Proposal to Hill House Association
For Connecting The Hill District To The Eliza Furnace Trail And Schenley Park

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Abstract

Problem Statement

The project focuses on a trail design to connect the Hill District to Eliza Furnace Trail and Schenley Park concentrating both on increasing awareness of health and wellness for the people of the Hill District and also, on better connecting Hill District with surrounding neighborhoods. The project is a collaboration with the Hill House Association in connection with the Pittsburgh Park Conservancy’s Greenprint Plan. Based on research we will propose alternate routes to connect Hill District to the Eliza Furnace Trail and any needed improvements, such as sidewalks with retaining walls and street lighting, for pedestrian safety and accessibility to the trail. Proposed routes will be highlighted, via a map and pamphlet combination, based on difficulty, pedestrian or bicycle access, cultural significance, and availability of Alleghany County Port Authority bus routes. The Statement of Work and Gantt Chart further explain the plan for what we hope to achieve.
Background

Our project is to create a pedestrian trail between Hill District and the Eliza Furnace Trail. The Hill, specifically Hill House, is where the trail will begin and where the neighborhood will be most affected by new access to the Eliza Furnace Trail. To understand the need for trail and park access in the community, one must first understand the community itself and the organizations that developed the idea for a connection to the Eliza Furnace Trail and Schenley Park.

The Hill District came into being in the 1840’s when the land was partitioned and sold to future residents. The original settlers of the Hill District gave way to waves of Jewish, European, and then African-American immigrants respectively as the allure of work in factories, and other areas of industry, and the reports of relief from segregation drew many people to the Hill District. By the late 1930’s and 1940’s the Hill District was in its golden age and had become an African American cultural center and a jazz capital.

The golden age ended quickly and the neighborhood slowly deteriorated to the point that Downtown Pittsburgh cut off economical ties with the area. Attempts were made to redevelop the area, but the violence and arsons of the Civil Rights Era destroyed any progress that had been made to redevelop the area and caused hundreds of thousands of dollars in property damage. The area has since been slowly attempting to revitalize the community, however is met by challenges such the lack of grocery stores within the community limits. Also, interspersed between family homes and new businesses many commercial and residential lots are vacant and will be either refurbished or demolished [1].

The Hill House Association has continuously been working to revitalize the area into a strong, safe community where people would want to live and conduct business. One way to redevelop the Hill is to connect the neighborhood to the rest of the city, providing ways for people to get to and from other parts of Pittsburgh. In the process, the Hill House Association hopes to highlight the many good qualities of the Hill District and its people.

Hill House is dedicated to rejuvenating the hill district, as evidenced in their mission to deliver a variety of integrated services to the community. The roots of Hill House go back to the early 1900’s but the organization as it is known today was not born until 1964 when the Hill City Youth municipality and earlier settlement houses combined in an effort to reconnect and revitalize the community. Hill House has continually created new programs to increase health, welfare, recreation, and community ties with the help of its campus partners [2]. The creation of a connection from Hill House to the Eliza Furnace Trail is primarily a health and wellness initiative that is overseen by community ambassador Terri Baltimore. Ms. Baltimore has expressed the need for an eco-friendly and historically significant

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http://www.hillhouse.org/home/about/history.html
method of connecting the people of Hill District with nearby trails and Schenley Park. The project is part of the Pittsburgh Park Conservancy’s Greenprint plan.

The Greenprint plan is a template for the Hill District’s future, designed and executed with the citizens of the neighborhood in mind. The plan is centered on three main goals. The first goal is to offer substantial daily access to nature in the form of green spaces, walking/biking routes, and parks in order to provide an above average quality of life to the people of the Hill District. Secondly, the Greenprint plan endeavors to utilize the natural landscape of the hill, become leaders in preservation and restoration, and ultimately make the Hill District a perfect model of urban beauty. Finally, the Greenprint plan strives to capitalize on leadership and innovation opportunities in an expanding local, green economy. Though specific plans are clearly outlined in the proposal, the Greenprint is a continuing effort to improve the Hill District while focusing on three distinct components: The Village, The Woods, and Conveyance.

The Village contains the majority of the commercial and social activity in the Hill, and the Greenprint is attempting to integrate the civic and neighborhood space of the Village into one cohesive entity with a more visible infrastructure. The Woods, by contrast, is defined as the densely vegetated areas situated on topographically challenging terrain, and the Greenprint is striving in these areas to enlarge existing parks and interconnect houses and circulation with adjacent greenery. Finally, Conveyance hopes to highlight the historical relevance of the streams and tributaries that run through the Hill District, to improve the quality of these streams and tributaries, and to create additional tributaries. The Greenprint is a unique and ambitious plan to rejuvenate an area, in that it utilizes the results of already completed community service projects to highlight the main goals of the plan [3].

The project, in collaboration with the Hill House Association, will explore how to connect the Hill District to the Eliza Furnace Trail as a subset of the Greenprint’s plan to integrate the three above-mentioned components of the Hill District in a health and wellness initiative. The Hill House Association would like to take the connection one step further and use it to increase positive awareness of the development and restoration occurring in the Hill District. The project will research alternate routes with specific detail on difficulty, accessibility, cultural significance, and need for improvement. Further research will explore the feasibility, cost, zoning, and legality of any improvements that are needed to ensure the safety of pedestrians, such as the implementation of sidewalks and lighting underneath the Birmingham Bridge. The proposed design will be based on individual and group assessments of the suggested routes, from on-site observations and research, and on the feasibility of efficiently delivering the best possible routes.

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Goals

1. Develop Multiple Connections to Eliza Furnace Trail From Hill District
   a. Centre and Ross Street to Grant Street Trailhead
      *Rationale:* This urban connection is more level than those that go directly to the trail head near the Birmingham Bridge. Furthermore, the sidewalks along this connection are wide enough for biking as well as walking, and there are crosswalks at all busy intersections. In addition, this potential route passes some important historical and cultural landmarks, including the old county jail and original county offices. Additional perks of this connection are the bike shop located near the trailhead, and its proximity to the 1st avenue subway station. The only clear disadvantages of this trail are that it is slightly lengthier than the other connections and does not go as far through Hill District as the others.

   b. Dinwiddie Street to Birmingham Bridge Trailhead
      *Rationale:* This connection was selected over Kirkpatrick for a variety of reasons. First, this connection goes down to Fifth Avenue past the Birmingham Bridge where there is less car traffic. As such, crossing the street to get down to Forbes Avenue is much safer. This connection is also shorter and on the whole more consistently sloped, better developed in terms of housing and whole sidewalks, and less overgrown than Kirkpatrick. The only clear disadvantage of this potential connection is that it is close to Kirkpatrick and Hill House Association expressed interest in keeping the current connection as an open possibility.

   c. Crawford Street to Pride Street to Birmingham Bridge Trailhead
      *Rationale:* Utilizing a connection such as this has distinct benefits of its own, including its proximity to the Crawford Square area, creating a convenient option for these residents. Moreover, this connection is near Consol Energy Center, as well as many other businesses, which is an area of heavy movement that promotes safety. Another unique feature of this connection is that it goes directly to Forbes Avenue. The final feature of the connection is that it is not a steep grade at many points and only has one slight elevation increase. The only clear negative of the trail is that pedestrians backtrack a few blocks to get to the Centre and Crawford Street intersection.

2. Birmingham Bridge Evaluation
   *Rational:* The second access point to the Eliza Furnace Trail is located at the crossing of Brady Street and Second Avenue underneath the Birmingham Bridge. This entrance to the trail is located the closest to Hill District, however it is not currently safe or convenient for pedestrian usage. As it
stands, there are no sidewalks, crosswalks or pedestrian lights on this busy motorist thoroughfare. The area surrounding the road has a high elevation grade, is covered in rubble and trash, and often has homeless just off the road (see Appendix B). The evaluation contained in the final report will give suggestions on how to build needed infrastructure near the trail access point and the most cost effective and sustainable ways to implement changes.

3. Increase Cultural Awareness of Hill District
   *Rationale:* Each route to the Eliza Furnace Trail begins at Hill House in Hill District and highlights positive aspects of the district. The individual routes accentuate new housing areas, open green spaces, and community venues of the surrounding areas. The existence of routes to access the trail can also serve as a positive selling aspect to potential new residents. Finally, the routes connecting to the Eliza Furnace Trail show how easy it is for Hill District to be connected with the surrounding communities of Oakland, Golden Triangle, and Uptown. Hill District is an area of little known beauty and history that this project, along with Hill House’s continuing efforts, can promote.

4. Create Visual Representations of the Project
   *Rationale:* In order to bring awareness to the accessibility of the Eliza Furnace Trail, visual representations of the connections are a critical component of the project. Hill House serves as a kind of welcome center and home away from home to new and current residents, and as such, is a great place to keep information about these connections. As is also the case with most welcome centers, a large map of the area is being considered, as well as a more portable pamphlet of information.

**Work Description**

1. Preliminary Research
   1.1 Greenprint Plan
      1.1.1 Ongoing projects
      1.1.2 As it relates to our project
   1.2 Birmingham Bridge Research
      1.2.1 Pedestrian/Traffic Laws
      1.2.2 Zoning regulations
   1.3 Hill House/District
      1.3.1 History
      1.3.2 Current Status
   1.4 Preliminary Connection Ideas
2. Initial Client Phone Call
   2.1 Receive clarity on project goals
   2.2 Feedback on current connection possibilities
3. Follow Up In Person Client Meeting
   3.1 Hill House history
   3.2 Walking Tour of Hill District
      3.2.1 Background on current and prior projects in Hill District
      3.2.2 Detailed description of developed and culturally relevant areas
4. Individual Visit to Hill District
   4.1 Trail Analysis
      4.1.1 Grant Street
         4.1.1.1 Crosswalk and sidewalk safety
         4.1.1.2 Convenience and clarity of connection
         4.1.1.3 Evaluation of trail use and status
      4.1.2 Dinwiddie Street/Comparison to Kirkpatrick Street
         4.1.2.1 Elevation, sidewalk safety, crosswalk accessibility
         4.1.2.2 Overall practicality of use
      4.1.3 Crawford and Pride
         4.1.3.1 Sidewalk and crosswalk safety
         4.1.3.2 Ease of use and convenience
   4.2 Birmingham Bridge/Trail Head Evaluation
      4.2.1 Possibility of path under bridge
      4.2.2 Crosswalk evaluation at Fifth and bridge
      4.2.3 Evaluation of trail use and status
5. Draft Proposal
   5.1 Title Page
   5.2 Background information synthesis
   5.3 Work Description
      5.3.1 Connection pros and cons
      5.3.2 Birmingham Bridge evaluation synthesis
   5.4 Compile Pictures for appendices
   5.5 Deliverables detailed
   5.6 Assumptions of project
6. Prepare Proposal for Presentation
   6.1 Review feedback
   6.2 Redraft
7. Initial Client Presentation
   7.1 Prepare Power Point Proposal Presentation
   7.2 Finalize Proposal
8. Assess Client Feedback on Proposal
   8.1 Compile client feedback
   8.2 Redraft Proposal
9. Prepare Deliverables
   9.1 Pamphlet
      9.1.1 Detail clear walking, biking, and bus directions with difficulty
      9.1.2 Address potential obstacles, hazards, accessibility issues
      9.1.3 Insert Additional Information (culture, legend, etc.)
      9.1.4 Consider printing options
9.2 Full Scale Map
   9.2.1 Find appropriate source map
   9.2.2 Figure out ArcGIS map software
   9.2.3 Highlight routes and insert legend
   9.2.4 Consider printing options

9.3 Birmingham Bridge Evaluation
   9.3.1 Individual visit to site
   9.3.2 Research into infrastructure
   9.3.3 Draft report
   9.3.4 Final report

10. Final Presentation
    10.1 Submit Final presentation to instructor
    10.2 Present to Client

**Deliverables**

1. Map of Trails
   This map will show the three different trail options for connecting Hill House to the Eliza Furnace Trail. The map will include trails color-coded based on difficulty, a legend with approximate distances and accessibility information, and highlighted areas of cultural importance for Hill District. The map will be large enough to be hung or framed and placed in Hill House for citizens to gain awareness of the connections with the Eliza Furnace Trail and Schenley Park.

2. Informational Pamphlet
   The pamphlet is a resource to be used in conjecture with the trail map. It will include detailed directions for each trail highlighting the more confusing intersections and any obstacles for pedestrians to worry about. Also, the pamphlet will include whether a route is bicycle accessible, as well as identifying the nearest bus stops to the trailheads on each route. Finally, the pamphlet will include the Hill House’s awareness campaign for how easy it is to connect the Hill District with the other neighborhoods of Pittsburgh.

3. Birmingham Bridge Evaluation
   The Evaluation of the Birmingham Bridge will include suggestions on how Hill House, and the city of Pittsburgh, can improve access to the Eliza Furnace Trail access road underneath the Birmingham Bridge. It will include suggestions on how to improve or create lighting, sidewalks, and crosswalks for the increased safety and activity on the Eliza Furnace Trail. Infrastructure suggestions will take into account feasibility, budget concerns, and sustainability for the environment.
Schedule Estimates

1.0 Initial client Phone Conversation ................................................................. 31 January 2013
2.0 Second, in person client visit and tour of Hill District area.......................... 5 February 2013
3.0 Individual walking trip to Hill District and trail observations.......................12 February 2013
4.0 Proposal presented to client.............................................................................7 March 2013
5.0 Final report due................................................................................................10 April 2013
6.0 Final Client presentation......................................................................................16/18 April 2013

Assumptions

1. The finances will be available through the Hill District and/or Hill House to complete this project.
2. Hill District and the City of Pittsburgh will approve of proposed changes for the area encompassing the project.
3. Estimates given in Birmingham Bridge Evaluation will not change greatly due to inflation or rising market costs.
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Appendices

Appendix A Connections to the Eliza Furnace Trail

1. Subway station near Grant-Ross Trail

2. Bike rental near the Grant Street trailhead
3. Dinwiddie connecting with Fifth

4. Image of Crawford-Pride Route
Appendix B Birmingham Bridge Trailhead

1. End of Sidewalk underneath the Birmingham Bridge and beginning of rubble.
2. Image of steep elevation change underneath the Birmingham Bridge.

4. Image of the parking lot leading to the trailhead at the Birmingham Bridge.
Appendix C: Trail Directions

1. Centre and Ross Street to Grant Street Trailhead
   Leave the Hill House, and turn right, heading toward town. Cross the street at the most convenient crosswalk. Pass St. Benedict the Moor Church on the right. Continue on Centre Avenue past old Mellon Arena, and to the intersection of Centre and Sixth Avenue (.8 miles total). If on the left side of the road (opposing traffic), proceed on the same sidewalk through a tunnel, passing a Steel Plaza Subway station on the right. At the intersection of Sixth and Fifth Avenue, cross the crosswalks as depicted on the image (400 feet). Proceed down Fifth Avenue until the intersection of Ross Street (250 feet). Follow the sidewalk (heading left at the intersection), passing the old county jail on the left. Continue for .2 miles, cross the street at the intersection of Ross and First Avenue (just past Firstside Park). Continue for 350 feet, and then follow the sidewalk bearing left until reaching the trailhead (250 feet).
   Total distance: approximately 1.2 miles.
   Difficulty: easy

2. Dinwiddie to Birmingham Bridge Trailhead
   Leave Hill House and go left, passing the shopping plaza on the right. Continue forward 350 feet, and make the first right at Dinwiddie Street. Proceed to the bottom of Dinwiddie, cross the street and proceed left for .2 miles. Turn right at Gist St., proceed to the intersection of Forbes Avenue and Gist, cross to the other side of the street, and turn left (approximately 300 feet). Continue on Forbes for .3 miles and cross at the intersection of Forbes and Brady St. Proceed down Brady St. to Second Avenue (.1 miles). Turn left into the parking lot and walk to the end to reach the trailhead.
   Total Distance: 1 mile.
   Difficulty: moderate

3. Crawford-Pride to Birmingham Bridge Trailhead
   Leave the Hill House and turn right outside of the Hill House, passing the shopping plaza on the right and continuing until the intersection of Crawford St. and Centre Avenue, turning left onto Crawford St. (.3 miles). Continue down Crawford until it merges to Pride St. and continue on Pride, crossing at the intersection of Fifth and Pride and continuing on to the intersection of Pride and Forbes Avenue (.2 miles). Cross the street and turn left at the intersection of Forbes. Continue on Forbes Avenue until reaching the Birmingham Bridge (.6 miles). Cross at the intersection of Brady St. and Forbes and proceed down Brady toward Second Avenue. Turn left into the parking lot and walk to the end to reach the trailhead.
   Total Distance: 1.3 miles.
   Difficulty: moderate
Appendix D: Route Maps

1. Centre and Ross to Grant Street Trailhead
2. Dinwiddie to Birmingham Bridge Trailhead
3. Crawford-Pride to Birmingham Bridge Trailhead