



Project Narrative

May 28, 2021

The New Granada Theater is an icon representing the rich cultural heritage of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Originally constructed in 1928 as the Pythian Temple, the four-story masonry structure with Art-Deco detailing was designed by one of America's early African American architects, Louis Bellinger (1891-1946).

During its most celebrated days, the Theater, and its famous second floor New Savoy Ballroom were fixtures in the jazz culture. Some of the jazz world's most important musicians such as Count Basie, Cab Calloway, Ella Fitzgerald, Charlie Parker and many other icons played the New Granada Theater. In fact, Duke Ellington was proclaimed the "King of Jazz" during a national radio broadcast from the Theater. In 1934, Louis Armstrong led a benefit at the site after floods devastated Pittsburgh. The New Granada was a 'required' stop for jazz aficionados as they traveled between New York and Chicago. Through the decades, the Theater has served many roles; it closed permanently in the late 70s. Concern that this architectural and cultural asset would fall victim to the wrecking ball spurred the Hill CDC to purchase the building in the early 90s.

Although the New Granada was acquired in the 90s, it is the organization's current leadership that has demonstrated the focus, determination and capacity to redevelop it. To this end, the Hill CDC has worked to build alliances with strong partners including investors, preservationists, community stakeholders and public servants; this has led to \$1.2 million in stabilization and predevelopment, and the creation of a final plan.

Today, the Hill CDC is redeveloping the 2000 block of Centre Avenue as the "Gateway" to the historic Hill District and new cultural corridor. As the centerpiece to this urban core redevelopment, the restoration of the New Granada Theater will be the jewel where the music returns and the culture never left. The food, the arts, and the people of this iconic neighborhood will be on a national stage as they transform this special place in one of America's top cities to watch.

The historic New Granada building and offices have as an anchor tenant the University of Pittsburgh's Community Engagement Center. Located on the upper floor of the historic theater building, and connected to the upper floor of the new construction, this 20,000 SF space will allow the University to interact in a more impactful way with Hill District residents. The second floor of the historic structure 40,000 square foot building will be restored as a flexible event hall that will easily accommodate over 900 attendees for performances, as well as a spectacular venue for special and corporate events. The first floor of the historic building will include both a food hall offering multiple cuisines and a community event space in the form of a Black Box Theater that will accommodate over 100 people. The

new construction on the western side of the historic structure will be will have a full-service restaurant on the lower floor next to the public plaza and will have office space located above. The University of Pittsburgh will occupy another 10k sqft for their Community Engagement Center and the top floors of the buildings will be adjoined by a connector. Finally, and not least of all is a rooftop dining and viewing deck that will offer spectacular vistas of the City.

Required Approvals (Self Evaluation Section A: General Information)

- Historic Review Commission (Approved)
- National Parks Service for Historic Structures (Submitted for approval)
- Zoning Board (Submitted for approval)
- Building Permit
- Allegheny County Health Department – Plumbing Section
- Allegheny County Health Department – Food Safety