#LowerHillFacts

A brief history of the Lower Hill and where we are today
The Lower Hill, part of the Greater Hill District, was a historic Black neighborhood and thriving business and cultural district that was condemned as a slum and demolished in the 1950s to build the Civic Arena and the Crosstown Expressway, now I-579. #LowerHillFacts
In 1943 City Councilman George E. Evans reasoned that public-private redevelopment could provide significant employment to returning war veterans, while ameliorating what he saw as an area beset by deterioration and urban blight.

"The Hill District of Pittsburgh is probably one of the most outstanding examples in Pittsburgh of neighborhood deterioration... Approximately 90% of the buildings in the area are sub-standard and have long outlived their usefulness, and so there would be no social loss if they were all destroyed."

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Mayor David L. Lawrence, the Allegheny Conference on Community Development, and the Urban Redevelopment Authority all saw the historically Black neighborhood as in the way of potential new housing, office space, and hotels. The Civic Arena was officially added to the URA’s Lower Hill plan in 1952 after an earlier site for the auditorium in Highland Park was met with strong resistance from affluent residents. #LowerHillFacts
Many Black leaders were also in support of the demolition, because they had been asking and waiting for the City to finally invest in the Hill. Their support of the redevelopment hinged on their belief that housing for the displaced would be built on the site and that construction companies would hire Hill District workers and build affordable replacement housing. 

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The demolition of the Lower Hill displaced more than 8,000 residents, overwhelmingly Black, and demolished over 1,300 buildings. #LowerHillFacts
Once the Lower Hill was completely demolished, the only buildings ever erected were the Civic Arena (est. 1961), originally slated to be the new home of the Civic Light Opera, and one apartment building, Washington Plaza (est. 1964), currently known as City View. The rest of the site remained largely parking over the last 5+ decades. The jobs and housing for the displaced residents never came. #LowerHillFacts
In 2006, after a failed bid to build a casino on the Lower Hill, the Penguins threatened to leave Pittsburgh if they didn’t get a new arena. The Mayor, County Executive, and Governor signed an option agreement in 2007 with the Pens that resulted in a $290 million arena (paid with tax dollars) and the development rights to the Lower Hill. The Penguins later revealed that their threat was a bluff.

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A Community Benefits Agreement was signed in 2014 to ensure that the Hill District could be restored as the Lower Hill District is developed. Now that the Lower Hill development is taking off, it’s time to make sure the entire Hill District gets developed, not just the Lower Hill District. #LowerHillFacts
The Community Collaboration and Implementation Plan (CCIP) has seven focus areas:

1. Minority & Women Business Inclusion
2. Job Creation, Local Inclusion, & Workforce Development
3. Inclusionary and Homeownership Housing Programs
4. Communications Reporting and Tracking
5. Wealth Building Initiatives
6. Cultural & Community Legacy Initiatives
7. Coordinated Community Development Strategies

Implement the WHOLE plan!

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According to the CCIP, the **funding streams** for the neighborhood will partially be placed into the Greater Hill Reinvestment Fund. Some funding streams that are listed in the CCIP are **shared parking revenue, shared ticket sales, and more**. To date, the **community** has only received a commitment to LERTA funds, which is **public tax money**. #LowerHillFacts
The 2015 Settlement Agreement from a lawsuit filed by the Hill CDC against the City and PAR (Penguins) required the City to create the LERTA for the Greater Reinvestment Fund, which is estimated to yield $40 million back to the community. #LowerHillFacts
In 2017, the City of Pittsburgh renegotiated the terms of the Pens Lower Hill Option Agreement (est. 2007) extending the timeline the Pens had to complete development on the Lower Hill. Under the expiration of the original option agreement the city could have begun to reclaim 2.8 acres of land per year. #LowerHillFacts
After a one-week delay, at a Special URA Board Meeting on October 18, 2019, the URA Board unanimously approved a term sheet and began transferring ownership of Blocks B and E on the Lower Hill, despite significant community opposition, due to failure to meet the CCIP goals.

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Of the **commitments** in the URA/Pens Term Sheet for Block B and Block E, **all are outstanding** with little or no progress:

1. Ammon Recreation Center
2. New Granada Theater Coordination with Live Nation Venue
3. Locate First Source Hiring Center with Partner4Work on or Near the Site
4. Fill Funding Gap of Curtain Call Project

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On Thursday, May 14, 2020, PAR (Penguins) and their affiliates asked the SEA and the URA to vote to begin transferring ownership to them of Block G1, a 26-story office tower located at the bottom of the Lower Hill. First National Bank is an equity holder and 40% anchor tenant #LowerHillFacts
No written agreement for the realization of community benefits on Block G1 has been circulated with the community, including the Executive Management Committee, appointed to ensure the implementation of the Community Collaboration and Implementation Plan (CCIP)

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The capitalization of the LERTA for the Greater Hill District Reinvestment Fund (est. $40 million) and the Parking Tax Diversion is a loan that will cost 2% or less in interest and will be repaid with tax dollars. The community does not have a written agreement for PAR (Pens) to pay that interest. 2% of $40 million is $800,000 #LowerHillFacts
If the URA Board votes to approve the takedown of Block G1, a third of the Lower Hill will be in the process of transferring ownership to PAR (Penguins) for free with insufficient return to the Hill District.

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Let's not repeat history. Let's not make the same mistakes, with the same unfulfilled promises, no accountability, and without the community's input. Submit your public comment to publiccomment@ura.org with the Subject Line: May 21st Board Meeting and CC info@hilldistrict.org #LowerHillFacts