

## City of Warren Comprehensive Plan Key Person Interviews – August 11 & 18; September 15

### Summary of Comments 8/27/08, Rev 9/22/08

Key persons were asked to address the various issues discussed below from a neighborhood perspective, as well as from a City-wide perspective. (xx following a comment indicates the number of people who made the same comment.)

#### **1. Regarding Neighborhood organizations, activities, and effectiveness.**

##### **Downtown, etc.**

- Good committees, need to take back the neighborhood.
- Aware of Perkins Group and Warren GROWS xxxxxx
- Aware of TBTN and Main Street group. xxx
- Aware of NEED.
- NEED – either young families or older folks in the association – do 3 clean-ups per year.
- There seems to be a disconnect with regard to collaboration between the DT and adjacent neighborhood associations.
- Historic Perkins taking aggressive approach – dumpster program, landscaping work, block parties, etc.
- Group trying to buy property in N. Park and Atlantic area – difficult working with the City.
- Historic Perkins area in major trouble; beautiful old homes deteriorating.
- WRAP is not very effective; trying to get going.
- Amphitheater and Riverwalk are a big plus.

##### **North East**

- Good committees.
- Problems are creeping north of Atlantic Street.

##### **North West**

- Aware of NW Neighborhood Association. xxxxx

##### **South West**

- Trying to bring back Quinby Park.

##### **South East**

- Aware of SE Association xxx, meets with them regularly. They meet on 4<sup>th</sup> Thursdays. Do clean-ups.

##### **General**

- City Council and the School Board have created a joint communications committee to address revitalization of the neighborhoods. Additional pocket parks are seen as an important element.
- No City-wide coordination of neighborhood groups.
- There is the historic East-West issue – intense old rivalry with huge “hatred” between the two, not so much with the kids, but still with many of the parents.
- Strong racial divides in the City (adults more than kids) – still living in the 60’s.
- Apathy is rampant.
- No one maintains the flowerbeds.
- Need leadership in the neighborhoods.
- Clean-up along the River.
- The City is cutting the grass on over 2000 properties – evidence of size of abandoned property problem in City.
- The Wean Foundation & the Mahoning Valley Organizing Collaborative are involved in neighborhood engagement and planning. They will be hiring staff to work with Warren and Youngstown and could assist in our efforts. They have grant programs and funds.

#### **2. Regarding medical care availability.**

##### **North West**

- Not much there.
- West side needs something.

##### **South West**

- Free Clinic on Tod Ave. xxxx
- Hear mixed reviews on clinic on Tod.
- It is not well known that there is a small out-patient clinic.
- Medical care is lacking. xxx

##### **South East**

- Medical care is lacking.



# Appendix 2-1

## General

- Even with both hospitals on the East side now, medical care is generally good throughout the City, due to size of the City and multiple routes for getting to the hospitals. xxx
  - Plenty of health care – especially compared to cities like Cleveland.
  - Both hospitals are very good. xx
  - Hospitals have been in transition.
  - Ownership issues at Trumbull are an on-going concern.
  - 24-hour availability.
- Facilities are not the issue – the bigger issue is transportation.
- In dire straits: big reduction in number of neighborhood doctors and dentists, closing of St. Joe's on West side, too much primary care is ending up in emergency rooms, which has a negative effect on emergency care.
- Really lacking in general services.
- There used to be several neighborhood clinics or mobile units.
- Urgent care facility on north side of town was closed – not good for emergency care.
- 71% of homes with school-age children are single-parent or other (grandparents, aunts/uncles, etc.), many with extreme poverty issues.
- Large segment of underinsured and uninsured are the issue – how do we continue to pay for/provide service?

### 3. *Regarding everyday shopping.*

#### **Downtown, etc.**

- The perception of the DT area being unsafe is false – there are essentially no crime issues in the DT and Amphitheater area.
- Parts of DT area not good.
- Mostly discount-type stores.
- Shopping is OK in DT.
- There's a Save-A-Lot in the DT.
- Needed.

## North East

- Giant Eagle
- Many shop in Howland Twp.
- Shopping is lacking.

## North West

- Only a few places.
- Giant Eagle

## South West

- None. xxxx
- Get the short stick when it comes to most things, including everyday shopping opportunities.
- Could use a grocery.
- Lacking on the west side and the south side – especially the southwest area.
- Tried to get a grocery store in connection with an elderly housing projects; developers wouldn't do one.
- Need shopping, restaurants and clothing stores.

## South East

- Not good. Xx
- Used to be facilities there, but they were robbed so they closed.
- SE area is dry, therefore, no bars or restaurants. (True?)

## General

- Convenience stores become hang-outs for drug dealers and prostitutes.
- Home improvement stores now pretty much limited to Lowes and Home Depot on Elm Road; smaller hardware-type stores mostly closed.
- There is a big difference between areas of the City – including restaurants.
- Not much on the west side – even in the DT, and there won't be until people feel it is safe.
- No more Dollar Stores! – have too many.
- Warren GROWS joined the Business Resource Network, which is a one-stop Employment Network out of Lisbon. If any business has a problem, the Network asks for anyone from the Network with experience in that issue to help them out.

## 4. Regarding crime.

### Downtown, etc.

- The location of the Warren Mission so close to the DT adds to at least the perception of being unsafe and a presence of crime in this part of the City.
- The area in and around the DT is perceived as being unsafe even though it really isn't; however, the perception keeps people from coming to the downtown. (The Relay for Life was moved from Harding to the DT and some folks were afraid to participate, even with all of the activity and people that would be there.)
- No gang activity in DT.
- Prostitutes are a problem in the north area. (xx) When they were pushed out of the DT area, they went south of Youngstown Road.
- Elm Road – DT to Porter.
- Washington St. and Park Avenue between Market and Washington Sts.
- TBTN area. xx especially around the High School – this area has drug problems.
- North side and Central area.

### North East

- Crimes in NE are hidden.
- Crime is a problem.
- Laird Avenue.
- The new News store on Atlantic is really a porno shop – got their permit from the City as a news store.

### North West

- Prostitution, adult book store just opened on Parkman.
- Summit/Tod area, small gang issue.

### South West

- There are issues in this area. Even prostitutes won't go to the SW area, as it is too unsafe.
- Safety is such a problem that pizza houses won't even deliver pizza on the west side.

- Gangs are a problem. xx Especially in the First to Third Street area.
- Crime is a problem.
- Drugs are a problem.
- Drug hot spot remains on 4<sup>th</sup> Street.
- Across from Horace Mann School.
- Alden Elementary School area.
- Had a house explode.

### South East

- South of Youngstown Road is a problem area.
- Crime is a problem. xx

### General

- Bad everywhere. Xxxxx
- Can be scary, but feel relatively safe in most of the City, notwithstanding recent rash of break-ins of out buildings and murder a few block north of the DT.
  - Reflects sense of desperation, loss of jobs. People with means aren't staying. Sense of hopelessness.
- 3,000 boarded-up properties in the City.
- Exists in all neighborhoods, but not really many organized gang issues – mostly groups of kids looking for something to do.
- Drug transactions have moved indoors, so not perceived as big a problem as in the 90's.
- With the national/regional focus more on rural issues (meth), we need more police presence back in City neighborhoods.
- Lots of registered sex offenders in the City – concerned for school bus stop areas.
- There is gang activity, mostly in the projects – not hard core but definitely gang-type activities such as stabbings, on a regular basis.
- City is working hard to control drugs/prostitution – the community needs to be more positive regarding the City and its attempts to solve problems.



# Appendix 2-1

- YWCA started Teen program in County for 12-18 year olds – book club, self-esteem classes, body and life skills, current issues.
- There is a Teen Mentoring program with Warren City Schools for HS students to volunteer to mentor 4<sup>th</sup> graders at Horace Mann.
- Letters were sent to absentee landlords regarding the maintenance code.
- Things are improving somewhat.

## 5. *Regarding walkability, non-vehicular connectivity.*

### **Downtown, etc.**

- City has done a good job of updating sidewalks and complying with ADA requirements.
- Need multi-use pathways to and within the DT.

### **South West**

- Re-open the fire station since the tracks block fire trucks, even though they can go around the tracks, which takes an extra minute or more.

### **South East**

- Sidewalks are especially bad.

### **General**

- Previous plans to create more trails not happening.
- Need more effort on multi-use pathways. x
- In the past, there has been resistance from Council members for paths in their Wards – concerned about the vocal residents that don't want a bunch of strangers walking or riding past their property.
- Already have a lot of places to walk with sidewalks throughout the City.
- Sidewalks are bad everywhere. xx
- Not many impediments in the daytime, but would not walk anywhere in the City at night.

- Only walking trail is between Perkins and Packard parks; need more with police presence.
- Need a skateboard facility. xxx
- Definitely need (the promised) skateboard park, and walking/jogging/ bike paths.
- City Council is worried about vandalism and crime at a skateboard park.
- Need good, safe pathways in vicinity of new schools within perimeter too close for busing. Should have designated safe houses for kids walking to schools.
- Pursue Safe Routes to Schools program through ODOT.
- Need better access to trails for bikes.
- No designated bike trails yet.
- No bicycling opportunities. Bike path is needed. Dangerous to ride bikes in the City.
- With no public transit system, need a car to get around in the City.

## 6. *Regarding infrastructure.*

### **Downtown, etc.**

- DT sidewalks are horrible.
- Sewer separation project has been completed in the DT.
- Can't access wireless at YWCA.
- Perkins Park floods.

### **North East**

- Market Street to the east floods.

### **North West**

- Has some issues.
- Jamestown Village floods.

### **South West**

- Some flooding south of Youngstown Road.
- First through Fourth Streets flood.
- Infrastructure is a problem. xx
- Should we consider a wetlands bank for this area?
- Still some septic tanks.

### **General**

- Sidewalks and streets are really bad everywhere. xxxx

- City not spending any local money on streets.
- Issues with wastewater lines in and around older homes.
- Open storm sewers throughout – especially in SE. xx
- There are 6 major storm sewer projects on the books. Eastland—separation study; the other five projects are being done together.
- A fee is being collected for storm sewer, so projects are getting done.
- Need more sewer separation.
- City does good job with water and sanitary sewer. xx
- Water pressure is low in some areas (Tod/Summit area).
- Hi-speed internet not everywhere. (OK through most of the City.)
  - Hi-speed internet more a problem of affordability than availability.
- City departments need to work together better; maybe a change in government structure would help.
- Expand DT wireless to YWCA area.
- Water is #1 asset – need to market it.
- Airport is #2 asset, Cheap Housing #3, Highways #4, and Labor Force #5.
- Should rename airport the “Ernie Hall Airport”.

## **7. Regarding key entrances into the City. Downtown, etc.**

- East Market Street from the Hospital to the DT needs work.
- North Park Avenue needs work.
- No signs at entrance from the north at 5/82.
- Why has work stopped on the memorial?
- Mahoning at Summit is a problem entrance.
- The entire DT needs streetscaping, façade improvements, and trees.
- A façade program has been started with CDBG funds, and the City is being asked to allocate a higher percentage of CDBG monies to the façade program.

## **North East**

- Tearing down the old Ames store at 422/5 was a big plus.
- East Market St. is OK; being repaved. Xx
- Market Street needs entrance sign.
- East Market used to have a lot of trees. Need to replace them.
- Elm Street is OK to the bend.
- There is a billboard that could be used for event advertising.

## **North West**

- Bad.
- Parkman Road needs upgraded. Xxx
- Parkman Road being repaved, with new curbing and sidewalks.
- 422 (Parkman Road) into town – demolished buildings, no welcome signs.
- West Market needs upgraded.
- West Market needs sidewalks, street improvements, litter control, removal or rehab of dilapidated buildings, and more trees.

## **South West**

- Bad.
- West Market is especially bad. xxxxx
- Vacant buildings.
- Uninteresting entrance, small sign at Lordstown.
- Improvements were made; then they were destroyed. Education is needed.

## **South East**

- Niles xxx and Youngstown xx Roads.
- Niles Road is a haven for weeds and garbage – city crews issue (union and supervision).
- Needs revamping – vacant buildings, junk in front of buildings, high traffic area, no greenery, pots, flower baskets, etc.

## **General**

- Huge problems with almost all entranceways. Xxxx
- Very gloomy in the wintertime
  - Many of the streets don't get plowed



# Appendix 2-1

- No one shovels their sidewalks.
- Need more positive image.
- Need more trees.
- Howland Twp applied for grants to upgrade entrances and parks.

## 8. **Best projects to jump-start neighborhood revitalization.**

### **Downtown, etc.**

- Peninsula project is very promising – plan to market housing to Cleveland area and folks with home offices.
- Former Martin Chevy property is prime land, trying to get deal done.
- Get young professionals here – make deals.
- Need more jobs.
- KSU study showed that area needs more attraction/marketing efforts.
- 20 houses north of Washington Street were rehabbed with tax credits; rent for 15 years, then available for purchase by tenants – 11 years to go.
- Porter/Scott area – larger homes with high utility costs.

### **North East**

- Elm Street corridor upgrade.

### **North West**

- Limit massage parlors on Parkman.

### **South West**

- When available, use former Western Reserve HS as a neighborhood community center – already has gym, pool and planetarium.
- Highland Avenue and Tod Avenue to the south need upgrading.
- Sunshine did a new construction project; 114 houses for rent for 15 years, then can be sold to tenants. First ones have only 3-4 years left before homes can be sold.
- Need jobs.

### **South East**

- Limit massage parlors on Niles and Youngstown Roads.

- Youngstown and Niles Road Corridors need upgrading.
- Draper St. has a few homes that are bad.
- Make Ridge Road a cul de sac and build some new homes in this area.

### **General**

- Enforce existing laws regarding renters and landlords.
- Check how many Council members and policemen are landlords and you'll see why it is hard to make any progress in this area.
- Make landlords, not tenants, responsible for water bill, including a sizeable deposit.
- Need effective leadership for all neighborhood committees.
- Community policing has worked very well in other areas.
- Police Chief not supportive of neighborhood groups. Xx
- Demolition! xx Rehab where able; mow & maintain empty lots – reclaim as green space.
- Better connectivity to neighborhoods.
- Corridors to DT.xx
- Attractive entrances.
- Use new schools as a base.
- Schools should provide neighborhood recreation infrastructure.
- Need to get social service folks into the neighborhoods and working with the kids.
- Each neighborhood should have its own focus, geared toward the local community.
- Create neighborhood playgrounds that the neighborhoods would design and maintain.
- Activities in the neighborhoods with a minimal charge – people need to learn at a young age that everything can't be free.
- Parks and recreation programs, especially in the summer.
- Youth programs: outside activities, basketball courts, skateboard park.
- The City needs to be much more open

to its citizens. There are fire station buildings in all neighborhoods. Think about reopening neighborhood fire halls and co-locate police in each neighborhood. Also locate employees from the water department, family court, social services and school resource offices with them so local residents have easy access to City services and people within each neighborhood get to know their police officers and firemen, and vice versa.

- Agencies offering social services should have hours from 1 PM to Evening, rather than the same as school hours. Schools could share facilities with social services and related offices.
- Increase housing occupancy.
- Non-profits buy-up houses, fix them up and sell them for cost of rehab and acquisition.
- Pick 100 homes, offer tax abatement and other incentives for 10-15 years – require property to be kept up and owners to do the right thing.
- More aggressive program for selling land-banked parcels is needed. They sell for \$5/LF. Some have been sold to neighbors.
- Dan Crouse is starting a program to improve housing/increase home ownership by reducing income taxes for 3 years, reducing utility fees, etc. to entice people to move into vacant homes. He is preparing a proposal for Council's consideration.
- Cooperation and coordination – non-profits, neighborhood associations, historical society, etc.
- YWCA starting new programs for teens; starting a 6-week camp next year.
  - Starting adult programs on racism, women's issues and health/wellness.
  - Starting 3-5 year olds program – going for grants, etc.
  - Need to market programs better.

## 9. *Regarding parks and recreation.*

### **Downtown, etc.**

- Filling-in City pool at Packard Park to create parking lot was big loss, even recognizing that the costs to maintain a pool are high.
- Need waterpark, maybe at Packard School site.
- North side needs a neighborhood park.

### **North East**

- NEED is doing a park.

### **North West**

- Needs a park. School district has land on Parkman Road that a portion was classified as wetlands – could be made into a park.

### **South West**

- Quinby Park group is doing some things.
- Quinby Park shelter house was a WPA project; is bricked up.
- Quinby Park needs attention.

### **South East**

- Park next to Fairview Gardens – no one to utilize it.
- Interfaith Park – not being utilized in spite of recent rehab and clean-up efforts.
- Park in SE corner of City (Interfaith Park) has been neglected, but the neighborhood group is now working on fixing it up.
- Robert Hinds and his group are doing some things for parks.
- There had been talk about putting in a water park at the Willard School site.

### **General**

- A disaster. There was a good study/plan done a few years ago; nothing was implemented.
- Need a comprehensive parks & recreation plan and program in the City, with a dedicated effort and annual funding from either the General Fund or a special levy – not grants. xx



## Appendix 2-1

- Adopt-a-park programs need to be “full-care” commitments, which takes funding as well as volunteer labor – difficult to sustain.
  - Not sure if the shepherding agreement process is working. There are only 2.
- Regarding activities:
  - Big lack of organized activities for kids. Consider partnering with the Y’s for after-school programs.
  - Few activities (and jobs) for young adults
  - Few for the “Tweens” – 6<sup>th</sup> grade to HS age.
  - Recreation programs are needed for middle school (6<sup>th</sup> graders and up).
  - Adults, seniors and young kids (pre-teen) reasonably well-served.
  - Y’s—need programs for after school.
  - There are no City programs except summer jobs for kids for 6 weeks in the summer.
  - There is a lot of collaboration among TAG, Butler Arts Institute, Fitness Centers, professional ball players, etc.
- Regarding facilities:
  - The City and the Schools should develop a joint program for use of swimming pool facilities year-round.
  - Should consider little water parks (with play-in fountain areas) instead of pools.
  - Need a Skateboard Park. xxxxx
  - Need more basketball courts.
  - Need a bikepath.
  - What about a motorcross area? (Maybe David Blaney would sponsor it.)
  - Create pocket parks in the neighborhoods with associations responsible for maintaining the areas, starting with abandoned school sites.
- Need programs where people don’t have access to DT area parks.
- Need a dog walk area.
- No neighborhood without a park – very baseball-oriented system.
- Regarding provision of service:
  - Up until 1985-86, the school’s summer rec program hired teachers and college students for 7 weeks. There were structured activities and weekly trips to zoos, parks, etc.
  - Need collaboration with colleges to train teachers to work in urban neighborhoods. Have them practice and live in communities and help provide social services.
  - It would be great if the City could have a City-wide recreation program.
  - Issues with City maintenance of parks – City workers are inefficient (union and supervision issues). xx
  - Have shut down so many parks in the area, e.g. Comstock Park – the union wouldn’t let neighborhood volunteers maintain the park.
  - Now that the 3 Little Leagues have merged, maybe other groups will follow suit instead of trying to protect their own turf. Need more coordination and cooperation. xx
  - The City closed the old City pool in 1992 but used the pools at the High Schools for summer swim programs from 1993-1999, then ran out of money.
  - All of the old rec programs just died in the last 8 years or so. TCAP had been part of the summer rec program.

## 10. Capitalizing on new schools.

### Downtown, etc.

- Provide for joint use of baseball field, gyms, pool and library at the high school.xx

### North West

- Will all the new schools be built? Schools should have known about the wetlands before they bought the proposed property on Parkman.
- Promote schools more.

### South West

- Will the new school be built?
- Folks in the SW complain about everything – need more notice and information.
- Reserve – now the Jr. High – will be gone after new school is built.
- Promote schools more, especially in the SW and NW. Emphasize that there is no difference in the education provided in any of the four schools.

### South East

- With Willard School opening soon, huge opportunity for collaboration with JFK.
- Willard Street being redone as part of school project.
- Doubt Willard School will be ready as scheduled.

### General

- Definitely should be focal points for revitalization of the neighborhoods.
- For this to happen, it needs to be a focus issue for the Mayor.
- Need more collaboration among schools, City, and various organizations.
- Need better communication to inform residents better; have School Board meetings on the West side.
- Improve properties around the schools.
  - Have City prioritize rehab and demolition dollars around new schools.

- Create parks adjacent to the schools.
- Use buildings for after school programs. Middle school is done at 1:15, parents aren't home.
- Recreational opportunities. There is some parkland at Willard and Lincoln schools.
- Need community groups to support the neighborhoods.
- People should call police when there are issues with trouble in the parks.
- Pursue Safe Routes to Schools program thru ODOT for \$\$.
- Kent has opened schools in the Summer and on Saturdays in the Winter for sports, movies, etc.

## 11. Reuse of former school buildings/ property.

### North East

- Garfield should be converted to senior housing.

### South West

- When available, use former Western Reserve HS as a neighborhood community center – already has gym, pool and planetarium.
- Former Alden School site – opportunity for lot for towed cars – adjacent to automobile technical training bays.

### South East

- Devon—temporary school now. While other schools are closed for new construction, students go to Devon. When done with this process, demolish it and add new housing.

### General

- The school district is knocking down old schools rather than risking providing a place for a Charter school.
- Demolish and reuse properties as green space – plant trees.
- Is the school district even permitted to market properties to private individuals?



# Appendix 2-1

- Pocket parks, maintained by neighborhood associations.
- If they become green space, who will maintain them?
- City already has trouble properly maintaining existing parks, so should consider some alternative uses for future green space:
  - Community gardens
  - Basketball courts
  - Walking tracks
  - Present ideas to School Board – create a joint School Board/City Council committee.
  - Consider ways to link schools (old properties and new schools) to local parks and recreational sites.
- In combination with the local churches, use the old school facilities for advisory and tutorial programs.
- Retrofit to senior housing; but the buildings are old, have environmental issues and would need elevators.
- Tear down old school buildings; add housing or best use – tired of vacant buildings.
- Lost 10 elementary schools in the City; all had playgrounds, all leveled.
- Gene Bray, Canton Planning Director, started “Candlelight Summer Youth Groups” which fix up housing and do odd jobs for seniors.

## **12. Opportunities for “Right-sizing”.**

### **Downtown, etc.**

- Need major restaurant that will stay open for concert goers.
- Atlantic Street, 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s of the houses are empty; 1/3<sup>rd</sup> have been stripped, windows gone, etc. Belmont and Porter are getting as bad.
- Dana Street is 3 blocks of residential. In the last 3 years it has gone from 75% owner-occupied to 50%, with half of the rental properties abandoned and boarded up.

### **South West**

- Create a wetlands area.
- Move people out of SW and into the other areas of the City.

### **South East**

- Demolish Fairview Gardens and enhance adjacent property.

### **General**

- Knock down old, crappy houses.
- As Trumbull 100 did in SW area ten years ago, empower the private sector to raze blighted properties and then sell the restored bare ground back to the City at cost of clean-up.
- Up to 3,000 houses vacant in the City; prisoners mowing 600+ houses.
- With Federal programs, you are limited to demolition of one house/neighborhood per year. The City was able to do more by using general fund monies, but has run out of available funds for this effort.
- A major problem in the City is the number of abandoned houses that are being “stripped” of anything with salvage value – wiring, plumbing, cabinets, making it almost impossible to ever rehab these houses. Have also heard tales of some of the schools on the West side being stripped as well.
- Green space where schools once were.
- Add neighborhood play areas.
- Neighborhood gardens should be considered.
- Sue Hartman wants to start a side-lot program whereby vacant lots are sold to neighbors for expansion of their homes, new garages, gardens, etc.
- Sell empty lots to neighbors, stress curb appeal, work with banks on first-time home buyer incentives.
- Allowing too much demolition of good, old properties.
- Swap properties owned by landlords to more appropriate places with agreements to develop or maintain in desired ways.
- Get landlords to pay water bills. (Will encourage them not to leave homes vacant.)

- Need housing for singles at YSU and KSU – gear some housing to them.
- Open up opportunities for developers with Dan Crouse’s program. Build new houses.
- Attract businesses and jobs that require education, corporate offices needed—raise the bar for education. Set the bar higher to encourage education.
- Need shopping – unique shops and boutiques.
- Whose job is it to attract new businesses? Anyone who wants to do it! – Governor’s Rep, elected/appointed officials, WRAP, Mayor, CD Department, Chamber...
- Explore expense-sharing opportunities with neighboring townships; shared services. Ideas, resources, purchasing of both large equipment (like dump trucks) and supplies like road salt, auction off old equipment, etc.
- More collaboration among groups – YWCA is collaborating with 4-H.
- There are 20+ school districts in the County, need to consolidate them.
- Used to work in Youngstown and used to say that what happened to the East side of Youngstown would never happen in Warren. Last year they tore down 660 houses in Youngstown, have over 5,000 more to go. 15,000 houses are unoccupied there; 5,000 condemned.

### **13. Regarding increasing home ownership/housing.**

#### **Downtown, etc.**

- Two towers have 300 rooms – at least 100 are unoccupied. (True?)

#### **South East**

- Fairview Gardens has low occupancy rate (50 or less of 140 units). Will probably be slated for demolition in the near future.
- Currently mixed uses (residential/commercial).

- Eliminate housing on main commercial corridors.

#### **General**

- Need middle-class housing, not low-income housing with almost everything free.
- The middle class is leaving the City, consequently the general demographics of Warren are getting older, poorer, dumber and sicker.
- Trumbull 100 is creating a new web site to try to develop a broad-based market for the very affordable housing in Warren.
- Hold landlords accountable, but City does not have enough inspectors to enforce laws and codes.
- Need more rental-home inspectors, but will they be in someone’s pocket? (Amazing what some people think they are “owed”.)
- City uses “new construction” codes for home rehabs as opposed to available alternative code that would encourage more and less costly home rehab.
- People are leaving the City because City officials are doing nothing (about absentee landlords, uncollected water bills, code enforcement, etc.).
- Check how many Council members own rental properties in the City.
- Cops, Police Chief, and other City employees own lots of rental properties.
- Enforce health codes regarding abandoned buildings.
- Absentee landlord issues.
- The City is over-housed – largest vacancy problem in the County. The population has decreased from 60,000 to nearly 40,000 but still have about the same number of housing units.
- Be much more aggressive regarding eminent domain – comply within 6 weeks or we’re taking.
- Streamline eminent domain with regard to abandoned houses. Hire a neighbor to mow the yard and check on the house until it can be seized by the City, then give the property to the neighbor to do



# Appendix 2-1

with it as they will – either fix it up and sell it, or have it razed (by the City) and then add the land to their property. This would create an increased interest in the neighboring property and improve the look of the neighborhood while in the process of seizing of the property.

- Involve banks and the Board of Realtors in projects to increase home ownership.
- Education – young people don't realize the advantages of owning vs. renting. xxx
- Have churches partner with banks in education regarding owning and maintaining property.
- Screen, qualify and counsel potential home buyers for TRADITIONAL mortgage loans, even if it takes someone a couple of years to qualify, they would then be more likely to succeed.
- Provide incentives (in addition to those being proposed for GM workers) to encourage home ownership, but only to qualified, capable buyers. xx
- Develop entrepreneurs. Look to foundations to help. Offer courses regarding owning property.
- Promote a program whereby renters who maintain the property and pay rent steadily for 5 years get the deed for the property, or at least have the opportunity to buy it at a very reduced price.
- Require people to take classes if they are becoming new homeowners.
- See above; pick 100 homes and offer incentives to entice people to move in and maintain them properly.
- TMHA considering a second CHDO for special needs housing.
- WRAP/Sunshine stopped building houses; started moving people from one subsidized house to another.
- College age and singles need housing.
- Sunshine upsets people. There are lots of problems. Houses are too costly. Pay Day loans hurt people.
- Mahoning Avenue and Freeman St. are sites of historic industrial row houses – big part of the City's heritage.

- Seniors probably the wealthiest segment of the City's population.
- Too many vacant houses.

## 14. Mass Transit/ Park & Ride.

### South West

- You need to talk to Jim Abicht, former Director of TCAP, about Mass Transit, as TCAP could be a key player – located on SW side of City.

### General

- Won't happen. xx There are virtually no riders in Warren on the existing Western Reserve Transit Authority busses now.
- Absolutely a need and would be used; but probably no public/political way to fund properly – too many fiefdoms, so why even discuss it? xx
- Need one that works – funding is available but needs to be a well-planned program.
- Need busses especially for lower income households to get people to DT area for programs xx – City layout not conducive to biking and walking from many areas.
- Busses that run between KSU Trumbull campus and Youngstown State are virtually empty.
- Need to publicize existing programs better so people, especially seniors, know what's available.
- Need to be perceived as safe.
- Niles/Trumbull Transit is available to Senior Center on call.
- Eastgate runs programs that are tied in with NOACA and AMATS. Ride-sharing program guarantees at least one match close by.
- Tough to fund but necessary.
- Kids can't get to activities.
- WRTA was stopped. Needed.
- No transportation to Cleveland.
- Only have CATS – 2-3 large routes in the City. Not responsive to needs.
- Transit has 1/4% sales tax on the ballot.
- Increase Niles' program to include Warren.
- Use small busses for an on-call program where people can call for rides to shopping, doctors or whatever.

- Need new routes for small busses for CATS.

## **15. Areas where the City spends too much.**

- Labor.
- Payroll – 85% of the budget.
- Pay levels for employees, and City Council.
- Staffing, salaries; top heavy – too many chiefs.
- There is one supervisor for every 3-4 employees. (Department heads are unionized.)
- Payroll – need to look hard at safety forces, may not need as many as we have.
- Hold the line on pay for police and fire.
- Packard Music Hall – City budgets \$450,000/year to subsidize salaries there. Instead, put out an RFP for professional management of both the Packard Music Hall and the concerts at the Amphitheater. With a \$200,000 City support package, they should get dozens of offers and the result would produce many more quality events at both venues.
- Difficult issue. On the one hand we have a shrinking population and shrinking budgets; on the other hand, we have the same geographic size, but increasing costs – especially energy-related costs now.

## **16. Areas where the City does not spend enough.**

- All areas – not enough money. xxx
- Parks. xx
- Streets. xx
- Sidewalks.
- Economic Development.
- Code enforcement.
- Have cut back too much in Fire Station overtime.
- Police and Fire are generally undermanned.
- Cleaning up properties, even private properties.
- Funds not getting to troubled areas of the City – not sure of level of

cooperation between the Mayor and City Council – historic rift.

- Marketing the City.
- Need to do more to make people feel safe (e.g. recent rash of break-ins to steal copper, etc.).
- City is doing what they can with the funds they have.

## **17. Other comments.**

- This study/comprehensive plan will do no good because City Council will never implement it. After glowing praise for the study, they will talk about establishing committees to focus on various recommendations, but never actually do it, and hope everyone else eventually forgets about it.
- City departments have a reputation for not being able to work together, being unfriendly and anti-development. Create 4 one-stop shops (police, fire, city services, social services, etc. – one in each neighborhood where local residents can have ready access and get to know the people who provide the services.
  - Hard to get past City’s inflexibility. Fragmented departments, no coordination, no public relations skills. Some department heads won’t even return calls.
- The Mayor is helpful and trying.
- City Council is apathetic and not visible. Not united. Concepts, egos, personalities get in the way.
  - Need more accountability of elected officials.
- Warren is an incestuous community. Government is ineffective, Need a Charter government and hire a professional City Manager to solve problems, with no pay for Councilmen. Nobody has a vision.
- Implementation of this Plan is a big issue. Divide up City Council members and mentor them. Have private leaders force implementation by the public sector.



## Appendix 2-1

- Too many councilmen own rental properties; hard to get legislation passed to enforce clean-up, etc.
- Politicians need to become involved regionally. They don't do this, so the money doesn't come to the Valley.
- The City won't use the County Planning Commission (no longer a regional planning commission). No one is doing planning in the City.
- The Law Director adamantly opposes Charter form of government. (Former police officer.)
- City needs a data base, especially for building owners and businesses in the DT.
- One family (mostly lawyers) owns property all over town and lets most of it go bad. Have lost businesses out of plazas owned by this group because they won't even do any maintenance, much less upgrade them.
- So much here but Warren does nothing regarding promoting itself and its history.
  - Pony League comes here
  - Underground RR history.
  - Western Reserve history – Warren was the capital – not even in the history books.
- There are lots of people trying to do good things, but separately.
  - Get neighborhoods, organizations, churches to work together. Now they don't support each other. Power struggles now. Not walking the walk.
- Good place to live – low cost of living, easy to travel to and from – driving or flying.
- New schools will help, but need to take care of blight, crime, etc.
- Condition of streets with huge potholes contributes to impression of this being a poor area.
- Labor mentality is a problem.
- Have lost 60-70% of CDBG funding (Housing, etc.) over the last 17 years
- Have lost tax revenues:
  - Lost jobs – Packard, etc.
  - Local banks have been acquired or merged, reducing DT employment by at least 300.
  - GE plant will probably be spun off, leaving uncertain future there.
  - Alco plant closed May 2008, lost 300 jobs.
  - St. Joe's Psychiatric Ward closed – lost about 15 employees, some part-time.
- Creation of jobs not addressed; major factor to get people to live here. xx
- Who does ED in Warren – the County ED Director? The Chamber will do it.
- Considering using Port Authority for ED. Chance to consolidate or eliminate WRAP, Warren GROWS.
- Biggest employers: City and Trumbull Memorial Hospital.
- Local folks can get funds to leverage City funds on projects.
- Need a local foundation. Shenango Valley Community Foundation is reaching into Trumbull County.
- Warren GROWS is located in the Chamber Office. Chamber provides free space and facilities; Trumbull 100 provides money, but there is no management expertise to manage the money.
- Get a program for ODOT funds, then we can get the funds here. (The Business Resource Network is doing this; so is the Regional ED Alliance.)
- Churches don't participate in Y outreach.
- Science/Math magnet school needed.
- Trumbull 100 has been doing the DT flower baskets for several years now – never a thank you, formal or informal, from anyone at the City.

Supplemental Summary of opportune discussion with Kirk Noden—Wean Foundation Mahoning Valley Organizing Collaborative

Kirk Noden history: Kirk was a neighborhood organizer in Chicago on the NW side for 2 years. He spent that time rebuilding civic engagement. Tried

to move public institutions in the right direction and hold them accountable. He also started a new organization in Chicago, similar to a Chamber of commerce for affordable housing, safety, policing, youth organizing, school reform. He did this for 4 years. Then Kirk went to England for 3 years. He came back and worked for an organization of Youngstown churches called ACTION. A year ago, he started with the Wean Foundation.

The Wean Foundation has \$90 million in assets, which allows it to spend between \$4 million and \$4.5 million each year. In former years, only 10% of the funds went to OH. Today, 100% of its funding is to go to the Mahoning Valley.

The Wean Foundation has four key programs:

- Non-Professional Capacity Building
- Early childhood development
- Neighborhood organizing
- Neighborhood success grants

They can provide \$500 to \$5000 grants to grass roots groups (not necessarily 501c3's) for community gardens, sewing classes. Committees of residents make decisions on grants. Jennifer Roller is program coordinator. Warren got \$75,000 to \$100,000 last year. **Next deadline is September 2.**

Two full-time community organizers just started, through a separate organization called the Mahoning Valley Organizing Collaborative. It has a \$700,000 budget. There will be 6 coordinators, one with ESOP.

Goals are grass roots engagement, knitting together churches, etc.

A Fall 2007 meeting had 250 people. It helped spearhead the landlord inspection legislation in the City. Legislation was passed.

In March 2008, there was a second meeting with about 100 people, concentrating on setting benchmarks for inspections...this hasn't happened yet.

Wean wants to fund a multi-faceted CDC to undertake a variety of projects.