

reclaimnorthside

Ambassador Program
2014-2015





GTECH initiated the ReClaim Northside program after working with Northside residents to survey each and every one of the Northside's 5405 vacant lots. This survey helped us to understand the state of blight in the Northside and to learn what work is already being done.

Ultimately, GTECH learned that Northside residents have a need for more outdoor community spaces and have thousands of vacant lots in need of some love. Put two and two together, and we've found our solution. Vacant lots are a wasted resource if left to become overgrown with weeds and strewn with litter. However, if we take a minute to imagine what could be, we see neighbors working together to create flower gardens, gathering spaces, trails and food gardens.

In the fall of 2014, GTECH recruited 14 Northside residents, called Ambassadors, to lead the movement for reclaiming vacant lots. For eight months, the Ambassadors participated in classes to learn about the process of reclaiming vacant land. Throughout the classes they designed their own vacant lot projects and rallied their communities to bring the project to life. In the spring of 2015, the Ambassadors began to go to work on vacant lots around the Northside. We invite you to look through these pages at what has been accomplished so far.



**GTECH's mission is to cultivate the
unrealized potential of people and places
to improve the economic, social and
environmental health of our communities.**

ReClaim Northside Ambassadors



Angela Williams - Perry South

“I hope that we can revitalize the existing community by engaging the residents to become a part of changes so they feel empowered to make positive things happen.”

Ayanna Lee-Davis - Perry Hilltop

“This neighborhood has great potential. There is a lot of diversity, innovative development and an abundance of people who are dedicated to making a difference and helping Pittsburgh as a whole become a more enjoyable and sustainable city.”



Bridget Little - Manchester

“I see a lot of need in my community for cohesion and involvement for people inside the community and to those interested in perhaps becoming a part of it.”



ReClaim Northside Ambassadors



Cynthia Levy-Mendoza - Observatory Hill

“I think everyone deserves access to information. Knowledge is power and there are not enough people in our neighborhood who understand and realize that information and the application of information is powerful.”

Doug Deckert - Observatory Hill

“I applied to be a ReClaim Ambassador to meet new people within our cohort and to stretch myself to reach out and meet my neighbors on my block. I love to make a difference in the beauty of my immediate environment.”



Mark Rawlings - Troy Hill

“Pretty much everything you need is walking distance in Troy Hill, it’s a very convenient place to live and there are great views all around!”



ReClaim Northside Ambassadors



Matt Yurkovich - Brighton Heights

“I love where I live and want to reclaim a vacant lot. The idea of ecological restoration is of great interest to me and I think greenspace is very important to a neighborhood’s health.”

Nicole Flaherty - Fineview

“I wanted to contribute to my neighborhood in a positive way. If I could make something beautiful and functional for my neighborhood, that would be wonderful.”



Riley Baker - Spring Hill

“In my opinion, Spring Hill is a hidden gem on the North Side. It’s quiet and friendly with a diverse makeup of working class, professionals, city employees, young, old, black and white. I am constantly astounded at the pool of interesting people such a small neighborhood has.”



ReClaim Northside Supporters



Dorrie Smith - Observatory Hill

“Northsiders are generational. We leave, but, believe me, we either return (take me for example) or keep it in our hearts.”

Heather Gacek - Manchester

“I would like to see Manchester develop a small town feel while within reach all of the amenities of city living. ”

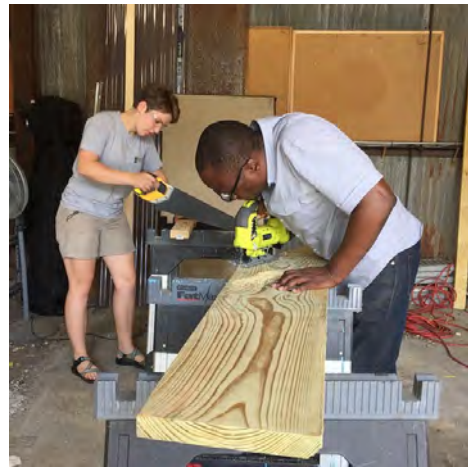


Linda Wallen - Spring Hill

“Apathy is a huge challenge in our community and exciting projects are (I think) a way of budging people out of their busy inertia. Once something is changing for the better people seem to come out and take a look and get involved.”



GTECH



ReClaim Northside Staff

Evaine K. Sing, Lydia Yoder, Dimeji Onafuwa, Lydia Kramer, Cassandra Williams, Sara Innamorato



Lauren Stauffer

Lauren supported GTECH as a community liaison for the Northside, particularly helping to plan, advertise, and orchestrate events for ReClaim Northside.

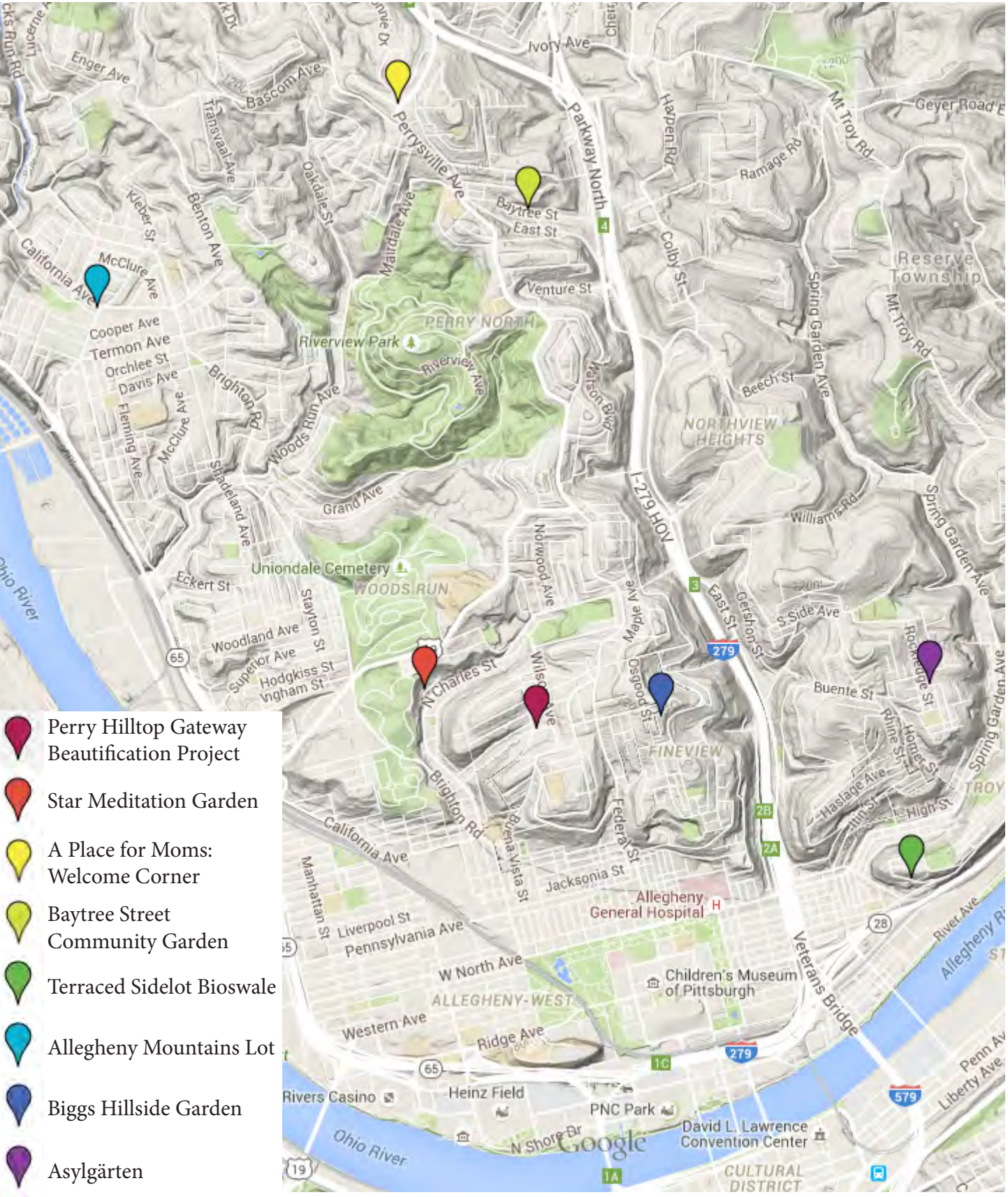


Jay Donaldson

Jay supported GTECH as a landscape contractor to lend a hand for the Ambassador projects.

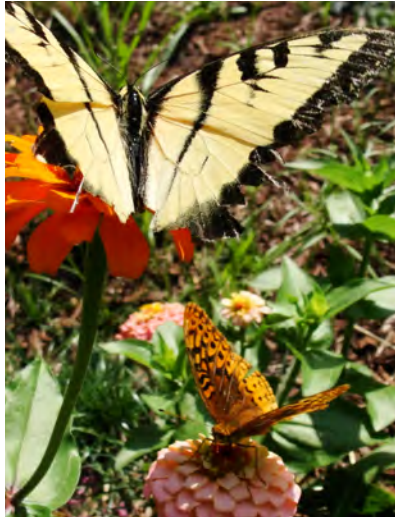
Project Locations

Pittsburgh's Northside Neighborhoods



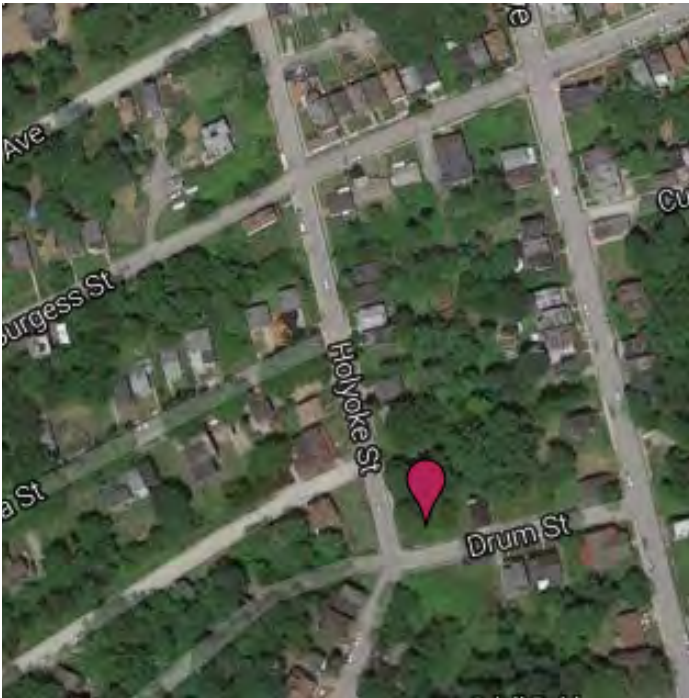
Star Meditation Garden

Angela Williams



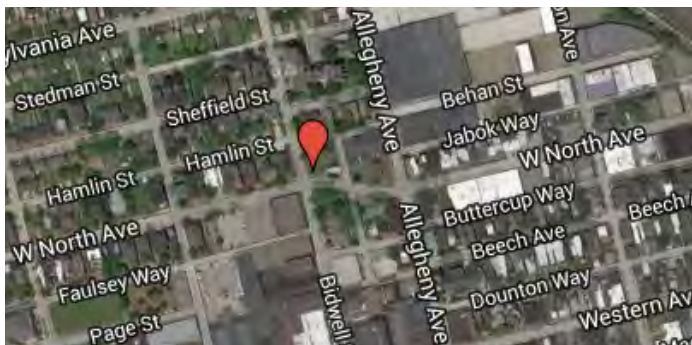
Perry Hilltop Gateway Beautification Project

Ayanna Lee-Davis



Project to be determined

Bridget Little



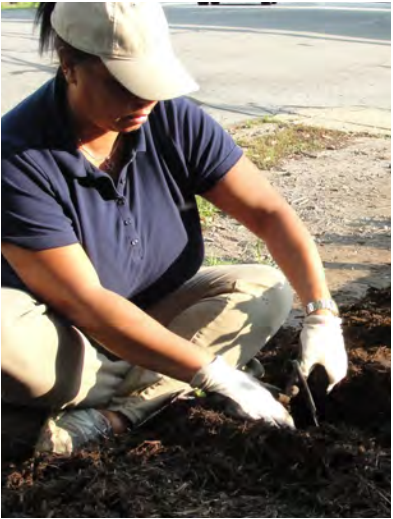
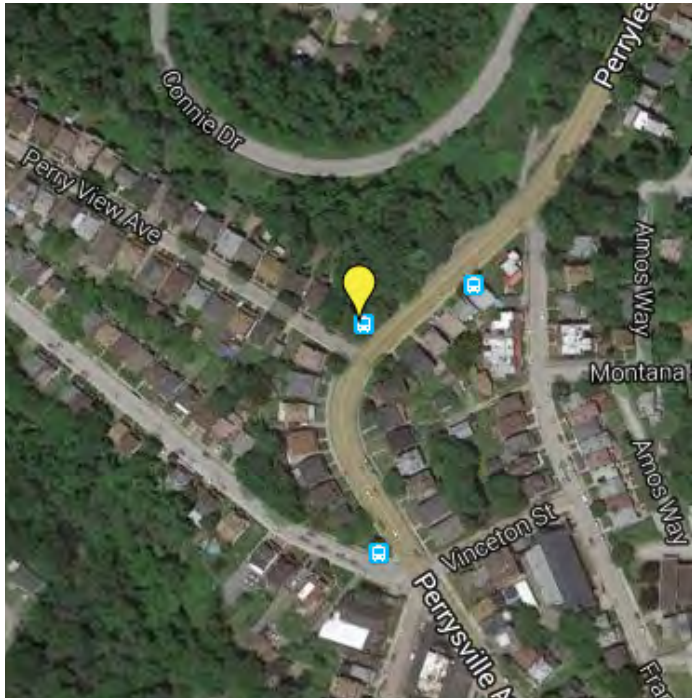
While Bridget's original project plans were canceled due to site access issue with PennDot, she has not lost motivation to create a welcoming gateway to the Northside.

A new project plan is now in the works on a different lot. These photos represent some ideas and inspiration that Bridget has been working off of to recreate her design. Stay tuned for more information!



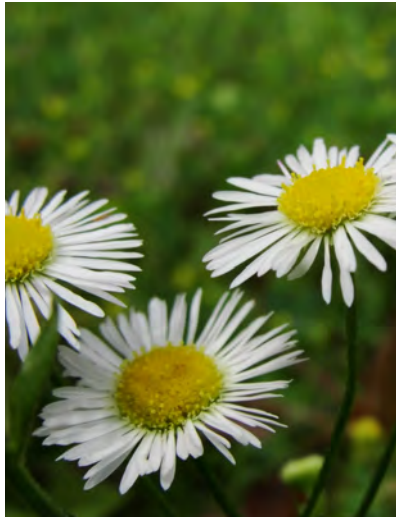
A Place for Moms: Welcome Corner

Cynthia Levy-Mendoza



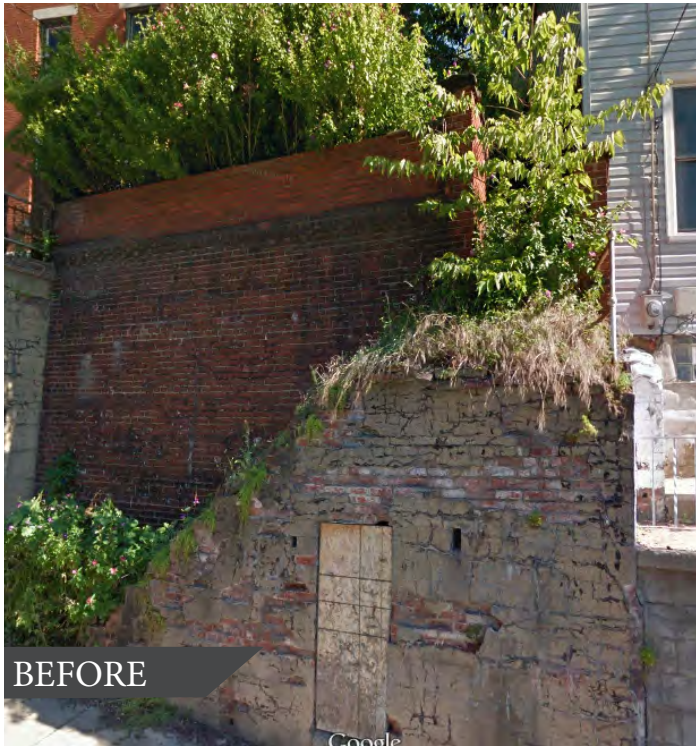
Baytree Street Community Garden

Doug Deckert



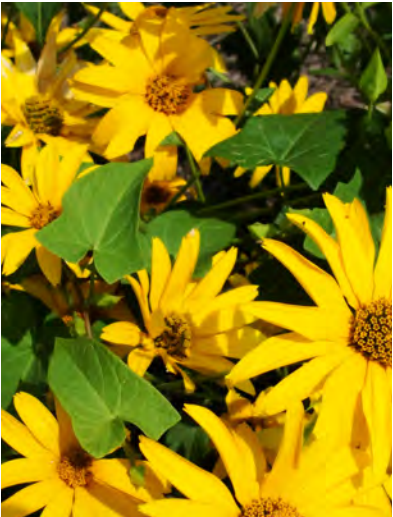
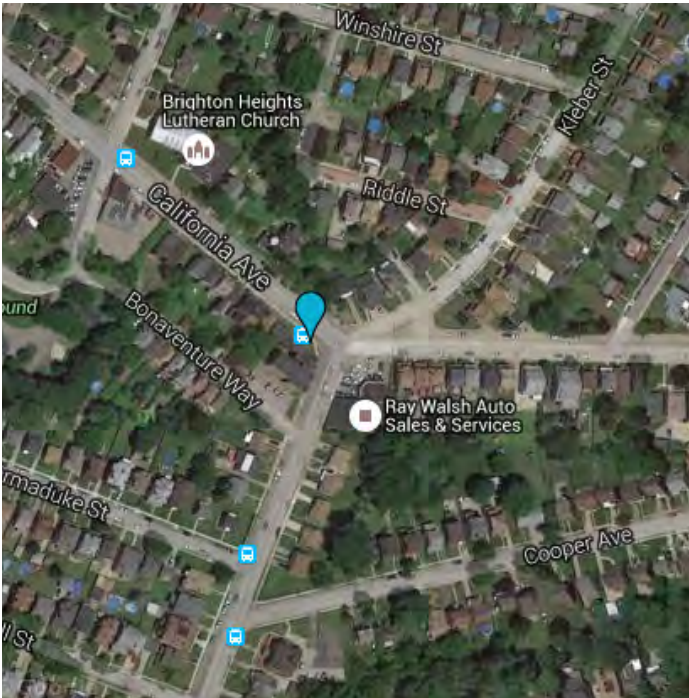
Terraced Sidelot Bioswale

Mark Rawlings



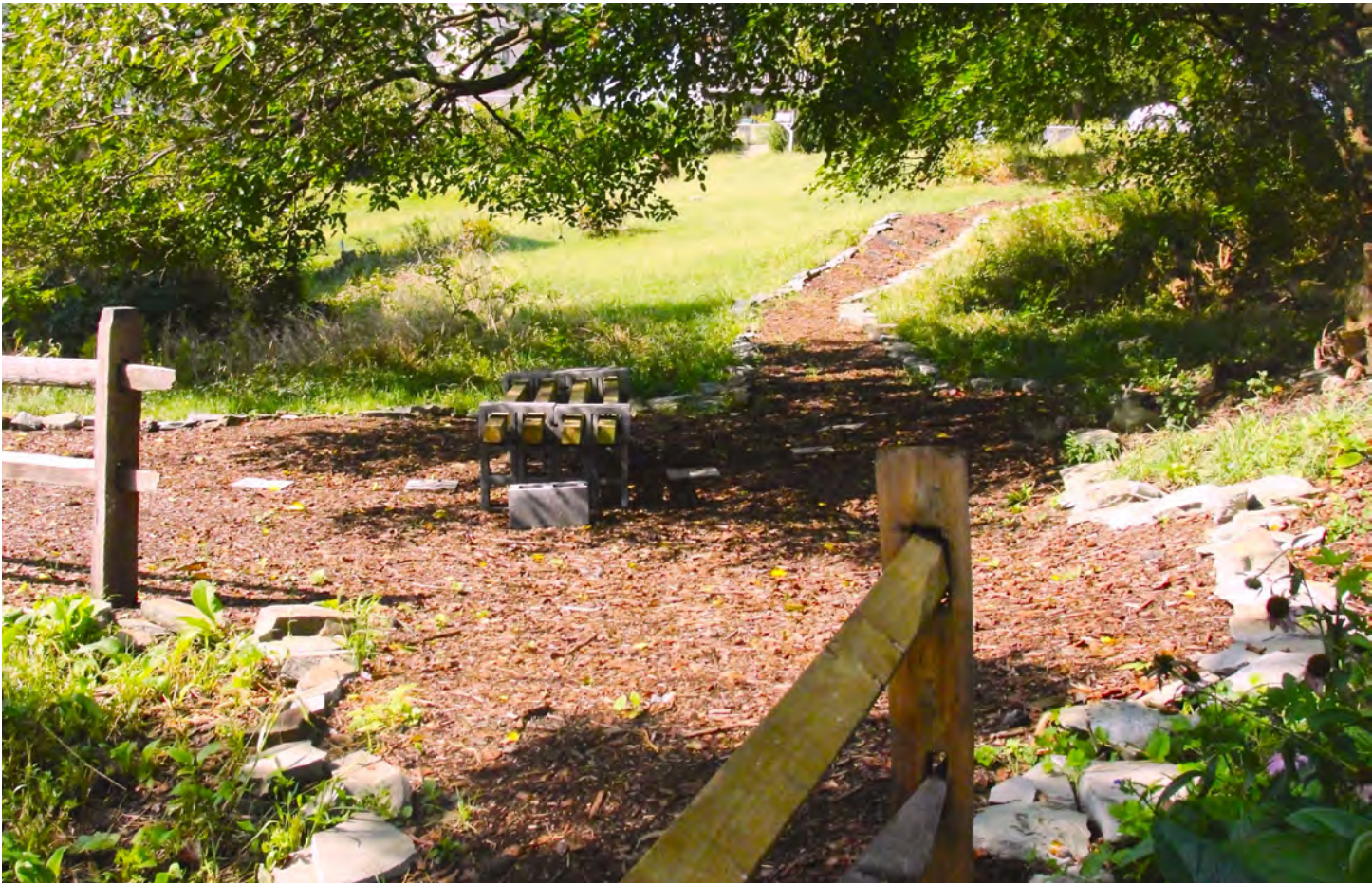
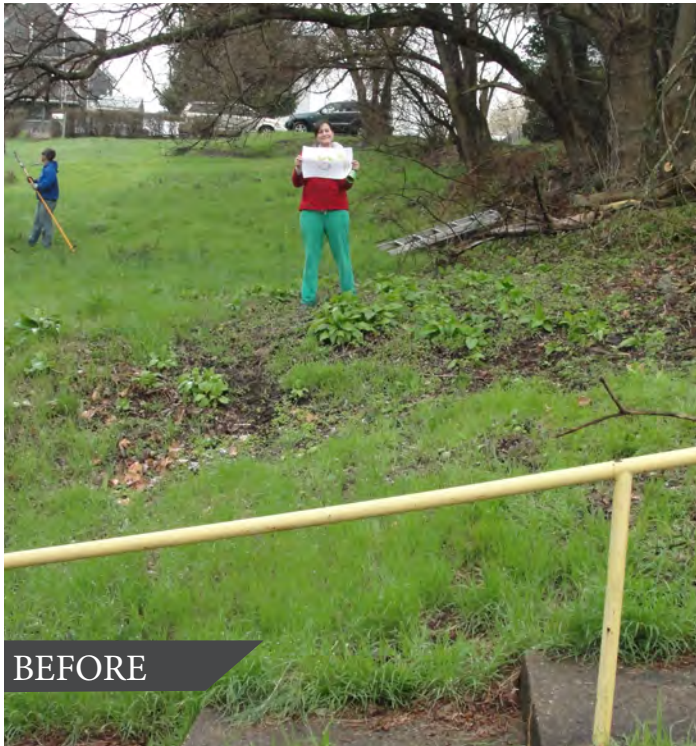
Allegheny Mountains Lot

Matthew Yurkovich



Biggs Hillside Garden

Nicole Flaherty



Asylgärten Park

Riley Baker



BEFORE



Classes and Activities

October 2014-April 2015

Class Topics

October: Intro to program, team building, vacant lot analysis

November: Vacant lot design

December: Design to paper, grant funding

January: Working with service providers, public speaking

February: Presentations

March: Volunteer coordination

April: Land use policy



Classes and Activities

October 2014-April 2015



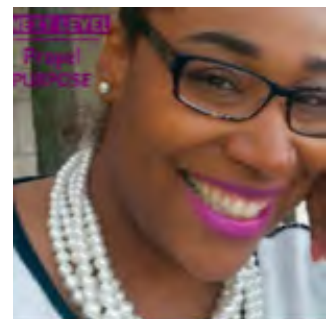
Community Presentations

April 22, 2015- The Pittsburgh Project



Community Leader Mixer

July 23, 2015 - Arnold's Tea Room



Acknowledgments

We would like to thank The Buhl Foundation and the Alcoa Foundation for making the ReClaim Northside Ambassador program possible.

We appreciate the time and efforts of our partner organizations, including One Northside and each of the neighborhood groups that supported and continue to support the Ambassador projects.

We also want to thank the many volunteers that worked hard to clear, plant and build the Ambassador projects from the ground up.

Thank you to Nicholas Fazio for the wonderful Northside artwork which was used on the cover of this book.

Last but not least, we want to recognize the ReClaim Northside Ambassadors. The work of reclaiming vacant land is not easy. However, the Ambassadors have given many hours of their time, their creativity and their drive to create beautiful spaces in their communities out of what was once forgotten. We can't thank them enough.

Autographs

Statistics



Number of Ambassadors: 13

Number of Vacant Lots Reclaimed: 8



Hours of Training: 350

Total Volunteer Hours: 894



Number of Volunteer Attendances: 344

Networking Participants: 200

