

Pitt to lease historic New Granada Theater building for community center

By Jon Moss, Editor-in-Chief

Pitt is set to lease space in the Hill District's historic New Granada Theater building for Pitt's Community Engagement Center in the neighborhood, giving the center its first permanent physical space since its founding. The property and facilities committee of Pitt's board of trustees greenlit the lease at a Thursday morning public meeting.

The building once served as a movie theater and space for ballroom dancing, community activities and live entertainment, hosting jazz legends such as Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Ella Fitzgerald and Cab Calloway, before its 1965 closure. The space, located at 2007 Centre Ave., is currently owned by the Hill Community Development Corp., and Pitt's project is part of the larger New Granada Square development project.

The University's lease will include about 20,000 square feet between the theater and a newly planned adjoining building to be developed by HCDC. Pitt will also invest \$6 million in renovation and construction costs. Terms of the lease and the construction timeline are still being finalized in "ongoing discussions," according to Pitt spokesperson Pat McMahon.

The new CEC, as well as its sister site in Homewood, which opened in fall 2018, are part of Pitt's Neighborhood Commitments, a University movement to improve engagement with local communities through long-term partnerships. The University is making a minimum 15-year commitment to work with these communities on investment, infrastructure, programming and staff.

David DeJong, the acting senior vice chancellor for business and operations, said the project would be a "catalytic community development investment in one of Pittsburgh's most renowned African-American communities."

Marimba Milliones, the president and CEO of HCDC, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The committee also approved a five-year renewal of the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences' lease for about 35,000 square feet of space at Bridgeside Point I. The lease will begin Oct. 1, 2021, with an initial annual base rent of \$1,038,690 and annual 2% rent increases. The terms also include full rent abatement for the first three months of the renewal term, along with escalations for the prorated share of increases in operating expenses over base year 2021.

The full board of trustees will meet Friday at 10 a.m., and Pitt will livestream the meeting on its YouTube channel.



Image via Lee Paxton | Wikimedia Commons
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>

Pitt is set to lease space in the Hill District's historic New Granada Theater building for its Community Engagement Center in the neighborhood.