

# Project Profile



## Location:

7443 Thomas Boulevard  
Pittsburgh, PA

## County:

Allegheny

## Description:

Business expansion loan

## Total Project Cost:

\$2,375,000



## ASCEND Point Breeze

### People:

ASCEND Climbing's founders never forgot their roots. Alex Bernstein, Aaron Gilmore and Paul Guarino met at The Climbing Wall, a pioneering bouldering gym opened in 1992 in Pittsburgh's East End. Even as they opened ASCEND in the South Side, and then bought a gym in Youngstown, the three thought often of the East End. As ASCEND rebounded from the pandemic, Alex reached out to The Climbing Wall's owners, and learned that they were open to sunsetting that business. Within a few city blocks of The Climbing Wall is the new Rockwell Park development. A plan emerged, Alex says, "to literally adopt and take over the memberships for the folks that are currently members of The Climbing Wall" — but ultimately to do much more.

### Progress:

The Progress Fund and Enterprise Bank funded ASCEND's first and second locations. This time, the lenders agreed to split \$1.7 million in financing and tapped a Small Business Administration program.

### Impact:

ASCEND's new location brings 40' high rope climbing walls to Pittsburgh and expands opportunities for everything from advanced bouldering to paraclimbing. The trio is dedicated to serving all of the East End, and their Equity and Outreach Department has developed programs to encourage diversity in their membership. Climbing creates "a beneficial community anybody can be a part of," says Paul. "It's a healthy community, focused on fitness, wellbeing and connectedness."

The Progress Fund is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

