

Broadband & Wireless in your Comprehensive Plan

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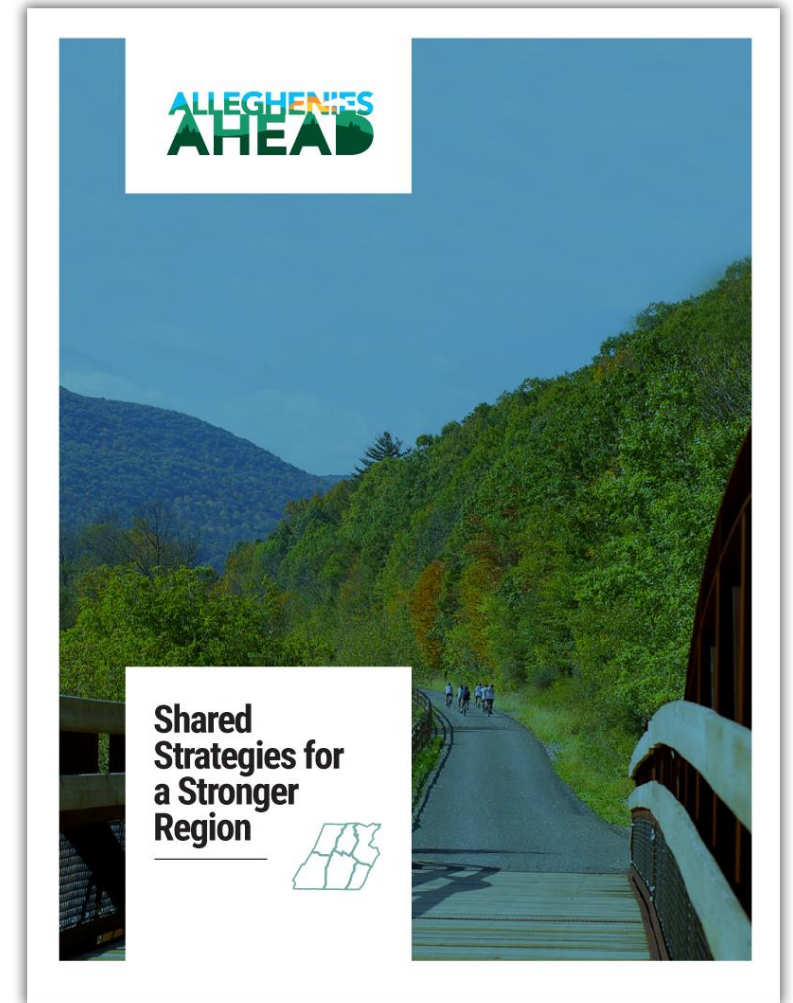
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Background:

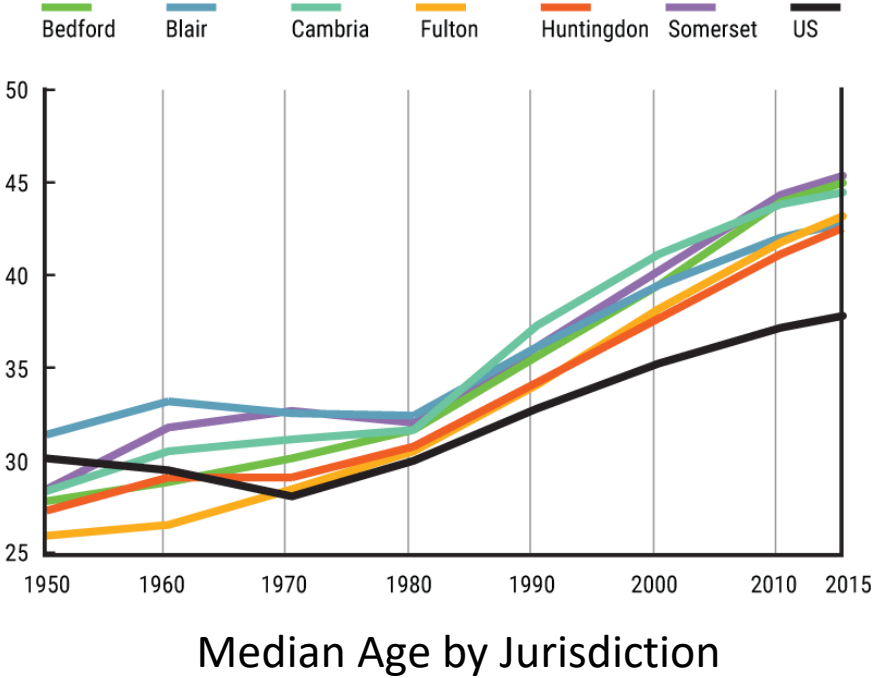
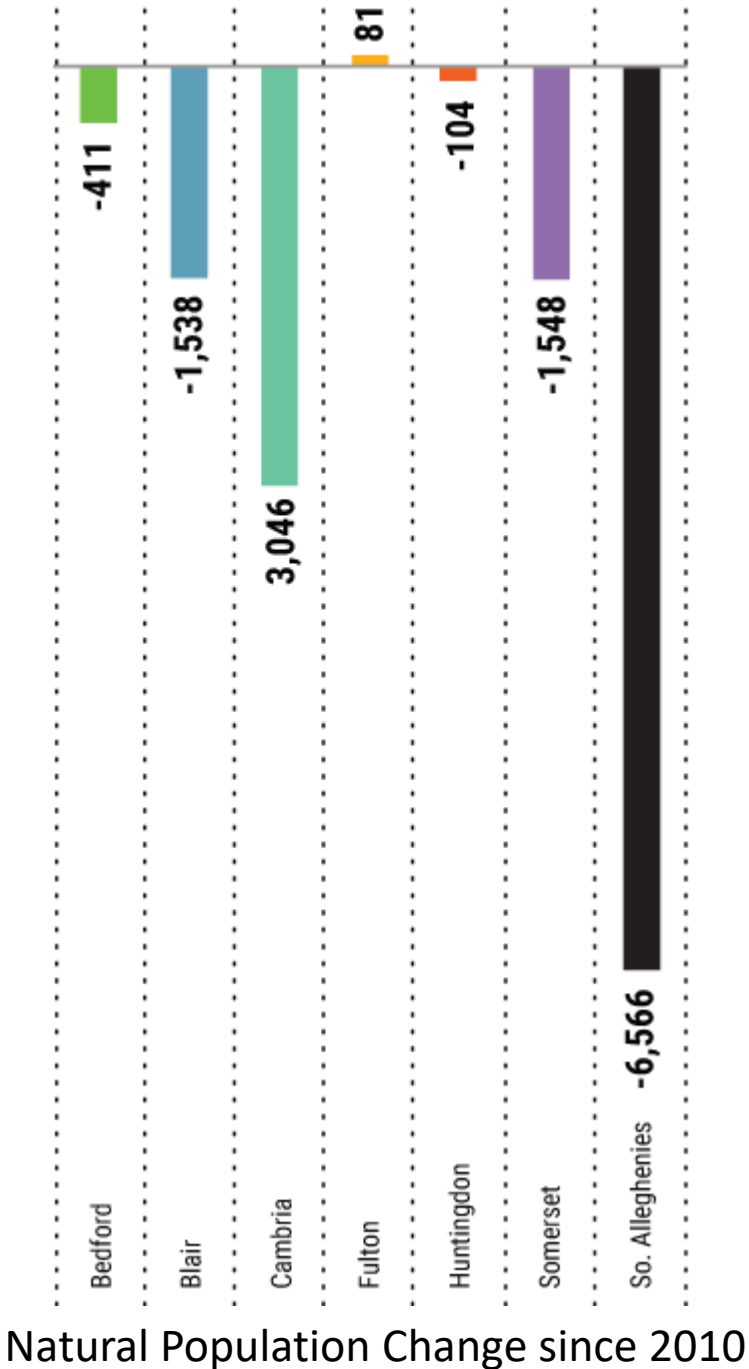
In 2016 the Southern Alleghenies Planning Advisory Committee embarked on a six-county comprehensive planning effort which came to be known as *Alleghenies Ahead: Shared Strategies for a Stronger Region*. The six planning directors hired the firm czb of Alexandria, VA to help develop a plan that would give its citizenry a desperately needed bright slap to awaken it out of the slumber it had been drifting into for nearly a half century.

The result was a nonstandard but implementable plan that is applicable to the entire region yet adaptable to each county's specific political structure and needs. Instead of chapters on each required element of the MPC, the plan focused on topics the region needs to 'get right' in the immediate future if it seeks to preserve the positive elements it has long enjoyed.

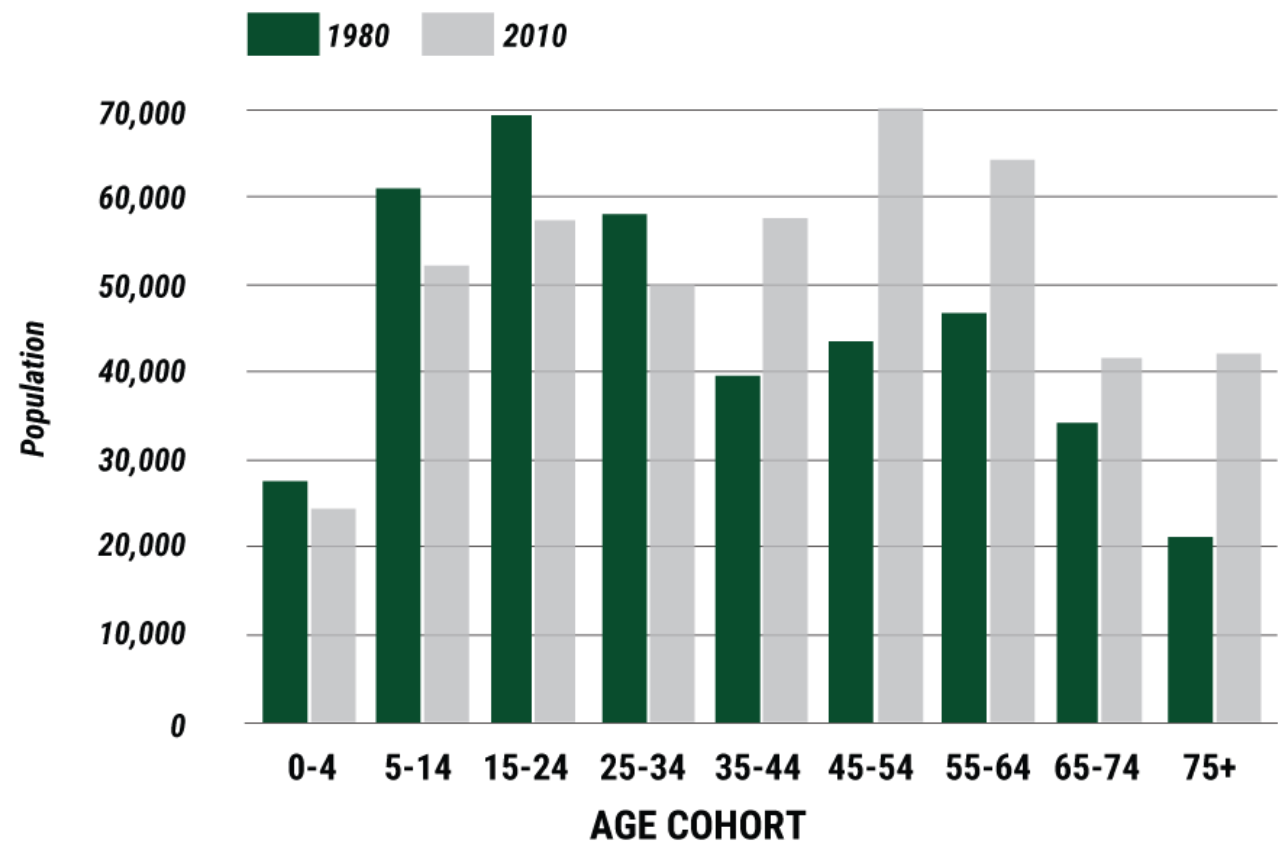
As part of the development process, the lack of broadband and wireless service came to the forefront as a critical barrier .



Demographic Trends



Demographic Trends



		Domestic Migration (within US)	International Migration
	Pennsylvania	-183,614	195,038
	Bedford	-1,035	32
	Blair	-1,252	213
	Cambria	-6,057	336
	Fulton	-250	30
	Huntingdon	-406	164
	Somerset	-1,214	194
	So. Alleghenies	-10,214	969

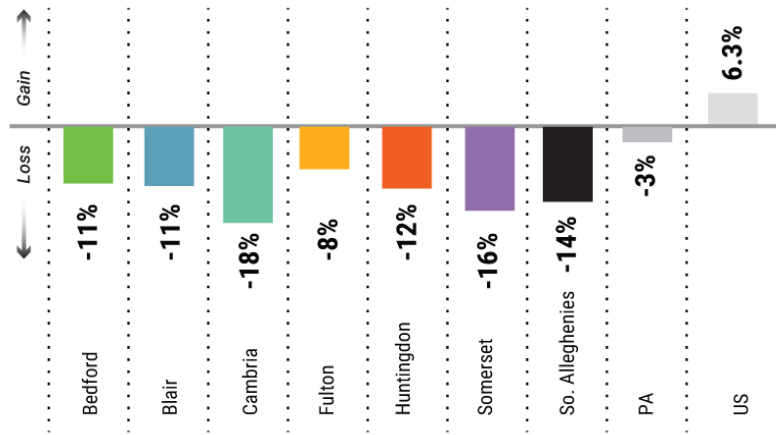
10,200

more people moved out of the region's counties to other parts of the country than moved in. Nationally, younger adults are the most mobile age group.

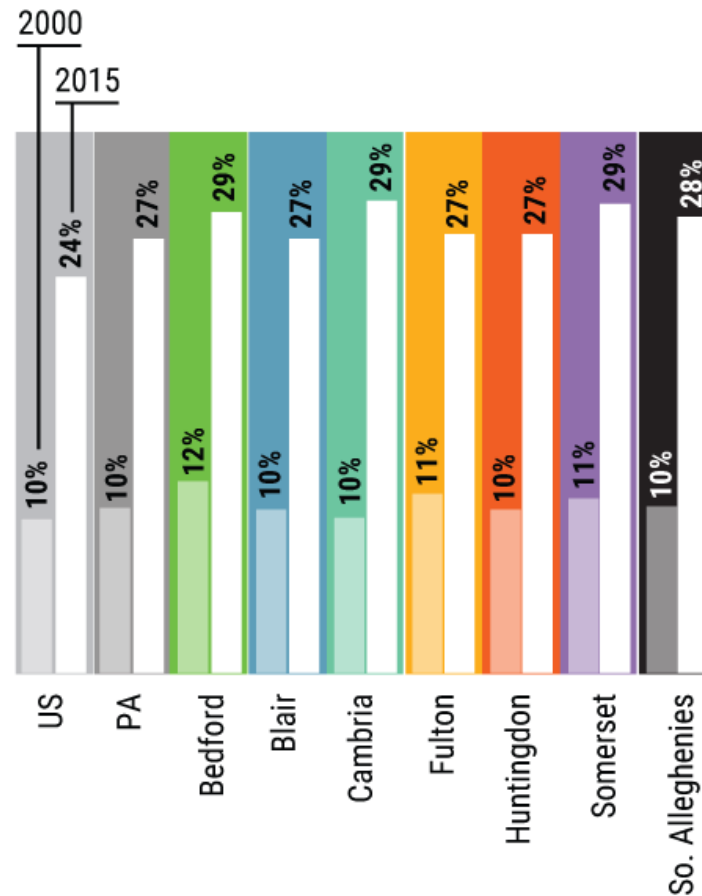
Only 969

people moved to the region from another country – not nearly enough to offset domestic losses.

Labor Trends



Civilian Labor Force Change Since 2010

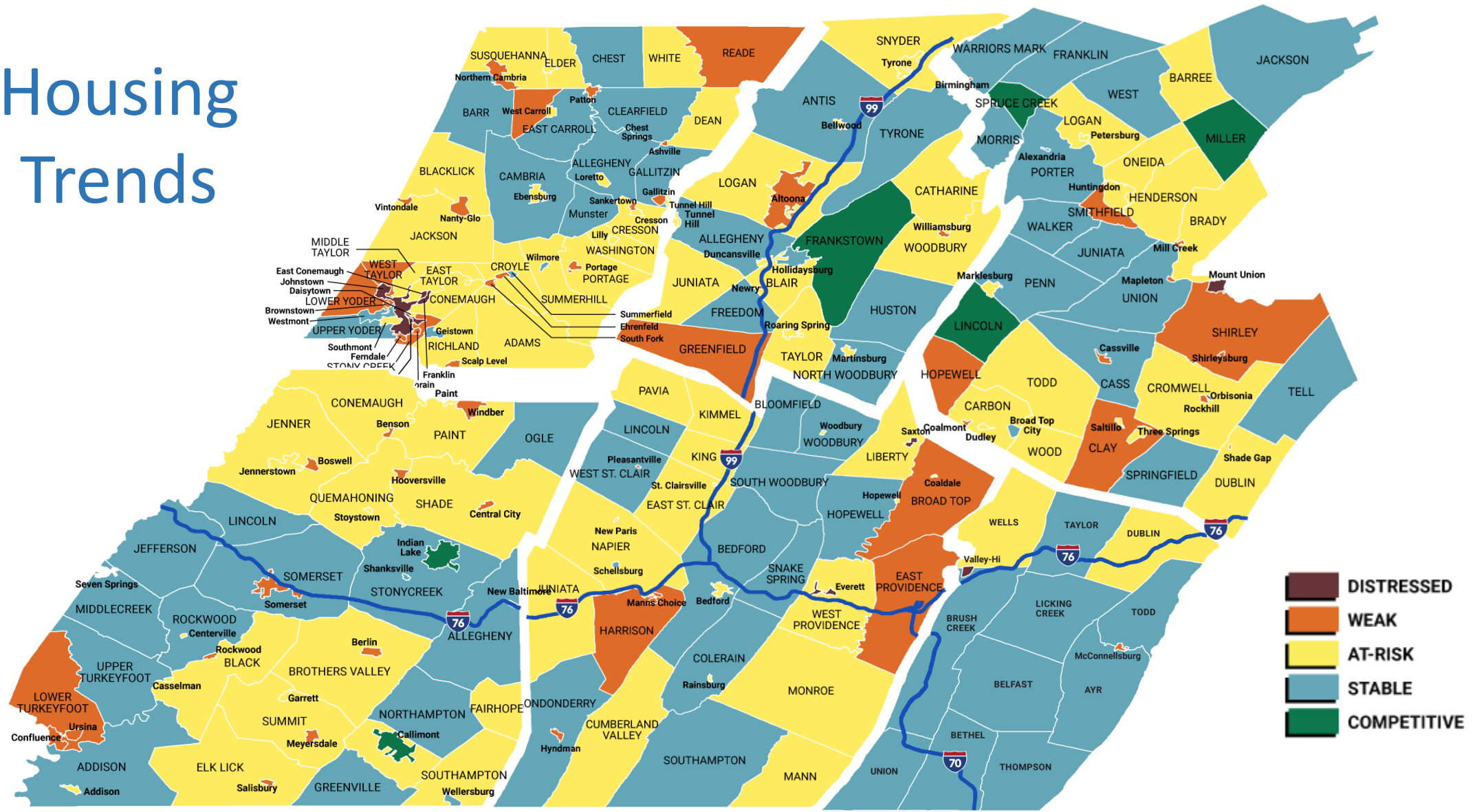


Civilian Labor Force Over Age 55

	2000	2015
U.S.	5.2	5.8
Pennsylvania	4.8	5.9
Bedford	1.9	2.3
Blair	3.0	4.0
Cambria	2.6	3.3
Fulton	1.9	2.3
Huntingdon	2.2	2.0
Somerset	2.2	2.5
Pittsburgh Area	6.1	8.2

Percentage w/College Degrees

Housing Trends



Housing Trends

Two interrelated housing trends that undermine the region's competitiveness

1

Too much housing that is rapidly **deteriorating from years of underinvestment**, dampening the overall market

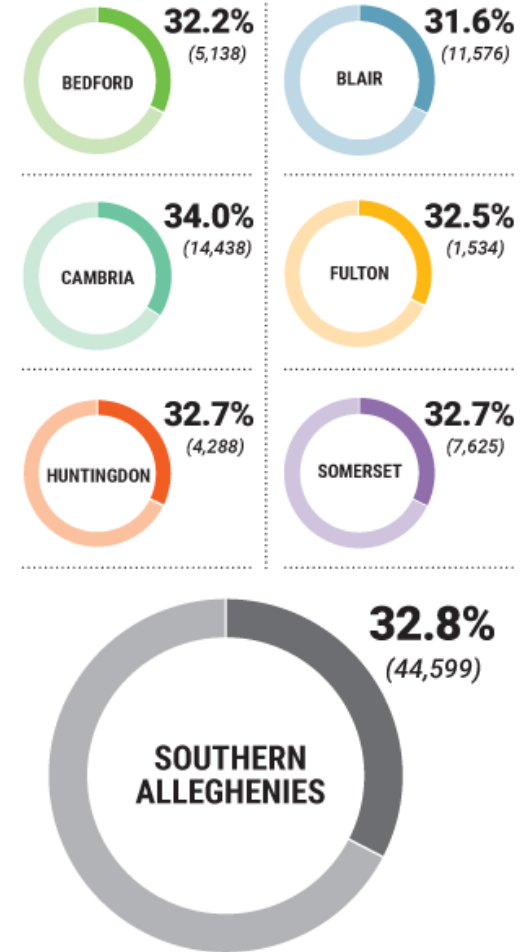


11,500

housing units are abandoned across the region, ranging from 4% to 7% of housing in each county

2

Too few options to **meet the needs of middle- and upper-income households**, who settle for inferior alternatives or choose to live elsewhere



Retired Homeowners, 2015

Business Trends

	2006	2015	
Bedford	1,100	→ 1,050	-4.5%
Blair	3,334	→ 3,191	-4.3%
Cambria	3,558	→ 3,194	-10.2%
Fulton	313	→ 264	-15.7%
Huntingdon	844	→ 821	-2.7%
Somerset	1,868	→ 1,707	-8.6%

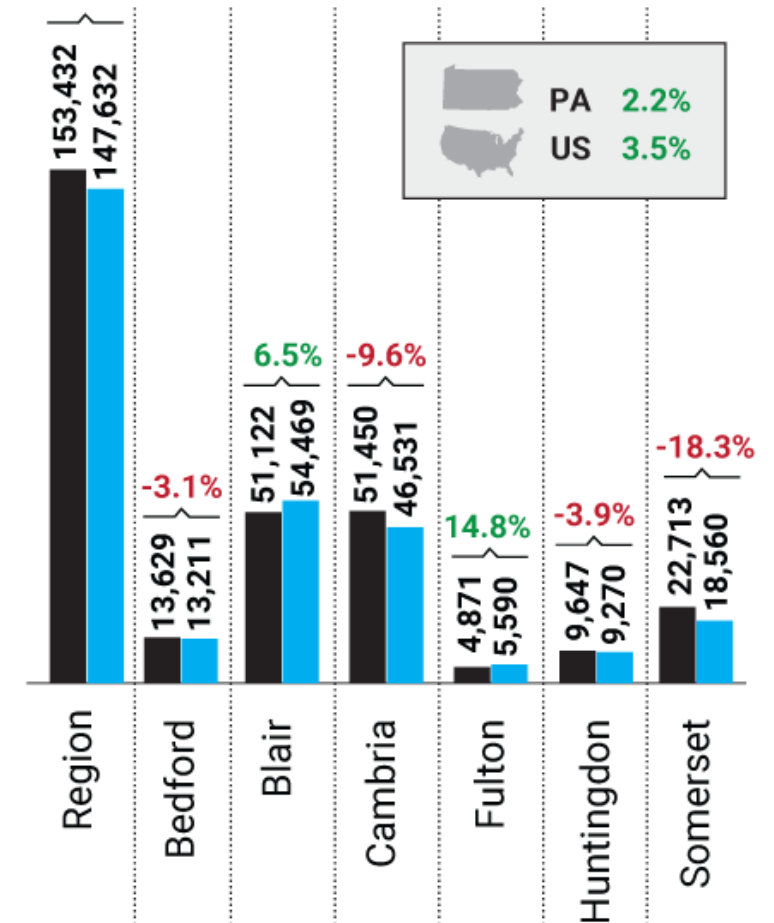


New Businesses



New Business Share of Total Businesses, 2015

2006 2015



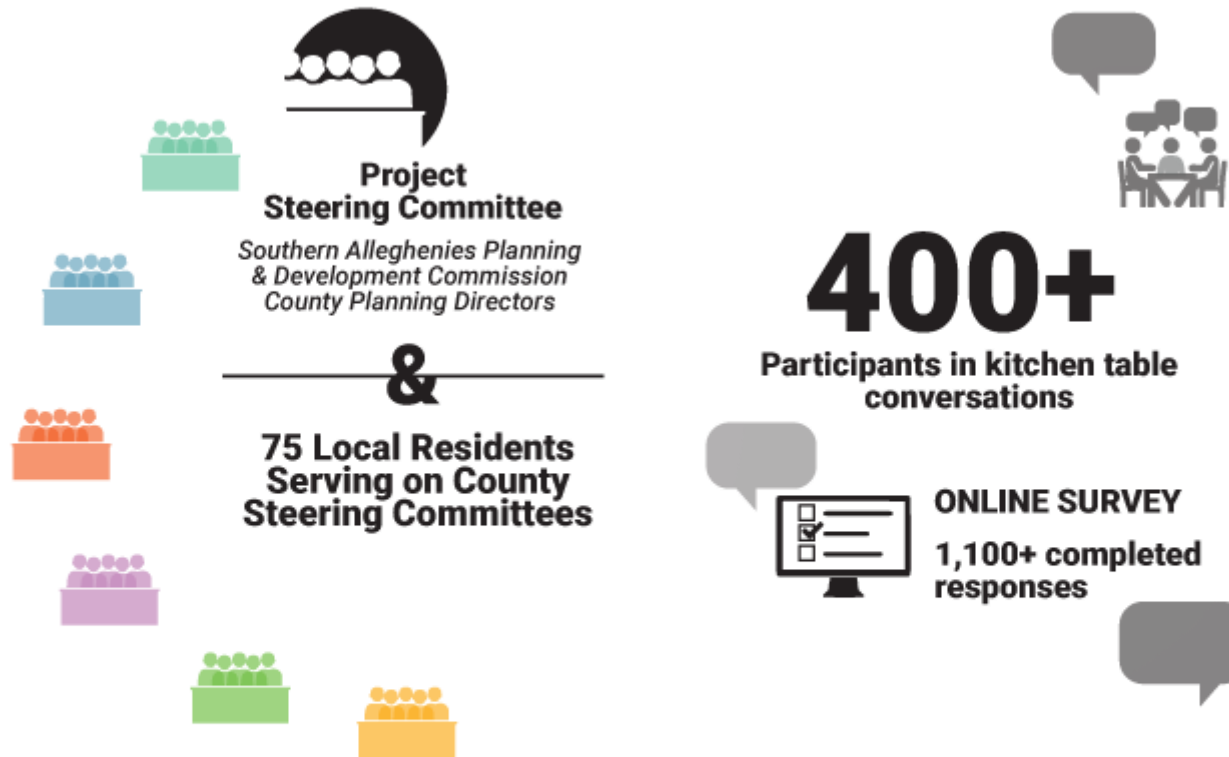
Number of Jobs



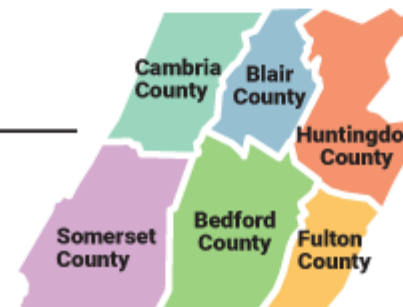
Business Trends

	BEDFORD	BLAIR	CAMBRIA	FULTON	HUNTINGDON	SOMERSET
# of Farms	1,210	525	551	656	833	1,140
% Change, 2007-2012	↑ 3%	0%	↓ -16%	↑ 8%	↓ -10%	↓ -1%
# of acres farmed	209,795	90,117	76,889	112,210	158,300	214,581
% Change, 2007-2012	↓ -1%	↑ 3%	↓ -13%	↑ 8%	↑ 7%	↑ 4%
Median farm acreage	108	82	76	110	104	118
Share of production value as livestock as crops	70% 30%	84% 16%	44% 56%	75% 25%	81% 19%	74% 26%
Average market value of products sold per farm	\$101,504	\$205,146	\$59,240	\$80,754	\$112,248	\$91,411

A community-driven process



Comprehensive Plan for the
Southern Alleghenies Region



“Competing for younger households and expanding our ability to invest in ourselves – this is what we need to address through the decisions we make on a daily, monthly, and yearly basis.”

Will the Decisions we make ...

... increase the likelihood that **young skilled workers** who live here will want to **stay here**?

... increase the likelihood that **young skilled workers** who don't live here will choose to **move here**?

... increase the likelihood that **entrepreneurs will start businesses here**?

... improve our **financial capacity** to **invest in ourselves**?

... improve our **community's ability to make trade-offs** that make us stronger?

What kinds of actions will help us compete for younger households and expand our ability to invest in ourselves?

Is our **housing stock** appealing?

How do our **recreational and cultural** opportunities stack up?

Are we **wired** to compete?

More broadly, what do we need to get right to make households and businesses more likely to stay and thrive here, or to move here from somewhere else?



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Cooperation & Collaboration



Business Development



Agriculture



Housing & Blight



Public Health



Recreation



Transportation

The Eight Critical Issues



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Addressing priorities that lead to actual progress – that is what entities across the region set out to do every day. How do we know our work is accomplishing something? What do we do if it is not as effective as expected? What if a new opportunity comes along? Does it make sense to shift priorities and resources?

Broadband and wireless services that are reliable and high quality are essential to economic competitiveness and even public safety - and anecdotes abound about their shortcomings in the Southern Alleghenies.



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Our communities are shaped by countless decisions made by the hundreds of boards, commissions, & committees. On what basis are the decisions made? Can they be coordinated to have a positive cumulative outcome?

The Link to Demographic Disadvantages:

For younger households and most businesses today, access to high speed internet and reliable wireless services is an expectation not unlike electricity. Places that don't have it cannot be competitive.

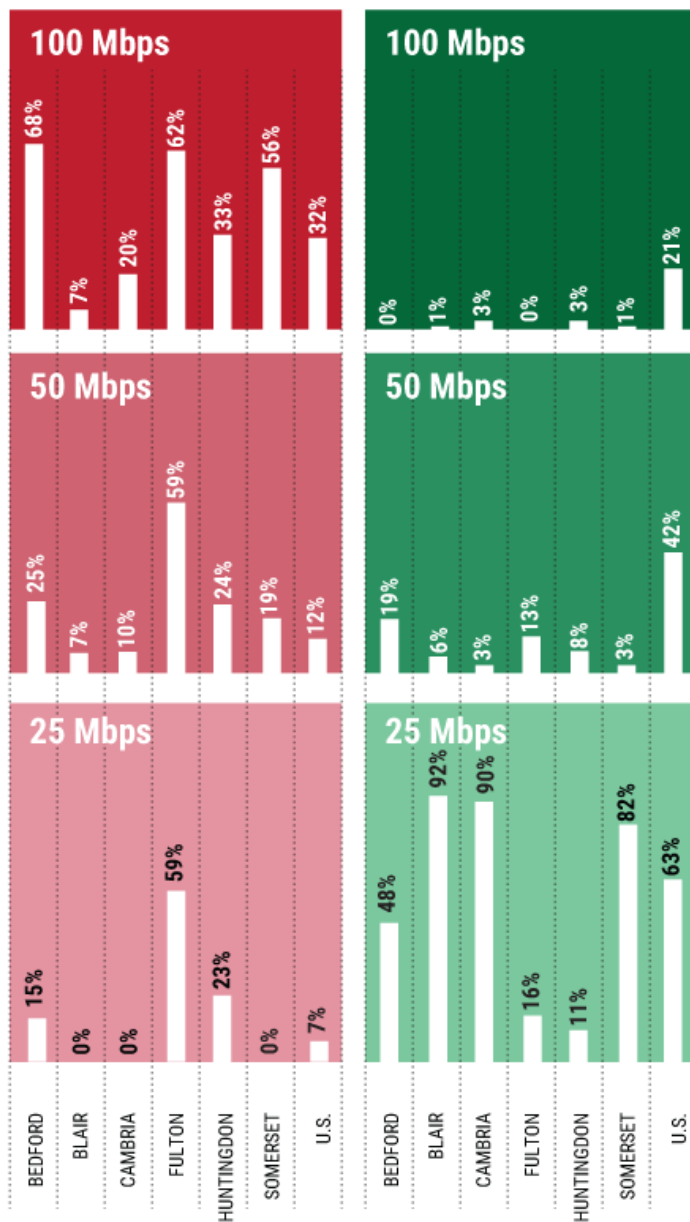
The Link to Varying Implementation Capacity:

Local capacity to negotiate with service providers or stimulate new infrastructure is limited, making county- and region-level action a necessity.

% of Population with...

NO ACCESS

ACCESS TO
MULTIPLE PROVIDERS



“Universal” 25 Mbps access in the more populous counties is achieved through satellite service, higher education, health care, and the railroad.

Lack of competition increases price. The region pays nearly twice as much for half the speed as compared to Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Harrisburg. Even State College is better served.

The number of people who work at home grew by 20% in Pennsylvania between 2009 and 2015

The number of people who work at home shrank by 2% in the Southern Alleghenies during the same time period, mostly due to frustration over slow, unreliable access and high cost.

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Access to internet speeds of 100 Mbps (which New York State has set as a near universal goal) is limited in the region’s most rural areas, while competition among high speed providers is low throughout the region – much lower than national averages.



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What are Core Values?

They are deeply held beliefs that are widely shared; characteristics that define how people view themselves and their community; things people will fight vigorously to preserve, strengthen, or achieve; and building blocks for the future – “what are we working towards?”

Outcomes sought:

Critical broadband and wireless coverage gaps are identified and filled, resulting in a reliable network and enhanced marketability and competitiveness of the region and/or improved public safety, health care, and education.

Action Items for Regional Implementation

- ❖ Establish a regional broadband and wireless service task force
- ❖ Develop an infrastructure inventory, customer survey, and identify anchor customers.
- ❖ Hire a telecommunications project manager at SAPDC
- ❖ Act 183 Outreach and Aggregation



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We Value:

Our Families, our strong social connections, our neighbors

Independence & Self-reliance

Our natural Resources and our connection to the land

Our heritage and the sense of identity it provides.

Inputs:

Knowledge: Identify service gaps that do the most to undermine the region's ability to compete and pose a high risk to public safety.

Management Capacity: Organize public-private partnerships around each priority gap identified to pinpoint options and select a course of action appropriate for the location

Capital: Allocate public resources to cover the cost of gaps that preclude the private sector from doing so on its own.

Path to Progress:

Somerset County, in partnership with state and federal partners, is installing a 22-mile fiber optic line in 2018-2019 to improve broadband service to industrial parks and adjacent customers.



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What are Planning Principles?

They are a by-product of our core values and the prevailing conditions; and a basis for making decisions about our community that align with our values, our vision for the future, and what we are building from.

Outputs:

Public-private partnerships complete projects (fiber installation, tower development, etc.) that resolve critical service gaps.

Improvements will position the network to adapt to changing technologies.

Broadband will provide alternate workplace options, thereby reducing dependence on traditional forms of transportation for commuting, gathering, meeting, and training.

Collaboration with education partners to better compete in the 21st Century economy

Path to Progress:

Two train derailments in Hyndman in 2017 highlighted the public safety risks posed by some of the region's service gaps, especially the limits they place on communication with residents during emergencies. Identifying the most critical gaps and working with service providers to find solutions will do much to alleviate future risks. This area was identified and the gap filled by AT&T within eighteen months to reduce the likelihood of recurrence.



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Our Principles:

We must first look within

We must work together

We must protect our region's natural beauty and historic character

We must support creativity

Habits to Overcome

Not Investing and Expecting to Get Ahead

A general unwillingness to invest at levels that will re-position the community for fear that the needed tax increases will be unpopular and hurt the community's competitiveness. No return is possible if you invest too little or nothing at all. Neither can you expect others to invest in your community if you are unwilling to invest in it yourself.

Cost Shifting and Blame Shifting

Unwillingness to invest is coupled with an expectation that Harrisburg or Washington should do more for us – money from others is the central discussion point when discussing major community projects and infrastructure expansions.

Risk Aversion

Fear of failure is acute despite the sense that the region has little to lose from taking risks. No one is willing to risk local public monies despite the proof that the skills are present to manage the risk. There is little incentive for the biggest risk-takers to apply their skills to the public sector, and the flack that comes from such a move from a small percentage of taxpayers keeps the community from benefitting from those skill sets.



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Technical Challenges

Best solved by fine-tuning existing systems using known policy or financial tools. These may include the creation of specific revenue streams, establishing a position or entity, or enacting regulation to accomplish a desired action.

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Adaptive Challenges

Require a shift in the community by letting go of old assumptions and habits and replacing them with new learning and new approaches. When made such changes can - and very often do - result in dramatic forward progress toward important community goals. These are the challenges addressed by *Alleghenies Ahead*.

Implementing Implementation:

Regional task force was created at the end of 2018 and meets frequently and regularly.

There are five subcommittees to handle the aspects of its charge: Outreach, Funding, Mapping, Technology, and Kimble.

Meetings are held regionally in-person as well as via phone (internet is not robust enough)

Co-op concepts are being developed, with a pilot underway in Huntingdon County.

Some counties are adding the lack of service to their Hazard Mitigation Plans to open up hazard mitigation monies for network development in gaps where lack of service can pose a risk to health and life safety.

Discussion is ongoing with the four rural electric co-ops in the region to utilize their infrastructure (or provide the service themselves).

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