

cityLAB is a do tank not a think tank.

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cityLAB AWARDED FUNDS FOR ITS "SIX PERCENT PLACE"

Pittsburgh, PA - Six percent is the number, the tipping point. If a neighborhood can get that many creative workers, it becomes an attraction in its own right. This simple idea is one that is worth putting into practice, thinks Jim Denova of the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation. The Benedum Foundation has funded an "experiment" by cityLAB in the East End neighborhoods of Garfield, Friendship and the Penn Avenue Arts Corridor. cityLAB will create a Special Impact Zone with the goal of driving the creative presence past this tipping point.

"The Penn Avenue Arts Corridor is a great laboratory for testing this unique economic development strategy," commented Mr. Denova, vice president of the foundation. "The Benedum Foundation is very interested in the resulting blueprint. It promises to be applicable to many other rural communities and urban neighborhoods."

cityLAB's experiment will directly address issues of population density in these neighborhoods through the creation of the Special Impact Zone. This Zone will draw from the scattered assets that have been built up over time and from the bold urban pioneers who currently reside there. It will market and draw people to settle in the blocks surrounding the Penn Avenue Arts Corridor so that it becomes more densely populated and a viable neighborhood. This in turn will build an economically stronger corridor providing fertile ground for expanded opportunities in the arts, retail and commercial development. At the end of this first phase, cityLAB will hand over an implementation strategy to their neighborhood partners which will consist of a toolbox of incentives. This toolbox will be a mix of physical and social incentives that when implemented will draw people to this neighborhood of great potential.

About cityLAB. The nonprofit entity, cityLAB, was launched just over a year ago. cityLAB is a "do" tank, not a "think" tank. Its purpose is to perform experiments with the city as its laboratory. Experiments are chosen to seed economic development, attract talent, create a buzz and effect positive change in the City, from both inside and outside.

There are two approaches to developing a city. One is the big, top down approach. This is the sort of visionary thinking that puts massive infrastructure into place, like stadia, boulevards and convention centers. Although these big pieces are essential for a city to be competitive, they are not the complete story in the revival of a city. The second approach is bottom up. These are the projects that might start in some relatively obscure corner of the city, and somehow take fire, like an art gallery that becomes gallery row, or a coffee shop so popular that other businesses spring up around it. These projects have the ability to stitch together the large assets already in play. If successful they may have an impact far beyond their modest starting point.

These bottom up approaches happen mostly on a hit and miss basis. Someone has an idea and pursues it. Their success depends upon it being the right idea at the right time. For every one of these that succeed, many others fail through lack of resources or applicable experience. We shouldn't be placing our future in the hands of luck or chance or assuming that there are enough superheroes to go around.

What if we were to pursue this bottom up approach more systematically?

cityLAB will set about systematically discovering the ways to change the future of the city for the better, by creating bottom up projects en masse. We will select issues that are most relevant to our City today, focusing on important emerging patterns and trends

determined by studies that others have completed. cityLAB isn't about nibbling at the problem on the fringes. It is about finding big ideas and discovering a path from here to there.

Eve Picker is the president and CEO of cityLAB. Eve is best known for her transformative real estate projects and guerilla marketing tactics, in downtown and the East End. Just as those projects transformed downtown Pittsburgh into a new neighborhood, Eve hopes that cityLAB will transform the landscape of the city. cityLAB's board includes Audrey Russo, President and CEO of the Pittsburgh Technology Council; Mickey McManus, President and CEO of MAYA Design Inc. and Donald Smith, President of Regional and Industrial Development Corporation. Courtney Ehrlichman is cityLAB's newly appointed director of experiments.

About the Benedum Foundation. The Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation is a regional philanthropy focusing on West Virginia and Southwestern Pennsylvania. The Foundation generally invests two-thirds of its grant dollars in West Virginia and one-third in Southwestern Pennsylvania. The Benedum Foundation promotes the economic well-being and quality of life including efforts that help communities organize, plan, and implement ambitious but achievable improvement strategies.