Residents of Allentown and the South Side Slopes are about one week away from seeing a former hillside dump site given special status as Pittsburgh's newest greenway.

City council introduced a bill to formally create the new greenway in June. It's due for a preliminary vote on Wednesday, with final approval expected next week.

On the site of a long-since demolished incline rail line, the proposed Knoxville Incline Greenway would encompass more than six acres of steep-sloped woodlands. The city-owned span of about 40 parcels includes an informal trail used by locals to traverse between hilltop neighborhoods and the South Side Slopes.

Cara Jette, a board member of the South Side Slopes Neighborhood Association, said the pending greenway designation comes as a rewarding culmination of years’ worth of ongoing cleanup work.
“I think back in 2005, the South Side Slopes Neighborhood Association pulled about 250 tires out of the area,” Jette said. “And two years ago, we chose another section of it and pulled another hundred tires out. I think we’ve gotten all the big sections of dumping taken care of at this point.”

She said her organization has raised about $1,500 to install a sign detailing the history of the Knoxville Incline, which carried people and freight between the top of the hill and the South Side Flats.

“So, if people are walking by, they’ll see that sign and they’ll have some idea of what happened on the site from 1880 to 1960,” Jette said. “And why it’s set aside and different from other hillside areas in the city.”

Jette said a bench has already been installed on the site, which has a view of the Cathedral of Learning in Oakland.

It’s crucial for neighborhood residents to take care of wooded hillside properties, according to Tim Dolan, program manager of the Hilltop Alliance, and the greenway designation would allow community groups to do that.

“It adds more value,” Dolan explained. “Not just, ‘I live next to this steeply sloped, wooded hillside,’ but this is a greenway. It’s being taken care of, and it’s part of a bigger plan for the area.”

Dolan said the Knoxville Incline Greenway could eventually join Emerald View Park, which was created in 2007 from a network of parks and greenways surrounding Mount Washington, Duquesne Heights and Allentown.

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