
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE BILL

No. 1508 Session of
2008

INTRODUCED BY WOZNIAK, WASHINGTON, LOGAN, RAFFERTY, A. WILLIAMS,
BOSCOLA, MUSTO, STOUT, LAVALLE, BROWNE, O'PAKE AND
WONDERLING, JUNE 25, 2008

REFERRED TO URBAN AFFAIRS AND HOUSING, JUNE 25, 2008

AN ACT

1 Establishing a Renaissance City Initiative to provide grants to
2 renaissance cities for purposes of furthering economic
3 development and urban revitalization; and making
4 appropriations.

5 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
6 hereby enacts as follows:

7 Section 1. Short title.

8 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Renaissance
9 City Act.

10 Section 2. Definitions.

11 The following words and phrases when used in this act shall
12 have the meanings given to them in this section unless the
13 context clearly indicates otherwise:

14 "Agency." The Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency.

15 "Department." The Department of Community and Economic
16 Development of the Commonwealth.

17 "Renaissance city." A city of the second class A or third
18 class.

1 Section 3. Establishment.

2 There is established within the department a Renaissance City
3 Initiative which shall provide grants to renaissance cities for
4 purposes of furthering economic development and urban
5 revitalization.

6 Section 4. Programs.

7 (a) Establishment.--The department shall establish the
8 programs under this section for renaissance cities.

9 (b) Public safety grant program.--For fiscal year 2008-2009,
10 the department shall establish a public safety grant program,
11 which shall provide grants to renaissance cities for purposes of
12 funding public safety initiatives. Initiatives eligible under
13 this program shall include all of the following:

14 (1) Purchases of equipment relating to law enforcement,
15 including vehicles, surveillance equipment or other equipment
16 that will protect the health and safety of the community and
17 its police officers.

18 (2) Creation of crime prevention programs, including
19 crime prevention programs focusing on violent crimes, drug
20 offenses, juvenile crimes or nuisance crimes.

21 (3) Purchases of equipment relating to firefighting
22 activities, including vehicles or other equipment that will
23 protect the health and safety of the community and its
24 firefighters.

25 (4) Any other initiative developed by a renaissance city
26 that is designed to protect the health and safety of its
27 residents.

28 (c) Blight removal program.--For fiscal year 2009-2010, the
29 department shall establish a blight removal grant program, which
30 shall provide grants to renaissance cities for purposes of

1 funding blight removal initiatives. Initiatives eligible under
2 this program shall include all of the following:

3 (1) Clearance, demolition or removal of blighted or
4 abandoned properties.

5 (2) Acquisition, reconstruction or rehabilitation of
6 blighted or abandoned properties.

7 (3) Programs relating to aggressive municipal code
8 enforcement, combating absentee landlords or other blight
9 prevention or remediation activities.

10 (4) Any other initiative developed by a renaissance city
11 that is designed to combat urban blight.

12 (d) Economic development and urban revitalization housing
13 programs.--For fiscal year 2010-2011:

14 (1) The department shall establish an economic
15 development grant program, which shall provide grants to new
16 businesses locating in or relocating to renaissance cities.

17 Initiatives eligible under this program shall include all of
18 the following:

19 (i) Environmental assessment and remediation.

20 (ii) Site preparation, including earth moving
21 activities.

22 (iii) Demolition of structures.

23 (iv) Installation or rehabilitation of
24 infrastructure.

25 (v) Reimbursement of engineering and administrative
26 expenses associated with any of the activities listed
27 under subparagraphs (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv).

28 (2) The agency shall establish an urban revitalization
29 housing program which shall provide financial assistance to
30 residential property owners in renaissance cities. The

1 program shall contain all of the following components:

2 (i) Direct homeownership assistance to low-income or
3 moderate-income households.

4 (ii) Loans or grants to owners of residential
5 property for property rehabilitation, renovation,
6 conversion or construction if the property will be used
7 for residential purposes.

8 (iii) Loans or grants to individuals or nonprofit
9 entities to acquire residential property for the purpose
10 of renovation or rehabilitation for use or resale as
11 residential property.

12 (iv) Grants to increase energy efficiency in owner-
13 occupied residential property.

14 (v) Any other initiative developed by a renaissance
15 city that is designed to encourage revitalization of or
16 increase to the renaissance city's residential property
17 housing stock.

18 (e) Municipal services grant program.--For fiscal year 2011-
19 2012, the department shall establish a municipal services grant
20 program, which shall provide grants to renaissance cities for
21 purposes of funding municipal service initiatives. Initiatives
22 eligible under this program shall include all of the following:

23 (1) Acquisition of real property for any public purpose.

24 (2) Construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation of
25 public buildings, including initiatives that increase access
26 to public buildings by the elderly or disabled.

27 (3) The repairing of streets, bridges and sidewalks.

28 (4) Construction, reconstruction and rehabilitation of
29 publicly owned utilities.

30 (5) Infrastructure repair or rehabilitation.

1 (6) Purchase of public works vehicles, including trash
2 or snow removal equipment or other equipment that will
3 protect the health and safety of the community.

4 (7) Service consolidation with surrounding political
5 subdivisions.

6 (8) Any other initiative developed by a renaissance city
7 that is designed to enhance the delivery of municipal
8 services in the renaissance city.

9 (f) Pension and debt grant program.--For fiscal year 2012-
10 2013, the department shall establish a pension and debt grant
11 program, which shall provide grants to renaissance cities for
12 purposes of providing targeted relief in areas of pension
13 liability and debt service. Initiatives eligible under this
14 program shall include proposals to do any of the following:

15 (1) Offset unfunded accrued pension liability.

16 (2) Pay debt service on indebtedness incurred prior to
17 the effective date of this section.

18 (3) Address any other initiative developed by a
19 renaissance city that is designed to address the renaissance
20 city's pension plans and debt service commitments.

21 (g) Construction.--Eligibility for any program authorized
22 under this section shall not be construed to prohibit a
23 renaissance city from receiving financial assistance through any
24 other Commonwealth program.

25 Section 5. Applications.

26 (a) Submission.--No later than October 1, 2008, and each
27 October 1 thereafter, a municipality may submit an application
28 to the department requesting a grant from the programs
29 established under section 4(b), (c), (d)(1), (e) and (f). The
30 application shall be on the form required by the department and

1 shall include or demonstrate all of the following:

- 2 (1) The applicant's name and address.
- 3 (2) The location of the project.
- 4 (3) A description of the project.
- 5 (4) A statement of the amount of the grant sought.
- 6 (5) Any other information required by the department.

7 (b) Review and approval of grant applications.--The
8 department shall review the application and upon being satisfied
9 that all requirements have been met, may approve the application
10 and award a grant. Grants shall be awarded by the department no
11 later than December 1 of each year.

12 (c) Grant awards.--Each renaissance city that submits an
13 application and is approved by the department shall be entitled
14 to a grant equal to 100% of the amount requested in the
15 application or \$1,000,000, whichever is less. Any remaining
16 revenue in the ??? fund shall be distributed to applicants
17 through a formula developed by the department. The formula
18 shall, at a minimum, take into account the renaissance city's
19 population, relative wealth and need.

20 Section 6. Report to General Assembly.

21 The department shall submit an annual report to the General
22 Assembly no later than September 1, 2009, and each September 1
23 thereafter in which a program is in effect. The report shall
24 include a list of all of the recipients of grants awarded by the
25 department in the previous fiscal year, the amount of the
26 grants, a description of the project and the public purposes
27 that it advanced. The department shall post a copy of the report
28 to the General Assembly on its Internet website.

29 Section 7. Appropriations.

30 The following sums shall be appropriated for purposes of

1 funding the programs established under this act:

2 (1) For fiscal year 2008-2009, the sum of \$100,000,000
3 shall be appropriated to the Department of Community and
4 Economic Development for purposes of the program established
5 under section 4(b).

6 (2) For fiscal year 2009-2010, the sum of \$100,000,000
7 shall be appropriated to the department for purposes of the
8 program established under section 4(c).

9 (3) For fiscal year 2010-2011, the sum of \$100,000,000
10 shall be appropriated to the department for purposes of the
11 program established under section 4(d). Of the amount
12 appropriated under this section, the sum of \$50,000,000 shall
13 be transferred by the department to the agency for purposes
14 of the program established under section 4(d)(2).

15 (4) For fiscal year 2011-2012, the sum of \$100,000,000
16 shall be appropriated to the department for purposes of the
17 program established under section 4(e).

18 (5) For fiscal year 2012-2013, the sum of \$100,000,000
19 shall be appropriated to the department for purposes of the
20 program established under section 4(f).

21 Section 30. Effective date.

22 This act shall take effect immediately.