



**PATRICK DOWD**  
MEMBER OF COUNCIL, CITY OF PITTSBURGH



June 20, 2012

Mayor Ravenstahl,

As the chairperson of the Intergovernmental Affairs Committee and likely future Council representative of the Lower Strip District, I continue to hold legislation related to the proposed \$50 million TIF for the Buncher redevelopment of the Lower Strip District.

I am again asking you and the URA to restructure the Buncher deal. The documents provided at my request confirm that you and the URA have tied together the future of the Lower Strip District with the 43rd Street and 62nd Street parcels in Lawrenceville. In doing this, your long-standing promise to remove truck traffic from Central Lawrenceville by relocating the 43rd Street Buncher distribution center has also become tied to the deal. Because of the agreement struck with Buncher, the URA will pay an estimated \$8 million for the 43rd Street site and receive less than \$1 million from Buncher for the 62nd Street site, even in light of the fact that the 62nd Street site is far more valuable than the sale price reflects.

The URA recently admitted it does not have the funds required to execute the land swap in Lawrenceville, thereby making it impossible for you to fulfill your promise to residents to alleviate truck traffic. By holding the legislation I am giving you time to restructure the deal and fulfill your promise to the residents of Lawrenceville.

I am also holding the legislation to allow the planning process to further unfold. Currently, there is no approved development plan – a document setting parameters on how the redevelopment of the Lower Strip District would occur. A development plan would likely include different types of permitted buildings, height and density restrictions, and time tables for construction. All of these specifications work to hold the developer accountable.

Previous Councils have approved other TIF's, such as the Southside Works and the Pittsburgh Technology Center, with less concern for development plans. In those cases, however, the public controlled all or most of the land being developed, releasing it to the developer for reuse only after the public interest was satisfied. In the case of the Buncher redevelopment of the Lower Strip District, the public owns little or no land, resulting in little or no control today and likely even less if the TIF were to be approved as originally presented.

Given the magnitude of public investment and minimal public control, Council is best serving the public by slowing down the TIF legislation to allow for public discussion of the development plan to unfold.

A development plan should also include an explicit list of public improvements (riverfront trails, public open space, stormwater management facilities, trees, etc.) for which public funds would be used. It is irresponsible for you to ask the public or Council to debate or support any TIF - let alone the largest TIF in Pittsburgh's history - without a definitive set of public improvements. Listing tens of millions of dollars as "TBD" is no way to hold a developer accountable for their use of public dollars.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the Strip District is Pittsburgh's grocery store; it is an integral part of the life and vibrancy in this region. You and the Buncher Company want to let the market determine where \$40 million of the TIF proceeds would go. Your "laissez-faire" policy for development and lack of regard for local flavor is reminiscent of the era of so-called urban renewal – the results of which include the devastating East Liberty and Allegheny Center redevelopment projects - and could have similarly detrimental results in the Strip District.

I am, therefore, holding the Buncher TIF legislation to provide you with time to restructure the Buncher deal, thereby enabling you to fulfill your promises to Lawrenceville residents and finalize the list of "TBD" improvements in your proposal. All of this will enable Council and the public to evaluate more accurately the effects this proposed redevelopment will have on the Strip District and on Pittsburgh as a whole.

Sincerely



Patrick Dowd  
City Council Member