



BETHLEHEM REVITALIZATION AND IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY

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Memo

To: BRIA Board Members
From: Alicia Miller Karner
CC: Mayor Robert Donchez
Date: January 31, 2020
Re: NIP Wilbur, LLC

NIP Wilbur has requested the authority consider a change in project and extension for the Wilbur Mansion.

History

In November 2016, NIP Wilbur responded to an RFP issued by Mayor Donchez for consideration of CRIZ for the Wilbur Mansion project. The project included renovation of the existing mansion, demolition of the former temple and the addition of an 8,000 sf office building. That project was conditionally approved by BRIA in September 2017.

In May 2018, NIP Wilbur requested a change in project to include 17,000 sf luxury hotel with 7,000 sf of event and restaurant space. That project, proposed as a joint venture with the Sayre Mansion, was conditionally approved and BRIA obtained the CRIZ designation on the parcel and project approval from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in May 2019.

Current Request

After the joint dissolution of the partnership with the Sayre Mansion, NIP Wilbur is requesting a change in project to include 9 boutique hotel rooms, dining area for 90 guests, private event space for 100, outdoor space and a focus on Lehigh Valley food sourcing. While confidential, the NIP Wilbur has represented this partnership has been formalized and is ready to invest in the Wilbur Mansion. The footprint of the building addition remains the same and therefore the CRIZ acreage remains the same. The expected increment generation by this new project is expected to increase by approximately \$60,000 to \$219,000 in the first year.

Support

Mayor Donchez has met with the representatives for NIP Wilbur and supports this project.

Action Requested

Because the changes to this project represent a material change, the Commonwealth has requested BRIA submit a new project application for approval. Additionally, NIP Wilbur has requests an extension to timeframe outlined in the current MOU (12 months from the date that DCED designates in writing the inclusion of the Project in the CRIZ) for an additional 12 months. All other conditions, including completion of the project within 24 months of project commencement.

Therefore, it is requested that BRIA move to approve the project which includes a boutique hotel, restaurant and private event space; and, extend the timeframe for project commencement 12 months from the approval of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania of the project.

Wilbur Mansion CRIZ Narrative

After the joint dissolution of the partnership with the Sayre Mansion, NIP Wilbur, LLC has reconnected with a partner who shares the same vision regarding this spectacular project. We are partnering with a local and nationally recognized restaurateur to create a boutique, luxury hotel with a culinary focus.

The originally proposed concept was more hotel focused and less food/hospitality focused with a large private events facility on site. In readdressing the project, both partners agreed the following changes would ensure the success and the longevity of the Wilbur project.

1. A shift from the large hotel focus to a smaller, more boutique approach to the rooms. With development on the South Side focusing on more large hotel development, this shift to exceptional, boutique rooms will set the project apart as well as compliment what is currently in the market.
2. A smaller and more flexible approach to the private event facility, allowing for the ability to change according to market needs.
3. A real focus on the food and hospitality with the goal being national and regional tourism that focuses on the local offerings of the Lehigh valley.

These changes were made to increase the sustainability of the project for the foreseeable future. After more than 20 years in the hospitality industry the restaurant partners know that it is key to plan on flexibility, innovation and a product that is not currently being offered in the market.

The partners (NIP Wilbur LLC) are committed to making the Lehigh Valley a destination for real boutique tourism. The Wilbur Mansion is a unique and amazing property to make this happen. The hospitality partners have been able to garner this kind of attention after 12 years in the Lehigh Valley and believe that this next step provides the ability to continue and build upon this legacy with an elevated venue. This is an opportunity to bring more employment to the South Side, training for local students and the ability to bring more people to the area through internship programs. This project proposes a destination that does not currently exist in this area.

Project Details:

- 9 boutique hotel rooms
- Bar/Dining Room for 90 guests
- Flexible space for private events from 10-100 ppl
- Curated outdoor space
- Focus on agritourism programming and the bounty of the Lehigh Valley
- Capitalize on the already nationally recognized reputation to make this a destination for Philadelphia, New York and the DC Metro Area