

Date: 11/15/2018 **Host:** City of Pittsburgh, DPW **Subject:** Cowley Recreation Center

Location: Most Holy Name School Hall, 1515 Tinsbury St. Pittsburgh PA 15212

City Representatives: Joe (Architect), Chris (DPW), Harvey (DPW), Beth (DPW), Molly and Leah (Office of Community Affairs)

City Overview

Demolition is tentatively scheduled for Spring 2019, with the possibility for delay if there is heavy spring rain and need for resources to address landslides. Prior to demolition, architects and engineers will be evaluating at the stability of Goettman St. and adjacent hillside. This is of greater concern given the recent landslides. An engineering study is the first step. It was also acknowledged that part of the building foundation is supporting the street, which is yet another consideration and risk during demolition.

Due to years of neglect and vacancy, the city considers the building an imminent danger, particularly a fire danger. City fire inspectors cannot enter the premises to inspect the fire suppression and notification system, which is currently not active. Therefore, if the building caught on fire, the fire department would not receive an immediate notification. Because of this and the presence of many toxic building materials such as mold, lead and asbestos which would require exorbitantly expensive remediation, the existing recreation center building must be demolished. The city representatives stressed that while demolition is non-negotiable, it will actively solicit community feedback for how new construction funds are allocated. Despite requiring demolition, pieces of the façade and items of historical significance could be salvaged and possibly used for reconstruction; however, the community should identify key items which they would like to repurpose for the new construction.

Approximately \$1.2M has been allotted for new construction, separate from the funds allocated for demolition. A new construction cost of \$250-300 per square foot was identified as preliminary. The existing building space was estimated as being 14,000 square feet, 2 stories. Because the two funds are separate, how much of the new construction funds are applied at the demolition site and in what way is still to be determined based on community input and city planning. Questions and comments from the community elaborated that these funds may have been allocated as early as 2003, and that the funding may actually be as much as \$1.8M. The city was asked to clarify the actual new construction fund amount, and to highlight any shortfalls from earlier earmarked funds. The goal is to apply excess funds to other needs/projects in the neighborhood, such as the business district revitalization. The city mentioned that the goal in similar development projects was to have private interests manage provide services for the recreation center, rather than the city (i.e. community non-profit, private gym company, etc). It was brought up that the existing Citiparks community recreation centers are actually staffed by the city, and that management by the community may be too much of a burden.

The city is planning to provide a recap of the meeting during the December 12th Troy Hill Citizens General meeting at 6PM in the Most Holy Name School Hall, located at 1515 Tinsbury St. It is unlikely that there will be many new developments by that time, and the city estimates that it will be ready to share demolition updates and to solicit further community input for the reconstruction efforts around March, 2019. During that timeframe the city would also seek community input for what facilities we would like to be unaffected by demolition, such as: baseball fields, spray park, basketball courts, etc.

They mentioned that they must keep the roadway open for local traffic, and will try to minimize the inconvenience during demolition.

In summary the process was identified as:

- 1) Engineering study required for demolition – November 2018 to Spring 2019
- 2) Recap of First Community Meeting – December 12th, 2018
- 3) Second Community Meeting – March 2019
- 4) Demolition, resulting in “clean slate” of backfilled, grass lot – Spring 2019
- 5) New Construction – TBD

Community Brainstorm Sessions and Exit Surveys

Residents were asked to first go around the room, introduce themselves, and in one word say what they liked most about Troy Hill. The responses were:

- Location, views, green-space, people, community, churches, small-town, neighbors, architecture, gardens, views, location, people, friendly, walkable

Residents were then asked to split up into 4-5 different groups and were given 20 minutes each to brainstorm how they would like the new construction funds to be spent, using craft material and pencil/paper. At the end of the session the groups all shared their ideas, and the city distributed exit surveys for each person to provide general comments as well as their most/least favorite idea. Breakout session group ideas included:

- Exercise gym/room
- Public WIFI
- Senior center activities
- Return of youth sports leagues and activities
- Proximity of Sarah Heinz House and Polish Hill Rec Center (West Penn), and to acknowledge what they offer and what items we would like to have within Troy Hill.
 - For example, Polish Hill offers exercise gym access for \$5/month and is open M-Fri 9AM-9PM and Sa 9AM-3PM.
 - Idea that due to proximity of Sarah Heinz House and older population, activities should favor seniors or be universal in enjoyment/utilization.
- Multi-use space such as indoor basketball court, which could be used for dances, music, rental.
- Multi-use room for arts and crafts, board games, computer use, small community library, etc.
- Idea to approach owners of existing, underutilized infrastructure in good condition like Provident Charter School or Most Holy Name, and to implement new community center in buildings that are already up to code rather than having to spend a large amount of new construction funds on brick and mortar.
- Indoor/outdoor flex space that is shared between recreation center and existing outdoor activities (spray park, basketball court, baseball fields), and can be opened/closed based on the weather/season. Potential for indoor kitchen/grilling, bathrooms/changing rooms.
- General comment on need for parking and where would that be.
- Skate park
- Tool shed/tool share library, maker space.

- Zip line to strip district
- Tetherball and additional playground type activities
- Bike station, similar to those around the city (bike lock stands, pump station, basic repair tools, etc).
- Indoor basketball/volleyball court.
- Outdoor grill/pavilion space which can be rented for birthdays, reunions, general purpose.
- Stage for performances
- Micro grocer
- Rain garden and additional landscaping and tree planting around the center.