

Sprinklers installed at demolition site

Measure intended to reduce dust from Ithaca Gun debris

By Krisy Gashler • kgashler@gannett.com • Staff Writer • May 5, 2009



SIMON WHEELER / Staff Photo

A continuous water mist is sprayed Monday afternoon over the pile of crushed demolition debris that sits next to Lake Street, across from the Gun Hill apartment, background.

In response to concerns about dust from Ithaca Gun, sprinklers have been installed over stockpiled demolition debris on the site.

Several members of the Community Advisory Group (CAG) for the project have repeatedly asked for more dust suppression, arguing that potentially contaminated material could be blowing into the neighborhood.

The city and the [state Department](#) of Environmental Conservation have responded that the four air monitors around the perimeter of the site are ensuring that neighbors are safe.

Last week, group members, led by activist and business owner Walter Hang, again asked for more protection. Over the past few weeks, the mounting pile of demolition debris has outgrown the tarp intended to cover it.

On Wednesday, Acting Mayor Dan Cogan, D-5th, wrote to group members and the DEC, and said the dust-control efforts "appear to be inadequate."

"On behalf of the Mayor's Office, I would like to request that the DEC ensure that the piles of debris are adequately covered, that dust control measures are strengthened, and that the control measures include times when there is no work taking place at the site," Cogan wrote.

Pete Grevelding, senior vice president of Developers & Professional Services at engineering firm O'Brien & Gere, said many factors influenced the decision to install sprinklers, including Cogan's email and a request from the DEC.

"The tarp keeps blowing away, and it was difficult," he said. "When we put some of the crushed material on top of it they complained that that could create dust, just the small amount we had on it. So we tried to use heavier weights, and it seemed to blow right beneath the tarp. So we decided that water would keep it so it wouldn't let the dust go. We're trying to do as best we can."

Mark Finkelstein is a Community Advisory Group member who lives directly across from Ithaca Gun in the Gun Hill apartments. He said the dust is far less than it was during Cornell University's lake source cooling project, when water pipes were laid along Lake Street. The dust then was so bad that Cornell began issuing neighbors coupons for free daily car washes.

"Now, in contrast, I park my car right up against the fence nearest the demolition site, and I have not noticed any accumulation of dust on my car," he said.

Even so, Ithaca Gun dust could be contaminated, so stricter guidelines are probably in order, he said.

"I appreciate the efforts they (group members) are making to monitor things, and I feel that probably as a result of their efforts the dust control and the water runoff and the other issues probably are being improved," he said.

Hang praised Cogan's decision to ask the DEC for stricter dust control, and he questioned Mayor Carolyn Peterson's decision not to intervene earlier.

"She's never reacted," Hang said. "I and more than 30 others have sent numerous letters to her about these concerns regarding Ithaca Gun. The CAG met with her, and she just never got back to us. We've had these concerns from the beginning of this public participation process."

Peterson could not be reached for comment. Cogan said he couldn't speak for her decisions, but for himself, he said, "I did what I thought was the right thing to do based on my own experience up there."

Grevelding said he anticipates full demolition to be complete by the end of May.