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Philadelphia Coalition for Affordable Communities Publishes Open Letter to Pope Francis

The 40 organizations of the “Development without Displacement” campaign sign-on in support of message

PHILADELPHIA, PA – The Philadelphia Coalition for Affordable Communities (PCAC) published an open letter to Pope Francis today urging him to use his upcoming visit to Philadelphia at the World Meeting of Families as a platform to encourage City leaders to treat housing as a fundamental human right and to fund the Philadelphia Housing Trust Fund.

The letter, which was signed by a diverse coalition of the city’s leading community, disability, faith, labor, and urban agriculture organizations, draws attention to the fact that families are being displaced due to the rising cost of housing in many neighborhoods around Philadelphia. In some neighborhoods of the City, real estate prices have increased 200 percent (200%) from 2000 to 2012. These rapid changes are having a disproportionate impact on minority communities. The African American population in sections of South and West Philadelphia, for example, has decreased by nearly 30 percent (30%) due to these pressures.

“Pope Francis has focused on issues pertaining to poverty, housing, and income inequality. As Philadelphia remains the poorest big city in America, I think it’s an appropriate opportunity to discuss poverty in this city and what we can do to ensure that Philadelphia’s families can obtain homes that are affordable,” said Nora Lichtash, a PCAC leader. “The Philadelphia Coalition for Affordable Communities has been deeply involved in alleviating the pains of displacement that many are experiencing due to gentrification in our city. Given Pope Francis’ focus on the poor, I believe that he should be aware of the struggle that thousands of Philadelphians feel every day, and we would welcome his thoughts and wisdom on the issue.”

Over the past year, PCAC has advocated to preserve affordability in gentrifying neighborhoods so that those who are committed to and invested in their communities can afford to stay in their homes as property values rise around them. The coalition was involved in creating a strong Philadelphia Housing Trust Fund, and worked to ensure that the Philadelphia Land Bank would be required to provide land to create affordable and accessible housing.

In March 2015, PCAC announced that they are advocating for creation of an Anti-Speculation Tax on the practice of “flipping houses,” with funds raised from the levy going toward preserving and expanding affordable, accessible houses and green space in gentrifying neighborhoods. Over the next year, PCAC will advocate for the Anti-Speculation Tax and other bills that support Development without Displacement.

About the Philadelphia Coalition for Affordable Communities - Inspired by recent legislative accomplishments by member groups, the PCAC now boasts 40 member groups representing roughly 75,000 Philadelphians. For more information about the PCAC and its proposal, please visit www.PhilllyAffordableCommunities.org.

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