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As John and I drove home to Pittsburgh from a whirlwind New England Thanksgiving tour, we listened to Doris Kerns Goodwin’s new book *The Bully Pulpit*, a fascinating account of the lives of Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft. We like to listen to books on tape during our long trips north to visit John’s family. Offering 20 plus hours of beautiful scenery, the trips give us time to get through longer books that elude our attention in daily life.

Histories of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries seem to be favorites of ours, as we have listened to many books focusing on this time period. Prior holiday trip books include David McCullough’s *Mornings on Horseback*, about Theodore Roosevelt, *The Great Bridge*, a fascinating look at the building of the Brooklyn Bridge and *The Johnstown Flood*, which described the experience of the flood so well it felt as though we were living through it.

As we got closer to home, my thoughts returned to Highland Park and the work ahead. We, the collective HPCC, have made great progress this year, but there is still much to do.

If my energy and determination waned at all in the past year, listening to the stories of Roosevelt and Taft has reaffirmed my resolve to move forward, full steam ahead.

While putting together this issue of the newsletter, I was also inspired by an article submitted by Dell Ziegler, a long-time Highland Park resident and past HPCC president.

Although I had heard many of the stories before, the article served as a reminder of the importance of the HPCC and HPCDC’s work in our community.

When you receive your membership renewal form in the mail this month, please take a moment to fill it out and send in your membership fee. Your continued membership will allow us to keep up the good work on your behalf.

If you are not currently a member, but would like to join, visit www.hpccpgh.org/contact to download a membership form. We would love to have you join the HPCC!

At our last meeting, we discussed two important changes on Bryant Street. The first was Rob Collin’s application for a beer-only liquor license.

We presented the proposed changes to the store, most of which are required by the license, including a separate entrance and cash register. The HPCC and HCDC are working together on this project with Rob to help ensure adding beer to his market does not change the family-friendly atmosphere that he has created. To view a PowerPoint detailing the potential store changes, visit www.hpccpgh.org.

Another important change we discussed concerned the intersection of Bryant Street and N. Negley Avenue, which has long been viewed by residents as dangerous.

There was a short-lived stop sign erected a few years ago, but unfortunately, it was placed behind a tree and was very difficult to see. Widespread confusion about the sign led to its removal within a few short days.

We revisited the need for traffic calming at this intersection in last year’s HPCC Pedestrian Safety Review, which was submitted to the City.

In response to the continued concern over safety at the intersection, the City is planning to install curb extensions on all four corners of N. Negley Ave. These extensions will narrow the road a great deal, naturally causing people to slow down while also shortening the crossing distance for pedestrians. Additionally, drivers will have a better view of approaching pedestrians.
If the curb extensions do not alleviate our safety concerns, I will continue to lobby to make this intersection a traditional four-way stop. In that event, the extensions will be a good place to post stop signs.

Speaking of stop signs, you may have noticed that the intersection at the main entrance to the Park, at the top of Bunker Hill, is now a traditional four-way stop. (This was another intersection addressed in the HPCC Pedestrian Safety Review). I am pleased the City agreed that this heavily utilized pedestrian walkway warranted a stop sign.

The City has also implemented changes just inside the Park entrance, as recommended by the HPCC report. These changes include adding separate designated areas for walkers and bikers around Reservoir Drive and clarifying the desired traffic flow in the area between the entrance and the fountain with painted lines.

Thank you for your support of HPCC and its efforts as we continue to make our community safer and more livable. I wish you and your family a wonderful holiday season!

Monica Watt
HPCC President
HPCC November Meeting Minutes

By Bob Staresinic

Monica Watt, HPCC President, called meeting to order at 7:05 pm, with a quorum present.

Kelly Vitti showed off the new t-shirts that are for sale to raise money for the Bryant Street Festival. The shirts are available at the Bryant Street Market and by contacting Kelly at vittik@verizon.net.

Rob Collins, Bryant Street Market owner, spoke about his application for a liquor license for the store. It is in the process of being voted on by City Council, since the license is coming from outside of the City limits. The license will allow him to sell 6-packs, and includes limited on-site consumption in the new seating area being designed. He included a slide show and handouts with information on his plans.

Emily Keebler from the District 7 Council office joined Monica Watt in presenting information on

the recent pedestrian study and resulting plans for the N. Negley Avenue and Bryant Street intersection. In order to slow traffic on Negley, and to increase safety to pedestrians and traffic turning off of Bryant, sidewalk bump-outs will be added to Negley. There is no timeline for this project yet.

Rebecca Schenck and Paul Svoboda from the URA spoke about the traffic and pedestrian changes that will be taking place with all of the development in East Liberty. The area includes the N. Highland Avenue and East Liberty Blvd. intersection at Obama Academy. There are plans to improve motor traffic flow and increase pedestrian safety at that intersection.

David Atkinson, Education Chair, spoke about the possibility of the Woolslair School in Bloomfield closing. A meeting is planned between the community groups in Bloomfield and Lawrenceville and the Pittsburgh Public School Board to discuss the effect on the neighborhoods if this school is closed.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.

The next HPCC meeting is Thursday, January 16th at 7:00 pm.
I recently opened my November issue of Money magazine, which included an article on the best places to retire. It picked five cities around the country, devoting a full page to each. Pittsburgh was one, because of its good public transportation, sports, health care, culture, top universities, etc. In the “where to live” section, it raved about Highland Park. It noted that our home values have rapidly increased, but are still a bargain by other big city standards. WOW. National recognition. As the old Virginia Slims commercial stated, “You’ve come a long way, baby.”

Forty years ago, Kathy and I moved here after law school and three years in the Marine Corps. We liked being near a park, the public transportation, and the racial and financial diversity. Everybody did not look the same and were not all in the same income bracket. As I rode the bus home from work, I mentioned my recent move to my bus driver. I clearly remember his words as he told me I had made a big mistake, that Highland Park was too close to East Liberty and Lincoln-Larimer and was just going downhill. Get out while you can.

We stayed, of course, but his words certainly gave me moments of concern.

Soon, a neighbor got me involved with the HPCC where I found a great group of people already interested in bettering their neighborhood and a history of active volunteers going back to 1948. The HPCC also had a long tradition of attorneys doing pro bono zoning work. I got hooked. The City simply did not have the staff to keep tabs on all the neighborhoods. It was up to us to do most of the grunt work. Our goal was to create an environment where people believed that their home was a good investment. If they did, they would spend the time and money on further improvements. And they would also spend the time on crucial quality of life issues, like schools, public safety, children’s programs, beautification, etc.

We found that the “problem properties” tended to have owners in these groups:

(A) Absentee landlords who bought cheap, spent little, and rented to anyone in as many units as they could squeeze in, legal or not. They viewed themselves as “realists” who were simply accepting the economic facts of life, like no one could afford the big, old grand houses in Highland Park.

(B) People who inherited homes. They had not worked for them, did not have the sweat equity in them, and frequently did not have the skills and interest to maintain them.

(C) Some folks from “the old country” who viewed zoning as an intrusion on their right to do as they please in this great country.

(D) A few wackos.

Most of the work involved hearings before the Pittsburgh Zoning Board of Adjustment, and an occasional appeal to the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas. We even took one case, involving a slumlord property on Wellesley Avenue, to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court - and won - by convincing the Justices that one of their own had erred when he decided the case against us when he was a judge in the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas.

I learned many lessons over the years. Contrary to the views of that bus driver, race was simply not important. Quality people with good values was all that mattered. Many people have negative views about Section 8 tenants. In the buildings that took Section 8, we found that 90% of the tenants were fine people you were happy to have as neighbors. The problem was the other 10% whose behavior issues made life bad for everyone, including the other Section 8 tenants. Screen out that 10% and the problems go away.
“Downhill creep” is what I call the negative things happening on a block - bad behavior, poorly kept homes, illegal units, etc. The absentee landlords believed that once it started, the downward slide of the rest of the block was simply inevitable. We found that the neighborhood was remarkably resilient, that a few bad homes on a block did not spell doom for the rest. And that “creep” can also go in a positive direction. Solve one or two problems on a troubled block and good things start to happen on their own. People will fight, and invest, if they see positive trends.

We are the beneficiaries of some crucial events over those 40 years. Here are my top seven:

1. **PRIVATIZATION OF THE ZOO.** Over 100 years old, the Zoo had always been an asset to our neighborhood, but as a City department, there was never money or professional leadership to move it beyond second class. Once it became a private organization in 1994, private donors were willing to donate the funds and hire the staff that has turned it into a first class attraction.

2. **THE SUPER PLAYGROUND.** I was HPCC president when Rosanne Levine and Marsha Dugan presented their idea of building a badly needed playground - all with unpaid volunteer labor and $100,000 for materials and maintenance that we had to raise. I could only shake my head at their audacity, but I had learned one big lesson by then - If you are not on board, at least have the courtesy to step aside and let the dreamers give it a try. Soon the whole neighborhood got behind the concept. After two years of planning and fund-raising, it was largely built in five long days in 1991. We had TV coverage. Volunteers came in from the suburbs. One politician said, “If any neighborhood could do this, it would be Highland Park.” Those who participated never lost their pride and sense of amazement from that experience.

3. **CREATION OF CDC.** Those of us working on zoning were doing a decent job keeping the bad actors from gaining ground, but we weren’t doing anything proactive to improve the neighborhood housing. In 1993, architect Dave Hance, Charlie Peterson, Tom Dickson, and others decided that we needed a separate organization devoted to that purpose. The Highland Park Community Development Corporation was born. It has focused on our southwest quadrant, buying and rehabilitating homes and apartment buildings, selling some and holding some. It has kick-started the private market toward our goal of becoming a self-correcting neighborhood where rehabilitating substandard housing is a profitable business. The HPCDC has also taken the lead on the commercial development of Bryant Street, which has been slowly increasing the number and quality of businesses over the last 15 years and is now beginning a major commercial/residential addition in the heart of Bryant Street.

The HPCDC has taken an enormous commitment of volunteer time, and it has produced enormous results.

4. **HOUSE TOUR.** We used to hear comments from realtors that Highland Park was not as well-known as Shadyside and Squirrel Hill and had no clear identity or boundaries. So in 1992, we erected quality signs welcoming people to Highland Park at the major entrances to the neighborhood. To get people to see the neighborhood, we started a House Tour in 1989. A few other neighborhoods had them, but it was a lot of volunteer time and a leap of faith to convince ten homeowners to let hundreds of strangers into their homes. They found those strangers to be very appreciative. The local media gave the House Tour wonderful coverage. Realtors loved it because they could hold open houses the same day. And volunteers were happy to show off their neighborhood, which expanded from residences to include the Park, businesses, churches, etc. As a side benefit, the House Tour became a major source of HPCC revenue for fifteen years.

Two other major events added to our quality of life and helped showcase the neighborhood. In 1994, the RESERVOIR OF JAZZ was begun as four Sunday afternoons in August where people could come for a free concert in the Park by some of the finest musicians in the City. The HPCC has continued to provide financial and other support as this signature cultural event has continued to grow in popularity. The ANNUAL YARD SALE was begun in 1987 as a way for people to sell unneeded...
stuff/buy desired treasures and get others to see the neighborhood. With 120 selling families, it has evolved into an eclectic blend of block parties, recycling opportunities, and antique road show.

5. FILTRATION PLANT FOR RESERVOIR. In 1989, we were informed that the City had to comply with a 1984 Pennsylvania (not EPA) law requiring all “finished” drinking water to be covered and protected from potential vandalism and contamination. The Highland Park reservoir holds water that has already been treated across the river, so we were told it had to be covered. The City had no option. The problem was that the Reservoir was not only a big container of water, but also the lake that was the aesthetic heart of the Park. The HPCC formed a committee of five, led by Dave Hance, to deal with the problem. I remember some of the meetings over the next nine years. All the proposals eliminated the lake; none were very pleasing - from a floating plastic cover to concrete covered with earth. And they were expensive, approaching $80 million.

With Jim Ferlo’s invaluable help, we dug in, refusing to accept the death of our lake and diminishment of the Park. Eventually, we got a break. Technology for micro-filtration had advanced, PWSA’s engineers solved some problems, and a small plant was built in 2002 to filter the water as it left the reservoir to go into the piping system. Instead of a lid, we still had our lake, plus an attractive filtration building, and the quality of the water was better than it was before. A win-win-win if there ever was one.

6. PITTSBURGH PARKS CONSERVANCY. The 400 acre Park has always been a wonderful asset for our neighborhood, but when it came to City budgets, the parks always had low priority, unlike some other cities, like New York with its Central Park. In 1996, the Parks Conservancy was formed by some of the best known civic-minded benefactors in the area. It would (a) raise private money and (b) provide a professional staff to partner with the City to improve the four major parks that are so important to city life. It has raised over $60 million and made huge improvements to our parks, including the fountain, gardens and plaza at the main entrance to Highland Park.

7. THE RISE OF EAST LIBERTY. My bus driver was correct that things looked bleak for East Liberty in 1974. A number of businesses could not make it. An attempt to reduce auto traffic and make it more of a pedestrian mall was not working. A good chunk of the white blue collar middle class had left the area as the steel industry was shrinking (as evidenced by the number of closed synagogues and churches). Crime was too high. Sears closed a very old building in a nationwide retrenchment. I would say East Liberty probably bottomed out around 1980-1985.

In 1979, ELDI (East Liberty Development Inc.) was formed to stem the tide. It was making slow progress and went through some internal turmoil for several years. In 1996, ELDI brought in Maelene Myers from Cleveland to be Executive Director. We were lucky to have her as a neighbor. Maelene assembled the right staff and had the right management style. Things began to happen. Motor Square Gardens saved an architectural jewel and demonstrated that people would come to East Liberty. Home Depot took over the old Sears site and immediately did a brisk business. Then came Whole Foods, where business was so good that it needed more parking. Then Trader Joe’s. Bakery Square, 1, and now 2. Target filled a large retail gap. Hotels. New restaurants. The list of projects has become an avalanche. And ELDI has worked on improving the housing stock in residential areas surrounding the business core. The HPCDC has partnered with ELDI on a number of projects in the past.

So, Mr. Bus Driver, I hope you are alive to see what determination, hard work, and a belief in the City can do. Don’t take my word for it. Just ask Money Magazine.

Note: This article is incomplete without a list of all the volunteers whose thousands of hours of work have made our progress possible. We just don’t have the space. The list is too long. What a nice problem to have.
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, indeed, Old Year to New, and in the Church, toward Advent and Christmas-and through it all we would wish all our neighbors a 2014 of hope and joy.

We will have two services on Christmas Eve, Tuesday, December 24, with the 4:30 p.m. Family Service of Holy Communion to include the Blessing of the Creche, familiar carols, and the Rector’s Children’s Sermon. The Midnight Christ Mass begins by candlelight at 10:30 p.m. with Service of Music for harp, organ, and Choir, featuring guest-artist Sierra Pastel, and the Holy Communion following at about 11 p.m.

For those who prefer a quieter service, or who don’t care to venture out at night, a Christmas Morning service of Holy Communion will take place in the Chapel at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, December 25, with a capella carols, followed by a Christmas Morning Coffee Hour.

On Monday evening, December 31, New Year’s Eve, we’ll gather at the Church at 11 p.m. for a brief musical program, followed by a service of Holy Communion - and then we’ll climb the tower and ring in New Year 2013 for the whole neighborhood on the Great Bell. A champagne (or non-alcoholic alternative) toast will follow.

Choral Evensong will “ring in” the New Year as well with a Christmastide service sung by the St. Andrew’s Choir on Thursday evening, January 2, at 8 p.m. A recital follows, featuring Carrie Smith on the French horn.

By Bruce Robison, Rector
St. Andrew’s, in the 5800 block of Hampton Street, has been in ministry in the heart of this neighborhood of Highland Park for over a century. If you have a pastoral concern we can help with - a baby to be baptized, a marriage to celebrate, a sick or shut-in family member or neighbor who would appreciate a visit and a blessing, a family to comfort at the time of the death of a loved one - or if you simply would like to borrow a table, please feel free, whatever your religious background or heritage may be, to give our Church Office a call at 412-661-1245 — to find and “like” our page on Facebook, or to check us out on the web, standrewspgh.org. We’re always glad to hear from you, and to help if we can.

St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church
5801 Hampton Street
Highland Park
Pittsburgh
412-661-1245
www.standrewspgh.org

The Rev. Dr. Bruce Monroe Robison, Rector
The Rev. Jean D. Chess, Deacon
Peter J. Luley, Organist & Choirmaster

Sunday Morning Services
9 a.m. Holy Communion, in the Chapel
11 a.m. Choral Holy Communion
(Choral Morning Prayer on the 2nd Sunday of the month)
Nursery Care, 8:45 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.
Adult Bible Study, Church School and Youth Programs, Sunday Mornings, 9:45 a.m.

Wednesday Morning Service
Holy Communion 10:30 a.m.
Rector’s Bible Study 11:15 a.m. - Noon

Choral Evensong
First Thursday of the Month, 8 p.m.
Third Sunday of the Month, 4:30 p.m.
Bryant StreetMarket
Home Delivery Reminder
Our local market will deliver to your home!
$30.00 minimum order.

Give Local
A reminder that many of our local businesses and restaurants offer gift certificates!

Bryant Street Market
E2”(Squared)
Enrico’s Tazza D’Oro Café & Espresso Bar
Joseph Tambellini Restaurant
Park Bruges Café
Smiling Banana Leaf
Union Project

Report a Pothole
To report a pothole go to www.pittsburghpa.gov/311/form/ or call 311. Phones are answered by a live operator from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday. At any time, you may leave a voice or text message for the 311 Response Center by dialing or texting 412-573-9736.
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Christine Adams
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Andrew Brooks
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House Tour - OPEN
Finance - Glen Schultz
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Public Safety - Lynn Banker-Burns (412) 361-8863
Reservoir of Jazz - Tania Grubbs
Super Playground -
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Lou Iezzi, Jr.

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