

the Bulletin

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ABOVE: Literary Arts Boom (LAB) participants designed and built their own "portable air conditioner and word-displaying devices" to keep cool during the final days of summer. Read the story on page 11. Photo by Paula Levin

City Zoning Board Delays Hearing for Grocery Store

By Paula Martinac
The Bulletin

Bloomfield/Garfield – Those in support of a proposed grocery store at 5200 Penn Ave. and those opposed both showed up in full force at the scheduled City Zoning Board of Adjustment hearing on Aug. 2 downtown. But in a surprise turn of events, the Zoning Board ordered the developer for the store and the neighbors opposed to the proposed site plan to sit down for another round of meetings in preparation for a final zoning hearing on Sept. 20.

Wrenna Watson, Chair of the City Planning Commission, opened the hearing by asking for a show of hands of those for the store and those opposed. Because the attendees included an even mix of several dozen for and several dozen against, Watson and the other two Zoning Board members suggested two additional community meetings to see if the two sides could come to greater agreement.

"You're asking for a lot of variances," Zoning Board member Manoj Jegasothy told Bottom Dollar's developer,

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Protest Targets Illegal Iron City Demolitions

By Rachel Rue *Lawrenceville Stakeholders*

Lawrenceville – On Aug. 8, a peaceful rally was called by the Lawrenceville Stakeholders to protest recent illegal demolitions at the Iron City Brewery. Protestors on both sides of Liberty

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Neighbors Raise Issues with Family Dollar

By Paula Martinac *The Bulletin*

Bloomfield/Garfield – A small group of neighbors who say their quality of life has been impaired by living in close proximity to the Family Dollar store located at 5160 Penn Ave. met with repre-

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City Steps Inspire New Organization

By Carolyn Ristau *The Bulletin*

East End – "[The Ella Street steps] were always my favorite; they were the first I spent any time on," said M.J. Flott, a former Bloomfield resident. The Ella Street steps, one of the city's 712

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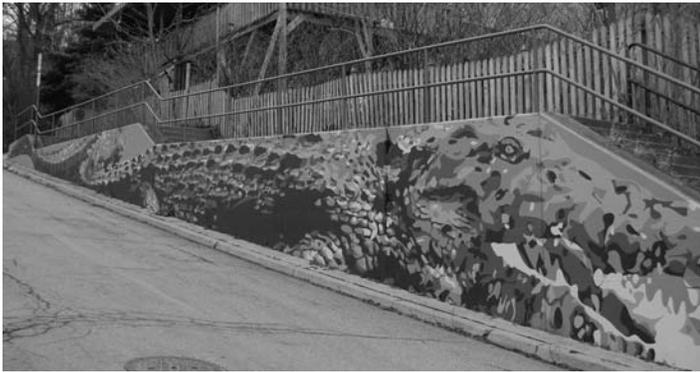
ABOVE: The Garfield Gators team, a member in the Allegheny County Midget Football League, gets ready to kick off its new season. Photo by Rick Swartz

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ABOVE: Rosetta Street steps, painted by Garfield artist Chris St. Pierre. Photo by Paula Martinac

public steps, have the word try painted on each riser. "I liked that people had taken care of them."

Flott started an organization called Community Steps Cooperative (CSC) to promote the local use and maintenance of the city's steps. The mission statement on CSC's website is "to engage communities in the maintenance and improvement of the City of Pittsburgh's public steps."

Begun in October 2011, CSC is still making its own first steps. It has a website, Facebook page, board and funding. Alex Lake, executive director of CSC, said the group expects to get a P.O. box and will be applying for nonprofit status.

Lake came to Pittsburgh three and a half years ago to work at the Union Project through the Pittsburgh Urban Leadership Service Experience (PULSE). Now, at CSC, he said, "It's neat to be part of something that's just beginning."

CSC will host its first volunteer workdays this fall. There are three workdays planned for the neighborhoods of Troy Hill, Oakland and Polish Hill. Lake explained these areas were chosen for having unique views of the city and having multiple staircases in close proximity. He said the goal of the workdays is to "make the steps more appealing to residents and visitors" by maintaining and repainting them as needed and "to get

people to come to steps they might not otherwise come across or use."

Lake noted that CSC hopes to have more workdays in the future in different locations, including other East End neighborhoods. In the meantime, he explained CSC will be working on additional initiatives for promoting the city steps. He discussed "assisting community members with ideas they have for their steps" and awareness programming such as "an art exhibit or something else not at a step site."

Flott explained, "We don't want to take over other people's projects. We really like that certain communities take care of their spaces. We want to help them make it easier."

This fall, Lake will be moving back to Garfield after living temporarily in Lawrenceville. The house he is moving to is on Rosetta Street, "near the alligator steps." These steps are the feature image on CSC's Facebook page. Flott said, "They are a good example of how you bring attention to your steps."

"[The steps] are a quirky Pittsburgh thing," Lake said. "It's the kind of thing that makes cities unique."

If you have a project for some city steps or want more information on volunteering with CSC, visit www.cscpg.org or email Alex Lake at alex@cscpg.org. ♦

Catering Company Opens on Main Street

By Samantha McDonough
Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation

Bloomfield – Roxanne Easley isn't new to catering. She began in 2006, by delivering dinners to small businesses in the East End, while working full-time at High-mark.

Then, after working at the insurance company for 10 years, she lost her job in 2008. Encouraged by fellow church members and friends, she began to consider opening her own catering business.

With help from some small business classes, Easley decided to pursue her dream, naming her venture "Roxanne's Soul Food Expressions." Through word of mouth, she was soon busy enough to support herself solely with her catering gigs. For four years, she didn't pick up another job. According to her website, the business serves everything: "a dinner for 2 or a banquet of 500."

In April 2011, on a drive down Main Street, Easley saw a sign in the window that caught her eye. The former pizza-shop site at 4124 Main St. was available for lease. She wanted to stay in the East End area, and felt fortunate to have found a property where the price was right, so she signed a lease right away.

After that, she says everything seemed to come together. She did the work little by little over a year, mostly by herself, to become "Roxanne's Catering and Take Out." Her opening was Aug. 15, 2012.

Of the name change, she says, "I figured I would take out the 'Soul Food,'



ABOVE: Roxanne Easley in front of her new establishment. Photo by Samantha McDonough

because, well, I do more than soul food." She says she doesn't want to be boxed in by that label and is able to provide a wide range of delicious food.

Items are prepared in advance, and customers can either walk in or call to order from her menu, which includes vegetarian options, croissant sandwiches and desserts. She also offers different daily specials.

Easley reports she has lots of ideas and plans for community-related events and gatherings she hopes to host in the future. In addition, a new website is in the works.

For more information, visit www.rsecatering.com or call 412-315-7471. ♦

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and 17 for bikes. In the plan, no additions are required for either the parking lot or the school. The second alternative plan proposes 68 apartments with 88 parking spots for cars and 21 for bikes. This plan uses an additional level of parking, but only one additional story on the school building.

Onwugbenu explained that potential alternative parking strategies were also discussed with residents. These strategies included restrictions preventing tenants from parking on the streets, discounts for tenants without cars, a second-car fee and a Zip car station. He said, "People liked these ideas."

Byrne explained that of the three options presented, the original and the two alternatives, the community tended to prefer the second alternative plan. However, she said, "Given the option between one of these plans and none, none was chosen."

According to Byrne, LU and LC "wanted to create consensus around one plan." After getting the feedback from the meetings, she said, "LU cannot publicly support one of

the three plans because there is no consensus."

Onwugbenu told *The Bulletin* he is continuing to meet with residents and get additional feedback as his company and LDA try to develop "the optimal solution – the very best that is achievable." He listed five issues they are addressing: less density, more parking, whether or not to include an addition, dumpster placement and the ability for the apartments to become condos in the future.

At press time, a final plan was not completed. Onwugbenu said, "We will definitely communicate the plan before going to zoning." He described his intent to issue public documents with the details of the final design, "let it circulate and be discussed" and then follow this up with a community Q&A session. "Our goal is to take the plan to zoning in September," he said.

For updates on the project, contact LU at info@Lunited.org or 412-802-7220. ♦



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