Fire Site Update

**Drawings to be presented at the September 2 Community meeting**

Detailed drawings and floor plans for all ten units of the Brereton/Dobson Fire Site Development plan have been completed by project architects Pfaffmann + Associates and developer Green Development Inc. and will be presented at an open, general PHCA meeting on Tuesday September 2 from 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. at West Penn Recreation Center.

After extensive community input received throughout the winter and spring, the design work is completed, and the project will now move into the implementation phase. The Steering Committee met recently to review these drawings and floor plans. The Steering Committee endorsed the project moving forward because the plans responded to community input, while incorporating the logistical and financial considerations of working on a small infill site.

The plans are true to the long-term flexibility, environmental sustainability, and preservation of Polish Hill’s scenic views and community connections that the community asked for throughout the winter and spring feedback gathering.

The plans include:

— Two small live/work houses on Dobson Street that will be for sale.

— Eight 1.5 bedroom rental apartments on Brereton Street. Based on the community’s interest in owner-occupancy, the developer intends to sell each of the rental units after the initial five-year rental period.

— One off-street parking spot for each of the ten units. Parking spots are in garages under the living space and are side-by-side parking spots (as opposed to tandem parking).

— Outdoor deck/terrace space and small planting areas to connect residents to the neighborhood, green spaces and to our spectacular views.

— Small houses on Dobson Street offer a flexible garage space that can be used for a car or as a workshop/studio/other creative space.

— Brereton Street apartments have one bedroom plus a study/office space, allowing for more live/work options or creative space.

— Flexibility in the current designs, which allows for the potential to add another terrace and a loft bedroom above each of the second-floor Brereton Street apartments. This expansion could be built at the time the units are converted from rental to for-sale or later (not during the initial rental period).

Immaculate Heart of Mary School Reunion

Seventeen years after closing, a fall gathering for all alumni will celebrate the school that served generations of Polish Hill kids

On Saturday, October 18, 2014, there will be a class reunion for anyone who attended IHM Grade School (no matter what year). The reunion will begin with Mass at 4:00 p.m. at IHM Church, followed by a reception in Rosary Hall with light refreshments. Concelebrating the Mass will be Reverend Joseph Swierczynski, pastor of IHM, and Reverend Kenneth Oldenski (whom you might have had in your class).

If you are interested in attending, please send an email to recihm@verizon.net or mail a note to IHM Church, 3058 Brereton Street, Pittsburgh PA 15219. RSVP by October 4, 2014. There’s already been a lot of interest from alumni, both here in Polish Hill and from farther away. We are sure it will be a wonderful event!

(Continued on page 4)
3031 and 3033 Brereton Street

Two long-vacant properties on Brereton Street will soon be renovated by Catranel Construction. Each of the buildings at 3031 and 3033 Brereton Street will be converted into owner-occupied duplex homes with a tenant apartment on the first floor. The owner's home will be on the second and third floors, which provide spectacular views of the Allegheny Valley below. The owner's home will feature three bedrooms, two and a half baths, rear decks or porches and off-street parking. The tenant space will be one bedroom, one bath with rear porch/deck access.

Catranel Construction is the company that renovated 3119 and 3121 Brereton Street. The company received a Preservation Award from the City and the Historic Review Commission for that renovation. It will be good to see two more properties on Brereton receive the same careful renovation. Owner Steve Catarinella says, "As with all of our projects, this will be a high quality renovation which will complement the character of the surrounding neighborhood." The company expects pricing for each building to be in the $350,000 range, with construction to begin by September 1. The company is also currently working on a facade restoration on Dobson Street. Steve says, "We're very happy to be back working in Polish Hill."

Treasurers Sale update

As part of the PHCA’s strategy to address vacant and blighted properties in Polish Hill, the PHCA requested in spring 2014 that two vacant, tax-delinquent properties go to Treasurer's Sale. One of the properties, 3007 Brereton Street, did not meet all of the City’s criteria to go to Treasurer’s Sale at this time. The second property, 3448 Melwood Avenue, has met the initial criteria and will proceed to the next step in the process. If the property owner does not address their back tax obligations with the City, the property can be sold at Treasurer's Sale.

The PHCA intends to then buy the property through the City of Pittsburgh’s Property Reserve process that is exclusively for community development corporations and neighborhood associations like the PHCA. The Property Reserve process removes any debts or liens against the property, thus allowing the PHCA to purchase the property for an extremely affordable price. The requirements for selling the property must meet guidelines of the Polish Hill Purchase Rehab Program, including that the owner must have the ability to renovate the property to code and will be an owner occupant. The goal is for this program to bring new life to the neighborhood, affordably.

Green Projects: Updates

Tree Tenders needed in Polish Hill

Street trees are a valuable asset in our community. Not only do they provide a pleasing aesthetic, they also improve our air quality and add value to our homes. With over 30,000 street trees in the City of Pittsburgh, Tree Tenders play a vital role in their care. Newly planted trees are mulched and pruned by Tree Tenders. Without these valuable volunteers, we wouldn’t be able to maintain and successfully care for our street trees.

The Polish Hill Civic Association will be applying for a grant this fall with Tree Vitalize. Our goal is to be able to replace damaged or dying street trees, as well as to plant new ones in the community. Preference for street tree plantings are given to communities who are able to demonstrate the ability to organize volunteers for plantings and maintenance activities.

If you are interested in becoming a Tree Tender, please consider the upcoming course that is being offered in the Strip District at the Pittsburgh Public Market on September 6 from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. The cost is $40, which includes registration, materials, light food, and instruction. Scholarships are available. Contact Joe@treepittsburgh.org or call 412-362-6360 for more information.

West Penn Edible Garden

Last July, the City of Pittsburgh installed ten garden beds near the playground at West Penn Park. The purpose of these beds is to grow and distribute fresh produce to folks in our area.

Tended by neighborhood volunteers, the produce grown in these beds is donated to a local food pantry. So far this season, we have harvested greens, potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, and herbs for the Jubliee Kitchen. The planning for next year’s vegetables will begin in February. If you are interested in learning about vegetable growing, or participating in the garden next year, please contact valerie@phcapgh.org.

Call for volunteers

We are looking for a few volunteers to lead groups of Pitt students on neighborhood volunteer projects on Saturday, October 7, from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m.

Volunteers are always needed to maintain neighborhood green spaces, parklets, and more. To get on the mailing list for updates on green space activities, email valerie@phcapgh.org.

Event Calendar

- September 2 | Community Meeting | 6:30 p.m. | West Penn Recreation Center (lower level)
- October 7 | Community Meeting | 6:30 p.m. | West Penn Recreation Center (lower level)
- October 18 | IHM School Reunion | 4:00 p.m. | IHM Church (RSVP to attend)
- October 18 | Neighborhood Cleanup | 10:00 a.m. | Meet at the PHCA office, 3060 Brereton Street
- November 4 | Community Meeting | 6:30 p.m. | West Penn Recreation Center (lower level)
**Alfred’s Deli and Market**

*A neighborhood store reopens with expanded hours and more shopping options*

Those who have wished for a small grocery store in Polish Hill will have that wish granted in mid-August, when an existing store reopens with expanded hours and a much bigger selection of products. Alfred’s Deli and Market, at 3041 Brereton Street, is being revitalized by Leia Knees and Natalie Misiaszek (daughter of Anna and Alfred). Leia and Natalie have been busy renovating the store, adding new flooring, wainscoting, and shelving.

They are greatly expanding the product range, with an eye to the varied residents of Polish Hill. In addition to basics such as milk, eggs and butter, the market will carry fresh local produce and organic, gluten-free, vegan and vegetarian foods. The deli counter will have meats, sandwiches and a selection of Polish favorites including pierogi, kielbasa and haluski. Also available will be household items such as toilet paper, catfood and litter, lightbulbs, and more.

The shipping service to Poland will continue, and within six months or so, a delivery service for residents who can’t easily walk to the market. There will also be a Polish Hill history display, creating an authentic neighborhood market with an old-style feeling. Leia and Natalie also know that for the market to be successful, it needs to have regular hours. They plan to be open from 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday.

It’s great news that another store is opening in the neighborhood and we hope that residents who have expressed the need for a local small grocery will take their business to Alfred’s Deli and Market. Keeping money in the neighborhood is one way to make sure that businesses can take hold and thrive here.

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**Progress on Roundhouse Park and Downing Street Overlook**

Two new parklets envisioned in the Polish Hill community plan are closer to becoming a reality. The proposed Roundhouse Park at Brereton and 30th Street and the Downing Street Overlook both sit on parcels that have long been owned by the Port Authority of Allegheny County.

But, since the Authority doesn’t maintain any parks-designated land it owns, it must transfer some control of the property over to the Pittsburgh Citiparks Department before parklet approval and landscaping can begin.

A request for Citiparks involvement was submitted soon after the idea of the Roundhouse parklet was suggested in early 2010. The Downing Street Overlook was added to the request at a later date. Now, four years after the ideas were first proposed, we are pleased to report that progress has been made.

The PHCA was recently informed that the Port Authority has offered to lease the two parcels to the City of Pittsburgh, through the oversight of Citiparks, on a year-to-year basis. Assuming everything goes well with drawing up a lease contract between the Authority and the City, the various government agencies will then meet with PHCA representatives to discuss the plan for developing the two parklets.

The beauty the Downing Street Overlook will provide and the history the Roundhouse parklet will honor promises to make our fine neighborhood an even lovelier and more culturally rich place.

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**Neighborhood business owner working to raise funds to renovate the skate park at West Penn**

The skate park was installed at West Penn Park in 1998. The project was initiated by residents and supported by the PHCA. In 2008, some repairs and updates were made, but those improvements have not held up well. Now, the skate park looks shabby and rundown.

Nick Teodori, who owns a skateboard company in Polish Hill, is working to get the skate park refurbished. His proposal is for an open, unfenced park made entirely out of concrete. The design was inspired by successful parks in other cities. The refurbished skate park would be more integrated into West Penn playground and field, and would be an attractive and appealing addition to the other improvements at the park. Nick hopes to get funding for the project from the skateboarding industry and state and local officials.

The skate park as seen from the hillside above. (Photo courtesy of Nick Teodori)

Nick has begun a petition for this project. The petition is available to sign at Lili Cafe and at the PHCA office.
School Days

A typical day in the life of a parochial grade school student back in the 1940s, when tuition only fifty cents a month.

Excerpted from Childhood Days in Polish Hill by Jane Bartoszewicz Pelczevski

There were two classes of each grade from the first up to the eighth grade. School would start at 8:30 a.m. but on Friday mornings we girls and boys would attend 8:00 a.m. Mass. Afterwards the classes would march from the church to the schoolhouse. Class would begin after reciting Our Father, Hail Mary, then we would either recite the Pledge of Allegiance or sing the National Anthem. Sister would always take attendance both in the morning and in the afternoon sessions. Usually we would be seated in alphabetical order. Along with the usual subjects there were a few Polish courses. We had Polish readers, and in the 7th and 8th grades, we were taught Polish history and bible history in Polish.

There was a recess period of about 15 minutes or so in both the morning and afternoon periods of school. This was important for we stayed in the same classroom all day. Classes would march in an orderly fashion to the school yard for playtime. Nobody was happy on rainy or snowy days for then we remained indoors. In the main hallways of the school there was a piano with a player piano roll. Marching songs were played on this piano to which we had to march to our respective classes. When recess was over we formed groups again and marched two by two into the building. Either a nun or one of the students would ring a bell when recess began or ended.

The lunch hour started at 11:30 a.m. and lasted until 1:00 p.m. Everyone went home for lunch. The lunch hour was 1 1/2 hours long because some of the students lived further away from the school building. The afternoon session of classes went from 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. This was a long day but there were plenty of breaks to cut up the time.

Every Wednesday afternoon the 7th and 8th graders went to Arsenal Junior High School for trade classes of cooking and sewing for the girls, while the boys had wood or metal shops. Most of us could walk to this school from our homes on Polish Hill. The distance did not seem that long in the warmer weather. When the weather was colder we took the bus to 28th Street and from there we could take the trolley to 40th Street and the main entrance of the public school.
The Immaculate Heart of Mary School, the *Schola Polonica*, was founded in 1896. The sturdy brick structure, encompassing a school and an attached convent, was the first fireproof building in Pittsburgh. The school served generations of neighborhood children. Enrollment peaked in the 1940s, when neighborhood population was at its height. As the population shrank, the number of students grew fewer each year. A registration drive in April and May of 1997 produced only 71 prospective students, just 17 of whom lived in the IHM parish. It became clear that the parish could not afford to continue to support the school, and it closed in 1997, one year after its 100th anniversary.

In 1999, the Salvation Army made a proposal to buy the school and convent to renovate the buildings to house 19 units to provide transitional housing for local families. That proposal was turned down, and the school and convent were sold to a private investor in 2003. Later plans to renovate the building into condos fell through. The building has now been empty for over 15 years, but the community has not forgotten. Residents both old and new hope that the building will get the renovations and a second chance at usefulness that it deserves.

Once a week we had physical education classes at the West Penn Recreation Building. We would have exercises, dance lessons, or play games such as volleyball. We all looked forward to when the official class was over, for then we were allowed to play games. If somebody had any records we could dance to that music.

Books were always scarce in our school. Many times, Sister would put much of the newer material on the blackboards. We would copy the material into our notebooks. Part of studying consisted of memorizing a great deal of our class work. At the time we thought it was a waste of our efforts. However, this built great discipline into our studying habits. When we went into high school and in some cases college, studying for exams was no major deal. That early discipline stood us in great stead.

In the eighth grade our class chose Kennywood Park for our class picnic after our graduation ceremonies. It was a nice sunny day to be having a farewell picnic. For this occasion a bus was hired and our teaching sisters went along as chaperones. We had a very good time. This would be the last time that our class would be together, for some of the students were going to different schools. Some were moving to other cities. After all, we were no longer children and in the fall we would be going to high school. Little did we realize that for most of us, we would probably never see each other again.
A walk with the PHCA
for public safety

By District 7 Councilwoman
Deb Gross

I’m happy to report we’re working (and walking) to solve issues block-by-block in Polish Hill. On June 20, my staff and I, along with the Polish Hill Civic Association, performed a public safety walk-through in Polish Hill. We were joined by members and staff of the PHCA, Zone 2 Police Commander Eric Holmes, EMS Deputy Director Mark Bocian, Amanda Purcell, a traffic engineer from the Department of Public Works, and members of the City of Pittsburgh Fire Department.

The PHCA and my office worked to organize the walk-through after several instances in which medical emergencies were worsened by delays in response time caused by difficulties facing large public safety vehicles, such as EMS responders and fire trucks, driving through the narrow streets of the neighborhood. After considering these issues, the public safety walk-through focused on targeted areas of Polish Hill particularly prone to delays in public safety response – those with unusually narrow streets and high population density.

Public safety walk-throughs allow representatives from key city departments to evaluate issues alongside community members. Several key blocks of Polish Hill, including Melwood Avenue between Herron Avenue and Jewel Street, were highlighted and recommended for future evaluations. My office will be following up and pursuing the required next steps to materialize the discussed improvements.

Walking the streets together allowed us to tie together issues that appear unconnected. As the walk highlighted, the “divide” between problems such as sidewalk maintenance, deteriorating retaining walls, and poor storm water management are intrinsically related to the health and safety concerns of the residents living in the neighborhood.

Thus, finding the resolutions to these problems cannot be divided either. I am working tirelessly to help bring together all affected parties to find solutions to neighborhood concerns. Resident participation and notification of problem areas from concerned citizens is vital to this process and I look forward to continued efforts with the PHCA.

Public Safety: Despite Change, Small Town Safety Remains

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Offenses by Neighborhood</th>
<th>Lower Lawrenceville</th>
<th>Middle Hill</th>
<th>Polish Hill</th>
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The chart above is from the Zone 2 2013 Annual Report Snapshot, a 16-page presentation which provides an overview of the crime statistics and police responses for the previous year. While it has long been common knowledge that Polish Hill has a much lower crime rate than neighboring communities in Zone 2 (Bloomfield and Oakland, while adjoining Polish Hill, are in Zone 5), it’s still interesting to see just how big a difference there is.

Each month Officer Marlease Porter, our Zone 2 community liaison, provides us with neighborhood crime statistics -- a page of information on reported incidents for the previous month. While the crime reports don’t represent every instance in which police were called (only those that result in an official police report being generated), they do provide a general picture of the amount and types of crime Polish Hill experiences. In a typical month, there are a few property thefts and occasionally there might be something more serious. However, in other months, there are no reports at all.

Part of the reason our crime rate is low is because Polish Hill is a much smaller neighborhood than adjacent ones. But, it’s also because this is a fairly quiet, tight-knit community where people know and look out for their neighbors. It’s nice to see that even as the population of Polish Hill has become younger and increasingly diverse, this small-town quality remains.

Keeping track of crime

An important thing to remember is that simply calling the police doesn’t automatically result in a report of the incident being generated. If you want to make sure the incident goes on record, it’s essential that you tell the responding officers you want to file a report. Make sure to ask for the report number, and follow up with the Zone 2 office if you don’t receive one.
— Staircases on Brereton Street separate the living spaces and have a lower roof than the rest of the building. The staircases create a more appealing, varying roofline that breaks up the building so that it doesn’t look like one large block of apartments, but more like stand-alone, single-family houses. This also provides more privacy and peace and quiet (similar to a stand-alone building), with fewer shared walls between neighbors.

— Crown-like rooflines on the Dobson Street homes create a more modern and visually appealing design and allow for views from the Brereton Street apartments over the Dobson homes.

— High energy efficiency and sustainability measures will be incorporated, providing significantly lower long-term housing costs such as heating and cooling. These aspects map to the original goals for the site, as established in the Polish Hill Community Plan. Passive house standards (extremely energy efficient) and modular construction are being explored as ways to achieve this goal.

These ten units are a unique and flexible product of an in-depth and creative collaboration over the past year. After so much hard work, the PHCA, Fire Site Steering Committee, property owner, architect and developer are excited to share these detailed drawings and floor plans with the community in September. We hope you are equally excited! In the meantime, the developer will continue to finalize agreements between these parties, plus finish construction budgets and secure financing.

Understanding the cost of new construction, the PHCA is working hard with the URA and potentially other funders to find deferred second-mortgage financing that will make the units more affordable to buyers. The intention is for these deferred second mortgages to be available to both the two Dobson Street live / work houses that will be for-sale initially and the eight apartments along Brereton Street that will be offered for-sale in five years.

Seven years after the fire that scarred the neighborhood, we look forward to the start of the implementation phase and construction in the coming year, so that we can warmly welcome new residents to the community that we’re all so proud to call home.

Many thanks to everyone who helped the Polish Hill Arts Festival!

The 2014 Polish Hill Arts Festival had a record number of participants -- over 50 vendors at the 35 spaces, 38 performers, 11 people involved in presenting art activities or demonstrating art-making, and over two dozen volunteers. There were also a record number of visitors.

In addition, we had substantial help from City officials and departments, from donors, and neighborhood supporters. Many thanks to:

City of Pittsburgh
District 7 Council office: Deb Gross, Nate Hanson and Brenton Weinert
Citiparks: Jim Griffin and Dodi Byrne
Office of Community Affairs: Grant Gittlen and Sally Stadelman
Mayor’s office: Mayor Bill Peduto and Deputy Chief of Staff John Fournier
Special Events office: John Chapman, Nadine Brnilovich and Nichole Price
Pittsburgh Police: Lt. Clarence Trapp, Detective Tressa Jones
Department of Public Works: Bill Crean, Oscar Hall, and the trash pickup crews

Donors
Susan Atkinson
Jason Barkley
Isaac Bower
Pam Buchner
Judy Cain
Leslie Clague
Laurel Coniglio
Hannah du Plessis
Myra Falisz
Senator Jim Ferlo
Bob Jankowski
Ed Librecht
Alexis Miller
Lee Parker
Pope’s Place
Red Star Kombucha
Marc Retigg
Rock Bottom Brewery in Homestead
The Rock Room
Patrick Singleton
Paulette Still-Khoury / Posy Flower Studio
Tugboat Printshop
Marcus Visco / Gooski’s Bar
... and two other donors who wished to remain anonymous

Volunteers and neighborhood supporters
Charlie Alessi
Susan Atkinson
Alida Baker
Carly Dobbins-Bucklad
Myra Falisz
Mark Knobil
Brandon McCarthy
Alexis Miller
Richard and Carole Miller
Jamie Miller
Erica Moulinier
Tom Ogden
Josiah Parkinson
Kalie Pierce
Brian Seklecki
Matt Smuts
Katie Sukenik
Garick Tai-Lee
Valerie Testa
John Winter
Laura Zuroowski
... and the four Allegheny County Sheriff’s Reserve deputies

IHM Church
Father Joe Swierczynski, Ceil Mocello, and all the volunteers who cooked and served food for the IHM food booth. And special thanks to Mark Dobies, without whom this would all be much more difficult!

URA home improvement loan products help homeowners rehabilitate or renovate their property.

The United Way of Allegheny County has a payroll deduction campaign for donations to your favorite local organizations. Please consider supporting the Polish Hill Civic Association.

Our organization number is 258.
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
Special newsletter-only offer: become a member for the rest of this year and through December 2015—for just $7!

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!