**ACTION-Housing**: Penn Mathilda

*Equity by design. When development partners ACTION-Housing and the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation (BGC) open Penn Mathilda apartments, on Penn Avenue in Garfield, the 39 units will challenge the notion of what affordable housing can look like. Handcrafted pendant lights, designed and blown by Pittsburgh glassmakers, will illuminate each unit’s kitchen.*

When Lena Andrews, Planning and Development Officer at ACTION-Housing, a nonprofit affordable housing developer, began to consider the Penn Mathilda project, it made sense to her to collaborate with the Pittsburgh Glass Center (PGC) to source a craft element. "The project is right at the gateway of the Penn Avenue arts corridor — and the PGC is the other bookend of the whole district."

Nationally, affordable housing design has shifted toward well-designed, well-built projects, as affordable housing is increasingly being mixed among middle-class homes. ACTION-Housing has led this approach in Pittsburgh, hoping to change what Andrews calls "preconceived notions about affordable housing — and what it's supposed to look like."

ACTION-Housing and the PGC identified handcrafted glass pendant lights — pairs and trios of which will hang over kitchen islands — as an opportunity to both support neighborhood makers and achieve equity through design. "It is important to show that anyone can have something beautiful in their home," says Andrews.

A team of glassblowers, based at the PGC, is currently working to fill the order. The team is on schedule and on budget — critical factors for a nonprofit developer working with the tightest of margins.

Penn Mathilda residents will include veterans and low-income individuals from within and around Garfield, all of whom can expect to have something truly beautiful — and Pittsburgh-made — in their new homes.

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**The Craft Business Accelerator** localizes the positive economic impact of real estate developments by supporting creative relationships between craft businesses and developers, architects, and designers. Bridgewater also offers craft businesses the working capital, business education, and affordable space needed to grow.

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— Lena Andrews,
Planning and Development Officer,
ACTION-Housing