



SouthSide Works getting office space in old cinema, Town Square and dog park

Michael Machosky September 15, 2020 City Design

Closed after 20 years, SouthSide Works Cinema will soon be transformed into the Box Office with 75,000 square feet of high-tech office space.

It's the centerpiece of a complete reimagining of the 34-acre shopping, office and housing complex SouthSide Works (<https://southsideworks.com/>).

It was time for a change, says Jonathon Reeser of Somera Road (<https://someraroadinc.com/>), the New York-based real estate and development firm that bought the property in March. The company is investing \$37 million in capital improvements for the complex and more than \$130 million in new development on the property and riverfront.

"I think the SouthSide Works, for its time, came across as an outdoor mall experience — more soft goods or apparel — as a way to bring national brands to Pittsburgh," says Reeser. "We view it as a much more community-focused project ... one that sits within the historical South Side and just has a lot more character and heart and soul behind it."

The owners are planning a new Town Square featuring food kiosks made from repurposed shipping containers, a dramatic new stage for outdoor performances and ample green space for games, exercise and hanging out.

In Tunnel Park, the long stretch of green space between the Cheesecake Factory and Hofbräuhaus, there will be a new dog park with a kiosk for food and/or beverages along with a playground.

The major national chain anchors — REI, Urban Outfitters and LA Fitness — will remain.

“We’d like to add to that, whether it’s a local neighborhood goods store, or dry cleaners or nail salon,” says Reeser. “We have a hair salon there already. We want to add great local chefs and kind of bring that local soul in as well.”

A few new tenants should be announced soon.

“I’d say it’s a mix,” says Reeser. “Whether it’s well-known food operators or general community needs, we’ve got a mix of tenants that helps diversify the offerings at SouthSide Works.”



Balcony at the Box Office. Rendering courtesy of Somera Road.

The Box Office will provide a new anchor and will bring hundreds of new workers and more foot traffic to the site.

“We realized the highest and best use of that space is a creative office building,” says Reeser. “We can use that same footprint that’s there today and lean on that historical cinema and marquee ... and make it a beautiful steel and glass adaptive reuse of that space. I think it’ll be one of the more impressive adaptive reuse projects seen in Pittsburgh.”

The design, created by HOK (<https://www.hok.com/about/>), will feature 20-foot ceilings and second-floor balconies on either side of the marquee.

“It fits well with the environment we’re in today, with concerns about open space and fresh air,” explains Reeser.



Town Square at SouthSide Works. Rendering courtesy of AE7.

The new outdoor amenities, especially the Town Center, are intended to be gathering spaces for the community.

“We’re looking at a more permanent stage,” says Reeser. “We have some kiosks for vendors that will just create an interactive environment — one where you’d want to go hang out.”



SouthSide Works Town Center. Rendering courtesy of AE7.

Later developments planned by Somera Road include more housing.

“We’ll be (at) about 250-280 units on the waterfront and are moving forward with that project full steam ahead,” says Reeser.

There’s also another waterfront site that could be slated for 200,000 square feet of additional office space, he adds.

The timetable is for the Box Office, dog park, Town Square and playground to be completed by spring 2021.

Currently, SouthSide Works has about 288,000 square feet of retail space, 180,000 square feet of office space and 83 residential units.

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