



July 12, 2021

Members of Pittsburgh City Council
City County Building
414 Grant Street
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15219

Dear Members of Pittsburgh City Council:

Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group (PCRG) would like to thank the Administration and members of City Council for its advocacy in securing federal funding for COVID-19 relief. These critical funds were made available through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) signed by President Biden on March 11, 2021. Pittsburgh's allocation of \$335 million will provide much needed assistance to communities hit hardest by the pandemic and will allow City government to fill in operating deficits caused by lost revenue. PCRG is requesting City Council to table its upcoming votes on the capital project portions of the plan, until a comprehensive, inclusive and transparent public engagement process is conducted.

As a member-based, non-profit organization representing over 40 community-based organizations (CBOs) throughout the City of Pittsburgh, our members have expressed concerns over the lack of public engagement from the Joint Pittsburgh Recovery Task Force and the Peduto Administration. Prior to the Administration's public announcement of its ARPA spending plan, which was released on June 28, 2021, the public had little input on the allocation priorities. This is troubling since the President signed the ARPA recovery package almost 4 months ago. Moreover, the Administration has remained vague on details for many of the proposed capital projects. Investments like the \$10 million directed towards the Pittsburgh Land Bank and the \$23 million in OwnPGH are encouraging, after last week's Post Agenda, it remains unclear how those funds will be utilized to increase capacity and output to benefit our neighborhoods. PCRG and our members would like to urge Council to create a committee made up of leaders from City CDCs and CBOs to assist the URA as it works towards the allocations of these critical dollars.

It is imperative that if Council decides to reopen the budget to fund these initiatives and programs using ARPA dollars, Council and other entities receiving ARPA funding should hold public hearings to disclose spending details, allow for public comment and additional scrutiny from community stakeholders. Should Council move towards passing legislation to allocate ARPA funds, PCRG urges the body to include specific legislative language to allow future Administration's and Councils the ability to reallocate ARPA funds based on shifting needs and priorities.

A+ Schools
ACTION-Housing, Inc.
Allegheny City Central Association
Allegheny Land Trust
Amani Christian CDC
Bona Fide Bellevue
Bloomfield Development Corp.
Bloomfield-Garfield Corp.
Brookline Area Community Council
Design Center Pittsburgh
East Allegheny Community Council
East Hills Consensus Group
East Liberty Development, Inc.
Economic Development South
Etna Economic Development Corp
Fineview Citizens Council
Friendship Community Group
Garfield Jubilee Association
Grounded Pittsburgh
Habitat for Humanity of
Greater Pittsburgh
Hazelwood Initiative, Inc.
Highland Park CDC
Hill District CDC
Hill District Consensus Group
Hill House EDC
Hilltop Alliance
Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania
Larimer Consensus Group
Lawrenceville Corp.
Lawrenceville United
Manchester Citizens Corp.
McKees-Rocks CDC
Mexican War Streets Society
Millvale Borough Development
Corp.
Mount Washington CDC
NeighborWorks Western PA
Northside Leadership Conference
Oakland Planning and
Development Corporation
Operation Better Block
Penn Hills CDC
Perry Hilltop Citizens Council
Pittsburgh Downtown CDC
Pittsburgh Project
PULSE
Polish Hill Civic Association
POWER Link
Rebuilding Together Pittsburgh
Sharpsburg Neighborhood Org
South Side Community Council
South Side Local Development
Company (Emeritus)
South Side Slopes Neighborhood
Association
Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition
Troy Hill Citizens, Inc.
Tube City Renaissance
Uptown Partners of Pittsburgh
Urban Innovation21
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Most importantly, PCRG would like to advocate for the inclusion of ARPA funding to programs and initiatives to help lift our most vulnerable citizens and marginalized communities who have suffered the most during the ongoing pandemic—particularly our black and brown residents. The unemployment rate among black women remains high, small businesses continue to need support, housing inequities remain, and the city continues its stagnant land recycling efforts. While many of the capital projects listed are worthy of public investment, it is irresponsible to utilize COVID-19 relief funds on “traditional” infrastructure projects that can be covered through the annual appropriations process through the City capital budget and other state and federal infrastructure funding sources.

Please consider this letter as part of the official public record. PCRG is ready to assist and stands with other community organizations to ensure an open and transparent process. If you have any questions, or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at 412-354-0642, or by email at crosselot@pcrg.org.

Sincerely,

Chris Crosselot
Policy Director

Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group (PCRG)