

Meeting Notes

The Global
**SWITCH
BOARD**

What does it
mean to be home?

January 28th 2020 • 5:30-8:30pm

Union Project 801 N Negley Ave,
Pittsburgh, PA
15206

REGISTER AT:

bit.ly/HomePGH

Food provided

Burgh
Meets World



Meeting Notes

Agenda

1. Connect

- a. House-Tenant Activity
- b. Small-Group Discussions
- c. Interactive Walls

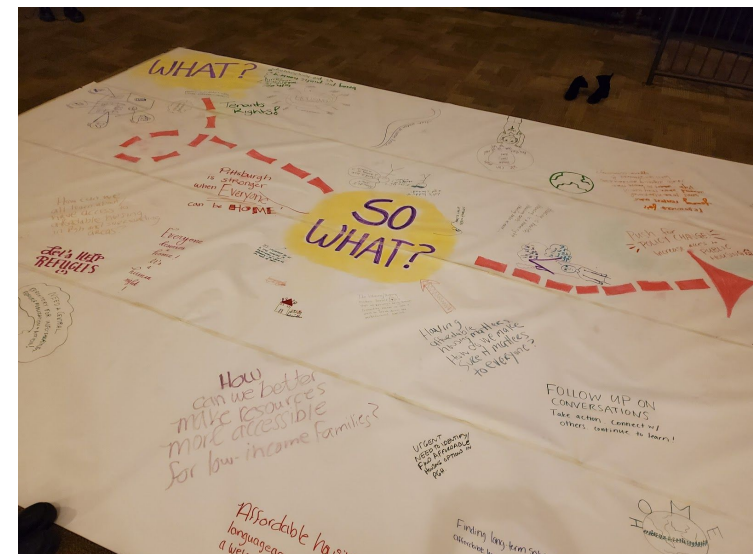
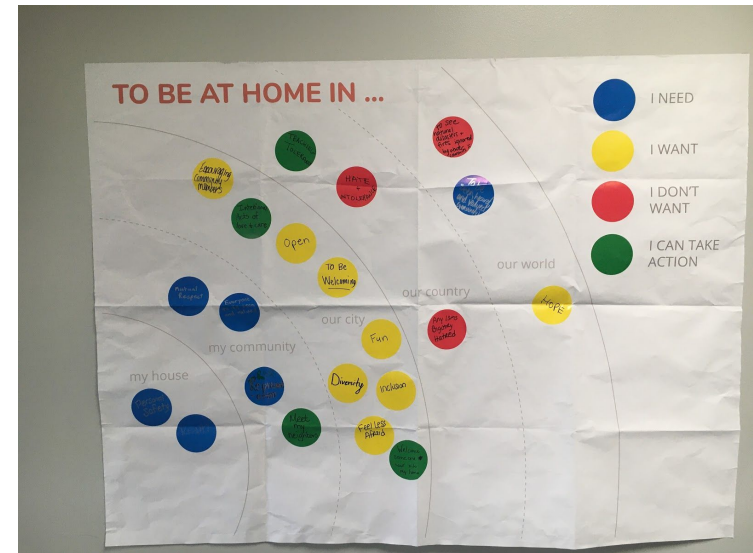
2. Learn

- a. Fishbowl with Community Leaders

3. Take Action

- a. Art Floor
- b. Resource Sharing

Check out this [recap video](#) from the event to see more!



Meeting Notes

Transcript of Our Interactive Wall

“TO BE AT HOME IN ...”

My House	My Community	Our City	Our Country	Our World
<p>I need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Personal safety ● Respect 	<p>I need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mutual respect ● Everyone to be seen and valued ● Representation <p>I can take action to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Meet my neighbor 	<p>I want my city to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Open ● Welcoming ● Fun ● Diverse ● Inclusive ● Feel less afraid <p>I can take action to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Welcome someone new into my home ● Take intentional acts of love and care 	<p>I don't want:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Any isms, bigotry, hatred ● Hate and intolerance <p>I can take action to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teach tolerance 	<p>I want:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hope <p>I need:</p> <p>To be open, heard, and valued (genuinely)</p> <p>I don't want:</p> <p>To see natural disasters and fires ignored by other countries</p>

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Notes from the Fishbowl

Check out the [full conversation here!](#)



Home is

- Welcoming
- A place of relaxation and comfort
- A place of safety
- A place you can return to at the end of the day
- A sanctuary
- A place where you belong

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Key Takeaways

- Being home is not just about living in a house, but being part of a community, feeling comfortable, and having a sense of belonging
- We must recognize housing as a systemic problem, not an individual one.
- Housing is a human right. It should NOT be treated simply as a commodity, real estate, or investment opportunity. Everybody deserves access to safe and affordable housing.
- In the US, homeownership has traditionally served as a wealth building opportunity that has systematically excluded people of color through unjust housing policies.
- We must recognize how housing intersects and connects with other issues: stable employment, credit scores, systemic inequalities and wealth gaps, etc. We need to be intentional in our hiring practices and ensure equitable employment opportunities.
- Credit scores not only impact one's access to mortgage loans, but may also result in higher interest rates.
- Our economy does not value the idea of home, and does not allow us to become rooted in and connected to our communities, displacing us and forcing us to be mobile.
- The lack of affordable housing in the city often pushes people out into the corners of the city, which are more inaccessible. Lack of access to public transportation means more time required in transit, and less time available to build a sense of community.
- Newcomer communities face additional challenges in finding housing, including language barriers, cultural differences, discrimination, lack of credit history, connections, and resources, and lack of access to educational and employment opportunities.
- People from all different backgrounds make Pittsburgh their home, which means we need to be more intentional about bridging gaps and building a sense of community.
- Our current policies do not reflect the view that housing is a human right. We need to push for a fundamental shift in policy to push for more spending on public housing and affordable housing.
- Current housing assistance or government programs are not always sufficient due to their strict regulations and guidelines. HUD needs to focus more on building people up and moving people into homeownership

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Questions we had

- What is Pittsburgh doing right in terms of affordable housing practices?
- How can we make public housing more efficient and accessible?
- What are some long-term housing solutions for low income families?
- Are there policies we could advocate for regarding housing reform that could help to keep communities in tact?
Have other cities done this well and are there other precedents we could draw on?
- Are there any other cities where the alliance has been successful?
- What actions can transfer vacant home into affordable housing, housing for homeless, and transitional housing?
- How can we ensure our policies at the city level ensure safe and affordable homes for everyone?

How can we take action?

- We need a fundamental shift in mindset to understand housing as a human right.
- We need to establish a Tenant Bill of Rights and push for change in policies and laws.
- We must build political will for public housing through education.
- We need to recognize lack of affordable housing as a global issue, and mobilize ourselves as part of a broader nation-wide and global network. We can learn from other cities that are implementing transformative housing policies, e.g. Barcelona, Spain; New Orleans, LA; Birmingham, AL; Jackson, MS
- We must look at the relationships between governments and financial institutions, and put pressure on our governments to dismantle the market-oriented approach to housing.
- We need to create a central repository for housing-related information and resources in Pgh that is easily accessible to everyone.

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How can we take action (cont'd)

- We need more cross-sector collaboration between different groups working on housing and related issues.
- We need to break down barriers so we're not working in silos, and bring together the communities to make resources more available and accessible to everyone.
- We need organizations to collaborate to make resources more accessible for all. For example, offering homebuyer education classes in multiple languages or training and building capacity within community organizations to provide housing resources.

Resources mentioned during the event:

- Leilani Farha, [UN Special Rapporteur on Housing Rights](#)
- [Allegheny Link](#)
- [ISAC](#)
- [Community Land Trust](#)
- [City of Bridges](#)
- HUD: [Housing Trust Fund](#)

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Transcript of our Art Floor

What

- Being pro-public housing vs. pro-homeownership. Both as a means to wealth and equity.
- Housing, it's all connected: Credit, Health, Language Barriers, Sense of Belonging, Access to Grocery Stores, Community Integration, Access to Education at all levels, Family Separation, Mobility/Transit Options, Loans, Distance to work, and so much more!
- Housing = Power

So What

- Pittsburgh is stronger when everyone can be home
- Need a central repository for info-sharing, resource mobilization, and action!
- It's important for us to stay connected to organizations in our community + see where we can build off them.
- How can we better make resources for low-income families?
- Having affordable housing matters, how do we make sure it matters to everyone?
- Urgent need to identify/find affordable housing in Pittsburgh.
- The listening/learning matters. Doesn't it all start with knowing/being known. Connecting makes us care and want to break down the multifactorial barriers.

Now What

- Advocate for housing as a human right.
- Can we recreate a discussion in which those affected by housing are the inner circle?
- Who is not at the table? Who is at the table but hasn't been seen?
- Resources for young renters who want to be intentional about where they are in Pgh: where to move that isn't displacing someone else, but is still affordable and offers community?
- Equity = in hiring how do we ensure all are entering the job market on equal footing?
- Push for policy change, increase access to public housing.

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Next Steps:

- Come to our next BurghMeetsWorld event in March! More details coming soon.
- Thank you to all of our partner organizations for helping us put on this event! Feel free to reach out to them to learn more about how you can get involved.
 - Global Shapers
 - Light of Life Rescue Mission, Jerrel T. Gilliam
 - NeighborWorks Western Pennsylvania, Beci Russel
 - PGHRights / Pittsburgh Human Rights City Alliance, Jackie Smith
 - Somali Bantu Community Association of Pittsburgh, Aweys Mwaliya
 - PHDC Business Incubator, Pittsburgh Hispanic Development Corporation, Guillermo Velazquez, Maria Nuñez
 - Jewish Family and Community Services of Pittsburgh, Abby Jo Krobot

Check out this event with more ways to get involved!

Community Forum on Human Rights and Habitat

Date: Saturday March 28 1:00-4:00PM, **Location:** 1 Smithfield Street, Liberty Room, Downtown Pittsburgh

This community forum brings Pittsburgh voices to the United Nations as part of the global community's assessment of human rights conditions in the United States. Learn about how rights to housing, decent jobs, health, and other rights require efforts to protect the environment. Discuss ideas for policy changes that can help us better protect and advance the human rights of residents of our region, and learn how community groups can work to realize our vision of a city where everyone enjoys the human right to grow and prosper in a safe place of one's choice. Co-sponsors: The [Pittsburgh Universal Periodic Review task force](#), which includes: Alliance for Police Accountability, Casa San Jose, Green Party of Allegheny County, Hill District Consensus Group, Pittsburgh for CEDAW, Pittsburgh Human Rights City Alliance, Just Harvest, City of Pittsburgh Human Relations Commission & Gender Equity Commission, Urbankind Institute, and others.