



Congress of Neighboring Communities Annual Report

January 2013

*A special thanks to our funders, partners and the
University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public and International Affairs*

2013 - CELEBRATING FIVE YEARS OF CONNECT

In the fall of 2008, Dr. David Miller invited the elected leaders from the City of Pittsburgh and the municipalities that share a border with the City together to discuss how they might work together. At that time, we never would have imagined that five years later the leaders of these communities would find so much that unites them. The trust and camaraderie developed among our leaders has given them the confidence to embark on a strategic plan to outline our region's future.

CONNECT has grown stronger each year and continues to collaboratively address the most pressing challenges facing the urban core of Allegheny County. Whether it is proposing solutions to sewer governance issues, advocating for important land banking legislation to help member municipalities address blight in their communities or advocating for sensible funding solutions for public transportation, CONNECT stands apart from other intergovernmental cooperation efforts because of our unique membership and the forum we provide for their voices to be heard. Since our first meeting we have known that the simple act of bringing leaders together to talk about what they have in common, rather than what separates them and forging strong relationships based on trust would lead us to accomplishing many goals that benefit all of us.

As we embark on our fifth year, I encourage you to learn about what we have accomplished, what we seek to accomplish together and why this coalition of local governments is one of the most exciting innovations in local government our region has ever seen.



Kathy Risko
Executive Director

PROGRESS ON POLICY ISSUE AREAS AND RESOLUTIONS

Every year at the annual CONNECT Congress; the municipalities adopt a number of resolutions that guide the work of the organization. Since our first legislative session in June 2009, the legislative body has passed 81 resolutions on issues ranging from organizational issues to policy related issues like emergency medical services, blighted and vacant property, economic development and water and sewer infrastructure. This year through an innovative partnership and funding from the US Department of Energy, CONNECT municipalities developed a solar coding, zoning and permitting ordinance to eliminate the barriers and lower the cost of installing solar panels on residential and business structures. As CONNECT has evolved so has the sophistication and depth of the issues addressed – a few highlights for 2012 are below.



2012- 2013 CONNECT Chair
Dan DeMarco (Ross Township)



CONNECT Representatives: (L to R) Jim Sloss (Pittsburgh), Bob Callen (Crafton) and Tom Hartwick (Castle Shannon)

Highlights from 2012 Policy Initiatives

SUNSHOT

CONNECT has been an active partner in the US Department of Energy Rooftop Solar Challenge grant received by the region to streamline solar zoning, coding and permitting processes that will lower the costs

of installation and expand the market for solar power in

Southwestern Pennsylvania. Twenty four municipalities have been meeting regularly to identify common ground and develop a model ordinance that can be applied by municipalities across our area to create standards to ensure safe regulation and minimize the burden on residents and businesses. The model ordinance was finalized in late 2012 and many municipalities are in the county's zoning review process, so it can be put to a vote by local councils.

CDC CONGRESS

In March 2012, CONNECT hosted a Community Development Congress (CDC) – a one-day event that convened the economic development organizations operating in CONNECT to discuss relevant policy issues, opportunities for collaboration, and the challenges they face. The goal of the summit was to apply the same successful CONNECT model to economic development entities to foster collaborative economic and community development projects that benefit the urban core of Allegheny County.

Based on the conversations and obvious needs of the economic development entities operating in our urban core, the elected officials of CONNECT adopted a resolution at the 2012 Legislative Session to embark on the development of an innovative Integrated Community Economic Development (ICED) plan for the urban core.

Resolution 12-10

WHEREAS CONNECT is an institution that has engaged the leaders of 37 municipalities that comprise the urban core of Allegheny County as a means of shared governing; and

WHEREAS CONNECT communities have been working together to address a variety of policy issues including transportation and green infrastructure and blighted and abandoned properties; and

WHEREAS each CONNECT community is engaged in community and economic development processes in their communities but recognize that a coordinated approach is needed to effectively leverage the power of the urban core.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that CONNECT will embark on a multi-year project which will develop the first-known Integrated Community Economic Development Plan (ICED) for the urban core.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT TEMPLATE

The CONNECT Solicitors Working Group developed the Model Intergovernmental Agreement to promote more efficient and effective cooperation between CONNECT municipalities, by creating a framework for formalizing intermunicipal cooperative arrangements that is based upon the Pennsylvania Intergovernmental Cooperation Law. This model agreement was adopted by CONNECT members at the 2012 Congress through resolution 12-03.

Resolution 12-03

WHEREAS CONNECT passed Resolutions 11-10 and 11-11, recognizing the value of a model framework for intergovernmental agreements as a resource for CONNECT municipalities and resolved that the Solicitor Working Group would develop such a framework; and

WHEREAS the Solicitor Working Group has drafted a framework intergovernmental agreement to assist the CONNECT municipalities in formalizing the terms of cooperative arrangements in an effective and expeditious manner; and

WHEREAS the framework developed is a basic model to be utilized as a resource, but use of the framework cannot be mandated and each contractual arrangement requires unique considerations; and

WHEREAS the basic model agreement is intended to serve as a guide for municipalities to form agreements consistent with the Pennsylvania Intergovernmental Cooperation Law, but that the framework developed does not constitute legal advice from any individual attorney or the Solicitor Working Group as a whole.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that CONNECT accepts the framework intergovernmental agreement developed by the Solicitor Working Group for use by CONNECT municipalities as a resource to encourage effective and efficient cooperation between its members.

THE CONNECT PROPOSAL FOR REGIONAL SEWER MANAGEMENT

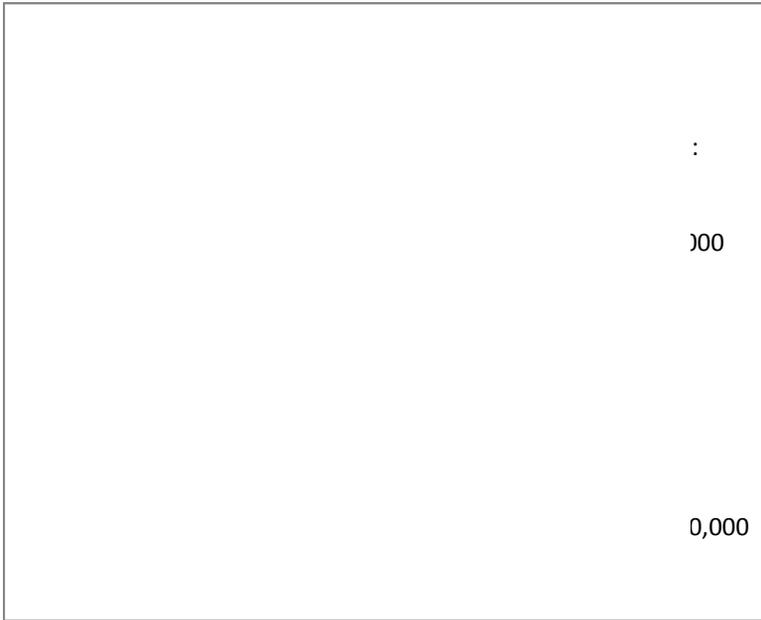
CONNECT adopted the “Options for Regional Sewer System Management” study at the 2011 Congress and based on those recommendations requested ALCOSAN to take title of 73 miles of multijurisdictional trunk sewers. This proposal has been incorporated into the options being considered by the members of the Sewer Regionalization Study Review Panel which is chaired by Dr. Jared Cohon and staffed by the Allegheny Conference on Community Development. While the group has not yet released its recommendations, it is believed that an enhanced version of CONNECT’s proposal is the likely consensus choice. Beyond these meetings, CONNECT is partnering with 3 Rivers Wet Weather, Nine Mile Run Watershed Association, Pennsylvania Environmental Council and the Clean Rivers Campaign to conduct a municipal outreach program that will focus on incorporating cost-effective green infrastructure and source reduction into the municipal wet weather plans.



(L to R): John Schombert (3 Rivers Wet Weather), Kathy DePuy (Whitehall), Vincent Cinski (Millvale)

BLIGHT AND ABANDONMENT COALITION

In 2011, CONNECT and Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group formed the Blight and Abandonment Coalition (BAC), a coalition of municipal leaders who are working together to address vacant, nuisance and under-maintained properties in their communities. This past year focused on education and sharing best practices – including a tour of the Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation housing redevelopment project in Wilkinsburg. Sharing locally-implemented best practices and policies helps municipal officials expand the toolbox they have to combat this serious issue. Through the BAC, CONNECT was also a partner in the campaign advocating for land banking legislation which passed in late autumn. In 2013, CONNECT will work be working diligently with our partners to develop a land bank that will benefit our region.



FINANCIALS

In our first year of soliciting municipal contributions from member communities, CONNECT successfully raised over \$40K from municipal members.

CONNECT has been successful in raising more than a half million dollars in funds from a variety of sources and continues to diversify our funding to ensure sustainability.

MEDIA HITS 2012

Since its inception, CONNECT has garnered tremendous interest in the greater Pittsburgh region. Check out the media hits below to see some of the great CONNECT coverage.

Sprawl and Policies

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, September 2, 2012

'We Buy Houses': Decline and Opportunity in Pittsburgh's East Suburbs

The Atlantic Cities Magazine, August 21, 2012

Wet Weather - Essential Pittsburgh

Essential Public Radio, July 27, 2012

Plan in works to avoid Port Authority cutbacks

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, July 4, 2012

CONNECT conference unites municipalities on Port Authority resolution

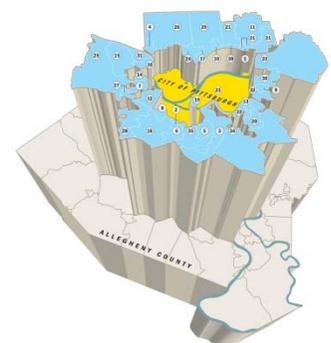
The Pitt News, June 14, 2012

O'Hara, Aspinwall, Sharpsburg decry cuts in transit service

Valley News Dispatch, January 29, 2012



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COMMUNITY OUTREACH and PARTNERS

We could not accomplish much of our work without our many valued community and governmental partners. As we have in years passed, we continue to collaborate with a variety of organizations including Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, Allegheny Conference on Community Development, Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group, 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania, Port Authority of Allegheny County, Wilksburg CDC, Economic Development South, Carnegie CDC, Pittsburgh Partnership on Neighborhood Development, Three Rivers Wet Weather, Pennsylvania Environmental Council, Clean Rivers Campaign, Nine Mile Run Watershed Association, McKees Rocks CDC, Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership, Local Government Academy, Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission, Allegheny County EMS Council, Center for Emergency Medicine, Pennsylvania Energy Aggregation Program, Green Infrastructure Network, Citizens for Pennsylvania's Future, Coro Center for Civic Leadership, GTECH Strategies and Allegheny County Economic Development.



Vanessa McCarthy Johnson (Wilksburg) and Dr. Leon Haley (GSPIA Professor)



(L to R): Karen Tomaszewski (Etna), Mary Ellen Ramage (Etna), Thomas Rengers (Etna), Pat Schaefer (Edgewood, Former CONNECT Chair), Warren Cecconi (Edgewood), Tom Lloyd (Dormont)

ABOUT CONNECT

CONNECT (The Congress of Neighboring Communities) was established in 2008 as an innovative model of intergovernmental cooperation that helps to address common public policy issues facing the City of Pittsburgh and its first-ring suburbs within Allegheny County, a county often cited as one of the most jurisdictionally complex and fragmented in the United States.

CONNECT's mission is to coordinate the activities of the City of Pittsburgh and the 36 neighboring municipalities that comprise the region's urban core through: advocating for and voicing the collective interests of the urban core and its nearly 690,000 residents; developing and enhancing ways the

37 municipalities work together to deliver important public services; and maintaining a forum for the discussion, deliberation and implementation of new ways to maximize economic prosperity for Western Pennsylvania. CONNECT emerged as a response to the absence of a formal structure for dialogue among the communities that comprise the economic and political powerhouse of Southwestern Pennsylvania. CONNECT's thirty-seven neighboring municipalities, with a combined population of 378,781, together with the City of Pittsburgh, with a population of 305,704 creates a core community of 684,485.