



## NEIGHBORHOOD ALLIES

- **Presley Gillespie, President & CEO**
- **Gentrification Debates: Perceptions and Realities of Neighborhood Change**
- **Harvard University Graduate School of Design**
- **April 9, 2025**

**Our vision** is for all neighborhoods to be resilient, thriving, and equitable.

**Our mission** is to engage Pittsburgh area residents and organizations with innovative tools that expand opportunity for transformative community change.

**We believe** the elimination of barriers begins with uplifting creative community ideas.

**We promise** to create pathways of opportunity that lead to healthy neighborhoods.



## Equity and Inclusion Statement

We center our work and investments to foster a more just, fair, and inclusive society in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential. We emphasize the importance of racial equity—the condition achieved when one’s identity no longer statistically predicts how one fares. Racial equity is a part of racial justice and thus we work to address root causes of inequities and not just their manifestations.



# Introduction – What is Gentrification?

- Gentrification refers to the process of urban transformation characterized by an influx of more affluent residents into historically lower-income neighborhoods. Often leads to rising property values, increased rents, and the displacement of long-term residents.



## Key Characteristics

**Economic shifts:** Changes in local real estate markets and property ownership.

**Demographic changes:** An influx of higher-income residents, often accompanied by cultural shifts.

**Physical changes:** Renovation and redevelopment of housing and commercial spaces



Value Bucket	Description	Developer Questions
<b>Economic</b>	ROI, property appreciation, job creation, financial sustainability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will this project impact property values and local businesses?</li> <li>• Is the project financially viable long-term?</li> </ul>
<b>Design &amp; Sustainability</b>	Sustainable design, resilience, usability, accessibility, climate impact.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the design meet the needs of future users while being environmentally responsible?</li> <li>• Is the project built for durability and ease of maintenance?</li> </ul>
<b>Political &amp; Regulatory</b>	Zoning, planning policies, legal compliance, public-private partnerships, governance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the project comply with zoning and regulatory requirements?</li> <li>• Are there incentives or funding opportunities tied to policy alignment?</li> </ul>
<b>Social &amp; Cultural</b>	Placekeeping, Preserving history, public spaces, affordable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who benefits from this development, and who may be negatively impacted?</li> <li>• How does the project ensure community input and engagement?</li> </ul>
<b>Ethical &amp; Moral</b>	Fairness, just development, equitable access, who benefits vs. who is harmed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the development decisions ethical and just?</li> <li>• How can we ensure that marginalized communities have a voice in this process?</li> </ul>



# Challenging Displacement - Equity

- **Addressing Social and Economic Inequalities.** One of the primary reasons for the emergence of equitable development is to address the social and economic inequalities that exist within communities. It recognizes the need to ensure that all individuals, regardless of their background or circumstances, have access to opportunities, resources, and benefits.
- **Challenging Displacement and Gentrification.** Equitable Development aims to challenge and remove the negative impacts of displacement, which often disproportionately affect Black and marginalized communities. It seeks to promote strategies that prevent displacement and ensure individuals can build wealth, improve quality of life, and enhance social well-being as part of the development.
- **Promoting Inclusion and Participation.** Equitable Development emphasizes the importance of inclusive and participatory decision-making processes.
- **Fostering Sustainable and Resilient Communities.** It advocates for development practices that prioritize environmental sustainability, resource conservation, and climate resilience, while considering the social and economic well-being of community members.
- **Advancing Social Justice and Equity.** Equitable Development is grounded in the principles of social justice and equity. It seeks to address historical and systemic injustices by promoting equitable distribution of resources, opportunities, and benefits within communities.

# POWERING PEOPLE-CENTERED DEVELOPMENT:

How Our Programs Work Together to Build Community-Led Neighborhoods

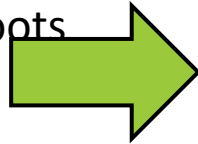
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## An Integrated Approach to Community Development

### SID program

#### Design + Engagement

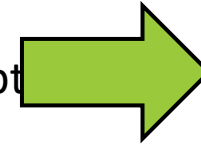
- Helps residents and grassroots orgs visualize community-driven ideas
- Provides co-design and storytelling support for equitable outcomes



### CREA program

#### Technical Assistance + Capacity Building

- Guides projects from concept to construction
- Supports Black and brown developers and community orgs navigating real estate processes



### NCF

#### Capital Stack Support





- Offers early-stage funding, loan guarantees, and equity investments
- Closes gaps in financing for community-rooted projects

#### Together, These Programs:

- Bridge the gap between vision and implementation
- Strengthen local capacity and reduce dependency on outside developers
- Align capital with community priorities for long-term impact

# OUR ANSWER: POWERING PEOPLE-CENTERED DEVELOPMENT:

## How Our Programs Work Together to Build Community-Led Neighborhoods

Development Approach	Traditional Development	Equity-Centered Community Development (ECCD)
 <b>Process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Top-down, developer-driven decision-making</li> <li>• Limited community input</li> <li>• Financial feasibility prioritized over social impact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participatory, community-led planning</li> <li>• Co-creation with local stakeholders</li> <li>• Balancing financial feasibility with long-term social equity</li> </ul>
 <b>Policy &amp; Regulation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focuses on meeting minimum zoning &amp; regulatory requirements</li> <li>• Relies on top-down policy implementation</li> <li>• Incentives favor large-scale developers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocates for equitable policies &amp; land use</li> <li>• Supports community land trusts &amp; anti-displacement measures</li> <li>• Encourages local ownership &amp; wealth-building</li> </ul>
 <b>Impact on Communities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can lead to displacement &amp; gentrification</li> <li>• Prioritizes economic return over social impact</li> <li>• Standardized solutions without cultural relevance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protects affordability &amp; cultural identity</li> <li>• Invests in public spaces, local businesses, &amp; social infrastructure</li> <li>• Prioritizes long-term well-being of residents</li> </ul>
 <b>Outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short-term financial gains for developers &amp; investors</li> <li>• Lack of long-term affordability &amp; community stability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long-term affordability &amp; sustainable growth</li> <li>• Community wealth-building &amp; resilience</li> </ul>

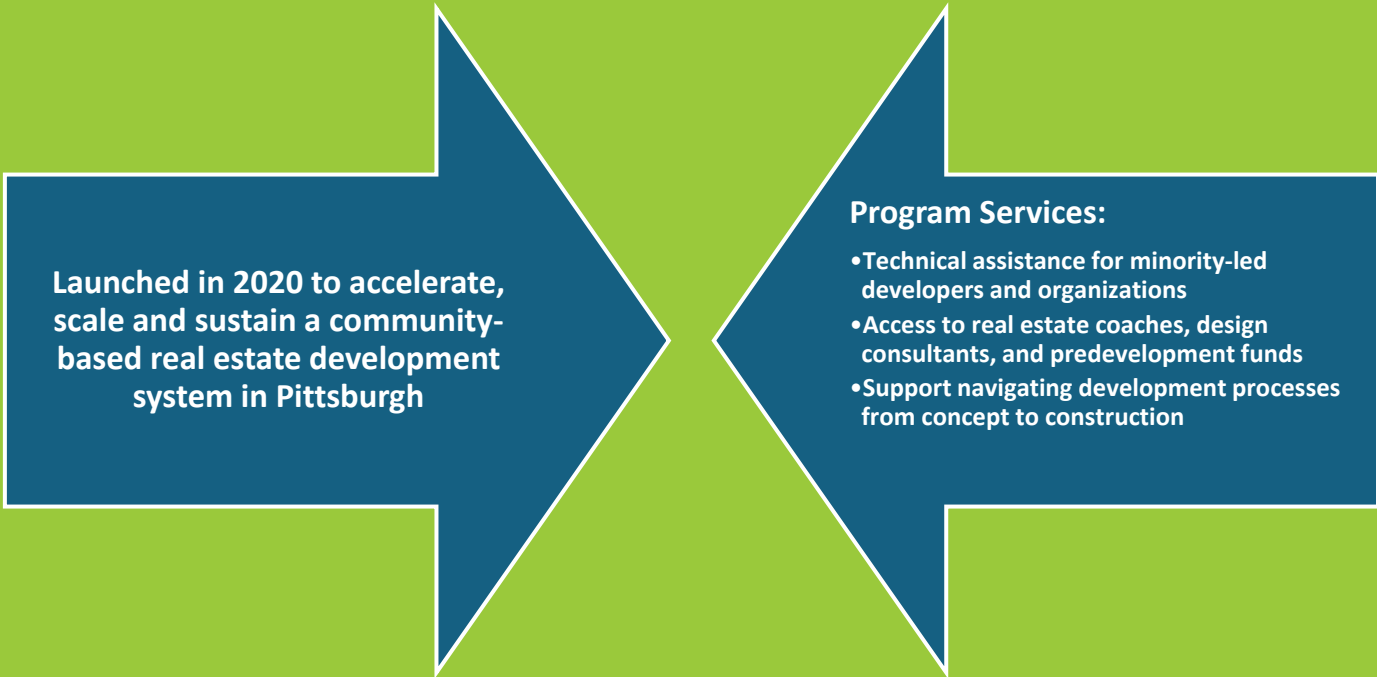


# POWERING PEOPLE-CENTERED DEVELOPMENT:

How Our Programs Work Together to Build Community-Led Neighborhoods

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## CENTRALIZED REAL ESTATE ACCELERATOR



Launched in 2020 to accelerate, scale and sustain a community-based real estate development system in Pittsburgh

### Program Services:

- Technical assistance for minority-led developers and organizations
- Access to real estate coaches, design consultants, and predevelopment funds
- Support navigating development processes from concept to construction



# POWERING PEOPLE-CENTERED DEVELOPMENT:

How Our Programs Work Together to Build Community-Led Neighborhoods

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## NEIGHBORHOOD CAPITAL

Innovative program providing funding for Black developers leading real estate development projects which strengthen Black communities

### Products offered:

Grants for initial project expenses such as design services or feasibility studies

Loan guarantees/Collateral pledges for shorter-term, predevelopment loans

Equity investments (non-preferred stakes) made into the project to help close gaps of the permanent capital stack





# POWERING PEOPLE-CENTERED DEVELOPMENT:

How Our Programs Work Together to Build Community-Led Neighborhoods

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## Social Impact Design

Makes professional design accessible to historically disinvested communities by providing project management and schematic design support to produce community inspired interventions.

### Program Services:

Co-design and visual storytelling for community development projects

Engagement strategies that translate resident ideas into design concepts

Design services provided at pro bono or below-market rates based on project need





# Rhythm Sqaure by Studio Volcy

2239 Centre Ave. | Hill District | 16,000 Sq ft. | \$5.5M+ | In Progress



**40 hours**  
of technical assistance



**31 units**  
of affordable housing



**\$1.5M**  
in funding leveraged



**9 spaces**  
for neighborhood businesses

Between the 1950s and 1990s the Hill lost 71% of its residents and 400 businesses. This displacement is still felt today, as 35% of Hill District residents live below the poverty line.

Once completed, Rhythm Sqaure, a mixed-use development, will include **retail shops, artist studios, micro-restaurants, live-work space and 31 beautiful affordable-housing units alongside an outdoor plaza, wall and street murals, public art installations and more.** In addition to renting apartments to 80% or less AMI households, there will also be affordable commercial space for budding entrepreneurs, existing small businesses, and artists.



The Real Estate Co-Powerment Series is an education platform designed for community members, nonprofits and small businesses, that demystifies the real estate development process so they can better participate in and benefit from their own neighborhood revitalization and learn how to get active projects across the finish line.

Featuring in-class instruction, coaching and mentorship, the 5-week series includes topics such as:

- Acquisition
- Proforma
- Financing
- Construction
- Architecture
- Transactional Law
- Liability Insurance
- Community Engagement
- City Planning
- Credit
- Landbanks
- Grants & Funding



Since launching in 2017, over **300 individuals** have graduated from the Co-Powerment Series, acquiring over **100 units of housing and commercial real estate** for neighborhood-based redevelopment.

## Join Our Next Cohort! Launching March 25, 2025

Classes will be held on Tuesday and Thursday 6-8PM in-person at The Kingsley Association Community Center, located at 6435 Frankstown Avenue. The course fee is \$100.



Register at [bit.ly/RE-Co-Powerment2025](https://bit.ly/RE-Co-Powerment2025)







Centralized Real Estate Accelerator



Digital Inclusion



Social Impact Design



Youth Banking/Bank On



Small Business Dev.

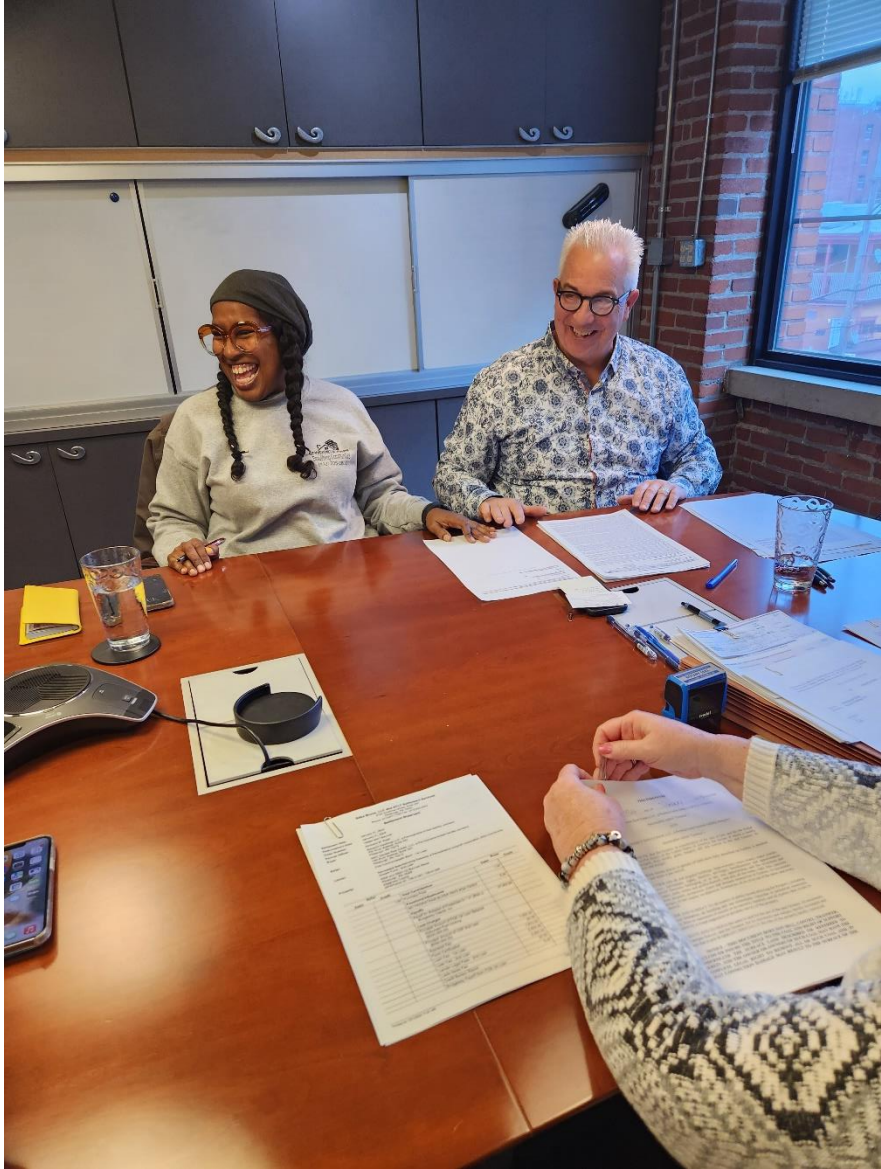


Black Mental Health



## **Accelerating, scaling, and sustaining a community-based real estate development system across Pittsburgh.**

In 2022, Tina Daniels, founder of [Concrete Rose Construction](#), embarked on her first multi-unit, multi-phase redevelopment project—sixteen units of affordable housing in Homewood. Phase 1 of the project, which will culminate in four units of newly constructed affordable housing on Bennett Street, called “Benedict Dwellings,” is already underway. In fact, demolition of the old structure and framing of the new structure is set to be finished by the end of November. Three of the four units will be reserved for families earning at or below 50% area median income (AMI), while the fourth will be leased to a family earning between 60% and 80% area median income (AMI).









# BUILDING CAPACITY

## 2024 By the Numbers:

- 600+ Small Businesses Connected with Resources
- 70+ Community Organizations Engaged in Programs
- 215+ Community Building Engagements
- 100+ Partnerships Formed
- 3,600 Students with Digital Upskilling
- 100+ Free laptops distributed to residents
- 790+ Households with access to free internet
- 6,800+ Hours of free mental health support/treatment
- 1,200+ Residents Connects with Mental Health Resources



# FOSTERING ECONOMIC MOBILITY

- **2024 By the Numbers:**
  - \$2.7M Dollars of Savings Built
  - 2,400 Residents Served
  - \$6.3M Dollars of Debt Reduced
  - 400 Youth Bank Accounts Opened
  - 125 Credit Scores Improved by 35 Points or More





## ADVANCING EQUITY | Digital Inclusion and Equity

**Removing barriers for Pittsburghers in under-resourced communities to access and achieve technology and digital skills in an increasingly digital world.**

Through a partnership with Verizon, residents of Homewood now have access to new cutting-edge technology for enhanced hands-on learning through Verizon's Community Forward Initiative, of which Pittsburgh was selected as one of four pilot cities to implement.



***“With this generous investment from Verizon, we are able to continue working towards bridging the digital equity gap in Pittsburgh and creating healthy neighborhoods of opportunity for all. We could not have achieved this without our many valued partners, including those at the Homewood Children’s Village, University of Pittsburgh Community Engagement Centers, and Community College of Allegheny County.”***

***-Neighborhood Allies President and CEO Presley Gillespie***

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**“POOR PEOPLE  
DON'T HATE  
GENTRIFICATION,  
THEY JUST HATE  
THAT THEY  
RARELY GET TO  
HANG AROUND  
LONG ENOUGH TO  
ENJOY ITS  
BENEFITS”.**

MAJORA CARTER,  
AMERICAN URBAN REVITALIZATION STRATEGIST

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# *Thank you!*

*Any questions?*

