Association’s preference for Allen St.: wider sidewalks and traffic lanes, but parking on only the north side

By RICHARD R. HAYNES

We don’t know yet what the final redesign of Allen Street will be like. The city will make that decision by November.

But the board of the Allentown Association Sept. 9 narrowly recommended a slightly modified version of one of the four alternatives that designers had unveiled July 19. By a 9-7 vote, the board recommended:

• Two-way traffic on lanes that would be 11-feet wide, one foot wider than currently exists, but one foot less than envisioned in Alternative B from the pros hired by the city, Halvorsen Design Consultants and engineering firm Bergmann Associates.
• Expanding sidewalks to 15 feet, about 3 feet wider than exists now.
• Eliminating parking on the south side of the street (about 46 spaces), leaving 72 spaces in an 8-foot parking lane on the north side.
• No dedicated bike lanes.

Arriving at the recommendation wasn’t easy, and the Association knows that many people will object to the elimination of 46 parking spaces and the exclusion of bike lanes.

“Everybody wants everything,” Continued on Page 7

Get set for a great time: Oct. 11 Fall Festival on Allen St.

This is going to be big – and it’s going to be fun.

The new Allentown Fall Festival will bring music, food, art and entertainment for all ages to the eastern end of Allen Street on Saturday, Oct. 11.

For years, the Allentown Association had sponsored an Oktoberfest at the west end of Allen. That was an adult-oriented annual event that ended more than a decade ago.

The Fall Festival will be for everyone, including children. It will be much bigger, and it will be on Allen from Delaware Avenue to Main Street.

Events begin at 9 a.m. with the 4-hour Buffalo Bike Ride sponsored by GObike Buffalo. Cyclists will embark on a fabulous sightseeing tour that touches the major Olmsted parks, returning at 1 p.m., when Fall Festival activities begin.

The event is a casual ride, not a race. It’s about 25 miles long, with an option to head back around the halfway point in LaSalle Park. The fee is $35 to participate, which includes an event T-shirt and a voucher for food at the festival. Cyclists can register the morning of the event, but are encouraged to register in advance online at gobikebuffalo.wildapricot.org.

At the festival, an area dedicated to free family-appropriate events runs from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. The family Continued on Page 4

For updates, follow on Twitter @AllentownAssoc and like the Association on Facebook.
Neighborhood news notes . . .

Annual membership meeting is Oct. 28
The Association’s annual membership meeting will be held at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 28, in the Karpeles Manuscript Library Museum, 220 North St. at Elmwood.

It’s an opportunity for members to get updates and ask questions about the Allen Street Extension Project that will redesign our main business strip and better link us to the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus – and about the new initiatives the Association has embarked on this year: the Allentown Farmers’ Market, the neighborhood tours, the Fall Festival and the Garage and Porch Sale.

Members also will vote on nominees to the board of directors.

Anyone interested in joining the board should contact Nominating Committee chair Caitlin Crowell as soon as possible. Her email is: clcrowell@gmail.com.

Farmers Market continues to Oct. 31
The Allentown Farmers Market is a great place to get local vegetables, fruit and other wholesome foods – and it continues 4-7 p.m. every Friday through October. Autumn produce is some of the region’s best, especially the many varieties of apples grown in Western New York, along with squash, melons, beets, corn, tomatoes and pumpkins. The market is held on South Elmwood Avenue between Virginia and Edward streets in front of the Adult Learning Center.

College Street Gallery closes
The College Street Gallery, one of Allentown’s longest running art dealers, closed Aug. 8 after 17 years at 244 Allen St. after the owner was unable to continue his rental arrangement.

Mike Mulley, a respected photographer who has had collections of his work published, said the gallery’s distinctiveness was in featuring local artists in all media. In recent years a cooperative of about 20 local artists provided exhibits.

He will continue to operate Queen City Gallery in the Market Arcade at 617 Main St., where the College Street Gallery’s “open mic” for musicians, writers and poets will now be held Thursdays from 7 to 9 p.m. Mike Mulley is a long-time Allentown activist and a former Association board member.

Entrepreneurs to party on Allen St.
You’ve probably heard about the 43North competition, in which 11 brilliant business ideas will get funding for start-up ventures in Buffalo. The top winner will get $1 million; six will get $500,000 and four will get $250,000. Events begin Oct. 24 in the BNMC’s Design Innovation Garage and culminate Oct. 30 in Shea’s Performing Arts Center.

But the west end of Allen Street is where scores of enthusiastic contestants and other entrepreneurs will be eating, drinking and networking during the Buffalo Startup Scramble the night of Oct. 28. After they hear a Google-sponsored speaker at 6 p.m., they’ll be out partying from about 7:30 to 11 p.m. Welcome to Allentown, brainiacs.

You can learn all about 43North at www.43north.org.

Neighborhood stalwart Bill Gallivan dies
William L. Gallivan, a longtime Association member and resident of Mariner Street, died Aug. 18.

Bill was the first head of the Allentown Community Center, a neighborhood resource founded by the Association in 1971 that continues today as the Clarkson Center. In Allentown’s raucous days, he and others formed what the Buffalo Courier-Express called a “bar patrol” that resulted one summer in nine arrests and convictions of criminals and troublemakers.

He was one of the lead organizers of the Buffalo Bliz-
zard Ball, the fundraiser for the Association that commemorated the infamous “Blizzard of ’77,” the record-breaking snow event of Jan. 28, 1977, that paralyzed the city for days. The ball was a black-tie and evening-gown gala that for years poked fun at the city’s stormy misfortune while celebrating the winter resilience of its residents. The last ball was held in 1997 on the blizzard’s 20th anniversary.

Bill was a Buffalo Public Schools art teacher, and after retiring volunteered for years at School 36 on Days Park, now Elmwood Village Charter School. He was the father of three successful men whom he raised on Mariner Street, and the grandfather of seven.

Bulk trash collection is week of Sept. 28

Allentown residents in the Fillmore Council District should put bulk trash out on Sunday, Sept. 28, for pickup by the city sometime that week. (Portions of the neighborhood in the Ellicott and Niagara districts had trash collections in August.) The pile can be as large as 12 feet long, 3 feet high and 3 feet wide. No TVs, computers or other electronics, nor any hazardous waste is allowed. Electronics can be dropped off at 1120 Seneca St. any weekday 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. or the first Saturday of each month 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Hazardous waste drop-offs are announced periodically, but none is scheduled currently.

Allen West Festival earned $23,000

The 2014 Allen West Festival was another huge success, netting $23,000 to support the Association and all it does for the neighborhood. The Association would have struggled to produce this event without the help of generous sponsors. Please take a look at their websites and give them a shot at your business:


The planter at Main and Allen has a new look.

Gateway planter is refurbished

Max Stephan, chair of the Association’s Beautification Committee and owner of Allentown Landscape, in July led volunteers in refurbishing the 12-year-old “Welcome to Allentown” structure at Main and Allen streets. They removed old plantings and soil, and added new soil and hardy shrubs and perennials. The Association had allocated $2,000 for the project in the spring.

Max also leads the Allentown Litter Mob that actually has fun cleaning up trash the third Thursday of every month. Volunteers meet at Fat Bob’s Smokehouse on Virginia Place, spend an hour picking up trash, and then return to Fat Bob’s for snacks and a drink for $5. Often the Association hides a few Lottery tickets in the clean-up area as a little added incentive for the volunteers.

Congratulations on birth

Association director Laine Walnicki has given birth to an 8-pound, 8-ounce baby boy, Archer Allen Walnicki. Mom, baby and dad Glenn are all doing well.

The new mom had been secretary of the board until late in her pregnancy. Jillian Stiefel has been elected acting secretary.
Custom glassware gallery is among new businesses

By PETE CARROLL

Among Allentown’s new businesses, Buffalo L.U.V., 74 Allen St., is a gallery offering the new and unusual, a welcome addition to our community’s variety of retail establishments.

Glassware is the gallery’s specialty. Matthew Lazzaro, a glassblower, makes the glassware – artistic pieces as well as functional items such as tobacco pipes – and also offers glassblowing demonstrations.

He and his partner, Taylor Clark, the store manager, also have an eclectic selection of art, furniture, antiques, bric-a-brac and jewelry. The gallery is open from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. six days a week and noon to 6 p.m. Sundays. Phone: 578-0003; email: Buffaloluvglasswork@gmail.com.

Presto, a new restaurant at 59 Allen St., corner of Franklin Street, has been opened by Janelle Dubenion and Lucille Alteri, offering lunches and dinners, with dine-in, take-out and delivery services. Menu offerings include dinners (changing by the season), sandwiches, salads, beverages and desserts.

The owners have a combined 30 years of experience in the restaurant businesses. Their mission statement: “To expeditiously serve delicious, healthy fare made with quality ingredients in a welcoming atmosphere…”

Presto is open daily except Sundays from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Phone: 768-0160; on Facebook at presto Buffalo NY.

Allentown Nail Salon has been opened at 95 Allen St. by Ann Cao. Open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Sundays by appointment. Phone: 883-0403; website: AllentownNailSalon.com.

Mercury Salon, at 43 Allen St., is a new “urban, unisex styling salon,” says its owner Felicia Cardinale, with 22 years experience as a hair stylist. Open Tuesday through Saturday by appointment only. Phone: 883-8800; on Facebook at Mercury Salon.

There’ll be music, food, arts, crafts, and kids’ activities

Continued from Page One

festival, sponsored by Buffalo Niagara Medial Campus, will be at the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural National Historic site at 641 Delaware, midway between Allen and North Streets.

There’ll be a petting zoo, face painting, acrobats, musicians, farmers’ market stands and pumpkin painting for children.

The intersection of Pearl and Allen will feature live music on stage from 2 to 9 p.m., with some of Buffalo’s favorite bands. WLKK 107.7 “The Lake” will have a DJ on site.

An Artisan Market will begin at 2 p.m., offering arts and crafts for sale, as well as food from local vendors.

Beer and soft drinks will be available throughout the day.

Restaurants will be open, of course. And on Franklin and Pearl streets, food trucks will serve their specialties.

Six off-duty Buffalo police offers will provide security.

There will be 18 portable toilets on site.

Allen will be closed from Delaware to Main, and Franklin and North Pearl will be closed from Allen to North streets.

Association director Jim Nash has been leading the effort to put this festival together. He has lined up a number of volunteers, but some additional help could be used the day of the event. Anyone who would like to help out should call the Association at 881-1024.

The festival would not be possible without the support of generous sponsors:

Labatt Blue, Try-It Distributing, First Niagara Bank, 107.7 Alt Buffalo, Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, Eric Mower+Associates, Buffalo Spree, the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural National Historic Site and Pepsi-Cola.
Do you dare spend an October evening at twilight walking through a neighborhood whose streets were once the scene of a bloody War of 1812 battlefield filled with dead bodies scalped and tomahawked?

Or pass under the shadows cast by dark brick Victorian mansions ornamented with grotesque gargoyles, soaring chimneys, and witch’s hat turrets?

Or tread upon the vestiges of abandoned graveyards and a tombstone maker?

With all of this haunting history and imagery found within Allentown, it’s no wonder the neighborhood has inspired legends of ghosts and ghouls through the years, captured by its resident literary artists.

Get in the Halloween spirit and sign up for the Allentown Literary Ghost Walks. They’re two-hour tours in which you’ll experience the shudder of an authentic Victorian ghost story as you hear tales that inspired writers such as Mark Twain, Anna Katharine Green, and Harry Castlemo, against the backdrop of authentic Victorian homes with a reputation for being haunted.

There are two different walking routes: Allentown Central, which includes North Street, Irving Place, Park Street, and Virginia Street; and Allentown West, which includes Symphony Circle, College Street, Cottage Street, and Day’s Park.

The cost of each tour is $10, and they will be held whether skies are clear or raining.

The tours will be led by Christopher Brown, and proceeds benefit the Allentown Association and Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural National Historic Site.

No reservations are necessary. Just show up at the starting points listed below before each tour begins:

**Allentown Central**, Sat. Oct. 11, 4 p.m., and Fri., Oct 24, 6 p.m.; Begins at TR Inaugural Site, 641 Delaware Ave.

**Allentown West**, Sat. Oct. 25, 4 p.m.; Begins at Karpeles Museum, 453 Porter Ave. *(Note: NOT the Karpeles at Elmwood Avenue and North Street.)*

Have an educational, scary good time
Calendar of Autumn Events


Allentown Association, 14 Allen St. Allentown Fall Festival, Oct. 11; Board of Directors meeting, Oct. 14, Nov. 11, 7 p.m.; Litter Mob clean-up volunteers, Sept. 18, Oct. 16, Nov. 20, Fat Bob’s, 41 Virginia Place. Annual membership meeting, Oct. 28, 7 to 9 p.m., Karpeles North Hall, 220 North St. For information call 881-1024, see www.allentown.org.

Allentown walking tours, sponsored by the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural National Historic Site and the Allentown Association, starting at the site, 641 Delaware Ave. Allentown East, Sept. 15, 10 a.m. to noon; Sept. 21, 1 to 3 p.m., Sept. 22, 10 a.m. to noon, Sept. 29, 10 a.m. to noon. Allentown West, starting at the statue of Chopin at Symphony Circle, Sept. 27, 10 a.m. to noon. For information, call 884-0095.

Allentown Literary Ghost Walks, Allentown Central, Oct. 11, 4 p.m. and Oct. 24, 6 p.m., begins at TR Inaugural Site, 641 Delaware Ave.; Allentown West, Oct. 25, 4 p.m., begins at Karpeles Museum, 453 Porter Ave.

Art Dialogue Gallery, 5 Linwood Ave., Tuesday to Friday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Shirley Gassman, small works, through Oct. 3; Fran Noonan, oil paintings, Oct. 7-Nov. 29. For information call 885-2251 or see wnyag.com.

Artists Group Gallery, 1 Linwood Ave., Shirley Gassman, master works, through Oct. 3; annual regional artists exhibition, juried by Aaron Ott, Oct. 10 to Nov. 14.

Betty’s restaurant, 370 Virginia St. at College St., Buffalo photographs from the 1940s and ’50s by Jerry Greenberg, Sept. 15 to Nov. 16; work created by students of Autism Services Inc., Nov. 17 to Jan. 18.

Buffalo Big Print Gallery, 78 Allen St. Monday through Friday, 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Recent paintings by John Berg, through Dec. 26. For information call 884-1777.

Casa de Arte, 141 Elmwood Ave., Thursdays and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.; Fridays, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and 6 to 9 p.m., and by appointment. “Exploring Space,” sculpture by Nancy Frankel, and “Color and Gender in Aztec and Maya Cultures,” mixed media by Mara Odette, Oct. 2 to Oct. 26. “Day of the Dead,” Nov. 1 to Nov. 16. See casadeartegallery.com, call 227-0271.

First Friday Gallery Tours, Allentown galleries will have extended evening hours, some with new exhibits and receptions, Oct. 3, Nov. 7 and Dec. 5. See firstfridaysallentown.org.

Glow Gallery, 224 Allen St. Tuesday to Saturday, 1 to 5 p.m. Street installation by Al Gilewicz, Sept. 19, 4 to 10 p.m. Paintings by George Hilham, Oct. 3 to 15. Illustrations by Jim Wojciech, Oct. 17 to 22. Paintings by Anthony Melice, Oct. 24 to 29. Photography by Thom Neill, Nov. 7 to 19. For information call 983-2112.

Indigo Art gallery, 47 Allen St., Tuesday to Friday, noon to 5, Saturday, noon to 3. “Want More,” works of Felice Koenig and Kevin Kedler, through Oct. 4. “Affinities,” mixed media by Nancy Belfer, Oct. 11 to Nov. 9. For information, call 984-9572.

Karpeles Manuscript Library Museum, 220 North St., 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily except Mondays. Early professional baseball, through December. For information call 885-1986.

Kleinhaus Music Hall, Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra: Classics series, Dark Secrets, Bluebeard and Chiuly, Oct. 1, 7 p.m. Rachmaninoff Festival, Oct. 10, 10:30 a.m. to 11, 8 p.m., Oct. 19, 2:30 p.m. Strauss and Moliere, Oct. 31, 10:30 a.m., Nov. 1, 8 p.m., Nov. 2, 2:30 p.m. Max Returns, Nov. 15, 8 p.m. Michael Ludwig plays Sibelius, Dec. 6, 8 p.m., Dec. 7, 2:30 p.m. Classical Christmas, Dec. 12, 10:30 a.m., Dec. 13, 8 p.m. Pops series: Matthews Morrison, Sept. 27, 8 p.m., The Hit Men, Oct. 24, 10:30 a.m., Glorious Gerschwin, Nov. 8, 8 p.m., Celtic Thunder, Dec. 10, 8 p.m., A Tribute to Neil Diamond with Jay White, Nov. 22, 8 p.m. Children’s series, Symphonic Spooktacular, Oct. 26, 2:30 p.m. Jingle Bell Jam, Dec. 14, 2:30 p.m. For tickets, call 885-5000 or see bpo.org. Buffalo Chamber Music Society concerts, Jerusalem Quartet, Oct. 14, 8 p.m. Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Nov. 11, 8 p.m. Amadeus Trio, Dec. 9, 8 p.m. For tickets, call 462-4939 or visit www.bflochambermusic.org.


Pausa Art House, 19 Wadsworth St., music and entertainment, café, 6 p.m. to midnight, Thursday, Friday, Saturday. For information, call 697-9069, see pausaarthouse.com.

Rust Belt Books, 202 Allen St. For information call 885-9535.

Studio Hart, 65 Allen St. Tuesday through Friday, 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday noon to 4 p.m. Mixed media collages by Gerald Mead, through Sept. 27. Works by Ann Bonte, Oct. 3-25. “Toy” a group exhibit, Nov. 7 to Dec. 24. For information call 536-8337.

Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural National Historic Site (Wilcox Mansion), 641 Delaware Ave. Hours, Monday to Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. For information, call 884-0095, see www.trsite.org.

The Calendar of Events is compiled by Pete Carroll. Email submissions to him at pcbonjoura@gmail.com.
There’s virtually no support for making Allen one-way

Continued from Page One

said Association Executive Director Andrew Eisenhart, “but we only have 62 feet to work with.” That’s the entire width of the public right-of-way – 62 feet for sidewalks, trees and bicycle racks, traffic, parking, and if they were to be included, bike lanes.

A complicating factor is that the state demands a minimum of 11-foot-wide traffic lanes on new or rebuilt streets. Allen’s now are only 10.

Making Allen one-way would free up space for bike lanes and wider sidewalks, but that idea seems to have no support. Businesses have been vocal in opposing a one-way street, and leadership of the Association hates the idea.

It would fetter the neighborhood link to the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus that the Association has been working to enhance.

So keeping Allen two-way with the state-mandated two additional feet for traffic and keeping two lanes of parking would mean that sidewalks would have to be narrowed by one foot. That would force restaurants to eliminate or reduce sidewalk cafe space and would be a blatant rejection of the urban pedestrian-friendly ethos that the redesign of Allen is supposed to enhance.

Association Director Christopher Brown summed up the dilemma for businesses: “Lose sidewalk space, or lose parking spaces?”

People can always find a parking spot on or near Allen during the day, said Association President Jonathan White. It’s only at night – especially Thursday through Saturday nights when the bars are busiest – that those 46 spaces will be missed, he said.

“If we make Allen Street great, people will come one way or another,” he said, citing the Allentown Art Festival, where thousands of attendees park far away and walk in.

The board’s recommendation goes to the Association’s Allen Street Improvement Steering Committee, which includes residents, business people and Association directors. Three members of that committee – Sokol, Matt Moscati and Vice President Brian Gould – also sit with representatives of the city, state and BNMC on the project’s key technical advisory committee.

Sokol cautioned that other groups may weigh in with their design preferences that could influence the city’s final decisions.

It is fairly certain that new street will be curbless, have movable bollards that separate pedestrian areas from traffic while allowing flexibility for increasing the pedestrian zone for special events, and interpretive elements and new plantings.

Groundbreaking is slated for next June. Underground utility work must be completed first, and National Fuel Gas already has begun replacing gas lines along the street.
**Allentown property owners: Be sure to check out the stories on these 4 pages. You’ll learn about why it’s so important to keep the historic features of your home or building intact; about free energy audits and subsidized loans and grants to make your structure energy-efficient; about availability of low-cost home-improvement loans, and about grants to hide ugly outdoor gas meters.**

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**Yes, this is a historic preservation district**

*That designation keeps the fabric of the neighborhood intact, allows tax credits for improvements, and helps keep property values growing*

**By CHRISTOPHER N. BROWN**

**Allentown** property owners should consider themselves lucky that the neighborhood is both a Buffalo Historic District and a New York State and National Historic District.

The city designation provides oversight to ensure the historic integrity of the neighborhood, and the state and national designation opens the door to special tax credits for home and building maintenance.

Since 1978, when Allentown became a city historic district, property owners have had to get approval from the Buffalo Preservation Board to make exterior modifications to their homes or buildings. That oversight has protected many structures that otherwise would have been lost, and has helped maintain Allentown’s historic character and increase property values.

In 1980 nearly all the neighborhood west of Delaware Avenue also became a State and National Historic District, and in 2012 the balance of Allentown did, too, opening the door to the financial incentives.

The New York State Historic Homeowner Tax Credit Program (for owner-occupied structures) allows recovery of 20 percent of the cost of approved work, up to $50,000 in tax credits. The New York State Commercial Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program (for income producing structures) is similar, but with a maximum benefit of $5 million. Commercial projects approved by the state also qualify for 20 percent tax credits from the federal government. Last year, these two programs were extended through 2019.

For the state tax credit, properties must be located in a federal census tract that is at or below the state family median income level. (Allentown meets that requirement, even though it is not required for a related federal commercial tax credit program).

Proposed exterior changes are evaluated against the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation. Among those standards is retaining and repairing original historic materials everywhere possible.

It’s also the environmentally conscientious choice, reducing the amount of construction and demolition debris that is hauled to a landfill.

There is another serious consequence of the loss of historic materials. It may result in the difference between a structure being designated either “contributing” or “noncontributing” to the historic district.

Contributing structures are eligible for those tax credits; noncontributing ones are not, unless the proposed renovations will restore the structure to contributing status.

A noncontributing structure is one that:

1. Does not add to the district’s sense of time and place, and historical development.
2. Or where the location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association have been so altered or have so deteriorated that the overall integrity of the building has been irretrievably lost.

The first criterion is simple enough to identify. Allentown’s period of significance ends in 1963; therefore buildings constructed subsequently are by default noncontributing to the district. An example is the Tim Horton's Café and Bake Shop on Delaware Avenue south of Allen Street.

The second criterion – irretrievably lost integrity – is much more difficult to clearly define.

At least one circa-1870 structure in Allentown which was initially identified as a contributing structure was demoted upon further review by the National Park Service to noncontributing when the owner of the building attempted to apply for historic tax credits. In this specific instance, historic structural material had been removed from the building’s exterior, thus causing it to lose its historic integrity.

This example serves as a cautionary tale for owners to not remove historic elements that contribute to the character of their home or building.
In its nearly 40-year history, the Buffalo Preservation Board has provided immeasurable value as it has reviewed hundreds of exterior change proposals to structures in Allentown as a public service meant to protect society’s investment in, and enjoyment of, historic properties.

In the case where the National Park Service decided the building in Allentown was noncontributing, it was determined its loss of structural material was performed after Allentown’s period of significance (1963) and before changes were required to be authorized by the Buffalo Preservation Board (1978). While some inappropriate changes made to buildings in Allentown have merely covered up or encapsulated historic materials and therefore can be reversed (such as asphalt siding), other changes (such as mineral fiber siding and vinyl replacement windows) may have irreversibly destroyed a building’s historic character.

Vinyl windows, in particular, are of such concern that in 2006, the Preservation League of New York State designated Original & Historic Wood Windows as one of its “Seven to Save Endangered Properties Program.”

It is important that Allentown’s property owners support and subscribe to the Buffalo Preservation Board’s change-approval process.

Sometimes the Preservation Board must deny proposed changes or suggest alternatives. Sometimes, well-intentioned owners propose new structures or changes to existing ones that may negatively affect their neighbors’ enjoyment and investment, to say nothing of the character or long-term value of the property itself. Other times, contractors or handymen (who should know better) lead owners to believe a “rip and replace” strategy is appropriate for their historic homes.

Lastly, there are a few people who seek to exploit the value others have created over the decades, but don’t care enough about their neighbors, the character of their buildings, or the law to seek Preservation Board approval for changes. They usually end up in Housing Court.

**Bottom line: Don’t make any exterior changes to your Allentown property without doing some research.**

Where to go for more information

Here are some resources to check before planning exterior changes to your historic property:

- **The Buffalo Preservation Board.** Go to the city’s website, www.ci.buffalo.ny.us; click on the “City Departments” tab; then on “Office of Strategic Planning,” then on “Historic Preservation,” and finally on “Informational Brochure.”

- **The State Historic Preservation Office** at www.nysparks.com/shpo. It has details on the state’s residential historic tax credits, technical assistance on preservation issues and advice on weatherization.

- **The National Park Service** at www.nps.gov/tps. It offers 47 downloadable briefs that address all types of preservation issues and offer practical advice on repair and maintenance of historic properties, as well as details on the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Historic Preservation and an explanation of the commercial tax-credit program.
Get a free energy audit

Even high-income homeowners qualify – and there are grants and loans available, too

Now’s the time for Allentown homeowners to think about taking steps to cut winter’s heat bills.

Even high-income homeowners can get a free or very cheap energy audit and low-rate loans to pay for insulation, weather stripping and energy-efficient furnaces and hot water tanks thanks to PUSH Green, a program run by People United for Sustainable Housing (PUSH Buffalo) with the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority.

PUSH Green, 456 Massachusetts Ave., has three staffers certified by the Building Performance Institute to do residential energy audits.

The audits are free for households with annual income up to $132,200; cost only $50 for income up to $165,250; $100 up to $198,300; $150 up to $231,350; $200 up to $264,400, and market rate for higher incomes.

PUSH Green works with about a half-dozen BPI-accredited contractors to do the work the audits show is needed. Its staff will inspect the work to ensure it was performed properly. Of course, homeowners are free to do the work themselves or to hire contractors on their own.

But using BPI-accredited contractors opens the door to 3.49% loans through NYSERDA. One option will put the monthly payment on homeowners’ electric bills, simplifying repayment. Loans normally total up to $13,000, but can go as high as $25,000 for unusually high-payoff projects.

Using a BPI-accredited contractor also makes homeowners eligible for 10 percent rebates from the state.

Homeowners with household income below $52,880 (80 percent of the county median) qualify for a grant of up to $5,000 to help cover costs.

In addition, National Fuel Gas Corp. gives rebates of $300 or $400 on energy-efficient furnaces; $400 on hot water boilers, $25 on programmable thermostats, as well as rebates on some other appliances.

Jenny Bruce, who bought 5 St. John’s Place in 2012, got a PUSH Green audit that resulted in installation of a high-energy furnace and hot water tank; insulation in her basement, attic and exterior walls; repair of a gas leak and air sealing. The Smart Energy Loan she took out to do the work is budget-neutral, with payments met by the money she’s saving on energy costs.

“It feels great to turn an old house that needs a lot of upgrading into a home that is healthy and efficient,” she said.

For details on PUSH Green’s programs, go to www.pushgreenwny.org or call 886-1780. The website also contains a link to information on the state rebates.

Details on National Fuel’s rebates are at nationalfuelforthought.com or call (800) 365-3234.

Small businesses and non-profits can get energy aid, too

Small businesses and non-profits with fewer than 10 employees can also get free energy audits, low-cost loans and incentive grants to improve the energy efficiency within their buildings through PUSH Green.

Some 55 Buffalo businesses, including a few in Allentown, have taken advantage of the free audits, many of which are in line for grants, said Sheila Richards-Perez, an architect who is PUSH’s Commercial Energy Advocate and heads its Building Retrofit Program.

C.J. Brown Energy P.C. performs the audits, looking for energy-wasting conditions such as inefficient mechanical equipment, insufficient insulation and outdated electrical fixtures and equipment. Should the energy-efficiency upgrades identified in the audit be installed, the PUSH Building Retrofit Grant can be used to remedy conditions that need to be repaired in order to make the investment in energy efficiency worthwhile – among things considered are leaking roofs, asbestos and lead, mold, and moisture.

After all the costs of the repairs and energy-enhancing measures are identified, PUSH Green works with the business to secure NYSERDA loans and a reimbursement grant to help pay for the work.

The PUSH Green grant program may pay up to half the cost of fixing the deteriorating conditions, and NYSERDA offers a zero-interest loan of up to $50,000 for half the cost of energy improvements.

For more information, email sheila@pushbuffalo.org and check out www.pushgreenwny.org.
Low-rate home improvement loans available

No income limitations on borrowing at prime plus 1%

By PETE CARROLL

Allentown homeowners needing to borrow money to rehabilitate their homes may obtain loans from West Side Neighborhood Housing Services Inc., a not-for-profit corporation formed to promote home ownership.

There is no income level to qualify. Loans are available for both single-family homes and for multi-unit dwellings as long as the owner resides on site.

The loan program is aimed primarily as an alternative for people who might not be eligible for bank loans.

“We make sure a family doesn’t get scammed. The contractor doesn’t get paid until the job is done,” said Linda S. Chiarenza, executive director of the agency.

West Side Neighborhood Housing Services, 459 Connecticut St., also provides grants to help low-income people become homeowners. A $5,000 grant is available under a city contract for first-time home buyers meeting income requirements which include a maximum of $35,600 a year for single persons and $40,650 for a couple.

About 10 loans and grants have been made in Allentown over the past two years, for home purchases as well as rehabilitation, Chiarenza said.

For rehabilitation loans, the terms are affordable, prime plus 1 percent. That’s 4.25 percent.

For home-purchase loans, the rates are comparable to banks, she added. The agency has an agreement with First Niagara Bank providing deferment of closing costs until the new purchaser sells the house.

West Side Neighborhood Housing Services can be reached at 885-2344 or by email at infor@wsnhs.org. More information is on the agency’s web site, www.wsnhs.org.

It is a member of NeighborWorks, a national non-profit chartered and funded by Congress.

Association administers grants to camouflage outdoor gas meters

By PETE CARROLL

Grants are available to property owners in Buffalo historic districts to hide those ugly outdoor gas meters that National Fuel now installs outside homes and buildings.

The grants are for up to $200 on a single-family house, and up to $400 for a residential building of two, three or four units with multiple meters. A matching grant is available for income-producing properties not owner-occupied, with an allocation of $50 per meter and a maximum of $500.

The Allentown Association administers the program from funds provided by the National Fuel Gas Co. Foundation. Besides Allentown, eligible districts are: Hamlin Park, Linwood, Delaware, West Village, 500 block of Main Street, Joseph Ellicott, Theater, Cobblestone and Genesee Gateway. Grants are also available for designated landmarks not in historic districts. They are not available for national historic districts that are not also Buffalo historic districts.

Property owners may use plants or other materials to mitigate the unsightliness of gas meters so long as the technical guidelines, available at www.allentown.org, are followed. Application must be made before work begins. Go to the website, scroll down to Gas Meter Grant for the application and guidelines.

The guidelines were set by National Fuel to ensure safety and access to the meters. Application forms may be downloaded from the website or obtained by calling the Association at 881-1024.

National Fuel has a continuing program of replacing low-pressure gas meters in basements with high-pressure meters outside.

If you are contacted by National Fuel or a contractor for the gas company to relocate your gas meters outside, contact the Association for advice on what to do. You may be able to find an alternative to the location suggested by the gas company, such as on the side of your residence rather than in front.
ALLENTOWN ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP FORM

NAME: ____________________________________________________________________________________

ADDRESS:  ________________________________________________________________________________

TELEPHONE: __________________________   EMAIL: ____________________________________________

If business, name of manager or owner:  _______________________________________________________

Please select a contribution level:

- Benefactor $1000
- Patron $ 500
- Contributing $ 250
- Sustaining $ 100
- Business $ 50
- Family $ 40
- Individual $ 35
- Student/Senior $ 20

Optional activities/committees you’d like to help with:

- Beautification
- Housing/Historic Preservation
- Business development
- Nomination to the board of directors
- Allen West Festival (adjacent to Allentown Art Festival)
- Hot dog stand at Allentown Art Festival
- Secrets of Allentown (annual tour of homes)
- Special events/50th anniversary events

All contributions are tax-deductible. Please make a check payable to: The Allentown Association, Inc.
Mail to: Allentown Association, 14 Allen Street, Buffalo, NY 14202.

Please feel free to enclose a note with any ideas you have for improving the neighborhood, or suggestions for strategies you think the Association should be pursuing or additional activities you think it should engage in.