Resilience in Community Development - Recommendations and Applications in Pittsburgh
December 2015

In an effort to maximize the social inclusion, equity, and participation of Pittsburgh's most vulnerable communities in The City's new Climate and Resilience Plan, GTECH has explored feasible application of resilience principles to the local community development context. Through a range of national best practice benchmarking, primary interviews, expert testimonials, and local focus groups GTECH has honed overarching observations combined with a contextual analysis of the local community development landscape to inform the recommendations outlined below.

For the purpose of this paper, GTECH has adopted the Kresge Foundation's definition of resilience. That definition is, *the capacity of a community to anticipate, plan for, and mitigate the risks—and seize the opportunities—associated with environmental and social change.*

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Actionable Recommendations:

The following recommendations are ranked in order based upon breadth of reach, leverage potential of local resources, costs, and the set of activities enabled through the action. While these recommendations are intended to dovetail with tenants of The City's 100 Resilient City framework some of them require a high level of City ownership and sponsorship, while others may require collaboration to create a new model and/or program outside of the City's ownership.

1. ***Establish Advisory Network of Low-Moderate Income Neighborhood Anchor-based Institutions:*** Through this mechanism the rich network of community based organizations have a clear point of engagement in the iteration of implementations through the Office of Resilience. Existing networks such as the Vacant Property Working Group facilitated by PCRG, The Pittsburgh Interfaith Impact Network, and Remake Learning make for ease of implementation.

2. ***Integrate Resilience Oriented Evaluation to Neighborhood Allies Funded Projects:*** As a primary hub for funding for communities and organizations in vulnerable places, this serves as an appropriate and effective nudge for both planning and information collection. Parameters of criteria and information need to be honed.

3. ***Develop Communication Toolkit for Resilience Communications and an associated Customized Communication Resource for Community Applications:*** Consistent, relevant, and straightforward language will enable effective outreach, engagement and partnership for all ancillary activities. Targeting this resource towards leadership development programs (Such as Coro and My Brother's Keeper) provide "Resilience Curriculum in Accessible Language" that embeds awareness into existing channels of education.

4. ***Host Dedicated Forum to Define Community Development, Sustainability and Resilience:*** While there are many activities in many communities addressing principles of environmental sustainability and elements of resilience, there is no primary forum to define City wide goals and objectives. Leverage of the Community Development Summit produced by PCRG and/or P4 may serve as an adequate venue for such a dialogue.

5. ***Establish Standardized Participatory Data and Needs Assessment Process:*** Primary climate based needs are modeled per community as it pertains to flood management and air quality. Yet a consistent process to identify local social and environmental threats needs to be established and represents an opportunity for engaging residents in such a data collection process. Critical partners include The Allegheny County Health Department and The Western PA Regional Data Center.

6. ***Create Sustainability/Community Expertise Advisory Committee:*** A City priority, likely already in motion and could be related to recommendation #1.

7. *Host Quarterly Community Information Sessions on a Range of Topics:* The key to this will be to conduct the meetings in alignment with existing CBO gatherings to maximize audience attendance.

8. *Establish A Neighborhood Empowerment Network of Equipped and Informed Individuals:* Based off of the concept that networks of motivated residents are key to embedding resilience concepts directly into neighborhoods. These Ambassadors would be responsible for implementing tangible actions that would directly result in an increase in awareness around resiliency and tools required for improving community health and conversations around resiliency. While requiring a high level of program administration and costs the opportunity to cultivate a network of expertise at a community level enables a high level of capability and success for almost all of the other recommendations. GTECH's Ambassador program combined with Coro's Neighborhood Leaders program and Neighborhood Allies Leadership forum may serve as effective partners.

9. *Develop Grassroots Community Health Engagement Strategy (e.g. Mobile Engagement):* Translating planning and theory into tangible activities designed to engage community members could be a highly effective method to enable increased awareness and even social cohesion.

10. *Host 2016 Resiliency Housing Forum:* Changing neighborhood demographics, shortage of affordable housing inventory, and pending legislation combined with a dense set of community development resources and intermediaries make this an ideal issue to embed resilience planning and information dissemination.

11. *Establish Program for Developers to Work with Neighborhood Level Plans:* Building from existing priorities within City Planning and The URA, this type of activity may yield points of leverage and investment as exemplified in Lawrenceville and The Northside.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Over the past several decades, our region has faced numerous acute and chronic stressors that have hampered our growth. An increased sense of responsibility for our actions means that the future of Pittsburgh will be shaped by the residents who call this city home. This report outlines some of the earliest interventions related to the development of communities that will engage, empower and equip individuals to be apart of the process of creating more resilient places.

Moving forward, it will be critical to work with partners identified in this report to determine the feasibility of each recommendation. We have ranked each recommendation on several criteria to determine which should be prioritized to receive funding. In the continuation of our work, the next steps in this process are:

- Sustain coordination with key partners (i.e. The Office of Sustainability, Neighborhood Allies and the RAND Corporation) to verify the prioritized recommendations and determine the feasibility for moving forward in the short-term with a handful of those highlighted as high priority.

- Provide this report to the Office of Sustainability and the RAND Corporation for vetting and incorporation into the City's Preliminary Resiliency Assessment, and ultimately, the finalized resiliency plan.

- Continue to treat this report as a working document, meaning that recommendations are subject to alteration and enhancement as more work around the final resiliency plan solidifies.

A resilient community can mitigate both its contribution to climate change and the disruption caused locally by chronic and acute stressors. As an organization, we are dedicated to increasing the resiliency of communities in our region, however, increased investment in both people and place is needed to accomplish this. We look forward to continuing to work with our partners in the community development sector in order to identify the resources and champions necessary for building resiliency in Pittsburgh.