A Second Year of Pivotal Streets
Seven more properties improved with the PHCA's façade grant program

The Polish Hill Pivotal Streets Residential Façade Grant Program returned for the second year in February. Twenty applications were received. The pool of funding was limited and the independent review committee had a tough time narrowing down the field to choose the winning projects. Factors considered included whether projects were on Brereton, Dobson, or Herron, safety concerns, and whether the projects would create a substantial difference in the street-facing appearance of the house.

Ultimately, seven projects were awarded grants totaling $25,000. The maximum grant amount was $5,000, but most of the grants were for smaller amounts. Homeowners paid all project costs up front and the grants were paid as a reimbursement, after the projects were completed.

The last projects were completed in early October. We’re excited to see these seven properties all fixed up!

Polish Hill Traffic Calming Work
Input from residents can help make the case for traffic calming improvements

Some of the most difficult issues facing our neighborhood are related to traffic, particularly the number of vehicles that cut through Polish Hill and the speed at which many drivers move through our streets. The PHCA has been working with Zone 2 Police and their Traffic Division, Office of City Council District 7 (Deb Gross), and the City of Pittsburgh to find ways to slow down and perhaps reduce the traffic that comes through our neighborhood.

You may have recently seen electronic signs that read “Your Speed” on Brereton and Herron. These signs not only show cars their actual speeds, but they also collect data on the number of cars and speed of each car that passes the sign. Zone 2’s Traffic Division has been working with the PHCA on the placement of these signs and regularly shares the data that is collected. They have also posted officers on motorcycles at Herron and Melwood, in response to concern about the safety of children getting on school buses at this intersection.

For the City to install new traffic calming improvements such as crosswalks, signage or speed humps, it is important to present data that these measures are needed and that residents support various methods of traffic calming. To gather feedback from residents about speeding and cut-through traffic, we’ve created a traffic calming survey. Residents can fill out the survey online (http://phcapgh.org/public-safety/fill-out-the-polish-hill-traffic-calming-survey/) or pick up a copy at the PHCA office.

The initial responses to the survey show a lot of support for more speed humps in the neighborhood. The most-requested locations for speed humps: Melwood

Fall to Winter 2014
Thanks to departing board members

At the end of this year, the PHCA will say farewell to three valued board members: Director Tom Ogden, Vice President Myra Falisz, and President Alexis Miller. Each one has given many hours and skills to help the PHCA and to make Polish Hill a better place to live. We thank them for their years of service to the organization and the neighborhood.

Tom Ogden came onto the board in 2009 and will reach his term limit at the end of 2014. In the six years he served, Tom has helped out with cleanups, tree plantings, community events and much more. He was part of the Strategic Plan Steering Committee, is chair of the Nominating Committee and serves on the Bylaws Committee. Tom’s calm and thoughtful approach and his ability to listen to differing opinions and find common ground between viewpoints has been an asset to Polish Hill.

Myra Falisz joined the board in 2010 after volunteering for over a year prior. She was closely involved in the establishment of Maly Park, at Herron and Dobson, and was especially proud to have worked with City crews to get the sidewalks at the park stamped with a yellow brick pattern, to echo the historic yellow brick in other areas of the neighborhood. Myra has worked on this newsletter as a copy editor and editorial advisor, was a member of the Strategic Plan Steering Committee, on the Fire Site Steering Committee, and has advocated for Polish Hill in meetings for citywide transportation and planning initiatives. She helps out at holiday and other community events and participates in neighborhood cleanups. Myra also worked tirelessly with designers Imagebox to create the PHCA’s new website. Myra is particularly interested in using her artistic skills in community work, as in her design for the No Spray signs on Melwood Avenue and Gold Way. Her careful approach and attention to detail have helped the organization to create strong grant applications, written materials and public presence.

Alexis Miller joined the PHCA board in 2009 and will reach her term limit at the end of 2014. Prior to serving on the board, she spent several years volunteering on the newsletter, at clean–ups, and other PHCA projects. She first served as secretary and was then elected vice president in 2011. Since becoming president in June 2012, Alexis has divided her time between a full time job as a UPMC project manager and 20 or more hours per week of volunteer time for the PHCA. Her work for the organization includes fundraising, project planning and management, attending meetings with City and local officials, and much more.

Alexis is particularly focused on development projects, chairing the Housing Committee and Fire Site Steering Committee and serving on a multi-community steering committee to advocate for community input in the former Iron City Brewery development. She secured funding and coordinated the Pivotal Streets Residential Façade Grant Program, now gearing up for its third year. Alexis is also closely involved with getting improvements for the neighborhood, has served on the Strategic Plan Steering Committee, Bylaws Committee, Green Team Committee and is currently active in the Monument Committee and the new Diversity and Inclusion Committee. She is there for community events and clean-up efforts, contributes to the newsletter, and has been tireless in her efforts on behalf of the organization and the neighborhood.

Alexis’ educational background in public policy and her experience working in other nonprofits have been enormous assets for the PHCA. Her professional skills have helped the PHCA to become a more high-functioning organization. Under her leadership, the PHCA board, particularly the Executive Committee, became a highly effective team, increasing funding and implementing new projects. Her ability to seek out expert advice and seek collaboration has greatly increased the ability of the organization to achieve more for the neighborhood.

PHCA board elections

It is time for the PHCA board election. The all-volunteer board is made of residents who are willing to devote their time and efforts. With a small budget and just one staff person, many PHCA projects are the work of board members and other volunteers. Board members advocate for Polish Hill in meetings with local officials, work with state agencies that provide much of our funding, and lend their professional experience to help the organization do a lot with limited resources.

The PHCA depends heavily on its board, so the organization needs people who have experience working with nonprofit organizations and fundraising. Board members need wisdom, patience, and the ability to put in hours every week to help serve the whole neighborhood.

Voting ballots were mailed to all current members in early November. If you are a resident of Polish Hill and a PHCA member, you have probably already received your voting ballot in the mail. Ballots are due back Dec 2 and the results of the election will be announced at the community meeting and holiday potluck at West Penn Recreation Center. We hope you will cast that ballot for the people you feel are best qualified to lead the organization in the coming years.

Did you miss an issue of the Polish Hill Voice?

The Polish Hill Voice is published four times a year. If you missed an issue or would like to read back issues, there are two ways to do that. On our website, the newsletter archive has newsletters back to 2002 at pphcaphg.org/newsletter/newsletter-archive/. Newsletters can be read online or printed out.

The PHCA also has extra copies of most issues back to February 2009. Stop the office to pick those up, or we can mail them to you for $1 each to cover postage. For more information, call us at 412.681.1950 or drop us a note at 3060 Brereton Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15219.
Traffic calming work, from front page

Avenue, followed by Herron, Brereton, Dobson and Paulowna/30th Streets. Respondents also shared their biggest traffic concern. Several people said they were afraid that their child would be hit by a car. One resident said, "I had a pet killed by a hit and run driver." Another commented: "Hit and run accidents are far too common. The streets are too narrow for two-way traffic and cars get stuck. Commuters often become irate when they're expected to move aside for oncoming traffic."

PWSA investigates ongoing water problems on Phelan Way

For years, water has intermittently flowed out of the hillside below Bigelow Boulevard, streaming down Phelan Way. In the winter, the street is covered with ice, creating a serious safety hazard. In June, a PHCA board member and staff person met with a District 7 staff person and a representative from Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority to look at the situation.

After testing the water coming out of the hillside, PWSA determined that it was not treated water, but appeared to be a natural spring. The PWSA representative who visited Pittsburgh Hill mentioned that his 90 year old grandmother grew up on that street and remembers the spring coming out of the hillside. Regardless of whether the water flowing out of the hillside down Phelan Way was spring water or city water, the flow appears to have stopped after recent water main work on Bigelow Boulevard. At the same time that the PWSA was working to identify the property owner and lay out the next steps, water mains on Bigelow were under repair. When the repairs were finished, the flow on Phelan water stopped. The task now is for PWSA to determine how and where the natural and city water sources are intersecting. Figuring this out will involve understanding at least three different elements under-ground: the deteriorating infrastructure, underground streams, and the abandoned mines that lace the hillside.

In the meantime, the District 7 Council office will coordinate with the Department of Public Works to get any returning run-off heading towards the sewer system instead of directly down the street. It looks like this situation is fixed for now, but may be more complicated than anticipated.

Rock Bottom Brewery fundraisers benefit the PHCA

Thanks to a Polish Hill resident who is also brewmaster at Rock Bottom Brewery in Homestead, the PHCA was the beneficiary of two fundraising events at the restaurant. Brandon McCarthy organized the first event this summer to benefit the Polish Hill Arts Festival. In October, the PHCA was again the beneficiary of Rock Bottom’s National Pierogi Day dinner. Over 70 people came out for the $10 all-you-can-eat pierogi buffet.

Many thanks to the CraftWorks Foundation, which is the charitable arm of CraftWorks Restaurants and Breweries, Inc., parent company of Rock Bottom Restaurant & Brewery. These were great events and we were honored to have been offered these opportunities.

Fire Site Development drawings presented at the September 2 community meeting

The Fire Site Steering Committee and architects from Pfaffmann + Associates presented the preliminary drawings for the Fire Site Development at the September 2 community meeting. The slideshow of drawings included building floor plans, layouts, and projections of what the buildings will look like in context with the surrounding buildings on Brereton and Dobson streets. Fire Site Steering Committee members explained how they arrived at this design. Factors in the design process included input from Polish Hill residents over the last year, limitations of the small, steep site, and the need for enough off-street parking. One of the drawings was previewed in the last newsletter (visit http://phcapgh.org/newsletter/).

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Event Calendar

November 27—December 1 | PHCA office closed

December 2 | Light Up | 5:30 p.m. | At the intersection of Brereton and Dobson streets

December 2 | Community Meeting & Holiday Potluck | 6:30—8:00 p.m. | West Penn Recreation Center (lower level)

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

February 3 | Community Meeting | 6:30—8:00 p.m. | West Penn Recreation Center (lower level)
**Polish Hill Voice**

**Pivotal Streets projects, from front page**

**471 30th Street (right)**
Project description: A "see through" fence made from new and reused lumber. The sidewalk was replaced with exposed aggregate concrete and the garage door was painted. Landscaping will eventually include two street trees on the sidewalk, 2 dwarf apple trees in the front yard and perennial herbs and flowers outside of the fence on Paulowna Street.

**1046 Herron Avenue (above)**
Project description: Install new exposed aggregate concrete sidewalk and steps; new railing, brick repair and repointing.

**3040 Brereton Street (right)**
Project description: Three new double-hung windows installed on first floor, brick work to fill in a door opening and a new awning above the front door.

**3208 Downing Street (left)**
Project description: Removal and replacement of badly damaged sidewalk.

**3200 Downing Street (below)**
Project description: Removal and replacement of existing side steps to the rear yard with new concrete, repairing the house foundation wall and rear yard retaining wall.

**Getting ready for next year's Pivotal Streets Residential Façade Grant Program**

UPMC Health Plan has committed to supporting the 2015 Polish Hill Pivotal Streets Residential Façade Grant Program. Keep an eye out for the announcement in the next newsletter, which comes out in February 2015.
Diversity and Inclusion Committee

In a diversifying neighborhood, a new committee examines the causes of intolerance and conflict and looks for solutions.

Residents old and new often say that the sense of community is one of the things they love most about Polish Hill. Most people get along with their neighbors; many have forged friendships that cross age groups, religion, or life experience. It’s also often said that Polish Hill feels like a small town, a village in the middle of the city, and for many years, that’s exactly what it was. From the early 1900s until the 1980s, the majority of residents were of Polish Catholic heritage. Most residents lived, shopped, studied and worshipped with people who had the same background and culture. The cohesion of the neighborhood provided support and a sense of security for those who belonged to this group. At the same time, residents who weren’t part of the majority, whether because of religion, ethnic background, or race, sometimes had a different experience.

While Polish Hill residents are generally respectful and embracing of others, sometimes, unfortunate incidents that highlight a lack of tolerance do occur. The need for a new neighborhood committee to discuss diversity and inclusion became clear after residents voiced their concerns about harassment related to cultural, race and lifestyle differences.

The goal of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee is to encourage our increasingly diverse neighborhood to work well together -- respecting, appreciating and valuing our differences in background, ethnicity, race, lifestyle and culture. At the first meeting, a dozen attendees listened to and offered support to Polish Hill residents who have been targeted and harassed by other community members. Stories were shared regarding verbal threats and abusive statements, as well as anonymous threatening notes. Repeated acts of vandalism and theft of personal property were also described, including ongoing harassing calls to police or building inspectors.

While all of these residents turned to the police initially for assistance, law enforcement has stressed that some of the behavior isn’t considered illegal, or that additional proof would be required for police to arrest someone or press charges. In some situations, the individuals who spoke of the harassing behavior did not know who was targeting them.

Fearing retaliation, some people who shared their experiences of harassment with the police and the neighborhood committee didn’t want their personal details made public. However, they all believed it important to bring the incidents of intolerance to light for other members of the community. While it’s troubling to hear that this behavior occurs in our neighborhood, it seems clear that those who approve or perpetrate harassing actions are a small minority among Polish Hill residents. Perhaps these individuals believe they are safe from exposure and that other residents agree with their actions. This could not be further from the truth. The Polish Hill Civic Association, members of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee, and many other concerned residents are standing together to say that this kind of disrespect will not be tolerated.

A number of attendees at the meeting felt that one way to fight intolerance was to expose it and bring it into the open. When individuals feel supported to speak out at the time of the incident, a clear message is sent that it is not acceptable to disrespect or demean others.

The group also discussed ways in which to support anyone who is experiencing harassment so that they don’t feel alone and threatened. This is a difficult challenge, but one in which our community must come together to solve. The committee members hope to not only raise awareness about the benefits of inclusion and diversity and remind folks to get along, but also to set a standard for what kind of neighborhood that we want Polish Hill to be.

If you believe civility and respect for others who live around you is essential, your participation in the committee is welcome. We don’t have to think alike, or look alike, or even like everyone, but we do need to respect each other. The committee plans to meet once a month near the end of each month and has discussed creative ways to get our message out through art, marketing, or articles such as this one. To become involved, or just to learn more, call us at 412.681.1950, or email phca@phcapgh.org.

New Director at West Penn Recreation Center

As part of a department-wide reorganization, Citiparks changed the directors of their community and recreation centers. The new director at West Penn is Steve Rothhaar, who came here from the center on the South Side.

Steve stopped in at the November community meeting to say hello to residents, and he’s been walking around the neighborhood to get a sense of the community. Steve hopes to get more Polish Hill kids coming to West Penn, and says that one of the programs he hopes to start in Polish Hill is a volleyball program for girls aged 9-16.

Citiparks West Penn Recreation Center
450 30th Street

Open to all Pittsburgh residents. Facilities include workout room, exercise machines and weight room.
9:00 a.m. - 8:45 p.m. Monday - Friday
10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Saturday
Closed Sunday

For more information, call 412-622-7353

URA home improvement loan products help homeowners rehabilitate or renovate their properties.
Visit www.ura.org for loan programs and income guidelines or visit the PHCA office.
IHM School Reunion

On October 18, graduates from the Immaculate Heart of Mary School gathered to attend a reunion Mass, followed by a reception in Rosary Hall. In attendance were graduates from the 1930s until 1997, when the school closed. IHM Church and volunteers provided an impressive spread of food, and many people contributed photos and memorabilia to decorate the room. Organizer Toni Gizzi estimated that about 200 people attended the mass, and the reception hall was crowded as people gathered to reminisce with old friends and family. The reunion was a big success and many people were heard to say that they wished it could happen every year! We didn't catch everyone's name, but we did manage to get some photos. If you'd like to see a slideshow of all the photos (in color), view our online post about the reunion at phcapgh.org/blogski.
The development includes two for-sale units on Dobson Street and eight rental units on Brereton that the developer intends to convert to for-sale buildings several years after construction. Architect Rob Pfaffmann noted that these drawings are not identical to what the buildings will look like; still to be determined are details like siding, colors, trim, and plantings. Now, the developer will begin working to secure financing for the project. Next are approvals, permits, and site preparation. Although there is already interest from people who would like to rent or buy, there will be no pre-sales until the actual construction begins, probably next summer. Visit the PHCA office or our website for more images of the development.

Winter volunteer opportunities: stair stewards and snow angels

During the winter months the most important volunteer efforts are directed toward keeping key areas clear of ice and snow. Across the neighborhood, residents take it upon themselves to shovel steps and sidewalks for neighbors who are unable to do it themselves.

Another opportunity to help out is the Polish Hill Stair Stewards program, which is an agreement with the City that if we can find neighborhood volunteers to assume stewardship of the city steps around the neighborhood, City crews will provide a salt box at the site and keep it filled. Call 412.681.1950, or email phca@phcapgh.org if you are interested in helping to clear steps.
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.

Have you renewed your membership for 2015?
Mail in the form below, or renew online at phcapgh.org/get-involved/join/

Polish Hill Civic Association Membership Application
Join now to become a member through December 2015 — just $5!

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!

EMAIL: ________________________________

VOTING MEMBER ~ Or ~ SUBSCRIPTION MEMBER
_____(Polish Hill residents) ________ (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

• 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!