August 31, 2026

Regarding the Conditional Use Application for 163 N. Franklin Street

Like many of my neighbors in Delaware's historic Northwest Neighborhood, I am extremely skeptical about the requested zoning change for the property at 163 N. Franklin Street.

I think we can all agree that it would be great to see that building thoughtfully repurposed and saved from further deterioration. But the request by Jablonka Real Estate Partners for Conditional Use Approval (PC 26-8) leaves far too many unanswered questions and concerns to be approved at this time. Further evaluation is necessary before anyone can be confident this idea would be compatible with the character of the neighborhood.

I attended the initial review at the August 5 meeting, and the Planning Commission seems inclined to approve Jablonka's request — despite the fact that he has no tangible plans other than some old drawings from 1985. The public voiced legitimate concerns about the impact the proposed hotel would have on the neighborhood, but Jablonka did not appear at the meeting to answer our questions or explain his vision for the property. His representative acknowledged that there is no partner lined up yet to operate the proposed hotel, so it's impossible at this point for anyone to say, for example, whether the hotel would have on-site staff 24 hours a day. Or if they intend to create outdoor gathering/entertaining spaces for guests. Or dozens of other critical details that would determine whether the proposed hotel is more likely to be a welcome addition to the community or a complete nuisance that decreases quality of life and drives property values down.

The request is moving forward as if we've already had a thorough evaluation of the proposal and its impacts on the neighborhood — but we haven't. We're being asked to believe that the applicant is a good guy with good intentions, so we should just trust that he has the best interests of the community at heart. And we're being fed this magic phrase "boutique hotel" as if that's supposed to ensure that the property will attract only the most desirable, well-behaved guests.

Well…I ain't buying it. And neither should you. Conditional Use Approval should not be granted until the applicant can present a detailed plan and paint a clearer picture of what will actually happen with the property. Right now all the Commission has to evaluate is the vague *concept* of incorporating a hotel into a quiet residential block. Zoning changes shouldn't be based on hypotheticals and hope. Too much is at stake.

Thanks for your consideration.



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