



2020 ANNUAL REPORT

grounded
change rooted in community



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Dearest Friends,

Wow, what a time to be alive, wouldn't you say? In 2020, our communities faced the absolute unimaginable over a mere 365 days.

Early in the year, severe illness caused deep pain across the world and left empty spaces where loved ones and neighbors once stood. In the summer, all of us were reminded in the most heinous way of how far we have to go on the road to an equal and equitable society that protects and holds sacred the lives of Black and Brown peoples. In the fall, the deep political divides amongst our fellow citizens were laid bare and scratched raw.

And yet, here we are, we are here.

Daylight came every single morning of 2020. And just like morning light that lifts and awakens, the energy, commitment, urgency, and passion of Pittsburgh's land justice champions has risen and shone every single day with the power of a thousand suns.

Despite the toughest of times, deep wells of joy and hope for the future remain in our partner communities. When outside became the safest place to be, Grounded stewards, ambassadors, and supporters worked tirelessly to ensure residents maintained access to high quality greenspaces, particularly in underserved neighborhoods living with high concentrations of unmaintained vacant lots yet so few open space assets.

I invite you to read on and learn more about the who, what, where, and how of all of the great things that came out of 2020 at Grounded. Grab your sunglasses, it's bright outside.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ariam Ford', with a stylized, cursive script.

Ariam Ford
Executive Director

2019-2023 Strategic Plan



STAY
LONGER



DO
MORE

Sustainable change is not instantaneous, but rather gradually picks up momentum over time. Grounded plans to deepen and develop 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. This will enable us to reach more people, incorporate inter-generational learning, and seed long-term habits and framework for growth.

Communities are complex. They require 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 building relationships to new partners 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.”



CHANGE
THE
SYSTEM

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

Grounded will advance policies and investments that reduce the impact of neglected and vacant land in the region.

We will focus on the level of municipal leadership and analyze budgeting, maintenance, as well as access policies and strategies to increase consistency, accountability, and transparency.



REFLECT
THE
COMMUNITY

Building trust requires connecting with, listening to, and addressing the needs of people on the ground.

Grounded will continue to prioritize diversity, equity and inclusion in our services and staff and board representation.

We continue to examine our processes and strategies to ensure they are equitable and will seek support to help remove institutional barriers from our methodology.

2020

By the Numbers

61
Partners

20
Youth
Participants

509
Volunteers

24
Stewards

7
Ambassadors

53
Stewarded
Spaces



6
New Green
Spaces



Where We Work

CITY	Manchester
Allegheny Center	Middle Hill
Allentown	North Shore
Bedford Dweelings	Observatory Hill
Beechview	Penn Hills
Brookline	Perry Hilltop
Central Northside	Upper Hill
Crawford-Roberts	Upper Lawrenceville
Duquesne	Uptown
East Allegheny	
East Liberty	County
Garfield	Clairton
Hazelwood	McKees Rocks
Homewood	McKeesport
Knoxville	Wilksburg
Larimer	
Lincoln-Lemington-	
Belmar	

Organizational Metrics

15
events



community
fundraising
conference



9
Reports
Produced



25
Toolbox
workdays

REVENUE

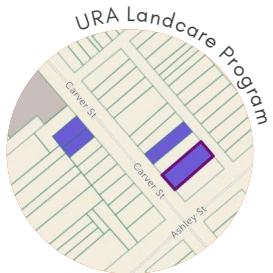
FOUNDATION	\$ 780,638
EARNED	\$ 123,940
GOVERNMENT	\$ 116,190
CORPORATE	\$ 2,441
EVENTS	\$ 10,045
INDIVIDUALS & BOARD	\$ 11,880
OTHER	\$ 4,026
	\$ 1,049,160

EXPENSE

PERSONNEL	\$ 540,641
PROGRAM	\$ 82,348
PROFESSIOINAL FEES	\$ 56,663
OFFICE & FACILITIES	\$ 69,650
OTHER	\$ 11,209
	\$ 760,511

* All numbers are unaudited at the time of publication.
 ** Annual surpluses are restricted for mission-related expenditures in the future

2020 PROJECTS





REFRESH FUND

The Refresh Fund is designed to cover small costs for upkeep and materials that usually prohibit resident involvement in urban environmental stewardship, particularly in low-income communities.

This fund supports the material and upkeep costs of community-greenspace investments like a fresh coat of paint, pickets to fix a hole in a fence, or mulch to support healthy plants and suppress weeds. If these small issues are not addressed, then maintenance needs add-up and costs become prohibitive, which can demotivate or burn-out the previously energized community stewards.

Residents can request materials through a simple application process on lotstolove.org. Upon approval, Grounded procures for the resident through purchase, bulk-buying, or informed solicitation of donations.

In the first year of the Refresh Fund, Grounded successfully distributed materials for site sustainability to a total of 19 project sites.

We connected 19 green space leaders with funds for site safety or sustainability improvements, for a total of \$7,321 invested directly into stewarded green spaces. We leveraged approximately \$775 in materials through donation. In 2020, this fund supported; raised bed replacement, accessibility and safety improvements, soil amendments, and materials for amenity repairs.



“There are people, who when we meet them, we feel an unburdening - and they leave us feeling a little lighter. The work that the people of Grounded do everyday in the communities that need it most is the very definition of what it means to care. We are eternally grateful for what they’ve done for us and so many others in making it possible to grow clean, organic, nutritious food.”

- Helen Baynes (Local Community Garden Manager)



Photos: (Top) Grounded staff meets with Lisa Freeman at Freeman Family Farms after construction of a hoop house and installation of rain barrels at her site. (Bottom Left) Soil is imported to the Oasis Farm and Fishery garden. (Bottom Right) Grounded staff meet with members of 5 Points Merchants Group to discuss plans for a community garden.

CITY FARM

In 2020, Grounded partnered with The City of Pittsburgh, Studio for Spatial Practice, and Grow Pittsburgh to imagine how urban farming on City land can be expanded to support resident growers and generate food resilience at the neighborhood scale. While the pandemic underscored the fragility of our regional food system, it provided an opportunity for local leaders to begin critically assessing how public land can be activated to support City residents in times of both need and plenty.

The City Farms project focused on supporting and expanding resident driven urban gardening efforts on public land in Districts 4 and 7, led by Councilman Anthony Coghill and Councilwoman Deb Gross respectively. In District 4, the project team created an Urban Agriculture Master Plan for the Memorial Field site.

For District 7, we analyzed scattered sites throughout the district, created an Urban Agriculture Master Plan for a short-list of promising Urban Farm sites, and developed Phase 1 of an implementation plan for new Demonstration Farm Plots, or the enhancement of an existing Garden/Farm Plots. Both projects included a community outreach program, detailed review and analysis of the selected sites, maintenance planning, and a coordinated effort to create a stewardship plan with the City that includes workforce development.



“This crisis that we are living through shows how important it is for the City to grow food that will aid in providing nutrition for its residents. For these reasons, members of the City Council are working together to develop a program that will create and support a network of farms and gardens throughout the City of Pittsburgh.” - An Lewis, Steel Valley COG



Photos: (Top) District 4’s Councilman Coghill outlines urban agriculture opportunities in District 4. (Bottom) Image from the District 7 Duncan Parklet Food Forest Plan.

COMMUNITY CARE WILKINSBURG

CommunityCare Wilkinsburg has been yet another successful iteration of the CommunityCare stewardship model. Taking notes from our longstanding Homewood program, we collaborated with both local and national partners to equip residents with the skills to transform their borough. Grounded offered educational sessions on several aspects of urban land stewardship and ownership, and provided hands-on support for stewardship activities throughout the borough.

Our model acknowledges the value of the stewards' contributions to their community. We reward activities such as vegetation maintenance, and litter cleanup via a credit system.



“As a single mom of three and a full-time student, I often find that it’s just not possible to find the time to do volunteer work. The credit system built into the CommunityCare program, however, made it possible for me. Because the time I spent volunteering could offset my utility payments or buy groceries, I was able to make it a priority in my schedule. Working with CommunityCare was incredibly rewarding, enjoyable, and even helped me to make ends meet during a difficult time.” - CommunityCare Wilkinsburg Steward



Photos: (Top Left) Grounded staff, Mayor Marita Garrett, and a local volunteer help distribute “grow bags” to Wilkinsburg residents at the Free Store. (Top Right) CommunityCare Stewards and Wilkinsburg residents team up with Local Roots Landscaping to clean up a neighborhood block.

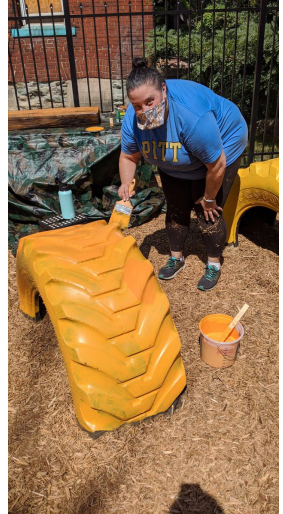
URBAN ACADEMY GREEN PLAYCE

The Manchester Academic Charter School owns several parcels of land in proximity to the school that may be used for a future building. There was a desire to use these parcels in the interim for increased play space and programmatic purposes. The outdoor spaces will primarily serve the 3-year to 11 year-old age range.

Urban Academy Green Playce, a.k.a. Pride Land was conceived by the school's administration in the hopes of turning the vacant land near the school into usable outdoor space for their students. Grounded worked with school teachers, staff and administration to envision an active, flexible space where elementary students can learn and play. Although the Covid-19 pandemic limited our ability to work with youth and host large volunteer days, we were able to execute construction with Grounded staff, contractors and limited volunteer help.

The Green Playce spans four fenced city lots. Active play features include a bamboo balance beam, log stepping stones, a rainbow of tractor tires for jumping and climbing, and tall wood post steppers fabricated by local woodworker, Jason Boone. A dry stream and pond break up the long, narrow space and offer sensory exploration with fine pea gravel and larger, egg-shaped river rock. Traditional African elements were incorporated into the design. They include; a metal drum, a custom made hanging amadidna, and an upright bamboo xylophone, painted by local artist, Kuwame Kinsel.

A bamboo teepee and grass-roofed hut encourage students to create shelters and pockets for more quiet activity. Seating mounds rimmed with boulders mark the entrance to a large, open play area to the rear that can operate as a gathering space.



Photos: (Top Left and Right) Community volunteers helping to install natural play features. (Top Center) Interactive play features and other amenities. (Bottom) View of the previous vacant lot transformed into outdoor space for Urban Academy students.



Soil
Keeper



Geared Up
& Grounded



ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORTERS

ORGANIZATIONAL PARTNERS

Abiding Ministries
ACCD
Allegheny County
Conservation District
Andy Warhol Museum
AVC Solutions
Bible Center Church
Black Environmental Collective
Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh
Carnegie Science Museum
Center Of Life
Center that CARES
Chapman Properties
Childrens Museum
City of Asylum
City of Duquesne
City of Pittsburgh
Civically
Department of Public Works
Duquesne Community Victory
Garden
Duquesne University
Environmental Charter School
EveryBody's Garden
Garfield Healcrest Farm
Glen Hazel Community
Resident Management
Corporation
Grow Pittsburgh
Gwen's Girls
Hazelwood Initiative
Hilltop Rising
Hosanna House
Jada House
Landgrid Technologies

Larimer Consensus Group
Lincoln Larimer Consensus
Group
Local Roots Landscaping
Mattress Factory
McKees Rocks CDC
Mission Continues
Neighborhood Allies
New Voices for Reproductive
Justice
Oasis Farm and Fishery
One Call Handles It All
Operation Better Block
Payne Chapel
Pennsylvania State University
Pittsburgh Major Taylor
Cycling Club
Pittsburgh Operations
Network of Nonprofits
Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy
POORLAW
Princeton Park Community
Group
Propel Hazewood
Sierra Club
Stone Soup Garden
Studio for Spatial Practice
The National Aviary -
Pittsburgh
University of Pittsburgh
University of Pittsburgh -
Engineers Without Borders
Urban Academy
Urban Redevelopment
Authority
Wilkinsburg CDC
Wilkinsburg Pollinator Group
Wilkinsburg Youth Project

ORGANIZATIONAL FUNDERS

Courtney Babcock
Borntraeger Foundation
Environmental Protection
Agency
Heinz Endowments
Healthy Ride Pgh
Highmark
Jefferson Regional Foundation
Laurel Foundation
Manchester Academic Charter
McAuley Ministries
McKees Rocks Community
Development Corporation
Network for Good
New Voices for Reproductive
Justice
Pennsylvania Cider and Meads
(Threadbare)
Point Breeze North CDC
Sierra Club
Studio for Spatial Practice
The Forbes Fund
The Mattress Factory
The Opportunity Fund
The Pittsburgh Foundation
The Schad Foundation
Tides Foundation
Urban Academy of Greater
Pittsburgh Charter School
Urban Redevelopment
Authority
Women for a Healthy
Environment

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John & Nicole Hays
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Kelsey Small
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Kirk Vandergriff



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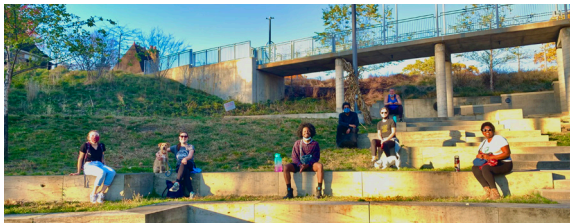
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