The parents of murdered University of Louisiana at Lafayette student Mickey Shunick, Tom Shunick and Nancy Rowe, stand to be recognized by the Lafayette City-Parish Council before it voted to name the city bike loop in their daughter’s memory on Tuesday at City Hall in Lafayette.

Lafayette council OKs memorial bike loop through heart of city

Michaela “Mickey” Shunick, who was abducted while riding her bike in 2012 and found dead after weeks of intense searching that brought the community together, will be memorialized with a bike path through the heart of the city.

The Lafayette City-Parish Council on Tuesday voted unanimously to create the “Mickey Shunick Memorial Bike Loop,” a mix of existing and planned bike paths that will be linked together in an 8-mile loop.
On Tuesday, the council voted to demolish the old Lafayette Natural Science Museum and Planetarium building on Girard Park Drive, near the Heymann Center in Lafayette.

The route will pass by Shunick's ghost-bike memorial on St. Landry Street, the road she was riding when Brandon Scott Lavergne — now serving life in prison — knocked Shunick off her bike with his truck, abducted her and later shot her as she fought for her life.

The loop includes several streets that Shunick, an avid cyclist, often pedaled when returning home, said her father, Tom Shunick.

"Her name will definitely be remembered now," he said. "... The Mickey Shunick legacy goes on."

Shunick's mother, Nancy Rowe, said the new loop will be a welcome addition in a city with few safe options for bicyclists.

"Safety in numbers. As more people ride bikes, cars will be more aware of them," she said.

The loop will include existing bike lanes on Johnston Street, St. Mary Boulevard and a segment of St. Landry Street, along with existing standalone bike paths near the Cajundome.

A longer stretch includes planned bike lanes beginning at South College Road and West Bayou Parkway continuing onto Roselawn Boulevard until it meets with the existing Johnston Street bike lane. After veering past the future Lafayette Central Park, the lane will continue onto Bertrand Drive.

Most of the loop is funded, but some sections will require additional dollars.

City-Parish Public Works Director Kevin Blanchard said he envisions city-parish government trying to piece together interconnected bike loops throughout the city.

"The hope here is that this is the first in a series," he said.

Shunick's disappearance as she biked home in the early morning hours of May 19, 2012, prompted a massive community search effort for the University of Louisiana at Lafayette anthropology student, whose remains were found nearly three months later when Lavergne led authorities to a shallow grave near Mamou.

Lavergne, 36, pleaded guilty in 2012 to two counts of first-degree murder for killing Shunick and Lisa Pate, a Lafayette woman whose body was found in 1999.

He is serving a life sentence at Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola.

In other business on Tuesday, the council voted to demolish the old Lafayette Natural Science Museum and Planetarium building on Girard Park Drive.

The building has been vacant since a new facility, now called the Lafayette Science Museum, opened on Jefferson Street in 2002.

There were plans about 10 years ago to use the old facility as an oil and gas museum, but the project never got off the ground.

The deteriorating building has been an eyesore for several years.

No date has been set for the demolition.