



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT:

Amie M. Downs
Allegheny County
412-350-3711 office
412-327-3700 cell
Amie.Downs@AlleghenyCounty.us

Katie O'Malley
City of Pittsburgh
412-255-2944 office
412-925-1990 cell
Katie.OMalley@PittsburghPA.gov

Anthony Moore
University of Pittsburgh
412-624-8292 office
412-715-3644 cell
amm114@pitt.edu

**University of Pittsburgh, Allegheny County and City of Pittsburgh
Launch Western PA Regional Data Center**

PITTSBURGH – University of Pittsburgh Senior Vice Chancellor for Engagement and Chief of Staff Kathy Humphrey, Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald and City of Pittsburgh Mayor William Peduto today announced the launch of the Western Pennsylvania Regional Data Center at www.wprdc.org. A collaborative effort of the University of Pittsburgh, Allegheny County and the City of Pittsburgh, the Western Pennsylvania Regional Data Center (WPRDC) will make local government data open and accessible to the public on a dedicated “open data portal” website. The announcement was made as part of the Greater Pittsburgh Nonprofit Partnership’s (GPNP) 2015 Summit, entitled “Our Region Wins When We Work Together.”

“We live in a world and a region being transformed by data. For researchers, governments, policy administrators, local citizens, oftentimes, the sheer amount of information can feel impenetrable,” said Pitt Chancellor Patrick Gallagher. “At the University of Pittsburgh, one of our key goals is working with partners and using technology to harness big data – to make it more accessible for positive outcomes in society. What we hope is that this project will provide another tool for our region’s citizens to engage with the government. Access to data can galvanize research, improve classroom experiences, and support civic innovation. An open government means openings for civic engagement. The University is extremely pleased to partner in this effort with Allegheny County and the City of Pittsburgh.”

The Western Pennsylvania Regional Data Center will be managed by Pitt’s University Center for Social and Urban Research (UCSUR). Established in 1972, UCSUR serves as a resource for researchers and educators interested in the basic and applied social and behavioral sciences. As a hub for interdisciplinary research and collaboration, UCSUR promotes a research agenda focused on the social, economic and health issues most relevant to our society.

“I’m very proud of this joint initiative between Pitt, the county and the city, and excited about not only what it provides today, but the possibilities for the future,” said Fitzgerald. “Ultimately, we want this portal to be available and open to all municipalities so that data can be shared with all of our constituencies. Perhaps even more importantly, with data at our fingertips, we can make data-driven decisions about what’s best for our communities.”

A total of 50 separate datasets will be part of the release from the county and will include information from the Property Assessments Office, Sheriff's Office, Department of Health, Elections Division, Allegheny County Jail, Kane Regional Centers, Medical Examiner's Office, and the Treasurer's Office. Datasets will include property information, sheriff sales data, inmate census information, overdose data, housing inspection reports, and election results, with additional offices and data slated for future release.

"The extent, scale and ambition of collaboration among the city, county, university, nonprofit, and foundation community is unprecedented and serves as a unique model across the country," Peduto said. "The regional data center will make as many as possible of the datasets available to you in flexible, open formats. Information which you previously had to request through Right-to-Know or through individual contacts will now be reliably and openly available. You'll be better able to answer simple questions such as 'How many baseball fields are in my neighborhood?' as well as monitor more complex systems such as keeping track of 311 requests in the neighborhoods we serve."

The datasets from the city including information such as 311 customer service calls, a daily police blotter, publicly available properties, geographic information and data on city-owned assets and energy usage. It was compiled from departments including Innovation & Performance, Public Works, Finance, Planning and the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police.

The Western Pennsylvania Regional Data Center, along with staffing to support innovative initiatives in the city and county, and the Code for America Fellowship at the City of Pittsburgh, was funded with \$1.8 million from the Richard King Mellon Foundation over the first 18 months of the effort. The foundation community has been very supportive of the efforts to build joint technology infrastructure, and encouraged the launch to be held at GPNP's 2015 Nonprofit Summit. GPNP's Summit illustrated the role that partnerships between the nonprofit, public, and private sectors are playing in the region's success. Participants were invited to help create collaborative solutions and learn innovative approaches for social good. Following the press event where the launch was announced, the staff of the WPRDC also presented a more detailed preview of the data and its potential uses.

In celebration of the launch of WPRDC, a Hack Night is being held at the East Liberty Branch of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, this evening, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. on the second floor. Participants can start building things with open data. Staff from WPRDC will be on hand to show participants how to use the open data portal, to talk about data and to discuss how partners can become involved in the data center.

On Friday, October 16, a number of events will be held to showcase the WPRDC to the participant communities.

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UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

4200 FIFTH AVENUE • PITTSBURGH, PA 15260
PHONE (412) 624-4141 • FAX (412) 624-1021
WWW.PITT.EDU

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

101 COURTHOUSE • 436 GRANT STREET • PITTSBURGH, PA 15219
PHONE (412) 350-6500 • FAX (412) 350-6512
WWW.ALLEGHENYCOUNTY.US

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

512 CITY-COUNTY BUILDING • 414 GRANT STREET • PITTSBURGH, PA 15219
PHONE (412) 255-2626 • FAX (412) 255-2687
WWW.PITTSBURGHPA.GOV