

Development Activities Meeting: OPDC and OBID

June 21st, 2021

Redevelopment of the Croatian Fraternal Union Building (3441 Forbes Avenue) by the University of Pittsburgh

Presenting: Beth McGrew, Vice Chancellor for Planning, Design and Real Estate; Owen Cooks, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Planning

The property at 3441 Forbes Avenue is within OPR-C zoning, and was most recently the Allegheny County Health Clinic until the university purchased it in 2018. It is located next to The Bridge on Forbes to the left and an empty lot owned by the University to the right. The building was constructed in 1929 for the Croatian Fraternal Union of America. It is three stories, flat-roofed, and constructed of brick steel, and concrete. Currently, the building is in poor physical state, including a failing super-structure and poor interior conditions. Based on expert consultation, the terra cotta façade is salvageable, but will require new steel framing. After demolition, the property would not use the lot before redevelopment. A preservation agreement was made on May 5th, 2021 between the university, Preservation Pittsburgh, Dr. Anthony Blevin, and the Nominators. The University agrees to preserve the façade in pieces for future reassembly. The pieces will be catalogued and stored off-site in a climate-controlled environment. After reassembly, the university will nominate the façade for historic designation.

After this meeting, the university anticipates that the planning commission will review the demolition proposal in their last July hearing. They will also seek an approved MPT plan for lane restrictions during demolition. A separate review process will be required for the new development. After the development, the University will seek approval from the Historic Review Commission for the restored façade. Potential future uses may be an office building with retail ground space set back behind the reassembled façade, which will provide open air space in between. The university will retain an architect to program the space for future uses. The maximum height allowance in this zone is 85 feet, but renderings shows the building lower than that.

Q: To enhance pedestrian safety, will lighting be added in the area?

A: Unsure about power available at the site, but can look into it. There are existing street lights.

Q: Will there be a special exception for the height of the building?

A: Not seeking variance for height (abides by zoning maximum).

Q: Why isn't the façade kept in place?

A: There is a basement level that is not safe and would put the façade in danger. The university consulted with Preservation Pittsburgh. Based on their expertise, there would be better success with the reassembly method.

Q: What is the demolition schedule?

A: There is no specific schedule since it is pending approval, but they would like to do it this summer.

Q: Has there been any consideration of restoring the ornamentation that was previously part of the building?

A: It is not feasible with its current state. They can highlight the building history in the open space with programming and displays.