

Oakland Development Activities Meeting
October 29, 2019, 6:00 p.m.
Hosted by OPDC at 294 Semple St.
Project: University of Pittsburgh IMP
Presenter: Ron Leibow, University of Pittsburgh

Pitt began the presentation with a focus on specific project guidelines, mobility, and neighborhood enhancement. Previous public commentary and concern regarding the IMP have been noted and changes to project guidelines were made to reflect comments about architecture, pedestrian connections, and access to open space. Student enrollment growth is projected to increase by less than 1% in the next ten years.

The IMP contains details about proposed development sites. The approved IMP essentially becomes the zoning for these building sites. In order to move forward with one of the planned development sites, Pitt will go through a project development plan review process with City of Pittsburgh. During this review details of design, materials, detailed use, parking and other specifics of each project will be fully vetted through community process and presentation at a hearing and action before the City of Pittsburgh Planning Commission. The IMP contains 28 proposed sites of development. Tonight's presentation highlighted the following to identify changes made since the summer:

- Site 5D: Playing Field Site
 - Chiller plant is planned for the site
- Site 5C: Petersen Bowl Infill
 - Aim to put a building inside bowl envelope
 - Will be taller than originally planned
- 7A: Recreation and Wellness Center
 - Improvement in pedestrian movability/circulation
- 7C: Lower Hillside Housing
 - Incorporate a garage into this hillside housing project
- 9A: One Bigelow
 - Discourse about reduction of height and more open space
- 2B: RA lot site
 - Building around the music building, no demolition
- 6B: Academic Success Center
 - Greater clarity for pedestrian access through the site
- 10A: Frick Fine Arts expansion
 - Reduced original footprint of expansion
- 3B: Oakland Ave redevelopment
 - Pitt is proposing a zoning change to EMI; site currently zoned R1A and OPR-A
 - Focus on building articulation, reduce its large massing
- 6D: Bouquet Gardens
 - More articulation of building facades and architectural context

Q: Site 3B proposes new housing development of 170 feet tall with 750 student housing beds. There are concerns regarding urban design, form, and scale because the proposed height far exceeds the heights of the neighborhood context. Community members voiced a strong opposition to the increased building height. There were also inconsistencies found in the visual renderings of the redeveloped site in the plan, showing the proposed size as looking much smaller than the massing diagram on the project page.

A: Pitt is attempting to build more student housing.

Q: Why is this the first that community members are seeing this proposal and the zoning change? There has not been adequate discussion.

Q: Although student growth will remain relatively flat, will the addition of 1,200 beds meet the future demands of this institution?

A: The housing study shows that the overall number of student housing beds in the IMP meets the unmet demand for on campus housing. That does not necessarily equate to all enrolled students.

Q: Is this housing only for freshman? What type of style is the proposed housing?

A: No, this housing is for all undergraduate students and it will be apartment-style housing.

Q: Was there consideration for how the typology of the building would affect the students' housing plans once they move out? Will they feel more inclined to look for similar housing nearby?

A: Will come out in future studies and once more student engagement processes are conducted.

Q: Will redevelopment increase the rent for students? It cannot be on the backs of the very students that Pitt is trying to encourage to live in these student housing developments

A: Pitt is interested in looking for creative ways of funding that may include university subsidization.

Q: Regarding Site 6C (Posvar Hall expansion), what's the plan for the amphitheater currently outside Posvar Hall?

A: The amphitheater will be replaced by the expansion of the building to hold more academic programs and classrooms.

Q: Would there be benches and places to sit around?

A: Posvar Hall is an edge development so there is a desire for more community access and open space around the building.

Q: There are not many open spaces for children to use around campus. Will Pitt provide more open space?

A: Pitt plans on providing open space.

Q: Where will that open space be?

A: The IMP does not specify where the open green space will be, therefore, it was not put on the massing diagram.

Q: Regarding Site 9B (O'Hara Student Center/ GSCC Redevelopment), the proposal to demolish these two buildings is concerning. They are within the Oakland Civic Center city-designated historic district. This is a protected district for historic preservation. It would make sense to state in the project description that Historic Review Commission approval would be needed. Has there been community discussion of this proposed demolition?

A: there is another section in the document that talks about historic preservation.

Q: Regarding Site 5F (Fitzgerald Field House), the West Oakland neighborhood stated concerns at a prior meeting about the proposed height of a new building at this site, adjacent to two-story homes. The proposal of 120 feet of height does not reflect hearing those comments. And filling the entire site is a concern. What about pulling the proposed building back from the property line?

Q: There are many potential uses listed. How was the scale decided before the purpose of the building? It is not in our best interests to be blind-sided by unknown development.

Q: I am unhappy with the maximum limits. What's to prevent Pitt from building to or exceeding the maximum? The maximum is already too large.

A: The purpose of this IMP is to show potential uses of the site. Pitt is limited by the uses allowed by the city, but the specific use has not been decided yet. Pitt cannot go forth with development without approval from the city through the project development plan process -- an with city planning. It would be an arduous process/very unlikely/difficult to exceed the limits on project descriptions in the IMP but Pitt could build to the maximums. Therefore it is unlikely that building maximums will be exceeded.

Q: Can you describe the chronological order of implementation of this plan? What's going to be built first? What will affect me the most right now?

A: N/A

Q: Will this increase traffic congestion?

A: presented overview of Mobility chapter.

Mobility plan

Pitt is committed to no net new parking; new parking locations and development will be done in phases to minimize parking disruptions.

Q: I am concerned that no net new parking on-campus will put increased pressures on off-campus parking to accommodate both the student parking demand as well as Pitt commuter demand. Also, the TIS findings were based on studies that inaccurately captured the student population. It was found that 95% of students walk to campus, but that includes students who walk from their off-campus apartment where they park their cars, therefore, there is a higher percentage of students with cars than was measured.

A: more studies will be conducted in the future.

Neighborhood Enhancement Strategy

Q: I am concerned regarding Pitt's lack of accountability with all this new development. Community members would like to see Pitt take more responsibility for mitigating potential negative impacts that this master plan will have on the Oakland community.

Q: The streets of Oakland are very littered and dirty. How can this lack of concern for street cleanliness and waste management be addressed?

Q: it's great to state support for OPDC neighborhood quality programs and to measure effectiveness, but it may also be that we simply need more resources to address the problem.

A: The biggest intervention Pitt has made is by partnering with OPDC to support trash and litter pick-ups/Adopt-A-Block.

Q: How will Pitt maintain vibrant and robust homeownership in the community? The strategy should also support residency in Oakland and incentives for employees to live in Oakland should be given to protect and maintain stability and a sense of community.

A: N/A

Q: Can there be more of a focus on the interior improvement and renovation of older properties and not just on the development of new buildings?

A: N/A

Q: the IMP does not govern development in the Fifth and Forbes business district, but references a proposed innovation district and renderings show massive redevelopment involving extensive demolition. There has been no community process about this. The concern is that if this is in the IMP there may be some implication that there has been community approval of the development of those sites references on pages 13, 75, 76, 80, and 137. Could there be a disclaimer on those pages/images to indicate that there is no community sign off on these concepts? Or could they be removed from the document altogether?

Q: Could there be a commitment in neighborhood enhancement to prioritize an equitable development strategy as part of the Oakland Neighborhood Plan process?

A: we will look into the possibility of disclaimers regarding innovation district renderings needing community process.