

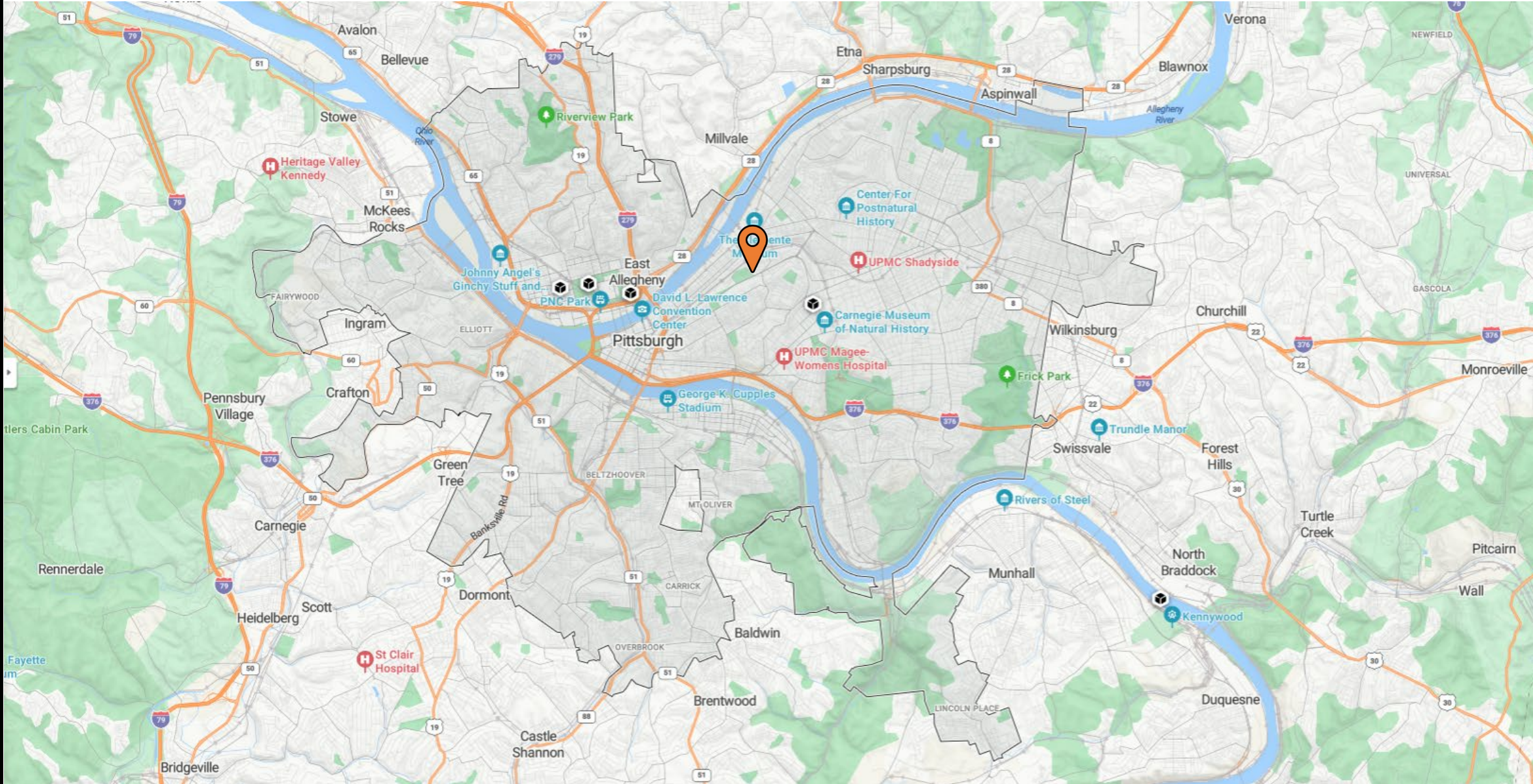


Donny's Place

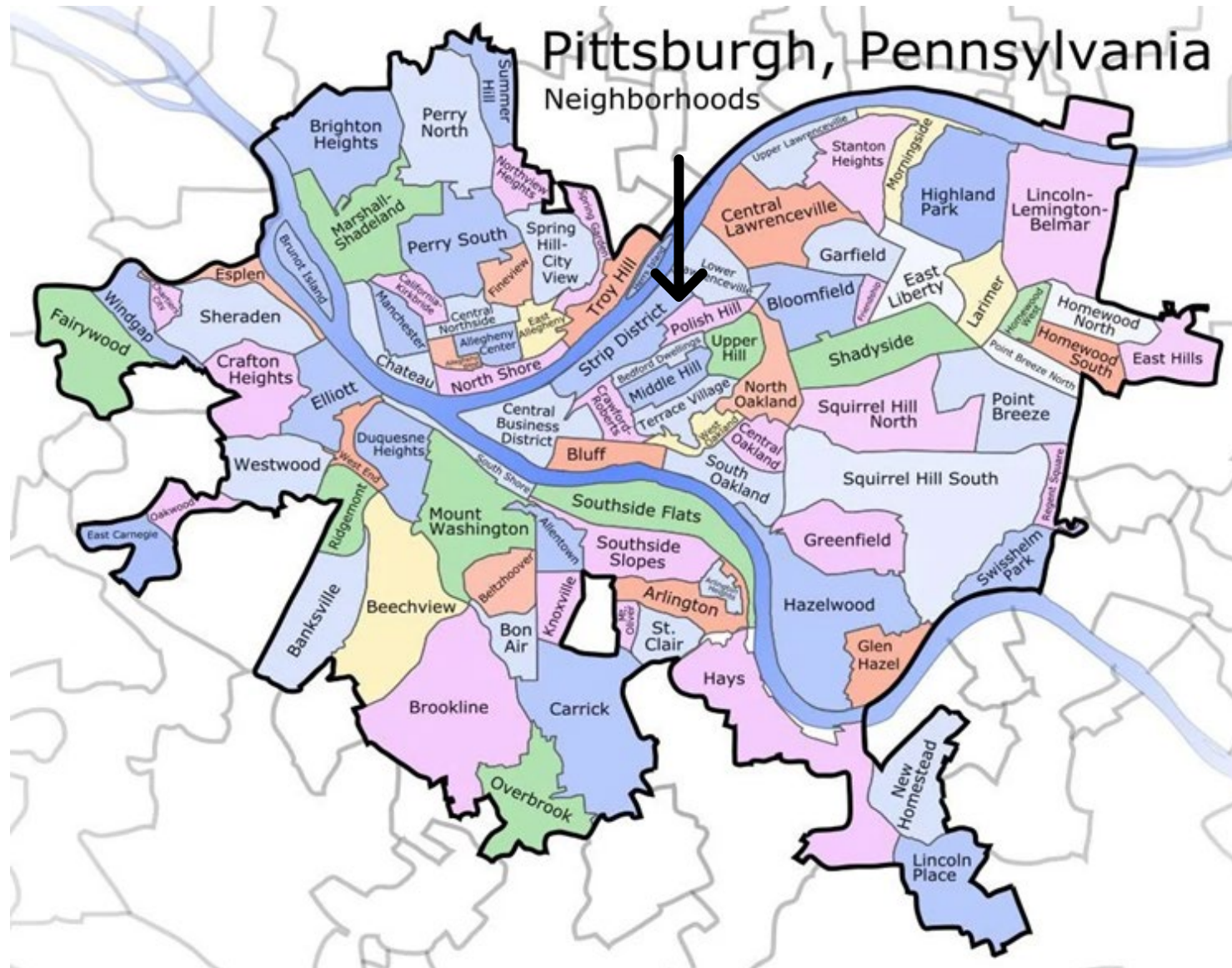
*1226 Herron Avenue
Historic Landmark Nomination
Planning Commission Presentation*

March 25, 2025

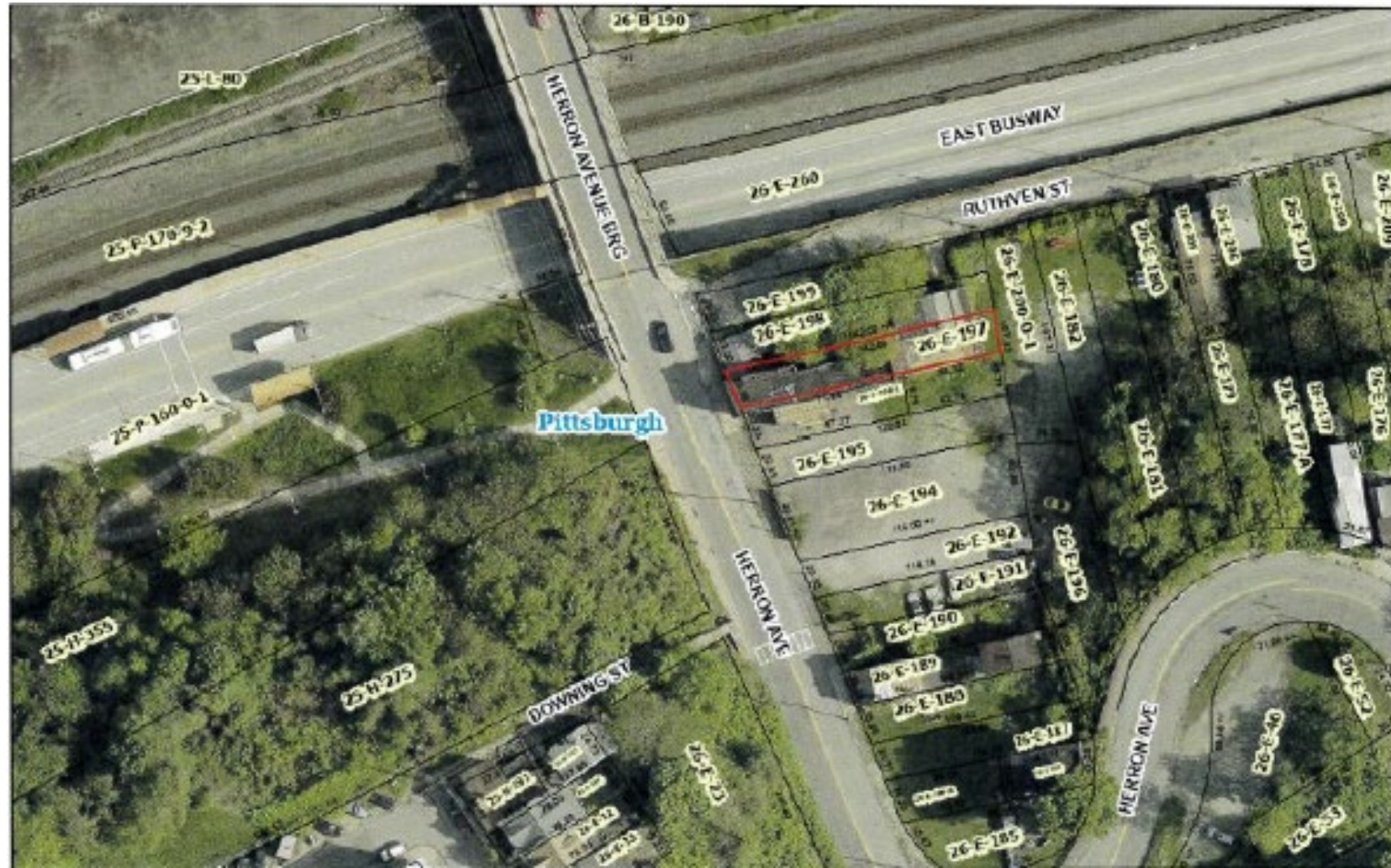
Location Map



Neighborhood Map



Site Plan






Donny's Place, facing Herron Ave, unknown source

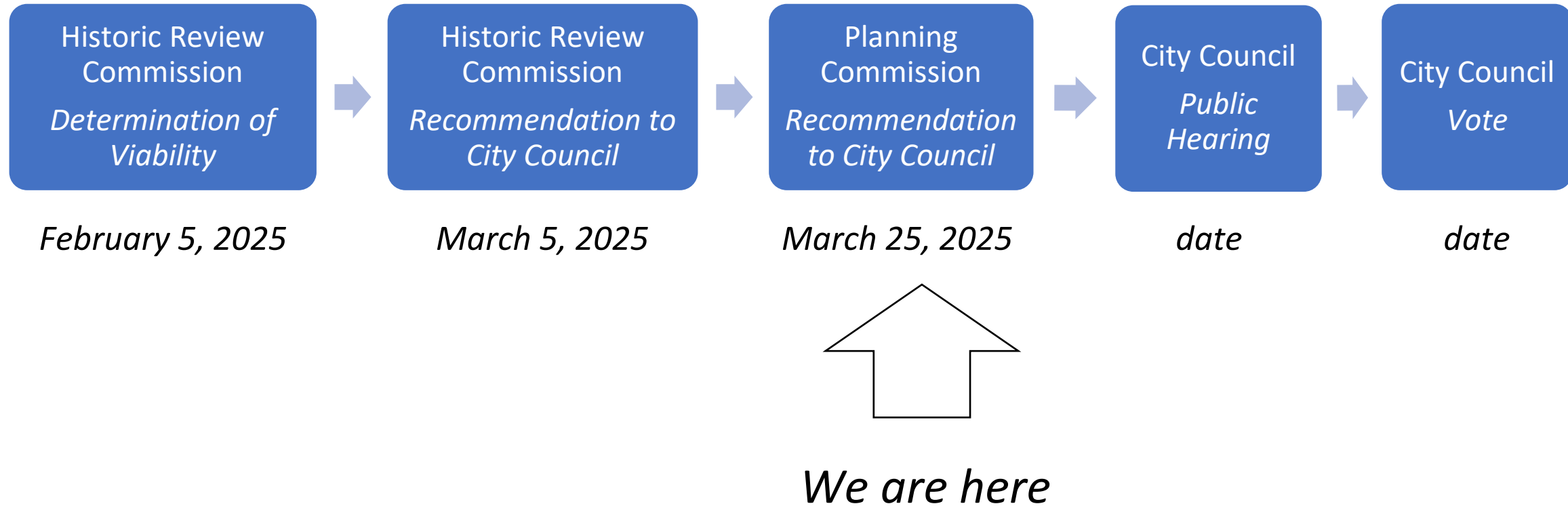






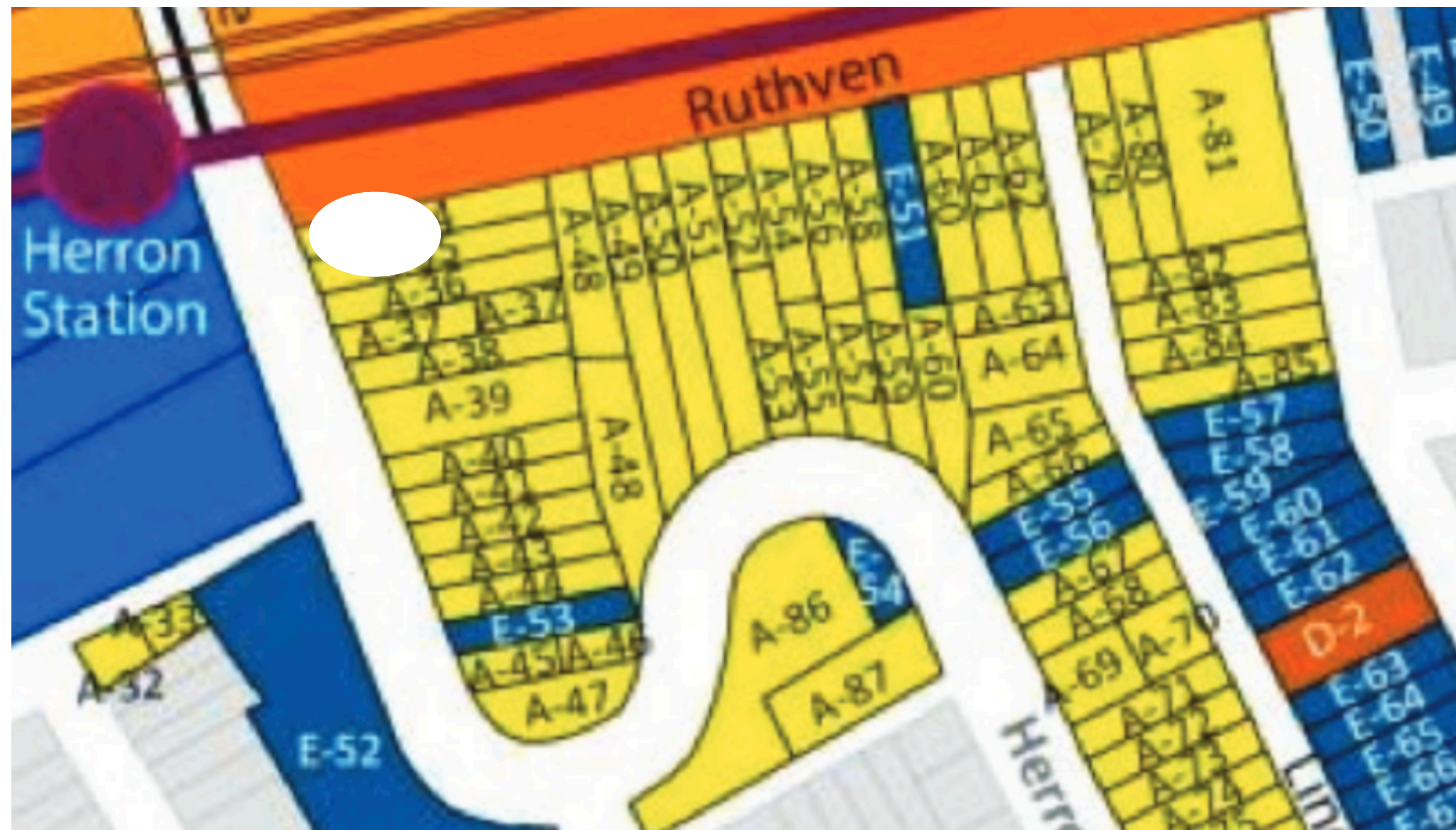
On March 5, 2025, the Historic Review
Commission voted to provide no
recommendation to City Council

Where we are in the process



What we are actually preserving

This around 2.5 acres site is home to 34 parcels that, according to the city, could hold 38 townhouses. Donny's Place, 1226 Herron Avenue, is the only building we are asking to preserve and it is between 1 to 2 of these parcels. The plan we know of from Laurel Communities is for them to build 19 townhouses, down from their original plan of 27, before inclusionary zoning passed. We want them to build around Donny's Place to preserve this invaluable history and to create something within the building that moves us forward in honoring LGBTQAI+ people and culture at an especially precarious time for the safety and care of our people.



Herron Avenue Station, East Busway Station Area Development priorities

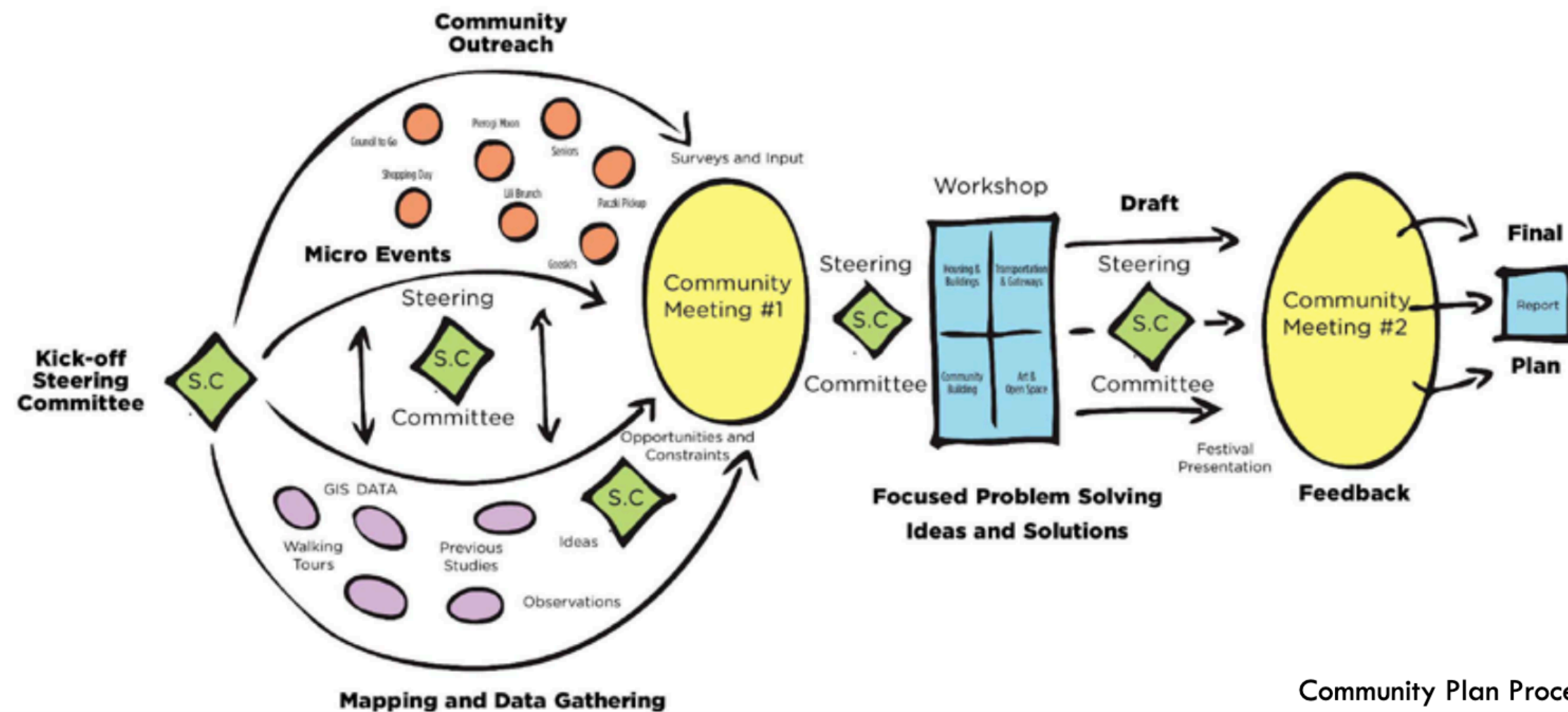
Endorsed in 2020 by Lawrenceville United, Lawrenceville Corporation, Polish Hill Civic Association, Bloomfield Development Corporation, Pittsburghers for Public Transit, Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group

- Big focus on affordable and multi-generational housing, access to transit, environmental health and sustainability.
- In relationship to the Donny's Place historic nomination:
 - Community ownership: open, public, transparent process with opportunities for community input/feedback throughout, managed in a way that's consistent with existing community processes (i.e. ground rules, communication protocols, etc.), and with decision points driven by community. New development takes into account the effect of construction and works to mitigate negative impacts on adjacent community.
 - Public space: New development creates new green and open spaces where people can gather, recreate, connect. Incorporating public art, utilizing the City's "percent for art" and outreach to local artists, makers, and fabricators.
 - Preservation of community character: history and authenticity of place should be preserved and celebrated.
 - Economic opportunity: Business development supports and grows small-scale independent retail and services in Lawrenceville, Polish Hill, Bloomfield, and the Strip District, and other nearby communities. First source hiring practices benefit local residents with new job opportunities. Resident-serving businesses preferred (grocery store from the ULI study would be awesome!). Respect for companies that make or craft things.

Polish Hill Community Plan

Finalized in 2011, it was formed through years of work and partnerships and is the most recent of its kind.

The focus is on 1) Housing and Buildings; 2) Traffic, Transportation and Gateways; 3) Open Space and Art; and 4) Community Building.



Community Plan Process Diagram

Polish Hill Community Plan, continued

In relationship to the Donny's Place historic nomination:

- Residents are in consensus: they appreciate the many unique characteristics of Polish Hill and wish to nurture and grow the many good qualities that already exist, most prominently the strong sense of community. Develop strategies to preserve history, heritage, and culture. The physical environment should support the core ingredients in quality of life — connectedness, hospitality, care, generosity, and creative expression - and derive from the diverse character of the residents. Preserve existing buildings.
- Self-designed projects are preferable to those that are developer driven.
- Fostering a culture of innovation within the neighborhood. How Polish Hill can be a neighborhood of “firsts”, or a role model for other Pittsburgh neighborhoods.
- Vacant Buildings and Small-Scale Development - The scale and eclectic look of the neighborhood make Polish Hill such an appealing place to live. Residents do not want to see wide-scale tear downs; we value preserving and building on what we have. Our goal is to remove barriers to vacant property acquisition, encourage renovations and support new small-scale infill and micro-housing developments.
- The green spaces that surround and permeate Polish Hill are some of the neighborhood's greatest assets, and residents want to preserve and strengthen these distinct features, particularly as gateways to greenways and public transportation such as the East Busway
- The Bloomfield Bridge, Lower Herron Avenue, 28th Street Bridge, Bigelow Boulevard Gateway improvements will identify the neighborhood, improve image ability, and calm traffic. Polish Hill seeks to green these public spaces and encourage public art projects for the neighborhood.
- Create public spaces that are welcoming and inspiring, where people can congregate in a safe, positive, supportive, friendly environment.
- Encourage more events and venues for visual art, performance and other creative activities. Creating social spaces (third places) within the neighborhood; develop community events. People building, (education, environment, programs, arts). Economic development—bringing business and commercial development opportunities: (businesses, live-work, studios, etc).

City of Pittsburgh Neighborhood Plan Guide

Adopted in March of 2020, this guide creates a standard for the development of neighborhood plans that can be formally adopted by the City Planning Commission.

- The city goals laid out are: EQUITY, SUSTAINABILITY, AND RESILIENCY
- The City’s Public Engagement Guide provides additional guidance on these topics as they relate to developing activities so that they ensure participation from “hard to reach” groups that have been historically left out of planning discussions
- An important task in the planning process is to gain an understanding of the neighborhood by learning about the community’s history, demographics, and built environment.
- Make the vision statement by finding the community’s aspirations for the future of the neighborhood. It describes desired change and identifies existing characteristics or conditions that the community wants to preserve.
- Within the Community chapter, Cultural Heritage and Preservation is required. Examples given are:

Cultural Heritage and Preservation

Distinct character and culture will be preserved in ways that contribute to a high quality of life.

- **Number of buildings of historic character preserved.**
- **Number of historic/cultural preservation projects completed and programs operated annually.**
- **Number of public art and cultural interpretive installations.**

PreservePGH

A component of PlanPGH (Pittsburgh's comprehensive plan of 2012)

- Foster a sense of citywide community while strengthening neighborhood identities
- Capitalize on Pittsburgh diverse natural and cultural resources
- Attract heritage tourism spending
- Part of neighborhood fabric
- In Polish Hill, aim to preserve the historic form and pattern of hillside development and the neighborhood views when considering building demolition and new construction

Urban Land Institute

A technical assistance panel on the Herron Station Area East Busway Pittsburgh, released in 2017

- “The site has great potential in its historic buildings and vacant land” and stresses “respect for historic assets.” (This is while Donny’s was open for business, so it is not mentioned as a historic site, it was very present at the time.)
- “The site is a confluence of edges and needs community engagement in planning.”



The ULI Herron Station TAP Study Area in Northeast Pittsburgh

National Trust for Historic Preservation - LGBTQ History Is American History

“One of the key challenges that continue to threaten those queer historic places is the fact that many are located in places that often experience revitalization/redevelopment...Given that change/development happens in more marginalized communities, we have lost many LGBTQ historic places. Scholarship that we have often showcases what once was (but is no longer). *“... One of the best aspects of the scholarship that has been produced is that places that have not been lost will have chances at survival, and possible preservation/adaptive re-use.”*



- They documented bars, community centers, meeting places, political offices, businesses, places of worship, doctors' offices, scientific laboratories, and even space ports across every American state and territory.
- Referencing the Stonewall memorial: “For myself and other LGBTQ people I’ve spoken to, the significance of being seen and recognized as important to America and American history is huge. Until very recently, the government has acted in opposition to LGBTQ people, contributing to our marginalization.” - Megan E. Springate
- As the Trump administration removes the references to trans and queer people from that very same monument, as the government acts in opposition to the LGBTQAI2S+ people yet again, this is even more important in the year 2025.

Neighbors share about the unique, distinctive, familiar presence of Donny's

“Absolutely. The silhouette of Donnys, nestled where it sits at the foot of Herron hill, is so representative of "old" Pittsburgh, a very recent history that is being disappeared before our eyes in favor of new, often inequitable, development...It signifies crossing the threshold into Polish Hill, a neighborhood that is changing at an alarming rate. We must ask ourselves, as these meaningful old buildings are razed and the cityscape is changed, who does this change serve?”

“Passing by Donny's reminds me of the conversations and laughter I would often hear coming from the fenced in patio on Ruthven. I would absolutely miss seeing the Donny's place building if it were to disappear. It has been a visual staple there for as long as I can remember.”

“As a 15 year resident of Polish Hill I have benefitted from the presence of Donny's Place as a cultural symbol and historical meeting place for the marginalized LGBT community. Important aspects of Polish Hill's history as a neighborhood are embodied in Donny's Place including its Eastern European immigrant roots and later its tolerance and welcoming of marginalized communities. The freestanding brick building stands as a threshold entering and exiting this unique Pittsburgh neighborhood.”

Neighbors share about the unique, distinctive, familiar presence of Donny's

“Donny's place feels like a gateway into/out of the neighborhood; riding by it on bike or bus, motorcycle or car, it serves as a symbol of the city's, and especially the neighborhood's history of community building, celebration, and mischief-making as a beautiful and powerful form of resistance.”

“To lose it would be to lose many stories of struggle and courage that have made Donny's Place and Polish Hill special. I have witnessed so much Pittsburgh cultural and architectural history being lost. Let's not make that mistake with Donny's Place.”

“Donny's has always felt like such an appropriate and comforting entity to have be our greeter. The combination of having such a meaningful social history, while also easily fitting in with the vernacular of the other bars in the neighborhood, it feels like an accurate representation of what happens and what has happened in polish hill, and in Pittsburgh in general. It stands out almost like the well devised first sentence in a story, creating a microcosm of the bigger story.”

“[For it to disappear,] would be an act of cultural erasure. What happened at Donny's was special for Pittsburgh, and representative of a broader moment in American queer history that should always be remembered. How can people know what's possible if they don't have thoughtful ways to remember their history? I think polish hill would lose a piece of its story, and that moment of entering the neighborhood when you go past Donnys will never get that story back, and I think people will regret that later, people will want to be able to look at it and touch it.”



Thank You