



Press Release
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WCRP Celebrates 30 Years of Improving Lives and Strengthening Communities

Philadelphia's first and only women-led community development organization commemorated their rise from a neighborhood based group to a nationally recognized innovator

PHILADELPHIA, PA – The Women's Community Revitalization Project (WCRP) hosted a celebration event on Friday commemorating a 30-year history of empowering Philadelphia women and families to improve their lives and strengthen their communities. More than 200 friends, residents and supporters were in attendance to help mark the occasion.

"We started out by asking, 'what can we do to improve our lives?'" said Nora Lichtash, a founding member of WCRP and current Executive Director. "We realized that just from living our lives, doing our jobs, being moms, we had a lot of skills that we could use to make an impact."

The story began in 1986, when WCRP became Philadelphia's first and only women-led community development organization. Since then, with its roots in the Kensington section of North Philadelphia, it has grown to become a nationally recognized, innovative developer that has built 282 units of housing and invested more than \$90 million in some of the city's poorest neighborhoods.

Today, WCRP has established itself as a leader in advocating for equitable, healthy community development as well as support for local women and their families. In addition to developing affordable housing, the organization leads community organizing campaigns aimed at shaping public policy outcomes, manages its properties and provides supportive services to tenants and communities throughout Philadelphia.

"We are an organization that willingly shares our power," said Staci Moore, co-chair of WCRP's board of directors. "We believe that people who live in communities are already leaders — and that we have a lot to learn from each other."

In addition to community development work, WCRP has organized and led various coalitions to astounding victories through the years – staffing the Philadelphia Coalition for Affordable Housing that was a key force in establishing the City's Housing Trust Fund; convening the Campaign to Take Back Vacant Land to fight for the creation of the Philadelphia Land Bank; bringing Pennsylvania's Community Land Trust organizations together to share ideas and collaborate on equitable housing and economic development across the State; and most recently, helping to form the Philadelphia Coalition for Affordable Communities to ensure that long-term residents are not displaced and remain in their homes in the face of gentrification and neighborhood change.

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. Emboldened by the economic opportunities created by their resultant \$50 million settlement, the group's leaders united around a common purpose: finding ways to improve their neighborhood to better the lives of local women and their families.

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WCRP spent its first year assessing the need, going door-to-door and networking throughout the community to gather feedback and share ideas. After lengthy deliberations and an eventual consensus, the organization embarked on its first project to rehabilitate eight row homes. Although initially met with skepticism from some lenders, funders and fellow developers, WCRP forged ahead and secured financial backing from Fidelity Bank. Three decades later, that fiercely passionate commitment to their cause is what still drives WCRP today.

The event featured a musical performance by the "First Lady of Jazz Guitar" Monnette Sudler, a Grammy nominated composer, jazz guitarist, vocalist and bandleader, as well as a poetry reading by Trapeta B. Mayson, an award winning Philadelphia poet who serves as Executive Director of Historic Germantown.

About WCRP

The Women's Community Revitalization Project (WCRP) is committed to social and economic equity for low-income women and their families, developing housing; providing supportive services, advocating for policy change and honoring leadership, dignity, and justice in our communities. Learn more at www.wcrpphila.org.

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