

CONFLICTING VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS OF REDEVELOPMENT  
IN PITTSBURGH'S HILL DISTRICT, 1943-1968

by

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Visual representations of the Lower Hill District created by Pittsburgh's redevelopment coalition and by neighborhood insiders reveal the conflicting ways redevelopers and residents understood older neighborhoods and their redevelopment. The maps and photographs created by the city's redevelopment coalition documented the Lower Hill's built environment—its older housing stock, its densely built-up blocks, and its intermixture of residences and businesses—as definitive examples of blight that threatened downtown's economic health. Models and architectural sketches of the Civic Arena, the jewel of the Lower Hill's redevelopment plan, promised to wipe away blight and renew the city. Redevelopers distributed their imagery through brochures and the city's daily press. Framed by captions labeling the Lower Hill “blight” and the Civic Arena a “wonder of the modern world,” these images sold the public on redevelopment. After the Civic Arena opened in 1961, redevelopers used its image to symbolize their success. However, Lower Hill insiders, most notably the neighborhood's African American newspaper, *The Pittsburgh Courier*, and the *Courier's* lead photographer, Charles “Teenie” Harris, envisioned the Lower Hill and its redevelopment differently. Harris and the *Courier* criticized the neighborhood's dilapidated housing but celebrated its thriving social life. Harris and the *Courier* supported redevelopment but saw it primarily as a route to new jobs and improved housing for Hill residents. In 1961, when new jobs and better housing proved illusory, the *Courier* protested by fusing



symbols of racial injustice to images of the Civic Arena. In the 1960s, anti-redevelopment protesters used this symbolism to force redevelopers' retreat from the Middle Hill. Visuals illuminate differences between redevelopers' narrow focus on the Lower Hill's built environment and Harris's and the *Courier's* broader inclusion of its people and history. Pittsburgh's business elite, however, ran the city's redevelopment coalition. They distributed their visuals *en masse* and backed them with their economic and political might. As a result, redevelopers' guiding vision won out in the 1950s. By the late 1960s, however, the *Courier's* visual critiques of redevelopment rode the momentum of nationwide black protest and defeated the Middle Hill's redevelopment.

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## INTRODUCTION

This study makes a contribution to three areas: visual culture, city planning, and race relations. It shows that visual images can shape public policy and public perceptions in important ways. In the 1940s and early 1950s, a collection of photographic images and drawings were used to stigmatize Pittsburgh's Lower Hill District neighborhood and prepare public opinion for a radical leveling of that African-American neighborhood in the name of urban redevelopment. Second, the study explores the role of city planners, whose mindset and worldview were appropriated by business interests and political elites to convince the Pittsburgh public—both black and white—that leveling the Hill District's businesses and homes would benefit the residents as well as the city. Third, the study also shows how a racial minority can use competing visual images to its own advantage. By the 1960s, Pittsburgh's black community used a different set of self-produced photographs and other visual images to create a counter-image of urban renewal as "Negro removal" and of the Hill District as a neighborhood worth preserving.

Media images of urban spaces shape how the public perceives different neighborhoods. Public perceptions, in turn, influence urban policy. This study analyzes the contrasts between visual representations of Pittsburgh's Hill District created by the city's redevelopment coalition and by neighborhood insiders—the African American newspaper, *The Pittsburgh Courier*, and its photographer and neighborhood portraitist, Charles "Teenie" Harris—to garner new insights into urban redevelopment. Redevelopers' cluttered land use maps and photographs of back alleyways reveal that they saw the Lower Hill's mixed land use and high building densities as infectious blight that endangered downtown. Their images of the Civic Arena, which replaced the Lower Hill in 1961, promised that

intervention through demolition and redevelopment would give the city a futuristic architectural marvel and national prominence. Distributed to the public through the media, these images argued that the Lower Hill could be demolished at no social cost. Visuals created by Harris and the *Courier* initially nuanced redevelopers' visual discourse and, after redevelopment, opposed it. In the 1950s, Harris and the *Courier* supported the Lower Hill's demolition, but their visual record foregrounded the neighborhood's people and framed redevelopment as a route to better housing. In 1961, when better housing did not materialize, the *Courier's* visuals turned oppositional by fusing the Civic Arena—a symbol of urban progress in redevelopers' visuals—to symbols of racial injustice. Anti-redevelopment protesters built on this symbolism and, in the late 1960s, stymied the spread of redevelopment.

Much has been written about Pittsburgh's urban redevelopment, particularly the strength and efficacy of its public-private partnership.<sup>1</sup> After WWII, the city's business leadership, following the lead of Mellon-Bank mogul and leading Republican, Richard K. Mellon, formed the Allegheny Conference on Community Development (the Conference) to save Pittsburgh from its smoky skies, dilapidated infrastructure, and flagging economy. The Conference teamed with Democratic mayor David Lawrence in a cross-partisan alliance of private and public leadership that brought about the city's famed "Renaissance." Many programs from this Renaissance, such as smoke control and the redevelopment of downtown's Point District, modernized the city and salvaged its economy.

The Lower Hill's redevelopment, which began during the Renaissance's apex, however, left a mixed legacy. Today, historians consider the redevelopment of the Lower Hill—which uprooted 1,885 families, a majority of them African American—a mistake. Today, many African Americans in Pittsburgh consider the Lower Hill's demolition the "most devastating thing that ever happened to the black

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Roy Lubove, *Twentieth-Century Pittsburgh: Government, Business, and Environmental Change* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1969); Sheri Merishon, "Corporate Social Responsibility and Urban Revitalization: The Allegheny Conference on Community Development, 1943-1968" (PhD diss., Department of History, Carnegie Mellon University, 2000); Shelly Stewman and Joel A. Tarr, "Four Decades of Public-Private Partnerships in Pittsburgh," in *Public-Private Partnerships in American Cities: Seven Case Studies*, ed. R. Scott Fosler and Renee A. Berger (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1982), 59-127.



community.”<sup>2</sup> They acknowledge that the project’s Crosstown Expressway eased downtown’s traffic flow and that the jewel of the Lower Hill’s redevelopment—a Civic Arena with a retractable dome for open-air summer musicals—awed residents and visitors alike. However, the project’s other elements—three high-rise garden apartments, multiple commercial buildings, and a symphony hall—were never completed.<sup>3</sup> So much disillusionment and controversy surrounded the Civic Arena that many African Americans cheered the Arena’s demolition fifty years later.<sup>4</sup>

This dissertation argues that interrogating the visual record of redevelopment explains how and why the Lower Hill’s redevelopment became so divisive. Urban renewal historian, Christopher Klemek, argues that an urban renewal order with a shared “guiding image” took shape in the early and mid-twentieth century.<sup>5</sup> This “guiding image” spurred urban policy towards slum clearance and redevelopment. Historians of urban policy like Klemek, Dana Cuff, and Margaret Farrar have suggested that redevelopers’ visuals illuminate their worldview and how they sold that worldview to the public.<sup>6</sup> This dissertation expands on their work by systematically interrogating the visual record of one urban redevelopment case study—Pittsburgh’s Hill District—from start to finish. Analysis of the maps, photographs, and models created by redevelopers sharpens our understanding of their guiding image. Contrasting redevelopers’ visuals to the visuals created by neighborhood insiders not only highlights

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<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Joe W. Trotter and Jared N. Day, *Race and Renaissance: African Americans in Pittsburgh Since World War II* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), 71-72,

<sup>3</sup> The Symphony Hall was later completed in downtown’s Cultural District.

<sup>4</sup> On the failures of the Lower Hill’s redevelopment see Mindy Thompson Fullilove, *Root Shock: How Tearing Up City Neighborhoods Hurts America, and What We Can Do About It* (New York: One World/Ballantine Books, 2004); Larry Glasco, “The Hill District,” unpublished manuscript; “Double Burden: The Black Experience in Pittsburgh” in *City at the Point: Essays in the Social History of Pittsburgh*, ed. Samuel P. Hays (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989), 69-109; Lubove, *Twentieth-Century Pittsburgh*; William J. Mallett, “Redevelopment and Response: The Lower Hill Renewal and Pittsburgh’s Original Cultural District,” *Pittsburgh History*, (Winter: 1992), 176-190; Mershon, “Corporate Social Responsibility and Urban Revitalization”; and Trotter and Day, *Race and Renaissance*.

<sup>5</sup> Christopher Klemek, *The Transatlantic Collapse of Urban Renewal: Postwar Urbanism from New York to Berlin* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 10.

<sup>6</sup> Dana Cuff, *The Provisional City: Los Angeles Stories of Architecture and Urbanism* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2000); Margaret Farrar, *Building the Body Politic: Power and Urban Space in Washington, D.C.* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008; Klemek, *The Transatlantic Collapse of Urban Renewal*.

what redevelopers failed to see—in the Lower Hill’s case, its people and its social life—but also spotlights what residents expected from redevelopment. The contradictions between redevelopers’ and insiders’ representations of the Lower Hill and its redevelopment illuminate the deficiencies in redevelopers’ perceptions of the Lower Hill’s people, problems, and solutions. Flawed perceptions encouraged flawed policies that went unchallenged because media coverage replicated redevelopers’ worldview. Skewed representations gave the public a mental picture of the Lower Hill that presupposed the aptness of demolition and redevelopment.

Chapter One will demonstrate that a shared worldview about older urban neighborhoods, blight, slum clearance, and redevelopment dominated the American planning profession in the mid-twentieth century. This worldview molded public policy at the federal, state, and local level and influenced urban redevelopment projects in cities across the United States. Although many aspects of planners’ worldview can be gleaned from redevelopers’ written texts, close readings of the photographs, models, and maps created by redevelopers to evaluate neighborhoods and plan their redevelopment provide new insights into how redevelopers envisioned older neighborhoods and their redevelopment.

Chapter Two will argue that Pittsburgh’s economic elites, most notably the Conference, expedited planners’ vision locally in what came to be called Pittsburgh’s “Renaissance,” but their visuals of the Lower Hill and its redevelopment reveal the assumptions and blind spots that made the Lower Hill’s redevelopment so problematic. The maps, photographs, and models used to analyze and emphasize the Lower Hill’s blight spotlight redevelopers’ singular concern with the built environment. Redevelopers believed that scraping away the neighborhood’s blight and replacing it with an architectural marvel like the Civic Arena would stem Pittsburgh’s economic decline. Redevelopers’ visuals also illustrate their dismissal of the benefits older unplanned neighborhoods offered residents and their underestimation of what would be lost through demolition.

Chapter Three will show that the Conference used these powerful, but slanted images to sell their vision of the Lower Hill's blight and its redeveloped future to the public. In both the Conference's promotional brochures and in the local and national mainstream media, captions and written texts paired with images to convince readers that the Lower Hill was a dilapidated slum that had to be demolished and redeveloped.

Chapter Four argues that *The Pittsburgh Courier* and photojournalist and neighborhood portraitist, Charles "Teenie" Harris, had a more nuanced image of the Lower Hill. Harris and the *Courier* saw the need to repair the Hill's physical dilapidation but also celebrated its vibrant social life and historic institutions.

Chapter Five examines Harris's and the *Courier's* visual coverage of the Lower Hill before and during redevelopment in order to demonstrate that Hill residents identified and attempted to solve their neighborhood's structural problems before redevelopment. When the URA began considering redeveloping the Lower Hill, the *Courier* and Harris supported redevelopment as a route to better housing and new jobs for Hill residents, a marked contrast to redevelopers' prioritization of downtown's economic health.

Chapter Six interrogates redevelopers' and the *Courier's* visuals of the Civic Arena and urban redevelopment after the Arena opened in 1961. These visuals underscore residents' and redevelopers' divergent expectations for redevelopment. Redevelopers used the Civic Arena's image as a symbol of success. The *Courier*, conversely, expressed its dismay that new jobs and better housing proved illusory by fusing symbols of racial injustice to images of the Civic Arena. By the mid-1960s, Pittsburgh's redevelopers were considering extending redevelopment through the Middle Hill, but the *Courier* threw its support behind anti-redevelopment activists. Riding the momentum of nation-wide black protests and using the Lower Hill as a symbol of the injustice of redevelopment, the Hill's activists and the *Courier* forced redevelopers to retreat from the Middle Hill in 1968.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE URBAN RENEWAL ORDER: ITS GUIDING VISION AND VISUALS

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

In the first half of the twentieth century, the American urban planning profession disdained older unplanned cities and embraced a new ideal of residential suburbs and super modernist landscapes. Visual images, particularly photographs, were of the utmost importance to the planners in presenting their vision and making their case. The visuals created by planners and their corporate boosters for the 1939 World's Fair and the lavish coverage given to their exhibits by *Life Magazine* exemplify this guiding vision. The Regional Planning Association of America (RPAA) created a documentary entitled *The City* for the World's Fair. *Life* published stills from the film that show how planners viewed older neighborhoods.<sup>1</sup> In a low-contrast image of workers' homes, old wooden houses in eclectic architectural styles filled the composition, crowding out the grey sky (Fig. 1.1). The image's angle and distance spotlighted leaning wooden porches and a wooden sidewalk, giving the scene a cluttered look. Grey and jumbled, the image equated older neighborhoods with dismal blight.

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<sup>1</sup> AND WORKMEN LIVED IN HOVELS NEAR THEIR WORK, "'The City' — New Documentary Film Shows Evolution of U.S. Urban Living," *Life*, 5 June 1939, 64-65.

IMAGE UNAVAILABLE  
DUE TO COPYRIGHT

Fig. 1.1 *AND WORKMEN LIVED IN HOVELS NEAR THEIR WORK*, “‘The City’—New Documentary Film Shows Evolution of U.S. Urban Living,” *Life*, 5 June 1939

IMAGE UNAVAILABLE  
DUE TO COPYRIGHT

Fig. 1.2 *CAN GROW UP TO DEAL WITH FUTURE PROBLEMS*, “‘The City’—New Documentary Film Shows Evolution of U.S. Urban Living,” *Life*, 5 June 1939

A second still from the film illustrates planners’ ideal as it was brought to life in the New Deal-era greenbelt towns of Greenbelt, Maryland and Radburn, New Jersey (Fig. 1.2).<sup>2</sup> This image foregrounded a vast landscaped courtyard. A pristine walkway led the eye towards uniformly designed, attached dwellings. No roadways appeared in the scene.

The ideal city of the future, meanwhile, debuted at the World’s Fair in General Motors’ *Futurama* exhibit, also covered by *Life* with photographs by Alfred Eisenstaedt. Taken from an aerial angle, the photograph centered on the junction of two super-highways surrounded by multi-tiered skyscrapers (fig 1.3).<sup>3</sup> The superhighways boasted a dozen or more lanes engineered to converge seamlessly. Spread into the background in two parallel lines, the skyscrapers bore matching symmetrical designs. Smaller buildings created open spaces between the highways and skyscrapers. Parks decorated their roofs, efficiently increasing the city’s green spaces. Geometrical symmetry and clean parallel lines dominated the model’s aesthetic and every technical aspect of the city represented in the model maximized space and efficiency. Urban planners believed that replacing older unplanned cities’ jumbled mixed land usage, narrow sidewalks, and erratic architectural styles with greenbelt towns and futuristic cityscapes would improve urban quality of life.

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<sup>2</sup> *CAN GROW UP TO DEAL WITH FUTURE PROBLEMS*, “‘The City’—New Documentary Film Shows Evolution of U.S. Urban Living.” Greenbelt towns were residential communities built on the outskirts of cities by the New Deal’s Resettlement Administration. Comprehensively planned to maximize open space, serene traffic flow, and architectural uniformity, planners viewed these towns as the apex of comprehensive planning.

<sup>3</sup> Alfred Eisenstaedt, *The City of 1960*, in “Life Goes to the *Futurama*,” *Life*, 5 June 1939, 84.

IMAGE UNAVAILABLE  
DUE TO COPYRIGHT

Fig. 1.3 Alfred Eisenstaedt, *The City of 1960*, in “Life Goes to the *Futurama*,” *Life*, 5 June 1939

The visuals of redevelopment—the maps, photographs, and models deployed by planners—not only illustrate planners’ guiding vision, but also their blind spots. Maps reduced neighborhoods to a series of statistics and legitimized planners’ assumption that mixed land use equaled blight. Reducing a lived-in space to statistics also reveals planners’ intellectual and social distance from older neighborhoods. Planners’ photographs accentuated mixed land usage, building density, and blight rather than neighborhoods’ people or social life. These photographs suggest that planners envisioned neighborhoods considered for redevelopment as aged built environments, beseeching expert intervention. Planners’ models and photographs emphasized space-aged high-rises, superhighways, and roof-top gardens. In these models and photographs, urban freeways efficiently funneled traffic from downtown shopping and office complexes to greenbelt towns that boasted uniform housing units surrounded by curvilinear streets and massive green spaces. The neighborhoods’ social life and its people did not factor highly in their guiding vision.

## 1.2 PLANNERS’ NATIONAL GUIDING VISION: THE PROBLEM

Urban problems became a field of serious intellectual inquiry starting in the 1920s. Progressive-era urban reform movements like the late nineteenth-century City Beautiful Movement and the early twentieth-century implementation of zoning laws had proposed discreet solutions to urban problems. In the 1920s and 1930s, though, the University of Chicago’s sociology department developed a school of

planning that used social scientific methods of inquiry to address a broad combination of urban issues ranging from housing to sanitation, transportation, policing, and city planning.<sup>4</sup> Fuelled by the work of Chicago professors like Rexford Tugwell, Louis Wirth, Robert Park, and Earnest Burgess, this application of social scientific methods to urban problem solving emphasized expert analysis and intervention. According to urban renewal historian, Christopher Klemek, “the creation of an urbanist [academic] establishment” formed “part of a larger trend toward the enshrinement of technocratic expertise in American life.”<sup>5</sup> Across the national academic landscape, “graduate programs . . . emerged to confer legitimacy through professional training and, ultimately, credentialed authority.”<sup>6</sup> Following Chicago’s lead, other elite universities like Harvard, the University of Pennsylvania, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology developed influential graduate schools in urban planning. Klemek argues that this “process of professionalization” gave urban planners “powerful authority in . . . American life.”<sup>7</sup> For example, President Franklin Roosevelt recruited Penn graduate, Rexford Tugwell, for his New Deal brain trust.<sup>8</sup>

In the 1920s these prominent urban sociologists and city planners promoted a cityscape of clean and spare modernist designs in opposition to the older city, which they disdained as chaotic and haphazardly planned. Older cities’ patchwork collections of architectural styles, they argued, needed to be replaced with compatible architectural designs. Jumbled and overcrowded city blocks with their high building density, narrow alleyways, and dangerous traffic patterns should be leveled and replaced with high-rise modernist apartments separated from each other and from traffic by open space. Cluttered inner-city neighborhoods also should give way to central-city expressways that would efficiently funnel

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<sup>4</sup> Christopher Klemek, *The Transatlantic Collapse of Urban Renewal*, 52.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 52-53.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

residents from the burgeoning suburbs into downtown shopping and cultural districts.<sup>9</sup> Neighborhoods intermixed with commercial, residential, and industrial land uses needed to be demolished and re-planned into functionally segregated land usage. Klemek summarizes this guiding image: “cities needed to be decongested and reorganized into four functionally segregated zones: work, residence, transportation, and leisure.”<sup>10</sup>

Planners believed particular conditions in older unplanned neighborhoods, such as mixed land use, automatically created blight. Between 1945 and 1950, the American Public Health Association (APHA) developed an influential method for appraising a neighborhood’s housing and environment that heavily penalized mixed land use. The APHA’s environmental appraisal method, which first appeared in 1950, argued, “the unplanned extension of industries and shopping centers into residential neighborhoods is usually followed by deterioration of the housing itself.”<sup>11</sup> Reflecting this belief, the APHA counted mixed land use against a block’s environmental quality grade in multiple ways. A block with fifty percent of its net area in industrial, commercial, or mixed use incurred thirteen penalty points.<sup>12</sup> If industrial, commercial, or mixed uses made up fifty percent of that block’s total frontage, it got another thirteen penalty points.<sup>13</sup> Specific non-residential businesses and industries also garnered penalties. The APHA meted out up to twenty points each for “nuisances” such as automobile repair shops, butcher shops, bakeries, and junkyards.<sup>14</sup> Blocks with “hazards to morals” such as bars, liquor

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<sup>9</sup> Raymond A. Mohl, “Planned Destruction: The Interstates and Central City Housing,” in *From Tenements to Taylor Homes: In Search of an Urban Housing Policy in Twentieth-Century America*, ed. John F. Bauman, Roger Biles, and Kristin M. Szylvian (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 230.

<sup>10</sup> Klemek, *The Transatlantic Collapse of Urban Renewal*, 29.

<sup>11</sup> American Public Health Association, Committee on the Hygiene of Housing (hereafter referred to as APHA), *An Appraisal Method for Measuring the Quality of Housing: A Yardstick for Health Officers, Housing Officials and Planners, Part III. Appraisal of Neighborhood Environment* (New York: American Public Health Association, Committee on the Hygiene of Housing, 1950), 3. According to Dana Cuff, property appraisers in Los Angeles saw “the mixture of commercial, industrial, and residential uses” as “undeniably negative”; Cuff, *The Provisional City*, 149.

<sup>12</sup> APHA, *An Appraisal Method . . . Part III*, 47.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 55-57.



stores, and pool halls received up to ten additional penalty points.<sup>15</sup> Finally, the APHA penalized blocks up to twenty points for fronting on any street that was not strictly residential.<sup>16</sup> Particular percentages and types of mixed uses, then, could lead to a maximum penalty score of seventy-six, enough to qualify a block as substandard.<sup>17</sup>

In addition, urban sociologists argued that the blight spawned from older neighborhoods' haphazard land use naturally spread outward, ultimately threatening to choke the whole city. Historian Jennifer Light traces this vision of cities to a zonal life-cycle model developed by University of Chicago sociologist Ernest Burgess in the 1920s.<sup>18</sup> According to Burgess, a "process of natural selection" continually moves through the city from inside out: "the more ambitious and energetic keep moving out" and "the unadjusted, the dregs and the outlaws accumulate" in the urban core.<sup>19</sup> Burgess's model predicted an ongoing cycle of urban decline: as supposedly less-desirable elements invaded neighborhoods in the inner zones, the city's more desirable residents moved outwards, abandoning the inner zones to social and physical decay. For example, Homer Hoyt's 1940 plan for Chicago foresaw a cycle where, over time, stable areas would degrade and, if left unchecked, turn into blight.

Urban sociologists argued that blight drained the city's economic resources and threatened its future viability. A 1955 congressional study on Washington D.C.'s Southwest neighborhood concluded that the city's expenditures on the neighborhood dwarfed its tax revenues. Southwest provided only 1.2 percent of every tax dollar collected by the District, but it consumed 9 percent of the District's welfare services, 6 percent of its health services, 12.5 percent of its mental health services, and 6.4 percent of its

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 59-60

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 62-63.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 86 and 88.

<sup>18</sup> Jennifer S. Light, *The Nature of Cities: Ecological Visions and the American Urban Professions, 1920-1960* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 26.

<sup>19</sup> Ernest Burgess, quoted in Light, *The Nature of Cities*, 26.

expenditures on incarceration.<sup>20</sup> The report concluded, “For slums and blight areas, a general rule is that for every dollar you take out of these areas in taxes, you put back \$5 to \$6 in city services.”<sup>21</sup> Because blight spread, it also economically endangered the city by driving away middle- and upper-income residents and their tax dollars. In 1946 Philadelphia’s Redevelopment Authority argued before the Pennsylvania Supreme Court that suburban “flight from slum-ridden” central cities produced “a profound social and economic injury . . . to the entire city” and “endangered the enormous investment in municipal facilities.”<sup>22</sup> Blight not only drained the city’s resources but also eroded its municipal tax base and, ultimately, threatened its economic viability.

Starting in the 1930s, the U.S. Congress integrated planners’ ideas about blight and urban decline into public policies appraising neighborhoods and demarcating slums; the federal government’s adoption of planners’ paradigm signals how powerful it was. The federal government first quantified and classified blight in 1933 with the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC), a crucially important and key policy-setting New Deal Program meant to fortify the construction industry and extend home ownership. The HOLC possessed the power and means to refinance home mortgages on a long-term and low-interest basis. To protect the HOLC’s mortgages, the agency received the power to nationally systematize housing appraisals.<sup>23</sup> The HOLC’s appraisals classified mixed land usage, high building densities, and eclectic architectural styles as “blight.” According to historian Kenneth Jackson, a HOLC evaluation of a white working-class neighborhood in St. Louis penalized its small lots, “general appearance of congestion,” “general mixture of type” and proximity to an “industrial section.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Farrar, *Building the Body Politic*, 82. Similarly, a 1938 congressional study bemoaned that one D.C. slum contained 13.5% of the city’s population, but produced 20.2% of its juvenile delinquents and 31.5% of its individuals on public assistance.

<sup>21</sup> US Senate Committee on Public Works, quoted in Farrar, *Building the Body Politic*, 82.

<sup>22</sup> John F. Bauman, *Public Housing, Race and Renewal: Urban Planning in Philadelphia, 1920-1974* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), 99.

<sup>23</sup> Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: the Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 197.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

### 1.3 PLANNERS' NATIONAL GUIDING VISION: EXPERT INTERVENTIONS

The planning profession's life-cycle model of urban decay not only identified the causes, spread, and economic hazards of blight, but also suggested remedies to halt its spread and reverse urban decline. Blight should be arrested by "weeding out the unfit and obsolete structures" in cities' slums.<sup>25</sup> Once cleared, a "former slum area" would begin the life cycle anew as a stable area. Planners in Washington D.C. during the 1930s, after assessing their city's blight and decline, prescribed intervention in line with the zonal life-cycle model. A report issued by the American Institute of Architects' (AIA) committee on housing in Washington D.C., headed by Louis Justement, noted "conditions in blighted areas were not yet 'alarmingly low,'" but predicted "present tendencies, if allowed to continue, will convert our present areas into slum areas."<sup>26</sup> To prevent blight from worsening and spreading, the report recommended "the consolidation of relatively large parts of a blighted area under one ownership and the renovation or rebuilding of the buildings on a large-scale basis."<sup>27</sup>

Although some planners advocated alternatives to full-scale slum clearance, like neighborhood conservation, and although some cities even experimented with these interventions, wholesale slum clearance and redevelopment dominated the planning paradigm into the 1960s. Planners in Philadelphia, for example, accepted the ecological assumption that blight ate away at cities from the inside out and used the APHA's survey methods to quantify blight.

Philadelphia's planners, however, experimented with neighborhood conservation to arrest blight. In the early 1950s, Philadelphia's East Poplar redevelopment exemplified this approach. According to urban historian John Bauman, East Poplar's planners aimed for a "human scale" that fought

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>26</sup> Howard Gillette, *Between Justice and Beauty: Race, Planning, and the Failure of Urban Policy in Washington, D.C.* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 137.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 137-138.

blight “with penicillin, not surgery.”<sup>28</sup> Philadelphia’s Redevelopment Authority cleared the neighborhood’s most blighted blocks, but preserved a number of East Poplar’s socially and historically significant buildings such as the Wister and Kearny schools, the Labor Lyceum, the Edgar Allen Poe House, and St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church.<sup>29</sup> Most cities, however, eschewed this blend of piece-by-piece clearance and preservation in favor of large-scale clearance.

Starting in the late 1930s and continuing into the 1950s, the U.S. Congress helped solidify slum clearance’s dominance by sanctioning the use of federal funds to help cities clear blight. The Wagner-Steagall Act of 1937 created the U.S. Housing Administration (USHA) and empowered it to loan cities up to ninety percent of the funds needed for slum clearance and public housing.<sup>30</sup> The Act required cities to demolish one blighted housing unit for every new unit of public housing it built.<sup>31</sup> The 1949 Housing Act further encouraged slum clearance by offering cities grants to cover two-thirds of the losses accrued through clearing and redeveloping slum land.<sup>32</sup> The Act also loaned cities money to purchase slum land for redevelopment.<sup>33</sup> Cities, however, had to use these funds primarily for residential redevelopment. By the 1950s, however, the federal government had broadened its scope beyond residential redevelopment. The 1954 Housing Act allowed ten percent of cleared and redeveloped land to be used for non-residential developments such as “schools, recreational facilities such as stadiums, and office towers.”<sup>34</sup> Although the emphasis of these laws shifted over time, they all defined blight as a menace to the nation’s cities in line with urban planners’ main assumptions.

If planners advocated slum clearance as the first step in the fight against blight, they advocated, as the next step, building new, comprehensively planned residential communities to replace blighted

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<sup>28</sup> Bauman, *Public Housing, Race and Renewal*, 107.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 141. In 1959 a subsequent Housing Act increased this percentage to 20 percent. The 1954 law also loosened requirements for designating an area as blighted. Only twenty percent of an area’s buildings had to be declared substandard for the whole neighborhood to be designated as blighted.

housing and improve urban America's quality of life. American planners embraced this ideal in the 1920s, drawing from a housing reform movement that originated in late nineteenth-century England. In 1898, Ebenezer Howard published a treatise on comprehensive urban planning that imagined a "Garden City" "located outside London, girthed by a lush greensward and replete with wide boulevards, diagonal arteries, garden and industrial zones, and enclosed shopping areas."<sup>35</sup> Howard realized his vision in 1903 with the construction of a garden city community in the industrial suburb of Letchworth.<sup>36</sup> Howard's Garden City idea influenced planners and housing experts in the U.S. such as Catherine Bauer, Lewis Mumford, and Clarence Stein who formed the Regional Planning Association of America (RPAA) in 1923.<sup>37</sup> The RPAA advocated replacing cluttered inner-city neighborhoods with the spacious, landscaped, and modernist Garden City communities. In the 1930s, Catherine Bauer crystallized the RPAA's Garden City principles in her influential book, *Modern Housing*, and the New Deal's Resettlement Administration applied them to "greenbelt" towns in Maryland, Wisconsin, and Ohio.<sup>38</sup>

Public housing projects boasting green spaces, uniform architecture, and safe streets constituted a final step in planners' and housing activists' interventions against blight; early public housing plans aimed to distribute the glories of comprehensive planning equitably to urban America. According to historian Dana Cuff, Los Angeles's public housing designers followed Bauer's ideals when building Aliso Village in the early 1940s.<sup>39</sup> Bauer advocated an integrated traffic, housing, and community plan that separated traffic from pedestrians and provided tenants with essential community services and modern domestic conveniences.<sup>40</sup> Aliso Village's designers planned a cautious traffic

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>38</sup> On Bauer, see Cuff, *The Provisional City*, 121. On the Resettlement Administration, see John F. Bauman and Edward K. Muller, *Before Renaissance: Planning in Pittsburgh, 1889-1943* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006), 267, and Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 195.

<sup>39</sup> Cuff, *The Provisional City*, 121.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

pattern that kept cars away from children and pushed through-traffic to the development's edges.<sup>41</sup>

These outer traffic arteries separated the project from commercial and industrial land uses. The plan's housing fit with Bauer's ideal in its uniformity, amenities, and harmony with the site's overall plan.

"Nearly identical" apartments sat in "repetitive" courtyard buildings, arranged into twenty-two courtyard blocks, each surrounded by open space. Light and ventilation entered apartments from two sides and each residence boasted the newest amenities.<sup>42</sup>

In addition to clearing slums and replacing them with greenbelt-inspired public housing, urban planners viewed inner-city expressways as a tool for removing blight, rejuvenating downtowns, and arresting urban decline. According to Raymond Mohl's research on urban freeways, the Bureau of Public Roads (BPR) linked inner-city highway building to slum clearance in its 1939 report, *Toll Roads and Free Roads*, which first articulated a plan for what became the Interstate Highway System.<sup>43</sup> In the following decade, the BPR's head, Thomas MacDonald, linked slum clearance and expressway building to the development of new low-income housing. In 1947 MacDonald asserted, "Before dwellings are razed [for highway building], new housing facilities should be provided for the dispossessed occupants," preferably in the suburbs.<sup>44</sup> In 1949, President Truman rejected McDonald's proposal to link highway building to new housing, citing expense and a resistant Congress. Thereafter, slum housing could be razed and not replaced in new highway projects.

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 154. Housing projects built in Philadelphia from the 1940s into the mid-1950s also exemplified this ideal. Wilson Park, for example, "featured four eight-story International Style elevator buildings surrounded by two-story flat-roofed and three-story hip-roofed low-rise units." The project's designers arranged the buildings "heliocentrically to assure maximum sunlight." and the city's housing literature praised the project's "openness," "orderly feeling," and "livability." Moreover, "interior driveways were arranged to discourage through traffic" and the project included "a community building with space for a child-care center, a well-baby clinic, and recreation." See Bauman, *Public Housing, Race and Renewal*, 113. Howard Gillette's *Civitas by Design: Building Better Communities, from the Garden City to the New Urbanism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010) also describes public housing ideals in great detail.

<sup>43</sup> Mohl, "Planned Destruction," 230.

<sup>44</sup> Quoted in Mohl, "Planned Destruction," 231.

## 1.4 VISUALS AND THE NATIONAL PLANNING PARADIGM

Across the U.S., redevelopers deployed maps, photographs, and architectural models to represent, codify, and publicize their understanding of the city's faults and its desired transformation.

Statistical mapping embodied planners' "ecological vision" of cities, including their belief that blight marred older sections of cities from inside out and beseeched demolition and redevelopment. Beginning in the 1920s, city planners used statistical maps to spatially analyze urban conditions and to render their theories visually legible. Working with Chicago as his template, Ernest Burgess mapped specific areas of Chicago—the Loop, the Black Belt, and Deutschland—to ground his model in the city's geographic reality.<sup>45</sup> Then he added concentric circles, his model's zones of outward-moving birth and inner-city decay. Burgess descriptively labeled each zone with housing and social types to illustrate their state of birth or decay and to support his model's prediction that interior zones declined and outer zones thrived. Burgess located "under world roomers" in the decaying "zone in transition" near the city center and "superior" apartment houses in the outer-lying "residential zone."<sup>46</sup> Burgess's mapped model fused his zonal life-cycle model to the city's on-the-ground conditions and made the city itself evidence of the model's authority. In turn, Burgess's mapped model, particularly its concentric circular zones, symbolized the ecological paradigm in city planning.

In the redevelopment era planners used statistical maps to translate their complex blight-rating systems into easy-to-read graphics that assessed levels of blight across neighborhoods. The APHA provided an influential template for statistical blight-rating maps with its appraisal method. In the introduction to its appraisal method, the APHA criticized previous rating systems that resulted in a

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<sup>45</sup> Burgess model pictured in Light, *The Nature of Cities*, 23.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

“bewildering array of maps, tables, and graphs.”<sup>47</sup> The APHA said that such an array failed to provide a clear synopsis that could be easily “understood by the busy public official or the layman.” The APHA’s method resulted in three basic numbers: a dwelling quality grade, an environmental quality grade, and an average of the two, called the housing quality grade. Broken down into categories of blight, these quality grades easily translated to maps where the APHA represented them with corresponding grey-scale patterns (fig. 1.4).<sup>48</sup> With the APHA’s method and maps “the busy public official or the layman” could study a few maps and understand what parts of their cities needed to be conserved, rehabilitated, or demolished and redeveloped.

IMAGE UNAVAILABLE  
DUE TO COPYRIGHT

Fig. 1.4 APHA, *QUALITY OF NEIGHBORHOOD ENVIRONMENT, An Appraisal Method for Measuring the Quality of Housing: A Yardstick for Health Officers, Housing Officials and Planners, Part III*

If maps gave planners and the public a comprehensive aerial view of their cities, photographs acted as unimpeachable witnesses to the city’s on-the-ground conditions, including blight.<sup>49</sup> The photographic process of the time reinforced the notion of photographic truthfulness. Photographers used cameras to capture light and burn it onto film. During the printing process, light shined through developed negative images, transferring the film’s original burnt image onto photosensitive paper. Because of this light-to-lens-to-film-to-print relationship between the photographed subject and the photographic reproduction, the American public historically perceived the photographic medium as an

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<sup>47</sup> APHA, *An Appraisal Method for Measuring the Quality of Housing: A Yardstick for Health Officers, Housing Officials and Planners, Part I Nature and Uses of the Method* (New York: American Public Health Association Committee on the Hygiene of Housing, 1945), 15.

<sup>48</sup> APHA, *QUALITY OF NEIGHBORHOOD ENVIRONMENT, An Appraisal Method . . . Part III*, 18.

<sup>49</sup> The term “unimpeachable witness” comes from photography historian Vicki Goldberg. Goldberg argues that historically Americans have viewed photographs as direct windows into reality and, therefore, unimpeachable witnesses. See Vicki Goldberg, *The Power of Photography: How Photographs Changed our Lives* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1991), 33-34.



authentic representation of reality.<sup>50</sup> The APHA's treatment of photographs in its "Appraisal Method" reflected this trust in photographic evidence. In its first and third volumes, the APHA referred readers to photographs as direct evidence of the method's veracity. The third volume explained "photographs of typical frontages in all quality grades are given . . . in order that the reader may judge for himself whether these grade classifications make sense to the eye as well as on the slide rule."<sup>51</sup> An APHA photograph of a block penalized with a "slum" environmental grade foregrounded a tavern and a storefront to attest to the block's mixed land use (fig. 1.5).<sup>52</sup> The image's tightly packed mixture of brick and wooden buildings emphasized the block's building density and erratic architectural styles. As such, the photograph documented and testified to the neighborhood's blight.

IMAGE UNAVAILABLE  
DUE TO COPYRIGHT

Fig. 1.5 APHA, *HOUSING OF GRADES E AND D, 1944 NEW HAVEN HOUSING SURVEY, An Appraisal Method for Measuring the Quality of Housing: A Yardstick for Health Officers, Housing Officials and Planners, Part I*

As redevelopment projects moved from the blight appraisal stage to the final planning stage, redevelopers and their boosters represented their visions for redevelopment with photographs of Garden City communities and sketches and models of futuristic cityscapes and modernist architectural designs. According to Christopher Klemek, Bauhaus-inspired modernist architecture and functionalist

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<sup>50</sup> For example, according to photography historian, Vicki Goldberg, the American public's reliance on photographic evidence led them to doubt written reports of Nazi concentration camps after WWII. When newspapers and news magazines printed photographs of the camps, the public finally believed the scope of Nazi atrocities. Goldberg, *The Power of Photography*, 35. Some particularly good essays on the development of this belief can be found in Martha Sandweiss, ed. *Photography in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1991). Alan Trachtenberg's "Photography the Emergence of a Keyword," for example, examines how "photograph" came to be understood culturally as synonymous with "truth" and includes an excellent analysis of a 1959 Atlantic Monthly article celebrating the authenticity of stereographs.

<sup>51</sup> APHA, *An Appraisal Method . . . Part III*, 16. The APHA used photographs similarly in its first volume, which summarized the "Nature and Uses" of its method: "The meaning of quality grades for the combined appraisal is visualized in the [following] photographs." APHA, *An Appraisal Method . . . Part I*, 33.

<sup>52</sup> APHA, *HOUSING OF GRADES E AND D, 1944 NEW HAVEN HOUSING SURVEY, An Appraisal Method . . . Part I*, 37.

urban design shaped urban planners' guiding vision. Klemek traces the fascination with this style to the early 1930s when the Museum of Modern Art featured designs by modernist architects like Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright for its International Style architectural exhibit.<sup>53</sup> Planners from the RPAA, including Lewis Mumford and Catherine Bauer, provided panels that juxtaposed photographs of densely built row houses in an older part of Queens to photographs of a Garden City-style development. In the middle of the room that featured the RPAA's panels, a scale model of a German "super-block housing project" provided a three-dimensional example of the RPAA's ideal modernist urban planning.<sup>54</sup>

The 1939 World's Fair provided the perfect venue for the modernist urban planning ideal and the photographs, models, and sketches planners used to represent and promote it. The 1939 World's Fair adopted the theme "Building the World of Tomorrow" and many of its exhibits celebrated modernist urban planning and architecture. The RPAA produced a documentary film for the fair, entitled *The City*. The film espoused the principles of modern housing and condemned older un-planned urban neighborhoods. Most notably, General Motor's *Futurama* exhibit featured a "model city of the future," which promised that technological innovations would facilitate a space-age utopia by the year 1960.<sup>55</sup> According to historian Mark H. Rose, six hundred spectators at a time visited the *Futurama* exhibit, where they rode around a 35,738-square-foot model of skyscrapers separated into discreet land uses and surrounded by express highways.<sup>56</sup> A recorded voice promised that expressways would route people around new "breathtaking" high-rise buildings on the former sites of slum dwellings.<sup>57</sup> Klemek argues that the *Futurama* exhibit promoted "urban redevelopment to thousands of visitors."<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Klemek, *The Transatlantic Collapse of Urban Renewal*, 49.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>56</sup> Mark H. Rose and Raymond A. Mohl, *Interstate: Highway Politics and Policy since 1939* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2012), 1.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> Klemek, *The Transatlantic Collapse of Urban Renewal*, 50.

In June 1939, *Life Magazine* extensively covered the World's Fair; *Life's* lavishly illustrated coverage promoted the *Futurama* exhibit and its vision of America's future to the public at large. The *Futurama* article began with a full-page photograph by Alfred Eisenstaedt of "a few of the millions of visitors" who had already lined up for the exhibit, which *Life* heralded as "easily the smash hit of the fair."<sup>59</sup> The article's other twelve photographs featured the model itself, including Eisenstaedt's photograph of "the City of 1960" (see fig. 1.3) and a more detailed close-up shot of the model's elevated highways and roof-top parks.<sup>60</sup> The article's text narrated the exhibit's technological promises in great detail. By 1960, control towers would direct cars whizzing down high-speed lanes, taking driving "out of the drivers' control" and making all cars "safe against accident."<sup>61</sup> Liquid air, "a potent, mobile source of power" would make "life in 1960 immensely easier." *Futurama* even guaranteed that in 1960 Americans would be a "tanned and vigorous people" and every "wife's skin . . . still perfect at age 73."<sup>62</sup>

In addition to these technological breakthroughs in architecture, medicine, and engineering, *Life's Futurama* coverage and the magazine's coverage of *The City*, which used film-stills from the RPAA's documentary, also promoted greenbelt towns as the model for future living. The *Futurama* article celebrated the "City of 1960" and its roof-top parks and elevated highways, but claimed "the happiest people" in 1960 "live in one-factory farm-villages producing one small industrial item." *Life's* coverage of *The City* elaborated on this theme with film stills of the greenbelt town ideal.<sup>63</sup> The RPAA chose Greenbelt, Maryland and Radburn, New Jersey—both comprehensively planned towns based on the Garden-city ideal—to exemplify the ideal city of the future.<sup>64</sup> The film stills chosen by *Life* to convey *The City's* message both reiterated and elaborated on *Futurama's* visual themes. An aerial photograph of a superhighway interchange echoed *Futurama's* emphasis on highway engineering and population

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<sup>59</sup> "Life Goes to the *Futurama*," *Life*, 5 June 1939, 79.

<sup>60</sup> Eisenstaedt, *A City Street*, in "Life Goes to the *Futurama*," 81-82.

<sup>61</sup> "Life Goes to the *Futurama*," 80.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> "'The City'—New Documentary Film Shows Evolution of U.S. Urban Living," *Life*, 5 June 1939, 64-65.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

dispersal (fig. 1.6).<sup>65</sup> An aerial photograph of a greenbelt town honed in on the RPAA's principles of modern housing and comprehensive planning (fig. 1.7). Vast green spaces separated uniform housing units. No commercial streets entered the residential area. Instead, curvilinear streets complemented the plan's green spaces. *Life's* visual coverage of *The City* brought planners' guiding vision—including its uniform architecture, green spaces, and functionally segregated land usage—to the mass public.

IMAGE UNAVAILABLE  
DUE TO COPYRIGHT

Fig. 1.6 *ALREADY SMOOTH NEW PARKWAYS*, "The City"—New Documentary Film Shows Evolution of U.S. Urban Living," *Life*, 5 June 1939

IMAGE UNAVAILABLE  
DUE TO COPYRIGHT

Fig. 1.7 *AND TOWNS TOO SMALL FOR TRAFFIC JAMS*, "The City"—New Documentary Film Shows Evolution of U.S. Urban Living," *Life*, 5 June 1939

## 1.5 THE BLIND SPOTS IN PLANNERS' GUIDING VISION

Planners drew the term "blight" from ecology and spoke of it as a corporeal threat to the city, but "blight" was a slippery concept whose political implication depended on the social context. In her work on Washington, D.C. historian Margaret Farrar argues that "blight" originated in agriculture, specifically with a destructive infestation of cash crops. Transferring this terminology to the city suggested that unchecked urban blight imperiled the city's economic health.<sup>66</sup> Urban planning, then, "became a matter of converting spatial liabilities into spatial assets."<sup>67</sup> Dana Cuff argues that Los Angeles's redevelopment plans depended on the discursive creation of homogeneously blighted slums to justify the generally unpopular use of eminent domain and the large-scale demolition of neighborhoods. Cuff contends "slums were conceptualized epidemiologically: they were urban diseases, whose blight would spread

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>66</sup> Farrar, *Building the Body Politic*, 81.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

outward from the point of infection.”<sup>68</sup> Because they threatened to spread their infectious “blight” to the rest of the city, urban planners maintained, slums should be eradicated.

However, planners failed to realize that many residents valued some aspects of older, unplanned neighborhoods—such as mixed land use—that planners equated to “blight.” Bars, bakeries, and automobile repair shops traditionally provided city people with economic opportunities as business owners and skill development as employees.<sup>69</sup> Many of the non-residential “nuisances” so heavily penalized by the APHA, then, sometimes provided a springboard for future employment. Mixed commercial and residential uses also spurred an active sidewalk life. According to urban critic Jane Jacobs, active sidewalks facilitate social bonding among neighbors, community self-policing, and a safe environment.<sup>70</sup> In Jacobs’ neighborhood—New York City’s Greenwich Village—a corner bar, the White Horse Tavern, encouraged late night sidewalk activity and ensured the block’s wellbeing and public safety.<sup>71</sup> The APHA would have considered the tavern a punishable “hazard to morals.”

Many urban planners also neglected to consider residents’ views of their own neighborhoods. Although the APHA’s surveyors recorded residents’ views of their housing and neighborhood, the APHA did not factor such feedback—positive or negative—into its statistical analysis of blight.<sup>72</sup> Residents viewed mixed land use as beneficial and even placed value on their neighborhood’s built environment. While researching the Flats, a Los Angeles neighborhood redeveloped into a public housing project, Dana Cuff interviewed Mrs. Frances Camareno, whose family moved to the area in the 1930s. Mrs. Camareno remembered the “really nice” river with “clean and pretty” water where she and her friend

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<sup>68</sup> Cuff, *The Provisional City*, 108.

<sup>69</sup> For example, RC grew up in Pittsburgh’s Hill District in the 1940s and 1950s and worked at two of the neighborhood’s auto repair shops. Colbert remembers, “I began to learn. Then I began to study. And it made all the difference in the world.” He went on to work as a mechanic for the city’s bus system. RC, interview with the author in Pittsburgh, PA, 13 February 2008.

<sup>70</sup> Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961). See also Klemek’s discussion of Jacobs in Klemek, *The Transatlantic Collapse of Urban Renewal*, 109-127.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> “In certain areas the leading complaint of occupants (these have been tabulated but are not scored) was some variant of ‘The house is always cold.’” APHA, *An Appraisal Method . . . Vol I*, 26.

had “picnics there under the trees.”<sup>73</sup> The neighborhood’s main commercial street, Mrs. Camareno attested, “had everything: a beauty shop, a bakery, grocery store, meat market, . . . laundry, milk factory, chili factory, and a stable.” Moreover, “you could walk the streets at midnight and no one would bother you” and “we never locked our doors.” Reflecting on the area’s demolition in the early 1940s, Mrs. Camareno concluded, “To me, it was good, happy memories. It was sad when they tore it down. People didn’t want to go.”<sup>74</sup> Because urban redevelopers’ mid-century worldview did not require residents’ input, Los Angeles’s urban-redevelopment coalition never took into account such testimonies of the advantages older, unplanned neighborhoods.

Planners’ policies for quantifying blight and clearing slums sometimes had negative racial implications. The HOLC’s neighborhood appraisals, for example, included mixed racial groups in its definitions of blight. In addition to penalizing a neighborhood for building density and mixed land use, the HOLC rated neighborhoods with small black populations “hazardous,” and reserved its highest grade of housing for racially homogenous neighborhoods.<sup>75</sup> Dana Cuff’s study of Los Angeles demonstrates how the HOLC penalized a racially mixed neighborhood.<sup>76</sup> In 1936 the HOLC gave the Boyle Heights neighborhood its lowest grade, marking it as a hazardous area for investment. The HOLC cited the area’s racial and ethnic diversity as part of this hazard: “This is a ‘melting pot’ area and is literally honeycombed with diverse and subversive racial elements. It is seriously doubted whether there is a single block in the area which does not contain detrimental racial elements.”<sup>77</sup> The HOLC’s low grade, in turn, “prevented virtually all lending” in the neighborhood and, as a result, “hastened overall deterioration.”<sup>78</sup> Similarly, Raymond Mohl discovered that highway builders “rarely mentioned” race

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<sup>73</sup> Mrs. Frances Camareno, quoted in Cuff, *The Provisional City*, 133.

<sup>74</sup> Cuff, *The Provisional City*, 134.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 198, 201.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>77</sup> HOLC quoted in Cuff, *The Provisional City*, 150.

<sup>78</sup> Cuff, *The Provisional City*, 150.

when linking freeway construction to blight clearance.<sup>79</sup> However, urban expressways “ripped through” central cities during the 1950s and 1960s, demolishing over 300,000 urban housing units, mostly in African American neighborhoods.<sup>80</sup>

## 1.6 PLANNERS’ BLIND SPOTS IN VISUALS

The maps, photographs, and models used by planners to represent blight and redevelopment illuminate planners’ blind spots. The APHA’s maps, for example, obscured the criteria used to distinguish among slum, substandard, intermediate, and good quality grade blocks (see fig. 1.4). The maps used grey-scale patterns such as lines, crosshatching, and dots to mark blocks as appropriate for clearance, rehabilitation, and conservation. As noted above, the APHA’s influential appraisal method penalized traditional urban qualities like mixed land use that arguably conveyed social and economic advantages for residents. The APHA’s maps shaded blocks with high percentages of mixed land use and “non-residential nuisances” like bakeries and auto shops “substandard” or “slum” without explaining why. This lent the certification visual authority while also cloaking its criteria. Surveyors sometimes recorded residents’ views of their neighborhoods but never factored them into an area’s overall quality score. These maps, then, also hid residents’ views of their own living space. Finally, the APHA’s mapping method divorced planners’ statistical analysis of the neighborhood from the neighborhood’s on-the-ground reality. The APHA’s maps minimized identifying markers like street names, schools, churches, and parks to emphasize the blocks’ patterned statistical summaries. As such, they erased the ways neighborhood residents transformed their environment for social use.

Although at mid-century many Americans perceived photographs as infallible representations of reality, photographic historians and visual theorists argue that photographs represent reality in

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<sup>79</sup> Mohl, “Planned Destruction,” 235-236.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 227.

accordance with their creators' worldview.<sup>81</sup> According to historian Alan Trachtenberg photographs show "the power of a particular cultural outlook projecting 'reality' as it knows and wishes it."<sup>82</sup> The producers and publishers of photographs decide what is worth seeing and how it should be shown. In the late nineteenth century the manufacturers of mass-produced stereographs, illustrated magazines like *Harper's* and *Frank Leslie's Illustrated*, and such books as Helen Campbell's *Darkness and Daylight* perceived poverty in accordance with middle-class reformers' worldview that split the poor into the morally deserving and undeserving poor. The photographs and illustrations they produced, then, represented poverty through these binary opposites. The deserving poor appeared as sober and chaste widows getting aid from charities and absorbing the middle-class values that would rout poverty. The undeserving poor appeared as drunken men or sexualized women failing to care for their families. Immoral behavior perpetuated poverty.<sup>83</sup>

The photographs used by city planners as unimpeachable witnesses of inner-city blight projected reality in accordance with their guiding vision of urban decline, including their antipathy toward older built environments. In her work on Washington D.C.'s redevelopment, Margaret Farrar analyzed photographs of southwest Washington taken by the Farm Securities Administration (FSA) in the 1930s and early 1940s. The FSA's photographs garnered national and international attention and, according to Farrar, echoed and solidified urban planners' negative view of older neighborhoods.<sup>84</sup> The

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<sup>81</sup> Here, I am drawing on Stuart Hall's summary of theoretical approaches to representation, in particular the work of Michel Foucault and the idea of a discursive formation. See Stuart Hall, "The Work of Representation," in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall, (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 13-74

<sup>82</sup> Alan Trachtenberg, "Photography: the Emergence of a Keyword," in *Photography in Nineteenth-Century America*, 42.

<sup>83</sup> Peter Bacon Hales' description of *Darkness and Daylight* in *Silver Cities: The Photography of American Urbanization, 1839-1915* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984) captures these two characterizations well. See also Joshua Brown, *Beyond the Lines: Pictorial Reporting, Everyday Life, and the Crisis of Gilded Age America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002) on *Frank Leslie's*. Martha Sandweiss's examination of visual representations of Native Americans in the American West, particularly in stereographs, offers another excellent example of a visual discursive formation. Martha Sandweiss, *Print the Legend: Photography and the American West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

<sup>84</sup> Farrar, *Building the Body Politic*, 95.



photographs spotlighted “shabby, make-shift dwellings, back streets littered with trash and puddled with stagnant water, and small African American children sitting in the small, garbage-filled dirt lots that constituted their ‘backyards.’”<sup>85</sup> For example, an aerial view of the southwest neighborhood set against the U.S. Capitol building showed the neighborhood’s buildings from their backsides. Unlike street-front views groomed by residents for the public eye, these unadorned and cluttered backyards formed “a sorry contrast to the glowing, white face of the Capitol perched above the scene.”<sup>86</sup>

The photographs chosen by the APHA to illustrate its five environmental quality grades similarly reveal the partialities implicit in planners’ mid-century guiding vision. Grade E constituted the APHA’s most reviled environmental conditions, neighborhoods that beseeched clearance and redevelopment. Two of the photographs chosen to illustrate grade E environments showed the same block viewed from both the front and back. The front view emphasized the neighborhood’s mixed land use (fig. 1.8).<sup>87</sup> An awning and a neon sign announcing “Jack’s Bakery” dominated the image’s top-right corner, pushing the street and its row houses into the background. The bakery counted against the neighborhood’s environmental quality score in at least three ways. Penalized as a “non-residential nuisance,” it also exemplified mixed land use and housing that fronted on a partly commercial street.<sup>88</sup> As noted above, though, the bakery might have signified something different to residents: a source for fresh bread, a place to develop job skills, or evidence of an active and safe sidewalk life.

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<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 97. This juxtaposition between the Capitol and D.C. slums was a common theme in alley reform and D.C. urban redevelopment literature. See Farrar, *Building the Body Politic*, 95 and Gillette, *Between Justice and Beauty*, 121.

<sup>87</sup> APHA, *Grade E. Area 2, Block 7. Washington [front], Figure 4 ENVIRONMENT OF GRADES E TO A, An Appraisal Method . . . Part III*, Figure 4.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 47, 48, 55-57, 59-60, 62-63.

IMAGE UNAVAILABLE  
DUE TO COPYRIGHT

Fig. 1.8 APHA, *Grade E. Area 2, Block 7. Washington [front]*, Figure 4 ENVIRONEMNT OF GRADES E TO A, *An Appraisal Method for Measuring the Quality of Housing: A Yardstick for Health Officers, Housing Officials and Planners, Part III*

IMAGE UNAVAILABLE  
DUE TO COPYRIGHT

Fig. 1.9 APHA, *Grade E. Area 2, Block 7. Washington, [rear]*, Figure 4 ENVIRONEMNT OF GRADES E TO A, *An Appraisal Method for Measuring the Quality of Housing: A Yardstick for Health Officers, Housing Officials and Planners, Part III*

The back view of buildings located on the same block spotlighted the backyard debris and day-to-day clutter that residents hid from public view. This clutter signified blight and lent credibility to the APHA's quantification of the neighborhood as a slum (fig. 1.9).<sup>89</sup> The photograph documents two three-story duplexes from behind, but the photographer took the image from an angle and at a distance that foregrounded a rubbish pile, weeds, and an open wooden gate constructed with a motley array of wood. Full laundry lines strung from third-story apartments appear to float into tree branches and add to the scene's clutter. Notably in the street-front view (fig. 1.8), the view groomed for public view by residents and shopkeepers, the sidewalks appear spotless. The block contained multiple three-story buildings. Whether the backyard chosen by the APHA to exemplify a grade-E neighborhood contained more or less clutter than other buildings on the block cannot be gauged. However, the foregrounded signifiers of blight would have been deemphasized from another distance and angle.

The APHA selected both the front and back photographs because they exemplified and dramatized aspects of older neighborhoods' built environments penalized by its method. No residents appeared in either image. Planners eschewed photographs of the people who lived under the conditions they disparaged in favor of photographs spotlighting the built environment they aimed to change. Photographs of unpopulated back yards represented older neighborhoods the way planners perceived them. Disseminating these images encouraged the viewing public to see older neighborhoods the same

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<sup>89</sup> APHA, *Grade E. Area 2, Block 7. Washington, [rear]*, Figure 4 ENVIRONEMNT OF GRADES E TO A, *An Appraisal Method . . . Part III*, Figure 4.

way. Farrar argues the FSA photographs of Washington D.C. emphasized “the worst of the Southwest” and “reinforced policy makers’ ideas about the space being ugly, blighted and dead—and not worth saving.”<sup>90</sup> These photographs became part of planning discourse because they represented the city in accordance with planners’ guiding vision. Planners then used them to illustrate older neighborhoods to the public at large, influencing how the larger public viewed their cities.

By using photographs to promote their guiding vision to the public, city planners deployed a reform strategy developed in the late 1800s when reformers began using photographs as unimpeachable witnesses to court public support for specific policies. Jacob Riis’s influential photographs of New York City’s Lower East Side tenements argued for housing codes and tenement reform in his late nineteenth-century lantern-slide lectures, in exposés of slum living conditions, and in his famous book, *How the Other Half Lives*.<sup>91</sup> In the early twentieth century, Lewis Hine’s photographs of child labor not only won support for the National Child Labor Committee and local child labor laws, but also solidified a social-reform photographic style. According to photography historian Vicki Goldberg, Hine’s “straightforward” style put the images’ human subjects at a middle-distance and posed them facing the camera.<sup>92</sup> Hine brought this style to the Pittsburgh area to document working-class living conditions for the Pittsburgh Survey in 1907.<sup>93</sup> In the 1930s, photographers such as Dorothea Lange and Gordon Parks, both of whom worked for Roy Stryker’s Resettlement Administration (RA) and later Farm

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<sup>90</sup> Farrar, *Building the Body Politic*, 99. Cuff similarly discusses a photograph of Chavez Ravine in Los Angeles. Although “an anomaly,” the photo “was widely shown as a typical condition” in Chavez Ravine by the Los Angeles Housing Authority. As a result, the public came to characterize the neighborhood as small and “in some cases extra-small” “ad hoc” wooden housing “strewn along dirt roads, stepping down hillsides” and leaning “into the fences of more substantial bungalows.” Cuff argues “this image provided evidence that Chavez Ravine was like no other part of the city” and “as propaganda, it argued for slum clearance.” Cuff, *The Provisional City*, 278-279.

<sup>91</sup> On Riis, see Goldberg, *The Power of Photography*, 165-170 as well as Peter Bacon Hales, *Silver Cities*; Bonnie Yochelson & Daniel Czitrom, *Rediscovering Jacob Riis: Exposure Journalism and Photography in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (New York: New Press, 2007), 124-152 and Maren Stange, *Symbols of Ideal Life: Social Documentary Photography in America, 1890-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>92</sup> Goldberg, *The Power of Photography*, 173.

<sup>93</sup> Goldberg, *The Power of Photography*, 178 and Maurine W. Greenwald, “Visualizing Pittsburgh in the 1900s: Art and Photography in the Service of Social Reform,” in *Pittsburgh Surveyed: Social Science and Social Reform in the Early Twentieth Century*, ed. Maurine W. Greenwald and Margo Anderson (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996), 124-153.

Security Administration (FSA), perfected Hine's social documentary style to garner public backing for the RA's and FSA's policies. According to art historian, John Tagg, the act of looking at RA and FSA photographs engaged viewers as concerned citizens and urged them to look to the New Deal liberal state for positive intervention.<sup>94</sup>

Reformers like Riis paired their photographs with captions, text, and context that encouraged viewers to interpret them in line with their reform agendas. In her study of the American West and photography, *Print the Legend*, Martha Sandweiss argues that analyzing photographs in their original context reveals how captions and text shaped images' meaning. Captions and text indicate how media producers intended photographs to be interpreted, sometimes in ways that contradicted photographers' intent. Captions and text also suggest how audiences, influenced by producers' textual encouragement, likely read images.<sup>95</sup> Indeed, Vicki Goldberg argues Jacob Riis's magic lantern lectures won more converts to the tenement reform cause than even his influential book, *How the Other Half Lives*, because of the context Riis created in his lectures.<sup>96</sup> Riis's lectures lasted for two hours and included over one hundred larger-than-life photographs projected by a magic lantern. Riis narrated every slide and often primed his audience before the show with scripture, prayers, and gospel songs.<sup>97</sup>

In the redevelopment era, planners paired photographs with text and context that nudged viewers towards seeing photographs as visual evidence of older neighborhood's blight. In its "Appraisal Method" the APHA used text to shape readers' interpretations of photographs and provided specific instructions for pairing visuals and context to sell survey findings to reluctant publics. Even though the APHA assumed readers would see photographs of environmental quality grades (see figs. 1.7 and 1.8) as

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<sup>94</sup> John Tagg, *The Disciplinary Frame: Photographic Truths and the Capture of Meaning* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 58-89.

<sup>95</sup> Sandweiss, *Print the Legend*.

<sup>96</sup> Goldberg, *The Power of Photography*, 169.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.* Similarly, The National Child Labor Committee used Hine's photographs in collages that juxtaposed images of sullen and sullied children with captions indicting industry for "making human junk," see Goldberg, *The Power of Photography*, 176.

direct evidence of the grades' accuracy, the APHA used text to guarantee this interpretation. In the first volume, the authors claimed photographs "bring alive the nuisances and hazards of buildings crowded together on the land, of industry and low-grade business mixed with dwellings, of heavy traffic streets that serve as playgrounds."<sup>98</sup> This text spurred readers to look for high building densities, mixed land use, and busy streets in the photographs and to interpret their presence as evidence of a neighborhood's hazards and blight. The APHA also urged planners to use photographs and context to woo resistant publics. Predicting that "a corrective program will take money and meet resistance," the APHA suggested that planners cultivate "an educated public opinion" through news releases and lantern slide lectures, much like Riis's.<sup>99</sup> Newspaper articles drawn from "a condensed version of the full" appraisal should include "photographs of conditions found." Planners should also design a local lecture tour that paired photographic slides with "large copies of maps and charts" and "brief talks" on the appraisal's results.<sup>100</sup>

*Life's* 1939 coverage of the RPAA's film, *The City*, paired "unsavory" images of "what U.S. cities have become" with captions that typified the ways planners paired image with text to represent the old unplanned and undesirable city.<sup>101</sup> Echoing the FSA photographs analyzed by Margaret Farrar that showed Washington D.C.'s children surrounded by litter and stagnant puddles, another image chosen by *Life* to illustrate *The City* showed a small child playing with debris picked from a water-filled gutter (fig. 1.10).<sup>102</sup> The image's caption explained that in the unsavory city of 1939, "slum children search gutters for fun."<sup>103</sup> This image and the caption's phrasing made the child a symbol of "slum children" *en masse*

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<sup>98</sup> APHA, *An Appraisal Method . . . Part I*, 33.

<sup>99</sup> APHA, *An Appraisal Method for Measuring the Quality of Housing: A Yardstick for Health Officers, Housing Officials and Planners, Part II Appraisal of Dwelling Conditions, Volume A. Survey Director's Manual* (New York: American Public Health Association Committee on the Hygiene of Housing, 1946), 88.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> "'The City'—New Documentary Film Shows Evolution of U.S. Urban Living," *Life*, 5 June 1939, 64-65.

<sup>102</sup> *SLUM CHILDREN SEARCH GUTTERS FOR FUN*, "'The City'—New Documentary Film Shows Evolution of U.S. Urban Living," *Life*, 5 June 1939, 65.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

and of the old unplanned city's detrimental effects on childhood. Without green spaces and playgrounds, "slum children" were forced to play in unsanitary and unsafe gutters.

IMAGE UNAVAILABLE  
DUE TO COPYRIGHT

Fig 1.10 *SLUM CHILDREN SEARCH GUTTERS FOR FUN*, "'The City'—New Documentary Film Shows Evolution of U.S. Urban Living," *Life*, 5 June 1939

## 1.7 CONCLUSION

*The City's* narrative juxtaposed such dismal scenes of the old unplanned city with "an optimistic glance at the town or city of the future" as represented by images of superhighways and greenbelt towns (see figs 1.6 and 1.7). This juxtaposition of photographs of the grimy old city—the "before" image—and photographs or models of the future city as envisioned by planners—the "after" image—exemplified the national planning profession's guiding vision.<sup>104</sup> City planners defined the ideal city of the future in opposition to the older unplanned sections of cities where they believed mixed land use, cluttered street patterns, hodge-podge architectural styles, and high building densities bred blight. Urban sociologists likened cities to living organisms, arguing that cities, like living cells, eventually die and decay. The decay began with the blighted, inadequately planned city centers and spread outward. To arrest the spread of decay, planners advocated scraping away the blighted sections of older city centers and rebuilding in accordance with modern planning principles: modernist-style buildings, segregated land uses, landscaped open spaces, greenbelt towns, and logical traffic patterns that included urban freeways to channel suburbanites into downtown business and shopping districts.

Planners used maps marked with indicators of blight and concentric circles of decay to illustrate the ecological model of urban decline and corroborate its predictive efficacy. To rate neighborhoods,

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<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

planners calculated land uses and building densities, plugged these criteria into equations, designated each neighborhood with a quality grade, and statistically mapped the city into either slum, substandard, or intermediate zones. Photographers documented on-the-ground evidence to testify to these conditions. Together, photographs and maps legitimized the criteria planners used to designate blight, cloaked the benefits of mixed land use, and obscured the social costs of sweeping neighborhood clearance and redevelopment. Once planners identified a neighborhood for redevelopment, impressive models of the space-age architecture, landscaped open spaces, and uncluttered expressways that were planned to replace the blighted neighborhood completed the argument for redevelopment. The next two chapters bring this analysis of the national planning profession's visuals to a local level by examining the visuals created by Pittsburgh's redevelopment coalition.

## CHAPTER TWO

### FROM RAMSHACKLE SLUMS TO TECHNOLOGICAL AWE: REDEVELOPERS' GUIDING VISION IN PITTSBURGH, 1943-1956

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Pittsburgh's city planners accepted the national planning paradigm's vision of what conditions endangered the city and what solutions would save it. In the 1940s, Pittsburgh's planners got their chance to implement this vision when local business leaders like Richard K. Mellon decided the time had come to rid Pittsburgh of its smoky reputation and dilapidated infrastructure and create a new economic future for the city. Mellon helped found the Allegheny Conference, which used its economic might and its mediating, legal, and public relations expertise to revive the city, starting with downtown's successful Point district redevelopment.<sup>1</sup> Supportive state urban redevelopment legislation enabled Pittsburgh's redevelopers and financial elite to realize their vision for the Point. Following this triumph, the Conference turned its attention to the Lower Hill, a project that proved controversial because it required uprooting people, not just office buildings. The Conference's visuals of the Lower Hill illustrate how the city's redevelopment coalition perceived the neighborhood, including its problems and

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<sup>1</sup> Sheri Mershon, "Corporate Social Responsibility and Urban Revitalization." For more on the Conference's history, see also Robert C. Alberts, *The Shaping of the Point: Pittsburgh's Renaissance Park* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1980); Gregory J. Crowley, *The Politics of Place: Contentious Urban Redevelopment in Pittsburgh* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005); Lubove, *Twentieth-Century Pittsburgh*; and Park Martin, "Narrative of the Allegheny Conference on Community Development and the Pittsburgh Renaissance, 1943-1958," Allegheny Conference On Community Development (Pittsburgh, PA.), Records, 1920-1993, MSS 285, The Detre Library and Archives, Senator John Heinz History Center (hereafter referred to as Allegheny Conference Records) MSS#285 Box 308, Folder 11.



solutions, and sold redevelopment to the public. These same visuals reveal the Conference's and its planning allies' blind spots. Pittsburgh's redevelopment coalition viewed the Lower Hill through its most egregious examples of blight but with no attention to its social vibrancy. This selectively bleak view of the Lower Hill combined with an idealized view of the city's redeveloped future to make demolishing and redeveloping, rather than rehabilitating, the neighborhood a foregone conclusion, regardless of its long-term social costs.

## 2.2 PLANNERS' GUIDING VISION IN PITTSBURGH

In 1943 local banking magnate, Richard K. Mellon, concluded that Pittsburgh's smoky air and dilapidated infrastructure endangered the city's economy. Pittsburgh had long been derided as "Hell with the Lid Off," but during WWII, Pittsburgh's industries ran at full capacity worsening the city's deplorable environmental conditions. According to Pittsburgh historian Roy Lubove, the city's polluted air meant a high incidence of respiratory problems, destroyed vegetation, and "abnormally expensive cleaning bills."<sup>2</sup> Undesirable quality-of-life issues also posed a long-term threat to the city's corporate economic base. A local paper argued, "often a valuable man will quit a Pittsburgh establishment . . . for the sole purpose of securing more pleasant living conditions for himself and his family."<sup>3</sup> This left Mellon and the rest of the city's business elite with three choices: they could move their corporate headquarters elsewhere to retain talented employees; they could stay and watch their top employees and the rest of the city's corporate economic base disappear; or they could mobilize their resources and revive their ailing city.

Mellon chose the latter, forming the Allegheny Conference in 1943 to coordinate local planning efforts aimed primarily at downtown. The Conference idea arose from an informal meeting of Pittsburgh

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<sup>2</sup> Roy Lubove, *Twentieth-Century Pittsburgh*, 115.

<sup>3</sup> *The Pittsburgh Press*, quoted in Lubove, *Twentieth-Century Pittsburgh* 115.

business, planning, and academic leaders convened by Mellon to discuss the city's future. Local planners had been trying to implement a comprehensive plan for the city since the 1920s, but internal bickering had stalled their efforts.<sup>4</sup> When Mellon initially met with Wallace Richards of the Pittsburgh Regional Planning Association (PRPA), and Dr. Edward R. Weidlein of the Mellon Institute, they concluded that Pittsburgh needed a civic organization with the power and resources to unite these quarreling factions, systematically research the city's problems, and develop a comprehensive improvement program. To fulfill this role, they created the Allegheny Conference. Although the Conference addressed regional issues like airport expansion and flood control, its primary focus was downtown Pittsburgh. The Conference's business leaders saw downtown's economic stability as the key to the region's health and prosperity.<sup>5</sup>

The national-planning paradigm influenced how Mellon and the Conference perceived Pittsburgh's blight and attempted to tackle its decline. When Mellon formed the Allegheny Conference in 1943, he already had close ties with the city's planning professionals. Since 1941 Mellon had been the president of the PRPA.<sup>6</sup> Dedicated to researching the region's conditions and proposing comprehensive planning solutions to issues like traffic flow and land usage, the PRPA had been founded by local planner, Frederick Bigger, in 1936. Wallace Richards, who went on to help found the Conference, took over the PRPA's directorship in 1937. Both Bigger and Richards had worked as planners for the Resettlement Administration's greenbelt towns, which exemplified national planners' comprehensively planned residential ideal.<sup>7</sup> According to Lubove, during Mellon's time as president of the PRPA, Wallace

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<sup>4</sup> On these quarrels, see John F. Bauman and Edward K. Muller, *Before Renaissance*. For a detailed narrative of the Conference's founding, its organization, and its efficacy, see Mershon, "Corporate Social Responsibility and Urban Revitalization."

<sup>5</sup> Park Martin, quoted in Lubove, *Twentieth-Century Pittsburgh*, 111.

<sup>6</sup> Lubove, *Twentieth-Century Pittsburgh*, 108.

<sup>7</sup> Bauman and Muller, *Before Renaissance*, 233; Mershon, "Corporate Social Responsibility and Urban Revitalization," 157. Lubove, *Twentieth-Century Pittsburgh*, 108.

Richards “emphasized to him the need for a comprehensive postwar planning program.”<sup>8</sup> Thereafter, Richards became one of Mellon’s top civic advisors, and historians credit him as a prime influence on the Conference’s foundation and philosophy.<sup>9</sup>

The Conference rallied the city’s business, political, and academic leaders to put their power and expertise behind the comprehensive planning program. As the head of the Mellon banking family, Richard K. Mellon directed Mellon Bank and Gulf Oil. Mellon Bank capitalized numerous local companies, giving the Mellon family either majority shares or directorships at companies like the Aluminum Company of America (ALCOA), Pittsburgh Plate Glass (PPG), Pittsburgh Consolidated Coal, Westinghouse Air Brake, and Pennsylvania Railroad.<sup>10</sup> Mellon also held leadership positions in the state Republican Party. This combination of economic and political might meant, according to *Time* magazine, “In Pittsburgh a ‘must’ from a Mellon list gets done.”<sup>11</sup> The Conference’s founders also included business leaders like Edgar Kaufmann of Kaufmann’s Department Store and H.J. Heinz II of Heinz Foods, as well as leading academics such as Dr. Robert Doherty of the Carnegie Institute.<sup>12</sup> The largely Republican Conference also forged cross-partisan alliances with Democratic city and county politicians like Mayor David Lawrence and County Commissioner John Kane. In addition to recruiting the heads of Pittsburgh’s major corporations, the Conference required them to actively participate by prohibiting corporate leaders from sending lower ranking replacements to meetings.<sup>13</sup> According to Wallace Richards, the Conference brought together the city’s “yes-and-no people,” the people with the economic and political

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<sup>8</sup> Lubove, *Twentieth-Century Pittsburgh*, 108.

<sup>9</sup> Bauman and Muller, *Before Renaissance*, 233; Mershon, “Corporate Social Responsibility and Urban Revitalization,” 157; Lubove, *Twentieth-Century Pittsburgh*, 108. Mershon credits Wallace Richards as the prime mover in the Conference’s founding and Lubove says he “played a key role” in establishing the Conference.

<sup>10</sup> “Mr. Mellon’s Patch,” *Time*, 3 October 1949, 12, in Allegheny Conference Records, MSS # 285, Box 12, Folder 6.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* On Mellon’s local influence, see also Mershon, “Corporate Social Responsibility and Urban Revitalization,” 482-483.

<sup>12</sup> See Mershon “Corporate Social Responsibility and Urban Revitalization,” 153-221.

<sup>13</sup> Martin, “Narrative of the Allegheny Conference” and Mershon, “Corporate Social Responsibility and Urban Revitalization,” 193. Interestingly, Mellon himself was exempt from this rule. Wallace Richards and Arthur Van Buskirk largely represented him in the Conference.

power to act on their decisions.<sup>14</sup> The Conference additionally enlisted the city's top lawyers, public relations experts, economists, architects, and planners.<sup>15</sup>

The Conference also received crucial support for redevelopment from the state legislature. In 1945 the Pennsylvania state legislature passed the Urban Redevelopment Law that facilitated much of the Conference's work.<sup>16</sup> The law enabled cities to create Urban Redevelopment Authorities (URAs), which were empowered to direct the certification of blighted areas, use eminent domain to purchase blighted land, and redevelop that land primarily for public use. According to the law, a neighborhood could be designated as blighted due to "unsafe, unsanitary . . . or overcrowded" housing. The law also considered "inadequate planning," "excessive land coverage by buildings," and "economically or socially undesirable land uses" to be evidence of blight.<sup>17</sup> The law defined blight, but left it up to local URAs to decide which neighborhoods would be surveyed for blight. Once the URA chose a neighborhood for analysis, the local City Planning Commission (CPC) stepped in to systematically quantify blight and designate neighborhoods for redevelopment.<sup>18</sup> Pittsburgh's CPC used the American Public Health Association's *Appraisal Method for Measuring the Quality of Housing* to certify neighborhoods as blighted redevelopment areas.<sup>19</sup>

The Conference made the most of this redevelopment-friendly legislation by creating and controlling the local authorities tasked with redevelopment. In response to Pennsylvania's Urban Redevelopment Law, the Conference assigned a local housing expert to write an in-depth report on its

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<sup>14</sup> Mershon, "Corporate Social Responsibility and Urban Revitalization," 193.

<sup>15</sup> Lubove, *Twentieth-Century Pittsburgh*, 110.

<sup>16</sup> *Urban Redevelopment Law, House Bill 1133, Act 385, 1945*, in Allegheny Conference Records, Box 231, Folder 7.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Light, *The Nature of Cities*, 143. See also APHA, *An Appraisal Method . . . Part I*, and Pittsburgh City Planning Commission, *Analysis of Part of the Lower Hill District, 1950*, Pittsburgh, Pa. City Planning Commission Records, 1928-1962, AIS.1976.17, Archives Service Center, University of Pittsburgh, (hereafter referred to as City Planning Records) Box 5, Folder 6.

nuances and its possible applications to Pittsburgh.<sup>20</sup> Armed with a grand vision for the city, a law that facilitated that vision, and a majority of the city's wealth, the Conference approached Mayor David Lawrence in November 1946 about creating and directing an Urban Redevelopment Authority.<sup>21</sup> According to Lawrence, the Allegheny Conference's Wallace Richards and Arthur Van Buskirk visited him at City Hall and asked him to create a five-member URA and appoint himself as chairman.<sup>22</sup> When Lawrence resisted, arguing that no "man ever appointed himself to a job," Van Buskirk responded, "we want the prestige of the Mayor's office involved in the Authority."<sup>23</sup> Lawrence complied and made appointments that gave the Conference significant power within the URA. He made Van Buskirk—the Conference's president and chairman and, according to Lawrence, Richard Mellon's "Chief of Staff"—the URA's vice-chairman.<sup>24</sup> Lawrence also appointed Conference members and local business leaders—Edgar Kaufmann of Kaufmann's Department Store and Lester Perry of the Carnegie-Illinois Steel Corporation—to the URA.<sup>25</sup> The Allegheny Conference, then, dominated the public authority tasked with identifying neighborhoods for the CPC to survey and with using eminent domain to demolish and redevelop blighted neighborhoods.

### 2.2.1 THE POINT'S REDEVELOPMENT

The redevelopment of downtown's Point illuminates how the Conference used its economic and political power and promotional and legal savvy to rejuvenate downtown. The Point's redevelopment began with Point State Park, a popular development that the Conference took charge of in 1945 and

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<sup>20</sup> Max Nurnberg, "Review of Legislation on Urban Redevelopment and Housing," 1946, in Allegheny Conference Records, MSS 285, Box 231, Folder 2.

<sup>21</sup> Martin, "Narrative of the Allegheny Conference," 14.

<sup>22</sup> David L. Lawrence, "Rebirth: as told to John P. Robin and Stefan Lorant," in Stefan Lorant, *Pittsburgh: The Story of an American City*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Pittsburgh: Esselmont Books, LLC, 1999), 426.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 427.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 408-409.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 427.

completed in 1974.<sup>26</sup> The park, however, was only part of the Conference's vision for the Point. The redevelopment of the land adjacent to the park into Gateway Center shows the Conference's mediation, legal, and business acumen at its best. The Conference created a Point Redevelopment Committee in June 1946 to tackle what executive director, Park Martin, referred to as "the generally run down area" next to Point Park.<sup>27</sup> A month later, the Conference approached New York City's Equitable Life Assurance Company about redeveloping the land adjacent to the proposed park.<sup>28</sup>

The Conference's economic might came into play when Equitable Life stipulated as a condition of its funding that corporate tenants sign long-term leases for sixty percent of Gateway Center's office spaces.<sup>29</sup> The Conference quickly got companies like Jones and Laughlin Steel, Pittsburgh Plate Glass, Westinghouse Air Brake, and Joseph Horne Company, to sign twenty-year leases for Gateway Center, even though the office buildings were years from completion.<sup>30</sup> In his retrospective narrative on the Conference, Park Martin credited Mellon as "a most important factor in persuading the corporations to sign the long-term leases."<sup>31</sup>

The Conference also used its legal savvy to smooth the way for the unprecedented use of eminent domain required to redevelop the Point into Gateway Center. Using eminent domain to clear privately owned land and then turning over that land to a private redeveloper such as Equitable Life, took the city into controversial legal territory. In a 1966 talk given to the American Newspaper Publishers Association, the Conference's Henry J. Heinz II acknowledged the URA's lack of legal precedents in using eminent domain to collect and clear land for a private redeveloper. "We were doing something that had never been done before" by exercising "the right of eminent domain to condemn blighted private property, take it over, and resell it to other private interests." Heinz recalled that "even

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<sup>26</sup> On the Conference and the development of Point Park, see Alberts, *The Shaping of the Point*.

<sup>27</sup> Martin, "Narrative of the Allegheny Conference," 13.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

under the most careful legal safeguards,” such an unprecedented use of eminent domain “could have been misunderstood.”<sup>32</sup> According to Pittsburgh historian Rachel Colker, the Conference and URA tested these murky legal waters by bringing a “friendly” lawsuit to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.<sup>33</sup> In the case, Point property owner and URA-ally Albert W. Schenk argued that the Pennsylvania Redevelopment Act limited the use of eminent domain to redevelopment projects with public uses such as increasing the housing supply. On January 11, 1950 the Court disagreed with Schenk, asserting that “no feature of this redevelopment” contradicted the redevelopment law’s intent.<sup>34</sup> Colker says this decision “helped to sway many members of [city] council in favor of the project.”<sup>35</sup>

When other Point-area property owners contested the state court’s decision, the Conference’s public relations experts teamed up with the local daily papers to mold public opinion and override their objection. In spring 1950, Point property owner Andrew L. Gamble organized the Property Owners and Tenants Protective Committee (POTPC) with the intent to reverse the state Court’s decision. POTPC activists attacked redevelopment by challenging the City Planning Commission’s (CPC) designation of their properties as blighted. The POTPC concurred with the CPC that the section of the Point scheduled to become Point Park qualified as blighted, but asserted that the blocks intended for Gateway Center had historical, social, and economic significance. The 400 block of Penn Avenue, for example, boasted some of the city’s oldest buildings including the thriving and stylish Mayfair Hotel.<sup>36</sup> In April the POTPC’s leaders filed lawsuits in federal and state courts challenging the Schenk decision, and in May they took their protest to the public with a full-page ad in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* accusing the URA of throwing “going” businesses “into the street.”<sup>37</sup> The Conference, meanwhile, employed its public

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<sup>32</sup> Henry J. Heinz II, quoted in Alberts. *The Shaping of the Point*, 137.

<sup>33</sup> Rachel Balliet Colker “Gaining Gateway Center: Eminent Domain, Redevelopment, and Resistance,” *Pittsburgh History*, (Fall 1995): 138.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

relations machine to counter the POTPC's arguments. According H.J. Heinz II, Pittsburgh's local papers helped the Conference win public support for the Gateway Center project by "molding public opinion through interpretation of facts in editorials and background stories written in the public interest."<sup>38</sup>

Gateway Center illuminates how the Conference's legal and public relations savvy expedited an example of the planning profession's and the Conference's guiding vision. As the POTPC's case made its way to the US Supreme Court, the URA began demolition. Aware that the court could rule the demolitions unconstitutional, the URA painstakingly recorded and photographed each building's mechanical and construction details in case the POTPC won its case and the buildings had to be resurrected.<sup>39</sup> A federal judge, though, ultimately dismissed the case. The Conference then replaced the Point's mixed land use and high building density with a perfect example of planners' ideal. Gateway Center featured modernist-style metallic office high-rises, separated from the rest of downtown's mixed land use and from each other by vast landscaped plazas. Including abundant office space, the redevelopment rejuvenated downtown business at the heart of the city. The Conference took the Point Park idea and used its legal and public relations expertise to expand it into Gateway Center. A space-age modernist office complex that would fit well in GM's *Futurama* exhibit, Gateway Center echoed the national-planning paradigm's guiding vision and revealed the Conference's strong emphasis on downtown economic renewal.

## 2.2.2 THE LOWER HILL'S REDEVELOPMENT

Since the early twentieth century, Pittsburgh's planners and reformers experimented with interventions in the Hill District because they identified the ethnically and racially diverse neighborhood as blighted. In the early 1900s, the city's two settlement houses, Kingsley House and the Irene Kaufmann

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<sup>38</sup> Heinz, quoted in Alberts, *The Shaping of the Point*, 137.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*



Settlement, set up shop in the Hill District to acculturate and aid the neighborhood's largely immigrant population. Starting with WWI, African Americans fleeing the South and seeking industrial labor in the North settled primarily in the Hill. By the 1940s, the Hill District was majority African American. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, Pittsburgh planners cleared patches of the neighborhood to make way for the Terrace Village and Bedford Dwellings housing projects. Similarly, since the 1920s Pittsburgh planners had dreamed of a Crosstown Expressway connecting the city's South Side to its North Side. They envisioned the expressway cutting through the Lower Hill's downtown edge.<sup>40</sup> Despite this early interest in clearing sections of the Hill District, when the Conference encouraged Mayor Lawrence and city council to create the URA in 1946, it first set its sights on the Point. In 1947, however, the PRPA hired the architectural firm Mitchell and Ritchey to design a "Lower Hill Cultural Center" plan for the neighborhood, and the URA and its allies in city government began discussing a Point-style clearance and redevelopment project for the Lower Hill.

Over the next decade, federal redevelopment legislation spurred the realization of the Lower Hill's redevelopment. The city initially could not cover the cost of clearing the Lower Hill and relocating thousands of its residents, but the 1949 National Housing Act solved that problem. Title I of the 1949 Act authorized the federal government to reimburse local redevelopment authorities for two-thirds of the loss they incurred buying and clearing land that had been certified as blighted and reselling it at a lower price to redevelopers.<sup>41</sup> The Act also loaned cities money to purchase slum land for redevelopment.<sup>42</sup> Aimed at expanding and improving urban housing, the 1949 Act limited federal aid for primarily residential redevelopment projects. The Lower Hill Cultural Center proposal included high-rise garden apartments as well as a massive arena and Crosstown Expressway. These apartments qualified the plan as a residential project, making it eligible for federal grants to cover two-thirds of the losses the URA

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<sup>40</sup> Baumann and Muller, *Before Renaissance*, 133, 143, 185.

<sup>41</sup> Mershon, "Corporate Social Responsibility and Urban Revitalization," 501.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

would accrue buying land in the Lower Hill and redeveloping it at a loss. This federal assistance made the Lower Hill's redevelopment feasible. In 1950, at the behest of the URA, the City Planning Commission surveyed the Lower Hill using the APHA's survey method and certified the area as "blighted" and ripe for redevelopment in accordance with Pennsylvania's 1945 Redevelopment Act. The URA then designated the Lower Hill as "Redevelopment Area No. 3."<sup>43</sup>

The Conference's influence in the PRPA and the URA meant it was involved in the Lower Hill's redevelopment from the beginning, but it fully threw its expertise and power behind the plan when Edgar Kaufmann's pet cultural project, the Civic Light Opera (CLO), needed a permanent performance space and ran out of other relocation options. Kaufmann had helped found the CLO in 1946. Initially, the CLO performed at the University of Pittsburgh football stadium during the summer months, an arrangement that dismayed the Opera and its supporters. In 1947 Kaufmann recruited the Conference and the PRPA to help find a new location for the CLO's open-air performances. The initial locations proposed by the PRPA—the Highland Park neighborhood and Schenley Park—fell through. Residents of Highland Park protested the noise and traffic an open-air auditorium would create.<sup>44</sup> Building an auditorium in Schenley Park, meanwhile, violated the legal conditions that the park's benefactor, Mary Schenley, had attached to her donation.<sup>45</sup> With these options acknowledged as dead ends, the PRPA and Conference began investigating the feasibility of relocating the CLO to the Lower Hill Cultural Center in June 1952.<sup>46</sup> The availability of federal funds legislated by the 1949 Housing Act had made clearing and redeveloping the Lower Hill feasible, so the Conference approved the Lower Hill site for the CLO in 1953. Edgar Kaufmann envisioned an arena with a domed retractable roof so the CLO could perform under the summer night sky. From this point on, the CLO and the arena's retractable roof became cornerstones of

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 508.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 511. For a detailed analysis of the Highland Park protests, see Gregory J. Crowley, *The Politics of Place*.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 512.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 514.

the redevelopment effort, and the Conference put its mediating and public relations expertise and its economic and political might behind the project.

With the Conference's support, the planning, land acquisition, and demolition required for the Lower Hill redevelopment project accelerated. In late February 1953 the Conference and URA presented a revised Mitchell and Ritchey proposal for the Lower Hill. The new plan spotlighted a revised arena with Kaufmann's domed retractable roof as well as the long-awaited Crosstown Expressway, high-rise garden apartments for, the architects hoped, an influx of middle-class residents, and a proposed Symphony Hall and Opera east of the arena.<sup>47</sup> The URA and the Conference decided to prioritize the arena and Crosstown Expressway. In October 1953 the state passed enabling legislation that let the city create the Public Auditorium Authority tasked with funding and guiding the arena's construction.<sup>48</sup> In September 1955 the federal government approved the Lower Hill project for Title I funds to cover the city's losses under the 1949 Housing Act. Shortly thereafter, Pittsburgh City Council held a public meeting to debate and vote on the proposal. It easily garnered the council's approval. Demolition began in May 1956.<sup>49</sup>

## 2.3 THE LOWER HILL ACCORDING TO REDEVELOPERS' VISUALS

In the years leading up to the Lower Hill's demolition, Pittsburgh's redevelopment coalition used maps, photographs and models to document and publicize the Lower Hill's blight and to envision its redevelopment and promote it to the public. The maps, photographs and models that Pittsburgh planners created drew on the visuals developed and deployed by national planners. The City Planning Commission used statistical mapping strategies drawn from the American Public Health Association's *Appraisal Method* to represent the neighborhood's housing quality grades. These maps illustrate the

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 515.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 516-517.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 518.

systematic and quantitative way Pittsburgh planners measured, represented, and defined blight. Pittsburgh's redevelopment coalition used photographs in ways similar to the American Public Health Association's (APHA) suggested use of photographs in its *Appraisal Method*. The APHA used photographs as what it considered unimpeachable witnesses to cities' on-the-ground conditions and encouraged planners to distribute photographic evidence of blight to sell redevelopment to reluctant publics. The photographs commissioned and collected by the Allegheny Conference presented specific examples of what it thought blighted the Lower Hill and aimed to bring this reality to the larger public. Finally, models of the Lower Hill's redevelopment showed what redevelopers wished to create.

When Pittsburgh's CPC analyzed the Lower Hill's blight in the spring of 1950 at the URA's behest, it followed the APHA's *Appraisal Method*, including its strong emphasis on easy-to-read summarizing maps. As noted in Chapter One, the APHA touted its method's translatability to "a small number of maps and charts" as one of its primary advantages.<sup>50</sup> In its May 1950 report on the Lower Hill the CPC, following the APHA's method, summarized its entire analysis on one sheet of paper (Fig. 2.1).<sup>51</sup> Three statistical maps stretched down the sheet in a vertical line. All three maps had the same base street pattern and parameters, but blocks within the maps carried different shading designating their housing, dwelling, or environment quality grades. According to the page's legend, black fill marked "slum" blocks and a crosshatched fill marked "substandard" blocks. In accordance with the APHA's method, the CPC combined each block's dwelling score and environment score to compute an overall housing grade. Visually straight forward and easy to comprehend, the CPC's maps fulfilled the APHA's promise to provide "a summary picture that will be understood by the busy public official or the layman."<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> APHA, *An Appraisal Method . . . Part I*, 15.

<sup>51</sup> Pittsburgh City Planning Commission, *Analysis of Part of the Lower Hill District, 1950*.

<sup>52</sup> APHA, *An Appraisal Method . . . Part I*, 15.

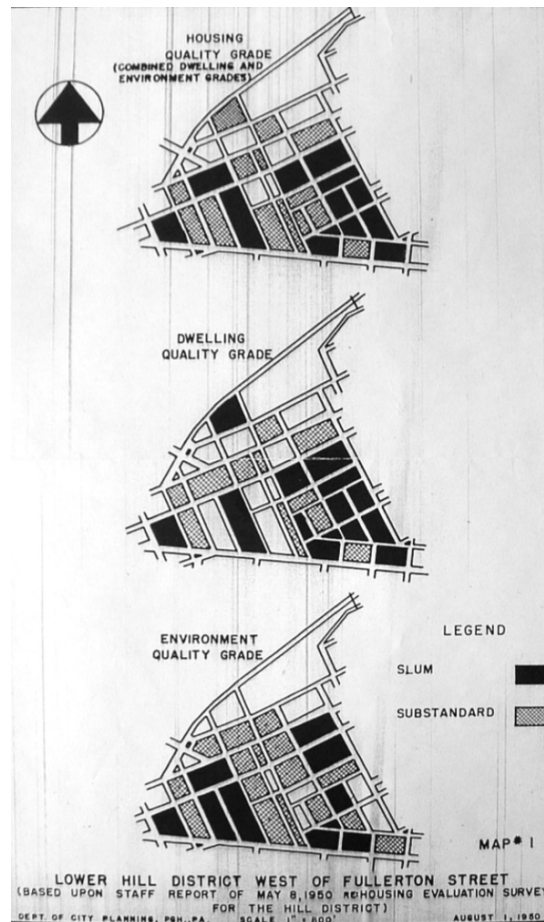


Fig. 2.1 Pittsburgh City Planning Commission, *Analysis of Part of the Lower Hill District*, 1950

The CPC also created more detailed statistical maps that unequivocally attested to the neighborhood's high mixture of land uses, which, to planners and politicians alike, meant "economically or socially undesirable land uses." These verified the Lower Hill's blight and the necessity of redevelopment. The CPC's summarizing maps clearly labeled blocks "slum" or "substandard," but did not elaborate on how or why they qualified as blighted. The CPC provided this elaboration with detailed statistical maps of the Lower Hill's building density and land uses. As noted above, Pennsylvania's urban redevelopment legislation identified "excessive land coverage by buildings" and "economically or socially undesirable land uses" as blight.<sup>53</sup> The CPC's land use map, then, gave what planners considered

<sup>53</sup> *Urban Redevelopment Law, House Bill 1133, Act 385, 1945.*

direct, easy-to-read visual evidence that the Lower Hill qualified as blighted in accordance with the 1945 law. The map broke the Lower Hill's blocks down parcel-by-parcel and, using shades of gray and patterns like thick and thin polka dots, illustrated the first-floor land-use of each parcel (fig 2.2).<sup>54</sup> The CPC's map portrayed the Lower Hill as a motley collection of city blocks divided into visually clashing public, residential, commercial and industrial land uses.



Fig. 2.2 Pittsburgh City Planning Commission, *Analysis of Part of the Lower Hill District*, 1950

Much like the APHA, which used photographs to illustrate blight and suggested using them to promote redevelopment to the public, Pittsburgh's planners and their boosters in the Allegheny Conference photographed on-the-ground examples of the conditions that they believed blighted the Lower Hill. The Conference intended to use these images to mold public opinion about the Lower Hill's redevelopment. The Conference's views on photography formally coalesced in December 1949 when it began formulating plans for a Civic Photographic Center.<sup>55</sup> In its proposal for this Civic Photographic

<sup>54</sup> Pittsburgh City Planning Commission, *Analysis of Part of the Lower Hill District*, 1950.

<sup>55</sup> The Allegheny Conference on Community Development, "Proposal for the Establishment of the Civic Photographic Center Under the Sponsorship of the Allegheny Conference on Community Development," A.W.

Center, the Conference argued that Pittsburgh's citizenry failed to grasp the city's problem, and this ignorance stunted progress because the "implementation and execution" of the Conference's program depended on public "support and participation."<sup>56</sup> This was apparent to the Conference's leaders because even well received programs like the redevelopment of the Point sparked controversy.<sup>57</sup> The Conference wanted a Civic Photographic Center to produce a "documentary photographic record of the Civic Program in its varied stages of progress, from the conditions as they existed, to the preparation of plans, to the demolition of existing structures, to the construction of new facilities."<sup>58</sup>

To further the view that photographs served as unimpeachable evidence of blight, in 1950 the Conference joined with the University of Pittsburgh to create this Civic Photographic Center, which became known as the Pittsburgh Photographic Library (PPL).<sup>59</sup> Initially, the Conference recruited Roy Stryker, the famed director of the New Deal's Farm Security Administration photograph collection, to run the PPL.<sup>60</sup> Under Stryker, PPL photographers such as Clyde Hare, Richard Saunders, Arnold Eagle, and Harold Corsini photographed the Lower Hill and other older neighborhoods. The Conference also collected photographs taken by the City Planning Commission and by local photographers like John Shrader.

The photographs commissioned and collected by the Conference illustrate how the city's redevelopment coalition perceived the Lower Hill and its blight. The CPC photographed evidence of blight in August 1950, the summer it declared the Lower Hill "blighted." To document the

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Mellon Educational and Charitable Trust Records, AIS 80:29, Archives Service Center, University of Pittsburgh, (hereafter referred to as "Mellon Trust Records") Box 56, Folder 1: "University of Pittsburgh, Civic Photographic Library," 1.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> For more on the Point controversy, see Colker, "Gaining Gateway Center" and Alberts, *The Shaping of the Point*. For more on resistance to smoke control, see Mershon, "Corporate Social Responsibility and Urban Revitalization"; Lubove, *Twentieth-Century Pittsburgh*; and Martin, "Narrative of the Allegheny Conference."

<sup>58</sup> Allegheny Conference, "Proposal for the Establishment of the Civic Photographic Center."

<sup>59</sup> Park Martin, "Allegheny Conference Executive Director's Annual Report," 11 September 1950, Park Martin Papers, Archives Service Center, University of Pittsburgh, AIS 71:16 Box 1 Folder 5: "Executive Director Annual Reports 1946-1950."

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

neighborhood's building density, the CPC photographed rear-yards shared by housing along Bedford Avenue, Fullerton Street and Gilmore Way (Fig. 2.3).<sup>61</sup> Brick buildings dominated the image, dwarfing and encroaching on the rear yards, the scene's only open space. Worse yet, no grass graced the rear yards and laundry lines, barrels and scraps of wood further cluttered the space. In 1956, the Conference hired John Shrader, a local photographer, to document the Lower Hill's blight. Shrader's photographs attested to the Lower Hill's building density, mixed land use, and dilapidation. Shrader captured all three of these indices of blight in a single photograph of the intersection of Logan and Colwell Streets (fig. 2.4).<sup>62</sup> A poultry market midway up Logan signified both a non-residential nuisance, as defined by the APHA's *Appraisal Method*, and mixed land use. The scene also showed a densely built-up block with buildings side-by-side, no open spaces, and no open spaces or greenery. Finally, the three-story building with discarded and boarded up windows filled the right side of the frame, testifying to the age and dilapidation of the Lower Hill's built environment.



Fig. 2.3 Pittsburgh City Planning Commission, *Lower Hill Photo No. E-1- August 1, 1950 Looking east on rear yards of dwellings facing Bedford, Fullerton and Gilmore*



Fig. 2.4 John Shrader, *Logan Street at Colwell Street, looking NW on Logan*

<sup>61</sup> Pittsburgh City Planning Commission, *Lower Hill Photo No. E-1- August 1, 1950 Looking east on rear yards of dwellings facing Bedford, Fullerton and Gilmore*, Allegheny Conference On Community Development (Pittsburgh, Pa.), Photographs, 1920-1993, MSP 285, The Detre Library and Archives, Senator John Heinz History Center, Pittsburgh (hereafter referred to as Conference Photographs) Box 33, folder 6: "Lower Hill Before Demolition."

<sup>62</sup> John Shrader, *Logan Street at Colwell Street, looking NW on Logan*, October 1956, negative number 15225-7. Conference Photographs, Box 33, Folder 5: "Lower Hill—Before Demolition."



The Conference also collected and commissioned photographs of housing that exemplified its comprehensively planned residential ideal. John Shrader photographed both the Terrace Village and Bedford Dwellings public housing projects for the Conference. A 1951 Shrader image of Bedford Dwellings, for example, exclusively demonstrated its uniform architectural organization, serene traffic pattern, and open spaces (Fig. 2.5).<sup>63</sup> Taken from across a broad street reserved for the project's traffic flow and parking, Shrader's Bedford Dwellings image showed six uniform three-story brick buildings in tidy, parallel lines. Open green spaces landscaped with bushes and fledgling trees separated the buildings. An image by PPL photographer, Clyde Hare, similarly represented a street in a planned suburban community (Fig. 2.6).<sup>64</sup> Hare's photograph looked across a quiet residential street at a row of houses. Although not identical, the houses sat at evenly spaced, parallel intervals. They shared similar designs and were photographed from an angle that underscored their similarity. Vast lawns stood between every home and the street. All of the houses shared the same setback distance and the same sized lawns. Shrader's images of public housing and Hare's photograph of a planned residential community exemplified the uniform designs, quiet traffic flow, and open spaces acclaimed by local and national planners.

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<sup>63</sup> Shrader, *Bedford Dwellings*, September 1951, print number, 5728-8, Conference Photographs, Box 29, Folder 27: "Housing-Public, Bedford Dwellings c. 1940-1955."

<sup>64</sup> Clyde Hare, *Housing down the street from Wallace School*. August 1951, print number 6569, Conference Photographs, Box 30, Folder 9: "Housing—Residential Scenes—Housing Plans—Neighborhoods."



Fig. 2.5 John Shrader, *Bedford Dwellings*, September, 1951



Fig. 2.6 Clyde Hare, *Housing down the street from Wallace School*

In addition to documenting planners' housing ideal, PPL photographers like Hare also took promotional "progress pictures" that encapsulated the Conference's Renaissance narrative. To illustrate the success of smoke control, one of the Conference's first campaigns, Clyde Hare spotlighted the contrast between the city's grimy past and sparkling present by photographing downtown's Oliver Building (Fig. 2.7).<sup>65</sup> Two workers standing on scaffolding cleaned the building. The brickwork above them gleamed clean and bright in stark contrast to the murky dark bricks beneath them that signified the building's filthy past. In a single photograph, Hare provided before-and-after evidence that the Conference had the ability re-make the city. Hare's view of Point Park's demolition and Gateway Center's construction suggested a similar narrative (Fig. 2.8).<sup>66</sup> Hare foregrounded the single remaining brick wall of a demolished Point building. Rubble from the Point's demolition appeared through the wall's two windows and the ragged top of the brick wall gave way to one of Gateway Center's buildings under construction. To the right, two of Gateway Center's nearly finished silver-colored buildings

<sup>65</sup> Clyde Hare, *Downtown: Cleaning the Exterior of the Oliver Building*, 1951, Carnegie Museum of Art Collection of Photographs, 1894-1958, Carnegie Museum of Art, 85.4.71.

<sup>66</sup> Clyde Hare, *Demolition of Old Buildings and Gateway Center Construction*, 1951, Carnegie Museum of Art Collection of Photographs, 1894-1958, Carnegie Museum of Art, 1998.52.10.

spotlighted the city's metallic future. The eye moves in accordance with the Conference's "progress pictures" narrative: demolished brick walls lead to new construction which culminates in Gateway Center's shiny architectural splendor.

IMAGE UNAVAILABLE  
DUE TO COPYRIGHT

Fig. 2.7 Clyde Hare, *Downtown: Cleaning the Exterior of the Oliver Building*, 1951, Carnegie Museum of Art Collection of Photographs, 1894-1958, Carnegie Museum of Art, 85.4.71.

IMAGE UNAVAILABLE  
DUE TO COPYRIGHT

Fig. 2.8 Clyde Hare, *Demolition of Old Buildings and Gateway Center Construction*, 1951, Carnegie Museum of Art Collection of Photographs, 1894-1958, Carnegie Museum of Art, 85.4.71.

Architectural splendor also dominated the models created by Mitchell and Ritchey, the architects of the Lower Hill Redevelopment. In 1947 the Pittsburgh Regional Planning Association (PRPA) commissioned architects Mitchell and Ritchey to draft the "The Pittsburgh Center," a massive civic and cultural center to replace the Lower Hill. Mitchell and Ritchey created architectural sketches and models to illustrate and promote their "Pittsburgh Center" design, including an aerial black-and-white sketch that represented the redeveloped Lower Hill as an abstracted future promising technological awe. Instead of orienting their sketch along a North/South axis, Mitchell and Ritchey oriented it along a geographically arbitrary axis that spotlighted the project's circular all-purpose auditorium (Fig. 2.9).<sup>67</sup> Here, the Lower Hill's Fullerton Street replaced north, and downtown stood in place of south. Wylie and Bedford Avenues ran to the left and right of the auditorium like outstretched robotic arms connecting Fullerton to downtown. The auditorium boasted a space-age appearance. Circular like a flying saucer, the sketched auditorium included concentric circles and slight shadowing to indicate multiple tiers. Besides the circles and shading, no color or patterning cluttered the auditorium. The sketch's planned streets appeared as clean white ribbons laid across the neighborhood with geometrical precision. Outside of the redevelopment area, Mitchell and Ritchey left the city's blocks blank.

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<sup>67</sup> Mitchell and Ritchey Executive Architects, *The Pittsburgh Center*, Conference Photographs, Box 33, Folder 8: "The Pittsburgh Center, 1947 Proposal."

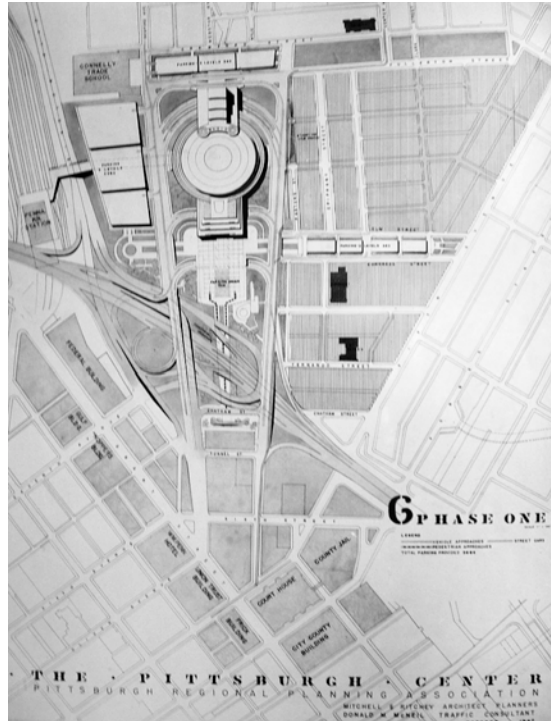


Fig 2.9 Mitchell and Ritchey, *The Pittsburgh Center*

For their 1953 Lower Hill Redevelopment proposal, Mitchell and Ritchey produced four architectural sketches that promised the Lower Hill redevelopment would exemplify technological and futuristic awe. The proposal included two black and white aerial graphics. One superimposed the architects' plan on top of a photograph of the Lower Hill and surrounding environs (fig. 2.10).<sup>68</sup> The urban spaces bordering the proposed redevelopment, such as the eastern edge of downtown and the hillside housing along the Monongahela River, remained unaltered, lending the scene's edges a sense of photographic realism. The superimposed rendering of the Lower Hill redevelopment, in contrast, appeared abstract, like a science fiction comic book. The entire redevelopment area appeared flattened, like a giant plateau of cutting-edge architectural technology grafted onto the hilly city. The circular arena in the middle of the sketch resembled a flying saucer or space station. The project's proposed roads,

<sup>68</sup> Mitchell and Ritchey Executive Architects, *Lower Hill Cultural Center Urban Redevelopment Area No. 3: Land Use Study*, Western Pennsylvania Historical Society, Call #: fff 159.68 H645 M5 1953.

including the Crosstown Expressway, which ultimately ran in between downtown and the Hill, radiated out from the center like polished metal arms. Superimposing this idealized vision of redevelopment on top of a photograph blended photographic realism with redevelopers' promise that demolition would facilitate futuristic awe.



Fig. 2.10 Mitchell and Ritchey, *Lower Hill Cultural Center Urban Redevelopment Area No. 3*

For their second aerial sketch, Mitchell and Ritchey eschewed photographic realism and drew the whole scene in an abstract black and white style that used flattened tones to emphasize the plan's clean lines and futurism (Fig. 2.11).<sup>69</sup> Drawn with its roof retracted, the arena, yet again, resembled a flying saucer or a giant robotic spider with steel legs. The project's proposed commercial and residential buildings surrounded the arena. Arranged spaciouly in tidy parallel lines, the artist drew the design's Garden apartments with clean lines. Barely shaded, the proposed buildings are gleaming white blocks, especially compared to the dark gray used to fill the spacious yards surrounding each building. Conversely, the artist drew downtown's buildings, which crowded in on the scene's top left corner, with lopsided lines and gray crosshatched surfaces. Beyond downtown a gray muddle hung over the Strip

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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

District like a fog. The graphic distinguished the gray mottled old city with the clean lines and sharp contrasts of the Lower Hill's city of the future.

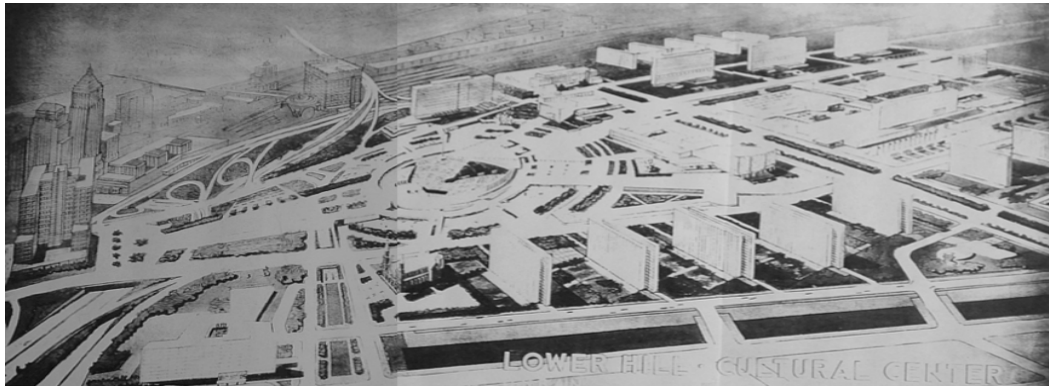


Fig. 2.11 Mitchell and Ritchey, *Lower Hill Cultural Center Urban Redevelopment Area No. 3*

The other two sketches in Mitchell and Ritchey's proposal took a more whimsical approach, using lighter lines and shading to highlight the arena from dramatic angles. The plan's aerial sketches showed the Lower Hill redevelopment as a flat futuristic plateau. These close up, stylized renderings of the arena, on the other hand, emphasized the city's rolling landscape. One looked slightly uphill at the arena with its retractable roof fully open (Fig. 2.12).<sup>70</sup> Without its domed roof, the arena nestled into the landscape like a giant bowl dug out of the gently rolling hill. To the arena's left, landscaped rectangles of trees ascended uphill. On the top of the Hill, large white buildings loomed on the left side of the scene. A building with multi-leveled roofs jutting at striking angles sat on the right. Open sky filled the rest of the frame. Another similarly styled sketch showed the arena from the opposite side. This vantage point peered slightly downhill. The shrub-lined roadway to the right of the arena gracefully dipped along with the landscape. Again, clear sky filled over half of the composition. These images embedded the project's futuristic architecture in a natural landscape. Seen at ground level, the city of the future promised to be spacious and harmonious.

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

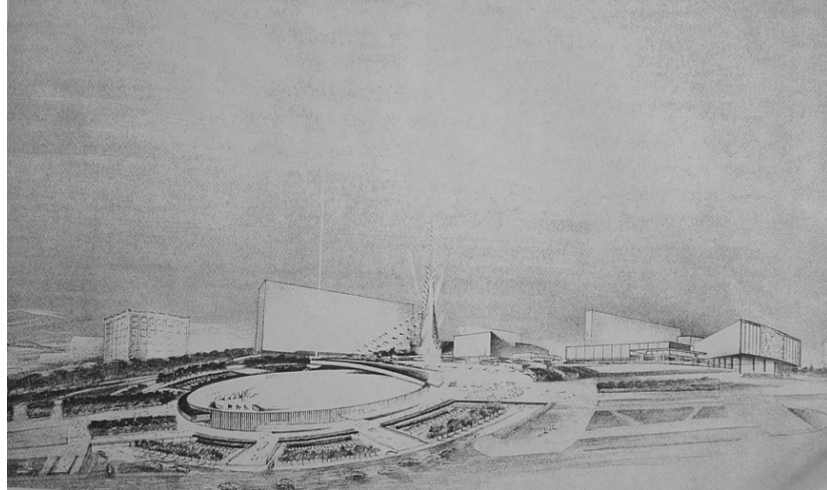


Fig. 2.12 Mitchell and Ritchey, *Lower Hill Cultural Center Urban Redevelopment Area No. 3*

Mitchell and Ritchey also used models to illustrate and promote the architectural splendor of their Lower Hill Redevelopment design. The models add another dimension to the viewer's experience, making it easier to understand the planner's vision. Photographed by the Allegheny Conference, the model featured the arena with its roof aglow and with miniature trees in tidily arranged rows radiating outward (Fig. 2.13).<sup>71</sup> The plan's other building, including three uniform garden apartments arranged at parallel angles, neatly surrounded the arena. Beyond the redevelopment plan, the Lower Hill's blocks sat empty and open, but colored with matte fill. When the model was photographed, the photographer placed the light source across the model from the camera. As a result, the model's tiny trees cast miniscule shadows, simulating a connection to the natural world. Rendered in three-dimensional form with great attention to detail, this model made the promise of redevelopment, including its spaciousness, space-age architecture, and tidiness, a concrete future reality.

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<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.* Photograph from The Allegheny Conference on Community Development, *The Allegheny Conference on Community Development Presents . . . Pittsburgh!*, Allegheny Conference of Community Development Collection (hereafter called "Allegheny Conference Collection"), 1944-1993, AIS.1973.04, Archives Service Center, University of Pittsburgh, Box 7, Folder 86, 13.



Fig. 2.13 Mitchell and Ritchey, *Lower Hill Cultural Center Urban Redevelopment Area No. 3*

## 2.4 VISUALS AND THE BLIND SPOTS IN PLANNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE LOWER HILL

The maps, photographs, and models of the Lower Hill produced by Pittsburgh's redevelopment coalition show how redevelopers perceived the Lower Hill, including their blind spots and biases. The statistical maps created by the CPC and URA obscured the criteria used by the CPC to designate the Lower Hill as blighted and by the URA to plot the Lower Hill's redevelopment. By lending authority to redevelopers' criticism of historic urban conditions like heterogeneous land use, these maps illustrate how thoroughly Pittsburgh's planners embraced the national planning paradigm's definitions of blight. The photographs commissioned and collected by the Conference, meanwhile, made the neighborhood appear ramshackle and desolate. Images of commercial streets focused on the streets and intersections, ignoring the businesses, churches, and institutions that lined them. Residential images showed neighborhood buildings from rear yards and alleyways, hiding the street-front perspective residents groomed for public view. Signifiers of blight like laundry lines, oil drums, discarded wood and empty window frames consistently appeared in these images, but residents rarely did, which made the neighborhood appear



trashy and desolate. Some images included residents, but kept them on the margins to focus on streets and intersections. The technical sketches and models created by the architects commissioned to design the Lower Hill's redevelopment replaced the Lower Hill's people and history with an arena made to look like a spaceship nestled into a tidy landscaped Eden and abstracted from the rest of the city.

The page of maps created by the CPC to summarize its analysis of the Lower Hill's blight and housing quality achieved a straightforward and easy-to-read simplicity. But the CPC's maps also buried the complexity of its analysis, including the conditions the CPC measured to designate blight (see Fig. 2.1).<sup>72</sup> From these maps, a casual viewer would have no idea what conditions the CPC measured to define blocks as "slum" or "substandard." The APHA method uncovered, quantified, and penalized unsanitary housing conditions such as outdoor toilets, but its method also gave high penalties to mixed land use, which residents often perceived as beneficial. In the CPC's survey, a dwelling sharing its sidewalk with a billiards parlor and a bakery would get penalized for sitting on a mixed-use block, for fronting on a commercial street, and for being near a "moral nuisance," such as a pool hall,<sup>73</sup> and a "nuisance producing industry," such as a bakery.<sup>74</sup> On the map, this triple penalty would have shown up simply as a darkened pattern with no indication why. If readers searched the CPC's written summary of its analysis to discover what conditions and criteria separated "slum" from "good," the CPC referred them to the APHA's *Appraisal Method*, a step casual readers were unlikely to take.<sup>75</sup> The CPC's maps, then, muted any debate over the disadvantages and advantages of living in a mixed-use neighborhood.

The way the CPC designed its map, specifically its decision to flatten its broad score range into blackened "slum" blocks and crosshatched "substandard" blocks, also obscured the range of conditions in the Lower Hill. The CPC's maps marked "slum" and "substandard" blocks but left "good to excellent,"

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<sup>72</sup> Pittsburgh City Planning Commission, *Analysis of Part of the Lower Hill District*, 1950.

<sup>73</sup> APHA, *An Appraisal Method . . . Part III*, 59.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>75</sup> Pittsburgh City Planning Commission, "Staff Report—Department of City Planning: Housing Evaluation on Program for parts of Housing Evaluation Districts 1, 4, and 5," 8 May 1950, City Planning Records, Box 5, Folder 6: "Analysis of Part of the Lower Hill District, 1950," 2.

“generally acceptable” and “intermediate” blocks blank.<sup>76</sup> In terms of the Lower Hill’s dwelling score, only five blocks rated “good to excellent” and “generally acceptable,” while nineteen rated “intermediate,” but the neighborhood’s environmental scores indicated more nuance. Seventeen of the ninety blocks studied, or just over eighteen percent, rated “good to excellent” and “generally acceptable” while twenty-seven rated “intermediate.”<sup>77</sup> Indeed, the Lower Hill’s environmental score averaged out to 59 or “intermediate.”<sup>78</sup> A map specifying which blocks enjoyed “good to excellent” or “generally acceptable” environmental scores or clarifying that the Lower Hill averaged out to an “intermediate” score on average would have made a less convincing argument for full-scale demolition and redevelopment than maps marking only “substandard” and “slum” blocks.

This simplification actually went against the APHA’s intended use for its method, which advocated using the environmental score to clarify which neighborhoods should be rehabilitated for residential use and which should be demolished and redeveloped for industrial or commercial uses. The APHA argued that neighborhoods with intermediate and substandard environmental scores should be residentially rehabilitated or further analyzed and dealt with on a case-by-case basis.<sup>79</sup> The APHA only deemed neighborhoods with the lowest slum environmental designation unsuitable for residential use.<sup>80</sup>

As noted above, the Lower Hill’s environmental score averaged out to 59, or “intermediate,” which should have pushed planners towards further analysis or housing rehabilitation rather than total demolition.<sup>81</sup> Indeed, the APHA argued that “[w]here dwelling conditions are poor but environment good, there is usually an indication that rehousing can proceed with a minimum of difficulty.”<sup>82</sup> A glance at the CPC’s environmental quality grade map not only obscured the Lower Hill’s intermediate rating,

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<sup>76</sup> Pittsburgh City Planning Commission, *Analysis of Part of the Lower Hill District, 1950*.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> Pittsburgh City Planning Commission, “Staff Report . . . Districts 1, 4, and 5.”

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> APHA, *An Appraisal Method . . . Part III*, 94.

<sup>81</sup> Pittsburgh City Planning Commission, “Staff Report . . . Districts 1, 4, and 5.”

<sup>82</sup> APHA, *An Appraisal Method . . . Part I*, 36.

but also failed to acknowledge that such a score actually suggested rehabilitation or further analysis instead of full-scale demolition.

The CPC's maps, meanwhile, visually marked arguably beneficial urban qualities, such as mixed land use and building density, as detriments. As noted above, the CPC's land use map broke the Lower Hill's blocks down parcel-by-parcel and used shades and patterns to illustrate the first-floor land use of each parcel (see fig 2.2).<sup>83</sup> The blocks that had been united into "slum" or "substandard" grades in the summarizing map now appeared shot through with thin polka dots for residential use, thick polka dots for public use, and gray shading for commercial and industrial uses. This parcel-by-parcel breakdown into visually busy and clashing patterns represented the Lower Hill's mix of residential and commercial land uses as visually chaotic. For the redevelopers, these land-use patterns documented the need for urban renewal as they defined it. For many residents, however, living on blocks with residences and commercial establishments provided economic opportunities, a vibrant social life, and safe sidewalks and streets. The CPC's land use maps, then, lent visual authority to planners' questionable equation of mixed land use with blight.

The redeveloped Lower Hill, according to a proposed land use map created by the CPC and URA in 1955, promised spaciousness, order, and a reconnection to nature. Like its 1950 predecessor, the 1955 proposed land-use map used patterns to demarcate different land uses (Fig. 2.14).<sup>84</sup> In 1950, the CPC chose heavy and visually cluttered patterns, such as dense thick and thin polka dots, to illustrate the Lower Hill's mixed land use. In 1955 the CPC and URA chose tidy, spacious, and idyllic patterns to illustrate the land uses they proposed for the Lower Hill's redevelopment. Tidy diagonal lines marked land set aside for parking and crosshatching running along vertical and horizontal axes designated new residential blocks. Thin and sparsely arrayed polka dots marked cultural, recreational, and educational

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<sup>83</sup> Pittsburgh City Planning Commission, *Analysis of Part of the Lower Hill District, 1950*.

<sup>84</sup> Pittsburgh City Planning Commission, *Redevelopment Area Plan for Redevelopment Area # 3*, 7 June 1955, Allegheny Conference Records, Box 231, Folder 10, 26.

spaces, while a sprinkling of light gray dots symbolized new commercial blocks. Finally, the design included “open areas,” which the map indicated with a pattern of tiny bushes. The Lower Hill represented in the 1950 map included open areas, but the CPC marked them with blank space as vacant land or heavy polka dots as public spaces. The arena, as the project’s star attraction, sat in the center of the map represented by a swath of thin polka dots. The CPC and URA planned a single land use for each of the large blocks surrounding the arena. The blocks immediately to the arena’s south bore cross-hatching to signify uninterrupted residential land use. The spacious, orderly, and naturalistic patterning chosen for the map argued for the inherent superiority of homogenous land use regardless of whether city residents enjoyed heterogeneous neighborhoods.



Fig. 2.14 Pittsburgh City Planning Commission, *Redevelopment Area Plan for Redevelopment Area # 3*

The photographs commissioned and collected by the Allegheny Conference focused on the neighborhood’s least flattering scenes and angles.<sup>85</sup> Taken in August 1950, the summer the CPC declared

<sup>85</sup> The CPC did not accompany their official analysis of the Lower Hill with any photographs, but the APHA’s *Appraisal Method*, which the CPC followed in its Lower Hill analysis, suggested that planners’ use

the Lower Hill “blighted,” the CPC’s photographs included visual symbols of blight like rubbish and laundry lines. The CPC photographed three Lower Hill buildings at street level from rear-yards<sup>86</sup> or narrow alleyways,<sup>87</sup> a perspective that ignored the front of neighborhood buildings, the view residents consciously groomed for public view. Focusing on rear yards and alleyways showed clutter that would not have appeared on main streets. Lines of laundry stretched across two of the CPC’s photographs: one of rear yards facing Bedford, Gilmore, and Fullerton (see Fig. 2.3),<sup>88</sup> and one looking down Gilmore Way from Elm Street (Fig. 2.15).<sup>89</sup> The rear yard photograph also included oil drums and woodpiles. Residents intended to keep such examples of back-yard clutter invisible from the street, but these photographs thrust them into prominence.



Fig. 2.15 Pittsburgh City Planning Commission, C-8 Looking west on Gilmore Way from Elm St.

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photographs as illustrative evidence of housing grades.<sup>85</sup> The CPC, then, likely photographed the Lower Hill for this purpose.

<sup>86</sup> Pittsburgh City Planning Commission, *Lower Hill Photo No. E-1- August 1, 1950 Looking east on rear yards of dwellings facing Bedford, Fullerton and Gilmore*, Conference Photographs, Box 33, Folder 6: “Lower Hill Before Demolition.”

<sup>87</sup> Pittsburgh City Planning Commission, *A-10 Looking south on Yuba Way from McCook Way*, Conference Photographs, Box 33, Folder 6: “Lower Hill Before Demolition” and Pittsburgh City Planning Commission, *C-8 Looking west on Gilmore Way from Elm St*, n.d., Conference Photographs, Box 33, Folder 6: “Lower Hill Before Demolition.”

<sup>88</sup> Pittsburgh City Planning Commission, *Lower Hill Photo No. E-1- August 1, 1950 Looking east on rear yards of dwellings facing Bedford, Fullerton and Gilmore*.

<sup>89</sup> Pittsburgh City Planning Commission, *C-8 Looking west on Gilmore Way from Elm St*.

The Allegheny Conference also commissioned photographs from the Pittsburgh Photographic Library that showed houses from rear yards and foregrounded signifiers of blight. The Conference collected many of these photographs for a sub-collection it labeled “slums.”<sup>90</sup> An Arnold Eagle image of a backyard off Charles Street on the North Side, for example, focused on a discarded armchair (Fig. 2.16).<sup>91</sup> Eagle photographed the chair upturned with its springs and stuffing exposed. A low cement wall stretched behind the chair. Behind that wall, children sat in two opened doorways. Laundry lines stretching from the building to the concrete wall framed both doors. In another image of the same yards, Eagle cut out the discarded chair but photographed laundry lines so that they completely framed the children and their yard (Fig. 2.17).<sup>92</sup> Both images focused on rear yards and foregrounded signifiers of blight.



Fig. 2.16 Arnold Eagle, *North Side: Back yard on Charles Street*



Fig. 2.17 Arnold Eagle, *Housing: Back yards of houses on Charles Street on North Side*

<sup>90</sup> The Conference collected a number of PPL photographs into a collection it labeled “slums.” Conference Photographs, Box 30, Folder 10: “Slums.”

<sup>91</sup> Arnold Eagle, *North Side: Back yard on Charles Street*, September 1950, negative no. 2674, Conference Photographs, Box 30, Folder 10: “Slums.”

<sup>92</sup> Eagle, *Housing: Back yards of houses on Charles Street on North Side*, September 1950, negative number 2612, Conference Photographs, Box 30, Folder 10: “Slums.”

John Shrader also photographed the Lower Hill for the Conference in October 1956. Shrader's images, like the CPC's and PPL's, featured alleyways and other symbols of blight. The Conference entitled the series "The Lower Hill—Before Demolition" even though Shrader took the photographs five months after the Lower Hill's demolition got underway. Two of Shrader's photographs, following the CPC's lead, showed the Lower Hill's buildings from alleyways.<sup>93</sup> Shrader also photographed narrow Lower Hill side streets. In a photograph of Pasture Street near its intersection with Townsend, the right side of the narrow brick street ended at a patch of weeds that stretched up a brick wall (fig. 2.18).<sup>94</sup> A pile of discarded wood sat on the left side of Pasture. This image also included a signifier of blight favored by Shrader but not captured by the CPC or PPL. Three gaping window frames marred the first building on the right. A few blocks away on Logan Street, Shrader foregrounded empty window frames again (see fig. 2.4).<sup>95</sup> Two wooden barrels sat on the sidewalk in front of the windowless building. Indeed, that October, Shrader included wooden barrels,<sup>96</sup> cast-off wooden palates,<sup>97</sup> discarded appliances and wrecked construction vehicles,<sup>98</sup> all effective signifiers of blight, in his Lower Hill photographs.

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<sup>93</sup> Shrader, *Calibant Way at Fullerton Street, looking west on Calibant Way*, October 1956, negative number 15225-4, and *Our Way at Elm Street looking east on Our Way*, October 1956 negative number 15225-5, Conference Photographs, Box 33, Folder 5: "Lower Hill—Before Demolition."

<sup>94</sup> Shrader, *Pasture Street at Townsend Street looking west on Pasture*, negative number 15225-1. Conference Photographs, Box 33, Folder 5: "Lower Hill—Before Demolition."

<sup>95</sup> Shrader, *Logan Street at Colwell Street, looking NW on Logan*, negative number 15225-7.

<sup>96</sup> Shrader, *Logan Street at Colwell Street, looking NW on Logan*, and *Calibant Way at Fullerton Street, looking west on Calibant Way*, negative number 15225-4, Conference Photographs, Box 33, Folder 5: "Lower Hill—Before Demolition."

<sup>97</sup> Shrader, *Our Way at Elm Street looking east on Our Way*, negative number 15225-5, Conference Photographs, Box 33, Folder 5: "Lower Hill—Before Demolition."

<sup>98</sup> Shrader, *Shomin Street at Hazel Street, looking SE on Shomin toward Cowell St*, negative number 15225-10, Conference Photographs, Box 33, Folder 5: "Lower Hill—Before Demolition."



Fig. 2.18 John Shrader, *Pasture Street at Townsend Street looking west on Pasture*

Not all of the Conference's photographs of the Lower Hill spotlighted blight, but none of its photographs highlighted the Lower Hill's people or social institutions. The CPC photographed Chatham Street from its intersection with Wylie Avenue (fig. 2.19).<sup>99</sup> The shot's angle directs the viewer's eye down the left side of Chatham where a parked car blocked out the receding curb line. This compressed line of vision made it impossible to see the buildings on the left side of this street, including a YWCA halfway down the block. The caption attached to the back of the archival print added "YWCA on left" to its basic street description: "Looking south on Chatham St. from Wylie Ave.," but no other photographs in the Conference's "Lower Hill—Before Demolition" collection named neighborhood landmarks. Instead, both the CPC and Shrader titled and captioned their photographs with street names.<sup>100</sup> While photographing the intersection of Wylie Avenue and Fullerton Street, Shrader captured two local

<sup>99</sup> Pittsburgh City Planning Commission, *A-7 Looking south on Chatham Street from Wylie Ave. YWCA on left*, Conference Photographs, Box 33, Folder 6: "Lower Hill Before Demolition."

<sup>100</sup> For example, Pittsburgh City Planning Commission: *B-7 Looking east on Webster Ave from Washington St*, *Looking east on Wylie Avenue from Tunnel St.*, and *Looking south on Logan St. from Pasture St*, Conference Photographs, Box 33, Folder 6: "Lower Hill Before Demolition" and John Shrader, *Fullerton Street at Clark Street, looking south on Fullerton*, 15225-2, *Fullerton at Wylie, looking SE on Fullerton*, 15225-9, *Logan Street at Hazel Street, Looking SE on Logan toward Colwell Street*, 15225-13, Conference Photographs, Box 33, Folder 5: "Lower Hill—Before Demolition."



institutions, the Crawford Grill and Ma Pitts restaurant (Fig. 2.20).<sup>101</sup> The caption affixed to Shrader's archival print gave no indication of Ma Pitts as a local celebrity<sup>102</sup> or the international celebrities, like Louis Armstrong, who patronized the Crawford Grill.<sup>103</sup> Instead, Shrader's caption simply listed streets: "Wylie near Fullerton looking west on Wylie towards downtown."<sup>104</sup> This emphasis on intersections rather than institutions supported the redevelopers' views that demolishing the neighborhood would have no social costs.



Fig. 2.19 Pittsburgh City Planning Commission, A-7 Looking south on Chatham Street from Wylie Ave. YWCA on left



Fig. 2.20 John Shrader, *Wylie near Fullerton looking west on Wylie towards downtown*

The Lower Hill's people rarely appeared in the CPC's and Shrader's archived photographs. When residents did appear, they were incidental distractions from the images' main subjects: streets and intersections. The CPC's rear-yard photograph (See fig. 2.3) and Shrader's photograph of Pasture and

<sup>101</sup> John Shrader, *Wylie near Fullerton looking west on Wylie towards downtown*, 15225-3, Conference Photographs, Box 33, Folder 5: "Lower Hill—Before Demolition."

<sup>102</sup> "Last Rites Held for 'Ma Pitts' Tuesday," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, 17 January 1959, 1.

<sup>103</sup> Charles "Teenie" Harris, *Two men, including Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong, on left, and woman with drinks, in booth in Crawford Grill No. 1*, c. 1940-1950, accession number: 2001.35.6360. Carnegie Museum of Art Charles "Teenie" Harris Collection. I discuss Shrader's and Harris's photographs of the Crawford Grill in greater detail in Chapter Four.

<sup>104</sup> John Shrader, *Wylie near Fullerton looking west on Wylie towards downtown*, 15225-3, Conference Photographs, Box 33, Folder 5: "Lower Hill—Before Demolition."

Townsend Street (see fig 2.17) made the Lower Hill appear desolate. The rear-yard image included signs of habitation, like hung laundry, but both scenes look like freshly deserted ghost towns.

The Conference's archive contains fifteen Shrader photographs and eight CPC photographs. Four of Shrader's images<sup>105</sup> and four of the CPC's images<sup>106</sup> included no residents. The rest of the collection's images relegated residents to the background or periphery. A CPC photograph of Wylie Avenue as it ran east from Logan Street centered the leftward half of Wylie, including trolley tracks, the cobblestone street, and parked cars (Fig. 2.21).<sup>107</sup> Wylie hosted the neighborhood's main commercial strip, so residents occasionally seeped into the scene. On the frame's leftward edge, a man crossed the street. Beyond him a woman and a toddler stood in front of a barbershop. Window shoppers and pedestrians faded into the background. Shrader's images similarly marginalized residents. His photograph of the intersection of Clark and Fullerton shows the street largely deserted (Fig. 2.22).<sup>108</sup> Across the intersection, however, two small spots of white—the white skirt and white jacket of two people resting beneath an awning—attest to the difficulty of photographing the Lower Hill's streets without its social life. However, emphasis belonged on the cars, streets, houses; people were incidental.

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<sup>105</sup> Shrader, *Pasture Street at Townsend Street looking west on Pasture*, 15225-1, *Calibant Way at Fullerton Street, looking west on Calibant Way*, 15225-4, *Our Way at Elm Street looking east on Our Way*, 15225-5, *Looking north on Elm Street (left), and east on Clark street (right)*, 15225-6, Conference Photographs, Box 33, Folder 5: "Lower Hill—Before Demolition."

<sup>106</sup> Pittsburgh City Planning Commission, *Lower Hill Photo No. E-1- August 1, 1950 Looking east on rear yards of dwellings facing Bedford, Fullerton and Gilmore*, C-8 *Looking west on Gilmore Way from Elm St*, A-3 *Looking east on Wylie Avenue from Tunnel St.*, A-7 *Looking south on Chatham St. from Wylie Avenue YWCA on Left*, Conference Photographs, Box 33, Folder 6: "Lower Hill Before Demolition."

<sup>107</sup> Pittsburgh City Planning Commission, *Looking east on Wylie from Logan Street*, Conference Photographs, Box 33, Folder 6: "Lower Hill Before Demolition."

<sup>108</sup> Shrader, *Fullerton Street at Clark Street, looking south on Fullerton*, 15225-2. Conference Photographs, Box 33, Folder 5: "Lower Hill—Before Demolition."



Fig. 2.21 Pittsburgh City Planning Commission, *Looking east on Wylie from Logan Street*



Fig. 2.22 John Shrader, *Fullerton Street at Clark Street, looking south on Fullerton*

Children appeared in photographs taken by the CPC and the PPL, but their presence usually argued that the Lower Hill and other older neighborhoods provided hostile environments for childhood. One of the CPC's Lower Hill photographs foregrounded a child (Fig. 2.23).<sup>109</sup> Like the CPC's other photographs, this one bore a caption describing the street: "Looking South on Yuba Way from McCook Way" and the narrow cobblestone alleyway ran down the center of the composition. The alley narrowed as it stretched toward the background. Two children played far down in the narrower section of the alley and the foregrounded child stood forlornly next to a tricycle. The alleyway's narrowness and the solemn child suggested that the Hill's narrow streets stunted childhood play. Rather than animating the scene with social vibrancy, the child and tricycle made an emotionally evocative argument for clearance. Photographs taken by the PPL's Arnold Eagle similarly condemned slums' damage to childhood. One Eagle image showed the bottom half of four row houses and the dirt alleyway that directly bordered

<sup>109</sup> Pittsburgh City Planning Commission, *A-10 Looking south on Yuba Way from McCook Way*, Conference Photographs, Box 33, Folder 6: "Lower Hill Before Demolition."

their wooden stairways and porches (Fig 2.24).<sup>110</sup> A toddler in all-white clothing stood on the porch closest to the camera staring into an open doorway. A slightly older child stood in the dirt alleyway wearing a short jumper and dark shoes. Dirt covered the seat of his pants. Standing in the road, an easy victim for speeding cars, and wearing evidence of playing in dirt, this child visually symbolized redevelopers' belief that slums endangered childhood.



Fig. 2.23 Pittsburgh City Planning Commission, *A-10 Looking south on Yuba Way from McCook Way*



Fig. 2.24 Arnold Eagle, *Slum District*

The compositional choices photographers like Shrader deployed when documenting the Lower Hill seem strikingly intentional when compared to their photographs of idealized new housing. Before commissioning John Shrader to photograph the Lower Hill amidst its demolition, the Conference hired him to photograph new housing developments. Shrader's Lower Hill photographs focused on the neighborhood's alleyways and intersections, and pushed residents to the margins. When Shrader photographed a row of single-family homes, the houses, their manicured lawns, and the scenes of

<sup>110</sup> Arnold Eagle, *Slum District*, number 2163, September 1950, Conference Photographs, Box 30, Folder 10: "Slums." The Eagle photographs discussed above (see Figs 2.16 and 2.17) included signifiers of blight like laundry lines and an upturned and torn-up chair, but they also included children. Sitting in the background, motionless on cement steps framed by open doorways, the children appear confounded by their environment.

childhood they fostered took up a majority of the composition (Fig 2.25).<sup>111</sup> Instead of the still, forlorn, and soiled children photographed in older neighborhoods, Shrader's suburban scene included two boys playing and a young girl watching from a nearby step. The photograph argued that the suburb's homogeneous land-use and low building density, unlike the Lower Hill's narrow alleyways, facilitated safe, wholesome, and joyful childhood play.



Fig. 2.25 John Shrader, no title.

The compositional choices made by Shrader, the CPC, and some PPL photographers to emphasize the Lower Hill's blight also seem strikingly intentional when compared to PPL photographs that aimed to convey a "social responsibility" theme. Indeed, many of the PPL photographs taken under Roy Stryker's direction prioritized "social responsibility" over redevelopment. Stryker's emphasis on "social responsibility" photographs came from his work with Rexford Tugwell. As the head of the New Deal's Resettlement Administration, and later the Farm Security Administration, Tugwell bore responsibility for resettling thousands of farmers displaced by the Great Depression. To sell his RA

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<sup>111</sup> Shrader, negative number 14577-2, Conference Photographs, Box 30, Folder 9: "Housing—Residential scenes—housing plans—neighborhoods."

programs, many of them unprecedented, to the U.S. Congress and public, Tugwell recruited Roy Stryker, his research assistant from Columbia University, to create a photographic record of farm migrants' poverty. Stryker's photographers, such as Dorothea Lange and Gordon Parks, also documented RA programs easing the Depression's effects.<sup>112</sup> When the Conference hired Stryker to run the PPL, he set out to continue this "social responsibility" tradition, arguing that documenting the city's transformation required taking photographs of the deleterious social conditions that the Conference's rebuilding projects aimed to ameliorate.<sup>113</sup>

Stryker sent his photographers out to document the city's hazardous living conditions, but they also prioritized showing that the city's residents, like the Depression era's migrant workers, deserved better conditions. To make this argument, they photographed the people who lived in the city's older neighborhoods and represented them with dignity. As shown above, most "slum" photographs commissioned by redevelopment boosters either made the Lower Hill appear abandoned or included residents only by default. The PPL's Richard Saunders, an African American, spent four months living in the Hill District and made its residents his primary subjects. During an Easter parade in the Hill District, a well-dressed father holding his son posed for Saunders (Fig. 2.26).<sup>114</sup> Saunders snapped the image from a close range, making the father and son fill the composition. Dressed up for this special occasion, this father and son produced a dignified portrait.

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<sup>112</sup> See Constance Schulz and Steven W. Plattner, "Introduction," in *Witness to the Fifties: The Pittsburgh Photographic Library, 1950-1953*, Constance Schulz and Steven W. Plattner, Eds. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1999, 6.

<sup>113</sup> Clyde Hare quoted in Schulz and Plattner, "Introduction," in *Witness to the Fifties*, 12. According to Hare, Stryker went through his photographers' daily output and "killed" photographs that did not live up to this "social responsibility" ideal. Hare, in turn, snuck into the office at night and "erase Roy's kill marks, so that the things we wanted to go into the file wouldn't be killed out because they didn't visually indicate social responsibility." Quoted in Schulz and Plattner, "Introduction," 12.

<sup>114</sup> Richard Saunders, *Portrait: Hill District, Father and Son at the Mason's Easter Parade*, 1951, Carnegie Museum of Art Collection of Photographs, 1894-1958, # 86.16.155.

IMAGE UNAVAILABLE  
DUE TO COPYRIGHT

Fig. 2.26 Richard Saunders, *Portrait: Hill District, Father and Son at the Mason's Easter Parade*, 1951, # 86.16.155, Carnegie Museum of Art Photographs, 1894-1958

Saunders' photographs also contradicted redevelopment boosters' indictment of urban childhood by celebrating one of the benefits of living in a city—easy access to popular entertainments. In April 1951, Saunders photographed fourteen young boys lined up for a Saturday matinee outside of the Hill's New Granada theatre (Fig. 2.27).<sup>115</sup> Half of the boys wore dress hats and many wore fashionable overcoats. Many of the Hill District's parents clearly dressed their children up for a group trip to the Saturday matinees. The fourteen young boys stood in a tight line, compressed like a spring about to burst with excitement. Adults stood on the children's left and right, but Saunders' cropping shrunk the scene's scale so that only the children's full frames fit within the shot, encouraging the viewer to empathize with the kids' excitement and anticipation. Redevelopment boosters' photographs of children in older neighborhoods emphasized hindrances to childhood play. Saunders' photographs celebrated the Hill District's urban offerings, including the commercial amusements enjoyed by its residents but decried by the CPC as mixed land use.

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<sup>115</sup> Richard Saunders, *Young moviegoers in line for the Saturday matinee at the New Granada Theater, Centre Avenue, Hill District April 1951*, Pittsburgh Photographic Library, Pennsylvania Room, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, catalog negative number 1752-14.





Fig 2.27 Richard Saunders, *Young moviegoers in line for the Saturday matinee at the New Granada Theater, Centre Avenue, Hill District, April 1951*

The PPL's Roy Stryker and the Allegheny Conference, however, soon disagreed about whether the PPL should concentrate on "social responsibility" images or "progress pictures," as preferred by the Conference. The Conference expected the PPL to photograph on-going redevelopment projects "so that a reservoir of progress pictures would be available for use."<sup>116</sup> Stryker, however, resented the Conference's emphasis on progress pictures and resigned in November 1951. In his "terminal Report on the Pittsburgh Photographic Library" Stryker subtly articulated his differences with the Conference, warning them to "keep in mind that the photograph must be authentic if it is to be widely accepted."<sup>117</sup> In a personal letter to friend Paul Giddings, Stryker spoke more boldly: "I . . . didn't take kindly to a program of photography for promotion instead of for documentation."<sup>118</sup> After Stryker's resignation, the Conference's Marshall Stalley, took over the PPL's directorship, heightening the Conference's control

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<sup>116</sup> "Meeting Minutes of the Program and Policy Committee," 15 May 1951, Mellon Trust Records, Box 56, Folder 2: "University of Pittsburgh, Civic Photographic Library."

<sup>117</sup> Roy Stryker, "Terminal Report on the Pittsburgh Photographic Library," Mellon Trust Records, Box 56, Folder 1: "University of Pittsburgh, Civic Photographic Library."

<sup>118</sup> Roy Stryker, "Letter to Paul Giddings," quoted in Schulz and Plattner, *Witness to the Fifties*, 18.



over the PPL's output.<sup>119</sup> Stalley steered the PPL towards public relations, specifically sending photographers out to document projects according to the Conference's wishes.<sup>120</sup> In the following years, PPL photographers covered the Conference's annual meetings,<sup>121</sup> and photographed the city under the direct supervision of John Grove, the Conference's public relations director.<sup>122</sup>

The Conference's preference for "progress pictures" not only led it to replace Stryker with Stalley, but also to archive only the PPL images that illustrated its progress narrative. Although many of the PPL's photographs fit the Conference's preference for "progress pictures," the PPL photographs that conflicted with the Conference's vision shed light on the compositional choices that comprised the ramshackle and desolate slum rhetoric. As argued above, the Eagle photographs of backyards along the North Side's Charles Street and collected by the Conference for its "slum" series, included signifiers of blight like laundry lines and an upturned and ripped up arm chair (see Figs. 2.16 and 2.17). Eagle, however, took a whole series of Charles Street photographs, many of which the Conference chose not to collect. In one, Eagle photographed the same row of houses and cement wall, but excluded the upturned chair and laundry lines, instead centering his composition on a white cat lazing on the wall.<sup>123</sup> In another image, Eagle photographed laundry lines, but a little girl in a tidy floral dress smiled in front

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<sup>119</sup> In September 1947 when the Conference released *Challenge and Response* Park Martin credited Stalley along with John Grove as one of the brochure's creators. Martin, "Executive Director's Annual Report," 16 September 1947, Park Martin Papers.

<sup>120</sup> Marshall Stalley, "Pittsburgh Photographic Library Director's Annual Report," 1 August 1952, Mellon Trust Records, Box 56, Folder 2: "University of Pittsburgh, Civic Photographic Library." In this report Stalley explained, "the Photographic Library has received from the Allegheny Conference a detailed statement of the items in the civic program which has been used as a guide for photographers."

<sup>121</sup> Marshall Stalley, "Three Year Report of the Pittsburgh Photographic Library University of Pittsburgh For the Period From June 1950 to July 1953," July 1953, Mellon Trust Records, Box 56 Folder 1: "University of Pittsburgh, Civic Photographic Library."

<sup>122</sup> Harold Corsini did so in July 1954. "Letter from Marshall Stalley to Mr. Viers Adams, Director of Special Services, University of Pittsburgh," University of Pittsburgh University Archives, Chancellors Collection—Fitzgerald, office file—nuclear research—public instruction, dept of, 2/10 1945/55 FF 232-247; Folder 244: "Correspondence from 1954-1955, Pittsburgh Photographic Library."

<sup>123</sup> Arnold Eagle, *Backyard on Charles Street, Pittsburgh Housing*, Carnegie Library, "Bridging the Urban Landscape" Collection, Neg. Number 2669.

of hanging laundry (Fig. 2.28).<sup>124</sup> Seated near her, another child held a dog. From these perspectives, life on Charles Street appears much less bleak. Photographs of cats and smiling children, however, were not included in the Conference's photograph collection.<sup>125</sup>

IMAGE UNAVAILABLE  
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Fig. 2.28 Arnold Eagle, *Portrait North Side: children on Charles Street*, 1950, Carnegie Museum of Art Photographs, 86.16.39

The architectural sketches and models created by Mitchell and Ritchey promised a space-age future of technological awe, but also separated this future from the rest of the city and minimized the Lower Hill's history. Mitchell and Ritchey, of course, created the models and sketches of their 1947 Pittsburgh Center Plan and their 1953 Lower Hill Redevelopment to illustrate a future where the Lower Hill had been demolished and replaced with their own architectural designs. By definition, then, these models and sketches replaced the Lower Hill and its social life with the architect's visionary designs for the future.

Details in the architects' presentations, though, also severed the Lower Hill's redeveloped future from the rest of the city. The sketch that accompanied Mitchell and Ritchey's 1947 design, for example, used sparse shading and clean lines to promise an orderly, amenable, and spacious future ideal (see fig. 2.9). However, Mitchell and Ritchey oriented the sketch to emphasize its straight broad roadways and the arena's round marvel. They also surrounded their detailed plan for the Lower Hill with the city's street grid as empty white blocks. These choices divorced the project from the city's geographical and social reality. Similarly, the image in Mitchell and Ritchey's 1953 proposal that superimposed a sketch of the Lower Hill's redevelopment on a doctored photograph of the city buried the Lower Hill's physical

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<sup>124</sup> Arnold Eagle, *Portrait North Side: children on Charles Street*, 1950, Carnegie Museum of Art Photographs, 86.16.39

<sup>125</sup> Saunders' photographs (Figs 2.26 and 2.27) of well-dressed Hill District residents at parades and matinees were also not included in the Conference's photo archives.

and social reality beneath a disk of space-age opulence (see fig 2.10).<sup>126</sup> Overexposure obscured the Middle Hill, which stood on the opposite edge of the redevelopment from downtown. The graphic, then, entirely negated the Hill District.

## 2.5 CONCLUSION

Pittsburgh's redevelopment coalition approached the Lower Hill with excellent intentions, but according to the written archived sources and histories of Pittsburgh's redevelopment, the Conference's primary goal was to invigorate downtown's business district. The Conference began redevelopment in the built-up heart of the city, at the Point. Here, it helped build a public park and a privately owned office building, illustrating its concern for the city's economic health.

Next, the CPC, URA, and Conference turned their attention to the Hill District. Here, the CPC certified the Lower Hill's blight by penalizing mixed land use, high building density, and the automobile repair shops and bars that residents valued but which the APHA deplored as "nuisances" and "hazards to morals." The worldviews held by Pittsburgh's redevelopment coalition borrowed heavily from the national planning paradigm, but the Conference's strong emphasis on downtown's economic health shaped how it remade the city.

The maps, photographs, and models deployed by planners reveal their blind spots. The CPC's statistical maps simplified the neighborhood's wide-ranging living conditions into pattern-coded blocks. Easy to read, these maps illustrated the CPC's conclusion that the Lower Hill's mixed land use, overcrowding, and dilapidation necessitated demolition. Boiling the neighborhood down to statistical conclusions, however, masked the criteria used by the CPC and established contentious criteria—like the disadvantages of mixed land use—as truth. Photographs commissioned by the Conference and created

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<sup>126</sup> Mitchell and Ritchey Executive Architects, *Lower Hill Cultural Center Urban Redevelopment Area No. 3: Land Use Study*.

by the CPC focused exclusively on alleyways and streets and on signifiers of blight like rubbish and laundry lines instead of institutions or businesses. Residents rarely appeared in the Conference's photographs and, when they did, they existed only at the margins. Roy Stryker's PPL photographers humanized the neighborhood and its residents, but the Conference's discord with Stryker's "social responsibility" ethic underscores redevelopers' preference for photographs of streets and not people. The sketches and models created by architectural firms entirely erased the Lower Hill's past and present while celebrating its destiny as the city of the future. The space-age circular building that became the Civic Arena appeared taken from science fiction. The rest of the city either fell away entirely or stood in contrast to the redeveloped Lower Hill's sleek design and technological awe.

These maps, photographs, sketches, and models effectively argued that the Lower Hill could be demolished and redeveloped at no social cost. The next chapter will show that redevelopers put these visuals before the public with texts and contexts that heightened their persuasiveness. The Conference, as the Renaissance's primary booster, wove these rhetorics into its promotional brochures and exhibits, ultimately embedding them in the city's redevelopment discourse and shaping how the public viewed the neighborhood and redevelopment.

## CHAPTER THREE

### SELLING REDEVELOPERS' VISION TO THE PUBLIC: IMAGES IN PROMOTIONAL BROCHURES AND THE PRESS, 1946-1957

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The Allegheny Conference used visual images to promote its vision of what ailed the city and how to revive it. The Conference identified multiple obstacles to remaking the city, notably infighting among planners, which had stalled comprehensive planning in Pittsburgh for decades, and the failure of Pittsburgh's citizens to grasp the magnitude of their city's problem. To overcome these obstacles, the Conference produced richly illustrated public relations brochures and distributed them in the 1940s to local elected officials, newspaper editors, high-ranking civil servants, and business leaders with the goal of legitimizing its authority to research, define, and solve the city's problems. In the 1950s the Conference employed visuals in promotional brochures to represent the Lower Hill as blighted and to argue for its redevelopment. Aimed again at local decision and opinion makers, the Conference framed these visuals with captions and texts that portrayed the Lower Hill as an uninhabitable slum that must be demolished and redeveloped. The Conference also won over Pittsburgh's three daily newspapers and the national print media, with the result that the visuals used by the local dailies and national periodicals celebrated the Conference as the city's savior and sold the Conference's vision to the larger public.

### 3.2 IMAGES IN ACTION: VISUALS IN THE CONFERENCE'S EARLY PROMOTIONAL BROCHURES

In the mid-1940s, the Conference sought to unite the region's planners, politicians, and business elite behind its program. From the Conference's perspective, Pittsburgh's citizenry failed to grasp the city's problems and lacked the knowledge and motivation to solve them.<sup>1</sup> By the mid-1940s, this was apparent to the Conference's leaders because even well-received programs like the Point's redevelopment and smoke control sparked controversy.<sup>2</sup> Historically, the fragmentation of Pittsburgh's leadership had also thwarted the implementation of comprehensive planning and environmental reform in the city.<sup>3</sup> The Conference believed the radical changes necessary to salvage the city, like smoke control and large-scale redevelopment projects, required a leadership unified around a shared view of what ailed the city and how to fix it.

To accomplish this unity, the Conference used visuals to represent itself in promotional brochures as the ultimate authority on solutions to the city's problems. Starting in the mid-1940s, the Conference produced two lavishly illustrated public-relations brochures aimed at an audience of local decision makers—elected officials, newspaper editors, business leaders, and high-ranking public

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<sup>1</sup> The Allegheny Conference on Community Development, "Proposal for the Establishment of the Civic Photographic Center Under the Sponsorship of the Allegheny Conference on Community Development," Mellon Trust Records, Box 56, Folder 1: "University of Pittsburgh, Civic Photographic Library," 1.

<sup>2</sup> For more on the Point controversy, see Rachel Colker, "Gaining Gateway Center," 134-44; and Alberts, *The Shaping of the Point*. For more on resistance to smoke control, see Sherie R. Mershon and Joel A. Tarr "Strategies for Clean Air: The Pittsburgh and Allegheny County Smoke Control Movements, 1940-1960," in *Devastation and Renewal: An Environmental History of Pittsburgh and its Region*, ed. Joel A. Tarr (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2003), 145-173; as well as Mershon, "Corporate Social Responsibility and Urban Revitalization"; Lubove, *Twentieth-Century Pittsburgh*; and Martin, "Narrative of the Allegheny Conference."

<sup>3</sup> For more on the infighting between city and county planners and public and private planning agencies, see Baumann and Muller, *Before Renaissance*. For conflicts between the specific industries and civic movements like smoke control, see Mershon and Tarr, "Strategies for Clean Air."

servants—hoping to convince the city’s decision and opinion makers to embrace its Renaissance vision.<sup>4</sup>

The first brochure, entitled *A Civic Clinic for Better Living*, was distributed free of charge to the city’s media, elected officials, and, in Park Martin’s words, other “leading citizens.”<sup>5</sup> The second, *Pittsburgh: Challenge and Response*, appeared in 1947-1948, was printed in color and distributed by the thousands.<sup>6</sup>

The brochures introduced the Conference and its methods to the public and rallied support for specific Conference initiatives. *A Civic Clinic for Better Living* analogized the Conference to a medical clinic that diagnosed and treated what ailed Pittsburgh’s civic body. The brochure highlighted the Conference’s research and coordinating acumen. Like a general practitioner calling in a specialist to diagnose difficult maladies, the brochure explained, the Conference called in the Pittsburgh Regional Planning Association (PRPA) to research and design Point Park. The brochure’s images demonstrated the fruits of such research. A sketch of Point Park created by the PRPA showed tree-lined walkways, grand fountains, and open spaces bordered by shrubs and trees.<sup>7</sup> The Conference’s second brochure, *Challenge and Response*, identified the problems that the Conference contended endangered the city and the solutions advocated by the Conference.

Although some problems, like what constituted blight, were open to interpretation, the images and written texts in the Conference’s brochures treated blight as a matter of fact. A careful examination of Conference images shows this tendency. For example, a drawing of hillside housing depicted rows of houses from behind, emphasizing a disorganization and unsightliness that would have been absent from

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<sup>4</sup> “Interview with Mr. John Grove” interview by Nancy Mason September 16, 1971, Pittsburgh Renaissance Project: The Stanton Belfour Oral History Collection, AIS 73:24, Archives Service Center, University of Pittsburgh.

<sup>5</sup> Martin, “Narrative of the Allegheny Conference,” 61. Each copy of *Civic Clinic* cost seventy-five cents to produce. See Letter from Park Martin to Edgar J. Kaufmann, Allegheny Conference Records, Box 39, Folder 1: “Executive Committee, 1943-1949.”

<sup>6</sup> Each copy of *Challenge and Response* cost two dollars to produce. See Martin, “Narrative of the Allegheny Conference,” 61. Memo from Park Martin to Executive Committee, 12 July 1948, Allegheny Conference Records, Box 39, Folder 1: Executive Committee, 1943-1949; and Park Martin, “Allegheny Conference Executive Director’s Annual Report,” 19 September 1948, Park Martin Papers, AIS 71:16, Archives Service Center, University of Pittsburgh, Box 1, Folder 5: “Executive Director Annual Reports 1946-1950,” 11-12.

<sup>7</sup> The Allegheny Conference on Community Development, *A Civic Clinic for Better Living*, 1946, Allegheny Conference on Community Development Collection (hereafter called “Allegheny Conference Collection”), 1944-1993, AIS.1973.04, Archives Service Center, University of Pittsburgh, Box 7, Folder 85.

a street-front perspective primed for public view (fig. 3.1).<sup>8</sup> No streets appeared in the image and a discarded tire sat in the right foreground, making the neighborhood appear antiquated and derelict. The image also appears darkened, like a sooty nightmare vision of the city. Another image showed a man and a boy strolling down a brick street (fig. 3.2).<sup>9</sup> Brick two-story row houses lined both sides of the street; cement stoops jutted into the sidewalk. A few scraggly trees appeared far down the street, but concrete and brick dominated the scene. The layout's leftward tilt maximized the visual impact of the scene's crowding. While sunlight bathed the right side of the street, shadows cloaked the left side. With the leftward tilt, the man and boy tottered towards the shadows. Even though both images' composition and formatting actually amplified their shabbiness, the Conference labeled the darkened drawing of houses' backsides "Housing" and described the tilted brick and the cement street as one of "the region's slums."<sup>10</sup> These captions gave no location, suggesting the images captured a universal "slum" or "housing" condition. Further, the captions gave no qualitative description, implying that elaboration would be superfluous. Caption and images stood in direct signifier-signified relationship; each gave meaning to the other. This one-image/one-word relationship presented these illustrations as authoritative examples of bad housing and slums.

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<sup>8</sup> The Allegheny Conference on Community Development, *Pittsburgh: Challenge and Response*, 1947, University of Pittsburgh, Digital Research Library, <[http://digital.library.pitt.edu/cgi-bin/t/text/text\\_idx?idno=3173505165231\\_5;view=toc;c=pitttext](http://digital.library.pitt.edu/cgi-bin/t/text/text_idx?idno=3173505165231_5;view=toc;c=pitttext)> (accessed 16 April 2009) 8.

<sup>9</sup> *Civic Clinic*, 4.

<sup>10</sup> *Challenge and Response*, 8; *Civic Clinic*, 5.



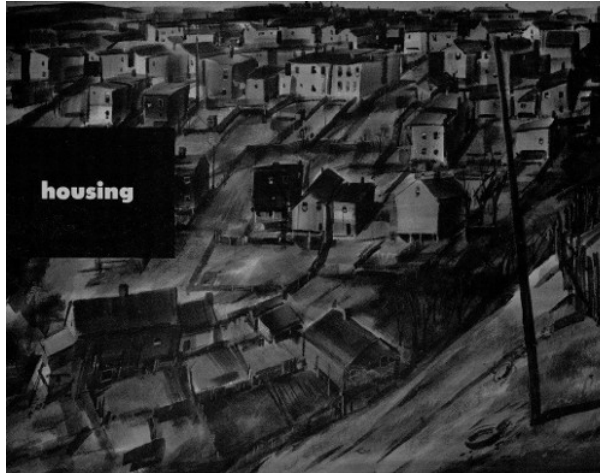


Fig.3.1 The Allegheny Conference on Community Development, *Pittsburgh: Challenge and Response*, "Housing"



Fig. 3.2 The Allegheny Conference on Community Development, *A Civic Clinic for Better Living*, "More Homes, Better Homes"

The Conference used futuristic architectural sketches in its 1940s brochures to promote its vision for the city's future. An illustration of the Penn-Lincoln Parkway, for example, turned downtown Pittsburgh into a black-and-white dreamscape (fig. 3.3).<sup>11</sup> Buildings looked like white blocks emerging out of a shadowed ground. Dark edging seeped from the top of the scene's tallest skyscraper, but no windows, patterns, or shading marred the fronts of other downtown buildings. Between these abstract buildings and the Monongahela River, the Penn-Lincoln Parkway curved like a toy racetrack elevated above the riverbank. Flying cars would not seem out of place in this futuristic graphic, meant to capture the reader's imagination.

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<sup>11</sup> "Civic Clinic," 6. *Challenge and Response* made the city's proposed Sewage Treatment Plant, the McKnight and Babcock traffic interchange, and the airport's proposed extension appear similarly futuristic, see *Challenge and Response*, 11, 17, 19.



Fig. 3.3 The Allegheny Conference on Community Development, *A Civic Clinic for Better Living*, "Efficiency of Roads, Transportation, and Parking"

These visuals effectively encouraged local leaders to put their trust in the Conference's authority to assess and solve the city's problems. As noted in Chapter Two, Mayor Lawrence formed the URA at the Conference's request and then appointed Conference members to a majority of the URA's seats.<sup>12</sup> At the Conference's behest, local corporations signed long-term leases for Gateway Center years before the office complex was even built.<sup>13</sup> When Point-area landowners challenged the URA's use of eminent domain for Gateway Center, the Conference's public-relations staff mobilized the local papers to mold public opinion in favor of redevelopment.<sup>14</sup> The Conference had clearly convinced the city's elected officials, business leaders, and newspaper editors to follow its lead.

### 3.3 FROM SLUMS TO SPARKLE: *THE ACCD PRESENTS . . . PITTSBURGH!*

When the Conference celebrated the beginning of the Lower Hill's demolition in May 1956, it faced a much grander undertaking than anything it had attempted before, in terms of both logistics and public relations. The Conference's vision for the redeveloped Lower Hill included a Crosstown Expressway,

<sup>12</sup> David L. Lawrence, "Rebirth," in Lorant, 427.

<sup>13</sup> Park Martin, "Narrative of the Allegheny Conference," 15.

<sup>14</sup> H.J. Heinz II quoted in Alberts, *The Shaping of the Point*, 137.

high-rise garden apartments, and an arena with a retractable domed roof to accommodate open-air summer performances by the Civic Light Opera. Described by the Conference as “one of the nation’s most dramatic redevelopment projects,” this vision required using eminent domain to acquire and demolish ninety-five densely populated acres and would force 1,885 families to give up their homes and relocate.<sup>15</sup> To preserve its momentum in the face of such massive upheaval, the Conference debuted a visual-laden brochure entitled *The Allegheny Conference on Community Development Presents . . . Pittsburgh!* in September 1956, four months after the Lower Hill’s demolition ceremony, and right before the neighborhood’s demolition and colossal relocations accelerated.<sup>16</sup> With demolition already underway, but with the critical upheavals yet to come, the brochure appeared at the perfect time to justify the impending disruption and fortify public support for the project. The Conference rallied this support with visuals arguing that the blighted old city, particularly the Lower Hill, must be demolished and redeveloped.

Through image and written text, *The Allegheny Conference on Community Development Presents . . . Pittsburgh!* argued for replacing the grimy and dilapidated Pittsburgh of the past with a well-planned and sparkling new city of the future. A spread of photographs on the brochure’s third page established this visual theme (fig 3.4).<sup>17</sup> Low-contrast black-and-white photographs of a railroad bridge, a smoggy street corner, and cluttered streets illustrated the grubby Pittsburgh of yesteryear. Yet, the last photograph on the “Great Industrial” spread showed the Point’s demolition and the rise of Gateway Center, one of the Conference’s first “out with the old and in with the new” successes. This optimistic view of Gateway Center segued into the blue-tinted scenic vistas of the redeveloping Point “By Day,” “At

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<sup>15</sup> The Allegheny Conference on Community Development, *The Allegheny Conference on Community Development Presents . . . Pittsburgh!*, Allegheny Conference Collection, Box 7, Folder 86, 12.

<sup>16</sup> *The Pittsburgh Courier* began covering residents’ relocation in November 1956 See “Negro Tenants ‘Prefer’ Upper Hill; Whites Go to S. Hills,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, 10 November 1956, 1.

<sup>17</sup> *The Allegheny Conference . . . Presents!*, 3.

Dusk,” and “By Night” on the page’s right.<sup>18</sup> This theme of decrying the city’s gray past and celebrating its blue-tinted future persisted throughout the brochure.<sup>19</sup>



Fig. 3.4 The Allegheny Conference on Community Development, *The Allegheny Conference on Community Development Presents . . . Pittsburgh!*, “A Great Industrial City Sparkles with New Life”

The brochure’s narrative also credited the Conference with replacing grimy old Pittsburgh with “sparkle.” Many images and captions illustrated structural and economic improvements linked to the Conference. The page hailing the redevelopment of the “midtown Triangle” included a blue-tinted image of Mellon Square Park. The photograph’s caption celebrated the park as “a harmony of fountains and cascades and flowers and trees.”<sup>20</sup> The brochure’s economic development page featured a photograph of Jones and Laughlin’s expanded South Side steel plant. The caption attributed the land for Jones and Laughlin’s \$70,000,000 expansion to the urban-redevelopment process.<sup>21</sup> Although these

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> The smoke control page contrasted a 1946 black-and-white view of smoggy downtown Pittsburgh to a blue-tinted 1956 view captioned, “the City’s new skyline glistens in the bright sunshine.” *Ibid.*, 18-19.

<sup>20</sup> *The Allegheny Conference . . . Presents!*, 8.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

captions did not explicitly credit the Allegheny Conference, the photographs illustrated well-publicized Conference successes.

### 3.4 THE ALLEGHENY CONFERENCE . . . PRESENTS! AND THE CONFERENCE'S BLIND SPOTS

*The Allegheny Conference . . . Presents!* accurately celebrated many of the Conference's accomplishments, but its treatment of large-scale clearance projects, such as the Lower Hill, spotlighted the Conference's conviction that life could thrive *only* in newly built environments. These assumptions made the Conference underestimate the social costs of full-scale clearance and ignore the implications of its one-sided representations of older neighborhoods. The "Lower Hill" and "urban renewal" spreads both addressed large-scale demolition projects proposed and underway in older neighborhoods. What was or was not captured in these photographs made old neighborhoods appear hopelessly dilapidated and socially desolate. These depictions, in turn, encouraged the brochure's audience of Pittsburgh's politicians and newspaper editors, to share the Conference's enthusiasm for radical change in the built environment and ignore the human costs of slum clearance.

The brochure's photographs portrayed older neighborhoods and their built environments from their most unflattering angles. To illustrate the Lower Hill, the Conference chose two photographs taken by the CPC in 1950. One photograph focused on rear yards bounded by brick buildings and cluttered with laundry lines, wood scraps, and oil drums (see fig. 2.3).<sup>22</sup> The other photograph showed a narrow cobblestone alleyway with two children playing far down in the alley and another child standing closer next to a still tricycle (see fig. 2.23).<sup>23</sup> This perspective ignored the front of neighborhood buildings, the

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* Photographs of old neighborhoods on the brochure's "Urban Renewal" page also showed buildings from behind. For example, an image of McKeesport showed rear yards lined with rickety wooden fences and a photograph of Rankin looked across a dirt road towards brick and cinderblock buildings. An old car, picked over for parts, sat to the left of the dirt road.

view residents consciously groomed for public scrutiny. Focusing on rear yards also showed laundry lines, oil drums, and woodpiles that would not have appeared on main streets. A complete absence of people also characterized the Lower Hill rear-yard photograph and all of the brochure's "urban renewal" photographs. This absence made neighborhoods slated for demolition appear lifeless and expendable.

The contrast between these slum images and the brochure's images of new housing brings to light the Conference's assumption that social life naturally burst forth from new, but not from old, built environments. To illustrate that assumption, the Conference chose a John Shrader view of suburban housing that looked across a quiet asphalt street towards a row of single-family suburban houses (see fig. 2.25).<sup>24</sup> Two boys played catch while a young girl watched from a nearby step. Landscaped front yards with manicured bushes stretched across the scene. This view captured the self-presentation that residents consciously shaped for the public and showed childhood flourishing in new neighborhoods. Frolicking children populated two other new housing photographs. In the second, three young boys ran down a wide tree-shaded sidewalk that sat in front of a new brick apartment building. The third photograph showed four darting children, radiating from a serene corner of a Braddock housing project. These children's presence breathed life into new neighborhoods that the slum images lacked.

The brochure's images of the Lower Hill's redeveloped future promised futuristic awe. The Lower Hill spread juxtaposed "slum" photographs with a blue-tinted architectural sketch of the arena, a photographed model of the arena, and a close-up stylized rendering of the arena. Drawn by the Conference's favorite local architects, Mitchell and Ritchey, the spread's blue-tinted aerial schematic stretched across both pages and showed the arena with its retractable roof opened to the sky (fig. 3.5).<sup>25</sup> The sketch's prominence and its contrast to the spread's "slum" images reiterated the brochure's

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 13. Mitchell and Ritchey did not include this sketch in 1953's *Lower Hill Cultural Center Urban Redevelopment Area No. 3: Land Use Study* but it was credited to Mitchell and Ritchey in Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce, *Pittsburgh Renaissance City of America*, Allegheny Conference Records, Box 217, folder 8: "Reports: Public Relations/Pittsburgh."

overarching visual argument that the murky city of yesterday, represented by low-contrast black-and-white photographs, needed to be demolished and replaced with the Conference's sparkling future. Trees and rectangular buildings in orderly rows surrounded the arena. The plan's proposed streets, draped across the landscape like pristine ribbons. The photographed model, also produced by Mitchell and Ritchey, showed the arena's retractable roof, in miniature, along with minute trees and buildings (see fig. 2.13). This real life rendering made the idealized scene appear tangible, feasible, and soon to be realized.



Fig. 3.5 The Allegheny Conference on Community Development, *The Allegheny Conference on Community Development Presents . . . Pittsburgh!*, "Lower Hill Redevelopment Project"

Finally, a stylized close-up drawing of the arena underscored the arena's futuristic splendor while also embedding it in a garden-like landscape. The drawing echoed two close-up whimsical drawings by Mitchell and Ritchey (see fig. 2.12), but focused on the arena's open-air roof and surrounding landscaping (fig. 3.6).<sup>26</sup> Here, the arena's retractable roof stood folded into one triangular plate, opening the auditorium up to the sky. Rows of bushes and trees, slightly smudged for a softer effect, stretched to the left and right edges of the drawing. The sketch made the auditorium appear to be embedded in a vast landscaped garden. In the background, tall, smoothly textured buildings marked

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

the plan's futurism. As a whole, the drawing promised a harmonious blend of futuristic technology and nature.

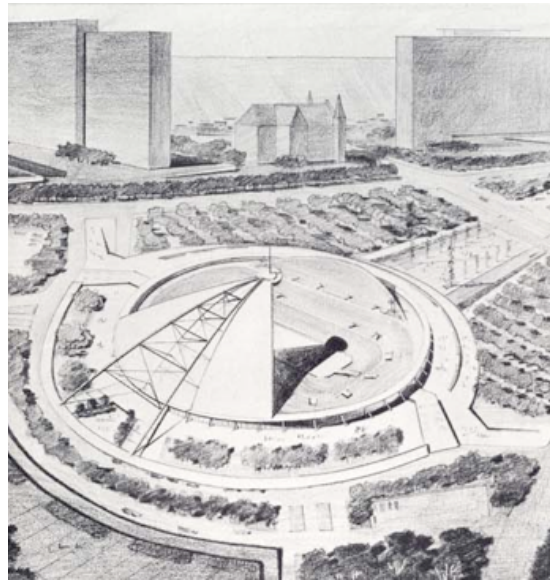


Fig. 3.6 The Allegheny Conference on Community Development, *The Allegheny Conference on Community Development Presents . . . Pittsburgh!*, "Lower Hill Redevelopment Project"

### 3.5 DEMARCATING SLUMS AND SPARKLE: HOW TEXT INFORMS VISUALS

*The Allegheny Conference . . . Presents!* used captions to mark the Lower Hill as blighted, even when the image actually defied this categorization. The caption for the "rear-yard" image (see fig. 2.3), for example, explained, "The new Hill will wipe away blight, decay, worn out structures and overcrowding."<sup>27</sup> Instead of saying these conditions existed in the photograph, the caption described a future without them, implying that the present Hill, the one depicted in the photograph, exemplified all of the above. According to the information attached to the Conference's archived version of the print, the CPC took the photograph "looking east on rear yards of dwellings facing Bedford, Fullerton and

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.



Gilmore.”<sup>28</sup> The CPC’s analysis of the Lower Hill, however, categorized the block bounded by Bedford, Fullerton, and Gilmore as one of the Lower Hill’s “intermediate” rather than “slum” or “substandard” blocks.<sup>29</sup> In other words, the rear-yard scene that the brochure’s caption defined as “blight, decay, worn out structures, and overcrowding” was officially classified as none of the above.

Information on the Conference’s archived print of children in a Lower Hill alleyway reveals that this image was not as representative as its caption claimed. The caption described the scene by delineating how redevelopment would improve it: “Broad, well-planned streets and throughfares [sic] and a spacious use of land will replace an ancient street pattern” (see fig. 2.23).<sup>30</sup> A proposed “before” and “after” contrast transformed the photograph into a definitive example of what the brochure called the Hill’s “ancient street pattern.” Taken by a CPC photographer looking south on Yuba Way from McCook Way, this intersection of two alleyways differed dramatically from the Lower Hill’s main streets and intersections.<sup>31</sup> Alleyway intersections, however, existed throughout Pittsburgh, so this photograph’s depiction of the Hill’s street pattern was not more representative of the Hill District than it was of any city neighborhood. The photographs and captions chosen by the Conference inaccurately amplified the Lower Hill’s blight and rendered an alleyway intersection representative of the neighborhood’s entire street pattern.

Captions of the photographs added authority to the text’s claims about the Lower Hill’s blight by repeating its assertions in similar language. The page’s text called the Lower Hill “the city’s worst slum,” a “densely populated area,” and “a welter of substandard housing, run down commercial structures and

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<sup>28</sup> Pittsburgh City Planning Commission, *Lower Hill Photo No. E-1- August 1, 1950 Looking east on rear yards of dwellings facing Bedford, Fullerton and Gilmore*, Conference Photographs, Box 33, Folder 6: “Lower Hill Before Demolition.”

<sup>29</sup> Pittsburgh City Planning Commission, *Analysis of Part of the Lower Hill District, 1950*.

<sup>30</sup> *The Allegheny Conference . . . Presents!*, 12.

<sup>31</sup> Pittsburgh City Planning Commission, *A-10 Looking south on Yuba Way from McCook Way*, Conference Photographs, Box 33, Folder 6: “Lower Hill Before Demolition.”

a narrow and obsolete pattern of streets and alleys.”<sup>32</sup> Captions added authority to the text’s claims by repeating its assertions in similar language. The “blight” and “decay” labeled by the rear-yard caption buttressed the text’s “worst slum” claim. This caption’s “[w]orn out structures” echoed the text’s “run down commercial structures,” while the caption’s promise to “wipe away” overcrowding reiterated the text’s claim that the Hill was densely populated. The caption for the alleyway photograph finished the job by rephrasing “obsolete pattern of streets and alleys” as “ancient street pattern.” The captions, of course, ascribed meaning to the photographs. The photographs, captions, and text added up to three layers of repetition attesting to the Lower Hill’s structural doom, making clearance a foregone conclusion.

Meanwhile, the captions and images on the brochure’s “urban renewal” page deemphasized themes that contradicted the Conference’s preference for slum clearance. A section of the urban renewal text described neighborhood conservation and rehabilitation. Midway through its descriptions of redevelopment projects and laws, the text boasted of the city’s and county’s rehabilitation tools—refined housing codes, health laws, and zoning—used to “protect neighborhoods, restore declining areas, and promote a fuller, richer city life”<sup>33</sup> Meanwhile, the page’s photographs and captions told another story: “Redevelopment will wipe out this section in industrial Rankin,” “A new in-town shopping center will replace this slum in Duquesne,” “Scotch Bottoms is being razed for [the] J and L [steel mill’s] expansion.”<sup>34</sup> Rather than being rehabilitated or conserved, these older neighborhoods were being wiped out, replaced, and razed. The page’s photographs focused on dirt roads, narrow alleyways, and rear yards, adding visual support to razing older neighborhoods. Here, captions and photographs drew attention away from the text’s acknowledgement of rehabilitation and conservation as alternatives to clearance.

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<sup>32</sup> *The Allegheny Conference . . . Presents!*, 12.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

The models and sketches that illustrated and promoted the Lower Hill redevelopment bore captions that heightened the plan's promise of a space-age future. The caption below the photographed model (see fig. 2.13) lauded the arena's architecture as "[u]nique and spectacular in design" and boasted, "[T]his structure is destined to become a wonder of the modern world."<sup>35</sup> This phrasing reframed a miniaturized simulacrum of the arena, with its tiny fake trees and foamy looking grass, as a spectacular wonder for the reader to behold. The blue-tinted aerial vista, meanwhile, promised "today's dreams are tomorrow's realities."<sup>36</sup> Calling the redeveloped Lower Hill "today's dreams" transformed redevelopers' vision for the neighborhood into a shared public dream. Public support for redevelopment ensured this dream would become "tomorrow's reality."

In 1954 the Conference gave these Lower Hill Redevelopment sketches and models their broadest distribution by including them in its School Resource Booklets, created for social studies classes in Pittsburgh's public and parochial schools. One booklet, "Pittsburgh: From Fort to City" recounted the city's history through a fifty-one-page fictional field trip around the city's historic sites.<sup>37</sup> According to the Conference's narrative, Pittsburgh's history began with George Washington crossing the Allegheny River and culminated with an image of the Lower Hill redevelopment. Specifically, the booklet used Mitchell and Ritchey's stylized aerial photograph of the Lower Hill with a sketch of their redevelopment plan superimposed on top (see Fig. 2.10). The page's text promised school children a "fine new sports-opera arena," and credited the arena to "Pa Pitt," the Conference's mascot. In this image, Mitchell and Ritchey made the Lower Hill redevelopment look like a massive spaceship. The booklet, then, captured school children's imaginations with a visual that would not seem out of place in a science-fiction comic book.

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Allegheny Conference, *Pittsburgh From Fort to City* [Pittsburgh Public Schools], Allegheny Conference Records, Box 176, Folder, 17: "Reports: Subseries 10, Education," 50.

### 3.6 THE CONFERENCE'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE DAILY PRESS

The Conference believed the local dailies' support was imperative because the Renaissance depended on public support. As noted in Chapter Two, H.J. Heinz II credited the local dailies with helping the Conference win much-needed public support for Gateway Center. By "molding public opinion through interpretation of facts in editorials and background stories," the local dailies swayed public opinion against protests launched by Point-area landowners.<sup>38</sup> The Conference sought an alliance with the local dailies to curry public support for all of its programs, including the Lower Hill's redevelopment.

To secure this support, between 1943 and 1945, the Conference's executive director, Park Martin, orchestrated an official alliance with the editors of *The Pittsburgh Press*, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, and the *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph*. As early as October 1943, the Conference's Sponsoring Committee included "persons connected with the newspapers."<sup>39</sup> Park Martin soon strengthened this alliance by inviting all three local papers' editors to a luncheon at the Pittsburgher Hotel.<sup>40</sup> Here, Martin explained the Conference and its programs, seeking the editors' support. One editor resisted. After an hour of discussion, Martin won all three over by pointing out "that the City was on the decline, that the success of the papers depended upon the future of the City and that the papers had more at stake than he did personally."<sup>41</sup> Shortly thereafter, the Conference's executive committee invited all three editors to join the Conference's Sponsoring Committee. They all agreed.<sup>42</sup> As Sponsors, the editors attended the

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<sup>38</sup> Heinz quoted in Alberts, *The Shaping of the Point*, 137.

<sup>39</sup> "Hotchkiss letter to Doherty (both of Carnegie Inst.)," 30 October 1943, Allegheny Conference Records, Box 39, Folder 1: "Executive Committee 1943-1949."

<sup>40</sup> Park Martin, "Narrative of the Allegheny Conference," 7; See also Mershon, "Corporate Social Responsibility and Urban Revitalization."

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Martin, "Narrative of the Allegheny Conference," 8.

Conference's sumptuous annual dinners where Martin regaled them with each year's accomplishments and thanked them personally for their support.<sup>43</sup>

Having merged the local editors' and the Conference's interests, Martin set policies and hired a public-relations expert, John Grove, to facilitate positive press coverage. The Conference staggered its press releases to appease every paper because Pittsburgh had two evening papers and one morning paper. Whenever the Conference introduced a new program, Martin "met individually with the editors to explain the programs and to answer questions."<sup>44</sup> In 1947, the Conference hired John Grove to coordinate public relations for the city's Renaissance. Grove described his primary tasks: "my first responsibilities were to deal with the news media and I developed a very close working relationship with the metropolitan dailies."<sup>45</sup> The Conference's Sponsoring Committee meeting agendas show that Grove acted as a liaison to the local press, inviting reporters and photographers to meetings.<sup>46</sup> Under Grove's and Martin's guidance, the Conference also maintained tight relations with the local press by giving them exclusive access to Conference meeting minutes and by giving them immediate access to its research reports and publicity brochures.<sup>47</sup>

As a result of these policies, the Allegheny Conference received excellent publicity from the local press. According to a talk by Henry J. Heinz II to the American Newspaper Publishers Association in 1966, the three daily papers assigned full-time reporters to the redevelopment "beat." These reporters

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<sup>43</sup> Martin thanked the local editors and reporters on the Conference's Sponsoring Committee every year when he read his Executive Director's Annual Report at each annual dinner. Park Martin Papers, AIS 71:16, Box 1, Folder 5: "Executive Director Annual Reports 1946-1950."

<sup>44</sup> Martin, "Narrative of the Allegheny Conference," 7. Martin also explained that the Conference opened up its files "for any special story that the any paper saw fit to write," a policy that "was never broken."

<sup>45</sup> "Interview with Mr. John Grove" interview by Nancy Mason, 16 September 1971, Pittsburgh Renaissance Project, The Stanton Belfour Oral History Collection, University of Pittsburgh Archives Service Center, AIS 73:24.

<sup>46</sup> "Letter from John Grove to Mr. W.E. Mansfield, Jr. of the McKeesport Daily News and Mr. George Stuart of the Valley Daily News," 16 June 1958, Sponsors Meeting Agenda, Allegheny Conference Records, Box 49, Folder 8: "Sponsoring Committee Minutes 1956-1959."

<sup>47</sup> On meeting minutes, see Leland Hazard, *Attorney for the Situation*. (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Mellon University Press, 1975), 271. The minutes were to remain "off the record" according to Hazard. On research reports and brochures, see Martin, "Narrative of the Allegheny Conference," 60-62.

“knew the details of the program” and built a “rapport and a good working arrangement” with the Conference.<sup>48</sup> According to Heinz, “[t]he reporters and editorial writers . . . became affected by the same motivations and enthusiasm as the community planners.” Indeed, four of these “civic beat” reporters left journalism for jobs as planning administrators for the City of Pittsburgh.<sup>49</sup> By the late 1940s, the Conference considered local press coverage abundant and positive enough to replace its own regular publications. According to Martin, in 1947 the local dailies’ abundant coverage enabled the Conference to stop printing its own newsletter, the *Allegheny Conference Digest*. The Conference’s progress “was being publicized well in the newspapers, and consequently, what might be printed in the *Digest* had already been printed.”<sup>50</sup>

### 3.7 THE LOCAL DAILIES’ VISUAL COVERAGE OF THE LOWER HILL BEFORE REDEVELOPMENT

In the past, Pittsburgh’s mainstream daily newspapers typically gave the Lower Hill in-depth visual coverage only when a rare but spectacularly violent crime occurred. In October 1943, for example, Matthew Kozera, a 35-year-old ex-convict, shot Albert T. Lorch, a County Detective, and took refuge in a Hill District boarding house at 1604 Colwell Street.<sup>51</sup> Kozera’s landlady informed the police of his whereabouts. When Kozera returned home one day, a “desperate ‘kill-or-be killed’ battle that topped any Hollywood scenario” greeted him, resulting in his death.<sup>52</sup> The *Press* covered the fifteen-minute gun fight in great detail, including six photographs: a close-up illustration of County Detective Inspector

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<sup>48</sup> Henry J. Heinz II, quoted in Alberts, *The Shaping of the Point*, 137.

<sup>49</sup> Alberts, *The Shaping of the Point*, 138.

<sup>50</sup> Martin, “Narrative of the Allegheny Conference,” 61. By 1953, the Conference similarly discarded its tenth-anniversary promotional brochure. To celebrate the Conference’s tenth anniversary, each of the local newspapers composed “special sections on the Pittsburgh Program.” The newspapers even drafted the Conference’s promotional staff to help write the special sections. This further negated the need for Conference publicity. See Mershon, “Corporate Social Responsibility and Urban Revitalization,” 655.

<sup>51</sup> “Kozera Slain by Detectives in Gun Battle,” *Pittsburgh Press* (hereafter referred to as *Press*), 11 October 1943, 1.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

Walter Monaghan gripping his gun as he did in the gunfight, a mug shot of Kozera, a photograph of City Detective Vincent Bunocci using a bandaged hand to display his gun, an image of the hallway where the police ambushed Kozera, and an exterior photograph of the boarding house where the fight took place overlaid with Bunocci's gun barrel and bandaged hand (fig 3.7). This spread linked a seemingly non-descript Hill District residence and horrifying gun violence.



Fig. 3.7 *The Pittsburgh Press*, "Kozera Slain by Detectives in Gun Battle"

Pittsburgh's daily press had long reported on the Lower Hill's blight; such coverage illuminates the national-planning paradigm's influence on Pittsburgh's papers. A five-part 1934 *Post-Gazette* series on "Pittsburgh's Slums" shows the national-planning paradigm's early influence and the paper's identification of the Lower Hill as the city's prime example of blight. The series detailed the worst of Pittsburgh's housing conditions and, much like national planners, furnished statistics on city expenditures for slum upkeep to highlight the cost of blight.<sup>53</sup> Citing federal legislation and borrowing

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<sup>53</sup> Joseph J. Cloud, "Ideal Housing Believed Possible if Pittsburgh Enforces Slum Laws," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* (hereafter referred to as *Post-Gazette*), 24 January 1934, Section 2, 1; Cloud, "Experts' Definition of Good

from the national planning paradigm, the series argued that Pittsburgh should court federal funds with which to eradicate blight with slum clearance and public housing.<sup>54</sup> Although the series addressed bad housing conditions across the city, the vast majority of its photographs showed deteriorated housing in the Hill District. One photograph looked down a line of row houses from their rear yards (fig. 3.8).<sup>55</sup> A row of outhouses converged as a tight alleyway with implications of filth. The article's caption located the photograph in Sweeny Court, in the Hill District.<sup>56</sup> The outhouse-lined alley, discarded scraps of wood, and caption implied that the Hill District could stand in for "Pittsburgh Slums" and blight itself. In the years before redevelopment, the images that molded the public's mental pictures of the Hill District linked the neighborhood to horrific violence or made it synonymous with "Pittsburgh Slums."



Fig 3.8 *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, "Experts' Definition of Good Housing Shows Needs of High Class Home"

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Housing Shows Needs of High Class Home," *Post-Gazette*, 23 January 1934, Section 2, 1; Cloud, "Do You Live in a Home, or a House? Experts List Barest Needs for Homes," *Post-Gazette*, 22 January 1934, Section 2, 1; Cloud, "Need for New Housing Is Shown Despite Apparent Home Surplus," *Post-Gazette*, 26 January 1934, Section 2, 1; Cloud, "Mater Plan Aims to Co-ordinate Pittsburgh's Future Housing Needs," *Post-Gazette*, 27 January 1934, Section 2, 1.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Cloud, "Experts' Definition of Good Housing Shows Needs of High Class Home," *Post-Gazette*, 23 January 1934,

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* In the series' fourth article, the text addressed slums in the North Side, the South Side, East Liberty and the Hill District, but, again, its visuals spotlighted a Hill District court that had remained "Unchanged for 27 years." Specifically, the article included two photographs of the water pump in the Hill's Bedford Court. See Cloud, "Need for New Housing Is Shown."



### 3.8 THE LOCAL DAILIES' VISUAL COVERAGE OF THE LOWER HILL DURING THE REDEVELOPMENT ERA

Once the URA singled out the Lower Hill for demolition, the dailies shifted their visual focus towards the ninety-five acres in the Lower Hill slated for redevelopment. Their coverage effectively added testimony to the Conference's and redevelopers' arguments that the blighted Lower Hill must be demolished and could be redeveloped at no social costs. Images of the redevelopment plans that promised to transform the Lower Hill added even more support to this contention and constituted the great majority of the dailies' visuals during the redevelopment era. These images of technological marvel evoked a sense of awe, which the papers heightened by describing them as "spectacular," or promising the "city of tomorrow." Pittsburgh's dailies also illustrated their coverage with portraits of redevelopers posing with models, plans, or soon to be demolished homes, which advanced these leaders as the city's saviors.

#### 3.8.1 IMAGES OF THE LOWER HILL'S BLIGHT

When the PRPA released Mitchell and Ritchey's first comprehensive redevelopment plan for the Lower Hill in 1947, the *Sun-Telegraph* visually testified to the neighborhood's blight with an aerial photograph of the Lower Hill taken from the paper's downtown office. The photograph looked up the Hill along Bedford and Webster Avenues at a leftward angle.<sup>57</sup> This angle obscured the side streets that connected Bedford to Webster, in turn, making the blocks in-between appear crowded by jagged-roofed buildings. The main article referred to the Lower Hill as a "jumble of small stores, old brick apartments, row houses and miscellaneous structures."<sup>58</sup> The photograph's caption explained what streets were pictured, but

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<sup>57</sup> "The Pittsburgh Center," *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph Daily Graphic* (hereafter referred to as *Sun-Telegraph Daily Graphic*), 30 October 1947, 1.

<sup>58</sup> Hi Howard, "Town Hall Center Planned," *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph* (hereafter referred to as *Sun-Telegraph*), 30 October 1947, 1.

also noted that the Lower Hill had been “classified as blighted.”<sup>59</sup> Using the phrase “classified as blighted” alongside an aerial photograph that emphasized the neighborhood’s crowding painted a picture of a jumbled, tumultuous, and, above all, inarguably blighted Lower Hill that needed to be demolished.

In its 1953 coverage of Mitchell and Ritchey’s new Lower Hill proposal, the *Press* paired a similar aerial photograph of the crowded Lower Hill with captions spelling out its blight. Taken from downtown, the photograph completely obscured the Lower Hill’s arterial streets (fig. 3.9).<sup>60</sup> Photographs taken at this distance highlighted the neighborhood’s clutter and made its on-the-ground day-to-day life impossible to see. Its caption told readers that Mitchell and Ritchey’s plan aimed to replace the “106 acres of the blighted section shown here.”<sup>61</sup> The phrasing “shown here” created a direct connection between the Lower Hill, as represented in the image, and blight. The article’s text, meanwhile, reinforced the scene’s ugliness and clutter by calling the Lower Hill downtown’s “unsavory stepsister” filled with “jumbled and crumbling tenements.”<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> “The Pittsburgh Center,” *Sun-Telegraph Daily Graphic*, 30 October 1947, 1.

<sup>60</sup> Guy Wright, “Cultural Center to Lift Face of Lower Hill,” *Press*, 12 December 1953, 20.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

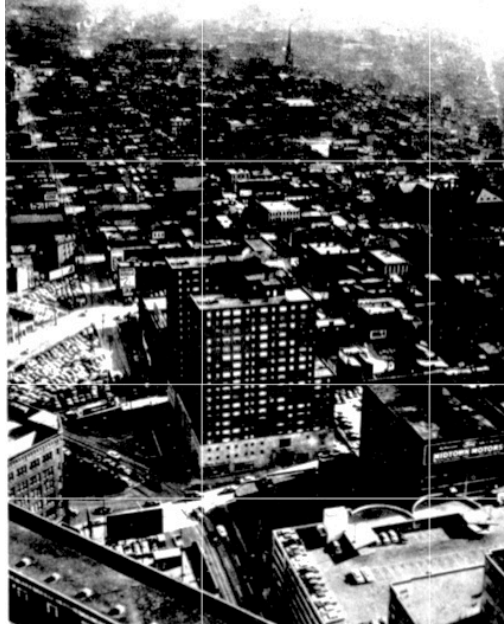


Fig. 3.9 *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph*, "The Pittsburgh Center"

An April 1954 *Post-Gazette* series by Ray Sprigle on slums focused almost exclusively on select on-the-ground examples of the Lower Hill's blight even though it addressed a citywide phenomenon. One article in the series quantified the city's slum housing by neighborhood, including the Strip District, the Lower Hill, the Upper Hill, the North Side, the South Side, and East Liberty.<sup>63</sup> Most of the series' slum photographs came from the Hill District, particularly the hundred-plus acres where redevelopment was under consideration. The series' first article investigated a residential court bordered by Humber Way and Mahon Street in the Hill District.<sup>64</sup> One of the article's photographs depicted the courts from Humber Way, an unpaved alley (fig. 3.10). Scraps of discarded wood leaned against the wooden stairways leading up to each doorway. Sprigle's title proclaimed "squalor is part of living in Hill District" and his caption reiterated that the image "shows squalor."<sup>65</sup> This repetition guided readers to conclude

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<sup>63</sup> Sprigle, "Slums Can't Be Torn Down Until New Homes Are Found for Tenants," *Post-Gazette*, 15 April 1954, 1.

<sup>64</sup> Sprigle, "Wretched Slum Returns Huge Profit to Owner," *Post-Gazette*, 12 April 1954.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

that the scene's conspicuous spare lumber represented squalor even though it could have also symbolized economic strategies like rummaging or do-it-yourself repairs.<sup>66</sup>



Fig 3.10 *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, "Wretched Slum Returns Huge Profit to Owner"

The series' April 17 article included a rare photograph of Lower Hill residents, but likened their neighborhood to certain death. The photograph showed a group of African American children seated on a building's interior stairway.<sup>67</sup> Sprigle's description of the children emphasized the scene's blight and suggested a similarity between the children's behavior and insects: "Kids swarm the broken stairs and splintered hallways." He also used language that implied a comparison to cattle when recounting his attempts to take a head count: "herd them into corners and hold them there to take a hasty census."<sup>68</sup> Sprigle described the Hill's homes as "crumbling kennels" and "dilapidated kennels."<sup>69</sup> He also referred to the Lower Hill with the harrowing phrase, "hundred deadly acres."<sup>70</sup> Using this phrase as a direct

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* This visual discourse reappeared in the series: the sixth article included a photograph of "tumble down shack home on Crawford Street" that emphasized litter. See Sprigle, "8,000 Jammed in Tumble-Down Rookeries in City's Hill District," *Post-Gazette*, 16 April 1954.

<sup>67</sup> Sprigle, "Life for Kids in Old Hill Tenement Is Desperate Struggle for Survival," *Post-Gazette*, 17 April 1954, 1.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Sprigle, "8,000 Jammed in Tumble-Down Rookeries in City's Hill District" *Post-Gazette*, 16 April 1954; and Sprigle, "Wretched Slum Returns Huge Profit to Owner," *Post-Gazette*, 12 April 1954.

<sup>70</sup> Sprigle, "Landlords of Hill Slum Tenements are Named," *Post-Gazette*, 21 April 1954, 15.

synonym for the specific acres targeted for demolition implied that it was a commonly understood characterization of the Lower Hill and that the benefits of its demolition were a foregone conclusion.

### 3.8.2 TECHNICAL SKETCHES AND PHOTOGRAPHS OF MODELS

All of the local dailies' visual coverage of Mitchell and Ritchey's 1947 Pittsburgh Center Plan included technical sketches and photographs of the plan's models that emphasized its technological awe.<sup>71</sup> The *Post-Gazette* included two aerial photographs of the model, one taken from the west and one taken from the east.<sup>72</sup> The *Post-Gazette* also included the sketch from Mitchell and Ritchey's original plan (see fig. 2.9) that made the Pittsburgh Center look like a flying saucer surrounded by streets akin to robotic arms.<sup>73</sup> The *Press* and *Sun-Telegraph* also used aerial photographs of Mitchell and Ritchey's model, but labeled them to highlight the key structures promised by the plan such as the domed Pittsburgh Center itself and nursery schools, hotels, and park apartments.<sup>74</sup>

The local dailies paired these photographs and sketches with text that heightened the redevelopment plan's technological glory and its role in transforming Pittsburgh into the city of the future. The *Post-Gazette*'s subheading promised "A City of the Future—All within a City of Today," the *Press* equated the Center to a "Pittsburgh of Tomorrow," and the *Sun-Telegraph* vowed "if the planners' dreams come true" the Lower Hill will be transformed into "one of the most spectacular panoramas of

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<sup>71</sup> "Pittsburgh Plans Municipal Center And Sports Arena," *Post-Gazette*, 30 October 1941, 1; "A City of the Future—All Within a City of Today," *Post-Gazette Daily Magazine*, 30 October 1947, 1; Gilbert Love, "Giant Center for Sports, Conventions Proposed for Pittsburgh of Tomorrow," *Press*, 30 October 1947, Section 3, 1; Hi Howard, "Town Hall Center Planned," *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph*, 30 October 1947, 1 and "The Pittsburgh Center," *Sun-Telegraph Daily Graphic*, 30 October 1947, 1.

<sup>72</sup> "A City of the Future—All Within a City of Today," *Post-Gazette Daily Magazine*, 30 October 1947, 1.

<sup>73</sup> Newman-Schmidt Studios, *The Pittsburgh Center*, print number 4779005, Conference Photographs, Box 33, Folder 8: "The Pittsburgh Center' 1947 Proposal."

<sup>74</sup> Howard, "The Pittsburgh Center," *Sun-Telegraph Daily Graphic*, 30 October 1947, 1; and Love, "Giant Center for Sports, Conventions Proposed for Pittsburgh of Tomorrow," *Press*, 30 October 1947, Section 3, 1.

urban reconstruction ever unfolded.”<sup>75</sup> The papers emphasized the plan’s futuristic marvels. Visitors arriving from the airport would helicopter into the city and land on the Center’s roof.<sup>76</sup> Visitors arriving by train would take moving stairways from the train station to the Pittsburgh Center.<sup>77</sup>

In its coverage of Mitchell and Ritchey’s 1953 Lower Hill Redevelopment plan, the *Press* combined a sketch taken directly from redevelopment boosters’ promotional brochures with text that spotlighted the plan’s futuristic promise. Drawn with its roof retracted, the arena, yet again, resembled a flying saucer or a giant robotic spider with steel legs (see fig. 2.11).<sup>78</sup> In the sketch, the plan’s arterial streets appeared wide, straight, and unmarred by texture or shading. Buildings similarly bore no texture or pattern, promising a perfectly immaculate, orderly, and sanitized future should redevelopment become a reality. This sketch also appeared in the Conference’s school resource booklet, “Pittsburgh: A Good Place to Live,” and the Chamber of Commerce’s promotional brochure, “The New Pittsburgh: The Most Talked about City in America.”<sup>79</sup> The press’s visual coverage directly borrowed redevelopment boosters’ visuals. The article’s text, written by Guy Wright, reiterated the awe the images meant to arouse. Hailing it as the “Most Ambitious Project of Pittsburgh’s entire program for the future,” Wright described the arena as “a pleasure dome.”<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> “A City of the Future—All Within a City of Today,” *Press*, 30 October 1947, Section 3, 1; Love, “Giant Center for Sports, Conventions Proposed for Pittsburgh of Tomorrow,” *Press*, 30 October 1947, Section 3, 1; Howard, “Town Hall Center Planned,” *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph*, 30 October 1947, 1.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> Howard, “Town Hall Center Planned,” *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph*, 30 October 1947, 1; “A City of the Future—All Within a City of Today,” *Press*, 30 October 1947, Section 3, 1; and Love, “Giant Center for Sports, Conventions Proposed for Pittsburgh of Tomorrow,” *Press*, 30 October 1947, Section 3, 1.

<sup>78</sup> Guy Wright, “Cultural Center to Lift Face of Lower Hill,” *Press*, 12 December 1953, 20.

<sup>79</sup> The Allegheny Conference on Community Development, *Pittsburgh: A Good Place to Live* [Pittsburgh Public Schools], Allegheny Conference Records, Box 176, folder 15: “Reports: Subseries 10 Education”; Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce, *The New Pittsburgh, the Most Talked About City in America*, Allegheny Conference Records, Box 216, folder 19: “Reports: Subseries: Public Relations/Pittsburgh.”

<sup>80</sup> Wright, “Cultural Center to Lift Face of Lower Hill,” *Press*, 12 December 1953, 20.

### 3.8.3 PORTRAITS OF REDEVELOPERS

The *Sun-Telegraph* illustrated its front-page coverage of Mitchell and Ritchey's 1947 Pittsburgh Center Plan with a portrait of prominent members of Pittsburgh's redevelopment coalition gazing at the Pittsburgh Center model. The portrait singled out these civic leaders as the city's saviors and encouraged readers to put the future in their hands. Mitchell and Ritchey made their Lower Hill redevelopment model in the shape of a triangle with the plan's jewel, the circular Pittsburgh Center, towards its base. In the *Sun-Telegraph's* photograph, the Pittsburgh Center sat at the heart of composition (fig. 3.11).<sup>81</sup> William B. McFall, the president of the Chamber of Commerce, stood directly behind the Center. Joseph Dilworth, the PRPA's vice president, and Richard K. Mellon flanked McFall, bending over the model. Mellon, the most powerful man in Pittsburgh, leaned on the base of the model, grasping it with both hands and drawing the eye towards him. Mellon commanded the scene much like he commanded the PRPA, the Allegheny Conference, and over a half a dozen Pittsburgh corporations. The caption spotlighted Mellon's, Dilworth's, and McFall's local prestige, calling them "civic leaders," and tied their prestige to the Center's future. The photograph showed them "looking at [the] future."<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Howard, "Town Hall Center Planned," *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph*, 30 October 1947, 1.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

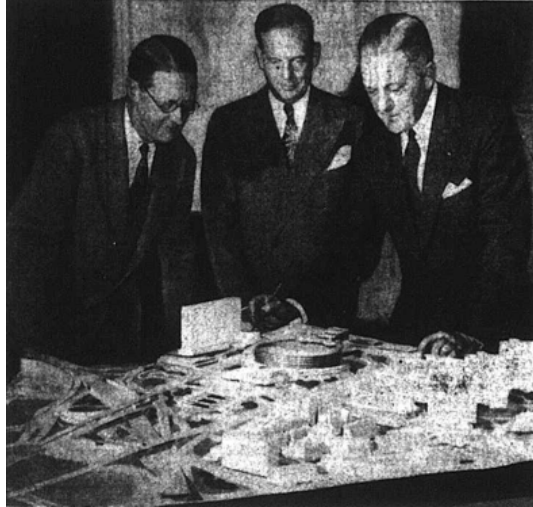


Fig. 3.11 *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph*, “Town Hall Center Planned”

When the Lower Hill redevelopment plan came before City Council in July 1955, the *Sun-Telegraph* illustrated its coverage with a portrait that highlighted the plan’s technical expertise and its public support. URA engineer, Robert Pease—who subsequently became the director of the URA and, later, of the Allegheny Conference—formed the heart of the photograph’s composition (fig. 3.12).<sup>83</sup> Pease leaned on a table spread with the Lower Hill’s redevelopment plans with one hand resting on the plan itself. Residents surrounding Pease leaned in to peer at the plan, but none made physical contact, yielding to Pease’s expertise. The *Sun-Telegraph* subtitled its article “Big Arena Unopposed.” Although it mentioned that two of the Lower Hill’s religious leaders voiced reluctance to move their congregations, it concluded, “Few, though, actually opposed the plans.”<sup>84</sup> Showing Pease surrounded by fascinated residents honoring his technical authority, The *Sun-Telegraph*’s visual coverage supported this narrative of unanimous support. The paper could have made other choices, for example, illustrating its coverage with a religious leader protesting relocation. Instead the paper highlighted a redeveloper’s expertise

<sup>83</sup> Joseph P. Browne, “Hill Project Heads for Council OK,” *Sun-Telegraph*, 7 July 1955, Section 3, 1. The caption explained the scene; “R.B. Pease (second from left), engineer for the Urban Redevelopment Authority, explaining plans for Lower Hill District to residents at a public hearing yesterday. There were no objections to the plan.”

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.* The religious leaders were Reverend Andrew Hughey of Bethel AME Church and Bernard Kaplan, the secretary of the Beth Hamedrash Hagodol Synagogue.



amidst an all-white group of enthusiastic citizens, bolstering the caption's claim that "There were no objections to the plan."<sup>85</sup>

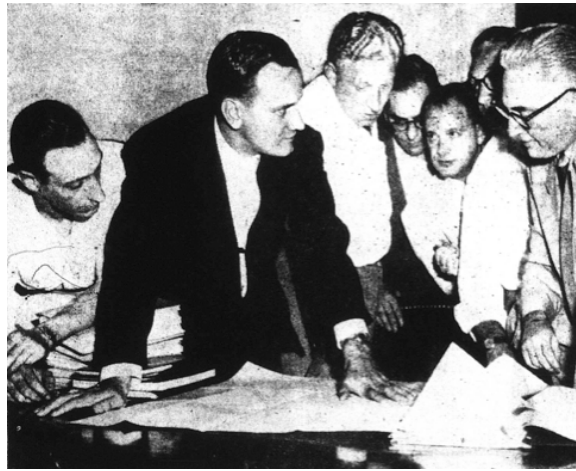


Fig. 3.12 *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph*, "Hill Project Heads for Council OK"

In May 1956, Mayor Lawrence and the Conference's Arthur Van Buskirk kicked off the Lower Hill's demolition by ceremoniously chipping away at the doorframe of a home on Epiphany Street; the *Sun-Telegraph* covered the event with a photograph elevating the mayor and his redeveloper allies. Taken from within the crowd staring up at Lawrence and Van Buskirk, the photograph included more African American Hill District residents than any photograph published by the local press during the redevelopment era (fig. 3.13).<sup>86</sup> However, only the backs of residents' heads can be seen. Instead, the photograph underscored Mayor Lawrence and the civic leaders on the raised ceremonial platform, such as Van Buskirk. African Americans in the crowd were presented as anonymous. The *Sun-Telegraph's* article mentioned no Lower Hill residents by name but detailed Lawrence's and Van Buskirk's role as crowbar-wielding leaders ushering in the city's future through the demolition ceremony.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> Charles W. Prine Jr., "First Lower Hill House Bites Dust," *Sun-Telegraph*, 31 May 1956, Section 2, 1.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.* The *Post-Gazette* illustrated its coverage of the ceremony with a photograph of the house, captioned to emphasize its blight: "A battered, old house" it "typifies the declining condition" many Lower Hill homes. See Mel Seidenbrg, "Razing of Old Homestead starts 'New Hill' Project," *Post-Gazette*, 30 May 1956, 32.

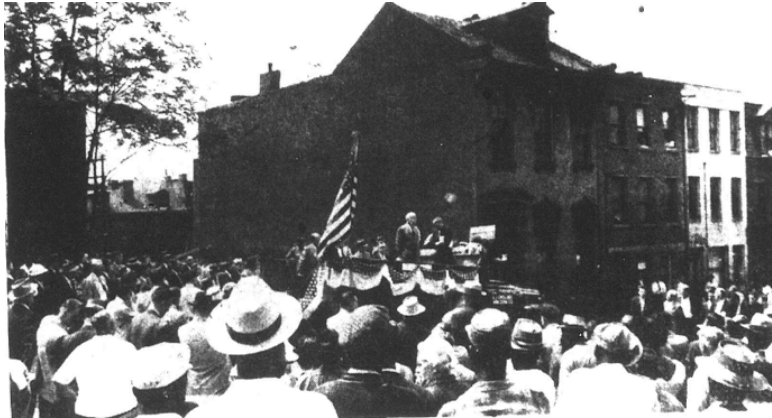


Fig. 3.13 *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph*, "First Lower Hill House Bites Dust"

### 3.9 NATIONAL PRESS COVERAGE OF REDEVELOPMENT

The Allegheny Conference courted good publicity for Pittsburgh's redevelopment program in national magazines. For locals, reading positive coverage about the city's "Renaissance" in prominent national magazines undoubtedly added a layer of authority to the Conference's and the local dailies' arguments for clearance and redevelopment. Selling the city's Renaissance narrative also made eminent sense to corporate leaders interested in keeping their employees and corporations in Pittsburgh. The Conference shaped national news coverage of Pittsburgh by distributing its promotional brochures to the national press, meeting with out-of-town reporters and photographers, and providing photographs to periodicals. The Conference's leaders urged national periodicals to emphasize Pittsburgh's new generation of business, political, and civic leadership as the driving narrative of the city's Renaissance. Images of the Conference's leadership and examples of its vision for the city's future dominated national periodicals' visual coverage.

Some magazines reiterated the Conference's view of Pittsburgh and its redevelopment by purchasing their photographic coverage from the Pittsburgh Photographic Library (PPL). The Conference formed the PPL in 1950 specifically to recruit talented photographers to create "a reservoir of progress

pictures” illustrating the city’s Renaissance.<sup>88</sup> The PPL made these images available to local and national periodicals.<sup>89</sup> Because slum photographs of the Lower Hill did not fit within the leadership-centered narrative, the only PPL photographs of the Lower Hill framed the neighborhood with examples of the Renaissance’s architectural triumph. PPL photographs, however, also appeared in a story that nuanced the Conference’s desolate representations of the Lower Hill. In 1952 the *Pittsburgh Spectator* illustrated an article on the Lower Hill’s redevelopment with PPL photographs of the Hill District’s people. The *Spectator*, though, ultimately concurred with the city’s redevelopment coalition that the Lower Hill needed to be demolished.

According to Park Martin, the Conference’s promotional literature helped garner positive coverage from the national press. In his address at the Conference’s 1948 annual dinner, Martin heralded the Conference’s most recent brochure, *Challenge and Response*, in terms of the publicity it drew: “Pittsburgh and Allegheny County have received hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of favorable, free publicity.”<sup>90</sup> Martin then went on to list an impressive array of newspapers and periodicals. The brochure had won coverage in “*The New York Times*, the *New York Herald Tribune*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Cleveland Press*, *The San Francisco Examiner*, *The Baltimore Sun*, *The Baltimore News Post*, *The Christian Science Monitor* and others.”<sup>91</sup> Indeed, each address Martin gave at the Conference’s annual dinners included a positive summary of the year’s national press coverage.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> “Meeting Minutes of the Program and Policy Committee,” 15 May 1951, Mellon Trust Records, Box 56, Folder 2: “University of Pittsburgh, Civic Photographic Library.”

<sup>89</sup> See, for example, Marshall Stalley, “Pittsburgh Photographic Library, Director’s Report,” 7 February 1952, Mellon Trust Records, Box 56, Folder 2.

<sup>90</sup> Park Martin, “Allegheny Conference Executive Director Annual Report,” 19 September 1948, Park Martin Papers, Box 1, Folder 5: “Executive Director Annual Reports 1946-1950.”

<sup>91</sup> Martin, “Allegheny Conference Executive Director Annual Report,” 19 September 1948. Martin similarly lauded the national reaction to *The Allegheny Conference . . . Presents!* In his 1957 address, he noted that the brochure had garnered “wide acclaim locally and across the nation.” See Martin, “Executive Director Annual Report,” 30 September 1957, Park Martin Papers. In 1958, he boasted, “requests are constantly received from out of the City for copies of the brochure.” See Martin, “Executive Director Annual Report,” 29 September 1958, Park Martin Papers.

<sup>92</sup> See, for example, Martin, “Executive Director Annual Report,” 20 September 1949, Park Martin Papers; Martin, “Executive Director Annual Report,” 11 September 1950, Park Martin Papers.

In a 1947 luncheon with *Fortune* reporters, Park Martin strengthened the Conference's influence on the national press's Pittsburgh narrative by convincing the reporters that the Conference's leadership was *the* story of Pittsburgh's Renaissance. According to Martin, when he took two *Fortune* reporters and a photographer to lunch, questions about the city's physical improvements dominated the conversation.<sup>93</sup> Martin redirected the reporters' interest towards the men behind the city's physical transformation: "the day of the old rugged individualist was gone . . . such younger men as Richard K. Mellon, H.J. Heinz, II, Edgar Kaufmann, and others were the leaders and active in support of the Conference and the program."<sup>94</sup> Martin convinced *Fortune's* reporters that the Conference's leadership was "the big story."<sup>95</sup> The magazine's 1947 feature on Pittsburgh, entitled "Pittsburgh's New Powers," heavily emphasized the Conference and its leaders.<sup>96</sup>

Other national magazines took up this narrative, both in terms of their text and their visual coverage. According to Martin, "Other national magazines, such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *Harpers*, followed" *Fortune's* lead by "featuring the names of Mellon, Heinz, Kaufmann, and others."<sup>97</sup> In October 1949, *Time* ran a cover story on Richard K. Mellon contrasting his generation of civic leadership to earlier industrialists such as Andrew Carnegie who built the city's steel industry but transformed its atmosphere into "an aesthetic abortion."<sup>98</sup> Mellon, Kaufmann, and Heinz, in contrast, committed themselves to "working to repair the damage done by the . . . thoughtlessness of the old empire builders."<sup>99</sup> *Time* cover illustration visually re-asserted the article's emphasis on Mellon as the Renaissance's leader and prophet (Fig. 3.14).<sup>100</sup> Mellon's face, drawn with great detail, dominated the left side of the image. Two abstract city skylines, separated by a horizontal line of clouds, filled the image's background. Drawn in

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<sup>93</sup> Martin, "Narrative of the Allegheny Conference," 64.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> "Pittsburgh's New Powers," *Fortune*, February 1947.

<sup>97</sup> Martin, "Narrative of the Allegheny Conference," 64.

<sup>98</sup> "Mr. Mellon's Patch," *Time*, 3 October 1949, 12, in Allegheny Conference Records, Box 12, Folder 6.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, cover illustration.

different shades of gray, the bottom skyline represented the smoggy and grimy Pittsburgh of yesteryear. The top skyline, golden instead of gray, emerged out of the clouds, emanating white beams of light into blue sky. Behind Mellon's shoulder, a construction crane hoisted a large golden triangle. Mellon's rule, as symbolized by the crane and golden triangle, transformed a bleak gray underworld into a glistening golden city atop clouds. *Time* represented Mellon, in text and illustration, as the city's savior, echoing Park Martin's collaboration with *Fortune* two years earlier.

IMAGE UNAVAILABLE  
DUE TO COPYRIGHT

Fig. 3.14 "Mr. Mellon's Patch," *Time*, 3 October 1949, cover illustration

Mellon's predominance in Pittsburgh's national news coverage persisted into the 1950s, most notably in Margaret Bourke-White's May 1956 *Life* photo-essay, "Mellon's Miracle." *Life*, like *Time*, indicted Mellon's forebears: "Much of the grime that blackened Pittsburgh had boiled from stacks financed by Mellon money."<sup>101</sup> Mellon and the Allegheny Conference, however, were making amends. Five of the article's photographs showcased Mellon, including a photograph of Mellon and Mayor Lawrence "in earnest discussion" in front of downtown's brand-new Mellon Square Park (Fig. 3.15).<sup>102</sup> Bourke-White photographed the scene with Lawrence's back turned to the camera and Mellon's face visible. This shot prioritized Mellon's power and activity over Lawrence's and reiterated one of the Conference's favorite themes: to save their city, the city's Republican businessmen put politics aside and allied with Democrats like Lawrence. This alliance made the Renaissance possible.

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<sup>101</sup> Margaret Bourke-White, "Mellon's Miracle," *Life*, 14 May 1956, 153, in Allegheny Conference Records, Box 9, Folder 57.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

IMAGE UNAVAILABLE  
DUE TO COPYRIGHT

Fig. 3.15 Margaret Bourke-White, "Mellon's Miracle," *Life*, 14 May 1956

In addition to following Park Martin's lead by making the Conference's leadership the center of the Pittsburgh story, national periodicals followed the Conference's visual lead by using redevelopers' visual images of the arena. Even a periodical somewhat hostile to Pittsburgh's redevelopment, *Architectural Forum*, used the same Mitchell and Ritchey imagery that the Conference used to illustrate the Lower Hill's redevelopment.<sup>103</sup> A February 1957 *Architectural Forum* article characterized Pittsburgh's Renaissance as "Projects without Plans." The article asserted that no one used downtown's Mellon Square Park because it was disconnected from popular pedestrian routes. This disuse made it no more than "eye-candy" for high-rise offices.<sup>104</sup> The article predicted the same fate for the Lower Hill Redevelopment, but its illustrations evoked the Allegheny Conference's promotional materials. As discussed above, the Lower Hill spread in 1956's *The Allegheny Conference . . . Presents!* juxtaposed unflattering photographs of Lower Hill rear yards and an alley with a photographed model of arena and its retractable roof. *Architectural Forum* illustrated the Lower Hill redevelopment with the exact same photograph of the Mitchell and Ritchey model (see fig 2.13).<sup>105</sup> *Architecture Forum* accompanied its photographed model with text that questioned the Renaissance's perfection, but its imagery emulated the Allegheny Conference's.

The Allegheny Conference also used the Pittsburgh Photographic Library to disseminate its worldview; many of the periodicals that utilized the PPL took the Conference's "progress pictures"

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<sup>103</sup> "Projects Without Plans," *Architectural Forum*, February 1957, 150-151. In 1962, *Architectural Forum* Associate Editor, Jane Jacobs, would visit Pittsburgh and heap criticism on its Renaissance and planners as a whole. See James V. Cunningham, "Jane Jacobs Visits Pittsburgh," *New City*, 15 September 1962.

<sup>104</sup> "Projects Without Plans," *Architectural Forum*, February 1957, 150.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 151 and *The Allegheny Conference . . . Presents!*, 13.

narrative as-is, selling the Conference's vision of blight and urban rebirth to the nation and adding a layer of authority to its vision in Pittsburgh.<sup>106</sup> A June 1952 *Fortune* article, entitled "Pittsburgh Rebuilds" relied entirely on PPL photographs. As noted in Chapter Two, by 1952 the Conference's Marshall Stalley ran the PPL and the PPL's photographers took direction from John Grove, the Conference's public-relations specialist.<sup>107</sup> *Fortune's* article featured images of Conference pet programs such as Gateway Center. A PPL photograph used by *Fortune* also captured the "before and after" progress narrative by juxtaposing the Lower Hill with downtown's brand new Alcoa building. Taken by Clyde Hare, the photograph showed the Alcoa building in close-up detail on the frame's left with the Lower Hill spreading out on the right (fig. 3.16).<sup>108</sup> The image showed one of the Hill's arterial streets at an angle, which made the neighborhood's densely built-up blocks choke the street. Framing the Lower Hill's haphazardly constructed blocks with the Alcoa building's straight lines and orderly square windows amplified the neighborhood's cluttered chaos. Heightening this contrast, the photograph's caption called the Alcoa building "a daring experiment in new design," described the Hill District as "the struggling, slummy Hill District," and stated outright that the Hill stood "out sharply against" the Alcoa building.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> According to the PPL's director Marshall Stalley, the PPL sold images to *Fortune*, *Life*, *Look*, and *Photography Annual*. See Marshall Stalley, "Three Year Report of the Pittsburgh Photographic Library, University of Pittsburgh for the Period from June 1950 to July 1953," July 1953, Mellon Trust Records, Box 56, Folder 1. "University of Pittsburgh, Civic Photographic Library." See also Stalley's 7 February 1952 and 1 August 1952 director's reports, Mellon Trust Records, Box 56, Folder 2: "University of Pittsburgh, Civic Photographic, Director's Reports."

<sup>107</sup> On the Conference's influence on the PPL, see Marshall Stalley, "Pittsburgh Photographic Library Director's Annual Report," 1 August 1952, Mellon Trust Records, Box 56, Folder 2: "University of Pittsburgh, Civic Photographic, Director's Reports." In this report Stalley explained, "The Photographic Library has received from the Allegheny Conference a detailed statement of the items in the civic program which has been used as a guide for photographers." On Grove's influence in particular, see "Letter from Marshall Stalley to Mr. Viers Adams, Director of Special Services, University of Pittsburgh," in University of Pittsburgh, University Archives, Chancellors' Collection—Fitzgerald, office file—nuclear research-public instruction, dept of 2/10 1945/55 FF 232-247; Folder 244: "Correspondence from 1954-1955 Pittsburgh Photographic Library."

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 93; Clyde Hare, *Alcoa Building contrasted against the Lower Hill area*, April 1952, Pittsburgh Photographic Library, Pennsylvania Room, Carnegie Library, catalog number 8533.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*



Fig. 3.16 Clyde Hare, *Alcoa Building contrasted against the Lower Hill area*, April 1952, Pittsburgh Photographic Library, Pennsylvania Room, Carnegie Library, catalog number 8533.

While *Fortune's* use of the PPL's photographs reiterated the Conference's vision of the Lower Hill and the city's redeveloped future, one notable exception, the *Pittsburgh Spectator* magazine, diverged from this visual discourse by using PPL photographs to humanize the Lower Hill. In August 1952, the *Spectator* ran a four-page article entitled "The Hill" illustrated by photographs taken by PPL photographer, Fran Nestler.<sup>110</sup> The article's cover photograph showed a young African American girl playing on playground. Wearing a tidy floral-print dress, white socks, and loafers, the girl clutched a monkey bar. Nestler photographed the girl amidst active play. Her elbows bent and arm muscles flexed, she used her right foot, pressed against a metal side bar, to stay off the ground.<sup>111</sup> The Hill's children formed a key theme in the *Spectator's* coverage. One caption poetically mused, "The Hill is the young because with the young there is hope."<sup>112</sup> This perspective contrasted sharply with the redevelopers'

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<sup>110</sup> "The Hill," *Pittsburgh Spectator*, August 1952, 14-17, in Allegheny Conference Records, Box 11, Folder 30.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.



and the local press's images of Hill District children. The Lower Hill photograph featuring a child in *The Allegheny Conference . . . Presents!* used children as testimony to the neighborhood's unfriendly built environment.<sup>113</sup> The local press, meanwhile, showed children crowded into a Lower Hill stairway.<sup>114</sup>

The *Spectator* also selected Nestler photographs of Hill District institutions, including one of a popular entertainment venue, the Roosevelt Theatre. Redevelopment boosters and the city's dailies, meanwhile, neglected the Hill's thriving entertainment culture. Nestler's wide-angle photograph of the Roosevelt captured the theatre's marquee, which proclaimed the Roosevelt "The Show Place of the Hill," as well as movie advertisements and the barbershop next door.<sup>115</sup> Nestler photographed the theatre at a busy time of day. Moviegoers hustled in and out of the theatre's entryway, two men and one woman leaned against the theatre's ticket window, and a crowd of men stood together in front of the barbershop. The magazine's text reiterated this sense of cultural vibrancy by boasting about the neighborhood's musicians and prizefighters: the Hill "is (or was) a gathering place for . . . boxers who claimed (not without justification in at least one case) that they could lay Joe Louis low in less than seven rounds" and home to "a song-writer whose melodies hit the national jukeboxes at least once a year."<sup>116</sup>

The article's photographs and much of its text humanized the Hill District to a degree unseen in the city's daily press, but snatches of the *Spectator's* language transformed the neighborhood into a picturesque caricature. The *Spectator* hailed some of the Lower Hill's successful residents and programs, including a detailed salute to Howard McKinney, the founder of Hill City, a youth recreation and learning center.<sup>117</sup> The *Spectator* also critiqued outsiders who viewed the Hill as a stew of "narcotics pushers" and prostitutes, stereotypes supported by the *Press's* and *Post-Gazette's* extensive coverage of vice in

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<sup>113</sup> *The Allegheny Conference . . . Presents!*, 12.

<sup>114</sup> Sprigle, "Life for Kids in Old Hill Tenement Is Desperate Struggle for Survival," *Post-Gazette*, 17 April 1954, 1.

<sup>115</sup> "The Hill," *Pittsburgh Spectator*, August 1952, 15.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

the Hill. The *Spectator*, though, invoked a similar caricature when it gloried in the neighborhood's "crap-table operators who eagerly waited for Friday and relief checks" and the "sisters" decked out in "lipstick and low-cut gowns."<sup>118</sup> With these descriptions, the *Spectator* took readers slumming in the Hill. Indeed, in an early paragraph, the article likened the Hill to "a state of mind, a place to go slumming, a day dream of success, or a place to get \$7.50 on a pawned suit."<sup>119</sup>

Even though the *Spectator's* photographs and text gave a more nuanced vision of the Lower Hill, the article ultimately favored the Lower Hill's demolition and redevelopment. The article highlighted many positive aspects of living in the Lower Hill, but it concluded that the neighborhood's derelict built environment spawned a derelict state of mind and, much like the Conference, viewed demolition and redevelopment as the only answer. "With the coming of the Point Park and increased public housing," in other words, urban redevelopment, "the Hill people will not have to live in cellars and think like people who live in cellars."<sup>120</sup> Speaking of a hypothetical Hill District steelworker, the article imagined him leaving for work and glancing "back over his shoulder" at his home. The steelworker's son "was born in that house," but "soon it will be torn down for the new Pittsburgh." The "new Pittsburgh," though, "will make everyone insiders."<sup>121</sup> The *Spectator* humanized the Lower Hill's residents and acknowledged their attachments to their homes and histories, but concluded that redevelopment would reshape the city for the best.

### 3.10 CONCLUSION

Visual images, especially photographs, were crucial in helping the Allegheny Conference insert its perception of blight and its solution—urban redevelopment—into Pittsburgh's public discourse. Images

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<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

filled the Conference's brochures and shaped how local leaders and the local and national media viewed the city's older neighborhoods, the Conference, and redevelopment. Brochures' images, text, and context combined to argue for the demolition of older neighborhoods—particularly the Lower Hill—and their redevelopment into space-age architectural marvels. The Conference's three main brochures and publications like the Chamber's *Greater Pittsburgh* set out to make this argument to the city's business and political leaders and its decision and opinion makers. The Conference's school resource booklets and exhibits, in turn, broadened their audience to school children and the wider public.

The local and national press, which had been heavily courted by the Conference, also used pictures to convey the message of redevelopment. By inviting the editors of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, *The Pittsburgh Press*, and the *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph* to join its Sponsoring Committee, the Conference received positive local press coverage. This positive coverage included images and graphics that echoed redevelopers' visuals: photographs that emphasized the Lower Hill's blight and sketches and models that promised the Lower Hill's redevelopment would deliver the city of the future. The local papers also illustrated their redevelopment coverage with photographs of redevelopers posed with models, blueprints, or in front of soon to be demolished buildings. According to Pittsburgh's dailies, the Allegheny Conference and its allies in the URA and city government had the authority, power, and insight to remake the city. The Conference received similarly positive coverage from magazines like *Fortune* and *Life*. The national media spotlighted the Conference's leadership, the contrasts between the old city and the new, and the arena's technical awe.

The *Pittsburgh Spectator* drew from the Pittsburgh Photographic Library just as magazines like *Fortune* did, but diverged from redevelopers' representational repertoire by depicting playing children and bustling commercial streets in the Lower Hill. The *Spectator*, though, ultimately agreed with redevelopers that life could not truly thrive in the Lower Hill's blighted built environment and saw demolition and redevelopment as the only solution. The *Spectator* also caricatured the neighborhood's

culture, taking outsiders vicariously slumming through the Hill's history and culture. As the next chapter will show, only the city's African American newspaper, *The Pittsburgh Courier*, covered the Hill District's people, culture, and history, without this slumming undertone. The next chapter examines how the *Courier's* status as neighborhood insider and advocate shaped its coverage of the Lower Hill.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CALL IT A JUNGLE, A GHETTO OR A SLUM, BUT TO MANY IT WAS A HAPPY PLAYGROUND: TEENIE HARRIS'S AND THE *PITTSBURGH COURIER*'S HILL DISTRICT, 1940-1956

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In striking contrast to redevelopers' desolate and derelict representations of the Lower Hill, Charles "Teenie" Harris, the lead photographer for the city's African American newspaper, *The Pittsburgh Courier*, depicted the Hill as a place of noteworthy institutions with a vibrant social life. The voice of the Hill District community, *Courier* used Harris's photographs to counter negative racial representations in the mainstream press by showing the Hill and its people in a positive light. Harris and the *Courier* also documented the neighborhood's structural and social ills, but, unlike the redevelopers, they kept the concerns of residents uppermost in their thoughts. By visually representing the Lower Hill's structural and social diversity, as both a "slum" and a "happy playground," Harris and the *Courier* captured a broad expanse of the neighborhood's reality.<sup>1</sup> Redevelopers' sole emphasis on blighted built environments and futuristic redevelopment, meanwhile, blinded them to the social costs of clearance.

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<sup>1</sup> "Sachem Alley Is Many Things to Many People," *Pittsburgh Courier* (hereafter referred to as *Courier*), 18 July 1953, 6.

## 4.2 REPRESENTING THE HILL'S BUILT ENVIRONMENT: FROM PRIDE TO CRITIQUE

Born in 1908 to a family with deep social and commercial ties to the Hill District, Teenie Harris grew up embedded in the neighborhood's social and commercial life.<sup>2</sup> Harris's mother, Olga, and older brother, George, ran the Masio boarding house on Wylie Avenue in the Lower Hill. Over the years, the Masio also featured a billiard parlor, a barber shop, a miniature golf course, and, for a brief spell, a restaurant. Harris's brother William "Woogie" Harris, meanwhile, co-ran the city's illegal "numbers" lottery with Gus Greenlee. Both Woogie and Gus reinvested their numbers earnings into businesses ranging from Woogie's Crystal Barbershop to Gus's Crawford Grill.<sup>3</sup> According to photography historian, Cheryl Finley, Harris's lifelong intimacy with the area gave him "unrivaled access" to the Hill and its residents.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, between 1930 and 1980, Harris took nearly 80,000 photographs, almost all of which focused on the Hill District. As a lifelong resident of the Hill District, Harris valued the neighborhood's institutions and, as a result, centered his photographs on residents and specific businesses, nightclubs, and churches; in doing so, he transformed the anonymous buildings in redevelopers' visual rhetoric into spaces where people shopped, played, and prayed.

The difference between Harris's and redevelopers' perspective can be seen in Harris's depiction of Fullerton Street. Redevelopment boosters' rear-yard photograph featured in the "Allegheny Conference . . . Presents!" depicted the backside of buildings that fronted on Fullerton (see fig. 2.3).<sup>5</sup> A few blocks away, where Fullerton met Wylie, Harris photographed such social clubs, restaurants and

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<sup>2</sup> Laurence Glasco, "An American Life, An American Story: Charles 'Teenie' Harris and Images of Black Pittsburgh," in *Teenie Harris Photographer: Image, Memory, History*, ed. Cheryl Finley, Laurence Glasco, and Joe W. Trotter (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press and Carnegie Museum of Art, 2011), 1-22; Cheryl Finley, "The Practice of Everyday Life," in *Teenie Harris Photographer: Image, Memory, History*, 39-68; and Nicole R. Fleetwood, "'One Shot': Charles 'Teenie' Harris and the Photographic Practice of Non-Iconicity," in *Troubling Vision: Performance, Visuality, and Blackness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 33-70.

<sup>3</sup> Glasco, "An American Life," 1-22.

<sup>4</sup> Finley, "The Practice of Everyday Life," 65.

<sup>5</sup> See Chapters Two and Three in this dissertation for analyses of this photograph and brochure.

businesses as the Loendi Club (fig 4.1), Stanley's Tavern, Hartzberg's Bar, and the Rhumba Theatre.<sup>6</sup> A Harris photograph of the Loendi Club featured a three-story brick building that stretched to the far-right edge and upper-right corner of the frame (fig. 4.1). The street filled the bottom of the composition, drawing the eye across the street, between two parked cars, up the club's stairs, and into its entryway. This composition made the Loendi the image's primary subject. A Harris photo of the Rhumba Theater also looked across a street to the theater's marque and entryway, located at the vertical and horizontal heart of the composition (fig. 4.2). Redevelopers' images of the same area differed sharply from those by Harris. A John Shrader image commissioned by the Conference of Fullerton and Wylie portrayed the intersection but not the people or businesses, suggesting that individual businesses were irrelevant (see fig. 2.20).<sup>7</sup> Harris's photographs transformed the institutions that enlivened the neighborhood into discrete subjects worthy of documentation.

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<sup>6</sup> On the Loendi Club, see Charles "Teenie" Harris, *Exterior view of Loendi Club, with the letters 'LC' embroidered on front of awning, with cars in foreground, 83 Fullerton Avenue, Hill District*, c. 1947-1958, Carnegie Museum of Art Charles "Teenie" Harris Archive Collection (all Harris images unless otherwise noted come from the Carnegie Museum of Art's Charles "Teenie" Harris Collection), accession number 2001.35.11769; *Exterior of the Loendi Club, 83 Fullerton Avenue, Hill District*, July 1946, accession number, 2001.35.3415. On Stanley's Tavern, see Harris, *Stanley's Tavern neon sign with champagne glass on brick building at Fullerton Street and Wylie Avenue, Hill District*, c. 1930-1970, accession number 2001.35.8522; *Stanley's Tavern at Fullerton Street and Wylie Avenue, Hill District*, c. 1948-1960, accession number 2001.35.10288; *Exterior of Stanley's Tavern with wood paneled exterior and large neon sign with bubbling champagne, Fullerton Street and Wylie Avenue, Hill District*, c. 1945-1970, accession number 2001.35.10297; *Exterior of Stanley's Tavern with neon sign with coffee cup, martini glass and clock reading 5:25, Fullerton Street and Wylie Avenue, Hill District*, c. 1948-1960, accession number 2001.35.10287. On Hartzberg's, see Harris, *Intersection with Stanley's Tavern, Hartzberg's, and Appliance Mart, with M. J. Farrell Building on corner, Fullerton Street and Wylie Avenue, Hill District*, c. 1945-1965, accession number 2001.35.7794; *Hartzberg's Bar with glass block windows, 67 Fullerton Street, Hill District*, c. 1940-1950, accession number 2001.35.8523. On the Rhumba Theater, see Harris, *Exterior of Rhumba Theatre with advertisement for movie 'Strangers on a Train,' 53-55 Fullerton Street, Hill District*, c. 1951, accession number 2001.35.3327; *Exterior of Rhumba Theatre seen from across street, Fullerton Street, Hill District*, February 1962, accession number 2001.35.3330.

<sup>7</sup> See Chapter Two of this dissertation for a full analysis of redevelopers' survey photographs of the Hill including photographs of the Fullerton and Wylie intersection.



Fig. 4.1 Charles "Teenie" Harris, American, 1908–1998, *Exterior view of Loendi Club, with the letters "LC" embroidered on front of awning, with cars in foreground, 83 Fullerton Avenue, Hill District, c. 1947-1958*, black and white: Kodak Safety Film, H: 5 in. x W: 4 in. (12.70 x 10.20 cm), Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: Heinz Family Fund, 2001.35.11769



Fig. 4.2 Charles "Teenie" Harris, American, 1908–1998, *Exterior of Rhumba Theatre with advertisement for movie "Strangers on a Train," 53-55 Fullerton Street, Hill District, c. 1951*, black and white: unknown safety film, H: 4 in. x W: 5 in. (10.20 x 12.70 cm), Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: Heinz Family Fund, 2001.35.3327

Another example of the contrast between Harris and the redevelopers can be seen in their respective treatments of the intersection of Chatham and Wylie. A Harris photograph of Chatham Street, when compared to one taken by the Pittsburgh City Planning Commission (CPC), demonstrates how Harris's compositional choices showcased local institutions. Both images looked towards downtown from the intersection of Chatham and Wylie. The CPC photo directed the viewer to the left side of Chatham (see fig. 2.19).<sup>8</sup> A parked car sat in the foreground. To the left of the car a dirt lot stretched out of the frame and telephone poles lined the street. The photograph's compressed line of vision obscured the buildings on the left side of this street, including a YWCA midway down the block. Harris's image, in contrast, looked across Chatham Street from its right sidewalk directly at the YWCA (fig. 4.3). Harris captured the block at an angle that accentuated rather than hid the YWCA. The YWCA

<sup>8</sup> Pittsburgh City Planning Commission, *A-7 Looking south on Chatham Street from Wylie Ave. YWCA on left*, Conference Photographs, Box 33, Folder 6: "Lower Hill Before Demolition."



stretched to the top-left of the frame and angled downward to the right, as the YWCA's roof gave way to clear sky. The CPC's image made the Lower Hill look like an impersonal jumble of brick buildings. In doing so, it reinforced the Conference's emphasis on intersections and streets rather than institutions.<sup>9</sup> Conversely, Harris's image highlighted a large neighborhood social center, one of demolition's social costs.



Fig. 4.3 Charles "Teenie" Harris, American, 1908–1998, *Central YWCA on Chatham Street, Hill District*, August 1955, black and white: Kodak Safety Film, H: 4 in. x W: 5 in. (10.20 x 12.70 cm), Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: Heinz Family Fund, 2001.35.7848

Unlike redevelopers' images, Harris used the Lower Hill's streets, particularly local landmarks like the Loendi Club, as a backdrop for portraiture, a technique that integrated the neighborhood's built

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<sup>9</sup> For example, as noted in Chapter Two, John Shrader took a series of photographs of the Lower Hill that the Allegheny Conference subsequently archived. Shrader photographed the neighborhood's intersections rather than its houses, institutions, or businesses; the Conference captioned each photograph by labeling the scene's intersection: "Fullerton at Clark St., Looking south on Fullerton," "Looking north on Elm St. (left) and east on Clark St. (right)," "Logan St. at Colwell St., looking northwest on Logan St." They maintained this captioning practice even in scenes that included local landmarks. The Conference captioned a Shrader photograph that included the Crawford Grill: "Wylie near Fullerton looking west on Wylie towards downtown." Shrader's images appear in *Allegheny Conference On Community Development* (Pittsburgh, Pa.), Photographs, 1892-1981, MSP 285, Library and Archives Division, Senator John Heinz History Center, Box 33, Folder 5: "Lower Hill—Before Demolition."

environment into residents' self-presentations and documented their connections to the neighborhood. In 1941, four members of the social club, Debs About Town, donned fur-lined dress coats, exquisite hats, and corsages while they posed for Harris in front of the Loendi Club (fig. 4.4).<sup>10</sup> Similarly, in 1947, a woman wearing a tidy dark dress suit, a wide-brimmed woven hat and a fresh corsage had Harris photograph her on the Loendi Club's stairway (fig. 4.5).<sup>11</sup> As the Hill's most elite social space, a photograph taken inside the Loendi Club marked high status.<sup>12</sup> The Loendi Club hosted elegant weddings<sup>13</sup> and special events that drew celebrities like boxer Joe Louis<sup>14</sup> and musicians Cab Calloway<sup>15</sup> and Duke Ellington.<sup>16</sup> In October 1944, local elites chose the club to host a reception honoring international music

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<sup>10</sup> Harris, *Debs About Town members Ms. Robinson, Joyce, Marion Harris (Slater), and Ethel, standing behind block wall, in front of Loendi Club*, 1941, accession number 2001.35.34224. Harris took a total of seven group portraits of the Debs in 1941 as well as other group portraits in front of the Club. See, for example, *Group portrait of six Debs About Town National Officers, left to right; Odessa Christopher, Eleanor Trott, Ada Fisher, Barbara Jones, Lydia Taylor, and Fedelma Boyd wearing leopard coat and dark hat with light-colored flowers, holding alligator handbag, posed in front of Loendi Club*, 1941, accession number 2001.35.34222; *Group portrait of five Debs About Town members; Dorothy James, Lucille Johnson, Jean Wright, Eleanor Trott, and Pauline Stewart, wearing fur or fur-trimmed coats, posed in front of Loendi Club porch*, 1941, accession number 2001.35.34223; *Men, women, and a child gathered on balcony of Loendi Club decorated with American flag bunting and sign reading '50th Anniversary,' September 1947*, accession number 2001.35.19667; and *Group portrait of fourteen women, including one on right wearing eyeglasses and bold floral dress, posed on steps in front of Loendi Club*, c. 1944, accession number 2001.35.28873.

<sup>11</sup> Harris, *Portrait of woman wearing dark suit and dark woven hat with wide brim, standing on exterior stairs of the Loendi Club, 83 Fullerton Avenue, Hill District*, c. 1947, accession number 2001.35.29938.

<sup>12</sup> The city's black professional elite flocked to the Loendi during the 1940s and 1950s, including Judge William H. Hastie, Attorney Wendell Stanton, and Dentist Dr. Robert Bolden, all of whom Harris photographed. See Harris, *Judge William H. Hastie shaking hands with possibly Nelson Morgan, with group of men including Attorney Wendell Stanton lower left, P. L. Prattis standing second from left, and Dentist Dr. Robert Bolden second from right, in Loendi Club*, c. 1948, accession number, 2001.35.4433.

<sup>13</sup> Harris took numerous wedding portraits inside the club, such as *Portrait of bride Minerva Williams Brice wearing gown with long train and long sleeves with puffed shoulders, posed holding bouquet, in Loendi Club*, July 1942, accession number 2001.35.17837; *Group portrait of wedding party from left: Roland Lucas, Kenneth Harris, groom Ernest Summers, bride Doris 'Dutch' Green Summers, Olive Jackson Cobbs, Thelma Turner, and Audrey Smith, posed in Loendi Club*, 6 June 1953; accession number 2001.35.6381; *Group portrait of wedding party with five women, left to right: Frances Moore, Kathryn Bolden, Beatrice Williams, Mary McNeal, and Suzanne Patterson; four men: Harry Bobo, Marty Sloan, Herbert Douglass, and Bill Carter, posed in Loendi Club with bamboo plants in background for Williams-Brice wedding*, July 1942, accession number 2001.35.17845.

<sup>14</sup> Harris, *William 'Woogie' Harris, Cab Calloway, John Henry Lewis, and Joe Louis, with Geraldine or Philistine Bobo at left, in Loendi Club*, April 1938, accession number, 2001.35.3091.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Harris, *Duke Ellington holding glass with bandaged finger standing with group of men, including Alderman Harry Fitzgerald third from left, and women, posed in Loendi Club for Synchronettes Club party*, February 1938, accession number 2001.35.11477.

and film star, Lena Horne.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, throughout the mid-twentieth century Harris used the Loendi's interior as a backdrop for dozens of portraits commissioned by elite social clubs like the Ducks Club.<sup>18</sup> This reflection of high status likely trickled out to the club's exterior. Yet if residents saw the entire Lower Hill as "the city's worst slum," as the Allegheny Conference labeled it, they would not have posed for portraits outside the Club where no members-only rules or fine brick walls protected their high-status portraits from associations with a slum. Clearly, these women took pride in the Loendi Club and its immediate surroundings.

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<sup>17</sup> Harris took over a dozen photographs of the event including *Lena Horne standing next to cake inscribed 'Greetings Lena Horne' with Bill Nunn Sr. on right, in Loendi Club, for reception in honor of Horne*, October 1944, accession number, 2001.35.5616. Meanwhile someone snapped a photo of Harris dancing with Horne, *Lena Horne wearing wool suit with three large buttons, dancing with Charles 'Teenie' Harris wearing pinstriped suit, in Loendi Club*, February 1938, accession number 2001.35.5613.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, *Group portrait of the We'uns Club, including Louise Stanton Chandler, Alma Thompson, Willnette Brooks Young, Helen Ruth Woods Thomas, Louise Johnson Barnett, and Elosie Paige in front row; unknown woman, Dixie Bray, Eleanor Waters, Oteria Willaman Nicholson, Emma Powell Thompson, and Gladys Burrell Hays in back row, posed in Loendi Club*, c. 1940-1955; accession number 2001.35.6951; *Group portrait of twenty-three members of the Ducks Club, pictured front: Alma Fox, Jane Williams, and Marion Slater; second row: Jean Slater, Betty Jean Williams, Mildred Bass, Marjorie Pratt, Lee Bosley, Evelyn Anderson, and Edna Britton; standing: LaRue Frederick, Kay Jones, Thelma Dunning, Ruth Mellix, Shirley Porter, Theresa Evans, Anna Mae English, Norma Duncan, Lois Hall, Vivian Mason, Margaret West, Betty Tibbs, and Ida Mae Mauney, posed in front of glass block wall in Loendi Club*, December 1955-January 1956, accession number 2001.35.17816; *Members of JUMS (Just Us Mothers) Club, seated from left: Marjorie Coy, Addie Trent, Betty Canty, Corrine Harris; second row: Geraldine Mike, Deloris Redwood, Louise Smith, Gwendolyn Bates, Elva Robinson, Maria Saunders, Mary Pernell Barnett; third row: Louise Clark, Mildred Woods, Alberta Atwater, Mary Jane Page, Mary W. Ray, Ann Barnett, Betty Fowler, and Pauline Nixon, posed in Loendi Club*, February 1954, accession number 2001.35.12435.



Fig. 4.4 Charles "Teenie" Harris, American, 1908–1998, *Debs About Town* members Ms. Robinson, Joyce, Marion Harris (Slater), and Ethel, standing behind block wall, in front of Loendi Club, 1941, black and white: Agfa Safety Film, H: 4 in. x W: 5 in. (10.20 x 12.70 cm), Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: Heinz Family Fund, 2001.35.34224



Fig. 4.5 Charles "Teenie" Harris, American, 1908–1998, *Portrait of woman wearing dark suit and dark woven hat with wide brim, standing on exterior stairs of the Loendi Club, 83 Fullerton Avenue, Hill District, c. 1947*, black and white: unknown safety film, H: 4 in. x W: 5 in. (10.20 x 12.70 cm) Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: Heinz Family Fund, 2001.35.29938

Harris also took spontaneous group and individual portraits in front of popular entertainment venues, demonstrating residents' comfort and pride in the neighborhood's built environment. In the early 1940s Harris photographed fifteen men casually jesting in front of the Crawford Grill, a popular bar and nightclub that regularly featured jazz music (fig. 4.6).<sup>19</sup> The action centered on a kneeling man holding his hat between his legs. Teenie's brother, Woogie, pointed with playful drama at the kneeling man. A dog meandering into the scene added to the image's spontaneity. These men clearly used the Lower Hill's streets as a space for social play and embraced having Harris capture it on film. Harris also photographed individuals in front of the Crawford Grill. In another image (fig. 4.7) a woman in a calf-length fur coat, dress hat, and corsage posed in front of the Crawford Grill.<sup>20</sup> Three dogs roamed in the photograph's background. The woman's fine dress would fit at the Loendi Club, but here she posed in front of a jazz bar at night. Women with eminently respectable self-presentations, then, saw the Lower

<sup>19</sup> Harris, *Men standing outside of Crawford Grill No. 1, including Jerry Sumpter in center, Mr. McTurner next to him, and William 'Woogie' Harris pointing at kneeling man wearing pinstriped suit, with dog on right, c. 1942*, accession number 2001.35.2229.

<sup>20</sup> Harris, *Woman in striped fur coat with fur handbag and hat, standing on sidewalk in front of Crawford Grill No. 1, with dogs in background, c. 1940-1945*, accession number 2001.35.3799.

Hill's streets as acceptable spaces to travel and pose for photographs. By choosing entertainment venues like the Crawford Grill as their backdrops, these residents fused the Lower Hill's built environment to their self-presentations and illustrated their ties to the neighborhood's street life and buildings.



Fig. 4.6 Charles "Teenie" Harris, American, 1908–1998, *Men standing outside of Crawford Grill No. 1, possibly including Bill Snyder third from left, Jerry Sumpter in center, Mr. McTurner, and William "Woogie" Harris pointing, with dog on right, Wylie Avenue, Hill District, c. 1942*, black and white: Agfa Safety Film H: 4 in. x W: 5 in. (10.20 x 12.70 cm) Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: Heinz Family Fund, 2001.35.2229



Fig. 4.7 Charles "Teenie" Harris, American, 1908–1998, *Woman wearing fur coat, hat, and purse standing on sidewalk in front of Crawford Grill No. 1, with dogs in background, Wylie Avenue, Hill District, c. 1946-1949*, black and white: Kodak Safety Film, H: 4 in. x W: 5 in. (10.20 x 12.70 cm), Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: Heinz Family Fund, 2001.35.3799

Harris's photographs also documented problems that arose in the Hill's built environment, but instead of dismissing the whole neighborhood as unmitigated blight, they called attention to nuisances and advocated solutions. He recorded the aftermaths of fires,<sup>21</sup> explosions,<sup>22</sup> and demolitions<sup>23</sup> as well

<sup>21</sup> For an example of a fire photograph, see Harris, *Women, possibly including Annie Leaks, sorting through household debris, including mattresses and springs, outside of burned row house at 512 Protectory Place, Hill District*, April 1956, accession number 2001.35.6652.

<sup>22</sup> For an example of a explosion photograph, see Harris, *Wooden sawhorses blocking front of four severely damaged row houses with debris on sidewalk, possibly after gas explosion, possibly on Crawford Street, Hill District*, c. 1952, accession number 2001.35.41340.

as broken sidewalks,<sup>24</sup> cracked streets,<sup>25</sup> crumbling houses,<sup>26</sup> trash-strewn vacant lots,<sup>27</sup> and overflowing dumpsters.<sup>28</sup> These latter photographs often pointed out the failure of city government to repair streets and remove litter.<sup>29</sup>

In Harris's visual reality, Hill District residents observed, assessed, and reacted to neighborhood nuisances, making residents agents in their neighborhood's progress and showing the human costs of disrepair. The Harris archive contains four photographs of rubbish left behind by a demolished house on Miller Street in the Middle Hill. Three of these four photographs included residents.<sup>30</sup> One showed the P.T.A. president of the Miller Street School, Marie Thomas, glaring at the rubble-strewn lot (fig. 4.8).<sup>31</sup> Thomas stood in the bottom right corner, a vision of tidy sophistication in a fur coat, dress hat, and

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<sup>23</sup> For an example of a demolition photograph, see Harris, *Lot of demolished house with debris, sidewalk, and car on the right along Miller Street in the Hill District*, April 1957; accession number 2001.35.46062.

<sup>24</sup> For an example of a broken sidewalk photograph, see Harris, *Webster Avenue from an intersecting street, in residential and business area*, c. 1930-1970, accession number 2001.35.3440; *Damaged sidewalk above sewer in front of Don Frazier's Men's Store, with boy standing in front of store window, two men standing in doorway of adjoining pharmacy, and another boy wearing plaid pants on right*, Wylie Avenue, Hill District, c. 1940-1960, accession number 2001.35.23191.

<sup>25</sup> For an example of a cracked street photograph, see Harris, *Wylie Avenue with trolley tracks in disrepair, I. Landis Groceries on right, Hill District*, c. 1955-1970, accession number 2001.35.3400.

<sup>26</sup> For an example of a crumbling house photograph, see Harris, *Brick row house at 2810 Webster Avenue, with damage to bricks and window, and police sawhorse with lantern in foreground, Hill District*, c. 1950-1960, accession number 2001.35.52381.

<sup>27</sup> For examples of trash-strewn vacant lot photographs, see Harris, *Empty lot with debris, two truck trailers, one marked 'Atlantic Freight Line,' with tires parked on right, and houses in background, near intersection of Francis Street and Wylie Avenue, Hill District*, July 1960, accession number 2001.35.55266; Harris, *Children playing with debris in block street, near intersection of Centre Avenue, with row houses and apartment buildings on right, and Golomb Window Glass Company in background, Hill District*, April-May 1945, accession number 2001.35.3030; and Harris, *Pile of garbage, broken furniture, junked car, and other debris, with men standing in street in background, near Centre Avenue, Hill District*, June-July 1965, accession number 2001.35.16539.

<sup>28</sup> For an example of an over-flowing dumpster photograph, see Harris, *Overflowing City of Pittsburgh garbage receptacle, in lot at intersection of Wylie Avenue and Crawford Street, Hill District*, July-August 1959, accession number 2001.35.3423.

<sup>29</sup> Harris also captured city workers cleaning up vacant lots in Harris, *City of Pittsburgh Highways and Sewers crew shoveling garbage into Pittsburgh Department of Public Works truck, in front of Amoco gas station, corner of Webster Avenue and Crawford Street, Hill District*, April 1952, accession number 2001.35.9984.

<sup>30</sup> Harris, *Bill Powell, Marie Thomas, and Jane Giles standing in a vacant lot with debris from demolished house with brick building with windows in background, on Miller Street in the Hill District*, April 1957, accession number 2001.35.46064; *Four boys standing in lot of demolished house with brick and cement walls, brick building on the right with windows and fire escape and telephone pole and wires in the foreground, along Miller Street in the Hill District*, April 1957, accession number 2001.35.46061; and *President of the Miller Street School P.T.A., Marie Thomas, standing on sidewalk near brick and concrete wall with debris on vacant lot from demolished house on Miller Street in the Hill District*, April 1957, accession number 2001.35.46063.

<sup>31</sup> Harris, *President of the Miller Street School P.T.A., Marie Thomas*.



smart handbag. The lot's rubbish stretched uphill to Thomas's left, dwarfing her. Thomas's dignified concern effectively spotlighted where rehabilitation was needed and argued the community deserved higher standards. Harris consciously included anonymous onlookers in his photographs of neighborhood conditions. A photograph of a crumbling house barricaded by the police in the Middle Hill (Fig. 4.9) extended leftward to include four young men.<sup>32</sup> By including residents alongside debris and dangerously damaged buildings, these compositions reminded the viewer that a neglected built environment posed health and safety hazards to people.



Fig. 4.8 Charles "Teenie" Harris, American, 1908–1998, *President of the Miller Street School P.T.A., Marie Thomas, standing on sidewalk near brick and concrete wall with debris on vacant lot from demolished house on Miller Street in the Hill District*, April 1957, black and white: Kodak Safety Film, H: 4 in. x W: 5 in. (10.20 x 12.70 cm), Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: Heinz Family Fund, 2001.35.46063



Fig. 4.9 Charles "Teenie" Harris, American, 1908–1998, *Man wearing plaid shirt and light colored apron, and three boys, including one wearing pea coat, standing beside brick row house at 2810 Webster Avenue, with damage to bricks, wooden braces, boarded up window, and police sawhorse with lantern, Hill District*, c. 1950-1960, black and white: Kodak Safety Film, H: 4 in. x W: 5 in. (10.20 x 12.70 cm), Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: Heinz Family Fund, 2001.35.52384

<sup>32</sup> Harris, *Man wearing plaid shirt and light colored apron, and three boys, including one wearing pea coat, standing beside brick row house at 2810 Webster Avenue, with damage to bricks, wooden braces, boarded up window, and police sawhorse with lantern, Hill District*, c. 1950-1960, accession number 2001.35.52384.

#### 4.3 REPRESENTING THE HILL'S SOCIAL LIFE: FROM VIBRANCY TO PROTEST

Harris also represented the Hill's whole social spectrum, from vibrancy to social ills to protests against those ills. His photographs accentuated the Lower Hill's animated social life: people dancing, praying, drinking, and playing in the Hill's social clubs, night clubs, and churches, a landscape that redevelopers' photographs rendered barren. Harris's extensive documentation of social activity in the Lower Hill documented a liveliness relished by residents and visitors alike. As such, Harris's photographs spotlighted the Lower Hill's greatest asset and one of the starkest social costs of demolition. At the same time, though, neither Harris nor the *Courier* shied away from documenting or publicizing the Lower Hill's social ills, particularly its violence. While Pittsburgh's daily papers covered the Hill's violence as an innate characteristic of the neighborhood, the *Courier* analyzed violence in the neighborhood from an insiders' perspective and advocated policies that would protect neighborhood residents.

Harris's extensive documentation of revelers at the Lower Hill's Crawford Grill exemplifies his commitment to recording the neighborhood's social vibrancy. The Harris photographic database contains over one-hundred-and-twenty interior views of the Hill's most famous gathering place, the Crawford Grill. When jazz great Louis Armstrong visited the bar, Harris photographed him joking with his former vocalist, Ann Baker, and *Courier* reporter George Brown (fig. 4.10).<sup>33</sup> Seated in the middle, Baker playfully flexed her arm as Armstrong and Brown laughed. Harris took the photograph from across the table and included a place setting in the foreground, as if inviting the viewer to take a seat. Most of

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<sup>33</sup> Harris, *Two men, including Louis 'Satchmo' Armstrong, on left, and woman with drinks, in booth in Crawford Grill No. 1*, c. 1940-1950, accession number 2001.35.6360. This photograph appeared cropped in the *Courier* captioned "What's the Joke?" *Courier*, 2 June 1945, 21. Harris photographed other celebrities socializing at the Crawford Grill including Bill "Bojangles" Robinson (Harris, *Bill 'Bojangles' Robinson wearing overcoat and holding hat standing next to woman, possibly Fannie Clay Robinson, and William 'Woogie' Harris, in front of crowd inside Crawford Grill No. 1*, 1940, accession number 2001.35.11633), baseball pitcher Satchel Paige (Harris, *Negro League pitcher Satchel Paige seated at bar with "Big" Bill Williams on left, and other men, in Crawford Grill No. 1*, c. 1941, accession number 2001.35.5849) and boxers such as Harry Bobo (Harris, *Group portrait of three men, including boxer Harry Bobo on left, and Leroy Brown on right, and woman, seated at small square table, in Crawford Grill No. 1 bar with small light on wall above table*, c. 1944, accession number 2001.35.29146).



Harris's Crawford Grill photographs depicted locals dolled up and out for a night of fun. One night Harris photographed four men, including his brother Woogie, and four women gathered around a corner of the Crawford Grill's bar (fig. 4.11).<sup>34</sup> The two women on the left looked at each other and laughed. At the bar's corner, Woogie, wearing a striped tie, locked eyes, mid-chuckle, with the man to the right. The two remaining women both looked away from the camera and smiled. Only the two men on the left side of the group, Leon "Pigmeat" Clark and Mildred "Pinky" Greenway, looked at Harris as he took the photo. Harris did not wait for Louis Armstrong's or Woogie's group to settle down and pose. Instead, these portraits became action shots, documenting friends' enjoyment of each other and the nightlife.



Fig. 4.10 Charles "Teenie" Harris, American, 1908–1998, Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong, Ann Baker, and Pittsburgh Courier reporter George Brown, in booth at Crawford Grill No. 1, May 1945, black and white: Kodak Safety Film, H: 4 in. x W: 5 in. (10.20 x 12.70 cm), Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: Heinz Family Fund, 2001.35.6360



Fig. 4.11 Charles "Teenie" Harris, American, 1908–1998, Group portrait of four men, including Mildred "Pinky" Greenway, on left, Leon "Pigmeat" Clark, third from left, and William "Woogie" Harris wearing striped tie, in center, and four women, including one on right wearing dark floral turban, gathered at bar in Continental Bar at Crawford Grill No. 1 with tropical murals on wall and glass block window, c. 1945-1950, black and white: Kodak Safety Film, H: 4 in. x W: 5 in. (10.20 x 12.70 cm), Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: Heinz Family Fund, 2001.35.33218

<sup>34</sup> Harris, Group portrait of four men, including Mildred 'Pinky' Greenway, on left, Leon 'Pigmeat' Clark, third from left, and William 'Woogie' Harris wearing striped tie, in center, and four women, including one on right wearing dark floral turban, gathered at bar in Continental Bar at Crawford Grill No. 1 with tropical murals on wall and glass block window, c. 1945-1950, accession number 2001.35.33218.

In contrast to these intimate and lively Harris snapshots, the Crawford Grill appeared in only one photograph archived by the Allegheny Conference. The Conference's scant coverage of the Grill reveals its disinterest in the Lower Hill's nightlife. Taken by John Shrader in October 1956 and captioned simply "Wylie near Fullerton looking West on Wylie towards downtown," the Conference's archived photograph documented an intersection in the midst of demolition (see fig. 2.20).<sup>35</sup> Shrader positioned his camera across the street from the Crawford Grill and photographed it as one anonymous building amidst others lining Wylie Avenue. The Grill's only relevance to the composition lies in its state of demise. No windows appeared in two floors above the Grill and a fence made out of discarded doors and held in place by two wooden beams encircled what had been the Grill's entrance. A cloud of dust rose into the air behind the doors and the men in the shot stared at the demolition underway. Whereas Harris photographed the Crawford Grill inside and out over two decades, the Conference's single image showed the historically significant nightclub as part of the larger demolition story and only after it had been hollowed out.<sup>36</sup>

Harris also photographed the street scenes and socializing that animated the Lower Hill but remained invisible to the redevelopers' narrative. Harris photographed children playing stickball in an empty Lower Hill lot (fig. 4.12).<sup>37</sup> Harris positioned his camera at a distance behind the kids' makeshift home plate, a distance and angle that allowed Harris to fit the whole game, outfielders and spectators, into the frame. Harris took the photograph as the game's batter hoisted his bat over his shoulder and awaited his next pitch. This image captured the day-to-day action that enlivened the Lower Hill's streets and vacant lots and depicted a livelier, albeit makeshift and urban, version of childhood play than the still-tricycle image featured in the Conference's "ancient street pattern" alleyway photograph (fig.

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<sup>35</sup> John Shrader, *Wylie near Fullerton looking west on Wylie towards downtown*, negative number: 15225-3, Conference Photographs, Box 33, Folder 5: "Lower Hill Before Demolition."

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Harris, *Children playing stickball on empty lot in front of Logan Meat Market, street no. 59, and Sambol's Quality Merchandise, Logan Street and Centre Avenue, Hill District*, c. 1940-1949, accession number 2001.35.5129.

2.23).<sup>38</sup> Harris's photographs also showed adults using the neighborhood's streets for leisure. In June 1949, Harris photographed fourteen men gathered around two sidewalk checkers games (fig. 4.13).<sup>39</sup> Again, Harris stepped back from the action to take in the whole scene. Two of the players sat on crates and the checkers boards rested on their laps rather than on tables. No one officially designated the sidewalk as a checkers arena or the vacant lot as a stickball pitch. After the games ended, these spaces likely returned to being an empty vacant lot and a sidewalk for strolling pedestrians. Yet both would likely be transformed, again and again, into recreational spaces when the Hill's residents descended on them with bats, crates, and checkers boards. According to Harris's photographs, then, residents saw the Lower Hill's streets, sidewalks, and vacant lots as much more than an "ancient street pattern" or examples of blight.



Fig. 4.12 Charles "Teenie" Harris, American, 1908–1998 *Children playing stickball on empty lot in front of Logan Meat Market, street no. 59, and Sambol's Quality Merchandise, Logan Street and Centre Avenue, Hill District, c. 1940–1949*, black and white: Ansco Safety Film, H: 4 in. x W: 5 in. (10.20 x 12.70 cm), Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: Heinz Family Fund, 2001.35.5129



Fig. 4.13 Charles "Teenie" Harris American, 1908–1998 *Checkers players, including Albert Valentine, John Gray, Clarence Walker, Ray Harris, Joe Mitchell, R. L. Lipscomb, Richard Reed, West Wall, Theodore "Ted" Campbell, Claud Foster, Clifford L. Brown Jr., and "Checkers" Brown wearing v-neck sweater standing fifth from left, in front of Babe's Place, Logan and Epiphany Streets, Hill District, June 1949*, black and white: Kodak Safety Film, H: 4 in. x W: 5 in. (10.20 x 12.70 cm), Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: Heinz Family Fund, 2001.35.2972

<sup>38</sup> City Planning Commission, *A-10 Looking South on Yuba Way from McCook Way and The Allegheny Conference . . . Presents!*, 12.

<sup>39</sup> Harris, *Checkers players, including Albert Valentine, John Gray, Clarence Walker, Ray Harris, Joe Mitchell, R. L. Lipscomb, Richard Reed, West Wall, Ted Campbell, Claud Foster, Clifford L. Brown Jr., and "Checkers" Brown wearing v-neck sweater standing fifth from left, in front of Babe's Place, Logan and Epiphany Streets, Hill District, June 1949*, accession number 2001.35.2972.

Harris's images of community parades documented how residents filled the streets on special occasions and holidays. In these instances, narrow sidewalks and brick-lined streets disparaged by redevelopers became an arena where the community's sense of self could coalesce. Harris recorded a scene from this mid-1940s parade honoring James T. Wiley, a local Tuskegee Airman, as it passed the Fullerton and Wylie intersection (fig. 4.14).<sup>40</sup> Harris jumped into the middle of the parade to photograph the parade's five-man color guard mid-stride. On the photograph's rightward and leftward edges, children and adults stood four deep on narrow sidewalks to watch the procession. Although the City Planning Commission designated Wylie as blighted area, these parade-goers used the street to celebrate their racial pride.



Fig. 4.14 Charles "Teenie" Harris, American, 1908–1998, *Five men of color guard leading parade in honor of Tuskegee Airman James T. Wiley down street lined with crowd of children, women, and men, and Stanley's Tavern on right, Hill District*, June 1944, black and white: Agfa Safety Film, H: 4 in. x W: 5 in. (10.20 x 12.70 cm), Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: Heinz Family Fund, 2001.35.38365

Years later, Lower Hill residents warmly recollect the neighborhood's street life and parades, adding a private and emotional dimension to Harris's visual record. Reflecting on her childhood in the 1950s Hill District, Brenda Tate remembers how the Fourth of July "was one big picnic in the Hill." "We

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<sup>40</sup> Harris, *Five men of color guard leading parade in honor of Tuskegee Airman James T. Wiley down street lined with crowd of children, women, and men, and Stanley's Tavern on right, Hill District*, June 1944, accession number 2001.35.38365.

had our own little street dance. They closed down certain areas” for “fireworks” and “huge parades” that started “early in the morning.”<sup>41</sup> Tate also remembers parades throughout the summers: “Almost one Sunday a month in the summer time there was a major parade.” The parades included “bands and majorettes” and members of organizations such as the Elks. Tate concludes that parades were “big stuff back . . . in the fifties.”<sup>42</sup> Indeed, many people who lived and socialized in the Lower Hill describe the neighborhood’s street life as “vibrant.”<sup>43</sup>

Harris’s photographs of the Lower Hill’s social life also captured the neighborhood’s cultural diversity, one of the area’s most noted cultural assets and a social benefit unseen by redevelopers. Harris photographed everything from drag shows and erotic dancers to gospel choirs and church conferences. Starting with its grand opening in November 1946 the floor shows at the Bambola club, located near the intersection of Fullerton and Wylie, exemplified the Lower Hill’s exciting nightlife.<sup>44</sup> The bar regularly featured Gilda, a prominent Hill District female impersonator, performing alongside blues singers and erotic shake dancers such as the Hill’s own Gypsy Rose Lee.<sup>45</sup> At one floorshow, Harris photographed a shake dancer, possibly Lee, gyrating in a two-piece ensemble accompanied by a drummer, trumpet player, pianist, and upright bassist (fig. 4.15).<sup>46</sup> A few blocks down Wylie stood Bethel A.M.E church. Here, Harris photographed members of the church’s choir as they rehearsed (fig. 4.16).<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Brenda Tate, interview by the author, 23 April 2008.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> For example, Brenda Tate described the Hill as “a whole community . . . vibrant” and Dr. Curtiss Porter said the neighborhood was “very much alive and vibrant,” Dr. Curtiss Porter, interviewed by the author, 11 June 2008, Pennsylvania State University of Greater Allegheny.

<sup>44</sup> “Club Bambola Hypos Local Nightlife,” *Courier*, 2 November 1946, 22; and “Bambola to Rock on Holiday . . . Plus Saturday, Sunday,” *Courier*, 30 November 1946, 20; “Bambola Club Bounces for Holiday Season,” *Courier*, 21 December 1946, 22.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* The Gypsy Rose Lee who performed at the Bambola in the 1940s and 1950s took her name from the famous burlesque performer.

<sup>46</sup> Harris, *Shake dancer, possibly ‘Gypsy Rose Lee’ performing with band, including Tommy Turrentine on trumpet, at Bambola Social Club*, c. 1938-1946, accession number 2001.35.1833.

<sup>47</sup> Harris, *Group portrait of five men and seven women, including one on left wearing dark crocheted shawl, holding music and singing, and another woman wearing striped dress and playing piano and seated on chair stenciled ‘Bethel A.M.E. Church’ in interior with alternating block patterned floor tin ceiling, exposed pipes, and heart decorations*, c. 1954, accession number 2001.35.42794. Other Harris photos of Bethel A.M.E. include a group

Comparing Harris's Bambola and Bethel A.M.E. photographs, the Bambola's scantily clad dancer smiles and flings her arms out while the church choir's front row of women wear calf-length dresses with high necklines and hold sheet music in firm hands. The Lower Hill's social milieu encompassed erotic dancers and church choirs that Harris captured with empathy.

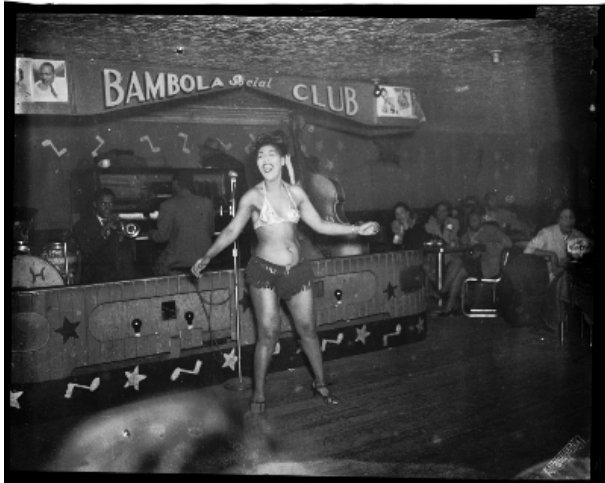


Fig. 4.15 Charles "Teenie" Harris, American, 1908–1998 *Shake dancer, possibly "Gypsy Rose Lee" performing with band, including Tommy Turrentine on trumpet, at Bambola Social Club, c. 1938-1946, black and white: Kodak Safety Film H: 4 in. x W: 5 in. (10.20 x 12.70 cm) Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: Heinz Family Fund, 2001.35.1833*



Fig. 4.16 Charles "Teenie" Harris, American, 1908–1998, *Group portrait of five men and seven women, including one on left wearing dark crocheted shawl, holding music and singing, and another woman wearing striped dress and playing piano and seated on chair stenciled "Bethel A.M.E. Church" in interior with alternating block patterned floor tin ceiling, exposed pipes, and heart decorations, c. 1954, black and white: Kodak Safety Film, H: 4 in. x W: 5 in. (10.20 x 12.70 cm), Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: Heinz Family Fund, 2001.35.42794*

Although the Lower Hill's shake dancers and church choirs seem like worlds that would never intersect, a remarkable amount of complexity and overlap distinguished the neighborhood's culture; Harris documented this complexity, further highlighting what would be lost through demolition. According to Ramon Woods, a Hill District resident who worked at and visited many Lower Hill bars, the

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of teenage girls dressed up for the church's "Go to College" party (Harris, *Group portrait of four women, including left to right: Doris Perkins wearing striped dress, Anna Mosby, Louise Baker, and Thelma Denson gathered behind wooden table with wrapped gifts, for 'Go To College Party' sponsored by Young People's Department of the Woman's Missionary Society at Bethel AME Church, September 1946, accession number 2001.35.27893*) and photographs of church conferences (Harris, *Portrait of Billy Graham standing at podium, with Bishop A.J. Allen on left, in Bethel AME Church for annual conference, October 1952, accession number 2001.35.41176*)

Bambola was “where all the gays was mostly” since female impersonators regularly performed there.<sup>48</sup>

Yet, a surprising number of religious and elite Hill District residents fondly remember the Bambola’s floorshows. Gospel singer, Wyatt Woods, for example, not only regularly attended the Bambola’s shows, but also arrived early to make sure he got a good seat.<sup>49</sup> Thelma Lovette, whose family founded the elite Aurora Reading Club and whose father prohibited her from going to the neighborhood’s seedier bars “because the family was well known,” remembered patronizing the Bambola one time with her Uncle Frank.<sup>50</sup> Curtiss Porter, a civil rights activist who spent a lot of time in the Hill, characterized the Hill’s diverse social life in the 1950s: “Blacks of all stripes, like the hard working men, the pimps and the street people, the studied and the educated, all basically hung out together.”<sup>51</sup> Some of Harris’s photographs captured these overlaps. In this image, a shake dancer performed in a two-piece costume with shiny metallic ribbon cascading between her legs (Fig. 4.17).<sup>52</sup> She looked like she could be dancing at one of the Hill’s racier bars, but here she danced at the Loendi Club. Behind her, men and women in formal wear sipped tea. Some audience members averted their eyes, but the photograph documented one intersection between the Lower Hill’s burlesque and elite cultures.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Ramon Woods, interview by author, 23 April 2008, Pittsburgh, PA. For more on female impersonators in the Hill, see Laura Grantmyre, “‘They lived their life and they didn’t bother anybody’: African American Female Impersonators and Pittsburgh’s Hill District, 1920-1960,” *American Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (2011): 983-1011.

<sup>49</sup> Wyatt Woods, interview by author, 11 February 2009, Pittsburgh, PA. For a much more in-depth description of the Hill’s night life and cross-class cultural overlap based on these same sources, see Grantmyre, “‘They lived their life and they didn’t bother anybody.’”

<sup>50</sup> Thelma Lovette, interview by the author, 19 February 2009, Pittsburgh, PA.

<sup>51</sup> Dr. Curtiss Porter, interview by the author, 11 June 2008, McKeesport, PA.

<sup>52</sup> Harris, *Woman wearing two-piece costume dancing in front of band with bass drum inscribed ‘ . . . night owls . . . ’ and audience, including Charlotte Enty Catlin holding small light colored purse, in Loendi Club*, December 1937-January 1938, accession number 2001.35.10515.

<sup>53</sup> Notably, this was not the first time that such an overlap occurred. In 1939 the FROGS, the city’s most elite African American social club, included a female impersonator show at the El Congo Club as part of its annual social classic, “FROG week.” See “The El Congo Too Hot for Mere Words,” *Courier*, 5 August 1939, 21.





Fig. 4.17 Charles "Teenie" Harris, American, 1908–1998, *Woman wearing two-piece costume dancing in front of band with bass drum inscribed "... night owls ...," and audience, including Charlotte Enty Catlin holding small light colored purse, in Loendi Club, December 1937-January 1938*, black and white: Agfa Safety Film, H: 4 in. x W: 5 in. (10.20 x 12.70 cm) Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: Heinz Family Fund, 2001.35.10515

The *Courier's* coverage of the Hill's social life also spotlighted the diversity of the neighborhood's social spheres, including religious and educational events that belied the daily press's depictions of the Hill as a crime-ridden slum. The *Courier's* August 12, 1950 and August 19, 1950 editions include announcements of blues shows, special guest preachers at local churches, community picnics, and even a science exhibit. The same month that the City Planning Commission certified the Lower Hill as blighted and photographed the desolate rear yard featured in "The Allegheny Conference . . . Presents!," the Lower Hill alone hosted a "'Seven Famous Women' of the Bible" talk<sup>54</sup> and an "Anniversary Pew Rally" featuring Mrs R.H. Fritz as the guest speaker at Bethel AME Church.<sup>55</sup> Meanwhile, a "Mobile Exhibition on Atomic Energy," sponsored by the Veterans of Foreign Wars and created by *Life* magazine, was unveiled at the Lower Hill's Wylie and Fullerton intersection.<sup>56</sup> The exhibit "completely illustrated" both

<sup>54</sup> "Local Church News," *Courier*, 12 August 1950, 14.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>56</sup> "Fullerton, Wylie to See Atomic Energy Exhibit," *Courier*, 19 August 1950, 1.



“atomic energy and nuclear fission” and included uranium ores, portable Geiger counters, and a “lovable pet monkey.”<sup>57</sup>

In addition to covering church and educational events, the *Courier* also spotlighted the neighborhood’s full cultural spectrum by describing the Lower Hill’s vice scene. An article entitled “Joy Vanishes When Police Go to Picnic” listed local vice arrests. In the Lower Hill, police arrested James Dougherty for allegedly selling wine, beer, and whiskey at his Fullerton Street “disorderly house.”<sup>58</sup> On the Saturday night of Dougherty’s arrest, his house was serving thirty-six customers, all of whom were “caught in the net.”<sup>59</sup>

Harris and the *Courier* covered the broad range of social activities that made the Lower Hill a vital epicenter for Pittsburgh’s black community, but they did not recoil from covering the neighborhood’s occasional violence. Two horrific crimes committed in the first half of the 1950s garnered copious coverage in the *Courier*. In 1955, the *Courier* reported on a brutal double murder. Thirty-two-year-old William “Short Arm Willie” Henderson, of Humber Way in the Middle Hill, broke into the house of his eighteen-year-old girlfriend, Carole Smith, also of Humber Way. Once inside, Henderson stabbed Carole and her mother, Rosemary, to death.<sup>60</sup> The *Courier*’s front-page coverage of the assault included a Harris photograph of the blood-soaked bed where Henderson had stabbed Carole and Rosemary (fig. 4.18).<sup>61</sup> Shot from above the footboard but tilted to include the blood stains which spattered the floor, the photograph’s angle made the scene tilt rightward, emphasizing the diagonal line of blood that spread from pillow to floor to rug. The photograph aptly illustrated the horror left behind by the double homicide.

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> “Joy Vanishes When Police Go to Picnic,” *Courier*, 12 August 1950, 1.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> “Jealous Suitor Confesses Fatally Stabbing Girl and Her Mother,” *Courier*, 31 December 1955, 1.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* See also Harris, *Turned wood bed with bloodstains, site of murder of Rosemary and Carole Smith, 2237 Humber Way, Hill District*, December 1955, accession number 2001.35.44504.



Fig. 4.18 Charles "Teenie" Harris, American, 1908–1998, *Turned wood bed with bloodstains, site of murder of Rosemary and Carole Smith, 2237 Humber Way, Hill District, December 1955* black and white: Kodak Safety Film H: 4 in. x W: 5 in. (10.20 x 12.70 cm) Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: Heinz Family Fund, 2001.35.44504

In 1953 the *Courier* reported an even more horrific crime: in the early morning hours of Friday July 10 ten-year-old Julia Mae Johnson of Sachem Way in the Lower Hill District was raped and murdered near her home.<sup>62</sup> Around 11 p.m. Julia Mae's mother had sent her out in search of her fifteen-year-old sister, who returned later having not seen the ten-year-old. After two hours of searching, Julia Mae's younger sister, Carol Jean, found her body on a couch across the street from their home. Julia Mae had been strangled and raped. According to the *Courier's* coverage of the killing, seven other sexual assaults had already occurred in the Hill District that year.<sup>63</sup> Harris and the *Courier*, then, recorded and reported the Hill District's crimes as well as its positive aspects.

However, the *Courier's* and Harris's coverage of the Hill's social ills, even their coverage of Julia Mae Johnson's rape and murder, resisted demonizing the Lower Hill as an innately crime-ridden slum. As noted in Chapter One, the national planning paradigm equated blighted built environments with crime and cited high crime rates and costs of policing as a motivation for clearance. Sachem Way could have exemplified this link. Only three hundred feet long, the alley exemplified the Lower Hill's "ancient

<sup>62</sup> George Barbour, "Child Killing Follows Series of Hill Attacks: Sex Slayer of Child Remains on the Loose," *Courier*, 18 July 1953, 1 and 6.

<sup>63</sup> "Eight Attacks Which Led to Murder," *Courier*, 18 July 1953, 1 and 6.

street pattern” and its isolation meant a ten-year-old girl could be raped and strangled with no one to intervene. The *Courier* also noted “women frequently solicited men for immoral purposes toward the Hazel Street end of the alley”<sup>64</sup> and police, who chased and often lost fugitives down the short alley called it “the jungle.”<sup>65</sup> Yet, the *Courier* contended, the alley meant different things to different people depending on “who you are” and “where you live.”<sup>66</sup> “To some of the fifty families who live” in the alley “it is home,” but “if you live elsewhere in the city, it is ‘the slum area.’” The Johnson family, for example, had lived in the area for generations. Julia Mae’s grandmother had attended the nearby Franklin School as a child and her stepfather had worked at a pickling company on Sachem and Clark Street for twenty years. Families like the Johnsons also used the alley’s vacant lots as garden plots, pathways to a local candy store, and playgrounds.<sup>67</sup> The *Courier* concluded: “call it a ‘jungle,’ a ‘ghetto,’ a ‘slum,’ . . . but to youngsters like Julia Mae Johnson . . . and her three other sisters, it was a happy playground.”<sup>68</sup> In 1953, the *Courier* favored the Lower Hill’s demolition; yet, even when covering a major crime scene, the paper actively refuted the implication that the neighborhood had nothing to offer but crime, decay, and blight.

The *Courier*’s coverage of Johnson’s murder also complicated claims that blight naturally bred crime by identifying the mainstream press’s underreporting and police inaction toward “slum” crimes as systemic causes of the tragedy. A front-page article written by Ralph Koger, the *Courier*’s assistant city editor, appeared nearly a month after Johnson’s murder lambasting the police force’s “lethargy” and “bungling.” According to Koger, police had been “lulled into a state of almost complacency” because the city’s daily newspapers had only covered the case with one or two stories.<sup>69</sup> Conversely, “when a 12-year-old white girl, Carole Kensinger, was killed” in Homewood in 1948, “daily newspapers carried

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<sup>64</sup> George Barbour, “New Clues Told in Child Slaying,” *Courier*, 1 August 1953, 5.

<sup>65</sup> “Sachem Alley is Many Things to Many People,” *Courier*, 18 July 1953, 6.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> Barbour, “New Clues Told in Child Slaying,” *Courier*, 1 August 1953, 6.”

<sup>68</sup> “Sachem Alley is Many Things to Many People,” *Courier*, 18 July 1953.”

<sup>69</sup> Ralph E. Koger, “Lethargy, Bungling Charged in Rape-Killing Police Probe,” *Courier*, 8 August 1953, 1.

stories on the death . . . for more than six weeks.”<sup>70</sup> As a result, the Kensinger case drew together detectives from the city, county, and special homicide units and the city’s superintendent of police, “personally led the investigation.” Only a half-dozen homicide detectives worked Julia Mae Johnson’s case and two of the investigation’s lead detectives had been sent out-of-state twice to escort suspects under indictment for unrelated cases. Koger concluded, “Apparently equal protection under the law does not apply when you are a Negro child who lives and dies in the slums on Sachem Alley.”<sup>71</sup>

In addition to indicting racially motivated police inaction, Harris and the *Courier* publically interrogated the Pittsburgh Police Department’s racially motivated police brutality. On September 1, 1951 the *Courier* reported that a “Cop on Prowl” had delivered a “Brutal Beating” to John Davis, a twenty-three-year-old African American man who lived on Wylie Avenue in the Lower Hill.<sup>72</sup> Dan McTague, the “Cop on Prowl,” followed Davis into an after-hours bar on Elm Street to question him about taxicab robberies. When Davis “replied that he had not been causing any trouble and ‘only came inside to get a bottle of beer,’” McTague, according to Davis, “began to beat me something terrible with his club and fists.” The *Courier* provided evidence, including photographs, to support Davis’s claims of injustice. Noting that McTague arrested Davis for vagrancy, the *Courier* contested this charge noting that Davis “gave the police his home address and relatives and friends claim he does not have to beg for support.” The *Courier* also published a collage of two Harris photographs documenting Davis’s mangled face on its front page. A close-up on the right side of the collage showed Davis with a bandage covering his left ear and cheek and his mouth open (Fig. 4.19).<sup>73</sup> This close-up spotlighted the gaps in Davis’s teeth left by McTague’s thrashing and the dried blood caking his mouth hours after the beating. The

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> “Brutal Beating Given Man by Cop on Prowl,” *Courier*, 25 August 1951, 1.

<sup>73</sup> Harris, *John Davis with bandaged face and missing teeth wearing bloody clothing, after being beaten by police officer Dan McTague, seated on bed in his home at 1303 Wylie Avenue, Hill District, August 1951*, accession number 2001.35.5245. Image cropped here as it appeared in the *Courier*.

photo on the collage's left captured Davis from further back (Fig. 4.20).<sup>74</sup> Davis looked away from the camera, his mouth closed and his eyes averted down and to the side. This angle emphasized the white bandage covering the left side of Davis's face and the blood stains which spread down his undershirt and jacket. The *Courier's* caption detailed Davis's injuries: "a possible skull fracture, injuries to his back and abdomen, abrasions and lacerations of the head, cheek, eye, mouth, and loss of some teeth."<sup>75</sup> The *Courier's* image and text convincingly argued for empathy with Davis and interrogated the Pittsburgh Police Department's brutality.



Fig. 4.19 Charles "Teenie" Harris, American, 1908–1998, *John Davis with bandaged face and missing teeth wearing bloody clothing, after being beaten by police officer Dan McTague, seated on bed in his home at 1303 Wylie Avenue, Hill District, August 1951*, black and white: Kodak Safety Film H: 4 in. x W: 5 in. (10.20 x 12.70 cm) Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: Heinz Family Fund, 2001.35.5245



Fig. 4.20 Charles "Teenie" Harris, American, 1908–1998 *John Davis with bandaged face and head wearing bloody clothing, after being beaten by police officer Dan McTague, seated on bed in his home at 1303 Wylie Avenue, Hill District, August 1951*, black and white: Kodak Safety Film, H: 4 in. x W: 5 in. (10.20 x 12.70 cm), Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: Heinz Family Fund, 2001.35.6646

<sup>74</sup> Harris, *John Davis with bandaged face and head wearing bloody clothing, after being beaten by police officer Dan McTague, seated on bed in his home at 1303 Wylie Avenue, Hill District, August 1951*, accession number 2001.35.6646. Image cropped here as it appeared in the *Courier*.

<sup>75</sup> "Brutal Beating Given Man by Cop on Prowl," *Courier*, 25 August 1951, 1.

#### 4.4 CONCLUSION

By the 1950s Teenie Harris had been photographing the Hill and its people for over a decade. Harris photographed the neighborhood's social ills, including double homicides and police beatings. Yet, according to Harris's photographs and the *Courier's* coverage, the Lower Hill hosted much more than violence and the "blight, decay, and worn-out structures" spotlighted in redevelopers' literature. The neighborhood's residents could choose among religious speakers, educational diversions, live entertainment, and illicit gambling. Harris's prolific news photos, portraits, and quotidian snapshots captured the neighborhood's expansive social diversity. Harris was there when the Loendi Club hosted an erotic dancer and when the hospital released John Davis still covered in bloodstains.

A downtown photographer like John Shrader contracted by the Allegheny Conference to photograph the neighborhood lacked Harris's intimate familiarity with the Hill District. It might not have occurred to Shrader to take photographs inside the Loendi Club, much less to photograph a shake dancer performing before evening-gown-clad and tea-sipping socialites or John Davis displaying his broken teeth. It also might not have occurred to Shrader to put the Loendi Club's exterior at the center of his composition, another marked difference between redevelopers' photographs and Harris's. While the photographs collected into the Conference's archives and used in its brochures overlooked the neighborhood's churches, bars, social clubs, and YWCAs, Harris compositionally centered these institutions, making them his primary subjects in hundreds of photographs and the backdrops for portraits. Harris and his subjects took pride in these parts of their neighborhood and Harris's familiarity with his neighbors and their shared love for their community led to candid and sincerely celebratory snapshots of the Hill's quotidian life.

Harris and the *Courier* considered the Hill their home base and set out to document its built environment and activities, for better or worse, day after day. As such, the visual and written

representations of the Hill created by Harris and the *Courier* provide an exceptionally thorough and candid view of the neighborhood and document what would be lost through demolition. Even though Harris and the *Courier* celebrated the Hill's people, institutions, and culture and acknowledged that demolition would have social costs, they still supported the Lower Hill's redevelopment. The next chapter examines the *Courier's* written and visual coverage of redevelopment to assess why it supported redevelopment, what it thought redevelopment would accomplish, and how its perceptions of redevelopment echoed and challenged developers' vision.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### BETTER HOMES, NEW JOBS, AND ADVOCACY: TEENIE HARRIS'S AND THE *COURIER*'S VISION OF REDEVELOPMENT, 1946-1956

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

Although *The Pittsburgh Courier* stressed the Hill District's vibrant culture, the paper nonetheless supported the neighborhood's redevelopment. The paper, however, tempered its support with skepticism of redevelopers' promises and with attentiveness to the neighborhood's history and residents' needs. Redevelopment boosters and the *Courier* both agreed that the Hill's built environment needed to be improved, but Harris's images and the *Courier's* news coverage initially stressed rehabilitation over demolition and considered residents, rather than redevelopers, the neighborhood's agents for change. In the years leading up to redevelopment, the *Courier's* support for demolishing and rebuilding the Lower Hill never wavered, but while redevelopers saw redevelopment as a path to monumental civic buildings and expressways, the *Courier* saw it as a path to better housing and new jobs.

#### 5.2 HILL RESIDENTS PROTESTING NEIGHBORHOOD CONDITIONS

In the 1940s and 1950s, Teenie Harris photographed Lower Hill residents protesting the very same neighborhood conditions that the city's redevelopment coalition decried: unsanitary plumbing, rodent infestations, and dangerous traffic. The *Pittsburgh Courier*, in turn, encouraged and publicized these



protests. Redevelopment boosters in the Conference claimed time and experience had inured city residents to bad conditions to the point that they failed to comprehend what plagued their city and how it should be improved.<sup>1</sup> Harris's photographs and the *Courier's* coverage, however, show residents noticing bad housing conditions, and bringing evidence of the Hill District's outhouses, courtyard water pumps, crumbling walls, and deadly traffic zones to the attention of the mayor, city council, and the Allegheny Conference. These protests suggest the Allegheny Conference discounted residents' knowledge of their own neighborhoods' problems and their motivation and agency to fix them.<sup>2</sup>

Shortly after WWII, Harris very effectively showed Hill District residents protesting the neighborhood's housing conditions in City Council Chambers (figs 5.1 and 5.2).<sup>3</sup> Harris took these photographs from the room's front-right corner. This angle captured the protest's organization, size, and complaints: well-dressed protesters filled the chambers in an orderly manner and held signs that read "From G. I. Latrines to Hill District out houses" and "From G. I. foxholes to Hill District rat holes." Ten years before demolition commenced, Hill District residents spotlighted housing problems, such as unsanitary toilets and vermin infestations. In 1950 the City Planning Commission quantified such conditions to certify the Lower Hill as blighted. Three years earlier, residents had already documented the same conditions and insisted that the city remedy them.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, the Conference's 1946 promotional brochure, *Civic Clinic*, called the city's inadequate housing supply and dilapidated housing stock "an insidious thing" likely to go "unnoticed by most permanent residents" because flexible Pittsburghers "manage to find places, here and there, despite overcrowded conditions." See The Allegheny Conference on Community Development, *A Civic Clinic for Better Living*, Allegheny Conference Collection, Box 7, Folder 85, 5.

<sup>2</sup> The Allegheny Conference on Community Development, "Proposal for the Establishment of the Civic Photographic Center under the Sponsorship of the Allegheny Conference on Community Development," Mellon Trust Records, Box 56, Folder 1: "University of Pittsburgh, Civic Photographic Library," 1.

<sup>3</sup> Harris, *Men and women protesting housing conditions with signs reading "Better Homes or Bigger Cemeteries," "From G. I. Latrines to Hill District out houses," and "From G. I. foxholes to Hill District rat holes," in Pittsburgh City Council Chambers, City County Building, c. 1940-1946, accession number 2001.35.4593 and Protestors with signs reading "Better homes or bigger cemeteries," "Twenty year condemned houses must go," "Delinquent homes mean delinquent children," gathered in Pittsburgh City Council Chambers at the City County Building, c. 1940-1950, accession number 2001.35.6854*



Fig. 5.1 Charles "Teenie" Harris, American, 1908–1998, *Men and women protesting housing conditions with signs reading "Better Homes or Bigger Cemeteries," "From G. I. Latrines to Hill District out houses," and "From G. I. foxholes to Hill District rat holes," in Pittsburgh City Council Chambers, City County Building, c. 1940-1946* black and white: Ansco Safety Film, H: 4 in. x W: 5 in. (10.20 x 12.70 cm), Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: Heinz Family Fund, 2001.35.4593



Fig. 5.2 Charles "Teenie" Harris, American, 1908–1998, *Protestors with signs reading "Better homes or bigger cemeteries," "Twenty year condemned houses must go," "Delinquent homes mean delinquent children," gathered in Pittsburgh City Council Chambers at the City County Building, c. 1949*, black and white: Ansco Safety Film, H: 4 in. x W: 5 in. (10.20 x 12.70 cm), Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: Heinz Family Fund, 2001.35.6854

The above two photographs most likely show a May 15 City Council hearing that was part of a housing protest movement coordinated by the Hill District People's Forum in the spring and summer of 1946. The Irene Kaufmann Settlement (IKS), which was the main Jewish social settlement house in the Hill District, organized the People's Forum in late 1944 to meet what it saw as the Hill's "overwhelming need" for "orderly responsible leadership" in the Hill District.<sup>4</sup> By February 1945, an array of Hill District social agencies had joined the Forum, including the Kay Boys Club, the YMCA, the YWCA, the Urban League, and Hill City.<sup>5</sup> The Forum drew city officials, neighborhood activists, and academic experts to

<sup>4</sup> "Housing is Blamed for Tot Mortality," *Courier*, 5 October 1946, 1.

<sup>5</sup> "Roessing, Duff Forum Speakers," *Courier*, 3 February 1945, 1.

monthly discussions on local topics such as garbage collection,<sup>6</sup> housing conditions,<sup>7</sup> and racial inequalities in Pittsburgh's justice system.<sup>8</sup>

Although started by the IKS and run by a rotating cadre of executive secretaries recruited from Ohio's Antioch College,<sup>9</sup> the Hill District People's Forum drew on the expertise of the Hill's black elite.<sup>10</sup> When the People's Forum moved beyond discussions in February 1946 by forming a Social Action Committee (SAC) and by starting a housing protest movement, the Hill's black leaders became central to the SAC's work. James Owens, the owner of a fine clothing store on Morgan Street in the Middle Hill, a member of the Business and Professional Association of Pittsburgh,<sup>11</sup> and an usher at Ebenezer Baptist Church,<sup>12</sup> became one of the SAC's leaders. John Patton, a Hill District resident and Navy veteran,<sup>13</sup> became "one of the most ardent workers in the [housing] campaign."<sup>14</sup>

The SAC's housing campaign began in late March at a People's Forum discussion of bad housing conditions in the Hill. During this meeting, local civic and religious leaders, including James Owens, Dorothy Guinn, (executive director of the Centre Avenue YWCA), and Rev. Harold R. Tolliver (pastor of Grace Memorial Presbyterian Church), launched a petition drive against "Hill District dwelling evils."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> "Roessing, Duff Forum Speakers," *Courier*, 3 February 1945, 1; "Garbage to be Aired at IKS People's Forum, Tuesday," *Courier*, 10 February 1945, 3; "Hill Gets Action on Collection of 'Hokey Piles', Back Rubbish," *Courier*, 3 March 1945, 3.

<sup>7</sup> See discussion of housing protest movement below.

<sup>8</sup> "'Equal Justice' to be Topic at IKS Forum," *Courier*, 27 February 1954, 1.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, "Heads Forum . . ." caption in "Photo Standalone 6—no Title," *Courier*, 13 October 1945, 4; "IKS Appoints New Forum Secretary," *Courier*, 21 September 1946, 2; "Parke Now Heads People's Forum," *Courier*, 4 November 1950, 17.

<sup>10</sup> For example, the *Courier's* international correspondent, Frank Bolden, lent his expertise to the Forum's discussions of South African apartheid ("Rights of South African Natives is Forum Subject") and racial discrimination in the justice system ("'Equal Justice' to be Topic at IKS Forum").

<sup>11</sup> "Display Ad 152—No Title," *Courier*, 29 June 1946.

<sup>12</sup> "Ebenezer Men Ushers Plan Monster Banquet," *Courier*, 3 November 1945, 13; "Photo Standalone 13—No Title," *Courier*, 10 November 1945, 11; "Ebenezer's BTU to Hear Miss Alma Polk," *Courier*, 12 October 1946, 13.

<sup>13</sup> "Photo Standalone 9—No Title" *Courier*, 17 March 1945, 8. This photograph of John Patton's new wife described Patton "at present on duty in the drafting department of the Naval Ammunition Handling School"; "Citizens Support Housing Campaign," *Courier*, 20 April 1946, 1 and Edna Chappell, "Immediate Action on Housing Evils," *Courier*, 18 May 1946, 1.

<sup>14</sup> "Citizens Support Housing Campaign," *Courier*, 20 April 1946, 1.

<sup>15</sup> Theodore Stanford, "Seek Housing Showdown," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 30 March 1946, 1. See also Harris, "Photo Standalone 1—No Title," *Courier*, 30 March 1946, 2.

According to the *Courier's* coverage of the event, the petition demanded that the city enforce old housing legislation, enact newer and stricter housing laws, and allot public funds to improve housing. The audience responded enthusiastically to the petitions. The volunteer circulators started with one hundred blank forms and ran out before they were halfway through the crowd.<sup>16</sup> In the next week the SAC had collected three thousand signatures from an aroused public and planned to post additional petitions in every Hill District church.<sup>17</sup>

One week into the housing campaign, the *Courier* sent a photographer out with SAC activists to document residents' complaints and to arouse public support for the campaign. Entitled "Shocking Housing Conditions Exposed in Drive," the article credited SAC protest leaders, James Owens and George LaBan, with calling the *Courier's* attention to "the shockingly unhealthy conditions" in some Hill District rental homes.<sup>18</sup> Three photographs taken by *Courier* staff photographer Ocenia Sockwell, documented and publicized protesters' complaints.<sup>19</sup> The first photograph showed the Youngblood family discussing desperately needed home repairs with James Owens. In the next photograph, a veteran drew water from a hand pump to demonstrate "how sixteen families in Humber Way are supplied with water." The third image pictured a mother, Mrs. Morgan, alongside George LaBan, pointing to her kitchen's dilapidated walls. These photographs showed residents discussing the specific conditions they wanted remedied with SAC leaders and noted that the Youngbloods and Morgans had signed the SAC's housing petition to Mayor Lawrence and city council.<sup>20</sup> Compared to the Allegheny Conference's and the local dailies' vacant photographs of rear yards, the *Courier's* visual rhetoric

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> "Aroused Public Backs Housing Campaign," *Courier*, 6 April 1946, 1.

<sup>18</sup> "Shocking Housing Conditions Exposed in Drive," *Courier*, 6 April 1946, 2.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* Unlike Harris's preserved and archived images, Sockwell's photographs are only available on the *Courier's* microfilm or on digitized copies of the *Courier* taken from microfilm. The microfilm's low picture quality precludes reproducing the images here.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

highlighted the Lower Hill's bad living conditions as well as residents' agency and commitment to improving those conditions.

Over the next three weeks, the *Courier* continued to encourage local support for the protest by publicizing the SAC's call for protesters and by publishing a "Picture Story" which evocatively but concisely supported protesters' demands. On April 20, the *Courier* reported the Forum had collected 7,500 signatures and had plans to present a petition to Mayor Lawrence and city council.<sup>21</sup> The SAC wanted Hill District residents to back up its petition with a protest at city council chambers. The article quoted John Patton articulating the SAC's argument, in effect supporting and amplifying the SAC's plan: "if large numbers of citizens from the Hill District congregate in the corridors near the Council chambers when the hearing takes place, we will be able to demonstrate that the public is backing this campaign."<sup>22</sup> To spur neighborhood action, the *Courier* published two Sockwell photographs entitled "Picture Story of Hill District's Bad Housing Conditions." Subtitled "People Live Here," the first photograph looked up the center of a narrow, refuse-strewn alley. The photograph's caption explained that many of the alley's dwellings had no baths and suffered from unsanitary toilet facilities.<sup>23</sup> The second photograph, subtitled "Animals Live Here," showed the exterior of the Animal Rescue League and argued that dogs, horses, and cats had a "better chance in life" than many Hill District residents. The animals' building boasted an annual upkeep budget of \$30,000 to \$35,000.<sup>24</sup>

On May 15, the *Courier's* publicity proved effective as 125 Hill District residents "flanked" the SAC as it presented its petition and demands to Mayor Lawrence and City Council.<sup>25</sup> Activists arrived at the hearing toting an illustrated report documenting Hill District housing ills and a petition bearing eight

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<sup>21</sup> "Citizens Support Housing Campaign," *Courier*, 20 April 1946, 1.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> "Picture Story of Hill District's Bad Housing Conditions," *Courier*, 27 April 1946, 17.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Chappell, "Immediate Action on Housing Evils," *Courier*, 18 May 1946, 1.

thousand signatures.<sup>26</sup> Speaking on behalf of the SAC, Rev. Harold Tolliver gave the mayor and city council a prescient warning: “if something is not done, the community will find itself with a much greater problem within the next five years.”<sup>27</sup> Representing the Hill District’s veterans, John Patton criticized the city’s lackluster attempts to house returning veterans, noting: “We’ve come from GI foxholes to Hill District ratholes [sic].”<sup>28</sup> Meanwhile, Miss Dorothy Guinn, the executive secretary of the YWCA, and James Owens “gave vivid word pictures of the prevalent objectionable conditions” in the neighborhood.<sup>29</sup> Mayor Lawrence responded to the testimonies and petition with a promise to “put an investigative group on it right away.”<sup>30</sup>

When the mayor’s commitment faltered over the next month, the SAC responded with heightened pressure, including strategies that brought the Conference face to face with the Hill’s housing problems half a decade before it mobilized its public relations machine in support of the Lower Hill’s redevelopment. In late May, the SAC handed over a list of the forty-five most “unlivable” Hill District homes to the mayor.<sup>31</sup> Two weeks later it walked city officials and Dr. Max Nurnburg—the Conference’s housing specialist—through houses in desperate need of repair on Humber Way, Boone Way, Conductor Way, and Miller Street.<sup>32</sup> SAC activists, then, approached the Conference with evidence of bad housing in the Hill District and strategies for improvement, such as code enforcement, while the Conference was still focused on the fledgling Point redevelopment. Indeed, when the SAC toured Nurnburg through the Hill, the Pittsburgh Urban Redevelopment Authority had not yet been created.

Shortly after Nurnburg’s tour, the city launched official inspections of the forty-five Hill District dwellings spotlighted by the SAC and took legal action against six negligent landlords. Conducted by the

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 and 5.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>31</sup> “Mayor Gets Report on Bad Housing,” *Courier*, 25 May 1946, 1.

<sup>32</sup> “Housing Repairs Certain,” *Courier*, 8 June 1946, 1.

Housing and Sanitation Division of the Department of Public Welfare along with the Health Department, the city's inspectors compiled a list of dilapidated rentals and the specific repairs they needed, and ordered landlords to address them.<sup>33</sup> As a result, twelve houses on Conductor Way, Kearney Way, Perry Street, Miller Street, Reed Street, and Somers Street received repairs by July 20.<sup>34</sup> Meanwhile, twenty landlords ignored the notices,<sup>35</sup> causing the city to file lawsuits against them on July 27.<sup>36</sup> By August 3, three of what the *Courier* termed the Hill's "most flagrant offenders" were fined the paltry sum of twenty-five dollars and given final notice to repair their properties straightaway.<sup>37</sup>

To housing activists, the city's actions were almost meaningless. In late July 1946, according to the SAC, only superficial repairs had been made to direly dilapidated houses and, overall, "nothing substantial has been accomplished."<sup>38</sup> Only three sanitary inspectors covered the entire Hill District, which made adequate inspections of supposedly repaired properties impossible. The mayor, in turn, invited the SAC to personally show the Hill's three inspectors which houses most needed repairs.<sup>39</sup> On October 5, though, the *Courier* reported that while two hundred housing code violations had been documented and brought to the city's attention during the spring protest, the city had only acted on slightly more than five percent of those complaints.<sup>40</sup> The SAC refused to accept these results. It recruited ten thousand Hill District families to file monthly reports with the mayor's office documenting houses lacking indoor plumbing or furnaces or shattered walls, windows, or roofs.<sup>41</sup> In mid-November, the *Courier*, yet again, reported activists' frustration. A study conducted by the SAC and the *Pittsburgh*

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<sup>33</sup> Chapell, "City to Bring Suits Against Landlords," *Courier*, 20 July 1946, 1.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> "Six Law Suits Filed By City Against Hill Landlords," *Courier*, 27 July 1946, 1.

<sup>37</sup> "City Means Business, Hill Landlords Told," *Courier*, 3 August 1946, 1.

<sup>38</sup> "Six Law Suits Filed By City Against Hill Landlords," *Courier*, 27 July 1946, 1.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> "Housing is Blamed for Tot Mortality," *Courier*, 5 October 1946, 1.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

*Post-Gazette*, the *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph*, and the *Courier* photographers found that city authorities had failed to respond to most documented reports of bad housing.<sup>42</sup>

Municipal representatives answered this criticism by claiming that code enforcement was untenable and the neighborhood needed to be razed and rebuilt. Their defense, which foreshadowed the Lower Hill's 1956 demolition, was rejected by the SAC. At a mid-November meeting with SAC activists, George M. Boileau from the Department of Building Inspectors insisted that enforcing the city's housing codes in the Hill District meant "the eviction of tenants" who had nowhere to go. City Solicitor Anne X. Alpern went a step further, arguing that the whole neighborhood needed to be demolished. According to Alpern, razing "the entire district" and building entirely new housing offered "the only effective solution to housing problems in the Hill District."<sup>43</sup> In spite of Alpern's assessment that the houses the SAC had been trying to get repaired should instead be abandoned and demolished, the SAC pressed forward with its rehabilitation strategies. It scheduled a meeting with city council to discuss dispatching more sanitary inspectors to the Hill District.<sup>44</sup> After November, the *Courier's* coverage of the SAC's housing campaign ceased; the People's Forum, however, continued to collect residents' housing complaints into the 1950s even though the city ultimately followed Alpern's plan for razing the Lower Hill.<sup>45</sup>

In addition to equating the Lower Hill's housing with "blight, decay" and "worn out structures," redevelopment boosters cited the neighborhood's "ancient street pattern" to prove the necessity of full-scale clearance in 1956.<sup>46</sup> Residents, however, had identified and tried to remedy dangerous traffic in the Hill District five years earlier. In August 1951 a speeding truck killed six-year-old Andy Jackson Jr.

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<sup>42</sup> "'Raze Hill' Forum Told," *Courier*, 16 November 1946, 1.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> "IKS Clinic Answers Tenants, Landlords," *Courier*, 25 February 1950, 2; "Housing Clinic Gets Complaints," *Courier*, 7 November 1953, 3; "New Housing Clinic at IKS," *Courier*, 2 July 1955, 3; "IKS Clinic on Housing Starts Monday," *Courier*, 11 February 1956, 9.

<sup>46</sup> The Allegheny Conference on Community Development, *The Allegheny Conference on Community Development Presents . . . Pittsburgh!*, 12.



outside his home on Webster Avenue. In response, Hill District residents blocked Webster Avenue, refusing to move until the city promised new streetlights, stop signs, and around-the-clock traffic patrols to ensure residents' safety.<sup>47</sup>

The *Courier's* coverage of the protest, much like its coverage of the housing protests, documented residents' complaints and added on-the-spot evidence to support its demands.<sup>48</sup> *Courier* reporter Alma A. Polk covered the demonstration and recorded residents' grievances in their own words. Mittie Vaughn, a University of Pittsburgh student, explained: "on Webster Avenue . . . cats, dogs, and human beings are killed indiscriminately." Polk enhanced Vaughn's argument by adding "Even as this reporter listened, the yelps of a dog filled the already highly charged atmosphere. It had been hit by a car."<sup>49</sup> Polk piled on more evidence justifying residents' complaints. In July a car had hit a resident named William Rucker in the same area.<sup>50</sup> Polk's coverage also articulated residents' frustrations with the city's previous inaction. Echoing the SAC's recurring 1946 critiques that the city failed to fulfill its promises to enforce housing codes, Webster Avenue protesters told Alma Polk that their complaints to the city had been ignored. Carrie Means of Morgan Street complained to Polk, "We have been trying for a long time to get street lights, or even a stop sign, but all we get are promises."<sup>51</sup> Marie Frazier agreed: "We have lived on promises long enough. The Traffic Department is fast on promising, but exceptionally slow on action."<sup>52</sup>

Harris's photographs encouraging sympathy with the protesters illustrated Polk's coverage. Highlighting children's participation in the protest, Harris's photographs urged readers to identify with Andy Jackson and his family and sympathize with protesters' demands for safer streets and children.

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<sup>47</sup> Alma A. Polk, "Angry Neighbors Block Street; Seek Protection from Speeding Drivers," *Courier*, 18 August 1951, 4.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

Introducing the story on the front page, a Harris image featured Curtis Williams, the protest's organizer, in a crisp white shirt and hat, discussing residents' demands with Fifth Ward Committeeman, Robert E. "Pappy" Williams (fig. 5.3).<sup>53</sup> The scene's action centered on adults, but children filled the photograph's foreground. Next to Curtis Williams, the scene's smallest child stood pressed against his mother holding her hand and looking directly at the camera. His mother, meanwhile, stared intently at Pappy Williams. Because Andy Jackson's death inspired the protest, foregrounding this mother and son gave readers a way to connect with the protests' emotional crux: children and their life-or-death safety. A photograph that illustrated the article's continuation further into the paper also foregrounded children (Fig. 5.4). A small child stood on the scene's left looking away from the action while an older child on the far right looked directly at the camera. Behind them, a dense crowd held placards. One read: "Andy Jackson need not have died."<sup>54</sup> The *Courier* captioned the photograph to underscore the protesters' youth and respectability. The caption labeled the whole crowd "Youngsters" and commended them for displaying their placards "in orderly fashion."<sup>55</sup> Teamed with Polk's evidence that Webster Avenue was unsafe for dogs, children, and adults alike, these images implied that these well-behaved "youngsters" and others like them would remain at-risk until the city met protesters' demands.

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<sup>53</sup> Harris, *Men, including Robert "Pappy" Williams wearing dark double breasted suit on left, and Curtis Williams wearing bandage on cheek on right, women, and children, standing in Webster Avenue, protesting lack of stop signs, police patrol, and lights*, August 1951, accession number 2001.35.38027; and Polk, "Angry Neighbors Block Street," *Courier*, 18 August 1951, 1.

<sup>54</sup> Harris, *Crowd, including Greta Richardson, fourth from right, holding signs inscribed "Andy Jackson need not have died" and "Detour, Speedway closed for lack of lights and police protection," on Webster Avenue near Morgan Street, Hill District*, August 1951, accession number 2001.35.7074.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*



Fig 5.3 Charles "Teenie" Harris, American, 1908–1998, *Men, including Robert "Pappy" Williams wearing dark double breasted suit on left, and Curtis Williams wearing bandage on cheek on right, women, and children, standing in Webster Avenue, protesting lack of stop signs, police patrol, and lights*, August 1951, black and white: Kodak Safety Film, H: 4 in. x W: 5 in. (10.20 x 12.70 cm), Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: Heinz Family Fund, 2001.35.38027



Fig. 5.4 Charles "Teenie" Harris, American, 1908–1998, *Crowd, including Greta Richardson fourth from right, holding signs inscribed "Andy Jackson need not have died" and "Detour, Speedway closed for lack of lights and police protection," on Webster Avenue near Morgan Street, Hill District*, August 1951, black and white: Kodak Safety Film H: 4 in. x W: 5 in. (10.20 x 12.70 cm), Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: Heinz Family Fund, 2001.35.7074

Harris's protest photographs and the *Courier's* coverage of housing and street safety protests in the late 1940s and early 1950s documented not only residents' awareness of the structural problems in their neighborhood and their strategies for rehabilitation, but also the city's failure to adequately respond. In 1946, residents protested the Hill's crumbling walls, unsanitary outdoor toilets, and rodent infestations. In 1952, residents blamed six-year-old Andy Jackson's death on Webster Avenue's insufficient stoplights, stop signs, and traffic patrols. The SAC pressured the city to force negligent Hill District landlords to abide by housing codes and the Webster Avenue protesters demanded the city resolve the issue with stoplights, stop signs, and traffic patrols. Yet, of two hundred housing complaints documented by the SAC, the city sued only three landlords, fining each a mere twenty-five dollars. Similarly, although the city promised to install stoplights, stop signs, and traffic patrols on Webster Avenue in 1952, protesters stressed the city's past failures to follow through. Such municipal inaction

likely left the Hill in even worse condition by the 1950s, as predicted by Rev. Tolliver at the SAC's May 15 protest in City Council Chambers. According to Harris's photographs and the *Courier's* coverage in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Hill District's residents—not the mayor, city council, or the Conference—initially had the “appreciation of the problems ahead,” and had the “knowledge” and willing “participation” to tackle them.<sup>56</sup>

Protest coverage by Harris and the *Courier* publicized residents' activism in tackling its housing and traffic problems, creating a visual record that contradicted representations of the Hill District by redevelopers and the white press. *Courier* photographs, like the one of a veteran pumping his water by hand, not only garnered attention and sympathy for the SAC's housing protest, but also portrayed Hill District residents as invested in improving their environment. These photographs contradicted redevelopers desolate images of the Hill District by including the neighborhood's residents and by showing residents agitating for specific rehabilitative actions. The spotlight the *Courier* put on residents' agency and its role as a neighborhood advocate becomes even clearer through a comparison of the *Courier's* SAC protest coverage to the local dailies' coverage. As noted in Chapter Three, the *Post-Gazette* clearly addressed the Hill District's living conditions in great depth in 1934. However, when the SAC protested those same conditions in 1946, the *Post-Gazette*, *The Pittsburgh Press*, and the *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph* paid little attention. All three papers' coverage consisted of non-illustrated, sporadic, and brief articles.

The *Post-Gazette* published an article summarizing the SAC's initial rally in 1946 but, unlike the *Courier*, the paper did not cover the SAC's ongoing strategies nor did it mobilize photographic evidence to support protesters' claims. On March 23, the *Post-Gazette* announced the SAC planned to hold a “rally meeting” at the Irene Kaufmann Settlement “to improve housing conditions” in the Hill. The article summarized the meeting's speaker schedule and announced the SAC's plan to gather ten thousand

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<sup>56</sup> The Allegheny Conference on Community Development, “Proposal for the Establishment of the Civic Photographic Center Under the Sponsorship of the Allegheny Conference on Community Development,” 1.

signatures for a housing petition.<sup>57</sup> A follow-up article published on March 27 described the petition's demands and noted the SAC addressed it to Mayor Lawrence and city council.<sup>58</sup> These early *Post-Gazette* articles provided the same basic information as the *Courier's* initial coverage, but the *Post-Gazette* fell silent between its two introductory articles and the SAC's May 15 protest before City Council. The *Post-Gazette's* and *Sun-Telegraph's* coverage of the May 15 City Council hearing objectively listed the facts of the protest, but, again, fell short of the *Courier's* detail and advocacy.<sup>59</sup> The *Post-Gazette's* coverage mentioned none of the protesters by name.<sup>60</sup> In four short paragraphs the *Sun-Telegraph* gave the protest only brief coverage.<sup>61</sup> The *Courier's* extensive coverage, conversely, kept its readers abreast of the SAC's strategies and plans and used photographs to visually demonstrate residents' complaints and spotlight their agency.<sup>62</sup>

### 5.3 THE *COURIER'S* VISION OF REDEVELOPMENT: BETTER HOMES AND NEW JOBS

The Hill District's black leadership, including the *Pittsburgh Courier's* editors and reporters, largely supported the Lower Hill's redevelopment but had different priorities. As noted in Chapter Two, the Allegheny Conference prioritized downtown's economic renewal, which is why it tackled the arena and Crosstown Expressway before addressing new housing in the Lower Hill. The *Courier*, on the other hand, envisioned redevelopment as a route to better housing, particularly more public housing, and new jobs for Hill District residents. The *Courier* based these expectations on the Pittsburgh Housing Authority's (PHA) history of providing high quality public housing and employment to Hill residents. When the

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<sup>57</sup> "Hill to Sponsor Housing Rally," *Post-Gazette*, 23 March 1946, 4.

<sup>58</sup> "Move Started to Clean Up Hill Housing," *Post-Gazette*, 27 March 1946, 24.

<sup>59</sup> "Relief Asked In Sanitation" *Post-Gazette*, 16 May 1946, 13; Hill Housing Under Fire," *Sun-Telegraph*, 16 May 1946, 36.

<sup>60</sup> Chappell, "Immediate Action on Housing Evils," *Courier*, 18 May 1946, 1.

<sup>61</sup> "Hill Housing Under Fire," *Sun-Telegraph*, 16 May 1946, 36.

<sup>62</sup> "Shocking Housing Conditions Exposed in Drive," *Courier*, 6 April 1946, 2 and "Picture Story of Hill District's Bad Housing Conditions," *Courier*, 27 April 1946, 17.

*Courier* had found fault with the PHA's policies in the past, the PHA had responded positively. The *Courier's* coverage of the PHA illuminates what the *Courier* expected from the Lower Hill's redevelopment and explains the paper's consistent support for redevelopment. As we will see in Chapter Six, though, it also explains why the *Courier* withdrew this support when better housing and new jobs did not materialize.

The Hill District's black political leadership supported redevelopment and helped make it happen. The Hill District's African American representative in the State Legislature, Judge Homer Brown, supported the 1945 Redevelopment Law as well as the 1947 "Pittsburgh Package," a hodge-podge of legislation drafted by Conference attorney Theodore Hazlett to fulfill the Conference's urban Renaissance vision. The "Pittsburgh Package" included legislation that transferred some local highway obligations to the state, ultimately enabling the construction of the Crosstown Expressway.<sup>63</sup> Judge Brown and the area's other Democratic representatives, all firmly under Mayor Lawrence's influence as a party leader, unanimously voted in favor of the "Pittsburgh Package."<sup>64</sup> In this sense, Judge Brown, acting as representative to the Hill District's Democrats, played a key role in ushering in the Lower Hill's Redevelopment. Similarly, Paul F. Jones, Brown's successor in the state legislature and the city's first African American city councilman starting in 1954, vocally supported the Lower Hill's redevelopment and served on city council's Planning and Redevelopment Committee.<sup>65</sup>

This support for redevelopment came, in part, from the neighborhood's positive experiences with the Pittsburgh Housing Authority's Terrace Village and Bedford Dwellings housing projects. The *Courier* had declared the projects boons to the neighborhood's quality of life early in its coverage of the PHA. In spring, 1939 the *Courier* celebrated Terrace Village's promise with sketches of the project's

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<sup>63</sup> Mershon, "Corporate Social Responsibility and Urban Revitalization," 344.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 345-346.

<sup>65</sup> "Jones to Get Davis Seat on City Council," *Pittsburgh Press*, 3 January 1954, Sec 1, 2. Paul L. Jones, "Housing Upheavals How to Meet Them," *Courier*, 13 May 1950, 35; "Mayor Signs 'Contract' for Hill Redevelopment," *Courier*, 23 July 1955, 3; John L. Clark, "Councilman Paul Jones Candidate for Second Term," *Courier*, 21 March 1959, 4.

architectural plans that emphasized the principles of modern housing: uniform and well-designed three-story buildings separated by broad landscaped courtyards.<sup>66</sup> An article in July added evidence to support this celebratory tone. Subtitled “Huts of Squalor to be Changed to Models of Modernity by PHA,” the article sought to raise community awareness about the needs of residents displaced for Terrace Village, but concluded that the project overwhelmingly benefited the community.<sup>67</sup> Slices of the Hill’s “dilapidated frame buildings and age-weary brick structures” were to be replaced by housing for 1,818 families in “complete little villages, each one a model of modernity.”<sup>68</sup>

The *Courier* also gave glowing visual coverage to these housing projects. Harris’s photographs showed children enjoying the projects’ amenities. For example, this Harris action-shot of children playing volleyball on Bedford Dwellings’ playground accompanied a 1941 article saluting Bedford Dwellings’ playground facilities (Fig.5.5).<sup>69</sup> Harris took the photograph from the playground’s corner, looking down on the backs of four boys defending one side of the volleyball net. Across the net, a team of girls and boys in crisp clothes watched the ball. This perspective drew the viewer into the game. Immaculately clean and surrounded by newly constructed brick walls, the playground looked like a healthy and safe space for children to play.

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<sup>66</sup> “Architect’s View of Terrace Village,” *Courier*, 11 March 1939, 4; “Ruch Hill’s Face to be Lifted for Terrace Village,” *Courier*, 8 April 1939, 4.

<sup>67</sup> “New Homes Sought for Dispossessed Tenants: Slum Dwellers Caught in Crux of Housing Lack,” *Courier*, 8 July 1939, 2.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Harris, *Boys and girls playing volleyball in Bedford Dwellings playground*, 1941, accession number 2001.35.5286; “Bedford Project Solving Own Recreation Problem: 200 Kiddies Play Daily on Bedford Dwellings Playground,” *Courier*, 9 August 1941, 2.



Fig. 5.5 Charles "Teenie" Harris, American, 1908–1998, *Boys and girls playing volleyball in Bedford Dwellings playground*, 1941 black and white: Agfa Safety Film, H: 4 in. x W: 5 in. (10.20 x 12.70 cm), Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: Heinz Family Fund, 2001.35.5286

Similarly, another 1941 Harris photograph from Bedford Dwellings looked across a room filled with children in Halloween costumes. The image accompanied a *Courier* article praising Bedford Dwellings for hosting a community Halloween party, representing the project as a vital community institution. When rain threatened to ruin Halloween for the Hill District's children, Bedford Dwellings offered to throw a Halloween party for the whole neighborhood. The party ended up saving Halloween for "450 costumed kiddies from the Hill area."<sup>70</sup> Harris's photograph of the party took in most of the 450 children in attendance (fig. 5.6).<sup>71</sup> An interracial group of kids dressed as pirates, superheroes, and princesses filled the frame from left to right. Bedford Dwellings' facilities made this dry, safe, and adorable Halloween scene possible. Bedford Dwellings' amenities exceed the *Courier's* expectations and functioned as a community space for the Hill District at large. When the *Courier* and its readers

<sup>70</sup> "Hill Kiddies Enjoy Halloween Party," *Courier*, 8 November 1941, 22.

<sup>71</sup> Harris, *Children wearing Halloween costumes at Bedford Dwellings*, October-November 1941, accession number 2001.35.6426.



envisioned redevelopment, they envisioned an expanded public housing supply and, in turn, more scenes like these of safe community recreation and socializing.



Fig. 5.6 Charles "Teenie" Harris, American, 1908–1998, *Children wearing Halloween costumes at Bedford Dwellings*, October–November 1941, black and white: Agfa Safety Film, H: 4 in. x W: 5 in. (10.20 x 12.70 cm), Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: Heinz Family Fund, 2001.35.6426

The PHA had also taken steps to ensure that its public housing projects would employ African Americans, setting another positive precedent that encouraged the *Courier* and Hill residents to support redevelopment. The PHA added a non-discrimination clause into all of its labor contracts assuring that twenty-nine percent of any PHA project's unskilled jobs went to African Americans. The *Courier* exclaimed, "So now they work for their bread and butter and at the same time prepare themselves a future place to live."<sup>72</sup> As Terrace Village's construction continued, the *Courier* hailed the PHA's continuing commitment to equal opportunity employment. In November 1939 the *Courier* examined the payrolls for Terrace Village I and II as well as Bedford Dwellings, and verified that the PHA's non-discrimination clauses worked. African American workers at the three projects had earned a combined

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

\$67,000, or one-fifth of the entire payroll.<sup>73</sup> In March 1941 the *Courier* applauded the PHA's hiring policies again when it hired African American electrician, Walter M. Dawson, as the chief electrician for Terrace Village and Bedford Dwellings.<sup>74</sup> The PHA's example of providing skilled and unskilled jobs for African Americans in the Hill encouraged the *Courier's* and its readers' support for redevelopment.

Earlier in 1941, the *Courier* voiced a rare critique of the PHA based on initial reports that Terrace Village's housing would be involuntarily segregated; the PHA responded by heeding the *Courier's* critique and altering its policy. In a February 22 editorial the *Courier* approved of the PHA's "American and democratic" policy of voluntary segregation at Bedford Dwellings.<sup>75</sup> The PHA set aside all-white, all-black, and racially integrated buildings, and white and black tenants chose between segregated and integrated housing. Initial reports from Terrace Village, though, indicated, "segregation shall be the [new] rule."<sup>76</sup> As a result, hopeful African American tenants were stuck waitlisted while vacancies sat open in the segregated white buildings.<sup>77</sup> The PHA responded in March with a formal answer to the *Courier's* critique: "There is no policy of segregation or discrimination, stated or implied, direct or indirect at Terrace Village" and assured the paper that Terrace Village would follow the Bedford Dwellings' policy.<sup>78</sup> With the Hill's housing projects, the PHA consciously courted the *Courier's* support by meeting the black communities' demands for better, non-segregated housing and non-discriminatory hiring policies. It comes as no surprise, then, that when PHA executive director, Dr. Bryn Hovde died of a heart attack in August 1954 the *Courier* ran a front-page article mourning his death.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> "Workers on Housing Projects Earn \$67,000: Sum Equals More than One-Fifth of Total Payrolls," *Courier*, 18 November 1939, 3.

<sup>74</sup> "Dawson Named Chief Electrician at Dwellings: Project Post to Walter Dawson Electrical Expert," *Courier*, 1 March 1941, 1.

<sup>75</sup> "Editorial: Segregation at a Price," *Courier*, 22 February 1941, 1.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> "Housing Authority Denies Segregation at Terrace Village," *Courier*, 1 March 1941, 1.

<sup>79</sup> "Dr. Hovde Dies on Trolley," *Courier*, 14 August 1954, 1.

## 5.4 THE *COURIER*'S COVERAGE LEADING UP TO REDEVELOPMENT

Considering the Hill District's positive experiences with the Terrace Village and Bedford Dwellings projects, it should come as no surprise that the *Courier* not only supported but also pushed for the Lower Hill's redevelopment. The *Courier* voiced this support with articles and editorials calling for the URA's intervention in the Lower Hill from the Authority's inception and urging the city to cut red tape and hasten redevelopment. Visually, much of the *Courier's* coverage of the Lower Hill's redevelopment resembled redevelopment boosters' and the daily papers' photographs testifying to blight. The *Courier's* role as the Hill District's voice and advocate, however, meant it tempered its support for redevelopment with advocacy for the Lower Hill's residents and institutions. The *Courier's* redevelopment coverage held public officials accountable to the Hill's residents, gave displaced institutions and business owners—even those who resisted moving—a voice, and visually documented the Hill's historical and cultural importance. As shown in Chapter Three, Pittsburgh's daily papers ignored all three of these issues.

From the URA's inception in December 1946, the *Courier* clamored for redevelopment in the Hill. In an article covering a December 1946 Hill District People's Forum discussion on urban redevelopment and the Hill District, *Courier* reporter Lester K. Hardy bemoaned redevelopment as yet another public works project that would bypass the Hill. According to Hardy's coverage of the meeting, the Allegheny Conference's assistant director and future PPL director, Marshall Stalley, addressed the meeting and stated outright that "[t]he URA has prepared no plans for the Hill District or any other community."<sup>80</sup> Hardy noted that "clouds of disillusionment . . . cropped up during the course of Stalley's

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<sup>80</sup> Lester K. Hardy, "Civic Plans Ignore Hill," *Courier*, 14 December 1946, 1.

remarks.” One resident remarked, “Well, it’s the same old malarkey again . . . everyone else first, the Hill District last . . . We’ll get new housing for this district . . . in 2046!”<sup>81</sup>

By April 1950, the URA had shifted its attention from the Point and the Golden Triangle to the Lower Hill. In a three-part series of articles that began on April 22, 1950, *Courier* reporter Paul L. Jones courted support for redevelopment by attempting to explain to Hill District residents “why urban redevelopment is necessary.”<sup>82</sup> According to Jones’s introduction to the series, “In a meeting where John P. Robin . . . spelled out the broad plans for the Hill, the Negro member of the panel spoke only of the need for a bank and a shopping center.” Retrospectively, this shows that Hill District residents engaged in the urban redevelopment dialogue from its beginning and brought their own ideas to the table. Jones believed that this exemplified the gulf between the URA’s and Hill District residents’ idea of what the neighborhood needed. Jones’s series actively set out to bridge that gulf by convincing the neighborhood that full-scale redevelopment was necessary.<sup>83</sup>

Jones’s arguments in favor of redevelopment closely resembled redevelopers’ arguments. Echoing the national planners’ ecological approach to city decline, Jones contended “the key fact” of city growth and decline was “that cities, like people, have patterns of growth, use, and aging.”<sup>84</sup> As such, the city government must sustain constant vigilance, keeping cities in good shape structurally so people will “enjoy living and working and playing” within city limits. The Lower Hill’s redevelopment, particularly its location, offered means to this end. Jones argued that once the URA bought and cleared the Lower Hill’s homes and businesses, new high-rise garden apartments could attract residents, the Crosstown Expressway could ease traffic jams heading in and out of the city, parking lots in the Lower Hill could

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* This is significant because the ACCD’s promotional literature was painting the Conference as the city’s ultimate authority on what needed to be done and how. The *Courier* and People’s Forum attendees did not automatically acknowledge the Conference’s authority.

<sup>82</sup> Paul L. Jones, “Is the—Hill District Doomed?” *Courier*, 22 April 1950, 32.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

ease downtown's clogged streets, and a convention hall could draw conventions and large sporting events.<sup>85</sup>

Jones believed redevelopment would improve living conditions for Hill residents. The Pittsburgh Housing Authority had plans to build fifteen thousand public housing units within six years. Further, the public housing already built in the Hill District, such as Terrace Village and Bedford Dwellings, boasted better standards of living than the rest of the Hill. Indeed, Jones characterized the houses replaced by Terrace Village in the 1930s as "squalor and filth," and asserted "the only way to get rid of the decay and blight that characterizes the district now" was to "tear the Hill down to the ground and rebuild."<sup>86</sup> Here, Jones's word choices, like "squalor" and "filth" paralleled those of redevelopment boosters and the daily press.<sup>87</sup>

In addition to echoing redevelopment boosters' text, the visuals that accompanied Jones's articles resembled the photographs used by the Conference and the daily press to testify to the Lower Hill's blight. A large photographic spread kicked off each of the series' three articles. The *Courier's* editors superimposed the first article's title, "Is the Hill District Doomed?" in white-outlined text on top of a photograph littered with signifiers of blight. The scene's buildings stood in the background; a rubbish-strewn vacant lot occupied the rest of the frame.<sup>88</sup> The photograph's left foreground, the brightest spot in the composition, was blanketed with discarded pieces of wood and paper. The lighting spotlighted the refuse. No people appeared in this photograph or in the photographs illustrating the series' final two articles. The last article's illustration included an unattached two-story house with a broad front porch and tidy cement front stairs that appears to be in fine condition, belying Jones's

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<sup>85</sup> Jones, "Hill Housing Future, What Will it Mean?" *Courier*, 6 May 1950, 31.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> These arguments appeared again in "Amphitheatre for Opera May Be Built in the Hill," *Courier*, 13 September 1952, 1; "Site Readies for Displaced Persons in Hill Rebuilding," *Courier*, 10 January 1953, 1; "Arena to Replace Worn Out Homes in Third Ward," *Courier*, 16 January 1954, A9.

<sup>88</sup> Jones, "Is the—Hill District Doomed?" *Courier*, 22 April 1950, 32.

characterization as the whole Hill as blight, filth, and squalor (Fig. 5.7).<sup>89</sup> The two older row houses pictured to the left of the collage more clearly exemplified Jones's complaints about the Hill. Wooden and lining a dirt street, these houses tilted slightly rightward to the edge of the frame. This angle added to the scene's sense of chaos and claustrophobia.

IMAGE UNAVAILABLE  
DUE TO COPYRIGHT

Fig. 5.7 *The Pittsburgh Courier*, "Is the—Hill District Doomed?" 22 April 1950

The *Courier* clearly pushed for redevelopment, but it also prioritized its role as community advocate by holding officials accountable to the Hill's African American population. When Mayor Lawrence announced the creation of the URA in November 1946, the *Courier* sent a reporter to question him about how African Americans would fare under redevelopment. Specifically, the paper asked Lawrence whether he would appoint a black housing expert to the URA and whether private builders would be allowed to segregate new housing as they had in New York's Stuyvesant Town.<sup>90</sup> The *Courier* reported that Lawrence "discounted the questions as being 'unnecessary' and 'apt to stir up trouble.'" Lawrence professed ignorance of the Stuyvesant Town situation in New York.<sup>91</sup> Despite Lawrence's initial dismissal, Pittsburgh's city planners did their homework and turned Stuyvesant Town into a catchphrase. In February 1950 when the URA's executive director, John P. Robin, spoke at the People's Forum, he assured residents that "a Stuyvesant Town with its bigotry can't happen here."<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Jones, "Housing Upheavals; How to Meet Them?" *Courier*, 13 May 1950, 35.

<sup>90</sup> "Urban Plan 'Not for Hill,'" *Courier*, 16 November 1946, 1.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.* The *Courier* explained the Stuyvesant Town example. An insurance firm "had built this new settlement" under circumstances similar to the URA's plans for Gateway Center and "allegedly refused to rent to Negro tenants by taking advantage of its rights as a private concern."

<sup>92</sup> "Says Hill District Must be Destroyed," *Courier*, 25 February 1950, 1. Thanks to Pittsburgh's African American state legislator, Homer S. Brown, Pennsylvania's 1945 Urban Redevelopment Act barred "discrimination on account of race, creed, color, or national origin" in projects built on "land assembled by redevelopment authorities."

Even though the *Courier* supported redevelopment, it gave voice to institutions and business owners who wished to stay in the Lower Hill or who doubted the promise of urban redevelopment. In his 1951 coverage of a proposed Lower Hill street pattern and land use plan, Paul L. Jones tempered his enthusiasm for redevelopment with quotes from Lower Hill business owners dismayed by displacement. According to Jones, both the Loendi Club and Bethel AME church supported the URA's overall plan but wanted to remain in their Lower Hill locations.<sup>93</sup> The Loendi volunteered, "to build a new structure in keeping with the redevelopment" so long as "we can retain our present location." William Goode, the owner of Goode's pharmacy, meanwhile, warned, "Negro business will be seriously and adversely affected by this proposed redevelopment" and suggested "We must look very carefully to see [its] full implications."<sup>94</sup>

As the URA's plans progressed, the *Courier* continued to give supportive coverage to the Loendi Club's and Bethel AME Church's attempts to remain in their Lower Hill locations. On April 7, 1951, the *Courier* ran an article summing up how the Lower Hill's business, church, and social club leaders were responding to the URA's redevelopment plans.<sup>95</sup> Bethel AME's board voted unanimously to remain in their present location. Bethel's minister, Rev. Andrew A. Hughey, announced the formation of a committee tasked with keeping the church "up to date" on the URA's plans for Bethel. The Loendi club, meanwhile, was "also exploring the possibilities of retaining its present location."<sup>96</sup> The next week, the *Courier* reported that the Loendi Club had scheduled a meeting with the URA to discuss the Club's fate.<sup>97</sup> In early May the URA responded to Bethel's lobbying with an offer to relocate the church to a proposed "institution district," promising a site within the district "at a reasonable price."<sup>98</sup> Bethel's congregation and leadership rejected this option. On May 26, 1951 the *Courier* reported that AME Bishop, A.J. Allen,

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<sup>93</sup> Jones, "Decree End of Fullerton, Wylie Area," *Courier*, 31 March 1951, 1.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> "Leaders Ask to Meet with 'Redevelopers,'" *Courier*, 7 April 1951, 1.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> "600 Block, Wylie Ave., to Be Razed May 1," *Courier*, 14 April 1951, 1.

<sup>98</sup> "Bethel Can Locate in New Institution District, If Able," *Courier*, 5 May 1951, 1.

and Rev. Hughey had gone “on record” in support of the Bethel congregation’s efforts to retain the church’s present location, including the formation of research and planning committees and meetings with the URA and Federal Housing Administration to lobby for keeping their Lower Hill site.<sup>99</sup> The Loendi Club eventually relinquished its exact location, but continued to search for a new site in the Lower Hill until 1957. A November 1957 *Courier* article reported that when the URA gave the Loendi Club a December 31 deadline to move, the Club attempted to purchase property “in the immediate vicinity of the proposed new Civic Arena.”<sup>100</sup> Efforts by the Loendi and Bethel to stay in the Lower Hill failed, but the *Courier*’s coverage of their resistance shows that some of the Lower Hill’s institutions wanted to keep the Lower Hill’s black social life intact.

The *Courier*’s spring 1951 coverage also highlighted how the Hill’s Business and Professional Men’s Association (BPA), while not overtly resisting relocation, drew the URA into some heated negotiations. According to the *Courier*’s April 7 summary of local responses to relocation, the BPA’s president, Samuel Scott, scheduled a meeting with the URA “to discuss . . . the whole problem of our relocation.”<sup>101</sup> Scott also noted with dismay that “the bulk of the 400 Negro businesses and professional establishments in the Third and Fifth Wards are located below Crawford Street, the eastern boundary of the proposed redevelopment.”<sup>102</sup> Wary of the redevelopment plan’s disproportionately negative impact on black businesses, the BPA aimed to organize a “Negro business center” to look out for African American business interests.<sup>103</sup> At an early May meeting with the URA, the BPA did just that. After suggesting that Bethel AME relocate to a new “institution district,” the URA’s John Robin suggested that black businesses relocate below Devilliers Street in the Middle Hill. The BPA, however, questioned “the advisability” of such a relocation, forcing Robin to admit that the area “might be the site of a large-scale

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<sup>99</sup> “Bethel Acts to Stay in Same Area,” *Courier*, 26 May 1951, 1.

<sup>100</sup> “Loendi Members Must Plan for New Location,” *Courier*, 16 November 1957, A3.

<sup>101</sup> “Leaders Ask to Meet with ‘Redevelopers,’” *Courier*, 7 April 1951, 1.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*



housing project within the next five or ten years.” As a result, Robin acknowledged that businesses which moved below Devilliers “might have to face relocation again.”<sup>104</sup>

Both in text and images, the *Courier’s* redevelopment coverage underscored the Lower Hill’s historical and cultural importance. The *Courier* wove subtle but significant salutes to the neighborhood’s historical and cultural legacy, particularly Bethel AME Church’s efforts to remain in the Lower Hill. Its coverage of Bethel AME’s resistance to relocation began in April 1951 with an emphasis on the church’s history: “Historic Bethel AME Church, which has been in operation for 124 years, wants to retain its present location.”<sup>105</sup> Nearly two years later John Clark, in his “Wylie Avenue” column, concluded the paper’s Bethel AME relocation coverage by mourning: “it is reported that Bethel AME will not be spared” despite its architectural “beauty.”<sup>106</sup> Even though the *Courier* supported the Lower Hill’s redevelopment, it still threaded its coverage with references to Bethel AME’s expansive history in the neighborhood and the building’s architectural distinctions.

The *Courier’s* most extensive salute to the Lower Hill’s history, an August 1955 article subtitled “Residents, Old Landmarks Must Bow to Progress” equated redevelopment with progress and advocated demolishing historic landmarks for the sake of progress, but also documented and honored those landmarks’ history with a full-page of Harris photographs. Entitled “Progress Demands These Lower Hill Landmarks,” the page featured nine photographs, tightly packed into a dense layout, documenting Bethel AME, the Chatham Y, Beth Hamerdrish Hagodol Synagogue, the Improvement of the Poor Institute, the Church of St. Peter, the Washington Park Natatorium, the Pittsburgh Bible Institute, the Amerita Club, and Washington Playground.<sup>107</sup> In all nine photographs, Harris made the institution he aimed to document the focal point of his composition. Taken from ground level and from a distance that aligned the buildings’ roofs with the image’s apex, Harris framed each building as a monument. For

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<sup>104</sup> “Bethel Can Locate in New Institution District, If Able,” *Courier*, 5 May 1951, 1.

<sup>105</sup> “Leaders Ask to Meet with ‘Redevelopers,’” *Courier*, 7 April 1951, 1.

<sup>106</sup> John L. Clark, “Wylie Avenue,” *Courier*, 14 February 1953, 22.

<sup>107</sup> George Barbour, “Word on Lower Hill: ‘Say Goodbye Next Spring,’” *Courier*, 27 August 1955, 13.

Washington Park, Harris photographed the park's brick community building from an elevated point across the park's vast ball field. Harris framed the park building with downtown Pittsburgh's skyline. This high angle and point of view emphasized the park's open green space, likening it to a grassy oasis amidst downtown's concrete skyscrapers.

The captions that accompanied Harris's nine images accentuated these institutions' monumentality. The photographs' captions reminded readers that each institution must "give way to progress," but they simultaneously detailed each institution's historical, cultural, and social significance. The *Courier* labeled Beth Hamedrish Hagodol Synagogue a "historic landmark," noted that Bethel AME had stood at the corner of Elm Street and Wylie Avenue since 1906, and that the "padres" of St. Peter's church "served the community well since 1917."<sup>108</sup> One caption likened the Central YMCA on Chatham Street to "a sophisticated lady who has aided in the social maturation of young women." The *Courier's* Washington Park Natatorium caption described the park's bath house in everyday residents' historical language: "Many oldtimers [sic] recall the Saturday night baths in the 'good ole days' at what they called the 'Bedford Blues.'" The caption for Harris's Washington Playground photograph honored the field as the "one time" home field of the Negro League's Pittsburgh Crawfords. Although the playground "will have new buildings erected on it," the paper said, "the colorful sports figures who played there will live in memories for years to come."<sup>109</sup> The *Courier* urged the Lower Hill to yield to the progress of redevelopment, but it also memorialized the neighborhood as a space saturated with historical significance. This was in stark contrast to the brochures and news articles published by the city's redevelopment boosters and local dailies, which never explored the neighborhood's historical significance or culture.

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<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

## 5.5 CONCLUSION

Harris's photographs and the *Courier's* coverage of the Lower Hill leading up to its redevelopment show that residents had many complaints about their built environment. Many of these complaints—such as the Hill's outhouses and dangerous traffic—were also voiced by redevelopers. Yet the *Courier's* coverage of residents identifying these problems and organizing protest petitions and rallies to solve them contradict the Conference's claim that the city's public lacked the "knowledge" and "participation" necessary to conquer urban problems.

The *Courier* supported the Lower Hill's redevelopment for many of the same reasons given by redevelopers. Basing its optimism on precedents set by the Pittsburgh Housing Authority, the *Courier* believed demolishing the Lower Hill and building new public housing would provide better homes and new jobs to Hill residents. *Courier* writers like Paul L. Jones condemned the neighborhood as "squalor." Jones argued that Hill residents deserved better, and identified demolition and public housing as a route to healthier living. The *Courier* also acknowledged and celebrated the Lower Hill's history—although tempered by a strong commitment to progress—and gave voice to institutions like the Loendi Club and Bethel AME Church that wanted to retain their place in that history.

The local dailies never celebrated Lower Hill institutions and only briefly described religious institutions' wish to remain in the Lower Hill before characterizing local responses to redevelopment as total acquiescence. As the next chapter will illustrate, once the redevelopment plan's promises of better housing and new jobs seemed to dissolve, the *Courier's* advocacy role spurred it towards overt protest.

## CHAPTER SIX

### REDEVELOPERS' AND THE *COURIER'S* INCREASINGLY CONFLICTING VISIONS, 1956-1968

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

After the Lower Hill's demolition kicked off in May 1956, the Allegheny Conference commissioned photographers to highlight the technological marvel of redevelopment. Photos of crumbling walls, commanding demolition machines, and scores of workers accentuated redevelopers' technical prowess. These photographs did not appear in the promotional brochures created by redevelopers during the demolition years. Instead, redevelopers utilized the same visual styles they had used to promote the Lower Hill's redevelopment: images that spotlighted the Lower Hill's blight and celebrated the Civic Arena's future marvel. These compositional and subject choices reveal how singularly focused redevelopers remained on the Lower Hill's built environment, rather than on its residents, during demolition.

Teenie Harris and *The Pittsburgh Courier*, meanwhile, commemorated the Lower Hill's history and documented its residents' relocation experiences, which the *Courier* published. Whereas the Conference's photographers documented anonymous buildings over short periods of time, Harris intentionally and systematically photographed specific Lower Hill institutions before and during their demolition. Harris also photographed Lower Hill residents as they underwent relocation. Harris's photographs, as well as the *Courier's* larger coverage, remained supportive of redevelopment during the demolition years. But their focus on the Lower Hill's institutions and people starkly diverged from

redevelopers' singular focus on the built environment. Such differences underscored the distance between redevelopers' and neighborhood insiders' visions of redevelopment.

These differences grew starker after the Civic Arena opened in 1961 and led ultimately to a sharp break that had long-lasting repercussions. Redevelopers' promotional brochures used photographs to showcase the Civic Arena as a symbol of their progress. Following the pattern set out in the 1950s, local daily newspapers and national periodicals distributed redevelopers' visual rhetoric to larger and larger audiences, including photographs heralding the Civic Arena's wonder. In 1964 the Conference released a generously illustrated book edited by popular historian, Stefan Lorant, entitled *Pittsburgh: The Story of an American City*. The book embodied redevelopers' visual interpretation at its most ambitious and marked an apex for the Conference's public relations. Famed *Life* magazine photographer, W. Eugene Smith, photographed the city for the book. Smith's Pittsburgh photographs also appeared in a 1959 *Photography Annual* photo-essay. Smith's essay used the same raw images available to Lorant, but told a more socially nuanced, human-centered, and pro-urban story. Smith's photograph selection, layout, and text framed his story in a way that implicitly highlighted Lorant's and the Conference's accounts of redevelopment.

Despite redevelopers' visual celebrations of their triumphs in the Lower Hill, the redevelopment plan's high-rise housing and Symphony Hall failed to materialize and redevelopers considered extending clearance into the Middle and Upper Hill. The *Courier* withdrew its support for redevelopment after new jobs and better housing failed to follow in the Civic Arena's wake. While redevelopers used the Civic Arena to symbolize their own success, the *Courier* soon regarded visuals of the Arena as symbols of racial injustice. The newspaper supported Hill District activists, notably the Citizens Committee for Hill District Renewal (CCHDR), in protesting further redevelopment in the Hill.

## 6.2 REDEVELOPERS' IMAGES DURING DEMOLITION

Photographing the Lower Hill's demolition for the Allegheny Conference, John Shrader documented the neighborhood's buildings from angles that made them unidentifiable and in sequences that celebrated demolition as an engineering marvel. The Conference's photographic archive contains one especially striking Shrader demolition series documenting one building's demolition in stages (see figs 6.1-6.2).<sup>1</sup> Shrader photographed this building from the side, leaving out visual information such as storefronts that would have differentiated it from any other. The archival print maintains this anonymity, bearing only the handwritten label "Demolition--Lower Hill—June 1956."<sup>2</sup>



Figs. 6.1 and 6.2 John Shrader, *Demolition—Lower Hill—June 1956*

Shrader's series also captured a brief time frame, documenting one corner of the building's wall through minute-to-minute stages of demolition. In Shrader's view, the genius of demolition engineering turned a solid brick wall into a teetering cracked sheet. Like a piece of dead skin, the brick sheet dangled

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<sup>1</sup> John Shrader, *Demolition—Lower Hill—June 1956*, negative numbers 14236-3 and 14236-2, Conference Photographs, Box 33, Folder 7: "Lower Hill—Demolition."

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

off the building before it crumbled in the next frame. No people appeared in Shrader's image. His series documented demolition's technological genius, but revealed nothing about the building or its history and residents.

The Conference's James McClain also photographed the Lower Hill's demolition in spring 1957; in contrast to Shrader's images, McClain focused less on the technological marvels of demolition and more on the labor of demolition, but the identity and history of the buildings McClain photographed remained anonymous. Unlike Shrader, who photographed for the Conference on commission, McClain worked full time as a planning engineer for the Conference and the Conference-affiliated Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (WPC).<sup>3</sup> McClain's labors for the Conference and WPC included everything from surveying and evaluating land for county parks, collecting water samples, and building hiking trails to photographing parklands, bridges, and the Lower Hill's demolition.<sup>4</sup> Reflecting his engineering specialization, McClain's images spotlighted the labor of demolition. On March 14 he photographed a work crew cleaning up the remains of a demolished building on the southwest corner of Washington Street and Bedford Avenue (fig 6.3).<sup>5</sup> Demolition comprised the whole image. African American laborers worked in a pit of lumber scraps, gathering salvageable boards into large piles. Buildings in various stages of demolition surround the pit. That same day McClain photographed men or machines moving large piles of lumber elsewhere on Washington,<sup>6</sup> Webster Avenue<sup>7</sup> and Wylie Avenue.<sup>8</sup> McClain also photographed half-demolished buildings and lots of rubble with no workers present at Washington and

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<sup>3</sup> In his "Narrative," Park Martin refers to James McClain as his "planning engineer," Park Martin, "Narrative of the Allegheny Conference," 50.

<sup>4</sup> Martin, "Narrative," 50 and "James McClain, Invoices," Conference Records, MSS #285, Box 123, Folder 4: "James McClain, 1959-1973."

<sup>5</sup> James McClain, *Lower Hill Demolition, SW corner of Washington and Bedford*, 14 March 1957, Conference Photographs, Box 33, Folder 7: "Lower Hill—Demolition."

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, *Lower Hill Demolition, Washington and Gilmore Way*, 14 March 1957, Conference Photographs, Box 33, Folder 7: "Lower Hill—Demolition."

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, *Lower Hill Demolition, Webster Ave bet. Elm and Logan*, 14 March 1957, Conference Photographs, Box 33, Folder 7: "Lower Hill—Demolition."

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, *Lower Hill Demolition, SE Corner of Wylie Ave and Fernando*, 14 March 1957, Conference Photographs, Box 33, Folder 7: "Lower Hill—Demolition"

Wylie,<sup>9</sup> at Washington and Gilmore,<sup>10</sup> and on Clay Way.<sup>11</sup> In one day, McClain covered a much broader geographical space than Shrader, and McClain's visual representation of demolition included workers and their labor while Shrader's emphasized the awe-inspiring spectacle of their labor. McClain, however, photographed the Lower Hill's buildings as examples of demolition, identifying them only with street names and ignoring the buildings' and the neighborhood's social histories.

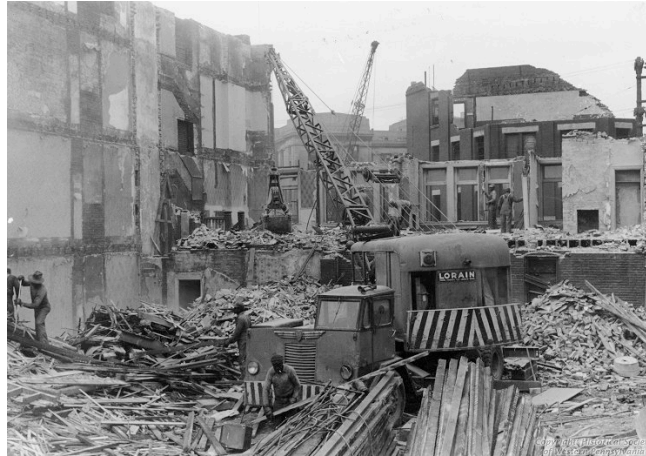


Fig. 6.3 James McClain, *Lower Hill Demolition, SW corner of Washington and Bedford*, 14 March 1957

On May 9 McClain returned to the Lower Hill to photograph demolition along Logan Street; with this second set of photos McClain extended his subject matter beyond workers, machines, and rubble to social sidewalk scenes, but his handwritten captions reduced the images to the label "Lower Hill Demolition." In May, McClain photographed the labor of demolition as he had in March, this time focusing on the addresses 41 and 45 Logan Street. He documented men carrying furniture out of a pool hall at 41 Logan Street,<sup>12</sup> but also expanded his repertoire with an interior photograph of laundry drying

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, *Lower Hill Demolition, Cor. Washington and Wylie looking W*, 14 March 1957, Conference Photographs, Box 33, Folder 7: "Lower Hill—Demolition."

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, *Lower Hill Demolition, Washington and Gilmore Way*, 14 March 1957, Conference Photographs, Box 33, Folder 7: "Lower Hill—Demolition."

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, *Lower Hill Demolition, Clay Way looking W*, 14 March 1957, Conference Photographs, Box 33, Folder 7: "Lower Hill—Demolition."

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, *Lower Hill Demolition, 41 Logan Street*, 9 May 1957, Conference Photographs, Box 33, Folder 7: "Lower Hill—Demolition."



on a line and along a banister in a stairway at 41 Logan.<sup>13</sup> Outside of 45 Logan, McClain photographed two parked work vehicles; the scene's one laborer stood on the back of a truck and socialized with a group of residents milling about on the street and a woman leaning out of her second story window (fig. 6.4).<sup>14</sup>



Fig. 6.4 James McClain, *Lower Hill Demolition, 41 Logan Street*, 9 May 1957

McClain's May 9 scenes offer a more intimate and personal view of the neighborhood's demolition, but his handwritten titles belie this intimacy. McClain titled these May 9 photographs just like he titled his March 14 scenes: "Lower Hill Demolition" followed by the photograph's street location. McClain took all of the May 9 photographs at 41 and 45 Logan, so he differentiated them only by street number. Two very different photographs taken at the same address, then, bore the exact same caption. McClain labeled the photograph of laundry hanging in the stairwell and the photograph of men moving

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, *Lower Hill Demolition, 41 Logan Street*, 9 May 1957, Conference Photographs, Box 33, Folder 7: "Lower Hill—Demolition."

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, *Lower Hill Demolition, 45 Logan Street*, 9 May 1957, Conference Photographs, Box 33, Folder 7: "Lower Hill—Demolition."

furniture out of the pool hall “Lower Hill Demolition, 41 Logan Street.” These generalized handwritten titles deemphasize the human dimension of demolition.

Meanwhile, redevelopers’ promotional brochures during the demolition years celebrated their progress with layouts that juxtaposed the Lower Hill’s clutter and blight with the Civic Arena’s marvel. The URA’s 1960 Annual Report included an aerial photograph of the Lower Hill that foregrounded a lot that had been razed since the beginning of demolition.<sup>15</sup> A block bounded by two arterial streets stretched from the photo’s foreground. The composition’s angle made the streets disappear beneath the clutter of surrounding buildings as they stretched into the backgrounds. Like many of the aerial photographs published by redevelopers in the years leading up to demolition, this image emphasized the Lower Hill’s chaotic building density. Although a muddy eyesore, the demolished lot offered a break from the neighborhood’s claustrophobic buildings. The photo’s caption described the scene as the “Lower Hill—at the beginning of clearance” and its text promised that clearance was facilitating the rise of “Pittsburgh’s famed Civic Arena,” an “architectural masterpiece.”<sup>16</sup>

The URA’s 1960 Annual Report also contained a photograph of the Lower Hill’s blight that utilized the visual signifiers of blight seen in redevelopers’ 1940s and 1950s brochures. The Annual Report included a photograph of an abandoned brick building captioned, “deterioration as it existed in the Lower Hill” laid out to the right of the aerial “Lower Hill—at beginning of clearance” image.<sup>17</sup> Viewed from across a narrow street, the building filled over half of the composition and signs of blight dominated its exterior (fig. 6.5).<sup>18</sup> The front door and window were both boarded up with wooden planks haphazardly nailed together. A second-story window frame with no glass or boarding looked

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<sup>15</sup> Urban Redevelopment Authority, *Annual Report 1960*, Conference Records, Box 230, Folder 10: “Reports: Urban Redevelopment/URA,” 11.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Pittsburgh Urban Redevelopment Authority, “Deterioration as it existed in the Lower Hill,” *Annual Report 1960*, 11. The photograph is also archived untitled in the Conference’s Photo archive. Conference Photographs, Box 30, Folder 10: “Slums.”

ragged and dark. Four bins of trash cluttered the narrow sidewalk in front of the building. Behind the building, blocks of buildings crowded together reiterated the neighborhood's density. The text drove home the point by describing the Lower Hill as "once home to some 1551 people living amidst squalor in substandard housing located on narrow and congested streets."<sup>19</sup>



Fig. 6.5 Pittsburgh Urban Redevelopment Authority, "Deterioration as it existed in the Lower Hill," *Annual Report 1960*

The URA's 1960s public-relations pamphlets also used photographs of a Civic Arena model and of the Arena under construction to emphasize technological promise and progress. The Lower-Hill layout in the 1960 *Annual Report* finished with an image of the Civic Arena model used in the Conference's 1956 *The Allegheny Conference . . . Presents!* (see Chapter Three). At that time, the Conference captioned the model, "Unique and spectacular in design, this structure is destined to become a wonder of the modern world."<sup>20</sup> In 1960, the URA's caption kept the exultant tone by likening the Civic Arena to "an architectural triumph unfolding."<sup>21</sup> The URA's 1960 *Pittsburgh's Redevelopment: The First Ten Years* celebrated the entire decade's work and spotlighted the Civic Arena as "Pittsburgh's most dramatic

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<sup>19</sup> Urban Redevelopment Authority, *Annual Report 1960*, 11.

<sup>20</sup> *The Allegheny Conference . . . Presents!*, 13.

<sup>21</sup> Urban Redevelopment Authority, *Annual Report 1960*, 12.

project in progress.”<sup>22</sup> Here, the Civic Arena appeared under construction. Viewed from downtown, an old brick building peeked into the photograph’s foreground. A flattened demolition area stretched beyond the building like a patch of urban desert. The Arena’s steel skeleton, including the girders designed to support its celebrated domed roof, sat in the middle of the emptiness. The photographs in the URA’s 1960 publicity brochures update the message from the Conference’s 1956 brochure: the Lower Hill’s old housing stock and dense blocks had yielded so that the Civic Arena could rise from the rubble.

### 6.3 HARRIS’S AND THE *COURIER*’S IMAGES DURING DEMOLITION

Unlike redevelopers’ images of demolition’s labor and technological awe, Teenie Harris’s photographs and the *Courier*’s coverage of the Lower Hill’s demolition paid homage to the Lower Hill’s history and people. Harris’s archived demolition images memorialized specific neighborhood institutions by documenting their demolition step-by-step and his photographs published by the *Courier* spotlighted how the Lower Hill’s residents experienced demolition. As noted in Chapter Four, Harris photographed the neighborhood’s iconic institutions like the Loendi Club and the Crawford Grill long before the City Planning Commission slated them for demolition. As the URA began demolishing these institutions in 1956, Harris photographed the stages of their demolition, including their identifying features.

Harris’s treatment of Bethel AME, exemplifies his commitment to extensively documenting the URA’s demolition of Lower Hill institutions; Harris began photographing Bethel AME’s demolition before it even commenced. Long before the Lower Hill’s redevelopment spurred Shrader’s and the Conference’s interest, Harris documented Bethel AME, inside and out.<sup>23</sup> In 1957, as the URA

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<sup>22</sup> Pittsburgh Urban Redevelopment Authority, *Pittsburgh’s Redevelopment: The First Ten Years*, 1960, Box 230, Folder 16: “Reports: Urban Redevelopment/ URA.”

<sup>23</sup> For examples of exterior images, see Harris, *Bethel A.M.E. Church and rectory*, c. 1930-1970, accession

systematically demolished the Lower Hill and Bethel's attempts to remain in place failed, Harris continued to photograph the church. Harris took this 1957 image from a side street diagonally across from the church's façade. At this distance, Harris made the entire church the center of his composition and documented the street life that bustled around it (see fig. 6.6).<sup>24</sup> Next Harris photographed the church as the URA's wave of demolition approached (see fig. 6.7).<sup>25</sup> Taken from the same direction, but even further away, Harris included the pile of rubble and wrecking crane, evidence of demolition, in front of the church. In the image's foreground, two men, one white and dressed for hard labor, very likely a demolition worker, and one black and dressed in a suit, very likely a neighborhood resident, talked in front of the demolition rubble. Next to the church, demolition crews had already removed an exterior wall and windows from two three-story brick buildings. In contrast to Shrader's images of demolition's moment-to-moment technical awe, Harris photographed a neighborhood institution in stages, including scenes of the impending demolition. Harris also included the church's façade and neighborhood residents in his images.

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number 2001.35.4129; *Bethel A.M.E. Church, John D. Bright, minister*, c. 1930-1970, accession number 2001.35.4090. For examples of interior images, see Harris, *Audience of men, women, and children, gathered for police brutality meeting in the Bethel AME Church on Webster Avenue in the Hill District*, April 1954, accession number 2001.35.43021; *Group portrait of women and men seated around banquet table, in interior with alternating block patterned floor, twisted crepe paper streamers, and two tiered sheet cake in background inscribed "26th anniversary, Bethel AME,"* c. 1953, accession number 2001.35.41632; *Group portrait of five men and seven women, including one on left wearing dark crocheted shawl, holding music and singing, and another woman wearing striped dress and playing piano and seated on chair stenciled "Bethel A.M.E. Church" in interior with alternating block patterned floor tin ceiling, exposed pipes, and heart decorations*, c. 1954, accession number 2001.35.42794.

<sup>24</sup> Harris, *Exterior of Bethel AME Church, with message board reading 'April 21, 1957 . . . Free At Last,' Wylie Avenue at Elm Street, Hill District*, c. 1957, accession number 2001.35.15438. Interestingly, this photograph—or at least the message board it captured—suggests that Bethel AME's leadership looked forward to the church's demolition and the subsequent move to a new church building.

<sup>25</sup> Harris, *Demolition zone for the Civic Arena, with Marpec Construction Company Contract Hauling truck, in front of Bethel AME Church, possibly Elm Street, Hill District*, 1957, accession number 2001.35.4091.



Fig. 6.6 Charles "Teenie" Harris, American, 1908–1998, *Exterior of Bethel AME Church, with message board reading "April 21, 1957 . . . Free At Last," Wylie Avenue at Elm Street, Hill District, c. 1957*, black and white: Kodak Safety Film, H: 4 in. x W: 5 in. (10.20 x 12.70 cm), Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: Heinz Family Fund, 2001.35.15438



Fig. 6.7 Charles "Teenie" Harris, American, 1908–1998, *Demolition zone for the Civic Arena, with Marpec Construction Company Contract Hauling truck, in front of Bethel AME Church, possibly Elm Street, Lower Hill District, 1957*, black and white: Kodak Safety Film, H: 4 in. x W: 5 in. (10.20 x 12.70 cm), Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: Heinz Family Fund, 2001.35.4091

When the URA began demolishing Bethel AME Church on July 24, 1957 Harris photographed the church throughout the day to document the stages of its demolition; even during demolition, though, Harris's images highlighted the church's history. The URA's demolition crew took the church apart from back to front. To capture the action, Harris first photographed the first stage of demolition from behind the church (fig. 6.8).<sup>26</sup> Taken from afar, the photograph showed debris surrounding the church and exterior edges of the building scraped away. Harris next photographed Bethel from a front side-angle that incorporated the church's entryway and demolition's action (fig. 6.9).<sup>27</sup> Bethel's historic bell tower and triple arched entryway still stood as identifying markers. Behind them, the wrecking ball swung and dust rose from piles of debris. Two men talked on the sidewalk in front of the demolition, and two men ambled past each other in front of the church's entrance. If cut in half, the image's left side would show

<sup>26</sup> Harris, *Demolition of Bethel AME Church with crane on left, Wylie Avenue and Elm Street, Hill District, 24 July 1957*, accession number 2001.35.4054

<sup>27</sup> Harris, *Demolition of Bethel AME Church, Wylie Avenue and Elm Street, Hill District, 24 July 1957*, accession number 2001.35.4127.

only the dust during demolition. The right side, with the church's entryway intact and men strolling past, would appear like any other day in the church's long history. Harris photographed the church from behind late in the day. In this image only the church's front wall and one sidewall remained.<sup>28</sup> Rubble filled what had been the church's interior. Bethel AME appeared nowhere in redevelopers' Lower Hill imagery. Harris, on the other hand, systematically documented the church's demolition in a way that emphasized its architecture and history.



Fig. 6.8 Charles "Teenie" Harris, American, 1908–1998, *Demolition of Bethel AME Church with crane on left, Wylie Avenue and Elm Street, Hill District*, 24 July 1957, black and white: Kodak Safety Film, H: 4 in. x W: 5 in. (10.20 x 12.70 cm), Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: Heinz Family Fund, 2001.35.4054



Fig. 6.9 Charles "Teenie" Harris, American, 1908–1998, *Demolition of Bethel AME Church, Wylie Avenue and Elm Street, Lower Hill District*, 24 July 1957, black and white: Kodak Safety Film, H: 4 in. x W: 5 in. (10.20 x 12.70 cm), Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: Heinz Family Fund, 2001.35.4127

Harris's archived photographs painstakingly documented the URA's demolition of Lower Hill institutions, but the Harris photos chosen by the *Courier* for its coverage of demolition spotlighted the impact on residents, including positive scenes of happily relocated families and subtly mournful scenes of demolition itself. A November 1956 *Courier* article summarized how families being relocated from

<sup>28</sup> Harris, *Demolition of Bethel AME Church by the Cuyahoga Wrecking Company, Wylie Avenue and Elm Street, Hill District*, 24 July 1957, accession number 2001.35.4124.

Lower Bedford Avenue were faring.<sup>29</sup> Among the area's non-white families, ninety percent had been relocated to "low-rent projects in the Upper Hill" in accordance with their preference to stay in the Hill. Two Harris photographs featuring Lower Hill residents illustrated the story. One showed three young boys from behind, one sitting on a wooden box and the other two standing to his right, watching construction vehicles in a rubble-strewn lot (Fig. 6.10). The photograph's caption explained the boys' "families will be displaced soon." Reminiscent of Shrader's images of a wall collapsing and McClain's images of men and machines removing rubble, Harris framed the children with a crane, gutted buildings, and rubble. Indeed, the children may have been captivated with the machines' complexity and power. Unlike Shrader and McClain, though, Harris made the Lower Hill's residents, specifically its children central to his composition. Noting that these same machines would be demolishing the boys' homes soon, the *Courier's* coverage acknowledged both the deftness of demolition and its social consequences.<sup>30</sup>



Fig. 6.10 Charles "Teenie" Harris, American, 1908–1998, *Three boys watching demolition of buildings by R. J. Omslaer Wrecking Company crane, at future site of Civic Arena, Lower Hill District*, November 1956, black and white: Kodak Safety Film, H: 4 in. x W: 5 in. (10.20 x 12.70 cm), Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: Heinz Family Fund, 2001.35.6539

<sup>29</sup> "Negro Tenants 'Prefer' Upper Hill; Whites Go to S. Hills," *Courier*, 10 November 1956, 1.

<sup>30</sup> Comparing this photograph as it appeared in the *Courier* to a print from the original negative in the Harris archive (fig. 16) shows that the frame of Harris's original shot extended upward to include the crane's claw grasping a heap of rubble. The *Courier's* layout editor, then, cropped out the scene's most obvious example of technological awe. See Harris, *Three boys watching demolition of buildings by R. J. Omslaer Wrecking Company crane, at future site of Civic Arena, Lower Hill District*, November 1956, accession number 2001.35.6539.



The article's second photograph of a relocated family watching television in their new public housing apartment envisioned demolition as a path to new homes, not as an end in and of itself as seen in redevelopers' images. In the photo, Mr. and Mrs. Walkers and their six young children sat on and around their sofa watching television. One of the television's antennae sliced through the composition, indicating that Harris photographed the family from behind the television (Fig. 6.11). This choice foregrounded the television, a symbol of the family's quality of life. The photograph's caption elaborated on this theme. Redevelopment had relocated the Walkers from a "six-room shack" on Gilmore Way in the Lower Hill, to public housing in the Upper Hill's Bedford Dwellings, "where they are happy."<sup>31</sup> This image supported demolition and redevelopment, but articulated the *Courier's* specific vision of what redevelopment should achieve: improved living conditions for the Hill District's people. This article appeared in fall 1956, at the start of the Lower Hill's demolition. Instead of focusing on demolition cranes and crumbling buildings, as the Conference's archived photographs did, Harris and the *Courier* used their demolition coverage to create a vision of what demolition and redevelopment should accomplish.

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<sup>31</sup> "Negro Tenants 'Prefer' Upper Hill; Whites Go to S. Hills," *Courier*, 10 November 1956, 1. Because of the low picture quality in microfilmed and digitized versions of the *Courier*, the photograph in figure 6.11 is a cropped version (following the *Courier's* cropping) of a photo taken from the original negative in the Carnegie Museum of Art's Teenie Harris archive: Harris, *Group portrait of Walkers family, including Mrs. Walkers wearing polka dot dress with baby girl on lap, Albert Walkers wearing light colored shirt and trousers, and five boys, posed in living room with sofa with plastic slip cover, and television antennae in foreground, in apartment in Bedford Dwellings*, November 1956, accession number 2001.35.45618.



Fig. 6.11 Charles "Teenie" Harris, American, 1908–1998, *Group portrait of Walker family, including Mrs. Walker wearing polka dot dress with baby girl on lap, Albert Walker wearing light colored shirt and trousers, and five boys, posed in living room with sofa with plastic slip cover, and television antennae in foreground, in apartment in Bedford Dwellings, November 1956*, black and white: Kodak Safety Film, H: 4 in. x W: 5 in. (10.20 x 12.70 cm), Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: Heinz Family Fund, 2001.35.45618

The local daily newspapers' scant coverage of the Lower Hill's demolition underscores the *Courier's* concern for Hill residents' welfare; the local dailies' visual coverage focused singularly on the demolition of an Italian Catholic church. In 1958, the parishioners of St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church on Fernando Street in the Lower Hill brought a suit against the URA, attempting to halt their church's demolition.<sup>32</sup> The URA had brokered a deal with the church's titleholder, Bishop John F. Dearden of the Pittsburgh Diocese. Dearden sold St. Peter's to the city for two million dollars, but St. Peter's parishioners hired attorneys and filed for an injunction to halt the church's condemnation and demolition. The church's lawyers accused the URA of planning to replace the church with a "cocktail bar" and, ultimately, argued that the parishioners, not Bishop Dearden, had the authority to sell the church. St. Peter's parishioners lost their lawsuit and the Pennsylvania Supreme Court refused to hear

<sup>32</sup> "Hill Church Razing Petition Rejected," *Pittsburgh Press*, 3 April 1958, 1; and "St Peter's Church Suit Held Faulty," *Post-Gazette*, 4 April 1958, Section 2, 1.

their appeal.<sup>33</sup> When the URA began demolishing St. Peter's in the fall of 1960, the *Post-Gazette* memorialized the church's passing with a photograph similar to Harris's of Bethel AME's demolition.<sup>34</sup> Rubble and a wrecking ball filled the photograph's foreground. Beyond the rubble, the church's rear wall had crumbled while the three spires that decorated the church's entrance stood intact. The *Post-Gazette's* caption described the scene: "A Landmark Falls."<sup>35</sup> The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* and *The Pittsburgh Press* gave zero coverage to the demolition of the Lower Hill's African American churches and residents appeared nowhere in their visuals.

#### 6.4 REDEVELOPERS' IMAGES OF THE CIVIC ARENA AND THE LOWER HILL IN RETROSPECT

No scenes of residents enjoying the new housing promised through redevelopment appeared in the Allegheny Conference's photographic archive or in redevelopers' promotional brochures; instead, the city's redevelopment coalition chose images of the Civic Arena to applaud the progress and technological prowess of redevelopment. For the city's dedication ceremony for the Civic Arena on 17 September 1961, the Public Auditorium Authority of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County (PAAP) created a promotional pamphlet as a souvenir. Entitled, "A Public Auditorium for Pittsburgh and Allegheny County," the souvenir pamphlet included six images of the Civic Arena.<sup>36</sup> A photograph of the Civic Arena took up most of the cover's top half (fig. 6.12). Taken from a slight aerial angle with the Civic Arena grandly centered, the photograph foregrounded the broad walkways that led to the Arena's entryway. This composition both emphasized the Arena's architectural majesty and drew viewers

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* See also *St. Peter's Roman Catholic Parish, Appellant, v. Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh*, 394 PA. 194; 146 A.2d 724 (PA, 1958) Lexis 309; and *St. Peter's Roman Catholic Parish v. Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh*, 401 PA. 182; 163 A.2d 56 (PA, 1960) Lexis 513.

<sup>34</sup> "Wreckers Start Demolition of St. Peters," *Post-Gazette*, 29 October 1960, 2.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Public Auditorium Authority of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County (hereafter referred to as PAAP), *A Public Auditorium for Pittsburgh and Allegheny County: Dedication Souvenir, September 17, 1961*, Conference Records, Box 133, Folder 3: "Lower Hill: Brochures," 1.

towards the Arena like a formal invitation. Dominating the pamphlet's cover, this straight-ahead, slightly elevated shot that spotlighted the Civic Arena set the tone for the pamphlet and became a visual shorthand for redevelopers' accomplishments.

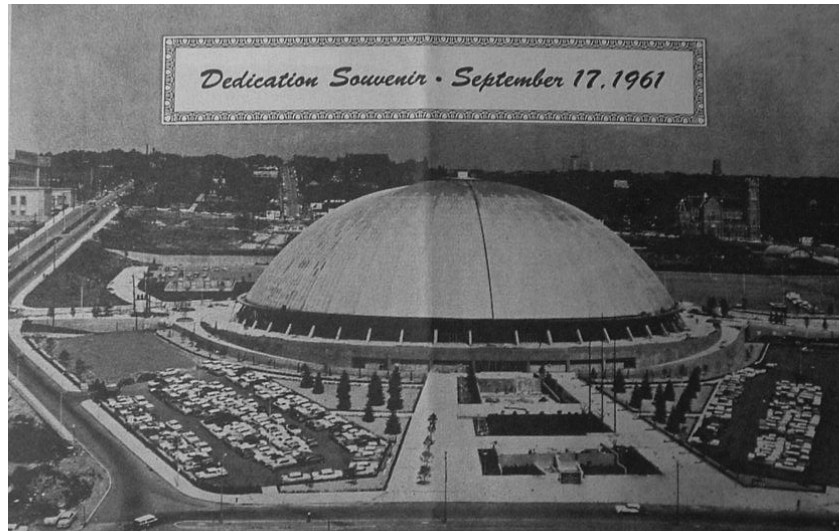


Fig. 6.12 Public Auditorium Authority of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County, *A Public Auditorium for Pittsburgh and Allegheny County: Dedication Souvenir, September 17, 1961*, cover

The dedication brochure also included smaller aerial photographs of the Lower Hill before demolition and the Arena with its retractable roof opened to the sky; side-by-side, these images provided evidence of technical distinction and a narrative of the city's rebirth. For the "before" image, the PAAP used an aerial photograph of the Lower Hill before demolition with the redevelopers' street plan superimposed on top. The Lower Hill made up a small portion of the photograph; the shot's high elevation incorporated the Monongahela River to the south and most of downtown to the west. The life of the neighborhood, its institutions, and its social life were invisible from this height, and the superimposed street plan marked the neighborhood as a relic of the past. A photograph of the Civic Arena with its roof retracted came next. Taken from an elevated angle on the Arena's northwest side

and looking east up Centre Avenue, this image visually narrated progress (fig. 6.13).<sup>37</sup> In its 1956 promotional brochure, *The Allegheny Conference Presents . . . Pittsburgh!*, the Conference included a sketch of the Arena's open roof drawn by the plan's architects.<sup>38</sup> This 1961 photograph equated the Arena's uniquely retractable dome to the technological marvels of redevelopment by showing the architect's dream come to fruition. The caption noted that the photograph captured the Arena's open dome "as it looked just before dedication."<sup>39</sup> Much of the brochure's text emphasized both the Arena's technological excellence and its centrality to the city's progress narrative. Not only did the Civic Arena "give the world its largest dome," but it also could boast of being "three times the size of St. Peter's in Rome."<sup>40</sup> A page-long "fact sheet" at the end of the brochure elaborated in great technical detail on the dome's leaves, cantilever, ring girder, and motor powering.<sup>41</sup> Finally, the brochure called the Arena's dedication "a milestone in a series of accomplishments that have lifted the city to new heights of modern living."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 2. The version of the photograph shown in Fig. 6.14 is from Conference Photographs, Robert E. Dick Studios, *Civic Arena, Allegheny Conference Photographs*, MSP285.B001.F17.I05

<sup>38</sup> *The Allegheny Conference . . . Presents!*, 13.

<sup>39</sup> PAAP, *A Public Auditorium for Pittsburgh and Allegheny County: Dedication Souvenir, September 17, 1961*, 2.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.



Fig. 6.13 Robert E. Dick Studios, *Civic Arena*, in Public Auditorium Authority of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County, *A Public Auditorium for Pittsburgh and Allegheny County: Dedication Souvenir*, September 17, 1961

The brochure's most striking photograph featured the Civic Arena at dusk; framed by downtown's skyline silhouetted by a silvery sky, this photograph added poetic revelry. The Civic Arena's dome took up the left half of the composition (fig. 6.14). At the center of the dome, one of the roof's famed cantilevers stood out in dark contrast to the dome's light metallic paneling. The dusk lighting deepened the contrast between the dome and the machinery that enabled its retraction. This contrast turned the cantilever arm into an abstract pattern of overlapping triangles. Here, the Arena looked as much spaceship as redevelopment project. Behind the Arena, downtown's skyline anchored the Arena to the city, rendering it real instead of science fiction. The dots of light projecting out of downtown's office buildings added to the composition's play with light. A silvery sky, with smears of clouds reaching down from the top left corner created a silhouette effect, emphasizing the dark uniformity of downtown buildings and heightening the contrasts between the skyline and the Arena's metallic roof and cantilever. The photograph's caption reiterated the composition's drama: "In a city where the sun rarely shone, the moonlight reflects brightly on the ten-story high steel dome while the city lights behind

provide a dramatic backdrop.”<sup>43</sup>



Fig. 6.14 Public Auditorium Authority of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County, *A Public Auditorium for Pittsburgh and Allegheny County: Dedication Souvenir*, September 17, 1961

The *Post-Gazette*'s extensive text and visual coverage of the Civic Arena's dedication ceremony on 17 September 1961 applauded the Arena as technologic marvel and a symbol of the city's progress. The *Post-Gazette*'s coverage took five full pages including the article itself, three large photographs taken by the *Post-Gazette*, one diagram of the Arena's seating, and quarter-page ads from Pittsburgh corporations like Mellon Bank, Gulf Oil, Westinghouse, Koppers, and US Steel.<sup>44</sup> The article's title set a triumphant tone for the paper's coverage: "City's Public Auditorium Now is a Dream Fulfilled" and its photographs highlighted the Arena's technological novelty. An aerial photograph showed the Arena's roof fully retracted. Its caption provided technical details about how the roof's cantilever arm moved six leaves along a concrete girder.<sup>45</sup> The article's other two photographs spotlighted the Arena's interior spaciousness and technical innovations. One photo, taken from high up near the Arena's roof, showed a quarter of the Arena from top to bottom, including the Arena's floor, seating, and airy domed roof. The caption reiterated the scene's vastness: "a ten-story building could be placed inside the auditorium, as

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Mel Seidenberg, "City's Public Auditorium Now is a Dream Fulfilled," *Post-Gazette*, 17 September 1961, Section 3, 7-11.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

this photo, emphasizing interior spaciousness illustrates.”<sup>46</sup> The caption then described the Arena’s lighting, scoreboard, air conditioning, and heating systems. The article’s final *Post-Gazette* photograph showed the Arena’s stage and seating, but its caption, again, underscored its technological marvel by narrating how the stage, scenery, and seats could be moved around by “the largest hydraulic lifting system of its type in the world.”<sup>47</sup>

While the photographs taken by *Post-Gazette* photographers emphasized the Arena’s massive size and cutting-edge technology, the corporate advertisements that accompanied the paper’s coverage used photographs in the pictorialist tradition to depict the Arena as a work of art, much like the PAAP’s (see fig. 6.12) photograph of the Civic Arena at dusk. For example, a US Steel advertisement that comprised the last page of the *Post-Gazette*’s Civic Arena coverage included large, high-contrast photographs of the city’s skyline to create striking multi-layered silhouettes. In the U.S. Steel advertisement, the Civic Arena filled the right side of the composition and stretched almost entirely across, with only a sliver of open space on the left (fig. 6.15).<sup>48</sup> Like the PAAP photograph, the stark contrast made the Arena’s cantilever arms stand out black against the Arena’s whitened dome. Downtown’s skyline, rendered completely black by the image’s high contrast, rose above the left side of the Arena and stretched to the left edge of the photograph’s frame. A man holding an umbrella stood in front of the Arena, a black silhouette in the photograph’s near foreground. The composition’s alternating layers of dark and light made the Arena appear otherworldly yet rooted in an abstract cityscape and in an “everyman’s” quotidian life.

IMAGE UNAVAILABLE  
DUE TO COPYRIGHT

Fig. 6.15 U.S. Steel Corporation “Even if it’s raining,” September 1961

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 11. The Gulf Oil and Mellon Bank advertisements that accompanied the *Post-Gazette*’s coverage also used high contrasts and abstract compositions to represent the Arena as a work of art.



The *Post-Gazette's* laudatory text and the article's advertisers spoke of the Arena as a wonder of the modern world and a direct symbol of the city's progress and future. Starting on the first page, the author, Mel Seidenberg, called the Civic Arena "a new architectural form on the Pittsburgh scene" and "one that belongs to the future" and is "like none other in the world."<sup>49</sup> The Arena's glory had been recognized by "many construction experts" as "one of the most unusual and really significant buildings of our time."<sup>50</sup> Seidenberg also emphasized the symbolic link between the Civic Arena and the city's progress. In a section subtitled "Strong New Symbol," he explained "The auditorium now stands . . . as a strong new symbol of the kind of physical, economic, and social progress Pittsburgh has been seeking to attain in its renowned . . . 'renaissance.'"<sup>51</sup> Later in the article, Seidenberg linked the Arena to Pittsburgh's larger reputation, calling it an "advertisement of the city" and "the product for which it is best known."<sup>52</sup> Advertisements echoed these sentiments. Mellon Bank's advertisement labeled the Arena "another proud achievement of a forward-looking community," and the Commonwealth Bank and Trust Company called it "A symbol of community progress."<sup>53</sup>

*The Pittsburgh Press* gave more extensive coverage to the Civic Arena and its dedication ceremony. Thematically, however, the *Press's* coverage mirrored that of the *Post-Gazette* and of the PAAP's dedication souvenir. The *Press* dedicated an entire twelve-page section of its Sunday, September 17 issue to the Arena, with separate articles hailing the Arena's history, retractable roof, variable seating plans, colorful décor, beautiful landscaping, ample parking, state-of-the-art scoreboard, and movable floors.<sup>54</sup> The *Press's* language matched that of the *Post-Gazette's* and PAAP's; one article labeled the

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 7 and 10.

<sup>54</sup> "13 Year Dream Realized in Arena," and "Public Arena Proposed in 1925," Sec. 7, 9; "Largest Dome in World Here," 1; "Figures Prove Arena Quite a Weighty Place: Movable Roof Really Two Half Circles," 2;

Arena's retractable roof an "engineering miracle."<sup>55</sup> The *Press's* front page began with images from the PAAP's dedication souvenir, including the photograph of the Civic Arena that appeared on the PAAP's cover (see fig. 6.11) and the photograph of the Arena's opened roof that the PAAP used to show the progress of redevelopment (see fig. 6.13).<sup>56</sup> The *Press's* direct use of redevelopers' visuals followed a pattern set out in the 1940s and 1950s (see Chapter Three) and evinces the daily papers' tight alliance with the city's redevelopment coalition. The *Press* also included photographs that illustrated the Arena's technical feats<sup>57</sup> as well as many of the same advertisements printed in the *Post-Gazette*. The PAAP's dedication souvenir and the *Press's* and *Post-Gazette's* coverage of the dedication proudly proclaimed the Arena a symbol of Pittsburgh's progress and future. The city's redevelopment coalition, in turn, echoed these themes throughout the 1960s. Local agencies like the URA decorated their annual reports with photographs of the Civic Arena. Local businesses, and even boosterish children's books, used grand images of the Civic Arena to exemplify the city's progress and promote Pittsburgh to the world at large.<sup>58</sup>

National periodicals like *National Geographic* aided redevelopers' promotional project by bringing Pittsburgh's progress narrative, symbolized by the Civic Arena, to a national audience. Starting

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"Engineering Miracle: Civic Arena Dome Largest of Kind in World to Move," 9. "Seating Plan Versatile for Various Shows," Sec. 7, 5; "Color Order of the Day in New Auditorium," 5; "Landscaping Adds to Arena's Beauty," 7; "Parking Lots Surround Arena; Number of Ways to Get There," 8; "Huge Scoreboard to Keep Tally," 11; "Floor Transform Quick as a Rink" and "Movable Floor for Basketball," 11, *Pittsburgh Press*, 17 September 1961.

<sup>55</sup> "Engineering Miracle: Civic Arena Dome Largest of Kind in World to Move," *Pittsburgh Press*, 17 September 1961.

<sup>56</sup> "Ceremony to Open Auditorium," *Pittsburgh Press*, 17 September 1961.

<sup>57</sup> "Figures Prove Arena Quite a Weighty Place: Movable Roof Really Two Half Circles," *Pittsburgh Press*, 17 September 1961; "Seating Plan Versatile for Various Shows," *Pittsburgh Press*, 17 September 1961; "Floor Transform Quick as a Rink," *Pittsburgh Press*, 17 September 1961.

<sup>58</sup> For examples of public authorities, see Public Auditorium Authority, *Make it Pittsburgh! . . . for your Convention, Exposition, Meeting, Event: Civic Arena and Exhibit Hall*, Conference Records, Box 133, Folder 3; PPA, *Civic Arena and Exhibit Hall in the New Pittsburgh: The Renaissance City of America*, Conference Records, Box 133; Folder 3; URA, *Program for Progress*, 1962, Conference Records, Box 231, Folder 7; URA, *Report on Renewal*, 1965, Conference Records, Box 231, Folder 13; For examples of local businesses and boosterish children's books, see Ryan Homes Inc., *Pittsburgh A Nice Place to Visit But a Wonderful Place to Live*, Conference Records, Box 217, Folder 5; Josie Carey and Marty Wolfson *This is Pittsburgh and Southwestern Pennsylvania: We Live Here . . . We Like It!* Conference Records, Box 217, Folder 25.

with its title, William Gill's March 1965 *National Geographic* article "Pittsburgh, Pattern for Progress" corroborated multiple elements of redevelopers' Renaissance narrative. In the 1950s, national periodicals like *Time* and *Life* named the Allegheny Conference and its leaders, particularly Richard King Mellon, the catalysts for the city's rebirth (see Chapter Three). Gill's *National Geographic* article followed this narrative by labeling the city's Renaissance "Mellon's Miracle," crediting Richard K. Mellon and the Conference with the city's revitalization.<sup>59</sup> In addition to reiterating themes from redevelopers' 1950s progress narrative, Gill also echoed their 1960s emphasis on the Civic Arena. Although Gill called the redevelopment of downtown's Golden Triangle a "Symbol of Renewal," he clarified "perhaps the outstanding symbol of Pittsburgh's renewal is the Civic Arena."<sup>60</sup>

When elaborating on the Arena, Gill's language, details, and images resemble the language, details, and images used by redevelopers and the daily papers. Emphasizing the Arena's size and grandeur, Gill wrote that its "massive dome dominates the city" and "stands like a colossus amid blocks of cleared land" before describing the marvels of its retractable roof.<sup>61</sup> Photographs by the Pittsburgh Photographic Library (see Chapter Two), illustrated much of the article. A large photograph of the Civic Arena with its roof opened to accommodate "a concert under the summer stars" shared the exact composition of the photograph of the Arena's opened roof that appeared in the PAAP's dedication souvenir and in the *Post-Gazette's* dedication coverage (see Fig. 6.13).<sup>62</sup> Both photographs had the same aerial-northwest vantage point and captured the Arena's roof from the same interior angle.<sup>63</sup> The *National Geographic* photograph showed the Arena at night, including twinkling lights along Centre Avenue. Gill's text and *National Geographic's* Civic Arena photograph show how closely the national

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<sup>59</sup> William Gill, "Pittsburgh, Pattern for Progress," *National Geographic*, March 1965, 350.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 348.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 349.

<sup>62</sup> Lois M. Weissflog, "Folding like a Japanese fan," in Gill, "Pittsburgh, Pattern for Progress," 352-353. The article's first page attributed "Photographs by Clyde Hare," but the photograph of the Civic Arena at night was credited to Weissflog.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 352.

print media's coverage of Pittsburgh's Renaissance followed redevelopers' narrative.

Stefan Lorant's book, *Pittsburgh: The Story of an American City*, which was commissioned, financed, and proudly promoted by the Allegheny Conference, marks the apex of the Conference's celebratory visuals. The Conference commissioned Lorant to compile the book in 1954, aiming to release it for the city's bicentennial celebration in 1958.<sup>64</sup> Due to problems like the death of Edgar Kaufmann, the project's primary patron, in April 1955, Lorant did not complete the book until 1964.<sup>65</sup> When the five-hundred-page hardcover book—lavishly illustrated with over one thousand images—was finally released, the Conference promoted it as an advertisement for its success.

The Conference announced the book's release to a national audience with a full-page advertisement in the *New York Times*; the Conference's pride saturated the advertisements' text and layout.<sup>66</sup> In large centered text, the ad boasted "The Allegheny Conference on Community Development proudly announces a major work of American history: *Pittsburgh: The Story of an American City*." An image of the book with a sketch of downtown's redeveloped Golden Triangle came below this announcement. To the book's left, smaller print elaborated on the Renaissance's and its leadership's accomplishments. Lorant's book traces Pittsburgh's "dramatic rebirth . . . as the nation's prototype for urban redevelopment" and "tells the story of how a new generation of Pittsburghers is rebuilding a great city." The Conference finished the advertisement by listing its executive officers, executive committee, and directors. The list reads like a "who's who" of Pittsburgh industry and finance, including Henry J. Heinz of Heinz Foods, Henry L. Hillman of Pittsburgh Coke and Chemical, and Arthur Van Buskirk of T. Mellon and Sons. Through this advertisement, the Conference fully connected itself to Lorant's

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<sup>64</sup> Jim Hughes, *W. Eugene Smith, Shadows and Substance: The Life and Work of an American Photographer* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1989), 341; Sam Stephenson, "W. Eugene Smith and Pittsburgh" in *Dream Street: W. Eugene Smith's Pittsburgh Project*. Ed. Sam Stephenson, (New York: The Center for Documentary Studies, 2001), 19; See also Anna Banks, "Photography as Communicative Praxis: W. Eugene Smith's Pittsburgh Essay" (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 1989).

<sup>65</sup> Hughes, *W. Eugene Smith, Shadows and Substance*, 351 and 361.

<sup>66</sup> "Display Ad—59," *New York Times*, 15 December 1964, 62. The Conference archived the advertisement: Conference Records, MSS #285, Box 75, Folder 8: "Lorant Book Project: Correspondence and Publicity."

book, going so far as to connect individual members to the book by name. The advertisement also summarized the book's narrative as understood by the Conference and as the Conference wanted it to be understood by the public at large. The Conference was the "new generation" of Pittsburghers proudly ushering its city's "dramatic rebirth" and universally respected as "the nation's prototype."<sup>67</sup>

Lorant's book dedicated a chapter to the city's redevelopment. Written by Renaissance mayor, David Lawrence, the chapter recited redevelopers' progress narrative, including multiple spectacular shots of the Civic Arena. Lawrence began his chapter with a poetic disavowal of the past and glorification of the future. Pittsburgh's redevelopment had "no nostalgia for the past" and even "took pleasure in the swing of the headache ball."<sup>68</sup> Instead, the city embraced "the sleek new forms of the future" and "erected buildings that glistened with stainless steel and aluminum."<sup>69</sup> The Arena, described by Lawrence as "the dominating architecture of the new Lower Hill," represented a sleek new form of the future with its "retractable roof" and twenty-two million dollar price tag.<sup>70</sup> Lorant spread four aerial photographs that spotlighted the Civic Arena throughout the chapter, including two color photographs taken by Don Bindyke of the Arena from different angles on a snowy day (figs 6.16 and 6.17).<sup>71</sup> Taken from a high enough angle to incorporate downtown's skyline and even outlying hills, Bindyke's images surrounded the Arena with the renewed Pittsburgh of the future. Centered and surrounded by open spaces, the Arena in Bindyke's photograph illustrates Lawrence's description of it as the "dominating architecture" in redeveloped Pittsburgh. Alongside color aerial photographs of downtown's famed Point and redevelopers' first triumph, Gateway Center, Bindyke's photographs of the Civic Arena symbolized Pittsburgh reborn.

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> David Lawrence, "Rebirth: as told to John P. Robin and Stefan Lorant," in Stefan Lorant, *Pittsburgh: The Story of an American City*, Fifth Edition, (Pittsburgh: Esselmont Books, LLC, 1999), 373.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 437.

<sup>71</sup> Don Bindyke, "THE CIVIC AUDITORIUM DOMINATES THE LOWER HILL," in Lorant, *Pittsburgh: The Story of an American City*, 415.

IMAGE UNAVAILABLE  
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IMAGE UNAVAILABLE  
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Figs. 6.16 AND 6.17 Don Bindyke, "THE CIVIC AUDITORIUM DOMINATES THE LOWER HILL,"  
from *Pittsburgh: The Story of an American City*

The chapter's photographs also emphasized the Lower Hill's blight. In this sense, the Lorant book echoed redevelopers' visual rhetoric and diverged slightly from their 1960s focus on the Arena as an upbeat symbol of progress. Famed *Life Magazine* photographer, W. Eugene Smith, whom Lorant had hired to photograph Pittsburgh for the chapter, took all of the chapter's images of Lower Hill blight in 1955 and 1956. Known for his compassionate photo-essays for *Life* that told extraordinary stories about seemingly ordinary people,<sup>72</sup> Smith's photographs of the Lower Hill sympathetically spotlighted its people as much as its dilapidation. However, Lorant, not Smith, had complete control over the layout for *Story of an American City*<sup>73</sup> and Lorant captioned Smith's sympathetic Lower Hill photographs to emphasize the neighborhood's blight.

For example, Smith sympathetically photographed a group of four African American men walking through a grass or gravel lot bounded by old wood-frame row houses and a two-story brick building with bricked-up window frames. Lorant captioned the scene as a definitive example of the Lower Hill's blight waiting to be demolished (fig 6.18).<sup>74</sup> A distant steel mill filled out the top of the photograph's frame. The row houses, the contrasting patterns of brick, and the sooty background made the setting unmistakably urban. The four men strolling through the scene, however, wore nice clothing. Their crisp white caps and white shirts stood out in contrast to the scene's grayness and lent dignity and sharpness to the setting. The four men and their bright white shirts and hats get no mention in Lorant's caption. Instead, Lorant focused on dirt and dilapidation: "Slums waiting for clearing—the houses dirty

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<sup>72</sup> Hughes, *Shadows and Substance*, 275-283.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 361.

<sup>74</sup> W. Eugene Smith, "SLUMS WAITING FOR CLEARING," in Lorant, *Pittsburgh: The Story of an American City*, 420.

and dilapidated, the garbage on the sidewalks.”<sup>75</sup> The wooden row houses definitely appeared age-worn and a few white scraps of litter lay on the ground around the men’s feet. Compared to some of the John Shrader photographs of the Lower Hill from 1956 (see Chapter Three), however, this lot appeared pristine. Lorant’s caption, then, identifies signifiers of blight that the photograph itself does not emphasize.

IMAGE UNAVAILABLE  
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Fig. 6.18 W. Eugene Smith, “SLUMS WAITING FOR CLEARING,” From *Pittsburgh: The Story of an American City*

Lorant also captioned a Smith photograph of an interracial group of young boys playing on a Lower Hill sidewalk—a scene that could function as a celebration of the Lower Hill’s racial diversity—as exemplifying the neighborhood’s blight. Smith photographed seven young boys, three of them white and four of them black, playing on an inclined sidewalk in front of a brick building and short cement stoop (fig. 6.19).<sup>76</sup> The building’s and stoop’s level lines clashed strikingly with the street’s and sidewalk’s incline and made the playing boys’ sprawling, sitting, and standing bodies into compelling shapes. Thanks to Smith’s composition, the scene is visually engaging and testifies to the Hill District’s racial integration and harmony. Compared to Pittsburgh’s downtown and surrounding neighborhoods, the Hill District contained a high degree of both residential and social racial integration, especially among neighborhood children who attended school together and often played together. One could argue that Smith’s photograph documented one of the key social losses attributable the Lower Hill’s demolition. Lorant’s caption, however, ignored this evidence of the Lower Hill’s social value. Instead, Lorant’s caption brought the Lower Hill’s built environment, or its lack of lawns, to the reader’s attention by

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<sup>75</sup> Lorant, *Pittsburgh: The Story of an American City*, 420.

<sup>76</sup> Smith, “CHILDREN OF THE AREA GREW UP ON THE SIDEWALKS,” in Lorant, *Pittsburgh: The Story of an American City*, 421.

turning an image of interracial childhood play into the indictment “Children of the area grew up on the sidewalks.”<sup>77</sup>

IMAGE UNAVAILABLE  
DUE TO COPYRIGHT

Fig. 6.19 W. Eugene Smith, CHILDREN OF THE AREA GREW UP ON THE SIDEWALKS,”  
from *Pittsburgh: The Story of an American City*

Lorant had complete control over Smith’s photographs in *Pittsburgh: The Story of an American City*, but Smith had a mania for editorial control and successfully battled Lorant for the right to compose and publish his own Pittsburgh photo-essay. As a result, Smith’s and Lorant’s presentations of the Pittsburgh photographs use the same images to tell different stories about the Lower Hill. Right before W. Eugene Smith came to Pittsburgh, he had quit his lucrative job at *Life* because the magazine denied him control over his layouts and stories. Accordingly, Smith threatened to sue Lorant for first publication rights to his Pittsburgh photographs. Lorant relented and Smith designed and wrote a photo-essay on Pittsburgh entitled “Labyrinthian Walk” for *Photography Annual 1959*.<sup>78</sup> Smith’s image choices, layout, and text opened up the Pittsburgh images for emotive interpretation and emphasized the city’s people and their lived experiences. Indeed, according to a 1980s interview, Smith designed the essay “to give a person the feeling of Pittsburgh, and the experience of the city.”<sup>79</sup>

Smith’s “Labyrinthian Walk” included photographs of children playing on city sidewalks. But unlike Lorant, who reframed an image of interracial childhood play to show that the Lower Hill’s children “grew up on the sidewalks,” Smith included photographs of children at play as part of a layout on the city’s diversity subtitled “many together.”<sup>80</sup> Interestingly, Smith chose images of children playing in racially homogenous groups, not the interracial image used by Lorant. In one image four African

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<sup>77</sup> Lorant, *Pittsburgh: The Story of an American City*, 421.

<sup>78</sup> Hughes, *Shadows and Substance*, 361, 389-392; Stephenson, “W. Eugene Smith and Pittsburgh,” 20-21.

<sup>79</sup> Smith interview with Ken Kobre, quoted in Banks, “Photography as Communicative Praxis,” 195.

<sup>80</sup> W. Eugene Smith, “Labyrinthian Walk,” *Photography Annual 1959*, 130-131.



American children—three young and one teenaged—sat, stood, walked, and swung from a street sign marking the intersection of Colwell and Pride (fig. 6.20).<sup>81</sup> In a smaller photograph, two young white boys crouched down to play cards on a brick sidewalk (fig. 6.21).<sup>82</sup> Both photographs show children using sidewalks as play spaces. Instead of highlighting this as evidence of the inner city’s unsuitability for children’s welfare, Smith framed the images as positive evidence of the city’s diversity. The page’s text began by describing the city’s historical waves of immigrants and migrants. The Irish and Germans came first, followed by the Polish, Slovaks, and “the dark refugees from the Deep South.”<sup>83</sup> Smith’s poetic text elaborates sympathetically on the city’s black migrants, noting that they came “in flight from hates figurized [sic] by white hoods and fiery crosses.” Smith then noted the difficulty these migrants and immigrants initially had understanding each other before concluding hopefully, “but for their children the new ways come less difficult” and “though the family is of many minds, it increasingly is one-tongued within a common, evergrowing [sic] tradition.”<sup>84</sup>

IMAGE UNAVAILABLE  
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IMAGE UNAVAILABLE  
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Figs. 6.20 and 6.21 W. Eugene Smith, “Many together,” from “Labyrinthian Walk,” *Photography Annual*, 1959

Lorant’s book, following patterns set out by *Time* and *National Geographic*, hailed Pittsburgh’s economic elite as the city’s noble saviors. Smith’s photo-essay, conversely, accused the city’s elite of secluding themselves from the city behind a veil of privilege. Lorant’s book devoted a full page to Renaissance mayor, David Lawrence, and another to Allegheny Conference founder, Richard King Mellon.<sup>85</sup> Lorant also included photographs and biographies of “men behind the renaissance” like Arthur Van Buskirk, Wallace Richards, Park Martin, and John Grove as well as photographs of Allegheny

<sup>81</sup> W. Eugene Smith, “Many Together,” in “Labyrinthian Walk,” 130-131.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> Lorant, *Pittsburgh: The Story of an American City*, 378, 379.

Conference members working in boardrooms and posing with models of Point State Park.<sup>86</sup> Smith's photo-essay included no photographs of the Conference's leadership, but he did photograph men standing outside the Duquesne Club, the city's elite social club that hosted many of the Conference's early meetings.<sup>87</sup> The Duquesne Club photograph appeared in a layout subtitled "Exclusions and Inclusions" that included a poetic diatribe against wealth and exclusivity. Smith described the city's elite as "the exalted" and claimed that they "huddle in splendor . . . under canopies of deference . . . carpeted away from the laboring city." Secluded in wealth, they "breathe an air that is filtered through privilege" and "savor a setting where even the shadows are elite."<sup>88</sup>

Smith's photo-essay also represented the city's politicians as flawed, but fully human, rather than heroic symbols of municipal renewal. Smith attended and photographed a city council hearing on urban redevelopment in 1955.<sup>89</sup> Lorant used nine photographs from the series for a spread entitled "Democracy in Action: Urban Redevelopment Problems under Discussion in 1955."<sup>90</sup> Six of the nine photographs spotlighted city council members, redevelopers, and Mayor Lawrence. One image showed three council members—Bennett Rodgers, Paul F. Jones, and A.L. Wolk—sitting at a table (fig. 6.22).<sup>91</sup> Rodgers stared straight at Smith while Jones and Wolk rested their heads on their hands and looked in different directions. Lorant captioned the photograph with the councilmen's names. Smith used the same photograph for a layout subtitled "By legal process . . . to place hand to shovel, to stay hand from shovel," and added a descriptive caption that interpreted the councilmen's slouching postures and distant stares as boredom.<sup>92</sup> Smith captioned the scene "Week after week—boredom, boredom. The dead dull stuff of commonplace to be contentious with. Only rarely drama, the headline fight, the

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<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 380, 381, 403, 383.

<sup>87</sup> Smith, "Labyrinthian Walk," 102.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> According to Robert Pease, who worked for the URA at the time, the photographs came from the Lower Hill hearing. Robert Pease, interview with the author at Mr. Pease's Pittsburgh office, 31 May 2011.

<sup>90</sup> Lorant, *Pittsburgh: The Story of an American City*, 404-405.

<sup>91</sup> Smith in Lorant, *Pittsburgh: The Story of an American City*, 405.

<sup>92</sup> Smith, "Labyrinthian Walk," 119.

moment of high contest.”<sup>93</sup> Of course, Smith’s caption might in no way reflect what Rodgers, Jones, and Wolk felt at the moment. However, representing them as bored with the day-to-day procedures of city council, especially during a redevelopment hearing when they should have been enthralled by the workings of the city’s rebirth, made them seem more human than superhuman.

IMAGE UNAVAILABLE  
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Fig. 6.22 W. Eugene Smith, “Week after week—boredom, boredom,” from “Labyrinthian Walk,” *Photography Annual*, 1959

Smith’s layout of the redevelopment council hearing also departed from Lorant’s by giving a voice to both sides of the debate. Lorant’s captions narrated the hearing’s actions, but gave no details: “Ladies in the audience follow the proceedings”; “The issue is argued before the council”; “A Plan is discussed by keenly interested participants.”<sup>94</sup> These descriptions give no sense of what arguments arose during the hearing and the layout as a whole deemphasized contention. Smith’s text, on the other hand, elaborately addressed both sides of the redevelopment debate. Characterizing both sides as “just forces in direct opposition, presenting fair arguments to a just-minded council,” Smith spelled out their arguments like a drama. The first character represented redevelopers and articulated demolition as a necessity for salvaging the blighted city: “We must . . . clear our city of this dreadful blight . . . .”<sup>95</sup> The next two voices were residents staking a claim to their neighborhood, questioning demolition as progress, and accusing redevelopers of dismissing their needs: “Thirty years we lived there, mindin’ our business, bein’ peaceful to the law. Now you tell us you’re gonna smash down our places and you call that progress . . . ,” and “. . . they just can’t sweep us under the rug, or trample on us like we are a bunch

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<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> Lorant, *Pittsburgh: The Story of an American City*, 404-405.

<sup>95</sup> Smith, “Labyrinthian Walk,” 118.

of ants.”<sup>96</sup> The last line spoke for redevelopers and asserted the benefits of redevelopment for the whole city: “The whole area will be greatly benefited through the accomplishment of this plan . . . .”<sup>97</sup>

Smith used multiple voices to sympathetically represent both sides of the redevelopment debate.

Lorant’s chapter and the promotional brochures created by Lorant’s patrons in the city’s redevelopment coalition never acknowledged, much less publicized, residents’ resistance to redevelopment.

## 6.5 CRITIQUES OF REDEVELOPMENT STARRING THE CIVIC ARENA

Although the *Courier* gave sympathetic coverage to the Lower Hill’s redevelopment before and during demolition, once the Civic Arena opened in 1961, the *Courier*’s coverage grew critical and showcased the Civic Arena as a symbol for the redevelopment’s racial injustices. A September 1961 article with the headline, “Jim Crow Hovers over Civic Arena” emphasized the Arena’s disturbingly segregated workforce.<sup>98</sup> In November and December, the *Courier* ran a series of highly critical articles by Phyl Garland on the city’s failure to help urban renewal’s “DPs,” or “displaced persons.”<sup>99</sup> These issues, particularly the Arena’s job discrimination, galvanized local civil rights activists, who protested in front of the Arena. Even when protesting a policy not directly related to the Arena, civil rights and black power activists continued to protest in front of the Arena, now a symbol of the city’s racial injustices.

The local daily papers gave glowing coverage to the Civic Arena’s dedication ceremony in September 1961; the *Courier*’s coverage dramatically departed from the dailies’ coverage and from its past support for redevelopment by berating the Arena’s segregated workforce both in text and image.

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<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> “Jim Crow Hovers Over Civic Arena,” *Courier*, 23 September 1961, 1.

<sup>99</sup> Phyl Garland, “‘Help Us!’ Urban Renewal ‘DP’s’ Plead,” *Courier*, 25 November 1961, 1; Garland, “‘Help Us!’ Urban Renewal ‘DP’s’ Plead: ‘My Program for the Aged Needy Will Be Strictly Charitable,’ Says Bishop Harris,” *Courier*, 16 December 1961, 1; Garland, “‘Help Us!’ Urban Renewal ‘DP’s’ Plead: City’s Redevelopers Admit Shortcomings,” *Courier*, 23 December 1961, A1.

The article began with a tone similar to the daily papers' praise for the Arena's technical splendors: "As the massive steel dome, covering Pittsburgh's magnificent 22-million dollar Civic Auditorium parted noiselessly to admit the late summer sunshine emerging from a sky of blue. . . ." <sup>100</sup> The *Courier*, however, described the scene from the perspective of "hundreds of Negroes among the crowd" who saw something beyond the Arena's technical marvel. When the Arena's dome spread open, African Americans at the dedication ceremony "saw the grim spectre of ole Jim Crow hovering over the stainless steel monument which had been erected for the benefit of ALL the people." The article then noted that "all of the ushers and guides" at the Arena "are white! So are the concession employees! In fact, all of the employees seen are white!" An editorial cartoon of "Jim Crow" hovering over the Civic Arena aptly symbolized the *Courier's* charges (fig. 6.23). <sup>101</sup> Shown from the same aerial angle used by the PAAP, the *Press*, and *National Geographic* (see fig. 6.13), the cartoon showed the Arena with its roof open to a hovering Jim Crow. The *Courier* took a pervasive symbol of redevelopment-as-progress, replicated it down to the angle favored by redevelopers and their media allies, and reframed it to show the dedication ceremony from the perspective of African Americans dismayed by the redevelopment's unfulfilled promises of new jobs.



Fig. 6.23 *The Pittsburgh Courier*, "Jim Crow Hovers Over Civic Arena," 23 September, 1961

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<sup>100</sup> "Jim Crow Hovers Over Civic Arena," *Courier*, 23 September 1961, 1.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

Two months later, the *Courier*, yet again, invoked and inverted the Civic Arena's symbolic power in its series, "'Help Us!' Urban Renewal 'DP's' Plead." Whereas the "Jim Crow Hovers" article directly addressed the Civic Arena and its hiring practices, the "Help Us!" articles utilized the Civic Arena as a broader symbol for the city's redevelopment. Redevelopers, of course, also used the Civic Arena as a broad symbol of Pittsburgh's "Renaissance," equating the Civic Arena with the city's progress. The *Courier's* "Help Us!" illustration, meanwhile, juxtaposed the Civic Arena with human suffering to visually challenge redevelopers' claims of progress (see fig 6.24).<sup>102</sup> In the drawing's foreground, two young African American children hold empty bowls up to their caretaker while a third child waits behind them. The caretaker, in turn, holds a small serving bowl and looks sadly at the children. The image implies hunger for the family and frustration on the part of the caretaker, connoting the Lower Hill's "displaced persons." Beyond the caretaker and hungry children, a broken window looks out on the Civic Arena's retractable roof. The message is clear. The Civic Arena displaced the Lower Hill's people and the city's indifference to the neighborhood's elderly and unemployed "displaced persons" mocked redevelopers' claims that the whole city basked in "progress." This powerful image reappeared in two more of the *Courier's* "Displaced Persons" stories.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Phyl Garland, "'Help Us!' Urban Renewal 'DP's' Plead," *Courier*, 25 November 1961, 1.

<sup>103</sup> Phyl Garland, "'Help Us!' Urban Renewal 'DP's' Plead: 'My Program for the Aged Needy Will Be Strictly Charitable,' Says Bishop Harris," *Courier*, 16 December 1961, 1; Garland, "'Help Us!' Urban Renewal 'DP's' Plead: City's Redevelopers Admit Shortcomings," *Courier*, 23 December 1961, A1.

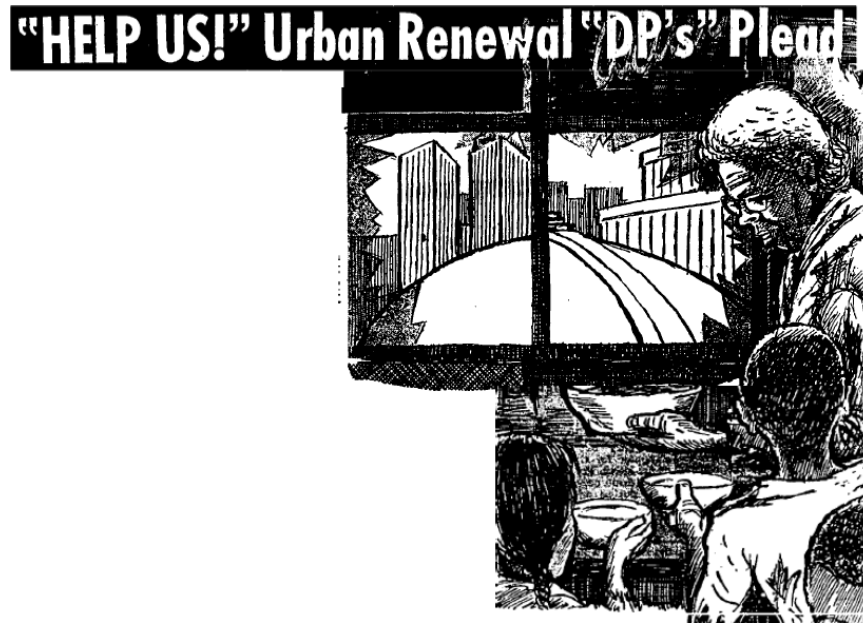


Fig. 6.24 *The Pittsburgh Courier*, “Help Us!’ Urban Renewal ‘DP’s’ Plead,” 25 November, 1961

The *Courier* and Hill District residents engaged in a cyclical dialogue of protest after the Arena’s 1961 dedication ceremony. The paper’s and residents’ protests against the Civic Arena’s discriminatory hiring practices illustrate the development of this dialogue. The “Jim Crow Hovers over Civic Arena” story appeared on the *Courier*’s September 23 front page. The article demanded “All jobs ranging from the supervisory level on down to maintenance . . . should be open to ALL qualified applicants.”<sup>104</sup> By October 7, the *Courier* ran a front-page headline relaying the NAACP’s demand that the city “Hire More Negroes at Arena!”<sup>105</sup> Clearly, the NAACP had concurred with the *Courier*’s observation that Jim Crow hovered over the Civic Arena and threatened “stern measures unless” the “arena authority improves” its “job policy.”<sup>106</sup> Two weeks later the *Courier* announced that the NAACP, along with the Negro-American Labor Council (NALC) and local “civic, labor and fraternal organizations,” had agreed to protest the Civic Arena’s job discrimination with an October 21 demonstration that would culminate with mass picketing

<sup>104</sup> “Jim Crow Hovers Over Civic Arena,” *Courier*, 23 September 1961, 3.

<sup>105</sup> ““HIRE MORE NEGROES AT ARENA!’-NAACP,” *Courier*, 7 October 1961, 1.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

outside the Civic Arena.<sup>107</sup> Teenie Harris photographed the Civic Arena demonstration and the *Courier* used one of Harris's images to illustrate its coverage of the protest and the Arena's subsequent promise to improve its hiring policy.<sup>108</sup> The *Courier* spread the news of the Civic Arena's discriminatory hiring practices with the evocative "Jim Crow Hovers" graphic which borrowed but transposed the Civic Arena's symbolic power. Local civil rights and labor groups pursued the issue by picketing the symbol itself. Harris photographed the protest and the *Courier* covered it, visually rendering and disseminating the neighborhood's dismay at its treatment under the Renaissance.

The Harris archive contains five photographs from the October 21 protest; four of these five utilized the Civic Arena as a backdrop, a theme that echoed the *Courier's* appropriation and transposition of the Civic Arena's symbolism and that persisted in Harris's 1960s protest imagery. Harris's photographs of the October 21 protest foregrounded clusters of picketers and framed them with the Arena's iconic dome. In one photograph, women, men, and children held signs calling for "Equal rights for ALL!" and proclaiming "We want to work"<sup>109</sup> (fig. 6.25). Behind the picketers, half of the Civic Arena's dome took up the right side of the frame and a cloudy sky filled the rest. Civil rights protesters continued to utilize the Civic Arena as a backdrop for protest, and Harris continued to frame protesters against the Arena's dome. In the mid-1960s Harris photographed CORE protesters holding picket signs memorializing slain civil rights activists (fig. 6.26).<sup>110</sup> Behind them, picketers circled in front of the Civic Arena; the Arena's dome filled the top of the photograph's frame.

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<sup>107</sup> "NAACP, NALC to Picket New Arena!" *Courier*, 21 October 1961, 21.

<sup>108</sup> "Arena Improves Hiring Policy," *Courier*, 28 October 1961, 2.

<sup>109</sup> Harris, *Protesters, including Rev. Bill Powell, James McCoy, Mal Goode, Byrd Brown, possibly Jim Scott, and Rev. LeRoy Patrick, with signs reading: 'Job opportunities for us too,' 'We just want our God-given rights,' and 'The soundness of our cause should prick your conscience,' outside Civic Arena, Lower Hill District, October 1961, accession number 2001.35.6295.*

<sup>110</sup> Harris, *CORE sponsored protest outside Civic Arena, with four picketers carrying placards with portraits, and protesters in background,* c. 1960-1975, accession number 2001.35.4629. See also Harris, *CORE sponsored protest outside Civic Arena, with picketers carrying placards with portraits and slogans reading "We Shall Not Be Moved," "Too Many Murders," "Freedom Now" and "Don't Vote Hate," another scene, c. 1960-1975, accession number 2001.35.4627.*





Fig. 6.25 Charles "Teenie" Harris, American, 1908–1998, *Protesters, including Rev. Bill Powell, James McCoy, Mal Goode, Byrd Brown, possibly Jim Scott, and Rev. LeRoy Patrick, with signs reading: "Job opportunities for us too," "We just want our God-given rights," and "The soundness of our cause should prick your conscience," outside Civic Arena, Lower Hill District, October 1961*, black and white: Kodak Safety Film, H: 4 in. x W: 5 in. (10.20 x 12.70 cm) Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: Heinz Family Fund, 2001.35.6295



Fig. 6.26 Charles "Teenie" Harris, American, 1908–1998, *CORE sponsored protest outside Civic Arena, with four picketers carrying placards with portraits, and protesters in background, c. 1960-1975*, black and white: Kodak Safety Film, H: 4 in. x W: 5 in. (10.20 x 12.70 cm), Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: Heinz Family Fund, 2001.35.4629

In the late 1960s, activists continued to utilize the Civic Arena's symbolism. The city's radicalized Black Power Movement, particularly the Black Construction Coalition, used the Arena as a backdrop. Harris included the Civic Arena in his photographs of the protest. In the late 1960s the Black Construction Coalition spurred protests all over the city, particularly at unionized construction sites that refused to hire black laborers. The Coalition's protests climaxed in 1969 with a citywide "Black Monday" demonstration that coalesced around the Civic Arena. Harris photographed the protesters as they gathered (fig. 6.27). Most of the photograph's action occurred in the bottom half of the frame. Here, a line of protesters stretched across the image's horizontal axis. On the photograph's left edge, the Civic Arena's dome emerged, almost organically, from the line of protesters.<sup>111</sup> As the protesters marched

<sup>111</sup> Harris, *Black Monday Demonstration on behalf of the Black Construction Coalition, large crowd of protesters gathered at Centre Avenue and Crawford Street near the Civic Arena, with Connelley Trade School in background*, 1969, accession number 2001.35.10668.

away from the Arena into downtown Harris kept the Civic Arena on the leftward edge of his frame (fig. 6.28).<sup>112</sup> Harris could have photographed the “Black Monday” march from a multitude of angles, yet he chose to include the Arena in both shots.



Fig. 6.27 Charles "Teenie" Harris, American, 1908–1998, *Black Monday Demonstration on behalf of the Black Construction Coalition, large crowd of protesters gathered at Centre Avenue and Crawford Street near the Civic Arena, with Connelley Trade School in background*, September 1969, black and white: Kodak Safety Film H: 4 in. x W: 5 in. (10.20 x 12.70 cm), Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: Heinz Family Fund, 2001.35.10668



Fig. 6.28 Charles "Teenie" Harris, American, 1908–1998, *Black Monday demonstration on behalf of Black Construction Coalition, with protesters marching down Centre Avenue near Civic Arena and Chatham Center, Lower Hill District*, September 1969, black and white: Kodak Safety Film, H: 4 in. x W: 5 in. (10.20 x 12.70 cm) Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: Heinz Family Fund, 2001.35.10587

## 6.6 REDEVELOPMENT IN THE MIDDLE HILL

Redevelopers considered the Civic Arena the centerpiece of the Lower Hill’s redevelopment, but they planned a multifaceted redevelopment that included high-rise apartment buildings and a Center for the Arts. After the Arena’s dedication in 1961, redevelopers turned their attention to the Center for the

<sup>112</sup> Harris, *Black Monday demonstration on behalf of Black Construction Coalition, with protesters marching down Centre Avenue near Civic Arena and Chatham Center, Lower Hill District*, September 1969, accession number 2001.35.10587.

Arts, which would incorporate an art museum and symphony hall.<sup>113</sup> In May 1961 as the Civic Arena reached completion, the Howard Heinz Foundation offered to donate \$8 million towards the design and construction of the Center for the Arts' symphony hall. H.J. Heinz II, however, linked this donation to the redevelopment of the Middle and Upper Hill. Heinz expressed this requirement in a 1961 *Press* article on the Center for the Arts, "Not a nickel will go for a symphony hall or anything else until something is done with [the] 50 blocks" east of the Lower Hill's redevelopment.<sup>114</sup> The *Press* explained Heinz's and other symphony hall patrons' requirement: they "want to make certain that the proposed cultural center is not built next to a seething slum; they want renewal for the Upper Hill to protect their donations."<sup>115</sup> Similarly, local aluminum manufacturer, ALCOA, had been tasked with completing the Lower Hill's three proposed high-rise apartment buildings. After completing one high-rise, the Washington Plaza Apartments, ALCOA informed the URA, "if the Upper Hill is not to be improved in a major way, it will stop us in our tracks."<sup>116</sup>

In this final round of redevelopment debate, visuals played a central role, but the arguments they made changed. In redevelopers' brochures and in the daily papers, photographs of the architects' model of the Center for the Arts illustrated the redevelopment's future promise. Images of the Civic Arena evinced the Renaissance's past success but linked the continuation of this success to the Middle Hill's redevelopment. The daily papers occasionally used blighted images of the Middle Hill to argue for its redevelopment, but redevelopers' strong visual emphasis on the Lower Hill's blight in the 1950s subsided in the more celebratory 1960s. Between the 1950s and 1960s redevelopers changed what their imagery emphasized, but not what it argued. The *Courier's* 1960s imagery, as noted above, used the Civic Arena to symbolize the racial injustices of redevelopment. Understandably, then, the *Courier's*

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<sup>113</sup> William J. Mallett, "Redevelopment and Response: The Lower Hill Renewal and Pittsburgh's Original Cultural District," *Pittsburgh History*, (Winter: 1992), 183.

<sup>114</sup> "Renew Upper Hill, City Planners Told," *Press*, 14 May 1961, 1.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>116</sup> Leon Hickman, vice president of ALCO to Robert Pease, executive director of Pittsburgh URA, quoted in Mallett, "Redevelopment and Response," 185-186.

coverage of the Middle Hill's redevelopment increasingly likened "urban renewal" to "negro removal" and provided a public platform for residents' anti-redevelopment protests.

#### 6.6.1 REDEVELOPERS' VISUAL ARGUMENTS FOR MIDDLE HILL REDEVELOPMENT

In the 1950s, redevelopers used architectural sketches and models of the Civic Arena to promote the Lower Hill's redevelopment; in the 1960s, they used this same strategy with sketches and models of the Center for the Arts. For example, the URA's "Report on Renewal, 1965" illustrated its summary of the Lower Hill redevelopment with a photograph of the Proposed Center for the Arts model (fig. 6.29).<sup>117</sup> The model promised Pittsburgh another architectural marvel: a massive glass rectangle encased between two stone slabs and bounded by twelve stone columns. A vast plaza landscaped with a geometrically complex but uniform pattern of trees and hedges surrounded the center. Tiny model people flocked around the Center and its plaza. Their numbers predicted the Center's vibrant popularity and their miniscule size conveyed the Center's grand scale. The URA captioned the image with boastful praise reminiscent of the Conference's 1956 promise that the Civic Arena was destined to become "a wonder of the modern world."<sup>118</sup> According to the URA, the Center for the Arts' "classic proportions and design" had "won the praise of planners and architects everywhere."<sup>119</sup> Like the Civic Arena, photographs and sketches of the Center for the Arts model appeared in an array of booster publications. For example, the Conference included a photograph of the Center for the Arts model in a *Post-Gazette* advertisement for Lorant's *Pittsburgh: The Story of an American City*.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Urban Redevelopment Authority, *Report on Renewal, 1965*, Conference Records, Box 231, Folder 13: "Reports: Urban Redevelopment/URA"

<sup>118</sup> *The Allegheny Conference . . . Presents!*, 13.

<sup>119</sup> Urban Redevelopment Authority, *Report on Renewal, 1965*.

<sup>120</sup> "You are invited to place your advance order for first-edition copies of the most beautiful book ever published about an American city," *Post-Gazette*, 2 June 1964. The Realtor Ryan Homes used a photograph of the model for its brochure "Pittsburgh A Nice Place to Visit But a Wonderful Place to Live," Conference Records, Box

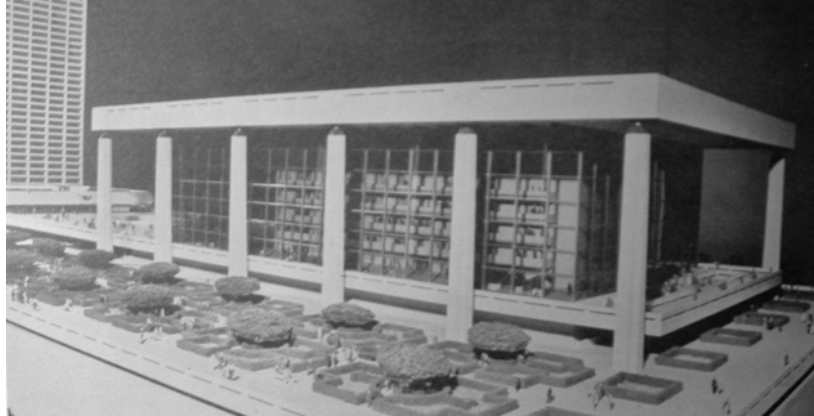


Fig. 6.29 *The Proposed Center for the Arts*, in Pittsburgh Urban Redevelopment Authority, *Report on Renewal*, 1965

As noted above, in the 1960s redevelopers, the local daily papers, and the national media used images of the Civic Arena to symbolize the city's progress and rebirth. The Civic Arena also appeared in 1961 *Press* articles on the Middle and Upper Hill's redevelopment, but instead of a celebratory symbol, here the Arena was imperiled by the Hill's blight. A photograph of the Arena supporting redevelopment in the May 1961 *Press* article, "Renew Upper Hill City Planners Told," announced donors' hesitancy to fund the Center for the Arts so long as the Middle Hill's "seething slum" bordered it.<sup>121</sup> The photograph shared compositional features, like a slightly elevated angle and eastward-looking perspective, with the PAAP's dedication souvenir cover and the *Press*'s dedication coverage, "Ceremony to Open Auditorium," four months later.<sup>122</sup> May's "Renew Upper Hill" photo included the Middle Hill in its background, but cropping and dodging made the Middle Hill disappear in September's strictly celebratory "Ceremony to Open Auditorium." (figs. 6.30 and 6.31).<sup>123</sup> The May article argued that the Middle Hill's blight endangered the Civic Arena. The photo's caption articulated the Arena's peril in military terms and

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217, Folder 5: "Reports: Subseries: Public Relations/Pittsburgh" A sketch of the Center for the Arts also appeared in the boosterish children's book *This is Pittsburgh and Southwestern Pennsylvania: We Live Here . . . We Like It!* By Josie Carey and Marty Wolfson, Conference Records, Box 217, Folder 25.

<sup>121</sup> "Renew Upper Hill, City Planners Told," *Press*, 14 May 1961, 4.

<sup>122</sup> PPA, *A Public Auditorium for Pittsburgh and Allegheny County: Dedication Souvenir*, September 17, 1961, 1; "Ceremony to Open Auditorium," *Press*, 17 September 1961, Sec. 7, 1.

<sup>123</sup> "Renew Upper Hill, City Planners Told," *Press*, 14 May 1961, 4; "Ceremony to Open Auditorium," *Press*, 17 September 1961, Sec. 7, 1.

linked its protection to the Renaissance's survival: "Development of the Lower Hill as a cultural center could mean a real Renaissance for Pittsburgh, if its flanks are protected—perhaps to Oakland."<sup>124</sup> Here, the *Press* used the Arena to symbolize the city's rebirth, but argued that rebirth might be stillborn unless redevelopment spread all the way through the Middle and Upper Hill to the Oakland neighborhood. The *Press* included the Middle Hill in May when the encroachment of its "seething slums" on the Civic Arena and the city's Renaissance supported the drive to redevelop the Middle and Upper Hill. The *Press* cropped and dodged out the Middle Hill for its giddily positive coverage of the Arena's dedication on September 17.



Fig. 6.30 *The Pittsburgh Press*, "Renew Upper Hill, City Planners Told," May 1961



Fig. 6.31 *The Pittsburgh Press*, "Ceremony to Open Auditorium," September 1961

Five sections before its coverage of the Arena's dedication, the *Press*'s September 17 edition, made a plea for the Middle Hill's redevelopment; the *Press*'s visual arguments for redevelopment juxtaposed signifiers of the Middle Hill's blight to the Arena's distant splendor. Noting that "only Crawford Street—60 feet of asphalt" separated the Arena from the rest of the Hill, the article's author, William Allen, claimed the Arena and Hill were "as different as a dream and a nightmare."<sup>125</sup> Allen described the Upper Hill as "dark, drab, decay rotting in the glare" of the Arena's dome and went on to

<sup>124</sup> "Renew Upper Hill, City Planners Told," *Press*, 14 May 1961, 4.

<sup>125</sup> William Allen, "Upper Hill Decaying in Glare of Civic Auditorium's Dome," *Press*, 17 September 1961, Sec. 2, 1.

describe the litter and abandoned houses that marred the neighborhood. Two photographs illustrating these conditions and linking them to the Arena accompanied the article. One spied the Arena from an overgrown rear yard in the Middle Hill. The other foregrounded a little girl walking by a broken swing set. Random pieces of litter clung to a thicket of bushes next to the swings and the Arena's roof peeked out over a hill. The photo's caption described the scene: "children fight debris for a place to play." The playground could easily be repaired with new swings, a trash receptacle, and some volunteer litter collectors, but litter became the focus of the *Press's* arguments that the Middle and Upper Hill's blight necessitated clearance and redevelopment.

Indeed, the Middle Hill's litter came up again in an April 1964 *Press* article on the Middle Hill's blight and its danger to the Center for the Arts. To illustrate the Middle's Hill's threat, the article's author Ralph Brem, quoted a potential symphony patron explaining his reluctance to go to a symphony hall located near the Middle Hill. The man insisted, "I'm not going to take my wife up there for a concert and run the risk of her getting hit by a bucket of garbage."<sup>126</sup> According to Brem the 12,000 people living between Crawford Street, Herron Avenue, Fifth Avenue, and Bedford Avenue—the boundaries of the Middle and Upper Hill—were the "12,000 reasons why the fabled Pittsburgh Renaissance is in danger of grinding to a halt." Until the Hill's 12,000 residents could be relocated, the Arts Center, "a thing of beauty," would never become more than a model because "there are no slums on the model."<sup>127</sup>

#### 6.6.2 THE *COURIER'S* AND THE CCHDR'S PROTESTS AGAINST MIDDLE HILL REDEVELOPMENT

Many of the 12,000 people living in the Middle and Upper Hill, however, viewed their neighborhood and its future differently. In a departure from the 1950s, the Hill's residents and newspaper asserted their vision with their own models, political cartoons, and public protests. As the 1960s progressed, the

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<sup>126</sup> Ralph Brem, "12,000 Wait to Escape Hill Slums," *Press*, 13 April 1964, Sec 2, 1.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

*Courier* increasingly criticized “urban renewal” as “Negro removal” and Hill residents formed the Citizens Committee for Hill District Renewal (CCHDR) to ensure that Hill residents had input in any future redevelopment plans. As noted above, the *Courier* grew critical of the Lower Hill’s redevelopment in 1961 when the Civic Arena opened with a Jim Crow workforce and the URA failed to adequately relocate the Lower Hill’s “Displaced Persons.” As the decade progressed, the paper’s criticisms grew more generalized. In May 1962, an editorial entitled “Negro Victims of Urban Renewal” charged that in cities across the nation, demolition outpaced relocation and “too often Negro families have been shoved callously off into obsolescent habitations worse than those previously occupied.”<sup>128</sup> By 1965, the *Courier*’s critique grew more direct and succinct: “During the past several years, urban renewal has come to mean ‘Negro removal.’”<sup>129</sup> The CCHDR formed in October 1962 aiming to protect Hill residents’ interests and spur grassroots neighborhood improvements.<sup>130</sup> The CCHDR and the *Courier* worked in tandem. For example, when the CCHDR hosted its first public meeting with City Planning Department head Calvin Hamilton in April 1963, the *Courier* published a lengthy article calling on Hill residents to attend the meeting.<sup>131</sup>

The CCHDR created its first visual challenge to the URA in January 1965 with a proposal and model for the Hill’s redevelopment that emphasized spot clearance instead of full-scale demolition. The *Courier*, in turn, publicized the CCHDR’s proposal, including an illustration of its model. *Courier* writer, Ralph Koger, began his coverage of the CCHDR’s proposal by framing its intervention as an attempt to

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<sup>128</sup> “Negro Victims of Urban Renewal,” *Courier*, 12 May 1962, A8.

<sup>129</sup> “Urban Renewal Term for ‘Negro Removal,’” *Courier*, 5 June 1965, 10; See also “Does Urban Renewal Mean Negro Removal?” *Courier*, 27 February 1965, 9. The *Courier* also regularly criticized urban renewal in other cities: On Chattanooga, TN: “From Slum to Slum,” *Courier*, 22 July 1961, 5; On Carnegie, PA: “URBAN RENEWAL ‘DP’S’ FIGHTING OUSTER,” *Courier*, 16 December 1961, 1; On Chicago, IL: “Urban Renewal Hurting Negroes,” *Courier*, 27 October 1962, 7. On Washington, PA: Frank E. Bolden, “Little Washington Redevelopment To Displace Most of Town’s Negroes,” *Courier*, 19 January 1963.

<sup>130</sup> “Hill Committee Sets First Public Meeting,” *Courier*, 30 March 1963, 3.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*



“assuage [the] redevelopment ‘dragon’ [and] stop the renewal ogre.”<sup>132</sup> More specifically, the CCHDR rejected full-scale demolition and the replacement of moderate-income homes and small businesses with high-rise and high-income towers and “Civic Arenas, Arts Centers, Civic Light Opera Buildings, etc.” Instead of just protesting URA proposals, however, the CCHDR drafted its own. The CCHDR’s plan called for spot clearance of “deteriorated slum housing” and its replacement with low-rise mixed-use buildings. In the CCHDR’s model, ground-level shops opened out onto widened sidewalks and houses sat above the shops. The CCHDR’s embrace of mixed land use diverged dramatically from planning ideals that had long equated mixed land use with automatic blight (see Chapters One and Two). The plan’s architect, Troy West, even seemed to be echoing Jane Jacobs when he explained the plan’s widened sidewalks: “In this part of the city, life takes place on the street.”<sup>133</sup>

Notably, by preparing an architect’s model for its public presentation of the plan, the CCHDR utilized one of the redevelopment coalition’s favorite visual promotional strategies. The Allegheny Conference and the URA displayed models when they introduced the 1947 Pittsburgh Center plan and the 1953 Lower Hill Redevelopment plan to the local media and elected officials.<sup>134</sup> Local daily newspapers, in turn, illustrated their glowing coverage of these redevelopment plans with photographs of the models and photographs of redevelopers and boosters posing with the models. The CCHDR, then, adopted a key element of redevelopers’ visual discourse, but deployed it for bottom-up community planning. The *Courier* used an image of the model to illustrate its coverage the CCHDR’s proposal (fig. 6.32). This choice referenced redevelopers’ and the mainstream dailies’ earlier pro-redevelopment visual rhetoric. The *Courier*’s publication of the CCHDR’s model, however, utilized redevelopers’ visual

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<sup>132</sup> Ralph E. Koger, “Citizens Unveil Plan for Solvent Folks to Renew, Remain in Hill,” *Courier*, 16 January 1965, 1.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.* The CCHDR continued to make and publicly present alternative redevelopment plans for the Hill and the *Courier* continued to announce the CCHDR’s plans. See “Mass Hill Resident Rally to Show CCHDR Renewal Plans,” *Courier*, 16 April 1966, 11B.

<sup>134</sup> See Chapter Three in this dissertation.

rhetoric to publicize the CCHDR's low-rise, moderate-income, mixed-use design as well as the community input it advocated as a fully legitimate alternative to the URA.

IMAGE UNAVAILABLE  
DUE TO COPYRIGHT

Fig. 6.32 *The Pittsburgh Courier*, "Citizens Unveil Plan for Solvent Folks to Renew, Remain in Hill," 16 January 1965

By the late 1960s, however, the *Courier's* and the CCHDR's visual messages became more direct. In May 1968, the *Courier's* veteran editorial artist, Wilbert Holloway, encapsulated the *Courier's* "Negro Removal" critique in a political cartoon.<sup>135</sup> Entitled "The Executioner," Holloway's cartoon showed a shirtless giant labeled "City Planning" with rippling muscles wildly swinging a demolition ball labeled "Negro Removal" (fig. 6.33). Behind the behemoth, the city's Northside, a neighborhood redeveloped after the Lower Hill, lay in ruins, already demolished by City Planning's "Negro Removal" wrecking ball. To the executioner's left, the Shadyside neighborhood, a largely white and upper-class neighborhood, sat peaceful and untouched. The Hill District, meanwhile, remained partly intact, but menaced by "Negro Removal." City planning had already smashed part of the district and its demolition ball lurched dangerously towards the neighborhood's remaining homes. The *Courier* had begun criticizing urban renewal's Jim Crow workforce and negligence towards "Displaced Persons" in 1961; subsequent articles and editorials charged that "urban renewal" often translated to "Negro removal." Holloway's 1968 cartoon succinctly crystallized the *Courier's* critical editorial stance by symbolizing Pittsburgh's city planners as a rampaging titan specifically targeting the city's black neighborhoods.

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<sup>135</sup> Wilbert Holloway, "The Executioner," *Courier*, 4 May 1968, 17. On Holloway's career with the *Courier*, see "Veteran *Courier* Artist Succumbs," *Courier*, 12 April 1969, 3.



Fig. 6.33 *The Pittsburgh Courier*, Wilbert Holloway, "The Executioner," May 1968

The CCHDR also shifted towards more direct visual protests by the late 1960s when it allied with the NAACP, the Model Cities program, and the Poor People's Campaign to erect an anti-redevelopment billboard on the corner of Centre Avenue and Crawford Street. The billboard, which Harris photographed (fig. 6.34), addressed "CITY HALL" and the URA, insisting on "NO REDEVELOPMENT BEYOND THIS POINT," and demanded "LOW INCOME HOUSING FOR THE LOWER HILL."<sup>136</sup> Heading away from downtown and into the Hill District along Centre, the billboard stood on the right side of Centre Avenue, diagonally across from the Civic Arena. A passerby, then, would have taken in the Civic Arena to their left and immediately come upon the billboard on the right.

<sup>136</sup> Harris, *Billboard inscribed "Attention: City Hall and U.R.A. No Redevelopment Beyond This Point! We Demand Low Income Housing for the Lower Hill, C.C.H.D.R., N.A.A.C.P., Poor People's Campaign, Model Cities," at Crawford Street near intersection of Centre Avenue, Hill District, 1969, accession number 2001.35.9463.*



Fig. 6.34 Charles "Teenie" Harris, American, 1908–1998, *Billboard inscribed "Attention: City Hall and U.R.A. No Redevelopment Beyond This Point! We Demand Low Income Housing for the Lower Hill, C.C.H.D.R., N.A.A.C.P., Poor People's Campaign, Model Cities," at Crawford Street near intersection of Centre Avenue, Hill District, 1969*, black and white: Kodak Safety Film, H: 4 in. x W: 5 in. (10.20 x 12.70 cm), Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh: Heinz Family Fund, 2001.35.9463

By geographically anchoring its demand that redevelopment cease “beyond this point” to the Civic Arena, the CCHDR invoked the Arena’s symbolism as it had come to exist in the minds of people disenchanted with redevelopment. This late 1960s Civic Arena symbolism garnered definition, authority, and emotional oomph from the critical reinterpretations that preceded it: the *Courier’s* 1961 drawing of Jim Crow hovering over the Arena; Harris’s photographs of protesters picketing the Civic Arena and its Jim Crow hiring policy; the *Courier’s* coverage of urban renewal’s “displaced persons” symbolized by a caretaker with an excellent view of the Civic Arena, but not enough food for her children. The CCHDR’s final visual protest also built on its own unsuccessful attempts to steer city planners towards a community-driven version of urban renewal that emphasized spot clearance and rehabilitation rather than large-scale demolition and redevelopment. If the Hill’s residents could not direct their own renewal, the CCHDR and its allies would draw the line at the Civic Arena. The CCHDR’s and the *Courier’s* growing militancy also reflected African Americans’ heightened frustration and rage. The unfulfilled

hopes left over from the early 1960s Civil Rights Movement boiled into violence in April 1968 when Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated. Holloway's "Negro removal" cartoon and the CCHDR's "No More Redevelopment" billboard fit within this larger sense of militancy. Urban renewal's unfulfilled promises, in turn, helped fuel this militancy.

The URA ultimately retreated from the Middle and Upper Hill. The Center for the Arts morphed into a symphony hall and, later, a convention center in downtown Pittsburgh. The violence that followed MLK's assassination and fiscal shortages encouraged the URA to withdraw, but community protests also played a role. According to historian William J. Mallet, in the wake of the fires and smashed property that followed Martin Luther King Jr.'s death in April 1968, the boosters behind the Center for the Arts "began to look for 'safer' locales," eventually opting for downtown.<sup>137</sup> Robert Pease, who served as the URA's executive director from 1958 to 1968 and the Allegheny Conference's executive director after 1968, attributes the URA's retreat to both fiscal constraints and community protests. Pease says that the URA ideally wanted to redevelop the Hill District "way, way, way far to the east with a lot of housing and apartments" but with other projects underway in neighborhoods like East Liberty and Homewood, "there wasn't enough money to do that."<sup>138</sup> Pease also recollected that when residents "organized and said 'you're not going to do anymore of what you've been doing,'" it "worked." These protests succeeded because, according to Pease, "Who needed to fight? There were plenty of other things that needed to be done."<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Mallett, "Redevelopment and Response," 187.

<sup>138</sup> Robert Pease, interview with the author at Mr. Pease's Pittsburgh office, 31 May 2011, 10.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

## 6.7 CONCLUSION

By geographically anchoring its demand for “No Redevelopment Beyond this Point” to the Civic Arena, the CCHDR referenced seven years of anti-redevelopment protests and critiques that spotlighted the Civic Arena as a symbol of racial injustice. The *Courier* and the CCHDR used mixed visual strategies to articulate their vision for the Middle and Upper Hill’s redevelopment. At their most constructive, they attempted to speak to redevelopers in their own visual language with a model proposing small-scale rehabilitation. At its most defiant, the *Courier* identified city planning as a raging “executioner” assaulting black neighborhoods with “negro removal” and the CCHDR figuratively drew a line at the Civic Arena and dared redevelopers to cross it. These protests originated, though, in the *Courier*’s initial critiques of redevelopment. The *Courier* had envisioned redevelopment as a means for new jobs and better housing. When the Arena opened, both of those hopes remained unfulfilled. Thereafter, the *Courier* revoked its support for redevelopment and re-envisioned the Civic Arena and the Lower Hill’s redevelopment as symbols of racial injustice.

The Civic Arena that was represented by the *Courier* and referenced by the CCHDR’s billboard differed dramatically from the Civic Arena that appeared in redevelopers’ promotional literature and in the mainstream press. Redevelopment authorities like the PAAP and the URA, local dailies like the *Press* and *Post-Gazette*, and national periodicals like *National Geographic* represented the Civic Arena as a dream fulfilled. Photographed at dusk, at night, and in broad daylight as well as from multiple angles, the Arena represented the city’s technological imagination, its leadership’s spunk and commitment, and, most of all, its progress out of its smoky past and into its marvelous future.

According to the Pittsburgh *Press*, the Civic Arena faced peril from the Middle and Upper Hill’s “seething slums,” which threatened the Lower Hill’s Center for the Arts and endangered the city’s Renaissance. Models of the Center for the Arts represented the city’s potential while photographs of

littered Middle Hill playgrounds with the Civic Arena in the distance symbolized the need for extending demolition and redevelopment all the way through the Hill District. Photographs evincing the Lower Hill's past blight, which had figured prominently in redevelopers' 1950s visual rhetoric, only appeared in the 1960s to show how the city had advanced. According to the Allegheny Conference's and Stefan Lorant's monumental book, the Lower Hill's children no longer had to grow up on city sidewalks.

Lorant and the Conference, however, failed to note the social value captured in W. Eugene Smith's photograph of an interracial group of children at play. The photographers hired by the Conference to photograph the Lower Hill's demolition in 1956 had the same blind spot. John Shrader and John McClain photographed demolition's labor, machinery, and technical prowess, but did so from spatial and temporal positions that treated the buildings under demolition as having no social value. Based on the demolition photographs collected by the Conference, the Lower Hill's buildings appeared without a history and devoid of community meaning. Teenie Harris, conversely, painstakingly documented noteworthy Lower Hill institutions through stages of demolition. Although Harris and the *Courier* supported demolition in the late 1950s, they understood its end goal as jobs and better living conditions for Hill residents. Redevelopers' solid concentration on the Lower Hill's built environment distracted them from social issues like housing and employment and set the stage for the *Courier's* and Hill residents' increasingly piquant protests.

## EPILOGUE

Disillusionment with the Lower Hill's redevelopment lingered after the Urban Redevelopment Authority retreated from the Middle Hill in 1968. Instead of revitalizing the neighborhood, the Lower Hill's redevelopment hastened the Hill's economic decline. The displacement of 8,000 residents from the Lower Hill led to overcrowding in the Middle and Upper Hill. Many Lower Hill businesses relocated to Centre Avenue in the Middle Hill and continued to thrive into the 1960s. The uprisings that followed Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination in 1968 burned out the Center Avenue commercial corridor and an influx of drugs and violence teamed with disinvestment ate away at the Hill District's commercial vitality through the 1970s. In the 1950s, the Hill had been a self-contained economy where, according to Constance Brooks—who grew up in the Lower Hill in the 1950s—you could find “every store that you wanted.”<sup>1</sup>

By the 1990s, the Hill District was commercially barren. Although multiple factors spurred the Hill's economic deterioration, many scholars as well as many locals believe that the Lower Hill's demolition set it in motion. In 1999, Rev. Thomas Smith of the Hill's Monumental Baptist Church asserted that the Lower Hill's redevelopment “cut the heart out of the black community” in Pittsburgh, a wound that “[w]e've never really recovered from.”<sup>2</sup>

The neighborhood's frustrations with redevelopment festered for four decades and erupted when the Arena's demolition came under consideration in the early 2000s. In 2002, the Arena's primary

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<sup>1</sup> Constance Brooks, interview by Laura Grantmyre, 20 February 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Fuoco, “Future Investment: Crawford Square one of many vibrant new Hill projects,” *Post-Gazette*, 12 April 1999, < [http://old.post-gazette.com/regionstate/19990412\\_hill1.asp](http://old.post-gazette.com/regionstate/19990412_hill1.asp) > (accessed 10 June 2013).



tenants, the Pittsburgh Penguins hockey team, began developing plans for a new arena, setting in motion the Civic Arena's eventual demolition. To stop demolition, local preservationists and architects pushed the city to designate the Civic Arena as an historic site.<sup>3</sup> The Hill District's city councilman, Sala Udin, passionately argued for the Arena's demolition. Identifying the Arena as a symbol of urban renewal's racial injustices, Udin said, demolishing it would provide "an opportunity to heal . . . a community whose bottom half was amputated."<sup>45</sup> When the Arena's historic site status was debated again in 2011, Udin intensified his argument, calling the Arena "a symbol of genocide."<sup>6</sup>

Some preservationists' arguments for designating the Civic Arena as a historic site, meanwhile, harkened back to redevelopers' exaltation of the Arena as an architectural sensation and symbol for the city's Renaissance. According to the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, the leaders of Preservation Pittsburgh and the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation, former Allegheny County Commissioner Bob Cranmer, and representatives of the architectural firm that designed the arena reiterated redevelopers' technical boasts when they testified before the city's Historic Review Commission in 2002. *Post-Gazette* reporter Tom Barnes summarized their arguments: "they praised the Arena . . . 'as a technological and engineering marvel' and 'the eighth wonder of the modern world.'"<sup>7</sup> They also echoed redevelopers' symbolic link between the Arena and Pittsburgh's resurgence by asserting it "represents the urban rebirth embodied in the first Pittsburgh Renaissance."<sup>8</sup> Clearly, redevelopers' vision of the Civic Arena as the embodiment of progress still resonates with portions of the Pittsburgh public.

This dissertation has shed light on how these divergent perspectives came to be by examining the Lower Hill's redevelopment through its visual record. More broadly, a close reading of visuals reveals

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<sup>3</sup> Tom Barnes, "Panel Considers Mellon Arena Historic Status," *Post-Gazette*, 11 July 2002, B1.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* Udin also challenged the preservationists claims about the Arena's architectural distinction: "It's a dome on top of a concrete bowl . . . There's nothing unique about that."

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Christian Morrow, "Historic Status Hearing for Arena," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, 9 February 2011, A5.

<sup>7</sup> Tom Barnes, "Panel Considers Mellon Arena Historic Status," *Post-Gazette*, 11 July 2002, B1.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, B2.

how policymakers, propagandists, and the mainstream media perceived the people and spaces affected by specific public policies. Comparing these top-down visual representations to visuals created by the people most affected by specific policies highlights how the latter perceive themselves, their problems, their built environment, and their own solutions. The contradictions between top-down and bottom-up representations illuminate policymakers' biases, assumptions, and blind spots—the flaws in their perceptions of the people and spaces touched by policy. Flawed perceptions encourage flawed policies. These policies go unchallenged if media coverage replicates policymakers' and their propagandists' biases, assumptions, and blind spots. Skewed representations give the public a mental picture of the people and spaces affected by policy that presupposes the policy's aptness.

Redevelopers' photographs of desolate litter-strewn back alleys reveal that they saw the Lower Hill only in terms of its built environment. The statistical maps they created to quantify the neighborhood's building densities, mixed land uses, and blight unfairly penalized beneficial elements of older neighborhoods. The architectural models and sketches redevelopers used to envision the Lower Hill's future illustrate the planners' ideal city—a landscape of ultra-modernist technological marvels nestled in landscaped natural spaces.

Redevelopers' visual images also shaped the white public's mental picture of the Lower Hill. By showing the worst examples of the Lower Hill's aged built environment but not its people, redevelopers' images argued demolition would have structural benefits and no social costs. Combining these unflattering images with captions and written texts naming them definitive evidence of blight both reiterated the argument for demolition and lent redevelopers' mental pictures of the neighborhood greater authority. Impressive models and architectural sketches that made the Civic Arena look like a futuristic space ship, paired with captions heralding it as a "wonder of the modern world" tickled the public's imagination and strengthened support for redevelopment. When the city's local daily newspapers and national periodicals used these same images and represented redevelopers as the city's

saviors in their coverage, redevelopers' mental picture of the Lower Hill garnered even greater authority.

In contrast to the redevelopers' vision, Teenie Harris and *The Pittsburgh Courier* also represented the Lower Hill District as they perceived it, as neighborhood insiders. Their depictions showed a larger swath of the neighborhood's built environment, paid homage to its social vibrancy, and envisioned a people-centered redevelopment. Harris's photographs of early housing protests, historic institutions, and residents' relocation and demolition experiences depicted redevelopment as residents perceived it. Photographs of the housing protests spurred by the Hill District People's Forum demonstrate residents' dismay with their living conditions as well as their activism to remedy their neighborhood's deficiencies before redevelopment. Once the Hill's black political leaders and the *Courier* embraced redevelopment, Harris's photographs envisioned it as a route to better housing but also mourned the loss of local institutions. The dissonance between redevelopers' and the *Courier's* vision for the Lower Hill's redevelopment helps explain the disillusionment and protests that ensued after the Civic Arena's completion, tensions that have lasted to the present day.

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## APPENDIX A: INFORMATION ON UNAVAILABLE IMAGES

Securing copyright permissions to reprint all of the images used in the original, unpublished version of this dissertation proved impossible. That is why boxes indicating “IMAGES UNAVAILABLE DUE TO COPYRIGHT” appear sporadically throughout the dissertation. If you would like a pdf of the original, unpublished version of the dissertation that still includes all of the images, please contact me at my permanent email address ([lgrantmyre@gmail.com](mailto:lgrantmyre@gmail.com)).

## APPENDIX B: ABBREVIATIONS

### ABBREVIATIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONS

ABBREVIATION	ORGANIZATION'S FULL NAME
The Conference	The Allegheny Conference on Community Development
URA	Pittsburgh Urban Redevelopment Authority
CPC	Pittsburgh City Planning Commission
PRPA	Pittsburgh Regional Planning Association
PAAP	Public Auditorium Authority of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County
CCHDR	Citizens Committee for Hill District Renewal
SAC	Hill District People's Forum Social Action Committee
APHA	American Public Health Association
HOLC	Home Owners' Loan Corporation
RPAA	Regional Planning Association of America

### ABBREVIATIONS FOR ARCHIVES AND NEWSPAPERS

ABBREVIATION	ARCHIVE OR NEWSPAPER'S FULL NAME
Conference Photographs	Allegheny Conference on Community Development (Pittsburgh, PA), Photographs, 1920-1993. MSP 285. The Detre Library and Archives, Senator John Heinz History Center, Pittsburgh.
Conference Records	Allegheny Conference on Community Development (Pittsburgh, PA), Records, 1920-1993. MSS 285. The Detre Library and Archives, Senator John Heinz History Center, Pittsburgh.
Conference Collection	Allegheny Conference on Community Development Collection, 1944-1993. AIS.1973.04. Archives Service Center, University of Pittsburgh. Pittsburgh.
Mellon Trust Records	A.W. Mellon Educational and Charitable Trust Records. AIS 80:29. Archives Service Center, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh.
City Planning Records	Pittsburgh, PA City Planning Commission Records, 1928-1962. AIS.1976.17. Archives Service Center, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh.
<i>Courier</i>	<i>The Pittsburgh Courier</i>
<i>Post-Gazette</i>	<i>Pittsburgh Post-Gazette</i>
<i>Press</i>	<i>The Pittsburgh Press</i>
<i>Sun-Telegraph</i>	<i>Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph</i>