



DEINDUSTRIALIZED COMMUNITIES MARKET STUDY

Final Report

May 2022



Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office
PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL AND MUSEUM COMMISSION

Letter from the State Historic Preservation Office

31 May 2021

The Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office (PA SHPO) is a bureau within the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, the commonwealth's official history agency. The PA SHPO manages all the commonwealth's historic preservation programs, one of which is participation in the Section 106 consultation process. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires federal agencies to take into account effects of their undertakings on historic properties and to seek ways to avoid, minimize or mitigate adverse effects.

In 2015 Shell Chemical Appalachia (Shell) required a permit from the US Army Corps of Engineers (the Corps) to build a petrochemical plant in Beaver County, Pennsylvania. The permit triggered Section 106 consultation; because the plant construction necessitated demolition of several historic properties and archaeological resources, the Corps, Shell, PA SHPO, and local consulting parties developed an agreement to mitigate those losses.

This market analysis is one of several mitigation projects from the agreement. This study's purpose is to create implementable strategies to help smaller deindustrialized communities leverage their historic resources for economic development purposes using data from public outreach, market analysis, and research.

The PA SHPO has long recognized the need for this study. The late 1970's- early 1980's collapse of the region's century-old heavy industrial economy resulted in massive job loss, depopulation, decaying infrastructure, environmental degradation and reduced local government capacity to cope with these challenges. In the national consciousness, larger cities such as Pittsburgh, Cleveland and Buffalo were the face of the "Rust Belt" label. However, over the past decade, many of these larger post-industrial cities have forged comebacks, creating new opportunity through development of alternative economic development strategies.

Though, lost in that narrative is that tens of thousands of people living in smaller communities that continue to struggle with the effects of deindustrialization. For these smaller communities, the transition to new economic paradigms is an ongoing struggle.

The PA SHPO documented that many historic buildings built during industrial prosperity remain largely intact and are often underutilized economic assets for these communities. The thoughtful identification, stabilization, preservation, and marketing of historic buildings can provide economic opportunity and a foundation for further revitalization. Individually, these opportunities are not of the industrial scale that built these communities in the first place, but collectively they create immense potential and can fit into holistic 21st century strategies of community and economic development.

This study is the PA SHPO contribution in providing local governments and communities as well as regional and statewide partners with data and implementable tools to use historic properties as economic assets. The holistic integration of these tools with other community resources such as riverfront access, sustainable living spaces and the vast human capital these communities possess will help create a roadmap for long-term success. It is our hope that this regional study's strategies and recommendations will be a model for the commonwealth and will be replicated in other communities on how to successfully integrate historic preservation tactics into broader revitalization plans.



Andrea L. MacDonald, Director and Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office

Study Team

The Deindustrialized Communities Market Study is a project of the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office (PA SHPO) for the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC).



Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office
PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL AND MUSEUM COMMISSION

Commonwealth Keystone Building
400 North Street, 2nd Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17120

www.phmc.pa.gov/Preservation

Tom Wolf Governor

Nancy Moses PHMC Commission Chair
Andrea Lowery PHMC Executive Director

Andrea MacDonald PA SHPO Director, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
Elizabeth Rairigh PA SHPO Division Manager: Preservation Services
William Callahan PA SHPO Community Preservation Coordinator: Western Region
Shelby Splain PA SHPO Education and Special Initiatives Coordinator

Study Consultants

In 2021 PA SHPO selected a team of consultants led by AKRF Inc which included evolve environment::architecture (evolveEA).



332 North Shore Drive
Building 1B, Suite 200
Pittsburgh, PA 15212

www.akrf.com

John Neill
Lorianne DeFalco
Madeleine Helmer
Tom Batrone



evolve
environment::architecture

6020 Broad Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15206

www.evolveEA.com

Christine Mondor
Elijah Hughes
Ashley Cox
Nicole Catino
David Ge
Harisa Martinos

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Unless otherwise noted, photographs were taken by the AKRF and evolveEA team in February and March of 2022.

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Chapter 4

Key Opportunities



Donora, PA

4.1 Introduction

Each community in this study has opportunities for interventions and investments that activate and rehabilitate the downtown historic fabric. The scale of these opportunities ranges from a single building, to a blockfront and a district. This chapter presents targeted strategies for enhancing, redeveloping, and reusing the historic commercial corridors and the key historic buildings within the business districts. This chapter addresses common building and district typologies, and appropriate uses for the historic buildings within these types. Following this section, the chapter addresses opportunities for each community, including district recommendations and reuse opportunities for key historic buildings. Flood mitigation opportunities are also addressed below. This chapter concludes with a list of funding sources.

4.2 Building and District Typologies

Within both regions, the downtown historic buildings and blockfronts have shared characteristics that are appropriate for certain types of interventions and investments. This section identifies common themes present in both regions of this study and the appropriate future uses for activating those buildings and contributing to the commercial district's economic development and preservation.

High-Vacancy Downtowns

Donora and Monessen have largely intact downtowns but many of the buildings are vacant. Charleroi and Rochester would also benefit from an increase in foot traffic downtown. Second-floor spaces are frequently vacant in most communities and in both regions. As described in Chapter 3, "Market Analysis," all communities have a market demand for quality, affordable housing. With the exception of Beaver Borough, the communities in this study have higher levels of unemployment and lower median household incomes compared to the counties that contain them. As described in Chapter 2, "Planning Context," concentrating housing near the commercial center is a strategy for increasing foot traffic and which supports local business. For communities with lower occupancy rates that are aiming to attract activity to the downtown, additional housing establishes foot traffic in the business center, supporting local business. In high vacancy downtowns, historic buildings can be repurposed to provide housing, thus establishing the customer base necessary for downtown revitalization. On a concentrated section of the main street (approximately one quarter mile), housing should be located on the upper stories in order to retain an active ground-floor presence and a continuous blockfront.

Pervasive vacancy and blight can lead to further disinvestment. If stabilizing investments are not made immediately, the historic fabric of these downtowns could deteriorate beyond repair. Chapter 2 “Planning Context” describes strategies for combatting blight, including inventories, penalties, and how to activate vacant properties in order to halt the progression of disinvestment.

Active Corridors

Ambridge, Beaver Falls, Beaver, and Monongahela have more active main streets that can serve as a model for other communities in the study. Uses in historic buildings in these communities could be an opportunity to leverage existing events, programming, and local attractions with additional uses that attract out-of-town visitors, including recreational and entertainment uses. Within these communities, there is opportunity for focusing design interventions on a targeted section of the main street.

Small Storefronts

Ambridge, Charleroi, Donora, and Beaver Borough are communities that contain a uniform corridor of smaller-scale storefront buildings. Typically, 20- to 30-foot-wide and 100 feet deep, the buildings include a single retail store on the ground-floor and one or two floors above. The upper floors of these buildings are often vacant. These buildings were typically constructed between 1890 and 1920, when the communities’ business districts were thriving. The buildings are brick and their façades often include intact ornament such as bracketed cornices, decorative brickwork, and wrought-iron balconies on the upper stories (locally referred to as porches). In general, the historic storefront buildings are suited for retail on the ground-floor with residential or office uses above. The smaller storefront buildings are compact and inexpensive to operate, while being centrally located in the communities. These qualities are ideal for entrepreneurs. The storefront can also be used as a pop-up shop, or a multi-use community venue for art exhibits, classes, and poetry readings.

Larger Anchor Buildings

Larger multistory buildings are common in Aliquippa, Rochester, Monessen, and Beaver Falls. Corner properties in Charleroi and Donora are also often developed with larger buildings. The commercial streets include three to four-story commercial or municipal buildings, typically at high-visibility intersections. The stone and brick-clad buildings often have Classical Revival-style façades that feature pilasters, parapets, round-arched windows and Classical entablatures. Due to their original uses as municipal buildings or banks, these buildings often feature large open-plan ground-floors, tall windows, and durable materials. The buildings are also more visible on the block, because of their height, longer street front and architectural features. These larger buildings on the commercial corridor may be suited for a community gathering space, an open market for local crafts people or vendors, or pop-up installations. Adjacent vacant land can be activated with community events and artist installations. An open market can offer a unique retail space for vendors or permanent booths. For communities that do not have high-volume foot traffic, major appliance and furniture stores do not require a large amount of pedestrian traffic.

Interrupted Corridors

Some downtowns, such as in Aliquippa, Beaver Falls, New Bedford, and Monessen, are broken up with areas of vacancy or surface parking between buildings. These areas may be challenged with a less vibrant pedestrian experience, and less foot traffic. Some vacant lots and parking lots are owned by municipal agencies. Reuse projects in these corridors could temporarily or permanently activate vacant lots, with tents or parks. Future investment in these communities must target a focused portion of the corridor, to initiate a continuous active street front that will attract pedestrians. In this limited section, ground-floor uses should be limited to retail, restaurant, and other spaces that activate the sidewalk. Beyond the boundaries of this targeted section, building uses can be more flexible to include housing and office space.

Riverfront-to-Downtown Access Corridors

Downtown riverfront connection is an opportunity for providing the entertainment and recreational uses that are in demand in both regions. The riverfront offers unique and desirable water related opportunities for central business district planning efforts. The 12 communities in this study have relied on the river, as a source of power, a means of transportation, and an engine of industry. The riverfront can continue to serve as an economic driver for communities in the two regions. Inter-municipal cooperation and partnerships can result in enhanced riverfront use and visitorship from within and without the region. The future Ohio River Greenway Trail is planned to connect with Aliquippa, Ambridge, Beaver Falls, Midland, Monaca, New Brighton, and Rochester. In the Monongahela River Valley, Charleroi, Monessen, and Monongahela participate in the Mon River Coalition, an economic and community development efforts to attract business and tourism through outdoor recreation along the Monongahela River.

Adaptive reuse initiatives in the commercial downtown can leverage existing assets. For many communities in the study, the waterfront is a valuable resource. Connections in terms of signage and walkways should be provided and clearly indicated to connect the downtowns to the waterfront, and thereby connect each community to the larger region.

In Charleroi, future projects can connect with the planned Magic City Riverfront Park, a riverfront park between Second and Third Streets, in close proximity to the business corridor. The park will feature trails, playfields, fishing access and a boat launch. Future uses in Charleroi's business corridor can serve the visitors and residents that will come to use this park, drawing foot traffic from the riverfront to the business district.

In Monongahela, the Aquatorium is a unique amenity along the river and in close proximity to West Main Street. Future uses in Monongahela can benefit from the Aquatorium's popularity. The way-finding and street beautification efforts that have been implemented on West Main Street could be extended along Second or Third Streets to solidify a pedestrian connection between the Aquatorium and the downtown.

Monaca and Rochester also have waterfront access. In both communities, way-finding and a devoted pedestrian corridor could direct foot traffic between the park to the business district.

Industry-to-Downtown Access Corridors

Many communities in the study continue to have active industry along the riverfront and in close proximity to the downtown. People who work at the industrial plants throughout the week are in close proximity to main street businesses. Communities can establish clearer pedestrian connections between the downtown and the industrial plants, to draw clientele from the industrial parks. Communities with industry that is located in close proximity the downtown include: Charleroi, Donora, Monessen, Monongahela in the Monongahela River Valley, and Ambridge, Aliquippa, Midland and Monaca in the Ohio and Beaver River Valley.

4.3 Community Opportunities

This section addresses opportunities specific to each community's commercial district, and potential uses for historic buildings in each community. This section includes an evaluation of each corridor's physical characteristics, including street design and building types. The existing zoning for each community's commercial corridor is also described. Within each community, this report recommends programming and policies that would activate the historic corridor, draw investment, and preserve the commercial district's historic character.

This section of the report also presents potential uses for historic buildings. Historic building investments can draw further interest to a street, community, or even a region¹. The following potential uses are intended to serve as demonstrations of best practices that can be widely applied to other communities that share similar existing conditions. Integral to any adaptive reuse development project is an assessment of the existing building's structural integrity, its interior architecture, and the status of the current owner and current use; this report does not address these vital issues, but rather applies future uses to historic buildings in order to demonstrate the findings of this market analysis and to exemplify the potential for historic property investment in the 12 study communities.

As described in Chapter 1, "Study Communities," this study focuses on historic buildings located in the business districts that are National Register- listed or considered by the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office (PA SHPO) as eligible for listing in the National Register, as well as properties recommended as eligible based on the 2020 historic resources survey and older historic resource surveys shown in the PA SHPO cultural resources online database (PA-SHARE).

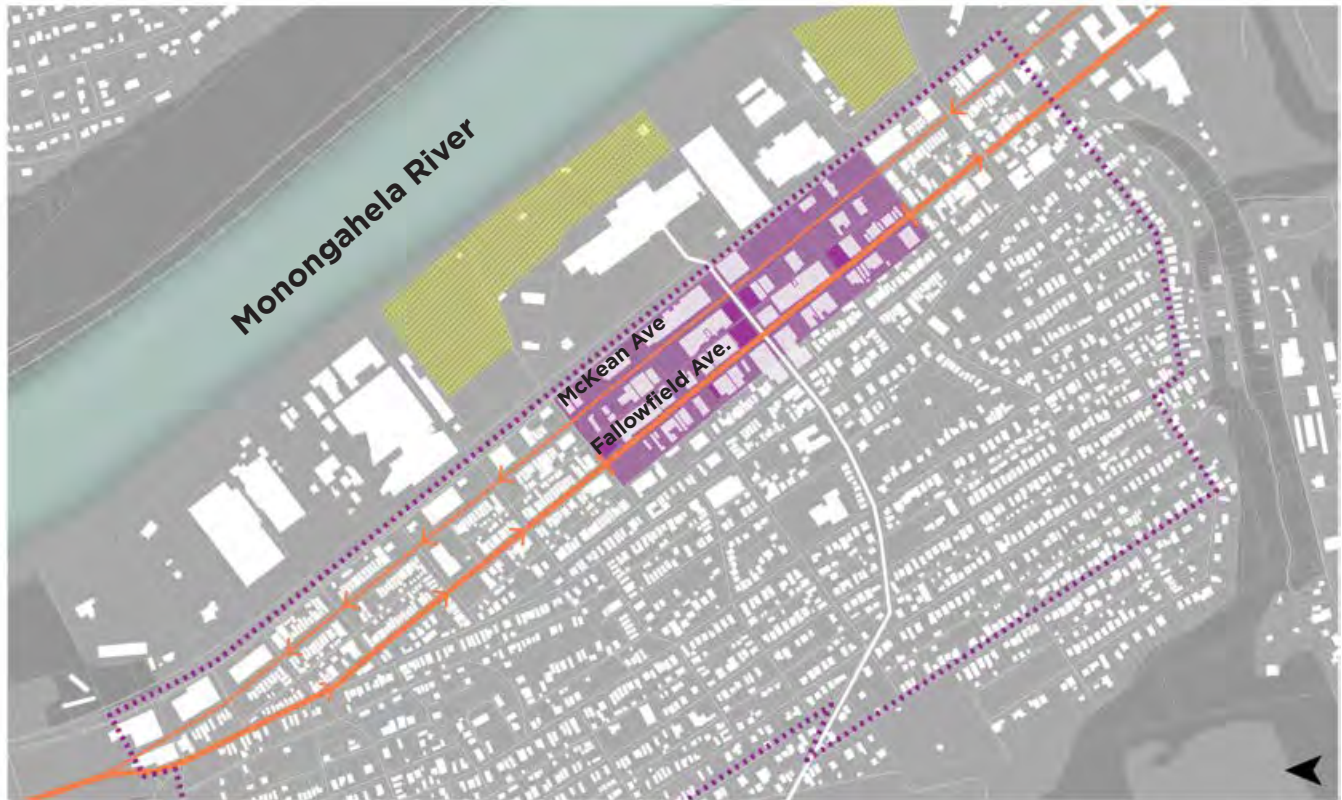
Historic buildings in downtown Beaver do not exhibit signs of vacancy or underutilization. No historic property investment opportunities are identified in Beaver. However, Beaver's historic central business district along Third Street is located within the Beaver National Register Historic District. Therefore, any substantial rehabilitation in the business corridor could qualify for historic rehabilitation investment tax credits (see pages 197 and 198).

¹ United States Environmental Protection Agency. Smart Growth and Preservation of Existing and Historic Buildings. Accessed 2022 at <https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/smart-growth-and-preservation-existing-and-historic-buildings>

Charleroi

Monongahela River Valley: Washington County

4



■ Park or Open Space ■ Business District ■ Significant Buildings — Main Road ■ Historic District

Charleroi's commercial district is concentrated along McKean Avenue and Fallowfield Avenue, between 3rd Street and 7th Street. The commercial district is within one block from the light industrial and commercial uses and railroad crossings at 3rd and 5th Streets. Fifth Street is a minor arterial leading to an upslope residential neighborhood, funneling people to the business district. As described in Chapter 1, "Study Communities," the entire commercial district is located within the boundaries of the Charleroi National Register historic district.

McKean and Fallowfield Avenues are one-way streets with curb bump-outs. Both streets have two-sided parallel parking and there are some private and municipal parking lots in the district. There is a large park-and-ride lot north of the railroad for Pittsburgh commuters and there are cafes and coffee shops a short walk away. The district is also within walking distance of a series of riverfront park areas that have active and passive recreation, including a boat launch. Many buildings appear to be well maintained or recently renovated and there are national and local chains with a presence in the district. There are some vacant or underutilized structures and there is likely more upper-level vacancy than storefront vacancy. The street furniture and plantings appear to be actively maintained and updated seasonally. The Charleroi Farmers Market is an open-air market available to host events and activities.

The Charleroi Central Business District (CBD) is zoned along McKean and Fallowfield Avenues between 4th Street and 7th Street. Permitted uses include retail and dining establishments, office space, community facilities, religious institutions, academic institutions, hospital and medical clinics, government and public agencies, hotels, and urban agriculture. Residential uses are also permissible within the CBD above first floor commercial uses. No off-street parking is required for commercial uses located within the CBD when abutting a public street with existing on-street parking. Charleroi also includes a section within the zoning code for adaptive reuse guidelines. Revitalization and rehabilitation of existing structures within the Borough are encouraged for buildings meeting the criteria of Adaptive Reuses. Permitted reuses include single- and multi-family residential structures, small commercial and retail businesses, private clubs and social halls, day cares and nursing homes, hospitals and medical clinics, civic or cultural buildings, conference centers and community centers.

District Recommendations

- Create an easy-to-recognize identity that draws upon the district history but also incorporates some of the recent businesses and their excitement.
- Establish an active arts and cultural district to draw visitors and residents. Use street festivals and events such as night markets or farmers' markets to extend the district activity.
- Consider hosting an "open doors" event to give people access to some of the more significant historic interiors.
- Signage and sidewalk improvements connecting the commercial and industrial sites to the downtown.
- Signage and sidewalk improvements connecting the downtown to the planned Magic City Riverfront Park.
- Create Charleroi-specific design guidelines.
- Continue to participate in the Mon River Valley Coalition and with National Road Heritage Corridor, to attract visitors and businesses downtown and along the riverfront in Charleroi.
- Participate in Mon Valley Creative Corridor, Rivers of Steel, to work with regional nonprofits to programming and events downtown and at the Riverfront Park.
- Fulfill the Mon River Valley Coalition's recommendations for Charleroi, including greening and murals in the Chamber Parking Lot and signage to river access points.
- Apply for historic rehabilitation investment tax credits for any substantial rehabilitation in the central business district, as the district is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Charleroi

Monongahela River Valley: Washington County

4



Building Profile

Location

601 Mckean Avenue

Size

12,691 square feet

Ownership

Local ownership

Context/adjacent uses

A municipal-owned parking lot, a post office, and retail uses.

601 Mckean Avenue, Charleroi (NR-listed Historic District)

Source: Washington County Tax Records

The three-story building at 601 McKean was built as a hotel circa 1890. The building is a contributing resource in the National Register-listed Charleroi Historic District. This key building is at a visually-prominent intersection in the Charleroi business core. This intersection includes a post office and a municipal parking lot, ensuring that it will continue to be a site of pedestrian activity. The building is currently occupied by a restaurant on the lower level and an apartment on the upper stories, although the apartment occupation is not verified. The Flemish Revival style building is a unique form, with multiple rooflines, and a chamfered northeast corner. As indicated in Chapter 3, “Market Analysis,” Charleroi has a surplus of retail supply for both retail trade and food and drink establishments. However there is an unmet retail demand for furniture and home furnishings stores, general merchandise stores, food and beverage stores, electronic stores, clothing stores, book/hobby/music stores, and building materials and garden supply stores. Although the building is currently in use as a restaurant, the occupants may benefit from supplementing their business with these types of retail activity.

Recommendations for Historic Property Investment

- Connect with Mon Valley Business Resource Center for small grants and business development support and training.
- Contact the Fayette-Washington County coordinator for the Keystone Innovation Zones and the Enterprise Zone Program to identify potential funding or tax credits for new businesses.
- Advocate with state agencies for green storm water infrastructure along McKean Avenue to mitigate flooding within the 100- and 500-year flood zones. Potential funding sources through the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) include: Appalachian Regional Commission Grant Program; CDBG grant program, floodplain management program and New Communities-Elm Street and Main Street Programs (supported by Keystone Communities funding).

Donora

Monongahela River Valley: Washington County

4



■ Park or Open Space ■ Business District ■ Significant Buildings — Main Road Historic District

Donora has a remarkably physically intact commercial district, despite the fact that most buildings are unoccupied and some even boarded up. As described in Chapter 1, “Study Communities,” Donora’s commercial district is concentrated along McKean Avenue and is characterized by two- to three-story buildings and some taller structures. The PA SHPO has determined much of McKean Avenue is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district.

Attractions in the commercial district, such as the Smog Museum, do not appear to be open regularly, and few storefronts along McKean Avenue are active. The few that are occupied generally contain passive uses such as professional services with a few small cafes or restaurants. The buildings generally appear to be stable and the district appears to have great potential but currently has few active uses to attract people to the main street. Interviews with residents indicate that the affordability of the

community has attracted an influx of speculative investment. A “buy-and-hold” strategy might explain the relative lack of investment activity in the commercial district.

The densest area of the commercial district stretches between 4th and 9th Streets on McKean Avenue and slopes to a minor valley at 6th Street, where there is a municipal parking garage and the police station and post office on Meldon Avenue. Parking exists on both sides of McKean, which is a one-way street. Historic maps suggest that Meldon Avenue, today known as PA Route 837, was not continuous and was a secondary road to McKean’s main street thoroughfare. After Route 837 was constructed it likely absorbed some of the energy from the business district but also relieved the burden of heavy truck traffic. Today, there is little presence of the McKean business district on Route 837 and one could easily pass through Donora believing that Meldon is the extent of the business district.

A riverfront park and a skating center are accessible a few blocks from McKean Avenue and 6th Street, though there is no visible signage indicating its presence. The majority of the riverfront appears to be a privately-owned industrial park. There are a number of historic churches and buildings of significant size and stature on the hillsides above McKean that might prove to be historic attractions. Cement City, an area of worker housing listed in the National Register of Historic Places is a 15-minute walk from the McKean Avenue commercial district. Zoning for the downtown in Donora permits the following uses: retail and dining establishments, automobile service stations, personal care services, financial institutions, real estate, offices, amusement businesses (e.g., billiard/pool halls, dance halls, theaters, etc.), day care, funerals, hotels/boarding house, public institutions, medical and dental clinics, upholstery/repair stores. The Borough has an off-street parking requirement that may inhibit redevelopment.

District Recommendations

- Consider nominating the appropriate blocks along McKean Avenue to the National Register of Historic Places in order to provide access to federal and state rehabilitation investment tax credits.
- A more thorough market study and building inventory could help explain the lack of commercial activity in the district.
- Signage, possibly including murals or other gateway graphics on the police station and parking garage, could welcome people to the district at 6th street.
- Programming of the upper parking deck on 6th and McKean for festivals, markets, or other events could attract attention to the district and bring people to the nearby Smog Museum buildings. Consider softening the visual impact of the deck with park-like buffer plantings that complement the clock and gazebo.
- A connection to the riverfront park seems possible but the riverfront park appears to be underdeveloped. A gateway (per previous recommendation) would help overcome the topographical challenges to move between the riverfront and McKean.
- Consider converting McKean Avenue to a two-way street to allow for more fluid movement in the district.
- Establish a temporary activation program for vacant storefronts.
- Develop a vacancy and blight inventory using software that can be updated and amended by a code enforcement official. Use the inventory to monitor vacant buildings and enforce upkeep.
- Amend the zoning code to reduce or waive off-street parking within the commercial business district or allow shared parking between business establishments.
- Establish and activate a pedestrian connection between industrial plants and the downtown business district.
- Near the periphery of the business district, allow housing to draw activity downtown.
- Participate in Mon Valley Creative Corridor, Rivers of Steel, to work with regional nonprofits to activate vacant buildings downtown and develop a place-making strategy for the downtown.
- Amend zoning to prohibit or limit ground-floor office spaces on a section of McKean Avenue.

Donora

Monongahela River Valley: Washington County

4



Building Profile

Location

501 Mckean Avenue

Size

Approximately 21,000 square feet

Ownership

The property transferred ownership recently to a property owner located in the southeastern United States

Context/adjacent uses

Storefronts, the Donora Smog Museum, a social club

501 Mckean Avenue, Donora (NR-eligible Historic District and Recommended Eligible)

Source: AKRF/EvolveEA

Located at the corner of Fifth Street and McKean Avenue, this prominent bank building is located centrally on Donora's commercial corridor. The building is contributing in the National Register-eligible Historic District. The bank is architecturally significant and an anchor building on the corridor. The building appears vacant on the ground-floor. The property's tall ceilings and architectural character would be ideal for a larger specialty retailer that has regional draw, such as a furniture shop or appliances. The upper stories would continue to serve as housing, helping to increase foot traffic in downtown Donora.

Recommendations for Historic Property Investment

- Connect with Mon Valley Business Resource Center for small grants and business development support and training.
- Contact the Fayette-Washington County coordinator for the Keystone Innovation Zones and the Enterprise Zone Program to identify potential funding or tax credits for new businesses.
- Advocate for zoning amendment to waive or reduce on-site parking for properties in the business corridor.

Donora

Monongahela River Valley: Washington County

4



Building Profile

Location

567 Mckean Avenue

Size

Approximately 19,800 square feet

Ownership

Local ownership

Context/adjacent uses

Retail storefronts, Donora Smog Museum

567 Mckean Avenue, Donora (NR-eligible Historic District)

Source: AKRF/EvolveEA

The three-story building at 567 McKean Avenue is located at the core of Donora's downtown, at a midblock location. The building is in close proximity to the Donora Smog Museum, but it also shares the block with many vacant storefront buildings.

A use that draws residents downtown and regional visitors to Donora is best suited for this property. Donora does not have a high volume of vehicle traffic passing through. Low-cost, high visibility uses are best suited for this space, to help activate the street front, such as a co-working space, a community arts venue, or business incubator.

The property could be part of a Donora storefront activation program, wherein the storefront windows would serve as an exhibition site for local artists, students, or crafts people. The window display can be a low-cost and immediate intervention at this site and other retail windows on the block, to enliven the corridor and express a shared identity and pride of place. Main Street America recommends window displays that tell a story, educate, entertain, lift spirits, and draw attention to downtowns. For example, the Downtown Milwaukee Business Improvement District #21 activated storefronts with illustrations of well-known Milwaukeens. Donora could create an art installation in its storefronts, displaying the community's role in Clean Air legislation.

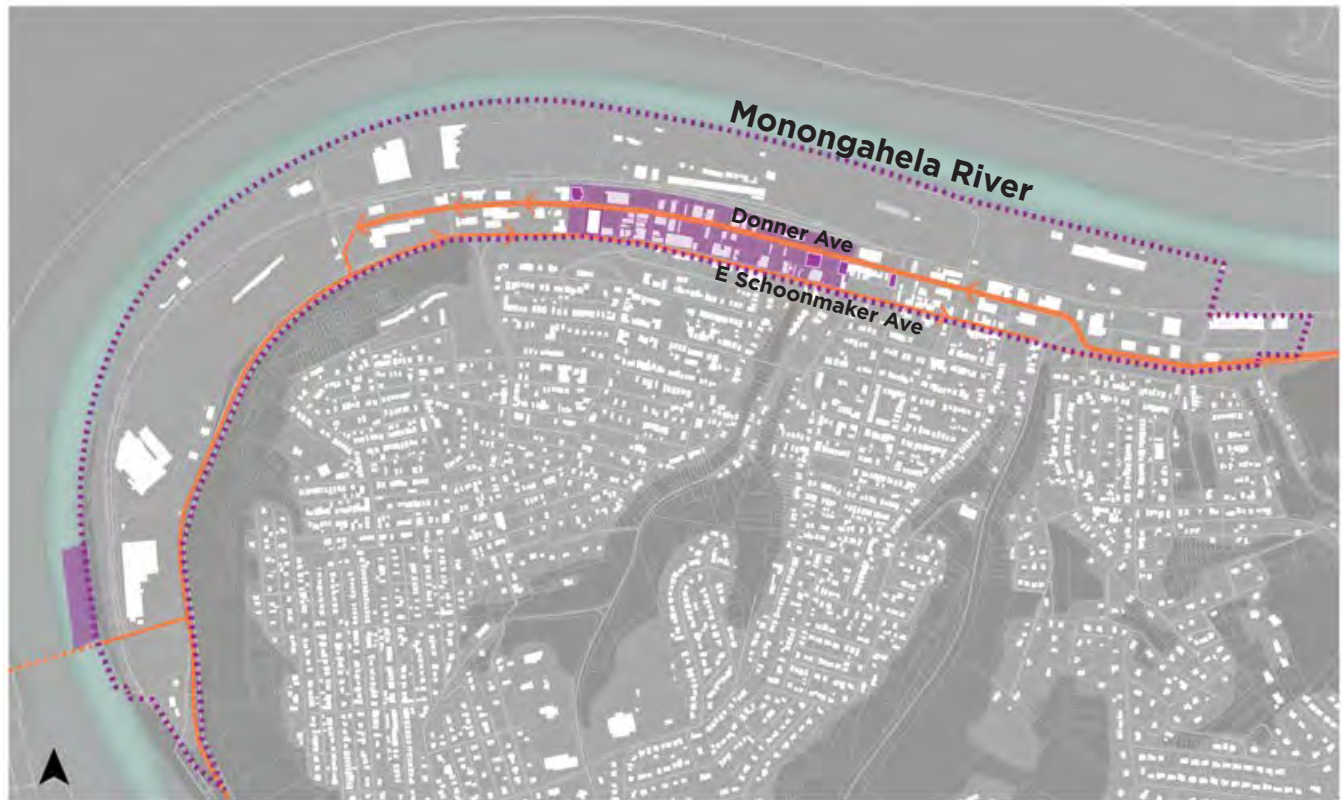
Recommendations for Historic Property Investment

- Coordinate with Rivers of Steel or other regional nonprofit to develop arts programming in vacant storefronts.

Monessen

Monongahela River Valley: Westmoreland County

4



 Park or Open Space  Business District  Significant Buildings  Main Road  Historic District

Monessen's commercial district is unusual in that it contains two, one-sided main streets. Donner Avenue, also known as Route 906, bears most of the heavy vehicle traffic and faces the riverfront industrial sites while Schoonmaker Avenue is oriented towards a steep hillside. The two streets are a one-way pairing and have parallel parking on one side of the street. There is a partially defunct multistory parking structure and at least one public parking lot, as well as private parking lots for some businesses.

The business district in Monessen grew quickly between 1900 and 1915, with the densest development between 5th and 6th Streets. Large, elaborate buildings lined 6th Street between Donner and Schoonmaker, and connect the Pennsylvania and Lake Erie Railroad Station with the hillside park that allowed people to get to the neighborhoods above. The former Monessen Savings and Trust Building at 500 Donner Avenue is a limestone-clad stone and steel Beaux Arts style structure. The building anchored the historic entry sequence into the community, although it was unfortunately demolished in Spring 2022ⁱ.

ⁱ Paterra, Paul. "Monessen Council takes steps to expedite building demolition". February 18, 2022. Observer-Reporter.

Monessen's commercial district contains both large and small structures ranging in quality, with masonry buildings concentrated between 5th and 6th Streets, to more modest two and three-story buildings of mixed masonry and framing. Although some structures have been maintained or renovated, many structures have been demolished and there are gaps in the streetscape that are maintained as lawn or have been converted to parking. Current businesses include professional services, small businesses, and a few cafes/restaurants, with a few chain stores in newer buildings on Donner Avenue. Many of the renovated buildings are part of a distributed campus for the Douglas Education Center, a cosmetological, makeup, special effects, and filmmaking school.

Monessen's district contains a diversity of architecturally interesting turn-of-the-century buildings such as Landmark Place at 803 Donner Avenue (the former Steel Worker's Union Hall, see Historic Buildings Opportunities below), and the uniquely designed St. Leonard's Roman Catholic Church (now Orchard Christian Fellowship), as well as the mid-century Monessen Public Library.

There is a functioning industrial site adjacent to the commercial area. It is not known if those employees frequent main street businesses. Air quality on the main street is affected by the adjacent industrial sites and may be an inhibitor to certain activities and attractions.

Permitted uses within the C2 district include some residential uses such as townhomes and apartments, retail and dining establishments, business services and financial institutions, commercial and public recreation, personal services, hotels and motels, office, medical and dental offices, educational institutions, and public facilities.

District Recommendations

- Encourage or formalize the practice of urban agriculture or other community uses of vacant land.
- Join the Mid Mon Valley Regional Chamber of Commerce.
- Adopt the International Existing Building Code.
- Insert Recommendations from Comp Plan for blight.
- Target blight remediation strategies in the downtown, to avoid demolition in favor of stabilization, mothballing and code enforcement.
- Signage and sidewalk improvements connecting the active industrial sites to the downtown.

Monessen

Monongahela River Valley: Westmoreland County

4



Building Profile

Location

803 Donner Avenue

Size

Approximately 16,000 sf

Ownership

Out of state ownership

Context/adjacent uses

Vacant lot, a school, parking lot, and post office.

803 Donner Avenue, Monessen (Recommended Eligible)

Source: Herald Standard, 10/8/2018

Landmark Place located at 803 Donner Avenue is a unique architectural resources that could be redeveloped to catalyze further investment in downtown Monessen. The building is one of the few intact historic buildings along the commercial corridor in Monessen. This portion of the downtown was largely demolished during the era of urban renewal projects that often gutted historic downtowns. The building was originally constructed as the Fraternal Order of the Eagles, and later converted to Monessen's AFL-CIO Steelworkers Union Hall. Since the 1980s the building has served as a music and events venue, Landmark Place. The building is currently used for storage.

There is demand for recreational and entertainment uses, in the Monongahela River Valley primary and secondary trade areas, as described in Chapter 3, "Market Analysis". This large and intact building could serve as a live music space and meeting hall.

Recommendations for Historic Property Investment

- Connect with Mon Valley Business Resource Center for small grants and business development support and training.
- As a cultural center and heritage site, apply for funding from National Heritage Corridor.
- Connect with the Douglas Education Center, a cosmetological, makeup, special effects, and filmmaking school in Monessen, to evaluate the demand for an events space or performance venue.
- Nominate the building for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places, in order to pursue rehabilitation tax credits through the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program.
- Advocate with state agencies for green storm water infrastructure installations along Donner Avenue to mitigate flooding within the 500-year flood zone. Potential funding sources through the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) include: Appalachian Regional Commission Grant Program; CDBG grant program, floodplain management program and New Communities-Elm Street and Main Street Programs (supported by Keystone Communities funding).

Monongahela

Monongahela River Valley: Washington County

4



 Park or Open Space  Business District  Significant Buildings  Main Road  Historic District

West Main Street forms the commercial corridor in Monongahela. The business district in Monongahela experiences substantial traffic with many large trucks moving through town. As described in Chapter 1, “Study Communities,” the two-way street is most active between 1st and 5th Streets. West of the commercial center are small historic homes and churches, repurposed for commercial uses, including the home of the Monongahela Historical Society, which occupies the National Register-listed Longwell House. Chess Park is also situated at the western end of West Main Street; this park hosts the Monongahela Farmers Market.

The Aquatorium is walkable from West Main. The site is large enough to host major events and overflow to businesses. The park is not designed for daily discovery with multiple trails or places to occupy, and therefore may not be as strong of an attraction when an event is not scheduled. The permitted uses within C-1 include retail and dining establishments, bank and financial institutions, personal services, hotels and bed-and-breakfasts, boarding houses, business services, day cares and educational institutions, community facilities, some residential uses, emergency services, municipal uses and public facilities, offices, religious institutions, public and private recreation, arts and entertainment spaces, vehicle sales and rental facilities, and parking lots.

District Recommendations

- Nominate West Main Street as a National Register historic district, in order to access federal and state rehabilitation tax credits.
- Fulfill the Mon River Valley Coalition's recommendations for Monongahela, including establishing a signage program to connect the downtown and the riverfront, and a development plan for available riverfront properties.
- Install businesses, sidewalk improvements, investment in adjacent buildings, and signage to "breadcrumb" people to the river.
- Consider curb bump-outs throughout the district to make a safer pedestrian experience and to calm traffic.
- Consider extending the riverfront park on adjacent or undevelopable parcels and acquire rights-of-way for a riverfront trail.
- Develop Monongahela-specific design guidelines for alterations and streetscape improvements in the business district.
- Continue participating in Mon Valley Creative Corridor, Rivers of Steel, to develop arts and programming downtown.

Monongahela

Monongahela River Valley: Washington County

4



Building Profile

Location

170-174 W. Main Street

Size

Approximately 15,000 square feet

Ownership

Local ownership

Context/adjacent uses

Retail, restaurants, apartments, and auto parts

170-174 W. Main Street, MONONGAHELA (Recommended Eligible)

Source: Washington County Tax Records

The former bank building is located at 170-174 West Main Street, occupying a corner property on West Main Street. This location is in close proximity to the Aquatorium, a popular events venue that attracts a regional audience. The property appears to be underutilized and could be activated on the ground-floor. The high ceilings and iconic architectural features of a bank building make this building type an attractive adaptive reuse site.

As detailed in Chapter 3, “Market Analysis,” there is demand for recreational and entertainment uses in the Monongahela River Valley primary and secondary trade areas. Monongahela in particular has a surplus of food and drink establishments and an unmet demand for retail. This property could serve as a retail or arts space, with evening opening hours that correspond to and complement the Aquatorium’s events.

Recommendations for Historic Property Investment

- Work with Monongahela Main Street Program for marketing and technical assistance.
- Connect with Mon Valley Business Resource Center for small grants, as well as business development support and training.
- Nominate the building for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Advocate with state agencies for green storm water infrastructure along West Main Street Avenue to mitigate flooding within the 100- and 500-year flood zones. Potential funding sources through the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) include: Appalachian Regional Commission Grant Program; CDBG grant program, floodplain management program and New Communities-Elm Street and Main Street Programs (supported by Keystone Communities funding).

Aliquippa

Ohio River Valley: Beaver County

4



■ Park or Open Space ■ Business District ■ Significant Buildings — Main Road ■ Historic District

Aliquippa's historic main street corridor was the main transit hub and commercial center for the surrounding residential developments, then known as Woodlawn. Photographs of the turn-of-the-century business district on Franklin Avenue, the nearby mills on the river, and new hilltop homes, were marketed domestically and abroad to attract people to work and live in the community. The narrow valley was a natural gathering place, but the lack of land created a corridor and not a district. The large size of many of the buildings, like the former department store at 434 Franklin Avenue, resulted from robust demand for space in a relatively small footprint.

Today, vacant parcels characterize the area between the historic train station on Station Street and Superior Avenue. Many of the buildings are still intact between Superior and Engle Street, although some are abandoned and appear to be in poor condition. This section includes some significant structures, including the former department store which has since been converted to housing. Continuing up the valley on Franklin Avenue, the main commercial area diminishes in density as single-family homes yield to civic structures like the BF Jones Memorial Library, the former United Steel Workers #1211 building (see Historic Building Opportunities below) and the Aliquippa Post Office.

Most of the significant buildings are located within the valley corridor, with the exception of the Aliquippa Station, which is on the opposite side of Route 51 and could potentially be a beacon or welcome point into the district. Aliquippa also has a rich history in organized labor, but little narrative is expressed in the commercial corridor. The fact that J&L Steel employees won the right to collective bargaining by pushing for the 1937 Wagner Act could be part of a Franklin Avenue historical narrative.

The Aliquippa Central Business District (C-1) is located along Franklin Avenue between Constitution Boulevard and Engle Street. Permitted uses within C-1 include retail and dining, public facilities such as libraries, community centers, day cares, and police and fire departments, municipal buildings, mixed-use developments, office space, and some residential uses like garden apartments and townhomes. Multifamily housing is permitted under conditional use. While there is no designated historic district within Aliquippa, the zoning code outlines design standards to encourage revitalization and continuity with existing, historic conditions. Renovations, additions, and new buildings are intended to be designed with consideration of the existing historic styles, particularly along the Franklin Avenue Business District. The Aliquippa zoning code also includes a section related to adaptive reuse and permits reuses such as single- and multi-family dwellings, financial institutions, private clubs, day care facilities, nursing home, hospitals and medical clinics, civic or cultural buildings, community centers, and conference centers.

District Recommendations

- Larger buildings in the district will require a greater investment than smaller buildings, resulting in a smaller pool of potential investors. If vacant, ensure that the buildings are stabilized with new roofs and other protection to prevent further deterioration.
- Given the history of organized labor and its architectural detail, the Local 1211 Union Hall should be stabilized and could be developed into an anchor in the corridor (see Key Buildings, below).
- A community development corporation or other nonprofit entity may be an essential tool to fill the funding gap on more challenging projects, in stabilizing and protecting assets, and can help distill the narrative that brings people and businesses to the corridor.
- Create bike and pedestrian connections between the downtown and the planned Ohio River Trail.
- Develop a separate design guidelines document, rather than within the zoning code, to promote new construction and alterations that reflect the existing historic character of the main street.

Aliquippa

Ohio River Valley: Beaver County

4



Building Profile

Location

501 Franklin Avenue, Aliquippa

Size

7,405 square feet; 0.17 acres

Ownership

Local ownership

Context/adjacent uses

Vacant lot, post office, cafe, apartment building, library.

United Steelworkers Local 1211 Union Hall, Aliquippa (National Register-listed), 501 Franklin Avenue

Source: AKRF/evolveEA



The Local 1211 Union Hall is a unique architectural resource that is poised to serve as a catalytic historic property in downtown Aliquippa. The vacant building is centrally located on Franklin Avenue on a high-use corridor in close proximity to civic services such as a library, post office, housing, and the planned Franklin Avenue Park (see key projects in Chapter 2, “Planning Context”). There is an opportunity to interpret the nationally-significant story of J&L Steel and Local 1211 to provide a marketing opportunity for the community and to celebrate Aliquippa’s shared history.

The Local 1211 Union Hall is a community asset, representing the industrial heritage of Aliquippa. The Classical Revival style building was constructed in 1927 as a bank and converted to a union meeting hall in the 1940s. The building has a limestone façade that features a large, arched window centered at the second floor and framed with Ionic pilasters. The building is currently vacant. From 1943 the building was occupied by United Steelworkers Local #1211, successor to the Steel Workers Organizing Committee, who pursued its members’ right to unionize before the Supreme Court in 1937ⁱ.

As detailed in Chapter 3, “Market Analysis,” there is demand for recreational and entertainment uses in the Beaver and Ohio River Valley primary trade area. These types of uses could include movie and other types of theaters, parks and museums, ice rink/skating lessons, boat rentals, and campsites. The building could be stabilized to host an indoor market for artisans, drawing on the rich character of the architecture as well as the building’s central location and large interior space. The market could have flexibility for vendors, and the adjacent vacant parcel owned by the Economic Development Corporation could be activated with a tent during events or a community park. This proposed use would stabilize the building without requiring an extensive rehabilitation, allowing the building’s short-term protection while the owner pursues other longer-term uses and funding for the building. If funds become available, the building could also serve as an educational space. The ecological approach for Franklin Avenue Park demonstrates a local and regional interest in environmental education.

ⁱ: National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. (2014). “ United Steelworkers Local #1211 Union Hall Nomination Form.”

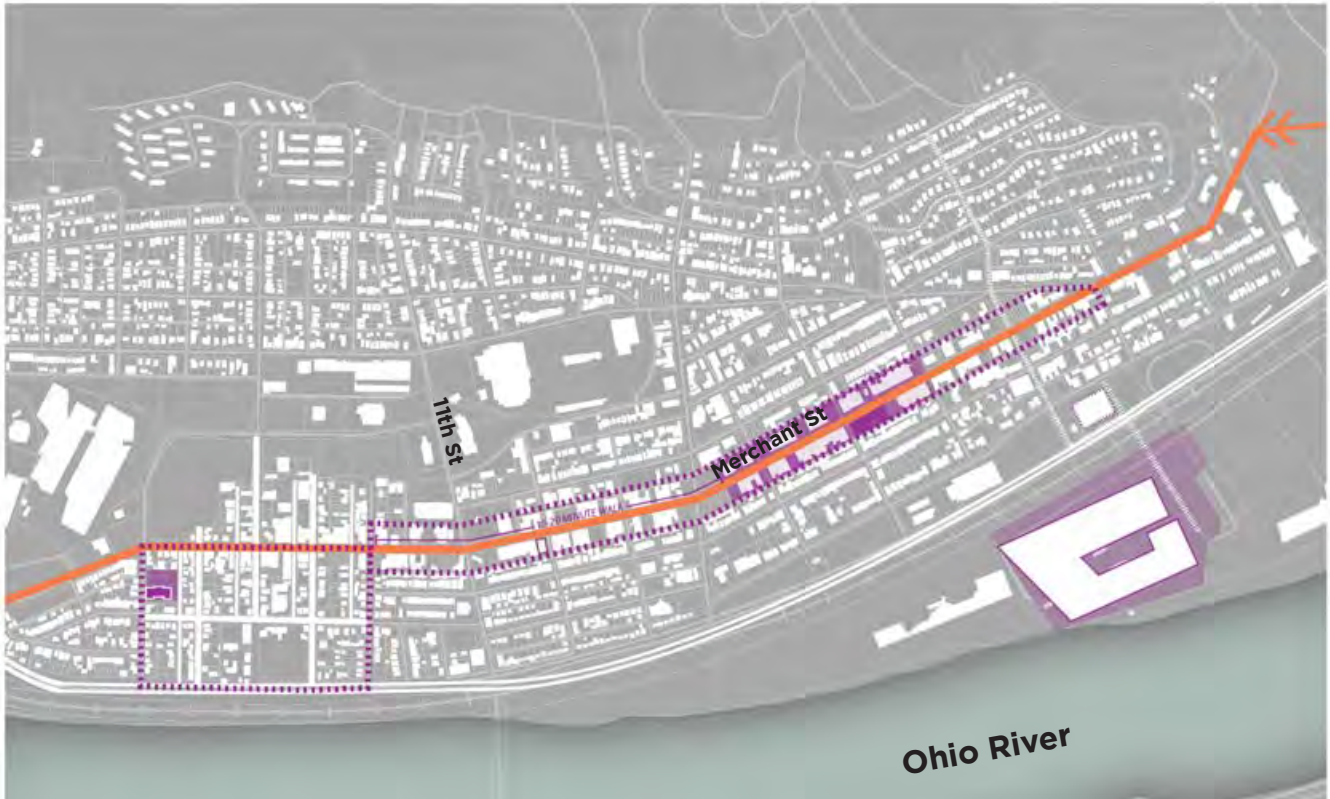
Recommendations for Historic Property Investment

- Due to the property’s listed status, pursue federal tax credits through the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program.
- Apply for historic preservation grants.
- Receive technical assistance and guidance from the Beaver County Main Streets Program, administered by the Community Development Program of Beaver County.
- Receive small business assistance from Paramount Pursuits.
- Coordinate with Rivers of Steel to organize arts events and/or educational signage .
- Coordinate with Riverwise, a nonprofit currently promoting sustainable practices in Aliquippa.
- Apply for funding or programming with Rivers of Steel, National Heritage Corridor.
- Contact the Beaver County Corporation for Economic Development to identify potential funding and tax credits through the Keystone Innovation Zones, Keystone Opportunity Zones, and Keystone Enterprise Zone Program.

Ambridge

Ohio River Valley: Beaver County

4



■ Park or Open Space ■ Business District ■ Significant Buildings — Main Road Historic District

Ambridge’s National Register historic districts are located in two distinct areas of town: surrounding Old Economy Village and further south along Merchant Street. As described in Chapter 1, “Study Communities,” Old Economy Village (OEV) is a Commonwealth of Pennsylvania state historic site. The historic district around OEV encompasses a small commercial stretch with visitor-oriented businesses, such as stores, restaurants, gas stations, and a hotel. OEV coordinates with the Beaver County tourism department and Visit Pittsburgh to promote the site.

The Ambridge Commercial Historic District is located on Merchant Street south of 8th Street, a 15- to 20-minute walk from the OEV and separated by automobile-oriented commercial properties. The business district fabric is fairly intact and occupied with service businesses and a few retail stores with little pedestrian activity. Many upper stories appear to be unoccupied. A few active businesses may indicate a shift to more activity on the street, including two breweries that recently opened. The breweries bookend the Merchant Street historic district, with locations at 411 Merchant Street and 918 Merchant Street.

Uses in the community and region could further capitalize on the visitors that come to OEV. Uses include a hotel, additional events spaces, and retail experiences. Currently Ambridge does not have public access to the riverfront; a future river connection to the downtown could help channel visitors to other communities via the river.

According to the zoning code in Ambridge, permitted uses downtown include apartments, art spaces, essential services, indoor recreation facilities, offices, retail, dining establishments, and personal care services.



Old Economy Village, Ambridge (National Historic Landmark, National Register-listed Historic District and Locally Designated Historic District)

Source: AKRF/EvolveEA

District Recommendations

- As a Certified Local Government, Ambridge has access to dedicated funding to help subsidize historic preservation projects. Consider use of CLG funding to help direct preservation activity on the Merchant Street corridor (Ambridge Commercial Historic District).
- Develop and improve pedestrian linkages between the well-visited OEV district and the Ambridge Commercial Historic District, south of 8th Street.
- Consider implementation of a preservation ordinance in the Ambridge Commercial Historic District listed in the National Register of Historic Places.
- Create a graphic identity for the two districts and develop signage to connect the two business districts.
- Activate the storefronts with temporary branded graphics, posters, and temporary art installations.
- Develop commercial building design guidelines to guide high-quality improvements that keep the character of the district.
- Cultivate anchor businesses that attract other businesses and visitors.
- Integrate the industrial history narrative into Merchant Street through art, branding, and events.
- Create bike and pedestrian connections between the downtown and the planned Ohio River Trail.

Ambridge

Ohio River Valley: Beaver County

4



Building Profile

Location

566 Merchant Street, Ambridge

Size

4,100 sf building; 2178 sf lot

Ownership

Local ownership

Context/adjacent uses

Vacant storefronts, 3D printing studio, a video game store, bakery, chamber of commerce

566 Merchant Street, Ambridge (National Register-listed Historic District)

Source: AKRF/evolveEA

The three-story building at 566 Merchant Street is located at the heart of the National Register Commercial Historic District in Ambridge. The building features unique architectural features, such as tile cladding on the façade and bands of geometric pattern motifs. The building is currently vacant and has a single retail storefront on the ground-floor. This building is located on a block that is characterized by a mix of vacant and occupied storefronts, with businesses nearby that include a 3D printing studio, a video game store, and a bakery. The chamber of commerce also shares the block with 566 Merchant Street.

As detailed in Chapter 3, “Market Analysis,” the Beaver and Ohio River Valley region has unmet market demand for various businesses, including electronics and appliance stores; building material and garden equipment stores; grocery stores; specialty food stores; health and personal care stores; clothing stores; shoe stores; jewelry stores; book/music stores; florists; office supply, stationary, and gift stores; and used merchandise stores. This small storefront in Ambridge is typical of the National Register Commercial Historic District in this community, which contains numerous two-story brick buildings with vacant storefronts and/or unused upper stories. This vacant building could be rehabilitated as a shop that caters to the many visitors to nearby OEV. The Market Analysis indicates that the region has a surplus of food and drink establishments, which would not be a recommended use for this building.

Recommendations for Historic Property Investment

- Receive technical assistance and guidance from the Beaver County Main Streets Program, administered by the Community Development Program of Beaver County.
- Receive small business assistance from Paramount Pursuits.
- Coordinate with Rivers of Steel to organize arts events and/or educational signage .
- Coordinate with Ambridge Historic District Economic Development Corporation for grants, place-making, and marketing.
- Contact the Beaver County Corporation for Economic Development to identify potential funding and tax credits through the Keystone Innovation Zones, Keystone Opportunity Zones, and Keystone Enterprise Zone Program.
- Apply for historic rehabilitation investment tax credits for any substantial rehabilitation in the central business district, because the district is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Beaver

Ohio River Valley: Beaver County

4



■ Park or Open Space ■ Business District ■ Significant Buildings — Main Road ■ Historic District

Beaver has a robust commercial district along Third Street with many businesses serving as local and regional attractions. The storefronts are occupied with active uses and upper levels appear to be occupied. There are public spaces, parking, and updated streetscape amenities that create opportunities for a variety of activities and there were many people out during the site visit. The relatively short commercial corridor allows for a critical mass of activity.

The Third Street commercial area is bounded to the west by parks and the Beaver County Courthouse and to the east by large mansions that have been repurposed for commercial use. The Third Street corridor can also orient visitors to other sites of interest in the Beaver Historic District. For example, College Avenue connects both the public library and Fort McIntosh to the south and connects the historic spring site to the north. Additional sites of interest are spread throughout, including the quadrant parks in the corners of the Historic District, high-quality historic housing, and a historic train station to the east.

The economic strength of Beaver could probably spillover into the development of a “river district” in nearby Bridgewater, and with a pathway connecting to the Beaver Greens park, could make for a continuous Beaver and Ohio Riverfront experience for the Beaver community.

Beaver Borough is one of many communities within the two regions that places a strong value on its historical buildings and district. It has successfully implemented planning and zoning tools to encourage preservation within the Borough. The main street thrives with mixed-use, ground-floor commercial uses with residential units above, helping create a cohesive historic commercial district with residential uses, due in part to creative, purpose-driven zoning.

Beaver Borough is zoned for a Retail Core District (RC-1) and Retail Core Support District (RC-2). The RC-1 District is located downtown and roughly bounded by River Road to the south, Sassafras Lane to the west, Maple Alley to the north, and East End Avenue to the east. Businesses and uses within RC-1 include retail and dining establishments, personal services, professional and business services, financial institutions, and forestry. Professional, business, and financial services are only permitted on upper floors, leaving general retail and dining and personal service uses along the ground-floor. While there are parking minimums outlined within the zoning code, they may be waived within the RC-1 district.

As described in Chapter 1, Beaver Borough also includes a historic district. Established to preserve the historic heritage of the Borough and protect the rich architectural style within the downtown, the historic district is generally located within the bounds of River Road to the south, Sutherland Place to the west, 5th and 6th Streets to the north, and Wilson Street to the east.

District Recommendations

- Develop branding that connects Third Street to other nearby sites of interest.
- Connect Third Street to the Ohio River with “breadcrumb” sites of interest such as Wayne Park, Fort McIntosh, and a pedestrian bridge with stairs and a ramp that delivers pedestrians and cyclists from the upper neighborhood to the Beaver Greens Park.
- Consider amendments to Beaver’s historic preservation ordinance as recommended by the Beaver Historic Preservation Plan (adopted September 2021).
- Create bike and pedestrian connections between the downtown and the planned Ohio River Trail.
- Consider Certified Local Government status as recommended by the Beaver Historic Preservation Plan.
- Apply for historic rehabilitation investment tax credits for any substantial rehabilitation in the central business district, because the district is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Beaver Falls

Beaver River Valley: Beaver County

4



 Park or Open Space  Business District  Significant Buildings  Main Road  Historic District

Beaver Falls has a long commercial corridor with a density of existing structures and historic buildings on Seventh Avenue between 10th Street and 15th Streets. The PA SHPO has determined most of this section of Seventh Avenue eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Beaver Falls' street grid is one of the more remarkable elements to the community and in the commercial district it yields 150' deep commercial lots with alleyways directly behind the Seventh Avenue businesses. There is ample parking along Seventh Avenue, allowing both parallel parking (southbound) and angled parking (northbound), with large lots behind main street to the west.

While the Seventh Avenue District was more extensive at its peak, today the densest blocks are anchored by a civic building and emerging redevelopment, including a street that was vacated to become civic plaza and plans for a children's museum, to be known as the Neighborhood North Museum of Play, in a former newspaper building. At the time of the site visit, sidewalk extensions were being created at some intersections.

Many storefronts in this area appear to be occupied with a mix of active uses such as takeout restaurants or hospitality businesses and passive uses such as professional services or storage. There are major civic structures in this stretch of Seventh Avenue, including the historic Carnegie Free Library. There are buildings of historic significance outside this commercial area, including former hotels, former banks, and an industrial building.

Permitted uses across the commercial districts in Beaver Falls include retail and dining establishments, business and financial services, office uses, medical clinics and essential services, day cares and commercial schools, public and commercial recreation, personal services, public buildings, community facilities, and public parking garages and lots. Within the Downtown Central District and Downtown South District, multi-family dwelling units are not permitted on ground-floors of buildings. Non-medical office uses are also permitted on upper floors only. The north, central, and south downtown districts are contiguous and intended to create a pedestrian-oriented commercial center. As such, parking minimum standards do not apply to new or existing development within the downtown business district unless specifically related to a conditional use or special exception.

District Recommendations

- Consider nominating the appropriate blocks along Seventh Avenue to the National Register of Historic Places in order to provide access to federal and state rehabilitation investment tax credits.
- Narrowing the intersections with sidewalk extensions, tree plantings, and other improvements (in progress) will make the central core of Seventh Avenue feel more pedestrian-friendly and calm traffic.
- Develop a façade improvement program to encourage high-quality renovations on historic and older buildings in along the Seventh Avenue corridor.
- Continue to develop the anchor projects at the civic center around the library. Develop a brand around these sites and uses.
- Creative programming at the library, the new park, and a future children’s museum could attract people from the community and beyond. Partner with nearby businesses to provide retail and restaurant amenities that might serve these uses, and keep visitors in the district as long as possible.
- Collaborate with Beaver Falls Innovation Corridor, including four ongoing projects: the BHIVE Innovation Hub, Portobello Cultural Life and Arts Center, March Park improvements and the Neighborhood North Museum of Play.
- Create bike and pedestrian connections between the downtown and the planned Ohio River Trail.
- Amend local zoning ordinance to prohibit or limit office spaces on the ground-floor for a portion of Seventh Avenue.
- Develop design guidelines to promote new construction and alterations that reflect the existing historic character of the main street.
- Develop a historic preservation plan.

Beaver Falls

Beaver River Valley: Beaver County

4



Building Profile

Location

914 Seventh Avenue, Beaver Falls

Size

10,635 sf

Ownership

Local ownership

Context/adjacent uses

Printing store, Nonprofit organization, vacant lots, restaurant, thrift store, professional offices

914 Seventh Avenue, Beaver Falls

Source: AKRF/Evolve



The vacant building at 914 Seventh Avenue is located within the eligible Beaver Falls Historic District. The building features intact architectural features such as a glass block transom, historic storefront, and exposed beams in the ceiling of the entry. The interior of the building is a single open plan space, with tin panels on the ceiling and mid-century globe pendant lights. The Seventh Avenue corridor in Beaver Falls is challenged with a discontinuous street front, interrupted by vacant lots and some office uses that occupy long frontages on the ground-floor. However, there are clear signs of entrepreneurship and investment in Beaver Falls, as demonstrated by the four projects for the Beaver Falls Innovation Corridor: the BHIVE Innovation Hub, Portobello Cultural Life and Arts Center, March Park improvements and the future Neighborhood North Museum of Play (see Key Projects in Chapter 2, “Planning Context”).

Several blocks south of the project site, the News Tribune Building at 401 7th Avenue is the focus of a community-led rehabilitation project to become the Neighborhood North Museum of Play. The Beaver Falls CDC, RiverWise, and local educational institutions are leading the project, with substantial support from local community membersⁱ. The building will include air quality monitoring stations on the roof, in partnership with AirWise Air Quality Monitoring Coalition, as described in a RiverWise strategic plan. This historic property investment project is undoubtedly attracting interest, and possibly investment, to Beaver Falls.

The property at 914 Seventh Avenue can complement the ongoing investments occurring downtown. As detailed in Chapter 3, “Market Analysis,” shoppers are coming to Beaver Falls from surrounding areas. Considering the retail market demands for Beaver and Ohio River Valley, detailed in Chapter 3, this property could be repurposed as a book or music store. The developments planned for the Beaver Falls Innovation Corridor are led by educational institutions. A book and music store in this unique and iconic historic building could be an attraction for the artists, educators, students and families visiting the Innovation Corridor.

ⁱ: RiverWise. August 2020. Beaver Falls Ecodistrict Vision Statements. Available at: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5aac968b5417fc405461978a/t/5f737fc4f5c3b305e4decb6a/1601404886497/RiverWise+Summary+Document+-+Beaver+Falls.pdf>

Recommendations for Historic Property Investment

- Receive technical assistance and guidance from the Beaver County Main Streets Program, administered by the Community Development Program of Beaver County.
- Receive small business assistance from Paramount Pursuits.
- Coordinate with Rivers of Steel to organize arts events and/or educational signage.
- Coordinate with Riverwise, a nonprofit currently promoting sustainable practices in Beaver Falls.
- Contact the Beaver County Corporation for Economic Development to identify potential funding and tax credits through the Keystone Innovation Zones, Keystone Opportunity Zones, and Keystone Enterprise Zone Program.
- Collaborate with the Beaver Falls Innovation Corridor to coordinate events and marketing.

Midland

Ohio River Valley: Beaver County

4



■ Park or Open Space ■ Business District ■ Significant Buildings — Main Road ■ Historic District

Midland Avenue's commercial district is comprised of stretches of two and three-story commercial buildings, which seem to be occupied with professional services, educational uses, and some hospitality uses. There are a number of buildings for sale or lease, but most appear to be inhabitable. Some upper levels appear to be occupied, especially in the larger buildings, while other upper stories of some smaller structures appear to be vacant. The streetscape appears to have been updated. The corridor has parallel parking with significant off-street parking on former building sites.

Midland is known for the Lincoln Park Performing Arts School which is just off the commercial district. Many of the businesses in the commercial district are also education-related and through conversations with people in the district, these businesses support some of the restaurants that are on Midland Avenue but are not enough to support a robust retail-hospitality ecosystem.

There is a functioning industrial site within two blocks of the commercial area. It is not known if those employees frequent main street businesses. The former steel mill site may be attractive to cracker plant spin-off industries. Poor air quality was apparent on the day of the visit and may be an inhibitor to certain activities or attractions.

The commercial district in Midland consists of a C-1 and C-2 district along Midland Avenue between Third Street and Twelfth Street. Midland Avenue serves as the major commercial corridor and thoroughfare in the Borough. Permitted uses within the two commercial districts include retail and dining establishments, banks, businesses and financial services, personal care services, amusement and entertainment facilities, and parking facilities. Residential uses are not permitted within the C-2 district, however multifamily housing is a conditional use permitted within the C-1 district. Residential uses are allowed on upper floors in the C-1 district, with several residential units currently in existence along Midland Avenue.

District Recommendations

- Connect main street businesses and seasonal amenities like farmer's markets with the service workers who travel to Midland each day.
- Develop a main street marketing program to attract businesses. Understand what businesses are desired by the adjacent residents and solicit destination businesses that might be interested in some of the more unusual buildings, such as the former bank building.
- Create bike and pedestrian connections between the downtown and the planned Ohio River Trail.
- Implement signage and sidewalk improvements connecting the commercial and industrial sites to the downtown.
- Develop design guidelines to promote new development and alterations that reflect the existing historic character of the main street.

Midland

Ohio River Valley: Beaver County

4



Building Profile

Location

616, 620, 624, 628, 630 Midland Avenue

Size

The buildings are each approximately 120 feet deep and 40 to 80 feet wide.

Ownership

Local ownership

Context/adjacent uses

An online charter school headquarters and vacant lots

616-630 Midland Avenue, Midland (Recommended Eligible)

Source: AKRF/EvolveEA

These five buildings on Midland Avenue are vacant or underutilized. The properties have recently transferred ownership, and efforts should be made to ensure that the buildings do not fall into disrepair or neglect. This contiguous street front could be targeted for a temporary activation program.

As detailed in Chapter 3, “Market Analysis,” employment in Midland is growing and there may be a market demand for office space. Office space along Midland Avenue could ensure that these buildings remain occupied and maintained.

Recommendations for Historic Property Investment

- Receive technical assistance and guidance from the Beaver County Main Streets Program, administered by the Community Development Program of Beaver County.
- Receive small business assistance from Paramount Pursuits.
- Coordinate with Rivers of Steel to organize arts events and/or educational signage.
- Contact the Beaver County Corporation for Economic Development to identify potential funding and tax credits through the Keystone Innovation Zones, Keystone Opportunity Zones, and Keystone Enterprise Zone Program.

Monaca

Ohio River Valley: Beaver County

4



■ Park or Open Space ■ Business District ■ Significant Buildings — Main Road ····· Historic District

Monaca's early agrarian uses yielded to a splinter sect of the Harmonists coming from Ambridge, resulting in the gridded blocks between 6th Street and 9th Street and between Pennsylvania Avenue and the Riverfront. While it is historically interesting, the commercial corridor in this area today is auto-oriented with many parking lots and open parcels. The densest commercial activity occurs between 9th Street and 13th Street on Pennsylvania Avenue, where small two- and three-story buildings are filled with professional services and some restaurants and cafe uses. Pedestrian crossings and bump-outs were previously completed, though they seem to be in need of renewal.

Many buildings in this stretch have been maintained or renovated, but there are some that are unoccupied and languishing without care. A few properties are listed for sale or lease. Parking is often available on one side of the street and, in some places, on both sides. Some off-street lots are available, but they appear to be privately owned. There is a small park, George Washington Park, and a municipal lot centrally located in the district. There are signs of reinvestment with some new businesses and storefronts at the western end of the corridor nearest to the Monaca-Rochester bridge.

Monaca's Riverfront Park, or Pump House Park, is at the terminus of 6th Street. It is a short walk from the business district but there are few destinations along the route. The park features a historic pump station structure built under the Works Progress Administration and views of three bridges.

Monaca's Core Commercial District (C-C) is located downtown and was zoned to preserve business activity and promote revitalization. The downtown core is primarily situated along Pennsylvania Avenue between 4th and 17th Street, as well as along 9th Street. Permitted uses within the downtown core include retail and dining establishments, business services, art and entertainment establishments, day care centers and commercial schools, financial institutions, medical and essential services, public buildings, private clubs, commercial and public recreation facilities, and public parking garages and lots.

The downtown core is located along a major thoroughfare that connects communities such as Monaca to the Beaver Valley Mall. While no residential uses are permitted within the downtown core, a Planned River-Oriented Development District (PROD) is zoned nearby to encourage private redevelopment of properties near the river and the business district to promote high-density residential uses within the Borough. A Mixed-Use Transitional District (MUT) also serves as a transition between the commercial and industrial corridors into residential neighborhoods.

District Recommendations

- Monaca is a crossroads for those upriver and inland to cross to Beaver and Rochester. The business district should take advantage of its high visibility with branding and promotion of stores and businesses.
- If successful, parking may be an issue for patrons wishing to stay. Develop a parking study to understand the level of service now and what might be needed with continued small business success.
- There seem to be some destination-oriented businesses there today. If one does not already exist, consider a chamber of commerce or other organization to create a business-friendly environment and to guide and/or fund streetscape renewal.
- Storefront guidelines and tree care guidelines may help guide investment.
- Create bike and pedestrian connections between the downtown and the planned Ohio River Trail.
- Develop design guidelines to promote new development and alterations that reflect the existing historic character of the main street.

Monaca

Ohio River Valley: Beaver County

4



Building Profile

Location

1020 Pennsylvania Ave, Monaca Borough

Size

18,000 square feet

Ownership

Local ownership

Context/adjacent uses

Post office and restaurant are across the street. The adjacent storefronts may be occupied. The block of Pennsylvania Avenue also contains George Washington Park and a police department.

1020 Pennsylvania Ave, Monaca (Recommended Eligible)

Source: AKRF/EvolveEA

The furniture warehouse was built in 1931. It is identified a Recommended Eligible historic resource in Monaca. The building is three stories with a freight elevator. Formerly a furniture warehouse, the building appears to be currently used as storage. It is centrally located across the street from the post office and two doors down from the police department. The building's vertical sign and decorative brickwork make it an identifiable landmark in the business corridor, positioning it to be a catalytic development in Monaca.

The property could be a co-working and incubator space, similar to the BHIVE Innovation hub planned for nearby Beaver Falls. This property could offer maker spaces, classrooms, and meeting rooms. The building is well suited as a maker space, with a freight elevator, open plan floors, and a solid construction intended to support furniture. With its distinctive vertical sign, the building would be an iconic and inspirational creative space for students and entrepreneurs. Located close to a public park and centrally situated on the Pennsylvania Avenue corridor, the building would be a convenient and comfortable place to work and gather.

As described in Chapter 3, "Market Analysis," shared office spaces present a longer-term opportunity to grow business activity and interest in downtown locations. Co-working spaces serve individuals who work remotely but who cannot or do not want to work from home, as well as entrepreneurs and freelancers who need office infrastructure. Co-working spaces also attract a younger generation of workers seeking a collaborative work environment. Co-working spaces and business incubators serve the larger community by attracting talent to an area. As described in Chapter 3, furniture and home furnishings retail is also in demand in Beaver and Ohio River Valley communities. The property at 1020 Pennsylvania Avenue could also serve this demand.

Recommendations for Historic Property Investment

- Receive technical assistance and guidance from the Beaver County Main Streets Program, administered by the Community Development Program of Beaver County.
- Receive small business assistance from Paramount Pursuits.
- Coordinate with Rivers of Steel to organize arts events and/or educational signage .
- Coordinate with Riverwise, a nonprofit currently promoting sustainable actions in Monaca.
- Contact the Beaver County Corporation for Economic Development to identify potential funding and tax credits through the Keystone Innovation Zones, Keystone Opportunity Zones, and Keystone Enterprise Zone Program.
- Reach out to Geneva College, Penn State Beaver, Community College of Beaver County (CCBC) and Robert Morris University, to garner support for a Monaca innovation hub similar to their BHIVE initiative in Beaver Falls.

New Brighton

Beaver River Valley: Beaver County

4



Park or Open Space
 Business District
 Significant Buildings
 Main Road
 Historic District

New Brighton’s commercial activity is concentrated along Third Avenue, a wide three-lane corridor running parallel to the Beaver River. The avenue is lined with two-story retail buildings, many of which retain original architectural features such as bracketed cornices, arched windows and brick facades. Many storefronts are active.

The business district is a pedestrian-friendly corridor with street trees, historic lampposts, bench seating, and signage directing visitors to local landmarks. The few vacant lots appeared to be maintained. The pedestrian experience along Third Avenue is sometimes interrupted by long windowless streetwalls of newer construction buildings. Third Avenue is separated from the riverfront by the railroad tracks, although there is a pedestrian tunnel at 8th Street that leads to the public Big Rock Park.

New Brighton zones for several commercial districts, including the retail commercial district (C-1), the general commercial district (C-2), and the commercial office/limited industrial campus district (C-3). The C-3 district is located in an isolated section to the north of the Borough. The C-1 district runs along Third Avenue between 5th and 13th Street, and the C-2 district is zoned parallel to the light commercial district along Fifth Avenue. Permitted uses within the C-1 district include retail and dining establishments, personal services, bank and financial institutions, religious institutions, schools, hotels, offices, public institutions, arts and entertainment spaces, parking garages and lots, and short-term rental units. The C-2 district similarly permits business offices, financial institutions, professional and personal services, public offices, commercial and public parking garages and lots, medical marijuana dispensaries, and short-term rental units. C-1 districts are zoned for higher-density buildings compared to the bordering C-2 district.

District Recommendations

- Create bike and pedestrian connections between the downtown and the planned Ohio River Trail.
- Develop design guidelines to promote new development and alterations that reflect the existing historic character of the main street.
- Install lighting and improved signage to make the tunnel on 8th Street leading into Big Rock Park more inviting to and safer for pedestrians.
- Partner with the New Brighton Historical Society in interpreting and raising awareness regarding New Brighton's role in the abolition movement and the underground railroad.

New Brighton

Beaver River Valley: Beaver County

4



Building Profile

Location

610 Third Avenue

Size

30,928 square feet

Ownership

Municipally-owned

Context/adjacent uses

Residential, public park, health foods store

610 Third Avenue, New Brighton (Recommended Eligible)

Source: Google Streetview

This municipal building is architecturally significant and serves as a landmark in downtown New Brighton. Built in 1908 as an armory, the heavily castellated stone building has Romanesque architectural features, including a round-arched entry. The building is municipal owned and has served as the municipal complex since 1979. New Brighton can ensure that the building is maintained and protected, to retain this important character-defining feature of the downtown.

The municipal building could also serve as a venue for an exhibition or signage that interprets New Brighton's known, documented role in the abolition movement and underground railroad.

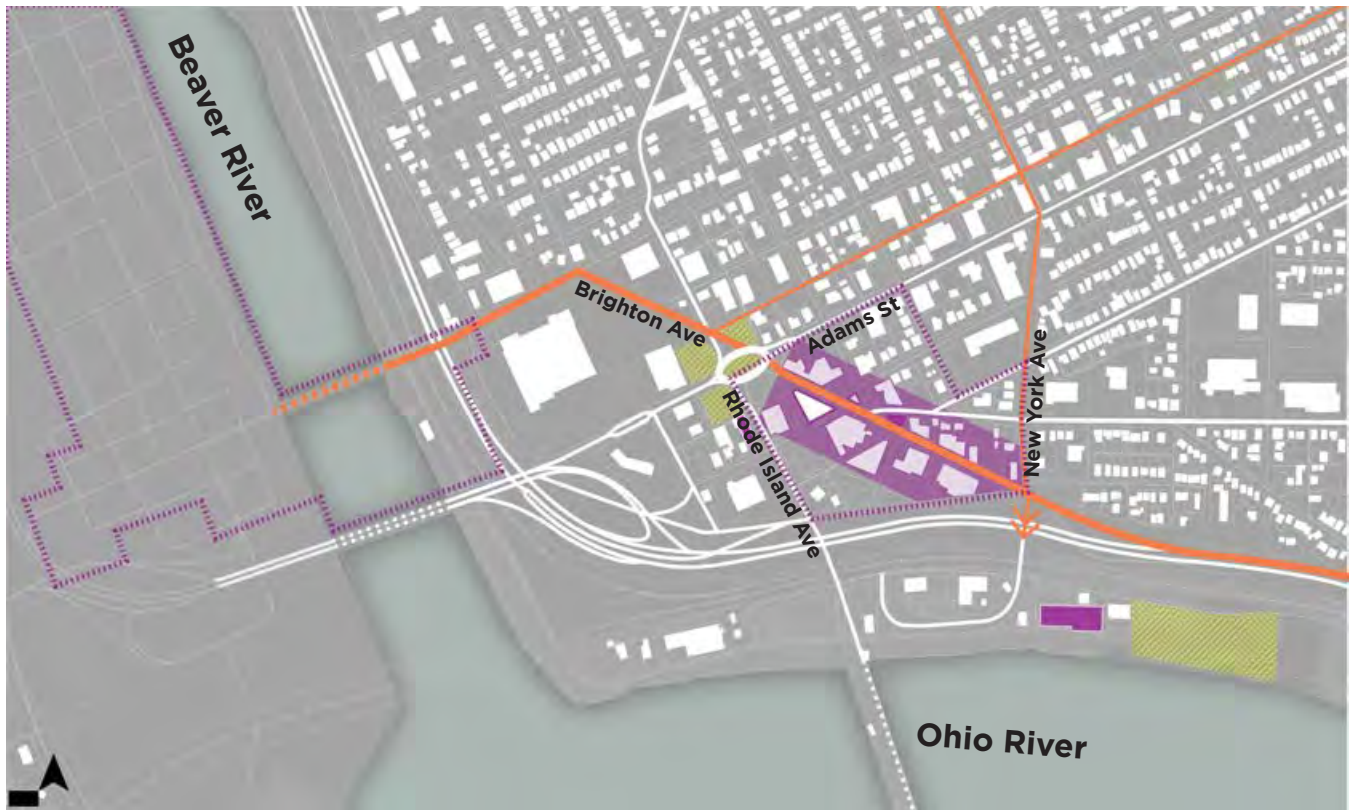
Recommendations for Historic Property Investment

- Develop a maintenance and preservation program for historic municipally-owned properties in New Brighton.
- Apply for a Keystone Historic Preservation Construction Grant to support repairs.
- Nominate the building to the National Register of Historic Places, to celebrate the building's historical significance.
- Develop a branding effort for New Brighton that includes the distinctive armory building.

Rochester

Beaver River and Ohio River Valleys: Beaver County

4



■ Park or Open Space ■ Business District ■ Significant Buildings — Main Road ■ Historic District

Rochester’s commercial buildings are distributed between the Beaver River and the Ohio River. The most significant concentration of storefront buildings is along Brighton Avenue, where the irregular street grid creates unusual wedge-shaped “flatiron” buildings. The corridor and the surrounding streets are busy with through traffic to Beaver, Monaca, and communities upstream in the Beaver River valley.

Although the Brighton Avenue corridor is topographically challenged with a steep slope, it connects two major civic spaces—the roundabout and park at the top of the hill and public access to the river at the lowest point. Although the connections exist, they are not apparent to the visitor. The corridor has on-street parking and some off-street parking. The streetscape has been upgraded in the past 20 years but may be a candidate for renewal and LED replacements.

The buildings are in various states of repair. Some structures have been consistently maintained or recently rehabilitated. However, many of the multistory structures have passive uses on the first floor or are functioning as storage. Many appear to have vacant upper stories or have upper stories that were sided with metal panels at some point. These buildings are 30-60 feet wide and would require significant investment. Despite their disrepair, the corridor is short and the loss of any of these buildings would be deleterious to the integrity and scale of the business district.

The business district is bounded by significant buildings. At the top of Brighton Avenue, the Rochester Hotel is a complex of buildings that have high visibility, numerous storefronts, and vacant upper stories. Similarly, the Rochester Masonic Lodge is a gateway structure for the community and is in need of repair. Smaller, angled buildings at Brighton and Jackson are visually interesting buildings in the district. At the bottom of the hill on the riverfront is a grand former brewery that appears to be used as open warehouse space for recreational tenants. The size, riverfront location, and its adjacency to vacant land could be a development opportunity (see Historic Buildings Opportunities below).

District Recommendations

- Stabilization of major structures and contributing structures is important to maintain the business district's integrity.
- Larger buildings in the district will require a greater investment than smaller buildings, resulting in a smaller pool of potential investors. If vacant, ensure that the buildings are stabilized with new roofs and other protection to prevent further deterioration.
- Brand the business corridor with signage on the traffic circle and install adequate way-finding to guide people to riverfront destinations. Given Rochester's high visibility and traffic counts, successful businesses and rejuvenated buildings on Brighton Avenue can become a beacon for others to follow.
- Create bike and pedestrian connections between the downtown and the planned Ohio River Trail.
- Create clear pedestrian connection between downtown and the riverfront park.
- Develop design guidelines to promote new development and alterations that reflect the existing historic character of the main street

Rochester

Beaver River and Ohio River Valleys: Beaver County

4



Building Profile

Location

25 New York Avenue, Rochester

Size

1.12 acre site (unknown square footage for building)

Context/adjacent uses

River park, storage sheds, highway

Brewery Valley Brewing Company, 25 New York Avenue
(Recommended Eligible)

Source: Google Streetview

The former brewery is located on the waterfront in Rochester. The six-story building operated in the early 20th century. It is now an imposing brick structure on the riverfront, flanked by riverfront parks and the highway. This building could be as an entry marker from the Ohio River Trail into Rochester, receiving trail users and branding Rochester. The building could house maker spaces and light industry. Two recently-opened breweries in Ambridge demonstrate the demand for this business type.

This building is within the 100-year flood plain, however the industrial building could include wet flood-proofing on the ground-floor. Wet flood-proofing allows water infiltration during flooding events, and drainage after the event. All mechanical systems are elevated above the base flood elevationⁱ.

Recommendations for Historic Property Investment

- Nominate the property for inclusion on the National Register, to access state and federal rehabilitation tax credits, and national historic preservation grants.
- Receive technical assistance and guidance from the Beaver County Main Streets Program, administered by the Community Development Program of Beaver County.
- Receive small business assistance from Paramount Pursuits.
- Coordinate with Rivers of Steel to organize arts events and/or educational signage.
- Contact the Beaver County Corporation for Economic Development to identify potential funding and tax credits through the Keystone Innovation Zones, Keystone Opportunity Zones, and Keystone Enterprise Zone Program.
- Include green storm water infrastructure on site to mitigate flooding.

ⁱ: For additional information about flood adaptation for historic buildings, see: National Park Service. "The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation & Guidelines On Flood Adaptation for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings," 2019.

4.4 Flood Mitigation Opportunities

4

Targeted flood mitigation strategies are proposed for three communities that are experiencing flooding in the business district: Charleroi, Monongahela, and Monessen. As identified in Chapter 1, “Study Communities,” these three communities have flooding that threatens historic property investment and long-term vitality along the commercial corridor. Flooding in these three communities can be attributed to the Monongahela River as well as the existing topography.

Green storm water infrastructure provides drainage and water retention to reduce flooding events while also providing streetscape improvements by beautifying and activating the sidewalk. The green infrastructure suggested for these locations include improved storm water drainage, vacant lot transformations or pocket parks, and green infrastructure implementation into existing or proposed park plans. These structures can help manage storm water coming from higher elevations and alleviate flooding along the river.



Green Streets, Improved Drainage, Storm water Storage and Street Landscaping. Examples of Green Streets, Improved Drainage, Storm water Storage and Street Landscaping. This image shows a cutaway view of a potential green storm water infrastructure design for a commercial corridor. Water infiltrates the street trees and the berms, providing water retention that can reduce flooding in neighboring historic buildings.

Image Credit: AKRF



Examples of Green Streets, Improved Drainage, Storm water Storage and Street Landscaping. Green storm water infrastructure effectively reduces flooding while also improving the public realm. Green space and sidewalk bump outs beautify the sidewalk and slow traffic.

Image Credit: AKRF



Example of Green Infrastructure Site, Park and Drainage Integration. A larger water retention program can assist with riverine flooding. These constructed natural areas support pollinators and local animal life, while also reducing flooding upland.

Image Credit: AKRF



Example of a Vacant Lot Pocket Park. Vacant lots can be repurposed to absorb and retain storm water, thereby reducing flooding on the street and in nearby buildings.

Image Credit: Copyright 2009–2020 Philadelphia Water Department



Example of Green Infrastructure Site, Park and Drainage Integration

Image Credit: AKRF

Charleroi, Washington County

As described in Chapter 1, “Study Communities,” flood zones AE (100-year) and X 0.2 percent (500-year) occur along the Monongahela River in Charleroi. The 100-year flood zone encroaches upon a segment of McKean Avenue, as flooding poses a risk to the historic buildings along this commercial corridor. Buildings within the 100-year flood zone are regulated by FEMA and flood insurance is mandatory.

Green storm water infrastructure practices can help manage some of the flooding in Charleroi. Along McKean Avenue, green street storm water drainage and storage can be used to capture and mitigate storm water flow coming from the west. This drainage system can also be connected to a green infrastructure site located in the planned Magic City Riverfront Park. Phase I of the park project is already underway, as initial survey work and designs are being finalizedⁱ. This site could also be used for additional storm water storage or water quality. Additional sites along the river are also potential transformed vacant lots, where water retention interventions could help manage flooding downtown. Responsible parties for these improvements could be the State Department of Transportation and the municipality.

ⁱ: Mon Valley Alliance. Magic City Riverfront Park. Accessed at <https://www.monvalleyalliance.org/community/community-projects/charleroi-renaissance-phase-1/>.

Monongahela, Washington County

As described in Chapter 1, “Study Communities,” the 100-year and 500-year flood zones extend from the Monongahela River to encroach upon the Monongahela business district. Almost the entirety of West Main Street is within a flood zone. The flood risk along West Main Street changes block to block as some buildings are within the 100-year flood zone and others are encompassed by the 500-year flood zone. Green street storm water drainage and storage is suggested along West Main Street. Improved storm water drainage systems and storage structures could capture excess storm water from the south along West Main Street. In addition, the Monongahela riverfront includes vacant or underutilized former industrial lands and transportation corridors that could be fitted with flood retention infrastructure. Two amenities—the Monongahela Aquatorium and Chess Park—could also be equipped with green infrastructure for additional water storage and retention.

Monessen, Washington County

In Monessen, the 100-year and 500-year flood zones occur along the east bank of Monongahela River. The 500-year flood zone encroaches upon the extent of Donner Avenue, posing a risk to the community and a deterrent for historic property investment. Donner Avenue is suggested for green storm water infrastructure. Improved system drainage along this avenue would aid in managing storm water coming from the south. There are vacant lots along this avenue as well that could be transformed into green infrastructure sites to provide additional water storage. A connection of the new street drainage system could be attached to a green infrastructure site located at the riverfront boat launch and fishing docks.

4.5 Funding Sources

Both Beaver County and the Monongahela River Valley region are supported by various federal, state, and local grant funded opportunities to identify, plan, support, and execute projects that promote development within the local communities. The list below offers some of the funding opportunities for historic preservation and economic revitalization in the regions. This is not a comprehensive list, as opportunities and sources change frequently.

Federal Funding Sources

FEDERAL OPPORTUNITY ZONES

Some municipalities are home to Federal Opportunity Zones, which are intended to spur economic growth and create jobs in low-income communities. Aliquippa, Beaver Falls, Charleroi, and Midland are all communities within a federally-designated opportunity zone.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG)

CDBG is a grant program, funded by the Federal department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and distributed by local and regional agencies. The CDBG State Program awards grants to smaller units of local government.

COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT (CSBG)

Funded by HUD, CSBG is a grant program aimed at reducing poverty and revitalizing low income communities.

REHABILITATION INVESTMENT TAX CREDIT (RITC)

The RITC provides a 20% income tax credit for the rehabilitation of income-producing historic buildings. Properties must be listed on the National Register. Rehabilitation projects must meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, with review by the National Park Service and the State Historic Preservation Office.

NATIONAL TRUST PRESERVATION FUND

The National Trust is a non-profit that offers matching grants for planning and education, as well as intervention funds for preservation emergencies.

PAUL BRUHN REVITALIZATION GRANT

The National Park Service administers the Paul Bruhn Revitalization Grant Program, which supports architectural and engineering services and physical preservation. The property must be listed in the National Register of Historic Places or determined eligible for listing in the National Register, and located in a community with a population less than 50,000. State Historic preservation Offices and CLG's can submit the application on behalf of the recipient project.

COMMUNITY PROJECT FUNDING

Members of Congress may solicit Community Project Funding requests, to earmark funding for specific projects and programs in their district. In 2022, Representative Conor Lamb secured funding for nine projects, including \$894,941 for the Franklin Avenue Park¹.

APPALACHIAN REGIONAL COMMISSION (ARC)

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) is an economic development partnership agency, including local, state, and federal entities, serving the greater Appalachian region. In addition to publishing research and sponsoring learning experiences, ARC provides grants to communities within the region. Most grants are awarded through the Area Development Program for project investment, though some receive funding from POWER Initiative, a dedicated fund to supporting coal-impacted communities recovering from the difficulties of transition away from coal-focused economies. Applications for ARC funding must be completed with the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission, described below.

State Funding Sources

KEYSTONE COMMUNITIES PROGRAM (KCP)

The KCP is a grant administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Community Economic Development (DCED). Entities eligible for the KCP include units of local government and nonprofits, housing authorities and business improvement districts. The program aims to establish public-private partnerships, through designation as a Keystone Main Street, Keystone Elm Street, Keystone Enterprise Zone, or Keystone Community. The grant can be applied to façade improvement programs, accessible housing programs, and development grants.

¹: "Lamb Secures More Than \$4.2 Million In Community Project Funding For Pa." 17 May 3, 2022. Accessed May 2022 at <https://lamb.house.gov/media/press-releases/lamb-secures-more-42-million-community-project-funding-pa-17>.

KEYSTONE INNOVATION ZONES (KIZ)

Administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Community Economic Development (DCED), the KIZ tax credit program is offered to newer for-profit companies operating within the targeted industries in the boundaries of a designated Innovation Zone. The program is managed by a regional KIZ coordinator.

KEYSTONE OPPORTUNITY ZONES (KOZ)

Administered by the DCED, the KOZ is offered to private businesses and residents. KOZ target sites are abandoned, unused or underutilized properties. Projects are supported through tax credits, waivers, and tax abatements, reducing the taxes on economic activity in the designated geographic area.

BUSINESS IN OUR SITES (BOS)

The BOS Grant/Loan is a fund intended to encourage and attract businesses by prepping a site for redevelopment.

INDUSTRIAL SITES REUSE (ISR)

Administered by DECD, the ISR program is a grant and low-interest loan that supports environmental remediation of former industrial sites. The program is administered by DECD.

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (NAP)

Nonprofit neighborhood organizations are eligible for the NAP, which offers tax credits for local investment.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION TAX CREDIT (HPTC)

The HPTC supports the rehabilitation of income-producing historic properties. All proposed projects are reviewed by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) and meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The total tax credits awarded to a qualified taxpayer may not exceed \$500,000 in any fiscal year.

KEYSTONE HISTORIC PRESERVATION CONSTRUCTION GRANT

Administered by PHMC, the Keystone Historic Preservation Construction Grants is a brick-and-mortar program for local governments and nonprofits who own or manage historic properties. This program is part of a larger Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund. Eligible activities for the grants include small construction projects at publicly-accessible historic properties. Grants range between \$5,000 and \$100,000 and require a 50/50 match.

KEYSTONE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLANNING GRANT

A PHMC program, this program supports planning and development projects that identify, preserve, promote and protect designated historic properties. Eligible activities include cultural resource surveys, national register nominations, planning and development assistance. The funding requires a 50/50 match. The Charleroi Historic District was funded by this grant. The funds are available only to qualified non-profit entities and units of local government.

COMMUNITY CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAM

The Community Conservation Partnerships Program grant is administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR). The grants support projects related to parks, recreation, and conservation. Three municipalities in Beaver Valley received grant funding for revitalization projects in their respective communities in 2021, including Beaver Falls, which was given \$249,000 for phase two of Liberty Park¹.

CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENTS (CLG)

As described in Chapter 2, “Planning Context,” municipalities that participate in the CLG program are eligible for special grants. These grants include project grants, mini grants, and scholarships for training in the community. Project grants can support initiatives that help a community build capacity, such as tools or plans. The CLG program is administered by the PA SHPO.

PARTNERSHIP GRANT

Through this program, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) supports collaborative regional heritage projects, as well as recreation and conservation initiatives. Eligible projects include education and training, such as workshops and public forums, as well as preservation plans and marketing plans. Eligible applicants include municipalities that intend to establish a multi-municipal process, and regional nonprofits.

Regional Funding Sources

BEAVER AND OHIO RIVER VALLEY REGION

Beaver County Corporation for Economic Development (CED):

The CED is a nonprofit that offers low-interest loans.

Distribution of State and Federal Funds:

The Community Development Program of Beaver County distributes state and federal funds aimed at alleviating poverty, including the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Community Services Block Grant (CSBG).

Façade Improvement Program:

The Community Development Program of Beaver County reimburses business owners or building owners for renovations to storefronts.

RiverWise mini-grants:

Regional nonprofit RiverWise distributes mini-grants for small-scale community projects.

THE MONONGAHELA RIVER VALLEY REGION

Distribution of State and Federal Funds:

The Redevelopment Authority of Washington County and the Westmoreland County Community Development Division distribute state and federal funds, including CDBG grants.

¹ Vercilla, Nicholas. “Three Beaver Valley Communities Receive DCNR Funding for Revitalization Projects.” The Times, Beaver County Times, 4 Jan. 2022, <https://www.timesonline.com/story/news/2022/01/04/three-beaver-valley-communities-receive-dcnr-grant-funding/9094542002/>.

Local Share Account (LSA) Program:

The Redevelopment Authority of Washington County established the Washington County LSA Program to support local communities with economic development, job training, or public interest projects through revenues generated by the Pennsylvania Race Horse Development and Gaming Act. Recent projects include the rehabilitation of Monongahela's library, Charleroi Atlas lot redevelopment, and sanitary sewer improvements in Donora.

National Road Heritage Corridor mini-grant:

Through funding from the DCNR, the National Road Heritage Corridor mini-grants for development, acquisition, or planning projects for communities within the heritage corridor. The grants are \$5,000 to \$10,000 and require matching funds. Washington County is the only county in this study that can access NRHC mini-grants.

BOTH REGIONS

Rivers of Steel Heritage Area:

The Rivers of Steel Heritage Area is a federally designated heritage area in Southwestern Pennsylvania that offers a Mini-Grant program to fund projects that preserve the industrial and cultural heritage of the region, ranging in amounts from \$1,000 to \$25,000. The Mini-Grant program is funded by a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Community Conservation Partnerships Program and the Environmental Stewardship Fund.

Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC):

The SPC is the metropolitan planning organization for the region, serving the 10-county Pittsburgh region, including Beaver County, Washington County, and Westmoreland County. The SPC's Business Finance Assistance program offers assistance and loans to entrepreneurs.

Alternative Funding Mechanisms

In addition to the specific entities outlined above, there are a number of other funding mechanisms available within the region that promote economic growth and community development. Many municipalities employ tax incentives to spur development¹. The Tax Increment Financing Guarantee Program is designed to assist in the development, redevelopment, and revitalization of brownfield and greenfield sites through the use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF). Other tax incentives include Transportation Impact Fees, in which municipalities collect fees from developers to address transportation improvements for local and state roads impacted by new development. Some communities, such as New Brighton, have implemented the Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance (LERTA) Act to initiate reinvestment in the community. Municipalities that have LERTA in place provide a temporary abatement (three years in New Brighton) of the local, school, and county property taxes as an incentive for development.

Stormwater Management Funding Sources

Federal and state water related infrastructure funding sources can fund green stormwater infrastructure projects for flood mitigation. These funds can be used as a financial catalyst for getting projects off the ground and stimulating the business districts. Federal agencies that distribute funds related to stormwater management include: the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), United States Department of Transportation (US DOT), United States Department of Commerce (US DOC), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), United States Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Endowment of Forestry and Communities, and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). State agencies include the DCED, Department of Agriculture, DCNR, and Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP).

1: Grass Roots Solutions. (2015). Rochester Township Economic Development Study. Retrieved from https://www.rochestertwp.org/sites/g/files/vyhlf49336/f/uploads/final_economic_development_study_-_dj101215_0.pdf

FLOOD MITIGATION ASSISTANCE (FMA)

The Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) program is a grant program with the goal of reducing or eliminating National Flood Insurance Program claims. Local communities can apply for funding, for projects such as floodwater storage and diversion, stormwater management, and localized flood control. The PA State Hazard Mitigation Officer and the PA Floodplain Manager can provide more information.

GREENWAYS, TRAILS & RECREATION (GTRP)

The GTRP is a grant for planning, acquisition, development, rehabilitation and repair of greenways, recreational trails, open space, parks and beautification projects. Eligible applicants include municipalities and for-profit businesses.

PA SMALL WATER & SEWER

The grant program administered by DCED supports sustainable drinking water and sewer improvements that support a local economy. Municipalities are eligible to apply.

COMMUNITY CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP GRANT

The DCNR Bureau of Recreation and Conservation administers this grant for local governments, for-profit enterprises, and nonprofits, to develop public parks, fund river access and recreation areas.

SMALL BUSINESS ADVANTAGE GRANT

The DEP program supports small businesses to install energy efficiency and pollution prevention projects.

CLEAN WATER STATE REVOLVING FUND (CWSRF)

Managed by PENNVEST, the CWSRF program support water quality infrastructure projects, including green infrastructure.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE SMALL GRANTS (EJSG)

The EPA program is aimed at community-drive projects that educate, engage and empower communities to understand and address local environmental and public health issues. Nonprofits can apply for these grants. Grants are amounts up to \$75,000.

URBAN WATERS SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM

The EPA program targets underserved communities, with the intention of restoring urban waters in a way that also supports economic revitalization. Eligible applicants include local governments, universities and colleges, nonprofits, and Indian Tribes. Grants are amounts up to \$60,000.

Appropriate investment strategies to attain diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility

4

For economic development strategies to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion, care must be taken to recognize and identify the existing inequities in a region's economy and current and historic barriers to access. Nationwide, gaps exist between white populations and populations of color in terms of employment, wages, and poverty ratesⁱ.

The magnitude of these gaps vary by industry. For example, the Brookings Institution found that economies whose major industry is healthcare have more successfully narrowed gaps in employment rates between white workers and workers of color. Brookings posits that healthcare industries have more equitable employment because there are positions available to workers at various levels of educational attainment that provide a pathway for career advancement. Manufacturing economies also provide more equitable employment due to lower barriers to entry in terms of educational attainment and higher wages than other sectors with lower barriers to entry such as the service industry.

Economic development strategies should seek to grow industries that provide jobs with livable wages at various levels of educational attainment and industries that provide opportunities for career advancement.

A chronic issue is that communities and municipalities with the capacity to apply for and manage grants and other financing tools are the communities that receive those funds and financing tools. This creates an inter-community equity issue related to capacity—those that have capacity are regularly successful applying for funding and are able to implement more programming—and those that do not have that capacity fall further behind.

Educational Attainment and Workforce Development

Gaps in employment and wages often stem from gaps in educational attainment between white populations and populations of color. Economic development strategies should seek to close gaps in educational attainment and prepare the local workforce for the jobs available to them. Partnerships between local employers, labor unions, and community colleges can help align education and training with the needs of employers.

Entrepreneurship and Small Businesses

Populations of color have historically faced barriers in accessing capital. Strategies such as revolving loan funds can provide low-interest loans to local entrepreneurs.

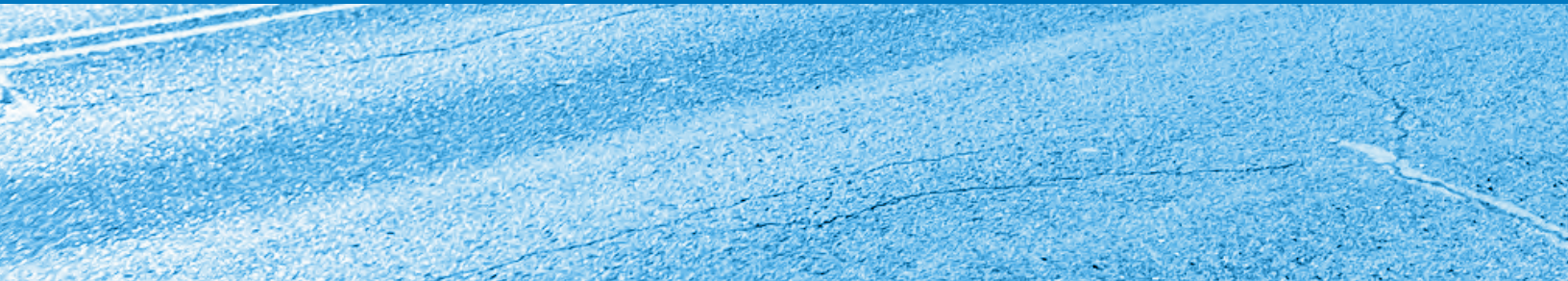
Small businesses have experienced severe negative impacts as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Small businesses in communities of color have faced disproportionate impacts and have received unequal access to federal COVID-19 support programs such as the Paycheck Protection Programⁱⁱ (PPP). Black- and Hispanic/Latino-owned small businesses are less likely than non-Hispanic white-owned small businesses to have received bank funding. Therefore, Black- and Hispanic/Latino-owned small businesses had less access to the traditional banks who primarily serviced PPP loans as compared to non-Hispanic white-owned businesses who are more likely to be existing bank customers. Black and Hispanic/Latino business owners also face lending discrimination. Equitable economic development strategies should seek to increase small business owners' access to traditional financing and provide alternate means of financing such as low-interest small business loans, and revolving loan funds.

i: Brookings Institution. (February 2021). "With racial equity on America's agenda, how inclusive were metro areas in the past decade?" (Accessed 2022 at <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2021/02/24/with-racial-equity-on-americas-agenda-how-inclusive-were-metro-areas-in-the-past-decade>)

ii: Brookings Institution. (September 2020). "New data shows small businesses in communities of color had unequal access to federal COVID-19 relief." (Accessed 2022 at <https://www.brookings.edu/research/new-data-shows-small-businesses-in-communities-of-color-had-unequal-access-to-federal-covid-19-relief/>)



Charleroi, PA





Chapter 5

Recommendations



Aliquippa, PA

Introduction

This chapter presents the key findings and recommendations from the study, along with proposed implementation strategies. See the “How to Implement this Plan” Checklist for an expanded list of proposed implementation strategies by lead implementing agencies and organizations, along with matching potential funding sources and suggested timeframe. Many of the recommendations were derived from the project’s robust public engagement process, including stakeholder interviews, public meetings, and online engagement.

5

Recommendation #1:

Focus on attracting talent, rather than attracting big business.

Why:

Communities in both regions continue to experience declines in population, workforce, and jobs, even though most major industrial employers shuttered decades ago. Between 2010 and 2020, all communities within the regions experienced residential population declines with the exception of Charleroi and Beaver Falls. Employment and labor force trends since 2010 in the region are more varied; in the Beaver and Ohio River Valley communities, Aliquippa and Ambridge experienced increases in total jobs and labor force participants, while other communities were static or experienced losses. In the Monongahela River Valley communities, Charleroi experienced employment growth but a drop in the number of residents in the workforce. There was a slight decrease in the number of jobs within Donora, and a larger decrease in workforce participants. Monongahela also experienced a slight decrease in total jobs but witnessed a slight uptick in workforce participants. Monessen experienced only marginal changes in jobs and workforce over the decade. During a focus group discussion, a member of a County Chamber of Commerce noted that difficulties in attracting a talented workforce is a major impediment to economic development in the regions.

Relative to the “old economy” that relied on major manufacturing employers, today’s “new economy” is driven by smaller service-oriented and creative businesses often founded by entrepreneurs (see “Old Economy” vs. “New Economy” insert, page 21). Today’s workforce is also more mobile, and tends to choose an attractive location to live rather than focusing on retaining a job and locating near that job. The quality of place is now the driving factor in attracting talented workers, which in turn grows business opportunities. The COVID-19 pandemic reinforces and accelerates this ongoing trend toward greater importance of placemaking, because workers have even more flexibility in live/work locational considerations. Future investment should focus on downtown areas, which have become the new economic drivers of communities as they now host more employment than the major industrial employers of previous generations. Businesses are attracted to vibrant, amenity-rich downtown locations that maintain authenticity in their built form because they are better able to attract workers at such locations.

How:

Preserve the historic character of the downtown:

- Municipalities can develop design guidelines for the downtown
- Municipalities can designate adopt a local historic district
- PA SHPO can work with communities to develop historic preservation plans
- Municipalities can amend zoning and local policy to encourage the use and maintenance of historic properties, rather than demolition and neglect. These include flexible uses, reduced/waived parking minimums, international existing building code, limit building sizes downtown, minimum maintenance ordinance.
- Local nonprofits can nominate historically significant properties for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Municipalities can apply for a Keystone Historic Preservation Planning Grant to fund local preservation planning.
- Municipalities or PA SHPO can conduct a historic building inventory to identify historic properties that are locally or regionally significant.

Invest in placemaking, such as public art, sidewalk installations and parklets, and events:

- Communities and property owners can coordinate with Rivers of Steel to organize arts events and/or educational signage.
- Communities and property owners can apply for mini-grants from regional nonprofits to support placemaking efforts.
- Local leaders can connect with local educational institutions to program events downtown.
- Nonprofits can host regional events such as restaurant week, food and wine festival, or riverfront events.

Pursue grants for outdoor recreation projects and outdoor open spaces, which are community assets that enhance the quality of life:

- Municipalities can apply for funding from Greenways, Trails & Recreation program or Community Conservation Partnership Grant.
- Regional planning agencies can improve pedestrian and bike linkages in town.

Recommendation #2:

Prevent and address vacancy and neglect of older buildings.

5

Why:

Pervasive vacancy in many communities threatens to create a blighting influence that leads to disinvestment, and if stabilizing investments are not made soon, some historic buildings could deteriorate beyond repair. The market study identified a range of reasons as to why ground floor storefronts, above-ground-floor spaces, and in some cases entire buildings remain vacant; not all reasons are tied directly to the economic feasibility of rehabilitation and reuse. In some instances, local property owners do not have the financial or technical knowledge to implement basic repairs, such as preventing water infiltration and maintaining adequate protective coatings on exterior walls, replacing broken windows, and maintaining gutters and downspouts. In other cases properties have been sold to out-of-region investors who for tax reasons may actually benefit from keeping a property vacant, or who can afford to believe that waiting on higher rents will benefit them long-term. A lack of code enforcement in many instances allows absentee landlords' properties to fall into disrepair.

The reasons for vacancies vary by community, and even by individual buildings within a community, so there's no one-size-fits all strategy. Rather, communities need to work with property owners to understand the primary forces inhibiting rehabilitation and redevelopment, so that they can develop and implement the most appropriate strategies. Generally, the strategies fall into two categories: 1) a "carrot and stick approach" whereby property owners are provided information and incentives for tenancing, and disincentives are established for leaving a property vacant; and 2) working to improve the downtown environment and promoting the attractiveness of a corridor in order to attract tenant interest and improve investment confidence. The process of rehabilitating and marketing a property is time consuming, costly, and can be fraught with risk. Property owners and other investors tend to be risk averse, and need to see evidence of success.

How:

Maintain, stabilize or mothball historic buildings before it's too late:

- Building owners can implement immediate repairs that seal a building from the elements and prevent further deterioration.
- CLG communities can apply for funding to stabilize significant properties, such as the Paul Bruhn Revitalization Grant Program (NPS) or National Trust Preservation Fund
- Municipalities can apply for a Keystone Historic Preservation Construction Grant to support small construction projects at publicly-accessible historic properties.
- PA SHPO can work with communities to provide technical assistance for building maintenance and repairs.

Proactively diagnose, track, and address vacancies and neglect of older buildings in the downtown:

- Regional planning agencies and local communities can establish a vacancy inventory, using a software or online platform that can be easily updated, accessed, and shared.
- Local communities can establish a Blight Committee that tracks vacancy and addresses persistent issues related to neglect and maintenance.
- Economic development corporations can establish small business liaisons who interview property owners to understand and help address specific reasons for persistent vacancies.
- Municipalities can establish a Vacant and Abandoned Property ordinance that requires property owners to register vacant properties, and pay a fee for vacant buildings unless they can demonstrate the property is actively advertised for lease or sale.

Temporarily occupy vacant properties downtown, to prevent further disinvestment:

- Local and regional nonprofits can establish a vacant storefront program, to temporarily activate empty storefronts on the commercial corridor.
- Local and regional nonprofits, and chambers of commerce, can develop events and popups in empty buildings.

Recommendation #3:

Reduce local barriers to the preservation of historic properties.

Why:

There are significant regulatory and financial barriers to historic property investment. During focus group discussions and interviews with real estate brokers, we heard that compliance with building codes can be challenging, particularly with respect to older, historic buildings. The economic development and planning focus group participants also noted that there is uncertainty about the zoning and development process in some communities, as well as financial challenges to redevelopment.

How:

Provide flexibility in zoning regulations and building codes to reduce barriers to historic property investment:

- Municipalities can amend zoning to expand allowable uses for historic properties downtown.
- Municipalities can adopt an adaptive reuse ordinance.
- Municipalities can waive parking minimums for older buildings.
- Municipalities can limit building sizes downtown, to disincentivize demolition.
- Municipalities can adopt the International Existing Building Code.
- Municipalities can become a Certified Local Government (CLG) to gain access to grants that support historic preservation planning.
- Regional planning agencies can offer model ordinances or technical assistance for rewriting municipal ordinances that enable the reuse and preservation of older buildings.
- Regional planning agencies can provide municipal planners a forum for sharing best practices and strategies.

Educate property owners on financing opportunities related to rehabilitation of historic properties:

- Regional planning agencies and state agencies can offer property owners technical assistance and information in navigating the redevelopment process, including obtaining grants, making repairs, and connecting with future occupants.
- Property owners can educate tenants on available funds for rental assistance.

Alleviate flooding downtown with green stormwater infrastructure:

- Municipalities and county agencies can apply for funding to support green stormwater infrastructure on the main street and along the riverfront.
- Local businesses can apply for Small Business Advantage Grants to install energy efficiency and pollution prevention projects.
- Nonprofits and municipalities can integrate stormwater retention in the designs for local parks.

Recommendation #4:

Encourage collaboration between communities.

Why:

Communities tend to act competitively and defensively about planning and economic development. We heard that communities feel that they are often competing for a finite set of grant funds and other financial resources to promote economic development, which can create hesitancy to collaborate on economic development initiatives. Economic development within one community does not need to come at the expense of others. Nearly every community has its own historic resources and unique attributes that can be promoted in ways that improve the perception of the region as a great place to live, work, and play.

How:

Establish communication between communities:

- Regional chamber of commerce or nonprofits can develop a shared events calendar.
- State agencies can create a regional web forum for communication related to downtown economic revitalization efforts, grants opportunities, and investment strategies.
- County agencies can establish working groups of local community leaders or business owners, to pool grant funds, share best practices, and collaborate to develop strategies and pursue regional grants and programs

Plan collaboratively:

- Municipalities can ensure that the goals and objectives of their comprehensive plan align with neighboring communities.
- Municipalities can take advantage of multi-municipal grant opportunities, such as a Partnership Grant (DCNR)

Recommendation #5:

Develop a regional vision while retaining and promoting local identity.

Why:

The regions' communities each have a strong identity, with a history and historic fabric that can be celebrated. We heard from many stakeholders that communities have unique identities that are at risk, particularly from out-of-state speculative developers who sit on vacant properties in anticipation of a long-term increase in land values, and who may redevelop a property in a way that's incompatible with the existing corridor, destroying the local character. A local narrative, preserved historic fabric, and strong identity can enhance local pride of place, and a draw heritage tourism.

How:

Educate residents and visitors about the history of each community, and its role in the region's historic narrative:

- Nonprofits can develop educational materials and celebrate a community's history, with walking tours, websites, or posts on social media.
- Nonprofits and educational institutions can research and document local history, including an oral history project.

Promote the unique history of each community:

- County Chambers of Commerce can work with regions to develop a local branding effort with regional coordination. This identity could include branding for each community, a website or Facebook page, and coalition of local representatives.
- Nominate historically significant buildings, structures and landscapes to the National Register of Historic Places.

Recommendation #6:

Harness the rivers as a recreational and scenic resource, and an opportunity for connecting communities.

Why:

Downtown riverfront connections are a recognized opportunity for economic revitalization. However in many communities, riverfront connections are challenging given the prominence of industrial sites, the railroad corridor, and a shared heritage of the river as an inhospitable industrial space and a health risk. Now that riverine health is improving, the riverfront connection is an opportunity for the study area communities. The riverfront presents a tremendous opportunity to attract visitors to town, and to connect the study area communities to each other and to the larger regions since the rivers are a shared asset.

In the Beaver and Ohio River Valley, Aliquippa, Ambridge, Beaver Falls, and Midland lack direct public access to the riverfront, while Beaver Borough has access through the adjacent community of Bridgewater. In the Monongahela River Valley, Donora lacks public access to the riverfront. Exciting projects such as the Magic City Riverfront in Charleroi and the Ohio River Trail are revitalizing the deindustrialized waterfront and creating connections. These projects are opportunities for regional collaboration.

Flooding and other natural disasters present serious hazards for historic riverfront communities and threaten their economic vitality, and climate change is likely to exacerbate these hazards in the future.

How:

Establish connections between the downtown and the waterfront:

- Municipalities can establish a comprehensive signage program that connects the river to the downtown.
- Municipalities and local nonprofits can install tactical urbanism installations along the street to temporarily activate routes between the downtown and the riverfront.
- Regional Planning agencies can establish pedestrian connections to neighboring towns' waterfront resources, particularly for communities that do not have public riverfront access.
- Local chambers of commerce and nonprofit organizations can leverage existing regional recreational assets, such as the Mon City Aquatorium, and identify other opportunities to activate the waterfront such as with outdoor theaters, boat rentals, parks, and museums centered on environmental and/or cultural awareness.

Mitigate flooding on the river:

- County and state agencies can develop green stormwater infrastructure on the main street and riverfront.
- Municipalities and regional agencies can develop disaster response plans to protect cultural resources, focusing on coordination between preservation agencies and private groups, development of a heritage inventory prior to a disaster, and early preparation for disaster recovery grant funding applications.

Use the river to connect communities:

- Communities and nonprofit organizations can continue to seek funding for riverfront trails.
- Nonprofits and regional agencies can coordinate regional waterfront events and amenities, such as fishing tournaments, environmental education programs, waterfront trails, and kayak/canoe launches.
- County and regional agencies can continue to plan for and construct the Ohio River Trail.

Activate riverfront parks with events and programming, in order to draw regional visitors and boost economic growth:

- Nonprofits and municipal groups can host celebrations and festivals that highlight or prominently feature the riverfront.
- Nonprofits and organizations can install or improve amenities on the waterfront, such as performance stages, bench seating, playground equipment, and landscaping.

Recommendation #7: Bolster capacity for the communities that need it most.

Why:

There is growing inequity between communities who can navigate regulatory and financing challenges versus those who cannot. There are opportunities for state and federal support for the communities who have the capacity to access those funds and contact their representatives and agencies. Effectiveness privileges and prioritizes those who already have capacity. To be receptive to funding and support, a community must build capacity by training local leaders and developing a shared community voice.

Greater collaboration with state and regional agencies is vital to affecting positive change and obtaining funding. Advocates and planners should include elected officials in their projects to build collaborative relationships and to advocate for allocation of state funds. At the same time, project leaders must also engage the community. Stakeholder engagement helps ensure plans have a unified vision and community support, which will build momentum for a project and enable local leaders to advocate for those projects.

How:

Build local capacity:

- State agencies and programs can bolster capacity for the communities that need it most, through programs such as local training and assistance.
- State agencies and regional agencies can offer grant writing and project management assistance, for municipalities that do not have staffing capacity.
- PA SHPO, regional planning and development organizations, and other local municipal agencies can establish regular opportunities for engagement with all members of the community.

Connect with elected officials:

- State agencies can establish better and more regular communication between communities and with local government agencies.
- Petition your local member of Congress for Community Project Funding to support your project.
- Advocates and planners should include elected officials in their projects to build collaborative relationships and to advocate for allocation of state funds.

Support funding strategies that attain diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility:

- State agencies can ensure equitable distribution of funds and technical support.
- State agencies can support industries that provide jobs with livable wages at various levels of educational attainment, and industries that provide opportunities for career advancement.
- State agencies can increase small business owners' access to traditional financing and provide alternate means of financing such as low-interest small business loans, and revolving loan funds.

Recommendation #8:

Embrace grassroots efforts; keep it local, maintain community character, and include residents' voices in the process.

Why:

Grassroots local investment is strong and there are strong signs of entrepreneurship in these communities.

Throughout the research and outreach process it became clear that grassroots initiatives are very much underway in several of the study area communities. Organizations such as the Mon Valley Alliance and Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area are working to strengthen regional collaboration and raise environmental awareness. The Monongahela Main Street Program is actively revitalizing its Main Street and recruiting new businesses.

How:**Support local arts and culture:**

- Nonprofits can collaborate with communities in each region to develop a shared calendar of events; and utilize social media to create a Facebook page for each region.

Support local entrepreneurship:

- Nonprofits can work to educate community members on the history of the region and the role of historic preservation in economic development.
- Agencies and nonprofits can continue to provide business services and loans.
- Regional planning agencies or the PA SHPO can provide a guide and/or technical assistance for local developers navigating the rehabilitation process, including strategies for navigating public funding sources.

Recommendation #9:

Do not be afraid to have big ideas, which can shift a community's mindset and build relationships among community stakeholders in the process.

Why:

Communities have an interest in affecting change. The process of working to achieve big ideas is as valuable as their ultimate success, because it requires shaping new relationships among community stakeholders and sharing information. In a public engagement process, organizations and agencies can ask the community for their input, and provide feedback on those suggestions. A forum can provide opportunities for individuals, community groups, and government organizations to offer their assistance in an effort to move concepts forward.

How:**Pursue projects that change local perceptions of the downtown:**

- Regional agencies can create a contiguous pedestrian/bike/river path that connects all communities within a region.
- Nonprofits, and business owners can host a one-week arts and crafts festival during the holidays. In Donora, artists and entrepreneurs from throughout the region can temporarily occupy vacant storefronts to sell their products and services.
- Nonprofits can partner with educational institutions and local elected officials to create “Maker Spaces” in each public school in the region.

Solicit ideas from the community:

- PA SHPO can continue to advertise and host this market study’s StoryMap—an online community engagement tools that integrates maps, text, photos and provides the public opportunity to submit ideas for a property, a community, or the region as a whole.
- PA SHPO can partner with local and regional leaders to host an online platform for big ideas.
- Regional nonprofit can set up a social media group for economic revitalization strategies.

Recommendation #10:

Include residential uses in the commercial center, to create pedestrian traffic, economic activity, and put “eyes on street;” for busier downtowns, include residential uses on upper floors of existing buildings.

Why:

There is currently a market for quality, affordable housing, other than in multifamily apartment buildings, which may be suited for adaptive reuse of historic buildings. There are several factors inhibiting residential development, including financial barriers to restoration of older, historic buildings. The two regions have lower household incomes and higher levels of unemployment, poverty, and population declines compared with the larger counties that contain them. The communities in these regions also have a higher share of renters than their counties, and generally higher vacancies (Beaver Borough is an outlier with a higher average household income than in the County). The communities in these regions also tend to have a more diverse housing stock (i.e., housing other than detached single-family homes) compared to their county counterparts. Some communities (e.g., Beaver Borough, Monongahela) place a strong value on its historical buildings and district. The main street thrives with mixed-use, ground floor commercial uses with residential units above, helping create a cohesive historic commercial district with residential uses. Like many of the study area communities, the City of Beaver Falls developed housing goals that include encouraging home ownership, protection of existing single-family neighborhoods in historic residential neighborhoods, promoting multifamily and senior housing facilities in central areas near retail or service businesses, and eliminating blight while focusing on housing rehabilitation.

Residential uses would be appropriate on the upper floors of older, historic buildings with retail on the ground floor. Housing/mixed-use has tremendous value in community centers—it creates pedestrian traffic, economic activity, and puts “eyes on street,” contributing to enhanced safety and perception of safety. Housing can also create the customer base that is necessary for successful retail and entertainment development. There may be opportunity for riverfront housing in these locations or houseboats/floating homes to strengthen the river connection between communities in each region.

How:

Establish housing near the downtown:

- Local planning agencies/municipalities can update their zoning codes to allow for mixed-use development in the central business districts, with residential and office uses permitted above retail uses on the ground floor.
- Municipalities can adopt flexible zoning ordinances that allow for a wide range of uses or mixed-use, particularly in historic districts or buildings. Communities could also develop adaptive reuse ordinances to disincentivize vacancy.
- Municipal leaders can work with developers to introduce more diverse housing options e.g., duplex, senior housing, assisted living, mixed-use.
- Municipalities can establish an inclusionary housing ordinance to safeguard affordable housing downtown.

Recommendation #11: Adaptively reuse downtown historic buildings for retail, restaurants, hotels, and entertainment uses.

Why:

There is unmet retail demand for furniture and home furnishings stores, specialty food stores, shoe stores, book and music stores, and clothing stores, and restaurants in the trade areas for both regions. Entertainment uses are also in demand including movie and other types of theaters, parks and museums, ice rink/skating lessons, boat rentals, and campsites. Older historic buildings in the downtowns may be repurposed for these uses. These investments may help to draw in visitors, and may serve as catalysts for further development.

How:

Attract businesses downtown:

- Planning agencies and county agencies can work with developers to market key building sites to potential developers and investors.
- Developers can apply federal and state historic preservation tax credits (RITC and HPTC)
- Local agencies can market key buildings in Opportunity Zones to potential investors.
- Municipal leaders can pursue workforce development projects that will support re-employment opportunities.
- Local agencies can develop a community vision plan and market key building sites to developers and potential investors.
- Municipal leaders can work directly with businesses who are seeking to move downtown.

Support existing businesses downtown:

- Provide wayfinding and pedestrian walkways to connect the riverfront to the downtowns, and connect industrial sites to the downtowns.
- Business owners can connect with local agencies and nonprofits, such as Mon Valley Business Resource Center, to receive training and assistance.
- Communities can collaborate to advertise events (particularly riverfront events and events that highlight the regions' industrial and cultural heritage) and draw tourists to the region.
- County and regional planning agencies can provide oversight and integration of various county main street revitalization funding programs, and build capacity of community development corporations.
- Municipalities can adopt an outdoor dining ordinance.
- Chambers of Commerce can host events such as merchant meet and greets or raffles.

Recommendation #12:

Adaptively reuse downtown historic buildings for office space, while preventing ground floor offices on a portion of the main street.

Why:

Commercial office space is an important component of a vibrant community. It provides space for businesses to locate and grow, and provides services to residents (e.g., banks and medical offices). The businesses' activities also grow demand for other local businesses such as restaurants, retail, and personal and professional services which support office tenants.

Municipal efforts toward growing an office-based economy need to be strategic in identifying specific locations to focus their often-limited human and financial resources. Municipalities must be proactive in efforts to attract and retain office-based tenants and, at the same time, communities need to be mindful of the location of office uses in a downtown area—too much office space can be a barrier to vitality. Commercial office uses are best suited for spaces above the ground floor and/or at ground floor locations that are not central to a downtown area, where consumer traffic is relatively low.

How:**Attract office spaces downtown:**

- Grassroots organizations and municipal managers can assess a community's economic strengths and weaknesses, by mapping and inventorying the community's built assets.
- Local planning agencies/municipalities can create greater flexibility in zoning and adopt the International Existing Building Code to encourage adaptive reuse.
- Regional agencies can build networks for resource sharing and communication of best practices among building developers seeking tenants.
- Regional agencies and chambers of commerce can attract business downtown, by promoting the existing incentive programs such as the Keystone Communities Program, Keystone Innovation Zones, Keystone Opportunity Zones

Maintain pedestrian-friendly downtown:

- Municipalities can amend zoning to prohibit ground floor office space on a portion of the downtown corridor.
- Municipalities can amend zoning to allow ground floor office space in buildings at the edge of the downtown.

Recommendation #13:

Support each community's industrial heritage and future industrial potential, while strengthening downtown economic revitalization.

Why:

While this study is focused on adaptive reuse of older, historic buildings in central business districts, which don't lend themselves to water-dependent or heavy industrial use due to their smaller floorplates and downtown locations, industry is still a major economic force in many of these communities. Future industrial development on the riverfront could include public access to the waterfront. A community's industrial heritage could be celebrated in modern light industrial "maker spaces" occupying historic downtown buildings.

How:**Attract industrial workers downtown, to support local businesses:**

- Chambers of Commerce can promote downtown businesses to workers at industrial sites.
- Municipalities and regional planning agencies can improve pedestrian connections between the downtown and the local industrial plant.

Partner with industry to further local economic development:

- Regional agencies can work to develop long-term plan for negotiating with local industry to provide public riverfront space and public access to the riverfront.

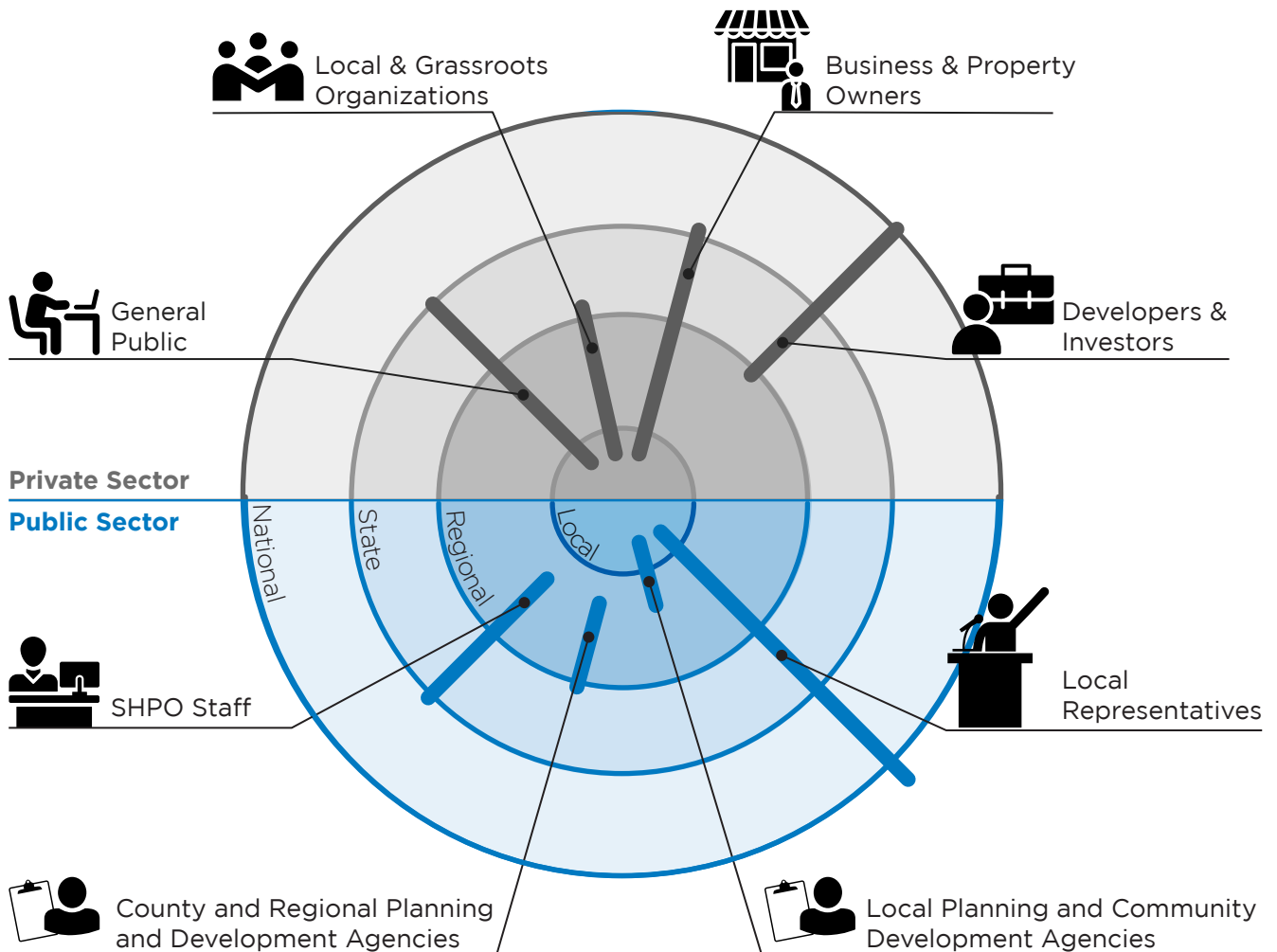
How to Implement this Plan

This market study contains technical quantitative data, qualitative observations, feedback from stakeholders and the general public, and recommendations that could apply to any number of potential actors. In this section, we've summarized some of the implementation steps and organized them by actor and by time horizon.

The eight groups of actors include four private sector constituencies and four public sector categories each with its own range of local, regional, state, and national reach. Each group has unique means and resources with which they can effect positive progress toward community development and historic preservation goals.

Time horizons were organized as being either ongoing tasks or implementation goals in the near-term (next 2 years), mid-term (next 5 years), and long-term (next 10 years).

Building vibrant communities requires implementation across sectors at every scale.



How to Implement this Plan

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General Public

- Stay engaged in planning and development conversations in your community! Your voice can make a big difference!
- Stay up to date on PA-SHPO's work by following the Pennsylvania Historic Preservation blog at <https://pahistoricpreservation.com/>



PA SHPO and Other State Agencies

Ongoing

- Continue to reach out to stakeholders and look for ways to foster regional collaboration and share contacts
- Continue to assist local governments in applying for and achieving Certified Local Government status and providing technical assistanceⁱ
- Ensure equitable distribution of funds and technical support.
- Support industries that provide jobs with livable wages at various levels of educational attainment, and industries that provide opportunities for career advancement.
- Increase small business owners' access to traditional financing and provide alternate means of financing such as low-interest small business loans, and revolving loan funds.

Near Term: Next 2 Years

- Match proposed implementation strategies (e.g., key buildings for rehabilitation or adaptive reuse, historic preservation plans, etc.) with available fundingⁱⁱ
- Work with communities to identify implementation projects and historic preservation plans that may be neededⁱⁱⁱ
- Provide technical assistance for building maintenance and repairs
- Provide a guide and/or technical assistance for local developers navigating the rehabilitation process, including strategies for navigating public funding sources.

i: Certified Local Government Program

ii: Shell Chemical Appalachia, LLC Mitigation and other SHPO funding sources (e.g., Keystone Historic Preservation Construction Grants)

iii: Keystone Historic Preservation Project Grants



Local Representatives

Ongoing

- Continue to partner with community development programs and nonprofits to prioritize community revitalization projects and provide programming for historic preservation and community revitalizationⁱ

Near Term: Next 2 Years

- Participate in the Certified Local Government (CLG) program to strengthen local historic preservation activities through exclusive funding incentives and enhanced technical assistanceⁱⁱ
- Pursue workforce development projects that will support re-employment opportunitiesⁱⁱⁱ
- Pursue grants for outdoor recreation projects or other projects to increase heritage tourism, enhance preservation efforts, involve the stewardship of natural resources, and/or include collaborative partnerships^{iv}
- Pursue grants for community and economic development initiatives^v
- Work with local chambers of commerce and business improvement districts to market events and recruit talent
- Participate in regional economic development initiatives that will put your community on the map
- Host community events that attract people from the neighborhood and region including business owners, artists, volunteers (e.g., food truck events, clean up days, holiday light shows and ceremonies, merchant meet and greet, farmers markets, arts and crafts fairs, artist installations, environmental awareness day, riverfront parades and festivals, historic district street fair, etc.)^{vi}
- Plan riverfront events that can leverage foot and water-based traffic from the Aquatorium and other catalytic projects (marinas, trails, boat rentals, riverboats)
- Establish a Blight Committee to track vacancy and address persistent issues of neglect.

Mid Term: Next 5 Years

- Develop ordinances that prioritize the reuse of older historic buildings before new buildings can be built, or that limit maximum building area to prevent big box retail stores

Long Term: Next 10 Years

- Consider implementing an inclusionary housing ordinance.

i: Beaver County Community Development Program, Rivers of Steel

ii: SHPO - Certified Local Government (CLG) program

iii: ARC POWER

iv: PA DCNR, Rivers of Steel Natural Heritage Area Mini-Grants

v: DCED Keystone Communities Program

vi: Beaver County Community Development Program, Rivers of Steel

How to Implement this Plan

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County and Regional Planning Agencies

Ongoing

- Apply for funding, manage grants, and coordinate support for historic preservation in the region (e.g., inventorying or active building rehab)
- Provide technical assistance for developers seeking Historic Preservation tax credits

Near Term: Next 2 Years

- Coordinate with the developer community to attract investors
- Coordinate with local municipalities to match potential catalytic projects with available funding sources and programs
- Secure grants to support on-going preservation work and by providing seed money for preservation projects (e.g., to build capacity, hire staff, hold a community forum, preservation education)ⁱ
- Prioritize funding for key buildings and projects that are expected to catalyze regional economic developmentⁱⁱ
- Establish regional working groups of local community leaders or business owners, to pool grant funds, share best practices, and collaborate to develop strategies and pursue regional grants and programs.
- Offer grant writing and project management assistance, for municipalities that do not have staffing capacity.
- Establish pedestrian connections to neighboring towns' waterfront resources, particularly for communities that do not have public riverfront access.
- Develop disaster response plans to protect cultural resources.

Mid Term: Next 5 Years

- Create/strengthen a regional identity
- Improve pedestrian and bike linkages connecting the downtown to the riverfront and the active industry

Long Term: Next 10 Years

- Provide oversight and integration of various county main street revitalization funding programs (e.g., consolidated funding application) and build capacity of community development corporations (CDCs)
- Continue to plan for and construct the Ohio River Trail and other riverfront trails to connect the communities and foster recreation and economic development throughout each regionⁱⁱⁱ

i: National Trust Preservation Funds

ii: Beaver County Community Development Program

iii: State funding - e.g., Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)



Local Planning and Community Development Agencies

5

Ongoing

- Create design guidelines for the business districtⁱ

Near Term: Next 2 Years

- Market key buildings in Opportunity Zones to potential investorsⁱⁱ

Mid Term: Next 5 Years

- Conduct an inventory of vacant/blighted spaces/propertiesⁱⁱⁱ
- Develop community vision plans and market key building sites to developers and potential investors
- Develop adaptive reuse, vacant building, property maintenance, and outdoor dining, and other ordinances or zoning to disincentivize vacancy
- Develop historic preservation plans as part of or as an amendment to the comprehensive plan^{iv}
- Develop progressive/flexible zoning ordinances that allow for a wide range of uses or mixed-use, particularly in historic districts or buildings
- For communities with riverfront access, link the business district to the riverfront with signage, improved pedestrian access and tactical urbanism that activate the pedestrian experience
- Amend zoning to prohibit ground floor office space on a portion of the downtown corridor, and allow offices at the edge of the downtown.

Long Term: Next 10 Years

- Pursue green storm water infrastructure investments within waterfront parks and on the commercial corridor, to mitigate flooding in communities that have existing flood risk^v
- Ensure that the goals and objectives of the comprehensive plan align with neighboring communities.
- Take advantage of multi-municipal grant opportunities^{vi}
- Include elected officials in projects to build collaborative relationships and to advocate for allocation of state funds.

i: SHPO - Keystone Historic Preservation Project Grants

ii: SHPO - Keystone Historic Preservation Project Grants

iii: SHPO - Keystone Historic Preservation Project Grants; Realtors® Association of Westmoreland, Indiana and Mon Valley (RAWIM).

iv: SHPO - Keystone Historic Preservation Project Grants

v: Federal programs including FEMA (Flood Mitigation Assistance, Hazard Mitigation Program, and Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities [BRIC]), EPA (e.g., Urban Small Waters Grant) and USDOT (e.g., Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity [RAISE]); and State including PA DCED (Greenways, Trails, and Recreation Program; Watershed Restoration and Protection Program). Insert footnote for reference: Montgomery County Planning Commission, Funding Opportunities for Storm water Management, Summer 2021 Update, last accessed 5/14/22 at: <https://www.montcopa.org/DocumentCenter/View/24759/FUNDING-PROGRAMS>

vi: DCNR - Partnership Grant

How to Implement this Plan

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Business and Property Owners

Ongoing

- Utilize business services from local nonprofitsⁱ
- Utilize available business programs from the Stateⁱⁱ

Near Term: Next 2 Years

- Implement immediate repairs that seal a building from the elements and prevent further deterioration
- Activate vacant storefronts
- List your local businesses, shops, restaurants, sites and anything else you would like to feature in the Mon Valley on the Mon Valley Alliance's form at <https://www.monvalleyalliance.org/monvalleyinfo/>
- Participate with local chambers of commerce
- Educate tenants on available funds for rental assistanceⁱⁱⁱ
- Pursue state or federal Historic Preservation Tax Credits for restoration of a qualified historic structure into an-income producing property.^{iv}
- Connect with local agencies and nonprofits to access training and assistance.

i: Mon Valley Alliance (MVA) - Microloan Program, Monongahela Main Street Program

ii: Department of Community Economic Development (DCED) - e.g., Business in Our Sites (BOS) Grant/Loan, Industrial Sites Reuse (ISR) Program

iii: Pennsylvania Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)

iv: DCED - Historic Preservation Tax Credits and Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits



Non-profit and Grassroots Organizations

Ongoing

- Work to educate community members on the history of the region and the role of historic preservation in economic development
- Continue to provide business services and loans

5

Near Term: Next 2 Years

- Collaborate with communities in each region to develop a shared calendar of events
- Utilize social media to create a Facebook page for each region
- Build off of/link to established community development and revitalization websites/Facebook pages within each region to create a wider network/reach a larger audience
- Pursue grants for community and economic development for a variety of uses including planning activities, façade grant programs, accessible housing programs, and development grantsⁱ
- Share contacts/"cross sell" services/events with other entities in each region
- Pursue grants for outdoor recreation projects or other projects to increase heritage tourism, enhance preservation efforts, involve the stewardship of natural resources, and/or include collaborative partnershipsⁱⁱ
- Promote downtown businesses to workers at industrial sites.
- Nominate historically significant buildings, structures and landscapes to the National Register of Historic Places.
- Promote downtown businesses to workers at industrial sites.
- Develop educational materials and celebrate a community's history, with walking tours, websites, or posts on social media.
- Research and document local history, including an oral history project.
- Establish a vacant storefront program to activate empty buildings along the business corridor, and draw attention to their reuse potential.

Mid Term: Next 5 Years

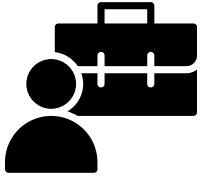
- Host regional events such as restaurant week, food and wine festivals, or riverfront events to bring communities together and attract visitors to the region
- Integrate stormwater retention in the designs for local parks.
- Reach out to elected officials at all levels; Petition your local member of Congress for Community Project Funding.
- Create "Maker Spaces" in each public school in the region.

i: DCED Keystone Communities Program; SHPO – Keystone Historic Preservation Project and Construction Grants

ii: Rivers of Steel Mini-Grant Program

How to Implement this Plan

5



Developers and investors

Ongoing

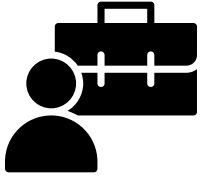
- Locate projects in federal Opportunity Zones to take advantage of tax incentivesⁱ
- Locate projects in properties Listed on the National Register of Historic Places to take advantage of the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives programⁱⁱ

Near Term: Next 2 Years

- Work with the municipalities to understand the community's vision
- Use this market study including the results of the market demand analyses and identification of key buildings to prioritize/select for redevelopment and potential reuse options

i: Qualified Opportunity Funds

ii: Federal Tax Credit and DCED - Historic Preservation Tax Credit (HPTC) and Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits



Chambers of Commerce

Near Term: Next 2 Years

- Continue to represent and bring together businesses, host events such as merchant meet and greets or raffles



Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office
PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL AND MUSEUM COMMISSION