

# The Polish Hill Voice



A publication of the Polish Hill Civic Association

*We are the community ... we are one voice!*

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## November 2012

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*The Voice is a quarterly published in February, May, August and November.*

## Work begins on implementing community plan goals



**After the Polish Hill Community Plan** was completed in November 2011, the next step was to identify which projects should be tackled first. Several meetings were held in early 2012 to help create an implementation matrix -- a spreadsheet quantifying short- and long-term goals, ranking level of difficulty and cross-referencing project overlap. Creating this matrix, an essential component of a community plan, would help identify which projects were the highest priority. The community plan contains many worthy goals, ranging from longer-term projects involving funding and partnerships, to smaller initiatives that can be done on our own or solved by teaming up with local officials.

In June of this year, the new PHCA leadership began moving ahead on the items identified as priorities. Near-term efforts include traffic calming, where we already have been able to claim a few small victories, and expanding our volunteer base -- something we continue to do.

The long-term projects that combine a number of goals connect to locations in which new development or redevelopment of existing buildings could occur. One such project is the Brereton-Dobson Fire Site, where a 2007 blaze claimed three buildings near the symbolic center of our neighborhood. Another longer term goal is to help facilitate the eventual redevelopment of the Immaculate Heart of Mary School, which is now privately owned and sitting empty. And we're participating in the community-input phase of the Iron City Brewery site, which sits partly in Polish Hill

and partly in Lawrenceville. This project is important because of its size, proximity to the bus line and potential for a large-scale development that would impact Polish Hill residents and their quality of life.

When projects involve property owned by others, the PHCA's role is to act as an advocate for residents, and help ensure that the principles and guideposts from our community plan are represented during the public-input process. While the organization can't dictate what happens at sites we don't control, we can have a say in, and some influence over, the type of development that occurs. Many of these initiatives are ongoing and will unfold over several years. Some involve adjacent neighborhoods while others include multiple partnerships and citywide or even regional planning. We are fortunate to be armed with our own community plan, which brings strength to our collective voice.

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### Starting the Development Process for the Brereton Street Fire Site

*By Alexis Miller*

**On Nov. 7, 2007**, a fire that started at 3109 Brereton destroyed three homes. What began as a neighborhood tragedy will soon become an opportunity.

The Polish Hill Civic Association has been working with Pittsburgh Housing Development Corporation (PHDC) and its parent organization, the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) to secure this and several surrounding properties for future development. Other partners over the past five years have included the Design Center (formerly CDCP), Tai + Lee Architects, PHCA housing committee members and board directors. The Brereton-Dobson Fire Site Project includes three parcels with two vacant lots and four houses that front Brereton and Dobson streets. Although much of the work on the

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## From the PHCA

### President's Message

**This fall, the PHCA** is seeing a lot more change than just the leaves. Allow me to share some of our laundry list with you:

We're getting ready to vote on the largest revision to the PHCA bylaws in over a decade, which will ensure that the bylaws reflect the current and future state of the organization, residents and membership. We're working with Pittsburgh Housing Development Corporation on plans for new development on three parcels near the intersection of Brereton and Dobson streets, one of the biggest changes to our housing landscape in nearly a decade.

We worked with multiple City officials and departments to see some of the most improvements by the City to our crosswalks, traffic signage and stop signs in many years. We hosted a near record number of volunteers to clean up our streets, city steps, hillsides, public gardens and lots.

We marched in the Bloomfield Halloween Parade for the first time. We're about to start working with web designers on an exciting new website for our organization. We voiced our thoughts and concerns about major plans and development in the Strip District and former Iron City Brewery.

We reopened communication with the owner of Immaculate Heart of Mary School, and have been meeting with people to help find an interested third-party developer as well as requesting assistance from the Mayor's Office for ways to clean up the exterior of the site. We have hired a real estate and community development consultant to help us strategize and fundraise for these projects, and other renovation and facade improvements in the neighborhood.

As the winter chill sets in, we'll still be busy, so stop by, drop us a line, give us a ring or come to a community meeting and find out how you can help be a change-maker too.

Alexis Miller

### Redstone Candies Fundraiser

**Twice a year**, Polish Hill resident Julia Sinicki coordinates a Redstone Candies fundraiser on behalf of the PHCA. Product lists and order forms are now available at the PHCA office; orders are due with payment by November 16. To see the full Christmas selection in full color, log onto the Redstone Candies website (<http://www.redstonecandies.com>).

### Recommendations submitted for revisions to PHCA bylaws

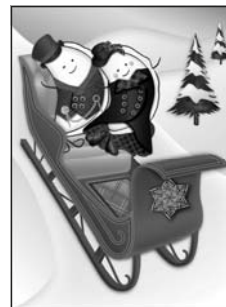
**A bylaws committee** began meeting in June 2012 to discuss revisions to the PHCA bylaws to make them more clear and applicable to how the organization currently operates. The committee is composed of Janice Heagy (board member and committee chair), Alexis Miller (PHCA president), Josiah Parkinson (board member), Tom Ogden (board member) and John Rhoades (subscription member). The committee also received assistance from the Community Technical Assistance Center.

The committee presented the proposed bylaw revisions at the membership meeting on October 2. Copies of the changes were also available at the PHCA office and on our website.

Voting on the revisions took place at the membership meeting on Wednesday, November 7, 2012. Members who were paid for calendar year 2012 and present at the November membership meeting were eligible to vote on the bylaw amendments. Members are also welcome to make motions for other changes to the bylaws. If the member-initiated revisions need more discussion or research, they will be voted on at a future membership meeting and treated as a separate amendment.

The bylaws are a living document and can be revised at any time as long as the revision is approved by the PHCA membership. Moving forward, it is the intention of the PHCA to review the bylaws annually.

### Again this year: P-Rogue™ holiday cards to benefit the PHCA



*The three holiday card designs by artist Myra Falisz. Each card carries the traditional greeting of Sto Lat, for 100 years of health and happiness.*



**This year the PHCA** will again offer holiday cards by Polish Hill artist Myra Falisz, featuring her pierogi characters, known as P-Rogues™. One design features a red sleigh with a pierogi couple moving through a snowy landscape; another shows a dancing pierogi girl wearing a colorful Polish costume. The third design sports a festive P-Rogue couple coasting downhill on a red tandem bike. All cards include the phrase of celebration, Sto Lat, wishing you 100 years of great joy and good cheer.

Pricing: six cards for \$15 (plus \$2.50 shipping); payable by cash or check. Choose whether you prefer all six of one design, or a mixed set with two of each. Cards also are sold individually for \$3.50. For more information, email [phca@phcapgh.org](mailto:phca@phcapgh.org), or call us at 412.681.1950. Cards can be purchased at the PHCA office, 3060 Brereton St., Pittsburgh, PA 15219, Tuesday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m. until 6 p.m. Proceeds from selling the cards will help support community projects.

Want to continue receiving the Voice?

Use the form on page 11 to renew for 2013!



# News and Announcements



## New owners for Lili Cafe



Photo by Leslie Clague

**Lili Cafe now** has new owners: Heidi Tucker and Mark Clowney bought the business from Rob Levkulich, who opened Polish Hill's first coffee shop in June 2010 and named it after his young daughter. Heidi and Mark have repainted and made a few changes to the decor, but the name will remain, and it's still the same friendly, welcoming place.

Heidi has been a familiar face behind the counter for most of Lili's existence, and she's devised some of the most-loved dishes at the coffee shop. She has also organized art shows and special dinners featuring guest cooks. Heidi and Mark plan to continue with new ideas and events to help make Lili even more of a neighborhood asset.

We wish Rob good luck in his future endeavors, which include renovating his house on Revere Street. And we welcome Heidi and Mark in their new roles as neighborhood entrepreneurs. It's good to know that a beloved neighborhood establishment is in good hands.

## BLOGSKI

*With new postings and pictures each week, Blogski is the most up-to-date source of news and information for residents and friends of Polish Hill.*

**Just type in this address:  
blogski.phcapgh.org**

## PHCA receives donations on the Pittsburgh Day of Giving

**October 3** was a special day for the PHCA and hundreds of other area nonprofits -- it was the Pittsburgh Gives 2012 Day of Giving. The Day of Giving is an annual event presented by the Pittsburgh Foundation. It features one day in which donations made to eligible nonprofits are increased by a percentage of matching funds. During the event, more than 20 people donated to the Polish Hill Civic Association. Supporters rallied both nearby and far away -- from our own backyard to Maryland, California and even Hawaii.

The October 11 announcement from the Pittsburgh Foundation confirmed that the amount of matching funds for nonprofits in Allegheny County will be 10.5 cents for every dollar received.

We value the opportunity to be part of the event and are delighted by the number of supporters. Many thanks to all the donors and to the Pittsburgh Foundation for spearheading the Day of Giving, which raised more than \$8.4 million dollars for hundreds of participating nonprofits from Allegheny and Westmoreland counties.

## Become a member or renew your membership

**If you haven't** renewed your membership for 2013, this is the time to do it! A wonderful benefit of becoming a member of the PHCA is that you can visit the Heinz History Center free of charge. All you have to do is let the front desk staff know that you are a member of a Heinz History Center Affiliate, and show them your PHCA membership card.

The museum is kind enough to extend this courtesy to the PHCA as an affiliate, and we are very happy to be able to offer this wonderful benefit to our members. Don't miss the fourth floor, where they have a large photo-mural showing a view of Polish Hill.

## One Young World Delegates get a warm welcome in Polish Hill



Photo by Leslie Clague

**On October 20, 2012,** Polish Hill participated in a unique and inspiring event that brought over 1,000 young leaders from all over the world into over 100 homes and communities in Pittsburgh. These leaders were in Pittsburgh for the third annual One Young World Summit. Home dinners, coordinated by the World Affairs Council of Pittsburgh, were a special way to welcome them and introduce them to Pittsburgh and Pittsburghers. Polish Hill Civic Association President Alexis Miller and owner of Lili Cafe, Heidi Tucker, hosted a potluck dinner in Lili Cafe that was attended by over 30 Polish Hill residents and friends.

The conversations were as warm and wonderful as the food that everyone brought. The enthusiasm and interest that the four One Young World delegates from Boston, London, The Netherlands and India had about Polish Hill, Pittsburgh and the PHCA was undeniable. Likewise, the neighborhood's interest in and friendliness towards these four visitors was overwhelming. Everyone left that evening with big smiles and we all waved to their departing bus until they were out of sight.

Myra Falisz and Alexis Miller were lucky enough to see them again on Sunday. Tom Ogden contacted us earlier that day, offering to sponsor destination gifts for our guests. We drove Downtown on Sunday night and met the four of them in the lobby of their hotel to give them each a special Polish Hill memento -- *Pierogi moon over Polish Hill* t-shirts (designed by Myra)! They were so touched by the gesture that several of them planned to put the shirts on right away. They also

## More News and Announcements

*Continued from previous page*

couldn't stop thanking us for such a wonderful experience and telling us that the dinner was one of the best parts of their five days in Pittsburgh. As a token of their appreciation, they gave us a copy of the book "Interventions" that had been give to them by the closing speaker, former United Nations secretary-general Kofi Annan. Inside the book, they wrote the following message:

*Dear Polish Hill Community,  
Thank you for your warm hospitality and touching our lives.  
It is a night we will always remember!  
We hope your community prospers and that our paths cross again in the near future.  
Kindest Regards,  
Charles, Megan, Karan and Louise*

In return, we wish them all the best and thank everyone who attended and helped make this evening so energizing and dynamic!

### John Paul Plaza celebrates its 30th Anniversary



*Photo by Carl Bergamini*

**At the intersection** of Herron Avenue and Hancock Street, near the top of Brereton, is Polish Hill's only high-rise building: John Paul Plaza, a 70-unit, affordable senior-living facility for those on fixed or limited incomes.

Named for Pope John Paul II, the first Polish pope, John Paul Plaza was built in 1982 under the direction of Rev. John M. Jendzura, C.S.Sp., former Pastor of Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, and Sister M. Coleman Conroy, OSF, the Executive Director of Christian Housing, Inc., and Sister Veronica, OSF. Presently, the Plaza is under Housing Management Services, and Sister Eileen Magill, OSF, is the Executive Director. The Property Manager at John Paul Plaza is Sister Lorita Kristufek, OSF, a member of the School Sisters of St.

Francis from Mt. Assisi Convent in Bellevue (North Hills), PA.

The facility supplies an important resource for seniors. Older Polish Hill residents who no longer wish to have the burden of maintaining a home can still stay in the neighborhood. The facility also is home to many people who came to Polish Hill from elsewhere. On warm days, residents sit outside on the terrace to chat and visit.

A celebration was held on October 21 to commemorate the 30th anniversary of John Paul Plaza. A special Mass of Thanksgiving was celebrated on October 21 by Rev. Joseph Swierczynski at Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church on Brereton Avenue. Following the Mass there was a catered dinner for Plaza tenants and invited guests. To highlight the occasion, Johnny Angel and the Halos performed a concert.

The PHCA would like to offer congratulations to the staff, management and residents of John Paul Plaza on the occasion of this anniversary, and wish them many more successful years to come.

### Polish Hill represented in the Bloomfield Halloween parade



*Photo by Mark Knobil*

**The PHCA was proud** to participate in the Bloomfield Halloween parade -- a first for any neighborhood organization, according to Janet Scullion of the Bloomfield Citizens Council. PHCA board members marched to the music of Lungs Face Feet and the May Day Marching Band. The musicians also brought along some dancers and jugglers. The PHCA was happy to part of Pittsburgh's only remaining nighttime parade, which organizers say drew a record crowd this year. We look forward to bringing even more musicians and performers to next year's parade!

### Helping to control the stray cat population: please spay or neuter your cat

**Polish Hill resident** Judy Vertullo and some of her neighbors on Dobson Street are concerned cat lovers who try to take care of the stray and feral cats that live nearby. This population of stray cats keeps growing, due in part to unspayed male cats -- not strays, but cats whose owners allow them to roam. Judy has asked us to remind residents not to let their cats wander around the neighborhood if they're not spayed or neutered. Judy says the un-neutered domestic male cats are fathering a lot of kittens. Sadly, these kittens are born outside and don't live long.

It's the responsible thing to make sure your cat doesn't help make more cats -- and cost is not an excuse to not spay or neuter your pets. The City of Pittsburgh Animal Control has a free spay-neuter program and they'll take up to five animals from each family. For an application, call 412.255.2036.

## Event Calendar

Nov/Dec/Jan

### Nov 7 | Monthly Community Meeting

6:30 p.m. | West Penn Recreation Center (Senior Center, lower level)

### Nov 14 | Council-to-Go with Councilman Patrick Dowd

7:00 p.m. | PHCA office, 3060 Brereton St.

### Dec 4 | Monthly Community Meeting and Holiday Potluck Dinner

6:30 p.m. | West Penn Recreation Center (Senior Center, lower level)

### Dec 7 | Light up the Street Night

6:30 p.m. | Intersection of Brereton and Dobson streets and at the PHCA office

### Jan 9 | Council-to-Go with Councilman Patrick Dowd

7:00 p.m. | PHCA office  
3060 Brereton St.

### Feb 5 | Monthly Community Meeting

6:30 p.m. | West Penn Recreation Center (Senior Center, lower level)

## Iron City Brewery development public meetings highlight differing visions for the “highest and best use” of a historic site

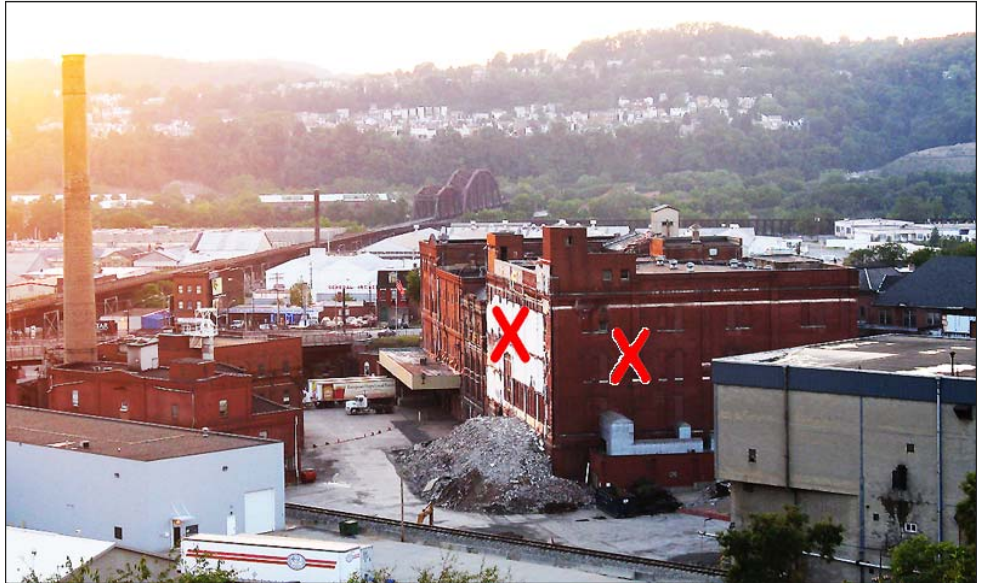
By Leslie Clague

As we go to press, the master planning process for the Iron City Brewery site which began this spring, is still under way. A steering committee, made up of nearby community stakeholders including PHCA President Alexis Miller and District 7 Councilman Patrick Dowd, has been meeting with DLA+ Architecture and Interior Design, the firm hired to help create the master plan. Collier Development, the property owner, and Lawrenceville Corporation, led by Executive Director Matt Galluzzo, pledged to secure both private and publicly sourced funds for the master plan. Matt Galluzzo is also leading the steering committee and its process of gathering public input during the planning.

October 16 was the second public engagement session for the Iron City Brewery site planning. At this meeting, DLA+ presented different possibilities for developing the site. The meeting was attended by more than 40 people, including several PHCA board members and Polish Hill residents.

The most drastic of the development options would involve demolition of 50 percent of the buildings on the site. These include very large metal-frame storage buildings from the 1980s and brick structures from the 1930s and 40s. Also being considered for demolition are two 1890s structures from the largest block of buildings on the site, which are probably the most visible structures as viewed from Polish Hill. DLA+ told meeting attendees that structural engineers have stated that the buildings are not safe. This doesn't mean that the buildings cannot be saved, only that it would be very expensive to do so. The structural problems may have been worsened by the tons of rubble piled up against them from a 1980s building that was demolished a couple of years ago.

The Iron City Brewery site is large, extending along Sassafras Street in the valley under the Bloomfield Bridge. Whatever development happens here will be a big project. The site is zoned urban industrial, which gives leeway to the developer. All plans presented include im-



*The Iron City Brewery site as seen from Polish Hill. The large 1890s brick structures marked with Xs in the photo might be demolished as part of the development.*  
(Photo by Leslie Clague)

proved vehicle access from Liberty Avenue as well as multiple pedestrian paths. The development would feature office space, possibly some apartments and perhaps a hotel (the developer has already been contacted by a national hotel chain interested in the site). There likely would be some retail and restaurants, and possibly other amenities. It was also mentioned that for a development of this size, 800 – 900 parking spaces would be required, composed of both surface parking and a new parking garage.

Most of the attendees at the Iron City Brewery meeting indicated that they valued the historic character of the site as a whole, and many felt that preservation of all brick structures (if not the large 1980s warehouses) was of great importance. The meeting ran over the scheduled time due to a spirited discussion, becoming heated at points, about the historic value of the site. The debate focused mainly on the value of spending millions to save and repurpose old buildings vs. replacing them with new buildings. Some presenters became impatient at what they perceived as an overwhelming concern for preservation over the “highest and best use” of the site. The definition of “highest and best use” varied according to who was speaking. The

location of the site makes the clash of visions almost inevitable -- it borders four neighborhoods, is surrounded by residential streets, and conveniently located near the busway and downtown.

In particular, Lawrenceville and Polish Hill are seeing property values increase partly due to the scale and historic feel of their communities. For stakeholders from these neighborhoods, the need for a sensitive, preservation-focused development of the Iron City Brewery site seems clear. Yet a number of times during the second community meeting, the presenter made a point of saying that while public input can inform or influence the process, it won't dictate what the developer ultimately will do. But that doesn't mean speaking up is futile.

We urge all Polish Hill residents to acquaint themselves with the progress of this development and weigh in with your comments now. Carol Peterson, a member of the nonprofit advocacy group Lawrenceville Stakeholders, has been closely involved in the site from the beginning. She states, "Although [Collier Development] bought the property aware of the prohibition against demolishing its buildings, I think they have use for a couple of the buildings at most, and community folks are the only thing that makes them think of demolition penalties as anything more troublesome than a parking ticket."

*Continued on page 8*

# Traces of Previous Occupants

By Leslie Clague

A lot of people who have purchased and are renovating houses in Polish Hill have mentioned finding interesting things in the process. It seems there are still a lot of washboards in basements; that many housewives plugged holes with rags, or lined cabinets with old newspaper; that every man kept a can of nails and screws, and perhaps a bottle of whiskey.

In the course of renovating my house, there have been many of these small discoveries: a tiny brass toy animal tucked behind a baseboard, perhaps intentionally -- to hide it from an acquisitive younger sibling? The tools left behind in the basement -- were they no longer useful? And the way a hole from a missing baluster was carefully patched -- other balusters were replaced; why not that one?



Like the many layers of wallpaper, in floral patterns of different eras, each discovery suggested a story. I became aware of the stream of people who had passed through the house.

I asked other Polish Hill homeowners what traces of previous occupants they had found. The responses were intriguing, oddly personal, and sometimes cryptic. The contents of our homes show the paths of our everyday, most private existence. Most of us never imagine that others will see these details, but something is always left behind, no matter how thorough the cleaning.

Tom Ogden, who lives on Melwood Avenue, found numerous empty whiskey bottles stashed in the rafters of the laundry room. He kept one, with the brand "Chickencock Whiskey" and the picture of a rooster on the label. With the implications of empty whiskey bottles in mind, Tom wondered, "Maybe this is not the story you were looking for?"

*Left: A patch over the hole from a missing baluster; a tiny brass animal (with a bottle cap, for scale).*

*Right: Chickencock whiskey bottle that Tom found tucked in the basement rafters.*

*(Photos by Leslie Clague)*



Marc Rettig, of Bethoven Street, said that the previous owners of his house diligently removed everything, but there are a few pieces from the owner before them, Harry Harenski. Harry was a well-known fixture in Polish Hill, living in the same house from sometime in the 1940s until selling it in 1999. Harry was over 100 years old at the time, and when he sold the house he made Denny and Cheryl (who sold the house to Marc) make two promises. First, if and when they sold the house, they must sell it to someone who wanted to live in the neighborhood. And second, that Harry's relief of the Last Supper must stay with the house.

Marc says, "There's still a little construction dust on it. Sorry, Harry. When my renovation is complete I'll find a place of honor for the Last Supper."

Marc also found a galvanized metal dairy delivery box, "Property of Menzie Dairy," and a small metal toolbox containing shoeshine materials. Oh, and a box of suppositories, and a medicine bottle.

Marc's house has not had many owners, and he says, "The fact that Harry lived there so long gives the place a sense of history I definitely feel as I live in and



*Harry Harenski's Last Supper relief, and everyday items of yesteryear: Glover's Hair Application Mange Medicine, and an elegantly labeled box of suppositories.*

*(Photos by Marc Rettig)*



work on the house. Harry played basketball for the Immaculate Heart of Mary church team in 1915! He fought in World War I. He worked as a machinist, coming back to this house each day. There's something sentimental and lovely about these details, and these small items found in the house help make those stories concrete."

Alida Baker's house on Paulowna Street was previously occupied by a priest. Naturally, there were lots of religious objects, such as ornate gold plastic frames with pictures of the crucifixion and ornate gold metal switch plates. She says that there were also a lot of cup hooks, all over the house, probably to string clotheslines to dry laundry.

More mysterious to the new owner were some chalk markings over the doorways. Following renovation work, three of them remain. One is over the door leading down to the basement and that reads "20+K+M+B-10." There are two more over doors in the basement; both read "20+K+M+B+08." Long time Polish resi-



Chalk markings over the doorways in Alida Baker's house. (Photos by Alida Baker)

dents might recognize the marks as the Twelfth Night blessing from the central European tradition. Each year during the Feast of the Three Kings, the occupant would have taken blessed chalk and inscribed numbers representing the date and the initials of the Magi, separated by crosses, above doorways in his house.

When we move on, these houses will probably remain and shelter others. Some future resident will find that small object we lost or notice an idiosyncratic repair. Perhaps, like so many of the people I spoke with, those who come after us will look at these traces of our existence and be charmed and fascinated. Perhaps they will choose to preserve some of these small details, in remembrance of those who lived there before.



Traffic study, continued from page 9

The point of the study was to test the hypothesis that men are more likely than women to run stop signs. Anjelica chose the intersection of Dobson and Hancock because she felt it would be the most convenient place to observe traffic because the outdoor seating at Lili Cafe offers a perfect view of the intersection.

She observed the stop sign for a total of 47 minutes. Out of the 90 motorists who arrived at the stop sign during that time period, 20 of them came to a complete stop. Of those 20, 11 were female and nine were male. This means that 70 motorists did not come to a complete stop. Of those 70, 27 were female and 43 were male. Anjelica noted that one of the motorists who did not come to a complete

stop was a male police officer. Of the drivers who came through the stop sign in a 47-minute period, 52 were men and 38 were women.

Although this was a small, one-time study, it supports what residents and the PHCA have been telling the City: stop signs are not enough to slow down speeding drivers; more is needed. We will continue to work with officials to find ways to make Polish Hill safer for pedestrians and cyclists.

## Restoration of native trees to help reclaim Melwood Avenue green space

By Valerie Testa



**There's a lot** of green space in Polish Hill. We aren't in the middle of a forest or anything, but there are enough patches of lovely shades of green to remind us that we are lucky to have so much urban open space.

Some of this space is on surfaces that otherwise aren't suitable for construction or landscaping -- like my giant cliff of a back yard or the hillside that leads down to the East Busway. On the other hand, we have several sites that neighbors help maintain for everyone to enjoy. A few that come to mind are Maly Park, the Melwood parklett, and more recently, the parklett at the corner of Brereton and Hancock. These spaces are established and open for us to enjoy.

Over the past few years, we've been trying to get another area of the neighborhood uncovered from a blanket of invasive species. The site is located under the Melwood Bridge, and until the 70s, was a tot lot for the neighborhood kids. Over the years,

knotweed and grape vine have established a strong hold there. With the help of a Sprout Fund grant, and countless hours from volunteers, we have been able to decrease the tenacity of certain plants growing there by means of physical extraction. No chemicals have been used on the site, and we are trying various methods to keep it that way.

One method of controlling knotweed is to create an environment that is inhospitable to its growth. This can be done by creating a healthy tree canopy to shade out the plant. Armed with this knowledge, I contacted Tree Pittsburgh and asked for their help on restoring the area with trees that are best suited to the former tot lot site.

It may seem counterintuitive to remove trees to create a canopy of tree coverage. One of the many factors in making this decision is the current tree stock growing at the site. Some of them are just as invasive as knotweed. There are several mulberries, a couple of silver maples, and several *Ailanthus altissima* (Tree of Heaven). With careful planning and the support of neighbors, several of these trees have been marked for removal by the city's forestry department.

*Ailanthus*, mulberry, knotweed and wild grapevine share a common thread. They like to grow in urban spaces that have been cleared of its original growth. While this can be looked at as a way of the land reclaiming itself, I choose to look at it as an opportunity to take the land back to its original state of varied trees and shrubs.

We'll be planting approximately 20 seedling trees at the site on November 27. If you'd like to participate in the planting or would like to learn more about the upkeep of the site until the trees get established, please contact me. The success of this restoration project and the possibility of doing similar projects around the neighborhood will be a learning experience for everyone involved. If you're interested in participating, or learning more about this project, please email [valerie@phcapgh.org](mailto:valerie@phcapgh.org) or call 412.537.2752.



*Fire site development, continued*

project may not be evident right now, there will soon be visible activity and multiple opportunities for community engagement.

During the creation of the recent Polish Hill Community Plan, the site was identified as a high priority and a creative opportunity for innovative, sustainable mixed-use development in the center of our most historic and culturally significant streets. The PHDC currently owns these three parcels and manages tenants at two of the properties on Dobson Street.

In October, PHDC put out a request for proposal (RFP) to demolish two vacant and condemned houses at 3111 Brereton Street and the house behind it at 3110 Dobson Street. Over the winter and spring, the PHCA will work in partnership with PHDC to solicit community input on development at this site. The goal of this pre-development design phase is to produce an inspired, community-based preliminary site plan that reflects the neighborhood's desire for moderate-income affordable housing and commercial space, incorporating all aspects of sustainability: environmental, social and economic. This step will ensure that the development principles established in our plan are translated into specifications for the site that will then be included in the PHDC's RFP. The purpose of the RFP is to look for a private developer interested in purchasing this site from PHDC and then developing it. By sharing your best and brightest ideas to include in the RFP, Polish Hill residents can help shape what is built here.

Because of its central location in the community, the Brereton-Dobson Fire Site has always had a highly visible, economic and sociological influence. The PHCA believes strongly that the scale and potential impact of this project on the neighborhood requires community feedback and ultimately more detailed studies, but this process will not be starting from scratch. Based on ideas that came from the Community Plan process, some possible solutions may include small commercial spaces, move-in condition homes, sustainable architecture, co-

operative/co-housing, green space and innovative mixed-use development. What are your ideas? Stay in touch with us as this development grows.

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## How our community plan reaches citywide strategy

by Myra Falisz

**Several PHCA board** members represented Polish Hill at the MOVEPGH kick off meeting in February and subsequent public-comment meetings held in early August. MOVEPGH is the first time the City is putting together a combined initiative that features multi-modal transportation, a bike/pedestrian plan and a street design manual. The initiative is part of PLANPGH, the City's first ever comprehensive plan for growth over the next 25 years. The process is open and inclusive, focusing on public participation and the opportunity to incorporate ideas from neighborhood plans into a citywide vision.

During the August public-comment sessions, Myra Falisz, Catherine McConnell, Alexis Miller and Valerie Testa sat with City and transportation design planners, presenting the principles established for the Transportation & Gateways section of our community plan. All four board members focused on the cut-through and speeding challenges, as well as the positive aspects of our location as a pivot point between downtown and neighborhoods east. The group was able to share a unified vision with a variety of planning officials.

PHCA representatives volunteered a total of ten hours spanning three sessions and concentrated on two main areas of concern. The group communicated ideas for transforming Bigelow Boulevard into a complete street safely shared by pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists, and also advocated for a walking and biking green corridor along Gold Way to Melwood.

They spoke passionately about Bigelow as a major connector from all neighborhoods east to downtown, especially Polish Hill, Oakland and the lower Hill District. The goal was to help the City and transportation design team appreciate that Bigelow presents an amazing opportunity to move people safely and

scenically towards downtown, while enjoying the vistas of Frank Curto Park and the City skyline along the way. The passionate lobbying brought initial results. Bigelow Boulevard, envisioned as a complete street accommodating bikes and pedestrians, made the slideshow of re-imagined possibilities at Wednesday evening's presentation.

Most importantly, the PHCA formed an alliance with Patrick Roberts, the principal transportation planner for Pittsburgh's Department of City Planning. Interestingly, Patrick is a car-free project manager for the MOVEPGH initiative. He was not familiar with Gold Way and Melwood until the PHCA team kept bringing it forward during the sessions.

On Wednesday evening, the last day of the initial planning phase, Patrick told us that members of the MOVEPGH team, including himself, went for a bike ride earlier that day so they could experience the corridor and how it might be transformed. This is the best result we could hope for. Not only did we get the gateway on his radar, but we also inspired him to appreciate firsthand its potential as a greener, safer way for pedestrians and bikes to travel between Oakland and Polish Hill.

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### *Iron City Brewery, continued from page 5*

Commenting on a recent Blogski post, Carol explained, "... The Pittsburgh Historic Review Commission designated the Iron City complex for protection as a city historic site, preventing demolition of its significant buildings, as a result of Lawrenceville and Polish Hill residents working together to nominate the property. So, community opinion and activism have already impacted what can be done there."

Iron City Brewery has long been a quiet, little-noticed site down the hill, but that's going to change in the next year or so — and what happens in this location will affect our neighborhood, for better or for worse. The next public meeting will be held on November 27 in Building T along Liberty Avenue at 6:00 p.m. Meeting presentation files and updates can be viewed at [www.lvpgh.com](http://www.lvpgh.com). Please consider coming out and adding your voice to the process.

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## Parallel actions help get a much-needed crosswalk into place

By Leslie Clague

**In early September**, a neatly painted four-way crosswalk mysteriously appeared at the intersection of Melwood and Finland streets. This intersection is one of the problem spots along a street where residents have been suffering the impact of speeding and careless drivers for years. The PHCA recently had been successful at securing a stop sign at Gold Way and Denver along this traffic-challenged corridor. The group also had been lobbying with the City to paint a crosswalk at the Melwood – Finland intersection.

As it turned out, the crosswalk wasn't put there by the City. It was painted by persons unknown who were quickly dubbed "the Crosswalk Vigilantes." PHCA President Alexis Miller contacted the City to let them know that while the organization didn't initiate this action (and doesn't know who did), we share the same concern that motivated it. Every resident we heard from liked the crosswalk and hoped it would remain.

Kalie Pierce, who lives near the intersection with her husband and kids, said, "I spend a good amount of time on my porch and at the community table near this intersection, and have observed a significant increase in folks obeying the stop signs, which had in the past been either less noticeable or easier to ignore. We have children and pets as do many other homeowners in the area, the simple addition of some paint on the road is a lovely method of attracting attention to safety and changing driving behaviors. I hope the city is too busy solving actual problems to spend resources removing this improvement to our neighborhood."

Eric Woodward's family lives right on the corner of Melwood and Finland. He stated, "I can say without a doubt that these crosswalks have made a huge difference. I am very proud to live in a community whose members go above and beyond to look out for one another." Mark Knobil of Bethoven Street declared, "Bravo! This makes me so proud of Polish Hill! It is the perfect



*The hand-painted crosswalk looked quite official. Photo by Leslie Clague.*

solution. And drivers seem much more aware that this is a real stop sign."

Following a PHCA e-blast and Blogski post about DIY traffic calming, the hand-painted crosswalk attracted wide media attention, including articles in the Post-Gazette and the Tribune, and segments on all three local television stations. A small Associated Press item about the crosswalk was picked up by news outlets across the country, and even made the lead-in for National Public Radio's Morning Edition. The media attention clearly helped bring results. During his interview with KDKA's Mary Robb Jackson, the head of Public Works, Rob Kaczorowski, said that city crews would be installing larger stop signs at the Melwood – Finland intersection and would paint a new, regulation crosswalk. Even better, Public Works also added traffic calming elements to the Dobson – Hancock intersection, another site where cars tend to speed through. The PHCA had also been lobbying diligently for painted crosswalks at this second location, and was pleased the City responded to requests for both locations.

The vigilante crosswalk painting reinforced efforts already under way, and in the process, helped make the voices of residents heard. PHCA President Alexis Miller said, "The actions of the crosswalk painters speak louder than any statement I could make about the way the neighborhood feels about traffic and speeding."

It's good news that one location where traffic calming was badly needed now has those elements in place. But the Melwood – Finland intersection is one location on one street. Speeding, careless drivers and too much cut-through traffic are problems all over Polish Hill. The PHCA is continuing to work to get

more traffic calming elements in place. Board member Valerie Testa has been working with Officer Kaine of Zone 2 to advocate for speed humps to slow down drivers. In October, Officer Kaine installed black boxes at a few sites to gather data on speeding that may help convince the City that stronger measures are needed. Officer Kaine also is interested in teaming up with us to determine whether a 15 MPH speed limit along the Melwood -- Gold Way corridor is feasible.

We also need the help of residents with this project. The City hears from the PHCA a lot, but what makes a situation a priority is for the City to hear from multiple residents. The City's 311 center can be used by concerned residents to report traffic issues, and to request things like new stop signs or a reduction in the speed limit. In the City of Pittsburgh, dial 3-1-1. Outside of Pittsburgh, call 412-255-2621. All calls to 311 are answered by a live operator from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. At any time, you may leave a voice or text message for the 311 Response Center by dialing or texting 412-573-9736. Another way to reach 311 is to use the online form, available at <http://www.pittsburghpa.gov/311/form>.

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### Small traffic study supports residents' belief that stop signs are not slowing drivers

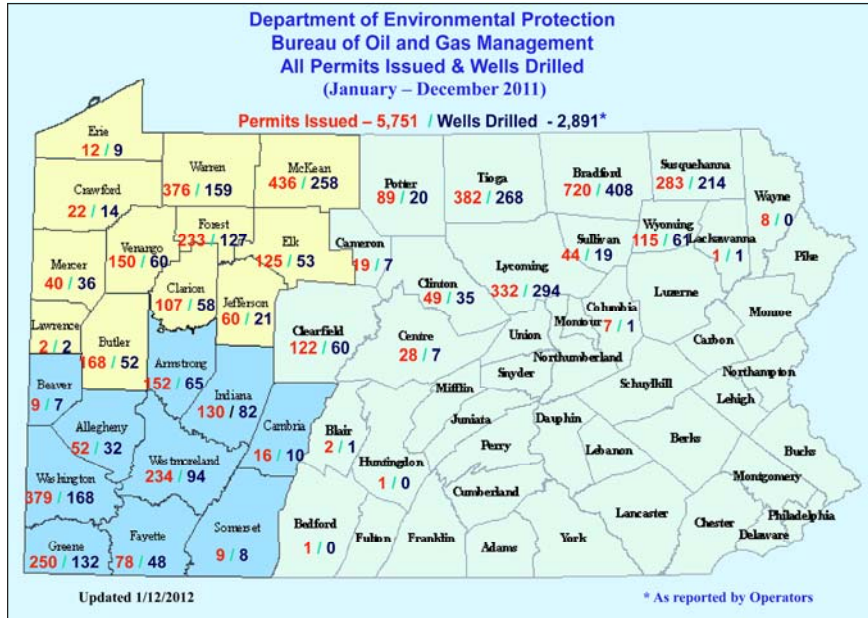
**In October** the City painted a crosswalk at the intersection of Dobson and Hancock streets, something that residents and the PHCA had been requesting for some time. The intersection already had stop signs, but drivers often seemed to ignore them. As in the case of the Melwood -- Finland intersection, Public Works initially declined the request to add crosswalks. It was residents and business owners, observing the intersection day after day, who noticed that the stop signs weren't stopping drivers and continued to advocate for crosswalks.

A more methodical approach supported what residents had noticed. In July, Polish Hill resident Anjelica Joy Miskanin did a small traffic study at the intersection of Dobson and Hancock for a graduate class in research methods.

# Councilman Patrick Dowd Introduces Mineral Extraction Legislation to City Council

By Nathaniel Hanson, from the Office of Councilman Patrick Dowd

On Tuesday, September 25, Councilman Patrick Dowd introduced legislation that, if passed, would create strict zoning protections for City of Pittsburgh residents by regulating and restricting natural gas drilling in the City of Pittsburgh. Councilman Dowd's legislation would establish much needed procedural requirements and land use standards to regulate drilling and protect citizens and their environment.



Oil and gas drilling permits issued in Pennsylvania in 2011. Image from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection.

The legislation allows for the creation of Mineral Extraction Districts. To be approved, proposed MEDs would have to meet specific acreage requirements, as well as engage in an extensive public process that would include mandatory public hearings and also the approval of both the Planning Commission and City Council. The creation of regulative procedures will ensure protection of the City's land, water, as well as the health and safety of residents.

These points have lead to questions about how Councilman Dowd's proposed legislation relates to the current ban on natural gas drilling in the City. When passed by City Council, the drilling ban in Pittsburgh was a political statement, one that did not have judicial sustainable or enforceable provisions. To effectively protect citizens, City Council must enact zoning legislation that provides tangible and legal protection for its citizens.

If the current ban were to be challenged in court, there is a very good

chance that it would be overturned. Without zoning legislation in place to regulate and restrict drilling activities, the overturned ban would leave almost no municipal regulations for where, how and when drilling could take place in the City. The creation of zoning regulations and restrictions, including Councilman Dowd's requirements for a master planning process, informed neighboring community support, and baseline soil and water testing requirements, will allow for additional comprehensive protections for City residents.

Many have asked why Councilman Dowd's zoning legislation would be better equipped than the drilling ban to withstand a court challenge. The answer lies in the recent ruling by the Pennsylvania Commonwealth Court on the state law Act 13. Act 13 attempted to give the state government the power to override the right of cities and municipalities to individually zone and regulate drilling activities at the local level.

In its decision, the Commonwealth Court ruled that municipal governments have the fundamental right to zone at the local level based upon the unique needs of their residents. The Act 13 ruling provides judicial precedent for Councilman Dowd's zoning legislation, allowing for better-guaranteed protections for City residents than the drilling ban, for which there is little legal support.

Councilman Dowd's zoning legislation will provide increased legal protection for the City of Pittsburgh, while also ensuring that there are strictly defined procedures that hold natural gas companies accountable and help keep our environment clean.

Our office is happy to answer additional questions about the proposed legislation, as well as questions about the current ban. We can be reached by email at "mailto:district7@pittsburghpa.gov" [district7@pittsburghpa.gov](mailto:district7@pittsburghpa.gov) or by phone at 412-255-2140. Be sure to stay updated on the issue by regularly checking our website, [www.pittsburghpa.gov/district7](http://www.pittsburghpa.gov/district7), for more information.

### Seeking submissions for the February issue of the *Polish Hill Voice*!

Deadline	Publication Date	Months Covered
January 15	Early February	Feb/Mar/Apr

Submissions of news items, articles or photos relating to the interests and concerns of Polish Hill residents may be emailed to [phca@phcapgh.org](mailto:phca@phcapgh.org), or by mail to the Polish Hill Civic Association, 3060 Brereton Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15219. Images may be JPEGs (200 dpi or higher) or camera-ready art.

Due to space and content constraints, we may not be able to accept every submission. If you have any questions, please call us at 412.681.1950.

*Editor's note: This article is presented to inform residents about the details of upcoming legislation. Publication of this information does not imply endorsement on the part of the PHCA.*

# Polish Hill Civic Association Membership Application

Membership term is by calendar year.

Just \$5 makes you a PHCA member for January through December 2013

PLEASE PRINT ALL INFORMATION

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

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

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

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

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

I'm not currently subscribed to the PHCA e-blast which comes out every other week — sign me up!

REGULAR MEMBER _____(Polish Hill residents)	~ Or ~	SUBSCRIPTION MEMBER _____(Non-residents)
____New Member	~ Or ~	____Renewal

For office use only:

REC'D BY: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ GOT CARD \_\_\_\_\_ LOGGED \_\_\_\_\_

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



A free subscription to the *Voice* (4 issues a year)



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 get a vote on neighborhood issues!

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



**Polish Hill t-shirt**  
*The crowned eagle on a red or black shirt, in adult or youth sizes.*

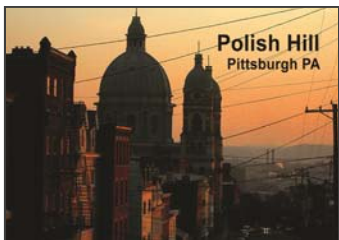
**Short sleeve \$15.00**  
**Long sleeve \$20.00**



**Pierogi pins and ornaments \$5**  
*Handmade from felt*



**Button .50 ea.**  
*Crowned eagle on a red background, 1/2" diameter*



**Postcard .50 ea.**  
*A colorful sunset view of Brereton Street by Mark Knobil*

Item	Qty	Cost	Total
<b>Red t-shirt</b> Circle size(s) desired Youth <b>S M</b> Adults <b>S M L XL XXL</b>		Short sleeve 15.00	
		Long sleeve 20.00	
<b>Black t-shirt</b> Circle size(s) desired Youth <b>S M</b> Adults <b>S M L XL XXL</b>		Short sleeve 15.00	
		Long sleeve 20.00	
<b>Polish Hill button</b>		.50 ea.	
<b>Pierogi pin</b>		5.00 ea.	
<b>Pierogi ornament</b>		5.00 ea.	
<b>Postcard</b>		.50 ea.	
<b>Postage</b>			5.00
<b>TOTAL</b>			

<b>Make your check out to the Polish Hill Civic Association .</b>		<b>Ship to:</b>
<b>Name</b>		
<b>Address</b>		
<b>Phone, email</b>		

## **POLISH HILL VOICE**

3060 Brereton Street  
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*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:**

**Dec 4**

**Jan 8**

**Feb 5**

***Community meetings are open to all residents of Polish Hill — you do not have to be a PHCA member to attend!***

**Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m.  
in the Senior Center on the lower level of the West Penn Recreation Center,  
450 30th Street at Paulowna Street.**



It's that time of year: United Way of Allegheny County is beginning their campaign for donations to your favorite local organizations. Please consider supporting the Polish Hill Civic Association. Our organization number is 258.