

Legislation Text

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Recognizing and celebrating Women's Community Revitalization Project on the 35th Anniversary of the organization's incorporation.

WHEREAS, In 1987, the Women's Community Revitalization Project ("WCRP") incorporated as Philadelphia's only community development organization that was created by and for women and their families; and

WHEREAS, In the decades since, the organization has grown to become a nationally recognized, innovative developer that to-date has supported over 2,500 individuals achieve greater economic and family well-being through tenant supportive services, engages about 75 individuals a year in leadership development activities, while offering opportunities to use those skills in helping to guide WCRP and play key roles in its advocacy campaigns, and built more than 322 units of housing and invested \$115 million in some of Philadelphia's poorest neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, WCRP has pursued a three-fold strategy of physical, social, and political development, believing all three to be essential, equal, and complementary in revitalizing neighborhoods and in securing equity and dignity for women and their families, developed close and constructive relationships with the people it houses, supporting them as they pursue personal growth and economic well-being, developed grassroots leaders and built collective power, advocating for policies that support affordable housing and equitable development, and created an organization that is led by women and accountable to the constituencies and communities it serves; and

WHEREAS, In addition to managing its properties and providing supportive services to tenants and communities throughout Philadelphia, WCRP has established itself as a leader in advocating for equitable, healthy community development and support for local women and their families as well as community organizing campaigns aimed at shaping public policy outcomes; and

WHEREAS, The idea for forming WCRP gained significant momentum in the mid-1980s after an eastern North Philadelphia neighborhood coalition successfully challenged the lending practices of First Fidelity Bank through the Community Reinvestment Act, resulting in a \$50 million settlement that emboldened the group's leaders, who were united around a common purpose of finding ways to improve their neighborhood to better the lives of local women and their families; and

WHEREAS, WCRP spent its first year assessing their needs by going door-to-door and networking throughout the community to gather feedback and share ideas, engaging in lengthy deliberations, and building an eventual consensus, allowing the organization to embark on its first project to rehabilitate eight row homes, which forged ahead after financial backing was secured from Fidelity Bank despite initial skepticism from some other lenders, funders, and fellow developers; and

WHEREAS, From 1992 to 2013, WCRP planned and developed facilities for organizations that serve low-income families to allow them an increased capacity to better serve their communities; and

WHEREAS, Through the years, WCRP has provided training to hundreds of non-profit organizations to help them fully understand the facilities development process, with some also receiving technical assistance or project management support; and

WHEREAS, Among the Head Start programs, child care facilities, health care centers, community centers, charter schools, and other human and social service agencies that have benefitted from those WCRP offerings are the Adolfinia Villaneuva Child Development Center, the Congreso de Latinos Unidos headquarters, Norris Square Civic Association's child care center, the Children's Village Child Care Center, Delaware Valley Community Health's expansion of the Maria de los Santos Health Center, The Preschool Project, and the Lincoln Day Educational Center; and

WHEREAS, With funding from the William Penn Foundation, WCRP worked with North Philadelphia residents throughout the 1990s to reclaim vacant land and repurpose it for community green space, by identifying and recruiting neighborhood leaders to help transform vacant lots as well as creating and implementing a plan to clean and green them as part of an effort to combat quality of life issues negatively impacting the community, which converted over 125 vacant parcels into 12 open-space parks, created over 40 side yards and backyards, organized to improve the delivery of City services to their neighborhoods and participated in classes on urban gardening and vacant land stewardship; and

WHEREAS, To help residents in eastern North Philadelphia increase options to purchase fresh, affordable, locally grown food within a 10-minute walk of their homes, WCRP partnered with University of Pennsylvania graduate students and St. Christopher's Foundation for Children for the Food for All program, relocating its Farm to Families CSA site to Maria de los Santos Health Center, a busy health care provider which primarily serves the area's Latino community, and has also collaborated with the Food Trust to bring fresh produce to nearby corner grocery stores, plus provided support to the Fairhill Square Farmer's Market by incorporating musical performances, Zumba classes, local library staff readings, and health & fitness outreach programs into the sale of produce; and

WHEREAS, WCRP worked with homeowners on eight blocks around the Adolfinia Villanueva Townhomes to provide grants and low-interest loans for home repair, temporary housing relocation, and rehabilitation by administering Model Block contracts to 80 neighborhood residents, resulting in major façade and other improvements, including energy-efficiency upgrades, such as central air-conditioning installations and new appliances, fixing construction flaws with new roofing system and replaced rear walls, and the remodeling of bathrooms and kitchens with new cabinetry, flooring and counter tops; and

WHEREAS, As in its programmatic work, WCRP has centered partnership in its advocacy work, including participating in the Eastern North Philadelphia Coalition and the Philadelphia Campaign for Housing Justice, plus staffing the Philadelphia Coalition for Affordable Housing, advancing the Development without Displacement Campaign through its successful support of creation of inclusionary zoning, the Land Bank, the Housing Trust Fund, and other policies and funding for permanent affordability and community self-determination; and

WHEREAS, WCRP has shown that not only for their women leader-collaborators that "what we do not know, we will learn" but also that they will teach, approaching their board meetings as opportunities for education and approaching their work with the assumption that "each person knows something and no one person knows everything"; and

WHEREAS, Not only for their exemplary commitments to women and families, inclusion and equity, growth and accountability, respect and openness, self-determination and justice, but for their many physical, social, and political accomplishments in partnerships centered on women and families across Philadelphia; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Does hereby recognize and celebrate Women's Community Revitalization Project on the 35th Anniversary of the organization's incorporation.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to representatives of WCRP as evidence of the sincere sentiments of this legislative body.