

# the Bulletin

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*Serving Bloomfield, Friendship, Garfield,  
East Liberty, and Lawrenceville since 1975*

## Residents organize around air quality in Lawrenceville

By Emily Cleath and Jenna Date  
*Lawrenceville Clean Air Now*

*Lawrenceville* - It all started online, with a Nextdoor post about odors associated with industrial air pollution.

The post and its resulting discussion led to a meeting of concerned neighbors; some had lived in Lawrenceville for ages, others had just moved to the area. All shared concerns and stories about different family health problems, including asthma, heart disease, autoimmune deficiencies, and even pets with breathing issues.

What began as a small team of neighbors soon became Lawrenceville Clean Air Now (LCAN). The group aims to provide education, and ultimately an action plan, that can help address local and regional air quality problems.

Lawrenceville features a unique mix of  
See **Air Quality** | page 4



**ABOVE:** Panelists (seated, left to right) Will Tolliver, Duane Binion, and Keyva Clark lead open discussions during Black Queer History Month Town Hall. The Feb. 20 event, hosted at Persad Center, fostered awareness of intersectional identities, highlighting the struggles faced by many local residents. See more from the town hall on page 9. Photo by John Colombo.



**ABOVE:** An abandoned classroom at Garfield's vacant Fort Pitt School waits for any new signs of life. In February, local community groups submitted a proposal to Pittsburgh Public Schools that could help transform the empty building into a valuable resource for the neighborhood. Read more on page 5. Photo by Nina Gibbs.

## Pittsburgh's neighborhood boosters face changing landscape

By Diana Nelson Jones and Rich Lord *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*

*Pittsburgh* - In 2016, the Mount Washington Community Development Corp. considered its future. Consultants suggested it close up shop, but the board didn't consider it, said board president Alaina Davis: "That's not where our hearts were."

Most of its funding in the previous decade had been grants to develop the 257-acre Emerald View Park, and with that largely done, revenues plunged. In 2015, its executive director and park development team left to create a separate nonprofit, and other staff departed, too.

"As an organization we never considered [ourselves] to be near collapse," Ms. Davis said, acknowledging that it was "faced with a tremendous change in program funding."

Mount Washington's CDC faced unique challenges, but in one respect its situation was not unusual: Community development groups - the nonprofit heroes that kept many neighborhoods from collapse during the bleak decades after industry declined - face futures full of questions amid the spotty vibrancy of Pittsburgh's current real estate market.

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FRIENDSHIP'S McGRADY FAMILY

ARE PGH 'ROBOT CARS' SHARING  
THE ROAD LIKE THEY SHOULD? - PAGE 11 -



## Parks Conservancy polls residents about future of Garfield parks

By Sarah Nielsen Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation

**BELOW:** Residents attend a Feb. 19 meeting at the BGC's Community Activity Center with representatives of Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy to learn more about the City's plans for Ft. Pitt Park, Kite Hill Park, and Nelson Mandela Parklet in Garfield. Photo by Sarah Nielsen.



**Garfield** – On Feb. 19, more than 40 people gathered at the Activities Center for the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy and City of Pittsburgh's presentation of the "Parks Listening Tour."

The presentation outlined the Conservancy and the City's approach to developing a long-term equitable investment in the Parks system.

Camila Rivera-Tinsley, Director of Education at the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, explained the organization's data-driven approach to bringing its parks to a high quality. The highest quality park is defined as being well-maintained throughout, incorporating new or like-new modern equipment, boasting a range of features throughout, and offering an excellent park experience.

In addition to rating the current state of city parks, the Conservancy is urging Pittsburgh residents to speak up for their parks by completing a survey, which was handed out at the meeting. The survey, along with the Conservancy's entire presentation are available at [pittsburghparks.org/listening-tour](http://pittsburghparks.org/listening-tour).

Also discussed at the meeting were the plans underway to develop a "green zone" in Garfield. This plan would

link existing green spaces - Fort Pitt Park, Garfield Commons, and Garfield Community Farm - with safe walkways along connecting streets and pathways.

The green zone has long been a priority for the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation (BGC), Brothers & Sisters Emergency, and the Garfield Land Trust.

The BGC recently met with City officials and Pittsburgh Public Schools administrators to address the future of Fort Pitt School, and Fort Pitt Field next to it (see related article on page 5). Most recently, the park's tennis court was renovated and turned into a basketball court.

Rick Swartz, executive director the BGC, closed out the meeting by inviting everyone to attend the BGC's Housing & Land Use Committee meeting (held on the fourth Thursday of every month) and reminded all that the committee's progress relies heavily on the "support and commitment" of local residents.

Neighbors are also welcome to participate in Garfield's next "Community Clean Up" on Saturday, Mar. 23; volunteers will meet at 113 N. Pacific Ave. at 10 a.m. Email [Sarah.nielsen@bloomfield-garfield.org](mailto:Sarah.nielsen@bloomfield-garfield.org) to learn more. ♦

## Landlord-Tenant Town Hall and Speak-Out

### WHO:

Community leaders, business owners, residents, stakeholders, and everyone in between. Moderated by District Judge Mik Pappas and hosted by Pennsylvanians for Modern Courts.

### WHAT:

The purpose of this event is to educate our community regarding the procedures and laws that apply in landlord-tenant cases, and to provide our community with a safe space to express diverse and opposing perspectives regarding affordable housing and landlord-tenant relations in the East End.

### QUESTIONS?

Contact Tom Pietryla at (215) 989-3620, [tpietryla@pmconline.org](mailto:tpietryla@pmconline.org) or The Office of District Judge Mik Pappas at (412) 404-5914.

### WHEN:

Tuesday,  
March 12, 2019  
6pm-8pm

### WHERE:

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## Greetings from State Rep. Sara Innamorato

**BELOW:** Lawrenceville resident and State Representative Sara Innamorato serves the 21st Legislative District. She welcomes neighbors/constituents to visit her 5154 Butler St. office. Photo courtesy of Rachel Belloma-Bonnet.



Hello,

I'm Sara Innamorato, Lawrenceville resident and State Representative for the 21st District. This winter has been busy in Harrisburg.

I'll continue fighting for laws that put the people first: healthcare for all; affordable housing; environmental protections; and continued investment in our public schools. I'm committed to protecting the federal benefits – the ones you've worked for and earned - by advocating for you at the state level.

Beyond representing your interests in the General Assembly, my staff will be available for services and outreach in your district office Monday-Friday, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Our office, located at 5154 Butler St. in Lawrenceville, is ready to help you navigate state programs and address any problems or needs you have.

Your district office is comprised of dedicated staffers who're prepared to provide these constituent services; they are problem-solvers, mediators, and sometimes spirit guides. When it comes to those seeking assistance with state services, benefits, or resources - we're working for you. Seniors in our area can get hundreds of dollars back on rent or property taxes they paid last year; we're ready to help make it happen.

The office telephone number is 412-781-2750. You can also reach out at [repinnamorato@pahouse.net](mailto:repinnamorato@pahouse.net). My neighbors - people who live, work, and raise their families in Pittsburgh - put their faith in me to fight for them at the state capitol, and I plan on doing just that.

In gratitude,  
Sara ♦

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for the latest neighborhood information and community updates

## the Bulletin

Serving Pittsburgh's  
East End neighborhoods  
since 1975

with the mission of reporting on issues affecting underserved communities and facilitating local residents' exchange of ideas.

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**Board Meetings** are held by the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation at 6:30 p.m. on the second Monday of each month, at the BGC Community Activity Center (113 N. Pacific Ave.), and are open to the public.

*The opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the publisher.*

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**[Bloomfield-Garfield.org](http://Bloomfield-Garfield.org)**

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## BGC aims to extend youth services

By Amber Epps Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation

**Garfield** - Responding to Partner4Work's request for providers interested in serving in-school youths (ages 14-24) and/or out-of-school youths (ages 16-24 years old), the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation (BGC) submitted a proposal for the continuation and expansion of its College and Career Readiness Program (CCRP).

Partner4Work, formerly the Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board, annually receives funds from state and federal sources to use in training youths and adults to obtain jobs in the modern-day economy. Through youth programs in partnership with community organizations, Partner4Work connects youths with occupational skills training and supportive services.

The BGC's proposal included extending services to youths as early as ninth grade in order to evaluate their goals and skill levels and help them create a success plan that includes high school graduation and post-secondary education or vocational training.

Youths would also be able to partake in various workshops and seminars, gaining exposure to various career op-

tions and becoming familiar with the paths that must be taken in order to attain those careers. The program would continue to work with high school seniors, assisting with financial aid & college applications, and providing paid internships.

If the proposal is accepted, the BGC would work with 110 youths in grades nine through twelve, starting in July 2019. ♦

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## Air Quality continued from page 1

heavy industry and residences located in close proximity to one another - far closer than modern zoning laws would ever allow.

Pressure Chemical and McConway & Torley, two of the County's top 10 toxic polluters [according to PennEnvironment (toxicten.org)] have operated in the neighborhood with few constraints for decades.

As the neighborhood has become more popular and increased its housing supply, vehicle traffic has noticeably intensified. Yet while many neighbors dwell on traffic problems, few seem aware of the air quality problems that jeopardize the area's vulnerable populations.

"Lawrenceville residents are contending with a variety of air pollution sources," said Rachel Filippini, Executive Director of Group Against Smog and Pollution (GASP). "Pollution from both mobile and stationary sources can negatively impact health and quality of life," she added.

According to the Center for Healthy Environments and Communities at the University of Pittsburgh, Allegheny County ranks in the top 2% of counties in the U.S. for cancer risk from air pollution. In 2017, the air quality in Allegheny County was officially considered "Not Good" for 203 days (more than 55% of the time).

In the American Lung Association's 2018 State of the Air report, Allegheny County was the only county located outside California to receive straight F's

on various air quality measures; it was the only county in PA to experience an increase in unhealthy air quality days. Of the 201 metropolitan regions studied, Pittsburgh rose in the ranks from seventeenth-worst to tenth-worst.

Data gleaned from the Allegheny County Health Department's website shows much higher cancer rates in particular parts of Lawrenceville than in the rest of the city. Anecdotal information implies that students enrolled in the neighborhood's schools also have higher-than-normal rates of asthma.

Concerned about the effect of air pollution on public health, LCAN's members share a love of the neighborhood and a hope that it can accommodate all who wish to live and work there safely.

"It is energizing to see a group of engaged residents coming together to inform themselves and strategize about ways to reduce pollution and minimize exposure," GASP's Rachel Filippini said, "GASP is happy to act as an air quality resource for LCAN."

Along with Lawrenceville United (LU) and GASP, LCAN will host a community meeting about air pollution on Wednesday, Mar. 13, from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. at the Lawrenceville branch of the Carnegie Library (279 Fisk St.).

Experts from GASP will address what causes pollution and what everyone can do about it. Pizza and childcare will be provided. Register to attend at [bit.ly/LCANmtg031319](http://bit.ly/LCANmtg031319), or by calling LU at 412-802-7220. ♦

## Expungement clinic helps clean slates

By Nina Gibbs Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation

*Garfield* - In order to help local residents learn how to clear their records, the Eastside Neighborhood Employment Center (ENEC) hosts semi-quarterly info sessions about expungement. This very effective, popular clinic drew 74 people to its most recent session.

"Having a criminal record not only affects a person's ability to obtain employment, but also effects housing and social aspects of a person's life," explained Rachelle Quinn, Employment Specialist with the ENEC.

Most of the expungement clinics are led by attorney Ed Van Stevenson of Neighborhood Legal Services Association (NLSA), which regularly provides free legal aid for people seeking to get their records sealed or expunged. NLSA exclusively handles expungements cases.

Expungements are only available for withdrawn or dismissed charges, or summary offense convictions - if five years have passed since the defendant's last arrest. Van Stevenson has been doing expungements for around ten years.

"Sealing means the criminal record(s) are not available to the public, landlords, and employers," he said. Many situations can result in a record that could be taken out of context by the public, from charges that have been dropped to a defendant pleading guilty to avoid a trial. According to Van Stevenson, "a lot clients still have outstanding court costs."

The State recently passed Clean Slate legislation, which permits many criminal cases in PA to be removed from public view - so that employers, landlords, and others cannot search them. It connects Pennsylvanians with volunteer lawyers who will screen their records and connect them with legal help to seal certain criminal cases that are at least 10 years old. Clean Slate did not change record sealing rules, but it does restrict who can see those records. The Clean Slate form is available online at [clsphila.org/mycleanslatepa](http://clsphila.org/mycleanslatepa).

The next expungement clinic is scheduled for Monday, Mar. 11, from 10 a.m. to Noon at the BGC Activity Center (113 N. Pacific Ave.). ♦

## EXPUNGEMENT CLINIC:

Removing Barriers to Employment



Are old arrests creating barriers? Convicted of a misdemeanor or felony? These can limit your work options, but there are ways to clear your record.

Ed Van Stevenson, J.D., a deacon and lawyer of over 47 years, will discuss:

- ▶ Implications and answers about the new Clean Slate legislation.
- ▶ Who is eligible for expungement?
- ▶ What charges can/cannot be expunged?
- ▶ Why should someone seek expungement?
- ▶ Who can help with the and how to get started?

### ALSO COVERING:

- How to get Driver's Licensee restored
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**When: Monday, March 11th, 2019 10:00am - 12:00pm**

**Where: BGC Activity Center, 113 N. Pacific Ave, Pittsburgh 15224**

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## THE BULLETIN WANTS YOUR FEEDBACK!

This publication begins and ends with you, our community members, so we respectfully invite your opinions & insights.

Please email our tip-line/suggestion box:

**[Bulletin@Bloomfield-Garfield.org](mailto:Bulletin@Bloomfield-Garfield.org)**



# Walk-through of vacant Fort Pitt School leads to new proposal

By Rick Swartz Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation

**Garfield** - In June of 2011, the Pittsburgh Public Schools made the decision to close Fort Pitt Elementary School in Garfield after years of watching declining enrollment.

Now, nearly eight years later, several organizations in the community want to draw the school district into a partnership around the future re-use of a two-story annex added on to the original building in 1964.

That annex, consisting of a mix of classrooms and other spaces, includes a gymnasium/auditorium, and sits across a driveway from Fort Pitt Field, where the Garfield Gators football teams play their home games every fall. Metal screens cover all of its windows, harkening back to an era when Garfield was considered to be unsafe.

As if to underscore its anxiety about the neighborhood, the school district paid over \$1 million in the mid 1990's for a state-of-the-art security system at the facility. A playground sits behind the building on land also owned by the school district.

On Feb. 8, school Superintendent Dr. Anthony Hamlet and other officials from the district accompanied a half-dozen community representatives on a tour of the annex, responding to a request made at a meeting last November with some of the same individuals.

At that earlier meeting, neighborhood spokespeople proposed that the district consider allowing for a re-use of all or part of Fort Pitt School that would give Garfield an indoor recreation, education, and cultural facility, to be managed by the community. The advocates' assumption was that the school district is no longer intending to sell the complex outright, having made an aborted effort to do so in 2017.

Last month's tour was a bit of an eye-opener for the community representatives, according to several of those

in attendance. Among the information they gleaned from the walk-through was the following:

- The annex is beginning to show signs of significant wear and tear, including roof damage and the growing obsolescence of its mechanical, plumbing, and flooring systems.

- There is no elevator to serve either the annex or the main building, making it impossible for those with impaired mobility to access the second floors of either structure.

- The district has no dollars allotted in its capital budget for 2019 or beyond that could be used to address the physical deficiencies now present in the annex, which were estimated by one architect on the tour, Andrew Moss, to be well in excess of \$2 million.

- The district is holding onto the possibility that it might one day need to use the main building to serve as temporary quarters for students from other schools in the East End that are earmarked for renovation in the district's capital plan. No such prospect exists, however, for the annex.

Despite the disappointment that most of the tour members felt after visiting the facility, a decision was made to move forward with a proposal to the school district that contained the following elements:

- A request for the execution of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the district that would give the community groups representing Garfield six months to raise at least \$100,000 to fund an analysis of the annex building and the preparation of drawings and specifications to do the improvements necessary for it to be re-used as a multi-purpose center.

- If the community groups are successful in raising those funds, then they would submit a second request to the district to enter into a license

agreement with one or more of the organizations, allowing for another 36 months to both plan and fundraise for the renovations to the annex building, in partnership with the school district.

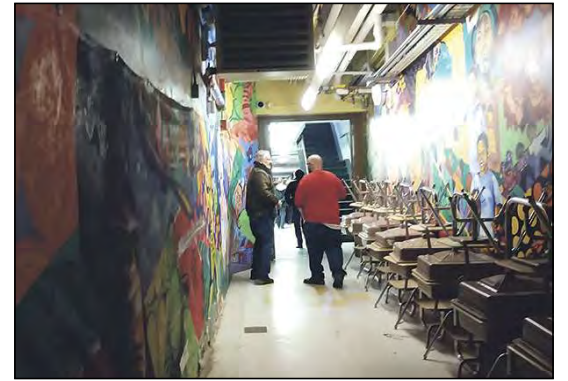
- If the above objectives were to be realized, then the school district and the organizations forming the *ad hoc* coalition would negotiate a more extensive agreement with the district to set forth the terms and conditions for the investment of any funds raised from sources outside the district in renovation of the building - and also to define how the community's unobstructed use of a portion or all of the annex could be possible.

A letter containing all of the above points was sent to Dr. Hamlet on Feb. 13, with a response sought from him

within 30 days. It was signed by the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation on behalf of the BGC, Brothers and Sisters Emerging, Garfield Jubilee Inc., Valley View Presbyterian Church, and the Kelly-Strayhorn Theater.

Others wishing to join the coalition are welcome to do so by emailing RickS@bloomfield-garfield.org. ♦

**BELOW:** Community representatives tour Garfield's vacant Fort Pitt School. Photo by Nina Gibbs.



**ABOVE:** Community representatives discuss school-community collaboration in the re-use of Fort Pitt annex with Supt. Anthony Hamlet (right) and Pam Capretta (center) during a Feb. 8 building tour. Photo by Nina Gibbs.

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## Community continued from page 1

Some CDCs are still trying to stabilize neighborhoods. For a few, conditions that prompted them to form in the first place - slack markets, disinvestment - reversed by the mid-2000s. The market that they worked so hard to woo to the front porch in the '90s was threatening to take over the whole house.

Those CDCs are trying to provide counterbalance to gentrification now. A few anticipate new directions or ending their runs.

For its part, the Mount Washington CDC decided not to close its doors, and established an agreement with the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy for co-stewardship of the park. It built a five-year plan from the rubble of 2016, hired an executive director with 30 years of real estate development in Gordon Davidson, and focused on salvaging properties in pockets of the neighborhood that need intervention.

"We made many changes and developed a five-year strategic plan we are proud of," said Ms. Davis. "It is better aligned with the needs and possibilities of our community. We're trying to flow where CDCs are flowing, but with less."

### Looking beyond government grants

A CDC is a nonprofit that advocates for a neighborhood through development or redevelopment of slumping business districts, distressed housing and vacant properties. The city's property reserve helps them get vacant houses with cleared titles for resale. Some CDCs act as redevelopers, others work with private developers.

The CDCs get property cheaply, but pay the closing costs and incur holding costs. Risk is part of the mission, since CDCs lay the groundwork by for investors by investing first.

The Ace Hotel, which opened in 2015, is an example. East Liberty Development Inc. bought the dormant YMCA in the mid-2000s and held it for eight years "trying to work out a development strategy" said Skip Schwab, ELDI's deputy director. "The holding costs ate us alive."

Before landing the Ace Hotel, ELDI chased other developers, each time incurring architectural, engineering, insurance and maintenance costs that eventually exceeded the appraised value. The buyer, Y Hotel Inc., got a deferred payment mortgage, and agreed to pay the price ELDI needed to recoup its losses.

ELDI is one of several CDCs that have become savvy at real estate, often acting as a middleman to sway the character of what development will look like.

They once relied largely on government grants. But in recent years, government grants to the city's 11 big CDCs fell from over \$5 million a year to around \$3.2 million, according to a Pittsburgh Post-Gazette analysis of disclosures to the IRS by 11 CDCs in Pittsburgh since 2014. Private contributions, largely from foundations, stayed steady, but they are almost exclusively for brick-and-mortar projects, not the costs of operating the CDCs.

Nonetheless, from 2013 to 2017, the value of assets of the 11 CDC's rose by 24 percent, to \$39.6 million. Their net worth - assets minus liabilities - rose by 38 percent, to \$18.9 million. That increase includes \$3.2 million in land, buildings and equipment; the 11 CDCs increasingly own such hard assets, for which they've paid a total of \$16.2 million, according to the IRS filings.

"We learned how to be a developer using creative tools," said Maelene Myers, executive director of East Liberty Development Inc., which has paid \$1.8 million for the land, buildings and equipment it owns. "If there are no grants, you have to use your resources to leverage resources."

CDCs all pick from the same real estate tool box, competing for affordable housing tax credits, negotiating creative financing to close funding gaps, using deferred second mortgages for new homeowners, investing in high-end development to get funds for smaller projects and, in several cases, creating land trusts to ensure the preservation of affordable housing.

Ms. Myers said ELDI is moving toward being less developer and more "facilitator." Mr. Schwab said ELDI is done with commercial development but still intent on recycling land for housing. It owns about 100 scattered rental units - all affordable, one-third of them federally subsidized - but it sold an 83-unit building it had wrested from a slumlord several years ago.

It owns and rents 22 homes to low-income families but expects to divest of those at some point, Ms. Myers said. The long-term intention isn't to hold a portfolio of properties, she said, but to get them out of the hands of slumlords.

### Right place, right time, right benefactors

For CDCs in the era of smaller government grants, finding operating support - money for salaries and overhead - can be a struggle.

A fortunate few get investments from corporations that, in return, get tax credits from the state. This funding, which CDCs compete for, has been the lifeblood of the Hilltop Alliance and the Bloomfield-Garfield Corp., among a few.

Some raise operating funds by administering programs for others, charging fees for services such as project management, selling advertising in their community newsletters, charging for the use of facilities and collecting rents.

In 2017, the CDCs in the Post-Gazette's study took in \$1.6 million in rents, up from \$1.4 million in 2014, and kept their expenses fairly static, hovering around \$11.6 million a year.

One CDC has thrived by being in the right place at the right time.

The Hazelwood Initiative sits in the middle of a market that's expected to get red hot once the neighborhood's former coke plant site - now called Hazelwood Green - is fully redeveloped. In part as a result, the group has won several years of foundation support to build staff capacity and to begin protecting housing affordability.


One benefactor, Bridgeway Capital, donated \$900,000 in 2017. The Heinz Endowments helped the Initiative buy the old Bergwin school, now operating as Propel-Hazelwood. The school pays the Hazelwood Initiative \$100,000 in annual rent.

"That support has been critical," said Sonya Tilghman, executive director of the Hazelwood Initiative.

In 2014, the Initiative had \$1 million in receipts. By 2017, it had \$1.6 million. It has gone from one employee to four and boosted its assets from \$971,000 to \$4

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million, largely by spending about \$2.2 million on real estate.

The Initiative also co-owns the former Gladstone school, which is destined to become, in part, affordable apartments. It owns five commercial buildings and six residential units.

The decline in government grants means that budgeting “is a bit of a dance every year,” Ms. Tilghman said. “But contributions have made up for it.”

### Riding off into the sunset?

Some CDCs still do the heavy lifting that precedes a strong market.

The Hilltop Alliance was founded in 2009 to shepherd the progress of a dozen blighted neighborhoods including Arlington and Beltzhoover. It has received \$250,000 a year in operating support from corporations, giving Allentown’s business corridor a boost and supporting social service programs.

“When I started, it was just me,” said Aaron Sukenik, executive director, who now has a full-time staff of six.

The Alliance recently bought two properties on Warrington Avenue in Allentown to ensure affordable rents for the restaurants in them and to make facade improvements and repairs. It has made 50 commercial grants and loans and 50 grants for facade improvements and emergency stabilization of homes, Mr. Suke-nik said. Budgeting, though, is never easy.

“The big challenge is when you get grants for one or two years while you’re trying to do community development with lots of layers, looking at a five-to-30-year horizon,” he said. “If you’re doing everything on short-term benchmarks, you’re just working toward the next grant application,” he said, likening the situation to legislators always running for reelection.

“The difference is we have to do the work and deliver outcomes to get more funding,” he said. “You have to stay ahead of the next thing. It can’t be, ‘Oops, funding dried up’ when you still have to do things.”

Other neighborhood groups are seeing hard times receding in the rear view mirror, and reflecting on their own futures.

The Bloomfield-Garfield Corp. got into community development in the mid-1970s when Garfield’s market had bottomed out. Its organizers started tackling blight and crime.

In the early ’80s, they held sit-ins at Urban Redevelopment Authority board meetings to get the URA to be a housing partner when no one else would be.

The BGC since has built and rehabbed more than 100 homes, with URA and several banks’ support.

With homes in its territory now selling for \$200,000, sometimes \$300,000, the BGC is expecting returns on earlier investments, said Rick Swartz, the group’s executive director. “There was a time when people would be lucky to get what they paid for a house in Garfield,” he said, “but now people are experiencing windfalls.”

The BGC continues to fight blight but recognizes the pressures of gentrification. It recently began working with ELDI to buy properties for a fledgling land trust - Garfield Community Land Inc. ELDI got a \$1 million grant from the Federal Home Loan Bank to help Garfield’s land trust with land acquisitions, said Mr. Schwab, ELDI’s deputy director.

The Garfield trust will follow the model used by the Lawrenceville Corp. and Oakland Planning and Development: The trust owns land in perpetuity and oversees sales of the homes to ensure that each buyer makes 80 percent or less of the area median income, which now is about \$56,000.

The BGC is considering sunsetting - the nonprofit term for closing up shop when the job is done - by 2024.

“It’s possible,” said Rick Swartz, executive director of the BGC. “We would sell our commercial properties, pay off our debts and hand off to the land trust or a compatible agency to do the good work. We have value beyond debt now, so it’s a good time to think about it.

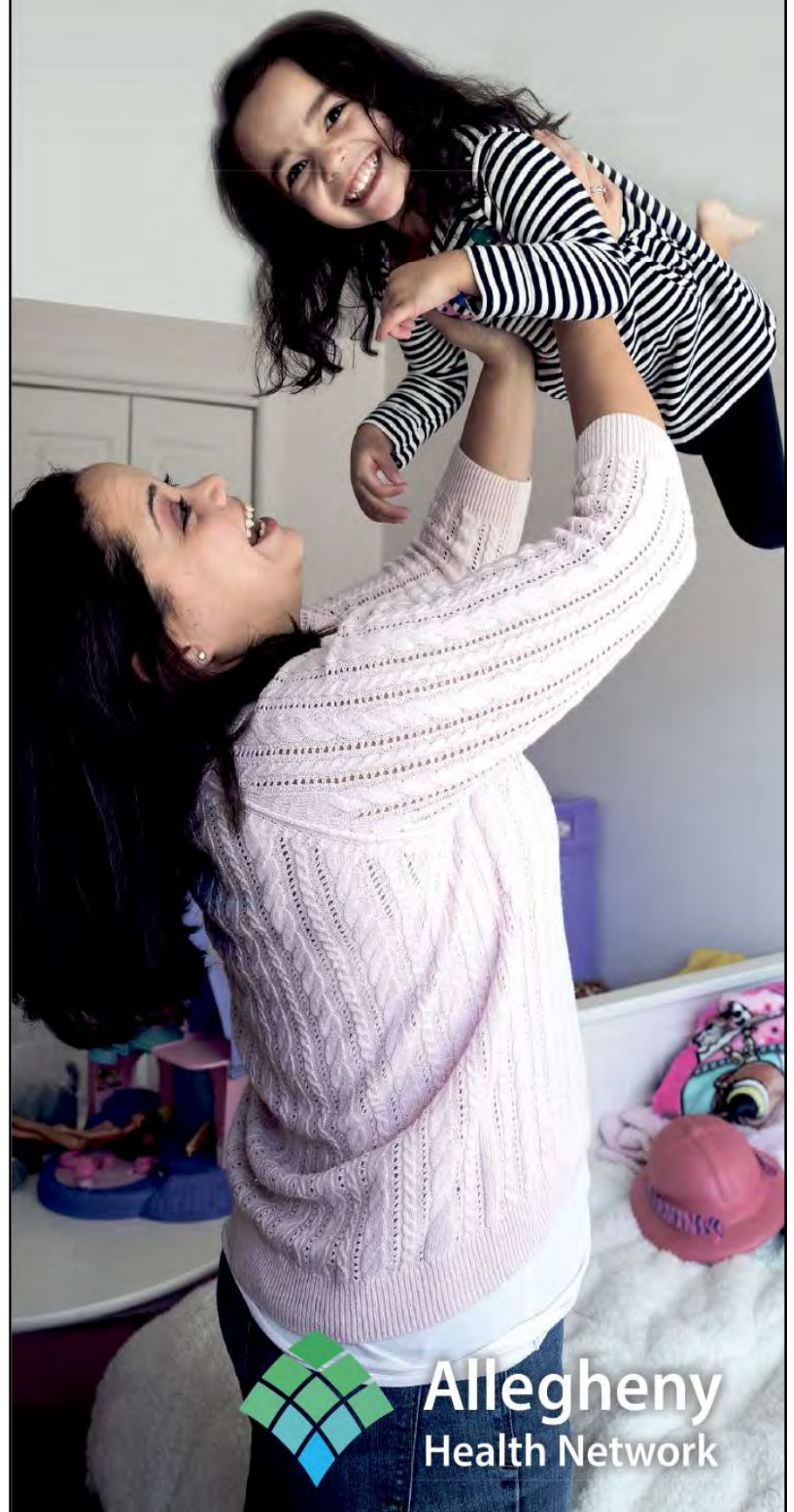
“We weren’t here in 1950 when the neighborhood was going strong,” he said, “so we may not need to be here in 2025 when the neighborhood is going strong again.”

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# Neighborhood FOCUS

## Cheaper by the dozen: Friendship's McGrady family

By Ellen DiBiase *Bulletin contributor*

*Friendship* - When my husband and I moved to the neighborhood in September of 2017, we received the warmest of Friendship welcomes. Our neighbors, Ed and Jean, offered to introduce us to some Friendship residents who lived down the street, where they were planning a welcoming barbeque for us later that week.

As soon as we set out on the neighborly walk, we came upon two people a few doors down relaxing on their porch. Two more people came to the door, and I soon learned the four of them were siblings from the McGrady family.

Then, somebody else appeared at the door. "He's a sibling too," one of the sisters said, "but he doesn't live here. He's just visiting from Virginia. But there are, in fact, more of us."

John E. McGrady, Sr., and Ellen Cusack McGrady raised 14 children together. In 1957, the husband and wife moved from a Denny St. rental in Lawrenceville to their home on S. Atlantic Ave.

By the time the McGradys moved to Friendship, two of their children had already left the family home. But, as it turns out, three of their other children would still be there 60 years later. Jim, Patty, and Roseanne currently share the home with Margie, who moved back home from Oklahoma in 1980.

Although they admit that they may have lost count, for all intents and purposes the 14 McGrady kids had 33 children of their own; these grandchildren, in turn, produced 72 kids in the generation following, and now there are even a few would-be great-great grandchildren of John and Ellen, who passed away in 1985 and 1990, respectively.

Readers may recognize the McGrady name from John's career as a respected political and civic leader. He served in public office as the Allegheny County Commissioner from 1960 to 1967, then as the Pittsburgh City Controller for the next 16 years. Upon McGrady's appointment as County Commissioner, outgoing Commissioner John J. Kane paid him a wry compliment: "Nobody knows how to stretch a dollar better than this man. He has 14 kids."

During his time in office, John McGrady was instrumental in the creation of the Port Authority of Allegheny County, the construction of Three Rivers Stadium, and the development of CCAC. He worked under Mayors Flaherty, Lawrence, and Caliguiri, who was a close personal friend. The Pittsburgh Sun, in 1976, described him as "what every politician wants to be: a man untainted by controversy who will hold elective office until he is good and ready to retire." More than 800 people attended John's retirement party in 1983.

Ellen McGrady was able to accompany her husband to political functions because childcare was provided by her own mother, her sister-in-law, or her brother – all of whom lived in the house on S. Atlantic Ave. In 1943, when twins Mary and Margie (babies #9 and #10) were born, Ellen's mother moved in with them; she helped take care of the children until her death in 1964.

Ellen, whose children describe her as "laid-back," would wake up every

**BELOW:** The McGrady family circa 1960, three years after moving from Lawrenceville to Friendship. A few of the family's 14 children are not pictured. Photo courtesy of Ellen DiBiase.



day at 6 a.m. and go to bed at 2 a.m. In the mornings, with school lunches having been packed by John the night before, she would go bed-to-bed to wake the children. When the mother of 14 needed a break, she headed down to the basement - to do laundry, but also to relax on a chaise lounge that she had set up in front of a TV.

Of John and Ellen's 14 children, 11 are still living, and all but one live in the Pittsburgh area. Two of their daughters went on to serve the church as Sisters, and several spent time as teachers. One sibling, Suzie, has a special connection to the world of professional basketball. Her daughter played in the WNBA and her grandson, T.J. McConnell, currently plays for the Philadelphia 76ers.

Jim, Patty, Roseanne, and Margie now live the quiet life of retirement in their childhood home. Margie does the laundry, Patty helps, and Roseanne is the designated cook. When pressed as to what he does around the house, Jim replied, "nothing." His sisters nodded in agreement, but admitted that he is the family's driver.

Roseanne, who contracted polio at the age of 5, has a special pedal that allows her to help share the driving duties with Jim. Just six months before Jonas Salk introduced the polio vaccine, Roseanne was admitted to the very same hospital where Salk was conducting research. At the time, the McGrady household had to be quarantined for 14 days.

- continued on next page -



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“Nobody knows how to stretch a dollar better than this man. He has 14 kids.”

– John J. Kane, former Allegheny County Commissioner

Growing up in Friendship, the McGrady children were spread out across six different high schools: St. Lawrence O’Toole, Central Catholic, Peabody, Schenley, St. Vincent Prep (a boarding school in Latrobe), and St. John the Baptist (now the home of Church Brew Works).

Jim, Roseanne, and Margie remember trips to the Bloomfield swimming pool and meeting up with their classmates at the Boys & Girls Club in Shadyside. They frequently walked up to Penn Ave. to enjoy Tootie’s Pizza (where Spork Pit is located) and Reinhold’s ice cream. Their dad often took them to Liberty Ave. for pizza from the Pleasure Bar, where they still go for takeout.

Getting together as a whole family does not happen too often these days, but the McGradys do have an annual reunion around the holidays. The siblings who remain in Friendship also host their other siblings a few times every year; they end up seeing the rest of the family frequently through graduations, communions, etc. One year, there were 9 graduation ceremonies of nieces and nephews to attend.

It seems like everybody in town knows a McGrady. At a recent party in Morningside, a former employee of the Controller’s office approached Margie and said, “I have some stories about your dad.”

Fortunately, they were all good stories. ♦



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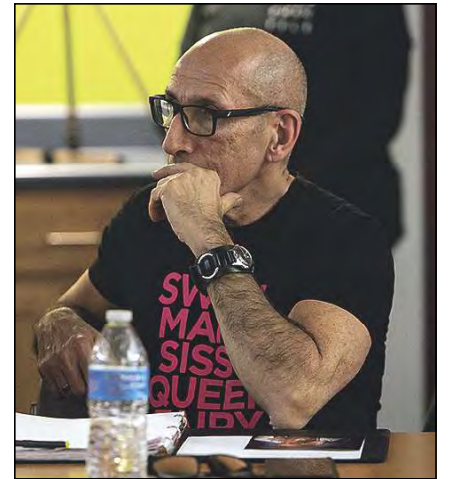
## Black Queer History Month Town Hall sparks dialogue at Persad Center

[Ed Note: On Wednesday, Feb. 20, the Mayor’s LGBTQIA+ Advisory Council brought voices and perspectives together at Lawrenceville’s Persad Center (5301 Butler St.) for Black Queer History Month Town Hall. All photos by John Colombo.]



**ABOVE:** Keyva Clark speaks on behalf of the Mayor’s Office.

**BELOW:** Richard Parsakian, of the LGBTQIA+ Advisory Council, listens.



**ABOVE:** Interactive group sessions expand on the town hall discussions.



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## EECM leader pushes for expanded services

By Elizabeth Sensky East Liberty Development, Inc.

*East Liberty* - Last September, Carole Bailey became the new CEO of East End Cooperative Ministry (EECM, 6140 Station St.).

Prior to entering the nonprofit world, Bailey worked as an audit manager for a large, regional public-accounting firm; she had clients in the nonprofit, construction, real estate, auto sales, and vehicle rental industries.

Bailey first contributed to EECM as a donor, and then served as its CFO from 2016 -17. In those capacities, she learned a lot about the organization before taking over from its previous leader, Mike Mingrone.

"This neighborhood has seen many changes," Bailey said. "These changes, as well as the increasing divide between the 'haves' and 'have-nots,' have resulted in a greater need for our services."

In 1970, EECM was formed when leaders of 18 local faith communities came together to host interracial breakfasts for Peabody High School students. Since then, EECM's services have expanded - in concert with the needs of the community - to offer a wide range of services in the city's East End.

At 6140 Station St., volunteers regularly provide underserved Pittsburghers

with a hot meal and a safe place to sleep. Other regulars visit the East Liberty space to regain their strength after a hospital stay, or utilize a support system as they work towards recovery, or seek out help with everyday problems.

"I'd like to make the building more accessible to the neighborhood. We have some excess space that we are looking to rent to a few nonprofits, which will help create a community of social enterprise within EECM."

The organization offers educational programming, including alcohol and violence prevention programs, as well as summer day camps. The workforce training program will soon award state apprenticeship certifications for its clients in commercial sewing & cleaning services. Bailey plans to partner with a culinary nonprofit that can provide her clients with real-life kitchen training.

"We are trying to be nimble and respond to the needs we see and hear about," she explained, citing the food her organization provided to government workers during the shutdown, as well as the warming center it opened during a recent bout of cold weather.

According to Bailey, EECM is committed to accommodating the city's growing homeless populations but, on account of certain facility requirements, it cannot currently house any families.

"There are only two places in the city that are housing homeless families and, as a result, the Department of Human Services is putting families in hotels when there are no available facilities," Bailey said. "In the future, we may explore how EECM can help with this growing sector of homelessness."

EECM is constantly recruiting volunteers; opportunities include preparing lunch/dinner, managing the food pantry, and assisting with the annual coat drive. For more info, contact volunteer coordinator Tracy Hudson at 412-345-7124 or visit [eecm.org](http://eecm.org). ♦



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## How do bicyclists, pedestrians feel about sharing road with Autonomous Vehicles?

By Alexandria Shewczyk *Bike Pittsburgh*

### Op-Ed

*Pittsburgh* - Shortly after Uber began testing Semi-Autonomous Vehicles (AVs) on city streets in Sept. 2016, Bike Pittsburgh (BikePGH) launched a survey to measure how bicyclists and pedestrians felt about sharing the road with this new technology.

"[Results] revealed that Pittsburghers actually felt slightly more comfortable sharing the road with AVs than they did with human drivers," said BikePGH Advocacy Director Eric Boerer, who created and managed the survey. "However, we also discovered incidents where people had no place to share their experiences."

BikePGH soon developed the Submit Autonomous Vehicle Experience (SAVE) form, where people could submit these odd scenarios, or "edge cases." Initial responses pointed to many close calls like AVs passing bicyclists within less than 4 feet, or failing to yield to pedestrians in crosswalks - both required by state law.

This year, BikePGH relaunched the survey to analyze how city residents' impressions of AV technology have changed. One of the report's goals, Boerer said, is "to spark conversation and dialogue around what it means to share the road with a developing technology that has the potential to save thousands of lives in the long term, but also has potentially deadly consequences in the short term."

Since the 2016 launch of Uber's AV program, several more companies have begun testing in the city, and the State House passed Autonomous Vehicle Testing Guidance legislature and, most significantly, an AV struck and killed Elaine Herzberg - a pedestrian walking with a bicycle - in Tempe, AZ. In setting tighter terms of operation for the AV companies conducting research on city streets, elected officials can ensure greater safety for all Pittsburghers.

"It's important to keep an eye on this rollout," Boerer cautioned, "to make sure that it's introduced to our streets as safely as humanly possible."

Find the survey at [bikepgh.org/avsurvey](http://bikepgh.org/avsurvey). Call 412-325-4334 to learn more. ♦

## Poetry in motion: contest to feature winning poems inside PAT buses

By Carol Elkind *Bulletin contributor*

*Allegheny County* - Crossing Limits, an organization that promotes solidarity amongst varying faith and cultural traditions, has partnered with Port Authority of Allegheny County (PAT) to launch the "I Too Am Pittsburgh" poetry contest.

City of Pittsburgh neighbors of all ages are encouraged to write poetry about their communities; winning poems will be displayed inside PAT buses.

"This contest will help our diverse communities recognize the rich history and challenges that are a part of Pittsburgh," said Rashida James-Saadiya, creative director of Crossing Limits.

I Too Am Pittsburgh is supported by PAT, The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, and Shuman Juvenile Detention Center. Shuman students will illustrate artistic renderings to accompany the

winning poems' interior bus display.

A series of Saturday writing workshops will help participants complete their poetry. Details about the workshops, as well as contest rules and instructions, can be obtained by sending an email request to [itooampittsburgh@gmail.com](mailto:itooampittsburgh@gmail.com). The submission deadline for poems is May 1.

"In the wake of recent destructive acts of hate, such as the violent attack at the Tree of Life synagogue," said project director Luqmon Abdus-Salaam, "I believe endeavors like [the poetry contest] are needed to help us break down barriers, stereotypes, and hatred."

Crossing Limits focuses on using poetry as an instrument for social change, highlighting the intersections of faith and social injustice. For more info, visit [crossinglimits.org](http://crossinglimits.org). ♦



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**Thanks for your support!**



## Dear community partners, thanks for supporting the BGC!

None of the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation's (BGC) accomplishments would be possible without those who have shared their expertise or given of their financial resources along the way. A number of corporate, business, and foundation donors, together with public funders, have been vital to our success, and allow us the freedom to do it the grassroots way. During 2018, those who have provided money, or lent their energy or expertise to our endeavors, include:

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- United Way of Allegheny County's After-School Initiative
- The Highmark Foundation
- West Penn Hospital and the Allegheny Health Network
- UPMC/St. Margaret's Family Health Center on Penn Ave.
- The ACCBO Fund at the Dept. of City Planning
- City of Pittsburgh – Personnel Employment & Training Division

The BGC extends a very special "Thank You" to our 2018 community donors. The following local partners helped us raise funds for local initiatives like the Broad St. landslide relief effort, beautification initiatives like "Pretty-Up-Penn," and the BGC's annual donor drive.

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[Donate at [Bloomfield-Garfield.org](http://Bloomfield-Garfield.org).] ♦

## Devotional music resonates in Garfield and beyond

By John Creasy Open Door Church/Garfield Community Farm

*Garfield* - On Saturday, Mar. 2, Jeremy Casella - singer, producer, and recording artist - will perform live at the BGC Activity Center (113 N. Pacific Ave.). This Side of Eve, a neighborhood act, is slated to open the show at 7 p.m.

From his home in Nashville, TN, Casella writes music to guide listeners towards a deeper spiritual relationship. His songs draw equally from scripture and life experience, a dovetail that has helped him connect with international audiences while on tour.

Cansella grew up in Pittsburgh and eventually departed to attend music school in "Music City," where he has lived and worked ever since. Listen to his music on iTunes or at [jeremycasella.bandcamp.com](http://jeremycasella.bandcamp.com).

My wife, Alyssa Creasy, has fronted our band [This Side of Eve] for more than

a decade. Based in Stanton Heights, we released our debut album in 2005 with a performance on Penn Ave.

Last December, we unveiled a five-song EP called "Take Me Down"; we recorded the songs at home, and with Cansella in Tennessee. Hear our new music at [thissideofeve.bandcamp.com](http://thissideofeve.bandcamp.com).

As a pastor of The Open Door Presbyterian Church, I enjoy the regular privilege of leading music with Alyssa in worship. We encourage those readers who cannot attend our March 2 show to visit The Open Door Church's worship gathering at the BGC Activity Center, which begins every Sunday morning at 10:10 a.m.

Suggested donation for the Mar. 2 concert is \$15 per person; family cost is "pay-as-you-can." To RSVP, search for "Jeremy Casella" at [eventbrite.com](http://eventbrite.com). ♦



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**MARCH 2 - SATURDAY**

**EAST LIBERTY**

**Charenee Wade: Music of Gil-Scott Heron**

Award-winning vocalist Charenee Wade pays tribute to Gil Scott-Heron with “Offering,” a tribute to the renowned poet/artist. Wade will deliver Scott-Heron’s music from the female perspective on Saturday, Mar. 2, at 8 p.m. at the Kelly Strayhorn Theater (KST, 5941 Penn Ave.). Tickets are “Pay-What-Makes-You-Happy”; call 412-363-3000 or email [info@kelly-strayhorn.org](mailto:info@kelly-strayhorn.org) for more info.

**MARCH 7 - THURSDAY**

**GARFIELD**

**Land Trust Meeting**

At 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, Mar. 7, the Garfield Land Trust will hold a public meeting at the Community Activity Center (113 N. Pacific Ave. at Dearborn St.). Read more, and become a member today,

at [GarfieldLandTrust.org](http://GarfieldLandTrust.org). Contact 412-345-3831 or [GarfieldLandTrust@gmail.com](mailto:GarfieldLandTrust@gmail.com) to learn more.

**MARCH 8 - FRIDAY**

**LAWRENCEVILLE**

**Lenten Fish Fry**

New Bethel Baptist Church (221 43rd St.) is hosting a Lenten Fish Fry from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. on the following Fridays: March 8, 15, 22, & 29. Baked sweet potato pies and pound cakes will be available for purchase. To place orders, call 412-291-8185. Delivery is available in close vicinity to the Lawrenceville church.

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**Writers: ‘Magical Marketing Trifecta’**

Join Creative Nonfiction (5119 Coral St.) and hear from publishing expert Jane Friedman at 6 p.m. on Friday, Mar. 8. Learn best practices for author websites, email, and social media to better engage

readers. This workshop is designed for writers of all backgrounds, genres, and experiences. Email [information@creativenonfiction.org](mailto:information@creativenonfiction.org) to learn more.

**MARCH 9 - SATURDAY**

**EAST LIBERTY**

**Public Benefits Workshop**

Learn how to apply for public benefits. Topics include but are not limited to food stamps, energy assistance, and health insurance. Presented by Attorney Melissa Paternoster. Workshop takes place at Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh-East Liberty (130 S Whitfield St.) at 11 a.m. Call 412-363-8232 to register.

**MARCH 14 - THURSDAY**

**LAWRENCEVILLE**

**Computer Class: MS Word Basics**


Brush up on your MS Word computer skills from 5:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 14. This free class will be held at Goodwill’s Workforce Development Center (118 52nd St.) in Lawrenceville. For more info, call 412- 481-9005.

**MARCH 15 - FRIDAY**

**STANTON HEIGHTS**

**Fish Fry Fundraiser**

Valley View Presbyterian Church (601 North Aiken Ave.) will host its annual Fish Fry Fundraiser, held every Friday from Mar. 8-29 and Apr. 12-19. Come



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**COMMUNITY CLEAN UP**





**MARCH 23**  
**10AM-2PM**

Meet at  
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Garfield  
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# Volunteer Opportunities    Announcements    Shout-Outs

## Services    Open Calls

to the church for food from Noon to 7 p.m. on those dates; live entertainment is scheduled for 5-7 p.m. For more info, call 412-361-0870.

### MARCH 20 - WEDNESDAY

#### LAWRENCEVILLE

### Free Lecture: Pittsburgh; Metropolis of Corruption

Rich Gazarik, author of *Wicked Pittsburgh*, will remind us when the city was an immoral, corrupt town. Pittsburgh was once dubbed the "Metropolis of Corruption" because of decades of vice, crime, and dirty politics. The colorful cast of characters included criminals such as "Dicebox Miller" and "Fainting Bertha." This event takes place at 6:30 p.m. at the Carnegie Library (279 Fisk St.). It is free to the public. No reservations required.

#### GARFIELD

### Land Trust Committee Meeting

At 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Mar. 20, the Garfield Land Trust will hold a meeting at the Community Activity Center (113 N. Pacific Ave. at Dearborn St.). Read more, and become a member today, at [GarfieldLandTrust.org](http://GarfieldLandTrust.org). Contact 412-345-3831 or [GarfieldLandTrust@gmail.com](mailto:GarfieldLandTrust@gmail.com) to learn more.

#### EAST LIBERTY

### PGH Photo Fair: Speaker Series

Enjoy this annual lecture series leading up to the PGH Photo Fair (which will be held at the Carnegie Museum of Art on April 27 & 28). This year's lectures are at the Ace Hotel (120 S. Whitfield St.) from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, March 20. The speakers panel will feature Nancy L. Lane, Joe Baio, and Ellen Kessler. Doors open at 6 p.m. Visit [PghPhotoFair.com/speaker-series/](http://PghPhotoFair.com/speaker-series/) to learn more.

### MARCH 21 - THURSDAY

#### LAWRENCEVILLE

### Computer Class: MS Excel Basics

Brush up on your MS Excel computer skills from 5:30 - 8:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 21. This free class will be held at Goodwill's Workforce Development Center (118 52nd St.) in Lawrenceville. For more info, call 412- 481-9005.

#### CITY-WIDE

### PULSE Virtual Nonprofit Info Session

On Thursday, March 21, from Noon to 1 p.m., join Pittsburgh Urban Leadership Service Experience (PULSE) for its Virtual Prospective Nonprofit Partner Info Session. For the past 25 years, PULSE has invited about 350 talented university graduates to partner with over 125 Pittsburgh nonprofits, contributing some 500,000 hours of service to the city and its residents. Join the Virtual Info Session at <https://zoom.us/j/864781080>.

### MARCH 28 - THURSDAY

#### EAST LIBERTY

### East Grounds Book Club

Join Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh-East Liberty (130 S Whitfield St.) for a monthly book discussion at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, Mar. 28. Share perspectives with local book-lovers over refreshments from Zeke's Coffee while exploring a mix of new reading material. This month, we'll discuss *Brother* by David Chariandy. Call 412-363-8232 for more info.

### MARCH 30 - SATURDAY

#### EAST LIBERTY

### 'Value the Vacant'

Join Billie Vaughn of Common-Unity, LLC to learn how to purchase tax delinquent vacant property for home ownership. Also, learn how to apply for grant funding for repairs and take advantage of home ownership through generational wealth. Refreshments will be provided. Seminar takes place at Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh-East Liberty (130 S Whitfield St.) from 1 to 3 p.m. Call 412-363-8232 to learn more and register.

### - ONGOING OPPORTUNITIES -

#### CITY-WIDE

### Biz. Opportunity for Renovation Contractors

The Allegheny Lead Safe Homes Program will remediate lead paint hazards in 175 homes throughout the County. We are in immediate need of contractors to perform this high volume of work. Contractors will be reimbursed for trainings; those who obtain all certifications may be eligible to join the contractor pool. Firms in the pool could be assigned work on dozens of units, which will pay competitively, and average \$12,000 per unit. Visit [www.alleghenycounty.us/leadsafe-program](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/leadsafe-program) to learn more and download an application. Please contact Jennifer Saks at [Jennifer.Saks@alleghenycounty.us](mailto:Jennifer.Saks@alleghenycounty.us) or 412-350-1032 with any questions.

#### FRIENDSHIP

### Education: Adults Achieve

Earthen Vessels Outreach (EVO, 250 S. Pacific Ave.) is offering a high school education to any individual, age 18 yrs. or older, who has not successfully completed their high school diploma. Enroll in a program and begin your online classes right away. EVO staff will provide computer help and tutoring support to help each participant get to the final (cap & gown) graduation ceremony. To learn more, email [marilynchaney@gmail.com](mailto:marilynchaney@gmail.com).

## Classifieds

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### Garfield Comm. Farm Hiring New Staff

Garfield Farm is hiring 2 farm apprentices and a Production & Sales Manager. These positions are seasonal, from April to September 2019. For more details, visit [garfieldfarm.com](http://garfieldfarm.com). Questions? Email [garfieldcommunityfarm@gmail.com](mailto:garfieldcommunityfarm@gmail.com).

#### PENN AVE.

### PGH Fringe Festival

The Pittsburgh Fringe is an all-out, no-holds-barred, inclusive multi-disciplinary performing arts festival featuring international and local artists. The annual festival will be in multiple venues along Penn Ave. - in the Bloomfield, Friendship, Garfield, and East Liberty neighborhoods. The festival will showcase theater (physical, street, musical), comedy, visual arts, puppetry, family entertainment, music, dance, spoken word, opera, poetry, literature and shows that have yet to be imagined. Interested venue-owners and performers may contact [info@pittsburghfringe.org](mailto:info@pittsburghfringe.org). ♦



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## D.C. developer envisions Garfield townhomes on Hillcrest St.

By Joe Reuben *Bulletin contributor*

*Garfield* - In what would be the neighborhood's first new homes built by a for-profit developer in decades, an out-of-town developer recently asked the City for approval to move forward with construction of three single-family houses in the 5400 block of Hillcrest St.

Last September, NCRC Housing Rehab Fund LLC - a Washington, D.C.-based company with offices located a few blocks from the White House - purchased a home at 413 N. Graham St. for \$120,000. The real estate acquisition was but one of several that the company has transacted in Garfield since 2017. The lot on which the home sits runs for 134 feet along Hillcrest St.; the developer intends to take most of what is now the home's rear yard and divide it into three separate parcels.

Two-story townhomes with integral garages would face Hillcrest, with driveways stretching across the sidewalk. Each home would have approximately 1,800 square feet of livable area - large by the standards that nonprofit organizations like the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation (BGC) and Garfield Jubilee Association have set for homes recently built in the neighborhood.

At a Feb. 21 hearing before the City's zoning board, civil engineer John Cenkner appeared on behalf of NCRC Housing Rehab, his client. He asked for relief from a city requirement that mandates a home be set at least 3 feet back from the lot line it shares with the adjoining property. With townhouses, that setback has to be "essentially zero," Cenkner told the board. He shared a site plan and a rendering of what the homes would look like at street-view.

Attending the hearing as an observer, Rick Swartz, the executive director of the BGC, told the three-member panel that his group was not taking a stand for, or against, NCRC's request to waive the setback requirement. His group's main issue instead, Swartz told the zoning board, was that the developer had made no effort to contact any local stakeholders about the project. Cenkner, whose firm has offices in Westmoreland County, told the zoning board that he had no prior knowledge of any community organization in the neighborhood, and said he would relay Swartz's frustration back to his client.

NCRC is an acronym for "National Community Reinvestment Coalition," a nonprofit group headquartered at the same tony Washington address, whose website pledges, "It's time for a #JustEconomy." For years, NCRC has been at the forefront of lobbying policymakers and federal agencies; the group continually pressures financial institutions to engage in equitable lending practices, along with banking services that are accessible to people living in high-poverty areas. The LLC evidently is a for-profit subsidiary of the nonprofit group.

County records show that NCRC Housing Rehab LLC also recently purchased vacant Garfield homes at 4826 Kincaid St. and 5010 Dearborn St. The property on Kincaid was purchased for \$113,000, from a private individual who had paid \$0 for it in 2014. The house on Dearborn was sold by Penn Pioneer Enterprises for \$103,000, after Penn Pioneer had purchased the property for \$30,300 just four months previous. According to City data, no building permit is on record for any work that Penn Pioneer might have done to the property in the interim.

"Eventually, we hope to sit down with NCRC Housing Rehab to better understand why it is they've come to Garfield from so far away, and what it is they're trying to accomplish here," Swartz told *The Bulletin*. "We are having issues with individual developers and companies whose only apparent interest is how quickly they can make a large profit from their activities in our neighborhood. I don't think NCRC Rehab falls into that camp but, right now, we're not grasping what it is they want to do with the resources they obviously have been given." ♦



**ABOVE:** In Garfield, the townhomes at 413 N. Graham St. exhibit the modern, albeit universally replicable, "selfsame" construction that a Beltway developer hopes to fully recreate on nearby Hillcrest St. Graphic courtesy of Cenkner Engineering, Inc.

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