



The Hill District: Strategies for Asset-Based Community Development

62 - 832: Arts & Community Development

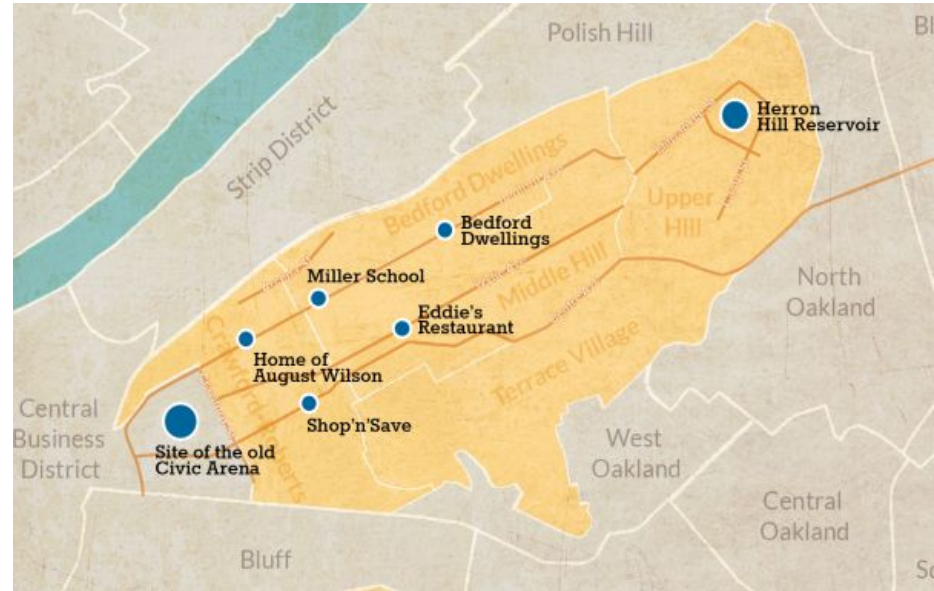
Ryan Dumas, Edward Fischer, Samantha Jones and Jamila Jordan

Hill District Background Information



Location and Geography

- Geographic center
 - Downtown/Oakland/Polish Hill/Uptown
- Five neighborhoods
 - Middle Hill
 - Upper Hill
 - Crawford-Roberts (Lower Hill)
 - Terrace Village
 - Bedford Dwellings
- Some of the highest points in PGH
- Grid Pattern, Parks



Alexandra Kanick, Public Source

History

- Great Migration
- “Little Harlem” / “Crossroads of the World”
- Center of Black cultural life in Pittsburgh
- Civic Arena



Clyde Hare, Carnegie Museum of Art



Demographics

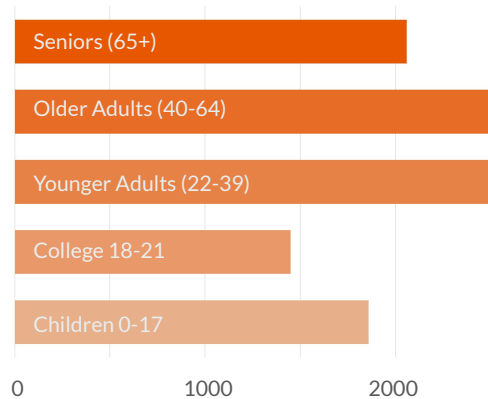
Population

 10454

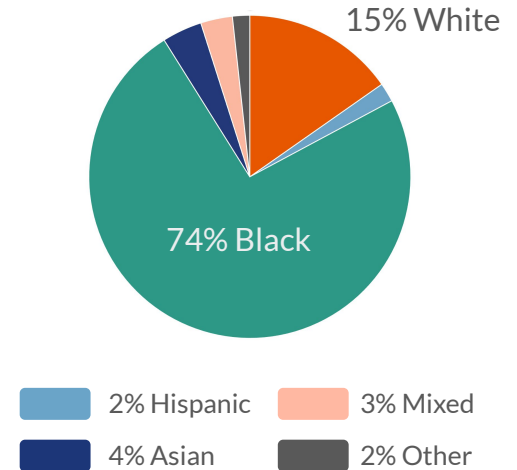
Households

 5006

Age



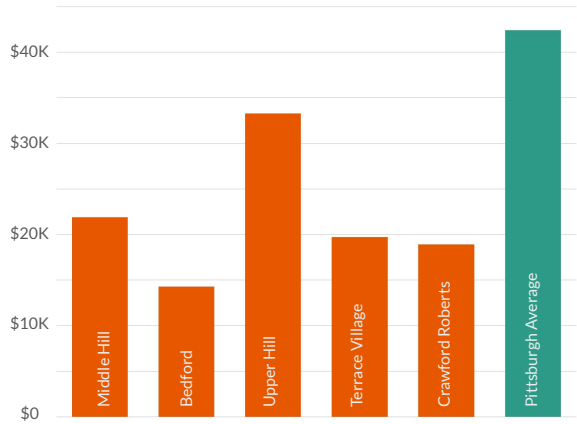
Race and Ethnicity



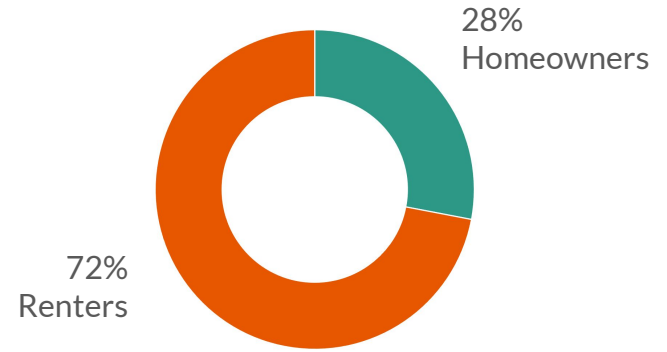


Demographics

Average Median Income



Homeownership



Only 28% of the population are Homeowners

Asset Map



Hill District

6 census tracts

Hospitals and Clinics

7 items

Local Businesses

37 items

Parks & Recreation

25 items

Religious Institutions

36 items

Historic Buildings & Sites

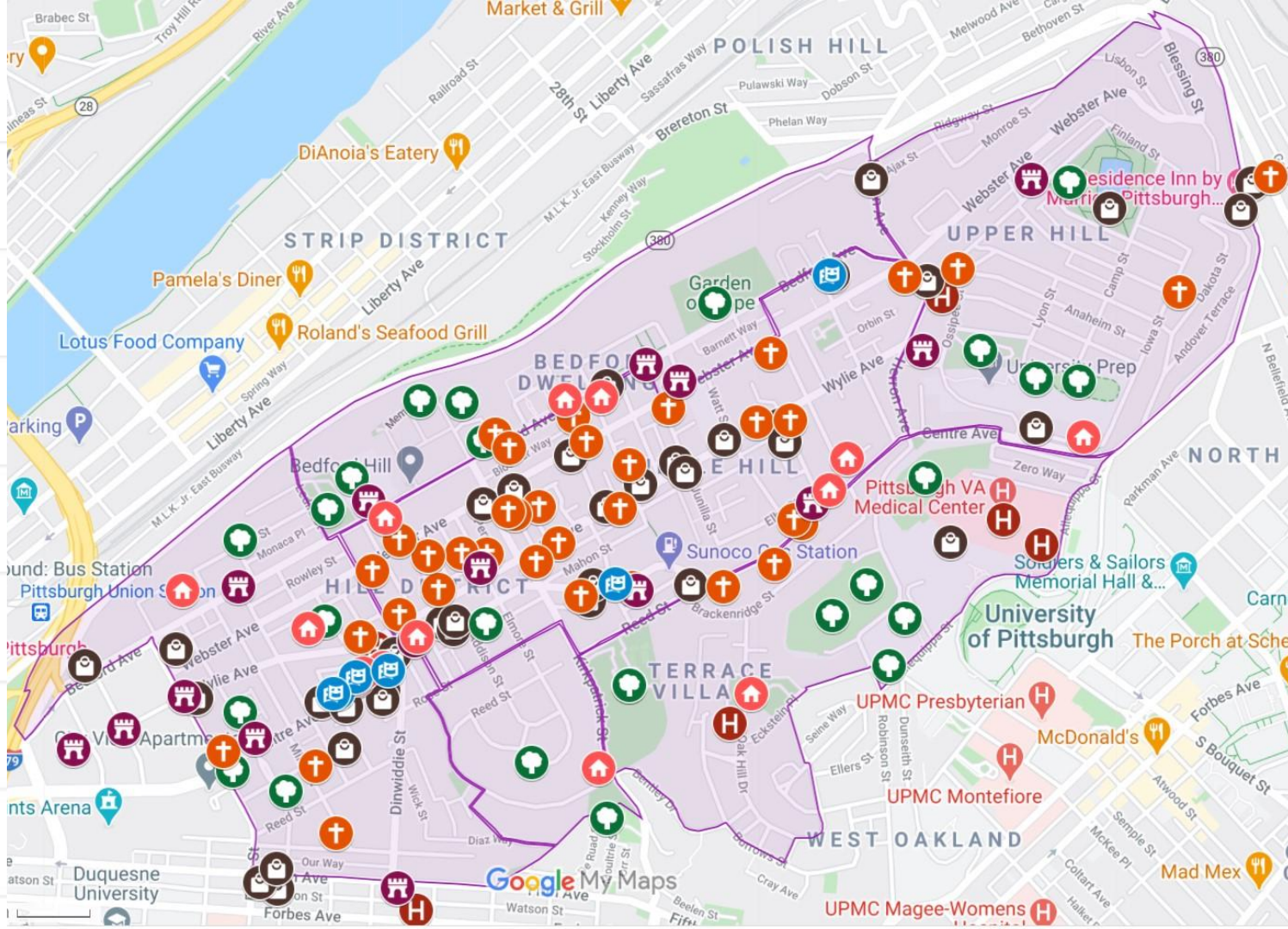
16 items

Community Centers & Groups

15 items

Arts & Culture

6 items



Assets



Physical: Historic Churches



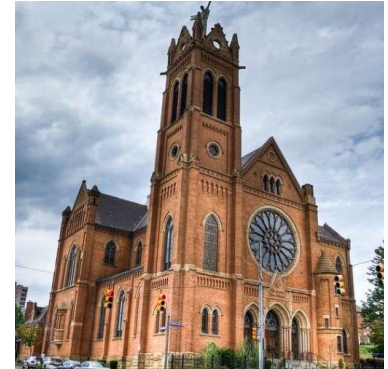
John Wesley
A.M.E Zion Church
Built 1894

From Wikipedia:
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Wesley_A.M.E_Zion_Church_\(Pittsburgh\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Wesley_A.M.E_Zion_Church_(Pittsburgh))



Macedonia Church of Pittsburgh
Built 1903

From Pitt Med:
<https://www.pittmed.health.pitt.edu/story/strike-connection>



Church of St. Benedict
the Moor
Built 1894

From Catholic News Agency:
<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/pittsburgh-diocese-to-open-personal-parish-to-serve-black-catholics-53390>



Physical: Green Spaces



Josh Gibson Field

Baseball Park and field in Bedford
Dwellings in memory of a former Negro
League hall-of-famer

From Nats 320:
<http://nats320.blogspot.com/2009/08/josh-gibson-field.html>



Robert E Williams Memorial Park

Park and Reservoir in the
Upper Hill District

From David Titmus:
<https://twitter.com/djtitmus/status/475777586447265794>



Kennard Playground

Playground and athletic facilities in
Terrace Village

From Pittsburgh Parks:
<https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/415693/RxInsertKennard.pdf>



Physical: Historic Sites of Arts and Artists

New Granada Theatre

Popular Former Jazz Venue on Centre Avenue. It is currently abandoned, and owned by the CDC



From Society of Architectural Historians (SAH):
<https://sah-archipedia.org/buildings/PA-01-AL120>



From National Park Service:
<https://www.nps.gov/nr/feature/places/13000254.htm>

August Wilson House

House where the famed playwright grew up. It now hosts cultural events, including public, outdoor stagings of his plays.

Physical: Former Civic Arena Site

Lower Hill District

Before construction of the Civic Arena, the Lower Hill District was a populous center of Black culture



pre 1961

From Skyscraper Page:
<https://skyscraperpage.com/forum/showthread.php?t=230831&page=156>

Civic Arena

The Lower Hill District was razed during Urban Renewal (1950s) to construct Civic Arena. Hundreds of families were displaced.



1961-2010

From Post Gazette:
<https://www.post-gazette.com/local/city/2017/08/11/civic-arena-debt-pittsburgh-allegheeny-county-regional-asset-district-sales-tax-revenue/stories/201708110071>

Demolition

The Civic Arena was demolished in 2010. The site is still owned by the Penguins, and used as surface parking.



2010-Present

From Penn Live:
https://www.pennlive.com/life/2017/11/pittsburgh_civic_arena_site.html

Development

Though construction has not begun, the Penguins have reached a deal with the City to construct a mixed-use development.



c. 2030

From WESA:
<https://www.wesa.fm/post/lower-hill-redevelopment-be-branded-mixed-use-centre-district/stream/0>

Social



John Wesley A.M.E. Zion Church

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Wesley_A.M.E._Zion_Church_\(Pittsburgh\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Wesley_A.M.E._Zion_Church_(Pittsburgh))

- 30+ churches
- 30+ local businesses
- August Wilson Birthday Block Party & ACH Arts Festival
- Food and food culture
- Jazz culture and community pride
- Community development groups
 - Hill District CDC
 - Hill District Alliance of Ministers
 - Hill House



Economic

Creative Economy

- Ujamaa Collective
- ACH Clear Pathways
 - Kauffman Center
 - Hill District Arts Festival
- Drumbeat Communications
- Hill Academy Dance Theatre
- #ArtsinHD
 - Nafasi on Centre Artist Residency

Economic Development

- African American Chamber of Commerce of Western PA
- Pittsburgh Central Keystone Innovation Zone
- Hill District 100

Civic



Source: facebook.com/1HoodMedia

- **Hill District CDC**
 - Community CDC and Registered Community Organization (RCO)
- **Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh**
 - Has provided guidance and funding for development in Hill District
- **Hill District Consensus Group**
 - Comprised of community groups and individuals
- **30+ churches**
 - Central to civic engagement in the Hill District

Vision Statement



Hill District Vision Statement

The Hill District is a centrally located Pittsburgh community comprised of five different neighborhoods. The area is majority African American and most residents earn below the poverty level. Historically, the community was relatively affluent and was a well-known center of jazz music and Black culture. Prosperity began to decline in the early 1950s due to loss of industrial and manufacturing jobs and poor urban planning. Today, community-led initiatives seek to bring the Hill District back to its former glory. Much of this effort is directed by the Hill District's extremely active CDC, which largely focuses on real estate development due to the abundance of empty buildings and lots in the community.

The Hill District strives to become the neighborhood of cultural and economic status that it once was. The Hill District needs no radical changes driven by outside interests. Its existing strengths include its location in Pittsburgh, its history and culture, and its people, who have the potential to drive revitalization.

Community Engagement Strategies





Short-Term

- Activating streets
 - 3 mile p/h walk
 - Walkshops
 - Speakouts
- Engage stakeholders in churches
 - Tabling outside of churches
 - Community meetings hosted at church
 - Collective visioning boards, focus groups held at churches



Long-Term

- Activate historic sites
 - Emphasis on Black history and culture
- Advocate for and activate infrastructural improvements
 - 579 Bridge Park
 - Increase public transit / vehicular access
 - Build up border areas
- Utilize vacant lots
 - Urban agriculture
- Maintain and expand community neighborhood pride
 - “City on a Hill”

Partners

- Churches
- Hill District CDC
- #ArtsinHD
- PennDoT
- Pittsburgh Land Bank
- Allegheny Land Trust
- Heinz History Center
- Quantum Theatre
- Hill District Residents



Photographer Unknown, Pittsburgh Beautiful

Opportunities for Growth



Historic Walking Tours



Opportunity and Key Assets

- Promote cultural tourism
- 16+ historic buildings and sites; multiple potential routes
- Include residences of famous people from Hill District
- Very walkable, so tours will necessarily pass by local businesses and encourage economic development
- Local artisans to sell wares along the routes

Image sources:
Greenlee Field: <http://www.projectballpark.org>
Miller Elementary School: <https://historicpittsburgh.org>
Crawford Grill: <https://pahistoricpreservation.com>
YMCA: <https://historicpittsburgh.org>

Historic Walking Tours



Partners

Hill District CDC

- CDC to plan and market/promote tours around Pittsburgh

Quantum Theater

- Lend expertise on creating entertaining events within a community

Outputs

- 15% increase in tourist traffic
- Local artisans sell 50% more wares
- \$900 thousand spent per year in the community by tourists attending a historic walking tour

Outcomes

- Significant growth in local business sales from outside patronage
- Heightened interest in Hill District as a place to invest in to start a business or buy a home, leading to an increase in population and diversity of culture and economy
- New perception of Hill District as a Pittsburgh historic treasure

Market Festival



Picture: Sam Jones

Assets, Partners, Purpose

- Artisan market for local artists, businesses, and restaurants to come together to promote and sell their work
- Partner with #ArtsinHD, Ujaama Collective
- Work with border neighborhoods to bring outside artists as inspiration



Market Festival

Outputs

- 4 market festivals per year
- 50% increase in foot traffic
- 20% increase in new customers at local restaurants and businesses

Outcomes

- Create a regular event that brings the community together and attracts other Pittsburgh residents to support Hill District artists and businesses
- Generate interest in Hill District artists and stimulate the creative economy



Urban Gardens



The Hill District has a high rate of property vacancy. Reclamation of some vacant lots to be used as Urban Gardens will promote community engagement, provide a resource of healthy food, and potentially spur economic growth.



Top left from Grounded:
<https://groundedpgh.org/projects/hill-district-vacant-property-strategy/>

Right from Howard Hanna:
<https://www.howardhanna.com/Property/Detail/1832-Cliff-St-Hill-District-PA-15219/Westpenn/1441479>

Bottom left from Grow Pittsburgh:
<https://www.growpittsburgh.org/>



Urban Gardens

Partners:

- Pittsburgh Land Bank
- Hill District CDC
- Hill District residents
- Grow Pittsburgh
- Frick Conservatory

Outputs:

- 50% of vacant lots in HD repurposed as urban gardens
- 100 residents registered in Gardening training program by the end of the year
- On average 50% reduced produce costs for Hill District residents annually

Outcomes:

- Trains residents and youth to garden
- Promotes ecological education
- Generates community pride surrounding a productive and healthy landscape
- Useful greenspace is beneficial for mental health
- Improved diet due to easy access to healthy fresh produce

Thank you!





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