



East Allegheny Community Council 2015 Year in Review

Overview

According to the bylaws, the purpose of the East Allegheny Community Council is the following:

- a) To promote social, cultural, educational, and charitable events and programs in the East Allegheny community;
- b) To promote enforcement of city ordinances, maintenance of city property, and the performance of city services in East Allegheny;
- c) To promote public safety in East Allegheny;
- d) To promote renovation, restoration, and improvement of the houses and buildings of East Allegheny;
- e) To improve the quality of life in East Allegheny; and
- f) To promote the general welfare of East Allegheny.

The group is governed by a nine-member volunteer board of directors.

This review details the decisions made by the board of directors during the year 2015. An electronic copy can be found online at deutschtown.org/eacc.

Further information about any of the information presented or meeting minutes is available upon request.

Meetings, Events, & Communication

One of EACC's bylaws states a purpose "to promote social, cultural, educational, and charitable events and programs in the East Allegheny community". To this end, the council organizes some special events itself, but more often supports the work of other organization and neighbors. In addition, the council plans and hosts community meetings. To communicate with the neighborhood, the council maintains several communication channels.

Events and Meetings

1. Hosted a holiday party in December for members and businesses.
2. Served as fiscal sponsor for the July 11 Deutschtown Music Festival, which brought in more than 100 bands to at least 15 venues in the area. Approximately 10,000 people came to the neighborhood to enjoy the free festival.
3. Serves as fiscal sponsor for the October 10 Pumpkinfest, which brings more than 5,000 children to the neighborhood for a fun event.
4. Held general membership meetings monthly. Coordinated relevant presenters at the meetings, including representatives from City Councilor Darlene Harris' office, Pittsburgh Police, Sprout Fund, the mayor's office, Allegheny Commons Initiative, and the district attorney's office, as well as City Council candidates and current and potential business owners.
5. Arranged special community meetings on relevant topics, including a meeting about public safety in March and a meeting about violence and activity in the park in July.
6. Supported an event to premier a promotional video featuring the East Ohio Street business district.
7. Represented the neighborhood at meetings of associated groups, including the Northside Leadership Conference, Historic Deutschtown Development Corporation, Northside Public Safety Council, Northside Bike-Ped Committee, Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group, and Allegheny Commons Initiative.
8. Provided letters of support for other organizations to coordinate events in the neighborhood, including the Saturday flea market throughout the summer and the 2015 Walk to Cure Arthritis event, both in Allegheny Commons East Park.

Neighborhood Communication

1. Maintained a neighborhood website (deutschtown.org), Facebook page (Welcome to Deutschtown), monthly e-newsletter, and bi-monthly printed newsletter. Each of these channels provides information about events and resources relevant to current and prospective residents and business owners.
2. Responded to incoming inquiries to council email (deutschtown@gmail.com) and phone.

Homes & Properties

EACC works to maintain the neighborhood's heritage by ensuring appropriate renovations and restorations where possible, i.e. by placing covenants on the properties sold by the council and enforcing said covenants. When historic homes or vacant lots are for sale, EACC will sometimes make discretionary purchases, in order to protect the building from demolition or unwelcome use.

In 2015, there was considerable activity involving covenants, real estate transactions, and monitoring of property activity.

Upholding Covenants

1. Enforced covenants regarding the façades on renovations of four homes on Foreland Street.
2. Referred to covenants to address deteriorating conditions on a home on Lockhart Street.
3. Referred to covenants to address unsuitable exterior projects on two homes on Middle Avenue.

Real Estate Transactions

1. Sold properties for renovation at 618-620 Foreland Street, 614-616 Foreland Street.
2. Sold lots for new construction at 619-621 Foreland Street and approved the design plans for two new homes on the lots.
3. Exposed the façade of 627 Foreland Street and gutted the interior, but determined that no original core of architecture remained and most of the structure was compromised, so demolished the building and prepared the lot for sale.
4. Met with several prospective buyers of a former church at 501 Avery Street to discuss options for future use of the church building and community house, taking into account neighborhood preferences and concerns.

Monitoring property use

1. Protected empty lots on Foreland Street by addressing side wall encroachment from the adjacent property.
2. Cross-referenced occupancy permits for businesses in the neighborhood with their current uses, to compile a list of nonconforming uses. Where discrepancies exist, EACC board will consider taking action. Uses that are more intensive than permitted can be reported for citations and possible suspension of the occupancy permit. For uses that are less intensive than permitted, the EACC can pursue getting the occupancy permit updated to the current, less-intensive use to reduce the risk of the property reverting back to more intensive use in the future.
3. Halted parking by hospital employees on an EACC-owned vacant lot on Dunloe Street.
4. Evaluated the rate of renovation progress on a home previously owned by EACC on Cedar Avenue; determined that it was progressing sufficiently.
5. Supported an NSLC development proposal for a commercial project on the five-lot site at 506-510 East Ohio Street and 507/509 Emlin Way. Since the project entails demolition of a very old building, community input was sought, with a vast majority supporting the project. EACC requested that architectural artifacts such as plaster ceiling medallions be salvaged where possible and donated to EACC.
6. Supported the Department of City Planning (Historic Preservation Committee) in its application for grant funding to cover an architectural inventory.
7. Supported zoning variances for setbacks associated with renovation of a home on Middle Street.
8. Approved proposed roof-top signage for Allegheny General Hospital (though this design was later withdrawn due to lack of support from other groups).

Neighborhood Beauty, Safety, and Quality of Life

EACC works to improve the quality of life and safety in East Allegheny. Working with local businesses, city departments, and political figures, the council coordinates public safety initiatives as well as neighborhood beautification and maintenance projects. Much of this work is subsidized by grants and public funding.

In 2015, several new projects were addressed and a few longstanding issues were resolved or sustained.

Neighborhood Beautification

1. Coordinated hanging flower baskets along East Ohio Street.
2. Planted petunias in the flower bed at the public pool along Stockton Avenue.
3. Explored options for a community garden on Kilday Way to be designed and maintained by an external company.
4. Maintained the lot surrounding the Deutchtown gateway sign at the corner of Nash and East Ohio streets. Communicated with Port Authority to address litter issues at the bus shelter on this corner.
5. Continued work to improve the landscaping in the parking lot of Giant Eagle by enforcing the official landscaping plan.
6. Coordinated two community meetings to brainstorm ideas for a \$10,000 grant offered by the Buhl Foundation. Received a grant for design and installation of a large mural on the exterior wall of 607 Foreland Street, facing the municipal parking lot.
7. Hosted Neighborhood Redd-Up events on April 25 and October 17.
8. Sponsor an Adopt-a-Block program for ongoing litter pick-up.

Public Safety

1. Installed two security cameras to monitor activity on East Ohio Street.
2. Explored crime and safety issues associated with the Allegheny Commons East Apartments complex. Coordinated with several city departments and the property managers and owners, in order to determine ways to increase safety in the area in the future. A previous settlement in which the complex was required to limit subsidized units to 30% was the basis for much of the focus, though it was determined in a general membership meeting that the settlement was unenforceable.
3. Coordinated a neighborhood public safety meeting on March 31.
4. Met with City Councilwoman Darlene Harris to discuss East Ohio Street lighting projects.

Quality of Life

1. Worked with police and other city departments to cease activity of an after-hours club operating at 509 Tripoli Street.
2. Distributed fruit trays to elderly neighborhood residents.
3. Support an application for a \$1,000 Sprout Fund grant to produce a promotional video for the East Ohio Street business district.
4. Sponsored a petition and continued communication with city officials regarding proposed permanent parking lane on the south side of North Avenue, to address safety and resident quality of life concerns.
5. Supported a Sprout Fund grant application for the purchase and installation of a garbage bag dispenser and a community message board in the West Park dog park.

Other

1. Developed a procurement plan to increase grant opportunities
2. Arranged insurance for neighborhood assets, including the wayfinding map on the corner of East Ohio Street and Cedar Avenue, the west gateway mural, the east gateway sign, and the security cameras.
3. Procured branded pint glasses (with a grant) for sale.