



U.S. House passes bill for Doyle's projects on affordable housing, workforce development and street maintenance



BOYCE BUCHANAN
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The U.S. House has passed a bill that would provide almost \$12.3 million in federal funding for 10 community projects in the Pittsburgh region.

U.S. Rep. Mike Doyle, D-Forest Hills, submitted the Community Project Funding requests that were included as part of \$600 billion appropriations legislation that funds seven federal agencies for the 2022 fiscal year. In order to become law, the act needs to pass the U.S. Senate and be signed by the president.

The proposed funding comes as part of the [return of congressional earmarks](#) — specific line items in budget bills that allow members of Congress to direct federal dollars to specific projects in their districts.

Mr. Doyle's projects target things like affordable housing, workforce development and street maintenance.

"These projects are going to help increase affordable housing, help small businesses, increase access to health care and other support services in neighborhoods like Clairton, the Upper Hill District, and the North Side," Rep. Doyle said in a news release.

In an interview last week, Mr. Doyle said he hopes lawmakers on both sides of the Capitol can reach an agreement to keep the earmarks. Senate appropriators, who are considering senators' own earmark requests, are scheduled to begin consideration of three House-passed spending bills this week. The process is widely expected to drag out until the end of the year.

"Who knows what the Senate side will do," Mr. Doyle said with a laugh on Thursday.

"The requests are bipartisan — there's as many Republican requests in there as Democratic ones — so I don't think it's going to take a partisan thing," Mr. Doyle said. "I don't think that's going to be a problem."

Affordable housing

Pittsburgh has a shortage of over 17,000 affordable housing units, according to Mr. Doyle's funding request. Some organizations plan to use the money to address that gap if the law is signed.

Greater Valley Community Services, Inc., would receive \$1 million to help finance Braddock Community Builders' rehabilitation of two historic buildings. It plans to convert the buildings into eight affordable housing units. At least four are slotted to be specifically for women who are survivors of domestic abuse and two would be accessible for people with disabilities.

Another housing-based project that would receive federal funding is Action Housing's construction of a four-story mixed-use building on Forward Avenue in Squirrel Hill. They plan to have 43 affordable housing units and also space for commercial use. The housing units will be available for households that are making 60% of the area median income or lower and a quarter of the housing units will be reserved specifically for people with disabilities.

Workforce development

The funding also would go toward expanding New Century Careers' manufacturing skills training program into Homewood and surrounding communities.

New Century Careers, a manufacturing workforce training program based on the South Side, plans to use the \$500,000 that it would receive if the bill makes it into law to train community members for jobs in the advanced manufacturing industry with the help of the University of Pittsburgh's Swanson School of Engineering.

The funding would allow for the creation of an advanced manufacturing training center and for the organization to offer tuition-free access to its pre-apprenticeship program. Participants would get direct entry into a four-year apprenticeship.

Another project that was included in the House bill is the renovation of two commercial buildings in Allentown and Beltzhoover by New Sun Riving, which would receive \$1 million.

The buildings will become the headquarters of South Hilltop Men's Group, which is a Black-led nonprofit that teaches trades to community members with employment barriers such as addiction, and Work Hard Pittsburgh, which also provides workforce development programs.

Street maintenance

The city of Pittsburgh's Urban Redevelopment Authority would get \$2 million in funding for the Centre Avenue Revitalization project in the Hill District. The city plans to use 70 publicly owned parcels to develop seven mixed-use sites led by local and minority developers and will include mixed-income residential units, retail and office space.

"This project will be a catalyst for re-establishing the neighborhood's economic and cultural vitality — and will serve as a model of equitable development as the city works to replicate this process in key, historically Black centers of culture and commerce throughout Pittsburgh," according to the funding request.

The city also would receive another \$2 million to make transit and safety improvements to North Avenue on the North Side. The improvements would include modernizing traffic signals and improving sidewalks and street lighting, among other upgrades.

Health programs

Other organizations plan to use the potential funding to focus on the physical health of the community.

Cornerstone Care would receive \$1.5 million, according to the House bill, for the construction of a health center in Clairton. The center would provide medical, dental, and behavioral health care for more than 31,000 low-income and aging residents of Clairton, Elizabeth, Elrama, and Glassport.

The new health center would be three stories. Half of the building would be used for health care and the other half would be leased to different employers offering complementary services, according to the funding request.

Pennsylvania Organization for Women in Early Recovery (POWER) would receive \$1.5 million for its substance-use disorder recovery campus construction project in Swissvale. The money would go toward renovating a three-story building next to POWER's halfway house. The plan is for the first floor to be occupied by POWER's partners, who will provide health care, child care, workforce development and other services for clients and the community at large.

Other supportive services

Some federal funds, if fully approved, would also go toward providing organizations with the tools to continue operating.

The 130-year-old former church used by Northside Common Ministries to house a men's homeless shelter and a food pantry is in great need of renovations, according to the funding request. Goodwill of Southwestern Pennsylvania would relieve \$525,000 for the renovation and for sustaining the Ministries' work in the future from this legislation.

Pittsburgh Community Services Inc. would also use the \$250,000 it hopes to receive from the federal government to deliver supportive services to low-income residents in the Hill District.

The organization would provide a range of services from case management, to workforce development and job training. It also would help with food access, housing stabilization, transportation and other services.

“These federal investments will help rebuild our region’s economy,” Mr. Doyle said in a press release. “These projects focus on neighborhood redevelopment that will make Pittsburgh more equitable, more prosperous, and more responsive to Pittsburghers' needs.”

Daniel Moore contributed. Boyce Buchanan: bbuchanan@post-gazette.com and Twitter [@BuchananBoyce](https://twitter.com/BuchananBoyce).

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