THE OVERLOOK

October 2026 *The official newsletter of the Fineview Citizens Council and Perry Hilltop Citizens Council* *No. 31*





160 steppers on the starting line at Lanark and Catoma. (Photo by Jo Deming)

31st Fineview Step Challenge in the books

If you've been hearing whispers of a new sports dynasty murmuring throughout Fineview, you can trace them back to the Overlook, early in the morning on October 3, when Mary Kowalski of Hollidaysburg crossed the Fineview Step Challenge finish line first among women for the second year in a row — beating her own time from last year by a whole two minutes, completing our grueling, five-mile course in 44 minutes and 21 seconds.

She was among 160 steppers who came from 25 towns and cities in 7 states to take on our 31st Step Challenge. Pittsburgh's weather even played nice for our guests: temperatures in the high 60s and barely a cloud in the sky.

We had more than 40 volunteers, serving as marshals who guided and encouraged steppers, as well as servers who provided water throughout the route and refreshments at the finish line.

Our fastest participant overall was Pittsburgh's own Kevin Bellanca, who finished in 40 minutes and 58 seconds, a pace of 8:11/mile. Erin Franke and Shann Riley of Pittsburgh finished second and third among women; Michal Kawecki of Gibsonia and Pace Nalbone of Pittsburgh took the silver and bronze among the men. Our fastest non-binary stepper was Ciara Stehley.

Our top-finishing Fineview resident was Jamie Wiggan, who notched a respectable 10th-place finish overall.

As in past years, runners received a special handmade set of stairs as their award along with gift cards from Pro Bike Run, Appalachian Running Co., and Fleet Feet.

This year, we capped off the event with a shot of pickle juice from a local company, The Brinery.

Many thanks to GCXC for timing the race and providing logistical support again this year.

And extra special thanks to our Step Challenge committee as well as our Step Challenge coordinator, Jo Deming. Our team was glad for the opportunity to share the importance of caring for our community, including: our staircases, green spaces, affordable homes, and our neighbors.

JOIN US AT OUR NEXT MONTHLY MEETING!

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 27, 6–8 PM
2610 MAPLE AVE.

CONNECT WITH NEIGHBORS, HEAR UPDATES FROM POLICE AND ELECTED OFFICIALS, DISCUSS NEIGHBORHOOD IDEAS AND CONCERNS.

MONTHLY MEETINGS ARE ON 4TH TUESDAYS. MEETING LOCATIONS ALTERNATE BETWEEN FINEVIEW AND PERRY HILLTOP.

Committee Briefs

Housing Working Group: On October 5, we talked through some next steps for a couple of community agreements with developers: Costello Properties, which is working to bring new housing to Buena Vista Street, and Urban Impact, which hopes to renovate a structure on its campus on North Charles Street. (A zoning hearing on Urban Impact's project took place on October 1; the Zoning Board has not issued a decision as of press time.)

We discussed the need to put additional pressure on Rising Tides Partners and the city to resolve legal issues pertaining to 2539 Perrysville Ave. and to repair damage from a recent fire as soon as possible.

There are no updates on City Council's proposals to regulate short-term rentals (e.g. Airbnbs). We await the Planning Commission's recommendation on the zoning bill.

Finally, we heard an update on the county's proposal to establish a winter warming shelter in Polish Hill, which will be the subject of a zoning hearing in November. We do not expect that effort to impact the county's plans to re-open for another season the warming shelter that has operated at Northside Partnership

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Board election results

With all the ballots tallied – 12 having been cast by Fineview members and 21 from Perry Hilltop – we can officially announce the winners of our 2026 board elections.

In Fineview, Ian Thomas and Peter Turner will be joining the board in January, while Chris Caldwell and Diondré Johnson have been re-elected.

In Perry Hilltop, Pauline Criswell and Robert Parise will join the board in the new year, while Andres Pierre, Renee Robinson, and Gia Haley have been re-elected. Gia, Pauline, and Robert were elected as write-in candidates. Pauline has served as a

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We're hiring!

After several months of conferring and planning, we are finally accepting applications for the next Executive Director of the Fineview and Perry Hilltop Citizens Councils.

The full job description is available on Indeed, via the QR link above. Briefly put, we are seeking a leader to build partnerships that benefit our neighbors, deepen resident engagement, boost our financial sustainability, support our excellent staff, and translate community needs into measurable results.

Candidates must be able to delegate, promote accountability, collaborate with our members and our boards, and assemble the people power and resources that we need to advance neighborhood priorities.

We are looking for someone with five or more years of experience in a non-profit, community development, public sector, or other mission-driven setting.

We can offer a salary range of $72,000 to $82,000, with health insurance and paid time off.

Our current director, Rhonda Strozier, informed our boards in June of her plans to move on from Our Future Hilltop, graciously giving us until the end of the year to select a replacement.

For questions, please contact our board presidents, Diondré and Micki, at diondrejohnson@gmail.com and mickimcd1948@verizon.net.

$400k for childcare center at 2610 Perrysville

The Perry Hilltop Citizens Council learned last month that we have earned a $400,000 grant from the state to fund the transformation of a long-vacant American Legion hall at 2610 Perrysville Ave. into a childcare center.

The funding was secured with the help of Rep. Aerion Abney through the Local Share Account program, which distributes gaming revenue through the Commonwealth Financing Authority.

The project, which we are pursuing in partnership with local entrepreneur LaTeresa Blackwell, is years in the making. We have already gutted the building and remediated the former site of a gas station on the property.

While this grant has reduced the funding gap, this will ultimately be a seven-figure renovation project, so we will remain in the fundraising phase for some time.

Spooky, Scary Info

There are several things to know ahead of Halloween.

We have decorations and some costumes available for anyone who needs them at our Free Store. Email outreach@ourfuturehilltop.org to inquire.

We will be holding our annual Trunk or Treat on Wednesday, October 28 from 5 to 7 p.m. in the Pittsburgh Project parking lot, 2801 N. Charles St. Please stop by, bring your kids, get some candy, say hi to your neighbors! If you can donate candy or use your vehicle to participate, please email Katie at admin@ourfuturehilltop.org.

Official trick-or-treating hours will be 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. on the 31st. Kids and parents, have fun! Motorists, please use extra caution that evening.

One last thing to know: This newsletter is haunted. Reader beware.

Boards, continued

Perry Hilltop board member in the past.

Diondré and Gia will continue to serve as "emeritus" board members. Per our by-laws, board members who once lived in the neighborhoods but no longer do may serve as emeritus board members.

All board members served staggered two-year terms.

New "Mommy Maintenance" group at Allegheny Dwellings

Our outreach staffers, Callie DiSabato and Casohn Peoples, in partnership with Project Butterfly, have organized a committee of Allegheny Dwellings residents — in particular, moms. The new Mommy Maintenance Group will be a safe space to nurture the mental and physical health of nurturers.

At our first meeting under the new moniker, on September 30, we had eight attendees with one lead volunteer. We distributed make-up gift bags (donated by Target) and children's clothes from our Free Store. We also started brainstorming what a heart health event hosted at the Dwellings by ourselves and Project Butterfly might look like.

This group developed out of our monthly engagements at the Dwellings, which have included informational sessions, supplies distros, and arts-and-crafts programming.

We are working on scheduling our next meeting. Email Callie at callie@ourfuturehilltop.org to get involved.

Your Ad Here?

Last month, one of our members asked us a neat question: could a business here in Fineview or Perry Hilltop advertise in *The Overlook*?

Well — sure, why not!

This newsletter — like most print media today, alas — is not a money-maker. Your membership fees more or less cover our costs. (Mailing in bulk puts us back about $40 every month, for example, so a lifetime membership buys us a month's worth of postage.)

So when we put together an edition of *The Overlook*, selling ads is not top of mind. But keeping our members informed about our neighborhoods absolutely *is*, which is why we are putting out this call to neighborhood businesses to advertise on these pages.

This is only for businesses based in Fineview or Perry Hilltop. We are seriously constrained on space, so these are going to be small ads: think 2.5 inches by 2.5 inches. We also intend for this to be a cheap way for businesses to reach potential customers. A 2.5" by 2.5" ad will cost $25 per issue.

Questions? Interested? Email the editor: jhanrahan1501@gmail.com.

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O'Connor budget means big changes for housing, anti-violence funding

Charlie Wolfson, Public Source

Mayor Corey O'Connor painted a dire picture of Pittsburgh's financial future on Wednesday, one in which the city would completely run out of money by 2032 if it stays on the current course.

The mayor submitted a 2027 budget proposal to City Council that would draw $26 million from the city's reserve fund to cover costs next year, even after cutting spending 2% from this year's level. He proposes cutting trust funds related to violence prevention and affordable housing, though he said in a press release the underlying programs will go on.

The proposal does not include a tax increase, a year after council approved a 20% hike in the property levy for 2026.

He warned that without his proposed changes, the city would face a future without rec centers, pools or parks, with more flooding, litter and blight, and worse public safety services.

"The alternative to my budget would be massive city staff layoffs, which we know from history affects how we deliver fundamental services, and, in turn, is felt most significantly in our most disadvantaged communities."

The mayor's plan for 2027 calls for pulling $26 million out of the reserve fund to meet expenses, while cutting costs in three primary ways:

- Cutting off funding to the Stop The Violence Trust Fund
- Cutting off funding to the Housing Opportunity Fund Trust Fund
- Decreasing the city's pension contributions.

The city has historically transferred $10 million to each of the two trust funds annually. The budget proposal also decreases pension contributions from $112 million to $105 million.

O'Connor referred to the trust funds as an accounting "gimmick" used by past mayors to avoid counting the expenses against the city's revenues when balancing the budget. He said the funds' present cash reserves "will allow us to continue to invest in the critical work paid through these trust funds without the transfers."

NEIGHBORHOOD HIGHLIGHTS:

- $1.35 million for construction of the Fowler Park rec center
- $350k for Fowler Park work
- Maple Ave. Bridge on track for $4-million renovation next year
- Budget for Swindell Bridge project roughly halved; work still expected to begin in 2028

The 179-page operating budget document shows the mayor is adding 63 jobs to the Department of Public Safety that previously were part of the Stop The Violence fund. The budget does not make it immediately clear how the Housing Opportunity Fund programs would continue.

The five-year plan released Wednesday predicts an annual deficit of more than $25 million from 2028 to 2031, plunging the fund balance below the legally-required threshold of 10% of operating expenses — and emptying the fund completely before 2031 ends.

O'Connor is also proposing to cut the amount of money the city spends out of pocket on infrastructure and capital projects next year. While the total capital budget would increase next year, from $112 million to $145 million, the amount that comes from the city's general fund would decrease from $21 million to $9 million. The rest comes from bond borrowing and federal and state sources.

The release of a preliminary operating budget starts a process which continues with a formal introduction in early November; a late autumn of City Council meetings, public hearings and amendments; and ultimately votes by year's end.

This excerpt of an article that first appeared on Pittsburgh's Public Source on September 30, 2026, is republished here under Creative Commons. Read the full article at publicsource.org.

Did you know that...

- you live in the Zone 1 Public Safety district?
- you have an active Northside Zone 1 Public Safety Council?
- meetings are held on the 1st Thursday of most months at 6:00 pm., and that you can attend in person at the Mattress Factory (509 Jacksonia St.) or via Zoom?
- you can stay up to date by emailing us at zone1psc@gmail.com?
- you can anonymously report safety concerns by emailing zone1tips@pittsburgh.pa.gov?

JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP TO RECEIVE THIS NEWSLETTER BY MAIL!

As a member of the Fineview Citizens Council or Perry Hilltop Citizens Council, we will mail you this newsletter every month. We will keep you up to date on our organizations' activities, goings-on in our neighborhoods, and opportunities for you to get involved. You will also be eligible to cast your ballot in our annual board elections. If you attend at least one community meeting this year, you may run for election to our boards.

To join or renew, fill out this form and mail it along with the appropriate payment (check only, please) to our office at 2438 Wilson Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15214. **You can also join or renew on our website, ourfuturehilltop.org.** Memberships run from January through December. Your contributions to the organizations are tax-deductible.

Name(s):

Address:

Neighborhood / Zip:

Phone:

Email:

___ New Resident (first year) $0

___ Financial hardship $0

___ Individual $5

___ Organization $10

___ Household $10

___ Business (non-voting) $20

___ Non-resident (non-voting) $10

___ Lifetime individual/household $40

Real Estate Tracker

The transactions listed below closed in August and September. (We cut this feature from last month's newsletter for space, hence the two months of transactions included here.)

Perry Hilltop: 2345 Perrysville Ave., OGR Realty III LP to Vires Et Virtus LLC, $317,000 (sale in July, recorded in August). 316 Chester Ave., PRF 100 LLC to Jamie Butler, $150,000 (sale in July, recorded in August). Two parcels at 2716 N. Charles St., Pittsburgh Project to City of Pittsburgh, $1. 525 Chautauqua St., Albert and Essie Humphries to Chrome Federal Credit Union, $35,000. 1845 Clayton Ave., Unit 202, Kelsey Kanspedos to Taylor Blackman, $269,000. 145 Marshall Ave., Charles McCreary to Geisler Family Holdings LLC, $110,000. 1731 Perrysville Ave., Ahmad Alhajhusain to Salamanca US LLC, $1. 2344 Maple Ave., OGR Realty III LP to Prestige World Wide PCD LLC, $195,000. 715 Chautauqua Ct., All About You Realty LLC to Maria Ramirez Henao and Kurt Diederich, $175,000. 3 E. McIntyre Ave., Luxxe Life Bundles LLC to Portfolio AI 027 LLC, $296,000.

Fineview: 1907 Meadville St., Pittsburgh Land Bank to Hope Housing Development & Solutions LLC, $30,000.

Briefs, continued

Project, 2610 Maple Ave., during the past two winters.

Litter Brigade: Our last big push for the year was prepping for the Step Challenge. We'll be out there through the end of daylight saving time, tidying up around the neighborhood — no heavy-lifting scheduled. Then it's "so long 'til spring."

Gardening Club: Ditto, 'til spring. Keep an eye out for Mulching Day 2027 at Unity Corner in May or June. Please feel free to harvest seeds from our wildflowers lining the front of the Carrie Street Garden.

Interested in getting involved? Email us: info@ourfuturehilltop.org

UPCOMING EVENTS

COMMUNITY GATHERING
OCTOBER 27, 6–8 P.M.
2610 MAPLE AVE.

WORKSHOP: WORKING WITH A BANKER
OCTOBER 28, 6–7:30 P.M.
ONLINE: BIT.LY/FCCPHCCRSVP

HOUSING WORKING GROUP
NOVEMBER 2, 6–7:30 P.M.
ONLINE (CONTACT US FOR INFO)

ELECTION DAY
NOVEMBER 3, 7 A.M.–8 P.M.
GO VOTE!

COMMUNITY GATHERING + POTLUCK
NOVEMBER 24, 6–8 P.M.
439 CATOMA ST.

PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Some of the volunteers and staff who worked together to pull off yet another Fineview Step Challenge. (Photo by Aaron Jones)

Have a photo you'd like to share? Email us: info@ourfuturehilltop.org

Fineview & Perry Hilltop Citizens Councils
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