

Development Activities Meeting – Form to Use During DAM

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

Logistics	Stakeholders
Project Name/Address: Homewood Park Improvement Project – 540 N Lang Ave	Groups Represented (e.g., specific organizations, residents, employees, etc. where this is evident): Homewood Children’s Village Homewood Community Sports Homewood Community Development Collaborative
Parcel Number(s): 125-S-125, 125-S-150, 125-S-150-1	
ZDR Application Number: DCP-ZDR-2022-03341	
Meeting Location: Hybrid (Zoom + in-person at Homewood-Brushton YMCA)	
Date: March 29, 2022	
Meeting Start Time: 6:30 PM	
Applicant: Andrea Ketzal – City of Pittsburgh Department of Public Works Sara Zewde – Studio Zewde (landscape architect)	Approx. Number of Attendees: 27 on Zoom; probably about 20-25 in person
Boards and/or Commissions Request(s): Art Commission – improvements to City property	

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 president of Homewood Community Sports, Mubarik Ismaeli, discussed the condition of the field and noted that what the architect drew up in 2015 “blew him away.” He noted that parking was the number-one issue for residents around the park when there are games there.
- M. Ismaeli said that with the new field, his program will “build capacity for violence prevention.” He noted that violent crime is decreasing for those under age 30. He discussed wanting to expand mentoring programs for young males and “especially females,” to get more positive Black females to see strong Black women.
- M. Ismaeli introduced Derrick Tillman, a real estate developer who has been involved with the Homewood Park improvement project since 2015 and is a Westinghouse High School graduate. D. Tillman has been helping to lead the community engagement on the park improvements.
- Andrea Ketzal went through a PowerPoint presentation. She showed an aerial view of the park and noted that the community did not want baseball and softball to be displaced.
- After A. Ketzal went through the first couple of slides, the sound cut out from the Zoom recording of the live/in-person proceedings. The in-person presentation continued, but landscape architect Sara Zewde took over those attendees on Zoom and gave a separate presentation.
- S. Zewde showed photos of past community engagements, including in-person events in April 2021 and June 2021. She pointed out that there was a physical model of the park improvements produced for the June engagement and that discussion centered around having a community hub including a playground and plaza near the field.
- S. Zewde shared a site plan, pointing out that the curving path served a dual purpose as both a walking circuit and an orienting path to get people in the community from Hamilton Ave to the “community hub,” with its fieldhouse (office space for Homewood Community Sports, multipurpose community gathering space, and lockers), poolhouse, and new pool.

- S. Zewde noted that parking was a major issue, so 42 spaces of parking with four ADA spaces are to be provided. Vehicular circulation will be provided from N Lang Ave to Clawson St.
- In addition to the improvements around the “community hub,” an amphitheater and lawn are also part of the design. The walking path is to be designed as a “walk of fame.”
- The football field will include a new natural turf surface.
- Shade trees and benches will be provided along Hamilton Ave in the plaza.
- S. Zewde showed a three-dimensional aerial view of the park design, pointing out the walk of fame, playground, amphitheater, and football field as the center of the park, as well as the pool and poolhouse/fieldhouse (to be under one roof) and the parking lot in the rear of the park along the Busway.
- S. Zewde showed the circulation plan. She pointed out that all hardscapes would be “universally accessible to the maximum degree possible,” which she noted was difficult given the amount of grade change on site. A path to the pedestrian bridge leading to Westinghouse Park in North Point Breeze will be maintained.
- The sound from the in-person presentation came back at this point, during which D. Tillman was discussing post-construction opportunities for residents and teenagers in the community.

Input and Responses

Questions and Comments from Attendees	Responses from Applicants
<p>“One of the things that’s concerning is that when I bring my kids to the park, I don’t see anyone there but adults drinking and smoking weed. Parents are drinking, hollering, and cussing. I’m really serious about children. The things that kids are being exposed to. No positive interaction.”</p>	<p>M. Ismaeli: “When you have 300 kids being coached on the field, you don’t see any positive energy?” [This devolved into a back-and-forth argument between the question asker and M. Ismaeli and between multiple in-person attendees that lasted for many minutes.]</p>
<p>“Your starting point for the community engagement, is that it’s not long enough. You have to start in layers.”</p>	<p>M. Ismaeli: “We’ve done the community engagement. We started in 2015. When the City put in the money, that’s when community engagement on record started.”</p> <p>D. Tillman: “What you happened is a microcosm of what’s happening in the black community. It’s unfair to put that on HCS. This organization is a safe haven keeping kids out of trouble. What you’re speaking of is a community problem. All stakeholders need to be involved. But that’s not something that HCS can do alone. They’re doing their part. That’s all of us working together.”</p> <p>Walter Lewis, Homewood Children’s Village: “This is a rich conversation. We apologize trying to put two DAMs in one night. We don’t often get this many community members in the room at one time. The front desk is trying to kick us out — we’re already over time.”</p> <p>M. Ismaeli: “We are a 100% volunteer organization. If you want to help make things better, we do things every day at the field, usually 5:30-8:00 PM.”</p>

Other Notes