



reclaimmckeesport

2014 - 2015 Ambassador Cohort

YEARBOOK

gtech

reclaimmckeesport

ReClaim McKeesport was a year-long education program that assisted community members in implementing change on vacant land. In McKeesport alone, there are over 2500 vacant lots. Program participants serve in the role of Ambassador to implement a green project on a vacant property of their choosing. In October 2014, GTECH's cohort of community Ambassadors in McKeesport began attending educational sessions and workshops, learning about the ways that vacant lots impact the community and thinking about ways to transform these vacant properties in ways that benefit everyone. These educational sessions ranged from how to structure site access agreements to volunteer recruitment and management that helped empower and equip Ambassadors to transform a parcel of vacant land in their community. Ambassadors then received a micro-grant to implement their project, working throughout the spring and summer of 2015 to make their ideas come to life. With the help of the community and various volunteer groups, the Ambassadors have created nine new community greenspaces throughout the City of McKeesport.

This yearbook is a testament to all of their success and hard work.



Growth Through Energy and Community Health (GTECH), is a nonprofit organization dedicated to cultivating the unrealized potential of people and places to improve the economic, social and environmental health of our communities.

**This program was made possible with funding through the
Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation.**



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The Program



1 City

4 Networking Events

9 Vacant Lot Projects

14 Months

30 Hours of Classes

276 Volunteers

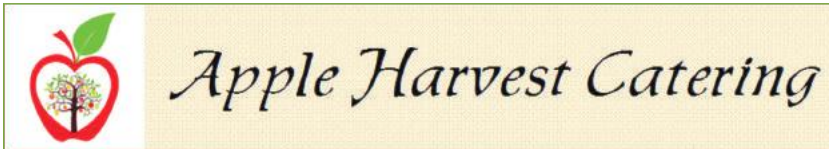


Education Sessions



10 Education Sessions
Tuesday Nights, 6-9pm
October - April
St Stephen's Church

Session 1: Introduction to Program
Networking Event 1:
Lemon Street Demonstration Project
Session 2: Site Analysis
Session 3: Site Design
Session 4: Design Considerations
Session 5: Site Access and Outreach
Session 6: Grant Resources
Session 7: Presentations
Session 8: Ambassador Presentations
Networking Event 2:
Youth Networking Event
Session 9: Volunteer Training
Session 10: Wrap-Up
Networking Event 3:
Ambassador Presentations
Networking Event 4:
Ambassador Graduation



Networking Events



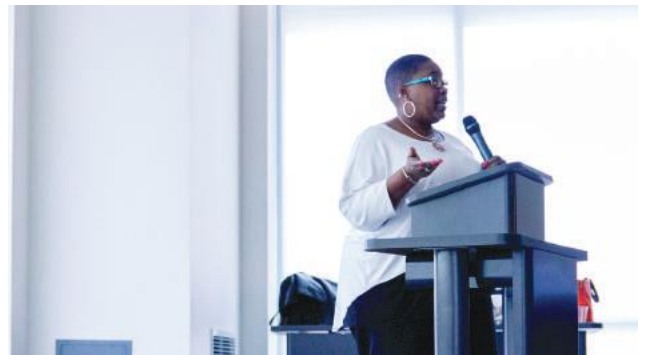
Lemon Street Demo Project Partners: Green Building Alliance, Habitat for Humanity



Youth Networking Event Panel Participants: McKeesport Area Public School District, Youth CAST, APOST, McKeesport Family Center



Ambassador Presentations



Site Locations



City of McKeesport



By The Numbers...



43,290 Sq Ft of Dana's Site

1210 Total Volunteer Hours

276 Total Volunteers

100 Boxes of Cracker Jacks Given Out

40 PSUGA Student Volunteers

31 Total Volunteer Days

28 Tons of River Rock Moved

12 Volunteer Days Hank Worked

12 Articles Written About Us

11 Appearances In The Paper

10 Ambassadors

9 Vacant Lots Reclaimed

5 Volunteer Days Rained Out at Shari's Site

2 Contractors to Fix Kim's Wall

2 Different Sites for Rochelle

1 Radio Interview

1 12 Foot Hole

1 Lion Statue



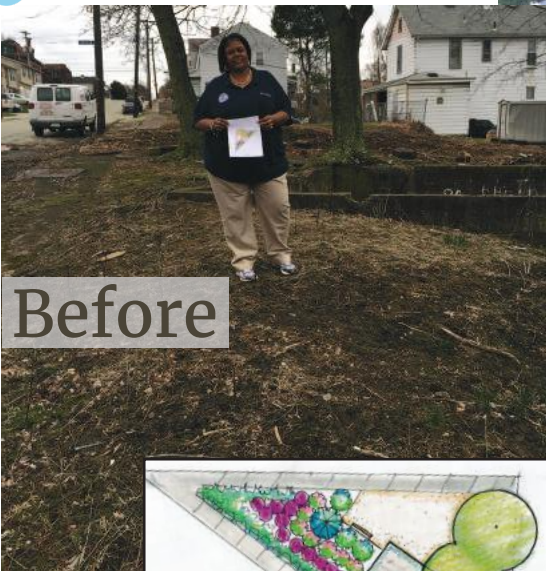
Kim Brownfield

Play in the Bouquet

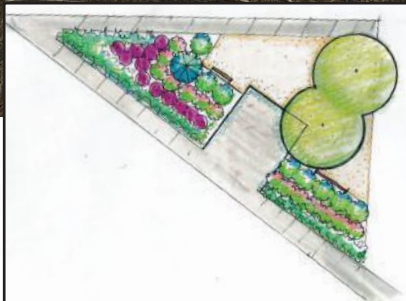


“My site was very small, and very, very challenging but well worth the time to beautify a little part of the community”

“I think that it’s a great program very informative very knowledgeable very useful for the community. I love the program and the staff - James, Ellie and Jibran - they really love and appreciate all of the Ambassadors. Thanks for all your time and support. You guys rock! Thanks for this experience!”



Before



After



Julie Fleckenstein

GAP Trail Garden



"We need to continue to make spaces that we can share with the greater community; we need to take pride in our city and be grateful that we can make a difference."

"I would describe my ReClaim Ambassador experience as a great journey with like minded people. We all came to the table with different lives, experiences, and expectations; we leave better people for having gone on this pilgrimage together. Not only are we changed for the better, but our city more beautiful for us saying yes."

Before



After





Hank Gostkowski

Alternate Ambassador



“While working on the sites it was always nice to see cars stop and shout out encouragements. I think that the effort of all brought some pride and good feelings to more than several citizens of McKeesport.”

“Even though I was unable to start my project, being able to remain an Ambassador really blossomed into a very positive and enjoying experience for me. I was able to cultivate many friendships which I hope will be ongoing. Seeing the projects evolve help to feed my desire to help the community and the other Ambassadors.”

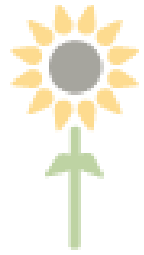
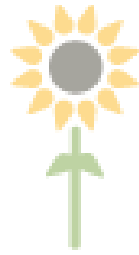
Before





Dana Jackson

Reservoir Retreat

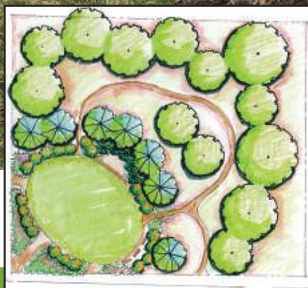


"I had a wonderful experience from the beginning to the end, and met some great people who I now cherish as friends! Thank you!"

"I had a wonderful experience with GTECH. They are a great group and were there every step of the way. I am so thankful to have been chosen to be n Ambassador for the ReClaim McKeesport Program. I love McKeesport and am glad to have made a change for the better and hopefully it will inspire others to do the same. I also want to thank everyone who came out to help, donated their time or money, or simply just supported any of us in what we were doing. It is greatly appreciated to know that people care and want to help."



Before



After



Alandra Kahl & April Belback

EN-GAGE



Greater Allegheny Garden Experience



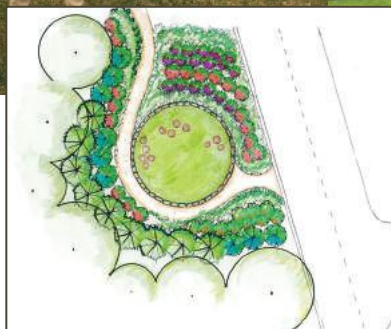
"This Project was a wonderful way to invite the community into our campus and strengthen our relationship with the area."

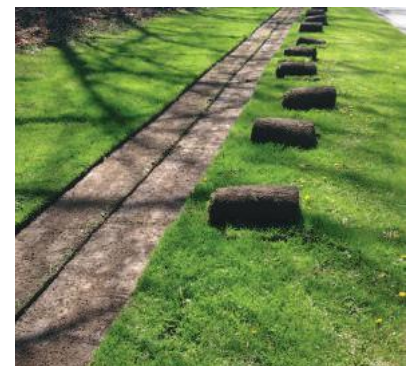


"ReClaim McKeesport was an uplifting opportunity to enhance the relationship of Penn State Greater Allegheny with the community. We are so glad to have been a part of this initiative and look forward to working together in the future. We are grateful for all the support we received and look forward to seeing the community on campus in the future."



After





Shari Holland



Library District Gateway Garden



“The hard work is all worth it for people to be interacting and working together, and stopping to say the garden makes them feel better when they walk or drive by it.”

“I cannot say enough positive. It has been a time to renew community connections, get people working together and meet others who are interested in making their community a better place for everyone. It has been an opportunity to make a difference and work together. I am so thankful for all the people I have met and talked with over the past year– both GTECH staff as well as community folks I have met when out working on the lot. How fortunate to be in the company of so many wonderful folks wanting to improve the health and well-being of their community! Cheers!”





Rhonda Moorer

Noah's Ark Community Park



"I am excited be able to watch the city as it has transformed and to have been a part of that transformation."



"My experience has been interesting, and has allowed me to explore unknown territory. I hope my project is beneficial to the community and inspires others to also become involved in the positive growth movement in the city"

Before



After



Sharon Soles

Palisades Butterfly Garden

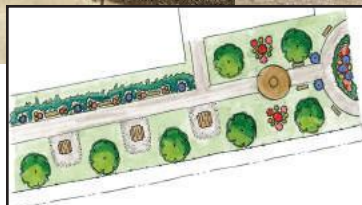


"It's great to see people really come together. McKeesport is a great area!"

"I am glad to have participated as an Ambassador to acquire knowledge and information to help reclaim my city that I love. A lot of people look to me for advice and I would like to assist them about vacant lots and properties."



Before



After



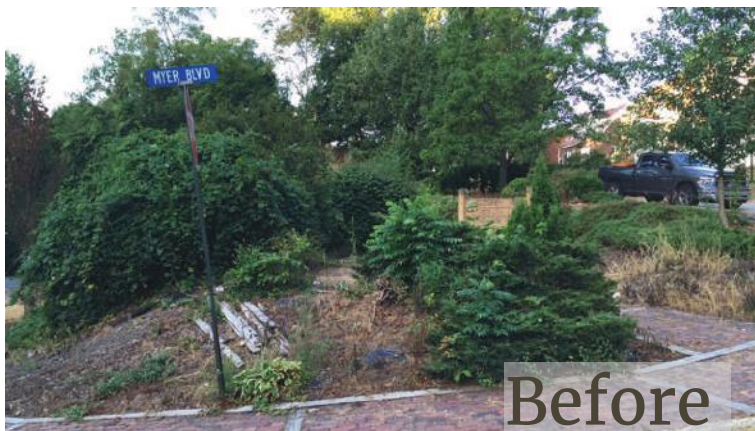
Rochelle Williams

Empty to Embellished



“This is a really great section of McKeesport where people do care and take pride in our homes and community.”

“I am excited try and make a positive change in our city and to restore it to what I have heard it was like in the past. Also to meet and network with others who are interested in doing the same.”



Before



After





Walt Yager



Connecting the Dots: A Railroad Crossing Runs Through

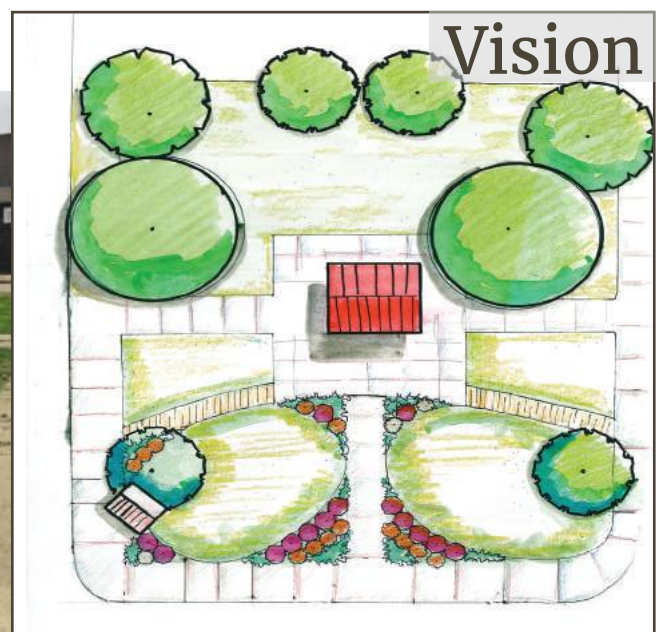


“McKeesport’s greatest asset is it’s great history and values of the proud citizens who developed the city”

“Using my acquired talents (as developed and defined over the years) to give back to the community and related organizations that have mentored me through my volunteer efforts. I want to start with projects like these and others that I am involved in to begin to turn a corner resulting in positive results and image. Basically, I am involved to make a positive difference and to honor the memory of my son Sean Walter-Andrew Yager”



Before



Vision



GTECH Staff



James Snow, Project Manager * **Ellie King, Project Coordinator** *
Jibran Ahmed, GTECH Fellow

Volunteer Spotlight



ReClaim McKeesport would not have been possible without the wonderful volunteers who gave their time. Thank you to all of the volunteers, friends and families of Ambassadors for their dedication and hard work.



Community Events



Good Neighbor Day * **GTECH On The GO** * McKeesport Festival of Trees * International Village Kids Day

Ambassador Potlucks



Acknowledgments

This program would not have been possible without contributions, help and support from a variety of partners. A big THANK YOU is owed to the following:

The City of McKeesport
Mayor Mike Cherepko and Staff

Our Funders

The Benedum Foundation
The McKeesport Hospital Foundation



Our Program Partners

Habitat for Humanity
Green Building Alliance
McKeesport Area School District

Our Community Partners

The Kiwanis Club
The Lions Club
McKeesport Trail Commission
Penn State Greater Allegheny
Auberle
McKeesport Heritage Center
APOST
McKeesport Family Center
YouthCAST

Our Corporate Volunteers

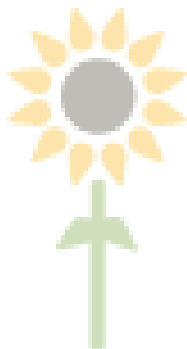
Starbucks
Apple Store

Our Local Business Friends

Apple Harvest
Busy Beaver
Veltre's Pizza

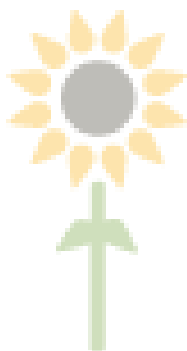


Autographs

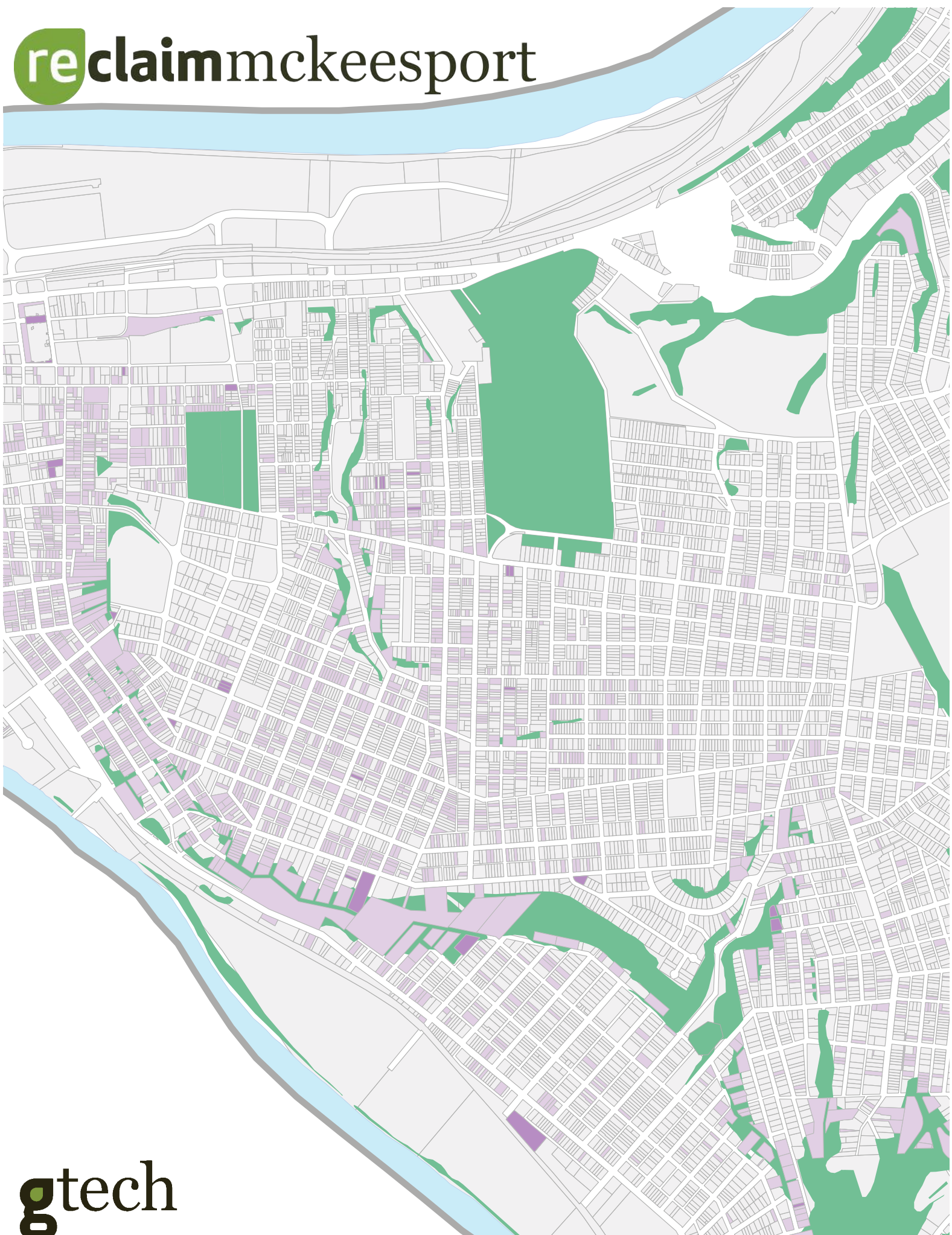


Autographs





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