

# GAZETTE EXTRA!

April 2009

## Western RENEWED! Update

As you can see, work has resumed on Western RENEWED!

The extremely cold weather this winter caused the cancellation of our plans of completing the installation of all of the drainage inlets.

The contractor would have had to keep the concrete heated as it dried. The added expense of heating was not in our budget and the installation was not time sensitive so the inlet work will be done at the same time as the sidewalks.

The excavation is nearly complete on the south side of the street – we are almost to Brighton Road. They will finish the excavating, lay the conduit, backfill with gravel and then concrete the entire area in just a few days.

If the weather cooperates they will be on the north curb at the Brighton Road intersection in about two weeks. It has been decided that the construction will go east to west on the street for one main reason - safety. It's much safer for the construction workers to work with the flow of traffic rather than against it. It is also much safer for those driving on the street. We will continue to post no parking signs on both sides of the street in the active work zone. Once again, this is a city requirement - we have city inspectors on site almost every day. Your patience and cooperation is greatly appreciated. It's a temporary inconvenience for a long-term positive outcome.

**THE BRICKS ARE HERE!** Finally, we have bricks after months of waiting. The brickwork is definitely constrained by the weather.

While it is now warm enough to use the adhesive, it can't be used in the rain or it loses its adhesive grip. So no brickwork will take place in the rain. But with a few nice days I'm told they can work rather quickly. Working around the corner with the handicap ramp and several poles takes much longer than going straight down the street. Anytime the workers have to cut the bricks to work around an obstacle it slows them down.

Light pole and parking meter installation will follow the bricks. At this time we don't intend to plant any of the trees until the fall. We want to minimize the risk of damage to the trees from any of the big pieces of equipment.

We continue to work on the removal of the power lines from Western with service drops to be installed in the alleys. Removal of all service lines from Western Avenue is in the legislation that was passed by City Council so this will be done.

The assessments are nearly complete and should be sent out within

the next month. Each property owner will be assessed \$125/lineal foot of sidewalk (those who have corner properties will not be assessed twice for the corner.) The \$125/lineal foot is at most only 1/3 of the cost of the upgrades!

The Northside Community Development Fund has verbally committed to work with those property owners who express a need for a low interest loan to help cover the cost of the assessment and/or the cost of electrical service relocation. If you've been thinking about other improvements to your front facade - you could possibly take advantage of a low interest loan and have the work done now! More details will be coming very shortly.

The City continues to be satisfied with the actual construction work - their inspectors are on site on a regular basis. This frequent onsite inspection is what led to the "no parking" signs in the active construction zone. A potentially dangerous situation near the intersection of Galveston & Western prompted the City to require the no parking signs. This temporary inconvenience is for the safety of everyone who travels on Western either by car or by foot. While I would really like to give you an estimate of when this project will be completed (or at least when the major excavation work will end) I can't because of two factors - the weather and PennDot. The contractor could give us somewhat of a time frame if he only had to consider the weather but the bigger factor is PennDot.

Western Avenue from the West End Bridge to at least Brighton Road is scheduled to be repaved this spring (Western Avenue is technically Route 28 which is why PennDot is involved.) The project has been on the books for at least a year and they need to complete the project by either May 31 or June 9 or June 30...yes, we have three different end dates depending on whom you talk to at PennDot...welcome to my world!! The street will be completely resurfaced - they will grind off the current pavement and put down an entirely new roadway. This is NOT part of our project just a lovely coincidence. We have been trying diligently to get an answer as to when this will happen... We cannot have our heavy equipment on the street while this work is being done but they would like us to have the entire curb in place. So it looks like our guys will go away for a week or two while the state guys work. The street paving gives us one additional issue with which we must deal. As mentioned above, PennDot has "requested" that the curb be in place before they come in and pave. That means we will have to excavate both blocks of the north side of the street and pour the curb. Unfortunately we cannot keep pace with pouring the concrete for the sidewalk at the same time. This means we could have the sidewalk torn up for much longer than we would

like. This is both a safety issue and a cost issue. It would be much easier if every property came out onto the sidewalk in the exact same way. But we have some houses that sit back off the sidewalk, business that have doors that open onto the sidewalk, and houses that have steps that come out 4 -5 feet onto the sidewalk. We have to decide what will work best for everyone and I'm sure that not everyone will be happy - it's inevitable. We will try to push the PennDot project back as far as possible so we don't have as much of the sidewalk open but there are no guarantees.

Once again, safety is a priority.

Oh - let's throw the Pittsburgh Marathon into the mix on May 3 just to make it interesting! Yep, the marathon is coming right down Western so it can't be ripped up that weekend.

So there you have it!

If you are a Western Avenue property owner and have any questions please feel free to contact me directly or you may contact Maureen at the Northside Leadership Conference at 412-330-2552. You are more likely to reach Maureen during the day. (I started a new job in mid-January so my daytime availability is now much more limited but I will respond as quickly as possible.)

If you are a neighbor who does not own property on Western Avenue but still have questions, please attend the monthly membership meeting on Tuesday.

Yours in progress,  
Gloria Rayman

## MEXICAN WAR STREETS SOCIETY JOINS THE ALLEGHENY COMMONS INITIATIVE "FIVE FOR FIVE" PROGRAM

(PITTSBURGH) – For the second time in its 40-year history, the Mexican War Streets Society (MWSS) has made a significant contribution to the Allegheny Commons Park Initiative, which provides capital projects, landscape care, attracts programs and raises awareness about the park's history and amenities. In January 2007, the MWSS donated all of its proceeds (in the amount of \$6,500) from the 2006 National Preservation Conference Candlelight Tour to Allegheny Commons, and now this community organization has demonstrated its long-term commitment to the park by joining its Five for Five Program.

Five for Five supporters pledge \$5,000 a year for five years to assist with the fundraising, community involvement and project activities associated with implementing the Master Plan for Allegheny Commons. Five for Five supporters have made it possible to leverage over a million dollars in park reinvestment. The successful restoration of the East Common is now being followed by the next phase of

restoration, the Northeast Common, which will include re-building the historic Northeast Fountain at the corner of Cedar and North Avenues.

"With this gift, the first from a community-based organization, the Mexican War Streets Society joins the ranks of the businesses, foundations and individuals that contribute funding for the revitalization of Allegheny Commons," said John Francona, Chair, Allegheny Commons Initiative. "It is a tangible statement about the value that the community places on the park, not only as an essential community amenity but as a historic treasure as well."

Other Five for Five supporters include: Babb, Inc., Citizens Bank, Pittsburgh Steelers, the Rooney Family, Merrill Stabile, and NRG Energy Center.

David McMunn, President of the Mexican War Streets Society, challenges all of the North Side neighborhoods to be a part of the living history that is the Allegheny Commons and to make a contribution--however great or small--to the success of the Allegheny Commons Master Plan.

"One of the earliest images that we know to exist of the Allegheny Commons is a photograph in the possession of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh that was taken circa 1864. The image shows the Commons several years before the Mitchell & Grant design was instituted to create a formal public park," said McMunn. "What is striking to me in the photograph is the clear line of rowhomes that flank the park along North Avenue. These properties still exist today and make up the Mexican War Streets-Central North Side. Of all the historic neighborhoods that surround the park, we have the most significant amount of frontage. Historically, the residents of our neighborhood have always enjoyed the closeness and the attractions of the Allegheny Commons. Whether for walking, jogging, sunning, playing ball, or exercising our pets, we delight in the lawn, the trees and the acres of rich cultural beauty we hold in the park. We are privileged to be a part of the Five For Five Program as we see the intrinsic value of preserving the Allegheny Commons for present and future generations."

The first annual check for \$5,000 will be presented to John Francona at the next MWSS membership meeting on Tuesday, March 17, at 7:30 p.m. at the Unitarian Church on the corner of North Avenue and Resaca Place.

The mission of the MWSS is to preserve the historic character of the Mexican War Streets and to promote our neighborhood through personal and community involvement. For more information, please visit [www.alleghenycommons.org](http://www.alleghenycommons.org) and [www.mexicanwarstreets.org](http://www.mexicanwarstreets.org).

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