

Zachary L. Brodt, Jeffrey D. Werst, and Ethan P. Pullman

Discovering Pittsburgh

Bridging neighborhoods



Pittsburgh Skyline, by Bobak Ha'Eri, licensed under CC BY-SA 2.5.

The recent collapse of the Fern Hollow bridge in Pittsburgh's Frick Park might cause a snicker or two, but Pittsburgh bridges are iconic, and icons don't crumble easily. Pittsburgh bridges have historically connected its greatly diverse neighborhoods and communities.

Affectionately known as the "City of Bridges," Pittsburgh boasts 1,500 bridges, in Allegheny County alone, and is home to the Three Sisters, the only three identical self-anchor bridges in the world: The Rachel Carson Bridge (aka the Ninth Street Bridge) and the Andy Warhol Bridge (or the Seventh Street Bridge) opened in 1926, followed by the Roberto Clemente Bridge (or the Sixth Street Bridge), which opened in 1928.¹

Designated as one of the country's most livable cities, Pittsburgh has plenty to offer visitors. From history to art, food, and more, there is something for everyone. You may have already read about art and culture in our article in the October issue. In the next three issues, you will also learn about Pittsburgh's people, explore its mysteries, and read about its restaurants, too. This month, Zachary Brodt and Jeffrey Wrest showcase some of Pittsburgh's neighborhoods and their history.

—*Ethan P. Pullman, ACRL 2023 Local Arrangements Committee*

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A view of the Point in downtown Pittsburgh, by Zach Brodt, licensed under CC-BY-NC 2.0.

Three Rivers, 90 Neighborhoods: There's Something for Everyone in Pittsburgh—Zachary L. Brodt and Jeffrey D. Werst

Won't you be my neighbor? was an appropriate tagline for Pittsburgh's Mr. Rogers. The city boasts 90 distinct neighborhoods encircling the confluence of the Allegheny, Monongahela, and Ohio Rivers, each with its own personality, hidden treasures, and history. While it is impossible to provide an overview of every neighborhood in the city, we have selected a few that are easily accessible and have attractions that might appeal to ACRL 2023 attendees.

Downtown (or “Dahntahn” in Pittsburghese)

Pittsburgh's downtown,² also known as the Golden Triangle or the Central Business District, is the administrative and business heart of the city. It was here in 1754 that the French constructed Fort Duquesne at The Point, where the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers meet to form the Ohio River. During the French and Indian War, the British replaced this fort with Fort Pitt³ in 1759, which propelled extensive European development of the area and the modern city. Today, the outline of both forts can be found at Point State Park,⁴ where you can enjoy the meeting of the rivers and various views of the city's skyline. Eighteen of the city's 446 bridges connect to downtown, including those crossing to the nearby North Shore and South Shore.

The Central Business District, as the name implies, contains most of the city's high rises and skyscrapers, where companies like U.S. Steel and PNC Financial Services have their headquarters. Here, you can also find the Cultural District,⁵ where you can catch a show at Heinz Hall or the Benedum Center.

Some consider “downtown” to also include the adjacent neighborhoods of the Strip District, Uptown, and sometimes the Hill District neighborhoods of Crawford-Roberts, Bedford Dwellings, Middle Hill, and Terrace Village. However, these are independent neighbor-

hoods, each with their own history and charm. Uptown, or the Bluff, is home to Duquesne University. The Strip District is a favorite of shoppers and foodies, especially on weekends. The Hill District⁶ is the heart of Black Pittsburgh and a major cultural and jazz center that many recognize today from the works of local playwright August Wilson.

North Side

Across the Allegheny River from downtown, Pittsburgh's North Side⁷ contains several interesting features including the city's baseball and football stadiums.

Art lovers will want to visit the Andy Warhol Museum,⁸ which is the largest museum in North America dedicated to a single artist. In this neighborhood, you'll also find The Mattress Factory,⁹ a contemporary art museum, and the outdoor art studio Randyland.¹⁰ Complementing the art scene is the Mexican War Streets Historic District,¹¹ which consists of row houses dating from the late 1840s.

Prior to 1907, the North Side was its own thriving city. Andrew Carnegie grew up in Allegheny, after immigrating from Scotland. Here Carnegie benefited from the private library of neighbor James Anderson, where he borrowed books on American history to learn about his new home. As a result, he became interested in libraries. It is no

surprise, then, that Carnegie placed his second American library in his old neighborhood in 1890.¹² In addition to books, the Allegheny library contained a large pipe organ inside its music hall, which was the first to be called Carnegie Hall. The building was designed by the same firm who designed the Library of Congress and meant to replicate the style of H. H. Richardson's famous Allegheny County Courthouse in downtown Pittsburgh.



The Homestead Branch of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, by Zach Brodt, licensed under CC-BY-NC 2.0.

Oakland and the East End

East of downtown and the Hill District is Oakland, the center of academia in Pittsburgh.¹³ Oakland is home to the University of Pittsburgh, Carnegie Mellon University, and Carlow University. While students and scholars frequent this neighborhood, anyone can enjoy the architecture of these campuses, including Pitt's towering Cathedral of Learning and its Nationality Rooms.¹⁴ Along with these academic institutions, two features of Oakland directly contributed to the neighborhood becoming Pittsburgh's civic center at the turn of the 20th century: Schenley Park¹⁵ and the Carnegie Institute. Donated to the city in 1889 by heiress Mary Croghan Schenley, the park includes the Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens,¹⁶ a golf course, footpaths, a lake, and more. Situated at the entrance to the park, you'll find, the Carnegie Institute, which consists of the largest of the Carnegie Free



The University of Pittsburgh's Cathedral of Learning on the Oakland Campus, by Zach Brodt, licensed under CC-BY-NC 2.0.

Libraries,¹⁷ the Carnegie Music Hall, the Carnegie Museum of Art (CMOA), and the Carnegie Museum of Natural History.¹⁸ Together, these landmarks served as the epicenter of Pittsburgh leisure at the turn of the 20th century and are lasting reminders of the city's foray into the City Beautiful Movement.¹⁹

Oakland also serves as one of the main thoroughfares from points west to the East End, which is the general term for all the neighborhoods east of downtown (and sometimes Oakland too, depending on who you ask). Nearby Shadyside is a popular neighborhood for graduate students, but its quieter streets are lined with mansions built during the height of the steel industry and home to Chatham University. North of Oakland and Shadyside is Pittsburgh's own Little Italy, Bloomfield. Further north, Bloomfield gives way to Lawrenceville, an area popular with young professionals and full of bars and restaurants. The eastern bus-

way in the Point Breeze neighborhood marks the end of the official city limits, but those interested in Pittsburgh's past will want to visit Clayton,²⁰ the former mansion of coal and steel tycoon Henry Clay Frick.

Nestled between these communities are Squirrel Hill North and South, two massive neighborhoods that contain over a thousand acres of parkland, including Schenley Park and Frick Park,²¹ featuring the popular Blue Slide Playground, which serves the students and families that call the East End home. Squirrel Hill is also the heart of Pittsburgh's Jewish community and is well known for its shopping and restaurants.

South Side and Mount Washington

While many of Oakland's academics and students call the East End home, more still live in the southern neighborhoods separated from the rest of the city by the Monongahela River: the South Side and Mount Washington. The river's flat banks used to house thousands of the area's steelworkers, and even a steel mill, but now include popular destinations for those looking to enjoy Pittsburgh's nightlife. The land quickly rises with Mount Washington, which locals use to describe both the neighborhood and general area. Two historic inclines²² from the South Shore's Station Square shopping center²³ can take you to the top of Mount Washington²⁴ for a view of the city that is a favorite for wedding proposals.

Mill Towns

Outside of Pittsburgh proper, mill towns were some of the most active and innovative areas of the region. While most of the area's famous steel mills have been demolished over the last

several decades, vestiges of their presence can still be found along the banks of the Monongahela and Ohio Rivers. Compact housing, a variety of churches, and memorials, particularly speak to the lives of the tens of thousands of steelworkers who toiled and resided in these towns. That said, grander institutions have also survived the deindustrialization of communities that once thrived there: it was here that Andrew Carnegie developed some of his earliest free libraries in the United States.

At Carnegie's first steel mill, the Edgar Thomson Works in Braddock, he initially created a reading room for the benefit of his employees. After establishing a library at his birthplace of Dunfermline, Scotland, in 1881, Carnegie next sought to expand this small room in Braddock into its own complete library. Dedicated in March 1889, the Braddock Free Library²⁵ was Carnegie's first in the United States. In addition to a lending library, the building would later include a music hall, gymnasium, pool, and bathhouse. Designed to resemble a mansion, the library gave the sense that the benefactor was inviting visitors into his home and set the standard for future mill town Carnegie libraries. The Braddock Library still stands today near the only large steel mill remaining in the region, the Edgar Thomson Works.

Another impressive Carnegie Library can be found in nearby Homestead,²⁶ the site of the infamous 1892 strike that pitted the townspeople against guards from the Pinkerton Detective Agency. The 1898 library served as a peace offering to the steelworkers from Carnegie, whose reputation was damaged during the strike, but by placing it high above the mill the building was also a message that Carnegie dominated life in Homestead. Like its counterpart in Braddock, this library also featured a pool, gymnasium, and a music hall that is still in use today. The site of the former Homestead Steel Works has been repurposed into the Waterfront shopping center,²⁷ but the Rivers of Steel Heritage Corporation²⁸ maintains the mill's pump house as well as the Carrie blast furnaces across the river, two reminders of the region's once dominant steel production.

If you are new to Pittsburgh, traveling by car might be a frustrating experience, but don't let that stop you from experiencing Pittsburgh's rich cultures and unique neighborhoods. Walk the Burgh (including Free Pittsburgh Walking), Bike the Burgh, Segway the Burgh, or cruise down our rivers²⁹ are always good options. Of course, there's always Port Authority (Pittsburgh's bus transit),³⁰ taxis, and ride share too.

So go on! Let Pittsburgh's bridges welcome you to its neighborhoods, experience its rich cultures, appreciate its unique offerings, and celebrate its diversity. 🍷

Notes

1. <https://www.alleghenycounty.us/public-works/sister-bridges-history.aspx>
2. <https://downtownpittsburgh.com/visit/>
3. <https://www.heinzhistorycenter.org/fort-pitt/>
4. <https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks/FindAPark/PointStatePark/Pages/default.aspx>
5. <https://culturaldistrict.org/>
6. https://www.carnegielibrary.org/clp_location/hill-district/
7. <https://www.visitpittsburgh.com/neighborhoods/north-shore-north-side/>
8. <https://www.warhol.org/>
9. <https://mattress.org/>
10. <https://www.discovertheburgh.com/randyland/>

11. <http://www.mexicanwarstreets.org/>
12. <https://museumlabor.org/explore/photos-videos/>
13. <https://www.visitpittsburgh.com/neighborhoods/oakland/>
14. <https://www.nationalityrooms.pitt.edu/>
15. <https://pittsburghparks.org/explore-your-parks/regional-parks/schenley-park/>
16. <https://www.phipps.conservatory.org/>
17. https://www.carnegielibrary.org/clp_location/main-oakland/
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22. <https://www.visitpittsburgh.com/blog/how-to-ride-the-pittsburgh-inclines/>
23. <https://www.stationsquare.com/>
24. <https://www.visitpittsburgh.com/neighborhoods/mt-washington/>
25. <http://braddockcarnegielibrary.org/our-histories>
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27. <https://www.waterfrontpgh.com/>
28. <https://riversofsteel.com/>
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30. <https://www.portauthority.org/>