Community Improvement through Involvement

OPDC

OPDC is the connector for people with shared concerns—to empower those who need a voice.

April 8, 2014

The Honorable Deborah Gross
The Honorable Corey O'Connor
Pittsburgh City Council
510 City-County Building
414 Grant Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Dear Councilpersons Gross and O'Connor:

On behalf of Oakland Planning and Development Corporation (OPDC), I am writing to express our support and provide additional feedback for the Pittsburgh Land Bank bill as introduced by Councilwoman Gross and amended by Councilman O'Connor. The land bank is a powerful solution that gives the public control of abandoned property and empowers communities to reverse the detrimental impact of blight.

We appreciate your inclusion of an appeals process in the current amendment. We also support the restrictions placed on the sale of land to individuals with outstanding tax and building code violations and appreciate that the bill now highlights the importance of selling land with the community's best interests.

However, we would like to contribute additional input on the amendment. We request that the Land Bank Board, when drafting its guiding principles, grant community development corporations the option to earmark and assemble parcels for developments that align with existing community plans. We also urge the Land Bank to employ the assistance of PCRG's Vacant Property Working Group (VPWG) to serve as the liaison between communities and government on public policy development and real estate acquisition.

OPDC is working to implement *The Oakland 2025 Master Plan: A Vision for Sustainable Living and Mobility* to steer growth so that the entire neighborhood benefits. We believe this request is consistent with Oakland 2025's recommendations.

Thank you for considering our input while crafting the amendments; we look forward to hearing your thoughts on our additional feedback.

Sincerely,

Wanda E. Wilson
Executive Director

CC via electronic mail:
Bruce Kraus, Member of Council, District 3

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R. Daniel Lavelle, Member of Council, District 6
Dan Gilman, Member of Council, District 8
Ernie Hogan, Executive Director, Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group