



2021 ANNUAL REPORT

grounded
change rooted in community





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Welcome!

On behalf of all us here at Grounded Strategies, we are so glad you are here.

Be you a program participant, a community member, a funder, or someone who found this booklet on a bus, we are honored to share the stories of stewards caring for neglected vacant land in the Pittsburgh region.

Decades of deindustrialization, suburbanization, white flight, and community divestment led to the proliferation of vacant land in our region. Concentrated vacancy leaves lasting negative effects on the mental, physical, and social health of the residents around them. In Pittsburgh alone, there are over 30,000 vacant lots.

The following pages provide a glimpse into Grounded's response to the lasting negative effects of the vacant land concentrated in our regions Black neighborhoods of low wage workers. Ours are stories of environmental restoration, improved quality of life, and strides towards intergenerational wealth, and most of all, joy!

My very best,



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.

2021

By the Numbers



20
Stewarded
Spaces



13
Projects



Where We Work

CITY

Allegheny Center
Allentown
Bedford Dwellings
Beechview
Braddock
Central Northside
Crawford-Roberts
East Allegheny
Fineview
Garfield
Hazelwood
Hill District
Homewood
Larimer
Lincoln-Lemington
Manchester
Middle Hill

North Shore
Perry Hilltop
Point Breeze
Sheraden
South Side Flats
Squirrel Hill
Upper Hill

County

Clairton
Duquesne
Penn Hills
Swissvale
Wilkinsburg

Organizational Metrics

11

Events



Community
Fundraising
Conference



3

Reports
Produced



37

Toolbox
Workdays

REVENUE

FOUNDATION	\$ 875,385
EARNED	\$ 58,245
GOVERNMENT	\$ 240,533
CORPORATE	\$ 4,160
EVENTS	\$ 4,671
INDIVIDUALS & BOARD	\$ 9,243
OTHER	\$ 40,895
	<hr/>
	\$ 1,233,132

EXPENSE

PERSONNEL	\$ 430,351
PROGRAM	\$ 111,049
PROFESSIOINAL FEES	\$ 18,817
OFFICE & FACILITIES	\$ 51,215
OTHER	\$ 11,250
	<hr/>
	\$ 622,682

* All numbers are unaudited at the time of publication.

** Annual surpluses are restricted for mission-related expenditures in the future

2021 PROJECTS



Land Doctor



Lots of Wildflowers



Mattress Factory



PB + G



PGH Mobile Toolbox



PWSA SWSP



Refresh Fund



Stewardship First Campaign



URA Landcare Program



Lots of Wildflowers

Grounded is working in partnership with The African Healing Garden and the Larimer Consensus Group to conduct a two-year study of a vacant lot in Larimer, exploring ways to use this space (as well as others in the future) to improve the ecological health and wildlife habitat of such spaces.

The project intends to beautify the community while exploring wildflower meadow and shrub/tree border plantings on urban vacant lots. Grounded has secured grant funding to plant and maintain the lots for at least 2 seasons. The project will help to establish new best practices for mid-term and long-term treatment of vacant land in the urban setting, with the potential to influence policy and maintenance practices at a systems level.

The proposed plan for the site includes (3) meadow test plots 30'x60' in size, separated by grass and clover pathways. The plots will test for variables including seed mixes, and maintenance intensity. Additional small trees and shrubs are planned for the front of the site to increase habitat, biodiversity, seasonal interest, and shade along the road.

As of June 2021, we officially broke ground at the Meadow Street site and started planting wildflower seed mixes including clovers, milkweeds, asters, goldenrods, and sunflowers. Throughout the summer we plan to plant more seeds as needed, work with our partners to determine a long-term care plan of the site, and provide any necessary maintenance to upkeep the site.



Photos: (Top) Meadow plots shown. Front beds are planted with chosen mix of wildflowers and pollinator plants which will reduce competition with weeds. (Bottom Left) Purple Clover (Bottom Right) Tickseed



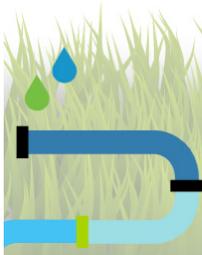
PWSA SWSP

Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority is seeking community input as it develops its Stormwater Strategic Plan which will serve as Pittsburgh's blueprint to address local stormwater challenges. It will seek to address the specific goals of improving water quality, reducing street flooding and basement backups, and beautifying neighborhoods in an affordable manner. All of which will create a community that is healthier, safer, and more resilient to the impacts of stormwater.

In partnership with PWSA, Grounded Strategies has launched a community-based effort to equip residents with information needed to engage their Pittsburgh Sewer and Water Authority (PWSA) Stormwater Strategic Plan peers on updates including design and investment strategies, stormwater fee, customer financial assistance program, and stormwater issues in their communities. For more information about PWSA Stormwater programs check out: <https://www.pgh2o.com/your-water/stormwater>.

The PWSA Stormwater Strategic Plan Ambassador program transforms passionate residents into well-equipped and knowledgeable champions of stormwater infrastructure in their communities. Throughout the program, Ambassadors are recruited, interviewed, selected, trained, & equipped for assigned community outreach objectives to include neighbor-to-neighbor education activities and community-scale data collection.

We seek to remove hurdles to participation and level curves of technical understanding for Ambassadors throughout the project.



PWSA Stormwater Strategic Plan Ambassador Program



(Bottom) Ambassadors attend cohort meeting at Grounded office



Duquesne Family Support Center

In July of 2021, Andre and Robyn Young of Chatman Properties came to us in search of design assistance for the Play Yard at the Urban League Family Support Center. The organization serves residents with children ages 0-5 at their facility on Library Place in Duquesne. Our objective was to create a comprehensive and engaging play space with both natural and upcycled materials.

In preparation for the initial design engagement, Design and Placemaking (DP) staff used open-source site data to produce digital print-outs of the existing playground conditions. These print-outs provided a foundation for the collaborative sketching session with Andre, Robyn and Support Center staff. Following this first meeting, DP staff collected data on-site to support further development of the preliminary design.

Once the partners reached consensus, DP staff produced a construction document set to finalize the design. These documents communicated product specifications, implementation strategies and technical instructions to the project contractors. DP staff also provided on-site support throughout the implementation process; we assisted in amenity installation and met with the contractors to confirm grading details.

With the help of Jason Boone, a bespoke wooden climbing gym has been installed on-site. A story circle has also been created, using reclaimed tree stumps as seating. DP staff built 4 Busy Boards using half-size wooden pallets and a collection of sensory objects from Home Depot and Creative Reuse. Privacy screening has also been installed along the existing chain fence. This project is expected to wrap up at the beginning of Summer 2022.



Photos: (Top Left) Grounded staff mark locations for log steppers (Top Right) Repair the World Fellow, Q Rice, painting flowers on “busy board” for the early childhood play amenity (Bottom) Completed “busy boards”



CommunityCare Hill District

CommunityCare is a public land stewardship program that supports people to care for vacant lots and urban greenspace in their communities. Program participants, or 'stewards', are provided training, tools, and continued support to perform self-directed clean-up and beautification work on their own time. Examples of steward activities include; litter clean-up, tending street trees or gardens, site beautification, among other options. The goal of the program is to make it easier for community-minded residents to engage in activities to beautify their neighborhoods.

CommunityCare began in 2017 in response to the shortage of resources being allocated to proactively maintaining green and open spaces in the public realm of Pittsburgh. This shortage has resulted in overgrown, unsafe, and inactive lots. In addition, this issue disproportionately affects low- and moderate-income communities. CommunityCare addresses this disparity by providing incentive-based stewardship, where stewards are recognized, rewarded and equipped to participate in green space maintenance work.

This Hill District cohort of the CommunityCare program came together in 2021 and built off of previous work Grounded had done in the Bedford Dwellings and Middle Hill neighborhoods of Pittsburgh. These engagements include; support in a community planning process, and the facilitation of multiple resident-led vacant land reclamation projects. The CommunityCare Hill District engages a small group of greenspace leaders to continue improving vacant land in their neighborhoods. This program was funded by McAuley Ministries.



(Top Left) Workday with Carnegie Mellon University student volunteers (Top Right) Local youth volunteers join orientation picnic (Bottom) Workday with Duquesne Terra volunteers





ECS
Panel



Geared Up
& Grounded



ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORTERS

ORGANIZATIONAL PARTNERS

Local Roots Landscaping
Grow Pittsburgh
Hazelwood Initiative
Mission Continues
Wilkinsburg CDC
Neighborhood Allies
Center Of Life



Black Environmental Collective
Pittsburgh Operations
Network of Nonprofits
Pittsburgh Major Taylor
Cycling Club
Duquesne University
Pennsylvania State University
Lincoln Larimer Conseunsus
Group
GTLO

ORGANIZATIONAL FUNDERS

Aetna Foundation
Allegheny Health Network
Babst & Calland Attorneys at
Law
BNY Mellon Corporation's
Community Partnership
Colcom Foundation
Community Development
Block Grant
Courtney Babcock
Borntraeger Foundation
Environmental Protection
Agency
Heinz Endowments
Highmark
Jefferson Regional Foundation
Laurel Foundation
Manchester Academic Charter



McAuley Ministries
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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