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End-of-run for Bitter Ends, fresh start for 'Thyme Machine' in Bloomfield

By Heather Hanus & Sam Spearing

Bloomfield Development Corporation

Bloomfield – In late March, popular Liberty Avenue dining spot “Bitter Ends” announced on social media that it would be closing down operations at the end of April.

By the time Bitter Ends opened a brick-and-mortar location in 2017, the business had already been serving Bloomfield by selling food at the neighborhood’s popular Saturday Market.

Fast forward to present day and “Thyme Machine” is now taking over Bitter Ends’ 4613 Liberty Ave. location. Following in similar footsteps, Thyme Machine also made its debut at the Bloomfield Saturday

See **Thyme Machine** | page 2



ABOVE: Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation staffers celebrate Earth Day at the Garfield Community Farm on Friday, Apr. 22. Look to page 7 for more action shots. Photo by Andrew McKeon.



ABOVE: Following service at the Immaculate Conception church on Thursday, Apr. 21, parishioners march to a new place of worship. Seminary student Nick Wytiaz leads a path down Liberty Avenue. Read more on page 8. Photo by Alan Guenther.

‘I’m about the people’: Donna Jackson creates lasting change in Larimer

By Elizabeth Sensky *East Liberty Development, Inc.*

Larimer - The story of a neighborhood’s rise and fall is all too familiar in Pittsburgh. Originally settled by Germans in the second half of the 19th century, Larimer eventually became known as “Pittsburgh’s Little Italy” thanks to its handsome brick homes and tight-knit community.

As urban renewal efforts got underway in neighboring East Liberty and many residents began to leave for the suburbs, Larimer entered a period of decline.

From 1950 to 2010, the population dropped from around 12,000 to a mere

1,728 people; the neighborhood struggled to overcome poverty and blight, as well as many abandoned homes.

The Larimer Consensus Group (LCG) was created in 2009 as an all-volunteer community organization to advocate for change in Larimer. Over the years, it has worked to respond to the needs and concerns of Larimer residents, and create a vision for the future of the neighborhood.

Donna Jackson, current Chair of the Board at LCG, is one of the founding members of

See **Donna Jackson** | page 6

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ASSEMBLE RAMPS UP NEW
FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

AFFORDABLE HOUSING.
MEET OUTDATED STATE LAW

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Thyme Machine continued from page 1

BELOW: In the beginning (2017), the Bitter Ends team starts growing its brand at the Bloomfield Saturday Market. Photo courtesy of Sam Spearing.



Market (BSM) last year. Since launching in 2014, the BSM has focused on supporting entrepreneurs throughout the Liberty Avenue business district.

Bitter Ends has been a shining example of what the market aims to bring to Bloomfield. After forging connections with BSM customers, owner/chef Becca Hegarty began selling her prepared foods and vegetables from a small storefront just down the street.

Hegarty was nominated for a James Beard Foundation “Rising Star Chef of the Year” award for three years running, starting in 2017 while at Café Carnegie and later for her work with Bitter Ends.

Veggie hoagies, doughnuts, and other breakfast/brunch items were some of Hegarty’s most popular offerings, but the menu did not stop there.

Bitter Ends experimented with a wide array of pop-up and seasonal offerings like “Bitter Bell Pizzeria” or the annual fish fry season during Lent. The final meal, served on Apr. 20, was the “Clownburger Meal” featuring cheeseburgers and fries.

While many neighbors are sad to see Bitter Ends go, Thyme Machine is sure to fill the breakfast sandwich void. The business started out as a food cart pop-up, in addition to maintaining a stall at the market, by selling breakfast sandwiches at neigh-

borhood spots like Tina’s and, fittingly, Bitter Ends. In fact, Ryan Chavara [Thyme Machine’s proprietor] was a longtime chef at Bitter Ends before launching his own business last summer.

Thyme Machine has yet to officially announce plans for a grand opening. As Chavara and his team prepare to open up shop, Bloomfield can look forward to a continuation of fresh, locally sourced food options at the same spot on Liberty Avenue.

Along with the return of warmer temperatures, the Saturday Market will return for the season on May 7.

The BSM is committed to supporting local food growers and providing a community event that brings people from around the region to Bloomfield’s business corridor.

This year, the Market welcomes six new vendors, in addition to its 44 returning vendors.

Visit bloomfieldpgh.org for more info. ♦

Homebuyer Education Series

SCHEDULE UPDATE!

There has been a change in the schedule for the Homebuyer Education Program at the BGC Community Activity Center (113 N. Pacific Avenue) in Garfield.

This educational workshop for would-be homebuyers, originally scheduled for three consecutive Saturdays (April 30th, May 7th, and May 14th), will now be held in its entirety on **Saturday, May 14th, from 9:00 AM to 4:30 PM.**

The change will ensure that those participants who attend the full-day class can receive a certificate of completion. That certificate will then make them eligible for help with their down payment and closing costs – available through various public or private sources.

NeighborWorks of Western PA will present the training program, in concert with Apollo Trust and the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation. Guest speakers will share information on the different facets of the home-buying experience.

The doors will open at 8:00 AM, with a light breakfast to be offered. Mid-day lunch will also be provided to all registrants.

Attendees are asked to register in advance. To register, visit [Eventbrite.com/e/317094447027](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/317094447027).

For further info, call Jarid Shipley (412-281-9986); email JShipley@neighborworkswpa.org or RickS@bloomfield-garfield.org.

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ENEC client spotlight: broadcasting vet secures gig work in new economy

By Paris Wright Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation

Garfield – Every day, I see neighbors from different backgrounds walk through the doors of the Eastside Neighborhood Employment Center (ENEC). Since his first visit, in June of 2021, Keith Davis has looked to the ENEC for career counseling services

Our Tuesday and Thursday sessions usually involve sitting and chatting for a few minutes before we get started. Once we get down to business, we review a list of positions that he has sourced.

I have been able to find positions that relate to his skill set - reviewing with him the job descriptions, salary, and scheduling possibilities of each - before deciding which positions we should prioritize.

Wielding degrees in Early Childhood Education and Film & Media Production, Davis has a very unique background.

He has served as a classroom educator, nonprofit education program coordinator, sports broadcaster, pop culture reporter, and event producer. Considering the hard work that he has already logged, we are excited for him to find new “gig work” opportunities.

As a result of COVID-19 ripples being felt in the workforce, we are well on our way to establishing a new economy rooted in gig work. Experts estimate that as much as a third of the working population is already working in some gig capacity as of 2021, and they expect these numbers to grow moving forward. This type of work is based on flexible, temporary, and/or freelance positions.

Keith Davis was able to capitalize on these opportunities. During “March Madness,” he worked on the CBS Sports production team for the NCAA Men’s College Basketball tournament at PPG Paints Arena.

He also worked events like the recent run of “Hamilton” at the Benedum Center, as well as the “Ecolution Fashion Gala” - an element of Pittsburgh Fashion Week at the Carnegie Music Hall.

Davis views the gig economy as a “net-good” for the broadcasting and entertainment industries. He remembers being told at church some years ago that “you might have friends or relatives that just don’t understand what you’re doing. They don’t mean to say you can’t do it or won’t do it, or that you’re Black, or that you’re too old, or whatever. They don’t mean any harm; they just don’t have the same mentality that you do.”

To Keith, the gig economy is one way of providing new opportunities for overlooked talent. “It’s nice to turn on the late news, and even the early news, and see some of the talents that I’ve worked with now recognized,” he explained, “by getting hired to fill production positions and reporter positions. There’s still a long way to go, but there are still more opportunities out there, too.” ♦



ABOVE: Keith Davis, a veteran of the broadcast industry, enjoys the view at the Final Four championship game in New Orleans. Photo courtesy of Keith Davis.

the Bulletin

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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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Bloomfield-Garfield.org

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Ramp Up Fellowship helps cultivate new arts educators

By Dale Crawford *Assemble*

Garfield - Launched earlier this year, as a partnership between Assemble (4824 Penn Ave.) and The Legacy Arts Project, the Ramp Up Fellowship is a full-time program for individuals (18-24 years old) who are interested in becoming teaching artists. It prioritizes young adults who identify as BIPOC or LGBTQIA creatives, and who reside in or grew up in Homewood or Garfield.

The inaugural Ramp Up Fellows include Veronica Rae Green and Alona Williams of Garfield, Breydon Prioleau of Homestead, and Azadiel Watts of Penn Hills. Each are incredible artists who specialize in an array of fields: creative writing, theater, photography, anime, songwriting, character design, video games design, and more.

Throughout the program, the Fellows get hands-on work experience by co-teaching in youth-serving programs at Assemble and The Legacy Arts Project; they also engage in professional development focused on skills, knowledge, and disposition.

Erin Perry, the Executive Director of Legacy Arts Project, said “the Ramp Up Fellowship has been a beautiful experience of creating space to cultivate the next generation of teaching artists while strengthening our practice as a community arts organization.”

The Fellows participated in sessions with Nina Barbuto, Assemble’s Executive Director, and explored learning theories & pedagogy with Paulo Friere and Dr. Bettina Love. The young artists are creating their own “Manifestos for Learning,” inspired by past theo-

rists as well as their own lived experiences. Michelle King, the Learning Instigator and guest expert, has helped them reimagine the future of learning.

They have also met weekly with Jacquea Mae Olday - diving into the history of communities, goal-setting, and planning - and embarked on field trips to spaces like Children’s Museum and the Museum Lab on the city’s Northside.

The Fellows assisted with the launch of the Legacy Arts Project Podcast, as well as the Africana Wellness Conference, on April 2; they will also assist with Dance Africa this summer. Check out the podcast at bit.ly/LegacyPod.

Alona Williams shared a little about their experience in the Fellowship so far: “The Ramp Up Fellowship has made me aware of who I want to be as an artist, in terms of connectivity and community. It has reignited my passion for helping young people express themselves and the education theory has been helpful - not just with teaching, but also with creating my own work.”

To learn more about the Ramp Up Fellowship and other happenings at Assemble, please contact Nina Barbuto (nina@assemblepgh.org).

For more details on The Legacy Arts Project programs, please contact Erin Perry (epery@legacyartsproject.org). ♦

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Stormwater infrastructure pays dividends for city residents

By Madeline Weiss Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation

Perspective/Garfield - As we experience a changing climate, each area of the country feels different impacts. In Pittsburgh, we will face increased rainfall with climate change - according to a study completed by the RAND Corporation in 2020, which focused on the Negley Run Watershed.

The city's sewage and flood control systems, which must weather the annual rainfall, could benefit from city-wide plans for sustainable development and green infrastructure. The strain on our wastewater system, which worsens in conjunction with an uptick in stormwater and development, actually comes from multiple sources,

The Pittsburgh Metropolitan area's combined sewers (where wastewater and stormwater flow through the same system) overflow when the amount of water rushing into them, all at once, is too great for the system to handle. This leads to polluted, unsanitary rivers.

Green infrastructure provides a great solution with multiple benefits - heat reduction, improved air quality, and enhanced health & wellness - for local residents while also helping to manage stormwater. Impervious surfaces, where rainfall cannot be collected, pose a threat to our city's sewage system with increased risk of floods and property damage.

We cannot expect to have a city full of fields of native plants, but we can incorporate green infrastructure into buildings. Installing "blue green roofs" could help manage drainage better than a traditional roof, while also providing recreational benefits.

Bioswales, rain gardens, and thoughtful tree planting can all help offset drainage and runoff issues that come with other types of development. The impact on our local infrastructure is well worth the cost incurred by developers.

Advocating for green space and sustainable development is about more than just the health benefits for the local community. This advocacy will help us better prepare for the increasingly local impacts of climate change in the coming decades. ♦

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Donna Jackson *continued from page 1*

the organization. With Jackson's passion and dedication leading the way, LCG has helped usher in a new era for the neighborhood.

The Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grant, which was awarded in 2014, has spurred four phases of affordable development, including the newly completed Cornerstone Village Apartments and Liberty Green Park, as well as the redevelopment of the Larimer School and nearby apartment units.

Now, the organization is working with East Liberty Development, Inc. (ELDI) through the K.E.E.L. partnership - a coalition of East End organizations, including the Kingsley Association, East Liberty Housing Inc., ELDI, and LCG.

The group came together in 2014 to ensure collective input regarding the implementation of the Choice Neighborhoods Grant, and is now working on the development of for-sale housing in Larimer.

LCG has also launched a \$1 million workforce development program with Walnut Capital and Bakery Square and is part of the City's Avenues of Hope initiative to infuse new life into Larimer's commercial core.

ELDI spoke with Jackson to hear more about her history of community service, the journey to help transform Larimer, and what she thinks is needed to create lasting change.

ELDI: How did you get into this community development work?

Jackson: "I worked for 911 for many years. My time there showed me my passion for working with and helping people. What I realized is that we sometimes have something to say but are afraid to speak out. When I retired, I had the opportunity to start working for City Council, and that truly sparked my interest in community building. I worked at the District 9 Council office and became the person that went out to the different communities surrounding District 9 to hear what people were saying. One day around 2007, the community group Jackson/Clark Partners heard me speak at an event and reached out to me, and that's how I got caught up with Larimer. They were working with Miss Ora Lee Carroll, who founded the East Liberty Concerned Citizens Corporation and was the first person to start the mission to have Larimer recognized. The rest is history; I was able to attend meetings and educate myself on community development and revitalization."

ELDI: What was the situation like in Larimer at that time?

Jackson: "What happened with Larimer is that the Larimer Bridge got torn down to be rehabilitated in 1981 because it was in bad condition. So, all the businesses that were located along the corridor were losing business since nobody could get through. As a result, a lot of people left and went to Lawrenceville or Bloomfield. That left Larimer vacant. When Jackson/Clark reached out, we had conversations about what we had seen in Larimer and what could be in Larimer. Feeding off the East Liberty Concerned Citizens Corporation, I helped found LCG, and I've just really stuck with it."

ELDI: What were some of the things you were hearing from residents when you first went out into the Larimer community?

Jackson: "The first things were that people were concerned about the blight. People were concerned about the vacancy and the disinvestment in the community. Larimer started out German and then flipped to predominantly Italian, and then Black. Today, it is a predominantly Black, low-income neighborhood. Our thoughts were, 'How do we advance this from low-income to build wealth?'"

ELDI: Now Larimer is entering a partnership with ELDI through K.E.E.L. to develop for-sale housing. Can you talk about what led to that?

Jackson: "LCG worked on the Choice project with ELDI, and with it moving quite well, the next step is to start creating market-rate housing. We separate these communities, but the reality is that it's all 15026, and with ELDI being a partner and a next-door neighbor - why not? What they've done in East Liberty has been good. A lot of people say there's no affordable housing, but that is absolutely untrue because they have affordable and they have market-rate. We need a partner that has completed their plan to help us with affordable and market-rate homeownership, plus creating a business corridor."

Stay up to date with the LCG by visiting thelarimerconsensusgroup.org. ♦



ABOVE: Malik Morris (left), the community engagement manager of the Larimer Consensus Group, and Donna Jackson, the group's board chair, stand on Larimer Avenue in front of the site of ongoing housing construction funded by a federal Choice Neighborhoods grant. Caption by Rich Lord; photo by Kaycee Orwig/PublicSource.

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BELOW: Adriana Perez, office manager of the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation (BGC), considers a new career as a goat shepherd. Along with her BGC colleagues, Perez celebrated Earth Day at the Garfield Community Farm on Friday, Apr. 22. Photo by Andrew McKeon.



ABOVE: BGC staff members tour the Garfield Community Farm greenhouse on Earth Day (Apr. 22). Photo by Andrew McKeon.

BELOW: Paris Wright, the BGC's Employment Center & Resource Coordinator, takes Earth Day to a whole new level. 'Picture me rolling,' he says while throwing stumps downhill into a heaping mound of 'Hügelkultur.' Photo by Andrew McKeon.



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SUMMER 2022

Neighborhood FOCUS

Closing 'The Mac': combining worship services in Bloomfield

By Alan Guenther *Bulletin contributor*

Bloomfield - On Holy Thursday, light from a setting sun poured through the huge stained-glass windows of the Immaculate Conception Church, suffusing the sanctuary in Bloomfield with a golden glow as more than 200 parishioners commemorated the Last Supper of Christ.

The ceremony was especially poignant because most parishioners knew that the church at 300 Edmond Street, affectionately known as "The Mac" to many, would close indefinitely - by decree of Bishop David Zubik, at 12:01 a.m. on May 2 - as a victim of declining attendance at Mass.

At the end of the service, police blocked off part of Liberty Avenue as congregants walked silently behind cross-bearer and seminary student Nick Wytiaz, who led the faithful to the stately St. Joseph's Church in the 4700 block of Liberty Avenue. The Diocese of Pittsburgh is offering St. Joe's as the new home for those who formerly attended services at The Mac.

The Diocese is facing a difficult "Sophie's Choice" between two beautiful churches with rich traditions. St. Joseph and The Mac each need more than \$1 million in repairs, and the Diocese cannot afford to fix both. The Mac is the more modern, gleaming structure, while St. Joe's - especially in the evening - is dark and Gothic, as richly atmospheric as the mysteries of faith.

"We had to separate the emotion from the reality," said Carlo Schiaretta, a Bloomfield resident who served on a parish task force that recommended closing The Mac. He feels that St. Joseph's maintains "a quiet presence" at 4712 Liberty Avenue. Tearing down the church, Schiaretta said, would make it feel like there was "a missing tooth" in the heart of Bloomfield's business district. The task force's recommendation was endorsed by Bishop Zubik.

The Immaculate Conception church actually costs thousands more each month to heat and cool, Schiaretta explained. Its heating system is intertwined with a parish school that closed two years ago. The air conditioning system needs to be repaired, and water has infiltrated and damaged the church's roof & walls, according to Diocesan officials. Not all agree with Schiaretta's viewpoint.

Bloomfield parishioners Linda Vacca and Nina Sacco say the bishop chose to keep open the wrong church. They have formally asked him to reverse his decision, and his answer is due by May 4. If he stands firm, Vacca and Sacco say they are working with an attorney who is an expert in the church's canon law.

Their appeal to the Vatican is ready to go. The Mac cannot be torn down or sold until the appeal process is complete, they say. While they acknowledge that roof and air conditioning repairs are needed at The Mac, Vacca says that St. Joe's will be "a money pit" because it is in even worse shape.

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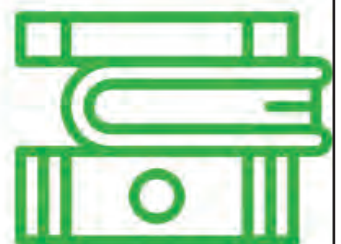
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BELOW: Immaculate Conception parishioners celebrate Holy Thursday at St. Joe's. Photo by Alan Guenther.



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"Don't we deserve the church that's in better condition?" Sacco asked.

After a fire, The Mac was rebuilt in 1960. On the other hand, St. Joe's, which was constructed in 1872, is now celebrating 150 years of service to the community.

A task force in 2015, on which Nina Sacco served as a volunteer, recommended keeping The Mac open. Rev. Regis Farmer, a former priest who served the parish, announced in a Jan. 8, 2015 letter to congregants that the Immaculate Conception church would become "the primary worship site" for the parish, and that St. Joseph's would be maintained only as a "place of private prayer and devotion."

But Father Regis died suddenly on Aug. 17, 2017. With his death, which coincided with the first day of that year's Little Italy celebration in Bloomfield, The Mac lost one of its most avid supporters. The Diocese closed the school connected to the church in 2020.

In an interview with *The Bulletin*, Father John B. Gizler, III, regional vicar supervising more than three counties, said the Diocese was consolidating parishes

'For us to sit in Bloomfield, or any area of the Diocese, and think that it's 1950 - that the churches are filled, the schools are filled, and that we're overflowing with priests - we would be fooling ourselves.'

- Father John B. Gizler, III, regional vicar, Diocese of Pittsburgh

throughout the area. By the time the process is complete next year, the number of parishes will drop from the current number of about 180 to 59. Many parishes have more than one church, and church officials said they could not estimate how many churches will close.

Repairs at St. Joseph's church will be completed within two years, Diocesan officials have said. St. Joseph's will soon be combined with Our Lady of the Angels parish in Lawrenceville. The faithful will select a name for the new parish in 2023.

"If you know your history in Bloomfield, half of it was Italian, half of it was German. And there were two churches in Bloomfield because the Catholic community was robust and could easily fill those churches and support them," Rev. Gizler explained.

Nina Sacco said her grandfather, back in the early 1900s, was told he could not attend St. Joseph's because it was for the German population. He had to attend the Immaculate Conception Church, she said, which was for the Italians.

Rev. Gizler said the need to consolidate was dictated by demographics.

"For us to sit in Bloomfield, or any area of the Diocese, and think that it's 1950, that the churches are filled, the schools are filled, and that we're overflowing with priests," he said, "we would be fooling ourselves."

Combined weekly Mass attendance at The Mac, St. Joe's, and Our Lady of the Angels has declined from 1,013 in 2012 to about 500 in 2019, declining even further to 262 in 2021, according to figures provided by the Diocese. In all three churches, funerals are outpacing baptisms by more than two to one. In 2014, there were 46 baptisms and 96 funerals. In 2020, baptisms declined to 18, while there were 50 funerals.

Many feel the trends represent a challenge to the future of the Catholic faith in the city. On Holy Thursday, as the Last Supper services concluded, a young family stood outside St. Joseph's, where the sky began darkening above the church.

"It's devastating, anytime a church is closed," said Catherine Rudolph as she held her four-year-old daughter, Roslyn.

"It's unfortunate," said her husband, Mark, as he held their one-year-old son, George. "It's sad when a church closes. People put their blood, sweat and tears into building [The Mac] and having community around it. Things change. Communities change. You're losing something, always, whenever a church like that closes." ♦

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Local zoning law: understanding variances, Board hearings

By John Axtell *Friendship Community Group*

Perspective/Pittsburgh - The previous two installments in this series focused on the historical and procedural hiccups of zoning law. Our final chapter sheds light on related topics like zoning variances, Board [of Adjustment] hearings, and the weight of legal “standing” on residents’ testimony.

What are variances, and why does local zoning code allow for them?

In theory, variances serve as a legal safety valve for instances when zoning law can effectively remove any feasible use for a property. This might be due to said property’s irregular shape, which often complicates construction of a building within the required setbacks. The property may contain a steep slope or rock outcroppings which, again, would prevent a building from meeting height or setback requirements. Similarly, physical conditions may justify a use variance, for instance, to permit a multi-family structure in a single-family zone, if building a conforming structure is not feasible.

Because the granting of a variance requires the Zoning Board (in Pittsburgh officially called the Zoning Board of Adjustment) to waive the application of the zoning law in order to protect an owner’s right to make use of their property, the legal standards for a variance are strict.

The physical condition justifying the variance (often referred to as a hardship) must

be unique, rather than shared by all neighboring properties. The hardship must not be self-created by the applicant.

The variance must not adversely affect the character of the neighborhood, the use of adjacent property, or the public welfare - and it must be the minimum measure required to give the property owner a reasonable use of their land. The applicant for a variance must then prove all of these factors to the Zoning Board at a public hearing. Affected neighbors and community organizations are permitted to support or raise objections to the evidence presented by the applicant.

The Zoning Board also holds hearings on applications for special exceptions. Special exceptions apply to certain uses that are permitted by zoning, subject to certain criteria, for which evidence must be presented at the hearing; examples include nursing homes or churches in residential zones, and major restaurants or supermarkets in neighborhood commercial districts. Many land uses, such as those involving small housing projects and small businesses, can be approved by city zoning staff without a hearing.

What can a property owner do if they don’t receive the variance(s) that they’re seeking?

If their application for a variance or special exception is denied by the Zoning Board, some property owners just find an alternate, permitted use for their property. Those who believe their application was wrongly rejected also have the right to appeal to the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas. Additionally, those who objected to the variance or special exception application at the hearing have the right to appeal a variance or special exception that they believe was wrongly granted. Applicants and objectors have the right to appeal and advocate for their interests, but appeals are time-consuming and expensive, and usually require the services of an experienced zoning attorney.

When neighbors appear at a hearing, in order to testify whether or not variances should be approved, they need to have “standing.” What does this mean?

In concept, the zoning hearing process provides a level playing field for all parties to argue the merits of each case. In practice, the disparity between applicants (who are often experienced developers with attorneys) and neighborhood advocates (who usually have no legal representation and very little knowledge of zoning law) is often stark, despite the best efforts of Zoning Board members to fairly consider each side’s argument.

Members of the Zoning Board often explain that they, and their counterparts in the appeals courts, give greater weight to testimony presented by objectors who are actually affected by a zoning decision - residents whose everyday lives would be affected by the decision, as well as any representative community organizations. If the applicant is represented by a lawyer, she or he is likely to protest that any individual objector who lives more than a few blocks from the applicant’s property lacks legal “standing” to testify.

Similarly, the Zoning Board may caution objectors that the Board will only consider relevant evidence. That is, the Board will weigh only evidence which proves or disproves the criteria for granting a variance or special exception. Frequently, objectors will testify regarding potential adverse effects from a variance, such as traffic congestion; the Zoning Board and the applicant’s attorney are likely to point out that such evidence must demonstrate actual, not speculative, harm.

Given the complexity of zoning law, neighbors and community groups that wish to object to all but the most routine zoning application are best off hiring an attorney to represent them at the hearing. However, given the high cost of legal services, this is not feasible in most cases. Then, even if a lawyer is hired to represent the neighbors or a community group on appeal to a higher court of law, the appeal could still fail for lack of evidence if inadequate lay testimony was presented at the original zoning hearing.

A number of reforms have been proposed to begin leveling the playing field at zoning hearings. Local community groups have distributed written materials on zoning law and provided training for city residents; housing advocates have called for the creation of a public-interest, nonprofit organization (specializing in zoning law) to represent community groups and clients of limited financial means; and some have even proposed that Pittsburgh create an office of public zoning advocate [ombudsman] to help residents get a fair hearing when it comes to zoning and land use issues. ♦

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LOCAL REAL ESTATE BLOTTER

- Bloomfield, Friendship, Garfield, East Liberty, Lawrenceville, & Stanton Heights -

Real Estate Sales for the month of February 2022

Compiled by Lillian Denhardt, Residential Realtor

Bloomfield

Ella 415, LLC to Axelrod, LLC at 415 Ella St. for \$1.

Juliana I Puglio to Fusion Link, LLC at 603 Gross St. for \$135,000.

Sapphire 329, LLC to Axelrod, LLC at 329 Sapphire Way for \$1.

Torley 4629, LLC to Axelrod, LLC at 4629 Torley St. for \$1.

Friendship

No sales to report.

Garfield

Erlene Proctor to Trerell Property Group, LLC at 5344 Kincaid St. for \$80,000.

Evans D & Lillian I Moore to Future 2020 Management, LLC at 106 N. Fairmount St. for \$220,000.

Helena L Ashley to Shirley Johnson at 5455 Kincaid St. for \$160,000.

James Herbert Jr & Catherine K Sattershite to A&R Two, LLC at 5108 Hillcrest St. for \$1.

Joseph Ditommaso to Syed Naqvi at 300 N. Aiken Ave. for \$366,000.

Pgh Rp LP to Jonathan G & Juanita Stoltzfus Barter at 5016 Jordan Way for \$132,000.

Sergiy Novikov to Blue Zone Trust at 100 N. Fairmount St. for \$120,000.

T.S. Pitt, LLC to Four 12 Development, LLC at 5400 Kincaid St. for \$20,000.

East Liberty

East Liberty Development, Inc. to Future 2020 Management, LLC at 512 N. Euclid Ave. for \$150,000.

Michael A & Judy E Celender to Jacqueline

Saunders at 6328 Stanton Ave. for \$195,000.

Stanton 5524, LLC to Axelrod, LLC at 5524 Stanton Ave. for \$1.

Lawrenceville

45th 288, LLC to Axelrod, LLC at 288 45th St. for \$1.

Arlene A Warywoda to Neuman Investing, LLC at 139 42nd St. for \$175,000.

Benjamin Karl & Andrealeigh Schilling to Whitney & Joshua J Gamble-Smith at 3451 Denny St. for \$360,000.

Brick Structures, Inc. to Daniel Alan Schepke at 3922 1/2 Howley St. for \$240,000.

CQ One, LLC to CJ Real Estate Management at 5313 Keystone St. for \$195,000.

Crews Development, LLC to Kimberly Diane Janusz at 5317 Dresden Way for \$289,000.

Dana Boyer to Entropy Properties, LLC at 5236 Duncan St. for \$204,500.

Geb Investment Partners, LLC to Brian F & Brenda L Broad at 5313 Carnegie St. for \$735,000.

Green Ventures, LLC to Christina Tirpak at 321 37th St. for \$445,000.

Hubpitch, LLC to Stanley & Alison Chen at 295 Main St. for \$560,000.

Ida J Masek to One Potato, LLC at 5108 Carnegie St. for \$135,000.

Investments, LLC Lawal to SFR3-000, LLC at 5609 Celadine St. for \$95,000.

James Jacob Strang to Cheyenne M Buntain at 148 Almond Way for \$312,500.

Jeffrey Bernettabonner Jones to City of Bridges CLT at 3734 Liberty Ave. for \$0.

Lawrenceville Lofts, LLC to Cynthia D Bailly at 3725 Butler St. Unit 502 for \$790,000.

Marc E Caputo to Neuman Investing, LLC at 136 42nd St. for \$243,000.

Martin Neale to Andrew & Erica Godish at 308 44th St. for \$325,000.

Molly E Sanjule to Samir Gupta at 5587

Butler St. for \$725,000.

Rhms Group, Inc. to Lawal Investments, LLC at 5609 Celadine St. for \$60,000.

Richard J Becker to Jennifer Eve Traxler at 3932 Liberty Ave. for \$311,610.

Robert A & Cheryl A Holloway to Kamal Gella at 3921 Howley St. for \$176,000.

Ronald Jardini to Riggstown Property Management, LLC at 3410 Charlotte St. for \$250,000.

Stanton 5209, LLC to Axelrod, LLC at 5209 Stanton Ave. for \$1.

Steel Town Properties Mc, LLC to Eric J & Kara Yakish at 0 43rd St. for \$300,000.

Stephen L Lippello Sr to Daniel E Harris at 327 37th St. for \$397,500.

Susan M Plank to 4923 Butler St. Pa, LLC at 4923 Butler St. for \$175,000.

William B & Margaret M Barron to Easy Rentals, LLC at 3700 Penn Ave. for \$325,000.

Stanton Heights

David Lackey to Kerryann & Oliver Palmer at 230 Schenley Manor Dr. for \$100,000.

David Underhay to Sicen Luan at 4325 Stanton Ave. for \$375,000.

Kaitlyn M Brennan to Melanie E Callahan at 134 Schenley Manor Dr. for \$250,000.

Laura Haibeck to Zachary Martin at 942 Woodbine St. for \$152,000.

This column, which uses data from Allegheny County's online portal, contains occasional errors. If something looks off, please let us know. Feel free to call with questions, or just to chat, about real estate in your neighborhood. Contact Lillian at lillian@agent-lillian.com or 412-335-6068. ♦

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The Bloomfield Development Corporation (BDC) is now accepting applications for new board members; applications are due by Jun. 1.

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As the Registered Community Organization for the neighborhood, we host community meetings about different developments and city-led projects.

For more info, visit bloomfieldpgh.org/board. To apply, send a resume and brief bio to board@bloomfieldpgh.org. Please refer any inquiries to this email address or call 412-681-8800.

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Lawrenceville sidewalk sale: Mother's Day celebrations in store

By Abi Gildea *Lawrenceville Corporation*

Lawrenceville - Just in time for Mother's Day Weekend, the neighborhood's small businesses will host a sidewalk sale - complete with sales, samples, and available sips - starting at Noon and ending at 4 p.m. on Saturday, May 7.

Participating businesses will offer an array of activities, including free live music at Thunderbird Music Hall, beer tastings at Bierport, sidewalk sales at retail favorites like Pavement and Una Biologicals, wine tasting at Songbird Artistry, and lots more.

Lawrenceville Corporation (LC) is hosting the event - in partnership with the small business community - to encourage residents, businesses, and visitors to celebrate and re-engage with the business community after a few tumultuous years brought on by the pandemic.

"I'm stoked to have a spring event that all the businesses can help promote, giving us a no-cost option for large-scale marketing," Jessica Graves, owner of Una Biologicals, said. "This is a celebration of our amazing neighborhood, a chance for all of us to connect, and an invitation to the greater Pittsburgh area to come hang out for the day."

The event will coincide with Lawrenceville's Artist Pop-Up Market, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., at Radiant Hall (4514 Plummer St.), Attack Theatre (212 45th St.), Ice House Studios (100 43rd St.), and Blackbird Studios (3585 Butler St.).

Lawrenceville Pop-Up Markets aim to support hundreds of makers, artists, vintage sellers, food/drink vendors, and small businesses in selling their locally-made, handmade, or vintage goods. For more details, visit radianthall.org/lawrenceville-popup-market.

This Mother's Day Weekend, go ahead and take your loved ones out to brunch in Lawrenceville, view the amazing artwork at the markets, and shop local at one of the 170+ small businesses along Butler Street & Penn Avenue. For updates, follow LC on social media (@lvpggh) and visit lvpggh.com/sidewalk-sale. ♦



ABOVE: Prism Stained Glass (5234 Butler St.) keeps the door wide open for Lawrenceville's sidewalk sale on Saturday, May 7. Photo courtesy of Abi Gildea.

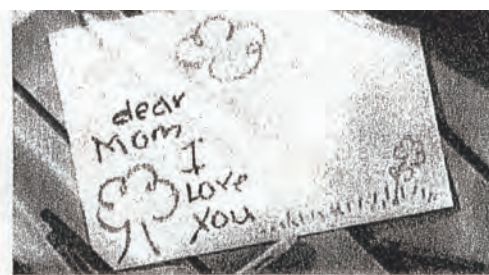
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Reflecting on Mother's Day

Mother's Day can be a sad time for those whose mothers are no longer living.

Whether this is your first Mother's Day without your mother or if it has been years since she has died, there are many ways to honor your deceased mother or grandmother on Mother's Day.

We would like to offer the following suggestions:

- **Talk about your mother with people who remember her.**
- **Bring out pictures of your mother, and show them to other family members.**
- **Consider taking flowers to the cemetery.**
- **Do something your mother would have enjoyed.**
- **Give a Mother's Day donation to your mother's favorite charity in her name.**
- **And finally, bring back the tradition of wearing a single white carnation in memory of your deceased mother.**



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National Opera House restoring historic arts hub in Homewood

A Message from the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation

Homewood - The Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation (PHLF) is pleased to support Jonnet Solomon, executive director of the National Opera House, in restoring a Queen Anne-style house that once housed the National Negro Opera Company, considered to have been the first African American opera ensemble in the United States.

When the house (7101 Apple St.) in Homewood was designated as a City Historic Landmark in 2008, PHLF showed full support.

"We have a great partnership with PHLF, which has been essential in understanding the scale of the restoration effort we are undertaking," Solomon said.

"I have been working on this house for more than 20 years," she continued, "and I'm pleased to have the support of PHLF, not only on advocacy but in understanding the feasibility of restoration and how to execute a fundraising plan."

Built in 1894, this historical landmark reflects on the complicated history of race in this country, and also the aspirations of African Americans who pursued careers in music, opera, and the performing arts

from a house on a hill.

"PHLF has taken the lead and is underwriting the cost of the civil engineering work for the site, which entails the restoration of two historic stone walls that support the structure of the house, and also includes stormwater and erosion mitigation, and landscaping of the steep hillside on which the house is located," PHLF President Michael Sriprasert said.

In 1930, the house was purchased by William "Woogie" Harris, Pittsburgh's first black millionaire and brother to famous photographer Teenie Harris. As the Harris' family home, the house hosted some of the most famous personalities of African American society.

During a period of discriminatory housing practices and lodging laws, the house provided a safe place, community, and accommodations to Black artists, thinkers, and athletes.

The National Negro Opera Company, organized under the direction of Mary Cardwell Dawson, rented the third floor of the house, using it as offices and rehearsal space. The company, which lasted from 1941 to 1962, launched productions

from Homewood and staged performances in D.C., Chicago, and New York, among other places.

Due to its significance, the house received a historical marker from the Commonwealth of PA in 1994.

It is included in *African American Historic Sites Survey of Allegheny County*, published that same year by the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission, and also featured in *A Legacy in Bricks and Mortar: African-American Landmarks in Allegheny County*, published by PHLF in 1995.

"Through this partnership [with PHLF], we have a great opportunity to restore this important house," Sriprasert explained. "We hope that this historic preservation effort will help create and leverage more funding opportunities for community renewal in this part of our city."

PHLF is currently designing an oral history & education program about the local and national significance of the house, entitled: "A Legacy in Stone: Homewood's National Negro Opera House and the Confluence of Pittsburgh's African American Culture."

BELOW: This Queen Anne-style house (7101 Apple St.) in Homewood previously housed the first African American opera ensemble in the United States. Photo courtesy of PHLF.



This project, which is funded by a grant from the African American Civil Rights Grant Program [through the Historic Preservation Fund administered by the National Park Service], will also include our nomination of the house to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places. To learn more, visit phlf.org. ♦

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BGC, URA collide over wage requirement for housing projects

By Joe Reuben *Bulletin contributor*

Perspective/Garfield - Fearing that legislation at the state level is impeding local efforts to build or renovate affordably-priced homes, some community groups are turning to Mayor Ed Gainey for help. The Urban Redevelopment Authority's requirement that a union-scale wage rate be paid to laborers on any construction project [where certain URA funds are used] is driving up the costs of smaller projects, critics contend.

At issue is the hurdle presented by a 1961 Pennsylvania law that raised the cost of producing housing units, in both working-class and upper-income neighborhoods, if state funding is used for construction or renovation purposes.

Any project funded in this manner, with a price tag above \$15,000, must still meet this so-called "prevailing" wage rate requirement. The \$15,000 threshold, were it indexed to the rate of inflation, would translate to \$196,000 today. But the state has never allowed any adjustment to that figure. By most estimates, the cost of complying with the state law, which pegs the wages laborers are to be paid to a "prevailing" wage rate set by the state itself, can add 15% to any construction budget.

Doug van Haitsma, a principal with Shape Development Group, a city-based general contractor, said recently that the cost of compliance goes beyond just the pay rate itself. "You have record-keeping obligations, if you're a contractor, that would test the resolve of just about any small firm," he noted. "The state wants to be able to audit your payroll records, if it comes to that, to verify that you did indeed pay the higher hourly rates."

Rick Swartz, executive director of the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation (BGC), said there was a time when the URA had federal funds it could deploy as grants or loans to developers who were building or renovating affordable housing. This allowed the agency to sidestep the state's wage rate requirement. But now, Swartz contends, the agency's allocation of federal funding from the city has been stripped away - a legacy of former Mayor Bill Peduto's administration. "The URA is permitted to direct the funds it now has to cover 'soft costs,' such as architect's fees, site acquisition, and engineering costs," he said, "or the interest you'll pay to the bank on their construction loan."

According to Swartz, "these costs, by themselves, will not trigger the prevailing wage

rate rule. Or, in the case of a new home, the URA will tell a developer they can have the home built at a modular factory - in, say, Clarion County - and shipped to the site without violating the law, should they want to use URA funds to pay for construction costs."

For developers like the BGC, which has always built new homes on-site out of a desire to keep the spending of public dollars in Allegheny County, the URA's exceptions to the law provide little relief. "Nonprofits like the BGC need the URA's subsidy dollars to offset these much larger 'hard' costs which, considering the inflationary cycle the country now finds itself in, are jeopardizing pretty much any affordable housing project."

Swartz argues that compliance with the state law could spell the difference between selling a new home for \$200,000 and a price tag of \$300,000, or a renovated home for \$135,000 instead of \$180,000. "The last thing we want to see is for those subsidy dollars to be neutralized by a corresponding jump in the project's labor costs," he maintained.

The URA has even locked in the wage rate requirement on the use of housing funds which the city itself is contributing to the URA's budget from the 0.5% increase in the deed transfer tax [adopted in 2018]. Nonetheless, there might still be some light coming at the end of the tunnel.

In 2020, the state of New York passed legislation that allows for exceptions to its prevailing wage rate rule on state-funded housing projects with units intended to be affordable [to households earning 80% or less of the state's median household income]. Pennsylvania could also reform its rule to mirror the federal prevailing wage rate requirement [known as "Davis-Bacon"] so that construction projects consisting of seven units or fewer are exempted from compliance with the union-scale wage rate requirement.

"We directed a letter to Mayor Ed Gainey in March, asking for his leadership in having the state reform this antiquated rule," Swartz noted. "We have heard back from the new board chair of the Urban Redevelopment Authority [Kyle Chintalapalli] that they are now looking into this issue. Because of the relationships that the Mayor has developed with fellow state lawmakers and Governor Wolf, he may be better disposed than most mayors to see this reform enacted." ♦

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