

the kingsley association

*Making a positive difference for youth and
community is our crowning achievement.*

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

Councilwoman Deborah Gross and Councilman Corey O'Connor,

On behalf of The Kingsley Association, 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 a powerful tool that can empower neighborhoods to effectively exercise control in determining the shape and direction of revitalization efforts in those neighborhoods.

The technical arguments and merits of the case to establish the land bank have been exhaustively debated, and the amendment process has produced a stronger bill that provides greater protection for property rights, as well as broader neighborhood representation in the governance of the Land Bank. Just as importantly, this legislation empowers neighborhoods by placing the onus for helping to set neighborhood priorities where they properly belong; in the neighborhoods. Through the arduous process of community organizing to build a broad consensus, Larimer stakeholders have established a shared vision that has guided the work of planning tomorrow's Larimer, while respecting the neighborhood's past. That organizing has entailed the difficult, but necessary work of educating ourselves on the dynamics of community development and smart, sustainable growth practices. Armed with that knowledge, Larimer stakeholders have established themselves, not as ultimate arbiters, but partners in the decision making process related to land disposition.

In the world of community development, there is a truism that planning never ends. We believe that to be true, but we also know that a more efficient and inclusive mechanism for recycling land has to be established in order for Pittsburgh to deliver on the goal of bringing opportunity for all of its neighborhoods. We believe the land bank formation presented in the amended legislation will provide Larimer, and other similar neighborhoods with one of the important tools needed to reverse the negative social and economic consequences that are familiar to so many. The Pittsburgh Land Bank will help to transform our most disinvested neighborhoods into engines of economic growth.

Sincerely,



Malik G. Bankston
Executive Director

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