



October 4, 2024

Lilly Freedman
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Urban Redevelopment Authority
412 Boulevard of the Allies, Suite 901
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Re: Expression of Community Input for GEI Proposal at 62nd Street

Dear Esteemed Members of the URA:

On behalf of Lawrenceville United and Lawrenceville Corporation, please accept this letter as an expression of community input in regards to Golden East Investor (GEI) 's proposal for the 62nd Street site. Lawrenceville United's (LU) mission is to improve and protect the quality of life for all Lawrenceville residents. Lawrenceville Corporation (LC) serves as a conduit for responsible and sustainable growth in the Lawrenceville community. Together, our community process provides a forum where proposed development projects can be discussed, vetted, and measured against community plans and priorities. This process enables the local community organizations to identify priority issues that will help guide conversations with the developer and/or business through the planning and construction processes.

The URA-owned site at 62nd Street has a long history with our organizations and our neighborhood. Our community plans provide both specific and general priorities for the site. On this most recent RFP process specifically, LU and LC co-hosted a meeting with the URA during the open RFP process on February 22nd, 2024, in which community members were provided with an overview of the history of the site and a review of our relevant community plans, and then invited to share their priorities for the site. We also hosted a community meeting with GEI on September 24th, 2024, in which GEI presented their concepts and plans to date, and community members were invited to share feedback. LU and LC staff have also engaged with GEI on several occasions to articulate our community priorities and advocate for how their proposed development can best respond to them. While this project is still in early stages, we appreciate the responsiveness of GEI to date.

Below summarizes the input we've received and our continued priorities related to this site.

- **Community & public space:** While there has been much private reinvestment across Lawrenceville, Upper Lawrenceville's public amenities and parks have been underinvested in by the public sector for generations and there are precious few quality

green spaces & public spaces for residents to utilize. Community members see the URA owned site at 62nd Street as a potential asset to address this need. In the absence of public sector leadership to redevelop the site for these purposes, we appreciate that GEI's proposal includes a designated publicly-accessible green space, as well as indoor space to serve community uses and needs. We appreciate that through iterating with GEI, they have already accommodated our input on siting the community uses on the 62nd Street side of the site to improve its visibility and the public nature we're trying to inculcate along lower 62d Street and the pathway towards the river. We have been exploring with GEI ideas like maker spaces, below-market-rent commercial space for local makers and entrepreneurs, meeting facilities, shared commercial kitchen spaces, or other community needs, while also exploring the needs that the green space could meet as either a passive or an activated space. Community members have shared that while they appreciate GEI's inclusion of these spaces, they're relatively small. All of us are eager to see further refinement and detail about how these spaces will actually address community needs.

- **Compatibility with Tree Pittsburgh:** With increasing our tree canopy a top priority for Lawrenceville, Tree Pittsburgh is a critical asset to our community and its campus is a model for sustainability and an important community space for meetings and events. LU and LC continue to see opportunity for the 62nd Street site to build on the footprint and vision of the Tree Pittsburgh campus by siting similar environmental organizations and uses that will advance the City's sustainability and climate goals. In the absence of this, we believe any private development should minimally be compatible in terms of design related to the environmental nature of TreePittsburgh's work and their commitment to environmental stewardship. Operationally, it should be compatible as it relates to movement of traffic and management of stormwater runoff. We appreciate that GEI has been very open to integrating feedback from LU and LC on how to better arrange traffic patterns with this in mind to date.
- **Sustainability:** As mentioned previously, there's strong desire reflected in both regional and neighborhood plans (as well as the direct feedback we've gotten to date on this project) for this site to incorporate sustainability measures, including addressing stormwater management and showcasing strong practices related to building performance -- this might include being a part of the Pittsburgh 2030 District, integrating solar, green roofs, or other technologies. While GEI has expressed openness to exploring these ideas, we continue to await further refinement and answers on how these goals will be incorporated into their project.
- **Mobility, safety, & access to the river:** This site is a critical connector as it relates to mobility in Upper Lawrenceville. *Green Boulevard:* This development should include the Green Boulevard, a multi-modal pathway to connect downtown to Highland Park, on site. We have long advocated for new development along its pathway to incorporate easements and to construct its leg of the bike/ped path. *Improving safety on Butler Street:* The stretch of Butler Street around 62nd Street is known for being an especially dangerous one for bikers, pedestrians, and other users. The Butler Street Design Guidelines as well as the forthcoming PennDOT project provide traction for improving this corridor of Butler Street from a Complete Streets perspective, and it will be critical

for GEI's traffic plans and public realm infrastructure to work in concert with these plans. *Connecting to the riverfront:* While the URA site does not abut the riverfront, users need to pass this site to access the riverfront along lower 62nd, so it will be critical to encourage these connections to the riverfront through sidewalks, public realm improvements, and quality design. Again, this is an area that will need further refinement and detail as any disposition process with GEI progresses, as this is underdeveloped at this stage. *Transportation Demand Management:* incorporating strategies to minimize single occupancy vehicular traffic to/from the site is essential to advancing climate goals and reducing negative impacts related to air quality, congestion, and safety.

- **Job density & economic opportunity:** While some responses from residents have been opposed to new manufacturing at this site, the Upper Lawrenceville Vision Plan celebrates our "neighborhood culture of making things" and calls for maintaining the industrial character of Lawrenceville by welcoming compatible industries that provide density of jobs for local residents and that don't contribute to negative environmental impacts. We look forward to working with GEI and the URA to consider ways that job opportunities that grow out of this project provide economic opportunity for local residents, especially disadvantaged workers.

Overall, the community's response to date has been uncertain how well this project will help achieve these community priorities. LU and LC recognize that this project is still early in the design and disposition process, but we wish to stress that further refinement and commitment on these priorities will be important to earning community support.

LU and LC appreciate the URA's partnership in including our voices throughout this process, hosting community meetings, and providing the opportunity to share the community feedback that we have heard through many years of community planning--as well as public meetings on this specific RFP process and proposal to date. We also wish to acknowledge and appreciate GEI's responsiveness to our communications and our feedback to date.

If you have any more questions about our priorities at this time, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,



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