

NEWS & NOTES

from the ALLEGHENY REGIONAL ASSET DISTRICT

Winter 2008

RAD APPROVES HISTORIC \$80.3 MILLION BUDGET for 2009 RAD to Reach \$1 Billion Funding Mark

The Allegheny Regional Asset District Board approved a 2009 Budget that recommends 96 operating and capital grants totaling a maximum of \$80.3 million to 90 assets. With the adoption of this budget, the District will have invested over \$1 billion in the county's regional assets since the funding program began in 1995.

According to the Allocations Committee, which recommends the budget, "Passing the one billion dollar mark in grants next year is a time for celebration, as is the fact that \$650 million of the total has been allocated to libraries and parks, places that are free to the public. It is also time to thank the citizens for their support of the assets whose contributions to our community grow each year."

Despite current economic uncertainty, the 2009 budget "holds the line" on operating grants, thus advancing the District's mission of sustaining and enhancing regional assets. This strategy was made possible in part by management of the District's reserve fund which allows for weathering more stormy times. Assets can use operating grants for any type of expenses, such as salaries, rent, maintenance or utilities.

The 2009 plan is funded with an estimated \$76.6 million in sales tax funds, \$300,000 of interest earnings and \$3.4 million from District reserves. It is identical to the preliminary budget released in September, which assumed a decline in sales tax revenue (the source of District funding) and interest income in 2009.

Noting the uncertainty that surrounds sales tax revenue, the Board will continue the long standing practice of withholding 10% of operating grants for the first six months of the year. This practice has always been applied to the contractual assets - a group of nine organizations that receive about 74% of the District's grants.

Beginning in 2009, the withholding process will be applied to all grants except for debt service allocations which cannot be altered. Under the process, the District reviews its revenue position no later than June and determines if it will have sufficient funds to meet all commitments.

If that determination is made, the balance of the grant is paid out over the remaining six months. The District retains the right to reduce grants permanently if it finds that it will not meet revenue targets.

In its report to the Board the Allocations Committee said that projecting revenue into next year remains a challenge and added:

"We appreciate the fact that the times we are in add an element of uncertainty that the District tries to avoid. We have, therefore, recommended a plan which is consistent with how the District has always approached the possibility of a sudden revenue decline. Should permanent reductions be needed, the committee believes they should be based on actual numbers.

"Assets are likely to face challenges from other funders so tightening belts now and developing contingency plans is only good management. We strongly recommend that assets review their business plans including whether they can benefit from shared service arrangements."

In addition, discretionary capital grants will be implemented only when the District is able to more accurately project its revenue.

The Board expressed its plan to reevaluate the District's budget position on an on-going basis as 2009 unfolds.

Visit the rad web site radworkshere.org for details on RAD's impact on the region.



Entrance to Highland Park in the City of Pittsburgh. District funds support more than 14,000 acres of natural settings, picnic and recreation areas across the county.

RAD BOARD NEWS

YEAR 16 Report: Comments Requested

The RAD Board has received a report from the Year 16 committee recommending renewal of the contracts of the nine contractual assets for another five year term. These organizations had received initial 10 year contracts in 1994 that were extended as five year contracts through 2009.

The Year 16 Committee, comprised of board and citizen advisory board members, made the recommendations after reviewing public comment. The report is available for further review and comment at radworkshere.org. Comment may be made in person at the next board meeting, tentatively schedule for January 26, 2009. Speaker sign-up procedure is posted on the RAD web site www.radworkshere.org

New Diversity Plan Requirement in 2010

At its December 1, 2008 meeting, the RAD Board reaffirms its commitment to diversity and inclusiveness among regional assets by adopting a new policy to require applicants to submit a written, board-adopted Diversity Policy and Plan with their funding applications.

This requirement will take effect in the year 2011 budget for which applications will be due in the summer of 2010.

"It is the intent of the District board to promote and make progress towards increasing diversity and inclusiveness in all aspects of asset activities, including programming, board representation, employees and volunteers of funded assets," said the report of the Diversity Committee to the Board.

For several years, the District has urged assets to develop and submit board diversity plans with their applications. The District's new policy will make broad-based diversity plans an application requirement.

"All of our citizens should share in the activities and programs of publicly supported regional assets. We believe this step helps to insure that opportunity," the report said.

Additional information will be provided to applicants beginning next year.

Revenue Update

Tax revenue through November totaled \$74.8 million or about 2% ahead of the same period last year. Most of the revenue received to date is for sales that occurred prior to the September 15th financial market downturn so the full effect of the change in sales patterns is not yet available to the District and other sales tax recipients. Despite several negative months this year, the District will meet its 2008 budget targets and fully fund the commitments for the year, a record \$84 million in asset investments.



RAD grants are funded by one-half of the one percent County Sales tax paid by residents of and visitors to Allegheny County.

IN THIS ISSUE

- RAD Releases 2009 Budget
- Board News: New Diversity Policy; Year 16 Report Comments Requested
- Renaissance Grants Update: Sen. John Heinz History Center and Pittsburgh Filmmakers Projects

Contact RAD:
425 Sixth Avenue
Suite 1610
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
412-227-1900
info@radworkshere.org



RAD Renaissance Grant Projects Show Region's Ingenuity

"Innovation" at the History Center

To say that Pittsburgh is a region of innovation and innovators is an understatement as demonstrated by the new exhibit *Pittsburgh: A Tradition of Innovation* at the Sen. John Heinz Pittsburgh Regional History Center. The museum received a \$25,000 Renaissance Grant from the District to create interactive components of the new exhibit as part of the region's 250th birthday celebration.

As visitors traverse the newly-opened exhibit, they'll encounter many Pittsburgh inventors whose investment of time, treasure, ideas and hard work have made the region a remarkable contributor to advances in art, medicine, industry, education, sport and technology.

The exhibit features dozens of hands-on activities and audio-visual displays spanning 16,000 square feet over

two stories. Using RAD funds, the History Center collaborated with graduate students from Carnegie Mellon University's Entertainment Technology Center (ETC) and created interactive exhibits to engage visitors of all ages.

Using a touch-screen display, visitors can conduct a virtual interview with George Westinghouse, one of the greatest innovators of all times, whose airbrake invention revolutionized the railroad industry and whose electricity innovation lights the world today. In the children's area, the interactive game "Get to the Point" is a fun, fast-paced test of knowledge of our region's "firsts."

Through the exhibit, visitors will meet remarkable women like Queen Aliquippa, the reporter Nelly Bly and the World War II icon "Rose the Riveter" which was created by Westinghouse; notable men like Dr. Thomas Starzl, who pioneered organ transplants, and Jonas Salk, who developed the polio vaccine; and step into a recreation of Pittsburgh's legendary jazz club the Crawford Grill.

Moving through time, *Pittsburgh: A*

Tradition of Innovation also explores the region today as a leader in education, medicine, "green" buildings and technology, and as the "epicenter" of robotics. Visit www.heinzhistorycenter.org

"Reframed" by Pittsburgh Filmmakers



More than 50 years ago, a film project that was begun to celebrate the city's bicentennial was never completed or shown.

With a RAD Renaissance grant, this year Pittsburgh Filmmakers asked 19 artists from the region to "have their way" with the old footage, according to the Charlie Humphrey, executive director of Pittsburgh Filmmakers/Pittsburgh Center for the Arts.

The result is a community project in celebration of Pittsburgh's 250th birthday, *Pittsburgh Reframed*, a DVD collection of short films by students, interns, musicians, filmmakers and visual artists that made its debut at the recent Three Rivers Arts Festival.

It includes Lucian Wintrich and Charlie Humphrey's *Vim and Verve*, a modern music video juxtaposing images of Pittsburgh in the 1950s with scenes from today linked together by a young Pittsburgher dancing through places like the PPG Place fountain and the Carnegie Museum of Natural History. Brady Lewis' *Pittsburgh Day for Night* uses the bicentennial footage to create a film noir story of a meeting with the "big man," Andrew Carnegie.

Pittsburgh Reframed is available on DVD from Pittsburgh Filmmakers. Visit www.pghfilmmakers.org.



RAD-funded Renaissance Grant at the History Center created an interactive display for visitors to interact with "George Westinghouse" with a touch-screen display of Westinghouse's journals, photos and memorabilia.