







GTECH Strategies  
Growth Through Energy + Community Health  
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Green Playces was made possible thanks  
to the generous support of our FUNDERS:

## THE HEINZ ENDOWMENTS

HOWARD HEINZ ENDOWMENT • VIRA I. HEINZ ENDOWMENT



THE GRABLE FOUNDATION  
dedicated to improving the lives of children

Propel Schools Foundation  
American Eagle  
Eat N' Park  
PNC Foundation  
Alcoa Foundation  
Starbucks Foundation  
Sprout Fund  
Allegheny County Conservation District  
Hosanna House  
Wilkesburg Community Development Corporation

### And PARTNERS:

Allegheny Partners for Out of School Time  
Propel Schools: Northside  
Bible Center Church  
The Brashear Association: Allentown Learning and Engagement Center  
Trinity Church of God in Christ  
Youth C.A.S.T  
Jeron X. Grayson Community Center  
Hosanna House  
Propel Schools: Munhall



# Executive Summary

Since 2013, GTECH has been exploring how to increase collaboration and implementation of environmental programming through community-based organizations and youth services, with particular focus on addressing blight and vacancy in distressed communities. In 2015, after a period of investigation that culminated in the 2014 Youth in Green report, the Heinz Endowments provided funding for GTECH to design and create five Green Playces in partnership with communities and youth in Allegheny County.

Green Playces had the following desired outcomes:

1. Increase the coordination between youth service providers and environmental service providers in communities with high levels of vacancy and blight.
2. Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of providing tangible, relevant, and meaningful environmental education to youth prior to entering high school.
3. Increase the eco-literacy, job readiness, and civic awareness of high school-aged youth in after school and summer programming.
4. Create safe, unique, and sensibly-designed green spaces in proximity to youth service facilities, utilizing a community-based design methodology.

The process helped to identify and create community green spaces for local youth service providers, enhancing the environmental education opportunities available to the youth they serve. The Green Playces Initiative provides a model for youth to be introduced to outdoor educational opportunities, including site design, ecology, plant care, and watershed systems, as well as basic life skills, such as problem-solving, responsible budgeting, simple construction skills, and teamwork.

The success of GTECH's first few Green Playces led to additional funding opportunities, allowing us to improve existing sites in a

*GTECH's goal was not to create a new youth program but to align existing youth programs with environmental services and experiential education through the building of green play spaces.*

## Design and Build

**60**

**partners**

**501**

**youth**

**1534**

**volunteer hours**

## Education

**13**

**modules**

**427**

**youth**

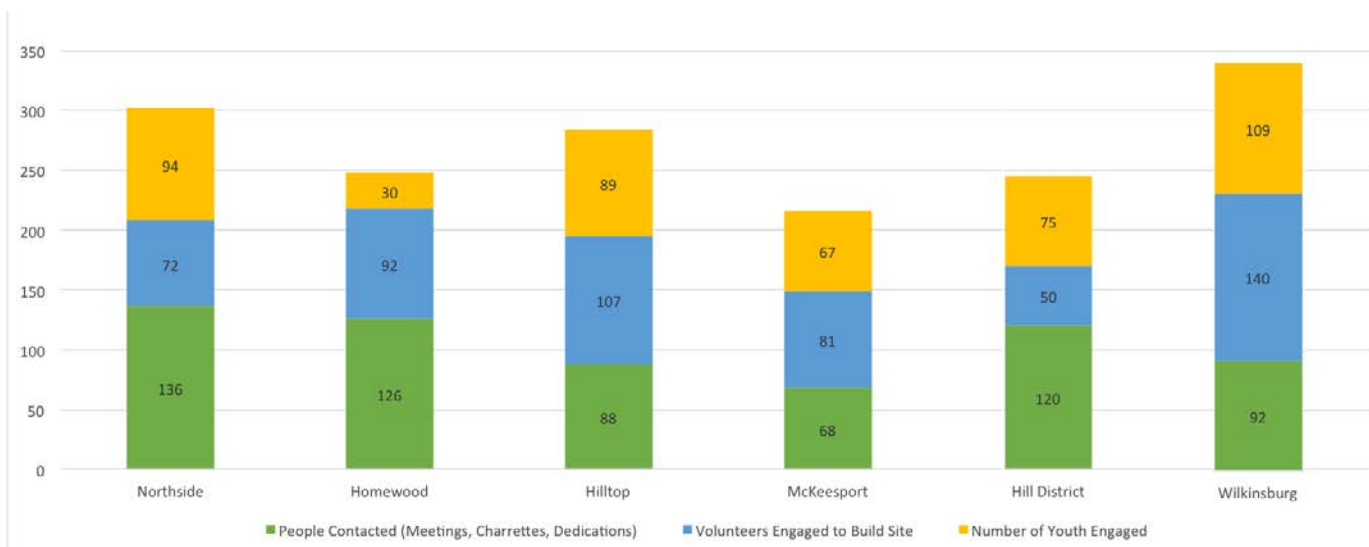
**873**

**programming hours**

variety of ways and even providing for two additional Green Playces. From the outset of the project to December 2016, GTECH secured \$116,500 beyond our original grant.

The seven completed projects took place in the Pittsburgh neighborhoods of Central Northside, Homewood, the Hill District, Allentown, and the municipalities of Munhall, Wilkinsburg, and McKeesport. The map on page 7 shows the Green Playces completed through 2016. From April 2015 to December 2016, GTECH engaged 490 youth from more than a dozen communities and worked with 540 volunteers who contributed more than 1,400 hours to make Green Playces projects possible. This widespread participation enhanced our capacity to create amazing spaces, as well as increased knowledge and ownership in each Green Playce community and beyond. Below is a breakdown of how individuals were engaged through each Green Playce process.

In addition, the sites hosted 13 educational modules, engaging 427 youth for a total of 873 hours of educational programming. Our partnerships with other environmental nonprofits and community-based organizations enliven these Playces, making each more than just a green space. We continue to work with partners across the county to utilize and maintain existing Playces.





# Introduction



Play can sound like a frivolous activity to adults—something that kids enjoy doing but that does not have much meaning, and has little impact on their future development. On the contrary, play is the primary vehicle for social and emotional growth. It teaches imagination, creativity, confidence, and resilience. Play is how the youngest of children begin to interact with and learn about their environment. Play allows kids to create worlds and stories that can teach important life lessons. When playing with friends and peers, children learn how to work in groups, how to lead, how to share, and how to advocate for themselves and others. As Mr. Rogers famously said: “Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood.”

Green Playces are places where play is paramount, from the earliest engagement with community youth to the end product, the Playce itself. At GTECH we believe that the best way for youth to explore, understand, and appreciate their environment is to play in it and with it. Designing Green Playces with the spaces’ primary users results in green, playful places and leads to healthier communities with environmentally conscious, civically engaged youth.

*“Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood”  
-Fred Rogers*

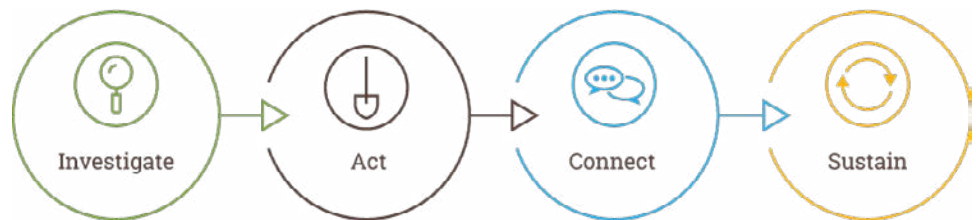
# Who We Are

*We see opportunities where others see obstacles.*

*We transform underutilized spaces into thriving places everyone can enjoy.*

*We invest in people and places, advocate for policy change, and provide the tools, insight, and resources needed to inspire Allegheny County communities.*

GTECH's methodology ensures that these solutions and programming are vetted and effective. We facilitate a systems-based approach to **Investigate** critical issues, take **Action** where action is possible, **Connect** people to resources and opportunities, and **Sustain** progress through innovative and collaborative partnerships. Our four-pronged approach has been refined throughout our decade of experience in program development, planning, community engagement, capacity building, and on-the-ground implementation.



This methodology is critical in allowing GTECH, an organization with an operating budget of \$1.3 million and staff of 12, to deliver quality programming rooted in the communities and individuals we serve. GTECHers have a range of complimentary skills. From designers to policy makers, and planners to horticulturists, we enjoy working from the big picture down to the small details. We Improve Community Health through:

- Policy & Advocacy
- Data Collection & Analysis
- Planning & Evaluation
- Design & Implementation
- Capacity Building
- Education & Outreach
- Multi-Organizational Coordination



# Youth in Green

Youth In Green was a study conducted for the Heinz Endowments that explored the connections between youth in the Pittsburgh region and environmental programming. To this end, GTECH investigated existing resources and made four recommendations to tackle vacancy while investing in youth programming in disadvantaged neighborhoods.

1. Produce facilitated community conversation in five communities to establish an ongoing working group aligned with existing community dialogue to implement an action plan for potential resource sharing, as it pertains to integrating environmental investments and youth service delivery.

2. Conduct focused, place-based projects with ecologically-appropriate themes tied to hands-on learning sessions conducted in partnership with partners participating in recommendation #1.

3. Implement safe, engaging, and fun green spaces for younger children to learn and play where there is vacant land in proximity to youth facilities.

4. Build capacity with existing youth service providers and young adults through a landscape-themed workforce development program with hands-on experience and an appreciation for the community development process.

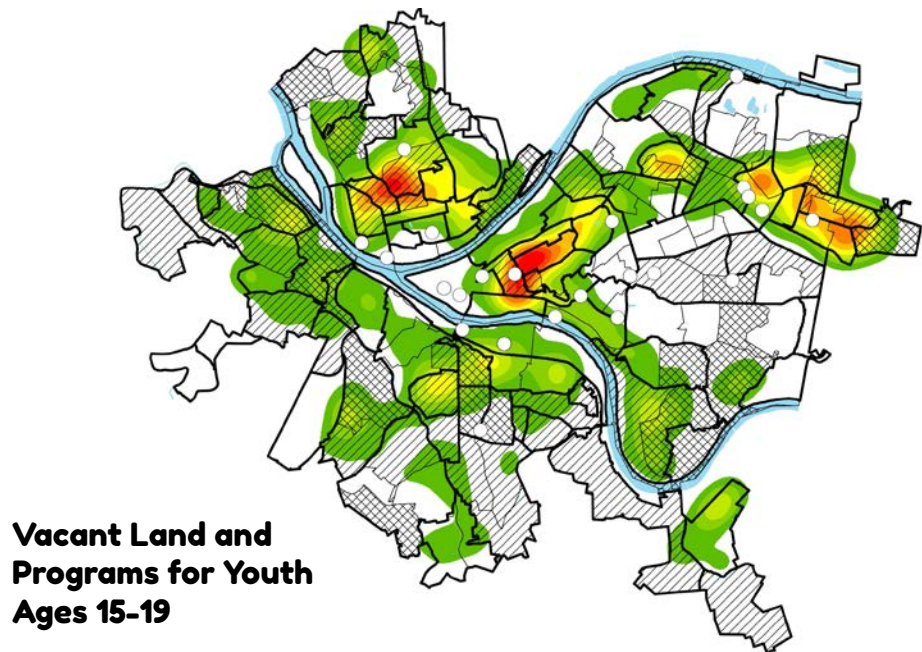
In 2015, the Heinz Endowments provided funding to implement Youth in Green's first three recommendations in five communities over two years, resulting in the Green Playces Initiative. GTECH started by analyzing the kernel-density hot spot maps developed for the Youth in Green Report to determine where neighborhoods with high vacancy occur and limited environmental education opportunities are present. This investigation led our team to a list of neighborhoods and communities that could benefit from a Green Playce.

*There are approximately 615 listings of youth programs in Pittsburgh.*

*Of those programs, there are 76 with an environmental focus.*

*These programs differ in timing, duration, and the age group they serve.*

A Kernel Density or “hotspot” map illustrating vacant land concentrations, total youth population ages 15-19, and locations of existing youth environmental programming. The American Community Survey via the US Census Bureau provided the youth population numbers by age group per neighborhood. Vacancy based on Allegheny County Assessment data. The third data point included in the map is where existing environmental youth programs are located in relation to vacancy and youth ages 15-19. GTECH, Youth in Green, 2014.



## The Green Playces Initiative

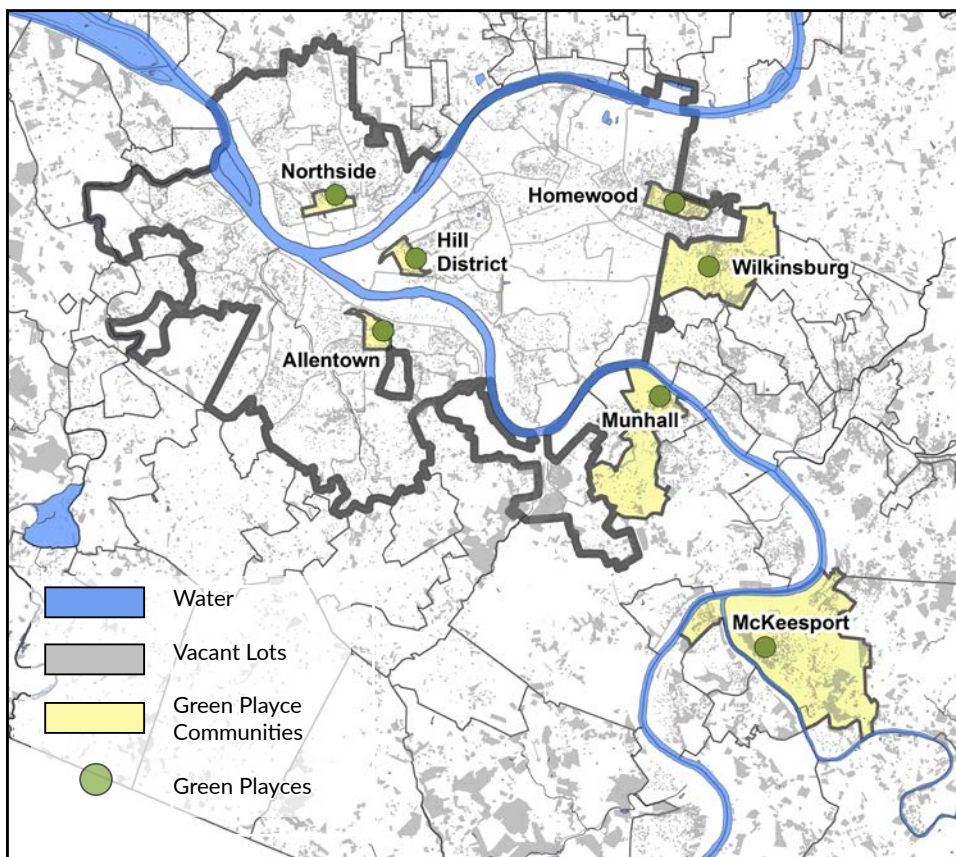
Looking at the strength of potential youth partners we focused on the following neighborhoods: Northside, Homewood, Hill District, Hilltop and the West End of Pittsburgh. After investigating the neighborhoods further, the West End did not seem feasible due to a lack of youth programs with access to vacant land. The City of McKeesport fit the criteria and became the fifth site instead.

As the Green Playces program began to design and implement sites, other communities and organizations reached out to GTECH to see if they could get their own Green Playce. We were successful in securing a grant from the Grable Foundation to build a Green Playce in Wilksburg. Staff at Hosanna House were so impressed that they provided their own capital for us to design and implement a few additional projects. In addition, the Propel Schools Foundation, after our success in the Northside, paid for the implementation of a modified Green Playce at their high school in Munhall.



To date, GTECH has successfully completed 7 projects in partnership with youth programs throughout the county.

- Northside: Propel Schools: Northside
- Homewood: Bible Center Church
- Allentown: The Brashear Association: ALEC
- McKeesport: Trinity Church of God in Christ and Youth C.A.S.T
- Hill District: Jeron X. Grayson Community Center
- Wilkinsburg: Hosanna House
- Munhall: Propel Schools: Andrew Street



GTECH, Green Playces, 2017

# Approach

*All neighborhoods, especially those in greatest need, already have citizen leaders and networks of residents who passionately seek to improve their communities.*

All neighborhoods, especially those in greatest need, already have citizen leaders and networks of residents who passionately seek to improve their communities. GTECH has always believed that activating vacant land can be an effective way to cultivate and develop that latent capacity. The Green Playces program seeks to harness that energy in youth and adults to increase awareness and capacity to confront issues that threaten the community's health and vitality.

Once neighborhoods were chosen, for each site, GTECH staff coordinated a meeting inviting all the youth service providers in the area. Program details were discussed and groups self-identified their interest in partnering on a Green Playce site. The primary requirement was that the youth program have access to or own a parcel of vacant land in close proximity to their program, as well as the ability to maintain these spaces.

After we selected our site and primary parnters, GTECH created a series of community-driven design charrettes to gain input from youth and the broader community. As the site's primary users, we felt it was critical to engage youth first. GTECH held a charrette with these kids which utilized inspirational pictures and informal conversation to pull out distinct themes of interest to the group. Next, we vetted these ideas with representatives of the partner organization and the community at large. Once we gathered this broader feedback, we developed a final design and returned to our primary partners for approval. The site was then built out with volunteer labor from primary partners, corporate volunteer groups, neighbors, and, most importantly, the youth users of each Playce.

Green Playces are more than just added green space. GTECH works to ensure that the process of designing and building the Playces adds value to the community and the youth in it. In addition, GTECH outlined and coordinated a series of educational modules with youth service and after school providers to focus on issues such as environmental



justice, stormwater management, alternative energy, climate change, community resiliency, and material reuse. The goal of this effort is not to create a new youth program, but to align programming needs with existing environmental services and experiential education.

The following sections detail the design and build process for each Green Playce.

## By the numbers

### Build Process

Location	# Partners	Youth Engaged	Volunteer Hours	Volunteers
Northside	11	94	285	136
Homewood	12	30	292	126
Hilltop	8	89	177.5	88
McKeesport	10	67	237.5	68
Hill District	7	40	131.5	54
Wilinsburg	9	109	318	92
Munhall	3	72	92	28
<b>Totals</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>501</b>	<b>1533.5</b>	<b>592</b>

### Programming

Event	Location	# Youth Engaged	Hours
Penn State University Design Class	Northside	35	52.5
TFIM Conference	Marriott Center	65	65
Remake Learning Days	Homewood	5	5
PCRG	Northside	15	45
Northside Art Project	Northside	40	240
Homewood Art Project	Homewood	15	64
Hilltop Stormwater Education Session	Hilltop	25	30
Hilltop Stormwater Education Session	Hilltop	25	50
Two Wheels Lots of Green	Hilltop	26	26
Pop Up and Play:McKeesport	McKeesport	50	100
Wilkinsburg Education Session	Wilkinsburg	55	55
Hilltop: Lights Out After School	Hilltop	40	80
Wilkinsburg Art Project	Wilkinsburg	30	60
<b>Total</b>		<b>427</b>	<b>872.5</b>





Central Northside  
PROPEL  
SCHOOLS:  
NORTHSIDE  
1701 Columbia Avenue,  
Pittsburgh, PA 15233

**11**

**partners**

**94**

**youth**

**285**

**volunteer hours**

### **Key elements:**

- Activity table
- Deck stage
- Garden corner
- Outdoor marimba
- Reclaimed stone bench
- Rock path
- Stump seating

### **Funders:**

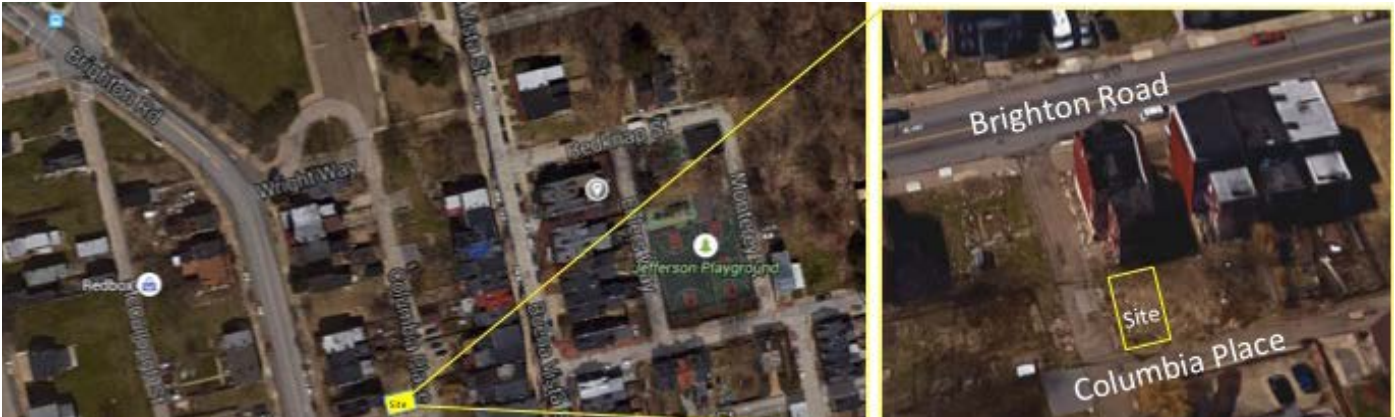
- The Heinz Endowments
- Starbucks Foundation

### **Additional Partners:**

- Girl Scouts of Western PA
- Northside Ambassadors
- Northside Common Ministries
- One Northside
- Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy
- Pittsburgh Pipeline Summer Youth Program
- Police Zone 1
- Propel Classrooms 3rd and 6th Graders
- Tree Pittsburgh
- Western PA Conservancy

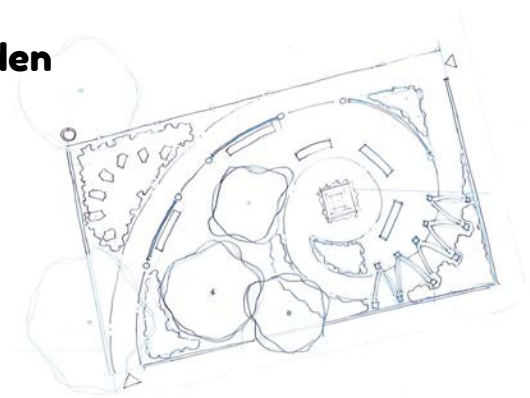


# Northside: Design Process



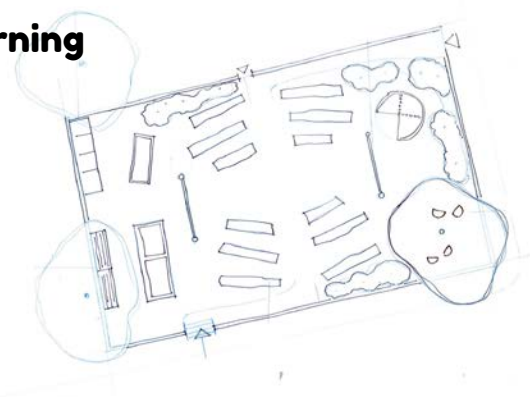
Winding path  
Plant tower  
Quiet space  
Willow tunnel  
Tree grove

## 1. Secret Garden



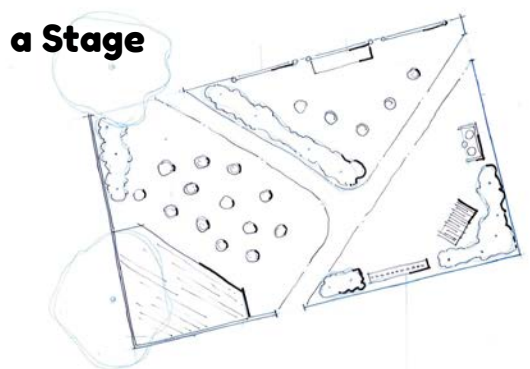
Classroom benches  
Chalk boards  
Raised beds  
Log seating  
Fence with gate

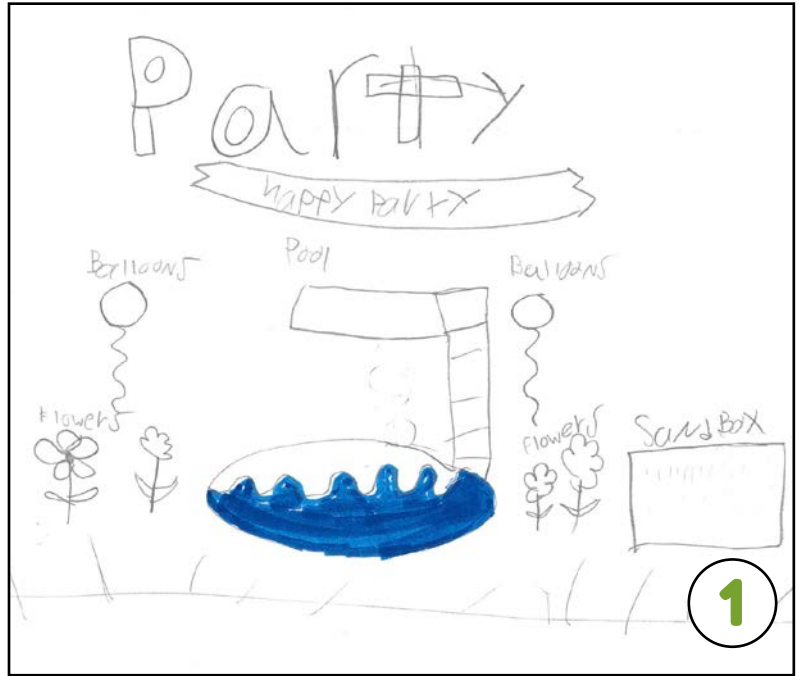
## 2. Serious Learning



Deck stage  
Musical instruments  
Log seating  
Game boxes  
Perennial plantings

## 3. The World's a Stage





In the Northside, we had the opportunity to work with Propel and a variety of community partners to design our first Green Playce. **Before** designing anything, we gathered raw input from the primary users of the space; in this case, Propel students! We asked a 3rd grade class to draw up their dream park, resulting in amazing ideas like the Ninja Garden above. **Next**, we pulled photos that those drawings inspired and asked the youth to select their likes and dislikes. We used those ideas to design the three options for the site on the previous page. **Finally**, GTECH shared our options with the community and asked them to select their likes and dislikes. We compiled all of that information into a final, synthesized design.



# Northside: Final Design





For the site's final design, we did our best to incorporate our partners' favorite components of each design option. For the Northside, this process resulted in an outdoor classroom and activity space including a **garden corner** with a reclaimed **stone bench**, an **activity table** and an **outdoor marimba**, a **rock path**, **stump seating**, and, the site's centerpiece, a **deck stage**, for teaching, performing, and play!



*"The Green Playce will allow our students to expand their learning along with their environment. On behalf of our Northside family, we thank both GTECH and all of the volunteers for making this space a reality."*

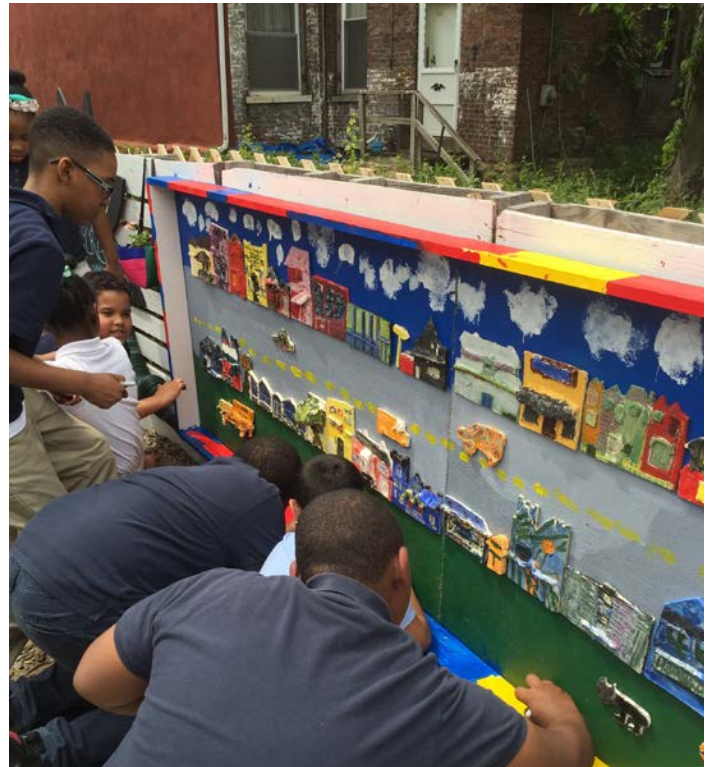
-Dr. Tina Chekan,  
Superintendent/CEO at Propel Schools



## Northside: Build Days







From start to finish, approximately 150 people, young and old, took part in building out the Northside Green Playce. From Propel staff to youth from the Pittsburgh Pipeline summer program, and neighbors down the street like Ms. Betty, the community played a critical role in this classroom's construction. This included clearing a jungle of weeds, laying the groundwork for the site, installing a pallet fence, lugging found stones for benches, adding some color with paint, and creating a custom artwork designed, fabricated, and installed by Propel Students.



## Northside: Art



A Starbucks Foundation grant helped bring art to the Northside Green Playce. GTECH coordinated with 3rd and 5th grade art teachers at Propel: Northside to create a whole neighborhood. Dubbed the “Clayborhood,” this colorful panorama includes one building or asset designed and created by each student in the two classrooms that participated. We worked with a local arts nonprofit, the Union Project, to provide these students with access to a ceramic studio (an amenity they don’t have at school) and instruction from one of their experts. Later, both classes met on-site to assemble the final product.



## Northside: Dedication Ceremony



After a few months of serious work, Green Playces: Northside was ready for play! We had a big celebration with Propel: Northside and local residents. Students tested out the new outdoor marimba and flower chalkboards. Police officers visited and chatted with the youth and teachers. For the culmination of this fun-filled afternoon, we had a formal ceremony on our deck stage which included a board-sawing (GTECH's version of a ribbon-cutting).



## Northside: Programming



Clockwise from top left: a Propel student found a snake at the Northside Green Playce!; Propel students discuss the space with visitors on a Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group (PCRG) bike tour; youth from art classes at Propel: Northside prepare to install their art project; a high school intern beautifies our chalkboards; PCRG tour attendees cruise away after their Green Playce visit.





## Homewood BIBLE CENTER CHURCH

7238 Fleury Way,  
Pittsburgh, PA 15208

**12**

**partners**

**30**

**youth**

**292**

**volunteer hours**



### **Key elements:**

- Circular tables
- Entry garden
- Log seating
- Mosaic countertop
- Movie screen
- Outdoor kitchen
- Split rail fence

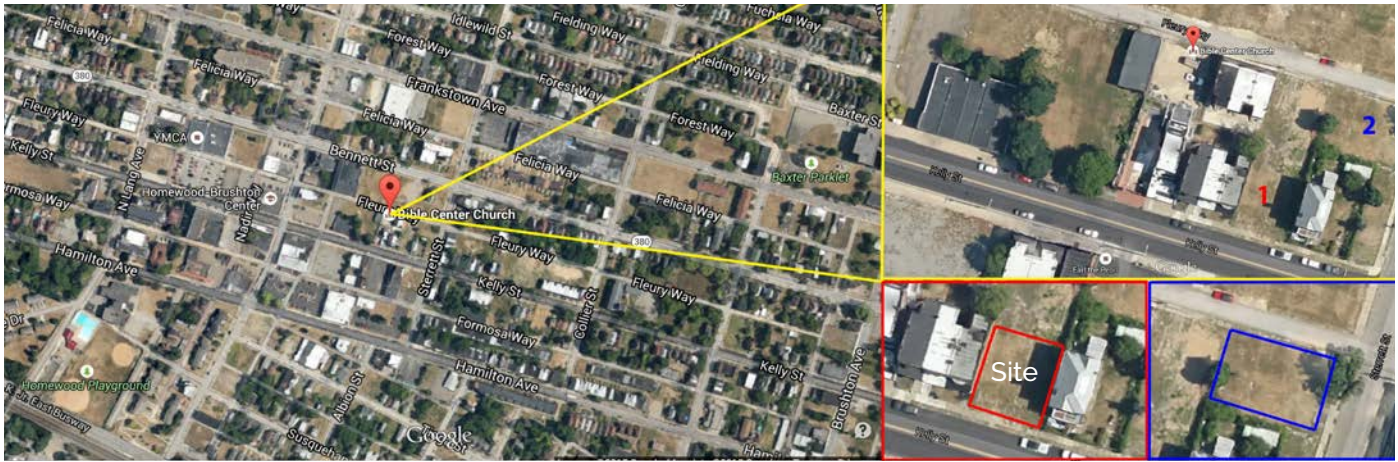
### **Funders:**

The Heinz Endowments

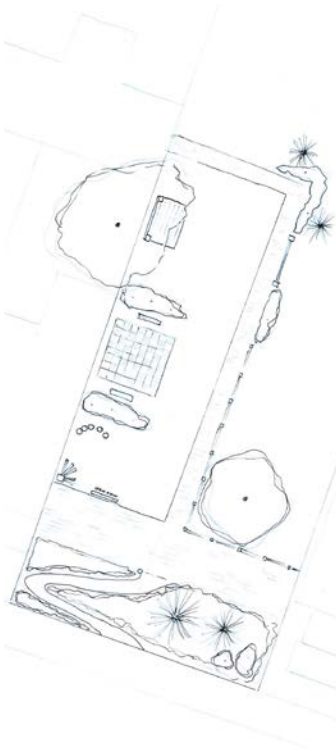
### **Additional Partners:**

- Grow Pittsburgh
- Homewood Children's Village
- Homewood YMCA
- HOST Network (Higher Achievement YMCA, Lighthouse, Y Creator Space, Mt. Ararat, Steeltown Entertainment Project)
- Junior Green Corps-Operation Better Block
- The Oasis Project
- Operation Better Block
- Penn State Extension
- Pittsburgh Glass Center
- University of Pittsburgh
- Westinghouse High School

# Homewood: Design Process

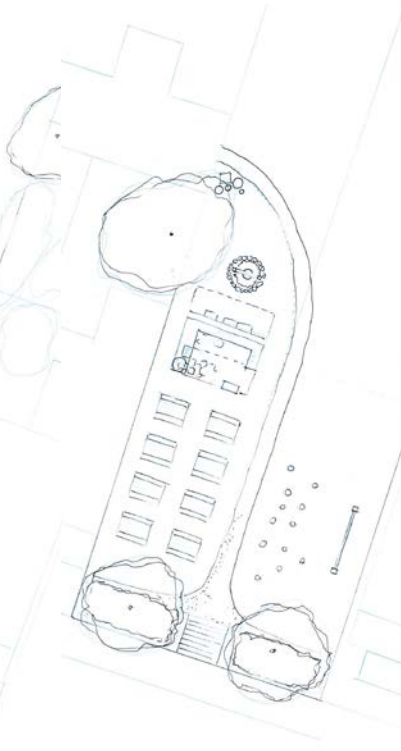


## 1. Games N'at



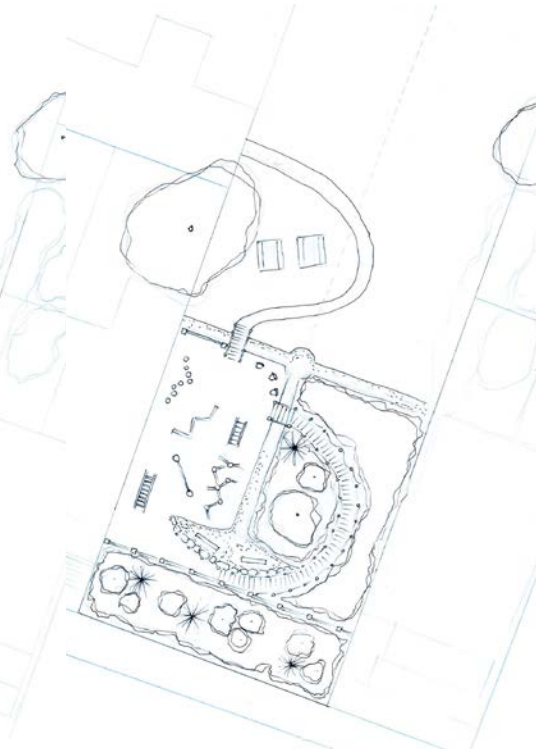
Winding entrance  
Brick path  
Chess/checkers  
Stage  
Fenced yard

## 2. Movie and BBQ



Stairs entrance  
Pop-up theater  
Picnic tables  
Outdoor kitchen  
Well garden

## 3. Adventure Garden



Fenced from street  
Fitness circuit  
Balance beams  
Stump jumps  
Perennial plantings





In Homewood we **started** our design process at the Bible Center Church in an extensive session with church-goers, young and old, as well as other community stakeholders. We gathered initial feedback through voting on images that inspire (or not) elements for the Green Playce. **Next**, we took that feedback and came up with three designs that community partners like Operation Better Block, Homewood Children's Village, and members of the HOST Network weighed in on at the Homewood Carnegie Library. After confirming that group's decisions with staff at the Bible Center, we had a final design.



# Homewood: Final Design





In Homewood, the synthesis of the community's choices from each option led us to a festive cooking and screening area complete with an **outdoor kitchen**, including a **mosaic countertop** designed and crafted by youth. We installed **log seating** for the kitchen and for a **movie screen**, which can also be viewed from **circular tables**, meant for eating or crafting. An **entry garden** with a **split-rail fence** leads from Kelly Street up into the site.



*"Learning takes place inside and outside of school and in many places and spaces! GTECH's Green Playce is making this happen for children in Homewood."*

Pastor Cynthia Wallace,  
Director of the Bible Center's Oasis Project



## Homewood: Build Days







Homewood's Green Playce developed throughout the summer of 2015 thanks to a few dedicated residents, youth from the Bible Center's summer programs, several corporate groups like US Steel, and a group of students from the University of Pittsburgh. GTECH led these groups through some grueling initial groundwork, helped them build planters out of reclaimed materials, and supervised a fairly extensive planting of the site, among other activities.



## Homewood: Art



In Homewood, we collaborated with an afterschool group at Westinghouse High School on a couple of art projects. For the mosaic (“The World is Yours!”), we brought in professionals from the Pittsburgh Glass Center, who taught students techniques for cutting and adhering glass tile. Over a period of several months, the group worked to assemble the mosaic piece-by-piece. It now lays atop the concrete “kids table” on site, underneath a recently installed solar array. For a more immediate result, we also spent a couple of hours (and just a couple of dollars!) making dragonflies out of reclaimed bannisters and fan blades, allowing the kids some exposure to painting techniques and power drills.



## Homewood: Dedication Ceremony



To open the Homewood site, Bible Center Church tried out a traditional ribbon-cutting ceremony (GTECH still prefers the board-sawing, but is always open to community wants and needs). The whole dedication ceremony was filled with a festive air, fancy clothes, and most importantly, kids having fun! And our work is just the beginning for this Green Playce - the Bible Center has leveraged these efforts and others to bring a greenhouse and solar array from the University of Pittsburgh and the Oasis Project to the site, adding even more capacity to engage youth in their environment.



## Homewood: Programming



Clockwise from top left: an environmental educator shows youth from the Bible Center how water acts in cities using an interactive module; girls make their own water testing landscapes; Stormworks talks stormwater; a group of Bible Center youth, chillin'; two girls show off their hanging garden.





## Hilltop ALLENTOWN LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT CENTER

827 E Warrington Ave,  
Pittsburgh, PA 15210

**8**

**partners**

**107**

**youth**

**178**

**volunteer hours**



### Key elements:

- In-ground slide
- Outdoor gallery
- Rain garden
- Reading nest
- Shade sails
- Window green house

### Funders:

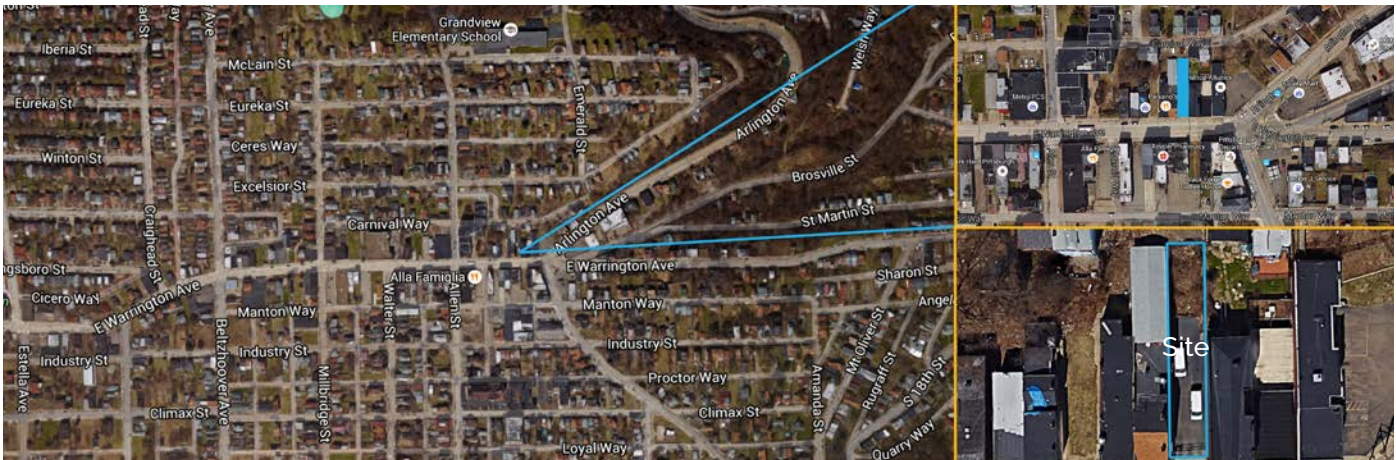
- The Heinz Endowments
- Allegheny County Conservation District
- American Eagle Foundation

### Additional Partners:

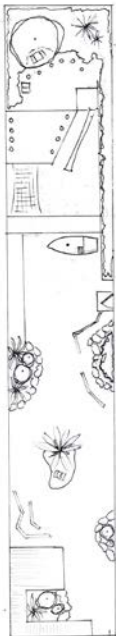
- Allentown Community Development Corporation
- Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh
- Hilltop Alliance
- Hilltop YMCA
- Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy
- Urban Kind
- Venture Outdoors



# Hilltop: Design Process



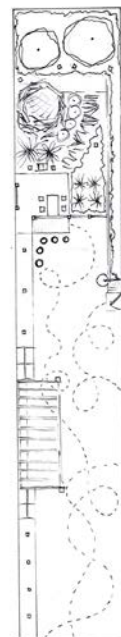
## 1. Allentown Adventure      2. Serious Learning      3. The World's a Stage



Treasure chest toy box  
In-ground slide  
Cargo net  
Mobile pirate ship  
Island gardens



Shed/lookout deck  
Planter tunnels  
Fun gutters  
Outdoor theater  
Pizza garden



Pollinator garden  
Reading nest  
Log climb  
Tire chairs  
Window green house





In the Hilltop, we had another opportunity to **start** with big dreams in the form of youth drawings. The kids at Allentown Learning and Engagement Center drew many treehouses, pollinating flowers (they had just learned about the importance of bees!), and pizza shops. **Next**, we tried to accomodate their interests through photos, like one of a pizza garden, and asked the youth to select their likes and dislikes. **Finally**, GTECH shared the three options on the previous page with community partners for review, and took that information as our inspiration for the final design.

# Hilltop: Final Design





After engaging youth users and active partners, GTECH came up with a design for this long, narrow space that included elements from all three options. At the top of the hill, at the rear of the space, volunteers built a **reading nest** out of found branches and installed an **in-ground slide** made from a used construction tube. At the bottom of the hill, a **rain garden** was installed to catch excess runoff. Other gardening amenities include: a **window green house** for seed starting, a **pizza garden** complete with tomatoes, basil, and more, and **mobile planter boxes**. Finally, an **outdoor gallery** with reusable art boards and a couple of **shade sails** were installed to add color to the front of the space.



*"Our partnership with GTECH's Green Playce program has allowed us to significantly improve access to green space and enhance the quality of our programming. It allows us to offer a whole new component of environmental education, with the opportunity to explore, play, and learn about native plants, pollinators, gardening, healthy food choices, and much more."*

Amber Rooke,  
Project Coordinator at ALEC



## Hilltop: Build Days







GTECH benefited immensely during the buildout of this Green Playce from an already excited audience of ALEC youth. From the get-go, young helpers cleared weeds on the hillside, built the reading nest, painted, and much more. Funding and volunteers from American Eagle assisted with the buildout of the site. Also, thanks to a grant from Allegheny County Conservation District, we were able to add a rain garden and design educational modules explaining the project and exploring the water cycle. Finally, a successful application to the Alcoa foundation allowed GTECH to hire three high school interns and a CMU intern for the summer to help facilitate Green Playces Educational Modules on sites. Our summer interns were critical in the project's completion, from detailed design advice to consistent support during build days.



## Hilltop: Art



In the Hilltop, our Green Playce benefitted from a strong relationship with the primary users of the space, the Allentown Learning and Engagement Center (ALEC). ALEC decided that they'd like a place for kids' art to go on the wall. We worked with local artist, Maggie Negrete, to come up with the first mural. At our Green Playce's dedication ceremony, she asked kids to draw what they thought "the future" would look like, and used those ideas to create an illustration that the youth colored in. These boards sit in permanent frames but can be easily removed and replaced or repainted. Maggie has since become the Education Coordinator at ALEC, so more art will happen in the future.



## Hilltop: Dedication Ceremony



The opening event for the Hilltop Green Playce brought youth from the ALEC, their parents, and other community partners together for a day of celebration. The day included lots of running up and down the hill, many trips down the new slide (and up it, even!), brainstorming for the new art to be installed in the outdoor gallery, and, of course, a board-sawing ceremony.



## Hilltop: Programming



Clockwise from top left: a GTECHer explores stormwater and our urban environment with youth at the Allentown Learning and Engagement Center; a mother and son pluck a carrot from the mobile planters at the Hilltop Green Playce\*; A young lady poses with her harvest\*; Hilltop youth discuss plants and rain gardens; a kid from Allentown shows off his mask at ALEC's Family Night.

*\*Photographs courtesy of Alexander Denmarsh*





McKeesport  
TRINITY CHURCH  
OF GOD IN CHRIST  
2200 Jenny Lind Street,  
McKeesport, PA 15132

**10**  
partners

**81**  
youth

**238**  
volunteer hours

### Key elements:

Chalkboard  
Craft tables  
Crushed gravel sidewalk  
Murals  
Play mounds  
Stump seating  
Tunnel

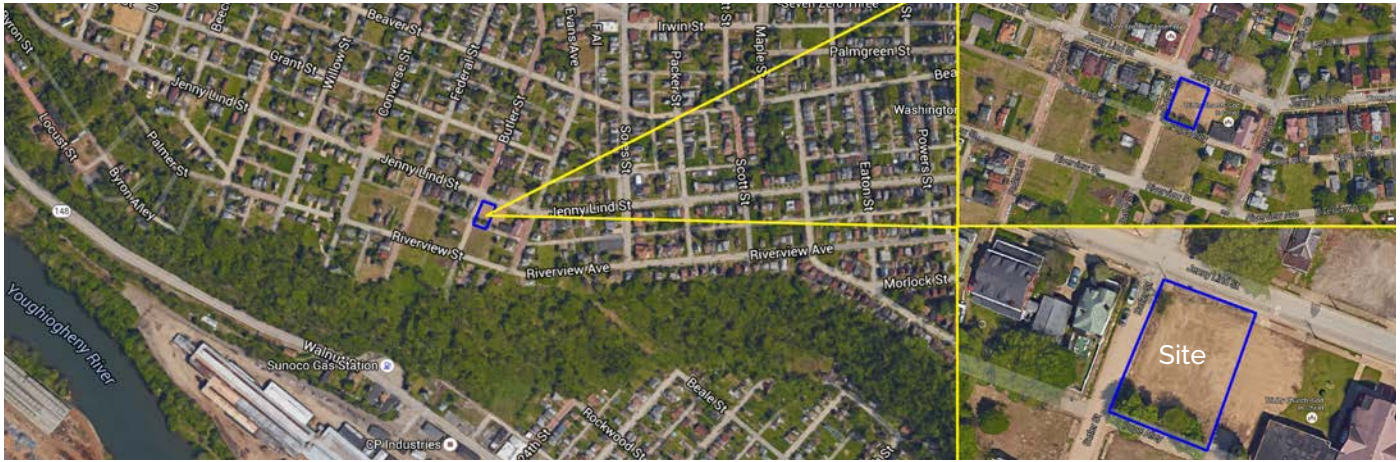
### Funders:

The Heinz Endowments  
PNC Foundation  
Eat n' Park

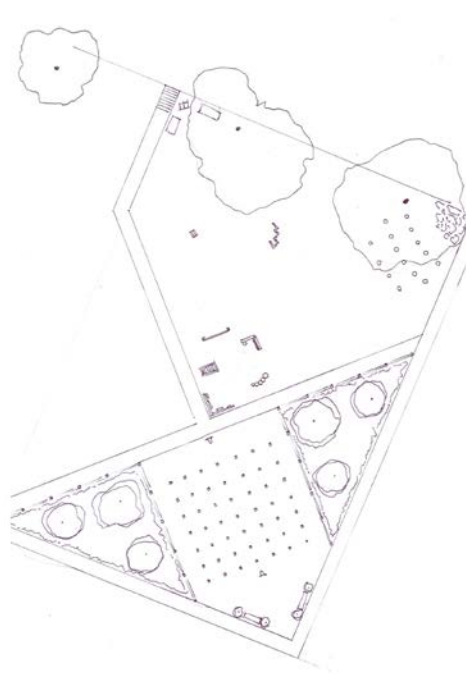
### Partners:

Allegheny East NAACP  
City of McKeesport  
GTECH McKeesport Ambassadors  
Mothers to Son Program  
Penn State Greater Allegheny  
Small Seeds Development  
Tube City Renaissance  
Venture Outdoors  
Youth C.A.S.T.

# McKeesport: Design Process

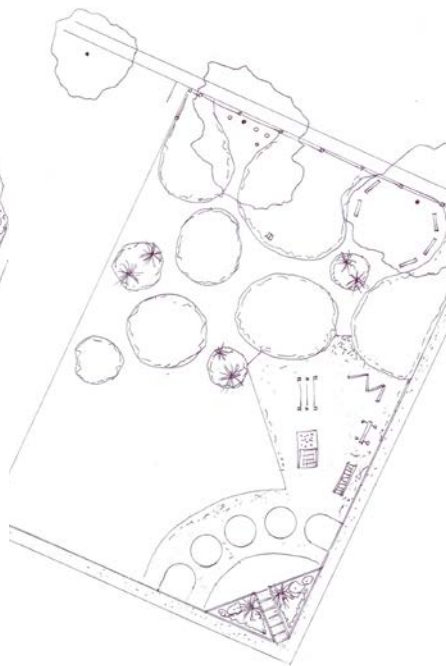


## 1. Maze and Maths



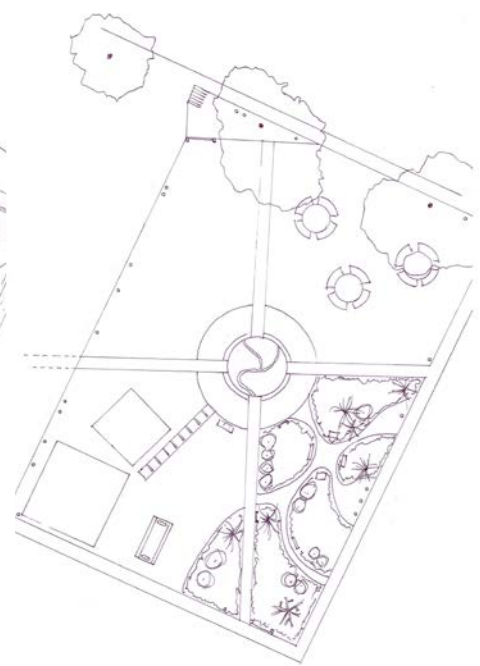
Adjustable maze  
Listening station  
Corner benches  
Musical instruments  
Shaded seating

## 2. Hills of Play



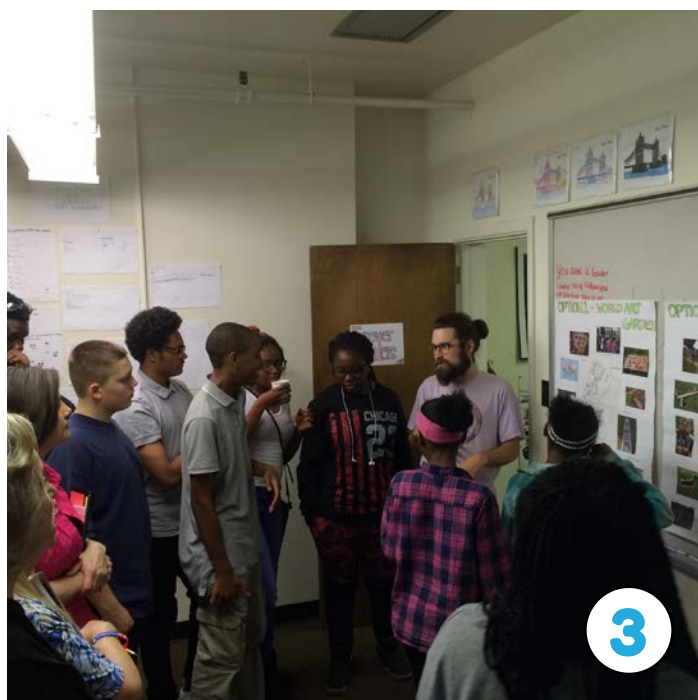
Play mounds  
Balance beams  
Garden maze  
Hangout circle  
Entry garden

## 3. Four Corners



Map garden  
World plants  
National flags  
Sensory walk  
Circular tables





GTECH **first** visited two classes in the McKeesport School District to start brainstorming this Green Playce. We wanted to get a representative sample of youth in the area, both younger and **older**. This brainstorm led to the three **design** options on the previous page, which we brought back to our partners at Youth C.A.S.T. to engage their after-school program in the process. The final design reflects a combination of all of this feedback.



# McKeesport: Final Design





The McKeesport Green Playce is the biggest thus far and we made sure to maximize each and every inch. With the help of amazing volunteers we added a **crushed gravel sidewalk**, built up compacted dirt **play mounds**, including one with a **tunnel** underneath, built a **maze** of poles with adjustable fabric walls, and also included an outdoor classroom, complete with **chalkboard**, **stump seating**, and **craft tables**. At the rear of the site, Art Expressions, Inc. helped McKeesport youth create two vibrant **murals** on existing retaining walls.

*"GTECH's support has raised the consciousness for stewardship and preservation. Our partnership has yielded; land beatification, environmental education and outdoor recreation across the City of McKeesport for our youth and families. I am very honored to have partnered with them and will continued to do so for may years to come".*

Keino L Fitzpatrick Sr.  
Founder of Youth C.A.S.T.

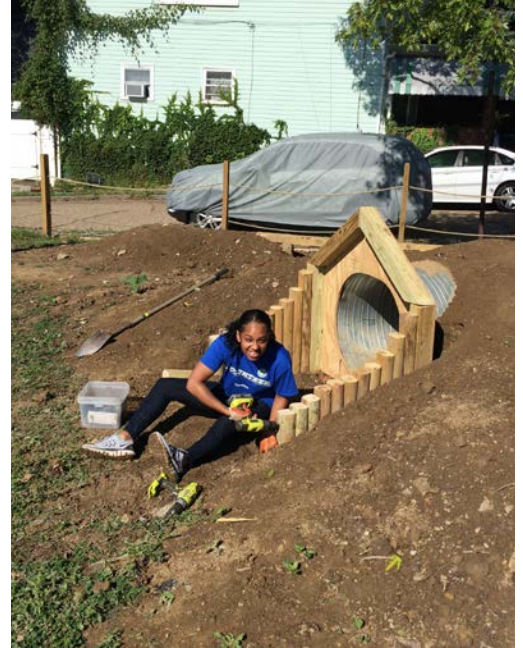




## McKeesport: Build Days







GTECH never would have completed this site if it weren't for the incredible ideas and efforts of the site's primary users - Youth C.A.S.T.. The teens and kids in their summer program played a major role in the design and build of the McKeesport Green Playce, from groundwork and construction, to planting and decoration. Others that helped out include Eat n' Park volunteers, members of Trinity Church of God in Christ, and our contractor, MB Construction, who built up the play mounds.



## McKeesport: Art



We partnered with Youth C.A.S.T. kids and Art Expressions Inc. to create two murals framing the Green Playce in McKeesport. Their artists worked with the kids, walking through the process of making a mural, to design and paint a colorful portrayal of their hometown, over the course of several weekends. These youth were involved in the entire Green Playce process and helped design and build the entire site. Eat n' Park and the PNC Foundation both supported additional activities in McKeesport, including Art Expressions Inc.'s work on the murals.



## McKeesport: Dedication Ceremony



The McKeesport dedication ceremony included many of the youth who designed the space with us, the Trinity Church of God in Christ congregation, and a host of community partners, including the City's Mayor. At the ceremony, we finished up a few plantings on site, surveyed residents about GTECH's impact in the city thus far, and had a lot of fun playing on the new site. After our ceremonial board-sawing, we enjoyed a community dinner at the church.



## McKeesport: Programming



Clockwise from top left: a young volunteer from Youth C.A.S.T. hops along a series of stump jumps between the play mounds at the McKeesport Green Playce; more Youth C.A.S.T. kids exploring their creation; a neighbor in Steelers garb stops by to check out her new play space; young ladies share their mural-making story; a young kid with impeccable balance enjoys the stumps.





Hill District  
JERON X.  
GRAYSON  
COMMUNITY  
CENTER  
1852 Enoch Street,  
Pittsburgh, PA 15233

**7**  
partners

**40**  
youth

**124**  
volunteer hours



### Key elements:

Colorful benches  
“Double foundation” wall  
Granite table  
Hillside seating  
Mosaic honoring August Wilson  
Perennial garden  
Red door

### Funders:

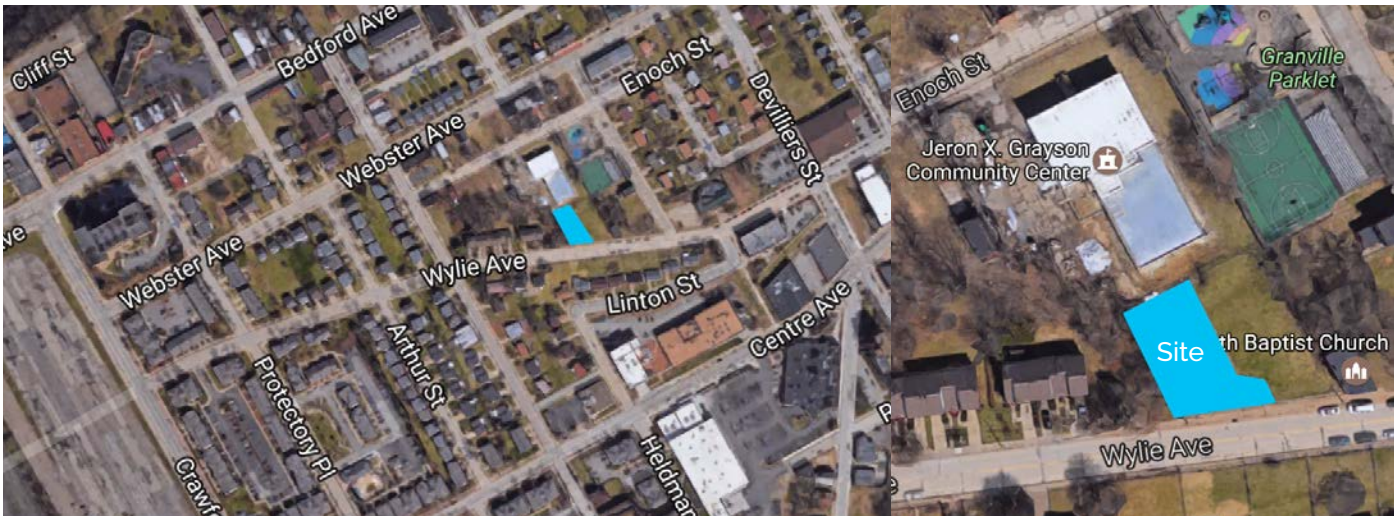
The Heinz Endowments

### Partners:

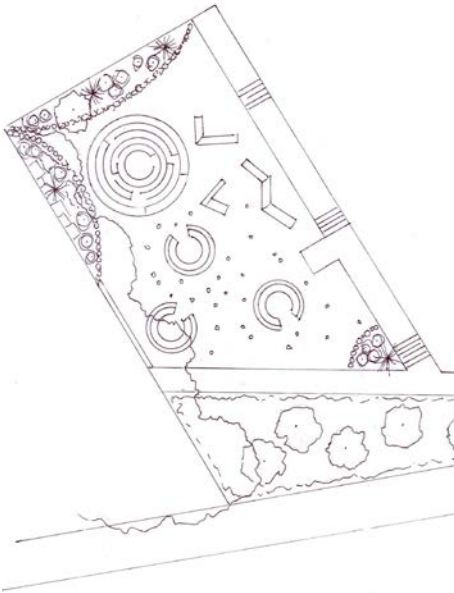
Pittsburgh Playwrights  
Hill House Association  
HYPE Network (Carnegie Library, Schenley Heights  
Community Development Program, Thelma Lovette  
YMCA)  
Daisy Wilson Artist Community  
Venture Outdoors  
Penn State Center



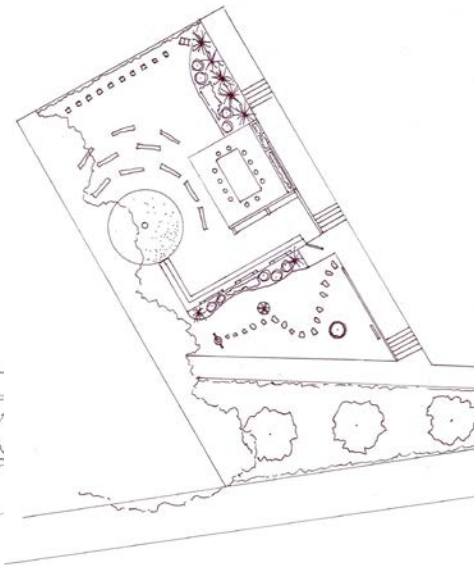
# Hill District: Design Process



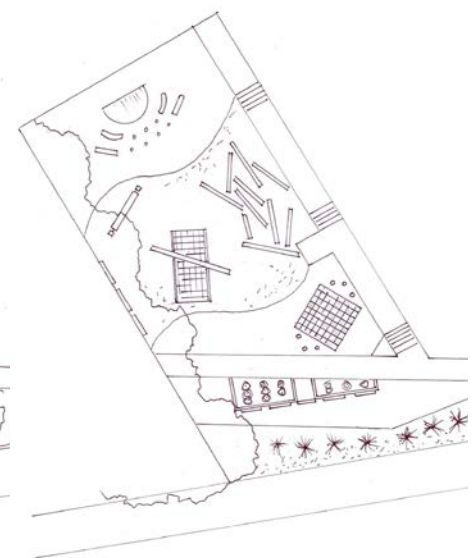
## 1. Maze & Conversation    2. Double Foundation    3. August Plays



In-ground maze  
Garden edges  
Conversation pits  
Balance beams  
Tree grove



Semi-circle auditorium  
Double foundation wall  
Craft table  
10 Chairs (for 10 plays)  
Industrial artifacts



Hilltop auditorium  
Climbing net  
Rolling log  
Checkerboard  
Faux house front

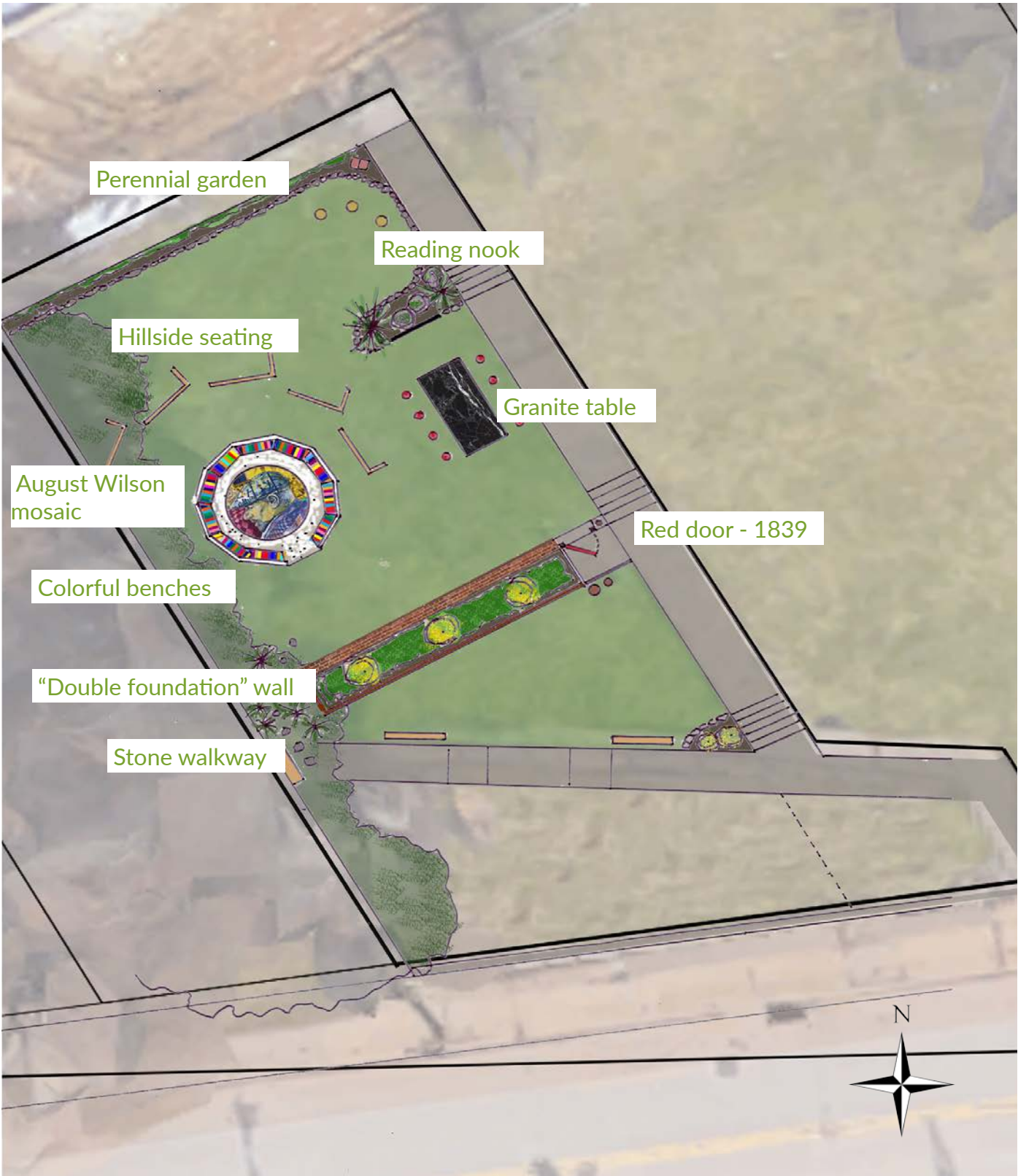




Green Playces: Hill District is a unique site behind the Jeron X. Grayson Community Center, owned and operated by the Center that Cares. If this lot had an address, it would be 1839 Wylie Avenue, which is perhaps the most famous address in the Hill. In the mythical century of August Wilson's plays, Aunt Ester's house sat here, a refuge for anyone seeking answers to life's big questions. GTECH worked with Grayson Center youth and other volunteers to bring this magical site to life. We **first** met with our primary users: camp attendees of the Center that Cares! **Next**, once school started, we added the input of after school youth who could use the space throughout the year. We used those ideas to design the three options on the previous page. **Finally**, GTECH shared our options with the Grayson Center staff, community members, and August Wilson experts, like his nephew Paul Ellis, director of the Daisy Wilson Artist Community, and Christopher Rawson, who cowrote *August Wilson: Pittsburgh Places in His Life and Plays*. All of this feedback contributed to our final design.



# Hill District: Final Design





For the Hill District Green Playce, a careful study of the space's relation to August Wilson and his plays, as well as a thorough, youth-driven charrette process, resulted in a mixed-use space with a variety of unique elements. These features include a **perennial garden** beautifying the fence at the top of the hill; a **reading nook** with a little free library; a **granite table** for eating, crafting, and other activities; a central amphitheater with **hillside seating**, and **colorful benches** surrounding a **mosaic honoring August Wilson**; a brick “**double foundation**” wall seating with a **red door** entrance, just like Aunt Ester's house; and a **stone walkway** through the wooded edge around the wall.



*“You got to plan better. I told you the key is to plan. You plan right you can unlock any door.”*

Aunt Ester,  
character from August Wilson's *Gem of the Ocean*



# Hill District: Build Days







The Hill District Green Playce was built in large part by youth at the Grayson Center. They painted and assembled our bench centerpiece, as well as the granite craft table. We also had help from an excellent group of volunteers, courtesy of the United Way, and one super-volunteer, who showed up for every one of our build days. From clearing the overgrown edge of the site, to arranging and planting a garden bed along the top, to installing telephone poles for our bench legs, our volunteers were a crucial part of the project. Finally, a local contractor is completing our brick wall and a cement pad in the middle of our colorful bench circle, to be decorated with a mosaic honoring August Wilson by local artist, James Simon.



## Hill District: Art



In the Hill District, youth at the Grayson Center enriched the centerpiece of the Green Playce behind their building. First, they creatively painted a bunch of 2x4's with a rainbow of colors. They later installed them in a circle of 10 benches, one for each of August Wilson's American Century Cycle plays. We talked about the site's significance in his plays and they learned some hand tool skills while assembling the benches with us, despite the cold weather that day. Local artists will continue to add to the site, including a mosaic by James Simon, storytelling by Amir Rashid, and more.





Wilkinsburg  
**HOSANNA HOUSE**  
807 Wallace Avenue,  
Wilkinsburg, PA 15233

**9**

**partners**

**108**

**youth**

**320**

**volunteer hours**



### **Key elements:**

Alphabet walk  
Chalkboard  
Hillside seating  
In-ground slide  
Reading platforms  
Stump garden  
Tire climb

### **Partners:**

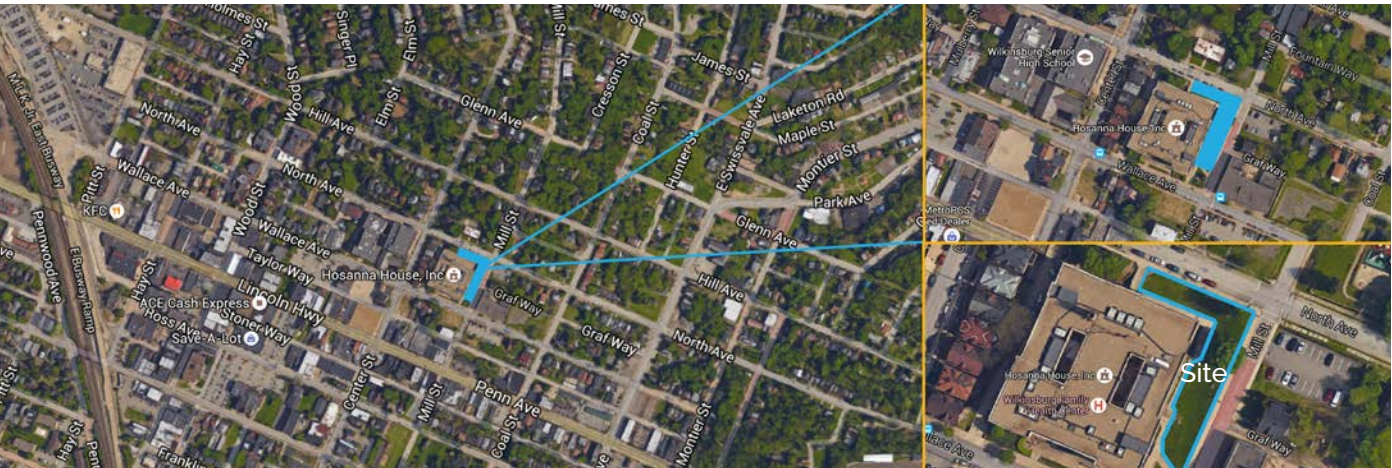
Accenture  
Holy Family Academy  
MAYA Designs  
Nine Mile Run Watershed Association  
Pittsburgh MADD Dads  
Pittsburgh Urban Christian School  
PNC Bank  
Wilkinsburg Community Development Corporation

### **Funders:**

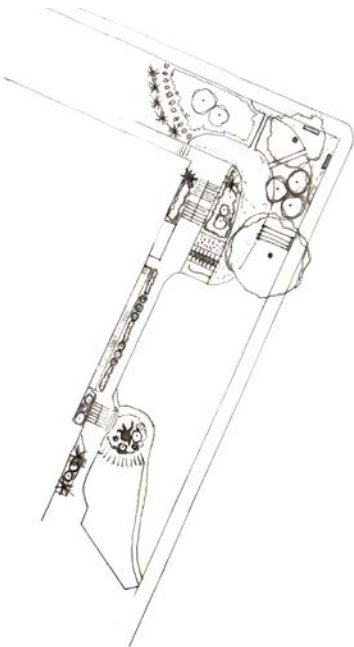
The Grable Foundation  
Holy Family Academy  
Alcoa Foundation  
Hosanna House



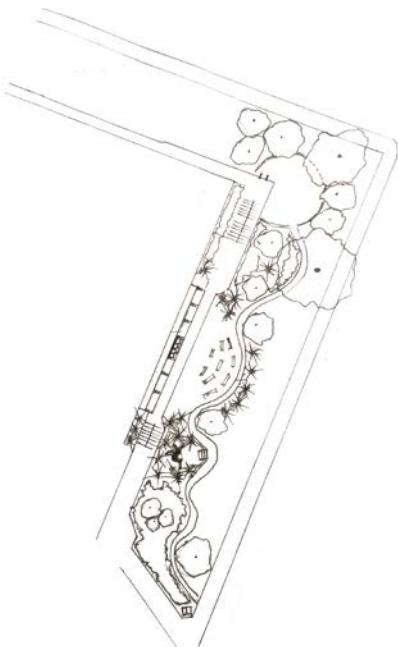
# Wilkinsburg: Design Process



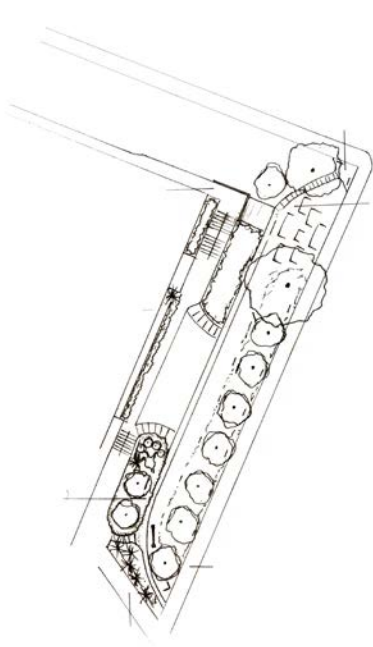
1. Take a Breath
2. Jumpstart
3. Planting Your Future



- Winding path
- Central auditorium
- Quiet space
- Tall grasses
- Tree grove

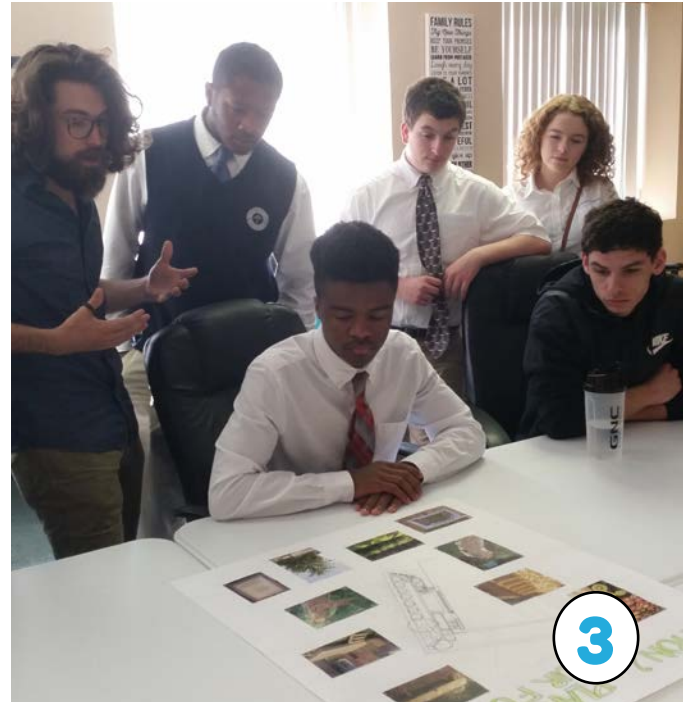


- Built-in slides
- Climbing wall
- Rope climbing
- Corner benches
- Rock stairs



- Hillside seating
- Line of trees
- Prehistoric garden
- Flanking stairs
- Interpretive signage





In Wilkinsburg, we had the privilege of working with high school students from Holy Family Academy. They generously contributed a small grant they won to our project, in the hopes of having their dollars go further. **Before** designing anything though, we needed to get raw input from the primary users of the space: the youth in Hosanna House programs! **Next**, we walked through the likes and dislikes of the youth with our partners at Holy Family Academy and brainstormed three themes and corresponding designs. **Finally**, GTECH and the Holy Family students shared our options with the Hosanna House staff, and we pulled all of that information together into a final design.



# Wilkinsburg: Final Design





For the site's final design, we do our best to incorporate our partner's favorite components of each design option. For Wilkinsburg, this process resulted in a mixed-use space with **reading platforms** under a tree, an active zone including a **tire climb** and an **in-ground slide**, an outdoor classroom with **chalkboard** and **hillside seating**, an **alphabet walk**, and, finally, a **stump garden** with a bench for quiet reflection.

*"The amazing outdoor space that was created will benefit children from toddler through Kindergarten allowing HHI to shift their indoor early learning programming to the outdoors, embracing the opportunity to connect with nature and support a broader range of engagement. We are in complete appreciation of GTECH and all of the staff and friends who helped in this effort."*

Tammi McMillan,  
Program Director, Hosanna House





## Wilkinsburg: Build Days







The Wilkinsburg Green Playce was built almost entirely by 140 volunteers from the local community, volunteers from PNC Bank, MADD Dads, Maya Designs, Accenture, Landforce, youth from the Hosanna House, and even young neighbors from up the street. Students from Holy Family Academy helped out on several occasions, bringing their work on the designs to life. Volunteers dug seating and a tire climb into the hillside, established and planted garden beds, painted and inserted alphabet stepping stones, stacked a limestone wall, brushed and painted a series of iron grates, built and installed a chalkboard, and more!



## Wilkinsburg: Art



In Wilkinsburg, Hosanna House youth got creative painting the pavers for a trail linking the site's amenities together. These pavers became what we call the "Alphabet Walk" - one stone for each letter of the alphabet, like the ones spelling out all of the different Green Playces neighborhoods in these pages thus far! This activity was part of a whole day of fun developed by our high school summer interns, including potting plants, playing games, and an environmental education session. These paid interns, one of whom had himself gone to Hosanna House, worked with us through every step of the process throughout the creation of the Green Playce.



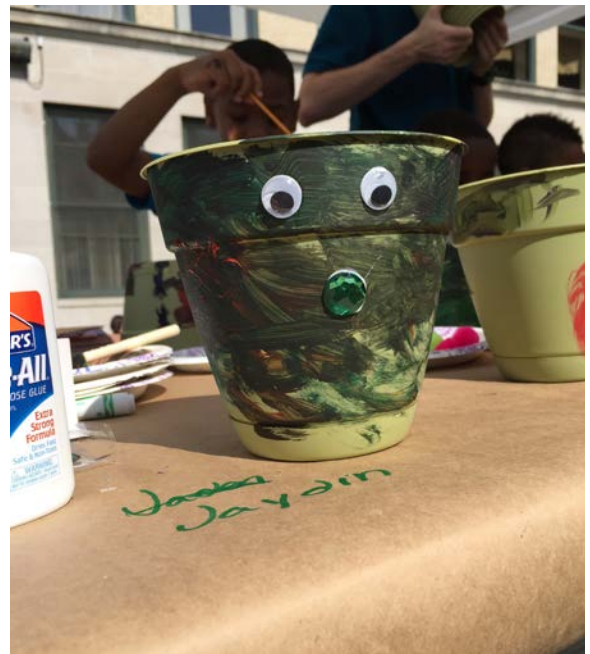
## Wilkinsburg: Dedication Ceremony



A GTECH summer intern, who was also a Hosanna House alum and a Holy Family Academy student, sawed the board that officially dedicated the Wilkinsburg Playce. We celebrated the end of the build process with local youth and Hosanna House staff, in spite of the chilly weather. But, the work of a Green Playce doesn't stop upon its completion; through collaboration with community partners and youth educators throughout the county, Green Playces are sites for diverse events, from environmental education sessions to arts and crafts.



## Wilkinsburg: Programming



Clockwise from top: through funding provided by the Alcoa Foundation, GTECH was able to hire three high school interns who planned, coordinated, and organized an event at the Wilkinsburg Green Playce. One of these interns shares her experience with Hosanna House youth; a kid from Hosanna House adds character to a pot with paint and plastic eyeballs; Another high school intern talks to kids about the plants he helped plant earlier that year.



## Wilkinsburg: Satellite Lots



Upon the completion of the original Green Playce, Hosanna House decided they wanted to spruce up a couple of nearby lots. On Wallace Street, they wanted a more formal outdoor classroom. Sturdy wooden benches now flank a colorful school of painted fish, including Whale blackboards (above). On Taylor Street, Hosanna House wanted to make a recently installed parking lot greener, so GTECH added a rock garden full of succulents and a quiet reflection space, nestled in ferns (next page). For these lots, GTECH worked with LandForce, a workforce development organization specializing in stewardship, as well as with Nine Mile Run Watershed Association, a local environmental nonprofit.









Munhall  
PROPEL SCHOOLS:  
ANDREW STREET  
605 East Tenth Avenue  
Munhall, PA 15120

**3**

**partners**

**74**

**youth**

**92**

**volunteer hours**



### **Key elements:**

Greenhouse  
Deck / stage  
Stump seating  
Erosion control  
Invasive control  
Mulch pathway

### **Partners:**

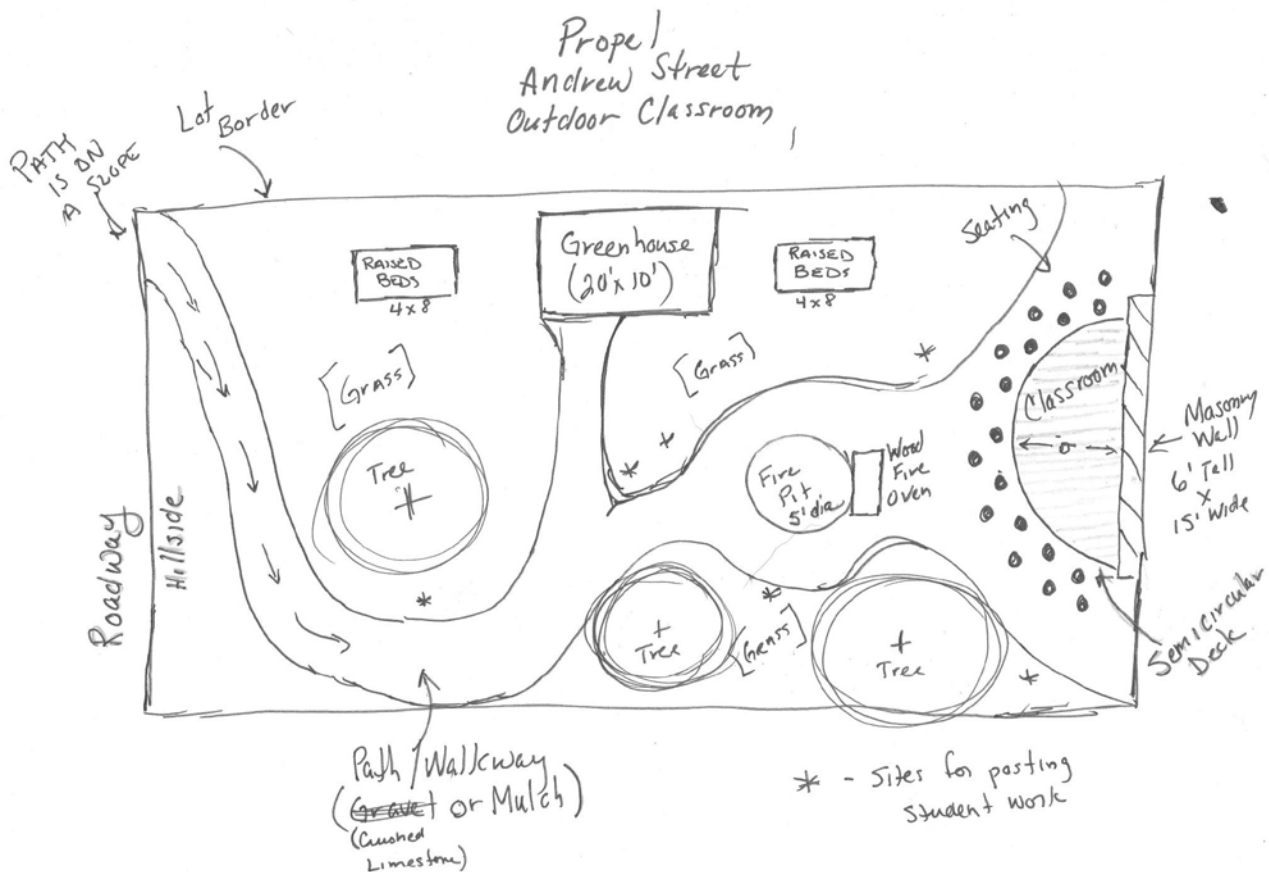
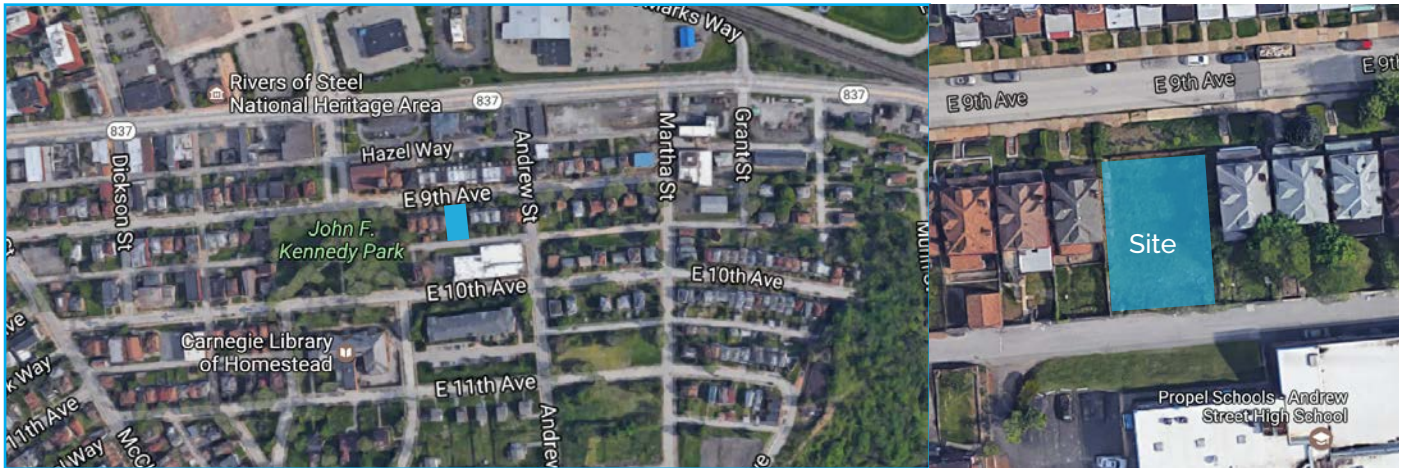
West Homestead Borough  
Raccoon Township Borough

### **Funders:**

Propel Schools Foundation



# Munhall: Design Process



Upon the completion of their first Green Playce in the northside, Propel Schools had additional ideas.; they had an outdoor space at Propel: Munhall and really wanted a greenhouse. They reached out and provided GTECH limited funds to design the space and install the greenhouse, along with another stage and stump seating area, a mulch path, and garden beds for plantrting outside.



## Munhall: Build Days





# Lesson Plans

GTECH worked with partners across the county to develop classes and other events for each Green Playce. In addition to this custom programming, GTECH built out several introductory lesson plans to encourage community residents, partners, and groups to utilize our spaces. The following pages provide an overview of each of the four lesson plans completed so far. To view and download all lesson plans developed for the Green Playce Initiative, please visit [gtechstrategies.org/resources](https://gtechstrategies.org/resources).

## Introduction to Green Playces Sites

**Main Lesson Objective:** Understanding Green Playces as a repurposed space. Understanding GTECH's process and how this playce was developed.

<b>Number of students/adults</b>	Goal of 1 adult to 15 kids max
<b>Age of students</b>	Middle school ages
<b>Length of each session</b>	60 minutes
<b>Focus</b>	Environment
<b>Background knowledge</b>	Assuming providers have no background knowledge
<b>Season</b>	Can be used during any season
<b>Resources</b>	Minimal cost and easily accessible

### **Learning Objectives:**

- Learn about GTECH's process for repurposing vacant space
- Identify positive elements about the Playces
- Make alternate suggestions for using the Playce

### **Lesson Overview:**

#### **Warm-up** (8 minutes)

- Welcome students to the Green Playce
- Have students note positive/pleasing elements.
- Turn and talk to share with peer.

#### **Introduction to New Material** (10 minutes)

- Discuss GTECH and Green Playces Initiative

#### **Pre-Activity** (10 minutes)

- Divide paper into sections
- I do – teacher demonstration

#### **Activity** (20 minutes) (Guided and Independent practice)

- Guide students through brainstorming list of ways to use the space in a different way.

#### **Wrap-up** (10-15 minutes)

- Present ideas for alternate uses of the Playce



## Exploration, Making Scientific Observations

**Main Lesson Objective:** Students will plot out and study a particular section of the Playces location, taking notes, and sharing their findings with the larger group.

<b>Number of students/adults</b>	Goal of 1 adult to 15 kids max
<b>Age of students</b>	Middle school ages
<b>Length of each session</b>	~60 minutes
<b>Focus</b>	Environment
<b>Background knowledge</b>	Assuming providers have no background knowledge
<b>Season</b>	Can be used during any season
<b>Resources</b>	Minimal cost and easily accessible

### Learning Objectives:

- Plot a specific area of the Playce
- Conduct scientific observations on their specific plot of land
- Document observations of the land
- Share findings with the group

### Lesson Overview:

#### Warm-up (5 minutes)

- Welcome students to the Green Playce
- Assess prior knowledge
- Turn and talk to share with peer

#### Introduction to New Material/Vocabulary (5 minutes)

- Making scientific observations
- Plotting an area

#### Pre-Activity (15 minutes)

- Discuss the importance of plotting and studying an area of land
- I do – teacher demonstration – guide students through plotting a section of space
- Distribute graphic organizers

#### Activity (30 minutes) (Guided and Independent practice)

- Divide students into groups
- Distribute materials
- Plot the area, explore, make scientific observations

#### Wrap-up (10-15 minutes)

- Share findings with group



## Stormwater and Its Effect on the Land

**Main Lesson Objective:** Students will become more environmentally conscious by understanding the effects of stormwater on the land.

<b>Number of students/adults</b>	Goal of 1 adult to 15 kids max
<b>Age of students</b>	Middle school ages
<b>Length of each session</b>	~90 minutes (can be cut down)
<b>Focus</b>	Environment, Effects of Stormwater
<b>Background knowledge</b>	Assuming providers have no background knowledge
<b>Season</b>	Can be used during any season, but especially useful immediately after a rain storm
<b>Resources</b>	Minimal cost and easily accessible

### **Learning Objectives:**

- Understand stormwater runoff
- Identify the influence that stormwater runoff has on the land
- Generate an illustration of a piece of land
- Determine directional path of stormwater and potential problem areas
- Summarize and present their findings

### **Lesson Overview:**

#### **Warm-up** (8 minutes)

- Welcome students to the Green Playce
- Ask students relatable question
- Turn and talk to share with peer

#### **Introduction to New Material** (10 minutes)

- Introduce stormwater runoff
- Discuss why this might be a problem

#### **Activity** (20 minutes) (Guided and Independent practice)

- Walk the area
- Map boundaries, structures, and basic elements

#### **Post Activity Teacher Demonstration** (if time allows, ~5 minutes)

- Demonstrate water flow

#### **Group Discussion** (10-15 minutes)

- Ask specific reflective questions
- Students represent reflective thoughts on their paper

#### **Summarize their Findings** (15-20 minutes)

#### **Wrap-up** (10-15 minutes)

- Present findings to the group



## Discovering Ways to Use the Outdoor Space

**Main Lesson Objective:** Students will make a collage of ways that they can use the outdoor space in interesting and creative ways. They may also create a pamphlet of information for other people who may encounter the space at a future time.

<b>Number of students/adults</b>	Goal of 1 adult to 15 kids max
<b>Age of students</b>	Middle school ages
<b>Length of each session</b>	60 minutes
<b>Focus</b>	Environment and Art
<b>Background knowledge</b>	Assuming providers have no background knowledge
<b>Season</b>	Can be used during any season
<b>Resources</b>	Minimal cost and easily accessible

### **Learning Objectives:**

- Discover ways to use the outdoor space in new and creative ways
- Document and illustrate ways to use the outdoor space
- Make suggestions for using the Playce

### **Lesson Overview:**

#### **Warm-up** (8-10 minutes)

- Welcome students to the Green Playce
- Brief overview of the initial space and how it was repurposed

#### **Introduction to New Material** (5 minutes)

- Discuss intended purpose of design elements

#### **Pre-Activity** (15 minutes)

- I do – teacher demonstration
- Discovery play – finding new ways to use the space

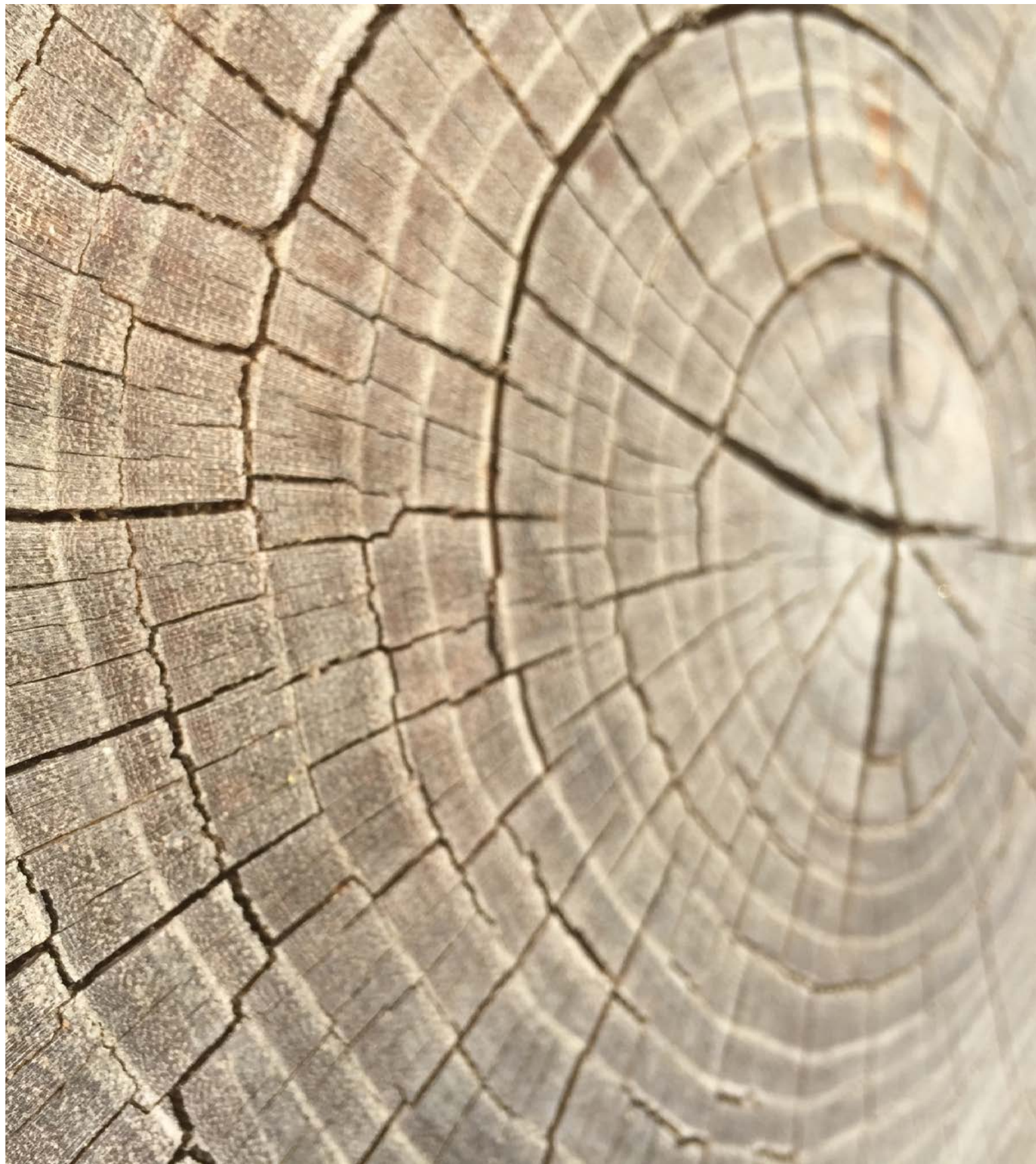
#### **Activity** (30 minutes) (Guided and Independent practice)

- Guide students through brainstorming list of ways to use the space in a different way.
- Students document and illustrate new ways to use the outdoor space.

#### **Wrap-up** (10-15 minutes)

- Present ideas for alternate uses of the Playce





**g**tech