



# BOROUGH OF DORMONT

## News Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 28, 2011**

### **CONTACTS:**

Gino Rizza  
Borough Manager, Dormont  
412-561-8900 ext. 229  
[gino@boro.dormont.pa.us](mailto:gino@boro.dormont.pa.us)

Ian McMeans  
Assistant Borough Manager, Dormont  
412-561-8900 ext. 228  
[ian@boro.dormont.pa.us](mailto:ian@boro.dormont.pa.us)

### **DORMONT BOROUGH SELECTED FOR ALLEGHENY TOGETHER PROGRAM**

*Highly competitive program assists traditional pedestrian-based business districts throughout the County with economic development activities*

DORMONT, PA, March 28, 2011—The Borough of Dormont, located in Pittsburgh’s South Hills, has been selected from a highly competitive pool of applicants to be a participant in the County’s Allegheny Together program.

Allegheny County Executive Dan Onorato has announced that Dormont and Carnegie will become the newest communities to join Allegheny Together, a program launched in 2007 that improves traditional business districts by encouraging well-planned, well-designed and geographically-focused investment. The unique program stresses community organization and data-driven planning as a way to direct public investment, spur private investment and revitalize regional communities.

As an Allegheny Together community, Dormont will complete a comprehensive planning process in consultation with the County’s economic development staff. The end result will be a community-driven action plan that includes market studies, traffic and parking analyses, historic preservation analysis, design guidance, and ordinance review. Allegheny Together will also provide management services to the boroughs, such as central office support, newsletter development, business communication and visits, business recognition awards, online property databases, and a community-specific website.

“I would like to thank Dennis Davin, Director of Allegheny County Economic Development, and his entire staff for believing in the Borough of Dormont, recognizing that we are a good fit for this program based on the unique characteristics of our business district, and for acknowledging that our community is moving in the right direction,” says Gino Rizza, Dormont Borough Manager, who has been working with County officials for more than 18 months on building relationships and gathering resources.

The focused, five-year approach, led by Allegheny County Economic Development, will provide a professional staff of architects, real estate experts, community planners, community development specialists and project managers who will assist Dormont Borough with building the capacity of its neighborhood groups, and with designing and implementing long-term improvements to Dormont’s Potomac and West Liberty Avenue business districts.

“We thank State Senator Wayne Fontana and his entire staff, as well as State Representative Dan Deasy and his office, who also provided us with support. We also wish to thank Dan Onorato for creating this important program, and the many businesses and community organizations in Dormont who wrote support letters for us,” says Rizza.

“Neighborhood business districts are the economic backbone of communities throughout the County, and Allegheny Together is designed to help municipalities develop a vision and plan to improve their business districts and make them thrive,” said Onorato. “I am pleased to welcome Carnegie and Dormont to the program, and we look forward to working with residents and business owners to identify and address their needs. By helping our traditional business districts succeed, we can attract additional investment and jobs to Allegheny County.”

Allegheny Together will revitalize Dormont by assisting and encouraging property owners to reinvest in their traditional business districts, repositioning them as centers of community life. The program will focus on preservation of historical architecture and will provide matching grants and low-cost financing for improvement projects, including façade enhancements, streetscaping, business signage, awnings, and architectural lighting.

Dormont’s previous application to Allegheny Together, submitted in 2009, was denied. “We were disappointed last year, but we were delighted to be invited by the County to apply again this year. It was a real sprint to the end in terms of updating our documentation and information and securing letters of support,” adds Rizza.

“Our business district has a lot of potential and this will help us capitalize on that. We do have some challenges, and we need this kind of guidance to direct us toward where we want to go,” says Ian McMeans, Assistant Borough Manager for Dormont, who assisted Mr. Rizza with completing the rigorous Allegheny Together application, which was submitted on February 10, 2011. “If you look at the other communities in the program, their business districts have a sense of uniformity and consistency—that’s what we want to develop here in Dormont.”

Throughout the initiative, Dormont Borough will work with professionals from Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation and Town Center Associates—primary consultants to the program. Both organizations have a wealth of experience and successful track record in commercial revitalization activities.

“This unique program will help with the long-term planning of our business district and with developing a sense of character for our unique main streets. We will be able to create design standards, put façade ordinances in place and gain site control over certain parcels,” says Rizza. “It will also be an important step in getting public and private dollars involved, and in leveraging additional investment in Dormont for the future. We look forward to working with professionals from Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation and Town Center Associates.”

Projects will include developing, implementing and maintaining a business district-wide master plan for: façade, streetscape and storefront improvements; landscaping and planting; and intersection and district boundary signage, among others. Previous communities selected for the regional Allegheny Together program include Coraopolis, Bellevue, Bridgeville, Elizabeth, Stowe, Swissvale, Tarentum, and Verona.

“One of our biggest assets is that we have T and bus stops right along our business districts, and that we are a walkable community,” says Rizza. “We have to invest in this program too, but it will be minimal compared to the significant benefits that Dormont will get out of it.”

## **ABOUT ALLEGHENY TOGETHER**

Since Allegheny Together's launch in 2007, the County has provided nearly \$1.2 million in funding to these communities, leading to 37 new businesses, as well as assistance to 753 small businesses. The County has sponsored 26 community input workshops designed to engage residents in the long-term planning process. The International Development Council recognized Allegheny Together's accomplishments and impacts by presenting the program with the 2009 Excellence in Economic Development Award.

Allegheny Together also serves as a way to connect with businesses and improve communities in other ways. In August 2010, Allegheny County Economic Development partnered with Town Center Associates and Sustainable Pittsburgh to create the Sustainable Business Designation Program, which encourages Allegheny Together businesses to implement sustainable practices.

A principal objective of Allegheny Together is to help existing businesses in the County's traditional, downtown shopping districts. By helping existing enterprises succeed, Allegheny Together works to attract new entrepreneurs to each town's market thus increasing district vibrancy. Public support will encourage private investment in areas that are hindered by disinvestment. Similar programs at the national and state level have succeeded in leveraging two dollars of private funding for every public dollar spent.

"The Sustainable Business Designation recognizes businesses for taking actions that are good for their bottom lines, the environment, and their communities," said Onorato. "Allegheny County has been leading by example when it comes to sustainable practices, and we want to recognize those small businesses that are also stepping up to make our region an even better place to live, work and play. The Sustainable Business Designation Program is further solidifying Allegheny County's position as a leader in sustainability and the green economy."

TCA and Sustainable Pittsburgh staff members visit Allegheny Together business owners to tell them about the program and to provide information on implementing more sustainable practices, which will ultimately save the businesses money and have a more positive impact on the environment.

In September 2010, Allegheny County Economic Development, the Allegheny County Health Department, and Town Center Associates created the Healthy Downtown Business Program to encourage Allegheny Together businesses and employees to incorporate walking and other exercise into their daily routines. The program offers free pedometers, walking maps, business directories, and logs to track exercise progress. The effort results in more people walking in business districts, making them more vibrant and safe, as well as helping residents become more aware of their local businesses.

***IMAGES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST***

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