



[www.pcr.org](http://www.pcr.org)

## MEMBERS

Allegheny West Civic Council

Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation

Central Northside Neighborhood Council

East Allegheny Community Council

East Liberty Concerned Citizens Council

East Liberty Development, Inc.

Fineview Citizens Council

Friendship Development Associates

Garfield Jubilee Association

Hazelwood Initiative, Inc.

Highland Park Community Development Corporation

Hill Community Development Corporation

Lincoln-Larimer Community Development Corporation

Manchester Citizens Corporation

Mt. Washington Community Development Corporation

Northside Leadership Conference

Oakland Planning and Development Corporation

Polish Hill Civic Association

South Side Local Development Company

Troy Hill Citizens, Inc.

West Pittsburgh Partnership for Regional Development, Inc.

August 27, 2008

TO: Board Members, Pittsburgh Public School District

RE: Sale of Pittsburgh Public School Building

Dear Pittsburgh Public School Board Members

PCRG is a non-profit organization whose mission is to bring equitable resources into our communities. As a member-based organization representing over 20 neighborhood groups and 125,000 lives in those neighborhoods, we believe there must be public comment and neighborhood input prior to the vote tonight on authorizing the district to hire two auction firms to assist with the auctioning of 18 surplus school buildings – four of which are being authorized for immediate auction.

Discussions of your action with our member groups reveals consensus that they have not been involved in discussion surrounding the future use of these buildings. Their efforts at preserving housing values through a strong focus on new construction, rehabilitation of existing structures, public safety and development of commercial corridors make them key players in the revitalization of Pittsburgh's neighborhoods. To not involve these neighborhood groups in decisions on how these centrally-located buildings are going to be used does not give them respect as partners on community renewal.

These groups have been responsible for stabilizing and increasing community values throughout the city as a result of their neighborhood plans and strategic directions. Success stories can be found in every area, from South Side Local Development Company, East Liberty Development, Inc. Oakland Planning and Development, Friendship Development Associates and more. Each of these neighborhoods has been successful because of strong community involvement and partnerships with the City of Pittsburgh, the Urban Redevelopment Authority, City Planning our Financial Institutions and state elected officials who all are passionate about rebuilding our communities.

While we understand the concerns surrounding empty school buildings and the financial burden Pittsburgh Public Schools face as a result of these, we cannot overlook the necessity of working with residents and community groups in our city to identify alternative uses and potential buyers that fit into the strategic vision they have established through the public community planning process.

A quick look at how other school districts have partnered with neighborhood groups shows:

- *Washington, DC* (March-June 2008) deliberated how to use two soon-to-be vacant school buildings in Ward I. The Office of City Planning and Mayor reinforced in March that "no closed school buildings would

---

1901 CENTRE AVE. · STE. 200 · PITTSBURGH, PA 15219  
PHONE: (412) 391-6732 · FAX: (412) 391-6737



[www.pcr.org](http://www.pcr.org)

## MEMBERS

Allegheny West Civic Council

Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation

Central Northside Neighborhood Council

East Allegheny Community Council

East Liberty Concerned Citizens Council

East Liberty Development, Inc.

Fineview Citizens Council

Friendship Development Associates

Garfield Jubilee Association

Hazelwood Initiative, Inc.

Highland Park Community Development Corporation

Hill Community Development Corporation

Lincoln-Larimer Community Development Corporation

Manchester Citizens Corporation

Mt. Washington Community Development Corporation

Northside Leadership Conference

Oakland Planning and Development Corporation

Polish Hill Civic Association

South Side Local Development Company

Troy Hill Citizens, Inc.

West Pittsburgh Partnership for Regional Development, Inc.

be sold and all would remain city property – either to be used as a school, a government office or some kind of public purpose” (Washington Post, March 26, 2008). Final decisions were made public in June, which showed that one school would become the home of the Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department and the other will house the Department of Parks and Recreation.

- When Roman Catholic Diocese had a drop in enrollment in the 1980s, it was forced to close many of its schools in *Long Island, NY*. Those schools have now either been renovated or demolished (if there was too much structural damage to renovate) and become one-bedroom apartments for senior citizens. They charge \$100 per month in rent and provide tenants with social and health services (newer complexes charge between \$475 and \$690 per month, still well below other rent prices in the area). The project has been so successful that there are now year-long waiting lists for unfinished units. The project was financed in part by the New York State Housing Trust Fund and by the Federal Low-income Housing Tax Credits program.
- *Mineola, NY* closed two schools in 1978. Since then one of the schools has housed a vocational school program for the district, a school (run by a separate organization) for “problem teenagers,” a gifted program, GED program, alternative high school including home teaching services for the same school district, and is now becoming the Nassau Suffolk School for Autism. The Levittown Tribune is suggesting the School for Autism is good for the community because it will provide the neighborhood with a good tenant, good neighbors and bring 25 students rather than the 200 students when the original elementary school was open, into the community daily. The second vacant school has been renovated into a day care facility for the school district’s staff members.

Surely the expertise and creativity of the Mayor’s Office, City Council, URA, Neighborhood Groups and the Pittsburgh Public School can be put to great use to create strategies to re-use these buildings that are innovative and embraced by all impacted partners.

PCRG implores the Pittsburgh Public School Board to delay its decision to authorize an auction company to sell your properties until public comment is heard and neighborhood groups consulted concerning potential reuse strategies and buyers.

Sincerely,

*Steven B. Shivak*

Steven B. Shivak  
Executive Director

---

1901 CENTRE AVE. · STE. 200 · PITTSBURGH, PA 15219  
PHONE: (412) 391-6732 · FAX: (412) 391-6737