



City of Pittsburgh Commission on Naming Public Properties

City of Pittsburgh, Department of City Planning
200 Ross Street, Fourth Floor
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15219

NAMING COMMISSION ON PUBLIC PROPERTIES
Application for Review

COVER FORM

Hearing Date: 01 / 04 / 2021

~~CURRENT AND~~ **PROPOSED NAME OF PROPERTY/FACILITY:** THE OVERLOOK

ADDRESS OF PROJECT PROPERTY: 3500 MILWAUKEE STREET, PITTSBURGH, PA 15219

HAS THIS PROJECT EVER COME BEFORE NAMING COMMISSION? yes no (check one)
If yes, when? Month year

APPLICANT NAME: Department of Public Works, Architecture Division

ADDRESS: City-County Building Suite 301, 414 Grant Street

City Pittsburgh

State, Zip Pennsylvania 15219

PHONE: 412.255.8850

FAX: 412.255.8847

E-MAIL: _____

RELATIONSHIP OR ROLE IN PROJECT: Leading City Department for the New Building

CO- APPLICANT NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

City _____

State, Zip _____

PHONE: _____

FAX: _____

E-MAIL: _____

RELATIONSHIP OR ROLE IN PROJECT: _____

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED PROPERTY: A new facility will be constructed in the Robert E. Williams Memorial Park, which will support community gathering year-round. The use of this building aligns well with other existing City facilities and should adopt similar nomenclature to be consistent.



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Letter of Intent

Please place in this section a formal letter of intent stating the current and proposed name of your project, asking to be placed on the agenda for a Naming Commission Hearing.

City of Pittsburgh Commission on Naming Public Properties:

On behalf of the City of Pittsburgh, Department of Public Works, Facilities Bureau, Architecture Division, I would like to formally submit this application and request that the New Park Building at Robert E. Williams Memorial Park adopt the name "The Overlook." Please consider placing this project on the agenda for the next Naming Commission Hearing on January 4, 2021 so that DPW Architecture Division can have the opportunity to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

Joe Adiutori, Jr., AIA
Department of Public Works
Architecture Division

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The Overlook (at Robert E. Williams Memorial Park)



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Narrative

Please provide a concise, yet thorough explanation of your proposed project within this section.

Please use no more than 3 letter-sized (8.5 x 11 inches) pages at a minimum of 10pt. type.

In this section, you should include and/or address:

Materials to be submitted should include:

- (a) Name of public property or facility to be named or renamed
- (b) Name of designee
- (c) Narrative on why designee was chosen and his or her connection to the property or facility
- (d) Site maps & Images
- (e) Historical information
- (f) Biographies
- (g) Other materials, as deemed necessary by the CNPP or applicant
- (h) Report on local community support and outreach done to garner community support



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Narrative

The Department of Public Works (DPW) is planning to demolish the 1963 Herron Hill Recreation Building, which is in poor condition and no longer appropriately serves the needs of the community. Since 2018, DPW has been working on plans to construct a new City Facility in Robert E. Williams Memorial Park. DPW has worked with the Upper Hill Community and Council District 6 to develop the project's design and program. In January 2020, DPW hired Renaissance 3 Architects to provide professional architectural services for the project. Design has continued throughout the year and construction is planned for 2021.

DPW would like to name the new structure **“The Overlook” at Robert E. Williams Memorial Park**. *Overlook* as a noun means: a commanding position or view. The word is established in the Pittsburgh lexicon and is embodied best in the Schenley, Grandview, Mt. Washington & West End Overlooks. While most of these examples are open-air engineered structures, we believe that this term is the best nomenclature to convey this particular building typology and stand the test of time. These buildings aim to provide a place for community events and gatherings within nature. That is in essence the goal of utilizing this particular term; other labels in the City Facilities portfolio do not adequately capture nor inspire the character of this architecture (*firmitas, utilitas & venustas*). The West End Overlook is the best established precedent and has served as a model for this new facility.

As you may know, DPW manages about (30) City Facilities that are available for the public to rent, typically from May through October each year. The vast majority of this portfolio contains simple, open-air shelters or pavilions located in (14) different parks across the City. There are, however, a few buildings that have been mislabeled; the Robert E. Williams Memorial Park Shelter (Herron Hill Rec. Center) is currently one of those buildings that would benefit from a better name.

DPW wishes to avoid internal and public confusion for this and future structures by avoiding terms such as “recreation center” unless that facility does in fact contain certain functional spaces (indoor courts, exercise rooms, etc.) and employs full-time CitiParks Staff to operate the facility. There have been multiple occasions where this term has been wrongly attached to the aforementioned project and that is why the generic term “new park building” has been used as a placeholder.

At this time, DPW has decided not to pursue adding a familial, cultural or geographical modifier to this facility's name given the complex history of the site and in light of the national discourse on equity. In respect to the project schedule, it is in the best interest of the City to only focus on the building typology. Overlook is a term that properly embodies the character of the architecture (*firmitas, utilitas & venustas*), adopts standard language and helps to manage expectation related to the function of this City Facilities. Therefore, DPW would appreciate an affirmative recommendation on this matter to name the new park building **“The Overlook” at Robert E. Williams Memorial Park**.

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Below is a thoughtful summary of the site/neighborhood:

Mid-1700's: The Herron's, a pioneer family of Pittsburgh, settled the area known today as the Upper Hill. They made a fortune in coal and lumber, and subsequent members of the family invested in factories that manufactured everything from brass to cotton batting -- fluffed cotton used in quilts and surgical dressings -- and objects of varying hardness in between. Herron coal, dug out from a part of town known as Minersville, was used to power Pittsburgh's gas works and was shipped as far away as New Orleans, carried by Herron-owned flatboats.

1837: Francis Jay Herron was born in Pittsburgh (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_J._Herron).

1849-1850: John Herron was Mayor of Pittsburgh. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Herron_\(Pittsburgh\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Herron_(Pittsburgh))).

1861-1865: It was the site of Fort Herron, one of Pittsburgh's defenses during the Civil War.

1872: William & Clausia Herron sell 13 acres of their land to the City of Pittsburgh for \$100,000.

1880: Construction of the 12-million gallon Herron Hill Reservoir is completed after 8 years.

1889: DPW Director, Edward M. Bigelow, recommends to City Council that Herron & Highland Reservoirs be made into City Parks. A 1923 document notes that Herron Hill Park is the 11th largest in the City.

1891: Madison School is built just across the street from Herron Hill Park.

1896: Herron Hill Pumping Station Building, designed by architect William S. Fraser, constructed.

1899: DPW plants a row of oriental plane trees three years prior along the sidewalk to Madison (Milwaukee) Street.

1907: Robert E. Williams is born to Henry M. Williams and Alice M. Johnson. He would be the oldest of 11 children. Thelma Williams Lovette is one of his better known siblings.

1913: Herron Hill Shelter House, designed by Thomas H. Scott, was built for \$4,445. The park also contained a music pavilion and ball grounds. A 1947 County Report, describes the structure as an open shelter with a fireplace for picnics.

1916: In a guidebook called Pittsburgh, How to See It, the district (neighborhood) of Herron Hill is described as: *The high hill in the center of the old city of Pittsburgh... included between Center avenue, Craig Street, the Grant boulevard and Herron avenue. The outlook from the summit is grand, and the Hill is worth of a visit. There has been a disposition lately to call the slopes of Herron Hill overlooking Bloomfield and Bellefield, Schenley Heights, and this appellation has been made to cover all the ground to the summit of Herron Hill, which claim is erroneous, as the Schenley estate never owned any of the hill.*

1922: The World War I Memorial is dedicated. It was created by Italian-born sculptor Frank Vittor. It lists the names of 1,200 veterans from the Fifth Ward.

1926: Herron Hill Junior High School is opened and named after Mayor John Herron. The school is remodeled in 1976 and renamed Margaret Milliones Middle School (a.k.a. University Prep). Various references show that other structures such as the Pumping Station, Laboratory and Car House embrace the Herron Hill name.

1930: The area was colloquially called “Sugar Top” after Sugar Hill, the legendary Harlem neighborhood flowering with the artistic and professional upper-crust of black New York. A lot more detail about the culture and who was living and visiting this area can be found in these articles:

<https://www.post-gazette.com/life/lifestyle/2005/07/17/Decades-haven-t-dimmed-the-allure-of-the-Hill-District-s-Sugar-Top/stories/200507170152>

<https://scholarship.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/handle/10066/5247>

<http://www.city-data.com/forum/pittsburgh/2893537-neighborhood-week-upper-hill.html>

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-01-13/the-hidden-fences-of-pittsburgh>

<https://carnegiemuseums.org/magazine-archive/2015/winter/feature-531.html>

1931: REW is appointed to his first political position as deputy constable of Pittsburgh’s Fifth Ward.

1933-1934: John S. Herron is appointed by Council to fulfill the remaining term of Mayor Charles Kline. He was the last Republican Mayor of Pittsburgh.

1934: REW is appointed to Constable of the Fifth Ward of Pittsburgh at the age of 27.

1945: REW is the first black detective in Pittsburgh at the age of 38.

1946: David L. Lawrence was sworn into first term as Mayor of Pittsburgh. Also sworn in was the City’s first black magistrate, Robert E. Williams, Fifth Ward constable and political leader.

1947: REW is the first black Democratic Ward Chairman in the State at the age of 40.

1954: Hill District resident Paul Jones became the first black man to sit on Pittsburgh City Council.

1962: REW is on the Study Committee for a report on Recreational and Neighborhood Development Services in the Upper Hill Area of Pittsburgh. Area of Study also included The Bluff, Polish Hill, Soho, Herron Hill and Hill District neighborhoods.

1963: Herron Hill Park Recreation Building, designed by Yecko & Zbikowski, is constructed.

1964: Robert E. Williams dies at the age of 57.

1984: City Council passes a resolution to change the name of the Herron Hill Reservoir to Robert E. Williams Memorial Park. REW would have been 77 years old.

1994: Christopher A. Smith (CAS) Walking Trail (around the Reservoir) established. CAS was a member of Pittsburgh City Council (93-94), Community Activist, Democratic Committeeman, Board Member of Western Restoration Association & Center Ave. YMCA, Herron Hill Reservoir Restoration Committee, Treasurer of Pittsburgh URA.

1994/1996: Playground Improvements are made in the park.

2007: REW was recognized at the Spirit of King Award Ceremony, for his lifetime achievements in the pursuit of human rights and equality in the spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



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Site Map & Images

Please keep this section as concise as possible, using no more than 6 full pages. All pages within this application document should be 8.5 x 11 inches in size. However, an applicant may use up to 11 X 17 size pages, if necessary, to ensure legibility in construction documents and other like detailed schematics.

Please insert all images, drawings, contextual renderings in this section. Images should be inserted into this Word document and be accompanied by a caption describing what the image is and its relation to the project.

Example of caption: *Detail of lower section of sculpture illustrating its mount to the base.*

- Site plan
- Historical Images
- Photographs of the proposed property
- Description or samples of ideas/suggestions of materials/colors for project

You may include multiple images per page, as long as images remain large enough to be easily understood.

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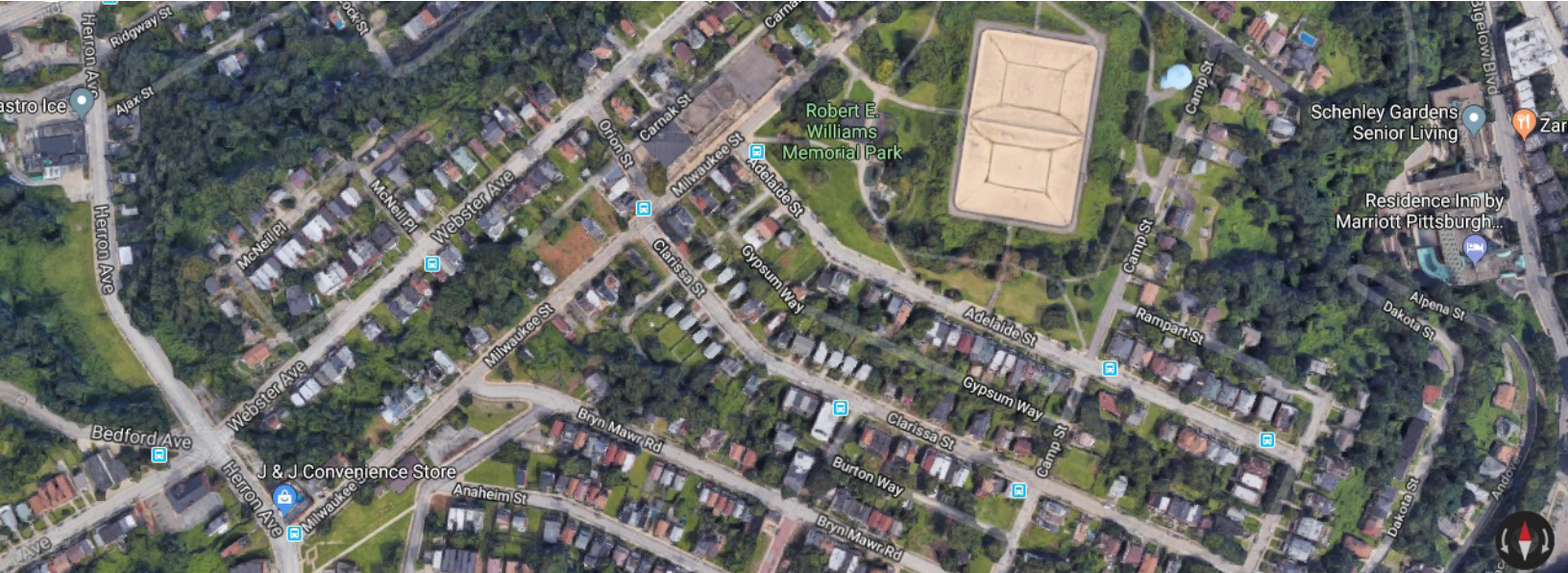
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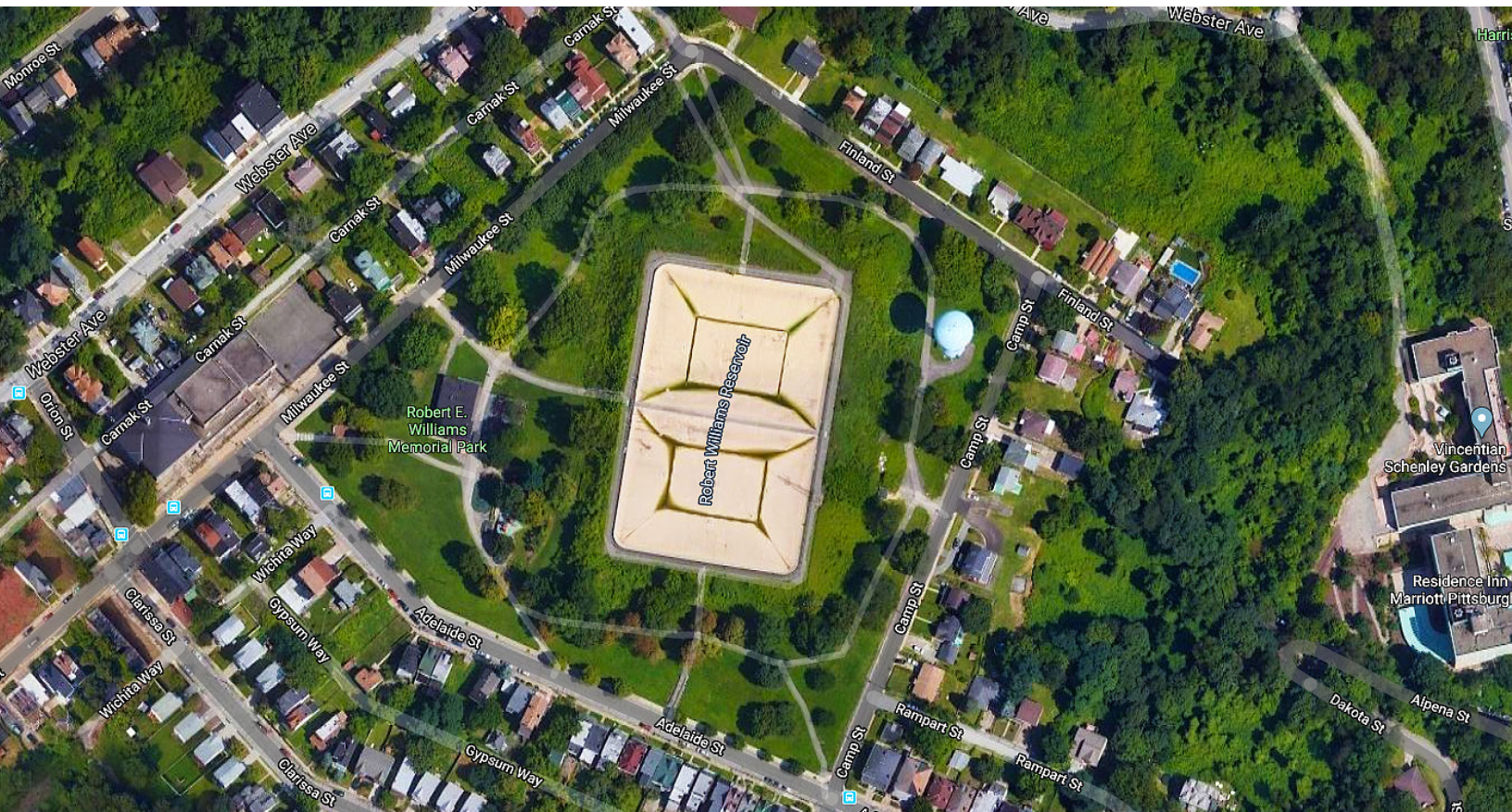
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Site Map & Images



Google Map of Upper Hill Neighborhood & Robert E. Williams Memorial Park



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Site Map & Images



Existing Conditions: 1963 Building & 1996 Playground



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Site Map & Images



Views from the Reservoir



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Site Map & Images



KEY POINTS

PRECEDENT STUDY

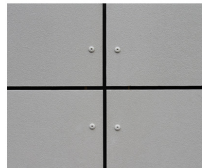
- > Covered Outdoor Spaces
- > Natural Materials
 - > Wood
 - > Stone
 - > Concrete
 - > Glass
- > Response to the Context/Landscape

Precedent Study & Exterior Material Options

ELDORADO STONE



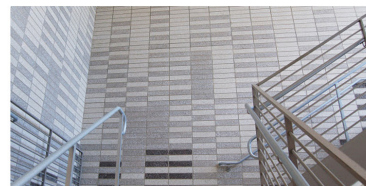
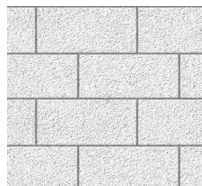
CEMBRIT CEMENT BOARD



DIZAL COMPOSITE PANELS



CONCRETE MASONRY



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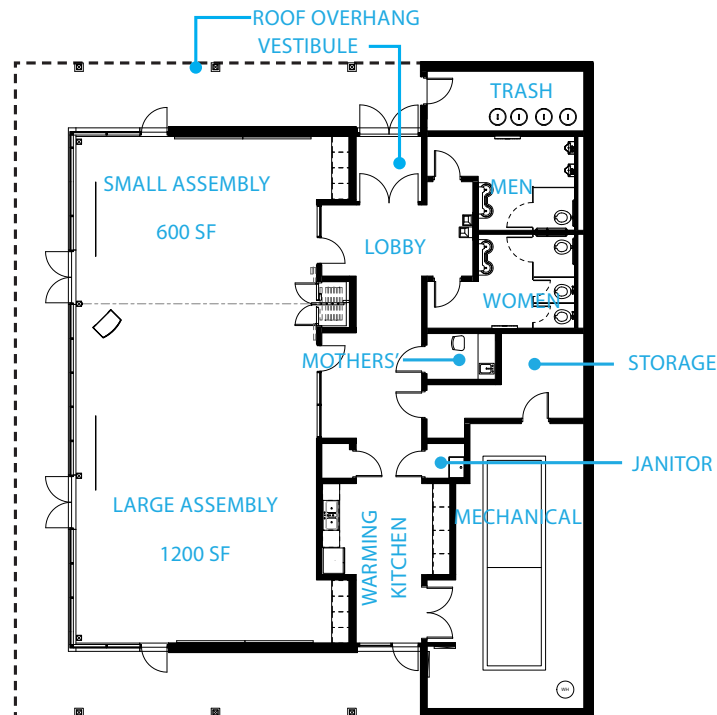
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Site Map & Images



Exterior Rendering & First Floor Plan



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Site Map & Images



Exterior Rendering & North Building Elevation



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Letters of Support

Use this section to provide proof that you have alerted and received at least tentative support and/or approval from any persons, community organizations and/or City agencies that will be directly affected by your proposed project. Your application should include:

- Letters of support from community stakeholders (residents, property owners, and frequent users of the project area)
- At least 1 letter of support/approval from any pertinent City agency or other governmental official that has purview or maintenance responsibilities to the proposed project location (ie: Department of Public Works, Department of Parks and Recreation, PA Department of Transportation, etc...)

Completed Applications

To be included on the Naming Commission's quarterly public agenda, an application from the project leader(s) requesting to be placed on the agenda and the documents outlined above must be received by **4:00PM on the Monday four (4) weeks prior** to an upcoming Commission meeting. The cover form must state the type of review being sought from the Commission. The application must indicate who will be presenting the project to the Commission, who will be attending the review, and the name of the client(s).

All application materials (cover form, narrative, images, letters of support, etc.) should be combined into a single Word or PDF document and delivered via email, CD with the optional digital presentation (either PowerPoint or PDF format) that the applicant wishes to present at the hearing. Presentation boards, material samples, color swatches, etc, are allowed as well. Should you have questions or have special needs for presentation materials, please email or call the Department of Planning.

Submit Applications/For More Information

The Naming Commission
Danielle Nicol, Senior Secretary
Department of City Planning
danielle.nicol@pittsburghpa.gov