

**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.

DeWitt Walton

COUNCILMAN, ALLEGHENY COUNTY

With 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,
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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.

