

Oakland Development Activities Meeting
March 27, 2019, 6 pm
Hosted by OPDC at 294 Semple Street
Project: Application for Demolition Permit, Point Park Playhouse on Craft Avenue

Mariann Geyer, Vice President of External Affairs, presented Point Park University's plans to demolish the playhouse and sell the vacant site to a new owner. Jeremiah Brooks, Project Management Associate, Stantech Architecture, presented details about the site, asbestos remediation, and planned demolition process.

Q: Have preservation groups green-lighted this demo? A: PHLF agrees with the assessment that the building is not viable.

Q: Is the site on the tax rolls now? A: university tax exempt.

Q: So opportunity to put on tax rolls. A: Yes.

Q: You will be selling the land? A: Yes. Proceeds go to paying off the new playhouse recently constructed in Downtown Pittsburgh.

Q: Can you put something in the sale agreement that it goes on tax rolls? Also, that the future use doesn't have a negative impact on the community? A: We put information about The Oakland 2025 Master Plan in the package of materials marketing the site.

Q: Want property on tax rolls to have benefit to city of Pittsburgh.

Q: Give some consideration to things that would be beneficial to Oakland when you sell the property. A: Point Park strives to be good citizen. We want to sell it for a good use.

Q: Is deconstruction an option to salvage things at Construction Junction? A: We haven't gotten to that point, but will look at it.

Q: Theater seats could be sold as a fundraiser to support a community improvement in Oakland such as Niagara parklet.

Q: Is there anything that can be done to prevent just another 15-story glass cube? Derek Dauphin, Department of City Planning: we will be facilitating a neighborhood planning process following on Oakland 2025 and this is an opportunity to discuss vision. Adding to O2025.

Q: Fifth and Forbes are becoming canyons. It doesn't even look like Pittsburgh anymore. This would be another part of the transformation. Need mixed use, scale that fits with the neighborhood.

Q: Are you willing to put a deed restriction that the future use be compliant with zoning? We are losing the character of the neighborhood.

Q: The building next door is UPMC Magee? A: Yes, research.

Q: Is there a date for demolition? A: Not at this time. The first step in process is to meet with community, then we will schedule for the City Planning Commission agenda.

Q: Can you make a commitment to be good to community? A: Point Park police presence in neighborhood. Work with Oakwatch regarding students living off campus and address those issues through student conduct office.

Q: but what about this site and future buyer? What can you do so that you don't sell to someone would not be good neighbor? A: case by case by applicants, depending on what they propose. Part of this is trust. We will continue to listen, follow city process be the good neighbor that we've been. Sift through interested parties to find what works for community and works for university.

Q: logical to assume UPMC given they own the other three sides.

A: Would you consider a deed restriction for no zoning variances?

Q: People are concerned about height and neighborhood impact.

Q: Why selling it? A: The university no longer has a use for it. Need to cover cost of new playhouse downtown.

Q: Why not land lease? A: we are a university. Mission to educate students. We are not developers. Appreciate the idea, but not mission.

Q: What is the cost of tearing it down? A: \$2.5 million to tear it down.

Council President Bruce Kraus stated that he has a great relationship with Point Park University. He believes they truly have interest in neighborhood. He will work to hold them accountable to that. This meeting is the first step in process. Lines of communication are there. We can have a healthy process.

Q: Why is the university tearing it down and not the future owner? A: A vacant site is more attractive to a potential buyer.

Q: What do you plan to get for the property if you are spending that much on demo? A: won't negotiate in public.

Q: Asbestos abatement? A: In progress.

On another topic at the end of the meeting, Council President Kraus announced that preserving character of the community is an important concern of the neighborhood. He, with Preservation Pittsburgh, has prepared a report to nominate the Blessed Mother Statue on Wakefield Street as a historic site with historic preservation protections. He asked city officials to see about process. Has document now to nominate it as a historic landmark. He will provide the report to OPDC to put on the website. Please give feedback. If the community would like to proceed with the nomination, it would be a 6 – 8 month process.