

Freedom House 1

Supplemental Information to City of Columbia Council

History

In 1981, a Columbia based nonprofit, Mid Missouri Barrier Free Housing for the Physically Disabled (MMBFH) applied to HUD for a loan to acquire and renovate a building at the corner of Walnut and Williams Road. **(See exhibit A for location)** The building was used for senior housing but was converted to a 13-unit apartment building for people with extreme physical disabilities. The building was a cutting-edge concept at that time.

In 1997, MMDFH successfully applied to HUD for an 811 grant to build an additional 12 units known as Freedom House 2. **(See exhibit B)** It was built on adjacent land to the south. Based upon HUD rules each project had to be a single asset corporation even though the members of the board are identical and are the members of MMBFH. (different owners have implication for building and zoning codes)

In 2016, ND&S management took over management of the facilities. HUD had disbarred the previous manager. The previous manager did not control the residence nor their caregiver's behavior and created problems for the neighborhood. ND&S has turned around the property and no longer has the type of problems that were previously experienced.

While managing the facility, ND&S sister company, ND Consulting Group, worked with MMBFH to secure funds to rebuild the Freedom House 1 because of its poor physical condition. After three attempts the funding has been approved by MHDC and all funding is in place including \$45,000 of HOME funds from the City of Columbia, \$455,000 from the Federal Home Loan Bank Board and \$1,282,000 on National Trust Funds. The total cost is \$3,900,000.

As will be noted often below, the site is difficult to meet all the standards due to grade changes. (See Exhibit B -The site drops 19 feet from the northwest to the southeast and 15 feet from the west to east) However, the site had to be used since the 12-unit Freedom House 2 is in great shape and operates with Freedom House 1 as a 25 unit's complex. Also, the location is great for the residents in power wheelchairs to get around Columbia. **All the residents who will be temporarily relocated, INSIST on returning.**

Design

Wallace Architects and A Civil Group (Columbia Missouri firms) were hired to design the building to meet the physical needs of the residents, the concerns of the neighbors, the operators of both buildings and the city codes. The site is very tight, and the grade drops 19 feet from the northwest to the southeast.

Prior to getting the first design the development team considered the following:

1. Considered a **2-story building**. Conclusion: a 2-story building was expensive to build and operate with an elevator to serve 6 residents on the 2nd floor. With persons who have significant physical disabilities it was impractical and not safe to have them living on the 2nd level.
2. Attempted to buy very small, **1 bedroom home at 103 Williams** that is between Freedom House 1 and 2. Owner said that his dad, from whom he inherited the home, told him it was VERY valuable property. He would not sell for less than \$200,000. (See Exhibit C)
3. Looked at buying **land at the northwest corner** to make the site fully square. The piece of land is 8 feet higher than the floor of the building and would not be usable. Even with the additional ground, we could not have 2-way drive around the building. (See Exhibit E site plan)
4. Driveway/entrance from Williams on south corner of property. The street is 10 feet lower than building site and utilities poles are located at that corner. This is not practical way to get to the site with today's accessibility standards.

Three years ago, all parties came to a design agreement that had the parking and entrance to the south for the following reasons:

1. Neighbors did NOT want parking next to their backyard
2. Operators wanted a south entrance to have better control over both properties.
3. Security cameras and entrances could oversee the parking and entrances
4. The City of Columbia took away bus access on Williams so all access for residents on a daily basis is to Walnut. Bus stop is by the Medical Center and Walnut is the resident's access to Downtown
5. The Southeast building grade to the Williams Street is 10 feet. Best pedestrian access is from the north property line.
6. A Civil Group met with City for a preliminary review to go over all these issues and thought there was consensus that this met the codes as best as possible.

Based on City review, the architect added a great entrance/presence to the entrance on the northeast corner. Further, they have left the curb cut on Williams to allow a car to pull onto the parcel to drop off or pick up someone. Due to the site constraints, the drive cannot circle the building to access the complete parking lot.

It took 3 years to get the funding and the development team proceeded to final drawings and bidding with great enthusiasm. It was believed that we were meeting the design standards and codes even though it was extremely difficult. Unfortunately, it appears that it doesn't quite meet all the overlay standards.

The main concern appears to be the location of the access thru Freedom House 2. A dedicated easement will be provided by Freedom House 2 to Freedom House 1. Of course, if the two buildings were under one ownership, this would not be problem but that is not possible.

See exhibit G for elevation of building on Williams as propose without the enhancement to the northeast entrance.

Solution

It hoped that the City Council can see that the development team has attempted to satisfy all the requirements of City codes, resident's needs, neighborhood requests and dealing with funding requirements by HUD, MHDC and lenders who require single asset corporations. Based on comments at the P and Z meeting, we have added the following:

1. A sidewalk access from Freedom 1 building to the Freedom 2 building so pedestrians have a safe access to Walnut without needing to use the parking lot.
2. Further enhancing the entrance and exit from north side of the building by add an accessible sidewalk route from the door to the north boundary and then east to Williams. The unused bus stop will be removed to allow connection to the sidewalk. Residents or visitors will be able to get to the building from Williams Street. An entry system is being added to the door system.

We have shown in **Exhibit F** to turn the entire building around to the north and have access and parking off N Williams. This would mean building a structure that will not meet all the requests of the operator, owner, and neighborhood. It would be sad to build something that does not achieve its best design for long term operations. Residents would use the back door to access Freedom 2 parking lot to get to Walnut Street. The operator would use the back door to provide services to Freedom 2.