



# EAST HILLS CONSENSUS GROUP

## *ACTIONABLE STRATEGY GUIDE 2018*



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# Executive Summary

East Hills is a neighborhood rich with human diversity. Many different life paths intersect at this location: people of widely varying ages, nationalities, and perspectives all call this community home. By encouraging dialogue between these groups, rather than division, Grounded believes that East Hills Consensus Group (EHCG) can step to the forefront of leadership within this neighborhood.

In the Summer of 2018, the East Hills Consensus Group was chosen as a partner in Grounded's Resilience Generation program. The EHCG identified a range of specific challenges that were facing the East Hills, and was seeking technical assistance to better address those challenges. The key issues they identified were: Community Beautification, Stormwater Management, and Public Safety. Organizational Capacity, as a factor that related to all of EHCG's efforts was also identified as an important focus.

Through a series of community engagement events, Grounded's staff had the pleasure of becoming acquainted with many different members of the East Hills community. By meeting residents within their comfort zone, we were able to talk frankly about concerns within the neighborhood. Because of this outreach, we were able to more precisely understand needs within the community. After gathering feedback from these outreach events, and convening stakeholders to discuss potential solutions, Grounded drafted a selection of action strategies for each key issue. In addition to these issue-specific strategies, Grounded prepared a host of recommendations for building EHCG's organizational capacity.

The purpose of this report is to present these action strategies, and to serve as a reference for EHCG as they work to address the challenges that East Hills faces. The action strategies are broken down by key issue area and by scale (short-term, intermediate, or long-term) and each strategy includes a breakdown of necessary and recommended actions.

EHCG members agreed that an important first step in addressing obstacles in front of the community is an expansion of the consensus group's membership and a diversification of its capabilities. Drawing on the deep well of knowledge that already exists within the group, EHCG already has access to many means by which to augment its capacity. Grounded suggests targeted recruitment of youth to build EHCG's forces.

Armed with a strategic emphasis on three community focus areas (Stormwater Management, Community Beautification, and Public Safety), as well as a capacity building plan designed around the group's specific needs, EHCG stands poised to lead the East Hills community toward a brighter, more cooperative future for all its members.

# Introduction

*This section provides background about Grounded, the Resilience Generation program, the East Hills Consensus Group, and this report.*



# **INTRODUCTION**

## **GROUNDED STRATEGIES**

Grounded was founded in 2007 out of public policy research at the Heinz College investigating and implementing catalytic green strategies to enhance and fuel community development activities in distressed communities. Since its inception, Grounded has had a rich history of working with communities to develop solutions for some of the most complex environmental problems they face.

Resilient communities are comprised of both strong social networks and accessible resources that enable residents to address both chronic, and acute shocks that may affect their health and well-being. For this reason, Grounded continues to build resources to aid communities in improving community health. Vacant land is our primary focus but our work includes other land use issues and need for capacity building with partners.

## **RESILIENCE GENERATION PROGRAM (REGEN)**

Beginning in the Fall of 2016, Grounded launched the Resilience Generation Program (ReGen). This program offers a range of custom interventions in partnership with individual communities working to improve community health through a people and places approach. Grounded provides technical assistance and direct financial support through targeted land use interventions, strategic data collection, community capacity building and ongoing partner collaboration in the effort to increase resilience of vulnerable communities.

## **EAST HILLS CONSENSUS GROUP (EHCG)**

Since its inception eight years ago, the East Hills Consensus Group's mission has been to operate as a united community collaborative addressing concerns and issues within the total community. Aiming to promote a positive image of East Hills, their goal is to address issues affecting residents of the community.

The East Hills Consensus Group (EHCG) has a goal to make East Hills one of Pittsburgh's most livable communities. The organization is made up of a small but active group of residents that work to create change. In the past, they haven't had the resources to reach the total community and tap into residents' unique knowledge, expertise, and needs.

## ABOUT THIS REPORT

In the Spring of 2018, EHCG applied to the ReGen program hoping to address a set of specific challenges. These overarching challenges included a negative perception of the neighborhood at large, and a lack of resources and capacity within the consensus group to address the needs of the community.

More specifically, EHCG sought technical assistance related to:

- Developing strategy plans to address the 3 key issues that repeatedly surface as neighborhood priorities: community beautification, stormwater management, and public safety.
- Building the organizational capacity of the East Hills Consensus Group to a point of understanding how to best respond to community member requests and needs.

During the Summer and Fall of 2018, Grounded Strategies investigated the needs of the East Hills community through engagement with EHCG, in the form of site visits and training sessions to improve communications and build internal capacity. Investigation also occurred through an engagement of local residents during three pop-up events held throughout the East Hills neighborhood. Finally, we convened a group of community stakeholders, identified by EHCG, to reflect on our findings to date and prioritize areas of interest for strategic planning.

This report is the final product of the EHCG's Resilience Generation project. It was developed in order to provide actionable strategies that were specific to the key issues identified in the initial proposal (Community Beautification, Stormwater Runoff, Public Safety and Organizational Capacity). These strategies are informed by feedback collected throughout the investigation process, and broken down into short-term, intermediate, and long-term categories.

Grounded recommends a focus on strategies related to building membership first and foremost. Emphasis is placed on carefully developing the group's recruitment to reflect and represent the current demography of East Hills in order to improve both the diversity of skill sets within the cooperative as well as its ability to generate a relatable narrative for messaging purposes.





## **Community Context**

*This section briefly describes the population served by the East Hills Consensus Group and the existing conditions within the neighborhood of East Hills.*

## COMMUNITY CONTEXT

### HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

East Hills is a small neighborhood measuring just 0.541 square miles in total area that is the east-most section of the city of Pittsburgh. The area's hilly topography is adjacent to Pittsburgh's Homewood neighborhood and Wilkinsburg Borough, with the Penn Hills Municipality on its eastern edge. Much of the eastern part of East Hills was originally vacant land until it was purchased by ACTION Housing, Inc. in the early 1960s.

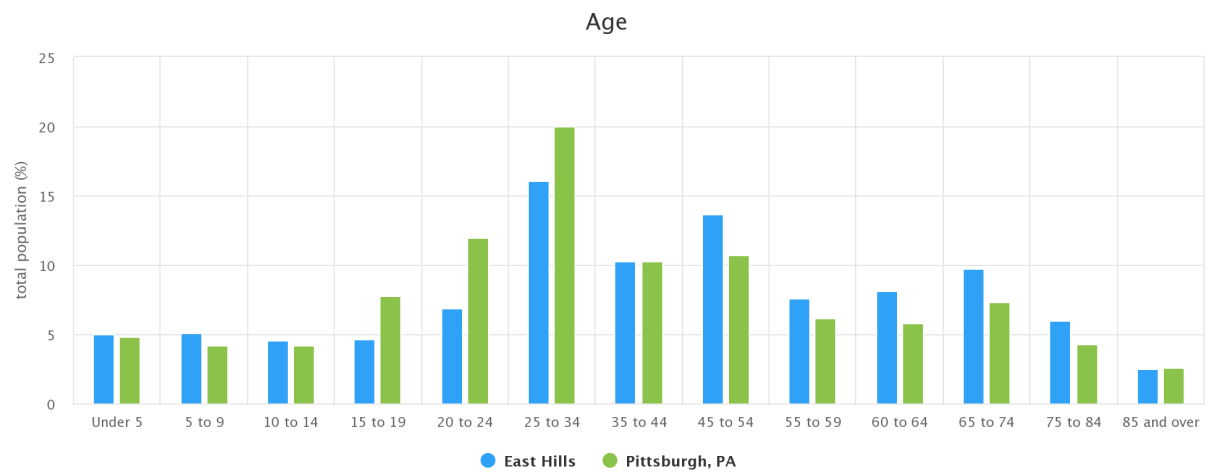
According to 2010 census data, its population at that time was 3,169 individuals. The sections of East Hills currently owned by Neighborhood Partners that once were considered East Hills First – Second & Third are anchored by community groups who connect residents and offer services such as mentoring for the many children of all ages.

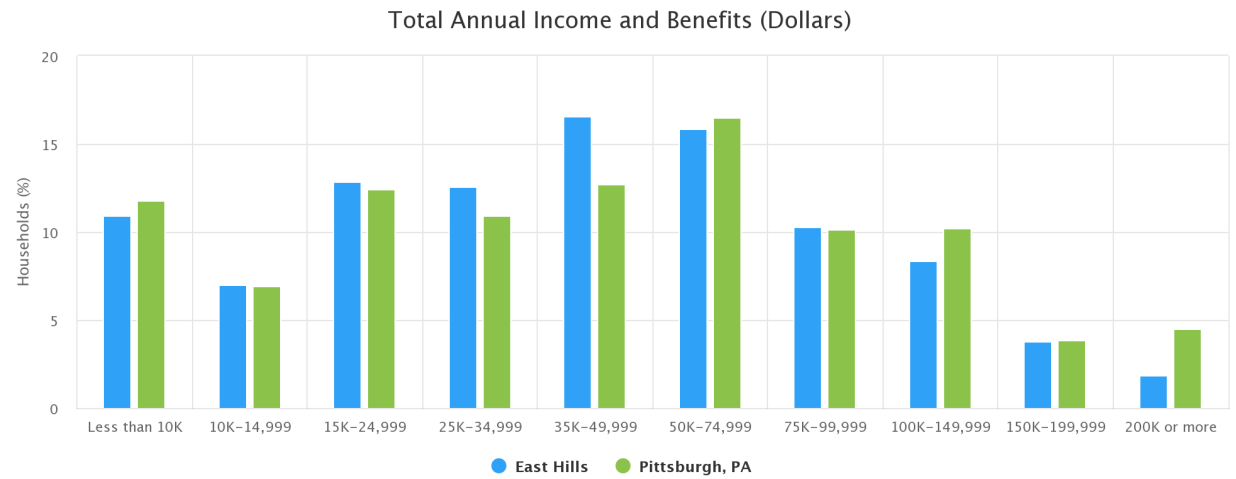
### CURRENT POPULATION

According to the *2016 American Community Survey 5 year estimates*, the total population of East Hills is 2,908. Of that population, 19% are under the age of 20. Racially, the majority of residents were identified as either Black or African American (46%) or White (45%). 19% of the total population of East Hills is living below the poverty level.

Although the neighborhood only stretches over a small geographic, the EHCG serves a diverse population. This quick demographic snapshot reminds us of the importance of having that diversity reflected in the EHCG's efforts to grow their membership and network.

The following charts, pulled from the *2016 American Community Survey 5 year estimates*, expand on this quick demographic snapshot of the East Hills community.





Source: Data from 'Age', 'Race', and 'Incomes' graphs were pulled from the *2016 American Community Survey 5 year estimates*, using the BlastPoint online utility.

## **Key Issues & Organizational Capacity**

*This section describes the key issues that repeatedly surfaced as neighborhood priorities for EHCG - and which are the focuses of this report's action strategies.*

## **KEY ISSUES**

In EHCG's initial application to the ReGen program, they identified three key issues as a focus for the project: Community Beautification, Stormwater Runoff, and Public Safety. These issues have repeatedly surfaced as neighborhood priorities. Our process of investigation was informed by this selection of key issues, our findings are organized into general categories based off of those issues, and all of the actionable strategies that we propose will relate to a specific key issue. This specificity of focus will help EHCG make tangible steps towards realizing their goals, while providing many opportunities for adjustment of priorities responsive to feedback from the community and the organization's changing capacity and position. Below are brief descriptions of each key issue.

### **COMMUNITY BEAUTIFICATION:**

Community beautification is a process of addressing indicators of disinvestment (blight) by making visual improvements to a neighborhood. Beautification strategies, like litter clean-ups or tree plantings, creates more livable neighborhoods and increases the pride that neighbors feel for their community.

### **STORMWATER MANAGEMENT:**

Stormwater run-off is rainfall that flows over the ground surface. This runoff not only contributes to a significant environmental challenge for our City, in the form of river contamination through combined sewer overflows, it can also degrade the quality of streets, homes and public spaces. The goal for these strategies, is to reduce run-off and position EHCG and residents to address property issues caused by run-off.

### **PUBLIC SAFETY:**

Public safety refers to well-being and protection of community members as a part of the general public. In this report, the key issue is understood to focus on the relationship between the police department that administers public safety and the East Hills community that they serve, with the goal of developing this relationship to create a safer environment overall.



## **COMMUNITY CAPACITY**

In addition to these focus areas, the EHCG also identified a need for greater organizational capacity. Throughout our process, the need for this increased capacity became recognized as a higher priority goal by both Grounded and the EHCG. As such, this need for greater organizational capacity was given special attention as a separate category in the action strategy section of this report. .

### **ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY:**

Organizational capacity is the ability of an organization to fulfill its mission. In the case of EHCG, organizational capacity refers to how well the organization is able to address the needs and concerns of East Hills residents. As a consensus group, membership base and communications are primary capacities to be addressed.



## **Process and Findings**

*This section describes the process of soliciting community input for the formulation of this report's action strategies.*

## PROCESS & FINDINGS

Grounded Strategies investigated the needs of the East Hills community through engagement with East Hills Consensus Group, local residents, and other stakeholders in order to develop a framework for neighborhood improvement. These engagements took the form of an interview and walking tour with the EHCG president, three outreach events engaging residents of East Hills, and one planning retreat held with community stakeholders as identified by the EHCG. The feedback that was captured from these engagements informed our action strategies specific to EHCG's key issues of community beautification, stormwater runoff, and public safety as well as to the larger goal of building the capacity of the organization. The process and findings related to each specific engagement are outlined below.

### EAST HILLS CONSENSUS GROUP WALKING TOUR

#### Process:

At the beginning of this project Grounded met with the EHCG president to conduct a guided walking tour of the East Hills neighborhood. During this tour, EHCG provided site-specific, social and historical context of the neighborhood, while Grounded recorded this feedback and took photographs of the existing conditions of the physical environment. The audio from this tour was recorded and used to inform the writing of this report.

#### Findings:

This investigation reaffirmed the focus on the key issues of beautification, stormwater runoff, and public safety. We identified the need to work towards tangible outcomes in regards to the first two key issues in our action strategy planning based on the condition of the land observed. Through this process we also identified the necessity of engaging more of the renting population through EHCG outreach, as differences in the condition of land was seen to relate to the geographic distribution of the renter vs. owner populations. The EHCG will need to have feedback from both populations in order to comprehensively address their key issues.

## OUTREACH EVENTS

### Process:

Three outreach events were held throughout the month of October, 2018, to build awareness of the EHCG, and to gather feedback from residents related to our key issues. The first of these events, the 'East Hills Community Meet and Greet' was hosted on October 3rd at the Spray Park and Playground at 2300 Wilner Drive. The event was well attended by members of the 'upper' East Hills Community. The second, was hosted on October 20th in partnership Imani Christian Academy as part of their annual homecoming celebration. This event drew a cross section of both the 'upper' and 'lower' East Hills communities. Finally, the third event occurred on October 25th along Remington Drive in 'lower' East Hills. Through these events, we gathered feedback from a total of 78 residents.

At all of these events, we asked residents to answer the following questions related to EHCG's key issues:

- What would you do to beautify your neighborhood?
- What challenges have you experienced in the past year relating to water?
- How would you improve public safety in your community?

Feedback collected during these outreach events informs this report's recommendations. The responses for each of these questions, are gathered in charts on the following pages and accompanied by summaries generated by the Grounded team members present during the engagements.



Photo: Outreach event at Imani Homecoming Game.



Photo: Outreach event on Remington Drive.

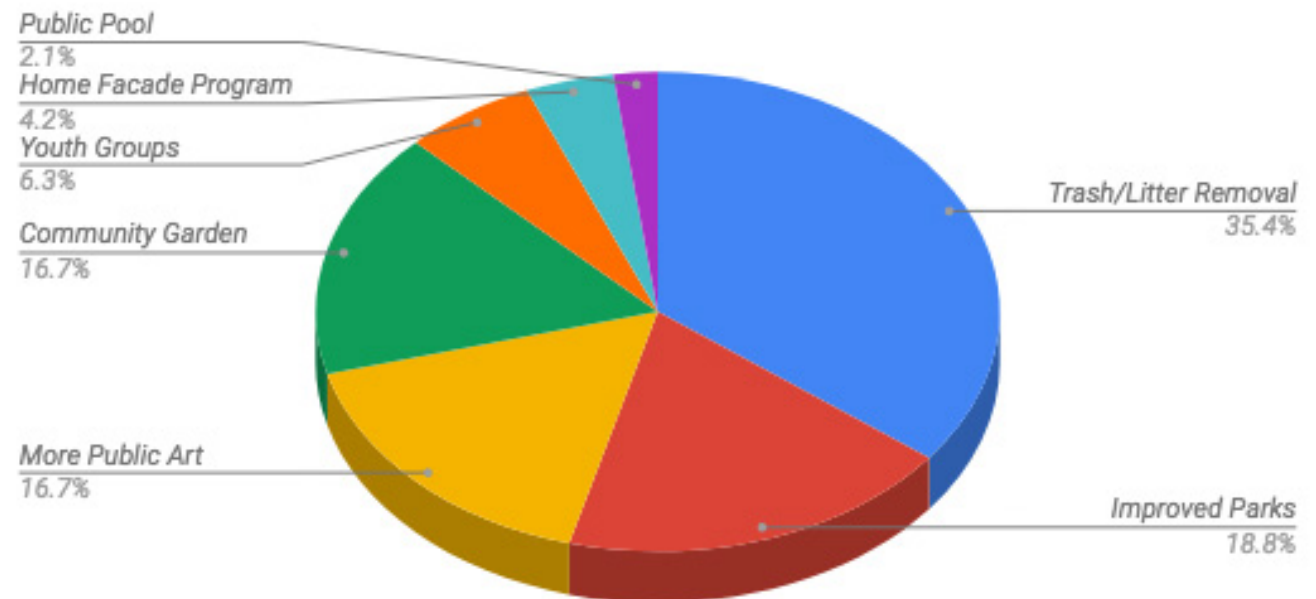
### Findings (Beautification) :

Residents advocated for community clean ups, trash/litter pick up teams, accountability so street cleanings happen regularly from the city and the need for more public trash/recycling receptacles!

There's a strong emphasis on the issue as well as many who said they were willing to undertake the task. Other highly suggested items to help uplift spirits were catty-corner flower beds and flower gardens, walking trails, public art and mural installations on vacant buildings/property. Responses also showed that among the youth there were 2 major preferences: more youth-based programming and mentorship paired with larger regularly maintained parks.

Additionally, residents expressed an interest in renovating and expanding on existing parks stating that the current ones were small and weren't very well maintained.

### HOW WOULD YOU BEAUTIFY YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD?





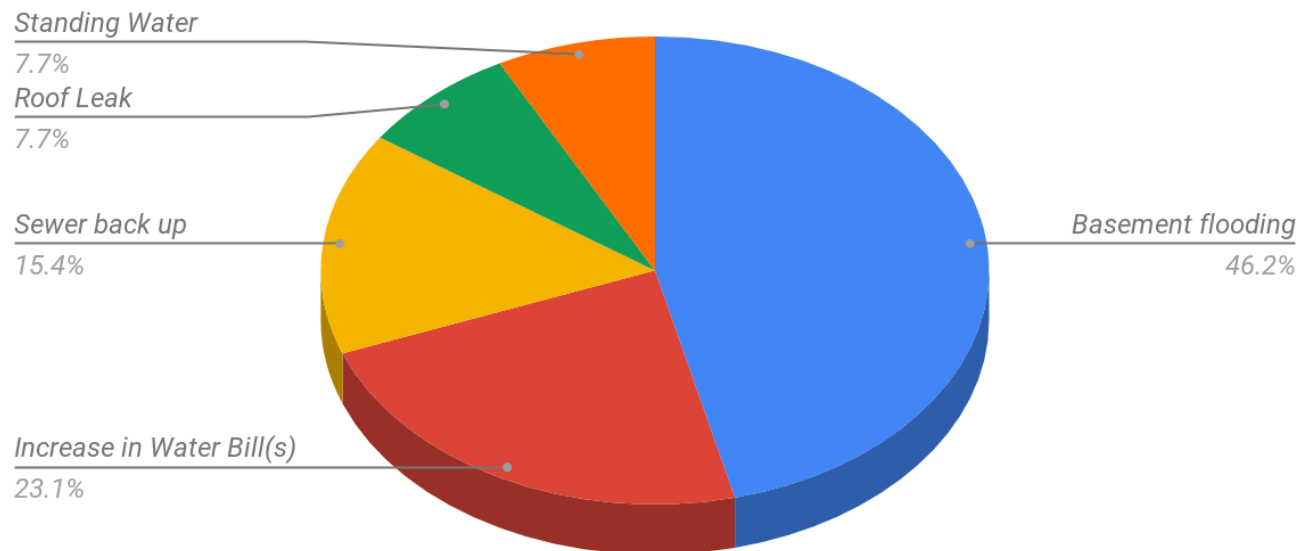
Findings (Stormwater) :

Residents were primarily concerned with basement flooding and increased sewer maintenance. Overall, residents had less feedback about this problem as compared to the other focus areas.

An assessment of the physical conditions of land in East Hills, on the other hand, tell a clear story of the need for greater stormwater management and capture overall.

The fact that there was less feedback related to stormwater challenges shows us that this is an area where greater outreach and education is required before EHCG can expect strong resident engagement.

WHAT CHALLENGES HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED IN THE PAST YEAR RELATING TO WATER?

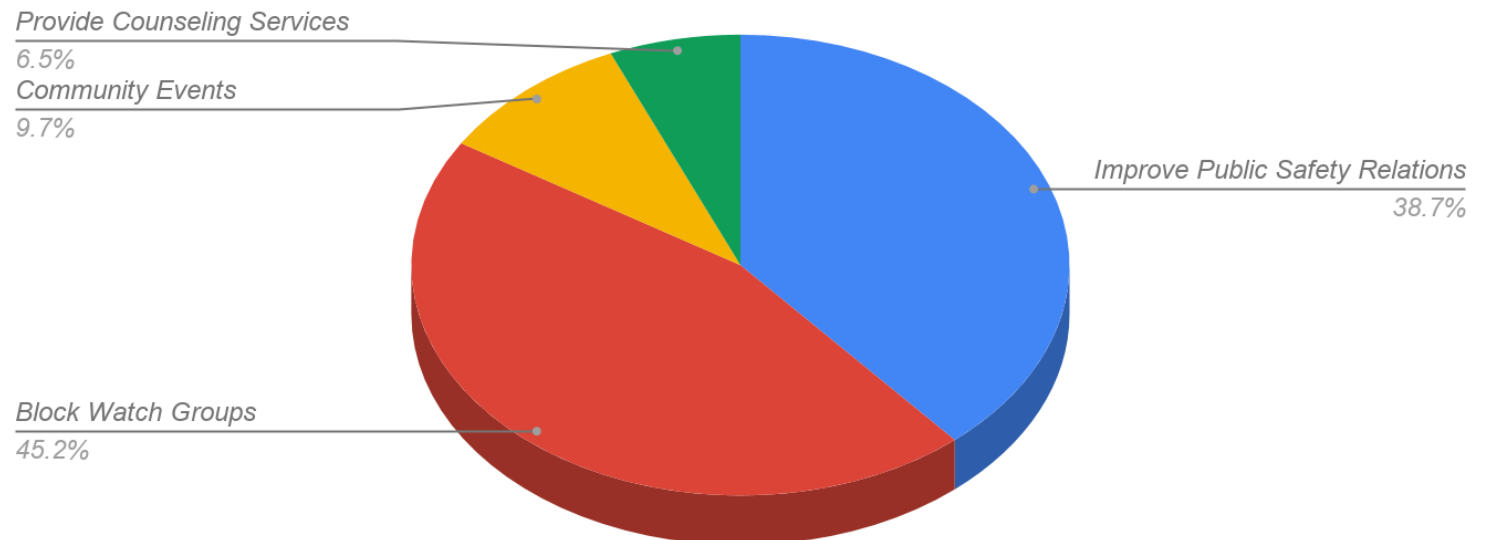


### Findings (Public Safety) :

The residents of East Hills expressed interest in a more present police/security team. The residents have emphasized that the current team lacks both empathy and urgency in regards to the treatment of the community and youth specifically. Stating that, "They (residents) would love if the security faculty would hang around and get to know us and the neighborhood... because to them this is just a 8 hour shift then they go home but this is my home!"

Though tensions are present it is agreed upon by all that the police and security are indeed a necessity whom they hope to see more of. Many expressed wishes of a Block Watch team comprised of police, security and volunteer residents as a means to increase patrols and unity among them. Additionally, many also expressed specific interest in community building events where you get to meet residents from other sections of the neighborhood and counseling services to start unpacking the traumas experienced as a collective.

### HOW WOULD YOU IMPROVE PUBLIC SAFETY IN YOUR COMMUNITY?



## STAKEHOLDER RETREAT

### Process:

The information collected through the walking tour and resident outreach campaign was supplemented through a collective stakeholder retreat on December 1st, 2018. During this retreat, Grounded shared findings from the outreach events, and gathered feedback from the stakeholders in order to finalize our outline for the action strategies. Stakeholders in attendance that day included representatives from:

- Shiloh Community Missionary Baptist Church,
- the East Tri-borough Neighborhood Organization,
- Living Way Christian Fellowship,
- the Office of State Representative Ed Gainey,
- and the Zone 5 Police Department.

### Findings:

Discussions during this retreat informed our selection of action strategies. Specifically, stakeholders expressed an interest in litter clean-ups, and public art in the form of creative signage for increased beautification. To address stormwater issues, stakeholders identified the need to collect more information to prioritize geographic focus areas, such as Park Hill Drive. In regards to public safety, stakeholders were interested in greater collaboration with the Zone 5 Police Department, in the form of meet-and-greet community events.



## **Action Strategies**

*This section describes the short-term, intermediary, and long-term strategies proposed for the following key issues: Beautification, Stormwater Runoff, Public Safety, and Organizational Capacity.*



Photo: Community clean-up in Larimer.

# Beautification

## Short Term Action Strategy: Litter Clean-up

This is one of the most accessible means by which to beautify one's community. It is also a great opportunity to recruit new members, or to energize existing members. This can be a one-time or recurring event.

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### Select a Coordinator

The coordinator oversees all who are helping to organize the cleanup and will act as the primary contact on the cleanup day.

### Coordinate Planning Participants

In order to create more opportunities for EHCG members to contribute, and to prevent one person from becoming overwhelmed, planning responsibilities can be broken into smaller assignments like: Publicity, Volunteer Recruitment, Supplies Acquisition, Logistics, and Follow-up.

### Set a Date

Set a date and time for the cleanup. You will want to give your team at least two months to prepare and to get the word out. Consider: Seasonal weather conditions, local community events that might conflict with your event, and peak traffic hours.

### Set a Location

Choose a location that is going to have the greatest impact. Consider what locations are close to volunteers, and what locations are meaningful to neighbors.



## Publicize the Cleanup

Determine how you want to promote the event. You can reach out to your contacts by phone, email, or in person. We would recommend scheduling a facebook event as well. Flyers at local business and faith institutions are another great way to get the word out.

## Secure Tools and Supplies

Allegheny Cleanways serves as a distributor for PennDOT of gloves, bags, and safety vests. Contact Allegheny CleanWays at 412.381.1301 or through their website at [www.alleghenycleanways.org/contact](http://www.alleghenycleanways.org/contact). Other supplies you will need include: water, food, a table, and shelter (from sun or rain) for volunteers. You will also want to bring a first aid kit and a physical list of emergency procedures including the location of the nearest emergency facility.

## Prepare for Volunteers

Make sure that when volunteers arrive, they have a clear understanding of how they can help. Volunteers can help with set-up, litter pickup, and tire/leaf/brush pickup. Understand how many will be needed for each job.

## Organize Trash Removal

Contact the public works department to schedule refuse collection at least 2 weeks in advance.

## Celebrate

Celebrations are a great way to thank volunteers, and retain them for future EHCG projects. You can ask local merchants to donate food, supplies, or prizes. Remember to follow-up and thank everyone who contributed to the success.

# Beautification

## Short Term Action Strategy: 311 Blast

For those who are less inclined to participate in the sometimes physically taxing task of cleaning up litter, coordinated 311 call-in campaigns (or blasts) can serve as a conduit toward community engagement. The 311 Response Center is a gateway to city services. From there, requests are sent to appropriate city agencies for resolution.

### Coordinate Efforts

- Brainstorm as a group and prioritize issues that you want to report.
- Create a schedule for callers to follow.
- Appoint a Call-in coordinator.
- Check-in with callers through-out the campaign to remind them to make their calls.

### Make the Call

Dial 3-1-1 to speak to a live operator or submit a request on their website at <http://pittsburghpa.gov/311/form>. Be prepared to explain the problem completely and to give an exact address. They will provide you with a tracking number to follow-up on your request. Make sure to coordinate all of these details with your 311 call-in volunteer team.

### Set Goals

Try to make at least 5 individual 311 contacts per week for each issue until it is resolved.

### Don't Give Up!

Sometimes it can take months or years to get a particular issue addressed. However 311 will NEVER respond to issues about which they are not aware.

# Beautification

## Intermediate Action Strategy: Adopt-a-Lot Project

The City of Pittsburgh Adopt-a-lot process is a way to temporarily or permanently gain access to a vacant lot. This would be a reasonable avenue to pursue once you've developed sufficient organizational capacity to plan open-space events and projects.

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### Select a Lot, Learn the Process

Visit <http://www.lotstolove.org/> to help understand if the Adopt-a-lot process fits your organizational needs and desires. You can use the site to find basic information on the vacant lot that you wish to reclaim.

### Submit an Intake Form

Visit <http://pittsburghpa.gov/dcp/adopt-a-lot> to begin the Adopt-a-lot process by submitting an intake form to the Open Space Specialist, Shelly Danko+Day. Depending on the owner, and your proposed project, you will be directed to meet different requirements under the guidance of the Open Space Specialist. If you run into any roadblocks, Grounded can help you troubleshoot problems.

### Execute the Project

Greenspace projects are a highly involved undertaking for a small organization. Use [lotstolove.org/your-lot/](http://lotstolove.org/your-lot/) for a step-by-step guide to help introduce your idea to the community, garner support, design your project, raise funds, call for volunteers, and plan the build-out of your project.



Photo: Maintenance of a vacant lot in Homewood.

# Beautification

## Intermediate Action Strategy: Public Art

Consider improving your community through the solicitation of public art pieces. Such structures, performances, or other displays can serve to improve morale in your community, as well as fostering a sense of belonging.

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### Develop Public Art Opportunity

Public art is usually managed by a municipal agency or by a nonprofit art organization. It may also be artist-driven and self-funded. The Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council is a great resource for funding. They offer a variety of grants for public art projects in the city. More information in the resources listing at the end of this section.

### Commission a Local Artist

Such patronage can serve to improve community ties directly (by supporting a community member's livelihood directly) as well as indirectly (by generating a cultural touchpoint that is meaningful to those in the vicinity).

### Solicit Community Support

Make sure to solicit community support for whatever public art project you wish to prepare. Public art which is approved by the community costs significantly less to maintain in the long-term.

# Beautification

## Long Term Action Strategies: Advocacy

When your organizational capacity has expanded sufficiently, it may be prudent to refocus your efforts from activism to advocacy. In this way, you can move from a reactive position, in which EHCG strives to address pre-existing challenges and “stay afloat,” to proactive position, where you instead make efforts to adjust policy as it is written... in a sense “steering the ship.” Do not rush toward an advocacy role at the expense of the community activation you’ve already achieved. Instead, think about continually expanding your web of support, building an advocacy role on the foundation of activism.

## Long Term Action Strategies: Coalition Building

As part of advocating toward better social, environmental, and legal outcomes for your community, you should also consider forming coalitions with like-minded organizations. Such partnerships will allow you to more strongly position your organization to receive monetary support, as well as expanding your messaging reach.

A few organizational players in the realm of community beautification include:

Allegheny Cleanways, Operation Better Block, Grow Pittsburgh, Neighborhood Allies, and Grounded Strategies.



Photo: Public art in Propel Andrew St. Highschool in Homestead

## Beautification Resources

### **Lotstolove.org**

Lots to Love provides information on pursuing projects to reclaim vacant land in the City of Pittsburgh. The site hosts a step-by-step guide for assessing, accessing, designing, planning, and implementing greenspace projects on vacant land.

<http://www.lotstolove.org/>

### **PGH Mobile Toolbox**

The PGH Mobile Toolbox is a free resource for use on community improving volunteer workdays. This enclosed trailer is full of gardening and landscaping tools that can be used for community clean-ups, park/greenspace maintenance, community gardening and more.

<http://www.lotstolove.org/reserve>

### **Master Gardeners**

Master Gardener volunteers support educational programs in consumer horticulture. After completing a training program, Master Gardners serve communities interested in home gardening by answering questions, speaking to groups, working with youth, gardening in

demonstration gardens, and more. This program is managed locally by Penn State Extension.

<https://extension.psu.edu/programs/master-gardener/counties/allegheeny>

### **Allegheny Cleanways - DumpBusters**

The DumpBusters crew also provides expertise to communities wanting to clean up difficult sites, assists in stewardship and beautification of sites (as a way of helping to keep the sites clean), and is readily “on call” to respond to new dumping incidents.

### **Allegheny Cleanways - Litter**

Allegheny CleanWays provides training and equipment to community groups trying to fight litter in their neighborhood. Cleanup Coordinator Workshops provide valuable details on how to plan and implement a community cleanup. Allegheny CleanWays also serves as a distributor for PennDOT of gloves, bags, and safety vests needed to get the job done.

<http://www.alleghenycleanways.org/programs>



# Beautification Funding Opportunities

## **America In Bloom National Awards**

This program offers information on various funding opportunities related to community beautification, youth engagement, and public art.

<http://www.americainbloom.org/resources/grant-opportunities.aspx>

## **Keep America Beautiful**

Keep America Beautiful showcases various resources relating to community level improvements, including programs from Dow and Coca-Cola for improving recycling capacity within neighborhoods.

<https://www.kab.org/resources/community-grants>

## **The Environmental Protection Agency's "Smart growth" program**

This program covers a range of development and conservation strategies that help protect our health and natural environment and make our communities more attractive, economically stronger, and more socially diverse. Check their resources page to leverage tax revenue on behalf of your community.

<https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/smart-growth-national-funding-opportunities>

## **The Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs**

Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs offers a significant number of funding opportunities in three main categories: Community Development, Environment, and Recreation.

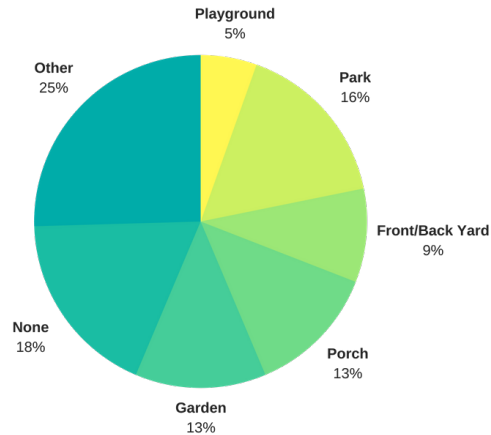
<https://boroughs.org/subpage.php?link=Private%20Grant%20Opportunities>

## **Pennsylvania Grant Watch**

Pennsylvania Grant Watch is a wonderful utility that can help you quickly narrow the field of available funding opportunities in order to maximize your efficiency when it comes to finding financial support.

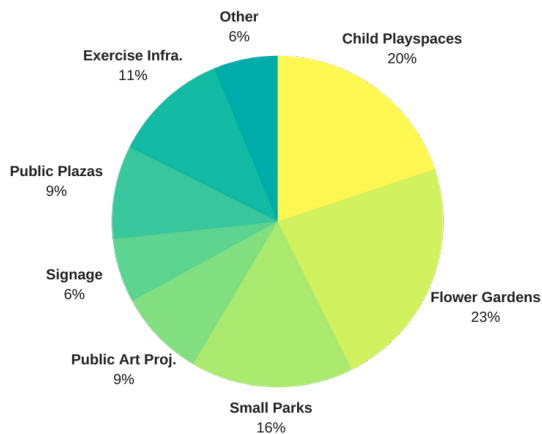
<https://pennsylvania.grantwatch.com/grant-search.php>

## East Hills



What is your favorite outdoor space in your neighborhood?

## East Hills



What types of outdoor spaces does your neighborhood need?

# Stormwater

## Short Term Action Strategy: Record and Map Problem Areas

What we learn from data gathering and analysis informs not only the solution but also the process we take and the decisions we make to put that solution in place. Sharing what we find with neighbors, partnering organizations, and local officials also help get the support needed to successfully complete projects. Starting a project with data collection ultimately gives us the ability to measure the change in neighborhoods over time.

### Select a coordinator

An important first step in understanding your community's relationship with stormwater is to begin to record information regarding incidents during wet weather (rain events and spring snowmelt). Designating this duty as a role for one or more EHCG members will create responsibility (and thus accountability) for this very important dataset.

### Collect Information about stormwater incidents in your community

Record these types of incidents:

- Basement flooding
- Temporary streams, ponds, or other surface water which is present only during/ after precipitation
- Sewer backups (residential, commercial, municipal)

Be sure to take note of as many of the following items as you can for each incident:

- Location
- Type of incident
- Date
- (Approximate) Time of incident start
- (Approximate) Time of incident end
- Has a similar incident occurred here in the past
- Witness feedback

Grow your team as your efforts expand!

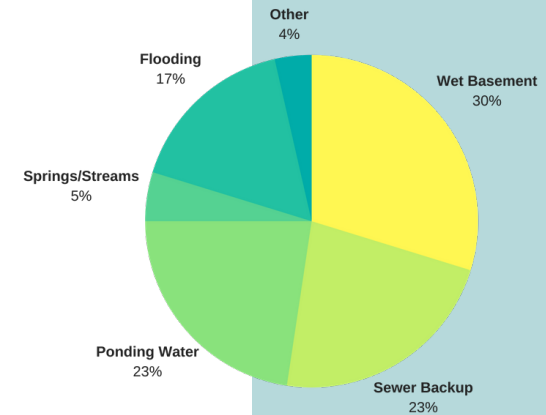
The number of incidents (and thus the amount of data) may seem overwhelming at first. However, you can use this mapping exercise as a means to measure your organizational capacity and resilience.

Start by recording basic information (Date, Location, Type of incident) about stormwater events which occur on properties owned by EHCG members

As your capacity to record and store this information expands, start accepting reports from non-EHCG community members and businesses.

As your capacity expands further, consider tracking additional parameters (Time of incident start/end, incident recurrence, witness feedback) in order to improve data quality.

## East Hills



What type of stormwater issues do you experience on your property and/or in your neighborhood?

# Stormwater

## Short Term Action Strategy: Convene a Task Force

Once you have identified specific goals relating to stormwater issues, you may want to form a temporary group with the explicit purpose of studying and solving those goals.

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For instance: if every member of EHCG is not familiar with the concept of a bioswale, you could designate a portion of EHCG's person power toward study of that topic in order to better inform the group.

Perhaps instead you're hoping to gauge community reception of a particular planting palette for a rain garden. In this case, you would want to select a focus group to examine the ways in which residents from different backgrounds would view the overall scheme. In this way, you can gain design feedback from community members without exhaustively checking for each neighbor's opinion.

Eventually, you may want to install a green stormwater intervention, and for that you will need to recruit volunteers. Designating a task force to accomplish this is a wise course of action. This subgroup within ECHG will be allocated sufficient capacity to accomplish this very specific task, without consuming the entirety of EHCG membership in planning and executing a relatively short-term goal. In this way you can strategically deploy your person power to accomplish transitory objectives and long-term plans simultaneously, ensuring continual progress for your organization.

When convening a subcommittee, focus group, or task force remember that this designation can be project-based, seasonal, or year-round. Members of this group will be responsible for developing educational materials to inform both EHCG and the community as a whole about issues relating to stormwater management.

# Stormwater

## Intermediate Action Strategy: Share Information

### *Don't reinvent the wheel!*

There are many great resources out there to educate residents about stormwater issues. Look to organizations like: The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, Allegheny Watershed Alliance, and Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority for educational materials and current news around stormwater in the City.

### *Don't overwhelm your audience*

The average resident of your neighborhood doesn't need to know intimate details about the hydraulic conductivity of soils or the evapotranspirative properties of native vegetation in order to appreciate and understand the value of green infrastructure. Always make sure to tune your messaging to your audience's ear. This means making sure that any information you convey to them is immediately actionable.

### *Consider the following tactics in messaging the importance of green stormwater management:*

- Informing residents about the nature of Pittsburgh's Stormwater Infrastructure (Combined Sewer) can help to improve their economic and health outcomes.
- Release snippets of information in small chunks (social media posts, pamphlets, etc.) rather than steering residents toward larger, more complex works (books, papers, etc).



Photo: Rain Barrell give-away at Riverview United Presbyterian in Perry North.

# Stormwater

## Intermediate Action Strategy: Assist Residents in Obtaining Green Stormwater Infrastructure Upgrades

### Assign a coordinator

Anticipate the management requirements of this undertaking in regards to personnel, materials acquisition and logistics. Choose an EHCG member suited to handling those requirements.

### Designate a storage location

Find a place to warehouse excess materials used for green stormwater infrastructure. This might involve the construction of a small outbuilding on a vacant lot, or the creation of a small nursery for GSI plants on an adopted parcel.

### Reach out to suppliers

Try to use your organizational negotiating power to obtain bulk discounts on rain barrels, plumbing adaptations, rain garden media, plants, maintenance agreements etc. EHCG could act as a buying club for motivated residents.

### Reach out to Stormwater Organizations

There are many organizations in Pittsburgh that have made it their mission to relieve stormwater issues. Reach out to these organizations and see if they have any resources that you can distribute to residents.

### Advertise to residents

Get the word out about services and materials that you offer. Use social media to advertise each influx of materials, as well as to inform residents when a particular resource (i.e. mulch or gravel) is depleted. As awareness about the impact of stormwater on our lives in Pittsburgh spreads, so too will a desire to act. Take advantage of this by planning to provide some level of concierge service to East Hills community members in terms of Green Stormwater management.

# Stormwater

## Long Term Action Strategy - Design and Build a GSI Feature on a Vacant Lot

Consider performing a demonstration project on a vacant lot. This is a way that you can directly contribute to stormwater capture, and inspire other residents to do the same or support your work in other ways.

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### Assign a task force

Deployment of a GSI feature on a vacant lot is a big undertaking. Be sure to spend sufficient time planning, researching, and revising your design before execution. Grounded recommends that you designate a task force and spend at least 6 months analyzing a particular intervention before breaking ground.

### Get Advice

Consider the liability issues associated with retaining stormwater on site. Because the installation of green stormwater infrastructure inherently involves altering a site's hydrology, it is important to have some level of engineering assessment conducted prior to any changes. Contact Nine-Mile Run Watershed Association (<https://ninemilerun.org/>) if you would like assistance navigating this process.

### Get Permission

Before you make any alterations to the landforms on a parcel, be sure to contact PA One Call by dialing 811 or accessing <https://www.pa1call.org/PA811/Public/>.

If you're executing your project on an adopted lot (or on a parcel with some other sort of limited use agreement), make sure that all proposed designs are in keeping with your lease, license, or other contract.





Photo: Green Stormwater Infrastructure  
Community Roundtable

### *Involve the community*

Solicit community input not only during the design process, but also during the implementation of your GSI feature. Try to make this volunteer experience one that participants will remember each time they pass by the lot. Similarly, make every attempt to upkeep the parcel so that it can evoke a sense of community pride in those who didn't have the opportunity to participate in its design or implementation.

### *Advertise your success*

A well-executed GSI project can significantly expand the notoriety of your group, thus increasing interest, and ultimately, membership. Make sure that your intervention doesn't fade into obscurity by keeping a catalog (i.e. scrapbook, yearbook, or facebook album) of your accomplishments. Keep people interested in the site by hosting events on it during clement weather, and publicizing it at strategic times during the year (when a rain garden is full after a large rain, or during the bloom period for a particular planting).



# Stormwater

## Long-term Action Strategy - Advocate for Green Infrastructure

### Alert neighbors to stormwater management issues

If advocating for community beautification measures is a desirable path, then consider advocating for better stormwater management a journey of necessity. Stormwater management in this city (and indeed within most of the industrialized world) is not equipped to handle the population density nor the environmental conditions with which we are faced. As things currently stand, no large players (government [municipal, state, federal], PWSA, etc.) are willing to assume (financial) responsibility for this multi-billion dollar issue. So it falls to the rate-payer to enact these badly needed infrastructure upgrades.

### Don't work alone!

If paying out-of-pocket for systems-scale upgrades doesn't appeal to you, you're probably not alone. Band together with members of your neighborhood to advocate for fair cost-distribution and timely action on this issue. The consequences of inaction include continued contamination of your environment by combined sewer overflows, and increased incidence of property damage due to mass wasting events (landslides, mudflows, uprooted trees, foundation and mine subsidence) in addition to rate hikes.

In order to improve your advocacy outcomes, ally with those who are similarly impacted by this issue. Look for environmental justice organizations and news outlets (<https://www.alleghenyfront.org/>) to help raise awareness about how this issue impacts your community directly, and how that effect continues downstream to affect other communities. Additionally, you should reach out to the agencies listed in the Stormwater Resources section to collaborate on stormwater management issues.

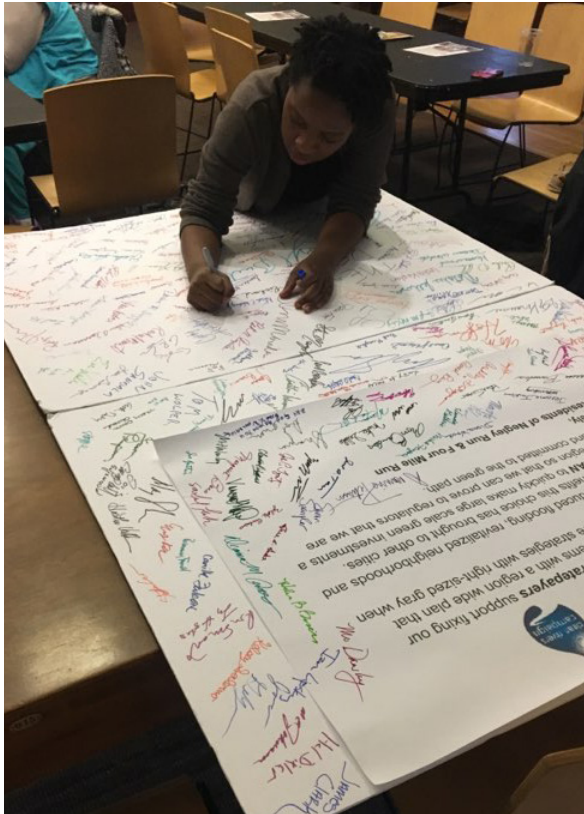


Photo: Signing letter to ALCOSAN

# Stormwater

## Resources

### Pennsylvania Resources Council

PRC is Pennsylvania's oldest grassroots environmental organization. Since 1939 we have worked to protect the Commonwealth's resources for future generations through environmental education, recycling and waste diversion programs, anti-litter campaigns and much more.

<http://prc.org/>

### 9 Mile Run

The Nine Mile Run Watershed is a small urban watershed located in Pittsburgh's East End.

Covering just 6.5 square miles, the watershed is home to numerous exciting initiatives, including the largest urban stream restoration in the United States completed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The Nine Mile Run Watershed Association (NMRWA) complements this amazing physical transformation with a variety of innovative urban ecology projects designed to directly involve the community in helping to improve the health of the watershed.

<https://ninemilerun.org/>

### PWSA

The Pittsburgh Water & Sewer Authority (PWSA) is a municipal water authority serving more than 300,000 people throughout Pittsburgh and surrounding areas. PWSA is the largest combined water and sewer authority in Pennsylvania, producing an average of 70 million gallons of water daily.

<http://www.pgh2o.com/storm-water>

### Restoration and Recovery

The City of Pittsburgh has enacted a Stormwater Ordinance in order to promote health, safety, and welfare within the City watersheds. The City of Pittsburgh is the permitting authority for all land disturbing activities and requires the land owner to maintain all on-site stormwater control facilities and all open space areas (e.g. parks or "green" areas) required by the approved stormwater control plan. The City of Pittsburgh will only provide construction permits to projects that establish a plan to manage stormwater runoff occurring during the construction process. The City of Pittsburgh, under the NPDES program, also has the authority to inspect properties

for noncompliance and can issue a notice of violation (NOV) for any deficiency or infraction onsite. Property owners are responsible for the maintenance of any stormwater facilities or practices located on the property. The City of Pittsburgh has the authority to inspect stormwater facilities and practices in order to ascertain that they properly maintained and functioning.

<http://rrstormwater.com/city-pittsburgh>

### **Three Rivers Wet Weather**

The Pittsburgh region's frequent rainfall brings an underground, out-of-sight problem into clear view. During nearly every rainfall or snow melt, excess water gets into municipal sewer systems, which results in untreated sewage and storm water overflowing into our streams and rivers. These overflows not only violate the Environmental Protection Agency's federal Clean Water Act, but they cause a multitude of health, environmental and economic development concerns.

3 Rivers Wet Weather is a nonprofit environmental organization created in 1998 to support 82 Allegheny County municipalities and the City of Pittsburgh in addressing the region's wet weather overflow problem. 3RWW has earned municipal trust by building relationships with municipal officials, regulatory agencies, legislators and other regional leaders.

With the cooperation and involvement of communities throughout the ALCOSAN service area, 3 Rivers Wet Weather is committed to laying the foundation for sewer system consolidation—the key to long-term system sustainability and improved water quality for generations to come.

<http://www.3riverswetweather.org/storm-water>

### **Allegheny County Sanitary Authority**

Water. It's our most precious natural resource. At ALCOSAN we believe our mission and our purpose is clear. That's why we're working hard everyday to provide you, our customer, with cost-effective, environmentally conscious wastewater treatment that protects the public's health while enhancing usage of our natural resources.

<http://www.alcosan.org/>

# Stormwater

## Funding Opportunities

PWSA's Green Infrastructure Grant Program has awarded funding to both neighborhood associations and churches in the past, making it a wonderful fit for EHCG's stormwater management ambitions. Make sure to express interest as soon as possible, in order to put your organization on PWSA's radar.

<http://pgh2o.com/GI-Grant>

The Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission's Water Resource Center is an index of grants and funding resources related to water management. Some programs that might be particularly pertinent to work in your community include:

- Pennsylvania American Water's Environmental Grant Program supports innovative, community-based environmental projects that improve, restore and/or protect watersheds and community water supplies through partnerships.

<https://amwater.com/paaw/news-community/environmental-grant-program>

- The Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds provides small grants suitable for implementing a rain garden or bioswale feature.

<http://pennsylvaniawatersheds.org/apply-for-a-grant/>

- The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Program supplies funding for on-the-ground restoration (or creation) of wetlands, environmental education, and community partnerships with measurable results and sustainable outcomes: exactly the sorts of projects in line with EHCG's GSI goals.

<https://www.nfwf.org/fivestar/Pages/home.aspx>

# Public Safety

## Short Term Action Strategies: Police Department Meet and Greet

A goal that was expressed by several parties during East Hills Consensus Group Planning retreat (2018) was to have better communication and interaction between the community, and the public safety officers who serve it. A Police and Resident Meet-and-Greet was one strategy that was discussed.

### Designate a public safety leader

As with community beautification and stormwater management, it is important to have a community 'expert' who can serve as a liaison between public safety officials, EHCG, and the community.

### Keep meet and greets relatively short

Respect the time of all parties involved by keeping these events under one hour in length. The intention of these events is to help individuals become acquainted, not to hold them together longer than is comfortable. Allow guests to freely intermingle and leave when they please.

### Meet (and greet) frequently

Try to set up at least one such event each month, in order to build resident-police relationships.

### Break-the-ice

Supply refreshments, as well as a non-threatening atmosphere conducive to amicable interactions. Be sure to account for a variety of dietary considerations when planning menus. Providing calming musical ambience can also facilitate peaceful interaction, though it is certainly not required.

Vary your meeting location

Consider hosting these events at various locations within the community, in order to encourage residents to congregate on less-used (perhaps even unfamiliar) streets, and allow neighbors to meet one another, as well as the officers who watch over them.

Remember: the objective of these meet-and-greets is to remind all parties involved of one another's dignity, and humanity. By generating familiarity between these groups, enmity can be reduced.

# Public Safety

## Intermediate Action Strategy: Police Department Sensitivity Trainings

### Find a mediator

Try working with your local police and an outside specialist (<https://www.adl.org/who-we-are/our-organization/signature-programs/law-enforcement-training/implicit-bias>) in order to conduct sensitivity training in order to improve enforcement outcomes in your community.

### Engage in Counseling

It is equally important to consider past, less-than-optimal enforcement outcomes within your neighborhood. Consider soliciting the assistance of professional counselors (<http://www.counselingwellnesspgh.com/>) to aid in healing past wounds within the community, so that they don't become nagging injuries which hamper future growth.

# Public Safety

## Long Term Action Strategy: Advocacy

### *Be open about the community's relationship with police*

In this particular arena, advocacy will largely revolve around publicizing interactions (both good and bad) between public safety officers and the neighborhood. Always be sure to celebrate any successes (meet-and-greets, rescue operations, evidence of community-supported policing practices) in social media posts, and newsletters. It is at least as important (if not moreso) to report incidences of bad behavior (corruption, brutality, delayed response times) to appropriate higher-authorities and media outlets. Your objective in this is not to tarnish the reputation of the department, but rather to set standards of behavior to which both residents and the officers that protect them can agree.

### *Contact experts in this field*

Forging relationships with organizations specializing in improving police-community relationships (<https://www.vera.org/centers/policing>) would be an excellent step toward boosting resident morale surrounding public safety. It is relatively unlikely that it would be worth EHCG's effort to develop this expertise in-house, but devoting some capacity (in the form of a liaison or task-force) of the group toward this goal is a sensible compromise. If you wish to expand the consensus group's capabilities surrounding community interactions with police, the following entities may provide you with support:

<https://www.nlg-npap.org/>  
<https://www.checkthepolice.org/#project>



# Public Safety

## Resources

### **National Police Accountability Project**

Founded in 1999, the National Police Accountability Project (NPAP) is a non-profit membership organization of plaintiff's lawyers, law students and legal workers dedicated to ending law enforcement and detention officer abuse of authority through coordinated legal action, public education, and support for grassroots and victims' organizations combating misconduct. We are a project of the National Lawyers Guild.

<https://www.nlg-npap.org/>

### **Anti-Defamation League - Managing Implicit Bias for Law Enforcement**

The unique role of law enforcement officials in any community makes cross-cultural understanding imperative. In addition to the need to ensure officer-to-officer sensitivity, to accurately represent its constituents, law enforcement officials need understanding, respect, and a willingness to communicate with all segments of the population. If members of the community feel that their own concerns are not understood, their confidence in law enforcement personnel to meet these needs may be severely

diminished. Unfortunately, this can adversely impact cooperation for reporting crimes and providing information vital to solving crimes.

<https://www.adl.org/who-we-are/our-organization/signature-programs/law-enforcement-training/implicit-bias>

### **Counseling and Wellness Center of Pittsburgh**

Today you are one step closer to the wellness you hope to achieve, a life and love where you feel empowered, balanced and inspired. At the Counseling and Wellness Center of Pittsburgh we offer integrative therapy solutions for the whole family. Our therapists, counselors, and relationships experts can help you to manage emotional or relational hurdles with individual therapy and marriage counseling. Our wellness team provide quality care, including a nutritionist, meditation instructor, and mindfulness workshops, we help you to optimize your wellness by strengthening your mind, body, and spirit.

<http://www.counselingwellnesspgh.com/>

# Public Safety

## Funding Opportunities

The Department of Justice offers funding opportunities to support law enforcement and public safety activities in state, local, and tribal jurisdictions; to assist victims of crime; to provide training and technical assistance; to conduct research; and to implement programs that improve the criminal, civil, and juvenile justice systems.

<https://www.justice.gov/grants>

Community Oriented Police Services (COPS) is a program under the department of justice's purview that focuses specifically on improving policing practices.

<https://cops.usdoj.gov/grants>

The Center for Faith-Based & Neighborhood-Partnerships is another organization that EHCG can appeal to for additional funding support relating to public safety.

<https://ojp.gov/fbnp/grants.htm>

The National Criminal Justice Reference Service is a resource that may become more useful as you interact more closely with law enforcement professionals, especially if you choose to co-apply for funding.

<https://www.ncjrs.gov/leresources/grants.html>

National Neighborhood Watch offers information about several community support grant programs that could assist EHCG's efforts.

<http://www.nnw.org/community-grant-support-programs>

# Capacity Building Strategies

*This section describes the short-term, intermediary, and long-term strategies proposed for building the organizational capacity of the EHCG.*

# Organizational Capacity

## Comprehensive Strategy

Building stronger and healthier communities involves local residents working together to transform the conditions and outcomes that matter most to them. While many residents may believe that East Hills' heyday has come and gone, this does not have to define how your community moves forward; there is always time for community growth. All it takes is a collective effort, with input from motivated community members, leaders, and organizations, to achieve shared long-term goals. Our objective with this brief guide is to provide useful information and resources that encourage resident engagement and build community capacity.

First, let's start with some definitions:

- *Community* - a group of people who share a common place, experience or interest (e.g. geographic location, racial or ethnic group, religious identity, or interest groups such as the business community)
- *Stakeholder* - a person or group with a concern or interest in something (e.g. East Hills residents, community groups, local policymakers, business owners, other groups from whom community draws its' resources)
- *Community organizing* - the coordination of cooperative efforts and campaigning carried out by local residents to promote the interests of their community (e.g. grassroots community action, meetings among stakeholders in East Hills, advocating for collective concerns, fundraising to promote social issues)
- *Capacity building* - the process by which individuals and communities obtain, improve, and retain the skills, knowledge, tools, equipment and other resources needed to achieve their goals competently

Now that we understand what the most important aspects of community organizing are, we'll continue with some steps you can take to affect community change. First and foremost, it is essential that the process of building community capacity is as inclusive and collaborative as possible. This means that all key stakeholders are involved in the process of achieving the common goal of creating a stronger, healthier, and more beautiful community.

According to the University of Kansas' Center for Community Health and Development, there are seven key factors in affecting last community change. These are listed below.

- Clear vision and mission. Initiatives with a clear and specific focus bring about higher rates of change than broad and loosely defined efforts.
- Action planning. Identify specific community changes; the action plan should specify information such as with whom, by whom, how and by when each action step should be carried out. The overall goal of action planning is to increase your community's ability to work together to affect conditions and outcomes that matter to its residents—and to do so both over time and across issues of interest.
- Leadership. Important facet of management that maximizes efficiency and helps to achieve goals.
- Resources for community mobilizers. Finding passionate community organizers can aid in following up on and mobilizing action plans.
- Documentation and feedback on the changes. Keep a record of what you have done and how you have done it. Looking regularly at what your group has done, how quickly it has occurred, and outside events that affect your work has been shown to spur groups onto even greater heights.
- Technical assistance. Outside help with specific actions, such as action planning or securing resources, is also a way to support a group's efforts to transform its community.
- Making outcomes matter. A process that uses feedback on progress and differential rewards (i.e., incentives and disincentives) for change and improvement. This process occurs over the lifespan of an initiative and aims to use information about progress to prompt action and make adjustments

The University of Colorado's Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning published the 3rd edition of their Community Organizing Handbook in 2014. In this handbook the authors lay out similar but different steps that your community group can take to implement positive social change within your community. These are listed below.

- Relationship building. Organizers facilitate and strengthen relationships in their community. This is done through techniques such as one-to-ones and community meetings.
- Issue selection. Identify a problem within your community and select an issue to work on together as a group. Organizers focus their work in the world as it is while working toward creating the world as it should be.
- Issue research. Collect information about the issue in your community. Identify the root causes of the chosen issue and aim to dismantle the power structure that enables this issue.
- Taking action. Organizers develop and implement a plan through the development of a strategy and associated tactics for creating change in your community based on the relationships built and the information gathered in the research.
- Reflection and evaluation. The community critically reflect on its progress and assesses ways to improve strategies and plans for future actions.

With that, you have two sets of steps toward implementing effective community change. However, there are many different perspectives on how to go about implementing impactful change. There are many resources online and in the library. The most important part is finding a strategy that will work for you and what you aim to organize around and change in your community.

Remember, a really important aspect of community organizing is connecting with others - whether it be inside (i.e. other East Hills residents) or outside (i.e., community organizations) of the community. Building relationships and working collectively with all key stakeholders is essential to achieving lasting change in your community.

Here are some resources that will amplify your group's collective voice and hopefully help you to accomplish your goal:

## Tools for Planning

Resource	Suggested Utilization	How to find it
Asana	Web and mobile platform that allows team members to organize, share and manage projects in a collective effort. This would be great for getting everyone involved in the project on the same page and effectively organizing your project	<a href="http://www.asana.com">www.asana.com</a>
University of Kansas' Center for Community Health and Development's Community Tool Box	Online resource that lays out how to go out about organizing around community issues. Learn skills or get help taking action with this online tool box that explains each step in the process in-depth	<a href="https://ctb.ku.edu/en">https://ctb.ku.edu/en</a>
University of Colorado's Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning Community Organizing Handbook	Another great online resource that outlines how to conduct community organizing in a step-by-step manner. This document is intended to serve as a guide for the processes and practices of organizing	<a href="https://www.du.edu/ccesl/media/documents/ccesl_handbook_third_edition_print_protected.pdf">https://www.du.edu/ccesl/media/documents/ccesl_handbook_third_edition_print_protected.pdf</a>

## Tools for Organizing and Communications

Resource	Suggested Use	How to find it
Canva	Free graphic design website that provides preset layouts for promotional documents	<a href="http://www.canva.com">www.canva.com</a>
Facebook	People join Facebook pages when they are passionate about something and excited to come together to make meaningful change. Try diversifying engagement opportunities by starting a club centered around something you are passionate about or increasing visibility by sharing important community meetings or events.	<a href="http://www.facebook.com">www.facebook.com</a>



## Tools for Fundraising

Resource	Suggested Use	How to find it
Kickstarter	Free graphic design website that provides preset layouts for promotional documents	<a href="http://www.canva.com">www.canva.com</a>
Ioby: In Your Backyard	People join Facebook pages when they are passionate about something and excited to come together to make meaningful change. Try diversifying engagement opportunities by starting a club centered around something you are passionate about or increasing visibility by sharing important community meetings or events.	<a href="http://www.facebook.com">www.facebook.com</a>
Letter Writing Campaigns	Letter writing campaigns are the original way to asking individuals for donations to support your project. These letters are typically no more than one page and explain your project's needs and invite the recipient to help out.	

# Organizational Capacity

## Short Term Action Strategy: Build Membership

One of the main goals stated by all members of East Hills Consensus Group in attendance at the stakeholder retreat is the expansion of the group's membership. Current members placed particular emphasis on recruiting youth to the team, recognizing an abundance of wisdom in the council, with a slight vim deficiency. In order to bring balance back to the Consensus Group, Grounded recommends the following:

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### Complete an asset mapping exercise

An EHCG member offered some of her expertise to complete this task, and Grounded fully supports the idea. By understanding the resources already at the group's disposal, you will position yourselves to more efficiently utilize them, thereby reducing frustration and maximizing benefit to your community from any resources the group manages to acquire.

As you create your asset map, take note not only of the resources that the group currently can access, but also those for which you might encounter obstacles or barriers. This will help to give you some sense of priority when it comes to recruitment and organizational strategy.

### Create an officer position within EHCG related specifically to recruitment

Recruitment for your community group is a continuous process. As such, it makes sense to allocate a portion of your group's capacity toward filling out the group's ranks. Grounded recommends that you create a role for one or more members of EHCG focused on engaging new neighbors in consensus group functions, with a broader emphasis on delivering EHCG's message to the public.

Initially we recommend that you convene a task force around recruiting in years 2019 and 2020.

After the task force term, re-evaluate the needs of the group, and reallocate person power as necessary.

Set goals for technology literacy for ALL EHCG members

Keep your current capacity in mind, then set goals for expanding it. This applies to both the group, as well as each member of it. By ensuring that each member of the group is capable of leveraging communications technologies such as shared cloud storage and social media, overall group capacity will be greatly enhanced.

Leverage existing communications networks

East Hills Consensus Group represents many different organizations within the East Hills community. Each of these organizations can help to amplify EHCG's efforts by offering new audiences from which to recruit assistants.

- Churches - Both Shiloh Community Church and Livingway Christian Fellowship are represented within EHCG's membership. Take advantage of their regular meetings to announce community activities and initiatives.
- Government - EHCG also includes agents from several sections of the city's government. These channels can also support expansion of the Consensus Group's roster via their communication networks.
- Businesses - The local business community is an integral part of EHCG. Utilize the expertise specific to each partner in order to efficiently allocate the group's resources.

Foster an environment of inclusivity

Think of the members of your community as a school of fish, and of the consensus group as a net. Your goal in crafting bylaws, setting meetings, and structuring events (the ropes and knots of the net in this analogy), should be to capture as many fish (community members) as possible. This will ensure that your group remains robust and resilient in the face of the shocks, stresses, and changes that East Hills will encounter in its future.

*Invite EVERYONE in your community to your events*

Unless they have actively expressed a desire to be excluded, do not assume that a neighbor would not be interested. They may have ignored several invites in the past due to conflicting engagements or other circumstances.

*Take advantage of momentum*

Already within East Hills there are moves being made toward many of the goals stated during the stakeholder retreat. Be sure to position the consensus group to support these actions, with particular emphasis on:

*Build a Youth Board for the consensus group*

Such a group could serve as a pipeline of talent to keep the consensus group's membership robust. Imani Christian Academy would be a great potential partner in this effort.

# Organizational Capacity

## Short Term Action Strategy: Communication Plan

Establish a regular schedule for getting the word out to residents and East Hills residents.

- Social Media - Frequent (weekly, ideally daily) posts to social media outlets such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter will significantly boost your group's exposure and aid in raising awareness about your programming
- Newsletter - Regular (weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, or quarterly) newsletters offer a means by which to showcase past successes and future plans in a condensed and easy-to-read format. Keep readers informed about the costs and benefits of EHCG membership so that they can make informed decisions about the long-term implications of the group's existence in their community.
- Email List - Delivering your newsletter and other pertinent communications via e-mail is a great way to keep neighbors in-the-loop. Make sure to add newly obtained addresses to your mailing list as soon as you acquire them, and regularly remove defunct addresses. It is generally considered good Internet etiquette to add all addresses for this sort of mass-mailing to the 'BCC' field before sending.
- Direct Mail - Direct mailings are significantly more expensive in terms of both time and resources compared with electronic messaging methods. While not necessarily appropriate for regular updates, this is a great outreach tool for important or unique developments in East Hills.

# Organizational Capacity

## Short Term Action Strategy: Activate Membership

### Convening Subcommittees

Gathering a huge number of members for the consensus group will do no good for the community if they are not organized toward some sort of goal. To that end, convening task forces, focus groups, subcommittees within your group can help to divide a seemingly insurmountable, perhaps nebulous task (improve my community) into discrete, manageable chunks (i.e. remove all litter along Wilner Drive, address frequent flooding events along Remington Drive, engage residents along Karl Street).

- Designate subcommittees when an objective arises which clearly does not require the full capacity of EHCG, but will require a substantial subset (3 or more members) to accomplish.
  - EHCG might convene a subcommittee to explore a topic of interest (Green Stormwater Infrastructure perhaps) in order to elevate the group's understanding of that topic while holding some capacity in reserve to address any issues that arise.
- Assign Task Forces for objectives which are time-sensitive, or those which require a some sort of expertise.
  - The consensus group might assign a task force to handle communications with a partner organization in addressing a discrete issue (for instance a delegation of EHCG members assigned to work directly with PWSA during the summer of 2019 to improve stormwater messaging within East Hills).
- Construct Focus Groups to assess the feasibility of a particular plan or method. Focus Groups, by nature, have demographically diverse membership. This makes them

particularly well suited to measure how the community as a whole might react to a course of action.

- EHCG could, for instance, construct a focus group to test the viability of a technology literacy course among community members. In this case, the course would be presented to a group demographically representative (i.e. similar cross section of age, race/ethnicity, income) of East Hills as a whole to gauge its efficacy.

# Organizational Capacity

## Intermediate Action Strategies: Programming and Initiatives

Build programming around the issues raised by your community. Start with spaces where EHCG already has a foothold, then expand outward to frequently visited community touchpoints (busy intersections, parks, community gathering spaces). Grounded identified the following as high-priority for East Hills stakeholders:

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### Programming

#### Youth engagement

Sports opportunities offer a means by which to link adult members of the East Hills community with youth in the area. The nature of practices, scrimmages, and contests (especially in team sports) lends itself well to the stated goal of connecting these two cohorts.

#### Signage

One goal raised by multiple members of the consensus group is to create a sign which helps to improve visibility of the neighborhood's boundaries as well as showcasing some unique aspects of the community's identity.

#### Street Repairs

One need common to various neighborhoods in the Pittsburgh area is the need for infrastructure repairs. Banding together around this issue during 311 call-campaigns can help steer funding toward these badly needed repairs.

#### Holiday Party

After a year-long effort to improve your community, take some time to celebrate your



successes and examine your failures in a low-pressure environment. Hosting a holiday party will raise your organizational profile as well as reaffirming the bonds between existing members.

### Block Watch

Tying in with EHCG's desire to improve public safety in the neighborhood, the establishment of a Block Watch coalition can help to improve intra-neighborhood communication as well as raising the probability that instances of malfeasance will be reported in a timely manner.

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## Initiatives

While programming will tend to be tied directly to a discrete space, think of initiatives as means by which to address more abstract challenges with a larger areal extent.

### Pedestrian Safety

Reckless driving practices were strongly identified as a challenge that East Hills faces, both in stakeholder interviews, as well as at the planning retreat. Mobilize community members around the following ideas to improve safety for all residents:

### Traffic calming

Modifying signage, landscape, and road features can help to reduce vehicle speeds in your neighborhood. <https://trafficlogix.com/how-traffic-calming-works/>

### Young Mothers

The consensus group identified young mothers as a key demographic underrepresented within EHCG's ranks. In order to improve communication with this cohort, Grounded recommends the following strategies:

### Mentorships

Take advantage of the experience already represented within EHCG by creating opportunities

to support young mothers through the provision of advice, resource guides, and other forms of support

#### Diaper Drives

By providing a necessity to young families, you will attract two of the key demographics you're currently seeking to recruit (young mothers and youth). Coordinate this effort with partner organizations to ensure supplies adequate to address demand.

#### Greenspace Cleanup

Another community-wide need declared during various community engagements was the need for cleaner green spaces. See the Beautification strategy section of this report for more recommendations relating to green-space clean-ups.

# Organizational Capacity

## Long Term Action Strategies: Partnerships

Expand EHCG's influence in the community by partnering with more local organizations. Grounded Identified the following entities as potential collaborators in achieving betterment of East Hills:

- Youthworks - Stakeholders identified this entity as a strong candidate for cooperation due to its youth oriented mission. Additionally, this program (under Goodwill of Southwestern Pennsylvania) could serve as a resource for youth in the community, as well as a pipeline of additional capacity that could serve the consensus group's goals.
- Three Generations Barber Shop - Working together with a community cornerstone such as the barbershop will significantly improve EHCG's messaging capability.
- Community Engagement Center - An important resource in Homewood, this extension of the University of Pittsburgh specializes in boosting the capacity of nearby neighbors, especially as it relates to community engagement. A wonderful fit for the consensus group's current needs.
- Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh - The Urban League has significant overlap with EHCG's goals in its vision. Particularly pertinent are its programs surrounding family support (a family support center is located within East Hills), and youth engagement.
- A Second Chance - As another strong organizational partner within East Hills, A Second Chance could help expand EHCG's resource network when it comes to providing for the needs of families in the area. Low-to-moderate income communities tend to be very familiar with the trauma associated with family separation: A Second Chance supports kinship care, providing options to reduce the stress associated with family rupturing events.

# Organizational Capacity

## Resources

### **Neighborhood Allies**

Neighborhood Allies provides financial resources, expertise and technical assistance to help neighborhoods become better places for residents to live, work and play.

They collaborate with other organizations across sectors, working on the same or complimentary issues (shared learning or research; build networks, alliances and coalitions; and promote best practices within the field).

<http://neighborhoodallies.com/>

### **Bayer Center for Nonprofit Management**

The Bayer Center for Nonprofit Management at Robert Morris University will provide effective and practical management and governance tools, information, education and research that strengthen nonprofit missions and multiply on all investments of time, talent and money made in regional nonprofit organizations.

<http://bayercenter.rmu.edu>

### **Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh**

The Urban League works to provide bold leadership, innovative programs and policies to strengthen the region by helping African Americans reach their full potential. With the active engagement in the Pittsburgh community, the Urban League advocates economic opportunity and justice that leads to significant improvement in the quality of our lives

<http://ulpgh.org/>

### **University of Pittsburgh Community Engagement Center**

Through support for local entrepreneurs, class projects that enhance community organizations' work, and various professional development programs the Pittsburgh Community Engagement Center in Homewood can build business and organizational capacity.

<https://cec.pitt.edu/>

# Organizational Capacity

## Funding Opportunities

### Neighborhood Allies Catalytic Grants

#### Details:

There is a rolling deadline for this opportunity. Awards range from \$1,000 to \$15,000.

#### Funding Priorities:

##### *Quality of Life*

Residents are able to access the larger economy and quality neighborhood amenities. They are able to build assets, accumulate wealth and connect to economic opportunities. The neighborhood is safe and the environment and social determinants of health positively impact the wellbeing of residents.

##### *Celebrated Neighborhood Image*

The neighborhood is a place that is visually appealing and desirable to all, celebrating and attracting new people and investment while retaining new and long-term residents.

##### *Community Ownership*

Residents, small business owners, community organizations and institutions are active participants and key decision-makers in projects aimed to revitalize their neighborhood. They have the capacity and community power to create positive change and shape the future of their neighborhood.

##### *Equitable Development*

Everyone participates in and benefits from the region's economic transformation – especially low-income residents, communities of color, immigrants, and others at risk of being left behind. It requires an intentional focus on eliminating racial inequities and barriers and making investments that yield healthy, safe and opportunity-rich neighborhoods that reflect their culture.

# Organizational Capacity

## Funding Opportunities Continued

### Contact Information:

225 Ross Street, Ste. 202  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219  
PHONE 412.471.3727  
FAX 412.471.3746  
EMAIL [info@neighborhoodallies.org](mailto:info@neighborhoodallies.org)  
<http://neighborhoodallies.com/what-we-do/grants-and-loans/catalytic-grants/>

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### EQT Foundation Grant Program

#### Details:

The deadlines for this opportunity are February 1st, May 1st, August 1st, and November 1st. Award amounts are \$20,000.

#### Funding Priorities:

##### *Community & Economic Development*

Encourage the development of diverse, livable communities that can attract and retain residential, commercial and industrial growth to sustain a healthy local economy.

Examples: community sustainability programs; festivals and other local traditions; food banks; volunteer fire departments; volunteerism and community service

##### *Environment*

Support the preservation of natural resources and encourage residents and businesses to employ accepted conservation techniques and activities to minimize adverse impacts on the environment.

Examples: Community gardens; wildlife and watershed conservation; environmental education; preservation and restoration of green spaces

# Organizational Capacity

## Funding Opportunities Continued

### Contact Information:

Ellen Rossi  
EQT Foundation Manager  
erossi@eqt.com  
412.553.7703  
<https://www.eqt.com/our-communities/eqt-foundation/funding-priorities>

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### The Heinz Endowments

#### Details:

The deadlines for this opportunity are February 15th and August 1st.

#### Funding Priorities:

Pursue socially just economic opportunity so that distressed neighborhoods thrive without displacing vulnerable residents.

Target distressed neighborhoods that are adjacent to strong markets that can leverage public and private capital to improve housing markets without displacing vulnerable residents.

Embrace first-in-class civic design.

Connect Pittsburgh through “complete streets,” transit-oriented development and alternative transportation.

Engage the arts and artists in socially just community revitalization, ennobling culture and neighborhood beautification.

### Contact Information:

Rob Stephany, Director, Community & Economic Development  
rstephany@heinz.org  
<http://www.heinz.org/strategic-areas/sustainability>

# Organizational Capacity

## Funding Opportunities Continued

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### **Ameriprise Community Grants**

#### **Details:**

The deadlines for this opportunity are January 15th and May 15th. Award amounts range from \$5,000 to \$10,000.

#### **Funding Priorities:**

Ameriprise Community Grants aim to create livable places for all, where neighbors look out for one another, cultural events are well-attended and people pull together in times of crisis and joy. They work to create economic vitality and cultural enrichment through the focus areas of Community Development and Cultural Enrichment. Deadlines are January 15th and May 15th. Awards range from \$5,000 to \$10,000.

#### **Contact Information:**

Communityrelations@ampf.com  
<https://www.ameriprise.com/financial-planning/about/community-relations/grant-making/?state=PA#view-state>

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### **Snee-Reinhardt Charitable Foundation**

#### **Details:**

Deadlines for this funding opportunity are the 2nd Tuesday in May, and the 2nd Tuesday in September. Awards range from \$1,000 to \$5,000.

#### **Funding Priorities:**

The Snee-Reinhardt Charitable Foundation permits grants for animal welfare, community



# Organizational Capacity

## Funding Opportunities Continued

development, sports, camps, fire and police departments and economic development as miscellaneous grants. Deadlines are the 2nd Tuesday in May, and the 2nd Tuesday in September. Awards range from \$1,000 to \$5,000.

### Contact Information:

470 Streets Run Road  
Suite 401  
Pittsburgh, PA 15236  
Phone: 412-884-3626  
Fax: 412-881-4636  
E-mail: [info@snee-reinhardt.org](mailto:info@snee-reinhardt.org)  
<http://www.snee-reinhardt.org/grant-request-process>

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### Walmart Foundation: Community Grant Program

#### Details:

Application are accepted annually, from December to February. Awards range from \$250 to \$5,000.

#### Funding Priorities:

Quality of life: Improving access to recreation, arts or cultural experiences for low income individuals and families in the United States

Community and economic development: Improving local communities for the benefit of low income individuals and families in the United States

Public Safety: Supporting public safety programs through training programs or equipment in the United States



# Conclusion

## CONCLUSION

Over the course of this last year, East Hills Consensus Group has already made significant strides in growing their capacity to address the issues facing members of the East Hills community. Through this process with Grounded, the EHCG was able to gather feedback and make connections with 78 residents, strengthen local partnerships, and develop skills to strengthen their organizational capacity. This process also served as a great opportunity for reflection, leading to a prioritization of organizational capacity, and with that, a strong emphasis on expanding the diversity of resident viewpoints represented in EHCG's membership.

Now, with this report in hand, the EHCG has roadmap of strategic actions that will help to address their key issues of Community Beautification, Stormwater Management, and Public Safety. Additionally, they are equipped to grow the capacity building efforts that they pursued both internally and with the support of Grounded over the course of 2018. This report should serve as a useful reference, to be revisited continually as EHCG's capacity grows.



