

**The Propel Pittsburgh Commission's Formal Recommendations to:
The Office of Mayor and Pittsburgh City Council
(Respectfully Submitted September 2008)**

Diversity, Outreach, & Civic Engagement Subcommittee

A. Partnership with Young Professional Organizations

Recommendation:

The Propel Pittsburgh Commission recommends that the Mayor's office and the Propel Pittsburgh Commission convene a meeting of the former members of the New Pittsburgh Collaborative and other relevant stakeholders to provide recommendations to the Mayor's office on raising awareness of opportunities, features, and activities in the City of Pittsburgh.

Comments:

Currently, there are numerous organizations in Pittsburgh that claim to be the voice of young Pittsburghers. Unfortunately, these groups are often fragmented and consequently, the voice of many young Pittsburghers is disjointed. The Propel Pittsburgh Commission will take a leadership position and commence a meeting off all stakeholders who strive to make Pittsburgh a better place for the current demographic of young Pittsburghers and for future generations. The focus off the meeting will be collecting input on how to raise awareness of the countless opportunities and activities that young Pittsburghers can become engaged in.

B. Community Partnership with Colleges and Universities

Recommendation:

The Propel Pittsburgh Commission recommends that the Mayor's office and the Propel Pittsburgh Commission convene a meeting of a representative from each college and university in Pittsburgh and other stakeholders (i.e. Pittsburgh CARES) to coordinate how all parties can work together to expose students to opportunities and experiences beyond their campus involvements.

Comments:

One of the City of Pittsburgh's biggest and most important resources is its university community. It is important for both the numerous colleges and universities in Pittsburgh and the city of Pittsburgh that the

'college experience' stretches well beyond their respective college campuses. By the university community ensuring their students are aware of the many character filled city neighborhoods, volunteer/community opportunities, recreational activities/amenities, and opportunities for professional development the City of Pittsburgh provides, the 'college experience' will be greatly enhanced, hence enhancing each school's reputation and engendering feelings of goodwill among its students. Similarly, the more engaged in the City of Pittsburgh students become during the college experience, the more favorable outlook they will have on Pittsburgh and the greater positive impact they will have on the city, both during their time in college and post-college life.

C. Growth of the Immigrant Population

Recommendation:

The Propel Pittsburgh Commission recommends that the Mayor's office and the Propel Pittsburgh Commission convene a hearing to develop legislative recommendations to grow Pittsburgh's immigrant population and make the city more welcoming to immigrants.

Comments:

The benefits to this are numerous.

- 1) This will help turn around the population decline in the City of Pittsburgh. Pittsburgh currently has the lowest immigrant population out of any major city in America. Consequently, the city continues to shrink. Cities in the Northeast and Midwest that currently have growing populations can directly trace this to a significant and growing immigrant population. When the City of Pittsburgh was a rapidly growing city in the mid 1900's, the growth was fueled by a steady flow of immigrants and a significant immigrant population.
- 2) A thriving immigrant population makes Pittsburgh a more dynamic and vibrant place. This will greatly help attracting and retaining young people, as young people are attracted to dynamic and vibrant cities. Additionally, this will help combat Pittsburgh's reputation as a stale, old city and this will go a long way towards improving Pittsburgh's image as a progressive thinking city with a progressive government.

Policy, Transportation and Infrastructure Sub-Committee

A. Impacts of Transfer tax on first-time Homebuyers

Recommendation:

The Policy, Transportation and Infrastructure Sub-Committee is recommending the Mayor's Administration consider the impact of the transfer tax on first-time home buyers and to investigate the impact a reduction or abatement of the transfer tax for first-time buyers would have on the City of Pittsburgh and School District budgets.

Comments:

The City of Pittsburgh collects a real estate transfer tax on every real estate transaction in the City of Pittsburgh. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania also collects a transfer tax on all transactions across the state. The state has mandated a 1% transfer tax for their share. The municipal transfer tax is to be determined by the local governments. Currently, the City of Pittsburgh has a real estate transfer tax assessed to any real estate transaction at 3% of the sales price (2% of the transfer tax for the City of Pittsburgh and 1% for the Pittsburgh School District). Therefore, in the City of Pittsburgh an individual who purchases a home for \$100,000 will be paying \$4,000 in transfer taxes alone at the closing.

This is significant because the City of Pittsburgh's transfer tax is the highest in Western Pennsylvania and is three times higher than most of the surrounding communities. For example the same home purchased for \$100,000 in Ross Township, Oakmont or Baldwin would be taxed \$2,000. Adding thousands of dollars to closing costs or a mortgage is a barrier to attract new homeowners to the City of Pittsburgh. The barrier becomes even more significant for first-time home buyers and for those buyers who are comparing the costs and benefits between the City of Pittsburgh and a suburban community. If an abatement or transfer tax reduction could be implemented for first-time home buyers these residents could use the money to make improvements to their new home and invest back into the neighborhood.