

Andy Pike visit to Pittsburgh: key findings and messages

The visit aimed to support the strategic partnership between Newcastle University and the University of Pittsburgh. It focused on urban, regional and local development, governance and policy. The visit took place between 13 and 19 Sept 2022.

Meetings were held with:

- Allegheny Conference on Community Development
- Steel Rivers Council of Governments
- Rivers of Steel
- Sustainable Pittsburgh
- Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh
- Southwest Pennsylvania Commission
- Allegheny County Economic Development
- Remaking Cities Institute, Carnegie Mellon University

A teaching session on ‘Reframing ‘development’ for ‘left behind places’ was also delivered for students on the Urban Affairs and related programmes at the University of Pittsburgh.

The key findings and messages are:

- **Shared vision and common direction** – ~35 years into the city’s post-industrial transition there has been an ongoing process of dialogue and revisiting and refreshing the vision and direction with key partners in the public, private and civic sectors e.g. revising strategies and priorities as the large scale former steel mill sites have moved into development.
- **Intermediary organisations** – critical role in convening and brokering dialogue in diagnosing key issues and prioritising responses e.g. Allegheny Conference on Community Development as a key public-private partnership and local Councils of Government supporting multiple municipalities.
- **Equity** – addressing related economic, social and environmental issues as a fundamental rather than bolt-on concern. This approach requires an intentional focus and resources. Otherwise, places where growth leaves people out will be left behind. This is a challenge to address in a city-region with no population growth, to provide opportunities in place so people don’t have to move and leave the city and/or region and to balance the geography of development between the City of Pittsburgh, especially downtown and the Oakland university district, and the outlying and vulnerable river valley communities.
- **Capacity** – needs to be built, supported and sustained especially where it is absent or deficient e.g. technical support from universities for cash strapped local municipalities without community development and planning capacity and leveraging pro bono contributions from major businesses.

- **Innovation and experimentation** – societal challenges require new ideas and pilots especially for just transition and decarbonisation and new bottom-up tools to support community development e.g. local land banks to address property abandonment and Carnegie Mellon University's Remaking Cities Institute's digital asset mapper to identify local assets. Monitoring and evaluation built in to build the evidence base and support the scaling up of promising initiatives.
- **Public engagement** – establishing genuine and meaningful participatory fora to enable local people to express their voice, get involved and own developments. Doing community development with people in place informed by their ambitions, values and lived experiences e.g. local involvement in common vision plans for communities and adaptive reuse projects for former industrial buildings.
- **Aligning funding and financing** – working with different organisations in their geographies to co-ordinate their investments and maximise their impacts. Challenge given high level of local government fragmentation and limited resources and tax bases due to population loss. Matching appropriate tools with opportunities e.g. organising the capital stack for projects from federal, state, local grants, businesses, universities and philanthropic foundations.