

Dear housing rights supporters,

Below are notes from our last meeting on June 29th. We had a really productive meeting, and we are hoping to engage more folks in supporting the efforts to make housing a human right in our city. If you can volunteer to help support this work, we need you!

In particular, we're hoping the Human Rights Cookout will be a great energy-building event to launch a fall full of powerful work for housing rights. If you can be part of our *food and fun team*, please contact pghrights@riseup.net.

Housing Justice Movement Building in Pittsburgh June 29, 2019 Meeting Notes

Next meeting: Wednesday September 4, 6:00-8:00PM Carnegie Library/ East Liberty 130 S Whitfield St.

Background/Purpose: To support and strengthen work for tenant organizing and the larger Housing Roundtable organized by Pittsburgh United. Support the implementation of the [Affirmatively Forwarding Fair Housing Task Force Recommendations](#) by: 1) promoting public awareness and engagement in work for affordable housing through public education/consciousness raising events; 2) working to shift the housing debate away from the prevailing market framework *to emphasize housing as a human right*; and 3) expanding connections with national and global networks of housing and human rights defenders.

Previous meetings and discussions with organizers led to the following projects, and task forces are working moving each one forward. **We need you! Please help with one or more of these specific task forces—please contact pghrights@riseup.net to volunteer for a task force, or message pghrights on Facebook.** Website with background and past notes: [Housing Justice Movement Building](#)

Task force updates & Calls for volunteers:

1) **Tenant/Resident bill of rights:** *Developing and working to pass state legislation to protect residents and the right to housing.* Rep. Sara Innamorato's office has been helpful with background work, and this needs to be taken to the state level given how the law is written. We will review and adapt as appropriate models from other cities such as [Washington DC](#) and New York City. The task force should also consider how a tenant bill of rights links with the [Affirmatively Forwarding Fair Housing Task Force Recommendations](#). We will aim to provide a draft text for discussion and input from tenant union initiatives being supported by the Landless People's Alliance and Hill District Consensus Group. VOLUNTEERS NEEDED! Email pghrights@riseup.net to see how you can help!

2) October is Zero Evictions Days! In response to the call by the International Alliance of Inhabitants for [Zero Eviction Days](#) the Human Rights City Alliance will help coordinate a joint calendar of events throughout the month to help raise consciousness about the affordable housing crisis in Pittsburgh and the solutions we want to see. We aim to help support tenant organizing in the region and spread the idea to the larger population of residents that housing is a human right and not a commodity available only to those who can pay.

Examples possible activities that various groups can help lead during this month of actions are below. We encourage residents and groups to organize events as part of these days of action, and we'll publish an online calendar to help publicize all [Zero Eviction Days](#) activities:

- Press conference- to announce the month of actions for [Zero Eviction Days](#) and point to how our local work connects with global actions
- Protest actions –throughout month at key sites of struggle
- Candidates forum on the right to housing
- Events to train residents and collect documentation and testimony and share analyses of Pittsburgh housing conditions as part of the human rights assessment for the [UPR Cities Project](#)
- Tenant union convergence- gather tenant leaders from around the region to report on their work and the conditions around which residents are organizing.
- Following NYC, we can conduct a People's Tribunal on Evictions (<https://www.tribunal-evictions.org/>), which groups around the world have used to draw attention to the moral outrage behind the commodification of housing and rising numbers of evictions.
- Movie night/s
- Book discussions

3) Democratize Policy Process—We will continue to watch developments around the [Registered Community Organization legislation](#) and related policies that impact residents' ability to have a voice in how our city develops. Volunteers are invited to help support this work and to help us find ways to follow up Penn Plaza Support and Action Coalition's work to get the [Planning Commission to adopt a Resolution of Concern in 2018 and Affirmatively Forwarding Fair Housing Task Force Recommendations](#)

4) *Global Human Rights Monitoring/ Bringing Human Rights Home

[The US Human Rights Cities Alliance](#) is inviting Pittsburgh to be a lead city in the [UPR Cities Project](#), which supports local efforts to document local human rights conditions as part of a [United Nation's Universal Periodic Review](#) (UPR) of the United States' human rights record. We're building a local planning team to help us build a process for developing a broad human rights assessment for our region and use this international process to bring pressure on public officials to improve human rights practices and address racial and other inequities.

The [UPR Cities website](#) & upcoming webinars provides tools for learning more about the Universal Periodic Review of the United States and how we can use international reports to

facilitate local policy changes. Upcoming webinars: July 25/ 6PM, August 29/6PM. Link to introductory webinar: [Introduction to UPR Cities](#). VOLUNTEERS NEEDED! Email pghrights@riseup.net to see how you can help!

ANNOUNCEMENT:

National Economic and Social Rights Initiative workshop: *Affordable for Whom? Organizing and Development Strategies for Housing Justice*- August 2-3, 2019 at CUNY Law School, NYC--Featuring presenters from California to the Deep South to the Northeast, all working to build a national movement to transform our relationship to land and housing [Details and registration](#). *There may be scholarships for Pittsburgh participants- please contact Pittsburgh United/Celeste Scott if you are interested in attending and contributing to our local housing justice work.

Calendar

Annual Human Rights Cookout/Potluck –Sunday August 25, Mellon Park shelter, Penn & Fifth (across from Bakery Square). 1:00 -4:00PM. Everyone is welcome! We'll have food to grill/please bring a side dish to share if you wish. BYOB. Co-sponsors: Pittsburghers for Public Transit, Casa San Jose, Pittsburgh for CEDAW Coalition & more. **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED for Cookout food & fun team!** Email pghrights@riseup.net to see how you can help!

HOUSING JUSTICE UPDATES:

UN to U.S. Government: Do Better on Housing: Local officials were reminded recently of their international legal obligations on housing. Copies of the letter by [UN Special Rapporteur Letter to US Government On Housing Policies as Human Rights Violations](#) were distributed to City Council members, Mayor Peduto, County Executive Rich Fitzgerald and our County Council members. We encouraged elected officials to read the strongly worded letter, which legitimates residents' claims that housing is a human right and shows local officials that “the world is watching” what

they do in regard to affordable housing policies. And when you communicate with public officials, be sure to remind them of their international legal obligations, especially given Pittsburgh's status as a "Human Rights City". [More details here: [Housing is a Human Right](#) and this recent article in *Shelterforce*: [UN to U.S. Government: Do Better on Housing](#)]