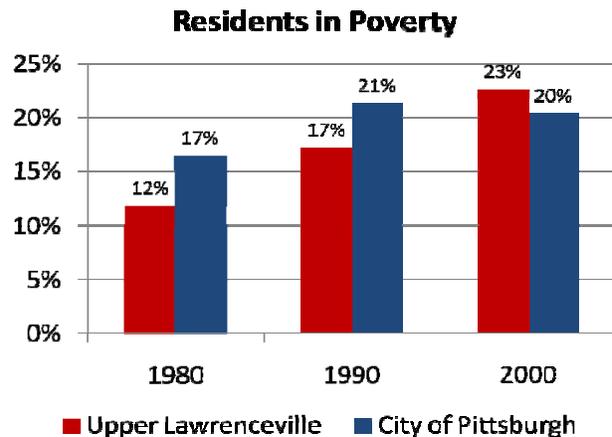


ABOUT OUR DISTRICT

Upper Lawrenceville is a compact and contained area bounded by Butler Street and the industrial riverfront, Stanton Avenue and the Allegheny Cemetery, and the hillside leading up to Stanton Heights. Our Elm Street district is within this area: one block from Butler Street (Dresden Way) to Keystone Street, Stanton Avenue to 55th Street.

Like most Pittsburgh neighborhoods, Upper Lawrenceville's population has declined in recent decades, 40 percent since 1970, which is faster than the City as a whole (36 percent). In 2000, the racial composition of the neighborhood was 86 percent white and 11 percent African-American.¹ We expect that the minority population is much higher today, probably around 30 percent as a growing population of Somali Bantu refugee families with many children move into the neighborhood.

Poverty trends over the last several decades have not moved in the right direction (see chart at right), and we also expect to see an acceleration in the poverty rate in 2010's Census. In 2000, 17 percent of families and 22 percent of individuals in Upper Lawrenceville lived below the poverty line, and an astonishing 39 percent of children under 5 were poor, substantially higher than the citywide child poverty rate of 28 percent. Furthermore, of the 619 individuals living in poverty, more than one-third of those (233) were extremely poor, living below 50 percent of the poverty line.²



Upper Lawrenceville also has one of the oldest populations in the city of Pittsburgh. These elderly residents have been the stable backbone of the neighborhood for years, and as they pass away or move into assisted living situations, it has destabilized the neighborhood. Yet relative to the City, there are high levels of homeownership. In 2000, 66 percent of residents in Upper Lawrenceville owned their homes, and about half of them were elderly. The volume of transactions has risen in the past 20 years, again as some of the elderly homeowners have passed away, and others have become fed up with public safety problems and perceived and real decline in the neighborhood. Deferred maintenance is also a problem that we saw firsthand when Rebuilding Together Pittsburgh repaired the homes of 14 elderly residents in the Elm Street district in April 2007.

Year	Average Price	Transactions
1998	\$42,897	198
1999	\$47,182	191
2000	\$42,404	258
2001	\$47,653	240
2002	\$49,050	240
2003	\$52,092	263
2004	\$58,096	263
2005	\$60,281	261
2006	\$62,111	254
2007	\$62,730	222
2008	\$77,536	217

Despite these circumstances, Upper Lawrenceville's real estate market is slowly improving. Although the neighborhood is not seeing the appreciation trends of Lower and Central Lawrenceville, recent data proves that there is market interest in the neighborhood and home values have risen.³ This does not include family transactions (when one relative sells to another for \$1) or sheriff sales which tend to throw off the average price and don't represent actual market activity.

The Elm Street Program has given the LC and our team of residents the opportunity to make a positive impact on a seemingly deteriorating neighborhood (see accomplishments to date); however, there is much more work to be done.

¹ 2000 Census

² Pittsburgh Neighborhood & Community Information Systems (PNCIS)

³ 10th Ward RealStats

ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE

- Ten street trees planted along the 5200 block of Carnegie Street. *Clean, Safe, & Green*
- “Rebuilding Day 2007”: a one-day home repair blitz with Rebuilding Together Pittsburgh. 450 volunteers helped repair fourteen homes within the Elm Street area (roofing, plumbing, electrical, and carpentry repairs). *Neighbors & Economy; Clean, Safe, & Green; Design; Image & Identity*
- 21 of the most blighted alleyway properties acquired; dilapidated properties identified to demolish. *Design; Clean, Safe, & Green*
- Vacant lot maintenance during monthly community clean-ups. *Clean, Safe, & Green; Image & Identity*
- Distribution of the URA’s Home Emergency Loan Program (HELP) to help residents receive forgivable loans for emergency home repair. *Neighbors & Economy*
- Installation of custom-designed benches and trash cans on Butler Street, adjacent to the neighborhood. *Design; Clean, Safe, & Green*
- 2008 Weed and Seed funding for seven programs within the district. Programs include youth development, greening initiatives, and photography/arts activities. *Sustainable Organization*
- 2008 Lawrenceville Resource Fair and Community Celebration, which connected over 300 residents with resource information distributed by key local and city-wide organizations. *Image & Identity; Sustainable Organization; Neighbors & Economy*
- Elm Street Manager, Nadia Diboun, successfully completed PDC Elm Street Academy Training in July 2008.



Images: A top priority of the LC is to recruit and engage volunteers—particularly youth—in participating during monthly Community Clean Up Days. Their efforts make a great impact on the health and appearance of our district while fostering neighborly connections that may not have been formed otherwise.



RESIDENTIAL FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

offering 1:1 matching grant incentives to property owners

One walk through Lawrenceville's Elm Street District, and it's obvious many homes are in need of a "facelift." Both the Lawrenceville Community and Elm Street Plans ("Design") call for the development of a residential façade improvement program that offers incentives to property owners to improve their structures. Furthermore, recent discussions with neighborhood constituents have proved there is a need and interest for façade enhancement. The overall goal is to improve streetscapes while improving quality of life for residents.

As other DCED Elm Street programs around the state report the success of their residential façade improvement programs, we visualize the impact improvements could make on our own. To jumpstart the program, we recently applied for and were awarded a Design Fund grant from the Community Design Center of Pittsburgh (CDCP). The \$8,000 grant will fund services provided by an architecture firm/consultant to assist our Elm Street Committee in developing design recommendations and guidelines.

Like the CDCP, the LC seeks to encourage good design and educate the public on building improvements. Many property owners simply don't know what to do with their aging structures: we intend to make it as simple as possible for them to transform their properties into something positive, in a cost-effective way. Paired with grant incentives, we expect to see an increase in home ownership and further neighborhood investment. The benefits are three-fold: 1) increased market value for the property owners; 2) diminished nuisance activity and better quality of life for surrounding residents; and 3) improvements that generate a stronger tax base for the City of Pittsburgh. We also expect that this project will serve as a demonstration or prototype for other residential façade programs around the City of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County.

Support for a residential façade improvement program in the Elm Street District comes from our Elm Street Committee, including residents and architects, Lawrenceville United, and City Councilman Patrick Dowd. We now need funding for the grant incentives. With this application, **the LC requests \$50,000 to offer a 1:1 match on grants up to \$2,000 for façade improvements.**



A handful of homeowners have already improved the look of their facades. We intend to encourage the others.



ALLEYWAY PROPERTY DEMOLITIONS

Both the Elm Street Plan and Lawrenceville Community Plan also call for the “de-densification” of Upper Lawrenceville in the category of “Design.” De-densification refers to reducing the number and density of blighted and sometimes hazardous alleyway houses. Some of these alleyway houses have been the epicenter of public safety problems for several years, providing a haven for criminal and nuisance activity. Others are simply unsightly and contribute to a negative image of the neighborhood and poor quality of life for local residents.

Since the onset of Lawrenceville’s Elm Street Program, the Committee has voted to allocate funding to acquire 21 of the most blighted structures. A preventative approach, this acquisition kept the properties from falling into the hands of speculators and greedy land owners who have little concern for the well-being of the neighborhood. As part of LU’s public safety work, this strategy draws a parallel to the decrease in criminal activity. (See below statistics, provided by Lawrenceville United).

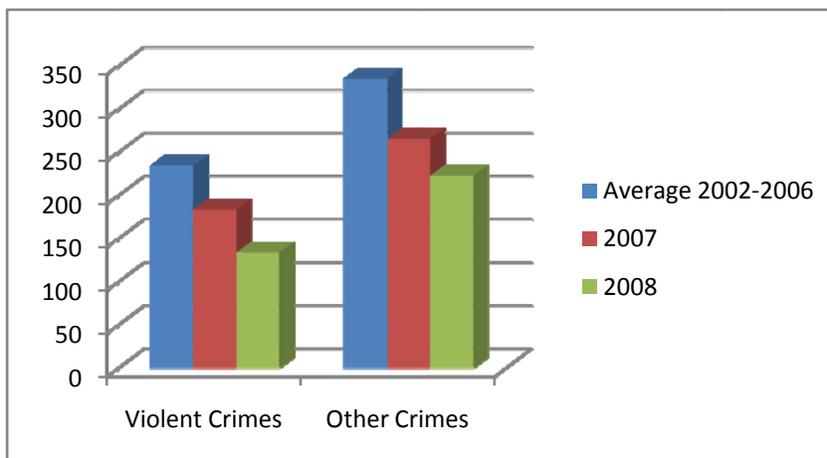


5235 Natrona Way: A dilapidated LU property that is too costly to rehab.

A top priority now is to develop a long-term plan for these properties, and we envision multiple uses. In a community as dense as Upper Lawrenceville, with modest houses, small yards, and limited or nonexistent off-street parking, rehabilitation presents an opportunity to enhance adjacent houses and improve quality of life for neighbors. The next logical step, however, is to demolish the structures that are too dilapidated to rehab. Holding onto them any longer will incur costs to LU and raise concerns among the community about their ultimate disposition.

After the demolitions, the lots may have the potential to be converted to side yards, urban gardens, or off-street parking spaces. In the meantime, the properties will be maintained by resident volunteers during monthly Community Clean Up Days and groups such as GTECH (Growth Through Energy & Community Health) who have planted and would like to continue planting sunflowers in vacant lots. These sunflowers brighten the “eyesore,” and later, the seeds are converted to bio-fuel.

With this application, the LC requests \$50,000 towards the demolition of the most dilapidated homes, identified by the City of Pittsburgh and Lawrenceville United.



According to tracking conducted by Lawrenceville United (see chart at left), crime has steadily decreased over the past six years and has decreased 26% during the Elm Street Program, with particular drops in prostitution (80%), drug violations (51%), and vandalism (30%). “Other crimes” dropped by 44% since the inception of Elm Street.



SAFE HOMES

Along with façade improvements and alleyway de-densification, the Elm Street Plan also calls for a home inspection/repair program in the categories of “Clean, Safe & Green” and “Design.” In addition to ensuring safety for our residents, our goal is to catalyze reinvestment in properties to make our neighborhood more livable for existing residents and more attractive and competitive for new residents.

In April 2007, the Lawrenceville Corporation partnered with Rebuilding Together Pittsburgh (RTP) to inspect and repair 14 homes owned by low-income, elderly and disabled residents. RTP’s network of skilled and volunteer laborers ultimately invested \$500,000 in Lawrenceville’s Elm Street District. Rebuilding Day 2007 saw 450 volunteers contribute their skills in roofing, plumbing, electrical, and carpentry repairs. The lives of three residents were likely saved when volunteer home inspectors discovered dangerous levels of carbon monoxide in each of their homes. Fortunately, the team was able to intervene quickly with emergency repairs that avoided a tragic result. Sadly, the PRO-ASHI’s president response was: “That’s nothing out of the ordinary.” These problems are all too common in Pittsburgh’s older homes where residents often defer maintenance and dangerous conditions go unaddressed.

Although *Rebuilding Day 2007* was highly successful in our Elm Street community, there is still work to be done. After recent discussions with Elm Street Committee members and other property owners, it became evident that more homeowners are in need of assistance to ensure that their homes are safe and livable. Most residents within the district cannot afford to pay for a home inspection and the necessary home repairs that the inspections reveal. 2000 Census demographics for the Elm Street District provide further support:

- Almost half of all homeowners are 70 years of age or older;
- Over half of the properties are in substandard condition; and
- Almost a quarter of the residents live below the poverty line

While the URA’s Home Emergency Loan Program (HELP) is a successful program in our district, it is a reactive approach to emergencies. We have come to the realization that we need a proactive approach to identifying emergency situations to ensure a safer, more livable community. With support from the Pittsburgh Regional Organization of American Home Inspectors (PRO-ASHI) and the Pennsylvania Downtown Center (PDC), the Elm Street Committee will implement a home inspection program to provide homeowners with free home inspections, funding for emergency repairs, and referrals to other existing resources within the City of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County. PRO-ASHI has agreed to donate free home inspections, and PDC has committed \$20,000 towards the remediation of emergency situations discovered from inspections.

How Safe Homes Program Will Work

We would like to start the program as soon as homeowners complete their applications. The Committee has unanimously agreed to open the program to all homeowners in the Elm Street District, regardless of age and income level. The program will function on a first-come, first served basis. However, grant eligibility for emergency repairs will be contingent on income level. The Committee will model eligibility requirements from the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA)’s Home Emergency Loan Program (HELP). Those not eligible for assistance will receive an information packet of loan providers and other assistance programs through local organizations.



The success of our program will largely depend on the input from our HIP Committee members. Pictured here is Harry Geyer—HIP and Elm Street Committee member, resident and property owner.

PRO-ASHI, who works with RTP, has provided a representative to sit on our program subcommittee. PRO-ASHI is also developing a standard inspection process based on the RTP model. Inspections by PRO-ASHI include, but are not limited to, carbon monoxide hazards, gas leak or discontinued gas service, severe electrical condition or discontinued electrical service, no heat in winter conditions, severe structural deficiencies, no water or no hot water, missing sanitary or uncontained backed-up sewage or massive rodent/insect infestation. Cosmetic and non-emergency repairs will not be eligible.

With this application, the LC requests an additional \$10,000 toward the remediation of emergency situations discovered from inspections.

TREES

Lawrenceville has the most active volunteer tree tending group in the City of Pittsburgh. With a mission to maintain existing street trees, educate residents, and re-forest the neighborhood, the group meets once a month to discuss projects including a tree park located within the Elm Street District. The group is currently working with Studio for Spatial Practice, Friends of the Pittsburgh Urban Forest, and the City of Pittsburgh's Green Up crew to develop a Tree Park within the district—on the corner of Stanton Avenue and Keystone Street.

Recently, the group has also received tree requests from ten residents located on Keystone Street and will include these requests in the City's Tree Vitalize application. Confident that these residents will receive the trees, the group has requested Elm Street funding to pay for the pit cuts in the sidewalk. At around \$300 per cut, this would cost approximately \$3,000. As the groups also seek funding for trees within the Tree Park, **the LC requests a total of \$5,000 of Elm Street funding to add trees to our district, a vital component of the program's "Clean, Safe, & Green" principle.**



According to Friends of the Pittsburgh Urban Forest, trees in an urban area increase property values, improve the tax base, purify the air we breathe by absorbing pollutants, intercept rain water (reducing landslides, flooding, and combined sewage overflows), and provide enough shade to save a household up to \$250 in annual energy costs. Additionally, the LC and its Elm Street Committee believe that trees foster safer, more sociable neighborhoods.



Image top: In spring 2007, 10 street trees were planted on Keystone Street. We would like to plant more! Image left: A sketch of the Lawrenceville Tree Park, which will be built and planted on the corner of Keystone Street and Stanton Avenue—a noticeable gateway to the Elm Street District, and Lawrenceville, coming down the hill from Stanton Heights.

2009 ELM STREET BUDGET

Program	Leveraged Funds	Requested Funds	Uses of Requested Funds
Façade Improvement Program	\$8,000 CDCP Grant	\$50,000	Grants to property owners
Alleyway Property Demolitions	In process	\$50,000	Demolitions
Home Inspection Program	\$20,000 for emergency repairs + donated inspections	\$10,000	Emergency repairs
Trees	Volunteer Design for Tree Park and Volunteer Labor (Tree Tenders)	\$5,000	Pit cuts and trees for park
Total:	\$28,000 + in-kind value of nearly \$20,000	\$115,000	

LAWRENCEVILLE'S ELM STREET COMMITTEE

Lawrenceville's Elm Street Committee is the LC's most dynamic and engaged group of volunteers. Eight of the nine members live in the district, some of whom have lived in Upper Lawrenceville their whole lives. The others are transplants who discovered affordable property to rehab.

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