

# Neighborhood FOCUS

## Mapping Out a Safe, Healthy East End

### City Moves Forward with Transportation Plan

By Carolyn Ristau *The Bulletin*

East Liberty – Can Pittsburgh become an 8/80 city? According to Patrick Roberts, transportation planner in the Department of City Planning, that's a city where "ages 8 and 80 would be safe on their own" using various modes of transportation. Roberts talked about this goal at the fourth MOVEPGH workshop last month. Safety was one of the main themes recurring throughout the workshop along with connectivity, choices and health.

City Planning is designing MOVEPGH to plan for future transportation development and address congestion and transportation modes. MOVEPGH is one of 12 components that will make up Pittsburgh's first-ever city-wide, comprehensive plan. This plan will guide the city's growth and development over the next 25 years. The fourth and final MOVEPGH planning workshop was Aug. 6 through 8 at the East Liberty branch of the Carnegie Library.

This MOVEPGH workshop focused on the East End of Pittsburgh. Amaris Whitaker, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) intern at City Planning, described the three-day workshop as "public planning: planning sessions open to the public."

Consultant groups and individuals worked with City Planning employees and community members to identify current transportation issues and assets as well as possible future solutions. The design team consultants were Dr. Catherine Ross, a transportation



ABOVE: Consultants from LaQuatra Bonci Associates explain their proposed redesigns of East Liberty's Baum-Centre Corridor, which include adding more trees to the area and putting in more links across the busway to Shadyside. Photo by Carolyn Ristau

consultant, and Joan Stein, an ADA consultant, and Aecom, Alta Planning & Design, Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc., John J. Clark and Associates, LaQuatra Bonci Associates, Trans Associates and Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.

"You can't build your way out of congestion," explained Roberts. Instead, "[You] increase the number of modes" people can choose from and make them safer. These modes include walking, biking, driving and taking public transit.

The meeting room where the workshop took place was filled with maps. Some of the maps were purely informative, showing information such as the current congestion levels of Pittsburgh streets, the demographics of the city and transportation problem areas already identified, including missing connections in roads, trails or sidewalks.

Community members could write their own comments on some maps. These comments included "good bike lanes" on Liberty Avenue and "bad potholes" on Negley Avenue that make driving and biking difficult. Additional comments highlighted particular intersections that needed crosswalks or new or better signals to improve the safety of pedestrians crossing the street.

The consultants worked with other maps focused on specific parts of the East End. Using tracing paper, they designed alternatives to the current conditions, which they overlaid on the existing street grid. The consultants welcomed comments from the community regarding their designs.

In addition to working with the maps, community members were invited to join biking and walking audits of the East End led by Alta Planning & Design. The walking audit focused on East Liberty while the biking audits visited the northern East End neighborhoods on Aug. 6 and the southern East End neighborhoods on Aug. 7. Alta used these audits to experience the actual conditions for biking and walking in the East End and to gather community input.

Dr. Ross talked about streets where "bikes, cars and transit can share space and be safe." She also discussed the need to increase connections and "safe travel choices" that "support independent living and aging in place."

Phil Goff from Alta presented several potential projects developed over the course of the workshop. These included making Negley Run Boulevard a two-lane road and converting the remaining space for bicycle and pedestrian traffic; adding a contra-flow bike lane on the one-way block of Friendship Avenue in East Liberty so bicycles can travel safely in the opposite direction of traffic; and putting all parking on Hamilton Avenue on one side to make room for bike lanes.

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## Mapping Out the East End continued

Paul Moore from Aecom explained the next steps for the MOVEPGH plan. All city projects developed regionally and within the city as well as community plans and the ideas brought up at all four MOVEPGH workshops will be put into a “pot of projects.” These projects will be ranked based on technical criteria such as feasibility and cost. The ranked list of projects will be

presented to the community to be “evaluated by community feedback.” Moore explained that projects will be reprioritized based on the community input.

Jeff Olson from Alta said, “We’re here because we want to make this the greatest city there is: biking, walking and transit.” ♦

## East Liberty Envisions Improved Circulation, Mobility

By Carolyn Ristau *The Bulletin*

*East Liberty* – On Aug. 2, East Liberty Development, Inc. (ELDI) led a circulation and mobility vision meeting, part of a larger process to create a vision document outlining East Liberty’s transportation needs and goals. East Liberty’s 2010 Community Plan included scattered references to transportation and accessibility, but lacked a dedicated discussion of the neighborhood’s transportation vision.

Loralyn Fabian, program manager at ELDI, monitored the vision meeting and presented the introduction. She contrasted the redevelopment projects of the 1960s, when the community did not have a say, with the current era, when the community is consulted. Fabian said the Aug. 2 meeting brought together the “experts who live, work and play” in the East Liberty area for “the chance to improve the quality of life in the neighborhood.”

Previous to this community meeting, a technical committee comprised of regional professional experts in circulation and mobility compiled lists of the key users, assets, issues and goals of the neighborhood. The community members at the Aug. 2 meeting went through these lists, marking those items they agreed with and adding their own suggestions. This process was also used for a list of community values consolidated from the 2010 Community Plan.

The lists dealt with broad terms and issues applicable to the whole neighborhood. The

existing issues identified by the technical committee included “crosswalk lights inaccessible to sight-impaired,” “poor vacant storefront conditions,” “lack of infrastructure maintenance,” “lack of bike and pedestrian connectivity between, and within, park systems” and “traffic congestion.”

The meeting was designed to discuss only neighborhood-wide issues. The format did not provide the opportunity to address specific issues such as the poorly designed intersection at Target that endangers pedestrians.

The information gathered from this meeting and the technical committee will shape a final circulation and mobility vision document. This document is online at [www.eastlibertypost.com/circulation\\_mobility](http://www.eastlibertypost.com/circulation_mobility). Fabian said it was available for public review and comment from Aug. 20 to 31 with the final draft accessible after Sept. 1. Contact Fabian at 412-361-8061 ext. 28 for a hard copy of the circulation and mobility vision document.

Fabian explained that this document will be shared with developers and planners working in the neighborhood so they “incorporate better infrastructure” in their projects. ELDI will also submit it to City Planning to be folded into MOVEPGH, the transportation component of the city’s comprehensive plan (see related story, page 8). ♦

## Low-Cost Zumba Classes Rev Up Community Center

By Deborah Knox *Bulletin Contributor*

*Lawrenceville* – The Latin rhythms pulsating from the third floor of the Stephen Foster Community Center on Main Street from the Zumba Fitness classes, taught by licensed instructor Stephanie Martin, have been energizing Lawrenceville since November, 2010. Some participants come for weight loss, but all come for fitness and the good company. The program attracts young adults as well as seniors, and it’s been a great addition to the Center’s programming.

The Center’s CEO, Mary Ann Heneroty, is enthusiastic about the program. “The Center has a focus on senior fitness, but we recognized the Zumba craze and said, ‘Let’s expand this to the whole community.’ People love it.” The Center also offers other classes for seniors as part of its overall programming. She said, “It fits into the progression of keeping seniors fit and active in the community.”

One of the dedicated students, Millie O’Carroll, started attending with a friend in January 2011. She’s an active retiree who travels in from Swissvale. “My kids said, you need some exercise,” she explained. Millie has had two knee replacement surgeries, a hinge in her knee and a screw in her back, but that hasn’t slowed her down.

“I enjoy the people and we have a good time. It’s good for everything, including my knees,” she said. Millie said she is glad that everyone can work at her own level. “The teacher says, if you can’t hop, don’t hop – she’s very good about that.” Millie said that the fitness classes have given her more energy and “it helps my attitude.”

Sue Simmons, a life-long Lawrenceville resident who lives on 44th Street, started taking the class about a year ago. “I saw the

class posted on the Lawrenceville website. I love Zumba. It makes you sweat, feel good and burn calories,” she explained. She has lost 40 pounds in the past year and says, “Zumba really helps.” She has also started walking with some people from the class, taking 5- and 8-mile walks on the river trails. Sue works full time, but still gets to class. She explained that it’s “not hard for me because I look forward to it so much, and it’s a stress release.” Aside from the weight loss she says Zumba “makes me feel better about myself and it’s given me more confidence.”

Instructor Stephanie Martin was inspired to get her Zumba teaching license after seeing an infomercial on television showing people dancing to Latin music in a cardio-based dance workout. She started teaching in 2009, and heard about the opening at the Center. She has her dance degree from Point Park University and an Exercise Physiology degree from University of Pittsburgh, and has been teaching a variety of fitness classes for the past 15 years.

“People of all ages take my classes, and most of the time my classes are full. I like teaching Zumba because I love dance and enjoy helping others get fit and healthy.” She added, “The students in my classes are what inspire me. The participants that attend regularly come because they like my class,” and she said she is always creating new routines for the group.

Classes will resume after Labor Day. Cost is \$30 for 8 classes, which are held on Mondays and Wednesdays from 6:15 to 7:15 p.m. For more information, contact Stephanie Martin at 412-526-2156 or Stephen Foster Community Center at 412-621-3342. ♦

BELOW: Participants in the Stephen Foster Community Center’s Zumba class pose with instructor Stephanie Martin (center, in white). Photo by Dori Schoffstall



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