

4406 Seneca St. Group Home Neighborhood Meeting Summary

Date: May 3, 2017
Location: Webber Middle School
Presenters: Clay Frickey (City of Fort Collins – Planning Department)
Greg Baustert (Applicant)
Justyna Baustert (Applicant)

Summary of City Presentation:

- Group home proposed for 8 residents at 4406 Seneca St.
- Proposal will be assessed for compliance with the Land Use Code
- Applicant has not submitted a formal development application with the City yet
- It is unknown when the applicant will submit their development application
- Planning & Zoning Board will be decision maker on project

Summary of Applicant Presentation:

- Looking to convert house to group home for 8 elderly residents
- Caretakers will live on-site and will have professional with over 20 years' experience assist with care of the residents

Summary of Question and Answer Session:

Question: Why did you pick to locate your group home in a neighborhood that violates the covenants?

Response (Applicant): We were unaware that this would violate the covenants. Do the covenants expire at some point?

Comment: The covenants show up on the title, you should know about the covenants.

Question: Does the Planning department know about the covenants?

Response (City): No, the only department that might would be Neighborhood Services. Covenants are up to the neighborhood to enforce. Since a covenant dispute is between two private parties, the City will not act to enforce covenants.

Comment: This feels intentional:

Response (Applicant): It's not, we had no idea.

Comment: There's a difference between the covenants and the HOA.

Comment: We need to know the boundaries for the covenants to determine if this property is controlled by these covenants.

Comment: Seniors are good neighbors. I'm the previous owner of the house and we went to great lengths to vet the new homeowners. We received a lot of offers for the homes and one of them was a family with 13 kids. Big families can have a far greater impact on the neighborhood than a home full of seniors.

Comment: I'm concerned with safety issues of having seniors living in the basement. In the event of a fire or a flood, how will a senior be able to get out of the basement safely? There's also no natural light in basements so I am concerned about their quality of life as well.

Response (Applicant): The primary caretakers will be living in the basement. We could perhaps house a senior in the basement if it was a good fit. We wouldn't put a senior in the basement that couldn't make it out in the event of an emergency.

Question: How many residents are you looking to have?

Response (Applicant): 6 residents upstairs, 2 downstairs.

Question: How big will the bedrooms be?

Response (Applicant): The smallest will be 11 x 12 feet.

Question: What will it cost to live in this house?

Response (Applicant): It's private pay, they will need to cover the costs.

Comment: This feels like a way to get around You + 2.

Response (City): Group Homes are a distinct use from other residential uses. You + 2 only applies for single-family homes, townhomes, and apartments.

Comment: I'm concerned about traffic and parking.

Response (Applicant): This is a response to some earlier concerns about the size of the rooms. There will be a lot of common area and people will tend to congregate in the common spaces. People won't stay in their rooms very often.

Comment: Our neighborhood is sensitive due to some bad neighbors in past. We have a business operating out of a home that has been a particular problem.

Response (City): The City allows home occupations but they are limited to 1 employee that doesn't live in the home.

Comment: We also dealt with a re-zoning for some townhomes that is still a sore spot. These people seem trustworthy, though.

Comment: I'm concerned about the long-term maintenance of the property. What happens if these folks sell their house to another party that wants to run a group home but doesn't care about property maintenance? What's your business plan?

Response (Applicant): I don't know if I can respond this question, it isn't very fair. We want to stay in this house when we get old.

Comment: We will all need a similar place to go when we get older. There's no guarantee the property will be maintained regardless of the use or who lives there.

Comment: I have confidence in the plan.

Question: Will there be an age limit as to who qualifies as a senior?

Response (Applicant): The State regulations say a senior is anyone aged 55 years and older.

Comment: I don't know, there are some pretty wild 55 year olds.

Response (Applicant): The State has many regulations on behavior to prevent disruptive residents.

Question: Why did you pick this house given the issues with the covenants?

Response (Applicant): We didn't know about the covenants otherwise we wouldn't have bought the house. The house is already fully accessible with wide doorways since it was the ultimate vision of the previous owner to turn this into a group home.

Comment: The difference is that since all of these folks will not be related, this plan is not better due to increased traffic and parking.

Response (Applicant): The difference is that in our case, we get to pick our residents. The other group homes in Fort Collins that are in neighborhoods are fine and fit in well.

Question: Will you be re-building the home? How many bedrooms are you looking to have?

Response (Applicant): No, the house has 6 bedrooms now and we are looking to have 8.

Comment: 8 residents seems like a lot. Do you have floor plans?

Response (Applicant): The house is big. The living room is 500 sq. ft. and the house overall is 5,200 sq. ft. There's plenty of room for 8 bedrooms.

Comment: I don't think a large family will be a bigger issue. I'm concerned about parking since there will be people living in the house, caretakers, and visitors.

Response (Applicant): Sadly, after the first couple of months people don't to visit very often so we don't think parking will be a big issue.

Comment: But it could still happen.

Response (Applicant): There's lots of parking on Seneca. Families will have more potential for issues with parking. Also, our visiting hours will be limited from 7-7.

Question: Will there be a traffic study for this project?

Response (City): No, this project does not meet the threshold for a traffic study.

Question: Are you proposing to convert the garage to bedrooms? Will this permanently be a group home?

Response (Applicant): Yes, we are looking to convert the garage to bedrooms. No, that change would not make this a group home permanently. It could be converted back to a garage.

Question: Will residents have cars? What about the administrative staff and family living in the house?

Response (Applicant): No, residents will not be allowed to bring cars. The family will have one car.

Comment: Just so you know, there's no parking on Seneca right next to Craig.

Comment: I would like to see the values of homes 1 year before and 1 year after a group home going into neighborhoods in Fort Collins.

Response (Applicant): Can we do that empirically?

Comment: We would really like you to consider property values when making a decision on this project.

Response (City): We can't consider property values for numerous reasons. It's too difficult what elements directly influence property values.

Question: I'm confused, what's up for consideration?

Response (City): What the City is considering is a change of use from a single-family detached home to a group home. The City will also consider a modification to get 8 residents as opposed to the 5 allowed by the Land Use Code. The applicant will have make a compelling case as to why the City should allow 3 additional residents.

Question: Can you pick your residents based on disabilities and a background check?

Response (Applicant): Yes.

Comment: The covenants also require garages. I can give you a copy of the covenants if you would like.

Response (City): That would be great, thanks.

Comment: One perk is that if someone in the neighborhood has an elderly family member living in this home, they would be able to walk over and visit easily.

Comment: But there's good facilities that provide care for elderly folks in the community already.

Response (Applicant): But this provides choices to families.

Comment: Sorry if this is coming off wrong, but we're just trying to get answers.

Response (Applicant): It's ok, our residents will be well vetted. We won't have any wanderers that get out of the house. We'll transfer residents out that need more intensive care. If the residents feel independent in a home-like setting, their quality of life increases.

Question: Will the residents be allowed to have pets?

Response (Applicant): No.

Question: What about smoking?

Response (Applicant): No, we will not allow smoking.

Comment: The circular drives are a safety feature to ensure cars are not backing out onto Seneca around the schools. Please don't block these drives and make sure the residents don't back out onto Seneca.

Comment: At first, I was a little scared about this development but the more I thought about it, the more I thought this is a really good idea. We would have loved this for our aunt that was in a large senior home. This is an opportunity to take care of the elderly and move them away from large homes. Everyone has different needs and this provides good proximity for families to come visit if they live in the neighborhood.