

P. MICHAEL STURLA, CHAIRMAN  
414 MAIN CAPITOL BUILDING  
P.O. BOX 202096  
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17120-2096  
(717) 787-3555  
FAX: (717) 705-1923



HOUSE DEMOCRATIC POLICY COMMITTEE

WEBSITE: [www.pahouse.com/policycommittee](http://www.pahouse.com/policycommittee)  
EMAIL: [policy@pahouse.net](mailto:policy@pahouse.net)  
Twitter Facebook Instagram YouTube @PADemPolicy

## House of Representatives COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

### HOUSE DEMOCRATIC POLICY COMMITTEE HEARING

#### Topic: Enhancing Neighborhoods

**New Sun Rising – Pittsburgh, PA**

**January 18, 2019**

#### AGENDA

- 10:00 a.m. Welcome and Opening Remarks
- 10:10 a.m. Panel One:
- Councilwoman Deborah Gross, District 7, Pittsburgh City Council
  - Robert Rubinstein, Executive Director, Urban Redevelopment Authority
- 10:40 a.m. Panel Two:
- Celeste Scott, Housing Justice Organizer, Pittsburgh United
  - Jessica Strong, Co-Founder & CEO, Flexible, LLC
  - Matthew Galluzzo, Executive Director, Lawrenceville Corporation
  - Brittany Reno, Executive Director, Sharpsburg Neighborhood Organization
  - Christine Mondor, Principal, evolveEA
- 11:20 a.m. Panel Three:
- Dr. Jessica Mann, Director of The Center for Community-Engaged Teaching & Research, Duquesne University
  - Jayne Miller, President and CEO, Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy
  - Laura Poskin, Director, Age-Friendly Greater Pittsburgh
- 11:50 a.m. Closing Remarks

## **Bios**

**Deborah Gross** | Councilwoman Deborah Gross serves District 7 of the City of Pittsburgh. She is a firm believer in the power and promise of Pittsburgh neighborhoods and has worked as a community organizer, strategic planner, and fundraiser for a variety of organizations including the Lawrenceville Corporation, Women and Girls Foundation of Southwestern Pennsylvania, the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation, and the Greater Pittsburgh Arts Alliance during her career.

**Robert Rubinstein** | Robert Rubinstein has been revitalizing communities, supporting housing and economic development, and helping to generate public tax revenue since 1988. He currently leads the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh (URA). Prior, Robert served in a number of roles at the URA, including Director of the Economic Development Department since 2006. He oversaw the direct lending of approximately \$10 million annually to roughly 45 businesses and commercial real estate projects. Additionally, he was responsible for all of the City of Pittsburgh's large scale development projects, including internationally-recognized Brownfield redevelopment and the creation, implementation and management of more than 20 tax increment financing (TIF) districts. Nearly \$15 billion of investment has taken place in the City of Pittsburgh during this time, generating tens of millions of dollars in annual tax revenues for each of the local taxing bodies.

**Celeste Scott** | Celeste Scott is currently the Housing Justice Organizer for Pittsburgh United, a coalition of community, labor, faith, and environmental organizations committed to advancing the vision of a community and economy that work for all people. Celeste led the fight to win and fund Pittsburgh's first-ever city-wide affordable housing legislation, the Housing Opportunity Fund. She also serves as the housing chair for SisTers PGH, a Black Transled organization dedicated to demarginalizing Queer Trans People of Color.

Growing up as a resident of the now demolished public housing project, Broadhead Manor, in Pittsburgh, her lived experience makes her poised to lend authentic, tangible strategies to move forward in solving the current national, state, and local housing crisis. In addition, she brings over decade of organizing and activism having been lead organizer on both local and national grassroots projects.

**Jessica Strong** | Jessica Strong is the co-founder and co-CEO of Flexible, which provides on-site, on-demand childcare at events, conferences, and workplaces, allowing these places to be more inclusive and accessible for parents. She has an undergraduate degree in International Economic Development from Ohio State, and a master's in public policy & non-profit management from Carnegie Mellon. She has worked in education, mental health, as a freelance grantwriter, and created a coworking space with on-site childcare prior to launching Flexible in 2016 with her co-founder, Priya Amin. She has 3 kids, a husband that runs his own restaurant, and a dog, and this combination means that she doesn't really have time for any hobbies that don't involve napping or coffee.

**Matthew Galluzzo** | As the Executive Director of the Lawrenceville Corporation, Matthew Galluzzo manages LC staff and volunteers, oversees the organizational budget and fundraising activities, and works to collaboratively develop neighborhood revitalization strategies. In addition to facilitating nearly \$200 million in public and private investment in the neighborhood over past 8+ years, Matt has served as the organizational lead for several catalytic neighborhood planning processes including the Upper Lawrenceville Plan, Lawrenceville Pivot, and the Allegheny Green Boulevard Plan. Since he arrived in Pittsburgh sixteen years ago, Matt has worked as a community development professional in numerous areas of the city, including the Penn Avenue Arts District, Hazelwood, and the Northside. He has also taught as an adjunct faculty member for the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School for Community Organization and Social Administration.

**Jayne Miller** | Jayne is the President and CEO of the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy (PPC), a U.S. nationally recognized parks conservancy. The PPC was founded in 1996 by a group of citizens concerned with the deteriorating conditions of Pittsburgh's historic city parks. To date, the PPC has raised over \$112M for Pittsburgh parks and has completed 20 major improvement projects. Currently active in 22 parks, the PPC is poised to raise its profile even further; working with the City for a parks funding in 2019 and expanding its role in Pittsburgh parks. The Pittsburgh Park System is a diverse park system with 4765 acres of parkland that include 5 historic regional parks that account for over 2000 acres and frame the park system.

From November 2010 through February 2018, Jayne served as the Superintendent of the nationally renowned and CAPRA accredited Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB). The MPRB has been recognized for the last six years, 2013-2018, by the Trust for Public Land as the #1 Park System in the United States and for the last 3 years, 2016-2018, by the National Recreation & Park Association as a Gold Medal Finalist. The MPRB is a diverse system of land and water spanning 6,804 acres of parkland and water featuring 179 parks with 22 lakes serving approximately 23 million visitors annually.

Jayne serves on the board of the World Urban Parks, currently serving as board chair, and also serves as a board member of the City Parks Alliance and Indiana University Executive Development Program. She is also a commissioner on the Commission on Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies.

**Dr. Jessica Mann** | Dr. Jessica Mann is the current director for the Center for Community-Engaged Teaching and Research at Duquesne University. She is an alumna of Duquesne, graduating with her Master of Arts degree in Integrated Marketing Communication. She is also a two-time alumna of the University of Pittsburgh, where she most recently graduated with a PhD in Administration and Policy studies from the School of Education. Jessica's career in higher education has been split between academic and student affairs, exploring the ways in which institutions' programs and initiatives respond to their larger civic and social responsibilities. She has spent her career developing and enacting strategic plans, assessing and evaluating institutional programs and initiatives, and creating and implementing programming which enhances the educational experience of students, supplements the research of faculty and staff, and simultaneously serves the local community.

**Laura Poskin** | Laura Poskin, MPSG, is dedicated to making our region a better place to grow old. She spearheads Age-Friendly Greater Pittsburgh, an initiative of Southwestern Pennsylvania Partnership for Aging that brings neighbors of all ages together to build more inclusive, respectful communities for every generation. She is a gerontologist who started her career as a journalist in New York City, writing for national publications (People magazine, Good Housekeeping) and, after hours, volunteering with older adults. Laura holds a Master's degree in Population and Social Gerontology from Miami University in Ohio and Mahidol (pronounced: Mahi-doan) University in Bangkok, Thailand.

**Christine Mondor** | Christine Mondor has been active in shaping places, processes and organizations internationally for twenty years through her work as an architect, educator, and activist. As Strategic Principal of evolve environment :: architecture, Christine brings creative solutions to infrastructure projects, design problems, and consulting work. She is experienced at helping communities, schools and other agencies build capacity as they navigate sustainability through strategic planning and project implementation. Christine has taught architecture, landscape design and sustainability concepts at Carnegie Mellon University, Slippery Rock University, and at Chatham College. She supports organizations that promote design and the environment, and currently serves as Chair of the Pittsburgh Planning Commission, is a former President for the Green Building Alliance Board of Directors, a member of the Global EcoDistricts Protocol Advisory Committee, the Penn State University Stuckeman School Advisory Board, and is former Board Chair at the Design Center of Pittsburgh. Christine is a Registered Architect and a LEED Accredited Professional.



Testimony

*Presented to the*

House Democratic Policy Committee

*By*

Robert Rubinstein

Executive Director, Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh

Friday, January 18, 2019

Chairman Sturla, Representative Innamorato, and other members of the House Democratic Policy Committee, my name is Robert Rubinstein. I serve as the Executive Director of the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh, known as the URA. It is my pleasure to be here today to discuss the subject of enhancing neighborhoods. I have worked in neighborhoods throughout my 30 years at the URA. It is the essence of what we do. I will keep my comments brief to allow for discussion.

In Pittsburgh, a city of neighborhoods, we know what it takes to create vibrant neighborhoods that offer all the qualities people desire in a place to call their home. The URA is the City of Pittsburgh's economic development and housing agency, committed to creating jobs, expanding the City's tax base and improving the vitality of businesses and neighborhoods. We achieve this mission by assembling, preparing and conveying sites for mixed-use development; and by providing a portfolio of programs that include financing for business location, relocation and expansion, housing construction and rehabilitation, and home purchases and improvements. Throughout all our work, the URA has committed itself to incorporate best practices for equity and inclusion.

The key to any thriving neighborhood is the presence of both traditional main street businesses and accessible, affordable residential communities. Attracting and encouraging development of either element is impossible without public infrastructure which serves as the base of any inclusive placemaking process. URA staff, through our Economic Development Department, offer community groups guidance and technical assistance, often at no cost, to help envision and develop public realm improvements to their neighborhood. With the public's vision in hand, the URA can develop public-private partnership models and seek funding opportunities, including the use of tax diversion programs for the exclusive benefit of the public. Tax diversion tools leverage private investment in roadway, sidewalk, lighting, bridges, tunnels, parks, and any other structure or facility that provides a public

benefit, including affordable housing. Through this equitable development, each place the URA touches marks Pittsburgh's progress towards a bright future.

Now, let's talk about those local, neighborhood main street businesses. We know that small businesses, startups and growing businesses are responsible for most new job creation. This dynamic plays out nationally, regionally and locally. In Pittsburgh, we understand it is critical to support new business start-up and growth to best ensure a diverse, growing, and resilient economy.

The URA's Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship supports new and growing businesses and neighborhood business districts in the City of Pittsburgh by providing access to capital, connections, and resources. The goal is to create quality jobs, improve the vitality of the City's businesses and neighborhoods, and strengthen the City's tax base through new and growing tax revenues to the taxing bodies.

Our programs focus on equitable development by making an intentional effort to support neighborhood business districts, startups and small businesses, and minority and women-owned businesses. Since 2014, over 50 percent of all URA small business financings were deployed to minority or women-owned businesses.

As we sit here in the 21st Legislative District, Lawrenceville stands out as a prime example of how URA investments catalyze neighborhood transformations; in this case, leading to a nationally recognized, destination neighborhood. Lawrenceville's apparent overnight success is the result of a 25-year, intentional and sustained investment strategy for Butler Street. Concurrently, there were similar investments in manufacturing and research businesses "off Butler Street," which occurred over this same time period, but that is a longer discussion for another day. The types of businesses assisted by the URA include the Allegheny Wine Mixer, Café D'Amore Coffee Company, Trend Salon, Elevate Fitness Studio, Civilization Pittsburgh Men's Clothing store, Prism Stained Glass, 57th Street Artist Studios, and the 51st Street Business Center. The URA understands that supporting neighborhood business districts, providing customer engagement services, and supporting the local entrepreneurial ecosystem are critical elements to building a happy, healthy neighborhood.

However, neighborhood revitalization can spark concerns about the threat of dislocation amongst long-time residents and disadvantaged populations who are at the highest risk. Through the URA Housing Department, we support the purchase, renovation, and development of housing units with a focus on affordable housing. This means investing in nearly 1,500 affordable units of housing from 2014 to 2018. These efforts stabilize neighborhoods by preserving existing housing stock and providing a range of housing options for city residents, which improves the quality of life in our neighborhoods and protects affordability for Pittsburgh residents.

This includes projects like the Penn Mathilda Apartments located at the convergence of Bloomfield, Garfield, and Lawrenceville— three thriving neighborhoods. We provided a \$1.4 million loan to complete this \$11.6 million mixed-use development project, which includes 6,200 square feet of ground floor space with 39 affordable apartments on the two upper floors. Half of the units we rented to veterans. Additionally, there is ground floor commercial space on Penn Avenue that was developed in partnership with Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation.

The URA also provided nearly \$725,000 in loans and grants to support the Lawrenceville Corporation's Community Land Trust in its efforts to provide seven units of permanently affordable, owner-occupied housing to households with incomes below 80 percent of Area Medium Income, or AMI, in Upper Lawrenceville. The Community Land Trust allows homeowners to build equity through the eventual sale of the home, but the Trust's ownership of the land and associated deed restrictions ensure future owners meet the same income restrictions as the original buyers.

It is important to understand that in the City of Pittsburgh, there are only approximately 12,000 deed-restricted affordable units. We face a citywide shortage of approximately 20,000 units affordable to households at or below 30 percent AMI.

In the face of this challenge, the Housing Opportunity Fund was created in 2016 to support development and preservation of affordable and accessible housing in all areas of the city. The City of Pittsburgh has committed to provide \$10 million per year for 12 years to the Housing Opportunity Fund. These critical funds are deployed to provide emergency rental assistance to prevent evictions; fund development and preservation of affordable rental housing; provide eligible homeowners grants for home rehabilitation; award down payment and closing cost assistance to eligible buyers; and fund the development of affordable for-sale housing.

The URA and our community partners cannot do this great work without reliable partnerships with the city, state, and federal government. We appreciate PA Department of Community & Economic Development awarding Pittsburgh with \$2 million from the federally-funded Neighborhood Stabilization Program. The Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency remains a long-term supportive partner of the City of Pittsburgh and does its best to support City priorities through the Low-Income Housing Tax Credits and the Pennsylvania Housing Affordability and Rehabilitation Enhancement Fund. However, only one in four "9 percent" Low-Income Housing Tax Credits applications receives funding in a given year. And while the Pennsylvania Housing Affordability and Rehabilitation Enhancement Fund receives state funding through the Reality Transfer Tax, it is currently capped at \$25 million annually.

Historically, the State of Pennsylvania supported our work by seeding many of our revolving loan programs. The foresight of state legislators to invest in a better future ensured that despite dwindling support, these valuable resources are still available today. Presently, most state support comes in the form of tax credit programs such as Keystone Innovation Zones, Keystone Opportunity Zones, Research and Development Tax Credits, Job Creation Tax Credits, and Enterprise Zone Tax Credits. These programs are often the only true non-debt financial incentives provided directly to businesses and developers trying to invest in the community by growing their business.

The URA also looks forward to the city benefiting from the Neighborhood Assistance Program expansion this year. This demonstrates that budgets are about priorities and Pennsylvania does have the ability to increase the current levels of state investment for enhancing neighborhoods.

In the coming year, we humbly request that the \$15 million line-item for PA First be restored to \$20 million in order to fully fund the services of the Governor's Action Team. We would also support an increase in the façade and accessible housing grants, as well as the core Main Street/Elm Street planning and development dollars in the Keystone Communities line-item. As mandated in the fiscal code, only about \$6 million of that \$12 million appropriation goes towards real neighborhood development. These

are not unreasonable requests. For context, the pre-recession levels of the programs within the PA First appropriation were \$70 million and Keystone Communities programs were funded at \$55 million. Finally, we would support legislation that lifts or eliminates the cap on the amount of Reality Transfer Tax revenues that can be allocated to the Pennsylvania Housing Affordability and Rehabilitation Enhancement Fund.

We look forward to a fresh set of eyes examining the state budget and considering important neighborhood-enhancing legislation. The URA stands as a willing partner in this effort.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to answering any questions.

Good morning. My name is Celeste Scott and I'm the Housing Justice Organizer for Pittsburgh United. Pittsburgh United is a coalition of community, labor, faith, and environmental organizations committed to advancing the vision of a community and economy that work for all people.

Pittsburgh is at a critical moment. We have an opportunity to be a national leader, not just in terms of economic revival, but equitable development that puts people first. To be truly livable, the revitalization of Pittsburgh must include both the high-tech *and* the service sectors of the economy, while lifting up every neighborhood in the city. Revitalization is benefitting some, but the fabric of low income neighborhoods and communities of color are being torn apart.

When we talk about enhancing neighborhoods, what we really should focus on is how we're improving the quality of life for the people who live in those neighborhoods. From that lens, preserving housing affordability is a critical issue.

In 2016, the City of Pittsburgh identified a shortage of affordable housing of over 20,000 units at the lowest incomes. We are currently in an affordable housing crisis in the City of Pittsburgh. As housing prices have increased across the City, many folks have been displaced from the neighborhoods they lived in for generations and forced to live in neighborhoods, many times second and third ring suburbs, without access to amenities like transportation, healthcare, and healthy places to get groceries.

I have personal experience with this, while I don't currently live in the 21st District, I used to, until I was priced out of the neighborhood I was living in: Lawrenceville. I now live in the Borough of Homestead. Through my work at Pittsburgh United and our partnership with Lawrenceville United in their housing advocacy efforts, I've become reacquainted with the neighborhood of Lawrenceville, which is a good example of why affordability should be part of any neighborhood improvement strategy.

Perhaps more than any other neighborhood in Pittsburgh, Lawrenceville has seen dramatic changes in recent years, and many of these changes have been noted as extremely positive. While not too long ago Lawrenceville had a reputation as an unsafe neighborhood, crime rates plummeted in the past decade, making Lawrenceville the safest neighborhood in its police zone. Lawrenceville's public schools have seen impressive gains, and transportation infrastructure is improving in a neighborhood that's less than 3 miles from the two largest regional job centers at downtown and Oakland. Many of these improvements were made possible by the hard work of residents and the community organizations, Lawrenceville United and Lawrenceville Corporation, with funding from the state's Neighborhood Assistance Program, which was critical to making these gains.

All residents of all intersections deserve to have such positive outcomes in their neighborhoods. Long time residents, seniors, veterans, folks living with disabilities, immigrants/refugees, LGBTQIA+ people, single parents and children, historically cash poor people, Black, brown, and indigenous people. This should be the narrative everywhere for everyone in PA.



Yet the benefits of revitalization haven't been shared with everyone. Housing costs have increased rapidly, with median home sale prices nearly tripling in 7 years. As a result, significant groups of residents have been priced out. As just one measure, between 2011 and 2016, Lawrenceville lost over half of its Section 8 voucher units in the neighborhood – representing the displacement of 120 low-income families. As another measure, 300 Somali Bantu refugees who called Lawrenceville their first home in America have all been priced out of the neighborhood, largely getting pushed away from the resources they depend on in the City, the schools they attend, and to significantly isolated areas of Pittsburgh. And according to census figures, Lawrenceville lost nearly 1/3 of its Black population and 1/3 of its long-time homeowners in just three years.

These displacement trends in Lawrenceville disproportionately affect people of color, low-income families, and single-parent households at the same time that Lawrenceville has had its largest housing boom in decades and has the fastest-growing millennial population in America.

These changes in the housing market happened fast and the Lawrenceville community groups along with local elected officials and organizations like Pittsburgh United have been working hard to make sure that residents who brought about positive changes in their community aren't priced out of the improvements they helped create. This includes efforts like Lawrenceville Corporation's Community Land Trust, a new LIHTC affordable rental development in the works, and passage of the Housing Opportunity Fund throughout the City of Pittsburgh, which will raise \$10 million annually to address the affordable housing shortage.

Additionally, Lawrenceville has also recently taken the lead on working with Councilwoman Deb Gross and Pittsburgh's City Planning Department to pilot the first mandatory inclusionary zoning program in Pittsburgh. By either incentivizing or requiring residential market-rate development of a certain scale to include a percentage of the units for low and moderate income folks, inclusionary zoning programs have created over 170,000 units of affordable housing in 25 states. Research shows that these programs are effective at preventing displacement and positioning affordable housing in areas with lower concentrations of poverty and better performing schools without preventing new market-rate development or raising the costs of housing.

In Lawrenceville, if the current policy under consideration had been implemented sooner, it would have created 56 more units of affordable housing over the past 5 years, which would've replaced almost half of the Section 8 units lost during the same period.

Local efforts are making a difference, but more tools are needed, and the commonwealth can and should take an active role in further supporting communities like Lawrenceville fighting for housing justice.

While Lawrenceville is moving on inclusionary zoning, states have made bigger strides by passing laws that encourage such policies across localities and protect them from legal

challenges. The Pennsylvania legislature should also support Pittsburgh by enabling the City to pass a long-time owner occupant protection ordinance that would prevent steep tax increases to elderly homeowners in gentrifying neighborhoods.

Finally, the commonwealth should continue to expand revenue sources for affordable housing, as well as the Neighborhood Assistance Program, which funds such critical work for neighborhood organizations to improve their communities.

As we think about enhancing neighborhoods, let's remember that the true measure of our success is improving quality of life for the people who live in them, and affordable housing is a critical component to that.

Housing affordability affects us all and cannot be stigmatized or separated from any other issues affecting our neighborhoods. Every member of our community whether directly or indirectly impacted by the affordable housing crisis is positively impacted when we increase access to safe, quality, affordable housing.

Additionally, I would like to mention some other policies and ways in which our State Legislature can be of assistance in helping Pennsylvanians to abate this housing crisis:

- Passing SB 1885 State Housing Tax Credit
- Lifting the 25 million dollar cap on the Realty Transfer Tax for PHARE (State Housing Trust Fund)
- Updating Landlord/Tenant Law on the State Level
- Giving 2nd class municipalities the power to create taxing classes-creative taxes that help to support accrual and preservation of affordable, safe, quality housing stock for renters and owners
- Provide state support to tenants and tenant associations who have opportunities to purchase their properties.
- This should include:
  - A set aside of housing trust fund dollars that can be used by tenants to explore the feasibility of purchasing their properties.
  - Policies that help create opportunities for resident ownership. For example, state law currently requires owners of manufactured home communities to provide residents with advance notice of their intent to close the community, to consider any purchase offer made by a resident association and to negotiate in good faith. This should be extended to other owners of multifamily rental housing.

The affordable housing crisis has been decades , if not centuries, in the making- exacerbated and supported by structurally racist housing policies .We must be intentional about creating tables where impacted people have the power to lead especially in spaces such as this.

We have the duty to dismantle these bad policies and replace them with authentically progressive-proactive policy that protects our most marginalized citizens and empowers them to make real change in their own lives. We must continue having real and honest conversations that lead to tangible solutions. Together we can do this. Thank you.

## House Democratic Policy Committee: Enhancing Neighborhoods Public Hearing Testimony 1/18/19

My name is Matthew Galluzzo. For the past 8 1/2 years I have had the honor of serving as the executive director of the Lawrenceville Corporation (LC)--a non-profit community development corporation driven by the Lawrenceville community. Our organization acts as a catalyst and conduit for responsible and sustainable growth. Our organization is governed by a 16-person board of directors that represents small business, residents, and institutional interests. The day-to-day work of the organization is carried out by five full-time staff persons.

The work of the LC is augmented by a number of enduring community partners. Our closest partner, Lawrenceville United, is a resident-based organization that oversees senior and youth programming, community beautification, special events, and public safety (among other programs). Other key partners include Goodwill of Southwestern PA, YouthWorks, and UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh. Our shared work ensures that we serve as a comprehensive umbrella of community service, support, and catalytic change.

The LC advances its mission by engaging in four business lines: community planning, business district management, marketing and communications, and real estate. Our role is to foster the development of a dense urban neighborhood anchored by affordable housing, good access to transit, amenities, and services that people need to utilize--hospitals and childcare facilities, workforce development & job training facilities, and job centers.

Resources garnered through the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania have been crucial in establishing Lawrenceville as a regional destination with a national profile. We have asserted ourselves as a leader in creating tools that address needs that the private market cannot or will not address. The now-underfunded Main Street program, currently operating under the Keystone Communities Program umbrella, historically provided us capacity and project resources to transform our commercial district into a regional gem and genuine model for revitalization. Our business district now boasts the largest number of women-owned businesses in Western Pennsylvania and serves as a destination for visitors from around the country. That did not occur by accident. It required the steady hand of our organization as a steward for that effort--buoyed by the Main Street program. Our experience has proven that downtowns are worth saving. We recommend that Main Street become a legitimate policy priority for the Commonwealth.

Additionally, Neighborhood Partnership Program investments have solidified our relationships with our corporate community and the community partners discussed above, and led to Lawrenceville serving as a laboratory for innovation in addressing regional community problems. One such problem is the lack of quality affordable housing in the neighborhood. Lawrenceville's median home sale price has skyrocketed 900% since 2005, and Lawrenceville lost over half of its Housing Choice voucher units between 2011 and 2016. To address issues of displacement and the lack of quality affordable housing, we have created the 1<sup>st</sup> community land trust in Western Pennsylvania, which offers permanently affordable housing to households of modest means. By maintaining affordability in perpetuity, CLTs represent the most cost effective and efficient use of public and private resources for the creation of affordable housing. In 2018 we developed and sold the first phase of our land trust houses, and community interest was overwhelming. The LC garnered over 400 applications for our homes. The homes are currently owner-occupied by first-time homeowners. LC and its partners anticipate the creation of 100 units across multiple neighborhoods in the next 5 years. To be clear: we would not be on this path without support through the Neighborhood Partnership Program. Moving forward, and given limited resources, we believe that the Commonwealth should prioritize community land trusts by providing preference to CLTs in the Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program, and working with the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency to expand and create a clear preference for permanently affordable housing through the State Housing Trust Fund--mirroring priorities already established in the City of Pittsburgh's Housing Trust Fund.

Thank you for this opportunity. We are grateful for your continued support and interest in our work.

## **PA House Hearing Testimony on Enhancing Neighborhoods**

*Brittany Reno, Sharpsburg Neighborhood Organization*

I serve as both Sharpsburg Borough council president and the executive director of our local resident-driven community development organization, Sharpsburg Neighborhood Organization, which I founded in 2014 to engage residents in local community projects and long-term planning.

Sharpsburg's a working class, industrial borough of about 3,400 residents, with a poverty rate of about 27% and an unemployment rate of around 12%. These are projections from the 2010 census, though I think the 2020 census will reveal a large shift in our local demographics.

I have lived in this town for about five and a half years, and in that time I've seen a huge amount of change in the community. Most of the changes are good and positive. New businesses, fewer vacancies, fewer blighted and abandoned structures, and improved outdoor spaces have all made Sharpsburg a more vibrant and enjoyable place to live. Four years ago, the number of vacant/blighted structures in our community was around 120. Today, thanks to the Allegheny County Vacant Property Recovery Program and a rapidly strengthening local real estate market, that number is down to about 15.

While many residents are happy with the changes, and while the Borough is happy to forego tax rate increases for the fourth year in a row due to sound finances and the naturally strengthening tax base, this evolution of our community has not come without its issues.

The first few years I lived here, many residents lamented the long-deteriorating conditions in the borough, specifically the 120 blighted houses. While these complaints still trickle in, I hear vastly more often now from people who can no longer find an affordable place to rent or buy in Sharpsburg; people whose families have lived here for generations who can no longer afford the rent in town; and single parents who have to move their kids out of the Fox Chapel School District because their landlords are evicting them to renovate and double the rent.

Those who have a little more money can still afford to rent here but can no longer afford to put away money for a down payment on a home of their own. The median sales price for a home in Sharpsburg has about doubled in the past three years, and an influx of new residents from around the country and region has pushed longtime residents out of the community just as the community has finally begun to enjoy an improved quality of life after fifty years of decline following the collapse of the steel industry. A few years ago, the average Sharpsburg house for sale sat on the market for six months. Today, the average house for sale in Sharpsburg is sold within six days, and many are sold the same day they're listed, with multiple offers over the asking price.

These are real situations that have drastically increased in prevalence as our housing market, which is across the river from popular East End neighborhoods, swells beyond anything it's seen in the past 50 years of disinvestment. Families who already have fewer resources—

namely, time and money—than their wealthier counterparts are being forced to move further away from resources that have formerly been accessible in the dense and well-connected urban areas of our region.

So what are some strategies for improving the quality and safety of neighborhoods without further burdening people already struggling to get by in these communities?

- **Incentivize growth in communities that need it *for the people who need it*.** Allocate funding to homeownership and connected wraparound services (credit counseling, nonprofit rent-to-own programs, job training, small business coaching) in communities with high rates of transience, low rates of homeownership, high rates of blight, and high rates of vacancy. Wraparound anti-poverty programs like the Circles program connect people in chronic poverty with housing, legal, economic, and job training resources as well as building social connections between program participants and people with successful careers and regional connections.
- **Prioritize affordable housing development projects that are “permanently affordable” and stewarded by non-profit organizations rather than for-profit projects with affordability that expires after a set time.** The need for affordable homeownership and rental opportunities is growing as stagnated wages are not keeping up with inflation and rising housing, healthcare, childcare, and education costs. Enriching private developers to help them build market-rate units that often sit vacant—in communities already burdened by a shortage of affordable units—does not strengthen a community and certainly does not help the people who already call the community home.

While some regional leaders discuss our area's affordability as a strong selling point to attract businesses and higher paying jobs, I urge you all and other lawmakers at the county, state, and federal levels to remember that attracting wealthier workers to our area without raising the floor on wages for our most vulnerable workers or without putting widespread protections in place for keeping housing and childcare and healthcare costs under control will only serve to further entrench people in poverty and shift the problems of blight, vacancy, and unemployment around to other communities without actually solving the problem. At a time of unprecedented corporate and CEO wealth in our country, it's a huge shame and no accident that so many workers at the bottom of the corporate ladder are finding it more and more impossible to access the American Dream touted by so many.

To help lift people out of poverty, it is critical that we invest in people and programs, not just in brick and mortar building projects, so that the people can in turn invest in their communities, local businesses, and families, ultimately realizing the long-term benefits of things like affordable homes, quality employment, emergency/retirement savings, and access to the necessary components of a happy and productive life.

**Testimony of  
Jessica Mann, Ph.D.  
Director, Center for Community-Engaged Teaching & Research  
Duquesne University**

**January 18, 2019**

Good morning, Representative Sara Innamorato, members of the House Democratic Policy Committee, and today's attendees. Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this important conversation surrounding the enhancement of our local neighborhoods.

My name is Dr. Jessica Mann, and I am the Director of the Center for Community-Engaged Teaching and Research at Duquesne University, commonly referred to as CETR. Under the leadership of President Ken Gormley, we have adopted a strategic plan that situates the institution as a regional flagship for community engagement.

CETR serves as the academic hub for community engagement at Duquesne. Our center provides support for teaching, learning, and research that promotes knowledge creation, civic development, and community transformation. Community-engaged learning is a pedagogy that is built on community-based experiences that mobilize the knowledge, skills, and values of an academic discipline. This process is different from traditional volunteerism as it:

1. emphasizes students' civic development;
2. utilizes structured and ongoing reflection; and
3. emphasizes the need for sustained, reciprocal partnerships between the institution and community partners.

Community-engaged research is an approach to scholarship in which authentic partnerships between scholars and community organizations generate and apply knowledge that is relevant to disciplinary discovery to community concerns in local contexts. The key principles for community-engaged research include:

1. collaborative, equitable partnerships;
2. a balance between research and action for all partnership members;
3. an asset-based approach;
4. co-ownership of data; and
5. the dissemination of findings and knowledge via products of benefit to all parties.

The partnerships that develop for the purposes of community-engaged projects and initiatives can take many forms, including community-based research, policy work, co-learning arrangements, and dialogue groups. However, regardless of the form taken, community-engaged projects consistently strive to develop authentic relationships that foreground the social and environmental problems that the collaboration seeks to address.

As a higher education administrator with a research focus on community-engagement, as well as experience in leading the service-learning and community engagement efforts of multiple institutions across the region, I can speak to the importance of responsible and authentic partnerships as they relate to successful and sustainable community development.

The tenants of community-engaged research and teaching, which I previously mentioned, can and should apply to community development projects and initiatives outside of higher education. By utilizing a partnership approach, you are able to enter into a community with the purpose of initiating conversations and setting shared goals, asking questions rather than giving answers, which not only creates goodwill among residents, but also encourages high levels of engagement. In addition, an asset-based mindset encourages the community's local assets to serve as the foundation for development planning. In other words, by utilizing the skills of local residents, the influence of local agencies and associations, as well as the resources of local institutions, asset-based community development plans are able to draw on existing strengths and resources to build stronger, more sustainable communities for the future.

In order to successfully mitigate gentrification, preserve affordable housing, and cultivate a successful culture of local entrepreneurship, it is important to allocate time for developing relationships. A citizen-centered approach not only allows for the provision of space for current residents to voice their concerns and share their history and culture with potential developers, but also for the opportunity for residents to articulate priorities and concerns surrounding the community and development plans moving forward. By utilizing this approach, an environment where shared values and mutual accountability can develop, thus fostering equitable and genuine dynamics between developers, community members, agencies, institutional representatives, and the government.

By taking the time to learn about a community, engage and empower its members, and discover the unique assets of the neighborhood, it is possible to positively affect the larger community while subsequently allowing individuals to respond to and create local economic opportunities that fit their needs and desires. In this sense, by acknowledging the people and resources already in existence within the community and celebrating the strengths and successes of a community's shared history, it is possible to leverage existing support that drives development and change in an efficient and well-supported manner.



**House Democratic Policy Committee Public Hearing  
with Rep. Sara Innamorato on Enhancing Neighborhoods  
Testimony by Jayne Miller, President & CEO, Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy**

As we all know, Pittsburgh has faced financial challenges for decades which have had a dramatic, negative impact on many of the City's neighborhoods, including our parks. The City has worked hard to balance the public's interests in all the public services it is responsible for, including working to best manage and care for City parks with very limited resources.

Over the last 20 years, approximately \$500 million have been allocated to Pittsburgh parks – an average annual investment of less than \$25 million, with per capita spending today on parks in Pittsburgh at \$99. As a comparison, Minneapolis, which has the number one park system in the United States is spending \$247 per capita on parks.

Parks are the cornerstone, the center pieces of strong neighborhoods. They serve as the great spaces for the health and wellbeing of the neighborhood to flourish. Parks are the most democratic spaces in any city, and as such are critical to addressing a city's needs for racial and economic equity. They provide places for all members of our city to gather, contemplate, recreate and be physically active.

Parks are consistently cited as a main attraction for luring new employees to a city. For cities to compete in the global marketplace, they must be desirable destinations in order to draw individuals and companies. Eighty-three percent of people in the United States are living in urban centers, more than ever before in our nation's history, and that number is continuing to grow. Today's citizenry wants to be in cities where there is a high quality of life with great green spaces, the ability to access them easily and quickly, biking and walking trails, restaurants and active lifestyle choices. To compete at this level and truly be a vibrant city, Pittsburgh must make smart investments, with parks as the centerpiece.

Parks improve the environmental sustainability of cities. When properly designed and integrated into cities, parks serve as the natural filter for stormwater before it enters our rivers. For example, the Minneapolis Park System filters nearly 100 percent of all the city's stormwater – a total of nearly 30 billion gallons of snow and rain each year. The topography of Pittsburgh and its parks provides an incredible opportunity to solve much of the city's stormwater challenges. Pittsburgh's hilly terrain and three rivers make flood control especially critical, with investment in strategic stormwater management being essential.

A tree-filled city will reduce the carbon footprint, reduce harmful particulate matter, improve air quality and create a more livable city. Investments in park and street trees, tree pruning, and tree planting will improve the city's urban forest, improve air quality for city residents and for those commuting to Pittsburgh to work, and create a softer, greener urban environment. Public trees in Minneapolis save \$5.8 million in energy costs annually – enough to power 4,350 homes each year. Minneapolis trees absorb and hold 9.2 million pounds of carbon from the atmosphere each year to build branches and leaves and take 8,936 cars off the road. All this is

\$700,000 worth of reduced greenhouse gas emissions, and the removal of 330,000 pounds of harmful particulate matter from the air.

The benefits of parks for health and well-being is well established and well documented. A 10-minute walk can enhance physical fitness, reduce the risk of chronic disease and improve brain function, like learning and memory. The 10 minutes it takes to walk back home, not to mention the activity done in between, are a bonus. Research has shown that community green space can reduce violent crime; social isolation, especially for older adults; improve concentration for children with attention deficit disorder; enhance relaxation; and promote self-esteem and resilience. Minneapolis leads the nation's metropolitan areas in providing the best overall access for the most people to well-equipped and serviced public parks and recreation, with St. Paul, Minneapolis' sister city, ranked as the #2 park system in the nation. Not surprising, then, is the fact that Minneapolis-St. Paul is also ranked the healthiest urban region in the country.

Parks are cultural assets of our city. With proper investment, parks improve life in the city and the quality of life for all its citizenry. When parks are properly cared for, they drive economic development. Properties adjacent to well cared-for parks have the greatest economic value in a city. Public parks motivate investment from the private sector – for housing and business development – creating active spaces throughout cities. In the City of Minneapolis, \$300 million in public investment was made extending the park system along a 4 mile stretch of the Mississippi River which resulted in over \$2 billion of private housing and business investments.

Every resident is entitled to a quality park within a ten-minute walk. With these investments in parks, communities and neighborhoods will thrive, and economic development will occur. Going hand in hand with a thriving community and neighborhood is the potential for gentrification. In Pittsburgh, we can ensure that neighborhoods thrive. We can ensure that investments are made equitably, specifically addressing racial and economic inequities. As we strengthen neighborhoods, we need to ensure that lower-income residents and neighborhood entrepreneurs are not displaced. This can be done using several strategies some of which include increasing housing affordability and stability, making the City's housing trust fund well-funded and well managed, preserving the affordability of city's homes that have deed or income restrictions by creating a housing preservation program, and expanding employment and ownership opportunities for low income residents.

In closing, I ask that as you consider enhancing neighborhoods, you focus on two key investments:

- Parks, as they address so many factors for a community and its residents – environmental sustainability – with particular focus on Pittsburgh on air and water quality, racial and economic equity, health and well-being, economic development, and the overall quality of life of a community and its residents, and
- Implementing tools and strategies to prevent gentrification from happening to ensure that Pittsburgh is a place for all and that no longer will a person's zip code will not determine their health, wellness or financial status.



**Enhancing Neighborhoods: House Democratic Policy Committee Public Hearing  
with Rep. Sara Innamorato**

Laura Poskin, Director, Age-Friendly Greater Pittsburgh

Friday, January 18 at 10 a.m.

New Sun Rising, 112 Sherman Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15209

My name is Laura Poskin, and—as we like to do at Age-Friendly Greater Pittsburgh—I'll lead with my age and where I live. I am 35. I live here in Pittsburgh, in a co-op community in Mt. Washington.

Last weekend, my parents were visiting, helping set up our nursery, and we went on a walk to Grandview Avenue. I was so touched to see a tribute to the 11 Tree of Life victims outside Saint Mary of the Mount. It is still there after 11 weeks, and it's next to a big sign that reads:

*Love thy neighbor. No exceptions.*

The age-friendly movement is all about making our region more inclusive and respectful of every generation.

Basically, our work is about loving your neighbor.

Many of our neighborhoods here in Allegheny County are undergoing rapid demographic change. We have a growing number of "longtime residents," people who have lived here for decades. At the same time, we have a growing number of "newcomers," an infusion of young professionals, students and immigrants from across the globe.

Our work through Age-Friendly Greater Pittsburgh is about bridging that divide. Whether we're advocating for safer crosswalks or organizing intergenerational events, our work says to neighbors of all ages and walks of life: "We care about you. We respect you. We want you here."

We are living longer than ever before, and we know that 90% of people want to age in place. My Pop Pop, for example, lived in the home he built in Ebensburg, PA until he was 95. He owned a clothing store. He sponsored a little league team. He, as one of very few Jewish people in town, was part of an interfaith discussion group.

What could he do from home the last decade of his life? Not much. Most days, he read the paper and watched CNN from his recliner in the living room.

Age-friendly design—when it comes to physical spaces, but also when it comes to programs and opportunities—opens up options for us to participate in the communities we call home. That goes for people like Pop Pop, but also for kids and busy families. A sidewalk that works better for my grandfather works better for my five year old niece and it works better for a 25 year old carrying groceries.

Policymakers who are mindful of our needs across generations are saying: “We care about you. We respect you. We want you here.” It’s loving your neighbor in action.

Age-Friendly Greater Pittsburgh is an initiative of Southwestern Pennsylvania Partnership for Aging, funded by the Hillman Family Foundations. We are part of a network run by the World Health Organization and, in our country, by AARP. Nationally, there are 318 age-friendly communities. In Pennsylvania, we have six:

1. Philadelphia
2. West Chester
3. Swarthmore
4. Lehigh Valley
5. Lancaster
6. Greater Pittsburgh

Being an age-friendly community doesn’t automatically mean you’re a great place to grow old. It means your area is dedicated to making changes over a five-year cycle.

Our planning process engaged more than 100 organizations and 800 residents. Collectively, we decided to focus on three areas through 2020: Access, Connection and Innovation. Here’s how we describe them:

**ACCESS:** *We envision a region that’s open to all of us. It’s easy to find and afford different options, whether we’re looking for a new home or a ride across town.*

**CONNECTION:** *We envision a region that supports one another. We celebrate the power of relationships that build bridges across ages and life experiences.*

**INNOVATION:** *We envision a region that’s relentlessly pushing for progress. We all can benefit from advancements in technology and ideas. We all can see what’s on the horizon.*

Three states have stepped up to become Age-Friendly States: New York, Colorado and Massachusetts. Governor Andrew Cuomo of New York embeds their work in their “Health Across All Policies” initiative, to incorporate health into state agency decision making. New York also recently announced a grant program to support communities enrolling in the age-friendly network.

Alongside AARP Pennsylvania, we have started to explore the possibility of becoming an Age-Friendly State. Regardless of where that leads, I challenge you to be a champion in the General Assembly for age-friendly communities.

Statewide, our demographics underscore the urgency. In the past seven years, our older population has grown at a rate over 20 times that of the state’s general population. People ages 65+ now represent 17.8 percent of the state’s population. That’s 2.27 million people.

Yes, I saved my stats until the very end, purposefully.

We’re not here today to talk about the macro. We’re here today to talk about enhancing neighborhoods. Representative Innamorato, thank you for choosing to start your term by addressing this essential, micro-level topic. Neighborhoods are about people, and we are all aging, which is a beautiful thing—so long as we can all participate in life our whole life.