

Development Activities Meeting - November 3, 2021

PWSA and the City of Pittsburgh: Lawn and Ophelia Green Infrastructure Project

Presenting:

Maria Natoli, PWSA Associate Project Manager; Damon Weiss, Civil and Water Resource Engineer with Ethos Collaborative, and Barton Kirk with Ethos Collaborative

The Lawn and Ophelia project has been in planning phase for the last few years. The parklet will reduce flows going into the combined sewer system to manage storm water, limiting sewer overflows and backups. Presently, there's a lot of water that cascades down the roads and collects in the parklet area. This project will take some of that water off the street and store it in a reimagined park.

The community engagement process included three public meetings during the design process. The project designers have revised plans in response to community feedback.

The project includes a rain garden, water storage mechanisms, new surface landscaping, and a new surface path. The parklet will have vibrant native perennials, groundcover, shrubs, and trees to boost the park's ambiance and create a more welcoming environment.

Questions:

Q: Will there be something blooming year-round?

A: There are many mid-spring into mid-fall blooms. Once the fall comes around, there will be less flowering visual interest within the rain garden, but we are optimizing the blooming season.

Q: Will the Department of Public Works (DPW) continue to maintain this?

A: The maintenance is split between DPW and PWSA in general. The rain garden, in its first year, will be maintained by its contractor. From there, PWSA will take over the maintenance of anything that relates to the storm water (plants and vegetation within the rain garden itself). DPW would still be in charge of the periphery vegetation (weeding, mowing, etc).

Q: The plant palette shows 12 perennials. Will all 12 be used or is this just a list from which they will be chosen?

A: The contractor will put all of these specific plants in.

Q: Will there be a third entry way at the point?

A: The existing fence will still be there, so there won't be an entrance point, no. There's no cross walk at that location now, and because no one would be crossing the road there, we didn't figure it was necessary to have an entrance. There will still be two entry points, one on Lawn and one on Ophelia.

Q: Would there be electricity?

A: There is not electricity in the park now, and there are no plans to introduce it.

Q: What about the broken fence across the street? Would it be repaired?

A: That fence is not a part of the proposed project. We recognize that there's deteriorated sidewalk and that the fence is not in good condition, but this project is specifically focused on the storm water within the park.

Q: Will mosquitos be an issue?

A: No. Rain gardens are designed to soak up a large amount of water with a silty sandy sort of soil mix. It will drain down in a day after it rains, and it takes resting water more like three or four days for mosquitos to become a problem.

Q: What is the yellow box on the rendering?

A: It's an ADA ramp.

Q: What's under the garden oval?

A: The oval will be depressed to create some ponding. Below that, there would be a couple feet of good soil that the water can infiltrate in, and that the plants can grab ahold of with their roots, and below that is storage for the storm water that drains to this area. There's also a little area to the right for a formal gathering/resting area.

Q: When is this going to Art Commission?

A: December 8, 2021

Q: And then this is planned to start construction in the spring of next year?

A: Yes.

Q: Is your bid package ready to go?

A: Yes it is.

Q: Will there be any frogs or fish in the pond?

A: No. There won't be visible ponding in the rain garden, so it likely won't be suitable for fish or frogs.

Q: Could we put proper benches on the upper lawn?

A: We don't presently have a lot of improvement happening on the upper lawn. There was a big internal conversation about site amenities, but there is no plan to put them in from a PWSA standpoint because they have no added benefit to storm water. I can discuss it with DPW though.

Q: What if Oakcliffe provided the chairs?

A: I think that's technically in the hands of the city, because the project sits on city-owned land. I think from a PWSA perspective, we would have no problem adding them to the project. But we'd need the OK from the city.