



grounded
change rooted in community

2022 | **ANNUAL
REPORT**



grounded
change rooted in community

6401 Penn Avenue | Floor 3 | Pittsburgh, PA 15206
www.groundedpgh.org
412.361.2099

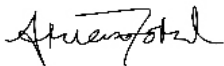
“Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.” -Barack Obama

In 2022, Grounded celebrated its 15 years of transforming neglected vacant lots into treasured community spaces. As the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic slips further into the rearview, we remain a small and mighty organization making big strides towards land justice 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 low wage communities of color. Ours are stories of environmental restoration, improved quality of life, strides towards intergenerational wealth, and most of all, joy!

My best,
Ariam Ford, Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ariam Ford', written in a cursive style.

2019-2023

STRATEGIC PLAN

STAY LONGER

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.

DO MORE

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.



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.



"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."

2022

BY THE NUMBERS

PROJECTS

18

Projects
Supported



35

Volunteer
Workdays

4

New Green
Spaces



63

Stewards &
Ambassadors



16

Program
Events



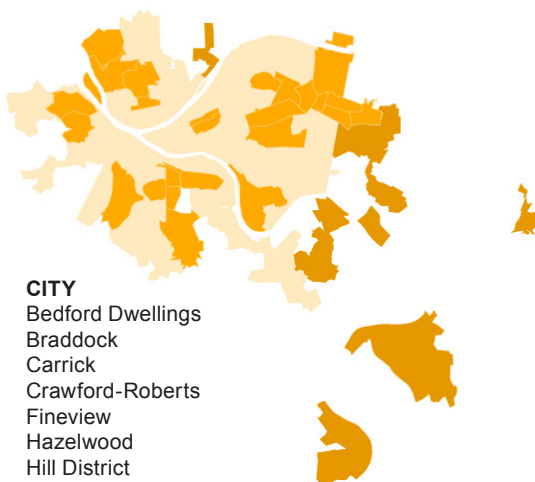
423

Volunteers

ORGANIZATION

- 17 Community Partners
- 2 Reports Produced
- 5 Conferences/Summits
- 9 Designs Created

WHERE WE WORK



CITY

Bedford Dwellings
 Braddock
 Carrick
 Crawford-Roberts
 Fineview
 Hazelwood
 Hill District
 Homewood
 Larimer
 Manchester
 Middle Hill
 Upper Hill
 Uptown

COUNTY

Duquesne
 Wilkesburg

WATERSHEDS

Four Mile Run
 Heth's Run
 Negley Run
 Saw Mill Run
 Soho Run
 Upper Monongahela
 Woods Run

REVENUE

Foundation	\$ 1,165,846
Earned	\$ 90,656
Government	\$ 2,065
Corporate	\$ 8,443
Events	\$ 2,315
Individuals & Board	\$ 29,470
Other	\$ 11,081

\$ 1,329,714

EXPENSES

Personnel	\$ 535,042
Program	\$ 250,805
Professional Fees	\$ 24,192
Office & Facilities	\$ 49,637
Other	\$ 18,639

\$ 878,315

* All numbers are unaudited at the time of publication.

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

2022 PROJECTS



African Healing Garden
Extension Design



Carrick Community
Garden Design



Community Revitalization
Fellowship



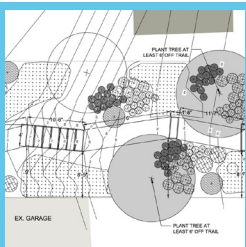
CommunityCare
Hill District



CommunityCare
Homewood



CommunityCare
Wilkinsburg



Edenvale Trail Design



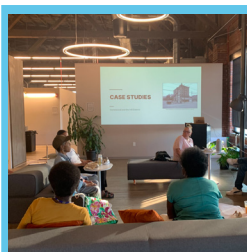
Gaining Ground



Green Playce:
Duquesne Family Support
Center



Green Playce:
Manchester Academic
Charter School



Ground Truthing



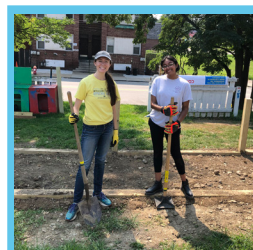
Grounded Community
Co-Design Studio



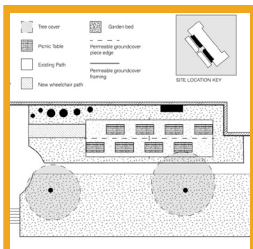
Hazelwood Resident
Remembrance Project



Lots of Wildflowers



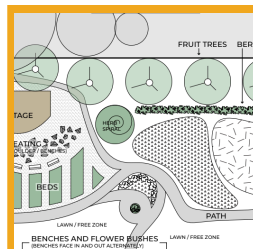
The Nook Project at
Oasis Farm and Fishery



Propel Hazelwood
Outdoor Commons
Design



PWSA Stormwater
Strategic Plan
Ambassador Program



Unity Garden Design

Edenvale

Trail Design



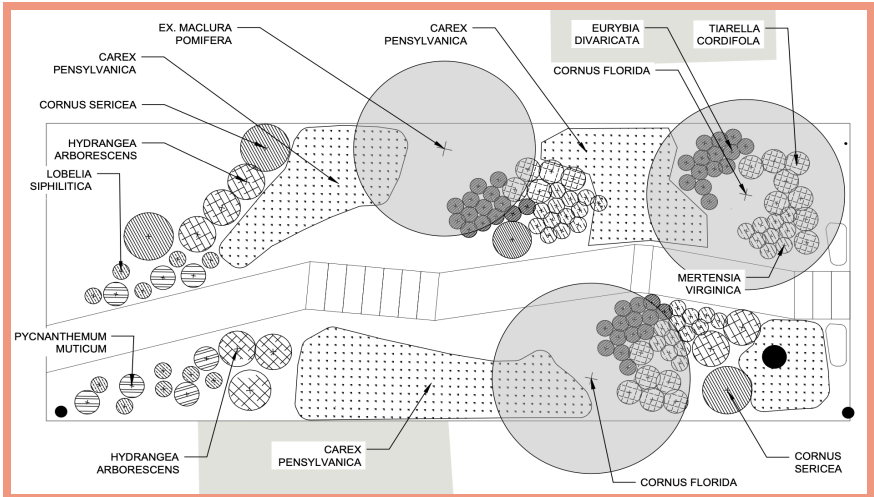
The Design and Placemaking team at Grounded collaborated with Fineview Perry-Hilltop Citizens Council to kickstart a walkability improvement project in Fineview. This project is one of several improvements detailed in the Choice Neighborhoods Early Action Activities Narrative. This directive outlines public space developments set to occur in multiple Northside communities, including California-Kirkbride, Charles Street Valley, Fineview, Perry Hilltop, and Allegheny Dwellings.

The goal of this project is to create an accessible connection between Edenvale Street and Fineview Avenue, improving resident access to amenities like outdoor work-out equipment, a running track, half-court, a children's playground and more located within Fineview Park.

The project site, located on a vacant parcel between Edenvale Street and Fineview Avenue, is a steep, overgrown slope between two vacant structures. In the site's current state, passage to the park up from Edenvale Street is unpleasant at best. While improvements to the surrounding area are surely needed, this site presents an opportunity to make a big impact with a relatively small change.

Prior to beginning design work, the Design and Placemaking Team convened a site visit with representatives from Choice Neighborhoods, the Pittsburgh Arts Commission, and Landforce, to set expectations and establish consensus. Grounded then produced construction documents and a concept rendering to visualize proposed changes to the site.

The design creates a gravel pathway with timber box steps from Edenvale Street to Fineview Avenue. The pathway meanders slightly as it approaches Fineview Avenue to mitigate the upward slope, and the area surrounding the path will be populated with a variety of native species.



The Construction Drawing of the proposed design for Edenvale Trail created by Grounded Project Manager, Eleni Contis and Project Coordinator, Aubrey Bloxdorf.



A color rendering of the proposed design for Edenvale Trail created by Grounded Project Manager, Eleni Contis.

Ground Truthing



Hypervacancy, or concentrations of vacant land that lack investment, have marked health impacts on the residents.

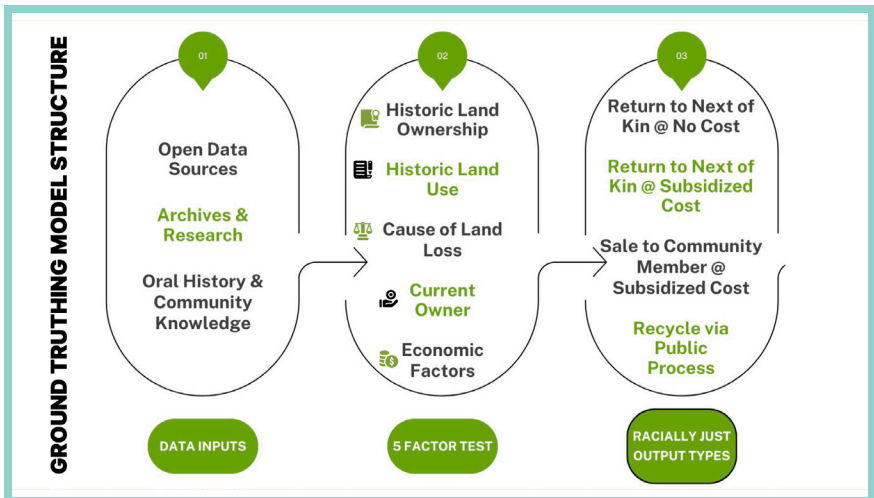
Urban planning policies and discriminatory lending practices have systematically harmed Black residents and led to hyper vacancy.

Children living in neighborhoods with hyper vacant conditions are shown to achieve less academically, are chronically sicker, and earn less over their lifetime.

Grounded Strategies, de-bias, and Resident Data Collectors are working with residents to collect information on how the vacant land around them became vacant.

Every lot has a different story and history that we want to acknowledge. We are building out an accurate vacant lot database created using community knowledge around land loss in order to create a racially just land recycling process.

We know land has a deep history other than it being seen as vacant, abandoned, or deteriorated. By working with residents to learn about the history of the land and injustices that have left the land vacant, we are able to collect valuable information that will enable us to create this database.



Slide from the Centering Community History in Data Collection & Vacant Land Reuse presentation which was prepared for the 2022 Reclaiming Vacant Properties Conference.



Grounded worked with New Sun Rising's Creative Advocacy Program on August 31st with residents from Homewood to document stories of land loss and what the alternative future of the land could have been if the resident had the resources and support to hold onto the land. We discussed the racist practices and disinvestment employed by the City of Pittsburgh/local developers that have led to the systemic problem of hypervacancy in Homewood.

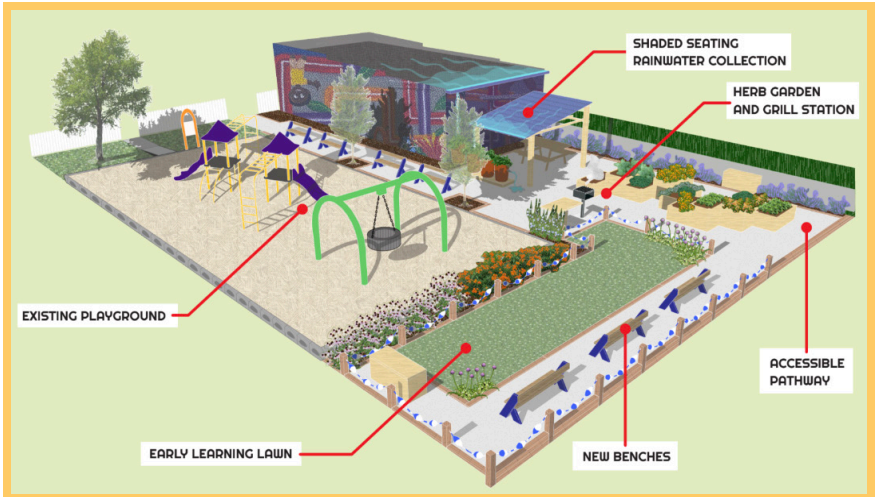
The Nook at Oasis



The Nook Project at Oasis Farm and Fishery (Oasis) is a design intervention that addresses vacancy and public space concerns in Homewood.

Last fall, Oasis' Tacumba Turner collaborated with architectural designer and Carnegie Mellon University graduate, Ever Clinton, and The Falk School of Sustainability at Chatham University to initiate a community charette series. This summer, Oasis partnered with Grounded to implement changes to the site according to resident feedback. Our team began construction of an intergenerational, outdoor educational space where residents of Homewood can learn about medicinal plants.

Contributions from the Richard K. Mellon Foundation made this partnership and early work possible. The bulk of the budget for this project was contributed by an individual donor who was interested in improving health outcomes for young children through creating more healthy green spaces in high-vacancy urban neighborhoods.



A rendering based on an updated design produced by Grounded Project Manager, Eleni Contis, based on additional community feedback and changes related to site control.



A workday at Oasis Farm and Fishery on July 16, 2022.

Community Care

Hill District



The Grounded CommunityCare Program works to inspire and support cohorts of residents to care for vacant lots and urban greenspace. Program participants, or 'stewards', receive tools and training to develop local capacity, incentives to recognize their accomplishments and relieve financial pressure, and opportunities to expand social, civic, and professional networks. Stewards report their care and beautification activities in exchange for credits that can be redeemed for a variety of safety net resources, including meal services, bus passes, and utility payments. To date, CommunityCare stewards have invested more than 2,000 hours across Allegheny County to stabilize and beautify their neighborhoods.

At the end of the 2022 CommunityCare stewardship season there were 9 active and official stewards in the Hill District CommunityCare cohort.

During 2022, Stewards collectively contributed 767 hours of clean-up and beautification activities. Although the cohort is smaller than others, it is highly active. Based on activity in other cohorts, we had initially projected a cumulative total of steward hours to be close to 800 over two years instead of only one year.



On October 14th we ended our 2022 working season with a celebration of our CommunityCare Stewards at the Garfield Community Farm.



On Juneteenth (June 19, 2022) we worked with volunteers from Duquesne Light Company at "Cat's Corner," a green space site on the corner of Bedford Avenue and Junilla Street.

GEARED UP

&

GROUND





FIELD DAY with PARTNERS



ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORTERS

ORGANIZATIONAL PARTNERS

Black Environmental Collective
Center of Life
Duquesne University
Grow Pittsburgh
Get the Lead Out, Pittsburgh
Larimer Consensus Group
Lincoln-Lemington Belmar Consensus Group
Local Roots Landscaping
Mission Continues
Negley Run Watershed
Neighborhood Allies
Pennsylvania State University
Pittsburgh Major Taylor Cycling Club
Pittsburgh Operations Network of Nonprofits
Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy
TriCOG Land Bank
Wilksburg CDC

ORGANIZATIONAL FUNDERS

Allegheny Health Network
Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield
Local Roots Landscaping
Trace Brewing

INDIVIDUAL DONORS

Alexa Deluca
Anna Archer
Anna Kochersperger
Anna Carbinio
Ashley Seiler
Autumn Walker
Beth Slagle
Chad Greenlee
Charles Goodwin
Christine Brill
Cynthia Closkey
Dr. Danielle Andrews Brown
Darnell Moses
David Lassman
David Stasenko
Gordon Hodnett
Hana Uman
Joan Bowser
Katherine Copic
Kenneth Levin
Leeza McGowan
Leonard V Amato Jr.
Linda Malinowski
Michael Shaughnessy
Michael Zimmerman
Nancy Latimer
Nathan Porter
Nick Pantalone
Rebecca Mizikar
Renee Pusey
Sarah Williams Wilson
Shequaya Bailey
Dr. Shondricka Burrell
Staci Egan
Stephen Tirone
Tammy Bowers
Teresa Hammond

BOARD MEMBERS

Ashley Jones
Ben Mileville
Charlie Goodwin
Dr. Danielle Andrews-Brown
Darnell Moses
Dora P. Magovern
Gordon Hodnett
Nick Pantalone
Sarah Williams Willson

STAFF MEMBERS

Aubrey Bloxdorf
Ariam Ford
Ashley Seiler
Becca Simon
Eleni Contis
Masoud Sayles
Nathan Porter
Kelsey Small
Riley McGrath
Shequaya Bailey
Skylar McGinley
Tom Mulholland





6401 Penn Avenue | Floor 3 | Pittsburgh, PA 15206
www.groundedpgh.org
412.361.2099