

Schenley Plaza Construction Nears Completion

Grand Opening Slated for Spring

By Amy Ripley



The newly planted rows of tiarella and heuchera ground cover, which are both native to Pennsylvania, were recently planted at the plaza.

By the end of November, major construction of Schenley Plaza is expected to be complete and Oakland residents and visitors can look forward to a vibrant public space opening in spring.

Schenley Plaza, formerly a parking lot between the Carnegie and Hillman Libraries along Forbes Avenue, has been reclaimed as the grand entrance to Schenley Park and will reopen as a public green space offering food, entertainment and a respite from Oakland's urban bustle.

Construction fences will remain in place through winter to protect freshly laid sod and flower bulbs. Final garden plantings and installation of finishing touches, including most signs,

are scheduled for March.

Modeled after the enormously successful Bryant Park in New York City, which draws thousands of people each day with an array of food and programming options, Schenley Plaza will reflect and serve Oakland's diversity.

"Oakland is a cultural melting pot and the Plaza will be no different," said Meg Cheever, Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy president. "You'll see students on their laptops using the free wireless. You'll see professionals eating lunch on the lawn. You'll see children on the PNC carousel and

tourists admiring the formal gardens. It will be the place to go for people-watching."

Four food kiosks have been constructed and will offer a variety of fare from local vendors. Ongoing leisure, educational and entertainment programming will be a significant draw to visitors looking for music, children's activities and outdoor theater.

"This is the signature project for the revitalization of Oakland," said Renny Clark, chair of the Oakland Task Force and vice chancellor of the University of Pittsburgh.

"Once complete, the space will be used by the entire community including the residents of Oakland, students and visitors to the region."

"It will always be a visual representation of what we can achieve when we work together collectively. No one person can take credit for this project that will greatly improve the quality of life in Oakland," Clark said.

Partners in the Schenley Plaza restoration include the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, Oakland Investment Committee of the Allegheny Conference on Community Development, the Oakland Taskforce, the City of Pittsburgh and the Commonwealth of PA.