Save the Date: CONNECT’s Eighth Annual Legislative Session & Reception!

Mark your calendars for CONNECT’s Eighth Annual Legislative Session and Reception on Thursday, April 20, 2017, 4-7pm at the Circuit Center (5 Hot Metal Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15203). Join our members, partners, funders, and friends to hear more about our accomplishments of the last year, and to identify priorities for the year to come. Cocktails and hors d’oeuvres will be served at the reception. Please send your RSVP to CONNECT@pitt.edu.

Sponsorship opportunities are available! Contact Lindsay Angelo at lindsayangelo@pitt.edu or at 412-648-2282 for more information.

Community Profile: Brentwood Borough

Brentwood Tackles Blight, Invests in Community

Located directly south of the City of Pittsburgh, Brentwood Borough boasts excellent transit service, a walkable main street, numerous retail destinations, green space, and ample parking for residents and their families.

The Borough has taken an active role to improve and build upon the quality of life for its residents, including taking aggressive action to remediate blight within municipal borders. In 2013, after spending several years revising landlord registration rules, Council enacted a rental property inspection program to ensure that landlords keep rental properties in safe conditions. The program requires the borough’s code enforcement officer to inspect each rental property at least once every five years. Now in its third year, Brentwood Borough Manager George Zboyovsky notes that the program resulted in tens of thousands of dollars in repairs to rental homes by landlords and rental companies. Eric Peccon, Brentwood Assistant Borough Manager, comments, “the rental list is nearly complete, with both big and small landlords and companies.
Brentwood Borough Council has supported this process as well, and overall, this has improved the perception of renting in Brentwood.”

Another step that Brentwood Borough has taken to combat blight includes the establishment of a Landlord License requirement that can be revoked for various offenses ranging from outstanding borough taxes, sewage, etc. to code violations. This requirement has been successful in ensuring that property owners keep their properties up to code.

These initiatives have been a joint effort between Council, the Mayor, the Borough Manager, the Police Department and the Code Department, and Peccen notes that “we’ve been seeing results. There are still issues, but they are smaller in scope. There has been a discernable difference since we started to take more proactive approach to addressing blight.”

Recently, the boroughs of Brentwood and Whitehall completed a streetscape enhancement overlay zoning district along Route 51 that requires new commercial development to install pedestrian-scale lighting, landscaping, trash cans, benches, and bicycle racks, among other amenities. Both municipalities invested their own funds into this project, and received grants from the PA Department of Community and Economic Development, as well as the Local Government Academy.

Finally, Brentwood’s investment into amenities including its public park (recent improvements totaled over $6 million), pool, and other recreation facilities has been substantial, and they believe these investments have brought in visitors and new residents. “From a community development standpoint, in order to attract residents, we can’t just worry about marketing and the quality of individual homes, we must also have amenities, places for our residents to go and things for them to do. This can have a residual effect, with newcomers spending more time here.”

CONNECT Holds 2017 Strategy Session
Engagement
Morningstar Community Services, Inc.

Communications Director
Green Building Alliance

Upcoming Events

Public Hearing on E-Cigarette Use
Monday, February 6, 2017
5PM
Allegheny County Courthouse
436 Grant Street – Gold Room
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
Allegheny County Council will review regulations unanimously passed by the Allegheny County Board of Health that ban the use of electronic cigarettes in indoor public places where traditional cigarettes are permitted. Click on the link above for more information or to register to speak at the hearing.

University of Pittsburgh: Local Government Career Panel
Wednesday, March 1, 2017
12:15-1:15PM
Room 3610, Wesley Posvar Hall
230 South Bouquet Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15260
The panel will include University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs (GSPIA) alumni who now work in local government in the Pittsburgh region.

Local Government Academy Municipal Internship Fair
Thursday, March 30, 2017
12-2:30PM
William Pitt Union, Kurtzman Room
3959 Fifth Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
Both graduate and undergraduate students can register for the Municipal Internship Program, and interested municipalities can submit a project application.

Save the Date:
Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group’s 7th Annual Community Development Summit
Wednesday, May 24 - Thursday, May 25, 2017
Location and other details to follow.

Open Streets Pittsburgh Event

Last week, CONNECT held a productive strategy session with our members, where we discussed CONNECT’s strengths and weaknesses, and planned for 2017 and beyond. Kathy Coder, Councilwoman of Bellevue and former CONNECT Chair, facilitated the session. Many great ideas were shared and priorities were set, so we’re off to work! Thank you to Kathy Coder for facilitating, and to Ruthann Omer and Gateway Engineers for hosting!

Live Well Allegheny Holds First Learning Collaborative!

On January 10, Live Well Allegheny (LWA) convened over 70 partners representing municipalities, schools, community organizations, and workplaces who learned more about the LWA campaign, discussed Health in All Policies and its application to different types of organizations, and identified ways to collaborate with one another. The event provided ample opportunities for participants to learn from their peers and engage panel speakers in their areas of expertise. Importantly, it highlighted the campaign’s ability to provide tools and resources for community partners that are available to LWA communities. To learn more about meeting takeaways, click here.

ALCOSAN Launches Customer Assistance Program

ALCOSAN, Dollar Energy Fund serving as the program administrator, is offering a new customer assistance program aimed at helping families afford their sewage treatment bills. The Clean Water Assistance Fund is now available to eligible residential customers within ALCOSAN’s service territory. The new program will provide a credit of $30 applied every three months to eligible customer accounts. The credit would appear on the account every three months regardless if the customer is billed monthly, bimonthly, or quarterly. Learn more about the program.

Thank you to Ross Township for hosting CONNECT’s January 2017 Executive Committee Meeting!

CONNECT’s first Executive Committee meeting of 2017 had a great turnout of over 40 attendees from 19 member municipalities. Breen Masciotra from the Port Authority of Allegheny County (PAAC) joined us to provide an update on recent ridership and fare changes and other PAAC happenings. Attendees also heard from ALCOSAN regarding the launch of their Customer Assistance Program, Rebecca Kiernan, the City of Pittsburgh’s Senior Resiliency Coordinator who shared information about opportunities available through their Resilient Pittsburgh Platform Partners, and updates on CONNECT’s health, EMS, and infrastructure coordination efforts. Thank you again to Ross Township for having us (and the sandwiches weren’t bad either)!

Tri-COG Land Bank Advances as Finalist for Technical Assistance Scholarship Program (TASP)

The Tri-COG Land Bank has been selected as one of five finalists in the Center for Community Progress’ Technical Assistance Scholarship Program! The finalists...
Sunday, May 28, 2017
9AM – 1PM
OpenStreetsPGH is part of a movement called Ciclovia, which includes 100s of cities across the globe. OpenStreetsPGH is also a group of businesses, neighbors, non-profits, and others who want to help Pittsburgh be the healthiest, most active, and happiest city it can be. All are welcome!

are in competition to receive one of up to three technical assistance scholarships from the Center for Community Progress, a national nonprofit that helps communities revitalize vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties. As finalists, the Tri-COG Land Bank received no-cost site visits from national experts, as well as assessments of their current activities and systems to address vacant and blighted properties. Up to three of the finalists will be chosen as recipients of a full scholarship through TASP, which consists of up to 400 hours of deeply subsidized technical assistance over the course of nine months in 2017 to help recipient communities break new ground in their efforts to address property vacancy and abandonment.

Congratulations to the Tri-COG Land Bank and we wish you continued success in the competition!

PCRG is Seeking Proposals for Upcoming Summit!

Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group’s (PCRG) is now accepting proposals for their 7th Annual Community Development Summit, CommUNITY: The Power of People in Action. This year’s Summit will examine how people take concepts, build support, and put them into action. The Summit will lift up models that have achieved lasting change that pays dividends to residents, entrepreneurs, responsible developers and investors, while breaking the cycle of triage management and creating true wealth and opportunity.

PCRG is seeking directors, coordinators, and experienced community development practitioners of all kinds to present and address Summit attendees. The Summit aims to include those who are interacting with people on the ground or putting a new program into motion. Click here to learn more, and submit your proposal (due by midnight, February 12, 2017).

Local Government Academy (LGA) Online Course, Contemplating Governing: Tackling Candidate Red Tape Now Online

Contemplating Governing’s Session 1 is now available online to help ensure that local candidates have the resources they need to get on the primary ballot. The purpose of this session is to educate candidates on the important deadlines and filing requirements they will face in order to appear on the May 16th Pennsylvania primary ballot. Click here to register for the course.

Good Reads

Featured:

Several CONNECT municipalities have received grants for projects ranging from boat launches to streetscapes. Congratulations, McKees Rocks, Sharpsburg, Bellevue, and Mt Oliver!

$750,000 Grant for Phase I of Chartiers Avenue Streetscape Plan
McKees Rocks Community Development Corporation
December 26, 2016

Sharpsburg gets $38K to upgrade boat launch
TribLIVE
Tuesday, January 3, 2017

Bellevue awarded $115,000 state grant for Bayne Park improvements
January 2017

Mt. Oliver receives funding to expand streetscape
South Pittsburgh Reporter
January 17, 2017

Will EMS Fee-For-Service Change with Obamacare Repeal?
EfficientGov
January 19, 2017

ALCOSAN Begins Customer Assistance Program
CBS Pittsburgh
January 9, 2017

Who’s Next: Politics; These 19 people are shaping Pittsburgh’s political scene
The Incline
January 5, 2017

Downtown Pittsburgh’s Strawberry Way named favorite ‘Street Transformation’
Pittsburgh City Paper
January 5, 2017

City of Pittsburgh and PWSA Draft City-Wide Green First Plan – Open for Public Comment
Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority

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