

**NOMINATION OF MURRAY HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT EXPANSION TO BE DESIGNATED AS A CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT**

CITY COUNCIL REPORT

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**THE MURRAY HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT EXPANSION NOMINATION STAFF REPORT**

**Name of Property** ..... 1163 and 1165 Murray Hill Avenues  
**Address of Property** ..... 1163 and 1165 Murray Hill Avenues  
**Property Owner** ..... Chatham University and Lenz Revocable Living Trust  
**Nominated by:** ..... Denise H. Holland  
**Date Received:** ..... November 18, 2021  
**Parcel No.:** ..... 85-K-225 and 85-K-227  
**Ward:** ..... 14th  
**Zoning Classification:** ..... EMI and R1D-L  
**Neighborhood** ..... Squirrel Hill North  
**Council District:** ..... 8<sup>th</sup> - Strassburger

**FORMAL ACTION REQUIRED BY THE HISTORIC REVIEW COMMISSION:**

1. Act on the Preliminary Determination of Eligibility for Historic Designation (1 June 2022)
2. Conduct a public hearing for the Historic Designation (6 July 2022)
3. Review the Report prepared by staff for the property in question, and make a recommendation to the City Council on the Historic Designation (6 July 2022)

**FORMAL ACTION REQUIRED BY THE PLANNING COMMISSION:**

4. Conduct a public hearing for the Historic Designation (26 July 2022)
5. Review the recommendations of the Historic Review Commission and make a recommendation to the City Council on the Historic Designation (26 July 2022)

**FORMAL ACTION REQUIRED BY THE CITY COUNCIL:**

6. Conduct a public hearing within 120 days of the Planning Commission vote (23 November 2022).
7. Review the recommendations of the Historic Review Commission and the City Planning Commission and take action on the historic designation

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## CITY COUNCIL REPORT

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### FACTS

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1. On November 18, 2021, the staff of the Historic Review Commission accepted an application for the nomination of Murray Hill Properties to be designated as a City Historic District Expansion.
2. **Description of the Murray Hill Historic District Expansion** (as *extracted from the nomination form*)

The side-by-side houses at 1163 and 1165 Murray Hill Avenue are both three-bay, three-story brick residential structures built in the Colonial Revival style inc. 1900. They feature two dormers on the third floor and are an identical match to each other. They are remnants of a longer streetscape that stretched down the eastern side of the street which included five additional houses. They were demolished in 1969 to create the King Mellon Library. The two remaining structures from this streetscape include 1163 and 1165 Murray Hill.

As such, these two homes are an integral part of the Murray Hill Avenue Historic District that was created by an act of City Council in 2000. For reasons that are unknown, 1163 and 1165 were left off the original nomination list This nomination corrects that error.

Murray Hill Avenue has received considerable attention for its stunning vistas, eclectic mix of architectural types, comfortable density, and large shade trees that line the street. Walter Kidney writes in *Landmark Architecture* (1985) that, "Murray Hill Avenue, parallel to Woodland Road, is decidedly middleclass by comparison, but for sheer picturesqueness, it is one of the most enjoyable streets in Pittsburgh" (273). Two black-and-white photographs on p.448 and a full-page color photograph on p.196 in Landmarks' 1997 edition capture Murray Hill's distinction as one of the most beautiful and livable residential streets in Pittsburgh. In 2000, the Community Design Center of Pittsburgh selected Murray Hill Avenue as one of Pittsburgh's favorite Places."

Murray Hill is also featured in Barringer Pittfield's *Seeing Pittsburgh* (p. 128), as well as on page 72 of *Pittsburgh . . . Views into the 21st Century*. For many years a painting of Murray Hill homes by Henry Koerner in the PNC Bank branch on Forbes Avenue, in Squirrel Hill. In Franklin Toker's *Pittsburgh: An Urban Portrait* (1986), Murray Hill is described as "a fine street even without (Willa) Cather's presence. It is considerably enhanced by the irregularities that have developed over the years in its Belgian-block roadbed."

Of the many unique architectural styles on the street that include Queen Ann, Tudor Revival, mid-century modern, and a few others, Colonial Revival is the most prevalent As identified in the booklet, "Murray Hill Historic District"(2000), p. 25, a number of homes on Murray Hill reflect the early twentieth-century Colonial Revival style.

According to the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, the Colonial Revival style is one of the most frequently produced and enduring popular styles in America It can be seen in a seemingly endless variety throughout the state and the country and continues to influence residential architecture today. Basically, the Colonial Revival style was an effort to look back to the Federal and Georgian architecture of America's founding period for design inspiration This enthusiasm to explore the architecture of America's founding period was generated in part by the Philadelphia Centennial of 1876 celebrating the country's 100th birthday. This trend was further promoted by the Columbian Exposition of 1893, held in Chicago. "Like most revival efforts, the Colonial

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## CITY COUNCIL REPORT

---

Revival style did not generally produce true copies of earlier styles. Although, in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (1915-1935) there was a real interest in studying and duplicating Georgian period architecture. Generally, the Colonial Revival style took certain design elements

"In the 1940s and 1950s a more simplified version of the Colonial Revival style became popular for homes, usually featuring a two-story building, a side-gabled or hipped roof, classically inspired door surrounds and windows, shutters and dormers.

According to *House Beautiful*, "The Colonial Revival movement really gained nationwide momentum at the turn of the century and was extremely popular through the 1940s, further instigated by 'advances of photography and printing [which] made an abundance of true colonial precedent available to the public nationwide,' says Andrew Cogar, architect and president of Historical Concepts

The Colonial Revival style is also responsible for additional related styles prevalent on Murray Hill. The Virginia and Lee McAlester's *A Field Guide to American Houses* (1991), the authors note that: "In the years between 1880 and 1900 the Colonial Revival movement also influenced two other architectural styles: Queen Anne and Shingle" (326). Colonial Revival is fitting for Murray Hill Avenue, which supported some of Squirrel Hill's first "pioneer" settlers of the late-19th century.

### **3. History of The Murray Hill Historic District Expansion (as extracted from the nomination form)**

From 1788 to 1868, Squirrel Hill was known as Peebles Township until it was annexed by the City of Pittsburgh in 1868. One of the first landowners in Squirrel Hill and Shadyside was Robert McFarland, who owned the estate until his death in 1834. He left his estate to his three sons, John, Joseph, and William. In 1839, it was John McFarland who inherited the land on which Murray Hill was developed until he sold it to James B. Murray in 1864.

Murray Hill Avenue takes its name from an early Squirrel Hill estate owned by James B. Murray, partner in Lyon, Shorb & Company, an iron mill on Pittsburgh's South Side, and was President of the Exchange National Bank in Downtown Pittsburgh. In 1864, Murray purchased the land which would later develop into Murray Hill Avenue from John McFarland, a prominent landowner in the East End. Plat maps indicate that other parts of Squirrel Hill such as the Murdoch family property, remained undeveloped.

In July 1889, Lorenzo T. Yoder purchased the entire Murray Hill property from Annie S. Murray, the widow of James B. Murray. In 1890, the land was subdivided into residential lots known as the Ardsheil Terrace Plan of Lots and became one of the first residential streets to be developed in Squirrel Hill. According to Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation's *Landmark Architecture: Pittsburgh and Allegheny County* (1985), most homes on Murray Hill developed in the early part of the 1900s. "In general, this northern slope is rich in domestic architecture of the 1890 to 1920 period.

As one of the first "streetcar suburbs" in Pittsburgh's East End, Murray Hill was highly valued for its country-like atmosphere, yet close to city amenities. It has an impressive collection of outstanding home styles—such as Colonial Revival—and many organized in unique streetscapes along the winding cobblestone road.

Throughout its history, Murray Hill has been home to a number of nationally famous individuals, including Pulitzer Prize winning author Willa Cather (who lived at 1180 Murray Hill, another Colonial Revival home), U.S. Surgeon General Thomas Parran, who served in that role from 1936 to 1948 (1278 Murray Hill), and nationally-recognized artists Henry Koerner (1915-1991), 1046 Murray Hill, and Harry Holland (1937-1994), 1140 Murray Hill. Finally, Murray Hill Avenue was home to John Duff, Sr. (1915-

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### CITY COUNCIL REPORT

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1991), who served as the Assistant Attorney General for Pennsylvania from 1971 to 1979, and who lived at 1174 Murray Hill.

In the post-World War II era, when many city residents fled to the suburbs and left older city neighborhoods to decay, homes on Murray Hill retained their old-world charm. Many residents reversed this trend and moved to Murray Hill because of its unique character and the street's livability. However, development pressures from the adjacent college would figure prominently in Murray Hill's postwar future.

In the early 1970s, ten homes on the eastern side of Murray Hill were demolished for the construction of the Chatham College library. Later in the decade, the W.H. Brown estate at the bottom of Murray Hill at Fifth Avenue was demolished. As a result of these blows to Murray Hill, residents on the street became more engaged in maintaining the livability of the street—a special use of stewardship and loyalty that continues today.

In the early 1960s, Chatham College sought to expand their rapidly growing library collection. The old college library, the James Laughlin Memorial Library, built in 1932, was quickly becoming obsolete. In a memo to Chatham's President Edward Eddy dated October 9, 1962, Chatham's librarian noted, "remedies cannot be found by simply enlarging the James Laughlin Memorial Library.

Chatham's options were to: 1) expand the existing library, 2) join the library of the Buhl Hall of Science, or 3) select a new location. Architectural drawings were made for the second option. In the early 1960s, planners began to favor a new location on Chatham's campus. One internal memo recommended: "The natural and beautiful amphitheater of the Mellon Garden area with its adjacent reflecting pond might be an appropriate and pleasing site as campus development proceeds!" But for reasons that are not clear, attention began to shift to the quiet, residential street of Murray Hill as a possible location for the new library.

In a report to Chatham prepared by Holmstone, McMillan & Associates, Architects, a Pittsburgh architecture firm, on June 15, 1965, "the principal consideration (for the library's location) should be a reasonably central location with a single clearly defined receiving-shipping control point served from Murray Hill Avenue rather than thru the present Campus roads." The report continued to claim that, "It is not desirable to use the already limited campus land for centrally paved parking spaces."

Meanwhile, between 1963 and 1968, Chatham had quietly began acquiring the homes on the eastern side of Murray Hill (a few properties on Murray Hill had already been acquired by Chatham in the 1920s and '30s). On May 1, 1964, Chatham acquired 1155 Murray Hill; on January 4, 1965, Chatham acquired 1045 Murray Hill; and on September 1, 1965, Chatham acquired 1043 Murray Hill. All were demolished by 1970.

In 1968, Chatham began a capital campaign to construct a new library facility, named for Jennie King Mellon, Richard King Mellon's mother (a Chatham alumnus, class of 1887) on the site of ten homes on Murray Hill Avenue. Strong opposition to Chatham's plan was raised by residents of Murray Hill.

There was little due process, few hearings were held, and the issue went before the Pittsburgh City Council in 1969. Led by long-time Murray Hill resident, John Duff, residents of Murray Hill rallied to oppose Chatham's proposed demolition of homes. Mr. Duff addressed City Council on October 26, 1969, and had this to say:

(Chatham's plan) means the destruction of the street and we find ourselves trying to find some way to put it across as to why we find ourselves fighting this revered institution. I have to say we are like the members of a well-to-do, upper-class family, living in comfortable circumstances without too many

# NOMINATION OF MURRAY HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT EXPANSION TO BE DESIGNATED AS A CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT

## CITY COUNCIL REPORT

---

problems and all of a sudden our elegant, white-haired, well-groomed old mother is starting to come home every night, stinking drunk. We hate alcoholism, but how can you fight Motherhood? ... We feel strongly this plan is worst of all possible plans and if the zone is changed, it means the destruction of the street.

Unfortunately, Mr. Duff and the residents of Murray Hill lost the battle, the homes were demolished, and a new library constructed. In 1992, Murray Hill's unique Belgian block street surface was in danger of being paved over, joining a growing number of cobblestone streets around the city. But Murray Hill's residents worked diligently with City Councilman Dan Colten to prevent the cobblestones from being paved. In 1993, the blocks were restored by the City of Pittsburgh at a cost of approximately \$225,000. Residents organized another effort to preserve and protect homes on the street in 1999. In 2000, Pittsburgh City Council created the Murray Hill Avenue Historic District.

Mr. Duff's effort was not in vain. The Murray Hill Avenue Historic District was successfully created in 2000. Mr. Duff taught us that, with proper foresight and planning, we can avoid similar battles in the future. All too often, preservationists find themselves fighting in the eleventh hour to save a highly regarded historic landmark. Fortunately, this nomination avoids that fate.

In 2020, neighbors organized a "Murray Hill Association" to begin a productive and ongoing dialogue with Chatham University as it begins new expansion plans. The Association is represented by more than 50 residents in nearly every home in the 1000, 1100, and 1200 blocks on Murray Hill. Everyone who supports this nomination seeks to avoid mass demolitions or inappropriate new construction on Murray Hill. As it was in 2000, this nomination is a positive, proactive step to maintain the livability of the Murray Hill Avenue Historic District.

#### **4. Significance of The Murray Hill Historic District Expansion** *(as extracted from the nomination form)*

The *Pittsburgh Code of Ordinances, Title 11, Historic Preservation, Chapter 1: Historic Structures, Districts, Sites and Objects* lists ten criteria, at least one of which must be met for Historic Designation. The nominator is of the opinion that the Murray Hill Historic District Expansion meets several of the criteria as follows.

The homes at 1163 and 1165 Murray Hill Avenue meet the following Criteria 2, 3, 8, and 10 for eligibility as a historic district.

2. Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the architectural, historic, architectural, archaeological, or related aspects of the development of the City of Pittsburgh, State of Pennsylvania, Mid-Atlantic region, or the United States:

*The homes at 1163 & 1165 Murray Hill are similar in style to several notable homes on the street, including the Willa Cather home at 1180 Murray Hill.*

3. Its exemplification of an architectural type, style or design distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship;

*1163 Murray Hill is constructed in the turn-of-the-twentieth-century Colonial Revival style, which is represented by a number of homes on Murray Hill. It stands as an outstanding example of this style, a contributing structure to the existing historic district.*

# NOMINATION OF MURRAY HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT EXPANSION TO BE DESIGNATED AS A CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT

## CITY COUNCIL REPORT

---

8. **Its exemplification of a pattern of neighborhood development or settlement significant to the cultural history or traditions of the City, whose components may lack individual distinction;**

*1163 Murray Hill was originally included in Lorenzo B. Yoder's Ardsheil Terrace Plan of Lots for Murray Hill Avenue, one of the first residential streets planned for Squirrel Hill in 1890.*

10. Its unique location and distinctive physical appearance or presence representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or the City of Pittsburgh.

*1163, along with 1165 Murray Hill, are the last surviving Colonial Revival homes that were part of the streetscape on the eastern side of the street which were demolished in 1970 to create the library. At least five homes that were demolished represented the Colonial Revival style.*

### **5. Integrity**

1163 and 1165 are without their porches. However, seven other Colonial Revival houses on Murray Hill do not have porches, including: 1022, 1026, 1160, 1172, 1212, 1238, and 1228. The porches were likely removed in the 1960s due to maintenance issues. Overall, the properties retain a moderate amount of integrity.

6. Photos



1163 AND 1165 Murray Hill Avenue



Murray Hill Avenue Facing Southwest



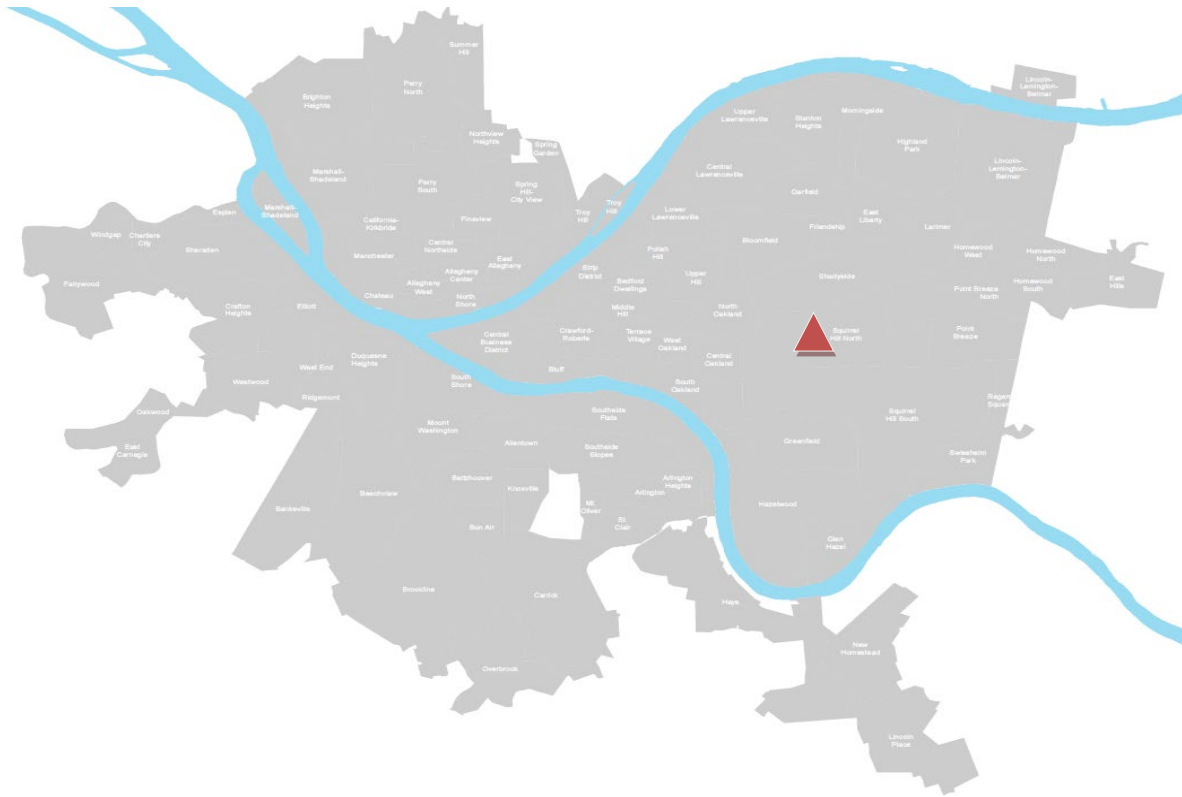


Subject properties facing northwest



Murray Hill Avenue at subject properties facing South

## 7. Maps



## 8. Recommendation of the Historic Review Commission

The Historic Review Commission held a public hearing regarding the designation of The Murray Hill Historic District Expansion. On 6 July 2022 the Historic Review Commission voted to recommend to City Council that it designate The Murray Hill Historic District Expansion as historic.

## 9. Recommendation of the City Planning Commission

The City Planning Commission held a public hearing regarding the designation of the Murray Hill Historic District Expansion. On 26 July 2022, the Planning Commission voted to recommend to City Council that it designate The Murray Hill Historic District Expansion as historic.

**10. Meeting Minutes**

**HRC MINUTES -1 JUNE 2022 – PRELIMINARY DETERMINATION HEARING**

***Murray Hill Historic District  
Expansion  
1163 & 1165 Murray Hill Avenue***

*Historic Nomination*

**Owner:**  
Chatham University  
Lenz Revocable Trust

Ward: 14th  
Lot and Block: 85-K-225,227

**Nominator:**  
Dan Holland

Inspector:  
Council District: 8th  
Nominations Received: 11/18/22

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**National Register Status:    Listed:                    Eligible:**

**Proposed Changes:** Nomination for historic designation.

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Discussion:

1. Ms. Quinn gives a short presentation on the property. She states that the nominator found that the property is significant under **Criterion 8**, exemplification of a pattern of neighborhood development or settlement significant to the cultural history or traditions of the City, whose components may lack individual distinction. She states that the property retains integrity and recommends that the Commission provide a positive determination of nomination viability.
2. Mr. Dan Holland speaks as the nominator to provide some additional background.
3. Ms. Aguirre notes that the nomination says that the original front porches were removed, but that integrity is maintained as other houses on the street have had their porches removed as well.
4. Mr. Holland states that the porches were removed prior to the 1970s.
5. The Commission discusses the nomination.

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Motion:

1. Mr. Snipe moves to provide a positive determination of nomination viability based on **Criterion 8**.
  2. Mr. Dash seconds.
  3. Ms. Aguirre asks for a vote; all are in favor and motion carries.
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**HRC MINUTES – 6 JULY 2022- RECOMMENDATION**

***Murray Hill Historic District  
Expansion  
1163 & 1165 Murray Hill Avenue***

***Historic Nomination***

**Owner:**  
Chatham University  
Lenz Revocable Trust

Ward: 14th

Lot and Block: 85-K-225,227

**Nominator:**  
Dan Holland

Inspector:

Council District: 8th

Nominations Received: 11/18/22

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**National Register Status:    Listed:                    Eligible:**

**Proposed Changes:** Nomination for historic designation.

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Discussion:

6. Ms. Quinn gives a short presentation on the property. She states that the properties were inadvertently left out of the original Murray Hill designation, and that one of the owners has provided a letter of support for the designation. She states that the nominator found that the property is significant under **Criterion 8**, exemplification of a pattern of neighborhood development or settlement significant to the cultural history or traditions of the City, whose components may lack individual distinction. She states that the properties retain integrity and recommends that the Commission provide a positive recommendation to City Council.
7. Ms. Aguirre asks for public comment; there is none. She asks for comments and questions from Commissioners.
8. Ms. Quinn clarifies that the owners have thought that the houses were in the district and have been complying with the guidelines all along.
9. The Commission discusses the nomination.

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Motion:

4. Mr. Hill moves to provide a positive recommendation to City Council based on **Criterion 8**.
  5. Mr. Snipe seconds.
  6. Ms. Aguirre asks for a vote; all are in favor and motion carries.
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**PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES –26 JULY 2022- RECOMMENDATION**

4. Hearing and Action DCP-HN-2021-01608 – Murray Hill Historic District Expansion  
Historic Nomination Squirrel Hill Neighborhood

Ms Quinn presented the historic expansion and nomination of identical houses 1163 & 1165 Murray Hill Avenue constructed around 1900. She explained the Historic Review Commission used Criteria Eight, exemplification of a pattern of neighborhood development or settlement significant to the cultural history or traditions of the city, to explain the historic significance of these properties. Responses to questions by commissioners in a previous briefing regarding the nomination, included an email in support of the nomination from the current owners of 1165 Murray Hill Ave; the style of properties located along Murray Hill Avenue is mostly colonial revival but also includes Queen Anne, Tudor Revival, and mid-century modern properties; no information regarding the architect of the properties could be located; a reply to an email to the nominator of the properties stated he was out of the country but did his best to provide answers to the commissioner's questions. He did not appear to be present at today's hearing and action. Acting Chair O'Neill call for public testimony; hearing none she call for commissioners' comments; hearing none Ms O'Neill asked if anything further was heard from the university who owns the other house.

Ms Quinn replied the university is currently using that house as office space and plans to continue it as office space, the university is aware of the nomination.

Acting Chair O'Neill verified with Ms Quinn the Historic Review Commission provided a positive recommendation to City Council

MOTION:

The Planning Commission of the City of Pittsburgh provide a positive recommendation regarding the Murray Hill Avenue expansion nomination to City Council

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MOVED BY: Ms Dick

SECONDED BY: Ms Burton-Faulk

IN FAVOR: Ms Burton-Faulk, Ms Blackwell, Ms Deitrick, Ms Dick, Acting Chair O'Neill

APPROVED as recommended