



Polish Hill Community Plan

A Community Vision for the Future of Polish Hill, September 2011

Polish Hill Community Plan

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Polish Hill Community Plan

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Polish Hill Community Plan

Executive Summary

Introduction

Polish Hill is one of the best kept secrets in Pittsburgh – centrally located, affordable, safe and surrounded by green; the neighborhood offers a village vitality with city convenience. Once home to a large close-knit community of Polish immigrants and their descendants, the neighborhood is becoming more diverse than ever, yet still maintains these close community ties and respects its heritage. Picturesque and walkable, Polish Hill is a quiet neighborhood characterized by charming narrow streets and older buildings, fantastic views, eclectic architecture, and the iconic Romanesque green domes of Immaculate Heart of Mary Church.

For a long time the neighborhood was isolated, suffering from a dwindling and aging population, but in recent years, Polish Hill has attracted many new residents and renovators with its creative spirit and strong sense of community. Polish Hill now has a keen interest in developing itself as a bridge between Oakland and Downtown, as well as strengthening connections with bordering neighbors—the Strip District, Lawrenceville, Bloomfield and the Hill District.

With these goals in mind, the Polish Hill Civic Association began preliminary stages of strategic planning in 2007, followed by the formation of an official strategic planning committee in 2010, supported by board members, Polish Hill residents and businesses, the Community Design Center of Pittsburgh and Pfaffmann + Associates. The strategic planning committee gathered neighborhood feedback via a series of public meetings, workshops, surveys and interviews. This feedback formed the basis of the priorities and recommendations in this neighborhood plan, which truly represents a community vision for the future.

The plan identifies four main categories for improvement: 1) Housing and Buildings; 2) Traffic, Transportation and Gateways; 3) Open Space and Art; and 4) Community Building. Priority projects that express the values of the community, respond to the most pressing resident concerns and address multiple strategic goals are outlined below.

Polish Hill Community Plan

Executive Summary

Brereton-Dobson Intersection

Anchored by the Immaculate Heart of Mary Church and surrounded by brick and frame residences and scattered businesses, the intersection of Brereton Street and Dobson Street is the cultural and physical heart of the neighborhood.

A multi-parcel site held by the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) at this intersection presents a great opportunity for creative, mixed-use development consistent with the surrounding residential and commercial block that boasts homemade pierogi, rock 'n roll and a highly-recognized architecture firm. The Brereton-Dobson intersection is also the natural place for an outdoor community gathering space; with modifications to the existing monument area, there is potential for a pedestrian-centric, European-style town square or piazza that could become an aesthetic and social landmark of the neighborhood.

Vacant Buildings and Small-Scale Development

The scale and eclectic look of the neighborhood make Polish Hill such an appealing place to live. Residents do not want to see wide-scale tear downs; we value preserving and building on what we have. Our goal is to remove barriers to vacant property acquisition, encourage renovations and support new small-scale infill and micro-housing developments.

Immaculate Heart of Mary School

The historic character of the neighborhood and its landmark buildings are highly prized. One particular site, the Immaculate Heart of Mary School, has been a major distress to the neighborhood since shutting its doors. Over the past ten years it has deteriorated in the hands of a private owner, becoming covered by graffiti and litter outside, while posing health and safety risks inside. Despite the challenges and costs, residents fully support seeing this potential gem restored and re-purposed.

Traffic Calming

Another widely voiced concern is the increasing amount of traffic and speeding through the neighborhood. Polish Hill is known as a convenient cut-through for vehicles traveling between Oakland, Bigelow Boulevard and the Strip District. Our narrow streets were not designed to handle the amount of traffic that comes through each day. Many parked vehicles and property, particularly on Melwood Avenue, Herron Avenue, Paulowna Street, and Brereton Street, have been damaged, and residents injured, by speeding vehicles. For the safety and quality of life of our neighbors, traffic calming is an important priority.

Bigelow Boulevard

Conditions on Bigelow Boulevard have a negative effect on the entire neighborhood. Traffic on Bigelow travels at speeds almost double the posted limit. The sidewalks on Bigelow are overgrown and ill-maintained, and dangerously close to the highway-speed traffic. Excessive billboards along Bigelow create an additional nuisance and negative impression of the neighborhood.

Pedestrian Improvements

To bolster our village-like culture, transportation planning must put people first, rather than cars. Our residents demand safe streets, sidewalks, city steps and lighting that promote walking, bicycling and community cohesion. Improvements such as increased lighting and maintenance of city steps, fixing broken sidewalks, adding sidewalks and restoring the historic yellow brick sidewalks are specific needs.

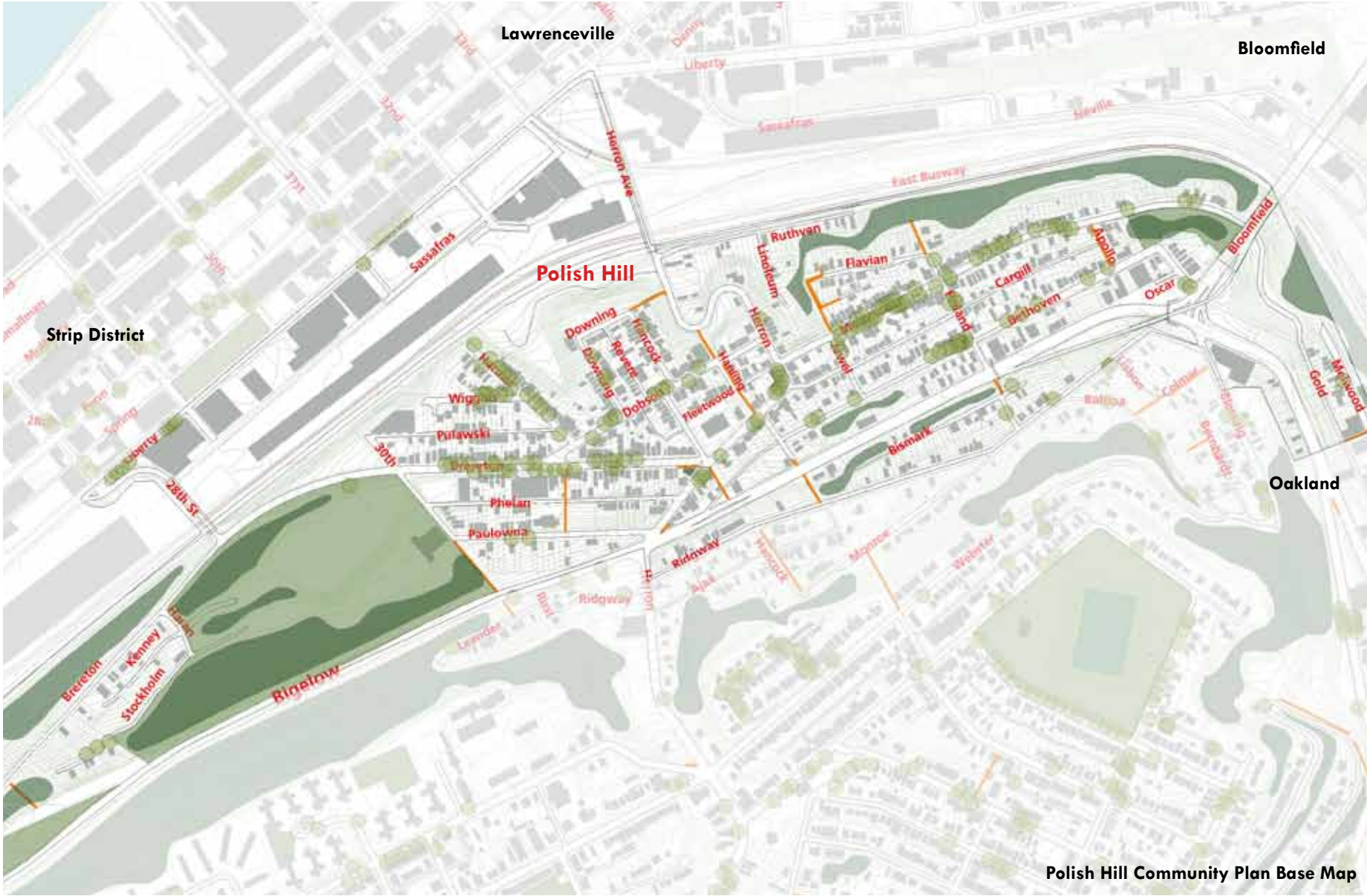
Gateways and Green Infrastructure

There are only a few gateways into Polish Hill. Many of these entrances greet visitors with billboards and overgrown weeds. The 28th Street bridge entrance into the neighborhood is a key entrance that needs improvement, connecting our largest green space, West Penn Park, to the Strip District and just a few blocks further to the Allegheny River. The green spaces that surround and permeate Polish Hill are some of the neighborhood's greatest assets, and residents want to preserve and strengthen these distinct features, particularly as gateways to greenways and public transportation such as the East Busway.

In addition to the many green gateways, Polish Hill values all green space within our borders and strives to protect our community gardens, parks, trees, gardens, wildlife and other green spaces as critical to the community and sustainability of our neighborhood.

Conclusion

Residents are in consensus: they appreciate the many unique characteristics of Polish Hill and wish to nurture and grow the many good qualities that already exist, most prominently the strong sense of community. The neighborhood is growing again and is poised to evolve in exciting ways. We invite you to participate and collaborate with us as we work to enhance the physical, economic and social fabric of the neighborhood and the region.



Vision

For many years, Polish Hill was a quiet neighborhood, known to most Pittsburgh residents only for the church domes and as a shortcut from Bigelow Boulevard down to the Strip. More recently, that perception has changed. New people are discovering the benefits of living in a friendly, walkable community with great views and easy access to transportation. The neighborhood is becoming an even more desirable place to live. Developers and homeowners are looking to invest in the community. With proximity to so many other neighborhoods, a low crime rate, fantastic views, and charming winding streets, this once-hidden village is now recognized as a desirable place to live. Polish Hill is poised to grow, but it needs some guidance.

While the Polish Hill Civic Association (PHCA) shepherded small-scale neighborhood development projects since its establishment in 1969, in 2007 it decided to create a wider plan that would look at the community as a whole. Creating a plan would help attract funding for projects and provide a vision that could be shared with potential developers and investors. The Community Plan would help determine what type of change was desirable and what needed to be preserved.

Community outreach and process would be as important to the community plan as the final recommendations themselves. Hearing from many voices in Polish Hill would provide opportunities to discover some common threads and brainstorm creative new solutions to old problems. It would help gain consensus about the future of the neighborhood and determine the next steps and priorities for neighborhood improvements. The plan would be organized to address improvements to the quality of public space, renovating homes and building new ones, making the streets and sidewalks safer, improving the business district, and making entrances to the neighborhood more attractive.





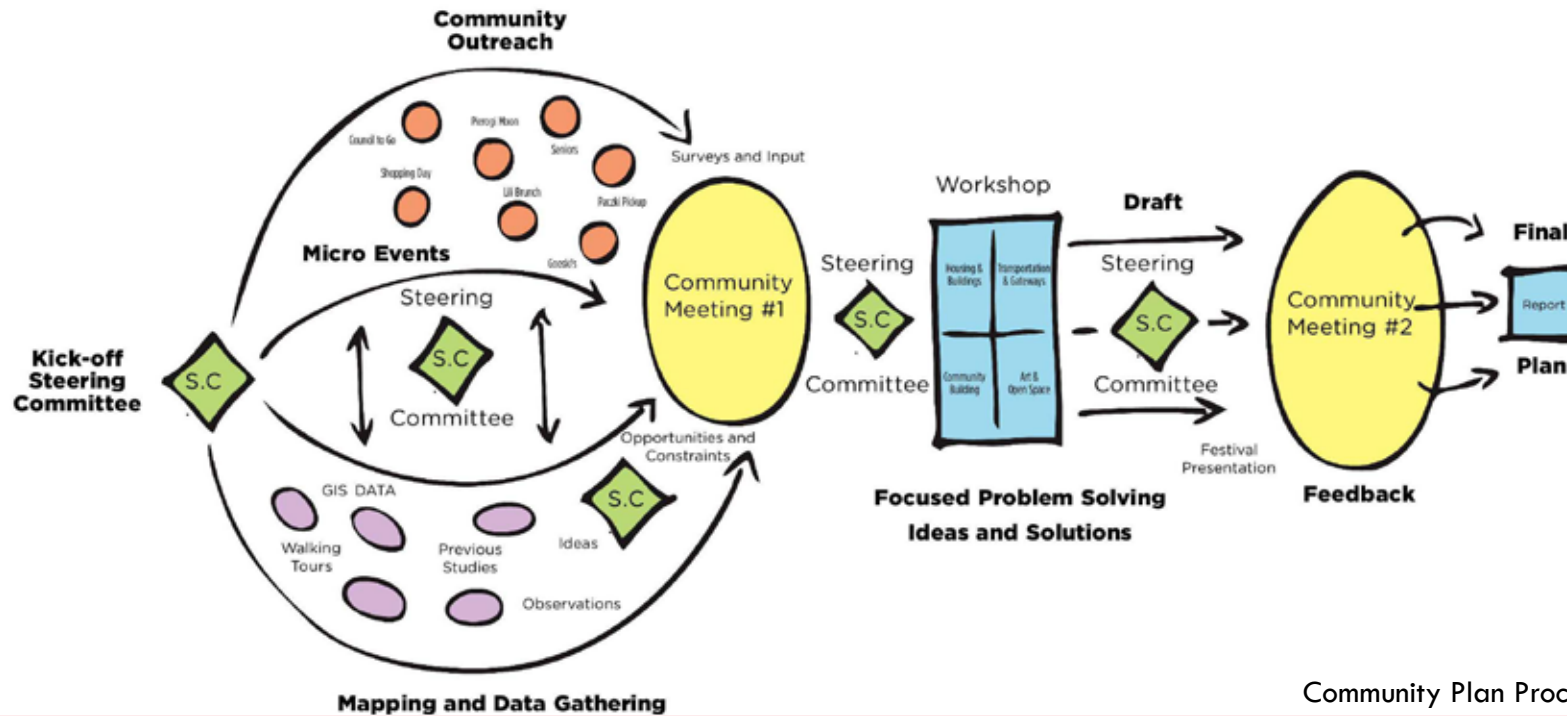
Micro Events



Walkshop Tours



Community Meeting #1



Community Plan Process Diagram

Planning Process

Organized into two phases, the first portion of the Polish Hill Community Plan consisted of a series of informal community events, walking tours, and discussions to get people talking about Polish Hill and introduce the planners to the neighborhood. Members of the Polish Hill Civic Association also organized smaller community outreach “micro-events” in Polish Hill to advertise the meetings and talk about issues. They also conducted several surveys to determine what people liked about the neighborhood, what needed to change, and what forces influenced people’s decisions to move to or relocate from the community.

The second phase of the community plan was comprised of a series of community meetings and workshops designed to come up with ideas about how to make Polish Hill a better place.

In the first community “listening meeting”, the planning team presented observations about Polish Hill and conducted a series of breakout sessions organized around the themes of Housing and Vacant Buildings, Transportation and Gateways, Open Space and Art, and Community Building. These themes form the organizational structure of the final plan recommendations.

With a list of ideas and recommendations from the first meeting, the second community meeting was conducted as an idea-generating workshop. Specific problems and potential solutions were presented and discussed. Participants were asked to draw up their visions for the neighborhood and discuss priorities.

Preliminary ideas were presented for feedback and discussion during the summer neighborhood festivals. In the final community meeting these ideas were presented and critiqued, and a series of implementation tasks for the plan was generated.



Community Meeting #2: Saturday Workshop



Summer Festivals



Community Meeting #3

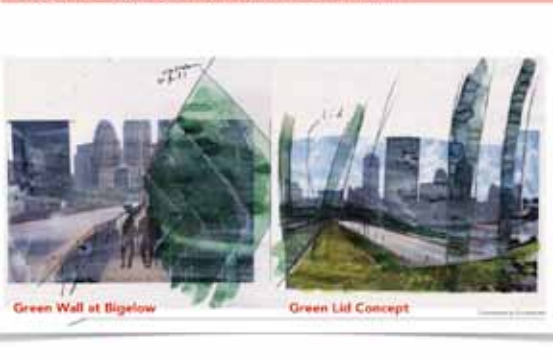
Hill Greenprint Plan

Proposal: Coal Seam Interpretive Trail



Hill Greenprint Plan

Proposal: Bigelow Connection to Downtown



Hill Greenprint Plan

Proposal: Kirkpatrick Stair Connection to Frank Curto Park



Hill Greenprint Plan

Proposal: Herron Avenue Geothermal Corridor



URA Pivotal Streets

Proposal: Kit of Parts for Housing Renovation



Herron Corridor Study

Proposal: Green Connections, Geothermal Corridor



Allegheny Riverfront Master Plan

Proposal: Development at Herron Ave and Liberty



Allegheny Riverfront Master Plan

Proposal: Green Streets Network



Allegheny Riverfront Master Plan

Proposal: 28th Street River Link



Previous Plans

As part of the planning process, the team analyzed the recent plans of Polish Hill's neighbors looking for ideas that could be incorporated into the Community Plan. Greening initiatives, transportation and inter-neighborhood connections were of particular interest to the group. Specific feedback and ideas to be incorporated from these plans is provided below.

Hill District Greenprint Plan

- ▶ Greenway concepts mesh well with Polish Hill's Greenway development efforts. The interface points should be studied.
- ▶ The landscape approach to planning is inspiring, especially as it relates to open space planning in Polish Hill.
- ▶ Opportunity to develop a lateral green street that knits across Herron Ave.
- ▶ Strengthening connections to the river is desirable, but requires further study.
- ▶ Stairs are also an opportunity in Polish Hill.
- ▶ Support the Bigelow Blvd. connection to downtown.

Active Allegheny Plan

- ▶ Support 'Road Diet' and 'Complete Streets' proposals for Bigelow Blvd.

Allegheny Riverfront Vision Plan

- ▶ 28th Street and Herron Avenue riverfront connections have validity for Polish Hill.
- ▶ Greenways or green streets are great, but they shouldn't become thoroughfares.
- ▶ Support development of higher density transit oriented design at Lower Herron.

Herron Corridor Study

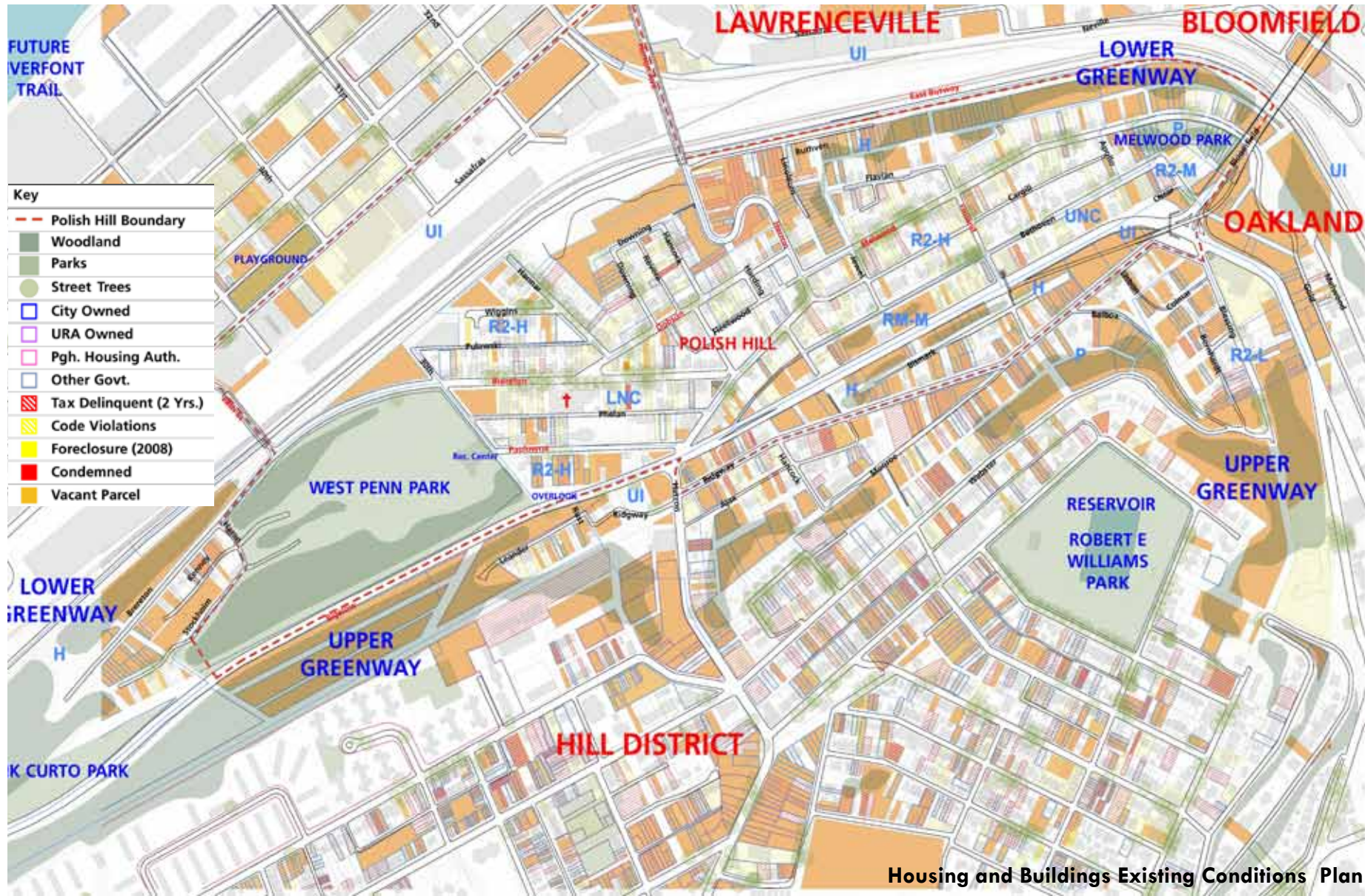
- ▶ Geothermal projects have potentially created water/hydrology issues in Polish Hill; the concept is a good one to be studied further.

Athletic Fields Study

- ▶ Plans for the fields were completed but not implemented.

URA Pivotal Streets

- ▶ A model for rehab in Polish Hill, especially the concept of a kit of parts for different scales of rehab.
- ▶ Needs to address how to rehab less architecturally significant frame houses.



Introduction

The Housing and Building Working Group sought to develop strategies for improving housing in the neighborhood. With limited vacant land for new construction, the team explored opportunities for renovation and new construction, with the goals of maintaining affordability and providing current residents of Polish Hill opportunities to continue to stay in the neighborhood. The group also discussed nonresidential development ideas which included commercial, business or live-work developments.

Discussion Topics

- ▶ Developing affordable infill housing/unit conversion strategies.
- ▶ Exploring suitable sites for new development.
- ▶ Developing new housing typologies (condo conversions, micro-houses, etc.).
- ▶ Determining whether there are any areas for a larger scale development, including transit oriented development (T.O.D.).
- ▶ Developing strategies to improve property and land transfers in the neighborhood.
- ▶ Addressing the issues of long-term vacancy and land ownership (liens, public ownership, title).
- ▶ Developing strategies to reduce the impact of absentee landlords within the neighborhood.
- ▶ Developing strategies to encourage housing renovation.
- ▶ Addressing the issue of housing property maintenance.
- ▶ Preservation of existing buildings.
- ▶ Commercial development opportunities: (businesses, live-work, studios, etc).
- ▶ Green housing strategies, unit conversions.

Melwood Infill Opportunity



Herron Ave TOD Opportunity Site



Stockholm Street Opportunity Area

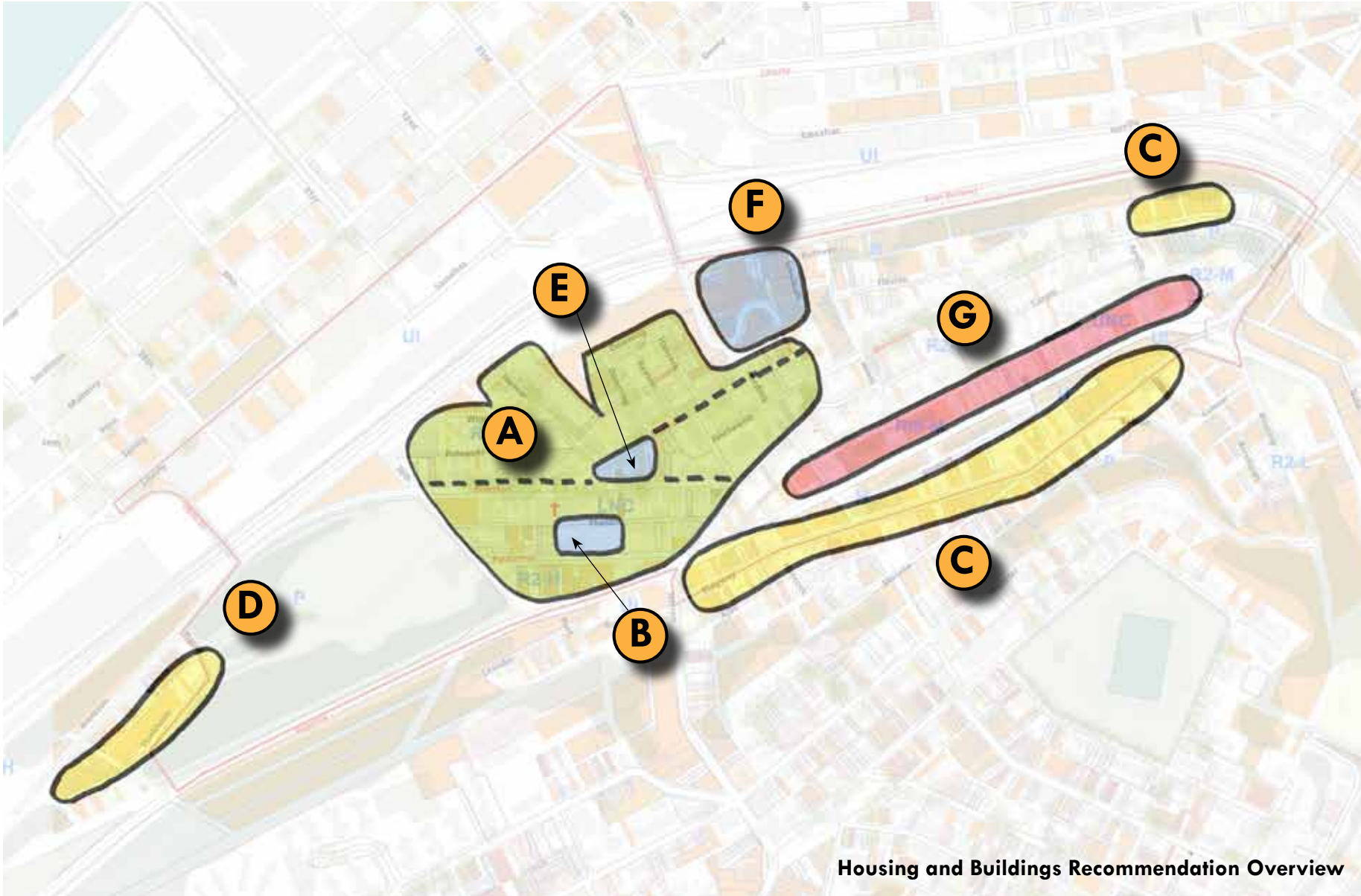


Pulawski St. Rehab



Downing Street Houses





Housing and Buildings Recommendation Overview

Recommendation Summary

Consensus emerged around the following values and vision statements regarding housing and building development in Polish Hill.

Values and Vision

- Keep the neighborhood affordable, mixed income and diverse.
- Keep the prices of new development accessible to existing residents—vital and affordable is preferable to higher income.
- Find ways to allow current residents to build equity in the neighborhood (i.e. turn renters into owners).
- Focus on existing housing and rehab rather than new development.
- The core of the neighborhood, rather than the periphery is most important.
- Keep things individualistic.
- Well designed, technology driven, green and innovative projects are desirable.
- Self-designed projects are preferable to those that are developer driven.
- Housing should be ‘Polish Hill Centric’, not be cookie cutter or suburban.
- Scattered-site (infill) development is preferable to all at once development.

Project Priorities Summary

- A. Polish Hill Housing Rehab (concentrated in the center of the neighborhood)
- B. Renovating the ‘IHM School Site’
- C. Infill Housing
- D. Micro-houses
- E. Brereton St. Fire Site Improvements
- F. Transit Oriented Development (Herron)
- G. Live/Work/Studio Space Development

The School Building



The Fire Site at Dobson and Brereton



Bigelow Housing Edges



Live-work along Bigelow Boulevard



Ridgeway Street Hillside Infill





Create a Polish Hill Home Renovation Guide

Creating a home renovation guide for Polish Hill residents would be an ideal way to share information and resources related to renovation. Ideally the guide would:

- ▶ Address the challenges homeowners face, and guide them through the process.
- ▶ Determine what projects need building permits.
- ▶ Help homeowners plan out construction budgets and schedules.
- ▶ Help determine when to do-it-yourself and when to hire a professional.
- ▶ Develop a list of reliable contractors and professionals (community-based Angie's List concept).
- ▶ Facilitate sharing of source materials, skills, tools, etc.
- ▶ Develop tips and tricks from seasoned veterans.
- ▶ Foster community connection and home ownership growth.



Encourage Triple-Decker Coop Conversions

Originally built for three families, many of the triple-decker houses in Polish Hill were converted into single-family houses and are now too large for smaller households.

- ▶ Many units are in need of major repairs and there is an opportunity to convert these buildings into vertical cooperatives or lofts.
- ▶ The ground floors could be accessible senior lofts for households looking to downsize but remain in the neighborhood.
- ▶ Developing these houses into co-housing units would provide a way to help residents to build up equity in Polish Hill.



Window Trim



Brackets



Iron Fences



Gates



Aluminum Awnings



Historic Woodwork

Kit of Parts for Micro Renovations

Building on the URA's Pivotal Streets façade grant design guidelines, this recommendation proposes encouraging homeowners to make renovations to small portions of facades, such as brackets, window trim, dormers or window boxes.

- ▶ Builds/restores the vernacular architecture of Polish Hill in a cost effective manner.
- ▶ Allows projects to take place at multiple scales.
- ▶ Could tie into renovation technical assistance programs, or weatherization grants.

Building Rehab Priorities

In community discussions and throughout the planning process, the issue of rehabilitation emerged as one of the most important elements of the Polish Hill housing plan. Conserving the existing housing stock was seen as an essential tool to preserve the character and cultural heritage of Polish Hill and maintain housing affordability in the neighborhood. Preservation was also regarded as one of the greenest housing strategies, given the cost and intensity of resources associated with new construction.

All acknowledged, however, that building renovation presents its own series of challenges. Many buildings in the neighborhood, for example, lack occupancy permits and proper titles, complicating building permitting and lending. Individual homeowners who are looking to invest and renovate must navigate a maze of zoning and building codes, financing requirements and construction challenges in order for a project to move forward. This led the group to develop ideas that could assist Polish Hill residents with renovation projects and focus neighborhood resources on certain areas and types of projects.

While building rehab should be pursued throughout Polish Hill, the planning process established that special attention should be paid to areas west of Herron, in the Brereton – Dobson corridor and around Pulawski Way. Properties in these areas tend to be larger, often multi-family, and in greater disrepair. The following projects represent some of the ideas that came up during the meetings and discussion.

Brooklyn Co-housing Concept Sketch



Triple Decker Interior, Boston



Triple Decker Exterior, Boston



Green Home Improvement Workshops



Polish Hill Pivotal Streets



Infill Hillside Houses

Polish Hill's steep terrain and complex site conditions provide an opportunity to develop new infill housing prototypes that can take advantage of topography and views. The Hillside Prototype has the potential opportunity to save energy by integrating thermal massing into the hillside, rainwater recycling and passive solar design. Green roofs and terraces could provide usable outdoor space. Three target areas for new infill housing were established.

Melwood Infill

- › Infill units along Melwood near the Bloomfield Bridge would strengthen the entrance into Polish Hill and connect to Melwood Park.
- › Fills in "missing teeth" at the Bloomfield Bridge Gateway.
- › Takes advantage of views into Lawrenceville and the Lower Greenway.
- › Smaller footprints could be more affordable.

Ridgeway Infill

The area just north of Bigelow Boulevard is cut off from Polish Hill and the Hill District. With amazing views of the Allegheny River, new infill development in this area could help fill the desire for housing in Polish Hill, and strengthen Polish Hill's connections with adjacent neighborhoods.

- › Larger units possible with yard space.
- › Preserve the "country in the city" feel.
- › Provide incentives for overpass improvements.

Polish Hill Trinity Infill (Urban Core)

- › Inspired by Philadelphia row house designs, the Polish Hill Trinity has the potential to be an economical infill solution that deals with complex hillside sites in the center of the neighborhood where there is greater density.
- › Roughly 200 square foot per floor, the compact plan allows the buildings to negotiate steep grade, while maintaining a small, cost effective footprint.
- › The building type is also flexible, allowing growth and change over time.



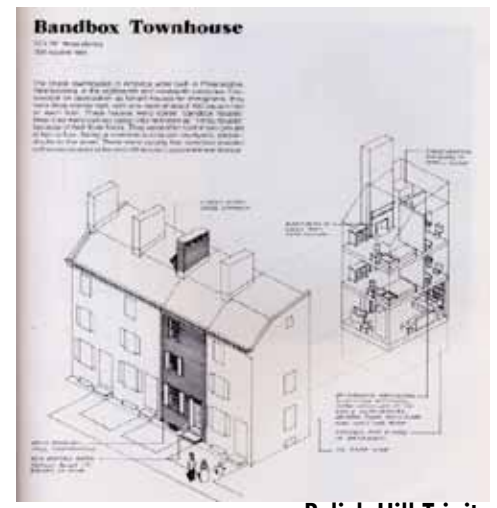
Melwood Infill Plan



Ridgeway Infill Plan



Historic Melwood



Polish Hill Trinity



Melwood Infill Site

Ridgeway Infill

Division 43 Affordable Infill Microhouses: Portland

Philadelphia 100K House



Stockholm Micro-housing infill plan

Infill Micro-houses

In the past few years, “thinking small” has become the next big idea in housing. Smaller building footprints have proven themselves to be less resource intensive, more cost effective to heat and cool, and more affordable.

New “micro-housing” options were proposed for the Stockholm subdistrict, an area with green hillsides and open space. The smaller footprints would allow for side yards and gardens. These new homes would be only a few hundred square feet—just large enough to provide for a bedroom, bathroom, and kitchen/dining/living space (basically the bare minimum).

Stockholm Street Micro-houses

- ▶ Introduction of a new housing type to the neighborhood for people who may not be able to purchase a larger house.
- ▶ New economical construction, possibly pre-fabricated.
- ▶ Allows for larger yards, with gardens or small-scale farming.
- ▶ Small environmental footprint.
- ▶ Flexible housing type can be added onto.
- ▶ Lowe’s Katrina Kit is a good benchmark.
- ▶ Minimize footprint on the neighborhood.

Existing Conditions: Stockholm



Lowe’s Katrina House



Tumbleweed Tiny House



Fire Site Infill (Dobson & Brereton)

In 2007, a five-alarm fire destroyed several homes in the commercial core of Polish Hill at the intersection of Dobson and Brereton. Two homes were demolished leaving a series of vacant parcels in the center of the neighborhood. In 2008, The URA presented a series of proposals for the site that were somewhat controversial in the community. This prompted a discussion about what should be rebuilt or whether to rebuild. While there has not yet been consensus about redevelopment for this site, the URA is continuing their efforts to acquire a series of parcels in this area.

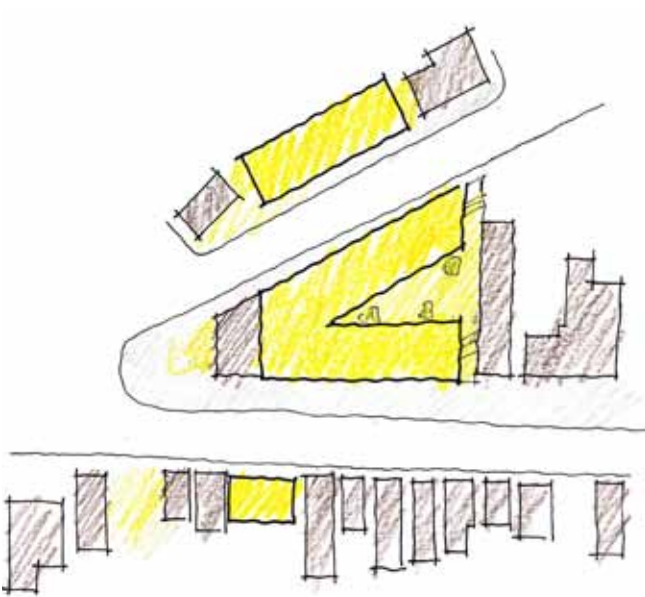
The community design process generated the following value statements related to the fire site and feedback on URA design work to date.

Preliminary Studies

In order to understand the site's development capacity, the team created a series of basic massing models showing varying levels of redevelopment at the fire site. These were used to facilitate discussion about potential re-uses and intensity of this new development.

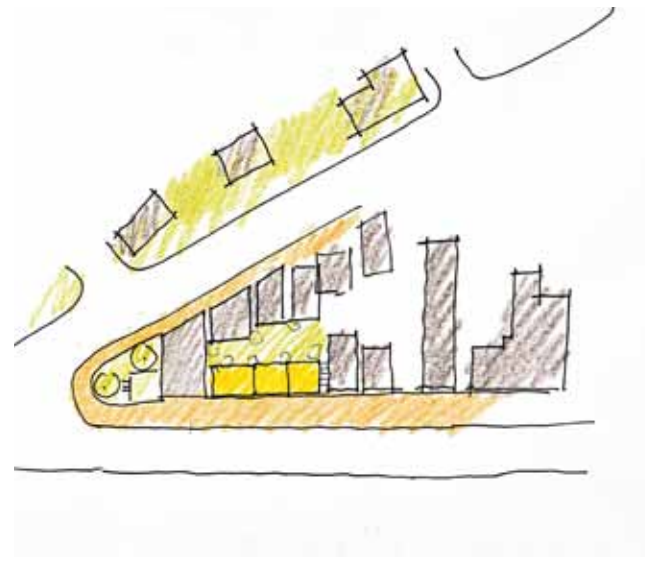
Community discussion and feedback established the following:

- ▶ Polish Hill residents like the idea of public space at the core, they've been getting used to the idea of empty space at the fire site.
- ▶ Replacing core of the neighborhood with something new is less desirable.
- ▶ All at once development is less desirable to incremental change
- ▶ New development should be innovative, not cookie-cutter
- ▶ Smaller is better, as is mixed income.



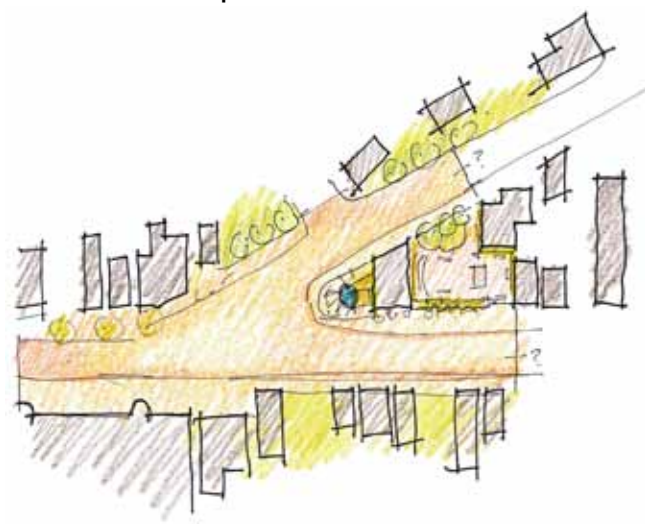
Maximum Site Development

- ▶ Similar to the original URA Proposal
- ▶ Shared Courtyard-opportunity to develop parking in center. Grading must be studied further
- ▶ Glass garage living room doors at street level
- ▶ New infill along Brereton and Dobson to complete the street wall
- ▶ Public access cut through



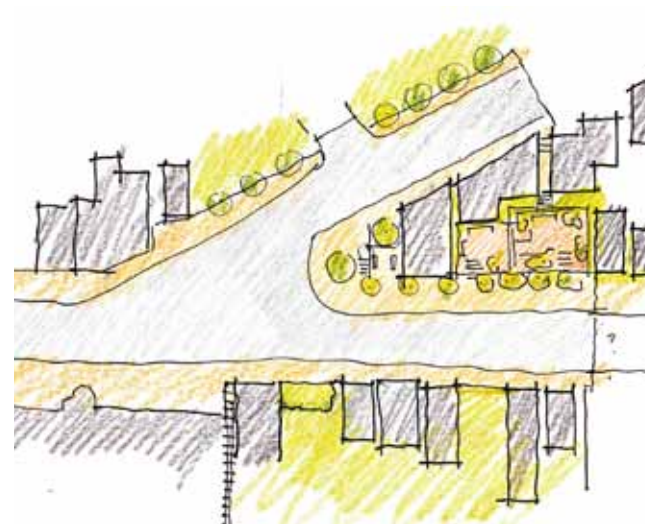
Small Scale Infill

- ▶ Small scale infill, smaller footprint
- ▶ Shared Courtyard
- ▶ Sidewalk Improvements



Piazza Concept

- ▶ Bricked Street for traffic calming and events
- ▶ Gathering space/park in the vacant fire site



Parklet Concept

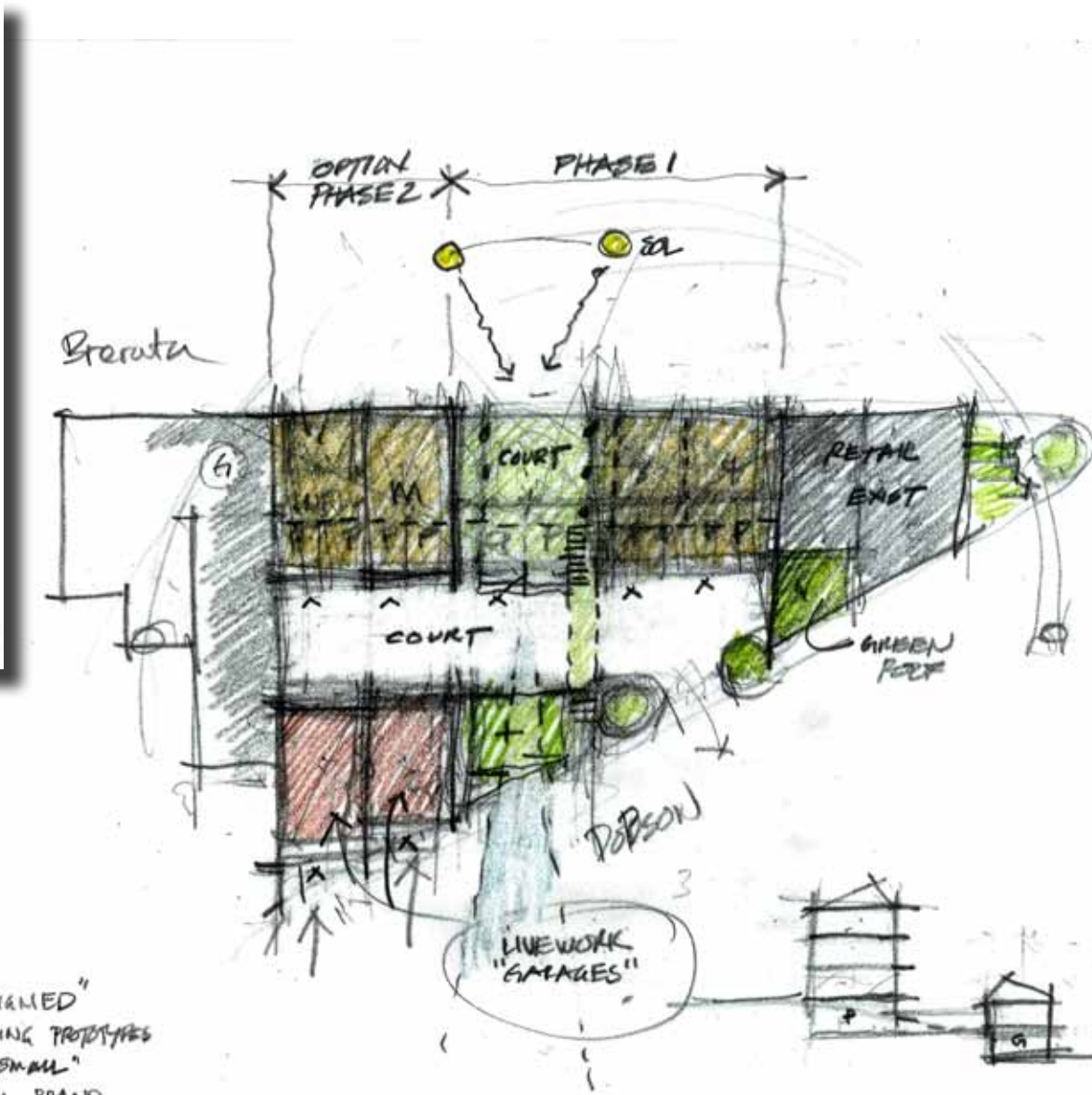
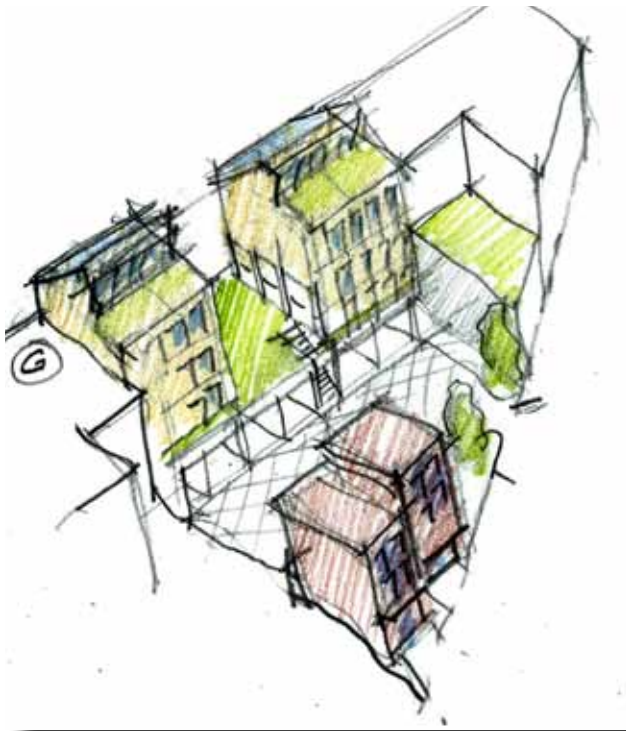
- ▶ Small scale infill, smaller footprint
- ▶ Shared Courtyard
- ▶ Sidewalk Improvements

Fire Site: View from Brereton



Fire Site: View from Dobson





"BANKS DESIGNED"
NEW HOUSING PROTOTYPES
"BUILDING SMALL"
POLISH HILL BRAND

Fire Site Infill (Dobson & Brereton)

After additional discussion it was agreed that the fire site requires a thorough technical review and design process, beyond the scope of the community plan. The complex geo-technical, and site conditions will require further study. New development, however should be guided by the following principles:

Fire Site Redevelopment Principles

- ▶ Establish "Density with diversity"
- ▶ Create new housing typologies:
 - ▶ Senior lofts/flats on Brereton
 - ▶ Artist live-work garages on Dobson
- ▶ Incremental development strategies are preferred.
- ▶ Avoid repetitive adapted suburban townhomes.
- ▶ Consider "breaks" in the street wall where appropriate.
- ▶ Create defensible open space and pedestrian overlooks— "visual links or pass-throughs".
- ▶ Building higher is okay (like "Mary's House").
- ▶ Recycle/Reuse architectural elements of demolished houses if possible on site.
- ▶ Create new innovative, green corner park, pedestrian friendly. Combine with traffic calming techniques.

Benchmark: Live Work Studio Garages



Live Work Garage Exterior



Mews Housing: London



Infill Parklet



Dobson Live-Work Storefronts





Immaculate Heart of Mary School

Dedicated in 1896, the Immaculate Heart of Mary School is one of the historic architectural landmarks in Polish Hill. The decaying structure has been the source of frustration for neighborhood residents for a number of years. The property was sold in 2003; in 2005, Rothschild Doyno Architects developed a proposal to create 13 condominium units in the existing structure. An additional 15 units would be developed in a second phase of new construction. At the time these plans were presented, neighborhood residents were in favor of developing residential units in the building.

In the community planning sessions, Polish Hill residents voiced that the best possible reuse of the building would be for it to house instruction-friendly artisan studios in a project similar to the Manchester Craftsmen's Guild on the North Side. Other interim uses might also include exhibit or performance space. Using the outdoor yard for concerts, farmers markets and performances was also discussed. However, all agreed that doing something with the space was most important.

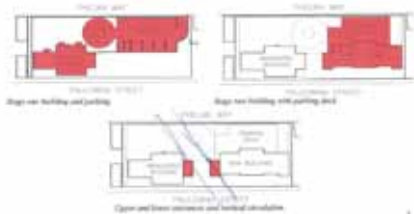
The community would also support converting the unit into residential apartments for young and older residents alike. How fun to house seniors in the school they attended as youngsters. Creating a condominium development was discussed as well, much like a smaller version of the Cork Factory (Strip District) or Angel's Arms (South Side Slopes) developments.

IHM School Next Steps

- ▶ Work with the owner to determine what steps need to be taken to weatherize and stabilize the building.
- ▶ Meet with owner to discuss the status of the redevelopment project and plans for moving forward.
- ▶ Develop a real estate pro-forma. Meet with other developers to discuss.
- ▶ It may be possible that the project can be made to work as a rental development.

A: Immaculate Heart of Mary School Rehab

Rothschild Doyno Phasing Plan and Unit Plans

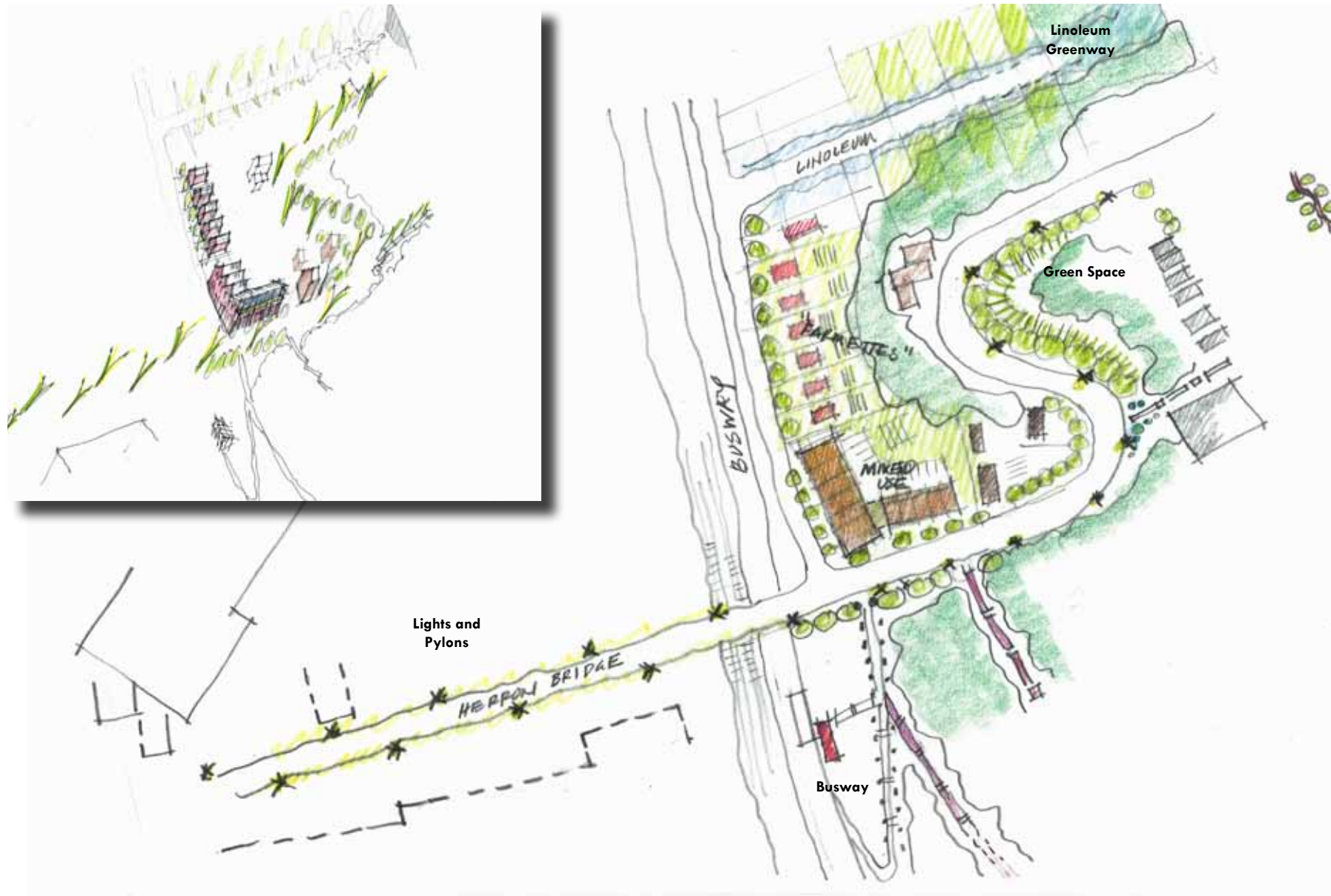


Angel's Arms: South Side Slopes



Cork Factory Lofts: Strip District





Herron TOD Development

With few large, developable parcels of land available in Polish Hill, the planning team explored whether there were any opportunities for larger transformative development projects in the neighborhood. The team was particularly interested in adding workforce rental properties to the housing mix and perhaps restaurant retail that could draw people from surrounding neighborhoods. They were also looking for projects that would build upon the neighborhood's proximity to PAAC's East Busway that links Polish Hill to Downtown Pittsburgh and the East End neighborhoods. Access to the Busway was seen as an overlooked opportunity in Polish Hill.

Currently up for sale, the 2.5 acres of land at the base of Herron Avenue contains a bar complex and series of surface parking lots. This site provides an opportunity to explore mixed-use transit oriented development in Polish Hill. Transit oriented development posits that proximity to transportation networks, can support higher density housing and retail development and encourage pedestrian friendly streets and environments.

While the team felt that it was best to allow market forces to shape this new development, a series of values statements with respect to this new development emerged.

Herron TOD Redevelopment Principles

- There is an opportunity for larger restaurant retail, currently not available in Polish Hill.
- Parking could take place in a courtyard center, perhaps structured.
- Green, multi-story project.
- Condominium or Rental, or a mix—ideally workforce housing.

TOD Site at Lower Herron



View from Downing Steps



TOD Benchmark



TOD Benchmark



TOD Benchmark





Develop Land Banking

A land bank could be set up to acquire and hold blighted, vacant or foreclosed property and allow for future development. This could help to spur acquisition of properties and allow for development plans to occur and properties could be turned back to productive use.

Implement the Blighted and Abandoned Property Conservatorship Law

This recently enacted Pennsylvania law allows a nearby neighbor or non-profit organization to initiate a court action appointing a third party conservator to take care of a property if an owner refuses. An owner may regain possession after reimbursing the conservator for its costs. If an owner does not redeem the property, the court may approve a sale of the property.

Vacant Land Policies



Developers Roundtable Breakfast: Lawrenceville

Establish Dialogue with Developers

- ▶ Informal and formal processes of communication between civic leaders and the development community is essential for any successful development project.
- ▶ In Lawrenceville, a Community Roundtable was established as part of the Community Planning Process. This provided a forum for each group to discuss goals and expectations related to new development.
- ▶ Lawrenceville also implemented a Development Review Committee which looked at new all new projects planned for the neighborhood, which could be implemented in Polish Hill.

Developer Dialogue Forum



Building Code Enforcement

Improve Building Code Enforcement

- ▶ The Housing Analysis Map of Polish Hill shows that there are many code violations in the neighborhood.
- ▶ Historically, the Bureau of Building Inspection (BBI) Blitz has been an effective tool that has gotten people to fix up their properties.
- ▶ Community leaders can turn the BBI Blitz into an annual event, which, if announced will get people renovating in advance of the inspectors.

New Senior Living

The next generation of seniors may not necessarily retire in the same way as the current generation of seniors. As a result, the building types built for today's retirees may not necessarily work for the next generation. New senior living prototypes could help fill a void in Polish Hill's current housing market. The units would help keep older residents in the neighborhood, increase accessibility and allow inter-generational connections. Several projects and models for new senior living emerged from the community plan discussion.

- ▶ Senior coops or co-housing
- ▶ New senior lofts
- ▶ Planning the future of John Paul Plaza



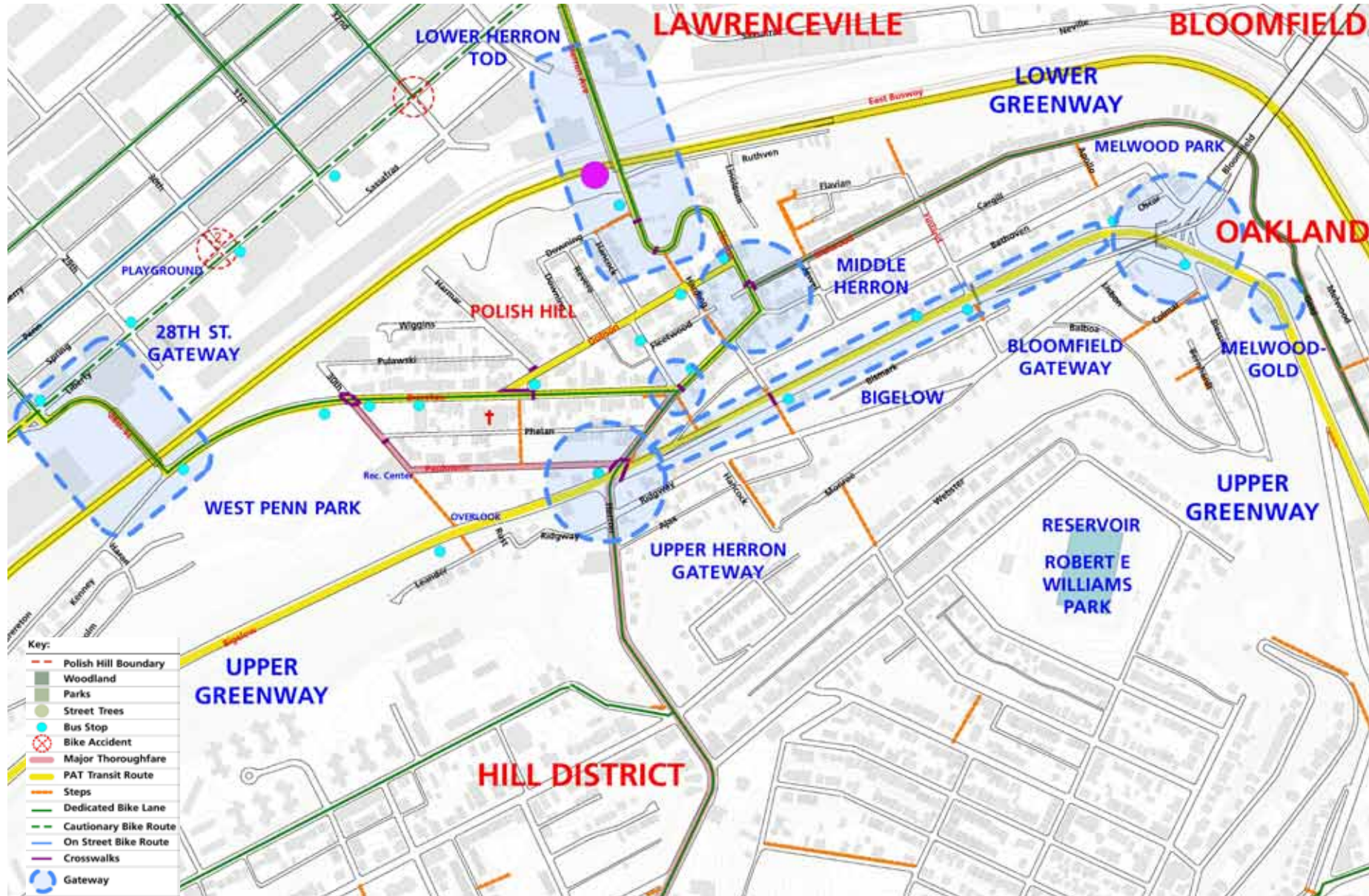
New Senior Living

Housing & Building Policy

The Housing and Building Working Group also developed a series of policy recommendations for residential rehab and development. The goal of the policy recommendations was to establish principles, rules, or forums that would guide decisions and influence planning outcomes, setting the framework for future decision making. These recommendations were intended to improve building conditions and strengthen the enforcement of rules and regulations already on the books. The group was interested in developing strategies that would help guide development projects in the neighborhood and address issues that were not necessarily solved through new design. The major discussions revolved around the following topics.

Housing Policy Discussion Topics:

- ▶ Developing strategies to address the problem of vacant buildings in Polish Hill.
- ▶ Establishing dialogue with developers interested in working in Polish Hill and a formal community development design review process.
- ▶ Generating strategies to improve property maintenance (PA Conservatorship Law).
- ▶ Working to improve building code enforcement.
- ▶ Creating opportunities for new senior living in Polish Hill.



Transportation and Gateways Existing Conditions Map

Introduction

The Transportation and Gateways Working Group worked closely with the Open Space and Art working group to explore ways of improving biking, walking and gateway connections in Polish Hill, and indeed there was much overlap in each group’s recommendations. The community process established that Polish Hill residents desire safe, unique and complete streets with ample public space to promote walking and community cohesion. They would also like to maintain the urban grid and create a green, walkable community that reduces auto-centrism and promotes multi-modal, safe transportation options. One of the values that inform all these potential projects is the desire to preserve the walkable character of the neighborhood.

Discussion Topics

- ▶ Herron Avenue Gateway/TOD Development: (Coordinate with Housing and Building Working Group)
- ▶ Beethoven/Bloomfield Bridge Gateway
- ▶ Bigelow Boulevard Proposals
- ▶ Melwood/Gold Way Gateway
- ▶ 28th Street Gateway
- ▶ Stair Proposals: (Coordinate with Open Space and Art Working Group)
- ▶ Biking Recommendations

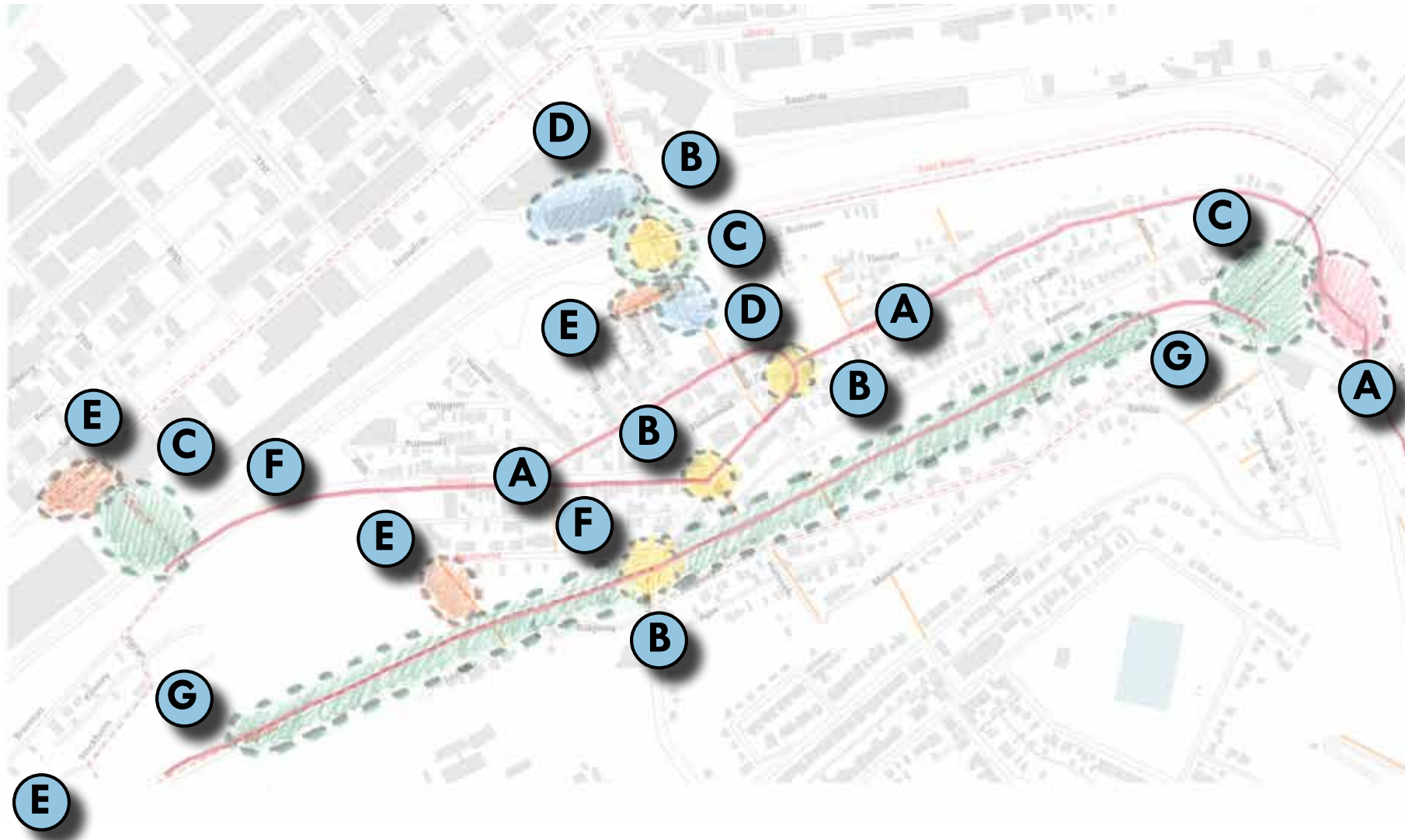
Values and Vision

- ▶ Transportation planning should put people first rather than cars.
- ▶ Quality of life is more important than efficiency or speed.
- ▶ Pedestrian and bike safety are paramount.
- ▶ Make connections without creating thoroughfares.



Recommendation Summary

- A. **Traffic Calming:** Implement traffic calming along Bigelow, Melwood, Brereton and Dobson. Potential traffic calming measures may include intersection art, crosswalk upgrades, and creative signage to remind people of the dangers of speeding.
- B. **Pedestrian Crossings:** Improving pedestrian crossings along Herron Avenue will help connect the east and west residential districts. Lighting, street tree, and crosswalk upgrades will unify the street and connect the neighborhood to the Allegheny River Trail.
- C. **Gateways:** The Bloomfield Bridge, Lower Herron Avenue, 28th Street Bridge, Bigelow Boulevard Gateway improvements will identify the neighborhood, improve image ability, and calm traffic. Polish Hill seeks to green these public spaces and encourage public art projects for the neighborhood.
- D. **Transit-Oriented Development:** Support a transit-oriented development along Lower Herron and Liberty Avenue to take advantage of the East Busway. Improve community awareness of the busway and upgrade the stairs and sidewalks that connect it to Polish Hill.
- E. **Stair Improvements:** Repair and upgrade the City stairs at Downing, 28th Street, and Frank Curto Park. Integrate pedestrian scaled lighting for safety.
- F. **Billboard Removal/ Reuse:** Reduce the saturation of billboards contributing to visual pollution in the neighborhood by teaming with Scenic Pittsburgh to remove or reclaim billboards for other uses.
- G. **Pedestrian & Cyclist Improvements (Long-Term):** Create new pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure that connects Polish Hill to Oakland and Downtown Pittsburgh.



Key Recommendations Map

Stairs to Downing at lower Herron



BRT Station at Lower Herron



Billboards on Bigelow Boulevard



Bigelow Sidewalks and Fences



Closed Steps at Paulowna





Bump-outs and Thermo-infused Crosswalk Paving



Traffic Calming Signs



Traffic Calming

High-speed traffic along Bigelow Boulevard, Brereton, Herron and Melwood Avenue has had a negative impact on residential quality of life. Commuters use Polish Hill as a convenient cut through during rush hours. Due to the high volume and speed of traffic, traffic-calming measures have been recommended to make the neighborhood more walkable, livable and safe. Specific recommendations include redesigned crosswalks with bump outs, traffic calming signs, intersection art/texture and a yellow brick plaza at Brereton and Dobson to reduce traffic speeds.

Crosswalk Bump-outs

Crosswalk bump-outs reduce the crossing time and distance for pedestrians while slowing traffic. Bump-outs are an important tool in the process of reclaiming part of the street for pedestrians and increasing walkability, safety and pedestrian connections. Potential sites for bump-outs include 30th and Brereton.

Traffic Calming Signs

Signage can be an effective tool for slowing the speed of automobiles. Creative signage can capture the attention of motorists and alert them to the presence of children and pedestrians. Polish Hill is home to a number of artists and creative professionals who could form a committee to explore traffic-calming signage and create unique and effective signage. Signage can be placed along Melwood, Brereton, Dobson, Herron and Bigelow Boulevard.

Intersection Texture/Art

By changing the texture of the intersection or introducing art onto the street, drivers reduce speed. Herron and its cross streets are a prime location for intersection art and new textures.

Yellow Brick Plaza

The concept of a 'piazza' at the intersection of Dobson and Brereton was one of the more popular proposals coming out of community workshops. A plaza would reduce the speed of traffic by announcing a public space to motorists. In addition to reducing the speed of motorists, the plaza could be used as a central communal space when Brereton Street is closed off to traffic. This traffic-calming feature would further distinguish the community of Polish Hill to newcomers, visitors and motorists.



Intersection Texture/ Art



Yellow Brick Plaza



Benchmark: Dedicated Bike Lanes



Intersection Art



Shared Roadways



Brick Main Street Plaza



Intersection Art



Melwood/Gold Way Gateway

While the Melwood-Gold Way connector resembles an alley in its width and road condition, the street carries a high volume of pedestrian, bike and vehicular traffic, connecting Polish Hill to Oakland at a relatively level grade. The roadway's narrow width, sharp turns and overgrown vegetation create dangerous blind spots and a potential for head-on collisions. The absent or overgrown sidewalks and lack of bike lanes only compound these unsafe conditions.

The community and planning team brainstormed ways to improve this corridor and developed the following improvements.

- ▶ Connect Upper Melwood to Lower Melwood through the creation of continual sidewalks, public space and through the development of a pedestrian trail.
- ▶ Improve the sidewalk conditions and look at the possibility of creating a pedestrian trail away from the road.
- ▶ Develop signs and art to reduce traffic speeds. This may include strategic art crosswalks or intersection art indicating unsafe conditions ahead.
- ▶ Develop murals on the underside of the Bloomfield Bridge to announce the neighborhood and call attention to the fact that motorists are entering into a residential area.



Plan Recommendations

Pedestrian Bridge- Bigelow Boulevard



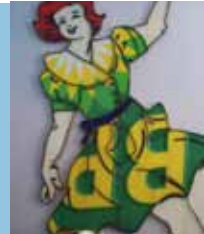
Billboard Close-up Art Opportunity



Benchmark Strip District Lighting



Kaulen Sculpture



Walkway Paving



Artful Signage



Herron Avenue Improvements

Herron Avenue is a major city street that connects the Hill District and Polish Hill to Lawrenceville and the Strip District. It is the only street in Polish Hill that traverses the neighborhood edge to edge, bisecting the neighborhood east to west. It establishes two neighborhood gateway entrances into the community and negotiates a steep change in grade with s-curves and shifts in direction.

The community workshops developed a series of streetscape and gateway improvements for Herron. The goal of these proposals was to unify and enhance safety, calm traffic and unify the street, knitting the eastern and western portions of the neighborhood.



Plan Recommendations

Lower Herron

- A. Improve sidewalk and stair conditions.
- B. Green and screen the parking lot.
- C. Improve connections to and awareness of the Herron Avenue Busway.
- D. Add lighting along the Herron Bridge as well as Lower Herron and the Busway.

Middle Herron

- E. Create a pedestrian-only landscaped connection along Melwood from Herron to Harding.
- F. Add clearly designated crosswalks and intersection art along Herron at Melwood and Dobson.
- G. Plant new street trees along Middle Herron to act as a buffer between pedestrians and automobiles.

Upper Herron

- H. Reduce the number of billboards along Bigelow. Work with Scenic Pittsburgh to remove or reclaim billboards.
- I. Improve crosswalks for safer pedestrian crossings.
- J. Improve the conditions of the pedestrian underpass that spans Bigelow along Herron.
- K. Green the Bigelow median, plant new street trees at the intersection, and improve bus stops.
- L. Implement traffic calming strategies to reduce the speed of traffic along Bigelow.

Lower Herron Avenue Bridge



Lower Herron



Melwood and Herron



Melwood and Herron



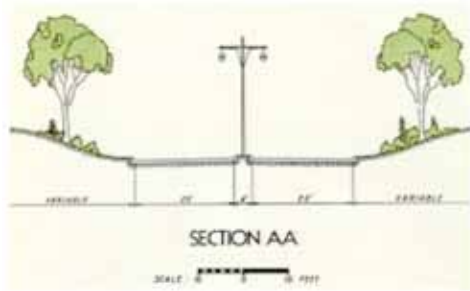
Upper Herron & Bigelow



Bigelow Boulevard

Bigelow Boulevard is a historic urban boulevard that connects Downtown to Pittsburgh's East End neighborhoods. Between Downtown and Herron Avenue the character of the arterial roadway is quite attractive and lined by wooded hillsides, historic fences, and Frank Curto Park. As it traverses the eastern half of Polish Hill, the character of the roadway changes dramatically. A mix of vacant lots, underutilized commercial buildings, billboards, and houses define the roadway.

For Polish Hill residents, Bigelow Boulevard functions as a linear gateway to the neighborhood that defines the neighborhood's northern edge. Workshop participants spent a great deal of time discussing how to calm traffic, improve bike and pedestrian connections along the Boulevard to Downtown and Oakland, and mitigate the impact of the roadway on Polish Hill.



Historic Bigelow Blvd. Section



Infill Trees at Hillside Edge



Infill Trees in Commercial Areas



Key goals for Boulevard improvements

- ▶ Traffic calming along Bigelow where current speeds far surpass posted speed limits.
- ▶ Greening the median and the vacant parcels along the commercial edge.
- ▶ Improving the crosswalks and bus stops along the Boulevard.
- ▶ Modifying the timing of traffic lights at the intersection of Bigelow, Paulowna and Herron.
- ▶ Improving connectivity to Downtown for pedestrians and cyclists.
- ▶ Improving access to Frank Curto Park.
- ▶ Reducing the number and visual impact of billboards.

Proposed Improvements

- A. New Infill Trees
- B. New fence & pedestrian links to Frank Curto Park
- C. Traffic Calming along Bigelow
- D. Improved Pedestrian connections to Oakland and Downtown
- E. Reclaim billboards, Lamar opportunity
- F. Lighting along the Herron Trail
- G. Timing of lights to facilitate pedestrian crossing
- H. Art Announcing Polish Hill

Historic Postcard of Bigelow Blvd.



Historic Photo of Bigelow Blvd.



Bigelow & Herron Avenue



Bigelow Hillside Sycamores



Traditional Blvd Street Section





Creative Traffic Calming



Complete Streets Planning



Green Transportation Advocacy



Public Transportation Advocacy

General Transportation Policy

Healthy and equitable transportation policy supports the development of accessible, efficient, affordable and safe alternatives to the automobile. For Polish Hill this means creating neighborhood transportation policies that de-emphasize the car, and put people first.

Policy Goals

- › Develop transportation policies and plans that support health, equity and environmental quality.
- › Emphasize accessibility instead of simply mobility in transportation policies and programs.
- › Prioritize investments in public transportation.
- › Prioritize investments in bike and pedestrian infrastructure.
- › Encourage equitable transit-oriented development by creating incentives for integrated land-use and transportation planning.
- › Support policies that increase access to healthy foods, goods and services, as well as schools and businesses.

Policy Action Items

- › Promote traffic calming throughout Polish Hill and efforts to decrease the amount of cut-through traffic coming through the neighborhood. Work with the City and collaborate with neighboring communities to step up traffic calming and enforcement.
- › Establish a plan for “complete streets” in Polish Hill.
- › Advocate green modes of transportation, such as bicycling, walking and public transit, over traditional automobile use. Incentivize modes of transit that are more environmentally sound and healthier for the neighborhood.
- › Protect and preserve existing bus service.



Polish Hill Bike Plan



Neighborhood Parking Plan



Bike and Car Sharing



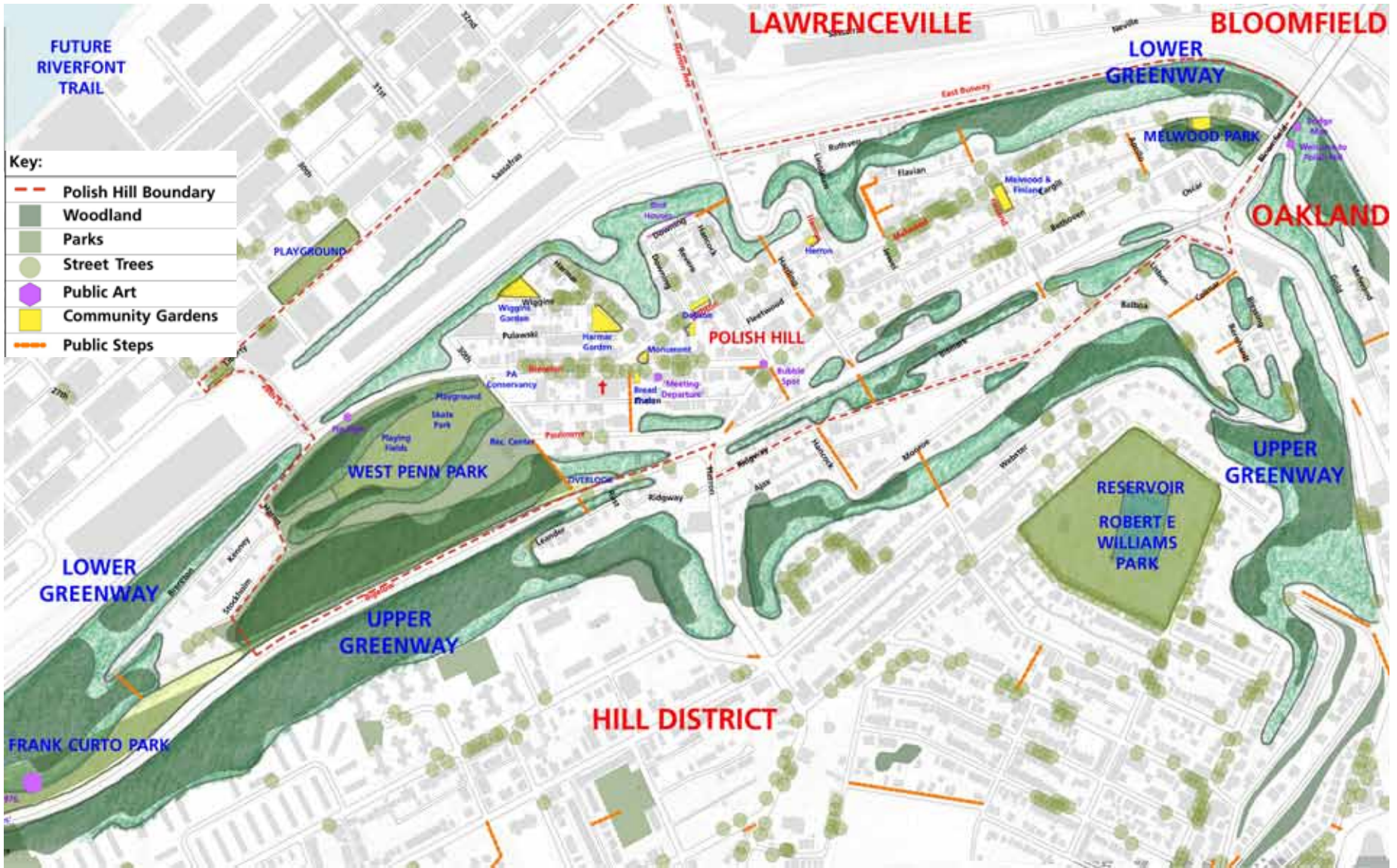
BRT Advocacy

Auto, Pedestrian, Bus & Bike Policy

In the Transportation and Gateways Working Group, residents discussed strategies to promote biking, walking and use of public transit in the neighborhood. Residents recognized that a balanced approach to transportation is necessary, one that supports all modes of transportation. A series of policy recommendations was put forward.

- A. Update the Bike Pittsburgh plan for Polish Hill, incorporating where possible:
 - Dedicated bike lanes
 - Allegheny River Trail connections
 - Downtown pedestrian and bike connections
- B. Develop a neighborhood parking plan:

The Polish Hill community has to identify creative ways to meet its demand for parking while maintaining its commitment to the expansion of green and open space. A committee can explore potential sites for parking in the neighborhood that will have the least impact on the livability of the neighborhood.
- C. Explore bike and car sharing opportunities: Currently bike sharing is being developed for Downtown, the Southside and the Strip District. It would be great to be able to expand this to include residential districts like Polish Hill.
- D. Increase and expand awareness of the Herron Ave. Busway Station, an important Bus Rapid Transit network serving the Polish Hill community.
- E. Work with City of Pittsburgh to improve the conditions of stairs and sidewalks.



Open Space and Art Existing Conditions Map

Introduction

The Open Space and Art Working Group worked closely with the Transportation and Gateways working group to develop a comprehensive plan for the public spaces in Polish Hill. It started with the premise that public art improves the environment aesthetically and culturally, adding beauty, unique character and new opportunities to engage with neighbors. Working with existing green neighborhood initiatives, the group developed a series of recommendations for greening neighborhood streets and public places, integrating art into the everyday fabric of the community.

Discussion topics

- ▶ Exploring ways of using art to calm traffic.
- ▶ Developing neighborhood branding and billboards.
- ▶ Using art and lighting to creatively deal with neighborhood infrastructure such as overpasses.
- ▶ Developing a plan for maintaining hillsides.
- ▶ Knotweed eradication plan.
- ▶ Greenway connections (Coordinate with Transportation and Gateways).
- ▶ Developing green streets within the neighborhood.
- ▶ Creative stair proposals.

Values and Vision

- ▶ Preserve and strengthen the natural green spaces surrounding Polish Hill. Respect and enhance the green infrastructure and open spaces to create a more sustainable, livable community.
- ▶ Foster the connection between residents and the natural environment.
- ▶ Create public spaces that are welcoming and inspiring, where people can congregate in a safe, positive, supportive, friendly environment.
- ▶ Actively integrate artistic and creative solutions into new and ongoing projects, leveraging the social and environmental benefits of green, open spaces.

Public Stairs and Sidewalks



Retaining Walls



Overpasses

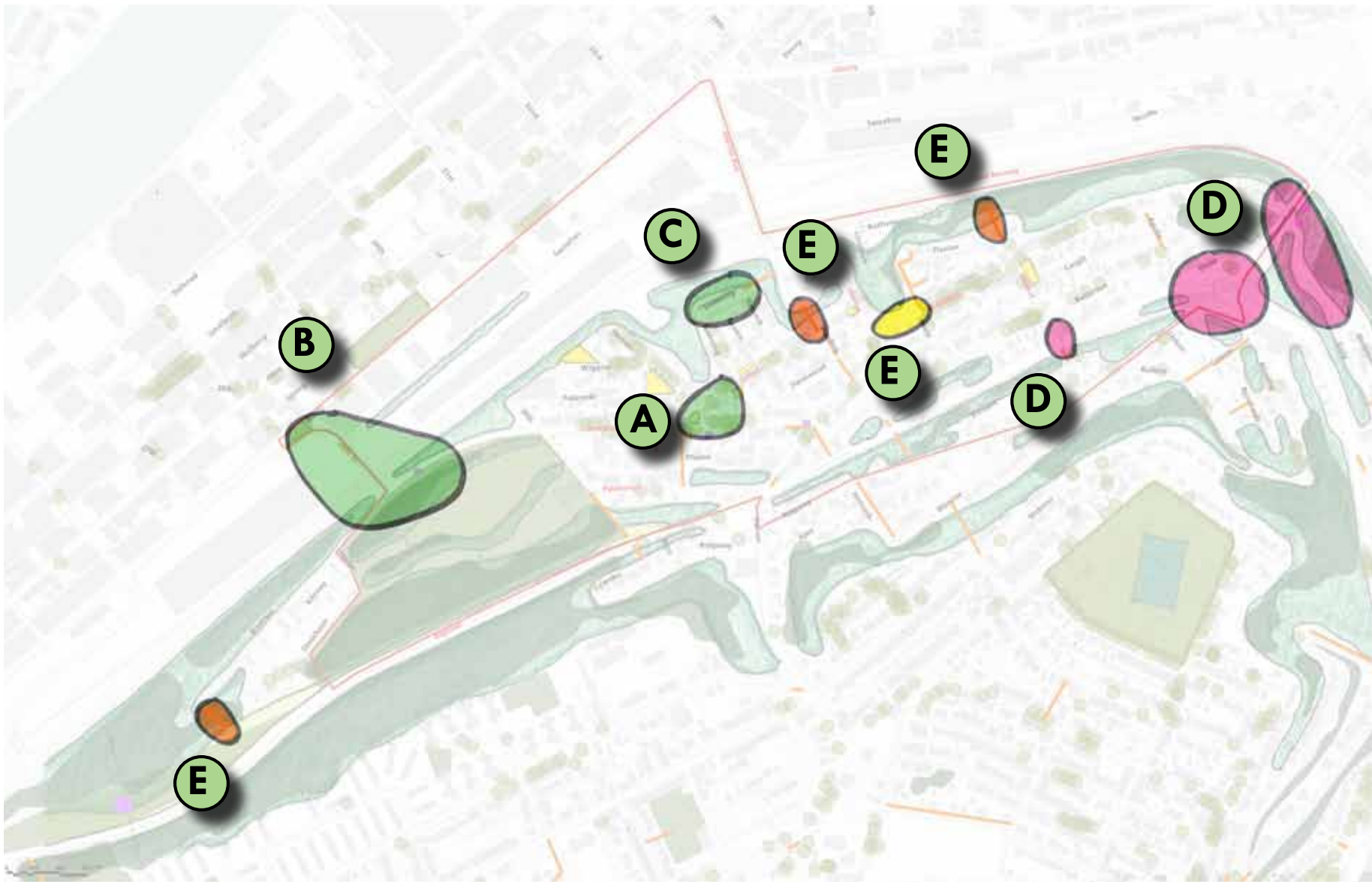


Water Conveyance



Stairs and Hillsides





Plan Recommendations Map

Recommendation Summary

The community workshops revealed that while art was very important to the heart and soul of Polish Hill, its definition and role in community planning was open to debate and discussion. In the public workshops many felt that creative projects should emerge out of the authentic life of the community and that art works best when it is a form of individual expression. As a result, neighborhood initiatives should not endorse art, but establish a culture to ‘let art happen’. To guide this development the steering committee established a series of guideposts and values.

Definition: Creative or artistic outreach means enhancing the daily experience between our residents and their surroundings, in both formal and informal ways. A more formal approach might be Polish Hill artists working in tandem with planning teams to bring their distinct perspective to projects like the proposed Roundhouse Park. An informal approach might be a movement that begins with one artist crafting an outdoor bench, bringing creativity to our sidewalks and traffic-calming to our streetscapes.

Guidepost: As creative community builders, we will incorporate art and inspiration into our daily lives. Community art is not only about creating visually inspiring projects; it is also about engaging participation across a diverse range of residents. It then becomes a vehicle for community building, transformation and growth.

Out of this discussion a series of projects was developed.

- A. Brereton-Dobson intersection and monument
- B. 28th Street Gateway and Roundhouse Park
- C. Downing Overlook Improvements
- D. Bloomfield Bridge/Gold Way Gateway
- E. Public Infrastructure Improvements

Dobson Brereton Monument Site



28th Street Gateway



Downing Overlook



Bloomfield Bridge Portal



Gold Way

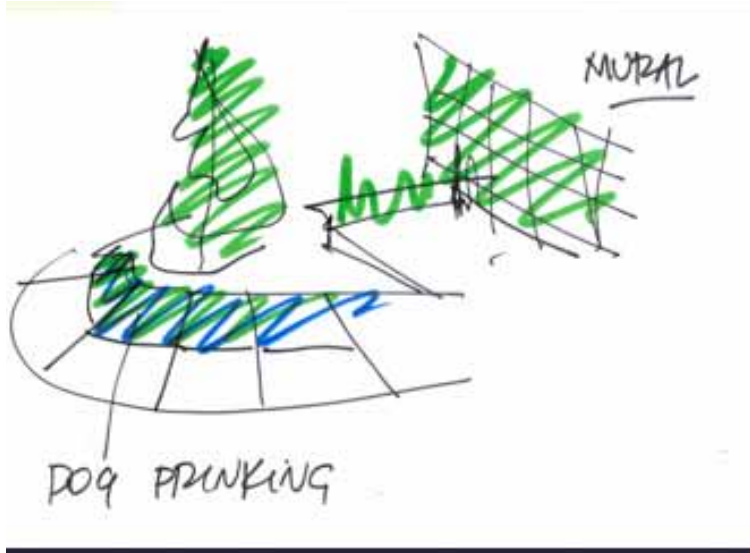


Dobson - Brereton Monument

Owned and maintained by the City of Pittsburgh, the small triangle of land at the tip of the Dobson-Brereton triangle is one of the few public spaces in Polish Hill's business district. The site is home to a memorial for Polish Hill residents who served in the U.S. Armed Forces of all wars, donated by the Ladies Auxiliary of V.F.W. Post 704. It also contains a series of steps and walls to retain the grade, an evergreen spruce tree that is decorated for the holidays, a set of benches and a bus shelter.

While the retaining walls, steps, rails and benches are in good condition, the site lacks shade and is not particularly welcoming to the public. Community workshops revealed that increasing the usability of this space would help address a lack of usable public space in the center of Polish Hill. While it would need to be designed, this new space could maintain the same functions, while being more user friendly and more of a neighborhood gathering space. Additional ideas for the monument site included:

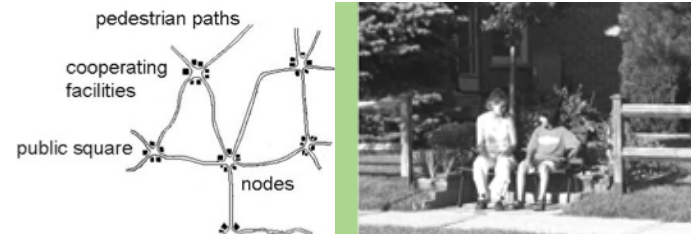
- › Vertical Green Space
- › A fountain or water feature
- › Improved seating
- › Native ornamental landscaping
- › Dog amenities
- › Shelter, gazebo, pavilion, or bandstand
- › Energy efficient LED lighting
- › Bike parking
- › Integrate art or murals



Dobson Brereton Monument Site



Dobson Brereton Monument Site

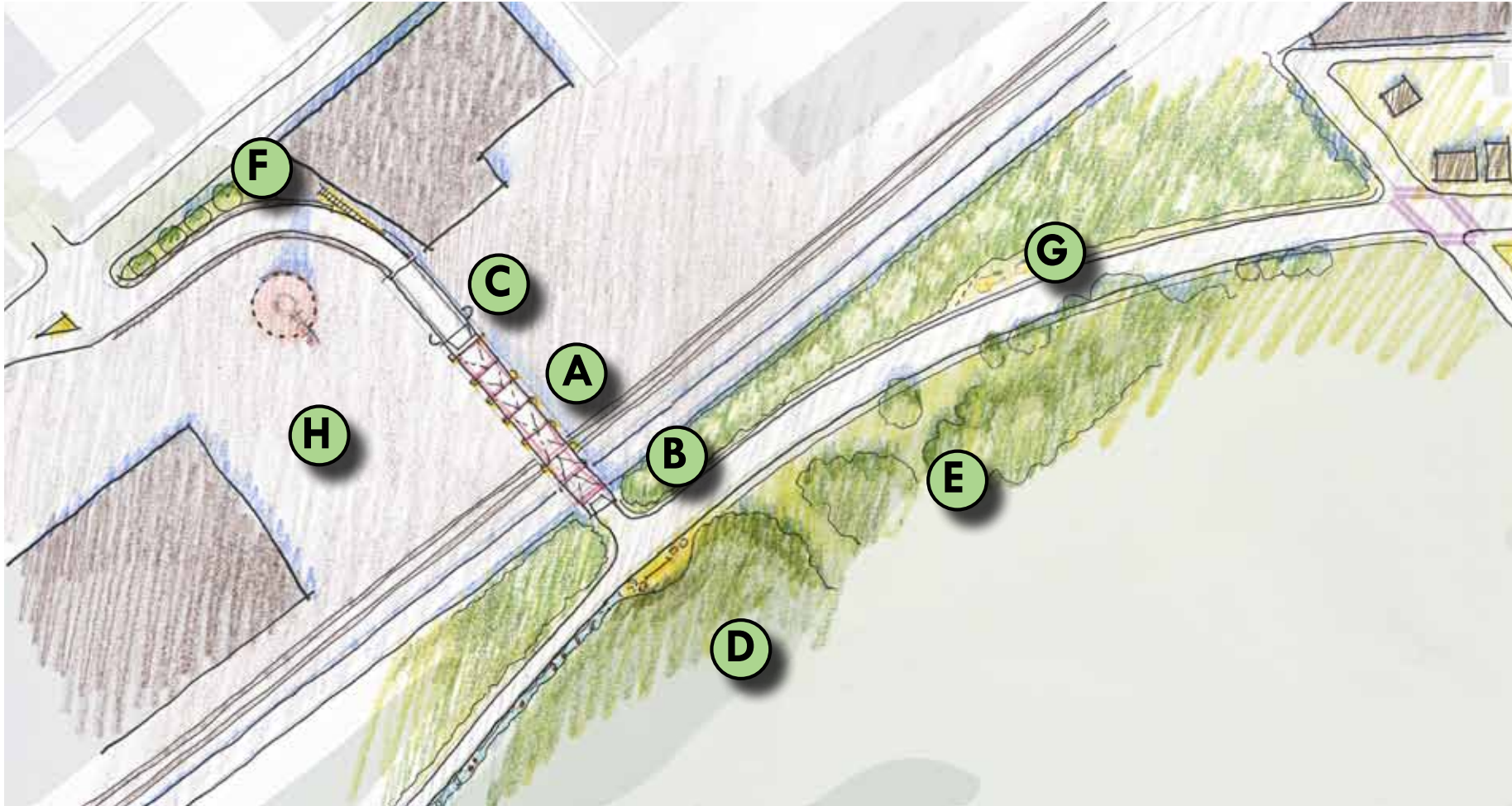


28th Street Gateway

The 28th Street Gateway has immense potential as a scenic point of entry into Polish Hill. The historic steel truss bridge, stone wall, and views of the city provide drama and quick connections to the Strip District and Downtown. However the lack of lighting, sharp turns, and minimal signage make this streetscape feel like a vehicular shortcut between Downtown and the East End rather than a true entrance into the neighborhood.

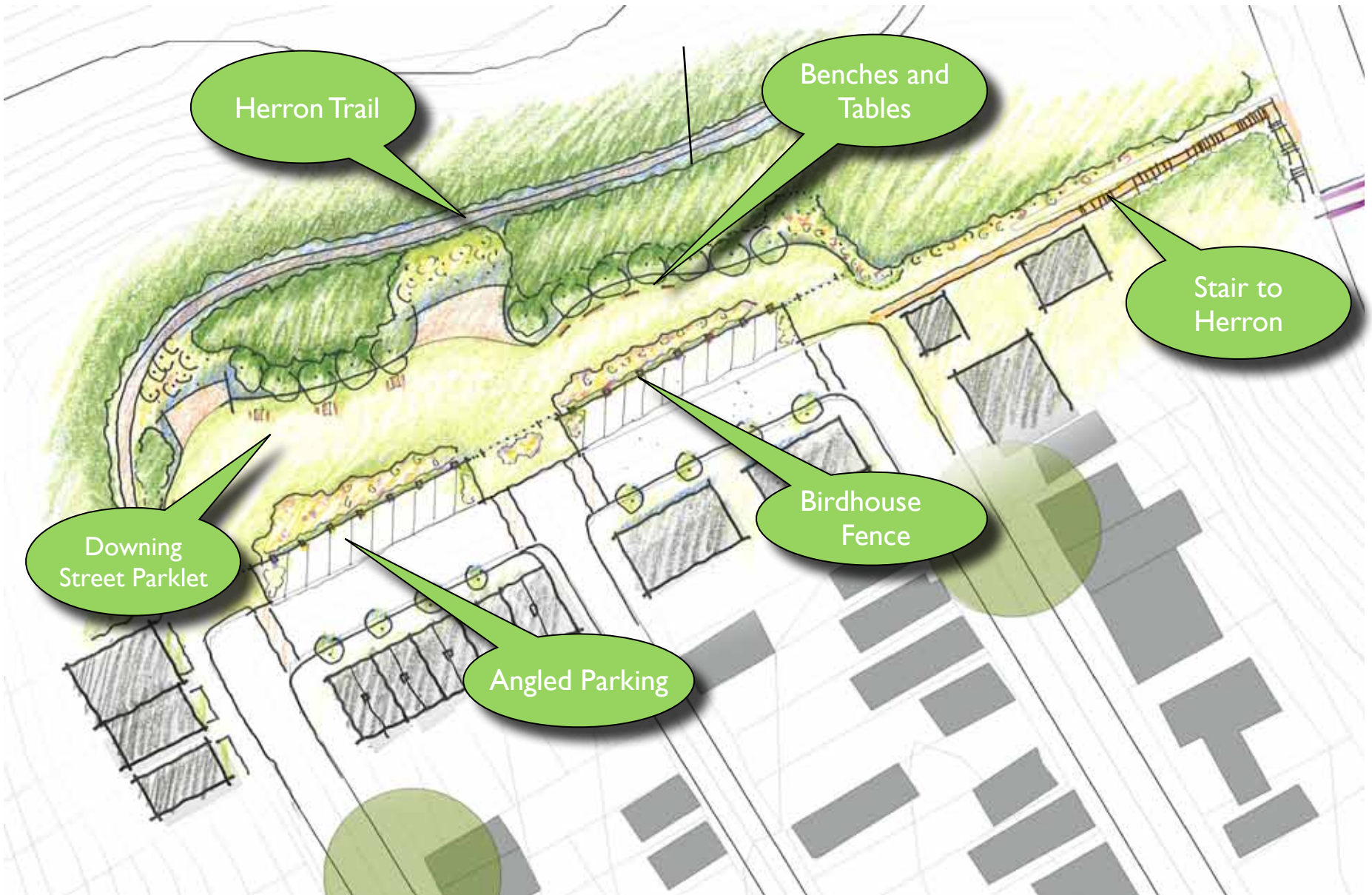
The bridge can be greatly improved to include lighting, planting and art to create a more vibrant pedestrian space and a space that is safe for cyclists. Lighting and painting the bridge would help introduce the identity of the neighborhood as a unique place with a strong grassroots art scene and civic engagement. Improvements that have been recommended at the 28th Street Gateway include:

- A. Lighting the 28th Street Bridge.
- B. Increasing the walkability over the Bridge by ensuring that there is a barrier between people and cars.
- C. Greening the Bridge, including the addition of planters.
- D. Announcing the entrance into Polish Hill through creative signage.
- E. Bike safety improvements.
- F. Repair and reopening of the steps to Liberty Avenue.
- G. Roundhouse Park and landscape improvements
- H. Future Monument Site commemorating The Great Railroad Strike of 1877.



28th Street Gateway Concept Plan





Downing Overlook Concept Plan

Downing Overlook

Owned by the Port Authority of Allegheny County, the long strips of vacant green space is fenced off, preventing residents from accessing the site. The area in front of the fence is currently lined with parked cars and overgrown with brush and weeds. Local artists have installed birdhouses and magnetic poetry bulletin boards along the fence edge.

Residents of Polish Hill would like to develop the Downing Street parcel into a passive recreation park space, for dog-walkers and picnickers, retaining parking along the street edge. With its potential views of the Allegheny River, one could imagine a series of benches, tables and overlooks along the edge of the hillside. The birdhouses and other installation art could be reincorporated into the new design. Other features of the Downing Overlook might include flower beds and improvements to the stairs to Lower Herron Avenue.





Perspective: Gateway From Bigelow



Perspective: Gateway From Gold Way

Bloomfield Bridge Gateway

The parking lot, overpass and series of buildings at the intersection of the Bloomfield Bridge and Bigelow Boulevard mark the eastern boundary of Polish Hill. Thousands of motorists use this thoroughfare daily to access Downtown Pittsburgh and the East End neighborhoods of Pittsburgh. While currently this gateway is defined by its unsightly concrete highway infrastructure, there are opportunities for greening and beautification.

While the long term vision for Bigelow Boulevard includes a “road diet” and transformation of the roadway into a green, multimodal urban boulevard, workshop participants identified short term opportunities to work with the existing roadway and infrastructure. Proposed improvements at the upper portion of the Bloomfield Bridge Gateway included:

- A. Integrating art and lighting into the overpasses and retaining walls
- B. New streetscape tree plantings
- C. Integrating art into the billboards
- D. Facade makeovers
- E. New signage and site lighting





Sidewalks and Retaining Walls



Public Stair Improvements



Vertical Greening



Storm water Strategies

Green Infrastructure

In recent years, the traditional definition of green infrastructure as green space in an urban environment has expanded to include man made structures and environments such as buildings (green roofs), streets, sidewalks, and storm water utilities.

“Green infrastructure differs from conventional approaches to open space planning because it looks at conservation values and actions in concert with land development, growth management and built infrastructure planning. Other conservation approaches typically are undertaken in isolation from — or even in opposition to — development.”

Mark Benedict and Edward McMahon, *Green Infrastructure: Smart Conservation for the 21st Century*, 2002

While Polish Hill is very fortunate to have large expanses of green open space, these very assets have also proven to be challenges to the neighborhood. Hillside subsidence, undermining, invasive species, erosion, and storm water flooding have all had a negative impact on the neighborhood and quality of life. To address this challenge, workshop participants discussed how to turn Polish Hill's infrastructure into more sustainable features of the community.

The following list of potential projects emerged as the list of green infrastructure priorities.

Public Infrastructure Priorities

- A. Sidewalk repairs and retaining walls (integrate art, craft into these renovations)
- B. Public stair improvements (integrate lighting, art)
- C. Vertical greening: window boxes, green walls, and roofs
- D. Storm water strategies (rain gardens, hillsides)





Policy Recommendations

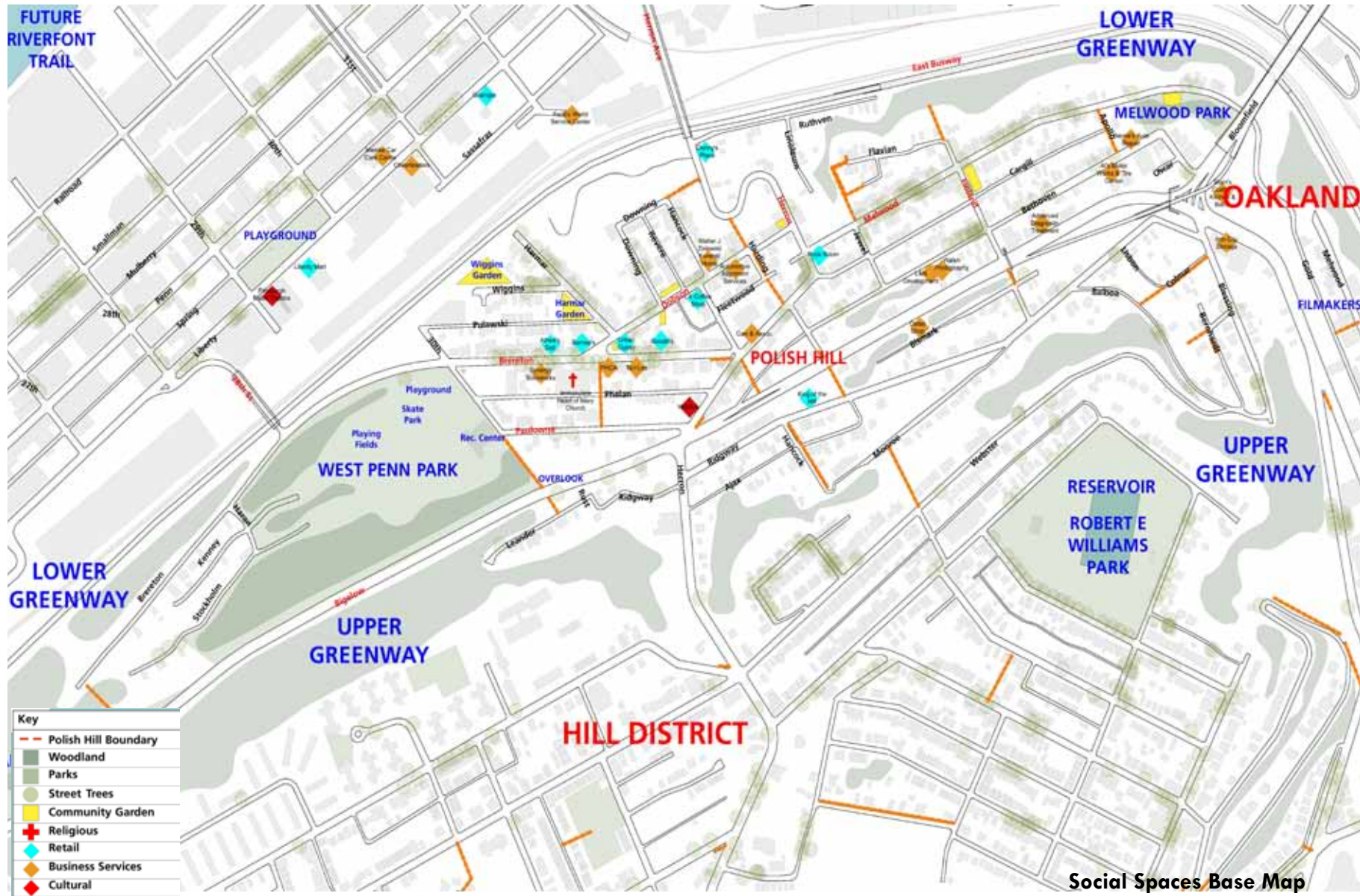
In addition to the projects listed above, the Open Space and Art Working Group developed a set of policy recommendations to improve Polish Hill's public realm. They are outlined below.

Community Art Policy Recommendations

- Educate and expand the concept of art to include neighborhood improvements and infrastructure, not just murals and traditional public sculpture (a.k.a. 'plop art').
- Provide informal support to creative activity in the neighborhood.
- Identify spaces for future work and projects and create a catalog of potential project sites— i.e. "It would be great if something would happen here."
- Encourage more events and venues for visual art, performance and other creative activities.

Open Space Policy Recommendations

- Pursue strategies to develop civic open space at the center of the neighborhood (i.e., Brereton/ Dobson/monument site).
- Develop strategies through public/private partnerships to help maintain and enhance public infrastructure.
- Support greenways development and native species revitalization efforts and control invasive plants; promote landscape restoration strategies.
- Encourage urban farming (greenhouses, community gardens).
- Work with Citiparks to make West Penn Park more usable, exploring options to create spaces for dogs, children, and other groups in need of open space.



Social Spaces Base Map

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).



