



Commonwealth Cornerstone Group is a nonprofit community development entity created by PHFA to help fund mixed-use projects of vital historical, cultural or business value that are pivotal to local revitalization efforts. The empty Nabisco cracker plant in east Pittsburgh was one such project, now known as Bakery Square. Todd Reidbord is president of Walnut Capital Management Inc., which led this development project.

1997



Agency launches first website
— www.PHFA.org — to
enhance customer service.

1999

All PHFA home loans from
this date are serviced by the
agency in Harrisburg for the
life of the loans.

*PHFA historical timeline
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A grand, old bakery plant **BEGINS LIFE ANEW** *with a* **21ST CENTURY FOCUS**

When Nabisco, and then a subsequent baker, shut down the cookie and cracker plant along Penn Avenue in Pittsburgh in 2004 after 86 years of operation, the city didn't just lose a major employer. It lost a proud part of its history. The tired, neglected building seemed to reflect the general sentiment in the area that the East Liberty/Larmier neighborhood had little left to offer.

But a turnaround came when public and private partners saw beyond the dust and rust accumulating at the empty plant. The project was led by forward-looking developer Walnut Capital and its investment partner, the RCG Longview Fund, which were attracted by both the historical character of the building and its strategic location.

"It's a huge, grand brick building," explains Todd Reidbord, president of Walnut Capital Management Inc. "And we felt that it had so much potential being right on the edge of where the universities and medical centers are expanding."

The project, to be known as Bakery Square, was seen as the perfect location to serve as a high-tech office center, and work began to make it happen.

Commonwealth Cornerstone Group played a key role

Commonwealth Cornerstone Group (CCG) was created by PHFA in 2004 to help fund exactly these kinds of mixed-use developments that can serve as anchor projects to stimulate revitalization. In the case of Bakery Square, CCG provided investment through New Markets Tax Credits.

Reidbord explains: "Working in the city, you have to make a tremendous investment in infrastructure, including parking and other public infrastructure, which doesn't necessarily have a return on investment. But it's a critical investment because you need the ability to fill this cost gap.

"The New Markets Tax Credit investments are able to help provide this infrastructure to create the office space, to bring the jobs. So it's all part of this chain that's needed to make the project successful."

Built during the economic downturn, completing Bakery Square was a daunting challenge. But it was a project urgently needed on the east side of the city. Drawing on public and private partners was essential for getting the project done.

"I think the only way this works is through a public-private partnership," Reidbord confirmed. "The old factory building is completely occupied now. Every square inch of it is leased. I think today we'd say it's a big success."