

Wolf Administration: West Philadelphia Neighborhood Can Achieve New Development Opportunities



Philadelphia Works photo
Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) Deputy Secretary for Community Affairs and Development Rick Vilello shown with Rep. Johanna McClinton and representatives from ACHIEVEability

On February 10, 2020, Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) Deputy Secretary for Community Affairs and Development Rick Vilello joined local officials and representatives from ACHIEVEability on a tour of a block of blighted residential and commercial properties and uninhabited areas in Haddington, West Philadelphia, to discuss how Governor Tom Wolf's bipartisan Restore Pennsylvania plan will help communities eradicate blight. "During today's tour we've seen so much potential in property and spaces that could be repurposed and transform this neighborhood—embodying Governor Wolf's objective of tackling blight through Restore Pennsylvania," said Deputy Secretary Vilello. "ACHIEVEability is an organization built by the community, for the community, so we are fortunate to hear and learn from them firsthand as they continue their decades-long efforts to improve the place that they call home."

ACHIEVEability is a non-profit organization founded in 1981 by community members who were concerned about housing limitations for low-income, single parent families. Their mission is to break generational cycles of poverty through higher education, affordable housing, supportive services, community and economic development, and accountability. Since inception, ACHIEVEability has developed 210 housing units from abandoned homes and vacant lots in West Philadelphia.

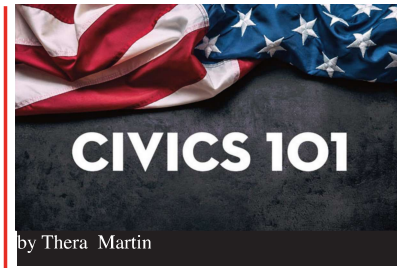
"ACHIEVEability is excited to host Deputy Secretary Vilello on a tour of the Haddington neighborhood, where

blight is a longstanding challenge along our corridor and beyond," said Executive Director of ACHIEVEability Jamila Harris-Morrison. "Blight is an eyesore, fosters nuisance behaviors, and negatively impacts health and safety. Working in partnership with residents and businesses, as well as with strategic investments from DCED, we are reclaiming these spaces to promote a healthy vibrant community."

In Pennsylvania, more than 300,000 blighted properties exist, creating health and safety concerns for citizens and lowering property values and tax revenues. Restore Pennsylvania would fund blight remediation efforts at a level far beyond any existing funding mechanisms currently available and would allow municipalities to direct funding to other economic development projects as needed.

Restore Pennsylvania would invest \$4.5 billion over the next four years in significant, high-impact projects throughout the commonwealth. This will help move Pennsylvania forward by increasing financial resources at the local level to acquire and demolish blighted properties, create new development opportunities, and provide new green space. It would also help communities reach the "last mile" in broadband connectivity, mitigate flooding, build roads and bridges, and address other infrastructure needs.

Learn more about what critical infrastructure could be addressed in your community by visiting the Restore Pennsylvania website.



Hello SCOOP USA Media Newspaper Readers: This week will be the 3rd edition of Civic's 101, a new column initiated by Sherri Darden, the Publisher and Owner of the SCOOP community newspaper. What she has acknowledged is that Civics is no longer taught in far too many classrooms across America. Many of our children have no idea what a civics class is, or what it means. In short, it's about understanding the way in which the politics of America is supposed to work. Thus through this column, it is our intention to share some of the basics about what Civics is, so that all of us can become more responsible citizens living in America.

As it is African American History Month, let's revisit when people of color, namely African Americans, gained the right to vote and what happened in the aftermath of being told, "You can vote." Keep in mind, that voting is a basic right supposed to be afforded to every American Citizen, once you turn the age of 18.

Black men were the first given the right to vote, although even after it was announced, they could get lynched, beaten, jailed or intimidated in so many ways that it entirely discouraged them from exercising their right. Black women and all women were given the right to vote years and years later, but for them too, (Black women), even with that so-called "right," more often than not, we were discouraged from voting.

I dislike being repetitive, but for the sake of those who did not see last week's column, let me just share the dates of when our people were told we could vote.

In 1870, the 15th Amendment was ratified to prohibit states from denying a male citizen the right to vote based on "race, color or previous condition of servitude." That means supposedly as of 1870, Black men were "supposed" to have the right to vote. The 19th Amendment guaranteed all American women the right to vote, and that wasn't until August 18, 1920, when passed by Congress. The ugly truth however, is that while on paper Black men were supposed to have the right to vote starting in 1870, and women, (Black women included), were supposed to have the right to vote starting after August of 1920, the road to that vote was blocked by violence and murder.

Another ugly truth is that even as of February 2020, there are states across this country who have elected officials who are doing everything they can to take away the right to vote for people of color, so-called minorities.

The 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution eliminates racial barriers to voting, however many states continue

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The Philadelphia Housing Authority
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BLACK HISTORY MONTH

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