

Developing the Blueprint

Program aims to revitalize older communities

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The Blueprint Communities (BC) initiative was launched to create momentum for revitalizing older communities and neighborhoods by fostering strong local leadership, ensuring collaboration and development capacity; serving as a catalyst for revitalization based on sound local and regional planning that includes a clear vision for the community and a comprehensive implementation strategy; and encouraging coordinated investments in targeted communities by public and private funders.

The Federal Home Loan Bank (FHLBank) of Pittsburgh has launched the second round of Blueprint Communities in Pennsylvania. This round includes three individual communities and three regional programs. The BC communities are the City of New Castle, Clarion Borough, Reynoldsville Borough, the Curwensville Group (Bloom Township, Curwensville Borough, Penn Township and Pike Township), the Huntingdon County Group (Mapleton Borough, Mount Union Borough and Shirley Township), and the Oil Region Group (the City of Parker, Emlenton Borough and Foxburg Borough).

Blueprint Communities is a capacity-building revitalization program that works with focused community members who are championing and leading the efforts in their municipalities. Part of the role of these core community teams is to attend intensive trainings that provide education and technical assistance through collective workshops and community-specific trainings. The teams are comprised of at least one representative from an FHLBank member bank, a representative from the planning, economic development, or housing perspective; a business owner or

property owner; a resident; leaders in local government; other community stakeholders and in some cases, a student.

As a result of the BC initiative, more than \$200 million in private and public investment has funded a variety of local needs including affordable housing, small business, infrastructure, beautification, public health and crime prevention programs in more than 40 communities throughout Delaware, Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

The latest round of the BC program launched during a ceremony held at the state Capitol in May. A two-day workshop was held and was the first in a series of year-long workshops and trainings that will give the community teams the tools and resources needed to create a vision, community plan, action and funding strategies, and a clear process to measure outcomes. These trainings will be conducted under the auspices of the Pennsylvania Downtown Center (PDC) with support from the Penn State University Extension and other partners.

In 2005, FHLBank Pittsburgh launched the first BC initiative in Pennsylvania with 22 participating communities. Past BC communities included Hamburg, Lebanon-Northwest, Tamaqua, McKeesport, Wilkesburg and Waynesburg.

This first round of communities received both financial and technical support. In Tamaqua Borough, Schuylkill County, two adaptive reuse projects evolved out of the BC plan. The former Boot and Shoe Factory received \$3.2 million in redevelopment funds and the former Liberty Hall received \$3.8 million.

In Hamburg Borough, Berks County, the BC program assisted in providing funding, historic district designation and historic tax credit assistance to an adaptive reuse



project, taking a former mill and transforming more than 20 units of senior housing. Additionally, Hamburg recently received support from both FHLBank's Affordable Housing Program and Berks County for more than \$500,000 to fund a program that provided interior and exterior improvements to homes in the Main Street district, the Elm Street district and Hamburg's Historic District.

These communities maintain and update their community plans, even nine years after the program, as those plans continue to provide the framework for their community revitalization strategies. For more information on all projects, visit www.blueprintcommunities.com. **(B)**

FHLBank of Pittsburgh, the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development and U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Community Development Initiative are co-sponsoring the second round of Pennsylvania Blueprint Communities. The Pennsylvania Downtown Center is directing

Pennsylvania Blueprint Communities (Recertified)

Berwick Borough (LaSalle Street) – Columbia County

Brownsville Borough (Downtown/Northside) – Fayette County

Hamburg Borough – Berks County

Lebanon (Northwest) – Lebanon County

McKeesport – Allegheny County

Norris Square (Neighborhood) – Philadelphia

Pittsburgh (Larimer) – Allegheny County

Tamaqua Borough – Schuylkill County

Tioga (Neighborhood) – Philadelphia

Uniontown (East End) – Fayette County

Waynesburg Borough – Greene County

Wilkesburg Borough – Allegheny County