

Development Activities Meeting Report

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

Logistics	Stakeholders
Project Name/Address: 1505 Fifth Avenue	Groups Represented (e.g., specific organizations, residents, employees, etc. where this is evident): Hill District Consensus Group, Hill CDC, Hill District Collaborative, Uptown Partners of Pittsburgh, Hill District Residents, Department of City Planning
Parcel Number(s): 0002-H-00076-0000-00	
ZDR Application Number: DCP-ZDR-2023-04363	
Meeting Location: Zoom	
Date: July 17 th , 2023	
Meeting Start Time: 6 pm	
Applicant: Bernard Yang	Approx. Number of Attendees: 18
Boards and/or Commissions Request(s): Planning 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.

<p>The applicant emailed each of the Registered Community Organizations. In addition, he met with Uptown Partners staff and the Real Estate and Development committee on June 15th.</p> <p>Demolition is the applicant's preferred choice because rehabilitation of the property's interior would cost 80% of new construction costs. It would also be difficult to rent the building. Although there has been some interest in purchasing the property, nothing has happened. He would like to take the building down and work with the community organizations to decide an appropriate use of the lot. In addition, they could work to find a developer to improve the site. Vandalism destroyed the interior and led to the theft of major infrastructure within the building which is why the building has sat vacant since 2007. He has until September 11th to come to a resolution about the property.</p>
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Input and Responses

Questions and Comments from Attendees	Responses from Applicants
<p>The applicant nor the developer have submitted to the Development Review Panel (DRP), and this the Hill CDC cannot endorse this project.</p> <p>We must receive an application for the DRP process, an email does not suffice. We would love for you to still present in front of the DRP.</p>	<p>We did send an email to all of the RCOs. The only one that communicated with us was Uptown Partners.</p>

Questions and Comments from Attendees	Responses from Applicants
<p>Uptown Partners and the Real Estate and Development committee does not support this project. UP and REDD do not support demolition with no plans for redevelopment. Additionally, Uptown is zoned as a Public Realm and demolition along on Fifth Avenue is not allowed. The committee offered to intervene with the City in response to fines if the developer proposed to sell the property and avoid demolition. The Hill District Consensus Group defers to Uptown Partners' decision.</p> <p>Another issue is that this property has been vacant for a very long time. We were told it was because of vandalism in 2007, that was a very long time ago.</p>	
<p>Do you live in Pittsburgh?</p>	<p>I live in Somerset.</p>
<p>How long have you owned this property?</p>	<p>Since 1987.</p>
<p>As someone who lives here, how do you think we should feel about this property sitting abandoned for so many years?</p>	<p>I used to live in Squirrel Hill. I spent money renovating this building into a three-bedroom apartment in the 1990s. It was rented for a couple years through CHOICE homes real estate. This was until the interior of the building was destroyed.</p>
<p>Are you willing to work with Uptown Partners to find a buyer who will develop the property?</p>	<p>Yes. You can speak to my lawyer who will represent me during this process.</p>
<p>If that is the route we are going to go [working with Uptown Partners], I need to know you won't apply for a demolition permit.</p> <p>That is up to you if you want to stabilize your property or demolish. While I would like to work with you to find another person to buy this property, I do not support this demolition just because it is too expensive to redevelop. You have sat on this property for years and left it blighted. It was vandalized in 2007, that is a long time for it to sit blighted and abandoned. Now that you are finally being cited by the City for leaving it abandoned, you want to demolish it. We do not support reckless and unnecessary demolition. There's a lot that you could have done with this property.</p>	<p>Right now, the City/Code Inspector has a lawsuit against me for this property. They want us to demolish.</p> <p>The easiest way to resolve this would be to demolish the property and create a lot. Then you could find a developer to address the property.</p>
<p>We encourage you to work with Uptown Partners to find a solution is this situation.</p>	<p>The most urgent thing is that there is a criminal complaint against him. He has to go to court and told the judge he will demolish the building per City order. Unless he has a firm commitment, he cannot postpone this. He has a hearing on September 11th.</p>

Questions and Comments from Attendees	Responses from Applicants
I understand that concern. We probably will need to work with City Planning as this is a legal problem. City Planning will talk to Legal to get this resolved.	If it is against the Hill District's policy to demolish, why would they tell us to demolish?
<p>Could you share the structural engineer's report with the cost estimates of the demolition versus rehabilitation? I think that would help with transparency. Also, for the record, our Development Review Panel process is listed on our website. An email to our organization does not count as a suitable application for our process.</p> <p>Are you willing to provide the structural engineer report information to the RCO's on this call?</p>	Yes, I will try.
You are supposed to work with Uptown Partners to determine an alternative. That could be either finding someone to purchase the building or working with code enforcement. We will contact zoning to ensure that you may or may not demolish property. You should get a letter that states you cannot get community approval for this demolition based on the community plans and Public Realm requirements.	
You should also make sure to send those engineer reports to the RCOs.	

Other Notes

<p>The applicant will speak to Permits, Licenses, and Inspections, Uptown Partners, and the City's Zoning Department to decide next steps and measures to take.</p>

Planner completing report: Adriana Bowman, Neighborhood Planner