

Pittsburgh's 2030 District Gets Big Business (and Small Business) on Board with Healthy and High Performing Buildings

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Pittsburgh has long worked to overcome its reputation as a steel town. The city has made great progress over the years; it now ranks #14 nationally for the number of LEED-certified buildings, places at the top of many “Most Livable Cities” lists, and boasts an impressive collection of universities with leading sustainability initiatives. The recently launched Pittsburgh 2030 District seeks to continue that momentum and ensure that the city remains a competitive place to live, work, learn, and play for years to come.

Green Building Alliance (GBA), USGBC’s local chapter, introduced the Pittsburgh 2030 District just six months ago, and already it has reached a major milestone: More than half of the square footage in the District has committed to making major reductions in building operations—eight months ahead of the scheduled goal.

What is the Pittsburgh 2030 District?

The Pittsburgh 2030 District is a voluntary public-private collaboration formed to meet the goals set by the Architecture 2030 Challenge – 50% reductions in water use, energy use, and transportation emissions by the year 2030. Green Building Alliance has also added the goal of improving indoor air quality. Property owners and managers within a defined boundary in Downtown Pittsburgh are being asked to consider making these commitments.

This type of cooperative action is not only a strategic undertaking to keep Pittsburgh competitive in the year 2030, but also represents a major investment in the city’s future and reflects the collaborative nature of our region.

How does this impact the green building industry?

While individual buildings have distinct opportunities for improvement, the 2030 District model offers a method for making large-scale changes and boosting holistic efficiency. Our Property Partners, along with the Community and Resource Partners who support them, meet on a regular basis to review baselines, share best practices and lessons learned, and discuss the potential for shared purchasing or infrastructure improvements.

The fact that so many businesses—large and small—in Pittsburgh have already committed to this challenge demonstrates that healthier, higher performing buildings are becoming the new standard in our region. Business owners recognize that making these changes will not only be good for their bottom line, their employees, and their neighbors, but also good for the continued economic development of their city.

Are other cities participating in 2030 Districts?

Yes. Seattle, Cleveland, and Los Angeles have also launched 2030 Districts, while other cities are currently in the planning phases. This is a great model to help make impactful changes in any community.

Why did Green Building Alliance take on this initiative, and what is the organization doing to support it?

GBA is facilitating and monitoring the Pittsburgh 2030 District. Not only did we feel that this was a natural fit with our role as the regional chapter of the U.S. Green Building Council, but it also aligns with our strategic plan, which places a focus on initiatives that demonstrate and prove the value of green building to a broad market.

Our role includes working with partners in the community to develop baselines, and to measure and report their progress. We also facilitate educational opportunities for our partners to help them achieve District goals and collaborate with other 2030 Districts to share information and learn from one another.

What companies in Pittsburgh have already committed?

From the beginning, the Pittsburgh business community has been very supportive of this initiative. So far, we have over 30 Property Partners representing more than 90 buildings in the District, along with 31 Community and Resource Partners who help create baselines and offer support. Some of those commitments include:

- The Pittsburgh Pirates
- The Pittsburgh Penguins
- The Pittsburgh Steelers
- Jones Lang LaSalle
- BNY Mellon
- PNC Financial Services Group
- Highmark, Inc.
- Point Park University
- Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh

These early adopters provide an excellent example for other businesses interested in making competitive changes to the properties they manage.

What's next?

We're now working toward getting 60% of the square footage in the District participating by the end of 2013, and 75% by the end of 2014. We'll start reporting the District's progress towards energy and water goals in August, and District transportation emission baselines and indoor air quality metrics are in development. We're also working with the 2030 Districts Network on fostering the development of additional 2030 districts around the country!

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