

The Brereton-Dobson Fire Site Development *A unique opportunity to create something new in the heart of Polish Hill*

Polish Hill is poised for the opportunity to create something unique and reflective of Polish Hill through the construction of new buildings in the heart of the neighborhood.

Since the 2007 fire that destroyed and severely damaged buildings on the 3100 block of Brereton Street and Dobson Street, the question of what might be built on the site has been a hot topic at housing committee, board and community meetings, and in the planning sessions for the Polish Hill Community Plan.

When the PHCA received a grant in November 2012 from the Design Center, it allowed Polish Hill to create a more informed plan for what kind of development the community wanted as well as what kind of development would be financially feasible. This unique opportunity brings together developers, architects and the community at one table early in the process to address both neighborhood and builder desires and realities. A steering committee was formed to guide this process for new construction at the Brereton-Dobson Fire Site.

First, a market study was completed by the firm Real Estate Strategies (RES) to understand what sort of development might be feasible, based on market realities. RES was charged with identifying the highest and best use of the Brereton-Dobson Fire Site. The firm compiled a wide variety of data about the neighborhood, and Pittsburgh real estate and retail markets, analyzed that data, and produced a 78-page report. The summary of this report is available on the PHCA website in the Planning section.

The report notes that the amount of housing stock in Polish Hill is declining, while demand for housing is increasing. The data indicates that the strongest

market at the Fire Site is for housing. The most common household size is currently one or two people, suggesting smaller housing unit sizes.

The analysis also recommended that it would be more challenging to attract commercial development in Polish Hill if that business relied only on customers in Polish Hill. Specialty shops or offices for professional service providers might be more likely to draw customers from beyond the neighborhood and would therefore have greater market potential.

Interviewing developer-architect teams

After the market study was completed, Pittsburgh Housing Development Corporation (the property owners) worked with the PHCA and the Design Center to send out a request for proposal (RFP) to teams of qualified developers and architects. Three teams responded with proposals. The steering committee interviewed all three teams on September 24.

The three teams interviewed were: S&A Homes / Inter*Architecture, E Properties and Development / Moss Architect, and Green Development Inc. / Pfaffmann + Associates. All teams were extremely qualified and gave compelling presentations to work on the Fire Site. The steering commit-



*A view of the hillside on the Brereton Street side of the fire site.
(Photo by Catherine McConnell)*

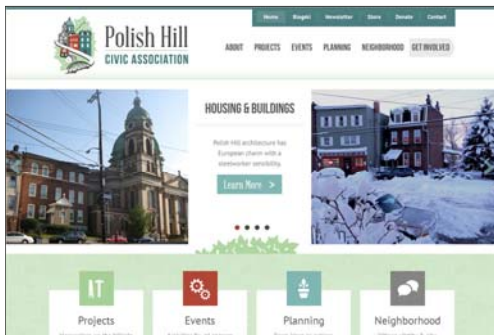


*The Dobson Street side of the fire site. The two houses in the center are part of the site owned by Pittsburgh Housing Development Corporation.
(Photo by Catherine McConnell)*

tee chose the Green Development, Inc./ Pfaffmann + Associates team based primarily on the value of their estimated construction costs, their strong mission and reputation around building environmentally sustainable and energy efficient structures, and their flexibility around design elements (for example, it might include live/work space or it might include a variety of different sized units and various prices).

(Continued on page 3)

The New PHCA Website is here!



In 2012, the PHCA received a grant from the Pittsburgh Partnership for Neighborhood Development to revamp and reprogram our website. The former website had become outdated and was difficult to change or update. After reviewing proposals from design firms, Imagebox was selected, and work began.

As part of this project, a new logo was first created for the organization. The next several months were spent designing the website layout, writing content, reviewing and selecting photos, and fine tuning all the details. Leading this project was PHCA board member Myra Falisz, whose prior professional experience in the software industry as a project manager and writer helped to give us a really fantastic result.

We are excited to announce that the new website was launched in late October. The new design includes the news updates of Blogski, as well as information on current projects, upcoming events, and more. We are excited to have this project completed and to have an attractive and useful new website that more accurately reflects the organization and the neighborhood. Please take a look -- the address is phcapgh.org.

The PHCA receives donations during the Pittsburgh Day of Giving

The Day of Giving is an annual day-long event during which online donations made through the Pittsburgh Foundation's Day of Giving website can be designated for local nonprofits. Donations are increased with a percent-

age of matching funds from the Pittsburgh Foundation. Millions of dollars are raised for local nonprofits during the event. The PHCA received \$2,510 in donations on the Pittsburgh Day of Giving on October 3. The match amount, which depended on how many organizations and donations were involved, turned out to be 13 cents on the dollar, raising the total amount received to \$2,836.30.

The donations will go towards a variety of activities, including community events and other efforts not covered by our normal funding sources. We are grateful to everyone who donated. If you missed Day of Giving, you can still support the PHCA every day by donating through our website.

Renew your PHCA membership for 2014!

If you have not already renewed for 2014, your 2013 PHCA membership will expire at the end of the year. For those who do not live in the neighborhood, being a member means that you will continue to receive the newsletter in 2014.

Joining the PHCA is a way to show support for an organization that is working to make Polish Hill a better place to live. All Polish Hill residents receive the newsletter, whether they are members or not. But members who live in Polish Hill can vote to elect PHCA board members, or run to serve on the board.

We hope that whether you live in the neighborhood, or elsewhere, you will renew your membership to keep connected to the PHCA and the work we are doing in Polish Hill. The membership form is on the back of this newsletter. You can also renew on our website or stop by the office.

The most up-to-date news and information for Polish Hill is online at:
phcapgh.org/blogski

Neighborhood Holiday Potluck and Light Up Party on December 3



Welcome the holiday season to Polish Hill on the evening of Tuesday, December 3. The monument tree will be lit at 6:00 p.m. From 6:30 - 8:00 the festivities move to Lili Café. After a brief announcement of the results of PHCA board elections, the holiday potluck takes over, with visiting, and conversation with neighbors. All residents are invited to stop by.

We'll be keeping track of who brings what, so if you'd like to contribute some food, get in touch and let us know what you're making. For more information on the Light Up or holiday potluck, call us at 412.681.1950, or email phca@phcapgh.org.

Event Calendar

December 3 | Holiday Potluck and Light Up the Street Party | 6:00—8:30 p.m. | Tree lighting at the monument at Brereton and Dobson. The potluck dinner is at Lili Café, 31378 Dobson Street.

* This event is in place of our December Community Meeting — see article above for more details.

January 7 | Community Meeting and public meeting for the fire site development 6:30 p.m. | West Penn Recreation Center (lower level)

February 4 | Community Meeting | 6:30 p.m. | West Penn Recreation Center (lower level)

The Polish Hill Community Plan Two years later

It's been almost two years since the Polish Hill Community Plan was completed. You might ask yourself, so what? What's the big deal? And what is this plan anyway?

What's in the plan?

The Polish Hill Community Plan is a written document with photos, sketches and text of recommendations for potential projects, improvements and policy in four areas: Housing and Buildings, Traffic and Transportation, Open Spaces and Art, and Community Building. The plan acts like a road map for the Polish Hill Civic Association, and guides the activities and priorities of the organization. It can be overwhelming to do community development, so the Polish Hill Community Plan describes some key areas in which changes would have a lasting and valuable benefit to the neighborhood.

Who created the plan, and how did they decide what to include?

The plan was created for and by the community. The planning process was led by the Polish Hill Civic Association and a 12 person steering committee made up of Polish Hill residents. Pfaffmann + Associates was the architecture and urban planning firm that facilitated the process, created sketches to help give life to our ideas, and created the final document. The firm has done strategic plans for a number of other Pittsburgh neighborhoods, including the North Side and Oakland. Also part of the planning process were advisors from the Community Design Center of Pittsburgh.

The goals outlined in the plan were determined from input and feedback from over 200 residents who participated in the planning process. Resident input was gathered in a variety of ways: through an online survey, in-person interviews, and at community meetings. Most importantly, all residents were invited to participate in any of four public events: two community meetings, a day-long workshop, and a two-day presentation during the summer festival weekend.

The whole planning process took almost a year, and during that year, it seemed to be all we talked about. The plan was publicized on the cover of each issue of the newsletter, talked about at community meetings, and discussed in casual conversations. A year after the plan was made public, an article about its implementation was featured in the November 2012 *Polish Hill Voice*.



*Residents at a public meeting for the community plan, May 2011.
(Photo by Leslie Clague)*

The plan includes a lot of different recommendations to get the ball rolling. As everyone knows, plans change and grow and evolve over time. The recommendations in the community plan are not set in stone. Our work will continue to need your input and creative ideas.

Community plan projects currently underway

Implementation of projects in the community plan began in the summer of 2012. Projects currently underway include the Brereton-Dobson Fire Site development, the Pivotal Streets Facade Grant program, traffic calming initiatives (crosswalks, improved signage, bike traffic markings, and speed humps), getting the gateways signs permitted and repainted, and a number of green projects.

How having a community plan benefits Polish Hill

In the current economic environment, there is less public money to go around for community development. Many

grants and government funds are only available for strongly prioritized communities that have a strategic community plan in place. Lawmakers and public officials want to make sure that money goes to communities that have a strong vision for what improvements are needed to make their neighborhoods more vital.

Update on proposed social club

The PHCA has been working with the Social Association of Pittsburgh Professionals (SAPP) since January 2013 on limitations to the hours and use of their proposed social club. This membership-based private social club was attempting to open an event space near the Herron Avenue Bridge at Liberty and 33rd Streets. The PHCA's hope was to prevent negative impacts on Polish Hill and surrounding communities through legally-binding zoning and liquor license limitations (including limits on hours of operation). Just as we were going to press, the PHCA was informed that SAPP had decided to seek a space in the Strip District, and is no longer planning on opening in Polish Hill in the originally proposed space.

Fire site development, continued

Community input

The next step is for the community to work together with the developer/architect team and the steering committee to provide input and inspiration for the design, scale and use of the new construction at the Fire Site. Rob Pfaffmann and Carl Bergamini from Pfaffmann + Associates and Ernie Sota and Diana Lynn from Green Development, Inc. came to the November 6 community meeting to introduce themselves to residents and talk about how the community engagement process will work. The first public meeting for community engagement about the Fire Site will be on Tuesday, January 7 at 6:30 p.m. at West Penn Recreation Center and is open to all residents of Polish Hill. We invite you to have your voice heard.

No-Spray signs



For years, a few residents near the border between Polish Hill and Oakland have been using their own time and money to plant and maintain spaces of City land along Gold Way. Each year, the City was asked not to spray weed killer along these areas, but each year, despite best efforts and best intentions, the cultivated areas did get sprayed. These incidents were frustrating for those who had spent hours and dollars tending these public green spaces.

PHCA board member Valerie Testa, in collaboration with Bill Crean of the Department of Public Works, came up with a new effort to make sure that cultivated areas are not at risk for being sprayed. Valerie got permission to put up our own No Spray signs, and Myra Falisz, (PHCA board member and artist) created an original illustration of a natural habitat pairing of a flower and a butterfly. The DPW sign shop produced the signs, and City crews installed them in August. The occasion was even marked by an article in the Post-Gazette.

We're excited about this collaboration and are grateful to the City employees and contractors who have worked with us to make it happen. We look forward to seeing this area bloom and thrive as an example of what dedicated individuals can do to make our community more beautiful.

Update on bike infrastructure

As you may have noticed, the bike lanes on Brereton between 28th and 30th streets, and the sharrow markings on Brereton, Dobson and Herron, were completed in early September. The bike markings are a City of Pittsburgh project that will eventually be seen in many more City neighborhoods. At the September 3 community meeting, featured guest speakers Stephen Patchan, the bike/pedestrian coordinator for the City of Pittsburgh, and Eric Boerer, the advocacy director for Bike Pittsburgh, shared more information about how the City came to identify preferred bike routes, and why those routes are now being marked with bike lanes or sharrow markings. Here are a few points of information they shared with residents:

-- Like cars, cyclists have the right to use any public road in Pittsburgh.

-- The route up the 28th Street Bridge, onto Brereton, Dobson and Herron, as well as Melwood Avenue, has been a City-recognized preferred bike route for years. The preferred bike routes were identified in the early 1990s, during the administration of Mayor Sophie Masloff. The safest routes for cyclists were identified based on traffic studies, accident statistics, and observation. When Bike Pittsburgh was founded in 2002, they continued this work with the City of Pittsburgh.

-- Bike Pittsburgh's other projects have included creating a Pittsburgh bike map which shows the preferred routes and the Bike Commuting 101 booklet, which explains bike laws and safety information. The organization also gives away free bike lights and promotes cycling safety. The City of Pittsburgh tapped Bike Pittsburgh to act as a consultant when work began on the transportation section of PlanPGH, the city's 25-year strategic plan.

-- One of the goals in the transportation section of PlanPGH is to mark the preferred routes with painted bike routes or sharrow markings. The City is focusing on central neighborhoods for the moment, but eventually, all the preferred bike routes in the City will have markings.

Polish Hill was chosen to be one of the



During the August Commander in Your Corner public meeting, uniformed bike officers came to Polish Hill via the bike lanes. (Photo by Alexis Miller)

first neighborhoods to get the bike markings because we are a centrally-located neighborhood that connects to a number of other central neighborhoods. As we go to print, the painted bike infrastructure has been in place for almost two months. Cyclists report that they are grateful to feel safer now that drivers have a reminder to share the road, making things safer for everyone.

Speed humps installed on Gold Way

Three speed humps have been installed by City crews on Gold Way, just outside of Polish Hill. The speed humps will help slow down cars as they move into the neighborhood.

A lot of people have asked that we get speed bumps, but here is an interesting fact: speed bumps and speed humps are not the same thing. Speed bumps are not permitted in the City of Pittsburgh because City snow plows can get stuck on them. Speed humps have a lower profile and do not impede snow plows. We have been told that the speed humps on Gold Way are some of the first installed in Pittsburgh.

The PHCA has been working with the City, Officer Raymond Cain of Zone 2 Traffic Division, and District 7 for a few years to get speed humps for Melwood Avenue and more locations in the neighborhood. We are excited to announce this first step and grateful to have this new traffic calming infrastructure along an entry to the neighborhood which has seen so much damage and even injuries due to speeding vehicles. If any residents wish to thank the City for installing the speed humps, they can do that through the 311 line.

Pivotal Streets Facade Grant program

Improving the face of the neighborhood

When the Polish Hill Pivotal Streets Facade Grant program was announced in February, there was immediately a lot of interest. It was clear that that program would be highly competitive. The response was astounding: 37 applications came in, far more than could be covered by the \$22,200 in funding that was raised from PNC Foundation and Pittsburgh Partnership for Neighborhood Development for this project. The independent review committee had a tough time narrowing down the field to choose the winning projects. Priority was given to the area bounded by Brereton, Dobson, and Herron, and to projects which would create a substantial difference in the street-facing appearance of the house.

Ultimately, seven projects were awarded grants totaling \$22,200. Through the spring and summer the work progressed. As we go to press, five of the seven projects have been completed. The final two, 328 Harmar Street and 3202 Brereton Street, are still in progress. We are looking forward to highlighting those in the next issue of the *Voice*.



3508 Melwood Avenue

This was the first grant project to be completed. The homeowners applied to replace a crumbling retaining wall and stairway. This wall is right on the sidewalk, so the work made a big difference in the look of the property, as well as correcting a safety issue.



3204 Brereton Street

This home on upper Brereton Street looks fresh and tidy after their renovation, which included new window boxes, railing, steps, front door, and a brick-bordered sidewalk planting area.



3019 Brereton Street

This half of a duplex got a new soffit, fascia, and new aluminum trim around windows, the front porch, and door. The changes made the house look bright and well-tended.



3057 Brereton Street

This house is in a central spot, at the Brereton and Dobson intersection, and just across from the church. The project included replacing windows, painting the window trim, awning, railings, and fence.



3057 Brereton Street

This project also included replacing a badly damaged and sloping sidewalk.

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Three years into the Knotweed Knockout

The knotweed knockout site is approaching its third year of remediation. It all started with an idea from Josie Ramsey to reclaim the former Tot Lot. Assisted by Alexis Miller and Leslie Clague, Josie applied for a Spring grant from the Sprout Fund. The grant called for submissions from neighborhoods for projects that would improve or highlight an area of biodiversity.

The project area submitted for the grant, located on lower Melwood Avenue under the Bloomfield Bridge, was known for a lack of diversity. The majority of the vegetation was knotweed; little else was able to thrive there. Since the grant was awarded and work began, the site has been host to several volunteer projects. Since 2011, Valerie Testa has led the project to maintain and replant the site.

One of the first knotweed eradication methods involved pulling the rhizomes from the soil. This tactic can weaken growth, but can also fragment root balls and lead to new plants. The current method of control, monthly cutting of the plant, is another experimental way of weakening the knotweed. The twenty trees planted last fall will grow in to create shade, attempting to smother



The Knotweed Knockout site is on the eastern border of Polish Hill, next to the base of the Bloomfield Bridge. The stakes mark the new trees, which were planted late last year. (Photo by Leslie Clague)

the knotweed and inhibit its growth.

As anyone who has ever dealt with this widespread vegetation knows, it does not go out without a fight. Knotweed is listed by the World Conservation Union as one of the world's 100 worst invasive species. While we cannot seem to escape it, there are merits to the plant. It is believed that knotweed was established in the U.S. in the early 1800s, used as an ornamental plant and for erosion control. Bees love the flowers of the plant, and the root is used medicinally.

The Knotweed Knockout site received regular weed-wacking sessions during the growing season this year. The trees are all thriving thanks in part to the generous rainfall we had during the summer months. In early October, the PHCA was able to work with the Student Conservation Association to give the site its final cutting for the year, and planted over 45 native plants. There are many benefits to planting vegetation that has been growing in our region for hundreds of years. They attract a variety of pollinators and insects, which in turn provide an important food source to birds in the area. Also, once established, they require minimal care.

It has been a great summer working on lower Melwood Avenue once a month, and we will be continuing the work next year. Now that the knotweed is getting knocked out, perhaps it is time to find a new name for the site!



Volunteers planted twenty trees on the Knotweed Knockout site in late November 2012. Above: Valerie Testa and a representative from Tree Pittsburgh. (PHCA photo)

At Home from Melwood Avenue to Stockholm Street

As we head into the holiday season, here are a few photos of people at home with loved ones from Polish Hill past.

The PHCA photo archive is mostly digital -- people share photos, we scan and return them. We have recorded any information people have about the photos, too. Contact us to find out how to share your photos!



David Bazczak shared this family snapshot taken on Melwood Avenue, probably in the 1940s.

Loretta Burek shared this photo of a family group in the courtyard of a building. The only person identified in the photo is Martha Kazmierczak (left rear).



Ron Rizner shared this photo of his sister Matilda with her accordion, on Stockholm Street.

Pivotal Streets, continued from page 5



1027 Herron Avenue

This project included painting window and door trim and foundation, street-facing roof repairs, and a new planter box constructed out of stone and brick. The colors of trim and design of the planter go with the house, but also give it a more unique, personal look.

Some of the work was on sides of the house that do not face public thoroughfares, and that percentage of the work was not covered under the parameters of the grant.

**Citiparks
West Penn Community
Recreation Center
450 30th Street**

Use of West Penn facilities is free for all Pittsburgh residents — just register to get a Citiparks card!

Facilities include workout room with exercise machines, weight room. Weight training and boxing training are available upon request.

Yoga class, Thursdays at 6:30 (\$7 donation per class)

West Penn hours:
9:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m. Monday - Friday
10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Saturday
Closed on Sundays

**For more information,
call 412-622-7353**

Don't forget to renew your membership for 2014 — use the form on the back of this issue!

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



www.ura.org

Polish Hill t-shirts



Item	Qty	Cost	Total
Red t-shirt Circle size(s) S M L XL XXL		Short sleeve 15.00	
		Long sleeve 20.00	
Black t-shirt Circle size(s) S M L XL XXL		Short sleeve 15.00	
		Long sleeve 20.00	

Packing and shipping: 2.50 per shirt

Payable to the Polish Hill Civic Association . **TOTAL**

Ship to:

Name	
Address	
Phone or email	

Give a nod to neighborhood history with the Imperial Polish crowned eagle on a high-quality red or black shirt. Adult sizes S—XXL.

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



United Way of Allegheny County

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.

POLISH HILL CIVIC ASSOCIATION

3060 Brereton Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Phone: 412-681-1950
Email: phca@phcapgh.org
Website: www.phcapgh.org
Blog: blogski.phcapgh.org

The PHCA's mission is to respect and preserve the sense of community in Polish Hill while promoting economic and housing development opportunities, and improving the quality of life for our community.

Polish Hill Civic Association Membership Application

All memberships expire at the end of each year. If you're a member now, get your 2014 membership for just \$5.
Not currently a member? Just \$7 takes you to the end of this year, through 2014!

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!

VOTING 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



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!