

East Liberty

DEVELOPMENT, INC.

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April 8, 2014

Councilpersons Deborah Gross and Corey O'Connor
510 City-County Building
414 Grant St.
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Re: Support for the Pittsburgh Land Bank Bill

Dear Councilwoman Gross and Councilman O'Connor,

On behalf of East Liberty Development, Inc., I am writing to express support for the Pittsburgh Land Bank as introduced by Councilwoman Gross and amended by Councilman O'Connor. The Land Bank is crucial to reverse the decades of blight and disinvestment that many neighborhoods have experienced.

We appreciate how you have patiently engaged a broad range of community stakeholders in crafting this legislation. It will create a remarkably transparent and responsive public entity. This structure will be responsive to community stakeholders and protect the interests of the residents of distressed neighborhoods. We appreciate how you have integrated national best practices and new community involvement structures that are designed just for Pittsburgh's neighborhoods.

Our experience in East Liberty has shown the potential for Land Banking interventions to stabilize a residential neighborhood. Since the Land Bank did not exist, we took control of the properties in our neighborhood through the City Land Reserve process. We took on a lot of risk and incurred a great financial burden to deal with these properties. If we had a fully functioning Land Bank as a partner, it could have reduced our risk and expedited our revitalization.

Over the last 12 years, we have learned many important lessons on how to revitalize distressed neighborhood using land banking and land development tools. We created a deliberate intervention to use market forces to achieve community goals. This large scale intervention created hundreds of units of affordable housing. It created new homeownership opportunities. It restored the tax base. It cut part 1 crimes by 54%. Our low income homeowners now have equity in their homes, which will help break generational poverty. As the new Land Bank is established it is important that the Land Bank and other city entities learn from our experience. We look forward to sharing our successes and struggles to help this City Land Bank become an effective partner in revitalizing neighborhoods.

As you have persevered in developing this Land Bank Bill, we encourage you to persevere in the great task of revitalizing the city's struggling neighborhoods. The private market will not naturally fix these places. It will take public and grass roots partnerships to bring about the stable, mixed-income neighborhoods that are envisioned in many community plans. This land bank bill is an important step in aligning our city systems to help communities solve their problems.

Sincerely,



Maelene J. Myers
Executive Director

CC: Councilman, Rev. Ricky Burgess
Mayor, Bill Peduto

ELDI is an equal opportunity employer.