

The background features a photograph of a multi-story brick building. A prominent sign on the ground floor reads 'FOR RENT Retail/Office Restaurant 3000 Sq Ft (plus basement) 412-508-6112'. To the right, another sign for 'SOUL FOOD CONNECTION' is visible. The image is overlaid with several semi-transparent, geometric shapes in shades of blue, grey, and yellow.

Community-Based Anti-Displacement Strategies

Proactively addressing potential increases in investor activity in Wilkinsburg, PA

WCDC
Wilkinsburg Community
Development Corporation



Background:

Wilkinsburg, PA

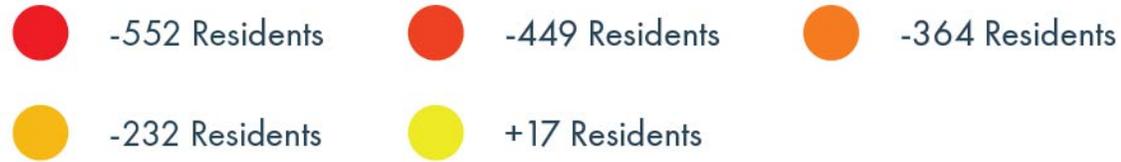
- An independent borough and first-tier suburb of Pittsburgh
- **1950:** Affluent community of 31,500 people
- **1970s & 1980s:** Regional industrial collapse and population shift to suburbs
- **Today:** High tax rate paired with decreasing population, increasing blight, lack of private investment & unsustainable local government

Current Situation:

2020 Census

- **Population: 14,349 – 10% decrease since 2010**
Compared to a 1% decrease in Pittsburgh and growth in most other adjacent municipalities
- **Black Population: 8,423 – 21% decrease since 2010**
Compared to a 13% decrease in Pittsburgh and growth in most other adjacent municipalities
- **Census Tracts: 6 – decrease from 8 since 2010**

WILKINSBURG POPULATION CHANGE BY CENSUS TRACT 2010-2020

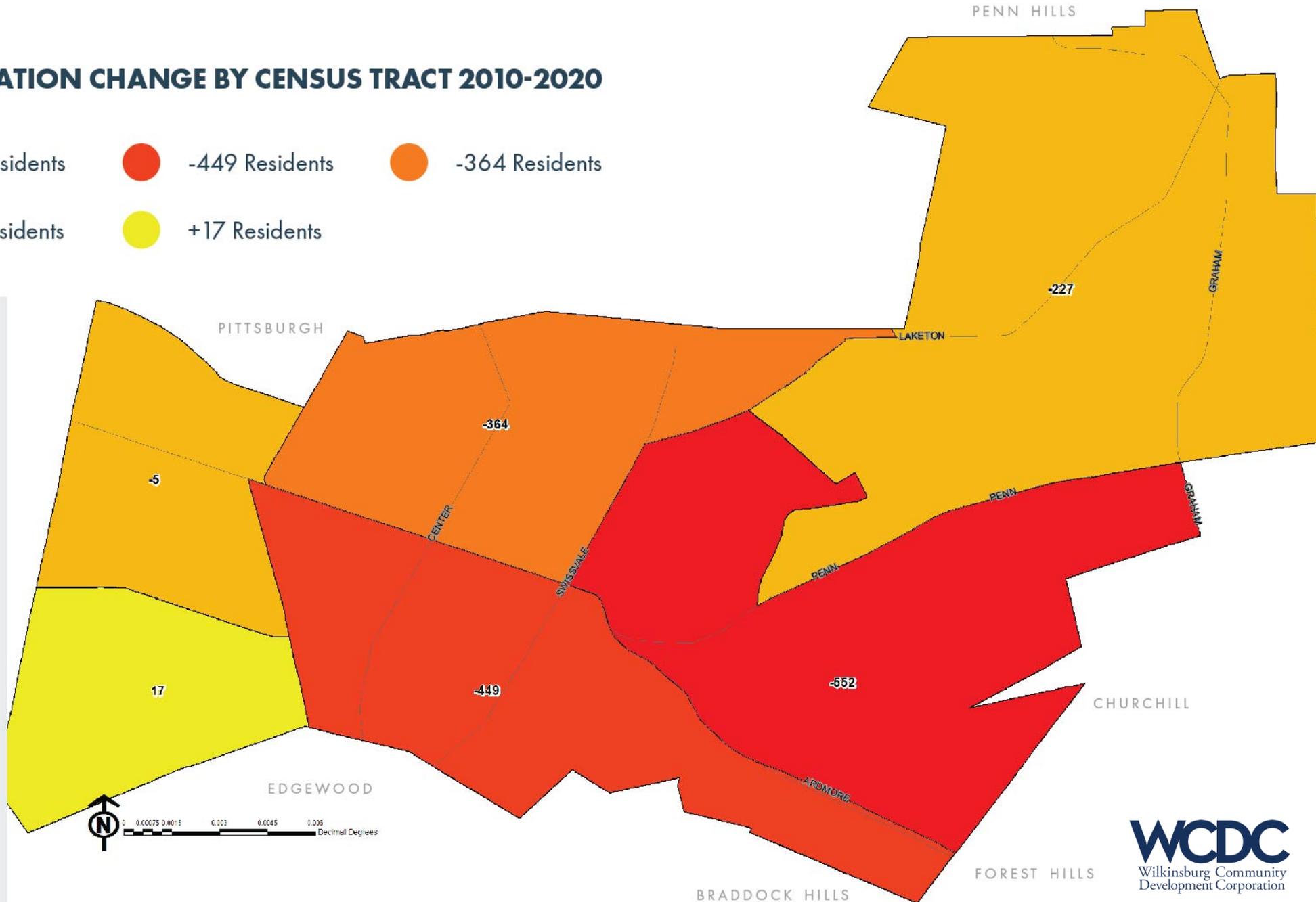


WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

1,597 Wilkinsburg residents left the community since the 2010 U.S. Census. **That is more than 10% of the Borough's population.**

Wilkinsburg has **lost two census tracts** since the 2010 U.S. Census due to population loss.

The majority of residents leaving the Borough are Black. In fact, **Wilkinsburg's Black population has decreased by 21% since the 2010 U.S. Census.**



WILKINSBURG POPULATION CHANGE & VACANCY 2020

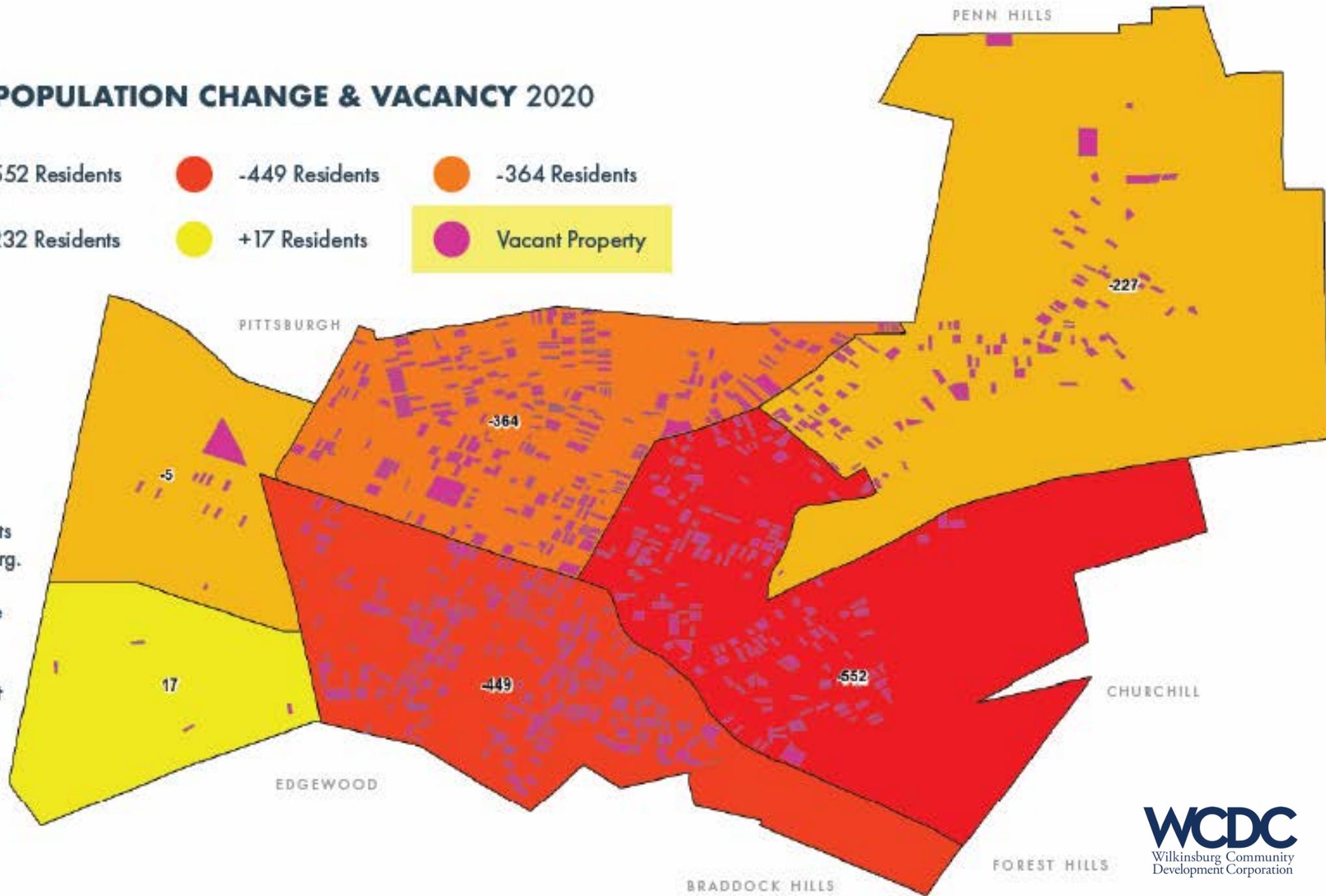


IMPACT ON VACANCY:

Over the last 20 years, an average of **4.6 people left Wilkinsburg every week.**

This displacement directly impacts the rate of vacancy in Wilkinsburg. **Today, over 20% of Wilkinsburg properties are vacant.**

The most significant amount of vacancy is in central Wilkinsburg, which directly correlates with the areas experiencing the greatest population loss.



Overview: Strong Neighborhoods

- **350 Wilkesburg stakeholders** participated in a visioning process from June to August 2020.
- This process found that:
 - Wilkesburg's population continues to decline, placing the tax burden on fewer residents each year;
 - Occupied housing units continue to decline;
 - The borough and school district's financial viability becomes unsustainable without strategies for increasing revenue and/or decreasing expenses;
 - High tax rates continue to make the borough uncompetitive for private commercial investment;
 - **Wilkesburg residents are among those who pay the highest property taxes in the county, with low income residents being the most affected.**

What We Are Doing Now

Community Engagement



68 Committee Participants
Over Eight Months



21 Neighborhood
Conversations



97 Technical Assistance
Requests



14 Volunteer Data
Collectors



160 Community Conversation
Participants



60+ Educational Resources
Shared

What We Are Doing Now

Impact: Strong Neighborhoods

Recommendations following the visioning process:

- Formation and ongoing management of a **Strong Neighborhoods Committee** to focus on issues related to property management and viability. This committee officially launched in October 2020.
 - **The committee shared available tools and resources and provided a platform for residents to voice concerns, ask questions, and share lessons learned.** Committee members helped shape the meeting schedule, make vacant property inventory updates, and support outreach efforts.
 - **Participants were recruited through word-of-mouth and community outreach.** Residents were asked to fill out an outreach form to help the committee understand which neighborhood they were from and what their interests were.

What We Are Doing Now

Impact: Strong Neighborhoods

Thanks to support from **PHFA and PHARE**, we are now able to provide:

Technical Assistance:

- General Assistance (Questions/Application Support/Property Research)
- Property-related Legal Advice

Education and Networking:

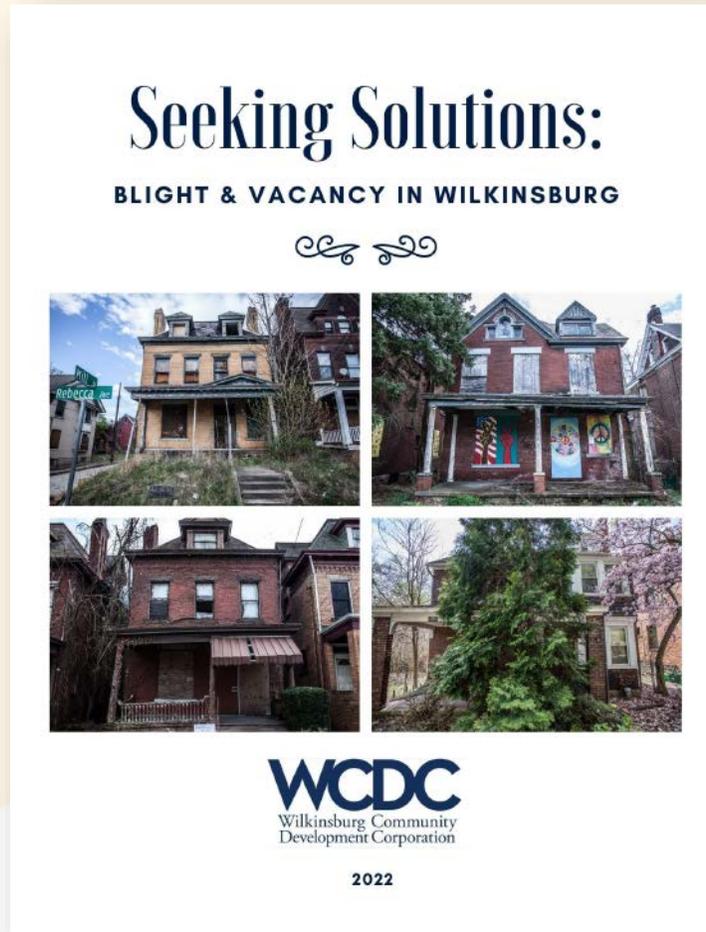
- Workshop and Info Sessions
- Networking Opportunities
- Resource Fairs

Resources and Opportunities:

- Acquisition Funds for the Vacant Property Recovery Program
- Estate Planning
- Funds for Property Repairs and Updates (Exterior)

What We Are Doing Now

Seeking Solutions: Report



Working with the Strong Neighborhoods Committee and community members, we compiled our findings into a comprehensive report on the status of vacancy across the borough.

To read the report, *Seeking Solutions: Blight & Vacancy in Wilkesburg*, visit wilkesburgcdc.org/vacant-property.

What We Are Doing Now

Impact: Strong Neighborhoods

Value of grassroots community engagement:

- **Educating Residents** – providing the information and resources residents need to make informed decisions and be able to make their own investments in their community – *and say NO to bad outside investors!*
- **Creating a Shared Vision** – working with residents to create comprehensive plans that address the *specific needs* within their neighborhoods. Work together to build a framework that residents can use to take the next step toward creating a vibrant community.



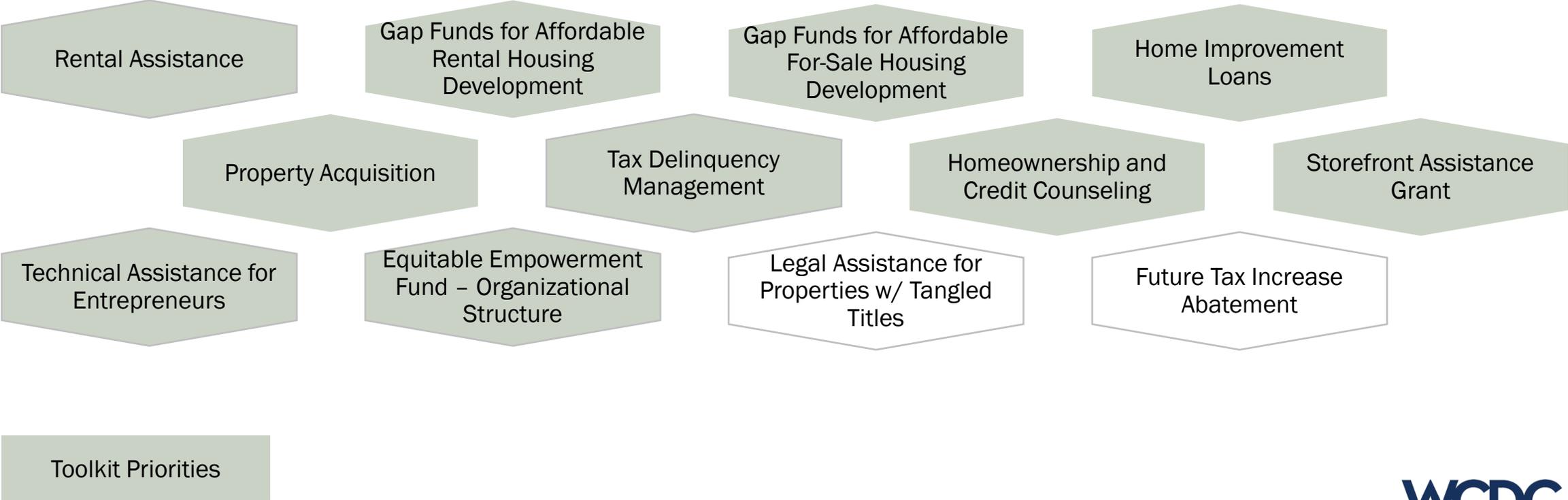
What's Next:

Anti-Displacement Toolkit

- In 2021-22, we consulted with HR&A Advisors to develop a toolkit of **anti-displacement policies and/or programs to prioritize for implementation and a high-level overview of action steps.**
- An **"Equitable Empowerment Fund"** was proposed to combine Wilkinsburg's resources with existing programs, philanthropic dollars, and more to address specific displacement pressures identified by community members.

What's Next

Community-Identified Policy Priorities



What's Next:

HR&A Recommendations:

- Prevent evictions through tenant supports.
- Ensure long-term affordable rentals.
- Support home improvements and home buying.
- Create long-term affordability through land trust.
- Increase financial resilience of owners at risk of displacement.
- Improve commercial properties and support business owners.

What's Next:

Implementation Strategies:

- Develop new funding source to support community reinvestment.
- Develop new partnership structure to advance anti-displacement priorities through an equitable empowerment fund.
- Make progress toward anti-displacement priorities by establishing a solid foundation for continued collaboration, development of new funds, and advocating for community priorities at the city and state levels.

What's Next

Wilkinsburg Annexation Initiative

Background

- **2014-2020:** Completed studies with CRA, Economy League, HR&A, and PFM to understand Wilkinsburg's financial outlook and review potential service consolidation options with adjacent municipalities, including City of Pittsburgh.
- **Jun-Oct 2020:** Hosted focus groups and distributed surveys to gather community input.
- **Nov 2020-Apr 2021:** Formed the resident-driven Merger Analysis Committee and subcommittees.
 - 43 committee and subcommittee meetings held.
 - 2,640 community members invited to participate.

What's Next

Wilkinsburg Annexation Initiative

Timeline & Next Steps

- **Jul-Sep 2022:** WCDC volunteers will circulate petitions to Wilkinsburg voters.
- **Oct 2022:** WCDC volunteers will present the petition to Allegheny Co. Court of Common Pleas.
- **Oct-Dec 2022:** Court will order City Council to vote within 90 days on the annexation of Wilkinsburg.
- **May 2023:** Wilkinsburg votes on annexation referendum (assuming City Council votes in favor).
- **May-Dec 2023:** Borough and City officials work together on transition (assuming Wilkinsburg votes in favor).

What's Next

Wilkinsburg Annexation Initiative

What are the benefits of annexation?

- **Cut Wilkinsburg's property tax rate** in half, potentially increasing property values and eliminating the inequitable tax burden in Wilkinsburg.
- **Provide more and better resources** for Wilkinsburg residents, business owners, and homeowners.
- **Increase Pittsburgh's population** by 5%, potentially resulting in more state/federal aid, increased political clout, and higher regional/national profile.
- **Enhance Pittsburgh's regional leadership** and become a model for municipal consolidation efforts throughout SWPA.



Questions?

For more information, contact:

Tracey Evans, Executive Director
Wilkesburg Community Development Corporation
tracey@wilkesburgcdc.org
(412) 727-7855 x101
wilkesburgcdc.org
wilkesburgmerger.org

Thank you!