

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: South Side Park Trail South Side Park 2100 Mission Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15203	Groups Represented (e.g., specific organizations, residents, employees, etc. where this is evident): Friends of South Side Park South Side Slopes Neighborhood Association Area residents South Side Community Council (applicant) La Quatra Bonci Associates (project's landscape architect) Dept. of City Planning
Parcel Number(s): 12-P-152	
ZDR Application Number: DCP-ZDR-2021-14016	
Meeting Location: Zoom (hosted by SSSNA)	
Date: 12/15/21	
Meeting Start Time: 6:30pm	
Applicant: South Side Community Council	Approx. Number of Attendees: 9-10 (including presenters and facilitators)
Boards and/or Commissions Request(s): Arts Commission	

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 neighborhood planner and the South Side Slopes Neighborhood Association (SSSNA) President each provided background information about the RCO program and DAM process, the SSSNA, and how to participate in the virtual DAM, notifying all that the meeting is being recorded and will be posted on YouTube in the days following the meeting.

Joe Hackett, landscape architect from La Quatra Bonci Associates, presented project documents and plans that are being presented to the Art Commission. The project is called the South Side Park Trail and will be located in South Side Park. He stated that the applicant is the South Side Community Council, specifically with Council members Kitty and Jeff. The mailing address for the South Side Community Council was provided:
 South Side Community Council
 PO Box 10776
 Pittsburgh, PA 15203
 Mt. Kitty Vagley – Volunteer Administrator

Joe Hackett of La Quatra Bonci Associates showed an aerial image of South Side Park, with a red line indicating the extents of the park, and a white dotted area showing the project's extents of disturbance, which cover ~18,988 square feet. The project area will be adjacent to the Bandi Schaum Community Garden.

Joe stated that because the project is in publicly owned property and is over 2,400 square feet, it will need to go before the Arts Commission.

Joe Hackett showed a photo (Photo #1) of the area beside the fence of the community garden and the steep escarpment where the proposed trail alignment is, looking west. He explained how the photo captures the historically wet area, as drainage issues are part of the reason for pursuing the trail project. He then showed a second photo (Photo #2) taken of the west side of the community garden, showing the fence of the former baseball field and some of the existing trees planted by Tree Vitalize and Tree Pittsburgh. The area in the photo will remain largely an open meadow to the west of the community garden.

Joe shared the application form that was submitted for the project and the South Side Community Council's letter describing the project to the Arts Commission. He also showed letters of support from the Hilltop Alliance, from the SSSNA, and from the Department of Public Works.

Joe described how the project is composed of three main components:

- 1) Crushed stone trail, which creates the loop as shown in the red lines on the visuals he shared.
- 2) Boardwalk (located 9-10" above ground), located in the historically wet area along the fence to the south of the community garden.
- 3) Concrete approaches (like thick sidewalks) that will be built with slight inclined slopes to get to the boardwalk from the crushed stone trail. These approaches allow the boardwalk to always stay above the level of the grade so that when there is moisture/water present, the boardwalk will be suspended above that.

Joe shared the construction drawings (which were also submitted to Arts Commission):

1. Survey and Existing Conditions drawing. He explained where the fence is located and the location of the access road to Mission Street.
2. Erosion and Sedimentation Control plan for the contractor, which is necessary due to the land disturbance. There will be series of silt socks and measures to prevent erosion going beyond the roughly 18,000 square foot area. Joe identified a dotted line separating two sections of the project area, identifying phase 1 and phase 2 of the project area. If funding is available, the project will complete phase 1 and phase 2, but if there is not sufficient funding, they will just construct phase 1.
3. Demolition and Removals plan. Cross-hatched items are existing elements that are being removed. There are series of timbers and gravel from years ago that were meant to deal with drainage, which are being removed. There is also Japanese Knotweed, which the project plans to fully remove, including the root structures of the knotweed to avoid the need to deal with in the future. The existing trees planted by Tree Pittsburgh will remain as planted, however there will be one tree removed within the phase 1 project area. If phase 2 occurs, there are a few dead trees in way of the alignment of trail that will need to be removed. During construction, the contractor will install tree-protection fencing around trees that are to remain, to protect their root structures.
4. Layout plan for trail. Trail in phase 1 is illustrated in darker shade, and trails in phase 2 are illustrated in lighter shade. The boardwalk will be in the middle of the phase 1 trail. Underneath the boardwalk there will be gravel (boardwalk raised 9-10" above ground). This should address the drainage issue and allow people to walk or travel on it even after a rain event. There will be small concrete approach ramps on either side of boardwalk. The trail will connect to the access road at the back side of the community garden.
5. Layout data for layout of trail. This is provided to demonstrate to Arts Commission that the project has done its homework and the trail can be laid out effectively as shown.
6. Grading plan. Trail is set on existing grade to minimize the need for excavation and also minimize any damage to existing tree root systems. The trail is to be located so as to stay away from trees as feasible. There will be some need to fill in gaps in the disturbed areas, and these gaps will be seeded and planted.
7. Details for boardwalk. One detail image shows a cross section of the boardwalk, including its concrete foundation structures that are about 8' apart, and on top a pressure-treated deck (similar to a deck behind one's house and 9" off ground). The boardwalk does not need a hand rail by code, but there will be edge-protection (curb-like element made of pressure treated lumber) to prevent someone in a mobility device from falling off the edge. The gravel below the boardwalk is to assist with the drainage. At the ends of the boardwalk, the boardwalk tapers down slightly closer to the ground, but it will always be off the ground by at

least a few inches. The thickened sections of concrete to get up off ground will ensure there is always a smooth transition between the boardwalk and trail and the boardwalk always meets something solid, because if the transition were simply a gravel incline, that gravel might erode over time and make the trail less accessible at the boardwalk. Joe also pointed out the detail images of the circular foundations and post and beam structures of the deck.

8. Additional Site Details and Layout information for the boardwalk. Joe noted that Landforce will do most of construction. There may be some things the Landforce contractor crew cannot do, but that there is a hope to have a General Contractor on board that could help teach Land Force some new skills in this project process, such as foundation installation, concrete work, etc. to be win-win for all.
9. Landscape plan. All areas illustrated by hatch marks around the trail will be a native meadow seed mix. The project plans to use a company out of Meadville, PA which create seed mixes customized to the region you're in, e.g. for wet areas, exposed slopes, level areas, etc., which are helpful for bringing in native habitat. The existing condition today is an evolving meadow, and the intention is to keep it naturalized, not turn it into a golf course.
10. Cost estimate prepared for trail. Phase one is ~\$70,000, and Phase two is ~\$8,000. If funding can be acquired for both the first and the second phases, the project will construct both phases simultaneously.

Q&A period (see below)

At the end, the SSSNA President shared that additional comments can be sent to the SSSNA email address – info@southsideslopes.org. Blake shared that the project will be presenting in front of Art Commission on Jan 26th. He provided the mailing address for sending a letter to City Planning, and shared that the public can also email Art Commission staff. In the chat, the neighborhood planner also included some of this information and ways to provide additional comment.

Input and Responses

Questions and Comments from Attendees	Responses from Applicants
How wide is the boardwalk?	Joe H. (project architect): Boardwalk will be 6 feet wide
I asked about width because I was thinking about railings.	Joe H. (project architect): There will not be any railings on it. (Community member with the question indicated understanding.)
Why did you select pressure-treated lumber for the boardwalk instead of composite decking such as Trex?	Joe H. (project architect): Pressure-treated lumber was selected due to the costs, since composite material is about 2 or 3 times the cost of pressure-treated lumber. Material costs in general are also extremely high now. Hopefully the contractor Landforce will be more familiar with this material being used.
Where are the lumber costs listed on the sheet?	Joe H. (project architect): The lumber costs are showed under the boardwalk section, and are \$40/square foot, so a total of \$21,600. If Trex decking were used, it would likely total about \$30,000 to \$35,000.
You surely know this, and as someone with multiple decks, I know that pressure treated lumber won't last long and then we'll be repairing this boardwalk again in 10 years.	Joe H. (project architect): The boardwalk wood will be off the ground and not in direct contact with ground. I estimate it would last 15-20 years. We could think about

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<p>What is the timeline for how long the boardwalk is estimated to last?</p>	<p>doing composite material on top of a wooden structure. The wooden structure should last 25-35 years. It's true that composite material is much more long-lasting and resistant to moisture. However, beyond the cost factors, there is also a concern that when the composite gets wet the boardwalk would become very slippery, and we want to be sure it does not get too slick and ensure it is handicap accessible, so we would need to select the right composite material with the right texture. This is certainly something that we can keep exploring. Right now the money is not there to build the project and still actively trying to fundraise. If prices come down in next few months, maybe it's possible to bring in composite material. That's a very good point.</p>
<p>This may be out of scope, but does this project dovetail with work improving the adjacent parking lot? We know that parking lot is not in good condition, and it's not easy to travel through for/get out of for people with disabilities.</p>	<p>Joe H. (project architect): You're being generous when you say it's not good. Kitty and Jeff are in talks with the Park Conservancy and discussing plans for parking lot. Ideal would be to package that together with this trail project, but funding availability has led to need to separate out to get it going. Once the trail is ready for use, it may possibly lead to more people asking for parking lot improvements since it's in awful condition. Have/had a call with Parks Conservancy discussing how to get to level of plans as shown on screen. There is hope but no guarantees.</p>
<p>Was the parking lot included in phase 1 or phase 2 of the overall development plan of the park?</p>	<p>Kitty V (with applicant): The parking lot is not in phase 1 or phase 2, or for that matter phase 3 or phase 4 – it's a totally separate stand-alone project. I spoke to Councilman Bruce Kraus about it recently and it's definitely possible to get it into the 2022 budget but if rely on City to do that then in that scenario it would not get paved until 2023. (Person who asked question stated: we should talk offline about that because that won't work).</p>
<p>What is the date for when it goes in front of the Arts Commission?</p>	<p>Joe H. (project architect): January 26th, 2022. We submitted a week or two ago and confirmed that it does need to go to the Arts Commission.</p>
<p>We will be sure to submit questions to the Arts Commission by the first week of January so that they have plenty of time to review it before the meeting.</p>	
<p>Overall this looks like it will be a nice addition to the park.</p>	
<p>Agreed, it has been a long time coming, and the design looks great.</p>	

Other Notes

There was general support voiced by multiple community members for the project overall. There is a community question pending about whether to use composite decking material for the boardwalk. Community members are also very interested in the improvement of the adjacent parking lot.

Planner completing report: Thomas Scharff