



University of Pittsburgh

Governmental Relations

710 Alumni Hall
4227 Fifth Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15260
412-624-2901
Fax: 412-624-7707
E-mail: psupowit@pitt.edu

Paul A. Supowitz
Vice Chancellor

September 20, 2013

Via email: carlinog@hotmail.com

Dear Mr. Giampolo:

It has come to my attention that you continue to use your "Open Letter" to misinform various people and groups within the University and the community. Because of the numerous mistakes and factual errors in your document, I wanted to provide a more accurate and credible picture of the University of Pittsburgh's relationship with our neighbors, especially since your version of that relationship is so much at odds with the view of other neighborhood groups and city officials. It has been my experience that the modern history of the University of Pittsburgh, particularly during the tenure of Chancellor Mark Nordenberg, has been characterized by strong and expanded levels of engagement, interaction, and support with our neighboring communities. In fact, the University meets on a regular schedule with Oakland community groups, including Oakland Planning and Development Corporation (OPDC), Oakland Business Improvement District (OBID), Oakland Transportation Management Association (OTMA), Community Human Services (CHS), and Peoples Oakland. The University is a regular participant at community group meetings, including the Central Oakland Community Organization, Coalition of Oakland Residents, Oakcliffe Housing Club, Bellefield Area Citizens Association, Oak Hill Residents Council, and a number of other organizations.

As community group leaders, Oakland residents, neighboring institutions, City of Pittsburgh officials and elected representatives regularly attest, the University has placed a strong emphasis on community consultation, engaging in extensive briefings, dialogue, and discussion regarding community and individual residents' concerns, University master plans and individual construction projects. In fact, the University's public engagement efforts in the context of its campus master plan and construction of individual projects exceed the legal requirements imposed by the City. And, our initiatives in regard to being a good neighbor have been cited as examples for other institutions to follow.

University representatives have met with you on a number of occasions to discuss these issues and to provide you with factual information, which you seem to have ignored in your recent letter. Coupled with our efforts to correct your misapprehensions is the fact that we have had no indication from elected officials or other Oakland community groups that have been contacted by you that they share your opinions or methods. Quite to the contrary, those groups choose to engage in the constructive interaction and dialogue that the University has fostered under the leadership of Chancellor Nordenberg. One example comes from Sandra

September 20, 2013

Page 2

Phillips, Executive Director of Peoples Oakland, who has confirmed that the relationship between the University and the Oakland community "has deepened over the years and continues to provide a community building model based on cooperative, effective, and inspiring teamwork. We thank the University of Pittsburgh for ongoing leadership and commitment to the strength and viability of the Oakland community." Peoples Oakland is not alone in its opinion of Pitt's contributions to the community. Adrienne Walnoha, CEO of Community Human Services, attests to the fact that CHS has had a long and mutually beneficial partnership with the University of Pittsburgh. In fact, she has noted that after attending a variety of national conferences, she has not "found another city that has a community-based food pantry completely supported by the university." She further notes that her colleagues are "consistently astounded that a university would be in the lead of that type of a grassroots project." Mavis Rainey, Executive Director of OTMA also echoed these sentiments: "The collaboration with the University of Pittsburgh has benefited not only OTMA but the Oakland community as a whole. It demonstrates the University's commitment to not only exist in Oakland but to be completely engaged in what happens in Oakland. One example is the Home Town Streets/Safe Routes to School Pedestrian Improvement Project. Not only did the University provide donated project management services throughout the three-year project, the University of Pittsburgh was a major contributor toward the funding of the project as well. Pitt continues to take a leadership role in working with the many community groups in Oakland to address the issues or concerns that go beyond just impacting their students, faculty, and staff. They recognize that whatever is done in Oakland impacts businesses, property owners, residents, and they embrace the opportunity to continue to work together as a community."

Simply put, Pitt's ongoing commitment to the betterment of the Oakland community is being recognized nationally as a model of the best in town/gown relations.

In regard to student housing, here again the University has been responsive to the input received from its surrounding community. For example, the single highest priority expressed by Oakland neighborhood groups and by City government in the mid-1990s was for the University to increase the amount of on-campus student housing. The University has responded directly to that expressed need by increasing the number of on-campus student housing spaces from about 5,300 beds in 1995 to about 8,000 today. At the same time, the University has remained sensitive to the community's desire that we not encroach on existing residential areas. The vast majority of University construction within the past 20 years has taken place on the existing footprint of Pitt's campus or outside of Oakland. Examples of new construction within the University's existing footprint include: Biomedical Science Tower 3 (BST3), Nordenberg Hall, Salk Hall addition, Graduate School of Public Health addition,

September 20, 2013

Page 3

Chevron Science building addition, and Benedum Hall addition. The demolition of Pitt Stadium created space within the existing campus footprint for the Petersen Events Center and the Pennsylvania and Panther residence halls. University projects in Oakland's business district, such as Sennott Square, Forbes and Bouquet green space, and the creation of the Oakland Business Improvement District (which the University championed) have helped revitalize this critical commercial area. At the same time, much development of University facilities has taken place outside of the Oakland area, including the Technology Center on Second Avenue, the Duratz Sports Complex and McGowan Institute for Regenerative Medicine on the South Side, the Center for Assistive Technologies in Bakery Square, the Pediatric Research Institute in Lawrenceville, and the Hillman Cancer Center in Shadyside. These projects have been essential to the City's most recent renaissance and have been enthusiastically supported by each of the neighborhoods in which they are located.

University expansion into the adjacent neighborhoods has been extremely limited in the past 20 years, and only when necessary to expand student housing (Bouquet Gardens) in a manner and location that was discussed with and supported by the community. The University engaged in an extensive discussion process with community groups and residents regarding the location for Bouquet Gardens, much of which was built on property already owned by the University (previously used for parking). Moreover, the University has faithfully adhered to, and in fact exceeded, the community consultation requirements and expectations set forth in the City Code. The University has also fulfilled the master planning requirements as set forth in the City of Pittsburgh's Zoning Code. After that consultation process, the University's Institutional Master Plan was unanimously approved by City Council. That Master Plan included the identification of the location of Nordenberg Hall as an area that would be developed for student residential use in the future. See Section E.2 of Pitt's April 7, 2008 approved Institutional Master Plan Update, which identified the site (then being used as a parking lot and a small, obsolete University-owned office building) as a potential location for a 10-story residential building. The University consulted with all affected community groups regarding the project. In fact, Oakland area organizations were extremely supportive and complimentary of the design and development of Nordenberg Hall. In particular, residents have praised the inclusion of ground-level retail space, which also has allowed for the return of a retail bakery to Oakland in a University building across Fifth Avenue.

You also seem to be mistaken regarding the University leased office space in the Park Plaza Condominiums, which was done in 2009, only after the owners of the property had previously announced their plans to close their restaurant and sell or lease the property. Moreover, the University's lease at Park Place provides for monthly rent of approximately \$40,000 per month, not the \$492,678 amount you stated. Your reference to eminent domain also is

misleading. Eminent domain has never been used by the University under Chancellor Nordenberg's leadership. In fact, as best can be determined, the last use of eminent domain involved the land now occupied by the Sennott Square office building that had been acquired by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania through eminent domain about 40 years ago.

In addition to including community concerns in our planning, the University provides extensive financial support to Oakland area organizations and initiatives, both through direct contributions and in-kind services. The University's Community Leisure Learn Program provides access for community residents to Pitt athletic and fitness facilities, with the University paying the program's annual costs of more than \$120,000. The University provides over \$115,000 annually to the Oakland Business Improvement District, including \$59,000 as an annual voluntary contribution and also provides financial support for Oakland Planning and Development's Keep It Clean Oakland initiative. A regular supporter of many other varied initiatives in the Oakland area, Pitt was one of the leading organizers and funders of the reconstruction of Schenley Plaza, a remarkable transformation that created an iconic community gathering place benefitting all of Oakland. The University provided \$250,000 in matching funds as well as in-kind services for the Hometown Streets Project that upgraded intersections and improved pedestrian safety and access in the Forbes/Fifth Avenue corridor in Oakland and has contributed extensively to upgrading municipal infrastructure in the Oakland area, including \$385,000 to upgrade a public waterline on Bigelow Boulevard and replace and upgrade traffic signals along Bigelow Boulevard.

In addition, the University provides annual financial support to OTMA and has provided financial support for OPDC's Oakland Dumpster Project. The University recently completed reconstruction and upgrade of sidewalks, protective railings, and traffic signals along Fifth Avenue at a cost of over \$800,000. And the University has been a long-term partner in the Oak Hill mixed-income redevelopment (as well as in the Allequippa Terrace public housing that preceded Oak Hill) through its Community Leisure Learn Program, Mathilda Theiss Health Center, employment assistance and educational counseling programs, to name just a few. The University, at the community's behest, located the Department of Health & Physical Activity of our School of Education as the prime tenant in Oak Hill's Town Center. And the University also leases 3,000 sq. ft. in the Town Center that is donated to the Oak Hill Resident Council for community use (at a cost to Pitt of \$56,000 annually).

Just the handful of illustrative examples above of projects and programs undertaken by Pitt over the past ten years represent an investment of over \$4.1 million in Oakland by the University, not the \$23,000 annually as you have noted.

The list of in-kind contributions by the University is simply too long to set forth here. Whether it is the Oakland Food Pantry, community organization events, on-going access to University facilities or the extensive engagement of the University of Pittsburgh's students as interns, volunteers and staff throughout Oakland's community-based organizations, the University is a ubiquitous participant in community life. The University has worked in a collaborative manner to address the impacts that come from the fact that Oakland is a magnet for students from around the City of Pittsburgh. Pitt's annual financial support for OPDC's Keep It Clean Oakland Program and dumpster project (which mobilizes at move-in time) has helped to reduce litter. The Keep It Clean Oakland Program utilizes University of Pittsburgh students to staff its 34 different Oakland adopt-a-block commitments. The University's voluntary and tax support for the formation and ongoing operation of the OBID has helped to transform the busiest part of Oakland into a clean and vibrant district that serves residents and the University community. And of course, the University of Pittsburgh Police supplements the work of the Pittsburgh Police and provides protection and police services in the neighborhoods surrounding the University. The University has also been recognized for its efforts to educate students and lessen irresponsible behavior by creating programs for its students to provide alternatives to excessive alcohol consumption. The University has also worked hard to educate its students about responsible behavior in the neighborhoods in which they live, recently publishing and distributing a Student Guide to Campus Life that has been exceedingly well received by members of the community and students. In fact, the Guide is being used as a template for similar publications at colleges and universities throughout the country. The University has been a leading participant in the Pittsburgh Sociable City effort that has been lauded by Oakland community groups and the City of Pittsburgh as an effective collaborative effort to address impacts of nightlife around the City. In regard to one specific event which you mention, the University responded to the inappropriate activities at Semple Fest by collaborating with City and Pitt Police to end that annual event. To be clear, it was the direct action and efforts of the University and its partners that put a stop to Semple Fest.

Through its monthly meetings with Oakland-area community groups and its attendance at community group meetings, Pitt provides regular updates to the community regarding its plans and engages in an ongoing dialogue about issues that may arise within the community related to the University. With regard to information sharing and disclosure, the University provides extensive information regarding its finances and operations. In compliance with Pennsylvania law, the University annually submits and publishes a Financial Disclosure Report as well as a salary and workload report (known as the "Snyder Report"). In addition to its annual audited financial statements, the University annually makes its IRS Form 990 public. These are just a small sampling of the reporting and disclosure activities of the University.

September 20, 2013

Page 6

The University has successfully cultivated an open, responsive, and productive relationship with Oakland-area neighborhood associations and community groups. The University has established procedures with those organizations for following up on concerns raised regarding student behavior or other issues. Community groups and residents know that they can either contact the University of Pittsburgh Police or the University's Office of Community and Governmental Relations with specific concerns. The University has also a means for anonymously reporting concerns in order to encourage those types of reports.

With the approach of Homecoming, I did want to correct your statements regarding the University's Homecoming week fireworks display, which is a long-standing tradition that is enjoyed by many beyond Pitt students, faculty and staff. In fact, the University invites residents to the event and for many years, community members have enjoyed the Homecoming fireworks display. The University complies with all applicable permitting requirements for the fireworks display and in fact goes beyond those requirements in planning and carrying out the fireworks. For example, the University pays for an extra fire truck beyond what is required in order to provide an added measure of safety and peace of mind. Several years ago, when you raised the concern that you did not believe that residents were aware of the planned homecoming fireworks, the University responded appropriately by distributing notices throughout the neighborhood inviting community members to join us for the homecoming festivities, and letting them know the time and length of the fireworks display.

In summary, the University is proud of its record and its continuing commitment to being an engaged and supportive partner. The University's efforts in this regard have benefitted the Oakland community and we have been recognized by a number of outside organizations and individuals as well as elected officials and community groups throughout the region. We remain committed to working together with all those residents of Oakland who share its commitment to making the community the best it can be for all. For reasons known only to you, you have chosen to frequently promulgate inaccurate and false statements regarding the University. Your actions in this regard are detrimental to efforts, on the part of both the University and the community, to work towards making Oakland the best community it can be for all residents. For that reason, I ask, on behalf of the University, that you refrain from continuing this injurious behavior.

Sincerely,



Paul Supowitz

Vice Chancellor for Community & Governmental Relations