

Urban Innovation21 Awards \$120,000 in Grants to Winners of 2016 Inclusive Innovation Community-based Business Grant Competition
--Non-Profit Focuses Awards on Revitalization of Homewood and Hill District Neighborhoods

Since 2012, Urban Innovation21 has recognized the strong entrepreneurial spirit in the Hill District and Homewood communities by hosting a Small Business Grant Competition. To date, \$500,000 in grants have been awarded to 68 businesses in those communities. In addition to grants, Urban Innovation21 has provided these companies with a wide array of business support to help them grow their businesses. The non-profit works with many community-based entrepreneurs each year to create a cluster of successful businesses owned by residents of underserved communities.

Urban Innovation21's president and CEO, William Generett Jr., believes that connecting the region's success to economically struggling communities will ultimately provide wealth opportunities for minorities, women and resident-owned businesses. "This important grant competition propels business creation and growth in neighborhoods who will benefit greatly from the boost."

Six Hill District's businesses won: [Living Juicy](#), ANS Billing, and Errands Made Easy existed previously while [TDC Contracting](#), Communion LLC, and [TDS Productions](#) entered as start-up companies.

Nine businesses represented Homewood: [Roland Ford Productions](#), [The Professional Barber Institute](#), [Knotzland](#), [Strong's Cleaners](#), and [Big Lulu's Trucking](#) were pre-existing and [Drafting Dreams](#), [Natural Choice](#), [Jazmeen Style](#), and Luminaria Productions (film producers and studios) were start-ups. Past grant winners are listed on [Urban Innovation21's web site](#).

Thomas M. Freyvogel, an attorney at the law firm Reed Smith and one of the judging committee members, stated "the field of competitors seems to improve every year. I was very impressed with the group of competing companies, who reflect a diverse talent pool of ambitious entrepreneurs in Homewood and the Hill District. The grant competition and Urban Innovation21's program in general gives these entrepreneurs a well-deserved opportunity for both monetary support and professional guidance while either launching their new business or expanding their current one.

The grant competition was made possible with support from the Richard King Mellon Foundation and UPMC Health Plan. Awards ranges from \$5,000 to \$10,000.

An informal reception will take place on Tuesday, February 28 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Energy Innovation Center, 1435 Bedford Avenue. Grant winners and members of judging committee are invited to attend.

[About Urban Innovation21](#)

Urban Innovation21 is a unique public-private partnership that is supporting the growth of entrepreneurship in our region's innovation economy and connecting that growth to underserved communities and the residents who live in those communities. Urban Innovation21 believes that an inclusive innovation economy is key to increasing regional competitiveness and sustainability. It is one of the first US-based organizations to work under the "inclusive innovation" paradigm.