

# the Bulletin

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## Lawrenceville fights for 'housing for all' amid deepening crisis

By Dave Breingan *Lawrenceville United*

Lawrenceville - As it has impacted many sectors of the economy, the COVID-19 pandemic has also exacerbated an existing national crisis in affordable housing.

In 2016, the City of Pittsburgh's Housing Needs Assessment identified a shortage of 20,000 affordable housing units for the city's low income households - an issue keenly felt in changing neighborhoods like Lawrenceville, where housing prices have soared in the past decade.

By one measure, between 2010 and 2019, median home sales prices in Lawrenceville skyrocketed from \$94,590 to \$260,000.

This has precipitated a huge wave of displacement, especially for the neighborhood's low-income residents, Black and Brown residents, and households with

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ABOVE: A vibrant mural in Bloomfield, located near the intersection of Penn Ave. & Main St., gives tribute to the essential workers who continuously improve local residents' quality of live. Photo by Andrew McKeon.



ABOVE: A snowman attempts to direct bicycle traffic through a 'neighborway' in the city's East End. Photo courtesy of Bike Pittsburgh.

## City shares proposal for moving E. Liberty Zone 5 Police Station; residents react

By Nina Gibbs *Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation*

East Liberty - On Tuesday, Feb. 9, the Zone 5 Citizens Public Safety Council hosted a virtual community meeting with Dan Gilman, Chief of Staff for Mayor Bill Peduto, concerning a possible relocation of the Zone 5 Police Station.

The meeting was attended by local residents, as well as neighborhood groups like the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation, Larimer Consensus Group, Operation Better Block, Highland Park Community Council, and "Stop the Station."

Gilman provided context on a proposal

to move the Zone 5 Police station from its current Washington Blvd. location to what is now Pittsburgh Fire Bureau Station 8 in East Liberty - where Zone 5 Police were previously headquartered at 149 N. Euclid Ave.

He began the meeting by sharing that it was the previous mayoral administration's decision to move the Zone 5 station to Washington Blvd. Gilman went on to explain that many residents have since reached out to the City to indicate that the

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## Affordable Housing continued from page 1

children. With millions of Americans out of work due to the pandemic and struggling to pay rent, these issues are only worsening.

Against these pressures, Lawrenceville residents and community organizations have been fighting on a number of fronts to protect and create “housing for all,” a community vision formally identified in the Upper Lawrenceville Vision Plan.

First launched [by Lawrenceville Corporation (LC)] in 2015, the City of Bridges Community Land Trust (CBCLT) has now created 13 permanently affordable, owner-occupied housing units for low and moderate-income buyers in Lawrenceville, with more on the way; six newly renovated units were completed in 2020 alone.

Additionally, through its Buyer Initiated Program, CBCLT now provides up to \$35,000 for income-qualified homeowners to support down payments, closing costs, or repairs and upgrades for a home they are purchasing.

A multi-year, grassroots campaign of neighbors demanding that new residential development include affordable housing resulted in a pilot program for what is known as “inclusionary zoning” in Lawrenceville in 2019. The policy, one of the first of its kind in Pennsylvania, has already mandated 40 new units of housing affordable to low-income residents, with the majority of these units currently under construction.

As the pilot legislation approaches its expiration in July, City Planning is introducing a permanent overlay that would continue the program in perpetuity. A public hearing and action on the permanent legislation will be held at the City’s Planning Commission on Apr. 6. Community members who want to get involved or learn more are encouraged to contact Lawrenceville United (LU).

Also under construction is the Sixth Ward Flats, a project developed by ACTION-Housing and facilitated in partnership with LC to bring 35 units of affordable rental housing to Doughboy Square, with a preference for individuals with disabilities. These units are expected to open this spring.

Low-income homeowners, especially Lawrenceville’s older adults or “wisdom keepers” struggling to keep up with a historic housing stock, are another target of housing interventions. Together with partners like Rebuilding Together Pittsburgh, LU supported five low-income homeowners in 2020, helping them access grants and forgivable loans for much-needed home repairs and accessibility improvements.

Of course, under the COVID-19 pandemic, millions of Americans have been unable to pay their rent. With partners like the Hill District Consensus Group and RentHelpPGH, LU supported 28 tenants and homeless individuals last year - with direct support on eviction prevention, homelessness prevention, rent & utility assistance, and re-housing support. Expecting to deploy a second round of local rental assistance in March, LU continues to be available to support folks struggling with rent, threats of eviction, and more.

Alongside this engagement with tenants, LU is also launching a new focus to partner with landlords and the Housing Authority in order to help provide housing for a broader range of incomes.

A landlord workshop was held in December to let landlords know about extra incentives to participate in the Housing Choice Voucher program, like a \$1,000 signing bonus, access to low-interest loans for property repairs, and higher payment standards (for example, up to \$2,041 for a three-bedroom dwelling).

Additional opportunities are on the horizon with an upcoming community planning process around Allegheny County’s Clack site [3900 block of Penn Ave.] and the new Upper Lawrenceville Affordable Housing Fund. While these efforts alone are not expected to solve the affordable housing shortage in Lawrenceville, they speak to the difference that grassroots, resident-focused advocacy and local action can make.

Community members who want to get involved in these campaigns are encouraged to join the LU Housing Committee. Anyone in need of housing support, or interested in upcoming affordable housing units, is encouraged to contact LU at 412-802-7220 or info@LUUnited.org. ♦



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# Letter-to-the-Editor

Dear *Bulletin* staff,

I recently moved to Pittsburgh from San Francisco. I have always loved newspapers - especially small, local neighborhood ones like yours.

I worked my entire professional life for the *San Francisco Examiner* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

I understand the daily effort, love, and enthusiasm needed to produce a newspaper. You run a very fine paper here, and you're providing great service to your community.

Take a bow! And keep on printing.

Yours,

Katy Raddatz, Lawrenceville resident

*[Editor's Note: Thanks for the kudos, Katy! Your kind words serve as an inspiration to our readers. While our footprint is much smaller than that of any Bay-Area publication, we still welcome any/all contributions.]*

# 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, and are open to the public. Meetings are currently being conducted online via Zoom; email Nina@Bloomfield-Garfield.org for more details.

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

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## Scholarship welcomes BIPOC vendors to join Bloomfield Saturday Market

A Message from Bloomfield Development Corporation

*Bloomfield* - While these gray, dreary days - often spent inside, staring at passing cars and pedestrians - may feel endless, there remains hope for a brighter future. In just a couple of months, the Bloomfield Saturday Market will be back in full swing.

This past year has been challenging, especially for small business owners. After bouncing back and forth between the shifting pandemic-related guidelines, with little direction and support from the federal government, many of our beloved businesses have been forced to close their doors for good.

Although farmers markets have traditionally been seen as welcoming community spaces, this past year opened our eyes to the fact that farmers markets are often very white spaces - and the Bloomfield Saturday Market was no exception.

Farmers markets are essential businesses that benefit communities by providing access to fresh food, supporting local vendors and farmers, and [in Pittsburgh] providing SNAP users with a 40% match on their shopping budget. However, these spaces often exclude BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and Person of Color) people, both as shoppers and business owners.

In an effort to create a more inclusive and comfortable market, we are now offering two scholarships specifically for BIPOC-owned businesses that are new to the Bloomfield Saturday Market. The scholarship program, which will operate every season going forward, had a successful trial run during our winter market season [ends Mar. 20].

Still, the mere addition of BIPOC vendors doesn't mean that a space is now comfortable or even safe. Our staff and Board members are currently working through anti-racism and inclusion training; we train vendors on what behavior isn't acceptable, and how to handle it, before each market date. We also spend time at our vendor meetings, held bi-monthly, discussing actions we can take to create a welcoming, safe space.

If you are, or know, a BIPOC-owned business who hasn't tried a farmers market because the fees were too high, are unsure how vending plays into your business model, or want to expand your customer base, we encourage you to apply.



**ABOVE:** Sarah Shaffer, owner of Tina's (4114 Main St.) in Bloomfield, offers hot beverages to winter market patrons. Photo courtesy of Abi Gildea.

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In 2020, the market drew an average of 1,500 people each week; permanent vendors' sales were similar to, and some even greater than, their sales from 2019. Attracting heavy foot traffic from Bloomfield residents, the Saturday Market also draws customers from other neighborhoods, and even some "destination shoppers" from outside of the city.

Since brick-and-mortar establishments have been hit just as hard by the pandemic and its ripple effects, we will waive fees for any first-time vendors in the neighborhood.

If you own a business in Bloomfield, you are welcome to vend at the Bloomfield Saturday Market [up to three times this year] free of charge.

Over the last few years, several Bloomfield businesses that participated in this program have since become permanent vendors. Judging from the owners' feedback, the Saturday Market is doing wonders for their customer traction - and motivating customers to visit their stores during the work week.

Applications to vend at the Bloomfield Saturday Market will remain open until Friday, Mar. 19. Please visit [bloomfieldpgh.org](http://bloomfieldpgh.org) to apply; contact our Market Manager, Abi Gildea, at [market@bloomfieldpgh.org](mailto:market@bloomfieldpgh.org) or 412-681-8800 (ext. 103) with any questions. ♦

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# Police Station *continued from page 1*

Washington Blvd. location presents accessibility issues. Whether on foot or via public transit, local residents seek better access to the police station; elderly and disabled residents are specifically disadvantaged by its current location.

Gilman added that Garland Park, the public space located closest to the East Liberty fire station, has seen an uptick in neighbors' complaints.

The regular flooding along Washington Blvd. not only caused significant damage to the station itself, but also to Zone 5 staff members' and visitors' cars in the parking lot.

According to Gilman, the "Negley Run Watershed" plan will help with flooding issues related to Washington Blvd. The plan, he explained, was always to find a new home for the Zone 5 headquarters - just as soon as the money was made available. Thanks to a recent renovation of the East Liberty Fire Station, police officers may be soon be stationed on N. Euclid Ave.

Potential changes to the building's limestone façade, as well as its doors and windows, would aim to create energy savings in achieving the City's 2030 goals of a

net-zero energy footprint.

While he was unable to provide any schedule details during the virtual meeting, Gilman was very open to receiving questions from local community members.

Many residents spoke to a need for more information around the thought processes - especially because this was the first time that the City had shared any relevant plans with the community.

"This move is to intimidate and attack black people," proclaimed Randall Taylor, a former city school board member who advocates for Stop the Station.

A number of local residents said that public consensus on the relocation of the Zone 5 Police Station hinges on further analysis.

"Homewood does feel left out because we can't walk to the station" Zinna Scott, long-time resident of Homewood, and the president of this council, said.

Several individuals on the call indicated they were concerned that the data collected by the Stop the Station group did not show community support for this move, further indicating the City's need for a central gathering of data on the subject.

**BELOW:** The present location of Pittsburgh Fire Bureau Station 8 might house Zone 5 Police operations in the near future. Photo by Andrew McKeon.



Data that community members said they would like to see posted online included: the cost of damages to the station and vehicles caused by years of flooding; crime stats around Garland Park; response times to each neighborhood, from Washington Blvd., and how that might change with

an East Liberty station; what other properties/communities could be considered for the relocation; information on how Zone 5 Police interact with local residents; and how the Negley Run Watershed Plan might benefit from Zone 5 leaving its current location. ♦

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# Environmental Charter School looks to expand outdoor recreation space

By Nina Gibbs Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation

*Garfield* - Ethos Collaborative, the engineering consultant in charge of making improvements to the Environmental Charter School's (ECS) field site at 5525 Columbo St., presented its plans to the public during a virtual meeting on Feb. 3.

A Development Activities Meeting (DAM), which was convened with the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation and the Garfield community, is required by the City ahead of the Zoning Board of Adjustment's (ZBA) hearing on two special exceptions that would allow Ethos to construct a new parking lot with 10 or more stalls.

Garfield residents who live near the field site were among the meeting's 22 attendees. The project team was represented by James Doyle (Chief Operating Officer, ECS), Nikole Sheaffer (Chief Innovation & Outreach Officer, ECS), Damon Weiss (principal at Ethos Collaborative), and Barton Kirk (principal at Ethos Collaborative).

Doyle began the presentation by talking about the ECS system and the building at 5525 Columbo St, where the middle school (grades 6-9) is now located. He discussed the organizational mission of the school, its core values, and a day in the life of an ECS middle-schooler.

Noting that an expansion of the school's recreational and outdoor learning area fits with these concepts, he also touched on how the school's curriculum and identity revolve around outdoor study, and how the COVID-19 pandemic has brought that into greater focus. Additionally, Doyle mentioned that he used to live across the street from ECS before he began working there.

He explained that the upper lot on Columbo St., where the improvements would be taking place, is currently just an unsightly and little used parking area where students are not able to engage in recreation.

The nature of the improvements would be to maximize space for outdoor play; create planted areas for buffering, screening, and stormwater management; and provide a managed overflow parking area. The school's goal is to create an educational space that is ecologically friendly and builds upon its mission.

Weiss mentioned that planting new trees would reduce noise, screen the field site from its surroundings, clean the air, and provide a lesson in food forests and native plantings as part of the students' educational and recreational regimen.

According to ECS, the existing parking area is twice the size of what the school actually needs. The new parking lot's footprint would be smaller; porous asphalt would be used to reduce the noise of bouncing balls and also manage stormwater.

The project team must seek waivers from the zoning code from the City because of the project's inability to conform to two separate zoning regulations. One applies to the extension of the proposed parking lot, which would not meet the side yard setback requirement in order to achieve the desired number of parking stalls. The other law pertains to playground areas that normally are not allowed within 50 feet of residentially zoned property; a proposed recreational path around the field site would come within 50 feet of neighboring residences.

During the Feb. 3 meeting, community members' questions focused heavily on parking, buses, plantings, and the nighttime safety of the space. Some neighbors expressed worry about school buses blocking the very narrow Columbo Street.

When they first moved to Columbo St., school administrators considered routing buses onto Black Street instead, but new development along the street would greatly restrict vehicular access, especially for a 72-passenger bus.

On account of the pandemic, ECS has not been able to gather data to analyze potential traffic flow around the field site; staff members promise to review timing and infrastructure solutions in order to alleviate traffic during the school's arrival and dismissal times.

While the field site does have another space suitable for a bus, in terms of dimensions, it is on a fairly steep grade that might not provide a safe place for bus staging.

Meeting participants also discussed safety issues, like proper lighting for the Columbo St. area. ECS indicated that it will research solutions, like signage, and also consider other interventions to deter any visitors at night. However, the scope of its plan would be specifically limited to the school day, and the hours immediately after school.

The field site is presently fenced along three sides, but not along Columbo. While exploring the idea of installing a fence along the Columbo side, school administrators also recognize that ECS wants this to be a resource open to the local community. As it stands, the final plan calls for a gate at the front entrance; it would not be used at night.

At the close of the Feb. 3 meeting, ECS staff members thanked everyone for their input, which will be incorporated into the final design. Full details of the meeting can be found at [bloomfield-garfield.org/ecsdam](http://bloomfield-garfield.org/ecsdam). ♦

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**BELOW:** *The Environmental Charter School's proposal for additional outdoor space presents concerns for neighboring residents. Graphic courtesy of Nina Gibbs.*



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for the latest neighborhood information and community updates.

## Preparing & Filing 2020 Tax Returns?

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The Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation (BGC), in cooperation with the IRS, will once again be assisting individual taxpayers with filing their federal and state tax returns online. There is no charge for this service, which will be offered every Saturday - beginning Feb. 6, and ending on Saturday, Apr. 14. Taxpayers will need to make appointments in advance, then come to:

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The earliest appointment we offer is at 12:30 and the last at 4:30 p.m. We do not assist business filers or individuals who have rental income or numerous capital gains' transactions to report. City residents will also be able to receive help in filing their city tax returns. All taxpayers will need to have photo ID's and proof of their Social Security number. Call either Pamela Schon (412-441-6950, ext. 110) or Rick Swartz (412-441-6950, ext. 111) at the BGC to schedule an appointment.

## Virtual Career Fair helps applicants 'e-meet' with ECS administrators

By Deana Callipare *Environmental Charter School*

Garfield - The Environmental Charter School (ECS, 5525 Columbo St.) will host its second annual "Virtual Career Fair" - Saturday, Mar. 13, from 9 a.m. until Noon - to fill several positions as the school district grows another grade.

ECS will open its doors to a Tenth Grade class for the 2021-22 school year; the school is now seeking highly dedicated and motivated individuals for a variety of positions.

The Virtual Career Fair is an excellent opportunity for applicants to [virtually] meet ECS staff, learn more about the school and its culture, and ask questions prior to the interviewing process.

Potential candidates can get to know the organization's background, which will help them determine if ECS is the right fit for their career goals.

"The first thing that drew me to ECS was that I felt welcomed right away," Mara Steinmetz, current 8th Grade English Language Arts teacher, said. "I participated in a career fair, and since that day, I have felt nothing but support."

Not only does the Virtual Career Fair provide applicants a look into the school culture, but it also prepares them for a day in the life of an ECS staff member while illustrating the organization's mission, values, and student-faculty relationships.

"When I attended the ECS Career Fair last year, something that stood out to me was the school's value of educating the whole child," Jessica Segal, current K-5 social worker, said. "Since I started, this value continues to be highlighted every single day."

The school's progressive education approach values faculty collaboration by recognizing the power of "systems thinking" while modeling environmentally-

focused education.

Every aspect of the organization and its environmentally-focused programming is designed, and continually refined through professional development opportunities, to ensure a high level of student success that follows the school's guiding principles: "catalyst, character, collaboration, and commitment."

"I was able to participate in professional development opportunities months before starting my position," Steinmetz said. "Through those opportunities, I met other team members and support systems throughout the district while learning what to expect during the school year."

In addition to professional development, ECS offers a variety of employee benefits including competitive compensation packages, paid time off, and dependent enrollment preference.

Staff members have flexibility in pedagogy, but are provided resources and systems to build on student knowledge and education. ECS provides opportunities with internal professionals, as well as external community partners, to help foster each staff member's professional and personal growth.

"I really appreciate the curriculum that's provided for us," Steinmetz said. "It gives me the power to teach students things that are important to me, but there's still an educational structure for me to give students learning opportunities that they'll be able to carry throughout their lives."

To hear more ECS staff stories, apply for a position, or register for the ECS Virtual Career Fair, visit [ecspgh.org/careers](http://ecspgh.org/careers).

We hope to "e-meet" you at the ECS Virtual Career Fair on Saturday, March 13, beginning at 9 a.m. ♦

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# Neighborhood FOCUS

## Doughboy of Lawrenceville: WWI statue stands test of time

By John Kohl *Bulletin contributor*

Lawrenceville - Above the bustling intersection of Penn Ave. & Butler St., an old symbol stands in unwavering tribute to those who fought overseas. The Doughboy war memorial was originally constructed in 1921 to honor the American infantrymen [known as “doughboys”] who served their country during the First World War.

It has since become a symbol honoring veterans of all foreign wars, many of whom hailed from the Lawrenceville neighborhood where it stands, that affords surviving military families an opportunity to pay respect to their loved ones.

The statue is a signature work of architect/sculptor Allen George Newman, whose work was well-known to both residential and commercial clients. It is regarded, by most estimation, as an exquisite piece of funerary architecture – reposeful in its curves, soothing in its shapes, and self-reflective in the subject’s overall expression.

Since WWI ended before a pot of locally-donated funds ever reached the troops, Lawrenceville residents pooled their monies together to replicate what other communities had successfully implemented: a war memorial.

In order to meet the project’s budget goal of \$10,000, more fundraising was needed in 1919. The monument was specifically commissioned to honor the troops of

**BELOW:** Lawrenceville’s Doughboy war memorial has given tribute to local veterans since 1921. Image courtesy of Wikipedia.



the Fifth Zone, which encompassed the city’s Sixth Ward. Pittsburgh’s Art Commission sponsored a special meeting on Feb. 25, 1920, approving Newman’s plans for the memorial. The Committee recommended that the statue be situated at the Y-shaped intersection of Penn Ave. & Butler St.

Newman created Doughboy out of bronze, at a height not to exceed eight feet, three inches. Three such models were cast: one was delivered to Pittsburgh; another to Cliffside, NJ; and the last one retained by Newman for his studio. Newman’s son later sold it to a friend in New York. A critic at the time announced that the monument is “the finest production Mr. Newman has designed and executed.”

The Lawrenceville monument was dedicated on May 30, 1921, when upwards of 20,000 people were estimated to have attended the ceremony. Many voiced their concerns that the intersection had too “magnificent [of] a round streetcar shelter” and a public comfort station. Thus, the shelter was dismantled and, as tensions rose, men with guns threatened to stop the dedication in its path. Despite what began with anarchy, the ceremony proceeded peacefully from there.

By 1940, the Doughboy was showing signs of disrepair; two decades of wear and tear, not to mention the city’s smog-filled air, had greatly impacted the statue’s bronze patina. According to *The Pittsburgh Press*, the statue was “chipped and cracked in countless places” and, at that time, “children romp up and down the memorial.” Another major publication reported that the statue was “grimy from the city’s soot.”

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## Meet the BGC: Board President Jarmele E. Fairclough



**ABOVE:** Meet Jarmele E. Fairclough, Board President of the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation (BGC). A resident of Garfield for more than 26 years, Fairclough has remained an active participant with the BGC for more than a decade. She currently works as a Program Assistant for the Urban Redevelopment Authority of the City of Pittsburgh. Visit [bloomfield-garfield.org](http://bloomfield-garfield.org) to learn more about the BGC Board. Photo courtesy of Nina Gibbs.

*‘The Lawrenceville Doughboy is widely regarded as an exquisite piece of funerary architecture - reposeful in its curves, soothing in its shapes, and self-reflective in the subject’s overall expression.’*

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Last year, during the morning hours of Memorial Day [May 25], the Doughboy memorial was defaced in a craven act of vandalism. The monument’s walls were splattered with red paint, and its base was covered in sloppy graffiti; the messages apparently referenced a Marxist group based in South America.

Pittsburgh Public Safety Director Wendell Hissrich released a statement regarding the wanton attack on Lawrenceville’s signature monument: “Vandalizing a memorial on any day is wrong, but it is incomprehensible to vandalize this memorial on a day in which we honor those who served, and gave their lives, for the freedoms that we enjoy today. Pittsburgh Police will vigorously investigate this crime. Anyone with information is asked to contact police immediately at (412) 323-7800.”

The FBI offered a \$2,500 reward for information leading to the arrest of the vandal [or vandals] responsible for the crime. Joining PLANPGH’s Public Art Division, the City’s Department of Public Works cleaned the monument later that day.

Despite its recent defacement, the Doughboy still stands tall in Lawrenceville. ♦

**BELOW:** Crews work to remove graffiti from Lawrenceville’s Doughboy Statue & Memorial after it was defaced on Memorial Day. Photo courtesy of @Pittsburgh on Twitter.





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- Availability for the entire program length: June 6th – August 13th, 2021

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## FCG brings value to Friendship neighborhood

A Message from Friendship Community Group

*Friendship* - Greetings from the Friendship Community Group (FCG). We hope our neighbors are staying well, and finding ways to connect during these unprecedented times.

As we've adapted over the past year, exploring ways to continue reaching out to our community, one of the most common questions we get from neighbors is "what does FCG do?"

Our group works to ensure a high quality of life for all residents in Friendship, our home. We are led by a volunteer Board of Directors that continuously works to strengthen the connective tissue of the neighborhood through community engagement, advocacy, and public events.

In an effort to encourage neighbors' dialogue about local happenings, FCG hosts quarterly community meetings. Speakers from both the public and private sectors share information about health & safety protocols, education initiatives, local development, and more.

FCG also hosts a slate of annual events including the Friendship Flower & Folk Festival (F4), Summer Picnic, Yard Sale, and Holiday Party; the organization also supports a biennial House Tour. The organization's diligent Outreach Committee members connect local residents with FCG event info via email, social media, website, and quarterly meetings. This committee, which meets the first Tuesday of each month, may be contacted at outreach@friendship-pgh.org.

Our Baum Grove Committee supports the care and maintenance of the Baum Grove parklet (400 Roup Ave.). The gem of our neighborhood, Baum Grove is owned solely by FCG and regularly maintained by volunteers.

FCG funds all of Baum Grove's maintenance and capital upgrades, and designs programming for its community events. The public space, which is open for all to enjoy, may also be reserved for event rentals.

This FCG committee works with neighbors to organize volunteer clean-ups and promote projects that enhance the health of our neighborhood green-space. Meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month; email BaumGrove@friendship-pgh.org for details.

The Housing & Business Borders Committee supports inclusive development that is mindful of the diverse nature of Friendship and its residents. Committee meetings center on conversations with the various City departments responsible for 311 complaints, refuse & recycling, building inspections, graffiti, and more; email hbb@friendship-pgh.org for details.

Committee members hold meetings with local developers and homeowners about projects located in Friendship and the surrounding neighborhoods, while also advocating for the residential compatibility and walkability of any proposed development.

All are welcome to meet these committee members on the first Tuesday of every odd month. To learn more, visit friendship-pgh.org; email subscribe@friendship-pgh.org to be added to FCG's email list. ♦

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# Women’s History Month: ‘Remembering Mary’

By Gloria Forouzan *Bulletin contributor*

*Lawrenceville* - The only trace of her life is a marker in Allegheny Cemetery, a brick-sized reminder bearing a single word: “Mary.”

Years of painstaking research have produced enough threads to weave together an account of this woman’s remarkable life. In recognition of Women’s History Month, please consider the remarkable accomplishments of one Mary Pattison Irwin.

On the night of March 17, 1784, Ireland’s Viceroy held the first ever “St. Patrick’s Day Ball” at Dublin Castle. The ballroom shimmered under light emitted by hundreds of candles. For Mary Pattison, a country girl from a village in far-off Northern Ireland, the whole scene must have seemed like a dream.

While no official account exists, at some point her gaze fell upon Major John Irwin, a seasoned veteran of the American Revolution. His reputation preceding him, Irwin was undoubtedly surrounded by a retinue of admirers, most clamoring for tales of his time serving under General George Washington.

Although [30-year-old] Pattison was already engaged to a doctor, by evening’s end she decided that Irwin offered the promise of a future she truly desired. A few months later, she took a remarkable leap of faith and married him.

The following year, they left Ireland’s County Tyrone for a new life in America.

Drawn by the promise of land earmarked for Revolutionary War veterans, the couple made its way to Pittsburgh in 1787. According to her granddaughter’s account, when Mary first saw the area’s three rivers, she foresaw an influx of boats - and a need for nautical rope.

Over 200 years ago, an astute Irish woman predicted how rope-making would lead to prosperity in her adopted town, which was considered a remote, frontier backwater at the time. To his credit, Mary’s husband agreed with her assessment and, in 1794, registered the family business as “John Irwin & Wife.” The very listing of a woman’s name on an official business document was all too unusual in that era.

As the ropery business prospered, so did the family, eventually growing to include four children. Sadly, John never recovered from the multiple wounds he suffered during the 1777 Paoli Massacre. With each passing year, his ability to work diminished. Mary took on all aspects of running the business in order to support both her family members and her employees. Mary’s modern-day business acumen is evidenced in her relocation of the “rope-walk” to meet the ever-growing, 18th century demand in Pittsburgh.

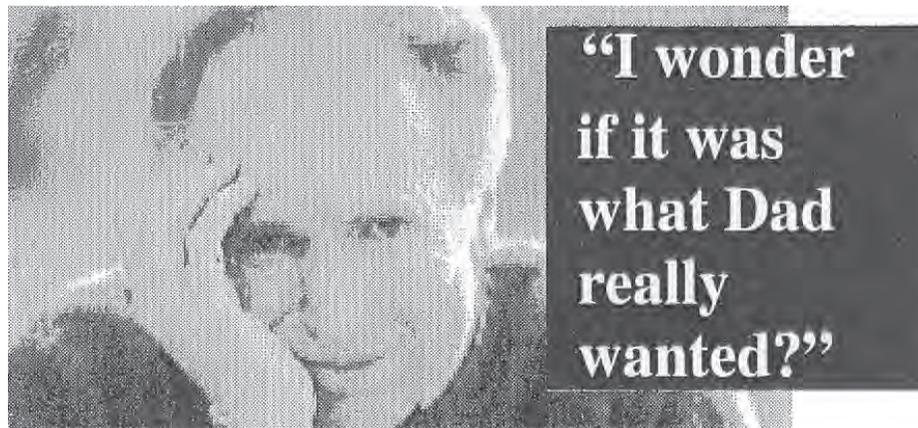
At the time, employers would partially pay their work crews with daily rations of rum. It comes as no surprise that this arrangement led to problems at Pittsburgh-area work sites. Mary soon became the first employer in Allegheny County to pay workers with actual money in place of liquor rations.

When John Irwin died in 1808, Mary immediately re-registered the business as “Mary Irwin & Son.” Despite operating in a society that limited women’s freedom to engage in commerce, she sustained a highly successful enterprise. Mary must have been an able leader, as her ropery enterprise generated great wealth for future Irwin generations. She succeeded in a world dominated by male privilege - from the workforce to the suppliers and clients.

Mary Pattison Irwin was one of Pittsburgh’s first industrialists, and she did it all while caring for her four young children. She also played a role in our nation’s history by crafting the ropes used on the steamboat *New Orleans* in 1811. This history-making boat was the first of its kind to travel from Pittsburgh to New Orleans. Thousands soon took advantage of this new mode of transportation to move people, products, and goods

By the following year, Mary wanted to retire, and she had prepared her eldest son [John] to take over the business. Yet fate found a way to intervene when Commodore Oliver Perry, an American naval officer in the War of 1812, convinced Mary to create the rope for his upcoming naval battle on Lake Erie. After personally overseeing the rope’s manufacture, she retired.

Mary Pattison Irwin is buried near her husband, Major John Irwin [Section 11, Lot 40] in Lawrenceville’s Allegheny Cemetery. Her remarkable legacy merits recognition. ♦



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**BELOW:** A non-descript stone in Allegheny Cemetery marks the buried legacy of Mary Pattison Irwin, an immigrant who thrived despite all odds. Photo courtesy of Gloria Forouzan.



## Walnut Capital launches new public art program for Bakery Square

By Elizabeth Sensky *East Liberty Development, Inc.*



**ABOVE:** A rendering of the public art display planned for Bakery Square. Image courtesy of East Liberty Development, Inc.

*Penn Ave.* – With the construction of “Bakery Square 3.0” nearing completion, Philips Sleep and Respiratory Care prepares to move into the city’s East End, intending to bring 4,000 employees to the new complex every day.

Walnut Capital recently launched a program for a new public art display that will help ensure the space feels welcoming to the surrounding community.

“When reimagining Bakery Square, we worked closely with our friends at the Larimer Consensus Group to plan for ways to more closely integrate the site with nearby communities,” Walnut Capital CEO Gregg Perelman explained, “because we want all of our neighbors to feel like they aren’t just welcomed here, but are part of Bakery Square’s vibrancy.”

A main feature of the program is a public art display on a renovated two-story building in the center of the original Bak-

ery Square, which will house a restaurant/food incubator called “Galley Bakery Square.” The building will showcase rotating artworks on two exterior panels, totaling approximately 720 square feet.

In December, Walnut Capital put out a call for artists to create the first artwork for the façade [Editor’s Note: as of press time, the selected artist(s) had not been announced]. In the spring, the selected artist(s) will work with community groups and students from the nearby Urban Academy of Greater Pittsburgh and Pittsburgh Public School’s Lincoln Elementary to develop the piece.

Morton Brown, a public art consultant for the project, said the art program will provide an opportunity for local youths to collaborate with inspiring artists and, in turn, for the artists to better understand and take inspiration from the community. He believes this element has become even more essential, given the current state of the world.

“Because we’re all impacted by COVID, the partnership is a unique opportunity for us adults to see, through the lens of a child, how this unprecedented time has

affected them,” Brown said.

Under a similar residency model, Brown recently worked with Duolingo on the creation of its community-driven mural, *To Be Human*, created by Ann Lewis. He said the process was very powerful.

“When you give an artist some quality face-time with residents, it makes everyone feel included,” Brown shared. “What you want to do is create a situation where the artist and community are having a discussion that results in inspiration to the artist - not necessarily a literal depiction of the community’s history and aspirations, although it can be.”

Bakery Square’s art program is open to all types of artists and artworks, including but not limited to painted murals, multimedia, light-based art, digital, façade-based sculpture, and any other forms that can be realized on the building’s exterior. The artist selection committee is comprised of Bakery Square team members, Larimer residents, and local art experts - including representatives from the City’s Office of Public Art.

Installation will occur in early summer, and the artwork will remain visible for

6 to 12 months, with more installations planned through the public art program.

“This project has the potential to allow more Larimer residents to see themselves in Bakery Square’s rebirth - and truly be a part of it,” Donna Jackson, Board of Directors chair of the Larimer Consensus Group, said. “We’ve been excited to work with Walnut Capital over the last several years as we reimagine, together, what thoughtful development can do for all the residents of nearby communities.” ♦

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## WHAT HAPPENED TO THE LOCAL REAL ESTATE BLOTTER?

The Local Real Estate Blotter, a regular Bulletin feature usually found on this page, is now on hiatus. Allegheny County's online real estate portal, where the blotter's listings are sourced, has not been updated since 2020.

The Bulletin will resume publishing real estate listings as soon as the County website refreshes its database. Until then, readers can look to the Sunday edition of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette for updated listings.

The Bulletin encourage readers to contact their elected Allegheny County Council members to ask why the real estate portal is not up-to-date for 2021.

## Garfield artist spotlight: Danielle Robinson

By Amber Epps Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation

Garfield - At the age of five, Danielle Robinson began drawing, painting, and sculpting her way to Rodgers Middle School, CAPA High School, Columbus College of Art & Design, and The Art Institute of Pittsburgh.

The Garfield resident has worked with a variety of artists and musicians in the Pittsburgh area, and continues to grow her body of work. "I hope I can just encourage conversation through my art" Robinson noted. "I paint black women and animals as I see them integrated into the fabric of my life - as fantastic goddesses, beasts, and super heroes. This is the way I see us. We are more than a shade of brown."

Her artwork incorporates various styles into a unique aesthetic that resonates with East End residents. "I combine graffiti-style, art-deco, and African art as starting points in most of my work," Robinson explained. "The way I express myself on paper is a thoughtless process, I just create. I do love to combine some of my favorite styles of art to create something new and different."

To learn more about Robinson and her work, visit [daniellerobinsonart.com](http://daniellerobinsonart.com) and follow @daniellerobinsonart on Instagram. ♦



**ABOVE:** A striking artwork from Garfield's own Danielle Robinson, entitled 'Creepyboo'. Photo courtesy of Amber Epps.

**BELOW:** Local artist Danielle Robinson relaxes at home, accompanied by the subjects of her impressive paintings. Photo courtesy of Amber Epps.



## GARFIELD COMMUNITY CLEAN UP

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APRIL 24, 2021

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AUGUST 21, 2021

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## Magic Theory 101 with Jon Tai

By Ashlee Green *The Northside Chronicle*

*Northside* - Magician and Troy Hill resident Jon Tai jokes that he was “actively hostile” toward the idea of sharing magic virtually last summer.

After all, he’d just quit his job of over eight years at a medical software company to pursue doing live performance full-time right as the COVID-19 pandemic struck the U.S.

“I was just like, ‘Why even bother? I’ll just work on my own thing and wait it out,’” he says.

By his “own thing,” he means his full live performance show, “Zen & the Art of Mystery,” which he had on the 2020 books to run a five-week series of at Liberty Magic in downtown Pittsburgh, reportedly one of only five venues dedicated specifically to magic in the country, until organizations started to shut down due to safety restrictions.

“There was a pretty long period where I just didn’t do much magic at all,” he says.

Fall was a turning point for him.

“I sat down and I thought, ‘OK, clearly this is the reality we’re in and it’s not going to change for some time now, so if I were to do magic virtually, what would I do?’” he says. At that, he got to work on his latest show: an, ahem, virtual one called “Missed Connections.” It’s a blend of “Craigslist nostalgia,” and an exploration of current times, when friends and family are feeling the tolls of isolation.

According to Tai’s website, the show is inspired by the works of writer Haruki Murakami, philosopher Marshall McLuhan, and English mentalist and illusionist Derren Brown, and “... takes 25 audience members on a roundtrip voyage to the stars in search of the invisible thread that connects them.”

“[It] has basically become my all-consuming project now, which has been great,” he says.

### *The “Origin Story”*

Around 17 years ago, Tai started, as many amateur magicians do, as a self-described shy, awkward kid. He learned a few card tricks from an instructional DVD that his dad bought him from Ellusionist, an e-commerce website for magic, and used them as an “avenue to interact with other people.”

He remembers reading the book “Absolute Magic” by Brown—he still has a copy on his bookshelf—early on in his “magic life” and being floored by its content.

“It’s almost a cliché at this point, but magic has the potential at certain moments to be, at its most extreme, a life altering experience,” he says. “At the lower end of the extreme end, it can be something that someone remembers for the next decade or for the rest of their lives.”

After reading Brown’s book, Tai says the bar was raised with what he believed was possible with magic.

“... Suddenly, everything I did was s---,” he says with a laugh. “I did genuinely love magic, but I also didn’t want to use it as necessarily a social crutch.”

### *Magic Theory*

Tai’s philosophy on magic is this: It’s not real—it’s illusionary—and that’s what makes it interesting.

“If magic was real, it wouldn’t be astonishing, it would just be an exhibition of something that is real,” he says with a laugh. “I think it’s astonishing because we know it’s not real and yet it feels real.”

Philosophy is something Tai is well versed in. A Cornell graduate with a degree in psychology and a minor in philosophy, he knows the role he wants to play as a magician.

“Number one, I try not to be a dick,” he says with a laugh. “I think a lot of magicians out there are not necessarily very empathetic. There is kind of a power thing.”

Instead, he aims to be a co-conspirator. It’s the difference between “Hey, I know something that you don’t,” and “Let’s experience this thing together and see where it takes us,” he explains.

It’s human nature for audience members to try to understand how magic works, Tai says, but his goal is to have “their heart and spirit ... engaged in the narrative and in the moment.”

### *Virtual magic is still magic*

With a few previews of his virtual show now under his belt, Tai practically considers himself a full-on convert.

“It’s a different sandbox,” Tai says about performing magic online. “You can’t just take what you were doing live and pour it over and think it will work, because it’s just a different experience and different interaction.”

The fun comes, he says, from strategizing and experimenting with what works and what doesn’t work in terms of engaging, communicating, and connecting with his audience behind a screen. Really, he explains, it’s an altogether different philosophy of magic.

“... Even if the ceiling for how impactful an experience can be is higher in-person than virtually—and I’m not sure if it is anymore—I know that the ceiling is high enough for virtual [performances] that it’s worthwhile to spend the time to create it and to share in it.”

For now, he’s refining “Missed Connections” and working with his friend Alex Gruhin, who is also his co-writer and co-producer, to develop partnerships with theaters around the country to grow his audience reach. Starting Feb. 2, a month-long run of his show will be presented in partnership with Chicago’s A Red Orchid Theatre.

You can find more information out about Tai and his magic at [www.taimagic.com](http://www.taimagic.com).

*[This story is published in partnership with the Pittsburgh Community Newspaper Network (PCNN). It was originally printed in The Northside Chronicle, the hyperlocal community newspaper of Pittsburgh’s historic Northside.] ♦*



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**ABOVE:** Bloomfield residents Rosie (left) and Emilia Belasco prepare to explore an igloo in Friendship Park. Photo by Andrew McKeon.

## Update: Penn Avenue Reconstruction Project

By Nina Gibbs Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation

*Penn Ave.* - On Feb. 4, the City and the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation (BGC) hosted a regular meeting of the committee that is planning Phase 2 of the Penn Avenue Reconstruction Project.

Joining a number of local residents, Eric J. Setzler (P.E. from the Dept. of Mobility & Infrastructure) and Terence V. Oleśniewicz (P.E., Principal/Design Services with Trans Associates Engineering Consultants, Inc.) presented project updates at the [virtual] meeting.

The only new information they were able to share was that the project is currently on hold; a scheduled meeting with PennDot officials will determine the project timeline.

Once this meeting is scheduled, the design phase will begin soliciting community input. At this point, if the project is delayed more than three months, the construction might not start until 2023, instead of spring 2022.

Community members expressed concern about the intersection at Pacific & Penn Aves., as well as Pacific & Coral St. Individuals were also eager to discuss the way traffic would be rerouted through

Friendship during the construction phase. Details on how these items might be addressed will be discussed at the next meeting. The City is looking into how it can gather more community input about the project.

The next committee meeting is scheduled for 11 a.m. on May 6 [via Zoom]; email [nina@bloomfield-garfield.org](mailto:nina@bloomfield-garfield.org) for details. Visit [bloomfield-garfield.org/penn-ave/penn-ave-reconstruction](http://bloomfield-garfield.org/penn-ave/penn-ave-reconstruction) to learn more about the reconstruction project. ♦

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## Landlord lowers the boom on Bloomfield tenants

By Joe Reuben *Bulletin contributor*



**ABOVE:** Tenants of a Bloomfield apartment building (254-60 S. Mathilda St.) were recently informed of a gigantic rent increase by NRM Property Management. Photo by Joe Reuben.

*Bloomfield* - Although it has come as a surprise to the tenants of a local apartment building, this story has an all-too-familiar ring: a large rent increase in the city's East End. Most of the twelve tenants living in this particular property in Bloomfield will now probably be forced to leave.

In mid-February, NRM Property Management served notice to the residents of a dozen apartments [254-60 S. Mathilda St.] that the rent for each unit will be increasing by as much as \$340/month - to around \$1200/month - plus a separate fee of \$25 for water and sewage.

According to one resident, who asked that her identity not be divulged, the news could not have come at a worse time, as her roommate recently lost her job because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The building isn't in great shape in general," she disclosed to *The Bulletin* recently. "They'll be pushing us out along with other families who live in this building. It's really upsetting and wrong that average people will no longer be able to live in these communities."

The apartment complex is showing signs of creeping age; a casual visit gives no indication of any major investments made to the property in recent years.

The *Bulletin* reached out to NRM Properties to find out why such a large increase had become necessary at this time [Editor's Note: because the contact info for NRM's management arm were listed incorrectly on its website, we had to reach the company through its investment arm].

A woman who identified herself as "Lydia" was willing to speak on one occasion, and said she was mainly responsible for leasing units. She promised to call back at a later time with more detailed information

as to what was going on with the building, but never did.

Allegheny County's assessment website shows Cosenza Properties LLC as the owner of record for the S. Mathilda St. building, not NRM.

Cosenza purchased the complex in 2016 from John & Virginia DiPucci for \$640,000. Around the same time, Cosenza also bought a building from the DiPuccis at 4901 Friendship Ave. for \$518,000. The mailing address on the county website for Cosenza Properties is a mailbox at a UPS Store on Freeport Road.

There also remains a bit of mystery as to who the principals are in NRM Properties. According to the NRM website, it is headquartered at 413 McKee Place, which is a small, nondescript warehouse/office building in Oakland.

The owner of that building, per the county's website, is Morgan Development Co., and the listed mailing address is a private residence at 6 Parklea Drive in Monroeville. The county website identifies the owners of that home as Nathaniel R. Morgan and his wife, Theresa A. Morgan. Nathaniel's initials are "N.R.M."

NRM Management has several other companies camping out at 413 McKee Place. One of these is BlueGreen Properties LLC, which dropped \$1.005 million on the purchase of another Bloomfield property [200 Taylor St.] in 2020. Also operating out of 413 McKee Place are AMO Management and BUP ("Best University Properties") Rentals, both of which appear on the NRM website.

AMO has been the object of mostly negative reviews about its management practices from current or former tenants. Morgan Family Development LP also

spent \$640,000 to purchase an apartment building [205 S. Millvale Ave.] in 2014. The listed mailing address for the company? 6 Parklea Drive.

"That must be a busy little place in Oakland," Rick Swartz, executive director of the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation, speculated when presented with the information. "You've got NRM, BUP, AMO, and who knows how many other LLC's. I'd bet they all have their claws deep into the Oakland student housing market, which has been the bane of that community for decades."

The tenants at 254-60 South Mathilda have been given 90 days to relocate if they do not intend to sign on to the higher rent schedule; the management company has not offered relocation assistance to help

tenants deal with the transition if they decide to leave.

"Unfortunately, Bloomfield is ripe for the pickings because you have a number of smaller rental property owners, like the DiPuccis, who will be looking to divest themselves of their property holdings as they get older," Swartz observed.

"Companies like Cosenza, NRM, and BlueGreen LLC are circling the neighborhood, waiting to swoop in and seize those properties," he continued. "They'll tell everyone that what they're doing - driving up rents - is perfectly legal. But they've cloaked their operations and insulated themselves well enough that they won't be bothered by tenants knocking on their doors should they decide to push forward with drastic rent increases." ♦

# GARFIELD

## State of the Neighborhood Meeting

**Tuesday March 30th 2021**  
**6pm-7:30pm**  
**ONLINE ONLY via Zoom**

**You can participate by phone or computer register for the link by contacting Nina**  
**Nina@bloomfield-garfield.org**  
**or calling 412-441-6950**

The BGC wants to hear from the community!  
 Come share your visions & concerns for Garfield. Things are changing fast in Garfield & we want to hear YOUR voice.

**Agenda includes**  
**Crime update from Zone 5 Commander Stephen Vinansky**  
**Time for Q&A from the community**  
**Discussion around public safety topics for the year**



**Bloomfield  
Garfield  
CORPORATION**

**Do you have questions?**  
**Contact Nina at the BGC Office**  
**nina@bloomfield-garfield.org**  
**412-441-6950 x 117**