



## **2159 Centre Avenue Narrative**

The “Hill,” as it is collectively known, was originally populated by new immigrants to the City after the Revolutionary War. It became a nationally renowned African American economic and cultural mecca by the 1920s, hosting musical icons such as Ella Fitzgerald, Duke Ellington, and Cab Calloway. The Great Depression and post-World War II Federal housing policies devastated the Hill on both an economic and physical level. The Lower Hill District was razed under the Urban Renewal Program and Federal Aid Highway Act to make way for the I-579 Crosstown Expressway and to erect the Civic Arena, originally to house the Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera and later as the home of the Pittsburgh Penguins and other professional sports teams. More than 8,000 residents, business and institutions were displaced during the resultant demolition of the Lower Hill District in the late 1950s. The Hill District lost its commercial core, much of its population, and its connection to downtown, was left isolated, disconnected from job opportunities, and was starved for capital investment, and is only now poised to rebound. Nonetheless, the Hill District continues to be the center of African American life and culture within the City of Pittsburgh. It also remains one of the largest predominantly African American neighborhoods in the City, as 88.3% of its residents are African American compared to a 26.3% average for the City of Pittsburgh overall.

Amani Christian CDC focuses on developing human capital in the Greater Hill District and understands the need for a shared vision and responsibility for the revitalization of the Hill District, its residents, and its youth. The significance of Amani Christian CDC's community strategy is the aim to empower and facilitate community partnerships by directly addressing the community's housing needs and restoring viable housing 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.

In 2019, the URA issued an RFQ from developers to participate in the revitalization of various scattered sites along Centre Avenue in the Middle Hill neighborhood of the City of Pittsburgh. Amani Christian CDC submitted a proposal for 2159 Centre Avenue and was awarded exclusive negotiating rights with the URA to purchase and develop the project. The Amani Christian CDC project consists of the construction of a 18,000 sq. ft. mixed-use development with 1,700 sq. ft. of commercial space on the ground floor, and a total of 12 apartments on the second, third, and fourth floors. The commercial space will be split into affordable and market-rate portions which will provide an opportunity for a commercial tenant looking for a well-located space of unique size in high demand and low supply in the



neighborhood. Three of the apartments are reserved for very low-income households and half of the apartments are reserved for households that are special needs or homeless. The depth of the affordability of the units will be determined by available funding sources, but Amani Christian CDC is committed to providing all twelve units at a level no higher than 80% AMI.

It is critical that this rebound occur in an equitable manner and in a manner that provides opportunities to those historically wronged as much as possible. The Hill District is extremely well positioned within the City of Pittsburgh due to its close proximity to a large employment base among Downtown businesses, universities, hospitals and other major institutions. As the city continues its transformation, increasing numbers of new residents will want to live and work close to the heart of the city and its strong institutions. As such, the Greater Hill District is strategically located to take advantage of the city's bright future, its strong institutions and cultural amenities.