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Contact: Jodi Hirsh, jodi@sequalconsulting.com, (412) 326-9832

NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATIONS FROM ACROSS CITY SLAM BAD FAITH LAWSUIT FROM DEVELOPERS OPPOSED TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING

A special interest group of corporate real estate developers is suing to ensure they can continue to profit off of the displacement of low-income families in Pittsburgh

Pittsburgh, PA -- One of the key areas highlighted in the Gainey Administration's transition team report is the critical need for more affordable housing for Pittsburgh families. And yet, on the same day Mayor Gainey and more than 50 community leaders announced recommendations that lift up the city's Black and brown communities, low-income and working families, and those whose voices have been left out, the Builders Association of Metropolitan Pittsburgh (BAMP) announced their vision for corporate greed by filing a lawsuit against Mayor Gainey's first affordable housing policy.

Mayor Gainey won his election on a pledge to focus on affordable housing and expand inclusionary zoning. All Pittsburghers, no matter what neighborhood they live in or how much money they have, should have the ability to find a home in any corner of this city. But BAMP, a special interest group comprised of corporate real estate developers, is now suing the administration, prioritizing their exorbitant profits over people. BAMP has long been hostile to neighborhood-driven solutions that help ease the housing crisis.

"All of us, regardless of where we live or what we look like, deserve homes that are safe, affordable, and accessible," **said Jennifer Rafanan Kennedy, Executive Director of Pittsburgh United.** "But groups like BAMP rig the rules to jack up prices, build only for the wealthiest few, and hoard even more profits for themselves. We need common sense solutions like inclusionary zoning to ensure every Pittsburgher has a safe, secure home to raise our kids, pursue our dreams, and make memories."

Unaffordable housing has displaced thousands of Pittsburghers, pushing them farther from access to food, transit, health care, neighborhood and family support systems, and jobs. The absence of affordable housing in good repair has pushed low-income families – particularly Black families – outside of the city limits. Pittsburgh lost 10,660 Black residents between 2010 and 2020, a 13.4% decline. In just five years, Lawrenceville lost more than half of its Black population, 1/3 of its kids under 18, and 1/3 of long-time homeowners, even as it saw its largest housing boom in generations.

“BAMP’s preposterous statement that ‘Pittsburgh doesn’t have an affordable housing problem’ shows they’re perfectly satisfied with ongoing segregation as long as they get to keep generating their profits,” said **Christina Howell, Executive Director of Bloomfield Development Corporation**. “Their open contempt for struggling families in our city proves the need for bold action from policy makers to ensure that Pittsburghers from every neighborhood have access to safe, secure, affordable housing.”

Even before the pandemic, there were increasing barriers to finding safe, secure, affordable housing in the city. Now, especially as prices on everything from gas to bread skyrocket, housing is becoming one of the hardest expenses to cover, especially in quickly gentrifying neighborhoods. This means the most vulnerable Pittsburghers are faced with evermore terrible choices.

Thankfully, the city has tools like inclusionary zoning at its disposal to help alleviate the affordable housing crisis. By requiring large housing developments to include a percentage of units for lower income households, IZ ensures that new development meets the housing needs of everyone. [Inclusionary housing policies have existed for decades, producing more 100,000 affordable homes across the country.](#) These ordinances have been repeatedly challenged by special interest groups like BAMP across the country and have consistently been upheld in state and federal courts. Studies have shown that inclusionary zoning is effective at reducing displacement and creating affordable housing in neighborhoods with lower concentrations of poverty and good schools.

“In a neighborhood like Oakland, simply increasing the supply of market-rate units doesn’t put a dent in the affordability of older properties, whether for homeownership or rental. In fact, it increases prices across the board, since here the gentrification pressure comes from the bottom of the market, not the top. Oakland needs every tool in the toolbox to incentivize the construction of affordable units. IZ is essential to preserving communities, locating working people close to the places they work, and ensuring a vibrant and resilient future for our neighborhood,” said **Andrea Boykowycz, Assistant Director of Oakland Planning and Development Corporation**.

Pittsburgh’s inclusionary zoning ordinance went through a robust, extensive process with local and national experts and the community, receiving overwhelming support in the neighborhoods where it has been implemented and winning unanimous approval from the City’s Planning Commission and City Council. In Lawrenceville, it has already set the stage for 40 new units of affordable housing, with more projects in the works in Lawrenceville, Bloomfield, and Polish Hill. Councilwoman Deb Gross, who introduced the ordinance, has repeatedly lauded it as a successful example of residents driving policy to realize their vision for their neighborhoods.

Said **David Breingan, Executive Director of Lawrenceville United**, “As Mayor Gainey’s transition team made clear, more can and should be done to address the affordable housing crisis in Pittsburgh. Despite BAMP and NAIOP’s evidence-free claims and many factual errors, inclusionary zoning is a sensible, proven policy that’s already working and will help Pittsburghers who are disproportionately hurt by the costs of displacement and rising rents.”

“Pittsburghers in every neighborhood in the city want a safe, secure place to call home. Yet here in our ‘most livable city,’ a lack of affordable housing is reaching crisis levels. This most basic of human needs – shelter – is put out of our reach to turn a quick profit for the corporate developers who make up special interest groups like BAMP. If we truly want Pittsburgh to be the most livable city for all of our residents, we need solutions like inclusionary zoning,” said **Monica Ruiz, Executive Director of Casa San José and co-chair of the Gainey Transition Committee on Equitable Development**.

Pittsburgh United, Lawrenceville United, Lawrenceville Corporation, Polish Hill Civic Association, Oakland Planning and Development Corporation, Casa San José, Bloomfield Development Corporation, and Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group (PCRG) are calling on Mayor Gainey and City Council to stand by their mandate to build a “Pittsburgh for all” by vigorously defending the inclusionary zoning ordinance against this baseless legal challenge, expand mandatory IZ City-wide, and aggressively pursue other policies to address the affordable housing crisis in Pittsburgh.

Many developers have easily complied with inclusionary zoning in other cities and are proud to meet community needs. Now is the time for members of BAMP and all community-minded builders and developers who do business in Pittsburgh to speak out against BAMP’s regressive attacks against common sense, community-driven housing policies like inclusionary zoning.

The groups demand that BAMP stop their attacks against working class families and good, lawful housing policy and withdraw their legal challenge to inclusionary zoning immediately. Instead of throwing temper tantrums and filing baseless lawsuits that will waste taxpayer resources, they -- and all of Pittsburgh -- would be better served if they would work with housing advocates and neighborhood organizations to create real solutions that address Pittsburgh’s housing crisis and promote inclusive, mixed-income communities with opportunities for everyone.

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