

April 18, 2016, for immediate release

August Wilson Week, April 25-30: Restoration of the August Wilson House advances with Press Conference and Block Party during week-long celebration of his 71st birthday

* **Press Conference**, Saturday, April 30, 10:30-11:30 a.m., August Wilson Room, Carnegie Library, Hill District Branch, 2177 Centre Avenue. Local and City leaders will describe what August Wilson means to our community. Then the August Wilson House Project will display architectural plans for its restoration and use as a community arts center and site of cultural tourism, and announce a first-ever production of an August Wilson play in the backyard.

* **Block Party**: Say Happy Birthday and celebrate August Wilson on Saturday, April 30, 12-3 p.m., in front of his childhood home, 1727 Bedford Ave. Come for varied performances, food trucks, celebrities, disc jockey, informational kiosk, children's activities, vendors, public art, park tour and more! Admission free and open to all.

* **A reading of his play, *Jitney***, will mark the actual birthday, April 27, 7 pm, at the August Wilson Center; doors open at 6 pm; birthday cake for all. Cast features Sala Udin (veteran of the play's 1982 premiere), Reggie Howze and screen actor Lamman Rucker (soap operas, Tyler Perry films). Free; details at pghplaywrights.com.

* **On Monday**, April 25, at August Wilson Center, "August Wilson: The Ground on Which I Stand" WQED/PBS (6:30 pm), followed by a panel discussion (8 pm) on minority opportunity in filming his 10-play Pittsburgh Cycle.

The August Wilson House is a project of the Daisy Wilson Artist Community, Inc., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit named for his beloved mother, whose mission is to promote the literary and social legacy of August Wilson through the restoration of his boyhood home. As a place to explore the cultural narrative of his plays through seminars, readings, receptions, exhibits and performances, the August Wilson House will encourage and support literature, music and the fine arts through personalized educational and artistic activities that enrich the Hill District and the city.

The house consists of several sections variously referred to in the plays. The rear wing, where Daisy Wilson raised her six children in two rooms, later four, dates back to the 1840s. The renovations will follow the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation, meaning the exterior will be restored to its appearance in 1945-58, when Wilson lived there for his first 13 years.

Starting May 1, using grants from the Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission, the Urban Redevelopment Authority and a number of philanthropies and individuals, the severely deteriorated masonry exterior will be restored brick by brick. This structural stabilization phase is expected to be completed by the end

of summer. The restoration of the historic storefront of Bella's Market will follow the core principles of engaging young construction talent trained through Steve Shelton's Pittsburgh Trade Institute.

With the exterior essentially complete later this year, we will formally begin our capital campaign, allowing us to start on interior renovations. The project has been planned in phases, beginning with the occupancy of the former Bella's Market, which will become a gallery and intimate meeting and performance space.

The major public fund-raising campaign will seek the substantial funds needed to complete the interior of the House, including the family's original apartment, which will become a guest-house for Visiting August Wilson Artists (literary, musical or visual), appointed in collaboration with Pittsburgh universities. The upper floors of 1727 Bedford above Bella's Market will provide four guestrooms.

Known as the Butera House, the adjacent 1725 Bedford Avenue helps set the cultural context of the Hill during August Wilson's childhood. Soon to be demolished, its existing façade elements will be preserved and used to rebuild the façade in its original design. State of the art studio spaces in this future addition will provide a home for small-scale seminars, readings, exhibits and spoken word gatherings.

Along with the guest rooms and Daisy Wilson Apartment for visiting scholars, artists or performers, the historic landmark will be a living tribute to the great artist it nurtured. As August Wilson said, *"My plays insist that we should not forget or toss away our history."*

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Facebook: Daisy Wilson Artist Community
Twitter: @AugustWilsonHSE, #HappyBirthdayAugustWilson, #AWHouse
Eventbrite and Facebook: Happy Birthday August Wilson Block Party
Website: under reorganization to reflect rush of recent activity