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THE MAGAZINE OF  
THE HEINZ ENDOWMENTS

Issue 2 2018

**COMMUNITY CHRONICLES:  
EFFORTS TO REVITALIZE  
PITTSBURGH'S HILL DISTRICT  
ATTRACT BIG IDEAS—  
AND SOME STAR POWER.**

ISSUE 2 2018

# INSIDE

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## 2

## FEATURE: IN THE NEIGHBORHOODS

The second installment of our *h* magazine neighborhood series examines initiatives to revitalize Pittsburgh's Hill District. As in the other communities we're featuring as part of this project, artists and entrepreneurs, residents and developers, local officials and philanthropies, including The Heinz Endowments, have been working together on improvements that benefit the neighborhood and those who live there.

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The Heinz Endowments was formed from the Howard Heinz Endowment, established in 1941, and the Vira I. Heinz Endowment, established in 1986. It is the product of a deep family commitment to community and the common good that began with H.J. Heinz, and that continues to this day.

The Endowments is based in Pittsburgh, where we use our region as a laboratory for the development of solutions to challenges that are national in scope. Although the majority of our giving is concentrated within southwestern Pennsylvania, we work wherever necessary, including statewide and nationally, to fulfill our mission.

That mission is to help our region become a just and equitable community in which all of its citizens thrive economically, ecologically, educationally, socially and culturally. We also seek to advance knowledge and practice in the field of philanthropy through strategies that focus on our priorities of Creativity, Learning and Sustainability.

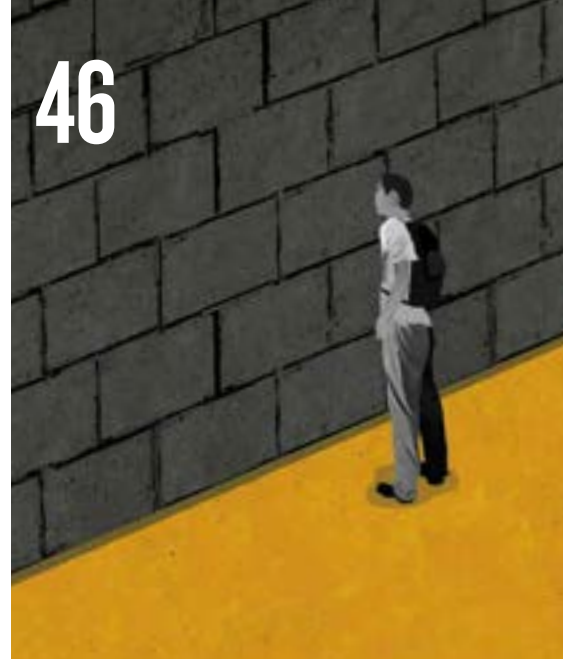
In life, Howard Heinz and Vira I. Heinz set high expectations for their philanthropy. Today, the Endowments is committed to doing the same. Our charge is to be diligent, thoughtful and creative in continually working to set new standards of philanthropic excellence. Recognizing that none of our work would be possible without a sound financial base, we also are committed to preserving and enhancing the Endowments' assets through prudent investment management.

**h magazine** is a publication of The Heinz Endowments. At the Endowments, we are committed to promoting learning in philanthropy and in the specific fields represented by our grantmaking programs. As an expression of that commitment, this publication is intended to share information about significant lessons and insights we are deriving from our work.

**Editorial team** Linda Braund, John Ellis, Donna Evans Sebastian, Carmen Lee, Grant Oliphant, Scott Roller, Courtney Tolmer. Design: Landesberg Design

**About the cover** Oscar-winning actor Denzel Washington participated in the September ground-blessing ceremony for the childhood home of the late Pulitzer Prize-winning-playwright August Wilson. Mr. Washington is helping raise money to transform the house in Pittsburgh's Hill District neighborhood into a museum and arts center. Weathering the rain beside Mr. Washington was Jamaica Johnson, a junior at Pittsburgh Creative and Performing Arts 6-12. Cover photo by Renee Rosensteel.





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Overlooking Pittsburgh's Downtown is the Hill District, a community with a storied history that is pushing to overcome past injustices to achieve a hopeful and fairer future.

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# IN THE NEIGHBORHOODS:

SECOND OF A THREE-PART SERIES  
FEATURING HOMEWOOD,  
THE HILL DISTRICT AND HAZELWOOD

**T**his second installment of our magazine's "In the Neighborhoods" series takes a look at Pittsburgh's Hill District community, often referred to informally as "the Hill." Once a prime destination for immigrants from Europe and African American migrants from the South, the Hill District has been known over the years for reasons ranging from its international jazz legacy to struggles common to urban communities where the majority of residents are lower income.

The Hill also has served as the inspiration for highly regarded creative projects that include Steven Bochco's Emmy-winning television series "Hill Street Blues" and Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright August Wilson's drama collection "American Century Cycle." Today, the Hill District is a place where a variety of cultural, social and economic visionaries are trying to shape the neighborhood's next act so that it fairly reflects the talents and desires of the community.

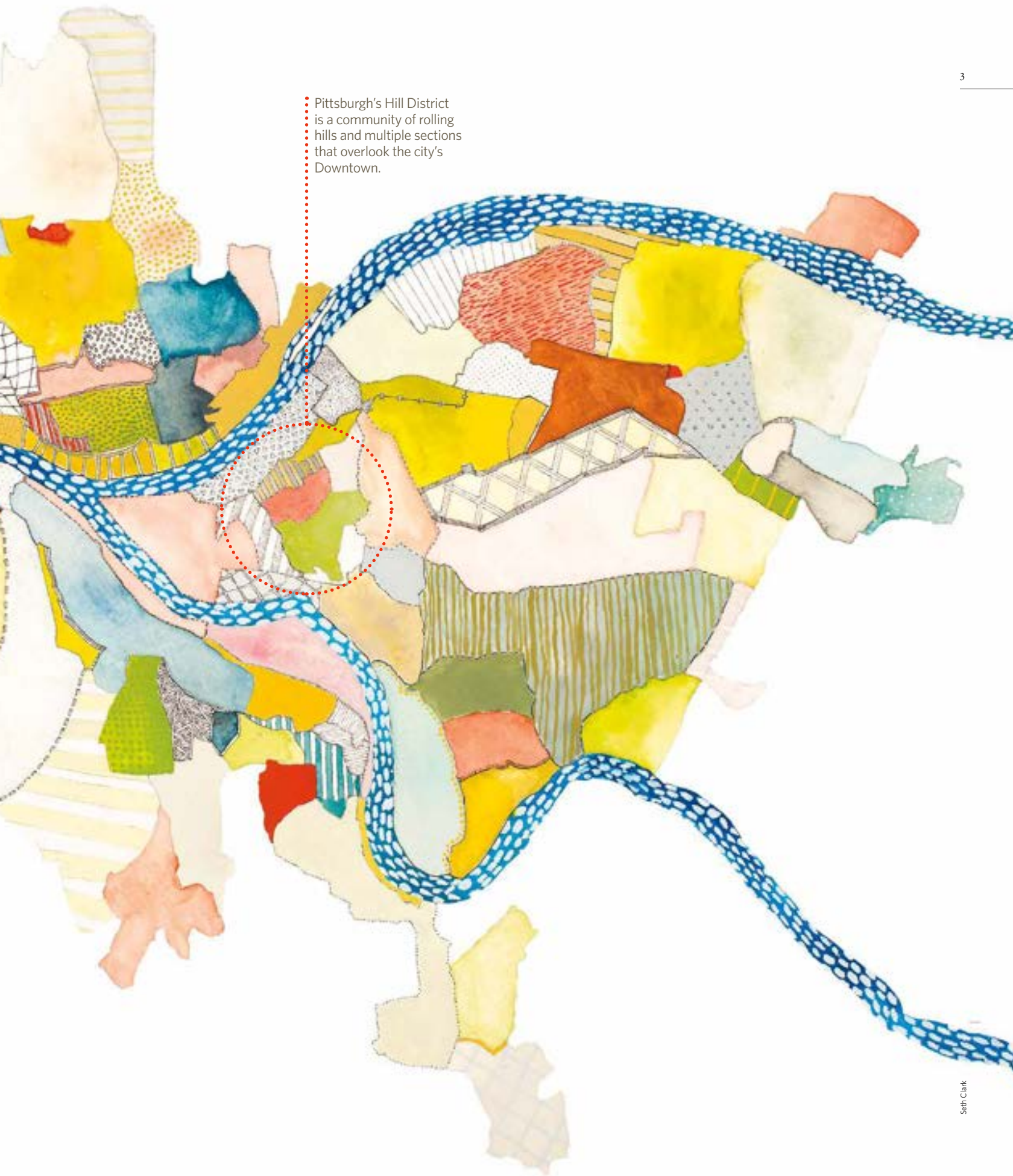
The Heinz Endowments and other philanthropies in the Pittsburgh region are working with residents to support revitalization efforts in the Hill District, which is being featured in our neighborhood series along with Homewood and Hazelwood. The Endowments selected these three communities to receive a special investment focus because of their established relationships with the foundation, existing assets as well as challenges, and commitment to create a better future for neighborhood residents.

The following pages will introduce some of the people and places that are integral to the transformation of the Hill.





Pittsburgh's Hill District  
is a community of rolling  
hills and multiple sections  
that overlook the city's  
Downtown.



# THE



VIBRANT. DIVERSE. THRIVING. VIOLATED.



Just as this corner of Centre Avenue in Pittsburgh's Hill District has changed over the decades, so is the neighborhood being transformed by creative and committed individuals and organizations.

# HILL

**AMBITIOUS. CHANGING. BY LACRETIA WIMBLEY**

he Hill District of Pittsburgh is more than just a place to which Terri Baltimore has dedicated the last two-and-a-half decades of her life. It is a place that has always drawn her, a place that always felt like home.

She can describe the groundbreaking history of the neighborhood's Freedom House Ambulance Service of the 1960s—the city's first mobile emergency medicine program, which became a national model for emergency medical transport and

care. She can share stories about actor Vin Diesel's grandfather who played for the Pittsburgh Crawfords Negro League baseball team in the 1930s. Ms. Baltimore recalls so much detail about the Hill District it's as if she transcended time and lived through much of its history.

"I've spent half my life here, and for the last 26 years, I've been rooted in this place," said Ms. Baltimore, a native of Pittsburgh's East Liberty community and director of

neighborhood engagement at the Hill House Association, a social services agency in the Hill District.

"I've worked at Hill House since 2007 as an employee, but from 1992 until 2007, I ran a program here to serve women in recovery. From 1985 to 1989, I worked for another organization that was based at the Hill House, and as a high school student, I came here to participate in other programs."

A neighborhood of rolling slopes overlooking Pittsburgh's Downtown, the Hill, as it is informally known, is still a beacon attracting interest locally for its historic legacy and current social and cultural activities, Ms. Baltimore said.

"I probably do anywhere between 30 and 40 tours a year for visitors, which consist mostly of people in Pittsburgh who have never been to the Hill," she noted.

But it is the Hill District's future, potentially foreshadowed by its prime real estate location and slowly changing demographics, that has community leaders and philanthropies like The Heinz Endowments and the McAuley Ministries Foundation partnering to ensure that longtime residents are able to participate in and benefit from revitalization efforts.

"There are 28 acres situated between Downtown and the Hill District, and depending upon your orientation, CEOs who see the site from their executive suites see it as an opportunity to expand the reach of Downtown," said Rob Stephany, the Endowments' director of Community & Economic Development. "Residents vividly remember the site as an important and integral part of their neighborhood. As parking lots transform into new things, like parks, office buildings and new housing, people are questioning, 'Is it built for us, or is it not built for us?'"

Like many Pittsburgh neighborhoods, the Hill District is steeped in a rich cultural history that provided a foundation for later generations to build on. In the 18th century, people of Chinese, Lebanese, Russian, German, Italian, Jewish and Syrian backgrounds populated the Hill with African Americans migrating from the South to the area in the early 19th century. The resulting ethnic hodgepodge would be a defining neighborhood characteristic for over a century.

## 1914

Before public housing was built in the Hill District, many lower-income and working-class residents lived in tenement buildings divided by common areas.

## 1932

Based in the Hill District, the Pittsburgh Crawfords baseball team was highly regarded in the Negro League and eventually had several National Baseball Hall of Fame inductees, including Josh Gibson, Satchel Paige and James "Cool Papa" Bell.

## 1946

The nightlife in the Hill District was legendary in the middle of the last century. Several venues, including the Roosevelt Theatre, showcased performances by jazz artists such as Duke Ellington, while restaurants like Stanley's Tavern provided food late into the evening.

## 1955

Wylie Avenue was a bustling thoroughfare in the Hill District that had thriving businesses and often served as the site for neighborhood parades.



Annie O'Neill

**"I'VE SPENT HALF MY LIFE HERE, AND FOR THE LAST 26 YEARS, I'VE BEEN ROOTED IN THIS PLACE."**

**Terri Baltimore**

Director of Neighbor Engagement,  
Hill House Association





Archives & Special Collections, University of Pittsburgh Library System

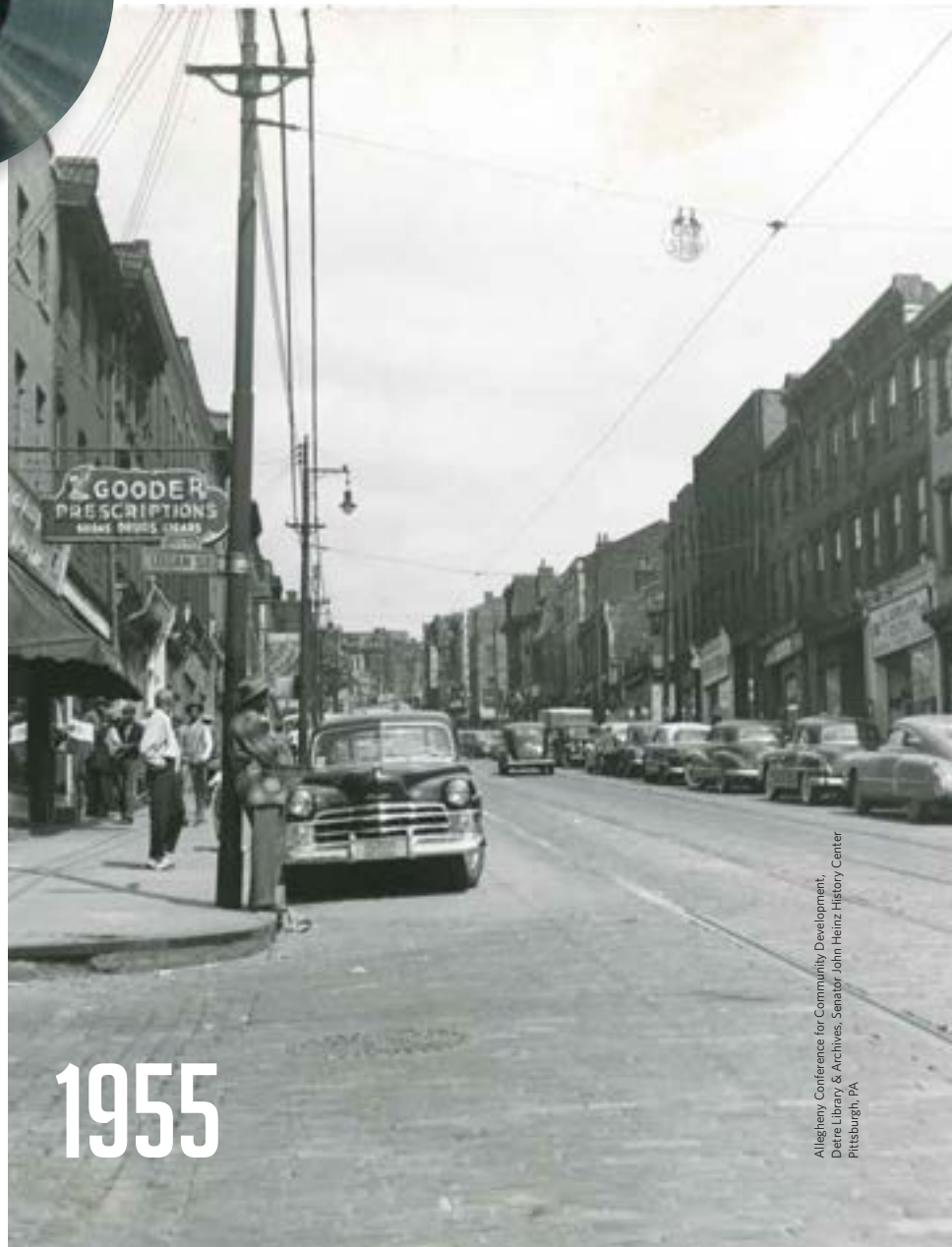


1932

Harrison Studio/public domain



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Allegheny Conference for Community Development,  
Dette Library & Archives, Senator John Heinz History Center  
Pittsburgh, PA



1960







Courtesy of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

## 1960

Construction of the Civic Arena wiped out much of the Lower Hill in the late 1950s and early 1960s, displacing hundreds of businesses and 8,000 residents. The arena would later be demolished, in 2010.

## 1968

Like many communities across the country, the Hill District experienced major rebellions after the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The civil unrest devastated the neighborhood's business district.

## 1969

While still recovering from deep community losses created by Civic Arena construction and the unrest following the murder of Dr. King, Hill District residents took a stand against further demolition in the neighborhood, erecting a billboard to make their point.

## 1993

The Crawford Square residential development was built in the Hill District in the 1990s, beginning a wave of new home construction in the neighborhood.

## 2010

As the Civic Arena was being torn down, a new sports and entertainment venue was under construction across the street. Originally the CONSOL Energy Center, it opened in 2010 and was renamed PPG Paints Arena in 2016. The arena hosts a variety of events but is primarily known as home to the Pittsburgh Penguins hockey team.

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## 1968

LaQuatra Bonci Associates



## 1969

© Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles "Teenie" Harris Archive



## 1993



## 2010



The Hill District's transition into a predominantly African American community began with the Great Migration in the early 20th century, when somewhere between 1 million and 6 million African Americans fled the racial oppression and poor economic conditions in southern states. The Hill District saw an influx of thousands. Upon their arrival, many sought and obtained jobs in iron and steel mills in the city, and during the ensuing decades, the Hill District became the city's center for Black Nationalism and political advocacy.

By 1950, the population in the Hill District became increasingly African American, with other ethnic groups moving to different sections of the city and region. While some white-owned businesses and white residents remained in the neighborhood, the Hill solidified its place as a black enclave in the mid-20th century, gaining national and international attention for its cultural and entertainment offerings.

Its jazz scene came alive with well-known clubs like the Crawford Grill and Hurricane Lounge. These venues featured a vast array of artists, such as Lena Horne, Billy Eckstine and Mary Lou Williams. In addition to the Pittsburgh Crawfords, a premier Negro League professional

baseball team, the Hill also was home to The Pittsburgh Courier, for a time the nation's largest black-owned newspaper with a peak circulation of more than 350,000 copies; the city's NAACP and Urban League chapters; and many black churches.

The neighborhood's heyday ended in the 1960s. Like a number of African American communities across the country, the Hill District experienced the impact of civil unrest, such as major rebellions after the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. But the event identified as more profoundly devastating by many neighborhood residents was an extensive, yet short-sighted, redevelopment project. Some 8,000 residents were displaced and several hundred buildings were demolished in the late 1950s and early 1960s to make way for a municipal arena in the section of the neighborhood closest to Downtown known as the Lower Hill.

Many families were moved into public housing as part of one of the largest urban renewal efforts in the region. In 1962, the Civic Arena opened as an entertainment venue hailed for the architectural achievement of having at that time the world's largest retractable stainless-steel roof. Later it became home to the Pittsburgh Penguins hockey team.

But the Civic Arena's emergence on the city's landscape also marked the beginning of the Hill District's decline—and the intensifying of community efforts to protect residents and their interests that continues today.

"[The Civic Arena construction] represented all of what is negative in how you destroy a community," said Pittsburgh Councilman R. Daniel Lavelle, who was raised in the Hill District and now represents the community on City Council.

"It's a lesson on what not to do that lingers today. You still have people who remember living on that site, people who could tell you where on the Lower Hill they grew up, what businesses they used to frequent there, who their neighbors were... It's been a devastating shock to the psyche of not only the Hill District community but also of the African American community as a whole to know that your government could think so little of you that they would forcefully take your home, and literally cripple and destroy a neighborhood socially and economically."

In the late 1960s, the fight to prevent cultural and demographic loss involved residents refusing to allow further demolition in the neighborhood, a stand that



## CIVIC DUTY?

The large parking lot that currently sits on the former Civic Arena site is an ongoing reminder that the Pittsburgh Penguins have yet to develop the property according to the team's agreement with the Sports & Exhibition Authority and the city's Urban Redevelopment Authority. So far, the only new construction on the 28 acres for which the Penguins have development rights has been the PPG Paints Arena and its surrounding infrastructure.



## HOUSING BOOM

While commercial development has been lagging in the Hill District, housing construction has been on the upswing for more than two decades. Townhomes on Dinwiddie Street, top, and the Skyline Terrace development, bottom, reflect the variety of new housing in the neighborhood.



included erecting a billboard that said “No redevelopment beyond this point.” The Freedom Corner Memorial at the intersection of Centre Avenue and Crawford Street marks that resistance and other civil rights protests that followed.

Forty years later, the local Sports & Exhibition Authority and the city’s Urban Redevelopment Authority reached an agreement with the Penguins on development rights to 28 acres of land in the Lower Hill, which included redeveloping the Civic Arena site and constructing a new hockey arena.

Hill District community leaders insisted on inclusion in the discussions about the property and negotiated a community benefits agreement, the first of its kind in Pittsburgh. The 2008 accord called for \$8.3 million in financial resources for neighborhood improvement efforts in the Hill, a number of non-financial benefits, and a commitment that residents would have first priority for jobs connected to arena development.

Some visible progress has been made. Along with the construction of the PPG Paints Arena and new streets, sidewalks and underlying infrastructure, \$1 million was provided to help support construction of a nearby grocery store. Several hundred Hill District residents were hired for positions in the construction and ongoing operations of the new arena. Also, a creative tax sharing plan was crafted to set aside 50 percent of all new real estate tax revenue generated by new development for use in rebuilding a nearby historic part of the neighborhood. However, except for the new arena, the Penguins have yet to develop any other buildings on the 28 acres—the needed



trigger for the additional tax revenue from the site—and no new funding has been generated so far.

But even before PPG Paints Arena was built, the Hill District was beginning to transform.

In the 1990s, new housing development began with Crawford Square, a collection of apartments, townhouses and single-family homes located just above Freedom Corner. Residential construction continues to expand deeper into the Hill, and redevelopment over the past two decades of public housing that once defined some areas has

led to the construction of a variety of mixed-income housing complexes.

Although some of those moving into these homes have been African Americans who were existing residents as well as newcomers, the housing growth has altered the racial and socioeconomic demographics in parts of the Hill, forcing a number of long-term, low-income residents to relocate to other parts of the city and county. Community organizations, neighborhood leaders and current Hill District residents are now working with developers to ensure

that future development allows those living in the redeveloped areas to stay there.

As new homes were being built across the Hill, other capital projects begun or completed have been more community-focused, with the primary aim of benefiting those who made the neighborhood their home for years. They include construction of the Thelma Lovette YMCA, the Jeron X. Grayson Community Center, August Wilson Park and the Hill House Senior Services Center. Plans also are underway to redevelop the New Granada Theater, another entertainment venue that in recent decades has fallen into disrepair but once hosted jazz greats of the last century.

Since 2008, the McAuley Ministries Foundation has awarded \$12 million to these and other community improvement projects as well as out-of-school-time programs, and health and safety house renovations for low-income homeowners.

“We believe that the Hill District is an important and historic neighborhood that deserves investment to build and restore community assets,” Executive Director Michele Cooper said. “We have also invested in human and social services because it is equally important to invest in people.”

Among the other initiatives intended to preserve the community’s assets and support its people there is the res-

toration of the home of Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright August Wilson, a Hill District native who brought international attention to his former neighborhood, where most of his plays were set. Plans call for transforming the Wilson house into a cultural center for performances, exhibits and other activities.

And the Sports & Exhibition Authority has proposed an I-579 “Cap” Urban Connector

Project, connecting the neighborhood to Downtown. Plans include the creation of a park with artistic design elements paying homage to African American culture in the Hill District. With a commitment of \$19 million in federal funds, the park would be built between two bridges that cross over the highway adjacent to the neighborhood.

Still, Mr. Stephany of the Endowments, which has invested more than \$19.7 million in various Hill District projects and programs over the years, cautions that rebuilding the community requires a high level of intentionality and tactical action, even as the process moves slowly.

Mr. Lavelle, for example, noted that it is important for African Americans from the Hill District community to participate in the redevelopment of the former Civic Arena site in terms of both construction and investment.

And the Rev. Paul Abernathy, director of FOCUS Pittsburgh and an Orthodox Christian priest, said that while the different construction projects continue in the Hill, his organization is working to address deeper issues in the community. FOCUS—Food, Occupation, Clothing, Understanding and Shelter—provides services designed to heal residents of trauma caused by factors such as physical violence, mental health problems or community displacement that could make it difficult for individuals to find jobs, housing or simply have healthy mental/emotional lives.

If these problems are addressed effectively, Rev. Abernathy contended, they could change community outcomes on a larger scale.

Carmen Anderson, the Endowments’ director of Equity and Social Justice, said that though the Hill District still faces its challenges, the good will and enduring hope that exists stems from the people in the community.

“We sometimes struggle with a balance between what is, what was and what could be,” Ms. Anderson said. “It’s important that public-private partners keep their commitments so that progress for the community as a whole can be accelerated.

“But I believe there have been and will always be committed individuals and organizations in the black community—wherever we are—who are dedicated to ensuring that our children are safe, have places to play, have places to learn and grow, and the Hill is no exception.” **h**

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**WE BELIEVE THAT THE HILL DISTRICT IS AN IMPORTANT AND HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOOD THAT DESERVES INVESTMENT TO BUILD AND RESTORE COMMUNITY ASSETS. WE HAVE ALSO INVESTED IN HUMAN AND SOCIAL SERVICES BECAUSE IT IS EQUALLY IMPORTANT TO INVEST IN PEOPLE.”**

**Michele Cooper** executive director  
McAuley Ministries Foundation





## (RE) CONNECTING TO DOWNTOWN



The proposed I-579 "Cap" Urban Connector Project would connect the Hill District to Downtown and include the creation of a pedestrian park with artistic design elements honoring the neighborhood's African American cultural heritage. With a commitment of \$19 million in federal funds, the park would be built between two bridges that cross over the highway adjacent to the community.





**Economic development in the Hill District:**

I don't see the Hill District as having the kind of development that Lawrenceville, the South Side and other city communities have enjoyed. One reason is the slow increase in capital income and employment. There's a direct correlation between per capita income and homeownership and between homeownership and public safety. There is a direct relationship between those things and investment by the business community. That has to improve.

Has there been some progress? Yes. Is there investment in the works? Yes. But it hasn't been fast enough and deep enough.

**Places ripe for development:**

When you look at what the Hill CDC proposes for rebuilding Centre Avenue, the business corridor, the Lower Hill development, the Herron Avenue corridor and the Herron-Milwaukee Street corridor, you see great opportunity for reinvestment, development and substantive growth.

**Avoiding gentrification:**

We have to create real employment opportunities for the current residents in the Hill so they can have family-sustaining careers and afford to stay where they are. It is real that individuals with resources are going to look for investment opportunities. But it is critical that residents have the requisite skills and opportunity so they will not be displaced.

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**DeWitt Walton****COUNCILMAN, ALLEGHENY COUNTY**



**W**ith its celebrity-attracting jazz clubs, internationally recognized black-owned newspaper, and variety of social and recreational activities catering to African American residents, the Hill District was Pittsburgh's center of African American culture from the 1920s through the 1940s. But the city's "renaissance," begun in the 1950s, led to harsh consequences for the community from which, in many respects, it hasn't recovered.

Bulldozers razed some 100 acres of the Lower Hill to accommodate the vision of a cultural center, a new home for the symphony and ballet with a state-of-the-art public arena and luxury apartments. It quickly displaced hundreds of businesses from the heart of neighborhood commerce and 8,000 people who lived there.

Only the Civic Arena was built. Much of the rest was left for parking. The Hill became a laboratory for researchers to study the aftershocks of poorly executed urban renewal.

One of them, Dr. Mindy Fullilove, a research psychiatrist and a professor of Urban Policy and Health at The New School in New York, found common themes in the destruction of large, established neighborhoods. Her findings, which included her study of the Hill District, became a book, "Root Shock: How Tearing Up City Neighborhoods Hurts America and What We Can Do About It."

An immense rupture in a community inflicts psychological wounds similar to the traumatic stress seen among victims of hurricanes, tornadoes and floods, Dr. Fullilove determined. It changes how they had come to see the world, disrupting their senses of attachment and identity. It undermines their trust and leaves them angry and frustrated that their neighborhood was taken from them. Relationships, and social, emotional and financial resources are weakened. The effects can last for generations.

In the Hill District, however, the experience also hardened neighborhood resolve. First, residents rallied to resist and successfully block later attempts by the city to take more of the neighborhood to expand the proposed cultural district. Decades later, they demanded, negotiated and won the first community benefits agreement in Pennsylvania, signed in 2008 as part of a

deal the Pittsburgh Penguins struck with the city for a new hockey venue to replace the Civic Arena. It included a master plan that residents contributed to and approved in contrast to decades earlier, when urban renewal steamrolled ahead without either their input or consent.

There have been encouraging signs since. The I-579 highway that cut off the Hill from Downtown is being capped and designed as a green passage with a park, trails and other amenities to restore that lost connection. The Energy Innovation Center, opened in 2015 in a former trade school, restores training opportunities and exposure to jobs and careers in the building trades, utilities and other sectors.

Neighborhood entrepreneurs and efforts to assist them are emerging, particularly in the arts. The nonprofit artisan boutique Ujamaa Collective offers space, education and support to help black women grow as artists, entrepreneurs and community leaders. Plans for Nafasi on Centre are moving forward as a workspace and arts business accelerator where artists live, learn and create.

But there have been setbacks as well.

Revitalizing the commercial district remains a struggle, and several existing businesses face a

hard road to survival. The Hill House Association, whose roots trace back to the early-20th-century settlement house movement, recently announced that it must sell four properties to avoid financial collapse.

The 28-acre former Civic Arena site in the Lower Hill remains undeveloped 10 years after the signing of the CBA that grew from concern over what would become of that prime acreage. Poverty and joblessness remain stubbornly high. And the level of economic growth recently experienced in other city neighborhoods, such as Lawrenceville and East Liberty, hasn't been seen in the Hill District.

In the following pages, six people intimately familiar with the Hill District share their perspectives of the neighborhood and its economic future. They consider the complexities, the hopes and dreams of its residents, their desire to preserve the Hill's identity as it moves forward, and the challenges of restoring the historic neighborhood to the vibrancy it once enjoyed. **h**

# VIEWS FROM THE HILL

**SIX COMMUNITY LEADERS DISCUSS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE HILL DISTRICT AND HOW TO ENSURE THAT LONGTIME RESIDENTS ARE INCLUDED IN THE PROCESS AND BENEFIT FROM THE CHANGES.**  
**BY JEFFERY FRASER. PHOTOS BY ANNIE O'NEILL**



## Karris Jackson

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER, POISE FOUNDATION

### **Economic development in the Hill District:**

The Hill District is well positioned for growth and development. The community has been very intentional about making sure there is a bottom-up plan for future development, which is evident in their master plan and other studies they've done that serve as a blueprint going forward. What is lacking is the investments in those institutions and people to see all of their plans to fruition.

### **Places ripe for development:**

The Centre Avenue corridor: The Poise Foundation has been making investments around business support, housing and commercial development and building stabilization, particularly along that corridor. There is interest among businesses around being in the Hill District. There are buildings owned by people who want to improve them, get them back on the market, but need some help, some investment. There's a lot of interest among residents in seeing that corridor come to life.

### **Avoiding gentrification:**

It is critical that the people and institutions in the neighborhood are empowered, invested in and given the opportunity to lead revitalization. That is the way to ensure that gentrification and displacement doesn't happen. If any neighborhood in the city is able to pull off revitalization that doesn't result in displacement and gentrification, it's the Hill.

### **Economic development in the Hill District:**

When I think of neighborhoods that have experienced robust economic growth and development in recent years, Lawrenceville and East Liberty come to mind. The Hill District is seeing slower growth. There is a blueprint for what that development should look like, but there has not been the level of public and private investment that we see in other neighborhoods.

### **Places ripe for development:**

Centre Avenue, an east-west corridor, is definitely one place, and Herron Avenue, which is a north-south corridor, is another. The Hill District is such a valuable and strategic location, and it is surrounded by large institutions that have the potential to invest in the community.

### **Avoiding gentrification:**

I'm optimistic by nature. I believe if you recognize the issue you can plan to mitigate it. We know neighborhood gentrification isn't a risk for communities where you see investment in those communities. But gentrification is a concern in the Hill District. I think working with the city and developers we can make sure that doesn't happen. It's not an either-or. It's an opportunity to be thoughtful and be a leader in Pittsburgh and nationally on how you can encourage investment without displacement. I think the Hill District is poised to demonstrate that.



## Michele Rone Cooper

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MCAULEY MINISTRIES FOUNDATION





## Carl Redwood Jr.

BOARD CHAIRMAN, HILL DISTRICT CONSENSUS GROUP

### **Economic development in the Hill District:**

I still have concern that economic development and growth always comes at the expense of low-income people. That has been the case in the Hill. There was a plan put in place, and the original part of that plan was to displace the folks from the Lower Hill, to get rid of 8,000 people to make way for a parking lot. A similar process has continued. Most recently, it's been the destruction of public housing.

### **Places ripe for development:**

One potential area for economic growth is the large student market normally served by Oakland that could become part of the Hill District. We already see students living in the Hill. The Herron Avenue corridor has a lot of traffic and could be developed. The Lower Hill parking lot is a development site, but, again, the question is for whom?

### **Avoiding gentrification:**

It may get to a point where there aren't many economically vulnerable people left to displace. You go through a process of displacing folks, and you get to a point where you can turn around and say there aren't many people left to displace and act like you are starting from square one.



## Marimba Milliones

PRESIDENT AND CEO, HILL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

### Economic development in the Hill District:

Most development in the Hill District has focused on housing. That's been a source of concern for the community because commercial revitalization is critical to our ability to have the well-rounded economic development that shapes a neighborhood by providing amenities, services and access to commerce.

Public agencies, philanthropic organizations, and community-based organizations have been engaged in a conversation around equitable development. You hear about p4 (people, planet,

place and performance), and All In Pittsburgh. Those things are great. Now, the important thing is to connect those aspirations to public policy in a tangible way. We have enough evidence that aspirations alone do not transform communities.

### Places ripe for development:

Extensive planning has gone into the commercial revitalization of the neighborhood. The Centre Avenue business corridor, Herron Avenue corridor, the lower Hill District—those commercial opportunities are what the community most desires to see move forward.

### Avoiding gentrification:

There are structural inequities around access to affordable health care, access to quality education and a livable wage that are a challenge to an anti-displacement philosophy. However, as those are being resolved, there are strategies for communities and governments that prevent or limit gentrification, such as inclusionary zoning, requirements for affordable housing in new development. These practices have been used in other cities.

## Diamonte Walker

DIRECTOR OF PERFORMANCE AND COMPLIANCE,  
MINORITY- AND WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESS ENTERPRISE,  
URBAN REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF PITTSBURGH

### Economic development in the Hill District:

There's been affordable housing development. What we haven't seen is the revitalization of the business corridor, the main artery of the neighborhood, and a reasonable amount of market-rate development.

My family has been in the Hill District for more than 100 years. It's a self-determining community. People want to have control over and influence neighborhood identity. They might not think every development is right for the neighborhood. People are aware of the reality of gentrification and want to make sure that what happens strengthens the neighborhood fabric. While you have factions that want to see an opportunity-rich neighborhood, better schools and housing choices, others are fearful of what that might mean because they don't want people to be priced out.

### Places ripe for development:

On the housing front, Schenley Heights has potential for the development of affordable and market-rate homeownership. It's historically an affluent African American homeownership area, but we've not thought about it in that way.

### Avoiding gentrification:

It's as though you have two false choices: stagnation or gentrification. I think the Goldilocks zone is neighborhood revitalization that grows people in place and grows the public-private partnerships that make that happen.





Sculptor and mosaic artist James Simon, a longtime resident of Uptown, created the 25-foot-tall glass and tile Uptown welcome sign.

Scott Goldsmith



# Uptown aspirations

**LEARNING HOW TO COMBINE INNOVATIVE AND INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT IN THE SAME PLACE**  
BY JEFFERY FRASER

If there is a Pittsburgh neighborhood hiding in plain sight, it is Uptown.

It rests between Oakland and Downtown and is also known as the Bluff, Soho or simply part of the Hill District, depending on who is doing the talking. Chances are, most people who live in the city have been there, passing through without stopping as 39,000 motorists do every day on the Boulevard of the Allies alone.

Some 1,400 people call the often-overlooked neighborhood home, not counting students and inmates at the Allegheny County Jail. And for the past few years, these residents had a hand in reinventing it in ways that are attracting national attention.

Uptown is the city's first attempt to create a sustainable, people-friendly eco-innovation district. It combines bottom-up planning focused on social equity and the well-being of those living in the community with strategies and infrastructure to attract companies, innovation and jobs.

While eco-innovation districts typically target well-capitalized, single-site, former industrial or commercial property, the Uptown plan is applying the concept to an existing urban neighborhood with residents, businesses and its own character. That makes Pittsburgh's plan exceptionally challenging.

Also, half of the strategy is focused on community empowerment, self-determination, wealth-building, preservation of assets and affordability while improving environmental conditions, explained Christine Mondor, chairperson of the City Planning Commission and principal at the architectural firm, evolveEA. "That's acknowledging this is a community. It's not a blank slate. Our strategy is different from others."

The initiative has gained momentum since city officials put it in motion four years ago. UPMC Mercy Hospital, a neighborhood anchor, recently announced a \$400 million expansion plan that includes a new eye hospital and a nonbinding agreement calling for

training and job opportunities for local residents. The Port Authority of Allegheny County has plotted bus lanes and designed stations for a rapid-transit bus system that is expected to help thin car traffic and pollution.

And Uptown residents endorsed an eco-innovation district master plan that reflects their desires and concerns—a plan they helped shape through a two-year engagement process that saw 550 of them participate in planning events and 700 complete surveys. The process also included 50 interviews and more than 25 focus groups with community stakeholders.

"It gave residents, business owners, nonprofits and institutions a chance to envision what Uptown could be and express what they hope it will be," said Joseph Wingefeld, program manager for Uptown Partners of Pittsburgh, a local community group. "Changes are being proposed, and they should be a part of that change. There's a lot of energy in this neighborhood."

The blueprint includes dozens of projects large and small, some more challenging than others.

Lanes for car traffic, for example, will be pared in favor of bus lanes and infrastructure that encourages biking and walking, enhances pedestrian safety, and curbs pollution. In Uptown, the rate of people killed or severely injured in car crashes and the concentration of black carbon in the air are among the highest in the city. Other strategies include reviving the commercial corridor and attracting new retail tenants and innovation companies. A civic plaza is also on the list, as are better stormwater management and more parks and green space, which Uptown's 37 percent rate of vacant and underused land suggests can be accommodated.

The benefits of such improvements won't likely be exclusive to Uptown.

As a natural extension of the university-rich corridor through Oakland, a revitalized Uptown will be a welcomed complement to the neighboring community, which is driving the city's emerging

innovation economy. Half of U.S. science, technology, engineering and mathematics jobs in that sector don't require a four-year degree and pay \$53,000 on average, according to a Brookings Institute study.

"As [Uptown] gets built out and becomes economically healthy, it's going to present new opportunities to the Hill District," Ms. Mondor added.

But the link between the eco-innovation district and greater Hill District could be better, said Marimba Milliones, president and CEO of the Hill Community Development Corporation. "The approach to development doesn't fully consider Uptown as part of the Hill District. It focuses on connecting Downtown to West Oakland, not fortifying the north-south connections with the Hill. I think that's an oversight."

The risk of gentrification accompanies initiatives that hope to raise the value of neighborhoods such as Uptown. As real estate values rise, so do housing costs, and the neighborhood is already seeing evidence of that, Mr. Wingefeld said.

Many Uptown residents are particularly vulnerable to rising housing costs. According to Uptown Partners data, 21 percent of housing units are subsidized affordable housing and all are rentals. Many other residents live in units that are "naturally" affordable due to their condition and other factors.

"For us, the challenge is finding ways to make sure that long-term residents of Uptown can stay if they want to and not get pushed out," said Andrew McElwaine, vice president of Sustainability at The Heinz Endowments.

Uptown Partners recently hired a community engagement and outreach staff member, with support from the Endowments, to ensure that the voices, interests and concerns of residents remain in the forefront as projects in the master plan are rolled out.

And the city is offering developers incentives, such as relaxed density restrictions, to add affordable housing to their new market-rate developments. Other strategies for addressing housing affordability, such as establishing a land trust, are also being explored.

Whether the Uptown Eco-Innovation District becomes a national model will depend on how successful it is in overcoming the neighborhood's solvable physical challenges in a way that allows residents to share the benefits of new prosperity, Ms. Mondor said.

"Pittsburgh is at a great point," she asserted. "We are growing at a pace that we can see things emerging fast enough to influence them, and we are learning from other cities that are growing faster." **h**

The size and boldness of artist Njaimé Njie's installations in her "Homecoming" series appear all the more impressive as she stands next to them. This mural, featuring an image of Pittsburgh native and Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright August Wilson, adorns a building at the corner of Centre Avenue and Elmore Street in the Hill District.







# ART IMITATING LIFE

LOCAL PITTSBURGH ARTISTS AND ARTS ORGANIZATIONS ARE  
CARRYING THE BATON OF THE HILL DISTRICT'S CULTURAL LEGACY,  
NOT ONLY HONORING THE NEIGHBORHOOD'S ARTISTIC  
PAST BUT ALSO HELPING TO BUILD ITS ECONOMIC FUTURE.

BY JULIA FRASER

In the heart of the Hill District, larger-than-life black-and-white images of neighborhood residents past and present are pictured inside a colorful sitting room. The faces proudly peer into the community from the side of the Bedford Avenue home of August Wilson, the late Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright and native son whose work introduced the Hill, its people, and their struggles, dreams and culture to the world.

Artist Njaimh Njie created the installation, the first site in her public art project, “Homecoming,” which adorns other notable buildings in the neighborhood with images inspired by oral histories, family photos, observations and other research she undertook to envision neighborhood gatherings across time.

“What would those conversations look like if those people could talk and share their experiences, and how would that connection shape the future of the neighborhood?” Ms. Njie asked. “If we knew of the past and we could recognize what’s going on in the present, how would that shape the future? The way to visually create that was to create these sitting rooms.”

Her work is a part of the latest chapter in the rich legacy of art in the Hill District. It is where Mr. Wilson found inspiration; the jazz of Ella Fitzgerald, Lena Horne, Charlie Parker and Duke Ellington once spilled from the New Granada Theater; and photographer Charles “Teenie” Harris chronicled urban African American life. It is the historic center of African American culture in the City of Pittsburgh.

It also is a neighborhood that has suffered disinvestment, neglect and ill-conceived urban planning that razed the vibrant Lower Hill and displaced businesses and thousands of families to make way for the now-demolished Civic Arena.

“A lot of Pittsburghers would look at that and say ‘You just have to get over that and move on.’ But if a lot of your experiences and identity is a part of that, it’s not easy to move on,” said Terri Baltimore, the Hill House Association’s director of neighborhood engagement. “That’s been a shadow for the neighborhood. But there are a number of ways people have used that shadow and turned it into light.”

Public art by Ms. Njie and others pepper the neighborhood. New parks and other green spaces are being designed. Mr. Wilson’s childhood home and the New Granada Theater are being restored. New art galleries and artist residencies are emerging. And partnerships with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra and other institutions are being reestablished as the arts drive economic development in the Hill District, which through all of its hardships never ceased being creative.

“Establishing black culture as the revival lynchpin sets in motion a suite of different decision-making from investors later,” said Rob Stephany, Community & Economic Development program director at The Heinz Endowments, which has awarded more than \$1 million to support the arts in the Hill District in the last five years. **h**

## August Wilson House



Renee Rosensteel

“It’s hard to overstate the significance of August Wilson,” said Paul Ellis, Jr., Mr. Wilson’s nephew and executive director of the nonprofit August Wilson House. “His life and his work are closely intertwined with the history of the Hill District. Its bustling nature, cultural vitality, [and history of urban renewal leading to resident] displacement are the perfect recipe for provocative representation in his plays. People in the Hill District are aware of that history.”

Plans for restoring the childhood home of the late Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright are being drawn with an official capital campaign to follow. The project already has attracted high-profile donors, such as actors Denzel Washington, Oprah Winfrey and Tyler Perry, as well as local philanthropic support, including grants from the Endowments and The Pittsburgh Foundation. In September, Mr. Washington brought to Pittsburgh \$5 million in contributions that he had raised with the support of well-known celebrities to give the initiative a boost.

Once restored to its 1950s condition, the August Wilson House will include an interactive museum and space for local artists, community programs and performances. Even while fundraising for the project has been underway, some performances have taken place on the Bedford Avenue property. Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company, led by founder and producing artistic director Mark Clayton Southers, has staged the playwright’s complete 10-play Century Cycle and presented several of Wilson’s plays in the yard of the Hill District house.

“There’s a large void in creating opportunities for talented artists,” Mr. Ellis said. “When I was growing up, I watched my uncle create opportunities for artists, countless people in the field. He was a gateway. That was important to him and that became important to me.”

African American landscape architect Walter Hood is designing the grounds. Although exactly how the grounds will be used is still unclear, outdoor theatrical productions will continue to be included, Mr. Ellis said.

“It’s truly honoring an American hero in this neighborhood,” Brian Brown, former vice president of the August Wilson House board of directors, said of the project. “He’s truly an African American hero in this city and that’s different. It’s about pride and blackness. That glory is really powerful.”

Photos by Renee Rosensteel



Oscar-winning actor Denzel Washington, left center, was a featured guest at the September “ground blessing” ceremony that marked the beginning of restoration construction at the childhood home of the late Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright August Wilson. Mr. Washington presented \$5 million in contributions from celebrities as part of his fundraising effort for the project. During the event, Jamaica Johnson, a junior at Pittsburgh Creative and Performing Arts 6-12 performed a monologue from Mr. Wilson’s play “King Hedley II.”









## Public Art

**T**he Hill District is emerging as a new frontier for art that is being created from an intimate relationship between the artist, the community and the people who live there.

Njaimeh Njie drew inspiration for “Home-coming” from the lives of residents she explored, and supplements her installations with an online component that includes an interactive map of the Hill along with the oral histories she gathered.

Her work is one of the projects to emerge from the Temporary Public Art and Placemaking Program. Supported by the Endowments, this collaboration between the community development nonprofit Neighborhood

Allies and Pittsburgh’s Office of Public Art has commissioned artists to work with community organizations and create art in six neighborhoods.

In the Hill District’s August Wilson Park, past, present and play merge in Alisha B. Wormsley’s “We Came From the Stars,” commissioned by the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy. A series of viewfinders throughout the park allow people to see images depicting past and current neighborhood scenes as well as those envisioned for the future.

A grocery store on Centre Avenue, the community’s main thoroughfare, boasts two large murals by Leslie Ansley, commissioned

by the Hill House Association five years ago. One, “Our Vibrant Future,” colorfully captures the modern neighborhood’s character and strength while the other, “Hill District Hey Day,” pays homage to the vibrant years when the neighborhood was known as “Little Harlem.”

“The artist’s process in these public art projects includes engaging with community members,” said Sallyann Kluz, director of the Office of Public Art. “The community members get tied in and see what’s happening in terms of development. That doesn’t happen if you don’t have the organic relationship with a place.”





Elan Mizrahi

Capturing the vision of a strong, dynamic Hill District and its prominent musical heritage is “Our Vibrant Future,” above, by artist Leslie Ansley. The mural stretches across an interior wall of a grocery store in the community. Art also is prominent in the design of parks and other green spaces in the Hill, including August Wilson Park, right, where enlarged replicas of photos by the late Charles “Teenie” Harris, who chronicled Hill District life, give additional energy to walking trails.

Public art and design merge at August Wilson Park, formerly Cliffside Park, which is near the August Wilson House, and offers a panoramic view of Pittsburgh’s northern neighborhoods and suburbs. Alisha Wormsley’s artwork, Teenie Harris’ photographs and quotes from the namesake playwright dot the trails.

It’s the first park project to be based on the “Greenprint for the Hill District,” a comprehensive green space framework for the neighborhood created by the Walter Hood Design Studio, that includes a water garden, parks, trails, a green overlook and fields.

Another high-profile example of how the Hill District is marrying art and green space in reimagining the neighborhood is the I-579 “cap.” The cap itself will be a concrete covering over the I-579 Crosstown Boulevard highway currently separating the Hill from Downtown that will be topped with a pedestrian park.

Overseen by the Sports & Exhibition Authority, the project is expected to begin construction soon. Upon completion, getting from the Hill District to Downtown — the city’s center of employment, education and services — will no longer require crossing over the busy boulevard leading onto the highway. Instead, the Hill and Downtown will be connected by scenic trails and walking paths through three acres of green space dotted with gardens and seating areas.

But art and design have been applied to envision something more: a walkway with a story wall reflecting neighborhood history and culture; lawns large enough for events; an outdoor classroom; and paving patterns in the shape of a Sankofa Bird, a Ghanaian symbol that represents the need to reflect on the past to build a successful future.

“The community said early on that they wanted art included in the design,” said Mary Conturo, executive director of the Sports & Exhibition Authority. Artists Amir Rashidd, Jann Rosen-Queralt, and Dr. Kimberly Ellis, along with design consultant Lake Byrd of Communion LLC, worked with the authority as part of the construction design team for the park.

## Green Space



Courtesy of Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy

Plans to rehabilitate and update the Hill District's legendary New Granada Theater, below, incorporate the lively colors of the building's original Art Deco style. Once restored, it could become the venue of performances like the "Lift Every Voice" concert in January, opposite page, which included members of the Hill District Unity Choir, right. The event at Heinz Hall in Downtown Pittsburgh was a collaboration between the neighborhood and the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra.

## Neighborhood Revitalization



**A**rtists have always found support in the Hill District, and that's continuing, especially as the vital role the arts can play in community development is better appreciated. The neighborhood's 2011 master plan, for example, led to #ArtsinHD, an arts planning group for strengthening local arts and artists.

"We strongly believe that culture should be a defining part of neighborhoods; but how culture is represented should be developed with the community and for the community, not parachuted in by someone else," said Janet Sarbaugh, the Endowments' vice president for Creativity.

One key project #ArtsinHD is involved in is called Nafasi, an artist live-and-work space done in partnership with developer Joshua Pollard, CEO of the real estate firm Omicelo, and the Hill Community Development Corporation. Drawings and demolition have been completed on the Centre Avenue building that will house Nafasi, which means "space" in Swahili, as part of the renovations to create the artist mercantile site and residency for six local artists.

"This is the most active time for physical spaces for the arts since I've been here," said Justin Laing, chairman of #ArtsinHD and a former Endowments Arts & Culture program officer who was a Hill District resident for many years.

"Artists play such a unique role in neighborhood revitalization," said Mr. Pollard, a Hill District resident. "Many times when a neighborhood is going through change that is not inclusive of community members, it's artists from other parts of town saying 'Hey, this is what it should look like.'"

The New Granada Theater awaits renovation in the same swath of the Centre Avenue corridor. The Art Deco building was designed in 1927 by Louis Billinger, a prominent African American architect. It fell into disrepair and was acquired by the Hill CDC in 1995. The Endowments funded an engineering study that determined that the historic structure could be saved.

"Such an iconic physical structure is a nod to our history and an important part of our future," said Marimba Milliones, president and CEO of the Hill CDC. "I've always envisioned this cultural economy, this cultural tourism the Hill District could have. People don't want to hear about where Duke Ellington was named king of jazz. They want to stand on the ground where Duke Ellington was named king of jazz."

The New Granada will have three floors of mixed-use space for a theater and community use. "I think that the New Granada will be the heartbeat of the cultural and commercial core of the Hill District," Ms. Milliones said. "Its redevelopment is central to our psychological transformation, as well as our physical transformation."

It also fits well in a Centre Avenue corridor already shared by emerging and established art spaces. Among them are the Ujamaa Collective, a nonprofit boutique and artist education and work space that promotes the work of African women locally and abroad, and the Mecca Of Kulture and Art (MOKA) gallery and studio, a space being developed for art exhibitions, artist residencies and classes.



**A**nd more artists are coming. The Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra recently revived a partnership with the Hill District after a community relevance survey reported feedback from neighborhoods like the Hill that was troubling.

"We heard that the symphony is only for rich white people," rather than for Hill District residents, explained Suzanne Perrino, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra senior vice president of learning and community engagement.

The PSO relaunched its partnership with the Hill District in January of this year with "Lift Every Voice," a concert hosted by actress Phylicia Rashad. The event featured a choir whose members were selected from choirs in the Hill; the premiere of the "August Wilson Symphony" by African American composer Kathryn Bostic; and the symphony sharing the stage with drummers, vocalists and artists from the neighborhood. 1,800 tickets were sold.

"Lift Every Voice" was followed by the "Sounds of Summer on Centre" concert in July, which was infused with artists and poets from the Hill celebrating female artists and featured Hill District-native Monica Ellis, a bassoonist with Imani Winds, a New York City wind quartet.

"A lot of things are promised to the Hill District," Ms. Perrino said. "A lot of one-offs or fly-by arts, and we didn't want to do that. We've been putting a lot of time into building trust."

This fall marked the beginning of a three-year fellowship program to bring national and

regional artists of color into the Hill District. The fellows will be provided with financial support and housing while they create, teach and showcase their work in the neighborhood. The initiative evolved from a partnership between the August Wilson House and Duquesne University, and is evidence of a trend to reacquaint the city's institutions with the Hill District community. The first fellow in the program is renowned poet Natasha Tretheway, who was appointed United States Poet Laureate in 2012 and 2014.

Upcoming events include a collaboration between the Hill District's Ebenezer Baptist Church and the Mendelssohn Choir of Pittsburgh on the choral piece "Let My People Go: A Spiritual Journey Along the Underground Railroad." The performance is scheduled for February at the church, which is near the location of an Underground Railroad stop. In March, the Renaissance City Winds, along with soprano Demareus Cooper and baritone Eugene Perry, will perform music primarily by African American composers during a concert at the Elsie Hillman Auditorium in the Hill House Association's Kaufmann Center.

"We're building these institutions in the neighborhood that are going to make it a cool place for the people who live here and part of the conversation about arts spaces in Pittsburgh," said Terri Baltimore of the Hill House Association. "It'll become a cultural touchstone of Pittsburgh, not an outlier."

## Partnerships



# HELP AND HILL

HILL DISTRICT NONPROFITS FOCUSING ON HUMAN SERVICES, INCLUDING SEVERAL FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS, ARE DOING MORE THAN MEETING NEEDS. THEY ARE HELPING RESIDENTS PREPARE FOR NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR THEMSELVES AND THE NEIGHBORHOOD.  
BY BEN WECHT

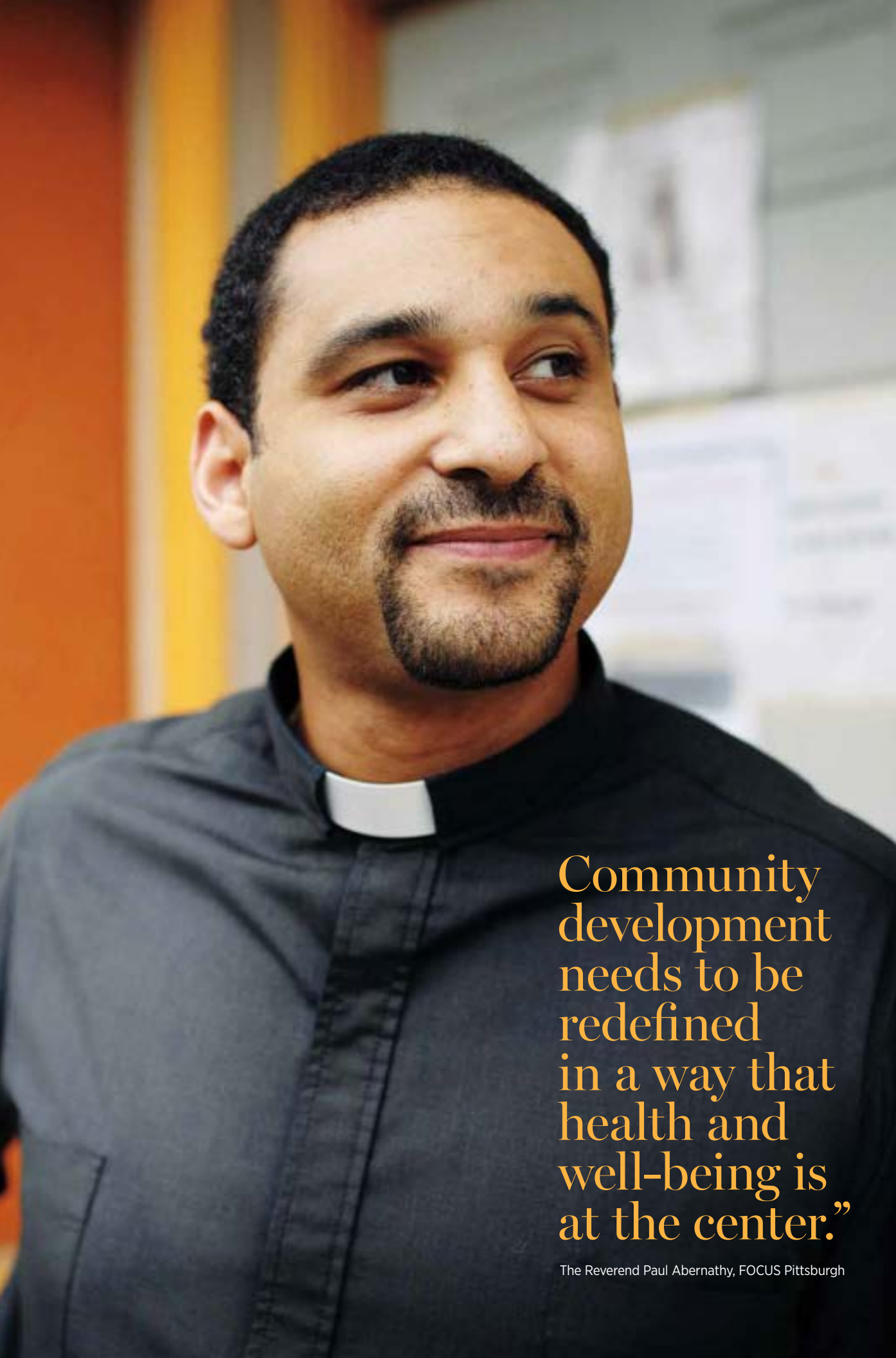
Inside an unassuming Centre Avenue storefront in the heart of Pittsburgh's Hill District, a transformation is in process. It's a late-summer weekday morning, and a mostly male, predominantly African American, gathering of seven or eight residents sits in rapt attention to a charismatic, hyper-verbal younger man in the white robe and gold-hued Byzantine stole of the Orthodox Church. He is preaching to them about suffering and redemption, about Jacob dislocating his hip in an all-night wrestling match in order to behold God at last.

But the transformation underway is not solely a spiritual one—at least not as intended by the young preacher. The Rev. Paul Abernathy is the founder of FOCUS Pittsburgh, a “trauma-informed community development” center bustling with activity in a cluster of rooms on the floor above the storefront. Its mission is to prepare a workforce and revitalize a neighborhood by first addressing the health and well-being of the individuals who comprise it.

FOCUS Pittsburgh's services include education, food, transportation and assistance with living expenses. The organization is one of nine chapters of FOCUS—Food, Occupation, Clothing, Understanding and Shelter—North America, an Orthodox Christian initiative to address poverty in America. The Pittsburgh affiliate also is part of a constellation of human services agencies in the Hill District, mostly faith-based, that are seeking to help a community with its historic share of struggles become in Rev. Abernathy's words, “a beacon of light to the nation.”

With support from local philanthropies such as The Heinz Endowments and the McAuley Ministries Foundation, FOCUS Pittsburgh and other organizations in the Hill District are both building upon the community's legacy of taking care of its own and addressing the root causes of long-standing economic disadvantage in an ambitious effort to restore and revitalize the neighborhood to its once and future glory.





The Rev. Paul Abernathy heads FOCUS Pittsburgh, a community organization based in the Hill District that is committed to addressing poverty and empowering residents.

Community  
development  
needs to be  
redefined  
in a way that  
health and  
well-being is  
at the center.”

The Reverend Paul Abernathy, FOCUS Pittsburgh



“It’s not a community that’s always looked to outsiders for help,” said Carmen Anderson, the Endowments’ director of Equity and Social Justice. “A lot of its strength and support comes from within. There has been for a number of years some core work in the area of human services to shore up what the neighborhood can provide in and of itself.”

Today’s human services organizations in the Hill follow the path carved out after the turn of the last century, when, as part of a national movement to manage the wave of newcomers to America’s urban centers, German Jewish immigrant Henry Kaufmann and his wife, Theresa, established the Irene Kaufmann Settlement House in the Hill District, a place where residents of all races and creeds could access everything from prenatal and infant care to music, art and drama classes. In doing so, the organization set the standard for settlement houses nationwide.

When Jewish and other immigrant populations began moving out of the Hill in the 1950s, government agencies took over much of the work of organizations like the Kaufmann settlement house. A small group of civic leaders, including the late attorney and activist Wendell Freeland and the late philanthropist Elsie Hillman, began to discuss the idea of transferring the settlement house’s operations to a then up-and-coming organization seeking to meet the neighborhood’s growing needs.

In 1964, at a time when the Hill District was just beginning to rebound from the displacement of businesses and residents caused by the construction of the Civic Arena—an entertainment venue and later home to Pittsburgh’s hockey team, the Penguins—the settlement house building reopened its doors as the Hill House Association. Eight years later, the organization moved next door to a newly constructed headquarters facility, and the original building became the Kaufmann Center, which houses the Elsie Hillman Auditorium, a gathering space for a range of arts performances, cultural events and other presentations.

“It started as a one-stop shop and in many ways continues to be that,” said Terri Baltimore, who began working for the Hill House 26 years ago and now serves as its director of neighborhood engagement. “The needs in the neighborhood have changed, but in many ways, meeting changing needs has always been at the heart of the settlement model.”

Although the Hill House has struggled at different periods and now finds itself once more at a perilous moment (see sidebar on page 33), its legacy extends across the community, particularly through the work of faith-based organizations.

On one of the neighborhood’s many steep slopes, tucked away on a side street that has a sweeping view of the Downtown skyline, sits another community hub of activity where a different charismatic clergyman is busy





Marnajah Coleman, far left, takes a peek at the art she created as she did yoga on top of plastic-covered paper and paint during Yoga Paint, a class offered as part of Center that Cares programming at the Jeron X. Grayson Center in the Hill District. David Williams, left, looks forward to the weekly community meal provided by FOCUS Pittsburgh helpers like Victoria Ely and her daughter Ava.

# taking care

trying to transform lives. As soft-spoken as Rev. Abernathy is loquacious, the Rev. Glenn G. Grayson heads the Center that CARES, a thriving youth development and enrichment organization serving more than 400 children and youth from pre-K through 12th grade. Rev. Grayson created the program almost 20 years ago, shortly after he arrived in Pittsburgh as the new pastor of Wesley Center A.M.E. Zion Church in the Hill District and began to notice a group of boys hanging around the church after school. Today, The Center that CARES offers programming at four locations. Its flagship site overlooking the city's Downtown, the Jeron X. Grayson Center, is named for Rev. Grayson's son, a Schenley High School graduate and star football player who was the unintended victim in a senseless act of gun violence in 2010, dying at the age of 18.

"After I lost my son, I wanted to do what I could," said Rev. Grayson, sitting amid the center's multiple depictions of Jeron and a museum-worthy collection of paintings with African American themes. "I was already doing this work, but I wanted to do more . . . I really firmly believed that if the young man who used that gun had been surrounded by a support base, he would have made a better choice. That's my drive and my mantra."

Twice honored by President Barack Obama for his work on gun violence, Rev. Grayson, with a staff of 30 and vital partnerships with University Preparatory School and McAuley Ministries, has provided the youth who flock to the

center four afternoons a week with a wealth of opportunities, from a safe place to gather to outdoor recreation excursions to overseas trips to locales such as Ghana and Northern Ireland.

"Kids who go to after-school programs do better and stay out of trouble more," he said, adding that "those kids who historically stay with us the longest have more opportunities come their way." Rev. Grayson is similarly optimistic about the Hill, which he describes as being "in an upswing. It's too slow, but it's taking root."

Another established provider of critical social services in the Hill is the Macedonia Family and Community Enrichment Center (FACE), an outreach initiative of Macedonia Church of Pittsburgh. Its mission is to help develop healthy families by providing key services in partnership with the Allegheny County Department of Human Services.

Macedonia FACE, which receives support from the national Annie E. Casey Foundation as well as from local philanthropies such as the Endowments and McAuley Ministries, focuses on three programs: Girls Circle, a strength-based, gender-responsive program for girls ages 9 through 18; the Community Truancy Prevention Program, a family-centered model to address root causes of truancy and absenteeism; and Teen Connect, an evidence-based program to help parents and caregivers improve relationships with the teens and preteens in their families.

According to Executive Director Trisha M. Gadson, a former children and youth caseworker who moved to Pittsburgh three decades ago, “over the years, we have recognized that a healthy community promotes a healthy family and vice versa.” FACE, she said, also strives to move beyond what she calls “deficit-based thinking” by highlighting strengths instead.

“So when we demonstrate that through our actions, it is more likely that we can engage in a partnership manner with families,” she said.

Michele Rone Cooper, executive director of McAuley Ministries, which also provides support to organizations in Uptown and West Oakland, said she is hopeful about the FACE approach “because residents who are engaged support each other. And that’s really what communities are about.”

Back at FOCUS Pittsburgh, Rev. Abernathy is busy balancing a steady flow of visitors with managing a staff that is striving to meet basic individual and family needs, providing assistance with primary medical and dental care,

and helping residents become agents of change in their own community. In one room, three young workers peer into laptops as phones ring incessantly with calls from residents in need of some type of support.

One such resident, single-mother-to-be Charmel Pollard, sits in an adjoining room outfitted with desktop computers and prices furniture on Amazon to furnish a new residence. Having discovered FOCUS Pittsburgh in 2009 when she needed help with an electric bill, she now comes regularly to access email, obtain household items and “listen to the word of God.”

As a U.S. Army veteran and graduate of both Wheeling Jesuit University and the University of Pittsburgh’s Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, Rev. Abernathy is well-versed in the formidable work that lies ahead in the Hill. Citing a late-1990s study by the California-based Kaiser Permanente Foundation about the effects of adverse childhood experiences on everything from mental health to employability, he explained why FOCUS Pittsburgh’s approach to community development centers on health and well-being.

“In the realm of community development in the U.S., people usually mean jobs,” he said. “We contend that jobs are meaningless if people are not healthy enough to sustain the opportunities. If we’re able to build buildings faster than we’re helping people, we’re just going to end up with different people living in our community.” **h**

Macedonia Family and Community Enrichment Center’s Girls Circle gives young women in the Hill District the chance to discuss issues that are important to them. Participating in this session are, from left clockwise, instructors Christina Hughey and Ashley Corum, with some students who include Shaunees Murrell, Anyia Washington and Erykah Dawkins.





# Keeping house

THE COMMUNITY  
COST OF  
PRESERVING  
A COMMUNITY  
INSTITUTION  
BY BEN WECHT



Pamela Robinson listens to state Rep. Jake Wheatley during an October meeting about the status of the Hill House Association.

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**B**y all accounts, the mood inside the Hill House Association's Blakey Program Center on Aug. 28 was a tense one. As a standing-room-only crowd of some 200 community members listened, the organization's leaders informed the group of their imminent plans to sell four of the Hill House's seven buildings, including the program facility where they were convened and the headquarters just around the corner on Centre Avenue. The reason: "dire financial problems."

The financial news was not necessarily surprising given the Hill House's budgetary struggles of the past several years. But the idea that the organization serving the Hill District's diverse human services needs for more than half a century would sell its most visible assets to a private developer certainly was. The deal with pending buyer Pittsburgh-based Omicelo LLC is expected to bring a cash infusion of some \$4 million to \$6 million and reduce the organization's deficit to about \$2 million with no anticipated interruption of its current services. Still, it was a testament to just how near and dear the Hill House is to the hearts of the community that emotions were running high that evening.

"I'm passionate about this place," Terri Baltimore, the Hill House's director of neighborhood engagement, said about both the headquarters campus and the organization. A staff member for more than a quarter-century, she uses such phrases as "unexpected amazingness" to describe the organization. Referring to the Hill House's spiritual roots in the Irene Kaufmann Settlement House, she added, "It's not just a building, but everything that's happened in this space for over 100 years and contributed to the quality of life in this neighborhood."

The Hill House Association was born, in a sense, from the ashes of the construction of the Civic Arena, an entertainment and sports venue that once

occupied a section of what is known as the Lower Hill. The arena was part of an "urban renewal" project in the late 1950s and early 1960s that displaced an estimated 8,000 residents and some 400 businesses. The Hill House was established, in part, to respond to the community upheaval with needed human and social services. Since 1964, through times of riot and renaissance, the organization has tended to the Hill's predominantly African American population in a myriad of ways. With its main programs focusing on arts and culture, senior services and community engagement, the Hill House also acts as home base to more than two dozen "campus partners." These include organizations as diverse as AJAPO, which resettles refugees and immigrants, to a medical clinic providing key primary and behavioral health services, to the Hill District Consensus Group, which helped to negotiate neighborhood benefits from redevelopment of the Civic Arena site and construction of the PPG Paints Arena, completed in 2010.

But as its client base has grown and diversified, so too has the Hill House itself, straining both its mission and its resources. A painful round of layoffs several years ago and recent streamlining of programs helped to a degree, as has support over the past decade from local philanthropies including the Endowments and the Pittsburgh, Richard King Mellon, Hillman, McCune, Eden Hall and McAuley Ministries foundations. But with a real estate portfolio that includes the historic Kaufmann Center, a Dollar Bank, and the Centre-Heldman Plaza, a strip mall anchored by a Shop 'n Save grocery store, the Hill House's work has become more daunting and its model more nebulous.

To help it get a handle on its assets and obligations, the Hill House brought in Pete Mendes, a financial consultant who specializes in working with organizations undergoing dramatic transitions, to serve as acting executive director beginning in 2014. According to Mr. Mendes, the root of the

organization's crisis lies in its lack of expertise in real estate management, which has led to a growing debt load. And while, in the past, organizations like the Hill House could count on government block grants to shore them up, today, "funders are asking more questions and demanding more answers," Mr. Mendes said.

In more than half a century of ministering to the varied, often formidable needs of the community, Hill House has never faced an existential crisis like the one it faces now. Even so, its leaders remain confident of its future vitality because of its pivotal role in the community.

The organization is "meeting ongoing needs so individuals can have a reasonable life," said Emma Lucas-Darby, Hill House board chair. "It's critically important for us to have a healthy organization, and I'm pleased to say that a lot of organizations feed off these services."

Carmen Anderson, the Endowments' director of Equity and Social Justice, echoed that sentiment.

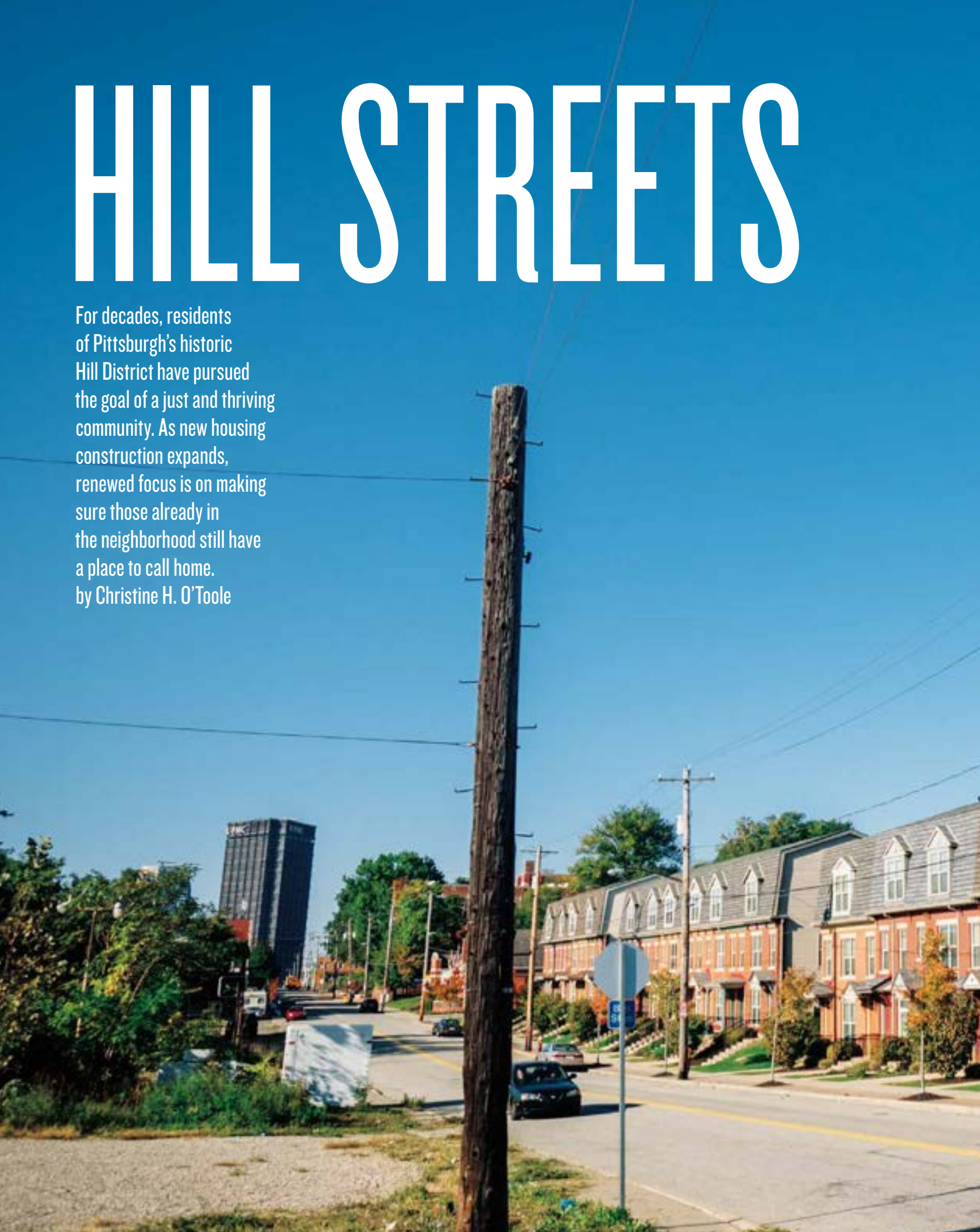
"The Hill House, in my mind, is a cornerstone in the community, both literally and figuratively, based on its prominence, its historical significance and its potential for the future," she said. "The Endowments has been one of several foundations that have tried to be strategically supportive to ensure its viability going forward. But I think the board and the community together really need to decide the role it will play moving ahead."

With Omicelo poised to buy four Hill House buildings, the developer's interest indicates that the organization's properties are viable for development. But in the long run, as Mr. Mendes sees it, the perpetuation of the Hill House is critical.

"The last thing anyone wants is economic development creating a chasm between the haves and have-nots," he said. "It's important that organizations that provide human services are there to fill the gap." **h**

# HILL STREETS

For decades, residents of Pittsburgh's historic Hill District have pursued the goal of a just and thriving community. As new housing construction expands, renewed focus is on making sure those already in the neighborhood still have a place to call home.  
by Christine H. O'Toole







The Bedford Hill apartment complex is among the new housing in the Hill District. But as this corner at Bedford Avenue and Kirkpatrick Street shows, additional redevelopment is still needed nearby and elsewhere in the community.





The Hill District's housing landscape ranges from Bedford Dwellings, Pittsburgh's oldest public housing complex, to Skyline Terrace, below, a development that replaced other public housing and has a hilltop view of the city's South Side neighborhood.

**“WELCOME [TO] BEDFORD DWELLINGS,” PROCLAIMS A FADED WOODEN SIGN WHERE BEDFORD AVENUE BEGINS ITS WESTWARD PLUNGE TOWARD THE SKYSCRAPERS OF DOWNTOWN PITTSBURGH.**





A block downhill, the name Bedford Hill is engraved in concrete on an elegant community center fronting well-groomed streets and sidewalks.

The two communities bookend 80 years of redevelopment in the city's most iconic African American neighborhood, with Bedford Dwellings, the oldest of the city's public housing complexes, finally at the front of the line for a major revamp.

Gail Felton, a Bedford Dwellings resident, is among those enthusiastic about proposals for the neighborhood makeover and the opportunity she had to participate in the planning process.

"The best thing about it is the homes," she said. "TREK Development is fantastic," referring to a developer working with Bedford residents and other neighborhood and city stakeholders. Ms. Felton also appreciates the options for private ownership, which include both market-rate and affordable homes for the community.

Although the Hill has always had the best views in town, even when some of its residential streets were unpaved, its steep terrain challenged optimal development.

For decades, connecting the neighborhood a mile to the nearby Downtown or Oakland business districts has meant facing physical and psychological barriers, though efforts to overcome some obstacles—such as creating a park between the Hill and Downtown—are underway.

"What's amazing about Pittsburgh is its topography, but it makes the Hill District area inaccessible," said architect Kai-Uwe Bergmann, who has consulted on proposals to develop the section of the neighborhood closest to Downtown and reconnect the Hill to the urban core. "You can't push a baby carriage or a wheelchair up a 14 percent slope."

Acres of gleaming townhomes have replaced barracks-style rental properties over the past 30 years. But the Hill's isolation from the larger community remains real and vexing, especially when trying to ensure that current residents benefit from the changes and are treated fairly.

"The Hill District doesn't want to be East Liberty or Lawrenceville," said Bill Generett, vice president of community engagement for nearby Duquesne University, identifying neighborhoods that have boomed in recent years but have priced out former residents.

"We want to make sure there are jobs and opportunities for current residents, and to find the right mix of market and affordable housing," noted the longtime Hill District advocate. "It's difficult."

For Rob Stephany, director of Community & Economic Development for The Heinz Endowments, the difficulty is ensuring equitable development that secures the fate of long-term renters who often aren't included in local redevelopment strategies.

"The issue moving forward is developing long-term housing for those vulnerable to economic displacement while making new housing available to others," he said.

Many are hoping for better results from the Bedford Dwellings/Hill District Choice Neighborhood Transformation plan, based on a two-year community process that invited residents like Ms. Felton and neighborhood organizations to reimagine large sections of the Hill. Not only does the strategy call for keeping current Bedford Dwellings residents in the neighborhood while the complex is redeveloped, the plan also identified other community aspirations for the Hill and those living there.

The consensus is that affordable housing alone can't provide the stable community and economic mobility local residents seek. Private investment, good transit, commercial activity, great schools, and efficient human services also are needed for the community to achieve its potential.

#### NEW HOUSING, NEW PROMISE

Reaching these goals requires overcoming a history of disinvestment and displacement going back to Depression-era Pittsburgh. That's when a number of Hill District residents had good blue-collar jobs, many in the steel industry, but didn't have housing.

A shortage estimated at 10,000 homes forced families into slums.

When Franklin Roosevelt signed the National Housing Act in 1937, Pittsburgh built two of the nation's first public housing complexes in the Hill, Bedford Dwellings and Addison Terrace. The Housing Authority of Pittsburgh set rents from \$18 to \$23 a month, at a time when the average steelworker's pay was \$36 a month. Working families were encouraged to apply, alongside the unemployed. Locally and nationally, public housing was viewed as a temporary home.

As more families—particularly white ones—fled the Hill for the post-war suburbs, the economic and racial diversity of the neighborhood dwindled. The wholesale razing of the Lower Hill to make room for the Civic Arena exacerbated the neighborhood's decline. Rebellions following the 1968 assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. felled its remaining business district. It would take another quarter-century for the city to move forward with plans in the Hill for a New Urbanist development dubbed Crawford Square, located near the arena.

New Urbanism envisioned walkable communities with streets and sidewalks that encouraged higher densities, mixed uses, public transit, and protected green space. Instead of low-slung apartments without individual doorways, designs featured private entries, patios and balconies.

Crawford Square redefined affordable housing for the city. A public-private partnership created a variety of affordable and mixed-rate townhouse rentals and private homes in the mid-1990s, close to Downtown amenities and transit.

"We bought in 1999," recalled DeWitt Walton, a homeowner who is a labor activist and Allegheny County council member. "It was centrally located, affordable, and we were committed to living in an African American community."

Today, Crawford Square is a successful and stable model for mixed-rate housing. Now wholly owned by developer

McCormick Baron Salazar, it has preserved 148 of its 348 units as affordable-rate housing. Families own another 72 homes.

“It brought people back to the community. That was a plus,” Ms. Felton explained.

But other sections of the Hill District did not fare as well during the close of the last century. Among the neighborhoods-within-the-neighborhood—Bedford Dwellings, Terrace Village, Crawford Roberts, the Upper Hill, the Middle Hill and the Lower Hill—the Middle Hill has the city’s highest rates of poverty, vacant homes, and vacant land. While the handsome, new affordable developments like Oak Hill and Skyline Terrace have supplanted former public housing complexes, vacant homes and deteriorating apartments like Bedford Dwellings are a barrier to sustainable transformation in the Middle Hill.

The Bedford Dwellings/Hill District Choice plan focuses on redeveloping Bedford Dwellings, a substantial portion of the Middle Hill, and a small section of Crawford Roberts. The Endowments committed \$50,000 to support the planning process. The work was folded into what was called the Bedford Connects proposal that was submitted to the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The city hopes to win a \$30 million grant for the \$250 million project, which includes 320 new housing units. The city’s Larimer neighborhood won the same grant for a similarly comprehensive plan in 2014. Now the Hill District, having been the subject of several ambitious redevelopment proposals and projects, is hoping that the city’s intentions for commercial development in the part of the neighborhood closest to Downtown and for bus rapid transit through the Hill will dovetail with the community-developed plan.

## NEIGHBORHOOD COMMITMENT

Ms. Felton, 66, has lived the history of the Hill. As a child, she had the run of Wylie Avenue, then a busy retail and cultural center. “Children were never allowed there by themselves, but my parents both worked on the street,” she recalled.

Her father ran a meat market; she joined her mother, a waitress at the famed Crawford Grill nightclub, for lunch each day. Her neighbors from nearby Whiteside Street still gather for summer reunions, which drew more than 300 old friends back to the neighborhood this year. In 1980, she moved to Bedford Dwellings. She is not only the decade-long president of the tenant council but also a vigilant community guardian. Three generations of her family live in the aging complex, with long barracks-style units facing bare lawns or parking lots.

“Why do I stay? It’s community,” she said. “People left the Hill for better schools and good homes. I say stay here and fight for those things. Better this community.”

Energy-efficient, free of mold and lead contamination, and surrounded by gardens and recreation opportunities, the new units under the Bedford Dwellings/Hill District Choice plan will follow the lead of next-door neighbor Bedford Hill Apartments, which opened in 2007 under public-private management. Individuals and families who moved there found a handsome complex that offered spacious, air-conditioned units, fitness and business centers, modern floor plans and green space.

For Marcus L. Brown, Bedford Hill was a good fit. At age 43, he has multiple sclerosis and is unable to work full-time; some 45 percent of his fellow residents are also disabled. When a vacancy for an ADA-compliant apartment came up, only a month after he joined the waiting list in 2009, he moved from East Liberty to Bedford Hill. Despite relying on a walker and ACCESS transit, he can easily navigate the hallways of his ground-floor home and the sidewalks of the community.

“I was born in East Liberty and I bleed East Liberty,” said Mr. Brown, who still misses his family home, razed in that neighborhood’s makeover 15 years ago. “But I’m blessed to be here.”

As plans for replacing the old Bedford Dwellings units emerge, some skeptics have wanted to know whether families living in the complex will be forced to move before

the new units are built. That’s been the case in just about every other affordable housing redevelopment project in the city, where residents were asked to leave substandard housing and promised the opportunity to return once new housing was built. But most never came back.

“Life gets in the way,” explained Mr. Stephany of the Endowments. “Families settle into new schools and new neighborhoods and only a very small fraction return. Regrettably, they often move to places that separate them from family, schools, social supports, transportation assets and job centers. The old development model might generate some housing units, but it more often than not puts low-income, vulnerable families in more precarious situations.”

Bedford Dwellings, however, has room to grow. Construction of new units could start immediately on nearby vacant land.

“The big idea here is ‘build first,’” said Bill Gatti, president of TREK Development.

As units are completed, residents are guaranteed one-for-one replacement of federally subsidized housing onsite or offsite nearby. This means instead of being forced to move outside of the community with small likelihood of returning, families are only relocated once and are able stay within the neighborhood.

## BEYOND HOME CONSTRUCTION

As Crawford Square and subsequent Hill redevelopments followed the New Urbanist template, one feature was notably absent: buildings that incorporated retail offerings at ground level, encouraging street life. Hill residents have long complained about the dearth of shopping and entertainment opportunities along the business corridors of Centre and Wylie avenues, but retailers have not followed public investment.

“The Hill District has more new affordable housing than other city neighborhoods. But Oak Hill, Skyline Terrace, Crawford Square and Bedford Hill—they all are islands. There’s not a lot of offsite redevelopment that connects them,” Mr. Stephany said.



# WHAT MAKES FOR BETTER COMMUNITY IN THE HILL?



## AFFORDABILITY

New housing in the Hill District includes townhomes on Dinwiddie Street constructed by TREK Development Group. This project, which included work on other nearby streets, consisted of a mix of new construction and rehabilitation of historic brownstones.



## GREEN SPACE

Redevelopment in the Hill District emphasizes the creation of an attractive, welcoming environment that includes well-maintained lawns, trees and pleasant sidewalks, such as those found on the grounds of the Crawford Square development.



## SCHOOLS

Community development plans in the Hill District call for investments in schools like Pittsburgh Miller PreK-5, where teachers and staff gave students an enthusiastic welcome on the first day of classes.



## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Converting an aging trade school in the Hill into the Energy Innovation Center, a LEED — Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design — Platinum building, involved installing color-coded, visible HVAC and plumbing pipe as a teaching tool for students and a showcase to visitors of the building's systems.



## PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Efforts to enhance the Hill District's quality of life include transit improvements such as providing more frequent bus service in the community.

"The coveted asset is Centre Avenue. The Hill Community Development Corporation has a great vision for Centre Avenue that could be the zipper that connects past investments together. They're calling for a mix of uses with housing, entertainment, retail and cultural amenities. This next phase of redevelopment could build the fabric of the historic neighborhood, keep longtime Hill residents in place, and generate a great Main Street."

Plans for Centre Avenue emphasize a walkable business district, with the city Urban Redevelopment Authority subsidizing commercial build-outs and providing loans to businesses in those storefronts. Residential and commercial building owners will be eligible for repairs of façades, roofs, sidewalks and steps, along with other improvements. The work complements acquisition of vacant and blighted homes that will be rehabbed and resold for between \$75,000 and \$110,000, promoting home ownership.

Other infrastructure improvements will rebuild the derelict Chauncey Street Steps, one of Pittsburgh's unique public staircases, with LED lighting and stormwater diversion. Transit improvements under the city's plans will include rerouting buses through the Hill District to provide more frequent service.

Bedford Avenue, the broad thoroughfare through the residential part of the community, also is slated for a makeover. With pedestrian-scaled lighting, existing historic markers and public art, it will be the renewed community's signature boulevard.

In the proposal to federal HUD officials, high-quality public education is highlighted as an essential long-term goal, along with access to well-paying jobs, affordable housing, commercial development and improved infrastructure. The plan calls for an active Communities in Schools program in the neighborhood, with full-time staff to connect students to social services.

At the Downtown terminus of Bedford Avenue, the former Connelly Trade School is now the Energy Innovation Center. Bob Meeder, president and CEO of Pittsburgh Gateways Corporation, which developed EIC, said that the center is working with UPMC to add three more neighborhood training programs in environmental tech services: pharmacy tech, surgical tech, and mold and infection control. Other courses, in 3D printing and rapid prototyping, are also planned.

Ms. Felton believes the time has come for the Hill District to look forward to future growth and opportunities.

"What's gone is gone. It's not coming back," she said. "Let's be real, and offer what our young people want." **h**



True to her name, 13-year-old Lyric Murphy enjoys music and dancing, and explores a range of arts-related activities through the ACH Clear Pathways program, where students learn about theater, music, dance and visual arts from working artists.





To learn

to blossom

OUT-OF-SCHOOL-TIME  
PROGRAMS MOTIVATE  
HILL DISTRICT YOUTH  
WITH ENCOURAGEMENT  
AND OPPORTUNITIES.  
BY LYNDY GUYDON TAYLOR

**W**hat can you say about a girl named Lyric Murphy who lives on Memory Lane? Her name and street hint of a Hollywood script, and in truth she has had some ups and downs.

About five years ago Lyric, now 13, sought her mother's permission to participate in an after-school program at a neighborhood center. Her father had just passed away, and she was hungry for things to do. A busy working mom, India Murphy was reluctant about allowing her daughter to attend but finally relented.

Since then, ACH Clear Pathways has become Lyric's second home.

"ACH is like family to me," said Lyric, smiling shyly as she peered through her glasses. "Whenever we get into a fight, we're able to work it out. We're able to handle it ourselves. We talk it out. Like, everyone can get along, and there's always something to do."

“We know that young people of color are afforded fewer opportunities to experience deep enrichment learning experiences than their white peers.”

**Mac Howison** Creative Learning program officer, The Heinz Endowments

ACH Clear Pathways is one of several out-of-school-time initiatives in the Hill District designed to support youth—particularly those from the neighborhood—in their growth and development. The program participates in the Hill Youth Partnership for Enrichment, or HYPE, a collaboration of organizations engaging 500 children and teens annually in grades K–12.

To more effectively serve Hill District families, these groups work together on matters such as coordinating transportation, ensuring a continuum of out-of-school experiences, participating in professional development, and providing financial scholarships. Other HYPE providers are Higher Achievement; School 2 Career; Thelma Lovette YMCA–Miller Afterschool Program in partnership with the Neighborhood Learning Alliance; YMCA School Age Child Care; Schenley Heights Community Development Program—A-STEP (After School Tutorial and Enrichment Program); and the Center that CARES.

Tyian Battle, ACH Clear Pathways founder and executive director, created her program to honor her son Amon C. Harris, who died at 7 of a congenital heart disease. He loved singing and dancing, so in 2010 she started the program because she realized that arts education outside of school can be expensive.

“I don’t know how to sing or dance,” acknowledged Ms. Battle, whose background is business administration. “I can’t even color inside the lines, so that’s why I get professional artists to handle the program.”

The working artists teach theater, music, dance and visual arts. Up to 60 children participate on weekdays from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. at Pittsburgh Weil K-8 Elementary School in the Hill District. Students are divided into three age groups, which are identified by a name: Smile is for ages 5 to 7, Dream for ages 8 to 10 and Expression for ages 11 to 13.

“I like to do everything. Dancing is probably my favorite thing,” said Lyric, who is a seventh-grader at St. Benedict the Moor School in the Hill. Last year, Lyric’s mother, whose love of songwriting influenced her daughter’s name, took students to a music studio where they recorded two songs. But as talented as she is, Lyric remains uncertain about a career.

“I want to see what’s out there first before making any choices,” she said.

Artist Eric Duffy, a program assistant, described Lyric as creative, introverted, humble, a really good writer, a leader and good at transitioning from one situation to another.

Those qualities were evident one evening this fall when Lyric was talking in the Weil cafeteria as the room throbbed with activity. A younger student hovered nearby, hanging on her every word. Lyric’s innate connection to younger students and the ability to lead that it implies has impressed Mr. Duffy. He’s encouraging her to become a student counselor when she ages out of the program next year.

Ms. Battle agreed that Lyric has matured and understands Clear Pathways’ mission. The young teen is willing to participate in programs and inspires creativity in younger students, Ms. Battle said. That shows the makings of a counselor for Creative Camp, a summer program during which children create mosaics that are installed throughout the Hill, with past colorful portraits that include a Stevie Wonder mural.

Ms. Murphy praised the impact Clear Pathways has made on Lyric: “It’s helped her with leadership skills, following through on projects, behavior and time management.”

Clear Pathways’ engagement of young people in the arts is impressive, said Mac Howison, Creative Learning program officer for The Heinz Endowments, which has recently given the organization a two-year, \$150,000 grant and has been a funder since 2013.

For an out-of-school-time program, Clear Pathways works with a relatively large number of children, and it is an



important out-of-school-time provider in the Hill offering a variety of support programs and catering to a wide age range, he said. He also commended the organization for giving older students the opportunity to become leaders and encouraging family and community participation.


While the Endowments awards grants directly to some out-of-school-time programs in the Hill District and elsewhere in the Pittsburgh region, the foundation also has joined other local funders in supporting APOST—Allegheny Partners for Out-of-School-Time—an initiative of the United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania that works to strengthen after-school programs by providing them with high-quality academic and enrichment learning, professional development, and training opportunities. One of APOST's initiatives is HYPE, which APOST started in the Hill to foster cooperation among the neighborhood's youth programs, especially in terms of transportation.

"We know that young people of color are afforded fewer opportunities to experience deep enrichment learning experiences than their white peers," Mr. Howison said. "One of APOST's core values is justice, which it defines as 'addressing institutional racism and confronting structural barriers to success for youth and families as critical steps to ensuring equitable access to high-quality, out-of-school-time programs.'"

**S**ydnee Patterson Thomas is a student who has benefited from participating in programming developed by HYPE member Higher Achievement, an academic youth-mentoring organization.

Started more than four decades ago in Washington, D.C., Higher Achievement came to Pittsburgh in 2012. The multi-city organization provides math and literacy academic support and homework assistance, and fosters leadership and civic-mindedness. In Pittsburgh, the program

Noah Purdy



The Higher Achievement program provides students like Sydnee Patterson Thomas, right, and Juilanna Page-Daughtry, center, with creative and stimulating academic support, such as this journal-writing exercise on as theme "Never give up!" The girls' stories of perseverance prompted laughter when they shared them with each other.

is housed in the Hill's Jeron X. Grayson Community Center, where it refers to participants as "scholars," and offers weekday and summer programming that targets middle school students.

Seated on a leather sofa in her Hill District home, Sydnee recalled her difficult adjustment from elementary to middle school. Near the end of fourth grade at Liberty Elementary, she learned of Higher Achievement.

"I didn't know what it was. It seemed like an interesting program based on what I was reading," Sydnee said. "They try to get us ready for the next year."

Her mother, Lakisha Patterson, urged her to enroll in the program, which both Sydnee and Ms. Patterson believe helped her transition to middle school academically—and socially.

"I'm an outspoken person," the precocious 12-year-old acknowledged. But her behavior sometimes put her at odds with teachers and students.

"In sixth grade, she was bullied because of her size," Ms. Patterson said. At nearly 5 feet, 5 inches, Sydnee is somewhat tall for her age and bigger than her classmates. "She just wanted to fit in. She was doing what she needed to do to fit in."

Both Sydnee and her mother said Sean Farr, former Higher Achievement director, was an important guide in this area. He knew what she was going through and how to mentor her. He helped her realize that defiance worked against her.

"Sydnee is very bright. She has the ability to lead," said Mr. Farr, now a positive climate and community coach at Propel School, Hazelwood. "We worked on how to lead and how to be respectful to others."

He also credited Higher Achievement with helping Sydnee and other students learn how to network and exposing them to colleges as well as helping them achieve academically and socially in middle school.

While Lyric and Sydnee participate in their after-school programs, HYPE is partnering with the Pittsburgh Public Schools and the Hill Education Council to share information about what is happening in the Hill District. This enables the collaborative to serve the community in the best ways possible as it supports its member organizations, said HYPE coordinator Ashley Comans.

Ms. Comans helps facilitate the different transportation, programming and other connections for member groups, including ACH Clear Pathways and Higher Achievement. She also oversees the initiative's scholarship program, which gives awards ranging from \$200 to \$2,000.

"I tell everyone this is the best job I've ever had," she said, "because of what we do for the kids." **h**



Photo courtesy of APOST

After-school programs in the Hill District that collaborate as part of the HYPE—Hill Youth Partnership for Enrichment—network participate in joint events that highlight what students have learned over the year through a shared enrichment activity. For this HYPE Showcase event, the shared activities on display included drumming and dancing.





Photo courtesy of 1Nation Mentoring

## GUIDING TO GREATNESS

**In 1Nation, high expectations for students are the norm. By Adam Reger**

Every student is a king or queen to the founders of 1Nation Mentoring. Every day, hundreds of students cross paths with Lloyd Cheatom, Kevin McNair and Sam Morant, who created the organization to change negative narratives around African American youth. Whether the students encounter the men through after-school programming at the Jeron X. Grayson Community Center in the Hill District, out in the community or in the hallways of one of the schools where the three mentors spend their days, each youth can be expected to be addressed as “King” or “Queen.” Every time.

“It’s so they know they can do anything, and to let them know you know it,” Mr. McNair said.

The titles may seem unimportant, but the emphasis on respect, expectations and the importance of how students think is at the core of 1Nation’s philosophy, represented in the motto “Everything begins with a thought.”

1Nation itself began as a thought, an idea tossed around among the three men during their time as Heinz Fellows. Through the fellowship program, college graduates interested in educational equity and social justice are placed in public schools in the City of Pittsburgh, where they collaborate with teachers, staff and school leaders to provide broad support to students.

The Heinz Endowments created the Heinz Fellows initiative in response to concerns about graduation rates and school disengagement among young African American men. Fellows support both male and female students’ social and emotional growth, as well as their academic progress, and engage with families and local community organizations.

While they were Heinz Fellows, Mr. Cheatom, Mr. McNair and Mr. Morant were stationed at different city schools and dreamed of ways

to keep their mentoring work going once the fellowship ended. With support from the Endowments, they created successful after-school and summer programming for youth and young adults ages 12 to 24. 1Nation also provides in-school mentoring at Pittsburgh Brashear High School in the city’s Beechview neighborhood, where many Hill District students are enrolled, and Sister Thea Bowman Catholic Middle School in Wilksburg Borough.

Working closely with teachers, the three men develop programming for students deemed likely to benefit from 1Nation’s support, offering lessons and leading discussions. During one recent session, students created lists in response to the question, “What do people think you are that you’re not?” Students brainstormed misperceptions of themselves and used these incorrect assumptions—“I’m ghetto” or “I’m bougie”—to better define who they are.

As mentors, the 1Nation founders strive to balance love and support for their students with the clear message that much is expected of them. A student overheard using bad language might be told, “Watch your mouth, King.”

“Kids respect us because they want structure,” Mr. Cheatom said. “They long for these relationships with us. Once we figured that out, it’s been God’s work ever since.”

Derrell Key, a 17-year-old Brashear senior who lives in the Hill District, has participated in 1Nation for the past three years, and today is a student leader. He helps mentor freshmen and is always available for advice, both in and out of school.

He stresses to younger students the importance of controlling your own narrative. Prior to the program, Derrell viewed his options for success as limited to football and basketball. Thanks to 1Nation after-school and summer programs that brought in speakers and provided

1Nation Mentoring founders are, from left to right, Kevin McNair, Lloyd Cheatom and Sam Morant.

tours of post-secondary campuses, Derrell plans to enter trade school to learn carpentry.

“The best part of the program is knowing there are people that care,” he said. “We have someone in our ear to tell us ‘This is wrong, this is right.’”

Stanley Thompson, the Endowments’ senior director for Learning, applauded the passion that Mr. Cheatom, Mr. McNair and Mr. Morant bring to their work, which impacts students not only in schools, but also in the community, where the men can help young people thrive.

“For students to see that someone really does value their contributions and where they want to go in life, and someone is going to help them get there, I think that is an incredible thing,” Mr. Thompson said.

Though the 1Nation mentors spend their days at Brashear and Bowman, the heart of the program is in the Hill District. Mr. Cheatom cited the neighborhood’s rich history as a mecca of the arts and of black culture as reasons why the organization is based there. It is a strong community partner, sponsoring community basketball leagues, collaborating with Allegheny County’s Learn and Earn summer youth employment program, and holding canned-food drives to benefit neighborhood residents.

1Nation’s presence in the community gives the men extra opportunities to engage with youth attending Brashear. Their visibility in the neighborhood means they frequently run into students at the supermarket, church or on the street.

“There aren’t always a lot of positive male role models for these kids,” Mr. Morant said. “So that kind of contact is important because we not only impact them at school but in the community.”

That presence can be absolutely critical. Faced with a shortage of positive African American male role models, many young people find negative examples among media stereotypes. As successful, college-educated young black men, the 1Nation founders offer a different picture.

“What Sam and Lloyd and Kevin have been able to do is create this counter-narrative that is very positive,” said Mr. Thompson. “And they’re not doing hand-holding. They’re modeling what these kids can do and become, and creating a belief that kids are able to embrace.”

Serving as role models extends to the men simply being themselves. They wear sneakers and jeans, and leave their tattoos visible.

“They’re seeing young black men who dress like them and listen to the same music—in a professional setting,” Mr. Morant said.

“We tell them to stay focused on the things that matter,” Mr. McNair added. “You don’t have to change who you are or dress a certain way. Success looks like you.” **h**

# SINGLED

**RACIAL DISPARITIES IN THE PITTSBURGH REGION'S SCHOOL SUSPENSION RATES ARE SPURRING SOME LOCAL DISTRICTS TO SEEK ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES IN ADDRESSING BEHAVIOR ISSUES SO THAT STUDENTS STAY IN SCHOOL. BY CHRISTINE H. O'TOOLE**

**Z**ero tolerance.

It sounds tough. If school students act up, they're out: suspended or expelled for bad behavior. But the impact of these policies, dubbed exclusionary practice, radiates beyond campus, harming families and the community.

Suspensions at U.S. public schools have doubled in the United States since the 1970s. But the practice hasn't forced the punished students to behave better.

In fact, the American Academy of Pediatrics reported in 2011 that being suspended even once makes students 12 percent more likely to drop out of school and three to 10 times more likely to become involved with the juvenile justice system. Other research has shown that suspended or expelled youth are twice as likely to get arrested during the months they were suspended.

Most troubling, African American students are far more likely to receive school punishments than whites, putting them on track to later incarceration. A recent analysis of Allegheny County school data by University of Pittsburgh researchers showed that black students are suspended at a rate seven times higher than that of students who are not African American

with the disparity particularly stark in districts with majority white student populations but significant percentages of black students.

"That number—seven times higher—points to a structurally racist set of behaviors," said Grant Oliphant, president of The Heinz Endowments, responding to the findings in "Just Discipline and the School-to-Prison Pipeline in Greater Pittsburgh: Local Challenges and Promising Solutions." The Endowments' African American Men and Boys Initiative commissioned the study.

"What does it mean for the kids involved? This is a phenomenon where African Americans are being singled out. What it means is they are not in school learning," Mr. Oliphant said. "As a result of suspensions, they're marked as 'bad kids' and have higher interaction with law enforcement. So, the national school-to-prison pipeline begins here, with decisions to suspend and expel students."

And suspensions have a lifetime impact both on students' futures and the region's.

Pitt's findings showed that a 10-point difference in suspensions per 100 correlated to a 3 percent lower graduation rate. Using the 2014–15 school year as an example, the researchers estimated that at least 12 percent, or 58, of the 480 students who dropped out of Allegheny



# OUT



County schools that year did so because of suspension experiences. The study determined that these 58 individuals who did not graduate will cost the county over their working-age time span more than \$9 million in lost tax revenue and over \$30 million in socioeconomic financial losses, such as reduced consumer spending and additional expenses for social supports.

Researchers studying the costs of suspensions, including the perpetuation of the school-to-prison pipeline, believe there has to be a fairer and more productive way to handle misbehavior. Several local school districts are trying preventive strategies, including the Pittsburgh Public Schools and Woodland Hills, a district serving students from 12 suburban communities east of Pittsburgh. Based on the principle of restorative justice, they focus less on punishment. Instead, they emphasize righting wrongs and building healthy relationships within the school.

At Woodland Hills, the work begins in a circle of middle school students.

Nineteen sixth-graders who gathered on Oct. 4 in the Woodland Hills Intermediate School's Maker Lab, surrounded by tools and art supplies, were invited there to become Leaders In Training. These students, along with fourth- and fifth-graders, confront bad behavior, like fighting or bullying, and express caring and confidence to their classmates. They choose to work in one of four groups: mentoring, an annual student-planned event, healing circles, and the Wolverine Cup, a friendly competition across the school's 25 homerooms.

Keatin Whitfield signed up to be a mentor to fourth-graders. The eager 11-year-old would have seemed an unlikely leader, having transferred to the school only weeks before. But teachers recommended her, and her application essay impressed Shawn Thomas, the school's restorative justice coordinator.



**A RECENT ANALYSIS OF ALLEGHENY COUNTY SCHOOL DATA SHOWED THAT BLACK STUDENTS ARE SUSPENDED AT A RATE SEVEN TIMES HIGHER THAN THAT OF STUDENTS WHO ARE NOT BLACK.**

As the mentoring group composed a statement of its goals for the year, Keatin grabbed a pink marker. She neatly lettered one word.

Empathy.

To Mr. Thomas, empathy is the first step in reducing Woodland Hills' worrisome suspension rates. His project, based on models from Houston and California, helps students resolve conflicts when they arise, engage an offender to recognize and repair harm through healing circles, and restore a sense of community.

Woodland Hills administrators and teachers knew their schools needed a better approach. Compared to the statewide average of 10 suspensions per 100 public school students, and the countywide rate of 14 per 100, Woodland Hills' rate was 41 per 100.

The district's problems were echoed throughout the region. University of Pittsburgh's Center for Race and Social Problems, which released in August its comprehensive study comparing Allegheny County school suspensions with statewide statistics, found that overall the county posted five of the 11 highest suspension rates in Pennsylvania, along with having black students' suspension rates significantly higher than those for their non-black peers. For the past two academic years, the Endowments has supported the center, which directs and evaluates the Woodland Hills pilot and its expansion to other local districts.

Mr. Thomas, 37, took the restorative justice post at Woodland Hills Intermediate School after several years as chief supervisor at the county's Shuman Juvenile Detention Center.

"My job at Shuman Center was to maintain safety—point blank," he recalled. "It was not about helping youth develop relationships. I wanted to have a bigger impact."

When Pitt sought a leader for the restorative justice project, Mr. Thomas, a Cheney University graduate with a master's degree in social work, found an opportunity to invert standard approaches. Using a three-tier model, the foundation is community building to enhance school culture, climate and relationships. Next are strategic response interventions to restore after harm has occurred. The top tier is reentry, welcoming back a student following suspension or other school disruption.

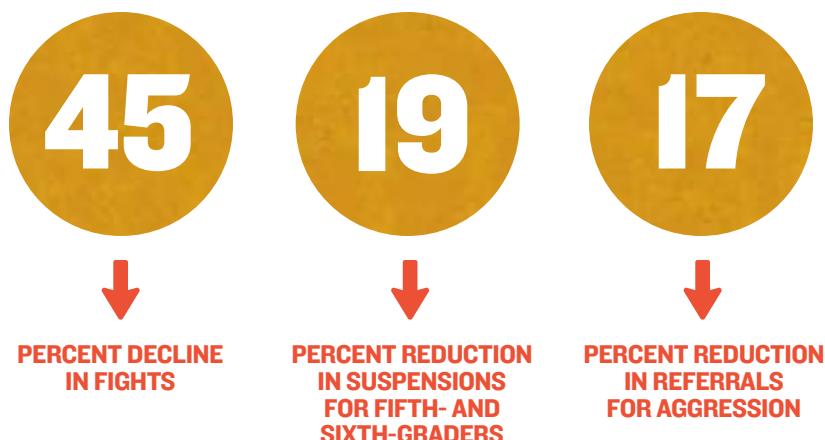
At the intermediate school, the most common infraction of school rules is disrespect to staff, which comprises about 60 percent of referrals, Mr. Thomas said. Fighting, often at lunchtime, gym class or recess, is another common cause.

"Our teachers have really bought into the restorative justice idea. Instead of writing a kid up for defiant behavior, they say, 'I see how you and the other kid are responding to each other. I want you to do a [healing] circle with Mister



# TRENDING DOWN

To reduce school suspensions and their negative impact on students' lives, the Woodland Hills School District is among those in the Pittsburgh region trying new prevention strategies. As part of a pilot program in the intermediate school, restorative justice approaches for addressing behavioral concerns have yielded positive results.



Shawn.' Before it was, 'I'm writing you up. Deal with the consequence.' Now there's a filter."

The Wolverine Cup competition allows homerooms to earn points for group achievements, like adhering to the school's uniform code or reducing student referrals to the school's assistant principal. Last year's Wolverine Cup winners earned 900 points and claimed the Cup's reward, a class trip to the Carnegie Museum of Art.

But the real prize of the restorative justice work was a calmer school atmosphere. With its 600 students, Woodland Hills Intermediate documented a 45 percent decline in fights and a 17 percent reduction in referrals for aggression. Suspensions for fifth- and sixth-graders declined 19 percent. At year-end, 17 percent of students reported that they now felt safer at school.

Building trust and positive relationships among students is only one part of the puzzle. As Mr. Oliphant noted, adult racial biases in both suburban and urban districts need to be addressed as well.

"If you don't talk about race, you can't talk about culture," said James Huguley, assistant professor of social work and lead author of the Pitt report. "The Pittsburgh area has one of the poorest African American communities in the country. We must understand the context here. We don't suspend a lot of kids, but when we do, they're black."

Researchers believe that disparities in school discipline practices are tied to widespread U.S. attitudes. Recent tests have revealed that as many as 80 percent of whites have anti-black biases. Some 40 percent of African Americans hold the same bias against their own race. Conflating a student's character with a violation of school rules, teachers and administrators may perceive black students, especially young men, as dangerous.

Racial bias training among police officers and other public employees can build awareness of unconscious prejudice, and has been implemented among Pittsburgh district teachers through its Beyond Diversity program.

Like Woodland Hills Intermediate, Pittsburgh Public Schools also reduced suspensions after the implementation of its restorative justice program in 22 schools across the district. Evaluation of the two-year project, funded by \$3 million from the U.S. Department of Justice School Safety Initiative, showed modest decreases in the district's suspension rates. During the 2015–16 and 2016–17 school years, the rates dropped overall from 16 percent of students suspended to 13 percent.

Developed by the International Institute for Restorative Practice, the Beyond Diversity project trained teachers and paired participating elementary, middle and high schools with peer schools that did not implement the program. In the schools that used restorative practices, suspension rates dropped twice as much as in the control group. Black students had previously been suspended four times as often as white students, and that rate dropped slightly to 3.5 times as often as white students. The RAND Corporation evaluated the study.

The Pittsburgh district plans to expand restorative justice practices throughout all schools. It has announced that it will phase in a new policy barring suspensions of students in kindergarten through second grade.

Data collected by Pitt's Center on Race and Social Problems indicates that throughout the county, even at schools without formal restorative justice programs, suspension rates are dropping—unevenly, but steadily. From 2012–13 to 2015–16, suspension rates decreased by 2.6 percent, a better rate than achieved statewide.

To Carmen Anderson, the Endowments' director of Equity and Social Justice, the trend suggests that restorative justice is gaining traction as a positive disciplinary approach.

"What we learn collectively, as various districts test ideas, is promising," she said. "The first step is awareness. Yes, it matters that districts are engaged in conversation about the issue, but conversation must lead to action in both policy and practice." **h**



On the set of "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood," Fred Rogers conveyed in every aspect of his television presence — including his hands and shoes — the calm gentleness that he wanted children to see.



# BEAUTIFUL NEIGHBOR

THIS YEAR'S COMMEMORATIONS OF THE  
50TH ANNIVERSARY OF "MISTER ROGERS' NEIGHBORHOOD"  
NOT ONLY INCLUDE AN ARRAY OF MOVING TRIBUTES TO THE ICONIC  
CHILDREN'S TELEVISION SHOW, THEY ALSO REVEAL THE  
GENTLE GENIUS OF CREATOR FRED ROGERS. BY CRISTINA ROUVALIS.  
PHOTOS FROM LYNN JOHNSON COLLECTION, MAHN CENTER FOR ARCHIVES  
AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, OHIO UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES.



red Rogers — the cardigan-wearing, sneaker-tying hero

to generations of preschoolers — had a way of reassuring kids that someone really understood all the big worries of their little worlds.

And it wasn't just TV shtick. He treated everyone as kindly in person as he did through the television screen.

But when it came to creating more than 900 episodes of "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood," the ordained Presbyterian minister wasn't laid back.

In the world he created for Daniel Tiger, Henrietta Pussycat, King Friday and millions of kids, everything had to be precise, down to the sheet music shown on screen. If the notes didn't correspond to the song being played, the real-life Mr. Rogers would politely correct the person managing the props. "That doesn't match what we're hearing."

"They're just kids," some might say.

But Mr. Rogers insisted. It didn't matter that the average preschooler would never notice, let alone call him out on the inconsistency. "He was so invested in kids, in putting them first. We had to do it right," said Margy Whitmer, a producer on the show.

At one point, he even decided to go back and edit some of his older episodes. In the early days, Mr. Rogers would

look into the camera and say something along the lines of, "Stand up and let me see how tall you are. My, you really have grown."

A few years later, he grew concerned that he might be misleading kids into thinking he could see them through the TV screen. He asked Hedda Sharapan, his associate producer, to review those episodes and suggest edits. The crew replaced the original bit with new footage where he talked about growing and explained how to measure with a ruler.

"He was a perfectionist as far as what he felt was meaningful for kids," she said.

Fifty years after the first episode of "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" aired in 1968, and 15 years after everyone's favorite neighbor died, Fred Rogers is shining brighter than ever. Out of appreciation for all he did, both those who worked with him and those who once sidled up to the TV to watch him are determined to ensure his message lives on.

The biggest year of his posthumous career may have been 2018. The documentary "Won't You Be My Neighbor?" has been a critical success and the highest-grossing biographical documentary of all time. A movie with megastar Tom Hanks as Mr. Rogers is scheduled for release in October 2019.

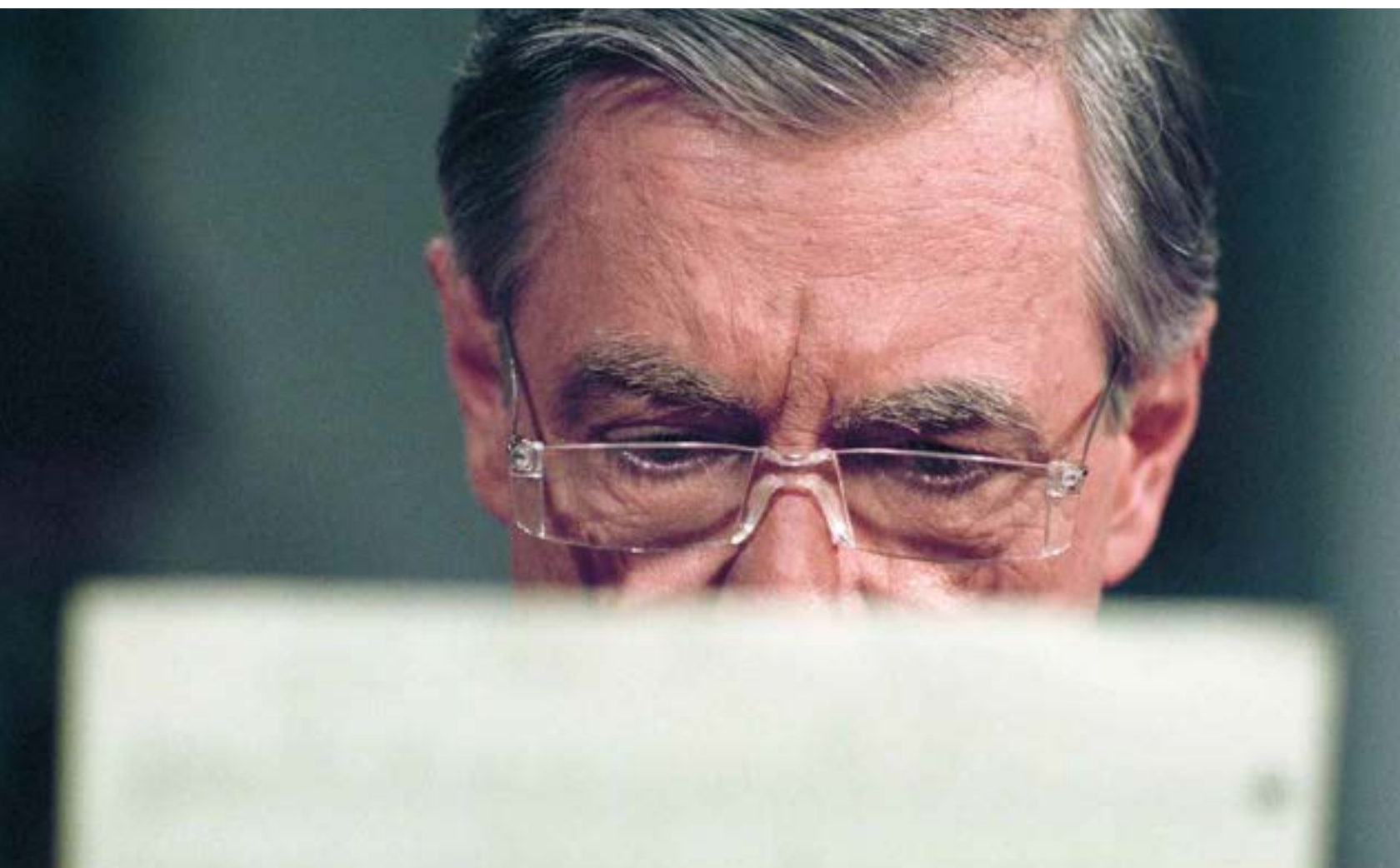
"The Good Neighbor: The Life and Work of Fred Rogers" by Maxwell King, president and CEO of The Pittsburgh Foundation and former president of The Heinz Endowments, is the first comprehensive biography of the TV icon. A new Mister Rogers' Neighborhood website, [www.misterrogers.org/](http://www.misterrogers.org/), streams five episodes weekly. There is even a Mister Rogers memorial stamp, featuring him and King Friday XIII.

The Pittsburgh TV host brought something unique to children's programming. Rooted in child psychology, he focused on the social and emotional development of young children, giving them a strong foundation before they ever encountered academic subjects. Though "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" is no longer filmed, Fred Rogers Productions and the Fred Rogers Center have created new ways of spreading the Mister Rogers message.

Gregg Behr, executive director of The Grable Foundation, said that Grable has awarded more than \$3.9 million to Fred Rogers Productions and nearly \$1.1 million to the Fred Rogers Center over the past decade as part of its support of programs critical to a child's successful development.

Fred Rogers, shown opposite page above, operating the Lady Elaine Fairchilde puppet, often joined the "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" puppeteering crew in staging those segments of the show at WQED studios. Below, he is captured reading on the set of the television program.





"Inevitably, as generations pass, our direct experience with Fred Rogers will pass. What remains will be a critical legacy about how we support and care for children and how we put children first," Mr. Behr said. "Yes, we are honoring the legacy of a person, but more so we are honoring the legacy of great ideas."

#### One of a Kind

**W**hen Fred Rogers retired in 2001, there was never any question of finding someone to replace him. It wasn't like "Bewitched," the popular mid-1960s to early-1970s TV show that swapped one Darren, husband of Samantha, a suburban witch, with another actor, and viewers willingly adjusted. Young viewers knew that the Mister Rogers who encouraged them on screen was not a character but a real person.

But the sincere, soft-spoken man whom children knew and loved was busy behind the scenes as the creator, composer, producer, head writer and showrunner of the television program. He not only wrote all the scripts at a punishing pace—65 shows the first year alone—he also performed the songs and handled the puppets. In a show that stressed content over production values, no one would be able to fill his navy-blue sneakers.

"We aren't looking for the next Fred Rogers," said Paul Siefken, president and CEO of Fred Rogers Productions.

"We're looking for people who can bring the same work ethic, talent and commitment, and let the work speak for itself."

As his career was winding down, Mr. Rogers mentioned the possibility of an animated spin-off. "Fred always felt that the puppets could live on in animation," said Bill Isler, former CEO of the Fred Rogers Company, which was renamed Fred Rogers Productions in May.

It's fitting that his successors chose Daniel Tiger to be the first star of this animated future. Daniel Tiger was his first puppet, the one that mirrored him the most, Mr. Isler said.

Despite its quaint image, "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" tackled difficult issues: divorce, anger, disabilities. He tapped into the experiences of his own childhood in Ligonier. He had a loving family but faced the taunts of bullies who called him "Fat Freddy."

"He remained close to his childhood in a way that most adults don't," said his widow, Joanne Rogers. "It was a difficult time for him. He was in his bed, isolated, with every imaginable childhood disease: measles, mumps, scarlet fever."

By channeling his inner child, Mr. Rogers helped kids make their way through day-to-day struggles. "He helped them connect the dots and negotiate the world," Ms. Whitmer said. "When you are 3 or 4, everyone else knows more about the world than you do."

"Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood," which follows the young son of the original puppet, continues in that tradition of helping kids grow socially and emotionally. Most episodes revolve around a conflict that the child needs to solve. In the first episode in 2012, the younger Daniel Tiger goes to pick up his birthday cake from the bakery, only for it to be smashed on the way home. It's a crushing disappointment, but Daniel's father shows him that the imperfect cake is just as delicious.

"His message was that birthdays often come with disappointment. The buildup is too much," Mr. Siefken said. "But when something is bad, you can turn it around and find something good."

The No. 1 children's show on PBS, "Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood" was created by Angela Santomero, the creator of "Blue's Clues" and other children's shows. As a child, she was mesmerized by "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" and, as an adult, met her hero and visited him on set.

Ms. Santomero and her team do the animation in New York. In Pittsburgh, some of the

We aren't looking for the next Fred Rogers. We're looking for people who can bring the same work ethic, talent and commitment, and let the work speak for itself."

**Paul Siefken** president and CEO, Fred Rogers Productions





original crew members for “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood” then review the script and film live-action sequences that are interspersed throughout the program. In one episode, local children in red sweaters visit the Carnegie Museum of Natural History to learn about dinosaurs.

“It’s a shoutout to the visits Fred used to make to interesting people and places in the ‘neighborhood,’” Ms. Whitmer said.

Fred Rogers Productions has introduced several new math-themed shows. For example, “Peg Plus Cat” is an animated series about a little-girl math whiz and her blue sidekick, Cat. “Odd Squad,” a live-action show aimed at first- through third-graders, stars young “agents” who work together to solve oddball mysteries. The company, which delivers content through streaming and apps, has other shows in the pipeline.

“Sometimes we don’t realize what a treasure we have in Pittsburgh,” said Michelle Figlar, the Endowments’ vice president for Learning. “We produce award-winning, record-breaking shows and media content right in our backyard. It reaches kids of all incomes.”

The foundation is giving \$3 million over three years to Fred Rogers Productions for its Legacy Lives on Campaign, which supports the company’s efforts to extend

its leadership in producing children’s media and to continue sharing Mr. Rogers’ vision and values for generations to come.

Since 1991, the Endowments has provided \$2.3 million to develop The Fred Rogers Center as a hub for programs supporting caregivers and educators of young children. Since 1992, it has awarded \$5.9 million to Fred Rogers Productions for new programs—including “Daniel Tiger’s Neighborhood” and “Peg Plus Cat.”

“The [recent] grant will help people share Mister Rogers’ vision for generations to come,” Ms. Figlar said. “When you see the name Fred Rogers Productions, it means kids first.”

### Extending the Legacy

**N**icholas Ma was 6 when he walked onto the set of “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood” with his famous father, cellist Yo-Yo Ma. It was one thing to watch him through a 10-inch TV screen but quite another to see the TV host towering above him. Overwhelmed, the little boy hung back.

As part of the 1994 special “Fred Rogers’ Heroes: Who’s Helping America’s Children,” Mr. Rogers visited Mesa Elementary School on the Navajo reservation in Shiprock, N.M., to recognize the work of principal Glojean Todacheene and enjoy time with the children.



Fred Rogers and his wife, Joanne, share a laugh together in front of the plaque that dubbed the home in their Nantucket, Mass., neighborhood "The Crooked House."

Mr. Rogers gave him space, allowing Nicholas to come to him in his own time—a rarity on a TV set, where time is money. “It was a very generous thing for him to do,” the now-adult Nicholas Ma recalled.

In the 1990 episode, Nicholas slid the cello bow back and forth as his father held his fingers on the strings. Ten years later, when he returned to the set as a teenager, Nicholas felt more intimidated playing alongside his virtuoso father than talking to his childhood hero on national television.

Thinking back on the time he spent in “the Neighborhood,” Mr. Ma became curious about the man behind the legend. He found the answers he sought in the process of producing “Won’t You Be My Neighbor?” The documentary captures both Mr. Rogers’ authentic kindness and the intellectual rigor of his ideas about child development.

Mr. Ma came across many small surprises about the children’s television legend in his research.


“He woke up every morning and read the Bible in Hebrew and Greek. He swam a mile every day. He kept his weight at exactly 143 pounds,” Mr. Ma recounted. “What surprised people the most was how hard it was for him to do what he did. We just assume this guy just had the good fortune to be a genius, but he thought deeply about what he should do in the world.”

After retiring in 2001, Mr. Rogers became melancholy. “I miss my playmates,” he told his wife.

Mr. King, his biographer, also discovered a much more complex character than the avuncular man his viewers saw.

“Everyone says that he was the same on TV as he was in person. That’s true,” Mr. King said. “But when you see him on TV, he seems sweet, kind and simple. He was sweet and kind, but he sure wasn’t simple. He lived his life in a very intentional way. He was always intense about his work. He was always on.”





Inevitably, as generations pass, our direct experience with Fred Rogers will pass. What remains will be a critical legacy about how we support and care for children and how we put children first.”

**Gregg Behr** executive director, The Grable Foundation

Following his eight years at the helm of the Endowments, Mr. King fell into the role of Fred’s biographer while serving as the executive director of the Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children’s Media at Saint Vincent College from 2008 to 2010.

“Why isn’t there a biography of Fred?” King asked.

“Fred never wanted one,” Mrs. Rogers replied.

But he convinced her that it was an important book to write.

Mr. King wrote about the time Fred and Joanne Rogers went out to dinner with colleagues in the 1970s. Just as the server brought the food, the head of a little boy popped up from under the table. He told Mr. Rogers that his dog had died.

True to his television persona, Mr. Rogers joined the child on the floor and explained how sad he was when his dog, Mitzi, died. As his food grew cold, he comforted the little boy.

Mr. King interviewed co-workers and relatives and dug through the Fred Rogers Archive—a treasure trove for scholars and filmmakers.

“We provide the unfiltered legacy to broaden the reach of Fred,” said Junlei Li, co-director of the Fred Rogers Center, which houses the archival materials.

The center also supports people who work with young children. Whenever disaster struck, Mr. Rogers was famous for saying, “Look for the helpers.” The Fred Rogers Center takes that one step further by “helping the helpers,” people like the child care providers, preschool teachers and crossing guards. Through videos, speeches and workshops, the center gives support to people who devote their lives to children.

Ms. Sharapan, a senior fellow at the Fred Rogers Center, travels around the country showing short clips from “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood” as educational tools, not for preschoolers, but the adults who work with them. She often highlights one of Mr. Rogers’ favorite moments: the 1981 episode where Jeff Erlenger, a young boy with quadriplegia, demonstrated how his electric wheelchair works. Then, in a bit of TV magic, Jeff and Mr. Rogers sang “It’s You I Like” together. Ms. Sharapan goes on to ask the audience about the message they hear in his words.

“He is talking to the kid at eye level,” some have pointed out, while others have said, “We’re more alike than different.”

At a time of political divide and incivility, Ms. Sharapan said she hears more and more from people who have rediscovered “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood,” which still airs weekly on some PBS stations, and streams on Amazon and the new website.

“People say their children are mesmerized. His shows are like tapestries, which weave things together in a wonderful way. It’s timeless.” **h**

## RETURN ENGAGEMENTS

**Issuing the Call** Because of the enthusiasm, energy and partnerships generated by last year's "Nonprofits and the Call to Moral Leadership" meeting, the Endowments organized another opportunity for nonprofits in the Pittsburgh region to examine how they can respond to societal challenges. Nearly 400 people attended "Nonprofits and the Call to Moral Leadership: Courage to Act" on Nov. 14 at the August Wilson Center, Downtown. Inspirational speakers included painter, sculptor, activist and arts incubator founder Titus Kaphar, who also is a recent MacArthur "genius" grant recipient, and Charlottesville, Va., police chief and former Pittsburgh police commander Dr. RaShall Brackney. The presentations provided attendees with data and action tools aimed at helping them and their organizations consider ways to harness the power of courageous moral leadership.



**Valuing our Veterans** Patti Gerhauser, above, is among the veterans from the Pittsburgh region featured in a Heinz Endowments campaign to address misconceptions often faced by post-9/11 vets. Because of the national attention that the foundation's 2017 campaign received, a follow-up public messaging initiative was launched in November to commemorate Veterans Day. The current campaign continues the emphasis on the skills and talents of returning servicemen and women and the assets they represent for the community. Perspectives from local veterans are included in public service announcements in regional and national digital media outlets as well as targeted social media and website platforms. The campaign is linked to the [www.rethinkvets.org](http://www.rethinkvets.org) website, which was updated from last year with stories and graphics to support the recent promotion.

## WORLD PREMIERES

Rio de Janeiro choreographer Deborah Colker's "Cão sem Plumas," or "Dog Without Feathers," was among the more than 500 international visual and performing arts attractions in this fall's 2018 Pittsburgh International Festival of Firsts. An initiative of the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust, the festival ran from Sept. 21 through Nov. 11 and featured 30 international companies and artists from 20 countries, including individuals and groups from the Pittsburgh arts community. This was the Trust's fourth and most diverse showcase of never-before-seen arts presentations. They represented a full range of arts disciplines — theater, dance, music, visual art and pieces that defied category — and were placed in both traditional and unexpected spaces.

Photo: courtesy of Deborah Colker Dance, Brazil



## LEARNING SCIENCE EARLY

The Pittsburgh Public Schools has opened an early childhood classroom at the Carnegie Science Center, which is providing young children with a fun and invigorating space to learn. The Heinz Endowments funded the renovations required to meet Head Start regulations, and supported teacher training and curriculum development. Preschoolers in the program have access to the center's educators, scientists, exhibits and programs on a daily basis. The Carnegie Science Center program is the second Pittsburgh Public Schools early childhood classroom located outside of a school building. The other is in the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh.





## MORE HOT TOPICS

This fall was a season filled with gatherings that received Heinz Endowments support and focused on issues critical to the Pittsburgh region and the country.

In September, the Change Agency, a local nonprofit that promotes community inclusion and collaboration, held its second annual **All for All Summit**. Participants looked at ways to engage the region's growing immigrant community and support immigrant artists, entrepreneurs and political interests.

Among the major national and international gatherings in Pittsburgh in October was the Land Trust Alliance's 31st **Rally: The National Land Conservation Conference**. About 2,000 people from the U.S., Canada, South America and elsewhere across the globe came to Pittsburgh the weekend of Oct. 11-13 to discuss various land conservation topics and to visit the region's natural landmarks. In his keynote address, Endowments President

Grant Oliphant spoke to the group about the importance of conservation during a time of social and political upheaval to serve as a voice of courage, a way to promote equity, and a means of creating places of pride and hope.

The 24th annual **Rail-Volution Conference** pulled into Pittsburgh Oct. 21-24, bringing together diverse sectors of the community — government, business, environment, advocacy and transit — to discuss how a range of mobility options can be incorporated into community development in ways that are fair and beneficial to all. The event included leaders and experts from across the country, who shared ideas and experiences about efforts to use transit to build communities that are more livable economically, socially and environmentally.



From Oct. 21 to 22, Pittsburgh hosted the second of a two-part exploration of ways to protect and promote the First Amendment. Presented by Duquesne University and The Pittsburgh Foundation, in cooperation with the National Constitution Center, the **National Conference on the First Amendment:**

**Bedrock of American Freedoms** was a celebration of the First Amendment as central to maintaining the viability of our democratic institutions. Speakers included various media luminaries, including top editors from The New York Times and The Washington Post, and a video appearance by U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. The kickoff summit, "The First Amendment for the Twenty-First Century," took place in Pittsburgh in June.

Annie O'Neill



## GROWING GREEN

Redevelopment of the 178-acre Hazelwood Green is moving steadily forward as firms respond to a recent request for qualifications, designed to identify highly qualified developers for the site's Mill District. Formerly home to LTV Steel and the Jones & Laughlin Steel Co., Hazelwood Green is in the city's Hazelwood neighborhood, bordering the Monongahela River, and is envisioned to become a world-class model for sustainable mixed-use development. Owned by Almono LP, a partnership of the Endowments and the Richard King Mellon and the Benedum foundations, the site has attracted the Advanced Robotics for Manufacturing Institute (ARM) and Carnegie Mellon University's Manufacturing Futures Initiative (MFI) as its first anchor tenants. Both are constructing their spaces within the steel mill shell of the historic Mill 19 building, above, which is located in the Mill District and owned by the Regional Industrial Development Corporation of Southwestern Pennsylvania.



## RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE

**Arts Honors** This year's recipients of the Carol R. Brown Achievement Awards are cinematographer and City Theatre production director and set designer Tony Ferrieri, who was selected for the established artist honor, and interdisciplinary artist Alisha Wormsley, who received the emerging artist recognition. Both were celebrated Dec. 10 at Pittsburgh's City Theatre during the annual awards ceremony.

In its seventh year, the Carol R. Brown Awards program recognizes an established artist and an emerging artist for their exemplary artistic achievements and promise for future work. Supported by The Heinz Endowments and The Pittsburgh Foundation, the Carol R. Brown Awards are a component of the Investing in Professional Artists Program, which is among a small number of initiatives in the region that provide direct philanthropic support to individual artists. They are named for Endowments board member Carol Brown, who

served as president of the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust during the transformation of a "red-light" section of Downtown into the nationally recognized Cultural District, which has served as a model for arts-based community redevelopment.

**International Treasures** Another inspirational group of people who are leaders in their fields have been recognized with Heinz Awards for exceptional work affecting the lives of people across the globe. A project of the Heinz Family Foundation, the awards were established in 1993 in honor of the late Sen. H. John Heinz III to celebrate individuals for achievements in the arts and humanities; the environment; the human condition; public policy; and technology, the economy and employment. Each receives an unrestricted cash prize of \$250,000.




This year's recipients are Norman Atkins, an educator whose models for training teachers

and school leaders have led to dramatic, positive change in public school classrooms and gains in teacher diversity; Ming Kuo, a psychologist whose research on the impact of urban green space on physical and mental health is changing urban forest and landscape design policy; Ralph Lemon, a choreographer, writer, visual artist and curator whose body of work interweaves movement, media, visual arts and language; Sherri Mason, a global expert on freshwater microplastic pollution whose research is raising awareness of microplastics and other contaminants in U.S. freshwater systems and leading to policy changes around the world; Linda Rottenberg, a social entrepreneur whose global nonprofit, Endeavor, is providing economic opportunity to business owners in developing countries and the U.S.; and Enric Sala, a marine ecologist working at the intersection of science and policy to protect the world's remaining pristine marine environments.

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