

Development Activities Meeting Report (Version: 06/24/2020)

This report created by the Neighborhood Planner and included with staff reports to City Boards and/or Commissions.

Logistics	Stakeholders
Project Name/Address: CMU RK Mellon Hall of Sciences/ 4644 Forbes Avenue	Groups Represented (e.g., specific organizations, residents, employees, etc. where this is evident): Oakland Business Improvement District (OBID) Oakland Planning & Development Corporation (OPDC) Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition (SHUC) Area stakeholders/residents City Planning staff
Parcel Number(s): 52-N-59	
ZDR Application Number: DCP-ZDR-2023-11179	
Meeting Location: Zoom Meeting	
Date: January 25, 2024	
Meeting Start Time: 5:30 PM	
Applicant: Bob Reppe, Carnegie Mellon University	Approx. Number of Attendees: 23
Boards and/or Commissions Request(s): Planning Commission review/approval required	

How did the meeting inform the community about the development project?

Ex: Community engagement to-date, location and history of the site, demolition needs, building footprint and overall square footage, uses and activities (particularly on the ground floor), transportation needs and parking proposed, building materials, design, and other aesthetic elements of the project, community uses, amenities and programs.

The applicant presented a proposal for a new multi-use building, totaling 344,500 gross sq. ft., with 289,000 sq. ft. for academic uses. The project is located at the corner of Forbes Ave and South Craig St, next to the Carnegie Museums and at the western edge of the CMU campus near the Craig Street business district.

It is meant to be a transitional building as the campus shifts towards the broader neighborhood of Oakland, with a mix of urban and academic characteristics. A restaurant on the ground floor is intended to be open to the public with indoor and outdoor seating.

This project is part of CMU's IMP (Institutional Master Plan) approved Fall 2022. The proposed building meets all applicable dimensional standards (i.e. setbacks, step backs, max. height) as outlined in the IMP and no variances are needed. The building design and massing consists of a short (3 story) podium along Forbes and Craig, with a taller toward positioned in the rear, more towards the campus to the southeast. The frontage along Forbes will include a pedestrian plaza area aimed at making a welcoming pedestrian experience which will connect the site with the Craig Street business district. This large plaza will include art pieces to complement Carnegie Museums, outdoor seating, raised-bed street trees, and other amenities. The design makes use of the steep topography difference on the site to include integrated parking along the hillside and beneath the grade of Forbes/Craig.

The building will contain a mix of academics, including hard sciences and computer sciences as well as the fine arts. Ground floor entrances will invite the public into the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) gallery and exhibit space. The gallery is positioned near the corner to align with the Carnegie Museum. Streetscape improvements to the driveway could include raised sidewalks enhancing the ped experience between the proposed building and the museum.

Materials include glass, high performance concrete panels, metal panels, etc. The tower section is a brick building to stay consistent with the surrounding campus context. There will be a series of brick weaves to add texture.

125 parking spots will be included, a 1 for 1 replacement. “No net new parking on campus.” Metal mesh to screen parking. “Flex parking” with museum for different large events, as needed for each institution.

The streetscape along Forbes Ave will include sidewalks with a maximum of 10 ft of width, complete with street trees. Space for Uber and Lyft pickup and drop-off will be accommodated. Truck loading will be located along Neville St at the base of the site. The building will include a bicycle room and bicycle locker room/showers; and access for cyclists coming from the junction hollow trail up to Forbes Ave via elevators.

Anticipated timeline:

Hope to start demolition and excavation in Summer 2024, for about six months.

Building construction Spring 2025 – 2026

Substantial completion in Fall 2027

Public Art is intended for inside and outside of the building. Will put together a list of artists, and issue RFP to those artists. The University would then have the chosen art fabricated and installed.

Input and Responses

Questions and Comments from Attendees	Responses from Applicants
Regarding plaza extension and expanding pedestrian space across the museum's driveway - any impact on pedestrian crossing timings for the lights on Forbes/Craig?	That intersection is an all-walk. We will support retaining this function, which gives more time for people. CMU & museum wants that to be a continuous pedestrian space.
Consistent with the safety concerns articulated in the Oakland Plan, can CMU work with the museum to make an at-grade sidewalk on S. Neville to connect to Boundary Street? Obviously there are driveways to navigate, but the need for adolescent-compatible pedestrian options on S. Neville is great.	As of now, we do not have a sidewalk proposed along the edge, so to not create a sidewalk that ends. If the City would be interested in extending sidewalks along Neville/Boundary St, then we would coordinate to make sure our site is integrated properly. We have not talked with DOMI yet, but if they are interested, we can discuss it and work it out with the museum. Ultimately, and ideally, the trail that runs parallel along the tracks would be the substitute or better condition for pedestrian/bike access heading south.
I have a question about the trees. Your architects like to use the same species in a row. Our arborists say to diversify for various reasons. Will you please consider that for this plan?	There are certain trees that survive better along roads. But for the hillside, there will be a mix of local trees. We are not able to get a full replacement of all the trees. As part of our master plan, 110%, we've committed to a strategic campus-wide replacement. Two areas on campus that would essentially be reforested: along railroad tracks and hillside within campus. These would be “pockets of reforestation.” Additionally, we plan to introduce undergrowth and smaller trees amongst them. We recognize there is a monoculture of trees and grass. We will finalize how many trees and where, how big, and what kind.
Safety question: During construction process, what measures will be taken for the safety of the job site? There will be students around a large gaping hole. College kids	For the roads, during the duration of the construction: left-turn lanes will close. Through-lane will continue across Craig Street and continue to the bridge, then get back. Bike lane will do the same. This is for a short-term.

Questions and Comments from Attendees	Responses from Applicants
<p>are out and about at all times of the night, and we want to ensure their safety.</p> <p>Follow-up, how tall will the fences be?</p>	<p>Second component is that we will fence it all off. We will fence the entirety of the site; majority of the work will happen along Forbes Avenue. Dump trucks and delivery vehicles will stage in an off-street, enclosed site behind barriers. The gates will be monitored. There will also be barriers at either end of the section. Pedestrians will have to use the north side of the bridge as the south side will be closed. We recognize it will be uncomfortable and crowded.</p> <p>There will be a similar blockade on the western end. There will also be security cameras throughout the area as well. There will be a website to watch the construction and to see what happens.</p> <p>We are working with the museum; they will redo their parking area at this time. They will get rid of the kiosks, which eliminates a chokepoint.</p> <p>The fences will be 8 feet. There will also be screens with CMU branding.</p>
<p>If I recall correctly, early drafts of the plan included a bridge across the ravine to Scott Hall. Though it would be extremely tall, it would be a good way to connect to the main part of campus. Is this still in consideration?</p>	<p>At this time, it is not in our budget, and not being designed as part of this project. Also, we don't know exactly where it would land on the other side. But with the building's design, there is an exit to the atrium. It is on the level of the campus. If we did do that, we could add it there eventually. We are working along with the idea, but are keeping it in the back pocket for something later.</p>
<p>With no net new parking and lots of new occupants, there will inevitably be spillover parking into the neighborhoods. What provisions are you making to mitigate that impact on the neighborhoods?</p>	<p>That is one that we have been wrestling with. While there will be some new people, the numbers are not that significant. There will be a decompression of the current institute. Everyone planning to be part of the building are coming from other parts of campus. We have planned for growth, but there are very few. Secondly, we're looking at this as part of a campus-wide system and a new parking system that is more manageable, which will allow us to better utilize the space that we have. As part of the master plan, we have doubled down on infrastructure for people to bike, bus, and walk to get to campus.</p>
<p>Will the recording of this presentation, and/or the PowerPoint, going to be available?</p>	<p>Yes, we will share that with the three RCOs to share with the community.</p> <p>As mentioned, we will share access to the webcam.</p>

Other Notes

Since the south side of the sidewalk along the Forbes Ave bridge will be closed during construction, CMU is working with partners to envision pedestrian improvements that could be completed in conjunction with the new building.

Planner completing report: Keith Portugal, Planner & Christian Umbach, Senior Planner