

REDISCOVERING...

Community

Connections

Competitiveness



Char-West Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan

McKees Rocks Borough, Neville Township and Stowe Township

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- A: Park Inventories
- B: Park Master Plan Opinion of Probable Development Costs
- C: Demographic Profile
- D: Retail Leakage and Surplus Analysis
- E: Existing Traffic Conditions Analysis
- F: Allegheny County Housing Authority Data
- G: Key Person Interview Summary: Comprehensive Plan
- H: Key Person Interview Summary: Park, Recreation and Open Space
- I: Public Meeting Survey Summary
- J: Land Bank Authorities
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- O. West End Village Master Plan Executive Summary Excerpt
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- Q. Quick Guide: New Tools to Address Blight and Abandonment

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Foreword



After over a half century of dramatic change, the riverfront communities of McKees Rocks Borough, Stowe Township and Neville Township have set-off to chart a new course – to better plan for their futures and transform their obstacles into opportunities. The communities have become some of western Pennsylvania’s most striking examples of decline caused by the shift away from manufacturing in the Pittsburgh region. Each community has experienced significant population losses; increased crime and violence; a growing number of vacant properties, buildings and homes; an eroding job pool; struggling school districts; and diminishing tax bases. In turn, these trends have limited each community’s ability to maintain their streets, sewers, gateways, parks and other civic spaces. Residents and community leaders currently face a dilapidated and largely obsolete building stock and no public access to nearly 16 miles of waterfront.



Communities in the Study Area have many opportunities for residential growth and revitalization.

Many view this current state in sullen despair while others look to the future with optimism. While the Char-West Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan (the Plan) addresses the Municipalities Planning Code requirements, it most importantly provides a blue-print for how the communities can **rediscover** their greatest strengths and to respond to their challenges. The Plan encourages the communities to look beyond their past

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perspectives and transform their challenges into assets – much like turning lemons into lemonade.

Adopting strategies which are based on this approach will enable the three communities to turn around the supply of vacant homes and buildings into something which attracts new residents who seek to become urban pioneers and homesteaders. Other communities in the Pittsburgh region have undertaken similar transformations. Notable examples include Pittsburgh’s South Side neighborhood and West End Village. The South Side’s transformation has taken nearly 25 years and is frequently considered one of the “best” neighborhoods in the city; the West End is entering its 10th year and is just now gaining traction.

This Plan is the beginning of a transformation. Implementing ideas will take many years – even decades. Building **community**, making **connections** and forging **competitiveness** will only come with the passion, grit and commitment of its residents, business leaders and elected officials. Most importantly, the ability of the Commonwealth to provide state-sponsored funding support for Plan implementation is expected to be limited at best. Therefore, implementation strategies have been developed with several objectives in mind: a) first, to involve volunteers and “champions” to tap into the region’s strong base of community institutions,



The old saying – “turning lemons into lemonade” is indicative of an opportunistic mindset. The transformation of a commonly known liability into a highly sought after asset is an important philosophy to adopt when revitalizing communities.

“Change is inevitable, but decline is not.”

Winston Churchill

organizations and dedicated citizens; b) second to minimize municipal resource demands and increase private-sector participation; c) and third to build success and confidence through simple tasks and progress to more complex challenges.

Community prosperity has been found to be cyclical – there are always periods of ups and downs. Communities that proactively navigate these ups and downs are the ones that most successfully achieve vitality and appeal. After half a century of change, it’s time for new prosperity.

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part 1: Overview



Introduction

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A comprehensive plan is a document that identifies the goals, objectives, principles, guidelines, policies, standards, and strategies for growth and development of a community. Pennsylvania law specifies the basic topics that each comprehensive plan must address. The specific ideas that each plan contains are tailored to the community's individual needs. Comprehensive plans allow change and development for all municipalities to occur in a coordinated manner and assist elected officials and planning commissioners with day-to-day land use planning decisions.

A comprehensive plan differs from a zoning ordinance in that it is adopted as a resolution rather than as an ordinance or law. The comprehensive plan serves as a guide, whereas the zoning ordinance is a legal instrument that is used to implement regulations and provisions that are consistent with the principles of the adopted comprehensive plan.

How will the next generation of residents, businesses and leaders embrace the opportunities of today and the future?

There are many challenges that McKees Rocks Borough, Stowe Township and Neville Township face; there also are many untapped resources that provide the communities with foundation stones upon which to build. With the Char-West Council of Government's assistance, the three communities have completed a Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan (the Plan). One of the greatest benefits of this effort has been establishing a series of practical and achievable strategies to improve the communities' quality of life.

Commonly referenced benefits of comprehensive planning include optimized economic development opportunities, better coordinated physical improvements, more effective environmental protection of greater fiscal savings, and strengthened policies.

The Keystone Principles & Criteria for Growth, Investment & Resource Conservation were adopted by Pennsylvania's Economic Development Cabinet on May 31, 2005. Since then, agencies or departments within State government seek to encourage responsive

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planning and to promote investments in collaborative projects; this Plan embodies these principles. One of the primary tools that communities can utilize to enhance cooperative efforts within Pennsylvania is the Municipalities Planning Code (MPC). The MPC offers communities who pursue multi-municipal projects several incentives including:

- Zoning that accommodates a full range of land uses;
- Permitted designation of growth, future growth, and rural resource areas;
- Formal review processes for developments of regional impact;
- Specific plans; and
- Elevated consideration for available state funding/permits.

The development of a Comprehensive Plan for the three (3) communities has been coordinated with the Allegheny County comprehensive plan, [Allegheny Places](#). Review by the County and adjacent municipalities will ensure that the Plan fits within the context of regional goals and recommendations and that regional goals are reflective of the needs of the three (3) communities as well. Allegheny County has published guidelines to maintain consistency between municipal and the county planning efforts at www.alleghenyplaces.com. Consequently, the

existing and proposed development of the municipality is generally consistent with the objectives and plans of the county comprehensive plan.

Planning Approach and Process

The comprehensive planning process was initiated in Fall 2009 as part of an 18-month process. In brief, the process was designed to allow the three communities to:

- Gather facts, identify issues, and outline opportunities;
- Explore and evaluate various strategies of community planning; and
- Achieve consensus through discussion, awareness and realistic implementation.



Steering committee meetings with local government and community representatives were held throughout the planning process.

The Plan is organized into seven (7) Parts:

Part 1: Overview describes the basic structure of the Plan and introduces the general planning process as well as the ways in which the public was involved.

Part 2: Foundations summarizes the factors, circumstances and influences impacting community vitality, stability and growth. More importantly, Foundations begins to suggest opportunity areas or anchors from which community planning efforts can build upon.

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Part 3: Vision outlines the key elements of rediscovering the future of the three communities. These elements include land use and housing, transportation and infrastructure, environment and culture, civic amenities, business development and parks and recreation.

Part 4: Relationships discusses how this Plan impacts or could be impacted by influences outside the three communities.

Part 5: Actions outlines the essential actions or tasks that need to be completed to implement the Plan. Each action has been prioritized and assigned a responsible party or “champion” to guide its implementation. Following the successful implementation of the defined actions, additional actions can then be pursued. Nevertheless, all actions should be re-evaluated and prioritized on a periodic basis in order to keep the Plan up-to date and applicable.

Part 6: Trends compiles reference information and data as well as presents technical analyses which influenced Plan discussions and feedback.

Part 7: Appendices contains a selection of supporting background materials referenced during the planning process.

Finally, blue pull out boxes have been provided to highlight important facts, figures or points throughout the document where appropriate. Images and captions are included to illustrate specific issues or discussion points and to “capture the essence” of a situation which words would not be able to describe.

Public Participation

The Plan was developed through the guidance of a multi-municipal Steering Committee. This Volunteer group truly symbolized dedication behind the planning effort. The Steering Committee, consisting of residents, business owners/operators, Borough Councilpersons, Township Commissioners and Planning Commissioners, met monthly throughout the 18-month planning process. The Steering Committee reviewed analyses and studies; established directions and reacted to the initial recommendations.

To complement the Steering Committee’s involvement, several public presentations, key person interviews and community leadership briefings were held at strategic points during the planning effort. Meetings were designed to inform residents and community leaders of planning issues, to review options and to obtain critical community input. During each Steering Committee Meeting and Public Meeting, feedback

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was obtained and incorporated into subsequent drafts. In addition, more than thirty (30) key person interviews of residents, businesses, municipal employees, and local and county officials were conducted to better understand the wide range of issues affecting the communities.

The information that all of the Plan's participants contributed was valuable and critical to shaping the document's recommendations. Additionally, the communities have had the fortune of meeting with County officials at various points during the planning process to discuss preliminary recommendations and get their reflections and thoughts. It is recommended that the communities continue to update the County about progress and forging opportunities to strengthen their relationship in moving forward with some of the economic development initiatives outlined in the Plan.

part 2: **Foundations**



Opportunities and Challenges

McKees Rocks, Stowe, and Neville possess a combination of significant challenges that few Pennsylvania communities can parallel in scale and magnitude. These issues became the most significant influences, or **foundations**, in formulating the Plan’s strategies and recommendations. It is important these planning drivers are addressed with practicality and innovation.

Vacant and Underutilized Land

Over several decades, the municipalities’ industrial base has shrunk. The region’s economy has changed and the scale of manufacturing work has declined dramatically. For nearly a century, manufacturing was the core of the municipalities’ land use patterns and their economies. There now the opportunity to establish new purposes for this land. Today, nearly 30% of the acreage previously used for industry is vacant. Moreover, a good portion of the land near the I-79 interchange in Neville Township is underutilized. All of this vacant or underutilized land has access to established infrastructure. Opportunities for new residential products and new non-residential development can come to life and succeed with all three (3) municipalities pursuing economic development cooperatively. This is crucial in order to bring positive change.

50% of the total land area is either industrial or vacant.



Much of the formerly active industrial property & railroad rights-of-way are now vacant or underutilized.



Home abandonment is on the rise within all three communities

Job and Population Trends

As manufacturing businesses left, so did jobs; loss of jobs precipitated loss of population. In 1970, there were more than 24,000 residents in the three (3) municipalities. Thirty years later, 14,500 people call the area home. While the greatest number of residents is between 25 and 50 years old, a large percentage of the population are seniors and those living on fixed incomes. Today, one in five residents is living on some sort of public subsidy. The impact of a transient population, those that live in the community but do not claim residency or contribute residential taxes, is unparalleled anywhere else in Southwestern Pennsylvania. Each community is struggling with a shrinking tax base and are seeking ways in which they can re-build with positive change and contribution to services.

Retail Follows Rooftops

As residents and consumers left the communities so did the businesses that provided many of the services and retail support that healthy places rely upon. Today, downtown McKees Rocks has a vacancy rate of over thirty (30%) percent. There is an opportunity to create an overall strategy to align desired services with new residents and new workforce needs.

The overall population has decreased by **40%** between 1970 and 2000.

30% to 40% of all households receive Social Security Income.



Business development is dependent on residential growth.

53% of homes were
built before World War II.



All three communities are home to businesses that serve customers throughout the Pittsburgh region.



The proximity of the three communities to downtown Pittsburgh provides opportunities to attract new residents who want to be close to the region's business and cultural center.

Infrastructure and Services

Today, each community is struggling with shrinking tax bases created by the loss of people and jobs. Municipal services can no longer be maintained at the same level of quality as they once had. Notably, over the past 50 years as industry needs shifted from rail and river access to the road network, there were few major (regional-scale) improvements constructed. In turn, some businesses have turned to other communities with better established road infrastructure/access to accommodate their transportation needs. In moving forward, priorities will need to be determined to identify those improvements which provide the greatest impact in strengthening resident and business quality of life.

Location, Location, Location

Without hard, fast numbers, there appears to be more underperforming land possessing infrastructure availability within the three (3) communities than nearly any other region in the Pittsburgh metropolitan area. Access to these three communities begins a mere three miles from Pittsburgh's Golden Triangle. For years, companies turned to suburban places for business growth on less expensive land. Today, businesses are returning to the center of the region. Determining and coordinating the ways in which the communities can optimize what they have to

attract and retain urban pioneers will be an important and positive step in moving forward.

Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

The parks system in the three communities is composed of several medium sized parks and a large number of smaller neighborhood parks. While Neville Township has been able to invest in its parks over the years, McKees Rocks and Stowe have made relatively few upgrades and maintenance is largely inadequate. The McKees Rocks administration prefers to provide recreation services for free, which creates a lack of financial support from residents outside of the Borough who use their facilities. There are presently no trails, which misses the opportunity to provide one of the top recreation amenities demanded by Pennsylvania residents. Although there are no recreational opportunities along Chartiers Creek or the Ohio River, McKees Rocks & Stowe have the potential through trails and Neville can provide access through an undeveloped property.

10% of all occupied homes in McKees Rocks are enrolled in the federally funded Section 8 Housing Program; the Allegheny County average is 1.4%.

Other Considerations

School Districts

The Cornell and Sto-Rox School Districts are unfortunately ranked in the lower percentile of Western Pennsylvania school districts for educational attainment and testing scores.

Pittsburgh Business Times' 2010 Guide to Western Pennsylvania Schools Scores are based on the Pennsylvania System School Assessment exam (PSSA). Three years of scores are used with the current year given the most weight. Superior scores for each grade are determined by combining the number of students placing in the advanced or proficient categories.

- Out of 105 school districts in Allegheny County, Cornell was ranked 87, slightly down from its 2009 ranking; Sto-Rox remained ranked at 101. Both are in the bottom 20% of the school districts for the county.
- Out of 497 school districts in the State of Pennsylvania, Cornell was ranked 417 for 2010 compared to 395 for 2009. Sto-Rox improved by three places to 484. Both school districts are in the bottom 20% of school districts for the state.
- Scores for each school in the school districts were relatively consistent with the overall school district rankings. Cornell High School fared better in the test results for 7th and 8th grade than the overall school district, placing at the lower 30-35% of the overall rankings for the state.

The "Overachiever" rank takes into account the number of students on free or reduced lunches as an indicator of economically disadvantaged students. Districts high on the list represent those that are doing remarkably well considering the difficult economic situation of its students.

- Cornell School District placed 8 on the list for 2010, the district's ranking of 13 for 2009 was very high as well.
- Sto-Rox School District jumped from 101 on the "Overachiever" ranking in 2009 to 25 on the 2010 list. This ranking is consistent with findings in the key person interviews. Stakeholders believed the school district has quality teachers that struggled as a result of the number of economically disadvantaged students.

FOUNDATIONS | part 2

Moreover, both school districts are challenged with an extremely high level of students that possess unique special learning disabilities. Despite these issues and the school districts' shrinking tax bases and on-going struggle to retain young, talented teachers, the districts have been recognized for their successes in doing as much as they do with the enrollment characteristics and the limited resources they possess. As an example, The Cornell Elementary School was awarded the U.S. Department of Education's National Blue Ribbon Award in 2010 for making significant improvements in their curriculum.

There are several private schools within close driving distance of the three communities including Robinson Township Christian School, Our Lady of Sacred Heart, Sewickley Academy, Glen Montessori School, Rhema Christian School, Holy Trinity School, and Bishop Canevin High School. As of the time of this printing, there was only one private school, St. John of God, located in the study area.

Institutional Partners

The strong ethnic backgrounds are trademarks of McKees Rocks, Stowe, and Neville. Residents have long been supportive of and have been supported by the religious institutions within the communities. The Father Ryan Arts Center is emerging as a foundation stone upon which to



Institutions such as the Father Ryan Arts Center provide a foundation for cultural celebration, economic development and downtown revitalization.

build. In recent years, other institutions like Robert Morris University have joined in providing assets to residents as well as drawing in others from the greater region and from other parts of the country for special events. Both types of partners are important in the communities' future by providing internships for institution-driven recreation and cultural programs.

Making Connections

Within each of the communities, topography, rail lines, road network patterns and perception fragment one portion of development from another.

Although nearly 15.5 miles of waterfront exist along the communities' perimeter, river access seemingly does not exist. Whether in the "Bottoms" or another neighborhood, there are significant steps that can happen to ensure the vacated and/or deteriorated housing stock can become attractive to tomorrow's population.



The Pittsburgh & Ohio Central Railway expects to remain active in the coming decades.

FOUNDATIONS | part 2

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part 3: Vision



Comprehensive Plan Goals

Goal #1	Connect people to existing resources and amenities.
Goal #2	Stabilize and enhance neighborhoods and corridors.
Goal #3	Attract new residents, businesses and employment opportunities.
Goal #4	Celebrate history, culture and uniqueness.
Goal #5	Improve infrastructure service quality by completing strategic upgrades and replacement.
Goal #6	Build and promote civic pride and awareness.
Goal #7	Leverage vacant and underutilized properties and buildings as opportunities for infill development.
Goal #8	Utilize and strengthen community partnerships.
Goal #9	Provide a “fair share” of affordable, equitable, and universally accessible housing choices.

Introduction

In the planning world, the word “**vision**” refers to a long-term outlook or aspiration. Simply put, it is each individual’s “dream”. The Vision of a plan is the backbone upon which goals, objectives and recommendations are developed. The Vision for McKees Rocks, Neville and Stowe is composed of this series of elements – all of which are interconnected.

The goals, objectives and recommendations incorporated into this Plan address future land use, housing, environment, culture, civic amenities, transportation, infrastructure, business community/economic development, and parks and recreation. As opportunities and challenges were evaluated, goals, objectives and recommendations were formulated. The recommendations are described in detail on the following pages as well as summarized in **Part 5 Actions**. Finally, a series of “places to grow” have been identified as key priority areas for implementation.

Goals

Based on public input and the three communities’ identified opportunities and challenges, a distinct set of nine (9) Comprehensive Plan goals have been formulated for McKees Rocks, Neville and Stowe. Goals represent the philosophical foundation for the Plan’s recommendations. They

describe future expected outcomes or desires. Essentially, they provide direction focusing upon “the ends” rather than “the means.”

Objectives

Stemming from the project’s goals and input received throughout Steering Committee and public feedback, *objectives* have been identified for each element of the Plan. Objectives are intended to be clear, realistic, measurable statements that describe the general nature of activities to be accomplished as part of a particular initiative. When objectives are addressed, goals can, in turn, be achieved.

Places to Grow

There are several specific development and redevelopment recommendations within discrete or well defined geographic areas that are critical to the Comprehensive Plan’s earliest implementation efforts. The Allegheny County Comprehensive Plan: Allegheny Places, is founded on a rich tapestry of locations that provide shelter, jobs, enjoyment, character, and economic development opportunity. The purpose of identifying key areas, or “Places to Grow” within the three (3) municipalities is not only to embrace the Allegheny County Comprehensive Plan but to also:

- Concentrate resources and efforts so that positive impacts can be demonstrated quickly.

- Strengthen the core growth areas of the communities so that additional revitalization radiates outward into the residential neighborhoods.
- Take advantage of some immediate opportunities which could produce big dividends.

Each municipality has a “Place to Grow”. The McKees Rocks “Place to Grow” encompasses the downtown, the P&LE property, the Shops at Chartiers Crossing, and a portion of the “Bottoms”. The “Place to Grow” in Stowe is centered on Broadway Avenue and the adjacent residential neighborhoods. The Neville “Place to Grow” concentrates the focus of development on the I-79 Interchange and adjacent commercial, residential, and mixed-use areas.

Recommendations

The Comprehensive Plan’s recommendations span each a variety of Plan aspects: future land use and housing, infrastructure and transportation, environment and culture, business community and economic development, and parks and recreation. Specific recommendations have been highlighted with a ❖ symbol and are incorporated into the Action Plan outlined in Part 5.

Future Land Use and Housing Plan

The Future Land Use and Housing Plan illustrates the relationship of various types of residential and non-residential development within the three (3) municipalities. Ways in which development character could be enhanced are also outlined when pertinent.

Recommendations have been designed to complement the existing land use patterns found within the communities as well as the surrounding municipalities; no conflicts have been created based upon review of adjacent municipalities land use patterns. Where applicable, the communities should assess and amend land use provisions within their current Zoning Ordinances to encourage that these recommendations become realities.

The study area is composed of a large amount of brownfields and underutilized sites, allowing many opportunities for development. Consequently, a key component of the recommendations is based on the activity of infill, redevelopment, and rehabilitation. Infill is development of vacant or remnant urban land passed over by previous development. Redevelopment is the act or process of rehabilitating or rejuvenating a blighted area or accommodating new development within the context of existing streets and buildings.

Future Land Use and Housing Objectives

1. Create opportunities for new riverfront-oriented housing.
2. Consolidate industrial and commercial uses in appropriate districts.
3. Obtain vacant residential properties; return to the tax rolls.
4. Expand the variety of housing types and products.
5. Strengthen business vitality of the Chartiers Street, Broadway, Grand Avenue and Island Avenue corridors.
6. Respect existing patterns and expand the potential for mixed use development.



There are many opportunities for the reuse of existing and historically significant buildings which helps to preserve the character of the community.

Rehabilitation is the act of remodeling or reusing a previously developed or improved lot, building or structure.

Utilizing the principles of infill, redevelopment, and replacement, the future land use and housing recommendations seek to integrate development/redevelopment opportunities in the context of existing patterns of development. As development does not occur in a vacuum, many of the recommendations must work around difficulties presented by less than ideal situations created from past development especially for non-residential development. A Retail Leakage and Surplus Analysis (see Appendix D) was conducted to identify needs of local residents and consumers to determine the appropriate land uses.

Although non-residential development is an important component of any revitalization strategy, the immediate need for residential growth is of greater importance. Without additional residential growth, there will be little demand for additional businesses or services. Bringing middle and upper-middle class housing to these communities will bolster a tax base which needs expanded. Members of these new households will demand a level of service that will continue the upward progression.

For-sale housing appeals to a very different set of households than renters. The market of for-sale

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housing is generally older and is prepared and able to invest in the largest asset of their personal net worth, their home. The markets for for-sale housing in a reviving community typically include singles and couples, young families and Baby Boomer aged empty-nesters. Empty-nesters are typically childless households who likely demand less living space, and aren't immediately concerned about the quality of the schools.

Another likely market to develop, though generally after the initial wave of for-sale housing, is retirees. The ability to access goods and services without the need for a car, coupled with close proximity to medical care in many cities, make urban communities ideal locations for this group. This allows them to stay close to friends and family while maintaining their self-sufficiency, especially if they are not able to drive.

Opportunities also exist for developing off-campus housing specifically targeted towards Robert Morris University facility, staff and students. As the University continues to expand, the demand for housing in close proximity that is affordable to its employees and student body will likely increase. A Community Housing Bank could play a major role in obtaining, renovating, selling and/or renting units specifically geared toward to students in strategic locations.



Riverfront residential development (shown in orange) can have a significant impact on McKees Rocks by providing new contemporary housing stock choices that take advantage of the riverfront as an amenity.



Abandoned homes within stable residential neighborhoods could be addressed through a Community Housing Bank.



An example of constructing a residential neighborhood within a flood plain can be found in Chapel Harbor on the Allegheny River.

Large portions of Neville Township, the “Bottoms” in McKees Rocks and Stowe, are situated within the 100 year and 500 year flood plain of Chartiers Creek. Many of these areas are currently developed for residential, commercial, and industrial uses. Future development in these areas based on the Plan’s recommendations should take into account the possibility of flooding and be designed accordingly. For example, new riverfront residential could have parking on lower levels with habitable space located above the flood plain elevation. All land development and building requirements should be consistent with current federal flood plan development restrictions.

McKees Rocks

Within McKees Rocks, the following projects and policies are recommended:

- ❖ Evaluate the potential for the McKees Rocks “Bottoms” neighborhood to accommodate mixed use to be more reflective of the historic and current use. Office uses should be located on the first floor for uses such as tax offices and day care. Residential uses should be located on the upper floors. It is unlikely that retail uses such as a corner drug store would have much success due to the nature of the area.



Many opportunities exist for commercial uses on Island Avenue.

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- ❖ Explore possibilities for the McKees Rocks' riverfront near the confluence of Chartiers Creek and the Ohio River to support high intensity residential uses.
- ❖ Refine the permitted uses within the existing industrial district along the CSX rail corridor to focus on warehousing, distribution and light manufacturing/ assembly uses
- ❖ Redevelop the P&LE administrative property as mixed use; integrate light industrial, assembly, office and high intensity multi-family residential uses
- ❖ Encourage the development of a greenway/ waterfront park along Chartiers Creek and its confluence with the Ohio River, refer to Environment and Culture Plan for more detail.
- ❖ Determine the feasibility of the area surrounding the Wind Gap and Chartiers Avenue intersection to support high intensity mixed residential development
- ❖ Concentrate higher intensity industrial uses between Chartiers Creek and Thompson Street/Creek Road.
- ❖ Formulate and adopt development standards as related to residential infill.



Potential for Chartiers Creek Park and Park Place.



The rehabilitation and/or replacement of the Neville Mansionettes could occur through the activities of a Community Housing Bank

- ❖ Explore the possibility of moderate intensity single family residential in the area along Singer Avenue.
- ❖ Encourage neighborhood-scale commercial uses for the south-side of Island Avenue from Neville Avenue to Bradley Street.
- ❖ Identify specific purposes for the reuse of the vacant properties.
- ❖ Develop Park Place on Chartiers Creek in the under-utilized parking lots of the shops at Chartiers Crossing.

Neville Township

Within Neville Township, the following projects and policies are recommended:

- ❖ Consider developing a portion of the former Dravo shipyard property for higher intensity mixed residential development.
- ❖ Amend the current zoning map to reflect the redevelopment of the former Calgon property along Grand Avenue for office and light industrial uses.



The existing industrial area has adequate utilities, roads, and rail access to accommodate future industrial uses.

VISION | part 3

- ❖ Rezone the I-79 interchange area to moderate intensity mixed use.
- ❖ Redevelop the former drive-in and skating rink properties to moderate intensity single family residential uses
- ❖ Amend the existing heavy industrial district to limit the intensity of industrial uses in the areas nearest the 1st Street neighborhood to be in keeping with the character of existing residential and commercial developments in the area
- ❖ Formulate and adopt development standards as related to residential infill
- ❖ Develop strategies for reuse of vacant properties
- ❖ Explore the possibility of high intensity residential uses in the properties in the Masionette neighborhood.

Stowe Township

Within Stowe, the following projects and policies are recommended:



Example of a potential flex/office development appropriate for the former P&LE paint shop property.



Another example of a flex/office development found in the Leetsdale Industrial Park.



The existing industrial area has adequate utilities, roads, and rail access to accommodate future industrial uses.

- ❖ Redevelop the former P&LE paint shop property as a flex office type of neighborhood for corporate headquarters, business incubators and small research and development organizations.
- ❖ Accommodate market competitive moderate intensity residential development on the former P&LE paint shop property if a private-sector developer is willing to remediate the land to meet residential standards and the market demand for flex office space is not strong.
- ❖ Determine the potential for the existing Stowe Township First Tee Golf Course property to change to moderate intensity mixed residential in the long-term.
- ❖ Concentrate intense industrial uses to the existing industrial park along Nichol Avenue.
- ❖ Encourage the redevelopment of the former strip mine site and landfill site on Robinson Boulevard for regionally-oriented recreational uses.

- ❖ Define and incorporate bufferyard standards for land use transition areas between residential and industrial uses.
- ❖ Determine the feasibility of mixed use for the Fleming Park neighborhood to be more reflective of historic and current land use patterns.
- ❖ Encourage neighborhood-scale commercial uses for the southside of Island Avenue from Neville Avenue to Bradley Street .
- ❖ Develop strategies for reuse of vacant properties
- ❖ Create a community housing bank to acquire, rehabilitate, redevelop, and return tax-foreclosed residential or delinquent properties to private-sector control.

Importantly, success can come through cooperation. The communities are encouraged to pursue following projects and policies together as regional cooperative efforts.

- ❖ Develop a priority list of properties to be land banked.

The Borough of State College has formed a Community Housing Bank known as the State College Community Land Trust (SCCLT) to support vibrant neighborhoods by creating and maintaining sustainable housing opportunities for families and individuals who value living in the Borough of State College.

The goals of the SCCLT are to:
Attract families and individuals to reside within the Borough of State College

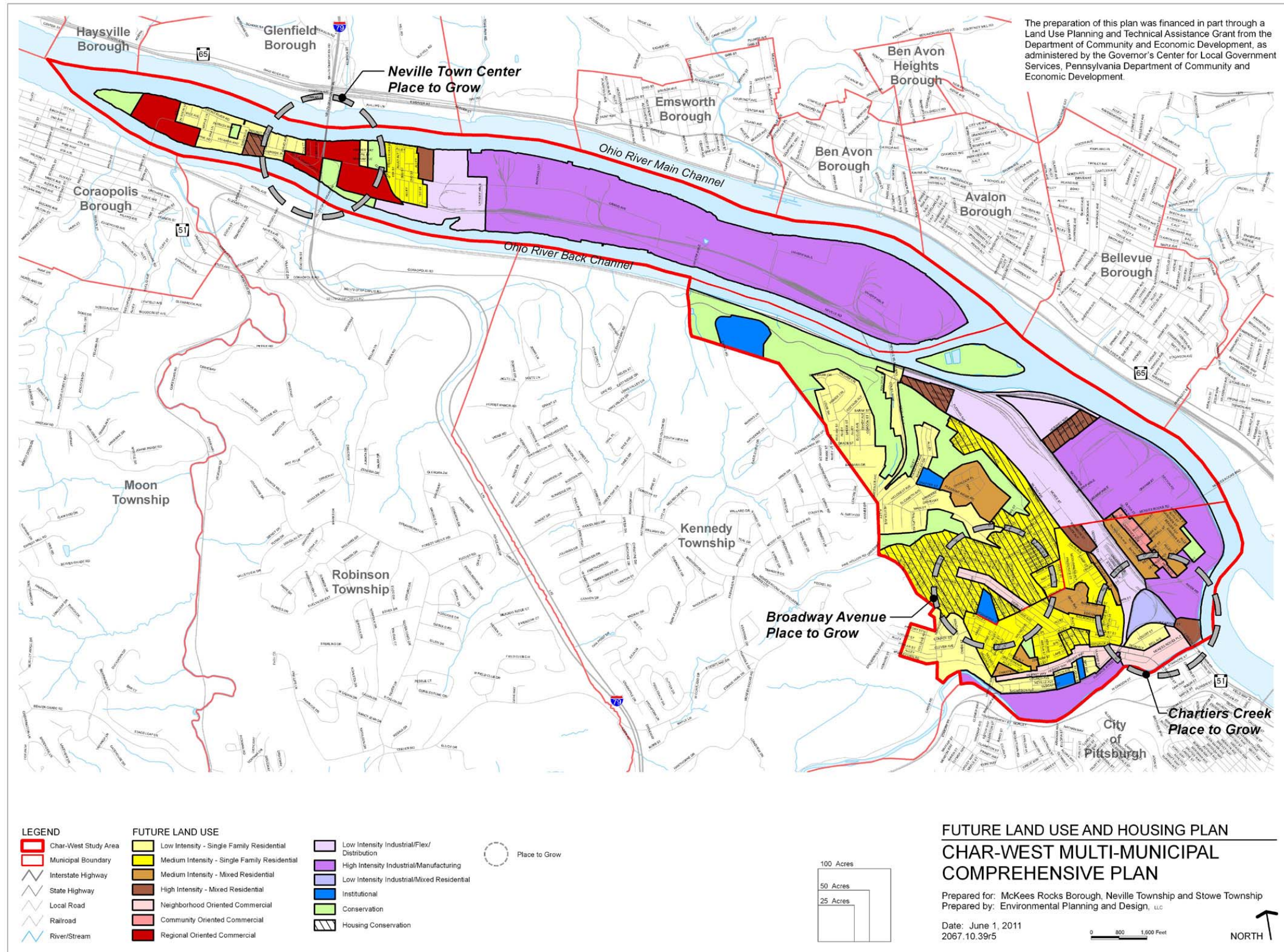
- Create affordable housing for future generations of home owners
- Help combat community deterioration in residential neighborhoods by promoting the rehabilitation and maintenance of quality housing
- Promote the general social welfare of the community by broadening housing opportunities for those currently priced out of the market

The SCCLT accomplishes these goals by signing a long-term lease with the new owner of the house assuring them that the property will remain available to them for as long as they remain within the parameters of their land lease. Consequently, the new home owner need only purchase the improvements to the land, significantly reducing the overall cost of the home.

The municipalities of McKees Rocks and Stowe could benefit from the establishment of joint Zoning Ordinances, joint Subdivision and Land Development Ordinances, or joint enforcement due to similarities in land uses, development types, density and infrastructure. Development of joint ordinances or joint enforcement could utilize resources and budgets more efficiently.

- ❖ Implement the suggested streetscape improvements for Broadway Avenue as outlined in the Broadway Avenue Streetscape Master Plan.
- ❖ Create an inventory of all tax delinquent residential properties, categorize per redevelopment type (renovate, redevelop, etc.).
- ❖ Evaluate the feasibility of developing and administering joint zoning and subdivision/land development ordinances for McKees Rocks and Stowe.
- ❖ Use Allegheny County Economic Development assistance to establish a fund for the demolition of abandoned houses by the municipalities on the Community Housing Bank.
- ❖ Form partnerships with neighborhood watch, and other faith-based, charitable or non-governmental organizations to maintain abandoned property while the community housing bank is being formed.
- ❖ Establish a tax abatement program for new residential development with both school districts.

- ❖ Explore the feasibility of creating an agreement between municipalities and taxing bodies to relieve back taxes.
- ❖ Work with local financial leaders to create low interest loans for owner-occupied home improvements.
- ❖ Pursue “Elm Street” funding as available for important public realm improvements situated within residential neighborhoods.
- ❖ Seek funding to identify and remediate Brownfield sites. Refer to the Environment and Culture Plan for more detail.
- ❖ Establish periodic (annually) meetings between the School District and the Borough Council to discuss joint opportunities.
- ❖ Complete a regional sewer service study to evaluate consolidation and/or joint operations/management possibilities.
- ❖ Obtain funding through DCED to conduct a feasibility study for consolidating police service for McKees Rocks and Stowe.
- ❖ Approach representatives of Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development’s Early Intervention Program to discuss the potential for conducting a feasibility study of consolidated police services for McKees Rocks and Stowe.



Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy Plan

Transportation Objectives

1. Improve congestion deficient intersections.
2. Mitigate impacts of truck traffic.
3. Increase pedestrian and motorist safety.
4. Enhance mobility through inter-connectivity.
5. Anticipate future traffic demands.

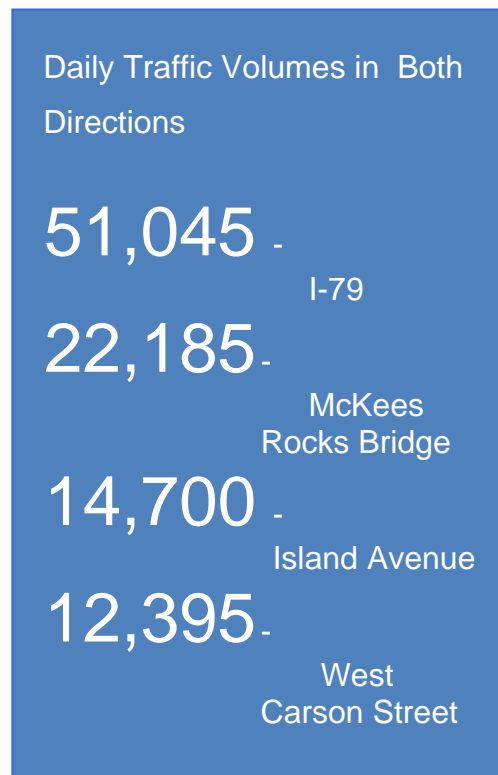
The Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy Plan highlights recommended improvements to the communities' circulation, public infrastructure resources and overall energy policies.

Transportation

In all three (3) municipalities, the current roadway system is, for the most part, adequate for meeting current needs and is not experiencing severe congestion or safety issues. Future traffic projections based on the land use and housing element identify a need to make improvements to the system to accommodate future residential, commercial and industrial growth. These improvements will also accommodate a conservative expectation of thru-traffic from outside the McKees Rocks, Neville and Stowe region. All recommended transportation improvements should be evaluated in conjunction with the municipalities' long-term Capital Improvements Program and annual Paving Program to determine their feasibility and prioritization. Finally, Americans with Disabilities (ADA) standards should be followed for all applicable transportation improvements. Curb ramps and cross-walks are transportation facilities that are commonly affected by ADA standards.

The improvements that should be made to address current traffic issues include the following:

- ❖ Replace and upgrade key intersections, including new (coordinated) traffic signal timings.
- ❖ Conduct an evaluation of unwarranted traffic signals throughout the communities to improve the level of service.
- ❖ Update traffic signals to improve "level of service" issues.
- ❖ Address the intersections of Chartiers Avenue/Windgap Avenue/ Singer Avenue, and Chartiers Avenue/Thompson alleviate existing critical traffic problems. Currently, these intersections have the most severe signalization problems.
- ❖ Begin acquiring right of way along major routes to accommodate potential future road expansion. To address long term issues with roadway capacity as a result of future growth, the municipalities should begin acquiring right of way along major routes such as Island Avenue. Areas of blight and prime urban redevelopment could benefit from expansion in the long term and it is therefore in the



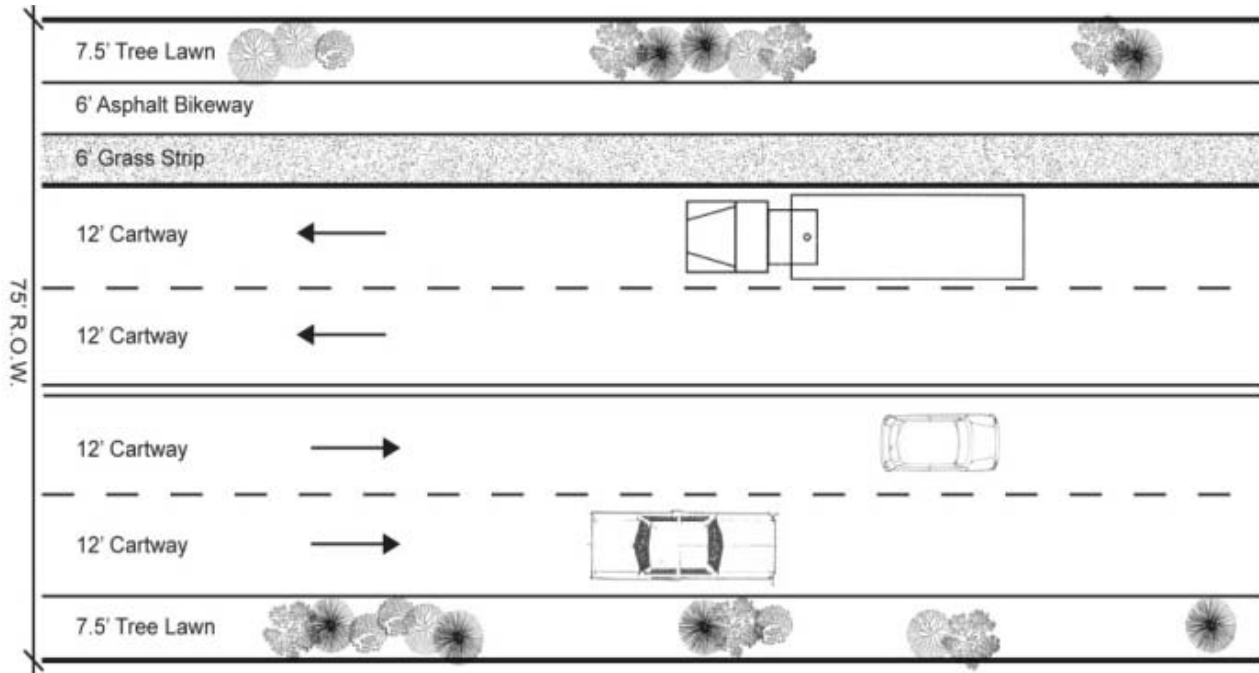
Neville Road provides an opportunity to implement a "road diet"

communities' best interest to provide for expansion in key areas.

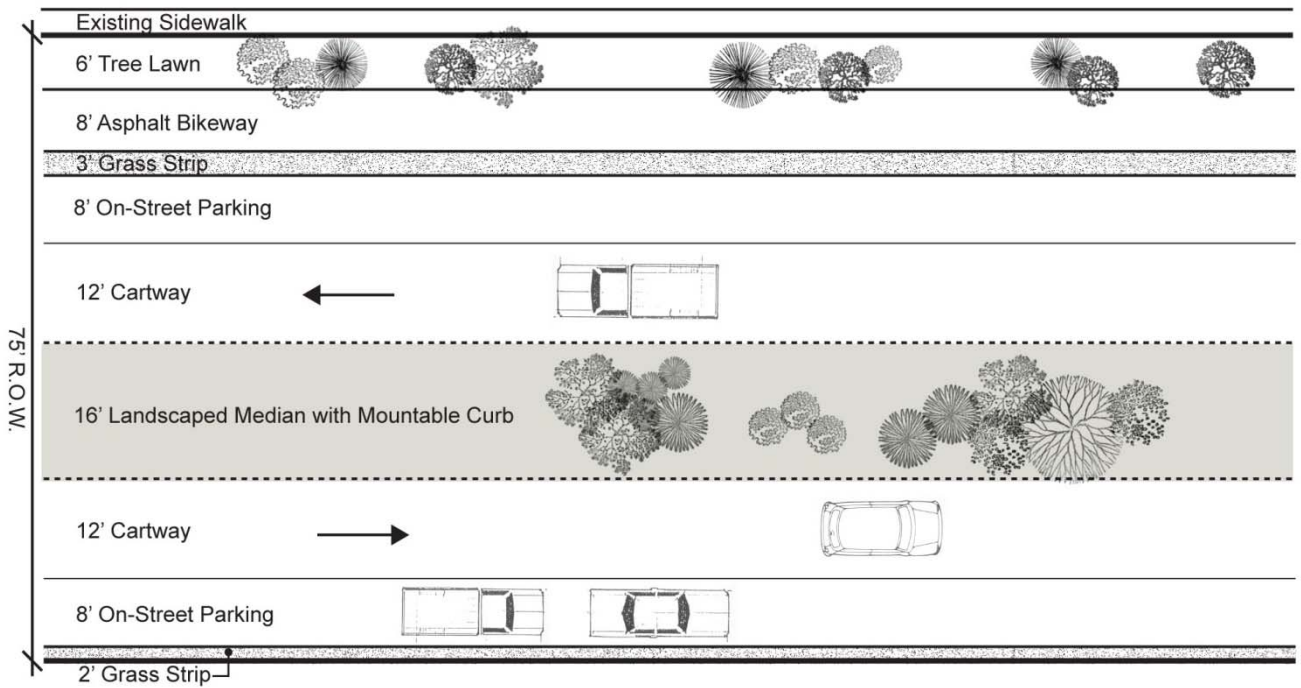
- ❖ Consider adopting Act 209 Traffic Impact Fees. The municipalities may also want to consider completing an Act 209 Traffic Impact Fee analysis. Such an analysis will enable the municipalities to evaluate whether to provide adequate funding for roadway improvements as the result of business growth.

- ❖ Reduce the number of lanes on Grand Avenue and Neville Road through a "road diet". The two main roads in Neville Township, Grand Avenue and Neville Road have a surplus in traffic volume capacity for existing and future growth. In brief, each road could have a lane eliminated and still would be able to accommodate the projected 2030 traffic volumes. Such a lane reduction or "road diet" for each of these roads affords the opportunity to constrict a bike lane within the existing right of way. Neville Road can be reduced to three lanes with a bike lane and street tree plantings along the shoulders. The recommended width for the bike lane is 8' which could be expanded to 10' if the Ohio River Trail is developed along the Back Channel of the Ohio River.

Neville Road



Grand Avenue



- ❖ Grand Avenue can be reduced by two lanes to accommodate a bike lane as well as a landscaped center median. The reduction of lanes and addition of landscaping will dramatically transform the character of the street to have a residential feel and encourage slower traffic. Pedestrian safety resulting from the reduced speeding and the availability of a bike lane will be greatly improved.
- ❖ Construct the vehicular-oriented Fleming Park flyover bridge from Island Avenue to the "Bottoms". The county property (the former P&LE property) at the northern end of the "Bottoms", if redeveloped for industrial or

distribution-type uses would require improved access to accommodate the resulting traffic. In order to accommodate industrial uses, vehicular flyover or bridge from Island Avenue would be needed to connect to the main thoroughfare through Stowe and McKees Rocks. The flyover would need to provide access to both sides of the CSX rail line to not only serve the county property, but the area between Island Avenue and the CSX lines in the “Bottoms” as well. This approach to providing access to this area may be cost prohibitive and would be unnecessary in the event of redevelopment of the county property as flex/office. If the former County property is developed for flex/office development or moderate density residential uses, the site could be accessed through an improved Nichol Street/Nichol Avenue. Improvements to the road surfacing are currently underway through a grant from Senator Fontana and can help to encourage new flex/office development. Realignment of a portion of Nichol Street/Nichol Avenue should be made as shown on the Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy Plan to extend and connect to Robb Street in order to improve access. Several properties would need to be acquired to implement the realignment.



A flyover to the former P&LE paint shop would be needed to provide heavy truck access to support new industrial development.



The County-owned property situated in Stowe Township provides the opportunity for new flex/office development.



An example of a flex-office development situated in Leetsdale, PA.



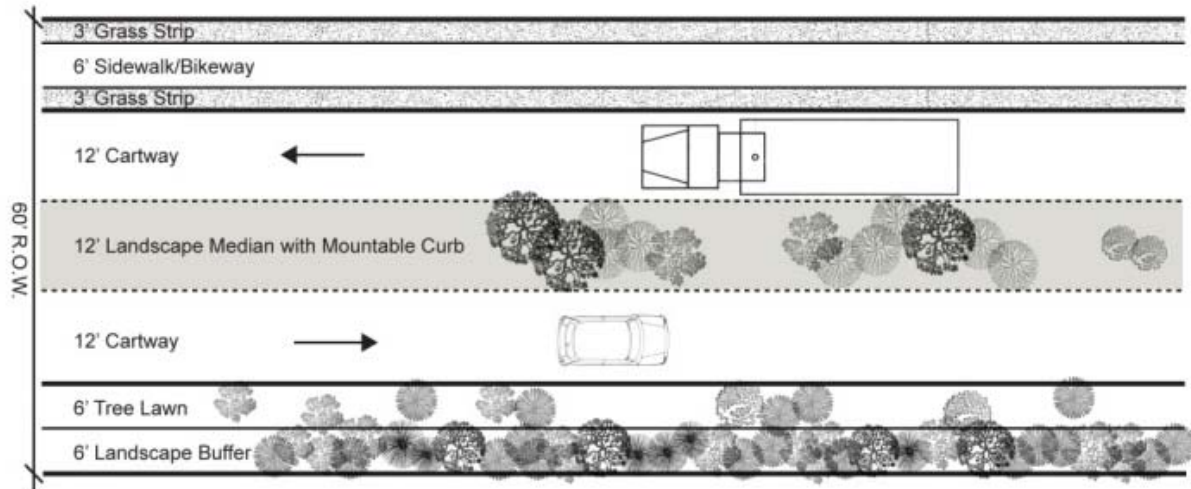
Suggested relocation of River Avenue will open up land areas for redevelopment as a river-oriented residential neighborhood.



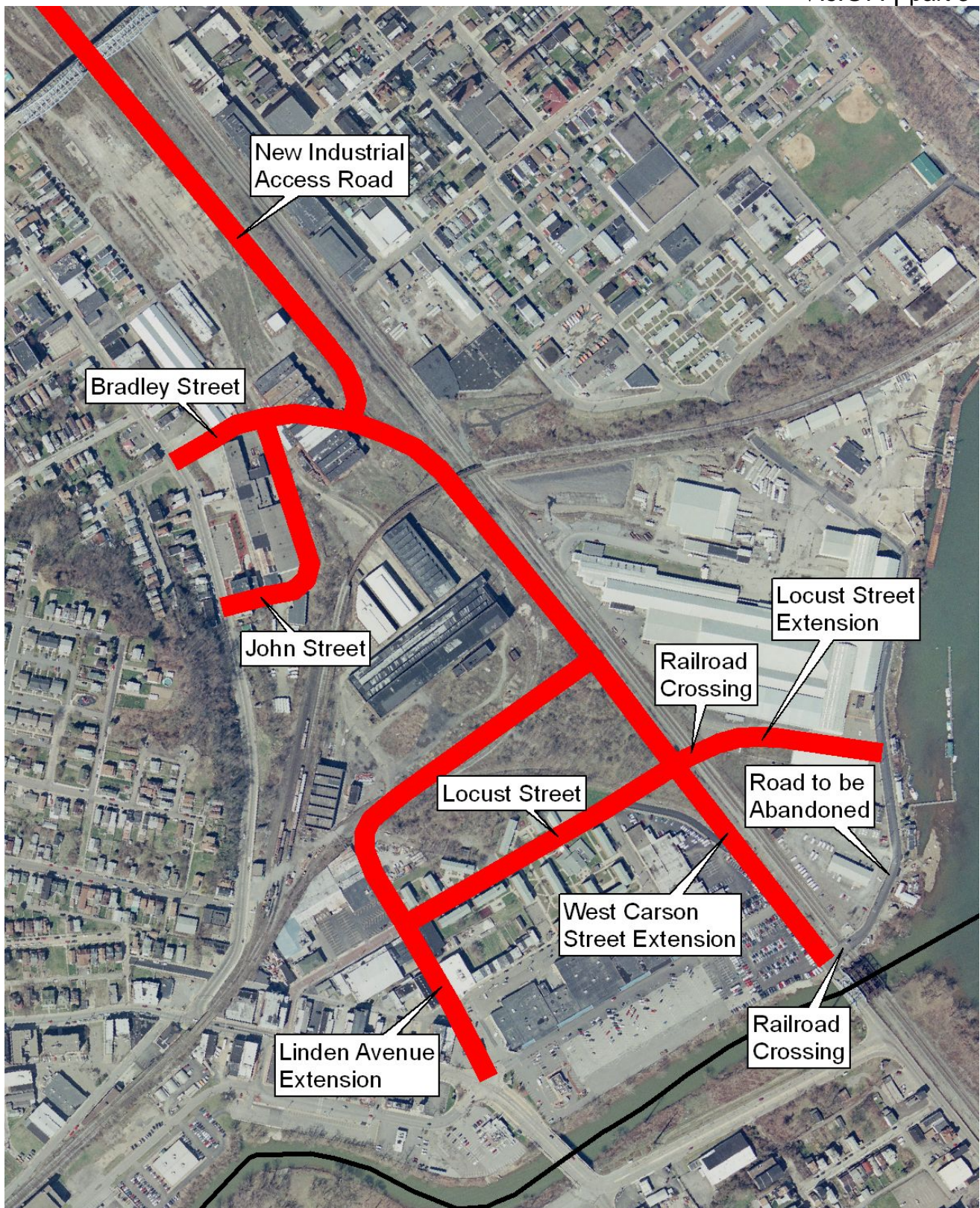
Proposed extension of West Carson Street will allow heavy truck traffic to enter the redevelopment areas of McKees Rocks without negatively impacting Chartiers Avenue

- ❖ Develop the West Carson Street Extension. The current truck traffic through downtown McKees Rocks has a negative impact on the business vitality, street shopping appeal and the revitalization of the buildings along Chartiers Avenue. A more efficient circulation system for trucks entering the community along West Carson Street could be achieved through the development of a West Carson Street Extension. The extension would in addition to alleviating large truck traffic in downtown McKees Rocks, provide much needed access to new development opportunities in the “Bottoms”. Access to Island Avenue would also be improved with the extension of West Carson Street. The extension would require minor realignment of a portion of West Carson where it intersects with Locust Street. (See McKees Rocks Transportation Improvement Plan).

West Carson Street



The proposed West Carson Street Extension would provide a more efficient circulation system as well as a pedestrian and bicycle connection



Realignment of River Avenue will provide direct access to the Ohio River for residential development.

- ❖ Assess the feasibility of abandoning a portion of River Road and re-locating the CSX railroad crossing as part of the West Carson Street Extension. Expand and improve potable water and sanitary sewer service in the lesser served portions of the "Bottoms. As a part of the West Carson Street Extension development, Locust should be realigned and extended to intersect River Avenue. This would allow the removal of a section of River Avenue to develop riverfront residential with direct access to the Ohio River.

- ❖ Complete sanitary sewer inter-connects to ALCOSAN where needed an analysis to evaluate the feasibility of regionalizing the operating maintenance and/or ownership of the sanitary sewer systems.

- ❖ A new road in the "Bottoms" along the western side of the CSX lines could be developed to provide access to the underutilized industrial area. A new roadway is essential for any redevelopment of this area for higher and better uses. This area could take full advantage of the proposed West Carson Extension.

- ❖ Explore the feasibility of extending Linden Avenue to connect to Furnace Street. To



The proposed extension of Furnace Street between the Father Ryan Arts Center and Shops at Chartiers Crossing.

better facilitate redevelopment of the Chartiers Creek Place to Grow area, an extension of Linden Avenue to connect with Furnace Street could provide another major access point. Having multiple access points to new development of the former P&LE administrative property and the area behind the Shops at Chartiers Crossing will significantly impact the success of new projects in this area (See Transportation Plan).

- ❖ Explore the feasibility of developing a transit center behind the shops at Chartiers crossing. With the multiple traffic improvements in the Chartiers Creek “Place to Grow” area, an opportunity is created for a potential transit center with park and ride facility behind the Shops at Chartiers Crossing. This center would be a hub for bus transit situated in the heart of the revitalized development area. The center would provide transit oriented development opportunities to take advantage of this prime location. River taxi access, if determined to be financially feasible, could also be coordinated with this area’s overall redevelopment activities.



Converting Chartiers Avenue to two-way traffic will greatly improve access to downtown businesses in McKees Rocks as well as to enhance convenience for shoppers.

- ❖ Convert Chartiers to two-way in downtown McKees Rocks. Improvement of traffic and access to new commercial businesses would be greatly improved in downtown McKees

Rocks by converting Chartiers Avenue from one-way to two-way east of Island Avenue. The cost for implementing this recommendation would be relatively low and would entail new signage and striping.

- ❖ Reconfigure Furnace Street and the adjoining parking areas. In combination with the Chartiers Avenue 2-way restoration, relocating Furnace Street toward Chartiers Creek and creating a pedestrian esplanade and parking area immediately adjacent to the McKees Rocks business district for example the (McDonald's side) is recommended. This new layout would improve pedestrian safety and parking for downtown McKees Rocks as well as the aesthetic appearance in an area adjacent to a core retail district. This improvement would likely require minor land acquisition in order to connect to Chartiers Avenue.



An example of a pedestrian esplanade.

Illustration of the proposed realignment of Furnace Street to improve safety and parking.



Infrastructure Objectives

1. Improve residential and commercial service by strategically completing infrastructure improvements.
2. Leverage available infrastructure capacities to spur economic development.
3. Continue to collaborate with ALCOSAN and the adjoining communities.



Several sites in the “Bottoms” would require infrastructure improvements to facilitate development.

- ❖ Create a roundabout at the intersection of West Carson and Stanhope Streets and at the McKees Rocks Bridge. The roundabouts will alleviate existing and future traffic congestion issues and provide a gateway to the communities as further discussed in the Civic Amenities section of the recommendations.

Infrastructure

Generally, water and sewer service is available for the majority of areas targeted for development/redevelopment identified on the Future Land Use and Housing Plan. The Neville Town Center “Place to Grow” has adequate water capacity for additional growth using existing water lines. Sewer service is also sufficient for increased development through available connections to the existing lines and the pump station on Grand Avenue. On the eastern end of Neville Township, water service is readily available, however, sanitary service for additional development would need to cross under the existing rail lines.

- ❖ Expand and improve potable water and sanitary sewer service in the lesser served portions of the “Bottoms”. The proposed residential development at the confluence of Chartiers Creek and the Ohio River can be serviced by existing water lines. Sewer

connections would need to be made to tie into the ALCOSAN system. West View Water Authority was contacted to obtain information regarding the three (3) communities' water systems. However, based on homeland security concerns, the Authority is not obligated to provide any detailed distribution and service line mapping to communities. The Authority has verbally stated that there are no service deficiencies or future problem areas for new or redeveloped property. All other Places to Grow have adequate service for both water and sewer to accommodate the potential growth identified in the Plan.

- ❖ Complete sanitary sewer inter-connects to ALCOSAN where needed. The proposed residential development at the confluence of Chartiers Creek and the Ohio River can be serviced by existing water lines. Sewer connections would need to be made to tie into the ALCOSAN system.

Energy

The economics of the 21st century have placed an emphasis on a community's policies related to energy production and conservation. It would appear that the days of "cheap gas" and low cost home heating are no more. Increasingly, residents and elected officials are challenged to

find cost effective and politically acceptable means of winter heating and electric generation. State and federal policies have opened new doors of opportunity; however, these opportunities come with a set of challenges. Title 58 of 1984 authorized modern standards for the exploration and development of the Commonwealth's oil and gas reserves. Much of today's gas exploration activity related to Marcellus Shale is regulated by Title 58. Act 213 of 2004 requires that 18% of all electricity sold to retail consumers in the Commonwealth come from renewable and/or advanced resources such as "clean coal." Finally, Act 129 of 2008 requires electric distribution entities to work with retail consumers to reduce overall energy consumption and demand. This reduction is expected to come primarily through energy conservation initiatives and programs. Reductions in energy consumption will improve the natural environment, resident health and the regional economy by mitigating environmental degradation and energy expenditures.

In an effort to address energy conservation as part of this Plan and to balance the opportunities and challenges created by the new doors being opened, the three (3) communities should consider the following recommendations:

- ❖ [Develop a comprehensive weatherization program and promote its availability.](#)

Weatherization, in the form of building envelope seals, high performance heating and cooling systems, modern electrical systems, can reduce heating costs by 32% annually and can ultimately save a household over \$300 a year. The program should initially target dwelling units occupied by senior householders or householders below the poverty level. The program should also be developed in conjunction with other regional energy conservation initiatives supported by organizations such as Conservation Consultants, Inc. (CCI) and Action Housing, Inc. (via the Allegheny County Winterization Program).

- ❖ Encourage the development of “green” buildings. Green buildings are considered high-performance and environmentally-friendly structures because they are designed to use less building materials, consume less energy and potable water and produce less landfill-destined waste. The communities should explore the possibility of providing development incentives such as building coverage bonuses, setback reductions, building height exceptions for green buildings that meet the minimum standards defined by the United States Green Building Council’s (USGBC) Leadership and Energy and

Environmental Design (LEED®) building certification program. Consider adding energy and water conservation measures and development incentives in future zoning amendments.

- ❖ Provide development incentives, such as well allowances, building coverage bonuses, setback reductions, building height exceptions for the use of geo-thermal energy systems. The close proximity of the Ohio River and the shallow ground water level in the three communities greatly improves the financial feasibility of geo-thermal systems. More importantly, geo-thermal systems, in many cases, can be accommodated on an individual building lot with no impact on adjoining properties. Consider the adoption of regionally-based ordinances related to oil and gas drilling, outdoor boilers/furnaces, wind turbines and solar arrays.

- ❖ Conduct a study to evaluate the potential energy savings using LED lighting for street lights and municipal buildings. Such studies can be completed by local experts in energy conservation and could be funded.

- ❖ Conduct a study to evaluate the potential energy savings using LED lighting for street lights and municipal buildings such studies of

Oil and Gas

While the practicality of developing oil and gas sites (particularly related to Marcellus Shale) is limited within the three (3) communities because of their built-out character, there are numerous instances in Allegheny County where well sites have developed in urbanized areas. Some communities have found themselves at a disadvantage when a well site was proposed but their municipal ordinances did not anticipate such a development. A regional approach allows the three communities to collectively draft and adopt an ordinance thereby reducing costs. A similar approach is being taken by the communities within the Quaker Valley School District. Moreover, a well placed and environmentally responsible developed wellsite actually can create a revenue stream for a municipality. These revenues can be used to offset other municipal expenditures such as street lighting or park and recreation maintenance.

Outdoor Boiler/Furnaces

An outdoor boiler/furnace is located outside of a building or structure, typically as an accessory

Households use about one-fifth of the total energy consumed in the United States each year. Much of this energy is not put to use. Heat pours out of homes through drafty doors and windows, and through ceilings and walls that aren't insulated. Some appliances use energy 24 hours a day, even when they are turned off.

Source: U.S. DOE

In the United States, buildings account for:

- 39% of total energy use;
- 12% of the total water consumption;
- 68% of total electricity consumption; and
- 38% of the carbon dioxide emissions.

Source: U.S. EPA, 2008



Small residential turbines could provide green energy for the communities.

structure, and is used to heat water or a similar liquid and piped into the building or structure for the purposes of heating. Common fuel sources of outdoor boilers/furnaces include firewood, wood pellets, wood pallets, bio-mass material or coal. Residents and industrial businesses realize significant savings in heating costs by converting to outdoor boilers/furnaces. However, the facilities can produce smoke and odors that can be offensive to neighbors.

Because many outdoor boilers/furnaces are less than 100 square feet in size, they are exempt from building inspection. Communities, subsequently, have had some difficulty in regulating their use, placement and maintenance. It is recommended that use of such facilities because of the urban context of the communities should be prohibited through the municipal zoning ordinances.

Wind Turbines

Electricity generated from wind is clean, renewable and often readily available in “river towns” such as McKees Rocks, Neville and Stowe. There are two classifications of wind turbines: Large-scale turbines, similar to the facilities located along the Pennsylvania Turnpike in Bedford County, produce enough electricity that can be fed into the national electric power transmission network. Small-scale turbines are designed for residential use and can operate on

either horizontal or vertical axes. Typically, the rotor of a small-scale turbine only needs to be six (6) feet in diameter.

While the development of large-scale facilities within three (3) communities is incompatible given the surrounding context, none of the municipal ordinances specifically address these types of facilities. Small-scale turbines can be appropriately sized for the urban context of the communities. More importantly, increasingly and increasingly residents and industrial businesses are exploring the feasibility of their use to offset overall electricity costs. The communities should establish basic development standards within their zoning ordinances for overall tower height, fall zones, noise emissions, vibration tolerances, de-commissioning, etc.

Solar Arrays

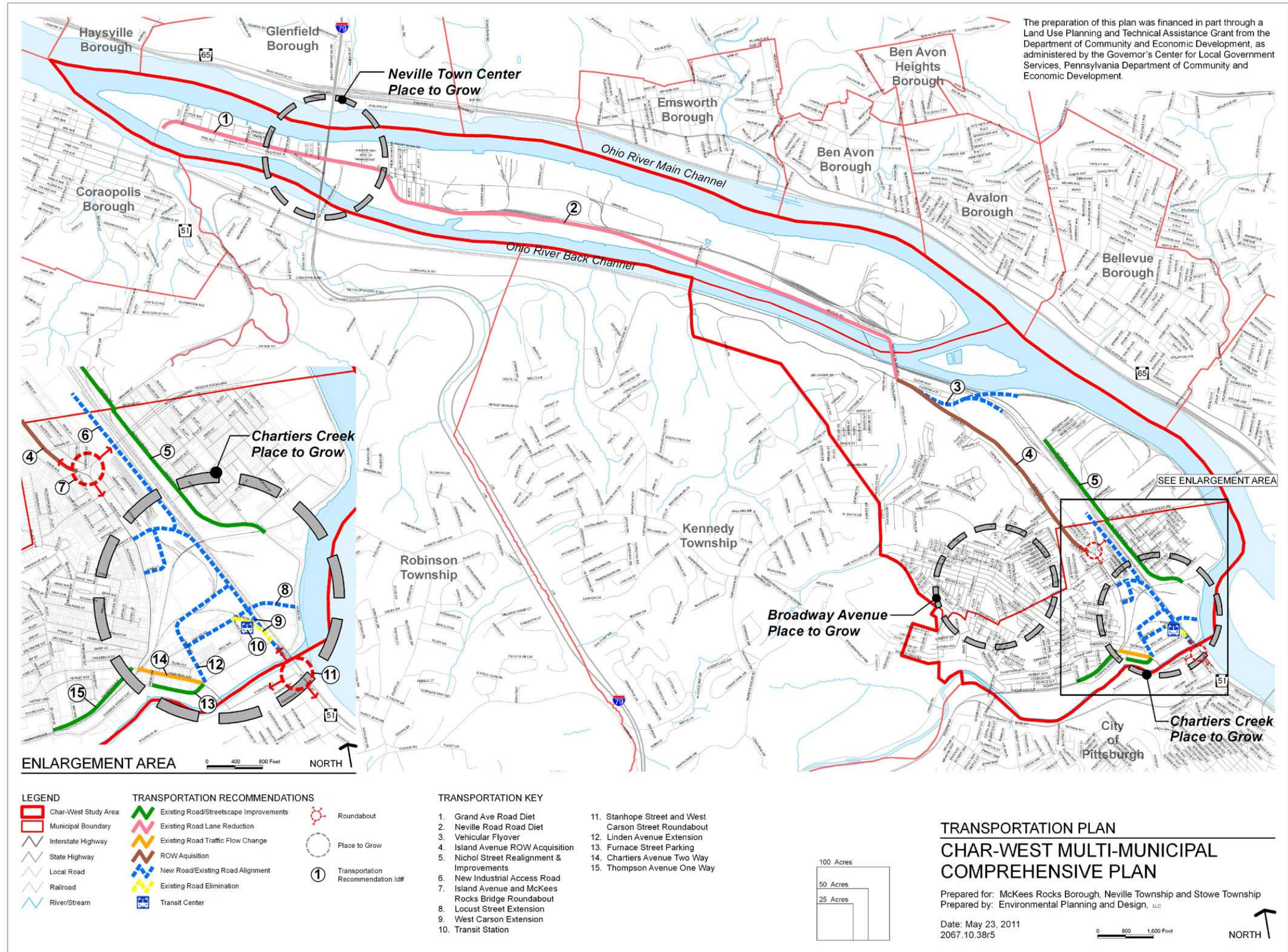
Solar arrays or panels contain photovoltaic cells that capture and store the energy within sunlight for eventually conversion to electricity. This process, known as active solar energy conversion, can be accommodated as ground-mounted or building-mounted facilities. In most cases, the development of solar arrays have minimal impact on adjoining neighbors and properties and provide a cost effective (albeit long-term) means of

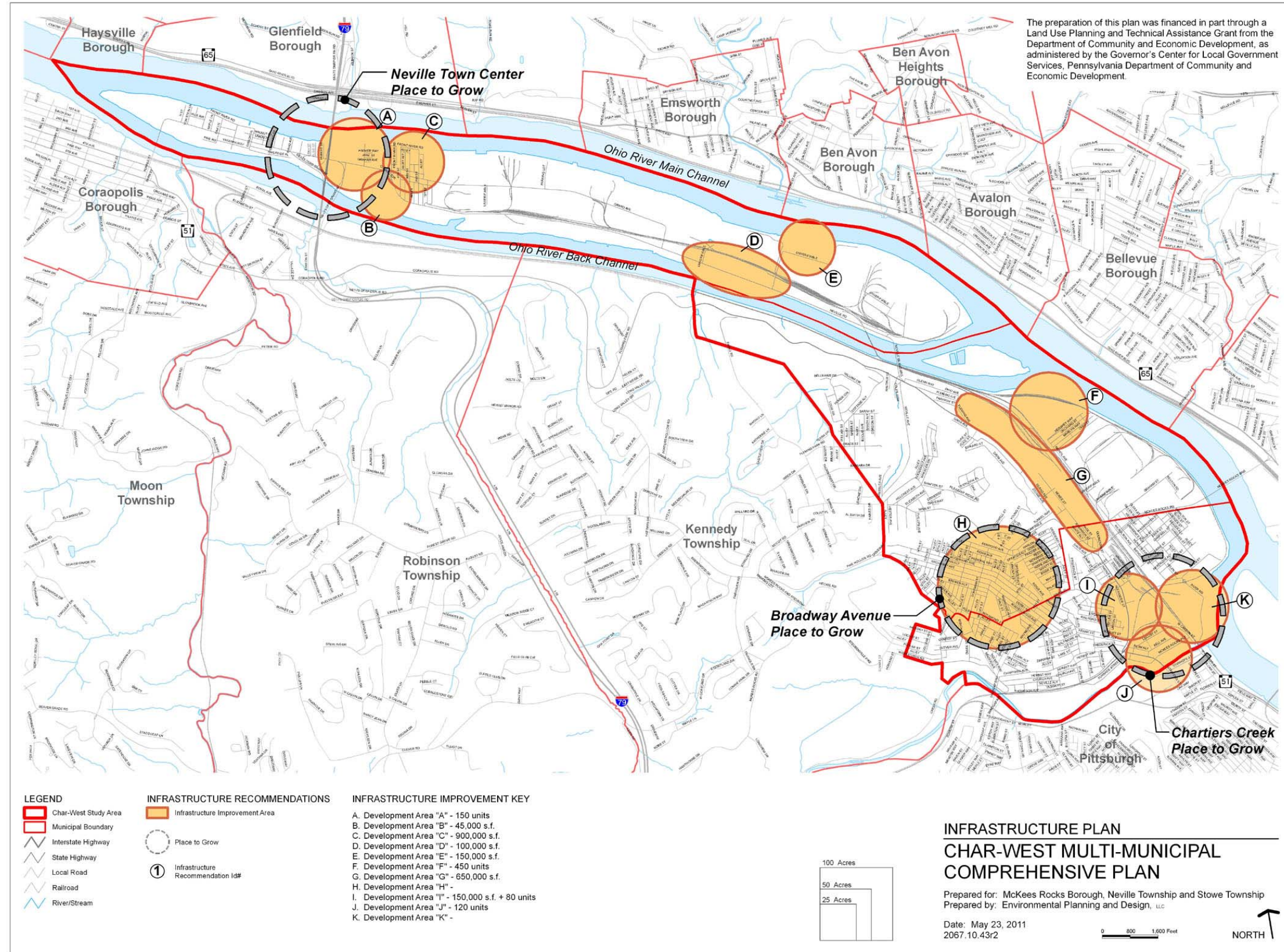


Solar panels are another practical solution for improving the sustainability of the communities.

supplementing traditionally generated electricity. Moreover, the federal government has created significant incentives for the development of solar arrays. These incentives are available in the form of tax credits after a period of use; since the introduction of the tax credits, there has been a significant increase in resident interest in installing solar arrays on their homes or within their properties. Similar to wind facilities, the communities should establish basic development standards within their zoning ordinances to regulate solar arrays. These standards should at a minimum address issues such as the location of the arrays, adequate setbacks, acceptable levels of glare, impervious surface exemptions, etc.

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Business, Community and Economic Development Plan

Business, Community and Economic Development Objectives

- Strengthen the tax base by encouraging redevelopment and new development
- Build on existing businesses and partnerships to stimulate business growth and expansion
- Become business friendly
- Put the “best foot forward” for commercial district appearance
- Focus community development entities on business community development
- Leverage partnerships to maximize available capital

Overview

Three (3) inter-related components: **policies, practices and perceptions** largely influence the economics of an area or region. These components are often planned and managed independently with very little cross-examination. Yet, as many prosperous locales across the United States have discovered, the most vibrant and stable economies assess and coordinate these three components as a means of maximizing public and private-sector value and minimizing unforeseen downturns and under-performance. This section of the Plan details recommendations designed to assist McKees Rocks Borough, Neville Township and Stowe Township in addressing important economic challenges they currently face and to leverage assets they already have in hand. The recommendations represent “best practices”-style suggestions and should be re-evaluated and re-adjusted on an annual basis. Annual reviews should involve elected officials, the public administration, representatives from the business community, and highly invested property owners.

In brief, the three economic components consist of:

Policies

This component focuses on the fiscal performance and management of local public taxing bodies such as a municipal corporation or a school district. Annual revenues, expenditures, household demographics and tax base expansion/contraction directly impact public operations and local elected officials' decisions-making.

Practices

The final component to business, community and economic development highlights the viability of forming, operating and/or expanding a business within a given place. The viability of such an endeavor often depends on the region's job market, availability of capital and financing, adequate infrastructure capacities, local demographics as well as the condition of local public finances. Changes in the local tax structure, quality public services and the regional business market all influence how business operator perceives each above factor and, in turn, how the business owner responds to opportunities and challenges.



The vitality of the region's commercial districts depends on several factors such as business vibrancy, attractiveness of place and quality of businesses/services.

Commercial district vitality depends as much on business vibrancy as it does on the quality of public services, attractiveness of place, and clean and safe streets/sidewalks.

Perceptions

Commercial district vitality depends as much on business vibrancy as it does on the quality of public services, attractiveness of place, and clean and safe streets/sidewalks. Economically vital commercial districts directly influence property values, a municipality's tax base and business growth.

Policies

McKees Rocks Borough and Stowe Township have been grappling with difficult financial conditions for nearly 30 years. As a consequence, both communities currently carry "BBB" bond ratings from the Standard & Poor's (S&P) Corporation. This low rating qualifies the communities as "high risk." Moreover, the rating requires elected officials to secure higher than average interest rates when borrowing money for necessary capital improvements - ultimately resulting in significant finance costs. S&P cites shrinking tax bases, aging demographics and difficulties in maintaining cash reserves as factors that resulted in the below average credit ratings. While the municipal bond ratings are not ideal, the communities are considered by S&P as financially stable.

Neville Township's financial state is not as austere as the other two (2) municipalities and enjoys a

slightly higher bond rating. The relative stability of its population and tax base has produced this situation. Neville Township has been able to maintain the majority of its civic investments despite its very small population.

Much like the three (3) municipalities, neither the Cornell nor Sto-Rox School Districts enjoys the best fiscal circumstances. Because of limited tax bases and challenging demographics, both districts struggle to attract and retain quality educators and administrators as well as adequately address many students' special learning needs. Tax rates have risen significantly; budget cuts for both facilities and academics have become visibly notable and to some degree fuel the region's negative image. One positive note is that both school districts have become well-known throughout the Commonwealth for their creativity and ability to make the most with available resources. This "can do" attitude has allowed S&P to give Cornell School District an "AAA" bond rating; and an "A" bond rating to the Sto-Rox School District.

Given all three (3) municipalities' limited fiscal resources, elected officials are required to make tough decisions regarding public service priorities. Emergency improvements or repairs tend to take priority over annual maintenance needs. This situation leads to long periods of deferred

Both school districts have become well-known throughout the Commonwealth for their creativity and ability to make the most with available resources.



Many commercial building and business revitalization opportunities exist in the three communities.

maintenance and public disinvestment in past civic investments such as parks and playgrounds. Over time, the deferred maintenance of such facilities begins to erode the community's quality of life and produces a state of decay.

Until redevelopment and/or infill development become more commonplace and the eroding demographic trends are reversed, all municipalities and school districts will have limited tax bases and constrained budgets. Moreover, none of the three communities is advocating for municipal consolidation and none of the analyses completed as part of this Plan assessed the merits or trade-offs of such mergers. Consequently, the approach to improve fiscal performance in the region is to do more with the dollars and resources currently available.

Pursuing collaborative or cooperative projects where resources are pooled between participants is one such approach. The three (3) municipalities have a history of working together to address common issues. While in most cases these efforts were project-specific and limited in scale/complexity, they do provide "lessons learned" and positive success stories. These collaborations demonstrate success can be achieved through partnerships.

Despite the efforts of the McKees Rocks Community Development Corporation (CDC) and Neville Island Development Association (NIDA), a healthy local economy is not only driven by consumer demand, a skilled labor force, and ready development/redevelopment sites but also a philosophy and reputation for supporting and nurturing businesses. While existing businesses may feel that the communities are business friendly, discussions with businesses outside the communities noted that there is a perception that the communities are negative to business development growth. All three communities should improve their image as pro-business communities that are willing to help businesses to develop, to succeed and to thrive. Elected officials who are committed to the process, both in word and in deed, need to be willing and able to do what it takes to help create the right environment for private sector development and investment.

The potential roles of the public in this process can vary based upon the needs and how much political capital elected officials are willing to expend in the effort. There are a host of activities the public sector may, in due time, be well-positioned to undertake such as improving public safety, expanding parking facilities, assembling land, and perhaps most importantly, creating easy-to-use zoning and building codes to enable development that defines thriving commercial districts.

To accomplish these above goals, the following policies are recommended to be instituted by the elected officials in each community:

- ❖ Work closely with Allegheny County Economic Development to identify and leverage both short-term and long-term redevelopment and revitalization programs as well as grant and funding opportunities
- ❖ Create or improve the links between the municipal web-sites, the CDC and NIDA. In the case of Stowe Township, develop a municipal web-site and create links between the new site and the CDC
- ❖ Participate in annual business development summits hosted by the CDC, NIDA and the Chamber of Commerce
- ❖ Market the communities' business offerings to real estate professionals and brokerages
- ❖ Assist businesses by providing public improvement financing, public-private sponsored business promotion, and cost reduction efforts
- ❖ Make key demographic and market information and professional assistance (with



Community websites can provide business operators quick and easily accessible information and create a pro-business environment. Moreover, community web sites, if designed to generate resident browsing traffic, can be used to sell advertising space to local businesses. This creates a revenue stream to pay for the website itself.

the help of the CDC and NIDA) available to businesses that need help in such areas as potential market assessment, labor pool projection, and employee training.

- ❖ Evaluate the feasibility of creating three tax increment financing (TIF) districts for new non-residential or residential construction. Differing from the tax abatements which should target solely new residential construction, TIF's should be open to any development. A TIF district allows taxes to be deferred for a period of time so that a property owner or developer can use those monies to construct new infrastructure needed to support the new development. TIF's have been found to be successful in stimulating private-sector investment in areas where the cost of infrastructure replacement or upgrades are substantial and render a project financially infeasible. Proposed TIF district locations include the three areas this Plan designates as "Places to Grow." These areas include the former P&LE administrative property and the River Road properties in McKees Rocks; the former P&LE paint shop property in Stowe Township; and the under-utilized industrial properties abutting the Grand Avenue/I-79 interchange in Neville Township

What is a TIF district? Is it a tax increase?

TIF is an acronym for Tax Increment Financing. A tax increment is the difference between the amount of property tax revenue generated before a TIF district is created and the amount of property tax revenue generated after a TIF designation. **It is not a tax increase.** TIF is used for two basic purposes:

- To induce or cause a development or redevelopment that otherwise would not occur
- To finance public infrastructure (streets, sewer, water, or parking facilities) that are related to the development

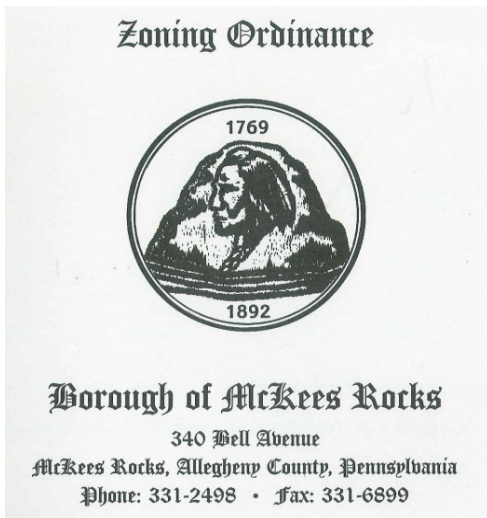
The following TIF projects have been approved in Allegheny County.

- Heinz Distribution Center
- Frazer Mills
- Mall at Robinson
- Alcoa
- Mt. Nebo Points
- North Shore Stadiums
- Fulton Building
- East Liberty-Home Depot
- Baum-Millvale
- Panther Hollow
- Center-Negley Giant Eagle
- Lazurus-Macy's
- Penn Liberty Plaza
- PNC FirstSide
- Brentwood Towne Square
- The Waterfront of Homestead
- RIDC Riverside
- Panther Hollow
- SouthSide Works
- Menzie Dairy
- Riverplace
- Pittsburgh Technology Center
- Cedar Height
- Mellon Operations Center
- Gimbels Building
- Station Square
- Penn Liberty Plaza

- ❖ Explore the feasibility of offering tax abatements for new single family owner-occupied residential construction. Abatements defer taxes for a period of time as a means of stimulating new development or redevelopment. Abatements are especially effective when encouraging redevelopment or infill of vacant or underutilized parcels. The majority of tax deferral affects school districts so any abatement program needs to be carefully analyzed and considered.

- ❖ Develop a joint subdivision and land development ordinance for McKees Rocks and Stowe with strong similarities in development types, density and infrastructure. The benefits of a common ordinance include the sharing of costs in preparing an up-to-date ordinance as well as the efficiencies of common standards where there are multiple property owners that own land in more than one of the communities and where properties and developments span municipal boundaries.

- ❖ Share code enforcement and building inspection responsibilities if a joint subdivision and land development ordinance is created. Quality of service, timeliness of reviews and fiscal responsibilities could be better balanced at a multi-municipal level.



Utilizing joint zoning and/or subdivision ordinances can lower review and development costs and facilitate more timely code enforcement.

- ❖ Seek out opportunities to jointly attend municipal training events such as staff/board/commission training sponsored by the Local Government Academy and/or the Char-West Council of Governments. Sharing notes about arising issues and “lessons learned” from these events could help community representatives more efficiently and effectively build awareness as well as spend municipal dollars in improving the outcomes and service the governments provide.
- ❖ Initiate a formal dialogue/discussion on the issue of school district consolidation. Many people involved in the comprehensive planning process acknowledged that several issues are on-going challenges for both the Cornell and Sto-Rox School Districts. The most common discussion topics focused on continuing population loss, loss of young teachers, increasing maintenance demands of aging facilities, and students’ rising special learning needs. The communities could consider collectively asking themselves “is it time we formally evaluate the advantages and drawbacks of consolidating school districts?” This type of feasibility study does not commit the communities to consolidating; it commits the communities to objectively exploring and asking the difficult questions and getting the

Trinity Development, based in Emsworth, PA is working with officials from the McKees Rocks, Allegheny County and the Brownfield Center to redevelop a portion of the P&LE property in McKees Rocks. Trinity Development successfully obtained in a Building In Our Sites (BIOS) grant to complete clean-up and infrastructure improvements. The overall build-out of the property anticipates over 300,000 sq. ft. of new flex/industrial development and the creation of more than 600 jobs. Phase 1 of the redevelopment project includes 60,000 sq. ft. and is expected to be completed by the Summer of 2012.

answers as to what benefits and/or challenges would arise in doing so.

- ❖ Conduct a fiscal analysis for the three municipalities. Recent changes in administration for McKees Rocks and Neville provide a good opportunity
- ❖ Pursue partnerships between the public and private sectors. Successful community revitalization and brownfield redevelopment efforts are founded on private/public partnerships, not the other way around. The public sector may convene the strategy and process but it must quickly be led by the private entities whose time and money will ultimately determine the effort's success. A healthy, sustained partnership is crucial to getting the revitalization process off the ground and building the critical mass needed to spur a cycle of investment.
- ❖ Conduct a fiscal analysis for the three municipalities. Recent changes in the municipal administration for McKees Rocks and Neville provide an opportunity. Such a fiscal analysis could evaluate the current demands and resource allocations/outlays for municipal – supported services like police, fire, public works and parks/recreation. A fiscal analysis can be completed through the PA

DCED's Early Intervention Program. This could be a cost effective approach for the communities to collaborate with other experts related to municipal services on a cost effective manner.

- ❖ Conduct an assessment of municipal facilities such as fire stations, libraries , police stations, etc.

Practices

A healthy local economy relies heavily on an environment that attracts new businesses, promotes business expansions, encourages private capital investments, increases employment opportunities for residents, boosts local tax base and helps the community to reach its long-term goals. Businesses rely on sales and revenues to survive. Businesses make their location, relocation and expansion decisions based on, among other things, market demand and sales potential. Business opportunities, consequently, are dependent upon a stable but growing demand for residential, commercial and industrial goods and services. The Retail Leakage and Surplus Analysis completed as part of this Plan (see Appendix) identifies the types of opportunities and trends found within the communities today.

The CDC has historically focused its efforts within the downtown McKees Rocks area but in the



McKees Rocks CDC has expanded its focus to include Broadway Avenue in Stowe Township.

Spring of 2010 expanded its service area to include Stowe Township's Broadway Avenue commercial district. NIDA's focus has been on the redevelopment of the lands surrounding the I-79 interchange and the several key industrial sites situated in the eastern portion of the Township. As part of their efforts, both the CDC and NIDA have assumed the roles of:

- Assisting in the retention and expansion of existing businesses, focusing on those businesses that have significant impact on the local economy and tax base;
- Attracting new businesses whose presence will significantly improve local economy;
- Utilizing planning tools to reserve strategic locations for business relocation, expansion and new construction;
- Undertaking local and regional market studies and economic development programs; and
- Supporting new residential development opportunities and strong neighborhoods.

A series of practices are essential to nurturing a healthy economy. The practices are best implemented by a business development

organization such the CDC, NIDA or the McKees Rocks Chamber of Commerce.

As the role and structure of NIDA differs from the CDC, the primarily focus of the following discussion is on enhancing the structure and effectiveness of the CDC. If NIDA were to obtain funding/financial support and/or extend its activities to those which demand an everyday presence as is the case in Stowe and McKees Rocks, the organization could evolve to taking on more of these types of activities.

- ❖ Create action plans for the CDC and NIDA that establish and prioritize goals and objectives. The Action Plan should focus on a five year timeframe and should define specific actions to be taken by the organization in that period as well as the resources that are expected to be required. At the end of each fiscal year, the CDC and NIDA should develop an annual report that details accomplishments for the year. This will assist the organization in staying on task in achieving their goals. The annual report will also let business and property owners understand work that is being accomplished by the organizations.

The CDC and NIDA Action Plan should also address the following:

- Strengthening and maintaining the organization's active membership,

An important task for the CDC and NIDA to establish a competitive advantage in a particular segment of the retail market. A niche is a specialization that allows a business district to gain attention for notable products and/or services that are provided. A niche can be determined through market analysis and building on the information gathered as part of this Plan. Local businesses should track sales and residency of current consumers to better understand consumer preferences and their willingness to travel.

Revolving Board members, Committees with active Chairs, and Financial Plan.

In 2006, the CDC and a market consultant performed an assessment of McKees Rock's Roxian Theater as to the best re-use for the building. That assessment concluded that live performance venue in the main theater area would be the best primary use of the Roxian Theater, and that such an undertaking would find sustainable success within the Greater Pittsburgh area. It was also a conclusion of that assessment that a live music venue would serve as the best economic anchor for revitalization within the McKees Rocks community.

Additionally, a secondary venue or "small space" formatted as a bar setting in the basement of the facility could meet with success and help to drive greater awareness of the facility.

- Marketing and promotion efforts related to Communication, Marketing Plan, Image Building or "Branding", and Advertising Businesses.
 - Public outreach activities such as Special Events and Promotions, Festivals, and Holiday Events.
 - Physical enhancements akin to historic buildings façade program, Clean streets and streetscape renovations/improvements, Gateway signs for the commercial districts, Revolving banner system for street lights (should change with seasons), and Holiday lighting.
 - Business retention and recruitment efforts including, current market assessment, and recruitment brochure.
- ❖ Work with local Small Business Development Center and Duquesne University to conduct seminars to assist local businesses with business operations.
 - ❖ Hold quarterly meetings with business/property owners. Invite experts to

discuss issues facing the commercial districts.
(i.e. PA Downtown Center, National Main Street program, etc.)

- ❖ Determine the market niche for the commercial corridors.

The key steps in this determination include the following:

- The characteristics of the various commercial districts, types of offices, businesses or institutions are located nearby.
- Spend time looking at niches in comparable communities.
- Carefully define the local trade area, but recognize that a very different and expanded trade area could arise depending on the niche developed.
- Identify retail gaps with market research that includes a supply and demand analysis. Use focus groups to generate ideas about possible niches.
- Communicate the revitalization to the local business owners, residents and elected

One potential theme for downtown McKees Rocks that builds on the CDC's past Roxian Theater Study, is one of live musical entertainment. Local restaurants and shops could adopt similar themes and carry goods that reinforce a focus on music or the live arts in general.

officials. Report on strategy and progress in implementing it to the investment and banking community so there is faith in the process in which they are being asked to invest. In context of work/home life patterns today, consider:

- Extend business hours – specifically for shopping. As the proportion of two wage-earning families and single head households increases, the traditional 8-5, Monday through Friday, hours are not appropriate. Perhaps businesses within the commercial districts can stay open late one or two days a week. Cultural habits and economic needs the following:
 - ❖ Promote your competitive advantages in being close to Downtown Pittsburgh. Develop effective and innovative promotions and advertising, and organize business district-wide promotional events.
 - ❖ Develop a unique theme or “brand” for each commercial districts.
 - ❖ Publicize events and activities. Through advertising, the business community can collectively ensure that citizens, particularly residents of surrounding neighborhoods, have continuous opportunities for input and

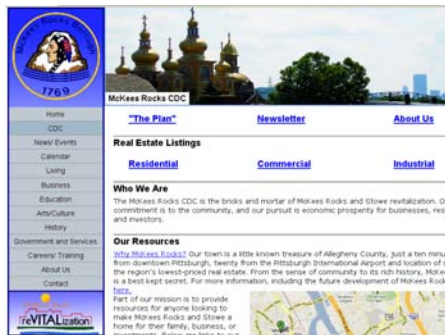
involvement. It is also important to keep the elected officials and the media informed about the revitalization process, as the public perception during the initial phases of revitalization can be given.

- ❖ Use Marketplace Direct or similar marketing venue as an affordable way to keep your targeted audience informed and engaged. Whether it is a monthly newsletter that is generated for downtown merchants, or a seasonal newsletter that is provided to consumers.



Business development can be enhanced by utilizing social networking outlets/venues.

- ❖ Promote businesses, development/redevelopment opportunities through Facebook or similar social web sites. The social website aids in building consumer loyalty, and starting discussions on topics important to business development and economic vitality. The administrator of the Facebook page can monitor dialogue to make sure information contained on the site is appropriate. The Facebook page should be updated routinely to maintain the interest of the consumers for downtown McKees Rocks, Broadway Avenue, and the Neville Town Center.



The McKees Rocks CDC website should be expanded to include tools to drive traffic to downtown.

- ❖ The CDC’s website should be used to promote downtown businesses, properties available for rent/sale, special events, and promotions such as validated parking, downtown gift cards and other tools used to drive traffic to downtown McKees Rocks and Broadway Avenue. The website should also include an area to capture email addresses for Market Direct (or a similar on-line marketing tool) marketing campaigns.

- ❖ Develop a NIDA – specific web-site and establish links to the Township’s municipal homepage. The web-site should incorporate features similar to those outlined above.

- ❖ Work with local media to promote activities and events in the three communities will give the lead organizations higher profile than an advertising campaign. The organizations should initiate monthly meetings with the media to keep them abreast of developments occurring in downtown McKees Rocks, Broadway Avenue and the Neville Town Center.

- ❖ Evaluate the need for the CDC to hire additional staff. In order to provide the appropriate level of support of reinvestment activities today as well as the recommendations above. The focus of the organization's executive director should be on running the overall organization smoothly. The additional staff should be charged with handling the Broadway Avenue commercial districts. An analysis of CDC staff resources should be conducted to match salaries, expertise and the ability to sustain the positions over the long-term.

- ❖ Realign the CDC's current involvement in from neighborhood watches and community gardens to instead focus on economic development and filling storefronts. The CDC, as the liaison between developers, the McKees Rocks Borough Council, and the

Stowe Township Commissioners is its most fitting role.

Perceptions

Strong business development initiatives tend to lead to vibrant commercial districts and vice versa. This notion, however, has only been affirmed in the last 15 years. Between 1960 and 1990, many downtowns and traditional commercial districts throughout the United States and Pennsylvania found themselves suffering from disinvestment, blight and public neglect. Once strong shopping and employment districts succumbed to newly constructed suburban shopping plazas. Downtown housing or mixed-use buildings were discouraged or simply outlawed as a means of clearly and exclusively reserving these areas for commerce.



Simple improvements such as powerwashing sidewalks and updating street furniture could have a significant impact on the appearance of the street without incurring significant construction costs for paving and utility upgrades.

Major streetscape enhancements are important to the revitalization of the commercial districts in McKees Rocks and Stowe Township. What is most important to the success of these districts is the need for public areas which are clean, safe and well lit. In some cases, this will require the painting of street lights, etc. In other cases, short-term enhancements could be achieved by sprucing up a streetscape's benches, powerwashing sidewalks, etc.

Summarized in the following discussion is a more detailed strategy for addressing the public realm of the communities' multiple commercial districts.

The following recommendations are a complement to the recommendations outlined in this Plan's Civic Amenities section and represent "best practices" for non-capital type improvements. Most importantly, the following recommendations are drawn from the successes of numerous "real world" downtown plans and revitalization projects; the recommendations are not based on theoretical manuals or academic handbooks that have not been "road tested."

- ❖ **Make the commercial districts attractive and clean.** This is an essential element to revitalization activities. Residents and visitors form impressions and perceptions as they pass through the districts. These impressions can be lasting or difficult to overcome in a short-period of time. Consequently, both public and private spaces need to be clear of trash and debris. Several nation-wide studies have been able to document that for every \$1 of public sector investment in a commercial district, the private sector invests \$3 to \$10. While it represents a wide-range that is affected by many variables and influences, there is a clear net return on investment. Potential steps to take to clean-up such spaces and maintain areas litter-free include:

- Identifying problem areas and creating a maintenance plan for public spaces;

Typically, for every \$1 of public sector investment in a commercial district, the private sector invests \$3 to \$10.



The Broadway Avenue commercial district continues to be an active and vital corridor.

- Designating and orchestrating district clean-up events/days using volunteer help (such as Boy Scouts, Rotary, Lions Clubs, or Robert Morris University students);
 - Honoring merchants or property owners with plaques or similar recognition for consistently maintaining their individual spaces; and
 - Placing litter receptacles in strategic locations and coordinating with the municipal public works departments or volunteer groups to regularly empty the litter receptacles.
- ❖ Illuminate and fill vacant storefronts until permanent tenants/occupants are found. A dark commercial district is perceived to be a “dead” commercial district. An effective strategy is to organize a volunteer group to adopt a window or storefront and to display a community events calendar/video, a historical exhibit or local arts and craft installations. The volunteers can define a series of themes so that the displays can be periodically changed (quarterly is suggested as a minimum). An important aspect of lighting and decorating the windows/storefronts is the need for property owner permission/cooperation.

- ❖ Complete facade improvements in order to make small but visible accomplishments that generate enthusiasm, interest and hope. Recognizing that facade renovation can be costly, grant monies may be sought to help local businesses achieve this goal. Grants could require a match from local business and a local bank could be enlisted to provide low interest loans to businesses enrolled in the facade program. Business owners should be encouraged to improve their facades as best they can in the short-term. In the long-term, the communities should set up a program to assist business owners with funding for facade improvements. The visible success of the facade program can help the community rally around the initiative.
- ❖ Explore the feasibility and economic benefits of developing additional cooperative efforts with surrounding Townships. Encourage a variety of moderate and high density market rate housing options. Building on the existing inventory of affordable housing, market rate housing as well as community-owned land and buildings, an assessment of square footages of upper and lower level floors should be completed. The way in which upper level space can be financially feasible for re-establishing living spaces and reinvestment in

Streetscapes are not just to beautify a place, they should be designed and marketed for optimizing pedestrian safety and continuity of the neighborhood. Implementing these improvements is one area that the efforts of community revitalization can be made publicly visible. Streetscape design should also be designed in context of functionality, durability, historic context and maintenance.

the early years of the turnaround process should be carefully strategized.

- ❖ Develop design criteria and implement larger-scale streetscape improvements. These efforts must be fully integrated to ensure the retention and enhancement of the commercial district's historic and aesthetic qualities. In order to reinforce the “brand” of the commercial district, a detailed streetscape plan should be created with the help of a landscape architect.

Environment and Culture Objectives

1. Protect the existing wooded hillsides.
2. Restore riparian buffers along the various waterfronts.
3. Discourage development in areas where unstable soils exist.
4. Provide opportunities for residents to experience existing natural amenities.
5. Emphasize the value of historic resources.
6. Celebrate relationships with local institutions.

Environment and Culture Plan

The Plan's Environment and Culture element explores the relationship of notable physical features in the communities. These features include riparian buffers, steep slope preservation, pre-revolutionary history, historic buildings, brownfields, the Father Ryan Arts Center and the Presston Bridge.

Riparian Buffers

- ❖ Collaborate with Allegheny County, the City of Pittsburgh and Duquesne Light to create the Chartiers Creek Greenway and to restore the stream's riparian buffers. Protection of vegetation along creeks and rivers can reduce pollutant runoff into the water bodies. These areas are also desirable for trails to encourage appreciation of waterways and natural resources. McKees Rocks should collaborate

with Allegheny County, the City of Pittsburgh and Duquesne Light to implement and market the Chartiers Creek Greenway as well as to restore the stream's riparian buffers.

- ❖ Seek funding to identify and remediate brownfield sites.

Steep Slope Preservation

- ❖ Protect steep slopes from future development. Over the years, development in McKees Rocks and Stowe has for the most part not occurred on areas of steep slopes. Protection from future development and redevelopment is recommended to prevent problems associated with disturbing steep slopes, sensitive soils, and sensitive habitats. Protecting the slopes will also preserve the scenic beauty of the wooded hillsides that are an important aspect of the communities' character.



The mouth of Chartiers Creek should to be dredged to remove debris and to improve canoe/kayak access.



Preservation of the steep slope areas will conserve environmentally sensitive areas as well as scenic views.

The Indian mounds in the “Bottoms” is the largest Native American burial mound in Western Pennsylvania., (16 ft. high by 85 ft wide). It was hand-built by the Adena people between 200 BC and 100 AD and later used by the Hopewell and Monongahela people. Late 19th century excavations uncovered thirty-three skeletons and artifacts made of copper and shells. (ExplorePAhistory.com)

Pre-Revolutionary History

The Indian Mounds, situated between Ranger Field and the Ohio River, have long been a topic of discussion for preservation and/or restoration. Over the next decade, McKees Rocks should actively pursue a “first right of refusal” agreement for the existing Fuel Oil/Petroleum Product Tank Farm in the event that the facility is no longer economically viable. The first right of refusal is the municipality’s right to purchase the property before it is offered to the private sector.

Historic Buildings

The three (3) communities have several buildings that are eligible for Pennsylvania and/or National Register designation. Buildings such as Saint Mary’s Roman Catholic Church, the P&LE Railroad Yard Complex, Oakdale Army Air Defense Base, and several other sites as identified by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission should be considered for historic designation. National Register sites are considered in the planning for federal or federally assisted projects, and may be eligible for federal tax benefits and federal assistance for historic preservation when funds are available. Pennsylvania Register sites may qualify for state funding grants for the preservation, promotion, and protection of historic structures. More importantly, the establishment of local historic districts provides residents with assurance of minimal maintenance



The three communities have buildings that may be eligible for historical designation.

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standards and projects maintain home values within the historic district.

Although there are no sites currently registered with the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC), there are four sites that are eligible according to the PHMC database. One site is located Neville; two are situated in McKees Rocks; and one site is located within Stowe Township. The Repair Facility Lock No. 2 is one of these sites and is located in Neville Township. The building was built in 1898 and was used to control the locks until the Army Corps of Engineers rebuilt and converted the Emsworth Locks and Dam to a gated structure in 1936. The original facade and locks remain and the building is now used as both a residence and an office.



The Lock House.

The McKay, James & Company Chain Works, is one of two sites listed as eligible for the historic register in McKees Rocks. The building was constructed in 1905 along Chartiers Creek on Thompson Avenue. The building is abandoned and in poor condition with holes in the roof and trees growing through the building. Mann's Hotel, the second McKees Rocks site in poor condition, and was reportedly demolished in either 2009 or 2010. The fourth site identified by the PHMC as eligible for the historic register is an apartment building located in Stowe. The building was constructed in 1915 and is allegedly in good condition; little else is known about this structure.

Allegheny Places has identified several Brownfields and Redevelopment sites for potential reuse within the study area. These sites include the following:

- P&LE Site
- Neville Island KOZ
- Neville Island Industrial & Office Complex
- 3400 Grand Avenue,
- M&B Development

The municipalities should coordinate with the county to ensure historic eligible sites are up to date and feasible. Several of the sites currently listed are not possible or unlikely for future use.

Brownfields

Seek funding to identify and remediate brownfield sites. The historic development of the three communities has been largely focused on the industrial areas along the railroad corridor and the riverfront. Consequently, multiple brownfield sites exist as a result of contamination from previous uses. The communities should seek funding from County, State, and Federal agencies to identify and remediate these sites to promote future redevelopment opportunities. Cleanup of these sites will in turn have an impact on the water, wildlife, and other natural resources of the communities.

Father Ryan Arts Center

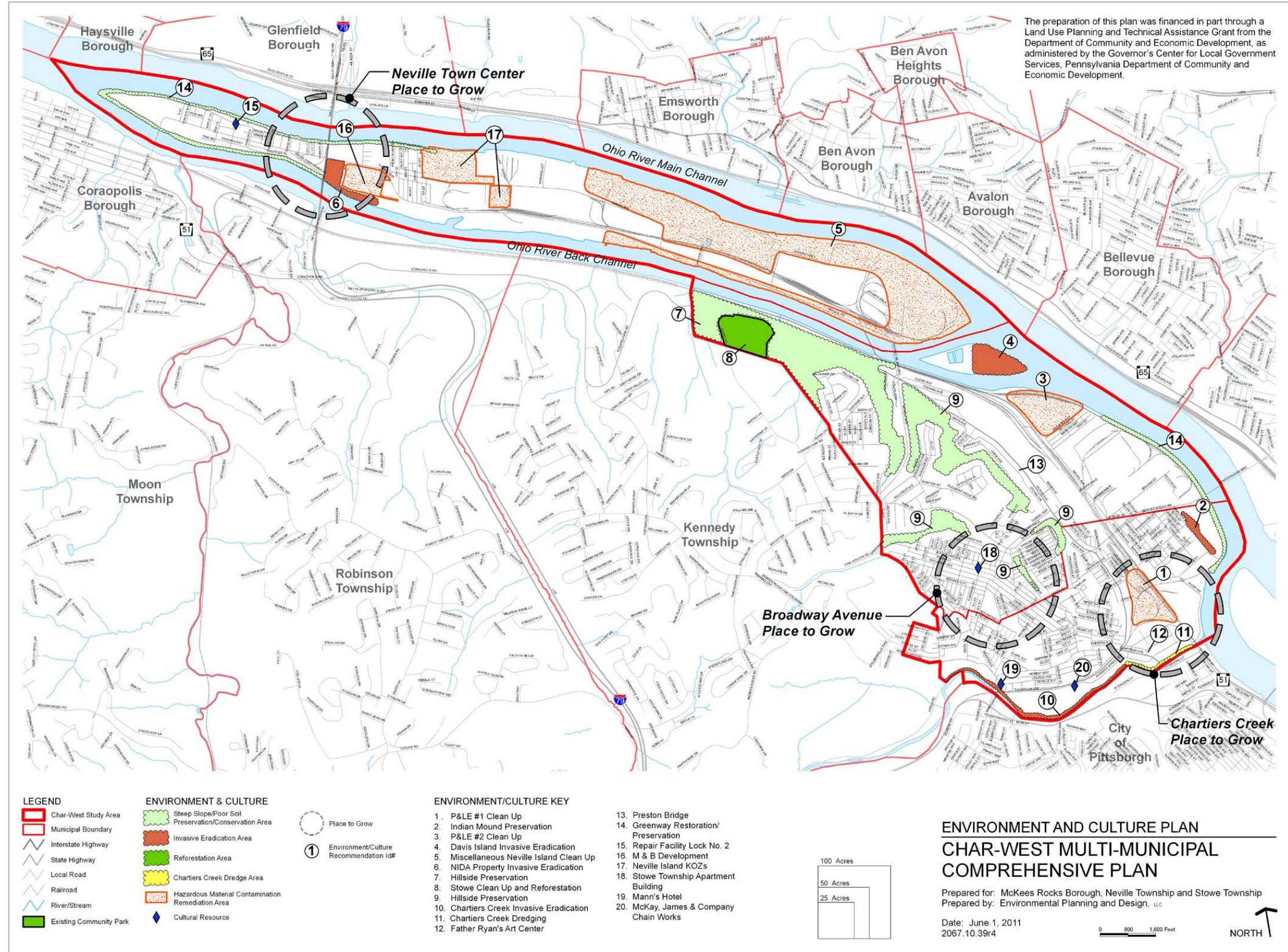
The Center has made great strides to improve the lives and image of the McKees Rocks community. The commitment to improving the social condition and providing an outlet for the creativity of the residents has had a major impact. Continue to support this institution and build upon its success, effectively using it as an anchor for new development. Due to the success of the center, an increased role in civic issues such as recreation may be feasible.

Presston Bridge

The Presston Bridge is a historic pedestrian bridge estimated to have been built around 1920. The bridge served as an important connection between the Presston neighborhood in the “Bottoms” and Island Avenue before its closure. This structure is scheduled for demolition by Stowe Township sometime in 2011. As a replacement to this historically important pedestrian connection, the Presston neighborhood residents have asked for a new bridge to be constructed in the same location or if a flyover to the former P&LE paint shop property is constructed, that a walkway be incorporated as part of this design. This would allow the reconnection of the “Bottoms” residents to the businesses and transit stops on Island Avenue.



The Presston Bridge formerly connected Island Avenue to the Presston neighborhood and is planned for demolition. Residents have asked that pedestrian access to Island Avenue be re-established via a new bridge connector.





Civic Amenities Plan

Civic Amenities Objectives

1. Provide public access to the communities' various waterfronts.
2. Create easily accessible civic gathering spaces.
3. Enhance the visual appearance and appeal of key streets and corridors.
4. Improve pedestrian and bicycle mobility.
5. Develop amenities as regional attractions.
6. Strengthen community identity through branding.

The Civic Amenities Plan identifies recommendations for key public spaces. Most opportunities for enhancing this system can be realized by focusing on streetscapes, gateways, wayfinding, Davis Beach, and the pedestrian network.

Streetscapes

Simple, cost effective improvements to the streetscapes of several key commercial corridors should be considered to improve the aesthetic appearance. Improvements such as pressure washing facades and sidewalks, painting (light poles, fire hydrants, etc.) replacing damaged light fixtures and other simple remedies can have a positive effect on the quality of the streetscape without investing a substantial amount of money. These early phase improvements should occur along Chartiers Avenue in downtown McKees Rocks and Broadway Avenue in Stowe early in the revitalization process. More intensive treatments such as street tree planting, sidewalk replacement, new lighting, etc. should be undertaken only after vacant storefronts have begun to fill and business revitalization efforts show signs of effectiveness.

Create a detailed streetscape improvement plan for Chartiers Avenue.

The proposed West Carson Street Extension into the former P&LE property and the rail-yard area provides a tremendous opportunity to demonstrate the potential for redevelopment in McKees Rocks. Sidewalks, lighting, and street tree planting should accompany the development of the roadway. The new road will likely remove a good portion of the heavy truck traffic that currently impacts Chartiers Avenue. As a result, the extension will help improve the public realm and pedestrian character of Chartiers Avenue within McKees Rocks.

- ❖ Improve the streetscape treatment of Nichol Street/Nichol Avenue in conjunction with pending transportation improvements. Nichol Avenue/Nichol Street, likewise, will have the potential to transform the image of the “Bottoms”. The proposed public space improvements along Nichol are intended to stimulate and support flex/office development at the northern end of the “Bottoms” in Stowe. The improvements are also to encourage revitalization and reinvestment in the existing Presston neighborhood. These improvements are further discussed in the Transportation and Infrastructure Plan. Nichol Street/Nichol Avenue would act as the major access to the proposed flexoffice neighborhood (former P&LE paint shop property) travelling alongside the existing industrial park. The screening of industrial uses is a key component to attracting



Example of a stable residential neighborhood with McKees Rocks.

new non-residential growth. These improvements will also benefit existing residential and commercial development in the “Bottoms” in McKees Rocks and the Presston neighborhood. Street trees should be planted along Neville Road to coincide with recommended lane reductions and the construction of a bikeway. Trees should also be planted along Grand Avenue in conjunction with lane reductions and the installation of a bike lane. The trees should be located in between the sidewalk and the proposed bike lane. Landscaping of trees and shrubs should also be installed in the proposed landscaped island.

Wayfinding & Gateways

Another important component to a memorable and aesthetically appealing community is the creation of a unified gateway and wayfinding system. A gateway designates a point of arrival, such as a sign near a portal situated at the municipal boundary, and generally is geared toward vehicular traffic. Wayfinding refers to the provision of contextual clues and/or signage that guide both vehicular and pedestrian travelers to identified destinations.

- ❖ Create gateways at prominent community entry intersections. Based on the myriad of directional guides and the traffic patterns currently within the communities, a system of



An example of a minor gateway signage in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania.

major and minor gateways should be established in proximity to locations where busier roadways intersect the study area's boundaries. Major gateways, which identify entrances/portals, could feature larger-scale architectural elements, traffic features such as roundabouts and/or signs. This Plan recommends the use of roundabouts to serve as gateways as well as to address traffic issues at the intersection of Singer Avenue/Windgap Bridge, the intersection of Stanhope Avenue/West Carson Street, and at the intersection of McKees Rocks Bridge/Island Avenue. Other major gateways such as the entrance to Stowe and Neville Townships from the Fleming Park Bridge, and the I-79 interchange should be marked by architectural features or signage.

Once within the communities, wayfinding should be provided to guide pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists to notable points of interest such as public spaces/buildings (Sto-Rox Library, Stowe Municipal Building) core commercial and retail areas (Downtown McKees Rocks, Broadway Avenue, Neville Town Center), parking areas, and historical attractions along key segments of the pedestrian network. The scale of gateways and wayfinding should be suitable for ease of reading by both pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Although the three municipalities receive a significant



An example of major gateway arch in Columbus, Ohio.



A strong entrance on gateway into McKees Rocks can be created with a roundabout at W. Carson Street and Stanhope Street



Sto-Rox Library serves as a local anchor for the downtown area and brings visitors to the downtown area

amount of truck traffic, the routes on which they travel are not delineated as well as they could be.

Wayfinding could be developed for this traffic and alternative routes explored. The municipalities should further study the potential locations of this guiding system to determine appropriate locations for system components in context of available rights-of-way, sight distances, surrounding architectural features historical character and residences. Graphic patterns developed as part of the gateway and wayfinding network could also be incorporated into a unified and unique street signage system.

Greenway Corridors

Generally, greenways are linear corridors of land that connect key resources and open space within a region. Open spaces are blocks of land that are generally self-contained with limited connections or linkages to other areas. The PA DCNR defines greenways as the following:

“Linear corridors of public and private land that serve as the linkages between specifically identified natural resource-based or manmade features. They can be either land or water based and serve a variety of functions and benefits including recreation, transportation, community revitalization and economic development, natural resource conservation, environmental protection, wildlife habitat and



Example of wayfinding signage for a shopping district

migration and education. These corridors often follow old railways, canals, ridge tops, rivers and stream valleys.”

The designation of greenways is an important component of the Civic Amenities Plan in terms of health of residents, the communities' overall character and potentially to economic development. Preservation of greenway areas also protects sensitive natural areas from any further development. Many of the greenways identified in the Plan are in flood-prone areas; preservation of the greenways will therefore minimize additional flooding impacts. The network as illustrated on the Civic Amenities Plan consists of steep slope areas, riparian corridors, and other environmental assets of the communities. Designation of greenways creates the potential for obtaining funding to protect the natural resources and development of recreational opportunities. The protection of flood-prone areas recommended in the Plan coincide with existing ordinances and can have an impact on protecting private property.

Davis Beach

- ❖ [Initiate discussions with the West View Water Authority regarding the development of a "float in" only park and beach on Davis Island.](#)



Davis Island provides a unique opportunity for a regionally-oriented recreation amenity that takes advantage of the boating activity on the Ohio River.



Boater's Beach

As part of their water treatment facilities, West View Water Authority owns and cares for Davis Island. The municipalities should initiate discussions with the West View Water Authority regarding the development of a "float in" only park and boaters' beach on Davis Island. This type of amenity can bring people from all over the region to the community. It also stimulates the potential for business activity (e.g. restaurants, etc) on the nearby McKees Rocks, Neville, and Stowe riverfronts. There is no such other facility in the Pittsburgh region. Allegheny County previously had a similar facility planned on Neville but it never came to fruition. However, the boating need remains unsatisfied. Ownership of the island could be retained by the Authority and areas currently used for operational purposes would need to be preserved as off limits for recreational users.

Pedestrian Network

Although there is a significant number of existing sidewalks, not all sidewalks are equal. Variations in size, condition, and topography have an effect on the suitability for different types of use. More importantly, where the sidewalks lead also influences the number of pedestrians that use them. A sidewalk network, much like a roadway system, has a hierarchy of types addressing various conditions. The majority of sidewalks in the residential areas are neighborhood sidewalks, designed for lower volumes. The “interstate” sidewalks, intended for higher levels of use, should occur along major routes and should conveniently connect civic amenities, commercial districts and the water fronts. The type of sidewalk plays an important role in defining an overall pedestrian network.

The three (3) communities should develop a clearly defined and signed pedestrian network utilizing a combination of existing sidewalks, new trails through greenway areas, and along proposed bikeways. This network can host the main portion of the communities’ wayfinding signage guiding residents and visitors to the communities’ broad range of amenities.

The pedestrian network should be designed to accommodate a wide range of users to increase support and use of the network. The network should address the needs of walkers, joggers,

The three communities should develop a clearly defined and signed pedestrian network utilizing a combination of existing sidewalks, new trails through greenway areas, and along proposed bikeways.



Pennsylvania residents rank trails as one of the most desired recreational activities.



The three (3) communities have opportunities for trails along natural waterways.



A clearly defined pedestrian system can provide recreation and fitness opportunities.



Connections to regional trail systems such as the Three Rivers Heritage Trail and the Montour Trail should be made in order to improve funding competitiveness.

bikers as well as young families with strollers, seniors and those with limited mobility from both inside the communities and from neighboring municipalities. Within the context of a hierarchical system of sidewalks, the network could be planned and marketed for fitness and wellness. Loops could be developed of varying distances to address the needs of different types of users. For the past ten (10) years, walking has been one of the top activities identified by Pennsylvanians.

Connections to larger regional trail systems such as the Ohio River Trail and the Chartiers Creek Trail should also be made to encourage users from other communities to help create a positive image of the communities. The three communities should work with organizations such as Pennsylvania Environmental Council and Friends of the Riverfront to develop a detailed master plan for the proposed Ohio River Trail. The communities should also work with the Chartiers Nature Conservancy to assist on-going efforts to develop a trail along Chartiers Creek that connects to the Ohio River. The development of the trail would be done in conjunction with the riparian restoration and creation of the Chartiers Creek Greenway.

To highlight the significance that this pedestrian network can play in connecting destinations within the communities, the recommended relationship of the system's components is illustrated on the Civic

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Amenities Plan. As part of developing a safe and efficient system, the communities should identify and address existing sidewalks in need of repair especially along “interstate” sections.

- ❖ Work with PEC and the Friends of the Riverfront to develop a detailed master plan for the Ohio Rivertrail.
- ❖ Utilize surplus road capacity to provide a multi-use path along Grand Avenue from the I-79 interchange to the Coraopolis Bridge.
- ❖ Modify the existing roadway shoulder (westbound) to create a bikeway/bike lane from the Fleming Park Bridge to the westernmost junction with Grand Avenue.
- ❖ Designate an inter-connected network of pedestrian/bike routes that link residential neighborhoods, commercial districts and recreational facilities.

Places to Grow

As was mentioned earlier in this section, there are several specific development/ redevelopment recommendations within areas that are critical to focus on as part of the Plan’s earliest implementation efforts. The intent of these areas, or “places,” is to:

- Increase awareness of development opportunities in areas with the greatest potential for growth;
- Maximize potential economic gains of these specific areas; and
- Help stimulate development on lands in close proximity to each “place”.

Also, as was previously noted, each municipality has a “Place to Grow”. The Chartiers Creek “Place to Grow” is located in McKees Rocks Borough; the Broadway Avenue “Place to Grow” is located in Stowe Township and the Neville “Place to Grow”, also known as the Neville Town Center, is located in the I-79 interchange area.

Chartiers Creek “Place to Grow”

The north eastern portion of McKees Rocks commonly serves as a front door to all three communities. Shops at Chartiers Crossing and the land located in around it should be the focus of the most intense, initial implementation efforts in the Borough. A portion of the Plaza’s underutilized parking lot could be redeveloped as a Town Square. Lower density residential development behind the Town Square should be also pursued.

Residential development along River Avenue should be developed to provide riverfront access



The Shops at Chartiers Crossing provides an opportunity for additional commercially-oriented infill development.

and reroute the road around the property. With valuable views of downtown Pittsburgh and the Ohio River, this area is currently highly underutilized and could be targeted for higher density development marketed towards young professionals or empty nesters.

The P&LE properties situated along the CSX mainline should be developed as a mix of light industrial businesses and residential lofts. To fully realize the opportunity of this area, pedestrian connections with downtown Pittsburgh, the Shops at Chartiers Crossing, and the proposed Ohio River Trail should be priority amenities supporting the mixed use development.

Broadway Avenue “Place to Grow”

This place encompasses the primary business district of Stowe. There is a good concentration of commercial property and thus leading to a logical location for concentrating replacement and redevelopment efforts. Along Broadway Avenue, businesses which are aimed toward neighborhood and local services should be encouraged.

Higher density residential development should be targeted for properties adjacent to Broadway Avenue, not on Broadway Avenue. The main goal in this is for safety of children and minimizing conflicts of traffic. A growth in population is desired to support businesses found within the Corridor.

“Though some fear infill consists of tall, high-density buildings changing neighborhoods and increasing traffic, that’s not necessarily so. It’s about building smarter to minimize traffic congestion and less stress on the environment. It’s about more trees and streetscape so that people get out of their cars and walk to local stores and restaurants. It’s about reinvesting in aging neighborhoods and creating economic vitality. Infill done right makes sense; for neighborhoods, the environment and the region as a whole.”

Steve Pedretti, Sacramento County Municipal Services Agency

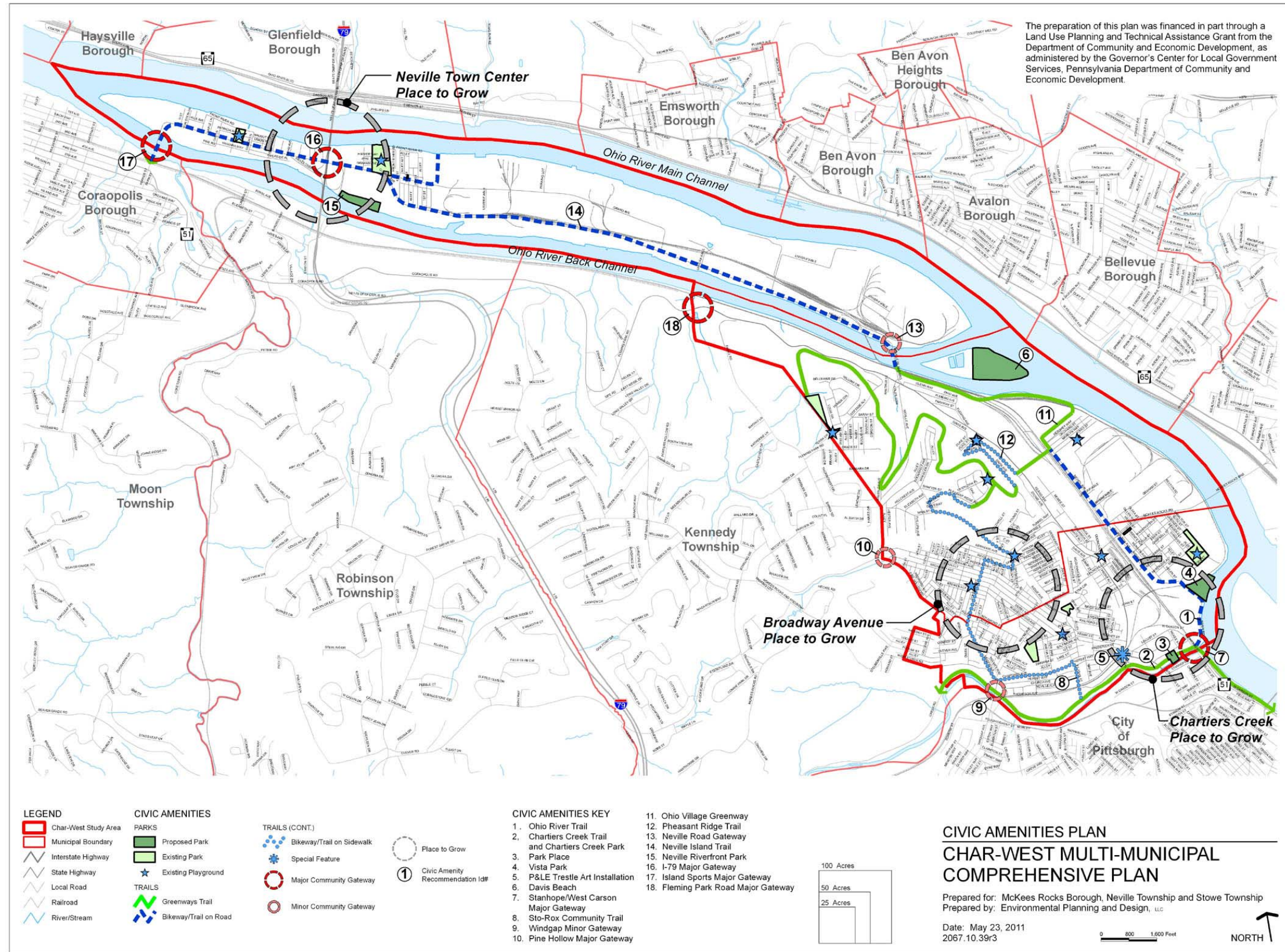
Neville Township “Place to Grow”

The area’s high visibility and easy access makes it the prime location for regional retail. There is continued momentum from recent development of Marriott and King’s Restaurant. Continuing redevelopment of land on the north side of Grand Avenue next to King’s Restaurant and on the western side of the interchange is important not only for economy but for identity.

Along the south side of Grand Avenue adjacent to the interchange, regionally-oriented development should continue to be encouraged. To give the area identity, it is recommended this location be “branded” as Neville Place.

Plans slated over the years for increasing riverfront access should link a river access park at the NIDA property and make connections to Neville Town Center.

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Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan



The quality and offerings of the three communities' parks and recreation opportunities is important for attracting new residents and retaining current ones.

The municipalities of McKees Rocks Borough, Neville, and Stowe, in partnership with the Char-West COG, decided to undertake a comprehensive parks, recreation, and open space plan to compliment the overall comprehensive plan. Although a comprehensive plan does address several aspects related to parks and recreation, the three municipalities wished to pursue a more in-depth study. In accordance with basic parameters of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PA DCNR), the representatives of each municipality recognize the significant impact parks and recreation opportunities as well as preservation of natural resources can have on attracting new residents and creating existing shareholders within the municipalities. Therefore, a more detailed parks, recreation, and open space study was seen as an important addition to the Plan, The parks, recreation, and open space element covers a wide range of topics in an effort to understand what opportunities are available to improve parks, recreation and open space and to define recommendations necessary to seize upon those opportunities.

All of the parks in the three municipalities, from the small parklets to larger ball fields, were analyzed as related to for their issues and opportunities. Issues such as universal accessibility, playground

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safety, physical improvements needed, level of use, overall safety, and many other factors were considered. Allegheny Places categorizes the parks in the three communities as either Riverfront Community Linear Greenway Prototype or Park Node/Micro Park Prototype depending on location. Guidelines for integrating future park development with the County Comprehensive Plan are provided in the Allegheny Places document.

Many of the smaller parks, referred to as parklets in this study, suffer from neglect both in funds and use. These parklets are designed to serve the immediate community and are vital for improving quality of life for existing residents and attracting new residents to the area.

The larger parks such as Ranger Field, Memorial Park, and Cottage Park were generally in better condition. Although there are improvements that should be made, these larger parks are more heavily used and receive greater attention.

The Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan for McKees Rocks Borough, Neville, and Stowe Township is a major step towards improving public parks and recreation opportunities for people of all ages and interests. Once the Plan is adopted, each municipality, through its parks and recreation board/commissioners/committees should develop a written annual work program of action items to be undertaken. It does not need to be extensive –

The recently enacted Accessibility Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas cover a wide range of issues related to parks and recreation facilities that are mandated by newly created/revised federal laws and must be addressed as part of any new park development or improvements to existing parks.



The larger parks, such as Memorial Park, are generally well maintained and in good condition.

but rather realistic and achievable. Prior to budget season, the outcomes for the year should be reviewed to determine the achievements, the challenges, needs and opportunities to serve as the basis for the next year's work program. By putting an annual work program in place, those involved will be able to assign responsibilities, partners, costs and sources of funding, labor and expertise. With a formal written work plan, achieving goals has a good likelihood of success.

For park improvements, a five-year capital improvement program should be established. By having such a program in place, the municipalities will be able to plan effectively, make sound decisions, budget and seek grants, and demonstrate to potential funding agencies a clear indication of community priorities.

Engaging the public in the process of developing the annual work program is another way to factor in better chances of success. Through community involvement in the planning process, stewardship for implementation emerges and often times an interested party or organization will step up to shepherd a project through to completion and help to rally others in the cause.

Take care of what exists today. Over the years, the funding of the municipalities has fallen short of the level typically needed to provide the quality of recreation services necessary for the

communities. In the next five years, the municipalities should concentrate on delivering higher quality recreation opportunities through the improvements of existing facilities.

Master Plans

Five of the parks located in the study area were chosen for plans for renovation as part of the planning process. Cottage Park, Memorial Park and the NIDA property in Neville and Ranger Field and Third Street Park in McKees Rocks were chosen due to their large size relative to other parks and their potential to impact the communities. These parks also draw in users from outside communities. The main draw for non-residents is the sports fields for soccer, football, Little League, and softball.

The Third Street Park is currently undergoing renovations by volunteers in need of a plan for future development of the park. The location, size, condition, and volunteer efforts were all factors in the selection of this park for further study. The NIDA property situated on the Backchannel of the Ohio River, represents one of the few areas with potential for access to the riverfront for residents.

A master plan was developed for each of the five parks. A master plan illustrates what features should be located on a site, where they should be located, relationships between elements, and circulation patterns. The first step of this process

In the next five years, the municipalities should concentrate on delivering higher quality recreation opportunities through the improvements of existing facilities.

A master plan illustrates what features should be located on a site, where they should be located, relationships between elements, and circulation patterns.

was to create conceptual diagrams to understand what types of recreational elements (ball courts, pavilions, playgrounds, etc.) could work on the site and how they would relate to each other. These concepts reflect the needs and desires of the communities as revealed through a series of key person interviews (see Appendix H).

Considerations such as how close parking was to facilities, visibility from the street, grouping elements by user age, and many other factors were explored. Following the development of several concepts for each park, a preferred concept was chosen for further refinement. The precise location, size, materials, and other issues necessary to develop the parks were developed. These refined concepts became the master plans for each of the parks as shown below.

The master plans for each of the parks described on the following pages have been designed to generally meet federal, state, and local codes. Prior to any detailed design or construction, proposed improvements should be checked against the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards enacted in 2010, Accessibility Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas, Uniform Construction Code, Allegheny County Plumbing Code, local subdivision and land development ordinances, local zoning ordinances, and any other land development regulations that may be applicable.

Third Street Park Master Plan

The Third Street Master Plan enhances the existing layout to optimize efficient use of space, preserve natural assets, and reduce opportunities for vandalism. Activities for all ages and abilities have been incorporated into the design including play, fitness activities, and passive recreation. The overall layout of the park brings the active recreation areas towards the Third Street edge in order to increase visibility into the park in an effort to reduce vandalism and increase neighborhood awareness. A paved loop has been added through the center of the park which would allow a patrol car to drive into the park and make a surveillance lap. The most “interior” area of the park is designated for passive activities with quiet seating areas and a woodland meadow.

A new asphalt parking area is proposed for the park at the entrance along Third Street. This parking lot will provide space for 20 vehicles and will include three designated handicap parking areas. At the end of the parking lot would be a mountable curb with removable bollards to allow for emergency, maintenance, or patrol vehicles to enter the interior of the park. The existing hard-top area should be turned into an active recreation area for families. A large accessible playground could be located here and include play elements for all ages. The safety surface beneath the play equipment and designated safety zone around the



The existing ball court is currently used for parking.



Sun shades are a cost-effective solution for improving park seating and providing shelter to park users.



An adult fitness station would provide quality recreation/fitness opportunities for park users.

play equipment should be clearly delineated and constructed of a sturdy yet safe material. Recycled rubber mats or similar sustainable material should be considered for this purpose. Horseshoes and a bocce courts could be located in this area of the park so as to offer a variety of activities to park users.

A new 25'x40' pavilion should be constructed with direct access to the parking lot and playground area and will be made available for rental. Additionally, two (2) sun-shade style structures should be located in the park to provide extra shade to park users. All structures are recommended to meet ADA and outdoor accessibility standards. Benches and stone-block seating should be located throughout the park and be accessible by all park visitors. The exact locations of these amenities should be determined based on safety zones and locations of shade structures. The selection of these amenities should take into consideration handicap accessibility and the potential for vandalism.

An adult fitness area could replace the existing playground area. Modifications to the current layout should include removing the stone berm which divides the existing two spaces. This large fitness area could provide a shaded area where park users can exercise on a variety of outdoor fitness equipment. The existing open lawn area in the center of the park should remain. The size of

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this space is appropriate for picnicking, spontaneous play, and other open-ended activities.

The upper interior plateau of the park is designated for passive recreation and could feature a small seating area as well as a large wildflower woodland garden with a mown walking path. This garden area can also have birdfeeders and be used to showcase native vegetation and wildlife species. Accessible pedestrian circulation would be provided throughout the park via an asphalt walkway. The passive recreation plateau is accessible by the walkway on the western edge of the park. An opinion of probable development cost for each of the master plans has been included in Appendix B.



An underutilized section of the Third Street Park could be re-used for seating and a woodland garden.



Ranger Field Master Plan

Based on information obtained through the Key Person Interviews, the users of Ranger Field are generally satisfied with the condition and layout of the ball fields. Consequently, the overall function and programming of Ranger Field remains largely the same. However, major improvements have been proposed to enhance the safety and accessibility of the facilities.

The current parking area should be relocated/reconfigured to provide better circulation throughout the park for both pedestrians and vehicles and to create a more defined entrance and drop-off area into the park. Handicap accessible parking is available directly adjacent to the playground and main entrance into Ranger Field. It is also located with direct access to the pedestrian walking path that circulates throughout the entire facility.

A separate pedestrian walkway should be provided between the basketball court and playground area to discourage pedestrians from traveling through the parking lot to get from one side of the park to the other. This path should also be wide enough to allow for a maintenance vehicle to travel along its length.

A new basketball court could be located near the site of the existing court. New court will be reoriented to allow for more efficient use of space



A better defined drop off area could improve the park entrance.



The ballfields are in high demand and provide much needed space for Little League games.



A new playground could become the centerpiece and entrance into the site.

and to better accommodate the parking area. A new small pavilion could be located at the basketball court for smaller and more private gatherings. This pavilion should be handicapped accessible and should provide a shaded place for basketball players to wait.

A new playground could become the centerpiece and entrance into the site. This large playground should be newly constructed and accessible to all park visitors. Some seating should be available within the playground's perimeter fence. A new patio seating area could be created behind the existing press-box directly adjacent to the new playground. This area would provide tables and chairs as well as a canopy shade structure for visitors to use for picnicking.



The existing pavilion is in good condition and should remain.

The existing large pavilion located between the two ball fields should remain in its current location, and the construction of the paved pedestrian path should be located along the pavilion to provide accessibility and a wider "apron" where tables and chairs can be located.

Two (2) little-league/softball size fields should remain at the park. Wildflower beds could be added behind the fields and around the walking path to provide a safe separation between the outfields and pedestrians but would still allow enough turf area for pick-up soccer and football games when the baseball fields are not in use.

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The maintenance area should remain in its current location and will become directly accessible to the pedestrian path, which could be shared by a maintenance vehicle. An evergreen buffer could visually separate the maintenance area from the main entrance, playground and patio area.

Additional evergreen screens should be added in order to reduce unsightly views and create separation between neighboring residential lots. All existing trees should remain in their current locations, and several areas of landscape beds could be added to further enhance the aesthetics of the park. A new paved walking path winds through the park and will be accessible to all visitors and will also be wide enough to allow a maintenance vehicle to travel through the park.



The maintenance building could benefit from landscape screening and improved equipment access.



Cottage Park

The preferred master plan diagram for Cottage Park maintains many of the existing features of the park with an added emphasis on improving the safety, condition, and accessibility of those facilities already existing.

The major addition to this park is the proposed splash park to be located near the existing restroom and swings. A splash park would provide much-needed heat relief during the summertime, provide a feature not available in any of the parks in the study area, and will help to attract the local children to the park. Areas of wildflower gardens should be added to the existing open space area in order to reduce the level of maintenance required for the open turf area while increasing wildlife habitats throughout the park. These areas, once established, should require only minimal maintenance such as reseeding every few years and annual mowing to a height of 4-6 inches to remove weathered material.

The existing basketball and tennis court area should undergo further improvements to the playing surface, backboards and nets in order to provide the best playing experience possible. Repairs to the existing chain-link fence surrounding the court area should also be made. The existing playground is recommended to undergo minor changes in order to repair and/or



A splash park could be added adjacent to the existing playground.



Replacing the chain link fence could have a strong positive impact on enhancing the visual appearance of the park.

remove equipment that is unsafe as well as add additional equipment in order to provide a fully accessible play area. The existing restroom building will need some changes and repair in order to increase the safety and security of the building while making it handicap accessible.



A decorative iron fence could improve the visual character of the site while providing security.

The single park entrance is recommended to remain located along Front River Road. There is no designated parking proposed to be added for Cottage Park due to a lack of space. A new decorative metal fence or other non-chain-link fence is proposed to be installed around the entire perimeter of the park (excluding where the chain-link fence of the basketball and tennis courts will serve as the perimeter fence). The new fence will help to set off the park as a focal point within the neighborhood.



The existing walk is in good condition and should remain unchanged.

The existing walking path throughout the interior of the park can remain largely unchanged. Minor repairs may need to be made as needed to correct and wear and tear on the path. Minor grading may need to be done near the court area to ensure ADA accessibility. The memorial trees planted along the perimeter walking path should remain untouched. Existing plaques may need to be cleaned and/or repaired. The area along the eastern boundary of the park and walking path should also remain untouched so as to leave room

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for future trees to be planted in honor or memorial of key figures in the community.

More seating benches can be located throughout the park, especially along the edges of the wildflower gardens, to provide a variety of seating environments and views within the park.



Memorial Park

The master plan for Memorial Park primarily addresses a new municipal building, new parking, improved walking trail circuit, and general improvements. Although there are currently no specific plans regarding the shape, size, or use of a proposed municipal building, the master plan has set aside an area for future development. A new parking area should be constructed in the current parking area as part of the plans for the municipal building. The new parking area will provide better circulation and more parking spaces to meet the increased demand.

A complete interior walking circuit should be completed which will make all elements of the park accessible. This walking trail includes a “switch-back” style trail that leads down to the water’s edge for fishing access. The existing trail should be in good condition and should be augmented with additional trail sections.

The addition of several wildflower garden areas will significantly decrease the maintenance and financial requirements for this site and the wildflower gardens will provide a better habitat for wildlife passing through the area.

The existing large picnic pavilion should be moved to the central/western boundary of the property, near the renovated restroom building once plans



The existing walkway could be expanded to accommodate a walking/jogging circuit.

for a new municipal building and related parking are developed. The Township may wish to consider a new pavilion instead of relocating the existing pavilion depending on the cost which may be comparable. A second, smaller, picnic pavilion could be added in the volleyball/bocce court area.



The removal of a portion of the fence will create additional area for park development and will create a more inviting entrance.

The existing fence located within the park that closes off a portion of the park to the private residences is anticipated to be removed by the Township. The land which is owned by the Township should be reincorporated back into the park. This area could become an active play area with a sand volleyball court, bocce ball court, and small picnic pavilion.

The private residence located within the park property should be screened on all sides by evergreen vegetation. However, their street access should remain along Phillips Avenue.

The two pedestrian entrances into the park should remain along Grand Avenue and Phillips Avenue. The memorial entrance along Grand Avenue should be realigned slightly to provide a safer entryway away from the edge of traffic along Grand Avenue. The pedestrian entrance along Phillips Avenue could be enhanced to create a more welcoming entrance for visitors coming from the adjacent neighborhood.

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The existing memorial at the pedestrian entrance to the park along Grand Avenue can remain largely unchanged. Some repairs may need to be made to the brick paved walking path in order to ensure a flat and accessible route. More seating should be added to this area.

The existing playground and picnic pavilion can also remain in the same area but undergo several improvements in order to increase safety of the equipment and provide more accessible playing options. The swing set should be moved closer to the current playground area, and a sturdy safety surface should be added to surround the play and swing equipment



The playground could benefit from an increase in minor weekly maintenance.



NIDA Property

As there is currently no existing development on the NIDA property, situated along the Ohio River's Backchannel substantial site improvements are being proposed in the master plan for the NIDA property site.

Access to the river's edge, an important asset for this park, is provided through a series of retaining walls and walkways that span the entire southern boundary of the site. These water access areas could provide space for sitting and fishing, while a nearby proposed future marina area would provide boat access. Extensive grading and clearing of existing trees and scrub will need to occur to make this water access possible.

Vehicular and bicycle connections to Grand Avenue, Neville Road and the Neville Road Bikeway would be made via existing right-of-way easements through adjacent properties. Parking is recommended in the center of the park with direct vehicle access to the two new pavilions for loading/unloading. A third, more remote, pavilion should be constructed in the southeast corner of the site in close proximity to the restored tower overlooking the River.

Several wildflower garden areas are proposed throughout this site. These areas will reduce the



Extensive clearing, grubbing and grading will be needed to gain access to the back channel of the Ohio River.

levels of maintenance required for the turf areas within the park, will provide a habitat for wildlife in the area, and also will serve as a buffer to inhibit visitors from getting too close to the utility poles that support the overhead utility wires traversing the site.

The existing low wall which runs east-west along the top of the slope leading down to the river should be refurbished in order to provide a safe seating wall overlooking the river. An evergreen buffer at the western-most end of the park could shield views towards the highway overpass and the large high-voltage utility structure.

- ❖ Create a riverfront park and boat access point at the NIDA property
- ❖ Redevelop the NIDA property for regionally-oriented recreation uses

Other Park Recommendations

Davis Park

The primary problem with Davis Park is a lack of maintenance and the general neglect by Stowe Township and local residents. The image of the park could be substantially improved with trash cleanup, minor repairs and additions such as basketball nets. Engaging local residents to take ownership of the park is a critical step towards the long-term maintenance of Davis Park. Likewise, some investment by the Township is necessary to get things started and to show the residents that the park is important to the Township. Stowe Township may want to consider organizing a neighborhood meeting to stimulate local support. A local resident functioning as a neighborhood leader could help keep the neighbors involved, thereby requiring less everyday involvement by the Township.

Long-term, providing that maintenance issues are resolved and park usage increases, removal of the tennis court should be considered. The court divides the usable park space and likely appeals to only a limited number of users. Replacing the court with open lawn and playground equipment could attract a greater amount of local residents to the park.



Removal of the underutilized tennis court could provide space for other recreational activities.

Harriet Street Park

Landscape screening and the addition of trees would make the park more appealing to residents.

Although the overall condition of the playground equipment is good, mulch should be added to increase safety. Landscaping along the retaining walls such as medium sized trees and shrubs would improve the park experience. The trees should be placed as to maintain visibility from the streets. In addition, a few shade trees could be planted throughout the park with little cost. A pavilion or other shade structure to allow parents to sit while watching their kids play would encourage greater use particularly for younger residents. The basketball backboard, rim, and nets should be replaced if use of the court is a priority to the residents.

Mayernik Park

Mayernik Park is in excellent condition. Due to the very limited space, there are few opportunities for any additions.

Norwood Park

Ideal area for installation of new playground equipment in Norwood Park.

Similar to Davis Park, Norwood Park suffers from a lack of attention both from the Township and the residents. Improved maintenance and the engagement of the neighbors are key to revitalizing this park. Funding through the grants including the Proctor and Gamble “Take it to the House” grant, the Heinz Grant, and the grant

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through Congressman Doyle provide opportunities for much needed park improvements.

Improvements to this park should focus on the interior area defined by the stone retaining wall. This is a good place to make improvements to the playground. The existing equipment, not including the swing set, should be replaced. The swings set's structure appears solid and is need of new swings. A moderately-sized playground module and some stand alone pieces should be purchased and installed to replace the outdated and unsafe equipment. There are many options for playground equipment that are geared towards different age groups; activities for ages 2-5 and ages 5-12 should be addressed. Seating for parents should also be included in this area since the playground could be heavily used by younger children.

Presston Park

The park has recently benefited from volunteer efforts as well as donated funding to improve the park. The park is well maintained, is frequently used, and is in good condition overall. The large open space allows for a wide variety of unstructured activities. Natural areas composed of trees, wildflowers, etc. could provide variety for a portion of the large open field and reduce maintenance. Given the length of the park, a paved ¼ mile walking trail around the entire park would provide opportunities for fitness, wellness



Presston Park has abundant space to accommodate additional activities.



Additional playground equipment should be considered for younger residents.

and leisure. Other activities such as soccer, horseshoes, bocce, and others should be considered as funding becomes available.

Munson Avenue Park

Overall, the park is generally in good condition. Planting along the concrete retaining wall would improve the look and feel of the park for minimal cost. Additional playground equipment should be considered for the park, there is currently very little available for children. Low fencing should be added along Munson Avenue to enhance the safety and security of playground users. The Township should explore acquisition of the adjacent vacant property, this area would be ideal for a new playground.

Pleasant Ridge Parklet and Meyers Ridge Park

Both of these parks are fairly new and in good condition; no major upgrades are recommended. Some minor enhancements such as seating for parents facing the playgrounds and the addition of shade tree planting should be considered and addressed with minimal costs to the Township.



Pleasant Ridge and Meyers Ridge Parks are in good condition and are not in need of any substantial improvements.

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West Park

The park is currently an asphalt parking lot with no vegetation or playground/recreation equipment. Removal of asphalt paving should be explored if the intention is for this site to function as a park. A master plan should be developed prior to any asphalt demolition to preserve areas where paving would be an asset (basketball courts, tennis courts, pavilion pads, etc.).



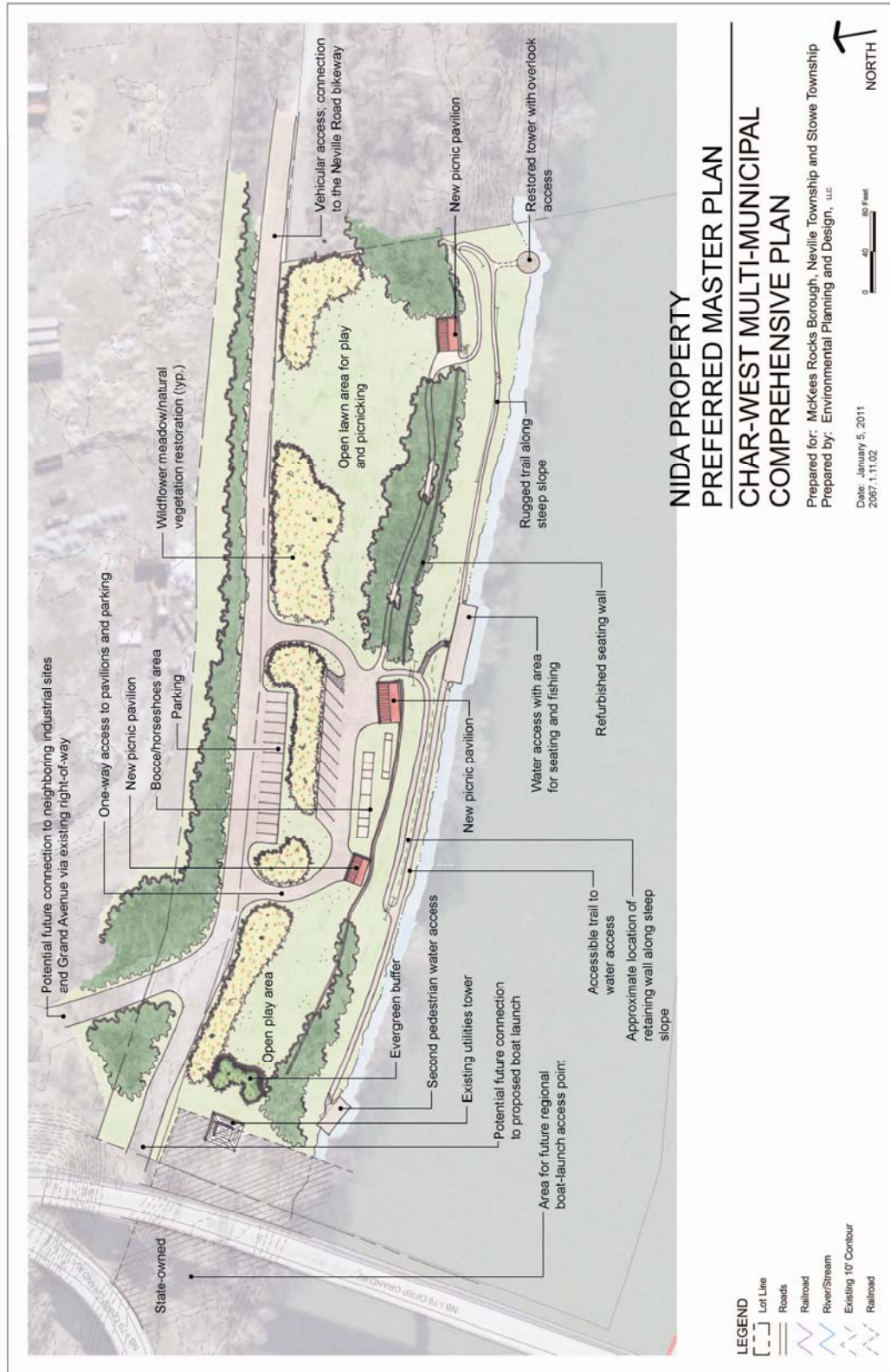
Removal of the asphalt should be considered to allow for increased recreational opportunities

Island Heights Park

The park is in good condition overall. There are some missing bricks in the pavilion paving that should be replaced and a few areas of chain link fencing that need to be repaired. There are some cracks in the basketball court paving that should be repaired. The goal posts and backstops should be repaired since they are beginning to show rust where the finish has been damaged.



The park is in good condition with only minor repairs needed



Recreation Programs

Continue to facilitate recreation programs and services provided by volunteers and community organizations and focus on self-directed recreation. Supporting the community sports leagues through facilities and maintenance will remain an important contribution. The communities should strive to foster partnerships with the leagues to operate and improve facilities collaboratively. Facilitation of the planning and provision of parks and recreation activities by volunteers and community officials should continue. Recognize that most residents will participate in recreational activities at their own discretion rather than as part of an organized scheduled program. By creating safe, clean and attractive recreation facilities, the municipalities will do more to serve the public in recreational opportunities than by offering an extensive slate of scheduled programs. Increase the focus on safe places to walk, bicycle, enjoy the great outdoors, places to socialize with family and friends, and special events.

Administration

Recognize that the three (3) municipalities prefer to continue to independently operate their parks and recreation systems at the present time. Although multi-municipal recreation helps communities to provide more public services at a higher quality and less cost than any one entity

can do on its own through pooling limited resources, the opportunity for multi-municipal recreation does not appear feasible here. The logical partnership would be McKees Rocks and Stowe since they share the same school district and sports league service areas. The McKees Rocks community parks and recreation facilities are also the home to athletic activities for Sto-Rox residents. However, the municipalities have not been able to come to agreement on pooling or sharing human and financial resources. Neville is too removed from McKees Rocks and Stowe and is part of a different school district to figure into a recreation partnership. Continue to work with three (3) Parks and Recreation Committees. Should a parks and recreation association be formed as described below, strive to have one Parks and Recreation Committee member from each community serve on the association board.

Financing

Recreation is a business. Adjusting the municipalities' mindsets and philosophies can enhance both time and monetary investments in the short-term. When decisions are made, impacts on programming, customer service, participation, maintenance as well as financing should be evaluated. The following issues related to financing should be studied:

- Potential funding sources

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- User fees
- Rentals and leases
- Grants, gifts, donations, etc.
- Developing the recreation and parks vision for the study area.

Develop a revenue policy that would work toward generating revenues from a variety of non-tax sources over time. The municipalities cannot provide all the community parks and recreation services that are needed alone, public and private investment and partnerships are needed. Strive to increase the per-capita investment in parks and recreation and ratio of the parks and recreation budget to the overall operating budget over time as possible.

While three (3) communities have major economic challenges, many other communities in Pennsylvania are dealing with similar issues. Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society (PRPS) offers many opportunities to learn about how others have dealt successfully with parks and recreation issues, opportunities that may present themselves, and a network of people to tap for support. PRPS offers publications, seminars, training, information, contacts, grant assistance, and even grant funding to advance public parks and recreation. PRPS offers the RecTAP grant

program that is a \$1,500 grant with no match required to work on a specific problem or opportunity on parks and recreation. A grantee can apply for a RecTAP grant up to once a year. The grantee can use the \$1,500 to retain a professional with expertise in a specific area. This entitles the grantee to onsite consultations and a written report.

Parks and Recreation Association

The fiscal challenges of McKees Rocks Borough, Stowe Township and Neville Township, while severe, are not uncommon. Economic crises have affected municipalities nationwide from New York to Los Angeles and all size municipalities in between. Where municipalities faced bankruptcy, budget cuts as large as 90 percent, citizens and community organizations as well as businesses stepped up to support parks and recreation as a vital service. The concept of a public-private partnership for parks and recreation could serve the study area well. Nearby Pittsburgh, with its Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, provides an excellent model. Although Pittsburgh is a much larger community, the elements of the conservancy still apply and offer inspiration for how a public private partnership could be an excellent vehicle for supporting parks and recreation in this area.

A Recreation and Parks Association is composed of advocates that play a key role in generating and

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gaining financial and human support for recreation and parks services. It has no legal powers or ability to implement its recommendations other than through collaboration with the municipalities. Associations spur the vital involvement and participation of citizens, organizations and the private sector that is necessary to meet your community's needs where municipalities cannot due to budget and staffing limitations. Associations work to generate support by harnessing the resources with related parks and recreation interests available community wide. They work on achieving the mission, goals and objectives established by the municipality. Usually set up as a private non-profit organization as a 501 C 3 organization under the codes of the IRS (Internal Revenue Service), they provide continuity through changes in administration, elected and appointed officials, and financial conditions. As private non-profits, they can raise funding that is tax deductible for contributors. An Association can benefit the area by:

- Extending the capability of the three jurisdictions.

The Association could assist by providing support for the operation of recreation and parks, especially because the study area has no dedicated parks and recreation staff and very limited funding.

The Association could help to develop a forward thinking approach to parks and recreation that is proactive rather than blocked or reactive.

- Assisting with implementation of the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan.

An Association could undertake identified projects and programs to implement the plan. Associations are action-oriented so the implementation of a plan would be a compelling reason to start such a group in the study area.

- Taking the pulse of the community. As the eyes and ears of your community, a board also knows how and when to broach a subject with residents by being aware of the needs and viewpoints of their neighbors, friends and fellow citizens related specifically to parks and recreation.

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- Promoting the value of recreation and parks to elected officials. As citizens themselves, a parks and recreation association is prestigious and is influential in generating support.
- Enhancing the image and developing community pride in community recreation and parks. The association could help to spread the word about projects, parks and programs.
- Serving as a buffer between citizens, recreational user groups, municipal staff and elected and appointed officials on controversial issues. Elected officials always have the final word and make decisions about the parks, recreation programs and facilities. Having an association helps to expand positive public influence in the community.
- Planning and conducting recreation programs and special events and involving more citizens as volunteers. The programs of the three municipalities are rooted in volunteerism. An association could serve to tap a broader range of resources in the area and extend secure support from the boarder greater Pittsburgh region.

*Park and Recreation Association**Recommendations*

- ❖ Obtain the services of a few “champions” of parks and recreation to form the Char-West Park and Recreation Association. Only one or two people are necessary to do this but the point is that a champion must take on the commitment to launch the Association forward.
- ❖ Make a field visit to the Pittsburgh Park Conservancy and the Latrobe – Unity Parks and Recreation Association to learn from their experience with running a Park and Recreation Association. Send the “Champion” along with two others to capture the value of the what Conservancy representatives have to say about how they got started, what worked for them, pitfalls to avoid and undertaking projects, fundraising, volunteers and events.
- ❖ Make the Association prestigious and include major community stakeholders. The stakeholders should have something important to contribute in terms of support, ideas, influence, know-how, funding, facilities, services and other resources. Consider including representatives from the municipal elected officials, Sto-Rox School District, Father Ryan Arts Center, Chamber of Commerce, sports organizations, University of

Pittsburgh Medical Center, Boys and Girls Club, and parks and recreation boards.

- ❖ Create a partnership with a non-profit organization such as the Father Ryan Arts Center with a potential staff person who could be focused on recreation in the community. Staff dedicated to recreation in distressed communities is often found in the private non-profit organizations. They can often step in to take the lead in orchestrating community efforts in recreation. In the case of the Father Ryan Arts Center, staff appears to be at maximum capacity with the current workload. However, if resources to support a recreation professional for community recreation services would become available, the Father Ryan Arts Center may be an effective location to house this person. Resources could come through public /private resources, support from a community foundation or organization or through a public private partnership. The recreation professional could serve as a Community Recreation Coordinator. The goal would be to plan, develop, implement and evaluate community recreation services. Examples of duties would be to coordinate work with the Char-West Parks and Recreation Association, conduct public outreach, identify target groups for services, develop a program system, plan and implement recreation

programs, solicit partnerships and sponsorships, and develop and implement a public relations program to foster a positive public image. The three municipalities and the Association should work to be supportive of that effort should the possibility present itself.

- ❖ Establish the vision, mission and goals for the Association. Consider using the Pittsburgh Park Conservancy materials as the model. Tailor them to fit the three communities. Align the focus of the Association on creating active healthy lifestyles through parks and recreation. This might enable the Association to tap into funding from UPMC or other sources.
- ❖ Consider applying for a Peer Grant from PA DCNR to start the Association. It would require a \$1,000 match for a \$11,000 project price. For this project, PA DCNR would assist the three communities in obtaining the services of a parks and recreation professional with expertise in launching and organizing the Association.
- ❖ Create a one-year work program with defined actions, responsible parties and time line. Strive to produce one signature event, one facility improvement, and a major public outreach effort designed to achieve success. Emphasize partnerships – having a partnership on every project will help to leverage limited

time and money. Achieving successes will help to build momentum and garner public support. Consider finding a community partner to help build and manage a website for the Association. Develop an annual report along with a plan to distribute it widely. Include state and federal elected officials in this distribution. Make an annual visit to these state and federal senators and representatives to tell them about the Association's projects and goals with a request for support. The Association should also visit the elected officials of McKees Rocks, Neville, and Stowe annually as well.

- ❖ Develop an inventory of civic groups such as the Boys and Girls Club, Rotary Club, etc. to assist in volunteer efforts

Recognize that starting a successful foundation takes time and a record of successes in place. Not everything can be accomplished at once but persistence and visibility will lead to more achievements and successes.

Park Maintenance

Continue to maintain the parks and recreation facilities through a combination of municipal forces and support from community sports organizations. Should the Char-West Parks and Recreation Association be formed, strive to organize an Adopt-A-Park Program. Potential adoptive entities and organizations can include scouts, school

groups, PTA's, neighborhoods, block and neighborhood watches, recreational clubs, sports leagues, individuals, families, faith based institutions, businesses, the Father Ryan Arts Center, the Boys Club, and similar groups. Adopted facilities could cover a range from one playground or pathway to an entire park. Volunteers and Adopt-A-Park are not free: they must be recruited, managed, trained, supervised and recognized for their efforts to sustain them.

- ❖ Deal with the goose problem on a sustained basis. Issues with geese are common in parks, cause controversy, and are enduring. They are not a once and done problem to be solved but instead require ongoing management. McKees Rocks and Neville Township are experiencing geese problems that are extensive enough that park users are going elsewhere to use recreation facilities without geese problems. While measures have been taken, the geese problem remains. Consider the development of a geese management plan. Contact the Allegheny County Conservation District for assistance in addressing this problem and developing a plan to manage geese in the parks over the long-term.
- ❖ Pursue additional park funding assistance for improvements to the existing neighborhood parks in Stowe, Third Street Park, and the NIDA property in Neville

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- ❖ Continue to facilitate and provide recreation programs and services through volunteers, parks and recreation committees and limited staff.
- ❖ Explore the establishment of the Char-West Parks and Recreation Association.
- ❖ Work with the Father Ryan Cultural Center to get a recreation position established. Strive to get a public private partnership to generate support for this position.
- ❖ Continue to maintain the parks and recreation facilities.
- ❖ Join the Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society. Apply for one Rec-TAP grant valued at \$1,500 every year to address one specific high priority problem or opportunity with no match required.
- ❖ Implement the specific park improvement recommendations defined in the Park and Recreation element of this Plan.

Although there are a number of repairs and upgrades needed for the parks, improvement of a few key items can have a significant on the usability and the perceptions of the residents. Fencing repair, replacement of basketball nets and goals, playground surfacing, painting, and other minor upgrades can help achieve higher quality

parks. Investment, even if limited, will demonstrate an understanding of the importance of recreation opportunities to the residents and can help spark community efforts to improve and maintain the parks.

Long term, about seventy-five (75%) percent of the cost of public parks and recreation is in maintenance and management. While the focus of park and recreation planning tends to be on land acquisition, facility planning, and development, the heart and soul of a community parks and recreation system lies in management and operations. Securing funding for capital improvement projects is comparatively easier than getting adequate funding and staff to manage the facilities, lands and services.

Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan provides a long-term picture that seeks to organize and optimize the communities' planning opportunities.

The compilation of these opportunities is illustrated on the following diagram. The diagram is a representation of the relationship between recommended land use and housing, transportation and infrastructure, environmental and cultural elements as well as civic amenity enhancements. Together, these components form

an integral Plan that seeks to balance community aspirations and available resources.

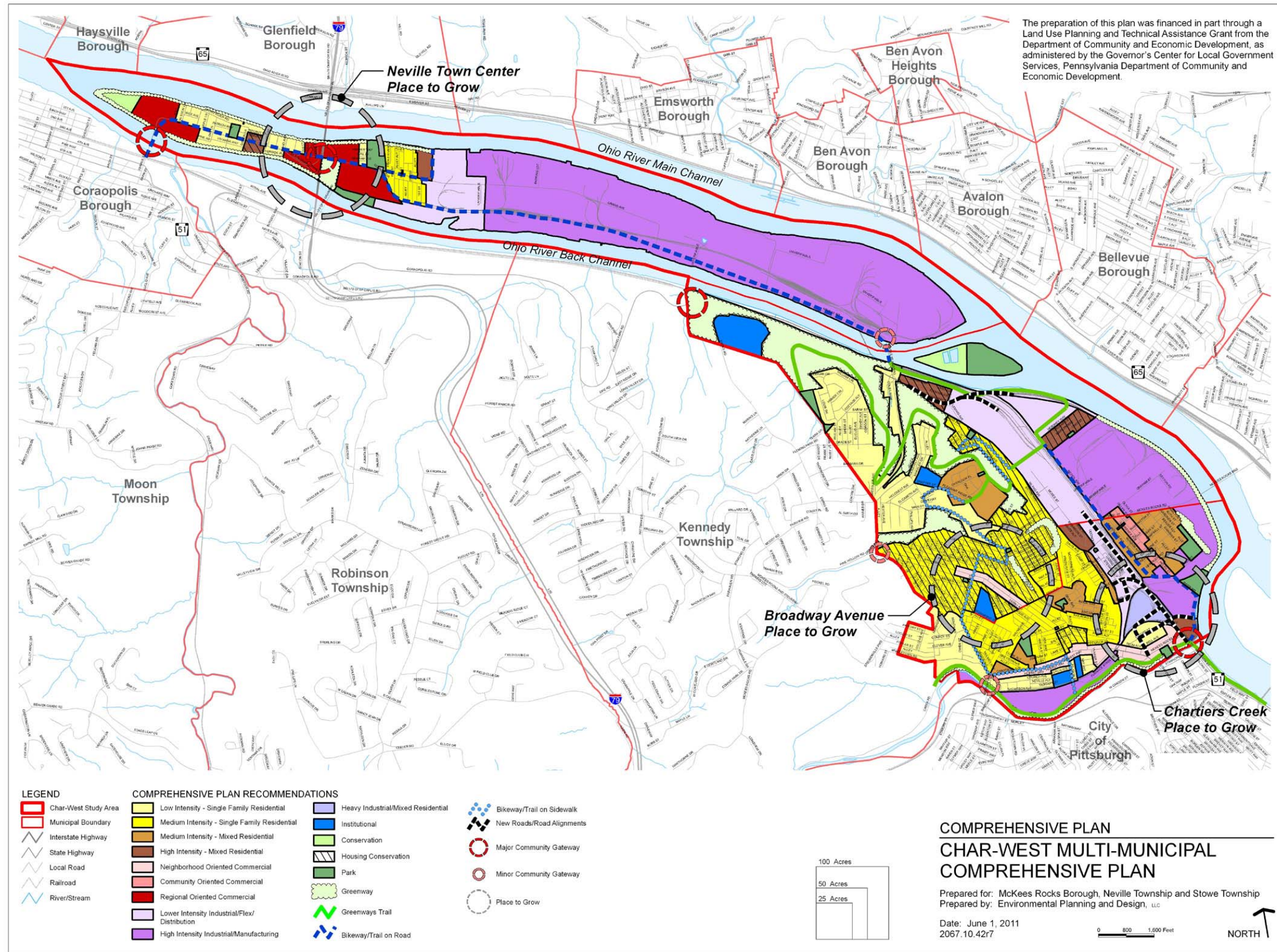
To ensure the implementation of desired goals and objectives, a defined group of key stakeholders including municipal officials and staff, the Community Development Corporation, NIDA, the Community Housing Bank representatives, and regional recreation coordinators should meet once a year, at a minimum to review the status of the Comprehensive Plan. The status reports should be summarized into an annual report which outlines the recommendations that have been accomplished as well as outlines desired actions for the following year. Updates and coordination among the community's various officials, staff members, advisory boards and civic organizations should occur at least twice a year to understand the opportunities and challenges of the year's various projects. The status report should be submitted to the municipalities' elected officials. The formal Planning Summits should be jointly hosted with Borough Council, Board of Commissioners, Planning Commissions and Municipal Staff in attendance to formally discuss the successes and potential enhancements to future implementation strategies and budgeting resources.

- ❖ [Develop a formal committee or work group to oversee implementation of the Plan's recommendation in the long run.](#)

- ❖ Hold annual Planning Summits with Borough Council, Planning Commission and Municipal Staff regarding the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.
- ❖ Produce an annual status report of the Comprehensive Plan and summarize for Borough Council/Board of Commissioners.
- ❖ Conduct annual status updates/coordination between municipal leadership, municipal staff and other municipal advisory boards

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part 4: Relationships



What are Relationships?

In the case of a Comprehensive Plan, the sum of the Plan's recommendations establish the vision of the community; the sum of the Plan's actions outline the capital needed to realize the vision. The Plan's relationships are the "causal connections" between:

- Two or more recommendations;
- Two or more actions; or
- A recommendation and an action.

The implementation of a Plan's recommendations and actions requires clearly defined relationships between objectives, tasks, stakeholders, funding and timeframes. In some cases, the Plan's specific recommendations and actions are related to not only those found in that particular Plan but also the recommendations and/or actions established in another plan or study, in a related program, in the form of development or in the form of a project. Therefore, it is important that all relationships contemplated in a Plan are consistent or embraced by others. The following discussion evaluates the Char-West Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan's recommendations and actions in light of the need for consistency and acceptance. Moreover, this plan confirms that the existing and proposed

development of the municipalities is generally consistent with the objectives and plans of the Allegheny County Comprehensive Plan.

Why Relationships Are Important for Implementation?

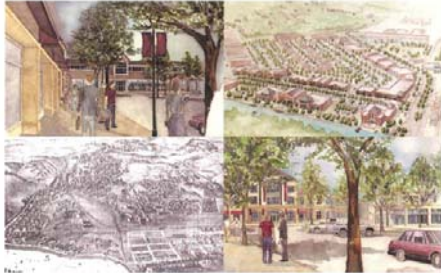
Consistency and acceptance between planning and development efforts allows numerous benefits to be reaped. Such benefits include data collection/mapping, funding, permitting and marketing. However, the most important benefit is the creation of synergies – collaborative partnerships between the municipalities and Allegheny County; between the municipalities and their neighboring communities and/or the local Council of Government (COG); between the municipalities and property owners/developers such as Trinity Development; and between the municipalities and community benefit organizations (CBO's) such as the McKees Rocks Community Development Corporation. Such synergies allow the implementation of a plan to retain “champions” of the cause, to build awareness and support as well as to share responsibilities and successes.

What Are Some of this Plan's Key Relationships?

In brief, there are numerous locally-based and regionally-oriented plans and studies that directly

relates to the Char-West Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan. These documents include, but are not limited to the following:

Local



The New Founding of McKees Rocks:

A recent strategic planning study that provided the impetus for the three communities to come together to prepare the Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan. The study was also used to inform initial analysis and discussion.

- The New Founding of McKees Rocks
- Grand Avenue Revitalization Plan
- Neville Township Strategic Plan
- Neville Township Riverfront Plan
- McKees Rocks Community Development Corporation Strategic Plan
- Sto-Rox School District Strategic Plan
- Cornell School District Strategic Plan
- Allegheny Together Plan for Stowe Township

Regional

Allegheny Places, The County's Comprehensive Plan can be viewed at www.alleghenyplaces.com.

- Allegheny Land Trust's Allegheny GreenPrint project
- The Allegheny County Comprehensive Plan, Allegheny Places
- Southwest Pennsylvania Commission's Long-Range Transportation Plan
- West End Village Master Plan

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- City of Pittsburgh Comprehensive Plan, *PlanPGH*
- 3 Rivers Wet Weather Options for Regional Municipal Sewer System Management
- Pittsburgh Maglev Study

Stowe Township is one of four (4) initial pilot programs undertaken by The Allegheny County Department of Economic Development and the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation (PHLF) to study issues related to downtown revitalization. The Study utilized an assortment of tools to analyze the current factors affecting Stowe's downtown area including design guidelines, economic tool analysis, market study, historical review analysis, traffic and parking analysis, and a code and zoning review. The Stowe Strategic Plan provides guidance on the many factors influencing revitalization of the downtown area. The Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan has provided recommendations that are compatible and in keeping with those suggested in the Stowe Strategic Plan. Copies of the Allegheny Together documents are on file with Stowe Township.

The greatest asset of the West End Village is its convenient location to the Ohio River; Downtown Pittsburgh and the communities to the south, but that should not just apply to vehicular transportation. The West End Village will benefit greatly from providing ample and safe bicycle access to the Ohio River in anticipation of Riverlife developing the parcel to the east of the West End Bridge. This level of proximity to the riverfront is quite rare in Pittsburgh and of real value if designed and cultivated properly. These connections will go beyond the south shore, connecting to existing bikeways and paths that can take commuters and leisure activities across the bridge, to the North Shore, the activity around the stadiums, and Downtown.

Influences of this Plan on Other Efforts

The Char-West Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan has been developed in manner to minimize impacts on adjoining communities. Only a few of the future land use or housing recommendations suggested in the Plan represent a major shift in the municipalities' established land use patterns. None of these shifts directly impact the perimeter of the three municipalities. The most dramatic future land use changes the Plan contemplates include the development of the Neville Town Center, the Davis Beach and the Chartiers Creek Greenway and Park. The Town Center is a reflection of current real estate market activity and demand; Davis Beach, while not specifically mentioned in Allegheny Places, has been planned and discussed vis-a-vis numerous County planning studies over the past 25 years. The location and nature of this proposed regional facility has evolved over time but is an appropriate re-purposing of the under-utilized Davis Island. The proposed Chartiers Creek Greenway and Park is consistent with Allegheny Places' future open space and greenway recommendations. Moreover, a well established community group exists to lead the charge in implementing the recommendation.

The infrastructure improvements, as related to sanitary sewer and potable water, needed to support the future land use element builds upon

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existing systems and does not require any additional capacity beyond the historic capacities of each community's systems. Most importantly, the infrastructure recommendations of this Plan reinforce the partnerships and collaborative efforts needed to correct the combined sewer overflows and system deficiencies as targeted by the 3 Rivers Wet Weather effort.

While many of this Plan's recommended transportation improvements have no anticipated impact on the adjoining neighbors, several of the transportation recommendations require regional collaboration and could alter current regional traffic patterns. These alterations would ultimately improve traffic congestion and movements in the City of Pittsburgh, Bellevue, Coraopolis and Glenfield. Examples of such proposed improvements include the Fleming Park Flyover, the extension of West Carson Street, the McKees Rocks Bridge roundabout and the Stanhope/West Carson Street roundabout.

Some of the Plan's recommendations are strongly dependent upon cooperative efforts between the municipalities, between municipalities and developers, between the municipalities and community organizations and between the municipalities and Allegheny County. The Plan suggests that issue or topic-driven working groups be formed as a means of advancing or progressing on these recommendations. The



An improved intersection at the McKees Rocks Bridge could positively affect other adjacent communities.

members of a particular working group need to include stakeholders knowledgeable about the issue or topic as well as to include stakeholders willing to build upon relationships between critical partners, entities or organizations.

The gateway to McKees Rocks Borough and Stowe Township via West Carson Street is heavily influenced by the existing development in West Pittsburgh particularly in the Esplean and Sheridan neighborhoods. To travelers, there is no distinction between McKees Rocks and these West Pittsburgh neighborhoods; the overall area appears to be part of the same community. The visual and physically poor condition of West Carson Street and the adjoining residential and commercial development leading to the study area is an issue that can be addressed in conjunction with the City of Pittsburgh.

The municipalities should engage in planning efforts with the City of Pittsburgh regarding development in this area while the City is in the midst of developing its comprehensive plan, known as PlanPGH. This is a rare opportunity to coordinate with the City of Pittsburgh and should be taken advantage of. The western part of the City of Pittsburgh shares many of the same issues and opportunities as the three municipalities. Recommendations from the Char-West Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan should be shared with the City and vice versa.

Outside Factors that May Impact this Plan

Based on a review of Allegheny Places, no outside factors are expected to impact the Plan's parks, open space, greenway and infrastructure recommendations.

While this Plan was developed using the most up-to-date information available and publicly known priorities, modification to some of the region's transportation plans and studies could have a major impact of the Plan's future land use, housing and economic recommendations. Transportation projects such as the extension of light rail transit into McKees Rocks or the construction of the Maglev line through Neville and Stowe Townships could require the three municipalities to re-consider the Plan's goals and to re-evaluate land use recommendations and priorities. Any re-examination should weigh the benefits and trade-offs of the proposed improvements in light of community interest, community character, capital costs, operating expenditures and tax base.

part 5: Actions



Synopsis

The Action Plan summarizes the steps necessary to complete the major recommendations outlined in the Vision. Actions vary from recommendation to recommendation with some being more project-oriented and others being more policy driven. Throughout different phases of implementation communities recognize these roles and the most likely stakeholders may also change depending upon the expertise that an Action may require. Some recommendations and related actions could be completed in the next few years, while others may likely take a decade or more. It is anticipated that physical, policy and economic influences will impact the feasibility and priorities of the recommendations. The Action Plan is intended to respond to opportunities that emerge, issues that arise and projects that are completed from year to year.

The success of some actions may require substantial resources and some of those being monetary. As a means of not losing focus and energy from the Plan's key stakeholders, early efforts should focus on less complex, less time-consuming recommendations. This approach will allow the stakeholders to further build confidence and support as well as to progress to more resource intense recommendations.

An example of such a collaborative effort is the creation of Chartiers Creek Greenway and Park. Entities and organizations that need to be involved in this recommendation's implementation include Allegheny County, McKees Rocks, Duquesne Light, Chartiers Creek Watershed Association, Trinity Development and Community Development Corporation (CDC). A first step effort in implementing the recommendation could be the organization and sponsorship of stream bank clean-ups. This effort requires little in terms of resources and generates a substantial visual impact that others in the communities will notice.

The Essential Twelve

The Essential Twelve is a collection of actions that have the greatest potential for producing or generating the most significant impacts on the future development and character of the three (3) communities. These actions, much like the twelve essential vitamins needed by humans, function as catalyst to promote health and growth within the communities. The Essential Twelve were identified as the key actions for implementation that trigger or lead to the implementation of other actions. More pointedly, the Essential Twelve are the actions that ultimately will produce the most “bang for the buck”. They are actions that will produce the very visible indications of change and will be the actions that the public “sees”. Consequently, they’re the actions that are more inclined to stimulate the private – sector to make their own investments within the communities.

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| 1. Create the Community Housing Bank | 5. Construct the Transportation Improvements related to the former P&LE properties and the “Bottoms” | 9. Develop and administer joint zoning ordinances |
| 2. Rezone strategic areas in all three communities | 6. Modify traffic flow on Neville Road, Grand Avenue and Chartiers Avenue | 10. Pursue additional park funding assistance for improvements to the existing neighborhood parks in Stowe, Third Street Park, and the NIDA property in Neville |
| 3. Form a Parks and Recreation Association | 7. Redevelop the former P&LE Properties and the I-79 Interchange | 11. Develop a committee to oversee implementation of the Plan’s recommendation in the long run |
| 4. Develop high intensity residential development at the confluence of Chartiers Creek and the Ohio River as well as in the Mansionette neighborhood in Neville | 8. Develop Park Place, Chartiers Creek Park, Grand Avenue, Chartiers Avenue and NIDA Park | 12. Utilize the tools provided by the recently enacted Blight Bill to obtain fees from landowners to rehabilitate or demolish all blighted structures |

Action Plan

Table 1: Action Plan

CSD	Cornell School District	CVO	Civic/Volunteer Organizations
CLB	Community Land Bank	MC,NC,SC	Council/Board of Commissioners
CNC	Chartiers Nature Conservancy	MPC,NPC,SPC	Planning Commission (McKees Rocks, Neville, Stowe)
FOR	Friends of the Riverfront	CDC	Community Development Corporation (McKees Rocks & Stowe)
MA	Municipal Authorities	SRSD	Sto-Rox School District
ME	Municipal Engineer	FOP	Friends of the Parks
DCED	Department of Community and Economic Development	NIDA	Neville Island Development Association
DOT	PennDOT		
DEP	Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection		

Action	Community	Priority	Responsible Stakeholder or Champion	Page Number of Related Recommendations Part 3
A Land Use and Housing				
1 Amend the existing heavy industrial district to limit the intensity of industrial uses in the areas nearest the 1 st Street neighborhood to be in keeping with character of existing residential and commercial developments in the area	Neville	Medium	NC	29
2 Rezone the I-79 interchange area to moderate intensity mixed use	Neville	High	NC, NPC	30
3 Explore the possibility of high intensity residential uses in the properties in the Mansionette neighborhood	Neville	High	NC, NPC	30
4 Consider developing a portion of the former Dravo shipyard property for higher intensity mixed residential development	Neville	Medium	NC	29
5 Amend the current zoning map to reflect the redevelopment of the Calgon property along Grand Avenue for office and light industrial uses	Neville	Medium	NC	29
6 Evaluate the feasibility of developing and administering joint zoning and subdivision/land development ordinances for McKees Rocks and Stowe	McKees Rocks/Stowe	Medium	MC/SC	33
7 Create a community housing bank to acquire, rehabilitate, redevelop, and return tax-foreclosed residential or delinquent properties to private-sector control	All	High	MC, NC, SC, SRSD, CSD, MA, CLB, DCED	32
a Inventory all tax delinquent residential properties, categorize per redevelopment type (renovate, redevelop, etc.)	All	High		
b Develop a priority list of properties to be land banked	All	High		

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Table 1: Action Plan Continued

CSD	Cornell School District	CVO	Civic/Volunteer Organizations
CLB	Community Land Bank	MC,NC,SC	Council/Board of Commissioners
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DCED	Department of Community and Economic Development	NIDA	Neville Island Development Association
DOT	PennDOT		
DEP	Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection		

Action	Community	Priority	Responsible Stakeholder or Champion	Page Number of Related Recommendations Part 3
c Use county redevelopment assistance to establish a fund for demolishing abandoned houses	All	High		
d Form partnerships with neighborhood watch, local organizations to maintain abandoned property	All	High		
e Establish a tax abatement program with both school districts	All	High		
f Create an agreement between municipalities and taxing bodies to relieve back taxes	All	High		
g Obtain low interest loans for home improvements	All	Medium		
h Pursue "Elm Street" funding for residential neighborhood related projects as funding is made available	All	Medium		
8 Determine the feasibility of mixed use for the Fleming Park neighborhood to be more reflective of historic and current land use patterns	Stowe	Medium	SC, SPC	32
9 Explore the possibility of moderate intensity single family residential in the area along Singer Avenue	McKees Rocks	Medium	SC, SPC	29
10 Determine the feasibility of the area surrounding the Wind Gap and Chartiers Avenue intersection to support high intensity mixed residential development	McKees Rocks	High	MC, MPC	28
11 Concentrate higher intensity industrial uses between Chartiers Creek and Thompson Street/Creek Road	McKees Rocks	Low	MPC	28
12 Explore possibilities for the McKees Rocks' riverfront near the confluence of Chartiers Creek and the Ohio River to support high intensity residential uses	McKees Rocks	High	MC	28

Table 1: Action Plan Continued

CSD	Cornell School District	CVO	Civic/Volunteer Organizations
CLB	Community Land Bank	MC,NC,SC	Council/Board of Commissioners
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ME	Municipal Engineer	FOP	Friends of the Parks
DCED	Department of Community and Economic Development	NIDA	Neville Island Development Association
DOT	PennDOT		
DEP	Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection		

	Action	Community	Priority	Responsible Stakeholder or Champion	Page Number of Related Recommendations Part 3
13	Refine the permitted uses within the existing industrial district along the Norfolk Southern rail corridor to focus on warehousing, distribution and light manufacturing/assembly uses	McKees Rocks	Medium	MC, MPC	28
14	Evaluate the potential for the McKees Rocks Bottoms neighborhood to accommodate mixed use to be more reflective of the historic and current use	McKees Rocks	High	MC	27
15	Redevelop the P&LE administrative property as mixed use; integrate light industrial, assembly, office and high intensity multi-family residential uses	McKees Rocks	Medium	MC, MPC	28
16	Encourage the development of a greenway/ waterfront park along Chartiers Creek and its confluence with the Ohio River	McKees Rocks	Medium	MPC	28
17	Formulate and adopt development standards as related to residential infill	All	Medium	MPC, NPC, SPC	28,30
18	Redevelop the former P&LE paint shop property as a flex office type of neighborhood for corporate headquarters, business incubators and small research and development organizations	Stowe	Medium	SPC	31
19	Accommodate market competitive moderate intensity residential development on the former P&LE paint shop property if a private-sector developer is willing to remediate the land to meet residential standards and the market demand for flex office space is not strong	Stowe	Medium	SPC	31
20	Determine the potential for the Stowe Township First Tee Golf Course property to change to moderate intensity mixed residential in the long-term	Stowe	Low	SC,SPC	31
21	Concentrate intense industrial uses to the areas along Nichol Avenue	Stowe	Low	SPC	31
22	Encourage the redevelopment of the former strip mine and landfill site along Robinson Boulevard for regionally-oriented recreational uses	Stowe	Low	SPC, DEP	31

ACTIONS | part 5

Table 1: Action Plan Continued

CSD	Cornell School District	CVO	Civic/Volunteer Organizations
CLB	Community Land Bank	MC,NC,SC	Council/Board of Commissioners
CNC	Chartiers Nature Conservancy	MPC,NPC,SPC	Planning Commission (McKees Rocks, Neville, Stowe)
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ME	Municipal Engineer	FOP	Friends of the Parks
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DOT	PennDOT		
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	Action	Community	Priority	Responsible Stakeholder or Champion	Page Number of Related Recommendations Part 3
23	Encourage neighborhood-scale commercial uses for the south-side of Island Avenue from Neville Avenue to Bradley Street	McKees Rocks	Medium	MC, MPC	32
24	Develop and incorporate buffer yard standards for land use transition areas related to residential and industrial uses	Stowe	Medium	SC, SPC	32
25	Redevelop the NIDA property for regionally-oriented recreational uses	Neville	Medium	MA, CVO, NIDA, NPC	30
26	Re-use the former drive-in and roller rink properties to moderate intensity single family residential uses	Neville	Low	NC, NPC, NIDA	30
27	Develop strategies for reuse of vacant properties	All	High	MC,NC,PC, MPC,NPC, SPC, MA, CLB, NIDA	30,32
28	Protect steep slopes from future development	All	Low	MC, NC, SC, MPC, NPC, SPC	86
29	Seek funding to identify and remediate Brownfield sites	All	Low	MC, NC, SC, MPC, NPC, SPC, DEP	86
30	Develop Park Place on Chartiers Creek in the under-utilized parking lots of the shops at Chartiers Crossing	McKees Rocks	Medium	MC, NC, SC, MPC, NPC, SPC, CDC	29
31	Utilize the tools provided by the recently enacted Blight Bill to obtain fees from landowners to rehabilitate or demolish all blighted structures	All	Medium		170
B. Administration and Governance					
1	Develop a formal committee or work group to oversee implementation of the Plan's recommendation in the long run	All	High	MC, NC, SC	152
2	Hold annual Planning Summits with Borough Council, Planning Commission and Municipal Staff regarding the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan	All	High	MC, NC, SC	153
3	Complete a regional sewer service study to evaluate consolidation and/or joint operations/management possibilities	All	Medium	MA, ME	34

Table 1: Action Plan Continued

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Action	Community	Priority	Responsible Stakeholder or Champion	Page Number of Related Recommendations Part 3
4 Initiate a dialogue/discussion between nearby School Districts as related to the feasibility of a operation and/or management merger	All	Medium	SRSD, CSD	70
5 Establish periodic (annually) meetings between the District and the Borough Council to discuss joint opportunities	All School Districts and elected officials	Medium	NC, MC, SC, SRSD, CSD	34
6 Explore the feasibility and economic benefits of developing additional cooperative efforts with surrounding Townships	All	Medium	NC, MC, SC, DCED	84
7 Produce an annual status report of the Comprehensive Plan and summarize for Borough Council/Board of Commissioners	All	High	NC, MC, SC, MPC, NPC, SPC	153
8 Conduct annual status updates/coordination between municipal leadership, municipal staff and other municipal advisory boards	All	High	NC, MC, SC	153
9 Evaluate the feasibility of joint code enforcement between McKees Rocks, Neville and Stowe	All	Medium	MPC, NPC, SPC	69
10 Attend joint municipal training events such as Municipal Staff/Board/Commission training sponsored by the Local Government Academy and/or the Char-West Council of Governments	All	High	NC, MC, SC, MPC, MNPC, SPC	70
11 Obtain funding through DCED to conduct a feasibility study for consolidating police service for McKees Rocks and Stowe	McKees Rocks, Stowe	Medium	MC, SC, DCED	34
C Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy				
1 Convert Chartiers to two-way in downtown McKees Rocks	All	High	MC, NC, SC, MPC, NPC, SPC, ME	47
2 Reduce the number of lanes on Grand Avenue and Neville Road through a "road diet"	Neville	Medium	MC, MPC, ME, DOT	40
3 Develop the West Carson Street Extension	McKees Rocks, Stowe	High	MC, MPC, ME, DOT	44

ACTIONS | part 5

Table 1: Action Plan Continued

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	Action	Community	Priority	Responsible Stakeholder or Champion	Page Number of Related Recommendations Part 3
4	Assess the feasibility of abandoning a portion of River Avenue and re-locating the CSX railroad crossing as part of the West Carson Street Extension and realign and extend Locust Street to intersect River Avenue	McKees Rocks	High	MC, MPC, ME	46
5	Update traffic signals to improve "level of service" issues	All	Medium	MC, NC, SC, MPC, NPC, SPC, ME	39
6	Evaluate "unwarranted" traffic signals to improve traffic flow	All	Low	MC, NC, SC, MPC, NPC, SPC, ME	39
7	Begin acquiring right of way along major routes to accommodate potential future road expansion	All	Low	MC,NC,SC, MPC,NPC, SPC,ME, DOT	39
8	Consider Act 209 Traffic Impact Fees	All	Low	MC,NC,SC, MPC,NPC, SPC,ME	39
9	Create a roundabout at the intersection of West Carson and Stanhope Streets	McKees Rocks	High	MC, MPC, SPC, ME, DOT	49
10	Develop a roundabout at the McKees Rocks Bridge Intersection	McKees Rocks	Low	MC, MPC, SPC, ME, DOT	49
11	Construct the vehicular-oriented Fleming Park flyover bridge from Island Avenue to the "Bottoms"	Stowe	Medium	SC, SPC, ME, DOT	42
12	Explore the feasibility of extending Linden Avenue to connect to Furnace Street	McKees Rocks	Medium	MC, MPC, ME	46
13	Reconfigure Furnace Street and the adjoining parking areas	McKees Rocks	Medium	MC, MPC, ME	48
14	Develop a new road in the "Bottoms" along the western side of the CSX rail line	McKees Rocks, Stowe	Medium	MPC, SPC	44
15	Expand and improve potable water and sanitary sewer service in the lesser served portions of the "Bottoms"	McKees Rocks	High	MC, SC, MPC, SPC, ME	49

Table 1: Action Plan Continued

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Action	Community	Priority	Responsible Stakeholder or Champion	Page Number of Related Recommendations Part 3
16 Complete sanitary sewer inter-connects to ALCOSAN where needed	All	High	MC, NC, SC, ME	46, 50
17 Explore the feasibility of developing a transit center behind the Shops at Chartiers Crossing	McKees Rocks	Medium	MPC, CDC	47
18 Replace and upgrade key intersections, including new (coordinated) traffic signal timings	All	Low	MC, NC, SC, MPC, NPC, SPC	39
19 Address the intersections of Chartiers Avenue/Windgap Avenue/ Singer Avenue, and Chartiers Avenue/Thompson alleviate existing critical traffic problems. Currently, these intersections have the most severe signalization problems.	McKees Rocks, Stowe	Low	MC, NC, SC, MPC, NPC, SPC	39
20 Develop a comprehensive weatherization program and promote its availability	All	Low	CDC/NIDA	51
21 Encourage the development of "green" buildings	All	Low	CDC/NIDA	52
22 Conduct a study to explore energy savings using LED lighting for street lights and municipal buildings	All	Low	CDC/NIDA	53
D Civic Amenities				
1 Work with PEC and the Friends of the Riverfront to develop a detailed master plan for the Ohio Rivertrail	All	Medium	MC, NC, SC, MPC, NPC, SPC, CVO	102
2 Utilize surplus road capacity to provide a multi-use path along Grand Avenue from the I-79 interchange to the Coraopolis Bridge	Neville	Low	MC, NC, SC, MPC, NPC, SPC, ME, PEC, FOR, PENNDOT	102
3 Modify the existing roadway shoulder (westbound) to create a bikeway/bike lane from the Fleming Park Bridge to the westernmost junction with Grand Avenue	Stowe	Low	MC,NC,SC, MPC, NPC, SPC,ME,PEC, FOR,PENNDOT	102
4 Initiate discussions with the West View Water Authority regarding the development of a "float in" only park and beach on Davis Island	All	Low	MC, NC, SC, MPC, NPC, SPC	50

ACTIONS | part 5

Table 1: Action Plan Continued

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	Action	Community	Priority	Responsible Stakeholder or Champion	Page Number of Related Recommendations Part 3
5	Collaborate with Allegheny County, the City of Pittsburgh and Duquesne Light to create the Chartiers Creek Greenway and to restore the stream's riparian buffers	McKees Rocks Stowe	High	MC, NC, SC, MPC, NPC, SPC, CVO, CNC	85
6	Create gateways at prominent community entry intersections	All	Medium	MC, NC, SC, MPC, NPC, SPC, MA, ME	95
7	Designate an inter-connected network of pedestrian/bike routes that link residential neighborhoods, commercial districts and recreational facilities	All	Low	MC, NC, SC, MPC, NPC, SPC, MA	102
8	Improve the streetscape treatment of Nichol Avenue and Grand Avenue in conjunction with pending transportation improvements	All	Medium	MC, NC, SC, MPC, NPC, SPC, MA, ME	95
9	Implement the suggested streetscape improvements for Broadway Avenue as outlined in the Broadway Avenue Streetscape Master Plan	Stowe	Medium	MC, NC, SC, MPC, NPC, SPC, MA, ME	32
10	The three (3) communities should develop a clearly defined and signed pedestrian network	All	Medium	MPC, NPC, SPC	102
11	Connections to larger regional trail systems such as the Ohio River Trail and the Chartiers Creek Trail should also be made	All	Medium	MPC, NPC, SPC	102
E Parks and Recreation					
1	Pursue additional park funding assistance for improvements to the existing neighborhood parks in Stowe, Third Street Park, and the NIDA property in Neville	All	Medium	MPC, NPC, SPC, NIDA	149
2	Explore the establishment of the Char-West Parks and Recreation Association.	All	High	MC, NC, SC, SRSD, CVO	150
a.	Obtain the services of a few "champions" of parks and recreation to form the Char-West Park and Recreation Association. Only one or two people are necessary to do this but the point is that a champion must take on the commitment to launch the Association forward.	All	Medium		

Table 1: Action Plan Continued

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Action	Community	Priority	Responsible Stakeholder or Champion	Page Number of Related Recommendations Part 3
b. Make a field visit to the Pittsburgh Park Conservancy to learn from their experience with running a Park and Recreation Association. Send the "Champion" along with two others to capture the value of the what Conservancy representatives have to say about how they got started, what worked for them, pitfalls to avoid and undertaking projects, fundraising, volunteers and events.	All	Low		
c. Make the Association prestigious and include major community stakeholders. The stakeholders should have something important to contribute in terms of support, ideas, influence, know-how, funding, facilities, services and other resources. Consider including representatives from the municipal elected officials, Sto-Rox School District, Father Ryan Arts Center, Chamber of Commerce, sports organizations, University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Boys and Girls Club, and parks and recreation boards.	All	Low		
d. Create a partnership with a non-profit organization such as the Father Ryan Arts Center.	All	Medium		
e. Establish the vision, mission and goals for the Association. Consider using the Pittsburgh Park Conservancy materials as the model. Tailor them to fit the three communities. Align the focus of the Association on creating active healthy lifestyles through parks and recreation. This might enable the Association to tap into funding from UPMC or other sources.	All	Medium		
f. Consider applying for a Peer Grant from PA DCNR to start the Association. It would require a \$1,000 match for a \$11,000 project price. For this project, PA DCNR would assist the three communities in obtaining the services of a parks and recreation professional with expertise in launching and organizing the Association.	All	Medium		

ACTIONS | part 5

Table 1: Action Plan Continued

CSD	Cornell School District	CVO	Civic/Volunteer Organizations
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Action	Community	Priority	Responsible Stakeholder or Champion	Page Number of Related Recommendations Part 3
g. Create a one-year work program with defined actions, responsible parties and time line. Strive to produce one signature event, one facility improvement, and a major public outreach effort designed to achieve success. Emphasize partnerships – having a partnership on every project will help to leverage limited time and money. Achieving successes will help to build momentum and garner public support. Consider finding a community partner to help build and manage a website for the Association.	All	Medium		
h. Develop an annual report along with a plan to distribute it widely. Include state and federal elected officials in this distribution. Make an annual visit to these state and federal senators and representatives to tell them about the Association’s projects and goals with a request for support. The Association should also visit the elected officials of McKees Rocks, Neville, and Stowe annually as well.	All	Low		
3 Continue to facilitate and provide recreation programs and services through volunteers, parks and recreation committees and limited staff.	All	High	CVO	150
4 Apply for a Peer Grant from PA DCNR to fund a one year consultation with a Park and Recreation Professional to help organize and get the Char-West Park and Recreation Association running.	All	Medium	MC, NC, SC, SRSD	147
5 Work with the Father Ryan Cultural Center to get a recreation position established. Strive to get a public private partnership to generate support for this position.	All	Low	MC, NC, SC, SRSD	146
6 Continue to maintain the parks and recreation facilities.	All	High	MC, NC, SC	150
7 Deal with the goose problem. Seek assistance from the Conservation District. Allocate funds to eliminate the geese problem especially on sports fields.	McKees Rocks and Neville	High	MC, NC	149

Table 1: Action Plan Continued

FOR	Friends of the Riverfront	CDC	Community Development Corporation (McKees Rocks & Stowe)
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	Action	Community	Priority	Responsible Stakeholder or Champion	Page Number of Related Recommendations Part 3
8	Join the Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society. Apply for one Rec-TAP grant valued at \$1,500 every year to address one specific high priority problem or opportunity with no match required.	All	High	MC, NC, SC	150
9	Implement the specific park improvement recommendations defined in the Park and Recreation element of this Plan	All	Medium	MC, NC, SC, MPC, NPC, SPC, MA, CVO	150
10	Create a riverfront park and boat access point at the NIDA property	Neville	Medium	MC, NC, SC, MPC, NPC, SPC, CVO	130
F. Business, Community and Economic Development					
1	Work closely with Allegheny County Economic Development to identify and leverage both short-term and long-term redevelopment and revitalization programs	All	High	MC, NC, SC	67
2	Form and participate in annual business development summits	All	Medium	MC, NC, SC, CDC, NIDA	67
3	Market the communities' business offerings to real estate professionals and brokerages	All	Low	CDC, NIDA	67
4	Create or improve the links between the municipal web-sites, the CDC and NIDA.	All	Low	CDC, NIDA	67
5	Assist businesses by providing public improvement financing, and public-private sponsored business promotion	All	Medium	NC, MC, SC, CDC, NIDA	67
6	Make key demographic and market information and professional assistance available to businesses	All	Low	CDC, NIDA	67
7	Explore the feasibility of offering tax abatements for new single family owner-occupied residential construction	All	High	NC, MC, SC	69

ACTIONS | part 5

Table 1: Action Plan Continued

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	Action	Community	Priority	Responsible Stakeholder or Champion	Page Number of Related Recommendations Part 3
8	Explore the feasibility of creating three (3) tax increment financing (TIF) districts for new non-residential and residential construction	All	High	NC, MC, SC, SRSD, CSD	68
9	Explore opportunities to create and sustain public-private partnerships for development	All	Low	CDC, NIDA	71
10	Create organizational Action Plans for the CDC and NIDA that establish and prioritize goals and objectives.	All	High	CDC, NIDA	74
11	Work with businesses to evaluate market appeal and to define specific niches	All	High	CDC, NIDA	76
12	Implement the extension of business hours specifically for shopping	All	Low	CDC, NIDA	77
13	Develop innovative promotions and advertising, organize business district-wide promotional events	All	Low	CDC, NIDA	77
14	Define a unique theme or "brand" for each commercial districts	All	High	CDC, NIDA	77
15	Work with local media to promote activities and events	All	High	CDC, NIDA	77
16	Use Market Direct as an affordable way to keep targeted audiences informed and engaged	All	Low	CDC, NIDA	78
17	Promote businesses, development/redevelopment opportunities through Facebook. Promote downtown businesses, properties available for rent/sale, special events, and promotions through the CDC's website	All	Medium	CDC, NIDA	79

Table 1: Action Plan Continued

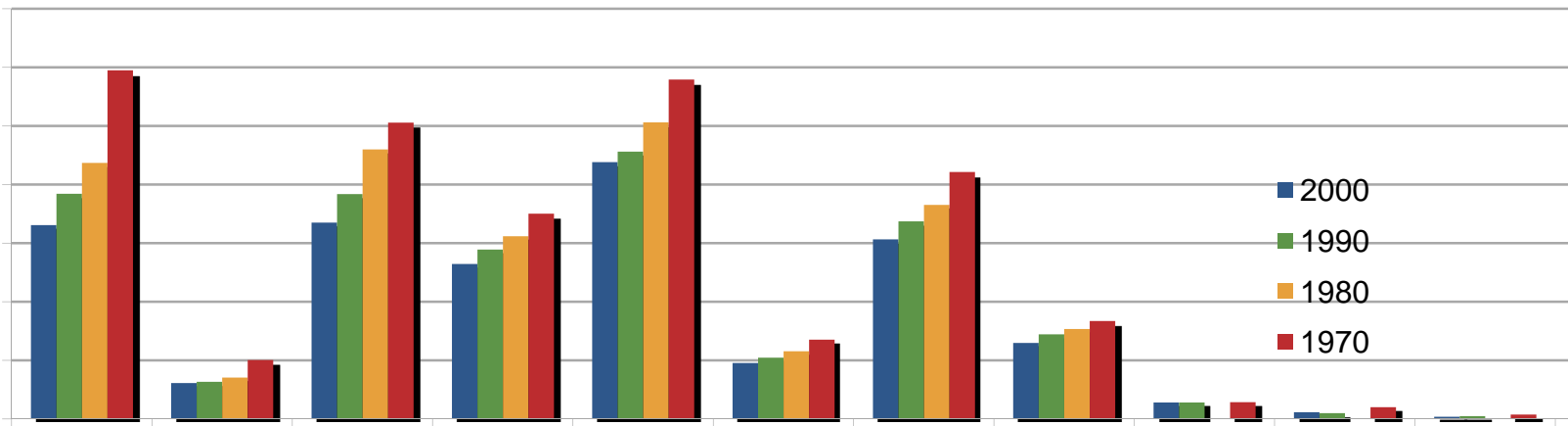
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	Action	Community	Priority	Responsible Stakeholder or Champion	Page Number of Related Recommendations Part 3
18	Develop a NIDA web-site and establish links to the Township's municipal homepage	Neville	High	NIDA	79
19	Conduct an analysis of CDC staff resources to match salaries, expertise and the ability to sustain the positions over the long term	McKees Rocks and Stowe	High	CDC	80
20	Realign the CDC's current involvement from neighborhood watches and community gardens to instead focus on economic development and filling storefronts.	McKees Rocks and Stowe	High	CDC	80
21	Make the commercial districts attractive and clean	All	High	MC, NC, SC, CDC, NIDA	82
22	Organize a volunteer group to adopt a window or storefront and to display a community events calendar/video, a historical exhibit or local arts and craft installations.	All	Medium	CDC, NIDA	83
23	Create a detailed streetscape improvement plan for Chartiers Avenue	McKees Rocks	Medium	MC, CDC	85
24	Communicate the revitalization strategy to the local business owners, residents and elected officials	All	Medium	CDC, NIDA	76
25	Promote competitive advantages of proximity to Downtown Pittsburgh	All	Low	CDC, NIDA	77
26	Work with local Small Business Development Center and Duquesne University to conduct seminars to assist local businesses with business operations.	All	Medium	CDC, NIDA	75
27	Hold quarterly meetings with business/property owners. Invite experts to discuss issues facing the commercial districts. (i.e. PA Downtown Center, National Main Street program, etc.)	All	Medium	CDC, NIDA	75
28	Illuminate and fill vacant storefronts until permanent tenants/occupants are found.	McKees Rocks, Stowe	Medium	CDC	83
29	Complete facade improvements in order to make small but visible accomplishments that generate enthusiasm, interest and hope.	All	Medium	CDC, NIDA	84
30	Develop design criteria and implement larger-scale streetscape improvements.	All	Low	MPC, SPC	85

ACTIONS | part 5

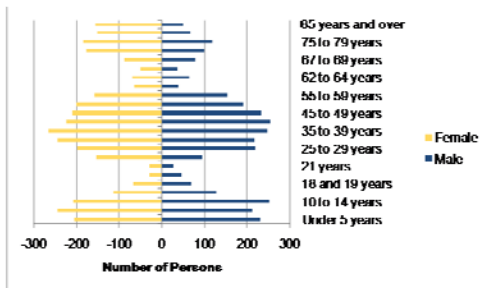
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part 6: Trends



Population Trends

The three communities share many similarities in their population trends. The communities' population has dropped almost 40% in the past thirty years. This is largely a result in the industrial sector's decline upon which these communities were reliant. This trend however is common throughout many communities throughout the Southwestern Pennsylvania region.



Since the '80s, fewer younger people have moved into the communities and the population is aging. The median, or middle age, for residents in the three municipalities has risen gradually. The number of families has also declined. This rate of change however is more than double that of Allegheny County.

Detailed demographic data was compiled to serve as a foundation for many of the Plan's recommendations. Data for the following was collected and analyzed:

- Population
- population density
- median age
- families
- total housing units
- housing units by year
- total households
- average household size
- total occupied housing units
- owner occupied housing units

- single-family owner occupied homes
- renter-occupied housing units
- median growth rent per month
- median housing value
- median housing income
- median family income
- poverty status
- additional household income
- education
- occupation
- industry of employment
- disability status
- work commute.

This detailed information is provided in Appendix C: Demographic Profile.

Housing and Development Patterns

A majority of the communities are characterized by single family dwellings with the majority of homes built prior to 1960. Over half of the homes located in McKees Rocks and Stowe were built before 1940, with many needing significant repairs. The three (3) communities, largely to the area's geography and established development patterns, have reached build-out. Build-out is the time in a community's life where all land has been developed. Consequently, opportunities for new growth in existing neighborhoods are limited; a majority of development will occur as "in-fill" – changing uses amongst existing development.

Within the McKees Rocks and Stowe, as changes in development have occurred over time, the nature of land uses have become a mix of

neighborhood-oriented businesses along a Main Street Corridor surrounded by more highly intense single family neighborhoods. Within these two communities, commercial development has primarily occurred along Chartiers Avenue in McKees Rocks, and Broadway Avenue in Stowe.

The “Bottoms” located in McKees Rocks and Stowe is a mix of single and multi-family residential, commercial, and heavy industrial development. The area is separated from the rest of the community due to the existing, heavily used rail lines that run the length of the “Bottoms”.

Neville Township’s development pattern has been largely dictated by industrial development. Residential development has occurred on the island’s western side, with many of the homes located west of the I-79 interchange.

Transportation and Infrastructure

Transportation

Road Network

The road network serving the three municipalities consists of a combination of regional and local oriented thoroughfares. McKees Rocks and Stowe are served primarily by the McKees Rocks Bridge and Island Avenue, connecting the municipalities to Neville Township and Pittsburgh. Traffic volumes and level of service (a measure of the efficiency of the intersections) were for the

most part adequate to meet the current needs of the municipalities. (See Appendix E for detailed analysis) Several key intersections have a significant impact on the traffic in the municipalities and could become more efficient through the re-timing of traffic signals and through changes in the alignment of the intersections.

Rail Network

The “Bottoms” in McKees Rocks and Stowe is bisected by a CSX mainline which serves as a major connection to major cities north and south of Pittsburgh. An average of 63 trains a day pass through McKees Rocks and Stowe every day (23,000 a year). CSX is currently converting many of their tracks to accommodate double stack cars to connect mid-Atlantic ports with Midwestern markets. The CSX line through the “Bottoms” will likely remain a major line for a very long time. Therefore, any development along the rail line in the “Bottoms” would benefit from landscape and/or hardscape buffers.

Pedestrian Network

The communities possess a reasonably well developed sidewalk system making them fairly pedestrian friendly. There are areas where the topography has discouraged construction of sidewalks; these gaps do create breaks in the sidewalk system. Moreover, there is no wayfinding system and the steep topography presents challenges to some users. Sections of

the sidewalk system may need to be repaired to ensure safe pedestrian access throughout the municipality.

Transit

For those utilizing public transportation, the Port Authority of Allegheny County provides service to all three communities. McKees Rocks and Stowe are serviced by multiple bus routes, Neville users have only one bus route. The Port Authority has encountered additional budget shortfalls; stop gap funding from the State has temporarily postponed further service reductions. Consequently, every route is being evaluated for the possibility of further cuts in addition to those made in 2010.

The three (3) communities are highly dependent on public transit for citizens working in Pittsburgh. Therefore, as public meeting concerning reductions in service occur, the communities need to be active participants in the meetings to help preserve existing routes. Due to the current state of public transit, it is highly unlikely that any additional service will be available to the communities in the next few years.

Studies for an extension of the light rail to the area and a Maglev system are currently on-going though no immediate plans affecting the communities have been made.

Infrastructure

Sewage

The sewer systems of the three communities are interconnected and share the same sewershed. Issues affecting one of the communities affect its neighbors as well. The systems of McKees Rocks and Stowe are close in age, have combined stormwater and sewer systems, and are municipally owned and maintained. Neville Township's system is newer than McKees Rocks and Stowe and has separate stormwater and sewer systems. Neville's system is also municipally owned and maintained. The three municipalities in the planning area have received Consent Orders from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) which are enforced by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) and the Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD). The goal of the Consent Orders is to eliminate sanitary sewer and combined sewer overflows in the municipal and ALCOSAN collection, conveyance, and treatment facilities. All three of the communities in the planning area are currently involved in the activities required by the Consent Orders.

Water

Water is supplied to McKees Rocks Borough, Neville Township, and Stowe Township by the West View Water Authority (WVWA). WVWA operates the Joseph A. Berkley Water Treatment

Plant at the upstream tip of Neville Township. This plant takes in water from the Ohio River for treatment and distribution to the entire WVWA distribution system. WVWA continues to maintain and upgrade their treatment and distribution systems within their service area, including the three communities, as needs dictate. They currently have capacity to supply and distribute water to current and proposed developments within the three municipalities.

Environment and Culture

Environmental Assets and Limitations

The natural environment of the three communities is due in large part to the topography of the area. While the majority of McKees Rocks and Stowe is composed of steep hillsides and valleys, Neville and the “Bottoms” in McKees Rocks and Stowe are almost entirely flat. The steep topography of McKees Rocks and Stowe has defined where past development has occurred and limits new development to redevelopment and infill areas. The inaccessibility of the slopes has provided preservation for wildlife and vegetation and has watershed protection benefits as well.

The lower areas of the community are subject to the forces of the Ohio River. Over half of the “Bottoms” and the majority of the residential areas of Neville are either in the 100 or 500 year

floodplain. These lower areas, due to the relatively flat slopes and high percentage of developable area, have retained little vegetation or wildlife habitat. Fortunately, the largest parks in the three communities are located in these lower areas that provide outdoor opportunities for the residents.

All three (3) communities have had a close relationship with industrial activities in the past. These industries provided jobs and accounted for a great deal of the prosperity experienced by the communities. Many of the remnants of the old industrial base, while no longer providing jobs, have left behind various forms of contamination. These "brownfield" sites will continue to impact future growth patterns for many years to come.

Although, there are more obstacles to redevelopment of these properties, many can be remediated to accommodate new industrial, commercial, and residential development. There have been many success stories in neighboring communities that have faced these same issues.

The redevelopment of older buildings provides an opportunity for incorporating energy efficient improvements. Programs such as energy audits for low income residents, water conservation, and insulation/weatherization programs are available for many lower income residents. Non-profit organizations such as Conservation Consultants

Inc. provide federally funded energy assistance programs.

New developments in the study area should also be encouraged to incorporate “green” energy technologies. Programs such as the Alternative and Clean Energy Program administered by the PA DCED provides loans, grants, and loan guarantees to utilize energy efficient products and installation of alternative energy systems.

Incentives are available for businesses, economic development organizations, local governments, schools, and other political subdivisions. Other programs such as the Keystone HELP - EnergyWorks Efficiency Loan Program are geared towards residential energy improvements. The Keystone HELP Program offers low-interest loans and rebates to encourage installation of energy efficient appliances, insulations, heating and cooling and other energy-saving improvements.



Places of worship continue to be anchors within the communities

Civic Resources

Cultural Amenities

McKees Rocks, Neville, and Stowe are host to a great deal of rich cultural amenities. Immigrant influx in the early 20th century brought a diverse culture found in few Pennsylvania communities. For instance, churches and other places of worship are intricately woven into the fabric of the communities and help define the cultural

character. The communities are also composed of many historic buildings, built with a high level of craftsmanship not found in newer communities. A wide range of civic organizations are active in the community such as the Boys and Girls Club, the Father Ryan Arts Center, sports leagues, Rotary clubs, and many others. These organizations are a great untapped resource for rediscovering the communities' potential.

Community Facilities

The Stowe Township Municipal Building provides a central meeting place not only for Stowe, but for collaborative efforts with adjoining municipalities. Due to the size, location, excellent condition, and amenities, the building is the preferred meeting place for those working with Stowe Township. The building also houses the police department; the police presence in the heart of the downtown district provides a sense of safety. The location of the municipal building also demonstrates the Township's investment in the community along its major business corridor.

Police departments for McKees Rocks and Stowe are separate departments but do assist each other. According to members of the police force, approximately half of all calls are related to the Section 8 Housing areas. Taxes are not collected by the municipalities for these County-owned developments which further exacerbates budget

issues. There may be a possibility of combining these two departments to maximize resources and eliminate redundancy. McKees Rocks and Stowe have demonstrated the effectiveness of working together for crime prevention through the community block watch program. Neville disbanded their police department and were able to cut cost while maintaining service to the community by contracting Police service with Ohio Township.

The fire departments for all three municipalities are run by volunteers. Recent attempts to merge the Presston fire station have demonstrated reluctance by community members to consolidate service. The fire departments for McKees Rocks and Stowe assist each other, beyond this, there is little chance of consolidating the departments. Due to the distance from McKees Rocks and Stowe, Neville does not participate in any cooperative efforts related to the fire departments. The Ohio Valley General Hospital located in Kennedy Township provides medical services for the three communities.

The F.O.R. StoRox Library and Learning Center offers many services to the two communities. The library is the first public library in Sto-Rox, established in 1995 and is a state-certified library and a member of the Allegheny County Library Association and Access PA. The library has a website, www.storoxlibrary.org that provides

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information on services and offers online audio book downloads. The library/learning center provides basic adult literacy classes at no cost; volunteers are an integral part of offering these types of services.

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