



for a purpose-driven, sustainable future by 2030

TRANSFORM
HARNESS
INNOVATE
NAVIGATE
COLLABORATE

THE TAKEAWAY 2020

The UN SDGs in the New Now:
Relevance and Recovery



When the history books are written, 2020 will likely go down as one of the most consequential years in the modern era.

And, one of the most enlightening.

As we grappled with the global pandemic, racial injustice reckoning, growing food and economic insecurity, the climate crisis, and the general sense of uncertainty and anxiety, it became clear to many just how inextricably linked these things are to one another.

You cannot have physical and mental health without economic health or environmental health or healthy social institutions.

These interconnections are the basis of the United Nations Sustainable Development goals. The goals recognize that achieving true sustainability rests on the three pillars of social, economic and environmental equity.

While the challenges were many, there were positives, too. Chief among them was the fact that many eyes were opened to longstanding systemic imbalances that are no longer sustainable or acceptable – something the UN SDGs have called out since they were first unveiled some five years ago.

In 2020, the relevance of these goals was indisputable.

Against this backdrop, THINC³⁰ 2020 examined these challenges head on. Over three mornings in October, with each day devoted to one of the three sustainability cornerstones, we invited 45 experts – national, regional and local – to share their insights and expertise not only about the issues before us, but also about solutions and the way forward.

They were exhilarating days filled with frank, honest conversations about how businesses, organizations and individuals can collaborate to move the needle on a host of sustainability issues. What follows are some takeaways from each day.

To dive deeper, we invite you to watch each day of the summit at www.covestro.us/thinc30-summit.

We hope the concrete strategies outlined here inspire you in the days, weeks and months ahead.



Rebecca Lucore
Corporate Social Responsibility
and Sustainability
Covestro LLC



THINC³⁰

Day 1: Social Resilience

On the first day, THINC³⁰ discussions centered on how to create social equity in areas like health, nutrition and education.

“Over the past several months, I’ve heard it said that the pandemic has revealed huge gaps in our society. I believe that these gaps were apparent long ago, which is why the Sustainable Development Goals exist. However, I believe the pandemic has revealed an urgency, a pressing need to close these gaps.”

Haakan Jonsson
Chairman and President, Covestro LLC



Addressing Public Health Challenges

Dr. Noble Maseru of the University of Pittsburgh's Schools of Health Sciences drove home the notion that equity in public health is not singular in nature. To have healthy people, he explained, you have to have healthy social factors. Meaning people must have access to good jobs and wages, clean air and water, quality education and so forth. It's a simple, logical idea that has huge implications as we work to correct longstanding racial bias.

For example, it's no secret COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on communities of color. The reason these communities are more vulnerable, some say, is because they have a higher incidence of pre-existing conditions. Dr. Maseru said the real issue is pre-existing social conditions. The question we need to ask is this: What are the social conditions that drive the high rates of diabetes, obesity, hypertension and other co-morbidities among people who live in these communities? Understanding those social determinants – quality education, healthy food, proper medical care – and working to fix them will have enormous impacts on health outcomes.

It's something Chris Norwood, Executive Director of Health People: Community Preventive Health Institute in New York's South Bronx, knows all too well. Even before COVID-19 began to ravage her community, type-2 diabetes had been – and continues to be – one of its top public health threats. But, according to Norwood, it doesn't have to be because "we know what works." She and Health People are leading advocates for proper patient education about self-care that can either prevent disease onset or dramatically improve the health of those who have the disease and, in some cases, actually reverse it.

"With diabetes, we have an incredible opportunity to improve health outcomes," said Norwood. "That's because fairly simple lifestyle changes in diet and exercise have such a huge impact on prevention and management."

For pre-diabetics, the National Diabetes Prevention Program is a U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention-endorsed, best practice with 20 years of research showing its effectiveness across all racial and ethnic groups. The Diabetes Self-Management Program enables those with the disease to take charge of their own health by making their own achievable action plan for nutrition and exercise. It, too, is backed by 20 years of research.

Depression and mental health were the subjects of a session featuring EMBRACE Pittsburgh's Gabriela Citrone. As the pandemic disrupted lives, many experienced feelings of loneliness, isolation and a lack of physical connection to family, friends and co-workers. This made it more important than ever to promote mental well-being, especially in a city that is "historically tough." Maintaining connections, recognizing the importance of self-care and practicing gratitude are all part of a strategy for achieving mental wellness.



Dr. Noble Maseru
Director, Social Justice, Racial Equity,
and Faculty Engagement, University of
Pittsburgh Schools of Health Sciences



Chris Norwood
Executive Director, Health People:
Community Preventive Health Institute



Gabriela Citrone
Outreach Director for Citrone 33
and Co-founder and Lead,
EMBRACE Pittsburgh



Tackling Food Insecurity and Providing Access to Healthy Food

Nutritious food, how to produce it sustainably and deliver it to those who need it was the topic of a panel that examined the creation of a local food supply chain. Besides benefits like increased job creation, less food waste, reduced consumption of energy and fuel, and fewer greenhouse gas emissions, localizing the region's food supply chain also will help alleviate food shortages.

It's a complex undertaking but between the policy work of Chatham University's Falk School of Sustainability and Environment and the "in the trenches" practices of the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank, Laurel Vista Farms and The Oasis Project, among others, the region is working to get there.

The recently developed Pittsburgh Food Action Plan serves as a roadmap for the development of a food system that meets the region's economic, environmental and nutrition needs. The result of

a massive undertaking, the plan reflects the input of more than 750 government, institutional and community voices through surveys, community meetings and stakeholder roundtables. In the end, the plan outlines five goals and 150 strategies.

Among them: Address food apartheid by building resilience, leadership and food sovereignty in underserved communities – something the Pittsburgh Food Council is supporting. Build on the strong leadership in the Black community that already exists for urban farming, food distribution and farmer's markets. Create a program for urban farmers and urban farmers of color that involves improving access to land ownership, land security and capital – again something the Pittsburgh Food Council is working on with the Urban Redevelopment Authority. Finally, create a central place where farmers can sell their excess produce directly to the public.

Reimagining Education for All

The unfortunate truth about the pandemic is that it merely shined an intense spotlight on the K-12 education system's significant challenges and inequities, especially in urban and rural communities. The Pittsburgh Promise Executive Director Saleem Ghubril summed it up succinctly: "The mountain is enormous that many of our kids have to face every single day. We're expecting them to climb that mountain without the tools that mountain climbers have."

And that was pre-pandemic.

When the pandemic hit, many school districts were wholly unprepared to pivot to remote learning. During the wide-ranging discussion Ghubril, along with Duquesne University's Dr. Gretchen Generett and A+ Schools' Nichole Sims, addressed the need to ensure all students, regardless of income, race, gender or ethnicity, have access to technology and internet/WiFi; to educate parents about the resources available to them to help their children learn; and, to better support teachers in creating equitable classrooms.

Teacher professional development and the training of teachers to effectively instruct classrooms of diverse students, in particular, are areas to which Dr. Generett has dedicated her career.

"Educators have a tremendous amount of influence and power when they are in front of students. And when they work with families, teachers need to own that influence and power, even if they

themselves do not feel influential or powerful. And finally, teachers must always be open and willing to enhance their craft. I intentionally use the word craft because teaching is an art, as much as it's a practice and a profession. Teachers must continuously learn how to get better at that craft. Good teaching is hard work. Excellent teaching is harder because it intentionally addresses the historical disparities and inequities that are there," she explained.



Saleem Ghubril
Executive Director, The Pittsburgh Promise



Dr. Gretchen Generett
Interim Dean and Professor,
School of Education, Duquesne University



Nichole Sims
Parent Leader, A+ Schools

"Why do I do what I do? It's quite simple. I want to leave a legacy. Unfortunately, systemic change is a slow process. Thus, I feel that it's my duty to provide young girls with the tools that will enable them to move this country and society forward. I want them to grow up in a society where they don't have to explain their worth, where their voices are never silenced, where they have control of their futures and where their seats at the table are already waiting for them."

Monica Henderson
Mentor, Strong Women, Strong Girls and University of Pittsburgh
Psychology and Sociology Undergraduate Student



Spotlight on Nonprofit Resiliency

In 2020, many organizations that operate in the nonprofit community found themselves either experiencing significantly increased demand for their services or reinventing their missions to meet the incredible need the pandemic created – or both. Pittsburgh nonprofit leaders weighed in on the good, the bad and the hope that emerged.



Trisha M. Gadson
CEO, Macedonia FACE

“There is an important concept that has to be understood – nonprofits help drive a response to community needs. It’s also significant to understand that many people who are doing this important work are also a part of the community. While serving, they are also experiencing and feeling the same needs and issues. This reality adds a different level of complexity to the way that one must be present in order to do the work through an equity lens.”



Josh Whiteside
Executive Director, The Education Partnership

“We needed to rethink how we deliver our services. We’re focusing on resiliency. That’s where our team at The Education Partnership really shines. We know this work has to get done. It’s just a matter of figuring out how we’re going to do it. Most important for us was collaboration. It was a key part of making sure that we were still able to deliver on our promise to teachers and to students. We relied on our nonprofit counterparts who had expertise in digital literacy, logistics and educational programming in a remote learning setting.”



Peggy Outon
Assistant Vice President, Community Engagement and Leadership Development, Robert Morris University

“Social capital is the glue that keeps communities together. And it’s measured by the amount of voting that people do, the amount of volunteering that they do, and the amount of donations to charity they make. These are all indicators of high social capital.

At the very beginning of the pandemic, there was a lot of worry about what exactly was going to happen [to the nonprofit sector]. We are seven and a half percent ahead of [fundraising] compared to this time last year. The amount of money that has been donated to charity by Americans is over \$400 billion. We also have seen a 12.6 percent increase in new donors.”



“Social Resilience” Featured Speakers

- **NOBLE A-W MASERU, PhD, MPH**, Professor, Public Health Practice Director, Social Justice, Racial Equity and Faculty Engagement University of Pittsburgh Schools of Health Sciences
- **CHRIS NORWOOD**, Founder and Executive Director, Health People: Community Preventive Health Initiative
- **MARNIE SCHILKEN**, Chief Program Officer, Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank
- **MIRIAM (MIM) SEIDEL**, Assistant Professor of Nutrition, Falk School of Sustainability and Environment, Chatham University
- **RITA RESICK, CO-OWNER**, Vice President of Marketing / Treasurer and Food Safety Officer, Laurel Vista Farms (and Food21 Board Member)
- **PASTOR CYNTHIA WALLACE**, Executive Pastor, Bible Center Church and Executive Director, The Oasis Project
- **STEPHEN RITZ**, Founder, Green Bronx Machine
- **SALEEM GHUBRIL**, Executive Director, The Pittsburgh Promise
- **GRETCHEN GENERETT, PhD**, Interim Dean and Professor, School of Education, Duquesne University
- **NICHOLE SIMS**, Parent Leader, A+ Schools
- **MONICA HENDERSON**, Mentor, Strong Women Strong Girls and Psychology and Sociology Undergraduate Student, University of Pittsburgh
- **PEGGY OUTON**, Assistant Vice President, Community Engagement and Leadership Development, Robert Morris University
- **TRISHA M. GADSON, PhD**, Chief Executive Officer, Macedonia Family and Community Center (FACE)
- **JOSH WHITESIDE**, Executive Director, The Education Partnership
- **GABRIELA CITRONE**, Outreach Director for Citrone 33 and Co-founder and Lead, EMBRACE Pittsburgh



THINC³⁰

Day 2: Environmental Equity

With a focus on environmental equity, Day Two sessions centered on strategies undertaken at the city, community, and for-profit and nonprofit levels that are helping to drive a more sustainable region – with notable success.

“The Sustainable Development Goals are not 17 individual goals. They are a universal agenda with 17 interconnected goals that influence, inform and impact one another. That means environmental disparities often create disparities in other areas like education, jobs, community investment, etc. When you correct one, you can also correct others.”

Haakan Jonsson

Chairman and President, Covestro LLC



At the City Level

Pittsburgh is one of only two U.S. cities that has officially adopted the UN SDGs and is aligning its practices and policies to them. Grant Ervin, Pittsburgh's Chief Resilience Officer, detailed one outcome – how the city has moved to source 100 percent of its electricity from renewables. Another outcome is how the UN SDGs have helped the city understand the relationships between and among all sorts of things from procurement to investments to pedestrian infrastructure development, all of which are being informed by the Global Goals.

City-wide adoption of the goals also has led to the development of a strong Pittsburgh UN SDG ecosystem that includes the Allegheny Conference on Community Development's Sustainability Committee, Forbes Funds, Sustainable Pittsburgh, Coro Pittsburgh, New Sun Rising and a host of other organizations. More recently, the Department of City Planning launched a new online public engagement platform to host conversations and seek input on community plans and projects.



“Covestro was one of the first corporations locally to share the SDGs at the first THINC³⁰ [in 2017]. That started us asking the question: What can [Pittsburgh] do with the SDGs? I began connecting with other cities working on the SDGs. We’ve developed a template that we created by looking at cities like New York, Los Angeles and Bristol in the UK.”

Grant Ervin

Chief Resilience Officer, City of Pittsburgh

"In my work, I have seen great projects not succeed. Not because of lack of will. But, because of lack of social and capital investments. What I have not seen is a true commitment to work with low-income communities in a real way. Investment takes time. It takes risk. It takes commitment."

Glenn Grayson, Jr.

Senior Program Manager for Neighborhood Development,
Neighborhood Allies



At the Community Level

The interconnected nature of sustainability has long been apparent to those who live in Pittsburgh's industrial neighborhoods of Millvale, Etna and Sharpsburg. New Sun Rising, a local NGO, has been instrumental in transforming these river towns into the Triboro Ecodistrict – a truly national model of economic, environmental and social sustainability.

Sitting at the bottom of a watershed, these communities watched as massive development over the last 50 years led to both environmental and economic challenges. After a series of floods in the mid-2000s, community members from all backgrounds

convened to address these issues. The concept of tackling economic development alongside sustainability and equity took root early on because of the shared experience of community residents.

Over the last 15 years, the communities worked to build local leadership and develop and leverage partnerships throughout the Pittsburgh region. Now, New Sun Rising and the Ecodistrict are creating an interactive tool called the Vibrancy Index to quantify the work and how they address the 17 UN SDGs locally.

At the Business and Industry Level

It's often said that if we are to achieve sustainability, industry must play a role. That is something both David Landis of Epic Metals and Justine Russo of PITT OHIO understand. Each shared their company's approaches and the sustainable business practices they've adopted.

For Epic, its journey began early on in 1968 when the company was founded in a barn it repurposed into a manufacturing facility. Today, its manufacturing facility in Florida operates on 100 percent solar energy, while its Pittsburgh operations rely on a combination of solar and wind energy. PITT OHIO, a leading trucking and logistics company which has made sustainability a core competency, is committed to lowering its carbon footprint through both green fleet and building initiatives.

For each company, the commitment to sustainability is ongoing and evolving. For companies beginning their own journeys, the two offered some sage advice:

1. Know that there will be challenges and those challenges will vary by industry.
2. Recognize that there isn't a one-size-fits-all approach.

3. Take the time to determine what is material to your company and where you can make the greatest impact.
4. Commit to being a thought leader around sustainability and communicating with employees from the bottom up about the company's path.
5. Understand the role and value your employees bring in helping to achieve the company's sustainability goals.



David Landis
President, Epic Metals



Justine Russo
Director of Sustainability and
Business Intelligence, PITT OHIO

"Planet or profit. People or profit. Making a difference or making a living. These are all false choices. If you remember nothing else today from my talk, I hope you will remember that when confronted with seemingly binary choices, there is always a third way. And that's where the real innovation happens. It just requires that we think differently."

Laura Asiala

Senior Director of Business Engagement, The Council of the Great Lakes Region and Senior Fellow, PYXERA Global





Joylette Portlock, PhD,
Executive Director,
Sustainable Pittsburgh

Thoughts on Environmental Justice

In her keynote, Joylette Portlock, Executive Director of Sustainable Pittsburgh, shared her insights on the region and the way forward.

“Collaboration is a key strength of our region and something we all need to lean into. Collaboration is certainly how we accomplish our work at Sustainable Pittsburgh. It is necessary.

According to the EPA, the definition of environmental justice or achieving environmental justice is when everyone enjoys the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards. It’s also about having equal access to the decision-making table. Pennsylvania’s definition of an environmental justice community is one where 20 percent or more of the people live in poverty and/or 30 percent or more of the community is a minority population.

Environmental justice communities often have fewer resources and are less able to deal with environmental hazards and climate change. What does that look like? It’s increased susceptibility to damages after flooding. It’s poor housing stock that leads to mold growth. And it’s an exacerbation of disparities around health impacts like asthma and respiratory illness that result from poor air quality.

We need to recognize that the equity conversation is not actually separate from the economic conversation is not actually separate from the environmental conversation. That’s one of the key lessons that we are all now taking to heart. At Sustainable Pittsburgh, we are working on a lot of collaborative projects, one of which is centered around regionalizing the UN SDG framework with a number of partners. That helps enforce the concept again that these subjects – environment, equity, economy – are intersectional. It takes folks not just working in the environment or equity spaces, but also having people at the table from communities, organizations, local government and the business sector. We need to be able to have these cross-sector conversations about what we need to do so that we can generate the best solutions and move forward together.”



SPOTLIGHT ON: Environmental Defense Fund's Climate Corps

An innovative fellowship program, the Environmental Defense Fund's Climate Corps cultivates the next generation of sustainability professionals united to advance climate solutions. It trains graduate students called fellows and pairs them with companies, public institutions and cities determined to meet their climate and energy goals. These fellows spend summers designing and implementing new tools and practices to reduce energy consumption, procure renewable energy and set carbon reduction targets, while engaging customers, employees and suppliers in achieving sustainability goals. Since 2008, more than 1,100 fellows have been placed in more than 500 organizations in the U.S. and China. They've helped identify energy savings worth more than \$1.6 billion, the equivalent of more than 2.2 million metric tons in carbon emissions.

If you are interested in hosting a fellow, please visit <https://business.edf.org/categories/climate-corps/>.



"There are a number of reasons why I got involved. First and foremost, I decided that I want to use my career to mitigate the effects of climate change and build our collective resilience."

Jeff Scanlon

2020 EDF Climate Corp Fellow and Candidate for Masters in Public Policy and Management, Carnegie Mellon University

"Environmental Equity" Featured Speakers

- **GRANT ERVIN**, Chief Resilience Officer and Assistant Director for the Department of City Planning, City of Pittsburgh
- **ZAHEEN HUSSAIN**, Public Policy Grad Student, Carnegie Mellon University and former Millvale Sustainability Coordinator and Director of Sustainability at New Sun Rising
- **GLENN GRAYSON, JR.**, Senior Program Manager for Neighborhood Development, Neighborhood Allies
- **JOYLETTE PORTLOCK**, Executive Director, Sustainable Pittsburgh
- **DAVID LANDIS**, President, EPIC Metals
- **JUSTINE RUSSO**, Director, Sustainability and Business Intelligence, PITT OHIO
- **LAURA ASIALA**, Senior Director of Business Engagement, The Council of the Great Lakes Region and Senior Fellow, PYXERA Global
- **JEFF SCANLON**, 2020 EDF Climate Corps Fellow, Candidate for Masters in Public Policy and Management, Carnegie Mellon University



THINC³⁰

Day 3: Economic Empowerment

Economic justice holds that economies will be more successful if they are fairer and achieve income equity by gender and race, enjoy equal opportunity for employment and credit, and sustain an overall environment that allows everyone to reach their full potential.

The third and final day addressed economic justice and empowerment and what it will take to rebuild a fair, inclusive economy, post-pandemic. The key question of the day was: How can we ensure everyone has a fair shot to participate – entrepreneurs, business owners, executives, professionals, inventors and innovators – regardless of gender, race, ethnicity or sexual orientation.



"I'm not going to come and tell you that I believe in your business. I want to show you that I believe in your business by giving you that first contract. I think that sends a signal to the market. If the public sector is investing in and putting taxpayer money on the table to support these businesses, then it only makes sense the private sector would do the same. So, the goal is not for the URA to be the end all, be all for these companies. It is for us to be a first mover and to send that strong market signal, that it is time to invest in work with minority- and women-owned businesses."

Diamonte Walker

Deputy Executive Director, Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh



Investing in Female and Minority Entrepreneurs

Female and minority entrepreneurs have long faced systematic business disadvantages ranging from lack of access to capital and lending to high interest rates to lack of mentoring networks – all of which have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

Fixing economic injustice requires resources, chiefly capital.

Fortunately, organizations like the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh (URA) and Riverside Center for Innovation are working to remove these barriers by providing financial and other resources, as well as the business network connections necessary to nurture and grow businesses.

"Riverside Center for Innovation's Diversity Business Resource Center has really made a life-changing impact positively for my company. They were able to introduce me to the URA, to the Center for Innovation at Pitt and other resources throughout Pittsburgh, including the Carnegie Library," said Christopher Spradley, President, CS Supplies.

In terms of financing, micro-loans provided by the URA have also been instrumental to success. They represent the kind of critical "first money in" that says "we believe in you and your business," and signal to the private sector that these companies are ripe for investment. Because public organizations like the URA can only do so much, the larger investment community needs to step up.

And not only banks. The private sector, overall, has a major role to play. Companies must move from articulating a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion and begin seriously looking at budgets and bottom lines to assess whether or not they are contributing to a healthy, diverse entrepreneurial ecosystem. The private sector has a tremendous opportunity to invest in and transform the vitality of women- and minority-owned businesses throughout the region.



Christopher Spradley
President, CS Supplies

Developing Diverse Executive Leadership

In Pittsburgh, African Americans represent only one percent of executive leadership in both the region's corporations and philanthropic organizations.

The Advanced Leadership Institute (TALI) is working to change that.

Launched in 2018, TALI's mission is to dramatically improve the presence of African Americans in the C-suite. It's vision: to create a more diverse, inclusive and prosperous community where executive leaders feel embraced and want to put down roots, raise their families and build their lives.

At TALI's core is the Executive Leadership Academy, a world-class executive development program in partnership with Carnegie Mellon University that offers the tools, exposure and training necessary to prepare African American professionals to ascend and contribute to their organizations – and the community – at the highest level. TALI's secret ingredient is its mentor-mentee approach where professionals receive one-on-one executive coaching and mentoring from leading executives, as well as the executive learning sessions with faculty from top academic institutions. The approach creates and solidifies important relationships meant to last.

"Those three pieces are what you need to be successful. You need the knowledge, the mentorship and the coaching on how you show up as a leader. The unexpected benefit – just as important – was the relationship my cohort built among one another. This was a group of 25 people who I am so blessed to have had in my life. We learned from one another, we laughed, we cried, we sang, you name it. We really became a TALI family. That type of connection is not easily created."

Steffanie Jasper

Senior Vice President, Senior Operational Risk Officer for Technology, Security and HR at PNC



Fostering a Diverse, Inclusive, Compassionate Workforce

Building diverse C-suites is important. Equally so is creating workplaces that are diverse, inclusive and compassionate. Covestro's own Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) lead Dina Clark led a discussion with her peers on how they're doing just that. While representing diverse organizations – corporate, academic and nonprofit – they all agreed that real change requires bringing people together, from the top-down and the bottom-up. It's having the hard conversations that move us forward, equitably and empathetically. Senior leadership needs to be at the table with those doing the work. At the same time, to sustain today's intentionality, the work must be codified with the proper tools and processes that build DEI into the fabric of our institutions.

Something else organizations need to be intentional about: allowing voices not traditionally heard to take center stage. Subject matter experts of different races, identities, genders and cultures exist. Their voices are real, present and valuable. Their stories need to be heard and amplified so people learn firsthand from those in the communities about the realities they're experiencing.



Betty Cruz

President and CEO, World Affairs Council of Pittsburgh

"I was doing immigrant inclusion work and... [serving in] the mayor's office centered my lens on the Black American experience to see that we need to confront the injustices that have happened for generations, for hundreds of years. When we solve for them, we solve for everyone else. It's better for everyone else. It's better for LGBTQ community members. It's better for women. It's better for people who are experiencing disabilities. Simply put, if we solve for Black Americans, we also improve lives for everyone else."

James Robert Martin II

U.S. Steel Dean of Engineering, University of Pittsburgh

"If you look at some of the disruptive changes in our past history, you'll see that if you want to change a region, a city, a community, a state or a nation, you have to change the learning patterns in your community. That's how you really undergo social change."



In Conversation

Jonathan Kersting of the Pittsburgh Technology Council talks with Jen Yosef, CEO of Mighty, on the region's tech landscape, diversity and inclusion, and talent retention.

Jonathan: What have been the upsides and the downsides of building and scaling Mighty here?

Jen: I'd say cloning is a challenge. People want to identify with people who look like them. Then, there's this tendency to follow companies that have some sort of trend going on. So, there's a double trend issue where people are investing in companies run by people who look like them and also are similar companies, rather than looking at companies in a much more holistic manner.

Jonathan: As a woman in the tech and start-up spaces, do you feel you're taken seriously?

Jen: That's the unfortunate part. I personally have had much more pushback. I understand this market inside out. I'm embedded in this space and yet I'm often unnecessarily challenged. That's a problem. I'm always up for constructive feedback, but when you're pushing back because I don't fit the mold of someone who should be running a real estate tech firm, that's an issue.

Jonathan: Let's talk more broadly about Pittsburgh's innovation landscape and where it needs to go. What are the top priorities, in your opinion, to ensure the region's vitality?

Jen: One of the biggest things is retention of talent. We're good at attracting talent. But, what kind of talent? Is Pittsburgh a place that is welcoming and retaining talented people with different backgrounds? This goes back to the issue of cloning. Are we just attracting the same type of person who is creating the same type of company? We obviously have a ton of positives in terms of the fact that companies like Facebook and Uber have strong offices here, but are we doing enough to ensure diverse talent stays here?



Jonathan: We need top talent – the best and brightest from everywhere coming here. How can we be more welcoming?

Jen: I wish there was a simple answer for that. It's going to take a collective effort, with different organizations and individuals doing their part and contributing. Each one of us needs to reach out to those students and individuals coming in. The community has a big role to play. So do companies. They need to do more to create inclusive spaces where people can thrive.

Jonathan: It's unacceptable that there are so few women in tech. Pittsburgh Technology Council is working to change that with a number of initiatives, including LAUNCH which targets high school girls. How do we inspire the next generation of women in tech?

Jen: I'm passionate about this. For me, a priority is giving back and one way I do that is by mentoring. Whether it's college students, high school students or middle school students, I'm involved in mentoring at all these levels. Again, I believe that each of us needs to play our part. We all need to contribute. That's the only way we can continue making Pittsburgh the great city it is.



“Economic Empowerment” Featured Speakers

- **JAMES MYERS, JR.**, Director of Community and Business Development, Riverside Center for Innovation
- **DIAMONTE WALKER, MBA**, Deputy Executive Director, Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh
- **TINA DANIELS**, Founder and CEO, Concrete Rose Construction, LLC
- **CHRISTOPHER SPRADLEY**, President, CS Supplies
- **SALLY MCCRADY**, Chair and President, PNC Foundation
- **EVAN FRAZIER**, Senior Vice President of Community Affairs, Highmark Health
- **NOLAND CHEUNG**, Chair of the Dentons Cohen and Grigsby Intellectual Property National Practice Group
- **STEFFANIE JASPER**, Senior Vice President, Senior Operational Risk Officer for Technology, Security and HR at PNC
- **BRIAN MOYER**, President and CEO, Nashville Technology Council
- **DAWNITA WILSON**, Vice President, Diversity and Inclusion, JBG Smith
- **BETTY CRUZ**, President and CEO, World Affairs Council of Pittsburgh
- **JAMES ROBERT MARTIN II**, U.S. Steel Dean of Engineering, University of Pittsburgh
- **JONATHAN KERSTING**, Vice President of Communications and Media, Pittsburgh Technology Council
- **JEN YOSEF**, CEO, Mighty

In Close

There is so much at stake in our world, in our country and in all of our communities. The THINC³⁰ community recognizes that truth. They are committed and engaged. Their work pushes our entire region forward. In the months and years ahead, we hope they continue to be the voice for those whose voices aren't always heard. To challenge the status quo. To bring the solutions. Working together, we can make the change happen.

For more information about THINC³⁰ and upcoming events, please visit www.covestro.us/thinc30-summit.

