

# STRATEGY21 CASE: CAPITAL FOR REGIONAL REDEVELOPMENT

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## LOOKING BACK TO THE EARLY 1980'S

The Pittsburgh region was just about to go over a cliff. Pittsburgh, arsenal of democracy. The region during World War II where the mills, fired by coal, yielded the steel, glass, and aluminum that won the war. The same mills emitted the smoke that gave Pittsburgh one of its handles, the "Smokey City." The pride and belief in the jobs in the mines and mills were as strong as the

steel they forged. Those jobs would be there as long as Pittsburgh. Why else in 1940 would you have the confidence to call your pro football team the Steelers?

The smoke the mills exhaled and people inhaled clouded that vision of the future. Smoke meant that vision of mill jobs for the future was alive. That vision dissolved in the early 1980's. Global competitive economics destroyed it. The opening of international trading markets with China, India, and other emerging economies combined with decreased costs of shipping meant American producers faced steep competition on cost. That resulted in the off shoring of jobs to lower-paid workers or the disappearance of those jobs altogether due to technological innovation.<sup>i</sup>

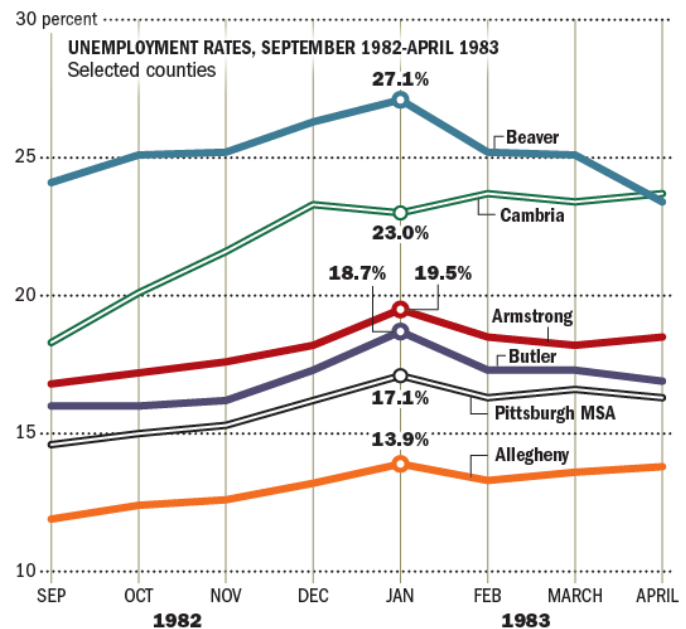
Pittsburgh lost 133,000 manufacturing jobs in the 1980s.<sup>ii</sup> Tens of thousands of jobs disappeared virtually overnight. Workers lost their jobs and families lost their homes. City neighborhoods, steel towns, and coal towns alike witnessed their commercial districts lose their customers and their vitality. People fled the region or hung on with the support of the government safety net hoping for a resurrection of the economy. A *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* survey in 1986 reported that 74% of Duquesne High School Seniors would leave their home region after graduation, with a 17% drop in those who planned on further education.<sup>iii</sup> Hope in the next generation was all but lost.

Looking figuratively at a chart of job growth over time, Pittsburgh began a tumble over an economic cliff in 1981. It could die at the bottom of the cliff. Or it could pick itself up and climb back up the cliff. This case is about getting the votes to build a scaffold from which to launch the climb.

For this climb, Pittsburgh was fortunate at the time to have public leaders that would be the anchors for that climb. One of those leaders was Republican Dick Thornburgh, Governor of Pennsylvania (1979-1987). Thornburgh was born a Pittsburgh Pirate baseball fan. Former U.S. Attorney for Western Pennsylvania and Assistant Attorney General of the U.S. Justice Criminal Division, he graduated from Pitt Law. Three others were key members of the state legislature. Democrat Leroy Irviss, Speaker of the House, represented the Hill and Oakland district of Pittsburgh for almost 30 years. Irviss championed civil rights and served as the only African

## Regional jobless rates in the early 1980s

In January 1983, the unemployment rate in the Pittsburgh region was 17.1 percent, the highest it has ever been.



Source: Pa. Work Stats

James Hilston/Post-Gazette

Figure 1: Pittsburgh Post-Gazette unemployment figures from an article on deindustrialization in the 1980s. Note the peak of unemployment inverse to the "economic cliff" beginning in 1981 (2012)

American Speaker of the Pennsylvania House. Democrat Jim Manderino, Majority Leader of the House represented his home town of Monessen, a steel town on the Monongahela River. Manderino served in the House for 23 years, becoming Speaker of the House after Irvis retired. Ed Zemprelli, Democratic Leader of the Senate, represented his hometown of Clairton, another steel town on the Monongahela River. Zemprelli served 20 years in the legislature.

Though not as severe, Philadelphia also suffered in those early years of the 1980s and even earlier in the 1970s. From 1950-1980, over 400,000 middle-class white residents ‘fled’ to the suburbs, increasing the City’s proportion of low-income and minority populations.<sup>iv</sup> Then, from 1970-80, the city lost 140,000 jobs and the manufacturing sector dropped from 26% to 17% of the total job share. Unlike Pittsburgh, which could raise tax revenue from the county, Philadelphia was both a city and county. This meant it could not levy taxes on its surrounding suburbs, where many of its former residents now resided.<sup>v</sup>

The Philadelphia region had its powerhouses as well in the state legislature. As a Republican, Thornburgh relied upon two key legislative leaders from the more populous and more powerful southeastern region. Republican Jack Stauffer, Senate Majority Leader, represented much of Chester County serving in the legislature for 20 years. Republican Matt Ryan, House Minority Leader, hailed from Delaware County. Ryan served as Speaker earlier in the decade and would return to the Speakership in 1995 for eight consecutive years before his death while in office.

## PHILADELPHIA’S IDEA FOR A WORLD CLASS CONVENTION CENTER

Home of the revolutionary gathering that authored the Declaration of Independence, Philadelphia has always been a destination city. Philadelphia, a place you want to visit, is also a place that Philadelphians want you to visit. Visitors create jobs. Unfortunately, Philadelphia’s outdated Civic Center in University City didn’t cut it anymore. Huge pillars prevented contiguous views for network television and a dearth of large hotels outside of center city meant conference attendees routinely required shuttles to piecemeal accommodations.<sup>vi</sup>

No surprise that in 1981 the Philadelphia Visitor and Convention Center published a report calling for a new world class convention center. The current facility ranked dead last behind centers in six peer cities like Atlanta, Baltimore, New York, and Washington DC, which were winning prized conventions with their freshly rebuilt facilities.

That study ignited a conversation. Democratic Mayor Bill Green (1980-84) appointed a committee to review proposals from private developers to build a new convention center. Prior to Mayor Green’s administration, Philadelphia had emerged from a nearly two-decade shift of power away from downtown and towards the neighborhoods. Democratic Mayors Tate (1962-72) and Rizzo (1972-80) had increased taxes on businesses. Many business leaders had viewed Philadelphia’s economic environment inhospitable.

As the first pro-business mayor in two decades, Green was well positioned to initiate the Convention Center project. A handful of well connected political and developer insiders worked

with the Mayor to align business and government interests. One key powerbroker and proponent of the Reading Terminal site proposal was Walter D'Alessio. D'Aliessio's career included stints in private development and mortgage banking and in government as the Executive Director of the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority and head of the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation (PIDC).<sup>vii</sup>

Of all the proposals seen by Mayor Green's review committee, only one rose above the rest for its charm and opportunity – the Reading Terminal site at Market East. Reading Corporation, a bankrupt railroad company owned the site. Reading Corporation hired D'Alessio to represent the project. Reading also had a proactive young team to market the site, gaining public support by techniques like handing out thousands of brochures at the site to daily commuters.

In this landscape, in September of 1983 Mayor Green's committee approved a proposal by the Reading Corporation by a 13-0 vote. The project would require the city invoking eminent domain to secure privately owned land. It would also require hundreds of millions of dollars in state and local funding. Despite huge public funding, Reading, a privately owned corporation, would own the Convention Center. This issue of publicly funded private ownership would prove one of the key sticking points once the project reached Harrisburg.

In early 1983, Mayor Green had decided not to run again. His appointed City Managing Director, Wilson Goode, stepped into the fray. Goode defeated former Mayor Rizzo in the Democratic primary and won the general election in November 1983 to become the first African American Mayor of Philadelphia. Inaugurated in January 1984, Mayor Goode supported the Reading proposal. The proposal would require the City Council to approve the Redevelopment Authority's invocation of eminent domain, which would displace over 20 families and 100 businesses in Chinatown. The residents and an opposition group, Businesses Against Reading Center (BARC), demanded \$32.5M in compensation. Meanwhile, land and construction costs were *initially* budgeted at \$283M for completion in four years. (The project would eventually run over \$500M and take 10 years.) To fund construction immediately, lobbyists for the project were soon at work to convince the state to come up with a \$185 million funding gap for the project. One benefit of private ownership at the Reading Terminal site was eligibility for \$100M in tax cuts for historic preservation.

Thanks to city lobbyists, SB 985 became [Act 62](#), the Capital Budget of 1983-84 in May of 1984.<sup>viii</sup> It contained an authorization for a state expenditure of \$43,900,000 for a "Convention Center – bounded by Market, Race, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 13<sup>th</sup> Streets" in Philadelphia. However, Mayor Goode would soon find that Republican Governor Thornburgh intended to withhold this funding until significant changes were made to the ownership of the project. The Capital Budget Act also contained an authorization of \$286,000 for the existing state-owned David Lawrence Convention Center, Pittsburgh for "Improvements to lobby and all meeting rooms." This was a paltry sum compared to the Philadelphia authorization. While Pittsburgh legislators voted for this Capital Budget Act, they started paying close attention to developments on the eastern side of the state and prepared to set the foundations for an East-West legislative partnership.

## PITTSBURGH'S IDEA – STRATEGY21

At least one Pittsburgh House member, Democrat Tom Murphy, and one wise lobbyist, Walt Giesey, shared a thought with the Allegheny County Commissioners and the Mayor of Pittsburgh in 1984. The thought? If Philadelphia is lining up to win substantial state funding for a development in the City, they will need the necessary votes, namely 102 of the 203 House members and 26 of the 50 Senate members and the approval of the governor. The House Speaker, Democrat LeRoy Irvis, Democratic Majority Leader Jim Manderino, and Republican Governor Dick Thornburgh all had western roots. Wouldn't it be a good idea to identify what Pittsburgh would need to fund its redevelopment?

The three Allegheny County Commissioners were Democrats Tom Foerster (Chair) and Pete Flaherty, and Republican Barbara Hafer. The Mayor of Pittsburgh was Democrat Dick Caliguiri. All four agreed with the idea. Their staffs in partnership with the Allegheny Conference began to compile a list of several projects, labeling it as Strategy21. This multi-faceted approach was different than Philadelphia's focus on a single big project.

Allegheny Conference had been at work on economic development recommendations. On August 30 of 1984, Dr. Konrad Weis, chairman of the Economic Development Committee of the Allegheny Conference on Community Development submitted a memo of over 100 recommendations for Pittsburgh's future. The recommendations constituted a regional "Call to Partnership." Nine task forces of over 200 regional business, political, and civic leaders developed the recommendations. Weis and the committee's memo noted conceptually that "a) there is no quick fix to the economic future of this region; b) there is no return to the old solutions of yesterday; and c) a large part of the solution rests with the private sector."<sup>ix</sup>

With private sector involvement, one advantage Pittsburgh had over Philadelphia was its strong public-private partnership approach. On many fronts, public leaders and private (corporate, nonprofit and foundation) leaders took a "we're in this together" approach. It has been said that in Pittsburgh, get the right 10 people in the room, and the project gets done.<sup>x</sup> Philadelphia, on the other hand, was larger and more diverse in political and private sector composition. Thus, Philadelphia's power was more of a plateau, and the eastern region would struggle to develop such a comprehensive regional economic vision.

As Pittsburgh and Philadelphia's agenda became more focused, the potential price tag got bigger and bigger. The Governor's staff grew increasingly concerned that the requests for state funding would far exceed the state's fiscal capacity. They began to fend off and dampen the expectations. When Pittsburgh/Allegheny County lobbyist Walt Giesey requested a sit-down meeting with the Governor to review the list of capital projects in Pittsburgh, he received pushback. George Werner, Executive Director of the Governor's Economic Development Committee, suggested Allegheny County's private sector could play a much larger role in financing projects. Werner recommended to the Governor's Secretary of Policy, Frank Wright, "...not to have the Governor participate in [a meeting with Giesey]," unless Allegheny County committed corporate resources and an integrated strategy that goes beyond a "laundry list."<sup>xi</sup> Instead, Werner suggested a pre-meeting between the Allegheny County leadership team and the Governor's Economic Development Cabinet Committee. Giesey rejected this offer on May



13. Nonetheless, the message about requiring significant private investment in requests for capital funding was clear.

In June of 1985, that “laundry list” was turned into a properly branded, comprehensive report entitled “Strategy21: Pittsburgh/Allegheny Economic Development Strategy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.”<sup>xii</sup> In addition to the Mayor and County Commissioners, Dr. Wesley W. Posvar, Chancellor of the University of Pittsburgh, and Dr. Richard M. Cyert, President of Carnegie Mellon University, committed their institutional support to the Strategy21 Proposal to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Strategy21 defined four goals to meet Pittsburgh’s deindustrializing economy and regional landscape:

1. *Reinforce the region’s traditional economic base as a center for the metals industry and an international corporate headquarters.*
2. *Convert underutilized land, facilities and labor force components to new uses, especially those involving advanced technology.*
3. *Enhance the region’s quality of life, thereby attracting new residents and increasing tourism.*
4. *Expand opportunities for women, minorities and the structurally unemployed.*

Strategy21 targeted twenty-five projects with a total budget of \$1.868B: \$419M of funding to come from the state (22%) and \$1,092B in private investment (58%). The projects were scattered across Allegheny County with a heavy concentration in the Mon Valley and the City of Pittsburgh. Projects fell into five categories: 1) Greater Pittsburgh International Airport Area Redevelopment, 2) Allegheny Redevelopment, 3) Mon Valley Redevelopment, 4) Transportation Improvements, and 5) University Advanced Technology Research. Language in the proposal was specifically tailored to appeal to

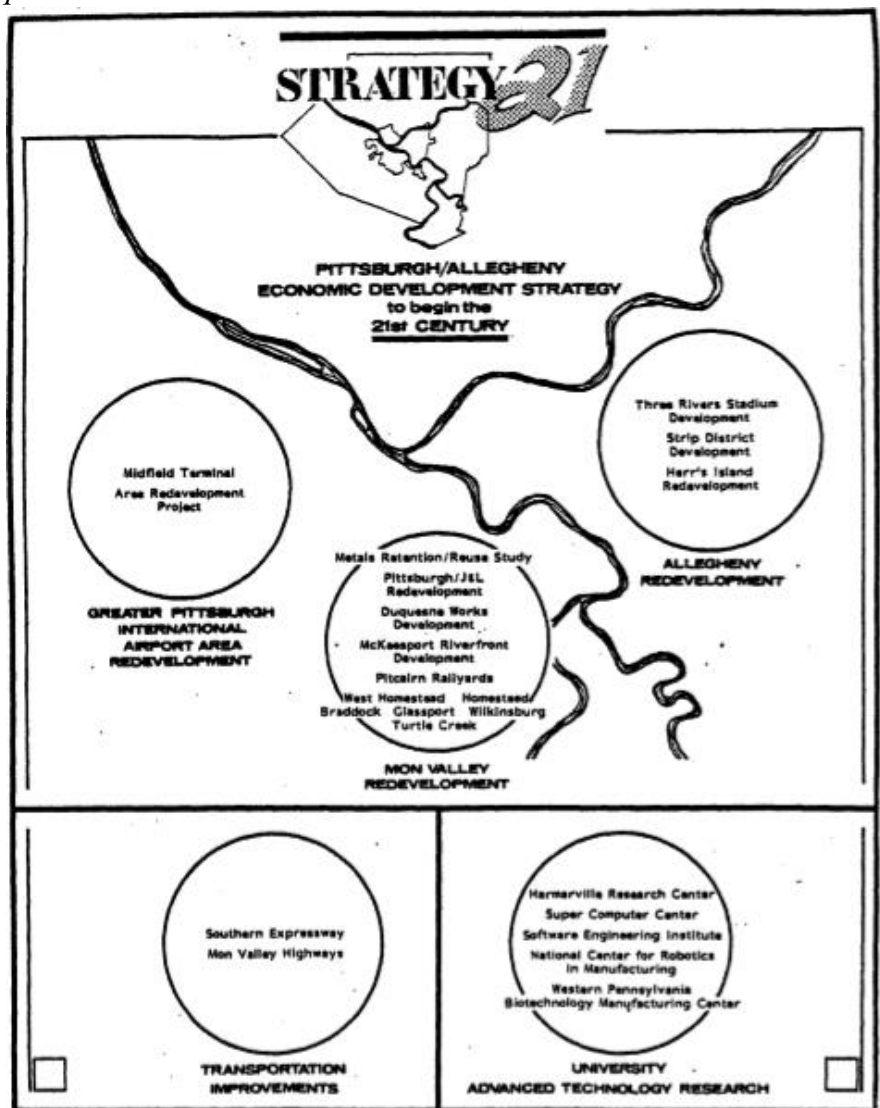


Figure 2: Strategy21 Booklet List of Projects

Governor Thornburgh's Pittsburgh roots, as well as the state's recently created Ben Franklin Partnership:<sup>1</sup> "The economy of 21<sup>st</sup> century Pittsburgh must be positioned to take maximum advantage of emerging economic trends toward advanced technology and international marketing and communications systems." xiii

Figure 3: Strategy 21 Initial Project List and Budget (Source: Strategy21 Proposal Booklet, 1985)

Project	Total Cost (\$M)	State Request	Prior State Funding	Private	Federal	Public Investment (Local)	Local Public Tax	Local Public - Revenue	Min Job Creation	Max Job Creation	Job Retention
<u>Greater Pittsburgh International</u>											
Greater Pittsburgh International Terminal Airport Area Redevelopment	\$ 403.65	\$ 97.00		\$ 249.87	\$ 50.78	\$ 6.00			18000	18000	
<u>Allegheny Redevelopment</u>											
Herr's Island	\$ 125.10	\$ 6.90	\$ 5.50	\$ 106.00	\$ 2.80		\$ 3.90		1300	1300	
Three Rivers Stadium	\$ 284.50	\$ 36.00		\$ 155.00	\$ 10.00		\$ 22.00	\$ 61.50	3238	3238	
Strip District	\$ 118.30	\$ 14.60		\$ 89.90	\$ 1.80		\$ 2.50	\$ 9.50	1000	1000	
<u>Mon-Ohio-Yough Redevelopment</u>											
Metals Retention/Reuse Study	\$ 0.75	\$ 0.75									
Pittsburgh J&L Redevelopment	\$ 98.50	\$ 14.00	\$ 2.00	\$ 79.00	\$ 0.50		\$ 2.00	\$ 1.00	1100	1100	
Duquesne Works	\$ 5.50	\$ 5.50							500	1500	
Glassport-Copperweld	\$ 8.30	\$ 1.00	\$ 0.20	\$ 4.00	\$ 2.00	\$ 1.10			250	250	
Pitcairn Railyards	\$ 185.00	\$ 10.00		\$ 174.00		\$ 1.00			9000	9000	
West Homestead Redevelopment	\$ 2.30	\$ 0.50	\$ 0.50	\$ 0.80	\$ 0.40	\$ 0.10			20	20	
Homestead Redevelopment	\$ 12.70	\$ 3.00	\$ -	\$ 7.20	\$ 2.00	\$ 0.50			200	200	300
Braddock Industrial and Commercial Revitalization	\$ 7.50	\$ 2.20	\$ 0.30	\$ 3.00	\$ 1.50	\$ 0.50					
McKeesport Riverfront Development	\$ 46.00	\$ 9.50	\$ 0.50	\$ 31.00	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.00			3000	3000	
Wilkinsburg Center Redevelopment	\$ 44.80	\$ 1.20	\$ 1.30	\$ 41.50		\$ 0.80			250	250	900
Turtle Creek, Wilmerding and East Pittsburgh Flood Control Channel	\$ 1.50	\$ 1.50									4200
<u>Transportation Improvements</u>											
Southern Expressways	\$ 76.00	\$ 76.00									
Mon Valley Highways	\$ 74.00	\$ 74.00									
<u>Research</u>											
Harmarville Research Center	\$ 106.00	\$ 3.00		\$ 103.00					1200	1200	
Super Computer Center	\$ 75.00	\$ 6.00		\$ 19.00	\$ 50.00				45		
Software Engineering Institute	\$ 125.00	\$ 4.50	\$ -	\$ 17.50	\$ 103.00				250		
Robotics Center	\$ 40.00	\$ 30.00		\$ 10.00					75	575	
Western Pennsylvania Biotechnology Manufacturing Center	\$ 28.00	\$ 28.00							250	300	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 1,868.40</b>	<b>\$ 425.15</b>	<b>\$ 10.30</b>	<b>\$ 1,090.77</b>	<b>\$ 227.78</b>	<b>\$ 12.00</b>	<b>\$ 30.40</b>	<b>\$ 72.00</b>	<b>39678</b>	<b>40933</b>	<b>5400</b>

The projects selected aimed to stimulate and revitalize the Pittsburgh region through its historical corporate industrial base, natural endowments of the rivers and land, and around a regional economic "Eds and Meds" model— educational institutions/research and medical services as "anchor" institutions.<sup>xiv</sup> The biggest project was to be a new international airport terminal with access via a new southern expressway. Consistent with the enactment of the Ben Franklin Partnership in 1983<sup>xv</sup> and with strong support of the university presidents, there was a heavy emphasis on advanced technology investments. The University Advanced Technology Research projects aimed to revitalize the metals industry, recruit corporate headquarters with the appeal of R&D excellence, and utilize Carnegie Mellon University's (CMU) comparative

<sup>1</sup> The Ben Franklin Partnership was created in 1983 to "make direct investments in promising technology-oriented companies throughout the Commonwealth to fund critical commercialization activities and growth needs." With state and regional headquarters in Philadelphia, Lehigh Valley, State College, and Pittsburgh, its initial goal was to turn universities into job-generating enterprises. Learn more at: <https://benfranklin.org/what-is-bftp/>

advantage in robotics and computing. CMU had just secured a \$100M+ Department of Defense contract for the Software Engineering Institute. Strategy21 would additionally lay the foundations for the Harmarville Research Center for multi-purpose research labs, a Super Computer Center shared between Pitt and CMU, the National Center for Robotics in Manufacturing, and a Biotechnology Manufacturing Center leaning on the University of Pittsburgh's excellence in biomedical research with close proximity to the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center.

Funding streams for these projects varied. The proposal called for \$203.65M in state funding from the capital budget for the Pittsburgh International Airport, Allegheny, and Mon Valley Redevelopment, in effort to categorically match the \$185M requested by the Philadelphia Convention Center project. Transportation Improvements and University Advanced Technology Research components would request funding from alternative state and private funding sources. Local public funding by revenue and taxes would comprise \$114.4M and federal funding would be \$227.78M of the total budget. Each proposed project also forecasted the number of jobs created or retained with over 20,000 jobs created and 5,400 jobs retained in industry in the near-term. Another 20,000 would be created within 15 years from the development of the Midfield Terminal at the Pittsburgh Airport, spinoffs from university startups, and research positions created at the advanced technology centers. Philadelphia legislators, too, would vote for this Capital Budget Act. They were paying attention to the developments on the western side of the state and preparing to negotiate.

## STRATEGY21 AND CONVENTION CENTER MEET IN HARRISBURG

Governor Thornburgh's staff was less than embracing of both Strategy21 and the Convention Center. Taken together, it was a lot of money. Even if the governor wanted to agree to all the projects, the sum was too large for the operating budget. There were also other issues. After a huge infusion of taxpayer money, the Convention Center proposal was to be owned by a private for-profit corporation, a political as well as legal stretch for taxpayer dollars. Thornburgh's budget secretary, Bob Bittenbender, had a traditional view of public finance.<sup>xvi</sup> Like the Governor, he believed that the state should not finance a project owned by a for profit enterprise. Looking back to the 1850s, PA's metropolitan cities got into deep financial trouble when supporting private organizations, resulting in defaults on major bonds. As a result, nearly every bond issue in PA after the 19<sup>th</sup> century cited these historical defaults. This left deep anxieties in public finance professionals, and Thornburgh felt the pressure to address these issues as a Republican who ran on a platform of fiscal responsibility.

In April 1985, Governor Thornburgh and Philadelphia Mayor Goode met and agreed the Convention Center would have to be owned by the public if state funds were to be part of its funding. Even with this agreement, there were serious reservations about the project. These were evident when the 1985-86 Capital Budget Bill, HB 383, was debated on June 26, 1985. In fact, a last-minute amendment attempting to strip the Convention Center from the Capital Bill completely, tied on a (101-101) vote. Upstate democrats were attacked for their support of the



bill, right ahead of their 1985 midterm elections, making it very hard for rural Democrats to support the project. The amendment failed, so the bill maintained its capital budget authorization of \$141,100,000 for the Convention Center. With the \$43,900,000 already authorized in the previous session's [Act 62](#), the Convention Center state funding request reached \$185,000,000. In addition, the 1985-1986 Capital Budget Bill also included \$238M in funding for Allegheny County projects including the first phase of Strategy21.<sup>xvii</sup>

With hundreds of millions on the table, the leadership sponsoring Strategy21 began lobbying the governor and legislature in earnest in the spring of 1985. Strategy21's full state price tag of \$425,000,000 was well in excess of the \$185,000,000 for the Convention Center. Southeast Pennsylvania was a far larger region population and economically than southwestern Pennsylvania. There needed to be some prioritization and equalization. By the time of the June 26<sup>th</sup> debate on HB 383, the airport was included for an \$85,000,000 authorization as well as several other smaller projects from the Strategy21 list.

It is worth noting that Governor Thornburgh was a Republican from Pittsburgh, presiding over a state with a Republican-controlled Senate of 27 Republicans / 23 Democrats and a Democratically controlled House with 103 Democrats / 100 Republicans. Only 50 of 203 House representatives hailed from Allegheny and Philadelphia Counties. Thus, even considering the (contested) argument that Strategy21 and the Convention Center would bring revenue to the immediately surrounding counties, their combined price tag of \$610M would provide challenging optics to many suburban and rural legislators who routinely felt that resources were directed to the urban corners of the state. These concerns would have to be mitigated if any funding or legislation were expected to pass the PA House and Senate.

## THE GOVERNOR'S PROBLEM

The day before Thornburgh's election to a second term, Rick Stafford, Secretary for Legislative Affairs, told his boss, Jay Waldman, General Counsel and Chief of Staff, he intended to leave state employment and return to his home in Pittsburgh. The day after his election, he told the governor. He thought his days of weighty state government were over. He was wrong. The call came and he agreed to return to take on Jay's Chief of Staff role.

On his first day, October 1, 1985, Governor Thornburgh and Rick secluded themselves to talk priorities. The purpose that day was to simply make a list. What did the governor want to accomplish in his next 17 months? One priority was at the top of the governor's list. Solve the problem of how to build the convention center and the priority projects of Strategy21. Do so in a fiscally responsible way. Do so in a clearly constitutional way that wouldn't be challenged. Do so in a way that would give a lasting role for the state in community investment. Finally, and most critically, do so in a way that could get the votes to send the solution to his desk.

## THE SOLUTION(S)

The first question was how big was the problem? How much funding was needed? Answer: at least enough for the convention center, the airport and then some. So let's say around \$300,000,000.

The second question was where to find the money? One answer would not work: a tax increase or dramatic cuts in the annual general fund. Answer: debt. How to approach? Answer: a sinking fund.

The third question was how to legally authorize and define the criteria for the projects? Answer create a new category of project authorizations in the capital budget called “Redevelopment Assistance Capital Projects.” If authorized as a RACP, the governor could fund them through the sinking fund as long as they met the criteria under the legislation.

The final question was how to get past the reluctance to entrust the building of the convention center to the city of Philadelphia government. Answer: call it the “Pennsylvania Convention Center” and create an authority to oversee the construction and operation of the center.

## GETTING THE VOTES

It’s one thing to map the ingredients of a solution. It’s another to get the votes. That’s the next part of the story. Three pieces of legislation needed a majority of votes in both chambers. The wording of the legislation, the debates about the legislation, and the final votes can all be found in the ‘history’ of each of these acts:

- Act 70 [History](#) (Senate Bill 655) Signed into law on June 27, 1986. Creating the Pennsylvania Convention Center Authority
- Act 115 [History](#) (House Bill 1676) Signed into law July 10, 1986. Creating the Redevelopment Assistance Sinking Fund
- Act 118 [History](#) (House Bill 383) Signed into law July 10, 1986. Authorizing capital budget projects including the Pennsylvania Convention Center Authority and the Strategy21 projects.

The order in which this legislation was passed was particularly important to getting the votes. Note first the creation of the Pennsylvania Convention Center Authority. Leadership knew that the votes would not be there for the other two without assurances that there would a mechanism to oversee the construction and operation of the center.

Philadelphia Convention Center lobbyists, like Joseph McLaughlin and his firm SR Wodjak & Associates, were key to building this strategy. McLaughlin and Thornburgh’s Chief of Staff Stafford began meeting in early 1986, followed by meetings with House Minority Leader Matt Ryan (R-Delaware County) and Senate Majority Leader Jack Stauffer (R – Chester County).<sup>xviii</sup> Coming from Democratically-controlled Philadelphia, McLaughlin and the Convention Center folks had an uphill battle to recruit suburban Republicans, rural Democrats and Republicans, and legislators from western PA. Therefore, it was essential to build a coalition with Republican leadership in the house and governor’s office.<sup>xix</sup> Floor leaders also had incentive to work together, as their leadership appointments depended on the support of their respective caucuses and, for Republicans, the Governor.<sup>xx</sup>

Prior to debate of Senate Bill 655 (Act 70), which created the Convention Center Authority, legislators were already broadly aware of the Convention Center project (for better or worse).

This was due to several bills that had already been passed or introduced to promote visibility. As mentioned, [SB 985](#) had been signed into [Act 62](#) as the Capital Budget Act in 1984. Act 62 appropriated \$43.9M as a capital grant through the Department of Community Affairs, a temporary holding place before the legal mechanism of RACP was developed to fund private projects. Then, in 1985, two other convention center bills, [SB 413](#)<sup>xxi</sup> and [HB 1128](#),<sup>xxii</sup> were introduced, referred to their respective Urban Affairs committees, and permanently laid on the table (suspended for consideration). These bills served merely to increase awareness of the legislation.

Then came SB 655. As per the strategy concocted by Stafford, McLaughlin, Stauffer, and Ryan, SB 655 flipped the process and would first create the Convention Center Authority before appropriating money for projects. They knew that legislators would only appropriate the money if oversight would be guaranteed. After initially passing SB 655 through the General Assembly<sup>2</sup> in June of 1985 with major amendments, it sat dormant in the Senate until October 2, 1985.<sup>3</sup> It is then, that Stauffer re-committed the bill. This generated a conference committee between the House and Senate, which would be the primary forum for re-negotiating the bill as a vehicle for the Convention Center Authority.

The chief barrier to “getting the votes” for SB 655 was a dispute over the composition of the authority board. Distrusting of the Philadelphia “patronage mill,” suburban Republicans and rural Democrats alike questioned who would be selected to be on the board.<sup>xxiii</sup> Likewise, the Governor, suburban legislative leaders and City elected officials all wanted control over the project. In early negotiations, lobbyists and General Assembly leadership agreed to create two 7-member PA Convention Center Authority boards as follows:<sup>xxiv</sup>

- Construction oversight board: 3 Mayoral Appointees, 3 Gubernatorial Appointees, 7<sup>th</sup> member elected by other 6.
- Operations board: 2 Philadelphia Mayoral appointees, 2 Gubernatorial appointees, 2 appointees selected by suburban county leadership, and the 7<sup>th</sup> member elected by the other 6.

While this version pacified suburban leaders and Philadelphia Democrats, Philadelphia Republicans such as Representative Frank Salvatore were dissatisfied and withheld support. Back to the drawing board. After much negotiation, what emerged from the conference committee between Senators John Stauffer, Frank Salvatore, Hardy Williams, and House Representatives James Manderino, Max Pievsky, and Matt Ryan was a new board structure that would (hopefully) appease everyone.

The solution: there would only be one 9-member board. The Governor would appoint two members who are residents of the Philadelphia MSA (except cannot be from Philadelphia.) The

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<sup>2</sup> General Assembly refers to both the PA State House and Senate.

<sup>3</sup> Note that SB 655 originated as a "An act making an appropriation from a restricted revenue account within the General Fund to the Department of State for use by the Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs. PROVIDING FOR THE CAPITAL BUDGET FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 1985-1986." It was later re-worked as a vehicle for the Convention Center Authority, a bill tactic sometimes used by legislators.

Governor would also appoint two members (not of the same party) representing PA Commonwealth at-large. These two at-large nominees would come from two lists of at least 4 nominees, given by the party leadership from both the state House and Senate. If the Governor did not pick from these lists in 30 days, the floor leaders could choose. In addition, the Mayor of Philadelphia would appoint 2 members, and the City Council would pick 2, one from each party. As before, these 8 appointees would select the board chairman, by a vote of at least 6/8. If the board could not elect the ninth member in 90 days, the Governor could appoint someone, with a 2/3 approval from the other 8 members.<sup>xxv</sup>

These terms reflected the struggle for power, a mutual distrust shared by all constituencies, and time-based rules to ensure no sneaky attempts to stack the board. But tensions remained. On February 12<sup>th</sup>, 1986, a vote in the Senate was delayed due to the lack of having found a “neutral” person as a potential chair of the board. Concerns from rural senators also emerged, exemplified by Senator Stout’s hog analogy: “I do not want to see all the loin go to Philadelphia and all the hams go to Allegheny County and those surrounding counties like Washington, Beaver, Fayette, Greene, Westmoreland and a lot of the other counties that are contiguous to the metropolitan areas end up with the sow belly.”<sup>xxvi</sup>

Backdoor dealing and lobbying prevailed. Introduced on March 10<sup>th</sup>, 1986 in the Senate by Majority Leader Stauffer, the bill passed 39-9. However, more arguments were raised that would pose difficulties in the House. For instance, while Philadelphia Senator Roxanne Jones voted in the affirmative, she raised concerns about lack of quotas for minority and women businesses (MWDBE).<sup>xxvii</sup> Indeed, passing SB 655 in the PA House was no easy feat. Introduced by House Majority Leader Jim Manderino one day after passing in the Senate, the bill was swiftly defeated 68-128.

While the bill wouldn’t change between first, second, and third consideration in the house, it took time to convince House representatives to sign on. Several black representatives from Philadelphia raised concerns about affirmative action. Concerned about costs vs. benefits to his constituents, Representative Linton (D -Philadelphia) said “They are going to have to bear the cost of cost overruns; they are going to have to bear the cost of debt service for this convention center, but they are not going to be able to participate in the wealth of that convention center. Oh, yes, they will have jobs as maids; oh, yes, they may have some jobs as bellhops; oh, yes, they may work as parking lot attendants, but the 18-dollar-an-hour jobs that the males need to support their families in the construction trade they will not get.”<sup>xxviii</sup> Rep. Richardson, had recently risen to speak out against South African Apartheid and now compared it with the segregation in Philadelphia.

Other House Republicans knew that SB 655 would just be the first of a series of bills that would eventually lead to funding for the Pennsylvania Convention Center. They raised concerns about the bill’s proposed hotel tax and the possibility of Philadelphia overrunning the eventual \$185M state allocation. A state court recently ruled Allegheny County’s hotel tax unconstitutional as it would disproportionately burden hotels outside of the city, who would not benefit from the David Lawrence Convention Center. They suggested that the same fate may befall this project.

As the old saying goes, the enemy of my enemy is my friend. Representatives raising each of these different concerns became unusual allies. That is, certain rural and suburban representatives who opposed the Convention Center, now supported concerns of affirmative action to try and hold up the bill.

Lobbyists and pressure from the governor's office helped convert 32 Nay votes to Yes by the second consideration of SB 655 on April 8<sup>th</sup>, 1986. Unfortunately, 12 Yes votes became Nays. The bill did not change, but certain assurances were made. Representative Ryan submitted a letter from a respected law firm suggesting that the hotel tax was sufficiently different than the recently struck-down Allegheny County tax. Additionally, a letter was secured from Mayor Goode of Philadelphia committing the city to any liabilities beyond the \$185M state allocation. Finally, affirmative action advocates were assured by promise of applying a state anti-discrimination law.

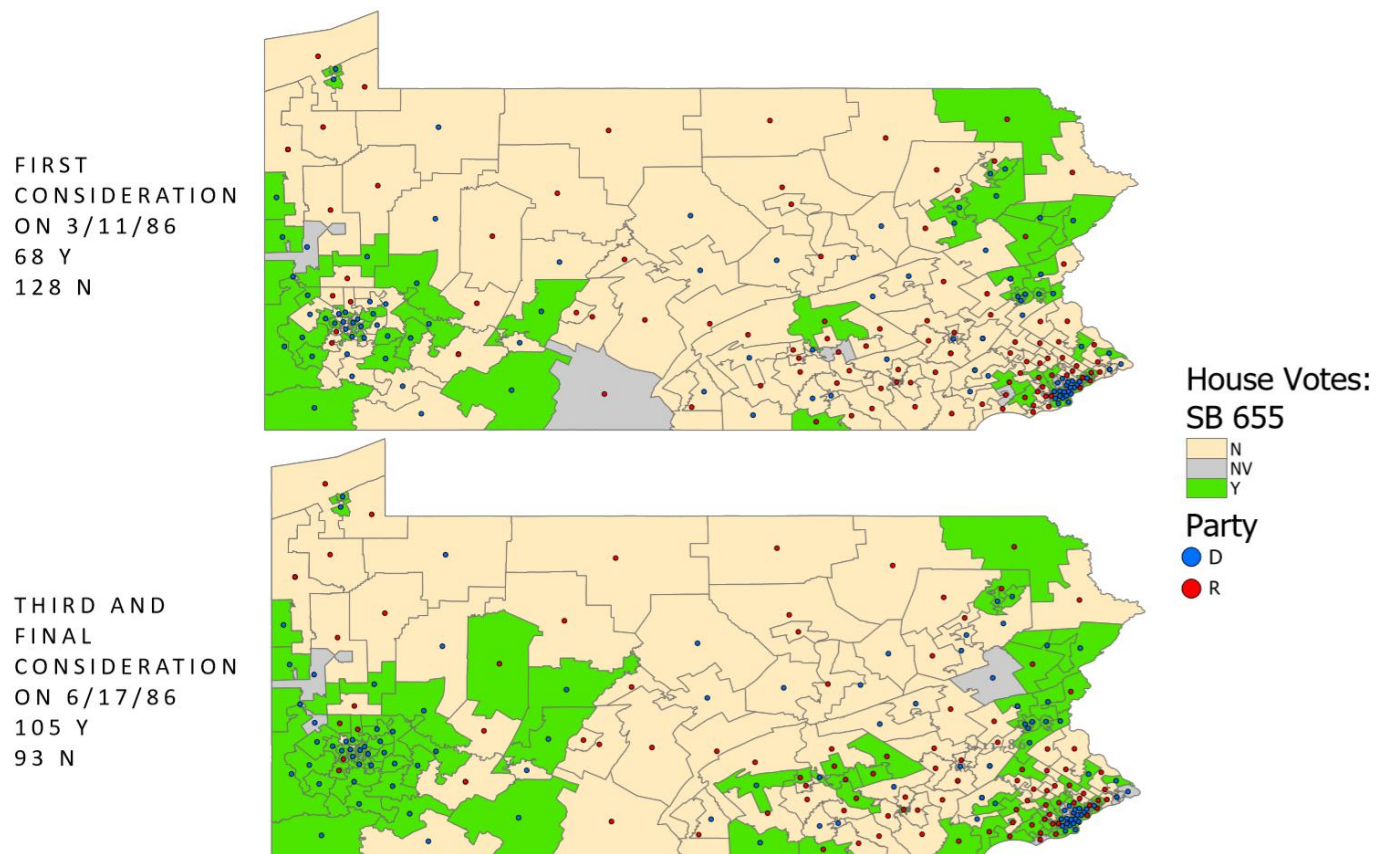


Figure 4: Legislative maps showing progression from first to final vote in the House on SB 655. Note the gain of 37 Yes votes reps in Southwest PA, suburban southeastern Republicans, rural and upstate Democrats, and Philadelphia representatives in Southeastern PA. (Note: maps reflect House districts as of 2012, which may vary from 1986).

Then came an unexplained failure of the electronic board that tracked the votes in the House. On April 15, 1986, House Majority Leader Jim Manderino moved SB655 for a third consideration vote. After a brief debate, the voting began. If it didn't pass this time, the bill would be dead since House rules did not allow a bill to be voted upon more than three times. The "jumbotron" tallying member votes is visible from every corner of the PA State House Chamber. An electronic scoreboard, the jumbotron shows the votes registered by each member. Just when it



became clear that the bill was not going to pass... BOOM! The board went blank due to technical failure. Whether a legislative maneuver by Speaker Irvis or Floor Leader Manderino, or divine intervention, the bill was saved... for now.

Smartly moving the vote to after the May primaries, Manderino called the bill again for its final vote on June 17<sup>th</sup>, 1986. Timed after the primaries, alleviating many legislators of the potential fury of their constituents, the bill passed 105-93.

One week after Act 70 (SB 655) was signed by the governor, HB 1676 (the RACP sinking fund) was passed unanimously by the House and Senate, and HB 383 (Capital Budget Act including appropriations for the Convention Center and Strategy21) was passed by the House (150-51) and in the Senate (49-1). The Pennsylvania Convention Center and Pittsburgh International Airport Terminal would be built (see images below<sup>xxix</sup>). Billions of state dollars would fund economic and community development projects in the coming decades.

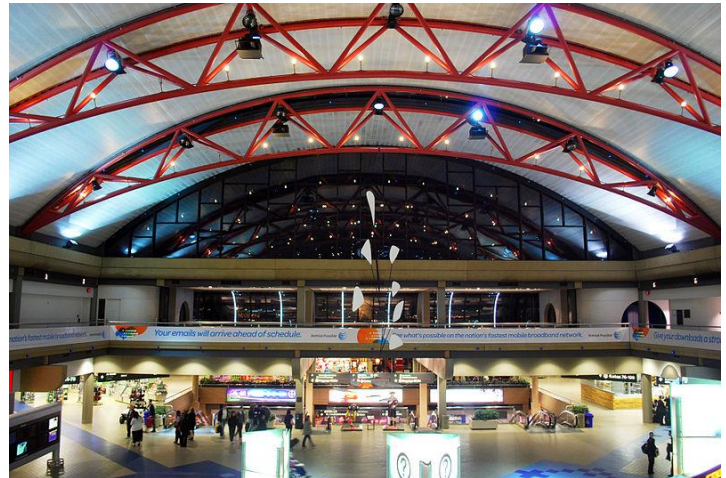
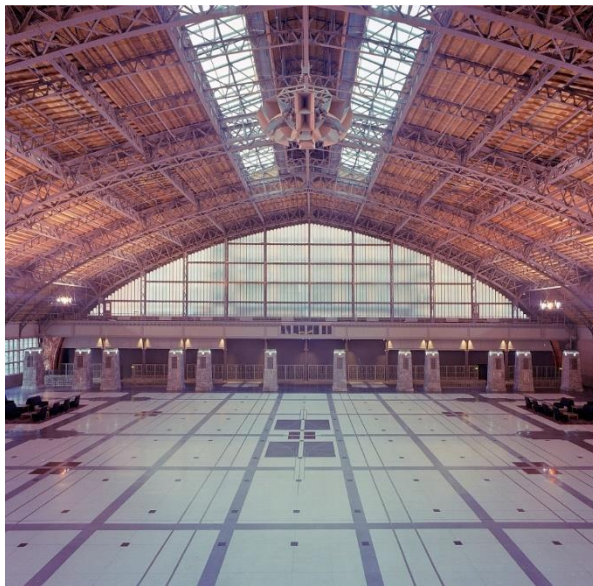


Figure 5: Pennsylvania Convention Center after completion in 1993 (left), Pittsburgh International Airport Midfield Terminal (in 2012), one of first Strategy21 projects (right).

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REDEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE CAPITAL PROGRAM

With Act 70 (SB655) creating the Authority, a majority of doubting legislators had been reassured that the state investment in the Pennsylvania Convention Center would be properly overseen. On July 10, Governor Dick Thornburgh signed HB 383, the 1986-86 Capital Budget Act, and HB 1676, creating the Redevelopment Assistance and Economic Development Sinking Fund (RACP). In a press release that day, the Governor's Office publicized and praised the key elements of the Acts.<sup>xxx</sup> Until then, capital projects would be typically owned by the Commonwealth or its municipal corporations and funded with standard bond debt financing. RACP provided a new mechanism for financing and ownership and intended to stimulate

economic and community development unforeseen by the former capital authorization program. The eligibility criteria for RACP projects listed in the release included:

- *Generate substantial increases in employment, tax revenues or other measures of economic activity;*
- *Have regional or multijurisdictional impact;*
- *Be eligible for tax-exempt bond funding under existing federal law or under federal H.R. 3838 of 1985, which shall be known as the Tax Reform Act of 1985 if it is enacted;*
- *Have a at least a fifty percent non-state participation, of which the only noncash, non-state participation permitted is land donation and toward which state funds from other programs may not be used;*
- *Have a total project cost of five million dollars (\$5,000,000) or more; and*
- *Be a facility other than housing units, highways, bridges, waste disposal facilities, sewage systems or facilities, or water systems or facilities, and are projects which cannot obtain funding under other state or federal programs*

To provide fiscally responsible funding, a dedicated sinking fund would be financed by \$30M of realty transfer tax revenues each year, yielding \$300M over 10 years. While projects would still be debt-financed with bonds, these bonds would be repaid with this sinking fund, rather than the traditional capital budget funds. The Governor's release touted this plan as responsible, in line with policies that had just earned the Commonwealth its first credit-rating upgrade in 15 years.

What was the process for getting a project funded under RACP? Projects that satisfied the eligibility criteria above should be submitted in a capital budget under a new "Redevelopment Assistance" category. Approved projects would need to secure local and private support for the project. They would then receive a grant agreement with the Department of Community Affairs (DCA). Funding could run out, depending on the level of the sinking fund. Lastly, just as with a capital budget, the Governor reserved the right to veto line items, and did so. He vetoed over \$800M worth of projects in the first round, confirming fears that legislators would try to take advantage of RACP and "Christmas Tree" (expand) funding requests.

## THE IMPACT OF RACP ON PITTSBURGH AND PA

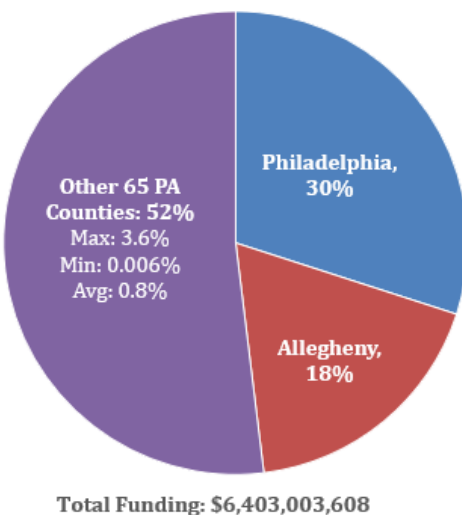
RACP was initially designed to solve the legal and political challenge of allocating capital funds in a critical moment in Pennsylvania's history that demanded activation of the private sector. The very first projects funded were those of Strategy21 and the Pennsylvania Convention Center, which provided the very political will to pass those projects in the first place. When Governor Thornburgh signed HB 383, the Capital Budget Act of 1986-87, it included \$400.7M in projects under new the new "Redevelopment Assistance" category:

- Philadelphia Convention Center: \$141.5M
- Midfield Terminal at Greater Pittsburgh International Airport: \$85M
- Center for Advance Manufacturing and Software Engineering, Pittsburgh: \$20M

- Buhl Science Center, Pittsburgh: \$13.8M
- St. Christopher's hospital, Philadelphia: \$23.8M
- Homer Research Laboratory, Bethlehem: \$10M
- Lancaster County convention Center: \$5M
- Scranton Civic Arena: \$11.9M
- Scranton Sports Stadium: \$4M

This was only the beginning. As of March 2020, RACP has funded \$6.4B through 2,928 redevelopment projects around Pennsylvania. Allegheny County has received approximately 18% of this funding (\$1,157,737,388) and with Philadelphia has received 30% (\$1,919,653,651). Of the 335 projects funded in Allegheny County over the years, projects recipients include everything from the Pittsburgh Zoo, YMCAs, Phipps Conservatory, Bakery Square, UPMC, Dinosaur Hall at the Carnegie Museum of Art, and the August Wilson Center. Walk down nearly any street in Pittsburgh, and you'd be sure to see the results of an RACP project.

RACP Funding Per County (%) as of 3/3/20



PROJECT	RACP Funding	Date
Midfield Terminal (DCA)	\$ 85,000,000.00	7/11/1986
Pittsburgh Baseball Stadium	\$ 75,000,000.00	3/22/1999
Pittsburgh Football Stadium	\$ 75,000,000.00	3/22/1999
US Steel - Mon Valley Works	\$ 20,000,000.00	10/3/2014
UPMC Passavant	\$ 18,000,000.00	3/26/2009
Cultural District Development Phase II	\$ 17,749,910.19	7/1/1993
Pitts. Technology Center (DCA)	\$ 16,107,144.00	8/1/1997
Fifth and Forbes 2006- Three PNC Plaza	\$ 16,000,000.00	2/9/2006
Carnegie-Dinosaur Hall	\$ 15,000,000.00	11/21/2002
Strip District and Produce Terminal Redevelopment	\$ 15,000,000.00	9/27/2010
Buhl Science Center (DCA)	\$ 13,800,000.00	1/0/1900
Lower Hill Infrastructure Project	\$ 11,714,945.00	2/11/2013
New Arena Site Acquisition and Demolition II	\$ 10,500,000.00	4/2/2007
North Shore Riverfront Park	\$ 10,000,000.00	2/13/2001
Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh	\$ 10,000,000.00	8/19/2004
New Arena Site Prep III	\$ 10,000,000.00	2/17/2010
Clinton Industrial Park II	\$ 10,000,000.00	8/30/2010
New Arena Site Acquisition & Demolition	\$ 9,200,000.00	10/13/2006
Three Rivers Stadium I	\$ 9,112,222.00	7/1/1993
Heinz History Center	\$ 9,000,000.00	11/21/2002
Pittsburgh Children's Museum	\$ 8,000,000.00	11/21/2002
Connelley Trade School III	\$ 8,000,000.00	8/3/2010
J&L Technology Center (A) (DCA)	\$ 7,600,432.00	8/1/1986
Clinton Industrial Park (Phase I) Development	\$ 7,500,000.00	8/19/2004
Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh-Infrastructure	\$ 7,500,000.00	6/6/2006

Figure 6: RACP Funding Per County since 1986 (left), Top RACP projects funded in Allegheny County (right), <https://www.budget.pa.gov/Programs/RACP/Pages/Main%20Page.aspx>

On its face, the rural legislators from 1986 may seem right about their concerns of not receiving as much funding as Pittsburgh and Philadelphia (according to Figure 7, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh received 9x and 6x more funding than every other county and together account for nearly half of all RACP funding). However, when normalized by population size, the distribution of funding is more equitable with Philadelphia receiving \$1,212/person, Lackawanna receiving \$968/person, Allegheny County receiving \$950/person, and the next 25% of counties receiving between \$455 to \$826/person. Note that this analysis does not consider the proportional revenue collected in each county. Nor does it account for the massive regional economic development impacts of projects centered in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.

Indeed, today when you fly over Philadelphia, you can spot the Pennsylvania Convention Center, the Phillies ballpark, the home of the Eagles. Fly over Pittsburgh and you can spot the David L. Lawrence Convention Center, Heinz Field, PNC Park and the Cultural District, and if

you're flying, you took off from the Greater Pittsburgh International Airport. All of these sights and sites owe their existence to these state political leaders and those local and political leaders who motivated them to create Pennsylvania's Redevelopment Capital Assistance Program in 1986. Indeed, if you fly over any community in the state, you can spot projects that this Program also made possible.

## APPENDICES

### 1. Timeline of RACP, Strategy21, and the Philadelphia Convention Center:

Designated by Pennsylvania [PA], Philadelphia [Phl], and Pittsburgh [Pgh] developments

- **1979**: Dick Thornburgh first elected Governor of the Commonwealth of PA [PA]
- **1980**: Bill Green elected as Democratic Mayor of Philadelphia [Phl]
- **1981**: Philadelphia Visitor and Convention Center report calling for a new convention center [Phl]
- **September 1983**: Mayor Green's committee approves convention center proposal by Reading Company [Phl]
- **December 5, 1983**: HB 1629, PA House's Capital Budget for 1983-84 re-committed to Appropriations in favor of the Senate bill instead [PA]
- **December 13, 1983**: Senate non-concurs with House Amendments on SB 985, Capital Budget for 1983-84, conference committee created [PA]
- **May 1, 1984**: SB 985 Conference Committee Report presented in House, Senate the next day passes (48-0), passes House (197-1) on May 8 [PA]
- **May 18, 1984**: Act 62 (SB 985) , Capital Budget Act of 1983-84 signed, authorized \$43.9M Convention Center funding (withheld by Governor Thornburgh by line item veto) [PA]
- **1983**: Ben Franklin Partnership created [PA]
- **January 1984**: Mayor Goode inaugurated in Philadelphia [Phl]
- **1984**: Walt Giesey and PA Democratic House member Tom Murphy pitch Allegheny County Commissioners and Mayor of Pittsburgh on Strategy21 Concept [Pgh]
- **August 30, 1984**: Allegheny Conference Economic Development Committee Memo on Pittsburgh's Future Published [Pgh]
- **April 1985**: Governor Thornburgh and Philadelphia Mayor Goode meet and agree that Convention Center will have state oversight [Phl]
- **April 10, 1985**: SB 655, an Act creating the PA Convention Center Authority introduced and referred to Appropriations [PA]
- **May 1, 1985**: HB 1128, an Act creating the PA Convention Center Authority laid on table in Urban Affairs committee (useful for visibility of future SB 655) [PA]
- **May 1985**: George C. Werner, Executive Director of Governor's Economic Development Committee suggests Governor Thornburgh not meet with Walt Giesey and Allegheny County Team unless more private funding is committed in upcoming Strategy21 plan [Pgh]
- **May 29, 1985**: SB 655 passes Senate (47-0) on third consideration, referred to Appropriations in house on June 3, 1985 [PA]
- **June 1985**: Strategy21 Proposal shared with PA Commonwealth [Pgh]
- **June 24, 1985**: SB 413, an Act creating the PA Convention Center Authority laid on table in Urban Affairs and Housing Committee (useful for visibility of future SB 655) [PA]



- **June 28, 1985:** SB 655 passes PA house (173-30) after third consideration, with amendments, sent back to Senate [PA]
- **October 1, 1985:** Governor Thornburgh meets with Chief of Staff Rick Stafford to determine legislative priorities [PA]
- **October 2, 1985:** SB 655 re-committed to Senate Appropriations [PA]
- **February 3, 1986:** SB 655, Senate non-concurs with House amendments, appoints Senators Stauffer, Salvatore, and Williams a committee of conference [PA]
- **February 4, 1986:** SB 655, House insists on amendments, non-concurs with Senate, appoints Representatives Manderino, Pievsky, and Ryan a committee of conference [PA]
- **February 11<sup>th</sup>, 1986:** SB 655 conference committee report presented in House [PA]
- **March 10<sup>th</sup>, 1986:** SB 655 conference committee report adopted by Senate (39-9) [PA]
- **March 11<sup>th</sup>, 1986:** SB 655, House rejects conference committee report (68-128) [PA]
- **April 8<sup>th</sup>, 1986:** SB 655 conference committee report second consideration in the PA House, fails (90-108) [PA]
- **April 15<sup>th</sup>, 1986:** SB 655 conference committee report for third (and final consideration) in the PA House, board fails. [PA]
- **June 17<sup>th</sup>, 1986:** SB 655 introduced for re-do third (and final consideration) in the PA House, passes 105-93. [PA]
- **June 27, 1986:** SB 655 signed into Act 70, creating the Pennsylvania Convention Center Authority [PA]
- **July 10, 1986:** HB 1676 signed into Act 115, creating the Redevelopment Assistance Sinking Fund [PA]
- **July 11, 1986:** HB 383 signed into Act 118, authorizing capital budget projects including PA Convention Center Authority and Strategy21 projects. [PA]

## 2.RACP Over the Years

After its initial passage in 1986, RACP has been amended and re-signed numerous times over the years to expand funding and adjust eligibility requirements. A brief history to-date can be found below:<sup>xxxi</sup>

- **Act 70, 1986:** RACP first passed, Commonwealth commits \$400M to projects
- **Act 39, 1993:** increased amount to \$700M
- **Act 46, 1997:** expanded to \$850M
- **Act 1, 1999:** \$1.2B, with revolving line of credit – new debt can be issued as initial credit is retired, but never exceeding \$1.2B
- **Act 130, 2002:** \$1.45B
- **Act 49, 2003:** \$1.51B
- **Act 67, 2004:** \$2.15B, changed eligible applicants to public authorities, 501©(3) Industrial Development Corporations, hospitals, projects including water, sewage, roads, bridges, minimum project size reduced to \$1M
- **Act 87, 2005:** \$2.65B, reporting requirements added, authorized housing allocations not to exceed \$25M total
- **Act 48, 2008:** \$3.45B
- **Act 48, 2010:** \$4.05B
- **Act 82, 2010:** Increased housing funding cap to \$50M
- **Act 77, 2013:** Reduced General Obligation borrowing authority to \$3.45B, 10-year sunset provision for itemizations in Capital Project Itemizations/Capital Budget Acts, added 30-year public comment period, eliminated exclusion of housing projects, added 30-day acceptance of award requirement
- **Act 45, 2017:** Reduced general obligation to \$3.35B, mandates \$50M reductions each year until sum of outstanding obligations is \$3.15B

### 3.RACP Today

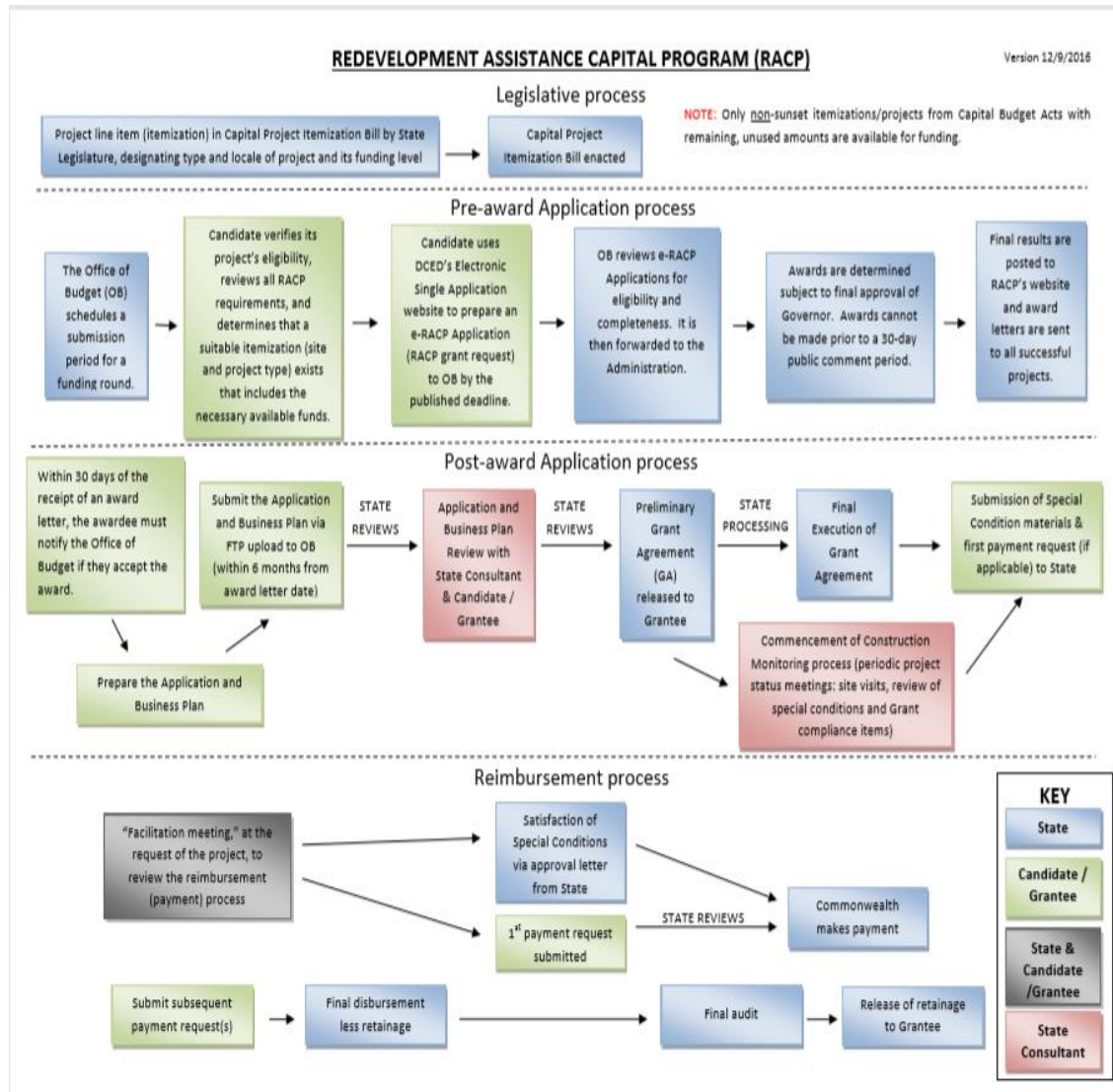


Figure 8: Current RACP Application Process (<https://www.budget.pa.gov/Programs/RACP/Pages/Process-Overview-and-Flowchart.aspx>)

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