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: 743 Technology Drive/ Environmental Charter School	**Groups Represented (e.g., specific organizations, residents, employees, etc. where this is evident):** Oakland Planning & Development Corporation (OPDC) Oakland Business Improvement District (OBID) Oakcliffe Community Organization (OCO) Area Residents & Stakeholders City Planning Staff
Parcel Number(s): 28-N-315	
Application Number: BDA-2026-04446	
Meeting Location: Zoom (Virtual)	
Date: June 8, 2026	
Meeting Start Time: 5:30 PM	
Applicant: Environmental Charter School	**Approx. Number of Attendees:** 12
Boards and/or Commissions Request(s): Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA)	

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.

This project concerns the Environmental Charter School (ECS), and its relocation of middle and high schools to an existing building located at 743 Technology Drive in South Oakland. The site is located in the SP-1 Special Purpose zoning district, created in 2005 and updated in 2020. The building ECS proposes to occupy is an existing structure originally designated for business and factory use. We are proposing to convert it into a middle and high school with a small addition to increase square footage. Educational use aligns with many of the intended uses in the SP-1 district, though it is not explicitly listed as a permitted use.

The site is in the Pittsburgh Technology Center, and the building is called the Elmhurst Innovation Center. The applicant shared an aerial view of the site for context. There are two major parking areas: one adjacent to the building, where ECS would have designated spaces, and another farther down the site. Bates Street and the nearby hotel are located to the east of the site. Second Avenue borders the north side of the site, and Technology Drive borders the south side; Technology Drive provides the primary building entrance. Several nearby PRT bus stops and a connection to the Eliza Furnace Trail also exist.

The building was constructed in 2019–2020 and consists of two halves: a high-bay area and a three-story structure. The lower floor of the three-story portion is an open parking level, with two floors of office space above. Photographs show the building from Technology Drive with the overhang above the parking area and the contrasting volumes of the high-bay and office sections. Exterior materials include metal panels, brick, and gabion rock walls around the parking lot. Interior photos show that the structure is currently a shell with no interior fit-out.

ECS has been searching for a site, and this building meets many of their needs. The high-bay space and shorter floor plates are appropriate for their program. However, the school does require additional space beyond the current footprint. The proposed renovations would infill portions of the parking area, still within the existing building envelope, to create a cafeteria and a technical lab area with woodworking, makerspace, and robotics space. The upper floors—

smaller and overlooking the high-bay space—will be classroom floors. Currently, the second floor is planned to be split between the middle and high school.
Preliminary elevations show that the only exterior changes occur where the parking area is being infilled. Along Technology Drive, three bays would be enclosed. The Second Avenue façade remains unchanged. Side elevations change only at the infill locations but remain within the existing building plane. Interior school design will use a modern open-bay aesthetic with exposed structure—an approach that fits well with this building. The high-bay volume will accommodate a gymnasium.

We also conducted an initial traffic impact study. The site has three entrances from Technology Drive. The westernmost entrance, near the Elmhurst Innovation Center's 250-space parking garage, would serve as the primary entrance for staff and visitors. Students would primarily be dropped off along Technology Drive, where designated drop-off zones would be located. Most ECS students arrive via public transit; two adjacent PRT bus stops allow for short walks of approximately 150 to 220 feet. The redesigned PRT Route O73, which connects much of Oakland, would also directly serve the site and may become heavily used by students. For students arriving via the O73 on Bates Street, the walk is longer but remains a viable option.

Student arrival typically occurs between 7:15 and 7:30 a.m., and dismissal between 3:30 and 4:00 p.m. After-school programs include roughly 100 students and 12 staff members. Three to five yellow buses serve the school daily, though this varies by year and student enrollment.
Per an agreement with the URA, ECS has access to 250 reserved parking spaces in the adjacent garage. A photo of this garage near Bates Street was provided.

The SP-1 district permits uses such as laboratory research, manufacturing, assembly, office uses, multi-unit residential, and accessory uses. ECS believes that a middle and high school is compatible with these uses, and thus we are seeking a use variance to allow educational use consistent with the intent of the district.

Input and Responses

Topic / Issue	**Recap**
Project/review Timeline & Construction	Comment/Concern Raised: • Inquiry about the project timeline • Question about the project's recent removal from the Planning Commission agenda. Who raised it: General audience; OCO Applicant Response: ECS is targeting occupancy for the August 2027 school year, which means construction would need to begin soon to stay on schedule. ECS clarified that they were considering a subdivision of the four-acre site into two parcels but have placed that on hold for now.
Transit & PRT Coordination	Comment/Concern Raised: • Several questions regarding PRT bus route changes, given the PRT Bus Line Refresh, and how students may access the site from the bus Who raised it: General audience Applicant Response: ECS confirmed they reviewed the recently released PRT "Refresh" routes, and the school's planned transit assumptions are based on those updates. ECS representatives noted that PRT expects to implement the refresh in

	early 2027. ECS reiterated their strong partnership with PRT and recent expansion of free transit passes to all students in grades 6–12, regardless of walking distance.
Traffic Safety & Pedestrian Circulation	Comment/Concern Raised: • Attendees raised the need to consider improved crosswalks, pedestrian traffic signal timing, and general pedestrian safety at Bates & Second Avenue. • Concern that current signal timing is insufficient for future pedestrian volume. • Several participants emphasized that the crossing is currently difficult and unsafe and will need attention before student traffic increases. Who raised it: General Audience Applicant Response: DOMI expected to evaluate circulation changes as part of the project review. Note: It was noted that PennDOT controls the signal, but DOMI can request changes.
Coordination With Technology Center Tenants	Comment/Concern Raised: • Questions were raised about outreach to other Technology Center tenants. Who raised it: OBID Applicant Response: ECS shared news of the proposal with all members of the Tech Park, with just one tenant who expressed curiosity but no concerns. They also noted that Elmhurst has a long-term lease on the nearby parking garage, meaning ECS's parking use won't displace other businesses.
Educational Programming & Use of Riverfront	Comment/Concern Raised: • There was interest in how ECS would use the riverfront. • A participant expressed concern about soil quality due to the site's history as a heavy-metal industrial plant, if gardening was to be undertaken. The participant encouraged ECS to use raised beds and clean soil for any future gardening programs. Who raised it: OPDC Applicant Response: ECS teachers are enthusiastic about environmental programming tied to the river. Future possibilities include river access, outdoor learning, and historical interpretation. ECS sees its three campuses as a "roots to rivers" model—from Frick Park to the Monongahela.

Recording: video1864843487.mp4

Planner completing report: Christian Umbach, Senior Planner