

https://lancasteronline.com/news/local/city-asks-residents-tell-us-what-you-hope-to-see-at-closed-upmc-pinnacle-hospital/article_7cf8db76-7b6d-11e9-b922-9736111464dd.html

City asks residents: Tell us what you hope to see at closed UPMC Pinnacle hospital site



TIM STUHLREHER | Staff Writer

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Mimi Shapiro, left, and Andy Berfond write suggestions about the future of the UPMC Pinnacle Lancaster hospital's Council Chambers on Monday, May 20, 2019.

TIM STUHLREHER | LNP Staff Writer

Mayor Danene Sorace had a simple request for those attending Monday's meeting on the future of the shuttered UPMC Pinnacle Lancaster hospital property.

"If you have an opinion" on what you do or don't want to see there, "let us know," she said.

The city can't control who buys the property at 250 College Ave., she noted. UPMC hasn't listed it publicly for sale since closing the former St. Joseph Hospital in February, and no developer has come forward.

But the city has told the Pittsburgh-based health giant it wants input on how the property is marketed, to help ensure a new use or uses that the city and neighbors will be happy with, the mayor said.

The public's wishes "will be reported back to UPMC," she said.

New ideas, and one old one

Audience members responded readily, listing their preferences on large sheets of paper posted on the City Council chamber walls.

Among the "do not wants": strip malls, businesses catering to the affluent, more parking lots.

Among the "wants": affordable housing, a multiuse development, a community center.

But most of all, medical services. Specifically, a hospital with an emergency room — that is, the same as before.

Sorace and other city officials say that's virtually certain not to happen.

It's not that the city is happy with UPMC's decision to close the hospital, or that it wouldn't welcome a new one there, Sorace said after the meeting.

But the facility was aged and in poor condition, and its use was dwindling. Moreover, it's unreasonable to expect UPMC to sell it to a competitor, Sorace said, so the city has to be realistic about the options it has.

That notion drew pushback from a segment of the audience, who resisted Sorace's pleas to let the conversation return to planning for the future.

The city should call UPMC to task for reducing health care access and hold out for a hospital, one person said.

"And if that's the will of this community ... then we will have that conversation," Sorace responded.

What the city can control

Other city officials outlined the regulations that govern the site and the tools the city has to influence its future.



The property is a single lot of about 6.4 acres, and about two dozen components form the hospital complex, said Randy Patterson, city director of economic development and neighborhood revitalization.

The city can offer incentives for certain uses, such as affordable housing, but can't mandate them, he said. The city is open to subdividing the lot if that would help facilitate redevelopment, he said.

Using eminent domain would not make sense, he said. Nor does the city have the money, Sorace added.

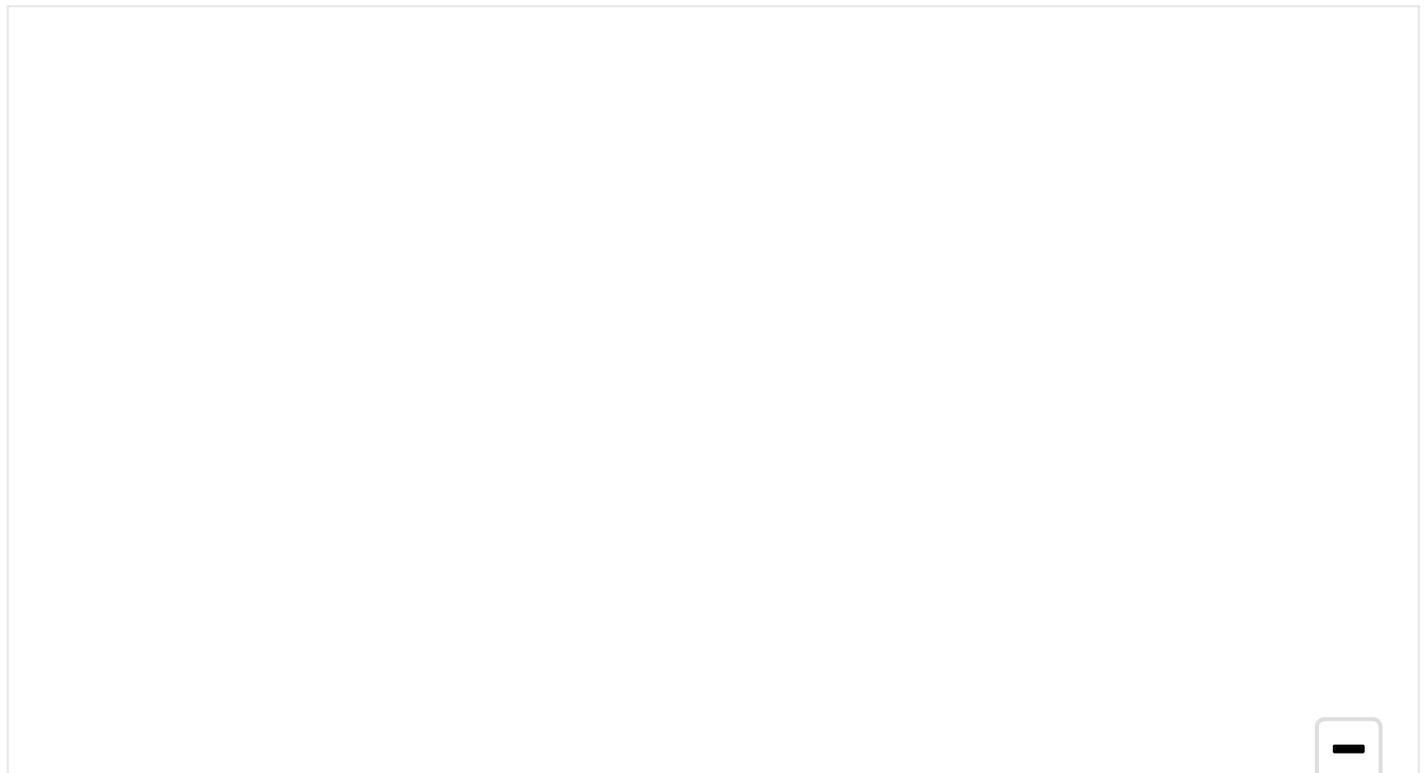
The city has oversight of demolition and new development, Patterson said. A project would be subject to a lengthy review process requiring approval at public meetings.

A new use would require the property to be rezoned. That would be subject to planning commission review and approval and enactment by City Council.

David and Kathy Noll live near the hospital on West Walnut Street. David Noll said he'd like to see a mixed-use development that would provide opportunities such as housing to city residents. Urgent care would be another possibility, he said.

Monday's forum was valuable, the Nolls said, and ongoing community discussion will be critically important to securing the best outcome.

"Hopefully, UPMC will be receptive," David Noll said.





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