

April 2024

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PITTSBURGH  
**MERCY**  
A HERITAGE OF HOPE

## Welcome Home!



### **Phase 1 of major affordable housing development opens in Uptown.**

Twenty-six women have a new home at Bethlehem Haven's 1410 Fifth Avenue location in Pittsburgh's Uptown neighborhood. A homecoming celebration and ribbon-cutting ceremony on April 12 announced the opening of the restored and renovated facility that promotes healing and moves residents toward self-sufficiency.

The \$4.2 million investment and year-long preservation was made possible by a dedicated team of funders, consultants, and contractors—including McAuley Ministries, Eden Hall Foundation, Henry Hillman Foundation, ACTION-Housing, Mosites Construction Company, LGA Partners, SIGAL Development Services, Montague Design, and Anderson Interiors.

## A place of safety with 24/7 support

1410 Fifth Avenue is a therapeutic supportive housing program for women and gender non-conforming people who have experienced long-term housing instability due to physical and behavioral health challenges, poverty, and generational trauma.

- 24/7 comprehensive onsite support and care management, with physical, behavioral, and mental health services provided by Pittsburgh Mercy.
- Approximately half of the residents are age 50 or older, and nearly one-third have lived there for 10+ years.
- Additional services include permanent housing navigation, workforce development, access to benefits, financial well-being education, and life skills.
- The goal is to empower residents to make the journey to affordable permanent housing and self-sufficiency.

## A historic building restored and transformed

The 1902 four-story Classical Revival building was originally the Merchant Savings & Trust Company. Decades later, it became Miryam's, Pittsburgh's first shelter and daytime drop-in engagement center for women with mental health disorders and experiencing chronic homelessness.

Just five blocks away, Bethlehem Haven served the same population, and in 2007, it merged with Miryam's and acquired the 1410 Fifth Avenue building. In 2016, Bethlehem Haven became a wholly owned subsidiary of Pittsburgh Mercy, further expanding Pittsburgh Mercy's homeless services and the capacity of both organizations to care for the region's most vulnerable.

The building's renovation began in March 2023 with preservation of important architectural and artistic assets, including the brick and stone façade and the colorful, four-story mural on its east-facing side. Dubbed "Urban Paradise," the artwork was commissioned by the Sprout Public Art Fund and created in 2006 by Pittsburgh artist Gregg Valley in collaboration with those who live, work, and play in Uptown.

The building's interior was transformed into a comfortable home that provides an enhanced quality of life. The former dormitory-style shared bedrooms were converted to fully furnished single-room units, giving each woman greater dignity and privacy. Residents share lounges, kitchenettes, laundry facilities, a community dining room, and a new large gathering space for socialization and educational opportunities. The women were engaged in every step of the project, informing important decisions on colors and selecting their own bedroom furnishings.

Major structural improvements include new mechanical, plumbing, electrical, and HVAC systems; a new roof and windows; French doors to allow more natural light; and a new elevator to improve accessibility.

## A true collaboration

"This project could not have been accomplished by any one organization alone," said **Tony Beltran**, president and CEO of Pittsburgh Mercy. "The progress we're making in Uptown is a testament to all that we, as a caring community, can accomplish when we bring together an amazing group of community partners who share a common vision and work collaboratively to create meaningful solutions that benefit the most vulnerable in our community. To our partners, board members, elected leaders, funders, the Sisters of Mercy, and the Uptown and Hill District communities—thank you. To those who call Bethlehem Haven home—welcome home."

Contributions from generous private individuals and corporate donors, an October 2023 gala, and a special fundraising campaign called "A Room of Her Own" helped underwrite



the cost of the renovation. Visit [our website](#) to learn more, including how you can support this important project.

## Mike and Lacy Lu: Together forever

It's been quite a journey for this committed pair. Mike and Lacy Lu—a man and his canine best friend—have been at Second Avenue Commons since last fall, first at the overflow shelter, then at the primary shelter. Because Second Avenue Commons allows pets, Mike didn't have to choose between accessing shelter services and staying with his trusted companion.

Mike purchased the Labrador/Rhodesian ridgeback mix as a puppy at PetSmart for “the best \$150 I ever spent.” Fifteen years later, through life's ups and downs, Lacy Lu is still at Mike's side. “She's family,” said Mike.

As the years passed, Lacy Lu's mobility gradually declined, leaving her unable to walk without pain. Fortunately, through the Snee-Reinhardt Charitable Foundation's support, Pittsburgh Mercy was able to purchase a pet wagon that transformed her quality of life. Before the wagon, going outside was a painful struggle; now, trips are easier and more enjoyable. “It's made a big difference for her legs,” Mike said. “She's happier, for sure.”

With help from Pittsburgh Mercy staff, Mike is now waiting for his SSI application to be processed. Once approved, he hopes to find a small, ground-floor apartment that is dog- and wagon-friendly—a forever home where he and Lacy Lu can look forward to spending the rest of their lives together.



**A Special Treat at Second Avenue Commons!**

On Saturday, April 20, a food truck arrived at Second Avenue Commons to offer a delicious lunch to all guests and colleagues. The generous treat was provided by an anonymous donor who chose to spend his birthday helping those in need. In addition to the meal, guests received care packages, games, and crafts—making for a truly special day indeed. Thanks to everyone who supports this important mission!



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