

PITTSBURGH PRIMER

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A GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING PITTSBURGH'S PRESENT, POLITICS, AND PLAYGROUNDS

Rust Belt Rebound

You've heard the stories of Pittsburgh's steel-industry past. The city was the epicenter of steel manufacturing in the nation back then. Today, there's one mill left.

Modern-day Pittsburgh is known for its education and medicine ("eds and meds"), and a growing tech industry. Carnegie Mellon University and University of Pittsburgh are more than top-tier universities; they're driving the region's innovation economy. Uber and Ford are testing self-driving vehicles on Pittsburgh streets because CMU's robotics and AI departments pioneered much of the technology.

The popular language-learning app Duolingo is headquartered in Pittsburgh's East Liberty neighborhood, as are the local offices of Google.

As the region's largest employer – by a considerable margin – University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) is the U.S. Steel of modern Pittsburgh. If there's any doubt about that comparison, look to the UPMC logo that now sits at the top of the former U.S. Steel Tower building downtown.

While education, medication, and tech have contributed to the post-1980s Rust Belt Revitalization and helped the city rebound economically, there are negative consequences to that growth.

Economic inequality is growing in the region. Certain neighborhoods, such as the aforementioned East Liberty, was developed at the cost of displacing or pushing out mostly poor black residents move out while richer residents moved in. Lawrenceville is also losing its poorer residents. Pittsburgh has taken a few steps to address this problem, but some say the issue is only getting worse.

Politics and Elections

You may have heard about Pittsburgh area state Rep. candidates, and Democratic Socialists, Summer Lee and Sara Innamorato, but neither represents areas where most college students live.

With college students congregating in Oakland, Shadyside, South Side, and Downtown, most city needs (street light out, roads needs plowing, etc.) can be handled by contacting Pittsburgh City Councilors. For North Oakland and Shadyside residents, contact Erika Strassburger. For South Oakland and South Side, contact Bruce Kraus. Downtown residents can contact Daniel Lavelle.

Bill Peduto is the mayor of Pittsburgh and his office also fields questions and complaints.

If you have bones to pick about state politics (fracking, transportation, college tuition), state Reps. Dan Frankel, Harry Readshaw, or state Sen. Jay Costa can address those concerns. If national politics have you riled up, U.S. Rep. Mike Doyle is the man to call.

Robert Morris University (RMU) students are currently represented by Democratic U.S. Rep. Conor Lamb, who won a well-publicized special election in March. Because Pennsylvania threw out its old gerrymandered districts, RMU and other suburban students have an opportunity to participate in a competitive race between Lamb and Republican U.S. Rep Keith Rothfus.

Pennsylvanians must register at least 30 days before voting, and for the most part, must vote on Election Day. U.S. citizens can register at votespa.com and polling locations can be located at vote.org.

If voting at the polling place for first time, you must show some sort of identification. Drivers' license or student ID will suffice.

Go vote.

