



STATEMENT OF VIVIEN LI, PRESIDENT AND CEO, RIVERLIFE
PITTSBURGH PLANNING COMMISSION
OCTOBER 4, 2016

Good afternoon, I am Vivien Li, President and CEO of Riverlife, a non-profit organization which works to reclaim, restore, and promote Pittsburgh's riverfronts. Last Tuesday, a Tribune-Review editorial called the Carnegie Science Center "one of the jewels of the North Shore". Riverlife strongly concurs: the Carnegie Science Center is both a jewel on the riverfront as well as a national leader in science education.

The Science Center occupies an important place along our riverfront, and its proposed expansion has the potential of presenting a welcoming facade to attract additional visitors and users not only to its world-renowned exhibits but also to the region's riverfront trail system. We strongly endorse this project as an enhancement to the downtown riverfront and the region, and ask that you approve it so that this worthy project can move forward in a timely fashion.

At a meeting with the proponent, Riverlife's Riverfront Design Committee suggested that the new riverfront facade be made to feel more transparent so that users along the trail, boaters, and those across the river experience more than just a solid blank wall at this key location. Committee members suggested that the design be such so that the exterior feel is more transparent, architecturally interesting (perhaps thorough the introduction of color), and inviting to the public. The side facing North Shore Drive can be designed to include glass and planting screens, creating a more welcoming transition between the Omnimax Theatre portion of the building and the transparent ground floor facing the river.

We hope that there is also an opportunity to create a visible and meaningful relationship between the building and the trail through the design of the upper plaza entrance and the connections from the upper plaza to the trail. The Committee suggests a grand entrance with distinct signage and architectural and landscape architectural features on the river side to mark the entrance to the Science Center's exhibits and classrooms and to the publicly accessible cafe and public rest rooms (the latter two available to the public, regardless of exhibit patronage). A more cohesive and integrated design of a wide staircase between the upper plaza and the lower trail, site walls, and an ADA-accessible ramp would strengthen the connection to the riverfront and provide opportunities for increased activation of the upper plaza.

Finally, as the Science Center begins planning for the transition of its two surface parking lots at 640 Casino Drive and at Reedsdale Street/Sproat Way to other uses after 2024, we ask that the Science Center continue to move forward on the planning for a discovery eco-park as envisioned in the Carnegie Science Center Master Plan. Thank you for your consideration.