



reclaimcentral

Ambassador Program
2017





Through previous work in the Hill District including the Hill District Vacant Property Strategy, GTECH learned that central Hill District residents have a need for more outdoor community spaces and have hundreds of vacant lots in need of some love. Vacant lots are a wasted resource if left to become overgrown with weeds and strewn with litter. However, if we see neighbors work together to create flower gardens, gathering spaces, trails and, food gardens where there was once a vacant lot, then the community begins to transform.

GTECH initiated the ReClaim Central program after an invitation from the Hill District Consensus Group and the Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh to complete early action activities in alignment with the HUD process and community priorities.

In the winter of 2016, GTECH began recruitment of 11 Hill District residents, known as Ambassadors, to lead the movement for reclaiming vacant lots. Over the following 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 projects to life. Throughout the Spring and Summer of 2017, the Ambassadors turned vacant lots in their neighborhoods into community assets for everyone to enjoy.

The 2017 Hill District cohort of Ambassadors was our 1st model where Ambassadors partnered up on lots to design and implement vacant spaces throughout the Hill District. Once the sites were determined, Ambassadors teamed up to design, budget and implement their vacant lots. This model was successful and created strong site designs. GTECH staff also feel this model forced Ambassadors to step out of their comfort zones, while creating strong community relationships. Having multiple viewpoints on decisions, ultimately forced Ambassadors to think about community benefits, as well as how to best utilize the budget. Each site was able to pull from multiple personal networks to help build out the sites as well.

ReClaim Central Ambassadors



Gail Felton

“Lets make Pittsburgh a city everyone can be happy to call home.”



Brenda Toley

“Good neighbors lend things, great neighbors lend themselves.”



Phyllis Ghafoor

“Rarely in one lifetime does a citizen live in an area that is impoverished in spots, culturally & economically stagnated.... and obtain a chance to improve.”

ReClaim Central Ambassadors



Cheryl Larry

“I love Pittsburgh it is home. I’m motivated to make it better of its potential to become a city where all of its residents fully participate in its growth.”



Willie Larry

“I think that through GTECH the improvements I would like to see in my community can become real.”



Tamaira Binion

“Love always wins.”

ReClaim Central Ambassadors



Louise Powe

I wanted to get involved in stead of sitting passively on the sideline.



Rhonda Lockett

“If you can make it in Pittsburgh you can make it anywhere”



Pamela Walker

“It takes rain, sun and man to make the city live”

ReClaim Central Ambassadors



Shamaiia Watkins

“To make a difference you have to be a difference”



Ta'sean Fields

“Its imperative we find ways to unite in order to stop the violence and help protect the children”



GTECH works with people and the places where they live to identify opportunities to improve the social, economic, and environmental health of our communities from within.



ReClaim Central Project Team

Ian Brown, Gavin White, Tacumba Turner, and Tom Mulholland



Student Conservation Association

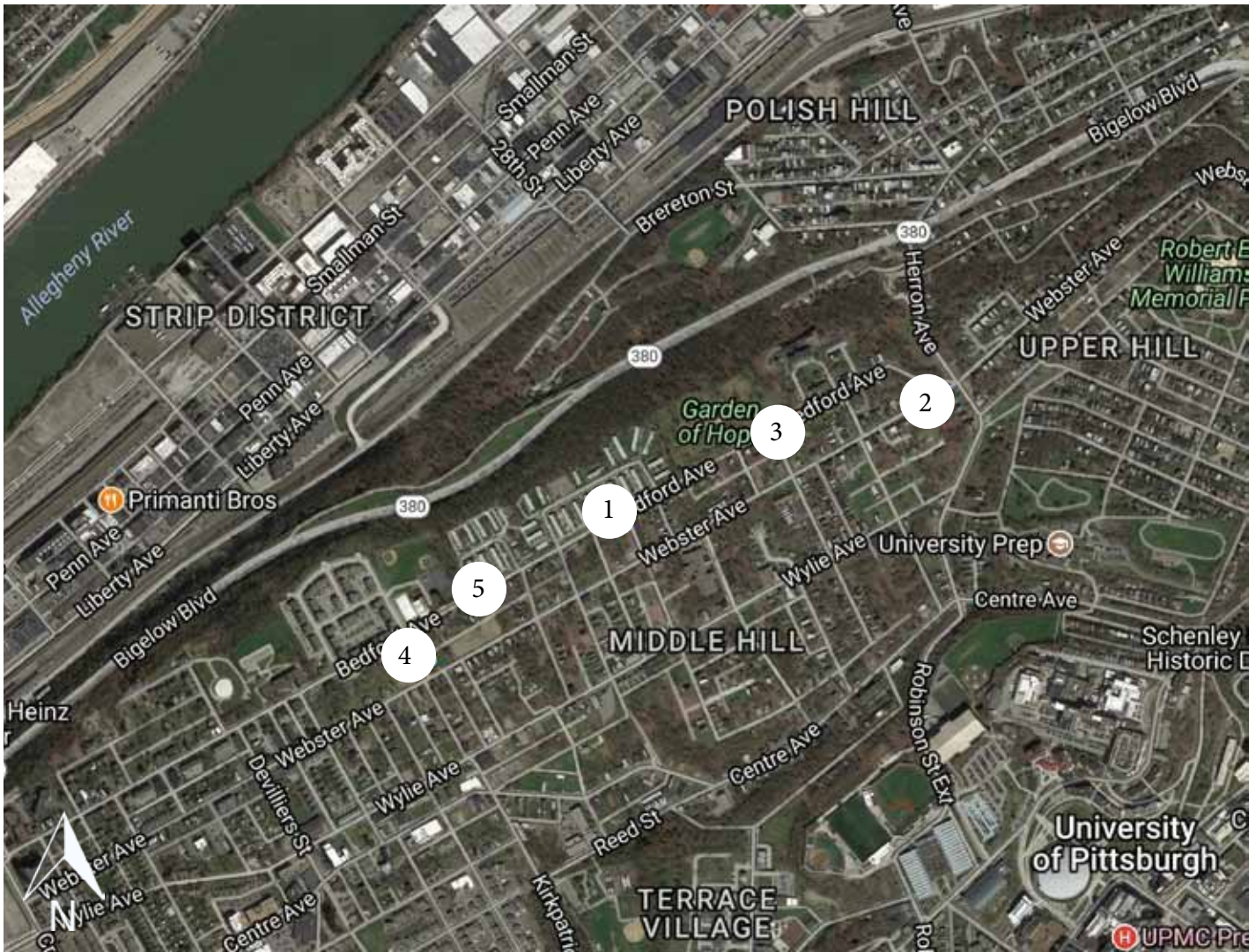
The SCA provides opportunities for young people to make a positive impact on the world around them. We partnered with SCA for 7 work days and 7 out of the 10 students were youth from the City of Pittsburgh.



Bedford Hope Center

The Bedford hope center went above and beyond in their support for us in all of our education activities and for opening their facility for meetings.

Central Hill District



- 1. Cat's Corner:** Pam, Ta'Sean, Phyllis, Shamaia
- 2. Serenity:** Rhonda, Willie
- 3. Gathering Place:** Tamaira, Cheryl, Louise
- 4. Middle Hill Parklet:** Gail, Brenda
- 5. Bedford Gateway Project:** Local Artist and All Ambassadors

Education Sessions

January - April 2017

Reclaiming a vacant lot takes a lot of imagination, time, and careful thought before even breaking ground. That's why our Ambassadors attended 6 education sessions throughout the winter. They learned about how to transform vacant land into activated and green community spaces through planning, preparation and the building of partnerships.



Class Topics

Session 1: Introduction

Session 2: Site Assessment

Session 3: Site Design

Session 4: Engagement

Session 5: Budgeting

Session 6: Celebration



Community Presentations

May 3rd - Center for Family Excellence



The Ambassadors hosted a public presentation of their planned projects in order to share their ideas and gather input and support from the Hill District community.



Cat's Corner - Junilla St.

Pam, Ta'Sean, Phyllis, Shamaia

This site got its name from the masses of stray cats that frequent the area looking for free food put out regularly by a neighbor, the local cat lady. It's an important place to our ambassadors because it represented an opportunity to stimulate community beautification, involvement, and pride. The site is located on Junilla and Bedford Ave in a highly trafficked area across from a bus stop and near a corner store.

Ambassadors Pam, Ta'Sean, Phyllis, and Shamaia are working on this project. They've installed seating, flower plantings, as well as a gigantic checkers/chess board.





AFTER

Serenity - Webster Ave

Rhonda, Willie

Before Serenity, this was the site to a long vacant house. Once demolished, the property was taken over by St. Luke's Baptist Church under the current Pastor, Gerald Laster. The church, which neighbors the site, is a spiritual anchor on this block as well as in the wider Hill District community and has been for the past 96 years.

The Ambassadors wanted to use this site to benefit the community by promoting pride and ownership on the block, building on relationships and engaging neighbors. They want to create a safe and serene space in which to relax and enjoy surrounding. The site's proximity to the church and bus lines make it ideal for sustained community use.





AFTER

The Gathering Place - Bedford Ave

Tamaira, Cheryl, Louise

Ambassadors Tamaira, Cheryl, and Louise are working on this project, located at 2808 Bedford Ave. Their goal was to create a safe and engaging environment that would appeal to neighbors of all ages. The Ambassadors wanted a site that could host multiple activities simultaneously, and sought out a large vacant lot to accommodate that. This is a space where Hill District residents can all relax, read, play games and enjoy each other's company.

Home Depot donated all of the rocks and pallets used on-site for fencing and beautification.



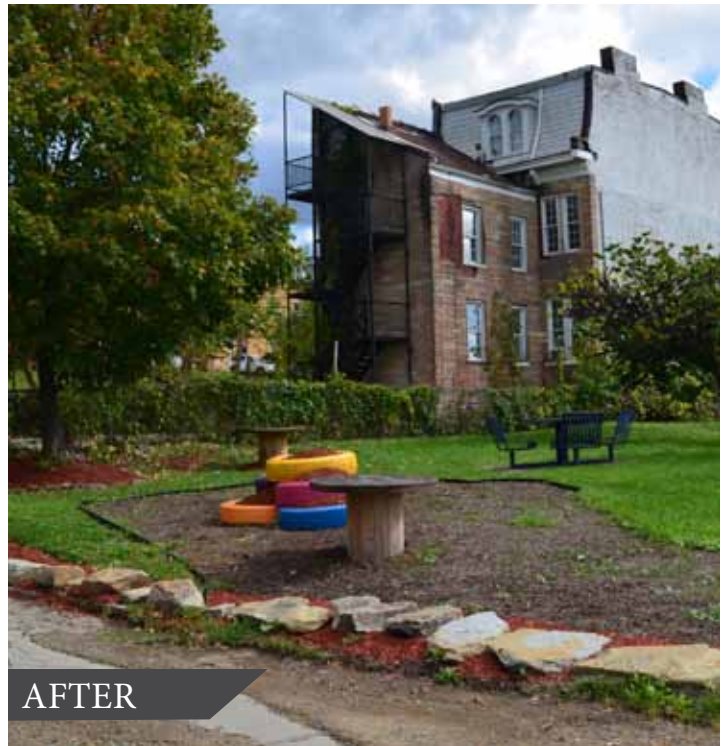


Middle Hill Parklet - Kirkpatrick St

Gail and Brenda

Ambassadors Gail and Brenda worked on this project located at 712 Kirkpatrick Street. This site was chosen because of its proximity to the housing that is currently under development. All of the rocks that are used to border the site were donated from this construction site. This project was made possible through the partnership of Macedonia Church. We hope that it will serve as a convenient gathering place that families can enjoy visiting.





Statistics



Number of Vacant Lots Activated: 5



Hours of Training: 132



Total Volunteer Hours: 801



Total Volunteer Days: 27



Number of Volunteers: 204

Special Thanks

We would like to thank the Hillman Foundation and McAuley Ministries and our partners at the Hill District Consensus Group, Focus+Pittsburgh, and the Bedford Dwellings Tenants Association for making the ReClaim Central Ambassador program possible. This vacant lot strategy was partly funded by Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh (HACP) in support of US Department of Housing and Urban Development's Choice Neighborhoods Planning's early action projects in Bedford Dwellings/Hill District community. The Choice Neighborhoods Planning is sponsored by Councilman Daniel Lavelle, Bedford Dwellings Tenant Council, Hill CDC, Hill District Consensus Group, Hill House Association, Hill District Education Council, Hill District Ministers Alliance, Urban Innovation 21, HACP, The City of Pittsburgh, Urban Redevelopment Authority, and TREK Development Group.



Additional thanks to Macedonia Church, St. Luke Baptist Church, Landforce, and all of our Home Depot volunteers! We also want to thank the many residents and community members who volunteered to clear, plant, and build the Ambassador projects from the ground up. Special thanks to the Student Conservation Association of Pittsburgh and Landforce for contributing their time and skill to these projects.

Last but not least, we want to recognize the ReClaim Central Ambassadors. The work of reclaiming vacant land is not easy. However, the Ambassadors have given 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



Autographs



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