Vision 2025: A Resilience Framework
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This is an exciting time to be in Johnstown. During the past year, Johnstown’s citizens have taken note of some important changes.

“Community leaders are working together.”

“It feels like Johnstown is on the move.”

“I see new people getting involved and it gives me hope for our future.”

Helping to move Johnstown forward is the Vision 2025 Governance Committee under the auspices of the Greater Johnstown Regional Partnership, created to launch a community-wide revitalization movement. Realizing that Johnstown already has a great number of planning studies, the big question before the Committee was, “How do we go from here? How can we engage the resources and energy we have here to transform Johnstown into a thriving community?”

A number of initiatives are underway or about to be undertaken, but what has been lacking is an overall strategy and a commonly held set of priorities. So the Community Foundation of the Alleghenies commissioned a research study by the Remaking Cities Institute (RCI) of Carnegie Mellon University to find a larger framework to guide this work and direct Johnstown’s next steps. RCI was asked to analyze existing plans and conduct new research on the opportunities available to revitalize Johnstown and to work with the Vision 2025 Governance Committee to:

1. Identify the key issues and opportunities in the Johnstown region by analyzing existing plans, meeting with community leaders, and conducting new research;

2. Create a framework for Johnstown’s future that focuses resources and energy toward a common vision;

3. Begin engaging a broad cross-section of community leaders for the transformation of Johnstown.
In a five-month process, twenty-six community representatives from public, private, and non-profit organizations in the Johnstown region were interviewed. Nearly one hundred community leaders took part in two workshops that explored the Resilience framework and its implications for next steps. An open public meeting was held for further input into the framework and to invite broader participation. Research included reviewing nine previous planning studies, analyzing the data from a community survey commissioned by the Tribune-Democrat, and investigating successful resilience strategies from other comparable cities.

From the interviews and other background research, it became clear that Johnstown’s future cannot depend, as it did in the past, on a large employer or a source of federal grants, but instead on the energy, creativity, and hard work of Johnstown’s citizens, who already have the resources to thrive if they can work together and pull in the same direction. This will transform Johnstown from a city of survival to a city of resilience--its goal for the next fifty years. The Resilience Framework has three major components: social resilience (strong sense of community), economic resilience (vibrant and open local economy) and physical resilience (life-sustaining landscapes). Most importantly, what supports these efforts is good governance, a culture of co-operation, accountability, and transparency and a process in which all citizens are invited to participate.

This study is the beginning of what we all hope will be a great transformation for Johnstown. It cannot be left to a political leader, the business community, or a well-endowed foundation. Johnstown’s transformation will require broad-based community commitment and cooperation on projects that will remake Johnstown into a thriving and resilient city. It’s a great time to get involved!

The RCI research team included researchers with expertise in urban design, economic analysis, and participatory planning.

The team met with the Vision 2025 Vision 2025 Governance Committee to review the scope of work, schedule, existing studies, and data needs; to identify people to interview; and to discuss ongoing research.

Carnegie Mellon University • Remaking Cities Institute
The City of Johnstown, like most post-industrial cities in the U.S., suffered severe economic decline when Big Steel collapsed in the 1980s, leading to the loss of jobs, out migration of workers and families, vacating of industrial buildings and sites, and deterioration of neighborhoods. The downward slide in Johnstown began in the 1970s when stricter environmental regulations threatened the outdated Bethlehem Steel plant, followed by the disastrous flood of 1977. In 1992, Johnstown was classified as a distressed municipality under Pennsylvania’s Financial Recovery Act 47, and remains so designated with financial oversight by the PA Department of Community and Economic Development.

Community-based revitalization efforts began in 1974 with the formation of Johnstown Area Regional Industries (JARI) and have recently included the preparation of the Johnstown 2020 Plan (2009), the City of Johnstown Sixth Amended Recovery Plan (2013), and Johnstown Community Revitalization: A Resource Roadmap (2014).

As a result, some infrastructure and economic improvements have been made, much of it credited to the influence and dedication of the late U.S. Congressman John Murtha, who served in Congress from 1974 to 2010. His seniority in Congress, particularly on the House Armed Services Committee, steered billions of dollars into the economy, both as direct federal government funding and through local investments by major defense contractors, leading to the creation of thousands of jobs in defense manufacturing and technology.

Johnstown is poised for a new vision. Community leadership is uniquely aligned with common goals, as articulated in Johnstown Community Revitalization: A Resource Roadmap. In June 2014, Mayor Frank Janakovic said, “Johnstown is ready for revitalization, and we should be pleased that so many public and private sector partners are ready to take advantage of key opportunities and resources that will make Johnstown an even better place to live, work, and play.” Key partners with the City in this coalition include the Greater Johnstown Regional Partnership, the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies, and JARI, among others.
Character & Personality
Johnstown’s rich history and long-time citizens have shaped the character of the city. Historic buildings add cultural richness to the urban fabric.

People
A renewed cooperative spirit among business, local government, and civic institutions has sparked optimism about the chances for progress and a culture of collaboration.

Major Institutions
Advances in technology and education are helping to prepare Johnstown’s future workforce.

Juxtaposition of the Natural & Industrial
Steel mills, downtown shops, and steep tree-covered slopes exist side-by-side, creating Johnstown’s uniquely intimate sense of place.

A Series of Urban Villages
Johnstown is a series of urban “villages” strung along the river and roads connect them. Paths along the rivers reconnect the urban settlements with their natural setting.

Small-Scale City
A small city provides the familiarity and comfort of a town. It is small enough to be manageable yet has abundant amenities at a walkable distance.

Natural Surroundings
The city is surrounded by nationally renowned hiking trails, beautiful rivers and streams, and other natural amenities.

River Valley
Johnstown’s spectacular river valley adds a natural richness to the city and can be one of its greatest assets.

Tourism
A cultural tourism strategy has been partially implemented; Johnstown’s museums and arts organizations serve the region by attracting visitors from near and far.
LIABILITIES

Flooding
Despite a longstanding history of floods, there is a lack of watershed planning. Comprehensive regional watershed planning can prevent flooding better than flood walls.

Loss of Industry
The closing of the Bethlehem Steel plant in 1992 punctuated a decline that started in the 1970’s, when the city began losing jobs and population.

Lack of Riverfront Access
Johnstown’s massive flood walls have turned the river into a concrete channel isolated from the city.

Crime & Drugs
A heightened sense of insecurity downtown poses an added challenge for revitalization. Crime related to drug abuse has grown regionally at an alarming rate.

Lack of Unity
Johnstown has had the benefit of strong leaders, but not a culture of sustained leadership. A history of factionalism has impeded progress.

Inadequate Career-Readiness
Johnstown is rich in educational opportunities but needs a more holistic approach for the training of a future workforce.

Blight
Blight is increasingly a regional issue—even suburban municipalities and school districts have pockets of blight.

Unemployment
Johnstown’s unemployment rate is above the national average and among the state’s highest.

A Culture of Dependence
While recognizing the hazards of relying on any single source of employment or economic vitality, many people cling to “white knight” solutions.
Resilience is the goal.

Johnstown must not just rebound and rebuild, but pro-actively construct the economic, ecological, and social conditions for its ongoing well-being and vitality.

Resilience indicates a community’s ability to withstand a shock—economic, environmental, or social. This is achieved through a vibrant local economy, good governance, life-sustaining landscapes, and a strong sense of community. Becoming a resilient city for the 21st century means that Johnstown commits to positively and pro-actively reinventing itself. This is the next chapter in Johnstown’s history—not Johnstown as victim of natural disasters or economic upheavals, but Johnstown as a model of a vibrant, prosperous and enduring community. By 2025 it is envisioned as a city not just of economic vitality (as it has been in the past) but, for the first time, a city of intentional resilience. Now is the time for Johnstown to pursue a common goal: to become a city that sustains its local economy, celebrates its authentic culture and heritage, acknowledges the value of the natural environment, and invites every citizen to participate in the realization their common aspirations.

Vision 2025 is a region-wide initiative to create a better, more resilient way of life. In 2025, Johnstown’s citizens will be comprised of a new generation graduating from high school and college; young people who have come back to raise their families; people in mid-career who want a slower lifestyle or realize they need to be closer to nature; hard-working practical people; entrepreneurs and innovators of new technologies, new companies, and new social enterprises; and people who want to retire in the community.

In 2025, as a truly resilient community, Johnstown will be a thriving city where the unemployment level is less than the state average, and education and income levels are comfortably above average.

Vision 2025 focuses on resilience as an inside-out approach. Instead of relying on a large corporation, the federal government, or any other single source of jobs and revenue, a resilient community has the capacity and resources to generate its own prosperity and well-being.
**Environmental Resilience**
Multiple independent clusters of industry can enable a city to weather a downturn better than any one industry or large employer. Urban landscapes are both natural and built. “Life-Sustaining Landscapes” are comprised of buildings, as well as the natural environment.

**Ecological Resilience**
Natural systems are powerful; working with nature makes better sense than to trying to fortify against it.

**Social Resilience**
The most effective tool for resilience is a strong community where people share a sense of common purpose and can work together well to learn, adapt, and flourish.

**The Four Circle Strategy**
developing a resilient city means having a vibrant and open local economy, life-sustaining landscapes, and a strong sense of community all supported by good governance, based on the principles of transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness.
To achieve economic resilience, Johnstown needs greater economic diversity. Many smaller businesses are better for a city than a few large ones: small businesses represent 99.7 percent of all firms and have generated 66 percent of new job growth over the past fifteen years in the U.S. Locally owned businesses weather economic volatility better than large-scale companies and national chains.

As part of Johnstown’s economy, locally-owned businesses support each other, purchasing supplies and services from each other and contributing to the overall resilience of the economy. Johnstown’s small size offers growing businesses advantages, such as low rent, access to business advice, and the support of family and community during startup. The region’s business development strategy should expand to more adequately serve the needs of Johnstown’s new and existing businesses.

Localization, a powerful economic development strategy, builds on a city’s strengths and resources.

**What’s Happening in Johnstown:**
There is a core of strong local businesses, but high unemployment and poverty.

**Working Well:**
- Successful mature locally-owned businesses, such as JWF
- Not for profit intermediary organizations, such as JARI
- Locally-based banks
- New locally-owned businesses
- Entrepreneurial Alchemy Network
- Local university workforce development programs
- Formation of Enterprise venture capital fund

**Not Working Well:**
- High unemployment
- High poverty rate
- Financial weakness of city
- Limited availability of venture capital
- Weakening work ethic
- Unattractive urban environment

**Ideas for Action:**
Develop individualized entrepreneurial assistance through JARI, Entrepreneurial Alchemy Network, and other business "pollinators".

Expand entrepreneurship education at local high schools and community colleges.
Initiate “Buy Johnstown” campaign led by City and major institutions’ procurement programs.
Recruit 2-3 employers to expand into downtown Johnstown.
Support Creator Square, attracting potential makers downtown.
Initiate a community land trust for downtown.
Explore the viability of a business investment district.
Integrate financial literacy education into programs targeting young families.
Create a city-wide or regional award program for outstanding young workers.
Consider ways to eliminate the cost of waste disposal (and generate income).
Create benchmarks for measurement purposes.
Pollinator Businesses

The Local Economy Solution by Michael Schuman suggests an alternative approach to economic development in which a company is created to nurture other local businesses with targeted assistance coupled with micro loans. These companies, which Schuman calls “pollinator businesses,” create jobs and support entrepreneurs, self-financing as they go so that they succeed as the businesses succeed.

They are important in communities that are struggling when economic development funds are less available.

Valley Ventures, a business pollinator in West Virginia created 300-500 jobs a year using a small initial grant to make micro-loans to start-ups. They offered business seminars in every town across three counties, and solicited business ideas to invest in. Two-thirds of their clients implemented their plans, and they all paid back their loans.

Local Investor Network

The Local Investing Opportunities Network (LION) is a loosely organized group of people who meet regularly with the goal of investing money in their local community. In Port Townsend, WA, LION has invested more than $2 million into the local economy over five years by supporting businesses such as a dairy, a fitness club, and a school.

LION does not make collective investment decisions. Business owners have to submit a plan and references, which is distributed among the members. Keeping the resulting equity investments and loans local has a dollar-multiplier effect—that is, a dollar kept within the community means the profits and jobs remain local as well.

Employee-Owned Businesses

The Evergreen Cooperatives of Cleveland, Ohio are pioneering innovative models of job creation, wealth building, and sustainability. Evergreen’s employee-owned, for-profit companies are based locally and hire locally. The worker-owned businesses are linked to the supply chains of the city’s anchor institutions. So far the initiative has launched three successful firms, Evergreen Laundry, Evergreen Energy Solutions, and Green City Growers.

The goal of the initiative is to develop at least ten successful cooperative businesses and create 5,000 jobs within 15 years. The Evergreen strategy is catalyzing new businesses; it first creates the jobs, and then recruits and trains local residents to take them.

Evergreen Laundry is a successful co-operative that hires local workers.
**Mutual Credit Program**

Sonoma Valley GoLocal Cooperative is a mutual credit program run by a cooperative of locally-owned businesses. Members are issued a loyalty rewards card good at all participating merchants in the network. Other examples of local currency are Berkshares, Bristol Bucks, Ithacash, and Arizona Dollars. There are about 100 examples in the U.S. alone.

Barter networks are growing in popularity. When a sale is made, barter dollars are deposited in the member’s account, which can then be spent to purchase from any other participating business. The network facilitator is paid a transaction fee by percentage to maintain the network.

“Bartering keeps wealth in the community and allows businesses to benefit from one another even when money is tight,” says Gildo Gennari, owner of Tenuta Marajeva winery in Verona.

**Turning Waste Into Fuel**

The city of Covington, TN eliminated the costs of transporting and landfilleding 360 tons of garbage a month by utilizing PHG Energy’s proprietary downdraft gasifier to process the waste into six million BTUs of fuel gas per hour. The biomass they process includes wood waste, tires, sludge and solid municipal waste as well as most agricultural waste products.

*Covington's new gasifier turns trash into revenue.*

Fairview Swiss Cheese plant in Mercer County, PA installed an anaerobic digester to convert food waste into energy in 2007 with $2.2 million in grants and loans from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and the USDA. The plant processes neighboring Joy Cone’s waste ice cream cone batter as well as the cheese plant’s waste whey, producing biogas that is used to power the cheese plant.

**District Energy**

The Prospect North neighborhood of Minneapolis, MN is combining energy, water, waste, IT, food production, and mobility infrastructure within a closed-loop and site-based setting, called an integrated utility system in an effort to achieve zero waste, emissions-free urban living. The neighborhood’s integrated utility system will operate on an eight-acre site where anaerobic digestion transforms waste into biogas. Converted into electricity and hydrogen, the biogas will power the neighborhood. A massive greenhouse, an aquaponic fish farm and a water treatment plant are all located on-site. Small wind turbines and a solar farm will also provide power and hot water will be stored on site for a district heating-and-cooling system.

The integrated utility system will treat its own water and grow its own food, and a heating system uses excess energy to warm the streets and sidewalks, eliminating the need for snowplows.
SUCCESS STORIES

Business Incubators

Across the U.S. there are more than 1000 business incubators in operation, and most of them operate as non-profit organizations. They are typically established to create local jobs, and foster entrepreneurship. The incubated businesses serve mostly local and regional markets, and the average length of incubation is 33 months. Incubators work for local economies: more than 80% of businesses stay local after graduation.

In rural Hart, Michigan the Starting Block is a successful incubator kitchen that opened in 2006 and serves about 30 small companies in the heavily agricultural region of Western Michigan. Local officials wanted to capitalize on the growing market for value added agriculture, giving local farmers better options than just wholesale. Starting Block focuses on training their clients on the basics of operating a food business, on how to incorporate and test market products, and provides commercial equipment for them to lease.

New Purposes for Civic Spaces

In Haarlem, Netherlands, the train station now includes a library designed for the needs of passengers. Library patronage in the city of Haarlem was dwindling, so rather than waiting for people to come to the books, they created a public library in the train station, providing a literary oasis for busy commuters.

The train station library is set up like a retail shop, meaning most of the book covers are facing out so that customers who are in a hurry need less time to decide on a book.

The library’s design is critical, with five zones based on how much time the patron can spend browsing. Zone One requires less than 30 seconds to return, choose a new book and check out, while Zone Five, the most leisurely zone, includes a waiting room with comfortable chairs, wi-fi and a coffee shop. Despite the small area (about 1,500 square feet) the library has loaned twice as many books as their goal.
Home-Grown Entrepreneurs

Home-grown entrepreneurs are bringing new vitality to Johnstown.

Conrad Building

Johnstown Business District Development Corporation is renovating the building for Cambria-Rowe Business College’s web and app development programs, along with office space for graduates’ start-up businesses.

The school intends to use the facility to house its Web development and app development programs, along with offering office space to start-up businesses opened by graduates.

Entrepreneurial Alchemy Network

In order to retain and attract young and professional talent to the region, the Entrepreneurial Alchemy Network will collaborate with a newly organized regional Alumni Network and Start Right Factory. The partnership will develop a robust talent pipeline in the greater Johnstown region by partnering students and aspiring mid-career entrepreneurs with already successful entrepreneurs and professionals.


**PITTch Fest**

PITTch Fest is a collaborative community event led by UPJ to showcase makers featuring a showcase for entrepreneurs (Makers Premier) and a “Shark Tank” Style venture pitch competition (PITTch Fest) whose winner takes home $10,000 in seed funding. The showcase is family friendly and even includes a Sprout Space for the littlest entrepreneurs.

**Community Cooperatives**

Community supported cooperatives, such as the Greater Prospect Store, often take extra work to get started, but are successful in many cities in building more sustainable communities.

**Creator Square**

Creator Square Imports young, skilled, and successful makers into live/work studios in the heart of Johnstown’s central business district.

**Regional Tourism Events**

Thunder in the Valley attracts more than 200,000 motorcyclists from around the country to Johnstown. The Flood City Music Festival brings more than 10,000 music lovers every summer. Tourism brings more than $150 million to Cambria County annually, almost $75 million of which comes in as revenue from local tax receipts.

While events can make it challenging to get around Johnstown for residents, the temporary inconvenience is outweighed by the distinctly positive impact on the local economy. In order to change the public perception of Johnstown it is critical to welcome visitors. Events enable the new narrative of Johnstown to be experienced by a much broader audience.
Vision 2025: A Resilience Framework
Life-Sustaining Landscapes

The ecology of a region today takes in the whole picture: downtown, urban and suburban neighborhoods, farmland, and woods and streams. Life-sustaining landscapes are not only healthy natural systems, but also vibrant urban environments.

Systems thinking enables us to work with nature instead of against it. Elements in a system are viewed in relationship to other elements, where the outputs of one element become the inputs of another. The natural processes of plants, animals, their nutrient cycles, climatic factors, and weather cycles are all part of the low-cost ecological services that the city can take advantage of.

By designing cities to function as part of a natural system, work is minimized, "wastes" become resources, productivity and yields increase, and the value of natural environments is enhanced. Adopting such a holistic systems view can turn a city’s liabilities - streets dominated by traffic, parks underused by local residents, and public institutions and redevelopment projects isolated from local communities into vibrant assets.

What’s Happening in Johnstown:
Johnstown has one of the most remarkable urban settings in the US: from Central Park in the heart of downtown, the street culminates in a steeply wooded slope to the west and stops at the immense facades of industrial mills just a few blocks to the east. The juxtaposition is dramatic. But blight is a problem in Johnstown, particularly the concrete river walls.

Natural Assets:
• Outstanding natural resources
• Cleaned-up streams
• Recreational water courses
• Biking and hiking trails

Built Assets:
• Historic downtown buildings
• Central Park
• Housing stock
• Mill buildings
• Vacant land downtown

Liabilities:
• Deteriorated and vacant property
• Highways through town
• Unfriendly public spaces
• Concrete river walls
• Pollution

Ideas for Action:
Set up citizens’ task force and advisory board to manage quantity and quality of water in the watershed.

Support two or more large employers in developing downtown locations through expansion or relocation.

Support and enhance downtown destinations to attract people there. Continue connecting cultural, historic, recreational, and entertainment destinations, especially through downtown.

Continue to put mill properties to good use.

Target land purchases at strategic areas, e.g., around Central Park, at the train station, and at the incline.

Transform and control Johnstown’s entrances and major roads.

Make strategic improvements to flood walls until they can be removed.

Support strategic neighborhood improvements, such as reducing traffic speed on city streets.
SUCCESS STORIES

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

A Regional Watershed Plan

The City of Martinez had experienced annual flooding and had been searching for solutions for many years. In 1996 the town of Martinez experienced heavy damage and the upper watershed was damaged by severe erosion, flooding and silting. The community realized that to solve these problems the entire watershed system needed to be evaluated.

The development of the watershed plan was a two-year collaborative process, involving the participation of landowners, municipalities, community organizations, and citizens from the area.

A River Revitalization Strategy

The 20-year Master Plan for the Los Angeles River includes a $98.2 million per mile removal of the concrete that has encased the river since the 1930s. In May 2014, the Army Corps of Engineers revealed it is recommending a $1 billion commitment to the revitalization of the river in support of the Plan.

The LA River, an over-engineered concrete “water-freeway,” is undergoing a long-term greening and revitalization. The planning for a 32-mile greenbelt, developed through numerous projects, promises to improve the health of the ecosystem and the value of the river as a regional public amenity, while managing flows and protecting properties.

A Naturalization Project

The eastern stretch of waterfront in Toronto is something of a last frontier. It is the last piece of significant land in the downtown area that can accommodate new communities. And the single biggest opportunity on the waterfront is the Port Lands.

At about 356 hectares (880 acres) this extensive, underutilized area on Toronto’s eastern waterfront presents an unprecedented opportunity for redevelopment. However, about 290 hectares (715 acres) of the area — including the parts of the Port Lands that are most accessible from downtown - are currently at risk of flooding from the Don River watershed, meaning flood protection is required before any redevelopment can occur. The solution to this challenge was to naturalize the mouth of the Don River to provide the necessary flood protection and to unlock the development potential of this premier waterfront area.
Friendly (Safe) Public Spaces

Bryant Park in New York City was a drug-dealing “haven.” In the early 1980s, they introduced features to attract park users: food and book stalls, tables and chairs, and special activities. They also created the Bryant Park Restoration Corporation, to actively manages the park. Rental activity around the park increased by 60%, and the park is widely considered the prime public asset in booming Midtown Manhattan.

Bryant Park Corporation, founded in 1980 as the Bryant Park Restoration Corporation, with the assistance of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, is one of the largest efforts in the nation to apply private management backed by private funding to a public park. The park, once a dangerous and depressing place, reopened in 1991, and now has no crime, a budget 20 times the level under prior city management, and has been a huge success with public, press, and nearby institutions. Daily attendance counts exceed 1000 people per acre on non-event days, which makes Bryant Park the most densely occupied urban park in the world.

Streets Lined with Trees

Downtown Greenville in 1978 looked a lot like downtown Johnstown today. The department stores had moved to the mall. The mayor and a group of business people planted trees, and lots of them. Cutting squares from the sidewalks and streets, city workers planted hundreds along Main Street. Twenty-eight years later, those trees are shading a retail and commercial district that flourishes beneath their branches. “The trees have a tremendous amount to do with our success,” said Greenville’s parks and grounds administrator. Greenville officials are proud of their trees and their tree-planting strategy, and economic development experts invariably point to trees as the most cost-effective way to spur downtown rejuvenation.

Downtown Anchor

In 2009, Quicken Loans, the nation’s largest online retail mortgage lender and the second largest overall retail lender, moved its headquarters and approximately 1,700 of its team members to leased space in downtown Detroit’s Compuware Building, overlooking Campus Martius Park. “Our move from the suburbs allowed us to begin transforming Detroit into a high-tech hub of business and ingenuity,” said company founder and chairman Dan Gilbert. Following that move, which catalyzed investment in the Campus Martius area, Quicken developed its new headquarters building a few blocks away, and now 8,000 of its 10,000 employees work downtown. Since opening their building, downtown Detroit has seen the redevelopment of more than ten major office buildings.
JOHNSTOWN STORIES

Sanitary and Storm Sewers

Johnstown is protecting its health and environment by separating its sanitary from storm sewers.

Walking and Cycling Trails

Lift Johnstown is building walkable neighborhoods with walking and cycling trails to parks and historic sites.

Stonycreek Whitewater Park

The Stonycreek Whitewater Park is a great place to learn how to paddle through hydraulics.
Water Treatment Plan

A collaborative effort by non-profits, the state DEP and Rosebud Mining Company has produced a water treatment plant that is cleaning up the Little Conemaugh River.
A STRONG SENSE OF COMMUNITY

A sense of community is an intangible yet vital component of a healthy community. In many communities across the nation, people are losing their sense of belonging. With affluence, sprawl, and increased mobility, many individuals and families do not feel very connected to their communities. A strong sense of community enhances commitment among members, mutual support among its stakeholders, optimism, a willingness to help, and a more inclusive perspective that can encompass diverse members. The key is active involvement, whether in planting a garden, planning a presentation, playing in a softball league, or taking part in a neighborhood potluck dinner.

What’s Happening in Johnstown:
Johnstown’s sense of community has deep historical roots. It has been strengthened through times of crisis and hardship, when people have discovered their shared purpose, intent, or vision. Lately, social capital has waned but a collaborative spirit is growing.

Social and Cultural Assets:
• Long-time residency and boomerangs
• Cultural heritage: many ethnic traditions
• Community institutions and organizations
• Post-secondary schools
• Local sports
• Community-supported arts
• Festivals and events
• Outdoor recreation

Social and Cultural Challenges:
• Poverty
• Drugs and crime
• Generally low educational attainment
• Alienation and apathy
• Social insularity and factionalism
• Culture of need or dependence

Ideas for Action:
A sense of community is at the core of all efforts to strengthen and build community, whether in a neighborhood or a city. Not everyone needs to be an active participant, but they must feel welcome to participate and trust that those who do take part are acting on behalf of the community.

Increase community awareness and engagement—get broad participation.

Promote and celebrate volunteering in neighborhood and civic activities; support community organizations.

Welcome newcomers.

Build sports leagues, both adult and children, recruit coaches from city leadership.

Start neighborhood walking clubs.

Include young people in community planning and activities.

Make festivals and events highly successful.

Celebrate the residents of Johnstown and their accomplishments.
Rising Out of Poverty

Circles USA enables families and communities to lift themselves out of poverty and thrive. Community leaders and/or organizations work with Circles to establish a local chapter. They work collaboratively with existing community-based organizations to provide a local leadership class.

The Circles model focuses on three stages: Crisis management and stabilization, education and job placement and job retention, advancement and economic stability. Local chapters sponsor groups of up to 25 participants who are committed to emerging out of poverty, who are known as Circle Leaders.

Circles USA is active in communities near Johnstown, such as Connellsville, McKeesport, Gettysburg and Chambersburg, among others across 20 states and Canada. Non-profit organizations in Johnstown developed "Bridges Out of Poverty" to help families in the region find their way out of poverty.

Cop Shop

Liverpool’s City Central Business Investment District decided to think outside the box to maintain public safety. Ged Gibbons, Chief Executive of City Central BID, which represents 630 businesses in Liverpool, England’s city center, said the ‘cop shop’ underlined what can be achieved when public and private sector work together. By initiating a dialogue with Land Securities, the owner of St John’s shopping center, the BID team secured a vacant unit for the Merseyside Police as a base for reaching businesses quickly, helping the victims of crime, taking statements and providing a visual presence in the heart of the retail environment. With the BID paying the rent, Land Securities contributing to the service charge and the Merseyside Police providing the officers, Britain’s first privately funded ‘Cop Shop’ was established. According to the police, it provides people with immediate access to police officers and has helped to make our city center the second safest in the country.

All-City Celebration

Happiness Week is a collaboration of religious groups and the nonprofit Transition Town Media to promote peacemaking, resilience and community building in Media, PA. Every spring the week-long festivities kick off with the Hometown Jubilee, a day of celebration that includes a neighbors walk, a town hall meeting, games for children, and a potluck lunch.

Transition Town Media organizes many programs to advance the goal of reducing the carbon footprint of the town of Media, PA.
Regional Events

Johnstown is home to three annual events that draw 10,000 or more visitors: The Flood City Music Festival, the Polka Festival, and Thunder in the Valley. These, along with many other cultural events as diverse as hikes, concerts, art shows, rafting trips, bike rides and craft fairs throughout the year make Johnstown a community where residents want to live and visitors want to visit.

According to the Soul of the Community study by Gallup for the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the connection between a resident and his or her community has a distinct emotional element. Community attachment was found to increase significantly along with increases in available social offerings, openness, and improvements to the aesthetic beauty of a community. The highest levels of community attachment correlated directly with the highest rates of GDP growth among the 26 cities studied.

Pop Up Art

Public art in unexpected places lends a festive air to any neighborhood, and in Cambria City the bridge piers are what everyone is talking about. The piers support Route 56, and although necessary to support the highway, they were a bit of an eyesore before they were re-purposed as an artist’s canvas. The project is a collaboration between the Bottle Works Ethnic Arts Center, the PA Department of Transportation, the National Parks Service and Americorps Program.

Hockeyville

Johnstown rallied together to become the first-ever Hockeyville™ USA. The Cambria County War Memorial Arena has received $150,000 to invest in arena upgrades and it played host to an NHL® Pre-Season game between the Pittsburgh Penguins® and Tampa Bay Lightning® televised live on NBCSN on September 29, 2015.

The economic impact of the game has been estimated from $2 - 2.5 million, a significant boost to downtown Johnstown. More than the game itself, the local economy gets a boost from the official NHL after game party, held at a local bar, as well as the local hotels, which were sold out for the evenings before and after the game.

“I’m hoping that it brings more to the arena, and hockeywise for kids. I just hope it helps the whole area, to promote Johnstown in general.”

- Cindy MacLachlan,
  Co-owner of Scott’s by the Dam
GOOD GOVERNANCE

Not to be confused with government, governance is “all processes of governing and all the people and organizations involved in or influencing decision-making.” The ultimate goal is a self-organizing culture that is inclusive and accountable.

Public-private partnerships have existed for a long time. Solving complex social, environmental and regional problems is typically more than any one entity can manage, leading governments to partner with non-profits and businesses. Recently communities have included citizens more and more in decision making, resulting in creative solutions to some of the most challenging issues facing communities.

What’s Happening in Johnstown:
A new core of leadership and collaborative spirit have raised expectations. A cooperative spirit among business, local government, and civic institutions has sparked optimism about the chances for progress.

Working Well:
- A more effective city government
- A civic-minded business community
- The collaborative spirit among leaders
- Relationships at regional and state levels
- Longtime relationships within the city
- Active neighborhood groups
- Foundations committed to the city

Not Working Well:
- A history of factionalism
- White-collar vs blue-collar divide
- The large number of small jurisdictions
- The political divisions within and around Johnstown
- A culture of dependency on corporate leadership
- Apathetic or nay-saying individuals

Ideas for Action:
The central purpose of the work going forward is to build good governance - it’s an ongoing process.

Continue to invite people to the table. Set up working groups around major efforts and charge each group with defining their one-year successes.

Build a broad-based network of citizens committed to a better Johnstown.

Engage college and high school students as working group interns.

Share progress and lessons learned through a Coordinating Circle.

Celebrate successes: create and sustain “buzz”.

Organize and staff a communications working group.

Set up an annual all-city event for presenting accomplishments, planning next year’s agenda, and celebrating.

Start regular informal meetings of regional economic development groups, watershed planning organizations, and human service agencies.
SUCCESS STORIES

Collaborative Governance

Collaborative Governance is a business decision-making strategy to improve outcomes by including those who are impacted by the decisions in the process. Today it is transforming many different kinds of organizations, from hospitals to community groups to schools. At Woodbury University in California, one of its schools, faced with declining enrollment and faculty resignations, began inclusive meetings with faculty, administrators, and industry leaders. Starting with the school’s mission, they agreed to a set of policies and brought others, including students, into smaller group discussions, on the principle of engaging all stakeholders in decisions. A year later the school enrollment turned around and has grown steadily since. According to the dean, collaborative governance “allowed people to focus on the reasons they came to work here in the first place—education and innovation. The School basically runs itself.”

Deliberative Democracy

Deliberative, or participatory, democracy is the shifting of decision making to citizens in order to provide better government to the community. Recently it has been lauded as an effective way to re-engage disaffected citizens with the governance process.

Pittsburgh implemented participatory budgeting beginning with the city’s 2016 capital budget. In two 2.5 hour long sessions, hundreds of citizens learned about the budgeting process, discussed spending priorities and asked questions of the experts in the room.

The Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership in Milwaukee is a coalition of more than 40 firms, community colleges and labor unions working together to improve the skills of the regional labor market. The formerly state-led job training program now responds more quickly to the needs of regional businesses.

Cooperative Enterprises

The Lake to River Food Cooperative in Youngstown is an example of a member-owned cooperative of farmers, producers, processors, and buyers who grow, prepare, add value to and market healthy foods to families. They sell to local school systems through a Farm to School initiative, partners with Mercy Health System through a Fruit and Veggie Rx Program, and make healthy foods accessible and convenient to purchase.

Pennsylvania is home to thirteen electric cooperatives which provide electricity to 4 percent of Pennsylvania residents in 41 counties, accounting for more than one third of the state’s land area. Operating as Allegheny Electric Cooperative Inc., they maintain a very competitive and stable generation rate due to a diverse supplier network. As a result, rural residents in Pennsylvania have access to consistently low rates for electricity distribution and generation.
Lift Johnstown

A dynamic partnership of residents, foundations, young professionals and the Greater Johnstown Chamber of Commerce, Lift Johnstown is working to implement the three plans: the City of Johnstown Master Plan, 2020 Regional Vision, and Laurel Highlands Conservation Landscape Initiative.

Through a partnership with the local United Way, Lift Johnstown is engaging residents in volunteer efforts and celebrating their accomplishments. In 2013, they were able to leverage more than $14 million for local projects. Approximately $3 million went towards building up the entrepreneurial economy, $6.6 million for transportation improvements, and the remaining $4.6 million towards cultural, recreation, and education improvements.

University of Pittsburgh Johnstown and Moxham

The University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown (UPJ) may have moved to Richland Township, but its roots are still deep in the neighborhood of Moxham. As an active partner in Moxham’s rebirth, UPJ has donated thousands of volunteer hours to beautifying the neighborhood, working with local kids after school on homework, participating in efforts to reduce crime and blight in the neighborhood, and pursuing internships with local businesses. UPJ has partnered with Goodwill Industries of the Conemaugh Valley and New Day, Moxham Renaissance and Russell House, as well as others working in the neighborhood.

After School Programs

A collaboration between the Greater Johnstown School District and Cambria County Child Development Corporation has created after school programs.

Trojan Learning Center is an after-school program for elementary school kids offered free of charge at both East and West Side Elementary Schools in Johnstown.

Trojan After School Program is for middle school students, and offers dinner, homework help, and free play time for kids from dismissal time until 5:00 PM.

Pride and Tradition is designed to enrich the high school experience. It helps students meet the requirements of graduation and reduces the incidence of dropout with a variety of recreational activities and academic supports.
STRATEGIES AT THREE SCALES

can reinforce governmental, economic, environmental and social resilience.

By working together municipalities can cultivate best practices in education, create stronger transportation networks, and have more control over watershed management.

- **Develop eco-tourism**
  - Build on the progress of Lift Johnstown and other regional organizations to attract people to the natural assets of the area.

- **Restore and protect water quality**
  - Healthy rivers with a vibrant edge and rich flora and fauna are a sign of a healthy ecosystem that can provide clean water and a rich eco-tourism industry.

- **Work for better passenger rail**
  - Connectivity with neighboring regions can help attract more visitors and boost the economic development of the city.

- **Create more integrated educational opportunities**
  - Expand relationships among businesses, secondary schools, and post-secondary schools in the region to increase career paths and opportunities.

- **Develop a Conemaugh Valley watershed management plan**
  - Improve the function, ecological health, and beauty of the watershed to benefit both users and natural systems.

- **Promote cultural assets and events**
  - Cultural events such as artisan markets and music festivals can draw visitors from neighboring regions and reinforce a sense of community.
Downtown is a great place to invest

Think of Downtown as an enterprise, and its citizens collectively as the entrepreneurs (not just real estate developers). The Project for Public Spaces’ “Power of Ten” framework suggests that a great city needs at least ten great districts, each with at least ten great places, which in turn each have at least ten things to do.

Introduce a mix of uses
Businesses, hospitals, banks, and colleges reinforce anchor places. New small businesses serve as connective infill. Housing should be renovated.

Develop and link anchors
Recognizable places downtown such as Central Park, the train station and Main Street have the potential to be further developed as anchors to the city. Linking these anchors allows for a more walkable city. Development of places like John St. could give way to a riverside boulevard.

Develop opportunity sites
The abundance of vacant property is the perfect opportunity for new development. Rather than expanding to the suburbs, Johnstown should focus on filling in its “missing teeth.”

Create great spaces
- Greenways connect trails:
  • Cambria City to Creator Square
  • mill to river, stadium to park
  • Street trees planted throughout
- Green infrastructure to manage stormwater

Downtown People and Places
- Activate spaces to celebrate sports events, festivals, parades
- Set up weekly markets and booths
- Pedestrian-friendly strolling streets
- Plant and maintain residual space

Create a shared parking strategy
Parking is needed for downtown’s vitality, but its liveliness has been undermined by a patchwork of parking (shown in red in photo) and streets lined with parking. Shared parking allows for needed development as well as reduced cost.

Improve streets strategically
The “Complete Streets” model puts emphasis on multi-use rights-of-way. Citizens should demand management, signage, land use controls, and active street walls.

Make a good first impression
Emphasis can be place on the panoramic views of downtown from Route 56 (403) as a parkway along the Conemaugh River between neighborhoods. The continuity of Route 271 should be improved.
NEIGHBORHOODS AND COMMUNITIES

Trying ideas at a smaller scale can lead to quick successes.

Small scale interventions can often pave the way for more permanent or bigger change.

- Support active neighborhood organizations
  Create internship programs that provide staff and expertise.

- Celebrate neighborhood successes
  Showcase accomplishments and recognize them with an awards program.

- Create a micro-grant fund for neighborhood improvements
  Encourage small-scale innovation and local community engagement.

- Support local enterprises
  Institutions and businesses should adopt a “buy local” policy. Create incentives for people to support local businesses.

- Start cooperative businesses
  Build wealth, equity, and resilience at the local level by facilitating shared ownership.

- Continue developing trails
  Extend the network of trails through the city to connect people to jobs and other local destinations.

- Reduce the number of vacant properties
  Develop an inventory and strategy for redeveloping blighted housing. Work with renters to become homeowners.

Vision 2025: A Resilience Framework

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Simple, short-term, and low-cost solutions can have remarkable impacts on cities and neighborhoods. Small successes can create a vitally important “buzz” that creates momentum while bigger projects are getting underway. What Johnstown has now are its beautiful natural context, its nationally-recognized cultural events and places, and its people.

**Promote trails and natural amenities**
Attract active people to the region and continue to improve the quality of river access and trail continuity.

**Build on successful events**
Since Johnstown already has a number of high-drawing events that are well-known throughout and beyond the region, it would be strategic to find new ways to expand or piggyback on them.

**Fill the streets: grassroots community events on weekends**
Fill some downtown streets with booths and tents and people, and downtown will suddenly be a festive and inviting place. Use the events as a way to incubate “pre-business” enterprises (booths, food trucks, etc). Help start pop-ups.

**Celebrate local sports and league competition**
Promote participation on local sports teams and expand the leagues. Create citywide opportunities for recognition, such as a Johnstown Sports League Day with awards and prizes.
VISION 2025 is a process that is built on the principles of good governance: transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness. It is conceived as an open process that promotes initiative and leadership.

It is modeled on the organization of living systems. The productive centers, like the flowers of a plant, are the “Capture Teams” that are formed to accomplish specific projects: a “buy local” campaign, a new playground, a parents’ support group, an arts celebration weekend, etc. The members of the Capture Team are passionate about their project, and their task is to “capture” it. Each Capture Team is supported by one of the three Circle Working Groups, which includes members from each of its Capture Teams.

The three Circle Groups are each dedicated to one of the primary resilience goals: economic, environmental, or social. The Circle Group assists each Capture Team with resources and links the Capture Teams to each other and to the Vision 2025 Governance Committee. Its task is to focus on the long-range goal and find ways to accomplish it by discovering and supporting ongoing initiatives by other organizations, starting and supporting Capture Teams, or connecting people, projects, and resources to each other.

The Vision 2025 Governance Committee serves as the core or root of the organization. It includes members from the three Circle Groups and is charged with overall planning, developing resources, and guiding the process. Its most important task is to model and promote good governance.

As a living system, VISION 2025 will learn, adapt, and grow. The organization diagrammed here is a way to get started. Like the community itself, the process will need to become resilient in order to succeed. The principles of resilience are just as applicable to the process as to its intended outcome—that is, resilience is all about the way people work together:

- Use past experience to inform decision
- Recognize alternative ways to use resources
- Work for broadly shared ownership of decisions
- Bring together many different systems
- Deliberately develop spare capacity
- Practice adaptability
IMPLEMENTATION

April - October 2015
Target Participants: 20

Vision 2025 Governance Committee kicks off process:
- Create an overall framework that guides both short- and long-term efforts (four-circle model).
- Catalyze action by others: enlarge the pool of leaders
- Set up process for ongoing work

Vision 2025 Governance Committee (VC) members all convey same message

Leaders are identified for each of the three circle working groups

VC puts administration in place to assist teams and communication

VC prepares proposal for next stage of funding support

VC announces next steps in the process and energizes participation.

VC members model good governance. Positive local media coverage.

October - April 2016
Target Participants: 100

Core leadership is developed. Governance model is put in place.

Passionate champions lead each Circle Working Group

Working Groups learn together in leadership workshop series:
- Facilitation/process/roles
- Economics
- Urban Design/Ecology
- Community
- Governance (collaborative)

Working Groups model good governance. Each working team develops its mission and short- and long-term goals.

Staff is trained to produce common templates for Working Groups.

Vision 2025 Vision 2025 Governance Committee is created (2 reps from each Working Group)
April - October 2016
Target Participants: 200

Capture Teams get going and produce some early actions:

Working Groups and their Capture Teams produce one-year priorities.

Each Working Group has at least one team working on a short-term goal.

Regional watershed planning group has been formed and is starting planning. Other long-term efforts are getting underway.

New team participants get orientation and basic training in process.

Once Vision 2025 Governance Committee starts functioning, VC phases out.

General community awareness raising (talks, films, panel discussions, classes) with social networking.

Local media coverage is now positive and frequent.

October - April 2017
Target Participants: 500

Process is underway. Short-term actions start building momentum and continue, while collaborative efforts go into longer-term projects:

New Capture Teams are formed.

Improvements to the process are made, based on evaluations.

General community awareness raising (talks, films, panel discussions, classes) with social networking.

Second annual “Johnstown Together” summit is held for sharing/learning/celebrating.

At least one presentation at a national conference.

Media coverage is expanding beyond local.

Along with other goals, one of the most important goals is to keep increasing the number of active participants (“believers” in Johnstown’s new future), so a goal is suggested for each stage. The number of participants is important to track.
Strong Sense of Community
Working Group

Life-Sustaining Landscapes
Working Group

Vibrant and Open Local Economy
Working Group

Vision 2025 Governance Committee

Capture Team
Resource Member
Pilot Project
Capture Teams

Teams are initiated by people who want to get involved. The team lasts only as long as it takes to accomplish its task. Some teams are responsible for a series of repeated actions. Teams grow leaders.

- Discover what’s already going on and has been done (field research)
- Define the task, particularly why it should be done (how it fits into the “circle strategy”)
- Plan the project—what, by whom, by when
- Recruit resources as needed
- Keep track of team members: contact information, etc.
- Take action
- Build relationships
- Document and evaluate
- Celebrate
- Confer with the Coordinating Team—designate a liaison (two-way communication)
- Share the project with others
- Model good governance: effective, transparent, consent-building decision-making and accountability
- Staff Assistance:
  - Provide basic leadership training, ground rules, etc
  - Provide templates for organizing and running team and project
  - Help write up and share projects and lessons learned
  - Provide basic leadership training, ground rules,
Vision 2025 Governance Committee

The Vision 2025 Governance Committee is launched by the Vision 2025 Governance Committee, and with preparation, eventually takes over from it. To begin with, its role is to set the initial overall goals and initiate the Working Groups. It is responsible for overall planning, resources, and effectiveness of the process. Its primary responsibility is good governance and its goal is ultimately culture change.

Set up the overall framework/goals for Vision 2025

Learn how to lead the process collaboratively

Define roles for teams and other participants

Recruit new team members

Hire staff

Prepare the material to introduce the purpose and process to participants

Understand what all the Circles are doing

Obtain funding

Promote the process throughout and beyond the Johnstown region

Hold an annual planning summit with the Circle Groups: evaluate and celebrate work done, identify priorities for the coming year

Build relationships

Model good governance: effective, transparent, consent-building decision-making and accountability

Learn continuously about what’s going on in other communities.

Track down and obtain outside resources

Share lessons learned at conferences, etc.

Staff Assistance:
Arrange for basic leadership training, ground rules, etc

Provide templates for organizing and running team and project

Set up and run website and other communication tools

Hold an annual planning summit with Capture Teams: evaluate and celebrate work done, identify priorities

Learn how to work and lead effectively

Help start new projects and see that projects have the resources they need

Accomplish short-term goals

Work toward long-term goals

Model good governance: effective, transparent, consent-building decision-making and accountability

Help get projects launched

Staff Assistance:
Provide templates for organizing and running annual planning summit, evaluation, etc

Help organize meetings, celebrations, and other get-together

Help with communication
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Johnstown Heritage Development Plan

Author
Johnstown Area Heritage Association
Lane, Frenchman and Associates

Date published
April 1991

Purpose
To preserve, interpret, develop and use the heritage and cultural resources of Johnstown as a basis for community revitalization.

Recommendations
Develop a national heritage park (at Bethlehem’s Lower Works) and Allegheny Ridge Industrial Heritage Corridor

Create a Heritage Development Trust to encourage the preservation and enhancement of historic properties throughout Johnstown.

Create an Ethnic Life Heritage District in Cambria City/Minersville

Develop river walks along the tops of the river walls

Downtown: Prioritize the restoration of storefronts and facades, flood surviving structures and housing.

Cambria City: Prioritize facade and storefront restoration along Broad Street and 4th Avenue, as well as churches and traditional homes.

Improve pedestrian access to the Inclined Plane

Methodology
Community workshops facilitated by Lane Frenchman and Associates were held over 10-month period, starting in June 1990. Culminated with a community workshop that included 75 citizens and speakers from Pittsburgh City Planning, a Developer in Lowell, MA, and the executive director of the PA Downtown Center.
City of Johnstown Comprehensive Plan 1998

Author
Cambria County Planning Commission

Funders
US HUD and PA DCED

Date published
1998

Purposes
To revise the city’s comprehensive plan, zoning ordinance, and subdivision and land use ordinance per the recommendations of the 1993 Municipal Recovery Plan

To help the City of Johnstown’s neighborhoods in the planning, development, and management of the City’s natural and built resources to foster community and economic growth

Recommendations
Includes policy recommendations for 12 neighborhoods on four aspects: Land Use, Housing, Transportation and Community Facilities

Neighborhoods studied: Oakhurst/ Morrellville, Coopersdale, Cambria City, Prospect/Minersville, Central Business District, Old Conemaugh Borough, Woodvale, Kernville, Hornerstown, and Walnut Grove.

Preparation of storm water management plans for the Stoneycreek, Paint Creek, and Bens Creek watersheds

Purchase flood insurance for properties within the 100 year flood plain
Develop and rehearse a flood evacuation plan

Adopt land use and zoning controls
Enhance urban quality by pursuing a strategy of infill development, redevelopment, and adaptive reuse while respecting context.

Promote compliance with floodplain mgmt. regulations, enforce building codes.

Protect historic and cultural buildings
Develop affordable housing for low to moderate income residents.

Provide emergency housing for homeless population.

Methodology
Local Advisors: Johnstown Planning Commission, City Community and Economic Development Dept., JAHA and the Cambria County Planning Commission
Johnstown Greenway Open Space Plan

**Author**
Pashek and Associates

**Date published**
2009

**Purposes**
To prepare master plans for Central Park and Market Street parklet
To create river access for Hillside Park and Tech Park
To lay groundwork for future design competition for River Wall Murals
To connect the surrounding trail systems with a Downtown Trail Plan

**Recommendations**

Central Park: Accommodate the current uses more effectively and increase its functionality

Market Street: Increase safety, aesthetics and functionality

Hillside and Tech Park: Create river access for the Inclined Plane and Tech Park campus

River Walls: Paint murals on the walls

Downtown: Connect trails through Downtown Johnstown with signage and shared lane markings

Improve the gateways identified in the report with landscaping and signage directing traffic downtown.

Report includes plans, cost estimates, prioritization, and maintenance estimates

Significant constraints: Army Corps of Engineers flood walls (mural project), narrow downtown street grid (trails project), Incline historical status (river access point).

**Methodology**
Pashek and Associates prepared an inventory of the existing site facilities and conditions at each park site. They performed analysis of the natural site features, such as topography, hydrology, soil composition and vegetation. They collected community and recreation related background information, and also conducted public meetings and interviews to solicit input on future recreation development policies.
Johnstown 2020 Report and Recommendations

Author
Next Generation Consulting

Date published
April 2009

Purpose(s)
Evaluation of young professionals in Johnstown area, perceptions and realities

Recommendations
Involve young people in decision making in more and different ways:
- Support a Young Professionals group
- Get young people on boards
- Post information about activities on-line
- Recruit people who have left
- Develop internship programs

Re-invent Johnstown as an exciting place to live, work and play:
- Beautify downtown
- Beautify the entrances
- Demolish blighted properties
- Implement the 2009 master plan
- Develop stroll districts throughout the region
- Connect urban trail network
- Create a trail map and post it on-line

Take pride in Johnstown:
- Pledge to help transform Johnstown
- Buy local campaign
- Celebrate young people

Methodology
Survey of 2,000 residents and listening sessions with an additional 100 residents
Johnstown Crime & Violence Commission Final Report

**Author**
Johnstown Crime and Violence Commission

**Date published**
July 2013

**Purpose(s)**
To investigate, evaluate and make recommendations to improve the city’s neighborhoods and business district.

**Recommendations**

Create a strategic enforcement team targeting violent crime.

Develop a partnership with civic and business leaders to raise funds and develop end to end services.

Request additional officers from other authorities to assist temporarily, and hire additional police officers as the budget allows for targeted drug and violent crime enforcement.

Work with the Housing Authority to create a program for people to exit assistance.

Take steps to decrease the concentration of poverty in Johnstown neighborhoods.

Define the expectations for recently rehabilitated citizens, developing greater accountability from the rehabilitation centers for their clients.

Consider relocating the Johnstown Community Corrections Center from downtown to an area with greater access to jobs and opportunities.

Develop afterschool programming to address the needs of minors after 5:00 pm, such as a neighborhood based activity center for kids to receive food, tutoring and services until 8:00 pm.

**Methodology**
Four subcommittees conducted research and analysis separately, and documented their results in this report.
Sixth Amended Recovery Plan, Municipal Financial Recovery Act (Act 47)

Author
Eckert, Seamans, Cherin, and Mellott, LLC

Date published
10/16/2013, adopted by city council on 10/28/2013

Purpose(s)
To determine the city’s eligibility as a distressed municipality under Act 47.

To establish new goals for the city pursuant to exiting distressed status.

Recommendations
Fund training for City manager and senior employees and acquire software needed to modernize accounting processes.

Discuss continued payments in lieu of taxes from Conemaugh Hospital System

Prepare a business and marketing plan for Point Stadium to incorporate advertising revenue and more extensive facility use

Review rental of the City’s Convention Center by Crown Conventions Center Co. to realize rental payments.

Implement a Market Based Revenue opportunity program to generate revenue from City assets through advertising

Formalize the agreement with the YMCA to program Roxbury Park and the school district around Johnstown Community Days festival

Market fire department, Public Works, code enforcement, and other city services to surrounding communities, obtaining state grants to do so.

Meet with the Cambria-Somerset Council of Governments and form public safety advisory committees to discuss and resolve public safety issues of mutual concern.

Control blight through code enforcement and adding anti-blight enforcement tools through Act 90 of 2010.

Consider the establishment of a land bank to acquire, demolish and return to productive use abandoned and blighted properties.

Continue to pursue Pennvest and Pennworks funding to improve the sewer system in compliance with the DEP consent order.

Apply to extend the term of the City’s enterprise zone beyond July 1, 2016.

Methodology
The report was created pursuant to the guidelines of the Municipalities Financial Recovery Act. It is the sixth iteration of the report, first prepared in September 1992.
Tribune Democrat Survey

Author
Tribune Democrat Newspaper

Date published
October 26, 2014

Purpose(s)
To measure perception of current state of Johnstown.

Perceptions
Perception that enough is being done about:
- Arts and Cultural Tourism
- Middle Income Housing
- Public Services
- Senior Programming
- Transportation

Perception that not enough is being done about:
- Blight
- Business and Entrepreneurship
- Crime and Drugs
- Downtown Revitalization
- Jobs/Employment
- Learning/Workforce Development
- Neighborhood Improvement
- Political/Civic Leadership
- Youth Services
- Municipal/School Consolidation

Perceptions without clear consensus:
- Marcellus Shale Gas Exploration
- Outdoor Recreation/Tourism

Methodology
Results of an anonymous survey of approximately 1,000 Tribune Democrat readers
Laurel Highlands Conservation Landscape Initiative – Johnstown

**Author**
Pennsylvania Environmental Council, PA DCNR

**Date published**
2006

**Purpose(s)**
To highlight the portions of the Laurel Highlands CLI, prepared for Lift Johnstown

**Recommendations**

- To develop whitewater boating amenities on Stoneycreek River
- To develop Whitewater Park adjacent to Greenhouse Park, an accessible playboating area for all skill levels
- Develop a campground at Holsopple and extend trails into Johnstown and Windber.
- Develop Johnstown’s trail hub, 3 trails are Path of the Flood, Jim Mayer Riverswalk, and Conemaugh Gap Trail. Johnstown is important point on the PA Mainline Canal Trail from Harrisburg to Pittsburgh.
- Develop Kiski-Conemaugh water trail access area at Inclined Plane and at Seward, PA.
- Help Johnstown become more walkable and bikable, plant trees to mitigate run off.
- Develop alternative energy sources, such as geothermal energy at mine discharge opposite Point Stadium.
- Restore brownfields and area rivers and streams.

**Methodology**
Two summits were held, which launched the formation of a local Conservation Landscape coalition. Dozens of projects were proposed, resulting in a $17 million investment in the region’s recreational assets.
City of Johnstown

Vision 2025: A Resilience Framework
Johnstown Region
Downtown Johnstown
A series of interviews with over 30 Johnstown area residents and community leaders was conducted in order to better understand the needs and conditions of Johnstown.

The majority of participants were born and raised in Johnstown or its vicinities, and attended school in the Greater Johnstown area. However, many went away for university level education.

Many of the participants saw themselves as mediators and optimists in the city. Few saw themselves as doers. Rather they saw themselves as mentors and helpers.

Many participants do expect to stay in Johnstown for the remainder of his or her life. Some were “snow birds” and spend winters in Florida. Others expected to retire elsewhere, yet a few said Johnstown would be a good place for retirement.

The most mentioned event was the death of Congressman Murtha. His death left a big gap in government, and as a result jobs were lost due to relocation.

Others said that the decline of the steel industry led to the decline of the city.

The most mentioned biggest recent change was the Duke LifePoint acquisition of the Conemaugh Hospital. Though many saw a positive trend due to new entrepreneurship and foreseeable job creation, population loss, poverty, and crime were widely perceived as significant downward trends.

What people feel is going well in Johnstown includes:

- Businesses and government are starting to come together to work together. Community organizations that help mediate between small businesses and government are the most effective.
- The highest percentage of college educated citizens, and college readiness programs are really effective.
- Coming together, and working together.

Things that are not working well in the opinion of the participants:

- Blight
- Lack of career opportunities for local graduates
- Crime
- Lack of unity in decision making--too many development organizations without a common vision

Johnstown’s greatest assets are considered:

- Consistently the people of Johnstown are regarded one of the city’s greatest assets. Additionally, its natural surroundings and beauty are highly regarded.
- The healthcare infrastructure and nearby universities are also seen as great assets and job providers.
The most common response for what is holding Johnstown back was political discord. Whether it be a lack of leadership, too many factions, or lack of common vision.

Overall lack of vision was also a common concern. This lack of working together was not a concern limited to politics, but also applies to leading organizations and the community.

Other causes for concern were the lack of jobs, crime rate, and infrastructure (more generally, the deteriorated physical condition of Johnstown).
SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

Two community workshops were held to present the initial findings of the Vision 2025: A Resilience Framework to the Johnstown Vision 2025 Governance Committee and other community leaders. More than sixty people attended the meetings and shared their feedback on the framework. The ideas that resonated most clearly with the participants are summarized here.

A Vibrant Local Economy
Entrepreneurship and Business Creation
Downtown was the clear priority, with many participants expressing the greater need to support entrepreneurs who are creating family sustaining jobs, and looking to the large employers and their educated workforce as new markets. Cleaning up downtown and making it more walkable was mentioned as a critical element of a vibrant local economy, as well as activating downtown with more after work events, creating a stroll district for downtown retail shops and restaurants. Participants also expressed that the beautiful Conemaugh Valley is something they take for granted and possibly under market to others.

Life Sustaining Landscapes
Increasing the number and size of community gardens, trails, water, and river access was the highest priority within this circle. Fighting blight was the second highest priority, which goes hand in hand with increasing green space in Johnstown. River wall removal was mentioned by many participants, with the intermediary step of river wall transformation enabling the walls to become a source of pride for more than just their practical utility. Other participants mentioned engaging the community in a more active outdoor lifestyle, along with the support of more local recreational businesses and trails, a natural next step after improved green spaces.

Strong Sense of Community
Johnstown has a strong sense of community already, and a renewed commitment to working together to help the business community emerged from the workshops. Particular collaborations that were mentioned included a education initiative that enables schools and employers to work more closely to build out the workforce Johnstown needs. Giving residents a reason to come downtown was also mentioned, linked with the idea of celebrating the local arts community. Others felt strongly about creating an advertising campaign, similar to Pittsburgh’s Renaissance.
Good Governance
Collaboration is key, with partnerships among all of the sectors (government, quasi government, community organizations, and business) mentioned by the majority of participants. In addition, participants saw a greater need for telling the success stories, remaining transparent about what is happening, forgoing ownership in favor of success, and seeking opportunities for shared services between school district and municipalities.

Conclusion
Workshop participants expressed very strongly that this group should reconvene regularly to continue this process. Attending the workshops gave most participants a better sense of what was happening in Johnstown and how they could be part of the solutions. Many identified Lift Johnstown as the natural lead organization for the transformation. The most mentioned next steps were to clean up and beautify downtown, creating a place where residents want to be, increasing the number of family sustaining jobs, and replacing the negative narrative with a success story for Johnstown.
SUMMARY OF PUBLIC MEETING

September 15, 2015

Johnstown is a place many residents—new and old—have come to love. Overall, they place a high priority on revitalizing downtown. They want to create a safe, walkable city where people, both locals and visitors, can enjoy Johnstown’s culture and history, food and entertainment, and the quality of its unique setting.

They value Johnstown’s amenities and natural resources, such as the trails and bikeways and see them as a way to increase connectivity and attract newcomers. Many people noted that Johnstown needs more people to visit and stay. They favor supporting small and start-up businesses, partnering with local schools and universities, and strengthening neighborhoods throughout the region. They want to fix the drug problem and are ready for new ways to approach it.

Two general themes emerged from people’s comments: self-reliance and collaboration. It’s time, they say, to engage people to work for their community—or as one person put it, “to put our pride in Johnstown to work”. They see collaboration and communication among organizations, businesses, neighborhoods, and government as key to building trust and community resilience. They feel it’s time to take down the political barriers that stand in the way of co-operation, and invite everyone to take part. Johnstown needs strong but inclusive leadership, and its leaders need to live up to their promises. People feel strongly that better communication is needed to help people work together.

Many people pointed out that Johnstown has a culture of volunteering. News spreads quickly, and it only takes some volunteers to get things started. They propose expanding on the success of city events and festivals. They want to engage the region’s youth and work more proactively in neighborhoods. They recognize that it’s going to take many years to revitalize Johnstown, but they see things that could be done right now and are eager to get started.
IMAGINING JOHNSTOWN IN 2025

Author's Note: This hypothetical description of Johnstown in 2025 is an exercise in imagination written to turn abstract goals and concepts into a more tangible vision of the community and to help "see" what it might become in the future. There can be many such imaginative accounts, and all of them can help make a better future seem more real, more worth the work it'll take to get there.

The market house downtown is busy year round on weekends, with local produce in summer and fall, and artisan specialties all year round. The new market shed is simple yet beautiful. Producers from the Cambria-Somerset region consider it their premier location because it draws thousands on weekends.

On the next block, the market continues in the stalls all around the new square. They’re worth a walk any time, since there’s always something new to see—gourmet foods, jewelry, and craft items, and clever electronics that are being Beta-tested. The city’s rent is nominal, and a permanent coffee shop and old fashioned soda fountain can be counted on to make any visit a good one. The new square is a second outdoor venue, which is needed since the Central Park gazebo is so popular. A local children’s chorus, a puppet show, and a mixed-media performance art presentation have been there this week.

People are downtown all the time—mostly walking or bicycling. The on-demand mini-shuttles have become a convenient alternative to commuting, and the need for parking lots has been reduced to less than 20 percent of what it was ten years ago, allowing for more productive and intensive use of downtown land as well as safer, healthier, and more enjoyable streets. The tree-lined streets are beautiful places to walk, and many are connected directly to the trails that take you in just minutes from town through beautiful woods, along streams, and past the many new farms and gardens that have become a hallmark of the Johnstown region. Nature runs right through the city, greenways that are as beautiful as the free-flowing rivers.

People come down the incline to take a walk through town to a restaurant and music at one of Johnstown’s well-known venues. The dance hall is a popular spot on weekend nights. During the week, some of the popular clubs meet there, and it’s where the annual bridge tournament is held. John Street is now a lovely shaded boulevard, a favorite place for people to stroll on a summer evening, stopping at one of the cafes overlooking the new green terraces along the river, where there are always people fishing and just sitting barefoot in the water. There are sure to be kayaks and water taxi paddleboats to watch. A common sight downtown are the tours led by local Town Docents to visiting officials, students, and tourists from around the world.

The Docents explain how Johnstown transformed itself from near bankruptcy to prosperity through the “We Own Johnstown” campaign. Citizens invested as shareholders in city and school facilities, enabling major upgrades in energy efficiency and renewable energy systems, with long-lasting savings for the city that paid the investors over 5 percent return on investment. The city now funds public services through its earnings on the power it generates from its new high-tech water mills and biomass processor, compost, organic fertilizer from the wastewater treatment facility, and other initiatives.

The city’s tree planting, carried out by neighborhood organizations, businesses, and other citizens over ten years, has now increased the city’s overall tree-canopy coverage to more than 70 percent, significantly reducing runoff and saving energy in buildings. Biomass from the annual leaf harvest provides fuel for the city’s electricity plant. The City is proud of its performance—with its commitment to utilizing a combination of natural ecological services and new technologies, it has an annual surplus that goes toward investment in people and quality of life. A portion of tax revenue is set aside for prioritized spending in accordance with annual online community survey. The city maintains a website dashboard that enables citizens to get up-to-date information and to make reports or inquiries directly to city agencies.

Vision 2025: A Resilience Framework
Ten years ago, one of the mill buildings was turned into a workshop for maker-entrepreneurs. They were soon renting space in the neighboring building, and now the entire complex is humming with new businesses. The success of new businesses in Johnstown has made news throughout the country, but it’s not just about the reuse of the mills. The great community networking and support that comes from Johnstown’s deep roots and strong sense of community solidarity has become a powerful economic resource. New technologies have made businesses highly successful—it was a small group in Johnstown who invented the simple technology for cleaning fracking water, which has enabled the industry to prosper and the local company to expand to take over an entire mill shed. Other successful businesses have developed cost-effective techniques for cleaning contaminated sites, domesticating Japanese knotweed and processing it into high-strength fabric and medicines, and a process that speeds up the disintegration of plastics in the environment, converting them into valuable soil amendments.

The naturalization of the rivers in Johnstown, which has just been completed, was conducted as a series of experiments in geomorphological engineering and fluid mechanics. UPJ’s new engineering department is now world-renowned for its advancement of knowledge in these areas, and they continue to do cutting-edge work in river hydrology. Other local scientists are tracking the remarkable resurgence in biological diversity that is occurring not only in the rivers but in the entire valley ecosystem. This, along with organic farming practices, is contributing to one of the fastest and richest soil production processes documented in North America. Based on an understanding of ecology, neighborhoods have been rebuilt with homesteads—houses with orchards, gardens, and sometimes beehives and small farmyards.

Schools in Johnstown are nationally known for their innovative "head, hands, and heart" curriculum, which is conceived as life-long education. Students are in small classes taught not only by master educators but also by community experts in all fields. Their school year is enriched with workshops, apprenticeships, intensive courses in advanced subjects, and overnight camps. Students learn by teaching others and take part as volunteers in city events. There are several different career tracks that are open to students, from professional to artisan to caregiver. Every student acquires life skills, such as raising and preparing food, caring for animals, design, construction, repair, and project management and budgeting. In high school, young people start taking part in civic governance, and many start active careers in public service by joining organizations such as the city’s Young Leaders Council. Everyone has an opportunity to take part directly in the city’s development by taking part in the Annual Johnstown City Forum, which is part of a week-long city celebration each year in late January.

By this time, nearly everyone in Johnstown is on the four-day work week, choosing the value of the extra time over the extra earnings. It’s really been a change in culture that has made it possible, since what started as a “summer schedule” was extended through the year, and more and more people came to expect and value the extra-long weekend. Recreational, social, and cultural activities have become part of Johnstown’s way of life, and visitors are envious of their enjoyable lifestyle. Johnstown has won the nation’s “Happiest City” award for the last three years.
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