

From the Mid City Messenger

<http://midcitymessenger.com/2015/09/15/houses-on-former-mcdonogh-31-school-property-quietly-approved-by-city-board/>

Posted by Robert Morris at 11:51 am blight and demolition, business, city government, land use, neighborhood groups

Sep 15 2015

Figure 3: Location of former McDonogh School #31 & Subject Lot



Site plan for one of the homes on the old Morris Jeff School lot on North Lopez. The other home would be next door. (image via City of New Orleans)

A proposal to build two houses on North Lopez Street as part of the redevelopment of the former McDonogh 31 school site received quiet approval from a city panel on Monday, after months of debate and negotiations between the developer and the neighborhood.

The request to build the two houses in the 800 block of North Lopez has been pending before the city Board of Zoning Adjustments since May, **postponed time and again** while CCNO Development met with the Neighbors of McDonogh 31 group. On Monday, Sept. 14, the items returned to the BZA agenda again.

The BZA staff had issued a report in favor of the request, noting that the houses fit the city's criteria for approval. The city has received no new information to change that recommendation since the last BZA meeting, staff members noted, so they are maintaining their recommendation that the project be approved.

"After a couple of months of requests for deferral from the owner, the owner has requested a vote at this time from the board on this particular project," said Tyler Hutcherson of M2 Studio.

Neighbors' opposition has focused more on the overall density of the redevelopment project, rather than the construction of the new houses themselves. At a meeting earlier this month, resident Jenny Bagert suggested that the total project be 30 living units, instead of the developer's current plan for 34 apartments in the former school building and the two houses.

The developers did not describe any change of those plans before the BZA on Monday, and no one from the neighborhood spoke to oppose the project or ask for another deferral. With the staff report at hand, BZA member Tommy Screen made a motion in favor of accepting the recommendation in favor of the houses, and the vote passed unanimously.

Unlike recommendations of the City Planning Commission or other boards, decisions made by the Board of Zoning Adjustments do not require final approval by the City Council. The only route for appeal of a BZA decision is to civil court.