Hill Scapes: A Scrapbook envisioning a healthy urban habitat
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Envisioning a Healthy Urban Habitat

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With the help of
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Supported by the Maurice Falk Medical Fund

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Every so often, a foundation makes a grant which somehow captures the essence of its work, and reflects a history often lost in the conventional wisdom that foundations always need to be at the “cutting edge” of social policy. But looking back at unsolved problems and attempting new solutions in different and newer times can be a way to capitalize on previous grants, programs and experiences to help toward new solutions to community problems.

This was the background thinking which gave shape to our idea that the Medical Fund’s long history in racism, mental health policy and community action, might be applied to long unsolved problems of housing, poverty and community organization in The Hill District. Thirty five years ago the Fund created a Hill District Development Fund, a small and flexible grant program, aimed at shaping action ideas, initiating small projects, providing fast matching funds for government funding programs, in short, making critical small developmental funding available.

The availability of two outstanding researchers in the psychology of place in neighborhoods faced with dislocation gave rise to a re-run of some of these policies in funding of the Falk Fellows program at the Center for Minority Health at the Graduate School of Public Health and the appointment of Drs. Robert and Mindy Fullilove of Columbia University as the first fellows. Their arrival, with a mandate to work with Hill District community groups, almost immediately resulted in a deep and gratifying partnership with Hill District citizens. This is not a typical case of outside experts brought into a neighborhood. Through their style and personalities, Robert and Mindy became, with dozens of Hill residents, co-creators of a movement of citizen participation and mutual policy making that remembered the 1960’s “maximum feasible participation” philosophy, and added new understanding of grassroots organizing and the way policy and practice in neighborhoods can be a real partnership.

The record of what happened since their arrival in Pittsburgh is the body of this scrapbook. These pages of text and photographs are a collected history of The Hill, its people, its institutions and neighborhoods. These are stories of people who have lived for decades on those streets and people who will create a new history from stories of the Thelma Lovettes, the Carl Redwoods, and countless others who have created a special place in Pittsburgh.

The Hill District Collaborative working with the Fulliloves, created the Coalition for a Healthy Urban Habitat which drew dozens of other urban players and institutions together: The Graduate School of Public Health at the University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation, the Heinz Architectural Center at the Carnegie Institute, and the Department of Architecture at Carnegie Mellon University.

But the real work described in this scrapbook is that of grassroots organizations and people who will continue to fertilize ideas and actions revealed through the eyes of these outside observers. Well, no, not just observers, but co-creators with their neighborhood partners of a new vision for a quality of Hill District life once vibrant, then dormant and embattled, now blossoming into new life.
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Glossary
This scrapbook documents an exciting project that began in February 1997. Robert Fullilove, my husband, and I were invited to talk to citizens of Pittsburgh about the problem of displacement. As researchers at Columbia University, we had learned that displacement posed serious problems for people. Pittsburgh had experience with displacement in the 1950s. As one of the first cities in the United States to implement a large urban renewal project, the city fathers destroyed a significant neighborhood and dislocated thousands of people. History seemed to be repeating itself in 1997, as the federal HOPE VI program for public housing was poised to bulldoze housing projects and displace more people. What would this mean for The Hill District neighborhood and for the city as a whole? This question is one we took quite seriously and we were very excited when, in 1998, the Maurice Falk Medical Fund offered us the opportunity to serve as visiting professors at the University of Pittsburgh, engaged in an extended conversation about HOPE VI, in particular, and community revitalization, in general. The conversation was augmented by opportunities to be in many parts of the city and surrounding communities, visiting humble neighborhoods and great tourist attractions. We spent some evenings listening to jazz and others listening to folk music. We visited many homes and took hundreds of photographs. We learned to love The Hill District and Pittsburgh with a passion that surprises our New York friends. “You have to go to Pittsburgh!” we keep telling them.

For us, a very important part of this conversation was that we were able to engage a consultant, Michel Cantal-Dupart, an architect-urbanist who practices in Paris, France. Cantal has had a long commitment to developing a city that embodies human rights. Certainly, the problems of a disintegrating African American neighborhood were of interest to him. He saw great hope for The Hill District in the deep attachment its residents expressed for the area, and in the rich and important history that is rooted there. Like us, he fell in love with Pittsburgh. “You have no idea how much the French would love this town,” he told us repeatedly. “Its complexity makes it a microcosm of the United States, but its size makes it possible to grasp the whole. Imagine Big Steel and Amish farms within an hour of a group of the most beautiful skyscrapers in the world!”

As the grant came to end, we asked ourselves, “How do you represent such a rich and complex experience in a report?” The answer was: you don’t. You make a scrapbook. With the help of many people who had been part of the year, we put together this collection of ideas and images that occupied our time and attention. As you leaf through the pages, you will find essays, memos, letters, photographs, maps, and other memorabilia that constitute the history of this project. This scrapbook offers no conclusions nor definitive directions. It is, rather, the record of a conversation. As a participant in that conversation, I can attest to its power. I carry away the sad realization that not one but many African American communities were destroyed by misguided urban renewal efforts in the 1960s, a style of urban management that haunts present plans. I also carry away memories of the citizens’ love for their neighborhoods and their city. We have much to do to revitalize American cities. It will take many conversations like this one. I hope that this record of our talks will be of use to future conversations in Pittsburgh and all American Cities.
When I think about the Lower Hill, I’m reminded of a book that my husband often encouraged me to read: Sinclair Lewis’ *It Can Happen Here*. My husband was an avid reader and this book was one of his favorites. The book describes how disruption and bad things can tear at the fabric of society. It shares that no one is immune to having something done to them if they allow it to happen. Although the book deals mostly with the rise and fall of the Roman Empire, the message is applicable to the changes that occurred in the Lower Hill beginning in the mid-1950s. The Lower Hill was demolished to make way for a cultural district. Lots of places I once knew and visited are gone.

The Lower Hill is my family home. Mama was born in 1892 at Fullerton and Pasture Street. Fullerton Street is where the Civic Arena parking lot is located – the open parking lot. They called the area the Melody Tent site. Fullerton Street was known by Blacks during the early ’20s and ’30s for its many clubs such as the Loni Club (a membership club) and Washington Club, as well as a black owned drugstore. I was born at Crawford Street and Wiley in 1917. There were eleven children that included a set of twins that died at an early age. I’m number five in the order of births.

On Crawford Street, we had a theater – Burke’s Theater. In the late ’20s my older sister played the piano at the Burke’s. It was a community theater that featured movies. They had comics. My sister was a youngster when she worked there. We would get in the theater for free. In the back of Burke’s Theater was a converted stable. This stable would become a special place for my father and family.

I remember well my father, Henry M. Williams, Sr., walking from Wiley Avenue – 1520 Wiley Avenue – to Sheraden to work at Wesley Masonic Temple, a white fraternal organization. He and Mr. Paul Gillette would go in the morning, walk there and walk back. Papa did that for many years. In May of 1919 he decided that he would work for himself. I know the date because my mother delivered a set of twins. The Gross brothers (a set of Jewish brothers who owned a confectionery store at the corner of Wiley and Crawford) were the ones who suggested that Papa use the converted stable behind the Burke’s and set up a shop.

Papa was a self-taught plumber. His skills and talents were often sought after by many who needed various plumbing jobs done. Outhouses had been outlawed and indoor plumbing was required. They were putting the bathrooms in the homes. So, Papa had lots of work. The plumbing shop is still operating today. It’s in our family home at 806 Heron Avenue. My brother, one of my younger brothers, has carried the business on. Today, we still have a portion of what was happening in The Hill in the early ’20s.

We lived in multiethnic community: Jews, Italians, Syrians, Poles. There were Blacks and whites and some of us lived next door to each other. They learned from us and we learned from them. The whole Hill was mixed. In some sections, there were people who had businesses, say a store, and would live in the back of the store. Economically it was the same until people start moving to other parts of Pittsburgh and taking their businesses with them.

Blacks had businesses. We had a jeweler who made jewelry at 1300 block of Wylie Avenue. We had Dr. Crampton and Crampton’s Drugstore in the ’20s. We had a pharmacist. We owned hotels. We had in the Lower Hill in an area called Court Place, a fabulous big hotel own by Frank Sutton. Our people (independent of fame or riches) couldn’t stay at other downtown hotels. We opened our own. The Bailey Hotel was another of our hotels. Fondly I remember the Bailey for its doorman. That was impressive doing those days. They had even a caterer, a restaurant, and room service. The Potter’s Hotel was another that offered Blacks welcome and comfortable lodging.

There were many lessons learned as I grew up in The Hill. One that left a lasting impression is my schooling. We were an integrated school system. All of my teachers from my early education and throughout were white women. I remember my second grade
teacher who taught us that we should always try to bring something to school – bring a penny to school in case someone needed something. She would put the pennies in a little box and save them. As we brought our pennies, she shared with us a saying:

“Reuben, I’ve been thinking what a world, what a great world this would be if we all supported you in your philanthropy.” Papa said that philanthropy meant “that someone got something; someone received something and they want to give something back.” “Always give something back to the community” was his philosophy.

1929: the Depression … I was in high school. The class was a mixed group. There weren’t many blacks as there were whites at Schenley High School during those days, but we persevered. Some of us put cardboard in our shoes to keep the rain, water and sometimes snow out. Our graduating was such a feat that Farmer’s National Bank put the pictures of the graduates in their windows. The bank was located where the present day Lazarus Department Store is now. I graduated in June 1934.

During the Depression, Papa always had a little something stowed away. And we did our parts to be helpful. We would preserve elderberries and Mama would make elderberry jelly and elderberry wine. We thought elderberry wine was medicine. We took it for whatever was ailing us. Mama would warm up the elderberry; we would take a few sips and the pain was relieved. For a cold, Papa would cook onions and sugar to a syrup. He, then, would mix the syrup with the wine and serve. Before long, you were well.

Although times were difficult, the wonderful smells of the kitchen will always be etched into my memory. I can still smell the wonderful aroma of peaches, apples or some other fruits stewing in Mama’s pots to be canned. The kitchen would often be filled with wonderful smells of breads being baked in the oven. I awaited anxiously to spread some butter on the hot rolls. Mama made great big flaky dumplings and put apples in them. She’d wrap them like pigs in a blanket and put them in boiling water. They were so delicious. You learned to do all kinds of things to feed a family.

The Depression, and then war time … I remember Papa telling us, “Always remember the neighborhood grocer … Because when you need, he will help you.” The government was rationing sugar and butter. We had a neighborhood grocer – Rosenfield was the name of the family. He would always find a square of butter for Papa. We always had butter. If by chance we had to use oleo, Mama would add coloring and prepare it so that Papa wouldn’t know the difference. These were things that we did during the Depression and in war time.

Times were hard but we didn’t recognize it. They were interesting times for us. I guess because of the way we were brought up. We learned to share. We had to share. The Williams’ were a large clan. In addition to our immediate family, we had my mother’s sister, her husband and two girls who lived with us. It was a big house. And we enjoyed each other. In the evening after we’d completed our homework and washed dishes, we’d sit and Papa would have each of us entertain the other. If Mama and Papa had company, we would entertain them. My sister played the piano, my brother the violin. The rest of us would sing and dance. I learned to get up in front of people to speak, perform and feel comfortable. And that in itself was a truly a wonderful education, because it taught us how to be confident in our sharing of talents and gifts. We had great times in those places.
Much is being said and written these days about postwar planning and development and there is no doubt that private industry is confronted with the greatest problem it has ever faced in preparing to furnish employment for returning soldiers and for the reemployment of defense workers in peace-time industry. Doctor J.P. Watson, in his recent article in the "Pittsburgh Business Review" of May, 1943, says:

The number of people to be reabsorbed into the peacetime economy will surely be something of the order of twenty millions: some say twenty-five. At the best-known expansion rates in past booms, the absorption of this number might require six to seven years - if anyone could conceive a boom expansion rate continuing for six or seven years. If private enterprise should outdo its past records, there would remain in all probability a big part of the load to be carried.

It will be unquestionably necessary for a certain amount of government participation in this readjustment of our economy. One place in which the Government’s action can be effective is in remedying the interior decay of our cities, and in no other city is there greater need for such action than in the City of Pittsburgh. Let private industry go to work with every resource at its command, but still there will be an important part which must be borne by Government. Farseeing men are studying this problem now and are advocating the preparation of postwar plans by local government agencies to be completed and placed on the shelf for immediate action when the crisis arrives.

Senator Wagner has recently introduced into the United States Senate a bill (S-1163) known as “The Neighborhood Redevelopment Act,” which has for its objective the elimination of cancerous areas in the cities. The Hill District of Pittsburgh is probably one of the most outstanding examples in Pittsburgh of neighborhood deterioration; beginning as it does just across the proposed new cross-town boulevard and within a stone’s throw of the large office buildings on Grant Street, it extends eastwardly a distance of a mile and a half and has an average width of well over a half mile. Altogether it contains an area of about 650 acres, of which it is estimated that 500 acres could be reclaimed. There are 7,000 separate property owners; more than 10,000 dwelling units and in all more than 10,000 buildings. Approximately 90 per cent of the buildings in the area are substandard and have long outlived their usefulness, and so there would be no social loss if they were all destroyed. The area is criss-crossed with streets running every which way, which absorb at least one-third of the area. These streets should all be vacated and a new street pattern overlaid. This would effect a saving of probably 100 acres now used for unnecessary streets.

The project would absorb all of the area lying between Fifth Avenue and Bigelow Boulevard, Tunnel Street and Herron Avenue, including the north side of Fifth Avenue out as far as Robinson Street; making it possible to widen Fifth Avenue and make it into a fine thoroughfare. This whole area lies so close to the downtown triangle that if it were properly planned and landscaped it should make one of the most desirable residential sections in the City of Pittsburgh. It is difficult for one to estimate what the increase in land values would be when the project would be completed. It is probable that the increase would eventually amortize the entire cost of the project. Probably no other city in the country has an area so well adapted for such an improvement. There would be no displacement of manufacturing plants or important industries; practically the whole area being residential. The land is now assessed at $12,000,000.00 and the buildings at $18,000,000.00. Of course the buildings would be a total loss. It is estimated that the job could be done for a total cost, including public utilities and public improvements, including land and building costs, of $40,000,000.00.

Senator Wagner’s bill provides in Section 4:

There is hereby authorized to be appropriated, out of money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, funds to carry out the purposes of the Act not to exceed $1,000,000,000.00 for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1944.

Senator Wagner says, in his statement on the introduction of the bill (S-1163):

This bill provides a method whereby the Federal Government can assist states and localities, in assembling large tracts of land as a necessary preparatory step toward the sale or lease of such land for development or redevelopment. This is primarily a private enterprise bill, in the sense that it recognizes that most of the development and redevelopment will be by private enterprise. It rec-
ognizes, however, that some cooperative or supple-
mentary public enterprise will be necessary to
make the program comprehensive.

And he goes on to say:

This is not a postwar bill. The problem with
which it deals must be met forthrightly before the
war is over; in order that industry and finance, as
well as State and local governments, may be pre-
pared and ready to act when the war is over.

Senator Wagner’s bill proposes that a loan may be
made for the above mentioned purposes not to exceed
ninety-nine years to cities or instrumentalities of cities
without pledging the faith or the credit of such cities.

It is the opinion of this writer that a finance plan
might be worked out by which local private financial
institutions could safely participate by investing in the
earlier maturity bonds – say those maturing in less
than fifty years and the Government taking those
maturing between fifty and ninety-nine years. A simi-
lar plan is already used for financing of housing pro-
jects by the Federal Housing Agency, and Senator
Wagner proposes that this activity shall be placed
under the supervision of the National Housing Agency,
thus preventing the creation of a new national agency.

If the project embraced simply the purchase of the land
alone, there would be no problem involved, but as
there must be approximately $18,000,000.00 worth of
old buildings destroyed, this loss must be absorbed
somewhere. But it is the opinion of the writer that in
the long term this loss would be made up by increased
land values in a material way, and certainly social and
economic benefits to the City would be far greater than
any material benefits.

The value of the elimination of these disease ridden
slums, where practically half of the crime, juvenile
delinquency, tuberculosis, police cases, syphilis (actual
recent survey shows 52 percent of all syphilis cases in
the City originate in this area), would be impossible to
estimate in dollars and cents.

The heavy tax delinquency ($1,400,000.00 January 1,
1943) far exceeds that of any other section of the City,
and yet that section requires a greater proportionate
expenditure of tax funds. The area now has a popula-
tion of approximately 40,000 and estimating the cover-
age under the new plan at thirty families per acre,
there could be placed within the same area, with ample
space, air, light, playgrounds, landscaped area, a popu-
lation of 60,000. This should have the effect of check-

ing the trend to the suburbs by furnishing decent, com-
derable homes for those of our citizens who prefer
urban to rural living.

If this plan could be worked out, it would be most
desirable to begin immediately the acquisition of the
land so that it would be actually in the possession of
the local government agency when the war ends. The
acquisition of large numbers of properties, such as
this, is no little job, as the writer knows from hard
experience in land acquisition, but it is entirely feasi-
ble.

Of course the project would not be undertaken all at
one swoop but would be divided into five sections, syn-
chronized with a master plan of the whole area, and
one section completed at a time. What an opportunity
this would be for the investment of idle capital in a
sound, safe long-term investment and what a stimula-
tion to private industry in the field of home building. It
is probably true that the largest single opportunity for
private industry expansion after the war is in the field
of residential construction. I hope that the business
interests of Pittsburgh will study this proposal from
every angle, as the writer has done, and I feel sure
that the conclusion will be that it is sound financially
and socially.
This map represents the geographic boundaries of The Hill District as represented by two viewpoints. The dark shaded area is drawn according to City of Pittsburgh Department of City Planning records. The larger area, in a lighter shade, represents viewpoints held by many residents of The Hill District. Portions of it also represent the pre-“Urban Renewal” boundary, placing The Hill District adjacent to Downtown Pittsburgh, and includes the Civic Arena. The larger boundary would also include Duquesne University, Carlow College, part of the University of Pittsburgh, and several hospitals.
Asking The Question: Improvement or Displacement?

Anthony Robins

“We will continue bringing down the monuments to hopelessness and replace them with homes on a human scale.” U.S. Vice President Gore, Public Housing Summit, 1996.

Two essays opened this scrapbook. Ms. Lovette spoke of a rich community full of resources, comradery and pride while the 1946 Councilman claimed that to deplete the same community would be of no social loss. How do we come to understand these two different views of The Hill District? The desire for a place one can call home is deeply rooted in the psyche. For Americans, a home embodies the promise of individual autonomy and of material and spiritual well-being that many people sought in coming to this country. In addition to its functional importance and economic value, having a place to call home has traditionally conveyed social status and political standing. It is even thought to promote thrift, stability, neighborliness, and other individual and civic virtues.

Consider three statements taken from the popular press:

• “Once you get used to a place, it’s hard to let it lose” (Perlmutter, 1997).
• “… The Civic Arena is sitting [where] my living room [was] …” (Perlmutter, 1997).
• “I remember when they first built the projects. I still remember where every place was. You don’t forget … It stays with you always” (Perlmutter, 1997).

These three statements were taken from Hill District residents who were displaced. Their homes were demolished. The land was bulldozed. They were not permitted to return to their community. The statements share a common denominator: loss. These statements ask us to consider, what does it mean to lose a home? What does it mean to be forced from that place (home) without choice? What is the impact of displacement?

Displacement may be seen as one end in a spectrum of housing outcomes that are determined by the motives of the various agents in the housing market and the balance of power among these agents. Some households stay in their housing or move by choice or for nonhousing reasons. These households have sufficient power in the housing market to stay or move according to their own motives. Some households are trapped – they wish to move but lack the power to do so because preferred housing is unavailable to them. These households have only the power to stay. Displaced households lack even the power to stay. Their housing becomes unavailable to them, either because it is uninhabitable or unaffordable or because others who control occupancy require them to leave (Palen and London, 1984).

Let us contrast displacement with the term “relocation.” Relocation is defined as moving to a new place (Webster, 1994). It implies moving by choice (i.e., the move is voluntary). However, it is not a term that specifies who makes the choice to move. In the urban renewal setting, relocation – which is fairly neutral – is actually a euphemism for displacement. The important difference between the two is power: displaced individuals do not have power of choice.

One can think about this problem in this way. When an individual is displaced, he/she experiences rupture out of one’s control. Fullilove (1996) has argued that such loss has important psychiatric implications. Specifically, the rupture of connections to a beloved place can lead to nostalgia, disorientation and alienation for an individual. Consider the following three cases.

Case 1 – What happens if one individual is displaced from a community?

In the first instance, imagine that a single person has been forced to move. Though this experience is traumatic for the individual, it is possible to reconnect to the community that was left behind. A sense of home – the center of one’s universe – can be kept by visiting the place that was once home. It is reassuring to him that the place is still there. Some relationships can be maintained from a distance.

Case 2 – What happens if people are moved from a community?

Now let us compare individual displacement with a neighborhood being uprooted. A neighborhood-based community is made up of many people, connected to the place and each other. It fulfills our needs as social beings by allowing people with common interests to interact with each other in the same physical area. Within these boundaries, there exists a socio-spatial relationship that can be measured. When the neighborhood is uprooted, relationships are lost and social-spatial patterns changed. For example, a neighbor who
could walk next door to borrow a cup of sugar or ask if her neighbor would watch “little Johnny” is now forced to find other means or do without. There is a rupture of the people and their spaces. The impact is greater on the group than on an individual. Ousted residents must reestablish community in a new place. Yet, these people can revisit the place where they once gathered or communed. The buildings and spaces are still in tact.

Case 3 – What happens if the people are moved and the land is bulldozed?
In the final case, imagine that after the people moved, the buildings were eradicated. When the buildings are razed and the geography reconfigured, a hole is left. There is no place to come back to visit. People are left with a void. Where “little Johnny” once played is now a freeway that does not allow such toying around. Jenny’s favorite reading spot in her big yellow house exists only in her memories. Ms. Anne’s street where she walked and skipped as a child is gone. The land has been changed for other uses. “Little Johnny,” Jenny and Ms. Anne cannot return to their favorite places or enjoy engaging activities there that once brought so much joy. They are deprived of their physical pasts. They cannot return to their homes.

What are the effects of Urban Renewal on a Community?
From the mid 1950s to late 1960s, throngs of residents in the Lower Hill section of Pittsburgh’s Hill District were forced to relocate to other areas of the city. City leaders with seventeen million dollars in grants razed buildings in a 100-acre area and demolished the Lower Hill. The plan was to create a cultural Acropolis. And the Lower Hill, because of its close proximity to downtown, was thought the appropriate site. The placement of theaters, music venues, and a Civic Arena in this location were to benefit the city (Toker, 1986; Volk, 1998).

Demolition began in 1956, displacing 1551 mostly African American families and 413 businesses. The $22 million, domed Civic Arena opened in 1961. Glistening in isolated splendor amid expressways and parking lots, it turned out to be something of a civic incubus. For the African American community, this austere silver dome is a highly visible symbol of their displacement. It is a momento of old-style renewal, indifferent to the housing needs and preferences of low-income families. As a result of this development, the fabric of the physical city was thoroughly damaged and marked the point of decline for The Hill District (Toker, 1986; Volk, 1998).

In the 1990s a new spate of reorganization efforts is poised to alter the community’s geography. There is vast demolition that is occurring in the housing projects in Pittsburgh’s Hill District. Public housing is being leveled to make way for new communities made of mixed incomes and races, forcing some low-income residents to move to other communities (Cyganovich, 1998; Burgess, 1998). City government forces these individuals to move without having power to decide if such a move is appropriate for their needs. They are pushed out of their spaces to occupy the unknown. They are cut off from the tribe and placed with strangers. Their community is ruptured.

An important lesson that needs to be learned is that the pain of rupture and displacement has lasting adverse effects on the community and should inform housing policy. When displacement is used to empower, it does more harm than good. In cities around the country, a determined effort is underway to confront the problems of our most distressed public housing through the 1993 Urban Revitalization Demonstration Act, also known as HOPE VI (Vliet, 1997). The principles guiding the legislation evolved from the 1992 Commission on Distressed Housing and the 1992 Cleveland Foundation Commission on Poverty. Both reports made a break with traditional, top-down approaches to combating poverty. As a result, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Public Housing Authorities, residents, and local community leaders are coming together to challenge the traditional purpose of public housing and its relationship to the families it is supposed to serve (Vliet, 1997).

Yet, if these encouraging changes are actually to bring about the lasting transformation in these communities that everyone intends, neither ambitious construction efforts nor top-down policy changes will be enough. Rather, sustainable success will be made possible by strengthening communities and harnessing the determination of the residents of public housing – key resources that many observers do not even figure into the equation of change.

Building new and vibrant communities from the most distressed public housing projects takes more than merely tearing down old, dilapidated buildings and replacing them with new structures. The efforts...
undertaken with HOPE VI funds must be about building community.

Community building is a holistic approach that focuses its efforts on people. It is predicated on the idea that residents must take control of their destiny and the destiny of their communities. It is built on efforts to help residents take on new responsibilities, make new connections with the larger community, and even own their own homes. Thus, community building is the opposite of community displacement: power versus infirmity.

In sum, community displacement is achieved by three assaults: (1) uprooting imposed by external, aggressive elements; (2) an unknown, uncertain future for the displaced, and (3) the unattainable desire by the displaced to return to his home, and thus a future that is a source of permanent concern and conflict. First, the individual is robbed of his home – a unique space in his universe that gives him a sense of balance. Assault two involves groups of people being uprooted to wander aimlessly in search of a dream (safe places) without clues to where they might find it. Finally, the third assault, the features of the land changes via demolition and bulldozing. The neighborhood residents are not able to identify with the changes and their special places no longer exist. Community displacement leaves a void where people feel rootless, deserted, adrift in a world no one has prepared them to understand. They have been abandoned in some trackless wilderness where the natural instinct to survive exacts behavior that reflects the raw, brutal circumstances trapping them.
In January, 1997, I received a notice from the Graduate School of Public Health/Center for Minority Health. It announced a presentation by Mindy and Robert Fullilove. The topic was “The Effect of Displacement on People In Their Communities.” The flyer was sent to me by Angela Ford, of the Center for Minority Health, and I circulated it at the January Collaborative meeting. I was intrigued by the subject. In the months prior to their presentation, activities around HOPE VI abounded in The Hill. On the surface, it appeared that the potential for people to be displaced seemed real. And yet, in The Hill talk of displacement was minimal to non-existent. I went to the presentation hungry to hear something that might be useful in The Hill District. But, I did not hold out much that the talk would offer anything concrete.

Since the Fulliloves were affiliated with Columbia University, I assumed that they would be speaking from a theoretical perspective. I expected that they would be talking to their fellow academics and they would be offering little in terms of speaking to community folks and their needs.

I made my way to the presentation, only to find that several members of The Hill District Community were there: Eric Hearn, Housing Opportunities Unlimited, Ron Wilson, Allequippa Terrace Residents Council, Louella Ellis, Allequippa Terrace Residents Council, Ken Thompson, Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic/Hill Satellite, Vaughan Stagg, Matilda Theiss Child Development Center and Margaret Madison, Matilda Theiss Child Development Center. In addition to the people from The Hill, the presentation was attended by John McCormick, the United Way staff person assigned to work with the three community collaboratives. Despite The Hill District representation, the lecture hall was dominated by students.

I was surprised when the Fulliloves were introduced. They were a married, African-American couple. They were casually dressed and seemed quite comfortable playing off of each other in their presentation. And contrary to my pessimistic expectations, they delivered a talk that spoke eloquently about abandoned communities and the overlooked resources that existed in them. They talked about the history and values that got lost when communities were allowed to systematically deteriorate.

The presentation was a powerful combination of stories, experiences, slides, research data and vivid details about the complex impacts of displacement. They each described how their childhood homes disappeared and they expressed how that affected their abilities to recall people, places and things connected to their childhoods. They talked about how hard it was to participate in conversations about childhood remembrances because they could not recall the details of their respective communities. The loss of touchstones, buildings, places was connected to their inability to remember details about that part of their lives. The names and faces of friends and neighbors vanished. Experiences tied to those places vanished.

The destruction of their childhood homes, and communities, was not an experience peculiar to the Fulliloves. They illustrated with slides and statistics, how displacement was a phenomenon in the United States and around the world. They tied together the destruction of communities (tearing down buildings, people moving out of neighborhoods, creating pockets of isolation within communities) with public health issues like HIV and AIDS.

Their personal stories stirred my own sense of being disconnected from the community where I grew up. The first house I lived in was 300 block of Paulson Avenue. The row of houses on Paulson Avenue was destroyed by fire. The buildings were gone. Community was gone. Gone too, were the close knit members of my extended family and my “neighbor family.”

A church parking lot now occupied the place where ten families supported and taught each others and their children. The Fulliloves made me recall the
lessons I learned there and helped me understand what happened when the places we called home vanish. It made sense that faces and experiences weren’t clear. It made sense to me why I couldn’t remember some details of my childhood. And why my boyfriend, whose family home and neighborhood remained intact, could recall the smallest of details of his life.

It made sense that when those buildings and people disappeared, a part of my identity, my grounding and memory went with them.

I recognized that all of the elements related to place were important. Although I knew the area as East Liberty, city planners have changed its designation to Lincoln-Lemington. The Fulliloves’ discussion made me realize that the act of renaming the area was an act of disconnection. In the minds of the city fathers, my old neighborhood ceased to exist.

In addition to touching me with ideas about disappearing communities, they touched a nerve when they discussed “empowered collaboratives.” The Fulliloves defined “empowered collaboratives,” as opportunities for people to work together, to have a voice in the decisions of the community. Empowered collaboratives provided opportunities for each member to contribute their talents and expertise in assessing the community and contributing to its life.

The more the Fulliloves talked, the more it seemed apparent that they were in the wrong venue. They needed to be in the community, places like The Hill, as well as in the university.

The more they spoke about looking at communities, and understanding and respecting the value of what existed there, the more it seemed they should be in The Hill District. The more they spoke about the necessity of removing negative labels “disadvantaged and distressed” from communities like The Hill, the more their message seemed ill-placed at Pitt.

As I sat listening to the Fulliloves, several questions turned over and over in my mind. “Why weren’t they talking to people in The Hill? Why weren’t they talking to the people who had the most likely chance of being displaced from their homes and communities? Was anyone else interested in having the Fulliloves in the community?”

When the talk concluded, I stuck around for the reception. At the reception, I spoke with some of the folks from The Hill District. Angela Ford, Ken Thompson and Vaughan Stagg all agreed that we needed to pursue the idea of bringing the Fulliloves to the attention of the community.

During a followup conversation with Angela Ford, I learned that the Fulliloves had expressed to Dean Mattison their interest in returning to Pittsburgh.

In the late spring, we began to actively engage other community members in a discussion on bringing the Fulliloves to The Hill. Residents and agency representatives attended the initial organizing meeting on June 18, 1997. What happened next? The members of the planning committee worked diligently to pull off Dr. Fullilove’s visit to Pittsburgh. The flyers were circulated. The press releases sent out. The meeting spaces secured. The child care providers recruited. Refreshments and snack bags assembled. The press conference was set. The community reception organized. Dr. Fullilove had a very busy day. In the morning, she spoke at Allequippa Terrace. The event organizers were surprised at the turnout. No one expected so many people to turn up at 10 in the morning for a program. But, they did.

The provocative flyers that were distributed made many people curious. Even after Dr. Fullilove was introduced, and she assured folks she could not tell them where they would be moving, most stayed. They stayed to hear about displacement and what it does to the mind, body and soul.

Many people were willing to acknowledge their fears and to share memories of that community. The residents broke up into small groups and talked about the memories that they wanted to take with them.

At lunch time, Dr. Fullilove met with the event organizers. Over lunch, she told us that this day was not
enough. That if we wanted to capitalize on the energy and interest, we had to be prepared to stay together for the long haul. Little did she know that we had already talked about what to do beyond July 24 at our second planning meeting on June 18.

After lunch, she spent the afternoon in Bedford Dwellings. The crowd was smaller, but the sentiments were the same – people here were fiercely proud of living in and coming from The Hill District. They eagerly shared what that meant to them.

In the late afternoon, Dr. Fullilove participated in a press conference. The conference was followed by a community reception.

At the reception, she had a chance to reunite with an old friend, Councilman Sala Udin. Councilman Udin had met the Fulliloves in San Francisco. He told how they met when he introduced her at the reception.

For several months following the July 24 visit, the community members were struggling with how to stay together, what our mission would be and how to bring both Fulliloves back to Pittsburgh.

By the end of 1997, we had a name. In a letter, sent to Sala Udin following her visit, Mindy Fullilove suggested the name “Coalition for a Healthy Urban Habitat.” The name was adopted by the planning committee. And the group embarked on a year long odyssey that included: a series of teach-ins, reading and research, a partnership with Carnegie-Mellon University, a community conference, and a conference for community organizers.
Feelings About Moving was a coloring book volunteers used to work with Hill District residents' children while their parents attended the “Do you know you were moving?” meeting.

### Feelings About Moving

Kids have different feelings about moving from one place to another. Circle the feelings you have about moving:

- happy
- sad
- scared
- worried
- lonesome
- excited
- confused
- tired
- missing my friends
- missing my old house
- missing my old school
- missing my old teacher
- missing my old classmates
- liking my new home
- liking my new school
- missing my old bedroom
- missing my old play area
- liking my new play area

I also feel

I can talk to _________ about my feelings.

I can ask _______ questions about moving.

I know it is okay to have feelings about moving from one place to another.
July 30, 1997

Councilman Sala Udin
Pittsburgh city Council
510 City County Building
414 Grant Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Dear Sala:

It was absolutely wonderful to see you last week. Bob sends his warmest regards. Our work has focused on the understanding the denatured inner city, that is, those neighborhoods that have suffered serious loss of housing and economic infrastructure. We would be happy to put our expertise at your disposal. I enclose some recent publications to bring you up-to-date on what we are doing.

I promised to write a list of those principles in the planning document I have reviewed that I believe to be sound. I take this from "Hope VI Planning Grant Report: Bedford Dwellings Addition, January 1997." The planning grant lists 10 principles which guided the process (p.11). While all are important, I would highlight the following:

- involve the existing residents in the planning process;
- integrate public housing units into the neighborhood;
- restore the street grid;
- bring back the street and the porch as a focus of community life;
- respect the historic and social context.

The current street grid, for example, isolates the public housing community, creating a virtual wall. The separation of people into districts—public housing, regular housing—is very destruction for social interactions. The Hill is a district of great historic importance to African Americans and to Pittsburgh. Its "look" and form should be restored. The developers' concept of using a "pattern book" taken from existing houses is an important idea. Also, the whole neighborhood must be rebuilt, not just the projects. If the neighborhood looks whole—like it was never damaged—the project will be a great success. There are, for example, some split level houses that do not match the older row house concept of the community. That kind of visual dissociation should be avoided. I could go on, but hopefully you get the idea.

The plan is problematic, in my view, in three major ways. First, it labels the community as "distressed" and therefore slated for demolition. This is a powerful psychological blow to residents, which must be countered. It is essential that people have pride, and even more so if they don't have much to be proud of. Second, the Hill has been slowly decaying over
several decades. People there have already suffered from displacement, and know that community is lost when people move. The moves that are proposed are very serious. They are likely to further weaken the community. The plan is virtually silent on this point. Finally, the plan does not propose a one-for-one replacement of housing. That means some people will be forced out of the neighborhood. As councilman for the area, I am sure that you are already quite concerned about the deconstruction of your district.

I think that a "Coalition for Healthy Urban Habitat" might be created out of the group that organized my visit. They are all aware and concerned. In the swirl of politics that surrounds a project of this size, many of the principles may be lost. Some of the bad outcomes might get worse. A coalition can provide badly needed advocacy for the residents of the projects and for all the people who care about the Hill.

In addition, I recommend that the City of Pittsburgh, as whole, should become invested in the success of rebuilding your district. This project is an interesting one, from the perspective of urban planning, architecture, urban ecology, etc. It would provide excellent teaching materials for school children. I think everyone should participate in the revitalization of the area, as a symbol of on-going investment in the survival of Pittsburgh.

I could go on and on, as I have lots to say on these subjects. Rather than talk your ear off, perhaps you could let me know if these ideas make sense to you. Also, let me know if I can be of further assistance.

Actually, I fervently hope you arrange to keep me involved as I am fascinated by the potential for great good, and the threat of terrible harm.

Sincerely,

Mindy Thompson Fullilove, MD  
Associate Professor of Clinical Psychiatry and Public Health  
Columbia University and New York State Psychiatric Institute
Maurice Falk Medical Fund Minority Fellows Program

MAURICE FALK MEDICAL FUND
3515 GRANT BUILDING   PITTSBURGH, PA 15213-2335

MEMORANDUM

TO: Center for Minority Health Advisory Board
FROM: Phil Hallen
DATE: January 12, 1998
RE: Grant to Establish the Falk Fellows Program of the Center for Minority Health

I am pleased to announce prior to a general press release, that the Falk Medical Fund has awarded a grant of $93,230 to establish a program of visiting scholars and researchers and to be known as the Falk Fellows of the Center for Minority Health. In addition to funding the initial Falk Fellows, Drs. Mindy and Robert Fullilove, the grant provides for administrative staff support and for research and development of a Minority Health Information Hotline.

This grant grows out of a long association between the School and the Falk Medical Fund and creates a flexible program to bring nationally known researchers, scholars and community activists to the Center for varying periods of time to teach, continue their research and work with community organizations.

The Fellows who will inaugurate the program are Drs. Mindy and Robert Fullilove of Columbia University. They have lectured at the Graduate School of Public Health several times and are well known in the School and within the public housing community where their research and teaching activities will focus.

The Falk Fund’s purpose in awarding this grant is to (1) increase the visibility of the Center within the University and to position it as the place for university-wide coordination of all research projects related to race and minority affairs in health, (2) to make the Graduate School of Public Health a nationally recognized location for scholarship and research in minority health issues, and (3) to create outreach to Pittsburgh’s minority community in issues of health information and referral.

The Falk Fund has previously supported fellowship programs in community psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh, Meharry Medical College and the American Psychiatric Association, as well as minority post-doctoral fellowships at the American Sociological Association and the Social Science Research Council.
These are comments on the UDA HOPE VI plans for Bedford Dwelling Addition (Bedford HOPE VI Revitalization Plan, 1997). The plans are designed to address the problems associated with substandard public housing. The project will demolish existing public housing and rebuild a mix of public and private structures. In addition to improving the housing stock, the plan will decrease both the concentration of very low income families and residential segregation in The Hill District of Pittsburgh. The Hill District, the plan notes, has lost approximately 40% of its overall housing stock, and suffers from economic and social isolation from the rest of Pittsburgh. Yet, the area is the closest residential center to downtown Pittsburgh.

Specifically, the plan proposes to demolish all buildings at Bedford Dwellings Addition (27 buildings, 460 units) and replace them with 185 new on-site units and 475 off-site units. 260 of the new units are designated as public housing. The planners state, “… the proposed mix of 260 new public housing units and 100 Section 8 certificates will satisfy the needs and preferences of the 340 households which currently reside in Bedford.” (p. 30)

Rationale for demolition:
• Bedford Dwellings is a “distressed community” by four parameters: relative density, total delinquent rent, drug crime rate, and modernization need;
• The design of Bedford Dwellings is flawed, for example, the streets do not connect to the local grid;
• Current plan lacks green space, community meeting places, shopping.

Plan to “build on strengths and eliminate weaknesses”:
• Restore turn-of-the-century street grid to create “human scaled, interconnected streets”;
• Increase parks and green space;
• Anchor the community with new housing opportunities;
• Support commercial revitalization along Centre Avenue;
• Create a Campus of Learners;
• Rebuild the neighborhood in character with the community;
• Create marketable addresses that link the strengths of the neighborhood to the city;
• In the future, continue to build on strengths and eliminate weaknesses.

Image and Character:
• Design blocks to support urban house/street connection
• Provide new houses based on the traditions of the neighborhood, with lawns and porches

Attention to needs/wishes of residents:
The plan has been developed in two stages. Stage 1 will build off site. Residents will be relocated to new housing prior to demolition of Bedford Additions. The plan recognizes the wishes of residents to remain in the area. The plan states, “In fact, a condition for resident support of this proposal was that the Housing Authority commit to provide a housing unit in the immediate vicinity of Bedford Dwellings for any household which needs it.” (p. 31) The plan also notes that residents interviewed in a project survey favored renovation over demolition by a margin of 3 to 1.
These are comments on UDA's economic plans for Bedford Dwellings. The Self-Sufficiency and Community Building Work Plan is an integral component of the HOPE VI revitalization project. Its objectives focus largely on economic development strategies, the development of job opportunity, educational, and employment programs for community residents, and the creation of strategies to support residents in becoming actively involved in community life and development.

The plan envisions a collaboration of public, private, and community-based agencies to create and support self-sufficiency programs. Community residents are to be actively involved in goal setting for this effort and in identifying problems and barriers to achieving these goals. Computer and Internet technologies will be utilized to support these efforts and will be a principal focus of many of the education and training initiatives that the plan envisions.

Because a significant portion of the families in the Bedford community are currently receiving social services, “The Bedford Self-Sufficiency Program will rely on a basic case management and advocacy model to help residents transition to economic self-reliance.”

All households will participate in a “family assessment” that will identify employment, housing, and family stability issues for each resident. This information will serve as baseline data for measuring each individual’s progress towards achieving the goal of self-sufficiency (pgs. 7-9). An advocate will be assigned to each family/individual to assist in obtaining needed services and to assist in the achievement of an appropriate level of self-sufficiency.

A set of impressive employment goals has been set as part of this segment of the plan. The proportion of “employable” residents between the ages of 16-60 will increase by 60% over the first five years of the plan, 50% of public housing residents will be placed in jobs and will sustain employment for at least 18 months, and at least 25% of those who are already employed will move to higher paying jobs. “Residents will be encouraged to use computer technology to develop career plans, research career and occupational alternatives, assess skills and interests, inform [themselves] of current job openings, and develop resumes and to write letters to potential employers.” Barriers to employment – most notably those involving transportation – will be part of a plan to enhance employment opportunities.

Economic Development

The plan has an aggressive set of objectives for economic development of the Hill District, as well. In addition to strengthening and revitalizing current District businesses, new businesses (with accompanying job opportunities for District residents) will also be developed. Strategies to attract new ventures will be undertaken as well as strategies to encourage current businesses to remain. Along list of potential partners in this venture is provided.

Community of Learners

The Community of Learners is aimed at improving educational opportunity to children and adults in the District. It will rely heavily on both computer technology and on providing residents with access to the internet to achieve its goals. Plans include the improvement of the physical plant and technological capacity of a number of area schools (McKelvey and Milliones) as well as the creation of important initiatives to improve parent involvement in educational and curricular reforms at these institutions. Adult educational opportunities are also highlighted and include providing access to seniors, as well.

Community Building

The community building component focuses on efforts to increase the involvement of residents in community governance and to enhance the sense of community pride. Of particular significance are the plans for a governance structure that emphasizes the incorporation of new residents into such a structure. “Until new housing units are ready for occupancy, it is anticipated that the Bedford Dwellings Tenant Council and its various committees, including the newly established network of building captains, will continue to represent the concerns of public housing residents. Upon initial occupancy of the new housing, a new resident association will be formed to represent the interests of all renters in the community, including but not limited to public housing residents.”

The plan envisions the involvement of other stakeholders and other organizations that are concerned with the health of the community. Thus, community building activities will be supported so that voluntary groups, neighborhood lock associations, and other groups can take on such projects as the development and maintenance of community gardens, the sponsorship of cleanup projects, the creation of community social events, and the construction and supervision of play areas for young children.
Teach-ins and Community Organizing
Robert Fullilove

Why hold teach-ins? Our intent in using this particular strategy was to create the conditions for a dialogue between our group and members of the Hill community about their experiences and perceptions of the changes in their neighborhood.

The Hill's transformation by the HOPE VI process was, ostensibly, designed to be a collaborative process between residents, developers, builders, and city government. This ideal has not been fully realized. In our early visits to Pittsburgh Hill residents described the “apathy” and the indifference of their neighbors in the face of the impending transformation of the community. They wondered aloud whether anything could be done to “wake people up” and get them to be actively involved in the process that would determine their fate. Teach-ins provided us with a unique opportunity to create a consciousness of place, of community, of dislocation, and of the psychological impact of all of these factors.

The use of teach-ins in our Pittsburgh project reflected a return to the “old school” notion of how to do community organizing. We wanted and needed to have community input: what were the views and perceptions of residents about the impending changes in the Hill's housing patterns? What were they planning to do, individually and collectively, about the loss of housing and community landmarks? In a series of five meetings we not only solicited comments from community residents about what they perceived to be happening with them, but also we tried to use their comments to create a shared vision of what was happening to the neighborhood and what it was possible to do in the face of these changes.

Our objective was ambitious. In order to create the foundation for such conversations, we were trying to teach participants a new language about spaces and places and emotion. Moreover, we wanted this language to become the medium for our communication with each other and for our discussion of strategies and tactics for the organization. We wanted meeting participants to evolve from a vague sense of unease and ennui about the changes in their neighborhood. We wanted them to name their feelings and their perceptions of what was happening to them. We wanted them to have the capacity to articulate what they wanted from a community campaign to improve their neighborhood, and we wanted them to have the language to make their feelings, emotions, and needs known.

The Teach-ins as Process

In order to master a new language it is essential that the learner have the opportunity to practice it. The “language of place” requires that people understand how their feelings, perceptions, and emotions are affected by the spaces that they move through. This language also requires that its speakers have words to label what they feel and what they see when they are in a particular place.

To provide practice in labeling their emotions, we asked participants in our teach-ins to react to and to discuss a host of different images. We showed them photos of buildings; some were new and familiar, others were neighborhoods in states of disarray. We also used images of new neighborhood developments as well as images of people moving through the spaces that they occupy in daily life. We asked participants to talk about the emotions that these images invoked.

This effort to link the familiar world to a new way of speaking and thinking is tied to three principles we have developed in working with communities:

First principle: assist people to understand displacement. Displacement is an increasingly common experience for the human family that carries with it the potential for serious psychological effects. Person-place relationships are important factors in understanding people, their mental health, and the manner in which they live in the places they occupy.

As is true with many experiences that are traumatic, those exposed to this kind of dislocation trauma may not have language to describe what they feel. The language we use to describe person-place experience is not well evolved; we take our relationships to the immediate physical environment for granted. People may enter a place and feel immediately that they are at ease or highly uncomfortable and not be at all aware that it is their experience of the space that causes these emotions.

Creating this awareness was the principal objective in our teach-ins and is a critical first step in helping people understand (and ultimately cope with) the impact of dislocation and displacement.

Second principle: finding the means to help people understand space and place. It is essential that we understand the particular rules that govern how groups of people [families or communities, for example] use space, move through it, and create rules governing the actions of themselves and others within a space.

“Mapping” a space, therefore, is an essential activity for the organizer. This process consists of identifying
“important” places and developing a concept for how people use it and move through it.

As is noted elsewhere in this report, having community residents walk around their neighborhood and map their impressions using a “community burn index” was precisely this kind of exercise. In addition to asking people to see their neighborhoods with “new eyes” and to use new labels to describe what they see, they were asked to share their impressions with others from other communities. In a community such as the Hill, which has lost so much of its housing and its neighborhood landmarks, it is critical to create a new consciousness of the place by having participants realize, as one Hill resident put it, “It wasn’t always like this. There was once a neighborhood here.”

**Third principle: empower people around the issues affecting space and place.** We seek to create “Empowered collaborations,” that is, relationships between people and organizations that will resist the problems of loss of place or of drastic change in the nature of a place. It stresses the need for folks to act communally and to seek the assistance of others to preserve their communities, and by extension, their way of life.

One of the most difficult challenges faced by a community that is being transformed by developers and bulldozers is the ability to retain a sense of cohesion. In our work we have tried to create opportunities for connecting the Hill to the rest of the world. In providing Hill residents and their neighbors with opportunities to learn and to work with each other, the foundation for productive personal and political alliances was created.

Teach-ins are not designed to turn out huge crowds; they are not – to use a term that was prevalent in the 1960s – “mass meetings.” They are, however, an opportunity to acquaint decision makers and concerned neighborhood leaders with the tools to become active participants in a planning process that was designed for them. As one teach-in participant noted, “You can’t tell people what you need until you know how to ask for it.”
We met at Hill House, members of the Coalition, Bob, Anthony and I. We were discussing ways to begin to build our understanding of the community, through a series of community Teach-ins. I proposed that we do a mapping exercise and described “The Community Burn Index,” which I had developed.

Here is what I explained:

*The Community Burn Index is modeled on the “Burn Index,” used by physicians to gauge the seriousness of injuries from burns. The burn index specifically assess the degree of injury to the skin and does so by examining the depth and breadth of the burn. The skin has three layers of tissue. If the top one or two layers are injured, the skin can regenerate. But if all three layers are burned, the skin cannot grow back in that spot. That is called a “third degree” burn. Repair requires transplantation of skin from another part of the body. When assessing the depth of the burn, the doctor is asking, “How many layers of the skin were damaged? Are there third degree burns?”

The skin covers the entire body. It serves many protective functions, such as keeping germs out, as well as regulatory functions, such as keeping water in. If the skin is destroyed over a large part of the body, germs can easily invade and water will quickly leak out. When assessing the breadth of the burn, the doctor is asking, “How much of the skin suffered third degree burns?”

In estimating the burn index, the doctor calculates the proportion of the skin that suffered third degree burns. The burn index guides treatment and predicts survival. As the index goes higher, the likelihood that the patient will live gets lower and lower.

What does this have to do with communities?

Houses and other structures are the “skin” of a community. If the structures are destroyed, the community is burned. Consider each demolished house as a “third degree burn.” Consider how many blocks have lost one or more houses. The “community burn index” is the proportion of all blocks that have third degree burn. In The Hill District, the number is very high.

At that point, Tamaneka Howze shuddered. “Are you saying my community is dead?” she asked me.
Mapping the Neighborhood
Mindy Fullilove

As planned at the March 27th meeting, the first Teach-in was organized around the Community Burn Index. Participants gathered in the community room at the Dolores Howze Treatment Center. We broke the group up into teams with about 5 members. Each team had a section of the map and instructions to look at each building, house or lot and inspect it. We were interested in getting information about its condition, its interesting features, and its contribution to the neighborhood, whether positive or negative. All of this information was recorded on the map section. Each group had a Polaroid camera and took pictures as they circulated.

When they had completed their inspection, the groups returned to the Dolores Howze Treatment Center and worked on a second exercise, “The Healthy Urban Habitat: What’s In/What’s Out?” In the interim, a small group assembled the data from all the maps on a poster-size map of the 12-block area. We used bright strips of tape to indicate building condition, resources and dangers.

Everyone gathered together to examine the map. Large blue X’s stood out, because many of the buildings that had existed when the map was made were now gone. People commented on many small observations they had made. Residents of a group of new houses, for example, had not yet planted their front lawns, giving a sense of temporariness to the area. Little abandoned streets were found tucked away throughout the area. A working factory was pointed out, in what looked like an abandoned building. Murals decorated buildings, giving charm to the area. Historical buildings, including the New Granada Theater/Pythian Temple, gave the area character and charm. Lots, strewn with garbage and hypodermic needles left by intravenous drug users, posed a danger to the area. In general, the wide-open spaces with neatly shorn grass gave an open air feeling at great odds with the urban character of the stores and row-houses.

One interchange stands out in my mind. A woman who lived in one of the housing communities destined to be demolished said, “The developers tell us not to be sentimental about where we live.” I replied, “But of course you should be sentimental about where you live – it’s your home!” A smile crossed her face: it seemed my remark had vindicated her own thoughts on the matter. She nodded in assent.

Michel Cantal-Dupart, our guest from Paris, asked to make some remarks. He emphasized that this was a community of working people and that people living in The Hill District worked in other parts of the city.
“How did they get there?” he asked. “You must find the paths to the rivers.” The older people present immediately began to explain the connections and pathways, such as the incline that had connected Cliff Street to the Strrip District. Many of the connections have since been lost, isolating The Hill District from the rest of Pittsburgh.
The photograph on the opposite page depicts the map that was created at the end of the first Teach-in. The schematic version on this page was generated by Rich Brown to provide participants with a portable version for studying.
Envisioning a Healthy Urban Habitat

What’s in?
- churches
- jitney stations
- taxi stations
- new houses
- green areas/gardens (flowers/vegetables)
- trees
- corner stores
- subsidized housing
- barber/hair salons
- new businesses
- clothing stores
- banquet centers
- hardware stores
- shopping malls
- supermarkets
- theatres
- pharmacy
- shoe repair
- bakery
- jewelry stores
- trash containers
- disabled accessibility
- day care
- recreation centers
- library
- job centers
- public park/sport complex/swimming pool
- block clubs
- restaurant
- substance abuse treatment/prevention
- medical clinics
- mental health clinics
- home ownership

What’s Out?
- poorly illuminated streets
- absence of trash receptors
- cheap materials used to build new buildings
- vacant lots
- abandoned buildings
- lack of retail stores
- too few health care facilities
- unsafe play areas for children
- no easy access to open areas and lots (no short cuts)
- lack of porches
- inadequate policing
- nuisance bars
- substance abuse/drug trafficking
- lack of businesses
- bureaucratic fragmentation
- trash
- traffic patterns (i.e., too narrow for 2-way traffic)
- permit parking
- missing street signs
MEMORANDUM

To: Pittsburgh colleagues
From: Mindy Fullilove, MD
Re: Preliminary list of M. Cantal-Dupart's ideas
Date: April 22, 1998

M. Cantal-Dupart (hereinafter Cantal) promised to send us a report. In the interim, here are some ideas that Bob and I gleaned from our conversations with him.

1) Map of The Hill District
   There should be maps of The Hill District in important places, like Hill House. This immediately raises the question: what is the Hill District? I attach two maps—one from the Wylie Avenue calendar, the other from city planning—which provide an interesting contrast.

2) Visualizing The Hill District with a model
   Cantal suggested that a model of The Hill District would really help people visualize what is going on. He suggested that the model should be big enough so that people could run a finger through the streets and detailed enough that they could find their houses. Bob proposed that this model should be prepared for display at the Heinz Architectural Center when Cantal comes back in October/November.

3) An athletic trail on the lost streets
   There are small roads that were closed as part of urban renewal. Traces of these streets exist and could easily be developed into an athletic trail, to be highlighted with cultural and historic trail markers (Josh Gibson played here, etc).
4) Trail to the river
The path(s) to the river must exist in the memory of older residents. This and the athletic trail project would be excellent activities for teens.

5) Historical/current photographs
Cantal would like to use a series of historical/current photographs of The Hill District for his talk. Each set should represent exactly the same location as it appeared 40-50 years ago and as it looks today. I think he was very inspired by the photos that we saw at the McCain home. Lester pointed out that the Roosevelt Theater is now something else, I believe the Triangle shopping center. Cantal took home with him a picture of the Roosevelt Theater identical to one at the McCain's. I suggested it would be a good present for his significant other, but he said, "No, that's for me."

6) Journalists on the first flight
Cantal proposed that USAir bring journalists from France to Pittsburgh on the first USAir flight, Paris-Pittsburgh, which will take place in October. Overall, Cantal fell in love with Pittsburgh and believes that it is a great site to develop for tourism. Cantal specifically suggested that journalists interested in social issues be invited to examine the parallels between Pittsburgh and Paris. He has friends working for the major dailies who would be interested.

7) House portraits
Cantal proposed that the historic houses be photographed and their stories collected. A display could be prepared for the Juneteenth celebration and the July street fair.

He probably has many more ideas by now, but these certainly give us food for thought and material for action.
Remembering the conversation in the first Teach-In, in which a woman had complained that the developers had told her “not to be sentimental,” I wanted to emphasize the intensity of emotions that we have towards our homes and other spaces we occupy.

Christopher Alexander, an architect in Berkeley, California, has pointed out the profound importance of place in supporting us as we live our lives. He wrote,

“The specific patterns out of which a building or a town is made may be alive or dead. To the extent they are alive, they let our inner forces loose, and set us free; but when they are dead they keep us locked in conflict.” (The Timeless Way of Building, p. 101)

To introduce these ideas, two exercises were presented.

Exercise 1: A Day in the Life…
Here are the directions we gave participants:

Examine these pictures. In what ways does the environment help or detract from the activities depicted?

In 1994 there was a contest that asked women to photograph their day. Sure that I had an interesting life, took pictures of my day. I didn’t win the contest, but the pictures provide an interesting record. It was shortly after that day that I decided to begin the study of the “psychology of place.”

1. The morning started with teaching post-doctoral fellows in the Public Psychiatry program at NYS Psychiatric Institute (PI). The class met in one of the elegant rooms at PI. I (looking up at the camera) was teaching about “Personal Geography.”

2. After teaching, I had to go to the nearby community of Central Harlem, where I was engaged in research. The Harlem community has suffered the loss of 30% of its housing infrastructure. Garbage piled in front of abandoned buildings is a common sight.
3. A plastic bag in a tree, a pet peeve of mine, is a problem that results from poor garbage collection and threatens urban trees.

4. Stopping for peanuts from a friendly man. When I gave him a copy of the picture, he said joyously, “Look at me, trying to make something of myself.”
5. In the afternoon, Julie Karasik, a high school student preparing for the Westinghouse Science Talent Search, came by for her regular meeting with me. Julie and I met on the way in and came up the elevator together. The dingy elevator is typical of the struggle for decent maintenance in the building where my offices are located. My offices are NOT at Psychiatric Institute.

6. Home in the evening, doing dishes, after a dinner cooked by husband Bob. We had just survived a brutal winter that featured 18 snowstorms. Our house was poorly insulated, and it was difficult to keep the temperature above 55. We renovated in the summer of '94 and this is one of the last pictures of the old kitchen.

7. Later, Bob made chocolate chip cookies, his specialty and a family favorite. We often eat cookies but this picture of me sitting with daughter Molly was staged for the contest. The props include: the chocolate chip cookies, the glass of milk, an article about plastic bags in trees (I was very proud that the New Yorker had acknowledged my pet peeve), Molly listening attentively, and Molly’s science book.
Exercise 2: One Best House

Here are the directions we gave participants:

Think back to your childhood. Try to remember whose house was the “best” house. Probably, as a little child, the best house was the one where the adults were kind to you and played with you a lot. Often, the one best house served great food and made everyone feel welcome. As an older child, the one best house might have been an interesting place, where there was room to explore, and games to play. As a teen, the one best house might have been the one where people listened to your ideas and respected your needs. As an adult, you might find that the one best house is the one where you can relax and enjoy the company of others without worrying, or, at least, it’s a place where you can share your worries with others who want to help. The Best House is one we remember fondly. We think, “I’d like my house to be like that!”

Mrs. Thelma Lovett, a woman who lived in The Hill for almost all of her 70 years, told us at the Teach In, “I’m proud to say that my parents’ house was the one best house. Everyone just liked to come there. My parents were wonderful people. In those days, we were very formal. I don’t think I ever heard my mother call my father anything other than ‘Mr. Williams.’ But the formality did not hide the love and concern that they always felt for us. When you walked in the door of that house, you just felt good.”

Another participant remembered, “My friend’s house was the best. His parents were really wierd. The house was big and spooky. We liked to play in the rooms in the attic – it was like a haunted house. We had a really good time there because nobody bothered us. It was cool.”

Another participant remembered his uncle’s house as the best house. Although the house was small, it had a wonderful backyard with lovely bushes and great shade trees, perfect for the neighbors to gather and make barbecues. The many wonderful afternoons of cooking and storytelling made that place the best house.

Common to every “Best House” story is that it is a place of welcome. It seems, no matter what age, no matter how rich or poor we are, what we want is to feel at home. The One Best House might be small, it might be grand, but it satisfied important needs for acceptance and nurturance. Teens, of course, prefer the “cool” house where they can be independent, while younger children like the houses with good food and good games. But though the needs are different, the point remains the same: the One Best House is a center of satisfying human contact.
Mindy Fullilove made opening remarks:

I am convinced that we feel good when we live and work in places that are “alive” – to use Christopher Alexander’s term – and that support our needs. We can tell if places are working by “tuning in” to our feelings and by assessing the match between a space and the activities that go on there. The basic idea is simple. It is easy to do any task if you have the right equipment and the right space. An ironing board that is at the right height makes it easy to iron. A chair at a table makes it easy to eat or write. By contrast, sawing in a small closet would be very difficult. Notice that we might enjoy ironing with the right equipment, but we would feel very annoyed trying to saw without enough room. In general, we feel good – we feel more alive – when the spaces are working with us, not against us.

In order to explain this further, I will introduce three important concepts: situation, configuration, and congruence.

**Situation**
Definition: interpersonal episode.
Explanation: People who live in a neighborhood interact with each other. They neighbor, police, supervise, entertain, exchange, relate, and avoid. These interactions, and thousands of others we might list, are the “situations” of community life. People are always in one situation or another.

**Setting**
Definition: location.
Explanation: Settings are the locations for the activities of our lives. We may think of our house as a setting, but it is important to remember that the house is set in a block, the block is set in neighborhood, and so on. Thus, there are many levels, each of which may considered as the setting.

**Configuration**
Definition: arrangements of physical objects, such as furniture in a room or rooms in a building.
Explanation: Physical objects are always laid out in relationship to each other. We can think of this as it applies to situations or to settings.

**Congruence**
Definition: agreement or correspondence in character and qualities, conformity, accordance, harmony.
Explanation: One way to think about congruence is to imagine two triangles that are the same size. We would say they are congruent. We can say that laughing is congruent with feeling happy. We can also apply this concept to the fit between people’s activities and their spaces: Because a flat table provides good support for writing, we can say “table” and “writing” are congruent. We can test for congruence by asking ourselves the question, “Does the setting fit the situation?” If they are well suited, we can say they are congruent, or that there is a good fit. If they are mismatched, we can call that incongruent, or a bad fit.

**Applying these concepts**
How does all this apply to The Hill District and other urban areas? An urban area is a configuration of buildings, streets, and open space. In the best of all possible worlds, the configuration of the urban setting would be congruent with the situations of the people who live there. For example, in urban neighborhood, people must buy their food. A supermarket can provide good quality at a reasonable price. Thus, a supermarket is congruent with residents’ shopping needs.

We can use the “goodness of fit” test of congruence as a way judging urban planning. Simply put, plans for buildings or parks or roads should specify settings that are congruent with the activities of people living in that area. Planners often come up with ideas for changes in a neighborhood, but they don’t necessarily live there or know the situations that area residents find themselves in. Planners’ ideas for buildings may not fit the space needs of residents.

Planners, for example, have built apartments with one bedroom in places where people have large families. Planners have designed galley kitchens for people used to farmhouse kitchens that have plenty of room for friends and family to gather. Planners have designed housing projects for families with no play areas for children. None of these incongruent projects would have happened if residents could have studied the plans and assessed the “goodness of fit” between the settings specified in the plan and the situations in their lives. As The Hill District is rebuilt, it is essential for people to be aware of, and to talk about, the congruence between setting and situation.
After the opening remarks, here are the directions we gave participants:

*Study these pictures. Is the activity congruent or incongruent with the place where it is going on? How do the pictures make you feel? What might make for a better fit?*
One of my favorite places to go as a little boy was a big white house that sat in the middle of the neighborhood – the Millers’ house. It had a large porch that seemed to stretch forever. There, I met my friends. We played games. We sat and talked about things. It was the gathering place – a happy place filled with smiles and belly rolling laughter. For many of us, it was there that we made plans and dreamed of becoming doctors, teachers, stunt men, astronauts, lawyers, and movie stars. The porch was where we sat and ate cool watermelon and let its sweet juices run down our faces. Ms. Miller would tell us stories or teach us a new game. We would spend hours there. Often, we would have to be beckoned home by our mothers who thought we had well spent our time. It was a safe place that welcomed all the children of the neighborhood.

When Mr. Miller enclosed the porch and remodeled the house – giving it a more contemporary look – something happened. The children stopped coming. They did not gather at the Millers’ porch anymore. Friends who lived in opposite directions of the Millers’ whom once met on the porch did not meet anymore. New social groups formed as a result. Because these groups did not mingle, suspicion and distrust were engendered. Friends became estranged. The strangest part is that no one understood at the time what was happening. Yet, everyone knew they were experiencing some phenomenon that was unpleasant and uncomfortable. No one gave language to their feelings. We went on with our lives as if the porch never existed.

As time went on, I found other places to play and hang out. I would never feel the same about the Millers’ house although I couldn’t explain why. These feelings would be buried deep within me not to erupt until years later. Almost two decades later and several thousand miles away from the Millers’ concrete porch, the strangest thing happened during a teach-in on the configuration of space and its relationship to our emotions. Those feelings I experienced as a child surfaced. However, this time I was able to give language to what I felt about the enclosed porch. I was able to understand that when Mr. Miller changed the structure of the house, he changed the function. The house no later welcomed the children. The renovation served as a wall that hindered their coming over to visit. More important, I learned that to every space is attached some emotion. When the porch was taken away, the children experienced (unbeknownst to them) grief as if they had lost a loved one. The happy place became a place of sadness.
Something about that orange chair … I walked into the room with a young lady that I work with who followed closely behind. As we entered the room, there was a quiet hush. All eyes came up from what they were doing and focused on me. (When I think about it that was very odd.) I could feel the eyes watching me as I went to get to a chair. I felt a little tense. Thoughts began to rush through my head. “Could my fly be open or something?” As I’m lowering my bottom into a chair, everyone began to laugh. Without thinking, I jumped up from the chair and stood a moment being a little confused. Did I do something wrong?

Mindy, then, shared that she had made a prediction. She predicted that the next person to enter the room would sit in the orange chair. I hadn’t paid much attention to the color of the chair, but I felt that it was the place I needed to sit. Thinking about what had just happened, I joined in the laughter. When everyone had quieted down, she asked, “Why the orange chair?” With some thought, I gave a response. “The orange chair felt closer to the circle. It gave me a feeling of warmth. The orange chair brought me closer to everyone.”

This “orange chair” experience happened as a result of my attending a teach-in at the Dolores Howze Treatment Center. I was encouraged to attend by the National Council for Urban Peace and Justice, my employer. Because this workshop focused on spatial relationships and emotions and my job is about connecting the conscience with emotions, it was thought that this would be a great event to participate in for enrichment.

At the teach-in, Mindy Fullilove shared pictures of Pittsburgh’s Hill District. These pictures were past (shots taken during The Hill’s heyday) and present (current shots). The groups of pictures showcased different things. The past pictures showed exuberance, life, and self-efficiency, and just simply old fun. The pictures included shots of neighbors with fine houses. The “now” pictures showed decay and loss. Empty lots and dirty needles were themes found in this set of pictures. While the past pictures were feel-good pictures, the “now” pictures brought about feelings of emptiness and devastation. The outlook doesn’t look very bright.

In its heyday, The Hill District was self-efficient. All resources required were nested there. People would stop off in Pittsburgh en route to New York (for example, jazz greats like Duke Ellington, Lena Horne or Stanley Turrentine). There were lots of eateries and clubs for your entertainment (Crawford 1 and 2, the Roosevelt, Grenada). The Hill District was the place to be. It was culturally rich. During the great migration of Blacks from the South, The Hill was the first place many settled. In addition, The Hill offered many opportunities. In its heyday, trade and bartering was the rule of the day. Willie Lynch was still alive and well. Yet, we thrived.

Today, as downtown expands, it robs us of the black culture. The community has been culturally ravaged and raped of culture. We have nothing physically, emotionally, or spiritually to attach ourselves. It is difficult to identify with our culture when everything is gone. How can one have an identity without being able to identify with culture?

I left the teach-in filled with lots of questions and strange feelings of loss. What could I do personally to bring back some of the life and vibrancy to The Hill? How could I advocate for change? How could I act as a go-between for the unheard and the “powers that are”? I felt a sense of loss – similar to the loss of a loved one (a grieving process actually). This best coins the emotions I felt after seeing a thriving community come to a complete standstill.

This teach-in got me more in touch with my feelings and emotions and their impact on visual messages. Overall, the workshop enlightened me. It awakened my spirit, feelings and emotions and how they relate to the things I can see and feel.
Looking at the configuration of a city teaches us that buildings are nested within blocks, blocks within neighborhoods, neighborhoods within the city. There are pathways and stories as we move within the complex unity of the city.

Part 1: My Route
How did you get here today? Each participant drew his/her route to the Teach In, held at the Dolores Howze Treatment Center.
Part 2: My Building

In this part of the Teach In, members of the Coalition for a Healthy Urban Habitat were asked to select buildings that had meaning for them. The chosen buildings were photographed, and each was described, in turn. The following comments are a synopsis of the remarks.

Della Wimbs, Bethel AME Church

I was born in The Hill in 1930, and The Hill is all I know. It was difficult to pick. My sister had a picture of the original church, which was in the Lower Hill, across the street from our house at 207 Wylie Avenue. I have many memories of the church – of Sunday School, of the Nightingale Choir – and I still see people that I know from 50 years ago in that church. There weren’t many people from the Lower Hill that went to that church. They were people from Sugar Top, the light skinned people. You can imagine who sang the solos in that church. There was a woman who cleaned the church who used to come to our house and get a couple of us to go with her. I guess she was scared to go alone, and we were too crazy or too excited about the few pennies she would give us, to be afraid. I don’t remember when the church was torn down – probably with all the other demolitions.

Edna Council, Ms. Edna’s House

My name is Edna and this is Edna’s House. I moved in when I was 5 and the house still looks the same today. I was close to the school but still I was late every day. There were houses on either side that are gone, a candy store that we used to go to. Excuse me if I get emotional. Other people live in it now but it’s still my house. I had the other children thinking I was rich because I lived in that house. My mother would work hard to keep the house clean and she would starch and iron my clothes. I told the kids we had a maid. Our house was the house where people gathered. This was the house that people came to when there was going to be a party. Everyone gathered at our house and then set out for the party. This was the house where family came when they moved to Pittsburgh from the South. They stayed here until they had a place to live. And my mother took in foster children. The house was full, but we were family and we had good times. I’m glad this wasn’t one of the houses they tore down. I think I would have put a plaque up that said, “This was Edna’s house, a house full of love and a house full of memories.”
The building I chose is located at 2155 Centre Avenue. It’s called the Union Hall. It has three stories, with a basement, and back in the 1950s and 60s this was the spot to be. Centre Avenue, things were happening, and Union Hall was part of it. On the first floor was Taylor’s, run by Jewish folks, and they sold the best cornbeef sandwiches in town. They did everything for the neighborhood — cash a workingman’s paycheck for free, give people credit. It was big fun at Taylor’s. Downstairs in the basement was a pool hall. Go in there with your full suit, and come out with your shorts. There were sharks in that pool hall, 9 ball, 8 ball, whatever; they’d take your money. I’d see people go in with a briefcase full of money and come out with no money. But they didn’t let you leave without something. They’d buy you a libation as you left. The upper two floors were rented out for receptions, cabarets, whatever. My mother’s club always had functions there. I would run errands up and down the stairs and watch the ladies dancing. It’s a sturdy building and it’s standing today. The Masonics use it. I’m glad it’s still there because it has a lot of good memories for a lot of folk. Everything is torn down around it, but it’s still standing.

I can’t say I picked this building. This building picked me. I just started working for The Hill CDC and it was brought to my attention that we want to restore this building. We have a web site and I was asked to implement the web page. The building is actually both the Pythian Temple and the New Granada Theater, which is a landmark building. The Pythian Temple is located on Wylie Avenue, and the New Granada is located on Centre Avenue. It was built in 1927 by black construction workers as a hangout. I say a “hangout” because men came there with their families on Sundays. In order to support the building, they rented it out for functions. On the first floor was a dining room. On the second floor was a ballroom, and on the third floor were the offices. The Knights of Pythian, the group that built the building, lost it in the 1930s due to hard times. The new owner moved the Granada Theater to the first floor of the site, and renamed it the New Granada Theater. I never saw it in its glory days, but I can imagine whoever was here how much fun they had. Imagine jazz greats such as Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway, Ella Fitzgerald. The theater closed in the 1960s. Later, social service agencies moved into the Pythian Temple. There is no great cultural center in The Hill at present. I would like you to close your eyes and don’t focus on what the Pythian Temple/New Granada Theater looks like now, but imagine what it could be tomorrow.
Terri Baltimore, Kay Club

I picked this building because this was the first place I knew in The Hill. I’m from East Liberty and I can find my way around East Liberty like the back of my hand, with my eyes closed, in my sleep. But I didn’t know anything about The Hill. When I got here, the only two people in the building were the secretary and me. We’d come every day, go to our office, answer telephone calls, lock up the building and leave. One day we got curious about what else was in the buildings. We decided to see what our door keys opened. They opened everything. That’s how I found out about the Kay club. We went into all the rooms, we went down in the basement and saw the old pictures. That’s when I realized this wasn’t just the place where I worked – it was a building with life. I worked here in the hottest summer of my life. I thought of it as a place full of people and I always wondered what it must have been like in other summers, when it was full of children. I left The Hill in 1989 and went to work in the Mon Valley. I came back in 1992. For me, this building feels like home. Wherever I work in The Hill, there’s always this some thing that brings me back here, whether it’s the Dolores Howze Treatment Center, or the Teach-ins we’ve had here.

Carmen Bray, Hill House

This is where my history starts on The Hill. I’ve been here for three years working in public relations for Hill House. The building is new; built in 1972. It was the realization of a dream of merging several community services, to meet new needs as the population changed and more services were needed. It was built by African American contractors. I am always amazed when I look at old pictures how much everything around the building has changed. In the 1970s there were houses across the street. Then there was a Shop and Save. Then the new shopping center was built. It keeps changing but Hill House has been steadfast. I’ve learned a lot here. Within the Hill House, we have a family concept, and I guess it’s like any family that has its good times and bad times. I’m not from this area. I got this job just out of college. Hill House gave me the opportunity to grow up from the college grad to the young professional. There will always be a place in my heart for Hill House.
Every time I went to a meeting in Homewood, I always gave myself a little extra time to make a pilgrimage to the 7200 block of Kelly Street. At 7222 there was a series of white buildings that represented my time as a member of the Nation of Islam. In those three white buildings were the mosque, the school, the import store and offices. In those white, stucco buildings, I bonded with my sister friends. I learned the meaning of community. I experienced the isolation of being different. I understood that being bound to duties because of my sex was unacceptable.

But last summer, the unexpected happened. I rounded Kelly Street and found those three buildings being demolished. I was shocked. They were always supposed to be there, connecting my now with my then.

For a long time, I just stood across the street, anchored to the sidewalk. I felt myself being washed over by voices, faces, names, memories from a lifetime ago. I felt an incredible mix of sadness, grief, loss. The tears came. The questions came. Why? When? How? Who?

I realized that I was watching a part of my life disappear. Then I realized there was something to do about it. As a part of the Coalition for a Healthy Urban Habitat, I understood from the Fulliloves that there were tangible ways to respond to just such a moment. Save the moment. Document the memories. Get a piece of the history.

One block away there was an all purpose store. I bought a disposable camera and clicked away. I talked with the guys who were taking the building down. They told me the buildings were structurally unsound and could not be saved. The construction men were kind enough to let me inside to take pictures. I picked up pieces of wood and tile. I walked around to the back of the building and stood for a while. During my vigil, I was joined by another former member of the Nation of Islam community. We exchanged pleasantries and reminisced. Where was so and so? When was the last time you saw such and such? Haven’t we changed since those days?

The brother that joined me asked me why I was taking pictures. I told him about my experiences in the Hill District and with the Fulliloves. And my need to have a part of that place with me for good. We stood for a while longer. Then I went on to my meeting.
We live not just in houses, but in the urban habitat of churches, jitney stations, green areas, corner stores, subsidized housing, barber salons, etc. We can compose a healthy urban habitat by knowing what we need and what we like, keeping in mind always the congruence between situations and configurations.

It takes many kinds of structures to make a neighborhood. In the fifth Teach-in, we looked at pictures of parts of The Hill. A lively discussion accompanied each photograph, as the group grappled with whether or not what we were seeing made sense to the neighborhood.

This started with the first picture, a shot of a statue called “The Phoenix,” by Thaddeus Mosley that stands across from the police station. One participant voiced the opinion that that was the most phallic and the most useless piece of art she’d ever seen. No one disagreed about the first point. As to whether or not it was art, there was a great deal of discussion, which led to the question, “What is public art? What do we need in a neighborhood?”

The police station, with its windowless exterior, was also a subject of great discussion. This police station is relatively new, and a great change from the older, and seemingly friendlier, police station. What should a police station look like? How should it welcome citizens? What is its role, as a building and as a site for services?

The picture of the trees was an important picture.

One participant noted, “There used to be lots of trees all over The Hill. It was green and shady. Many of them were fruit trees, and you could gather all kinds of good food if you knew where to go.”
The Ammons Swimming Pool was a site of happy memories. The discussion led to thinking about how many places there used to be for children, and how few there were in the present time.

The Triangle Shops are a new shopping center, located across the street from Hill House. The Triangle Shops include much-needed outlets such as a sandwich shop, a bank and a pharmacy. Yet the large parking lot and adjoining vacant lots give a slightly desolate air to the area.

New construction dominates the lower section of The Hill District. This construction is revitalizing the area, creating new housing, and filling in empty spaces. The new construction, which repeats design elements from building to building, is in contrast to the individuality and charm of the historic buildings that dot the area.

Hill City Building provides services for seniors, as part of the Hill House Association. The windowless, concrete exterior is cold and somewhat dismal, belying the warm intent of the people inside.

The bright, cheery decorations in the windows of Williams’ Square (shown at right, top) are framed by the white stones of the facade to create a dignified and welcoming border with the street. Many of the formal buildings of The Hill District, including schools and churches, use white building stones. Many are adorned with ornate sculpture. The repetition of white throughout the community is reminder of the sacred and special places that give the neighborhood great dignity.
Conference Purpose

The Power of Place: What Marks a Neighborhood Home

A conference for those who work in and care about urban planning, architecture, public health, and social services. It will explore the impact of urban design changes on health and the power of place. The conference will begin with a lecture addressing the health benefits of urban design, followed by group discussions on urban design and health. Participants will then be divided into groups, each led by a professional in the field, to discuss the impact of urban design on health and the power of place.

THE POWER OF PLACE: What Makes a Neighborhood Home

October 8 and 9, 1998
Carnegie Museum of Art
5000 Forbes Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

You are cordially invited to a conference sponsored by:
Carnegie Institute of Technology, University of Pittsburgh
The Nature Conservancy
Museums of Art
Pittsburgh, PA

Conference Program:

Friday, October 8:
10:00 AM
Conference Opening and Welcome
11:00 AM
Lunch
1:00 PM
Panel Discussion: The Impact of Urban Design on Health and the Power of Place

Saturday, October 9:
10:00 AM
Workshop Sessions
12:00 PM
Lunch
2:00 PM
Panel Discussion: The Power of Place in Urban Design

For more information, please contact:
Conference Coordinator
Carnegie Museum of Art
5000 Forbes Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
(412) 622-3136

Sponsors:

The Nature Conservancy
Museums of Art
Pittsburgh, PA
AGENDA
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8
5:00 PM  Creating a Democratic City: Presentations by Michel Ceraillote, Mayor of Hilltop
6:00 PM  Reception, Museum of Art, Pittsburgh
7:00 PM  Gala Dinner, Acme Hospitality
5:00 AM  Registration and Coffee: Museum of Art, Pittsburgh
9:00 AM  Welcome and Opening Remarks
Philip B. Hall, President of the Mountaineer Medical Fund and Chairman of the Executive
History & Landmarks Foundation
Tom More, Assistant Center of the Easton Neighborhood Center
9:15 AM  Opening Presentations (Presenters from the Hill)
9:45 AM  Neighborhoods: Mapping Neighborhoods
Dr. Mindy Pulliam
11:00 AM  What is the Community Doing Itself?
Dr. Mindy Pulliam
11:45 AM  Lunch: Hilltop Restaurant
2:00 PM  A Neighborhood Workshop: Paul Zuchner, University of Pittsburgh
2:00 PM  Workshop: A Neighborhood Workshop: Paul Zuchner, University of Pittsburgh
4:00 PM  Decline, Decline: Antidote to Decline
4:30 PM  Continuing the Tradition of the Hilltop:
4:45 PM  Closing Remarks
5:00 PM  Reception, Museum of Art, Pittsburgh

REGISTRATION FORM
The Power of Place: What Makes a Neighborhood Work
Registration is free, and sponsored by the Mountaineer Medical Fund. Space is limited.

NAME

ORGANIZATION

ADDRESS

PHONE

Days

Yes, I will attend the lecture and reception.

Workshops

Yes, I will participate in the workshops.

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Registration deadline: Thursday, October 1, 1998

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Good morning. I’m not much of a story teller. I do a lot, but I don’t say a lot. What I’d like to say to you, – have you ever heard of Hill City Youth Municipality? How many people have heard of that? Those of you that haven’t heard of it might be too young to know about the part I’ll tell you. Hill City was formed back in the late 30s, early 40s. It was one of the things that happened during the war. The director, Mr. Hart McKinney had to go away to the war, went to Europe, and talked about what he had done in Pittsburgh. It was written up in the Reader’s Digest and things like that.

I think that he was the founder of an organization that became the first full service facility in Pittsburgh. Hill City was located on Bedford Avenue at 2038 Bedford Avenue and in 1949 I was lucky enough to be hired there as one of the workers. We had to do something about what was happening in our neighborhoods then because right after the war things were a lot different than they had been during the war. So we said, “We’ll open Hill City up again.” And “Hill City” meant a “city in the Hill.” That meant that we had to start from scratch. That meant we had to have an election, just like the city had. We elected a mayor, we elected council, we elected judges, we elected alderman, we elected all the people that you need to run a city.

These were young people. The mayor must have been about 18 or 19, and all the rest of them were younger than 18. But that didn’t stop us, we kept going. We kept going. And this was what we built on every year, or every election year, we had elections. All the people who were involved in Hill City had to learn their job, in whatever position they got. And most of them carried it out very well.

But not only that, Hill City meant a lot to the whole community. In-house we had a broad section of people who did things that we do “in house,” like cooking, we had a cooking teacher, we had a charm teacher, we had a dance teacher, we had a Hill City band with a good teacher who taught the kids to play instruments, as well as be in the band. We had majorettes and we marched in all the important parades that were held in the city of Pittsburgh and that was before 1955 so you know that for a long time we were in the forefront of those kinds of activities.

There were nursing classes, they were people who worked with people in the community. We had block clubs and people from Hill City helped form block clubs. That was working with adults. We had baseball teams, that was working with teenagers and kids below teenage who were in the Little League. Hill City had the first uniformed baseball team in the Hill District called “Farmers”. Farmers was a department store located on Centre Avenue and he came up and suggested that we wear his name on the uniforms and he would buy them for us. And so we wore his name on the uniforms and for about two years the Hill City team was known as Farmers.

After that time the Little League from Williamsport accepted us as members of the Little League. We were able to have four teams in the Hill, the Firemen, the Hill City who were formerly known as the Firemen, the Elks, the AmVets, and the Pirates, and the Dodgers were the Little League that was formed out of Williamsport. So you see we worked with everybody. We worked with the parents. We worked with the kids.

We had other things going on in the community, one of which was the junior crime prevention clubs. In the junior crime prevention, we met in the schools. Each school in the Hill District had a junior crime prevention club. At each club meeting – I was the director of the clubs – and each club meeting we would talk to the kids about cleanliness, the neighborhoods, how to go about helping people in the neighborhood, and how to be a good citizen and you had to do things that wouldn’t bring disgrace to the neighborhood. They had a card that said that.

On this one particular day I’d like to talk about when I took 40 children between the ages of 9 and 12 on the trolley car to Highland Park. Each of them had their own fare in their hands, got on the trolley, got their transfer like they knew they should get it because they were taught that, got off at the stop we were supposed
to get off, and on the next trolley to get to Highland Park. We stayed in Highland Park until almost dark, got back on the trolley, came back to the Hill and I marched with each of them past their homes that evening, and I did that that week for each crime prevention club and that meant for 5 schools. That was early in the years that I was director. I never missed one meeting in all those years that I worked and I worked from 1949 until 1960. The crime prevention clubs were my idea of what you should be doing in the neighborhood and how all the kids should be involved. Thank you.
In order to build the Civic Arena, the City Fathers of Pittsburgh bulldozed a community, destroying homes, stores, schools and churches and scattering the residents of the area to the four winds.

It was called “urban renewal” and was billed as an effort to revitalize the city.

But the residents of the Lower Hill lived a different reality. They suffered an enormous loss, one that could never be repaired. The complex and intangible entity called “community” existed in the connections among human beings but depended on the matrix of buildings to give them form and substance. To put it another way, one does not simply have a friend. One has a friend that lives “just down the block.” One does not simply say hello to the news vendor. One says hello to the news vendor in passing the newsstand on the way to work. It is this specificity of connections that is almost always overlooked in thinking about “renewal.” Interpersonal connections are not generic linkages, like plumbers’ tubing. Rather they depend on the repetitions of specific crossings, situated in very particular life spaces.

In the aftermath of displacement, people suffer terribly. As a psychiatrist, I have come to think of three major categories of loss that people routinely describe.

The displaced are disoriented. The landmarks that guided them, almost unconsciously, are now gone, and they must renegotiate everything, from groceries to shoe repair.

The displaced are nostalgic for the past. They remember the way things “used to be” and they long for that way of being. The neon lights, the street signs, the places to go – all that has disappeared is mourned. This mourning takes on a particular character. Because many of the people survive, it often seems silly to sweat the “small stuff.” “At least we have each other,” people say. It seems somehow trivial or illegitimate to miss your corner store, or the shoe shine boy. In fact, in order to understand the magnitude and meaning of the loss we must recast our understanding of what is lost as not simply a house or a store, but rather the whole net of living, the matrix of interdependence, that made life possible and joyous in a particular place, at a particular time. In the aftermath of the bulldozers, this is difficult, if not impossible, to rebuild.

Finally, the displaced are alienated. The fact that “outsiders” could take the homes and land of “insiders” makes outsiders a species of enemy. It creates a rupture between those of us “here” and those “over there.” Displacement creates a profound sense of suspicion that lingers and colors later relationships.

They did that, what will they do next?” is the question that always hangs in the air.

What I want to propose is the antidote to these painful emotions of disorientation, nostalgia and alienation. The antidote, I wish to suggest, is neighboring.

I like to use “neighbor” as a verb, as an action that we can take. I neighbor when I take soup next door. I neighbor when I chat over the fence in the backyard. I neighbor when I shovel snow on either side of my house. I am neighbored in return when I am given a cheerful “hello,” or someone asks, “What do you think of the weather?” We neighbor each other when we get together to gossip about Mrs. So-and-So’s broken door, which brings down the look of our street.

Jane Addams, founder of Hull House in Chicago, was one of the greatest neighbors America has ever had. As a young woman of privilege, she longed to live a life of meaning. This story of neighboring began in 1887, when 27 year-old Jane Addams embarked on a lifetime of adventure. In that year she and Ellen Gates Starr moved to an old mansion in the middle of the Chicago slums. Addams and Starr believed that democracy was not solely a matter of voting, but more a matter of interdependency and cooperation. In this idea, she followed in the footsteps of her father, a pioneer who helped settle Illinois and later was a friend and supporter of Abraham Lincoln. Addams thought that people of money and influence had an obligation to work together with the poor and the immigrants in order to create a just and functional society.

The fact that “settlement houses” were really residences has been obscured with the passing of time and the shift in functions of those venerable institutions. But Addams and Starr, like others in England and around the US, went to live among the poor in order to learn what was needed to improve their conditions. Hull House welcomed other residents, most often middle or upper class women concerned to be service in an era that offered women few opportunities to realize such an ambition. One of the first projects, which was a model for many later efforts, was a survey of the area residents, designed to learn about their backgrounds, occupations, living conditions and health problems. The survey – in its conception and methods—a forerunner of modern sociology—helped the settle-
HillScapes 48

Hull House began to tackle these problems in ways great and small. The residents believed fervently in solutions as diverse as the need for art and the need for clean streets. Perhaps because of the breadth of their vision, Hull House became a dynamic and powerful institution. Within five years of its founding, it had outgrown the original homestead. Addams and her co-workers added a suite of buildings that eventually ringed a city block. Every week 5,000 of the neighborhood’s 50,000 residents came to Hull House for activities, classes, and social events. Hull House became a leading intellectual center in the United States, providing a window into the problems of the era, and a laboratory for testing solutions. Addams and her co-workers developed a complex mix of support, education and advocacy to address the array of problems that beset the neighborhood. The lessons of Hull House – from the need for child labor laws to the respect for immigrant cultural traditions – helped shape the nation through the early part of the 20th Century.

The lessons shaped Addams’ own life, as well. On the eve of World War I, Addams announced that she was a pacifist and could not support the war effort. She had heard too many stories of war from her neighbors to believe that any good could come from fighting. She was viciated for her stand: J. Edgar Hoover was to call her “the most dangerous woman in America.” She did not waver, however, going on to found the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom. In 1935, she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her efforts. At her death in 1937, thousands of mourners thronged the streets around Hull House, grieving the loss of a woman whose compassion and resolve had done so much to help her neighbors. Though the Hull House complex was destroyed during 1960s urban renewal efforts, Addams’ vision remains to guide the nation, still struggling to care for the poor, to welcome immigrants, and to realize the promise of democracy.

Addams’ work was great, I believe, because she fought for her neighborhood, she tried to help her neighbors. A neighbor is an important person for each of us, but a neighbor is also an accident of fate. The profound act in neighboring is the commitment to help the person next to you, not because of who they are, but because of where they are. In the era of global travel and economic connections, we have more neighbors than ever before, and an ever deeper need to help our neighbors.

By neighboring, we overcome displacement. We create welcome, we set landmarks, we provide reassurance. In the 1950s, the City Fathers in Pittsburgh and many other US cities set in motion the displacement of inner-city families. As we come to the end of the century, we find ourselves in desperate need of displacement’s antidote: neighboring. In the life of Jane Addams, America’s greatest neighbor, we can find a model for a way of life that will lead us out of pain and suspicion, and into interdependence and cooperation, the true roots of American democracy.
In the afternoon, conference participants went to The Hill to map sections of the community.

Guidance Photos

1. New (but made to match)
2. Oldy but goody
3. Wearing out
4. Severly deteriorated
5. Abandoned
6. Vacant lot with plants

All photos of Manchester except for 5 (East Orange, NJ).
The Obligations of Neighboring
Terri Baltimore

The following were the closing remarks for The Power of Place Conference:

My name is Terri Baltimore and I am a member of the Coalition for a Healthy Urban Habitat. The Coalition has been around for approximately one year. We are a group of people who live and work in the Hill District. I would like to ask the members of the coalition to stand and be recognized: Edna Council, Della Wimbs, Lois Cain, Angela Howze, Tamanika Howze, Neil Locust, Rebecca Webb, Carmen Bray, George Moses and Maureen Jones.

For over a year, we have worked along with the Fulliloves to help residents, providers and other interested parties to pay close attention to what the proposed changes in the Hill District mean. Our activities have included: holding a day of meetings with Mindy Fullilove and residents in both Allequippa Terrace and Bedford Dwellings. We held a series of meetings, known as Teach-ins that covered topics related to displacement, loss, what constitutes a healthy community, places and buildings of importance in the Hill District.

Our very first teach in was the Community Burn Index, the very experience you had today. There are some key things that I hope you will carry away from this conference.

Through the mapping exercise, you have seen first hand a community on the cusp of revolutionary change. With change comes some very strong emotions. And we hope you have had every one of them.

Frustration. A community, home, is more than bricks and mortar, new buildings and reconfigured streets. Community is connection to places, to people, to memories. People in The Hill District know exactly what that means. But people outside of the neighborhood have a hard time understanding why Hill residents proudly proclaim The Hill as home. That they don’t have to apologize for it. It is simply home.

Anger. Members of The Hill community, and some members of the Coalition are angry that they cannot get people to see the treasures in the community. Several months ago I was on a bus traveling from Oakland to town and encountered Australian tourists on the bus. They were admiring the buildings and speculating on the past of the areas they were passing through. Like a nebbish Pittsburgher, I engaged them in a conversation about The Hill. They got it. Most Pittsburghers don’t understand that The Hill is not just a blighted neighborhood.

Grief. Hill residents have lived through a previous renaissance that decimated the community physically and emotionally. For current and former Hill residents, there is a deep sense of loss. They have seen the results of progress and it left them mourning streets that were amputated. It left them with only memories of friends and loved ones scattered all over Pittsburgh. And until recently some did not recognize that what they were feeling mimicked the feelings endured at the death of a loved one.

Confusion. We know that change is coming but what we do not know is exactly what change may mean. Will a revitalized Hill District mean a better place to live for all? Or will it mean that some people will remain and others will leave? We do know those who leave, by their choice or by circumstances, may not be welcomed into new neighborhoods and towns as has been evident by a growing N.I.M.B.Y. We do not know what will happen to the people who leave, who will face displacement and homelessness.

Fear. We do not know what will become of the residents who will not survive all of this change. We are afraid that the repercussions of change will devastate part of the community. And very few people are openly discussing what responsibility we all have in seeing that the least harm is done in this process.

Hope. Today we have begun a dialogue that cannot be denied or ignored. Now we are all aware that we have a responsibility to each other. What happens in The Hill District does not happen in isolation. If we do not recognize our role in this community today, we will recognize it when it may be too late to alter the outcome.

Today you have been given a gift, a chance to begin to know the Hill District in an intimate way. That gift comes to you with expectations. Whatever job you have, however you describe yourself – teacher, planner, resident, provider, student – you have an obligation to learn about the area and the people. You have an obligation to plan with, not for, the people in The Hill. You have an obligation to know in your head and your heart what makes a community whole and healthy. You have an obligation to put yourself in the place of a Hill resident and ask yourself – what would I do if this community was my home? You have an obligation to act.
Every third Thursday, September 1998 through June 1999, employees from Pittsburgh Mercy Health System team with Miller Elementary School students for an after-school program. This year, the Mercy staff suggested the theme: “Our City, Our Home.” They invited Pittsburgh History & Landmarks to outline lesson plans for the ten sessions and teach most of them. Through slide shows, walking tours, neighborhood mapping exercises, and art activities, students are learning about the city, their community, and their family. They record historical facts on a giant time line, and tape photographs of their experiences on the time line too. Building on the skills introduced by Drs. Mindy and Robert Fullilove during the “Power of Place” Conference on October 9, 1998, students made a giant map of the blocks surrounding Miller School and color coded the places worth saving, as well as vacant lots, green spaces, and areas of new construction.
MEMO

To: Pittsburgh Colleagues
From: Michel Cantal-Dupart, Architect-Urbanist
Paris, France
Re: Six Priority Issues for the Renaissance of The Hill District
Date: 10/11/98

The following issues are central to the renaissance of The Hill District. You should use these guidelines for two purposes: 1) to develop activities sponsored by the Coalition for Healthy Urban Habitat or other groups, and 2) to assess the relevance and potential contribution of proposals made by others. Proposals that do not address these priority issues should be reviewed with caution, as they may detract or, worse still, create new problems.

1. Creating a strong street facade
First, it is essential to guard the corners of streets and avenues. The houses and stores on these corners have a particularly powerful influence on a community. Strong, well-designed corners protect the intermediate spaces, and create an attractive vista. Second, it is important to keep the variety of house facades, as this variety gives depth and appeal to the streetscape. Uniform, unvarying design is visually deadening and detracts from the public space.

2. Personalize units in the housing projects
Some of the units in the housing projects have gardens or are personalized in other ways. This is an important way in which people people put a "stamp" on the things that they value about the places that they occupy. This tradition is very important in creating a sense of ownership and in creating an interesting public space and should be encouraged as a way of creating a sense of belonging, a sense of community, and a sense that one's neighborhood is worth protecting and maintaining.

3. Separate the houses from the street
Some houses have stairs intruding into the street, without the protection of a front yard. Space to enclose these house fronts can be created by widening the sidewalk, and narrowing the street. It is important to understand that there is a need to separate the personal space that is created by one's home from the public spaces that are created by sidewalks, streets, and avenues.
4. **Access to the river**
The hillside down from Cliff Street used to be a vital connection between The Hill District and The Strip District. There used to an incline and numerous steps to connect the two areas. These connections have been obliterated with time. The creation of a hillside park with crisscrossing paths would reopen the lost connection. During my last day in Pittsburgh, Dr Robert Fullilove and I walked along Bigelow from the Hill down to the Civic Center and counted numerous traces of old stairways and pathways that connected the Hill to the river and the numerous places where community residents worked. These accessways are obliterated by the highway and have contributed to the isolation of the Hill from much of the city’s current growth and development.

5. **Create market centers**
One feature of urban life that gives neighborhoods great vitality is the presence of strong market centers. These centers offer products that are unique creation of the community’s artists and artisans and should be created at various points throughout The Hill District. One obvious point is the intersection of Centre and Kirkpatrick, while another is the cluster of stores near Hill House. These and others should be developed to serve the community and to attract others to visit.

6. **Attract people from around the world**
Successful neighborhoods attract people from all over the world. They are drawn there for specific kinds of things, like the presence of a stadium, a museum, or a particular kind of shopping. What is it that would bring people to The Hill District? Finding and developing this attraction will create a momentum essential to the area’s renaissance.
Access to the River

The Civic Arena and downtown, seen from The Hill

Former site of an incline, once connecting The Hill with the Strip District

Neglected city steps
Michel Cantal-Dupart took Robert and Mindy on a tour of “Pittsburgh in France.” He showed them many places that had structural problems/concerns/solutions similar to those in Pittsburgh. Over breakfast one morning, he drew a series of designs on a placemat. The text and maps presented here are an explanation of the designs.
Note à Bob et Mindy
Michel Cantal- Dupart

J’exprime les trois petits croquis à partir de planches.

• La planche 1, c’est le plan de Pittsburgh avec les différents quartiers sur lequel j’ai porté le Civic auditorium, le Pittstadium et le triangle de la cathédrale du savoir ainsi que le périmètre du domaine universitaire puis je marque les ponts qui franchissent l’Allégheny river et Monogahéléa river.

Il est remarquable de voir la concentration des ponts sur les deux rivières, entre Point park et le Civic auditorium par rapport à ceux qui sont en amont. C’est la conséquence historique de la présence d’industries sur les rives qui ont longtemps empêché le franchissement. Mais les industries évoluent, il faut repenser les liaisons interquartiers suels capables de renforcer l’idée de ville globale, alternative à une ville communautaire, renfermée dans ses quartiers.

• Sur le plan 2, je renforce la 5th Avenue. Voilà une avenue qui joue un rôle interquartier fantastique. Elle débute au cœur du centre puis elle limite Bluff et Crawford puis Terrace village, West Oakland, South Oakland, Central Oakland et North Oakland pour aller se perdre dans les quartiers Est de la ville. Il faut remarquer que District Hill, Middle et Upper ne sont pas irrigués directement par cette avenue. D’autre part, à partir de cette colonne vertébrale, on rejoint assez facilement la rive droite de l’Allégheny et la rive gauche de Monongahéléa river.

• Le croquis 3 montre comment le Hill est assez bien desservi, du centre vers les faubourgs mais de mon point de vue, il a perdu des racines, les chemins, les funiculaires qui le reliaient aux deux rivières. C’est l’expression de la coupe qui figure sur mon croquis entre les bâtiments du haut et les quartiers Strip district et Polish hill. Cette coupure étant renforcée par la tranchée intermédiaire de Bigelow boulevard.

Il faut reconquérir ces pentes pour retrouver les << chemins de traverse >> qui étaient les chemins du travail, les chemins de l’intégration.

• Le croquis 4 donne l’esprit de ce qu’il faudrait faire. La géographie ne facilite pas les choses mais déjà la restitution des traces qui existent sur les pentes et qui composaient un parc dont il ne resterait qu’à mettre les passerelles organiseraient un jardin. Aujourd’hui cet espace en friche est la porte ouverte à toutes les délinquances. Je propose en priorité pour exemple le chemin qui descend de Kirkpatrick road. C’est le chemin qui vers le Sud

rejoint South side flats.
I’ll describe the content of my three hand-drawn sketches using four actual maps of Pittsburgh.

Map 1 represents different neighborhoods on which I’ve highlighted the Civic Arena, Pitt Stadium and the triangle that marks the perimeters of the University campus including the Cathedral of Learning; I have also highlighted the bridges that traverse the Allegheny and the Monongahela rivers.

It is remarkable to see the concentration of bridges on these two rivers between Point Park and the Civic Auditorium; they stand in sharp contrast to those upstream. Historically, this is because the heavy industrial development along the banks of these rivers limited the building of other bridges. But industries evolve and we must now rethink how to link communities in order to strengthen the creation of a unified city [ville globale] as opposed to a city of multiple neighborhoods, each isolated one from another.
On map 2, I have highlighted 5th Avenue. Here is an avenue that plays the role of an inter-neighborhood link beautifully! It begins in the center of The Hill and cuts across Bluff and Crawford then Terrace Village, West Oakland, South Oakland, Central Oakland, and North Oakland to lose itself in the neighborhoods east of the city. Please note that The Hill District – that is the Middle and Upper Hill – are not served directly by this avenue. On the other hand, this avenue is the spine that easily connects the right bank of the Allegheny and the left bank of the Monongahela.
Map 3 shows how The Hill’s neighborhoods are reasonably well connected to each other and to the suburbs. However, The Hill has lost its roots, its footpaths, and the system of tramways that connected it to the two rivers. It is what I attempted to show in my original sketches: viz. How the buildings at the top of The Hill are cut off from the neighborhoods of The Strip District and Polish Hill that lie below. Note as well how this sense of being cutoff [coupure] is further reinforced by Bigelow Boulevard.

It is critical that we re-establish the pathways along these slopes that linked the working folks from The Hill to the rest of the city.
Map 4 embodies the essence of what must be done. The geography of The Hill complicates things but already the restitution of the traces of what once existed on these slopes is there in the form of a park which needs only the building of a few foot bridges [passerelles] and the creation of a garden. At present this undeveloped space is open to all sorts of mischief [délinquances]. Thus, I would propose first and foremost a path which would go down Kirkpatrick Road as it is the Southward connection to the Southside Flats.
The Urban Laboratory at Carnegie Mellon University is an interdisciplinary outreach program, offering urban design services to neighborhoods and communities in the Pittsburgh metropolitan region.

In the summer of 1998 a request came from Ms. Terri Baltimore of the Coalition for a Healthy Habitat. She asked whether the Urban Laboratory could field an interdisciplinary team to work with the citizen members of her organization in the Hill District.

The Hill District is in rapid transition. The construction of Crawford Village has encouraged new commercial, office and residential development. Two HOPE Six projects, one centered on Bedford Dwellings and the other on Arlington Heights, are in the process of design. While many Hill residents welcome these developments, others are fearful of displacement, and yet others wonder what the longer-term impacts might be.

Graduate students from the Heinz School and final year undergraduate students from the School of Architecture formed six teams, starting work at the end of August 1998. Each team engaged in a threestage study: Analysis and Program; Urban Design Recommendations; Individual Projects within the overall urban design recommendations.

Citizens worked with the students at every stage. Early on in the program the Coalition for a Healthy Habitat organized a “teach-in” for Hill citizens. The teach-in included Drs. Mindy and Robert Fullilove from the School of Public Health at Columbia University, Dr. Anthony Robins from the Graduate School of Public Health at the University of Pittsburgh, and Tracy Myers from the Heinz Architectural Center at the Carnegie Museum.

Students from the Urban Laboratory asked the citizens to create a “map of memories.” A huge sheet of white paper was pinned to the wall, and a thick black line was drawn across it to represent Centre Avenue from downtown to Oakland. Before long the map was filled with a rich mixture of places, memories and hopes. And the more the citizens described what they drew on the map, the more the students understood the intersection of deep tradition and aspiration for the future.

As a result of this and further meetings, and individual interviews with citizens, the students on each of the six teams were able to develop their own individual themes. One team, for example, emphasized an approach to economic development in the Hill that would provide the maximum entrepreneurial opportunity for the Hill’s own citizens.

Another team emphasized transit as a strategy to link citizens in the Hill with job opportunities in the region, and to bring visitors to the Hill from other
parts of the metropolitan region to shop and to attend cultural events. Yet another team emphasized building on empty sites as a means of creating density and hence commercial markets in the Hill. And yet another, not surprisingly, picked up on the Hill’s rich cultural history, particularly in music, jazz and gospel.

The citizens came to the students’ final presentations in December 1998, to ensure accountability. It was a rich meeting, at which the students were exposed to exciting inputs from the citizens, and the citizens were able to engage in rich debates among themselves. The tradition of the Urban Laboratory is to publish a final illustrated report. This will be ready in early May 1999 and will be available to all the participants through Terri Baltimore.
The window in the dining area of my apartment looks out onto a pedestrian bridge that passes over what is known as the East Busway, as sort of highway, for the exclusive use of buses, that makes possible speedy transit between the borough of Wilkinsburg and Pittsburgh’s Downtown and Oakland areas. A modest structure, the bridge spans a physical space of probably no more than one hundred and fifty feet. The psychic distance one traverses in crossing this bridge is substantially greater: on one side lies the overwhelmingly white, middle-class neighborhood of Shadyside, and on the other lies East Liberty, a community largely of working-class African Americans.

The sharpness of this distinction – the seeming unbridgeability of this gap – were made explicit to me on the very day I moved to Pittsburgh. I had just pulled up in front of my building when I fell into conversation with a woman waiting in a car for her husband. On learning that I was newly arrived in the city, she gestured to the large grocery store across the street and warned, “Don’t go there after dark.” Seeing the look on my face that said, “Oh, don’t be ridiculous,” she elaborated: “The element … Believe me, I know. I used to have a shop in that building right there, and I had to leave.”

I wish I could say that my reaction to this exchange was to assail the woman with my righteous indignation at her blatant racism. After a two-day-long, four-hundred-mile relocation, however, I was too dispirited and exhausted to do moral battle. I just sighed to myself and thought, “For this” – this provincial, narrow-minded bigotry – “I left New York City?” The more profound corollary of this question, of course, was, “If crossing the street is inadvisable, how do I cross that bridge?”

In a city like Pittsburgh, reported to have more than seven hundred bridges, the notion of a connective structure that links places, domains, features that would otherwise remain separated is apt. The idea of connectivity in turn operates on numerous levels: one can be connected to people, to place, across borders, across languages – across races; one can be attached to ideas, to beliefs – to misconceptions. To further unwind the spiral of the notion of connection: it both requires and has as its goal communication.

It is at the intersection of these axes of connection and communication that I have been involved in the project documented in this scrapbook. As assistant curator of architecture at the Heinz Architectural Center, Carnegie Museum of Art, my professional aim is to enlarge our community’s understanding and appreciation of the built environment – meaning not simply the structures that comprise it, but the ways in which those structures impact and are affected by humankind and are generally implicated in the relationship between humankind and the built world. In an urban neighborhood, the relationship is typically extremely dense, involving diverse constituencies and stakeholders – citizens, activists and organizers, policymakers, architects and designers, preservationists – whose points of view and agendas may be at odds. This marvelous, babbling, exasperating complexity is inordinately interesting to me, and I feel the dissolution of neighborhoods like a personal wound. I was thus intrigued by the possibility of involvement, in whatever form, in an effort to repair a damaged community.

Late in the summer of 1998, the Coalition for a Healthy Urban Habitat agreed to be the client for an urban design studio conducted by the fifth-year architecture students at Carnegie Mellon University (CMU). The students would study the Hill District in all its dimensions – its history, demographics, economic and commercial structure, physical configuration, transportation routes, potential for revitalization, etc. – and then, in small groups, devise master plans for the redevelopment of the Hill. These designs would be presented to the Coalition as a sort of framework within which it could think about its strategies for staking a claim in the political process through which decisions about the Hill’s future are made.

The studio was conceived from the outset as a unique opportunity for the Coalition and the students to engage in a dialogue about what kind of physical environment a community needs – not what designers think it needs – to allow it to thrive. In order to encourage this dialogue, I was asked to act as a sort of translator. As an architectural historian, I of course understand the language of design; and as a former student of public policy, I am deeply sensitive to community concerns and attentive to the way in which they are voiced. In short, I am conversant in the two languages in which the project’s participants speak, and it made sense that I was asked to translate them – to act, in other words, as a bridge between the Coalition and the CMU students.

I was pleased to take on this role, for prior to this...
point, I had been primarily an observer. I attended the Fulliloves’ teach-ins at the Coalition, listening closely, moved often to tears by the recollections and revelations of the Coalition’s members. But I was a visitor to the Hill, and I am white, and I represent an institution that is often considered elitist. And so I just listened, and listened, and filtered, and digested, and listened … until there was a way in which I could be – felt more entitled to be – active.

On reflection, though, it seems that the invitation to be a translator – a link, a bridge – between the Coalition and the students was motivated by an assumption that turned out to be inaccurate: namely, that they needed a translator. To be sure, there was a certain amount of discomfort among the students and the Coalition members at their first meeting: all but one of the students are white, all of the Coalition members who were present are black, and a critique of the white power structure’s disregard for and depredation of the Hill District was implicit (sometimes explicit) in the stories told by the Coalition’s members. But over time, some of the Coalition’s members let their guard down; and the studio’s presentations clearly revealed that some of the students heard, responded to, and truly attempted to incorporate into their designs what the Coalition’s members shared with them. This happened completely independently of me. This small bridge – and to so characterize it is by no means to diminish it – was built not through my agency, but as a result of the Coalition’s willingness to speak and the students’ willingness to listen.

Throughout the time during which I was associated with this project, I felt very much that I was on the fringes. This is not bad, but instructive – not a defeat, but a challenge. Despite the warm, generous, and sincere embrace of those involved in the project, there are determinative differences between our worlds. I do not know what it is like to be involuntarily moved from my home and disconnected from all that is familiar, comforting, and meaningful. I have not had to watch parts of my neighborhood fall into ruin. Reading a wariness or mistrust in people’s eyes that is based solely on the color of my skin is not part of my daily experience, although I now have an inkling of how hurtful this reaction, and how insuperable this mistrust, can be. What I do share with my partners in this project is the knowledge that it is possible to hear and to speak in new ways, and that learning to do so is the first step toward the kind of understanding that can make revitalization something more than an empty phrase. Maybe now I can cross that bridge.
Part V: Some Answers and More Questions
Reflections

21 November 1998

Jason Vrabel
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Anthony Robbins
Graduate School of Public Health
University of Pittsburgh

Dear Anthony,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for inviting me to last November 11th presentations. I have a much better sense of the Coalition’s aspirations along with the goals of the School of Minority Health, the community, etc. I commend the students on a number of their ideas, although I depart from them on many others. The latter is why I kept a rather low profile at the presentation, as to not disrupt what was, for the most part, a good start. It undoubtedly provided a good framework for the healthy discussion which followed, thereby constituting a success.

Additionally, I am grateful to have had the chance to finally meet you, as well as Terry, Mindy, Larry and Lois (I hope I have her name right) and others, who all seem to be gracious people and great educators.

I would like to make a few comments which may or may not have a place in future discussions. I’ll first take a step backwards, and mention that I have a reproduced Romare Bearden painting of Duke Ellington hanging in my apartment, and I know some kind souls in the Pittsburgh jazz community. So as far as, ”Meanwhile.....get that jazz club up and running!” goes, I know a man by the name of George Heid, who might be worth talking to, and who has played drums for King James, Cecil Taylor and others. Furthermore, Gregg Vizza, the man for which I do architectural design for, was instrumental in the renovation of the Manchester Craftsmens Guild recording studio, and designed Audiomation Studios on the North Side. He could be helpful in bringing the discussed ideas of a radio station/recording facilities to fruition when the time comes.

Back to the subject at hand, I loved the idea of the vocational training facilities. Aside from their obvious and direct benefits, they also provide a unique form of equity more valuable than that which is monetary. By developing the skills to physically build their own community, it becomes far more than just a job. In partnership with one another, they invest themselves in the collective pride of their community. In essence, it is much like Habitat for Humanity's concept of "sweat equity."
Regrettably, I have to argue that many of the other proposals presented that day are too closely aligned with strategies of the past which laid the groundwork for gentrification. Unfortunately, it is easy to produce, often unknowingly, a formula for displacement which will be easily recognized by certain Renaissance III zealots. There are some protective mechanisms which should be considered to help secure the future stability of the Hill. Invariably, once any revitalization effort commences, so do the underlying forces of gentrification. In a number of cities, I've seen that once the community development projects begin to unfold, developers and city planners begin to circle like vultures. Soon, residents' homes are bought out from underneath them, either directly or through eminent domain. Having said that, the most pressing issues for the architect are as follows:

1. Any revitalization project will be dependent upon funding from city government; a government whose agenda will most likely lack the sensitivity needed to defend against gentrification. After all, in the eyes of some, gentrification is an attribute of success. How can the inevitable differences be reconciled in a way that decisions are made by those who know what is best for the Hill.

2. What qualities are essential to affordable housing? Building it is relatively easy; maintaining its affordability is where the challenge lies. Furthermore, how can the community become involved in the actual design process? This concept is imperative as a form of empowerment as well as an upkeep and maintenance incentive.

3. Diluting the potency of neighborhood crime must be a major concern for the designer. Here is yet another opportunity for architects and planners to reverse the course of the dangerous neighborhoods their predecessors helped created. I hope they're up to the challenge, perhaps the greatest an architect can face in his or her lifetime.

To be honest, there is a seemingly endless list of questions which future designers should be forced to consider and debate. How do we build new houses and stores, and renovate the old, without raising rents and property values to an unmanageable level? How do we ensure that the owner of an apartment building won't raise the rent every time he or she finds a tenant who can pay more? Should H.U.D. be involved? Habitat for Humanity? How can we encourage landlords to live amongst his tenants rather than manage from afar? Can we envision a housing prototype which would be more appealing to an elderly couple as opposed to college students, and vice versa? How can we develop a commercial district which would preference pedestrians over motorists, for those who don't own a car? Are there architectural solutions to crime?

Of course, there are no purely architectural solutions to any
of these questions. I'm only attempting to stay within the boundaries of what I know best, and I had expected the architecture students to take up some of these issues. I had a fundamental problem with the way the CMU studio was conducted. I saw no reason in having all seven groups spend five weeks developing master plan schematics. Looking back at the presentation itinerary, most groups identified the same areas which need the most attention. Most everyone focused on the same commercial blocks, the need for improved transit, the renovation of the Grenada and so forth. Without a doubt, consensus is important. Dissension is equally as important. Often times the best ideas come from conflicting viewpoints. Had I conducted the studio, I would have asked for a master plan report each group within a week's time. From there, each group would have focused on one area (commercial, transit, housing, etc.) for the next four weeks; and the result would have been a mostly agreed upon master plan with seven areas thoroughly studied, and presented with thought-provoking depth.

********

A battle is currently being fought in an area of Cincinatti called Over-the-Rhine. O-T-R is like the Hill District in many ways, but is currently at that delicate stage where the community is losing control over its own fate. Not long ago, it was written off as a helpless "slum." However, enough alternative coffee shops and brew pubs have opened up, along with small art galleries and movie theaters, that O-T-R has become a fashionable area to dine or drink for the evening. It has become so alluring that the plans are in place for total upper-middle-income occupancy. This urban renewal, disguised as urban revitalization, has been partially paralyzed by a notable figure.....Buddy.

I don't recall ever learning Buddy's last name, but he operates a low-income housing rehab organization. Buddy is a thorn in the side of Cinci's city council. He has aggressively taken on the council almost single-handedly. Living on very little income, Buddy has managed to buy nearly fifty houses and apartment buildings throughout O-T-R. They are dilapidated and boarded up buildings which had become such a nuisance to their previous owners (whose tenants had moved out leaving them unoccupied) that they became available at very little cost. Many of the owners sold to him rather than selling to the city because they were slumlords who were cheating on their taxes. In any case, these buildings are strategically located in such a way that the bulldozers can't simply erase neighborhoods without a trace. Buddy, with an ever-changing army of volunteers rehabs these buildings one at a time. He either maintains ownership or sells to someone that won't raise rents beyond what is reasonable. Seven days a week he fights an amazing fight. I know that people like Buddy aren't easy to find, but it wouldn't hurt to brainstorm on incentives for a trustworthy individual, who has the means, to take ownership of vacant or
unwanted buildings in the Hill District.

Throughout the presentations it was clear that housing, let alone the deeper issues of affordability, was overshadowed by commercial development. When working on any complex design issue, I like to practice what I call "always working towards completion." In other words, working on multiple tasks simultaneously. This concept is difficult for me to practice when cooking breakfast, let alone working out a master plan. Yet, it is essential; and as long as the projects are well thought out and flexible, designers and builders can still move one step at a time. While commercial development is underway, nearby residential areas need to be strong or in the process of being strengthened. Otherwise, before the community can fully enjoy the new stores and benefit from the jobs created by those stores, someone will offer to buy their houses for twice what they're worth, and little by little they disappear. If the Coalition gets there before private interests, the residents may be living in priceless homes that they won't sacrifice.

The above scenario will soon be critical on Pittsburgh's North Side with the nearly-approved stadium projects. I would personally go to the edge of the earth to lure suburban residents back into the city, but the city's recent focus on high-end lofts and luxury townhouses is myopic. If a simultaneous effort to improve the habitat of those who already live in the city is not made, then suburban recruiting becomes futile. The proposed stadium complex includes a variety of shopping and amusement attractions. Nearby rowhouse residents are already being asked to relocate, and they have neither leverage nor bargaining chips. I have not heard of any plans to establish a multi-income community, but only the insertion of wealthier enclaves into poor communities. I guess Renaissance IV will deal with that one.

Finally, there is an element of urban design which architects don't like to talk about; the element of crime. I find it disconcerting that the sometimes unharnessed ego of architects permits them to act as economists, sociologists, politicians, and psychologists, but when the issue of crime is mentioned, they say that law and order should be left to legislators and police. The unspoken reality, the way I see it, is that architects are complicit in the perpetuation of community-crippling crime.

Architects provide a stage on which life's events unfold. They provide a stage on which we raise families, on which we work, on which we educate and learn, and on which we play. In doing so, they create a stage on which crimes are committed. Of course, architects shouldn't be held as the gatekeepers of peace. Yet in the post-WWII American city, the prevailing attitude is that longer prison sentences and more police are the only solutions to crime. I simply don't understand what the long-term
goal of this system is, martial law? I guess it is an easy sell in terms of tax dollar allocation, in comparison to prevention-education-rehabilitation programs. One of the things that I think everyone felt really good about at the presentation was the collective presence of many articulate, confidant and knowledgeable voices representative of nearly all of the components needed to produce creative, honest and viable solutions to the problems at hand. I have long maintained, often to the disdain of my peers and co-workers, that lending our knowledge of the built environment to those who really understand the dynamics of urban life, may be the most worthwhile contribution we could make.

In any urban design project there will be insurmountable budget issues and insurmountable zoning regulations. Zoning codes are usually revered as omnipotent doctrines. But battles have been fought and won, and sometimes these battles can make or break the new urban landscape. It is my contention that many of these regulations concerning property lines, setbacks, etc. are outdated and incongruous with contemporary city life. While walking through the city, we cross hundreds of invisible lines which, on a map, indicate changes in elevation, changes in ownership and changes in what is public vs. what is private. On a map somewhere, there is a dotted line which says, "You have to put your building ten feet to the left of this line; and you have put yours ten feet to the right." Years later you have an alley between these two buildings with our friend, the dotted line, running right down the middle. It doesn't matter that one day an elderly man will be mugged in this alley, it doesn't matter that one day a young woman will be raped in this alley, and it doesn't matter that one day an addict will overdose in this alley. What matters is that we respect the dotted line. We, the architects, create the stage; shouldn't it be us, the architects, who help defend it? Creatively? Too much energy is exerted on what color to paint the windows.

In the meantime...what can be done architecturally to address the issue of safety without an abundance of time or resources? Some of the students proposed to "densify" the area by building upon vacant lots to tie a street together. But before infill projects could possibly take place, vacant lots could be addressed through simple landscaping projects. With the help of school children, neighborhood residents and volunteers like myself, flowers and shrubbery could be planted. In doing so, one can define a vacant lot as an actual place, not just an extension of the sidewalk. In other words, take Project Picket Fence to the next level, without adding more fences, gates or walls. Eliminating a multitude of the Hill's "no-man's-lands" could effectively change the urban landscape beyond the realm of "beautification."

In the later phases, during the actual design of houses and buildings, attention should be turned toward design strategies which actually extend residents abilities to "self-police" their
surroundings. Although residents shouldn't be expected to make
citizen arrests, they should be given the comfort of having
an awareness of what is taking place around their home.
Sufficient outdoor lighting, private entrances and yards, and
the elimination of blindspots are but a few provisions which
"architecturally enhance the senses" of those who live within.

Well, Anthony, I guess I've gone on a bit too long here. The
social consciousness of the architecture community is something
which is of great concern to me. It is reassuring to see where
it has some practical application because, for the most part,
it resides in the realm of theory. If you think any of these
ideas will somehow be material to upcoming discussions, please
let me know. There are a lot of publishings on architects who
have devoted their careers to developing the urban context with
incredible sensitivity, in both theory and practice. Again,
please keep me informed of any new developments as I'm eager
to see this project progress.

Respectfully,

Jason Vrabel
Date: Thu, 18 Mar 1999 16:14:59 -0500 (EST)
From: Robert E Fullilove <ref5@columbia.edu>
To: mf29@columbia.edu
Subject: more, please (fwd)

-------- Forwarded message --------
Date: Thu, 18 Mar 1999 15:38:55 -0500 (EST)
From: Jewish Women's Center of Pittsburgh <jwc@trfn.clpgh.org>
To: ref5@columbia.edu
Subject: more, please

Dear Dr. Fullilove-

I am one of the people who attended your talk to the needle exchange forum
we held a couple of weeks ago in Pittsburgh. I would love to read more
about your work—your talk and your wife's talk fascinated me. I'm a
native Pittsburgher and I realize the truth of what you both had to say.
Still, I do have a couple of questions. When we talk about substance
abusers and say that they are a segment of society that deserves respect
and so forth, can't a community make a decision that certain behaviors are
undesirable, unhealthy and threatening to that community? That is, of
course, there will always be drug users and of course, they don't deserve
to die or go to jail because of their addiction. But addiction is not a
way of life that is desirable (it seems to me, anyhow) because of the
risks of disease, the lack of productivity etc. suffered by the user. And
addiction, like any illness, has societal costs. Isn't it valid for a
community to place a value on behaviors it finds desirable, and to
discourage those it doesn't? Also, when you talk about new housing
replacing old projects and this being the eviction of people from their
homes—I'd rather live in a new, clean, functional space I can control than
live in a filthy, dangerous place that is run by people who make it
unpleasant to live there. Wouldn't you?
I realize these are not new questions for you and I'm sure I'm just
missing the obvious. But I love my hometown and I want it to grow and be
a healthy and welcoming place for all of us who live here. Your wisdom
would be much appreciated!

Thanks-

Laura Horowitz
Prevention Point Pgh.
**Hillscapes: Envisioning a healthy urban habitat**

Final Report on the Maurice Falk Medical Fund Minority Fellows Program

Presented by

**Drs. Robert and Mindy Fullilove**
1998 Falk Minority Fellows
The Center for Minority Health
University of Pittsburgh

**Friday, April 30, 1999**

9:00 a.m. -- 10:00 a.m.

Faculty Commons Room
Parran Hall, Room 109
Graduate School of Public Health

**Synopsis:** Hillscapes is the report of one and half year’s effort to envision a new future for Pittsburgh’s Hill District. This effort was led by the Center for Minority Health and the Coalition for a Healthy Urban Habitat (a group formed specifically as an advocate for Hill District residents experiencing emotional and psychological stress related to displacement). The presentation will address the effects and public health implications of mass community displacement. It will be a powerful combination of research data, stories, experiences and vivid details.

*Center for Minority Health*

*Light refreshments will be provided.*
In my grandma’s house, the kitchen table was the center of gravity. Everyone was drawn to the table and once you settled there, it was almost impossible to move away. Friends and neighbors (who dropped by) claimed that any time of day or night you could find the Hayes (my grandparents’ surname) sitting around the table. Long after we finished eating, we would still be there – my mom, my brothers, sisters, and some friends and neighbors. The table would always be dressed with the finest southern cuisine – fried catfish, deep-fried chicken, cooked cabbage, yams, macaroni and cheese, black-eyed peas with ham hocks, corn-on-the-cob, collard greens mixed with a few mustards, corn bread and grandma’s famous bread pudding with plump raisins. All the vegetables came from my grandfather’s garden, of course.

Around the table we would tell stories, relive the day’s events, explore new ideas, and compete for air time. It was here that we always brought our tales from school, sometimes funny tales about the kids in class or some victory and sometimes miserable laments. This place will always be a special place for me. It is difficult as I reflect. This place exits only in my mind and memories now. When the big house (that’s what family members so lovingly called it) burned, an empty space forever was burned in my soul. Place, as I would learn much later, has particular characteristics that affect us mentally, physically, and even spiritually. It has power.

I remember sitting around the kitchen table and being on the edge of my seat as I listened to detailed play-by-play accounts given by the grownups of “unbelievable” happenings about certain neighbors. Miss Odessa Phillips (a fictional name given to a neighbor that lived down the street from my grandparents) lived in our neighborhood. Grandma spoke often of how she behaved or should I say misbehaved at funerals. There was a particular neighbor (Ms. Ida) who died and Miss Odessa decided to perform. I can hear grandma’s voice now as she so vividly tells the story.

“... boo-hooing and blowing snot everywhere. I could have died when she goes flying up to the front of the church wiping out all the plants and flowers and flung herself into that casket. Just a crying and screaming “Don’t leave me Ms. Ida. Lawd takes me instead. I’m ready ...”

Grandma would pause for a moment. Shaking her head and giving a hearty laugh she says, “Hypocrite, ‘Dessa didn’t know that woman!” After a moment or so she continues to tell the story. “The brakes must have undone themselves ‘cause the next thang I know Odessa came racing down the aisle knocking over the mothers’ bench and deacon’s row with the mortician running behind her like a madman. Next thang you know you had women and men piled up like mashed potatoes and casket like gravy crashed in the back of the church … Odessa with her legs all open just screaming. I never saw people screeching and screaming like that ….” I still laugh when I think about the story.

The number of people at the kitchen table often expanded beyond the nuclear family. The round shape would turn into a long oval with the addition of leaves as friends and extended family joined us. Early afternoon Sunday dinner – always big and festive – was a favorite time to have folks over for a potluck. Dressed in her long apron, my grandma would prepare one of my favorite meals – twice baked potatoes, a tasty dish which she prepared often. I consider this one of her signature dishes.

Grandma’s house had a big fireplace in the kitchen wall. There she baked the potatoes. She would take pieces of light wood from the porch and start the fire in the wood stove. Often you would find a big cast-iron pot on one burner for rice, and the white-enameled pot on another for some other tasty dish. There was also a gas stove where other relatives preferred to prepare their special dishes.

She would rub white potatoes with oil and bake them in the fireplace until they could be easily pierced with a fork. Grandma cut the potatoes into halves, lengthwise, and carefully scooped out the pulp, reserving the best shells. Then, she riced the pulp into a bowl and, while the potatoes were still hot, whipped in several tablespoons of sweet creamed butter, a little milk, bacon crumbs, a cheddar cheese and salt. She beat in egg yolks and sour cream, whipping them into a puree. And, later she heaped the mixture into the reserved shells and placed them on a baking sheet. Taking more butter, she dotted each one and placed in the wood oven until golden brown. I remember the wonderful smells coming from the kitchen. After several minutes, the dish was ready to be eaten, a delight to any-
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one’s palate. I found that besides being a tasty treat, the dish became to represent something far greater in my life – a developmental process. The first baking would be represented by my schooling. The second baking would be the experience gained post classroom training.

This process was put to test when I took my first academic position – a postdoctoral fellowship at the Center for Minority Health, University of Pittsburgh where part of my training included working with the community. As a newly minted Ph.D., there were two major ideas that made up my thinking about science and scientific activities: (1) scientists should take the lead in the experiment or scientific activity and (2) all others that are not of the scientific community should follow the scientist’s lead. By employing these simple rules, the outcomes of any project were due to be scientifically worthy.

In February 1998, I walked boldly into a conference room at the Hill House in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. With shoulders high, Ph.D. credentials in hand and a presence oozing with confidence, I took my place at the long rectangular shaped table as a newly minted scholar (the title bestowed upon me by the academy). I came to share my expertise and dictate the appropriate way of doing things (was I not the methodologist?). Like a potato, I had been baked sufficiently, however bland to the taste. In my case, I was dull and not prepared for what lay ahead. I needed seasoning (i.e., experience). Nevertheless, my ability and confidence were enough, I thought.

As the meeting came to order, the group began to share painful thoughts and experiences. The remarks seemed to have a common theme – the horrors of displacement. I would later learn that the Hill District had been razed of its buildings before leaving many residents displaced. Now, in the aftermath of its doom, the Hill District is witness to having its homes demolished and residents uprooted again. I continue to listen. I listened for twelve months.

The group that sat around this conference table would play a critical role in my second phase of career development (the second baking). This group would scoop out my insides and season them. They would rice my pulp into a bowl (i.e., the numerous meetings at the Hill House), while I was hot, whip in some sensitivity, awareness and understanding. They would beat out the mixture into my shell and place me in the neighborhood to bake again. I would become twice-baked. As grandma’s dish was tasty to the palate, I would be tasty to the community (i.e., of service). My earlier way of thinking – I am the expert; I bring the methods and strategies; let me show you the way – changed. The group that sat at the table that cold February day put me back in the oven to be twice baked. I discovered that one cannot address a problem and be of service if you’re not aware of the issues. For too long, academic types have dictated what the process and issues should be, oftentimes not addressing what is most critical to the community or the community’s concerns. If the academy is to make a difference, we must first listen and then respond by lending a helping hand.
Where do we go from here?
Terri Baltimore

There is no definitive singular answer for what the people in the community and the outside interests should do. However, as the planning for The Hill District moves forward, there is one thing that remains crystal clear – no one can forget the past.

When all of the plans are on the table, the residents, planners, providers and all Pittsburghers need to remember what happened to The Hill District when the focus was strictly on development. People were lost. A community was lost. Memories were lost. Hence, our goal should be not to repeat the past.
References


Cyganovich, J. “Knocking down public housing: how will this affect the community?” Streetvoice, November 1998, p.3.


Contributors

Terri Baltimore, Director, The Hill District Community Collaborative, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania


Michel Cantal-Dupart, Architect-Urbanist, Paris, France

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Robert Fullilove, Ed.D., Associate Professor of Clinical Public Health/Associate Dean of the Columbia School of Public Health, New York; Maurice Falk Minority Fellow, Center for Minority Health at the Graduate School of Public Health, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Albert Gray, Community Outreach/Crisis Intervention Worker, National Council for Urban Peace and Justice, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Philip Hallen, President Emeritus, Maurice Falk Medical Fund, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Laura Horowitz, Prevention Point Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

David Lewis, Professor, Department of Architecture, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Thelma Lovette, Life-long Community Activist, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Tracy Myers, Assistant Curator, Heinz Architectural Center at the Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Carl Redwood, Sr., Life-long Community Activist, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Anthony Robins, Ph.D., Post-doctoral Fellow, Center for Minority Health at the Graduate School of Public Health, University of Pittsburgh

Louise Sturgess, Executive Director, Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation

Jason Vrabel, Architect/Photographer, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
Alienation: feeling estranged or separate from others.

Best House: house identified by an individual as the "all time favorite" home to visit or live in.

Community Burn Index: a measure of the extent of housing abandonment and destruction in a neighborhood.

Configuration: the pattern of objects or people.

Congruence: agreement or correspondence in character or quality; harmony.

Disorientation: not sure of one's bearings.

Displacement: forced relocation.

Distressed community: term used by HOPE VI planners to determine which federal housing projects are slated for renewal/demolition.

Empowered collaboration: groups working together to inventory environmental problem/resources and find solutions.

Goodness of Fit: test of congruence between settings and situations.

Healthy Urban habitat: an urban environment that supports the well-being of people and other living creatures.

Hillscapes: portraits of The Hill District.


Market centers: points of commerce within an urban neighborhood.

Neighborhood redevelopment, revitalization, renewal: modernization of an existing neighborhood designed to repair decay or economic decline.

Nostalgia: mourning for a lost home or place.

Setting: location or place.

Situation: an interpersonal episode.

Street facade: the vertical plane created by a row of house/building fronts.

Teach-in: community meeting for purposes of self-education.

Urban design: the process of configuring a city.