



Introduction

The Community Building Working Group sought to develop ideas to improve the quality of life in the neighborhood and bring people together. Starting with the premise that Polish Hill is a place to have a life, not just a home, the group looked at strategies to build on the cultural heritage of the neighborhood, connect the generations, and bridge some of the gaps that currently exist within the neighborhood. The recommendations of this portion of the plan are not necessarily physical or built proposals. Instead, this group will look at some of the event driven and social aspects of community place-making.

Some of the ideas that were explored in this working group included:

- ▶ Creating social spaces (third places) within the neighborhood.
- ▶ Economic development—bringing business to the neighborhood.
- ▶ Developing community events.
- ▶ Outreach proposals on an ongoing basis (i.e. “Hello Neighbor” Program).
- ▶ Technology assistance.
- ▶ Fostering a culture of innovation within the neighborhood. How Polish Hill can be a neighborhood of “firsts”, or a role model for other Pittsburgh neighborhoods.
- ▶ People building, (education, environment, programs, arts).

CB Community Building Pop-Up Retail/Art/Events/Training

Conflict Cafe, East Liberty

CB Community Building Amenities Build a new Community Bread Oven

CB Community Building Keep Polish Hill "Weird"
 "Weird" Means "of strange or extraordinary character".

CB Community Building "Third Places"

Guideposts

One of the guiding principles for the Community Building discussion group was that the greatest asset of Polish Hill is its people and that all neighborhood improvement efforts need to build upon this resource. For residents, the quality of life is determined by how people interact as much as it is by improvements in the physical environment. Neighborhood community building includes working together to develop places of subtle discovery while creating opportunity and openings for engaged, involved residents. The process of fostering community connections is as important as the end result. To assist this effort the group developed the following guidelines for community building:

Guideposts for Civic Engagement

- Develop strategies to preserve history, heritage, and culture.
- Promote opportunities for education and skill sharing (especially with respect to technology, trades, seniors, and youth).
- Create an outreach committee to connect residents (whether new arrivals, or those who are not currently involved).
- Encourage channels and outlets for residents to share and pursue their talents in the community; support and encourage cottage industries, entrepreneurship.
- Strengthen community connections with organizations such as the Immaculate Heart of Mary Church and Citiparks/West Penn Recreation Center.

Values and Vision

- Quality of life and vitality of the community is the core value underlying all neighborhood improvements.
- Quality of life is determined by how people interact as much as it is by the physical environment.
- Physical improvements that support resident interaction and relationships are preferred; let the life of the neighborhood shape the buildings and streets.
- The physical environment should support the core ingredients in quality of life — connectedness, hospitality, care, generosity, and creative expression - and derive from the diverse character of the residents.

CB Community Building Venues for Public Art

CB Community Building Need Large Scale Gathering Place

CB Community Building Public Realm: The street

CB Community Building Recreational & Play Space

Recommendations

Community Plan participants helped develop the following recommendations related to improving the quality of civic spaces and everyday quality of life in Polish Hill. The recommendations were developed specifically to preserve the neighborhood’s history, heritage and culture, and optimize outreach to existing and new residents.

Civic Space Project Recommendations

- A. Develop a big indoor space for community events.
- B. Redesign the Dobson-Brereton monument area as a usable space for community events.
- C. Create public amenities for people to congregate (including benches, tables, and places to shelter from the rain and sun; including pop-up and temporary structures.)
- D. Create community bulletin boards, e-boards, etc.
- E. Partner with West Penn Park and Recreation Center and develop ways to focus on partnerships and alliances.

Project Recommendations:

Live - Work - Shop

- F. Improve access to food within neighborhood (co-operatives, CSA’s, bulk purchasing).
- G. Encourage the development of pop-up retail and exchanges (food trucks, farmer’s market).
- H. Develop shared workshop or offices spaces.
- I. Encourage the development of exchanges (garden tools, materials, Freecycle).
- J. Promote new retail within Polish Hill (pizza, laundromat).

