

grounded

ANNUAL REPORT

2019





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Dear Friends,

I am very excited to share with you the details of another impactful year here at Grounded Strategies. Life has changed so much for all of us since 2019, but in the spirit of reflection and restoration, I'd like to take a moment to look back down the road and point out all our team has to be thankful for.

We continue to be inspired by the strides our partner communities have taken thus far, reclaiming and stewarding distressed land to improve the health and wellness of their neighborhoods. We give thanks for the 23 individual communities Grounded worked with across Allegheny County, and for the 36 Ambassadors & Stewards who committed time and effort to see their resident-driven projects through to completion. We celebrate the 784 volunteers who joined us in our mission to see land recycled for community benefit in a way that respects the legacy of the people, the place, and the inherent trauma of divestment and reclamation.

Journeys are filled with successes and challenges, good days and hard ones. As an environmental justice organization working towards the equitable access to and stewardship of high quality open spaces, our journey through 2019 was punctuated by a set of transitions: our former Executive Director's mid-year departure and my appointment as the new Executive Director in the fall. It was during this time of rapid change and realignment that our team supported one another, and became closer to our mission and each other.

Perhaps I am most thankful for our staff. Their tenacity and commitment, their compassion. Our workplace culture is intentionally driven by trust, open communication, diversity, and flexibility. We share a commitment to our work, but also openness to challenge ourselves, our perceptions, our tactics, and our impact. Every member of our team understands the urgency of the issues we tackle. Every member of our team has spent their days doing all they can to make a difference, and will continue to do so through the uncertain days ahead.

So, come along. I invite you into our story. We invite you to come on this journey with us.

Sincerely,

Ariam Ford-Graver, MCP
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ariam Ford-Graver". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ariam" starting with a large capital 'A' and the last name "Graver" ending with a long, sweeping tail.

2019-2023 Strategic Goals



STAY LONGER

Sustainable change is not instantaneous, but rather gradually picks up momentum over time. Grounded plans to develop and deepen authentic community relationships in every community we serve, committing to at least three years of programming on the ground. This will require more proactive and long-term funding partnerships and committed partners, and will enable us to reach more people, incorporate inter-generational learning, and seed long-term habits and framework for growth.



DO MORE

Communities are complex, requiring interdisciplinary, collaborative, and comprehensive strategies for change. Grounded will expand our team expertise to increase the positive impact of our investment in communities, expanding and formalizing new services to ensure the gaps are filled. We are also committed to bridging the gap to new partners with relevant skill sets and knowledge to ensure a robust approach is taken.

Over the next 5 years, Grounded will become the “go to” organization for residents, non-profits, and municipalities working on vacant and underutilized land issues in Allegheny County.



The processes, policies, and programs that govern community need to be accessible and responsive.

Grounded will advance policies and investments aimed at reducing the impact of blighted and vacant land in the region. Our focus will be on municipal leadership to examine budgeting, maintenance, and access policies and strategies to increase consistency, accountability, transparency and performance.



Building trust requires the need to connect to, understand, and resonate with people on the ground.

Grounded will continue to prioritize diversity, equity and inclusion in our services, program offerings and execution, and staff and board representation. We will also continue to examine our processes and strategies to ensure they are not inherently set up to be exclusive and will seek support to help remove institutional barriers from our methodology.

OUR YEAR

By the Numbers

PROJECTS

19

Green Spaces
Implemented

25

Projects
Supported

23

Stewarded
Spaces

37

Education
Sessions



45

Volunteer
Workdays



6

Program
Events



784

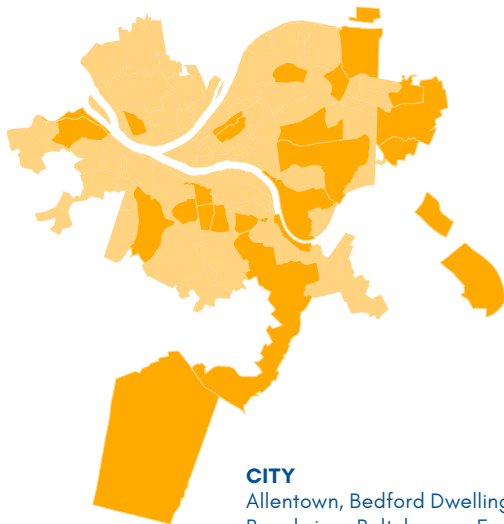
Volunteer
Workers



Organization

- 44 Community Partners
- 3 Reports Produced
- 3 Conference Presentations
- 8 Staff Trainings

WHERE WE WORK



CITY

Allentown, Bedford Dwellings, Beechview, Beltzhoover, East Hills, Esplen, Garfield, Hazelwood, Knoxville, Larimer, Lincoln-Lemington-Belmar, Manchester, Middle Hill, Mount Oliver, Sheraden, Squirrel Hill, St. Clair

COUNTY

Braddock, Bethel Park, Duquesne, Edgewood, Pitcairn, Wilkinsburg

REVENUE

Foundation	\$726,121
Earned	\$93,795
Government	\$65,870
Corporate	\$23,577
Events	\$3,846
Individuals & Board	\$6,564
Other	\$74,618

\$997,390

EXPENSES

Personnel	\$555,213
Program	\$210,777
Professional Fees	\$40,019
Office & Facilities	\$70,958
Other	\$19,505

\$897,472

* All numbers are unaudited

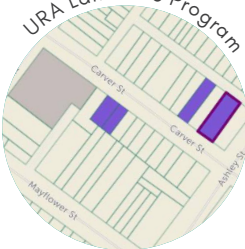
2019 Projects



PGH Mobile Toolbox



URA Landcare Program



MACS Green Playce



CommunityCare Larimer



Together We Shine



CommunityCare Wilkinsburg



East Hills Consensus Group



Gaining Ground



Greenway CleanUp



Hazelwood GSI



Friendship Circle



James Street Sensory Garden



Youth ReClaim Hazelwood

Youth voices are often overlooked in the planning process in favor of meeting the needs, preferences, and preconceived notions adults carry. This leads to public spaces in which young people have limited interaction and are therefore cut off from their community. The Youth Reclaim PGH program puts decision-making power into the hands of adolescent youth through an environmental justice focused placemaking curriculum.

Youth work with Grounded, community residents, and municipal leaders to work through a placemaking process that results in the reclamation of a community space on a vacant lot in their community.

In Hazelwood, youth from JADA House International are supporting the placemaking process at Morning Star Baptist Church, helping to design and build a community space for Hazelwood youth and residents that memorializes two meaningful members of the church community and neighborhood, Minister Renee Fuller and veteran, George Thomas.



Finishing touches were added to the Renova St. Green Playce during an October 2019 community workday. A balance beam and wavy bridge cross a dry stream in the children's area. PVC pipes and caps are being transformed into a drum.



Top Left: Volunteers from Bellfield Presbyterian Church construct a new pathway into the site. Photo by Elan Mizrahi. Top Right: Planter benches designed and built by volunteers from The Mission Continues Hazelwood Platoon Line Second Avenue. Bottom: Volunteers from The Mission Continues establish a new planting bed along the walkway and main gathering space. Their extensive and capable volunteer base supported three major workdays on the site in 2019.

Youth ReClaim Braddock and Wilkinsburg

Youth ReClaim is an opportunity for youth to develop their leadership abilities by making true change in their community. By reclaiming and repurposing a vacant lot, youth learn the power of community organizing and planning to improve their neighborhood. Our Youth ReClaim program has worked in Braddock and Wilkinsburg and engaged two youth cohorts. Our youth cohorts have facilitated design workshops with elected officials and community members, developed site plans, and will participate in build days turning their ideas into reality. At the end of Youth ReClaim, the Braddock and Wilkinsburg community will have a community greenspace allowing for intergenerational relationship building on a previously vacant lot. From their experience planning and managing a vacant lot project, our youth cohorts have the ability to maintain their project to ensure it remains a community asset.



Kristen Michaels (founder of For Good PGH/Hollander Building) guides a young friend to try out the pipe paddle organ constructed by youth from the Braddock Youth Project. The project also provided the outdoor piano shelter visible in the background.



Top: A view into the Braddock site with umbrellas painted by the Braddock Youth Project. The crystal in the foreground was uncovered during the early site work. It was one of many that laid in the original Braddock Ave. sidewalk allowing daylight to shine into basements pre-electricity. Bottom Left: Youth work on their individual site designs. Bottom Right: Volunteers from University of Pittsburgh help to plant the pollinator garden at the Wilksburg site (1401 Malboro Ave.).

MACS Green Playce



A student runs along alphabet stones leading into the site. A Kaboom Play Everywhere grant allowed Grounded to add this “Discovery Walk” creating a strong connection between the Green Playce and the neighborhood.

Grounded piloted the Green Playces Initiative in 2015 with the goal to create dedicated outdoor spaces that give youth the opportunity to play, gather, and connect with their local, outdoor environment. To-date, the Green Playces Initiative has built ten outdoor classrooms and play spaces in areas with high levels of vacancy in Allegheny County.

In Manchester, Grounded is partnering with Manchester Academic Charter School to create a Green Playce on a vacant parcel that lies behind the school.

Relying on community-driven design input, volunteer support, upcycled materials, and material donations from local residents and businesses, the MACS Green Playce was built through the summer of 2019.



Top: A view of the completed Green Playce featuring many of the wood elements constructed by local carpenter and artist Jason Boone of Pittsburgh Urban Tree. The natural forms of logs and boulders encourage imaginative play. Bottom Left: Students enjoy the new stepping poles. Bottom Right: Local youth help to paint a mural of the U.S. on a remnant concrete parking pad.

URA Landcare



In early 2016, Grounded started working closely with the URA to develop a tiered vacant lot maintenance system. The tier-system allowed URA staff to identify and prioritize vacant lots of similar size and condition that were concentrated in five communities. Approximately 350 vacant lots were grouped into seven separate bundles. Two bundles were located in the Hill District, two in Homewood, and one in each Hazelwood, Manchester, and Larimer. In the summer of 2016, an RFP was released for firms to apply for year-long maintenance for one bundle.

The URA adopted the new initiative and the LandCare program launched in September 2016. For one year, seven contractors were responsible for maintaining URA-owned property. Responsibilities included the debris removal and disposal, grass cutting, plant maintenance, snow and ice removal from sidewalks and driveways, responding to emergency situations, and clean-out of non-hazardous materials from lots. Contractors report their work on a web and mobile-based software that the URA verifies. For each site visit, contractors take before and after images and note the completed maintenance activities. Contractors also participated in community outreach to help publicize their service schedules.

Since the development of the LandCare program, 9 small businesses have contracts, at least 55 individuals have been employed in property maintenance, and 2.5 million square feet of vacant land has been cleaned and maintained.



Left Page: A detail of the Landgrid application, used by contractors and the URA to record and share maintenance activities on vacant parcels. Top: A huddle with the Landcare contractors to share knowledge and resources. Bottom: Landcare contractor, Andre Young of Chatman Properties, maintaining a vacant lot.

CommunityCare

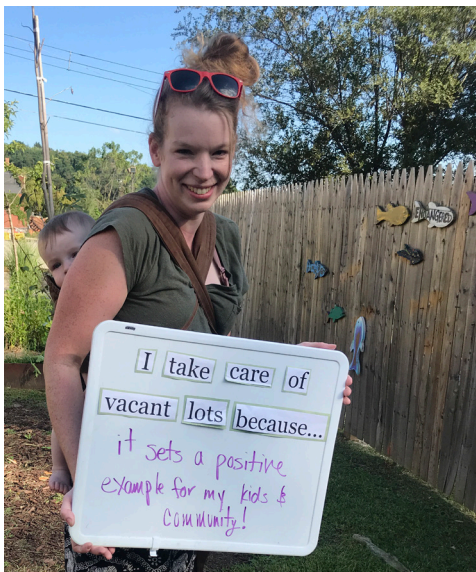
The simple act of maintaining green space improves a community's appearance, decreases crime, and contributes to a healthy and resilient environment.

Currently there is a shortage of resources being allocated to proactively maintain green and open spaces in the public sphere throughout Allegheny County, resulting in a mosaic of overgrown, unsafe, and inactive lots interspersed among privately maintained holdings.

Additionally, this is an issue that disproportionately affects low- and moderate-income communities who may not always have the capacity to donate 'free time' to volunteer efforts. Grounded addresses this challenge utilizing a proven approach: an incentive-based stewardship model called CommunityCare. Grounded's CommunityCare Program adapts the traditional method of volunteer-led stewardship to recognize, reward, and equip residents to participate in greenspace maintenance work.

In 2019, the CommunityCare Stewards completed more than 550 hours of maintenance throughout Homewood, Larimer, and Wilkinsburg. Through our continued efforts in the 2020 program year, they'll be trained to respond to a broader range of greenspace needs, including tree care, green stormwater infrastructure upkeep, and advocacy around greenspace issues.





Opposite Page: Homewood CommunityCare stewards partner with Sierra Club to do a community clean-up. Top: Homewood CommunityCare Stewards recruiting new participant at the Homewood Good Food Festival sponsored by Phipps Homegrown Program. Bottom Left: Wilkinsburg CommunityCare Steward with son sharing why she joined the clean-up effort! Bottom Right: Larimer CommunityCare Steward at the Goddess Garden installation.

Geared
Up and
Grounded



A
Merry
Gnorman
Holiday
Party



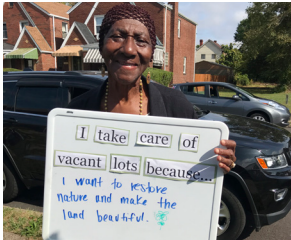
ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORTERS

EVENT & ORG FUNDERS

ALCOSAN
Allegheny Health
Network



Alumni Theater Company
Amazon Smile
Foundation
Babst Calland
Benter Foundation
BNY Mellon
BNY Mellon
Corporation's
Community Partnership
Clif Bar Family
Foundation
Colcom Foundation



Courtney Babcock
Borntraeger
Foundation
Economic Development
South Inc
Forbes Fund
Fourth Economy
Grable Foundation
Grow Pittsburgh
Heinz Foundation
Highmark
Hillman Company
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iGive
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Magovern Foundation



Neighborhood Allies
Peoples Gas
Pittsburgh CDBG
Pittsburgh Community
Services, Inc.
PNC Bank
URA Landcare
US Environmental
Protection Agency

EVENT PARTNERS

Bike PGH
Dig It
Dogtopia
East End Brewing
Eat 'n Park Hospitality
Group, Inc
Healthy Ride
Jenkins & Crum
Mecka Fitness
Millie's Ice Cream
National Aviary
Pittsburgh Community
Broadcasting
Corporation
Pittsburgh Community
Services, Inc.
Pittsburgh Major Taylor
Cycling Club
Pittsburgh Symphony
Orchestra
Pittsburgh Zoo &
Aquarium
Red Lantern Bike Shop
Slide World Wide Band



Southern Tier
Venture Outdoors
Wigle Whiskey
World Vision

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Alice Beattie
Allason Holt
Andre Young
Anna Kearny
Anne Silbaugh



Ashley Jones
Ashley Kyber
Autumn Walker
Benjamin Locrone
Ben Milleville
Beth Slagle
Bob And Karen Worley
Bradd Celidonia
Bradley Graver
Cara Jette
Carol James
Charlie & Sue Goodwin
Cheryl Noss

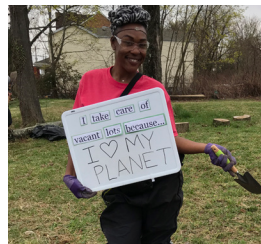


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Diane Daniels
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PROJECT FUNDERS

AARP Community
Challenge
Aetna Foundation
Benter Foundation
Birmingham Foundation
Google Tides
Foundation
Heinz Endowments
Heinz Foundation
Henry L. Hillman
Foundation
Jefferson Regional
Foundation
Kaboom
Manchester Academic
Charter School
McAuley Ministries
Neighborhood Allies
Peoples Gas
PNC Charitable Trust
PNC Foundation
ReMake Learning
The Benter Foundation
The Opportunity Fund
The Pittsburgh
Foundation
Urban Redevelopment
Authority

PROJECT PARTNERS

Abiding Missions
Allegheny County
Conservation District
Allendale Acres
Community Garden



Bedford Connect
Bedford Dwellings
Tenant Council
Braddock Youth Project
Carlow University
Carnegie Library of
Pittsburgh
Carnegie Library:
Knoxville
Center of Life



Chatman Properties
City of Duquesne
City of Pittsburgh

Department of City
Planning
Civically
Compass Americorps
Duquesne Community
Victory Garden
Duquesne University
East Hills Consensus
Group
For Good Pittsburgh
Garfield Jubilee
Glen Hazel
Community Resident
Management
Corporation



Grow Pittsburgh
Hazelwood Initiative
Hilltop Alliance
JADA House
Larimer Consensus
Group
LOVELAND
Technologies
Manchester Academic
Charter School
(MACS)

Manchester Citizens
Corporation (MCC)
Morningstar Baptist
Church
Neighborhood Allies



Operation Better Block
POORLAW
Pretty Up Beechview
Project Love Coalition
Sierra Club
Spartan Community
Center
Student Conservation
Association
The Hollander Project
University of Pittsburgh
Urban Redevelopment
Authority
West End P.O.W.E.R.
Wilksburg Youth
Project

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Hilltop Rising
Kamara Townes
Kipp Jackson
KRJ Enterprises
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Nature's Grooming
Pittsburgh Urban Tree
POORLAW
Premier Touch
 Cleaning
Sciarretti Site
 Development and
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Spherical Land
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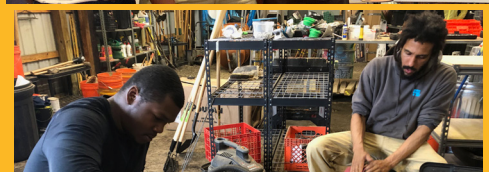


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*Thanks to those who
completed their
service in 2019





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