

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: Carlow University Institutional Master Plan update	Groups Represented (e.g., specific organizations, residents, employees, etc. where this is evident): Oakland Planning and Development Corporation (OPDC) Oakland Transportation Management Association (OTMA) South Oakland Neighborhood Group (SONG) Family House Pittsburgh Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh Sisters of Mercy City of Pittsburgh Office of Community Affairs (OCA)
Parcel Number(s): 28-E-110, 28-E-112, 28-E-116, 28-E-120, 28-E-122, 28-E-126, 28-E-128, 28-E-130, 28-E-131, 28-E-132, 28-E-133, 28-E-137, 28-E-140, 28-E-146, 28-E-148, 28-E-151, 28-J-70, 28-J-79, 28-J-81, 28-J-82, 28-J-83, 28-J-84, 28-J-85, 28-J-86, 28-J-87	
ZDR Application Number: n/a	
Meeting Location: Virtual via Zoom/Facebook Live (Oakland Planning and Development Corporation account)	
Date: 11/24/2020	
Meeting Start Time: 6:00 PM	
Applicant: Carlow University (Emily Gaspich, David Meadows, Shawn Nelson, Anna Torrance)	Approx. Number of Attendees: 39
Boards and/or Commissions Request(s): Planning Commission (PC)	

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, Carlow University, was represented by David Meadows (Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer), Emily Gaspich (Director of Capital Planning), Shawn Nelson (Secretary of the Board), Anna Torrance (Secretary for External Affairs at the Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh), and Sister HelenMarie Burns (Sisters of Mercy).
- Wilson opened by informing attendees that Carlow had made a presentation almost a year ago and has continued to work on the plan and has had meetings with stakeholders since.
- There is no Planning Commission date yet for the Institutional Master Plan (IMP), as the Applicant has yet to submit a final draft. However, the timeline was proposed for a January 2021 timeframe for the Planning Commission hearing and a March 2021 City Council hearing.
- The presentation given by the Applicant went through a timeline of Carlow's IMP dating back to 2018 and its future P3 Lower Campus development. The Applicant also extensively discussed Carlow's engagement with the community both in terms of its capital improvement projects like the IMP and the P3 development and in terms of its educational and workforce development.
- The Applicant expressed a "pressing need" to develop its real estate for academic purposes (classroom and lab space) to ensure the viability of the university. It was further expressed that the university is living out its Catholic mission and doctrine by expanding access to educational opportunities.

- The focus of the presentation was largely on the portion of the IMP that involved demolishing the St. Agnes Center at 3235 Fifth Ave, a former church building near the corner of Fifth Ave and Robinson St.
- The Applicant reevaluated its earlier IMP after community feedback and decided to keep the St. Agnes School building in use while demolishing the St. Agnes Center. Other buildings on the campus have also been preserved in the past.
- The Applicant has evaluated the St. Agnes Center internally a few different times to determine whether the building would be viable to preserve and reuse. In 2010, the Applicant conducted an adaptive reuse study for the building; in 2017, a Facilities Condition Assessment was conducted; a Highest and Best Use Study was undertaken in 2019; and a review of the Historic Review Commission (HRC) criteria and its applicability to the building was completed in 2020. At the end of these alternative analyses, the Applicant concluded that demolition was in the best interests of meeting its institutional goals and objectives. The review of the HRC criteria, in particular, determined that the building was not in any historic districts and was not a designated historic landmark, even though it was designed by a prominent architect.
- In May, the former church was “relegated to profane but not sordid use” in accordance with canon law and Bishop David Zubik’s decree.
- Additional rationale given by the Applicant for demolition was that St. Agnes Center was in poor condition, would be very costly to maintain or rehabilitate, and had not functioned as a church since being purchased by Carlow 23 years ago. The last point is significant in terms of any purported reuse of the building for secular purposes, as Catholic doctrine requires the removal of items of devotion, which would include stained glass windows, murals, etc. that depict the holy family.
- The Sisters of Mercy has submitted a letter to the Planning Commission supporting the IMP and Carlow’s expansion plans. The Sisters will oversee the removal of the items of devotion and ensure their caretaking.

Input and Responses

Questions and Comments from Attendees	Responses from Applicants
First week of March was when this came into sharp public view - https://pittsburgh.cbslocal.com/2020/03/05/future-of-st-agnes-church-in-pittsburgh-remains-unknown/	
Beyond all the verbal commitments, is there anything in writing and legally binding?	Carlow is currently in the process of developing implementation schedules and guidelines for the Community Benefits. There is not a legally binding document at this time. If you have an example of one that was used previously in the City you can email to me at ejgaspich@carlow.edu .
Can you provide a link in the chat to the document(s) that we're discussing now?	There is a full 10-year document that governs the development of the campus over 10 years, which includes a Neighborhood Enhancement Strategy. A link to the IMP can be found via www.opdc.org/institutional-master-plan-projects/2019/3/26/carlow-university-master-plan .
Yes a presentation of the full plan is in order.	I can pull up the various sections, but we were anticipating that St. Agnes would be the biggest discussion tonight. We don't have a Planning Commission date yet, as we may need to resubmit a final draft of the IMP, but we would be happy to come back next month to show the full plan. (OPDC will follow up with the Applicant and see if they can maybe present again later on the full plan.)

Questions and Comments from Attendees	Responses from Applicants
<p>So, yes, these commitments should be included in the IMP then, so as to be binding. Otherwise they mean little.</p>	<p>This IMP would become the zoning for the project for the next 10 years; would go through project development review process, so each project would have to go through a DAM and community approval.</p>
<p>Has there been any outreach to your other adjacent residential community of South Oakland?</p>	<p>Our public meetings have been open to everyone, but we're in West Oakland, so that naturally results in a closer relationship to West Oakland.</p>
<p>Work of architect, builder, and muralist have all been recognized as historic, yet, we are talking about demolition! Community feedback - I have seen petition approaching 600 signatures and community FB pages show overwhelming opposition to demolition. What kind of community feedback has university received?</p>	<p>We're aware of the petition; have received phone calls and emails and Facebook comments, but we purchased this church in the 90s and have struggled with adaptive reuse for decades and we feel at this point it needs to be demolished.</p>
<p>“Wisdom is the ability to discover alternatives.” Carlow has about 15 acres. No one would consider tearing down Heinz Chapel. St. Agnes has murals that are very beautiful. No one would destroy the John Alexander murals at Carnegie. This is a church that was built to last for centuries, consecrated with the devotion and prayers of the congregation, including people who worked in the steel mills, and the people who built the church. St. Agnes is sanctuary, a pathway to the Holy Spirit. It is not a stretch to say that the Holy Spirit inspired the architecture and the murals. The House of God should not be a candidate for a landfill in Ohio. St. Peter’s Episcopal Church is gone. St. Agnes is a portal to Oakland. Destroying a spiritual, cultural, and artistic heritage is not a good path to a caring future.</p>	<p>As Emily has indicated, this hasn't been a church since purchased by Carlow, back in 1996. No question about the beauty and architectural value, but this is not on the same level of Heinz or Carnegie — there are resources there we don't have. We remain as a values, faith-based Catholic institution in the area and would argue that the church has been gone for a long time. Additionally, the university has made a good-faith effort to look at reuse.</p>
<p>Beyond adaptive reuse, what about incorporating the church into a new development? Enhancing rather than diminishing the streetscape.</p>	<p>We did consider a scenario if the facade could be kept, but going back to the secular use, we would have to remove the items of devotion. Keeping only part of the facade there would not honor the building's history in any way. We would refrain calling this building a church; it has not been a church since 1995. Carlow never calls it “St. Agnes Church.” It has been St. Agnes Center since 1995.</p>
<p>Have you considered selling air rights?</p>	<p>We are not going to sell air rights. We don't feel that's beneficial to us. All of the higher education institutions are pivoting to the 2025 cliff, in a loss of traditional students and making room for adult students and grad-level courses. Our buildings are very old and often the interiors don't support the high-tech learning environments and lab spaces we need now. It's not easy to just renovate rooms without renovating pumps, etc. Our board of trustees is in unanimous agreement in that in order for Carlow to continue to thrive and continue its mission, this lower campus development is the #1 priority of our institution. We cannot make this more clear — we are entering a period in our country where 18-24 student population is rapidly declining, and that is even more pronounced in</p>

Questions and Comments from Attendees	Responses from Applicants
	Western PA. Carlow needs to make strong pivots to address these issues, which is why we're launching some new doctoral programs and channeling the gateway to the innovation district. Is it critically necessary for our survival? Yes, it is.
Something like Bellefield Tower? Separate but "connected".	
Not a church - still a historic structure	
With the objects of devotion, it is still a "religious" building if not a "church".	
A church is a place of the heart.	
No doubt. History is important. Will Carlow close down without this development?	
This development is a major component of Carlow's plan for the future sustainability.	
So, begging the question ... without this "major component", will Carlow's future be unsustainable?	
I'm just curious if Carlow has looked into developing on the parking lot off Terrace St?	That is Lot C, and the plan does not include development of that property in the 10-year master plan. When we proposed our IMP the first time around, the community said it was too close to residential density, and we listened. Instead, we want to be close to the BRT line to maximize efficiency.
David, can you share what the MWDBE % participation goal will be on Carlow's construction projects?	Carlow has established MWDBE goals for participation in predevelopment and construction spend of thirteen percent (13%) for Minority Business Enterprises and two percent (2%) for Women/Socially and Economic Disadvantaged Business Enterprises for this project. Carlow is following Allegheny County guidelines with respect to MWDBE goals.
Are my kids allow to help shovel snow with me	Hi Vonni - I don't think the City has an age requirement, so I'd recommend filling out the volunteer form and they can confirm. Thx!

Questions and Comments from Attendees	Responses from Applicants
Who in this chat does not want a grocery store in oakland	
Let get a grocery store in oakland	Our master plan doesn't include a grocery store.

Other Notes

--

Planner completing report: Phillip Wu