

**PITTSBURGH CENTRAL KEYSTONE INNOVATION ZONE  
MODEL --- CREATING CLUSTERS IN UNDERSERVED  
COMMUNITIES AND USING THOSE CLUSTERS AS A  
DRIVER FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY BASED  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

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PITTSBURGH CENTRAL KEYSTONE INNOVATION ZONE MODEL --- CREATING CLUSTERS IN UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES AND USING THOSE CLUSTERS AS A DRIVER FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY BASED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper is a descriptive analysis of the programs and successes of a new Pennsylvania based economic development model. Much of its content has been derived from a recently submitted proposal to expand this program. Pennsylvania Governor Edward Rendell created the Keystone Innovation Zone program in 2004 to increase the number of high growth jobs in the Commonwealth. Keystone Innovation Zones (KIZs) are designated zones that are established in communities that host institutions of higher education – colleges, universities, and associate degree technical schools. These zones foster innovation and create entrepreneurial opportunities by aligning the combined resources of educational institutions, private businesses, business support organizations, commercial lending institutions, venture capital networks (including angel investors), and foundations (KIZ partners). The focus of the Pennsylvania KIZ program is the technology sector.

The Pittsburgh Central Keystone Innovation Zone is the only one of over 20 KIZs in Pennsylvania that is targeted to distressed areas. Its successes have been significant since its founding in 2007. Its partnership of a board and working group consisting of several organizations alongside a small core staff (Director plus part time clerical), various programs designed to recruit and stimulate businesses, cluster approach for business attraction coupled with co-development of a supporting business service and retail sector is an interesting development model that can be a subject of future study. The mix of educational institutions, foundations, economic development organizations (public and private) and private sector firms has been a model that has served to stimulate other sectors of Pittsburgh which have grown rapidly and now seems to be spearheading the successful development of this depressed region.

This discussion of the PCKIZ and its accomplishments to date stimulate some interesting research questions, particularly because the successes have created interest to transfer the model to other communities. Appropriate research questions may be: What role do partnerships play in determining success? Which partnerships are most critical—within and external to the community? How should success be defined? Which business assistance/support/ finance programs are most effective for business development and investment success? Is the cluster model effective for inner city development? Does the clustering of firms stimulate new development? Does past history of failure and all of its lessons contribute to the eventual success of development for a depressed area? What is the preferred mix of investment dollars (private, public, foundation, etc.) How important are loan funds for the success of the program?

## INTRODUCTION

Western Pennsylvania has become a national model for the manner in which it has been able to successfully diversify its economy. Up until the early 1980s, the steel industry was the Pittsburgh region's main economic driver. Today, education and healthcare are the new drivers of innovation and the resulting job growth and high standard of living that are the direct results of that innovation. In a recent business report, the Pittsburgh MSA had 8,438 technology firms representing the information technology, life sciences, advanced materials, advanced manufacturing, environmental, and energy industries.<sup>1</sup> These firms represented 11.2 percent of all companies in the region, 19.4 percent of the regional workforce, and 27.5 percent of the region's wages.<sup>2</sup> The success of the Pittsburgh region's economy, even in the face of the worldwide downturn, has largely and correctly been attributed to the strength of Pittsburgh's powerful education and medical sector. According to an article entitled "Carnegie Mellon, Pitt, and UPMC Leaders Discuss Role of 'Eds and Meds' in Transforming Pittsburgh's Economy", "The 'eds and meds' factor accounts for more than \$11 billion in local salaries—22 percent of the total salaries in the region<sup>3</sup>. Most powerful of the eds and meds are Carnegie Mellon University, the University of Pittsburgh, and the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC.) The combination of two of the nation's important research universities and one of its largest and most respected medical complexes forms a dynamic economic engine that has driven the economy to new heights, pumping many billions of dollars into the regional economy each year, including the employment of nearly 80,000."

Because of Western Pennsylvania's successful economic transformation, its economy is fairing significantly better than the economy of most Midwestern and Northern cities that did not successfully diversify their economy. Because of its successful transition both the Economist and Forbes magazines<sup>4</sup> have ranked Pittsburgh as the most livable city in the United States.

But, the fruits of the new economy have not benefited all sectors of the Pittsburgh region. The economic disparities that are a part of this new economy are glaring. African American communities and the residents that live in those communities have received very few benefits from the diversified economy. In an article entitled "Regional Insights: High Black Poverty a Shame", "according to the U.S. Census Bureau, the Pittsburgh region has the highest rate of poverty among working-age African-Americans of any of the 40 largest metropolitan regions in the country<sup>5</sup>. More than one-quarter (28 percent) of the region's African-Americans ages 18 to 64 lived in poverty in 2008. That's twice as high as in regions such as Baltimore and Charlotte, N.C." According to the US Census bureau, African Americans make up 27.1% of the population of the city of Pittsburgh<sup>6</sup> with African-American neighborhoods such as the Hill District, Uptown, and the North Side having between 22.5 and 35.1 percent of their households below the

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<sup>1</sup>Pittsburgh Technology Council (2009). *State of the Industry Report*. Pittsburgh, PA.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> The Pittsburgh Summit. (2009). *Carnegie Mellon, Pitt, and UPMC Leaders Discuss Role of 'Eds and Meds' in Transforming Pittsburgh's Economy*. Retrieved from: <http://www.edsmespittsburgh.org/>.

<sup>4</sup> The Economist. (8 June 2009). *Liveable Vancouver*. The Economist. Retrieved from: [http://www.economist.com/blogs/gulliver/2009/06/liveable\\_vancouver](http://www.economist.com/blogs/gulliver/2009/06/liveable_vancouver)

<sup>5</sup> Miller, Harold D. (4 July 2010). *Regional Insights: High Black Poverty a Shame*. Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.

<sup>6</sup> United States Census Bureau (2000). *2000 US Census*. Washington, D.C.

federal poverty level. Most live in poverty<sup>7</sup>. To see this phenomena, all one has to do is drive through the Hill District, predominately African American enclaves in the Northside and East End sections of Pittsburgh.

### **MISSION OF THE PCKIZ**

Pennsylvania Governor Edward Rendell created the Keystone Innovation Zone program in 2004 to increase the number of high growth jobs in the commonwealth. Keystone Innovation Zones (KIZs) are designated zones that are established in communities that host institutions of higher education – colleges, universities, and associate degree technical schools. These zones foster innovation and create entrepreneurial opportunities by aligning the combined resources of educational institutions, private businesses, business support organizations, commercial lending institutions, venture capital networks (including angel investors), and foundations (KIZ partners).

The Pittsburgh Central Keystone Innovation Zone (PCKIZ) officially started in July of 2007. The mission of the PCKIZ is to increase the number of high growth start-up businesses and relocated firms within the boundaries of the PCKIZ and ultimately within the region by seeding the areas surrounding our higher education institutions with new companies drawn by the benefits of being in the PCKIZ. These start ups provide the impetus for growth of new commercial concentrations and the symbiotic businesses and economic development initiatives that they attract.

What differentiates the PCKIZ from the other 25 Keystone Innovation Zones in the Commonwealth of PA is that a large portion of the PCKIZ territory is located in an underserved community. More importantly, the PCKIZ has a mission of both creating a culture of entrepreneurship and spurring economic development in a manner that benefits the underserved portions of our community. The PCKIZ is currently collaborating with a variety of organizations to contribute to the overall development of an economic development focused “culture of entrepreneurship” within the region and within our student populations.

The PCKIZ is accomplishing its mission by convening a powerful and committed consortium of higher education, government, local corporations, regional economic development organizations, financial lenders and charitable foundations committed to creating, relocating and sustaining beneficial high-growth companies in the PCKIZ. This consortium is also committed to using their individual and combined resources to achieve the goals of the PCKIZ which includes creating a culture of entrepreneurship that encourages businesses to start up and grow in the zone. Individually and collectively, PCKIZ board members and supporters have played a significant role in utilizing the PCKIZ to achieve the goals and mission of the PCKIZ. The following organizations are active board members and supporters of the Pittsburgh Central Keystone Innovation Zone.

### **PCKIZ ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIPS**

The PCKIZ staff consists of a single Director with clerical support. Its management partners, all of whom are represented on the board and provide matching funding, consists of educational institutions, private firms, foundations and economic development organizations.

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<sup>7</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2010). *2006-2008 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates*. Washington, D.C.

## **PCKIZ EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS**

PCKIZ educational institutions have played a lead role in defining and supporting the economic development and educational initiatives of the PCKIZ. Duquesne University was a co-founder of the PCKIZ. As a co-founder and lead partner of the PCKIZ, Duquesne University is taking a leadership position in connecting the underserved community that it is located in to the benefits of the Tech Based Economic Development (TBED). Along with Carlow University, Point Park University and Community College of Allegheny College (CCAC), the PCKIZ has led successful efforts to coordinate creative, community focused economic development initiatives. Moreover, all four educational institutions have successfully assisted the PCKIZ in the creation of an internship program that connects students from those education institutions to internships with PCKIZ companies. CCAC has led workforce development initiatives that are connecting people from underserved portions of the PCKIZ to obtain job opportunities in the life sciences.

## **PCKIZ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS**

The PCKIZ has helped to coordinate and organize high profile economic development initiatives by assisting with fundraising activities and the implementation of economic development initiatives. These projects have included playing a significant role in helping the Hill District Economic Development organizations grant and loan funding from the Allegheny County Department of Economic Development and the City of Pittsburgh Urban Redevelopment Authority for the funding of a full service grocery store. Moreover, the PCKIZ has become one of the lead referral agencies to the City of Pittsburgh Urban Redevelopment Authority Technology Loan Fund. The PCKIZ has and is currently working with graduates of the Innovation Works Alpha Labs program to create an information technology cluster in an underserved portion of the KIZ program. The Idea Foundry has referred portfolio companies to the PCKIZ and has supported PCKIZ through its portfolio program.

## **PRIVATE SECTOR ORGANIZATIONS**

Private sector organizations have played a critical role in providing leadership, funding and referrals to the PCKIZ companies. PNC Bank is participating in the strategic and program development for the PCKIZ and is providing expertise and financial insight into various capital and loan programs proposed for the zone. UPMC Health Plan works with the partnership to develop programs and provide strategic direction including (1)identifying and locating early-stage and start-up businesses into the KIZ(several opportunities have been and continue to actively pursued); (2)facilitating development of the business incubator, (3)directly supporting student internships and faculty-business collaborations; (4)fostering interactions and related business development among academic partners and industry; and (5)participating in community outreach efforts with the Hill House and other community organizations(such as Bethlehem Haven)who serve residents within the KIZ.

## **FOUNDATIONS**

The PCKIZ has helped raise funding to help the Hill House Economic Development Corporation and other economic development organizations working in the PCKIZ raise funding for a variety of projects. The PCKIZ has helped the foundation community coordinate its investment so that maximum impact could be achieved. This includes raising funds to support a full service grocery store and to raise the capacity of the economic development organizations. Two major

Pittsburgh Foundations have been very active on the board of Directors and in providing for the PCKIZ organization and several community projects.

### **PCKIZ GEOGRAPHY**

Because of the economically diverse geography of the zone, a significant goal of the PCKIZ is to leverage the success of its innovation economy programs to provide tangible and positive benefits for businesses that locate in the zone and most importantly the communities and the residents that reside in the most distressed areas of the PCKIZ. One of the ways that the PCKIZ accomplishes this goal is through the creation of innovation clusters comprised of high growth companies and utilize the benefits produced by those clusters to create economic prosperity for the companies in the cluster, the underserved communities surrounding the cluster and the residents of those underserved communities. These benefits include but are not limited to the following: 1) The addition of retail businesses that are attracted to the area because of the demand generated by new company location 2) Additional real estate development activity caused in part by new company relocation 3) High profile economic development projects that benefit residents of the community 4) Jobs and apprenticeship opportunities created by PCKIZ companies and economic development partners.

### **MARKETING AND OUTREACH**

The PCKIZ implements a marketing program for the zone by working with regional development organizations to highlight the advantages of the zone and to appeal to the market niche of companies and entrepreneurs. Funds are used for marketing and promotion of the a “Front Door” to the zone and its partners and affiliates and to both the opportunities and advantages of the zone in conjunction with KIZ partners including UPMC, Duquesne, CCAC, PLSG. Marketing focuses on availability of sites, access to universities, and on the existing community of technology companies already resident in the zone.

### **PCKIZ PROGRAMS**

PCKIZ benefits are tailored to help recruit and encourage companies grow so that participating companies decide that it is in their best interest to move into the PCKIZ. These benefits include access to tax credits, access to micro grants, access to other sources of grant and traditional financing provided by KIZ partners and others, paid internships. Networking opportunities have also been put in place to better connect companies with business opportunities and to interact with each other. These benefits are intended to help successful companies become even more successful.

### **NETWORKING EVENTS**

The PCKIZ also hosts bi-monthly networking events that enable PCKIZ companies and companies interested in locating in the PCKIZ to interact with PCKIZ partners. These events help market the benefits of being in the PCKIZ. Additionally, the PCKIZ hosts a variety of educational seminars on issues ranging from KIZ tax credits, Intellectual property, creating more company spin outs from institutions of higher education,

## **PCKIZ INTERNSHIP PROGRAM**

The majority of students that graduate from all four of the partner educational institutions remain in Western, PA upon graduation. Thus, the alumni and alumnae of the PCKIZ educational institutions, if trained, have the potential to supply the workforce for jobs created by the innovation economy.

The PCKIZ internship program matches undergraduate and graduate students with paid internship opportunities at a PCKIZ company. The PCKIZ internship program provides an opportunity for students from the PCKIZ higher educational institutions to work for a PCKIZ company. The immediate goal is to provide students with “real world” work experience at a start up business and to give students an understanding of what it takes to be an entrepreneur, or an employee at a start up company. The long term goal is to provide job opportunities for graduates of the PCKIZ educational institutions. Additionally, this is a great opportunity for participating PCKIZ companies to have an intern accomplish valuable predefined strategic and/or operational work.

Since the internship program started in the spring of '08, The PCKIZ is responsible for creating a student internship program that has created sixty-seven semester long student internship experiences. Approximately fifty percent of the student participants are woman and twenty-five percent are African Americans. The PCKIZ anticipates that as the economy improves and PCKIZ companies start to hire more employees they will use their PCKIZ internship as a source of permanent employees

## **PCKIZ TAX CREDIT PROGRAM**

The PCKIZ can help companies that qualify secure a tax credit that can generate up to \$100,000 in direct cash to that company. A pre-condition for application for tax credits is that a company must be in the KIZ for one year. In 2008, a PCKIZ company, InspectTech was the only PCKIZ company eligible to apply for tax credits because that company transferred from the Greater Oakland KIZ to the PCKIZ. In 2009, the PCKIZ processed 10 tax credit applications that totaled \$807,299. This was the second largest amount of tax credits allocated amongst the twenty-six KIZ programs. This program is one of the state mandated components and benefits of the KIZ programs.

## **PCKIZ GRANT PROGRAM**

The PCKIZ provides grant money to qualified PCKIZ companies to support projects that promote innovation and job creation. Eligible applicants can receive grant funding on future projects up to \$25,000 in a one year calendar period. To date the PCKIZ grant program has awarded approximately \$200,000 to 13 PCKIZ companies. The goal of the PCKIZ grant program is to provide grant funding in a manner that does not conflict but compliments the grant and convertible debt programs provided by other TBED organizations like Innovation Works, the Idea Foundry, The City of Pittsburgh Urban Redevelopment Authority and the Pittsburgh Life Sciences Greenhouse. With the help and support of the PCKIZ grant and internship program, Gearheadz was accepted into and has completed the Innovation Works' Alpha Lab program. InspectTech, a successful Idea Foundry portfolio company, has utilized the PCKIZ tax credit program, the PCKIZ grant program and the PCKIZ internship program. Currently, several other PCKIZ companies are currently being considered to be accepted into Innovation Works

and Idea Foundry programs. PCKIZ programs and grants have either created or helped PCKIZ companies retain 40 jobs in the region.

### **ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

Since the PCKIZ officially began in July of 2007, it is well on the road to achieving its goals of seeding businesses around PCKIZ educational institutions and leveraging innovation economy benefits to successfully help the most distressed areas within our footprint. The PCKIZ is currently working with 30 companies that either started up in the zone or relocated to the PCKIZ because of PCKIZ benefits. Ten of those companies are located in the Greater Hill District, which is one of Pennsylvania's most economically distressed communities. Twenty percent of the PCKIZ companies are owned and operated by African American entrepreneurs and slightly more than 20% owned and operated by female entrepreneurs. The ten companies located in the Greater Hill District have created a cluster that has help change the perception of the PCKIZ. The PCKIZ recently has been a star performer among organizations working to revitalize the city's center by helping young companies obtain more than \$1 million in funding, achieving the second-highest total of dollars in tax credits among all of Pennsylvania's Innovation Zones. (Six of the 10 companies approved for tax credits received the maximum amount.) The PCKIZ is currently working with eight companies that are located in the Hill District and Uptown. Of those eight companies, the PCKIZ is directly responsible for attracting four of those companies to the PCKIZ. Those four "pioneer companies" have played a significant role in getting other companies and organizations to consider relocating to the area and to relocate to the area. All eight companies are using programs offered by the PCKIZ (i.e., internship program, grant programs and/ or networking events) to help their respective companies grow.

### **PARALLEL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND THE CREATION OF AN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY CLUSTER IN AN UNDESERVED AREA**

While the PCKIZ has been very successful at implementing the core program listed above, its success has also been its ability to successfully connect the results of those programs and the PCKIZ collaboration to connect the benefits of the innovation cluster created to catalytic economic development initiatives that positively benefit the lives of residents of underserved communities in the PCKIZ footprint.

It is a well accepted notion in Technology Based Economic Development (TBED) that technology clusters generate substantial economic benefits to a community. (Examples include the economic benefits and the service oriented businesses that have relocated or started up in the Southside area of Pittsburgh because of the Robotics and Gaming Clusters and that Oakland has received from its Information Technology Cluster). "Where clusters are supported by local businesses, universities and other educational institutions, and communities, advantages accrue to both established and new businesses—and their workers. Established businesses that sell their goods and services across a broader region or around the globe bring new dollars and employment opportunities that then expand the local economy. Fostering innovation among startup companies and established companies in clusters has a multiplier effect for both types of companies and purely local businesses, too, such as restaurants, dry cleaners, and other small

retail businesses, all of which provide ‘non-traded’ services that are created and consumed within the cluster”<sup>8</sup>.

### **PCKIZ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES WITH COMMUNITY GROWTH & EXPANSION OF SERVICE BUSINESS**

The PCKIZ noticed very early on that it was having success at attracting and identifying start up companies to the zone. However, the vast majority of those companies were located in the most developed portions of the zone; specifically downtown, and small portions of the Northside and Southside. Companies interested in relocating or starting up in the PCKIZ were not locating within the most distressed commercial corridors of the PCKIZ (Uptown and the Hill District). A question that several of our partners became interested in was what could we as a KIZ collectively do to utilize technology based economic development in an innovative manner to make the Hill District and Uptown areas of the zone more inviting so that those areas could truly take advantage of the benefits of the innovation economy. The Commonwealth’s KIZ program encouraged each KIZ to spend twenty percent of its time on economic development initiatives outside of the strict scope of the core KIZ program. The PCKIZ used 20 percent of its resources to assist non profits like the Hill House Economic Development Corporation and Pittsburgh Gateways Corporation raise money for economic development activities and it has helped those organizations and others create a coordinated economic development effort to do high impact, sustainable, community focused and driven economic development within the Greater Hill District.

Some successful cooperative initiatives include assisting in the planning and development to transition two cornerstone buildings in the Hill. Fundraising has started and been successful to transform the Historic Crawford Grill into a multi faceted community building that includes dining, entertainment and a digital music incubator. Also, several players, including the PCKIZ are securing financing to turn the Connelley Technical Institute into a world renowned environmental living, learning and earning green collaborative campus called “The Pittsburgh Green Innovation Campus”. This green renovation will enable the former Connelley school to become a nationally recognized teaching facility featuring wind power, solar power, solar powered water systems, geothermal wells, underground heat storage system, living machine sanitary collection, green roofing, green houses, biodiesel generators, sunshading, on-site storm-water collection system, green walls and pervious paving. Moreover, this campus will house programs that will stimulate and capture green collar jobs in the Pittsburgh region by fostering and creating opportunities in education, training, research and product demonstration, commercialization and regional collaboration. Pittsburgh Gateways Corporation and the PCKIZ are also working together to create a business incubator in this complex. The PCKIZ also helped leverage a \$250,000 grant from the Heinz Endowments to hire full time staff for the Hill House Economic Development Corporation. This grant played a large role in assisting the Hill House Economic Development Corporation to attract a full service Shop ‘n Save grocery store to the Hill District. The PCKIZ is assisting HHEDC open a full service grocery store inn the Hill District. HHEDC and PEIDC are involved in a joint effort to develop an \$8,000,000 retail

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<sup>8</sup> Sallet, J. Paisley, E., Masterman, J. (2009). The Geography of Innovation, The Federal Government and the Growth of Regional Innovation Clusters. *Science Progress*.

center. Duquesne University, motivated by this accomplishment, plans to open a pharmacy in the retail center area to service the Hill District.

### **THE FUTURE OF THE PCKIZ**

The PCKIZ was slated to receive four years for funding to support its programming from the state through its technology arm, the Ben Franklin Technology Development Authority (BFTDA). Unfortunately because of state budgetary cuts, BFTDA decided to keep the KIZ program but to suspend funding for the program. The PCKIZ only received two years of funding from BFTDA. Although this has presented some financial challenges for the organization, this will enable the organization to be more creative in terms of its programming. Funding from BFTDA required that the KIZ programming have a strict TBED focus.

### **RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES**

The success to date of the PCKIZ seems to indicate that a combination of interested partners, investment by partners and linkages between various key sectors of a regional economy are effective in both stimulating investment and attracting business development which in turn, stimulates further investment. Many attempts had been made previously to develop the community that had failed.

The foregoing discussion of the PCKIZ and its accomplishments to date would be greatly bolstered by research studies comparing this model to those of developing underserved communities in other regions as well as to those which continue to fail. Appropriate research questions may be: What role do partnerships play in determining success? What partnerships are most critical—within and external to the community? How should success be defined? Which programs are most effective for business development and investment success? Is the cluster model effective for inner city development? Does the clustering of firms stimulate new development? Does past history of failure and all of its lessons contribute to the eventual success of development for a depressed area?

### **CONCLUSION**

The work of the PCKIZ is having a very positive impact in this region and within the Greater Hill District, one of Pennsylvania's most distressed communities. As our work in this arena becomes increasingly successful, the PCKIZ and its partners and supporters believe that this is a base for creating a community revitalization model that can be replicated by other underserved and depressed communities throughout the United States. The model will enable those communities to effectively leverage TBED as a powerful tool to spur much needed economic development initiatives.

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