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University will lease New Granada Theater for Hill District CEC

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By **SUSAN JONES**

After months of operating in temporary space, the Hill District Community Engagement Center is moving toward a permanent home in the historic New Granada Theater building at 2007 Centre Ave.

The Board of Trustees' Property and Facilities Committee on Sept. 24 approved contributing up to \$6 million to the Hill Community Development Corp. for the project, which includes renovation of the original building and construction of an addition. The money also will cover all soft costs, such as furnishings, fixtures and equipment.

Jack Barbour, a member of the committee, told the Board of Trustees meeting on Sept. 25 that "the University's investment in this development is to be structured as a lease or leases with a maximum project contribution of \$6 million. Anticipated lease terms are for 10 years at \$1 per year with renewal rights thereafter at fair market rates. The Hill Community Development Corporation is leading this development and will be responsible for all design and construction prior to the University's occupancy."

After the construction is completed, Pitt will lease approximately 20,000 square feet of the development to serve as the Hill District Community Engagement Center. The center will include spaces for the Center for African American Poetry and Poetics, Jazz Studies, Education, Social Work in the Institute for entrepreneurial excellence, as well as staff offices, classrooms and conference space. A digital inclusion center will facilitate STEAM programming, as well as digital workforce development in digital literacy. Access initiatives will also be offered by the School of Computing and Information, the Swanson School of Engineering and Pitt Information Technology.

Kirk Holbrook was named director for the Hill District center in 2018, and a variety of programs have been taking place throughout the neighborhood over the past two years, although some have been curtailed because of the pandemic.

"Enhancing our impact in the community remains a long-term goal for the University, and our partnerships in the Hill District are critical to delivering on that mission," the University said in an emailed statement. "We've been offering robust programs out of our temporary location at the Blakey Program Center, and look forward to what we can accomplish when our permanent location is ready.

"Making Pitt's CEC in the Hill the anchor tenant of the New Granada Theater project is a wonderful opportunity for Pitt to catalyze a national model of community-driven urban development: the New Granada Square project marries historic preservation with cultural arts economic development."

No timeline has been announced for when work will start on the New Granada Theater building.

Bridgeside Point lease

The Property and Facilities Committee also approved renewing the lease at Bridgeside Point 1, 100 Technology Drive, for the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences.

The lease is for five years at an initial annual base rent of \$1,038,690 and annual increases of 2 percent thereafter. Pitt also will receive full rental abatement for the first three months of the renewal term, which begins on Oct. 21, 2021.

Bridgeside Point 1 is home to the Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy departments classrooms, labs and administrative offices.

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