

Hello, I would like to welcome our friends and distinguished representatives. My name is Dino Lopreiato I have lived on this street for 50 years, my parents arrived in this country in the late 1950s from an impoverished war-torn Italy, and since then have seen a multitude of changes, good and unfortunately bad also. For years my father and mother's response to my gripes about policies and issues was met with the same response. "Why don't you go to the meetings?"

They used to tell me that they couldn't go, I would ask why? and they would respond in broken English that they would not be understood... They were great residents, they paid their taxes would keep their area clean, and make gorgeous improvements on their property, and were always willing to help others. I listened and learned and wanted to get involved so I started attending meetings 10 years ago. 6 years ago I finally got my opportunity and became the Councilman for the 1st ward of Brackenridge. I also am the proud owner of the local bakery down the street called Vibos' Italian Bakery. My mother started it in 1984. So believe me I have a vested interest in my community. I also have plans to open up a coffee shop/arcade in the next few years.

I would like to describe what it used to be like here. When I was younger we had a gate at the top of the street, for the steelworkers to enter and exit, it used to see the steelworkers walking up and down the street supporting the local businesses. Would have to avoid the street at 4:00 cause they're was so many steelworkers leaving work. Well, now they spent 3 billion dollars to build a new rolling mill and made a wall instead of a gate, with no possibility of the limited amount of workers to enter our community. This is just one of the factors that have crushed our community. Those good-paying jobs used to affect the community. Even now as we speak the mill is on an active strike. Many families have moved out of town and the result is blighted structures that have no hope to be repurposed as is. I'm not saying that we do not have structures that could be repurposed but am asking for help with Blight remediation. For 2 years we have been having active public meetings with our tri-borough residents to find the answer on what they think the greatest issue is within the boroughs and it has always come back the issue of blight. It became a major component within our newly written multi-community implementable comprehensive plan.

There is hope, even this building we are standing in was an abandoned church for years and I never thought that it would be taken down and a new Salvation army would be built, and here we are. The Salvation Army has been a very positive asset to the community. They help the needy with food distribution, community events, worship service, and many other social events...

Down the street, there used to be an old Acme supermarket and a huge parking lot. Now there is a brand new public housing facility for 55 and older residents. Daltons Edge is a spectacular facility with trees and a life center w various social, recreational, educational, and vocational services. In addition, many programs continue to be provided by independent agencies.

Another shining example is Brackenridge Construction who revamped an old warehouse and housed a construction business. All of these structures created jobs and made the community aesthetically nicer.

I could keep talking about the progress we are making, but the reality is that we need help. It seems for every property we take down countless others need to be done. I also would like to express an issue that makes it harder for our borough. That is a lack of funding for commercial blight. Many properties were at one-time mom-and-pop shops and now are non-eligible for funding, these are not factories and I would love to see exceptions made on a case-to-case basis. Other issues that we encounter are asbestos mitigation. The cost is quite steep and we are really struggling. I hope you can find a way to help us with these issues by thinking outside the box.

Finally, I would like to thank you all for listening to me and caring enough to visit our community. We truly appreciate this, and please come and visit me down the street at our little bakery, I'd love to see you,

Regards, Dino Lopreiato