

Oakland Development Activities Meeting

March 30, 2021

Project: Carnegie Mellon University 2022 Institutional Master Plan (IMP)

Presenting: Bob Reppe (Master Planner), Don Carter (School of Architecture), Ralph Horgan (Associate Vice President), Jen Beck (Project Manager)

Carnegie Mellon presents early ideas and aspirational thoughts for their next IMP, which is one year away from its renewal date. There will be more community input opportunities over the next six to eight months as CMU develops the IMP.

Carnegie Mellon's graduate student population has more than doubled in the last 20 years. Guided by Simon's Principles -- sustainability, diversity, equity, and inclusion -- the IMP focuses on design, experience, mobility, context, and opportunity. The Historic Core and North Campus district goals include increasing density and redeveloping smaller, currently inefficient buildings, and developing eight possible academic sites in the Historic Core. The Craig St. district focuses on making Craig St. a better college street and urban asset to Pittsburgh, and increasing mobility on and around Craig St. Additional focuses include improving mobility at Fifth Ave. and Morewood Ave, increasing connectivity through the core of campus, improving direct connections to Schenley Park, improving Frew St, Tech St, and Margret Morrison corridors, and creating a campus mobility network that intentionally integrates BRT, bikes, and walking. Carnegie Mellon is committed to on-campus residential housing for undergraduate students and not negatively impacting parking in the neighborhoods.

Carnegie Mellon is seven months into internal work and is starting outreach with campus, neighborhood, and institutional partners. There will be an open house at the end of April. Carnegie Mellon hopes to go to Planning Commission by the end of 2021, and bring their IMP to City Council by March/April 2022. Carnegie Mellon will come back to the community in between Planning Commission and City Council for feedback. Carnegie Mellon will share this presentation with any interested group that might not already be on their radar.

Q: Is the Margaret Morrison Carnegie Hall (MMC) extension going to happen?

A: While we need to do a new IMP every ten years, the city plan does not require us to actually build what is in the plan. The MMC was not funded in the last IMP; we want to carry it along in this plan, but funding is pending.

Q: Are you considering a new health and wellness center?

A: We are amid a three-phase improvement to our athletic facilities on campus. Our third and final phase is rethinking the existing Skibo Gym. We will come back and have a Development Activities Meeting with OPDC in April for this project. We will renovate parts of the existing structure and demolish others. Ultimately it will be a new health and wellness center that houses our physical health center, counseling and psychological services, upgraded performance gymnasium, and the new home for athletics departments.

Q: What is Carnegie Mellon's commitment to improving pedestrian and bicycle safety along the S. Neville/Boundary connection?

A: We think increasing pedestrian connections is very important. We built a new sidewalk on the eastern side of Neville when we built the Tepper facility. We moved our facilities building along the railroad track 12-15 feet away from the right-of-way line to leave an easement for a trail.

Q: Are the mature trees you want to remove in Schenley Park? Do you intend to make the buildings more visible from the park so people in the buildings can see the grass?

A: Yes, the existing trees on Flagstaff Hill are overgrown. We value tree cover in the city and will not remove trees indiscriminately. Opportunistic vegetation has taken over this area. The idea is to selectively remove trees and invasive that have taken over the hillside. We are working with Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy on this, and they are in support.

Q: Are any of these improvements talking about the crosswalk by the Westinghouse Memorial?

A: Yes. We are talking about the intersection of Tech and Schenley Drive, where there had historically been landscaping. Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy is focusing on replanting this area and creating crosswalks.

Q: What is the plan for the re-design of the plaza next to Baker?

A: We have not designed a plaza yet. It might not be a plaza, but the idea is to increase connectivity.

Q: But under PA code, aren't there implicit crosswalks right at Frew and Schenley? Why can't they be painted?

A: We agree that there should be a painted crosswalk here. We want a stop sign as well.

Q: Can we paint all of the implicit crosswalks outside of the one by Westinghouse, including the ones higher up for the people walking down from Squirrel Hill?

A: Our internal drawings include a series of crosswalks at that intersection.

Q: A lot of your drawings on Craig St. are about supporting food and dining. Can there be a strategy to support retail and unique shops that add to the mix of what makes a college street? What can you do to help the business district?

A: An active business district with a combination of functions is ideal. If we can improve mobility to get people to Craig St, hopefully that will help make it so there are stores that can continue to thrive there.

Q: Is a shuttle bus from Carnegie Mellon to Hazelwood part of the IMP?

A: No. There is already a shuttle bus that goes into Hazelwood, and our IMP does not propose changes to it. We are talking about opportunities to work with other institutions to combine shuttle services, especially in Oakland and Shady Side.

Suggestion: I'd recommend adding some street names/directional grounding to images in the future as well. I work at Carnegie Mellon and it took me a while to recognize some of the places!