



positivelyALTOONA

Comprehensive Plan



Adopted - May 2013

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Plan was made possible by the input and enthusiasm of:

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OVERVIEW

Altoona’s past contributions to industry and craftsmanship are equally important as its outlook for the decades to come. City residents and leaders participating in Altoona’s Comprehensive Plan process recognize that a positive, “can-do” attitude is key to ensure the community’s continued livability and vitality.

For Altoona, this comprehensive plan’s aim and timing are like no other planning process in the City’s history. Why? Two reasons: Firstly, this Plan is being developed simultaneously with the City’s Act 47 Recovery Plan; Secondly, this Plan also emphasizes the necessary balance between the City’s planning initiatives, physical improvements and fiscal investments. One of this Plan’s most important functions was in offering a forum for prioritizing future City services while addressing each service’s costs and the City’s ability to pay for them. Through public and community leader feedback, priorities were evaluated and determined.

City Council and Planning Commission have set forth that planning in the City seeks to be:

- broad and reflect an integrated approach;
- in touch with market conditions and realities;
- geared to specific actions and steps for implementation;
- rooted in capacity, resources and expertise;
- understandable by and engaging for all; and unique.

Altoona’s Comprehensive Plan incorporates the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code’s (Act of 1968, P.L.805, No.247, as reenacted and amended) required technical components and concepts with a series of specific recommendations. These recommendations anticipate that ideas will be transformed into projects and policies that further reinforce the City’s finest attributes – its people’s drive, hard work and results. Rightly, the people of Altoona treasure their history; through this Comprehensive Plan, they have reinforced that they are positioned to move into the future with positive direction.

Thus, the following principles have been adopted to guide planning in the City:

- 1: Instill pride in our City.
- 2: Build new community partnerships.
- 3: Nurture local economic development.
- 4: Promote transportation options for convenient, healthy living.
- 5: Improve the infrastructure and appearance of the City.
- 6: Incorporate sustainable development principles.
- 7: Invest for future generations.

This comprehensive plan seeks to address opportunities for direction and progress City-wide. As the City’s 2000 Comprehensive Plan presented a number of important guiding actions, this Plan seeks to expand that work and identify cost-conscious initiatives that offer to maximize effects and results for minimal City financial resources. This Comprehensive Plan seeks to call upon the expansion and/or creation of partnerships with others in both the private and public sectors by which past and future City planning pursuits can be realized and enriched. Thus, putting the Comprehensive Plan’s recommendations in action is going to require an approach that is cooperative, accountable and resourceful. The rewards for doing so will be absolutely, positively Altoona’s. Altoona exemplifies progress in motion.



A CITY OF NEIGHBORHOODS

The spirit of the City of Altoona is evident throughout its many neighborhoods. Each area of the City has evolved from the nature of its land uses, its intensity of development and its connectivity to surrounding activities. While no official map currently exists designating the geographic boundaries and/or names of these areas, the Neighborhood Map developed as part of this Comprehensive Plan provides reference to 26 neighborhoods that, through the City’s evolution of settlement and cultural distinction, embody the heart and soul of Altoona. While few on the “outside looking in” realize, the significance and identity of each neighborhood (and the people within them) contributes to the City’s charm. As this Comprehensive Plan moves forward, the City should view and encourage opportunities for neighborhood-scale action whereby residents and businesses can assist in initiating and/or seeing actions through implementation.



HOW THIS PLAN IS ORGANIZED

The Comprehensive Plan’s four parts outlined key aspects of future planning and action for the City. The presentation of ideas incorporates the aspects identified as part of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code Plan along with other initiatives to encourage continually positive outcomes for the people of Altoona.

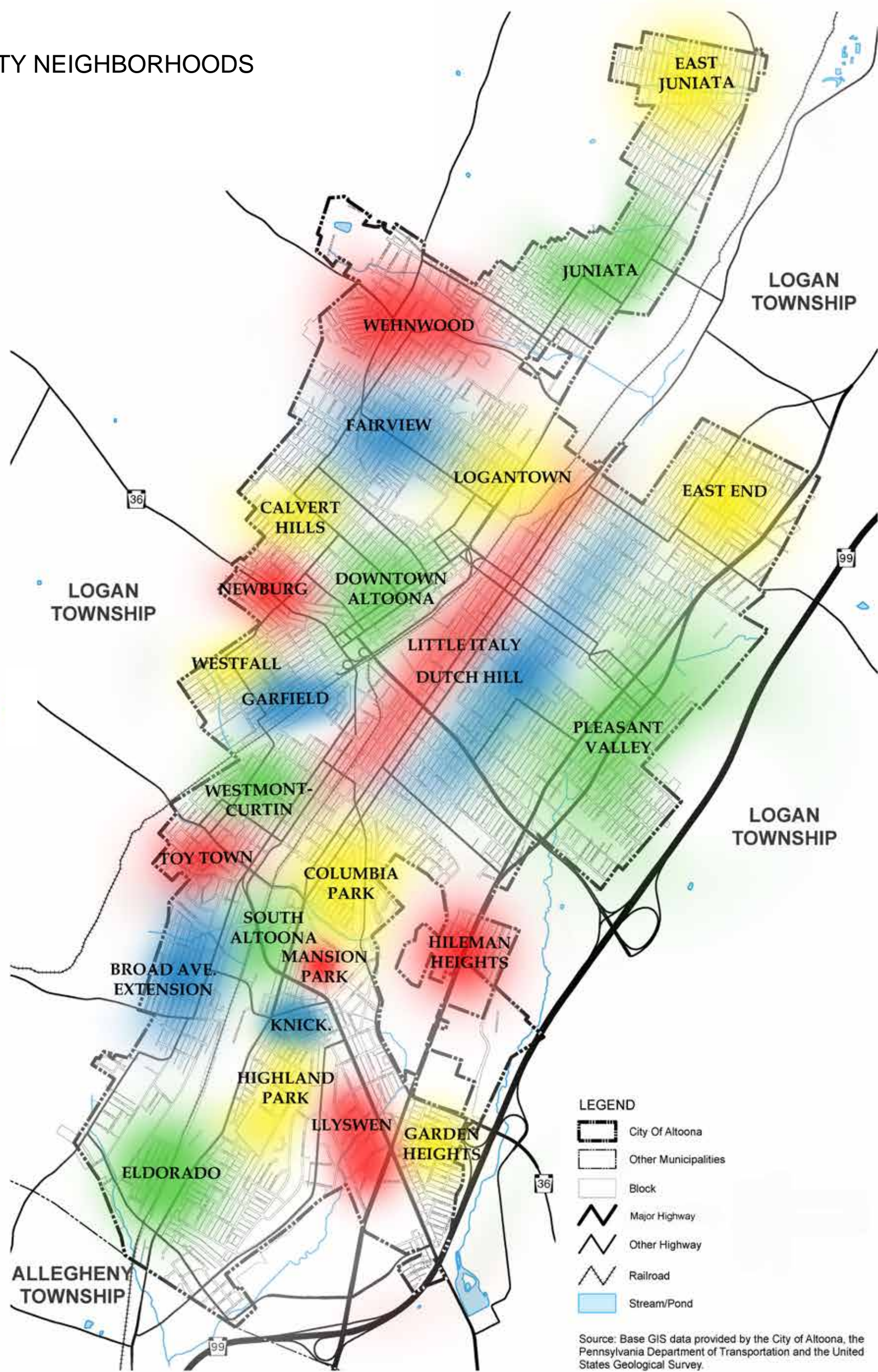
Part 1: Planning Influences examines a range of topics that are shaping opportunities in Altoona.

Part 2: Core Plan Elements is a summary of the basic goals and objectives of the plan. It also presents a table of the Comprehensive Plan’s objectives with anticipated general implementation timeframe and implementors.

Part 3: Detailed Objectives and Actions outlines initiatives aimed to enhance collaboration, livability and resourcefulness throughout the City.

Part 4: Background Studies identifies notable trends and patterns of life in Altoona and, where applicable, in the greater region. Tables, charts and mapping summarize key information and the status of existing conditions.

CITY NEIGHBORHOODS



PART 1: PLANNING INFLUENCES

Understanding and Exploring Community Patterns

A number of influences emerging from analysis and discussions have become foundation stones upon which the Comprehensive Plan’s objectives and actions emerge. Influences from in-field and technical analysis completed include: relationships, economics, services and budget, transportation, infrastructure, well being, amenities, urban design of the public realm, and future land use/housing/ redevelopment. As part of this process, the City also conducted a wide variety of public engagement events in which the people of Altoona were invited to participate. Community feedback in the form of open dialogue, personal interviews and surveys was also considered in conjunction with analyses.

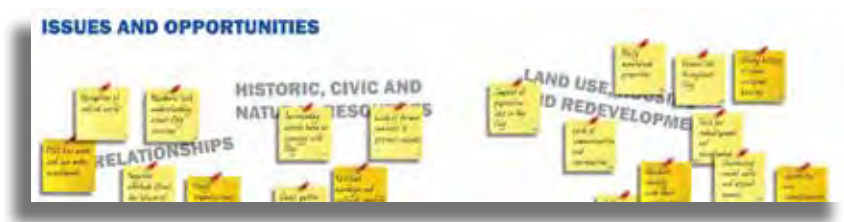
Relationships

A reality of early 21st century municipal planning is that solid, fruitful relationships are fundamental to achieving success and delivering quality services. For decades, the City has cooperated with other public/quasi-public entities to ensure that fundamental services are available and affordable. In an aim to encourage and serve additional population growth in the coming decades, the City will encounter both the need and the opportunity to strengthen and expand these partnerships as well as to take a more active role in conveying the message about its assets. There is an abundance of local and regional institutions and organizations in the City that have resources (monetary and non-monetary) that can be leveraged. For instance, in recent years, the health care industry and Penn State Altoona have made and could continue to make major investments in the City.

Positive attitudes about the future can encourage residents, institutions and the City to capitalize on opportunities and making effective investments.

Economy

In many cities across the Commonwealth, the loss of jobs and shift in local industries within the first decade of the 21st century has created a highly skilled but underemployed workforce in the region. Downtown businesses also face increasing competition from nearby retail centers, and Downtown has limited new residential units; its retail vibrancy is directly related to this. A real estate supply/ demand analysis conducted in conjunction with the Comprehensive Plan demonstrates that there is pent-up demand for new residential units, both for rent and for sale. Commitment to attracting mixed use development in the way in which local leaders, residents and organizations have embraced the concept and taken ownership about these matters speaks to their courage to tackle challenges and problems. The 2012 decision to admit enter the City into the Commonwealth’s Act 47 status is, undoubtedly, significant. The way in which the City emerges from this challenge will illustrate commitment to enhancing assets that exist, exploring new ideas and implementing practical, forward thinking solutions. While many economic tools may be possible to address these complexities, the City’s continued work with Greater Altoona Economic Development Corporation (GAEDC) and AltoonaBlair County Development Corporation (ABCD Corp.) to identify and pursue initiatives that optimizes available funding is important. The exploration of how best could New Markets Tax Credits be used to strategically drive redevelopment is a valid and recommended opportunity for the City to consider.



Services throughout the community and Budget

School districts throughout the Commonwealth, including the Altoona Area School District, have ever changing dynamics, opportunities and challenges. Civic amenities, such as institutions of elementary, secondary and higher education, athletic facilities, places of worship, the library and performing arts, are plentiful throughout the City and a source of pride for City residents. In keeping that spirit of quality, Altoona’s classification as a distressed city is not one of permanency; opportunities exist to maximize efficiencies in City services to reduce cost and increase effectiveness. Local tax-exempt organizations offer opportunities for furthering City partnerships. Public works and public safety departments along with all other City departments strive to deliver all services with efficiency and effectiveness. As evidenced by review of the City departments’ annual reports, discussions with Department Directors/Chiefs, and consideration for initial Act 47 Team feedback from analysis of City functions and budgetary spending, City services are delivered with notable effectiveness and efficiency. Some City employees fulfill multiple roles within a single position in order for City functions to be met. One area the City does identify as a current challenge is code enforcement.

Transportation

As part of ongoing improvements in the appearance, safety and efficiency of major transformation corridors, the City can realize greater impact on traffic flow and transportation infrastructure for pedestrian and bicycle connectivity. While mobility for seniors can be a planning challenge in many communities, entities like AMTRAN in Altoona have been pursuing ways to engage a greater number of citizens in mass transit. A high quality of life in the City can be strengthened with an intact, comprehensive sidewalk network between neighborhoods, health care facilities and scheduled mass transit stops.

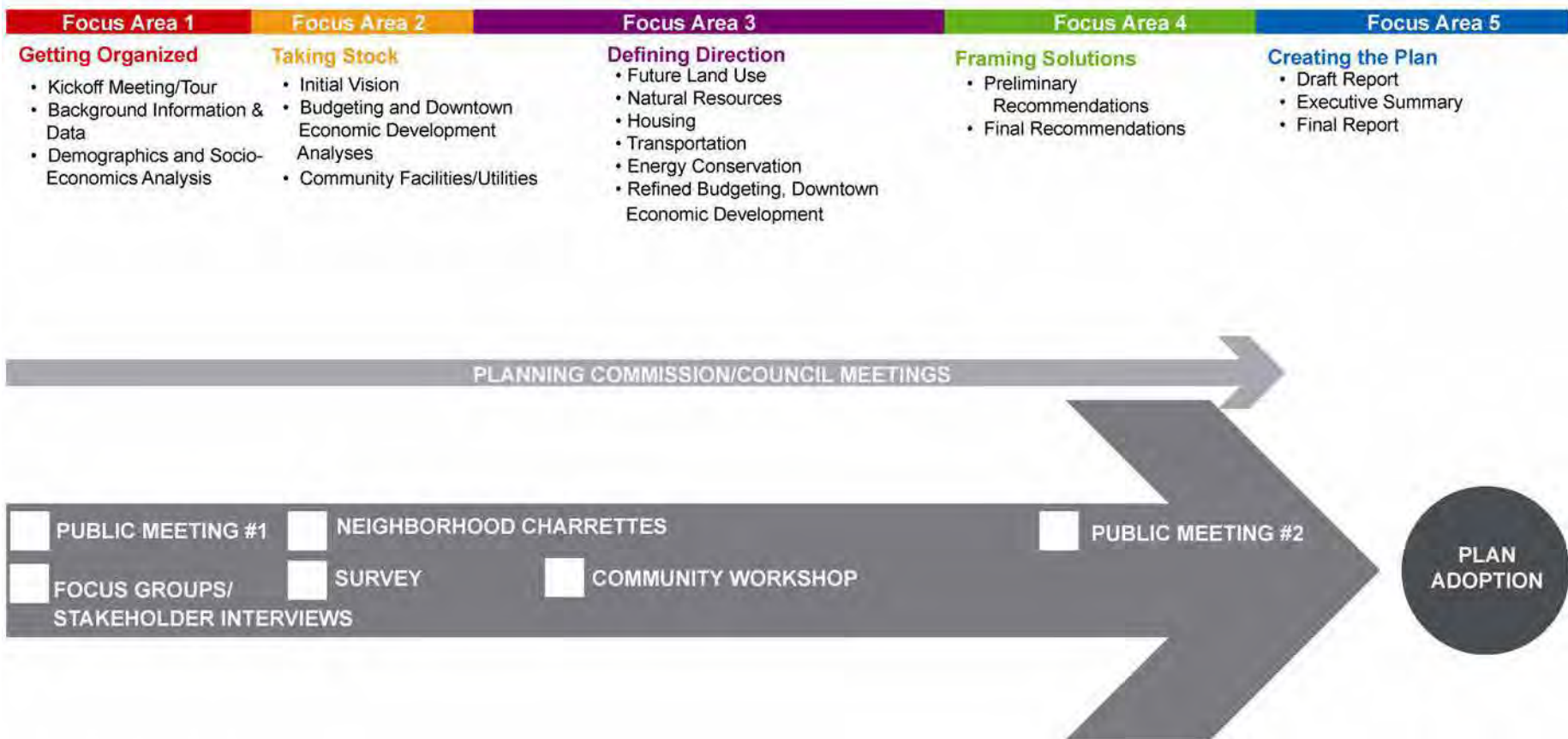
Infrastructure

A trademark of Altoona is the high quality of and abundance of potable water as well as a capacity for sewage treatment. Comprised of various watersheds, the City has numerous issues shaping its effectiveness of storm water management. Armed with a comprehensive capital improvement strategy to resolve flooding and drainage problems, the City will be able to proactively address priority projects and to explore new technologies in storm water management. Millions of dollars have been invested in business district streetscaping efforts that continue to this day. Consistency among components such as street signs, lighting standards and street furnishings remains important within the City’s right-of-way.

Well-being

Resembling community trends nation-wide, Altoona’s population is confronted with some noticeable statistics. According to the PA Department of Health, in 2008-2009, 11.4% of school students in Blair County were asthmatic; Blair County had the 5th-highest diabetes-related death rate (2011). Blair County had the 4th-highest number of reported cases of maltreated children under age 18; 30.5% of Blair County residents were identified as obese (2011). The City’s existing walkability (with hundreds of miles of sidewalks) is a direct and readily available resource to begin helping Altoona’s population turn these trends around. Notably, Police Department records indicate Altoona is a safe community with a decreasing crime rate. Fire Department response times are notably efficient and effective in addressing all types of emergencies. Altoona Regional Health

The Planning Process

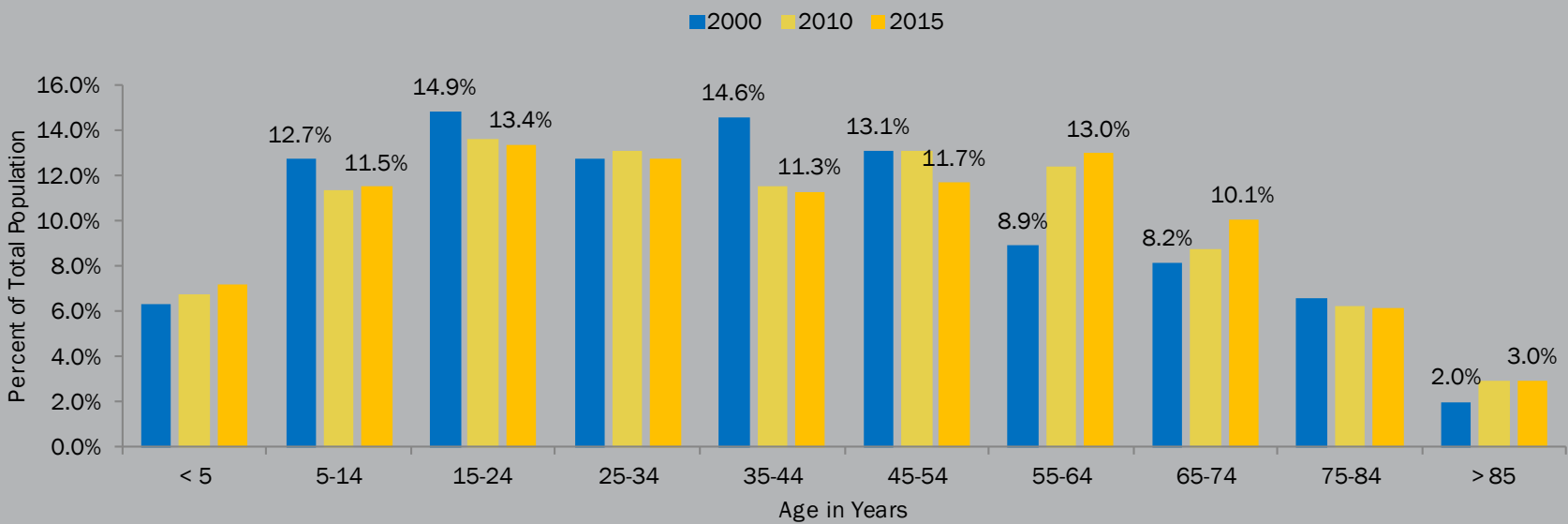


In a community wide survey, residents provided feedback regarding:

How satisfied are you with the following:	Satisfied	Not Satisfied
Affordability/Quality of Homes	<div></div>	
Homeowner/Property Maintenance		<div></div>
Tax Rate/Cost of Living	<div></div>	
Job Opportunities		<div></div>
Parks and Recreation Opportunities	<div></div>	
Code Enforcement/Demo of Blighted Buildings		<div></div>
Availability of Info on City Services, Policies, etc.		<div></div>
Street Maintenance, Repairs, etc.		<div></div>
Sewer Maintenance/Storm Water Runoff	<div></div>	
Parking	<div></div>	



Public meeting, Altoona Area Public Library, Saturday, 9/24/11



System and others are expanding facilities and services to provide high-quality medical care to those in the City as well as to those in the greater region. Throughout the nation, as diabetes and obesity have become epidemic, a major focus of funding dollars (both private and public) has been in addressing these matters. The resolution lies not only in tackling the ailments directly but in expanding community connectivity. Wherever possible, pursuing every source of funding that could tie community design (directly or indirectly) into community health issues should become part of the City’s operating procedures. This is a newer aspect of community planning where significant resources nationwide exist. With a well-established walkability system and the growing number of community health professionals, Altoona could become a model of transformation.

Amenities

The railroad has always been a strong cultural identity for the City. With greater coordination and communication, the City and/or neighborhoods could realize greater opportunity to further leverage or capitalize on the other abundant quasi-public land throughout Altoona either in context or outside of the railroad. Surrounding regional assets have the opportunity to have synergy with City initiatives or spin-off for economic value. Formal controls in place protecting the City’s many resources will encourage compatible development/redevelopment.

Urban design and the public realm

The zoning and subdivision and land development ordinance is an opportunity to encourage urban infill that supports neighborhoods and business districts in the City. Many alternatives that can be pursued at varying levels of depth and cost exist to shape the effectiveness and impact of context-sensitive redevelopment. The general appearance of the public realm should be considered as the vehicle for sending a positive message to City residents or visitors, and in highlighting the City’s many existing assets. Opportunities to coordinate the characteristics and features of wayfinding and signage should be pursued.

Future land use, housing and redevelopment
Neighborhood Compatibility

Residents have expressed they identify most with their neighborhoods, of which there are approximately two dozen in the City, and feel invested in their future. As participants in the planning process expressed, however, population loss in the City over the decades has had a major and wide reaching impact on attitude and vitality. Redevelopment and reinvestment in various portions of the City has occurred in varying scales and quality. Zoning map updates completed as part of the 2000 Comprehensive Plan are the foundation of current land use patterns and decisions. The City has a strong history of owner occupied housing and residents who invest in their homes and communities. Based on field review, mapping and City records, vacant and/or abandoned lots are scattered in various neighborhoods. The City and Redevelopment Authority have had some success in capturing private sector reinvestment of these lots but a number privately and publicly held vacant lots remain available for redevelopment, consolidation and/or infill. The manner in which these lots redevelopment occurs will potentially affect the character of the lot, the neighborhood block and streetscape, it is important as to how the City and Redevelopment Authority identify, encourage and enforce context- sensitive redevelopment and, above all, property maintenance.

With systematic coordination and communication, City agencies could weave existing tools and programs together more succinctly in conjunction with creating guidelines for context sensitive “infill” type development with little cost so that both the City and the private sector may realize obvious benefits of redevelopment and reinvestment.

Downtown Altoona Overview

Like many communities have experienced, the shift away from neighborhood businesses/services to strip malls creates limited

HIGHLIGHT: ALTOONA AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

In 2011, the Altoona Area School District was named as an overachieving school district by the Pittsburgh Business Times. Altoona Area is currently ranked ninth out of Pennsylvania’s 500 school districts after being listed 25th in 2010. As the publication noted, “It is widely acknowledged that the economic situation of a student is one of the strongest predictors of how well a student will perform academically. A low percentage of economically-disadvantaged students generally results in a high percentage of top performances on the state’s standardized tests.” The Business Times took its annual Pennsylvania honor roll rank and factored in the percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunch into the formula to compile the list of overachieving school districts. The Times went on to say, “A district finishing high in this rank of overachievers is smashing expectations, and any district above the median point is exceeding expectations.” Altoona Area was listed 208th out of 500 Pennsylvania school districts on the publication’s honor roll which does not factor in the number of economically-disadvantaged students into the ranking. Last year, AASD was ranked 249th.

Source: Altoona Area School District Website, 2012

reinvestment in neighborhood business districts and communities. Over the past several decades, a number of studies have been completed and recommendations outlined for Altoona’s Downtown. Today, these considerations include the following:

A Champion for Downtown

More investment and development has taken place in the last decade with the expansion of Penn State Altoona’s campus than in many years. This investment, facilitated by Altoona Blair County Development Corporation, has helped Downtown reappear on the radar screen for many. To further these and other efforts, Downtown needs a dedicated full time “Champion”. The Greater Altoona Economic Development Corporation (GAEDC) is a primary player in Downtown’s economic development with an identified purpose to promote Downtown, but funding is limited. Significant relationships could be further forged and developed when GAEDC has an opportunity to expand its current efforts – whether through volunteer or low cost partnerships, such as Penn State Altoona student/faculty members rooted in enterprise studies – to have daily presence and feel the pulse of daily activity Downtown. Similarly, with limited funding, the Main Street Manager position has been vacant for some time with no immediate plans to fill it. ABCD Corp. is well recognized for their abilities and significance of bringing investment to the City. Along with their City focus, they have a broader development reach with attention and resources being invested in other portions of the region. ABCD Corp. can leverage the impact of these recent investments Downtown by strengthening the organizational emphasis in this arena. Its annual Operational Plan should be updated to include a dedicated goal devoted to the vibrancy of Downtown Altoona in all aspects that is equal in stature to the other three goals (Community, Economic and Workforce Development; Enhance Quality of Life; Sustainability of the Environment).

“Sense of Place”

The unique history of the rail industry makes Altoona special – a city founded around rail lines, not a stream or river. More investment, led by health care providers and accompanied by PSU Altoona, is happening Downtown currently than in decades. Downtown Altoona, however, needs a stronger brand and identity that works hand-in-hand with an overall City brand/identity. A “family” of enhanced gateways will introduce an overall sense of place. Downtown can be established as a special place to operate or conduct business through Main Street staffing as well as dedicated programs such as

tax abatements for new investments or building façade programs available only in Downtown. In addition to the rail lines and 10th Avenue that cleave the traditional central business district from Station Medical Center and the businesses that adjoin Plank Road, Altoona has two additional “downtowns” that are notable in scale and vitality:

- Juniata along North 4th Avenue
- The concentration of suburban-style retail development on 25th Avenue in Wehnwood

Infrastructure & Public Spaces

Millions of dollars have been invested in business district streetscaping efforts that continue to this day, including the Juniata streetscape project. Further, nearly every block in the various business districts has “missing teeth” where a building once stood that has now been replaced with a public plaza. Compatible infill development should be a priority for Downtown efforts, and may require leveraged financing strategies to help compete with lower building costs where construction efforts may be easier than an infill project. At this time, no comprehensive written maintenance plan accompanies the very significant investment of funds for streetscaping and public spaces. One way streets, typically with underutilized cartways, direct traffic around Downtown and encourage higher speeds for traffic to pass by Downtown. Active transportation initiatives (e.g.: bike, pedestrian, alternative non-motorized equipment) have the opportunity to gain greater support in Downtown.

Downtown Parking

Downtown Altoona should be commended for its use of free on street parking. Such spaces, both in surface lots and garaged, dominate land use in Downtown. Parking, an often misunderstood function, is maligned, despite its abundance Downtown. As plans evolve for the expansion of Penn State Altoona’s Downtown campus, additional parking is highly anticipated/required. The manner in which this occurs (either construction of new spaces, shared parking agreements with existing facilities or combination of the two strategies) will be a critical discussion among Downtown stakeholders, GAEDC and the City. According to the Parking Authority, the 7 surface lots downtown have a 92% usage rate for parking spaces. Meanwhile, the Parking Authority’s Downtown multi-modal garage has a 55% usage rate. The multi-modal station in the parking garage is clean, but hard surfaces and lighting could be softened to reduce echoes and to improve customer experience. Thus, there’s the opportunity to raise the percentage of its use by those affiliated with and unaffiliated with the University. Employees downtown reported a difficult time finding

parking for shifts longer than 4 hours, even in off-street Parking Authority lots. Conversely, patron parking problems were not noted in reviews conducted as part of the comprehensive planning process.

Retail Storefront Strategy

Specialty retail opportunities in Downtown Altoona are limited. Some celebrate arts and culture, but to date there is limited market evidence to support this approach. Also, beyond diner-style options, dining and entertainment opportunities are limited. Juniata’s dining market is more pronounced than Downtown as well as more compact, based upon citations on websites such as www.urbanspoon.com. (Juniata features four eateries in only six blocks, while Downtown tallies only five over the twenty block area.) However, PSU facilities feature in-house dining options that discourage captive student audiences from leaving the building. The City and GAEDC should encourage any businesses to make an effort to engage the street; the livelihood of Altoona’s streets is dependent on this.

Downtown Living

Downtown living is dominated by three affordable senior housing high rises. Current Downtown housing options appear to be fully subscribed and there is potential to capture more and the age demographic of current occupants is getting younger. Upper floor housing is increasingly popular on the national level and within most urban places. Upper Floor Housing also has state programs to support it in Pennsylvania (eg: Anchor Building Program and Mixed Use Facility Financing Initiative). There is also investor desire to expand the Downtown housing market with market rate housing.

Cultural Opportunities

Cultural activities are one of the three leading economic development drivers for Downtown (health care and PSU being the others). The Mishler Theatre and Altoona Symphony Orchestra are widely regarded as strong economic drivers to Downtown. Other cultural entities provide support as well, including the Railroaders Memorial Museum and the Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art. It is cultural events like these that drive the Downtown dining and entertainment market potential and consideration for the growing heritage and tourism market to be more adequately tapped. Assets include:

- DelGrosso’s Amusement Park and Lakemont Park provide a unique one–two punch for historic amusement parks
- Railfans (Railroaders Memorial Museum, Horseshoe Curve,Gallitzin Tunnels, etc)
- Cyclists and outdoor enthusiasts that the Allegheny Ridge Corporation is targeting to reach
- Minor league baseball enthusiasts

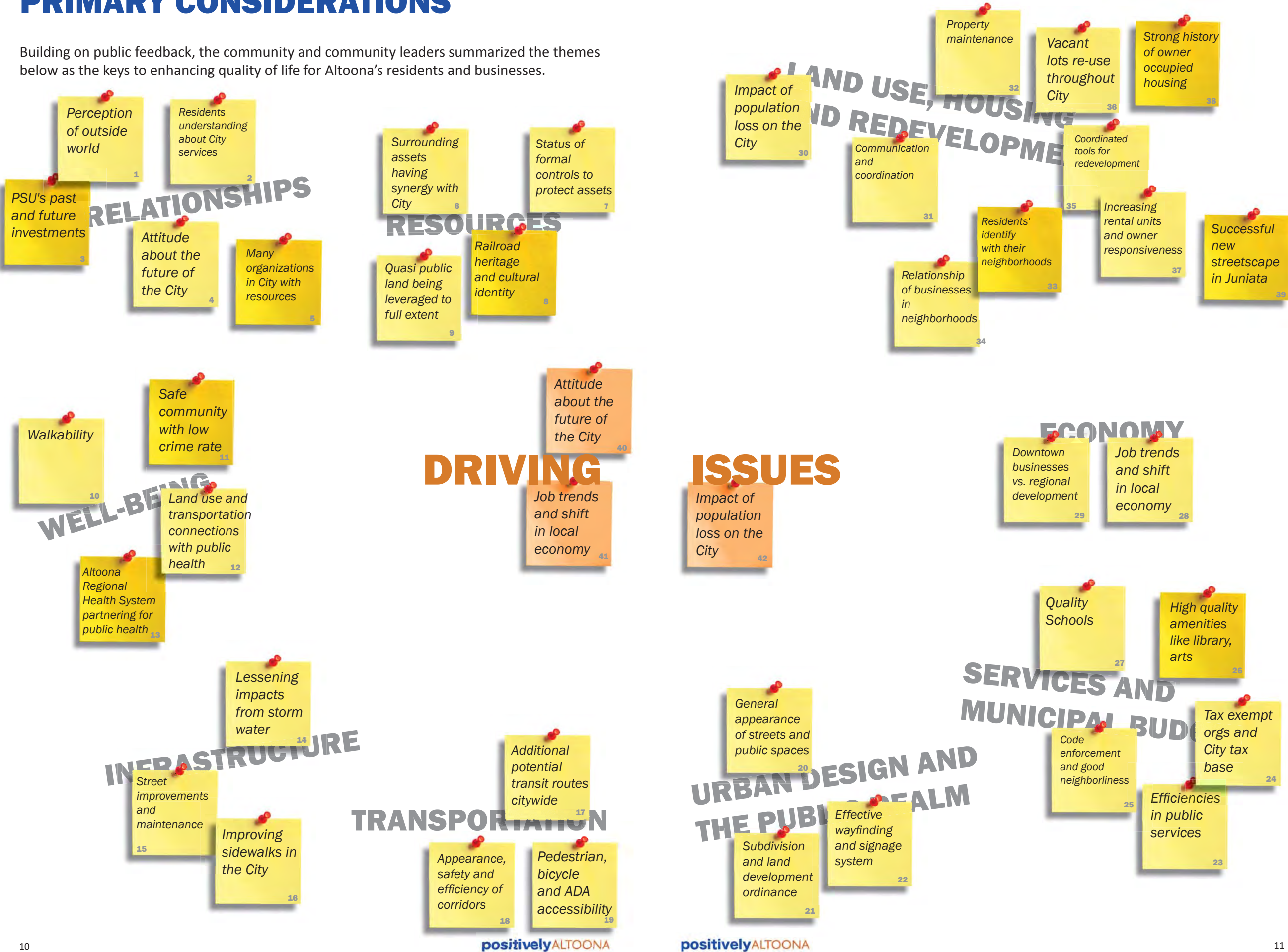
Tourism Programming Opportunities

Heritage and tourism programming exists, but can be improved and leveraged. Three separate outdoor concert series, each for a different target audience, are coordinated and well received, but could be better promoted together. Altoona also possesses a unique niche agglomeration of candy makers and confectioners that can be further enhanced and leveraged.



PRIMARY CONSIDERATIONS

Building on public feedback, the community and community leaders summarized the themes below as the keys to enhancing quality of life for Altoona’s residents and businesses.



PART 2: CORE PLAN ELEMENTS

The Comprehensive Plan [mission statement, goals, objectives and actions](#) in this Plan address future land use, housing, environment, culture, civic amenities, transportation, infrastructure, business community/economic development, and community vitality. As opportunities and challenges were evaluated, the components of this part were born. The Mission Statement is the guiding statement as to why all of the proposed planning efforts matter.

The Plan’s Mission Statement is to:

Embrace the City’s existing assets through a new “lens” to initiate transformative, sustainable and cost effective change in Altoona.

The Mission Statement is geared to:

- 1. INSTILL PRIDE IN OUR CITY.**
- 2. BUILD NEW COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS.**
- 3. NURTURE LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.**
- 4. PROMOTE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS FOR CONVENIENT HEALTHY LIVING.**
- 5. IMPROVE THE INFRASTRUCTURE AND APPEARANCE OF THE CITY.**
- 6. INCORPORATE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES.**
- 7. INVEST FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.**

The Plan’s Goals

Let’s get to the heart of the matter. 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 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 through the identified action steps, goals can, in turn, be achieved. As presented in this Part, real change can be realized through four themes: cooperation, livability and resourcefulness. All planning objectives and actions identified on the following pages are dynamic - meaning the course taken on one is likely to impact another. Requirements of the PA Municipalities Planning Code along with considerations for fiscal responsibility, political will and accountability are folded together to create a realistically functioning and inspiring comprehensive plan.

Part 2 is organized first to include a listing of overall priority implementation items followed by important considerations and associated key actions for each priority item. For the coming decade, the City’s highest priorities include the following twelve objectives:

- 1. Follow the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania’s Act 47 Plan for Altoona.**
- 2. Establish a City Strategic Planning Committee to improve communication and coordination.**
- 3. Investigate the advantages of creating a City-focused community land bank.**
- 4. Create a showcase neighborhood for redevelopment.**
- 5. Upgrade critical infrastructure.**
- 6. Support and, where possible, expand incentive programs for local businesses.**
- 7. Define a unique brand for the City.**
- 8. Initiate a campaign to highlight the City’s assets and change outside perceptions of the City.**
- 9. Develop stronger and more predictable code enforcement.**
- 10. Continue to compare City finances and spending patterns.**
- 11. Maintain the Blighted Property Demolition Program.**
- 12. Hold neighborhood meetings and complete at least simple neighborhood strategic plans.**

In past decades, the City has followed through with a number of actions, projects and policies in line with former planning studies and recommendations. This comprehensive plan’s objectives are intended to improve on the effectiveness of past successes by looking at a situation and acting upon it in a slightly different way as well as to introduce new objectives where logical. The intent of these recommended actions is to generate the most progress possible with the greatest efficiency and resourcefulness as possible.

Action Plan Summary

These objectives were developed through the plan’s public participation process, which included two separate surveys with responses from nearly 650 residents, students and employees in Altoona, five neighborhood meetings, and two planning charettes. Thus, they reflect the priorities and will of the City’s residents. The overall objectives and actions are summarized in the following tables. For each objective, information associated with the anticipated lead agency, existing partners and potential partners is outlined. An initial probable opinion of relative costs/investments is outlined for each objective the along with a general timeframe for implementation. The timeframes (short term, mid term, long term and ongoing) are presented as a general guideline for the objectives’ recommended action.

		Objective	Lead Agency	Existing Partners
Collaboration	Key Objectives	1 Follow the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania’s Act 47 Plan, when adopted, to stabilize the City’s finances	City Council	All City Departments
		2 Establish a City Strategic Planning Committee to improve communication and coordination between City-based elected officials, staff , authorities, boards, commissions, schools, civic organizations, legislators and faith communities	DPCD	CC, PC
		3 Investigate the advantages of creating a City-focused community land bank, and promote potential start of one in coordination with others outside the realm of City government	Redevelopment Authority, City Council	ABCD Corp
		4 Define a unique brand for the City exploring ideas to which the City strives and achieves such as longevity and taking successes forward (eg Altoona: Progress in Motion, Altoona: Multi -Modal Transportation City USA or others) to use in rallying support, interest, community pride and investment	DPCD, PC, CC	GAEDC, ABCD Corp, Explore Altoona, Penn State Altoona
	Other Objectives	5 Initiate a campaign to highlight the City’s assets and change outside perceptions of the City	CC, PC, City Administration, DPCD	ABCD Corp, GAEDC
		6 Work with other organizations to create a database of volunteer opportunities for citizens and organizations	CC, City Administration	DPCD, DPW, GAEDC, Central Blair Recreation Commission
		7 Investigate the advantages of online and credit card payment systems at Altoona City Hall	CC, City Administration	All City departments
		8 Advocate for Blair County to conduct a new County-wide Re-assessment	City-wide	
Livability	Key Objectives	1 Focus City resources on revitalizing Lower Fairview and Logantown; Create a showcase neighborhood for redevelopment	ABCD Corp, DPCD, RA	ARHS, Nehemiah Project
		2 Hold neighborhood meetings and complete at least simple neighborhood strategic plans, focusing on everything from forming neighborhood associations and events to infrastructure and land use improvements	DPCD, PC, CC	
	Other	3 Determine the best use for Keith Athletic Field	CC, PC, DPCD	AASD

Potential Partners	Target City/Non-City Relative Cost(s)/Investment(s)	Timeframe
business community, Chamber of Commerce, legislators, County of Blair, faith community, civic groups	Investments/savings outlined per Act 47 Plan	Immediate
Representative of each - Penn State Altoona, legislators, elected officials, department heads, AWA, Altoona Regional Health System, other major employers AMTRAN, GAEDC, ABCD Corp, Altoona Parking Authority, RA, ZHB, civic organizations, faith community, AASD, Shade Tree Commission, Operation Our Town	Investments of Volunteers' time (total 100-150 hours every other month)	Short Term
developers, local business community, civic groups, faith community	Investments in property purchase as applicable; annual land bank staff costs: \$40-50,000 (could be coupled with existing position); plus operations	Short Term
ARHS, medical care providers, Norfolk Southern, Railroaders Memorial Museum, AMTRAN, AMTRAK, Chamber of Commerce, business community, civic organizations, faith community	\$25,000 + volunteer time of Partners (250-350)	Short Term
Chamber of Commerce, Penn State Altoona, Penn State Altoona interns, civic groups, faith community, City businesses, Explore Altoona	on going weekly discussions as part of any/all City venues	Short Term
Civic groups, faith community, Chamber of Commerce, Penn State Altoona, Penn State Altoona interns, gardening clubs, volunteers, justice system	40 volunteer hours database design + 8 hours monthly for database upkeep	Short Term
	\$2,000	Long Term
	on going time /hours required to champion the cause	Immediate
faith community, civic organizations, Operation Our Town, land bank	\$150,000 per neighborhood for use in securing matching funds	Short Term
Penn State Altoona, ARHS, faith community, civic organizations, GAEDC, ABCD Corp, business community, Chamber of Commerce, Central PA Landlords Association, Central Blair Recreation Commission, BCPC, Blair County Community Action Agency, AHA, IDA, Operation Our Town	\$7,500 + 500 volunteer hours per neighborhood	Long Term
ABCD Corp, realtors, developers, civic groups, the surrounding neighborhood	on going time /hours required to develop solution	Mid term

		Objective	Lead Agency	Existing Partners
Transportation	Key Objectives	1 Invest in the Altoona Transportation Center as a main gateway to Blair County	DPCD, CC, RA	Altoona Parking Authority, GAEDC, ABCD Corp
		2 Collaborate with transit providers to elevate ridership of transit service	DPCD, CC	AMTRAN
Service and Infrastructure	Key Objectives	1 Expand City Planning Department roles and personnel to further optimize the effectiveness Comprehensive Plan implementation and pursue/generate additional investment in the Altoona	City Council	
		2 Upgrade critical infrastructure to improve health, promote quality of life, reduce long-term operational costs, and make the City more competitive with its suburban communities	CC, DPW, DPCD	Altoona Water Authority, private utilities, ABCD Corp, GAEDC, PC, Central Blair Recreation Commission
		3 Develop stronger and more predictable code enforcement	CC, City Manager	DPCD, Department of Code Enforcement, DPW
	Other Objectives	4 Review the Altoona Planning Code and any other relevant City ordinances regularly, looking for opportunities to make City regulations more efficient, simple, and effective in promoting quality development and balancing the needs of neighborhoods – both commercial and residential	PC, DCED	CC, ZHB
		5 Maintain the Blighted Property Demolition Program as a means of removing blight and preserving neighborhood quality	DPCD, CC	HUD, Department of Code Enforcement
Economic Development	Key Objectives	1 Support and, where possible, expand incentive programs for local businesses	ABCD Corp, GAEDC, DPCD, CC	AASD, County of Blair
		2 Diversify land uses and activities in Downtown Altoona, Downtown Juniata, and Downtown Wehnwood	DPCD, GAEDC, ABCD Corp	CC, Penn State Altoona, ARHS

Potential Partners	Target City/Non-City Relative Cost(s)/Investment(s)	Timeframe
DPW, County of Blair, Explore Altoona	\$200,000; otherwise volunteer time and materials equivalent	Short Term
Penn State Altoona, Other service providers	on going time /hours required to champion the cause	Short Term
DPCD, volunteers, faith community, civic groups	\$35-45,000 + benefits for each of the three positions; otherwise annual # volunteer hours = 6,000	Short Term
MPO, IRC, Chamber of Commerce, business community, CIL, bicyclists, Allegheny Ridge Corp, Rails-to-Trails of Central PA, PennDOT, civic groups, faith community, AMTRAN, Logan Township, Explore Altoona, West Penn Conservatory, Penn State Altoona, AASD, gardening clubs, volunteers, justice system, Operation Our Town	\$5,000,000 pilot projects and detailed infrastructure system audits; long-term capital improvements determined based on detailed infrastructure audits	Long Term
Police Department, Fire Department, civic groups, faith community, Penn State Altoona, volunteers, ZHB, PC, Blair/Bedford Builders Association, Central PA Landlords Association, Chamber of Commerce	Code Enforcement Personnel wages and benefits (2 persons)	Mid term
Chamber of Commerce, Blair/Bedford Builders Association, Penn State Altoona, IUP, ABCD Corp, Blair County Planning Commission, RA, IRC, other cities, Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Planning Association	\$5,000 Code Audit; up to \$35,000 Code Updates	Ongoing
civic groups and the faith community	No additional costs/investments beyond current level	Ongoing
Chamber of Commerce, local businesses, Penn State Altoona, RA	\$50,000 annual target	Ongoing
Faith community, civic organizations, Downtown businesses and property owners	on going time as part of general City business	Ongoing

		Objective	Lead Agency	Existing Partners
Urban Design and the Public Realm	Key Objectives	1 Create a City-wide wayfinding signage system, as funding permits, like those used in Pittsburgh and Johnstown	CC, DPW	DPCD, GAEDC, ABCD Corp, PennDOT, MPO
		2 Focus more resources on public street tree maintenance	STC	CC, DPCD, DPW
		3 Provide adequate trash cans and recycling containers in high traffic pedestrian areas, such as the downtowns and the parks, as funds permit	DPW	IRC, Central Blair Recreation Commission
Resources	Key Objectives	1 Continue to compare City finances and spending patterns to those of other Third Class Cities. Seek to understand the positives and drawbacks of those patterns and seek to match or exceed the positive performance of others	Finance Department	DPCD, CC, Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development
		2 Increase awareness of the historic districts and their value to the greater City and its identity	DPCD, DPW, CC	PC, Explore Altoona, GAEDC, ABCD Corp
		3 Work with the County and regional watershed organizations to create an education program for storm water best management practices	DPW	Altoona Water Authority, PA DEP, Blair County Conservation District
		4 Identify and promote energy conservation opportunities for residents and businesses	DPCD, DPW, PC, CC	IRC, Blair County Community Action Agency, utilities
Well-Being	Key Objectives	1 Work with AMTRAN and others to transform public transit into a series of Wellness Lines targeting routes that connect or are in the vicinity of Altoona Regional Health System facilities	CC, AMTRAN	
		2 Improve the cleanliness of neighborhoods and streetscapes by instituting a revolving neighborhood green sweep as funds permit	CC, DPCD, DPW	
		3 Create opportunities for residents to improve their wellness	ARHS, PC, CC	RA

Potential Partners	Target City/Non-City Relative Cost(s)/Investment(s)	Timeframe
Explore Altoona, Chamber of Commerce, Penn State Altoona (for design assistance)	\$100,000 capital investment for matching funds; design assistance through Penn State Altoona	Long Term
	\$20,000 annual target	Long Term
trash haulers, business community, faith community, civic groups	Target city-wide uniformity and installation trash and recycling \$350,000	Mid term
Chamber of Commerce, ABCD Corp, Penn State Altoona, IUP	on going time as part of general City business	Short Term
local architects, Blair County Historical Society, Altoona Enhancement Committee, City website, Chamber of Commerce, City businesses, Penn State Altoona, civic groups, faith community, historic district property/home owners	\$25,000 + 500-750 hour volunteer time	Mid term
Blair County Planning Commission, Juniata Clean Water Partnership, PA DCNR, Penn State Altoona	\$25,000 + 500-750 hour volunteer time	Ongoing
Penn State Altoona, Pennsylvania Resources Council, Penn Future, Blair County Conservation District, civic organizations, faith community, Chamber of Commerce, City website	on going time as part of general City business	Long Term
DPCD, Altoona Regional Health System, others	\$50,000 concept development and pilot project; long-term costs (developed as part of implementation strategy)	Mid term
trash haulers, business community, faith community, civic groups, Operation Our Town	\$10,000 (by others) per year + annual # volunteer hours (500-750)	Mid term
DPCD, AASD, Central Blair Recreation Commission, AHA, IDA, Penn State Altoona, civic organizations, faith community, gardening clubs, volunteers, business community, VA Hospital, Chamber of Commerce, Operation Our Town	\$35,000 (total: Years 1 and 2); \$5,000 annually thereafter + annual # volunteer hours (250-400)	Mid term

PART 3: DETAILED OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

In this Part, complementary objectives and action are outlined where appropriate under each theme as are graphics to support place-oriented recommendations.

Positively Collaborative

The next decade of administrative and fiscal success within the City is directly dependent on genuine, responsible relationships. It is through cooperation that projects and policies will be well thought out and cost effectively implemented. The City’s Act 47 Plan developed within the time-frame of the Comprehensive Plan presents a number of detailed initiatives that could take precedence over the recommendations of this planning effort; however, in all cases of prioritization and budgeting, the City should evaluate to what extent the Comprehensive Plan and Act 47 initiatives can be interwoven in a manner of optimizing the efficiency and effectiveness of resources, time, improvements and energy invested.

Along with the City’s administration, departments and commission/boards, a number of organizations, agencies and groups are integral to transformation in the City. While plentiful, this listing of existing and potential Comprehensive Plan partners is considered initial with opportunities to fold in other partners where and when possible. Based upon funding, personnel and resources available, it is recommended that implementation in context of the City’s fiscal and physical landscape. Identified partners to date include:

Altoona Area School District	Greater Altoona Economic Development Corporation
Altoona Blair Community Development Corporation	Improved Dwellings for Altoona, Inc.
Altoona Enhancement Committee	Indiana University of Pennsylvania
Altoona Housing Authority	Intermunicipal Relations Committee
Altoona Parking Authority	Juniata Clean Water Partnership
Altoona Redevelopment Authority	Justice system
Altoona Regional Health System	Legislators
Altoona Shade Tree Commission	Local architects
Altoona Water Authority	Metropolitan Planning Organization for Blair County
AMTRAK	Nehemiah Project
AMTRAN	Norfolk Southern Corporation
Bicyclists	Operation Our Town
Blair/Bedford Builders Association	Other municipalities
Blair County Chamber of Commerce	PA DEP
Blair County Community Action Agency	PA DCNR
Blair County Conservation District	PA Economy League
Blair County Historical Society	PA League of Cities
Blair County Planning Commission	PennDOT
The business community	Penn Future
Center for Independent Living	Penn State University - Altoona Campus
Central PA Landlords Association	Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development
Civic groups	Pennsylvania Resources Council
Community land bank (proposed)	Private utilities
County of Blair	Rails-to-Trails of Central PA
Elected officials	Railroaders Memorial Museum
Explore Altoona Convention and Visitors Bureau	VA Hospital
The faith community	Volunteers
Gardening clubs	West Penn Conservatory

Key Collaborative Objectives

Collaborative Objective 1

Follow the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania’s Act 47 Plan, when adopted, to stabilize the City’s finances.

Timeframe: Immediate.
Responsible Lead Agency: City Council
Existing Partners: All City Departments
Potential Partners: business community, Chamber of Commerce,legislators, County of Blair, faith community, civic groups.

The primary Action Step consists of evaluating the Comprehensive Plan recommendations in context of the Act 47 Plan recommendations prior to their implementation.

Collaborative Objective 2

Establish a City Strategic Planning Committee to improve communication and coordination between City-based elected officials, staff, authorities, boards, commissions, schools, civic organizations, legislators and faith communities.

Timeframe: Short Term
Responsible Lead Agency: DPCD
Existing Partners: CC, PC
Potential Partners: a representative of each-Penn State Altoona, legislators, elected officials, department heads, AWA, Altoona Regional Health System, other major employers AMTRAN, GAEDC, ABCD Corp., Parking Authority, RA, ZHB, civic organizations, faith community, AASD, Shade Tree Commission, Operation Our Town.

Action Steps include:

- a. Prepare a letter of invitation to all Committee members outlining Committee roles and responsibilities. Initially, the Strategic Planning Committee may be interwoven into the Act 47 Plan’s committees. At the applicable time in longer-term planning, the City will have the opportunity to transform the Strategic Planning Committee into it own committee.
- b. Structure the series of protocols/outlets of communication/reasons for coordination
- c. Identify the criteria and full range of projects/policies appropriate for Committee review and the frequency of Committee interaction.
- d. Establish the City Progress Card so Planning Commission can evaluate the effectiveness, efficiency and status of the Comprehensive Plan’s implementation
- e. Determine the method and venue for Planning Commission to deliver the Progress Card’s results as well as their recommended next steps for the upcoming year of action.
- f. Deliver recommended next steps to the applicable bodies/ responsible parties.
- g. Utilize the City Progress Card as part of pursuits/ applications for funding to demonstrate areas that need improvement and the areas that have made improvements.

Collaborative Objective 3

Investigate the advantages of creating a City-focused community land bank, and potentially start one in coordination with the Altoona Redevelopment Authority, ABCD Corp., local developers, civic groups, and faith based organizations.

Timeframe: Short Term.
Responsible Lead Agency: Redevelopment Authority, City Council.
Existing Partners: ABCD Corp.
Potential Partners: developers, local business community, civic groups, faith community.

EXPLORING OPPORTUNITIES OF A COMMUNITY LAND TRUST

A community land trust (CLT) is a nonprofit, community-based corporation committed to the permanent stewardship of land and the permanent affordability of housing and other buildings located upon its land. Most CLTs target their programs and resources toward charitable activities like redeveloping blighted neighborhoods or providing housing for lower-income people, allowing the organization to qualify for a 501(c)(3) tax exemption from the IRS. Land acquired by a CLT is never resold. It is retained by the CLT, held in trust for the community. Although a CLT never resells its land, it provides for the exclusive use of its land by leasing out separate parcels to individual homeowners, cooperative housing corporation(s), nonprofit developers of rental housing, or other nonprofit, governmental, or for-profit entities. These ground leases last for a very long time, typically 99 years. Any residential or commercial buildings already located on lands acquired by a CLT or any buildings later constructed on these lands are not retained by the CLT. They are sold off to organizations or individuals who are leasing the CLT’s land. The owner of a house, a condominium, or a multi-unit residential or commercial building located on a CLT’s land holds a deed for the building and a lease for the underlying land. The CLT retains an option to repurchase these buildings, should their owners ever choose to sell. The resale price is determined by a formula contained in the ground lease. This formula, which usually yields a resale price that is lower than the building’s market value, is designed to give the seller a fair return for his/her investment, while giving subsequent buyers fair access to a home or commercial space at an affordable price. By design and by intent, the CLT is committed to preserving the affordability of housing (and other structures) – one owner after another, in perpetuity.

While most CLTs are created “from scratch,” as new, autonomous corporations, some have been established as successors, affiliates, or programs of an older nonprofit. Either a pre-existing nonprofit transforms itself into a community land trust or grafts selected elements of the CLT model onto its own structure and programs. Similarly, although ground leasing is a characteristic of every organization that calls itself a community land trust, buildings that are renter-occupied are sometimes treated differently than buildings that are owner-occupied. Some CLTs, when developing multi-unit rental housing – or when leasing out commercial space – have decided to retain ownership not only of the underlying land but of the building as well. Conversely, some CLTs, when accepting limited-equity condominiums into their portfolios, do not own the underlying land. They retain ownership only of a durable right to repurchase these condominiums for an affordable, formula determined price when their current owners decide to resell. There are also variations in the way in which CLTs have structured their membership or selected their governing board. In short, the CLT remains a dynamic model, one that is easily and frequently adapted to meet the priorities and needs of a particular community. Such malleability is a large part of the CLT’s strength and appeal.

Burlington Associates, Frequently Asked Questions, 2007.

Action steps include:

- a. Inventory all tax delinquent residential properties and categorize per redevelopment type (renovate, redevelop, etc.)
- b. Develop a priority list of properties to be land banked
- c. Use City, County and regional redevelopment assistance to establish a fund for demolishing abandoned houses
- d. Form partnerships with neighborhood watch, local organizations to maintain abandoned property
- e. Establish a tax abatement program with the school district
- f. Create an agreement between municipalities and taxing bodies to relieve back taxes
- g. Obtain low interest loans for home improvements
- h. Pursue funding for residential neighborhood related projects as funding is made available.

Collaborative Objective 4

Define a unique brand for the City exploring ideas to which the City strives and achieves such as longevity and taking successes forward (e.g. Altoona: Progress in Motion, Altoona: Multi-Modal Transportation City USA or others) to use in rallying support, interest, community pride and investment.

Timeframe: Short Term.
Lead Agencies: DPCD, PC, CC.
Existing Partners: GAEDC, ABCD Corp., Explore Altoona, Penn State Altoona.
Potential Partners: Altoona Regional Health System, medical care providers, Norfolk Southern, Railroaders Memorial Museum, AMTRAN, AMTRAK, Chamber of Commerce, business community, civic organizations, faith community.

Action steps include:

- a. Develop the brand with help from the students and faculty at Penn State Altoona, Explore Altoona and others as applicable in order to maximize talent in initiative while minimizing financial costs.
- b. Annually evaluate City policies and initiatives relative to this brand.
- c. Include the brand information (graphic and /or text) in some manner on ALL official correspondence/publication the City produces.
- d. Work with other organizations throughout the City encouraging their participation and emphasis of policies relevant to the brand.

On any given day, a lot happens in Altoona and the City’s “personality” is expressed in many ways. What message does the City convey to those who live, do business and visit here? Developing a brand identifies what the city stands for and how it wants to function as a whole. The aim of this effort is to bring people together to capture the City’s personality and establish actions which illustrate this message.

A city brand resonates when the city possesses defining and distinctive characteristics that can be readily identified including appearance, people’s experience of the city, people’s belief in the city and what the city stands for. Although different in population scale, Fresno, CA is a City that provides many lessons learned from the later 2000s regarding the value of initiating such a campaign including one geared towards its own residents. Another success for City rebranding is Amsterdam’s “iamsterdam” campaign for both local and international audiences; as identified by Smithsonian.com, the campaign’s effectiveness to date has been noteworthy in bringing change.

(<http://logs.smithsonianmag.com/design/>)

Successful, strong city brands proactively market history, quality Of place, lifestyle, culture and diversity. These types of cities make a specific intent to seek out cooperative partnerships in order to enhance infrastructure. In keeping these elements in mind, Altoona’s potential for a successful city brand is great.

Collaborative Objective 5

Initiate a campaign to highlight the City’s assets and change outside perceptions of the City.

Timeframe: Short Term.
Lead Agencies: CC, PC, City Administration, DPCD.
Existing Partners: ABCD Corp., GAEDC.
Potential Partners: Chamber of Commerce, Penn State University Altoona, PSU interns, civic groups, faith community, City businesses, Explore Altoona

Action steps include:

- a. Target the use of the Internet and the City website.
- b. Use Penn State Altoona students and faculty to help design the campaign and website, as well as input from Explore Altoona. Seek to transform the existing City website into a user-friendly platform that provides information to both businesses and residents on the opportunities for progress in Altoona and their role in it.
- c. Explore other media as funds permit.

Other Objectives

Collaborative Objective 6

Work with other organizations to create a database of volunteer opportunities for citizens and organizations.

Timeframe: Short Term
Lead Agency: CC, City Administration.
Existing Partners: DPCD, DPW, GAEDC, Central Blair Recreation Commission.
Potential Partners: Civic groups, faith community, Chamber of Commerce, PSU, PSU interns, gardening clubs, volunteers, justice system.

In 2004, the City of Houston created the Volunteer Initiatives Program (VIP) to engage residents in civic service. The VIP places 3000 - 5000 volunteers annually with various City departments, allowing them to channel their passions into meaningful action. This innovative collaboration between Houston employees and citizen volunteers will continue to improve the City’s existing partnerships with nonprofits, faith based organizations, and the community at-large. The contribution that the VIP generates towards saving the City’s time, resources, and funds through its volunteer and internship outreach is enormous. Without the generous dedication of these workers, Houston would not be able function in the capacity that it does and is continually grateful for the amount of quality volunteers and interns that the VIP procures. The Volunteer Initiatives Program has established rapport with several local and national organizations to plan community outreach events that provide important services to the Houston Community. A summary of the overall plan for volunteerism can be found at <http://www.houstontx.gov/volunteer/houstonservice.pdf>

In Corpus Christi, Texas, significant consideration went into providing electronic payment options to its residents. There are a number of costs to the City for electronic payment processing. All online payment processors must have a merchant account and payment gateway service. Associated costs include assessment fees; authorization/transaction fees; interchange rate fees, chargeback/ACH fees, and monthly support fees. Other direct costs include an annual fee for the online software that is interfaced with the utility billing system; the annual fee for the automate phone system (IVR) software that is interfaced with the utility billing system; the annual fee for the SSL security certificate; monthly transaction fees for the IVR phone; monthly charges for phone ports; annual payment for quarterly security audits required by the credit card companies; server leases and maintenance to run the systems; and staff support to assist online and IVR customers.

Why not just use an online payment service like PayPal instead of the systems used and save money?
Options such as the PayPal service only provide the collection of payments. They do not provide an interfaced system for utility payments, so City staff would need to receive the payment list from PayPal and then enter the information into the system to credit payments to customer accounts, resulting in delayed posting of payments to accounts. In addition, customers would not have access to account information such as current and past bills, usage, due dates, balance forward, etc. The interfaced system currently used by the City enables real time posting, even though the transfer of funds may take one to three days. If a customer makes an online or IVR payment to avoid shut-off status (which often happens), the information is immediately posted into the utility system. As stated above, the proposed electronic payment processing fee of \$2.50 per transaction is lower than the cost of most options and provides expanded services and account information to the utility customer using the online and IVR systems.

Why does the City need to do quarterly security audits?
In 2006, Visa, MasterCard, American Express, Discover and JCB formed the Payment Card International (PCI) Security Standards Council. Payment processors of these credit cards must conduct an annual assessment and audits based upon the number of transactions they process. If the assessment and audit are not completed, the payment processor can be liable for up to \$500,000 per incident of credit card fraud. The City has had several cases of credit card fraud that involved someone using another person’s credit card to make online and IVR utility payments. These cases were referred to the Police Department. This is also the reason the City includes authentication for online and IVR payments. In addition, authentication service helps to reduce the number of chargebacks, for which the City pays \$15 per incident. In a 2005 study published by Northern Illinois University of 45 local governments in the United States with online payment applications (parking violations, utilities, property taxes and water-related payments), 76 percent of the local governments charged a fee.

Source: Corpus Christi, Texas, 2009

A number of cities in Pennsylvania are part of the nationwide effort to connect volunteers to public initiatives – Cities of Service. The City of Altoona should consider the benefits of joining in on this effort for a resource of cost effective strategies, ideas and sharing of lessons learned. The Cities of Service Playbook is available for download at citiesofservice.org and is a notable, concise primer for Altoona’s enhancing community-focused volunteer efforts.

Collaborative Objective 7

Investigate the advantages of online and credit card payment systems at Altoona City Hall.

Timeframe: Long Term.

Lead Agency: CC, City Administration.

Existing Partners: all City departments.

Collaborative Objective 8

Advocate for Blair County To Conduct a New County-wide Re-assessment

Lead Agency: City-wide

The City is resourceful and prudent with its financial management. Pursuits of municipal income sources through grants are a fundamental part of City Department operations. However, as evidenced by fiscal analysis completed as part of the Comprehensive Plan, City income will not match the level of change needed to maintain City systems without property reassessment (no matter how much redevelopment should take place within its confines).

Because property valuations are frozen at 1958 rates, potential revenues from redevelopment are limited. The City should lobby the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and Blair County to revisit its current regulations pertaining to real property taxation for cities like Altoona. Reassessment has the opportunity to present a viable method of making taxation equitable and fair as well as reflect upon the provision of needed public improvements and services.

In 2011, Altoona became the first U.S. city to impose no property tax on buildings. Currently, school and county taxes are not primarily land-based. The Center for the Study of Economics’ 2011 report Land Value Tax in Altoona, PA looks at some outcomes in the past 10 years, the revenue effects of the last year of transition to a land-only tax as well as the impact of reversion to the standard property tax.

During the prior 10 years, the community evaluated and instituted a transition from land-based to non-land based taxes. The outcomes of this transition are presented in The Center for the Study of Economics’ report Land Value Tax in Altoona, PA report, M. Speirs, 2011.

Source: Center for the Study of Economics, urbantools.org, 2011

Positively Livable

The City’s livability is dependent upon the relationships of land use and housing, services and infrastructure, transportation, economic development, urban design and the public realm. Several objectives and actions are keys to success in the coming decade. The way in which Altoonans embrace their existing assets and, in many cases, creatively address traditional issues in untraditional ways will enable them to prosper.

Land Use and Housing

Key Objectives

Livability Objective 1 - Land Use and Housing

Focus City resources on revitalizing Lower Fairview and Logantown. Create a showcase neighborhood for redevelopment.

Timeframe: Short Term.
Lead Agency: ABCD Corp., DPCD, RA.
Existing Partners: ARHS, Nehemiah Project.
Potential Partners: faith community, civic organizations, Operation Our Town, land bank.

Within the past decade, notable redevelopment has occurred in various portions of the City. Building on successes of public-private partnerships, the City should continue to forge other public-private partnerships for infill and redevelopment. Models for building partnerships, like those promoted by the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), should be sought and pursued. “For almost three decades, LISC has connected local organizations and community leaders with resources to revitalize neighborhoods and improve quality of life. The LISC model assembles private and public resources and directs it to locally-defined priorities. This unique structure enables local organizations to access national resources and expertise and our funding partners to leverage their investment and achieve an impact that is truly remarkable.” www.lisc.org

One small town’s many changes

When you ask Tamaqua (PA) residents how they managed to reverse an 80-year slide, they will tell you that they are no different from the folks in other small towns struggling with job loss and population decline. Indeed, thousands of these small towns across our country have developed strategies to fill downtown vacancies, rehab old buildings and spruce up tired old playgrounds. But in Tamaqua, they are not just planning these changes; they are making them happen. In the past 20 years, the town of 7,000 has used its plans to seize opportunities and implement an amazing amount of change, including restoring the historic train station, renovating dozens of downtown buildings, opening a new art center and installing historical markers throughout the community.

What is the secret to their success? State Senator Dave Argall, whose district includes Tamaqua, summed it up like this: “What we have learned these last ten years is it takes people, it takes money and it takes a plan.”

Eileen Figel, The Institute for Comprehensive Community Development
Full article - <http://www.instituteccd.org/news/4385>

Livability Objective 2 - Land Use and Housing

Hold neighborhood meetings and complete at least simple neighborhood strategic plans, focusing on everything from forming neighborhood associations and events to infrastructure and land use improvements.

Timeframe: Long-Term Lead Agency: DPCD, PC, CC. Potential Partners: Penn State Altoona, ARHS, faith community, civic organizations, GAEDC, ABCD Corp., business community, Chamber of Commerce, Central PA Landlords Association, Central Blair Recreation Commission, BCPC, Blair County Community Action Agency, AHA, IDA, Operation Our Town.

Just as any organism is comprised of smaller components, a city like Altoona is comprised of nearly two dozen neighborhoods. Neighborhood identity is a stabilizing factor in community growth and in revitalization efforts. Engaging community stakeholders in assessing their own assets and needs is an effective method to build community awareness and buy-in to revitalization efforts. Strong and organized neighborhoods may initiate the practice and only require supportive assistance from public agencies. Weaker communities that have been more impacted by disinvestment over the years may require more pronounced engagement and initiation from public agencies to develop comprehensive plans for the future.

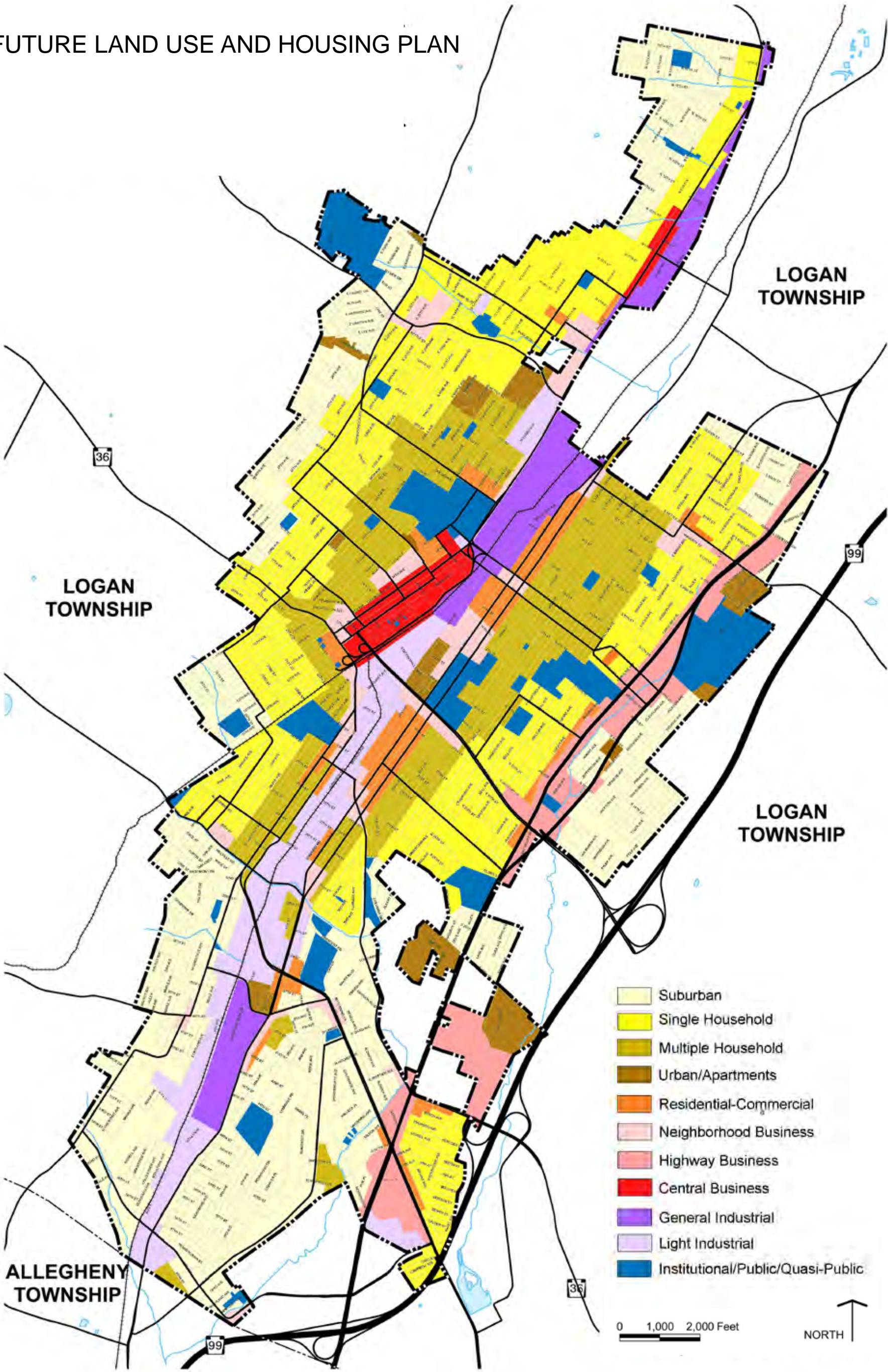
As part of the City’s Comprehensive Plan, there was an examination of market/economic conditions. Some of the influences of vitality and/or stagnation in the City are rooted in the relationship of land use mix and location. As part of developing a series of neighborhood based plan, the approach to and character realized in redevelopment and infill are critical. Specifically, as part of initiating neighborhood based planning to supplement the comprehensive plan, a goal should be established that results in each neighborhood participating in this process through some schedule (e.g.: once in every 10 years), recognizing staff resources and capacity. To optimize impact and time, groups of neighborhoods should be coordinated so that a stronger neighborhood and a weaker neighborhood alternate or undertake the process in tandem. Similarly, the process may benefit from the selection of one primarily residential neighborhood and one significantly commercial community undertaken in tandem. The neighborhood-based process should work to reflect and enhance significant community assets unique to each community, such as:

- The Main Street-style business district of Juniata;
- The strong presence of Penn State Altoona in Wehnwood;
- The unique architectural heritage of The Knickerbockers, etc.

Recent significant investments or investment potential should guide this effort as well. The Nehemiah Project effort in Lower Fairview is one such successful undertaking that deserves attention in a neighborhood-based comprehensive plan.



FUTURE LAND USE AND HOUSING PLAN



The Future Land Use and Housing Plan was developed through the public input gathered at neighborhood meetings, the planning charettes and consultation with the Planning Commission, the Zoning Hearing Board, the business community and other community stakeholders.

Other Objectives

Livability Objective 3 - Land Use and Housing

Determine the best use for Keith Athletic Field

Timeframe: Mid term
Lead Agency: CC, PC, DPCD
Existing Partners: AASD
Potential Partners: ABCD Corp, realtors, developers, civic groups, the surrounding neighborhood

The re-use of the Keith Athletic Field has been at the front of several City land use planning discussions. The balance of the future use’s impact on neighborhood character, maintenance needs and City finances.

Livability Objective 4 - Land Use and Housing

Promote existing housing rehabilitation programs and expand downtown housing opportunities – both affordable and market-rate.
Lead Agency: DPCD.

Timeframe: Ongoing.
Existing Partners: Altoona Housing Authority, IDA.
Potential Partners: PSU, ARHS, Habitat for Humanity, faith community, private sector development, realtors, media.

Action steps include:

- a. Strive to grow residential non-student and student market-rate units developed in Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods (recently completed regional supply/ demand analysis demonstrates there will be demand for more units within Downtown and the

surrounding neighborhoods). One of the many types of urban infill targets could include that these units could sit atop ground-floor convenience and specialty retail, including dining establishments.

- b. Continue the collaborative working relationship it has previously established with the Altoona Regional Heath System (ARHS) senior executives, as well as include administrative representatives from Penn State Altoona (PSU) and senior members from the Altoona Blair County Development Corporation (ABCD Corp) and GAEDC in order to promote housing to both professionals working in/in proximity to Downtown as well and to those desiring to be in walking convenience to many amenities.
- c. Develop a near- and long-term property acquisition and redevelopment strategy with ABCD Corp and GAEDC spearheading this effort. The strategy should recognize that both PSU and ARHS have pent-up demand for quality housing (for PSU, it’s growing demand from students desiring to live on campus or close to it; for ARHS, it’s quality rental housing for medical professionals relocating to the region and not yet ready to purchase a house). PSU’s and ARHS’s forward commitment to leasing the new units for a specific period of time is an important consideration in realizing this objective.



Transportation

Livability Objective 1 - Transportation

Invest in the Altoona Transportation Center as a main gateway to Blair County.

Timeframe: Short Term
Lead Agency: DPCD, CC, RA.
Existing Partners: Parking Authority, GAEDC, ABCD Corp.
Potential Partners: DPW, County of Blair, Explore Altoona Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Action steps include:

- a. Evaluate the operations and management of the Altoona Transportation Center, and especially the Amtrak train station function for the greatest economic development impact upon the tens of thousands of visitors to Altoona who interact here annually. Combining the management and operations here with other real estate management oversight has the potential to result in reduced costs, greater efficiencies, and revenue enhancement. Connecting the transportation center into the economic development system of Altoona has potential to not only realize cost efficiencies but to enhance the economic development potential of the facility.
- b. Coordinate the experience of Amtrak arrivals/departures with the similar Airport experiences to provide a one-stop approach to connecting with visitors and provide a seamless and high value approach whether traveling by rail or by air. The Altoona Transportation Center requires additional ongoing investment. This is the front door for tens of thousands experiencing Altoona, either as a first time visitor or as a daily commuter to the city. Re-examine and reconfigure the physical experience and evaluate the operations of the multimodal Altoona Transportation Center to enhance visitor experiences and the image and “visit-ability” of Altoona and its Downtown. Revisit the transit center, especially the non-parking functions (e.g: Amtrak, Amtran, etc), with the eyes of a new visitor to the community. Amtrak alone had >25,000 boardings and alightings from the Altoona station in 2010 (<http://www.amtrak.com/pdf/factsheets/pennsylvania10.pdf>). Additionally, Greyhound provides direct service to Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, New York City and beyond from this facility. Combined with more than 20,000 annual interactions by local commuters making use of the 200-space parking garage and the Amtran routes that connect at the facility, this Downtown anchor potentially interacts with more visitors to and from Altoona than any other location. In 2011, there were more than 46,000 trips occurring through this station. For comparison, the Altoona/Blair Co. airport averaged approximately 5,400 enplanements in 2009-10 (http://www.faa.gov/airports/planning_capacity/passenger_allcargo_stats/passenger/media/cy10_npcs_enplanements.pdf). Low cost enhancements such as softer lighting and potted plants could improve the user experience notably. Coordinated management efforts have potential to increase revenue through cross promotions at both the facility and other locations such as the airport or convention center.

Livability Objective 2 - Transportation

Collaborate with transit providers to further improve innovations in transit service.

Timeframe: Short Term
Lead Agency: DPCD, CC.
Existing Partners: AMTRAN
Potential Partners: PSU, Other service providers.

AMTRAN beta tests new system for transit industry
AMTRAN is partnering with Avail Technologies of State College to develop a “game-changing” new fare collection system which is expected to have a significant impact on the transit industry nationwide.

Customer Benefits
The new myFare system offers benefits to AMTRAN but more importantly it offers benefits to AMTRAN’s customers. The proximity smart card is simple to use. Just tap it on the reader. There’s no more stuffing bills into a fare-box or digging for exact change. And the card is reloadable right on the bus, saving customers the hassle of having to renew their cards at a central location. With myFare, customers can feel secure if their smart card is lost or stolen because a simple call to the agency will cancel the card. (The new fare collection system will not trigger a fare increase.)

Benefits to AMTRAN
Transit providers will be able to reduce the cost of handling the cash box each day and increase the speed at which customers enter the bus. The cutting-edge technology provides AMTRAN with an even better understanding of their ridership for service planning and as a result, can make positive enhancements to the bus system based on actual customer usage.

Industry Game-Changer
General Manager Eric Wolf believes that Avail’s new myFare system will be a game-changer for the transit industry because it’s an affordable smart-card solution. “We’ve heard a lot of promises over the years about utilizing smart card technology for transit,” says Wolf. “Avail’s myFare system delivers on that promise - without breaking the bank. Their tagline is ‘Enhance your rider’s experience,’ and that’s precisely what this technology will do.”

Partnership
Avail’s CEO, Dorsey Houtz, stated that AMTRAN was selected as the beta test site because of the exceptional decade-long relationship between the two organizations. “AMTRAN is an innovative organization with an engaged and dedicated staff,” said Houtz. “We’ve developed an excellent connection with them that will serve us well in a major project beta test like myFare.”

Technology Grant from Congressman Shuster
myFare is the final component of AMTRAN’s Smart Bus project funded by a Technology Grant through Congressman Bill Shuster. The initial component of the Smart Bus project, myStop, which provides real time bus departure information to customers, earned AMTRAN a Technology Award from the Blair County Chamber of Commerce.

Source: AMTRAN website - News Article April 02, 2012

- Action steps include:
- a. Strategize with AMTRAN and other transportation providers so service times and routes can be optimized and ridership of critical/underserved populations (e.g. seniors, Penn State University Altoona students).
 - b. Examine the evolving successes and innovations of other institutional-oriented transit systems (e.g. Penn State Univ. [State College] Park N Ride, Duquesne University, Carnegie Mellon University and University of Pittsburgh Medical Center employee rider programs) to identify lessons learned and favorable strategies for neighborhood-campus.

Services and Infrastructure

The City of Altoona’s 2012 Act 47 Plan identifies a broad range of improvements with which the City will be tasked. Beyond those measures, it is recommended the City’s departments advocate for a number of improvements to ensure continued effective delivery of goods and services. When considering the following improvements where an opinion of probable costs is identified, numbers outlined are a present value (2012 dollars) that will likely increase in some manner reflective of the Chained Consumer Price Index. In 2002, the Bureau of Labor Statistics introduced the Chained Consumer Price Index for the U.S. to be considered an accurate indicator for changes of the cost of living. For reference, in 2011 the chained consumer price index was at 129, reflecting a 29 percent increase from the base year 1999. City budgeting for short and long term improvements are encouraged to be reflective of the Index’s relationship.

Key objectives

Livability Objective 1 - Services and Infrastructure

Expand City Planning Department roles and personnel to further optimize the effectiveness Comprehensive Plan implementation and pursue/generate additional investment in the Altoona.

Timeframe: Short Term.
Lead Agency: City Council
Potential Partners: DPCD, volunteers, faith community, civic groups

The residents and businesses of the City of Altoona would benefit with an expanded City personnel specifically for three types of endeavors:

- organizing/coordinating volunteer opportunities;
- preparing grants and pursuing funding opportunities for the public sector; and
- tending to increasing building and zoning-related code enforcement needs.

Ideally, three different and distinctly responsible personnel would be fulfilling these positions. If there is administrative benefit in contracting any of these professional service positions, the City may want to consider the physical and/or fiscal benefits of doing so. A volunteer coordinator can provide interested residents and businesses a “one-stop shop” for volunteering both on an events-based schedule, and on a regular basis within several City Departments. Volunteer involvement is imperative to the City getting the most out of the next decade of Comprehensive Plan initiatives while minimizing City financial expenditures. Cities across the country are increasingly employing a volunteer coordinator to manage and direct volunteer operations. In tracking the amount of hours and cost-equivalent time that volunteers provide to these communities, it has become evident that the cost of a well managed position for the tasks and effort returned can be realized within a relatively short amount of time.

Based upon the number and depth of capital improvement projects on the City’s horizon, a more significant, more in-depth effort should be focused on the City’s pursuit of grants and other available funding pursuits. To fully realize and prepare rationale for the level of funds needed, this position should be full-time and aimed to reach to both traditional and non-traditional avenues and sources. This position is not just aimed as one of being a grant writer but also in one that forges new and strengthened relationships including potential pursuit of formalizing direct administrative and financial relationships.

The City has historically been noted for its quality attention and detail to code enforcement, especially in managing blight. It is in the best interest of the city to maintain or (as funding permits) expand the number of code enforcement, zoning, building inspections, and land development personnel needed in order to provide more

consistent enforcement and more helpful, responsive customer service. Evaluation of the City’s financial status completed in Spring 2012 notes relationship of code enforcement activity to impacts on community health, safety and welfare are directly related.

Livability Objective 2 -Services and Infrastructure

Upgrade critical infrastructure to improve health, promote quality of life, reduce long-term operational costs, and make the City more competitive with its suburban communities.

Timeframe: Long Term.
Lead Agency: CC, DPW, DPCD.
Existing Partners: Altoona Water Authority, private utilities, ABCD Corp., GAEDC, PC, Central Blair Recreation Commission.
Potential Partners: MPO, IRC, Chamber of Commerce, business community, CIL, bicyclists, Allegheny Ridge Corp., Rails-to-Trails of Central PA, PennDOT, civic groups, faith community, AMTRAN, Logan Township, Explore Altoona, West Penn Conservatory, Penn State Altoona, AASD, gardening clubs, volunteers, justice system, Operation Our Town.

Action steps include:

- a. Streets
 - i. Work with the Altoona MPO to implement projects in the long-range plan and TIP.
 - ii. Focus transportation improvements – including paving, curb, sidewalk and streetscaping projects – along prominent corridors. Specifically, on the horizon, the City’s Department of Public Works has identified a series of critical, needed long-range physical improvement projects - some of which include the following actions.

Rebuild all temporary streets to permanent (curb, storm sewer, base) \$1-2 million per year for 20 years

Replace Spring Run wall (N 8th to N 9th Ave.) \$800,000

Street light upgrade to LED technology
Approx. 3,000 street lights @ 800/light totaling \$2.4 mill

Curb and Sidewalks
Complements to PA resurfacing Lloyd Street to Walton Avenue to City Line \$2.5 million

Broadway: PSU campus–Silk Mill	\$400,000
7TH Ave. Corridor (8th to 12th St.)	\$800,000
7TH Ave. Corridor (17th to 31st St.)	\$2.8 M
4TH Street (Chestnut Ave. to 25th Ave.)	\$2.8 M
6TH Ave. Corridor (30th St. to 40th St.)	\$1 M
6TH Ave. Corridor (7th St. to Lloyd)	\$1 M

Repair/replace bridges: 3 of 23 national bridge inspection system bridges are currently structurally deficient per the bridge inspection program on Route 764 \$2 M

Repair/replace non-NBIS bridges: Brush Run Corridor) \$3.5 M

Replace 12th St. pedestrian bridge on Norfolk Southern railroad tracks \$4 M

ADA Ramp Replacement to current ADA standards 3,000-4,000 ramps at \$2,000 each = \$6-8 M

Maintain 189 miles of roads with resurfacing on 30-year cycle 6-7 miles/year @ approx. \$1.2 million annually (w/2-3% inflation per year)

- b. Bike-pedestrian corridors
 - i. Designate and begin constructing (as funds permit) a formal network of bike-pedestrian corridors to connect neighborhoods, shopping areas and amenities.
 - ii. Collaborate with the Altoona MPO to implement bicycle-pedestrian projects in the Long Range Plan, TIP, and the MPO Bike and Pedestrian Plan.
 - iii. Develop additional enhancement fund applications for needed bicycle and/or pedestrian infrastructure.
 - iv. Construct bicycle-pedestrian linkages to Hollidaysburg (and the Lower Trail) and Bellwood (and the Bells Gap Trail) as funds permit, as recommended by the Blair County Greenway Plan.

c. Crosswalks and Sidewalks

- i. Prioritize and build (or require to be built through land development) crosswalks in major City street intersections.
- ii. Work with PennDOT to build crosswalks across Plank Road, Pleasant Valley Boulevard and Valley View Boulevard in the areas designated by PennDOT’s Plank Road Pedestrian Access Study.
- iii. Create and maintain a database identifying homeowners interested in sidewalk replacement, so that adjacent homeowners may be able to replace their sidewalks together, saving money.
- iv. Develop a prioritization plan for the City to replace sidewalks, as funds become available. Potentially utilize the Chamber of Commerce’s Transportation Committee to help.
- v. Continue to require sidewalks through land development where needed to fill gaps in areas with significant pedestrian traffic.
- vi. Maintain the sidewalk requirement as part of land developments
- vii. Promote the existing adopt-a-park program.
- viii. Add recognition signage as appropriate and feasible.

- d. Storm Water Management
 - i. Outline and adopt passive storm water management standards promoted as best management practices by PA DEP to encourage greater on-site storm water infiltration
 - ii. Implement the adopted stormwater management standards into a publicly initiated project to demonstrate the desired standards’ goals and effectiveness.
 - iii. Complete capital improvement projects as necessary.

Projects on the near horizon include:

 - Replace 60-inch storm sewer – Ivyside and W. 15th Ave. \$300,000
 - Replace N. 3rd St. Storm Sewer (N. 7th Ave. to N. 11th Ave.) \$800,000
 - Replace Plank Road Storm Sewer: Union Ave. to City Line (Morningside Avenue) \$5-10 M
- e. Gateways
 - i. Improve and install gateways, welcoming both residents and visitors to the City of Altoona and fostering community pride.
 - ii. Develop a hierarchy of displays at all City gateways and landmarks (e.g. flag at Gospel Hill as a landmark and grouping of smaller flags at/near City line gateways.)
- f. Parks comprehensive plan.
 - i. Sell under-utilized and un-used parks as appropriate and as recommended by the CBRC.
 - ii. Work with the CBRC to implement City-related improvements as outlined within their current and future planning efforts.
- g. City buildings and supportive equipment infrastructure
 - i. Address necessary building upgrades for the Transportation Center, Public Works facilities, Police/ Fire department facilities
 - ii. Account for necessary equipment/vehicles for City operations

Based upon completion and findings of a Comprehensive City infrastructure Audit, the City should continue maintenance of essential safety improvements as a top priority. Excluding the 189 miles of road resurfacing and assuming today’s dollars, if the above improvements were to be completed over the next two (2) decades, it would require an annual allocation of approximately \$4 million dollars to address the projects outlined above (in addition to regular annual Public Works department maintenance and improvement projects). Based upon the 2010 US Census’ occupied housing units within the City, this equates to the equivalent additional contribution of \$209 per household annually for the next 20 years (based on 2012 dollars). Ideally, if these above projects were completed within the general 10-year timeframe of other strategies outlined in this Comprehensive Plan, the City would need to commit an annual allocation of \$8 million to these efforts. This level of commitment entails an additional contribution of \$418 per household for the next 10 years (again reflective of 2012 dollars).

Livability Objective 3 - Services and Infrastructure

Develop stronger and more predictable code enforcement.

Timeframe: Mid Term. Lead Agency: CC, City Manager.
Existing Partners: DPCD, Department of Code Enforcement, DPW.
Potential Partners: Police Department, Fire Department, civic groups, faith community, Penn State Altoona, volunteers, ZHB, PC, Builders Association, Central PA Landlords Association, Chamber of Commerce.

- Action steps include:
- a. Improve coordination of code enforcement and complaints, including, if possible, the Fire and Police Departments.
 - b. Educate the general public on what our codes say and why.
 - c. Utilize volunteers, board members, civic organizations and the faith community to both report and correct code violations.
 - d. Focus on sidewalk maintenance, prominent corridors and alleys – where appropriate and feasible.

Other objectives

Livability Objective 4 -Services and Infrastructure

Review the Altoona Planning Code and any other relevant City ordinances regularly, looking for opportunities to make City regulations more efficient, simple, and effective in promoting quality development and balancing the needs of neighborhoods – both commercial and residential.

- Timeframe: Ongoing.
Lead Agency: PC, DCED.
Existing Partners: CC, ZHB.
Potential Partners: Chamber of Commerce, Builders Association, PSU, IUP, ABCD Corp., Blair County Planning Commission, RA, IRC, other cities, Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Planning Association.
- a. Complete an Audit of municipal ordinances to determine where provisions can be updated to promote quality infill development and optimize use of property in context-sensitive manner of existing development
 - b. Prioritize needed updates and pursue as funds permit

Livability Objective 5 - Services and Infrastructure

Maintain the Blighted Property Demolition Program as a means of removing blight and preserving neighborhood quality.

- Timeframe: ongoing
Lead Agency: DPCD, CC.
Existing Partners: HUD, Department of Code Enforcement.
Potential Partners: civic groups and the faith community.
- a. Review the United States Conference of Mayors report: Vacant and Abandoned Properties Survey and Best Practices (<http://www.usmayors.org/bestpractices/vacantproperties08.pdf>)
 - b. Identify and pursue preferred best practices to further Altoona’s effectiveness and efficiency in maintaining blighted properties.

Economic Development

Key objectives

Livability Objective 1 - Economic Development

Support and, where possible, expand incentive programs for local businesses.

- Timeframe: ongoing.
Lead Agency: ABCD Corp., GAEDC, DPCD, CC.
Existing Partners: AASD, County of Blair.
Potential Partners: Chamber of Commerce, local businesses, PSU, RA.

- Action steps include:
- a. Hold workshops on Tax Increment Financing and use this economic development tool where feasible and prudent.
 - b. Identify a priority area or areas for New Market Tax Credits.
 - c. Maintain and, where possible, enhance incentive programs for mixed-use, higher density development in Downtown Altoona, Downtown Juniata, and Downtown Wehnwood.

Assuming the redevelopment of Altoona needs additional financial incentive mechanisms sufficient to attract residential mixed-use development in downtown, developing new incentive programs can attract mixed-use residential development within Altoona’s central business district.

One or more codified policies can be developed and encouraged in cooperation with ABCD Corporation to provide financial assistance to certain residential development project costs (e.g., demolition and clearance, infrastructure and site work, public amenities).

There are a number of existing legislative tools available to local taxing jurisdictions, and authorized by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, concerning incentives for revitalizing commercial and industrial property, as well as residential property. The City’s Act 47 Plan identifies a number of tools that the City can consider and ways in which these tools could be most applicable. The tax incentive could be taken advantage of by either a for-profit or non-profit entity, meaning that ABCD Corporation, PSU or others could avail themselves of this incentive.

As part of the comprehensive planning process, discussion explored how best could the City use New Markets Tax Credits to drive redevelopment. Strategically, New Markets Tax Credits (NMTC) can be used to leverage larger private investment and serve as a catalyst for investment in priority areas of Altoona. It was ideally framed out for every dollar of NMTC invested, the City of Altoona should aim to leverage five dollars of third party (private, non-profit or state government) money.

Based on the comprehensive plan’s identified strategic redevelopment and priority investment areas, and consistent with ongoing redevelopment strategies involving PSU and ARHS, the City and ABCD Corporation should create a five-year NMTC investment strategy. This investment strategy will identify not only the likely near-term investment locations and uses for the dollars the NMTC leverages, but also the project fiscal and economic impacts likely resultant from such an investment strategy. By going through such an exercise, local planning officials and the ABCD Corporation can optimize their near-term investment strategy and, in so doing, better leverage third party investments.

As the program rules require NMTCs to serve the interests of low- and moderate income persons, in particular, great care must be given when creating the strategic investment policy to show how low and moderate income neighborhoods and/or households will benefit (e.g.,

permanent job creation, new business opportunities, improved public amenities, etc.) from such strategic investment.

Livability Objective 2 - Economic Development and Downtown Revitalization

Diversify land uses and activities in Downtown Altoona, Downtown Juniata, and Downtown Wehnwood to present and market a balanced focus and effort.

- Timeframe: Ongoing.
- Lead Agencies: DPCD, GAEDC, ABCD Corp.
- Existing Partners: CC, PSU, ARHS.
- Potential Partners: Faith community, civic organizations, Downtown businesses and property owners.

A Balanced Focus and Effort for Downtown Altoona

The revitalization efforts of the City’s Central Downtown, Downtown Juniata and neighborhood commercial districts fall into three broad categories: Programmatic, Promotional, and Physical. Strong efforts cross over and blend these three headings, but as a guide, they are useful to develop a comprehensive strategy for Downtown revitalization efforts.

Programmatic Strategies

The hallmark of the programmatic approach to Downtown revitalization is the Main Street model developed and refined by the National Trust for Historic Preservation over the past forty years. Now encompassing nearly 2,000 programs, the Main Street model (<http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street/about-main-street/>) has become one of the most successful approaches to neighborhood transformation.

One value of the Main Street model is its low operating cost and high impact relative to other strategies. The relatively low cost allows for a long term strategy that engages business owners and investors over time to strengthen and grow the program and its impact. Although GAEDC and the City of Altoona follow the Main Street model on paper, they have lacked sufficient funds to implement these recommendations.

The Main Street Manager position, such as the one that had been part of Downtown Altoona until recent years when federal funding program criteria shifted, establishes a concise approach and contact for Downtown. They are, in effect, the Downtown Champion. In smaller markets, their efforts are often supplemented by student interns who tackle discreet projects in exchange for college credit or a nominal stipend. Importantly, as Downtown Champion, the Main Street Manager must have a consistent and prominent presence in Downtown. Relationships with local business owners and proprietors are strengthened when the daily experience is shared so that a full understanding of the challenges and successes of the community are shared. Issues such as parking, perception of crime, the rain during the previous weekends’ farmers’ market become individual strands in the fabric of the community and strengthen the impact of the program.

An easily accessible office that is walkable in nature is beneficial to both the Main Street Manager to reach out to business owners and proprietors, as well as in terms of reciprocity. Business owners in a community value the respect for their time and engagement when they can easily walk to the office nearby. The symbolism of the location is important, and epitomizes the focus of the programmatic efforts.

Investment

Main Street Managers act as public relations professionals for their Downtown. To do so, successful organizations track investment that takes place in the community. Programs early in their development should conduct a baseline survey of existing businesses and opportunities for investment. These surveys provide a solid approach for gathering data going forward that helps to build and advance the

Downtown community. Information that should be widely reported annually include:

- Number and list of new businesses opened each year
- Estimated number of new employees Downtown
- Total investment impact Downtown
- Number of inquiries responded to (highlights the level of interest in a community)
- Number of previously vacant spaces now occupied
- Other relevant information to the community

Volunteers

One of the hallmarks of the Main Street approach is that while a Main Street Manager may lead the program, the full team complement includes a strong and engaged group of volunteers. While the Manager is the Champion, the volunteers act as additional ambassadors. The Main Street Four Point Approach ® is often guided by volunteer committees for each topic area (eg: Design, Promotions, Economic Restructuring, and Organization.). Organizations are encouraged to make use of existing volunteer infrastructure rather than create new committees to fit a preconceived structure. The Greater Altoona Economic Development Corporation has a series of functional committees (along with a former housing committee) that are comprised of volunteers who aid in moving some of the City’s Downtown initiatives forward until the time that the City and/or GAEDC are able to once again provide a Main Street Manager. While volunteer committees may be engaged in an ongoing basis, many Main Street programs also avail themselves to interested supporters for occasional group projects such as spring outdoor planting project, graffiti paint-out efforts or the like. These projects may also have added value of recruiting new volunteers for the day who later become more engaged on the committee and policy level.

Networks and Investor Relations

The Main Street Manager works to expand the promotion and awareness of Downtown and the opportunities thereof. To do so, Main Street Managers work to maximize their networks of individuals and professionals and the exposure that these networks enhance. These types of network relationships fall into three broad categories:

- Civic: Chamber of Commerce, Lions and Kiwanis Service Clubs, etc.
- Professional: Pennsylvania Downtown Center, International Downtown Association, Urban Land Institute, National Trust Main Street Center, etc.
- Investor Connections: Architects and Real Estate Brokers are the Main Street Manager’s best friends. They connect with developers and investors and can share referrals back and forth with the Main Street Manager, even in a confidential manner to be of assistance and streamline the investment opportunities available in Downtown.

Promotional Strategies

The second leg of the Downtown revitalization strategies’ tool is promotion. While that is one of four Main Street model components, its function can be varied and significant enough that it bears additional recognition here.

Promotional strategies are often interpreted primarily or solely for special events and street festivals. While valuable, such marketing or PR/advertising activities are only one component of the promotional toolbox. Further, they must be authentic and designed to capture unique assets of a community. The Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership has used seasonal lighting strategies to encourage visitors to investigate architecture throughout their area. Likewise, Plymouth, Michigan has turned the normally indoor northern winter months into an extravaganza celebrating the outdoors and ice sculpture. Meanwhile, Gilroy, California has accented local crops for more than three decades through the Gilroy Garlic Festival.

The Altoona Railfest worked to capture the community’s unique history after struggling in recent years, eliminated features and

attractions despite the growing market for heritage travel. With the area’s strong rail and historic assets, efforts to reinvigorate and to capture this market are important. Along those lines, a community celebration of Altoona’s confectioners could conceivably develop into a singular celebration of Dutch Hill Chocolates, McIntyre’s Candies and the all-important Mallo Cup of Boyer Candies.

Promotional strategies can also be used to enhance the appearance of currently vacant street level storefronts and windows. Temporary pop-up art displays have been used successfully to fill such spaces in an eye-catching style. Participation can be encouraged with either prizes for best window display or nominal stipends to artists or organizations who participate. Establishing a number of pop-up locations at the same time helps to build buzz and draw visitors to seek them out across Downtown.

While important in creating interest, events such as these are only part of the equation. Maintaining promotional efforts year-round is the focus. Events and experiences should be considered links in a chain, where an attendee at one concert is given information about next month’s window display contest. The impact creates recognition that something special is always happening here and Downtown is the place to be.

Additional promotional elements often include Restaurant Week featuring deals and specials that build ongoing traffic and Downtown Living open houses that showcase the largely untapped residential opportunities available. These types of events should also be considered when venues of regional and/or state-wide significance, such as the 2011 Pennsylvania Brownfields Conference, occur in Altoona.

Downtown promotions should also be tapped to build awareness of partner organizations and generate volunteers for other community events. The Chamber of Commerce, for example, should be encouraged to participate and support and expand its membership at Restaurant Week. These efforts will likely start small but build momentum going forward as more activities draw more supporters, which draws more business.



Printed Materials

Widely distributed promotional materials should include the investment information gathered and tracked that was noted above in the Programmatic Strategies section. The Shopping & Business Guide can reference how many new businesses opened last year and available parking options. In this manner, the cross-pollination of efforts occurs as both Programmatic and Promotional strategies are woven together. Similar cross-pollination of Promotional strategies occurs often with Physical strategies. Notably this occurs with public art or mural programs. These efforts are designed to bring attention to an area and assist in invigorating the market nearby. The Philadelphia Mural Arts Program has now produced more than 3,000 public art murals across the city (www.muralarts.org). Originally conceived as a method to mitigate and prevent graffiti vandalism, the program has now successfully been copied by Pittsburgh’s Sprout Fund, among others. Together, these murals both in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh (as well as similarly in Steubenville, Ohio) have become

an attraction in and of themselves and as such serve an economic function. Altoona, too, recognizes that public art and murals add value and has them located throughout Downtown. Likewise, the SouthSide neighborhood in Pittsburgh has used architectural lighting throughout the neighborhood as both a promotional strategy and a crime prevention technique. Lighting of the historic facades along East Carson Street has highlighted the area’s competitive advantage, namely its architectural history, by bringing attention to it both day and evening (www.southsidepgh.com).

Physical Strategies

The third category within the revitalization toolbox involves Physical Strategies. As alluded to above, these techniques may also cross over into the Programmatic or Promotional spheres, and in fact are particularly effective when doing so. Physical strategies range from purely public realm improvements such as streetscape improvements to public/private matching grants for investors from an economic development agency to facilitating private investments by businesses themselves.

Above it was noted that public realm and streetscape improvements are particularly of value when more than aesthetic aims are considered. Direct promotional or public safety purposes overlaid onto the physical project provide for a greater impact and return on investment. Public realm improvements should establish a design consistency and branding strategy that can remain contemporary and appropriate throughout the decades-long lifespan of such projects.

Further, maintenance and investment of these improvements needs to be considered before implementation proceeds. Many communities struggle to maintain and replace brick sidewalks installed in the 1970’s with inadequate public works budgets. Repairing brick walks with asphalt patches only highlights the lack of attention being paid to the public realm. Likewise, trees that do not survive the trauma of planting and the harsh urban environment need to be replaced on a regular schedule. As Altoona has successfully pursued through the Tree Vitalize program, urban tree planting should be considered an ongoing undertaking, not a one-off activity. Annual removal of dead trees and pruning should be included as part of program plan, as should regular replacement of trees. The value of trees in streetscape projects, however, remains unquestioned. They provide a pedestrian scale and traffic calming effect upon the street, as well as soften the environment and increase the pedestrian and user experience of the area. In the public/private category of Physical Strategies, a standard approach with proven results is the establishment of matching grant programs. These programs both require active financial participation of the investor, as well as provide an incentive for participants to maximize the public good in ways that might not occur without the incentive structure. A prerequisite for matching grants must be compliance with all other programmatic efforts of the organization. It does no good, for example, to support a local investor with a matching grant for business promotion while at the same time this property owner is proceeding with the demolition of part of the historic building stock of the community.

Matching grants can be used to expand just about any program successfully. These programs, most widely recognized for façade repairs and replacements, have also been used for business signage, graffiti removal, ADA accessibility and more. The availability of these Physical programs should be widely advertised, including in the local newspaper, and projects funded through such programs should be posted that funding was made available through a matching grant of the economic development agency.

Design guidelines should be established and supported for any Downtown revitalization effort. The built environment of Downtown provides a competitive advantage to suburban environments, and this advantage is preserved and enhanced through design standards. Design guidelines provide consistency of expectations for investors. To aid in overcoming the resistance that sometimes accompanies design standards, matching minigrants or design services to aid in the preparation of architectural renderings may be considered a valuable incentive. Further, the design review process is often handled by

volunteer architects and provides a gateway for interested third parties to become engaged in the Downtown revitalization effort.

With respect to the built environment, it should be recognized that as Downtown’s age, demolition of some structures is sometimes necessary. However, demolition should be limited and proceed only under an explicit written strategy document. GAEDC does not support demolition for the purposes of creating parking lots. Redevelopment within Downtown while also considering recommendations and potential update of the 2000 Parking Demand Analysis present noteworthy and positive challenges to the way in which conservation of structurally sound and/or notably contributing structures within Downtown can be woven into new development. A variety of factors should guide the demolition process, not just the individual condition of any particular building. Rather, a check list of factors should be developed and reviewed to ensure that too much demolition does not take place and jeopardize the economic impact of the unique Downtown experience. Guidelines established by the community in advance of demolition needs allow for an objective analysis and process that places the community’s comprehensive needs (public safety, economic issues, and design aesthetic) in balance.

Finally, great care should be taken before proceeding with any demolition that is either the first on its block or an interior building within a block (as opposed to an endcap building). For some blocks, the interior buildings were not constructed with exterior walls between them, and the demolition of an interior building now exposes to the elements other buildings in manners for which they were never designed. In these and similar instances, it may in the long run be more cost effective to determine the cost of demolition for the entire block and use that figure as a guideline for assistance with any potential development project for the building in question.

The last category of Physical Strategies involves the assistance of privately-led development activity. These efforts range from financing tools such as revolving loan funds to subordinate financing to Tax Increment Financing districts. Each of these tools have been used successfully in many markets and are worth consideration. Revolving loan funds are particularly effective tools because they offer flexibility to the economic development organization as well as are available for multiple uses over time. Further, they are often combined with matching grant programs to enhance their effectiveness and attractiveness to investors.

ABCD Corp. management of several funds such as the \$1 million Facade Improvement Program, the \$9 million Enterprise Revolving Loan Fund, monies through the USDA Rural Micro Enterprise Assistance Program or the \$2 million Innovate PA Fund are examples of how one success can lead to another within the City.

The Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh’s facade loan program becomes a grant if the investor maintains ownership of the subject property in good standing for a period of five years after the loan is made, for example (http://www.ura.org/business_owners/streetfaceProgramGuidelines.pdf). Other communities have evaluated similar approaches to provide financing for retrofitting buildings to install elevators that also serve nearby buildings with adjoining floor plates, thus lessening the overall cost of development while maximizing the existing building stock.

Incentives for private investor developments should be carefully managed for greatest impact. The locations available to maximize this impact are not often relatively apparent, however. In the East Liberty neighborhood of Pittsburgh, for example, many years of effort to revitalize the neighborhood’s commercial core focused on Penn Avenue to no avail. Once these efforts rotated ninety degrees to abut the economically healthy Shadyside community along Centre Avenue for a new Whole Foods store, the “overnight success” became well recognized. The lesson: development success may come more readily from adjacency to areas that are strong economic performers, not necessarily the central location of the development.

Encouraging the growth of economic generators, even nonprofit

institutions such as universities and medical centers can readily be leveraged to benefit the community at large. Detroit’s Live Midtown program provides financial support to employees of three institutional non-profits to both homeowners and renters interested in living in the midtown Detroit area (www.livemidtown.org). The success of this program has resulted in a residential building boom and vacancy rates below five percent, in an otherwise economically challenged city suffering from fiscal pressures and economic decline well categorized as among the worst in the nation. With the success of the program, new taxpaying residents are moving in and developers are busy converting historic properties into residential lofts throughout the area.

Summary

The toolbox of commercial area revitalization has many options available. Low cost Programmatic Strategies have long track records of success that focus on small staffs and incremental improvements that create a dynamic neighborhood over time. Promotional Strategies build from these efforts and often bridge the gap with Physical Strategies. Physical Strategies’ higher costs should be carefully planned beyond the implementation phase through ongoing maintenance to maximize their impact. The balance of physical strategies with maintenance strategies is imperative. A well rounded and successful commercial revitalization strategy is comprehensive and includes components of all of these elements.

Urban Design and the Public Realm

As evidenced through cities throughout the world, a high quality public realm can:

- increase the use of public space and support associated business
- encourage greater participation in community and cultural activities and;
- enhance personal safety

Livability Objective 1 - Design

Create a City-wide wayfinding signage system, as funding permits, like those used in Pittsburgh and Johnstown.

Timeframe: Long Term.
Lead Agency: CC, DPW.
Existing Partners: DPCD, GAEDC, ABCD Corp., PennDOT, MPO.
Potential Partners: Explore Altoona, Chamber of Commerce, Penn State Altoona (for design assistance)

The City should create a request for proposal to pursue a comprehensive, unified wayfinding signage system that consists of the following:

- City Gateways
- Commercial District Gateways
- Destination Directional Signs (to include historic districts and sites)
- Destination Identity Signs
- Parking Directional Signs
- Parking Identity Signs
- Pedestrian Directional Signs
- Interpretive Signs and kiosks

Livability Objective 2 - Design

Focus more resources on public street tree maintenance through the Shade Tree Commission.

Timeframe: Long Term. Lead Agency: STC, CC, DPCD, DPW.
Potential Partners: Penn State Altoona, Penn State Cooperative Extension, gardening clubs, civic groups, faith community, volunteers.

Tree Pittsburgh was founded in 2006, growing out of citizen concern for the health and well being of Pittsburgh’s trees. The organization, however, has its roots in the long-felt need for a 501(c)(3) charitable non-profit urban forestry organization among members of the City of Pittsburgh’s Shade Tree Commission. Tree Pittsburgh’s mission is to enhance the City’s vitality by restoring and protecting the urban forest through community maintenance, planting, education and advocacy. The organization’s vision is to be a leader in creating a healthy, attractive and safe urban forest by inspiring and engaging citizens to maintain, plant and protect trees.

Unfortunately, Pittsburgh, along with many other cities in our country, has experienced a substantial drop in the number of trees along its streets due to a variety of causes, including construction, pollution, disease, and neglect. A consortium of Carnegie Mellon University graduate departments conducted a study of Pittsburgh’s urban forest in 1995. Painting a bleak picture of life in the streets for the city’s trees, the report identified the following conditions: Pittsburgh’s urban forest is clearly in decline.

The Forestry Division of the Pittsburgh Department of Public Works removes four trees for each one planted. An estimated 20 percent of trees that are planted in city rights of way do not survive five years. Pittsburgh’s Forestry Division is critically understaffed, for the most part able to engage only in crisis management. In the 1970s, over thirty people were employed in the Forestry Division; there are now a total of twelve people, including two clerical staff.

Three key recommendations were made in the CMU report:

- 1. Establish a Pittsburgh Shade Tree Commission.
- 2. Improve the maintenance of young trees.
- 3. Conduct a comprehensive inventory of Pittsburgh’s street trees.

In response to the report’s first recommendation the Pittsburgh Shade Tree Commission (PSTC) was established by city ordinance in 1998 to “preserve and maintain as many trees as possible in the city.” Initially, PSTC limited its work to neighborhood-wide tree plantings and community educational projects. Since its inception, PSTC has planted a total of 450 trees in neighborhood-planting projects conducted in Lawrenceville, Uptown, Southside, Carrick and Friendship.

In response to the second recommendation of the CMU study, PSTC recruited nearly 200 volunteer Tree Tenders from neighborhoods where planting projects occurred and trained them to care for the newly planted trees. The PSTC also helped community groups organize tree care work events and maintained a small tool bank for use by volunteers.

The nature of these recommendations led to the creation of the successful and expanding Tree Pittsburgh. TreePittsburgh.com History, 2012



Positively Resource Rich

The City’s resources include its financial make-up, historic/cultural assets, open space, best management practices and energy conservation.

Resource Objective 1

Continue to compare City finances and spending patterns to those of other Third Class Cities. Seek to understand the positives and drawbacks of those patterns and seek to match or exceed the positive performance of others.

- Timeframe: Short Term.
- Lead Agency: Finance Department.
- Existing Partners: DPCD, CC, Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development.
- Potential Partners: Chamber of Commerce, ABCD Corp., PSU, IUP.

The comparative budget analysis of communities can continue to be a way in which lessons learned can be identified. Further, *In Philadelphia's Shadow: Small Cities in the Third Federal Reserve District* provides an in-depth study of the cities of Eastern Pennsylvania, Delaware and Southern New Jersey, performed by the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia. The cities it examines are Allentown, Bethlehem, Camden (NJ), Chester, Harrisburg, Lancaster, Reading, Scranton, Trenton (NJ), Wilkes-Barre, Wilmington (DE), York and Altoona. From 1940 to 2010, it examines population decline, employment, industries, family income, housing, poverty, crime, home sales and other characteristics. To the greatest extent possible the City should strive to not exceed an annual debt service of 5% of its budget.

Resource Objective 2

Increase awareness of the historic districts and their value to the greater City and its identity.

- Timeframe: Mid Term.
- Lead Agency: DPCD, DPW, CC.
- Existing partners: PC, Explore Altoona , GAEDC, ABCD Corp.
- Potential Partners: local architects, Blair County Historical Society, Altoona Enhancement Committee, City website, Chamber of Commerce, City businesses, PSU Altoona, civic groups, faith community, historic district property/home owners.

The value of the built environment is multiple. Not only have resources (both financial and natural) already been expended to create this space and are not required to do so again, but the built environment is invaluable in “place making” strategies. Many communities, from the Georgetown neighborhood of Washington DC to the South Side of Pittsburgh to nearby Hollidaysburg have successfully used their historic assets as an anchor for economic growth and revitalization efforts. Leverage the architectural assets of the built environment into an economic driver for community revitalization.

Resource Objective 3

Work with the County and regional watershed organizations to create an education program for storm water best management practices.

- Timeframe: On-going
- Lead Agency: DPW
- Existing Partners: Altoona Water Authority, PA DEP, Blair County Conservation District
- Potential Partners: Blair County Planning Commission, Juniata Clean Water Partnership, PA DCNR, PSU

***In Philadelphia’s Shadow: Small Cities in the Third Federal Reserve District* notes:**

- **Altoona has, by far, the smallest percentage of African-American or Latino residents of any of these cities.**
- **Altoona has, by far, the highest percentage of its county’s total retail sales of any of these cities.**
- **At 65% home ownership, Altoona is the only one of these cities where the majority of its residents are not renters. (70% of Pennsylvanians as a whole live in homes they own, which is only 5% higher than in the City of Altoona.)**
- **Of the studied cities, only Allentown, Bethlehem, Scranton, Wilmington and Trenton had a higher median household income than Altoona (\$33,623) in 2009. And from 1989-2009, only Bethlehem and Scranton median family incomes grew faster than Altoona’s.**
- **Of the studied cities, only Bethlehem had a lower percentage of residents living in poverty than Altoona.**
- **Only Bethlehem and Wilkes-Barre had a lower percentage of their populations under the age of 18, and only Scranton, Bethlehem and Wilkes-Barre had a higher population over the age of 65.**
- **Altoona was right in the middle of the cities examined in terms of residents with a bachelor’s degree or higher.**
- **Only Allentown had a higher labor force participation rate than Altoona’s 74.1%.**
- **Only Bethlehem had a lower violent crime rate than Altoona’s 303 incidents per 100,000 residents (compare that to Camden’s 2,380 or Harrisburg’s 1,770 or Reading’s 953).**
- **As low a cost as Altoona homes are, the 2009 median sale price in the City was relatively high amongst the cities: only Allentown, Bethlehem, Lancaster, Scranton and Wilmington had higher prices**

Resource Objective 4

Identify and promote energy conservation opportunities for residents and businesses

- Timeframe: Long-term
- Lead Agency: DPCD, DPW, PC, CC
- Existing Partners: IRC, Blair County Community Action Agency, utilities
- Potential Partners: PSU Center for Sustainability, Pennsylvania Resources Council, Penn Future, Blair County Conservation District, civic organizations, faith community, Chamber of Commerce, City website

Several dozen cities have been the subject of study for energy efficiency. The International Energy Agency (IEA) has sought to develop a transparent, research-based process to define where efficiencies exist and where they do not as related to energy consumption within cities. Through the demonstration of municipal energy efficiencies, the community can then promote the significance and cost savings on to its residents and businesses.

http://www.iea.org/publications/freepublications/publication/cities_bpp.pdf Promoting Energy Efficiency Best Practice in Cities
- A pilot study - IEA, May 2008



Municipalities with successful stormwater BMP programs have demonstrated that there is more than one solution to managing stormwater. Infrastructure improvements, restoration, incentives, and regulations can be combined to develop a successful stormwater management program. Six types of incentive programs might be used by local governments in an effort to reduce the volume of runoff that is discharged to the municipal storm sewer system. These incentives include:

- 1. Fee Discount:** When a municipality’s stormwater fee structure is based on calculation of impervious cover that closely reflects the costs incurred in managing stormwater from each property, a discount may be offered if a project reduces impervious area by including stormwater BMPs and managing stormwater runoff on-site. One example is Chicago’s Floor Area Premium Program.
- 2. Development Incentives:** Municipalities may offer special zoning exceptions, expedited permitting, or modified stormwater requirements during the permitting process. For example, providing an expedited permit review for new development projects that include stormwater BMPs will encourage the use of innovative techniques reducing the burden on the storm sewer system and subsequently delaying the need for pipe sizing upgrades to the storm sewer system. One example is Philadelphia’s Fast Track Permitting Program.
- 3. Rebates and Installation Financing:** By providing tax credits or funding that encourages innovative and creative solutions for reducing stormwater runoff, a municipality can reduce stormwater management costs while passing on savings to the community. One example is Portland’s Clean River Rewards Incentive and Discount (CRID) Program.
- 4. Awards and Recognition Programs:** Municipalities may increase implementation of stormwater BMPs by offering grant awards or recognizing unique efforts that reduce impacts on the storm sewer system. This not only encourages participation, but also establishes partnerships by working with the public and private sector to strive towards the common goal of improving water quality and reducing stormwater runoff. One example is Portland’s Clean River Rewards Incentive and Discount (CRID) Program.
- 5. Green Landscaping Requirements:** Municipalities can create additional incentives for stormwater BMPs by implementing permit requirements that encourage increased quantity and quality of planted areas within affected zones. This requirement provides developers and designers with flexibility in meeting development standards through mechanisms that are complementary to other stormwater management programs within the zone. One example is Seattle’s Green Factor Program.
- 6. Cool Roof Exemptions:** A municipality may provide exemptions, or waivers, for an existing cool roof requirement when a green roof is installed. This allows for cost-effective stormwater and environmental management while increasing energy-efficiency and reducing energy costs. One example is Chicago’s Cool Roof Provision.

Water Environment Research Foundation, Using Incentive Programs to Promote Stormwater BMPs, 2010, <http://www.werf.org/liveablecommunities/index.htm>

Positively Oriented

In the case of Altoona, the goal of developing Active Design principles is to create places that people want to experience and relate to – places where people want to visit, enjoy, recreate, commune and re-turn again. In short, just as the City has incorporated some of these initiatives into facilities such as Booker T. Washington Park and Kipple Run, the City can infuse physical and mental health and fitness considerations and objectives into municipally controlled public policies and capital improvement projects. The evaluation of any proposed project can be evaluated in context of the degree to which the Active Design principles are achieved.

Well-being Objective 1

Work with AMTRAN and others to transform public transit into a series of Wellness Lines targeting routes that connect or are in the vicinity of Altoona Regional Health System facilities.

Timeframe: Mid Term
Lead Agency: CC, AMTRAN
Potential Partners: DPCD, Altoona Regional Health System, others.

Action steps under this objective include:

- a. Explore the physical and fiscal trade-offs aligning transit with development/redevelopment.
- b. Determine available funding sources and short-term vs long-term partnerships
- c. Pursue projects and funding as available.

Well-being Objective 2

Improve the cleanliness of neighborhoods and streetscapes by instituting a revolving neighborhood green sweep as funds permit.

Timeframe: Mid Term
Lead Agency: CC, DPCD, DPW.
Potential Partners: trash haulers, business community, faith community, civic groups, Operation Our Town.

Action steps under this objective include:

- a. Create a map of routes and collection areas; designate days per area as appropriate
- b. Develop and share literature regarding clean-up preparations including timeframes, accepted/not accepted materials, weight limits, assistance available for seniors/disabled residents, etc.

Well-being Objective 3

Create opportunities for residents to improve their wellness.

Timeframe: Mid Term
Lead agency: ARHS, PC, CC.
Existing Partners: RA.
Potential Partners: DPCD, AASD, Central Blair Recreation Commission, AHA, IDA, PSU, civic organizations, faith community, gardening clubs, volunteers, business community, VA Hospital, Chamber of Commerce, Operation Our Town.

Action steps under this objective include:

- a. Support and expand the size or possibly even number of farmers’ markets in the City.
- b. Start an Active Altoona campaign in context of the City Progress Card, as funds permit.

Fit Community Case Studies
These case studies summarize the Fit Community initiative, an innovative program that helped generate changes in policies and environments in municipalities and counties across North Carolina between 2006 and 2012. The Fit Community Case Studies provide a rich array of stories and lessons learned from varied settings that can be used by community partnerships, funders and technical assistance providers engaged in similar work across the state and the nation. The case studies also offer a variety of relevant resources from featured Fit Community grantees and designees.
<http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/events-resources/resources/fit-community-case-studies, 2012>



BACKGROUND STUDIES

The City of Altoona takes great pride in its history. This heritage as highlighted on the City’s website includes:

“The Altoona area was originally inhabited by native Americans of the Iroquois Confederacy. The first western settlers arrived in the mid-1700s. A series of stockades were constructed in the region as a defense against Indian raids, including Fort Roberdeau. In 1811, iron making began at the Allegheny Furnace. The owner of the furnace built the Baker Mansion nearby. By 1831, the Main Line of the Pennsylvania Canal was extended west to Hollidaysburg. The Canal connected to the Allegheny Portage Railroad in 1834, which hoisted boats over the Allegheny Ridge on primitive rail cars.

Altoona owes its origin and growth to the Pennsylvania Railroad. While most cities were located along rivers, Altoona was located at the approach to the Horseshoe Curve. The Pennsylvania Railroad was chartered by Pennsylvania in 1846. In 1849, the Railroad began developing the community that became Altoona - as a staging area for the construction of the rail line. By 1850, the railroad had been constructed from Harrisburg west to Altoona. The Allegheny Ridge was a major barrier to the completion of an east-west railroad across Pennsylvania. Through innovative engineering, the Horseshoe Curve was completed in 1854 west of Altoona to provide a westward passage at a grade that was gradual enough for heavy trains. The Horseshoe Curve is now designated a National Historic Landmark. Once this route was completed, the railroad was able to replace the canal as the primary means of transportation. By 1858, the travel time between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh had been reduced to 15 hours, as opposed to the three days required before the railroad was built.

The original rail yard in Altoona was centered in the vicinity of the present-day Station Medical Center between 9th and 10th Avenues. The west side of this rail yard became the commercial center, while the east side was primarily residential. The most prominent building was the Logan House, on the site of the present Post Office. Altoona was incorporated as a borough in 1854, when it included approximately 2,000 residents. The population grew to over 10,000 by 1870 - partly as a result of demand for rail cars during the Civil War. Altoona was incorporated as a city in 1868.

By 1880, Altoona’s population had reached almost 20,000. This growth in residents was accompanied by establishment of strong churches, clubs and a range of businesses. Downtown Altoona for decades served as the commercial center for the entire surrounding region. Llyswen was a carefully planned suburban community that was laid out between 1894 and 1907 to take advantage of streetcar access.

By 1925, 14,000 of the 17,000 industrial workers in the area were employees of the Pennsylvania Railroad. The rail yards produced locomotives, other rail cars and railroad equipment. At one point, the present-day location of the Station Mall included three roundhouses and the main locomotive construction facilities. Other major industries included silk, meat-packing and clothing.

Altoona grew through new construction and annexations that almost doubled the size of the city, including the annexation of the Borough of Juniata. The development of the City was spurred by horse-drawn trolleys in the 1880s and electrified trolleys in the 1890s. These trolleys allowed residents to live further from their workplaces. Commercial development occurred along many of these trolley routes, which extended along most of major streets of present-day Altoona.

The early 1900s saw tremendous growth, from a 1900 population of almost 39,000 to an all-time peak of 82,000 residents in 1930. After World War II, the demand shifted from steam locomotives to more cost-efficient and reliable diesel and electric locomotives, and construction of new locomotives ended in Altoona in the 1950s. The repair and maintenance of locomotives continues to employ a large number of people in the City even through ownership changes from the Pennsylvania Railroad to Penn Central to Conrail and to present-day owner Norfolk Southern.

After World War II the era of railroad ended. All business and commerce up to this time was conducted between cities and those cities were connected with railroads as the main transporter of goods. As the nation developed the interstate highway system, the corridors of commerce moved away from the cities and their rail connections. Just like the rest of the nation, the retail activity increased and relocated to the newly developing shopping districts located along the nearby highway corridors outside the City limits. The 1990s saw Altoona finally getting its link to the interstate highway system.

As the local economy shifted away from being rail centered, local leadership established enterprise development programs under the Altoona Enterprise program. This effort diversified the area’s economy and attracted new manufacturing jobs. Simultaneously, urban redevelopment activities revitalized major sections of the city and created new housing, educational and professional opportunities.

Figure 4-1: Total Households by Geography

Geography	Household Population (in thousands)		
	2000	2010	2015
City of Altoona	47.6	45.9	45.7
Blair County	125.0	122.1	122.5
Altoona Region	560.9	551.3	551.1

Figure 4-2: Annualized Percentage Change in Household Population

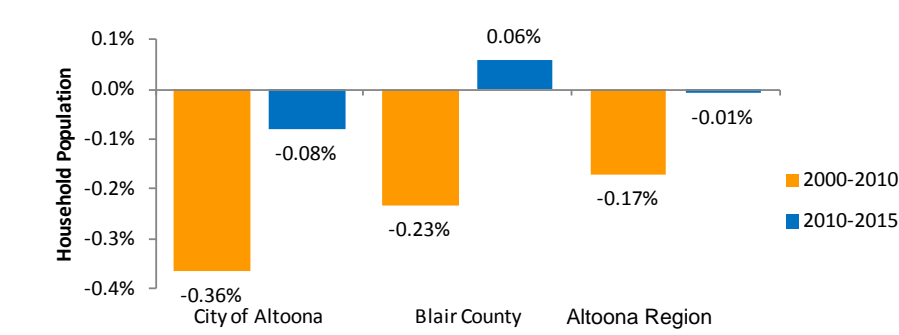


Figure 4-3: Annualized Percentage Change in Total Households

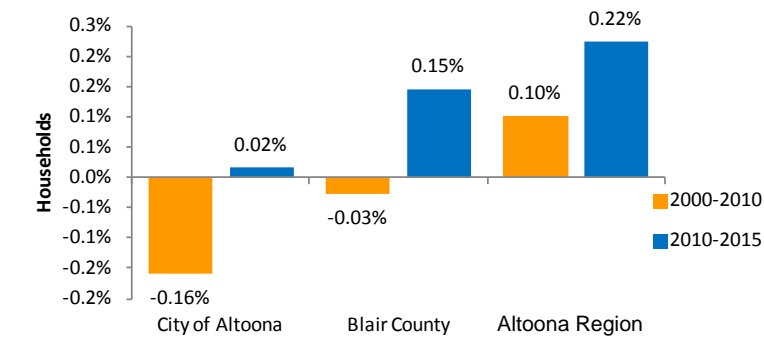


Figure 4-4: City of Altoona Family and Non-Family Households

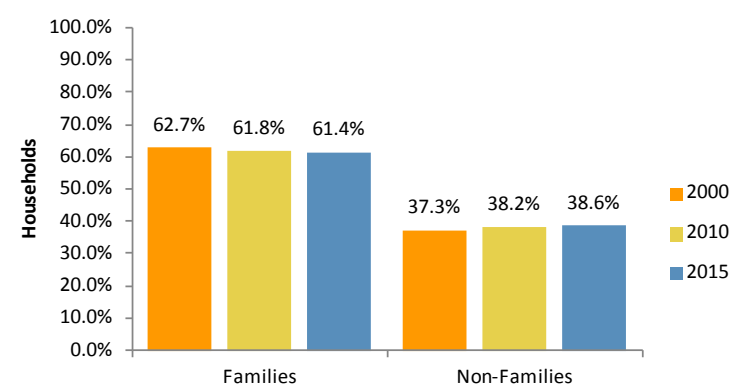


Figure 4-5: City of Altoona Housing Units

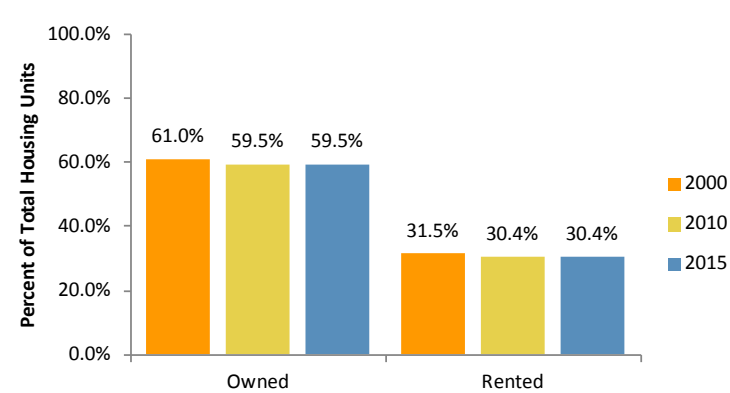
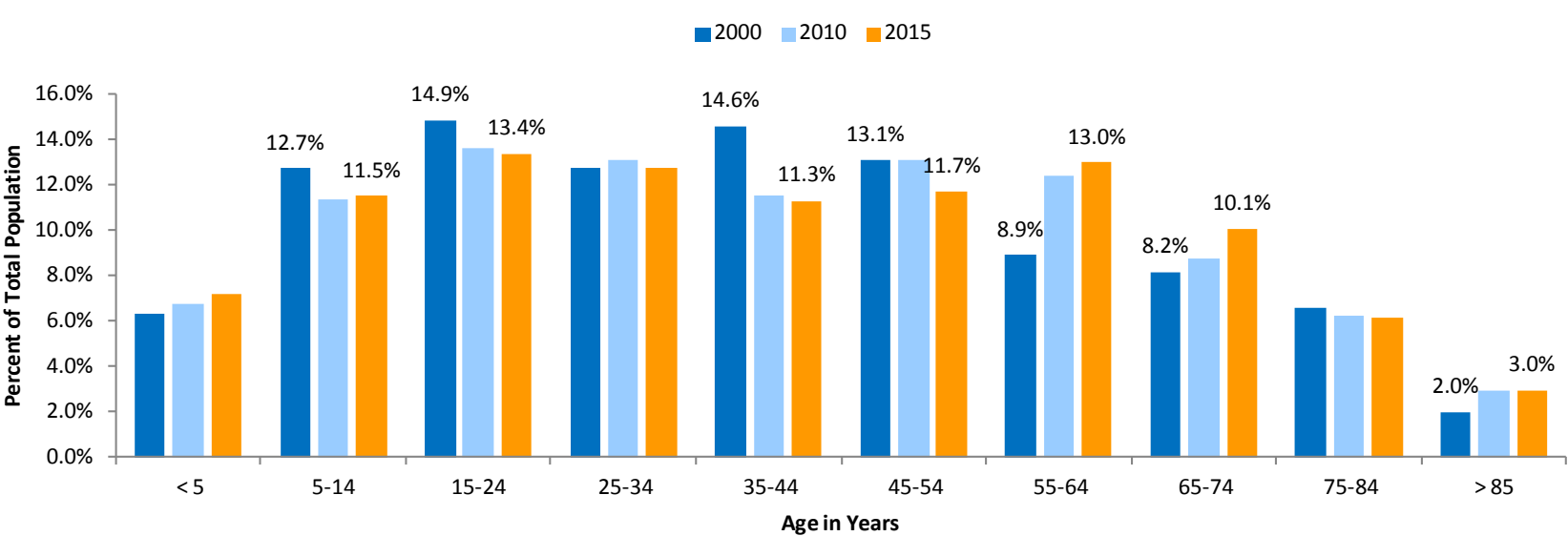


Figure 4-6: City of Altoona Age Cohorts by Percentage Sharing, educational and professional opportunities



Socio-Economic Trends

Socio-economic trends have been analyzed for the City of Altoona, for Blair County and for the Altoona Region, which is represented by Blair County and adjacent counties (Clearfield, Centre, Huntington, Bedford and Cambria). Demographic trends and projection analyses were performed using U.S. Census data and proprietary demographic analysis software (ScanUS).

Households

“Household population” refers to the total population minus all persons living in group quarters or institutions. The City of Altoona Blair County and the Altoona Region all experienced relatively flat household population growth from 2000 to 2010.

Over the course of the past decade, the number of city residents declined by 0.36 percent per year, slightly greater than Blair County (-0.23 percent) and than the Altoona Region (-0.17 percent). Household population is expected to remain flat through 2015 in all three geographies.

Similar to household population, total households in all three geographic areas remained relatively unchanged from 2000 to 2010 with minor declines in the city and county and a slight increase in the region. All three geographies are projected to add a small number of households from 2010 to 2015.

The lack of robust population and household growth suggests that short-term planning should focus primarily on providing occupational opportunities and quality-of-life improvements for the existing population which, in turn, has the potential to drive longer-term growth.

Family Households

Slightly less than two-thirds of all households in the City of Altoona were family households in 2000 (the US Census defines a “family household” as having two or more related persons). From 2000 to 2010, the ratio of family to non-family households held steady, with a very slight decline in family households and a corresponding uptick in non-family households. This trend is projected to continue through 2015. Blair County displays a similar makeup of family and non-family households, with about five percent more family households than Altoona.

Housing Tenure and Inventory

Trends in housing tenure in both Altoona and Blair County mirror family and non-family households closely. Each geography contains a similar percentage of owner-occupied housing units as it does family households; the same holds for shares of rented units and non-family households. Approximately six in ten housing units were owner-occupied in 2000, while three in ten were rental units. This trend remained steady through 2010 and, with notable stability, is expected to continue virtually unchanged through 2015. Blair County had a slightly higher percentage (10%) of owner-occupied units in 2000 and 2010, and is projected to remain steady through 2015 as well. Based on Us Census 2011 housing stock estimates, a majority

of units are single-family detached structures and built prior to 1960 (additional housing data is found later with this document.)

Population Age

The City of Altoona, mirroring regional and national trends, is experiencing an increasing trend in its aged population. Between 2000 and 2015, the three age groups that are projected to see the most growth in terms of percentage of total population are the over-85 (41.0 percent growth), 55-to-64 (40.1 percent growth), and 65-to-74 (18.2 percent growth) cohorts. All other cohorts remained flat or declined as a percentage of total population over the same period (except for the under-five population, which increased its share slightly).

Household Income

Altoona had a lower median household income in both 2000 and 2010 than both Blair County and the region; in both years, Blair County had the highest median income. From 2010 to 2015, however, Altoona is projected to have the strongest median household income growth (14.0 percent, compared to 8.1 percent in Blair County and 7.6 percent in the Altoona Region). Over the same period Altoona is projected to see an approximately 136 percent growth in households earning more than \$75,000 per year. In 2015 more than one in five Altoona households is projected to earn above \$75,000 (compared to less than one in ten households in 2000).

Educational Attainment

All three geographies saw growth of more than 3.5 percent per year in the share of degree-holding adults from 2000 to 2010. However, similar to household incomes, a smaller percentage of Altoona adults hold an associate degree or higher in comparison to the other two geographies.

Further growth in educational attainment is projected through 2015. It is specifically projected to be higher in the Altoona Region than in the City and the County. Increasing educational attainment levels are a favorable trend for job growth in key industries as this is a positive indicator for employers of a growing skilled labor market.

Conclusion

The City of Altoona, Blair County and the Altoona Region all share similar demographic trend characteristics over the period examined.

Households drive markets; flat population and household growth experienced from 2000 to 2010 (and projected through 2015) generally imply a more limited demand for new housing products as well as for new goods and services. Short-term demand for public amenities, employment opportunities, as well as goods and services, therefore, will be driven primarily by the existing market.

Should this trend continue, the overall aging of the Altoona population (which mirrors regional and national trends) carries implications for the types of housing and commercial retail options that will be in demand. Examples include housing units that are smaller in scale and that feature handicapped-accessible amenities as well as more convenience-oriented retail than specialty retail.

Despite flat growth trends and an aging population, some positive demographic trends have surfaced. The rise of household incomes in Altoona appears to be outpacing that of the County and the Altoona Region over the 2000-2015 period. Similarly, increasing educational attainment levels bode well for household income and job potential.

Figure 4-7: Median Household Income by Geography

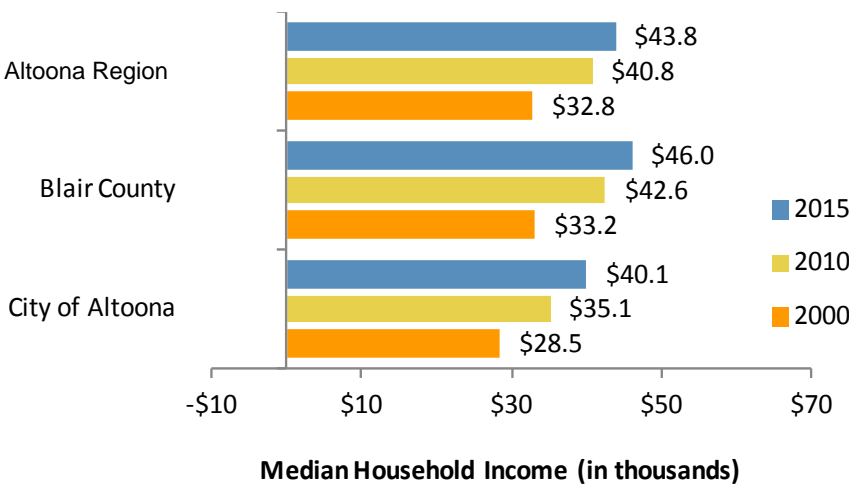


Figure 4-8: City of Altoona Household Income by Percentage Share

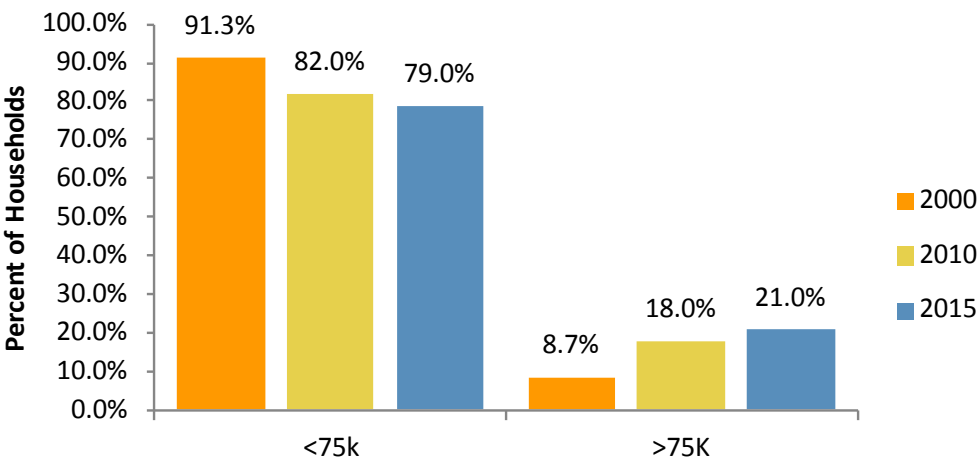


Figure 4-9: Adults with an Associate Degree or Higher by Percentage Share by Geography

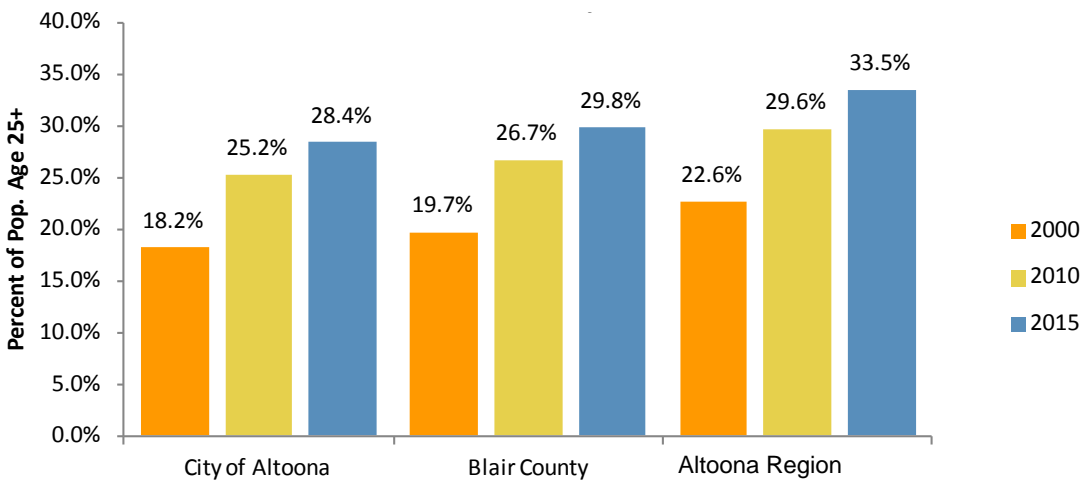


Figure 4 -10: Total Population Projections, Under 19 Years, Blair County

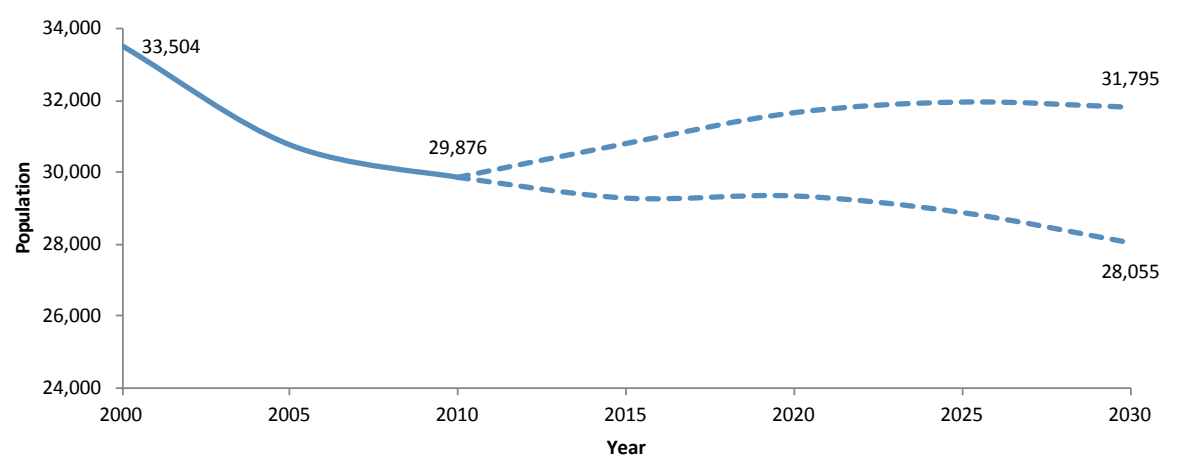


Figure 4-11: Total Population Projections, 20 to 64 Years, Blair County

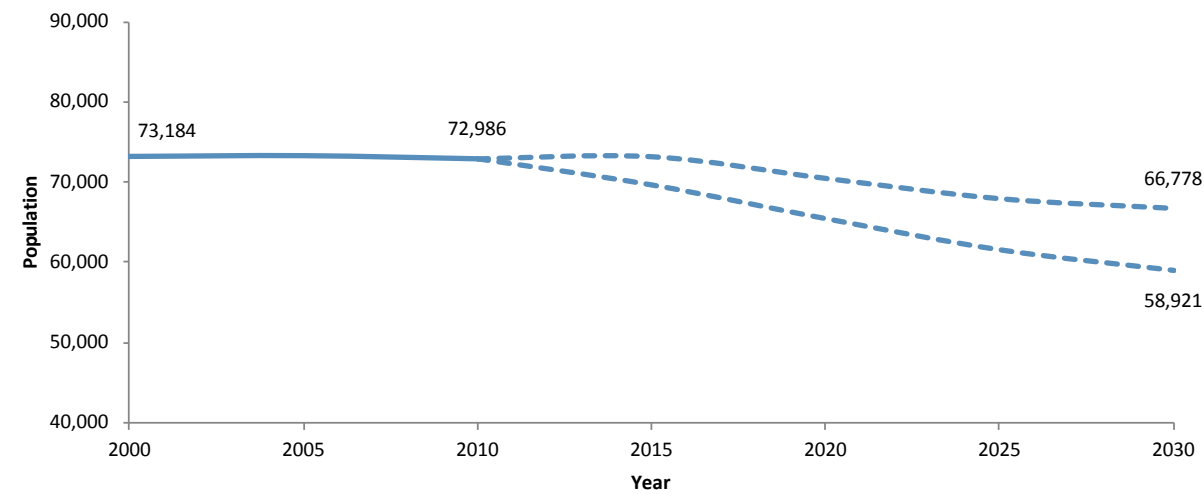


Figure 4 -12: Total Population Projections, 65 Years and Over, Blair County

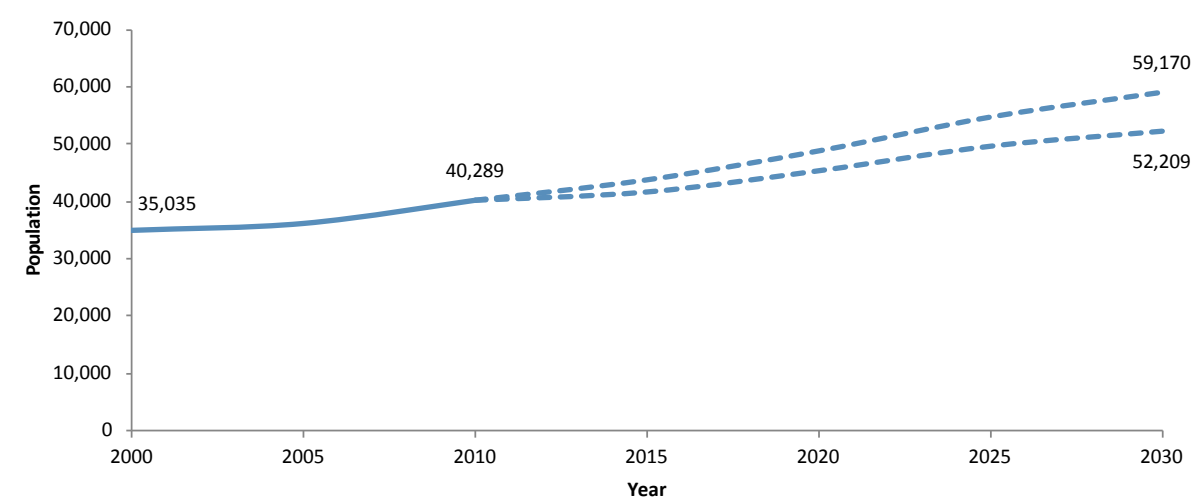


Figure 4-13: Projected Number of Households with Income <\$75,000, Blair County

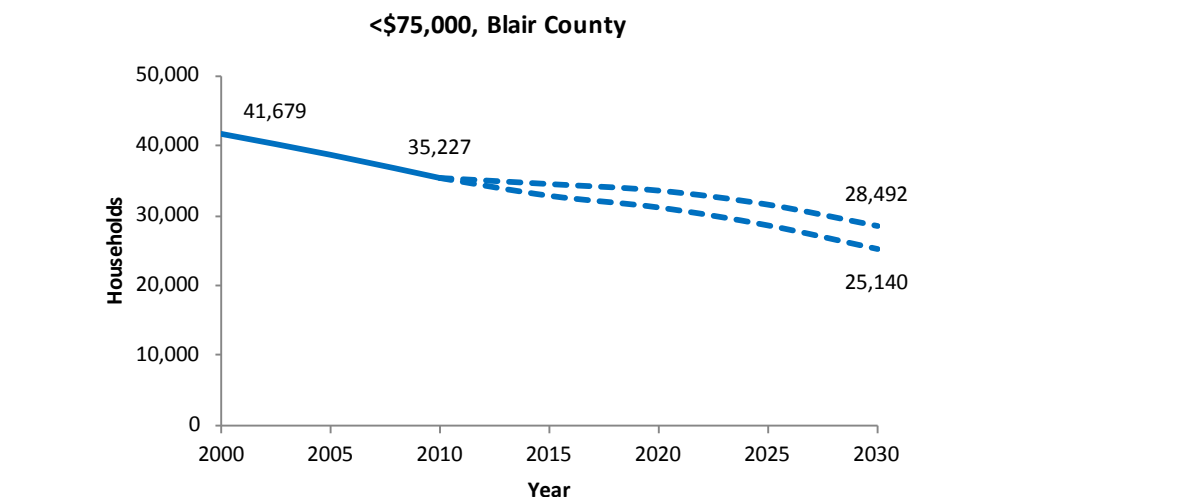
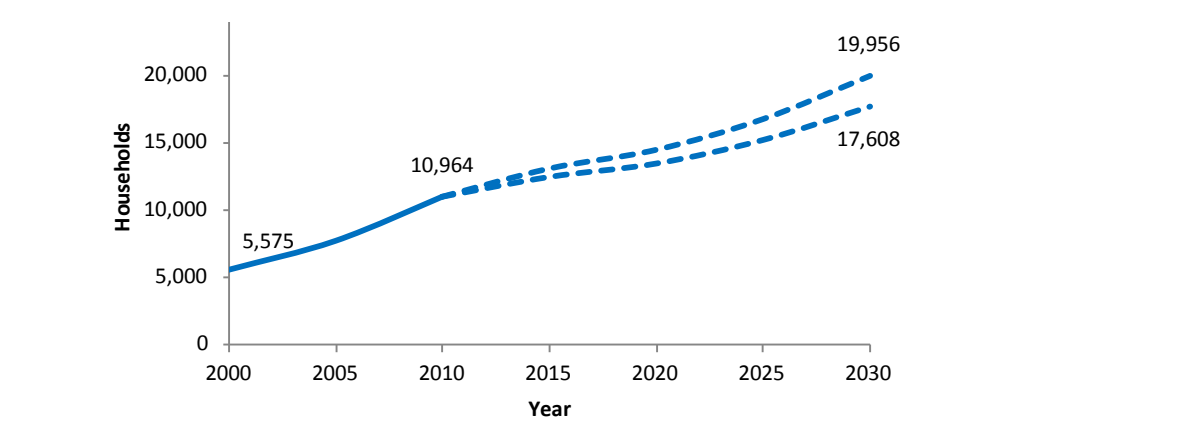


Figure 4 -14: Projected Number of Households with Income >\$75,000, Blair County



Long-Term Demographic Projections

Projected demographic data is presented for only Blair County, Pennsylvania. Woods and Poole-projected demographic data for Blair County, Pennsylvania was used and indexed to the current U.S. Census to project key demographic metrics to year 2030. Because projected data is inexact, these figures are presented with increasing margins of error, from +/-2.5 percent in year 2015 to +/- 6.25 percent in year 2030.

Population and Household Projections

Total population in Blair County remained relatively flat from 2000 to 2010; it declined by 0.2 percent per year. Long-term projections show a continuance of relatively flat population change; over the next two decades, Blair County’s population is projected to grow as much as 5.3 percent (0.27 percent per year) or to decline as much as 7.1 percent (-0.35 percent per year). Total households in Blair County, mirroring population trends, declined very slightly from 2000 to 2010. Through 2030 household projections range from a slight growth of 4.8 percent (0.24 percent per year), which could level off around 2025, to a decline of 7.5 percent (-0.38 percent per year). Again, these projections closely align with long-term population projections for the county.

Projections by Age Cohorts

The 19-and-under age cohort in Blair County declined from 2000 to 2010, from approximately 33,500 to 29,900 (a decline of nearly 11 percent). Projections to 2030 show that this decline is likely to moderate, perhaps declining no more than 6.1 percent over the twenty-year period from 2010 to 2030. The declining trend also may reverse, with the upper projection suggesting a possible 6.4 percent increase in the 19-and-under cohort. Any growth, however, likely would level off around the year 2025. The 20-to-64 year old working age population in Blair County remained virtually unchanged from 2000 to 2010. However, projections to 2030 show a slight to moderate decline for this population segment: the number of persons aged 20 to 64 in Blair County is projected to decline between 8.5 (-0.43 percent per year and 19.3 percent (-0.96 percent per year). In contrast to the under-65 population, the 65-and-older age cohort in Blair County grew 15.0 percent from 2000 to 2010. This growth trend is projected to continue through 2030; by that year, the 65-and-older population in the county could grow between 29.6 percent (1.48 percent per year) and 46.9 percent (2.34 percent per year).

Projected Household Income

Blair County experienced household income growth from 2000 to 2010, when households earning less than \$75,000 per year declined by 15.5 percent and those earning more than \$75,000 per year nearly doubled (increasing by 96.7 percent). Projections to 2030 suggest a continuance of these trends, with moderate change through 2020 followed by more robust change from 2020 to 2030. Overall, the number of households earning more than \$75,000 per year is projected to increase between 60.6 percent (3.0 percent per annum) and 82.0 percent (4.1 percent per annum) from 2010 to 2030.

Conclusion

The long-term demographic projections for Blair County tend to mirror recent trends and short-term projections from 2000 to 2015.

Population and households should see a relatively flat change over the next two decades, with slight growth or decline projected for both. Similarly, Blair County’s population is projected to continue an aging trend through 2030. The 65-and-older cohort should grow moderately while the under-65 population remains flat or wanes.

Finally, household incomes, which have increased from 2000 to 2010, should continue to see healthy growth over the next two decades. It is important to note that these projections, which are built using a cohort-component model, are based on recent historical and current demographic trends. New market demand generated through investment could shift these projections upward considerably.

Industry and Labor Trends

Industry and labor trends were analyzed using the US Census Bureau’s Quarterly Workforce Indicators and the On The Map program. The analysis was performed on a ten-mile radius of Altoona, Pennsylvania, Blair County, and the Altoona Region.

Work area analysis was performed for the most recently available years (2005, 2007, and 2009) and was also projected to 2018, utilizing the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics’ (BLS) data.

Total Primary Jobs

Both the Altoona 10-minute radius and Blair County experienced an approximately five percent decline in total primary jobs from 2005 to 2009. This decline was slightly less acute between 2005 and 2007 than it was between 2007 and 2009. The Altoona Region also experienced job decline from 2005 to 2009, but to a lesser degree than in the other two geographies, shedding 3.6 percent of total primary jobs over the four-year period. Nearly all of this job loss occurred between 2007 and 2009, when over 7,800 jobs were lost (versus only 300 jobs lost in the prior two-year period between 2005 and 2007).

Altoona Worker Flow

In 2005, the area within a 10-mile radius of Altoona had a net job inflow of 15.1 percent, as a larger percentage of people worked in this area but lived elsewhere compared to those who lived in this area but worked elsewhere. In the same year, 39.7 percent of total workers and residents lived and worked in this area. By 2009, worker inflow was at the same level as it was 2005, while those that lived and worked in this area decreased and worker outflow increased. This suggests an uptick in the number of area residents who either lost or left jobs within the area and who now commute elsewhere for work.

Figure 4-18: Worker Inflow/Outflow by Percent of Total Workers and Residents, Altoona 10-mile Radius

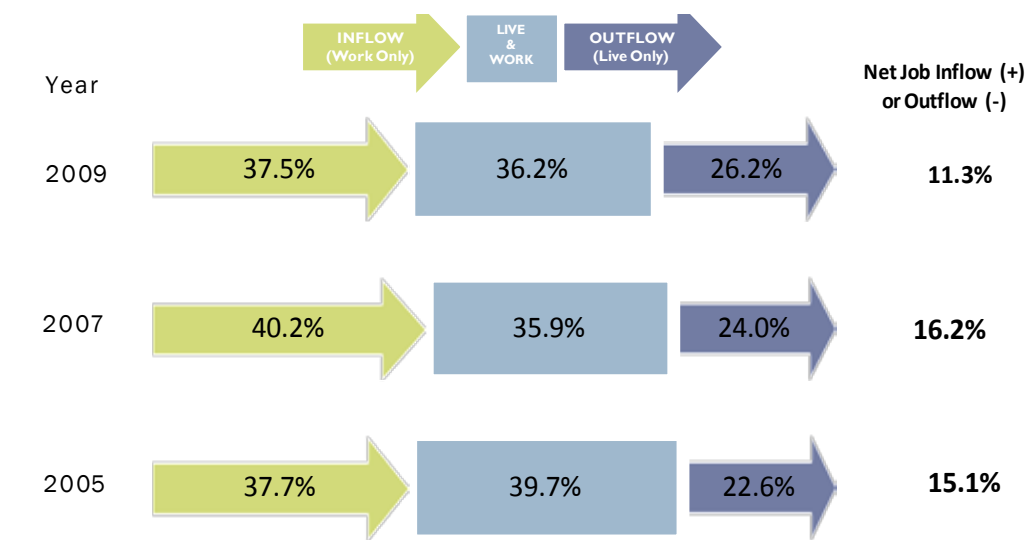


Figure 4-15: Altoona 10-Mile Radius Total Primary Jobs

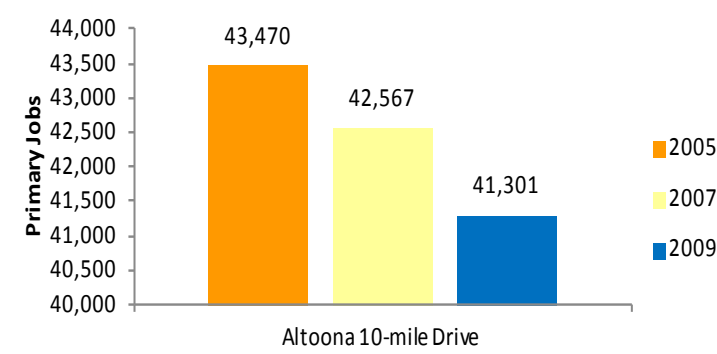


Figure 4-16: Blair County Total Primary Jobs

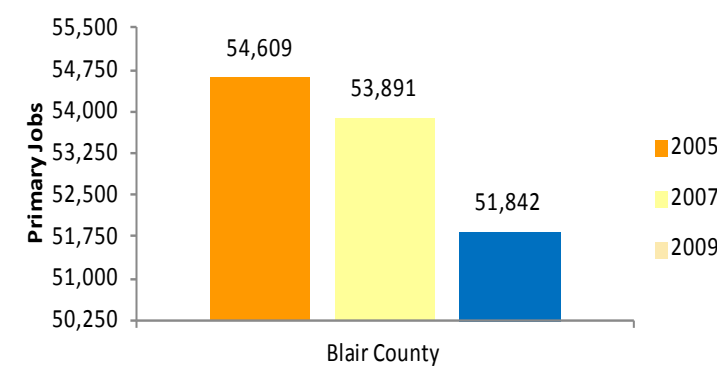


Figure 4-17: Altoona Region Total Primary Jobs

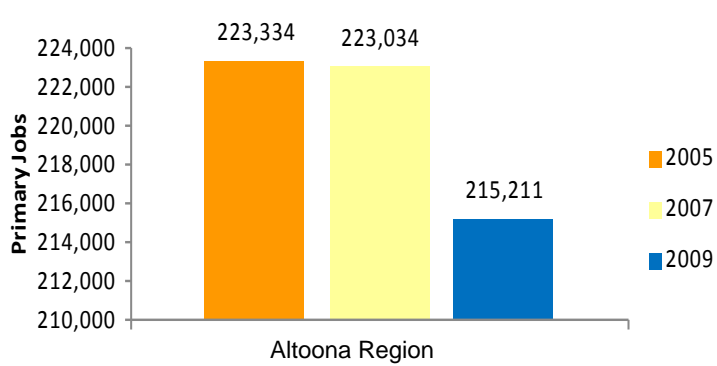


Figure 4 – 19: Work Destinations for Residents Within Altoona 10-mile Radius

	2005		2007		2009	
Altoona city (Blair, PA)	15,382	36.7%	14,049	34.9%	13,446	32.7%
Hollidaysburg borough (Blair, PA)	2,495	5.9%	2,249	5.6%	2,324	5.7%
Logan township (Blair, PA)	2,204	5.3%	2,464	6.1%	2,280	5.6%
Allegheny township (Blair, PA)	2,830	6.7%	1,677	4.2%	1,886	4.6%
Frankstown township (Blair, PA)	943	2.2%	1,268	3.1%	1,273	3.1%
Antis township (Blair, PA)	1,291	3.1%	924	2.3%	1,010	2.5%
Blair township (Blair, PA)	868	2.1%	1,147	2.8%	948	2.3%
Kimmel township (Bedford, PA)	384	0.9%	490	1.2%	840	2.0%
College township (Centre, PA)	254	0.6%	185	0.5%	725	1.8%
Tyrone borough (Blair, PA)	447	1.1%	535	1.3%	535	1.3%
All Other Locations	14,868	35.4%	15,272	37.9%	15,805	38.5%

Source: US Census Bureau, OnTheMap; 4ward Planning LLC, 2011

Figure 4-20: Altoona 10-Mile Radius Workers by Place of Residence

	2005		2007		2009	
Altoona city	13,799	29.8%	12,247	26.9%	14,126	32.5%
Logan township	2,966	6.4%	2,773	6.1%	1,840	4.2%
Hollidaysburg borough	1,435	3.1%	1,315	2.9%	1,506	3.5%
Allegheny township	1,487	3.2%	1,485	3.3%	1,385	3.2%
Frankstown township	2,095	4.5%	1,903	4.2%	1,160	2.7%
Blair township	1,237	2.7%	1,043	2.3%	992	2.3%
Bellwood borough	556	1.2%	558	1.2%	617	1.4%
Tyrone borough	537	1.2%	504	1.1%	549	1.3%
Antis township	1,272	2.7%	1,428	3.1%	538	1.2%
Roaring Spring borough	394	0.9%	405	0.9%	445	1.0%
All Other Locations	20,491	44.3%	21,785	47.9%	20,318	46.7%

Source: US Census Bureau, OnTheMap; 4ward Planning LLC, 2011

Work Destinations

Confirming the trend shown in the worker inflow-outflow analysis, the percentage of residents within the 10-mile radius of the City that were employed within the City of Altoona declined by 12.6 percent. Nonetheless, Altoona was by far the top work destination for area residents; the second-highest destination was Hollidaysburg Borough, in which 5.7 percent of area residents were employed in 2009, followed immediately by Logan Township, in which 5.6 percent of area residents were employed in the same year.

Workers by Place of Residence

Analysis of workers by place of residence demonstrates that one out of every three persons employed in the Altoona 10-mile radius lived within the City of Altoona in 2009. This is up from 26.9 percent in 2007 and 29.8 percent in 2005. As in the worker destination analysis, all other workers’ places of residence were geographically dispersed. Besides the City of Altoona, there is no other large single “source” of workers within the 10-mile area.

Figure 4-21: Altoona 10-mile Radius Total Primary Jobs

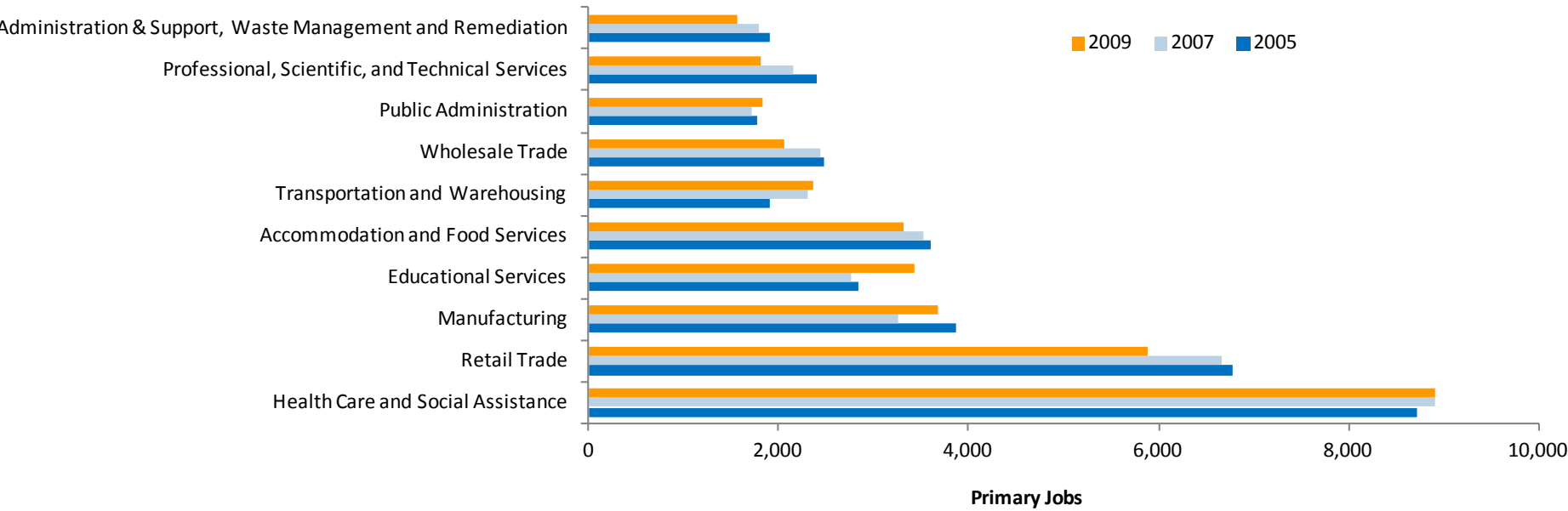
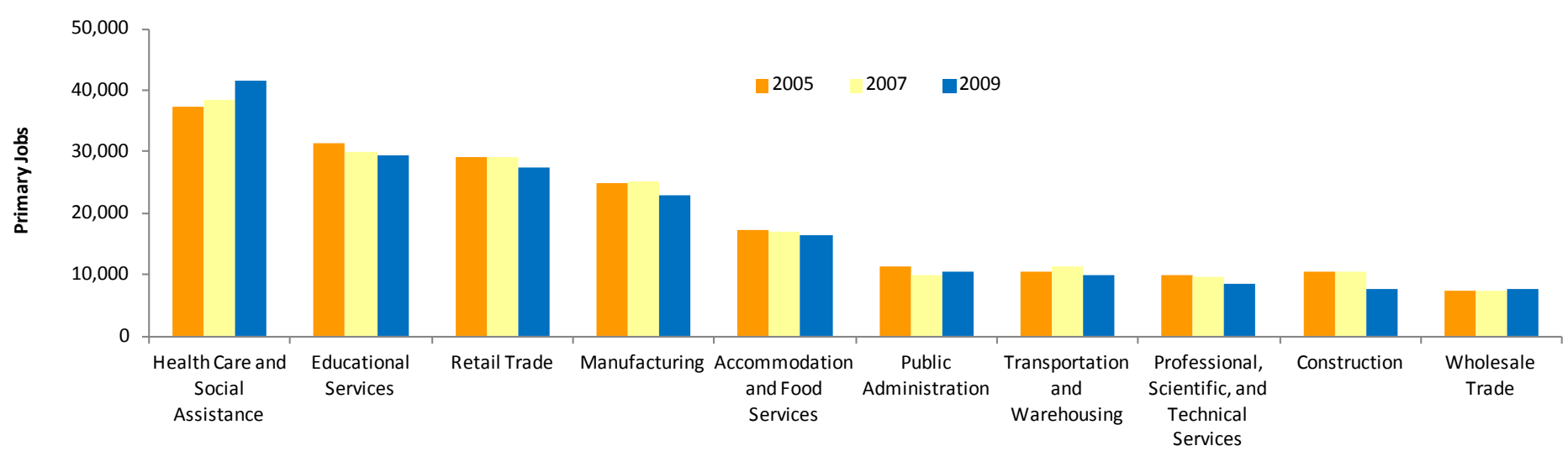


Figure 4 -22: Altoona Region Top Ten Industries by Employment



Top Industries by Employment

While total primary jobs within a 10-mile radius of Altoona declined from 2005 to 2009, job loss was not realized across all industries. Of the top ten industries by employment in the Altoona area, health care and social assistance, educational services, transportation and warehousing, and public administration experienced job growth over the four-year study period. Educational services, in particular, had strong job growth as it increased 24.5 percent from 2007 to 2009. Employment in this industry coincides with strong increases in educational attainment and incomes for the City of Altoona between 2000 and 2010.

Unlike the ten-mile area surrounding Downtown Altoona, the multi-county Altoona Region saw decline across all of its top industries from 2005 to 2009 except for health care and social assistance, which added approximately 4,400 jobs, an increase of 11.8 percent. Educational services, the second largest industry by employment, shed nearly 2,000 jobs (a decrease of 6.3 percent) even as Altoona itself saw significant growth in this industry. Construction experienced a notable decline in employment by shedding or losing 26.6 percent of its jobs from 2005 to 2009.

Location Quotient Analysis

Location Quotient (LQ) analysis is used to compare the relative concentration of employment in a given industry, relative to total employment for a particular geography. An LQ greater than 1.0 for a given industry suggests that the subject geography has a relative competitive advantage to a comparison geography, for that industry. The graph on the following page demonstrates that, compared to the multi-county regional area, seven of the top ten industries found within a ten-mile radius of Altoona maintain a competitive advantage over like industries within the larger regional area. The ten-mile radius area industries exhibiting the greatest employment concentrations in 2009 include wholesale trade; transportation and warehousing; and administration and support, waste management and remediation.

Conclusion

Altoona, Blair County and the Altoona Region did not escape the last decade’s economic recession; all three experienced job losses from 2005 to 2009. Data suggest that an increased number of Altoona residents either lost or left local jobs and began commuting elsewhere for work during this period.

However, there were a few bright spots: employment in educational services within the ten-mile radius surrounding Altoona grew by 24.5 percent from 2005 to 2009 (even while declining in the larger regional area), while health care and social assistance—already the region’s largest industry by employment—grew by 11.8 percent.

The ten-mile area surrounding Altoona also possesses comparative advantages in the majority of its top industries by employment. The 2009 data indicate that seven of the top ten industries contain some level of basic employment and likely export goods and services elsewhere in the larger multi-county region.

Figure 4-23: Total Housing Stock (In Units)

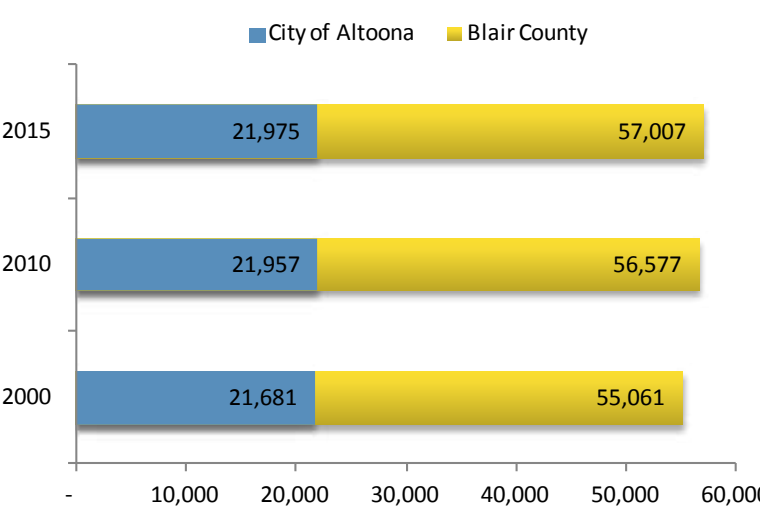


Figure 4-24: Vacant Housing Units

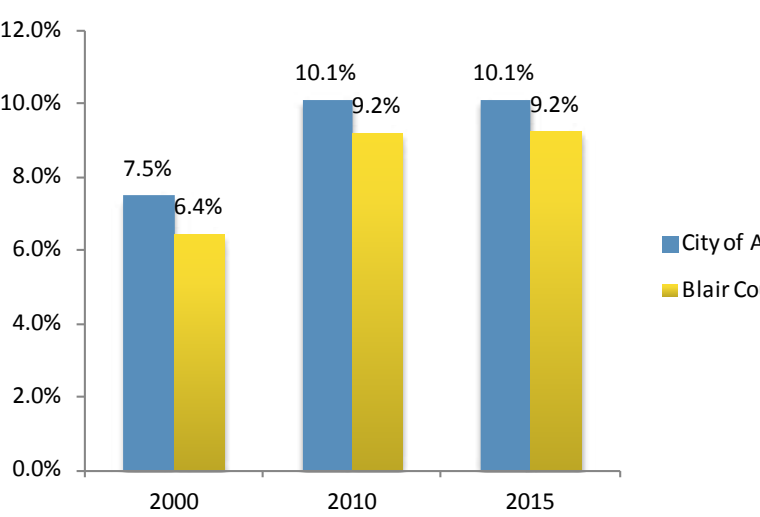
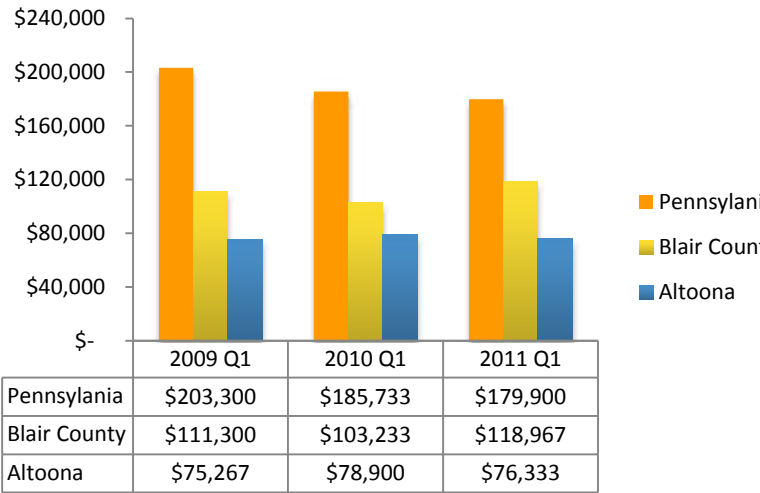


Figure 4-25 Median List Price, All Homes



Market and Real Estate Analyses

Because of its smaller size, there generally is not a wealth of data and information available for the Altoona and Blair County real estate markets. Therefore, this analysis relies primarily on qualitative information gathered from interviews with local realtors. The primary data sources for residential data and listings include on-line residential real estate databases of Zillow and Trulia, with supplemental qualitative data from realtor interviews. Commercial real estate information came primarily from realtor interviews, while for-lease listings were obtained from on-line commercial real estate database Loopnet.

Housing Stock Trends

Altoona’s housing stock represented 39.4 percent of the housing stock in the county in 2000. This declined slightly in 2010 to 38.8 percent. Projecting to 2015, Altoona’s share of the county’s housing stock should remain flat. Vacancies increased 34.7 percent in Altoona and 43.8 percent in Blair County from 2000 to 2010, but are projected to remain flat as a percentage of total units through 2015.

Residential Median List Prices

In the first quarter of 2009, 2010, and 2011, median list prices for all homes were significantly lower in Altoona and Blair County than in the state, as a whole. However, homes in Altoona and Blair County generally have held their value better over the three periods than in the state. The price per square foot metric declined by \$12 (9.8 percent) from the first quarter of 2009 to the first quarter of 2011 in the state. In Altoona, price per square foot increased slightly in the first quarter of 2010 before dropping back to the 2009 first quarter level. Blair County saw a similar slight increase in 2010; the 2011 median price per square foot was \$4 lower than in 2009 (a 5.2 percent decline).

Residential Median Sale Prices

Across the geographies, median sale prices represented a larger discount off of the listing price in 2009 than in 2011. In Pennsylvania, the median sale price was 24.6 percent less than the listing price in 2009; in 2011 it was only 13.6 percent less; The same metrics, respectively, in Blair County were 19.0 percent in 2009 and 12.7 percent in 2011. In Altoona, sale prices were 21.6 percent lower than list prices in 2009 and 12.5 percent less than list prices in 2010 (Altoona data for 2011 were unavailable for this analysis.)

As part of planning analysis, a series of residential and commercial data sources were utilized to conduct a retail demand analysis for the City of Altoona and the Primary Market Area (PMA), a 10-minute drive contour from the center of Altoona. ESRI retail marketplace data was the primary source for information on existing retail demand and sales.

Information on local retailers was collected from a combination of proprietary and public data sources, including BizStats, Street Atlas USA, and Google Maps. Retail metrics for average sales per square feet and size by category was adapted from data provided by BizStats, adapted to reflect currently observed neighborhood-retail supply trends.

Figure 4 -26: Median List Price per Square Foot, All Homes (within first quarter [Q1] per anum)

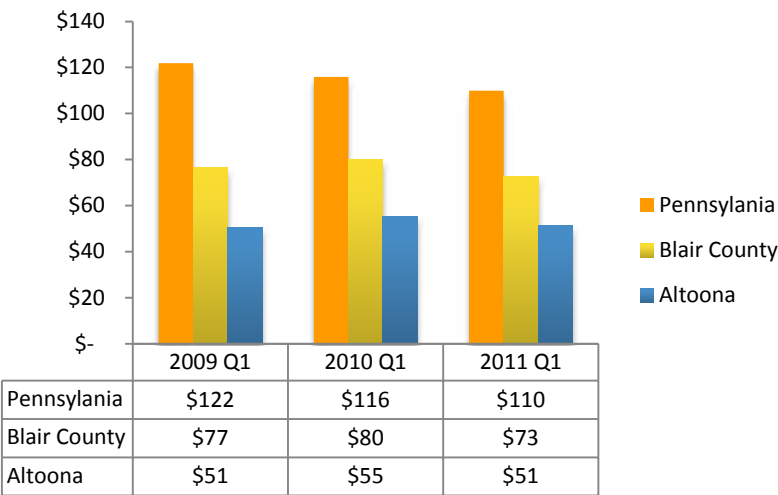


Figure 4-27: Median Sale Price, All Homes (within first quarter [Q1] per anum)

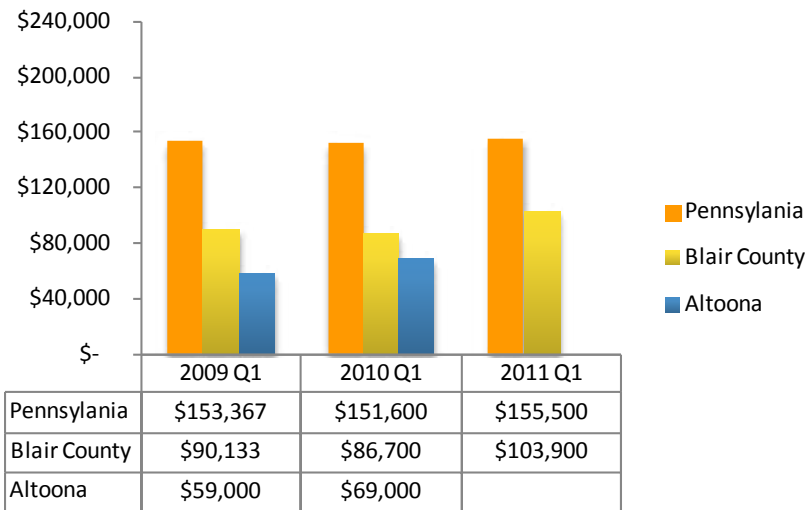


Figure 4 -28: Median Sale Price per Square Foot, All Homes (within first quarter [Q1] per anum)

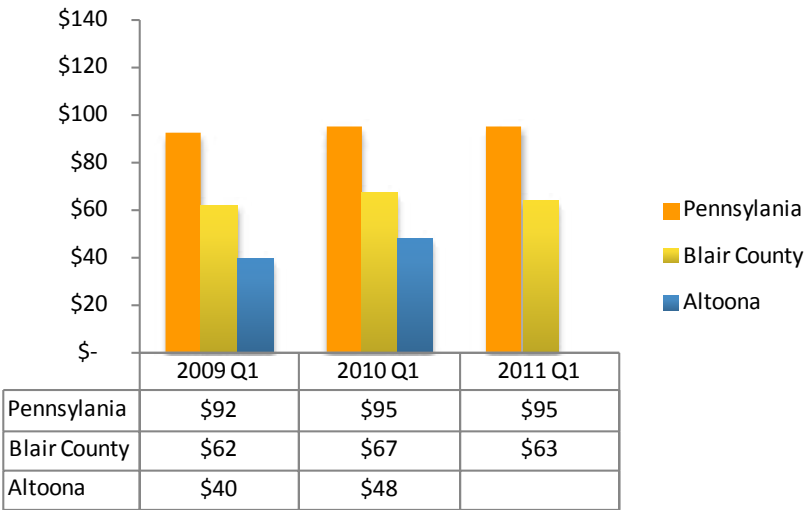
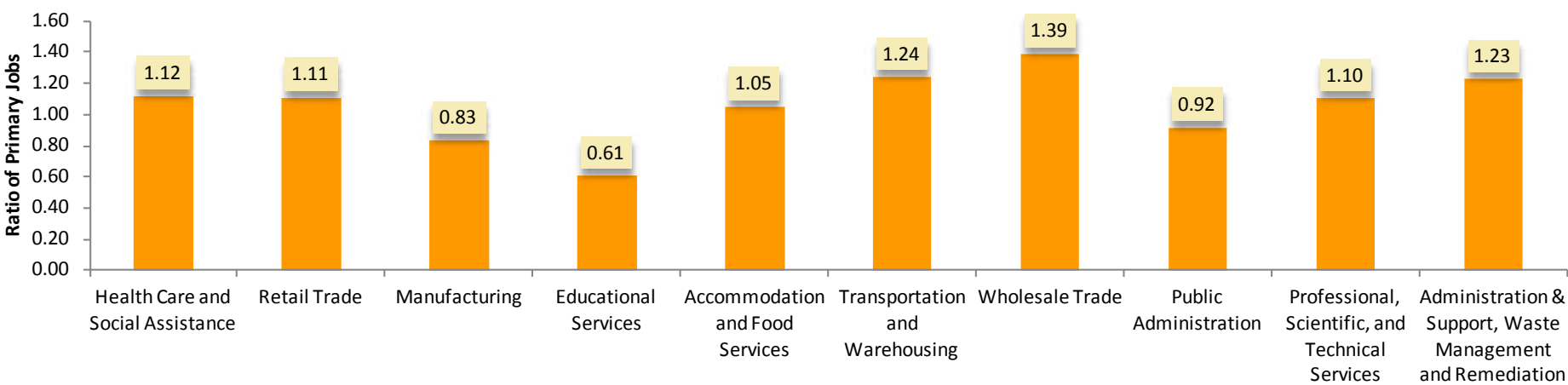


Figure 4-29: 2009 Location Quotient for Top Ten Industries by Employment Within a 10-mile Radius of Downtown Altoona



Assumptions for population growth were based on continuing the current growth trends in the area. Based on the above assumptions, a rough order of magnitude estimate was developed for new commercial and/or mixed-use development demand within the PMA, and the percentage of this demand prospectively captured within the City of Altoona. A comparison of demographic patterns between the City boundary and the primary market area (10-minute drive contour) is as follows:

<i>City of Altoona</i>	
2010 Population (per economic research databases):	49,523
Total Households:	20,059
Median Age:	40
Median Household Income:	\$37,617
Percent of Household Incomes >\$75,000:	17%
Percent Owner-Occupied Housing:	59%

Altoona, PA



<i>10-Minute Drive Contour (PMA)</i>	
Population (per economic research databases):	57,554
Total Households:	23,611
Median Age:	41
Median Household Income:	\$38,246
Percent of Household Incomes >\$75,000:	18%
Percent Owner-Occupied Housing:	61%

Primary Market Area, 10 minute Drive Contour



Contrasting with the increasing percentage of households earning >\$75,000, the aggregate disposable income for PMA households was estimated for 2010. 21% of households have less than \$15,000 disposable income annually.

PMA household expenditures for retail goods and services were estimated for 2010. The average amount spent per household, annually, totals about \$36,000.

Retail Goods and Services Expenditures

Another way to look at the City’s economic health is to examine patterns of the population’s spending and commercial real estate markets. In 2010, an estimated 23,127 primary workers were employed in the City of Altoona. This total represents an addition to the daytime residential population of the City. To determine daytime population expenditures for these workers, an industry benchmark estimate of \$5.00 per person per day was used to represent spending on food and necessities (an average of 250 days was used, which excludes weekends, holidays and assumed time off. Further, the \$5.00 average per worker assumes that there are a number of workers who may purchase goods and services outside of the area in which they work). Based on this estimate, annual daytime worker retail spending in the Altoona area amounted to \$28,908,750.

Given that the downtown area has relatively little competitive retail establishments (by virtue of visual observations and estimated retail square footage), it is a fair assumption that better than 80 percent of the \$28,908,750 was spent by these workers outside of the downtown.

Retail Business Mix

According to ESRI forecast data for 2010, the City of Altoona was capturing a 66-percent share of the total number of retail businesses within the surrounding 10-minute drive contour. Eating and drinking establishments represented the largest percentage of all retail businesses within both the PMA and the downtown (which is consistent with urbanized areas nationally). In November 2012, the City of Altoona issued business licenses for 3,411 businesses located within the City proper. This total number of licenses accounts for all business types including retail, office, industry and other services.

Major Retail Inventory

Utilizing The Directory of Major Malls proprietary database, three major shopping centers exist within the greater Altoona Region (major shopping centers were defined as those having a minimum of 200,000 gross leasable area (GLA) under roof). As of 2011, there is nearly two-million square feet of major retail space within four-miles of Altoona’s central business district (CBD). Field interviews with local retailers in Altoona’s business districts indicated that the majority of area residents and employees satisfy their shopping general needs at one or all of these three large retail centers. Thus, based upon the level and consistency of data available and identified general shopping trends, a deeper evaluation of these it was considered noteworthy to evaluate the trends of these large retail centers. The City’s moderately sized shopping plazas (Logan Plank Crossing and Chestnut Avenue Plaza) in addition to “big box” development in Logan Township were given general consideration as part of the City’s shopping center retail experience because of their accessibility, occupancy patterns and retail/service mix.

Logan Valley Mall, the oldest large-format shopping center in the Altoona region, provides its patrons with a large variety of shopping and consumer service options. Like Logan Town Centre, Logan Valley Mall features large comparison retailers (national and regional brands), as well as a large selection of specialty, high-tech and personal service stores. Vacancy data was not able to be obtained for this shopping center.

Logan Town Centre features broad offerings for comparison retail and certain specialty retail categories. Casual dining options are relatively limited among two national chain restaurants and one specialty food shop.

As of 2011, Logan Town Centre reports a vacancy rate of two percent – extremely low relative to shopping center retail vacancy rates nationally – hovering above ten percent in most regions.

Park Hills Plaza features the least number of stores and GLA under roof among the large regional retail centers. Many of its anchor stores are within smaller building formats, as compared to anchor stores in the newer Logan Town Centre and Logan Valley Mall. Both comparison and specialty retail are relatively limited. There are, however, a number of low- and mid-priced casual dining chains present in the retail center. As of 2011, Park Hills Plaza reports a vacancy of 25,700 s.f. (9.2 percent – reflective of national retail vacancy trends within large shopping centers).

From national economic resource database calculations, the 2016 projections of existing and net supportable retail space include only a few retail categories indicate a net positive demand for additional retail space (beer, wine and liquor stores; general merchandise (specialty retail), limited service eating places (fast food); and special food services.

Conclusion

The residential and commercial real estate markets in Altoona, specifically, and Blair County, generally, have felt the effects of both the economic recession and flat population and household growth.

This analysis demonstrates that the Altoona area is, generally, well served by most retail categories and that the downtown area would likely not be successful in pursuing a broad-based retail recruitment strategy. However, this analysis does demonstrate that certain categories of retail and services (e.g., dining and drinking establishments and certain specialty retail [think boutique retail]) do have sufficient demand to warrant a downtown strategy to accommodate these uses. Combined, the net retail demand identified (for all categories) in this analysis amounts to more than 250,000 square feet of commercial space. Recognizing that it is neither practical nor likely to have that amount of retail hosted in the downtown, a more reasoned captured of 20 percent (50,000 s.f.) is considered achievable.

Regarding the 50,000 s.f. of downtown captured retail, it is estimated that approximately 40 percent of this amount (20,000 s.f.) would represent dining and drinking establishments of various sizes (which will be appealing to the growing number of local professional and service workers). The remaining space would be a combination of specialty retail and entertainment arts, children’s venue, etc).

Fiscal and Budget Relationships

A fiscal impact analysis examines the linkage between local government revenue generated by new development and its resultant municipal service costs (e.g., police, fire, schools, sanitation, etc.). The outcome of such an analysis is to produce a project related estimate of community service costs to projected revenues, a “cost-revenue ratio”, which will be positive (a revenue surplus), negative (a revenue shortfall) or neutral (break-even).

As part of the Altoona Comprehensive Plan, two general development programs were considered as part of evaluating the ramifications of the City’s current tax policies.

The impacts of these two general development programs were estimated over a phased two-year time period. Assumptions included that up-front capital costs would be financed according to a 30-year amortization schedule. The net present value of the overall fiscal impact takes into account the time value of money and therefore discounts the cumulative financial impacts back to 2012 dollars.

A variety of data sources and conventional fiscal impact methodologies were incorporated into the analysis:

- Current municipal services expenditures and assessment data were obtained from the City of Altoona.
- Average square feet per unit and monthly market rent per square foot were obtained from www.zillow.com.
- Construction costs per square foot were estimated using RS Means (www.reedconstructiondata.com/rsmeans/models/).
- Residential multipliers, including persons per unit and public school-age children, were developed by the Center for Urban Policy Research at Rutgers University.
- Employees and annual sales per square foot were estimated using industry standard metrics.
- Median hourly wages were obtained from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (www.bls.gov).
- Estimated expenditures per student were obtained from the Altoona Area School District.

Based upon information of tax calculation provided by Blair County and the City of Altoona, each of a selection of development programs was analyzed under two different sets of assumptions to assess the effect that the current real property tax policies have on

City revenues. The first analysis is based on the current City tax policies and the following assumptions:

- Existing property assessments are based on 1958-vintage valuation tables.
- Real property taxes in the City are levied against assessed land value only. The County assessment data was reviewed to estimate the land value to property value ratio.

The second analysis performed was conducted using the following set of assumptions, reflecting a real property re-assessment based on current market value data.

- The full market value of each property is estimated, and the assessed value is established at 70 percent of the market value for the purposes of this analysis.
- The city tax rate is revised to 15 mills and levied against the value of the entire property, including improvements.

The two development programs considered were 1) development of 200 new residential units and 2) development of 20,000 gross square feet of medical office space. The results of the impact analysis are.

Figure 4-30: Fiscal Impact Analysis for Sample Residential and Office Scenarios

Development Program	Residential Current Tax Rates	Residential Revised Tax Rates	Med Office Current Tax Rates	Med Office Revised Tax Rates
Net Fiscal Impacts	\$199,271	\$1,165,757	\$114,172	\$416,286
Projected Services Costs	\$90,918	\$90,918	\$3,863	\$3,863
Public Schools	\$48,572	\$48,572	\$0	\$0
City Services	\$42,345	\$42,345	\$3,863	\$3,863
Projected Net New Revenues	\$290,188	\$1,256,675	\$118,035	\$420,149
Real Estate Property Tax				
Real Estate Property Tax	\$220,633	\$1,187,119	\$68,968	\$371,082
Revenues				
County	\$49,141	\$343,986	\$15,361	\$107,527
City	\$76,855	\$180,671	\$24,024	\$56,476
School	\$94,637	\$662,462	\$29,583	\$207,079

Therefore, using this fiscal impact analysis snapshot, for each 20,000 square feet of non-residential development, an average of twenty-two (22) jobs is created along with \$1,154,525 in gross wages (2011 dollars). For the tested residential development scenario, new school expenditures would be estimated at \$48,572 (2011 dollars) based upon 16 new school age children (10 elementary, 4 middle school and 2 high school). The residential development program’s projected net revenues present an average \$1,450 per unit under current real property tax policies. Based on this calculation, the addition of 200 residential units is the equivalent fiscal impact if each existing household were to contribute an additional \$60 in real estate property tax. As part of hypothetical reassessment values (assuming fully realized 2011 dollars), a proportionally greater net revenue could result.

It should be noted that a variety of project factors (e.g., net new employment levels and wages, actual numbers of school age children generated, and real property values achieved) will all influence the likely range of the net fiscal impacts realized.

In further projecting this methodology/calculation with property valuations are frozen at 1958 rates, potential revenues from redevelopment are, and will remain, limited until reassessment is completed and, based on Commonwealth law, when the evolution of increased values can be fully realized City-wide. Thus, this analysis and snapshot further illuminate that the use of the 1958 assessment can be a disincentive to redevelopment and opportunities for public investment.

CITY BUDGET COMPARISON

The Comprehensive Plan Team compared the 2011 Altoona City Budget with the most recently available city budgets for three Pennsylvania cities of similar population: Harrisburg, State College, and Lancaster. The budgets of these comparison cities were adjusted to correspond to the line items given in Altoona’s 2011 City Budget. A complete comparison is presented below, broken out as per the categories of the City of Altoona.

Figure 4-32: City of Altoona Budget Comparison

		City of Altoona			City of Harrisburg		
		Budget Year 2011			Budget Year 2011		
		2010 Population: 47,376			2010 Population: 48,630		
		Area: 9.8 Sq. Miles			Area: 11.4 Sq. Miles		
Revenues			Revenue Per	Revenue Per		Revenue Per	Revenue Per
			Capita	Sq. Mile		Capita	Sq. Mile
	Taxes	\$13,755,981	\$290	\$1,403,672	\$28,487,572	\$586	\$2,498,910 ¹
	Licenses, Permits & Fees	\$1,462,452	\$31	\$149,230	\$577,000	\$12	\$50,614
	Fines And Forfeits	\$299,833	\$6	\$30,595	\$2,430,400	\$50	\$213,193
	Charges For Services	\$3,334,550	\$70	\$340,260	\$14,969,414	\$308	\$1,313,106 ²
	Intergovernmental Revenues	\$7,751,103	\$164	\$790,929	\$6,576,579	\$135	\$576,893
	Interest, Rents & Royalties	\$79,550	\$2	\$8,117	\$183,388	\$4	\$16,087
	Other Revenue	\$24,100	\$1	\$2,459	\$2,768,801	\$57	\$242,877 ³
	Total Revenue	\$26,707,569	\$564	\$2,725,262	\$55,993,154	\$1,151	\$4,911,680
Expenses			Expenditures	Expenditures		Expenditures	Expenditures
			Per Capita	Per Sq. Mile		Per Capita	Per Sq. Mile
	General Government	\$4,573,494	\$97	\$466,683	\$14,397,070	\$296	\$1,262,901 ⁴
	Public Safety	\$16,169,606	\$341	\$1,649,960	\$23,175,907	\$477	\$2,032,974
	Public Works - Highways And Streets	\$3,188,741	\$67	\$325,382	\$4,698,689	\$97	\$412,166
	Culture And Recreation	\$278,666	\$6	\$28,435	\$1,583,403	\$33	\$138,895
	Community Development	\$174,666	\$4	\$17,823	\$929,957	\$19	\$81,575 ⁵
	Debt Service	\$2,047,902	\$43	\$208,970	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Miscellaneous Expenditures	\$274,494	\$6	\$28,010	\$11,208,129	\$230	\$983,169 ⁶
	Total Expenditures	\$26,707,569	\$564	\$2,725,262	\$55,993,154	\$1,151	\$4,911,680

Source: City of Altoona; Harrisburg City Controller; State College Borough; City of Lancaster; 4ward Planning LLC, 2011¹⁸

		State College			City of Lancaster		
		Budget Year 2010			Budget Year 2011		
		2010 Population: 40,655			2010 Population: 58,184		
		Area: 4.5 Sq. Miles			Area: 7.4 Sq. Miles		
Revenues			Revenue Per	Revenue Per		Revenue Per	Revenue Per
			Capita	Sq. Mile		Capita	Sq. Mile
	Taxes	\$10,475,760	\$258	\$2,327,947	\$30,863,054	\$530	\$4,170,683
	Licenses, Permits & Fees	\$536,325	\$13	\$119,183	\$1,950,000	\$34	\$263,514 ¹³
	Fines And Forfeits	\$1,440,500	\$35	\$320,111	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Charges For Services	\$4,144,436	\$102	\$920,986 ⁷	\$7,884,783	\$136	\$1,065,511 ¹⁴
	Intergovernmental Revenues	\$581,270	\$14	\$129,171 ⁸	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Interest, Rents & Royalties	\$93,530	\$2	\$20,784	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Other Revenue	\$1,097,498	\$27	\$243,888 ⁹	\$4,814,744	\$83	\$650,641 ¹⁵
	Total Revenue	\$18,369,319	\$452	\$4,082,071	\$45,512,581	\$782	\$6,150,349
Expenses			Expenditures	Expenditures		Expenditures	Expenditures
			Per Capita	Per Sq. Mile		Per Capita	Per Sq. Mile
	General Government	\$3,503,757	\$86	\$778,613 ¹⁰	\$5,756,424	\$99	\$777,895 ¹⁶
	Public Safety	\$8,361,659	\$206	\$1,858,146	\$29,405,647	\$505	\$3,973,736
	Public Works - Highways And Streets	\$3,617,239	\$89	\$803,831	\$3,467,374	\$60	\$468,564
	Culture And Recreation	N/A	N/A	N/A ¹¹	\$1,849,278	\$32	\$249,902
	Community Development	\$369,296	\$9	\$82,066	\$2,172,839	\$37	\$293,627 ¹⁷
	Debt Service	\$886,034	\$22	\$196,896	\$2,861,019	\$49	\$386,624
	Miscellaneous Expenditures	\$1,888,229	\$46	\$419,606 ¹²	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Total Expenditures	\$18,626,214	\$458	\$4,139,159	\$45,512,581	\$782	\$6,150,349

CITY BUDGET COMPARISON NOTES

¹ Real Estate Tax, Hotel Tax, EMIS Tax, Earned Income Tax, and Mercantile Business Privelege

² Departmental Earnings

³ Miscellaneous and Interfund Transfers

⁴ General Government, Administration, and General Expenses

⁵ Building & Housing, and Transfers

⁶ Transfers

⁷ Departmental Earnings

⁸ Intergovernmental Revenue and Intergovernmental (Pass-Thru)

⁹ Miscellaneous and Interfund Transfers

¹⁰ Administration, Finance, Tax Collection, Information Technology, Parking Enforcement, and Planning & Zoning

¹¹ Included in Public Works

¹² Regional Programs, Miscellaneous, Pass-Thru Grants, and Interfund Transfers

¹³ Regulatory Livenses and EDNR Licenses/Permits

¹⁴ Public Safety Fees and Public Work Fees

¹⁵ Miscellaneous Revenue and Other Income

¹⁶ Executive, Legislative, City Controller, City Treasurer, and Admin Services (Excluding Debt Service)

¹⁷ Economic Development and Neighborhood Revitalization

¹⁸ <http://harrisburgcitycontroller.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/2011-Adopted-Budget.pdf>
<http://statecollegepa.us/DocumentView.aspx?DID=1912>
http://www.cityoflancasterpa.com/lancastercity/lib/lancastercity/2011_budget_summary.pdf

CITY BUDGET COMPARISON

The City of Altoona’s total revenue and expenditures, and revenues and expenditures per capita, places it third among the comparison cities (earning more than State College but less than Harrisburg or Lancaster. Altoona’s revenues and expenditures per square mile, however, are far below those of all three comparison cities: In 2011, Altoona is estimated to have generated an average of \$2.3 million less, per square mile, than Harrisburg, State College, or Lancaster.

Figure 4-33: Revenue and Expenses per Capita

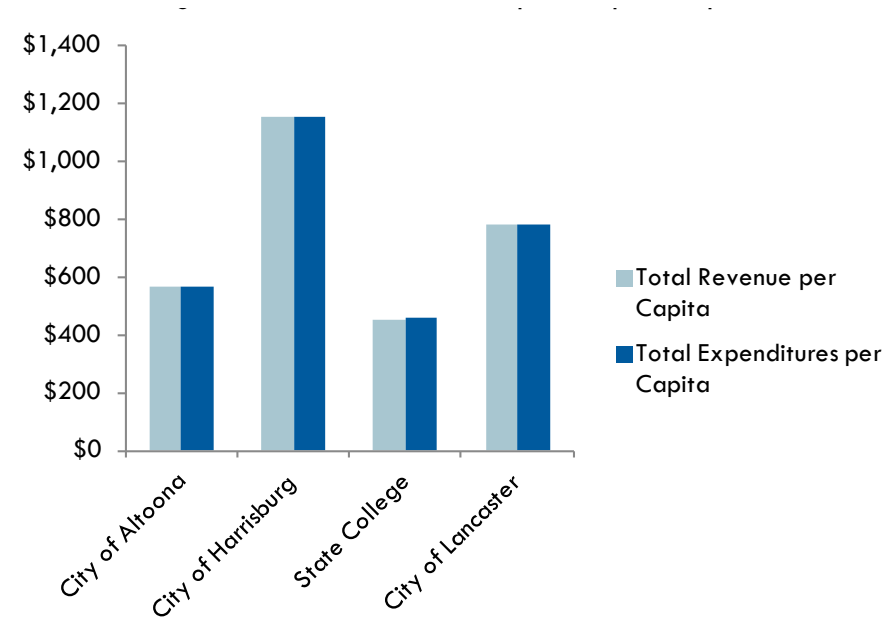
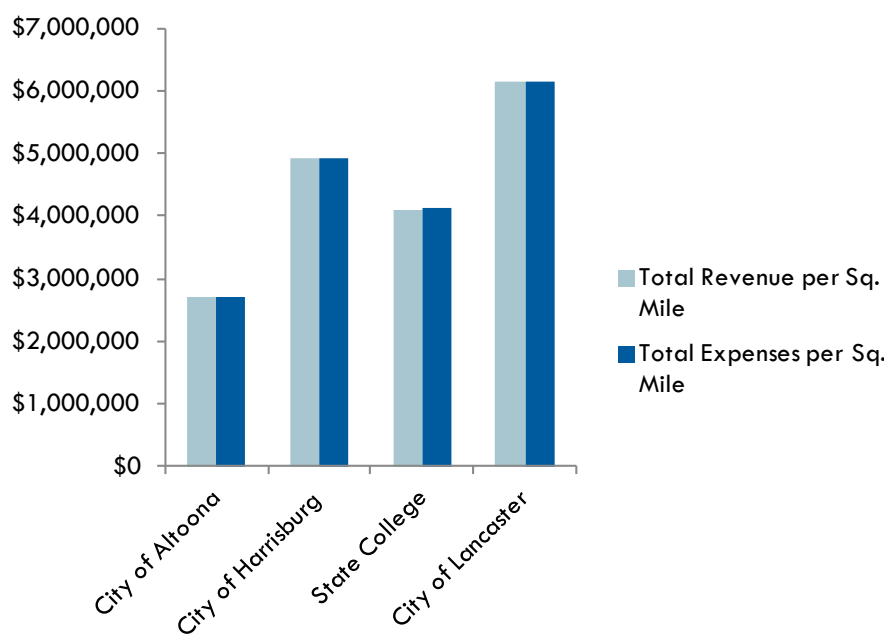


Figure 4-34: Revenue and Expenses per Sq. Mile



CITY BUDGET COMPARISON - EXPENSE DISTRIBUTION

Though Altoona earns less revenue from taxes than Harrisburg or Lancaster, the proportion of total revenue made up by taxes is roughly the same for all four comparison cities (representing between 50 and 70 percent of total revenue). The second largest source of revenue for Altoona is intergovernmental revenues such as CDBG funds (nearly 30 percent) - significantly greater than that of the comparison cities. Similarly, earnings from charges for services (or departmental earnings) were significantly lower for Altoona than for the comparison cities.

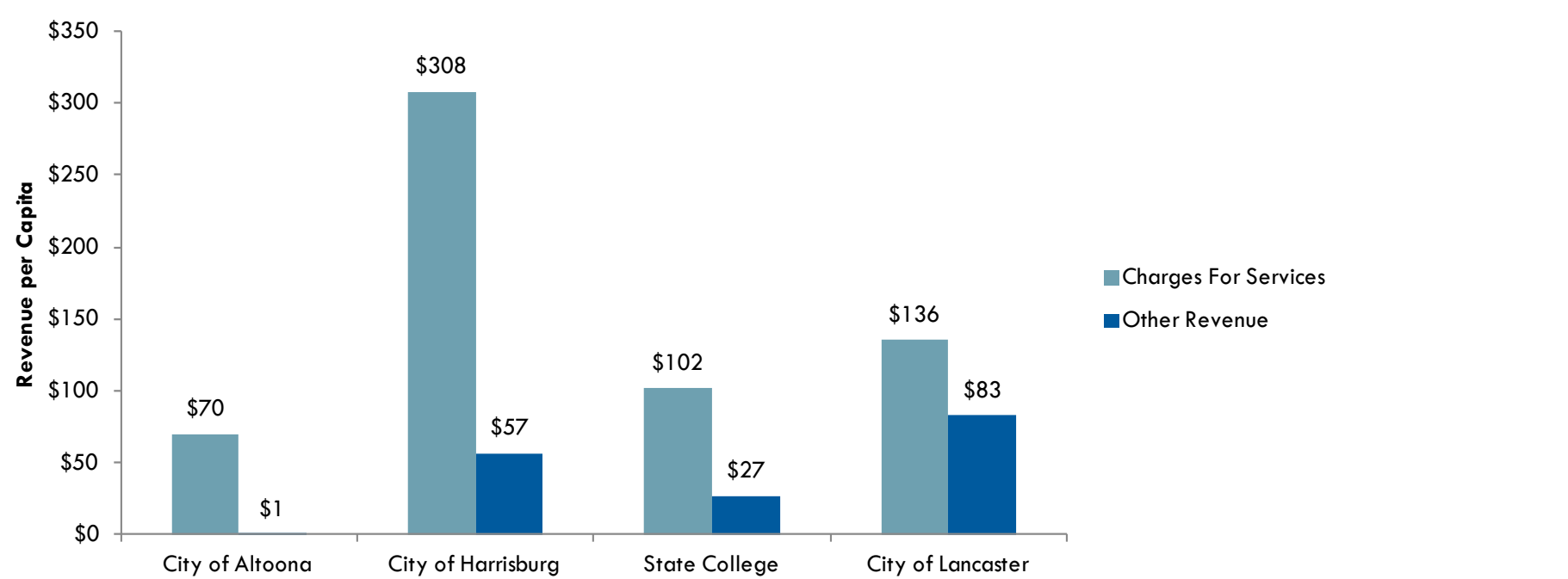
Figure 4-35: City of Altoona Budget Comparison - Expense Distribution

	City of Altoona Budget Year 2011 2010 Population: 47,376 Area: 9.8 Sq. Miles	City of Harrisburg Budget Year 2011 2010 Population: 48,630 Area: 11.4 Sq. Miles	State College Budget Year 2010 2010 Population: 40,655 Area: 4.5 Sq. Miles	City of Lancaster Budget Year 2011 2010 Population: 58,184 Area: 7.4 Sq. Miles
Percent of Total Revenue				
Taxes	51.5%	50.9%	57.0%	67.8%
Licenses, Permits & Fees	5.5%	1.0%	2.9%	4.3%
Fines And Forfeits	1.1%	4.3%	7.8%	N/A
Charges For Services	12.5%	26.7%	22.6%	17.3%
Intergovernmental Revenues	29.0%	11.7%	3.2%	N/A
Interest, Rents & Royalties	0.3%	0.3%	0.5%	N/A
Other Revenue	0.1%	4.9%	6.0%	10.6%
Total Revenue	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Percent of Total Expenditures				
General Government	17.1%	25.7%	18.8%	12.6%
Public Safety	60.5%	41.4%	44.9%	64.6%
Public Works - Highways And Streets	11.9%	8.4%	19.4%	7.6%
Culture And Recreation	1.0%	2.8%	N/A	4.1%
Community Development	0.7%	1.7%	2.0%	4.8%
Debt Service	7.7%	N/A	4.8%	6.3%
Miscellaneous Expenditures	1.0%	20.0%	10.1%	N/A
Total Expenditures	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

CITY BUDGET COMPARISON - MAJOR REVENUE DIFFERENCES

The most significant differences in revenue earnings for Altoona, as compared to Harrisburg, State College, and Lancaster, were in the charges for services (departmental earnings) and other revenue categories. Altoona receives an average of \$70 per capita for charges for services, as compared to \$100-\$300 per capita, per annum, in the three other cities. Similarly, Altoona earns almost no miscellaneous revenue per capita, while the comparison cities earn \$27 to \$83 in additional revenue per capita each year. Miscellaneous revenue is a category which appears in most, if not all, municipal budgets. It is so classified because the particular revenue streams of which it is comprised are generally very small and quite varied (e.g., one-time grants, administrative fees assessed to local residents or businesses, small, one-time inter-governmental transfers, etc.).

Figure 4-36: Selected Revenue Sources, per Capita



CITY BUDGET COMPARISON – MAJOR EXPENDITURE DIFFERENCES

The largest portion of Altoona’s city budget (60.5 percent) is allocated to public safety related expenditures (salaries, etc), with the second largest portion of the city budget allocated to general government (17.1 percent). Altoona’s expenditures, by major category, are in line, generally, with those of the three comparison cities. Altoona’s general government expenditures, as percentage of total expenditures, ranks second lowest, while its expenditures for public safety (inclusive of police, fire and code enforcement) ranks second highest.

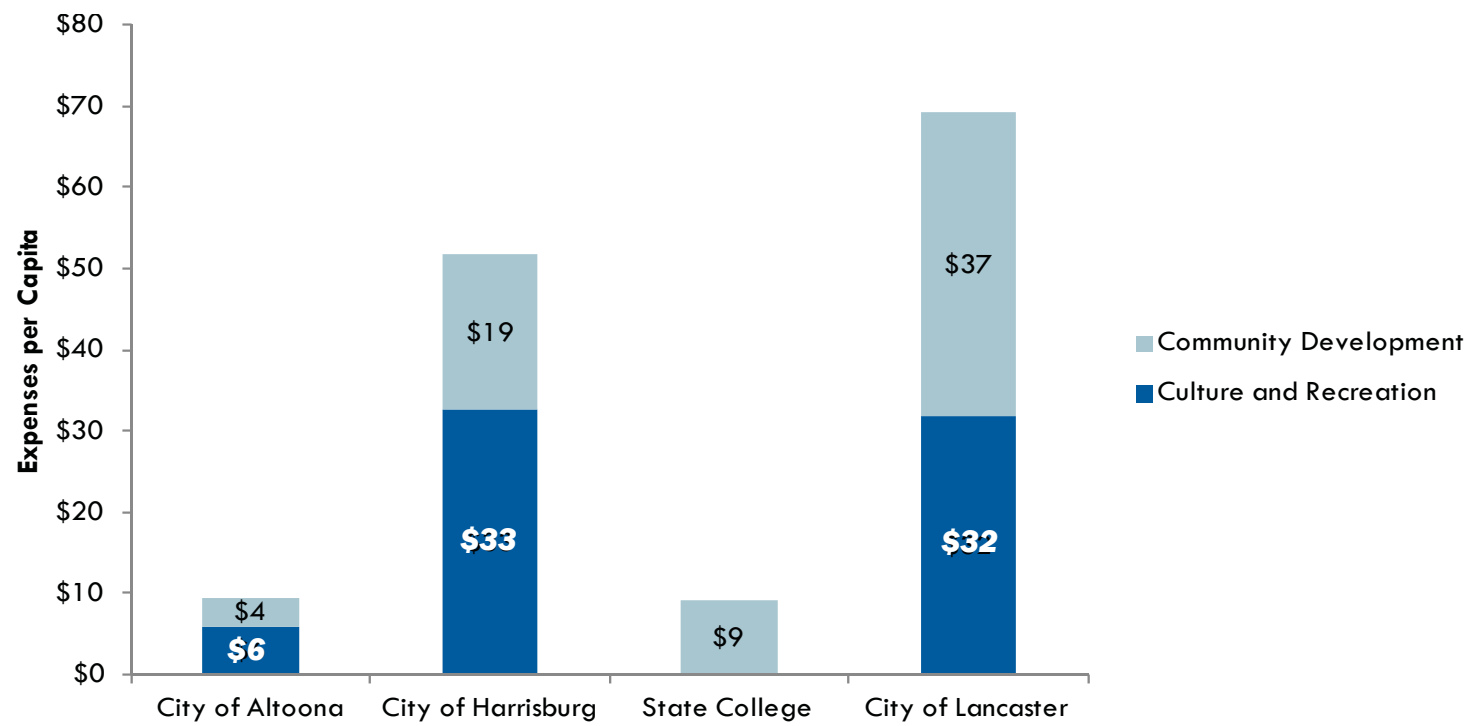
Figure 4-37: City of Altoona Budget Comparison - Major Expenditure Differences

	City of Altoona Budget Year 2011 2010 Population: 47,376 Area: 9.8 Sq. Miles	City of Harrisburg Budget Year 2011 2010 Population: 48,630 Area: 11.4 Sq. Miles	State College Budget Year 2010 2010 Population: 40,655 Area: 4.5 Sq. Miles	City of Lancaster Budget Year 2011 2010 Population: 58,184 Area: 7.4 Sq. Miles
Percent of Total Revenue				
Taxes	51.5%	50.9%	57.0%	67.8%
Licenses, Permits & Fees	5.5%	1.0%	2.9%	4.3%
Fines And Forfeits	1.1%	4.3%	7.8%	N/A
Charges For Services	12.5%	26.7%	22.6%	17.3%
Intergovernmental Revenues	29.0%	11.7%	3.2%	N/A
Interest, Rents & Royalties	0.3%	0.3%	0.5%	N/A
Other Revenue	0.1%	4.9%	6.0%	10.6%
Total Revenue	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Percent of Total Expenditures				
General Government	17.1%	25.7%	18.8%	12.6%
Public Safety	60.5%	41.4%	44.9%	64.6%
Public Works - Highways And Streets	11.9%	8.4%	19.4%	7.6%
Culture And Recreation	1.0%	2.8%	N/A	4.1%
Community Development	0.7%	1.7%	2.0%	4.8%
Debt Service	7.7%	N/A	4.8%	6.3%
Miscellaneous Expenditures	1.0%	20.0%	10.1%	N/A
Total Expenditures	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

CITY BUDGET COMPARISON - MAJOR EXPENDITURE DIFFERENCES

The 2011 budgeted community development, culture and recreation expenditures totaled approximately \$10 per capita in Altoona, far lower than Harrisburg (\$52 per capita) or Lancaster (\$69 per capita), and only slightly higher than community development spending in State College (\$9 per capita). While some State College culture and recreation expenditures are conflated with other budget items, it should be noted that Penn State University likely provides a significant amount of culture and recreation opportunities for State College residents, without cost to the community.

Figure 4-38: Selected Expenses, per Capita



TAKEAWAY

With the exception of intergovernmental revenues, Altoona’s *overall* pattern of revenue and spending percentages are most similar to Lancaster (of cities compared as part of the comprehensive planning process). The matters of reassessment continue to be a significant element of communities’ ability to generate revenues and expenditures. In comparison to the 1958 Blair County Reassessment, other counties have conducted and adopted their reassessments within the last two decades (Centre [1995], Dauphin [2001] and Lancaster [2005]).

In an effort to provide a forum for prioritizing City services, Altoona has the opportunity to evaluate the costs of upcoming needed physical improvements in context of both short-term and longer-term spending patterns. In the short-term, a significant amount of prioritization will likely be guided by Act 47-related recommendations. However, implementation of the Act 47-related recommendations does not minimize the importance of the City taking the opportunity to examine the nature of the improvements in context of their contribution to the overall quality of life for those residing and/or working in the City. In fact, it means the City has the opportunity to find creative, inspiring ways in which to elevate the emphasis of quality of life in Altoona.

What does this all really mean? It means, the City should:

1. Continue to advocate for updated property reassessment within Blair County.
2. Re-evaluate and amend the charges for services it collects in context of the specific rates that the other communities assign to the various services that are offered.
3. Determine ways in which to facilitate new income generating opportunities. One area worth discussion may be determining ways in which some or all of the 8.3% of Altoona’s land area that is classified as public and/or quasi-public could become revenue generating.
4. Identify public amenity sites which could be redeveloped and maintained at limited cost to the City while serving as catalysts for surrounding investment and initiate greater investment.
5. Define and act upon ways in which culture and recreation-related spending and/or investments of the City’s time in cooperating with the Central Blair Recreation and Park Commission can be increased.
6. Re-examine the Altoona earned income rates/percentages in comparison with other cities/municipalities/home rule communities to determine if adjusting to that rate/percentage would be applicable and advantageous.

ANOTHER WAY TO COMPARE: NATIONAL TRENDS/ METRICS

Based on communities between 10, 000 and 50,000 residents

In addition to evaluating the way or focus of dollars invested, a community can identify how its allocation of personnel, amount of development and/or response levels compare to a series of general planning metrics. These metrics are used as reference points within communities across the nation. When the City of Altoona’s allocations are compared with national metrics, a series of differences emerge. The first two tables outline the national metrics and City of Altoona allocations, respectively. The bottom figure outlines the results of this comparison.

National Metrics

- Police and Fire (EMS coordination with others)
 - Personnel per thousand residents (Police 2; Fire 1.7; EMS full-time .13)
 - Facility square footage per thousand residents (Police 200; Fire 250)
 - Vehicles per thousand residents (Police 0.6; Fire 0.2; EMS 0.03)
 - Anticipated calls per year per thousand residents (EMS 37)
- General Government, Public Works
 - Personnel per thousand residents (General Gov’t 10.9; Public Works 14.2)
- Parks
 - Community Parks and Neighborhood Parks
 - Acres per thousand residents (both park types 2)

Altoona Planning Factors

Police	General Government
92 personnel	50 personnel
9,200 SF facility	
27 vehicles	
	Public Works
Fire	65 personnel
78 personnel	
11,500 SF facility	
9 vehicles	Parks
	Community Parks
EMS (coordinate with others)	92 acres
6.2 personnel	
1,700 + Calls	Neighborhood Parks
1.5 Vehicles	92 acres

COMPARING TRENDS

Figure 4-39: Total Personnel

	Personnel			
	2012 (Budgeted)	Current	National Metrics	Difference (2012- Metric)
Public Works Department	57	56	65	(8)
Police Officers/Support	78	74	92	(14)
Fire Department/Support	65	63	78	(13)
Other City Staff	35	34	50	(15)
Inspections and Code Enforcement				
Finance & Personnel				
Planning and Community Development				
Administration				
Deputy Controller				
Total Personnel	235	227	285	(50)

	Acres			
		Current	National Metrics	Difference (Current- Metric)
Parks/Open Space				
Community Parks		139	92	47
Neighborhood Parks		121	92	29
Total Acres		260	184	76

The Built Environment

Population Density

The density of a community’s population is part of its built environment. Density, in this case a measurement of people within a geographic area such as an acre, impacts the physical and social tapestry of a place. Each of the neighborhoods within Altoona has a slightly different density but the US Census is one of the primary sources for tracking and reporting this type of characteristic. Throughout the City’s history and continuing on today, Altoona’s areas of greatest density are within the neighborhoods adjacent to the community’s Downtown Business District. Areas of less dense population are generally found along the City’s boundaries.



Existing Land Uses and Resources

Over the course of Altoona’s development, land use within the City’s geographic center has experienced dramatic transformation - from intense railroad industrial activity to specialty manufacturing to retail to health care and education. Shopping and major employers are generally concentrated within this central core.

In contrast, single-family residential development has been one of the Altoona’s greatest constants as well as the City’s greatest proportionate share of its overall land use mix. One of the most unique and memorable aspects of Altoona is its pattern of cultural, institutional and civic land uses throughout the City’s neighborhoods. From more than 90 places of worship to dozens of park and open spaces, Altoona’s development pattern embodies and reflects the community’s historic cultural influences. Based upon comprehensive plan discussions, it is anticipated that the City’s land use patterns as well as associated zoning district designations remain consistent with existing development patterns. As part of the comprehensive planning outreach process, one significant aspect of anticipated land use efforts noted was the on-going evolution of The Penn State University’s investments and success in Altoona. As part of its near- and long-term expansion plans, Penn State Altoona is proposing new or expanded facilities totaling more than 170,000 square feet of space. More than 150,000 square feet of this projected space, based on the space type and proposed use, could be accommodated within Altoona’s central business district (CBD) as part of an in-fill and/or redevelopment strategy. The Entrepreneurship Center, to be housed at the former Meyer Jonasson building, could permit Penn State Altoona to provide its undergraduates with a hands-on entrepreneurial training curriculum – a location where students will “develop their business ideas and concepts, counsel small business owners, and interact with local business leaders.”

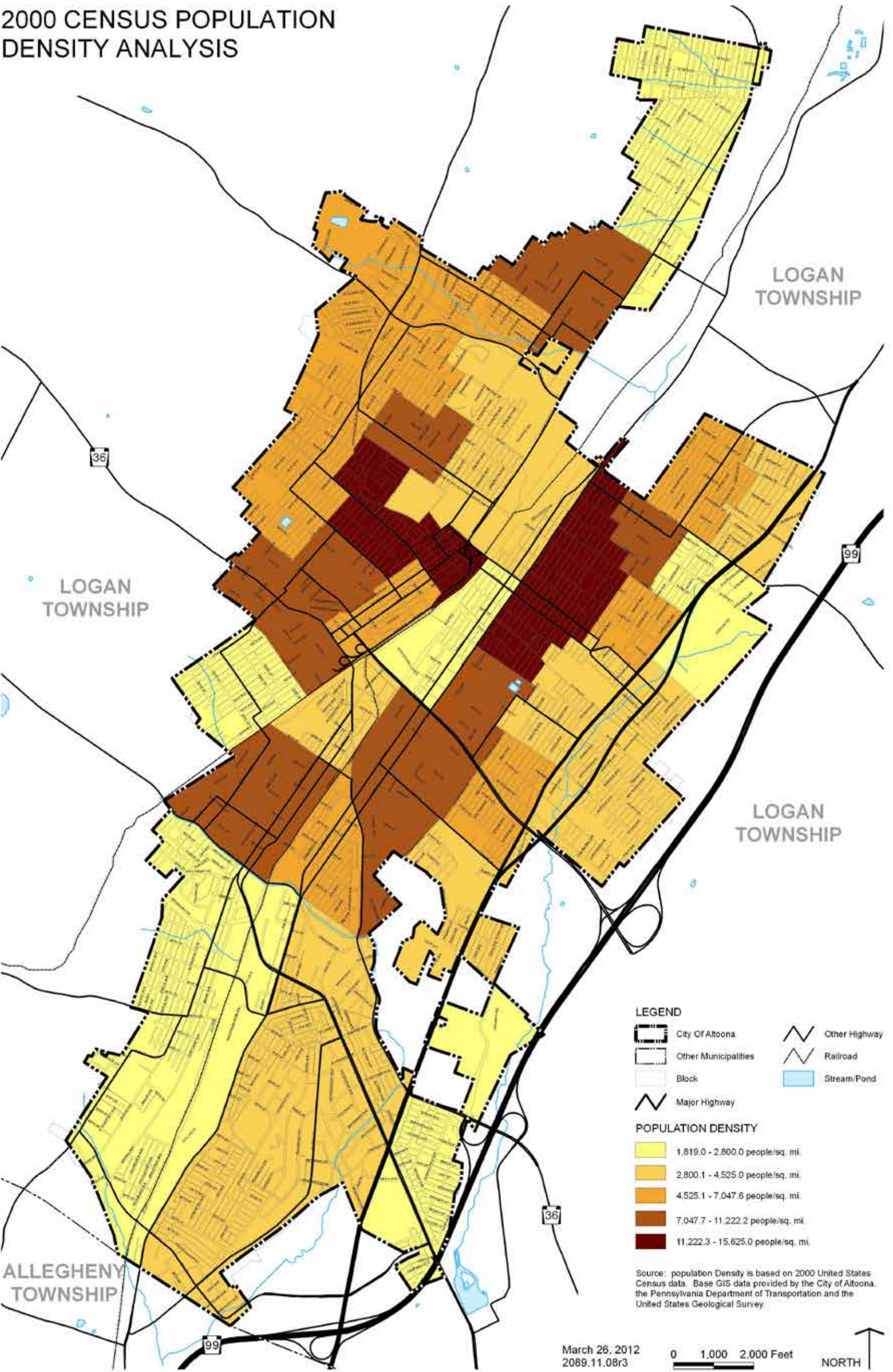
Penn State Altoona Chancellor, Lori Bechtel-Wherry, stated to Logan Township officials, in August of 2011, that off-campus housing will play a role in future development. According to a related article in which Chancellor Bechtel-Wherry was quoted, “Quite frankly, without additional housing off-campus, we will be limited in the amount of growth.” Another article, citing information provided by Penn State Altoona, stated that Penn State Altoona had more than 10,000 students apply for the 2011 fall term, but currently only has available space for 1,300 additional students. With the opportunity to embrace some of this movement, Altoona’s private and public sectors can become poised to realize success and vitality.

Further, where opportunity arises to encourage additional mixed use and/or neighborhood-scale commercial/office development, the City should evaluate and act upon development which respects relationships and advantages (as well as minimizes drawbacks) of such uses within and/or adjacent to existing land uses. When opportunity arises, the City and ABCD Corp. should also continue to expand economic-development-related mapping and metadata within the City’s GIS system. This coordinated mapping information can aid in strengthening project funding pursuits as well as assist in discussions about priorities for redevelopment and investment.

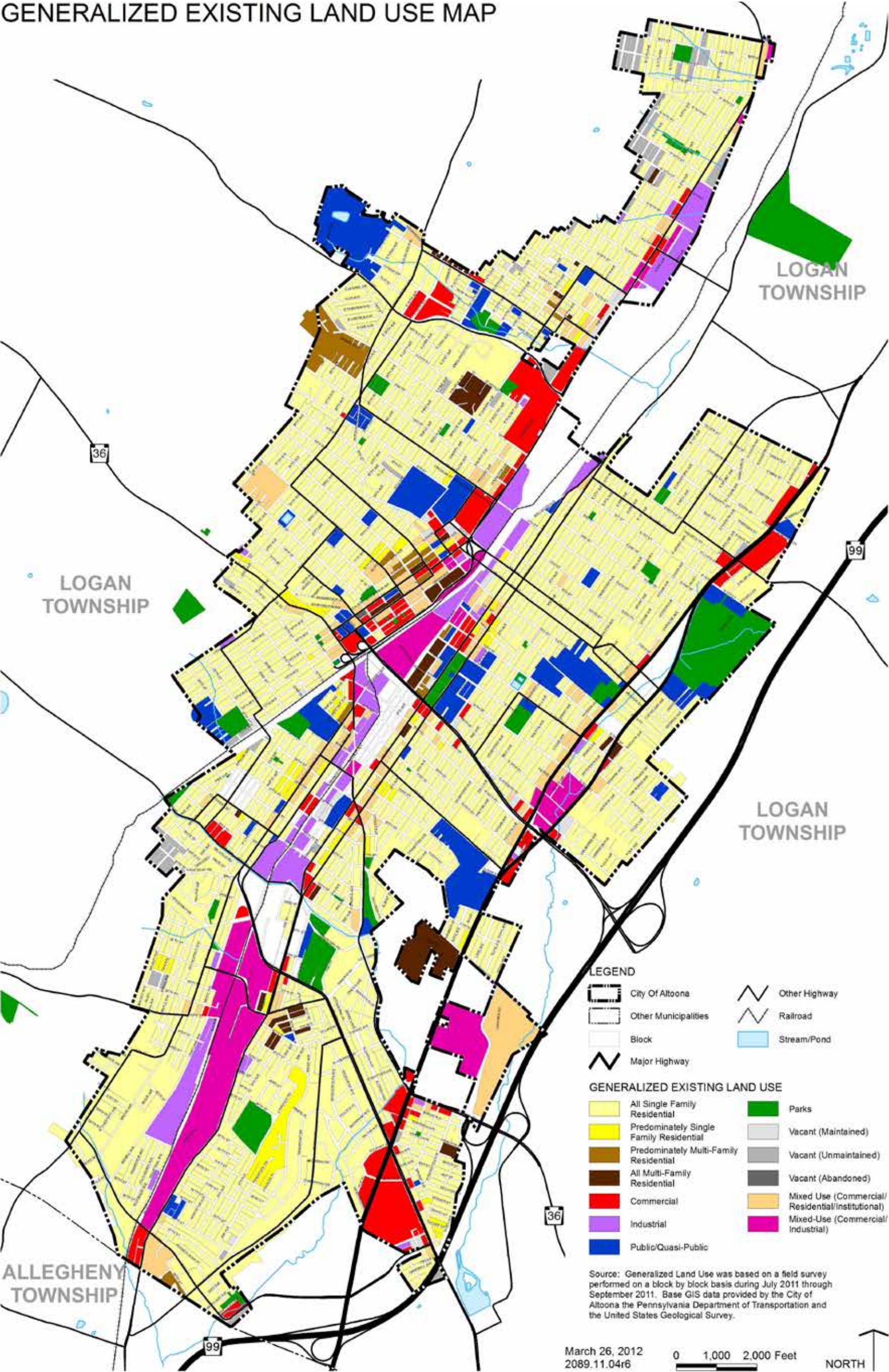
These proposed facility expansions and new development be placed in downtown Altoona and have a significant catalytic effect on downtown revitalization.

Building Name/Designation	Building Purpose	Proposed Square Feet	Floors	Suitability for Downtown
Student Activity Center	General purpose recreation and leisure center.	50,000	2	High
Science & Engineering Bldg.	Academic building containing lab, classroom and faculty space.	40,000	3	Modest
Eiche Library	Needed expansion of existing campus library	50,000	3	Modest to High
Misciagna Center Expansion	Phase II expansion of existing Misciagna center providing art studio, classroom and faculty space.	10,000	1	High
Maintenance & Operations	Facility providing for storage and office needs of campus M&O personnel	8,000	1	Low
Holtzinger Building	Needed expansion of existing Holtzinger	10,000	1	Low to Modest
Sheetz Family Health Center	Expansion of existing facility to include health and wellness center, nursing and faculty offices	5,000	1	Modest to High
Total Square Footage		173,000		

2000 CENSUS POPULATION DENSITY ANALYSIS



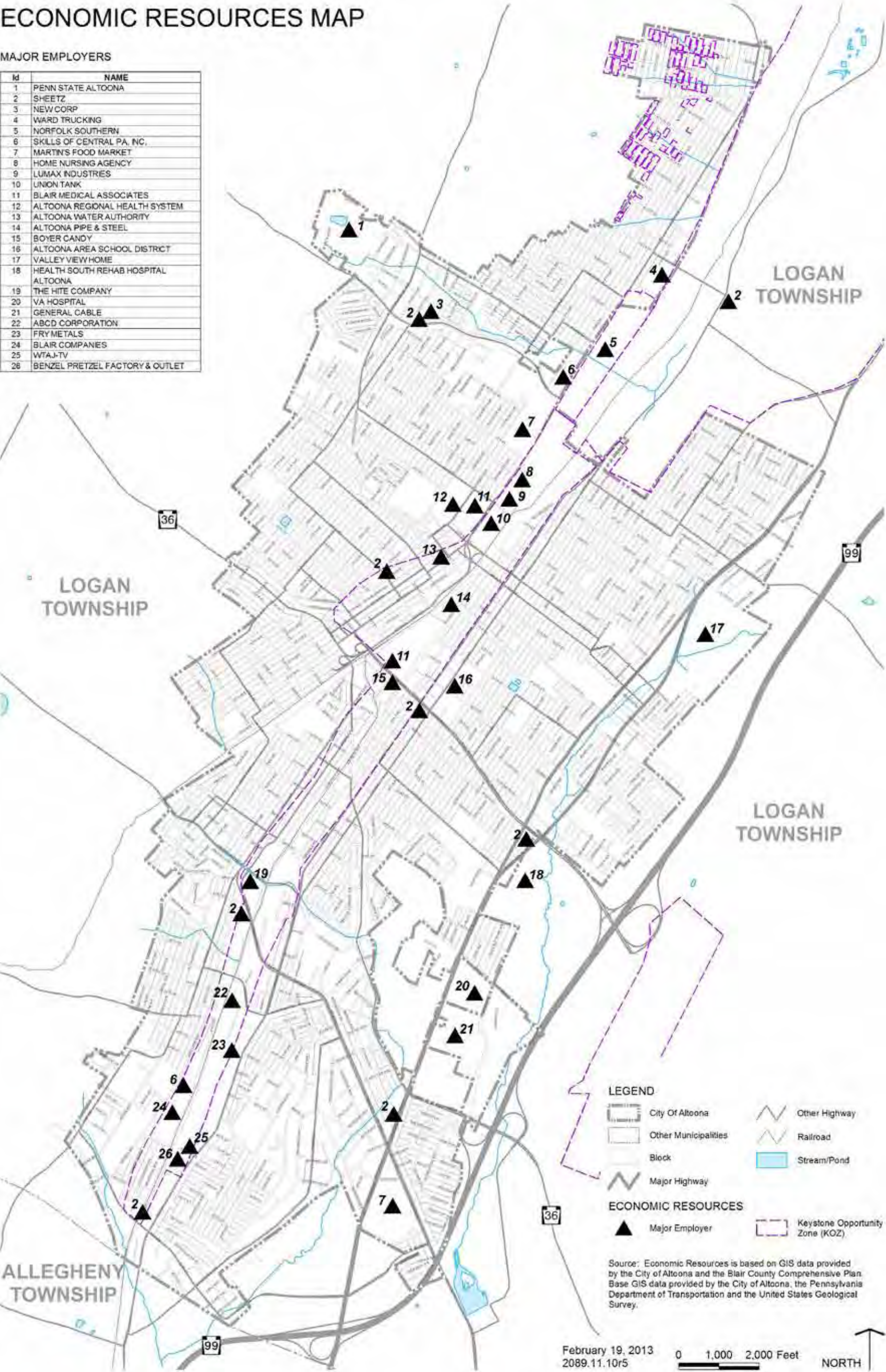
GENERALIZED EXISTING LAND USE MAP



ECONOMIC RESOURCES MAP

MAJOR EMPLOYERS

Id	NAME
1	PENN STATE ALTOONA
2	SHEETZ
3	NEW CORP
4	WARD TRUCKING
5	NORFOLK SOUTHERN
6	SKILLS OF CENTRAL PA, INC.
7	MARTIN'S FOOD MARKET
8	HOME NURSING AGENCY
9	LUMAX INDUSTRIES
10	UNION TANK
11	BLAIR MEDICAL ASSOCIATES
12	ALTOONA REGIONAL HEALTH SYSTEM
13	ALTOONA WATER AUTHORITY
14	ALTOONA PIPE & STEEL
15	BOYER CANDY
16	ALTOONA AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
17	VALLEY VIEW HOME
18	HEALTH SOUTH REHAB HOSPITAL ALTOONA
19	THE HITE COMPANY
20	VA HOSPITAL
21	GENERAL CABLE
22	ABCD CORPORATION
23	FRY METALS
24	BLAIR COMPANIES
25	WTAJ-TV
26	BENZEL PRETZEL FACTORY & OUTLET



Housing

Housing stock, sound property maintenance provisions and enforcement are fundamental aspects of quality of life in Altoona. The City of Altoona’s on-going, concerted effort to minimize properties of negative condition and impact has brought opportunity for strategic redevelopment. The ways in which the community’s existing housing stock and residential redevelopment are brought together can become an opportunity for Altoona to create one of its signatures of excellence.

As part of the comprehensive planning process, field reconnaissance was completed in order to develop a detailed Housing Conditions Analysis throughout the entire City. The map on the following page summarizes the analysis’ results on a block-by-block basis. The Analysis included observations on the general presence of:

- a. Peeling paint
- b. Roof in poor condition
- c. Chimney in poor condition
- d. Visible cracks in façade
- e. Visible cracks in foundation
- f. Missing/dilapidated windows, railings, etc.

Based on the evaluation, residential housing stock throughout Altoona is in good condition. Stock where there is poor conditions are notable are generally limited to pockets within the overall City. Per the U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2011 American Community Survey, housing within the City is generally comprised of the following: (All numbers estimated.)

General Housing Characteristics

Household Employment - Altoona

Employed residents	19,183
Worked in place of residence	10,846
Worked outside place of residence	8,337

Household Employment - Blair County

Employed residents living in a “place”	34,086
Worked in place of residence	12,824
Worked outside place of residence	21,262
Employed residents not living in a place	22,224

Rooms

Total housing units	21,180	100%
1 room	378	1.8%
2 rooms	316	1.5%
3 rooms	1,380	6.5%
4 rooms	1,982	9.4%
5 rooms	3,076	14.5%
6 rooms	5,086	24.0%
7 rooms	3,612	17.1%
8 rooms	2,461	11.6%
9 rooms or more	2,889	13.6%
Median rooms	6.2	(X)

Bedrooms

Total housing units	21,180	100%
No bedroom	406	1.9%
1 bedroom	2,268	10.7%
2 bedrooms	4,870	23.0%
3 bedrooms	9,499	44.8%
4 bedrooms	3,488	16.5%
5 or more bedrooms	649	3.1%

Average household size of owner-occupied unit	2.53
Average household size of renter-occupied unit	1.98

Year Householder Moved Into Unit

Occupied housing units	19,148	19,148
Moved in 2005 or later	7,283	38.0%
Moved in 2000 to 2004	2,691	14.1%
Moved in 1990 to 1999	3,598	18.8%
Moved in 1980 to 1989	1,798	9.4%
Moved in 1970 to 1979	1,583	8.3%
Moved in 1969 or earlier	2,195	11.5%

Other Characteristics

House Heating Fuel

Occupied housing units	19,148	19,148
Utility gas	16,823	87.9%
Bottled, tank, or LP gas	158	0.8%
Electricity	1,162	6.1%
Fuel oil, kerosene, etc.	686	3.6%
Coal or coke	31	0.2%
Wood	118	0.6%
Solar energy	0	0.0%
Other fuel	130	0.7%
No fuel used	40	0.2%

Occupied housing units	19,148	19,148
Lacking complete plumbing facilities	71	0.4%
Lacking complete kitchen facilities	200	1.0%
No telephone service available	398	2.1%

Occupants per Room

Occupied housing units	19,148	19,148
1.00 or less	19,063	99.6%
1.01 to 1.50	33	0.2%
1.51 or more	52	0.3%

Value

Owner-occupied units	12,952	12,952
Less than \$50,000	2,362	18.2%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	6,205	47.9%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	2,593	20.0%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	1,240	9.6%
\$200,000 to \$299,999	366	2.8%
\$300,000 to \$499,999	136	1.1%
\$500,000 to \$999,999	15	0.1%
\$1,000,000 or more	35	0.3%
Median (dollars)	81,700	(X)

Mortgage Status

Owner-occupied units	12,952	12,952
Housing units with a mortgage	7,444	57.5%
Housing units without a mortgage	5,508	42.5%

Selected Monthly Owner Costs

Housing units with a mortgage	7,444	7,444
Less than \$300	38	0.5%
\$300 to \$499	331	4.4%
\$500 to \$699	1,194	16.0%
\$700 to \$999	3,181	42.7%
\$1,000 to \$1,499	1,980	26.6%
\$1,500 to \$1,999	480	6.4%
\$2,000 or more	240	3.2%
Median (dollars)	884	



GENERALIZED HOUSING CONDITIONS MAP

LEGEND

City Of Altoona

Other Municipalities

Major Highway

Other Highway

Railroad

Stream/Pond

GENERALIZED HOUSING CONDITIONS

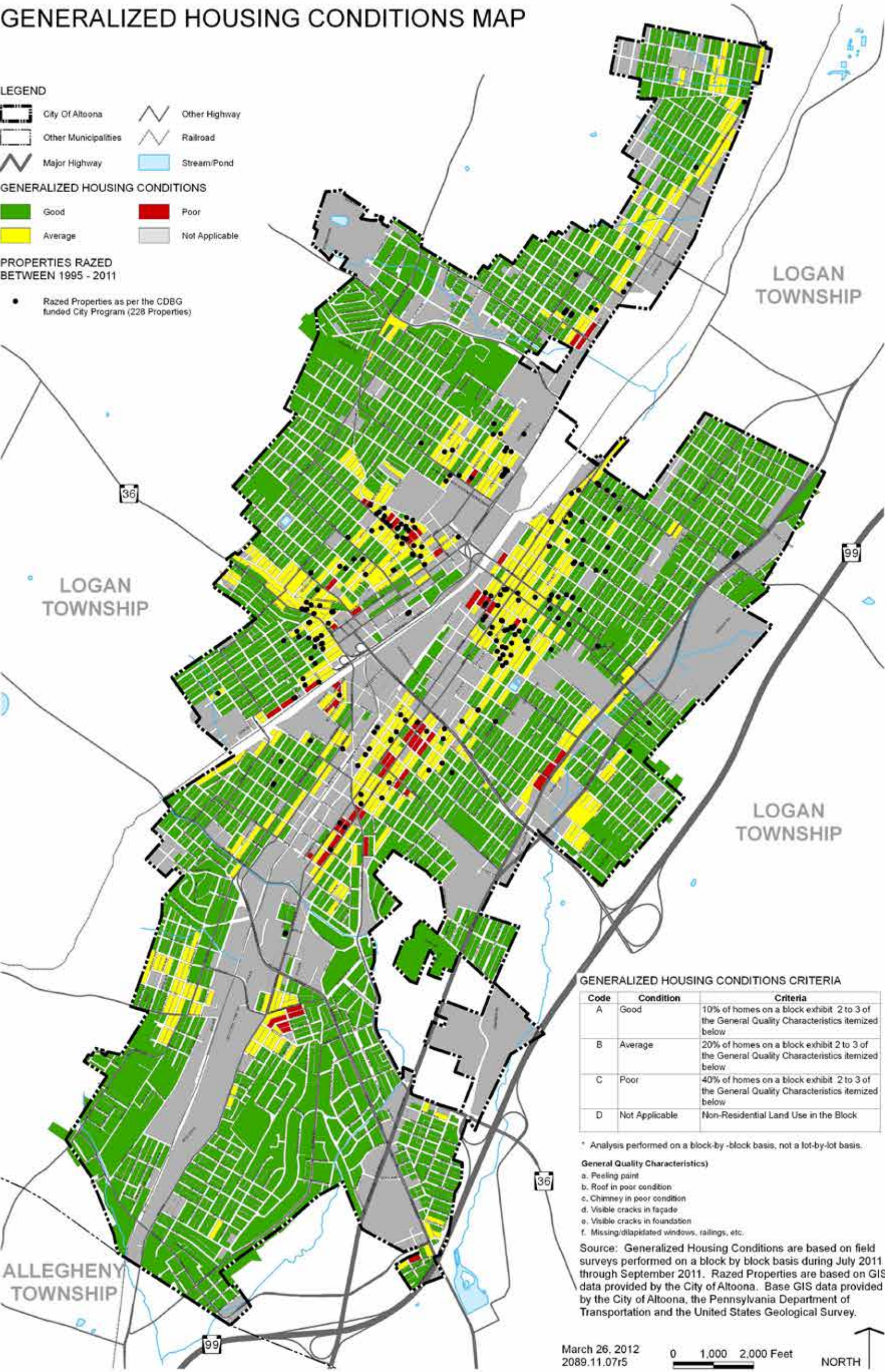
Good

Average

Poor

Not Applicable

Razed Properties as per the CDBG funded City Program (228 Properties)



GENERALIZED HOUSING CONDITIONS CRITERIA

Code	Condition	Criteria
A	Good	10% of homes on a block exhibit 2 to 3 of the General Quality Characteristics itemized below
B	Average	20% of homes on a block exhibit 2 to 3 of the General Quality Characteristics itemized below
C	Poor	40% of homes on a block exhibit 2 to 3 of the General Quality Characteristics itemized below
D	Not Applicable	Non-Residential Land Use in the Block

* Analysis performed on a block-by-block basis, not a lot-by-lot basis.

General Quality Characteristics)

- a. Peeling paint
- b. Roof in poor condition
- c. Chimney in poor condition
- d. Visible cracks in façade
- e. Visible cracks in foundation
- f. Missing/dilapidated windows, railings, etc.

Source: Generalized Housing Conditions are based on field surveys performed on a block by block basis during July 2011 through September 2011. Razed Properties are based on GIS data provided by the City of Altoona. Base GIS data provided by the City of Altoona, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation and the United States Geological Survey.

March 26, 2012
2089.11.07r5

0 1,000 2,000 Feet

NORTH



A sampling of homes within the City as listed for sale in 2011 provide a snapshot of current asking prices for various locations and room composition.

Location	Asking Price	Beds	Baths
2201 17th Ave	\$154,900	4	3.0
5028 Beale Ave	\$139,900	3	2.0
722 N 4th Ave	\$32,000	1	1.0
2633 W Chestnut Ave	\$84,900	3	1.5
221 E 4th Ave	\$62,900	3	1.0
534 54th St	\$117,900	3	1.5
832 18th Ave	\$48,000	3	1.0
4003 Cortland Ave	\$74,900	3	1.0
1423 21st Ave	\$99,000	4	1.0
5701 California Ave	\$53,900	2	1.0
713 3rd Ave	\$32,900	4	2.0
309 31st St	\$159,900	3	1.5
1426 20th Ave	\$92,000	3	1.0
1419 3rd Ave	\$22,900	2	1.0
706 S 22nd St	\$84,950	3	1.0
201 Winding Knoll Rd	\$84,950	3	1.0
1506-08 13th St	\$29,900	4	4.0
1107 4th Ave	\$19,900	3	1.0
976 35th St	\$214,000	3	2.0
627 E Grant Ave	\$99,900	4	1.0
Sample Median: \$84,925			
Sample Mean: \$84,480			

Source: Zillow (accessed August 22, 2011); 4ward Planning LLC 2011

Altoona Housing Authority

The Altoona Housing Authority is a municipal body that was created to administer and to develop affordable housing for low-income families in the City of Altoona. The Authority’s goal is to maintain safe, secure and affordable housing to very low and low-income families. This entity serves families, single householders, senior citizens, disabled and handicapped individuals. The Housing Authority was created in 1949 to develop Pleasant Village, a 126-unit veteran’s housing development, which opened in 1951.

The Altoona Housing Authority, a five (5)-member Board, was first expected to provide housing for individuals and families who cannot afford safe, sanitary housing in the private market. Current members are appointed for a five (5)-year term by the Mayor with the approval of Council. Today the Housing Authority offers assistance to eligible Altoona families through its Public Housing, Section 8, and Pleasant Village housing opportunities.

The housing assistance for low income families is available via two main programs, Public Housing and the Section 8 Voucher programs. The Housing Authority owns and manages public housing apartments in the City of Altoona. Additional assistance is provided to very low and low-income families through the Section 8 Voucher Program. The Housing Authority administers 674 “Tenant Based Vouchers” that are awarded to eligible applicants and can be used anywhere within the City of Altoona. Landlords must meet the property standards established by HUD and

agree to accept the rent determined by the Housing Authority staff. Tenants may move from the property after one year and the Voucher will move with them.

In the City of Altoona, there are five project based locations with 52 Vouchers: These Vouchers are assigned to a specific building. The tenant must live in the building to receive assistance. If they move from the building, they cannot take the Voucher with them.

Public housing apartments are located in three primary communities in the City: Fairview Hills (largest of the three), Green Avenue Tower, Eleventh Street Tower. The Altoona Housing Authority also manages Pleasant Village apartments. Public Housing communities owned and operated by the Altoona Housing Authority include The Towers (Senior Community) and Fairview Hills (Family Community). To be considered for space at any of these developments, families must apply and meet eligibility guidelines.

Improved Dwellings for Altoona, Inc. (IDA)

As highlighted by the organization, IDA was organized in 1968 in response to the needs in the City of Altoona and the surrounding area for safe, decent and affordable housing. The quality of housing stock in context of economic conditions in the City are one of IDA’s foci.

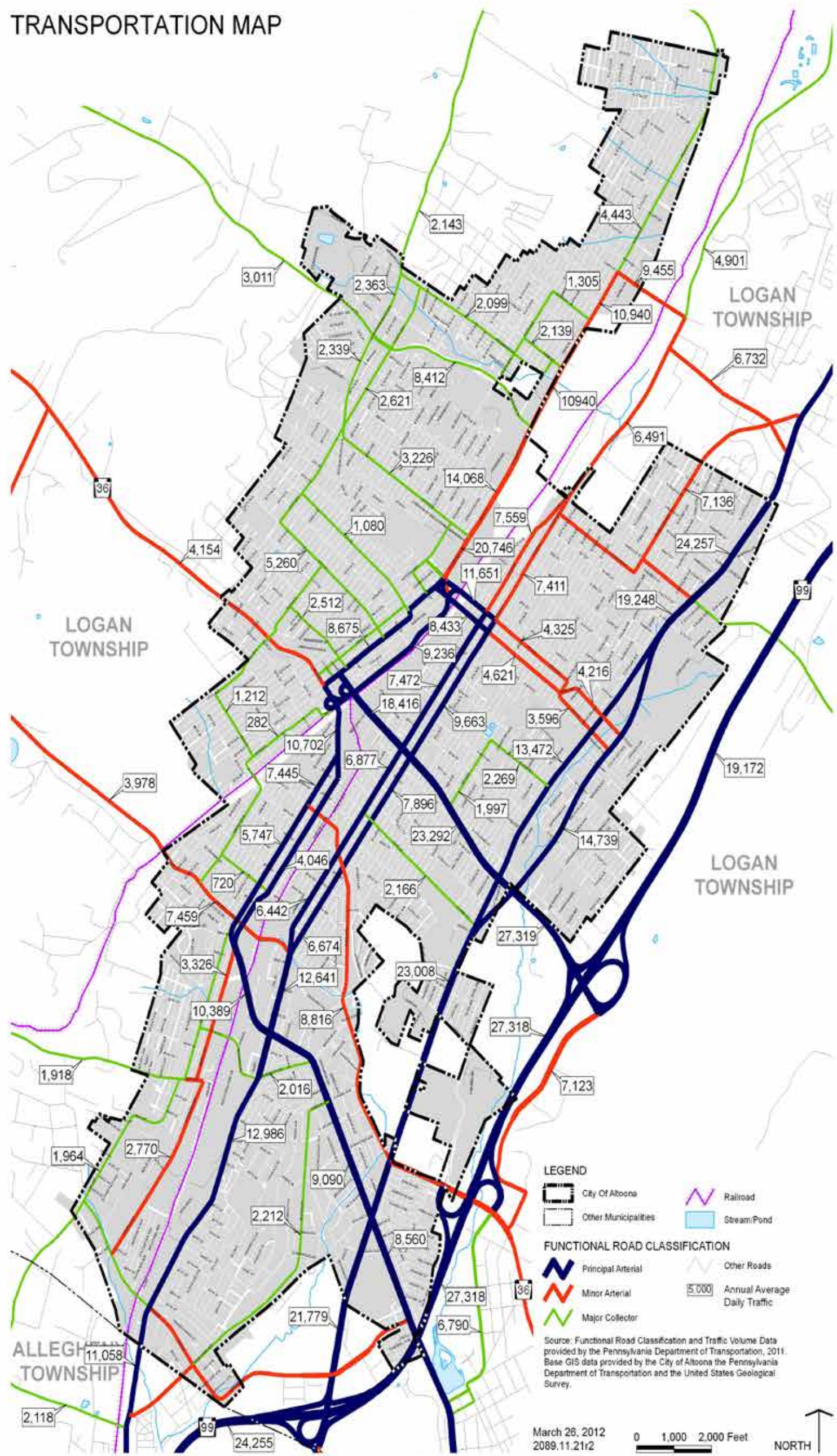
- IDA is a non-profit corporation whose mission is:
- 1) To provide adequate housing and related facilities and services for persons and families of low and moderate income who cannot secure it through rental or purchase in the private market and
 - 2) To receive and administer funds for charitable and educational purposes that will preserve, improve, or rehabilitate neighborhoods in keeping with a plan of action to insure the best long-range development of the area.

The IDA organization reports that it “has succeeded over the past 40 years in rehabilitating or constructing nearly 1,000 dwelling units with an investment of federal, state and local funds of over \$40,000,000. The support of the local officials and community members has played an integral part in the successes and ongoing efforts of IDA to improve the communities’ housing stock and to provide safe, decent and affordable housing for low and moderate income persons. Through the years, IDA has developed and/or managed 18 separate developments consisting of 944 units of rental housing for low and moderate-income persons and families with developments located in four adjoining counties. These developments are located as follows: one in Centre County, one in Cambria County, one in Clearfield County, and thirteen in Blair County, eight of which are located in whole or in part within the boundaries of the City of Altoona.

IDA has always believed in the importance of supporting the communities where IDA’s subsidized rental housing developments are located and that support for the local community has included paying real estate taxes. in a recent reported year, IDA-managed properties will pay a combined total in excess of \$580,000 of real estate taxes to the various municipalities, school districts and counties in which the 18 development are located.”

The City of Altoona recognizes IDA’s Community Development Corporation, (IDA-CDC) “as a CHDO to carry out homeownership programs and rental housing development. The IDA-CDC undertakes a program using HOME program funds to acquire and rehabilitate additional properties in Altoona for sale to low and moderate income families. The IDA-CDC also serves as the conduit for obtaining grants through the PennHOMES program through the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA), HOME & CDBG Program funds from the City of Altoona, and Affordable Housing Preservation Funds through the Federal Home Loan Bank of Pittsburgh, for extensive preservation rehabilitation projects at many IDA developments.”

TRANSPORTATION MAP



Transportation and Infrastructure

Transportation

Altoona was originally established as the western terminus of the Pennsylvania Railroad, and the Railroad Shops served as the primary maintenance facility for the railroad. Today, to supplement the railroad, major transportation corridors include Interstate 99, Pleasant Valley Boulevard, Plank Road and Fransktown Road. Altoona’s gateway corridors are 4th Street, 6th Avenue, 7th Avenue, Union Avenue, Broad Avenue, Beale Avenue, 17th Street, Plank Road, Pleasant Valley Boulevard, Valley View Boulevard, Logan Boulevard and Chestnut Avenue.

Critical intersections/crossings and other thoroughfares are the focus of on-going safety studies the City, in cooperation with PennDOT, has conducted to determine appropriate signal, turning and pedestrian upgrades. The extent to which the recommendations of those studies can be implemented in cooperation with other public entities is encouraged.

The US Census estimates as part of its 2009-2011 community survey efforts, approximated that 13.2% of occupied housing units (2,529 of 19,148) in the City do not have vehicles available to residents. Thus, the residents in nearly 1 out of 8 dwellings do not have their own vehicle and are prime customers for public transportation. Continued dialogue between the City and AMTRAN are anticipated to be ever more important in the years to come to ensure safe, efficient mobility for citizens throughout the community.

Infrastructure

At the on-set of the Comprehensive Plan, a number of points of information were gathered for general reference. In 2011, the following selected characteristics were associated with the City’s Public Works and Public Safety Departments:

Public Works

Public Works is a significant portion of the City’s annual budget. In 2011, the \$2.89 million general fund budget for the department that year equated to approximately \$62 of public works spending per City resident. Of note, the 2011 highway aid and other grants received were only \$175,000 less than the department’s annual budgeted capital projects.

There are 181 miles of City-owned roadway (362 lane miles) within the municipal boundary. Some of this mileage is comprised of streets with temporary construction (pavement atop sub-grade, rather than atop an aggregate sub-base).

City-roadway maintenance is one of the Department’s most important functions inclusive of, but not limited to, signage, salting, truck repairs and paving. The City’s Public Works Department also manages and maintains components of the municipal public works system and engineering. The Public Works Department maintains the City’s storm sewer system and annually inspects/services all fire extinguishers in the City Hall, Highway Yard and Police Department. The building fire sprinkler system in the City Hall and Police Station is also annually inspected, tested and certified. The Public Works Department is responsible for mowing approximately 60 acres of park land and maintaining park facilities throughout the City.

The Department manages contract documents and creates, bids and awards work; works with the Blair County Conservation District, local schools to address stormwater; works with Altoona Water Authority and PennDOT. Public property maintenance from fleet maintenance to streets to grass cutting is completed daily. Staff is in the process of collecting and integrating Public Works data (locating all signs, street lights, traffic signals, storm sewers and survey monuments with GPS) into the City’s Geographic Information System. As of 2011, data from 60% of the City has been collected as part of this information/mapping effort.

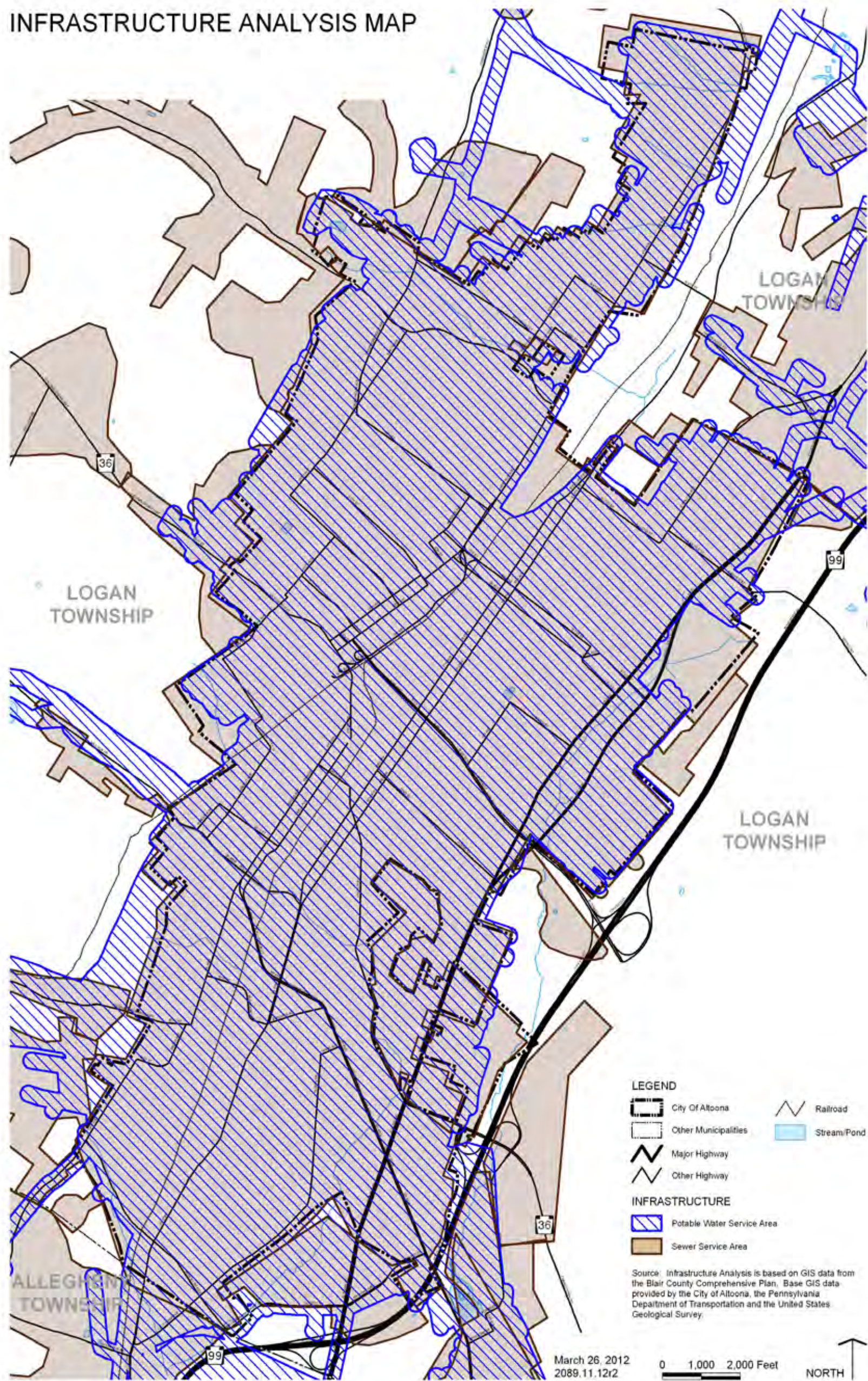
Public Safety

The City police and fire department services all development and people within the City boundaries. The geographic boundary of EMS service area extends 420 square miles with 5 stations including City of Altoona, Logan Township, Borough of Bellwood, Borough of Tyrone, Borough of Roaring Spring. In an inventory snapshot of characteristics of 2010-2011 public safety services, the following were reported:

<i>Police</i>	
# of police cruisers (cars)	17 patrol vehicles 10 CID vehicles
# of police personnel (full-time equivalents)	67 + 7 vacancies
# of reported police calls annually	30,014 (2010)
# of drug-related arrests	318 arrests (2010)
Average police response time	varies based on nature of call
<i>Fire</i>	
# of professional fire personnel	65
# of fire fighting apparatus (by type):	4 front line engines 2 reserve engines 1 heavy rescue truck 1 front line latter truck 1 reserve ladder truck
Average fire response time	3:10
Fire personnel on duty 24-7-356	13
<i>EMS</i>	
# of certified EMS personnel	84
Total pieces of EMS apparatus	13 ambulances 2 ALS level supervisor vehicles 6 para-transit vehicles 1 utility vehicle 1 all-terrain utility vehicle 1 mass casualty trailer
Average # of responding personnel	2
Average response time	6.40 minutes



INFRASTRUCTURE ANALYSIS MAP



Public Sewer and Water

The City of Altoona is serviced by municipal water supply and sewer service. The Altoona Water Authority (AWA) is a non-profit municipal authority providing public water supply and sanitary sewer service to residents in Blair County. As provided by the AWA (altoonawater.com and AWA personnel), the AWA Watershed system, comprised of seven (7) surface water drainage areas, is located in the Juniata River watershed of the Susquehanna River Basin (SRB). The AWA watershed system encompasses approximately 66 square miles covering portions of 11 municipalities in 4 counties.

Using treatment plants that employ direct filtration, ozonation and process monitoring and control via a sophisticated computer instrumentation system., the AWA’s water treatment facilities are part of one of the most technologically advanced water treatment and distribution systems in the United States. The AWA public water service area encompasses the City of Altoona, Hollidaysburg Borough, Bellwood Borough, Tyrone Borough, Duncansville Borough, Allegheny Township, Antis Township, Blair Township, Frankstown Township, Juniata Township, Logan Township, Snyder Township and Tyrone Township. The AWA wastewater collection system services the City of Altoona, Logan Township and Allegheny Township.

Approximately 18,198 customers in the City of Altoona are serviced by public potable water lines and 4,732 customers outside the City of Altoona totaling 22,921 customers system-wide. There are approximately 268 miles (1,415,040 feet) of water pipes (mains, not laterals) in the City of Altoona and approximately 121 miles (638,880 feet) outside of the City of Altoona totaling approximately 389 miles (slightly more than 2 million feet) system-wide. Water treatment plants, combined, are permitted to treat a total of 14.5 million gallons daily with a usual daily treatment of approximately 9 million gallons daily. The combined actual capacity of AWA water treatment plants is 28 million gallons daily. Additionally, the AWA provides “bulk” water to several smaller water utilities which distribute and re-sell to their direct customers.

As part of AWA’s sanitary sewer service, there are 17,901 dwelling units in the City of Altoona served by sanitary sewer and 591 outside of Altoona totaling 18,492 customers system-wide. Approximately 220 miles (more than 1 million feet) of sanitary sewer pipes (mains, not laterals) in the City of Altoona and approximately 10 miles outside of the City totaling about 230 miles.

The City is permitted to treat a total of 19.8 million gallons daily at the City wastewater treatment plants. The East Plant is permitted for 9 million gallons daily and the West Plant is permitted for 10.8 million gallons daily. The actual combined capacity of the wastewater treatment plants is about 85 million gallons daily.

City Personnel

The composition of City personnel responsible for the daily functions and management of public resources has changed over the course of the past decade. Within a 10-year period, the number of City employees has changed from approximately 5.7 employees per 1,000 residents to 5.0 employees per 1,000 residents.

Figure 4-31: City of Altoona - Workforce History By Year

DEPARTMENT	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Public Works	69	66	66	64	63	63	63	61	60	56
Police Officers	74	69	69	69	74	74	74	74	73	68
Police Support	9	9	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
Fire Department	67	66	66	66	66	67	67	67	65	62
Fire Support	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Codes Enforcement	13	13	13	13	13	13	14	13	13	10
Finance Personnel	11	10	6	6	6	6	7	7	7	6
Planning & Community Dev.	15	15	13	14	14	14	16	16	15	13
Administration	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Information Technology	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Deputy Controller	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Total	264	254	247	246	250	251	255	252	247	229

The PA DCED’s Municipalities Financial Recovery Act Consultative Evaluation (April 2012) along with the City’s Act 47 Plan (2012) expands upon this inventory identifying other projects and patterns of the City’s Departments, personnel and serves as reference for the Comprehensive Plan’s analysis and recommended strategies.

Intermunicipal Relations Committee

Altoona, along with Logan Township, Tyrone Borough and Hollidaysburg Borough comprise the Intermunicipal Relations Committee (IRC) - a council of governments (COG). The IRC was initially established as the Intermunicipal Recycling Committee in 1990 to address the needs of the member municipalities related to recycling and composting required by Pennsylvania Act 101 of 1988. The name was changed in 1997 to reflect a desire by the member municipalities to undertake other intermunicipal issues. Each member municipality has one vote on the board of the IRC. An elected official from each municipal governing body is the primary voting representative and the municipal manager serves as a proxy in the event of the elected official’s absence.

Civic, Cultural and Environmental Resources

The City of Altoona is surrounded by natural resources and recreation areas. These amenities are illustrated on the following pages. In addition to those within the City, several notable civic amenities are in nearby Logan Township: Brush Run County Park, Valley View County Park, Blair County Ball Park and Lakemont Amusement Park.

Within Blair County, Altoona has the greatest concentration of cultural and historic sites in the county with four designated historic districts as well as the following registered and eligible sites:

Historic registered sites

- Allegheny Furnace
- Baker Mansion
- Broad Avenue Historic District
- Central Trust Company Buildings
- Downtown Altoona Historic District
- Knickerbocker Historic District
- Llyswen Historic District
- Mishler Theatre
- Penn Alto Hotel

Eligible Sites

- Gospel Hill
- Altoona US Post Office
- Boyer Candy Company
- Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmens
- First Evangelical Lutheran Church
- PA Railroad: Altoona Works: Master Mechanics Building

Museums and Attractions

A number of museums and regional attractions have become hallmarks of the City. These include:

- Altoona Railroaders Museum
- Blair County Historical Society - Baker Mansion
- Blair County Arts Foundation
- Altoona Community Theater
- Altoona Symphony Orchestra
- Albert Michael’s Gallery - 230 4th Ave.
- Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art
- Quaint Corner Children’s Museum

Parks and Recreation

The City has Central Blair Recreation Commission assists the City in providing the people of Altoona opportunities for parks and recreation system. The City is a partner in helping the Commission implement its overall strategic plan for improvements and services. As part of this collaboration, one of the opportunities that the Commission and City provide Altoona residents is to give back to the community through volunteer efforts to adopt-a-park or become an advocate for support. The following is a list of parks in the City of Altoona that are available for adoption (July 2012).

- Fairview Park - 25th Avenue and 3rd Street
- Focus Park - 23rd Avenue and 9th Street
- Garden Heights - Tennyson Avenue & Lowell Avenue
- Garfield Park - 25th Street and 11th Avenue
- Geesey Park - Grant Avenue and 3rd Street
- Hamilton Park - East Walnut Avenue and 3rd Street
- Highland Park - 3rd Avenue and 44th Street
- Iuzzolino Park - Maple Avenue and 26th Street
- Jefferson Park - 4th Avenue and 2nd Street
- Juniata Memorial Park - 12th Avenue and Park Blvd
- Locust Hills Park - West Chestnut Avenue and Greenway Dr.
- Orchard Park - Beech Avenue and 2nd Street
- Prospect Park - 14th & 15th Street and 1st Avenue
- Second Ward Park - 10th Street and 3rd Avenue
- Veteran’s Field - Maple Avenue and 24th Street
- Booker T. Washington Outdoor Facility - 19th St/13th Ave.

Natural Resources

Of the City’s nearly 6,100 acres, the community’s topography can generally be characterized as:

0-8% slopes	3,721 acres	61%
>8-15% slopes	1,259 acres	21%
>15-25% slopes	677 acres	11%
>25-40% slopes	290 acres	4.5%
>40% slopes	151 acres	2.5%

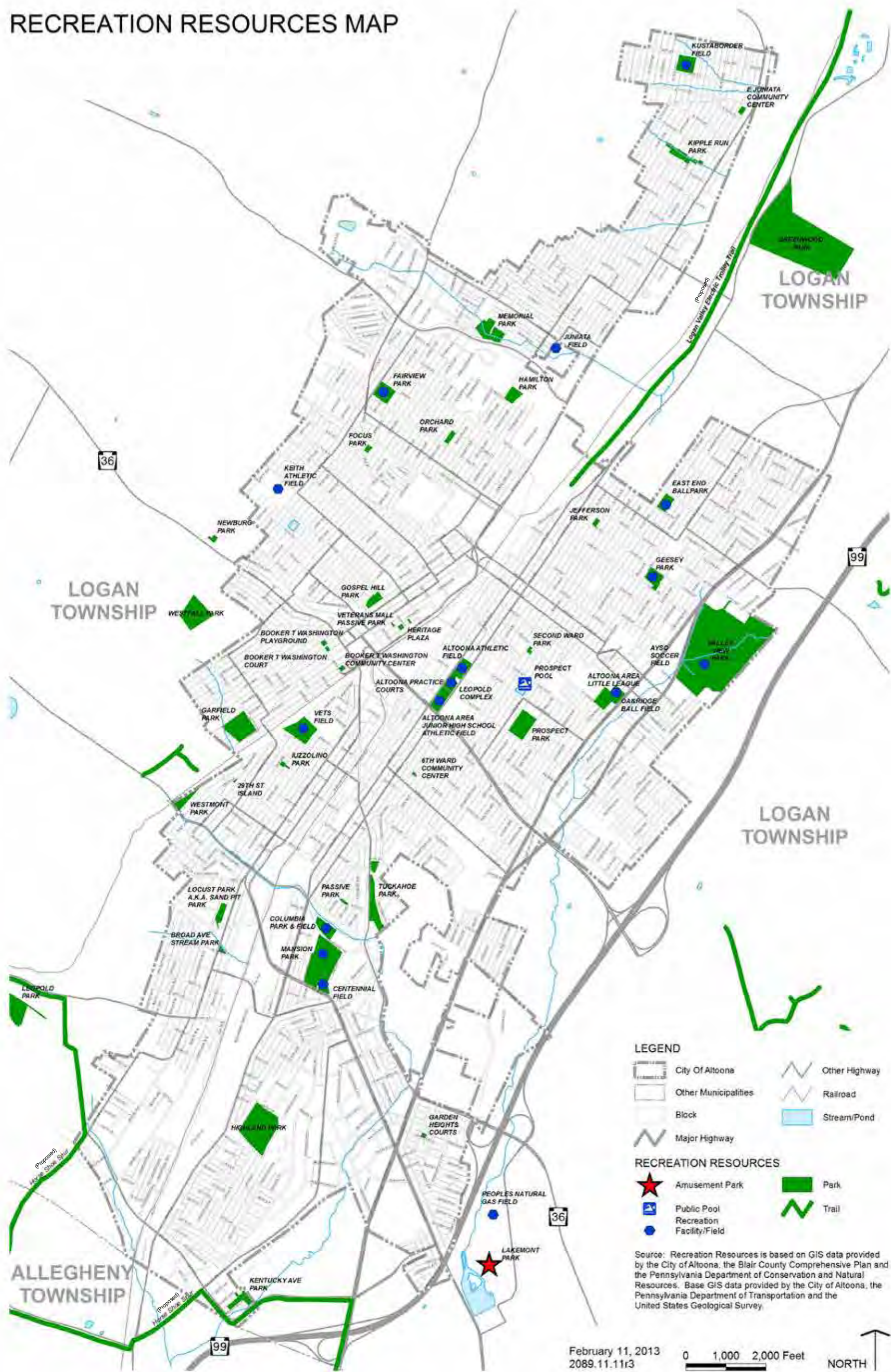
Steep slopes (those >25%) generally comprise 441 acres. The Landform Map illustrates the elevations and the City’s overall topographic pattern of ridges and valleys. A few portions of the City also possess land within the 500-year floodplain. Altoona’s topography creates significant storm water management issues due to the nature of the low-lying areas within the city and the City’s position as a low-lying area in the region.



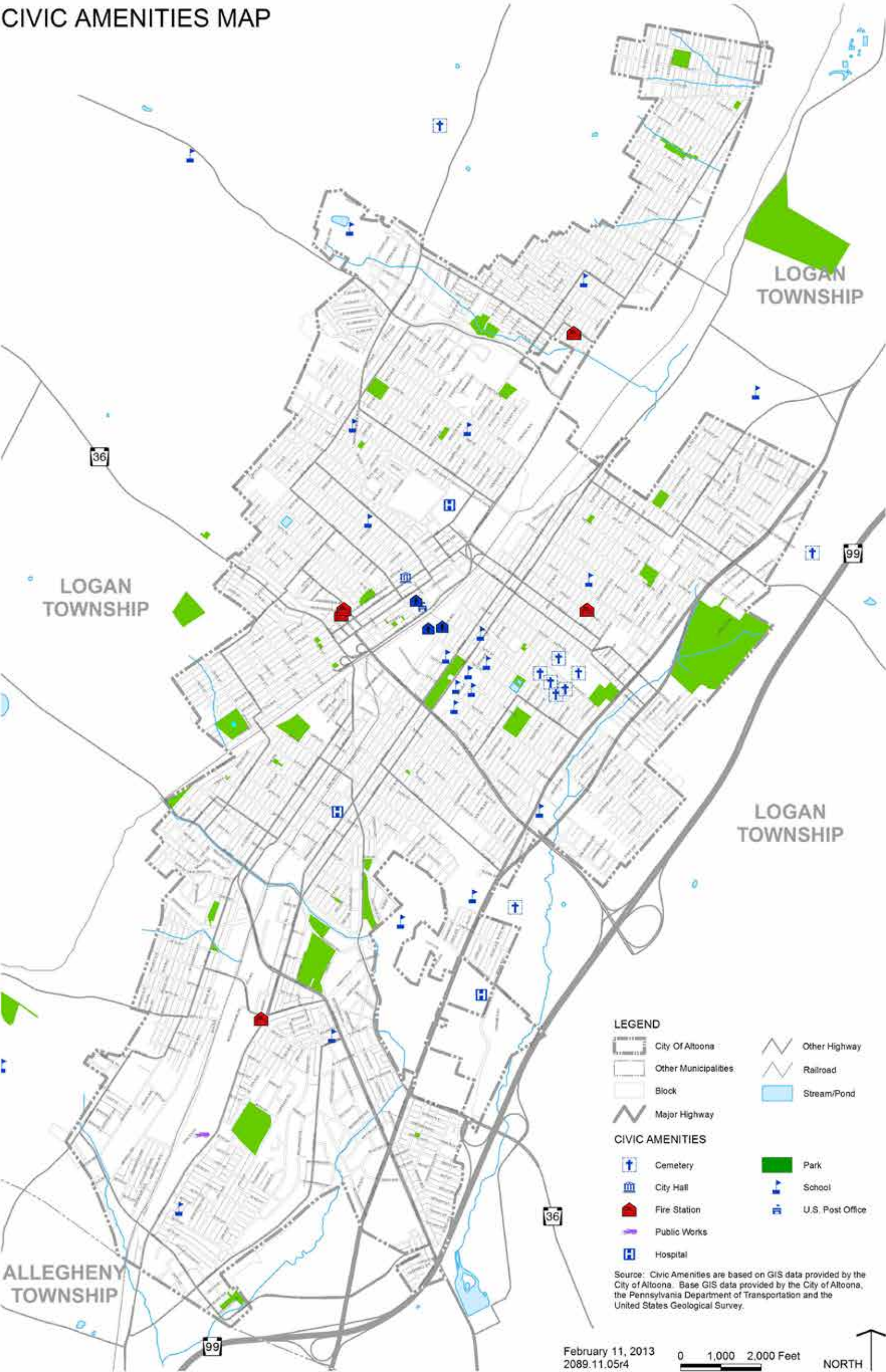
HISTORIC RESOURCES MAP



RECREATION RESOURCES MAP



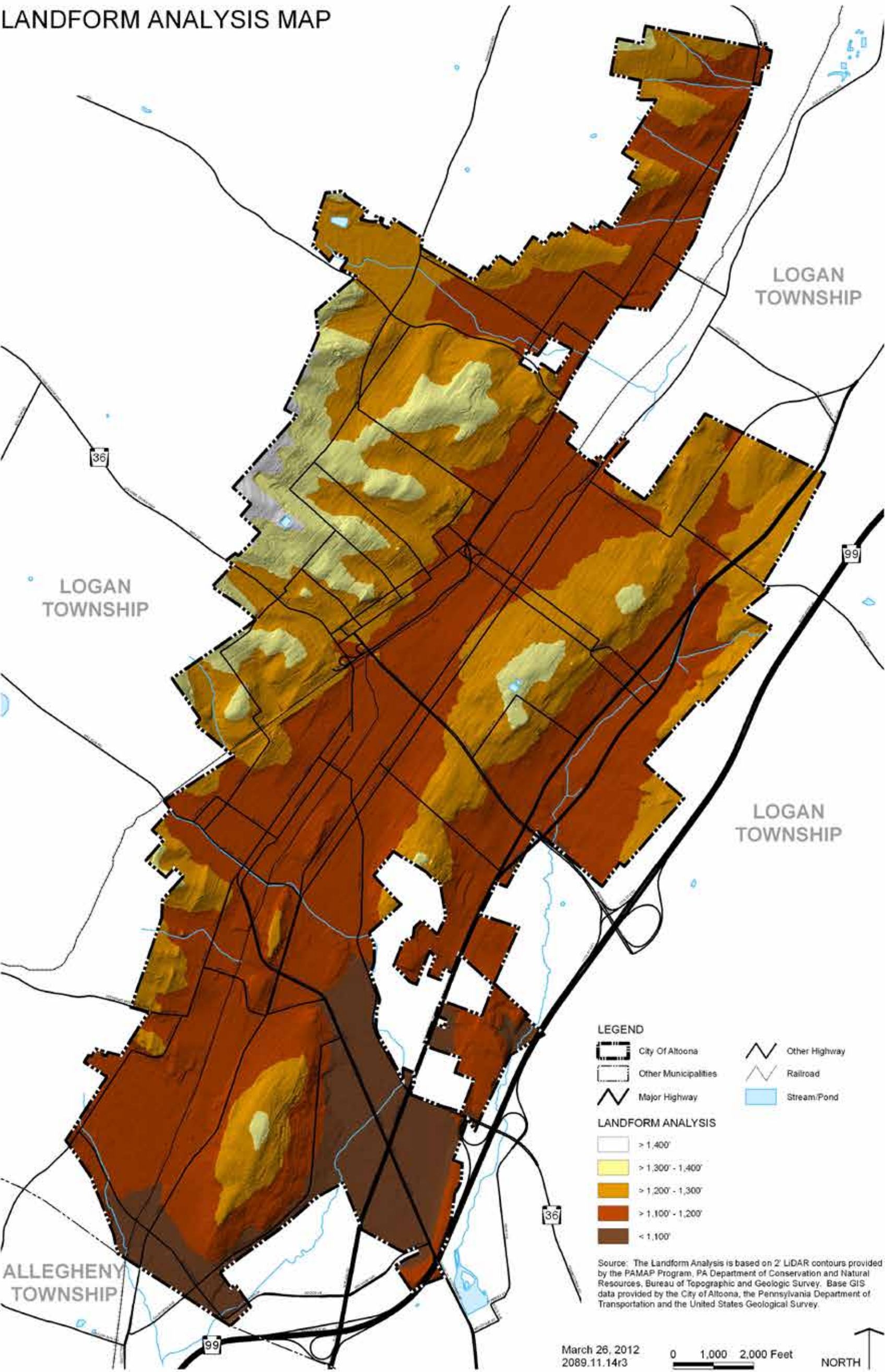
CIVIC AMENITIES MAP



NATURAL RESOURCES MAP



LANDFORM ANALYSIS MAP



SLOPE ANALYSIS MAP

