



# **FORD CITY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2019**

# Ford City Comprehensive Plan

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## INTRODUCTION

Since early 2018, Ford City has been in the process of writing a Comprehensive Plan that sets the stage for Ford City's development over the next 10 years, including a strategic plan as well as a new zoning plan. This process included a survey, several focus groups and community workshops supported by Fourth Economy Consulting, Codametrics and Incremental Development Alliance. The following recommendations for action have been drawn from and vetted by community members during meetings or calls.

## VISION

*Ford City is a place where anyone can feel at home. In 2030, Ford City will maintain the small town feel and neighborliness that residents value, but with increased job and housing availability.*

## HISTORY

Ford City has been at the mercy of change. One change that left reverberations throughout the community was the closure of the largest Pittsburgh Plate Glass factory in the world in the 1970s. Much like the United States, Ford City is now in the position where manufacturing is still a strong force and still provides good jobs, but there is a need for diversification of the economy. This plan plays to Ford City's strengths as an ideal location for regional tourism, and it's close proximity to the growing economy in Pittsburgh.

Similarly, Ford City's existing housing stock was built to serve the former population of factory workers and their families. Changes need to be made to ensure that the housing stock fits the needs of today's population, including young people without children and retired people who are interested in downsizing from larger homes.

Throughout this planning process, the facts of the economic situation in Ford City have not been dismissed. From a development point of view, the Borough is currently in an invitational state – inviting potential projects in and considering ways to encourage new investment. This suggests the need for collaboration and investment from many different partners to improve the value proposition of Ford City.

The opposite of being in an invitational state is being in a defensive state – places that are seeing so much development that citizens are protesting and land prices are rising exponentially. In ten years, it is unlikely that Ford City will witness this shift.

However, through implementing these recommendations and working together as a community, Ford City can aspire to reach a state of equal partnership between potential investors and the municipality. In this state, investors are comfortable making investments in the town due to the groundswell of activity, business support, and citizen engagement. Consequently, the municipality benefits from more jobs, more opportunities, and increased revenue.

The following plan builds on existing strengths, encourages innovative thinking about underused resources, proposes new partnerships, and casts a wide net for engagement. The outcome of engaging with this plan is a community that recognizes and values its heritage and legacy, while also providing opportunities for new growth to take hold.

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The planning process begins with understanding a place from the citizen's perspective. Several types of outreach were engaged in, including a survey, interviews, and Build Sessions, which are facilitated discussions that allow community members to devise solutions to the problems facing their communities. Partner firms Codametrics and the Incremental Development Alliance were engaged for a two-day workshop, and an Opportunity Tour was held to showcase the development potential of Ford City to real estate and community development professionals. A summary of public participation is included in the Appendix.

### STEERING COMMITTEE

A project Steering Committee was formed to guide the development of the Comprehensive Plan and revised zoning plan. The Steering Committee was comprised of elected officials and volunteers and supplemented by municipal staff, business-owners, and other community leaders. This group met twice monthly throughout the planning process to discuss the direction and major elements of the Plan. Committee members provided essential guidance throughout the planning process to allow the Plan to overcome political obstacles and move toward implementation.

### SURVEY AND OTHER OUTREACH

The planning process was informed by engaging various stakeholders including:

- Initial outreach included intercept surveys, quick interviews with community members, at the June 2018 First Friday event, of which 25 were collected.
- Next, Fourth Economy staff conducted eight interviews with key stakeholders as recommended by the Steering Committee.
- Vision Boards provided citizens with a way to brainstorm through answering questions by writing on large pieces of paper. The questions read "What is your vision for the waterfront?" and "What is your vision for the high school site?" The responses are included in the Appendix.
- Another important aspect of community engagement is the survey, which was taken by 462 people. Of the respondents, 61 percent were from Ford City, while 22 percent were from nearby municipalities. Most were between 55 and 64 years of age – and 61 percent were 45 or older. This is similar to Ford City's demographic makeup. When respondents of the survey indicated what they were interested in seeing developed in the Borough, the responses were split between focusing on residential, jobs and small businesses, and amenities and recreation.

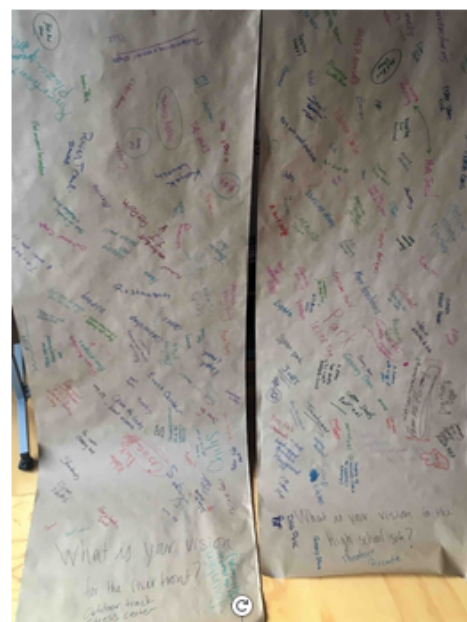


Figure 1: Vision Boards



## FOCUS GROUPS AND WORKSHOPS

Over July and August, 2018, the Ford City Comprehensive Planning Process transitioned from asking for opinions to asking for possible solutions. Through the process of four events, we engaged the Steering Committee, Borough leadership and citizens to focus on the most pressing issues facing Ford City.

Build Sessions on Riverfront Development Infill/Housing, Economic Vitality, Talent, and Safety and were held in August. These Build Sessions provided an opportunity for community members to offer solutions to key issues facing Ford City. A summary of the Build Sessions and Workshops is included in the Appendix.

On Monday, August 20, an Opportunity Tour was held for regional real estate developers to visit Ford City. Also on August 20, Jim Kuman, of the Incremental Development Alliance, gave a lecture about the importance of starting small and building incrementally. The Incremental Development Alliance is a non-profit dedicated to teaching people how to revive their neighborhoods. The following day, Jim Kumon and Leslie Oberholtzer of Codametrics provided a planning workshop.

## PLAN ORGANIZATION

The plan is organized into five core focus areas with an introductory section covering the organizational framework for carrying out the recommendations, as well as a Catalyst Area map. The core focus areas are:

- Downtown
- Riverfront
- Housing
- High School Site
- Safety

Specific action items in each one of these five core areas are further explained by categorizing them as Project, Programs, and/or Policies, as defined below. These action items are sorted into short-term, mid-term, and long-term durations to guide expectations.

After focusing on the core focus areas, a section is included that provides background information about Ford City including regional characteristics, population characteristics and trends, demographic studies, housing stock analysis, economic analysis, land use analysis, and an overview of existing plans.

## TYPES OF ACTION ITEMS

**Projects:** Projects are improvements that can be funded in one investment. There may be some upkeep involved, but these are generally “one-and-done.” Financial support may come from the city, from grant sources, or from private actors such as individuals or companies. Projects could also be a one-time study.

- An example of a project is installing bicycle racks.

**Programs:** Programs involve collaboration and generally require an investment of time, although some funding may be needed. Programs could be undertaken by the city, members of the Task Force, or organizations.

- An example of a program is coordinating businesses for Riverfront marketing.

**Policies:** Policies require action from Ford City Borough. They include changing ordinances or adopting zoning codes.

- An example of a policy is removing cycling ordinances.

## ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

**Vision:** Citizens, municipal staff, and elected officials working strategically towards the same goals.

**Goals:**

- Establish Comprehensive Plan Task Force
- Borough convenes Riverfront Committee and Flood Mitigation Committee
- Incorporate a publicly and privately funded Economic Development Entity that oversees a Community Development Finance Institution
- Support the development of a Main Street organization

**Organizations:**

**Task Force Members:**

- Ford City Business Association
- Business Owners
- Engaged Citizens

**Task Force Stakeholders/Partners:**

- Allegheny River Development Corporation
- Armstrong County Tourist Bureau
- Allegheny Valley Land Trust

## Overview

An organizational structure that provides oversight and names responsible parties is essential for carrying out the vision of an improved Ford City by 2030. Currently, there are groups of citizens involved in specialized efforts to improve aspects of the Borough, from groups of businesspeople to hard-working event planners. Integrating these groups into a larger plan will ensure that their efforts build towards something more significant. Coordinating these efforts with strategic spending from the Borough government will lead to tangible change.

Within this plan, all recommendations for action belong to a certain group, and all groups report out through various channels so that progress can be tracked. The following organizational framework is suggested for planning purposes.

Years 1 - 3	Years 4 - 6	Years 7 - 9
Comprehensive Plan Task Force - Downtown - Riverfront - Housing - High School Site - Safety Borough - Riverfront Committee - Flood Mitigation Committee	Economic Development Entity - Housing (in partnership with the City) - Tourism Task Force - Business/Developer Relations	Economic Development Entity - Community Development Finance Institution Main Street Organization - Events - Marketing

## YEARS 1 - 3: COMMITTEE LEADERSHIP

In years one through three, Ford City will enact many of the recommendations that will deliver small wins for the Borough and show the momentum generated by the plan. In order to keep the Borough and dedicated community members accountable to one another, it is suggested that a Comprehensive Plan Task Force meet once per month to review progress.

The Task Force could include the Steering Committee as well as people who have been involved in the planning process. The Task Force would concentrate on enacting the programs laid out under the Action Items of Housing, Riverfront, Downtown, Safety, and the High School site, while the Borough government would be responsible for the programs, policies, and long-term vision.

During this time the Borough leadership would also convene two committees to deal with identified challenges. The Flood Mitigation Committee would consider tactics that could be implemented to lessen the impact of the revised FEMA flood map that impacts much of Ford City. The Committee would consider ways to lessen the cost of flood insurance through the National Flood Insurance Program and improvements to infrastructure including pump stations and outfalls.

The Riverfront Committee would explore the feasibility of conducting an environmental assessment the riverfront. The outcome of this assessment would greatly impact the cost and design of any future development of these parcels. This group will work with county staff, representatives of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, and the Borough staff.

## YEARS 4 - 6: FORMATION OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ENTITY

In years four through six, it is recommended that Ford City Borough work with local businesses to help create an Economic Development Entity (EDE) that is funded both publicly and privately. This entity could carry out large projects with a long timeline, as well as lead programs related to housing. To start, this Economic Development Entity would be staffed by an Executive Director who may have offices in the Borough building. This entity would work on business retention and attraction, relationships with developers, and would have under its umbrella either an arm, or a separate entity devoted to housing within the city (both building more and refurbishing existing housing). The EDE's mission would be informed by the findings of the Flood Mitigation Committee and the Riverfront Committee. Additionally, the EDE would be the liaison between regional and state entities that could provide funding and assistance, including the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission, and the Department of Community and Economic Development.

The Task Force would continue to exist and would focus on growing Ford City's appeal as a destination. The Task Force would include business owners, leaders, and citizens of Ford City who are currently working toward its revitalization. This Task Force would focus on events, marketing, and maintaining downtown improvements such as murals. The Task Force meetings would be attended by EDE staff to maintain collaboration. Separate committees under the umbrella of the Task Force may emerge.

## YEARS 7 – 9: ADDITION OF A MAIN STREET ORGANIZATION

In years seven through nine, it is likely that the Economic Development Entity would add additional staff to accommodate programming related to both business- and developer-related areas as well as housing.

The Task Force would transition into a Main Street organization, with an Executive Director focused on events, promotion, and downtown improvements.

### **CATALYTIC SITES:**

**Riverfront** – These properties will enter into a new relationship with Ford City's largest asset, the Allegheny River, creating an amenity to be enjoyed by residents and visitors alike.

**Downtown** – The heart of the community, downtown is reinvigorated by improving the built environment and recruiting and retaining businesses to create a regional destination.

**High School Site** - This site is most appropriate for units designed for small households, with light retail or commercial. Until that type of development happens it could be re-purposed as a community gathering space.

**2nd Ave** - This thoroughfare will change with new development, and must be sure to incorporate the needs of manufacturers and pedestrians/bicyclists.

**5th Ave** - As the main route through town, 5th Avenue would benefit from traffic calming and aesthetic improvements.



# Ford City | Catalytic Sites

## Riverfront

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## Downtown

The heart of the community, downtown is reinvigorated by improving the built environment and recruiting and retaining businesses to create a regional destination.

## 2nd Avenue

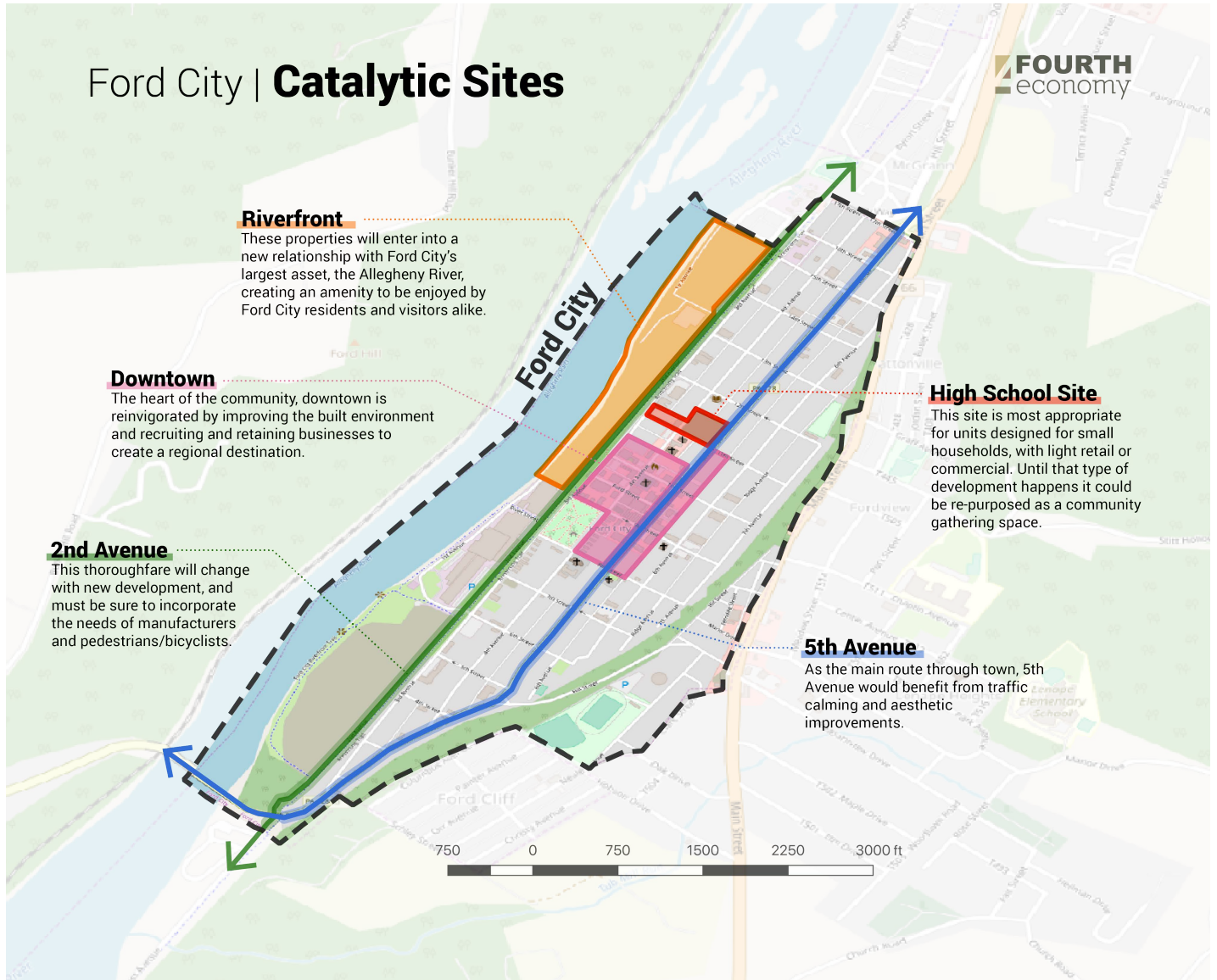
This thoroughfare will change with new development, and must be sure to incorporate the needs of manufacturers and pedestrians/bicyclists.

## High School Site

This site is most appropriate for units designed for small households, with light retail or commercial. Until that type of development happens it could be re-purposed as a community gathering space.

## 5th Avenue

As the main route through town, 5th Avenue would benefit from traffic calming and aesthetic improvements.



## FOCUS AREAS

### FOCUS AREA 1: DOWNTOWN

**Vision:** A downtown that has something for everyone and is active from morning to evening.

**Goals:**

- Activate downtown
- Make downtown more walkable and bikeable
- Support downtown businesses

**Organizations:** Business Association, School District (to display art).

**Overview**

The downtown business district is the heart of a small town. It is where people see their neighbors and attend community events. The health of a downtown is a signal to community members and visitors of the vibrancy of the community.

In Ford City today, there are some flourishing businesses in the downtown, but there are also empty storefronts, unoccupied upstairs apartments, and a general lack of activity and vibrancy. The following chart shows where Ford City has gained jobs and where jobs have been lost since 2010:

Jobs by NAICS Industry Sector	2010	2015	Change
Manufacturing	184	224	40
Retail Trade	212	165	-47
Health Care and Social Assistance	142	160	18
Educational Services	102	94	-8
Other Services	64	84	20
Finance and Insurance	30	62	32
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	14	52	38
Accommodation and Food Services	55	41	-14
Public Administration	8	22	14
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	12	14	2
Wholesale Trade	40	10	-30
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	16	9	-7
Construction	14	7	-7
Utilities	8	5	-3
Information	4	4	0
Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	8	1	-7

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics: Industries at a Glance 2010-2015

From 2010 – 2015, retail trade jobs decreased from 212 to 165 in the Borough, which was the largest decrease of all industries. Accommodation and food services, which covers hotels and restaurants, decrease by 14 jobs. These job numbers indicate the need for a concentrated effort to address downtown businesses.

Community engagement shows support for improving the infrastructure and vibrancy of the downtown. When asked, on the survey, to supply an answer to the question “What makes Ford City special?” the most common answer was people, friends and family, (29%) or the sense of community and the small-town feel (27%). Other answers related to downtown included events, the ability to walk or bike around town. When asked “What change to Ford City would make the biggest impact?” citizens responded with adding jobs (39%) and having more events (7%) and encouraging small business (7%). Improving the downtown will add jobs by assisting Ford City in becoming a destination. A report on the survey is included in the Appendix.

Regarding changes to 5<sup>th</sup> Ave, which is included in the downtown recommendations, there were many responses specifically addressing safety and aesthetics of this street. Respondents indicated that improvements needed to be made regarding the planting of trees, slowing traffic, and improving pedestrian infrastructure.

## DEFINING DOWNTOWN

Downtown is characterized by a higher concentration of business and commercial uses, and by a street pattern that encourages foot and bicycle traffic.

Improvements listed in this section, such as the addition of street trees, trash cans, and murals, will take place within this downtown area. This concentrates activity into a few blocks and creates vibrancy.

Years 1 - 3	Years 4 - 6	Years 7 - 9
Activate Downtown <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Street Trees</li> <li>- Decorative Trashcans</li> <li>- Sidewalk Cafes</li> <li>- Art Programming</li> </ul> Parking Study in Downtown Remove anti-cycling ordinance Mural in Downtown	Address Core Area Streetscape	Main Street Program in Downtown

## YEARS 1 – 3: ACTIVATE DOWNTOWN

### Project: Street Trees

Downtown could be enhanced with some minor improvements that will set the stage for larger improvements in the future.

Street trees are foundational in urban street design. They provide a physical and emotional barrier between the street and the pedestrian on the sidewalk, as well as shade and visual interest. Some of the most famous streets in the world are defined by the trees that line them; the Champs Élysées in Paris is banked by tall horse chestnut trees that offset the wide street.

Trees can also cause issues such as sidewalks developing bumps from growing roots or branches tangling in overhead lines. Trees can also be difficult to place in downtown areas due to underground utilities. Smaller breeds of trees that do not reach great heights or create large roots would be a better choice for downtown areas. When possible, trees should be planted in the ground.

An alternative to planting trees in the ground along sidewalks is to use large planters with smaller trees planted inside. This approach may bring more maintenance long-term. Trees in pots are not well insulated in the Pennsylvania climate, and may perish sooner than trees planted in the ground. However, seeing as street trees have been removed recently, a replacement that will contribute to the public realm is needed. Advice on the best approach can be sought from the Western PA Conservancy.



Figure 2: Street trees along Champs "Elysees" (Source: <http://www.thesanguineroor.com/?tag=mimosa>)

### Stakeholders:

- Shade Tree Commission
- Garden Club

### Cost: \$10,000

- Cost for 15 planters and trees

### Project: Garbage Receptacles

The addition of public garbage receptacles in the downtown will cut down on trash in the area and will make a for a more inviting atmosphere. Generic garbage receptacles are inexpensive but given that they are street furniture and thus contribute to the public realm, there is the possibility to make them serve a larger function. For example, garbage receptacles could be sponsored by local businesses and serve as advertisements. In some larger cities, specialty garbage receptacles also function as WIFI internet providers. Garbage receptacles perform best if placed on corners.

Maintenance of garbage receptacles is a necessity. Discussing receptacle placement with the workers



who will be in charge of maintenance and emptying will help to make this process efficient. According to the non-profit planning organization Project for Public Spaces, other considerations are:

- Users should not have to touch the waste receptacle or push open a door to use it.
- The opening should be large enough to accommodate the type of litter that is expected – for instance, a receptacle on the street should have at least a 10-inch-wide opening to accommodate a newspaper or takeout container.
- The size of the receptacle should be related to how much it is expected to be used and how frequently it will be emptied.<sup>1</sup>
- A receptacle should be sturdy, as it may be used by pedestrians for sitting or leaning and will be out in all elements.

#### Stakeholders:

- Borough of Ford City
- Sponsoring businesses

Cost: \$3,200

- Cost of 8 trash cans<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Waste Receptacles*, Project for Public Spaces, <https://www.pps.org/article/wastereceptacles>, December 31, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.theparkcatalog.com/trash-receptacles?gclid=EAlaIqobChMIkYa\\_vdOV4AIVEozICh3KRg64EAAAYASAAEKz7fD\\_BwE](https://www.theparkcatalog.com/trash-receptacles?gclid=EAlaIqobChMIkYa_vdOV4AIVEozICh3KRg64EAAAYASAAEKz7fD_BwE)

## Policy: Sidewalk Cafes

Sidewalk cafes immediately increase the vibrancy of a downtown; for those patronizing the café, dining on the sidewalk allows for engagement with the environment, while for those walking it creates interest and liveliness.

The dimensions of sidewalk cafes should be carefully measured to ensure that dining space does not encroach upon the public realm. There is also a need to protect diners from traffic, and to create a space that feels removed and safe. One of the best ways to create a separation between diners and traffic is to have parking along the side of a street that allows sidewalk cafes. Planters and street trees can also enhance this effect.

The diagram below details the design requirements for the City of Austin, Texas.<sup>3</sup> The measurements included are appropriate for their sidewalks but may not be an exact fit for Ford City. Specific design requirements and measurements would need to be calibrated for Ford City's downtown urban fabric.

Permitting of sidewalk cafes would need to be incorporated into a zoning code or downtown overlay district and regulated by the Borough.

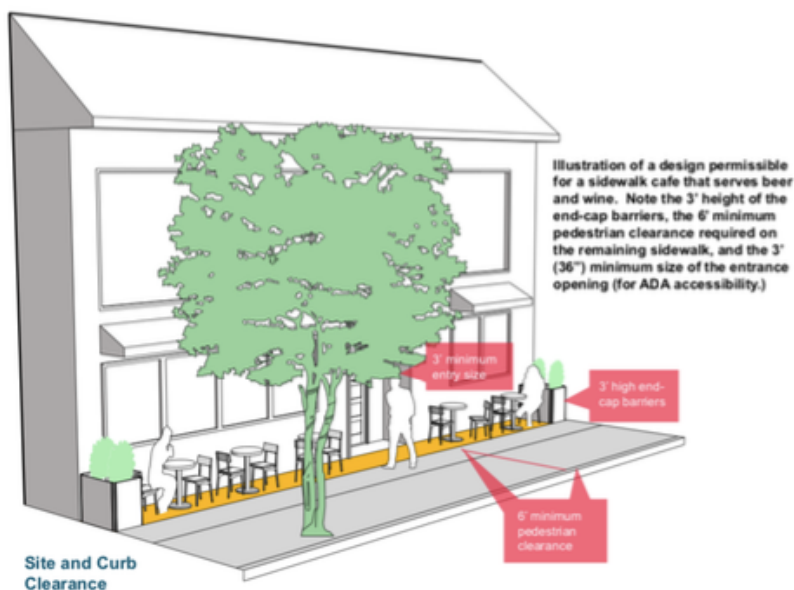


Figure 3: Austin Sidewalk Cafe Diagram

### Stakeholders:

- Downtown business owners
- Borough of Ford City

**Cost:** To be determined

### Program: Art Programming for Downtown

Another way of activating the downtown is to work with local schools to facilitate artwork being installed in downtown window displays. This would encourage families to come downtown to view their students' art and patronize local businesses. It would also add interest and liveliness to the downtown.

Coordination would need to be established between local schools and downtown business or property

<sup>3</sup> Sidewalk Café Handbook.

[https://austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Transportation/SidewalkCafe\\_Handbook\\_05\\_12\\_17.pdf](https://austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Transportation/SidewalkCafe_Handbook_05_12_17.pdf). City of Austin, Texas, 2012.

owners; a member of the Task Force would take this on as a project. Stipulations about how long the art would stay in windows, and how to launch the program in a celebratory way, would be the responsibility of the Task Force.

This initiative could coincide or expand along with other arts programming in the downtown. For example, students could be asked to create work on the theme of the mural (described later), and their works could be installed and celebrated at the same time the mural is unveiled.

#### Stakeholders:

- Downtown business owners
- Borough of Ford City/Comprehensive Plan Task Force

**Cost:** To be determined

#### Project: Parking Study in Downtown

Some recommendations included in this plan have the potential outcome of influencing parking. As Ford City becomes more of a destination, and more apartments are utilized in second stories, parking may become a commodity. Before making any changes to add more parking, a thorough audit of existing parking in the main business district should take place. Often, after considering existing parking, cities find that further parking is not needed, especially if improvements to walkability and bicycle infrastructure are made.

For more information about how parking works within cities, and how to plan for parking efficiencies, Donald Shoup's book *The High Cost of Free Parking* is a helpful resource. In short, Shoup recommends that cities should (1) charge fair market prices for on-street parking, (2) spend the revenue to benefit the metered neighborhoods, and (3) remove off-street parking requirements.

Although downtown merchants often complain that increasing parking fees negatively impacts their business, charging fair-market prices for on-street parking helps to ensure there is enough supply and encourages residents to walk downtown rather than drive. The benefits of charging fair prices for parking will be realized as Ford City becomes more of a destination for regional visitors.

Included in the appendix is an article entitled "How to Do a Parking Study" from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, which covers the larger metropolitan Boston region (including several small towns). With a dedicated group of citizens, or a volunteer group of students, this study could be conducted in a few hours.

In summary, the steps for conducting an area parking survey are:

1. Survey stakeholder to learn about perceived parking needs and problems. Stakeholders would include business owners, downtown workers, and nearby residents.
2. Design the survey to include an inventory of spaces and count of vehicles parked. Because vehicle parking changes during the course of a day, it may be beneficial to survey the area two or three times – once during a workday, once on a Saturday, and once on a Friday night.

### 3. Inventory Existing Parking

- (a) Define the study area – which would be the downtown or a few blocks surrounding the downtown?
- (b) Number the blocks and the individual parking areas on a map.
- (c) Count the number of spaces, on-street and off, for each of the parking areas. For curbs, the chart below can be used to estimate parking spots.
- (d) Count the number of parked vehicles during each time period.

- 4. Analyze results by calculating occupancy, which is the amount of vehicles divided by the number of spaces. Occupancies of 85% to 90% are considered ideal because the demand is met without wasting space.

A parking survey should be conducted every year. More parking in the downtown should not be added unless there is a drastic trend upwards in parking usage. Due to potential seasonal variations, parking studies should be conducted in the spring or summer months. Though the survey could be conducted by volunteers, city staff may be involved in maintaining the data.

#### Stakeholders:

- Downtown businesses
- Borough of Ford City

**Cost:** \$20,000

- Cost covers materials and fees for survey and staff time

### Policy: Anti-Cycling Ordinances

As a trail town, Ford City should be actively welcoming toward bicycles. Therefore, there should not be any ordinances that restrict bicycle riding on streets or in parks. Restrictions can be placed on motorized bicycles and scooters to define where they may be used. These ordinances should be addressed by Council, and the repeal of them should be publicized to gain a positive reputation as a bike-friendly town in the region.

#### Stakeholders:

- Businesses in Ford City
- Borough of Ford City

**Cost:** To be determined

Distance as Measured Along Curb (feet)	Number of Parking Spaces
<15	0
15-35	1
35-60	2
60-85	3
85-110	4
110-135	5
135-160	6
160-185	7
185-210	8
210-235	9
235-260	10
260-285	11
285-310	12

Figure 4: Ratio of Vehicles to Curb Space (Source: <https://www.mapc.org/resource-library/how-to-do-a-parking-study/>)





Figure 5: Interactive Mural (Source: [www.newcastleproductionsart.com](http://www.newcastleproductionsart.com))



Figure 6: Wings Mural in Houston (Source: <https://thebuzzmagazines.com/articles/2017/06/buzzing-about-murals-heights-and-downtown-edition>)

### Project: Mural in Downtown

Establishing a mural program or wall with changing murals is an easy way to bring vibrancy to the downtown area. Adding more murals to the downtown builds off the historic Mailpouch mural that already exists in downtown, and can add to the feeling of Ford City being a destination.

Murals could be accomplished in several ways. There are art non-profits that help to fund murals in communities, which may provide a grant. Alternatively, Ford City could work with local high school students to commission a mural, or hire a professional muralist. Murals could be painted directly on a wall, or could be installed on panels and hung on walls.

Especially enticing to those who use social media are interactive murals that allow the viewer to engage with the artwork by posing in front of it as a backdrop for a photograph. Two examples are included below.

### Stakeholders:

- Downtown businesses
- Borough of Ford City

**Cost:** \$1,000 - \$15,000

- Cost varies according to muralist and staff time devoted

## YEARS 4 – 6: INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

### Project: Bicycle Storage

The addition of bicycle racks downtown would facilitate cyclists being able to leave the trail and safely park their bicycles while visiting local merchants. Racks could be installed on the sidewalk or in a green space, or a private landowner could donate property to be utilized on a temporary basis. Ideally bicycle parking would be placed in the immediate vicinity of downtown.

Bicycles can be very expensive. Making sure that racks are designed in a way that facilitates safe storage will give riders peace of mind while visiting Ford City. The most effective bicycle storage is anchored to the ground in a sturdy fashion and supports two bicycles:

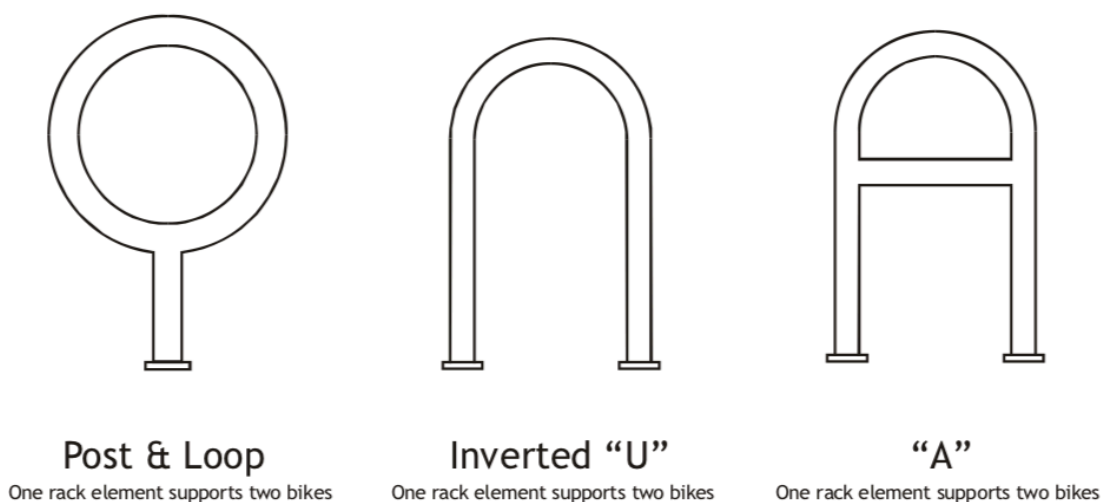


Figure 7: Bicycle Storage Options (Source: <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/research/safety/pedbike/05085/pdf/lesson17lo.pdf>)

These racks can be installed in a series to create a free-standing parking area.

Other considerations for bicycle storage include making sure the space is well lit, and potentially providing a cover for the racks in case of inclement weather.

#### Stakeholders:

- Borough of Ford City
- Downtown businesses

**Cost:** \$1,000 - \$15,000

Cost varies according to type of bicycle rack and accompanying infrastructure

### Project: Reconsider Core Area Streetscape

Adding improvements to Fifth Avenue and the downtown will create a more welcoming environment that increases foot and bicycle traffic, thereby increasing time spent in the main business district and revenues of businesses in the downtown.

## Project: Temporary Solutions

Temporary design solutions can influence the way people move through a town, thus giving new visitors a great experience and providing new perspective for citizens. Because Ford City has a great traditional urban grid pattern, it is relatively easy to walk or bike through the town. Implementing a few temporary design solutions could improve this accessibility and help to test the ideas before moving forward with a redesign that would cost exponentially more.

There are many great examples of towns that have used simple materials like paint, traffic cones, and planters to temporarily create bike lanes, crosswalks, and options for non-motorized transit. This practice is called tactical urbanism, and describes a collection of low-cost, temporary changes to the built environment intended to improve local neighborhoods and create city gathering places. A free four-part guide can be found at <http://tacticalurbanismguide.com>.

One specific example that Ford City could benefit from is implementing semi-permanent wayfinding signage along the trail and through the town.

Semi-permanent wayfinding would be signage designed to last for a season, so it would be good to install in the summer months, when there is activity on the trail and events in the downtown.

Signs along the trail should be large and bright enough to be read by cyclists traveling at higher speeds. These signs can point out where to enter or exit the trail, and where to buy refreshments. One idea is using repurposed oil drums to point the way, such as in the picture below:

In town, semi-permanent signs can be printed on corrugated plastic and attached to poles with zip ties. These are especially useful for directing people during an event, pointing out parking for bikes or cars, restrooms, and entertainment options. Other more permanent signs could point to landmarks such as the library, the park, or trail entrances. These signs can also encourage citizens to choose walking rather

than driving, especially if they have the walk measured in minutes, as the signs below show:



Figure 8: Temporary Wayfinding Examples (Source: Pinterest), Figure 9: Temporary Signage on Corrugated Plastic (Source: Pinterest)

## Project: Renovation of Downtown Streetscape and Fifth Avenue

Fifth Avenue is a part of the downtown street network, but due to the high speed of traffic on this road it currently acts as a border of the downtown rather than an integrated corridor. Fifth Avenue is permitted for traffic travelling at 25 miles per hour, but in reality, traffic travels at a much faster pace. This is a safety concern. Slowing traffic along Fifth Avenue in the downtown area will create a safer environment for pedestrians and will encourage parking and walking and biking along the corridor, thereby helping businesses in the area.

Additionally, in the community engagement process, there was significant discussion of upgrading Fifth Avenue. Residents pointed out that street trees that were removed due to sewer updates were not replaced. They also indicated frustration at the lack of an attractive entrance to the city when entering at Fifth Avenue. Furthermore, parking along Fifth Avenue is not currently managed, which creates uncertainty and tension.

To plan for a renovation of Fifth Avenue, the Borough's Planning Commission should determine their priorities for the corridor's redevelopment, including ideas for entryways, parking solutions, street trees, improved pedestrian crossings, and traffic calming measures like traffic lights and pedestrian bump outs. The Planning Committee should also consider burying the power lines along Fifth Avenue, in tandem with making other improvements. Estimated costs for these improvements are listed below:

Improvement	Cost Per	Total Cost
Curb Extensions to Improve Pedestrian Environment <sup>4</sup>	\$12,000 each @16	\$192,000
Traffic Light <sup>5</sup>	\$500,000 @ 1	\$500,000
Burying Power Lines <sup>6</sup>	\$1,000,000 per mile @1.3 miles	\$1.3 million

The Planning Commission should keep in mind that design solutions are often effective ways to slow traffic and increase the beauty of the public realm and can be less expensive and require less upkeep than a system of traffic lights. One solution to consider in the downtown area between 9th, Ford, and 10th Streets is pedestrian bump outs that decrease the amount of street that a pedestrian must cross. A way to determine the effectiveness of bump outs or other design solutions would be to run a trial with temporary infrastructure. More information about this can be found in the Appendix. This could be done in partnership with PennDOT.

The first step in the renovation of Fifth Ave would be reaching out to Region 10 of PennDOT to begin the planning process. The Planning Commission could share their ideas and propose any temporary installation, as well as the data that could be expected from such an experiment (such as miles per hour of speed decreased). The Borough should also reach out to the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission, as their Livability Through Smart Transportation (SMART) Program provides funding for transportation projects.

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<sup>4</sup> [http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/planning/facilities\\_crossings\\_curbextensions.cfm](http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/planning/facilities_crossings_curbextensions.cfm)

<sup>5</sup> <https://wsdot.wa.gov/Operations/Traffic/signals.htm>

<sup>6</sup> <http://theconversation.com/why-doesnt-the-u-s-bury-its-power-lines-104829>



Undertaking the redevelopment, including the redesign and repaving of the downtown street network could be a significant cost. Ford City should incorporate this cost into future budget planning and reach out to PennDOT to discuss the planning process. Plan for infrastructure improvements during street upgrades, such as when burying power lines and improving internet through installing fiberoptic cables.

#### Stakeholders:

- Borough of Ford City
- Downtown businesses
- Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission
- PennDOT

Cost: \$3 – 5 million

## YEARS 7 – 10: ADDING CAPACITY

### Program: Main Street Organization

After working for some years to increase vibrancy in the downtown, it would be beneficial to establish Ford City as a Main Street community. The Main Street Approach is a community-driven, comprehensive strategy that has been used to revitalize downtowns and neighborhood business districts throughout the United States. Main Streets go through an application process and are funded primarily through the municipalities that sponsor them.

In Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Downtown Center (PDC) serves as the official State Coordinating Program for Main Street, while the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) provides funding and management of Main Streets in Pennsylvania through the Keystone Communities Program (<https://dced.pa.gov/programs/keystone-communities-program-kcp/>).

The four core tenants of a Main Street Approach are listed below:

**Design** means getting Main Street into top physical shape. Capitalizing on its best assets such as historic buildings and the traditional downtown layout is just part of the story. An inviting atmosphere can be created through window displays, parking areas, signs, sidewalks, street lights, and landscaping. Good design conveys a visual message about what Main Street is and what it has to offer.

**Promotion** means selling the image and promise of Main Street to all prospects. By marketing the district's unique characteristics through advertising, retail promotional activities, special events, and marketing campaigns, an effective promotion strategy conveys a positive image to shoppers, investors, new businesses, and visitors.

**Organization** means getting everyone working towards common goals. The common-sense formula of a volunteer-driven program and an organizational structure of board and committees assisting professional management can ease the difficult work of building consensus and cooperation among the varied groups that have a stake in the district.

**Economic Vitality** means finding new or better purposes for Main Street enterprises. By helping existing downtown businesses expand and recruiting new ones, a successful Main Street converts unused space into productive property and sharpens the competitiveness of its businesses.

In order to qualify for a Main Street Designation in Pennsylvania, the program must meet all requirements of the Main Street program and must also prove organizational sustainability, which is demonstrated by identifying and documenting a sustainable funding stream to employ the full-time manager for five years.

**Stakeholders:**

- Borough of Ford City
- Business community

**Cost:** \$300,000 (\$60,000 salary over 5 years)

## DOWNTOWN COSTS YEARS 1 - 3

		Stakeholders	Cost
Project	Street Trees	Shade Tree Commission Garden Club Borough of Ford City	\$10,000
	Trash Cans	Borough of Ford City	\$3,200
	Mural	Borough of Ford City Downtown Businesses Task Force	\$14,000
	Parking Study	Borough of Ford City Downtown Businesses Task Force	\$20,000
Program	Art in Downtown	Task Force	Time of coordinator
		Stakeholders	Cost
Policy	Remove anti-cycling ordinances	Borough of Ford City	Staff/Council time
	Allow sidewalk cafes	Borough of Ford City Downtown Businesses	Staff/Council time

## YEARS 4 - 6

		Stakeholders	Cost
Project	Temporary Traffic Solutions	Task Force Borough of Ford City	\$5,000
	Streetscape	Borough of Ford City PennDOT	\$5 million
	Bicycle Storage	Borough of Ford City	\$1,000 – 15,000

## YEARS 7 - 9

		Stakeholders	Cost
Program	Main Street Organization	Borough of Ford City Business Community	\$300,000

## FOCUS AREA 2: RIVERFRONT

**Vision:** Amenities along the riverfront will provide Ford City residents with activities and recreation while attracting outside visitors.

**Goals:**

- Determine cost and process of environmental remediation for the riverfront
- Establish connection point(s) between river and citizens
- Market Ford City as a destination

**Organizations:** Ford City Library, Towns and Trails Coalition, Lion's Club, Ford City Parks and Recreation, and Armstrong County Rails to Trails etc. Work with Armstrong County Department of Economic Development to address environmental remediation of riverfront areas if needed.

### Overview

Destination building means improving the recreational, food and accommodation options in Ford City. This serves two purposes. One, the residents of Ford City will benefit from improved quality of life. Many respondents to the survey expressed their interest in having more dining options and more activities in the Borough, especially centered around the riverfront. Secondly, increasing Ford City's reputation as a regional tourist destination will diversify jobs and bring more investment to the community.

Becoming a regional tourist destination is a real possibility for Ford City if all assets are utilized, including the Armstrong Trail, the riverfront, the Borough's rich heritage, and the local businesses. Research about the economic impact of biking trails shows that highly educated people of working age are most likely to seek out and use trails. Along the Great Allegheny Passage from Pittsburgh to Washington D.C., tourists spend about \$114 per person per day in trail communities.<sup>7</sup> Promoting Ford City as a gateway to the Armstrong Trail can entice cyclists from around the region to visit Ford City and spend their money.

Similarly, there are existing ways to engage with boaters. The Allegheny River Development Corporation can serve as a communication channel between boaters on the Allegheny River, promoting new developments along the Ford City riverfront. Ford City can start out by providing basic boating accommodations for boaters involved in paddlesports and kayaking. These boating uses are easily transportable, easy for users to enter the water through a ramp or slip, and are one of the fastest growing sports in the United States. From 2012 to 2015, stand up paddleboarding increased by an average of 26 percent and kayaking also saw large gains in users.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Economic Impact Study 2012. The Great Allegheny Passage. <https://www.gaptrail.org/about-us/economic-impact-studies>.

<sup>8</sup> SUP Statistics and SUP History. Stand Up Paddle Boarding Guide. <http://www.standuppaddleboardingguide.com/sup-statistics.html>. Accessed January 17, 2019.

Given the advantages that Ford City already has, it is easy to imagine that over ten years the Borough could grow into a hub for watersports and biking for Pittsburghers who do not want to travel far for quality outdoors time. Increasing the number of destination businesses and accommodations will encourage this vision, and will provide out of town visitors and citizens alike with needed services.

A review of jobs data shows that, while 120 residents of Ford City work in accommodation and food services, there are only 41 jobs in the Borough. Residents are commuting out of Ford City to work in these jobs, so it is clear that there are workers who have the skills for these jobs. Furthermore, the overall poverty rate in Ford City is 24%, which is an indicator of a need for higher-paying jobs.

Years 1 - 3	Years 4 - 6	Years 7 - 9
Coordinate Destination/Downtown Businesses	Recruit and Encourage More Destination Businesses	Improve Riverfront Infrastructure (roads, park infrastructure)
Bicycle Rental in Downtown Area	Fund for Upkeep of Trail	Boat Launch or Marina
Investigate Environmental Remediation Process	Vending at Borough River Property	Sports Facilities
Address Borough Property by the River		

## YEARS 1 - 3: COORDINATION

### Program: Coordinate Businesses for Destination Marketing

Coordinating businesses to form a cluster of recreation options can facilitate more effective regional marketing. Marketing opportunities include creating a map of businesses that could be printed and distributed or made available online, as well as advertising in regional news outlets. For example, an advertisement might highlight outdoor recreation opportunities such as the Armstrong Trail, kayak and bicycle rental, eating and drinking establishments, and accommodations. *Pittsburgh City Paper*, a weekly arts and entertainment periodical, offers a year-long advertising package to non-profits from \$2,000 to \$4,000; additionally, they have a series featuring "one-tank trips" to nearby towns.

The cost of hiring a graphic designer to produce the map and a series of advertisements could be covered by a collective of business owners who would benefit from the increased visibility. The person taking charge of this initiative would either be a business owner or a member of the Task Force.

**Stakeholders:**

- Ford City Area Business and Professional Organization
- Task Force

**Cost:** \$2,000 – \$4,000 per year

**Project: Recreational Equipment Rental**

The trail and the river in Ford City can draw people from around the region, and the addition of a recreational equipment rental can help facilitate enjoyment of the trail and river and complement other destination businesses.

One option is bicycle check-out via a library. This has been undertaken in several communities across the US. Another option would be to allow a private company to rent bicycles and potentially kayaks along the trail. This may require action on the part of the Ford City Council to change regulations.

Furthermore, Venture Outdoors, a nonprofit based in Pittsburgh could also be a partner. This organization offers public, custom, and youth trips that introduce people to the benefits of outdoor recreation, including the administration of Kayak Pittsburgh, a rental concession that operates along several bodies of water in Pittsburgh. This organization could be approached to do a pilot, with the possibility of a long term partnership.

**Stakeholders:**

- Ford City Library or local business specializing in bike and kayak rentals
- Ford City Borough

**Cost:** \$0 - \$2,000 (estimating cost per bicycle at \$100)



Figure 10: Wilson B. Roberson Boat and Kayak Launch on the Perdido River in Florida  
(<https://www.outdoorgulfcoast.com/perdido-river-boat-ramp/>)



Figure 11: Wilson B. Roberson Boat and Kayak Launch on the Perdido River in Florida  
(<https://www.outdoorgulfcoast.com/perdido-river-boat-ramp/>)

Figure 12: Stepped Kayak Launch (Source :<https://s3.amazonaws.com/suncam/docs/240.pdf?1535262382>)

## Project: Address Borough Property by River

The Borough owns a plot of land along to the river, which could be made into a park with a boat or kayak launch point. The first step in determining the feasibility of this park is figuring out if an environmental study needs to be done. Improvements would vary in cost depending on the outcomes of this study. Once the status of the land has been determined, the Borough can make improvements such as updating any boating infrastructure, clearing the road, and making it a more park-like setting.

Especially important is establishing a way for non-powered boats such as kayaks and canoes to access the river. There are several ways of designing this type of entry. Typical set-ups utilize a ramp or set of stairs that allows a person in a boat to slide into the water. The type of material used is important, since asphalt and concrete can scrape the bottom of a boat. Two examples of boat ramps are show in the graphics below.

### Stakeholders:

- Ford City Borough

**Cost:** \$1 – 1.5 million<sup>9</sup>

## Project: Investigate Environmental Remediation Process

The properties along the riverfront may be in need of environmental remediation. The Borough should first focus on the property it owns and should determine if it needs to commission an environmental study. Armstrong County Department of Economic Development can be a resource for this.

The parcels that are north of the manufacturing area along the Ford City riverfront will also need to be investigated to determine the need for environmental remediation. The Riverfront Committee will explore the feasibility of conducting an environmental assessment on the land that borders the riverfront. The outcome of this assessment will greatly impact the cost of any future development of these parcels. This group will be made up of property owners and Borough leadership, who will work with county staff and representatives of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection.

According to Pittsburgh-based non-profit, Green Building Alliance, a Phase I assessment typically costs between \$1,000 and \$5,000. If Phase I does not produce definitive results, a Phase II assessment may be needed for further investigation. Phase II costs vary widely depending on the size and complexity of a given site, so while many fall between \$5,000 and \$15,000, the cost can also be many times higher.<sup>10</sup>

Resources for this undertaking include reviewing the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) website, which has a number of site remediation options. The Hazardous Sites Cleanup Program (HSCA) provides the DEP with the funding and authority to conduct cleanup actions at sites

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<sup>9</sup> This cost was determined from reviewing information on several other boat ramp projects, such as the boat ramp in Anne Arundel County, MD <https://www.capitalgazette.com/news/ac-cn-discovery-ramp-20180831-story.html>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.go-gba.org/resources/green-building-methods/brownfield-remediation/>



where hazardous substances have been released. The governing body of a municipality in which a HSCA site is located may apply for a Host Municipality Technical Evaluation Grant to reimburse up to \$50,000. More information about this grant is provided in the Appendix. To learn more about this program and others, the Riverfront Committee should reach out to the Northwest Regional Office of the Department of Environmental Protection in Meadville PA. They may also want to consult with Pittsburgh-based Riverside Center for Innovation which has secured numerous brownfield grants over the years on behalf of the region's various river towns.

#### **Stakeholders:**

- Borough of Ford City
- Private landowners
- Armstrong County Department of Economic Development

**Cost:** To be determined

## **YEARS 4 – 6: BUSINESS RETENTION AND ATTRACTION**

### **Program: Recruit and Encourage More Destination Businesses**

While Ford City has recently seen the opening of a few small food and drink establishments, more of this type of business would help to cement the city as a destination. Destination businesses draw customers from around the region; they have a novel concept that is intriguing and authentic. Good examples of destination businesses are artisanal coffeeshops, art galleries featuring the work of local artists and crafters, and specialized stores. In recent years, restaurants have been an important part of putting communities on the map; for example, Pittsburgh was rated 2019 Food City of the Year by a private restaurant and hospitality consulting firm, which has garnered the city national attention.

The appropriate stakeholder to carry this program out would be the Economic Development Entity. Based on the existing retail and restaurant mix, one or two businesses that would be a good fit in Ford City should be chosen, and outreach should be conducted to community members, regional chains, or food trucks to discuss what it would take for these businesses to move to the Borough. Businesses that are being recruited should serve both the community and its visitors. From the community survey we know that residents of Ford City spend approximately \$20 – \$50 per person on a typical night out at a food venue. Therefore, a fine-dining restaurant with higher price points would not be a good fit.

If one of these businesses is a coffee shop offering espresso and other drinks along with wireless internet, the group could focus on meeting with regional coffee shop chains such as Crazy Mocha, as well as local entrepreneurs, to determine the feasibility of establishing a coffee shop.

Another business that would serve the residents and potential visitors is a co-working space. This kind of establishment, which provides shared office spaces, could be a way to convince young people with tech jobs that moving to the area would not impact their connectivity to the city or to their jobs. Many employers offer flex time, which lets people work from home or another office. A co-working space is an amenity that targets these tech workers. A first step in the process would be

meetings with Beauty Shoppe and other co-working brands in Pittsburgh.

Many of the responses in the community outreach included requests for a grocery store or more food options. One group that could be a partner in bringing a food-based business to the community is Bridgeway Capital, who was a participant in the Opportunity Tour. This group, which offers low-interest loans in the Pittsburgh region, has as one their core tenants providing financing for healthy food access.

The Economic Development Entity will be an important resource for recruiting businesses. Potential roles for this entity include:

- Working with property owners to determine the appropriate space in which to open a business.
- Coordinating zoning with the Borough and other regulatory issues such as potential Health Department licenses.
- Assisting with legal structures.
- Connecting owners with entities that provide loans for equipment or renovation.
- Working with prospective and current business owners and the Tri-County Workforce Development Board to ensure the business can find staff.
- Partnering with the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development to take advantage of the Neighborhood Assistance Program, which allows for tax credits in distressed areas. Other programs to consider are the Neighborhood Partnership Program, and Special Program Priorities.

**Stakeholders:**

- Economic Development Entity
- Regional chains
- Bridgeway Capital

**Cost:** \$40,000 per year (Staff of EDE)

**Program: Fund for Upkeep of Trail**

The Armstrong Trail is an important component of quality of life in Ford City. The Borough is responsible for maintenance of the trail from 17<sup>th</sup> Street to SR 128. This is a cost that could potentially be supported by private companies, citizens, and non-profit organizations. Therefore, in partnership with the Economic Development Entity, a public/private fund should be established to receive these contributions and ensure that repairs are made.

**Stakeholders:**

- Economic Development Entity
- Ford City Borough

**Cost:** \$5,000 seed from Borough of Ford City

### Policy: Vending at Borough River Property

Through community outreach, citizens made their interest in more restaurants well-known, especially along the riverfront. An intermediate step between redevelopment of the riverfront and clearing land for a park would be to attract a concession vendor to offer light refreshments during the summer months. The EDE would be best poised to undertake the recruitment for this concession stand, and the Borough can assist by addressing any undue regulatory burden that might arise.

Having a concession stand, coffee cart, or food truck at the riverfront park will encourage people to see the riverfront as a gathering place. It will also help to show potential businesses that there is a market for dining establishments along the river. To this end, the EDE should work with the vendor to track sales and should market the vendor via social media and local newspapers.

#### Stakeholders:

- Ford City Borough
- EDE

**Cost:** To be determined

## YEARS 7 – 9: REDESIGN WATERFRONT

As the EDE comes online in years 7 – 9, it will take on a larger role in managing the development of the waterfront. Potentially, the EDE may play the role of consolidating riverfront property so that it can be marketed as a full site to outside investors. Determining the EDE role is a crucial step in the redevelopment process, and it will require significant coordination between property owners, as well as supporting bodies such as Armstrong County Economic Development, the Pittsburgh Regional Alliance, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (especially in regard to environmental remediation) and the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. Also, depending on how the trail will be impacted, Friends of Armstrong Trail will need to be involved.

As changes come to the riverfront in Ford City, it is important for the EDE and the community to establish design guidelines and priorities up front, for example, that the development must be connected to the community and be accessible by foot and bicycle. The Zoning Document that is being produced will assist with this. The manufacturing community will be an important voice to

include with the Riverfront Committee, as well as regional groups such as the Allegheny River Development Corporation.

### Project: Infrastructure Improvements to Second Avenue

The Ford City waterfront could potentially house two very distinct uses – manufacturing and recreational – which need to be served by one street network. In order to facilitate the movement of traffic from manufacturers along the river, and to ensure that waterfront uses are safe and easy to access, there will need to be improvements to the existing road infrastructure.

At different points, according to Google Maps, this corridor is known as Ball Park Road, Eljer Way, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave. This is the main thoroughfare between the manufacturing plants and Route 66, which leads to Route 422. Large trucks consistently use this route. Additionally, if infrastructure was built to accommodate larger boats, this would be the likely route through which those boats would be towed. Therefore, any road improvements would need to reflect the scale of these loads.

Other future development of this corridor could include recreational uses such as a sports complex or a hotel. These uses necessitate an environment that is suitable for parking cars and for pedestrians crossing the street. Furthermore, it would be imperative to connect the street grid between the waterfront and the downtown to facilitate the flow of traffic and commerce between the two areas. Potential areas to make this connection include O'Conner Street, 11<sup>th</sup> Street, and 12<sup>th</sup> Street. Between 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Street there is an existing connection, which could be improved. On the map above, it is marked with a star.

Street design that accommodates large loads and that which serves pedestrian and parking needs can be at odds. For example, streets around industrial areas are constructed with large curb radii to ensure that trucks can make turns, whereas streets that serve pedestrians are often designed with curb angles closer to 45 degrees. Shorter crossing districts keep pedestrians out of the path of oncoming vehicles and are especially important for ensuring safety for the disabled, children and the elderly.

Streets can be designed that facilitate both types of traffic. For example, wide boulevards can have trees and parking along the sides, and can integrate slightly raised medians and different pavement that functions as an attractive separation of lanes, thus providing wide berths for large loads, as seen in the picture below.

Prior to reconfiguring this street, Ford City leadership and the EDE should meet with local manufacturers to understand their needs and allow them to weigh in on design. The trail will also need to be moved closer to the river itself to accommodate for street widening.



*Figure 13: Potential Connections Linking Second Ave*



Figure 14: Truck Appropriate Infrastructure

**Stakeholders:**

- Ford City Borough
- Manufacturers along riverfront

**Cost:** \$5 million

**Project: Marina**

Turning Ford City into a river-based destination necessitates the creation of ways for people to interact with the water. The Borough can integrate a marina into the infrastructure improvement plan and can also consider a partnership with a private developer.

While boat and kayak launches are simply ramps designed to facilitate access to the river, marinas are docks with boat storage areas called slips. Marinas also may have equipment that facilitates taking boats in and out of the water, business offices, and services such as restaurants or fueling stations.

Boat launches are often publicly owned, while marinas tend to be privately owned. When building a marina, it can be assumed that each slip costs approximately \$50,000 to construct. Partnering with a private entity would be essential in facilitating the development of a marina.

**Stakeholders:**

- Ford City Borough
- Private investors
- Economic Development Entity
- Allegheny River Development Entity

**Cost:** \$1 million<sup>11</sup>

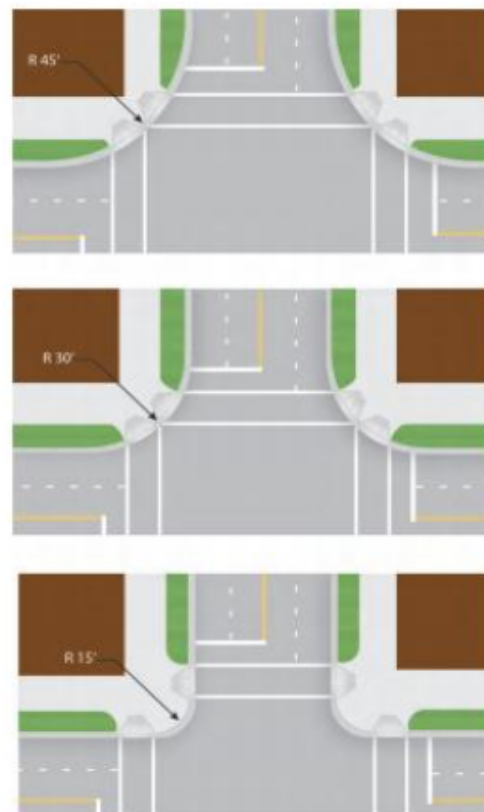


Figure 15: Example of how Curb Radii Influences Pedestrian Environment  
(Source: [http://pedbikesafe.org/PEDSAFE/countermasures\\_detail.cfm?CM\\_NUM=28](http://pedbikesafe.org/PEDSAFE/countermasures_detail.cfm?CM_NUM=28))

<sup>11</sup> <https://howtostartanllc.com/business-ideas/marina>

## **Project: Sports Facility or Other Recreational Use**

In the community engagement part of this planning process, there was significant interest in “something for kids to do.” Furthermore, depending on the environmental condition of land along the riverfront, there may be a need to have only above-ground, capped uses. Sports facilities such as skateboard parks or indoor/outdoor tennis or basketball courts may be a good use and can encourage tourism, as the Iron Horse Baseball complex in Windber, PA does.

Encouraging the development of a sports facility could also spur job growth through other, ancillary uses. For example, depending on the type of facility, a hotel and additional eating establishments might be complimentary, especially if the facility is expected to bring tourists or overnight visitors for tournaments.

Developing a sports facility would be a large undertaking that would require significant collaboration between the Borough, property owners, the county, and state agencies. In particular, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) could be an important partner. The DEP’s initiative Brownfields to Playfields seeks to expand recreational and land conservation uses on vacant industrial or commercial properties. They provide assistance, particularly for smaller and underserved communities, through a multi-agency taskforce that includes the Natural and Conservation Resources, DEP, and Community and Economic Development. More information can be found on the program website:

<https://www.dep.pa.gov/Business/Land/Redevelopment/Pages/Brownfields-to-Playfields.aspx>

### **Stakeholders:**

- Ford City Borough
- Private investors
- Economic Development Entity
- Department of Environmental Protection
- Department of Community and Economic Development
- Armstrong County Economic Development

**Cost:** \$5 million to \$8 million



## RIVERFRONT COSTS

### YEARS 1 - 3

		Stakeholders	Cost
Project	Bicycle Rental	Library Business Borough of Ford City	\$2,000
	Address City Property Bordering River Including Boat Launch	Borough of Ford City	\$1,000,000
	Investigate Environmental Remediation Process	Borough of Ford City Private Landowners Armstrong County Department of Economic Development	\$6,000 - \$20,000
Program	Coordinate Businesses for Destination Marketing	Task Force	\$4,000 per year

### YEARS 4 - 6

		Stakeholders	Cost
Program	Recruit and Encourage More Destination Businesses	Economic Development Entity Borough of Ford City	\$60,000 per year in salary
	Fund for Upkeep of Trail	Economic Development Entity Borough of Ford City	\$5,000
Policy	Allowing Vending at Riverfront Property	Borough of Ford City	To be determined

## YEARS 7 - 9

		Stakeholders	Cost
Project	Infrastructure Improvements along Second Avenue	Borough of Ford City Business Community	\$5 million
	Marina	Borough of Ford City Business Community Economic Development Entity Allegheny River Development Corporation	\$1 million
	Sports Facility	Ford City Borough Private investors Economic Development Entity Department of Environmental Protection Department of Community and Economic Development Armstrong County Economic Development	\$8 million

## FOCUS AREA 3: HOUSING

**Vision:** Amenities provide Ford City residents with activities and recreation while attracting outside visitors.

**Goals:**

- Increase number of single-family homes owned by occupants.
- Increase number of renovated, newly built apartments for seniors, young people.
- Enable Economic Development Entity to accept federal, private, and state funding to invest in housing.

**Organizations:** Forthcoming Armstrong County Land Bank, Armstrong County Department of Economic Development, Strategic Investment Fund, potential for developing a new Community Development Finance Institution

### Overview

Ford City has a high percentage of renters, and a high percentage of vacant housing. Furthermore, there is currently a lack of variety in rental properties; that is, there are few new apartments that are appropriate for seniors or young people.

From analysis of population data, it is clear that Ford City has a large population of older residents, and that the young adult population (ages 25 to 44) is decreasing. Retaining both of these populations is important, and therefore, it is important to create housing options that are attractive for both groups. Seniors may be interested in downsizing out of single-family homes to smaller living units with all rooms on one floor. Survey results show that, when people are asked, “What kind of housing should be built in Ford City?” 28 percent of respondents answered senior housing, the largest percentage of all options. Young adults may not be interested in purchasing houses. In fact, recent research from the Federal Reserve shows that growing student loan debt negatively impacts young people’s decision to buy a house.<sup>12</sup>

It is also clear that property values in Ford City are not rising. Data show that median sales price is falling, that housing stock has not been updated or maintained, and that vacancy of housing units in Ford City is at 17 percent (286 units). No current homes on the market in Ford City are priced more than \$200,000, which is due in part to the age of the housing stock; 78% of the housing in Ford City was built before 1950 and most of this was built before 1940.

Regarding rental housing, there is not much variety in pricing of rental units by size; most rentals are two bedroom and priced between \$500 to 1,000 per month. Furthermore, half of all renter households are cost burdened. The following chart shows where there are gaps in rental housing:

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.federalreserve.gov/publications/files/consumer-community-context-201901.pdf>

Ford City	Renters			
Rent Price	Rental Housing Units	Renter Households	Housing Need (too few units)	Housing Surplus (too many units)
LT \$200	37	84	47	-
\$200-299	26	78	52	-
\$300-499	53	156	103	-
\$500-750	325	45	-	280
\$750-999	100	49	-	51
\$1-1.49K	-	63	63	-
\$1.5K plus	-	66	66	-

Table 1: Ford City Property Ownership (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 - 2016)

As the chart shows, there are many gaps in the lower ranges of rental properties available. There are also gaps in the higher end rental properties. The following recommendations provide strategies to increase the number of rental properties at both the lower and higher end, and also suggest ways to mitigate the vacant housing numbers.

#### Steps:

Years 1 - 3	Years 4 - 6	Years 7 - 9
Collecting Data to Drive Action	Loan Access through Community Development Finance Initiative	RFP for Development of High School Site
Review Relevant Property Use Policies		
Coordinate with Ford City Employers		
Educate Property Owners		
Partner with Land Bank		

## YEARS 1 - 3: DATA COLLECTION AND COORDINATION

### Project: Collecting Data to Drive Action

Ford City is at 17% vacancy according to national data sets. This statistic indicates that 286 properties are vacant. In order to drill down into this problem, there needs to be more fact-finding on the ground, and there needs to be a system developed to address these vacant homes.

To understand the extent of the problem, more investigation is needed. This can be done by a group of volunteers who will travel the length of Ford City and categorize which properties are exhibiting signs of vacancy. This could be created as a Google form, so that all information goes into one spreadsheet. One advantage of Google Forms is that they can be used via a mobile phone.

While a windshield survey is being completed, volunteers could also record whether the building has apartments or the potential for apartments. With this information, the property owners could be consulted as to whether they plan to utilize these apartments, and what kind of improvements would need to be made. This group could also focus specifically on one area of town where there is an interest or need for apartments - for example, downtown.

The database of properties could then be compared to water usage data and postal records data to determine a list of properties that should be targeted by code enforcement. Ford City staff is already collecting vacant property information related to water usage data, and they should be a key aspect of this effort.

### Stakeholders:

- Borough of Ford City
- Task Force

**Cost:** Time of staff and Task Force Members

### Policy: Review Relevant Property Use Policies

Responsibilities of the Borough regarding code enforcement in maintaining cleanliness and upkeep should be evaluated and, if needed, new policies should be developed that are more effective. One step would be to review the Landlord Tenant Ordinance and Property Maintenance Code to determine the level of strength these policies have to encourage compliance.

If Ford City is to become a destination, then there may be a need for lodging within the Borough. Since there is not currently a hotel (other than Lenape Heights), the lodging option would be a short-term rental such as AirBnB. A policy to monitor AirBnBs or other short-term rentals could be as simple as a form that hosts fill out online to alert the city of their plans.

One reason why AirBnB has grown so quickly is because homeowners can simply log in to the website and list their home as an option for paying guests to utilize. Within this paradigm, there is no established role for the municipality. Asking would-be AirBnB hosts to register with the city is an extra step in this process; therefore, the Borough should highlight the positive benefits of registering a property, such as safety, and the ability to understand demand for lodging in the city.

**Stakeholders:**

- Borough of Ford City
- Property owners

**Cost:** Staff time

**Program: Coordinate with Employers**

With the expansion of manufacturing in Ford City, there will be a need for employee housing. Establishing a means for human resources departments in existing manufacturing firms to understand what properties are available for purchase or for short-term rentals will help to locate employees in the Ford City, and potentially increase home sales. A meeting with employers would be the first step in establishing this pipeline.

**Stakeholders:**

- Borough of Ford City
- Employers

**Cost:** Staff time

**Program: Educate Property Owners**

After compiling needs assessments, housing analysis studies and comparables on properties such as the Farmer's Building, educate property-holders on the value of refurbishing second-story apartments.

Information could also be conveyed about AirBnB, and the process for registering a property as a short-term rental.

This meeting could also inform property owners about the new zoning code.

**Stakeholders:**

- Borough of Ford City
- Property owners
- Task Force

**Cost:** Staff/Council/Task Force time

**Program: Partner with the Forthcoming Armstrong County Land Bank**

Armstrong County is considering the formation of a Land Bank. Partnering with this entity would be the easiest way to return vacant properties to the tax rolls.

The following description of a land bank is taken from the Armstrong Blight Task Force Report,



issued July 2017:

Land banks have the power to demolish, reconstruct, rehabilitate, renovate, relocate, design, and develop acquired property. They can acquire foreclosed properties at tax sale through a negotiated intergovernmental transfer for minimal cost, and trump other tax sale bidders. Land banks can also hold acquired properties for future use when there is no market demand for property and can eliminate property tax liens and claims subject to school district permission – thereby allowing them to convey clear, marketable title to prospective buyers.

Forming a partnership with the land bank would require Ford City to establish a program within the municipality for transference of property. This may need to be addressed by policies as well as a program.

**Stakeholders:**

- Borough of Ford City
- Armstrong County Land Bank

**Cost:** Staff/Council Time

## **YEARS 4 – 6: MAKING RESOURCES FOR RENOVATION AVAILABLE**

### **Program: Loan Access through Community Development Finance Institution**

A role of the Economic Development Entity would be as a Community Development Finance Institution, which can provide loan options for housing upgrades and apartment renovations. The Community Development Finance Institution would be a nonprofit, community-based organization focused on revitalizing homes and businesses in Ford City through offering accessible capital.

These types of nonprofits can offer certain types of loans that banks cannot; for example, the Small Business Administration partners with community economic development groups to provide the SBA 504 Loan for small businesses, which can be used to upgrade property. Additionally, because of their status as non-profits, community economic development groups can accept donations from foundations and private citizens, which can go toward funding other types of loans, including micro-loans (e.g. \$5,000 or less) for smaller upgrades.

**Stakeholders:**

- Borough of Ford City

**Cost:** Staff/Council time

## **YEARS 7 – 9: DEVELOPMENT OF HIGH SCHOOL SITE**

### **Project: RFP for Development of High School Site**

In years seven through nine, with improvements made within the community and with an increase in property values, there may be a possibility that for-profit developers would consider building housing in the area. This housing could fulfill the stated interest in senior housing, as well as providing more units at the higher end of the market. Prior to this the following section describes a

process for developing the site for community benefit.

In addition to working with site ownership, other regional partners should be considered. For example, the Strategic Investment Fund is managed through the Allegheny Conference on Community Development and has the goal of filling financing gaps in critical economic development projects throughout the 10-county region.

Ford City can best guide housing development on the former high school site by working with stakeholders and current ownership to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP). The basic components of an RFP include:

- Description of the site
- Type of disposition (sale or lease)
- Target population, type of housing, and level of affordability desired
- Submission requirements
- Design guidelines
- Evaluation criteria
- Schedule for site visits, interviews, and selection
- Forms and certifications

**Stakeholders:**

- Armstrong School District
- Armstrong County Economic Development Department
- Ford City Borough
- Private investor

**Cost:** To be determined

## HOUSING COSTS

### YEARS 1 - 3

		Stakeholders	Cost
Project	Collecting Data to Drive Action	Task Force Borough of Ford City	To be determined
Programs	Coordinate with Employers	Borough of Ford City Employers	To be determined
	Educate Property Owners	Borough of Ford City Property Owners Task Force	To be determined
	Partner with Land Bank	Borough of Ford City Armstrong County Land Bank	\$500 minimum fee
Policy	Review Relevant Property Use Policies	Borough of Ford City	\$2,000 – 3,000 solicitor costs

### YEARS 4 - 6

		Stakeholders	Cost
Program	Loan Access through a Community Development Finance Initiative	Borough of Ford City Employers	To be determined

### YEARS 7 - 9

		Stakeholders	Cost
Project	RFP for Development of High School Site	Borough of Ford City Developers Armstrong County Industrial Development Council School District	To be determined

## FOCUS AREA 4: HIGH SCHOOL SITE

**Vision:** The former high school site is a community gathering place programmed with innovative activities that are inclusive of all age groups; future uses of this site are market rate housing.

### Goals:

- Coordinate with Armstrong School District and Armstrong County Economic Development Department to allow activates on the high school site.
- Use the former high school site as a community gathering place.
- Economic Development Entity coordinates with site ownership to market site to developers.

**Organizations:** Armstrong County Land Bank, Armstrong County Department of Economic Development, Economic Development Entity

### Overview

Because of its large size, location in the center of town, and emotional resonance for the community, Ford City must address the potential of the former high school site. The recommendations below suggest a number of creative, innovative, and community-building activities for the site. These uses are meant to be temporary, and therefore do not overlap with the activities that take place at Ford City Memorial Park.

In 2015, prior to the demolition of the Ford City High school, Fourth Economy and Fourth River Development completed a highest and best use analysis for the site, which was a project of the Armstrong School District. This study found that housing, especially targeted toward seniors, would be the best use of this site. Other, complementary uses could include an urgent care facility.

The community has expressed that housing on this site be market rate. There is a need for housing variety, especially for smaller format housing suitable for single or senior households, and development on this site can fulfill that need. Furthermore, this site is a Keystone Opportunity Zone, which allows for a greatly reduced tax burden for property owners. This designation expires in 2023 but could be renewed.

**Organizations:** Armstrong County Industrial Development Council, Comprehensive Plan Task Force, Armstrong School District

### Steps:

Years 1 - 3	Years 4 - 6	Years 7 - 9
Activate High School Site	Ongoing Programming of High School Site	Coordinate with Community Development Corporation to Explore Housing on High School Site through an RFP process as described previously

## YEARS 1 – 3: DEVELOP HIGH SCHOOL SITE

### Program: Activate High School Site

The high school site is in a visible location in the middle of town. In community engagement, residents of Ford City expressed sadness that the building was torn down. Activating this site to be a community gathering space could increase morale and enthusiasm. Additionally, creating new uses for the site shows that there is a market for retail or restaurant uses to be included in development, along with housing.

Some ideas that have been suggested include:

- Lawn games such as croquet, bocce, or miniature golf
- Popup Bar
- Farmer's Market on Parking Lot
- Dog Park

For this Action Item, the Comprehensive Plan Task Force would consider each of these options and how to best facilitate these activities. This engagement would need to be coordinated and approved by the current ownership of the site.

Included are some examples of a pop-up park in Alexandria, VA. The infrastructure is non-permanent; all furniture is easy to remove, and the bocce courts are simply wooden frames set into soil and covered with small gravel.

#### Stakeholders:

- Borough of Ford City
- Comprehensive Plan Task Force

Cost: \$3,000



Figure 16: "Interim Open Space" connotes the impermanence of this park.



Figure 17: Bocce court with benches alongside



Figure 18: All equipment for bocce and horseshoes stored in this container, which is locked with a combination lock.

## YEARS 4 – 6: CONTINUE ACTIVATION

### Program: Ongoing Programming at High School Site

During this time frame, the Comprehensive Plan Task Force would be responsible for monitoring tourism and marketing. As part of this task, this group could also take over programming for the High School site and create a more formal program.

Other communities have created successful programming based around family-friendly activities, such as an exercise series that is easy and fun for everyone, or a “Movies on the Green” series, where a temporary screen is installed every Friday night in the summer.

#### Stakeholders:

- Borough of Ford City
- Comprehensive Plan Task Force

Cost: \$2,000

## YEARS 7- 9: CONSIDER HOUSING ON SITE

### Project: Coordinate with Economic Development Entity to Explore Housing on High School Site

After establishing the High School site as a place of activity, bringing a multi-unit apartment complex with a possible public-facing ground floor such as retail or restaurant use would make sense. This would also be the appropriate timing to transition recreational activities to proposed waterfront developments.

The Economic Development Entity would be an important part in helping to shepherd a Request for Proposals (RFP) process for this site, along with the current ownership.



## HIGH SCHOOL SITE COSTS

### YEARS 1 - 3

		Stakeholders	Cost
Programs	Install Games on High School Site	Borough of Ford City Ford City Department of Parks and Recreation Task Force	\$2,000 per year
	Install Temporary Bar on High School Site	Alcohol Provider Borough of Ford City Ford City Department of Parks and Recreation Task Force	To be determined
	Farmer's Market on High School Site Parking Lot	Borough of Ford City Task Force Property Owners Task Force	\$1,000 per year

### YEARS 4 - 6

Programs	Continue Programming on High School Site	Borough of Ford City Ford City Department of Parks and Recreation Task Force	\$2,000 per year
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### YEARS 7 - 9

		Stakeholders	Cost
Project	RFP for Development of High School Site	Borough of Ford City Developers	To be determined

## FOCUS AREA 5: SAFETY

**Vision:** People in Ford City look out for each other and work together to make the community safe.

**Goals:**

- Improve walkability and biking access
- Establish programs to foster community accountability (i.e. Neighborhood Groups)
- Ensure rapport between police and citizens

**Organizations:** Ford City Police Department, Ford City Borough, Comprehensive Plan Task Force

### Overview

According to community outreach, most residents of Ford City indicated that they liked the “small town feel” of the Borough and appreciated the pace of life, which indicates a level of safety. However, there is a perception of crime. When asked if they felt safe in Ford City, 70 percent of residents answered yes, while 30 percent answered no. Most often, the reason that people cited for not feeling safe was drugs. Upon discussion of this statistic with 911 responders, data was produced that indicated illegal drug use in Ford City was not higher than other regional cities, and that most arrests were due to alcohol-related incidents.

Furthermore, there were several responses that indicated a lack of safety due to parts of the city not being pedestrian friendly. For example, there were comments about sidewalk condition and lack of streetlights. Due to the large elderly population, addressing pedestrian infrastructure is important, as rough sidewalks can be a hazard. The following items address the perception of crime and aim to increase citizens’ ability to traverse the city in a safe way.

**Steps:**

Years 1 - 3	Years 4 - 6	Years 7 - 9
Improve Communication Between Police and Community Groups	Ongoing Communication	5th Avenue Streetscape
Establish Neighborhood Groups/Block Captains	Reconsider 5th Avenue and Other Major Pedestrian Crossings	To be determined
Sidewalk Repair Week		To be determined

## YEARS 1 – 3: COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

### Program: Improve Communication

An action item that came out of the Build Session on safety was to improve communication between police and citizens. This can be accomplished through two means – having police report to the general public at council meetings and reactivating the Ford City Police Department’s Facebook page. Additionally, the police force will continue to engage in public-facing activities that improve their image and relationship with the public.

#### Stakeholders:

- Borough of Ford City
- Ford City Police Department

**Cost:** Staff time

### Program: Establish Neighborhood Groups/Block Captains

Another suggestion from the Safety Group was to create neighborhood groups to establish stability in residential areas. Groups of citizens working together are a powerful signifier that the place is valued and monitored.

The first step is to determine official neighborhoods in Ford City to establish how many neighborhood groups will be created. Second, groups of three to five people should be established, and a leader/spokesperson chosen. This person would report to council one or two times per year. Potential members of the neighborhood groups would include local churches, local businesses, homeowners, and renters.

A third step would be to establish a meeting schedule for two to four gatherings per year. These could be an annual neighborhood cleanup, a holiday potluck, or a summer barbeque. Information would be shared about the neighborhood group through the Facebook groups, email lists, flyers, and knocking on doors. These types of platforms could be used as another way to share information between the Borough and citizens.

The neighborhood group infrastructure could also be used to address emergencies. One option would be to send all neighborhood group leaders to a Community Emergency Response Team Training through the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency.

#### Stakeholders:

- Neighborhood leaders
- Churches
- Ford City Police Department

**Cost:** Staff and citizen time

### **Program: Ford City Services Registry**

The Borough could assist citizens in finding and vetting service providers such as lawncare and snow removal. Service providers would need to fill out a form with their business information, showing a business license or other form of legitimacy. The resulting roster could be placed on the Ford City Borough website and printed for distribution and updated every year. To encourage vendor participation in the program, a logo could be designed that vendors would be able to display.

Because a large proportion of Ford City's residents are older, they may be more comfortable using paper copies of a services roster; furthermore, they may be more likely to fall prey to scams.

#### **Stakeholders:**

- Ford City Borough
- Service providers

**Cost:** Staff Time

### **Program: Sidewalk Repair Week**

Many sidewalks in Ford City are in need of repair. Buckled, potholed, or missing sidewalks are a hazard. Fixing them is important because they keep the city walkable for everyone.

A way to fix sidewalks at a low cost for citizens and the city is to have a Sidewalk Repair Week. When the Borough is fixing sidewalks, citizens could coordinate to have their new sidewalks poured at a discount, or a partnership could be created wherein citizens could purchase sidewalk repair.

#### **Stakeholders:**

- Citizens
- Property owners
- Borough of Ford City

**Cost:** \$5,000 per year

## **YEARS 7 – 9 : INTEGRATION WITH OTHER AREAS**

In years 4 – 9, the action items from the previous years will continue to be acted upon and built into strong programs and policies that encourage safety in the Borough.

Safety will continue to a priority and will be folded into the process of the redevelopment of 5<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenues, thereby making them more pedestrian friendly with slower moving traffic and space for bicycles and cross walks.

## SAFETY COSTS

### YEARS 1 - 3

		Stakeholders	Cost
Programs	Improve Communication	Borough of Ford City Ford City Police Department	To be determined
	Establish Neighborhood Groups/Block Captains	Borough of Ford City Property Owners and Renters Task Force	To be determined
	Ford City Services Registry	Borough of Ford City	To be determined
	Sidewalk Repair Week	Borough of Ford City	\$5,000 per year

### YEARS 4 - 6

		Stakeholders	Cost
Project	5th Avenue Streetscape	Borough of Ford City PennDOT	\$5 million
Policy	Ongoing Communication	Borough of Ford City Ford City Police Department	To be determined

### YEARS 7 - 9

		Stakeholders	Cost
Project	2nd Avenue Street Improvements	Borough of Ford City Business Community	\$ 5 million

# Appendix

Appendix 1: Data Insights

Appendix 2: Pedestrian Bump Out Information

Appendix 3: Ford City Flood Map

Appendix 4: Community Engagement

## APPENDIX 1: DATA INSIGHTS

The following data insights help to inform the plan, and shape the recommendations made within it. The following data insights cover:

- Regional Characteristics
- Demographic Studies
- Housing Stock
- Economic Conditions

### REGIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Ford City is 25 miles from Butler, 45 miles from Pittsburgh and 55 miles to Johnstown in western Pennsylvania. It is located along the banks of the Allegheny River, and has nearby interstate access via Route 66 and 28. While Ford City has pockets of urban density, the surrounding region is rural, with the exception of nearby Kittanning.

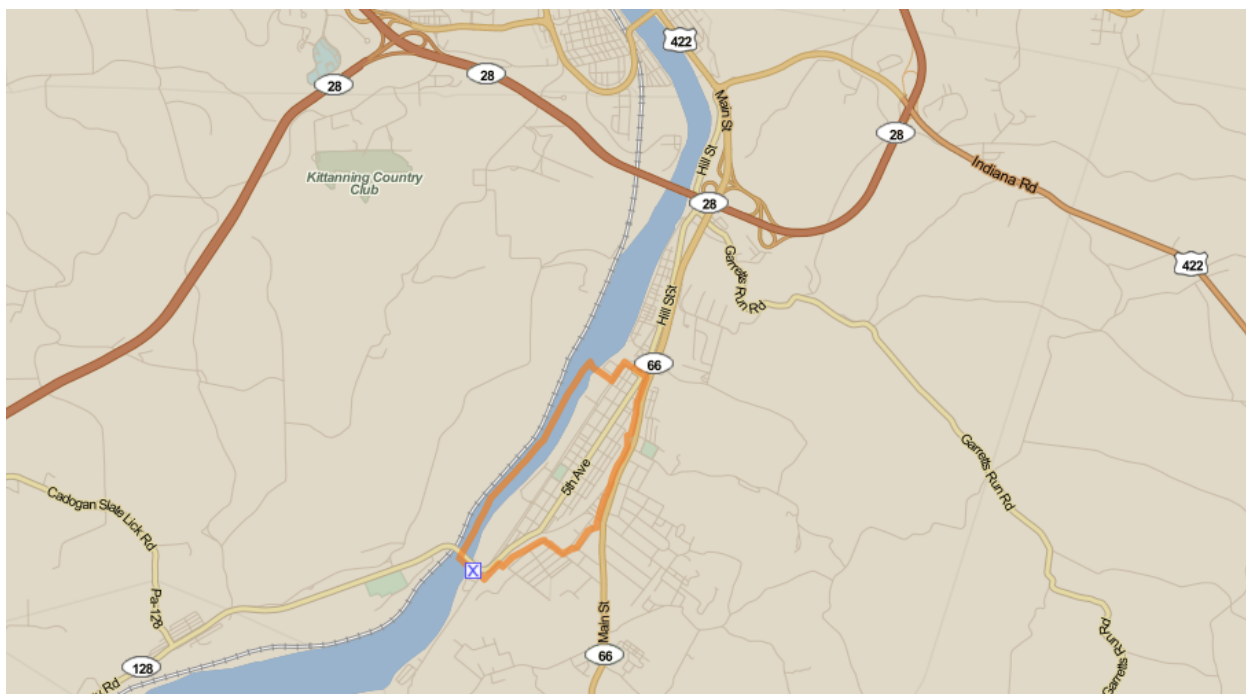


Figure 1: Map of Ford City Immediate Region (Source: Policy Map)

### FOURTH ECONOMY COMMUNITY INDEX

Armstrong County

The Fourth Economy Community Index incorporates twenty different indicators in the areas of Investment, Talent, Sustainability, Place, and Diversity. The Index rates all counties in the United States on a continuum of these measures. While there is no single recipe for economic success, these five areas are critical ingredients



in vibrant communities everywhere.

Armstrong County scores high on Talent and Sustainability, but scores lower on Place and Investment. The County has a very low score in Diversity.

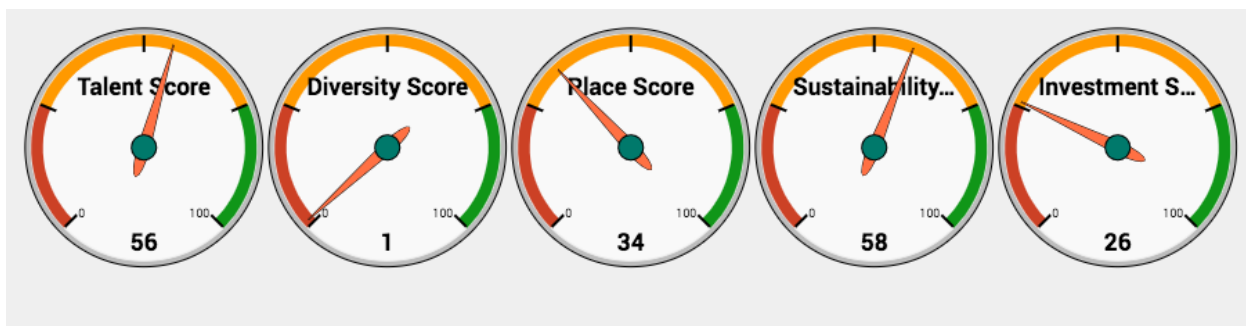


Figure 2: Armstrong County Index Scores (Source: Fourth Economy Index)

County Population Growth 2000-2016	
Butler	7%
Washington	3%
Indiana	-2%
Jefferson	-3%
Westmoreland	-3%
Allegheny	-4%
Armstrong	-7%
Clarion	-7%
Venango	-7%

A potential cause of lack of diversity could be due to population decreasing, which thereby decreases age of residents. Furthermore, new populations are not moving into Armstrong County. Among the surrounding counties, only Butler County has grown since 2000, adding more than 10,000 residents.

Table 1: Population of Surrounding Counties (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, percent change 2000 - 2016)

## POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS AND TREND

Since 2000, Ford City has lost 16% of its population. The population estimate of the town for 2012 – 2016 is 2,900. Armstrong County has approximately 67,512 people for the same time period.

	2000	2010	2016	Percent Growth (2000-2016)
Ford City	3,451	2,991	2,900	-16%
Armstrong County	72,392	68,941	67,512	-7%
PA	12.3M	12.7M	12.8M	4%

Table 2: Population Growth (Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS 2010 - 2016)

The graphic below shows the slow decline of population in Ford City that is predicted to occur from the current time period to 2030. This decline is not drastic, but it is not an encouraging sign. Following through on the recommendations in the plan could result in a change in this pattern.

## Population in Ford City

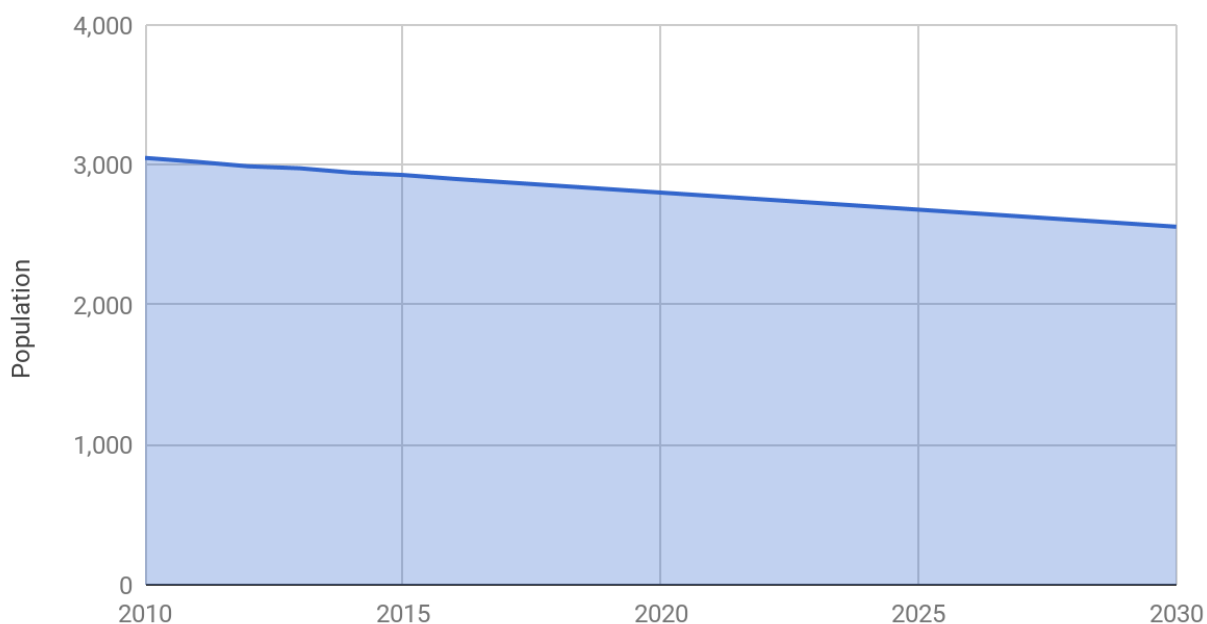


Figure 3: Population Growth (Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS 2010 - 2016)

## DEMOGRAPHIC STUDIES

The largest portion of the population is working age, defined as between 18 and 64. This group makes up 63% of the population. Children and the elderly are somewhat evenly split, with 19% over 65 and 18% under 18.

Young Children make up only 4% of the population. These statistics are relatively on par with the population statistics for Pennsylvania.

Age	Percent Ford City	Percent Pennsylvania
Under 5	4%	6%
Under 18%	18%	21%
Working Age	63%	62%
Aging	19	17%

Table 3: Population Age (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2010 - 2016)

In Ford city, 92% of people are white, 5% are African American, 3% are Hispanic. The population of Ford City skews whiter than Pennsylvania as a whole, where 81% of people are white and 11% of people are African American.

Ford City is losing population in children, young adults, and older adults. The group that is most concerning is adults aged 25 to 44, as this age group includes young people who are having families and would be assumed to take on civic and corporate leadership.

Population Loss by Age	2010-2020	2020-2030
Children (Under 18)	-167	-111
College Age (18 to 24)	24	0
Young Adult (25 to 44)	-123	-126
Adult (45 to 64)	139	93
Older Adult (65 plus)	-120	-98
Total	-247	-242

Table 4: Population Projection (Fourth Economy Consulting)

The chart below shows the projected decline pictorially. The dark green represents adults aged 45 to 64, which will be the only group predicted to grow. The continued loss of young adults aged 25-44 is the biggest concern for future population and workforce.

## Ford City Expected Population by Age 2010 to 2030

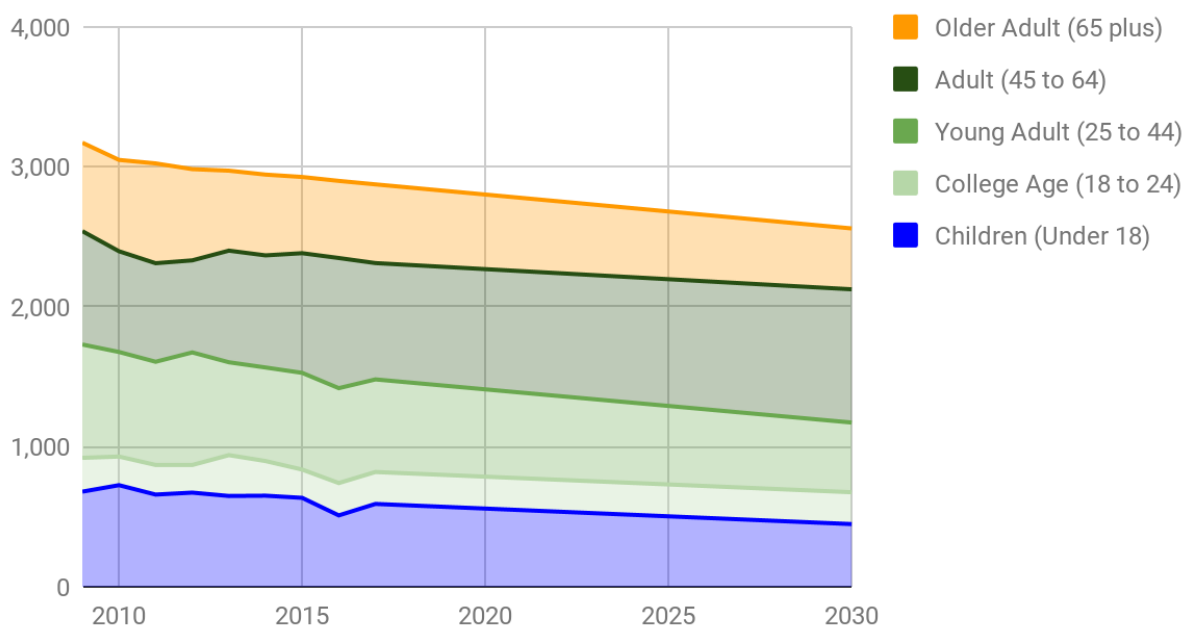


Figure 4: Population Projection (Fourth Economy Consulting)

Although population is declining, there are some new people moving into the area. In 2017 there was a total of 115 new homeowners that moved to Ford City, compared to 90 new renters. Most of the new residents moved less than 10 miles.

## HOUSING STOCK

Overall, the most typical form of housing in Ford City is aging single family, although the city has more attached single family and duplex types than Armstrong County or Pennsylvania as a whole.

	Number	Percent		
	Ford City	Ford City	Armstrong	PA
<b>2012-2016 Housing Stock</b>				
Single family detached homes	923	56.5%	75.7%	57.2%
Single family attached homes	369	22.6%	3.7%	18.4%
2-unit homes and duplexes	130	8.0%	2.6%	4.6%
Units in small apartment buildings	189	11.6%	6.5%	12.0%
Units in large apartment buildings	0	0.0%	1.4%	3.8%
Mobile homes or manufactured housing	24	1.5%	10.2%	4.0%
Other types	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Table 5: Housing Types (U.S. Census Bureau 2012 - 2016)

The housing stock represents the development of the town in conjunction with the Pittsburgh Plate Glass and Elger factories; 78% of houses were built before 1950 and most of this stock was built before 1940. Older housing can be considered high quality if it is maintained and updated; in Ford City, prices of housing do not reflect ongoing upgrades. The sales volume has been trending higher whereas the median sales price has fallen from just under \$60,000 in 2007 to less than \$30,000 in 2016. This drop could be a blip or the start of a steep decline.

### Ford City Annual Home Sales and Median Sales Price

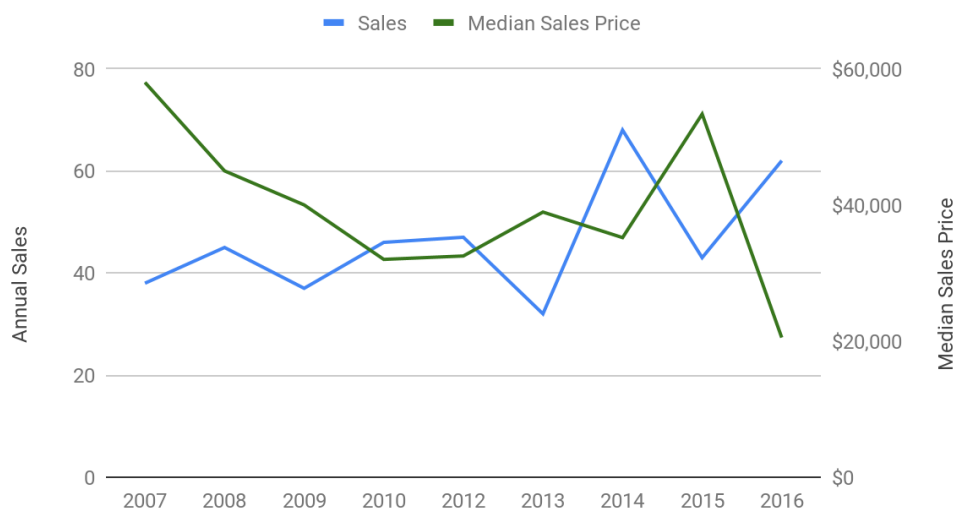


Figure 5: Annual Home Sales (Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2007 - 2016)

Ford City	Owners			
Home Value	Owner Housing Units	Owner Households	Housing Need (too few units)	Housing Surplus (too many units)
LT \$50k	268	78		190
\$50-99k	443	146		297
\$100-149k	77	198	121	-
\$150-299K	20	285	265	-
\$300-499k	-	82	82	-
\$500k plus	-	19	19	-

Table 6: Ford City Property Ownership (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 - 2016)

As the table above shows, those properties in the price range of \$50k to \$99k are most numerous, but also most likely to be rental properties or vacant. For example, there are 443 housing units valued at \$50,000 to \$99,000. Of these 146 are owned; therefore 297 of them are either rentals or vacant.

Many properties are rentals, or vacant units. As of 2016 17.5% of the housing units are vacant - 286 units - compared to 11.3% in Pennsylvania.

In Ford City 40% of the population is renting. Most of the rentals are 2 bedroom properties, which encompass either single family homes, attached homes, or apartments. This is similar to Armstrong County, which has about ten percent less 2 bedroom rentals and ten percent more 3 or more bedroom rentals, as shown in the graph below.

	Ford City		Armstrong
Rental Units by Size	Number	Percent	Percent
0 or 1 Bedroom	138	27%	27%
2 Bedrooms	259	51%	43%
3 or more Bedrooms	107	21%	30%
All	504	100%	100%

*Table 7: Rental Units by Size (Source: Census 2010 - 2016)*

There is a need for higher value single family homes, and a need for more diverse rental stock, with increased number of bedrooms and a variety of price points. As shown below, there are few 2 bedroom units below \$500 per month, and no 3 bedroom units available. Overall, most of the rentals are 2BR units priced between \$500 to \$1,000 per month and all 107 3BR units are between \$500 to \$750 month.

Half (254) of all renter households (504 total) are cost-burdened. Furthermore, 215 (85%) of the cost-burdened renters are under age 65. This indicates a need for more income-appropriate housing.

## Number of Rental Units by Size and Price

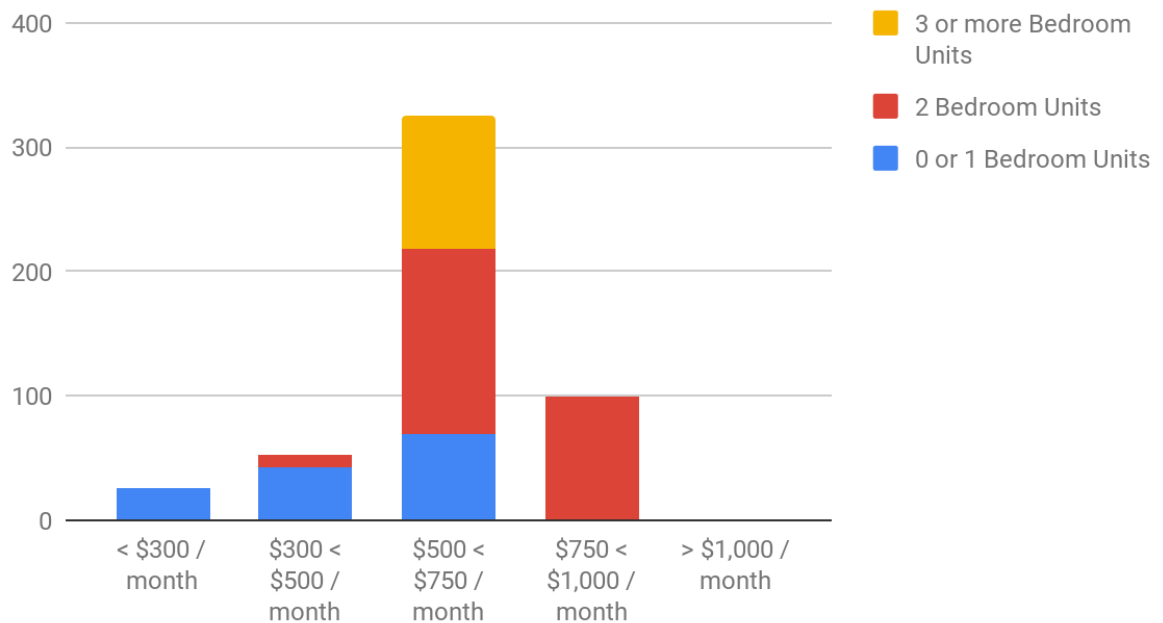


Figure 6: Number of Rental Units by Size and Price (Census 2010 - 2016)

As population changes, it will be reflected in demand for housing units. Fewer housing units will be necessary, but there may be more of a need for smaller apartments to meet the demand for senior housing.

Population Change	2020	2030	Change
Children (Under 18)	559	448	-111
College Age (18 to 24)	228	228	0
Young Adult (25 to 44)	624	498	-126
Adult (45 to 64)	859	952	93
Older Adult (65 plus)	533	435	-98
Total	2,803	2,560	-242
Demand for Housing Units	2020	2030	Change
Low	1,121	1,024	-97
High	1,401	1,280	-121

Table 8: Projected Housing Demand (Source: Fourth Economy Consulting)



## ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Ford City has lower economic indicators than Armstrong County and Pennsylvania. Median Household Income is \$13,000 below the county median and poverty is about 10% points higher. Four out of every ten households in Ford City earns less than \$25,000 per year.

2012-2016 Annual Income Category	Number of Households	Percent of Households		
		Ford City	Armstrong	Pennsylvania
Less than \$25,000	542	40%	26%	22%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	156	12%	13%	10%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	136	10%	15%	13%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	220	16%	20%	18%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	138	10%	12%	13%
\$100,000 - \$124,999	75	6%	8%	8%
\$125,000 - \$149,999	63	5%	3%	5%
\$150,000 or more	19	1%	4%	10%

Table 9: Annual Income (Source: Census 2010 - 2016)

The labor force participation rate is higher in Ford City than in Armstrong County, however, the reported unemployment rate of 9.5% for Ford City is also higher than Armstrong County. With recent increases in employment across the U.S., these rates have decreased.

The median income in Ford City is about \$12,000 lower than that of Armstrong County. It is significantly lower than the median income in Pennsylvania, which is \$69,960. The poverty rate in Ford City is 24%.

Labor & Income Overview - 2016	Ford City	Armstrong
Labor Force	1,525	38,163
Labor Force Participation Rate	61.3%	57.4%
Unemployment Rate	9.5%	7.7%
Median Household Income	\$32,552	\$45,879
Poverty Rate	24%	13.8%
Mean Travel Time to Work (minutes)	21.2	28.9

Table 10: Labor and Income Overview (PA State Data 2016)



Overall, Ford City has added a total of 41 jobs from 2010 to 2015. Manufacturing had the largest increase. Retail trade had the largest decrease.

<b>Jobs by NAICS Industry Sector</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>Change</b>
Manufacturing	184	224	40
Retail Trade -	212	165	-47
Health Care and Social Assistance	142	160	18
Educational Services -	102	94	-8
Other Services	64	84	20
Finance and Insurance	30	62	32
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	14	52	38
Accommodation and Food Services -	55	41	-14
Public Administration	8	22	14
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	12	14	2
Wholesale Trade -	40	10	-30
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services -	16	9	-7
Construction -	14	7	-7
Utilities -	8	5	-3
Information	4	4	0
Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation -	8	1	-7

Table 12: Increase in Industries (Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010 - 2016)

## APPENDIX 2: PEDESTRIAN BUMP OUT INFORMATION

Slowing traffic along Fifth Avenue in the downtown area will create a safer environment for pedestrians and will encourage parking along the corridor, thereby helping businesses in the area. Currently, Fifth Avenue is permitted for traffic travelling at 25 miles per hour, but in reality, traffic travels at a much faster pace. Installing traffic lights would be an excellent way to slow traffic, but since Fifth Ave is owned by Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, this is a longer process.

A temporary design solution could be to install temporary pedestrian bump-outs at 10th Street, Ford Street, and 9th Street. Bump outs reduce the time that a pedestrian spends in the street, and provides a physical reminder for vehicles to slow speed.

It is recommended that this intervention take place over one day, or a series of days, and that it is not left overnight, as bump outs can be hard to see. On either side of the 10th, Ford, and 9th Street there should be signage that announces the approaching “bump out zone” to warn drivers. Sample bump outs can be seen in the following pictures:



Figure 8: Temporary Bump Out Made of Tires (Source: <http://downtownontherange.blogspot.com/2012/06/better-block-pics.html>)



Figure 9: Temporary Bump Out (Source: [http://betterblock.org/\\_dsc0274/](http://betterblock.org/_dsc0274/))



## APPENDIX 3: FORD CITY FLOOD MAP

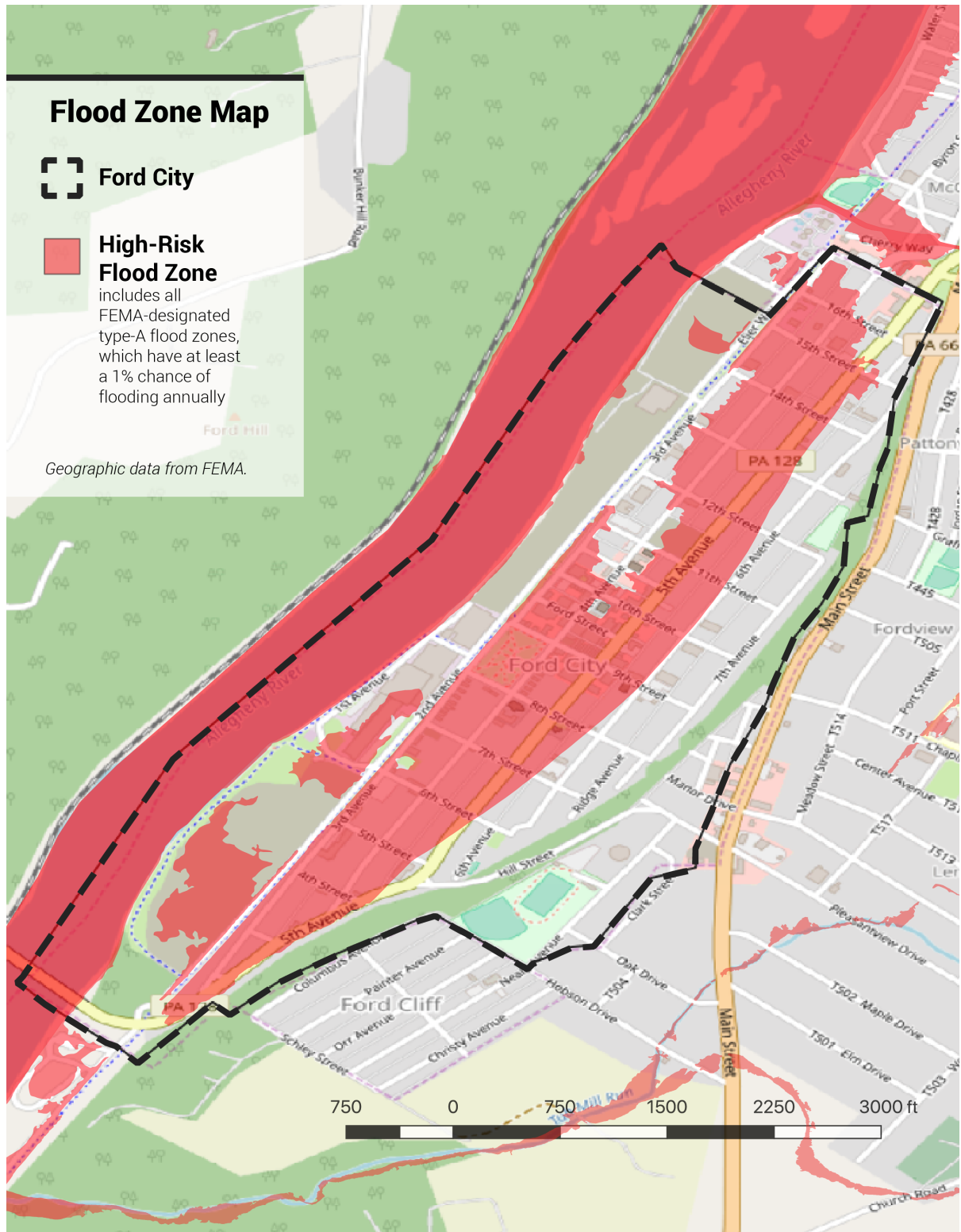


Figure 10: Ford City Flood Map Source: FEMA

## APPENDIX 4: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Interviews
- Vision Boards
- Survey

### INTERVIEWS

Eight interviews were conducted with stakeholders of Ford City. The feedback is as follows:

- Focus on building the community through young people
- Home ownership rates are down. How can we move people into homeownership?
- Benefits of a rural community:
- Do not have to fight traffic
- Convenient
- No urban sprawl
- Open the riverfront to recreation and housing
- Need to address flood designation
- Overall: Ford City's biggest asset is the riverfront

### VISION BOARDS

On June 15, Fourth Economy attended the Family Fun Fest in Ford City PA to ask people their vision for the riverfront, which formerly held a large PPG plant that moved in the 1970s, and to ask their vision for the high school site, which is in the middle of town. The high school was recently demolished. The exercise was designed to encourage residents to think of the future. There were 200 responses written on our papers, from BMX park to drive-in movie theater, to an on-paper debate about affordable housing with people drawing arrows and stars and highlighting yes or no.

*What is your vision for the high school site?*

Dog Park  
 Grocery Store  
 Theater  
 Arcade  
 Ice Cream Shop  
 Soup Kitchen  
 Shopping and Restaurants (Like at the waterfront in Pittsburgh)  
 Dog Park  
 Handicapped Accessible Playground  
 Nursing Facility  
 Skate Park  
 Dog Park  
 Jobs  
 Restaurant  
 Townhomes  
 Movie Theater  
 Carnival  
 Coffee Shop  
 Boutiques



Condos  
Townhomes  
Flats/Courtyard Apartments with No Stairs  
Arby's  
Community Free Library Boxes Like at YMCA  
A place for people who can't afford food  
Grocery Store  
Grocery Store  
A Factory with a LOT of Jobs  
Arcade  
Low Income Housing  
Not Low Income Housing!!!  
Homeless Housing  
Need Housing  
Low Income Housing  
Drug and Alcohol Rehab  
Music Venue  
Outside Movie Theater  
Jobs or activities for kids  
Machining Jobs  
Winery  
Need housing  
Park  
Laser Tag  
Splash Park  
Lights  
Home for the Intellectually Disabled  
Affordable Housing  
Apartments  
Drift trike Park  
Fun For All (Like in Cranberry)  
More trash cans  
Apartments  
Something for Vets  
Winery  
Exercise  
Food  
Pool  
Kids attractions  
Jobs  
Kids' Community Center  
Sports Antiques  
Huge Play Area for Children  
Dog Park  
Pet Park  
Pet Shop  
Park  
Homes (Living Space)  
Movie Theater  
Shopping  
More Jobs  
More Trash Cans

Medium Income Housing  
 Winery  
 Veterans Memorial Park  
 Park with Small Shops/Cafes  
 Haven  
 Small Store or Deli  
 Adoption Center  
 Brewery  
 Hotel  
 Better Roads  
 Shopping  
 Coffee Shop  
 Ciderhouse  
 Hot Rod Shop  
 Jobs  
 Hospital for Animal  
 Low Income Housing  
 Dog Park  
 Roller Skate Rink  
 Kids Sports Park  
 Community Center  
 Doctor Center  
 Community Center  
 Game Room "Arcade" for Teens  
 Something for Kids  
 Coffeehouse  
 Water Park like Butler  
 Winery  
 Park  
 Medium Income Housing  
 Senior Center  
 Small Business – something to give jobs  
 Light Manufacturing  
 Jobs

*What is your vision for the riverfront?*

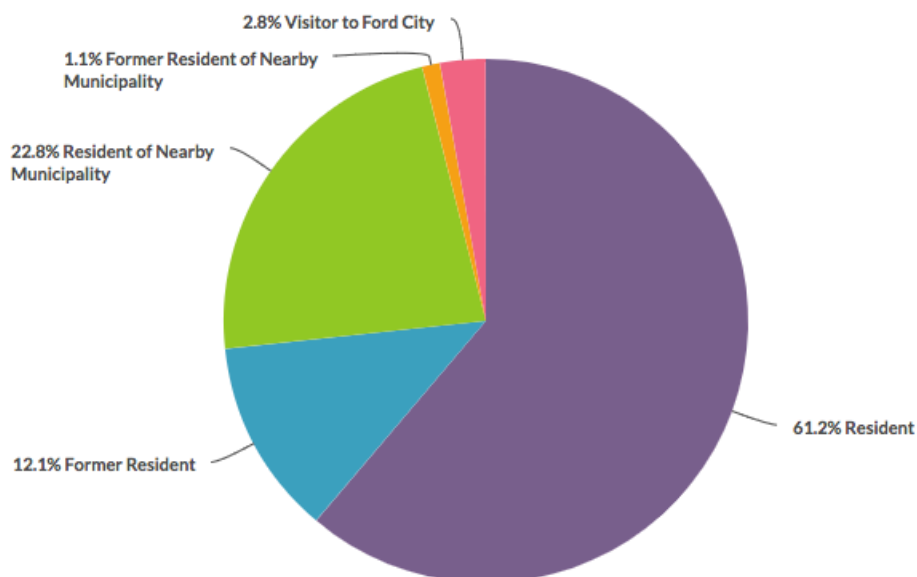
Outdoor track  
 Fitness Center  
 Fountain (Like the point in Pittsburgh)  
 Sand  
 Boat Launch  
 Four Wheeler Track  
 Mini Park  
 Winery  
 Shops  
 Drive-in Movie  
 Dog Park  
 Wine bar  
 Open Locks  
 Starbucks  
 Rec Center and Climbing Wall

Open the locks – boat access  
 Restaurant like Applebee's or Chili's with outdoor seating along river  
 Event Center  
 Docks with Activities  
 High rise for people over 70  
 River Trail Paved  
 Boater Park  
 Cider House  
 Hot Rod Shop  
 Drive In Movie  
 Dog park  
 Wine bar  
 Chilis  
 A factory with a lot of jobs  
 Water slide park  
 Skating Rink  
 Fishing  
 Dock  
 Arcade  
 Lights  
 Shopping/restaurants like at the waterfront in Pittsburgh  
 Drive-In  
 Drive In  
 Family activities  
 Burger King  
 Kayak Launch  
 Bowling Alley  
 Bowling Alley  
 Water Park  
 Restaurants with outdoor patio overlooking the river  
 Coffee shop  
 Drive in  
 River access  
 River access  
 Drive in  
 Shops for boaters and riverfront access  
 Boat launch  
 Winery  
 Cafes  
 BMX park  
 Coffeeshop  
 Fast food restaurants  
 Sports complex  
 Winery  
 Restaurants  
 Trampoline park  
 Winery  
 Fun for kids  
 Restaurant  
 Water park  
 Laser tag  
 Pet park

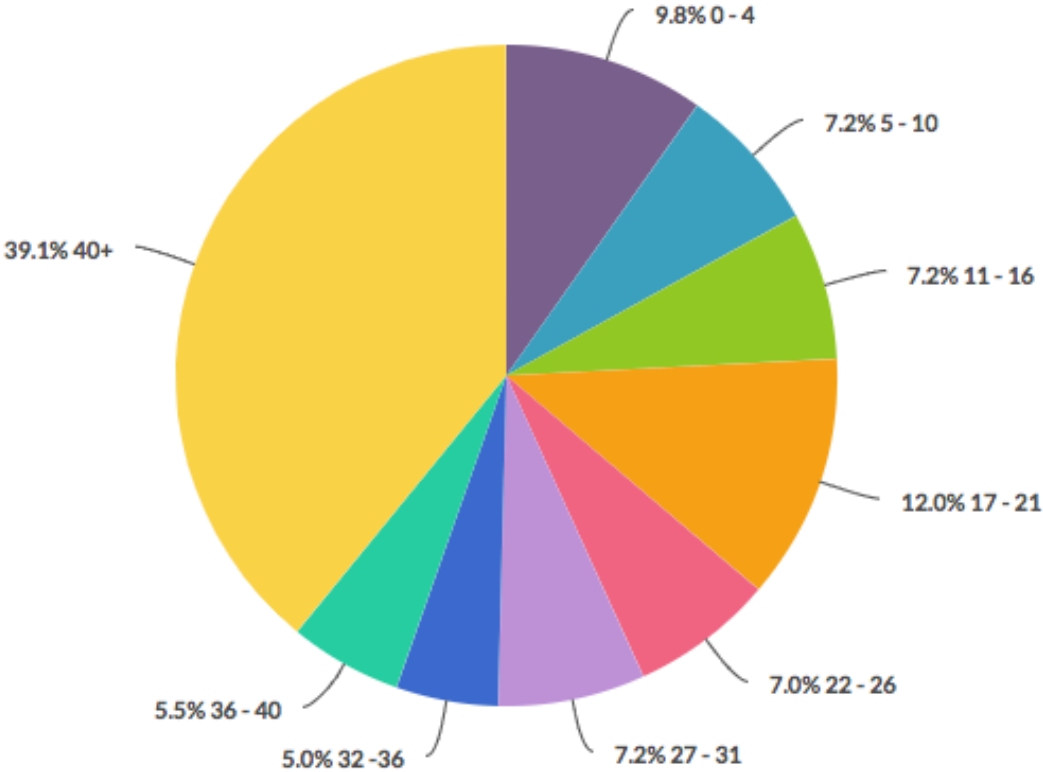
Pet park  
 Dog park  
 Outlet mall  
 Shopping mall  
 Marina  
 Outdoor café  
 Shops for boaters and riverfront access  
 A rock wall  
 Gamestop  
 Dog park  
 Drive in  
 Shopping outlet  
 Petshop  
 Garden  
 Park  
 Marina  
 Small shops  
 Eat n Park  
 Starbucks  
 Riverboat gambling  
 Casino  
 Riverfront Plaza  
 Skate/BMX park  
 Target and mini mall

## SURVEY

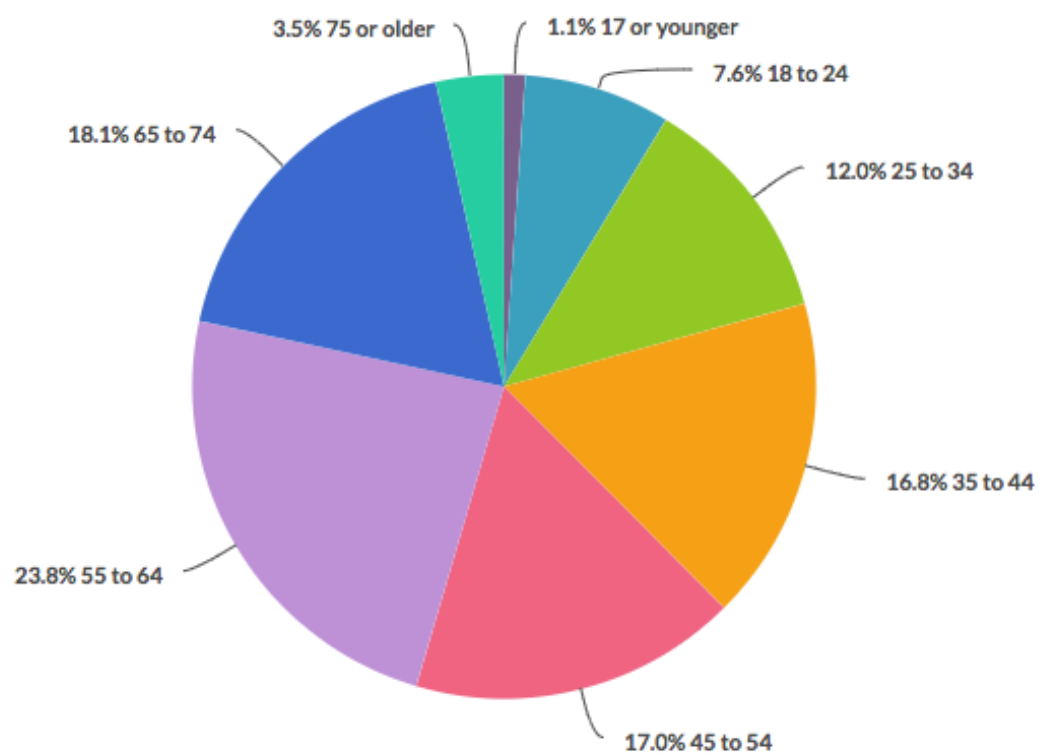
The survey was completed by 481 people. Most were residents of Ford City or a nearby municipality. The survey was advertised via facebook and other social media, and through local papers. Full results are available on the Ford City Borough website.



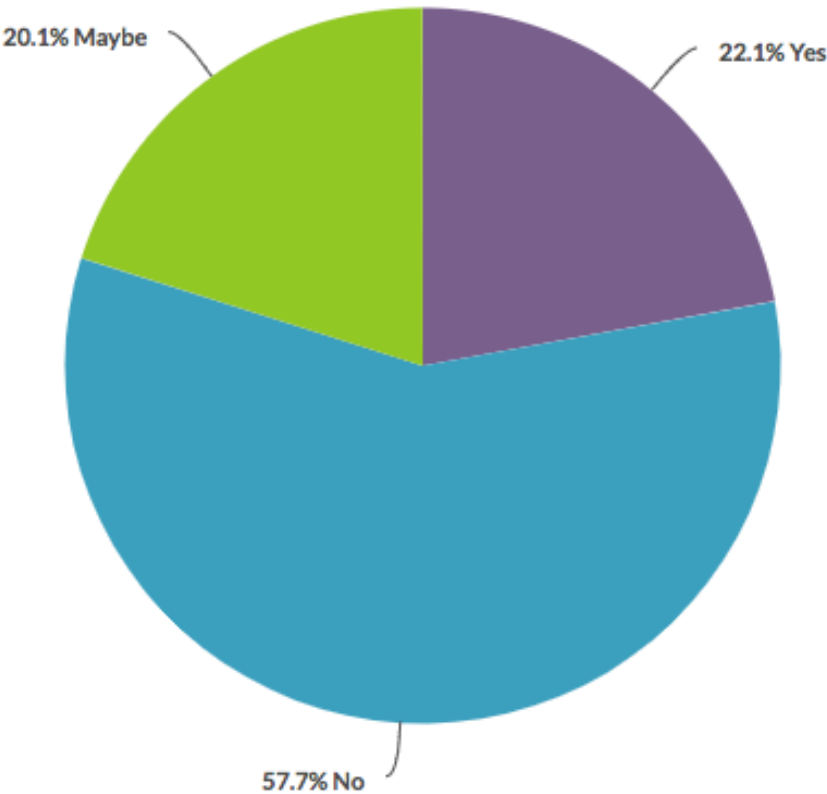
Most had spent 40+ years in or around Ford City:



Most were between 55 and 64:



About 40% are considering leaving:





What makes Ford City special?

People/Friends/Family	29%
Community/Neighborly/Small town feel	27%
Nothing, I don't like it	15%
Pride/Traditions/History	6%
Events	5%
Safe	5%
Walkable/Bikeable	3%
Affordable	3%
Beautiful	2%
Schools	1%



exercise  
factories  
farmers market  
fishing pier  
fitness  
fountain  
garden  
go karts  
grocery store  
hotel  
housing  
ice arena  
industry  
jobs (most popular)  
kayak  
rental  
library

light industry  
lights  
marina  
mini golf  
mixed use  
moderate income housing  
movie theater  
museum  
music park  
pavilion  
picnic areas  
pizza oven  
playground  
pool  
restaurants (2nd most popular)  
river access  
shops  
skate park  
specialty grocery store  
sports complex  
sprinkler park  
tech jobs  
townhomes  
track  
trail  
walking trail  
water park  
water sports