

New Leadership
New Approach
New Ideas

NEIGHBORHOOD ALLIES

An accomplishments report: May 2014-July 2015

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New Leadership, New Approach and New Ideas are Taking Shape at Neighborhood Allies

In early 2014, Neighborhood Allies formally re-launched as a new and improved 21st century community development organization, with a renewed and revamped commitment to improving the social and physical infrastructures of Pittsburgh's distressed and transitional communities.

Neighborhood Allies believes that Pittsburgh's future is built upon strong neighborhoods. We're hard at work developing and launching new and innovative strategies that will directly improve the quality of life in our neighborhoods; building our capacity to deliver measurable results and collective impact to communities and residents at the level they need and deserve; making investments that support resident and neighborhood dreams and aspirations; and building strong relationships with a long list of new partners.

This report highlights the significant Neighborhood Allies accomplishments in its first year, under new leadership:

Bold New Face and Expertise

In May 2014, we welcomed our inaugural President, Presley Gillespie, to the team. Since his first day, Presley has been elevating the organization's capacity to serve as a valued community development partner. Unlike any other community development organization in Pittsburgh, Neighborhood Allies is equal parts funder, lender, connector and consultant: a real ally.

When Presley came on board, he committed to injecting new energy by building a forward-thinking, solutions-oriented community development organization that brings hope, fresh ideas, expertise and resources to distressed and transitional neighborhoods. Building stable, healthy neighborhoods requires more than bricks and mortar strategies -- it takes a comprehensive approach that is led by residents and supported by many stakeholders. Most importantly, we immediately began working to build trust by working with residents and community leaders authentically, and ensuring that they have ownership in the process and outcomes.

One year in, the organization is transformed and developing a new identity. Our new team is comprised of a strong leader and a talented staff that is beginning to deliver a network of resources and solutions-based strategies to Pittsburgh's neighborhoods, while creating hope and opportunity.

Organizational Capacity and Culture

The culture at Neighborhood Allies has changed significantly, along with an ambitious reorganization agenda. Two of the most important accomplishments are a rejuvenated esprit de corps among the staff, and a heightened level of positive "conversation" about Neighborhood Allies again. The staff is energized and empowered to have a strong entrepreneurial and enthusiastic approach, curiosity, and a healthy sense

of impatience. A culture of innovation, ownership, honesty and accountability has been created. At the same time, Neighborhood Allies is now building strong institutional knowledge and cultural competency, with specific sets of skills and talent in key areas of our field, so that the organization can become a trusted advisor to key investors, stakeholders, city officials, and residents. Neighborhood Allies has revamped its grants/neighborhood engagement process, and restructured and created new key staff roles, creating specializations in Economic Opportunity, Community Resources & Communications, and Strategic Partnerships & Services. Additionally, this summer we met another organizational goal and hired a full-time Senior Program Officer, Community Development Lending in partnership with the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC). This staff member is responsible for the underwriting, documentation and administration of pre-development, acquisition, construction, bridge, commercial and term financing for real estate developments sponsored by nonprofit organizations and other community development partners of LISC and Neighborhood Allies.

Diversity and Inclusion

At Neighborhood Allies, we see diversity as the combined strength of experience, skill, talent, perspective and capability that each employee brings to the organization. For our organization to remain essential in a changing society and help lead us into the future, it had to be brought into greater alignment with national demographic and cultural shifts. Neighborhood Allies is extremely proud that its staff and board reflect the communities we serve. Over the past year, Neighborhood Allies has significantly increased its diversity in leadership, staff and governance; from a homogenous staff to one where minorities and women each comprise 56% of the staff. Similarly, minorities and women comprise 44% and 67% of the Board of Directors, respectively.

The team is vibrant, inspirational, experienced, and staffed with the best and brightest. This new dynamic team has been built and structured so that we possess the set of capabilities to meet the needs of the community, and respond to the challenges and opportunities of organizations, partners and residents working to build stronger neighborhoods.

Internal Systems

Internal systems have been developed and updated. This includes updated financial policies and procedures such as financial and record keeping systems, new graphics/visuals/collateral materials, including a redesigned website, technology infrastructure and the development of an 18-month communications plan.

Board of Directors: We are truly grateful for the continued commitment, leadership and support of our Board of Directors, who led us through the organizational and leadership transition including:

- Laurel Shaw Randi, Senior Program Officer, McCune Foundation
- Anika Goss-Foster, Program Vice President, LISC
- Jane Downing, Senior Program Officer, The Pittsburgh Foundation
- Rob Stephany, Senior Program Director, The Heinz Endowments (Former Board Member)
- Tony Macklin, Former Executive Director, Roy A. Hunt Foundation (Former Board Member)

We have also expanded and diversified our Board of Directors. These community leaders each bring a different and fresh perspective, a wealth of knowledge on community development and related fields, as well as a network of partners and resources to Neighborhood Allies.

- Erin Dalton, Deputy Director, Allegheny County Department of Human Services
- William Generett Jr., J.D., President & CEO, Urban Innovation21
- Mark Peterson, President & CEO, Bridgeway Capital
- Michelle Rone Cooper, Executive Director, McAuley Ministries
- Ray Gastil, Director of City Planning, City of Pittsburgh
- Carolina Pais-Barreto Beyers, Independent Consultant

Key Priority Issues (in any neighborhood) include:

1. **Economic Opportunity** – increasing people’s financial health and credit, net assets, employment skills, and connections to entrepreneurship opportunities and career paths that produce living wages.
2. **Safety and Healthy Environments** – increasing wellness and quality of life for residents including placemaking, good housing, strong schools, access to local health centers, fresh food markets and athletic programs, community police partnerships that reduce violence, and new ventures that reduce blight and attract new neighborhood amenities.
3. **Leadership Capacity** – increasing people’s self-confidence, motivation, hope, and willingness to take risks and get involved; increasing their interpersonal, project management, teamwork, group management, fundraising, and other skills in service to community improvement.

Priority neighborhoods/communities in which we will commit place-based investments for the next 10 years are:

1. **Pittsburgh Hilltop (Allentown, Beltzhoover, Knoxville)**
2. **Homewood**
3. **Larimer**
4. **Millvale**
5. **Wilksburg**
6. **Hill District**

Six Strategic Priorities Have Been Established:

1. **Serve as primary convener of resources, fund innovation, and broker financing**
 - We are actively investing in and working alongside our partners to support and grow innovative initiatives including the Farm Truck Foods Pilot, FOCUS Pittsburgh’s Trauma Informed Community Development Pilot, Made Right Here’s Youth Maker Training Pilot and Wilksburg CDC’s Vacant House Tour Pilot.
2. **Connect and align people, organizations, and networks**
 - We are leading a collaboration with the URA and Heinz Endowments to increase federal grant funding opportunities in neighborhoods. We are also convening community, bank, foundation, government, and healthcare partners to extend a Northside pre-arrest

diversion pilot program into a replicable model around actionable public health approaches to neighborhood crime and safety.

3. Communicate results and impact to promote and inspire

- We are publishing a series of reports/case studies on local best practices being implemented on the ground in Pittsburgh neighborhoods. The reports will be distributed widely and available as a resource and guide for other neighborhoods as they embark on their own efforts. The first edition highlights the One Northside community engagement process.

4. Support innovative approaches to engaging residents, building leadership, and growing the talent pool

- This summer, we launched our Community Leadership Forum which will connect grassroots leaders to each other and to available resources and other networks; and create visible, resident-led change in our targeted neighborhoods. Small, grassroots grants of \$500-\$2,500 will be provided to promote community engagement and address issues such as arts, beautification, education, health, or safety, and the members of the forum will make the grant decisions.

5. Synthesize data and research and serve as the resource for actionable information

- We have developed and will use the Neighborhood Snapshots Project to narrow our focus, set attainable goals, measure our own progress and hold ourselves and grantees accountable to realizing our mission. We are also working with our partners using the findings of our Data Needs Assessment Survey to better provide funding, technical assistance, support and other services to community organizations.

6. Grow and diversify funding support

- Over the past 12 months we have tripled our funding sources from 4 funders, to more than 14 unique funders, including a national funder and a Charitable Trust. We will continue to develop new and diversified funding sources, as well as fee-based services to build a sustainable revenue stream and business model.

Programs & Strategic Initiatives (Highlights)

Our approach to neighborhood revitalization is comprehensive and multifaceted. We are taking a holistic look at both neighborhood health and overall quality of life for residents, which aligns economic assets, physical assets, and the networks across the system.

Launched Three Financial Opportunity Centers (FOCs)

Financial Opportunity Centers are career and personal financial service centers that focus on helping people improve their financial behavior by encouraging them to make a long-term commitment to increasing monthly net income, building credit, and acquiring assets. We serve as the funding and technical assistance provider for these centers, and bring training in best practices, guidance in the launch process, access to local and national funding, promotions and communications, and shared data

management software to track program outcomes. The three core services include Employment Services, Financial Education and Coaching, and Access to Income Supports.

Since the launch of the three FOCs in January 2015, accomplishments related to bundling services and employment placement have surpassed projections: of the 215 clients who have received at least two of the three core services, 137 clients have been placed in employment, with increases of net income for those clients, nearly meeting the year-end goal of 150 in just six months. The financial goals of improved credit scores and increased net worth are longer-term goals requiring more time with financial coaches, and we expect significant progress by year end.

Launched Neighborhood Allies' Community Development Fellowship Program

We launched our Community Development Fellowship program, which aims to bring the next generation of community development leaders into our field by building a strong pipeline of talented, minority professionals from underserved communities. Our Fellows develop valuable skills and connections within the community development field and will contribute to and expand our current expertise, capacity, and credibility to provide and deploy additional services, resources, and connections to Pittsburgh's communities of need.

In mid-June, we welcomed Mary Taylor to the team as our Real Estate and Placemaking Fellow. Mary is responsible for assisting our partners in developing multifaceted, coordinated strategies that include community planning, real estate and design, public art and cultural identity to rebuild market strength and improve quality of life for all residents in Pittsburgh's distressed neighborhoods. Mary joins our existing Fellows, Doni Crawford, Community Data and Policy Fellow and Armando Yanez, CMU/Heinz School Fellow. A Leadership Fellow will be hired this summer.

Launched Project HOPE

At Neighborhood Allies, we believe that hope is a key driver of behavior and decisions, both financially and socially. Increased levels of hope can be a powerful means to transform neighborhoods by bolstering residents' imagination, self-confidence and resilience to improve their community and themselves. Through a partnership with a student team at Carnegie Mellon University, we have already received a survey tool to collect data and variables of hope at the individual level, an algorithm that processes variables into a mathematical equation resulting in a "Hope Score," and a user interface that can produce graphics and tell us the "story" of the data. This summer, we will further partner with CMU's School of Computer Science (led by Michael I. Shamos, Ph.D., J.D., a distinguished career professor and intellectual property attorney), to enhance the Project HOPE prototype and receive a Project HOPE software application.

Launched the Real Estate Allies Leadership (REAL) Network

The objective of the REAL Network is to ensure the greatest level of awareness and information/knowledge sharing of real estate project opportunities and training among community leaders, finance providers and developers. We will also work to bolster projects that demonstrate community enhancing components, such as positive resident impact (i.e. jobs, and integration with community visions that fit within the neighborhood

plans). Ultimately, we want to help build capacity in neighborhoods that have not yet realized a key benefit of new development and connect them with the broadest array of applicable funding and technical resources.

Neighborhood Data and Indicators

To ensure that our mission, vision and values align to match the impact we want to achieve, we developed the Neighborhood Snapshots Project to narrow our focus, set attainable goals, measure our progress and hold ourselves and grantees accountable to realizing our mission. We will further work with our partners using the findings of the Data Needs Assessment Survey to better provide funding, technical assistance, support and other services to community organizations. As a result, neighborhood organizations will have greater access to the data, resources, and technical assistance needed to better track the effectiveness of their programs, which will improve their ability to reach the comprehensive objectives of their communities.

Strategic Partnerships & Services Created for Collective Impact

A newly developed staffing structure allows us to utilize specific expertise to strengthen the community development system in Pittsburgh, by serving as a “neutral party”, with the ability to engage a multitude of stakeholders with a variety of views, to improve the quality of life for all people in our community.

We have worked to become a trusted ally to our CBOs and CDCs by seeking to fully understand the needs and aspirations of their neighborhoods and connect them to the resources and technical assistance needed to achieve the communities’ defined objectives. To accomplish this, we help our neighborhood partners better access and effectively utilize the latest data, research findings, and innovative practices within the community development field so they can make informed decisions and reach the strategic priorities of their neighborhoods. Additionally, we will build cross-sector partnerships with regional and national leaders in fields such as public health, education, public safety and with other entities to systematically address the most pressing challenges of our neighborhoods. We will also consistently motivate and promote the people and projects of our neighborhoods to attract the investments, human capital, and public support needed to build sustainable communities.

Regional and Neighborhood Communications

It is integral to our role as an advocate, collaborator and convener to lift up exemplary projects and share best practices in ways that advance better engagement and community-led decisions and ensure a better understanding of the processes that lead to success and positive impact on our neighborhoods. Our Communications Program provides a platform to inspire action by telling the success stories of our neighborhoods and managing and sharing a bank of community/economic development resources that can be used to build a better Pittsburgh.

At the request, and with the support, of the Buhl Foundation, we have worked to capture and highlight the innovative approach to community engagement and imbedded philanthropy they are implementing in the Northside. In July, we will release the first in a series of case study reports on local best practices, highlighting Buhl’s work in the Northside in the first edition. Using interviews and testimonials from the

residents and local leaders actually participating in the process, we were able to produce a clear and concise summary of the model, lessons learned, and impact the work is having on the health of the neighborhoods. The story will be shared and disseminated to inspire action, celebrate progress, and most importantly, to empower leaders and residents in other communities to actively shape the future of their neighborhoods.

Community and Neighborhood Connections Are in Place: Community Leadership Forum

The Community Leadership Forum is Neighborhood Allies' vehicle to stay informed about what is happening on the ground, to connect grassroots leaders to each other and to available resources and other networks; and to create visible, resident-led change in our targeted neighborhoods. This spring, we asked for nominations of three resident leaders from each of our six targeted neighborhoods to serve for one year in our Leadership Forum and we will be selecting the resident leaders to participate this summer. Small, grassroots grants of \$500-\$2,500 that promote community engagement and address issues such as arts, beautification, education, health, or safety will be provided; and the members of the forum will make the grant decisions. We will also build their leadership capacity and provide connections to resources needed to achieve change. In return, they will help us make informed and sensitive investments that will lead to stronger, healthier communities.

New Cross-Sector Partnerships of “Uncommon Actors”

In partnership with the Northside Coalition for Fair Housing, the Buhl Foundation, Dollar Bank, Allegheny County Health Department, Allegheny General Hospital, the POISE Foundation, and the Pittsburgh Justice collaborative, Neighborhood Allies is working to extend a Northside pre-arrest diversion pilot program into a replicable model around actionable public health approaches to neighborhood crime and safety. Additional critical partners include: The Pittsburgh Bureau of Police, the University of Pittsburgh's University Center for Social & Urban Research (UCSUR), and Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC).

Investment Highlights

We have developed a unique and engaging approach to making investments in communities - one that encourages creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship. Our investment approach is based on first listening and establishing a relationship with our potential grantees and understanding the needs and desires of residents. Throughout the grant application process, we work together alongside our applicants, as allies, to nurture and grow what often begins as a promising idea into a fundable, impactful and inspiring program, project or initiative. Over the past 12 months, we have invested more than **\$1.3 million** in neighborhood transformation projects in under-served communities.

Economic Opportunity: creating ladders of opportunity and building personal wealth

Trade Institute of Pittsburgh (TIP) was established to give young men and women who have made mistakes in their past a chance to develop skills in the trades; making them employable, and giving them a chance to increase their earning potential. TIP's concept was developed with the idea that significant impact can be made in Southwestern Pennsylvania through job creation, long-

term support of the trades, and youth education on the benefits of working in the various trades. The goal is to combat the imminent workforce shortage predicted in the masonry and other trades in the years to come.

A catalytic grant supported TIP's facility expansion, enabling TIP to grow from 1,000 to 10,000 square feet and to double the number of aspiring tradespeople receiving training. This increased capacity has also enabled TIP to be a better, more effective partner in Project RE: a program that addresses the need for renewal in blighted communities by utilizing the ingenuity and resources of fifth year architecture students at Carnegie Mellon University, the supplies and resources of Construction Junction and the trade labor and expertise of TIP.

Safety and Healthy Environments: providing fresh and healthy foods to underserved neighborhoods

Farm Truck Foods (FTF) is in the business of bringing fresh, local produce to low-income residents a price they can afford. They motivate, encourage, and empower people to place nutritious foods on their tables and countertops so that they can live healthier lives. FTF bridges the gap between farmers and community members through the Greater Pittsburgh region, providing universal access to whole, nutritious, affordable and local foods in a way that engages and unites neighbors.

A catalytic grant afforded FTF a truck that was outfitted with solar panels to run the refrigeration and freezers on board. FTF has made arrangements to buy fruits, vegetables, meats, dairy, eggs, honey, breads, grains, fresh pasta and other products in bulk from local farms and other vendors. They will resell those items at special prices in communities where residents often have trouble accessing high-quality, affordable fresh food.

Leadership Capacity: providing the resources, connections and tools needed to do your best work

Millvale Community Library (MCL): As development opportunities continued to increase and spill over into Millvale, the community found itself in critical need of raising capacity to ensure that residents were well poised to participate in the revitalization of their community. A solid decade of implementing successful small-scale improvement efforts led by volunteers positioned Millvale to participate in the tremendous growth and opportunity trickling into their community.

MCL is more than a library. They're an agent for positive change that supports the community economically, ecologically, and socially. They received a catalytic grant to hire a full-time Sustainability Coordinator and three AmeriCorps VISTAs. This additional capacity has enabled them to begin implementing major community revitalization initiatives including the Town Square project, which will include a Food Hub offering affordable fresh food, as well as office space for small businesses and startups.

Resource Development/Expansion

We have begun to develop a more robust and diverse portfolio of funding sources, which is critical to sustain and grow the impact of the organization. Over the past 12 months, we have tripled our funding sources from **4** funders, to more than **14** unique funders, including a national funder and a Charitable Trust. We will continue to develop new and diversified funding sources, as well as fee-based services to build a sustainable revenue stream and business model.

Funders

We are extremely grateful to our dedicated funders; without you this work is truly not possible. Together, we will propel our neighborhoods and our residents to a better tomorrow. Thank you to the following organizations for providing the financial resources to help make our city healthier, stronger and safer:

Core Funders:

Anonymous
The Heinz Endowments
The Pittsburgh Foundation

Program Funders:

Bank of America
The Birmingham Foundation
The Buhl Foundation
Dollar Bank
Fifth Third Bank
First Niagara Bank
Hillman Family Foundation
Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)
McAuley Ministries
PNC Foundation
PNC Charitable Trusts
Roy A. Hunt Foundation

Lessons Learned in the Past Year

It takes of a lot of time to build authentic trust and collaboration.

- A historic mistrust has come as a result of decades of top-down decision making that cannot be undone in a few meetings; we must build a foundation of resiliency through equity, cultural competency, participation, listening, and responding.
- Creating new, innovative, and inclusive solutions to old problems is hard work and takes a tremendous amount of time and human capital. No matter how promising an idea is, it will take resources, nurturing, patience and flexibility to have real impact.

- Many organizations come to the table with the idea that they know how to solve an issue and everybody else is supposed to follow. We must be as rigorous at changing the culture of collaboration as we are about data and strategy.

We must change the conversation of what neighborhood change really means.

- While both community-oriented and market-based approaches are critical, the challenge will be to do both simultaneously. How do we harness capitalism for the good of all?
- In neighborhoods like East Liberty, there are conflicting notions of who benefits (and who is harmed) from development. An honest, data-supported conversation about affordability, shared prosperity, and healthy income mix needs to occur so that smart, strategic responses and solutions can be found to preserve diversity, affordability, and authentic identity of all neighborhoods facing development potential.