



**Central Northside Neighborhood Council**

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# CNNC

N e w s l e t t e r

Summer 2009

## Abandoned and Blighted Properties Act

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- Julie Peterson..... Vice President
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### Executive Director

Kilolo Luckett

The Pennsylvania state legislature and Governor Rendell have recently enacted a new law which is designed to give communities, like ours, greater power to bring abandoned properties in line with community codes and standards. The Abandoned and Blighted Property Conservatorship Act (House Bill 2188), which became law in February 2009, allows courts to appoint conservators with the power to rehabilitate and restore qualifying blighted properties. The CNNC is exploring the use of this law to develop blighted and abandoned buildings on the central north side.

The owner, a lien-holder or other secured creditor, a non-profit corporation, a redevelopment authority, a school district, a municipality, and/or residents and business owners within 500 feet of the building all can petition the Court of Common Pleas to have themselves or someone else appointed as a conservator under the act.

In order to have a Conservator appointed the petitioner must establish all of the following four conditions:

1. That the property was not *legally* occupied for the previous 12 months
2. That the property was not actively marketed for sale during the 60 days before filing the petition
3. That the property is not subject to an existing foreclosure, and
4. That the property was not acquired within the preceding six months.

In addition, the petitioner must establish the existence of three of following facts:

1. The building is in need of substantial rehabilitation and none has taken place in the previous 12 months
2. The building is unfit for human habitation, occupancy or use
3. The building is in a condition that materially increases the risk of fire
4. The building is subject to unauthorized entry, and owner failed to secure the building or the municipality has secured the building
5. The building is an attractive nuisance to children



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## President's Message ~ *A Community on the Move: Partnering Vision and Action*

**G**reetings Neighbors:

I want to begin my first letter to you by thanking Bill Buettin for serving as CNNC President for the last twelve months. I learned a lot from Bill—his ability to listen, his steady resolve, his skills at putting together and shepherding development projects and other initiatives to benefit the neighborhood and, of course, his unwavering work ethic. Perhaps the most important thing I learned by working with Bill this past year was his focus on turning vision into action for our organization and for the Central Northside community at large.

Anyone who spends anytime at all in our neighborhood knows that there is no shortage of vision or action here. Even through decades of disinvestment and economic decline in our neighborhood, the city and in the region, the people of this neighborhood dreamed big and then worked hard to protect what they had and build a better tomorrow. They preserved the uniquely historical housing stock and quaint retail spaces scattered throughout the Central Northside, knowing that some-day long neglected, abandoned and blighted properties would again be comfortable dwellings for people and retail. They built community organizations and housing for seniors and helped neighbors buy homes through public/private partnerships. They cultivated artistic and humanistic institutions and planted urban gardens that are the envy of the city and the region and the world. They did all of this in an economic climate that made progress very tough indeed. We owe our neighbors that worked so hard and so long envisioning a brighter future a great debt of gratitude.

But what Bill Buettin focused so well on this past year—and what I hope to continue to focus on in the coming year—was translating vision into action in a way that recognized that the climate of disinvestment and decline in our neighborhood has radically changed. Bill made sure to cultivate our relationships with the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) and others in a position to help us translate vision into action. You already know some of the results of this. As I write this, the bricks are being removed from the future site of Crazy Mocha at the corner of Federal Street and East North Avenue and soon site preparation will begin across the street for the mixed retail/apartment building at the corner of Federal and West North. You will, no doubt, be hearing of many more developments as commercial corridors come alive and abandon lots become new home or green spaces.

But the physical redevelopment of the Central Northside is only part of the picture of our neighborhood at the moment. During Bill's tenure as President, we also undertook an elaborate and painstaking community planning process. For those of you who have been part of that process you know well that it is aimed not only at acting to build our physical environment but also to foster a healthier more vibrant community by improvements in safety, youth programming, housing, employment, recreating and beautification. Through the community plan, we can make many of the dreams of the past decades into actions that will benefit the neighborhood now and leave it better for future generations.

Greg Spicer, President

*“Because a vision is the bridge from present to future that permits an organization to grow toward that future, it is the key ingredient to the success of a leader.”*

Donald A. McAndrew, PhD

## CNNC Representatives to Meet with Mayor Ravenstahl

CNNC Representatives are slated to meet with Mayor Luke Ravenstahl on Friday, July 10 concerning the recent wave of gun violence in the Central Northside. The meeting is geared toward both immediate policing issues and possible long-term policy solutions in the areas of traffic, transportation, housing, youth and

family issues, and development and community surveillance. A letter sent to the Mayor from CNNC President Greg Spicer following the most recent shooting prompted the meeting. Attending the meeting along with Dr. Spicer will be CNNC Executive Director Kilola Luckett, Safety Committee Co-Chairs Christopher

D'Addario and Joe Mansfield and Development Committee Co-Chair Kirk Burkley. Also at the meeting will be Pittsburgh Public Safety Director Mike Huss, the Mayor's Chief of Staff, Yarone Zober, Kim Graziani, Mayor Ravenstahl's Special Assistant for Neighborhood Initiatives. “We are hoping that this is the first of many

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## Abandoned and Blighted Properties Act [continued from page 1]

6. The building is an attractive nuisance for illicit purposes
7. The building poses potential health and safety hazards (including from uncut vegetation and vermin), or
8. The building negatively affects the economic well-being of nearby residents and businesses.

Upon a showing that the foregoing conditions apply, the Court will appoint a Conservator. When appointed, the conservator will be tasked with rehabilitating the building, and will have the power to take immediate possession and control of the building and its contents, including any associated bank or operating accounts. In addition, the Conservator has the power to:

- collect receivables
- pursue any legal claims associated with the building
- contract for repair
- borrow money
- enter into leases
- secure insurance coverage
- engage and pay legal, accounting, appraisal and other professionals
- consult with historical commissions, and
- exercise all authority of an owner.

A conservator is the owner for the purposes of filing plans, seeking permits, and submitting applications. However, this act does not relieve the actual property owner of any liability or obligation with respect to the property. Moreover, the property owner may become responsible for any debts incurred as a result of the conservatorship.

Perhaps most important, the Conservator has the power to sell the building free and clear of all liens, claims and encumbrances. Upon a sale of the building, the Conservator will pay, *inter alia*, from the proceeds of sale any unpaid taxes; any loans used to rehabilitate the property, existing liens and if there is any money left over, the record owner.

This act basically streamlines the process by which abandoned and blighted properties can be rehabilitated by local non-profit community groups like the CNNC to bring those properties back to life in the neighborhood.

We are presently contemplating the formation of a subsidiary entity to the CNNC to head up the task and concentrate on development projects in the Central North Side.

There is a great deal of work ahead of us on this project and we will need the help of the membership to make it a success. I will keep you posted on any progress we make through our community meetings and this newsletter.

Joe Mansfield

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*“There are risks and costs to a program of action, but they are far less than the long-range risks and costs of comfortable inaction.”*

John F. Kennedy

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Rich in Diversity  
Rich in Promise



## Central Northside Community Plan (CNCP)

So, 40 meetings, a lot of notes scribbled, plans and planners, maps and architects, residents and some more meetings and we finally are edging closer to what will become the Central Northside Community Plan! It is exciting stuff and everyone who has participated in it should be very proud of themselves and what we have all accomplished so far.

Phase II has just wrapped up and we again worked on our top six topics:

- |   |                                       |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Education and Youth/Arts and Culture | 4. Residential Development            |
| 2. Public Safety and Transportation     | 5. Economy and Market/Jobs and Retail |
| 3. Architecture and Urban Design        | 6. Garden Theater Block               |

We had our summary meeting at the Mattress Factory on June 17 and, despite a torrential down pour, over 75 people braved the elements and turned out to witness one of the final phases of our planning. All the solution ideas were presented by Pfaffman and Associates and participants were given the opportunity, yet again, to add and voice their additional comments on any aspects that were being presented.

So, onwards to Stage III, this is where our urban designers take the lead and use the information they have collected over the course of all these meetings and start putting it into an actual plan. We will then present these drafts in a series of public meetings and the schedule has been announced as follows; [location to be determined]

- August 19 [Wednesday]..... Architecture and Urban Design/Residential Development
- August 26 [Wednesday]..... Public Safety and Transportation/Education and Youth/Arts and Culture
- September 2 [Wednesday]..... Garden Theater Block/Economy and Market/Jobs and Retail

We will also be attending the following public events and displaying information for the proposals:

- July 19 [Sunday] ..... CNNC Summer Street Party ~ Arch Street
- August 15 [Saturday] ..... Old Timers Party ~ West Park
- September 13 [Sunday] ..... Mexican War Street House Tour

We will be collecting feedback at the meetings as well as these public events, so please note the dates and plan to attend or stop by one of the events.

The **Final Plan** will be presented at the CNNC General Membership meeting on September 14 ~ 7:00 pm Allegheny Traditional Academy

## CNNC Representatives to Meet with Mayor Ravenstahl [continued from page 3]

meetings with the administration that attempt to connect findings in the community plan with improvements in the quality of life in our neighborhood, particularly in regard to safety and criminal activity," Spicer said. A sum-

mary of the meeting will be given to members at the July 13 General Membership meeting.

*“Neighborhoods are sustainable if they have a genuine mix of population in terms of different kinds of interests, and needs, as well as in different kinds of assets that residents have to contribute to their neighborhood. These assets include time, care, skills, culture, and social capital, as well as money.”*

Monika Jaechel



## Federal Street is Buzzing with Construction Activity

What a difference a year makes. A year ago, Federal Street held much promise, but nothing to show for it, yet. Fast forward a year and there are as many signs of revitalization as you'll find anywhere in this city. Cranes are reaching into the sky, hard hats are moving about and the sound of hammers and power tools fill the air like a well-practiced symphony.

On June 9, Barron Commercial Real Estate became the newest property owner on Federal Street with the purchase of 2 East North Avenue from the Urban Redevelopment Authority. By the end of June, passersby could see Barron's construction crew chipping away the brick from the soon-to-be restored historic windows on the Federal Street exterior. Come late summer we will all be enjoying a new place to meet over delicious coffee and treats at Crazy Mocha.

Further up the street, the Carnegie Library's Allegheny branch is readying for the much-anticipated public opening later this summer. As anyone who has stopped to look can tell you, this building is going to be a real gem for

the community and a key component of the continued revitalization of the street. Past the library, you will see cranes and crews working diligently on the construction of CNNC's own Federal Hill project. Soon you will notice the framing of the 2<sup>nd</sup> building on the east side of Federal Street taking place. Meanwhile, the residents in the 1<sup>st</sup> building will begin moving into their new homes in July. If you're walking over that way later this summer, perhaps to go to the library or Crazy Mocha, consider taking the opportunity to meet one of your new neighbors in Federal Hill; maybe even invite them to your next stoop sit!

Driving up or down Federal Street can be a bit of an inconvenience these days and we apologize for this. You'll notice that portions of Federal Street near Federal Hill are closed and traffic is down to one lane in both directions. One of the reasons is the medians are finally under construction. The medians will make a tremendous difference in slowing the traffic and in creating a more pedestrian friendly atmosphere on Federal. As Theologian Richard Hooker once wrote "*change is not*

*made without inconvenience, even from worse to better.*" Please bear with us as we make these necessary improvements.

Fall should bring the next phase of development on Federal Street. In January, CNNC members were informed about an exciting project on the west corner of Federal and North being proposed by Aiello Development Company. On July 9, this project will achieve the next important milestone when the URA Board accepts Aiello's proposal to sell the properties to him. This action doesn't mean the URA actually sells the property to Aiello, but it gets him one step closer and, more importantly, allows him to finalize his leasing, financing, construction costs and architectural drawings. If Aiello is able to keep to his timeline, we will start seeing site work beginning in October and construction in January. This \$5 million project will dramatically alter the streetscape on lower Federal and make further development in the corridor more feasible.



Federal North  
federal hill townhouses  
carnegie library allegheny branch  
crazy mocha



## Are You a WOW Yet?

Have you ever overheard someone say "Are you going to WOWS?" and wondered what the heck they were talking about, wonder no more!

Four years ago this month, a small group of women met to start a women's group for the neighborhood. The purpose of the group was to provide a means for new and long time residents to meet and socialize/network with other women in the neighborhood. Hence, the WOWS [Women of the War Streets] was born and has grown beyond our wildest dreams. We now have approximately 150 women in the group, not only from the War Streets, but from many of the contiguous neighborhoods [Manchester, Central Northside, Allegheny West, Allegheny East,

Brighton Heights and Fineview] and we continue to grow.

What do we do? We get together once a month (except December) from 6:30-10:00pm at a hosting member's house with each person bringing something for the table and their beverage of choice. Not everyone shows up due to prior commitments but we usually have anywhere between 15-40 each month. There are no agendas or dues - just an informal setting for women to touch base and forge stronger friendships. We also have a private Yahoo site where discussions and notices can be posted.

A few years ago we started a charitable donation jar and House Tour Bake

Sale which have raised almost \$900 for the benefit of such diverse groups as: YMCA's Youth Membership and Mentoring Programs, Sherry Everett Scholarship Fund, YMWHA, Millennium Children's Garden, Light of Life, Women's Center and Shelter of Pittsburgh and the Western PA Humane Society.

If you would like to find out more about WOWS or are interested in attending the monthly get-togethers [sorry men, women only!], please contact: Leslie Ward

ljward51@yahoo.com or 412.596.0181

WOWS

## Northeast Commons and Fountain Restoration

The Allegheny Commons Initiative has completed the design phase of the Northeast Common and Fountain restoration project. Designs will be presented at the next general membership meeting.

This project, contiguous to the completed pilot project south of East Ohio Street, stretches North along Cedar Avenue to Allegheny General Hospital and along North Avenue to Federal Street. At the very busy intersection of North and Cedar, the Northeast Fountain will be built, which will feature a large urn set in a 50' basin, surrounding by water jets and planting beds. The project will include restoration of the paths and lawns, installation of a perimeter railing and placement of pedestrian amenities including

signage, benches, drinking fountain and trash receptacles. The path lights will all be replaced. An event space will be created in the area of the Farmers Market, which will provide electrical receptacles, and offer temporary festival lighting and banners.

Project fundraising is underway, with commitments made by Laurel Foundation, Duquesne Light, PA Historical and Museum Commission, Allegheny County Community Infrastructure and Tourism Fund, and the Garden Club of Allegheny County.



Old Northeast Fountain at corner of Cedar Avenue and East North Avenue



## July 2009 General Membership Meeting

DATE ..... July 13, 2009

TIME ..... 7:00 pm

LOCATION..... Allegheny Traditional Academy

### Meeting Agenda

- Allegheny Commons Fountain Project..... Alida Baker
- Summer Street Party..... David McMunn
- Report on Mayor's meeting..... Safety Committee
- Conservatorship Update ..... Joe Mansfield
- National Night Out
- Strategic Plan..... Bill Buettin
- Other Business

### Upcoming Events

- July 19 ..... [Sunday] ..... CNNC Summer Street Party ~ Arch Street
- August 15 ..... [Saturday]..... Old Timers Party ~ West Park
- August 19 ..... [Wednesday] ..... Architecture and Urban Design/Residential Development
- August 26 ..... [Wednesday] ..... Public Safety and Transportation/Education and Youth/Arts and Culture
- September 2 ..... [Wednesday] ..... Garden Theater Block/Economy and Market/ Jobs and Retail
- September 13..... [Sunday] ..... Mexican War Street House Tour

### Announcement

- **POSSIBLE BUS ROUTE CHANGE ON JACKSONIA** ~ The Port Authority is examining their bus routes and considering many changes. As part of research for the transportation portion of our Central Northside Community Plan our Urban Design consultant went to the Port Authority Open house to check out the transit study proposals. He found both of the viable proposals [Radial and Radial Plus] for transit improvements to the Central Northside appear to eliminate 16F Bus Service routing along Arch and Jacksonia. The Port Authority will be accepting feedback until the end of August on these proposed changes. If you are for the change or against the change let the Port Authority know by contacting them at: [www.portauthority.org](http://www.portauthority.org) and then click on **Transit Development Plan-tdp.portauthority.org**

# ATTENTION



**SUNDAY ~ JULY 19 2009 ~ 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm**

**[Rain Date: Monday ~ July 20 2009 ~ 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm]**

## **Arch Street Residents ~ PARKING RESTRICTIONS**

On Sunday ~ July 19 [rain date Monday ~ July 20], Arch Street will be closed from Gentry Way to Sampsonia Way all afternoon—from 3:00 pm to 9:00 pm. An activities midway will be set up on the street for the Summer Street Festival. Please assist us by parking your car on alternate streets starting Sunday morning, July 19 [rain date Monday ~ July 20.]

If you do not have a garage, we've arranged for you to park at the Kindred Hospital Lot behind the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church [Wolfrum and Greeves Way.]

We apologize for any inconvenience. Thank you for your cooperation and for your support in making this a great day in the Central Northside neighborhood.

QUESTIONS? Call David McMunn 412.231.1316.

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