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Committee: Committee on Hearings

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Resolution establishing an Affordable Housing Grade as part of Pittsburgh's Annual Housing Plan, pursuant to Resolution No. 650 of 2021, effective October 11, 2021.

(Held for Post Agenda)

Whereas, a recent report by Research for Action found over 31,000, or 1.8 percent of K-12, students in the state experienced homelessness in 2018-19; and,

Whereas, it also shows that Pennsylvania schools under-identify the number of students facing homelessness; and,

Whereas, the number of people using Safe Haven programs has been steadily decreasing since 2014 due to the phasing out of this type of housing under HUD funding. All HUD-funded Safe Haven programs in the region ended in 2017. Eight Safe Haven beds were in use on the night of January 29, 2020. These beds are funded by the VA Grant Per Diem Program and are available only to eligible veterans referred by the VA; and,

Whereas, in the U.S., 20%-40% of homeless youth identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender and/or Queer (LGBTQ), while only 3%-5% of the overall youth population identifies as LGBTQ; 44% of gay homeless youth are African-American and 26% of gay homeless youth identify as Latino; 62% of transgender homeless youth are African-American and 20% of transgender homeless youth are Latino; and LGBTQ youth are twice as likely to be the victims of sexual crimes while homeless; and,

Whereas, immigrants are more likely to face barriers to enforcing their housing rights including language barriers, cultural mistrust, fear of government agencies, fear of retaliation, lack of familiarity with applicable laws, and lack of familiarity with judicial and administrative procedures for enforcing their rights; and,

Whereas, studies have shown that the most important piece of a person getting stabilized from struggles with employment, addiction, mental health issues and physical health is by having stable, long-term housing as a first step; and

Whereas the Council of the City of Pittsburgh finds as follows:

1. Much of the City's housing stock is older and in need of repair, and many existing and prospective homeowners lack the resources to make necessary repairs. Repairing the existing housing stock helps to stabilize neighborhoods by maintaining property values in the surrounding neighborhood, reducing the incidence of vacancy and blight, and decreasing the need for City-funded demolition.

2. Much of the City’s housing stock is not energy efficient, and many property owners lack the resources to make energy efficiency improvements. Improving energy efficiency can help reduce utility costs and provide relief for families with severe housing cost burden. It can also help reduce the City’s carbon footprint.
3. Many Pittsburgh neighborhoods have very low rates of homeownership and high rates of absentee owner-held properties. Increasing resident ownership of housing gives people more of a stake in the upkeep of their communities and helps to stabilize neighborhoods.
4. The City is experiencing a shortage of decent, safe and sanitary housing that is affordable to extremely low-income families and individuals. The shortage of housing that is affordable to extremely low income families forces them to pay more for housing than they can afford, which reduces the supply of housing that would otherwise be available for families and individuals at other income levels and creates a ripple effect of unaffordability.
5. Over 23,000 Pittsburgh households are paying more than half of their household income on housing costs. This severe cost burden can make these households vulnerable to eviction, foreclosure, utility termination, and other hardships.
6. Many very-low income and extremely low-income families and individuals in Pittsburgh need better access to opportunity resources - such as public transportation, jobs, safe neighborhoods, high-quality schools, child care and grocery stores - that can help to improve their and their children’s health, safety and economic self-sufficiency.
7. The City is also experiencing a shortage of decent, safe and sanitary housing that is accessible to people with mobility impairments and other disabilities.
8. At any given time, there is an average of more than 2000 homeless households on a waiting list for housing and homeless services in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County.
9. Existing affordable housing resources provide relatively short periods of affordability. This can cause the City to invest its limited resources into preserving the existing affordable housing stock instead of expanding the supply. Financing mission-driven developers and prioritizing permanent affordability will help maximize the effectiveness of the City’s housing resources.
10. The City and its authorities have experienced steady decreases in funding from federal and state resources for investment in neighborhood development and affordable housing projects.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PITTSBURGH AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. The Council of the City of Pittsburgh does hereby establish the Pittsburgh Affordable Housing Grade.

Section 2. City Council’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy Analyst will coordinate with Department of City Planning to include the Affordable Housing Grade as part of Pittsburgh’s Annual Housing Plan,

pursuant to Resolution No. 650 of 2021, effective October 11, 2021.

Section 3. City Council’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy Analyst in coordination with City Planning will award an affordability grade for each new development project (“Project”) in the City of Pittsburgh containing over twenty-five (25) units of housing.

Section 4. The Affordability Housing Grade will be determined consistent with the following standards:

- a. Projects containing at least 20% Affordable Housing Units are Grade A;
- b. Projects containing at least 15% Affordable Housing Units are Grade B;
- c. Projects containing at least 10% Affordable Housing Units are Grade C;
- d. Projects containing at least 5% Affordable Housing Units are Grade D;
- e. Projects containing fewer than 5% Affordable Housing Units are Grade F.

Section 5. City Council’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy Analyst will work with the Department of City Planning to design a formula for a financial contribution to the Greater Pittsburgh Affordable Housing Trust or The Housing Opportunity Fund in lieu of affordable housing units. These contributions can also be used to supplement a Project’s Affordability Grade.

Section 6. The definition of an Affordable Housing Unit is a housing unit affordable at or below 80% of the area median income (AMI) that a person can rent without spending more than thirty (30) percent of their monthly income.