

Racial Equity Policy, Programs, and Practices

PRICE HILL WILL

We are a nonprofit community development corporation serving Cincinnati's Lower, East, and West Price Hill neighborhoods. Combined the Price Hills are Cincinnati's largest and most racially and ethnically diverse neighborhood. Our 36,000 residents are 48% White, 33% Black, 13% Hispanic, and 4% other. The majority of residents are struggling financially and 58% of households are in poverty.

Our mission is to create systemic change in Price Hill through an equitable, creative, and asset-based approach to physical, civic, social, and economic development that improves the quality of life for all people in our community. We started in 2004 as the culmination of a community-based appreciative inquiry process that engaged residents in a conversation about the future of Price Hill. From that process emerged an asset-based approach to community development that seeks to strengthen and build on the many resources of the neighborhood.

RACIAL EQUITY STATEMENT

We are committed to a life of reflection and evolution and to a generations-long struggle for racial equity in our broader community. Our community has been and is still affected by racism and patterns and practices that consistently disadvantage people of color as evidenced by redlining, disinvestment, unreliable and uneven delivery of public services, education disparities, and lack of generational wealth. We know that when our neighbors are left out of opportunities, we all suffer. We promote equity. This commitment starts within our organization, and we do that by implementing anti-racist practices and policies wherever possible and at all levels.

PRACTICES & POLICIES FOR RACIAL EQUITY

- Equitable Hiring Practices -

We aim to have our staff reflect the diversity of the neighborhood. Currently, 33% of our staff identify as Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Color (BIPOC), and we actively recruit and hire BIPOC individuals. We promote staff openings through diverse networks that include Black and Latinx communities. We value life and work experience in addition to formal education.

- Staff & Board Trainings -

Staff and Board trainings cover topics identified by leadership as key areas of growth including introduction to racial equity, racial equity in education, racism in housing development, implicit bias, violence & bullying, conflict resolution and de-escalation, bridge building techniques, and creating safer spaces.



- Price Hill Will Board of Directors -

Our Board utilizes a skills/experience matrix to recruit new members and aims to have our Board reflect the diversity of Price Hill. Currently, 33% of Board members identify as BIPOC. Also, as a community development corporation, it is important to us that more than half of our Board members live or own a business in Price Hill. Currently, 67% of Board members live or work in Price Hill.

- Fundraising & Gift Policy -

We plan to increase community financial investment in the organization, and by doing so, increase our level of direct accountability to our community. Our goal is to increase small donations from individual donors in Price Hill by 20% through 2025. We will not accept financial gifts that compromise the integrity, values, or mission of the organization.

- Communication & Language Policy -

We use inclusive language that describes our community with the words that our community uses. We do not use terms like underprivileged, at-risk, outreach, or uplift to describe our community, programs, or impact, as they are inaccurate, often racially coded, and at odds with our asset-based framework. Documents and information are shared in both English and Spanish whenever possible.

PROGRAMS

We employ a unique combination of arts, community engagement, affordable housing, and commercial corridor development programs to bolster the neighborhood's many assets, build equity, and improve the quality of life for residents of Price Hill. Our programs help residents, particularly residents with lower income or formal education levels, immigrants, and people of color build on their assets, gain skills, and share experiences.

- Community Engagement -

For centuries, voices from communities of color and low-income neighborhoods have been ignored or dismissed. To buffer against this systemic oppression, these communities have developed a high level of social capital and resilience. Our neighbors are the experts in the community and we are accountable to them.

We meet residents where they are, knowing not everyone has the time to attend community meetings, but this does not mean that they do not care for their neighbors or neighborhood. All of our activities are designed to allow residents to lead, grow skills, and build upon all the assets in the community. Each year we support over 250 events and projects that connect residents in a range of free activities from community art installations to public gardens and orchards, from fitness classes to safety walks, from community multi-use trails to do-it-yourself home repair workshops. These initiatives build leadership capacity, grow neighborhood connections, and create a greater sense of belonging.



- Homesteading -

Historic redlining and systemic housing discrimination supported by federal government incentives denied homeownership opportunities to Black and Brown families and is a root cause of the current wealth gap between White households and households of color. The 2008 foreclosure crisis and resulting flood of institutional investors have exacerbated these inequities. The homeownership rate for Price Hill is 35%, while the national average is 63%. Across Cincinnati, Black people are 41% of the population but own 29% of houses, compared to White people – who are 50% of the population and own 66% of houses. Latinos are the fastest-growing demographic in Cincinnati, but also face significant barriers to buying a home.

Our Homesteading program is an innovative approach to providing affordable homeownership to families in need. Low-income families who do not have access to conventional mortgages are provided with a safe home that needs a little work. Of the 16 families currently in homes, there are 79 family members (28 adults and 51 children). Participants are 63% Latinx, 32% Black, and 5% White. Over several years, they make improvements and purchase the home by making small affordable payments based on their income. Then they own their home outright, which provides a rapid equity growing opportunity and stability to their family and the neighborhood. Homesteading allows families to build generational wealth.

- MYCincinnati Youth Orchestra -

Access to quality arts education programs is cost prohibitive and widens the achievement gap between low-income students and their peers. One third of our neighbors - 12,000 residents - are under the age of 18. There are many children in Price Hill who want to learn an instrument but cannot because of the cost, cultural barriers, or cuts in school music programs.

MYCincinnati uses ensemble-based music as a tool for youth development by providing children in Price Hill with access to free, daily, intense, high-quality music education. MYCincinnati is comprised of 150 youth between the ages of 7-18 who either live or attend school in Price Hill. 85% of students are from low-income households. 54% of students are Latinx, 25% are Black, 13% are White, and 8% are mixed race. The focus of the program is ensemble-based music making, where students learn to make art together, using the orchestra to serve as a model for civic society, in which people with different views, capabilities, and responsibilities all work together towards a common goal. MYCincinnati's Core Values outline how the program is promoting racial equity through music. Our students enjoy a dignified recently renovated space to practice at the MYCincinnati Firehouse. Our students also benefit from other services such as tutoring.



- Commercial Corridor Development -

Historic redlining discouraged economic investment in Black and Brown neighborhoods, denied loans to businesses operating in those areas, and caused uneven deployment of City services, hindering the growth of Price Hill's commercial corridors. Our commercial corridor initiative supports economic development by working with residents, local governments, and businesses to create and implement neighborhood revitalization plans. We work to bring as much capital to Price Hill as we can. BIPOC-led and locally owned businesses are provided tools, resources, and other support in overcoming obstacles to grow their business.

In Lower Price Hill we acquired and renovated vacant buildings to spark investment in the historic State Avenue neighborhood business district. Grants funded the acquisition and renovation of the two commercial spaces which are leased at below market rate. Meiser's Fresh Grocery & Deli is run by Your Store of The Queen City to meet our neighbors' need for affordable healthy food. Next door, Outerspace is a shared art studio and gathering space for adults who wanted an intentional space to meet and work with their neighbors. Meiser's and Outerspace both support BIPOC and women-led businesses in addition to providing a desperately needed community space for events and activities.

Our Warsaw Avenue Creative Campus is a place where youth and families learn and grow together via arts and creative pursuits in the heart of East Price Hill. The objective of the Creative Campus is to equitably develop Warsaw Avenue into a creative, mixed-used business corridor. Once completed, we will have revitalized nine properties into eight commercial spaces, 22 affordable housing units, and one performance center. We are using an equitable recruitment strategy to select tenants for the spaces and hope to set the tone for future development along Warsaw Avenue.

The renovation of the historic Price Hill Masonic Lodge envisioned a new home for arts in Price Hill that would be open and accessible to everyone in the community. The new name for the building, ARCO, combines the words 'arts' and 'community' to remind everyone that these are intertwined. We use a sliding scale leasing schedule to keep ARCO affordable while bringing in enough funds to cover debt, utilities, and maintenance. Resident-led groups can schedule use of the space for free and non-profits and Price Hill residents receive a very affordable rental rate. Free, family-friendly monthly events provide a space to celebrate diversity, art, and explore culturally significant themes.

