



Joshua Franses

# OPEN UP TO HIDDEN NEIGHBORS

> **Majestic Lane**

DEPUTY CHIEF OF NEIGHBORHOOD EMPOWERMENT,  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR, CITY OF PITTSBURGH

**M**ayor Peduto created our office to identify low- and moderate-income neighborhoods and increase their quality of life. I do this work because I believe the city has turned a corner to become a city for all, with a new level of coordination and shared vision. And that excites me.

Mine is a place-based perspective. But we don't grow places without growing people. So we're putting them at the center of our process. Pittsburgh has been talking about the four P's: people, planet, place and performance. But there's a fifth P: possibility. That is the belief in our ability to become an inclusive city, to achieve success, and to enable our children to be successful. Now our goal is that every child in each of Pittsburgh's 90 neighborhoods sees himself or herself reflected in the city and shares the same feeling of wonder.

Pittsburgh has survived difficult times but has not always been open to change. It reminds me of growing up in Philadelphia: We lived near other people, but we didn't live in the same place. That's changing in Pittsburgh. We're opening up to our hidden neighbors, like African Americans in Northview Heights, Latinos in Beechview and newer Pittsburghers like the Bhutanese.

I recently attended an event hosted by Young Black Pittsburgh and community leaders. It wasn't about preaching one point of view. Instead, the gathering said, "We want to connect. We really want to get to know each other." I've seen black elected officials meeting with the West End community—even though they don't represent those folks, they sincerely want to hear about their concerns and create that sense of "we."

This is a moment of change, and we're seizing it.

— Interviewed by Christine O'Toole