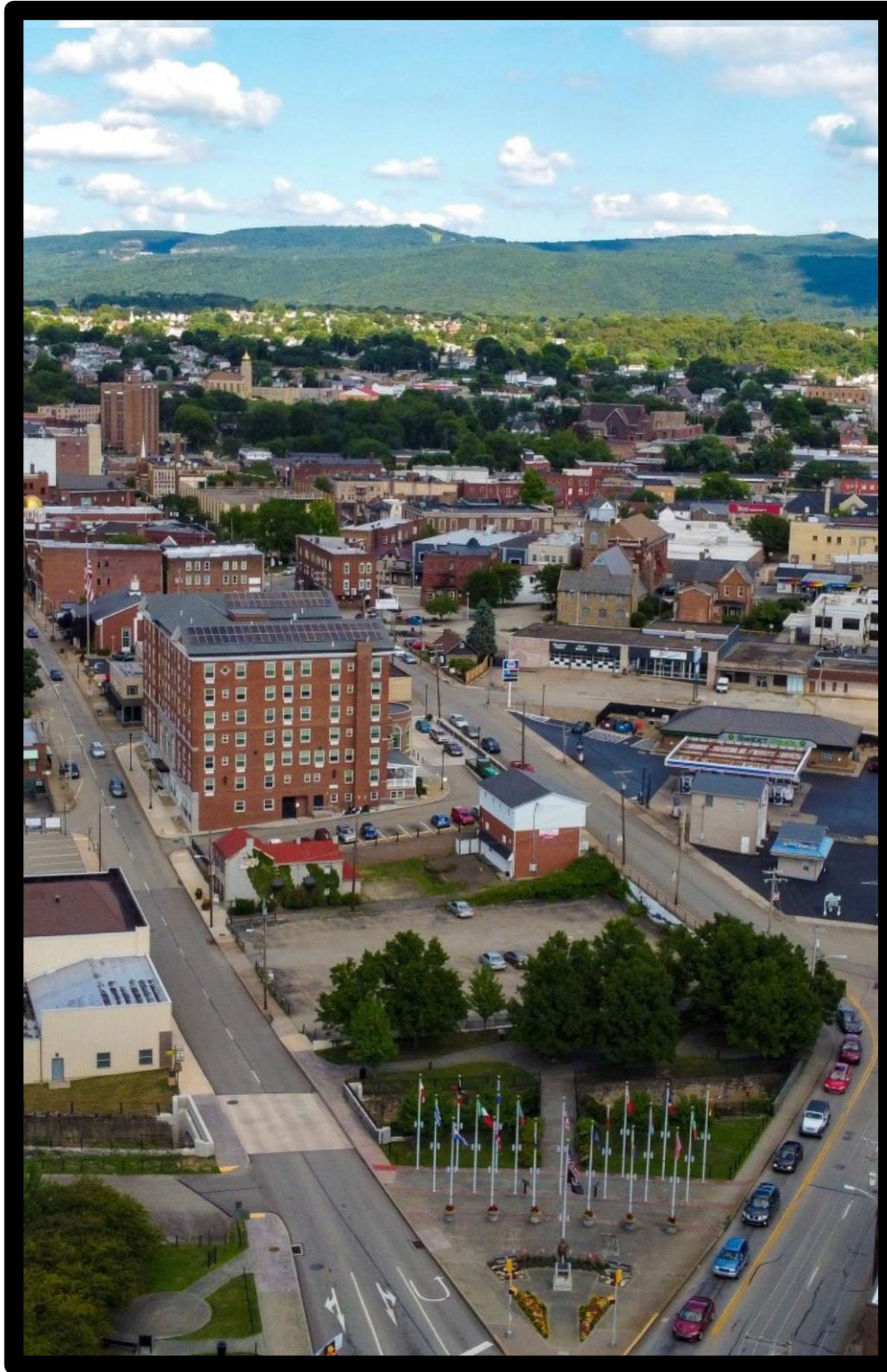


City Of Uniontown Comprehensive Plan

2026

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Photo Credit: Jeff Hughes

***Designing a dream city is easy;
rebuilding a living one takes imagination.
Jane Jacobs***

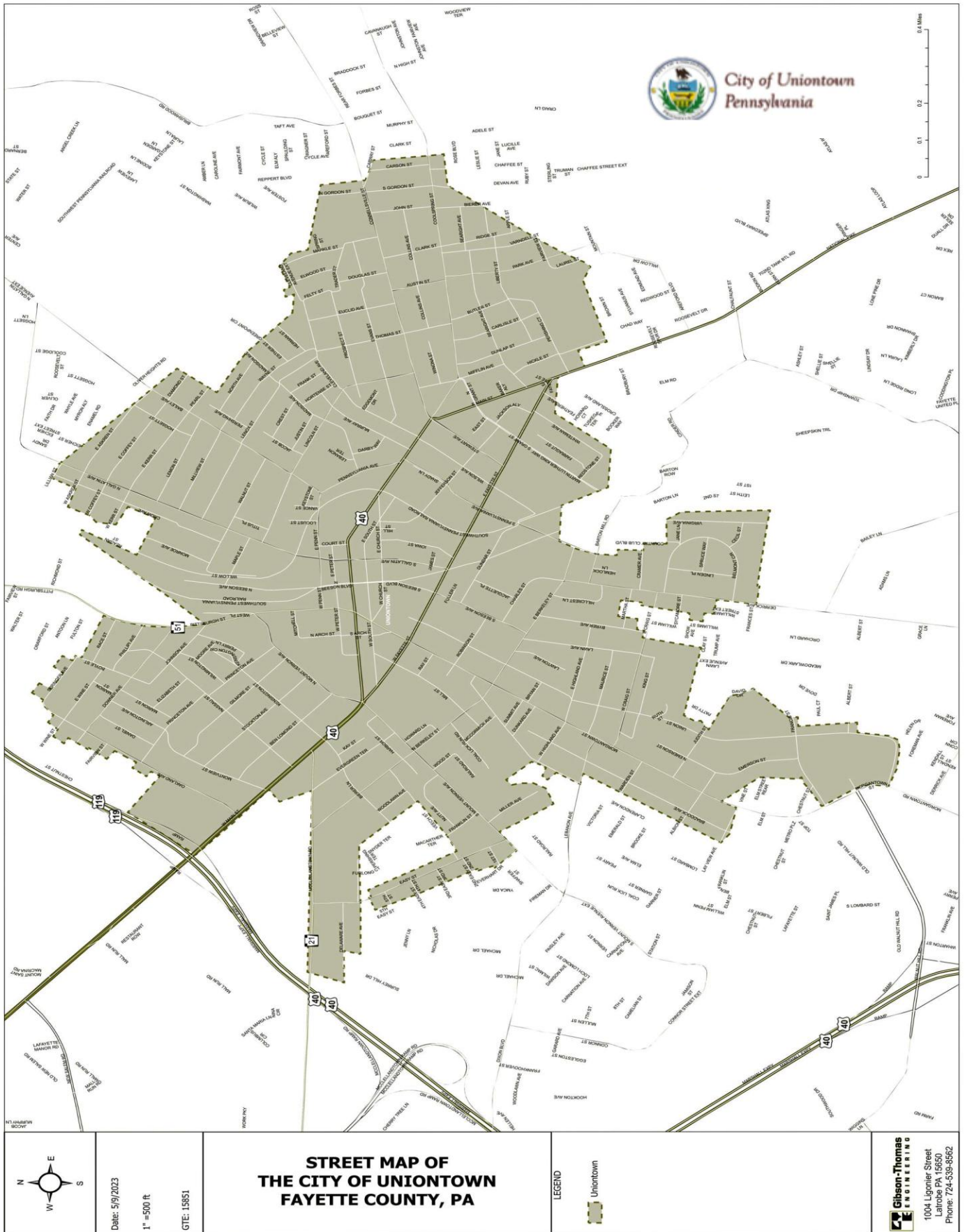


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Introduction

Comprehensive Plans have long been considered a required document for communities. They typically contain mostly historical and current data along with maps for land use, infrastructure, parks and recreation, economic conditions, etc.

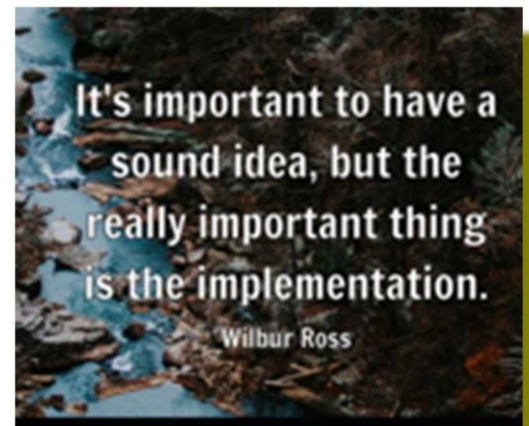
Basically, a litany of what was and is, with goals for the future but limited direction for achievement.

Della Rucker, AICP, CEcD, the Principal of Wise Economy Workshop, a consulting firm focused on community and economic development, put it this way; "I see a lot of plans that are 95 percent Encyclopedia, and 5 percent recommendations. You end up knowing a ton about the community's past and present . . . but you have very little guidance about the direction and priorities for the future."

Comprehensive Plans have evolved over the decades as communities have recognized the plan needs to be actionable and that the community must not just support the plan but be part of the implementation process.

Here is what the reader will find on the following pages. A plan based on interaction

with elected officials, community leaders, local businesses, the network of faith-based organizations as well as residents. It will present current concerns that may inhibit future economic and community growth; solutions and partnerships; and an implementation plan. In other words, the plan offers strategies to pivot as well as take advantage of opportunities and potential future funding unknown at the time the plan was crafted.



Uniontown Today

Founded on July 4, 1776, Uniontown's history is rich in important events and people who played a key role in the building of this Nation. The opulent housing stock in some of its oldest neighborhoods demonstrates how rich and prosperous the city once was. The economic downturn that affected Uniontown's prosperity occurred with the deindustrialization of the United States. With the closing of mines and the shutdown of practically all of the steel mills in the region, Uniontown suffered loss of jobs and revenue. Many moved to other areas across the Country to find work.

Population Changes Census Data

1990 - 12,034

2000 - 12,422

2010 - 10,372

Today, the City's leadership is working with its partners to reinvigorate the city and improve the quality of life for its residents. The City's vision and goals are focused on.

addressing current issues such as: blight; providing diverse housing stock to meet the needs of existing residents with the hope of also attracting new residents; improving parks and recreational amenities; upgrading the City's infrastructure; working with Central Business District property owners to attract more small businesses and services; becoming more business friendly to support existing businesses; and leveraging its Historic District designation to bring funding that will allow owners to restore the significant historic structures that tell the story of the city and its people.

The updating of the City's Comprehensive Plan is a key step in achieving this vision.

If you are in a position to make a difference in your town, let me provide you with some free resources. Look to the towns that are healthy, consider your town when it was faring better, and think about what you personally value.



What you will find, time and time again, is that the solutions are simple –

1. People want to feel a sense of pride in their place, so consistently improve conditions.
2. People want to have robust social connections, so make it easier to meet people.
3. People want to feel a sense of ownership in their community, so focus efforts on growing local ownership in real estate and commerce.

Nothing revolutionary, not even controversial, just incredibly obvious. Of course, this is how we go about improving our communities, how we increase a sense of attachment, combat apathy, and foster connections. The concepts are simple, but they cannot be done overnight, and you cannot hire someone to do them for you. Maybe that is why they aren't more popular.

At the end of the day, the steps to improve our towns are known to us all. Make things better consistently. Bring people together, make the surroundings nicer and foster local ownership. Shift your efforts in these three areas and apply effort every day. Because there is no improvement without effort, ever. Anyone that tells you differently is lying. Your community cannot improve without your community putting in the work to improve. Once you embrace this truth, you have all the answers you need to move forward.

Revitalize or Die - Jeff Seigler
jeff@revitalizeordie.com

Essential Action Steps for Success for the Revitalization of the City of Uniontown

The key to revitalizing the City of Uniontown is rooted in improving the physical appearance of the city. Blight is certainly the number one issue. Revitalization is a marathon and not a sprint. Potential residents, businesses and investors form an opinion at first sight. Therefore, beyond the significant blight, the physical care that is or is not taken within the City's downtown can eliminate those you wish to attract before you even know they have arrived.

- 1) Hire a full-time City Manager whose focus will be to implement the Comp Plan.
 - Acknowledging potential budget restrictions, explore a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Uniontown (RACU) to hire a shared director and a project manager.
- 2) Form a "team" of organizations that share the City's goals and have connections to the community on a level far beyond any city government, e.g., area churches, service organizations, social service agencies, schools, etc.
 - This team can play a role in handling situations, such as the daytime challenge of the homeless on the downtown streets, by offering alternative locations and services.
- 3) In partnership with the Uniontown Downtown Business District Authority (UDBDA), undertake the implementation of a Business Improvement District (BID). This will provide the funding to keep the downtown "clean and green." If a BID is not successful, consider discussing how businesses can contract together for services such as window washing, snow removal, sidewalk sweeping, etc. to realize an economy of scale.
- 4) Increase the staffing and capacity within the City's offices including code enforcement, parks and recreation, and the streets department.
 - Explore Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) Training Programs (see appendix).



OBJECTIVE: BLIGHT

Communities across the Country have been facing the challenges of blight for many years. In the last few decades, the issues of control, removal and elimination of blight have been at the forefront of municipal planning as well as state and federal legislation.

There are a variety of reasons for blight including: absentee landlords who either defer maintenance or never maintain their rental properties and then abandon them when they are no longer habitable; lack of resources and advocates for renters who can't afford to move so they live with the blight conditions; banks and mortgage company foreclosures with the institution never taking ownership of the property; and lack of stringent code enforcement due to capacity and/or hesitation to fine due to personal relationships with owners.

Other causes of blight are less blatant but equally devastating to neighborhoods such as elderly residents; financially challenged homeowners; mental or physical conditions; and hoarding.

Neighborhood blight and the presence of vacant and abandoned properties have profound negative impacts on afflicted communities. Blighted properties decrease surrounding property values, erode local housing markets, increase criminal activity, pose safety and health hazards, and reduce local tax revenue.

Even more devastating is the impact on the residents and community. It changes attitudes, lowers self-esteem, damages "pride in place" all of which brings with it complacency.

The City of Uniontown once boasted a bustling economy, and like many other towns in Southwestern Pennsylvania saw a significant decline when the region's major employers - coal mining and steel making - disappeared. Combining that with housing supply and demand imbalance, disinvestment led to the current overwhelming vacancy and deterioration.

Blight plays a significant role in all aspects of the City's economic vitality. Empty and abandoned storefronts, deteriorated houses and unkept vacant properties demonstrate to potential new employers, entrepreneurs, and future residents that Uniontown is not a place to live, work, play, raise a family or prosper.

Prioritizing control of blight becomes the top priority for Uniontown's future. Without improvement and revitalization, economic growth will be compromised.

Blight Strategy

Action Steps:

1) Dealing with blight in any community is a significant and sustained effort. Successful blight remediation requires strong partnerships across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors, as well as a coordinated strategy grounded in data and community engagement. In Uniontown, this work is being advanced through collaboration among key partners including the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Uniontown, Fayette County Redevelopment Authority and Land Bank, Community Action, Salvation Army, Habitat for Humanity, Senior Life, and other housing and social service providers.

Blight Planning and Inventory – Progress to Date

The City of Uniontown has completed a comprehensive Blight Reduction Plan (May 2025) that establishes a citywide, data-driven foundation for addressing blight.

. As part of this effort, a representative parcel-by-parcel inventory was conducted, surveying approximately 2,053 residential parcels, or 44 percent of the City's housing stock. Each parcel was evaluated using a standardized grading system (Good, Fair, Poor), allowing the City to objectively assess property conditions and identify patterns of deterioration, vacancy, and risk.

Properties identified as blighted include those that are dilapidated, abandoned, severely deteriorated, or vacant and that pose risks to public health, safety, and neighborhood stability. The inventory revealed that while the majority of surveyed parcels are in good condition, approximately 36 percent fall into Fair or Poor categories, with concentrations of severe blight closely aligned with areas of lower income, higher vacancy, and absentee ownership.

The most
difficult thing is
the decision to
act,
the rest is
merely tenacity.
-Amelia Earhart

This completed inventory now serves as a practical implementation tool rather than a planning exercise. It informs:

- Targeted code enforcement and compliance strategies
- Prioritization of rehabilitation versus demolition
- Identification of clusters suitable for redevelopment or land assembly
- Outreach to owners with multiple Fair or Poor-rated properties
- Strategic deployment of public funding and incentives

In addition, the inventory and supporting analysis identify developable vacant parcels, ownership patterns, tax delinquency trends, and code violation history—providing a comprehensive picture of both challenges and opportunities for reinvestment.

Technology, Monitoring, and Coordination

To support ongoing implementation, the City has invested in the iWorQ property management and code enforcement platform, which allows real-time tracking of parcel conditions, violations, inspections, and outcomes. This system enables continuous updates to the blight inventory, supports performance monitoring, and ensures that progress can be measured and adjusted over time.

The city has also formalized a Blight Task Force, composed of municipal staff, redevelopment professionals, housing partners, and community stakeholders. This group has guided plan development and is positioned to continue meeting on a regular basis to oversee implementation, coordinate partnerships, and recommend priority actions.

Funding and Implementation Strategy

Uniontown has moved beyond the planning phase and is now focused on implementation and resource alignment. Blight remediation activities will continue to be supported through a combination of local, county, state, and federal resources. Key funding tools include Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, HOME Investment Partnership funds, Local Share Account (County and Statewide), PHARE housing programs, demolition funds, and targeted redevelopment and brownfields programs.

Moving forward, the city should:

- Align annual CDBG and housing investments with priority areas identified in the blight inventory.
- Establish or expand a dedicated Blight Fund to support demolition, stabilization, and gap financing.
- Coordinate closely with the Fayette County Redevelopment Authority and Land Bank to return vacant and abandoned properties to productive use.

- Leverage nonprofit and private-sector partners to expand rehabilitation capacity, particularly for owner-occupied and workforce housing.

Next Steps and Recommendations

With the Blight Reduction Plan complete, the City's focus should shift to sustained execution. Recommended next steps include:

- Completing the parcel inventory for remaining properties to establish a full citywide baseline
- Formalizing a prioritization framework for enforcement, acquisition, and demolition decisions
- Expanding outreach to high-impact property owners with multiple distressed parcels
- Continuing regular meetings of the Blight Task Force to guide implementation and evaluate outcomes.
- Integrating blight remediation goals with broader housing, economic development, and neighborhood revitalization strategies outlined in this Comprehensive Plan

Through continued coordination, strategic investment, and use of data-driven tools, Uniontown is well-positioned to reduce blight, stabilize neighborhoods, and support long-term reinvestment and community growth.

2) Funding

The City of Uniontown was previously awarded **\$25,000 through Pennsylvania's Blight Remediation Program** for development of a comprehensive blight plan. That funding has been fully utilized to support the initial planning and inventory work necessary for a city-wide assessment of blight conditions (see previous planning deliverables).

Now that the basic planning work is complete, the next phase requires **expanded funding resources to implement remediation, demolition, rehabilitation, and redevelopment initiatives**. To support this broader effort, the City should pursue the following coordinated funding strategy:

Federal Appropriations and Congressional Support

In addition to state and local funding sources, the City of Uniontown is actively pursuing federal Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) to support blight remediation and neighborhood revitalization efforts. For the FY2026 federal appropriations cycle, a blight-related project submitted to Senator John Fetterman's office was advanced to the next round of review and submitted to the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee for consideration.

Advancement by the Senator represents a significant milestone in the federal funding process and reflects recognition of the City's readiness, documented need, and strategic approach to blight remediation. While advancement does not guarantee final award, it positions Uniontown competitively as the appropriations process continues. The city will remain engaged with federal partners and prepared to respond to any additional information requests as funding decisions are finalized.

3) Increase in Enforcement Staff

Consider partnering with adjacent municipalities (North Union and South Union Townships) and share a Code Enforcement Officers Team. Outsource to a code enforcement provider which offers an arm's length distance from enforcement. This removes the issue of enforcement on family members or friends.

Explore developing a neighborhood ambassador program. Local Share Account (LSA) funding could be used to institute community partnerships and match potential for support from foundations.

Here is how the City of Syracuse established its program:

"The City of Syracuse used a grant to establish a community ambassador program that pays and trains residents to serve in a leadership capacity in their neighborhoods for code enforcement and housing related issues."

4) Zoning Ordinance

Review and update the City's Zoning Ordinance to ensure it supports the Comprehensive Plan's land use, redevelopment, and neighborhood revitalization goals. Separately, evaluate the City's property maintenance regulations and code enforcement procedures to strengthen the City's ability to address deteriorated structures, nuisance properties, and unsafe building conditions. This may include adopting or updating a Property Maintenance Code, such as the International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC), and coordinating enforcement with the Pennsylvania Uniform Construction Code (UCC) where applicable.

The City's zoning regulations, property maintenance requirements, and related development regulations should be reviewed and consolidated into organized, user-friendly documents. While zoning establishes standards for land use and development, property maintenance and building codes provide the primary mechanisms for addressing deteriorated structures and blighted properties. A coordinated review of these regulations will improve administration, increase transparency for property owners and developers, and provide City staff with clearer enforcement tools to support neighborhood revitalization efforts.

Hire a consultant to review the existing code and make recommendations for edits, additions and removal in cases where the code language is no longer appropriate.

The Pennsylvania Neighborhood Blight Reclamation and Revitalization Act provides many progressive tools to control blight. Code enforcement officers, the City Council, the Solicitor, and Judges engaged with the enforcement process and other partners should become familiar with these tools. (See Appendix II for a document regarding the contents of the Act.)

A Vacant Building Registration program provides valuable, real-time information for both the city and the community. By requiring owners to register vacant properties, the City gains accurate data on ownership, building conditions, and duration of vacancy—information that is critical for code enforcement, public safety, planning, and redevelopment efforts.

The program also generates dedicated revenue that can be reinvested directly into increased enforcement capacity, including inspection staff, compliance monitoring, and targeted follow-up. This creates a self-supporting system where problem properties help fund the resources needed to address them.

More importantly, consistent enforcement of the Vacant Building Ordinance changes behavior. Registration fees, escalating penalties, and regular oversight incentivize owners to either maintain, rehabilitate, sell, or redevelop their buildings rather than allowing them to sit idle. Overtime, this reduces blight, improves neighborhood stability, protects surrounding property values, and supports broader economic development goals.

In short, Vacant Building Registration is not just a regulatory tool—it is a proactive strategy that combines data, accountability, and reinvestment to move properties back into productive use.

Partnership with the Redevelopment Authority — Landlord Registration Program

The City of Uniontown has advanced collaborative efforts with the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Uniontown (RACU) to support the administration and enforcement of the Landlord/Rental License program. The Redevelopment Authority serves as a key partner in managing rental property registration and compliance, providing tools and resources for landlords to register rental units and comply with local requirements. Through the Authority's online portal, rental property owners can register new properties, manage existing registrations, and submit necessary documentation, helping to streamline the City's rental licensing process.

Uniontown Redevelopment Authority

The Landlord/Rental Registration initiative promotes safer, healthier housing conditions by ensuring that rental properties meet established standards for maintenance and habitability. By centralizing registration through RACU, the City has strengthened oversight of rental housing stock, improved record-keeping, and helped educate property owners on their responsibilities.

Uniontown Redevelopment Authority

This ongoing partnership demonstrates the City's commitment to proactive property management and community development. Continued support for the program enhances the City's ability to address issues related to aging buildings, absentee ownership, and housing quality—ultimately contributing to more stable and vibrant neighborhoods.

Funding to Support Code Enforcement and Revitalization:

Potential blight control uses with City's remaining American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding:

- Prepare grant programs for low to moderate income homeowners and landlords to fix code violations.
- Support ongoing compliance and administration of the City's existing rental registration, inspection, and licensing program by ensuring adequate staffing and enforcement capacity to complete required inspections, maintain program compliance, and deliver the services and resources promised through the program. Funding could also support targeted repair assistance initiatives and related program administration. Data and technology infrastructure improves efficiency of code enforcement programs, like parcel surveys, software platforms, and field equipment for inspectors.
- Code enforcement staff capacity and training programs.
- Resident collaboration with code enforcement, such as quarterly meetings, community tool sheds, clean-ups, and neighborhood walk throughs with code enforcement staff.
- Tenant support programs, including programs that help tenants bring claims against negligent landlords to secure critical repairs.

Resource: <https://housingalliancepa.org/wp-content/uploads/BlighttoBrightrevJune2016PrintFriendly.pdf>

***Mark Twain put it this way:
“We take stock of a city like we take stock of a man.
The clothes or appearance are the externals by which we judge.”***

5) Build Community Ownership

People tend to be more adamant about protecting and improving their neighborhood when they feel ownership of it. If they do not feel it belongs to them, there is rarely any interest.

Projects completed without meaningful community input or participation frequently struggle to achieve long-term success or sustainability, regardless of whether they are funded publicly or privately. When residents, business owners, and stakeholders are not actively involved in shaping improvements, there is often limited long-term buy-in, stewardship, or shared responsibility for maintaining those investments. Building community ownership through engagement, transparency, and participation helps create a stronger sense of pride, accountability, and long-term support for neighborhood revitalization efforts.

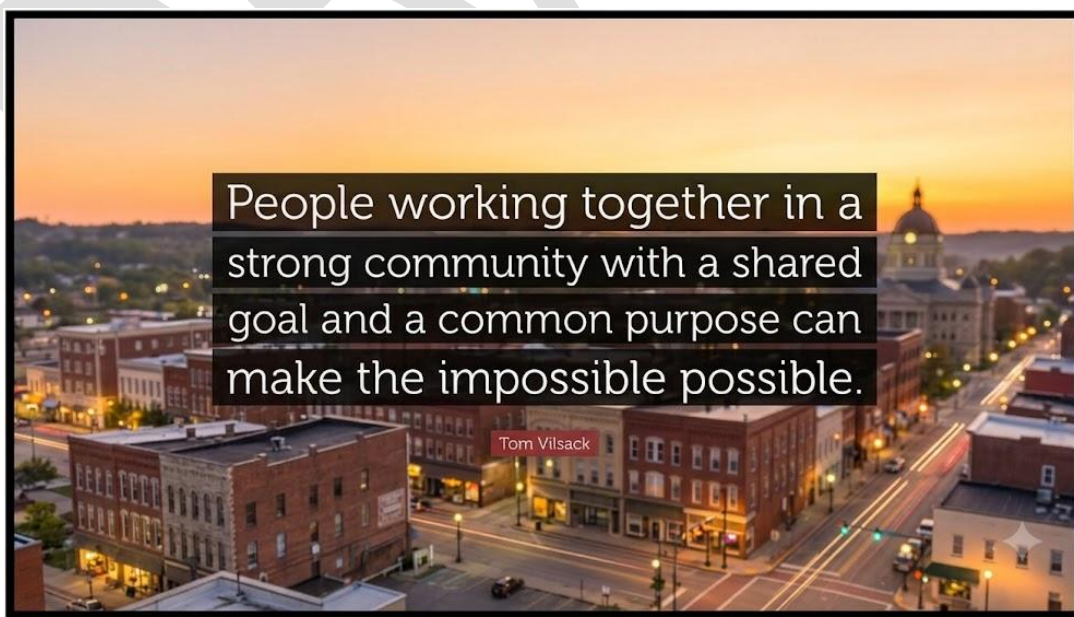
Not to be overlooked is the need to engage with students. If the City wants to keep the next generation of leaders within the community, the youth must learn to take ownership and see the value of civic engagement. Work with the school system to introduce these projects and encourage participation. Develop a presentation to be shared as a whole school program or brought into the classroom by teachers.

During the process of developing the updated Comprehensive Plan, the team met with several groups of people. One of the most interesting, having the potential to play a significant role in blight control, was the area churches. Uniontown is fortunate to have such an engaged group of people who know their parishioners, their conditions, their needs and their challenges. They are committed to helping and guiding at all levels. Engagement with these spiritual leaders should be a top priority in the fight to remove and curtail blight.

- Develop programs to encourage general property maintenance. The City can play a role in promoting basic property upkeep (painting, pressure washing, weeding, etc.) as well as assisting persons who are unable to complete this work themselves due to physical and/or financial limitations.
- Church leadership can certainly provide insight into residents' personal situations.
- Partnering with the Uniontown School District, the Accelerated Rehabilitate Disposition Program (ARD), Adult/Youth probation as well as Rotary, Lions, Elks organizations to provide labor for minor maintenance in identified areas of need (weeding, painting projects, litter removal). While this may produce a Union grievance, the city solicitor should work with the Union representative to overcome this roadblock and gain their support.

- Just like the “Adopt a Highway” program, an “Adopt a Block” program can bring individuals, families or a cluster from the neighborhood who can take it on throughout the year. This delivers the next level of ownership which is the ultimate goal and needed to solve blight.
- Creating a “community tools” program providing basic maintenance equipment for residents’ use at reduced fee (i.e., pressure washer, ladders, painting utensils, lawn care tools, etc.)
- Connecting residents in need with volunteers. This is something in which the churches could take the lead and may already have volunteers in place.
- The program could be launched through a Neighborhood competition. Again, the churches can play a role providing information via their bulletins and newsletters about upcoming clean-ups, training, etc. Funders who typically support this work with either funds or materials include Lowes, Home Depot, Walmart, 84 Lumber, and Target. Local businesses should not be overlooked.

Additional information on addressing blight including funding sources, can be found in Appendix I.







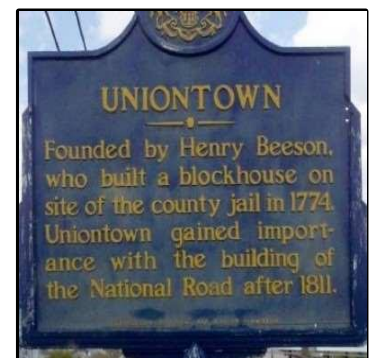
Great cities are not built through a single project or moment, but through steady investment, community pride, and a shared commitment to progress over time.¶

Communities move forward when progress is continuous, collaborative, and rooted in local pride.¶



There are multiple reasons why the conservation and restoration of historic buildings is important.

- They are existing symbols of a community's history and culture.
- They offer unique character and value to a business center or residential district.
- Preservation of historic buildings helps the local economy, positions a community to attract heritage tourism and enhances a sense of pride in place for residents.
- Historic buildings are constructed with high quality, enduring materials and beautifully designed.
- Many smaller businesses (restaurants, pubs, bookstores) prefer interesting unique and historic buildings.
- Historic preservation conserves resources, reduces waste, and saves money through the reuse of existing buildings rather than tearing down and building anew.



Uniontown is fortunate to have a nationally designated downtown historic district of 113 contributing buildings and one contributing site in its central business district. The majority of the historic buildings were built between 1881 and 1932 and 22 dates between 1811 and 1860. Uniontown's downtown was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1989, with a boundary increase in 2003.

Notable buildings in the historic district include: The Fayette Bank Building (1902), Thompson-Ruby Building (1900), Highland House (1890), State Music Hall (1922), Exchange Hotel (1891), Gallatin Apartments (1929), Gallatin Bank Building (1924), Federal Building (1930), Central School (1916), Fayette County Courthouse (1892), County Building (1927), and St. Peter's Episcopal (1884).



Given the great advantages to preserving these historic buildings attract business and tourists; it makes sense to recognize them and capitalize on their intrinsic appeal.

Action Steps:

1) Develop a historic plaque program. There are many good examples of programs throughout the country, but a long standing, successful model can be found in Pittsburgh, initiated by Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation (PHLF) in 1968. To date over 600 architecturally significant structures and landscapes have been designated throughout Allegheny County. This recognition does not protect a building from alteration or demolition, but it does identify significant structures that contribute to local heritage. The award of such a plaque not only physically marks a building as historically significant but also raises awareness of the value of such structures. <https://phlf.org/preservation/historic-plaque-program/>



2) Develop historic walking tours of downtown Uniontown. Once multiple plaques denote historic buildings in the downtown central business districts encourage walking tours of the district. A first step might be to work with the Fayette County Historical Society, the Fayette County Chamber of Commerce or Downtown Business District Authority (UDBDA) to develop a simple walking tour map. Increasing foot traffic not only familiarizes the public with downtown but also encourages stops in commercial shops along the way.

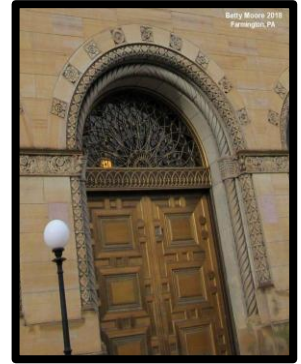


3) Offer public educational programs on the value of historic buildings. These programs can be offered by the Fayette Chamber of

Commerce, Redevelopment Authority of Uniontown, the National Road Heritage Corridor or other public entities. The value of such offerings would serve both to raise awareness and to inspire pride of place with more public understanding of the significance of downtown Uniontown.

Beyond the intrinsic and public value of historic buildings, there are advantages to restoration or the adaptive reuse of designated.

historic buildings. Known as the Historic Preservation Tax Credit (HPTC) it provides tax credits to qualified taxpayers completing the restoration of a qualified historic structure into an income producing property (www.dced.pa.gov/program/historic-preservation-tax-credit)



4) For broader outreach and to increase effective capacity, develop public educational programs on Historic Preservation Tax Credits with public entities such as the Downtown Business District Authority and the Redevelopment Authority of Uniontown. The statewide historic preservation program is directed by the Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission (PHMC) and offers advice, direction and programs related to all aspects of the preservation of historic resources throughout the Commonwealth. This organization can be reached at www.phmc.pa.gov and its site offers a multitude of information. There is also a regional director who can be contacted to assist in all aspects of a preservation program. At this time, it is William Callahan, Community Preservation Coordinator, Western Region, wcallahan@pa.gov.

Tourism is often noted as the second largest industry in Pennsylvania and heritage tourism has evolved over the last decade and these dollars are no longer being spent exclusively on tours of historic forts, battle sites or museums. Today's tourists are seeking experience in places with historic authenticity, places that offer



shopping, dining, touring in communities that demonstrate pride in place, that welcome exploration with signage and walking tours, which recognize the value of the visitor in their shops and restaurants. Clean, attractive streets speak to residential pride in their community. Simple additions of attractive store signage, flowering pots, benches to rest in green-spaces and attractive lighting should be explored.

5) Highlight the downtown historic district on the City's web site and other public sites to attract heritage tourism and attract new residents.

Studies have shown that the shifting economy and demographics are encouraging people to redefine where they choose to live and authentic historic character is one of several factors they consider as an important community asset.
<https://pahistoricpreservation.com>

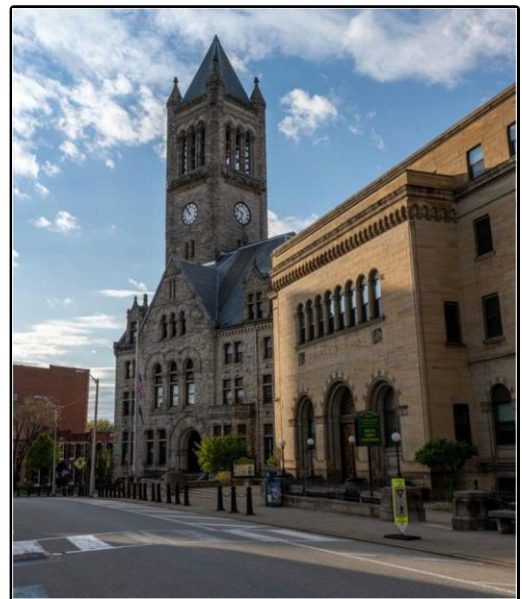
There is also an interesting phenomenon happening at present, as Baby Boomers begin retiring in significant numbers. Since this large generation was born, studies have followed their choices and, in retirement those who have the financial freedom to determine where they retire are increasingly seeking towns with historic character, enriching outdoor recreation, access to technology and amenities within walking distance.

Other studies show that the younger Millennial generation includes historic buildings in their vision of an ideal community. This generation, in sharp contrast to Baby Boomers, does not have a sense of employment loyalty. They recognize that they will certainly have many jobs and even different careers in their lifetime. Their priorities are to find a place where they want to live and then find their career path. The generation is attracted to community character, access to technology, primarily, and outdoor amenities such as trails.

<https://pahistoricpreservation.com/historic-preservation-outdoor-recreation-whole-greater-sum-parts/>

<https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/USA-Update/2015/0512/Millennial-movers-how-young-people-choose-where-to-live>

Another studied phenomenon is that, when residents discuss the value of their community, they do not distinguish between access to recreation, natural resources, and historic preservation. Those characteristics are definable assets. Thus, the preservation and investment in historic resources enhances the perceived quality of life and appeals as vacation and housing destinations.





OBJECTIVE: INFRASTRUCTURE

ROADS, STREETS, SIDEWALKS, & TRANSPORTATION

Acceptable and adequate infrastructure investment should be one of any community's top priorities. Throughout the United States, a combination of economic, administrative, and legislative challenges has led to under-maintained infrastructure. Uniontown faces many of these same difficulties, including rising costs, a limited tax base and multiple city-owned structures and recreational areas.

The city is working to meet its infrastructure needs and address the challenges. To that end, the City is exploring all potential funds available for maintenance and expansion. In partnership with the other infrastructure suppliers who provide residential services, a plan should be formulated to address system repairs, improvements, preventative maintenance and future expansions supporting the City's growth. The plan should guide the principles of growth, sustainability, and responsiveness, interconnecting all systems and efforts.

Infrastructure is crucial to both productivity and inclusiveness. Businesses depend on it to remain competitive, and the community depends on it to give equal opportunity and access to services for all residents. Local officials understand that investment in the City's infrastructure will also stimulate investment in private properties and businesses, contributing to the economic vitality of the area.

While the continuation of services and maintenance of infrastructure are essential, the city, in its current circumstance of aging roadways and utilities, can only do so much. Therefore, goals of this comprehensive plan are to identify and provide action items that can inform funders of needs and outcomes thus encouraging grant making and philanthropic investments. The city is committed to this effort.

Current Infrastructure Services and Agencies

Infrastructure in Uniontown is owned and operated by a complex web of public and private entities. All provide regional services beyond City limits.

Transit: Fayette County Coordinated Transportation (FACT)

Roadway Infrastructure: Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) – primarily Engineering District 12

Water: Pennsylvania American Water (PAW) – an investor-owned utility

Sewage: Greater Uniontown Joint Sewage Authority – service area includes North Union & South Union Townships and the City of Uniontown

Natural Gas: [Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania](#) and/or [Peoples Natural Gas](#) depending on mapped service areas within the City.

Electric: [West Penn Power](#)

Telecommunications / Broadband: Providers include [Comcast Xfinity](#), [Verizon](#), and [Omni Fiber](#) / Omni-Essentials in select areas.

Overall Strategy

Action steps:

- City infrastructure and private utilities will be regularly maintained and upgraded to ensure continued operation and service to the community.
- Design physical infrastructure to be compatible with built environment.
- Prioritize investment in infrastructure based on existing conditions and level of use as well as impacts on commercial activity and quality of life.
- Implement coordination for construction activity by City departments, PennDOT, Fayette County, the City of Uniontown, utility companies, and private developers.
- Create an interdepartmental geospatial inventory of City facilities and infrastructure.
- Develop an asset management plan for City facilities and infrastructure to guide future investment and maintenance.
- Re-establish an ongoing maintenance program that is funded by the City's operating budget.
- Provide adequate staffing and training for all levels of construction and maintenance operations.

Roads, Streets, Sidewalks and Transportation Corridors

The City of Uniontown manages a series of collector streets providing connections throughout the community to local streets primarily used to reach residential areas and to arterial roads beyond.

As an important crossroad, the main route around the city is the General George C. Marshall Parkway which includes US 40 and US 119. Traveling south, this route connects to PA 43 into West Virginia and north to PA 66 with access to the PA Turnpike at New Stanton. Terminating in the City are routes PA 21 and PA 51 that connect to Greene County and Pittsburgh, respectively. In recent years, PA 43 was completed heading north to Pittsburgh and opened as part of the Mon-Fayette Expressway.

Streets, Sidewalks and Parking

Essential to every city's prosperity and culture is its Main Street. Main Street tells a story of who we are, who we were, and how the past has shaped us. Uniontown's Main Street is at its historic core. Originally the National Road, now designated as Business US 40, the nation's first federally funded interstate highway, played a key role in the development and growth of the city.

The City of Uniontown Department of Public Works is responsible for general maintenance as well as improvements to the City streets and City-owned properties including parking garages and City parks. The department's ability to be proactive regarding this work is challenged by limited employees as well as aging equipment and resources. According to the Third-Class City Municipal Code, property owners are required to maintain the sidewalk area in front of their properties. Ensuring compliance is a code enforcement issue. The City needs to establish a program for working with the property owners to ensure this responsibility is met. Currently, the sidewalks are in varied conditions, resulting in potential for pedestrian injuries. Visually, sections of the city appear uncared for or abandoned. The message sent by this condition does not support the City's goal of attracting new businesses and residents.

The city owns and operates two parking garages located at South Street and East Penn Street. To maximize revenue from these garages for funding preventive maintenance, the City needs to improve and maintain the fee collection system. Metered parking is provided in a parking lot near the library on Jefferson Street. and for street parking along Main, South, Church, Peter Streets and Gallatin Ave.

The City does have an employee monitoring the meters and writing tickets. Enforcement on violation fee collections needs to be consistent. Again this is a needed revenue stream that the City can utilize to support its budget.

Transportation

In 1995, Fayette County established the Fayette Area Coordinated Transportation (FACT) system as a Shared Ride Program for the elderly across the County. Over the next seven years funding was earmarked and the program expanded into an urban transit operation. While bus transportation within the city limits appears adequate, there are limitations in being able to bring residents and visitors from outlying areas and tourist destinations into the City. Additional routes in those areas can bring more people into the City for shopping, dining and services. The City should engage in with the FACT director, as well as state legislators, regarding funding for service expansion.

Mobility Strategy

Action steps:

- Develop an interconnected transportation network that makes it convenient, routine, and feasible for all residents and visitors to walk, bike, and use transit.
- Adopt Complete Streets principles as official City policy ensuring Uniontown's streets are well-designed, interconnected, with access accommodations.
- Work to provide seamless bicycle and pedestrian linkages between neighboring municipalities.

Coordinate with Pennsylvania Department of Transportation to evaluate and modernize traffic signal timing and roadway operations along major corridors, state routes, and key intersections throughout the City. Priority attention should be given to congestion and turning movement issues at Five Corners, including left-turn back-ups from South Mt. Vernon Avenue onto Business Route 40.

- Increase the City's level of funding, effort and focus on trail planning, maintenance, and construction.
- Consider accommodation for pedestrians and cyclists in decisions concerning on-street parking.
- Advocate for the expansion of bus service and air travel to regional destinations and work with FACT to coordinate local bus service with improved intercity schedules.

Public Utilities: Water and Wastewater

The history of the City's waterworks dates back to 1859 with the incorporation of The Uniontown Gas and Water Company. In 1883, a new gravity system was implemented by the new owners, the Uniontown Water Company. This company existed until April 1927 when the Pennsylvania State Water Company purchased the works and continued through several mergers and is now Pennsylvania American Water.

Pennsylvania American Water (PAW) supplies the communities of the City of Uniontown as well as South Union Township, North Union Township, Menallen Township, and Dunbar Township. The sources of the water are the Youghiogheny and Monongahela Rivers. As a private company, PAW is responsible for all maintenance and improvements to the supply system. The City should maintain regular communication with PAW to allow for partnerships when improvements or new services are being installed within the city limits. This coordination can provide opportunities to realize an economy of scale for infrastructure projects.

Wastewater: Sewage Authority

Built in the early 1900's and developed through the 1950's, the City of Uniontown owned, operated, and maintained their sewer system until the early 1990's. Three entities, who at that time were utilizing the plant, formed the Greater Uniontown Joint Sewage Authority.

Wastewater treatment plants are designed to protect public health and the environment through the Clean Water Act. Informed communities understand that their behaviors and contributions support water quality efforts. As consumers learn to conserve water, the capacity of the facilities that perform treatment is greatly enhanced. While water conservation goes a long way toward an efficient system, the consumer should also be educated in the proper disposal of hazardous waste.

As with its water supplier, the City should maintain regular communication with the Sewage Authority to allow for partnerships when improvements or new services are being installed within the City limits. This coordination can provide opportunities to realize an economy to support infrastructure projects.

Water System: Resources & Stormwater Management Strategy

Action steps:

- Uniontown will take a leadership role in long-term, collaborative, and inter-municipal approaches to protect the watershed.
- Collaborate with community-based water-monitoring groups and other municipalities to implement a watershed restoration and protection plan.
- Partner with bordering municipalities to develop a long-term dredging strategy for appropriate City waterways.
- Prioritize areas that need to be protected from development and to serve as buffers, to absorb stormwater run-off, filter pollutants, and preserve wildlife habitats.
- Work to educate the public about watershed-protection measures. Provide illustrations of how daily choices and routines affect water quality.
- Preserve green space and other natural systems that enhance water quality and quantity.
- Discourage new construction of impervious surfaces and encourage conversion of existing impervious surfaces into pervious surfaces or landscaping.
- Collaborate with Fayette County to explore allowing appropriate gray water and rainwater use in construction.

Telecommunication Systems

As a worldwide pandemic prompted millions of people to switch to work and school at home options, municipalities found themselves tested as they dealt with the unprecedented network spikes in usage.

Within the City limits, most residents have access to the Internet, DSL, Cable, and Satellite. There has been a countywide effort to set up hotspots to be certain those needing access to the internet were able to sign in at no cost. However, the City's internet access can be spotty. A partnership with contiguous communities to improve this essential service, which is a keystone to future business growth, is imperative.

The City also boasts the first radio station to sign on air in all of Fayette County. Using the call sign, WMBS, the station went live on July 15, 1937, and has remained a phenomenally successful AM station to the present day. Area residents are able to stay informed of local happenings by tuning into 590 AM and 101.1 FM, Facebook, and Channel 77 – Fayette TV.



OBJECTIVE: PARKS & RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

A focus on improving and enhancing existing parks and recreational opportunities and developing the Sheepskin Trail are key strategies for the city. Parks and recreational opportunities not only improve the quality of residents by encouraging active, healthy lifestyles, but also attract significant tourism dollars.

In the last 20 years, there has been a shift in priorities for many seeking a work/life balance. Adding to that, the COVID pandemic required more flexibility in jobs and increased the numbers of people working remotely. For those reasons, people are looking for where they want to live and play, a close work location has become secondary. Uniontown is located within a 45-minute drive to multiple popular recreational amenities.

In Pennsylvania, tourism is the second largest industry and outdoor recreation accounted for a third of total leisure travel spending in the state. Total visitor spending is estimated at \$44.8 Billion with Pennsylvania hosting 208 million visitors annually, supporting more than 515,000 jobs, generating \$4.6 Billion annually in tax revenues (See Appendix II).

Beyond the economic and business generating impact of outdoor resources, parks are a major factor in the perception of a community's quality of life. Parks also provide gathering places for families and social groups and are free of charge.

Outdoor recreational opportunities provide health benefits, a sense of community, and allow for person-to-person interaction.

Research has shown that homes adjacent to parks can result in up to a 20% increase in home value. Residences near larger parks used for biking and hiking can realize up to 32% average increase in home value.

It is, however, essential that these parks be well- maintained and safe. Parks perceived as unsafe or poorly maintained have a detrimental effect on the community.

Another study which compared 300 cities noted that neighborhoods with more green space have lower crime rates.

<https://theconversation.com/can-parks-help-cities-fight-crime-118322>

Fewer non-violent crimes: burglaries, auto theft, property crimes, and violent crimes such as murder and armed robbery, were less common in greener neighborhoods.

There are several reasons for this phenomenon: utilizing parks and green spaces put more “eyes” on the street. Gatherings in green spaces promote neighborhood connections. Amenities such as ballfields encourage involvement of both children and adults. But the parks and green spaces need to be cared for and maintained as decaying infrastructure encourages crime.

Strategy #1: Improve public perception of five major public parks by repairing equipment, cleaning up trash, and establishing a regular maintenance plan.

NOTE: In consultation with the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), information was provided regarding three city parks which were developed with Land & Water Conservation Fund dollars in the early 60s.?? The requirement, in perpetuity, is for these parks to be open and accessible to the public. The DCNR continues to inspect these parks on an annual basis. Here is a specific list of the parks and specific observations and needs for each.

Bailey Park - Baily Park, located in the South Side Neighborhood directly along Sheepskin Trail. The park has been improved with both DCNR funding and private donations and the City has additional work planned but maintenance continues to be its primary downfall. Preliminary discussion identified the need for a press box, outfield fence, playground equipment, benches, resurfacing of two (2) tennis courts for pickleball, and repair of the stadium seating.

Grant Street Park: Grant Street, located in East End Neighborhood, needs an overall rehabilitation to include ADA Accessible bathrooms, replace courtside seating benches, adding other benches, replace/repair playground equipment, paint the light poles and add protective coating, paint lines of the basketball courts, upgrade the water fountain and repair cracks on the courts.

Coal Lick Run Park - Coal Lick Park, funded and built in the 70s-80s, is located along the Rotary Walk. The park pavilion and block building need to be repaired as well as

the addition of amenities, e.g., picnic tables, and benches. The playground equipment is antiquated and needs to be replaced with new equipment that meets current safety standards. The Rotary Walk also passes through this park. It is important that any overgrowth is removed to enable better sight lines, etc. A solid maintenance plan is key.

Marshall Park: Marshall Park is located in the downtown area on Jefferson and South Streets. Originally designed as a passive park, it provided respite from the surrounding city. There are no playground equipment or swings, however, there are picnic tables, pavilions, and hard vinyl benches throughout the park. Conceptual plans for this park include a stake, walkways, seating, and mobile vending spaces to accommodate special events as well as daily use.

Lincoln View Playground – e former playground site is overgrown and no longer functions as a park, with no remaining recreational equipment on the property. As a result, the site does not currently serve a public use and has fallen into disrepair.

The property is owned by the Redevelopment Authority, which does not have the resources to advance improvements or redevelopment at this time. Completing a Master Plan would help evaluate feasible options for the site, including reuse for residential development, restoration as a recreational space, or other community-serving purposes. A plan would also help clarify constraints, potential marketability, and next steps.

Given current conditions and funding limitations, the property should be actively marketed to identify potential buyers or partners capable of returning the site to productive use, whether through residential development or recreational investment.

Action Steps:

- Support and continue implementation of the City's established Parks and Recreation Board to help guide park planning, programming, maintenance priorities, community engagement, and long-term recreational improvements. Maintain and routinely repair playground equipment and recreational amenities within the City's public parks to ensure safe and functional recreational spaces. In conjunction with the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Uniontown, the City's Parks and Recreation Commission should outline a schedule for park clean ups. One source of assistance in this effort would be AmeriCorps, other sources might include Boy/Girl Scout troops, and / or local high school sports teams.
- Application can also be made to the AmeriCorps program. Currently, sites can apply to 900-hour, 450 hour and 300-hour members.

Each spring, AmeriCorps opens the application period, and host sites may apply to

host a fulltime member that could serve 1700 or 1200 hours.

Each position requires a cash match from the host site, and it varies based upon the number of hours being served. All members receive a bi-weekly stipend and an education award upon successful completion of service hours. Members who serve full time are eligible for healthcare and (possibly) childcare.

Host site applications are here: <https://www.pmsc.org/apply-to-be-a-host-site/>.

- Other potential assistance for park clean-up and maintenance would be neighborhood volunteers who adopt a park and potentially sponsor programming. The effort of pulling together local residents, young and old, creates ownership and pride in place. It often results in these volunteers taking long-term care of the park.
- Additional resources are needed to supplement City funds for the restoration and clean-up of the City's key parks. Explore the concept of Parks and Recreation Foundation. Explore philanthropic organizations and residents who may have a generational interest in a particular City Park.

Strategy #2 Implement and maintain standardized signage for the major public parks.

Action Steps:

- Continue implementation of the City's adopted park signage standards across all City-owned parks and recreational facilities to improve visibility, branding, wayfinding, and consistency.
- identify and prioritize parks where signage upgrades, replacements, or additional wayfinding signage are still needed.
- explore opportunities for community engagement, sponsorships, or public art partnerships to enhance park identity and support future signage improvements.
- Encourage partnerships with local businesses, organizations, and residents to assist with sponsorship or underwriting opportunities for park signage and beautification initiatives.

Strategy #3 List all public parks on the City's web site.

Action Step:

- The web site should have a section devoted to parks and recreation and should include high quality photos of each park, specific directions, amenities to be found in each park, and hours of operation.

Strategy #4 Enliven and energize the parks.

Action Steps:

- Encourage community connectivity through engaging programs held in City parks.
- Host movies in the parks.
- Sounds of Summer Concert series (high school performances).
- " Play for All" Playground Projects – partner with Uniontown Hospital – WVU Medicine.
- Develop a Pickleball area in one of the parks, as it is a fast-growing and extremely popular sport.
- Organized walks, runs and other similar public events.

Strategy #5 Restore and Repurpose *Lincoln View Park*.

Action Steps:

- Host a meeting of neighborhoods contiguous and near Lincoln View Park for the purpose of soliciting ideas for the restoration and repurposing the park.
- Schedule Lemon Park Clean Up Days.

Strategy #6 Restore and Expand *Bailey Park*

Action Steps:

- City officials should formally communicate with a local citizen reportedly interested in funding the revitalization of Bailey Park.
- Upgrade playground equipment to ensure ADA accessibility.
- Through signage physically note the connection with the adjacent Sheepskin Trail to capitalize on the visitor traffic generated by the trail.

Strategy #7 Explore whether additional events can be held at *Grant Street Park*

Action Steps

- Grant Street Park is currently home to the City's summer basketball program.
- The playground equipment in this park is in good condition.

Strategy #8 Determine the best approach for *Coal Lick Run Park*

Action Steps:

- Involve the contiguous neighborhood in a discussion of **Coal Lick Run Park**, currently not being used with a deteriorating pavilion and bathrooms.
- Determine present use and neighborhood opinion of the park, particularly note safety concerns and evidence of crime.
- Determine from neighbors whether use of the park would increase with physical improvements of the park and its structures.

Strategy #9 Determine festivities in Marshall Park for the 250-birthday celebration.

Action Step:

- Convene a 250-birthday committee (connect with the Herald Standard as some employees have expressed interest in the effort) and determine how best to involve **Marshall Park** in the festivities.

Strategy #10 Continue to advocate for and encourage the completion of the Sheepskin Trail

The Sheepskin Trail, a 34-mile amenity currently under development will, once completed, connect Dunbar Township to Point Marion Borough, passing through Dunbar, Mount Braddock, Lemont Furnace, Uniontown, Hopwood, Fairchance, Smithfield, Cornish, Outcrop, Gans, Lake Lynn and Point Marion.

The Sheepskin Trail is widely considered as a “missing link” to nationally significant trail systems. To the north, it will link up with the Great Allegheny Passage (Pittsburgh to Cumberland, MD and via the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Towpath, onto Washington DC) and to the south it links to the Monongahela River Rail Trail system in West Virginia. **The Sheepskin Trail, even partially completed, is already an important asset to Uniontown, providing health and entertainment benefits to residents and attracting tourism dollars to the City’s businesses.** Once completed, this trail has the opportunity to become an extraordinary economic benefit generator as years of research on longer distance trails has already shown. (See Trail Town Guide in Appendix V)

Action Step:

The Sheepskin Trail offers a significant opportunity to introduce people to the community. Capitalize on this by developing a strategic signage program focused on this hiking/biking trail. Trail users need and expect signage to lead them to trail access areas, amenities and services as well as to describe the history and heritage of the region.

[https://gaptrail.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/2021-Great-Allegheny-Passage- Economic-Impact-Report-Spreads.pdf](https://gaptrail.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/2021-Great-Allegheny-Passage-Economic-Impact-Report-Spreads.pdf)

Footnote:

One of the most thoroughly researched bike trails in the country, largely located in Pennsylvania, is the Great Allegheny Passage running 134 miles from Pittsburgh to Cumberland, Maryland.

Multiple economic impact studies have been done on this trail demonstrating a growing impact each successive year.

The most recent study, conducted by Fourth Economy estimated \$121 million realized in annual economic impact in 2019, which exceeds the total cost of physical investment required to create this long-distance rail trail in the first place.



OBJECTIVE: PUBLIC RELATIONS, COMMUNICATION & MARKETING

A solid communications program can go a long way in making residents and outsiders aware of the reasons why someone should choose this community. It will not be easy, a paradigm shift never is, but it is essential in order for the City of Uniontown to realize its goal of revitalization.

Communication with citizens is a basic obligation of the government. Good public communication should be an integral part of achieving success in every City project.

Effective communication benefits citizens and helps the City meet goals in many ways:

- Communication encourages informed participation. Improving residents' attitude towards their community and ways they can themselves contribute to its success gives them ownership which is key to improvement.
- Communication builds community pride and satisfaction. The more citizens learn about City services, the better they understand how their tax dollars are used, and the better they feel about their government.
- Communication encourages growth, attracts good employees, and improves services. A good reputation is pivotal for attracting new residents, development, and entrepreneurs.

On July 4, 2026, the City of Uniontown will be celebrating its 250th anniversary. There is already a group of residents working on the historical aspects of the City. This will be an excellent time to launch a "Rediscover Uniontown" campaign. Beginning now, 2023, the City and its partners will be able to achieve some of the action steps contained in this plan including: hiring a city manager, having a UDBDA manager in place, and improving visual aspects of the streetscape. A committee should be formed immediately to begin creating a timeline and work plan as well as implementing the Public Relations and Marketing strategies. This committee should include a solid representation from downtown businesses, economic development partners, County representation, historical society members, Uniontown Library and local residents.

Action Steps:

1) First Impressions - If you were visiting Uniontown for the first time, what would you think?

Current community members' feelings are often skewed by being too familiar with the surroundings, as well as attitudes about certain places, property owners and past experiences. The City, in partnership with the City's Redevelopment Authority(RACU), should seek volunteers from different neighborhoods as well as those from the surrounding areas and ask them to complete a walking survey. The results will yield actionable information that can guide the City and its partners to improve visual obstacles, the first steps necessary to create a new attitude among its current population and potential new residents, businesses and developers (See Appendix for Sample Survey Tool).

2) Visual Marketing - Vacant storefronts in retail areas, dirty sidewalks, streets, dead trees, unplanted flowerpots, all impact first, and therefore, lasting impression.

In partnership with the City, the UDBDA Executive Director and property owners work to improve the streetscapes.

- Work with property owners to place pop-ups in empty first floor spaces. This can allow start up small businesses, home-based originally, to attract a broader audience. A pop-up agreement is for no less than 6 months to a year.
- If and when the UDBDA institutes a Business Improvement District (BID), services such as sidewalk snow removal, window washing, flowers, as well as group marketing and events to attract shoppers would be paid for by the monthly fees collected (See "Growing Small Business Opportunities" section). Volunteers from service clubs and the garden club can work with shop owners as well as individuals to launch seasonal cleanups at least three times a year. New business entrepreneurs and developers are not going to invest in a town that looks uncared for or abandoned.



3) Increase Online Presence

Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) and websites are the means by which most people get important information about their communities, new places, events and special offerings.

A section of the website should feature businesses and restaurants in the City and include links to their websites. Fresh content on social media can feature specific city businesses every few days. Find a community volunteer or work with local high school students willing to periodically update the City's website.

Provide a page that features available storefront and building stock including contact information.

List the locations of the City's recreational amenities. A video of someone riding the Sheepskin Trail from the City into South Union Township, children playing in a city park, etc. could be added to the website. Helping people imagine themselves in that area is a great marketing strategy.

The City's website link should be on partner websites, including Fay-Penn, Community Action, Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau, etc.

Hundreds of thousands of people visit Ohiopyle and the surrounding area annually. Many do not realize that there is a city less than 20 miles away. Encourage social media and website partnerships with Ohiopyle State Park as well as the outfitters, and destinations such as Fort Necessity National Park, Touchstone Center for Crafts, Kentuck Knob and Fallingwater.



**A CITY BUILT
FOR LOCALS WILL
ALWAYS ATTRACT NEW
VISITORS, BUT A CITY BUILT
FOR VISITORS MAY NEVER
ATTRACT NEW LOCALS.**



RorD



OBJECTIVE: SMALL BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

Like many small cities in the region, before the arrival of “the mall,” Uniontown’s Central Business District (CBD) was a bustling destination for shopping, dining and entertainment, as well as an active community gathering spot. Every service or item needed could be found there. The retail offerings were comprised of department stores like J C Penney, Montgomery Ward, GC Murphy as well as family owned and operated clothing, furniture, jewelry, and shoes businesses. In its heyday, there were five theaters in the City - a true sign of prosperity.

Today, there are fewer shops and restaurants in the City’s Central Business District (CBD).. However, the longstanding businesses that remain offer a diverse selection of home goods, clothing, jewelry and unique gifts. The restaurants and bakeries offer a broad selection of food that lends itself well to a “foodie” destination if marketed in that manner. These businesses are also all locally owned and operated, considered an important asset in the “buy local” surge across the country.

The City’s CBD is also a National Registry Historic District. Its historic buildings, some designed by famous architects, should be marketed as a destination which will increase interest and attract people. As a designated Business District Authority, the City has additional opportunities for improvement. The Central Business District Authority allows a Business Improvement District (BID) to provide similar programs that supplement municipal services through a similar “common fund.” The assessments paid by property owners are collected and managed by an authority board established to oversee the BID.

Business improvement districts (BIDs) are special service and assessment districts that typically cover territories as large as the downtown of a central city or as small as the commercial corridor of an outlying neighborhood. These organizations typically collect mandatory fees – assessments – from property owners within their areas to fund projects and provide services such as cleaning streets, providing security, installing streetscape improvements, and marketing the area. BIDs operate at a highly localized scale but, like many regional entities, they are a form of collective action that can cross jurisdictional boundaries. So, while they are rarely considered as a form of regionalism, they may have an overlooked role in cross- boundary governance. Furthermore, these cross-boundary BIDs are among the constellation of actors involved in governing American regions. In the context of this colloquium on American regionalism it is worth exploring the experience of BIDs, and their cross-boundary variants, and reflect on their place in urban and regional development. By Richardson Dilworth (Drexel University)



Action Steps:

Key to revitalizing the CBD is a strong partnership between the City and the Uniontown Downtown Business District Authority (UBDBA). It is also important that the UBDBA be regularly engaged with the small business owners.

This relationship must begin by hiring an executive director or Main Street manager. Many of the action steps below would fall to that manager.

1) Ensure Existing Businesses Succeed and Grow Strategies:

- Engage with St. Vincent Small Business Development Center requesting they offer programming and training on growing a small business.
- Develop downtown walking tours of the historic district to familiarize more people with downtown businesses and instill "Pride in Place."
- Host larger scale downtown events including sidewalk sales and children's activities for families.

2) Fill Vacant or Underutilized Commercial Buildings Strategies:

- Engage with St. Vincent Small Business Development Center requesting they offer programming and training on writing business plans, launching start-ups, securing financing, etc.
- Support the community, municipality, and current property owners by marketing all businesses for sale/lease in the central business district on the City's web site and through all other available means.
- Provide opportunities for new businesses and merchants seeking additional locations to readily find available space in Uniontown.
- Encourage the real estate community in the leasing, sales, and promotion of central business district properties.
- Determine service gaps in Uniontown and target business clusters to address those gaps.
- Launch a central online platform carried on the Uniontown website, listing all vacant and available commercial properties within a defined focus area.

- Market the online platform on the web site and drive traffic to the site through advertisements. Consider advertising in the Great Allegheny Passage Trail Guide and Adventure Cycling focusing on trail-related businesses; work with local historical societies, real estate publications that focus on historic properties, and historic restoration and preservation publications, and web sites, to raise interest in the availability of empty spaces in the historic downtown district.
- Regularly update the City's web site to ensure valid, targeted information.
- Work with local realtors to offer them updates on positive community information i.e., parks and recreational opportunities, any available funding programs, and the Sheepskin Trail progress.
- Host a Business Opportunities Event(s) in one of the historic vacant properties for real estate agents, brokers, related business owners, entrepreneurs, and developers.

Other Tactics:

Ensure that there is an active, attractive, informational City of Uniontown web site. Do a google search on "Uniontown" and note what appears. Does it send a good message about the City? Is it comprehensive and addresses questions that someone not living in the community might have as well as local residents and business owners.

Opportunities for targeted marketing:

The Sheepskin Trail. The influx of trail traffic and the most common demographic of trail user has proven to be an attractive market for communities and the growing Sheepskin Trail passing through Uniontown offers an opportunity to consider targeted strategies directed at recognized business segments. Multiple studies prove the incredibly positive economic impact of trail visitors, and an increasing percentage of businesses owned and operated by trail community transplants.

Downtown Historic District. Uniontown's central business district is fortunate to contain over 113 buildings noted as contributing structures in a National Historic District. This allows for access to restoration and construction funding as well as offering unique opportunities for marketing.



LIGHTER QUICKER CHEAPER IDEAS

- ***Indoor and outdoor events.***
- ***Short term use of buildings - Pop-ups.***
- ***Window Décor and Displays - in both occupied and vacant storefronts.***
- ***Street Furniture and Planters.***
- ***Art on buildings? Sidewalks?***
Temporary, Interactive & Permanent - Working with schools and local artists.
- ***Highlight architectural elements with lighting.***

Appendix

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Community leadership is the courage, creativity and capacity to inspire participation, development and sustainability for strong communities.

— *Gustav Nossal* —

The City of Uniontown – “Wishlist”

Aspirations are important to establishing a vision for a community. It defines goals, informs a strategy and allows for financial planning for both implementation and maintenance.

As the City, its partners, its residents, and supporters outside the City limits, work to realize some or all of these amenities and improvements, caution should be taken regarding overpromising and underdelivering.

Grant funding and private donations may be accessible for development and construction but more of a challenge for maintenance and staffing.

This plan recommends that the City begin expanding the details of this list by associating costs (allowing for inflation) for construction, maintenance and staffing. These figures will be extremely important for establishing development, maintenance, and staffing budgets.

City & Partners Aspirations

- ★ Sheepskin Trail
- ★ Recreation Center
- ★ Marshall Park Amphitheater (required different topography)
- ★ Outdoor Pool
- ★ New Outdoor Parking Monitoring Equipment
- ★ Bailey Park Revitalization
- Basketball Courts
- Tennis Courts
- Pickle Ball Courts
- Pavilions and Comfort Stations
- Splash Park
- Soccer Fields
- Baseball/Softball Batting Cages
- New Lighting for Baseball/Softball Fields
- Indoor Baseball/Softball Training Facility

Development / Attraction Aspirations

- ★ Minor League Baseball Team and Uniontown Junior American Legion Team
- Home Field: Bailey Park
- ★ Boutique Hotels
- ★ Solar Companies
- ★ Manufacturing Companies
- ★ Installation Companies
- ★ Marketing Companies
- ★ Underground Railroad Museum
- ★ Technology Companies
- ★ Market District
- ◆ Butcher
- ◆ Dairy
- ◆ Produce
- ◆ Vegan
- ◆ Gluten-Free
- ◆ Fish Market
- ★ Installation Art and Murals of the City's Story
- ★ Interactive City Maps

APPENDIX II Potential Funding Sources Overview

Financing for community development projects has become more constrained given the state of the economy. On the public and private side resources have declined over the last several years. Despite this there are programs that the project may qualify for. The approach is to combine different funding sources together in order to get to a project that is financeable. A summary of relevant programs appears in the appendix and in the text that follows.

Program Summaries:

Private

Private Bank Financing – Project finance starts with determining how much private debt can be supported. Current underwriting standards have banks' lending at 70% - 80% of a project's appraised value. In many community development projects, appraised value is likely to be significantly less than project cost. Banks that are already familiar with the market and the organization are the most likely to lend to a project. After the bank debt is determined, we look at a variety of other sources to fill the gap between project cost and the amount a bank is willing to lend.

Foundation Funding – Private foundations have invested grants and program related investment dollars in these types of community based real estate projects. This funding is competitive, and it is best to start with local foundations that have an interest in and a familiarity with Uniontown and downtown revitalization. Awards are typically less than 10% of project costs, which can be critical to filling the last piece of project financing.

Federal

New Markets Tax Credits – This is a funding source for commercial or mixed-use projects in areas that are targeted for reinvestment. A project needs to find an institution that has been granted tax credits and a private investor that is willing to purchase those credits in exchange for making an investment of cash equity into the project. The structuring of this project is complex, but the result is that this source can typically fund 20% - 25% of an eligible project. The project must have at least 20% of its income from non-residential uses (i.e., retail, office, etc.).

Historic Tax Credits – These tax credits are available for a qualifying renovation of a historic property. The property must be a contributing structure in a National Register Historic District, or it must be individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The tax credit is for 20% of qualifying costs. The tax credits are sold to investors that invest cash equity into the project. These credits can be combined with New Market Tax Credits.

State

Neighborhood Assistance Program Tax Credits – These are tax credits through the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development that are available on a competitive basis. They work similarly to Federal tax credits in that they are sold to investors who contribute cash equity to a project. The limit on the tax credit is \$250,000 per project.

Redevelopment Capital Assistance Program – This program has been curtailed recently and its future is uncertain; however, it should be monitored as the project moves forward. This program provides grant funding to community projects. Matching funds are required, and prevailing wage rates apply. This is an extremely competitive program that requires legislative approval.

Keystone Historic Preservation Program--This program is administered by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. Grants may be awarded to help advance projects that preserve Pennsylvania's historical resources. Matching funds are required, and awards are typically less than \$100,000. The PHMC also has a smaller technical assistance grant program.

Analysis and Recommendations

The costs of renovating many large commercial buildings can be significant. It is important to find multiple funding sources that can leverage additional resources. The Historic and New Markets Tax Credit programs can bring significant equity to projects. A clear understanding of these tax credit programs is essential, and as a project moves into active predevelopment the project team should include professionals that have expertise in this regard.

Raising funds for redevelopment projects often occurs in stages. Following the feasibility study of a particular project and market analysis, the next stage will be the predevelopment phase that will involve additional architectural work and other due diligence activities such as environmental and additional engineering reviews. Foundations (particularly the Fayette County Growth Fund) and the Keystone Historic Preservation Program are potential sources that can cover the costs of these activities.

Additional Info on Tax Credits New Markets Tax Credits Eligibility Criteria

One or more of the following must apply.

- Must be an income producing property or a business that employs low-income residents.
- Must be a in a high poverty or low-income census tract.
- Real estate projects cannot be 100% housing. At least 20% of the project rent must come from commercial occupancy.
- Administration
- Eligibility and the awarding of credits determined by the U.S. Department of Treasury.
- Compliance monitored by the IRS. How it Works
- Credits are awarded to intermediaries known as Community Development Entities (CDEs).
- A total of a 39% credit taken over a 7-year period for the eligible investment
- It is a competitive process to get the tax credit.
- Investor contributes cash equity for the tax credit. Pricing for the equity ranges from \$.70 to \$.80 of cash per \$1.00 of equity depending on the project.
- Most projects involve leveraging or the use of other financial resources. These transactions typically have at least \$5M in project costs to make using the tax credit worth it.
- Analysis
- Ownership of the real estate would have to be examined, frequently a requirement is that a taxable entity on the real estate in a leveraged transaction. Sale and lease- back could be an option.
- Transaction costs to a leveraged structure can be significant.

Federal Historic Tax Credits

Eligibility Criteria

- Must be an income producing property (i.e., rental real estate)
- Must be a contributing structure to a National Register Historic District or individually listed on the National Register. The Theatre is within a National Register Historic District and therefore should be eligible.

Administration

- Rehabilitation specifications reviewed and approved by the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission and National Park Service. The review encompasses the renovation work, interior and exterior.
- Compliance monitored by the IRS.

How it Works

- 20% of qualified rehabilitation costs qualify for the credit. The credit is received after the work is complete and certified.
- It is a non-competitive process to get the tax credit.
- A taxable entity (the investor) must be a partner in the ownership of the project.
- Investor contributes cash equity for the tax credit. Pricing for the equity ranges from \$.80 to \$1.00 of cash per \$1.00 of equity depending on the project.

More Resources <http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/tax/incentives/index.htm>

APPENDIX II PROJECT MEETINGS

Subject: City of Uniontown – Comprehensive Plan Kick Off Meeting

Date: 08/04/2022 **Location:** Uniontown City Hall

Minutes: The purpose of the meeting was to offer an opportunity for City officials to share with Gibson-Thomas Engineering and their Consultants the City's challenges and opportunities for consideration during the development of the sustainable Comprehensive Plan.

In Attendance: Mayor Bill Gerke; Council Members: Jared Billy, Joseph Czuchan, Steve Visocky, and Vincent Winfrey; City Solicitor: Tim Witt; Community Development Coordinator: Mark John; Consultants: Donna Holdorf Roadman and Cathy McCollom; Gibson-Thomas Engineering (GTE): Becky Wadsworth

A brief welcome and introductions were provided by Donna Holdorf Roadman. Donna briefly described the role and importance of the comprehensive plan as one intended to be implementable and sustainable. To ensure that outcome, it is important that residents from each neighborhood participate in some manner through the process. GTE has created a contact list, with groups such as Love Fayette and others to gain insight and work towards helping the neighborhoods take ownership. We will also meet individually with members of the Council for a deeper discussion of their specific areas of responsibility.

Cathy McCollom, principal of McCollom Development Strategies, laid out the approach to the plan's development and emphasized it was meant to be quickly implemented rather than sit on the shelf gathering dust. The plan produced will also be based on information from residents, businesses, and Council members throughout the development. A Steering Committee will be formed to ensure information is gathered directly from City residents and businesses and any course correction needed can be taken quickly. One of the successful approaches in previous planning efforts has been an early focus on "lighter, quicker, cheaper" projects to build momentum, interest from residents, and encourage their participation. Cathy mentioned there will be at least one community wide meeting as well as multiple smaller neighborhood outreach opportunities throughout the process.

Donna opened a discussion of the City Council's goals, objectives, and expectations. The first topic was the significant blight in the City. It was noted that one street in particular, Murray Avenue, alone has six blighted parcels. Councilman Jared Billy felt that a good approach to handling this issue was to address the City's areas of blight in phases, possibly street by street. He mentioned that Uniontown is landlocked and when people search for this City two of their biggest concerns are neighborhoods and schools.

It should be noted that 1/3rd of Uniontown currently stretches the tax base of the other 2/3rds. He envisions green, new homes focusing on one section at a time. Building these types of homes will power other homes through natural gas, solar and wind.

The City could continue to use this footprint in all areas. He understands that for the City to ensure private sector funding it will have to address the issue of the shrinking tax base.

Mayor Gerke offered the East Liberty transition as an example of going in the right direction. They are building smaller homes along Centre Avenue and making great strides in improving East Liberty. This neighborhood and others have found that improving curb appeal is essential, and improving one home can become contagious, others in neighborhood will often begin to "spruce up" as well. (Cathy later mentioned to a member of Council that the opposite effect, known as the "broken window" theory is also a reality, so cleaning up blight as soon as possible is a priority to prevent the rapid deterioration of a neighborhood "on the edge.")

Council Steve Visocky raised the issue of the overwhelmed sewer system. It currently has old terra cotta pipes and is often inundated with stormwater runoff. The City has received a DEP correction plan that they must implement. The Kerr Street project is going out for bid today. Capacity, age of the sewage plant and business/residential gutters running into the sanitary lines are the main culprits for its decline. Recently a video was completed of all of these lines. GTE requested a copy of the DEP correction letter.

Mark John and Mayor Gerke agree that rebuilt parks and bike lanes through the City will be a major draw. They recently toured Lincoln View park and found it in shambles. Donna relayed again that this is why the residents who surround a particular asset, such as a park, need to be invested in its upkeep. Otherwise, this is just a plan on paper that will not be relevant ten to twenty years in the future. A discussion ensued as to the addition of a skate park and what type of insurance the City would be required to purchase.

Mark John mentioned that the FACT Bus Station could be moved to another location and that area used differently for smart streets with bike lanes. Donna suggested that she and Mark should take a look at the area together and discuss the best layout for the bike lanes. The comprehensive plan will also take into consideration how bike lanes intersect with businesses offering services and amenities for cyclists. This consulting team has particular expertise in working with outdoor recreational assets and understands the importance of business participation and connectivity to such community amenities. Mark continued to say that he believes the addition of safe parks and creative play areas for young people will help to decrease crime within five years. He believes that early intervention will play a significant role in

helping young people refocus their energies and purpose.

Vincent Winfrey discussed the need for a recreation center, mentioning that both North and South Union have such facilities, but none are available to the kids within the City limits. Two sites have been considered. One is to the side of the East End Community Center and the other at the Jewish Center.

Mark John mentioned that he applied for a \$70,000.00 grant for a splash park at Bailey Park but is having difficulty in finding vendors who will offer costs for the estimated project budget.

The roles of the Redevelopment Authority and the Uniontown Downtown Business District were discussed. Authority Mayor Gerke said that the Authority currently lacks an Executive Director and the UBDBA is currently looking for board members.

The team explained that the next steps would be for us to meet individually with Council members, form a Steering Committee and then move towards community-wide meetings.

Adjournment

Action Items:

- Schedule a breakfast meeting with Love Fayette and other area clergy
- Schedule individual meetings with Council Members
- Obtain DEP corrective letter and plan.
- Schedule tour of town with Donna, Cathy and Mark to view potential bike lane direction.
- Formation of a Steering Committee
- Public Meetings

Subject: City of Uniontown – Comprehensive Plan Faith-Based Community Meeting

Date: September 26, 2022 Location: Fay-Penn Business Center

Minutes:

The purpose of the meeting was to offer an opportunity for faith-based leaders to share with Gibson-Thomas Engineering and their Consultants the City's challenges and opportunities, from their perspective, for consideration during the development of the sustainable Comprehensive Plan.

In Attendance: Gibson-Thomas Engineering (GTE): Becky Wadsworth; Consultants: Donna Holdorf Roadman and Cathy McCollom, McCollom Development Strategies (MDS); St Paul AME: Eric Morris and Adrienne Wilson; Faith Assembly: Jason Lamer; Abundant Life: Mark Scott; St. Mary's Nativity: Andrew Hamilton; Asbury United Methodist: Don Henderson; Fresh Fire: Adam Lawson; St Peter's Anglican: Aaron Prosser and Catherine Dunn; Calvary United Methodist: Deb Hull; St. Peter's Lutheran: Jim and Erica Engle

A brief welcome and introductions were provided by Donna Holdorf Roadman. Donna briefly described the importance of faith-based organizations. We recognize the work currently being done and that they are potentially well-positioned to do even more.

Cathy McCollom, principal of McCollom Development Strategies, also offered a welcome and gave a brief overview of why the comprehensive plan team felt it advantageous to meet with the faith-based community. It was quickly learned that the majority of leaders in the room did not know one another. An opportunity was provided for each one present to talk more about themselves and how long they have been in the Uniontown Area.

Donna opened discussions by letting everyone know that the comp team is here for the purpose of listening.

Aaron Prosser opened talks by linking his newness to the area (less than 3 years) with the challenge of finding services needed when asked by his parishioners. He can find no reliable advertised areas. Websites are often out of date and the contact list he was given upon arrival has individuals no longer working in those positions. It is very time consuming for him to track down needed services, particularly for the elderly community. Centralized information would be helpful.

Deb Hull interjected that it remains difficult to be a senior in Uniontown. She is a lifelong resident and entering the senior years but still is unaware of the senior programs in the area and how to make the appropriate connections. In particular, those in the area now entering the senior years are realizing that inflation and cost of living increases will keep them in the workplace longer than earlier expected.

Don Henderson offered the name "Carol Ashton, Executive Director at Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers" as a reliable source for the elderly.

Cathy asked if it would be better to have something in written form or online if these resources could be brought together in one place. The unanimous consent was both.

Deb then offered that she recently visited Third Presbyterian Church for their rummage sales and was struck by the high volume of items. She inquired and found that Third Pres has been offering to clean out homes, garages, storage units and other buildings for free as a service to the community. They then hold these rummage sales and donate the money to senior services.

Cathy remarked that what we are hearing is that services are available, but information is limited. Donna added that it may be possible to add a faith-based services area to the Comprehensive Plan.

Jason Lamer mentioned that the "Love Fayette" group meets the first Thursday of every month at 8:00 am at Eat N Park to discuss how they can best work together to address common community concerns. A view from different backgrounds is not only wanted but needed in this area. He quoted Terry Vassar, Founder of Empowerment Center in Brownsville, "One Voice for One Community." The faith-based community needs to be intentional in building relationships. Love Fayette is currently in the process of becoming a 501C3, but he has had mixed feelings about this because the intent was not to create another service to take resources away from those that already exist. Instead, it was intended to identify those resources and work alongside to help them be successful.

Jason relates the most significant issues facing the community are spiritual issues: poverty and isolation.

Deb interjected that many elderly people are embarrassed to ask for help. There is a sense among seniors who qualify for certain services that they should not take them. They view the services as welfare and as individuals who have worked and supported themselves their entire life it goes a bit against their grain. She is aware of some who refuse to sign up for services because of this mentality and their genuine concern that they will be taking from those who have a greater need.

Donna asked if those present have youth involved in their respective ministries. There was a consensus that they are connected to youth – some more so than others. Donna asked if those present have more of an aging population among their parishioners or do they have youth. There was a mixed response. Several have the problems that come with an aging population while others have youth resources but are not necessarily seeing the number of youths grow.

Donna mentioned the mindset that many in the City and County have about the area in which they live. The challenge is to get the people here to stop the negative branding and to combat generational habits. The challenge becomes getting youth invested and changing their perception of the area in which they live.

Jim mentioned that having moved from the western part of the country to Pennsylvania for its natural beauty, they were taken back by the manner in which residents talk about the area.

"It's like watching that smart friend that dates the losers." He would like to see us tie our identity to the mountain. We could be the "gateway to the mountain." He was told that 1.5 million people from all over the world visit Fayette County every year. We could do so much better at marketing the obvious resource in our backyard. He and his wife began The Wilderness Experience Leadership & Service Program (www.welsadventure.org), (509-406-0926) to introduce a leadership development opportunity for Fayette County youth. It engages 7th and 8th grade students through the sports of rafting, biking, climbing and hiking as well as providing adult mentorship and community service opportunities. They would also love to see some type of nightlife for young people inside the City limits, getting on board with Free play as a starting point.

Donna added that we do not really want the City's identity to be the gateway to anywhere but agree that more people visiting the mountain should be made aware that the City is close by and have the opportunity to take advantage of what goes on here. It would be good to market it as a homebase for when you land, it is all about the semantics.

Erica felt that a downtown bookstore with a coffee shop and gathering place could help.

Mark mentioned that he agrees with the need for new things to be brought into the City, but the concern remains as to how you maintain those things. Grants are available to bring new things, but we still need a maintenance plan. He also is a life-long resident of Uniontown and remembers parents enjoying the opportunity to bring their children and youth into town. But now the drug problem, lack of safe family spaces and lack of parking causes the city to lose to other areas. He agrees we are the gateway to the mountains but that comes with challenges. What he sees needed most is for us to "polish" what we have before adding more to maintain.

Donna mentioned that when it comes to maintenance, the Council is challenged by budget. The subject became, "Is the poverty perceived or real?" If you look around, there are many good companies looking to hire. Uniontown has a PR issue and needs to build pride.

Andrew added that looking from the outside in, he sees artificial communities through social mediums that create false relationships. Young people struggle for identity, and we need to create a community for them as an anchor. There is little for families to do in the evenings. Many are stuck at home in front of a tv playing video games by the hour.

Aaron said that he has three children in local area schools. They have not encountered any unsafe circumstances at any of their schools, yet educators are carrying on the idea that "this is as good as it gets." He has been part of conversations where middle school teachers feel their job is to prepare a student's exit from Fayette County. Middle school is not assigning homework due to lack of support at home.

Mark said that the negative view of the City and the County as a whole began with the closing of the industries in the 80's.

When those jobs disappeared, the economy changed, and we did not replace them with something else to stabilize families.

Adam mentioned "Dream Fayette"(724-580-7027) a multi-purpose building designed to reach our community and the world. They put together a database through Covid-19 that consists of income levels and birth dates of thousands of people. Currently they are doing food distributions; life skills training; partnering with educational institutions; and purchasing properties that can be sold as first- time home ownership at a reasonable cost and building a solid relationship with City police.

Jason Lamer added that he is involved with "Faith & Blue."(faithandblue.org) [*"Inaugurated in 2020 by Movement Forward, Inc. The idea was a simple but powerful one – the ties that bind officers and residents must be reinforced if we are to build neighborhoods where everyone feels safe and included. Faith- based organizations are key to building those bonds because they are not only the largest community resource in the nation, with 65 million participants in weekly events, but because they are as diverse as our nation."*]

Jason believes that politics is ever changing but the faith-based community is a constant – a staple in the community.

Andrew believes that the workplace is lacking anywhere you go. Training for young people is needed. He has encountered a group of young people they call the "nones." These are young people with no connection to the church but have created the "new churches" by investing their time in 4H or soccer organizations or the dance moms or the online gaming centers. We need to find a way to "reach" these "new churches" and get them to connect with their spiritual side. This could be done with itinerant groups that go outside the traditional church to meet with them where they gather.

The group discussion ended and those present were encouraged to stay and make whatever connections they felt necessary.

Adjournment

Subject: City of Uniontown – Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

Meeting Date: December 1, 2022

Location: Fay-Penn Business

Center Minutes:

The purpose of the meeting was to meet in person with the Steering Committee, selected by the City, to share with Gibson-Thomas Engineering and their Consultants the City's challenges and opportunities, from their perspective, for consideration during the development of the sustainable Comprehensive Plan.

In Attendance: Gibson-Thomas Engineering (GTE): Becky Wadsworth ; Consultants: Donna Holdorf Roadman and Cathy McCollom, McCollom Development Strategies (MDS); Steering Committee Members: Brenda Girod; Terry Burden; Christine Buckelew; John McCune; Bill Talkington; James Stark; Gerald O'Brien

A brief welcome and introductions were provided by Donna Holdorf Roadman and Cathy McCollom, principal of McCollom Development Strategies.

Donna opened discussions by letting everyone know that the Comprehensive Team (Comp Team) is here for the purpose of listening.

Discussion began with the role that the Uniontown Downtown Business District Authority (UDBDA) has played both past and present for the City of Uniontown.

- Donna offered that as former chair of the UDBDA, in past years, they were doing marketing, banners etc. for the downtown businesses. The businesses had come together to form a City of Uniontown Merchant's Group that would get together monthly to talk and support each other. The City of Greensburg currently has a merchant's group and once a month they have a "shop night" to draw people downtown. This is something our team would recommend to Uniontown. Cathy added that Confluence with only 680 people has a merchant's association/tourism geared at how to keep businesses thriving, especially with the trail users coming through.
- Donna recently read an article in *Strong Communities* blog that suggested not creating destinations in your city specifically for tourists but rather develop your city for residents and then the tourists will come. If the residents are not supporting the businesses, it causes them to be stuck with seasonal income and brings a challenge to survive year-round.
- One committee member mentioned Jeff Ziegler, Pittsburgh (not sure of the name of his business), who suggests building for residents first, if it is a place where people want to live, then it's a place where people will want to visit.
- It is believed that this is the reason that Mr. Hardy's businesses failed. The townspeople did not become patrons in his stores and were never going to support his little shops. His vision was seen as an attempt to build a second destination to keep people at his resort for a longer period of time. One committee member remarked that Mr. Hardy did spend a great deal of money on this town and that should be noted.

Progress on the Sheepskin Trail was mentioned as not being visible to the community as far as when and how they were going to move forward.

- It has been reported that money has been received to finish the trail through the City and the railroad was to begin lifting the rails as early as this past fall. There is a plan laid out for this, but it is clearly not known to the community beyond those directly involved.
- Donna mentioned that she was working under contract with the National Road on the Sheepskin Trail up through June of this year. She is able to confirm that the City did get money from the railroad but should be noted that it costs almost a half million dollars to complete a one-mile section.
 - The rails were supposed to be lifted in town and there was a debate about how that was going to be done. The City was going to use their own people to lift the rails and then buy a machine to cut the rails into pieces to sell off as souvenirs.
 - Another suggestion encouraged them to deal with a place from Indiana County that has the equipment to come in, lift the rails, get them out of the way, and scrap them. There was one bid that would allow the bidder to remove the rails but keep the scrap. The downside is the City would lose out on the money for the sale of the scrap.
- The railroad gave to the City the land from Grindle's station to the North Union boundary line, but the City does not have the money, at present, to do that work. The City will need to apply for more money. It was reported that something is supposed to be happening this spring in that section, but it has not been confirmed.
- Cathy asked who the point person is on the Trail for businesses that may want to open along the trail through town. At present, no one has a name other than Mark (Mookie) John who is currently no longer on the City payroll.
- An idea has been presented to the Mayor to change Beeson Avenue into a one way. If Beeson Avenue becomes a one-way street up to Fayette Street, curbs are put on each side of the rail, the road is mounded up and nice bricks (like at the intersection) are put down, it would make this beautiful. The fire trucks would have the right-of-way because this would run North to South. This is a welcome avenue to Uniontown. Just painting a line on the road is not what the City should be doing.

Code Enforcement:

- The City is no longer doing code enforcement, instead the police department has added this to the duties of one of their officers.
- Donna remarked that code enforcement will be part of the blight section of the plan. As chair of the Redevelopment Authority for Westmoreland County, it has been learned that code enforcement officers can only be reactive in following up on a complaint and there is only 1 person doing the job. The only way things get noticed or addressed is when a complaint is filed. There is no one doing regular inspections of houses or going after landlords who are not taking care of their properties.

- During the team's conversation with the faith-based group, it was learned that one church is taking note of the elderly who cannot handle the upkeep of their properties on their own and taking steps to help them. They put together a list of contractors and others that they feel people can comfortably let into their home. So, when the code enforcement officer gets a complaint, the first thing that should happen is a little research and not just go and hang a tag on the house. There should be questions asked as to why and how the property got into disrepair and then a plan to get them in touch with a resource who could potentially help. Some communities have groups like *Fight the Blight*, (a non-profit), who get involved in bringing about change.
- Fay-Penn has recently sponsored a housing settlement to address the problem that about half of the homes in Uniontown are rental properties. This brings its own set of problems with absentee landlords. A lot of people in the City keep their properties in good shape but there are just as many who do not.
- The City has more renters on average than the County as a whole. A few years ago, the City attempted to implement an annual rental registration to maintain the most basic of upkeep, but it was unclear if it ever passed. The nature of it was something like \$50 per year per property and the fire department would do a walk through to make sure that the property, water systems etc. was in good repair. The idea lacked political will to pass.
- One thing that did pass was a requirement to keep the outside of the house and property equal to that of the surrounding neighborhood. Places in the City, like Murray Avenue, do not need to have a lot done. This street has a history as the place where all of the merchants lived.
- When the City of Uniontown was laid out it included curbs and sidewalks where streets were clearly visible. It is disappointing that now the County does not require new developers to do what is proper. They can just lay an asphalt road and build a new development. If you go into any other community that has a little bit of wealth you will see wide streets, curbs, and double sidewalks on either side. It makes you want to live there. In Uniontown there is no code telling builders what to include in their plan.
- Historically the City has lacked the tax base to support this type of planning. In a modern subdivision you find things included that in 25 years from now, when it needs repair, there will be no funds to repair or replace it because of the declining tax base. Uniontown has a problem of builders giving us something that is passed onto a municipality who cannot sustain what was built. A perfect example of this is our town now. For instance, Beeson Blvd should have been maintained 30 years ago. As soon as the buses no longer got service out of that rail, it should have been extracted.
- The PUC had an order for a long time that was pushed back and forth.

- Westmoreland and Fayette Counties bought the short line, and each County maintained its own.
- Westmoreland still maintains their short line. But Fayette County sold the short line to the operator that was running it which was Carload Express or Southwestern Pennsylvania Railroad. Trying to get them to lift the rail and take responsibility was part of the PUC agreement that just got signed a year and a half ago. Southwest Pa Railroad is not known to be a trail supporter, they have the opinion that trails are ruining their business.
- Back to blight, Uniontown has some prominent citizens who are landlords of some of these properties but have not had to deal with enforcement. The sidewalks are the responsibility of the property owners to repair in front of their building, but the City again does not enforce them. Coming into town you see sidewalks that are trip hazards or have grass growing around and through them, it looks abandoned.
- One member remarked that they once lived in the west end and enjoyed the sidewalks and curbs. Over the years they have not been taken care of due to lack of funding for the streets. Each time they paved they went on top of the last pave and over time the curb disappeared, the sidewalks became unusable, and people began to use the sidewalk as their own personal parking space. Eventually you are driving in a zigzag pattern just to get up the street. The result is a dangerous street because of all the blind spots. When the house was purchased in 2009, the entire street was owner occupied and in 2020 it is mostly rentals.
- Cathy remarked that Uniontown is of course not unique in having this problem. At the end of the day though there is one ingredient that is consistently present and that is "does your leadership share the same view and are they managing decline or actively seeking improvement?"
- One member believes they are overwhelmed, have a lack of resources, and definitely manage decline. If they can secure the funds to tear down a house in disrepair, it is a huge success for them.
- Not too long ago the City was in the position of having Harrisburg take over. So financially, the tax base is shrinking, and they are just trying to survive. They do not have the time or the capacity to determine who is driving the train to work on making things better.
- If you look at some of the decisions, the most recent one being the takeover of the Gallatin Bank building, in doing this, you take a valuable property off the tax role. Just to be clear, when the County owns a piece of property there are no taxes due.
- It has been reported that the Fayette Bank building has a new owner and will now be used for housing only. The amount of money for infrastructure alone to upgrade will run into the millions. If the building were added to a current blight plan, you would expect to see it in the yellow.

- Cathy, what are the positives in Uniontown?
 - Our 250th anniversary is soon to be celebrated – July 4th, 2026. Currently a walking tour is planned to identify different structures, a narrative is being written, and a website is being developed. Main Street is being concentrated on the most. The County's historical society is leading this charge. A perspective in promoting Uniontown is that it is unique in that it is the only one founded on July 4th, 1776, the nation's birthdate.
 - The George Marshall connection.
- While there is an image problem, many believe we can do something about that through planning and identifying the proper resources.
- The functionality of some of the organizations, like the redevelopment authority, has no executive director at present. The UDBDA might meet monthly, maybe not, they just appointed people to the board but there is not a clear vision known to the community. The UDBDA is under municipal code so it could put into place a Business Improvement District (BID). It does take time and it does charge the people who own the buildings an amount of money per month based on square footage or the frontage, there is a lot of different ways, but it does deliver clean windows, clean streets, marketing, so there is a benefit to it to help make improvements. BID has to go through a process, public meetings and all that but in the end its work having.
- Cathy – it has been done before; the Southside of Pittsburgh was really falling into decline. They were thinking along the lines of a BID, but it never went through because coming together, talking together, and working together was enough. The process alone of coming together and looking at things as a mutual problem proved beneficial enough to make significant changes.
- One thing to consider is that many of the people working downtown are not shopping downtown. They are going up to the mall area to purchase things, especially lunches. If it can be shown that they can get lunch here at an affordable price and you just have to walk to a restaurant verse running through a drive through at a fast-food restaurant, it would keep the money in the neighborhood. We want new money, but we also want to keep recycling the money that is here.

East End:

Tell us about the children and what you see in the East End because you have been working there for a long time, and you have a strong presence with a conscious understanding of this community.

- East End recently got its own grant. It used to be under the IU, but the present director decided to write a grant and was the only one in Fayette County to receive the award.
- The Community Center currently has about 11 to 12 programs. The current need is what happens to the kids once they go home. Most are sitting at a computer with

the absence of parks and places to go.

- The Center provides as much exposure as possible by doing field trips and having special speakers come in to provide presentations.
- The Center is currently seeing about 70 kids from 1st grade to 5th grade. There is also a middle school program, but it is through the IU for 5th to 8th grade. The Center is currently outgrown, and the church next door permits use of its facilities for classrooms. The hope is to build out.
- One member mentions that in the township where he lives, children from about the age of 7 are in T-ball and then other programs throughout high school. He is surprised not to find that within the City. It is hard to get volunteers.
- Prior to 1980 the School Districts were involved with running their playgrounds, the teachers took turns to supervise through the summers. Competitions between schools or neighborhoods took place.
- The committee agrees that the parks need to be opened again and the Jewish Community Center needs to be utilized. Its current owners are not involved. One member contacted the Jewish Federation due to complaints about the monument. They are willing to take care of this monument, but they have no interest in the Center. So, the building just sits there with a swimming pool that could be used to teach children how to swim within the City. The building has so many possibilities but with one owner passing away and reports that it is tied up in the estate, it just sits. The Center is being marketed and it contains a large tract of land behind. One interested party looked at it for development but wanted to be able to pull onto Rte. 119 directly, but it was not permitted.
- The City has expressed an interest in this property and has told us they would like to build a recreation center but have not yet reached out to make that happen. It is on their dream list along with a splash park, pickleball, and many other things that you will find in the appendix of the Comp Plan. A recreation center within City limits is a long-term goal. Money to not only open a center but to maintain it as well would have to be found. In the short term we need to identify avenues where children and grandchildren can go now. Agreements need to be formed between those who have the facilities and the City who desires to use them.
- Other Recreational Centers in the area would include the South Union Recreational Center beside the Sheepskin Trail on the border of South Union and Uniontown. The YMCA is not in the City but is next to the City's Rotary walk and is in poor condition. The old YMCA building within the City still has an intact pool and would be an ideal location but again, this building is privately owned.

City Parks:

The City is down to 4 parks that are semi operational and only 1 is programmed (Grant Street). One member believes the park at Chestnut Ridge School is being used by the City. On the basic line, the City needs to get these existing parks cleaned up, get safe play equipment, and be in a place where they can be maintained for future generations to use.

- Lemon Street Park is currently being developed by the City's Redevelopment Authority.
- Lincoln View Park, home to some of the most storied basketball leagues, is not visible from the road and currently unusable. Currently proposed as a pickleball court area.
- Bailey Park is currently in use.
- Grant Street Park, unknown status.
- Coal Lick Run Park – along the Rotary Walk a small pavilion and piece of playground equipment.
- Marshall Park has water issues as it lies in the flood plain.
- Chestnut Ridge Park was fenced in as though it belongs to the school, but members believe it is on its own parcel. (*Listed on Fayette Property as Boyle School owned by the Chestnut Ridge Christian Academy, this includes the playground/basketball court area*). The City gifted this to the school on the condition that they would maintain it and the City could use it if needed.
- City residents can use the North and South Union Recreation Centers for a nominal fee. The City children tend to migrate towards the South Union Center. The Uniontown High School was asked if the pool at the school could be used on Saturdays for public swim, but insurance and liability issues brought a hard no.

Volunteer Programs:

- The City has been somewhat antagonistic towards accepting help. They have been approached with volunteer programming but offered no input and nothing to encourage the programs or the volunteers. Several volunteers have gone out on their own and then the City seems offended. It would be good to hear them admit they need help and then have a more welcoming attitude.

Central Business District:

- If you could have your wish list of what would be available in the City from a business retail standpoint and as the County seat, what would that look like?
- For starters, way back when the GC Murphy building was still existing, Mr. Eberly gave it to the National Road who had formed a group to go after grants and make it an anchor building. The idea was to have a building with shared office space. The courthouse brought in many attorneys from other places who had no place to set up a workspace. The plan was to have a receptionist available who could send faxes, make copies, all the things they could do in their office but were unable to do because they had no access to their home office. Instead, the chamber held the property and sold it without a conversation with the National Road group. One thing to consider is that ideas that did not work at a prior time can now be revisited for this time.

- The city lacks retail, at present, you cannot buy a pair of shoes or a dress. With World Import closing, you cannot go to a deli. Paula's bakery closed so the closest one now is Emma's on S. Mt. Vernon Avenue. Goodie girls is still in town but serves mostly sweets. There is a good mix of restaurants, but word has it that restaurateurs are looking for buyers due to no traffic. Sullivan Brothers Coffee Company opened several years ago hoping for the trail to come through but that has not happened yet. They have closed temporarily due to lack of local support.
- This business was seen as a 3rd place to go. It was a place where people would go, linger, spend a few dollars, and meet people you otherwise would not know. Dylan (owner of SBCC) had the right idea – the trail. The problem was that the community was not supporting him enough. The other challenge – no group goes to welcome them outside of the chamber doing a ribbon cutting. Which takes us back to the Merchants Association.
- With the proximity of senior citizens and rental properties the City is a food desert. A groceria would be great or a corner store where you could get staples like paper towels, bread, milk. The City had two at one point, Francis Market Grocery on South Street and Pechins Grocery on Main Street. South Street businesses do not tend to do well. Someone coming into the City, going down Main Street, would not be aware that the buildings they see on Main have businesses in the back on South and if they are aware, they have no idea where to park. International Mediterranean is on South Street and is not marketed well. Other businesses, (J Paul's; Brass Rail; Boston Beanery) have tried this location and failed. Next to them is a vacant lot with a chain link fence. Other cities, Jeanette for one, have a vacant property registry and it would be good to have one here.
- Is Uniontown one of the census tracts that received ARPA funds? [<https://www.nlc.org/resource/local-allocations-in-the-american-rescue-plan/>] (Also see attached).
- The City has a problem with its parking garage. The machines have trapped people inside and the police have had to be called to open the gates after a malfunction. When bigger events happen, the City chooses to leave the gates up to avoid the hassle.
- There is a vacant lot located on Main Street, across from Gallatin Bank, which takes up what could have been useful space for development. At one time, there was a plan to put pop ups in there and a walk path through the center along with a farmer's market. [*Ownership on Fayette County Property Search lists Carma Lloyd (aka J Lloyd Carma, Jean Lloyd Carma, and Jean Carma, 80 years old. Address Chautauqua, NY/Sarasota FL, and previously Uniontown, Pa) as the owner of these two lots – parcels 38-04-0099 and 38-04-0100.*]
- A space for teens downtown is needed. A coffee shop with an open mic night as was done in the past with Café 45 would be a good revision.

- Tattoo parlors and Vape shops keep popping up. These businesses are never a good sign because this is just the art of the day and at some point, people will lose interest. The one tattoo shop located in the old Mundell's building could be an anchor to utilize that entire building as a teen spot.

Historical Challenges to the Central Business District:

- You cannot hold private owners of buildings to task on changes that might keep the historical aspect. The City learned that when the façade on the Masonic building was promised to be dropped down to become a wall and maintain the street wall. That did not happen. Some of the "improvements" done to these old buildings do not always work out. It is sad when a person goes by after the change and thinks the before version was better. Mr. Hardy put *Dryvit* over some of these buildings and it will eventually fall off.
- What are the places that are being researched for the 250th anniversary celebration that have been identified as ones that the City should not touch? 18 Buildings on Main Street have been identified (*Christine will email the list to Becky at GTE, becky.wadworth@gibson-thomas.com*).
- The City has an Historical Architectural Review Board (HARB) on the books as existing, but no one is serving on its board. They did dust this off and took a look at it concerning the attempt by Dollar General to build in place of the Craig Mansion. The problem with the HARB as it stands is the criteria for board members. It calls for an architect/engineer to serve but they must live in the City. This Code needs to be modified to allow for a broader search of board members. The current City Council did not know this was in their plan nor did they know where the zoning map was located.

At Risk:

Health of the City from the perspective of the kids. What should be in the Comp Plan for the next citizens coming up in the world.

- Activities for the kids are key. Too much vandalism suggests bored kids. Seniors complaining about the types of activities the kids are getting into in the alleys behind their buildings. The alternative is to find something for them to do. When our team met with faith leaders in the community, we found they have many programs in place for teens. Again, we need to coordinate and advertise these things in a way that the entire City is aware of their options. Our team encouraged them that you do not need the City the City needs you. We suggested they find a way to come together to get a voice and become doers.
- Volunteerism is going to be the way forward for now. The City, at present, does not have the financial resources to make these changes happen on their own. It is also important for the community to have skin in the game, otherwise they do not care. Mr. Hardy planted all these hydrangea trees along Main Street and installed awnings on buildings, but nobody watered the trees or took care of the awnings.

The attitude was Joe put it up and Joe can take care of it. But Joe was gone pretty quick, and things fell into disrepair. To succeed the City will need a coordinated volunteer force to take responsibility.

- Finding volunteers is a challenge. The retired in our community seem to feel that they have raised their families, put in hours helping in the past and now it is "me time." Those with children are constantly on the run and do not have the time. The City is limited to that college aged group, but they are not here. This could just be a messaging problem.
- If the City had a volunteer team who organized the work and worked on getting the message out to the community, we would have a better chance at finding people. As noted, before, the City does not seem to be interested in a volunteer force and may need to revisit their position on having one.
- One opportunity to consider is WVU taking over the hospital. We now have new young doctors coming in to work but cannot find housing. They are going to Morgantown to live and driving to Uniontown to work. One young family recently left Uniontown and bought a home in Morgantown after considering how often they are down there with their kid's activities and shopping. There is also a concern about the quality of schools.
- Bottom line we need a campaign of sorts that could help pull others along. We need to find our image and begin to promote. We suffer from a distinct lack of vision. We would like to see the City form a vision and act on it. The City needs to become their own cheerleader. Currently, they have an anemic website and an approach to government that makes it a mystery to know what is going on at City hall. If you look at Connellsville's Mayor, he is doing all he can to promote. Tik Tok challenges, Facebook page messaging, and showing up to events. He is paid little and yet is constantly promoting his city.
- This Comp Plan definitely needs a public relations (PR) section to address public image. A core group of people saying the same thing, marketing the same message can make this happen. If the City takes small steps where they are completing a task, actually seeing it through and then making a big deal about it so that everyone sees some progress, more people will want to take part.
- Imaging is definitely needed but it does not need to come all at once. Once a plan is laid out the City can take little bites with a long-term goal in sight. It is recommended they start looking into putting aside funds for a grant match. Our team plans to give them action steps with suggestions on who should be the action head. The steering committee will drive it forward or at least be the torch bearers to get this document to see the light of day. The job of the action head will be to hold the City accountable to move the plan forward. There are some things that can be done short term, but the City will need to appoint a lead who will help to implement the plan.

- The City also needs a good rapport with the County since it serves as the County seat. This will require individuals in both places to have common goals and a good working relationship. Also, since the City is relying heavily on finding grant funds, it would be helpful for them to have their own “experienced” grant writer.
- Lastly, our team received the names of those present at this meeting from the City Council. If you know of anyone else who would make a good addition to the Steering Committee, please send an email to Becky (becky.wadworth@gibson-thomas.com) with the name and contact information.

Adjournment

Subject: City of Uniontown Comprehensive Plan Meeting

Date: December 12, 2022 Location: City Council Chambers

Minutes: The purpose of the meeting was to meet with representatives of the City of Uniontown; K2 (City Engineer); and Pennsylvania American Water (Pa American Water) to discuss the infrastructure section of the Comprehensive Plan.

In Attendance: K2: John Over, Brian Lake, Dana Kendrick; Pa American Water: Timothy Berder, Brent Robinson; McCollom Development Strategies (MDS): Cathy McCollom; Gibson-Thomas Engineering (GTE): Barbara McMillen, Becky Wadsworth; City of Uniontown: Chris (?)

Becky, Barb and Cathy welcomed all to the table and thanked them for the time set aside to contribute needed information for the completion of the City of Uniontown's Comprehensive plan. A question-and-answer session followed.

Q. Where does the water source come from?

A. Youghiogheny and Monongahela rivers.

Q. Who owns and operates the water system?

A Pennsylvania American Water including the lines.

Q. When was the original water system built?

A. Late 1800's – 1888. A wooden pipe was found in a section off Union Street. The original system was mostly cast iron until the 1940's and they went with some different types of cast iron, asbestos concrete, HDP (2") and ductile iron pipe.

Q. Is there a map of the water system?

A. Yes digital with valves – GIS was done on the entire system. *[Pa American will make this available to GTE.]*

Q. What is the service area?

A. All of the City with the exception of north Morgantown Street. There are six entities that are not in the Pa American Water service area.

Q. What is the number of fire hydrants/valves?

A. Unsure - *[Pa American Water will make this number available to GTE.]*

Q. When was the last improvement/upgrade made to this system?

A. Maintenance is ongoing. Pa American Water responds whenever and wherever the need arises. Recently, they responded to the East End on the following streets: Cleveland; Murry; Lincoln; and Prospect. Every year there is a project.

They follow break history and work closely with the City Engineer (K2) who sends notice of

anytime a pave/repave project is in the works to coordinate and save the City money. A future project is upcoming with a bridge relocation running along Shady Lane to Grant Street and past the library with 12" line sometime in 2023.

Q. What is the average daily pumpage in gallons?

A. 2 million gallons

Q. What is the amount of unaccounted water?

A. Less than 5% - the hydrants are flushed every year which raises the unaccounted water total to about 18%. Valve program is on a three-year process. Every valve is turned at least every 3 years, and some are turned more frequently.

Q. Number of City customers served?

A. Unknown - *[Pa American Water will get this number to GTE.]*

Q. Condition of lines – percentage that need to be replaced?

A. A good guestimate would be a little less than 40%. The East End section was recently targeted because the Fire Department gave notice of water issues that needed to be addressed. Also, Columbia Gas was in the same area doing work and Pa American partnered with them to avoid tearing up the area more than once.

Q. Does the City have a local source water protection program to protect and improve water quality?

A. No. Some years ago (about 20) the City asked us for fluoride to be added to the water and a station was put in place on Route 40 around Menallen Township to handle the City's request.

Q. Is there a vision of where things need to be in the future? Also are there any major changes coming in the future?

A. No vision has been communicated to Pa American Water or the City's Engineer. The main line coming into town is being updated with 16" pipe from 12" due to some development in South Union to make sure there is enough flow. This is coming from Brownsville, 16" pipe is already coming from the Municipal Authority of Westmoreland County (MAWC) to sustain the needs of future development. There are no water issues as far as pressure is concerned. There is 190# of pressure coming into the City on the current 12" line. The fireman will tell you they do not even need to start the pump if they do not want to. It is an older line that was being considered for change. The plan is to gradually take the new lines toward Hopwood. Blowouts have occurred but are infrequent. There have been leaks but nothing out of the ordinary, and those areas have been targeted as a first order of business. Projects completed over the past five years include: Morgantown Street; Lincoln Street; Cleveland Avenue; and McCormick Avenue.

In terms of potential growth areas in the City, the Route 40 Corridor from 119 by Atlas toward the City with the exception of the cemetery area.

West Virginia University's (WVU) takeover of the hospital could potentially become a growth area for smaller healthcare related businesses.

The new business park will be strictly North Union and will be serviced by Pa American Water. The County has acquired the old Gallatin Bank building and is developing that space. The Fayette Bank building was just sold to someone from New York, and we have not learned of their plans for it. Menards will be coming in and Pa American is working to sustain their needs. That should be all unless the City decides to address some blighted areas.

There is a group in Westmoreland County that is addressing blight. The City should look into getting on board with their program. There is a group in the Mon Valley area called a COG (Council of Governments). Their mission is to take homes, remodel them and then sell them to people for around \$50,000.00 to bring in a new generation. The goal is to recycle these communities and bring younger people and families into the area. *[For Reference: Steel Rivers Council of Governments – steelriverscog.org].*

Since 2012, the City's Engineer (K2) has been working with a changing City Council and Mayor to take note of Blight ordinances that are on the books now, but not being enforced. The City does not employ a code officer any longer. The job this is being handled by a police officer. Another point to consider is that home ownership has changed. In the 1970's – 80's home ownership in the City was about 70 to 80%. That has reversed. Currently, rentals consist of about 70% of the residences. The City's Engineer (K2) recommends that this be the first thing the City addresses in the Comprehensive Plan with a plan to reverse this trend. The City has not yet addressed this need. K2 introduced a landlord registration ordinance, but it is not being enforced. The ordinance does not require inspections and the City has not communicated a vision to K2 on how they want to tackle this problem. K2 has provided several types of plans for the City to consider that addresses each neighborhood and ways to tackle this problem while recognizing this to be a momentous task. One plan would be to localize and find a starting point with the intention to spark other areas to begin to improve on their own. K2 would allow GTE to adopt this as a recommended vision as part of the Comprehensive Plan. *[John will provide this plan to GTE.]*

Q. When you prioritized the neighborhoods with this vision what was the thinking behind it?

A. We started with those that appeared to have the most need and showed the greatest blighted area.

The City of Uniontown did receive a blight remediation grant. The sum of \$25,000 in grant funds has yet to be utilized and will expire in 2 years. The state is adamant that the City use the adopted program.

The City of Jeannette in Westmoreland County has done the exact same thing. There was an area of old rowhouses by the glass plant area of town.

They tore down an entire section on both sides of the street and rebuilt brand new homes and sold them to young couples.

A similar thing happened at Dunlap Creek Village. The City, also, has done something like this on Maple Street and those homeowners are maintaining their homes and doing a great job. They sold them to needy homeowners who accepted home ownership and cleaned up that area.

K2 pointed out that Fayette County Community Action Agency (FCCAA), under Jim Stark's leadership, is buying up neighborhoods and working with the City's Redevelopment Authority on a vision. It was suggested that GTE follow up to learn more of this endeavor.

Q. Who owns and operates the Sewer System?

A. The City owns just the lines. The plant belonged to the City until 1991-92. Three entities, who at the time were utilizing the plant, formed the Greater Uniontown Joint Sewage Authority. [North Union, South Union, and the City of Uniontown]. There are no pump stations in the City.

Q. When was the facility built or what is its history?

A. Built in the early 1900's and developed through the 1950's. The interceptors carry North and South Union sewage to the City through the Redstone interceptor, which is a main dual interceptor. Then it carries north, south through the City to the plant. The Coal Lick Run interceptor carries it from Pittsburgh Street, South Mount Vernon to the Redstone interceptor and it handles the hospital and South Union Township. The Cove Run Interceptor comes into the Redstone interceptor at the plant and then goes out towards Morgantown Street.

Q. Where is the wastewater treatment plant located?

A. In North Union Township near 84 Lumber. *[90 Romeo Lane, Uniontown, PA 15401.]*

Q. What is the rate of stormwater and ground water entering the sewer system?

A. Normal daily flow, non-weather conditions is about 6 million gallons per day (mgd). In wet weather conditions, about 5 minutes after it starts raining, it changes to around 21 mgd. It has been suggested to upgrade the system to accommodate that larger number, but then during normal dry conditions the plant cannot operate. One way to alleviate the increase would be to build tanks throughout the system or to fix the infiltration problem. K2 had the "greater ?" do a "? Study" of the interceptors. The study shows where the problem areas are, and a plan was to be formed to start addressing the infiltration problem, but the City has not yet been addressed. *[K2 to provide a copy of the study to GTE.]*

Q. Is the City meeting the DEP permitting requirements for the 21 mgd?

A. Yes. The plant is actually permitted to 9 mgd even though the flow is around 6. They actually permitted 11.4 mgd. They have a general manager there who does a fantastic job and knows the chemistry behind it all.

Q. Is the system blowing manholes on the lower end?

A. It used to but not anymore. The last major upgrade done was the relining of the Redstone interceptor from the City line at North Union township. Coal Lick Run is the worst interceptor right now.

Currently, a grant application has been submitted through the Local Share Account (LSA) with January being the expected time to learn of those awarded. K2 has been communicating with the DCED/CDBG funding towards multi-year projects to use their funds for the sewer projects. One requirement is for K2 to do income surveys and that is why they have submitted them for a multi-year period because it will take six months in itself to complete the surveys. K2 has gone door to door to get the income survey completed.

In regard to the City's finances, unfortunately, what the City collects goes right back out for employees, equipment, etc. so, there is no plan for the future. At some point the assets of the system need to be looked at and creative ideas should be put forth for someone else to operate the system. Pa American Water has been acquiring other sanitary/sewer systems in the area and there is interest for them to acquire this system as a whole or in parts, they will do it either way. It is noted that Pa American Water is a for profit business where the municipalities are not. On the other hand, municipalities have a frequent changeover in leadership and decision changes come with that. The expertise is not at the municipal level to handle foreseeable changes in regulations coming down from the EPA and DEP. It will be difficult for the municipalities to keep up with those changes. There could be a short-term benefit to the City to be able to fund the blighted programs out of the sale of the sewer system.

Q. When you bring these thoughts before the Council what is the response?

A. One Councilman was initially determined to follow through but somewhere along the line that attitude changed. Concerns about the current employees losing their jobs has been raised, but Pa American has agreed to keep the employees and they would end up better paid then where they are now.

Pa American Water is extremely aggressive when it comes to building a capital budget for a takeover for a five-year plan. In that five-year plan 99% of the things put into the plan will get done.

From the system's standpoint the plant itself is in very good condition. They have a new maintenance budget and a general manager who stays on top of stuff. The processes themselves and the plant itself are in good condition and operate well.

Q. What would happen tomorrow if the current operator were not there?

A. It would not be good news. The system currently has five operators that have been there a long time. It presents some problems because they are facing retirement age in five to six years.

The general manager is actually at retirement age, and he could be gone at any time. A statewide issue with the DEP is the process to get an operator certified. You must be working for a number of years before you can take the test. There is an "E?" license that can be obtained quickly but that only lets you work on the system, but not as an operator. After you have been licensed and working then you can take the test to move on to operator. This test is also involved and difficult.

Q. When was the wastewater facility built?

A. The original plant was in the 1950's but a major upgrade and expansion took place in the early 90's. It has been maintained very well. A ten-to-fifteen-million- gallon tank out front or somewhere in the system could help. The plant itself is not under any Corrective Action Plan (CAP) from the DEP. However, the three entities involved have placed themselves under a self-imposed CAP for the past two and a half years.

Q. Where/How is the sludge contained?

A. The sludge is brought into the belt press process plant and the disposal facility is a landfill on 21.

Q. What kind of plant is it?

A. It is not an SDR it is a hybrid – the process was changed from the original extended air – It is broken down more efficiently now with clarifying chambers.

Q. For the flow information and other info on the plant to whom should we talk?

A. Dean Mori – 724-323-3688

Q. Has an MS4 plan been completed?

A. Yes there is an MS4 plan, but it is not that much due to the City receiving a waiver. *[K2 will send us a copy of the MS4.]* The issue is that the whole City was built on a combination sewer/sanitary system, so even if you separate some main lines, you still have the combined system. The City does have an ordinance to separate the downspouts. If you sell your house, they do a test to see if the downspouts are connected to the sewer. The City, however, is not enforcing this.

Q. Who has done the Zoning Code and Ordinances and is it in digital form?

A. Most of the ordinances done by K2 are in digital form. The bulk of the ordinances are located at City Hall in filing cabinets in paper form. *[K2 will provide the digital ones that they have to GTE.]* K2 has the zoning ordinances in paper form, and they can be viewed at K2's offices. The process of codification needs to be done.

Q. Parking garage locations.

A. South Street and East Penn Street. The South Street garage needs major deck repair. The condition is very poor. K2 was asked to look at it but that was eight years ago, and it was in bad condition then. No formal structural review has been done.

Q. Does the City have maintained parking lots paid/free?

A. Library lot – metered / 911 lot – free / Marshall Park – free (10 spots) / Verizon lot – private / Fayette Bank – private

Q. Does the City have an established taxi or Uber company?

A. No

Q. What is the FACT bus route and schedule?

A. Ask the County but do not rely on their website, the information there is incorrect.

Q. Has there ever been a traffic study done within the City limits?

A. No

Q. Are there any plans to change or reroute the current traffic flow? (The Steering Committee proposes that Beeson Street become a one-way street)

A. Making Beeson Street a one-way does not work. Gallatin Ave is shutting down in the next year to finish the bridge and traffic will be rerouted. Changing traffic flow at this juncture is not recommended.

Q. Has there been a traffic study done within the City limits?

A. Only for the addition of stop signs.

Q. Who maintains the sidewalks?

A. Third class code requires the property owners to maintain the sidewalk in front of their business.

Q. What about intersections, signals, and accidents?

A. There is a need for existing signals to be upgraded and coordinated. No major accidents at the intersections. Five corners are an ongoing problem, but that is due to complaints about adding a left turn from S. Mt Vernon onto Route 40. The through lane needs to become a left turn lane and the right turn lane needs to go straight and right. It backs up traffic.

Q. Does the City have a Long-Range Transportation Plan or a Transportation Improvement Plan?

A. No long-range or improvement plan.

Q. Are there any state maintained roads within the City limits?

A. Route 40: E Fayette, Church, and Main Streets; Route 21: Morgantown Street; Route 51: Pittsburgh Street

Q. Does the City inspect/maintain bridges?

A. PennDOT inspects the bridges – There are five bridges owned by the City:

Gallatin Ave, Jefferson St., Dunbar Street, Beeson Avenue and Mill Street. The arch being replaced on Main Street is a state bridge.

Q. Does the City have a recycling program?

A. It is part of the County recycling program (Contact Sheila Shea for particulars).

Q. Is there a planning commission that you work with?

A. Yes – *[K2 will get their names to us.]*

Q. Transportation providers – FACT bus.

A. There are no other City providers for transportation, only the FACT bus.

Q. What companies provide land line and cellular services to the City?

A. Verizon, AT&T, Breezeline, Segra (fiber optic).

Q. What types are available? DSL, Cable, Satellite?

A. All are available.

Q. What percentage of residents have access to internet?

A. Within the City limits all residents have access.

Q. How many cellular towers are in the City limits?

A. One (1) at the Fayette Bank Building.

Q. How many radio stations does the City have and what station numbers?

A. One (1) – WMBS on S. Mt. Vernon Avenue.

Q. How many tv stations does the City have and what are their station numbers?

A. One (1) – Fayette County TV – Facebook Channel 77

Q. Is there a map of the current communication infrastructure that shows the fiber optic routes?

A. No. You would need to speak with someone in the County or Fay-Penn (Tina Vargo).

Q. Sheepskin Trail

A. The City of Uniontown received LSA money to do all of the preliminary construction documentation for the route through the City.

A SMART grant was done by the County Commissioners on behalf of the City. There is confusion at the County level, and we want to be sure they do not double their expenses.

Other things of note: The Rotary Walk runs from Lebanon Avenue to Pittsburgh. This is maintained by Rotary. Coal Lick Park sits along this walk, and it is now a project on the City's radar. They are focusing on this with already granted funds.

The City would like a skate park, but they have no proposed location, and no master site plan has been completed. The City was awarded funds (200K) that will be used for Lemon Street Park – it is a park in use and the community has a yard sale day once a week in the summer. No existing map of parks or walking trails exists.

Flood:

K2 did a Hec-Ras study. As part of that study, K2 proposed (as part of the grant awarded to the City) a cleanup. Since the cleanup things have been a lot better. But it has been two years and you can already see the buildup. In trying to help with the flooding, the City was helped but another area was adversely affected. As soon as the cleanup was completed, North Union Township got water there. It is only a matter of time before it goes back to being a problem again. It would take demolition and reconstruction to solve the issue permanently. Streets would need to close; lines would need to move some demolition to buildings would be expected.

Lighter, quicker, cheaper projects:

Ongoing projects: Lemon Street park

The City could definitely use updated signage and maps for outsiders coming into town.

Gibson-Thomas thanked all that were present and contributed to this question-and-answer time.

Meeting Adjourned:

Central Business District Business Owners Survey Synopsis

A survey of Uniontown's Central Business District businesses was conducted during the development of the Comprehensive Plan.

Several business owners responded offering thoughtful responses to the following questions:

1. *As the City's consultant creates a new comprehensive plan, how can the City contribute to helping you sustain and grow your business in its Central Business District?*

Several responses included offering free parking, business incentives for new businesses and repairing the streetlights which had been out for some time. Other responses included offering more events downtown and encouraging more people to live downtown.

As one business owner said, "There is a great core of businesses, but outside of them, there is a revolving door of new businesses, opening and closing."

2. *What is the most important action that could be undertaken to improve the central business district as a whole?*

The most common response was "free parking" and business incentives, but others included repairing streetlights, attracting more boutique shops, addressing the perception of downtown not be safe, restore the dilapidated older buildings.

"The most important action that can be taken immediately to improve the CBD is by assisting with dilapidated properties."

3. *What types of businesses or services are lacking within the central business district?*

A grocery store was mentioned more than once, as well as "a place for kids to hang out." Other suggestions included attracting a large employer which would add employees and thus shoppers in the downtown area.

4. *Within the next 12 - 18 months, do you anticipate your business to grow or decline and why?*

Most respondents said they expected their business to continue and even grow but due to their own efforts. A few stated they expected sales to decline due to lack of traffic and one business said it was closing because of a personal issue but did state the business was not growing.



Department of Community & Economic Development
 Governor's Center for Local Government Services
 Commonwealth Keystone Building
 400 North Street, 4th Floor
 Harrisburg, PA 17120-0225
 ph: 888-223-6837 | fax: 717-783-1402

LETTER OF INTENT

This Letter of Intent is submitted to the Governor's Center for Local Government Services to request technical assistance. By submitting this request, the municipality agrees to cooperate with the Center.

The governing body must approve this request for assistance by motion prior to submission. No resolution is required.

Complete and return the form either by mail or fax. Center personnel will evaluate the request to determine the level of assistance. The contact person designated below will receive all future information regarding this request.

PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING

Type of technical assistance being requested:

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Regional Police Consolidation | ☐ Finance |
| ☐ Police Management | ☐ Public Works |
| ☐ Fire & Emergency Services | ☐ Administrative/Secretary |
| ☐ Council of Governments/Intergovernmental Cooperation | ☐ Home Rule |
| ☐ Land Use Planning | ☐ Boundary Change |
| ☐ Uniform Construction Code | ☐ Other _____ |

Are you currently a part of any intergovernmental agreement?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, describe briefly: _____

Description of Project: _____

CHIEF ELECTED OFFICIAL (PRINT)

Municipality: _____ Federal ID#: _____

County: _____

Name: _____ Title: _____

Municipal Address: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

CONTACT PERSON

Name: _____ Title: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

E-mail: _____

SIGNATURE AND VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that the governing body, at a public meeting held on _____, has approved this Letter of Intent.

 Attest (Secretary)

 Date

Public and Private Grant Resources Table

GRANT SOURCE	CONTACT INFORMATION	PROJECT	APPLICANT	FINDINGS
National Endowment for the Arts	http://www.nea.gov https://www.arts.gov/grants	Community revitalization and development	Nonprofit	Our Town Grant \$25000 - \$150,000 Challenge America \$20,000 or greater Grants for Arts \$10,000 to \$100,000
Appalachian Regional Commission	http://www.arc.gov	Supplemental infrastructure grants for projects funded through other federal programs \$100-\$300K (50% of program; unless access roads than will fund 80%)	Nonprofit economic development; municipalities	Still active - in 2021 Congress appropriated a record \$180 million for the ARC.
PA. Conservation Corps	US Dept of Labor https://www.dol.gov/grants	Labor for community projects	Community groups	Still active -
Kresge Foundation	www.kresge.org Several grant programs; varying application rounds; some by invitation only Large grants: \$1M and more; average \$250K-\$300K Will go lower though (\$58K to PA nonprofit)	Supports a wide variety of projects; nation-wide. Will support operating as well	Nonprofit; municipality	Still active - Annually, Kresge makes more than 400 grants to nonprofits. Annual giving has averaged around \$160 million in recent years, always in accordance with IRS guidance to give at least 5% of our endowment on a five-year rolling basis.
PennDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety	www.drivesafepa.org https://www.penndot.pa.gov/TravelInPA/Safety/Pages/Safety-Grants.aspx	PennDOT, through its Public Safety Program: Yield to Pedestrians, is distributing free Yield to Pedestrian signs to municipalities	Municipality Grants to local political subdivisions and nonprofit organizations are administered through the department's eGrants electronic grants management system	Still active - 2024 -2026 grant opportunities Apps - April 1 to May 31 Grant Term Oct 1 - Sept 30
Port of Pittsburgh	http://www.port.pittsburgh.pa.us/home https://www.portpitt.com/pages/funding-programs https://www.portpitt.com/pages/sen-ferlo-small-grants-program	Related to river Eligibility projects will seek to enhance the utilization of our waterways for the betterment of our communities	Nonprofit; municipality	Still active - Ferlo Memorial Grant -up to \$10,000. Deadline is May 25, 2023.
Home Depot Community Impact	https://corporate.homedepot.com/page/grants	Community revitalization	Nonprofit; community residents	Still active - Veteran Housing Grant \$100K to \$500K
Bikes Belong Coalition Grants Program	http://www.bikesbelong.org/grants/	Related to land-based trails Up to \$10,000	Nonprofits; public agencies	Still active - opens early fall 2023 - online apps only. The PeopleForBikes Community Grant Program supports bicycle infrastructure projects and targeted initiatives that make it easier and safer for people of all ages and abilities to ride.
PA. Partners in the Arts	www.arts.pa.gov/WHAT%20WE%20DO/FUNDING/apply-for-a-grant/Pages/default.aspx	Arts and culture	Nonprofit	Creative Sector Flex Fund Grant (NEW PROGRAM) This grant program incorporates the current needs of the field by offering grantees the flexibility to use \$5,000 grants in ways that ensure the most significant impact for their organizations and communities.

PA Humanities Council	http://pahumanities.org/initiative/pa-sharp-recovery-and-growth-grants	Arts and culture	Nonprofit	Still active - PA SHARP Recovery & Growth Grants.
DCNR: Community Conservation Partnership Program	http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/brc/grants/CCPPBrochureFinalRev.pdf Applications due April annually	Outdoor conservation; land and water trails, parks	Municipalities; Nonprofit	Still active -
DEP Environmental Education	http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/environmental_education/13903/grants/588549 (page not found) https://www.dep.pa.gov/Citizens/EnvironmentalEducation/Grants/Pages/2023-EE-Grants-Program-Manual.aspx	Education	Nonprofit, municipalities; business	Still active -
DEP Cleanup and Brownfields	http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/environmental_education/13903/grants/588549 (page not found) www.dep.pa.gov/Citizens/GrantsLoansRebates/Pages/default.aspx	Brownfield remediation and redevelopment	Nonprofit; municipalities	Still active - 40 Grant and rebate programs to support a range of projects to improve or protect water, land, and air in PA. Scroll to section on local and state governments.
Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission	http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/grants_and_funding/3748 (page not found) https://www.phmc.pa.gov/Preservation/Grants-Funding/Pages/default.aspx	Historic Buildings	Nonprofit; Municipalities	Still active - has multiple funding programs.
DCED: Municipal Assistance Program (MAP)	http://www.newpa.com/find-and-apply-for-funding/funding-and-program-finder/municipal-assistance-program (my antivirus software blocked this page) https://dced.pa.gov/programs/municipal-assistance-program-map/	Multi municipal planning; shared services; flood management	Municipalities	Still active - Single Application process permits applications to be submitted at any time. Grants up to 50% of eligible costs.
Center for Rural Pennsylvania	http://www.rural.pa.legislature.us/resources.html#jan4b (my antivirus software blocked this page) https://www.rural.pa.gov/research-grants/eligibility	Community revitalization; multiple programs	Municipality; Nonprofit	Still active - Two research grants are available. (1) One-year grant to conduct applied research or identify local strategies. Max is \$50,000 (2) Mini Grant awarded to projects that focus on data collection and analysis. Max is \$15,000
Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission Keystone Historic Preservation Project and Construction Grants	www.phmc.state.pa.us	Historic buildings	Nonprofits; municipality; private but with public access	Still active - Min \$5000/ Max \$25000. 50/50 Cash Match App Deadline - March 1, 2023

US Dept. of Transportation	TIGERGrants@dot.gov https://www.transportation.gov/RAISEgrants/additional-guidance	Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER)	Municipality	Appears that TIGER funding stemmed from a 2014 large scale initiative. Biden admin has something similar RAISE Discretionary Grants - 1.5 Billion available.
Department of Community and Economic Development: Municipal Assistance Program	Municipal Assistance Program Grants (MAP) http://www.newpa.com/find-and-apply-for-funding/funding-and-program-finder/municipal-assistance-program	Formerly LUPTAP; Land Use Planning and Technical Assistance; three groups funded: shared services; community planning (including zoning) and Floodplain management	Municipality	See above
Department of Community and Economic Development: Keystone Communities Program	Keystone Communities http://www.newpa.com/find-and-apply-for-funding/funding-and-program-finder/keystone-communities-program	Community Revitalization; replaces Main Street Program	Community Development Corporation; Municipalities	Still active - (KCP) Applications are accepted July 1 through August 31. Planning grants may not exceed \$25,000 - dollar for dollar match is required.
Department of Community and Economic Development: Neighborhood Partnership Program	Neighborhood Partnership Program http://www.newpa.com/find-and-apply-for-funding/funding-and-program-finder/keystone-communities-program http://www.newpa.com/find-and-apply-for-funding/funding-and-program-finder/ (this site would not open) https://dced.pa.gov/programs/neighborhood-assistance-program-nap/	Community Revitalization	Community Development Corporation; Municipalities	Still active - Minimum \$100,000 serves clients who are low-income or residents of distressed neighborhoods. Requires business contributions annually for five years of \$50,000 - tax credits.
Department of Community and Economic Development: Keystone Innovation Zone Program	http://www.newpa.com/find-and-apply-for-funding/funding-and-program-finder/keystone-innovation-zones (antivirus blocks this site) https://dced.pa.gov/programs/keystone-innovation-zone-tax-credit-program/	Community Revitalization	Community Development Corporation; Municipalities	Still active - For profit business in operation less than 8 years. Tax credit equal to 50% of the increase in gross revenues. Credit shall not exceed \$100,000 annually. Awards no later than May 1 of subsequent year.
Department of Community and Economic Development: First Industries Fund	http://www.newpa.com/find-and-apply-for-funding/funding-and-program-finder/first-industries-fund-fif (antivirus blocks this site) https://dced.pa.gov/programs/first-industries-fund-fif/	Community Revitalization: agriculture and tourism	Municipalities; Community Development Corporation	Still active - LOAN and Grant CFA reviews applications for projects related to tourism or agriculture with at least \$500K of private invested funds.
Department of Community and Economic Development: Industrial Sites Reuse Program	http://www.newpa.com/find-and-apply-for-funding/funding-and-program-finder/industrial-sites-reuse-program (antivirus blocks this site) https://dced.pa.gov/programs/industrial-sites-reuse-program-isrp/	Community Revitalization: brownfield remediation	Municipalities; Community Development Corporation	Still active - Loan and Grant Int rate 2%/ term no to exceed 5 years / remediation loans not to exceed 15 years Maximum amount to be awarded not to exceed 75% of total cost of assessment or \$200K whichever is less in single fiscal year.

HOME INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAM

SMART PARTNERSHIPS FOR HOUSING SOLUTIONS

The HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) Program provides municipalities with grants and technical assistance to expand the supply of affordable housing for low and very-low-income Pennsylvanians.



HOME funds can be used in a variety of ways to address critical housing needs in the commonwealth. The program can leverage other governmental, non-profit or private funds to supplement the HOME funds for a greater impact.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

- Local governments on behalf of private, non-profit and for-profit housing development corporations
- HOME participating jurisdictions may apply under certain criteria (*see program guidelines on deed.pa.gov*)

ELIGIBLE USES

- Rehabilitation of substandard, owner-occupied housing
- Homebuyer assistance that helps people to acquire newly constructed or existing homes.
- Development of affordable homebuyer or rental housing units, including opportunities for persons with disabilities and formerly homeless individuals and families
- Operational support for nonprofit groups that qualify as Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDOs)

The PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) awards HOME funds on a competitive basis to projects which demonstrate that they aim to address housing needs, leverage other resources, and demonstrate significant community impact.

For more information, including funding amounts and detailed guidelines, visit deed.pa.gov/home.

HOME funding is provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and administered by DCED.



05/11/2022

Department of Community and Economic Development Grant Programs
Additional programs can be found at www.dced.pa.gov/program/

HUD Programs (NSP & Others)

Fayette County Community Action is a qualified applicant for this funding stream.

Local Share Account (LSA)

Annual application through the Fayette County Redevelopment Authority.

HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME)

The Pennsylvania HOME Program is a federally funded program that provides municipalities with grant and loan assistance to expand and preserve the supply of decent and affordable housing for low- and very low-income Pennsylvanians. Applications are made through the DCED Single Application portal.

Keystone Communities Program Funding:

First step - Seek Keystone Communities Designation Status

The Keystone Communities (KC) program is designed to encourage the creation of partnerships between the public and private sectors that jointly support local initiatives such as the growth and stability of neighborhoods and communities; social and economic diversity; and a strong and secure quality of life. The program allows communities to tailor the assistance to meet the needs of its specific revitalization effort.

Whole Home Program

The Whole-Home Repairs Program is the first of its kind in the nation, creating a one-stop shop for Pennsylvanians to repair and weatherize their homes by providing up to \$50,000 for habitability repairs and energy efficiency upgrades, allocating support staff to ensure applicants receive the help they need in the order they need it, and funding pre- apprenticeship and training programs to build a skilled local workforce capable of meeting the growing demand. The program is administered by the Redevelopment Authority of the County of Fayette.

Uniontown, PA June 7, 2017

Resolution No. 124

BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Uniontown:

To Adopt Ordinance No. 1696, Bill No. 1714

AN ORDINANCE

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF UNIONTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA, TO IMPLEMENT PA ACT 90-2010 OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA TO GOVERN BLIGHT PROPERTY PROBLEMS IN THE CITY OF UNIONTOWN.

An ordinance amending the Code of the City of Uniontown by adding to said code by authorizing the denial of permits and approvals in accordance with Act No. 90-2010 for serious code violations and to further authorize the recovery of cost and penalties, including attorney's fee or the abatement or prevention of serious code violation by an action in court to the full extent allowed by the Act while preserving all remedies to the recovery, prevention, abatement or restraint of code violations under other statutes and ordinances.

Submitted by _____

Seconded by _____

Yeas

Councilmen

Nays

✓
✓
✓
✓
✓

Billy
Jones
Palumbo III
Metros
Mayor Kasievich

Shannon Wood City Clerk

Mayor

Appendix III

Combating Blight: New Tools for the Ongoing Municipal Battle

By **Esch McCombie** on March 7, 2017

POSTED IN **MUNICIPAL LAW, REAL ESTATE, STATE GOVERNMENT**

Blight – or urban decay – reduces property values, has been linked to higher crime rates, and is visible throughout Pennsylvania in the form of deteriorated and abandoned properties. The Pennsylvania Neighborhood Blight Reclamation and Revitalization Act, 53 Pa.C.S. §6101 *et seq.* (the “Act”), provides additional tools to combat blight.

Originally passed as Act 90 of 2010 (“Act 90”), the Act subsequently was amended through the passage of Act 171 of 2014 (“Act 171”) and Act 34 of 2015 (“Act 34”). Through the Act and related laws as well as financing opportunities, municipalities and developers have the tools necessary to reduce blight and make neighborhoods safer and more desirable.

A case study illustrates the benefits of the Act. Philadelphia tracked the effects of the Act as applied to enforcement of a property maintenance ordinance and enforcement against owners of multiple properties. *William Penn Data Collaborative and The Reinvestment Fund, City of Philadelphia Licenses and Inspections: Act 90 Enforcement Analysis* (2014). The question addressed by the Study was whether code enforcement would benefit or further depress blighted areas. The clear answer was that strategic enforcement utilizing the Act significantly benefited blighted neighborhoods, especially those not in the margins (i.e., not affluent neighborhoods nor severely depressed neighborhoods).

Consider the potential value for your municipal or real estate client: The Study found the mean sales price of properties within targeted areas increased 31.9% from 2008 to 2012 as compared to 1.6% for comparable homes outside targeted areas. Where 80% of the properties in a targeted area were addressed, the average increase was over 48%. Conservatively, properties that complied with the City’s citations created approximately \$74 million in sales value for surrounding properties and at least \$2.34 million in increased transfer tax revenue for the City. Moreover, the City collected an estimated additional \$1.1 million through fees, fines and judgments, more than covering the City’s associated enforcement and training expenses.

Developers and municipalities can further enhance redevelopment efforts by combining the Act with the procedure set forth in the Abandoned and Blighted Property Conservatorship Act, 68 Pa.C.S. §1101 *et seq.* (the “Conservatorship Act”), referenced below.

The Act offers municipalities the ability to streamline enforcement through the establishment of “housing courts” within a county’s court of common pleas. A housing court enables a single judge to become intimately familiar with the property codes and repeat offenders. The Study found the threat of the City’s housing court was a significant factor leading to increased compliance with the City’s citations. Accordingly, from a municipal standpoint, municipalities and the courts of common pleas should be encouraged to consider establishing such courts.

The Act also offers municipalities significant new tools to combat blight. Prior to its passage, municipalities could only place liens against an offending property. Section 6111 of the Act permits additional leverage for municipalities when a property is in “serious violation of a code,” including, for example, building, housing, and property maintenance codes, or when a property becomes a “public nuisance” because of its condition. Specifically, the Act grants municipalities the authority to initiate *in personam* actions against property “owners.” An *in personam* action may be initiated when an owner fails to take a “substantial step to correct” a continuing violation for a period of six months “following receipt of an order to correct the violation.” In addition, municipalities may recover penalties imposed plus any lawfully incurred costs of remediation if it remedied the violation. It is important to note the Act specifically defines the terms “public nuisance,” “serious violation” and “substantial step;” therefore, any attorney preparing to utilize the Act should familiarize herself with each definition.

Equally powerful is Section 6112 of the Act. Section 6112 permits municipalities to attach a lien to an owner’s assets following a judgment or order by a court against the owner for an adjudication under Section 6111. For example, if “Borough A” obtains a judgment under the Act against the owner of a property, Borough A may place a lien against that property, the owner’s personal residence located in “Township Z,” and any other property owned by the owner located within the Commonwealth. Moreover, under certain circumstances giving rise to criminal liability, the Act permits municipalities to extradite nonresident owners to face prosecution in Pennsylvania.

Lastly, the Act limits owners of blighted property from expanding their holdings. Indeed, Section 6131 of the Act permits a municipality or a board (e.g., a zoning hearing board or historic architecture review board) to deny municipal permits, such as building permits, variances, and occupancy permits, when there exists a final and unappealable government collection delinquency or a judgment pursuant to Sections 6111 and 6112 of the Act against any property owned by the applicant in Pennsylvania. There are exceptions, including when the permit is necessary to correct a violation.

The Act has since been amended by the passage of Act 171 and Act 34. Act 171 clarified that the definition of “code” is only those codes related to “the use or maintenance of real property.”

However, it also added “other responsible part(ies)” residing outside Pennsylvania, who are responsible for property within Pennsylvania, as individuals who may be extradited under Section 6113 of the Act. Thus, both property owners and those managing their properties from outside the Commonwealth may be extradited pursuant to the Act.

Changes to the Act established by Act 34 are even more significant. Act 34 added Section 6115 which defines the offense of “failure to comply with a code requirement” and sets the grading of that offense. The criminal offense of “failure to comply with a code requirement” occurs when (1) the owner of real property is “convicted of a second or subsequent serious violation of the same provision of the [code] for the same property.” (2) “the violation poses a threat to the public’s health, safety or property and the owner has not taken a substantial step to correct the violation,” and (3) “the violation is considered a public nuisance and the owner has not made a reasonable attempt to correct [it].” A second conviction of a serious violation of the same provision of a code relating to the same property is a misdemeanor of the second degree, while three or more convictions warrant a misdemeanor of the first degree. So, while the Act can benefit developers and municipalities alike, owners should be forewarned that criminal charges can be brought against them if they fail to keep their properties up to code.

Unfortunately, Section 6115 of the Act is ambiguous and internally inconsistent. Section 6115(a) requires that “all of” the above elements apply even though the rest of the Act is applicable for any one of the elements. In addition, combining the offenses creates irreconcilable interpretations. For example, #2 requires that the offending property owner take a “substantial step” (a defined term and an affirmative action) to correct the violation, while #3 requires only a “reasonable attempt” to correct the violation. Regardless, the groundwork has been laid and hopefully the courts or the General Assembly will clarify or clear up the internal inconsistencies.

In addition, Act 133 of 2016 amended 68 Pa.C.S. §1081 and reduced from 18 to 12 months the amount of time new owners of property has to make their property comply with municipal codes. However, code compliance alone is not enough; capital investment and land reinvestment by municipalities and developers are also needed to effectively combat blight. To that end, the General Assembly passed Act 152 of 2016 permitting counties to opt-in to a program by which they charge an additional \$15.00 to record deeds. The money received from that fee is placed in a fund and used to lessen the expense incurred by municipalities that demolish blighted property after acquiring it.

Additionally, the Conservatorship Act permits municipalities or another “party in interest” (e.g., a developer) to take control of a noncompliant property to either bring it up to code or demolish it, and then recover related expenses. Together, those acts help lighten the burden of investment and reinvestment.

The Act and the other laws described above, in addition to financing opportunities, provide municipalities and developers with significant tools to combat blight. Of course, it all starts at the ordinance level and municipal enforcement of its code is only possible to the extent the code is enforceable. However, if enforceable, municipalities and even developers have the power to force code compliance.



Strategic Code Enforcement

How to Use Strategic Code Enforcement to Prevent Vacancy

Broken doors, high grass, or a sagging roof are more than just visual cues of vacancy. They pose serious health and safety concerns - and communities have the power to take action in response through code enforcement.

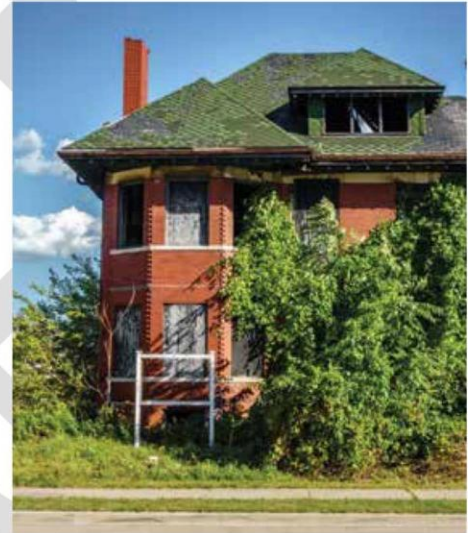
Code enforcement, defined broadly, includes all of the elements involved in obtaining compliance from private owners of vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties. Property ownership comes with important responsibilities, including maintaining properties in compliance with local codes.

What is strategic code enforcement?

Strategic code enforcement focuses on maximizing compliance while minimizing intervention from local government. It's an approach to code enforcement that uses data and community input to make the most of limited resources to achieve a community's goals.

Strategic code enforcement often involves public, private, and resident partners. The best strategic code enforcement efforts are equitable, effective, and efficient.

Equitable code enforcement recognizes differences in circumstances and provides the necessary support and protections to property owners in more vulnerable positions. Equitable code enforcement mitigates individual hardship while still working to improve property conditions.



Code enforcement that is used equitably, effectively, and efficiently is one of the most promising approaches to vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties.



Learn More about Strategic Code Enforcement
at communityprogress.org/codeenforcement

Center for **COMMUNITY PROGRESS**



Ready to Tackle Vacant Properties in Your Community?

Technical Assistance Consultation from
the Center for Community Progress



The Center for Community Progress is the leading national organization providing expert, high-impact technical assistance to end and prevent entrenched vacancy so that all people can live in safe, affordable, resilient, and equitable neighborhoods.

If you're ready to take a comprehensive approach to ending systemic vacancy in your community, we can help you get there.

What is Technical Assistance?

Technical assistance from Community Progress is a consultation service where we provide expert guidance and analysis to government officials and decision makers tailored to the needs of your community. Our team combines decades of legal, planning, and strategic expertise to **assess** the state of vacant property in your community, craft **recommendations** for policy and practice changes, and help you **build long-term capacity** so implementation succeeds.

Addressing vacancy cannot be solved overnight. What sets Community Progress apart is that our technical assistance team **builds relationships** to make sure local partners have the ongoing support they need to create long-term solutions to equitably prevent and reduce entrenched vacancy.

Our Services

The technical assistance team at Community Progress has expertise in a variety of topics including:

- Comprehensive assessment and strategy development to support vacant property revitalization;
- Property data collection and neighborhood market analysis;
- Strategic code enforcement;
- Delinquent property tax enforcement;
- Land banks and land banking; and
- Vacant land maintenance and reuse strategies.

We center racial equity in all we do, and design solutions to vacancy and deterioration within a framework of equitable community development so communities can realize goals like resiliency, healthy and affordable housing, and safe neighborhoods.

We assess your existing policies and practices that affect vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated (VAD) properties. By analyzing the state of VAD properties in your community,

conducting an initial assessment of your policies, or calculating the true cost of VAD properties on your municipality, we can help you understand the scope of the problem and which local and state laws, strategies and practices are working—and which aren't.

We recommend policy and practice changes your community can implement to equitably, effectively, and efficiently tackle vacant properties. From drafting specific ordinances and laws aimed at addressing problem properties, to comprehensive strategic planning, we tailor every recommendation to your unique needs.

We build your capacity so you can see policy change through to implementation by delivering locally based, topic-specific presentations, trainings, and customized resources. We can coach leaders and staff, and produce top-tier publications that share best practices for tackling vacancy to inform the field.

Ready to end systemic vacancy?

Community Progress has helped more than 300 communities across the country in their pursuit to reduce vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties. Contact us for more information about our services and pricing. Thanks to the generous support of our funders, we also may be able to offer reduced-cost technical assistance support related to property tax and code enforcement systems for specific communities. Inquire to learn more.

Email us about your community's needs and challenges at info@communityprogress.org and learn more at communityprogress.org/services/technical-assistance.



“

The technical assistance provided by the Center for Community Progress helped energize and pull together several initiatives that were underway within the City of Dallas. Their work proved to us that we were on the right path and, most importantly, provided us with tangible recommendations that we have implemented to take the all-important next step. The Blight Task Force is now a living, working, functioning group!

”

Kris Sweckard, Director of Code Compliance for the City of Dallas, Texas

About the Center for Community Progress

The mission of Center for Community Progress is to foster strong, equitable communities where vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties are transformed into assets for neighbors and neighborhoods. Founded in 2010, Community Progress is the leading national, nonprofit resource for urban, suburban, and rural communities seeking to address the full cycle of property revitalization. The organization fulfills its mission by nurturing strong leadership and supporting systemic reforms. Community Progress works to ensure that public, private, and community leaders have the knowledge and capacity to create and sustain change. It also works to ensure that all communities have the policies, tools, and resources they need to support the effective, equitable reuse of vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties. More information is available at communityprogress.org

HEADQUARTERS

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Flint, MI 48502

NATIONS CAPITOL

1101 14th St NW,
Suite 510
Washington, DC
20005

877.542.4842

communityprogress.org



Economic Impacts of Outdoor Recreation

A recent report by the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources reports:

1. The dollars spent by outdoor recreation enthusiasts accounted for a third (33%) of the total spending in Pennsylvania for leisure travel.
 - a. From 2002 to 2006, visitor spending within the Pennsylvania Wilds region grew by +6.3% per year, versus +4.9% per year for visitor spending within PA as a whole.
2. From 2002 to 2007, tourism employment within the PA Wilds region grew by
 - a. +0.5% per year, versus -2.2% per year for tourism in PA as a whole.
3. Outdoor Industry Association recent report late 2012:
4. Americans spent more money to enjoy the outdoors than buying gasoline, purchasing pharmaceutical drugs, or owning cars. More than 44 percent made outdoor recreation a priority, adding up to an annual economic impact of \$646 billion, (by comparison American buy \$354 billion worth of gas and other fuels).
5. Outdoor recreation supports 6.1 million jobs and adds \$80 billion in federal, state and local tax revenues. More American jobs depend on trail sports (766,000) than there are lawyers (726,200) in US according to the report.
6. "The biggest takeaway is that protecting our public lands, waters, and trails is more than just about the land. It is about preserving and protecting economies, communities, and people whose lives depend on having great places to play outside, " said Frank Hugelmeyer, president of the Outdoor Industry Association
 - a. *"Outdoor recreation and tourism are huge economic engines for local communities and the country, so it is vital that we continue to support policies and investments that help Americans get outside, learn to fish, or go hunting," U.S. Secretary of the Interior, Ken Salazar said in a prepared statement released with the 2011 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service survey.*
 - b. Research studies and surveys have clearly shown that all aspects of outdoor recreation continue to attract increasing numbers of people. A recent study from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service focused on Americans 16 years and older and found that in 2011 more than 90 million people hunted, fished or took part in other outdoor activities. The study conducted every five years showed a significant increase in both numbers and spending associated with outdoor activities.



Tourism: The second largest industry in Pennsylvania

The second largest industry in Pennsylvania, tourism has continued to increase annually despite the economic recession.

Research has determined that across the board, outdoor recreational activities, both passive and active, are growing in large measure due to the baby boomer generation.

Nearing retirement in better health and more active than previous generations, the 45-65 age cohort have made heritage and eco-tourism significant economic engines for many regions across the country; regions that had heretofore not focused on natural resources as economic assets.

(<http://www.outdoorindustry.org/images/researchfiles/RecEconomypublic.pdf>)

The number of Americans who participate in outdoor recreation activities:

Wildlife Viewing	66 million
Bicycling	60 million
Trails	56 million
Camping	45 million
Fishing	33 million
Paddling	24 million
Snow sports	16 million
Hunting	13 million

Outdoor Industry Foundation Study, 2006

- More Americans camp than play basketball
- The number of Americans who bicycle is double the population of Canada.
- More Americans paddle (kayak, canoe, raft) than play soccer.
- Participants in snow-based recreation are more than double the combined annual attendance for NASCAR's two premier events.
- Active outdoor recreation employs FIVE times more Americans than Wal-Mart, the world's largest private employer.

The economic impact of trail and river users is professionally researched and has repeatedly been objectively quantified.

The Rails-to Trails Conservancy offers regular research on line at <http://www.railstotrails.org/aboutUs/people/index.html> outlines on the economic impact of trails throughout the country, rural as well as urban areas, long distant as well as shorter distance trails.



One of the most thoroughly researched rail trails in the country is the Great Allegheny Passage (GAP) rail trail now running 138-miles from just outside downtown Pittsburgh to Cumberland, Maryland. In Cumberland, the trail joins with the C & O Canal Towpath and traverses another 182-miles to Washington D.C.

A Campos Market Research study looked at economic impact directly related to the GAP for the 2008 and 2009 season and credited the trail with over \$40 million in direct spending related by trail-users and \$7.2 in employee wages at trail-related businesses. A program launched in 2007 working in the towns bordering the GAP has noted 54 new and expanded businesses have created 83 new jobs in eight small rural communities.

The investors in these businesses often first discovered the opportunities in the towns while riding the trail. Since the typical rail trail user is of the baby boomer generation, there is a significant number nearing retirement age, looking for a possible second vacation/weekend home, a more rural setting for retirement or an opportunity for the long-considered retirement business. Along the Great Allegheny Passage, several new and successful businesses fit that profile.

A retired Naval officer and his wife, a retired schoolteacher, fell in love with Confluence, PA while using the Great Allegheny Passage. They sold their home in Arlington Virginia and purchased a home in Confluence. The next summer they purchased and renovated a large commercial building and now operate a repair and bike shop; offices for professional services and are presently busy restoring the top floor for apartments. Their brother and his wife followed a year later and are now also settled in Confluence.

A marketing director of a non-profit in Pittsburgh, discovered the Levi Deal Mansion B & B in Meyersdale. Her husband still commutes to his job in DC, but they operate the Mansion as a successful B & B on the Great Allegheny Passage. This particular business had previously been owned and originally restored by a couple from Baltimore.

A retired teacher in West Newton partnered with a local man who had been downsized out of job and together they turned a local convenience store into a restaurant, and outdoor patio café and bar. The Trailside in West Newton is one of the most popular stops along the trail and has expanded three times in five years.

The operator of a successful retail imported glassware business just outside of Pittsburgh, moved with her husband (retired) three years ago to Connellsville to operate a fine glassware boutique and B & B in a now fully restored building near the trail.

Confluence, a town of 654 full-time residents, now encourages visitors to stay overnight with 13 Bed & Breakfasts, dozens of guest houses and longer-term vacation rentals. Several of the latter are available when local residents purchased older homes and restored them for rental properties. The community, which at one time printed t-shirts NO BIKERS, now is so welcoming that on busy weekends several have been known to offer guest rooms in their own homes to stranded visitors.



A sample from the typical trail user demographic is listed below:

The majority of trail users are 35 and older; with a significant percentage 45-54 and up.



Source: Vermont Tourism Data Center, University of Vermont, Burlington VT, <http://www.uvm.edu/~snrvtdc/NFCT/>

- Study of the [Northern Forest Canoe Trail](#) (NFCT), a 740-mile route traversing New York, Vermont, Quebec, New Hampshire, and Maine.
- The NFCT Association has worked with communities along the water trail to develop amenities and to recognize the trail as an economic driver.
- Results of survey indicate that approximately 90,000 visitors paddled the waterways in the six study regions.
- Their spending in local communities created \$12 million in total economic impacts, supporting about 280 jobs.
- The median paddler group spent about \$215 per trip, primarily at lodging establishments, restaurants, grocery stores, and service stations.
- Non-locals spent an average of \$414-498 per trip, or \$46 per person per day.
- Please note—amounts vary significantly by study region.
- Communities with developed tourism infrastructure situated close to well-traveled waterways appear most successful at capturing visitor dollars.

Source: <http://www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/rtca/helpfultools/wtimpacts.pdf>

- Case study community trends indicate paddlers will spend between \$27 and \$63 per day. A destination paddler on a multiple day water trail trip will spend about \$88 in a community.
- In the eastern North Carolina region, the coastal plains water trail system produces 2.4 percent (\$55.14 million) of tourism economic impact. When combining local and non-local expenditures, North Carolina's coastal paddling experiences produced
- \$103.9 million (Thigpen, 2001).
- Canoeists on the Kickapoo spend over \$1.2 million in rural southwest Wisconsin.

Source: 2008 Paddle Tourism Study, North Carolina State Trails Program
http://www.ncparks.gov/About/docs/paddle_report.pdf

- The majority of participants in this survey (70%) believe that paddling is a viable form of economic development for North Carolina.
- Respondents spent almost one million dollars (\$947,800) last year on paddle trips outside their local area.

- Respondents spent nearly \$300,000 last year on trips within their local area.
- Kayaks dominated paddlers' choice of craft. Over half of survey participants (58%) indicated they use their own kayak when they go paddling.
- Over half of all survey participants (56%) considered themselves recreational paddlers. Another 27% considered themselves avid paddlers and 17% considered themselves novice paddlers.
- Viewing wildlife (91%) and being away from the city (88%) represented the top two elements of paddling trips most enjoyed by respondents.
- Over three quarters of respondents (77%) rely on word of mouth to plan their paddling trips. Other top sources for planning include the Internet (69%), and books (43%).
- 17.8 million Americans ages 6 and older participated in kayaking, canoeing, and rafting in 2008.
- 9.9 million Americans participated in canoeing in 2008. 7.8 million Americans participated in kayaking and 4.7 million in rafting.
- Paddling participants made 174 million outings in 2008, averaging 10 days per participant.
- Kayaking has enjoyed steady growth since 2006, climbing to 2.8 percent of Americans ages 6 and older in 2008.
- Recreational kayaking is the most popular type of kayaking followed – by a significant margin – by sea/tour kayaking and whitewater kayaking.
- 47 percent of kayakers go out 1 to 3 times per year.
- Canoeing is the most popular type of paddling. 3.6 percent of Americans aged 6 and older participated in canoeing in 2008.
- Canoeing participants make an average of 7 outings per year. Despite the activities greater popularity, canoeists make fewer annual outings than kayakers – 77.4 million compared to 69.5 million.

Source: http://bismarcktribune.com/lifestyles/outdoors/usfws-outdoor-recreation-on-the-rise/article_f6a042a0-4fac-11e2-8568-001a4bcf887a.html

The latest national survey of fishing, hunting and wildlife-related recreation shows the participation in outdoor pursuits has increased 3 percent in the last five years. The survey results are from 2011 and put together by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The survey focused on U.S. residents 16 years of age and older and found that more than 90 million people hunted, fished or did other activities related to wildlife.

The increase in participation was mainly among those who hunted and fished. The number of sportsmen rose from 33.9 million in 2006 to 37.4 million in 2011, the report found.

The survey showed 33.1 million people fished, 13.7 million hunted and 71.8 million participated in at least one type of wildlife-watching activity such as observing, feeding and photographing wildlife.

Wildlife enthusiasts spent \$144.7 billion in 2011 on their activities, equal to 1 percent of the gross domestic product. Of the total spent, \$49.5 billion was trip-related, \$70.4 billion was spent on equipment and \$24.8 billion was spent on other items such as licenses and land leasing and ownership.

There was some overlap in activities among anglers, hunters, and wildlife watchers. In 2011, 69 percent of hunters also fished, and 28 percent of anglers hunted. In addition, 51 percent of anglers and 57 percent of hunters wildlife watched, while 29 percent of all wildlife watchers reported hunting or fishing during the year. For hunters, most participated in big game hunting,

11.6 million. Small game hunters numbered 4.5 million, migratory birds 2.6 million and other games 2.2 million.

Freshwater anglers made up 27.5 million of the 33.1 million people who fished while saltwater anglers made up the remainder.

According to the U.S. [Outdoor Foundation](#), which recently released its 2010 [Outdoor Recreation Participation Topline Report](#), Americans are not just spending more time outside, they are also participating more in “core outdoor sports and activities.” The report shows a 3.3 percent increase in what they call “core” outdoor activities (from 97.5 million to 100.7 million Americans ages 6 and above).

The report shows a continued increase in hiking and camping and a huge increase in one particular activity; snowshoeing, which made a 17.4 percent participation rate increase. These results contrast with the fact that Americans are spending significantly less *money* on outdoor equipment, which indicates that Americans spending more time outdoors is a result of the poor state of the economy.

From the study:

"Americans surveyed indicated they preferred activities that could be "done in a day" based on costs and busy schedules, which illustrates how the economy created some vulnerability in the outdoor sports industry, as a whole."

Christine Fanning, Executive Director of [Outdoor Foundation](#) says, “We see the economy driving people back to nature. This has tremendous implications for health and wellness issues surrounding the sharp increases in childhood obesity,” adding that, “Outdoor recreation is finally being recognized as part of the solution. Our position is that nature should be the first prescription.”

The latest national survey of outdoor recreation shows a significant increase in hunters and a double-digit increase in anglers over the past five years.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation found the number of hunters increased by 9 percent while the number of anglers grew by 11 percent. The survey found that almost 38 percent of all Americans participated in wildlife-related recreation in 2011, an increase of 2.6 million participants from the previous survey in 2006.

In addition to more people in the field, they also spent more compared with the 2006 survey. In 2011, people engaged in wildlife-related recreation spent \$145 billion on related gear, trips and other purchases, such as licenses, tags, and land leasing and ownership, representing 1 percent of the nation's gross domestic product. That is up from \$120.1 billion in 2006.

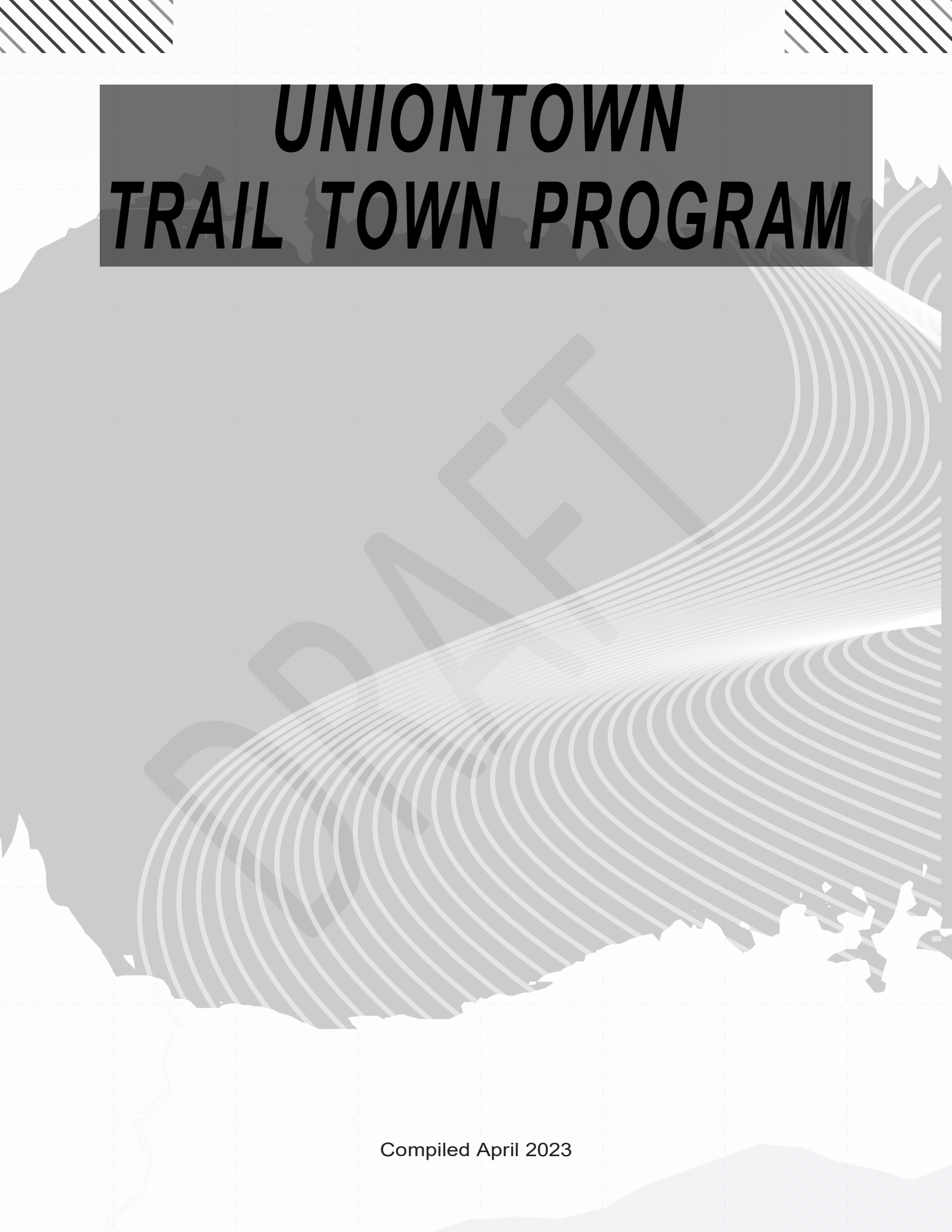
The report provides more evidence to Interior Secretary Ken Salazar as he travels the country touting the economic importance of outdoor recreation. It was a message he brought to a meeting on Aug. 14 with business and community leaders at Mount Rainier National Park.

"Outdoor recreation and tourism are huge economic engines for local communities and the country, so it is vital that we continue to support policies and investments that help Americans get outside, learn to fish, or go hunting," Salazar said in a prepared statement released with the survey.

Read more here: <http://www.thenewstribune.com/2012/08/26/2268570/new-survey-shows-number-of-us.html#storylink=cpy>

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DRAFT



UNIONTOWN TRAIL TOWN PROGRAM

Compiled April 2023

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Introduction

The number of people experiencing the outdoors is increasing each year. Twenty and thirty year olds flock regularly to land and water trails; baby boomers, leading longer and healthier lives, are seeking outdoor experiences in record numbers. With increasing frequency, both individual residents and businesses locate where trails and rivers are accessible.

A long trail, greenway or river represents a recreational/ tourism corridor and can offer new opportunities for your community. Visitors to these areas need services; they are looking for restaurants, lodging and sundry supplies. While these visitors are drawn to the natural element, they are also interested in welcoming communities that can make their journey a pleasant one.

The economic benefit to trail towns is well documented. A year-long analysis released in 2021 estimated \$121 million in annual economic impact from tourism along the 150-mile Great Allegheny Passage rail-trail. Other trails in other states across the country demonstrate similar economic benefits as noted in these studies:

Rails to Trails

<https://www.railstotrails.org/resourcehandler.ashx?id=4620>

American Trail

<https://www.americantrails.org/resources/the-business-of-trails-a-compilation-of-economic-benefits>

The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

<https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/GoodNatured/Pages/Article.aspx?post=205>

The goal of a Trail Town is to be a welcoming stop where visitors can experience an authentic community with a strong heritage and a solid conservation ethic.

To launch such a place, a core group of volunteers dedicated to a healthy downtown join together to craft a plan of action to ensure that their community will be in a position to offer visitors the services and amenities of the river and/or trail as recreation as well as a community which embraces conservation and sustainable development.

If done effectively, a Trail Town will reap the economic benefits of the growing eco-tourism market.



A Trail Town

WHAT IS A TRAIL TOWN?

A destination along a long-distance trail, whether on a river trail, towpath, water trail or hiking/biking trail. Trail users can venture off the trail to enjoy scenery, services, and the heritage of a nearby community with its own character and charm.

A safe place where residents and visitors can walk, bike, find the goods and services they need and easily access town and trail on foot, bike or by vehicle.

The trail is an integral part of the community. Trail towns are linked by the trail corridor.

A place where trail users may pass on a day trip or longer distance trek or may park to access the river or trail.



HOW DO YOU BUILD A TRAIL TOWN?

- **ORGANIZE:** CREATE A TRAIL TOWN ACTION TEAM
- **DESIGN:** VISUALLY IMPROVE YOUR TOWN'S APPEARANCE AND CONNECT TO THE TRAIL
- **BUSINESS GROWTH & ATTRACTION:** EDUCATE BUSINESS TO THE MARKET. ACTIVELY ATTRACT NEW BUSINESSES
- **MARKET:** POSITION AND BRAND YOUR TOWN AS A WELCOMING CENTER.



Trail Towns Vision and Strategy

Trail Towns envisions a corridor of revitalized communities that reap the economic benefits of outdoor recreational-based tourism as part of a larger, coordinated approach to regional economic development. The long-term economic viability of participating communities is to be achieved through concentrated business development efforts that capitalize on the trail user market.

Trail Towns embraces sustainable development practices, comprehensive community planning and cooperative marketing strategies to further the economic health of each community and enhance its connection to trails and other outdoor recreational opportunities.

The program follows a successful process first implemented in the communities along the Great Allegheny Passage. The economic development strategies launched there led to the opening or expansion of 55 businesses and 227 new jobs in six small rural communities over the first three years of the program launch. The economic impact from the trail in 2008 was documented at \$42 million in direct spending by trail users in these communities. The impact continues to grow as a recent report revealed: "Tourism on GAP Drives \$121 Million in Annual Economic Impact, Estimates Fourth Economy. Tourism along the 150-mile Great Allegheny Passage drove over \$121 million in economic impact in 2019, according to a year-long analysis by Pittsburgh-based consulting firm Fourth Economy released on November 30, 2021." <https://gaptrail.org/tourism-on-gap-drives-121-million-in-annual-economic-impact-estimates-fourth-economy/>

Creating a successful visitor destination is complex. If it were easy, the region would already be a world class destination. While there are currently many users of the outdoor recreational opportunities throughout Pennsylvania, there is limited public recognition in the small towns of the benefit of these users.

We strive for sustainable communities, a community that is trying to grow the local economy in a socially acceptable manner without destroying the resources that benefit and attract residents, businesses and visitors. It is also about working toward a closed loop cycle where the better job one does to protect and restore the resource, the greater and more sustainable the economic growth. It is about maintaining the resources as fewer dollars are available. Finally, it is about creating the perception and brand that this is where value, recreational and historic experiences exist for both active and passive recreation and it is a good place for the right businesses too.



Communities as Visitor Destinations

A destination is a place where people are willing to travel to experience the resources because:

- The resource is recognized as being unique
- Prospective visitors believe the local communities welcome them
- The region is large enough to support the investment in facilities and amenities
- The trail is long enough to attract overnight visitors
- The local community embraces and welcomes the visitor market
- Local businesses understand the needs of the user groups (customers)
- Communities acknowledge the value of their local outdoor recreational resources and actively engage in planning for their protection and sustainability.
- User organizations are interested in creating events and competitions to draw users into the local communities
- The trail system, community hubs and gateways are integrated and designed to make travel easy, safe, alluring and interesting.

A destination is sustainable because it is able to cater to a mix of seasonal markets and users. Fortunately, the woodlands, riparian areas, wetlands, agricultural fields, scenic views and trails have multiple markets. Protecting these resources helps grow the market. Connections between resource and town make it easy for visitors to enjoy their choice of recreation as well as access services and amenities.

Not all communities are created equal. Community evaluations are made to understand strengths and weaknesses of each community and to prioritize where to invest time and energy first. Next, groups work together to create the right community character, access, infrastructure, services, amenities and facilities for targeted users and business mix. This will require both short- and long-term strategies.

Short-term strategies deal with signage, minor infrastructure, facilities, store fronts, community readiness, “going green” strategies, small events, and a regional place-based business plan with prioritized initiatives. Longer term strategies deal with major infrastructure, business development and attraction, branding and major events. The goal is to create momentum in the short term with a clear vision for the future. This helps tourism and business development and attracts the interest of sponsors and funders.



Launching a Trail Town

1. **Determine whether the community meets criteria to warrant designation as a Trail Town.**

This determination is based on the number of community members that are willing to participate in advocating for the trail, ensuring that visitors have amenities and services and are made to feel welcome.

2. **Present to municipal officials**

Their engagement from the start is important, if not essential. The presentation to the municipal officials should be open to the public and outline the program and process.

3. **Engage your community**

Particularly the business community by hosting a community-wide meeting to discuss the value of the trail to economic development. Disseminate the economic impact studies for the Great Allegheny Passage, the C&O Canal Towpath, and other trail systems, including demographic information and raw numbers of visitors. Highlight the direct economic impact on business, if available.

4. **Review existing information**

- a. Review the inventory of existing and proposed trails, recreational facilities and opportunities and historic and cultural facilities, offerings and studies of the broader area, often county wide. The more attractions working together, the more tourists are attracted to visit.
- b. Review any existing economic development plans and strategies.
- c. Collaborate with local municipality and designated community groups (chambers, merchants associations) in scheduling community outreach.
- d. Identify existing businesses in trail town communities and related recreation and tourism businesses and assess status.
- e. Synthesize trail status (funding and completion status, existing length and nearby attractions).
- f. Develop descriptions of trail town community resources.

5. **Conduct a Needs Assessment**

The Needs Assessment is a survey to assist in producing a record and list of the gaps in service and connections with trail users. The process takes approximately 4-6 hours and actively engages community leaders, residents, trail users, municipal officials, business owners/operators, and experts in the fields of architecture, land use planning and economic development.

The Assessment process directs community goals, objectives and strategies based on the analysis that follows the activity. Those having participated in the Assessment follow the activity with a group debriefing and discussion of findings. Priority projects are determined and volunteer committees begin to take shape based on project interest.

The Trail Town Needs Assessment addresses issues of design, safety and access, business service gaps, trail and town amenities, marketing and sustainable, historic and environmentally conscious attitudes and programs in the community.

6. **Synthesize Assessment results and prioritize projects**

Immediately following the Assessment, synthesize results and outline priority projects in a community-wide debriefing. These projects become the foundation of the Trail Town Action Plan.

7. **Create the Action Plan**

The Action Plan will prioritize goals and propose strategies to obtain them. It includes projected timeframes, estimated budget costs and the parties responsible for completing the projects. It also includes possible financing sources to support the priority projects and other available tools.

8. **Form Committees to implement the Action Plan**

At the Assessment debriefing and following the prioritization of projects, committees are formed to begin the implementation of the Action Plan.

Community contacts form the basis of the Trail Town Action Team and act as a steering committee. This Action Team strengthens the planning process by identifying issues of local import, assists in community outreach and policy recommendations.

In that the implementation phase follows the Needs Assessment, the Action Team assists in identifying potential funding sources to implement the program. The Action Team should constantly strive to ensure broad public participation and meaningful involvement in the Needs Assessment process by residents and businesses.



9. **Community outreach and continued engagement**

The Action Team distributes the findings of the Assessment, the prioritized projects, committee structure and the initial action plan to community participants. The Trail Town Action Team

is encouraged to engage wide participation and to hold regular committee meetings to move the process forward. Consultant remains available for consultation as the committees meet and begin to map their process for implementation of their assigned projects.

10. **Participate in Regional Collaborative (Regional Action Team)**

Trail Town Action Team members also serve as part of a regional Trail Town Action Team that works regionally to address trail-wide issues, raise regional funding for trail town wide projects and aggressively assist in the marketing and sustainability of the trail. The Trail Town Action Team meets quarterly. All community participants are also invited to participate in periodic Trail Town summits to address key issues/challenges such as Packaging; Marketing; Signage and Branding.

11. **End Result**

The end result of the Trail Towns process are engaged communities recognizing the economic engine offered through outdoor recreational tourism and a working structure for moving a Trail Town community plan forward. The communities are better connected to available outdoor resources, attract and welcome visitors more efficiently and effectively and position a business attraction and economic development strategy on a proven and growing market.

Trail Town Business Attraction Program for Uniontown

Program Overview

A Trail Town business attraction program is designed to assist the local real estate community in marketing vacant and available properties in a Trail Town's business district or located within a reasonable distance from the trail.

An additional program goal is to increase sales and expand existing businesses.

Program Objectives

- Support the community and current property owners by marketing key businesses for sale or lease in the business district or within a reasonable distance from trail.
- Provide opportunities for new businesses and merchants looking for additional locations to readily find available space.
- Reduce the number of vacant and underutilized buildings.
- Expand the opportunity to bring in businesses to better serve Uniontown residents and trail visitors, enhance the business mix, and revitalize the downtown business district.
- Engage the real estate community in the leasing, sales, and promotion of business district properties.
- Facilitate expansions (in services, products, or real estate) among existing businesses.

Action Plan

A key recommendation for any community interested in becoming a Trail Town is to develop a Trail Town Action Team of interested community members. This action team can support existing organizations in Uniontown that share the goal of attracting new businesses and expanding existing ones. Organizations like the Uniontown Downtown Business Authority (UDBA) can begin to implement a Business Attraction Program. Begin by reaching out to existing business owners to help them understand the trail user market and consider expanding specific product lines to meet the market needs.

Trail Town information (there are dozens of economic impact studies) should be made available to the real estate community. A chart from the national Rails-to Trails organization outlines some of the studies available on the economic impact of trails throughout the area. There are dozens of more recent ones as well.

Trail User Comparison Chart

Trail, state and date of survey report	Total respondents	Survey distribution method	Local/non-local	Majority reason for using the trail	Age of majority of respondents	Average \$ amount spent on soft goods by trail user	% purchasing soft goods	Annual # of total user visits	Annual soft goods total	Resources
Ghost Town Trail, Pa., 2009	441	self-selecting, return mail	65% local 35% non-local	Health	46-65	\$13.62	72%	75,600	\$741,364	Ghost Town Trail 2009 User Survey and Economic Analysis; Rails-to-Trails Conservancy.
Pine Creek Rail Trail, Pa., 2006	1049	self-selecting, return mail	31% local 69% non-local	recreation	56-65	\$30.30	86%	138,227	\$3,601,919	Pine Creek Rail Trail 2006 User Survey and Economic Analysis; Rails-to-Trails Conservancy.
Perkiomen Trail, Pa., 2008	694	self-selecting, return mail	76% local 24% non-local	health	46-55	\$11.09	53%	397,814	\$2,338,231	Perkiomen Trail 2008 User Survey and Economic Analysis; Rails to Trails Conservancy.
Schuylkill River Trail, Pa., 2009	1223	self-selecting, return mail	80% local 20% non-local	health	46-55	\$9.07	50%	800,000	\$3,628,000	Schuylkill River Trail 2009 User Survey and Economic Analysis; Rails to Trails Conservancy
Heritage Rail Trail County Park, Pa., 2007	220	self-selecting, return mail & drop off	73% local 27% non-local	health	56-65	\$12.86	79%	394,823	\$4,011,165	Heritage Rail Trail County Park 2007 User Survey and Economic Impact Analysis; Carl Knoch, York County Rail-Trail Authority.
Oil Heritage Region Trail System, Pa., 2006	261	self-selecting	73% local 27% non-local	health	46-55	\$3.71 local / \$32.93 non-local (includes lodging/camping)	NA	160,792	\$4,308,229	Trail Utilization Study: Analysis of the Trail Systems Within the Oil Heritage Region; Allegheny Valley Trails Association, 2006.
Lower Trail, Pa., 2007	485	self-selecting	94% local 6% non-local	health	56-65	\$27.21 (includes gasoline costs & trail donations)	NA	NA	NA	Trail User Survey Report, The Lower Trail; Rails to Trails of Central Pennsylvania, 2008.
Great Allegheny Passage, Pa./Md., 2009	1272	intercepts	69% local 31% non-local	health	45-54	\$13.00	67%	NA	NA	2008 Trail Town Economic Impact Study (Phase II: Trail User Survey), Progress Fund and Laurel Highlands Visitor Bureau; 2009.
Torrey C. Brown Trail, Md., (formerly the NCR Trail), 2005	767	self-selecting	96% local 4% non-local	health	46-55	\$9.14	72%	800,000	\$5,264,640	NCR Trail 2004 User Survey and Economic Impact Analysis; Trail Facts, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, 2004.
Virginia Creeper Trail, Va., 2004	1036	intercept	47% local 53% non-local	health	46-55	\$19.20 (based on total \$ amount); \$2.00 (based only on local users)	NA	130,172	\$2,500,000	The Virginia Creeper Trail: An Assessment of User Demographics, Preferences, and Economics; Virginia Dept. of Conservation, 2004.
Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park, Va., 2004	1426	intercept	95% local 5% non-local		46-55	\$4.11	NA	1,707,353	\$7,000,000	The Washington & Old Dominion Trail: An Assessment of User Demographics, Preferences, and Economics; Virginia Dept. of Conservation, 2004.
Genesee Valley Trail, N.Y., 2009	233	self-selecting, return mail	92% local 8% non-local	health	46-55	\$10.83	31%	NA	NA	Preliminary Results for the 2008 Trail User Survey, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, February 2009.
North & South County Trail, N.Y., 2009	257	self-selecting, return mail	95% local 5% non-local	health	46-55	\$10.31	25%	NA	NA	Preliminary Results for the 2008 Trail User Survey, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, February 2009.
East Bay Bicycle Path, R.I., 2002	244	intercept & mail	NA			NA	80%	NA	NA	2002 Bicycle Transportation User Survey; Developing Inter-modal Connections for The 21st Century. U. of R.I. and R.I. DOT for U. of R.I. Transportation Center, 2004.
William C. O'Neil Bike Path, R.I. (formerly South County Trail), 2002	141	intercept & mail	NA			NA	84%	NA	NA	2002 Bicycle Transportation User Survey; Developing Inter-modal Connections for The 21st Century. U. of R.I. and R.I. DOT for U. of R.I. Transportation Center, 2004.

Trail Towns programming first launched over 15 years ago in the communities that border the Great Allegheny Passage rail trail, a 150-mile trail from Pittsburgh to Cumberland, Maryland. In Cumberland, the trail joins with the C & O Canal Towpath and traverses another 184-miles to Washington D.C.

In the first few years of the Trail Towns launch, over 60 businesses opened or expanded, creating 250 plus jobs in the original six small Trail Town communities. The investors in these businesses often discovered the opportunities in the towns while riding the trail. Since the typical rail trail user is of the baby boomer generation, there is a significant number nearing retirement age; looking for a possible second vacation/weekend home, a more rural setting for retirement or an opportunity for the long considered retirement business. Within the Great Allegheny Passage Trail Towns, several new and successful businesses fit that profile.

A retired Naval officer and his wife, a retired schoolteacher, fell in love with Confluence, PA while using the Great Allegheny Passage. They sold their home in Arlington Virginia and purchased a home in Confluence. The next summer they purchased and renovated a large commercial building and now operate a repair and bike shop; offices for professional services and are presently busy restoring the top floor for apartments. Their brother and his wife followed a year later and are now also settled in Confluence.

A marketing director of a non-profit in Pittsburgh discovered the Levi Deal Mansion B & B in Meyersdale. Her husband still commutes to his job in DC, but they operate the Mansion as a successful B & B on the Great Allegheny Passage. This business had previously been owned and originally restored by a couple from Baltimore.

A retired teacher in West Newton partnered with a local man who had been downsized out of job and together they turned a local convenience store into a restaurant, and outdoor patio café and bar. The Trailside in West Newton is one of the most popular stops along the trail and has expanded three times in five years.

The operator of a successful retail imported glassware business just outside of Pittsburgh, moved with her husband (retired) three years ago to Connellsville to operate a fine glassware boutique and B & B in now fully restored building near the trail.

Confluence, a town of 680 residents, now encourages visitors to stay overnight with 13 Bed & Breakfasts, dozens of guest houses, and longer-term vacation rentals. Several of the latter are available residents purchased older homes and restored them for rental properties.

1. Just as trail building is not an overnight project, neither is trail town development and the Trail Town Action Team will have to “sell the concept” repeatedly until it is completely evident to all in town.

2. Some of the many resources available:

[The Trail Town Handbook](#)

<https://gaptrailstore.org/products/trail-town-manual-capturing-trail-based-tourism>

[Deciding on Trails -Practices-Healthy Trails](#)

<https://www.amazon.com/Deciding-Trails-Practices-Healthy-Trail/dp/B08RH5N1T5>

The state agency to access for “all things trail related” is the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)

<https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/Communities/TrailDevelopment/pages/default.aspx>

The real estate community should be made aware of the typical trail user demographic as verified in multiple studies. (See www.gaptrail.org for several studies of the Great Allegheny Passage.) A sample from the typical trail user demographic is listed below:

- The majority of trail users are 35 and older; with a significant percentage 45-54 and up.
- The typical trail user traveling 50 or more miles will spend twice as much as the trail user traveling less than 50 miles.
- The household income levels of overnight trail users are significantly higher than average with 34.8% over \$100K.
- The average expenditure of an overnight trail user is \$98; day trippers on average spend \$13/day.
- Packaged trips are growing in popularity and the average package is \$350/person.

There is also significant information available about the value of properties located next to or near trails.

- Manon Trail, Indiana homes within ½ mile of the trail sold for 14% more than comparable homes in the area.
- Pinellas Trail, Florida. The median home sales prices adjacent to the trail escalate faster than county wide.

When trail systems were exploding around the state, a major concern heard from landowners was the possibility of an increase in crime. This has not proven to be the case and in fact studies have shown trails act as a deterrent to criminal activities.

- A study in Florida conducted by the Renaissance Planning Group concluded that trails acted as a deterrent on crime.
- The Rails to Trails Conservancy studies crime statistics from 372 trails of diverse length and type and found that the five million users on these trails reported crimes significantly below the national level.

The Trail Town Action Team should also consider partnering with the real estate community and UBDA to offer workshops specific to businesses. Perhaps a workshop for business owners on Financing your Small Business or Marketing to Outdoor Recreational Users.

Uniontown Trail Town Action Plan

Key Findings:

To fully reap the benefits of the attractive trail market the most important project to consider: Safe and clearly marked connections from the Sheepskin Trail to the downtown business district and other nearby market districts. This is the single most important and potentially impactful achievement.

To achieve the potential of a successful trail town, community enthusiasts and supporters should form a Trail Town Action Team to assist in marketing and promoting the trail and advocate, when necessary, for improvements.

Examples of how trail enthusiasts and supporters form active associations is found along the Great Allegheny Passage rail trail. For that trail, there is an overseeing nonprofit organization, the Great Allegheny Passage Conservancy (formerly the Allegheny Trail Alliance), and there are county wide trail/outdoor recreation-focused associations such as Somerset County Recreation and Trails Association (SCRTA www.scrta.org), a volunteer group interacting with Somerset County's Director of Trails and Parks. There is a volunteer-based organization in Connellsville, the Yough River Trail Council https://www.regionaltrailcorp.com/yough_river_trail; and in Confluence, Confluence Tourism Association, another in Westmoreland County, Westmoreland Yough Trail Chapter <https://bikewytc.org/> and the Regional Trail Corporation in West Newton <https://www.regionaltrailcorp.com/> to name just a few.

Varying organizational structures have been used but the purpose is the same: promote and connect trails in a municipality to reap the benefits for residents; for business growth and overall to increase the value of the community and region.

ACTION PLAN

Recommendation 1: FORM A TRAIL TOWN ACTION TEAM.

A local group should meet regularly to effectively achieve results and quickly address issues. As is true of any project, some motivated action team must keep others moving forward and on task. A trail town action team can fill that need.

Just as trail building is not an overnight project, so is trail town development and the Trail Town Action Team will have to "sell the concept" repeatedly until it is completely evident to all in town.

Some of the many resources available:

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Recommendation 2:

Take away the fear of change with statistics and plenty of “on the ground” examples from other trail towns. Invite business owners from other trail towns, take community members on a tour to other successful trail towns.

Educate people. Trail Towns along the Great Allegheny Passage often welcome Chamber and other business associations to their communities to show them directly the business growth due to trail traffic. When the trail town program was first launched, a bus was chartered and took municipal, tourism, business leaders to visit towns up and down the Great Allegheny Passage trail showing community leaders the opportunities firsthand. Those who wished to do so, cycled eighty miles of the GAP to fully understand the importance of connections to towns along the way.



Be familiar with up-to-date statistics that sell the concept of trail towns. The statistics most important would include economic impacts of long-distance bike trails. Be prepared to answer with information and the many studies that demonstrate there is no increased crime associated with long-distance trails. Become familiar with the studies that also demonstrate increased property values for residences near a trail. Many of the trail town businesses are seasonal in nature; but they continue to survive and thrive in many cases. How do they do that? What are the most important services to offer in a trail town? Why is signage so important?

Address Signage Issues both on and off the trail. Create a signage committee to inventory existing signage; review models from other trails (the Great Allegheny Passage Sign Guidelines is available at www.gaptrail.org); Develop a signage plan along with a funding plan; and determine sign standards.

Signs to be considered:

- Gateway portals on either end of town
- Share the road signs through town
- Vehicular access to parking and trail heads
- Trail user accesses to town (directional and wayfinding)
- Business directory with map and services (at trail heads)
- Visitor information on the town (at the service station ; other visitor access points)

Recommendation 3:

Engage the business community in the Trail Town process and educate on the value of the market. Consider a hospitality workshop. Develop a funding strategy to assist in the purchase of bike racks throughout town.

Engage businesses in consideration of expansion of services to address gaps (i.e. could a restaurant open an ice cream parlor or offer outdoor seating? Deli sandwiches to eat in the park along the river? Can the auto repair shop repair bikes?

Recommendation 4:

Work closely with municipal leadership to ensure they are on board. Offer the Action Teams assistance in marketing available and vacant properties on the Uniontown website and support with collateral material (posters/flyers/postcards). Engage the real estate community in the value of the trail/river users as potential investors in the community.

Target potential industries to fill specific gaps: B & Bs; coffee shops; ice cream vendors; café with wait staff.

Recommendation 5:



Ensure the community website is attractive, with a large number of good quality photos, information on services and amenities, includes the street routes to and from the trailheads and generally acknowledges the value of the trail and cyclists. A significant number of cyclists (over 80%) plan any biking trip on line and will visit the towns they will be passing for services, amenities, and will judge on the need or desire to visit and spend time (AND MONEY) in that town. YOUR TOWN'S WEBSITE IS VERY OFTEN THE FIRST IMPRESSION FOR A TRAIL VISITOR.

Recommendation 6:

Develop a self-guided historic walking tour of Uniontown's downtown and offer a downloadable pdf online as well as printed versions distributed at businesses throughout town. This program will keep the visitor in your community for a longer amount of time, and familiarize them with the investment opportunities in this special trail town.

Sample: TRAIL TOWN ASSESSMENT

Customized for Trail and River Towns by:
McCollom Development Strategies, LLC.

*Modeled from the Great Allegheny Passage trail assessment developed
by the Allegheny Trail Alliance)*



TRAIL TOWN NEEDS ASSESSMENT COMPILATION FROM UNIONTOWN RESIDENT/ VISITOR ASSESSMENTS

The checklist responses represent the majority of answers from assessors.

SECTION 1 - BUSINESS CHECKLIST

Overall Impressions:	Yes	No		
Is there a gateway point to enter/leave town (e.g. a piece of art; mural; sign)?		x		
Do business hours match customers' needs (e.g. open on weekends)?		x		
Are customers greeted warmly when they walk through the door?	x			
Are businesses clean, including windows?		x		
Are businesses attractive, both exterior and interior?		x		
Accommodating to Visitors:				
Are there publicly-accessible restrooms in the businesses?	x			
Is there a tourism information or visitor center?		x		
Can employees answer questions about your town or the region?	x			
Business Signs:				
Are businesses open on Saturday and Sunday?	x			
Are business signs clearly visible with hours of operation noted?	x			
Services:				
Does your town have the following types of businesses or services?				
Food:	Yes	No	Open Weekdays?	Open Weekends?
Outdoor vending machines		x	x	x
Grocery or portable food		x		
Coffee shop	x		x	x
Ice cream	x		x	x
Fast food or chain restaurant	x		x	x
Informal café with wait service	x		x	x
Restaurant with liquor service	x		x	x
Restaurants that offer outdoor seating	x		x	x
Do restaurants serve local food?		x		

Lodging:					
Hotel or Inn		x			
Bed and Breakfast		x			
Motel		xx			
Hostel					
Nearby camping		x			
Services and Amenities:					
Convenience/quick stop store	x		x	x	
Drug Store	x		x	x	
24 hour ATM	x		x	x	
Bookstore		x			
Laundromat	x		x	x	
Emergency medical service	x		x	x	
Shuttle service to nearby towns		x			
Public Transportation		x			
Taxi service		x			
Access to public email service (e.g. at the library)	x		x	x	

Promotions:	Yes	No
Does your town host special events to encourage people to come to town?	x	
Do businesses use special promotional tactics to invite people in (e.g. free ice cream?)		x
Are there any events now linked to outdoor recreation?		x
Do businesses offer out of town shipping for large items?		x

SECTION 2 - DESIGN CHECKLIST (Visual Appearance)

Town and Storefronts:	Yes	No
Does the business district feel distinct or special?		x
Does your town feel safe?		x
Is a walk through the business district generally a pleasant experience?		x
Are walls and storefronts kept free of graffiti?	x	
Buildings and Parking:		
In general, are vacant storefronts reasonably maintained?		
Does the community enforce building codes?		
Are historic buildings restored and recognized?		

Storefronts:		
Are store windows lit at night?	x	
Are storefronts maintained (e.g. no broken glass, crumbling bricks, peeling paint)?		x
Do stores have attractive window displays?		x
Are there street banners and/ or pole banners in the business district?	x	
Are there drinking fountains or free access to potable water?		x
Are there decorative lampposts for night lighting?		x
Clean and Green Elements:	Yes	No
Are there enough benches in public spaces?		
Are parks/green spaces easily accessible and welcoming to visitors?		x
Do parks have adequate benches or other amenities?		x
Are street trees used effectively?		x
Are the sidewalks swept and kept neat and free of debris?		x
Are there sufficient trash cans in town?		x
Are there recycling receptacles in town?		x
Access Area: Proposed Trail	Yes	No
Signage:		
Is there an attractive, well-placed access area to the proposed trail?		x
Are there well-placed access area directional signs (signs that direct to trail access and back to town)?		x
Is there an informational kiosk or bulletin board at the trail access area?		x
Are there directional signs at the access area indicating destinations to the east/ west or north/south?		x
Is there a rules and regulations courtesy sign at the trail access area?		x
Is there interpretive information at the access area?		x
Is there information about the town, services or amenities at the access area?		x
Is there a map of your town at the access area?		x
Is there available information about your town's nearby services and other attractions that can be "taken away" (e.g. a brochure)?		x
Are there signs to emergency facilities?		
Parking lots:	Yes	No
Does the parking lot have extra length for hitch-mounted bike racks?		x
Does the parking lot have extra turning radius for shuttle vans?		x

Amenities:	Yes	No
Are there flush toilet facilities available to the public?		x
Is there a portable toilet available to the public?		x
Is there a public water fountain?		x

Are there trash receptacles?	x	
Are there picnic tables?	x	
Are there pavilions or shelters?		x
Are there bike racks?	x	
Is there security lighting?		x
Is there a pay telephone?		x

SECTION 3 - TRAFFIC and ACCESS ISSUES

General Access Between Trail and Town:		
	Yes	No
Is it easy for visitors to access downtown or commercial district from trail?		x
Signage:		
Is there adequate signage for motorists to find the trailhead from town?		x
Does your town have a sign ordinance?		x
Is there adequate signage from the trailhead leading to the town?		x
Is there sufficient signage for finding businesses and services?		x
Safety:		
Are sidewalks in good shape?		x
Are crosswalks well-marked?		x
Do motorists generally respect pedestrians in crosswalks?	x	
Are there pedestrian walk/don't walk signals?		x
Are there enough stop signs and stop lights in town?		x
As a pedestrian, do you feel safe when walking through town?		x
Parking (vehicles, and/or bicycles):		
Is there sufficient on-street parking?	x	
Are off-street parking lots placed behind stores?	x	
Are curb cuts in front of businesses limited in size and number resulting in a continuous sidewalk?	x	
Are there bike racks near businesses?		x
Are there secure off-sidewalk bike parking areas close to the business district?		x

BUSINESS ATTRACTION STRATEGY FOR TRAIL COMMUNITIES

Program Overview For communities with long distance trails, this is a sample business recruitment program designed to market and encourage the sale/lease of available properties in the central business district. The influx of trail traffic and the most common demographic of trail user has proven to be an attractive market for trail communities. Multiple studies prove the economic impact of trail visitors, and the percentage of businesses owned and operated by trail community transplants.

Program Objectives

- Support the community, municipality, and current property owners by marketing all businesses for sale or lease in the central business district
- Provide opportunities for new businesses and merchants looking for additional locations to readily find available space in Uniontown
- Reduce the number of vacant and underutilized buildings in Uniontown
- Expand the opportunity to bring in businesses to better serve the community, enhance the business mix, and revitalize the business district
- Engage real estate community in the leasing, sales and promotion of central business district properties.
- Facilitate expansions (in services, products, or real estate) among existing businesses.

Tactics

- Determine service gaps in Uniontown and target business clusters to address those service gaps.
- Launch central online platform carried on the Uniontown website listing all vacant and available commercial properties within a defined focus area.
- Market the online platform on the web site and drive traffic to the site through advertisements (possibly in Trail Guide)
- Regular updating of Uniontown web site to ensure valid, targeted information.
- Host a Business Opportunities Event(s) in one of the vacant properties for real estate agents, brokers, related business owners, entrepreneurs, and developers.