October 21, 2016

To: Land Bank Board of Directors

At the urging of our members, PCRG’s Vacant Property Working Group (VPWG) has advocated for the policies, tools, and resources that empower our communities to transform the challenges of blight and vacancy into opportunities for stability, growth, and inclusivity since 1996. The founding issue that has remained central to these efforts has been the fight for a community-serving land bank. The successful passage of legislation that created the Pittsburgh Land Bank in April of 2014 was not without struggle, but we’re grateful that minority, labor, environmental, community development, and other leaders joined us to say - loud and clear - that community is the priority.

PCRG remains committed to fulfilling the journey that our members set out upon 20 years ago. To that end, we respectfully request the following:

- The Draft Policies and Procedures are released publicly prior to the legislated 5 community meetings, allowing community organizations adequate time to review them and educate residents about the process.
- Representatives of the Land Bank Board of Directors meet with PCRG staff and VPWG representatives to review and receive feedback on the Draft Policies and Procedures and how they can strengthen and improve Pittsburgh’s land-recycling system.
- The legislated 5 community meetings around Policies and Procedures are held no later than the end of February 2017.

We are thankful for the significant progress that the City, URA, and Land Bank Board of Directors have made in developing the required organizational and legal infrastructure needed for the Land Bank to function effectively. Vital to that are the Policies and Procedures that will govern the Land Bank’s day-to-day operations, including the acquisition and disposition of property and how the Land Bank responds to and facilitates community priorities.

Community organizations and the residents they serve will undoubtedly be impacted by the activities of the Land Bank. It’s important that residents are prepared to meaningfully participate in discussions about its Policies and Procedures. We are committed to ensuring that the priorities of our members and their communities are preserved, and that the Land Bank Policies and Procedures are created through a robust and inclusive manner that results in a transformative tool that truly serves - and is driven by - Pittsburgh’s communities. This important process deserves no less.
PCRG has consistently served as the leading partner and expert on policies and implementation of land-recycling activities in Pittsburgh, and for 20 years our VPWG and Membership have passionately championed land banking as a means to strengthen and improve these systems. The Land Bank is a critical tool needed to overcome the blight and vacancy that many of our communities continue to struggle with. Much work has been invested in creating the Land Bank, and we are very close. We need an operational Land Bank soon.

In continued partnership,

Ernie Hogan  
Executive Director

LaShawn Burton-Faulk  
Chair, Board of Directors

Aggie Brose  
Immediate Past Chair, Board of Directors

Chair, VPWG

Allegheny Land Trust  
Amani Christian Community Development Corp.

Bloomfield Development Corp.  
Bloomfield-Garfield Corp.

Economic Development South  
Fineview Citizens Council

GTECH Strategies, Inc.  
Habitat for Humanity of Greater Pittsburgh

Hazelwood Initiative  
Hill Community Development Corp.

Hill House Economic Development Corp.  
Hilltop Alliance

Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania  
Larimer Consensus Group

Lawrenceville Corp.  
Lawrenceville United

Lawrenceville Corp.,  
Manchester Citizens Corp.

McKees-Rocks CDC  
Mexican War Streets Society

Millvale Borough Development Corp.  
Mount Washington CDC

NeighborWorks Western PA  
Northside Leadership Conference

Oakland Planning and Development Corporation  
Operation Better Block

Perry Hilltop Citizens Council  
Penn Hills CDC

Pittsburgh Downtown CDC  
Pittsburgh Housing Development Association

Pittsburgh Project  
Polish Hill Civic Association

Rebuilding Together Pittsburgh  
Ross Economic Development Sharpsburg Neighborhood Organization

South Side Community Council  
South Side Local Development Company

South Side Slopes Neighborhood Association  
Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition

Troy Hill Citizens, Inc.  
The Pittsburgh Project

cc: Mayor Peduto  
Kevin Acklin