

# CentralNorthsideNews

“Hand-delivered since 1970”



Aug  
2008

## CENTRAL NORTHSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

1310 Arch St. • Pittsburgh, PA • 15212 • Phone: 412-231-7742 • Fax: 412-322-3386 • [www.cnnc-pgh.org](http://www.cnnc-pgh.org)

*Mission: The Central Northside Neighborhood Council is dedicated to sustaining a diverse community, enhancing the lives for all residents and ensuring a sense of community cohesiveness by developing affordable housing, advocating for our neighbor's needs, promoting quality of life and providing a public forum.*

*Vision: The vision of the Central Northside Neighborhood Council is to create a safe, clean, affordable, and engaged community.*

### Welcome to a Special Edition of the CNNC Newsletter!

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Normally, we take a break from the monthly newsletter during the heat of August. Many residents are on vacation or just staying cool in the “dog days” of summer and thoughts of community meetings and ongoing neighborhood projects are, at least for a few weeks, put aside. This year, however, because so many exciting developments are underway at what seems like a break neck speed, we want to keep you the membership as informed in as timely of a manner as possible. That is why the CNNC board and the Communication Committee are bringing you this special edition of the newsletter. Among the exciting developments:

- An election to fill vacant Board seats has been moved to the October membership meeting so those wishing to cast a vote will have a chance to do so. If you haven't been able to make a membership meeting this fiscal year (starting June 1<sup>st</sup>) you can attend the September 8<sup>th</sup> membership meeting to satisfy the attendance requirement in the bylaws.
- Construction financing for the Federal Hill development is now closed and work is set to begin this week. Additionally, the traffic islands (medians) have been deemed “safe” by the traffic calming study prepared for the City, which should lead to final approval by Department of Public Works in the next couple of weeks.
- The Malta Temple Building on West North Avenue is now a historical landmark in the City of Pittsburgh and is likely to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places in the next week or so. Plans to demolish the Malta by the Salvation Army have been quashed by a concerted community effort.
- The Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh (URA)—the owner of the buildings at Federal Street and North Avenue – has granted a 6-month exclusive negotiating period to Aiello Development for a portion of this important commercial corridor.
- At the same meeting, the URA awarded an exclusive negotiating period to the community for the more historically significant portion of the Federal/ North corridor including the Garden Theater, Masonic Hall and Bradbury building.
- The Pittsburgh Art Commission approved a public art project for the Garden Theater block of North Avenue that will enliven the streetscape while development plans move forward. Duquesne Light has agreed to light the facades of these North Avenue buildings, which will improve the safety of this block while enhancing its appeal.

In the future, these kinds of developing stories will be posted on the new website for the quickest and most efficient possible dissemination to the membership, the neighborhood and the various publics beyond the Central Northside. For now, we are committed to ensuring that members and other interested neighbors get “the skinny” on some of the many things afoot at the CNNC this summer.

Happy reading and see you in September!

## Second CNNC Board Vacancy Prompts Board to Move Special Election to October Meeting.

As announced at the July general membership meeting, two board members, Chantal Blake and Tracy Mortimore, have resigned from the board for personal reasons. In line with the bylaws, the board called for a special election to fill the vacancies at the September meeting. As mentioned at the July meeting, to comply with the voting requirements as set forth in the bylaws. There are 4 criteria that must be met to be able to vote at a general membership meeting. Those criteria are:

1. Being present at the meeting when the vote is taking place; and
2. Is a member listed in the membership list on the date when the vote is taken; and
3. Has attended at least one (1) other meeting during the current fiscal year [the fiscal year is defined as June 1<sup>st</sup> through May 31<sup>st</sup>]; and
4. Is not in default of payment of dues.

Since the fiscal year begins June 1<sup>st</sup> we've had just two general membership meetings that would satisfy the 3<sup>rd</sup> voting criteria above. Many members have told us they're concerned that limiting voting to the attendees of the 1<sup>st</sup> two meeting this year will disenfranchise members who voted in the regular board elections in May. As a result of members' feedback, the CNNC board voted to move this special election to the October membership meeting. This gives all members plenty of time to consider qualified nominees and to comply with the requirements for voting as set forth in the organization's bylaws. All the eligible candidates who were nominated at the July membership meeting will be on the ballot in October. We will take additional nominees from the floor of the September membership meeting. Nominations will be closed at the conclusion of the September meeting. Please remember that, in order to vote, you must comply with all four criteria described above. If you have any questions about your eligibility please contact Aaron Churchill at the CNNC office.

Although the board makes no endorsements of particular candidates, we think it is important that the person elected adds to the board in terms of unique skills sets, life experiences or social/cultural identity. The current board varies somewhat by sex/gender, income level, age, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, religious identification or practice, educational attainment, political affiliation, home ownership and other factors representative of the diversity in our neighborhood. Even so, we recognize a lack of representation on the board by females and persons of African descent. Given the current demographics of our neighborhood, the under-representation of African-Americans on the board concerns us greatly and we strongly encourage members to identify, nominate and help elect qualified neighbors who might help us fill this position in a way that benefits the board and the whole neighborhood.

Help your neighborhood organization by identifying qualified candidates and voting!

## Hip Zip Cars to Make Northside Even Cooler

Central Northside residents have long embraced alternatives modes of transportation such as walking, biking and public buses. We're accustomed to utilizing these modes to go to work, run errands and visit friends and family. In this time of sky-rocketing gas prices, it's even more important to find economically efficient means to get from one place to another. There are times though, when having access to a car is necessary, which is why we're thrilled to announce Zipcar is moving into the Central Northside this week.



According to CNNC President Bill Buettin who lobbied for the vehicles to be placed in our neighborhood, Zipcars were slated for other locations in the city but a climate of enthusiasm here (along with some lobbying by Buettin and the Mattress Factory) persuaded the company to expand its current operations to the Central Northside .

Zipcars are like traditional rental cars except there are no lines to wait in, you can rent and return a car 24 hours a day, 7 days a week all year round, they have lots of cool cars, with hourly rental rates it is cheaper than gas. Insurance and parking is all included in the price! The best part is they will be located right in our neighborhood. Zipcar has agreed to put 2 cars in our community. One car will reside on Sampsonia Way near the Mattress Factory and the other will be on Arch Street near the National Aviary. We are planning some promotional events for Zipcar in September and will be offering discounts to CNNC members. For more information or to reserve your Zipcar, go to their web site at [www.zipcar.com](http://www.zipcar.com).

## Malta Temple Saved from Destruction: City Council Votes Reflect Concerted Community Effort

After an unprecedented community response, the Pittsburgh City Council voted 8-1 to designate the building at the corner of West North Avenue and Reddour Street known as the Malta Temple Building as an historic structure, thus saving it from demolition by its current owner and occupant the Salvation Army. The Salvation Army sought to raze the building and to construct in its place a new community center and worship site.

The lopsided vote came after weeks of negotiations between representatives of the CNNC and the Mexican War Streets Society (MWSS) with representatives of the Salvation Army in an attempt to reach an agreement to save the two prominent outside facade walls—one facing Reddour and one facing West North—before the final vote. In the end, the Army would not budge from their position that they needed to destroy the two facade walls of the Malta Temple in order to make their intended uses for the building work. They held this position despite the many experts in preservation and development who argued that keeping the walls was not only compelling from a preservationist perspective but also would ultimately make money for the Salvation Army—money that could be used for their services to the community.

Councilwomen Tonya Payne and Darlene Harris were both very supportive of our efforts to preserve Malta with both women speaking eloquently about the sustained, decades-long efforts at historic preservation in the Central Northside. Before the vote, Ms. Payne tried diligently to reach a consensus between the Army and the CNNC/MWSS only to be rebuffed in the end. At the committee hearing on the matter, Ms. Payne lauded community leaders here on the Northside for their efforts to work with the Salvation Army and likened the Army's response to poking the community in the eye. She also rejected the notion that efforts to save the Malta Temple were rooted in an antipathy toward the Salvation Army and hostility by residents toward the poor and homeless. Councilwoman Payne spoke of her first hand experience with community leaders here and their genuine efforts to accommodate the Salvation Army, regardless of whatever use they put to the building.

Ms. Payne's arguments carried the day with all of her colleagues on council save the newly elected representative from council district 9, Mr. Ricky Burgess. While pretending neutrality in the matter, Mr. Burgess coaxed Salvation Army into making an ill fated legal argument that the Malta Temple constituted a "religious structure"

under a city statute—an interpretation of the statute that the Pittsburgh City Solicitor found lacking. If it were found to be such a structure, it might have exempted the building from gaining historic designation. Mr. Burgess preceded his "no" vote with a slew of invectives against our neighborhood—something those that witnessed it will not soon forget.

In contrast to Mr. Burgess, many members of council told representatives of the CNNC that they were quite impressed with the level of enthusiasm and commitment in our neighborhood and that they were looking forward to the new developments on North Avenue and Federal Street as well as other projects showcasing a neighborhood on the move.

## Federal Hill Moves Forward with Closing, Traffic Study Promising on Islands

At long last, and after several false starts, the Federal Hill townhouse project is officially underway! On August 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> we closed on our project financing with the URA and Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA), which gives us the necessary capital to complete the first 23 townhomes. Construction is set to begin this week! Prior to putting a shovel in the ground we have received 12 signed sales contracts by qualified buyers. That is most certainly a good indication of this project's desirable location, amenities and home prices. The vast majority of buyers are moving to the Northside from other parts of the region. The buyer demographics cross the spectrum including empty nesters, young professionals, newlyweds and families. Several buyers have taken advantage of the generous second mortgage loans being offered by the URA to those whose income is less than 80% of the median household income.

Progress is also being made towards getting the traffic island matter resolved. If you recall, we learned in mid-June that Department of Public Works Director Guy Costa was opposed to the long planned for traffic islands, because he felt they were "crash obstructions" and weren't appropriate to slow down traffic on Federal Street. Thanks to the many emails and phone calls from Central Northside residents and the leadership of Mayor Ravenstahl's office we believe the traffic islands will be built. To satisfy Director Costa the URA engaged a traffic calming study to review the effectiveness and safety of traffic islands on Federal Street. Last week we learned that the study revealed what we've all suspected for some time, which is the traffic islands are an effective and safe method of slowing down traffic and making Federal Street a more pedestrian friendly thoroughfare. We have not yet received the final approval from DPW that they will maintain the traffic islands, but we believe this will be forthcoming shortly.

## **URA Selects Development Proposal for the Federal St & North Ave Intersection, Gives Community Control over Key Properties**

During this past spring's board election we heard loudly and clearly that the redevelopment of the Federal North corridor is a top priority for the community. With those marching orders in hand we're extremely pleased to announce two very positive pieces of news.

First, on August 14<sup>th</sup> the Board of the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh (URA) granted Aiello Development a 6-month exclusive negotiating period for the redevelopment of the entire block of Federal Street between North Avenue and Eloise. This proposal includes the properties located at 2 & 4 West North Avenue and 1107-1115 Federal Street. The proposed development includes new construction of one building with split facades that will closely resemble the character of the original structures. The 7,000 square feet on the first floor will contain retail anchored by a Fifth Third Bank on the corner of North and Federal. Additional retail tenants have not been determined, but the developer is looking at food service establishments. Above the street-level retail will be 13-15 market rate apartments for rent. The portion of the building at the high profile corner of Federal St and North Ave will be 3-4 stories with the remaining portion along Federal to be 2-3 stories. Situated behind the building on Eloise will be 15-18 space public, surface level parking. The development team will explore LEED certification (making this a certified "green building"), green roof with rooftop garden access for community events and façade replication of existing buildings.

It's important to point out that the URA's approval only grants the developer an exclusive period during which time the developer will prepare architectural renderings, line up retail tenants, study the market and gain community support for the plan. It will be the CNNC's role to facilitate community input and support for this development. We plan to have a series of events, called Charrettes, for members of the community to ask questions of the developer, make suggestions and voice their opinions of this development.

Second, while we're very excited to see something positive happen with this portion of the block we are concerned with the remainder of the Federal North block, particularly the Garden Theater, Masonic Hall and Bradbury building, which are some of the most historically significant buildings in our community. These buildings represent our greatest opportunity for restoring the historic character of our commercial corridor, but they also represent our biggest challenge because of the immense cost of redevelopment and the difficulty in finding economically feasible re-uses for the structures.

We decided to seize the opportunity, which may only come around once, to gain control of these tremendous community assets. On August 14<sup>th</sup> the URA also approved granting an exclusive negotiating period to the Northside community. At the request of the URA, the exclusive period was granted to a joint venture formed between the CNNC and the Northside Leadership Conference (NSLC), although the CNNC will have control over the entity.

It is our intention to expeditiously prepare these properties for redevelopment. This endeavor will include:

- Master planning the block to incorporate the community's goals and visions for this corridor, connectivity between the buildings and access to adjacent the parking garage;
- Exploring economically feasible adaptive re-use of the properties;
- Restoring the building facades and making interior structural improvements;
- Seek private development partners to execute the community's master plan.

While the Aiello development project and community control over the remaining properties is exciting news, much work remains to be done. Even though the URA Board approved this proposal we must still negotiate an agreement with the URA and form our partnership with NSLC. Most importantly, we will need the membership's approval at our September 8<sup>th</sup> meeting before we move forward.

## Communication Committee Meets and Sets Ambitious Agenda

The newly formed Communication Committee held its first meeting on Thursday evening August 8<sup>th</sup> in the CNNC offices on Arch Street. The meeting was well attended and productive with several initiatives coming from this first meeting. Among these initiatives was the formation of a “working group” dedicated to finding out what our different “audiences” may be and rethinking *who* we communicate *what* to and *why* (dubbed the WWW working group). This group will consider everything from the format and distribution of the CNNC Newsletter to possible publications for “outside” audiences that are more geared to showcasing our organization and the neighborhood that it serves. Look for more news on the Communication Committee including meeting times and dates in September. In the meantime, if you would like to be on the email list for the Communication Committee, please write to Greg Spicer, Communication Committee Chair at [gregorispicer62@yahoo.com](mailto:gregorispicer62@yahoo.com).

## Public Art Project to Spruce up North Avenue

Not far from the leafy clusters of maples and curling bark of the sycamore trees in tranquil Allegheny Commons Park is an impressive cluster of six beautifully detailed, landmark buildings. The short but stately block, standing tall at the northwest corner of West North Avenue and Federal Street, consists of some of the city’s best historic architecture. And this summer, after awaiting revitalization for more than two decades, a local artist will give it a colorful makeover.

The North Avenue Public Art Project, an art installation to be installed on that very spot, will be lead by local artist Dan Wintermantel. Drawing upon 35 years as a professional illustrator and graphic designer, Mr. Wintermantel will lead a group of ten volunteers and create the large work of art that he designed specifically for the highly visible space. Through the use of metaphor and color, Mr. Wintermantel hopes that this public art piece will express the many exciting and positive changes that our neighborhood is now experiencing.

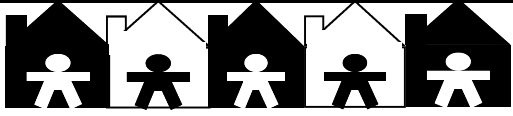
The process, itself, will be a symphony of coordination and cooperation. In order to decorate the boarded-up windows and storefronts of the large, soot-covered buildings, starting at sleepy Reddour Street and moving to busy Federal Street, Dan and his team will use 13 “jazzed-up Victorian colors” sporadically throughout the entire 220 foot-long block.

On the first day of painting, the team will apply a coat of primer to the plywood that covers the empty storefronts, followed by a scaled grid and outlines of the painting that Dan will draw as a guide. On the second day of the installation, the team will bring the design to life by painting the colors between the lines and fixing them securely using two coats of vibrant, semi-gloss paint. After the installation process, the artwork is scheduled to be up for an estimated 12 to 18 months until the renovation process begins on the entire Federal North block.

Community art projects, like the North Avenue Public Art Project, are part of an initiative created by the Central Northside Neighborhood Council’s board members and volunteers on its Federal North and Beautification Committees. Their shared goals are to stabilize historic buildings and revitalize the area through extensive community involvement. This is the first in what will be a series of ongoing efforts to showcase the burgeoning renewal and inherent value of this area. And the colorful work in this project will highlight the block as a gateway to the charming potential of the Central Northside’s hillside enclaves.



*Rendering of Federal North Art Project, courtesy of Dan Wintermantel*



Central Northside  
Neighborhood Council

**Membership Registration Form**  
Dues Run From January 2008-December 2008

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (day): \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (eve): \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**YES! I want to be involved.**

Enclosed is \_\_\_\_\_ \$5 \_\_\_\_\_ \$3 (seniors) for my dues for 2008.

If your organization/business would like to be a member, dues are \_\_\_\_\_ \$25  
(Include the name and contract information of delegate \_\_\_\_\_)

Enclosed is an additional tax-deductible donation of

\$20 \_\_\_\_\_ \$40 \_\_\_\_\_ \$60 \_\_\_\_\_ \$100 \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

I am interested in participating in the following committees of CNNC:

\_\_\_\_\_ **Youth**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Business District Development**

( Working on the Brighton Road and Federal Street business district revitalization)

\_\_\_\_\_ **Membership**

( Working on outreach to the community, events, and various other programming)

\_\_\_\_\_ **Housing**

( Working to eliminate blighted housing, provide affordable housing options)

\_\_\_\_\_ **Public Safety**

( Working with Safe Streets)

I have the following skills, talents or interests that I would like to put to use for our neighborhood: \_\_\_\_\_

Send this form or drop it off at the CNNC office with your dues ( Check or Cash) Make check payable to CNNC:

**CNNC Membership**  
1310 Arch Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15212

**CNNC Newsletter Is Available Electronically!**

If you would like a newsletter delivered to you via email, please contact Aaron: [achurchill@centralnorthside.com](mailto:achurchill@centralnorthside.com) or 412.231.7742

**New to the Neighborhood?**

The CNNC has a New Residents Packet full of information for people who are new to the neighborhood. Please contact Aaron: [achurchill@centralnorthside.com](mailto:achurchill@centralnorthside.com) or 412.231.7742 to obtain a packet.