

Developer proposes 104 apartments next to Clipper stadium



This rendering shows the proposed Stadium Row apartment building, to be developed next to Clipper Magazine Sta
Submitted

A partnership based in Mechanicsburg is proposing to build 104 upscale apartments next to Clipper Magazine Stadium in Lancaster city.

The project, named Stadium Row, would be the first substantial apartment building for the general public to be constructed from the ground up in the city since 1963, a project official said.

To be built behind WellSpan Philhaven's mental health facility at 812 N. Prince St., Stadium Row would bring a better use to land that's now home to five storage sheds, said Jim Shultz, the project's development manager.

"I consider this classic private redevelopment," he said Wednesday.

That's because the venture would add value to the property, causing it to generate more property-tax revenue, and would move the city a bit closer to its goal of adding 2,500 housing units by 2030, Shultz explained.

The project would be developed by Strong & Detweiler Partnership, which Shultz described as a family partnership that has ties to Lancaster. He declined to elaborate.

Shultz also declined to disclose the four-story project's cost. But a construction industry source, who requested anonymity to discuss a competitor's project, said the cost to build the 97,000-square-foot structure would far exceed \$10 million.

That would be on top of the cost of the land. The partnership paid \$1.9 million for the 2.7-acre tract in 2017, according to courthouse records.

The parcel has the WellSpan Philhaven facility in front and the storage sheds in back. WellSpan Philhaven, on about 0.7 acres, would remain there. The apartments would go on the balance.

The tract is zoned mixed use, which allows multi-family housing if the city zoners OK it as a special exception. Strong & Detweiler will ask the zoners for the exception at their May 20 meeting.

If the special exception is approved, Strong & Detweiler next would file a land development plan with the city. The partnership hopes to secure all the approvals it needs by year-end.

That would let Strong & Detweiler start construction in the first quarter of 2020. Occupancy would follow at mid-year 2021. Rents would be determined closer to the opening, said Shultz.

Though most of the rents would be market rate, Shultz said Strong & Detweiler is working with the Lancaster Housing Opportunity Partnership and others to find a way to lower the rent on an undetermined number of units.

Randy Patterson, the city's director of economic development and neighborhood revitalization, declined to comment on Stadium Row at this time, saying he prefers to withhold comment on a venture until a developer formally applies for city action.

Stadium Row would be the first newly constructed, sizable apartment project in the city for the general public (not senior living) since City View Apartments went up at East Lemon and North Duke streets, according to Shultz.

Convenient location

Shultz, who has decades of experience in Lancaster city housing development, anticipates high demand for Stadium Row's apartments.

A key attribute, he said, is the site's proximity to the Amtrak station, downtown, the YMCA, College Row, Franklin & Marshall College, Lancaster General Hospital — and of course, the ballpark.

Beside being a "walkable" site, as it's located a few steps or blocks from those city features, the site also is within a short drive of a mile or two from major roads and shopping centers, he observed.

But Stadium Row would have a lot more going for it than its location, Shultz indicated.

Amenities would include an indoor bike storage and repair room, secure lockers for parcel deliveries, tenant storage and valet trash removal (tenants would put their trash outside their door).

The building also would have electric car charging stations, a street-level outdoor terrace, a fitness center, vending machines selling fresh food and a rooftop terrace with a view of the ballfield.

Free parking would be provided with 104 spaces behind and to the side of the building.

Modern urban features

The apartments would have their own attributes, said Shultz and project architect Doug Phillips.

“This is a building that makes a statement on its own while fitting into an urban setting,” said Phillips.

The apartments, which he described as a blend of urban, modern and chic, would come in four configurations, from studio units of 460 square feet to two-bedroom units of 1,000 square feet.

“I would consider this very successful if a person walks in and says, ‘Wow. This is something I would see in Philly or Baltimore or Washington D.C.,” said Phillips.

Each unit would be equipped with smart home technology, allowing the tenant to remotely control heating, cooling, security and other features.

Joining Shultz and Phillips on the development team are John Hershey of land development consultants RGS Associates, property manager Boyd Wilson and construction manager Pelger Engineering & Construction.