Empty Houses
Obstacles on the path to neighborhood revitalization

Many people ask why the PHCA doesn’t do more about the abandoned properties in our neighborhood. The quick answer is: because very few of those empty buildings are truly abandoned. Most are owned by someone who is paying the taxes and sitting on the property, choosing to allow it to remain empty and unused. Some vacant properties are owned by the City, or by corporations that are using them as a loss item to offset profits in other places.

But many of Polish Hill’s ‘abandoned’ properties are owned by individuals who have no plans to fix up the building, and no intention of selling. The owners of these properties are not considering the impact they are having on the whole community. These vacant properties attract people looking for scrap metals. Thieves break in to steal items such as wiring, plumbing, and downspouts, making the structure vulnerable to the elements. All of these invasive actions keep increasing the cost for anyone who wants to renovate these structures.

High weeds and the openings in buildings provide shelter for rats and raccoons, posing serious health risks for all of our residents. During storms in all seasons, roofing material and structural debris falling from buildings adds to public safety concerns. These structures that were once the pride of many families are slowly rotting away.

It’s not always clear why someone would choose to allow their properties to sit and deteriorate. In some cases, the reason might be sentiment—it’s hard to get rid of the old family home, even if the family has long since moved out of the neighborhood and the house has been empty for years. Others may feel that someday they’ll return to Polish Hill, or simply prefer not to see the building used by someone else. And some owners are certain that as the neighborhood’s fortunes continue to rise, their building will become more valuable.

This last assumption is one we can address. Unless an empty property is carefully maintained and minimally heated during the winters, it deteriorates rapidly. The majority of Polish Hill buildings are frame houses more than 75 years old — many are over a hundred — and they require a lot of care.
President’s letter

We are embarking on a time of preparation and planning here on Polish Hill. As the scope and pace of our neighborhood changes, the community has the opportunity to adjust and renew its focus. Through grant writing, and asking local businesses for support, the Polish Hill Civic Association has raised the funds necessary for a strategic community plan. We will work through the planning process with assistance from the Community Design Center of Pittsburgh and the Pittsburgh Partnership for Neighborhood Development. Having open community meetings combined with information gathered in recent years, we will be able to identify the issues and concerns our residents define as priorities. Keeping community consensus in mind, we will work with a professional firm to create a plan for Polish Hill. This focused approach will help us make the best use of time and resources to achieve our goals. Since the majority of our efforts are volunteer-based, with support from dedicated part-time staff, efficiency will be key to our success.

Every day we are taking steps to improve the quality of life in Polish Hill. Recently we collected twelve large boxes of household chemicals: paint, thinner, insecticide, varnish and weed killer were all disposed properly at Allegheny County’s disposal event. We will continue to lead initiatives on environmentally safe practices. The best thing we can do for future residents is to leave our community a little better than we found it.

Along with the daily, ongoing work we do at the PHCA, there is still time for friends and neighbors to gather. Our recent successes, including the PHCA yard sale on August 28, PARK(ing) Day on September 17, and the Polish Hill Flea Market on September 25, are proof that community building has its place alongside the bricks and mortar. Our connections to each other, and the network we form, is the living, breathing part of Polish Hill. The magic happens when our residents gather together -- young and old, native and newcomer.

Looking back as well as looking forward, I see what we have accomplished and what is left to do. I am in my second term as President of the PHCA, still making contact with residents every chance I get. New challenges constantly arise, presenting great opportunities to learn and apply new skills. Some people may not realize that being president of the PHCA is a volunteer role. Working for the neighborhood is my continuing education and career. I just keep my day job to pay the bills.

Terry Doloughty
PHCA president

Polish Hill Oral History Project

By Leslie Clague

In August, a new project was launched with the aim of honoring and preserving the history of Polish Hill. Mark O’Connor, a Polish Hill resident and a professor of English at Slippery Rock University, came to us with the idea of an oral history project. There have of course been similar projects, including Polish Hill Remembered, a small book and CD produced by high school students, and a section on Polish Hill in a recent edition of On the Bluff, a publication from Duquesne University journalism students. The PHCA’s oral history project will be more comprehensive, and it’s the first initiated from within the neighborhood itself.

We are seeking people who lived in Polish Hill for any length of time, up into the 1980s. Interviewees don’t have to have been born here, or still live in the neighborhood, or even in Pittsburgh. And they don’t have to be older, or even Polish. We just want to talk to anyone who lived here and has memories and stories of what Polish Hill was like in past decades.

If you or someone you know has memories of Polish Hill in its prime -- the people, places, and unique feel of the neighborhood, Mark would like to interview you. Interviews can be held wherever is convenient and comfortable for you -- at the PHCA office, at your home, or by telephone. The only requirement is that you will need to be in a quiet place, as the interviews are being recorded.

So if you have memories to share, please get in touch. Mark has already talked to a number of people, and the colorful stories he’s hearing are enough to fill volumes! We are discussing ways to combine the oral histories with the wonderful photos the PHCA photo archive is collecting. One pie-in-the-sky idea is a book -- wouldn’t that be wonderful?

For more information about the project, contact Mark O’Connor at 412.321.1999 or email him at mark.oconnor2@sru.edu. Mark is currently on sabbatical and is devoting himself to this project. He has also been researching Polish Hill’s past at local libraries -- you can read about one fascinating story he unearthed on pages 6 and 7 of this issue.

Does your family have old photos or other material from the heyday of Polish Hill?

Please consider sharing them for the PHCA archive!

We can scan your photos or other memorabilia and return them to you.
Or, have a friend or family member scan them and email us the files. Scans should be at least 200 dpi, but preferably 300 dpi.
Please contact the PHCA for more information about contributing materials to the archive.
Harmar Garden Sign

The gardening season is winding down, but take note of a new addition at one of our community gardens. A beautifully crafted sign now marks the Harmar Garden. The carved wooden sign was a combined effort by Jennifer Martin and Brian Seklecki. If you’re on a neighborhood walk, stop by the garden and see what a wonderful job they did. The sign is sturdy and will serve the garden for years to come.

Polish Hill's Light-Up Night gets a new name

For years, Polish Hill has celebrated Light-Up Night at the intersection of Brereton and Dobson streets. The monument tree is lit; the church, Sarney's, and the PHCA all have their lights up, the church choir sings carols, and Santa makes an appearance with presents for the kids.

This year, the celebration is the same, but the name has changed. The Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership trademarked the phrase “Light Up Night” in 2003, but this year they’ve started charging for the right to use it. Many communities around the country use the phrase, but anyone in our region will now have to pay PDP a fee to use the name. Some have agreed to do so, but we have decided to rename our event. Starting this year, Polish Hill’s holiday event is called “Light up the Street”. It takes place on Friday December 3rd at 6 p.m., and we hope you will join us.

Petition for Roundhouse Park

In the last issue of the Voice, George Waksmunski put forth his proposal to create Roundhouse Park to commemorate the workers of the Railroad Strike of 1877. The proposed park site is the vacant land on the north side of Brereton Street below 30th Street. Currently this land, owned by Port Authority, contains two billboards, which we hope to have removed. Port Authority has said that they would be willing to deed this unbuildable sliver of flat space to the City, which is one step towards making the park a reality.

To date, 130 people have signed the petition. We thank everyone who has come out in support of the park. If you haven’t yet signed, but would like to, please let us know. This is an ongoing process, so there’s still time to lend your support.

IHM Sidewalk Repaved

You may have noticed that a section of the 100-year-old brick sidewalk along Brereton Street below the church parking lot was taken out. The church chose not to re-set the old brick, or to repave the entire section. Only one-half of it has been repaved, and the other side was filled with loose dirt. Perhaps in the spring this empty space might be an area for plantings.

Rather than allow the piles of removed brick to be taken to the dump, as was planned, PHCA volunteers spent several hours cleaning and sorting the bricks, then carting them away. The bricks will stay in the neighborhood -- they will be used for sidewalk repair elsewhere, and many will be used to build the community brick oven.
Traffic Calming 101

By Patrick Singleton

As many residents have observed, more people have been discovering Polish Hill in recent months, not necessarily in a good way. It seems like many drivers are using our neighborhood as a cut-through route - speeding along our narrow streets -- creating a dangerous situation for pedestrians, bicyclists, skateboarders, and drivers alike.

To combat this all-too-common problem, many neighborhoods and cities have turned to what is called traffic calming: designing our streets and urban spaces in ways that encourage people in cars to drive slower. You may already know about or do some form of traffic calming; things like parked cars, pedestrian activity, and even trees are natural ways to slow down traffic. Yet there are many other traffic calming measures, ranging from high cost to very inexpensive. Some traffic calming measures, including installing speed limit signs, painting VASCAR lines, or installing a special sign that tells drivers their speed, along with actively issuing speeding tickets, are meant to encourage people to drive slower by fear of punishment or fine. These tactics can be persuasive, but require a recurring commitment to enforcement by local police to be effective over the long-term.

Other traffic calming measures seek to affect a driving person’s behavior in a more passive way, by making them feel like they can’t or don’t want to drive so fast. The most common of these traffic calming devices are speed humps (a smooth bump across all lanes), curb extensions (bump-outs at intersections), and median dividers (thin islands that make lanes narrower). Some cities have installed raised crosswalks (the sidewalk continues at the same level across the street), traffic circles (a planted obstruction in the middle of an intersection), and chicanes (creating an s-curve within an existing street). These permanent installation traffic calming measures have been used around the world with great success, although they do involve increased up-front costs. In addition, traffic calming tools such as curb extensions and chicanes can be designed with bioswales (landscape elements designed to remove silt from surface runoff) to capture and filter storm water or for the planting of native flora, creating “green streets.”

Traffic calming is not limited to engineering alone; artists can also help to slow traffic. Many neighborhoods have created painted intersections, where the entire intersection is painted a unique and community-directed design every few years. By placing something out of the ordinary on the street surface, drivers are induced to slow down before entering the intersection, and communities have something to rally around. In one instance, an image was painted so that, to an approaching vehicle, it looked like a 3-D child playing in the street!

Concerns over emergency response and snow removal often are raised when traffic calming is considered. However, studies have shown that the proper placement of speed humps and even traffic circles does not significantly delay fire trucks, and snowplow drivers can be trained to avoid these obstacles just like they avoid hitting curbs and signs. While the City of Pittsburgh may not (currently) allow some of these traffic calming measures like speed humps, they are included in PennDOT’s Traffic Calming Handbook, and other cold-weather cities such as Boston, Vancouver, and even Anchorage have used them with success.

When you walk or travel about the neighborhood, think about where some of the speeding problem spots are, and try to picture some of these traffic calming remedies in place. To find out more, visit http://trafficcalming.org.

Share your observations and help the PHCA combat speeding in Polish Hill!

Excessive traffic and speeding have been problems on some Polish Hill streets since the 1960s, but it’s become more of an issue in recent years. Because Brereton Street is so straight, many drivers floor it after they’ve passed the 30th Street stop sign, and don’t slow until they reach the top of the hill at Herron Avenue. Many Melwood residents park halfway on the sidewalk; speeding drivers have dented vehicles and knocked off mirrors; most residents have had vehicles damaged. And residents on Paulowna have complained for years about the traffic jam they experience every weekday morning and evening, and the problems associated with being a heavily-used shortcut from Bigelow down to the Strip. Our narrow streets were never designed for the traffic we now get, and enlarging the streets isn’t an option. Parking on the sidewalk damages curbs and concrete, and in some cases, utilities, which are sometimes located under sidewalks.

The recent construction on Route 28 means that even more drivers are now cutting through Polish Hill. Our neighborhood has few speed-limit signs, and many of these drivers seem to be unaware that the speed limit in Polish Hill is just 25 mph. From the PHCA office, we regularly see vehicles fly past at speeds far exceeding the limit. We are constantly worried about the elderly or young residents who might be crossing the street when one of these speeders comes tearing through.

The PHCA is working with Councilman Dowd and Zone 2 to control speeding in Polish Hill. To do that effectively, we need resident feedback. It’s not enough that our office reports problems; our representatives need to hear from as many residents as possible. If you are aware of particular problems on your street, please contact Councilman Dowd’s office at 412-255-2140, or let us know and we will share that information.

Want to continue receiving the Voice?

Make sure your PHCA membership is current! We’re currently offering a membership special that will take you through 2011.

See the mail-in membership form on page 11.
Many of these empty buildings are slipping past the point where they could be rehabilitated.

For many years, Polish Hill had a reputation as a place where you could find an affordable house. But a $25,000 building isn't much of a bargain, if it costs over $100,000 to get into acceptable shape. In cases where the building has been empty for several years, that is what's needed. We have watched a few buildings pass through multiple owners, as each optimistic new buyer finds out that it will cost much, much more than they anticipated to make their bargain building habitable.

There are issues in obtaining loans to both purchase and renovate homes in our community. The attractive low assessment prices also limit how much the banks are able to lend — usually it is far less than the amount needed. The gap financing and second mortgages available through the URA can help, but many of these structures need more than that to be saved. Building codes are an important part of the process here. When it comes time for a home inspection, it's often discovered that the owner will need to do tens of thousands of dollars of improvements before their home can go to market, or qualify for a loan. Many of our older structures that have been family homes for generations have space heaters and no furnaces. Houses must have a central heating system, such as a boiler or a furnace, in order for a bank to grant the loan.

Some owners, hoping to get a better price, will do a portion of work on their building before selling. To a point, this is a good idea. A new roof, furnace, or plumbing system will increase the selling price of a house. But some owners do unnecessary work on their buildings, wasting their money and time on things that don't really matter so much to potential buyers. One costly mistake is to focus on immediate visual appeal rather than essential components.

In a recent example, the owner spent time and thousands of dollars to update the kitchen with new cabinetry and fixtures prior to putting the house on the market. They left the freestanding gas heaters, the only heat source in the building, in place. As it turned out, insurance companies view these heaters as fire hazards, so banks will not approve mortgage loans for homes that are heated in this way. The decision to leave the heaters reduced the viability of the property and cost them buyers.

Superficial aspects, such as interior details, or appliances, might make a visual difference to a potential buyer — but tastes differ, and what an owner might think will appeal might not be of interest to buyers. At the PHCA, we meet many house-seekers, and most intend to do their own renovation after they purchase a house. They want a house to have a good roof, reliable utilities, and such, but most don't mind if the house looks old. Buying an older house is part of why they are here, instead of looking at new homes! They often are specifically interested in the old details. But these are sometimes what someone doing a rehab with profit in mind will rip out.

Another building owner had snapped up cheap properties at City auction, planning to renovate them and sell at a large profit. He did a very thorough demolition, pulling out drop ceilings and other remnants of a bad renovation job. But he also tore out every last bit of the old moldings and shutters, mistakenly thinking that a stripped-down interior was what buyers wanted to see. But those old moldings were actually quite valuable. Along with the historic details and the quality of craftsmanship, the lumber is of exceptional quality. The old growth timbers that were used in the construction of these older homes is not available today. It makes economic and historical sense to preserve these materials; it's also environmentally responsible. This owner's action removed more than $5,000 worth of irreplaceable detail.

And it made the property less appealing to many potential buyers, who would have to spend money and time to replace the woodwork.

One of the less tangible attractions of our neighborhood is its charm, shabby though things may be in some places. While the older buildings may need more maintenance, they also have a quality that many people prefer, even cherish. The location of Polish Hill, as well as the charm of a largely untouched neighborhood, is attracting increasing numbers of potential buyers. Some may be real estate speculators, hoping to buy in and eventually resell at large profits. But most are individuals, hoping to settle in a nice neighborhood and build their futures in a place that feels comfortable and isn't full of cookie-cutter new homes.

Perhaps some of the people who own empty buildings would prefer to see these buildings slowly rot and fall down, rather than used again by others. This would be a shame. The strength of community that existed in Polish Hill is a rare heritage. What better way to honor that heritage than to help the neighborhood revitalize? Every place changes, and we hope to make the change a positive one. Whether incoming residents are of Polish descent or not, their interest in the neighborhood is genuine. To help a new community develop, while acknowledging and honoring the hardworking people who built this neighborhood, is one of the PHCA's primary goals.
The September 8, 1927 edition of *The Pittsburgh Press* featured dramatic photos of police carrying “riot guns and tear gas bombs” as they raid two Polish Hill stores. The first shows shotgun-carrying detectives, “entering the confectionary store of J. Jakubowski” on Hancock Street, and dashing down the alley next to the store, presumably to cover the back. The next photos show the proprietor of Walkowski’s Grocery being interrogated by half a dozen officers. The photos are impressive, the police caught mid-step leaping from cars, guns at the ready. It is like the trailer for an action movie.

Clearly the photos are from the vantage point of a photographer invited on the raid. This crucial voyeurism was necessitated by the man being hunted, Paul Jawarski, who had shot two guards in breaking out of Allegheny County jail three weeks earlier. Readers of the *Press* had been regaled with stories about this “Phantom of the Coal Fields,” the “arch-bandit of the western Pennsylvania,” and the “deadliest killer and bandit of his generation,” and Jawarski’s escape was an embarrassment.

It was not the first time. Jawarski’s ability to avoid capture (or to escape, on the rare occasions when caught), was through a combination of intelligence, luck, and a facile willingness to use violence. As a *Press* reporter noted, “Paul Jawarski lived the life of a bad man.”

Just before Christmas in 1922, Jawarski shot a Pittsburgh Coal Company payroll guard off his motorcycle. While the guard lay on the road, Jawarski apparently killed the man as the gang exited the scene, netting around a quarter-million dollars for the effort.

In April 1924 Jawarski himself was twice shot in the chest during a saloon holdup in Sharpsburg. Under arrest as he was being treated at St. Francis Hospital (on the site of the Children’s Hospital today), he gave the name Paul Palmer and is released on $5000 bail. Paul Jawarski-Palmer disappears.

Right before Christmas in 1925, Jawarski has recovered enough to hold up a Pittsburgh Terminal Coal Company payroll, killing another guard. This take was over half a million dollars, but he wasn’t finished. Though this murder is what he will ultimately be convicted of and executed for, his most successful robbery was yet to come, one that squarely put him in the sights of Pittsburgh and state police.

In March, 1927, in Cloverdale, Pennsylvania Jawarski and his gang dynamite two Brinks trucks, flipping one like a turtle and sending the other into a ditch. Though no one was killed, the robbery was notorious for two reasons. The haul was over half a million dollars and it was the first successful robbery of a Brinks armored truck. Brinks would not lose another armored truck deposit until 1981, when former members of the Weather Underground stole $1.6 million in a Nanuet, New York.

For a long time police did not know even Jawarski’s name, but Jawarski was not even his real name. A 1929 *Press* article reports Jawarski’s father insisting his son change his last name from Pallas to Jawarski when Paul “was arrested for the first time more than 12 years ago and accused of disgracing the family’s name.” This story seems apocryphal.

For instance, his two brothers, Sam and Thomas, were arrested and convicted around the same time under the last name of Pallas. Sam Pallas was sentenced to eight to twenty-five years for smuggling the guns Paul used to escape from Allegheny Jail. Thomas Pallas was sentenced to life for the murder of a policeman during a robbery of the Detroit News business office. Years later, in 1947 a paroled Thomas Pallas (listed in a *Press* article as Thomas Jawarski) is questioned about three Pittsburgh area robberies involving safes blown open with nitroglycerine. The family fascination with identity...
shifting and explosives seems to have lasted well into the mid century.

Everyone, it seems, was skittering along on various identities. According to an article written on the day of his execution, Paul Jawarski is said to have been “reared in a Greek Catholic faith,” so the Greek surname Pallas could be accurate. Except in the same article Jawarski is also quoted as scarring the comfort of the prison chaplain by saying, “I have preached atheism from soap boxes, and it would be going against my belief if I changed now.” If this statement brings his religiosity into question, it also drags along questions about his background, his “true” identity. A supposed immigrant Greek gangster choosing a decidedly Polish name seems odd, even at the supposed suggestion of his father. And it does not explain why he was in Polish Hill that September day when the neighborhood stores were raided.

Perhaps beer might be helpful here. In 1945 the brothers Mickey and Henry Laskowski founded Lasky Beer Distributor at 1037 Herron Avenue. That they clipped the last part of their surname name off for the business name is a particularly American thing to do, a linguistic sleight of hand for reasons of acculturation. Laskowski begets Lasky. The same thing may have happened in the Jawarski family. Pallas was not plucked from the air, but instead is an anglicized, clipped form of Poluszynski, a name only later revealed. We will probably never know why Paul Poluszynski was in Polish Hill that day, but the name suggests a cultural familiarity more consonant with Poland than Greece.

But it was Paul Jawarski, not his father, who used the American-sounding Paul Palmer when he was arrested in 1925. Paul Poluszynski became Paul Pallas who gave the false name of Paul Palmer and emerged as Paul Jawarski. And it is Paul Jawarski whose exploits are written like the stuff of dime novels. A few days before his execution, the all-capital-letters headline was thrilling—JAWARSKI, IN DEATH CELL, DOOMED. There was even a description of a secret night transfer of Jawarski, “After a sudden rush by automobile across the mountains under the leadership of Sheriff Robert H. Braun has forestalled any rescue plot that might have been planned, Paul Jawarski, arch murderer of western Pennsylvania was lodged in the death house at Rockview prison today, awaiting execution Monday.”

Descriptions like these function in the same complicated way as the Polish Hill raid photos. In the same breath as the all-capital headline which offers, IRON WILL NERVE OF JAWARSKI HAS NOT LEFT HIM, readers are also provided with moralizing by the reporter, “The charmed, notorious career, the hopes for life and death, the good breaks and the bad ones, are all near an end.” The voyeuristic reportage from the death house provides comfort, a perspective of safety, a sense that ultimately all is right with the world. Murderers are caught, and are repentant.

Before his execution Jawarski is reported to have confessed, “if the newspapers could do something to keep kids from going wrong, there wouldn’t be anything of this kind.” Do not believe it for a second. Everything ever reported about Jawarski indicates he would never give into such moralizing. This line is ostensibly from a man who, when asked by the prison chaplain if he wanted absolution replied, “Sorry, I want to die as I have lived.”

But it is easier to believe he went to the electric chair sorry for his sins. Moments after his execution, Calvin James was put to death for having murdered a man over $150. James’s story barely rates three paragraphs.

This was long ago. A funeral home now stands on the site of Walkowski’s Grocery across from the new Lili Coffee Shop; J. Jakubowski’s Confectionary has long been an empty lot. Though Paul had parents and a sister who worked tirelessly for his release, after his execution no one claimed his body. He is buried anonymously in the Rockview prison graveyard. Seeing this all from afar, I wonder which sentences, stories offer me comfort, a sense that all is well with the world.

## Historic Pittsburgh photo archive

The photo above, of Dobson Street at Revere Way, looking towards the church, was taken on July 13, 1936, nine years after the events in the story. We’ve included it since it’s almost the same location as the police raids in the photos opposite, and because it’s such a great photo. This image, and hundreds of others, are from the image collection of the Historic Pittsburgh archive at the University of Pittsburgh. The entire collection is available for viewing online. If you or a family member has a computer with Internet access, it makes for a very enjoyable hour or so. You can enter search terms, such as "Polish Hill," to view photos from particular neighborhoods.

The Historic Pittsburgh archive includes tests, maps, images, archival finding aids, census records from the 19th century, videos, and a chronology. The Internet address for the entry page of the image collection is: http://digital.library.pitt.edu/images/pittsburgh/.
A Park for One Day

Three years ago in San Francisco, an art and design group created the concept of PARK(ing) Day to inspire city dwellers everywhere to transform parking spaces into temporary parks. The now-global event promotes the preservation of our current green spaces and the planning of new ones, focusing on how parks improve our communities. The day is about creativity, civic engagement, critical thinking, unscripted social interaction, generosity and play.

As an artist and community volunteer, I was immediately hooked by the idea. It would be meaningful to create a one-day park as a temporary art installation, echoing a project that’s underway in Polish Hill. The PHCA hopes to build a community bread oven. Because of this project, we had been salvaging bricks from various sidewalk removals, including ones from Maly Park and a recent IHM project along Brereton. So most of the materials were at hand, yet I hesitated to share the idea -- lots of bricks to move about meant labor-intensive logistics.

The turning point came over brunch with a group of PHCA volunteers at Lili Coffee Shop. I mentioned the temporary bread-oven park idea. The group was enthusiastic and immediately embraced the concept, and the idea spread around the table like wild fire. My worry about logistics diminished as momentum grew. In less than five minutes, we had a crew to create the park. We would transport our salvaged bricks from the backyard to the PHCA front, and build a replica bread oven.

Terry Doloughty focused on assembling items that were repurposed and could be reused. Sod would form the base of the park, and then be recycled in the PHCA side yard. He and Josiah Parkinson moved the bricks in advance, making things easier on building day. Catherine McConnell offered a potted red maple and purple flowers to add bursts of color. A stylish bench, wooden chairs and other design elements were also repurposed for the installation.

It’s one thing to share in the early enthusiasm, another to follow through, especially when weather was not on our side. The evening we were slated to build the park, it was raining heavily at times. Yet the volunteers arrived and with minimal verbal exchange, folks were in lock-step. After the sod was put in place, an assembly line formed, passing bricks and stacking them to build our oven. Almost in unison, the group would stop momentarily to step back and check the perspective and design direction. Doug Ramsey became our structural engineer, pointing out potential pitfalls along the way.

Passing bricks and stacking continued ... as did the rain. Patrick Singleton stopped to help on his way home from work. At this point, we were almost done with the upper chamber. All that remained was how to build the chimney. Amazingly, Patrick chimed in that there was an abandoned one in his backyard, and he and Josie Ramsey jumped in her car to rescue our installation’s crowning piece. As it was put in place, we were all rain-soaked and no one seemed to care. We had just created this amazing park - - ready for PARK(ing) Day on Friday, September 17.

On her way to work that morning, Jennifer Kirk brought us a homemade, fresh-from-the-oven loaf of olive-oil bread. She promised to bake two more loaves at the end of her work day. Our park was open until 8 p.m. and Jennifer kept her word, bringing two more fresh loaves for hungry park visitors.

Our park attracted impromptu passers-by, four-legged friends, and those biking across various neighborhoods to see PARK(ing) Day spots. The common thread of conversation became, "We wish your one-day park was here to stay."

That same day, other Polish Hill creatives were taking it to the streets. Paulette Still-Khouri designed a magical mystery tent in front of The UrbanGypsy. Rob Levkulich spearheaded a night of campfire activities at Lili Coffee Shop, featuring The Caravan Collective and Rob’s ’67 Airstream Safari.

(Continued on page 9)
As evidenced by the map prepared to guide park visitors throughout the city, our neighborhood showcased the highest concentration of PARK(ing) Day spots!

The bricks that formed the temporary oven have been put to a new use: courtesy of Josiah Parkinson and Terry Doloughty, a herringbone brick-pattern has now replaced battered chunks of cement in front of the PHCA office, and the side yard of the PHCA is sporting newer, heartier grass instead of brown patchwork. Our temporary art installation is already giving back to the community.

**Council-to-Go**

**Every other month, at**

**Lili Coffee® Shop, 3138 Dobson Street**

(at Hancock St.)

**Wednesday November 10, 6:30 p.m.**

**Wednesday January 12, 7:00 p.m.**

Come share your concerns with District 7 Councilman Patrick Dowd and his staff.

---

**Polish Hill items benefit the PHCA—order here!**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Qty</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Red t-shirt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth S M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults S M L XL XXL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black t-shirt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth S M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults S M L XL XXL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish Hill button</td>
<td></td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierogi pin</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierogi ornament</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postcard</td>
<td></td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cookbook</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shipping</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Make check or money order out to the Polish Hill Civic Association and mail to the PHCA, 3060 Brereton Street, Pittsburgh PA 15219.**
West Penn Advisory Board

by Leslie Clague

In the fall of 2009, the PHCA discovered that the West Penn Community Center still had an advisory board, and that the board was supposed to include neighborhood representation. Up to that time, we were not aware that the board still existed. After months of inquiries, we found that the board elections are every November.

In September 2010, members of our community attended an introductory meeting for the West Penn board. At that meeting, potential board members learned about the obligations of the position. At the October board meeting, five Polish Hill residents, and eight individuals who are affiliated with the social service groups with programs at West Penn, submitted their names for a board position. There are seven positions open; we will find out who will serve after the West Penn board election takes place in late November.

We are glad to once again have an opportunity to have a neighborhood voice on the West Penn Advisory Board. Although it’s been years since any Polish Hill residents have served on the board, the PHCA has been actively seeking ways to partner with the center to help establish open and ongoing communication, and offer programs that better match what our residents are seeking. We have polled residents about what sorts of classes they would like to see, featured classes and schedules on our blog and the newsletter, and created handouts promoting the center.

West Penn, which opened in 1939, has been a part of Polish Hill life for generations of residents.

Two basketball teams from years past: Top, West Penn first opener, (early 40’s). Bottom, the 1947-48 team.

Photos courtesy of Regina Sarnowski.

Above right, the entrance of West Penn as it looks today.

West Penn has been a part of Polish Hill for over seventy years, so it seems appropriate that the center would have more contact with the neighborhood. We look forward to seeing who is chosen to serve, and we hope that this involvement will initiate a new era of communication and cooperation between West Penn and the neighborhood in which it has been a presence for so long.

Citiparks West Penn Community Recreation Center
450 30th Street

Martial Arts
(instructor: DeWayne Adams)
For kids: Mondays 5:00—6:00 p.m.
For adults: Fridays 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.
($10 monthly fee)

Hatha Yoga
(instructor: Ilona Auth)
Thursdays 6:15—7:15 p.m.
(for adults, $7 donation per class)

Ceramics
(instructor: Patti Dobies)
Thursdays 5:00—8:00 p.m

Zumba
(instructor: Dionna Butler)
Thursdays 12:15—1:00 p.m.
($7 fee per class)
A Latin dance-based fitness class.

Movie Night
Tuesdays 5:30—8:30 p.m.

West Penn fall hours:
10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday - Friday
10 a.m. - 3 p.m. on Saturday
Closed on Sundays

For more information about West Penn, call 412-622-7353.

Submission Deadline | Publication Date | Months Covered
--- | --- | ---
January 15 | Early February | February, March, April

The Polish Hill Voice is published quarterly.

Advertisers/Photographers: Acceptable formats include:
- Black & white camera-ready art
- PC-based JPG, TIFF or PDF (300 dpi or higher)

Editorial: Contributing writers, artists, poets and historians welcome! Please submit content via email at phcapgh@gmail.com, or send to the PHCA office at 3060 Brereton Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15219.
**PHCA Membership Special: $7.00 takes you through 2011!**

Membership is typically $5 per member per calendar year. Because more than half the year is over, we’re offering a special. Join or renew now for $7, and your membership will be valid through 2011. Please include names and $7 for each person in your household who wishes to take advantage of this special offer.

Make checks payable to the Polish Hill Civic Association and mail with the membership application to:

PHCA Membership Chair, 3060 Brereton Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15219

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME:</th>
<th>______________________________________________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>__________________________________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Street Address)                     (City)       (State)       (ZIP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHONE:</td>
<td>______________________________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMAIL:</td>
<td>______________________________________________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_____ REGULAR MEMBER   Or   _____ SUBSCRIPTION MEMBER
(Polish Hill resident)                          (Non-resident)

_____ New Member   Or   _____ Renewal

Help build the neighborhood that you want to live in!

All members get a free subscription to the Voice (4 issues a year)

Members who are also Polish Hill residents get:

- An invitation to the monthly community meeting and a vote on neighborhood issues
- An invitation to the bi-monthly Council-to-Go sessions
- A voice on community issues

Make checks payable to the Polish Hill Civic Association and mail with the membership application to:

PHCA Membership Chair, 3060 Brereton Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15219

TELL EVERYONE IN POLISH HILL ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS!

To advertise in the Voice, call (412) 681-1950 or email phcapgh@gmail.com

If you’re a low-income person hoping to buy or fix up a house, check into the loan programs at the URA!

The Urban Redevelopment Authority has programs to help low and moderate income residents buy, rehabilitate, renovate, or improve homes.

Check out URA programs and income guidelines on their website:
http://www.ura.org/pittsburgh_residents/pittsburgh_residents.php
The PHCA’s mission is to respect and preserve the sense of community in Polish Hill while promoting economic and housing development opportunities, and improving the quality of life for our community.

Upcoming Community Meetings:

PHCA Community meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. Meetings are held in the Senior Center on the lower level of the West Penn Recreation Center, 470 30th @ Paulowna Street.

Dec 7
Jan 4
Feb 1