

NICHIHA CASE STUDY

Custom-Hued Nichiha Panels Help Reinvigorate Historic Pittsburgh Neighborhood

Multi-Family Exterior Gives a Nod to Cultural Roots

Pittsburgh's Hill District, a collection of historically Black neighborhoods, is one of the steel city's most storied areas. The region has roots that are more than 200 years old and has served as a major cultural hub for jazz music. It is also the birthplace of the nation's first ambulance service, the Freedom House Ambulance Service.

Starting in the middle of the 20th century, a variety of factors contributed to urban blight and deterioration within the Hill District. Redevelopment efforts began in earnest in the 1990s and continue today.

One of the latest initiatives is a 40,000-square foot, 40-unit multifamily building adjacent to a hugely influential property in the district.

And Nichiha was there to be a part of it.

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PROJECT DETAILS

LOCATION

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

PRODUCTS

[Illumination](#) - Custom Color

TIMELINE

June 2021–May 2023

TYPE

Multifamily

CHALLENGE

Find an affordable, long-lasting cladding solution that would allow architects and designers to incorporate the Hill District's historic culture into the façade of the New Granada Square Apartments.

SOLUTION

Nichiha's Illumination panels not only offered custom colors for the building's African-inspired designs, but it achieved the aesthetic while also offering high-performance protection for residents.

RESULTS

Residents of the New Granada Square Apartments can live in an affordable building that pays tribute to the Hill District's legacy, but also stands tall against Mother Nature.

“The colors and designs for the New Granada Square Apartments were also inspired by kente cloth woven from threads of silk and cotton by the artisans of Ghana, West Africa”

CHARLOTTE KA, DESIGNER

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New Granada Square: Marrying the Past, Present

The Hill Community Development Corporation (Hill CDC) led the recent effort to put the Hill District back on the map. Hill CDC hired Pittsburgh-based [Perfido Weiskopf Wagstaff + Goettel](#) architects (PWWG) to design the New Granada Square apartments, a five-story, multifamily and commercial use building in the heart of the Hill District. The development would be only three doors down from the New Granada Theater. In the first half of the 20th century, major jazz legends such as Ella Fitzgerald, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, and Cab Calloway performed at the theater. A historic location, the property had fallen into disarray.

Based on its proximity to a property that is listed on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places, the New Granada Square apartments sought to infuse the district’s African roots into the façade’s contemporary looks—a design hurdle that was easily overcome thanks to Nichiha’s custom color abilities.

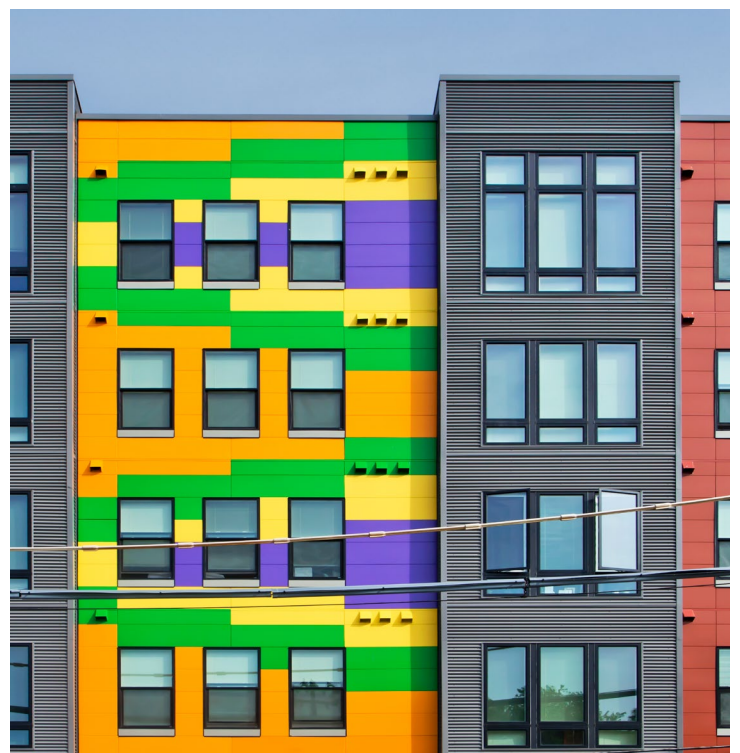
“The colors and designs for the New Granada Square Apartments were also inspired by kente cloth woven from threads of silk and cotton by the artisans of Ghana, West Africa,” said designer Charlotte Ka in an interview with Pittsburgh’s [WTAE-TV](#). “They created symbolic colors and patterns from these threads.”



Designers employed [Nichiha’s Color Xpressions](#) system when it came time to specify exterior cladding to achieve the aesthetic vision. The [Illumination](#) panels used on the New Granada Square Apartments are just one of several Nichiha products that are available in custom colors without minimum quantities or additional cost. It was a perfect fit to create a contemporary aesthetic that could specifically use color as a tribute to the district’s history.

“It’s a really nice product that offers great flexibility,” said Jeremy Perchinsky, architectural sales manager at Nichiha. “But it was also budget conscious to help with the affordable housing.”

Six custom hues fostered a dynamic, contemporary design. Red, yellow, rust, mystical grape, orange sky, and peppermint-colored Illumination panels mimicked traditional kente cloth patterns for an eye-catching façade.



“The New Granada is arguably the most important development the Hill District has seen”

MARIMBA MILLIONES, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF HILL CDC

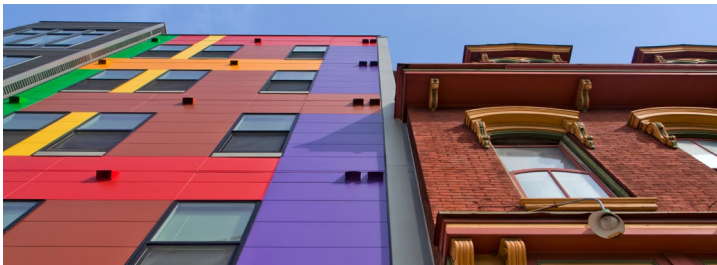
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Attainable, Premium Looks

From the start of construction in June 2021, the New Granada Square Apartments were designed with financial accessibility in mind. For decades, the Hill District had been one of the city’s most impoverished neighborhoods. The district simply could not afford gentrification that can come from high-priced renovated apartments.

This new development offers four stories of affordable housing for income-qualifying households. On the building’s ground level sits opportunities for commercial spaces to support local businesses with priority given to artists. The four stories above the ground floor consist of 40 one- and two-bedroom units for eligible families.

Unlike many of the blighted buildings of the Hill District’s past, the New Granada Square Apartments are poised to last as long as possible. The investment in high-quality housing marks a significant step forward for the city and reflects its commitment to restoring the Hill District as one of the area’s most eclectic cultural hubs.



From the start, stakeholders took the investment in the New Granada Square seriously. A mixture of tax credits and investments amounted to more than \$46 million in total potential funding for the area’s redevelopment, per the [Hill CDC](#).

“The historic New Granada is arguably the most important development that the Hill District has seen,” Marimba Milliones, president and CEO of Hill Community Development Corporation, said to [WTAE](#). “It’s going to bring jobs, it’s going to bring culture and put it front and center, not just for the Hill District but for the entire region.”

This commitment reflects in the material choices thanks in part to Nichiha’s impressive durability. Made of resilient fiber cement and engineered with an integrated rainscreen, Illumination panels are among the toughest building envelope offerings on the market. The product’s ability to be installed quickly and simply helped the project move along without delay.

These were vital value propositions for both the city and the building’s residents. The cladding requires less maintenance than traditional materials, and it is poised to better weather Pittsburgh’s variable climate, which can deliver intense heat and humidity in the summer and frigid temperatures and snow in the winter.

The New Granada Square Apartments opened to residents in 2023.

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Nichiha USA, Inc., a subsidiary of Nichiha Corporation, was established 1998 and is headquartered in Johns Creek, GA. Nichiha Corporation, an international leader in fiber cement technology for more than 35 years, has 13 plants worldwide and markets distinct patterns of fiber cement siding products in the U.S. In 2007, Nichiha opened its first U.S. manufacturing plant in Macon, GA, responding to an increase in demand for fiber cement products in the Southeast market. For more information, call 1.86.NICHIHA1 or visit [www.nichiha.com](#).

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