

## **Amani Christian Community Development Corporation**

Amani Christian Community Development Corporation is a nonprofit tax-exempt 501(c)(3) faith-based community and economic development organization. The focus of the organization is to maximize the human capital of the Greater Hill District Community. Understanding the need for a shared vision and responsibility for the uplifting of the Hill District community, its residents and its youth, the mission of ACCDC is:

“To facilitate the healthy and safe communities by creating programs that educate the Hill District community residents and nurture youth, encourage community and economic development and promote a livable quality of life.”

The importance of Amani’s community strategy is that it empowers and facilitates community partnerships in addressing our community housing needs and restoring viable house structures for rehabilitation. Additionally, providing community wealth building opportunities for low and moderate income residents adds a human component to the physical revitalization of the community.

ACCDC began the revitalization of the Schenley Heights community in 1998 with planning and implementing of The Milwaukee-Clarissa Street Project. This project provided 5 units of single family homes and 3 three bedroom rentals in the Upper Hill District, and was completed in 2016.

In 2014, ACCDC implemented a new project named “Fix It First” to reclaim abandoned homes that can be rehabilitated and resold to a market of potential homebuyers seeking homes less than \$100,000. Amani has completed a total of four units.

To date ACCDC has constructed and/or rehabbed 15 units of housing for community residents. The Milwaukee-Clarissa Street Project is an opportunity for continuing the revitalization of the Hill District community and improving the quality of life for residents. The relevance of the turnkey project connects with our mission and looks to raise the quality of life for the residents of the Hill District.

To date ACCDC has constructed and/or rehabbed 15 units of housing for community residents. The Milwaukee-Clarissa Street Project is an opportunity for continuing the revitalization of the Hill District community and improving the quality of life for its residents. ACCDC has completed several community development projects to date with several projects to be initiated and developed in 2015-16. ACCDC is currently undertaking the Scattered Sites Housing Project continuing its mission to stimulate the economy of the Hill District community and creating a higher standard of quality of life for residents of the Hill District and Schenley Heights.

The ACCDC will serve in the role of developer, managing all aspects of the project: due diligence, property acquisition, finance, design, approvals and permits, bidding and negotiation, construction, and management. ACCDC will work closely with Ralph Falbo Inc. who will undertake the technical development tasks in partnership with the ACCDC.

## **Geographic Focus**

ACCDC has focused most of its work on the Schenley Heights community, but its mission encompasses the Greater Hill District. This particular project is a logical extension of ACCDC’s work and builds upon its earlier successes.

See Board of Directors Listing Attached (Item 2)

### Staff Leadership

#### **Reverend Lee J. Walls, Executive Director**

Reverend Walls is a longtime resident of Pittsburgh's Hill District and is a product of the Pittsburgh Public Schools. His post-secondary education began at Point Park University and eventually led to Hampton University. After he returned to Pittsburgh and began working at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. While working at UPMC, Reverend Walls responded to God's call to the ministry in late 1986. Reverend Walls' education continued with his studies at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and finally at Virginia Union University of Theology, when he was ordained as a minister.

In 1992, Reverend Walls was selected to attend Harvard University's Community Development Program for pastors--a nationally recognized program that provided an intensive academic learning experience for learning community and economic development from national experts in both areas.

For the next several years, Reverend Walls began working in community service in various capacities and for several Hill District youth serving organizations including: Open Doors, Hill District Ministries, Breachmenders and eventually serving as Operations / Program Director for The Center That C.A.R.E.S. As an active participant in the community and with a focus on his ministerial duties at Macedonia Baptist Church of Pittsburgh, Reverend Walls continues to serve his Church and the Greater Hill District. In addition, Reverend Walls is a charter member of the Hill District Education Council, Hill District Consensus Group, Clean Green Hill and the Schenley Heights Collaborative.

In 1998, Reverend Walls founded ACCDC. Reverend Walls is a charter member of the Hill District Education Council, the Hill District Consensus Group, Clean Green Hill and the Schenley Heights Collaborative.

Reverend Walls is a well-respected community leader with deep ties to the neighborhood. He provides stability for the organization, and is able to work with many stakeholders to make a project successful. For this project, he has supplemented his capacity with additional real estate expertise provided by the Michael Polite-Consultant, Ms. Lakeisha Byrd, Communion LLC Project Management/Consultant, Mr. Shivam Mathur, Real Estate and Planning Coordinator, Cleveland Housing Network (Mr. Kevin Nowak) and Architect Moody-Nolan (Mr. Jonathan Moody).

## Development Team Capacity, Experience, and References

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Reverend Walls is a longtime resident of Pittsburgh's Hill District and Amani's Executive Director. Reverend Walls was educated in the Pittsburgh Public School system. Reverend Walls' post-secondary education began at Point Park University and eventually led to Hampton Institute (currently Hampton University). After completing the requirements for a Bachelor of Arts in Biology with minors in Chemistry and Psychology Reverend Walls returned to Pittsburgh, Continuing to pursue educational opportunities Reverend Walls enrolled in various graduate courses in science and business at Robert Morris College and the University of Pittsburgh.

While working in the University of Pittsburgh Health System (now UPMC), Reverend Walls responded to God's call to the ministry in the late 1986. Reverend Walls' education continued with his studies at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and finally at Virginia Union University School of Theology. For the next several years, having been ordained as a Baptist minister, Reverend Walls began working in community service in various capacities and for several Hill District youth serving organizations including: Open Doors, Hill District Ministries, Breachmenders and eventually serving as Operations/Program Director for The Center That C.A.R.E.S. As an active participant in the community and with a focus on his ministerial duties at Macedonia Baptist Church of Pittsburgh, Reverend Walls continue to serve his Church and the Greater Hill District.

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*Amani Development References:*

Clarissa Street Phase 1 - 2005

Single Family, 2 Townhouse For-Sale Units  
Steven G. Hawkins, Architect (412) 521-9399  
Steve Catranel Construction, General Contractor (412) 351-2101

Clarissa Street Phase 2 – 2007-9

7 rental units  
Steven G. Hawkins, Architect (412) 521-9399  
Steve Catranel Construction, General Contractor (412) 351-2101

Fix It First Rehab Projects -- 2015-17

3 units for sale  
Ms. Michele Cooper, (412) 578-6223  
McCauley Ministries Foundation



Michael Polite

Founder, CEO and Chairman

Catalyst Communities LLC

Michael brings expertise honed over more than three decades of developing affordable, mixed-income and market-rate housing in western Pennsylvania and eastern Ohio. As Chairman and CEO of Ralph A. Falbo, Inc., he identified and led projects creating 968 units with total development costs of more than \$200 million, and consulted on the economic development of low-income areas, resulting in more than \$50 million of investment. His knowledge is grounded in his early work for Pittsburgh's Urban Redevelopment Authority, planning and implementing Economic Development programs, and, earlier, rehabilitating residential rental property.



## **Biography**

### **Howard K. Graves, Jr., AIA, NCARB - President, Principal in Charge**

A Carnegie-Mellon University graduate and native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Mr. Howard K. Graves heads Graves Design Group LLC, the *largest* and *oldest* African-American owned architectural firm in all of Western Pennsylvania. He offers decades of experience on *hundreds* of projects including but not limited to; University/Educational, Parking Facilities, Multi-purpose Facilities, Offices, Monuments, Residential, Medical, Historic Preservation, Retail, and Commercial.



Beginning in the 1970's, Howard worked for the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh where he was the project architect who played a significant role in the restoration of the Manchester Community of Pittsburgh's North Side. In 1988, he started his own firm in the Homewood neighborhood, hiring the majority of his staff from the community as the firm focused on urban community projects throughout the city. His office has now been located in downtown Pittsburgh for over 15 years and his focus has widened to include projects well beyond the city and state boarder.

He and his firm have been tied to many of the larger projects in the Pittsburgh area over the years, such as; Pittsburgh International Airport, Downtown Lazarus Department Store, South Side Works, PPG Sports Arena, PNC Park, UPMC Children's Hospital, and more. As his firm began receiving project awards and name recognition, personal acknowledgement for his professional expertise came as well; Howard was a mayoral-appointed board member of Pittsburgh's Historic Review Commission in the 1990's and served there for 15 years, where he played an important role in determining which buildings within the city are significant enough to warrant historic designation. He also served 2 terms on the Pennsylvania Architectural State Licensing Board.

Howard has always been driven to develop his business and promote others as well, both professionally and in diversity. As a mentor, he teaches and challenges his staff and in support of their professional development; many have gone on to attain architectural registration, get promoted within the firm, or even leave and start their own businesses. In terms of diversity, Howard is a founding member of Pittsburgh's African American Chamber of Commerce and remains actively involved in his pursuit of advocating for the inclusion of his and other MBE firms and, as well as WBE businesses, on projects. And, his firm employs a very diverse group of people from varied ethnic backgrounds, cultures and backgrounds, both male and female.

With a thriving firm that can compete with (even) larger competitors and with long-term staff on the partnership track, Howard still remains active in the firm every day. He is *absolutely* the most vibrant and energetic person in the office due not only to his good health but also his love and interest in his work. He is involved in all projects within the office, big or small, working side by side with senior and junior staff. Mr. Graves also leads business marketing/networking and actively establishes strategic alliances with other businesses to find project opportunities for the firm and others, as he has always done.



**Graves Design Group, LLC.** (GDG) is a full service design firm that provides architectural/engineering, interior design, design/build, and graphic services. We have served a variety of public, private, and non-profit clients since 1988 with a primary specialization in **educational facilities, parking facilities, and residential.** We also design **office and retail, commercial, entertainment, historical restoration, Green/LEED, and government** projects.



GDG has the capability of managing several projects simultaneously; any one of which may range in construction cost from under \$100K to \$ 30 million or more. We also collaborate with other professional firms, developers, and contractors on certain projects with requirements that are best met with a varied team member approach. In addition to our professional expertise, our firm is **MBE/DBE Certified** and, therefore, can add diversity participation to any project.

Over the years, GDG has earned a reputation for creative and cost effective solutions to design, coordination, and planning that meet a client's budget, program, and schedule. This starts with paying close attention to learning and understanding our client's needs; our **Design Philosophy** seeks optimum results through interactive dialogue with the client that leads to implementation of essential project elements. Among these are:

- What kind of environment the client is wants us to provide; for living, working, learning, or entertaining
- Prioritized program components with respect to a realistic budget
- Maximized use of Green Technology, LEED criteria, and sustainability practices whenever possible
- Maximize the useful life of the structure, with attention towards providing lower long term maintenance and operating costs



Our clients tell us we offer all of the services and capability of a large firm, but with a small

business interaction and accessibility that many large firms can't offer. To learn more about our firm and its capabilities, please visit us on our website at: [www.gravesdesigngroup.com](http://www.gravesdesigngroup.com) and find [Graves Design Group LLC](https://www.facebook.com/GravesDesignGroup) on [Facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com) for the latest firm news and updates.