

Let's Talk... Finding Your Place In Oakland
Oakwatch: The Oakland Code Enforcement Project
Minutes: August 18th, 2021

Attendees: Jeff Miller, Elena Zaitsoff, Liz Gray, 'sharon', Grant Scott, Cate Irvin, Kathy Gallagher, Roy Weil, Andrea Boykowycz, Chic Noll, John Tokarski, Randi Vega, Dan Trimbur, Danel Rothschild, Millie Sass, Jamie Cunningham, Dominic Victoria, Robert Harper, Geoff Campbell, Emilie Yonan, Jessica Chau, David Ennis, Jim Pieffer, Mavis Rainey, Dave Shifren, 'griffir,' 'Dave south Oakland,' 4129567594, Millie (Tidioute), Erin Clarke, Rachel Webber, Dara Braitman, Bob Charland, Trisha Margiotti

Featured Speakers: Let's Talk... Finding Your Place In Oakland

Jim Pieffer & Dan Rothschild | Presbyterian SeniorCare & Rothschild Doyno Collaborative

Presbyterian SeniorCare Network serves the greater Pittsburgh area with senior services, including developing retirement homes and nursing facilities. They are working with Affirmative Investments on developments in the city, including their proposed housing development in Oakland. For this project, they are partnering with Persad Center as well. The proposed development would have 54 affordable units for LGBTQ seniors above the age of 55. Presbyterian SeniorCare is preparing an application to PHFA this fall, and they are making a 40-year commitment to keeping these units affordable. The proposed development would be a low-income housing tax credit (LIHTC) property.

The Oakland project will be located at the corner of Forbes Avenue and Craft Avenue. The development is currently in the OPR-D zoning district, and the development will be highly visible to people entering Oakland on Forbes Avenue. This will be important in terms of their corner façade on Forbes Avenue. The current site is triangular with multiple flat areas. The future development can be accessed on Forbes Avenue and Craft Avenue to allow for access from both the east and west. There can be a green park located at the street corner of the ground level site, along with parking spaces, a public space, and a courtyard. It will have five or six floors (with the bottom floor only accessible from the western side of the building, due to the slope of the site). The design will be contextual to the surrounding buildings and area.

NOTE: This presentation is not part of a Development Activities Meeting (DAM). This presentation was a preliminary discussion of the project.

Q: Will the general public be able to access some of public spaces?

A: The first floor will house some service spaces and there will be social spaces outside the building.

Q: Will there be variances or zoning changes needed to build this?

A: Yes, there may be two variances needed. They will have to do with front and rear setbacks: required setback from Forbes is 20', but project will be requesting 10' to mirror UPMC building across the street. There will be no zoning changes.

Q: Will brick be used on the building?

A: Brick is being considered as a possible material along with other materials, such as glass.

Q: How much parking will there be?

A: For 54 units and a bicycle exception, there will be 33-34 spaces. But a traffic study may better highlight what is needed.

Q: Will there be balconies?

A: There would be an outdoor group balcony on the top floor, but unsure about individual balconies.

Comment: There is a concern for people taking parking in the neighborhood.

Response: We agree, and the development will be conscious of that.

Q: Will there be bike storage in the development?

A: Yes, there will be two levels of parking and storage.

Comment: There is a hope that there will be a sustainable approach to the architecture since this will be a gateway to Oakland.

Response: The PHFA is very mindful of sustainability, and this is where a lot of the funding stream is coming from. High sustainability standards.

Comment: Emergency access to the site is important, and Pittsburgh Police would like to help provide insight on how to help.

Response: We will welcome any support on this.

Q: Is there a connection between ADU's and the Presbyterian SeniorCare development?

A: No

Q: Thinking about the outdoor space around the building, is there consideration for outdoor exercise equipment?

A: That is a great idea and we will look into this.

Grant Scott, Jeff Miller, & Randi Vega | AARP LGBTQ Committee, Age-Friendly Pittsburgh

69% of senior LGBTQ respondents in a survey administered by the Persad Center were worried about housing, social isolation, transportation, amongst other things. Oakland is unique in terms of its abundance of amenities. Older LGBTQ individuals are very concerned about safe and supportive housing due to the historical treatment of the community as well.

One idea for such supportive housing could be accessory dwelling units, where the owner lives on the premise. This can promote the housing of 'families of choice.' This is simply a concept to think about in context with Oakland community as more research and work needs to be done.

Comment: Absentee landlords make it very difficult for owner occupied units like ADU's.

Comment: It may be difficult to age in place in an area like Oakland due to the population and the existing amenities.

Response: Elderly co-living in college campus towns has become popular in the country.

Dara Braitman & Erin Clark | Department of Mobility and Infrastructure

Temporary outdoor dining and retail permits were streamlined to OneStopPGH in June 2020 while indoor dining was restricted and businesses were struggling due to the pandemic. Both a DOMI permit and PLI permit are required. For parking lane permits, the permits are due to expire on December 31st, 2021. To be eligible for such a permit, the street must be city owned, speed limits must

be 25 mph or lower, and the site must be directly in front of the business. Any structures on the site must be designed for easy installation and removal. Permanent built structures are not permitted. Oakland Avenue is one of only two current full street closures for outdoor dining in the city. There was a site on EngagePGH for people to make their input heard.

Q: Are these street closures permanent or temporary, such as Oakland Avenue? What is the process of making this permanent?

A: It is permanent only until end of 2021. There has been interest from businesses to renew their permits. Normally, PLI, Zoning, and DOMI must approve, along with a letter of approval from councilperson. Ordinance changes are required along with DOMI guidelines to make something like this more permanent past the pandemic.

Q: How can residents proactively give feedback on potential closures?

A: Something formalized will need to be made in policy to allow this.

Comment: Craig Street will not be closed to a miniature golf course. That was a marketing error.

Q: When will this process change? And what changes are made to this with the federal relief funding?

A: A million dollars have gone into helping businesses purchase better installations for their outdoor spaces. A decision will have to be made by the end of the year on how the program will continue?

Q: Has DOMI engaged with community organizations?

A: have discussed the matter with the Oakland Business Improvement District, and will need to engage with other groups as well.

Q: What is the justice of the private use of the public street, as there are numerous examples in Oakland?

A: Businesses and institutions must go through the permitting process for road closures for special events.

Comment: There is resentment due to the inequitable manner to which streets have been closed.

Comment: There was a survey about street closures in Squirrel Hill and surrounding streets in Schenley Park. That is an issue.

Comment: There is general concern about the clarity of why and how streets get closed for specific issues.

Comment: The city is transitioning permits to OnePGH to help consolidate and centralize everything to avoid issues.

Q: What is the public process for requesting to close a street?

A: It depends on the specific circumstance. Eliminating the right of way will require traffic studies and other forms of approval. Permanent street closure must go through DOMI. Proposals from a private developer will require it go through city planning.

There was a code enforcement walk on Friday, August 6th, to review certain streets in Central Oakland with regards to trash and other issues. There have been various citations written on some of these issues. On Urie Way, there is an issue with trash containment. There is also an issue with feral cats in area. There are water drainage issues on Semple Street going into St. James Way. Graffiti remains a problem in the area. Another walk is being planned for September in South Oakland.

Amendments to the Residential Parking Permit code have not yet occurred; neighborhood organizations have filed right to know requests to seek more information.

Property Updates | Lizabeth Gray

537 Yarrow Street/0 Boundary Street: Submitted new application regarding retaining wall. PLI requested revisions and it is currently in Zoning.

2610 Forbes Avenue: City owned and condemned. There are issues of graffiti.

3221 Kennett Square: Back in court for two family occupancy units. A hearing will occur on December 7th.

3401-3421 Bates/Coltart: Demolition has occurred. Materials will be removed and the site will be backfilled.

3421 Parkview Avenue: Case dismissed due to owner death.

3204 Niagara Street: Violations still remain. Case closed due to no service.

3319 Niagara Street: Violations still remain. Case closed due to no service.

3611 Frazier Street: Violations still remain. Case closed due to no service.

1 Ayers Street: Violations still remain. Case closed due to no service.

No housing court hearings this week.

Public Safety Updates

Find Zone 4, Pitt Police, and Public Safety updates and statistics on the Oakwatch webpage at <https://www.opdc.org/oakwatch>

Pittsburgh Zone 4 Police | Dave Shifren

Noteworthy amongst the posted statistics are thefts from persons jumped from 5 to 11 from June period to July period. Overall, no major crimes have reported. More attention to possessions can help with mitigating against burglaries. A warrant has been issued for a theft for someone with a specific tattoo. Some thefts of delivered packages have occurred. Please be attentive to when packages will be delivered to your house and coordinate with neighbors if possible. Some vehicles were also stolen. Please do not leave a spare key in your car.

Public Safety | John Tokarski

National Night Out occurred earlier this month and it was successful. Flier of additional information can be found on the website. We are hoping to hold the Citizens Police Academy this fall. Please reach out for additional information.

University of Pittsburgh Police | Jamie Cunningham & Dan Trimbur

On September 14, the Pitt Police will work with PennDOT on a program to deter impaired driving. Please contact Pitt Police for noise and party complaints as the semester begins. Please contact Officer Collello (jgc30@pitt.edu) for pedestrian and traffic safety concerns. There were two recent crime alerts. Both

were off campus and dealt with theft of personal belongings. Please report suspicious activity and be aware of your surroundings. You can sign up to receive Pitt's crime alerts. More information can be found on the flier on the OakWatch webpage.

Office of Nighttime Economy | Rachel Webber

Not many updates, but we are working on safety campaigns for students. There will be work ahead of the rescheduled St Patrick's Day parade.

Community Updates

Posted Community Updates can be found at <https://www.opdc.org/oakwatch>.

District 8 | Emilie Yonan

No major updates from the District 8 office. Thanks for having me and I can be reached at emilie.yonan@pittsburghpa.gov.

District 3 | Bob Charland

The Oakcliffe playground sign will be installed in a few days. It's printed just needs to be hung. The city is trying to figure out next steps in the rent registration lawsuit. Pressure should be put on the next administration to continue the lawsuit. As always, I can be reached at Bob.charland@pittsburghpa.gov

Meeting Adjourned

The next meeting is **Wednesday, September 22, 2021**, 6-7:30 PM via Zoom.

Contact OPDC about Let's Talk: aboykowycz@opdc.org or 412.621.7863 ext. 217

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