

Development Activities Meeting Report (Version: 12/20/2019)

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

| Logistics | Stakeholders |
|---|--|
| Project Name/Address: Historic Nomination of Tito-Mecca-Zizza House (1817 Fifth Ave/1818 Colwell St) | Groups Represented (e.g., specific organizations, residents, employees, etc. where this is evident): RCOs, developers, residents, Councilperson Lavelle, |
| Parcel Number(s): 11-E-91, 11-E-93 | |
| ZDR Application Number: DCP-HN-2021-01137 | |
| Meeting Location: Virtual (Zoom) | |
| Date: 12/20/2021 | |
| Meeting Start Time: 5:30 p.m. | |
| Applicant: David Rotenstein on behalf Uptown Partners | Approx. Number of Attendees: 21 |
| Boards and/or Commissions Request(s): Historic Review Commission, Planning Commission, City Council | |

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.

Uptown Partners has made it a major part of their work to deal with blight and abandoned properties. These properties were deemed to be worthy of preservation and reuse. Contracted David Rotenstein and submitted a petition to the City for historic nomination which has since been deemed viable. Rolling Rock Beer was first distributed from this location in 1935. Joe Tido history reviewed, link to Gus Greenlee. Dr. Rotenstein showed the two buildings that are proposed for preservation, and then reviewed his credentials and background to show he is qualified for the work. Walked through how the Historic Review Commission designates something a City Historic Property by recommending the designation to the Planning Commission and how it fits into the neighborhood and city planning efforts, then Planning Commission recommends it on to City Council which then makes a legislative decision to designate the property as a City Landmark. This would lead to regulatory controls overseen by the Pittsburgh Historic Review Commission. Walked through the history of the Tito Family starting with Joe Tito's parents. Showed newspaper articles and other materials referring to Joe and his brother as well known bootleggers during the Prohibition Era. His family purchased 1817 Fifth Ave and he began to run bootlegging operations out of that location. Invested in the entertainment industry, becoming a business partner with Gus Greenlee. The Crawford Grill was both a famous entertainment venue and also a numbers gambling business. Joe Tito became the vice president of the Pittsburgh Crawfords, a Negro League team based out of the Hill District. Played audio clip interview of Gus Greenlee's son who spoke about the brotherly relationship between Gus and the Tito brothers. Joe Tito founded the Latrobe Brewing Company. Ran distributor out of 1818 Colwell Street behind the house on Fifth Ave. Eventually Joe moved out of the Fifth Ave house at which time his sister Anne took up residents and lived there with her husband through the 1970s. Shows photos of Anne's family living in the house throughout the 20th century. Then shows the 10 criteria that need to be met for City Landmark status. Walked through them and argued that it meets 7 of the 10 criteria. Includes Joe Tito operating businesses out of it including bootlegging, beer distribution company, Pittsburgh Crawfords, etc. Also noted recognized position in organized crime history, Pittsburgh's sports and Black history, etc. Addressed some questions others have raised about anger in the community when Greenlee Field failed and was replaced by public housing.

Review the architecture of the house as a mix of Italianate and Queen Anne Victorian architecture. Noted comments from those supporting the nomination including scholars from throughout the country, Tido family descendants, historians of Black, sports, and Italian-American topics, local historic preservation organizations.

Input and Responses

| Questions and Comments from Attendees | Responses from Applicants |
|---|---|
| Comment from Uptown Partners about how informative the presentation was. | N/A |
| Comment from an attendee thanking the presenter for the detailed information. | N/A |
| Question about how they are going to restore the building, why they can't just redevelop it and put a plaque on the site. | Uptown Partners wants to restore the building and honor the history. Development mentioned by the applicant is focused on demolition. Uptown Partners wants to have development in Uptown, but want to make sure it's responsible or in the best interests of the community. Asks people to reach out to them if they have questions or concerns. |
| Broker for 1818 Colwell Street noted that they support the comment about redeveloping the site and correct that the Colwell building is really only one story, not two. | N/A |
| How would a nomination affect the use of the properties by the owners? I am a resident of Uptown and think it's a great idea to have something preserved here, considering all that has been demolished. It will actually increase property values nearby to have this historic site. | Phil from City Planning notes that designation would lead to changes to the structure being reviewed by the Historic Review Commission. Dr. Rotenstein said that it would lead to opportunities for historic preservation tax credits that would be available to community assets not available to historic homes. |

Other Notes

Both RCOs briefly spoke about the mission of the organizations at the start of the meeting starting with Uptown Partners and then Hill CDC. Hill CDC noted that they have been in contact with Uptown Partners who is studying the history of the site, appreciate the seriousness of their work to preserve cultural heritage.

Planner completing report: Derek Dauphin and Phil Wu