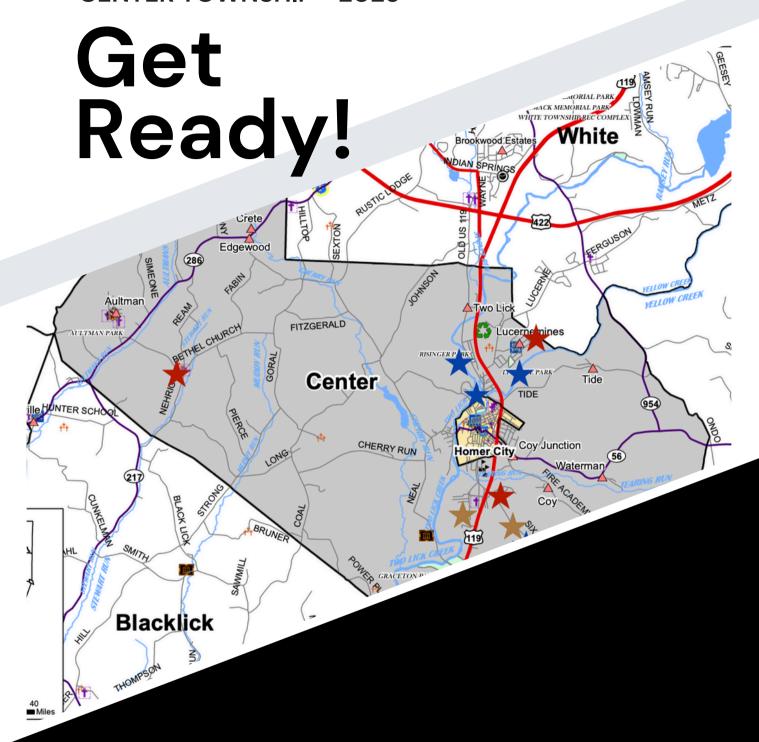
HOMER CITY BOROUGH & CENTER TOWNSHIP - 2025



A Community-led Strategy



Introduction

Homer City Borough and Center Township, nestled in the heart of Indiana County, Pennsylvania, are communities defined by their resilience and rich histories. Once flourishing under the boom of the fossil fuel industry, these areas were pivotal in powering the region—and the nation—with energy derived from coal and natural gas. For decades, the local economy thrived, supported by robust industrial infrastructure, coal mining operations, and energy production facilities, such as the iconic Homer City Generating Station.

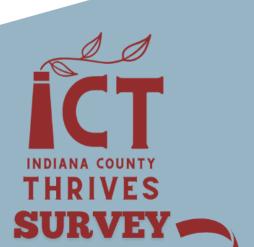
However, like many energy-dependent communities across Appalachia, Homer City Borough and Center Township have faced significant challenges in the wake of the fossil fuel industry's decline. Economic shifts from global market pressures, underinvestment, and aging infrastructure, has led to economic contraction, job losses, and uncertainties for residents. These challenges underscore the critical need for adaptive strategies to rebuild economic stability and foster sustainable growth.

Today, these communities stand at a crossroads, rich with opportunity to redefine their identity and future. This strategic document explores the current economic and social landscape, and outlines pathways to resilience through community-led innovation and sustainable development initiatives.



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To better understand the current state of Homer City Borough and Center Township, it is essential to assess key demographic, economic, and educational indicators. This first section provides a snapshot of the local context, challenges these communities face, and sets the foundation for identifying strategies to support sustainable growth.

Population

Homer City Borough and Center Township have experienced a steady decline in population over the past several decades, reflecting a broader trend across many rural communities in Appalachia. According to the latest U.S. Census data:

- Homer City Borough has experienced a 3.91% decline in population in the past decade, 8.49% since 2000.
- Center Township saw an 8.8% decline since 2000, 6.7% in the past decade

This decline is driven by outmigration, particularly among younger generations seeking employment and educational opportunities elsewhere, coupled with an aging population that has seen reduced natural growth rates.

Median Age

The median age in both communities underscores the demographic challenges:

- Homer City Borough's median age is 43.1 years, higher than the national average of 38.4 years and state average of 40.8 years.
- Center Township's median age is 39.9 years, reflecting more closely the national average, though there is a larger portion, 25%, of the population that is 65 years of age and older.

This aging demographic has direct implications for workforce sustainability, ability to generate tax revenue, and long-term economic growth.

⊕ Employment

The economic backbone of these communities has shifted significantly over the years. Utility companies and coal mines once dominate, now mining only appears in Center Township's top 5. Major economic sectors include:

- Education, Healthcare, & Social Assistance: These public enterprises are the communities' top employers but employ fewer people than traditional industrial jobs did at their peak.
- Retail Trade: This second largest sector provides jobs for the community, however there
 are limited employment opportunities for family sustaining wages, struggling against
 declining customer bases in local markets and regional economic stagnation.
- Manufacturing is a strong sector for both Homer City Borough and Center Township with local employers like Komatsu, Miller Fabricating, Integrated Power Systems (IPS), and Chemstream within the community.
- Transportation & Warehousing, & Utilities: Some displaced workers from the closure of Homer City Generating Station have found local employment at neighboring powerplants, and transportation still supports ample workforce opportunities.
- Professional Scientific, Management, and Administrative and Waste management Services: These opportunities account for the 4th larges sector in Homer City Borough, followed by Arts, Recreation, Accommodation, and Food Services.
- Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, & Mining: Rounds out the bottom of the list for Center Township, as productive farming activity and some mines continue to operate.

Education

Educational outcomes are pivotal for shaping future opportunities, yet these communities face hurdles:

- 30% of residents in Homer City Borough hold a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to the national average of 35%.
- Center Township fares slightly worse with 21% achieving higher education credentials.
- Homer-Center Jr. Sr. High School has excellent graduation 97% graduation rate, state average is 90%, and outranked neighboring schools and districts across the commonwealth in overall student achievement and growth on PSSA and Keystone tests...

Education is strongly valued, however there is a need for enhanced pathways to postsecondary education and vocational training to meet modern workforce demands.

Both Homer City Borough and Center Township qualify for various state and federal programs aimed at addressing economic distress and fostering community development.

Energy Community

Federal programs recognize the economic challenges associated with the decline of coal and natural gas operations. This designation provides opportunities for targeted federal investment and support, particularly for economic and workforce development, as well as energy transition initiatives like renewable energy investment tax credits.

(Environmental Justice Areas

Homer City Borough and Center Township are recognized under various Environmental Justice (EJ) programs for their unique socio-economic challenges and environmental burdens. These designations highlight the critical need for targeted interventions and opportunities for revitalization:

Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) – PennEnvironScreen Tool

- Center Township: Recognized for its disproportionate environmental burdens, including a legacy of mine drainage, pollution, and high rates of disability.
- Homer City Borough: Identified for economic disadvantages and significant health challenges, including high rates of disability, asthma, cancer, and heart disease.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) – Low-Income, Disadvantaged Community (LIDAC)

• Homer City Borough is recognized under the IRA Disadvantaged Communities 1.0 Tool.

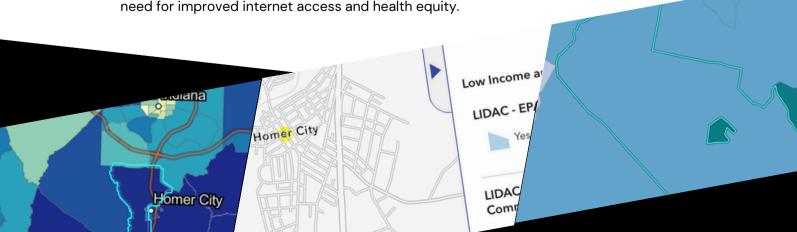
Justice 40 - Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST)

 Homer City Borough is highlighted for its socio-economic vulnerabilities, particularly the stark economic disparities within the borough, ranking in the 76th percentile compared to 2020 national averages.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – Environmental and Climate Justice Screening Tool

 Homer City Borough: Categorized as a "High" risk area due to aging building stock, significant disability prevalence, and vulnerabilities to extreme heat.

 Center Township: Categorized as "Moderately High" risk, with similar vulnerabilities and a need for improved internet access and health equity.



Get Ready!

Funded by the Just Transition Fund to support community-level planning for economic diversification and workforce development, the **Get Ready! Workshops** are designed to leverage the unprecedented prioritization of communities like Center Township and Homer City Borough.

Over four sessions, the Homer-Center community explored its identity, assessed its assets, and fostered innovative approaches to building a strong, thriving future. The workshops harnessed local knowledge through a collaborative framework to address challenges, unlock opportunities, and chart a pathway to resilience and growth.

- Identity
 Who we are.
- Participants explored the community's experience, perceptions, and unique characteristics, identifying shared values and asserting a collective vision for the future. This session reaffirmed local pride, recognition of strengths in resilience and collaboration; and also it's general neglect and downturn.
- Assets

 What we do.

 Where we do it.
- This session focused on identifying tangible and intangible assets, including natural resources, workforce capabilities, and existing infrastructure. Outcomes included a mapping of assets highlighting underutilized resources, community strengths, and opportunities for growth.
- Innovation
- Partitcipants learned the Ten Types of Innovation* and brainstormed innovative approaches that leveraged previously identified strengths. Ideas sought increased collaboration and networking. Outcomes centered on the feasibility and potential impact of these ideas.
- → Strategy
- The final session oriented around community challenges. Innovation work continued as the group sought to leverage challenges and needs into new opportunities through the upcoming development of the powerplant site and Main St.
- Keeley, L., Pikkel, R., Quinn, B., & Walters, H. (2013). Ten types of innovation. John Wiley & Sons.

Homer – Center's Community Vision

The Get Ready! process started with a community survey to build an understanding and gather participants. Then, during the workshop sessions, **22 participants** came together to craft a shared vision for the future of Homer-Center. Drawing on their personal experiences in Homer City Borough and Center Township, they painted a picture of communities that are safe, affordable, and filled with hardworking, caring individuals. Despite facing significant challenges, these communities remain places of collaboration, mutual support, and steadfast resilience—a good place to raise a family, rooted in pride and a deep sense of belonging.

By uniting to address the challenges ahead, the community is demonstrating its toughness and adaptability. The following vision statements capture their aspirations and serve as a guide for the innovations and strategies outlined here-in.

"The community of Homer-Center will be thriving and bustling, with a revitalized downtown, new businesses, and economic opportunities for all."

"Homer-Center is a welcoming, safe place where residents and business owners have worked together to achieve a community of shared success—one that takes pride in its abundant recreation opportunities, vibrant businesses, and inviting atmosphere for visitors and locals alike."

With a clear and inspiring vision for the future, the Homer-Center community is already taking steps to turn these aspirations into reality. Through the Get Ready! Workshops, participants identified key strengths, innovative ideas, and actionable strategies to navigate challenges and build a thriving, inclusive community.

Community Assets, The Heart of Homer – Center

Homer-Center is a community rich in identity and pride, renowned for its power plant, strong school district, and vibrant culture of sports and recreation. These attributes are bolstered by supportive local institutions, businesses, and community activities that hold great potential to attract even more engagement and investment to the area.

Below is a detailed inventory of the community's strengths, which serve as the foundation for the innovations and strategies discussed in later sections of this report.

Community Destinations

Homer-Center offers a variety of destinations and events that foster connection, recreation, and local pride:

- Festivals and Parades: Light-Up Night, Hoodlebug Festival, and Harvest Festival.
- Sports and Recreation: The Hoodlebug Trail, Booster's Ball Fields, and Homer City Pool.
- Community Activities: 5K runs, fishing spots, community garden, and charity events.
- Local Businesses: Trendy Trades, Disobedient Spirits, Sanso's, the Auction Barn, and Indiana County Recycling Center.
- Civic and Social Hubs: American Legion, Red Barn Sportsman Club, Club Savoy.

Respected Local Institutions

The area is home to well-regarded businesses, organizations, and public institutions that are central to the community's economy and identity:

- Key Employers: Komatsu, Miller Fabricating, Arone Autobody, and Integrated Power Services (IPS).
- Community Services: Arone Lumber & Hardware, Ideal Market, First Commonwealth Bank
- **Public Entities:** Center Township, Homer City Borough, and The Homer-Center School District.

Barriers to Progress & Building a Better Future

While Homer-Center is a community with deep pride and a strong vision for its future, it also faces significant challenges that must be addressed to fully realize its potential. Participants in the visioning process expressed a range of perceptions about their community, describing it as "a town that is dying, depressed, run-down, stuck in its ways," but also "small, cute, and full of potential." These contrasting views highlight both the obstacles and opportunities at play, providing a critical context for understanding the barriers to growth and well-being.

These challenges fall into three key categories: economic growth, community well-being, and immediate concerns. Each presents unique obstacles but also opportunities for innovative solutions and collaborative action.

Challenges to Economic Growth

The economic landscape of Homer-Center faces hurdles that limit new opportunities and investments:

- Expensive, Empty Buildings: High costs associated with purchasing, maintaining, or repurposing vacant buildings deter investment.
- Available Spaces for New Development: A lack of readily accessible or prepared spaces constrains growth potential.
- **Diverse Businesses:** Limited business diversity reduces economic resilience and employment options.
- Funding & Outside Investment: Attracting financial resources and external investment remains a persistent struggle.
- Population Characteristics: An aging population, disability, unemployment, and outmigration of younger residents challenge workforce sustainability and market demand.

Challenges to Community Well-Being

Key issues affecting quality of life and community cohesion include:

- Housing / Affordable Housing: A shortage of affordable, high-quality housing impacts residents' ability to live and work locally.
- Code Enforcement: Inconsistent or insufficient enforcement leads to neglected properties and infrastructure.
- Blighted Properties / Property Care: Deteriorating properties detract from the community's appeal and sense of pride.
- **Welcoming Community / Diversity:** Perceptions of the community as insular or unwelcoming hinder its ability to attract and retain new residents.
- Lack of Coordination: Fragmented efforts among stakeholders slow progress and reduce the efficiency of community improvement initiatives.

Immediate Concerns

Some issues require urgent attention to stabilize and revitalize the community:

- Community Pride Resistance to Change: While pride is a strength, resistance to change can hinder necessary progress.
- **Housing:** Addressing housing shortages and quality issues is critical for both residents and economic development.
- Commercial Properties: Underutilized or poorly maintained commercial spaces limit business expansion and tourism opportunities.
- **Health Services:** Gaps in local healthcare access reduce the community's overall well-being and attractiveness to new residents.
- Community Involvement: Limited participation in civic activities and community initiatives hinders progress and the ability to implement solutions effectively. Engaging more residents in shaping their community's future is critical.

Get Ready!Innovative Pathways



Innovation Pathways

The Homer-Center community has not only identified its challenges but also generated bold and forward-thinking solutions to address them. Through the Get Ready! Workshops, participants worked collaboratively to craft strategies that align with their shared vision for the future. These strategies are grounded in the community's strengths, informed by its challenges, and validated through a mapping activity where participants identified priority areas for growth, investment, and revitalization.

The outcomes of this process are organized into four key categories:



Community Building: Enhancing engagement, pride, and collaboration among residents and organizations.



Economic Vitality: Promoting diverse business opportunities, workforce development, and attracting investments.



Revitalizing the Power Plant - Community Partnership: Leveraging the site's potential while fostering a harmonious relationship between the facility and the surrounding community.



Imagining a Main Street: Breathing new life into the downtown area through targeted redevelopment efforts and sustainable businesses.

The following sections detail the strategic innovations and recommendations within each category, starting with a community priority mapping that illustrates the alignment between the community's priorities and these outcomes.

Mapping Community Priorities

As part of the Get Ready Workshops, participants engaged in a collaborative mapping activity to visually identify underutilized community assets, challenges, and opportunities. This process reinforced the strategic outcomes by pinpointing physical areas for focus and investment.

The maps that follow highlight the zones identified by participants, including:



Economic Development

Red Stars

Blue Stars

 Key areas for business growth and investment.



Community – Environment Connection

 Zones empahsizing access to nature and environmental stewardship.

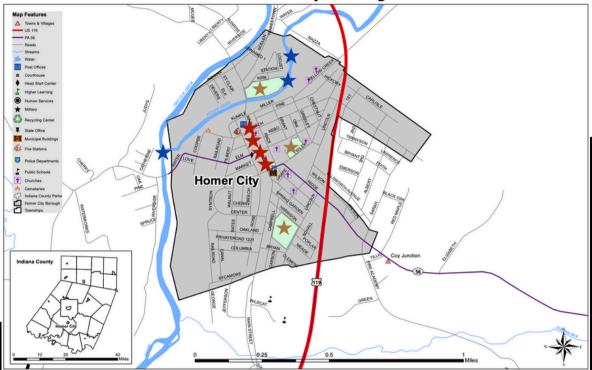


Bronze Stars

Community Spaces

 Spaces that promote social interaction and community building.

Homer City Borough



Red Stars

Economic Development

- Main Street is a clear priority for revitalization. There is a dedicated section at the end of this report with recommendations for this space.
- Workshop participants thoughtfully explored the types of new development that could address community challenges and shop local initiatives that can provide sustainable economic opportunities.
- Funding has already been secured to begin remediating eight blighted properties on the main commercial thoroughfare.

Blue Stars

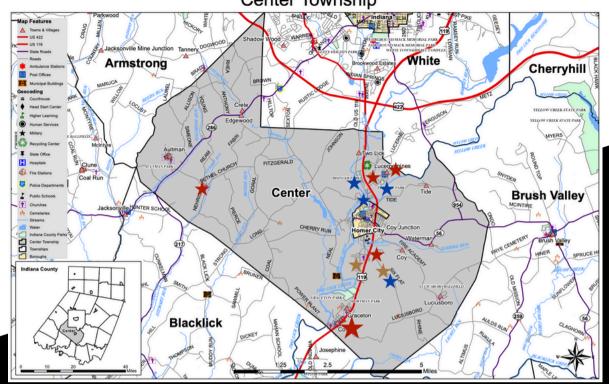
Community – Environment Connection

- Identify known locations of polluted waters in Yellow and Two Lick Creeks.
- These areas are a focus of ongoing restoration efforts and present an opportunity to leverage Homer-Center's existing sports identity by enhancing outdoor recreation. This theme weaves through Community Building and Economic Vitality innovations.

Bronze Stars

Community Spaces

- The Homer City Pool and Memorial Football Field (bottom): Featured in Community
 Building innovations as central to fostering a stronger sense of community.
- The Floodway (top): An open area with potential for environmental and recreational enhancements, including opportunities for electrification fundraising.
- Intown Park (center): Home to the Community Garden and the annual Harvest Festival, this large open space has the potential to host expanded events and activities, as discussed in the Community Building section. It needs thoughtful planning to become a better resource for community wellbeing.



Red Stars

- 119 Business Park (Bottom): Located in an Opportunity Zone, this site offers lots ripe for industrial enterprises and partnerships, particularly given the co-location potential with renewable natural gas production currently in development.
- Underutilized Industrial Properties (2 Stars, Top): These former industrial sites
 near Lucerne Mines, previously hosted lumber yards, machine shops, and a wellservices company, are now owned by the salvage company Kovalchick
 Corporation. Accessible by highway and rail, these properties present excellent
 opportunities for innovative economic initiatives. Collaboration with municipal
 leadership will be key to fostering partnerships to share burdens of
 redevelopment, as highlighted in the Economic Vitality section.
- Center and Center-Left: Identified as potential sites for affordable housing, medical services, and other critical community services, following the inventory activity discussed in the following sections.

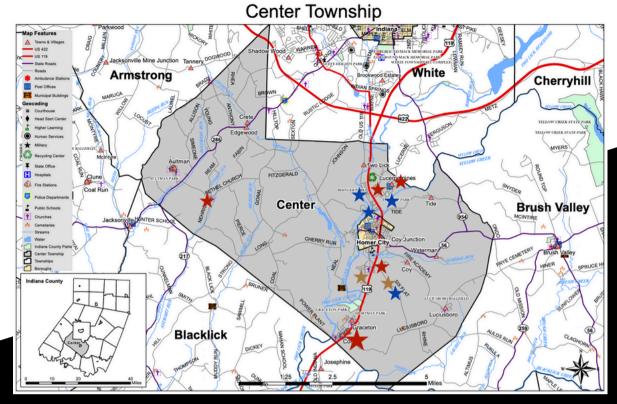
Blue Stars

Community – Environment Connection

Economic

Development

- Water Resources (Three Stars): Mine drainage pollution, water conservation, and environmental management efforts are critical priorities for enhancing outdoor recreation opportunities. Restoring streams and ponds to their full potential serves as a key pillar for both Economic Vitality and Community Building initiatives.
- Each start represents places where fishing and outdoor activities are a vibrant part of the community's experience.



Bronze Stars

Community Spaces

- Red Barn Sportsman Club (Bottom Right): A hub for events and a thriving social scene, Red Barn is a cornerstone of the community, drawing both locals and visitors. Its continued participation is critical to advancing Community Building initiatives.
- Ball Fields (Bottom Left): Over the past 15 years, this resource has grown to include five ball fields, two concessions, and facilities hosting games for boys and girls ages 6–18. Booster participation is pivotal for both Community Building and Economic Vitality as the sports identity expands. This complex is also adjacent to the Hoodlebug Trail, linking directly to Main Street at Floodway Park and serving as a midpoint between Blairsville and Indiana along the trail.

Activating the Path Forward

The insights gained from the mapping activity and workshop discussions highlight the shared priorities and aspirations of Homer-Center's residents. These priorities, represented by the colored stars on the community maps, provide a framework for innovative strategies rooted in the collective vision of the community. Whether focused on economic development, community building, environmental conservation, or revitalizing Main Street, the shared commitment of the community is clear.

To carry this momentum forward, it is essential to build the capacity of both local governments and community networks through additional funding and physical resources. Participants identified a lack of coordination as a key barrier to success, underscoring the need for formal collaboration between Center Township and Homer City Borough to align development efforts, funding strategies, and infrastructure planning. At the community level, informal coordination among residents, businesses, and organizations is equally critical to ensuring broad participation, resource-sharing, and sustained momentum for local initiatives.

Sustained coordination—both at the formal governmental level and within the community—is key to advancing Homer City and Center Township's shared vision. While strong partnerships provide a foundation for progress, building local capacity through targeted funding and technical support is essential for long-term success. The following programs offer financial resources and strategic assistance to help the community develop workforce initiatives, improve infrastructure, and strengthen local governance:

- Just Transition Fund Provides technical assistance and funding opportunities to help coal-impacted communities build economic resilience, develop workforce programs, and secure additional investments for community-led initiatives.
- Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) Municipal Assistance Program (MAP), is specifically designed for municipalities looking to expand collaboration, pursue technical assistance, and build capacity.
- Energy Community VISTA Program Places a full-time service member within the community to assist with project management, resource coordination, and public engagement, ensuring local initiatives gain traction and long-term sustainability.

SMART Success

For successful applications and to maximize the impact of the funding and technical assistance opportunities, Homer City and Center Township should apply a structured approach to planning and implementation. Using the SMART framework detailed below, the community can ensure that programs are well-defined, achievable, and aligned with long-term success.



- · Keep it simple.
- · Center on significant aspects, impacts, & actions
- What will be done? Who will do it? How, or by what action?



- · What is chosen to measure has meaning.
- What is needed to understand progress towards a goal?
- What data measures the goal?



- It can be done.
- · Are the knowledge, skills, and resources attainable?
- · Is there the necessary support, or authority?



- Alignment exists with broader goals.
- The why and outcomes are evidence backed.
- Is it reasonable and the result impactful?

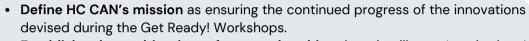


- Understand the time constraint and needs.
- · Think through small and large tasks temporally.
- What is the timeframe for accomplishment?

HC CAN Create Leadership

Exercising the SMART framework for an Energy Community VISTA program application appears below to support the development of a Homer-Center Community Action Network (HC CAN). Establishing a dedicated community initiative to facilitate collaborative endeavours and provide leadership would address a major barrier to successfully implementing the innovations described in this report. However, HC CAN cannot be developed or sustained without dedicated resources, making a VISTA placement a critical first step in building the necessary capacity.

The considerations below serve as the first step in outlining the VISTA project scope.



Establish clear objectives for membership that instills a 'get-it-done' mentality.
 Pursue diversity! Include municipal leaders remote & isolated communities.

 Pursue diversity! Include municipal leaders, remote & isolated communities, business owners, and all the active local organizations. This ensures HC CAN effectively addresses community priorities, recruits volunteers and fosters collaboration across Homer City Borough and Center Township.



• Focus on attainable initiatives & steps within a reasonable timeframe, given current constraints & influence.

• Big ideas can be transformative but take the time to plot the course in preparation and field the idea amongst stakeholders. This increases their likelihood of success and highlights barriers and risks along the way.

• Align HC CAN's activities with the community's established vision, ensuring it reflects the needs and priorities identified during the Get Ready! process and addresses the areas of community building, economic vitality, developing the power plant – community partnership, and reimagining Main Street.

• Establish timelines for implementation, starting with an initial launch within three months, regular bi-monthly meetings, and a progress review at six months to ensure accountability and effectiveness.

 Maintain momentum by posting schedules, timelines, and milestones on a dedicated HC CAN website or social media account.









Relevant



Through the Get Ready! Workshops, participants identified the importance of fostering collaboration, enhancing social cohesion, and addressing community well-being. This section highlights innovative opportunities and aspirations that emphasize the community's collective strength and shared commitment to progress.

Building a strong and connected community is foundational to achieving Homer-Center's vision for a thriving future:

"Homer-Center is a welcoming, safe place where residents and business owners have worked together to achieve a community of shared success—one that takes pride in its abundant recreation opportunities, vibrant businesses, and inviting atmosphere for visitors and locals alike."

Centering Community Well-Being

Participants expressed a desire for initiatives that leverage strengths to enhance connectivity, foster a welcoming attitude, and improve quality of life. These aspirations include:

- Creating a community of care: Encourage more community directed effort, interaction, and participation among community members through local organizations and events.
- Fostering a welcoming attitude: Build inclusive spaces that celebrate Homer Center's diversity, pride, and belonging while embracing change, new opportunities, and innovative ideas.
- **Promoting health and wellness**: Host community events and provide accessible services that encourage holistic well-being.

Collaborating and Innovating Together

Homer-Center's community building efforts needs an organization to maintain active leadership. HC CAN, if pursued, could facilitate ongoing collaboration among residents, organizations, and leaders while serving as a platform to coordinate initiatives that promote community well-being. Additionally, HC CAN's leadership would foster homegrown pride, bring people together, and build capacity for long-term resilience.



Community Building Innovations

Led by community organization partners, and potentially HC CAN, this section's innovation are mindful of the community at present and oriented towards impacts. Consider each an initiative on its own, that can compound with others to form bigger community innovations with larger impacts.

Innovative Opportunities Through Sport

Sports are a vital part of Homer-Center's identity, offering opportunities to bring people together, promote health, and create economic activity. It builds off existing sources of esteem, and can catalyze community buy-in. Key initiatives include:

Homer-Center Health Day

A community-wide event combining sports, fitness, and wellness education. Activities such as family-friendly fitness challenges, health screenings, and nutrition workshops promote a holistic approach to well-being. Centralized on Main St. with each recreation asset, the ballfields, trails, pool, and parks, hosting a different event.

Resources For Planning:

- PA WalkWorks: Homer City Borough participates in this program, which offers technical assistance for active transportation plans. Hosting the Health Day event could position the community for substantial funding in the future. https://www.pa.gov/agencies/health/programs/healthy-living/walkworks.html
- Pennsylvania Office of Rural Health: Partnering with this office could provide additional resources and funding to ensure the event's success. https://www.porh.psu.edu
- National Public Health Week (April 7–13): Aligning with this tradition could bring
 national attention and resources to the initiative. Keep an eye on this website for
 resources about planning events to be released soon! https://nphw.org
- Learn from statewide events & adapt ideas from successful programs like the United Way's Walk-a-thon or Community Hero Action Group's "Fun Fit Health Day." https://communityheropa.org/fun-fit-health-day-2024/



Sportsman Clubs Day of Games and Giving

A partnership between local sportsman clubs to host games, outdoor activities, and charitable giving. Proceeds would support community programs, enhancing connections and generosity. This is one of several innovations that link could be linked together for greater impact. Below are some SMART goals and considerations such an event.

Specific

- Engage Clubs & local organizations to Identify community needs, activity ideas, suggested times, and venues.
- Agree to set deliberation and decision making structures

Measurable

- Set fundraising targets alligned with the desired corrective actions.
- Track participation, budget, expenses, and time invested.

Achievable

- Be aware of costs benefit rations, and prepare for surpises
- Prioritize long-term impacts through incremental investment.

Relevant

- Align the event with Homer-Center's vision and strategic priorities.
- Communicate potential impacts and benefits.

Time-Bound

 Define timelines for planning, implementation, and follow-up communication.

Community Building

Cultivating Pride & Care with Neighborhood Competition

This innovative initiative fosters a spirit of collaboration and pride among residents by hosting a Monthly Neighborhood Competition that celebrates curbside aesthetics. Whether it's seasonal decor, a magnificent perennial garden, or creative use of outdoor space, this competition invites neighbors to enhance their surroundings and share their efforts with the community.

Specific

- Set, in advance the schedule and theme for competitions.
- Choose name and themes that create excitement & ownership.
- Focus on building neighborhood pride, strengthening community bonds, learning and shareing best practices for curb appeal.



- Track participation by number of streets, houses, businesses, etc.
- Measure engagement through social media shares, event attendance, content traffic, and interviews with monthly winners.
- Evaluate success based on number of improved facades, participant feedback, and growth in participation overtime

Achievable

- Leverage existing resources. Judges from local organizations, no-cost online promotion, and community volunteers. Prizes, such as discounts at the May Day Festival, provided by participating businesses and area clubs.
- Build gradual momentum, starting with a pilot, interview residents from a few neighborhoods before expanding.
- Collaborate with local organizations to provide resources for struggling neighborhoods (e.g., gardening workshops).

Relevant

- Align the competition with Homer-Center's vision for community pride and collaboration, tying it to building a safe & caring community.
- Engage local organizations, such as the Homer City Business Association, Community Garden, and the Indiana Garden Club, to ensure alignment with community goals.
- Position it as a catalyst for broader community initiatives, such as Reimagining Main St. and utilize the HC CAN ListServ!

Time-Bound

- Month 1 3: Set short-term goals for competition branding, partnerships, and theme development
- Month 4 6: Launch first competition and be clear about frequency and schedule for judging
- · Ongoing: run competition according to schedule,



Service-Oriented Innovations

Promoting collaboration among community organizations and developing a community that works together is critical to building a connected and resourceful community. Proposed innovations include:

Community & Civil Organizations Fair

A public event showcasing local organizations, employers, volunteer opportunities, and available services. This fair would serve as a one-stop shop for residents to connect with resources and get involved in shaping Homer-Center's future.

- Consider partnering with the Homer-Center School District to host the event before a holiday break or after a half-day to encourage youth participation and resumé building.
- Continued information regarding activities, needs, and best practices can continue throughout the year when paired with the next innovation.

HC Community Listserv

Establish a centralized email listserv hosted by a community organization or HC CAN to disseminate information about volunteer activities and community events. This initiative would serve as an ongoing virtual platform connecting residents with opportunities to contribute to community projects and services.



The listserv will act as a hub for sharing volunteer opportunities from various local organizations, events, and community needs. It will provide subscribers with regular updates and calls to action.



Success can be tracked by monitoring the number of subscribers, engagement rates (e.g., email opens, clicks on links), and the number of volunteers participating in events as a result of the listsery communications.



Utilizing user-friendly and cost-effective email marketing platforms like Mailchimp or Constant Contact makes implementation feasible with minimal resources and technical expertise.



Hosting a listserv aligns with community goals, & HC CAN's mission to enhance community connectivity and engagement, making it easier for residents to stay informed and involved in local initiatives.



Aim to launch the listserv within two months. Establish a consistent schedule for sending out updates, such as a monthly newsletter or biweekly announcements, to maintain engagement and momentum.

Strengthening the Local Economy

Economic Vitality

Homer-Center envisions a future as a thriving and bustling community, rich with opportunities for self-sufficiency and economic growth. Building on the insights gained from the community-led Get Ready! workshops, this section highlights innovative strategies to strengthen the local economy, foster entrepreneurship, and create a vibrant commercial landscape.

"The community of Homer-Center will be thriving and bustling, with a revitalized downtown, new businesses, and economic opportunities for all."

"Homer-Center is a welcoming, safe place where residents and business owners have worked together to achieve a community of shared success—one that takes pride in its abundant recreation opportunities, vibrant businesses, and inviting atmosphere for visitors and locals alike."

Shop Local Innovations

Promoting local spending is essential for boosting small businesses and fostering community connections. These initiatives align with Homer-Center's vision for a resilient, self-sufficient economy:

HC Cash Card Program

A local gift card or coupon program that encourages shopping at participating businesses and services. Customers can pay a set amount and receive bonus cash, & works like credit for in-store purchases.

Learn From Successful Programs:

- Talon Tickets: Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP) and the Indian Chamber of Commerce hosts a program where students purchase receive discounts and special offers at participating businesses in Indiana.
- Z-Card: The Zelienople Area Business Association's Z-Card program has seen remarkable success as part of their revitalization plan. Program design assistance is available through Yiftee, an eGift Card platform for community programs (www.yiftee.com).

Combine Innovations!

- This card, if invested in, could be gifted to community members in need. Consider using the **Day of Games** fund-raising opportunity as an initial investment for an eGift Card or similar card program that can be utilized at the Homer City Pool's point of sale system, as well as local shops. Then subsequent programs can purchase cards for individuals and families in need, enabling greater access to the pool and other local goods and services!
- Link the launch of the card with the holiday season, the Harvest or Hoodlebug Festivals, the Homer City Health Day, or Homer City Shop Happy Hour!



Innovations to Accelerate Commerce

Spend and Save

A rebate program facilitated through a partnership with First Commonwealth Bank (FCB), incentivizing residents to shop locally.

• Think SMART: Go into engagement with FCB with specific, measurable, goals for participation, and link the initiative to Homer-Center's emerging shop local innovations, the communities vision for the future, and the priorities FCB's Community Development Office.

Homer-Center Shop Happy Hours

Participating businesses stay open later and offer games, entertainment, and special discounts, creating a festive and engaging atmosphere for residents and visitors.

- This is a perfect compounding innovation! HC Cash Cards, Spend & Save, and the ListServ are can be leveraged to make these regular events more successful.
- Downtown Indiana is a perfect, local expert for interviewing and learning best practices.

Inventory Commercial Properties & Identified Priorities

To attract investment for development and revive underutilized spaces, Homer-Center must focus on creating a **comprehensive inventory of local businesses**, **vacancies**, **and properties in need of redevelopment**. This sentiment was expressed throughout the Get Ready! Process and proposed during our innovation strategy.

Below are the key identified community priorities.

- Main Street, Homer City Borough: A centerpiece for revitalization efforts.
- 119 Business Park, Center Township: Positioned in an Opportunity Zone, ideal for attracting businesses and industries.
- Lucerne Mines / Former Halliburton Property, Center Township: A potential site
 for redevelopment with significant infrastructure advantages and current industrial
 activity.

To follow is an outline of an approach to take and resources for more comprehensive assessment and planning.

Economic Vitality

SMART Steps for Commercial Inventory Development

It is importnat that the commercial inventory is rich in engagement with municipal leadership, property owners, and the investment community. Discussions with these stakeholders are important for learning about properties and informing a roadmap for redevelopment that achieves the community's vision for thriving economic opportunities for all.

Specific

Define the scope of the inventory, including detailed property information, business profiles, owner and stakeholder registry.



Track progress by the number of properties inventoried and businesses engaged. Break down the findings by categories like condition, area, location, and other stakeholder-informed indicators.



Utilize existing resources and partnerships to ensure the inventory is achievable within the set timeframe.



Align the inventory with the strategic goals of HC CAN and municipal priorities. Communicate the need for the inventory in relation to the priorities of the stakeholder.



Complete the initial inventory within six months, provide period for comment from developers, investors, entrepreneurs and the community. Proceed with regular updates to maintain accuracy.

This approach ensures a mindful, engagement rich process that creates buy-in and enables successful communication to both private and public funding sources.

The following funding opportunities could support the inventorying and eventual transformation of underutilized spaces into vibrant, productive areas. They can serve as key resources for developing Homer-Center's redevelopment roadmap, and illuminate new innovative strategies.

Economic Vitality

Funding Resources: Commercial Redevelopment

Pennsylvania Strategic Investments to Enhance Sites (PA SITES) Comprehensive Real Estate Planning Grant*

Administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development (DCED), this grant offers up to \$250,000 to support comprehensive real estate planning. A joint application between municipalities and private entities for this funding can target all key focus areas such as Main Street, the 119 Business Park, and the former Halliburton location. This grant provides the resources to develop detailed plans that align with Homer-Center's vision for revitalization and prepare the community for future development opportunities.

Key Considerations: Pursuing this opportunity should be seen as a foundational step toward securing larger investments from both public and private capital sources. Organizations like Team Pennsylvania, Green Bank for Rural America, and DCED prioritize projects that are strategically planned, developed sequentially, and demonstrate strong commitments to public and industry engagement. Collaboration with stakeholders such as Homer City Redevelopment LLC and Kovalchick Corporation will further strengthen the potential for impactful partnerships and successful outcomes.

Environmental Justice Thriving Communities Grant Making Program Tier 1 - Assessment Projects**

These one-year planning grants funded by the **EPA**, and administrated by the **Green & Healthy Homer Initiative**, offer \$150,000 for one year assessment projects. It could be utilized to measure contamination levels at critical locations such as the former Halliburton property. waterways impacted by mine drainage, or effluent. By achieving a comprehensive understanding of environmental challenges, this grant can open doors to further designations and public funding opportunities. To strengthen this application, consider partnering with the **Indiana County Conservation District** and ensuring alignment with SMART goals. Other tiers of this program include 1 – 2-year planning and implementation grants that will be available in future rounds, and can build off of this initial project proposal.

Key Considerations: This grant is most effective when purposefully planned and includes resources for long-term engagement with critical stakeholders, such as the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation (BAMR), and the EPA. Building relationships and creating a thorough, data-driven proposal will enhance the community's capacity to secure funding and address pressing environmental issues

https://dced.pa.gov/download/pennsylvania-strategic-investments-to-enhance-sites-program-guidelines/?wpdmdl=121837

^{**}https://www.greenandhealthyhomes.org/wp-content/uploads/EXTERNAL-FAQ-for-GHHI-Thriving-Communities-Grantmaking-Program_12.20.24.pdf



Get Ready For a Big Idea!

Expanding local economic activity requires thinking beyond traditional small business models. A **Recycled Material Recovery & Processing Center** is one promising idea!

Exploration Steps Overview:

- Assess the supply and demand for recyclable materials locally and regionally.
- Conduct a pre-development analysis to evaluate feasibility, including infrastructure needs and cost projections.
- Engage experts and stakeholders to guide the development process and connect the project to broader economic and environmental goals.

Potential For Economies of Scale

Sustainable economic development activity requires innovative approaches that align with community needs, prioritize environmental wellbeing, current contexts & opportunities. One promising initiative is a **Recycled Material Recovery & Processing Center**, which could leverage existing expertise, infrastructure and resources to create economic and environmental benefits for Homer-Center and the surrounding region. E-waste, aluminum, and glass all hold useful potential as feedstock for many industries. the right partnerships could create meaningfull opportunities for the community, contribute to regional sustainability initiatives, as lower costs for local industries.

Funding and other key considerations appear follow within the SMART model. These details are to be used to inform initial communication, grant applications, & requests for proposals.



Define the project's objectives, focusing on creating a processing center for recycled materials like glass, metals, and paper. Collaborate with the **Indiana County Solid Waste Authority (ICSW)** to assess current waste streams and identify the types of materials most viable for processing.

- **Objective:** Reduce waste, create local jobs, and promote sustainable, circular economic practices.
- Collaboration: Work with ICSW, ICOPD, and HC CAN to identify potential sites, materials, and initial operational needs.



Recycled Material Processing Center SMART Steps



Establish clear metrics to understand the current circumstances, evaluate potential and track progress and success, such as:

- The volume of materials gathered quarterly & annually.
- The volume sent out for processing quartly & annually.
- Associated revenues and costs.
- Current use of recycled material locally and regionally.
- The number of jobs currently, labor / weight thresholds.
- Revenue generated from processed materials.
- Reduction in waste sent to landfills.

Objective: To set baseline metrics using data from ICSW's existing waste management programs to establish and communicate potential.



Evaluate feasibility based on local infrastructure, market demand, and funding opportunities.

- Work with ICSW to identify logistical challenges, flush out risks, and develop cost-effective solutions.
- Engage regional stakeholders, such as local businesses and neighboring municipalities, to determine interest and potential partnerships.
 - O-I Glass works with the Punxsutawney area's recycling program.
 - Engage Kovalchick, Miller Fabricating, local breweries, distilleries, and other end users of metal and glass processed goods to inform the potential for circularity of this initiative.
- Utilize available grants and funding opportunities, such as those from the DEP 902 Grant Program, & Just Transition Fund for predevelopment planning, as well as development funds through the USDA Rural Development Program, PA SITES, Team PA, and Reinvestment Fund.
- Study the potential supply for each material against the demand for local users of metal and glass processed gods like Miller Fabricating, Komatsu, local breweries, distilleries, and others that would inform the potential for circularity through this initiative.



Recycled Material Processing Center SMART Steps

Relevant

Align the processing center's goals with Homer-Center's vision for economic vitality and sustainability, as well as the economic interests of existing industries.

- Ensure the project addresses local needs for waste management and economic development.
- Position this recycling center as a regional resource that supports surrounding communities while enhancing Homer-Center's economic and environmental standing.

Leverage local expertise in salvage from Kovalchick Corporation for potential partnership, expansion, and innovation.

Time-Bound Establish a timeline for project development, including:

- 6 Months: Conduct a feasibility study with ICSW, focusing on supply and demand analysis and site evaluation. Engage local resources and funding organizations.
- 12 18 Months: Finalize funding and partnerships, determine a site, and begin pre-development work.
- 18-24 Months: Launch the processing center development plan, community outreach and recycling education programs to ensure public support.
- Ongoing: Monitor operations and track key metrics to refine and expand the center's capabilities over time.

Material recovery and processing present an opportunity for Homer-Center to explore new economic pathways while leveraging existing industries, community strengths, and local expertise. By analyzing resource flows and aligning them with both emerging development priorities and the needs of current industries, the community can ensure that any feasibility study for this initiative is comprehensive and maximizes long-term benefits.

Power Plant Community Partnership

Redevelopment of the Power Plant – Community Partnership

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Social License to Operate (SLO), and Community Benefits Agreements are modern extensions of philanthropic ideals rooted in the values of industrious protestants and American titans of industry like the Rockefellers. These principles are particularly relevant in today's interconnected but fragile social fabric. Redevelopment efforts for the Homer City Power Plant present an opportunity to pursue a collaborative spirit of community investment, shared pride, and mutual responsibility.

During the Get Ready! Workshops, participants highlighted concerns that redevelopment could exacerbate challenges related to traffic, housing, and community disorder. The following recommendations serve as starting points for meaningful discussions between the community and Homer City Redevelopment LLC as they pursue their growth strategy. By working together, the community and redevelopment stakeholders can foster sustainable growth that benefits everyone.

Traffic Risks and Opportunities

Redevelopment phases will likely bring increased traffic, noise, and congestion. Collaboration with Borough and Township officials is critical to ensure a balance between development progress and community well-being.

- Collaborative Planning: Work between local government and Homer City Redevelopment LLC will assess traffic considerations during each phase of demolition and redevelopment.
- Pursue Opportunities: Explore how traffic study and mitigation strategies could simultaneously promote new business opportunities and illuminated needed investments in infrastructure improvements.



Redeveloping the Power Plant - Community Partnership

Traffic Risks and Opportunities

Outcomes:

To ensure long-term accountability and effective management of traffic impacts, the following outcomes are recommended:

- Traffic Management Plan: Develop a comprehensive plan that addresses traffic flow, congestion hotspots, and safety measures during and after redevelopment phases.
- Communication Strategy: Establish a public communication strategy to provide timely updates to residents and businesses about traffic changes, detours, and progress milestones.
- Regular Meetings and Updates: Implement a process for holding regular meetings between Homer City Redevelopment LLC, municipal leaders, and community representatives to review traffic impacts, assess the effectiveness of mitigation measures, and make adjustments as necessary.

Power Plant - Community Housing Planning

Housing demands from construction, development, and production activities will strain existing stock, potentially raising rents and disrupting community stability. Collaboration between Homer City Redevelopment LLC, local leaders, and the community is essential to ensure redevelopment supports, rather than undermines, housing goals.

• Collaborative Planning:

- Establish a housing liaison to serve as a key point of contact between the developer and the community.
- Develop a comprehensive housing study to evaluate current stock, identify workforce housing needs, and assess projected impacts during redevelopment phases.



Redeveloping the Power Plant - Community Partnership

Power Plant - Community Housing Planning

Outcomes:

To ensure housing stability and alignment with community goals, the following outcomes are recommended:

- Housing Needs Assessment: Conduct a joint assessment to identify gaps in current housing stock and quantify anticipated needs during redevelopment.
- Community-Centered Solutions: Create housing strategies that align with community goals and emphasize affordability, durability, and inclusivity. Ensure these solutions address the housing needs of both existing and future residents while maintaining long-term community stability.
- Impact Reports: Regularly conduct local housing market assessments to ensure transparency and accountability.

Local Employment and Community Equity

Redevelopment creates potential for creating good-paying jobs that offer security and benefits. It's the ambition of this strategy to ensure that there is a clear and transparent assurance of local economic benefits that support a thriving local economy.

- Local Content Policy Collaboration:
 - **Labor**: Implement hiring policies that require 15–20% of workers to come from Homer City Borough and Center Township. Target Homer City Borough more aggressively due to its higher rates of unemployment and lower tax revenues.
 - Suppliers: Set goals for sourcing 15–30% of project supplies from local businesses, including small, minority-owned, and veteran-owned enterprises.
 This approach supports embedded economic systems, and new opportunities for sustainable development.
- Support Labor: Endorse unionized labor and the use of Good Job Principles when contracting and hiring to ensure fair wages, legal protections, and benefits while fostering workforce stability.



Redeveloping the Power Plant - Community Partnership

Local Employment and Community Equity

Outcomes:

- **Job Creation**: A known, quantifiable, and secure level of employment for local labor participants.
- Local Procurement Industry Enlargement: A percentage of materials and services sourced from local businesses, stimulate and grow a more diverse local economy.
- Workforce Development: Collaborate with organizations like Indiana County Technology Center & Labor Unitions to train residents for redevelopment related jobs.

Power Plant – Community Partnership Implementation and Monitoring Framework

To bring the previous recommendations to fruition, a structured implementation and monitoring framework is essential. Adopting a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) or similar approach, this community partnership can formalize commitments, collaboratively address challenges and ensure that redevelopment aligns with the community's vision for a more sustainable future. The following steps outline a clear path to ensure accountability, transparency, and meaningful progress throughout the redevelopment process:

1. Establish a Community Oversight Board:

- Composed of community representatives, municipal leadership and Homer City Redevelopment LLC, this board will oversee the execution of commitments outlined in the CBA.
- Responsibilities include monitoring traffic impacts, housing strategies, and local employment initiatives, while providing a transparent forum for communication & community input.



Redeveloping the Power Plant - Community Partnership

Implementation and Monitoring Framework

2. Develop and Monitor Key Priorities:

- **Traffic Management**: Regular assessments of congestion, safety, planning efficacy, and infrastructure quality.
- Housing Stability: Periodic evaluations of local markets, pursued housing initiatives, as well as other indicators for displacement and affordability.
- Local Economic Impact: Metrics tracking job creation, job duration, supplier diversity, and tracking of investments into the community.

3. Regular Reporting and Communication:

- Publish progress reports to keep residents and stakeholders informed about redevelopment milestones and outcomes.
- Maintain open lines of communication through public meetings, online updates, and community outreach efforts.

4. Dispute Resolution Mechanisms:

• Establish clear protocols for addressing concerns and resolving disputes between the developer and the community, ensuring challenges are managed proactively.

The recommendations outlined here are not just solutions to immediate challenges; they are building blocks for long-term prosperity, rooted in the values and aspirations of Homer-Center's residents. From creating affordable housing to fostering local employment opportunities, these strategies reflect a shared commitment to growth that benefits all.

Now is the time for Homer City Redevelopment LLC to seize this moment. By working with the community, they can position the power plant as more than a redevelopment project—it can become a symbol of innovation, shared value, and renewed trust. This collaboration not only strengthens the fabric of the local community but also elevates the plant's challenged social license by demonstrating leadership through socially responsible redevelopment.

A New Vision for Main Street

Reimagining Main St.

Main Street in Homer City Borough represents the heart of the community—a place where residents and visitors alike should feel welcome and inspired by a thriving, vibrant atmosphere.

During the Get Ready! Workshops, participants emphasized the importance of revitalizing Main Street to align with the community's vision for a future rich in opportunities to live, work, and play. This section builds on those aspirations and outlines actionable steps to reimagine Main Street as a hub for sustainable economic development and community life.

"The town of Homer-Center will be a thriving and bustling community, with an updated downtown featuring new businesses and economic opportunities for all."

"Visitors and residents alike will feel welcomed in the friendly, safe community as they enjoy ample recreation opportunities and support our local businesses."

To achieve this vision, Homer City Borough is receiving roughly half a million dollars to demolish blighted properties on Main Street. Prioritizing a mixed use building type with both residential and commercial spaces will create a dynamic, multi-functional community center. Sustainable building practices, and thoughtfully curated businesses will ensure the area serves diverse needs while maintaining affordability and environmental stewardship.

Building On Investment in Recreation and Environmental Remediation

Homer City Borough's proximity to significant recreational assets, including the Hoodlebug Trail, Booster's Ball Fields, Yellow and Two Lick Creek, positions Main Street as a potential catalyst for a sustainable Recreation Economy. Ongoing environmental remediation efforts, such as water quality restoration in Yellow and Two Lick Creeks and the Yellow Creek Trailway extention, further enhance the area's appeal to both residents and visitors. By integrating these assets into Main Street's redevelopment strategy, the community can foster sustainable economic growth while reinforcing its identity as a destination for outdoor enthusiasts and families.



Key Priorities for Reimagining Main Street

Mixed Use Buildings

By pursuing buildings with commercial spaces on the first floor and residential units above Main St. can create the charming, rural town esthetic that entices visitors and businesses alike.

- Prioritizing high efficiency and sustainable building practices.
- Emphasize a range of **affordable housing** options that attract diverse residents, including **young families and professionals**.
- Utilize funding opportunities such as PA SITES Comprehensive Real Estate Planning and Construction Grants, Main Street Matters Designations & Grants, as well as Green Bank for Rural America applications with regional CDFi's to finance these projects.

SMART Approach to Planning for Mixed-Use Buildings



- Clearly define the scope of the project: develop mixed-use buildings with commercial spaces on the ground floor and affordable, high-efficiency residential units above
- Identify target funding programs, their priorities, and application requirements.
- Specify the exact locations, characteristics, and desired esthetic for buildings on Main Street through the development.



- Study the impacts of displacement and potential impact of replacement stock on those community stresses.
- Set clear targets for the application:
 - Include detailed plans for at least **2 types** of mixed-use buildings, varied by cost or residence types.
 - Establish expected outcomes, such as creating 3 new commercial spaces and 15 residential units.



Key Priorities for Reimagining Main Street

SMART Approach to Planning for Mixed-Use Buildings



- Build a phased plan that aligns with available resources and funding program requirements:
 - Phase 1: Conduct pre-development assessments, expert interviews, and feasibility studies.
 - Phase 2: engage preliminary architectural plans, cost estimates, and community impact analysis for each alternative.
 - Phase 3: Finalize application documents, ensuring all required materials are complete.
- Leverage partnerships with local engineers, seek out non-profit developers,
 CDFi's, regional and local planning departments to provide expertise and support.

Relevant

- Find alignment between funder & investor priorities and community goals, emphasizing:
 - o Community input and ongoing engagement.
 - Economic development benefits, such as job creation, workforce development, and business growth.
 - Affordable housing to attract and retain residents.
 - Energy-efficient designs to promote sustainability.
 - "Story book" small town esthetic appeal.
- Reference community vision statements from the Get Ready Workshops, such as fostering a thriving, welcoming Main Street.

Time-Bound

- Establish a timeline for key milestones:
 - Month 1-3: Preform pre-development assessments and schedule community consultations to refine project goals.
 - Month 3-5: Draft proposal & application documents, including financial projections, design renderings, and narrative alignment with funding criteria.
 - Month 5-6: Finalize the proposals & applications with input from stakeholders and submit it to target funding programs.
 - Ongoing: Prepare for follow-ups and revisions based on feedback from funding agencies.



Key Priorities for Reimagining Main Street

Sustainable Business for Residents & Visitors

Fostering a sustainable Main Street ecosystem is one that meets community needs and attracts visitors. Our workshop suggests businesses include:

- Restaurant/Diner/Café: Create a gathering space for residents and visitors to enjoy local cuisine.
- Bakery/Coffee Shop: Offer a welcoming space for socializing and working.
- Health Services: Focus on mental and physical health, with facilities accessible to all residents.
- Work Clothing/Footwear Store: Meet the needs of local laborers and construction workers.
- Sports Store: Cater to recreational and organized sports' needs, including cycling, fishing, and hunting.
- Limited Short-Term Rental Properties: Provide accommodations for visitors while maintaining balance with housing for long-term residents.

Innovation Collaboration w/ Booster Sports Programs

To strengthen the sustainability of a Sport Store on Main St., the community can pursue partnerships with the Homer-Center School District Booster organizations.

• Sports Store Partnership:

 Coordinate with boosters to ensure the sports store orders & stocks items required for school programs, guaranteeing consistent business and maintaining storefront occupancy.

• Broaden Offerings

- Incorporate a full range of sports and recreation products and services, including equipment for ball sports, cycling & repair, fishing, hunting, camping & excursions.
- Include items to satisfy sport & utility such as safety boots and durable clothing to attract construction workers and laborers during redevelopment phases.

Reimagining Main St.

Key Priorities for Reimagining Main Street

Sustainable Business Development Resources

Sustainability in business means the **mindful assessment of inputs and outputs** to ensure the responsible use and distribution of resources, impacts, and benefits. It aims to balance economic, environmental, and social goals, ensuring both current and future generations can properly meet their needs.

Key Resources for Sustainable Business Development

New and existing businesses can take advantage of free resources to help navigate, business development, sustainability and make measurable benefits to their businesses and communities.

1. Technology Entrepreneurial Center (TEC)

- Offers training and support for entrepreneurs, focusing on business planning, innovation, and start-ups.
- Connects local entrepreneurs with the tools and mentorship needed to create successful, responsible businesses.
- TEC Entrepreneurship Academy runs twice yearly and welcomes all big ideas!
- Visit <u>www.TECenter.org</u> for upcoming workshops and events that support growing tech and small business industry in Indiana County.

2. PA Wilds Center for Entrepreneurship

- Host of resources for building rural economies that work and competitive funding opportunities for entrepreneurs.
- Offer wholesale purchasing and distribution of sustainable, rural made goods.
- Check out www.PaWlldsCenter.org and see how they leverage their recreational opportunities and foster entrepreneurs in their area through www.WildCoPA.org cooperative, and www.ShopThePAWilds.com.

Reimagining Main St.

Key Priorities for Reimagining Main Street

Sustainable Business Development Resources

3. Outdoor Recreation Roundtable (ORR)

- Excellent rural economic development toolkit
- Resources for funding, workforce and business development
- Check out the resources: https://recreationroundtable.org/programs/rural-development/

4. EPA Smart Steps to Sustainability

- A practical guide from the Environmental Protection Agency to help small businesses integrate sustainable practices into operations.
- Includes strategies for reducing waste, conserving resources, and improving energy efficiency.
- o Create your own plan:

https://www.epa.gov/resources-small-businesses/smart-steps-sustainability

5. BLab & BCorporation Certification

- Recognizes businesses meeting high standards of social and environmental performance, accountability, and transparency.
- Benefits of certification include:
 - Access to a global network of like-minded businesses.
 - Increased customer loyalty and employee engagement.
 - Enhanced brand reputation and differentiation in the market.
- o Explore the BCorporation process: bcorporation.net

Why It Matters

Incorporating sustainable practices not only aligns with Homer-Center's vision for a vibrant and responsible Main St. connected to its environmental assets, but it also positions local businesses to thrive in a growing economy that values sustainability and community impact.



The Homer-Center community stands at a pivotal crossroads, brimming with opportunities to shape a vibrant and sustainable future. Through the Get Ready! Workshop series and this strategy, the voices of residents have coalesced into a shared vision of innovation, inclusivity, and resilience. By leveraging the community's strengths, addressing its challenges, and fostering collaboration between stakeholders, Homer-Center is poised to build a thriving local economy and a better quality of life for all.

This document serves as a foundation for action, offering concrete strategies for community building, economic vitality, partnerships, and the reimagining of Main Street. However, its true success depends on the continued engagement and dedication of the community.

Together, we can turn vision into reality and build a Homer-Center that future generations will be proud to call home.

Whether you're exploring innovative business ideas, sustainability frameworks, or opportunities for growth, we're here to support Homer-Center's journey toward a thriving future.









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