

**Annual Report to the Members  
Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation  
October 28, 2013**

The Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation (BGC), now in its 39<sup>th</sup> year of working to improve the quality of life for those living or working in the neighborhoods of Garfield, Friendship and upper Bloomfield, has had a busy 12 months.

When we say “quality of life,” what exactly does that mean? Most notably, it means building a community that enriches the experiences of those who call it their home. It means helping residents and business owners feel secure within their homes or premises. It means holding to a standard for how each community member responds to the responsibilities and obligations they have to themselves, their families, and their neighbors. It means cultivating the environment so that blight and abandonment don’t come to define it. And it means investing in the assets we have, the people, the buildings, the businesses, the institutions, so that they can achieve their full potential.

As 2013 draws to a close, the violence that marred the Garfield neighborhood a year ago seems to have subsided. But the challenge we face in eliminating street-level, criminal activity at several hotspots remains. So does the task of finding feasible re-uses for vacant school buildings on Hillcrest and Black Streets in Garfield. And the engagement of residents in determining what to do about abandoned houses and empty lots in the eastern section of Garfield will have to occur if long-term improvement is to happen there.

But the BGC is steadfast in pursuing the vision outlined in the “Garfield 2030” plan, and in a corresponding plan adopted in 2008 for the Penn Avenue corridor. Our board and staff remain committed to 1) creating opportunities for those at the bottom of the economic ladder, while collaborating with those who want to build a brighter future for all; 2) pressing for more viable public institutions, including schools, health centers, and local government; 3) and being creative about how to attract people to live and work in the community and invest in it.

We are fortunate to be guided in this work by an active, 13-member board of directors, and a staff of 7 full-time and 8 part-time employees. Our budget for operations is \$522,000 this year, and we spend an additional \$1 million or more on new development projects, on high-quality after-school programs for children, and on employment training and work internships for teens. We support facilities like a neighborhood job bank, a computer lab, and a Community Activity Center, where meetings and events help to forge a sense of common purpose and shared destiny. And we talk year-round with those in positions of influence at major institutions like public authorities, hospitals, and banks to convince them of the worth in investing in communities like ours.

What have been some of the BGC’s more tangible achievements since our last annual meeting?

- Completed construction this fall on the final phase of single-family homes in Garfield, bringing to 48 the number completed with our partner, Garfield Jubilee Association. Three buyers are readying to close on their home purchase before year’s end.
- Collaborated with another partner, S & A Homes, in finishing construction of 45 single-family homes in Garfield and leasing them to families earning less than \$35,000/year.

A second phase of 19 homes is being planned, and can become reality if the PA Housing Finance Agency selects it for funding in early 2014.

- Sold houses renovated at 529 N. Fairmount St. and 5351 Waterford St. to first-time homebuyers.
- Assumed sole management of the Penn Ave. Arts Initiative, which produced 12 first Friday *Unblurred* events, sponsored a street arts' festival on Penn in June, organized a Kwanzaa event on Penn in December, and provided matching grants to three building owners to help with improvements to their storefronts.
- Initiated a community planning process to devise a new 5-year strategy for improving the physical and economic potential of the Penn Avenue corridor.
- Hosted a final planning session this past winter with community residents, city officials and their engineering consultant on the \$5 million reconstruction of the public infrastructure on Penn Ave., between N. Evaline and N. Mathilda Sts.; construction launched in August.
- Helped a private developer secure zoning approval and the building permit to move forward with an 18,000 square-foot grocery store at 5200 Penn Ave.; construction started at the end of August.
- Have joined with a non-profit developer, ACTION-Housing, Inc., in formulating plans for the construction of residential/commercial building at the corner of Penn Ave. and S. Mathilda St.; project will be seeking financing from a variety of public & private sources.
- Graduated 13 young adults from our Out-of-School Employment Program and 38 teens from our In-School Employment Program, in partnership with private and non-profit employers; placement of an additional 40 young people this summer in 6-week internships with various businesses and non-profit organizations.
- Offered after-school academic programs and credit recovery classes for more than 70 high-School students attending University Prep, Career Connections Charter, and Science & Technology High Schools.
- Placed 218 adults from the greater East End in part-time and full-time jobs (from July 2012 to June 2013) through our on-going relationship with the Eastside Neighborhood Employment Center.
- Operated a public computer center at 5321 Penn that provides more than 300 residents each month with free access to laptops and the Internet to do job searches;
- Interacted monthly with law enforcement authorities through meetings of a Public Safety Task Force to try to address serious criminal activity and crime-affording conditions in the community; a gun buy-back program held by BGC collected more than 130 weapons in September.
- Engaged in advocacy with other community groups in the East End and across the city to preserve a health-care institution in Bloomfield, retain strong mortgage lending programs for first-time homebuyers, and press for a coherent vision for the future of public

schools in our part of the city.

- Covered most of the above through the publication of 12 editions of our community newspaper, *The Bulletin*, reaching 18,000 households via direct mail and providing a unique forum for the exchange of information and perspectives on all that's happening in the East End today.

The BGC is proud of our work and our accomplishments. Obviously, none of this would be possible without those who have guided and supported us along the way. A number of corporate, public, and institutional donors and funders have been instrumental in our successes, and understanding of our shortcomings. In the past year, those who have provided money, or lent a hand along the way, include:

- PNC Bank
- Dollar Bank Foundation
- BNY Mellon Foundation (for the Eastside Neighborhood Employment Center)
- Allegheny Valley Bank
- Citizens Bank
- First Niagara Bank
- First National Bank
- Fidelity Bank (now WesBanco)
- The Heinz Endowments
- Steve Catranel Construction Co., Inc.
- Lami-Grubb Architects
- cityLab, Inc.
- Pittsburgh Partnership for Neighborhood Development
- Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board
- The Neighborhood Learning Alliance
- Office of Mayor Luke Ravenstahl
- City Councilmen Patrick Dowd and the Rev. Ricky Burgess
- State Senator Jim Ferlo and State Representative Dom Costa

We also relied heavily on a number of public agencies for help, most notably the city's Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA), the city planning department and its Advisory Commission on Community-Based Organizations (ACCBO), the PA Housing Finance Agency (PHFA), the PA Dept. of Community and Economic Development (DCED), the city's Pittsburgh Partnership Employment and Training Division, the city's Bureau of Building Inspection, the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police, and the city's Public Works Department. And we don't want to overlook the contributions made by the UPMC/Bloomfield-Garfield Family Health Center and the West Penn Allegheny Health System in making health care accessible to people in our community, and in their outreach to the children who attend our public schools.

We were served very well this past year by our accountants at Bookminders and our auditors at R C Holsinger Associates.

And, as always, it's important for us to take this moment to thank those of you who, each day, through your membership in the BGC, your volunteerism in the community, and your professional associations with us, provide the expertise, credibility and dedication necessary to

making our neighborhoods safe, distinctive and livable places. It's a job that is never finished.