

IN RE: APPEAL OF HOUSE	:	BEFORE THE ZONING HEARING
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION	:	BOARD OF THE CITY OF READING,
MIDATLANTIC AND LANDIS QUALITY	:	PENNSYLVANIA
LIVING RELATIVE TO A PROPERTIES	:	
LOCATED AT 201, 217, 223, AND 225 S.	:	APPEAL NO. 2023-34
SIXTH STREET AND 216, 218, 220, 222,	:	
224, AND 226 PLUM STREET, CITY OF	:	VARIANCE, INTERPRETATION
READING, BERKS COUNTY,	:	AND/OR SPECIAL EXCEPTION
PENNSYLVANIA		

**DECISION OF THE ZONING HEARING
BOARD OF THE CITY OF READING**

AND NOW, this 13th day of December, 2023, a hearing having been held on November 8, 2023, upon the application of House Development Corporation MidAtlantic and Landis Quality Living, notice of such hearing having been first sent and advertised in accordance with the provisions of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code and the City of Reading Zoning Ordinance, as amended, the Zoning Hearing Board of the City of Reading (hereinafter referred to as the “Zoning Board”) renders the following decision:

FINDINGS OF FACT

The Zoning Board finds the following facts:

1. Applicants are House Development Corporation MidAtlantic, a 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofit corporation, with a principal mailing address of 8 West King Street, Suite 821, Lancaster, PA 17603, and Landis Quality Living, a 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofit corporation, with a principal mailing address of 1001 E. Oregon Road, Lititz, PA 17543 (hereinafter referred to as “Applicants”).
2. House Development Corporation MidAtlantic is a 53-year old nonprofit affordable housing developer, property manager and resident services coordinator founded in 1971 and currently serves 5,000 residents in 72 different communities primarily in Pennsylvania but also in Delaware and Maryland.
3. Landis Quality Living is a nonprofit real estate developer founded in 1964 specializing in servicing seniors and currently serves approximately 950 residents in five properties.

4. Applicants have an equitable interest in the Subject Property located at 201, 217, 223, and 225 S. Sixth Street and 216, 218, 220, 222, 224, and 226 Plum Street, in the City of Reading, Berks County, Pennsylvania, (hereinafter referred to as the “Subject Property”).

5. The fee simple owner of the Subject Property, Pennsylvania Artist, LP, has granted Applicants permission to seek the requested relief.

6. Applicants are 50-50 joint venture owners of the Subject Property, and they have a minimum 40-year commitment to the Subject Property.

7. The Subject Property consists of approximately 1.023 acres and is located in the R-3 Residential Zoning District and Prince Historic District as those terms and districts areas defined by the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Reading, as amended (hereinafter referred to as the “Zoning Ordinance”).

8. Applicant was represented by Robert S. Cronin, Jr., Esquire, of Nikolaus & Hohenadel, 212 North Queen Street, Lancaster, PA 17603.

9. Applicants are seeking a special exception for adaptive reuse for elderly apartments and dimensional requirements for mid-rise apartments at the Subject Property which consists of ten tax parcels, namely 530627884975 (201 S. 6th St.), 530627885804 (217 S. 6th St.), 530627884890 (223 S. 6th St.), 530627884798 (225 S. 6th St.), 530627886817 (216 Plum St.), 530627886816 (218 Plum St.), 530627886813 (220 Plum St.), 530627886812 (222 Plum St.), 530627886800 (224 Plum St.), and 530627886708 (226 Plum St.).

10. Applicant seeks relief of the following provisions of Section 600-1202.A(3) of the Zoning Ordinance to effectively accomplish the redevelopment of the blighted Subject Property:

a. Maximum Building Height: 60’ maximum for mid-rise apartments – To allow up to 65’ maximum (8.3% relief);

b. Minimum Yard Requirements: 10’ Front/30’ Rear/30’ Side for Mid-Rise Apartments – To allow the project to match existing nonconforming setbacks with any new construction;

c. Maximum Building Coverage: 30% Maximum for Mid-Rise Apartments – To

allow up to 37% maximum coverage (7% over required; 21% reduction from existing nonconforming condition of 58%);

d. Maximum Impervious Coverage: 55% Maximum for Mid-Rise Apartments – To allow up to 80% impervious coverage to accommodate building modifications and anticipated parking demand (25% over required, 16% more than current conditions of 64%, but more consistent with other permitted uses in the R-3 District); and

e. Buffer Strips and Screening: 6' Perimeter Screening for Parking Lots – to allow alternate screening options to screen the proposed parking from adjacent streets and neighboring properties. The existing building façade will be utilized to screen the parking from Sandstone Alley.

11. The existing buildings located on the Subject Property were previously occupied by a brass works company, a publishing firm and book bindery, a hosiery mill, and finally an engineering firm for decades before the company moved on and abandoned the structures, eventually declining to the current blighted state.

12. Applicants are collaborating to develop “Cornerstone on 6th”, a transformative affordable housing community for seniors.

13. Applicants will convert the blighted historic commercial buildings located on the Subject Property into 51 units of high-quality affordable homes for seniors over the age of 62, consisting of 46 one-bedroom and 5 two-bedroom units.

14. The project will redevelop or replace six existing structures with a single building located at 201 S. Sixth Street.

15. The one-bedroom units will average 669 square feet and the two-bedroom units will average 913 square feet.

16. All of the units will be restricted to households earning up to 60% of area median income with units reserved at 20% and 50% of area median income.

17. All of the units will be ADA-accessible or ADA-adaptable.

18. The building will have a community room with a kitchen for hosting events, on-site

management, maintenance offices to ensure responsive and attentive property management and an interior courtyard.

19. Applicants' proposal is for the buildings to be completely re-built inside, but the exterior walls and the essential character of the historic structures will be preserved to the greatest extent possible.

20. Applicants propose a 52 vehicle parking lot on the Subject Property which exceeds the parking requirements under the Zoning Ordinance.

21. Applicants will install a security system at every entry of the building and will also have cameras both externally and internally to provide maximum security for the residents.

22. Applicants state there is a trash and recycling room proposed on each floor and a location on the first floor for a maintenance, trash and recycling room which opens out on to the parking lot.

23. Applicants stated that converting this blighted property to a productive contributing asset in the community will help improve nearby property values and the general quality of life in the neighborhood.

24. Applicants state the proposed use of the Subject Property will not increase traffic congestion as there is an abundance of off-street parking spaces that exceed the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance but align with the needs of the project and the driveways are proposed from two public streets to provide controlled, safe and efficient turning movements to and from the Subject Property.

25. Applicants stated the proposed use will not create an undue concentration of population.

26. Applicants stated the proposed reuse of the existing buildings along with a limited amount of new construction will not have a detrimental impact on light or air to adjacent properties. Building heights will be consistent with existing conditions and most open areas of the site will remain open but be converted to a surface parking lot minimizing any impact on adjacent properties.

27. The Director of Community Development for the City of Reading spoke in favor of Applicants' proposed project.

28. There were no objections to the requested relief.

DISCUSSION

Applicants are seeking a special exception for adaptive reuse for elderly apartments and dimensional requirements for mid-rise apartments at the Subject Property which consists of ten tax parcels. The Zoning Board finds the proposed use will not be a detriment to the health, safety and welfare of the neighborhood and is in keeping with the spirit and intent of the Ordinance as long as Applicants are in compliance with the conditions set forth below.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. Applicants are House Development Corporation MidAtlantic and Landis Quality Living.
2. The Subject Property is located at 201, 217, 223, and 225 S. Sixth Street and 216, 218, 220, 222, 224, and 226 Plum Street, Reading, Berks County, Pennsylvania.
3. The Subject Property is located in the R-3 Residential District and Prince Zoning District.
4. The Zoning Board is permitted to provide interpretation and grant applications for variances and special exceptions as set forth in the relevant sections of the Zoning Ordinance.
5. The Zoning Board incorporates the findings of fact and conclusions of law as though fully set forth at length herein.
6. In order to grant the requested relief, the Applicants must show they have satisfied the relevant sections of the Zoning Ordinance.
7. After reviewing the Applicants' request in detail, the Zoning Hearing Board enters the following Decision:
 - a. Applicants are granted relief from all relevant sections of the Zoning Ordinance subject to the following conditions:
 - (1) Applicants shall comply with all pertinent provisions for Adaptive Reuse considering the Residential Apartment Uses, as prescribed by the Zoning Ordinance.
 - (2) Applicants shall provide a secure parking lot, internal security system and proper waste disposal area.

(3) Applicants shall submit to the Zoning Office a revision of the parking lot due to the narrow alley behind the building on the Subject Property should there be snow or other emergency situations.

(4) A Preliminary Land Development Plan, if necessary, shall be prepared to address the provisions required by the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (Chapter 515 of the City of Reading Code).

(5) A Final Land Development Plan, if necessary, shall be prepared for approval by the City of Reading and recorded with the Berks County Recorder of Deeds.

(6) All sanitary sewage disposal issues shall be resolved to the satisfaction of the City of Reading, including the reservation, permitting, installation and connection of the required sanitary sewage disposal improvements.

(7) All water supply issues shall be resolved to the satisfaction of the City of Reading, including the reservation, permitting, installation and connection of the required water supply improvements.

(8) All proposed signs shall be located, designed, permitted and installed in accordance with the provisions specified by the City of Reading.

(9) The appropriate building and zoning permits shall be prepared and submitted to address all building code requirements for the proposed residential apartment units.

(10) The building shall comply with all fire, safety and accessibility requirements specified by the City of Reading prior to occupancy.

(11) Applicants shall provide proof of designated off-street parking.

(12) Applicants shall comply with all relevant building and occupancy codes and ordinances as well as the plans and testimony submitted before the Zoning Board.

(13) Applicants may not use, expand, alter or otherwise use the Subject Property inconsistently with the contents of this Decision without making application requesting further relief from the Zoning Board.

(14) Failure to comply with any of the above-referenced conditions shall mean the immediate revocation of the relief granted herein.

The decision of this Board is by a vote of 5 to 0.

**ZONING HEARING BOARD OF THE CITY
OF READING**

/s/ Philip Rabena

PHILIP RABENA, CHAIRMAN

/s/ Thomas Fox

THOMAS FOX

/s/ Jeffrey Gattone

JEFFREY GATTONE

/s/ William Harst

WILLIAM HARST

/s/ Jared Barcz

JARED BARCZ