

ARTS EXCURSIONS UNLIMITED

**I like to close my eyes and imagine
into the future.**

Are you doing it right now?

**Yes. Come. Close your eyes and do it
with me.**

THE ROCK FROM THE SKY by Jon Klassen

**A STRATEGY TO SUPPORT AEU
TO KEEP UP ITS WORK CREATING ART
AND MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS
IN HAZELWOOD**



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OUR VALUES

EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO ACCESS THE ARTS, CULTURE, AND CREATIVE EXPRESSION. THE ARTS ARE A CATALYST FOR PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY ENRICHMENT, EDUCATION, AND ENJOYMENT.

AN INTRODUCTION TO AEU

This strategy was created by AEU community collaborators, program supporters, and artist Edith Abeyta. It is reflective of AEU collaborators' vision for AEU.

It is intended for many different audiences: Hazelwood residents, the AEU neighborhood family, local and regional art and community funders, and anyone interested in the development of a community-based arts program.

Having an understanding of how several words are defined in this document will clarify frequently referred to roles and relationships. Even with these definitions, it's important to know that roles and responsibilities within AEU are fluid. Residents' engagement with the program fluctuates based on their availability and interests.

KEY TERMS

Arts include any form of visual, literary, or performing art.

Community collaborators are people who participate in AEU programming and planning in any capacity. They can have active roles or simply

enjoy the activities. A community collaborator generally participates more than once. Sometimes we shorten this to "collaborators" in this document when the context is clear that they are community members and not collaborators from outside of Hazelwood.

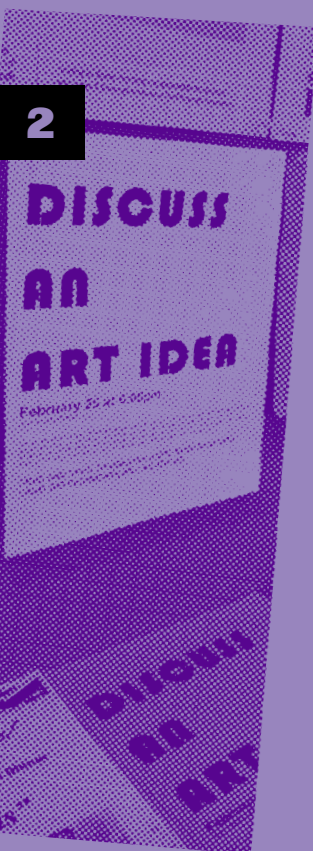
AEU Family and **neighborhood family** are terms used to describe community collaborators who have formed very strong relationships. Community collaborators often refer to themselves, and AEU, as a family. Neighborhood family also distinguishes between relatives who participate in the program, and the familial-like bonds developed during AEU activities.

AEU serves the **Greater Hazelwood** neighborhoods in Pittsburgh. We include the following areas in the community we call Greater Hazelwood in this document: Glenwood, Glen Hazel, and Hazelwood.

A **resident** refers to a person who lives in Greater Hazelwood. Although most community collaborators live in Greater Hazelwood, not all residents are community collaborators.



OUR BEGINNINGS



Artist Edith Abeyta was selected by the staff of the [Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh-Hazelwood](#) for an artist residency in the public realm in 2014. The residency was organized by the [Office of Public Art \(OPA\)](#) and funded by [The Heinz Endowments](#). Former library branch manager Maryann McHarg and children's librarian Michael Balkenhol were also active collaborators and allies during the residency.

Following the OPA artist residency in the public realm model, Edith developed relationships in the community for one year before identifying a creative project to produce in the second year. Using the library as a home base, in year one she hosted workshops and creative activities that were open to anyone who wanted to participate. The activities were often based on skills residents said they wanted to explore such as sewing, dancing, and photography. Edith presented the workshops so they offered a mix of creativity, socialization, and support. One of the earliest temporary public art projects resulting from Edith's deep engagement was a photo of community members attending an event at the YMCA. The photograph was then turned into a billboard with the theme: *We Are Hazelwood*.

Edith dedicated hundreds of hours getting to know residents, organizations in the community, and the dynamics of Hazelwood. She also actively participated in community activities organized by others, such as the Grandparent's Coffee Hour and the holiday party at the YMCA. The time she spent getting to know people by truly listening and responding to what residents wanted and needed, developed trust between her and the community.



Trust, dedication to inclusion, and a "come as you are" atmosphere became the foundations of AEU.

To identify the creative project to produce in the second year of the residency, Edith and OPA staff [Kate Hansen](#) and [Renee Piechocki](#) organized a three-meeting process open to anyone in the community. The meetings took place in the library community room.

During the first meeting, anyone who attended could share an idea for a creative project.

At the second meeting, OPA presented examples of projects similar to those shared by the community at the first meeting. Participants discussed each project.

Community members reviewed projects and voted during the third meeting. The top program, which won by many votes, was "arts excursions," or field trips to cultural and community places in the region.

During the second year, Edith and community collaborators developed [AEU](#) while continuing to host other community events and arts activities. The program was such a success in the community that it continued beyond its initial two-year plan. Eventually, AEU shifted from an ongoing AEU residency to becoming a program fiscally sponsored by OPA. The activities AEU developed are described below in the next section of this document.

Funding from [The Heinz Endowments](#) seeded the residency, and continues to support the program as AEU develops. Over the years, Edith pursued operating funds from other foundations and individuals, in-kind donations, and commissions and funding for temporary artworks including the Uber fence and Elizabeth Street Bridge.

An assessment of the program was completed by Mary Navarro in 2018. In short, the assessment is very positive and documents the success of AEU. Navarro's document uses the publication [Aesthetic Perspectives: Attributes of Excellence in Arts for Change](#), created by Animating Democracy, as a framework to reflect on and [evaluate AEU's work](#). It offers objective context about AEU's place in the community.

OUR VALUES

AEU BELIEVES IN THE POWER OF PEOPLE. HAZELWOOD NEIGHBORS CAN GROW TOGETHER AND PROSPER THROUGH CREATIVITY, SELF-DETERMINATION, ENJOYING EXPERIENCES, HELPING EACH OTHER, AND COLLABORATION. HAZELWOOD NEIGHBORS NURTURE SINCERE JOY.



THE PRESENT

AEU is a grassroots community arts organization that is responsive to and reflective of the residents and stakeholders of Greater Hazelwood. AEU takes the position that arts and culture are required for human development, self-determination, and should represent the people, place, and culture of its community collaborators. This manifests as arts and cultural excursions, an arts studio, and temporary public art. Additionally, AEU participates in, and produces, community events such as an annual Grand-parents' Day celebration and the monthly Hazelwood Market.

This document is being written during a global pandemic. AEU community collaborators who participated in the interviews and the review of this document, stated many times that the

pandemic and its social isolation offered them the opportunity to reflect on how important AEU is for them personally as well as for the entire neighborhood family. The pandemic did not stop AEU from connecting neighbors with creativity. Edith and the community collaborators adapted to the circumstances by delivering masks, at-home art kits, and regularly contacting people to show how much they are appreciated and demonstrate care. Over the summers of 2020 and 2021, AEU even organized opportunities to get together safely in person. Instead of renting buses, [public transportation](#) became a way to attend excursions. The entire AEU family missed each other, and should be recognized for the care and love they showed one another during this very difficult time.

DEEPER NOT WIDER



Interviews and surveys of community members and AEU community collaborators conducted at the start of this planning process revealed that one of the most admired aspects of the program is the diversity of participants. For example, people appreciate how AEU brings community members from multiple generations together, and they are grateful for the opportunity to get to know their neighbors. Several people commented that their participation in AEU gives them a true sense of community because they have shared experiences with their neighbors and neighbors' families. Because people love AEU so much, they want to be sure that as many people as possible have opportunities to participate in the program. Confidentially, some people stated that they felt left out when they missed an excursion, while others discussed the need to use new methods of outreach to get the word out to new neighbors. There were several conversations about how, and if, AEU should expand to other communities. Every person who mentioned this followed it quickly with the caveat that Hazelwood should not be forgotten if the program grows.

- Two ideas were discussed:**
- A.** Expand beyond Hazelwood to include other communities in the program.
 - B.** Include more people from Hazelwood through better communication.

Through follow-up discussions with AEU community collaborators about the capacity and limits of the program, we decided AEU can increase their audience with residents in Greater Hazelwood first. AEU can then consider connecting with other communities.

OUR VALUES

EVEN WHEN WE ENCOUNTER ROADBLOCKS, AEU ALWAYS FINDS A DIFFERENT ROUTE. AEU ALWAYS TRIES TO THINK OUT-SIDE OF THE BOX. AEU NEVER GIVES UP AND STRIVES FOR LONG-TERM POSITIVE IMPACTS IN THE COMMUNITY.

AEU ACTIVITIES

- NOW:** As we recover from the pandemic, bring back AEU activities that people have missed and continue to adapt to current community needs.
- SOON:** Move to a new studio that is more physically accessible to a wider range of community members.
- EVENTUALLY:** Improve documentation of AEU activities and create an event and photo archive. AEU community members will be planning and implementing the majority of program activities. Foster relationships with developers and consultants working throughout the neighborhood including Hazelwood Green.

WHY WE MADE THIS DECISION

The interviews and surveys completed for this strategy were conducted in spring 2021 before pandemic restrictions were lifted. The responses underscore that the program's facilitation of activities and experiences is one of the main reasons AEU is deeply loved. However, it's not just participating in the activities that creates bonds, but rather the fact that community members experience these things together. Multiple times in the interviews, people said how much they value the program because it creates the opportunity to get to know their neighbors, create friendships, and participate in building community. Others commented how much they appreciated Edith's creativity in coming up with activities, even during the pandemic. Everyone mentioned how much they missed each other and how they were looking forward to getting back to excursions and having experiences together.

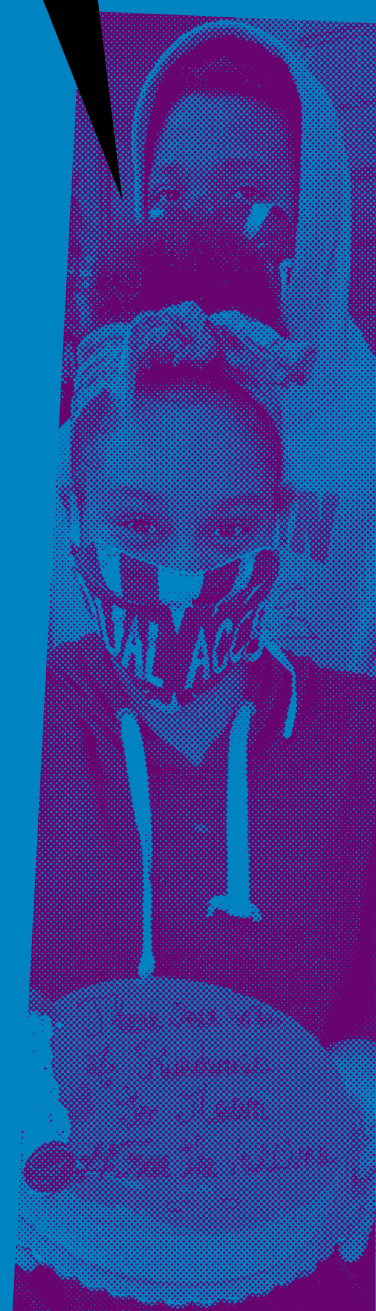
The key intention for AEU activities is to support the creative self-determination of the people who participate in the program. Ways AEU supports creative self-determination include:

- ▶ Welcome everyone. Access to participate in and enjoy the arts, culture, and creative expression is a right.
- ▶ Participation is free.

- ▶ Break down any barriers to participation. These can be transportation, food, entry fees, and others.
- ▶ Create variety in the types of activities and experiences available; develop multiple ways for participation in AEU.
- ▶ Engage community members in planning.
- ▶ Be open to suggestions and feedback.
- ▶ Try things that may seem challenging or impossible.
- ▶ Travel to other neighborhoods and cities and consider how or if some of what is experienced can be replicated or interpreted in Hazelwood. Consider how Hazelwood shares common narratives or experiences with other places.
- ▶ Listen and respond to the residents' ideas and what they say they want to do and try.

A short description of each AEU core activity and recommendations made during our planning process are outlined below. Importantly, there was no feeling that AEU needed to expand beyond its current core activities.

Although there is no shortage of ideas to consider, in general the success of the program is about the quality of the experiences people have and the availability of experiences to Greater Hazelwood residents.



ARTS EXCURSIONS

At least once a month, community members adventure together to local, regional, and national places and events that interest them.

NOW: Continue to plan Covid-safe excursions using public transportation. Begin to identify methods to improve communication about the availability of excursions and the sign-up process.

SOON: Identify ways the new AEU van will be used for excursions and test methods. Schedule the excursion to Philadelphia.

EVENTUALLY: Develop a photo archive of AEU excursions that all AEU community collaborators can access. Greater Hazelwood residents will plan and implement all aspects of the excursions. Develop a tool kit or other resource to share information about the excursions with other communities.

Community collaborators love the excursions and report a wide range of community and personal benefits from participating in them. During the planning process, some members expressed the desire to expand the program to other neighborhoods including: Braddock, Homestead, McKeesport, and the Northside. After talking about this in more detail, the group decided that engaging more Hazelwood residents in AEU activities is a priority. Developing relationships with other neighborhoods to explore potential collaborations is also desirable. AEU can be a resource to others seeking information on how

to create an arts-based and community-focused program.

Some AEU community collaborators are concerned about unfair access to the excursions and want more ways to register. A paper calendar, online registration, and email reminders were suggested. Even though AEU has tried some of these in the past, they can be tried again and reevaluated. Creating a photo archive of AEU excursions and better documentation of AEU activities has been on the horizon for several years. These ideas are explored more in the Communications section of Administration below.

Additionally, there are limitations to the number of people who can attend due to the size of the bus, the logistics of traveling with more than 40 people, and budget constraints.

Future excursions mentioned during the planning phase include:

- ▶ Philadelphia, PA
- ▶ Trip along Pittsburgh rivers
- ▶ Weekend camping trip
- ▶ Toronto, Canada
- ▶ California
- ▶ Mexico
- ▶ Europe
- ▶ The Caribbean



OUR VALUES

EVERYONE IS WELCOME. AEU MEETS PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE, AND EMBRACES DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES AND UNIQUE EXPERIENCES. AEU TRIES TO ACCOMMODATE THE NEEDS AND WANTS OF ANYONE WHO DESIRES TO COLLABORATE IN THE PROGRAM. WE ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT EXPERIENCES ARE BETTER TOGETHER.

AEU collaborators work together to create a range of free events such as birthday parties, parades, monthly market, Easter basket distribution, receptions for temporary art openings, and picnics.

NOW: Continue to plan a range of Covid-safe community events to rekindle relationships and connect in this phase and after the pandemic. Begin to share a 3-6 month calendar of events and make more frequent posts on social media. Remain fluid and responsive to community requests and needs, including different accessibility needs.

SOON: Develop and test new systems for people to learn about and register for community events. Develop clear ways for people to learn about how to plan and implement events. Although volunteers are welcome, paying people for their work will be the norm. Create teams of people to work on the different parts of each event.

EVENTUALLY: Greater Hazelwood residents will plan and implement all aspects of the events and be paid for their work. Create a calendar of events for the AEU website.

Community events are visible neighborhood activities. They have the potential to involve new people and introduce them to AEU.

Many people remarked on how important the events are to build a tight community, the AEU neighborhood family.

Even though community collaborators work together to create the events, many people feel that more help is welcome. There are usually a lot of different jobs for planning and implementing the events, so people with different skill sets and

availability are welcome. Paying people for their work is a core value of AEU and all community members should be paid for their work on events.

New ways of advertising, using the [website](#) and [social media](#), and other methods identified by AEU community collaborators would help AEU increase awareness of the program among Greater Hazelwood residents. Expanding the ways people learn about AEU activities is explored in more detail in the Communications section of Administration below.

COMMUNITY EVENTS





STUDIO

AEU has rented a studio space on the 3rd Floor of the [Spartan Center](#) for several years. This is the AEU headquarters where artworks are planned and created, residents can bring creative projects to work on, guest artists conduct workshops, and where AEU hosts meetings with community members and guests. The studio is also used for after-school and youth arts education, often in collaboration with organizations such as [Center of Life](#) and [Jada House](#).

NOW: Continue to use the current studio space to work on AEU and resident creative projects, as well as free arts workshops. Consider ways to make the current studio more efficient and user-friendly. Remain fluid and responsive to community requests and needs.

SOON: Move to a new studio that is more physically accessible to community members. Identify resources and equipment needed to fulfill a wider range of creative projects.

EVENTUALLY: Consider a mobile studio that can travel to multiple locations in Greater Hazelwood. Consider a gallery space for AEU and creative resident projects.

The AEU studio space is affordable, but it is not physically accessible to many older residents and those unable to climb stairs, known as "heart attack hill." AEU has also outgrown the size and function of the current studio. A larger space would be ideal, as well as a space that could accommodate more computers and specialty arts equipment, like a kiln. Air conditioning and accessible restrooms on the same floor are also desirable.

Even though it has its limitations, the studio is highly valued and people who participated in interviews talked about its potential. Many people mentioned how the studio is welcoming, socially active, and that Edith's resourcefulness helps other community members develop projects.

There is appreciation for how the studio provides opportunities to work with guest artists. Several people mentioned how the studio is important for people with no access to art supplies and working space.

A first floor studio space in Hazelwood is ideal. Alternatives include a space outside of the neighborhood and a mobile studio. After more discussion, a mobile studio is preferred to a non-Hazelwood based studio space. A mobile studio would allow AEU to bring creative projects to multiple locations such as park spaces, parking lots, or parking spots in front of community gathering places. It would also provide AEU with opportunities to engage with more Glen Hazel residents and residents who live north of Hazelwood Avenue.

Until a new studio can be located, there are improvements that can be made in the current space to make it more efficient and user-friendly. To identify the changes, studio users can reflect on the activities they participate in the most as well as new ones they want to try. We can then modify the space to accommodate those activities. AEU will identify someone with expertise in space planning or organizing to assist with storage and furniture selection. AEU will ask the building owner about changing spaces or renting additional space.

TEMPORARY PUBLIC ART PROJECTS

AEU has completed many temporary public art projects since the inception of the program including banners, billboards, murals, and sculpture installations. At times, the funding for these projects is from outside sources including private companies and the [City of Pittsburgh](#).

NOW: Maintain the existing projects, including the asphalt mural at the Spartan Center and the Elizabeth Street bridge mural.

SOON: Create an inventory of future temporary art sites and projects that AEU can address or share with other organizations seeking to create art. Create an inventory of existing art locations in Hazelwood. Produce temporary art installations and performances at the monthly market. Encourage entities to remove damaged artworks, offer to provide assistance, and new ideas for projects.

EVENTUALLY: Create a list of visual, literary, and performing artists who live and work in Greater Hazelwood.

During our planning process we identified that AEU is only interested in producing temporary public art projects. Maintaining existing temporary artworks is important, as well as leaving space for future and different responses to a particular site.

In the future, if AEU community members are interested in permanent art opportunities, they can build relationships with other organizations in the region to learn about that process.

AEU community collaborators will create an inventory of possible locations, project types, and document existing and new ideas for temporary art. This inventory will build on opportunities identified in the [Greater Hazelwood Neighborhood Plan](#). The community could benefit from AEU sharing this inventory with additional organizations, artists, consultants, and other entities who are interested in creating art in the community. The inventory will bring resident opinions about public art to the forefront. In the future, residents who participate in development and planning efforts would not have to start from scratch when they are asked about artwork or placemaking locations.

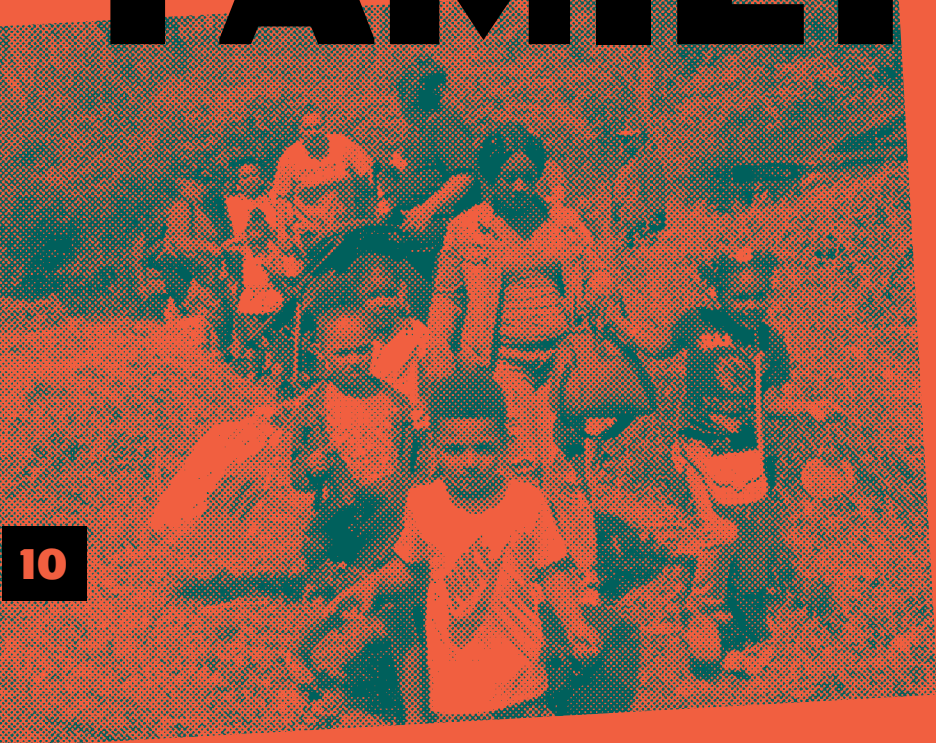
Creating a list of visual, literary, and performing artists living and working in Hazelwood will provide opportunities to connect local artists with AEU and other residents. The list would benefit other entities seeking to connect with local artists.

AEU will document the community engagement strategies it has found to be successful, and will share their learnings with other entities and artists who are seeking to connect with Greater Hazelwood residents.



CREATING A NEIGHBORHOOD FAMILY

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A neighborhood family is one of the most subjective and important concepts to define within AEU's activities. Being a good neighbor is the glue that keeps the entire program together. It is created from truly listening and responding to what community members need, and being present in the neighborhood. Although people may not be related, AEU actively creates and supports a neighborhood family through small and large acts of caring and thoughtfulness.

NOW: Continue being fluid and responsive to community requests and needs. Stay open to everyone and free to participate. Continue to seek opportunities to amplify community voices in the discussions and plans about the future and changes in Greater Hazelwood. Remain focused on multigenerational participation.

SOON: Use value statements to determine if opportunities are aligned with AEU. Consider ways to welcome teens back, or engage them in the program for the first time.

EVENTUALLY: Through authentic community building, expand the neighborhood family to include professional organizations, developers, and consultants working in the neighborhood.

During the interviews conducted in this planning process, the sentiment that "AEU is a family" was frequently shared. In the meetings to review sections of this plan, we reflected on how some children have "grown up in the program," and that people who were neighbors and hardly knew each

other have become a family. AEU's commitment to meet people where they are, to be welcoming, and creating programs that respond to what people say they want and need were mentioned as key reasons this closeness is possible.

OUR VALUES

AEU ALWAYS APPRECIATES FEEDBACK.

AEU EMBRACES QUESTIONING, REFLECTION, & KNOW-HOW.

ADMINISTRATION

AEU focused on developing the programs and values of the organization for the first few years. As AEU continues to grow, the need for more administrative focus and systems is evident. Community collaborators highly value the offerings of the project and recognize the need to grow in administrative capabilities. This section details changes that will be made, as well as things to try, to help AEU realize its vision for the future.

NOW: Transition from OPA and Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council (GPAC) fiscal sponsorship.

SOON: Move to a new fiscal sponsor (potentially New Sun Rising).

EVENTUALLY: Reevaluate AEU to see if a new administrative structure is needed.

WHY WE MADE THIS DECISION

Through the benchmarking process for this strategy, we researched organizations with different structures. Some of our considerations for each type are below.

Artist project with minimal formal structure:

While this was appealing on some levels because of the lack of structure, AEU's current programming is not well-suited to this framework. Plus, it could prevent AEU from being able to obtain grants from foundations and some government sources. We recognize this is an option for AEU in the future if a less formal program is desired.

LLC: Having a for-profit company would give AEU the ability to earn money and distribute it among community members who are active in the program. It would also release Edith from some of the personal risk. However, it would block AEU from being able to obtain grants from foundations and government sources. We recognize AEU can earn income through other models as a revenue source for the program. This framework would also have more complex reporting and structure than is currently desired.

Program housed within a public sector entity with a nonprofit component: This was the

most complex framework studied; pursuing a relationship with a government entity, or becoming a program of another nonprofit organization, is not desirable to AEU at this time because it would affect all levels of administration. AEU is committed to collaborative decision-making by and for Hazelwood residents and the benefit of the community; becoming part of another program or entity could hamper independence, decision making, process, and growth..

Fiscally sponsored project: AEU is fiscally sponsored by OPA and acknowledges the benefits of this framework. AEU can apply for grants, retains almost complete independence in decision-making, and relies on [GPAC's](#) accounting services. However, being a long term fiscal sponsor is not aligned with OPA's or GPAC's mission. AEU needs a fiscal sponsor that can continue to provide the services it receives from OPA, in addition to other services provided by a more robust fiscal sponsor. In our region, [New Sun Rising](#) is a fiscal sponsor that is aligned with AEU's community-based mission and also provides capacity building services that would be available to Edith and all of the community collaborators. Some of their services include grant application review and fundraising advice, marketing and communications advice, and consultations with New Sun Rising staff. AEU would determine how "hands-on" or "hands-off" the relationship will be. AEU will also benefit from being in a network of

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

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Other paid positions held by residents include:

- ▶ youth art assistant for 3 hours a week at \$10 per hour
- ▶ adult art assistant for 10 hours a month at \$15 per hour
- ▶ food preparation for excursions is \$100 per excursion
- ▶ food preparation and serving for events fees vary
- ▶ photo documentation is \$250 per event
- ▶ artists and designers fees vary

Many residents have limitations on how much income they can earn due to benefits they receive from government programs. We have also tried other incentivized activities such as writing content for the newsletter, social media content creation, and online curation content. There are residents who are paid by other organizations to work with AEU. The initiatives and organizations include: [Summer Learn and Earn](#) interns paid for by the [Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation](#); food preparation and outreach paid for by the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy; and high school interns paid for by [Start on Success](#) a program through Pittsburgh [Allderdice High School](#). We are always looking for opportunities for Hazelwood residents to share their expertise and be paid for their work.

Building capacity will lead to more resident participation in program implementation. Non-residents are paid for their work on the AEU newsletter and social media. This is an example of a position that could transition to a community member with more capacity building. A new fiscal sponsor's services, coupled with continually seeking opportunities to provide access to community interests, will allow self-selected community members to take on more responsibilities. As AEU expands the number of residents who know about the program we will tap into a wider network of existing skill sets in the neighborhood.

One of the characteristics of AEU is staying power. When a creative work achieves sustained resonance, impact, or value this is called "stickiness," according to *Aesthetic Perspectives: Attributes of Excellence in Arts For Change*, 2017, published by Animating Democracy of Americans for the Arts. Stickiness will be reinforced by implementing the administrative changes outlined in this document in order to prepare future generations of community collaborators to manage AEU.

NOW: Build capacity in more AEU community collaborators to share in the creation and implementation of AEU programs.

SOON: More residents will be active in directing and implementing AEU programs.

EVENTUALLY: AEU will be fully managed by Hazelwood residents.

WHY WE MADE THIS DECISION

From the beginning of her residency in Hazelwood, Edith sought to create a program that is not only for residents, but by and with them. The interviews and surveys conducted for this program, as well as the previous evaluation by Mary Navarro, established that this was not only Edith's aspiration, but is the keystone of the entire project. Residents feel included in the ideation and implementation of AEU's programs and activities because they are. While residents are welcome to just enjoy what AEU has to offer, anyone is able to participate as much as, and as often as, is desired. There are many opportunities for residents to collaborate, and also be paid for their work.

Currently, resident [Joe Hepner](#) is the most active Hazelwood resident and is an example of a person who has decided to take a very active role in directing and implementing AEU programs. He is a leader in excursion planning and fundraising. His record of individual donations is outstanding; he has raised more than \$65,000 through fundraisers and direct donations from individuals. Joe is currently paid monthly for his work as an independent contractor for AEU. He determines his workload, activities, tasks, focus, and hours. As an independent contractor he is not supervised.

OUR VALUES

AEU BELIEVES IN A BALANCE BETWEEN WORKING HARD AND HAVING A GOOD TIME WHILE ENJOYING EXPERIENCES.



livability eventually do occur, neighborhoods often become the target of large-scale outside investment, which can result in the negative impacts of gentrification and displacement.

Building upon practical lessons learned while supporting hundreds of community projects and businesses since 2005, the NSR Vibrant Communities Framework emerged as a practical solution to activate real change through local ownership. This toolkit is adaptive and implemented through local partners to instigate regenerative development: built from the bottom up and from the inside out.

TRANSITION PERIOD

Once a new fiscal sponsor has been identified, there will be a transition period between fiscal sponsors. To make the transition smooth, we currently anticipate the following activities: Review the new fiscal sponsor operating agreement. AEU will identify an attorney to help them with the process and terms of the agreement suitable to AEU's needs and operations if needed.

- ▶ Plan the transition of grant funds from OPA/ GPAC to the new fiscal sponsor. Contact each funder to ask if moving funds is permitted.
- ▶ AEU will apply to the new sponsor's program. AEU anticipates the new relationship to begin by January 1, 2022.
- ▶ Establish AEU's account with the new fiscal sponsor.
- ▶ Select AEU community members to learn the new accounting system.
- ▶ Receive training from the new fiscal sponsor in program operations.
- ▶ Pay any outstanding bills and invoices before the date of new fiscal sponsorship begins.
- ▶ Move AEU's balance of remaining grant funds from OPA to the new fiscal sponsor.
- ▶ Update AEU's insurance policy to reflect the new fiscal sponsor.
- ▶ Identify other transition needs and solutions.

other sponsored projects. Lastly, New Sun Rising's relationship would be with AEU as a project, not with Edith as an individual artist.

New Sun Rising started in 2005. In the About Us section of their website, they describe their work:

New Sun Rising (NSR) designs and implements programs that create economic opportunity, solve social challenges, and strengthen community vibrancy. As a nonprofit 501(c)(3) charitable organization, we serve as an educator, resource provider, connector, and activator of neighborhood-scale innovation. Our focus is on disinvested communities and how regenerative growth strategies can be utilized for equitable development.

New Sun Rising's framework for co-powering grassroots change was born in the aftermath of Hurricanes Ivan and Katrina. After witnessing the traumatic disruption of social and economic ecosystems in Pittsburgh and New Orleans, the organization's founders began to question what the nature of these neighborhoods would become. An immediate response took the shape of practical capacity building and fiscal sponsorship services for grassroots leaders and their efforts to rebuild. The outcome of these early projects created networks of hope and an undeniable shift in neighborhood perception.

Further research demonstrated a lack of support for emerging entrepreneurs in disinvested neighborhoods, especially when compared to the Silicon Valley-inspired high growth tech sector. Skewing investments heavily towards extractive socioeconomic ventures has resulted in unbalanced and inequitable opportunity in local ecosystems. And, when positive shifts in local identity and



FINANCES\$ & FUNDRAISING

NOW: Continue to diversify AEU's funding from foundations, government, earned income, and individual sources.

SOON: Create a fundraising and finances committee. Address wage inequality within AEU by creating a payment structure in collaboration with residents who contribute labor to the program. Develop a policy regarding transparency about the cost of running AEU programs and the amount of information shared about pay rates for community collaborators. Create a conflict of interest policy that addresses how to handle issues community collaborators may encounter working for AEU.

EVENTUALLY: Be a model of self-determination and equity.

WHY WE MADE THIS DECISION

There have been several organizations who have stopped working in Hazelwood because they were not able to raise enough funding to maintain their programs. AEU wants to be sustainable. AEU acknowledges the ongoing support of The Heinz Endowments which has enabled the slow growth of the program, resulting in deep roots and authentic community participation. To become more sustainable, AEU has sought other means of financial support. While we have been slowly reaching out to new foundations, the efforts to secure in-kind donations and individual contributions has secured thousands of free admissions to cultural institutions and will purchase the AEU van. Edith has also pursued funds for AEU programs and activities by applying for public art opportunities in Hazelwood from the City of Pittsburgh and Uber.

Earned income is defined as a source of revenue earned by an entity for goods or services provided by the entity. AEU already earns income through bake sales and spaghetti dinners, and some consulting work. When AEU has fiscal sponsorship through an entity that easily accepts earned income, Edith and other community members can grow earned income sources. These can include applying for more temporary public art opportunities as well as earning fees for participating in, and leading components of community planning projects in Hazelwood. For example, Edith could choose to direct her fees for participating in the [Hazelwood Riverfront Plan](#) or [Mill 19](#) to AEU when the fiscal sponsor has the ability to accept those funds.

We will apply for grants from a wider range of local, regional, and national foundations and government sources. During our benchmarking phase we examined the funding sources for each program, remarking on the large grants from national arts funders. We believe AEU's authentic community focused approach is relevant to national funders and will gain the attention of those entities.

At the same time, it's important for AEU to stay true to itself. By having more diverse funding sources, we can ensure the program is not placed in the position of having to chase grant dollars or earned income opportunities that are not aligned with its values.

AEU always strives to pay people for their work and advocates for paid opportunities for all residents engaged in community projects. Over the next few years, AEU intends to address wage inequality within its own administration. We propose working together to create a fee structure that demonstrates the equal value of everyone's skills and contributions to implementing the program. We will work together to decide how transparent the rate of pay will be.

More community collaborators can be involved in learning about AEU's finances and making decisions about spending our resources. Having more people engaged will help with long-term planning and sustainability of the program. A fundraising and finances committee will be formed to help identify grant funds, write grant requests and reports, identify earned income opportunities, and seek donations of money and in-kind goods and services. Committee members will also research how other grassroots programs, nonprofits, and for-profit entities secure funding and sustain their work. They will then share that information with AEU and consider if any of those methods could be good for the group to adopt.

NOW: Experiment with ways to build visibility and engagement in Hazelwood to increase awareness and participation in the program. Increase the number of AEU activities and posts about AEU on calendars and information resources implemented by other entities in the community like *The Homepage*. Be more inclusive by accommodating different accessibility needs when planning programs. Improve communication about what people can expect at the excursions and programs so that they can prepare to participate. Build in more time for reflection and feedback about AEU activities. Create an AEU "hotline," a phone number people can call to learn about upcoming activities.

SOON: Build the capacity of Hazelwood residents to implement and manage all communications about the program. Improve documentation of AEU activities.

EVENTUALLY: Create an archive of AEU activities, including a photo archive of excursions. Share knowledge about AEU with other communities who are creating their own resident-focused arts and culture programs locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally. Reach out to community arts programs like AEU to develop relationships and peer communication exchange.

WHY WE MADE THIS DECISION

Even though AEU has a large and loyal following, there are chances to grow the number of people who know about AEU and engage with the program within Greater Hazelwood. Certainly, some of the more robust and ongoing programs mentioned above have the ability to attract new AEU community members and deepen existing relationships. Experimenting with different communication methods will benefit the program. It may take a few years to find the right mix of word of mouth, hotlines, posters, newsletter announcements, flyers, social media, website updating, and door-to-door conversations. The different methods will likely enable many members of the AEU community to take on different communication roles. Some may want to focus on social media and creating a calendar for the website, while others may prefer creating flyers in the studio and handing them out to neighbors.

While we build awareness about AEU, we also need to focus our communication on listening and learning about people in our community. Creating opportunities to meet neighbors, hear about their interests and creative practices, and about what they are interested in will help us grow.

Creating an archive of photos of excursions and documenting all of the AEU activities has been mentioned several times over the years. An archive of AEU activities is a way to view changes in the Greater Hazelwood community. A photo archive will show children growing up, celebrate neighborhood family members who have passed away, remember neighbors who have moved, and mark when new people have started to participate. The neighborhood itself is physically changing, with many new developments on the horizon. An archive of our work would make it

possible to see the changes in the neighborhood, especially the built environment. For example, AEU has organized youth photography workshops where neighborhood places or features are explored. One example is a photography workshop of Mill 19 before development. These photographs were used to make screen prints and large drawings documenting the building. [The Greenway](#) is another example of a site that changes almost yearly due to development. Although we are not explicitly tracking its changes, they can be seen in the photos and videos of the events we have on the Greenway.

As more community members become involved, identifying people who want to participate in documenting and archiving our activities is needed, as well as opportunities to help them develop their archiving skills. One aspect of the photo archive that has been discussed several times is the ability for residents to access it and print photos of their families and friends, as well as contribute their own photos to the archive.

AEU is positioned to be a model for other communities who are seeking to create a resident-focused arts and culture program. This can be accomplished through a more robust AEU website, connecting with peers and colleagues, participating in written and conference forums to talk about the program, and being open about sharing information and resources.

In addition to sharing our work, we know it will be helpful to connect with others to learn about their practices. One way to accomplish this is to invite other artists and programs that focus on community arts and culture to ongoing conversations and peer exchanges. These do not need to be formal, like a conference. They can be informal get-togethers where we can talk about art and our work.



IDENTIFYING OUR VALUES

These values reflect the experiences of AEU community collaborators participating in the program over several years. The AEU community collaborators who participated in visioning sessions wrote sentences about what AEU believes in, tries to do, and embraces. They also wrote sentences about the

abilities and future of their community.

We developed these values together based on shared experiences and observations about AEU's most important characteristics.

Sentences with common concepts were combined to create the value statements.

This is a living document and we see the benefit of continuing this practice every few years. In addition, we will make time to reflect on AEU activities, our values, and our work together more frequently.

NOW: Seek feedback from community collaborators about opportunities to create time for reflection in our work. Consider opportunities like surveys and excursion journals to encourage feedback and reflection.

SOON: Create a "thank you note" committee so we can remember the people and organizations who have helped us and show our appreciation for their support.

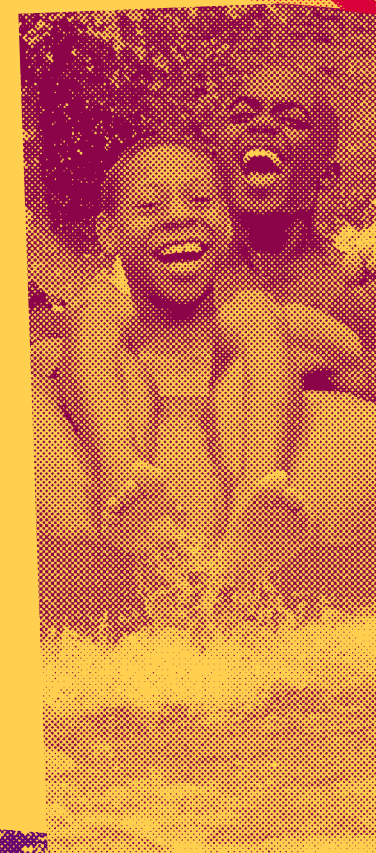
EVENTUALLY: Continue to develop strategy documents for AEU. Reflect on this document and create an updated version.

Making time for reflection is an important part of AEU's culture. AEU does not want to create an atmosphere that is always focused on the next thing without considering the effectiveness of our

programs, the impact of our work, and what can be changed. Reflection also offers the opportunity to recognize the short and long-term effects of different experiences, appreciate the contributions of community collaborators, and learn from the good and the challenging aspects of being together. Importantly, reflection is also a chance to reminisce and enjoy experiences again. Our monthly AEU meetings are a good opportunity to spend some time focused on the previous month's work. Creating this strategy was a way to reflect on our work and envision the future of AEU.

IF YOU ONLY HAVE TIME FOR BULLET POINTS, READ THESE:

- ▶ AEU is committed to the right of every person to access and enjoy the arts, culture, and creative expression.
- ▶ AEU is deeply loved and respected by residents and community leaders. While some changes are needed to help the program reach a fuller potential, there is no need for major changes in mission, programing, or focus.
- ▶ AEU will continue to create in the Greater Hazelwood community. We aspire to foster deeper engagement rather than have a wider geographic focus.
- ▶ AEU will identify a new fiscal sponsor by January 2022 and transition away from being housed at the Office of Public Art and Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council.
- ▶ An AEU studio space with either first floor access or an elevator is needed to fully serve the community and engage neighbors in studio activities.
- ▶ AEU will seek opportunities to build residents' capacities and interests in sharing in the ideation, implementation, and administration of the program.
- ▶ Sharing information about AEU and its activities will increase awareness of and participation in its activities by residents, and also offers other communities opportunities to learn about this successful program as a model.



CONTEXTUALIZING AEU

A MAP of GREATER HAZELWOOD



CREATING THIS STRATEGY

This strategy was created using the same framework that brought AEU to the top of community members' creative project lists in 2014 -

- *Invite as many voices as possible.*
- *Create time for reflection.*
- *Work at the pace right for us.*

The process to create a strategy for AEU began when the program assessment was completed by [Mary Navarro](#) in 2018. The assessment formally acknowledged what was already known: AEU is a successful community-based arts program that has the potential to positively impact the people who participate in the program for years to come. What should happen next?

This is the question that launched this strategy process in late 2020. Renee Piechocki was hired by the Office of Public Art to develop the planning process in collaboration with Edith Abeyta.

Originally, many community collaborators were invited to participate on a planning team and benchmarking trips were planned.

The Covid-19 pandemic forced changes to our process. A small strategy team was formed with Edith Abeyta, [Rachel Klipa](#), Renee Piechocki, and [Laura Zorch McDermitt](#). We developed a fluid process that could be implemented safely during the pandemic. Instead of in-person meetings, we conducted interviews over the phone with community collaborators. Additional feedback was sought through an anonymous survey of community leaders. The planning team identified and researched benchmarks.

After the benchmark research and reflecting on next steps, the planning team decided the best people to write the strategy for the future of AEU was the AEU neighborhood family. We shifted away from identifying an outside consultant, and embarked on a draft and review process combining the vision of community collaborators and the planning team's research. Starting in May, we created a schedule of review and discussion meetings for each section of this document. By August, we were meeting as a group to read sections aloud and edit together.

HOW OUR VALUES GUIDE US

Hazelwood is a neighborhood going through rapid change. New developments are being constructed in a place where there are long-standing, unmet basic needs for affordable housing, healthy food, more abundant community spaces, and educational resources.

AEU aspires to bring community voices to the table to lead, and participate in, discussions about their present situation and the upcoming years. As AEU tries to evolve in new ways for the future, we also acknowledge that we are part of creating the future in Hazelwood. It's important to AEU that we remain true to ourselves.

WE WILL USE THESE VALUE STATEMENTS TO:

- *Reflect on how we are working together.*
- *Evaluate opportunities and invitations to participate in the work of others.*
- *Make decisions about the types of programming and projects we create.*

VISION GUIDES

We appreciate the time and thoughtfulness of everyone who participated in creating the vision and strategy.

Edith Abeyta
Danielle Chaykowsky
Andrea Coleman-Betts
Homer Craig
Ursula Craig
Dasawn Gray
Joseph Hepner

Jessica Hofbaugh
Tameeka Jones-Cuff
Tevin Jordan-Blair
Rachel Klipa
Lutual Love
Sarah Love
Laura Zorch McDermit

Renee Piechocki
Cenythia "Nita" Strothers
Grace Taylor
Marce Nixon Washington
Tayshaun Watkins
Carolyn Williams
George Williams

Every day is like a new learning experience. We all put our heads together. Everyone participates. It's not just "my program," it's everyone's program. Everyone chips in. That is a really great feeling of the program. It's a collaboration.

—George Williams, AEU Community Collaborator

Photographs by: Edith Abeyta, Terry Clark, Dasawn Gray, Heather Mull, Renee Piechocki

Design by Leslie Stem

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