

Chapter 5: Central City Area Strategies

Boundaries

For the purposes of this Plan, the **boundaries** of the Central City area are the Mahoning River on the west, the railroad on the south, Laird Avenue to Elm Road NE on the east, and all land within the corporate limits to the north. This includes all of Ward 2 and part of Ward 4. Refer to **Map 5-5**.

With the exception of two small areas, this area is within the City's **Community Development Target Area**. The two exceptions are: The area north of Comstock between Ogden/Arlington Streets on the east and the River on the west; and the area between Elm Road, Laird Ave., Youngstown Road, and Chestnut Avenue.

A portion of this area is also included in the City's proposed **Weed and Seed Target Area**. The included area is bounded by South Street on the south, Chestnut on the east, Dana and Forest on the north, and the River on the west.

The Central City area includes two **Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) target areas**, and a portion of a third. The "**Downtown Target Area**," which is bounded by Dana and Forest on the north, Elm and Chestnut on the east, Porter and Monroe on the south, and Mahoning on the west; and the "**North End Target Area**," which is bounded by Elm Road and Corp. limits to the east, Dana and Forest to the south, Mahoning to the west, and Mayflower, Corp. limits, Ivanhoe, the railroad, Yale, and Corp. limits to the north. Also, a portion of the "**Harding Target Area**" is in the Central City area and is bounded by East Market on the south, Chestnut on the west, and Elm on the north.

This Central City area includes a **wide variety of land uses** from residential (single-family, multi-family, historic) to commercial (both in the downtown and along corridors), industrial (new--Warren Commerce Park and old—along the railroad corridor), institutional (schools, government, library, etc.), and parks and recreation.

The Area

The Central City area is referred to as the "**Revitalization**" area, as there are many current efforts underway to restore the Downtown, the historic homes along Mahoning Avenue, the neighborhood to the north of the Downtown, and the industrial area along Dana Street, to their former glory. With the revitalization of the central core of the community, it is imperative to rejuvenate the residential areas adjacent to it in order to provide support to the businesses in the Downtown and allow it to be a viable economic engine. It should be a priority focus of the community to revitalize the downtown and the neighborhoods adjacent to it.

Demographics

This Central City area experienced some of the lowest **population** losses in the City of Warren between 1980 and 2000. According to YSU, the census tract encompassing the downtown and the census tract encompassing the neighborhood immediately north of the downtown lost less than 374 people each during that time period.

Census tract 921100, which is primarily north of the railroad tracks, lost between 375 and 600 people during those 20 years, while the area to the far north, primarily the Warren Commerce Park area, experienced an increase of between 0 and 112 people during that same time period.

Information compiled by the City of Warren regarding **water utility services that have been terminated** was provided to and mapped by YSU. This information shows a high concentration of terminations in the area bounded on the south by High Street and the north by Dana Street. There are also a number of terminations in the balance of the Central City area, with the exception of the Warren Commerce Park area and the industrial area around Dana Street.

Organization

There are several **neighborhood organizations** operating within this Central City area, including:

- **Warren Grows**, a 501c3, which was the organization managing the Main Street program in the downtown, changed its name to **Main Street Warren** in early 2009, to reflect its acceptance into the Main Street program. Its boundaries are Chestnut Street on the east, Porter Street on the north, Tod Avenue on the west and Fulton Street on the south. Main Street Warren (MSW) has approximately 100 members and has hired a Manager to address the Main Street four-point approach to downtown revitalization. The downtown is in Ward 4.
- The **Downtown Business Association** uses the City's "CBD" designation as its boundaries. (Chestnut Street on the east, Atlantic on the north, Tod Avenue on the west, and Fulton Street to the south.) They are not involved in the Main Street effort, mostly because they don't understand the Main Street agenda. This area is also within Ward 4. There are between 25 and 30 dues-paying members.
- **Take Back the Neighborhood** (TBTN) was incorporated in July 2005 as a 501c3. The TBTN neighborhood is bounded by Park Avenue on the west, Chestnut Street on the east, Washington Street on the north, and High Street on the south, all of which is in Ward 4.
- **Historic Perkins Homestead Neighborhood Association** (HPHNA) is a 501c3 corporation as of October 2006 (approval was recently granted but was made retroactive to the inception of the association). Its boundaries are the River on the west, High Street on the south, North Park Avenue on the east and Belmont Street on the north. The organization is over 2.5 years old, has officer, by-laws, a budget, regular meetings. There are about 25 members.
- **North End Environmental Development** (NEED), a 501c3 corporation, services an area bounded by Mahoning Avenue NW on the west, North Park on the east, Freeman Street on the south, and Roosevelt Street on the north. Their projects include developing a playground and a community garden at Packard Park. NEED's major issues are doing something about the empty houses, and getting more people involved in the neighborhood. Currently about 9 to 10 people attend meetings. They are all on the Board.

Potential Partners and/or Employers in the Area

- Several funeral homes
- YWCA and YMCA
- City of Warren and Trumbull County
- Banks, accountants, attorneys, etc.
- Jamestown Village Shopping Center
- Delphi

- Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Academy of Arts, TAG, Library
- Ace Hardware, Jewelry Stores, Saratoga Restaurant
- Wean Building and Foundation
- Many churches
- Businesses in Warren Commerce Park: Charles Manufacturing, Lays Potato Chips, Consolidated Containers, Rally Time Trailers, Leed's World, Jaro Trucking.
- Bral Corp (in township)
- Giant Eagle
- Deitrich Steel (township)
- Brainard Strapping (township)
- Sears/Kmart Distribution Center (township)
- Embarq
- Jobs & Family Services (JFS)
- Child Support Enforcement
- Glunt Industries, Liberty Steel, Trumbull Industries, Wheatland Tube, American Welding & Manufacturing, United Refractors

Major Corridors in the Neighborhood

- **Mahoning Avenue NW** (14,606 vehicles per day (vpd) south of North St.; 11,690 vpd north of Comstock; and 16,360 vpd north of the bypass) travels through the historic district known as "Millionaire's Row," which contains numerous historic buildings including the Perkins House (City Hall), the Harriet Taylor Upton House, the Kinsman House (the Connecticut Land Co. office), the Woods House, and the John Stark Edwards House, as well as the Packard Museum and Music Hall, and the Sutliff Museum at the Public Library.
 - Perkins Park, Packard Park, Courthouse Square, the Amphitheater, and Veterans' Memorial Park are all located along Mahoning Avenue.
 - Mahoning Avenue is SR 45 through the City. Thus, this is a key corridor in the community.
 - The northern most portion of Mahoning Avenue, some of which is not within the City limits, is more commercial in nature and could use streetscaping and design assistance. This is a key gateway into the community and needs aesthetically pleasing gateway design treatment.
- **East Market Street** (10,588 vpd in the downtown) from the hospital west to Tod Avenue is within the Central City area.
 - The section from the hospital to the downtown is one section that needs attention. There are numerous vacant lots and buildings, a haphazard assortment of land uses, and no design standards or common design elements, creating a void in an otherwise impressive corridor from the eastern corporate limits through the downtown.
 - The downtown portion of East Market Street is in good shape, with decorative street lighting, hanging baskets, decent sidewalks, and street trees.
 - The consultant for Howland Township's planning process said that the Township is willing to work on a joint gateway on East Market Street, as well as on North Road.
- **West Market Street** (10,982 vpd at the River) extends from Mahoning Avenue to Tod Avenue in the Central City area.

- The main roadway in “the peninsula” has vacant properties on both sides (an opportunity for redevelopment), as well as a few viable businesses.
- Its junction with South Street is a critical intersection.
- **North Park Avenue** (8,976 vpd south of Atlantic and 4,283 vpd north of City) provides a major access north-south through the heart of the City.
 - Although surrounded with commercial uses in the downtown, and industrial uses in the Dana Street area, it is mostly a residential street.
- **Atlantic Street** (9,013 vpd by Park Avenue and 8,508 vpd by Elm Road NE) is an east-west access through the City.
 - It is a residential street, except for its intersection with Mahoning at the railroad where there are some industrial uses.
 - Atlantic Street forms the northern boundary of the Warren Harding High School property and its athletic facilities.
- **Elm Road** (13,267 vpd near Woodland and 28,873 vpd at the bypass) is a major gateway into the City from SR 5 and SR 82.
 - Surrounded by residential land uses to the northeast, it becomes a commercial corridor within the Central City area.
 - Elm Road forms the northwestern boundary of the Warren Harding High School property, including the athletic fields.
- **South Street** (17,430 vpd in the downtown) parallels Market Street to the south until it merges with Market Street just west of the downtown.
 - Major businesses, and the City Municipal Building and Fire Station front on South Street.
- **Woodland Street NE**, (3,814 vpd at Elm) which runs along the southern property line of the High School, is also a major corridor, especially because of high school traffic. Woodland dead ends into Elm Road and Chestnut, just west of the railroad tracks and the High School.
 - The backs of homes face the school property. They are mostly rentals, although some are long-term residents. Homes are values at about \$20,000. The area needs to be cleaned up to capitalize on the public investment in the new High School facility.
- The **railroad tracks** in the Central City area provided great opportunities in the past for industrial development. These rail corridors still remain industrial today, although there are several underutilized and vacant structures. The Norfolk Southern Railroad travels northeast-southwest through the City, while the Ohio Central Rail travels north-south. (The CSX railroad travels from the east, just south of South Street to the Pine Street area, then heads south, paralleling Niles Road to its west.)

Parks and other community facilities in the neighborhood

- Packard Park
- Perkins Park (including the new ADA playground behind the Tourism building)
- North End Park
- Trumbull County Veterans’ Memorial Park
- Birrell Park on Harmon Street at Monroe by the Board of Education, the former site of Central School.

- Courthouse Square & County Courthouse (restored in 1997)
- Amphitheater
- City Hall
- Visitors Bureau (The Kinsman House and former Land Title Office)
- Police Department/Municipal Building/Courts
- Fire Department
- Packard Museum
- Packard Music Hall
- Public Library and Sutliff Museum
- Trumbull Art Gallery
- YWCA and YMCA
- Post Office
- The Trumbull County Historical Society on Monroe behind Upton
- The Upton House
- Robins Theater
- The Woods House

School Facilities

- The former **Turner Junior High School** property along Mahoning Avenue and the River was swapped with the City for the Wallace Lynn Park property near the new Willard School. The building has been demolished and a skatepark is being constructed in 2009. This site adds great river front property to Packard Park.
- **Roosevelt Elementary** (between Roosevelt and Hall) has been demolished and the land is available for development. Plans have been proposed for a basketball court and Senior Center facility on this site by NEED. The property still needs to be purchased from the Board of Education.
- The **School Administration Building** is located at Monroe and Harmon.
- **McKinley Elementary School**, between Martha and Hollywood just off Elm Road NE, has been demolished. The property is going up for auction and is being considered for senior housing.
- The former **Harding High School** has been demolished, except for the oldest part of the façade, which is being retained and preserved. The new high school has been constructed to the south and opened its doors for the 2008-2009 school year.

Housing

- There are approximately **22 condemned** properties in the Central City area, as well as **16 court-ordered demolitions**. In addition, there are about **19 land-banked parcels** in this neighborhood.
- **TMHA** has several housing complexes in the Central City area, including:
 - **Reo Court** off North Park Avenue, which has 24 units, five of which are vacant (9/08).
 - **Kenmore Apartments**, a non-public housing complex, located at 2325 Plaza Avenue NE, which has 24 units, none of which are vacant (9/08).
 - **The Elms**, another non-public housing complex, located at 2300 Plaza Avenue NE, which has about 100 units, one of which is vacant (9/08).

- **Community Commons**, an assisted living and elder care facility, is located on Mahoning Avenue between North and Hall Streets.
- Housing is a major issue within the Central City area, especially:
 - Preservation and restoration of **historic homes along Mahoning Avenue** is critical to the redevelopment of the community. The HPHNA has spearheaded several renovations and preservation projects. Some homes have been demolished, others are not being maintained and preserved as needed.
 - Homes in the **Belmont Street area** should be evaluated for structural and historical integrity and judicious decisions made regarding their future based on those evaluations.
 - The residential area **between the downtown and the railroad tracks** has been neglected; many homes are vacant and/or boarded up, single-family homes are being used for multi-family, and yards are unkempt, in spite of efforts from various neighborhood organizations, which have made substantial progress. All this attracts vagrants and criminal activity, a major problem in revitalization efforts.
 - **Perkins Apartments**, across from the library on Mahoning Avenue, are very attractive, but suffer from a lack of maintenance. The facility needs attention. There is an association, and each owner owns about ten apartments.
 - The need for viable **housing** units to provide retail and service markets for **downtown** businesses. This could include housing on upper floors of downtown buildings, as well as housing in adjacent neighborhoods.
 - There are nice residential areas north and west of Elm Road NE, and north of the railroad tracks on either side of Park Avenue. There are still some vacant homes, land-banked parcels, and some inappropriate land uses mixed within residential areas.

Neighborhoods

- The **Take Back the Neighborhood** area is experiencing high rates of crime and blighting influences such as break-ins, burglaries, destruction of property, unkempt vacant buildings and lots, poor maintenance of rental properties, rampant prostitution, drug dealing, stealing copper from abandoned homes, public urination and defecation, litter and debris. TBTN is actively working to stop these problems and to make the neighborhood safer, cleaner, and more attractive to home owners and good landlords.
- **MSW** and the **Downtown Business Association** are working to make the downtown a more viable and attractive place to live, work, and play. The Main Street program is being pursued, the appropriate committees have been established and are beginning planning and implementation, and a downtown manager has been hired. Progress on a variety of issues is already being felt.
- The **Historic Perkins Homestead Neighborhood Association** is attempting to stop blight from encroaching on their neighborhood. One to two clean-ups are undertaken each year, which has made a noticeable difference. Ownership information has been researched and recorded. Communication has been initiated

with residents, the first block party was held in August 2008, and efforts are made to stop any demolition of historic homes in the neighborhood, as well as to renovate those for which they can acquire control.

- Any land-banked parcels in the neighborhood are purchased quickly.
 - New street signs to match the downtown signs are in the process of being acquired.
- **NEED** is attempting to get more people involved in the revitalization of this small neighborhood. Efforts at Packard Park have attracted a small number of people to get involved, but more people are needed. NEED is working with the Wean Foundation and other neighborhood groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following preliminary general and specific goals for the Central City have been developed and organized based on the Main Street/Elm Street approach to revitalization, as discussed in an earlier chapter, as well as on input provided by the various neighborhood associations and residents of the neighborhood. Preliminary goals, objectives, and strategies have been summarized as follows

1. Sustainable Organization

Goal: Build consensus and cooperation among the neighborhood groups that play roles in the Central City area and work together, with the City of Warren, to achieve common goals and to implement common strategies.

Objectives and Strategies:

- **Solidify the various organizations** carrying out downtown and neighborhood revitalization, assuring that each has a solid legal base, a mission, a vision, and an appropriate board and committee structure to do the job. Several groups are already there.
 - The Downtown Business Association should merge into Main Street Warren. MSW would like the DBA to become the Promotion Committee under the Main Street program.
- **Develop a relationship with the Mahoning Valley Organizing Collaborative**, as this group will be providing support and staff for neighborhood capacity building in Warren.
- **Create a partnership and agree to work together** on the overall goals and strategies presented herein, to capitalize on synergies, dollars, manpower, and City resources. This may require quarterly coordination meetings among the various groups, and could also include joint events, clean-ups, block watch activities, etc. MSW has agreed to spearhead these coordination efforts.
- **Involve all stakeholders** in the process, especially early in all planning for future projects.
- Make a concerted effort to involve and attract **private investment** in the Central City, and to encourage and promote **entrepreneurship**.

- MSW should continue implementing the **Main Street 4-point approach**, with its new manager. Revitalizing the downtown is critical to the revitalization of the Central City area, as well as the City of Warren as a whole.
 - Each of the four points of the Main Street approach should be assigned to a committee and a five-year strategy developed for each.
 - It may be worthwhile to add a “Clean, Green, and Safe” committee to the Main Street effort. (Suggestions are made below.)

- If/when appropriate, the other neighborhood groups should **implement the Elm Street** approach, as discussed in an earlier chapter. Consolidating some of the neighborhood groups, or making them sub-groups under a common umbrella organization, may make the Elm Street approach more doable.

- **Continue to develop a volunteer base** to staff various committees using local stakeholders, matching their skills with the group’s needs. There could be cross-overs among the volunteers for the various groups, which could be beneficial to the area as a whole. Identifying the volunteers, as the NWNNA has done, with bright color tee shirts and signs/lights on vehicles, helps put “eyes on the street” and can help deter crime.

- **Ensure communication** among and between all volunteers and partners through the creation of a regular newsletter and email updates. This could be a joint effort among all groups.
 - Invite City staff and officials to meetings on a regular basis to develop relationships and to better understand each others’ issues.
 - Work **with** the City to enforce parking ordinances, provide additional support to deal with drugs and crime, and develop strategies to stop prostitution.

- **Enhance relations with the City**, especially the Police Department and Administration. Forget the past, work toward a better future. All neighborhood groups, speaking with one voice that is understanding, considerate, and cooperative, will go much further than some past efforts. Understand the constraints of City government and work WITH them to achieve the desired goals.
 - As a longer-term goal, identify and support key neighborhood stakeholders to run for public office.

- **Find regular ongoing funding** support to ensure operational security through such tools as the Special Improvement District (SID) assessment, public assistance programs, and private donors. Once again, sharing of time, effort, and funds could help all organizations to succeed in their goals.
 - **Creating a SID.** Self-sustained efforts are important, and the ability of local property owners to set priorities, budget, and generally “control their own destiny” is a positive. SIDs can collectively advertise the downtown or neighborhood, create maintenance programs, invest in properties, create a meaningful, sustainable budget, and be a partner to the City.
 - Stay current with the **Wean Foundation** programs and request assistance as appropriate.

- Continue to work with **Trumbull 100**, as this organization is willing and able to raise funds for worthwhile community projects.
- Consider retaining a **grantswriter** to identify and acquire funding for projects.

2. Clean, Green and Safe

Goal: Enhance the real and perceived level of safety, cleanliness, and quality of passive and active parks and open space opportunities in the neighborhood.

Objectives and Strategies:

- Develop a partnership with the City Police Department to create a **Neighborhood Crime Task Force** for the Central City Area. Combine forces with the Block Watch Groups and the Drug Task Force to make a concentrated, trained, legal, and targeted effort to rid the area of crime. Some suggestions to discuss with the Police, and to acquire consensus, parameters, and procedures on, could include:
 - Neighborhood groups, residents, and the Police Department need to **assess the real and perceived crime situation** in the Central City area.
 - The neighborhood would like to adopt a **zero tolerance policy**. This should be defined, discussed, and if agreed upon, adopted and promoted by everyone.
 - The **police, courts, and prosecutors** need to do their jobs more diligently. Residents need to understand what these jobs entail, and need to be supportive of their responsibilities. Police, courts, and prosecutors need to understand what the residents would like to see change, within reason and legal parameters, and consensus should be reached on a timeline to see more aggressive results.
 - Since **prostitution** is rampant in the neighborhood, especially along Washington, Belmont and Atlantic Streets, specific procedures to combat prostitution should be researched, discussed, agreed upon, and implemented by the Police Department. Better communication is needed between the Police and the residents so that policies and procedures, as well as successes and failures, can be understood and appreciated.
 - Prostitution sting operations should be considered.
 - If/when possible, City **police bike patrols** should be reinstated. Additional **police** presence should be provided, especially along Belmont Street. The local Block Watch or neighborhood groups might be able to help the Police with this effort, through trained volunteers (such as the NWNA is now doing).
 - **Camera surveillance** should be investigated for the neighborhood. Open discussion should be held to weigh the pros and cons, including costs and legal liabilities, and the residents should be aware of final decisions.
 - If/when the City is successful with its **Weed & Seed Program** application, the Central City area should work with the City to properly implement the program. The federal Weed and Seed Program recently changed its parameters, so that Wards 6 and 7, and parts of Wards 2 and 4 now qualify. The City and YSU submitted the application.

- **Start a “Hall of Shame”** on billboards or in the newspaper identifying drug dealers, prostitutes, johns, and folks who are not maintaining their properties.
- Work with the City, CD, MVOC and others to implement a **faster demolition process**. As the market study shows, many more demolitions must be done each year to keep up with the vacancy rate and prevent more deterioration of neighborhoods, and the City as a whole.
- **Street lighting** is needed in the neighborhood, and should be pursued as funds become available. In the interim, each neighborhood group should promote a program where front and rear porch lights are left on in an effort to deter crime and light the neighborhood. Possibly grant funds could be used to fix light fixtures and purchase light bulbs (new, energy-efficient bulbs) for those who cannot afford to do so themselves.
- Continue to assess and document the **level of maintenance** of important public spaces such as sidewalks, front yards, vacant lots, etc. for the existence of such items as graffiti, trash, etc.
 - Work with MVOC and the CD Department to **document vacant properties, foreclosed properties, sub-prime mortgage problems, delinquent mortgages**, etc. to help access Neighborhood Stabilization Program funds, and to better target CDBG and HOME funds.
 - Extend the HPHNA process of **researching and recording ownership** of all parcels in the neighborhood to other areas.
 - Work together and continue to sponsor one to two neighborhood **clean-ups** each year.
 - Adopt the HPHNA tradition of sending out **letters to residents** regarding the need to cut their grass or otherwise clean-up their property. They also send out letters recognizing when clean-ups and renovations have been completed, or flowers or shrubs have been planted.
 - Work with the City and other neighborhood groups to develop **policies** regarding what neighborhood groups can legally do in terms of cutting grass, cleaning up, etc., on private properties.
 - As a coalition of neighborhood groups, seek funds to purchase a lawn mower, edgers, and other **equipment** to help maintain properties. Also, a shed or building to properly store this equipment should be pursued. Wean Foundation grants are being sought for these purposes. Wean and MVOC staff have offered to assist with applications for these funds.
- Work with the appropriate groups to service and **reduce the homeless population** in the City, providing alternative housing options and incentives to become homeowners or renters.
 - Involve churches more in this effort (as well as other neighborhood revitalization efforts).

- Work with the Warner House, Christie House and Warren Family Mission in this effort.
- Work with the Kevin Kuhlman Agency and Lifelines.
- Inventory and assess **open space and recreational areas** within the neighborhood.
 - Work with the City to **implement the Parks Plan** completed by the City. With the City's current financial condition, this is going to be harder to do than ever before. A special levy may be required to operate the parks system. Interested citizens are likely going to have to push this effort.
 - Work with the City to **keep the parks open 12 months** out of the year instead of just warmer months. This may require a solid group of volunteers to assist, as well as additional revenues potentially generated by a special parks levy.
 - There is no **neighborhood park** or playground for young children in the TBTN area. Possibly a land-banked parcel or parcels with an abandoned homes on Orchard Park could be acquired, demolished, and converted into a small play area for neighborhood kids.

3. Neighborhood and Economic Restructuring

Goal: Strengthen the quality of existing industrial, commercial, and residential housing stock of the neighborhood, while diversifying the type and income mix of housing to ensure a balanced environment.

Objectives and Strategies:

- Work with the City and MVOC to identify neighborhood **demographic and market** information, and housing and commercial **building stock condition**, and keep the data current.
 - Incorporate the market study results (completed by PDG and Boulevard Strategies) into planning and implementation efforts.
- As mentioned earlier, Main Street Warren should continue to **implement the Main Street** program. The Economic Restructuring committee should concentrate on the following, as part of its overall strategy:
- Work more closely with local businesses to gain their support and cooperation..
 - Get more **face time** with merchants.
 - An **entrepreneurial trainer** should be recruited to help mentor new businesses and merchants, and ideally help retain their businesses in the downtown, and to provide **succession planning**.
- Based on the market analysis, identify **target markets** to pursue, and then continue to pursue additional businesses and investment opportunities for and in the downtown, such as:
 - Small, **locally-owned franchises** to maintain a unique atmosphere, not the "mass produced" feeling of a mall.
 - **Hobby businesses**. As the boomers begin to retire, yet still want something to do, market trends indicate that there is substantial potential to open small,

- unique, niche businesses, and the downtown would be an ideal spot. Look for ways to make that easy. For example:
- Scrap booking supplies, classes, and products.
 - Yarn and knitting supplies, classes, and products.
 - Pet supplies, services, and classes.
 - Medical offices, possibly condos in existing buildings.
- **Restaurants** – theme restaurants that don't compete head-to-head with existing restaurants, "food channel" ideas. Consider a restaurant incubator.
- Consider a **Farmers' Market** or Auction in Courthouse Square, or create a Public Market. Embrace ethnic groups. An "Auction" would include wholesale prices for goods. It could be held twice a week and involve local farmers and businesses. MSW is starting this process, working with OSU Extension.
 - **The Robins Theater** (which is now privately owned) requires \$7 million of renovation. It is a key facility in the downtown and developers should be pursued to complete the renovation project. This should be a key goal.
 - The Mocha House bought the **Hippodrome for a banquet facility**, and is nearing completion of this process.
 - **North Park Office Building** is 90% vacant. Main Street Warren should assist in finding additional tenants for the building or relocating tenants to other buildings and demolishing the building.
 - The **downtown incubator** idea for green technology and/or retail is great. This includes renovation of two buildings on Market Street, with a central area connecting Market Street to the parking deck in back. A grant has been requested to start this project. All parties should work with the city and WRAP to assure that this happens. **E-commerce** should be encouraged or required of tenants within the incubator. The IEBW union should be involved in recruiting energy-related companies into the incubator, or creating a second incubator.
 - Plan for an innovative use for the **old power plant site** at Summit and Mahoning, possibly a restaurant with a boardwalk along the River. A developer should be recruited through an RFP process. The site should be ready for development in 2010.
 - **E-commerce.** Website presence is critical, both for individual businesses and the downtown as a district. Promoting the requirement for e-commerce and green technology in the downtown incubator is an excellent idea, according to market trends.
 - Market the hospital area along East Market Street and Laird Avenue as a **medical corridor**. Designate a redevelopment zone in this area, remove blighted, boarded-up houses, encourage medical businesses, and provide incentives as needed. Medical offices are one of the growing industries according to the market study, and with two hospitals in the City, Warren should capitalize on this opportunity. Medical condos should be considered.

- Work with WRAP, which is aggregating **lots on the 200 block of East Market**, north side, for potential re-use, to recruit appropriate tenants that will complement the downtown and the medical corridor.
- **Continue to help the current owner to find tenants for the warehouse** on Main Avenue (next to Health Dept.). At least a portion of the building is intended to be used as a furniture store. Other tenants could include a dinner club, shops/boutiques, and loft apartments or /work units on upper floors. The old train station could be used for parking for this facility. A bridge may be needed to get to the parking. The building is currently being renovated.
- Support the County's JRS application for an **indoor industrial park** in the former Delphi building on Dana Street.
- Consider developing a **Request for Proposals (RFP)** to solicit the investment of a private developer to partner with the City and WRAP for redevelopment of the **peninsula area** of the City. This area has a tremendous amount of potential based on its River location, proximity to downtown and the amphitheater, and its availability. A slick, mixed-use development with a restaurant, entertainment, upscale office and/or unique housing options could be worthwhile.
- Alternative owners and uses should be pursued for the **Chase Building**, which is for sale, the **Huntington Bank Building**, and the **former JFS building**, which is vacant, and the upper floors of the YMCA, which could be apartments. Upscale housing options, restaurants, offices, and entertainment venues should be pursued. Also, the market study indicates that **medical offices** might be a viable cluster of businesses to recruit.
- As part of the City's right-sizing efforts, a **One Stop Center** located in a vacant building in the downtown could save money and make business transactions easier for prospects as well as residents.
- **Tax and other incentive programs** should be reviewed, amended if needed, and/or created to assure that the City of Warren has the best programs to be competitive with its neighbors, as well as other cities and states.
 - **Low-interest loans** for rehabilitating historic homes should be made available if/when possible, to encourage preservation, as well as to increase the supply of available housing near the downtown.
 - **Tax abatements** should be available for businesses that are expanding, renovating, or relocating in the downtown or the Central City area. Real property tax abatements could be provided through the Community Reinvestment Area (CRA). The City's CRA should be reviewed, updated as needed, and promoted to encourage better utilization of the program and more investment in the area.
 - The **façade improvement program** should be promoted better and used more effectively.
 - Store and building owners need to keep facades **cleaner** and more attractive.
 - **Rear facades** should also be emphasized for rehabilitation, especially when accessible to public parking areas behind buildings.

- There is a perception that the City **income tax is a disincentive** for investment in the downtown or anywhere in the City for that matter. Professionals are locating in Howland Twp. instead, because there is no income tax. However, the property taxes are higher, and other services may not be provided. This needs to be better understood, calculated, and marketed.
- The City and all its partners need to **encourage businesses to locate in the downtown**. As the heart of the City, it is imperative that the downtown be strong and vibrant. Consider the cost of licenses, water and sanitary sewer, taxes, permits, etc. and be flexible in offering these to prospects at lower costs. In addition, the City needs to review its rehab standards (see below). Housing alternatives should be pursued for the Central City area.
- The City and its partners should explore incentives to **attract investors back** into the City. (The higher inspection fees and the inspection program may have frightened some investors away, while solving other major problems. Education and awareness programs are needed with investors to recruit them and others back.)
- Pursue housing opportunities in the downtown and within the Central City neighborhoods:
 - **Historic home conversions** were done so that doctors could create live/work space near the hospital. Houses very difficult to sell for this purpose now. Promotion of a medical corridor could make these historic homes more attractive once again.
 - Stabilize existing housing and other buildings around the **new Harding High School**, to capitalize on the investment made in the new high school facilities, especially the area along Woodland St. NE.
 - Encourage residential **rehabilitation near the downtown**.
 - Work with building owners to **convert upper floors of older buildings** in the downtown into upscale and affordable housing options, such as loft apartments, condos, live/work spaces, etc. One potential building is the Chase Building.
 - Investigate use of the **International Existing Building Code** as an alternative to the International Building Code, which could make renovation a bit less cumbersome and costly. Applying “new construction” regulations to old buildings reduces opportunities for revitalization.)
 - Encourage the use of housing **tax credits and HUD’s 202 and 203 programs** to convert older buildings into housing units.
 - Work with the owners of the **Packard Apartment building** for a successful renovation project. They are renovating the building into 16 apartments, using Historic Preservation Tax Credits, for market rate housing. This will provide excellent housing close to the downtown.
 - Preservation and restoration of all **historic homes** in the area should be encouraged and promoted.

- Work with local housing groups **to reduce the number of rentals and vacant homes** on the area, as most drug houses are in rental units, some of which are vacant.
 - The Rental Inspection program started in October 2008. Hopefully this will be beneficial. Neighborhood groups need to lobby City Council to re-enact the program in 2010.
 - Work closely with key landlords to assure that the inspection program is helping the rental and investment climate in the City.
- The Community Development Department should continue to work with housing providers and lenders to adequately address the **foreclosure problems**, especially with the new NSP funds.
- Provide people with **incentives** to move back into the Central City.
 - The City's proposed housing incentive program, Warren Invites New Neighbors or **WINN** was approved in late 2008, and provides incentives to recruit people back to Warren. Incentives include:
 - \$500 credit on water/sewer/trash bills,
 - \$500 additional credit if the home has been vacant for one year,
 - 50% reduction on Warren income taxes for three years,
 - This program excludes landlords, tenants, land contract purchases, purchase money mortgages, lease/options and lease/purchases.
 - **Target young families** with higher paying jobs for home ownership programs.
 - Develop an organization to help people find homes (either volunteer group or a paid group).
 - Teach people how to maintain properties.
 - Offer some **"rent to own" educational programs**.
 - Start a rental rehab program for **reputable rental companies**. Need a reputable company to manage larger housing complexes.
 - **Howard-Hanna** in Pittsburgh renovated apartments and may be able to do the same in Warren.
 - Need a source to showcase available housing.
- **The Warner House and Reeves House apartments** should be converted to market-rate housing or upscale apartments. Relocate low/moderate income residents into HUD-assisted housing units.
- **Demolition** of vacant and boarded up homes, and **re-utilization of land-banked parcels** should be emphasized and expedited, especially in the TBTN area. Vacant lots should be sold to neighbors who agree to maintain and utilize the land properly, used for in-fill housing construction (although new housing is not needed in the City), developed as a playground, used as a community garden, or otherwise utilized in an agreeable manner to promote the Central City.
- **The land bank program** should be utilized more proactively and aggressively to help resolve more of the housing problems within the City. Properties should move through the land bank faster to achieve local goals.

- **Several areas of housing are recommended for demolition** near the downtown because the blight and high vacancies are promoting deterioration. Refer to the South West neighborhood section.

4. Design

Goal: Enhance the physical appearance of the neighborhoods and the downtown by capitalizing on their unique assets and traditional layout.

Objectives and Strategies:

- Work with the City and MVOC to **keep property inventories** current and establish a baseline database, as well as to understand the makeup of the areas.
- Survey the private residential and commercial **building stock needs** of the neighborhood in terms of exterior appearance and interior code compliance, when possible.
- **Survey public improvement needs** of the neighborhood and prioritize their importance. The public improvements can be categorized into the following:
 - **Streets, curbs, gutters and sidewalks** should be given attention in most of the Central City area, but especially in the Historic Perkins, downtown, and TBTN areas.
 - **Meaningful pedestrian connections** should be developed between the surrounding neighborhoods and the downtown.
 - **Streets should be** paved properly, **milled down** so that the curbs are effective.
 - Streets that are **brick** should be properly repaired. The street department staff needs to be educated on the value of brick streets and proper snowplowing techniques.
 - **Landscapes** are needed at key locations throughout the neighborhood.
 - **Trees** should be planted throughout the area to complete the canopy, especially along Belmont, although lighting is also an issue on Belmont. The trees and the lighting need to be properly sited.
 - **Period street lighting** to match or complement those in the downtown should be added along Mahoning, Washington, Monroe and Belmont, at a minimum, and all the way to Packard Hall in the Historic Perkins neighborhood, when possible; and street lighting for safety should be added throughout the Central City. A TEP grant has been requested for **period street lighting** for Mahoning Avenue near City Hall, from High St. NE to Summit St. NW on the west side of the street. This should be completed in 2009.
 - **Market Street** was resurfaced and six intersections addressed, in 2008/2009, with stamped brick identifying pedestrian crossings.
 - A **sitting/gathering area** near the Powerhouse Bar should be considered.

- A **mural program** should be pursued for exposed walls of key buildings in the downtown and elsewhere. Advertisers could pay for the murals in exchange for having their logo/name on the mural. Taylor's building on Grohl Alley is an ideal location for a mural.
- The **signage system** started in the downtown should be continued and extended throughout the City.
 - **Finials** could be added to the street sign poles, which otherwise look great. The signs were purchased by Main Street Warren.
 - The signage system should include **additional directional signage** for parking, government offices, businesses, amphitheater, neighboring districts, other attractions, etc.
- Street furniture should be added where appropriate. Recycled products should be considered.
 - **100 hanging baskets** were paid for by Trumbull 100, Embarq, the City, and the Chamber.
- **Gateways** should be designed and constructed at key entrances into the community and the downtown, as well as into the Perkins Historic district. Gateways at City/Township borders in key areas should be properly addressed jointly by both jurisdictions. Some suggested areas near the downtown include:
 - Elm Road NE (in an area where both sides are within the City limits)
 - Mahoning Avenue NW
 - Both sides of Market Street at the downtown
 - Park Avenue
- Resolve the **2-hour parking** problem in the downtown. Main Street Warren and the City are working on resolution of this problem. The City has transferred the ticketing issue from Enforcement to the Municipal Court, therefore, there will be a new era in collection of parking ticket fines. Parking fines WILL BE collected!
- The **parking lot** behind the Blue Iris and Comfort Inn should be better signed and utilized. Rear entrances to businesses from the parking lot should be created and rear facades should be improved.
- Work with the City to better **light parking lots** to provide safety.
- Make better use of the **parking deck** in the downtown. [The parking deck has 125 spaces for Embarq (which has transferred many employees); 100 spaces for Second National Bank (which has been bought by Huntington, so these spaces are not used); and 100 spaces for JFS, which relocated & no longer uses these spaces). State & federal funds built the deck; the City owns it.]
 - Work with the County to assign and mandate **parking spaces in the parking deck to County employees** in order to get their vehicles off the main streets and key parking lots.
 - The **Market Street Alley** should be upgraded to include streetscaping, pedestrian period lighting, and a pedestrian walking area between the deck and rear entrances of businesses.

- The **Summit/Mahoning interchange** needs to be enhanced. It could serve as a gateway into the historic district.
- **Parking and traffic calming methods** should be reviewed and considered to improve pedestrian safety and quality of life in the neighborhood and the downtown. As an example, stamped crosswalks are visual and tactile elements that can be used to slow or calm traffic.
- **Diagonal parking** has been pursued in the past; some people think it works, others do not. A parking study, if done, should pursue this alternative for consideration.
- Consider making **parking lots** free and installing parking **meters** on the streets.
- The parking garage is an issue, especially with the one-way streets around it. The one-way streets were added to make traffic flow better for the police department; however, it is believed that this can and should be changed. **Better access to the garage** is required. To have better access, the adjacent streets and alleys need to be two-way.
- Enforcement of **traffic control**, especially on East Market, and a speed camera on East Market, should be considered and would help generate revenues and (more importantly) help make the downtown safer, and more pedestrian friendly. Cars are going too fast to be either pedestrian or parking friendly.
- **Rehabilitate alleys and rename** them after famous Warrenites, and add murals in their honor, e.g. David Grohl.
- The City and residents should work on cleaning open **ditches** that serve as storm drains in the area.
- Wiring the downtown for **fiber-optics/WiFi**, and creating/extending a hot spot for the downtown are critical if the downtown is going to compete with newer buildings in the townships. WiFi is now available around Courthouse Square and possibly in some buildings, close to windows. However, it is not in all buildings.
- **Perkins Park** should be **wired with electricity** and adequate outlets to safely service vendors at the various festivals.
- Review and revise relevant **planning and zoning ordinances** to improve development and reinvestment potential.
 - **Historic preservation** of older, architecturally significant buildings should be encouraged and possibly required through an historic preservation ordinance. Rehabilitation should always be considered over demolition.
 - MSW and the City should consider becoming a **Certified Local Government**.
 - The **Design Review Ordinance** is working and should continue to be enforced.

- The City should consider a “**vacant building ordinance**,” which would require building owners to keep vacant buildings up to code.
- Assure that the City’s zoning code allows for **newer uses** such as mixed-use developments, live/work units, zero-lot line housing (condos), etc.
- **Pursue affordable alternative rehab standards.** Meeting current building codes costs money that cannot be recouped by increased rents. Use of the alternative building codes, if/when possible, would make renovation of older buildings more attractive and affordable.
- The City needs to **re-evaluate** its current **Sexually-Oriented Business (SOB) Ordinance**, as it does not appear to have the teeth that it needs to prevent undesirable adult uses in key areas.
- The City should investigate the potential to utilize the **International Existing Building Code** in lieu of the International Building Code for existing building renovations, especially in the downtown.
- The City and its neighboring townships should work together to **straighten out the corporate boundaries**.

5. Promotion

Goal: Market the unique characteristics of the Central City and downtown neighborhoods to potential residents, investors, new businesses, tourists, and others.

Objectives and Strategies:

- **Improve the general image** of the neighborhoods first to existing residents, and then to outsiders, through educational and awareness programs, as well as through the development of printed materials, improved public relations, and image building events.
 - A **general image campaign**, directed equally at residents and visitors, should be undertaken
 - Promote the area for **tourism**.
 - Promote the downtown as a “Legal and Financial Hub” during the work days and an “Artist Haven” at other times. (The Artist theme is currently being pursued.)
 - Market the tourism, cultural, and recreational opportunities of the City.
 - Market the City as a **business-friendly** town.
 - Warren downtown could be marketed as a “**creative center**.”
 - Market the Courthouse Square area to **government-related businesses**.
 - Work on reversing the negative, **self-defeatist atmosphere** that is abundant within the City.
 - Capitalize on the new school facilities as an incentive to draw people back.
 - **Better communication** in the City and a PR person are needed.
 - Better promote City incentives, including the new **WINN** housing incentive program that was approved in 2008.
 - Continue working with merchants and businesses in the downtown to establish and honor **common business hours**.

- Develop a **branding package and logo** for the downtown, incorporating “Warren: Celebrating our History, Creating our Future.”
- Work with other groups on reversing the general negative impressions of the City and the downtown, including the “**brain drain**,” few/no foundations for philanthropic support, the area is deteriorating, there are no jobs in the community, etc.
- **Link existing web sites** and keep them current.
 - Help produce a **web-site or catalog** featuring all local products and services.
 - Promote **e-commerce** among local businesses.
- A central **promotional calendar** should be developed. More creative promotions should be developed.
 - The Tourism Bureau, TAG and Fine Arts groups are all working together well to try to make things happen.
- **Capitalize on** the thousands of people who work in the downtown and who come to the downtown for concerts at **the amphitheater and Packard Music Hall**, through greater promotional efforts, targeting specific groups for specific events.
 - **Packard Music Hall traffic** goes directly to the bypass or otherwise leaves or bypasses the downtown. Visitors to the Music Hall do not see the downtown as a destination, and do not stay. This trend **MUST** be changed.
 - The **amphitheater** brings in 6-8,000 people on Saturday nights for concerts. Except for a few bars, people have no where to go after the concerts, since most businesses aren’t open. This trend **MUST** be changed.
 - Businesses must stay **open in the evenings** to provide shopping and other opportunities to concert goers.
 - An active **nightlife is needed** for daytime businesses to succeed.
 - There are 5,000 workers in the DT M thru F; they are **gone after 5:00**.
 - **Trumbull Town Hall** brings 800-900 women into the City from all over, for sessions at Packard Music Hall and dinner.
- **Organize neighborhood events** such as house tours, holiday/heritage celebrations and welcome visits to encourage social interaction.
- **Undertake various commercial related promotions** using the downtown/Main Street techniques as examples.
 - Encourage local groups to better **coordinate amphitheater** shows, and to acquire more stakeholder contributions to the calendar.
 - Encourage better **coordination** with merchants regarding **festivals**.
 - Restaurants claim they lose money during festivals because there is no place to park.

- Work with the City and others to provide **shuttle services** if necessary and to identify parking areas for visitors.
- **Work with merchants, especially restaurants to “embrace” the festivals** and events and to capitalize upon them.
- The **placement of barriers** during the summer concert series blocks access to merchants. Suggest moving the fences to funnel people past merchants. Closing the streets for 4 days hurts merchants. Mahoning Avenue is an alternate, although there are no electric boxes. Work to resolve this issue so that festivals are more successful for everyone.
- **Utilize “Downtown Dollars”** as a way to generate interest in restaurants after summer concerts. Coding the certificates will help track the success of this promotional effort.
- There has been some misunderstanding about **the entertainment district issue** in Warren. The status as of May 2009 is:
 - City Council’s Downtown Revitalization Committee, in about 2004, worked hard at getting an “entertainment district” designated for Downtown Warren, primarily as an idea to generate excitement and activity, and capitalizing on all the existing entertainment venues in the downtown.
 - This idea was presented to Council. It was approved and currently exists today.
 - This designation, as provided in the Ohio Revised Code, could allow an increase the number of D5-J liquor licenses available in the designated area, as an economic development activity, if \$50 million of investment were made in the area. That investment has not been made at this time, and relates to larger or smaller cities.
 - In 2009, all liquor licenses within the City of Warren are owned, whether the owner is currently operating a business or not. They are not available for purchase. It should also be noted that a liquor license is not required to allow diners to bring their own wine into the restaurant. A corking fee may or may not be charged.
 - Main Street Warren is revisiting this “entertainment district” idea, and is currently working with WRAP to **develop special legislation** to present to the State for approval, for mid-sized cities the size of Warren, to acquire ten additional liquor licenses with no minimum investment, if the community has an active effort to revitalize the downtown. All partners should cooperate with this effort and support it with the proper political entities.