

## Upcoming funding changes will require a shift in focus for the PHCA

**Later this year**, you may notice that the Polish Hill Civic Association will make changes to its hours of operation, and/or the services it provides to the community. This is a result of changing eligibility for some of the PHCA's government funding. Government funding has provided about 20-35% of our operational funding for almost twenty years. Losing this funding will necessitate some changes in the work that the PHCA does.

Last fall, the City of Pittsburgh informed the PHCA that we would no longer be eligible for funds from the Advisory Commission on Community-Based Organizations (ACCBO), starting in September 2015. These are government funds, which are provided to neighborhoods where at least 51% of the population are low-moderate income. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) determines which communities are eligible for the funding and works with the City of Pittsburgh to communicate these changes and to administer this funding.

In July, HUD released updated census and survey data, which will affect funding for the PHCA and a number of other neighborhoods in and around Pittsburgh. Census tract 605, Polish Hill, is now 41.73% low-moderate income, according to the updated income information. This number represents real improvement in the lives of many Polish Hill residents, and as such it's good news for the neighborhood.

This shift also means that the PHCA is facing funding cuts in the 2015-2016 fiscal year and beyond, which starts on September 1, 2015. District 7 Council office is working with us to determine how this will affect the PHCA. Here's what we know: it will mean that the organization will have less revenue for

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## The Pivotal Streets Residential Façade Grant Program returns for 2015



**The Pivotal Streets Residential Façade Renovation Grant Program** returns for the third year thanks to funding from the UPMC Health Plan. The grant matches the homeowner's contribution dollar for dollar up to \$5,000. For example, if the total façade project is \$10,000, the grant would be \$5,000 and the homeowner's responsibility would be \$5,000.

The application and detailed guidelines for the program are available now at the PHCA office, or can be downloaded at [phcapgh.org/projects/current](http://phcapgh.org/projects/current). The application deadline is March 31, 2015. An independent review committee, made up of architecture, design and construction professionals, will review applications and announce the winners of this competitive award by April 17, 2015.

There is a limited pool of funding available. The application process is competitive and not all eligible projects will receive funding. The grant is disbursed on a reimbursement basis, so all award-ees must pay the full cost of their project up front. Homeowners may hire a contractor or do the work themselves. If the homeowner is performing the work, only the material costs are eligible for a matching grant. Once the project is completed, the property owner will be reimbursed for the amount of the grant. All project sizes are encouraged, and any project with a minimum cost of \$500 will be eligible to apply for a grant.



Renovations should follow the guidelines and suggestions in the Pivotal Streets Design Book. Created by Loysen + Kreuthmeier Architects, the design book is specifically for Polish Hill, highlighting the neighborhood's varied architecture and suggesting

design concepts for projects ranging from under \$1,000 for micro renovations up to \$35,000 or more for extra-large renovations.

For more information on the Pivotal Streets Residential Façade Renovation Grant Program, email [phca@phcapgh.org](mailto:phca@phcapgh.org) or call 412.681.1950.

*Past Pivotal Streets projects include (top to bottom): 3208 Brereton Street, 3508 Melwood Avenue, and 3200 Downing Street.*

## Meet the 2015 PHCA board

Nine positions were open in the recent PHCA board election, and thirteen candidates accepted nominations. After years in which all candidates ran uncontested and positions remained vacant, this represented a record number of people who were willing to take on the responsibility and the extensive time commitment of being a PHCA board member. Many thanks to all the individuals who stepped forward as candidates. We are grateful that they were willing to make this commitment. We hope that all will remain as involved as ever.

There was also increased participation on the part of PHCA members. A large percentage of our membership took the time to return their ballots. It was very encouraging to see so many residents engaged and interested in the organization and its work in the neighborhood. Here are the ten individuals who will serve Polish Hill for the next year. (Still to be filled is the position of Secretary; the board will draft an individual to serve as Interim Secretary for this year.)



**John Rhoades**  
*(President)*  
John lives on Wiggins Street. Previously the Public Policy Initiatives Manager at the United Way, John is now a partner

in The Beauty Shoppe, which provides shared workspace and services for entrepreneurs, small companies, and freelancers. He also serves on the board of the Sprout Fund. John has helped out at cleanups and community events and is the chair of the Bylaws Committee, where he has served since 2012. John says, "I love living in Polish Hill. This is a truly unique place to live with so much to celebrate."



**Valerie Testa**  
*(Vice President)*  
Valerie lives on Dobson Street and is the stair steward for the nearby City Steps. Val works at Whole Foods Market where she is

an integral part of the Enright Community Garden. Founded with the help of Grow Pittsburgh, education and community building, as well as food donation are the primary focuses of the garden. Val also works with Churchview Farm coordinating volunteers and participating in all aspects of organic vegetable production.

Val loves gardening and is passionate about our neighborhoods green and open spaces and their potential to influence civic engagement. Her involvement in the community inspired her to attend the City's Civic Leadership Academy and to become involved in local issues. She has volunteered with the PHCA Green Team since 2010 and took over leadership of PHCA green and open space projects in 2012. Prior to being elected as Vice President, Valerie served on the PHCA executive board as Secretary. Her focus as a board member will continue to be on green and open space projects. Past projects include coordinating and participating in neighborhood clean ups, organizing two Love Your Block projects, an urban restoration project, and an edible garden where all the food is donated to a local food pantry.



**Kalie Pierce**  
*(2nd Vice President)*  
Kalie lives on Melwood Avenue with her husband Doug Weaver, a City of Pittsburgh firefighter, and their two teenagers. She runs a private

practice as a Licensed Professional Counselor, specializing in anxiety disorders and obsessive compulsive disorder. Kalie's interests include gardening, jogging, biking, and hiking. She is also an activist whose concerns include economic disparity, health and wellness for disadvantaged people, as well as political and environmental issues. Kalie's volunteer work for Polish Hill includes traffic calming, neighborhood outreach, and the Diversity and Inclusion committee, and she served as an interim director on the board in 2014. Kalie says, "I plan to spend my energy creating connections between the local groups in Polish Hill in order to bring neighbors together and help reach shared goals."

**Erica Moulinier** *(Treasurer)*  
Erica is a financial accountant. She was



formerly the controller at the Simple Way, a faith-based nonprofit in Philadelphia, and divided her time between that city and her house on Paulowna Street. Erica now works at Bowie & Co., an accounting firm based in Polish Hill. Erica's interests include cooking, crafting and music.

Erica is in the midst of her second term as treasurer. Since 2009, she has donated her professional services as an accountant to the PHCA. She also volunteers for community events and is on the Diversity and Inclusion committee. Her goals as a board member are to help the PHCA focus more on helping underserved residents and increasing our community building.



**Susan Atkinson**  
*(Director)*  
Susan lives on Brereton Street and is both a homeowner and landlord. She is a psychologist with a private practice and in her spare time she is an avid gardener, hiker, and skier.

Susan has served on the PHCA board under three previous presidents. The continuity of perspective she brings is invaluable as the board works to continue development that meets the needs of our membership and residents. Susan says, "I want to promote continued development of blighted properties into affordable family oriented residences. I value both the heritage of this neighborhood and the new energy that we're seeing, and wish to assist us in our journey to blend the old and the new."



**Mark Knobil**  
*(Director)*  
Mark lives on Bethoven Street and is a photographer and a freelance cameraman for film and television. He is also a property owner and a force for

thoughtful and creative development in Polish Hill, including the renovation of the building which holds the coffee shop, record store, and bookshop. Mark volunteers for community events, has donated generously to the PHCA, and helps to manage the three apartment units owned by the organization.

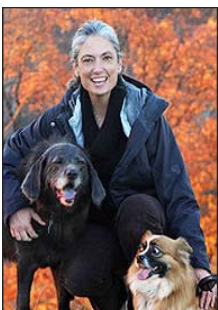
Now beginning his second term on the board, Mark would like to increase membership and people's involvement in the PHCA. He says, "It's important that we, all together, have a voice in the kind of neighborhood we want to have. Our voice is the PHCA, and I want our voice to continue to advocate and support local ownership of property in the neighborhood. That one thing can go a long way to promote all those things that we want our neighborhood to be."



**Catherine McConnell**  
(Director)

Catherine lives on Bethoven Street and (with her husband Mark Knobil) owns properties around Polish Hill. Formerly an artist and set designer for films and television, including the Mr. Rogers show, Catherine became a real estate agent and discovered a passion for community and helping people attain home ownership. Catherine previously served on the board from 2008-2013, as a director, and then Vice President. Her real estate expertise and generosity of spirit are huge assets to the organization and the community. Catherine volunteers for community cleanups, holiday events, and the arts festival. She has donated generously to the PHCA, including the Polish Hill Community Plan, and has helped raise money for the Polish Hill Arts Festival. She also volunteers her time to manage the three apartment units owned by the PHCA.

Catherine says, "I believe it's vital to have a community organization that attracts participation from our neighborhood as a whole. There is a lot happening in Polish Hill now that needs input from all of us and I'll continue to make connections within the community to help empower our neighborhood in shaping our direction and choices for the future."



**Myrna Newman**  
(Director)

Myrna lives on Melwood Avenue and can often be seen walking her two dogs through the neighborhood. In her professional life, Myrna is the Executive Director of Allegheny Cleanways/Keep

Pittsburgh Beautiful, a nonprofit that works to clear illegal dump sites in Pittsburgh.

Myrna is new to the board, but has volunteered for neighborhood cleanups and community events since she moved to the neighborhood.



**Josiah Parkinson**  
(Director)

Josiah lives on Flavian Street and is a radiologic technologist in cardiology at UPMC Passavant in McCandless. He is an avid film buff and music fan. He reads a lot, mostly fiction, and collects vintage sci-fi paperbacks. He also enjoys gardening.

Josiah began his involvement by helping out in the PHCA yard, then started volunteering for every activity, and finally joining the board, serving as a PHCA board member since 2012. His work on behalf of the PHCA and the neighborhood includes volunteering at community events, helping with maintenance at the PHCA property, working on neighborhood green spaces and at neighborhood cleanups, and copyediting on the newsletter. He was a member of the planning team for the Polish Hill Community Plan and has served on the Bylaws Committee.



**Ruth Rizner**  
(Director)

Ruth Rizner lives on Harmar Street and has long been actively involved with the community and local politics.

She is a highly respected member of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Church parish, serving as the president of the Rosary Society and the treasurer of the Pastoral Council. Ruth is also the chairperson of the 6th Ward Democratic Committee.

Ruth is a returning board member, reelected after serving as an interim director in 2014, and we are very glad to have her back. She previously served on the board of the Polish Hill Civic Association as vice-president and president, and headed the monument committee for many years. Ruth now serves on the PHCA Bylaws Committee.

*Funding changes, from front page*

operational costs such as salaries, taxes, utilities and office supplies. It will also mean that the PHCA will need to shift towards providing more direct services to low-income, disabled and elderly residents and spend less time on projects that impact the entire neighborhood. In order to continue to provide services to the entire neighborhood, the PHCA will need to identify and apply for alternate funding as well.

While this shift will be challenging for the PHCA, it provides a measure of just how much the neighborhood has improved in recent years. After decades in which Polish Hill was rated as a distressed neighborhood by both state and federal agencies, the fortunes of the community have improved. This is good news. Over the next several months we will continue to keep residents updated as to how the PHCA will evolve to continue to serve residents in the years ahead.

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**Event Calendar**

**April 7 | Community Meeting |**  
6:30—8:00 p.m. | West Penn  
Recreation Center (lower level)

**May 5 | Community Meeting |**  
6:30—8:00 p.m. | West Penn  
Recreation Center (lower level)

**May 30 | PHCA yard sale and  
bake sale | 11:00 a.m. — 6:00 p.m. |**  
3060 Brereton Street

**June 2 | Community Meeting |**  
6:30—8:00 p.m. | West Penn  
Recreation Center (lower level)

## From the PHCA archive: One family's photos offer glimpses of Polish Hill

While we occasionally use photos from the PHCA archive to illustrate a history article, there are a lot of wonderful photos that we haven't yet shared. Here, the images themselves tell the story. All of these photos were shared by former Polish Hill resident Doris Kwasnieski McNorgan. Doris has spent most of her adult life in Santa Ana, California, but she has many fond memories of Polish Hill. The Kwasnieski family, Edward (known as Kirby), Catherine, and their children Don and Doris lived in a ground floor apartment at the corner of Herron and Brereton Streets. Later the family moved down to Hancock street.

We love that in these very personal snapshots it's also possible to see a bit of the neighborhood and to get a sense of what it was like back in the 1940s, when Doris was growing up here. Doris particularly remembers the shops and businesses and notes that you didn't have to leave the neighborhood, as everything one could need was here. She says, "I don't think I knew there was anyplace but Polish Hill until I was about 8 years old!"



*Above: Edward Kwasnieski with kids Don and Doris at the intersection of Herron, Brereton and Hancock streets. The big building to the left is Penn School.*



*Above: Doris on Herron Avenue. Just visible in the background is Penn School, often referred to as Dinky School. The school was torn down in the 1980s to make way for John Paul Plaza.*



*Above: Doris and her brother Don on Brereton Street in the late 1940s.*

*Left: Doris on the railing along the sidewalk near the top of Brereton Street, about 1949.*



*Above: Mary Ann Kwasnieski, Doris' grandmother, at her old iron stove. Mary Ann lived on the third floor of an apartment that overlooked Phelan Way and the schoolyard.*



*Right: Doris' aunt and uncle near their home at the intersection of Herron Avenue and Dobson Street. In the background is Zydel's Caf  (now the Rock Room).*



*Left: A group poses on Brereton Street after a Memorial Day parade. Edward and Catherine Kwasnieski are the second couple from the left.*

*Below: Doris all grown up, posing with her mother in the courtyard behind their home.*



*Left: The family lived in the ground floor apartment in this building at the corner of Brereton and Herron (here, as it looked in the 1970s). The building was torn down in the 1990s and the site is now a public green space.*

**Do you have photos from Polish Hill past to share? Scan (at least 200 dpi) and email them to us, or bring in originals, which we will scan and return to you.**

## Traffic and transportation news



*Tire tracks are visible in the hillside at the Herron Avenue s-curve, just next to the Harding steps. The neighborhood sign was knocked down and the plantings destroyed by a speeding car.*

### Another incident on Herron Avenue highlights the need for traffic calming

Sometime during the night of December 8-9, a car drove up on the hillside at the Herron Avenue S-curve, knocking over the "Witamy do Polish Hill" sign and flattening the bushes and plantings. This was not the first time a speeding car has gone off the road here; the stone wall was badly damaged by another vehicle this fall. This location is right next to the City steps and a crosswalk, so the frequency of accidents is of particular concern.

Incidents like this highlight the need for long-term solutions to the problem of speeding and cut-through traffic. The issue is complicated. City traffic engineers and Zone 2 Traffic Division have examined the issues and advised that the best way to address the problem is to make it difficult for drivers to speed. If it is not as quick to cut through Polish Hill, more drivers will stay on the main roads, and the vehicles that do come through will move more slowly.

Another way to support traffic calming solutions is to file a 311 report. Tell the City how speeding and cut-through traffic affect you and your family, and what solutions you want to see.

### School buses: finding a safer place to stop

The intersection of Herron and Melwood is one of the locations where speeding traffic is a big problem. It is also where buses from schools such as St. Raphael, Maria Goretti, and

Woolslair stop to pick up or drop off students. A number of parents have shared their concerns with our office that this is not a safe place for buses to stop.

Last year, Zone 2 traffic division looked into this issue and informed us that the intersection of Melwood and Herron was not a safe location for a school bus stop because it was an area where traffic accidents were a regular occurrence. Another issue is the proximity to a bar, the Rock Room, where there have been drug busts. PHCA president John Rhoades has contacted the head of transportation for Pittsburgh Public Schools, and he is open to moving the bus stop. Both the PHCA and District 7 Council office staff have asked parents where they would prefer to have the buses stop. If you are a parent, please let us know your opinion on this.

### Final results of the traffic calming survey

We created the Polish Hill Traffic Calming Survey to collect feedback from residents about what traffic calming measures they want, and where. The survey was introduced at the October community meeting and we reported on the initial responses in the last newsletter. The survey was available for three months and was available online or on paper. Over 100 people took the survey.

The survey asked residents about their own methods of transportation, whether they thought that speeding and cut-through traffic are a problem and where they would like to see

traffic calming measures. Over 80% of respondents walk through the neighborhood as least weekly; over 60% walk on a daily basis. Over half of the respondents bike in Polish Hill at least occasionally; 15% are on their bikes daily.

90% said that speeding cars were a problem to some degree, with most of those rating speeding as a serious problem. Over 60% felt that cut-through traffic was a problem. The responses in these categories seemed to depend on where people lived. Residents on the most-traveled streets, such as Brereton, Dobson, Herron, Melwood, and Paulowna had daily experience with issues relating to speeding and cut-through drivers. Melwood and Herron were the two most-mentioned problem streets.

The majority of respondents support speed humps (not speed bumps, which are higher.) The most-requested location is Melwood Avenue, followed by Herron Avenue and Paulowna Street.

### A note on the bike route markings

A few responses to the traffic survey seemed to indicate that there is still some misunderstanding about the bike markings in Polish Hill.

The bike markings are part the City of Pittsburgh's 20 year traffic plan. The City hopes encourage more residents to ride bikes and to keep cyclists safe.

The only bike lane in Polish Hill is on the two-block stretch of Brereton Street, between 28th and 30th streets. Elsewhere, the bike symbols, called sharrows, simply remind drivers that cyclists also use the road. The route through Polish Hill has been an official City-recommended bike route for over twenty years, though only recently did public works get the budget to add the pavement markings.

Want more news and photos of Polish Hill?

Visit us online! Blogski has news, history items, photos, resources, and much more!

[phcapgh.org/blogski](http://phcapgh.org/blogski)

## Graffiti on the rise



**Residents and business** owners have noticed an increasing amount of graffiti around Polish Hill in the last year or so. Certain areas on the edges of the neighborhood, such as the Bloomfield Bridge and sections of Gold Way, have long been targets for graffiti. What's new is that homes and business in the central areas of the neighborhood are also being hit.

One high-profile incident last fall was the vandalism of the 100+ year old Mother's Bread sign on the side of a home on Dobson Street. The historic sign came to light after the neighboring building was demolished in 2007. Painted on the original wood siding, the sign is over a hundred years old and is one of the best-preserved examples in Pittsburgh of an early hand-painted advertising sign. The sign has been written about in many articles and has become one of the most-photographed sights in Polish Hill. Residents were upset and angry that the sign was vandalized. Jim Young, who owns and lives in the house, is researching how to remove the graffiti without damaging the original sign.



Other homes and buildings around the neighborhood center have also been hit with new graffiti, including the IHM School and the PHCA office. While graffiti activity has slowed during the winter months, it's likely that it will

resume as the nights get warmer. Residents whose schedules have them awake or out in the nighttime could keep an eye out for people doing graffiti. Call 911 if you see suspicious activity, and if possible, note descriptions or license plate numbers. Also call 911 if your home or business has been vandalized. When officers arrive, make sure to say you want to file a report. The City's recently revived Graffiti Busters crew will remove or cover graffiti on private property, but they require a police report number before the cleanup can be scheduled.



*Recent graffiti on the Mother's Bread sign (left), at a home on Phelan Way (above), and on the PHCA office (below).*

## Pittsburgh Mass Mob comes to IHM church

**Mass mobs** are groups that work to bring people to services at under-attended churches in cities such as Buffalo, Detroit, New York City, Rochester, Cleveland, and Philadelphia. The groups select old churches, advertise a particular date for Mass, attracting people who might not have known about the church. The idea has come to Pittsburgh, and on Sunday, December 28 the Pittsburgh Mass Mob came to the Immaculate Heart of Mary Church. After Mass there was a tour and a social so that people could visit and reconnect.

## Flavian Street erosion



**Flavian is a** small street, and getting smaller -- part of the street has been slowly washing away, leaving only a narrow section of pavement. That problem will be addressed sometime this year: the City of Pittsburgh has earmarked \$50,000 to repair the washed-out section. A date has not yet been set for the work.

## Shops of Brereton Street past in the Post-Gazette

**The Post-Gazette's Storefront** Project is an occasional feature that looks back at the main shopping streets of Pittsburgh neighborhoods. The first installment of the Storefront Project looked at Centre Avenue in the Hill District, the second focused on the Mexican War Streets, the third at Beechview.

The latest installment featured the storefronts of Brereton Street, including photos from the PHCA archive. The article ran in the Post-Gazette Magazine on Sunday, February 1. The article is still viewable online. There's also an interactive map of the street; you can click on buildings and see a then and now view. To see the interactive map, enter this address: <http://newsinteractive.post-gazette.com/storefront-polishhill/>.

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**POLISH HILL CIVIC ASSOCIATION**

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Blog: [phcapgh.org/blogski](http://phcapgh.org/blogski)

*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.*

**Polish Hill Civic Association Membership Application**

All memberships expire at the end of each calendar year.  
Join now to become a member through December 2015

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

(Street Address) \_\_\_\_\_

(City) \_\_\_\_\_ (State) \_\_\_\_\_ (ZIP) \_\_\_\_\_

**I'm not currently subscribed** to the PHCA e-blast which comes out every other week — sign me up!  
(If you are already receiving the e-blast, there is no need to re-subscribe)

EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

VOTING MEMBER _____(Polish Hill residents)	~ Or ~	SUBSCRIPTION MEMBER _____(Non-residents)
_____ New Member	~ Or ~	_____ Renewal

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Make checks payable to the Polish Hill Civic Association and mail with this application to:  
Polish Hill Civic Association, Membership Chair, 3060 Brereton Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15219

**Benefits of membership**



**Free courtesy admission to the Heinz History Center for yourself and up to three others**  
*(Show your PHCA membership card at the front desk)*



**Members who are also Polish Hill residents**  
*Can vote to elect PHCA board members*



**Knowing that you're supporting an organization that is working to make Polish Hill a better place to live!**