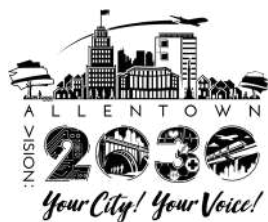




Allentown Vision 2030

Comprehensive &
Economic Development Plan

Final Report- November 2019



Allentown Vision 2030

Comprehensive &
Economic Development Plan

Final Report- November 2019



CITY OF ALLENTOWN

Comprehensive and Economic
Development Plan

Mayor of Allentown Ray O'Connell
Managing Director Joseph Mc Mahon

ALLENTOWN CITY COUNCIL

Council President Roger MacLean
Council Vice President Julio A. Guridy
Candida Affa
Daryl L. Hendricks
Cynthia Mota
Courtney Robinson
Ed Zucal

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Director Leonard Lightner
Operations Manager Thomas Williams

BUREAU OF PLANNING AND ZONING

Director Irene Woodward
Chief Planner David Kimmerly
Senior Planners Hannah Clark
Jesus Sadiua

ALLENTOWN CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

Chairman Oldrich Foucek III, Esq.
Vice Chairman Mark J. Buchvalt
Secretary Richard L. Button
Christian J. Brown
Jeff Glazier
Damien C. Brown
Anthony Toth

CONSULTANT TEAM

evolve environment :: architecture
Fourth Economy Consulting
FACES International
Clear Language Communications Inc.

ALLENTOWN VISION 2030 STEERING COMMITTEE

Janet Roth,
Harry C. Trexler Trust

Steve Bamford,
Allentown Neighborhood
Improvement Zone
Development Authority
(ANIZDA)

Damien Brown,
Allentown City Planning
Commission

**Superintendent Thomas
Parker,**
Allentown School District

Dr. Joseph Napolitano,
Dorothy Rider Pool Trust

Melissa Shafer,
St. Luke's University Health
Network

Dr. Kamran Afshar,
KADAC

Lisa Curran,
The Century Fund

Rev. Dr. Gregory Edwards,
Resurrected Life
Community Church

Matthew Tuerk,
LVEDC

Sharon Fraser,
Eatwell Consulting

Ashley Blake,
Run for Books Creative
Center Inc.

Dr. Daniel Lopresti,
Lehigh University - Dept. of
Computer Science and
Engineering

David Jones,
New Vision Church

Courtney Robinson,
Allentown City
Councilperson

Dr. Luis Brunstein,
Lehigh University -
Diversity, Inclusion, and
Equity

Roger MacLean,
Allentown City Council
President

Audrey Mathison,
Allentown School Board of
Directors

Flor Velez,
Puertorrican Culture
Preservation

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Allentown Vision 2030 team would like to thank City of Allentown staff, our public, private, nonprofit, and institutional partners, the generous hosts of our Community Collaboration Meetings - the East Side Youth Center, South Mountain Middle School, JCC of the Lehigh Valley, and St. Luke's Sacred Heart Campus - and the participants of the Allentown Vision 2030 Community Ambassador Program for your support and participation in the Allentown Vision 2030 plan development process.

Finally, we would not have the Allentown Vision 2030 Plan without the incredible participation of our Allentown community - residents, workers, youth, and all those who engaged with the plan development process through meetings, at the Community Engagement Hub, our community survey, and the many other events held throughout the planning process. Thank you for your time, your participation, your ideas and sharing your VOICE to create a shared vision and plan for the future of Allentown!

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
FORWARD
INTRODUCTION

S1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CH 1 ALLENTOWN FOR ALL
CH 2 COMMUNITY COLLABORATION
CH 3 ALLENTOWN'S HISTORY & GROWTH
CH 4 A MAP TO VISION 2030

S2 CITY-WIDE URBAN SYSTEMS

CH 1 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
CH 2 HOUSING
CH 3 ACCESSIBILITY & CONNECTIVITY
CH 4 SERVICES & AMENITIES
CH 5 LIVING SYSTEMS
CH 6 NEXT STEPS

S3 AREA PLANNING

CH 1 EAST ALLENTOWN
CH 2 SOUTH ALLENTOWN
CH 3 WEST ALLENTOWN
CH 4 CENTER ALLENTOWN

APPENDICES

PREVIOUS PLAN SCAN
COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS
COMMUNITY COLLABORATION MEETING SUMMARIES
PUBLIC COMMENTS (SEPT - OCT 2019)

CITYWIDE URBAN SYSTEMS

The five Urban Systems are a comprehensive way to understand the City of Allentown, and encompass many different forces and factors that make up the systems of the city. Under each system is a set of principles and recommended policies, projects, and programs that will enhance these systems:

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
HOUSING
ACCESSIBILITY+
CONNECTIVITY
SERVICES+AMENITIES
LIVING SYSTEMS

PPL Center

Source: Jordan Platton Photography
for City of Allentown





Chapter 1

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GOAL

THE CITY OF ALLENTOWN WILL BOAST A STRONG, RESILIENT; AND DIVERSIFIED ECONOMY, WHOSE VIBRANCY IMPROVES THE HEALTH AND WELL BEING OF ALL RESIDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES.

CATALYTIC ACTIONS:

- ! Support the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem
 - ! Arts + Culture Economic Development
-

Five City Center - Lobby

Source: JDAVIS Architects, PLLC





Local Business Ribbon Cutting

Source: City of Allentown



What we aspire to achieve...

PRINCIPLE 1: INCREASE LOCAL EMPLOYMENT

To support economic growth citywide, bringing new jobs and identifying industry growth areas is very important. A significant portion of new jobs should be accessible to Allentown residents that currently work outside of city limits. Ideally, these jobs should pay livable wages, and be accessible to the existing population. Jobs in healthcare and manufacturing are likely to be most suitable.

PRINCIPLE 2: INCREASE ACCESS TO TRAINING AND SKILL BUILDING

An important factor in attracting potential and existing employers is a highly-skilled labor force. Allentown will ensure its residents are aware of educational resources and get the right skills training to take advantage of high-wage job opportunities.

PRINCIPLE 3: FOSTER SMALL BUSINESS GROWTH AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Entrepreneurs and small businesses play a fundamental role in local communities and their economies. Allentown will increase its competitiveness, diversify and stabilize its economic base, and accelerate growth by supporting its small businesses and cultivating an ecosystem of resources for entrepreneurs.

PRINCIPLE 4: ENHANCE LAND VALUE

Strengthening the city's tax base is essential to provide necessary social services and public goods, such as health, public safety, and educational services. Allentown will explore innovative approaches and utilize existing tools and resources that support the continued expansion of businesses and achieve an increase in local employment.

PRINCIPLE 5: CONNECT TO REGIONAL MARKETS

Allentown has an economic advantage in having key tourism destination markets within 200 miles of city limits. The city will strengthen and enhance local tourism to attract tourists and investors from these markets. Doing so will also support local entrepreneurs in their ability to expand their consumer base.

**PRINCIPLE 1:
INCREASE LOCAL
EMPLOYMENT**

- ED1a Local Employers.
- ED1b Tax Incentives For Targeted Sectors.
- ED1c Market NIZ to Investors and Developers.
- ED1d Appropriate Manufacturing Space.
- ED1e Zoning Update: Neighborhood Mixed-use Overlay District.

**PRINCIPLE 2:
INCREASE ACCESS
TO TRAINING & SKILL
BUILDING**

- ED2a Increase the Use of Training and Education Programs.
- ED2b Second Language Programs.
- ED2c Apprenticeship Programs.
- ED2d Digital Access Programs.

**PRINCIPLE 3:
FOSTER SMALL
BUSINESS GROWTH &
ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

- ED3a Support Spatial Needs of Entrepreneurs Throughout Company Life Cycle.
- ED3b Activate Public Places.
- ED3c Retail Pop-Ups.
- ED3d Maker Spaces and Incubators.
- ED3e Create a Pipeline.
- ED3f Offer a Path to Legitimization.
- ED3g Financing.

**PRINCIPLE 4:
ENHANCE LAND
VALUE**

- ED4a Historic Preservation.
- ED4b Adaptive Reuse.
- ED4c Opportunity Zones.
- ED4d Brownfield Remediation.
- ED4e Zoning Update: Business Focus.

**PRINCIPLE 5:
CONNECT TO
REGIONAL MARKETS**

- ED5a Develop Entertainment Districts to Increase Local Tourism.
- ED5b Market Business Opportunities and Support to Nearby Cities.

What does economic development mean for Allentown?

The best type of economic growth is that which builds on a solid foundation. In the past, Allentown's economy has relied on manufacturing and heavy industry. Today, the global economy is powered by people and knowledge, and Allentown is no exception, as shown in the growth of the healthcare industry and management jobs in the city. The solid foundation of a strong economy today is people, and Allentown Vision 2030 recognizes the need to support people in reaching their full potential.

JOBS & WAGES IN ALLENTOWN TODAY

The Lehigh Valley's economy has grown and diversified, but job growth has not been equally spread through the region. Wages are not equally distributed. As the accompanying map shows, residents of Allentown tend to leave the city for work; analysis shows that over 80 percent of employed residents work outside the city limits. The jobs that these workers hold often do not require high levels of education. They also do not pay high wages—for example, the average yearly wage for someone in the Transportation and Logistics sector is \$26,445. Graphs on the following pages show how wages of residents in Allentown compare to a Living Wage and state and national averages.

Job Inflow and Outflow: Job vs Home Locations in Allentown

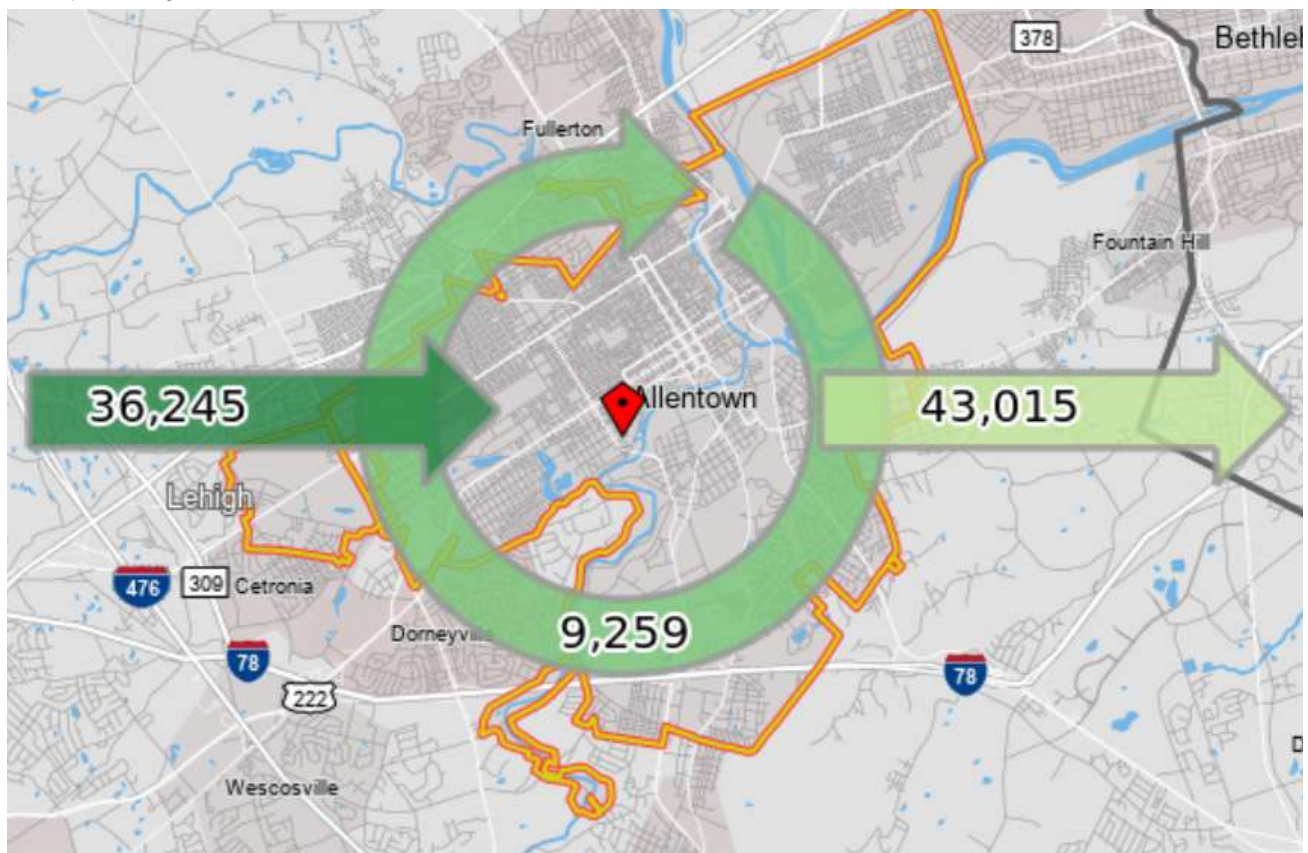
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2017;
OnTheMap Application, <https://onthemap.ces.census.gov>



80% of the jobs in the city are held by commuters (36,245)



82% of employed city residents work outside of the city (43,015)



Generally, jobs outside Allentown pay less than jobs inside Allentown. Many Allentown residents that work in Transportation and Warehousing, Administration and Support, and Accommodation and Food Services have to leave Allentown for work. Many health care workers and those in managerial positions travel to Allentown for work. In regional economies like the Lehigh Valley, a traveling workforce is not unusual; however, the economic disparity between the two populations is troubling, especially because of the additional burden of transportation costs on workers that are already financially unstable.

To understand if wages for workers who travel jobs outside of Allentown would be able to provide a living wage - defined as basic accommodation, food, clothing, and transportation - the regional wage in each sector was compared to the calculation of what is needed for a single person to live in the Lehigh Valley. Using the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Living Wage Calculator, it is estimated that the living wage for one person in the Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton area is \$23,709 per year, before taxes. This calculation was made in December 2018. Though this amount seems low, the average wages of growing sectors of Accommodation and Food Services, Administration and Support, and Retail Trade do not reach this level. (Other Services, located in the category of jobs in the city, is a combination of job types that are often freelance positions.)

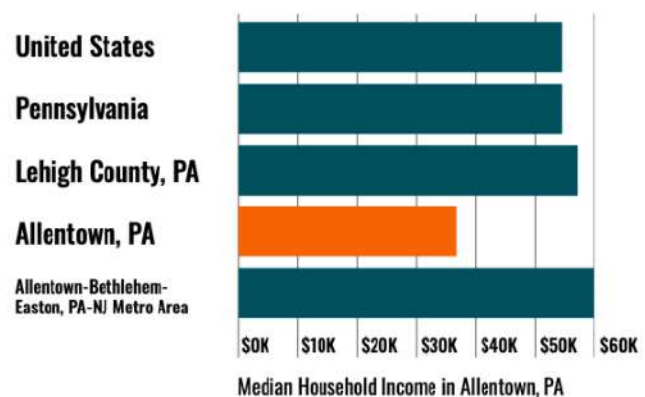
These analyses provide additional insight into why wages of Allentown residents are lower than those of Lehigh County residents and Pennsylvanians in general. Feedback from Allentown Vision 2030 community engagement highlights the problem that lower wages can cause. Due to low wages, community members shared that it can be necessary to work two to three jobs. Holding multiple jobs can cause a hardship for parents who need childcare, and also necessitates either owning a car or putting limited resources toward transportation. Additionally, low-wage jobs often do not provide benefits, including adequate sick or personal leave.

Average Wages - Top 5 Sectors for Allentown Residents Employed Outside of City vs Top 5 Sectors for Commuters Employed in City



Source: U.S. Census Bureau; 2013 - 2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Allentown Median Household Income compared to other geographies



Source: U.S. Census Bureau; 2013 - 2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



Community Action Development Corporation of Allentown - Main Office

Source: City of Allentown

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN ALLENTOWN TODAY

Allentown is served by highly capable economic development organizations, including the Allentown Economic Development Corporation (AEDC), the Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce, and the Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation (LVEDC). These organizations represent the business voice of the community, interfacing with companies interested in coming to the region and facilitating connections within the area to find the right parcel for development. At the city level, the Business Expansion, Attraction, and Retention Office housed in the city's Department of Community and Economic Development is the liaison with business in Allentown.

Because the Business Expansion, Attraction, and Retention Office is locally focused, their actions will be more relevant to small- to medium-sized businesses within the city. The Allentown Vision 2030 Economic Development recommendations consider this role and the roles that other municipal systems such as planning and zoning, and public infrastructure development have on the economic landscape of the city. For example, there is guidance regarding local land-use and zoning decisions that, when implemented, can support sustainable economic growth. Taking an economic development approach to city land use planning serves as a long-term mechanism to enhance fiscal health of the city and school district.

The Vision 2030 economic development recommendations build upon the city's strengths and competitive advantages and considers how economic development relates to the four other Allentown Vision 2030 urban systems—Housing, Accessibility + Connectivity, Services + Amenities, and Living Systems. It is important that the City of Allentown continues to support and champion economic development efforts and work in partnership with private and public leaders to implement effective strategies. A focus on jobs and business growth during a time of expanding population and industry will allow the City of Allentown to compete in an ever-changing, rapidly-advancing global economy.

KEY THEMES

The key themes emerged from a combination of community engagement, data analysis, and community survey feedback. They have informed the Principles and actions suggested for this Urban System.

DOMINANT INDUSTRIES

Many of the major industries that anchored Allentown's economy have changed. Manufacturing continues to have a strong presence in Allentown and the Lehigh Valley, but is changing with the rise of automation and emerging sectors—for example, the Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation has identified Life Science Research and Manufacturing as an important sub-sector. As seen in the graph below, Healthcare and Transportation and Warehousing are the fastest growing industries in the region.

Furthermore, the revitalization of the downtown that began in 2009 has brought many new jobs and residents into the urban core. This growth represents a significant shift in the city's employment base.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Having a robust entrepreneurial ecosystem allows anyone to start and grow a business at any scale, from a local corner store to a new tech company. In turn, this grows the economy and provides economic mobility. In a community such as Allentown, with a large percentage of foreign-born people and a high concentration of poverty, entrepreneurship can provide opportunities and decrease economic inequality.

WORKFORCE OF THE FUTURE

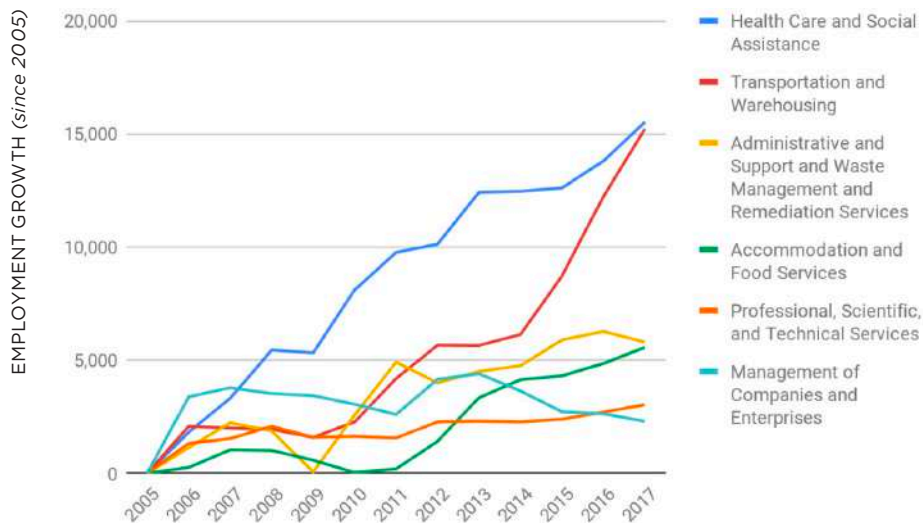
Employment in the future will not look the same as it does today. The World Economic Forum estimates 65% of children entering primary school today will work in jobs that do not exist yet. From factory floors to office buildings, the skills needed to succeed will be different, and the way that those skills are acquired will be different. Allentown has the benefit of a growing population that is younger than the rest of Pennsylvania, and the potential to deliver educational opportunities to this population in an innovative way that can increase economic mobility and grow the city's economy.



AEDC Adaptive Reuse Flex Office and Coworking Space

Source: AllentownAEDC.com

Lehigh Valley Employment growth from 2005 to 2017



Source: Quarterly Workforce Indicators, U.S. Census Bureau, 2017

How does economic development align with our vision?

ECONOMIC INCLUSIVITY

For economic development, a strong educational foundation, access to training and skill building programs, and robust workforce development efforts are essential for inclusive and equitable growth. In Allentown, over 75% of residents do not have a college degree (2017 American Community Survey), indicating an opportunity to connect Allentonians with technical training programs, higher education institutions, and the trades to build skills and to access jobs in some of the region's major sectors such as healthcare, transportation and logistics, manufacturing, and professional/administrative positions. In our neighborhoods and on our main streets, small businesses are the heart of Allentown's economy – providing local, family sustaining jobs and essential services and amenities to the community. An inclusive and equitable Allentown economy supports businesses of all sizes and connects our residents with educational and training opportunities to access living wage jobs to sustain themselves and their families.

CITY AS A STEWARD

Smart use of land can strengthen the tax base which, in turn, will strengthen the financial position of the city. Strengthening the tax base can improve essential services funded by property taxes such as the Allentown School District, road repair and maintenance, and provision of other essential services. Development that supports a mix of uses such as commercial and residential and strategically increases density in areas well-served by transit, can help promote vibrant neighborhoods that provide opportunities for new and existing residents.

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Ongoing encouragement and investment highlighting arts and diversity in Allentown will continue to build the city's reputation as a regional destination. Allentown's cultural and ethnic diversity is an asset and is celebrated throughout our city in many ways, including the diverse offering of restaurants, shops, and festivals. Expanding opportunities for entrepreneurs and small businesses to grow these enterprises is an important economic development tool for Allentown.

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT & COLLABORATION

As the City of Allentown carries out economic development objectives, the residents can expect transparency in how citizen tax dollars are used to promote the city and add new jobs. Knowing the priorities set forth in this plan, residents, through the neighborhood planning framework, and through the legislative process, will hold the city accountable, and will work collaboratively to implement the plan.



Allentown's North Seventh Street Corridor

Source: The Morning Call, "Allentown thought downtown development would extend to Seventh Street. But instead it's thriving on its own."



Former Neuweiler Brewery

Source: City of Allentown



2016 Puerto Rican Day Parade

Source: The Morning Call, "Allentown Puerto Rican Day Parade 'bigger than ever!'"



Allentown Vision 2030 Build Session

Source: City of Allentown

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- ED1a Local Employers.
- ED1b Tax Incentives For Targeted Sectors.
- ED1c Market NIZ to Investors and Developers.
- ED1d Appropriate Manufacturing Space.
- ED1e Zoning Update: Neighborhood Mixed-use Overlay District.

Principle 1

Increase Local Employment

Over eighty percent of employed people in Allentown leave the city for work on a daily basis. This employment pattern contributes to traffic congestion and longer commute times and transportation costs for these Allentown residents. Additionally, Allentown Vision 2030 baseline research has found that often jobs outside of the city do not pay a living wage. One way to balance the uneven job distribution pattern is to encourage more jobs in the City of Allentown that are available to the people who do not have more than a high school degree.

Generally, there should be a push for more jobs to be brought to Allentown, for those with and without post-high school degrees. Higher-paying jobs in the city will ensure that workers will be better positioned to purchase a home or rent one of the newer multi-family units in the downtown. Locating jobs in the city where transportation is more easily accessed will also help reduce barriers to employment. Workers without a post-high school degree can access these jobs through job training programs. Another path to higher wages is to support manufacturing in the City of Allentown, as wages in manufacturing are higher than other jobs attainable without a post-high school degree.

Local employment is maintained through retention and expansion of existing businesses. The Business Expansion, Attraction, and Retention Office within the Department of Community and Economic Development can assist with this by building relationships with businesses through outreach meetings, in which opportunities and challenges can be identified. Attracting new companies to the city is also important by continuing to work with local and regional economic development partners to attract new companies to Allentown.

Increasing jobs and wages in Allentown will have many favorable impacts. Higher paying jobs provide disposable income, which can support small businesses and cultural assets. Furthermore, the combination of residential development and job development will attract some of the 80% of workers that travel to Allentown on a daily basis to move to the city.

At the first Community Collaboration Meeting in Nov. 2018, Job Opportunities was one of the top 5 quality of life issues that attendees selected as most important to them.

ED1a Local Employment.

Work with new and existing businesses in the city to identify types of jobs and skill sets needed. The Business Expansion, Attraction, and Retention Office can meet with new prospective businesses to the area to identify their job needs and provide information on the current workforce. Through those discussions, partnerships with area institutions such as Lehigh Carbon Community College, Muhlenberg College and local technical and trades institutions and training programs etc. can be identified. Those partnerships can lead to the development of training programs to support Allentown residents and prepare them for the new jobs being created as well as continuing to support the existing positions. Information can be shared on the existing job training programs and trends to the Allentown School District, so that they can prepare students for the jobs in the city.

La Mega Radio Station: Job Fair with Local Employers at the PPL Center

Source: Victor Martinez of LA MEGA Radio Station



ED1b Tax Incentives for Targeted Sectors.

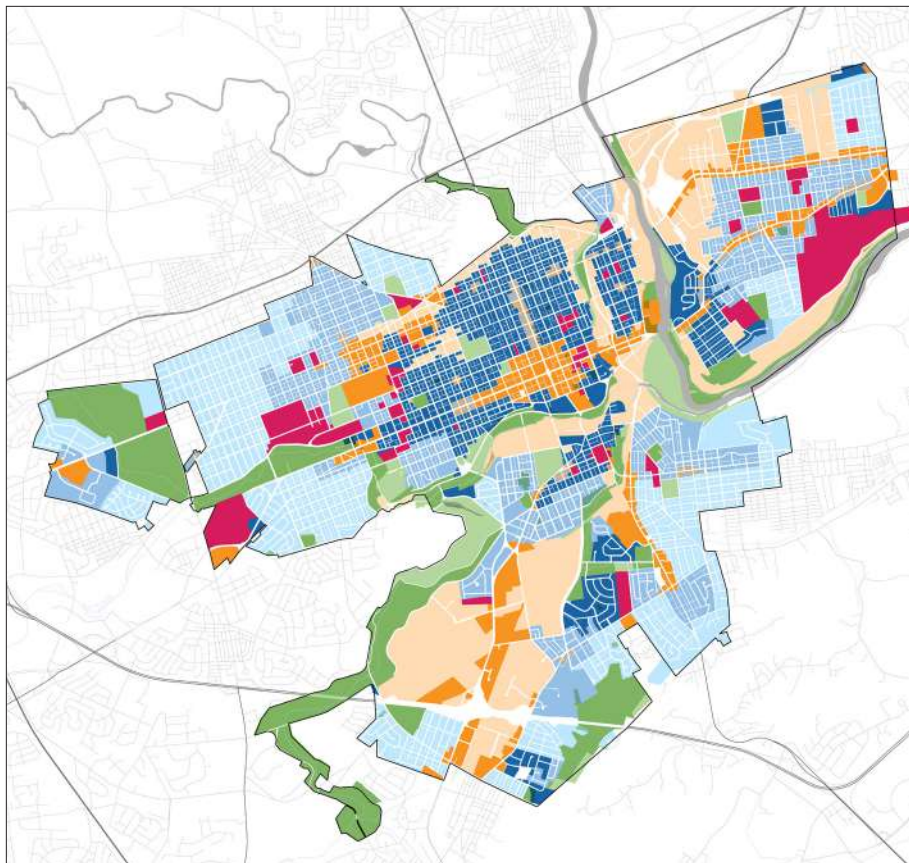
Manufacturing continues to play a large part in the economies of Allentown and the Lehigh Valley. Where possible and economically feasible, manufacturing facilities in the city should be maintained and encouraged through tax incentives. The City of Allentown and the Allentown Economic Development Corporation have collaborated on a series of re-industrialization studies that highlight the importance of manufacturing and suggest incentives to improve existing sites, such as:

- Highlight locations in Keystone Opportunity Zone and Enterprise Zone
- Tax Increment Financing
- Assistance from the State of Pennsylvania
- Federal Assistance via the Environmental Protection Agency
- Federal Assistance via Economic Development

Pennsylvania enables municipalities to offer a locally specific tax incentive called Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance. This incentive, known as LERTA, enables municipal authorities to create ordinances temporarily exempting the payment of certain real estate taxes. The purpose of this tax exemption structure is to encourage economic development in specifically designated areas by allowing property owners to continue paying the property's current taxes for a set amount of time, rather than the increased tax that would result from new construction and improvements.

NEXT STEPS:

- Consider tax incentives for targeted sector of manufacturing.



ED1c Market NIZ to Investors and Developers.

The Allentown Neighborhood Improvement Zone (NIZ) has generated \$689 million in total investments, development, and revitalization in Center City. New multi-family housing units, while not directly supported through the NIZ, have been constructed to provide more downtown housing options targeted at employees in the new office and commercial developments. Additionally, new employers such as ADP have relocated in the area and are expected to grow over the next several years.

The NIZ is a special taxing district created by state law that is utilized to encourage development and revitalization. Approximately 128 acres in Center City Allentown have been designated. Certain state and local tax revenues generated by new and existing businesses are captured to pay debt services on bonds and loans. While a number of taxes are captured and utilized for debt service as part of the NIZ, real estate taxes continue to go to the school district, county and city. Ongoing development in the NIZ will continue to improve the tax base and bring more businesses and people to Allentown.

NEXT STEPS:

- Continue to support the development of infrastructure and city services, including policing, throughout the NIZ and adjacent neighborhoods.
- Continue to work with Allentown Neighborhood Improvement Zone Development Authority and development partners to ensure quality development in the downtown and the waterfront.

Center Allentown, Artswalk

Source: Jordan Platton Photography for City of Allentown



ED1d Appropriate Manufacturing Space.

Regional experts in the manufacturing sector note that most new manufacturers are seeking 40,000 - 80,000 square foot buildings that are in close proximity to highways. Allentown currently has spaces fitting this building type, including options in the South Allentown Opportunity Zone near I-78 and in East Allentown near US-22. Additionally, redevelopment areas in industrial corridors such as Irving Street in East Allentown and in mixed-use corridors like South Fourth Street provide opportunities to build out new space.

Experts also identified a need for smaller flex manufacturing spaces. These kinds of spaces would offer environments that have a mixture of uses and can accommodate larger equipment. Companies that are interested in these spaces are tech companies that have R&D and warehousing on site. Flex spaces can also be an appropriate place for maker spaces. Considering a Flex Zone Overlay along Hanover Avenue and Union Boulevard in East Allentown would be a way to encourage this type of development. Currently, there is a large amount of land along Union Boulevard that is zoned Highway Business District that could be re-purposed as flexible manufacturing space. The accompanying Areas of Allentown section provides more context for how this change could be integrated into Union Boulevard.

NEXT STEPS:

- Categorize sites appropriate for buildings of 40,000 - 80,000 square feet and publicize them in partnership with economic development entities.
- Consider how to incentivize flexible office/fabrication space.
- Work with economic development organizations to promote manufacturing sites.



More good jobs for middle and lower income people; training for manufacturing jobs that increase income to pay for better housing.
- From community survey

Urban Manufacturing Space in Allentown

Source: City of Allentown

ED1e Zoning Update: Neighborhood Mixed-use Overlay District.

Walkable neighborhoods with a variety of neighborhood serving businesses and services can create hubs of activity across the city. By approaching business development at the neighborhood-scale and utilizing both the zoning code rewrite and neighborhood planning framework, the city can work alongside the community to determine where and how additional commercial spaces could function in neighborhoods.

Like many cities in the United States, Allentown's zoning regulations are typically separated by use, with residential, commercial, and industrial uses located in different areas. As the city begins the process of updating the zoning code, there are areas, usually located at the edges of these zones, where it could be beneficial to permit a mixture of two or three uses. These areas are highlighted in the following section, "Areas of Allentown." Many cities are adopting mixed-use zones, which allow for different types of uses next to or near one another, and create vibrant and diverse neighborhood centers.

Currently, Allentown allows for some mixed uses, through the zoning categorization of Limited Business/Residential. This allows for businesses, residences, and some industrial uses to be combined in an area. However, there are some inconsistencies that can limit vibrant and accessible neighborhoods – such as not permitting bus or passenger rail terminals as a use. These types of inconsistencies should be addressed in the zoning update as combining dense, mixed-use development supports transit use; residents who live and work in this area have access to alternate modes of transportation.

Furthermore, the uses permitted by Limited Business/Residential are specific and do not necessarily reflect the types of uses that are found in neighborhoods today. Limited Business/Residential also does not support hotels, which may be an appropriate use for more intensive mixed-use environments.

NEXT STEPS:

- As part of the Zoning Code Rewrite, explore expanding Limited Business/Residential Zoning to have a larger range of uses.



Neighborhood Businesses in Allentown

Source: City of Allentown

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- ED2a Increase the Use of Training and Education Programs.
- ED2b Second Language Programs.
- ED2c Apprenticeship Programs.
- ED2d Digital Access Programs.

Principle 2

Increase Access to Training and Skill Building

The Workforce Board Lehigh Valley estimates that by 2026, nearly 6% more workers will be needed across all occupations in the Lehigh Valley, which means that between the number of people retiring and new jobs added, 38,176 new workers will be needed. The occupations with the highest demand are in the health, labor, and service fields. In order to keep up with demand, it is necessary to increase access to educational and training opportunities.

Allentown's residents have access to a number of educational opportunities, including options both inside and outside of traditional academic tracks. Institutions such as Muhlenberg College, Cedar Crest College, and Lehigh Carbon County Community College offer degree programs, while IBEW 375, Lehigh Career and Technical Institute, and others offer building trade certifications, trainings, and apprenticeships. Predictions for future employment suggest that there will be a specific need for licensed truck drivers and nursing professionals. There will also be a continued need for language and communications skills for service professionals. However, the economy is changing rapidly, and many jobs of the future have not yet emerged. Having a nimble education system, from K-12 and beyond will help Allentown's resident adapt to these changes. However, the economy is changing rapidly, and many jobs of the future have not yet emerged.

Let the public know how helpful CareerLink is for all individuals to get training.
- From community survey

ED2a Increase the Use of Training and Education Programs.

The Workforce Board Lehigh Valley and PA CareerLink Lehigh Valley programs serve as a first stop for job seekers in the region. These organizations help job seekers by supplying them with information about potential job opportunities, and the training needed to access these jobs.

Throughout the Allentown Vision 2030 community planning process, job training and access to educational programs was highlighted by the community as an important aspect of workforce development. Ongoing engagement with CareerLink would increase the utilization of training and education programs. The city may be able to strengthen connections between CareerLink, Lehigh Career and Technical Institute (LCTI) and the Allentown School District, as well as the organizations serving low-income populations in Allentown.

CareerLink works with job seekers to determine the best path to a career, which could include entering into a four-year college or university, seeking a certificate, or pursuing an associate degree.

ED2b

Second Language Programs.

English proficiency significantly increases wage-earning potential. With 17% of the population in Allentown foreign born, access to English as a Second Language programs is important to advancing economic mobility and opportunity. In Allentown, organizations such as the Hispanic American Organization and the Literacy Center offer English as a Second Language. The Allentown School District also provides programming to assist parents.

In the future, there may be a need to specify the subject matter of English proficiency courses. For example, participants in community engagement activities suggested having an English for Entrepreneurs class. With the increase in demand for service jobs and manufacturing, there could be specific courses in these areas. Ongoing engagement with employers can inform which language skills are most needed.



*City of Allentown Training at Workforce Board LV
555 Union Blvd*

Source: City of Allentown

NEXT STEPS:

- Promote training and educational programs in high schools, via CareerLink and other partners such as LCCC, Muhlenberg College and Cedar Crest College .
- Connect nonprofit organizations to CareerLink.

NEXT STEPS:

- Promote access to English as a Second Language Training.

ED2c Apprenticeship Programs.

An apprenticeship is a program that trains a worker to become skilled in a particular trade. Apprenticeships combine hands-on work with classroom learning to train the apprentice. As the apprentice is learning, they are also applying the lessons through working part-time and receiving payment for their work.

Apprenticeships are most often used in the trades and in manufacturing. For example, IBEW 375 offers apprenticeship programs for electricians. Apprenticeships are most often undertaken as a program after high school. An advantage for those who choose to enter into apprenticeships is that they begin to make money as part of the training program.

In the Lehigh Valley, the manufacturing sector employed 33,712 workers in 2018, and it continues to be the second largest job sector in the region's economy. Establishing apprenticeship programs to introduce students to manufacturing can ensure that this sector has a steady pipeline of workers while also providing young people with well-paying jobs.

NEXT STEPS:

- Highlight apprenticeship programs for young people.
- Convene local manufacturers to discuss potential apprenticeship programs.

Governor Wolf Visits IBEW 375

Source: Pennsylvania State Website, "Governor Wolf Announces New Apprenticeships for Clinical Research, Residential Electricians"



ED2d Digital Access Programs.

Digital literacy will be the most needed skill of the future. In order to keep up with the rapidly changing technology sector, there is a need to offer more informal types of education. For example, coding bootcamps are short, 6 to 12-week programs that teach basic skills in application development. These programs have been in existence for several years, and some are more reputable than others. Vetting coding programs and working to coordinate the program with an organization such as CareerLink or the Allentown Public Library can ensure that Allentown residents have access to a high-quality program.

Digital access can be improved by adding wifi to places that already are heavily frequented. In Detroit, the Mayor's Office partnered with Libraries Without Borders and several other non-profits to host "Wash and Learn" a summer learning program that creates pop-up spaces in laundromats throughout the city. WIFI is provided by an Internet company oriented toward education, which comes with pre-set content filters.

NEXT STEPS:

- Investigate coding bootcamp programs.
- Coordinate with a training entity to offer digital education.

Rendering of new Allentown Elementary and Community School to Open 2020

Source: Breslin Ridyard Fadero Architects, The Morning Call "Allentown to build 'playful' elementary school with room for community services"



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- ED3a** Support Spatial Needs of Entrepreneurs Throughout Company Life Cycle.
- ED3b** Activate Public Places.
- ED3c** Retail Pop-Ups.
- ED3d** Maker Spaces and Incubators.
- ED3e** Create a Pipeline.
- ED3f** Offer a Path to Legitimization.
- ED3g** Financing.

Principle 3

Foster Small Business and Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurs and small businesses play a fundamental role in local communities and their economies. They affect local competitiveness, diversify the economic base, and stimulate economic development. Small businesses serve as employers, tax revenue generators, economic supporters, property owners, renters, and providers of economic stability.

Having a robust entrepreneurial ecosystem means that anyone can start and grow a business at any scale, from a local corner store to a new tech company. In turn, this grows the economy and provides economic mobility. In a community such as Allentown, with a large percentage of foreign-born people and a high concentration of poverty, entrepreneurship can provide opportunities and decrease economic inequality.

The Census Bureau tracks how many businesses are started each year by county and Metropolitan Statistical Area, which is the way the Census categorizes regions. Lehigh County has a lower establishment birth rate (the percent of an area's businesses that are new) than the rest of Pennsylvania. This lower rate may be influenced by many factors. For example, some business establishments may not register and would therefore not be tallied in this count. However, it does point to a need to focus on increasing the business start rate.

The Number of Establishments "Born" in 2015 Compared to the Baseline in 2014

	Establishments	Establishment Births	Birth Rate
Lehigh County	118,093	74,986	26,769
Pennsylvania	121,283	75,707	27,109

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; 2014-2015 SUSB Annual Datasets by Establishment Industry (County)

ED3a Support Spatial Needs of Entrepreneurs Throughout Company Life Cycle.

There are many stages of a business lifecycle, from seed and development to startup, growth, expansion and maturity. The need for varying kinds of spaces differ throughout each stage. While starting home-based businesses is a common practice for entrepreneurs, there is a need for appropriate spaces so these businesses can grow. Collaborative spaces help expose entrepreneurs to new markets while allowing them to access available services.

Bridging the gap from startup to intermediary spaces looks different for different sized businesses. For very small businesses, such as a food entrepreneurs, spatial needs could be met through a network of community kitchens rather than cooking from home. These small entrepreneurs could then sell their product via city-supported markets.



Renderings of Incremental Retail Space

Source: Mike Thompson

NEXT STEPS:

- Provide spaces for entrepreneurs to grow.

At the first Community Collaboration Meeting, 30% of our participants agreed that it is important to support small business development and keep small businesses in Allentown.

ED3b Activate Public Places.

Informal and temporary spaces like farmers' markets, festivals, and pop-up retail spaces make it possible for entrepreneurs to test out concepts without signing a lease or investing heavily in equipment. The graphic above shows how entrepreneurs might grow from small, temporary settings such as public markets, into more permanent storefronts. Allentown has several environments where entrepreneurs can test their ideas, from festivals and markets to the Allentown Farmers Market and Downtown Allentown Market. All of these informal business spaces are dependent on the strong activation of public places to provide customers. Activation can happen through art-based programming and cultural festivals, which have the added benefit of highlighting Allentown as a regional destination.

Downtown Allentown Market

Source: City Center, LVED, "Downtown Allentown Market Holds Long-Awaited Opening"



Fairgrounds Farmer's Market

Source: Joana Ireland, U.S. News: Real Estate



NEXT STEPS:

- Provide opportunities for entrepreneurs by activating the city's open spaces for public market use, supporting retail and food enterprises.
- Ensure that informal business spaces have an easy path to permitting.
- Support street festivals, weekly markets, and other events that allow local businesses to vend.
- Develop small spaces in new construction and in existing buildings for small businesses to start. Small spaces have lower rents making it easier for small businesses to get started.
- Develop spaces for flea markets and community yard sales.

More affordable eating out options in walking distance. A space with multiple casual eating options like Easton Public Market, or Ponce City Market in Atlanta.
-From community survey

ED3c Retail Pop-Ups.

Pop-ups are temporary spaces that can energize entertainment districts by creating a buzz around a brand or concept for a short time, such as 1 - 2 months. For example, pop-up bars might focus on a holiday theme, and pop-up retail might be in partnership with a celebrity or social-media themed concept.

Pop-ups are best administered through a liaison between businesses and landlords. Building owners do not want to be encumbered by the administrative demands of short-term leases; a liaison can work with them to come to an initial set of terms, then administer the paperwork and tenant search. On the tenant side, liaisons would vet the tenant and establish lease terms and other ground rules, such as how many events would be held in the space.

NEXT STEPS:

- Set up retail spaces in vacant storefronts and buildings, preferably in proximity to entertainment assets.
- Act as a liaison between businesses and owners.

ED3d Maker Spaces and Incubators.

There are already resources available in the Lehigh Valley region to support the development of entrepreneurs and small businesses. The Bridgeworks Enterprise Center is providing entrepreneurial and educational experiences to small manufacturing and tech startups. Maker spaces include Lehigh University's Ben Franklin Tech Ventures Incubator, and Pi: Partnership for Innovation in Bethlehem. Additional incubators and maker spaces can add value to Allentown's growing entrepreneurial ecosystem and network of support. Spaces can be targeted to niche industries or specific demographic groups.

For entrepreneurs who are starting businesses in incubators throughout the region, there is an opportunity to offer limited-term leases in Allentown in partnership with existing business owners. More interim spaces for small businesses could be accomplished through refurbishing small and medium-sized buildings.

NEXT STEPS:

- Repurpose blighted, industrial buildings for community-based and industry-specific incubator and maker spaces that can help entrepreneurs develop a product.
- Facilitate growth from maker spaces to commercial or retail spaces in Allentown.
- Explore partnerships with existing entrepreneur-focused entities Bridgeworks Enterprise Center, Lehigh Valley University's Ben Franklin Tech Ventures Incubator

MTS Ventures Incubator Program at Bridgeworks

Source: MTS Design & Manufacture, "Manufacturing Stays Strong in Allentown's City Center"



ED3e Create a Pipeline.

Creating spaces for entrepreneurs to grow from pop-ups to leases establishes a path for physical growth. Identifying the related services and support needed at every level will help to identify gaps and provide entrepreneurs at any stage an “on-ramp” into the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

One way to do this is to establish a “portal” to funnel entrepreneurs to the services and funding sources that best suit their needs. This online portal could expand on the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Map that Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation (LVEDC) has created.

Another way to create a pipeline of entrepreneurs and provide support would be to establish groups of startup cohorts, or small businesses in the same field. These groups would ideally be headed by a mentor—either a seasoned businessperson, or an economic development representative - to set up meetings and provide guidance. Beyond making the resources more easily accessible, it is important to emphasize the quality of life aspects of the city when trying to attract and retain entrepreneurs. The city’s assets such as food, culture and activities are all useful when attracting businesses to the area.

Furthermore, educational institutions serve as a hotbed of entrepreneurial activity, from inspiring and encouraging students to start their own businesses to offering services to existing entrepreneurs. Partnerships with Allentown School District, Muhlenberg College, Lehigh Carbon Community College, Cedar Crest College, Northampton Community College, Moravian College, Lehigh Career and Technical Institute (LCTI), and Lehigh University can expose students to entrepreneurial possibilities in Allentown.

NEXT STEPS:

- Establish online source for entrepreneurial guidance.
- Create cohort groups of entrepreneurs.
- Reach out to local educational institutions.
- Consider partnership with Promise Neighborhoods Entrepreneurship without Limits and Community Action Development Corporation of Allentown (CADCA).

*Food Vendor - 2019
International Cultural Festival*
Source: LDG Creations



ED3f Offering a Path to Legitimization.

Unregulated businesses create a less than ideal situation for both the city and the operators. These businesses are not able to scale, or to access traditional sources of capital, which means that their ability to grow and hire others is limited. The city cannot properly regulate these businesses including ensuring they are licensed and collecting taxes.

Certification in the trades and other methods to legitimize business owners operating without licenses would enable more people to enter the formal economy. Additionally, professionals who received their degrees in foreign countries may not be able to practice their profession due to licensing restrictions, which means their skills go unused while working jobs for which they may be overqualified. Connecting these individuals to training programs can set them on a path to certification in the United States.

The Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians in Philadelphia has pioneered a program focused on upskilling credentialed immigrants. Through their International Professionals Program (IPP), recent immigrants are offered 8 weeks of intensive training, and an additional 6 months, of career coaching and counseling. A suggestion from the Allentown Vision 2030 Build Sessions is to support entrepreneurship training that is culturally competent and provided in multiple languages. There is also a recognized need to provide entrepreneurship services and outreach to those who are returning from prison.

NEXT STEPS:

- Promote career education and counseling services.
- Reach out to businesses that may be operating under the table to explain benefits of securing a business license and insurance.



Welcoming Center and Department Commerce Staff with City Fellows

Source: Philadelphia, Welcoming Center

ED3g Financing.

Access to capital is the first thing on the minds of many entrepreneurs and small businesses. In the region, there are many ways to access loans to support businesses, from start-ups to businesses growing and expanding.

In Allentown, the following products are available for businesses starting out or growing:

- Allentown Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund
For businesses within the City of Allentown;
- Enterprise Zone Revolving Loan Fund
Geared toward manufacturing and service-focused businesses located within Allentown's Enterprise Zone;
- Retail Mosaic Self Forgiving Loan Program
\$15,000 that can be used for business expansion costs.

Throughout the Lehigh Valley, other financing is available for businesses at any stage.

Early-Stage Funding

These smaller loan amounts are accessible for businesses just getting started:

- Rising Tide Community Loan Fund
Micro-loans for up to \$50,000. Small business loans for existing businesses, up to \$150,000
- Ben Franklin Technology Partners
Seed investments of \$30,000 to \$150,000, for a total not to exceed \$450,000 per client

Mezzanine Financing

These products are meant to complement bank financing:

- Lehigh and Northampton Counties Revolving Loan Fund
Mezzanine financing, requires one new job for each \$10,000 borrowed

Venture/Angel Investment

Private funding that can require equity from businesses:

- Lehigh Valley Angel Investors
Early-stage funding from \$50,000 to \$150,000
- Originate Ventures
Early-stage funding from \$500,000 to \$4,000,000 for product and services companies located in Pennsylvania and the surrounding regions.

A common theme that emerged from the public meetings, community survey, and build sessions was the need to offer micro-loans in the denomination of \$5,000 to \$10,000. The city should continue to partner with the Rising Tide community Loan Fund to promote their available capital and identify if there are any other gaps that need to be addressed.

NEXT STEPS:

- Coordinate with banks, nonprofits, and foundations to develop a micro-loan fund.
- Establish parameters for making loans from this fund.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- ED4a Historic Preservation.
- ED4b Adaptive Reuse.
- ED4c Opportunity Zones.
- ED4d Brownfield Remediation.
- ED4e Zoning Update:
Business Focus.

Principle 4

Enhance Land Value

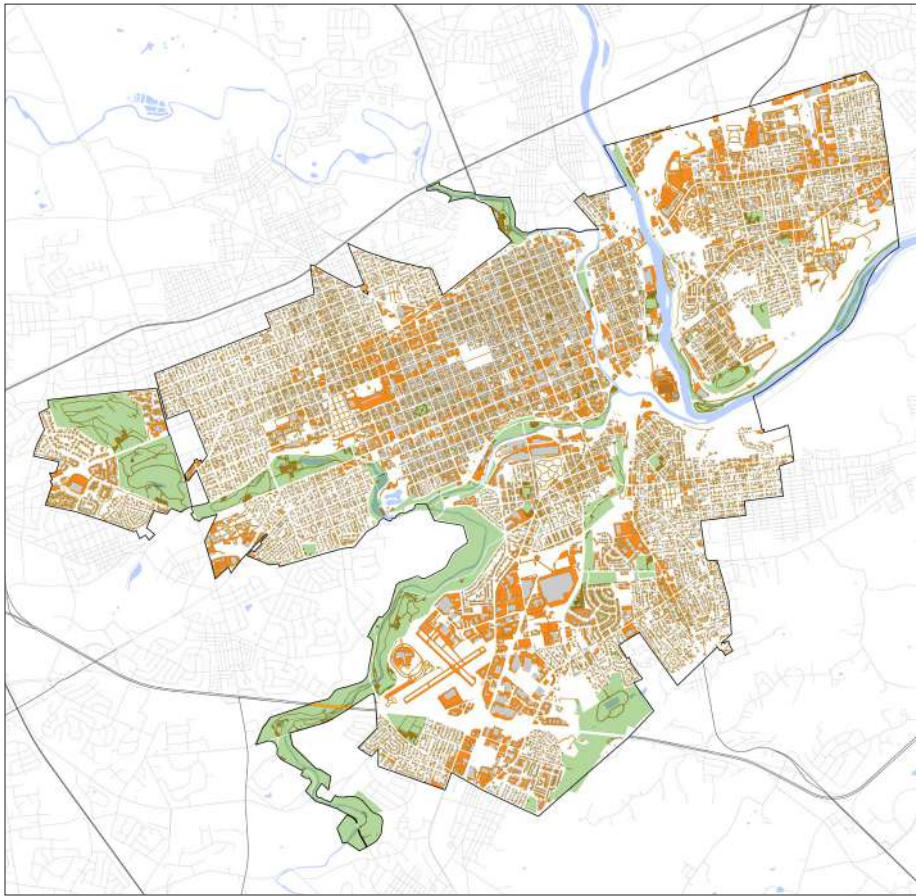
A common misconception is that Allentown is “built out” - that there is no more room for development. Increased development raises the tax base by providing more property taxes and by providing more space for residents and workers, who both pay an income tax. Businesses pay taxes as well, such as a business privilege tax, which ranges from \$1.50 to \$3 levied on every \$1,000 gross volume of business.

In order to optimize the tax-producing capabilities of the city, properties should be well-maintained, and land that is not used for parks, recreation, schools, government, or nonprofits should be considered for development. In response to the claim that the town is “built out,” analysis of land use in Allentown suggests that there is space for more development, through creative and innovative approaches.

Impervious surfaces, shown on the map on the following page, are parking lots or other concrete or blacktop areas. Changing parking regulations can lead to more land for development. If transit accessibility increases and more walkable communities are created, decreasing parking can be less of an inconvenience.

Vacant land in the city is categorized into different types of vacancy, which helps to understand how the parcel might need to be remediated. The city should consider whether these parcels are in a special incentive zone, such as a federally designated Opportunity Zone or the Neighborhood Improvement Zone, and their zoning classification (i.e. residential, commercial, industrial, institutional).

Many of the recommendations in this section address the city’s need to prioritize development. Some parcels stand out as strong candidates to attract investment, including parcels in the NIZ and in Opportunity Zones. Other parcels are important due to the impact that redevelopment could have on the community, such as the Allentown State Hospital site. The Allentown Vision 2030 plan makes more specific recommendations for how some sites may be developed. These are outlined in greater detail in the Areas of Allentown section.



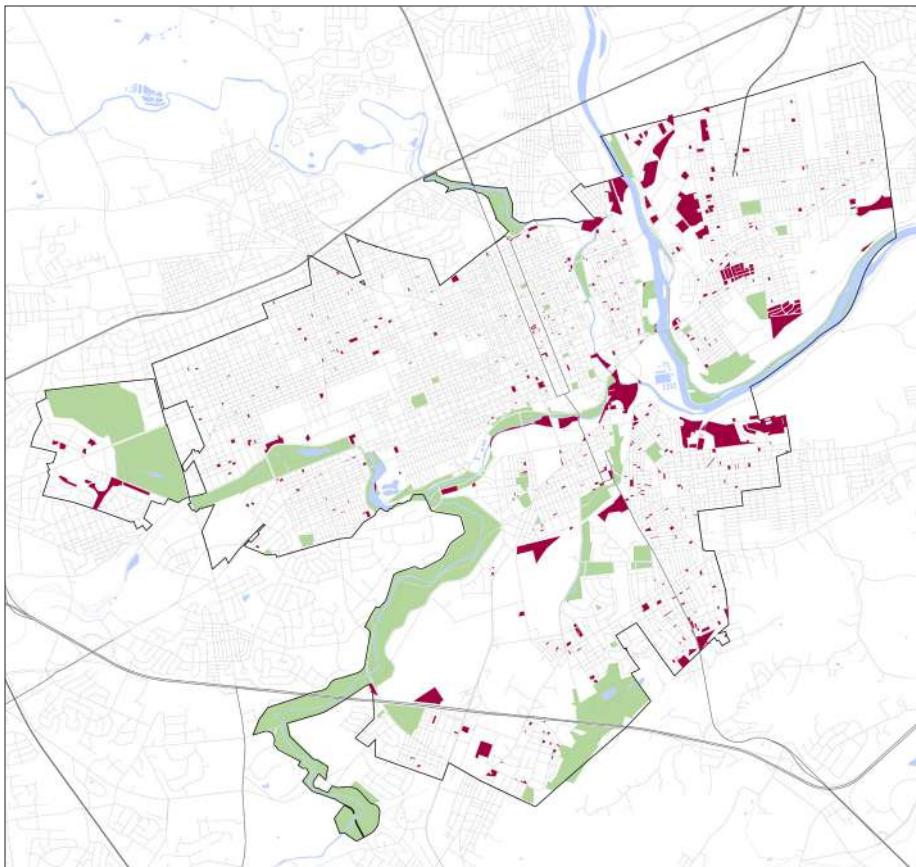
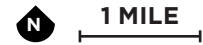
IMPERVIOUS SURFACES MAP

Source: City of Allentown

- Impervious Area
- City of Allentown Buildings

BASE LAYERS

- City of Allentown Boundary
- Lehigh County Roads
- Lehigh County Water
- City of Allentown Parks



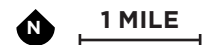
VACANT PARCELS MAP

Source: City of Allentown

- Vacant Parcels

BASE LAYERS

- City of Allentown Boundary
- Lehigh County Roads
- Lehigh County Water
- City of Allentown Parks



ED4a Historic Preservation.

Historic preservation of residential, commercial, and office buildings in Allentown helps tell the city's story, build its status as a destination by attracting heritage tourism, and increase tax revenue by encouraging the improvement and reuse of buildings. The former Allentown National Bank Building on N 7th Street located near the corner of Hamilton Street in the downtown business district is an example of a large-scale historic preservation project in the city with \$11M invested to create housing for those 62 years of age and older.

Currently there are three historic districts in Allentown—Old Allentown, Old Fairgrounds, and West Park—and the preservation focus has primarily been residential. The city should expand the scope of historic preservation in Allentown to include commercial, office, and industrial buildings.

Beyond local policies, there are state and federal historic preservation income tax credits for income producing buildings that have been successful in rehabbing buildings and creating jobs. The National Park Service estimates that in 2017, in Pennsylvania, \$368 million was invested in rehabilitation of historic buildings and nearly 6,000 jobs were created as a result of the federal historic preservation tax credit. Use of these tax credits requires compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitation. The tax credits encourage repair of character defining features rather than replacement.

ED4b Adaptive Reuse.

Adaptive reuse refers to using a building for a purpose other than what it was initially designed for. An example would be turning a former mill building into apartments or converting a warehouse into a brewery. Adaptive reuse has the potential to enliven neighborhoods and create interesting, walkable places that attract customers from the region while improving the tax base.

Adaptive reuse is encouraged by the federal and state historic preservation tax credits which allow conversion to new and different uses through the flexibility of the Rehabilitation standards. Because buildings are being converted into a different use, elements such as floor plans, materials, and entry and exits may change. Adaptive Reuse projects are a great way to activate under-utilized structures throughout the city while maintaining some of their historic qualities.

NEXT STEPS:

- Conduct historic resource surveys and create an inventory of all historic and potentially historic resources in Allentown. This will identify the most significant historic resources with potential for reuse and identify those that are worthy of protection.
- Work with owners or and potential developers to bring these properties back to a functional state, while also retaining historical integrity.

NEXT STEPS:

- Coordinate with Allentown Historical Architectural Review Board to determine which sites are eligible for adaptive reuse and which should be pursued as historic sites.
- Determine priority adaptive reuse sites.
- Market these sites to developers.
- Work with Allentown Economic Development Corporation to provide financing that will stabilize and retrofit.
- Other potential stakeholders include Historic Architectural Review Board, Allentown Planning Commission, Zoning Hearing Board, Greater Lehigh Valley Realtors.

*Stop tearing down old buildings and challenge new development to adapt to and/or work around—without old buildings Allentown will someday have no meaningful identity. Embrace the architectural legacy of Allentown and apply it to everything in some way.
—Community survey respondent*

ED4c Opportunity Zones.

Opportunity Zones are a federal program signed into law in the 2017 Tax Act. Opportunity Zones are designed to funnel capital gains into designated low-income census tracts. Investors in these Opportunity Zones receive the benefit of not paying capital gains tax for up to ten years, and of not paying capital gains taxes on additional value accrued during that time. Investors in these Opportunity Zones receive the benefit of not paying capital gains tax for up to ten years, and they do not have to pay capital gains taxes on additional value accrued during that 10-year period. It should be noted that Opportunity Fund Investors are not required to consult the community or the municipality before beginning any development process; Opportunity Zones are only regulated at the federal level, and investors will be primarily motivated by seeking a large return and an investment that satisfies the regulations to decrease their taxes.

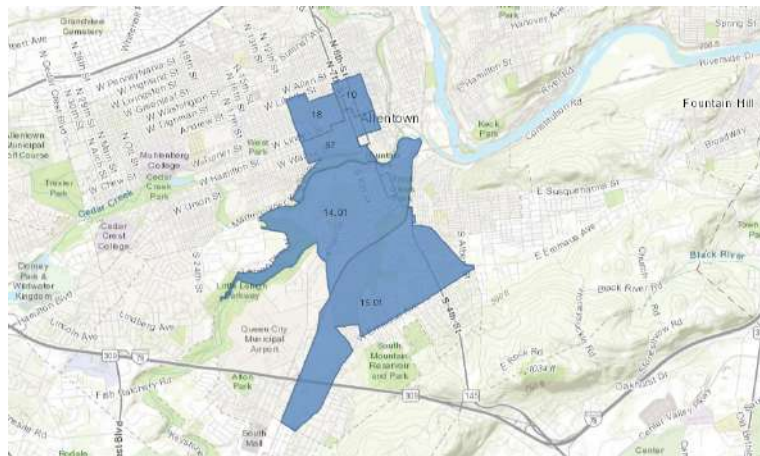
Allentown has five Opportunity Zones (OZs), shown in the map below. They include the downtown business district as well as two large, heavily industrialized tracts in South Allentown. The Center City NIZ is wholly within a federally designated Opportunity Zone and includes several properties eligible for development. The industrial sites, including the former Mack Truck headquarters, and several tracts in South Allentown offer an opportunity for industrial space that is close to Interstate 78.

Opportunity Zones are invested in by Opportunity Funds, which are run by investors, banks, and special interest firms. Targeting this wide-ranging group requires a combination of collaborative strategic planning, marketing, and policy alignment. Many communities are attempting to influence development in Opportunity Zones by creating an Investment Prospectus to highlight projects that would best serve the surrounding neighborhood. Projects could include affordable housing, or needed retail, such as a grocery store. Community engagement is important in forming this list of projects, and local government involvement is also needed to determine what financial incentives or infrastructure improvements are needed to improve the value proposition for investors.

Once a list of projects are determined, parcels that are for sale or available for investment in the OZs should be marketed via website, as is currently underway with www.allentownopportunityzone.com. They can also be marketed nationally on platforms such as www.oppsites.com, which matches projects with investors.

NEXT STEPS:

- Create a list of available sites for development throughout the OZs.
- Determine key sites to market.
- Advertise these sites to national and regional developers via online platforms and national events with city and regional economic development organizations.
- Ensure that clear rules are in place for what type of development is welcome on each site; work with potential developers to bring clarity to the development process.



Allentown Qualified Opportunity Zones

Source: DCED <http://dced.maps.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=b0bd4d703ddc498fb0a993a00d77ed4c>

ED4d **Brownfield Remediation.**

Due to previous uses, whether large manufacturing sites or a smaller drycleaner, or uses such as a gas station, properties in Allentown that have not yet been redeveloped may be contaminated or considered a brownfield. Locally and on a federal and state level, there are programs to clean these sites, and return them to productive use. The PA State Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) offers the Hazardous Sites Cleanup Program which provides the DEP with the funding and authority to conduct cleanup actions at brownfield sites. The EPA has grants for planning, assessment, cleanup and redevelopment of brownfield sites.

Regionally, the Lehigh Valley Land Recycling Initiative (LVLRI), LVEDC's environmental clean-up coalition, is focused on promoting economic development through the reuse of abandoned and underutilized commercial and industrial properties. LVLRI has already had a successful project in Allentown with the development of Bell Hall, a downtown restaurant.

Federally, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) offers a Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Grant. According to the EPA website, an eligible RLF Grant applicant may apply for up to \$1,000,000 to address brownfield sites contaminated by hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, and/or petroleum.

With Allentown's zoning code update, it is feasible that some parcels that were previously zoned industrial may become eligible for commercial or residential development. These parcels may be brownfields, and changing their zoning could impact the value of the property. Supporting owners and potential owners by connecting them to LVLRI, EPA and DEP, will help to ensure that the preferred development takes place.

NEXT STEPS:

- Maintain an inventory of brownfield sites.
- As zoning changes, monitor parcels that are potential brownfields and reach out to owners.
- Work with Lehigh Valley Land Recycling Initiative; Allentown Economic Development Corporation, and Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation to connect to resources.



Bell Hall, Recent Brownfield Redevelopment Project

Source: Jeff Brown, Lehigh Valley Economic Development

ED4e Zoning Update: Business Focus.

Zoning ordinances are important to economic development, in that they help determine the type of land use that is allowed for a given area, what kinds of facilities can be built, and if there are any kind of land requirements such as setbacks or parking requirements. For businesses, a favorable zoning environment is one where laws do not prohibit growth but are established to facilitate growth. The Zoning Code Update is a Catalytic Action for Allentown Vision 2030, but this section focuses on the importance of zoning for business.

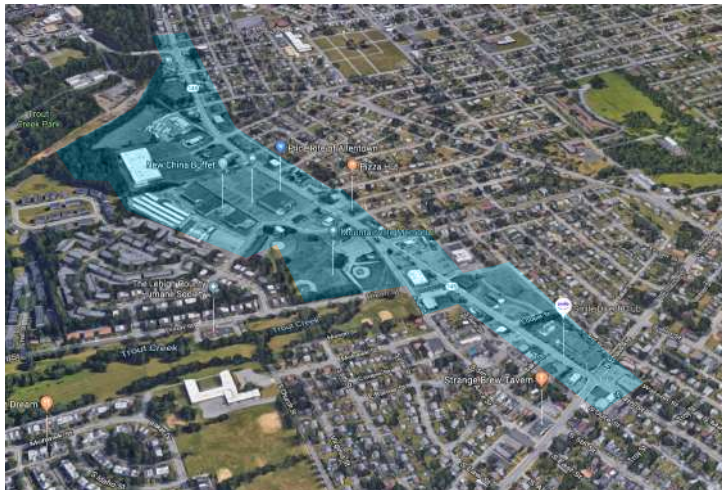
In the current zoning ordinance, Allentown zones are separated by use with residential, commercial, and industrial uses sectioned into different areas. Allentown allows for some co-mingling of uses, through the categorization of Limited Business/Residential, which allows businesses, residences, and some industrial uses to be combined in an area; however, there is potential in areas located at the edges of the city's zones where a mixture would be beneficial.

Many cities are adopting mixed-use zones, which allow for uses to be commingled and creates vibrant neighborhoods. Pairing dense, mixed-use development with transit creates the most utilization, as residents who live and work in this area have access to alternate modes of transportation.

Updating the zoning would allow for development to be consistent with historic development patterns and could accommodate a dense mix of uses typical in historic urban areas. Other considerations that need to be examined include the minimum parking requirements. Parking minimums have been identified as one of the challenges to business growth.

NEXT STEPS:

- Prioritize mixed-use development zoning, especially for redevelopment areas. Consider two new categorizations; neighborhood commercial mixed-use and dense mixed-use.
- Allow for adaptive reuse of properties formerly zoned as industrial, such as warehouses, and other manufacturing.



Proposed South 4th Street Corridor Redevelopment Area

Source: Google Maps

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- ED5a** Develop Entertainment Districts to Increase Local Tourism.
- ED5b** Market Business Opportunities and Support to Nearby Cities.

Principle 5 Connect to Regional Markets

Allentown has always been connected to regional markets. In the 1800s, the Lehigh Canal opened the town to increased trade with the eastern seaboard, and in 1905 Jack and Gus Mack moved their motor car plant to Allentown from Brooklyn. Today, Allentown is connected by bus to the larger markets of Philadelphia and New York, and by plane via the Lehigh Valley International Airport.

As the nearby metropolitan areas continue to grow, there is an opportunity to leverage connections with Allentown's growing economy. Regional tourism can help to support small businesses and a burgeoning art scene, and highlighting Allentown's value proposition for businesses to entice new companies to the area.



Miller Symphony Hall

Source: Jordan Platton Photography for City of Allentown

ED5a Develop Entertainment Districts to Increase Local Tourism.

Some notable local attractions that make the city unique and vibrant include the PPL Center, the 7th Street business district, the DaVinci Center, the city's parks system and trails, the West End Theatre District, the annual Drum and Bugle Corps at J. Birney Crum, and the many other local institutions, arts, and cultural attractions across the city. Events such as the Blues, Brews and Barbeque Festival, Allentown ArtsFest and other cultural and heritage festivals and the Lehigh Valley Phantoms and Iron Pigs minor league teams are attracting visitors from all over the world and strengthening community pride across the region. Additionally, Allentown is in the center Lehigh Valley region, bringing people in to explore the many attractions across the Lehigh Valley and in neighboring cities such as Bethlehem and Easton.

The Hamilton District in Allentown is the cultural heart of the Lehigh Valley region. A concentration of arts institutions provide opportunities for residents and visitors to experience unique art and culture in the downtown area. The Cultural Coalition of Allentown is one organization working in concert with the Allentown Arts Commission to provide these experiences - be it art galleries, art events, or downtown concerts. The West End provides a neighborhood commercial area, with 140 businesses, and an award-winning theater. Nearby, the Allentown Fairgrounds is host to year-round indoor farmers' market and many events, including the annual Allentown Fair.

There is an opportunity for Allentown to leverage its unique strengths in arts and culture to attract more visitors to the area, particularly as its central business district continues to grow. Furthermore, the city has the ability to tap into key tourism and destination markets such as Philadelphia, New York, Baltimore, and Washington D.C., which are all within a 200-mile radius of the city limits.

ED5b Market Business Opportunities and Support to Nearby Cities.

With a growing population and new investment via the Neighborhood Improvement Zone—both in the downtown and the future reopening of the Lehigh waterfront—Allentown has a strong value proposition to attract new businesses.

Focusing on Arts-Based Programming in conjunction with outreach to other markets can build off the foundation of the Baum School of Art and other cultural amenities. Inviting nationally known muralists and musicians will help to establish Allentown as a hub for the arts. Similarly, performing arts venues such as the Miller Symphony and Civic Theatre can showcase regional and national upcoming musicians to help build Allentown's reputation as a vibrant music scene.

NEXT STEPS:

- Implement the Catalytic Action of Arts and Culture Economic Development to build on existing and identify new cultural activities.
- Market arts and culture offerings to Philadelphia and New York, as well as Easton, Bethlehem, and surrounding cities.
- Design user-friendly website to showcase arts programming and location of public art.
- Encourage the establishment of small music venues such as coffee houses and open mic venues, as well as creation of galleries for new artists and alternative artists.

NEXT STEPS:

- Develop an online portal to support businesses
- Invite artists and musicians in these markets to showcase their talents at local events.
- Potential partners include Discover Lehigh Valley, ANIZDA, Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Allentown Business Alliance, LVEDC, Allentown Arts Commission, Cultural Coalition.

CATALYTIC ACTIONS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

! Support the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

City of Allentown's Department of Community and Economic Development is the primary resource for entrepreneurs and small businesses in Allentown to navigate through the internal and external systems and provide guidance for small business and entrepreneurial development.

Creating a robust structure for small businesses to grow allows for more jobs to be created in Allentown, and for more workers to take the risk of starting their own operation. Allentown's Department of Community and Economic Development has an important role to play, specifically through the Department's Business Expansion, Attraction, and Retention Office. By acting as a liaison between the City of Allentown and the small to medium sized businesses within the city, the Business Expansion, Attraction, and Retention Office fills a gap that is not specifically addressed by larger, more regionally-focused entities.

GOAL

- The Business Expansion, Attraction, and Retention Office will be the consistent point of contact for any business or entrepreneur in Allentown, and will provide customized assistance plans and services to succeed in the city's business environment.
- Increase the successful launch, expansion, and sustainability of diverse-owned businesses, including minority, immigrant, LGBT, and women-owned small businesses and entrepreneurial enterprises.

NEXT STEPS

- Identify and create an accessible automated system that allows business support services to be available on-demand process.
- Allentown's Business Expansion, Attraction, and Retention Office will continue to innovate to identify financial resources, navigate land development, zoning and licensing processes, and market the City of Allentown.

SUGGESTED PARTNERS

City of Allentown CED, City of Allentown Business Expansion, Attraction, and Retention Office; Allentown Department of Community and Economic Development; LVEDC; Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce; Downtown Allentown Business Alliance; Allentown Economic Development Corporation; Nonprofits/CBOs providing small business/entrepreneurship assistance (i.e. CADCA, Promise Neighborhoods - Entrepreneurship Without Limits).

*Bridgeworks Business Incubator
Work Meeting*

Source: The Morning Call, "Allentown Business Group a Model Public-Private Partnership"



CATALYTIC ACTIONS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

! Arts + Culture Economic Development

Enhance the advancement and enjoyment of Allentown's worldwide cultural vibrancy of visual, performing, and other arts-based programming throughout the city.

GOAL

- Strategically align public and private resources to support cultural vivacity over the long term, and etch art and culture in the daily lives of the Allentown community. Recondition city government, nonprofits and the private sector's collaborative approaches, and prioritization of arts and culture across the city.

NEXT STEPS

- Expand Allentonians' experience in art and culture by establishing a funding mechanism for administration of a public art and culture program throughout the city that celebrates the works of artists, particularly those who are members of historically underrepresented groups.
- Integrate art and creativity into all development and city projects. The City of Allentown will lead the charge to create two new Arts Innovation Districts in conjunction with the Allentown Arts Commission.

SUGGESTED PARTNERS

Allentown Department of Community and Economic Development; Allentown Arts Commission; Cultural Coalition of Allentown; Allentown Art Museum; Baum School of Art; Miller Symphony Hall; City Center; Civic Theatre; Community Music School; Allentown Public Theater; ASD; The Alternative Gallery; Bradbury Sullivan LGBT Community Center; Downtown Allentown Business Alliance; neighborhood groups/associations.

Queen City Mural

Source: City of Allentown



Economic Development Implementation Plan

CODE	STRATEGY	1-3 years	3-5 years	5-10 years
PRINCIPLE 01 - INCREASE LOCAL EMPLOYMENT				
ED1a	Local Employers.	■	■	■
ED1b	Tax Incentives For Targeted Sectors.		■	■
ED1c	Market NIZ To Investors And Developers.	■	■	■
ED1d	Appropriate Manufacturing Space.	■	■	■
ED1e	Zoning Update: Neighborhood Mixed-use Overlay District.	■		
PRINCIPLE 02 - INCREASE ACCESS TO TRAINING & SKILL BUILDING				
ED2a	Increase the Use of Training and Education Programs.	■	■	■
ED2b	Second Language Programs.	■	■	■
ED2c	Apprenticeship Programs.	■	■	■
ED2d	Digital Access Programs.		■	■
PRINCIPLE 03 - FOSTER SMALL BUSINESS GROWTH & ENTREPRENEURSHIP				
ED3a	Support Spatial Needs Of Entrepreneurs Throughout Company Life Cycle.	■	■	■
ED3b	Activate Public Places.	■	■	■
ED3c	Retail Pop-Ups.	■	■	■
ED3d	Maker Spaces and Incubators.		■	■
ED3e	Create a Pipeline.	■	■	■
ED3f	Offer a Path to Legitimization.	■	■	■
ED3g	Financing.	■	■	■
PRINCIPLE 04 - ENHANCE LAND VALUE				
ED4a	Historic Preservation.	■	■	■
ED4b	Adaptive Reuse.	■	■	■
ED4c	Opportunity Zones.	■	■	
ED4d	Brownfield Remediation.	■	■	■
ED4e	Zoning Update: Business Focus.	■		
PRINCIPLE 05 - CONNECT TO REGIONAL MARKETS				
ED5a	Develop Entertainment Districts to Increase Local Tourism.		■	■
ED5b	Market Business Opportunities and Support to Nearby Cities.	■	■	■

Chapter 2

HOUSING

GOAL

ALLENTOWN WILL BE A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE OF ALL AGES AND INCOMES CAN OBTAIN QUALITY AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN WELL-CONNECTED NEIGHBORHOODS NEAR GREENSPACES, GOOD SCHOOLS, AND OTHER ESSENTIAL SERVICES.

CATALYTIC ACTIONS:

! Land Bank

Center Allentown Porches

Source: Consultant Team





Allentown YouthBuild Program Onsite at Home Renovation

Source: City of Allentown



What we aspire to achieve...

PRINCIPLE 1: IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF ALLENTOWN HOUSING

Healthy, quality housing that is free from physical hazards promotes quality of life and community well-being. Homeowners and landlords both have responsibilities and opportunities to create well-built homes, whether new or renovated, that are more resilient, attractive, and equitable. The city and its partners can help ensure that all residents live in quality housing with code enforcement, education, and assistance programs.

PRINCIPLE 2: INCREASE THE QUANTITY OF HEALTHY, SAFE, AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

In addition to the demand for market-rate housing, the City of Allentown and the Lehigh Valley needs more healthy and safe housing that is affordable for those making at or below the area's average median income. Affordable housing is more difficult to build than market-rate housing and often has to have some subsidy to make up the gap between the cost of construction and the revenue generated by renting or selling the units. Coordinated action between the city and its partners can make it easier to build more affordable housing through programs, incentives, and funding opportunities.

PRINCIPLE 3: EXPAND PATHWAYS TO HOMEOWNERSHIP

In an era where investors may be located anywhere around the world, cities are finding that property owners who reside locally are more likely to be engaged with neighborhood revitalization efforts and to be part of the community network. Local ownership, whether owner-occupied or rental, is an indication of community-scale investment. Encouraging homeownership can provide stability and economic security to individuals and families. Engaged ownership also reinforces commitment to place and sense of community.

PRINCIPLE 4: PRESERVE ALLENTOWN'S HISTORIC LEGACY HOUSING

Allentown's diverse historic housing contributes to the city's unique character. Landmark structures, historic streetscapes, and charming districts of housing and small commercial tell the story of Allentown's creation. With sensitive zoning, programs, and key projects, Allentown can preserve and protect its assets to ensure that the legacy remains.

**PRINCIPLE 1:
IMPROVE THE
QUALITY OF
ALLENTOWN
HOUSING**

- H1a** Performance-based Rental Inspections.
- H1b** Code Inspections and Enforcement.
- H1c** Housing Court.
- H1d** Preserve Existing Housing.
- H1e** Financial Assistance Programs.

**PRINCIPLE 2:
INCREASE THE
QUANTITY OF
HEALTHY, SAFE, AND
AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

- H2a** Zoning Update: Single Family Housing Focus.
- H2b** Zoning Update: Accessory Dwelling Units Focus.
- H2c** Zoning Update: Inclusionary Zoning.
- H2d** Create an Affordable Housing Overlay.
- H2e** Enable More Development with an Affordable Housing Fund or Housing Trust Fund.
- H2f** Anti-displacement Strategy.
- H2g** Housing Analysis.

**PRINCIPLE 3:
ENHANCE PATHWAYS
TO HOMEOWNERSHIP**

- H3a** Expand Affordable Homeownership with a Community Land Trust.
- H3b** Affordable Housing Revolving Loan Fund.
- H3c** Financial Assistance for Owners.

**PRINCIPLE 4:
PRESERVE
ALLENTOWN'S
HISTORIC LEGACY
HOUSING**

- H4a** Historic Preservation Districts.
- H4b** Facade Grants, Stabilization Grants, and Other Preservation Funding.

*Apartment Building
in West Allentown*

Source: City of Allentown



LINKING AFFORDABILITY AND NEED

In Allentown, over 31% of the 18,195 homeowner households and over 57% of the 23,740 renter households are considered “cost-burdened,” meaning they spend over 30% of their gross income on housing-related expenses. Cost burden comes from mismatch between incomes and the availability of affordable housing. In general, the entire Lehigh Valley is under-supplied in housing for households earning less than \$29,350 per year.[1]

Additionally, the current market offers few larger rental units for lower income households, with very few options for 2 and 3+ bedroom units. For more expensive homes, rental opportunities are only 3+ bedroom apartments, and ownership opportunities are almost exclusively single family detached housing. A lack of housing diversity means households must consume housing that does not meet their preferences, further intensifying pressure on the housing sub-markets with high demand and limited supply. As a result, households with incomes above \$70,440 per year are “buying down” from their ability to pay, increasing competition with moderate-income households.[2]

Across the region, foreign born residents have lower homeownership rates than residents born in the United States (58.3% and 69.2%, respectively).[3] By using economic development tools, Allentown will reduce the risk of home ownership and create pipelines for first time home-buyers, which will create more equitable communities, catalyze the momentum of housing markets, and develop stronger community connections.

[1] The American Community Survey 2013-2017 estimated the number of cost-burdened households in Allentown.

[2] LVPC Regional Housing Plan

[3] HUD Comprehensive Housing Market Analysis - Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton 2018
<https://www.huduser.gov/portal/publications/pdf//Allentown-Bethlehem-EastonPA-NJ-Comp.pdf>

SIGNS OF A PIVOTING MARKET

Allentown’s relative affordability combined with increasing demand may mean rising housing costs.

Like many cities across the country, Allentonians want safe, healthy, and affordable housing, a need made more acute by future population growth - as much as 26% from 2010-2040.[1] Allentown’s housing diversity is unique in the region, with many different types of housing, including historic row houses, single family houses, and newly built apartments. Much of Allentown’s housing is considered affordable when compared to regional and national statistics, however, much of the existing housing is under-maintained or in need of renovation. According to LVPC’s 2016 Housing Study Update[2], Allentown’s median housing value was \$116,000, and despite annual increases in median prices, it remains one of the more affordable areas in the region.[3] This can play in Allentown’s favor for regional competitiveness, but it will be important to make sure that within the city there are sufficient housing options to accommodate residents’ diverse needs in housing type and cost. Since 2010, rental rates have been increasing by one to two percent annually. Rental rates went up by 30% in 2018 but have quickly fallen back. It is not clear what is driving these dramatic short-term swings, but this volatility increases pressure on vulnerable renters.[4] [5] Increasing levels of homelessness are also attributed to economic pressures and rising rental rates.

[1] (LVPC)

[2] <https://www.lvpc.org/data-lv-housing.html>

[3] https://www.lvpc.org/pdf/2014/Housing%20Plan/LVPC_Regional_Housing_Plan.pdf, page 83

[4] Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton 2018, <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/publications/pdf//Allentown-Bethlehem-EastonPA-NJ-Comp.pdf>

[5] HUD PD&R Housing Market Profiles - Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton, Pennsylvania, New Jersey 2013, https://www.huduser.gov/portal/periodicals/USHMC/reg//AllentownPA_HMP_Aug13.pdf



Spending an overbearing amount on housing limits families' spending on essentials and can limit quality of life. Not having appropriate affordable housing stock to meet demand affects where families choose to live. These factors—along with jobs clustered far from population centers—results in a persistent imbalance of jobs and housing across much of the Lehigh Valley.

Colonial Home Listing within Allentown

Source: Lehigh Valley Home Hunting Guide

Allentown's relative affordability despite signs of demand presents conflicting signals that may indicate a market pivoting from weak to strong. Strong market communities that are adjacent to weak market communities tend to drive demand in those communities. For example, as buyers from the metro areas of Philadelphia and New York-New Jersey seek more affordable options further from the center, they increase demand and housing and commercial prices in adjacent markets. In addition, new services such as logistics and warehousing increase demand for land that might have been previously used for housing. Lastly, demographic changes and new residents add demand for affordable and starter housing.

The current level of affordability may be due to many factors, any of which could change over the course of the Allentown Vision 2030 plan. There has not been a lot of new housing built in Allentown with the exception of apartment construction, and there is likely a mismatch between market demand and Allentown's available housing types. The poor condition of much of the older housing and the high percentage of investor-owned properties may also depress housing values, contributing to Allentown's role as a regional reservoir of "naturally occurring affordable housing" or housing that is affordable due to underinvestment. Additionally, factors like the perceived quality of the school district or lack of amenities can keep housing prices low. If any of these factors change, the housing market could strengthen, which would squeeze the inventory of affordable housing options.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY HEALTHY, SAFE, AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING?

Healthy and Safe Housing: Utilizing the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's definition of **'healthy and safe housing'** the City of Allentown identifies 'healthy and safe housing' as homes that are safe and free from physical hazards such as poor indoor air quality, lead paint, substandard housing such as water leaks, poor ventilation and pest infestations, extreme low and high indoor temperatures, and residential crowding. [1]

City of Allentown definition of Affordable Housing: housing that consumes 30 percent or less of a household's income as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Mixed-Income House definition: a deliberate effort to construct and/or own a multifamily development that has the mixing of income groups as a fundamental part of its financial and operating plans.

Workforce housing definition: Housing that is affordable to households earning between 60 to 120 of area median income (AMI). [2]

[1] "How Does Housing Affect Health?" Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, May 2011.

[2] Urban Land Institute

STABILIZE :: NEIGHBORHOODS WITH LOW HOUSING VALUES

Neighborhoods with weak housing values often need to invite investment and community development. Low housing values may make conventional lending difficult but these areas may be attractive to home-buyers who can supply “sweat equity” and do work themselves. Public subsidies may be applied to catalyze other investment, and serve as a way to reduce risk on complex projects.

Some under-performing markets will remain weak and thus need “patient” capital that can wait for economic return. Other communities may be likely to pivot with investment and will need quick and intensive action to preserve future affordability and prevent displacement. As markets mature, public subsidy is likely to be needed for the preservation of affordable housing and the community may be considered a GROW neighborhood, or a neighborhood with strengthening housing values.

Community development strategies typically try to “jump start” the market, invite people into the community, or stabilize physical assets.

GROW :: NEIGHBORHOODS WITH STRENGTHENING HOUSING VALUES

Neighborhoods with strengthening real estate values may emerge due to the construction of new housing, a desirable location, or improved amenities. Access to needed services, opportunities, or cultural attractors can also increase a neighborhood’s demand. Small and large projects may be built without public investment and public subsidy is likely to be needed to maintain affordable housing access. Speculative development can create a flurry of activity, but may also prematurely limit small scale or homeowner investment. Market rate housing development may focus on a narrow selection of housing types, as commercial financing tends to favor the established, lower risk, products.

Community development strategies typically try to intervene in the market to preserve or create affordability.

THRIVE :: NEIGHBORHOODS WITH STABLE HOUSING VALUES

Some neighborhoods will have stable housing values with marginal growth or decline. There might be little market change due to factors like build out, location or property ownership, or lack of opportunity for large projects. In general, there is little speculative market activity as there may be little return on investment due to already high values. Stable market areas are often overlooked when prioritizing areas for community development but these areas should be monitored for changing signs of activity.

Community development activity is more about engagement and education and less investment focused.

STABILIZE

neighborhood development tools include:

- Target renter assistance
- Homeowner programs, especially for first time homebuyers^[CH1]
- Revolving loan fund
- Facade or stabilization grants
- Larger projects that capture affordable or tax credit funds

Example community:
Center City



Housing Association and Development Corporation

Source: City of Allentown

GROW

neighborhood development tools could:

- Increase purchasing power (loans, higher wages)
- Control prices (rent control, permanently affordable units, etc.)
- Develop larger affordable housing projects funded by tax credits and/or larger, well-established sources of capital
- Subsidize or otherwise encourage housing with nontraditional ownership such as cooperatives, land trusts, etc.
- Incentivize or require affordable housing production along with market-rate housing with tools such as inclusionary zoning

Example community: South or East Allentown, near redevelopment projects



South Allentown homes

Source: Jordan Platton
Photography for City of Allentown

THRIVE

neighborhood development could:

- Establish or continue positive community trajectory with a catalytic project (housing, a school, or investment in public infrastructure)
- Monitor key indicator trends such as affordability, tenure type (renter/owner), population increase or decline
- Engage with key property owners or associations to understand public/private tools for growth
- Promote neighborhood assets and institutions that lend stability to the neighborhood
- Assist existing homeowners to avoid foreclosure and with estate planning for smooth transition of assets

Example community: West End



West Allentown home

Source: City of Allentown

How does housing align with our vision?

ECONOMIC INCLUSIVITY

When Allentonians have stable housing, they are better able to participate in the economic and civic opportunities in Allentown. Studies have shown that housing is a social determinant of health, meaning that poor health is more likely when housing conditions are poor. To create an inclusive economy, quality housing and strong neighborhoods are a fundamental need.

CITY AS A STEWARD

As a steward of the tax dollars, the city is committed to investing to create the conditions that allow its residents to thrive. Nothing is more essential than the strengthening of one's neighborhood to create new or renewed housing, whether through the construction of a large development project or the renovation of someone's home.

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

The long term production of housing to meet Allentown's growing needs will help support neighborhoods and communities that are diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, culture, and income level. Great housing is the building block of a great neighborhood, and communities need a role in the creation of housing that addresses their needs. The type, location, size, cost, and organization of where we live enables the relationships that we form. Allentown can be a national leader with creative solutions to suit its unique needs.

Community Survey:
The top three concerns for survey respondents were affordability, rental quality, and preservation of historic buildings.

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT & COLLABORATION

Improving, involving the community in the creation of housing is essential. When people are able to invest time, money, or creative energy in housing solutions they are more committed to successful outcomes. Through neighborhood planning, access to capital, and knowledge of the housing system, Allentonians can identify and create powerful responses.

Community Survey:
Over 25% said they moved at least ONCE in the last year, 27% are likely or very likely to leave Allentown and 30% are neutral about staying.



*Walnut Street Commons
- Multi-Unit
Residential in
Downtown
Allentown*

Source: City of Allentown



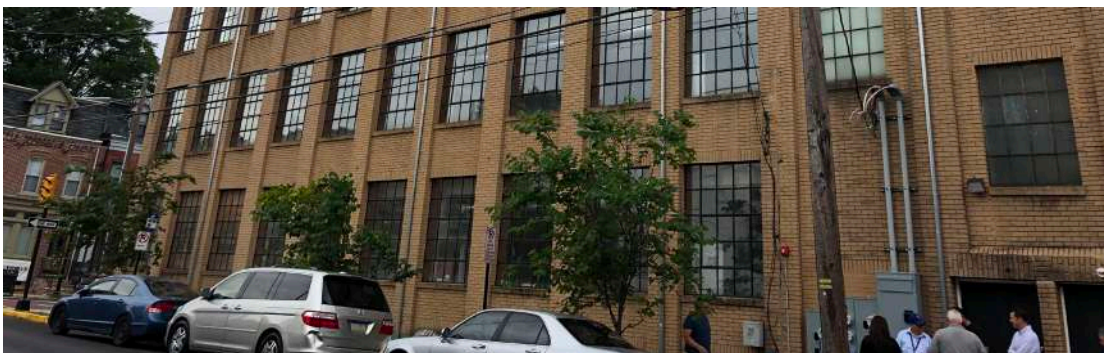
*Housing
Association and
Development
Corporation-
North Street
Development*

Source: City of Allentown



*Edolly Rodriguez
at her home in
Overlook Park
(East Allentown)*

Source: Enid Santiago,
Penrose Management



*Adaptive Reuse
Apartment
Building by CDC
Developers, Inc.
at 10th and
Turner Streets in
Allentown*

Source: City of Allentown

HOUSING

- H1a** Performance-based Rental Inspections.
- H1b** Code Inspections and Enforcement.
- H1c** Housing Court.
- H1d** Preserve Existing Housing.
- H1e** Financial Assistance Programs.

Principle 1

Improve the Quality of Allentown Housing

As a growing city, Allentown is striving to ensure that its residents live in safe and healthy affordable housing. Allentown's urban character is unique in the region, with the majority of houses in Allentown built prior to 1950, in walkable neighborhoods that can support small commercial enterprises, community schools, and other desirable amenities. However, older houses need to be periodically updated, and with the increase of rental housing in Allentown, many residents don't own their homes and are not empowered to make improvements. Creating healthy, safe and affordable housing will require programs for both homeowners and renters and will encourage, incent, and in some cases require improvements and investment in Allentown's housing.

H1a Performance-based Rental Inspections.

The majority of Allentown residents are renters - nearly 60%, according to 2013-2017 US Census numbers. There will be a continued demand for more rental units in the future; a 2018 HUD Analysis for Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton, determined that there will be a demand for 2,625 rental units between 2018-2021, with only 850 under construction, leaving a gap of 1,775 units.[1]

Ensuring landlord responsibility for their units will improve the housing quality, and make housing options more livable and attractive. It will also protect vulnerable populations from displacement, abuse, and neglect. Simultaneously, ensuring tenants' responsibility for the unit and property they live in will improve the neighborhood and make it more attractive.

Currently, all residential rental units in Allentown must be registered according to the Licensing Residential Rental Units Ordinance, and licenses must be renewed annually. While this is a good step for oversight of landlords, a more effective system for monitoring rental properties would be to institute a performance-based evaluation.

Performance-based systems are based on having a functioning landlord licensing system and an up-to-date inventory of rental properties. Working with Code Enforcement, and the Police and Fire Department, infractions at each rental address can be logged, and those properties that are most egregious can be prioritized for action. The properties can be evaluated by number of code violations, reports from police and fire departments regarding safety, and tax status. Properties can then be categorized, and offending landlords can either work with the city to bring their properties up to code, or can lose their license to rent.[2]

[1] HUD Comprehensive Housing Market Analysis - Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton 2018, <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/publications/pdf/Allentown-Bethlehem-EastonPA-NJ-Comp.pdf>.
 [2] https://mayorscaucus.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/SSMMA_landlord-incentives_how-to-guide_final-am-12-28-15.pdf



Rental License Required? **Yes**



Registration Fee

Rental License \$112

The license fee is \$112, and is valid for as long as you own the property. In addition to registration fees, you will be required to pay an inspection fee to have your property inspected. Without a passing inspection, you cannot receive your certificate of compliance and will not legally be able to rent your property.



Inspection Fees

Single Family	\$225
Two Family	\$300
Multiplex	\$105
Per Building (After 1)	\$38
3 - 4 Units	\$90
5 - 50 Units	\$75
51 or More	\$45

Need a Rental License?

Apply Here

NEXT STEPS:

- Partner with renter advocacy groups to create programs and events such as landlord-tenant workshops to educate and inform landlords and tenants on their rights and responsibilities, including discrimination issues, financial issues, and tenancy and eviction.
- Obtain a more modernized software system or enhance the current software system that can create a more efficient code enforcement process through automation.
- Hold educational events in community locations and do not rely on people coming to the City offices to deal with renter protection issues.
- Strengthen registration and licensing procedures and consider including training requirements in licensing process.

Example Online Dashboard for Performance Base Inspections

Source: Center for Community Progress, "Encouraging Responsible Landlords"

Link: https://reclaimingvacantproperties.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Encouraging-Responsible-Landlords_ALL.pdf

H1b Code Inspections and Enforcement.

Diligence in keeping buildings up to code will protect the safety and wellbeing of Allentown residents. It is important to note that code enforcement will require education and investment to remedy conditions. This will require coordination with agencies who can assist homeowners to make the required upgrades and track any displacement that may occur due to rising rents or fees on already burdened households.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has recognized the need that cities have for addressing blight and problem properties, and in 2010 passed Act 90, the Neighborhood Blight Reclamation and Revitalization Act, which empowers municipalities to take legal action against the owners of deteriorating properties and deny municipal permits or licenses in certain circumstances. The act provides for action against property owners whose property is in serious code violation or whose property is determined to be a public nuisance, and allows municipalities to put liens on both their business and personal assets. It also allows for extradition of out-of-state owners.

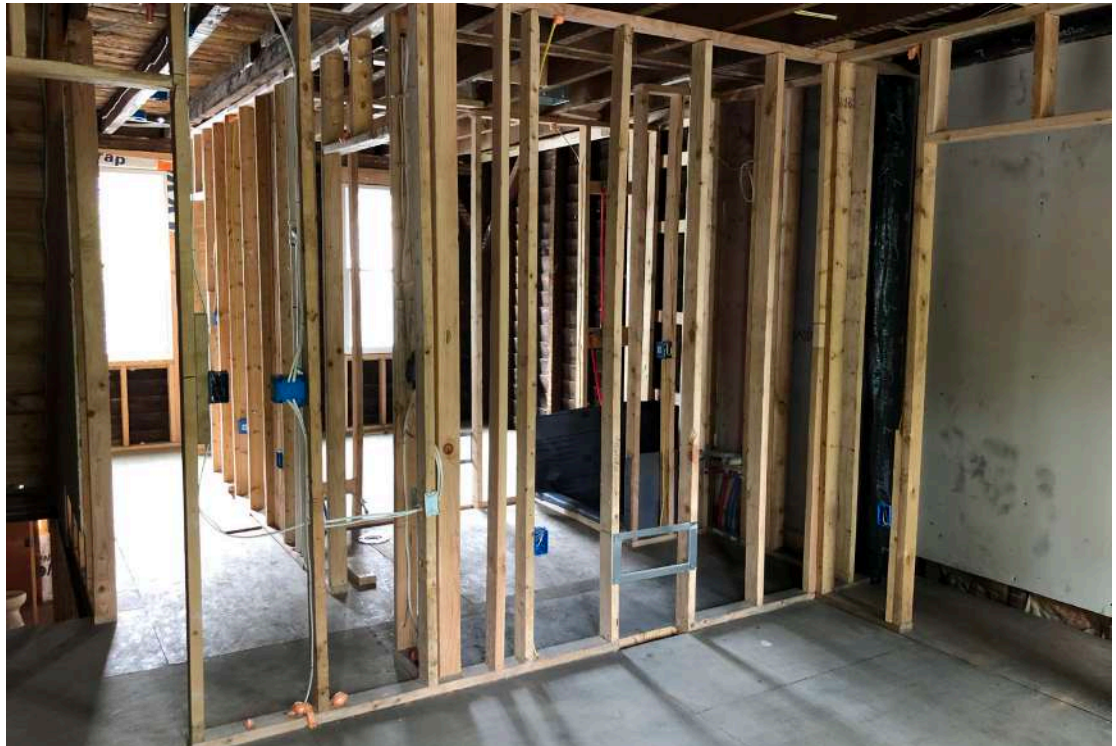
While code enforcement requires landlords to improve tenant conditions, cities like Detroit have found that small landlords sometimes cannot recoup their investments in weak market neighborhoods, leading to unintended consequences such as building abandonment, rising rents, displacement, or sales to predatory investors. Recommended practices to avoid this include a measured roll-out of the program, access to a revolving fund for renovation, or tax incentives.

NEXT STEPS:

- Consider implementing a priority-based code enforcement system and increasing the number of code enforcement staff.
- Examine the use of Act 90, which is currently used in Allentown's Blighted Properties program, to expand ways to address code enforcement issues.
- Partner with The Redevelopment Authority of the City of Allentown; In the case that properties need to be acquired, this organization has state-ordained powers to assist.
- Track potential displacement and connect residents to assistance agencies.
- In weak market neighborhoods, connect landlords to legal and financial assistance and track potential displacements or loss of housing inventory.

Allentown Home Rehabilitation

Source: City of Allentown



H1c Housing Court.

A Housing Court can help mitigate issues and legal disputes around evictions, property damage, and discrimination. It can also be a resource regarding zoning concerns and disputes. Housing Courts take a large burden off of magistrate courts, and place these cases in the legal system that has a particular expertise in adjudicating property cases.

The housing challenges Allentown faces are not new. In 1960 the Pennsylvania Supreme Court stated: “We must recognize the fact that . . . critical changes have taken place economically and socially. Aware of such changes, we must realize further that more frequently today the average prospective tenant vis-a-vis the prospective landlord occupies a disadvantageous position. Stark necessity occupies a disadvantageous position. Stark necessity very often forces a tenant into occupancy of premises far from desirable and in a defective state of repair. The acute housing shortage mandates that the average prospective tenant accede to the demands of the prospective landlord as to conditions of rental, which, under ordinary conditions with housing available, the average tenant would not and should not accept. . . Premises which, under normal circumstances would be completely unattractive for rental are now, by necessity, at a premium.”

The establishment of a Housing Court in Allentown concurrent with the development of other local legal remedies, is an effort to provide an effective legal mechanism to cope with the increasing number of substandard dwellings in Allentown. Establishing a Local Housing Court can serve as a crucial component to an effective and holistic housing code enforcement structure, and even more important, as an essential agent in the development of such a system.

In 1949 Congress declared as national housing policy, “the elimination of substandard and other inadequate housing ... and the realization as soon as feasible of the goal of a decent home for every American.” The Supreme Court and Congress both have weighed in on the issue, and the city alone cannot enforce the code to its full intent without the help of the courts.

NEXT STEPS:

- Be goal-oriented to ensure the health and safety of the community. Work with city solicitor, city council, the local court system to create an ordinance in establishing a Housing Court as “a single magistrate’s court with jurisdiction over all violations of statutes, ordinances and regulations relating to housing.”

Bronx County Housing Court

Source: NPR, “Someone to Speak for You: Low-Income Tenants get Lawyers for Housing Court”



H1d Preserve Existing Housing

Allentown's housing stock is older and in need of updating. Given the age of the housing, most of the existing housing stock is considered affordable. However, there is a need to maintain and preserve the existing housing. The variety of housing types, styles and sizes gives the city character. Due to the age of the housing, specific work is needed to bring properties up to code as well as making them more efficient for the user. In many cases, work has been delayed or put off over the years. Investment is needed to ensure that the existing housing stock can be preserved.



Allentown Home Rehabilitation

Source: City of Allentown

NEXT STEPS:

- Develop a program to support maintenance of existing housing units.
- Work with nonprofits and other agencies to preserve and maintain existing units.

H1e Financial Assistance Programs

In order to maintain the quality of the housing stock, the community has identified a need for Financial Assistance Programs. Due to the age of the housing stock, investments need to be made in order to modernize the housing and address deferred maintenance. Improvements to make the housing more energy efficient will assist in reducing some of the monthly costs for both renters and landlords. There are some existing programs available to residents but there is a need to evaluate the gaps in funding in order to provide assistance where it is needed.

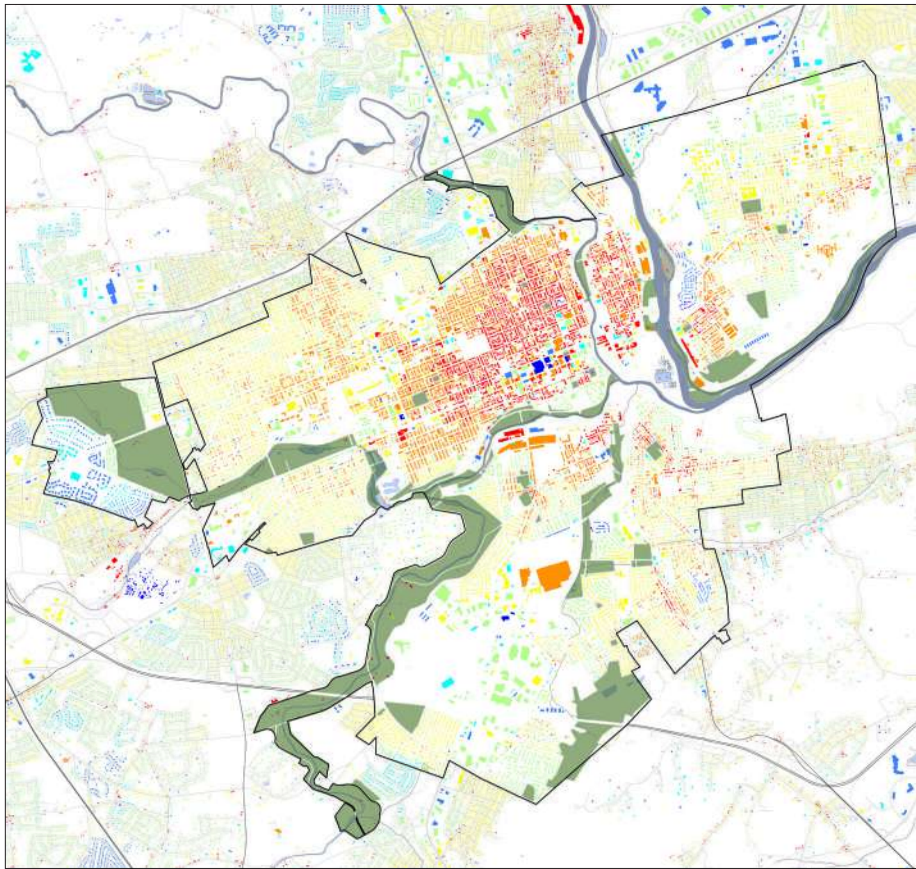


Facade Renovation to Allentown Home

Source: City of Allentown

NEXT STEPS:

- Identify existing programs and parameters around those programs.
- Identify gaps in existing programs.
- Work to develop a program that addresses programmatic gaps in conjunction with nonprofit organizations.



YEAR OF BUILDING CONSTRUCTION

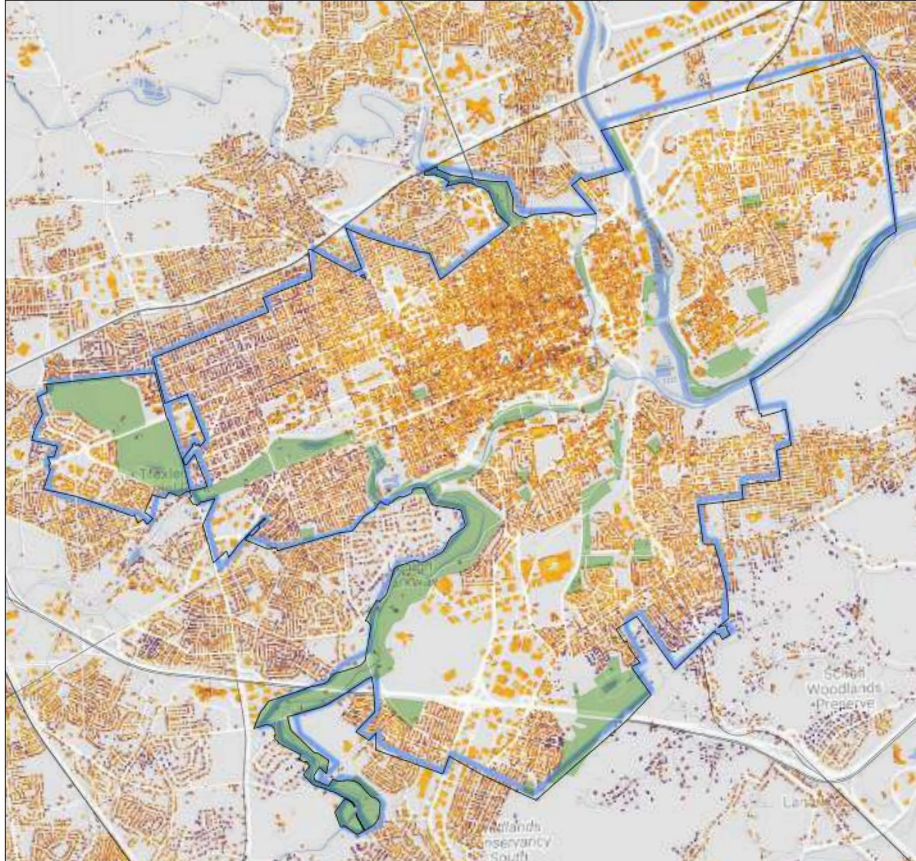
Source: 2015 Lehigh County Assessment

- After 2010
- 2000 to 2010
- 1990 to 2000
- 1960 to 1990
- 1930 to 1960
- 1930 to 1900
- Before 1900

BASE LAYERS

- City of Allentown Boundary
- Lehigh County Roads
- Lehigh County Water
- City of Allentown Parks

N 1 MILE



ESTIMATED ROOFTOP SOLAR ENERGY POTENTIAL

Source: Google, Project Sunroof

SUNLIGHT ON ROOFTOPS



BASE LAYERS

- City of Allentown Boundary
- Lehigh County Block
- Lehigh County Water
- City of Allentown Parks

N 1 MILE

HOUSING

- H2a Zoning Update: Single Family Housing Focus.
- H2b Zoning Update: Accessory Dwelling Units Focus.
- H2c Zoning Update: Inclusionary Zoning.
- H2d Create an Affordable Housing Overlay.
- H2e Enable More Development with an Affordable Housing Fund or Housing Trust Fund.
- H2f Anti-displacement Study.
- H2g Housing Analysis.

Principle 2 Increase the Quantity of Healthy, Safe, and Affordable Housing

Affordability is closely linked to the number of available housing units or the supply of housing relative to housing demand in a market. Unlike its more suburban and rural neighbors, Allentown neighborhood patterns have been set for decades and the city does not have much undeveloped land. However, Allentown does have key parcels available for redevelopment, such as the Allentown State Hospital site, riverfront redevelopment, and redevelopment of underutilized areas such as vacant retail sites and former industrial sites. Strong cities have a diversity of investment, from large scale redevelopment to smaller-scale opportunities for sweat equity and community development. Although Allentown's larger projects will require significant investment capital, there are opportunities for homeowners and smaller investors to contribute to the supply of housing with infill and small projects that strengthen neighborhood fabric.

As the city continues to grow, it is important to encourage mixed-income neighborhoods. The city does not want to create isolated pockets of poverty by developing additional affordable housing in neighborhoods that are already primarily low-income. Encouraging a mix of incomes in a neighborhood is important in bringing vitality to a city. This can be done through the development of market rate housing and affordable housing within one development. Other ways to encourage mixed-income neighborhoods include identifying key parcels for development or redevelopment within areas of the city that can accommodate additional housing. While it may not happen with every project, it is critical to consider where new housing is being proposed and how it will impact the community. The city will continue to work with developers of both market rate housing and affordable housing to identify key parcels throughout the city that have redevelopment opportunities.



*Habitat for Humanity
Renovation Project*
Source: City of Allentown

H2a Zoning Update: Single Family Housing Focus.

The character and fabric of the different neighborhoods of Allentown are a major asset that adds to the authenticity and quality of life. Zoning updates should make it easier to preserve that character while also adding in appropriate density. Allentown's Zoning Ordinance currently has eight different classifications of residential. Given the large variety of homes in the city, it seems that the original authors tried to create specific conditions to allow for neighborhoods to retain their identity. With this in mind, a new Zoning Code could more efficiently retain this character, while allowing for change and adaptation.

- Currently, residential zones have **minimum lot widths**. Many of these lot widths do not correspond with the actual lot sizes. If home prices in Allentown increase, this can encourage consolidation of lots, in order to build larger homes, which impacts neighborhood character and decreases the availability of smaller, more affordable homes. A new ordinance could include the provision that existing lot widths within each zone are suitable.
- Residential zones should also **align with the type of housing that exists** in each zone. For example, in the Low Density Residential categorization, twin dwellings are not permitted, but there are a number of these structures in Hamilton Park, which is an R-L zone.
- Where accessory dwelling units are permitted, it is worth considering whether front, back, and side setbacks allow for units to be built that meet the requirements for habitation.
- Like most other towns in the United States, Allentown utilizes the International Building Code (IBC) to govern construction of buildings. These building codes address public health and safety with measures peer-reviewed by the ICBO and the International Codes Council, and are based in building science. **The IBC offers guidance** as to where a building should be placed on a lot, and the amount of square footage a building should contain. This guidance could be used in place of existing zoning, and would simplify the building process.

NEXT STEPS:

- Either internally, or with the help of a consultant, re-write zoning code to simplify the residential zoning or, at minimum, align the zoning code to reflect current conditions.



Single family homes in Allentown

Source: City of Allentown

H2b Zoning Update: Accessory Dwelling Units Focus.

An Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) is a secondary house or apartment that shares a lot with a primary residence. It may or may not be attached to the primary residence. The most common type of ADUs are garage apartments but they can also be built on the same level as the house.

Accessory Dwelling Units have many benefits. ADUs are sometimes called “granny flats” because they allow for flexible living arrangements as children or elders age and have different living needs. Accessory Dwelling Units are typically conditioned on the owner living in the main house or structure and are not the same as “upzoning ordinances” which increase the parcel density from one unit to two or more units per parcel.

One of the greatest benefits of ADUs is that they can provide additional income to the property owner to mitigate increases in the cost of living. While there is a cost to build an ADU on a property, ADUs usually do not require additional infrastructure, as they share utilities with the main structure and can be well integrated in the character of the existing neighborhood. ADUs work best in neighborhoods with alleyways or rear garages, both characteristics that are typical in Allentown’s neighborhoods.

H2c Zoning Update: Inclusionary Zoning.

Inclusionary zoning (IZ) is a tool to increase affordable housing options by requiring market-rate housing projects to include a percentage of affordable units. Designed to integrate affordable units with market units, IZ strives for both social and economic benefit. Units can be targeted at certain income levels and can be included within a development or can be constructed off-site by the developer or through a contribution to a housing fund or affordable housing nonprofit. Inclusionary zoning ordinances can be mandatory or voluntary, with the latter requiring financial incentives to encourage participation. The requirement to include affordable units works best when market values are high, thus making more feasible the economic subsidy of below-market rate units within a project.

Inclusionary zoning is often applied to projects over a certain number of units. The ordinance typically requires a target income range based on the area median income (AMI). Below-market rate units may require deeper levels of subsidy, depending on the targeted income level.

Sometimes IZ ordinances allow for alternatives to building the units on site, such as contributions to a housing fund or building on another site. Sometimes the cost burden for developers is offset with other entitlements like density bonuses, fee reductions, or expedited processing.

The City of Allentown can refer to the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission’s Inclusionary Zoning Model Ordinance document for detailed discussion as to how IZ ordinances can comply with the PA Municipal Planning Code. The document also expands on the trade-offs between mandatory and voluntary requirements and the many incentive types that can be used in a voluntary ordinance.

NEXT STEPS:

- Benchmark ADUs ordinances in similarly sized cities and housing markets for small market best practices.
- Evaluate how zoning updates can allow ADUs overlay in residential districts.

NEXT STEPS:

- Investigate how many units can be produced by benchmarking national inclusionary zoning policies against Allentown’s past and projected unit construction.
- Consider the cost to development considering different AMI targets, the current real estate market, and future market growth scenarios.
- Partner with the county and LVPC to understand the county and regional use of inclusionary zoning as well as other tools for the production of affordable housing.

H2d Create an Affordable Housing Overlay.

Affordable Housing Overlays (AHOs) have been used across the country to enable the production of affordable housing units. AHOs can be created for areas with high real estate values or in places where density or affordable housing cannot be built “as-of-right” and require exceptions. Other zoning overlays, like Transit Oriented Development overlays can be similar to an AHO with provisions to enable affordable housing near transit.

The City of Allentown can create an affordable housing overlay that will identify key areas of the city where policies/tools can be utilized to maintain affordability and create new affordable housing. An AHO can strategically increase the density of housing and services to achieve a variety of housing types accessible at different income levels, and protect affordability of existing housing.



Allentown Center Square Housing Development: Affordable Senior Housing

Source: City of Allentown

H2e Enable More Development with an Affordable Housing Fund or Housing Trust Fund

Cities across the country use Affordable Housing Funds (AHFs) or Housing Trust Funds (HTFs) to mitigate the high cost of construction and development projects and to direct money to special resident programs. As federal funding has decreased, affordable housing funds or housing trust funds have become a flexible tool to redirect funding to much-needed projects. AHFs or HTFs can be in the form of tax credits and direct financing programs that offset affordable housing costs and directly increase supply. Cities can contribute revenue to AHFs or HTFs from many sources, including developer impact fees, general funds, inclusionary zoning in-lieu fees, or real estate transfer taxes^[1].

The National Housing Trust Fund, a funding source through the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, “may be used for the production or preservation of affordable housing through the acquisition, new construction, reconstruction, and/or rehabilitation of non-luxury housing with suitable amenities.” HTF funds are typically given to developers to who create affordable housing and can be used for a variety of activities such as demolition, site improvements, operating costs, and even relocation assistance. The targeted levels of affordability can be set by the city. All HTF-assisted rental units are required to remain affordable for a minimum of 30 years and HTF-assisted homeownership housing must remain affordable for between 10-30 years, depending on the level of funding.

NEXT STEPS:

- Utilize Zoning Code Update to consider how to simplify residential zoning and preserve a variety of housing, how to strategically increase density of commercial and residential in mixed-use areas, and how to adjust and simplify allowable uses.
- Establish guiding policies/ goals to increase density of housing and services where appropriate (i.e. those areas highlighted under the affordable housing overlay).
- Identify sites already owned by the city or the Redevelopment Authority for the development of affordable housing. Identify underutilized/vacant sites that can be strategically acquired by the city or Redevelopment Authority and hold in a land bank for further development of affordable housing.

NEXT STEPS:

- Partner to create potential sources of continuous income in the city’s Housing Trust Fund and the appropriate affordability targets based on income.
- Work with the county and regional partners, including LVPC, to develop joint strategies to grow the regional housing inventory and coordinate or collaborate with other regional municipalities and programs to expand affordable housing funding sources.

H2f Anti-Displacement Strategy

The City of Allentown will be a leader in developing an Anti-Displacement strategy that engages the city's partners in the counties, nonprofit organizations, neighboring municipalities, the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, and residents. The Anti-Displacement Strategy will be a community-wide partnership to effectively address systemic issues facing our city including housing instability, pressures on local and small businesses, neighborhood health, community engagement and empowerment, connectivity to services and jobs, and regional economic disparities.

The Anti-Displacement Strategy will build on recommendations from Allentown Vision 2030 that focus on affordable and accessible housing, increasing the quality and quantity of housing, enhancing the services and amenities in our neighborhoods, and connecting Allentownians to workforce opportunities to increase wages and decrease burdensome costs of transportation. As the largest city in the Lehigh Valley, Allentown will take on a leadership role in the development and implementation of the Anti-Displacement Strategy; however, the city will look to partner and collaborate with residents, nonprofits, institutions, the private sector, and others interested in this important issue.

The Anti-Displacement Strategy will include an assessment of the baseline needs, available resources and role of partners. The strategy will include recommendations for strategic, cross-cutting policy changes that can effectively address the issues facing residents.

NEXT STEPS:

- City of Allentown will initiate baseline assessment to understand community needs, available resources, and role of partners. Utilize action H2g - Housing Analysis to inform next steps.
- Identify collaborative partnerships with community organizations, local nonprofits, the county, and regional entities.



Community Mural near the Corner of 9th and Turner Streets in Center Allentown

Source: City of Allentown

H2g Housing Analysis

Allentown's neighborhoods will need different types of tools to create quality housing and avoid displacement.

In the next decade, Allentown will need strategies for neighborhoods that have weak real estate values, strong real estate values, and steady-state market values. Each type of market has a different set of tools and indicators like property values, sales data, and new mover data that can help the city understand the transitioning markets. As part of the city's neighborhood planning process, a housing market and capacity study should be performed to set a baseline, enable comparison of different communities, and track progress over time.

This analysis will provide information on the types of units that are needed to accommodate the growth in the city. Another critical component is identifying the rent ranges based on the needs. The baseline analysis will provide data as to what the current needs are and how best to accommodate the growing population over the next 10 years.

NEXT STEPS:

- Initiate Housing Analysis within Year 1 of Vision 2030 implementation.
- Utilize Housing Analysis findings to inform neighborhood planning processes.



*For Sale
Multi-unit Home
in Allentown*

Source: City of
Allentown



*Affordable
Senior Housing in
Allentown*

Source: City of
Allentown

HOUSING

- H3a** Expand Affordable Homeownership with a Community Land Trust.
- H3b** Affordable Housing Revolving Loan Fund.
- H3c** Financial Assistance for Owners.

Principle 3 Enhance Pathways to Homeownership

Even though a city may have a substantial inventory of healthy and safe housing, there can still be an affordability gap. To become a homeowner, you need upfront money to purchase a home, good credit to qualify for loans, and enough funds to maintain the property once purchased. Education can help people understand the many steps it takes to buy a home, own a home, pay taxes, do renovations, and many other homeownership responsibilities. Giving people access to loans to purchase or maintain a home, or even to avoid foreclosure, helps to stabilize a property and an entire neighborhood. Homeownership programs can be targeted to address building types or areas of greatest need. Promoting homeownership in Allentown would potentially increase neighborhood investment, provide a wealth-building tool for homeowners and renters, and support stable communities

*Habitat for Humanity Housing
Dedication*

Source: City of Allentown



H3a Expand Affordable Homeownership with a Community Land Trust.

A Community Land Trust (CLT) helps establish a pool of permanently affordable housing in a city or neighborhood through long term ownership of the land by a CLT organization. Typically, a CLT owns the land in perpetuity and leases it to homeowners who build and/or maintain their house. If the property value increases, the homeowner accrues some of the profit and the land trust also receives part of the value.

CLTs can be customized to serve different needs. For example, some CLTs may place deed restrictions with their leases to require the owner to sell to someone within a certain income bracket. Some CLTs own and lease both properties and structures and may have programs that are on-ramps to ownership. Other CLT's may build homeowner capacity through training and/or sweat equity to teach people homeowner skills.

A Community Land Trust is advantageous to establish in pivoting market conditions as the CLT can acquire low cost properties and hold them for future affordable housing development as the market heats up. The CLT can also work with a municipal-run land bank and affordable housing developers to bring projects to market. A community land trust keeps wealth and wealth-creation local, contributing to the long-term equitable development of Allentown neighborhoods.

NEXT STEPS:

- Evaluate an expanded relationship with the Lehigh Valley Community Land Trust.
- CLTs are typically nonprofits but can also be councils of government, and other community development organizations. Establish relationships with possible CLT supportive organizations.
- Set a targeted funding goal, unit production goal, and solicit philanthropic support for an endowment or corpus.



Lehigh Valley CLT Logo

Source: Community Action Committee of LehighValley, Inc.

H3b Affordable Housing Revolving Loan Fund.

While the Housing Trust Fund can provide a pool of money used to offset mid to large project costs, an affordable housing revolving loan fund (AHRLF) can provide capital for smaller investors. An AHRLF is a pool of resources that can finance construction, purchase or maintenance of affordable housing. As borrowers repay loans, the payments are circulated back into the fund to support future borrowing.

The fund can be directly applied to financing options for first time homeowners or to decrease renter gaps. Some funds may come from federal and state housing development programs (see recommendation 2.d Housing Trust Fund) but banks may also invest to meet their Community Reinvestment Act requirements. While most loans are repaid, the repayment period may be extended, and so the fund needs multiple sources of capital.

Established in 1987, the Vermont Community Loan Fund is one of the most vibrant examples of how RLF micro-lending can improve a community. In 2018, the VCLF lent close to \$4M and built or renovated over 100 affordable homes. The VCLF's was also able to lend to non housing related quality of life initiatives such as child care creation, and business advisory services.

H3c Financial Assistance for Owners.

Property values may increase in Allentown to the point that some homeowners may be at risk of displacement due to high taxes. Programs exist which protect homeowners in developing neighborhoods from dramatic tax increases that would move their homes outside of the realm of affordable over time, such as a Longtime Owner Occupied Program. This program, which has been utilized in Philadelphia, is a Real Estate Tax relief program for eligible homeowners whose property assessments (after the Homestead Exemption) increased by 50%, or more, from the previous year. Participants must fall within income limits, and meet length of home ownership requirements.

Similarly, an Owner Occupied Payment Agreement (OOPA), such as the one established in Philadelphia, allows residents who have fallen behind on their property taxes to enter into a payment plan with the city. A property tax rent/rebate program can support vulnerable populations, such as the elderly or disabled. Both of these programs would work best in a delineated, highly affected geographic area (potentially through an overlay) rather than as a citywide program.

NEXT STEPS:

- Promote existing city-led grants and loans for low to moderate income homeowners, as well as for landlords who rent to low and moderate income tenants.
- Work with local banks to create a loan pool of Community Reinvestment Act funds to fund affordable housing solutions.
- Partner with a non-profit organization to develop an affordable housing fund to address small investors, homeowners, or even renters' needs.

NEXT STEPS:

- Determine the feasibility, tax implications, and area in which these programs would be needed. Establish a set point at which such a program would be enacted.



TOP

*Signing Closed Papers for the First Rehabbed Allentown
Redevelopment Authority Property*

Source: City of Allentown

BELOW

Homes on S 10th Street in Allentown

Source: Jordan Platton Photography for City of Allentown

HOUSING

- H4a** Historic Preservation Districts.
- H4b** Facade Grants, Stabilization Grants, and Other Preservation Funding.

Principle 4

Preserve Allentown's Historic Legacy Housing

Allentown is fortunate to have walkable districts where beautiful historic structures line the streets. In these areas, stores, schools, small businesses, and services are woven into the neighborhood fabric. Allentown has taken steps to protect its historic assets and is committed to the preservation of historic buildings and urban patterns to ensure that its legacy remains.

The City of Allentown began a citywide Historic Preservation Plan in the fall of 2019. The Plan is anticipated to be completed in the fall of 2020 and include recommendations on existing historic districts and other historic resources. All of the recommendations of the Historic Preservation Plan, once adopted, will be incorporated into this Plan.

Old Allentown- Upside Allentown

Source: Upside Allentown



H4a Historic Preservation Districts.

Allentown has a long, rich history, evident in its unique structures and the stories people tell about them. Preserving this history by making sure these structures are livable, attractive, and at the forefront of neighborhood awareness is paramount to preserving and building upon the fabric and culture of each community. Old structures left neglected pose a safety threat to its tenants and neighbors, and are a deterrent to outside investment. Because of this, improving and increasing the housing quality of existing buildings will strengthen markets and contribute to the vitality and vibrancy in each district.

The Historic Preservation Districts in Old Allentown, Old Fairgrounds, and West Park represent an opportunity to preserve and build upon the unique character and story of each district. These districts protect the existing structures and regulate development. It can increase property values in the area and add to an enhanced sense of community.

H4b Facade Grants, Stabilization Grants, and Other Preservation Funding.

Historic structures can require a great deal of upkeep and occasionally need a complete overhaul of systems. Because the building envelope — the walls and roof — are visible to the public, special care should be taken to ensure the integrity of facades, windows, architectural detailing, colors, and materials. The cost of this maintenance can be a burden for low to moderate income property owners, and may lead to the displacement of residents from their communities because they could no longer afford the mortgage or rent on an improved property. Access to grants, loans, or other preservation-based funding would welcome people to invest in historic communities.

While there are grants and tax credits for income producing buildings and non-profit organizations for historic properties, there are currently no grants nor tax incentives available for most property owners in historic districts. This is neither at the federal, state nor local level. Some form of financial assistance for owners of historic houses will assist with the preservation of residential buildings and prevent their neglect and demolition.

The Cleveland Restoration Society has been successful funding historic preservation or residential properties using a revolving loan program where property owners can borrow funds at a low interest rate for restoration projects then pay the loan back replenishing the fund.

NEXT STEPS:

- Create new or expand/reduce existing historic districts through the forthcoming Historic Preservation Plan.
- Establish guidelines for historic districts that address both architectural character as well as sensitive improvements to the public realm, including historically contextual sidewalks, signage, transit facilities, and parking and the inclusion of more green spaces and street trees.
- Identify catalytic residential projects that feature historic structures, including non-residential structures such as re-purposed industrial buildings, churches, schools, and other difficult to reuse buildings.

NEXT STEPS:

- Create a pipeline of funding to ensure that existing homeowners can make improvements and invite new homeowners to make smart and responsible investment in Allentown's historic neighborhoods.
- Investigate and implement tax incentives, grants, or loans for historic residences. Also advocate that the state and federal government provide grants, tax incentives or loans for historic property owners.
- Partner with a non profit organization to implement a historic preservation revolving loan fund.

CATALYTIC ACTION HOUSING

! Land Bank

Create a Land Bank program as a strategic approach to blighted properties throughout the city. Land banking is the process of gathering parcels of land for future sale or development. During property disposal, the land bank would not keep any rights to the property. A Land Bank would have the opportunity to gain site control of problem residential properties to end the cycle of vacancy, abandonment, and tax foreclosure. The Land Bank would be guided by a strategy focused on identifying both the best reuse of the blighted property or group of properties as well as the impact on the neighborhood.

GOALS

- Establish a Land bank program as a community and economic development tool to revitalize blighted neighborhoods.
- Acquire cultural, historical, and archaeological open space sites.
- Act as a facilitator in the coordination of land purchases among all levels of government and nonprofit agencies.

NEXT STEPS

- Identify key parcels in the city that should be secured for future projects.
- Map existing parcels to identify clusters and key areas.
- Develop strategy for blighted properties throughout the city.
- Create a process to dispose of properties to ensure the most appropriate reuse

SUGGESTED PARTNERS

Redevelopment Authority of City of Allentown (RACA), non-profit organizations, developers

North Street Property

Source: Housing Authority
Development Corporation



Housing Implementation Plan

CODE	STRATEGY	1-3 years	3-5 years	5-10 years
PRINCIPLE 01 - IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF ALLENTOWN HOUSING				
H1a	Performance-based Rental Inspection.	■	■	■
H1b	Code Inspections and Enforcement.		■	■
H1c	Housing Court.		■	■
H1d	Preserve Existing Housing.	■	■	■
H1e	Financial Assistance Programs.	■	■	■
PRINCIPLE 02 - INCREASE THE QUANTITY OF HEALTHY, SAFE, AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING				
H2a	Zoning Update: Single Family Housing Focus.	■		
H2b	Zoning Update: Accessory Dwelling Units Focus.	■	■	
H2c	Zoning Update for Inclusionary Zoning.	■		
H2d	Create an Affordable Housing Overlay.	■		
H2e	Enable More Development with an Affordable Housing Fund or Housing Trust Fund.		■	■
H2f	Anti-displacement Strategy.	■	■	■
H2g	Housing Analysis.	■		
PRINCIPLE 03 - ENHANCE PATHWAYS TO HOMEOWNERSHIP				
H3a	Expand Affordable Homeownership with a Community Land Trust.	■	■	■
H3b	Affordable Housing Revolving Loan Fund.		■	■
H3c	Financial Assistance for Owners.	■	■	■
PRINCIPLE 04 - PRESERVE ALLENTOWN'S HISTORIC LEGACY HOUSING				
H4a	Historic Preservation Districts.	■		
H4b	Facade Grants, Stabilization Grants, and Other Preservation Funding.		■	■

Chapter 3

ACCESSIBILITY AND CONNECTIVITY

GOAL

ALLENTOWN WILL BE A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE ARE CONNECTED TO EACH OTHER, SERVICES, AND OPPORTUNITIES. THE CITY WILL BE SUPPORTED BY AN EFFICIENT TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS AND VIRTUAL NETWORKS.

CATALYTIC ACTIONS:

- ! **Mobility Hubs**
 - ! **Invest in Digital Infrastructure**
-

Allentown Transit Center
Sarah Cassi, Lehigh Valley Live



A N T



DUNKIN' DONUTS

Bus

0675



Get TIVO and watch
your shows EVERYWHERE!

EVERY BUSKIN - ON THE ROAD - ALL STATES

Service Electric

What we aspire to achieve...

PRINCIPLE 1: CREATE SAFE AND EFFICIENT ROUTES

Whether walking, biking, or driving, everyone wants to arrive safely and on time. At times, there can be conflicts between different modes of transportation; for example, what is efficient for cars may be less safe for bikes or pedestrians. A citywide mobility plan, coordinated with the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission's (LVPC) regional Walk/Roll LV plan should assess the physical infrastructure, existing and emerging technologies and services, and lastly, how people make mobility choices. More efficient transportation options, like LANTA's Enhanced Bus Service, will be supported by dedicated bus lanes, signal prioritization, and transit-oriented development to increase service frequency and decrease travel times. Trail and bikeway systems provide dedicated or shared routes that decrease travel times and increase safety. Complete streets integrates multiple types of transportation into a safe and functional streetscape for pedestrians, cyclists, cars, and public transit.

PRINCIPLE 2: CONNECT PLACES IN THE CITY

Well-designed streets and pathways provide alternative routes, enable bicycle and pedestrian circulation, create greater access, and decrease congestion. Allentown's dense street grid makes it one of the largest walkable areas in the Lehigh Valley. According to the LVPC's 2011 Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Study, the term "connectivity" refers to the interconnection of streets between trip origin and destination. Infrastructure improvements, combined with targeted development strategies, can create vibrant urban destinations and strengthen the viability of Allentown's urban network.

PRINCIPLE 3: WELCOME PEOPLE TO THE CITY

Many people visit Allentown for work, recreation, and entertainment and cultural amenities. Improvements to the experience of entering the city would help establish Allentown's identity and thereby support economic development. Gateways and signage could help orient people to centers within the city and help clusters of businesses market themselves to Allentonians and visitors alike. A shared parking strategy could dynamically manage demand for car storage and could promote alternative transportation through price signals.

Establishing gateways and coordinated signage can lead to stronger recognition key services and destinations in Allentown.

PRINCIPLE 4: CREATE MOBILITY CHOICES

Transportation is changing rapidly with automation, on-demand ride services, and new vehicle types. National experts suggest that each region will experience the transformation in different ways. This is reflected in the LVPC's Transit Oriented Development study (2011) that noted that Allentown, Bethlehem, and Easton all share characteristics like walkable, urban neighborhoods that enable car-lite (one car per two wage earners) or car-free (no cars) households. To capitalize on these existing assets, development projects, zoning, and other policies should align to create district and corridors with increased residential density. As the perception (and reality) of traffic congestion increases, improved bike and pedestrian networks, safe and identifiable transit stations, and more convenient service frequency could change the calculus and make car alternatives more appealing. Regional efforts such as the LVPC Walk/Roll mobility plan and collaborations with partners such as the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor and Wildlands Conservancy to close key trail gaps in Allentown can play a role in offering mobility alternatives to cars.

PRINCIPLE 5: PREPARE ALLENTOWN TO BE A SMART CITY

As technology advances, Allentown needs to prepare for infrastructure and policy changes to support new technologies. With rising numbers of employees working from home or remotely, the importance of physical connection to job centers is waning for knowledge-centric industries. Access to the Internet affects educational and economic opportunities and essential services such as healthcare as providers begin to integrate telemedicine into their practices. Allentown will need to incorporate planning for the expanded broadband service and capacity in order to provide residents with digital connections.

**PRINCIPLE 1:
CREATE SAFE AND
EFFICIENT ROUTES**

- AC1a** Strategically Coordinate Transportation with a Citywide Mobility Plan.
- AC1b** Connect Trail and Bikeway Systems.
- AC1c** Safe Routes to School.

**PRINCIPLE 2:
CONNECT PLACES IN
THE CITY**

- AC2a** Cluster Services and Amenities.
- AC2b** Streetscape Improvements.
- AC2c** Calming Traffic with One-way to Two-way Street Conversions.
- AC2d** Develop Transit-oriented Corridors.

**PRINCIPLE 3:
WELCOME PEOPLE TO
THE CITY**

- AC3a** Establish Gateways.
- AC3b** Wayfinding Signage and Branding.
- AC3c** Shared Parking Program.

**PRINCIPLE 4:
CREATE MOBILITY
CHOICES**

- AC4a** Explore Micro-transit.
- AC4b** Transit Stop Improvements.

**PRINCIPLE 5:
PREPARE ALLENTOWN
TO BE A SMART CITY**

- AC5a** Neighborhood Digital Access.
- AC5b** Smart City Equipment.

What does accessibility and connectivity mean for Allentown?

People need to connect with **physical infrastructure** such as sidewalks and roads, they need the **means to travel** such as bikes, cars, and public transit, and they need other ways of connecting, such as **virtual networks**. Cities provide the infrastructure that enables people of all ages to connect through the design of neighborhoods, the regulation and/or operation of transportation systems, and access to virtual networks.

This chapter will address accessibility and connectivity by discussing physical improvements, recommendations for transportation networks, and the establishment and/or expansion of virtual networks. These systems enable equitable economic development and access to services which contribute to the character and quality of Allentown's neighborhoods.

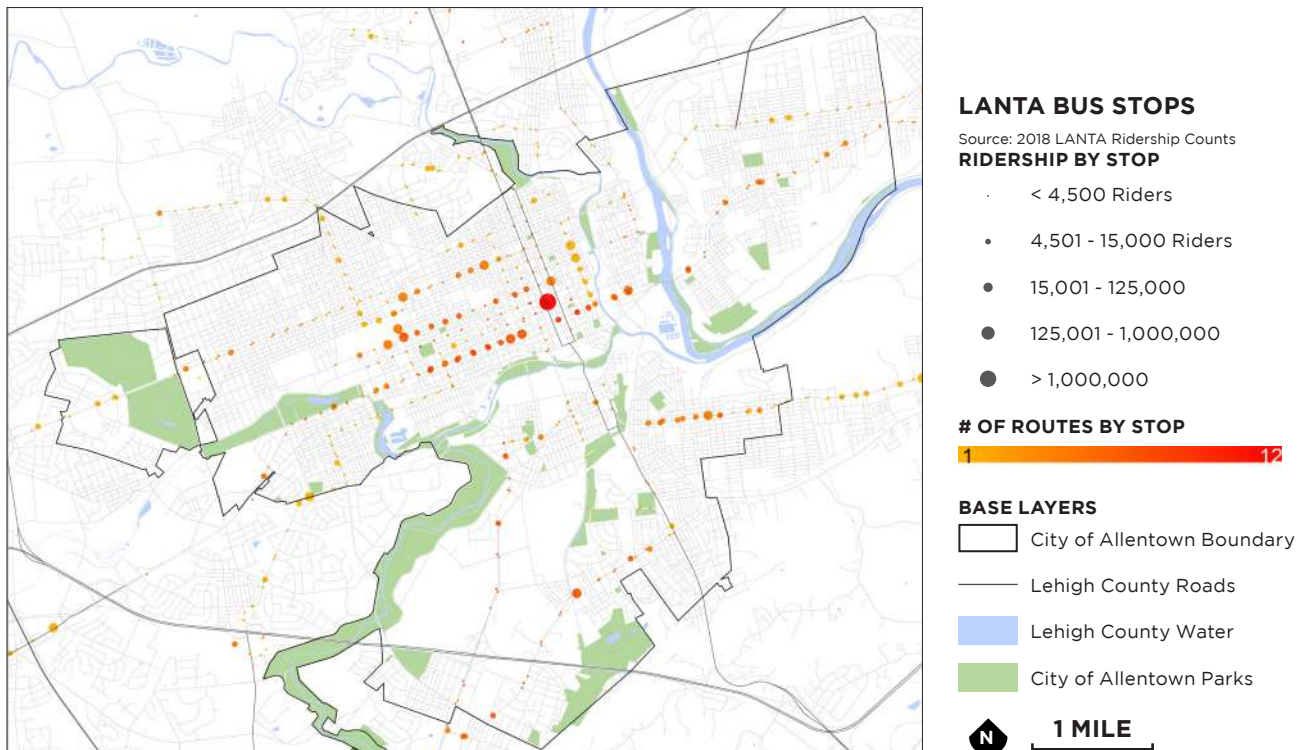
KEY THEMES

The key themes emerged from a combination of community engagement, data analysis, and community survey feedback. They have informed the Principles and actions suggested for this Urban System.

ACCESSIBILITY AND CONNECTIVITY IN ALLENTOWN TODAY

The Lehigh Valley is expected to continue to grow and Allentown will continue to be a major center of new development through 2030. The Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (LVPC) Comprehensive Plan (2005) projected that by the year 2030, 55% of the Lehigh Valley will be urban, compared to 40% in the year 2000. Farmland is being converted to housing, commercial, and industrial uses at a rapid rate. The areas that surround urban centers such as Allentown are less dense and are typically car-centric.

Allentown's success is linked to regional economic opportunities, housing, and other cultural assets. Residents of Allentown need to be able to easily and efficiently access job opportunities outside and within the city. Job growth in Allentown is attracting people from surrounding municipalities and they need efficient ways to access the city. A comprehensive look at how streets are used, public transportation, alternative mobility systems, and land use patterns is needed.



THE DAILY COMMUTE: MOVING IN AND OUT OF THE CITY

Allentownians' economic prosperity is connected to the region and adjacent communities. Data shows that over 80% of people who live in Allentown commute outside of city limits to work. Conversely, 80% of the people who work in Allentown travel from their homes outside of the city limits.

The daily exchange of commuters has many negative effects on transit infrastructure and the public realm:

Public transit is difficult to support

- Dispersed residential development patterns outside the city do not create conditions that support public transit.
- While Allentown's dense residential areas could supply adequate transit ridership, the employment destinations are also dispersed, inhibiting an efficient public transit network.

The quality of the public realm suffers

- One-way streets allow for increased speeds but reduce pedestrian safety and quality.
- The need to own a car in otherwise walkable urban neighborhoods creates high demand for parking and the need for increased parking capacity threatens space otherwise available for public spaces, amenities, or development.

There is increased financial burden for all

- Downtown parking structures raise development costs.
- Lower income residents need to own a car to access regional jobs and often spend a disproportionate share of their income on travel.

LVPC CLIMATE AND ENERGY ELEMENT (AUG 2014)

CLIMATE GOAL 4:

To create a land use pattern that helps to mitigate climate change impacts through a compact urban development area, mixed land uses, higher densities in urban areas and through preserving land for agricultural and environmental purposes.

ACCESSIBILITY + CONNECTIVITY IS ONE IMPORTANT PIECE OF A LARGER PUZZLE

Accessibility and connectivity extends beyond moving people more efficiently, it also refers to development patterns that allow people to live, work, and shop within their communities. Creating more compact, walkable development involves economic development strategies to support access to educational opportunities for Allentown residents so they can hold higher skilled jobs in the center of the city, as well as continued land use strategies to increase the housing inventory to attract more people to Allentown's walkable neighborhoods. If done with intention, supporting walkable communities and transit-oriented development can benefit people in both lower and higher income brackets.

Allentown is experiencing sustained growth and activity that could create a critical mass of viable economic and cultural centers that are walkable, connected with transit, and attractive to people who want to live a more affordable and/or less car-reliant lifestyle.

MOBILITY INNOVATIONS

Innovations in mobility are shifting the way residents, commuters, and visitors move, and many of these trends may affect Allentown. People are changing their relationship to their vehicles as new technologies like electric and automated vehicles and car alternatives such as bike-share and electrified bicycles create more choices for travel. On-demand services like Lyft and Uber, also called transportation network companies (TNC's), operate in Allentown. Locally, entrepreneurs have started operating smaller shuttles and van-pools to reach new employment destinations - particularly in neighborhoods where many households do not have access to a car. Lastly, the growth of online shopping makes it just as likely that goods will come to the consumer, not the consumer to the store, further complicating freight, distribution, and delivery patterns. These patterns will change greatly over the lifespan of this comprehensive plan. Citywide transportation planning needs to be nimble and able to respond to rapidly changing transportation technology and services.

How does accessibility and connectivity align with our vision?

ECONOMIC INCLUSIVITY

For economic development, supporting an efficient transportation system that offers multiple options can cut down on costs and time spent in transit. Decreasing the need to have a car greatly influences household finances. Land use policies that are supportive of enhanced accessibility and connectivity can promote employment centers, services, and amenities closer to one's home, so less time and money is spent on transportation. Enhancing digital access and connectivity supports economic and educational opportunities.

CITY AS A STEWARD

Enhancing accessibility and connectivity requires continued maintenance of the city's streets and improvements to its infrastructure. The city will be a strong partners with LANTA, supporting more efficient public transit routes through infrastructure investment such as traffic signal prioritization, bus priority lanes, streetscape improvements, and general road maintenance. The city will continue to support the expansion and maintenance of regional trails and trail connections to enhance connectivity and commuter corridors.

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

As the largest city in the region and the third largest city in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Allentown's growing and diverse population needs a variety of options for moving around the city, region, and further destinations. Residents, workers, and visitors in Allentown should feel comfortable and welcome when navigating the city's streets, sidewalks, transit, and trails. Public infrastructure investments and improvements should be designed for users of all abilities.

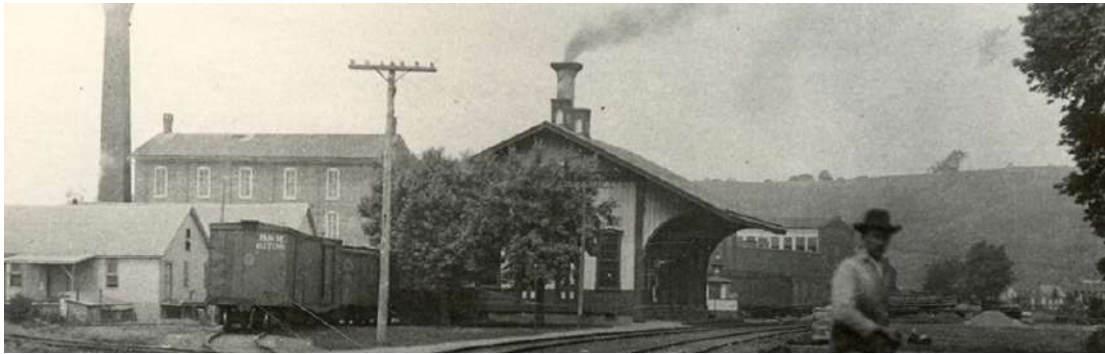
COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT & COLLABORATION

Designing effective transportation, biking, and walking routes will be a process that is undertaken with the community through Neighborhood Planning and through engagement with transportation entities like LANTA and the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission. Community members will guide digital access and expansion efforts, including identifying digital access points in their neighborhoods.

FUTURELY: THE REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (2019)

In August of 2019, Lehigh Valley Planning Commission released the draft of the 2019 Comprehensive Plan for the region. The process to create this plan included extensive community outreach about transportation. Key elements are included here:

- 89% of respondents said designing walkable bikeable communities would best address Lehigh Valley's future transportation and mobility needs
- 85% of respondents said installing new sidewalks and closing gaps in the existing sidewalk network would best address Lehigh Valley's future transportation and mobility needs
- 84% of respondents said promoting walking, biking and carpooling to work would best address Lehigh Valley's future transportation and mobility needs
- 84% of respondents said building new roadways and widening existing roads would best address Lehigh Valley's future transportation and mobility needs
- 82% of respondents said extending local public transit/bus service to new areas would best address Lehigh Valley's future transportation and mobility needs



*Pennsylvania
Railroad
Kutztown
Transportation
Authority*
Source: Allentown &
Auburn Railroad



*Hanover Avenue
Streetscape
Improvements*
Source: Lehigh Valley
Planning Commission
"FutureLV: The
Regional Plan"



*Pedestrian
Improvements at
6th and MLK Blvd
in Allentown*
Source: City of
Allentown



*Lehigh Valley
Planning
Commission
Walk/RollLV
Event - June 2019*
Source: City of
Allentown

ACCESSIBILITY + CONNECTIVITY

- AC1a **Strategically Coordinate Transportation with a Citywide Mobility Plan.**
- AC1b **Connect Trail and Bikeway Systems.**
- AC1c **Safe Routes to School.**

Principle 1

Create Safe and Efficient Routes

As a growing city, Allentown is already experiencing traffic congestion and increased pollution from having more cars on the road. From our community survey, we learned that most workers commute by car, and 60% had a commute over 15 minutes. This percentage—and the length of commute—is likely to continue to rise as the Lehigh Valley grows in population.

Enhancing the transit system and providing alternatives to driving at every level, from the neighborhood to the region, will ease the pressure of automobiles on the roadways and create conditions that benefit residents economically, socially, and physically. Economically, decreasing dependency on personal automobiles will decrease associated costs such as gas, insurance and maintenance costs. Socially, walking and biking infrastructure create recreational opportunities to connect with neighbors. Physically, people who live in more walkable areas are healthier, and a decrease in air pollution is beneficial to all residents.

Walkable communities connected by efficient public transit support youth and their families. Allentown School District (ASD) is a walking district, meaning that most students arrive to school by walking, biking, or taking a LANTA bus. Being able to arrive safely and efficiently to school is one part of a strong foundation for educational opportunity and success.

Train Service to Nearby Cities

Throughout the planning process, several community members brought forth the idea of train service to the nearby cities of New York and Philadelphia. Through their transportation planning, the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission has considered this, and held conversations with federal entities and potential private railroad companies. As of 2019, commuter rail into either of these cities is not planned for, due to cost and existing rail being utilized for freight, and existing land use patterns that were determined not dense enough to support viable passenger rail service.

AC1a Strategically Coordinate Transportation with a Citywide Mobility Plan.

Transportation networks are poised to change greatly in the next 10 years. To best support decisions and policies related to transportation networks, initiating a citywide Mobility Plan that utilizes data, assesses systems at a finer scale, and allows for ongoing realignment is needed. The citywide Mobility plan would set more specific citywide goals and guidelines for many of the topics in this section, including:

- Signage and gateways
- Parking demand management
- Complete streets implementation
- Street network planning (one way conversion, levels of service, etc.)
- Transit oriented development, including node, corridor, and district identification, coordinated with transit and LANTA Enhanced Bus Service planning
- In depth assessment of potential for micro-transit, mobility-as-a-service, automation, and other technological innovations
- Equity assessment and policy
- City-specific assessment of user needs and preferences
- Comprehensive and bicycle infrastructure

Understanding how and why people make transportation decisions will help to prioritize infrastructure investments. This will be especially helpful in informing Neighborhood Planning, since local residents will need to make decisions that impact their communities.

To kickstart the citywide mobility planning process, there are many mobility surveys that can be used, typically informed by the type of transit in question. One such survey is the Neighborhood Environment Walkability Survey (NEWS), which assesses residents' perception of neighborhood design features related to physical activity, including residential density, land-use mix (including both indices of proximity and accessibility), street connectivity, infrastructure for walking/cycling, neighborhood aesthetics, traffic and crime safety, and neighborhood satisfaction.

Another example is the Green Building Alliance "Make My Trip Count," survey. According to the organization's website, the survey has been influential as the responses were shared widely with regional transportation leaders and influenced projects like the ongoing transportation plan for the city.

NEXT STEPS:

- As part of Neighborhood Planning and Mobility Planning, administer surveys to assess transit needs.
- Work with advocacy groups and regional employers to survey residents and workers and better understand how people move around Allentown and the region.
- Either internally, or with the assistance of a consultant, prepare a citywide mobility plan.
- Coordinate citywide mobility planning related to accessible pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure with Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (LVPC) Regional Walk/Roll/LV Plan

AC1b Connect Trail and Bikeway Systems.

Significant improvements have been made to walking and biking infrastructure in Allentown, but more is needed to build the system out to connect neighborhoods and support commuting and recreation uses. Recent investments include the Urban Greenway walking trail that connects Center City with surrounding parkland and greenspaces and the establishment of THE LINK Regional Trails Coalition focusing on connecting greenways and trails that link to urban parks, neighborhoods, and surrounding communities.

Add additional sidewalks and pedestrian lanes. The shopping center on the corner of Hamilton and Cedar Crest is virtually inaccessible to the surrounding neighborhoods by foot because of a lack of sidewalks and dangerous road crossings.

- Community survey respondent

NEXT STEPS:

- Integrate trails into the citywide mobility plan and integrate into neighborhood plans.
- Align with LVPC's current bike and pedestrian planning, WalkRollLV, and identify priority projects for inclusion in LVPC's planning process.
- Update and continue to implement the City of Allentown Parks and Recreation "Connecting Our Community" Plan (2010) as the mobility component of the current Comprehensive Plan and integrate key projects and trails into neighborhood planning.
- Become an active partner in THE LINK Regional Trail Network

Lehigh Valley Canal Trail Concept

Source: Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, "FutureLV Plan"



AC1c Safe Routes to School.

The Centers for Disease Control's Safe Routes to School program, which has been widely adopted across the country, has health and safety benefits for children that extend to the whole community. A program of the U.S. Department of Transportation, Safe Routes to School is an approach that promotes walking and bicycling to school through infrastructure improvements, enforcement, tools, safety education, and incentives to encourage active transportation. Children benefit directly through increased walking and biking, better levels of physical fitness, and improved academic performance due to fewer absences. The community benefits through lower transportation costs and associated pollution, fewer collisions and accidents, and reduced traffic congestion.

The Allentown School District is a walking district making initiatives like Safe Routes to School essential for the safety of students.

NEXT STEPS:

- Identify citywide Safe Route efforts and integrate them into neighborhood planning.
- Support Allentown School District Safe Routes to School efforts and align infrastructure improvements when possible.

*Lincoln Elementary School
- Allentown School District*

Source: City of Allentown



ACCESSIBILITY + CONNECTIVITY

- AC2a Cluster Services and Amenities.
- AC2b Streetscape Improvements.
- AC2c Calming Traffic with One-way to Two-way Street Conversions.
- AC2d Development Transit-oriented Corridors.

Principle 2

Connect Places in the city

Creating connections throughout the city will make it easier for residents and visitors to utilize and experience all that Allentown has to offer and will create a more cohesive identity for the city.

Urban Street Evolution

Source: NACTO Urban Street Design Guide



AC2a Cluster Services and Amenities.

Identify places where there are existing or emerging business clusters and align economic and business development strategies with mobility infrastructure improvements. Evaluate the potential for transit-oriented development through analysis of future transit investments and mobility preferences of residents and workers. Involve business owners, the Chamber of Commerce, and LVEDC through an economic development lens to advocate for mobility options.

In the Areas of Allentown Section on future land use, specific areas in Allentown are identified to potentially increase services and amenities. For example, East Allentown, with its connection to Bethlehem and two major transit routes of Hanover Avenue and Union Boulevard, has potential areas for more intense commercial and residential uses. Increasing services and amenities along Hanover will help to prepare the area for eventual development at the Allentown State Hospital site.

AC2b Streetscape Improvements.

Advancing and coordinating streetscape improvements in Allentown can be supported through the Complete Streets framework and through integrating technology-focused solutions.

Complete Streets plans have been adopted by cities across the country to integrate different transit modes into standardized street sections. Complete Streets is a nationally recognized framework for how to design streets for all users, all modes of transportation, and all ability levels. Complete Streets balance the needs of drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, emergency responders, and goods movement based on local context. Thus, a Complete Street in a neighborhood commercial area, will not look the same as a Complete Street in a busy downtown, but both will accommodate all potential users.

NACTO's Urban Street Design Guide shows how streets evolve over time, with temporary improvements that can be tested and formalized through reconstruction. These streets can include:

- Adequate sidewalks accommodate pedestrians and those using wheelchairs or other assistance, and also include different textures and street trees to indicate the barrier between the walking realm and traffic
- Bike lanes are protected by physical barriers - for example, planters can delineate a lane with a different color and texture
- Curb extensions act as bus stops, and create islands for pedestrians crossing the street. These platforms also mark the beginning of parking zones along the street
- Buses are given their own lanes, which facilitate them moving through the city faster
- Bus shelters are covered, providing protection from the sun and precipitation

NEXT STEPS:

- Coordinate mobility planning with economic and business development policies and programs.
- Explore the creation of a mobility advisory board at the regional or municipal level to support the development of a long-term vision and priorities for coordination of mobility planning.

- Signalization and crosswalks make the intersection safe for pedestrians
- Adequate street lighting creates safer pedestrian environments, especially for those using transportation systems

Complete Streets were considered in Allentown previously. The city should adopt a formal policy and work with Public Works and other departments to formalize the standards.

Allentown supports another framework for urban design, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, or CPTED, corresponds well with Complete Streets. This system highlights the importance of designing spaces that feel monitored. For example, CEPTED’s suggestion for creating lighting design is:

“Ensure potential problem areas are well lit: pathways, stairs, entrances/exits, parking areas, ATMs, phone kiosks, mailboxes, bus stops, children’s play areas, recreation areas, pools, laundry rooms, storage areas, dumpster and recycling areas, etc.”

In combination with Complete Streets guidelines and CPTED principles, smart city technologies, like optimized traffic signals, can ensure a safe and efficient public realm for all types of transportation. In addition to the adoption of these technologies along Enhanced Bus Service routes, other areas of the city should be examined to increase capacity, decrease congestion, and improve safety through smart signalization technology.

Coordinating streetscape improvements with entities such as LANTA and PennDOT can be supportive of a ‘transit-priority’ approach that can benefit all transit in the city and region. When possible, coordinating streetscape and infrastructure improvements such as priority bus lanes, sidewalk improvements, and transit stop enhancements should be considered to support public transit and enhanced connectivity.

NEXT STEPS:

- Coordinate with LANTA and PennDOT on a ‘transit-priority’ approach for infrastructure investments such as signalization technology and streetscape improvements along key transit corridors.
- Consider adopting a Complete Street policy and implementing it through Neighborhood Planning.

Proposed LANTA Bus Enhanced Bus Service Routes

Source: LANTA, “Enhanced Bus/ Bus Rapid Transit”



AC2c Calming Traffic with One-way to Two-way Street Conversions.

Many of Allentown's streets are one-way, perhaps as a remnant of mid-century redevelopment along Hamilton Street. Conversion to two-way streets would calm traffic, increase pedestrian safety, increase business visibility, and create better conditions active storefronts and sidewalks. Street conversions are a significant investment, as they require changing signals, striping, signing, and potentially metering. However, two way streets can greatly change the character of a neighborhood from being car-friendly to people-friendly.

For example, although one-way commercial corridors operate best in "pairs," neither Seventh Street nor Hamilton have an equivalent commercial district pairing, making the experience of the commercial district discontinuous. In Allentown's historic neighborhoods, smaller one-way streets like West Chew, West Turner, and West Linden improve the flow of vehicles, but not necessarily to the benefit of the neighborhood residents who would like slower traffic and safer conditions. Even if a street is not converted back to two-way, the one-way street should be planned to calm traffic and increase multimodal travel with bike lanes, intersection bulb-outs, or other improvements that slow cars and make safer environments for people.

AC2d Develop Transit-oriented Corridors.

Transit is most effective when it serves areas with residential and commercial density. More people are able to utilize the service, and subsequently, fewer cars will be needed in the area. Fewer cars lead to less traffic congestion, fewer parking problems, and better air quality. In both the Zoning Code Update and in future neighborhood planning efforts, Allentown can work with the community to evaluate how neighborhoods align along LANTA bus routes and where an increase of services, amenities, and housing could be supported. Highly used transit stops are already clustered in areas with high population density. Those transportation stops in areas that are less dense could be considered for increased density to maximize the transit services.

In areas where transit is already heavily used, the city can potentially create zoning overlays that allow for multi-use development and appropriate transit densities, especially within a 5 minute walk of major transit routes.

The proposed LANTA Enhanced Bus Service route through Allentown provides a guide for potential locations for transit-supportive density as well as focus areas for transit stop improvements. The consideration of transit-supportive density is appropriate at these locations as the Enhanced Bus Service, when fully implemented, will be able to carry large numbers of people to and from commercial centers on a more frequent schedule. Mobility Hubs are highly visible station area improvements and a number of potential intersections have been identified as possibilities due to their proximity to dense development, institutions, intersections, or routes.

NEXT STEPS:

- Create a citywide strategy for one-way conversions and vet the proposals through the neighborhood planning process.
- Align this work with Complete Streets policy.

NEXT STEPS:

- Identify focus nodes and corridors with a citywide assessment.
- Integrate in-depth assessment aligning residential/commercial density with transit into neighborhood planning process.

Potential locations for transit-supportive density and transit stop improvements corresponding with Enhanced Bus Service:

- Irving Street
- 2nd Street & Hamilton Street
- Allentown Transit Center
- South 4th Street
- 17th Street & Chew Street

ACCESSIBILITY + CONNECTIVITY

- AC3a Establish Gateways.
- AC3b Wayfinding Signage and Branding.
- AC3c Shared Parking Program.

Principle 3 Welcome People to the City

Allentown can take charge of the city's image and brand by creating ways to welcome people to the city. This can happen through gateways announcing their arrival into the town, wayfinding signage and branding that represents the spirit of Allentown, and clearly marked parking instructions that make it easy for out-of-town visitors to access amenities.

AC3a Gateways.

Allentown can be a more welcoming place for both residents and people who come to the city to visit, work, or for entertainment. Installations such as welcoming gateway areas and wayfinding signage can create a larger citywide identity. By making it easier to navigate the city, both visitors and residents will be able to access their daily needs and amenities. The signage can communicate neighborhood character and identity, and be a part of empowering residents to take greater ownership and pride in their neighborhood and communities.

NEXT STEPS:

- Create a citywide strategy for neighborhood and community gateways.
- Leverage neighborhood planning efforts to identify strategies, standards and projects.

AC3b Wayfinding Signage and Branding.

Creating a memorable brand is key to establishing a sense of place and communicating the identity of a city. The best brands are easily understood, unique, and fit into a flexible system so they can be used in many ways.

A good example is Bozeman, Montana. Cities often feel that they need to express civic grandeur with a formal or traditional logo, but Bozeman wanted to project its progressive and youthful attitude. The City of Bozeman's logo is graphically simple, easy to recognize at many scales, and represents parts of the city as well as parts of the government.

In addition to a mark or logo system, cities can incorporate their brand identity to help people think about the parts of a city as a whole. For example, the mark can be used along with different colors to create neighborhood gateways, business district furniture, and directional signage. Trails and parks can incorporate the system and use creative and low cost installations, like ground adhesives, to communicate effectively.

Lastly, signs with simple icons to understand systems as well as different languages communicate that all are welcome and that the community is well-informed.



Bozeman Neighborhood Logos
Source: City of Bozeman, MT

NEXT STEPS:

- Develop a citywide wayfinding strategy.
- Execute a citywide branding initiative that can be incorporated into wayfinding signage.

RiNo Art District Signage

Source: Westword, "Op Ed: Ten Ways RiNo is Advocating for its Artists"



AC3c Shared Parking Program.

In Allentown, current commuting patterns indicate that most structured garage parking is full during the weekdays with lower utilization in the evenings and on weekends - with the exception of special events. Similarly, street parking likely experiences ebbs and flows with the workday schedule. A demand analysis in neighborhoods and districts served by LANTA would assess on-street and structured parking assets, estimate demand based on future development, and suggest the best ways to adaptively manage Allentown Parking Authority inventory along-side privately managed assets. Recent updates to metered street parking and free parking after 5PM on non-event days provide an opportunity to further explore shared parking initiatives.

Allentown, specifically downtown city center, should focus on parking solutions that entice individuals to visit. I have heard many complaints that parking is a hassle and that is why people don't want to travel here to go out to eat or shop.

NEXT STEPS:

- Consider zoning update for parking, identify transit-oriented districts through a zoning overlay.
- Conduct a parking demand analysis in conjunction with the Allentown Parking Authority.
- Support expansion of automated parking fee collection systems.

- AC4a Explore Micro-transit.
- AC4b Transit Stop Improvements.

Principle 4 Create Mobility Choices

Enhancements to our transportation and mobility infrastructure including LANTA's Enhanced Bus Service, complete streets improvements, a larger pedestrian and bicycle regional network through Lehigh Valley Planning Commission's Walk/RollLV Plan, and the regional trail system envisioned by THE LINK will change how we move around Allentown and the region. Incremental changes to transportation infrastructure and operations along with promoting walking, biking, and public transit use as alternative transportation operations can set the stage for a decrease in personal auto use. Supporting the infrastructure to provide mobility choices will benefit community health, decrease traffic congestion on our roads, and benefit the environment.

LANTA Stop

Source: LANTA, "Regional Public Transportation"



AC4a Explore Micro-transit.

Micro-transit systems, bike share, and other mobility-as-a-service innovations are rapidly evolving, showing up in larger cities throughout the United States. These systems can also play a role in smaller markets like Allentown and the Lehigh Valley. Through the Walk/RollLV Regional Plan, the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission is exploring the feasibility of regional bike-share. The city can explore partnership opportunities to prototype these systems, either with mobility companies directly or through partnerships with LANTA and/or LVPC.

One option that was popular in community engagement sessions and the community survey was the idea of elevating and potentially partnering with van-pools to help the workforce that travels from Allentown to the warehousing industries located outside the city. While there is some LANTA bus connectivity into these areas, the dispersion of warehousing sites is not conducive for mass transit.

AC4b Transit Stop Improvements.

Transit helps create affordable and accessible places to live. The City of Allentown will be a strong and supportive partner of LANTA and consider how infrastructure improvements can support public transit planning and promote its use, particularly along key transit corridors identified in LANTA's Enhanced Bus Service plan. The city can also consider integrating improved stops into existing neighborhoods and new development. Ridership is likely to increase if there are more amenities near bus stops, they are well marked, and riders can find shelter from the elements. Bus stop areas should be clear of conflicts with parked cars or moving vehicles.

Public right-of-way improvements are typically designed as part of a package for enhanced bus service, and because of the investment and size of the undertaking, they will likely occur on a mid to long-term time horizon. In the short term, the city can evaluate ways to encourage new development to include transit amenities such as dedicated transit stop areas and transit accessible commercial development. Neighborhoods should be assessed for key locations for retrofitted stop or station area amenities, such as places near schools, elder care facilities, and existing shopping centers. Allentown can work with LANTA through the Neighborhood Planning process to prioritize stations to be updated.

NEXT STEPS:

- Dedicate staff time to periodically assessing mobility innovations, assessing the need and viability through the neighborhood planning processes, and cultivating opportunities with regional partners like LVPC and LANTA.
- Work with vanpool operators to understand routes, frequency, and service areas to optimize van-pools, particularly in areas where public transit is limited.

NEXT STEPS:

- Evaluate opportunities to encourage development to include transit-supportive infrastructure.
- Work with LANTA on improvements to key transit stops within neighborhoods and collaborate on the establishment of mobility hubs.
- Create a strong package of improvements to go into LVPC's Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP).
- Prioritize bus stop improvements.

ACCESSIBILITY + CONNECTIVITY

AC5a Enhance Neighborhood Digital Access.

AC5b Invest in Smart City Equipment.

Principle 5 Prepare Allentown to be a Smart City

Becoming a 'smart city' means planning for and making investments in digital infrastructure and technology that will enhance digital access and help Allentown prepare for advances in technology. Technological advancements such as automated vehicles and sensor technologies are already transforming city landscapes, and the city is committed to preparing and planning for these changes. However, while preparing city infrastructure for technological advancements is a priority, more immediately the City of Allentown seeks to establish collaborative partnerships and identify next steps for addressing the 'digital divide' in Allentown.

According to the US Census 2017 American Community Survey, nearly 1 in 4 households in Allentown do not have an Internet subscription. [1]

The lack of an in-home Internet connection can be a barrier to educational and economic opportunities. Increasing digital connectivity and access within Allentown's neighborhoods is highlighted as an early implementation Catalytic Action.

[1] <https://www.mcall.com/news/breaking/mc-nws-five-year-census-20181203-story.html> - Morning Call 'A surprising number of people don't have internet access in the Lehigh Valley' Dec. 8, 2018.

Allentown Central Business District

Source: Lehigh Valley Economic Development, "Downtown Allentown Revitalization District Wins Global Award for Excellence"



AC5a Enhance Neighborhood Digital Access.

Improvements to WiFi coverage, especially in dense urban areas, can be achieved through partnerships with institutions or schools. For example, in Santa Ana California, the school district made efforts to increase home Internet access by boosting school signal strength to cover nearby apartment units and, in partnership with the city, increase access to WiFi hotspots. The City of Allentown will work with community, institutional, public and private partners to advance efforts to address digital access in the city's neighborhoods.

Improving access will not address lack of knowledge of how to access the Internet and benefit from services and information. Residents who may not have grown up with the Internet, or who don't have access to a computer at home are also caught in a digital divide. Providing information about how to access low-cost Internet providers and purchase used or discounted computers or devices, and providing digital literacy training are services that the city can undertake with local nonprofits, the library system and the Allentown School District.

AC5b Invest in Smart City Equipment.

Increasing the presence and bandwidth of the Internet and Internet-enabled systems will help Allentown become a "smarter" city. The Internet has an increasing role to play in monitoring the systems of a city- from safety to stormwater. Better-synched systems lead to a higher quality of life for all; for example, investments in smart technology will help to sync traffic lights and other signals.

Internet-enabled technology can help the city to run smoother and can provide essential information about safety and health in a city. The devices that monitor places or systems are part of the "Internet of Things," which means they function as an individual devices, but are also connected to a larger, internet-enabled system which tracks data.

Synchronized traffic lights are one example of Internet of Things technology in cities. Another is air and noise pollution monitors that send information about levels of particulate or sound in a given area. Cities have also utilized devices to maintain safety; Pittsburgh is using a gunfire locator system, which relies on connected microphones to measure the range of explosive sounds.

NEXT STEPS:

- Initiate a collaborative public-private partnership on a comprehensive approach to enhancing digital access in Allentown neighborhoods
- See Catalytic Action 'Investment in Digital Infrastructure' for further detail

NEXT STEPS:

- Take examples/ recommendations from 'Becoming Broadband Ready - A Toolkit for Communities' Next Century Cities (Jan 2019) - <https://nextcenturycities.org/becoming-broadband-ready/>
- Invite each department to submit ways in which increased Internet access and connectivity can improve systems.

CATALYTIC ACTION ACCESSIBILITY + CONNECTIVITY

! Mobility Hubs

Establish a network of efficient transportation options that allow people to get where they need to go using whatever mode of transportation makes the most sense for them on a particular trip.

Mobility hubs should be built around existing or planned transit lines. Priority should be given to areas of dense residential and commercial development, but also those where development or redevelopment is planned or imminent. If public transportation is not currently in place, an interim step would be to add other elements of the hub such as wayfinding signs, bicycle infrastructure, and appropriate crosswalks.



Proposed Enhanced Bus Service Stop and Transit-Supportive Development at 7th and West Allen Streets

Source: LANTA "Enhanced Bus/BRT Study"

GOALS

- Provide affordable and efficient transportation options to residents and commuters in Allentown that encourage a decrease in private automobile use.
- Provide residents with better transportation access to employment and education opportunities.

NEXT STEPS

Add five to seven strategically placed nodes that combine public transit, vanpool, bike-share, bike storage, safe pedestrian crossings, connections to regional trails [where possible], and wayfinding signage by:

- Coordinating mobility hub design with LANTA Enhanced Bus Service routes and stops.
- Engage the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation to discuss permitting, design, and partnership.
- Identifying operators of van services, understand their established routes and offerings, and coordinate connections with mobility hubs.
- Identify key locations for enhanced lighting, bicycle parking, or bicycle lockers, which may align with increased office space in the downtown area.
- Prioritize pedestrian access in mobility hub designs, especially considering crosswalks, signalization, and other interactions with traffic.
- If electric charging is needed for cars or other modes of transportation, ensure adequate utility loads.
- Increase focus on pedestrian and bicycle safety, while emphasizing these alternative transportation modes

SUGGESTED PARTNERS

LANTA; Lehigh Valley Planning Commission; City of Allentown Public Works; Bureau of Planning & Zoning; THE LINK Trail Network

CATALYTIC ACTION ACCESSIBILITY + CONNECTIVITY

! Investment in Digital Infrastructure

Enhance Allentown's broadband infrastructure with a focus on advancing digital equity and digital inclusion in our neighborhoods.

GOALS

- Prioritize digital inclusion for all Allentonians and identify pathways for connectivity for currently unconnected residents.

NEXT STEPS

- Develop a team to head up WiFi expansion, which can include: city IT staff; a GIS expert for mapping speeds; infrastructure and availability; an emergency management coordinator; local government finance or budget directors; and economic development staff.
- Assess existing WiFi networks in public spaces in Allentown. WiFi provided by local businesses, libraries, and other entities should be mapped, noting availability, transmission speeds, and gaps.
- Physical infrastructure for providing Internet access should also be mapped, as even wireless networks need to have physical infrastructure such as fiber, cells, and towers to facilitate coverage.
- With an understanding of networks and infrastructure, a plan can be created and a budget developed for how to extend WiFi throughout the city.
- Through meetings with Internet providers, the city can determine whether to change their investment in Internet services to provide broader coverage, and how to structure that contract.
- Public and private entities can be engaged as partners to partially fund the development of citywide WiFi network.
- Coordinate with community-serving entities to understand Internet access programming, and develop innovative programs for outreach
- In partnership with the Allentown School District and efforts to enhance digital access and reduce the digital divide, explore the potential for neighborhood schools to serve as digital access hubs for the community.

SUGGESTED PARTNERS

City of Allentown Community and Economic Development; City of Allentown Department of Information Technology; Allentown Public Library; Allentown School District; Community organizations; Philanthropic entities; Private sector entities; Institutions; Telecom companies



Solar Powered Public Phone Charging Station

Source: Yahoo News, "NYC to Offer Free Phone-Charging Stations in Parks"

Accessibility & Connectivity Implementation Plan

CODE	STRATEGY	1-3 years	3-5 years	5-10 years
PRINCIPLE 01 - CREATE SAFE AND EFFICIENT ROUTES				
AC1a	Strategically Coordinate Transportation with a Citywide Mobility Plan.	Light Purple	Medium Purple	Dark Purple
AC1b	Trail and Bikeway Systems.		Medium Purple	Dark Purple
AC1c	Safe Routes to School.	Medium Purple	Dark Purple	
PRINCIPLE 02 - CONNECT PLACES IN THE CITY				
AC2a	Clusters of Services and Amenities.	Light Purple	Medium Purple	Dark Purple
AC2b	Streetscape Improvements.		Medium Purple	Dark Purple
AC2c	Calming Traffic with One-way to Two-way Street Conversions.			Dark Purple
AC2d	Develop Transit-oriented Corridors.		Medium Purple	Dark Purple
PRINCIPLE 03 - WELCOME PEOPLE TO THE CITY				
AC3a	Gateways.	Medium Purple	Dark Purple	
AC3b	Wayfinding Signage and Branding.	Medium Purple	Dark Purple	
AC3c	Shared Parking Program.			Dark Purple
PRINCIPLE 04 - CREATE MOBILITY CHOICES				
AC4a	Micro-transit.		Medium Purple	Dark Purple
AC4b	Transit Stop Improvements.		Medium Purple	Dark Purple
PRINCIPLE 05 - PREPARE ALLENTOWN TO BE A SMART CITY				
AC5a	Neighborhood Digital Access.	Light Purple	Medium Purple	Dark Purple
AC5b	Smart City Equipment.		Medium Purple	Dark Purple

Chapter 4

SERVICES AND AMENITIES

GOAL

IN ALLENTOWN, RESIDENTS WILL HAVE EASE OF ACCESS TO THE SERVICES AND AMENITIES NEEDED TO SURVIVE AND THRIVE. IN PARTICULAR, THE COMMUNITY WILL SUPPORT THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE, AND WILL CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE THE ARTS FLOURISH, NEIGHBORHOODS ARE EMPOWERED, AND PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ENTITIES ARE LEVERAGED.

CATALYTIC ACTIONS:

- !** Youth Development through Pre-K
 - !** Community Centers: Improvement and Investment
-

Dieruff High School Track and Field Team

Source: City of Allentown





West Park Fountain
and Bandshell

Source: City of Allentown



What we aspire to achieve...

PRINCIPLE 1: SUPPORT NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTIFY AND ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

People who live in neighborhoods should make decisions about the places they live. This can help to direct development and ensure that the values of the community are supported by the planning efforts of the city. The Allentown Vision 2030 Community Ambassador Program provided a mechanism for deeper community engagement in the plan development process, and Community Ambassadors will be important partners in implementing Vision 2030. Additionally, the new Bureau of Planning & Zoning Neighborhood Planning Framework will empower community groups to engage with the planning process and build capacity across the city.

PRINCIPLE 2: ENHANCE ACCESS TO LOCAL ESSENTIAL SERVICES AND AMENITIES

To improve quality of life for all citizens of Allentown, it is important to provide necessary services that meet daily needs in a convenient and welcoming way. In the Allentown Vision 2030 community planning process, what rose to the top was the importance of providing access to training facilities, grocery stores, banking, and programs to assist returning populations and the homeless. Access to these services defines a just and equitable society, and provides a foundation for citizens not just to survive, but to improve their lives.

PRINCIPLE 3: FOSTER INCLUSIVE AND WELCOMING COMMUNITIES

Allentown has a long history as a diverse city. Alongside celebrating and honoring diversity is the importance of being a welcoming city where all feel included and heard. Fostering inclusive and welcoming neighborhoods means all community members feel respected, safe, and part of the future of their city.

**PRINCIPLE 1:
SUPPORT
NEIGHBORHOOD
IDENTIFY AND
ORGANIZATIONAL
CAPACITY**

- SA1a** Allentown Vision 2030 Community Ambassador Program.
- SA1b** Youth Empowerment.
- SA1c** Support Neighborhood Leadership.

**PRINCIPLE 2:
ENHANCE ACCESS
TO LOCAL ESSENTIAL
SERVICES AND
AMENITIES**

- SA2a** Financial Empowerment Program: BankOn.
- SA2b** Food Access Program.
- SA2c** Homelessness Support and Housing.
- SA2d** Community Educational Facilities.
- SA2e** Neighborhood Partners.
- SA2f** Small Lot Art Installations and Cultural Placemaking.

**PRINCIPLE 3:
FOSTER INCLUSIVE
AND WELCOMING
COMMUNITIES**

- SA3a** Support Cultural Spaces.
- SA3b** Expand Multicultural Programming.
- SA3c** Re-entry Program.
- SA3d** Youth and Public Safety.

What do services and amenities mean for Allentown?

Building community and trust starts in neighborhoods. Throughout this process, the idea that community and a sense of belonging is important has surfaced several times. Allentonians want to know their neighbors, to feel safe, and to have pride in the place where they live.

Knowing your neighbors includes being able to frequent community spaces, such as neighborhood stores, cafes, bars, and welcoming public areas. Schools are an important public space; these facilities can be integrated into the fabric of a neighborhood by expanding hours for programming and utilizing space for community functions. Communities are empowered when they have agency, so this section includes how a community can make decisions together and develop itself through a neighborhood planning process. Communities also grow stronger by celebrating the people who live there through art and public events. This chapter provides insight into how the city may strengthen neighborhood bonds, and how residents can be involved.

Feeling safe is important to Allentown residents. This can mean increased police presence, but can also pertain to the physical environment, such as the cleanliness of streets and increased lighting of public spaces.

Access to services can sometimes be limited by the type of development that is dictated by other urban systems. For example, some neighborhoods may not be served by as many food outlets due to a lack of commercial zoning that would accommodate a grocery store or market. As described in the Connectivity and Accessibility chapter, it is especially helpful to consider systems of transportation when locating services and commercial centers, such as co-locating retail districts and bus transportation. As LANTA builds out the Enhanced Bus Service network, zoning patterns should change to accommodate ridership and promote density in proximity to transit lines.

KEY THEMES

The key themes highlighted below emerged from a combination of community engagement, data analysis, and community survey feedback. They have informed the Principles and Actions suggested for this Urban System.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Throughout the Allentown Vision 2030 community planning process, there was a clear priority on supporting and empowering the youth of Allentown through educational opportunities, community programming and skill building, recreation, and after-school programs. Additionally, in considering policies and programs to support Allentown's youth it is important to engage young voices and ideas directly so they are a part in planning for the future of our city.

Allentown's population is young - the largest age group (17% of the population) is 20 -29. In Allentown, the median age in 2017 was 31, while the median age in the rest of Pennsylvania was 40.6. As shown in the chart below, nearly 63% of the population is under 40. With so many young residents, it is necessary for the city and its partners to ensure there are opportunities for educational growth, workforce development, and support to prepare the next generation to be leaders in their neighborhoods and communities.

Supporting Allentown's youth also means supporting their parents and guardians. The Allentown School District has created innovative ways for parents and guardians to access support and resources. The ASD Parent University focuses on how parents can be involved in the schools and the Allentown Parent Network provides leadership and advocacy opportunities.

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

The community leaders in Allentown are committed to making their neighborhoods the best they can be. They seek a partner in the city, especially related to issues of cleanliness, safety, and activating public spaces. The city can meet them in co-creating their neighborhoods by establishing a framework for citizen leadership and engagement in planning, and by providing opportunities for activation through arts and cultural activities.

Allentown Population by Age (2016)

Age	0-9	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80+
Population %	16.7%	15.4%	17.1%	13.7%	10%	11.3%	7.9%	4.4%	3.5%
# of Residents	20,079	18,520	20,614	16,547	12,093	13,553	9,520	5,345	4,169

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census Reporter, ACS 2016 1-Year Survey

How do services and amenities align with our vision?

ECONOMIC INCLUSIVITY

Services and amenities create a support system that allows for wealth-building. The recommendations in this chapter address economic inclusivity on many levels - from more locally focused retail to financial empowerment and food access programs.

CITY AS A STEWARD

Ensuring that services are available to a diverse population means that people from all walks of life will be able to improve their lives and contribute to society. This approach strengthens societal structures, and helps to decrease reactive, stop-gap spending that does not address underlying problems.

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Diversity strengthens a community. Accessible services and amenities conveys the message that all are welcome. Integrating voices from across the community in planning will help to increase the accessibility of services and amenities in all neighborhoods. Additionally, highlighting diversity through the creation of spaces in which to share cultures contributes to a welcoming civic space.

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT & COLLABORATION

Programs such as the Community Ambassador Program and the Neighborhood Planning Framework create channels for engagement with the City of Allentown, and will help to ensure that development and investment in neighborhoods serves the people who live there.



Keck Park Skate Park - East Allentown

Source: City of Allentown



Fishing in the Park Event, Lehigh Parkway - South Allentown

Source: City of Allentown



2019 West End World of Food Festival - West Allentown

Source: Jane Geist



2019 International Cultural Festival in Arts Park - Center Allentown

Source: LDG Creations

SERVICES AND AMENITIES

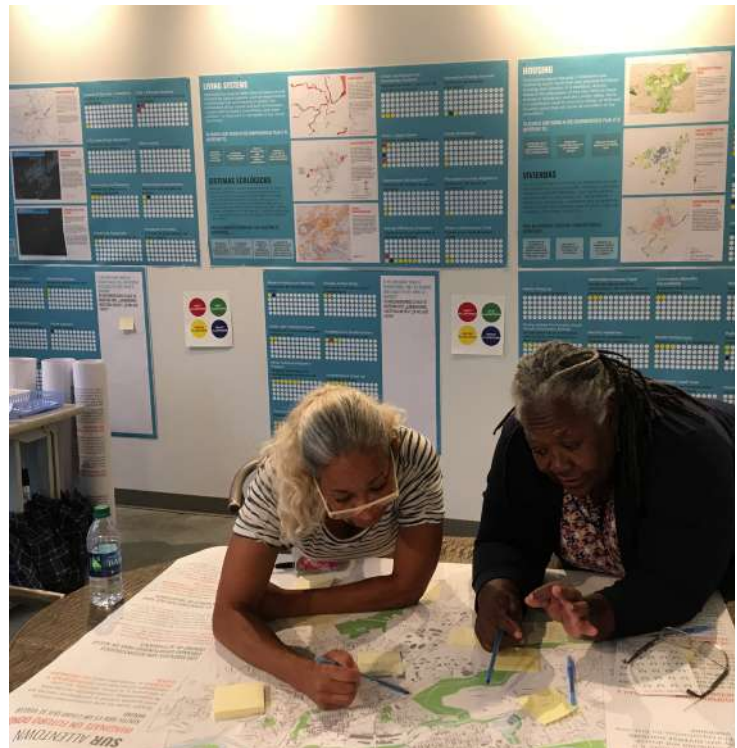
- SA1a Allentown Vision 2030 Community Ambassador Program.
- SA1b Youth Empowerment.
- SA1c Support Neighborhood Leadership.

Principle 1 Support Neighborhood Identify and Organizational Capacity

Allentown's neighborhoods are the foundation of the city. Supporting initiatives that create welcoming neighborhoods and provide opportunities to connect with neighbors, local businesses, and community organizations will help build collective ownership and neighborhood identity across Allentown's diverse communities.

Community Ambassador Meeting

Source: City of Allentown



SA1a Allentown Vision 2030 Community Ambassador Program.

In Spring 2019, Allentown Vision 2030 launched the Community Ambassador Program as a way to more deeply engage the Allentown community and neighborhoods in the Vision 2030 planning process. The Community Ambassador Program is a network of community volunteers who help build awareness and promote engagement in the Allentown Vision 2030 process. The focus of the Community Ambassador Program is to empower and build capacity in Allentown's communities and neighborhoods. In the development of Allentown Vision 2030, Community Ambassadors were invited to promote engagement in a variety of ways including meetings with their neighborhood association or organization to gain feedback on the Plan, participating in community conversations on the future of Allentown, and conducting Vision 2030 planning exercises. Allentown Vision 2030 engaged over 50 community ambassadors in the development of the Vision 2030 Plan.

As Allentown Vision 2030 enters implementation, the Community Ambassador Program is being solidified into an initiative to empower and build capacity in Allentown's neighborhoods and communities. The Community Ambassador Program will work alongside the city and its partners to make the projects and programs of Allentown Vision 2030 a reality. Supported by the new Neighborhood Planning Framework and community leadership training, the Allentown Vision 2030 Community Ambassador Program will be a collaborative platform for identifying neighborhood-scale projects that can positively impact our communities.

NEXT STEPS:

- Establish a regular schedule of Community Ambassador Meetings to provide engagement opportunities and updates on Allentown Vision 2030.
- Support community leadership training that can help Community Ambassadors propose, plan, and implement neighborhood scale projects.
- Engage with existing neighborhood associations and community groups to build awareness and engage members and leadership in the Community Ambassador Program.
- Partner with Community Ambassador Program on neighborhood-scale projects and initiatives.

SA1b Youth Empowerment.

Because Allentown has such a large population of young people, it is especially important to incorporate their ideas and opinions as the city grows and changes. They are the future of the city, and engagement now will create a pipeline of leadership for later. The city will make it a priority to find ways to seek and incorporate youth voices.

The National League of Cities (NLC) has created a series of resources for cities interested in engaging youth in a meaningful way. The values they suggest that city leaders follow are:

- Treat youth as valuable partners in the work of local government;
- Prepare and support youth to take on meaningful roles in addressing important issues; and
- Respect and listen to youth.

NLC has many tools that support these values. Before starting a new program, they suggest first conducting a Perceptions Inventory with youth in the community to understand how they perceive city government. This form is included in the Appendix.

The results of the inventory will give some indication of what action to take next. The National League of Cities has resources available for establishing a Youth Council, and for holding a Youth Summit. More substantial information about creating a framework for youth engagement can be found in their publication “Authentic Youth Civic Engagement: A Guide for Municipal Leaders”.

NEXT STEPS:

- Support platforms for youth engagement and seek their feedback in program development and decision making.
- Explore tactics and resources from National League of Cities and other entities with experience in engaging young people.

*Planning Workshop with
Community Bike Works
Youth Leadership*

Source: City of Allentown



SA1c Support Neighborhood Leadership.

The City of Allentown can provide mechanisms for supporting existing neighborhood groups and associations as well as provide tools for establishing new neighborhood groups where none currently exist. Supporting neighborhood associations and community groups is an essential part of enhancing the sense of community and creating welcoming spaces for new and existing residents.

To build capacity, neighborhood and community leaders should have access to resources and training on neighborhood capacity building. Trainings could be offered through the Allentown Vision 2030 Community Ambassador Program, done in collaboration with existing neighborhood and community organizations, or could be conducted in coordination with larger state or regional entities such as the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission or Pennsylvania Downtown Center.

Engaging neighborhoods in decision making ensures that projects and plans fit the day to day needs of the people most affected. Allentown currently has many neighborhood associations, but these groups are not formally engaged with the city on an on-going basis. An important action to take is to establish a way for neighborhood groups to be engaged and kept up-to-date on planning and development activities in their neighborhoods.

To keep momentum up and create connections across neighborhoods, the city could facilitate quarterly or bi-annual meetings to invite neighborhood leaders to discuss planning issues amongst themselves and with local leadership. This could present a forum through which to share progress on planning goals and to learn from each other.

Supporting neighborhood leadership and engagement applies to entities across the city. In 2018, the Allentown School District launched the Allentown Parent Network (APN) aimed at establishing a new model for parent engagement and leadership in their children's education. The Allentown Parent Network is supported by multiple community-based organizations with the goal of authentic engagement and true advocacy to support Allentown students.

NEXT STEPS:

- Establish a means of offering training to neighborhood leaders.
- Through the Neighborhood Planning Framework, create a system of engagement for local decision making.
- Hold meetings during which neighborhood leaders can network and share information.

Community Meeting

Source: City of Allentown



SERVICES AND AMENITIES

- SA2a Financial Empowerment Program: BankOn.
- SA2b Food Access Program.
- SA2c Homelessness Support and Housing.
- SA2d Community Educational Facilities.
- SA2e Neighborhood Partners.
- SA2f Small Lot Art Installations and Cultural Placemaking.

Principle 2 Enhance Access to Local Essential Services and Amenities

The city has many agencies that serve the needs of the community. However, there are gaps in awareness of these services, and ways that access can be improved.

Allentown Fire Department and Health Bureau - Free Meals at Firehouse Fridays

Source: City of Allentown



SA2a Financial Empowerment Program: BankOn.

An important aspect to supporting economic inclusivity is access to banks and financial institutions. Financial transactions through banks decrease the high fees and instability that come with using services like payday loans or informal banking systems. Bank accounts allow customers to build credit and savings, and to access products like mortgages.

In the United States, African American and Hispanic populations are more likely to be unbanked, meaning that they do not have a bank account. An 2017 FDIC survey reports that, nationally, African American populations are 17% unbanked and Hispanic populations are 14% unbanked. In recent years, Allentown has seen an increase in both African American and Hispanic populations, many of whom include immigrants to the United States. Making banking options available to residents of Allentown can help to secure their financial stability and ultimately encourage investment through homeownership and business starts.

The City of Allentown is working in collaboration with local non-profits and financial institutions to create a BankOn program. BankOn is a financial empowerment program, operating under the Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund, that increases banking access, financial education and community wealth building, targeting the under and unbanked residents. The goal of the program is to bring under and unbanked residents into the banking system through:

- Providing financial education to residents through nonprofit partnerships
- Working with local financial institutions to increase the availability of low-risk, low-cost banking products.

SA2b Food Access Program.

Access to fresh food is an essential aspect of health. Areas without access to fresh fruit, vegetables, and other healthful whole foods are categorized as “food deserts,” and are usually found in lower-income areas. Residents in these areas either have to take the time to travel outside their neighborhood to access healthy food options or settle for limited options at restaurants or convenience stores. From the Allentown Vision 2030 community planning process, access to healthy food is important in Allentown, and a priority for the community to address.

Allentown’s grocery stores are typically located on major retail corridors, and are most easily accessed by car. In some places, those that have limited access to a car must utilize corner stores and convenience stores for food. Affordability of food is also an important consideration. During the summer, school children who rely on free or reduced lunch programs may not have access to nutritional foods.

NEXT STEPS:

- Continue to work with BankOn, a national program administered in partnership with the CFE Fund, to establish a program of outreach to the unbanked in Allentown.
- Collaborate with local non-profits and financial institutions to build out the BankOn Program in Allentown.

NEXT STEPS:

- In order to determine the specific food-related needs of residents of Allentown, an assessment of groceries, markets, farmers markets, convenience stores, and all other food access points should be conducted.
- Continue to support food access programs in partnership with nonprofit and institutional partners.

The Allentown Health Bureau is a strong partner in the effort to feed children after school and in the summer months. The “Healthy Kids, Healthy Allentown” Summer Lunch Program offers many options for children to have healthy lunches throughout the summer months. In addition, the Health Bureau offers the Firehouse Fridays program, a once weekly after school feeding program designed to prevent hunger and expose children to career firefighting.

The city also supports a mobile fruit and vegetable truck which operates similarly to an ice cream truck and drives throughout the city’s 18 playgrounds offering free fruit and vegetable snacks. Furthermore, the city supports over 15 school and community gardens designed to increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables and teach children where food comes from and how to cultivate a garden.

Across the nation, programs have been developed to address food deserts. Examples include churches or community centers offering meals via youth programs in the summer, and food access nonprofits partnering with corner stores and local health departments to sell fresh fruits and vegetables, as in the case of D.C. Central Kitchen’s Healthy Corners initiative.

SA2c Homelessness Support and Housing.

Homelessness Support

Services for the homeless population are available in Allentown; access and knowledge of these services could be expanded by increasing promotion of these services, including resources for job training and social service facilities. An example of enhanced promotion of services is the smart-phone compliant Internet resource, BigBurgh.com, a mobile-optimized website that pulls together services that help the homeless (or those at risk of becoming homeless) in the City of Pittsburgh. Administered by the Homeless Children’s Education Fund, the phone application only includes services that are free, good, and welcoming to those without an address.

Housing for the Homeless

Addressing the root causes of homelessness goes beyond the need to build more housing and should include issues such as stagnant wages and the lack of adequate mental healthcare in the United States. Increasing access to training and transportation can provide some solution to the former issue, and for the latter, public health services exist. But the most concrete step to address homelessness from a city planning perspective is to create more affordable and supportive housing.

Existing plans can inform this work. The American Planning Association suggests taking guidance from the Consolidated Housing & Community Development Plan, Continuum of Care for the Homeless, and Public Housing Agency Plan. Integrating the recommendations in these plans with actions that the city can take to facilitate more housing will be more effective than reactionary measures.

APA also suggests legalizing a type of housing that has been systematically removed from urban areas since the 1920s, Single-Residence Occupancy Buildings, or SROs. These building types were made up of small living spaces with flexible rental terms. The layouts varied, with some units including kitchens and showers, and some built around these shared amenities. San Diego has focused on building or maintaining SROs to address homelessness with successful results.

NEXT STEPS:

- Explore the potential for an app, brochure, or other repository for homeless services, either through the city or through a non-profit partner.
- Reconsider the zoning ordinance on rooming and/or boarding houses.
- Continue and expand the work of Mayor’s Homelessness Committee.
- Coordinate the entities providing homelessness services and supportive housing.

With rental prices increasing in cities across the United States, SRO type buildings have been popularized again as micro-units. However, they tend to be marketed toward young adults rather than homeless populations. They also tend to be new construction and built with a high level of finish that increases prices.

Creative uses of existing buildings could result in a larger supply of small units that fit the use case for SROs. Buildings such as former schools, hotels, light industrial buildings, or large single-family homes could be converted to SROs.

In Allentown, rooming and/or boarding houses are allowed to be built by special exception only in B1/R zoning. The ordinance stipulates that, “Each rental unit shall include a minimum of 250 square feet. The lot shall include a maximum of 6 rental units.” This zoning should be reconsidered to determine if the maximum number of rental units would allow for conversion of existing buildings.



*Sixth Street Shelter-
Emergency Family Housing*

Source: Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley, Inc.

SA2d Community Educational Facilities.

There is great interest in the community for more intensive partnerships between the community and schools. Frameworks for community engagement with schools have been utilized successfully in other cities. According to the Coalition for Community Schools:

“A community school is both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. Its integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development and community engagement leads to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities. Schools become centers of the community and are open to everyone – all day, every day, evenings and weekends.”

When school is not in session, buildings can be used for a multitude of uses. Community uses could include:

- Continuing Education Space
- Computer Labs/Technology Centers
- Music Ensemble/Practice Rooms
- Athletic Complexes
- Health and Wellness Centers
- Expanded Mental Health Services
- Gardens
- Artist Studios and Exhibit Space
- Job Resource Center
- Broadcast Center
- Daycare or preschool programs
- Food pantry
- Library
- Family support service

NEXT STEPS:

- Ensure schools and educational facilities are connected into the Neighborhood Planning Framework and Process.
- Work with Allentown School District to determine parameters of community schools.

The Allentown School District will be opening a community school at 12th and Gordon Streets in Center Allentown. In designing community services for the new school, the Allentown School District is working with the surrounding community in order to understand the types of services and programming residents would like to see at the new school.

SA2e Neighborhood Partners.

With increased planning at the neighborhood level, philanthropies, the nonprofit sector and private sector entities should be engaged as partners in the planning and implementation of plans. Financial support is not necessarily needed for implementation. Engagement from these entities can also include agreements to hire from the neighborhood or to open a satellite location in the area.

However, financial support can make a big difference. In Detroit, seven corporate sponsors have donated \$5 million each to the Strategic Neighborhood Fund, which concentrates on the following areas:

- **Park improvements**, including the creation of new parks and improvements to existing parks by adding amenities based on residents' needs.
- **Commercial development** to fill vacant storefronts and lots, with mixed-use and multifamily projects along commercial corridors.
- **Streetscape improvements**, including street and sidewalk repaving and redesigns to create walkable, beautiful streets that are attractive to businesses and pedestrians alike.
- **Single-family home stabilization** to renovate and preserve existing vacant houses, build density and create affordable housing in these neighborhoods.
- **Affordable housing development**, to fight displacement where there is growth.

NEXT STEPS:

- Identify partnership opportunities with the nonprofit, private, and institutional sectors to encourage innovative projects and programming in support of the Allentown Vision 2030 Plan.



Build Session Meeting with Local and Regional Organizations to think about Allentown's Future

Source: Consultant Team

SA2f Small Lot Art Installations and Cultural Placemaking.

Access to art that reflects the many cultures and perspectives in Allentown will create an authentic sense of place. Art in institutions may feel inaccessible, but creating art installations or civic activations in vacant lots or small public spaces offers benefits of creativity to all residents.

An example of an interactive art piece that activated a neighborhood space is Candy Chang's 2011 work in New Orleans entitled "Before I Die." Using chalkboard paint Chang stenciled hundreds of fill-in-the-blank sentences reading "Before I die I want to _____" and provided chalk for the public to write their wishes. The project reframed the abandoned building it was attached to into a community gathering space.

In addition to activating spaces, continual maintenance of art projects is needed. In order to ensure that all existing and potential public art is in good repair, a repair and maintenance plan for public art pieces will be developed.

NEXT STEPS:

- Identify public spaces throughout the city that may be available for activation.
- Partner with neighborhood groups and arts organizations to establish a plan for activating these spaces.

"Before I Die..." Public Art Piece by Candy Yang

Source: Inhabitat, "'Before I Die' Art Project Transforms Abandoned Building into Hopeful Bucket List"



Source: <https://inhabitat.com/before-i-die-art-project-transforms-abandoned-building-into-hopeful-bucket-list/>

SERVICES AND AMENITIES

- SA3a Support Cultural Spaces.
- SA3b Expand Multicultural Programming.
- SA3c Re-entry Program.
- SA3d Youth and Public Safety.

Principle 3 Foster Inclusive and Welcoming Communities

Diversity and inclusion is a core value for Allentown. The city recognizes that through celebrating its diversity and supporting inclusive and welcoming spaces - the community grows stronger. The City of Allentown supports actions to foster inclusive and welcoming neighborhoods, community and public spaces, and overall - a welcoming city where everyone sees themselves as a part of its future growth.

2019 Hispanic Heritage Festival

Source: LDG Creations



SA3a Support Cultural Spaces.

Neighborhood identities can be highlighted in many ways; through artwork such as murals, through events, and through cultivating neighborhood identity. The gateways and wayfinding signs mentioned in the Accessibility and Connectivity chapter are one way to establish neighborhood identity. Neighborhood identity can also be established through grassroots efforts, such as street fairs that local community groups hold or food tours for a cluster of restaurants. The Allentown Vision 2030 Community Ambassador Program can be a platform for innovative ways to cultivate and promote neighborhood identity and celebrate Allentown's diverse communities.

For cultural events to be successful, support from the rest of the community is needed. It may be possible to establish a grant program for neighborhood groups seeking to create programming that reflects their neighborhood identity. Such a program could be funded by a foundation or private groups in partnership with the city, and these groups would be acknowledged as partners in signage and information around events, public art, and park installations.

Arts based economic development corresponds with an increase in cultural spaces. Murals, public spaces, and recreational amenities all can be part of the arts programming that raises cultural awareness.

SA3b Expand Multicultural Programming.

The city has a role to play in expanding awareness of diverse cultures that contribute to the great racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity of Allentown. The city can help to educate groups on holding events, provide staff assistance to make all cultures feel welcome, and can choose to highlight diversity.

Through the City of Allentown's Immigrant and Multicultural Affairs program, organizations have been able to access office space in the city's Alliance Hall Building. Future plans envision the expansion of this program and space to establish a central location of services for new and existing residents. Services could include access to multicultural programming and events, legal services, housing information, health and social services.

NEXT STEPS:

- Consider a grant program for cultural events, prioritizing requests for funding from organizations representing historically underrepresented groups.
- Utilize arts-based economic strategies to highlight diverse cultures.

NEXT STEPS:

- The City of Allentown will work to expand its programming and space for multicultural and immigrant services.
- Provide training resources to neighborhood groups to facilitate events in partnership with the city. For example, providing information on what types of permits are needed for street closures.
- Hire a multicultural coordinator to work with neighborhood groups, ensuring that grant programs and education is disseminated in an equitable way to all neighborhoods, and that events are dispersed throughout the calendar year.
- Allentown can continue to hold events and support programming celebrating the city's diversity and multiculturalism.

SA3c Re-entry Program.

Diversity in a population can also refer to the types of experiences that residents have had. Residents who re-enter into society after incarceration have a difficult time finding housing, jobs, and tapping into a support system. As a community, Allentown has many services that meet the needs of citizens reentering society from incarceration, including counseling and job training services. For example, the Lehigh Council of Churches' Lazarus House program offers shared housing for adults re-entering the community following incarceration.

In support of those reentering society, the City of Allentown has created a "Ban the Box" policy, which bans city employers from asking applicants about their criminal history on initial job applications. As of 2015, employers are allowed to ask applicants about their criminal history only when a conditional offer of employment is made.

Connection to a job, or to training that allows for a quick turnaround is helpful in stemming recidivism. Many formerly incarcerated people have had success in entering the trades through union training. Trades unions, such as those that comprise the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), have well-developed expertise in designing training and apprenticeship programs and the relationships with employers to ensure successful completion.

NEXT STEPS:

- Connect groups that serve the formerly incarcerated with training programs.
- Ensure entrepreneurship training and small business resources are available to the formerly incarcerated.

SELF! Lehigh Valley is a nonprofit organization that provides tools and resources for women re-entering into society

Source: LDG Creations



SA3d Youth and Public Safety

An important part of supporting inclusive and welcoming spaces is identifying ways to have authentic conversations and respectfully discuss the opportunities and challenges we face as a community. Allentown is a young city, the median age is 31 years old and almost 27% of the population is under 18 (2017 American Community Survey). Meaningfully engaging and listening to Allentown's youth to help identify ways to support a safe, inclusive, and welcoming city can help build trust and improve community relationships. The City of Allentown Police Department and the Allentown School District have launched a Student Advisory Counsel where students, the Police Department, and School District leadership and staff meet with students on a quarterly basis for a respectful dialogue on current issues and ways to work together to find solutions. The Student Advisory Counsel provides a platform for open communication between students and leadership from the city and schools, and the model could be applied in other community contexts and in engaging youth across the city.

With the Allentown School District, Restorative Practices are being utilized to strengthen relationships between individuals as well as social connections within our communities. Restorative Practices provide opportunities to model positive behaviors that promote empathy, accountability and community building and create an environment where students feel safe, valued, and nurtured. The School District began Restorative Practices trainings for leadership and staff in summer of 2018.

NEXT STEPS:

- Promote the APD/ASD Student Advisory Counsel as a way to engage in respectful communication and create inclusive, welcoming spaces in our schools and city.
- Consider how the Student Advisory Counsel model could be utilized in other youth-serving organizations to encourage relationship building.
- Identify ways to connect ASD Restorative Practices with community development activities and programs.

Student Advisory Counsel Meeting with APD and ASD Leadership

Source: City of Allentown



CATALYTIC ACTIONS SERVICES AND AMENITIES

! Youth Development Through Pre-K

Facilitate early education partnerships. The City of Allentown recognizes the need for youth development and will make a commitment to its future residents holistically by targeting education from the standpoint of early learning. The city actively partner in facilitating innovative private-public-nonprofit partnerships to enhance opportunities for early childhood education, and potentially, assist in tracking the growth and learning of children in the programs.

GOAL

- Provide early childhood support to form a basis for education and growth and identify opportunities for expanded programming for early childhood education efforts. The city's investments will look for positive effects of high-quality early childhood programs on specific, short- and long-term outcomes for children, families, and communities.

NEXT STEPS

- The City of Allentown CED can facilitate and support the creation of impactful investments for early childhood education that must be quantifiable.
- Establish a public-private partnership to collectively impact the growth and learning of our youngest residents.
- Identify opportunities to expand the physical locations of early childhood programs.

SUGGESTED PARTNERS

Allentown Health Bureau; City of Allentown Department of Community and Economic Development; private sector partners; CSC; United Way of Greater Lehigh Valley; Greater Lehigh Valley YMCA; Head Start.

! Community Centers: Improvements and Investments

Enhance existing community centers throughout the city and identify where additional facilities are needed to support residents, particularly those who are members of historically underrepresented groups. Community Centers provide key linkages between residents and existing resources such as healthcare, government systems, parent support as well as youth programs.

GOAL

- Improve existing centers in the city and identify where additional facilities are needed in order to provide the needed services and support for all residents.

NEXT STEPS

- Identify locations for a new community center that is easily accessible to the community
- Examine existing facilities and identify improvements needed
- Create space in the facilities for existing non-profits, government entities, etc. to better serve residents
- Develop programming for residents of all ages
- Find grants and creative funding solutions to implement the project including looking to identify new partnerships.

SUGGESTED PARTNERS

Allentown Department of Community and Economic Development; Institutional, philanthropic, and nonprofit partners.

Services & Amenities Implementation Plan

CODE	STRATEGY	1-3 years	3-5 years	5-10 years
PRINCIPLE 01 - SUPPORT NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTIFY & ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY				
SA1a	Allentown Vision 2030 Community Ambassador Program.			
SA1b	Youth Empowerment.			
SA1c	Support Neighborhood Leadership.			
PRINCIPLE 02 - ENHANCE ACCESS TO LOCAL ESSENTIAL SERVICES & AMENITIES				
SA2a	Financial Empowerment Program: BankOn.			
SA2b	Food Access Program.			
SA2c	Homelessness Support and Housing.			
SA2d	Community Educational Facilities.			
SA2e	Neighborhood Partners.			
SA2f	Small Lot Art Installations and Cultural Placemaking.			
PRINCIPLE 03 - FOSTER INCLUSIVE AND WELCOMING COMMUNITIES				
SA3a	Cultural Spaces.			
SA3b	Expand Multicultural Programming.			
SA3c	Re-entry Program.			
SA3d	Youth and Public Safety.			

Chapter 5

LIVING SYSTEMS

GOAL

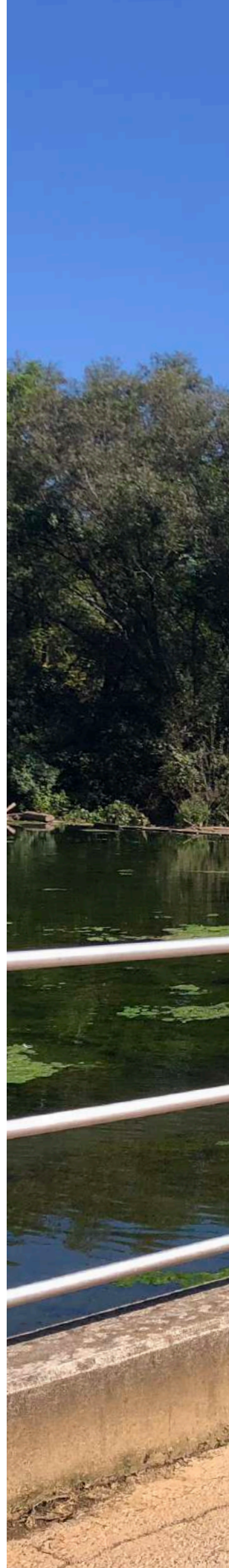
ALLENTOWN WILL BE A PLACE WHERE THE HEALTH OF THE COMMUNITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT IS PARAMOUNT. ALLENTOWN WILL PLAN FOR A SUSTAINABLE, VIBRANT, AND RESILIENT FUTURE FOR THE CITY AND THE REGION. IN ALLENTOWN, RESIDENTS WILL BE CONNECTED TO OPPORTUNITIES TO REDUCE THEIR ENERGY USAGE, CULTIVATE THEIR OWN FOOD, AND ENHANCE THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.

CATALYTIC ACTIONS:

- ! Network of Greenways and Urban Trails**
-

Trexler Park

Source: Consultant Team







Bench designed by Allentown School District student - Urban Greenway

Source: City of Allentown

What we aspire to achieve...

PRINCIPLE 1: PLAN FOR A SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT ALLENTOWN

As a growing city and economic center, Allentown needs to evaluate the ability of its systems and services to respond to shocks, such as flooding or a major storm event, as well as ongoing stressors such as an aging housing stock and economic inequality. Allentown will work together with regional partners such as the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission and city partners such as the Environmental Advisory Council to understand how we can plan for and implement actions to support a greener, more sustainable future. Allentown can reinvent itself as a model small city with regard to sustainability and resilience.

PRINCIPLE 2: IMPROVE COMMUNITY HEALTH OUTCOMES

Community health is closely tied to the places where we live, learn, work and play. Improvements in residents' health result from limiting exposure to negative conditions, such as poor air quality, flooding, and noise, as well as from adopting of beneficial activities like exercise and healthy eating habits. To improve community health, Allentown can adopt the Center for Disease Control's call to "change the context to make healthy choices easier."

PRINCIPLE 3: INCREASE ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Everyone can care for the environment, whether in daily actions by an individual or in larger and longer-term actions that need to be accomplished by many people acting together. There needs to be a mix of activity to improve Allentown's environment, from engaging residents and businesses to support neighborhood cleanups to working to mitigate noise pollution.

PRINCIPLE 4: CREATE PRODUCTIVE AND CONNECTED URBAN LANDSCAPES

Urban open space and parks are often considered a sign of environmental health, yet the presence of green space does not mean that the urban landscape is functioning at a healthy level. Allentown has many opportunities for win-win solutions where flood control and water quality improvements yield both ecological and economic benefits and opportunities for networked trails, parks, and outdoor recreation and learning environments.

**PRINCIPLE 1:
PLAN FOR A
SUSTAINABLE
AND RESILIENT
ALLENTOWN**

- LS1a Climate Action Plan.
- LS1b Resilience Plan.

**PRINCIPLE 2:
IMPROVE COMMUNITY
HEALTH OUTCOMES**

- LS2a Design for Public Safety.
- LS2b Neighborhood Health Centers.
- LS2c Community Health Programs.

**PRINCIPLE 3:
INCREASE
ENVIRONMENTAL
STEWARDSHIP**

- LS3a Neighborhood Clean Up
- LS3b Noise Pollution Mitigation Program.
- LS3c Zoning Update: Floodplain Alignment.
- LS3d Support Expansion of Green Infrastructure.
- LS3e Improve Air Quality.
- LS3f Energy Efficiency Programs and Policies.

**PRINCIPLE 4:
CREATE PRODUCTIVE
AND CONNECTED
URBAN LANDSCAPES**

- LS4a Parks and Open Space.
- LS4b Stormwater Management.
- LS4c Urban Agriculture and Community Gardens.

Joseph S.
Daddona Lake
and Terrace

Source: City of
Allentown



What do living systems mean for Allentown?

Living Systems address both community and environmental health. Community health includes physical health as well as how Allentonians can thrive in their communities – ensuring neighborhoods are safe, walkable, and promote a culture of health. Environmental health looks at the natural systems that support Allentown, from the greenspaces and parks to the streams and Lehigh River. Ensuring Allentown’s Living Systems are healthy, resilient, and sustainable will support a vibrant and prosperous future.

The City of Allentown uses the Center for Disease Control’s (CDC) ‘Social Determinants of Health’ as the framework to understand community health in Allentown. These include economic factors such as job access and occupational safety, social factors such as family support systems, political participation, and education, and environmental factors such as air quality, water quality, access to parks,

and mobility choices. (CDC, Social Determinants of Health at the Local Level, 2004.)

The CDC has developed a “place-based” organizing framework, reflecting five key areas of the social determinants of health, which are:

- Economic Stability
- Education
- Social and Community Context
- Health and Health Care
- Neighborhood and Built Environment



Bucky Boyle Park
Source: Consultant
Team

How do living systems align with our vision?

ECONOMIC INCLUSIVITY

The health of the community and the environment is essential for a city to thrive. Ensuring Allentonians are living in healthy neighborhoods provides the foundation for a strong education, workforce development, and economic opportunity. Furthermore, as Allentown plans to become a more sustainable city in the face of climate change, we will become more resilient to disruptive events such as flooding, heatwaves, and extreme weather that can affect economic development. High quality ecological systems and healthy communities provide a strong foundation for resilient and vibrant economy in Allentown.

CITY AS A STEWARD

Protecting and enhancing Allentown's living systems is an essential function of the city. The city is continually working alongside our philanthropic partners to maintain and improve our world-class park system - ensuring all Allentonians have access to the incredible greenspaces and recreation opportunities across the city. Through innovative stormwater management and green infrastructure, the city is working to reduce the impacts of flooding and prepare the city for a greener and more resilient future.

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

When it comes to enhancing the city's environmental health and planning for a sustainable and resilient future, everyone needs to be involved. From a noise pollution mitigation program to ensuring healthy meals are available to all youth year-round to creatively using our parks and open spaces to manage flooding and stormwater - the diversity of Allentown leads to an incredible range of ideas, programs, and policies to support and enhance our natural environment and community health.

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT & COLLABORATION

Creating healthy neighborhoods and supporting the vision of a sustainable and resilient Allentown will require action from every part of the community. Residents can make their homes more energy efficient, community organizations can identify opportunities for gardens and urban agriculture, and the city can evaluate practices to promote more sustainable and efficient buildings. Each Allentonian has an important role to play in supporting the health of our community and ecological systems.

LIVING SYSTEMS

LS1a Climate Action Plan.

LS1b Resilience Plan.

Principle 1

Plan for a Resilient and Sustainable Allentown

Cedar Creek green infrastructure improvements

Source: City of Allentown



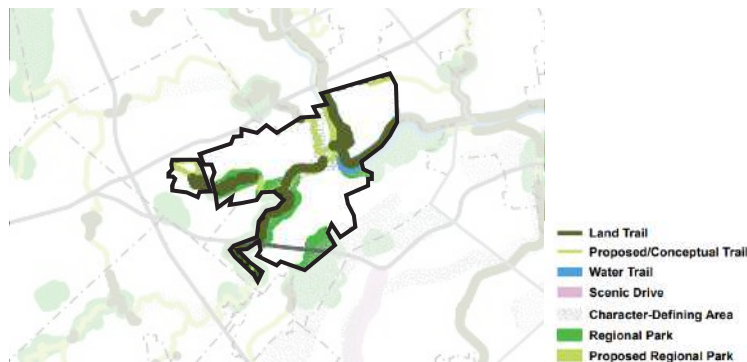
LS1a Climate Action Plan.

A climate action plan (CAP) for Allentown would assess Allentown's carbon contribution and would help the city reduce its greenhouse gas emissions. Many of the reduction strategies affect land use and transportation systems, such as walkable and dense development patterns, robust public transit systems, energy efficiency for buildings and infrastructure, and purchasing policies for energy and other municipal supplies. A good CAP can improve services, save money, and decrease environmental impact.

The basis for a Climate Action Plan is a quantitative analysis of carbon emissions typically performed in the following format: Scope 1 (direct emissions by the city or any entity tracking emissions); Scope 2 (power generation indirect emissions); and, Scope 3 (other indirect emissions, for example transportation emissions). CAPs are often performed for city properties and operations only, but Allentown might want to participate in a regional effort, as many of the emissions are connected within larger systems. A climate action plan would help the city align resources, identify gaps in services, prioritize initiatives, and pursue new funding opportunities.

Successful plans are built from robust community engagement that advances the community's capacity to implement projects. Both the resilience plan and the climate action plan are documents that can guide the other recommendations in this section.

At the regional level, the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission's FutureLV: The Regional Comprehensive Plan proposes several measures to "reduce climate change impacts through mitigation and adaptation," including reducing greenhouse gas emissions; encouraging sustainable building, site design and community design practices; promoting energy conservation and efficiency; supporting renewable energy; incorporating environmentally sensitive transportation technologies; and supporting business practices that mitigate the effects of climate change. The Allentown Climate Action Plan will align with regional goals and be done in coordination with regional entities.



Regional Parks, Outdoor Recreation, Open Space and Scenic Plan

Source: Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, "FutureLV Plan"

NEXT STEPS:

- Prepare a Climate Action Plan that integrates with regional plans.
- Collaborate with local universities and schools on research and projects that can engage citizens in the solutions.
- Pursue grants from state agencies like the PA Department of Environmental Protection, PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, as well as local and national foundations to fund early stages of education and planning.
- Consider integrating climate action and resilience planning into Neighborhood Planning Framework to help structure climate and resilience goals into concrete and actionable plans.
- Partner with the City of Allentown Environmental Advisory Council to further define the Climate Action Planning approach.

LS1b Resilience Plan.

Many major cities have created resilience plans to understand the shocks and stressors that may affect their communities and what preparations they need to take to avert economic, social, or ecological harm to their cities. While some resilience plans resemble climate action planning, there are distinct differences between the two.

A resilience plan for Allentown could begin with the Lehigh Valley Hazard Mitigation Plan (2018) to understand the type and likelihood of natural and man-made disasters such as chemical spills, nuclear accidents, floods, tornadoes, or other weather related events. The Hazard Mitigation Plan generally assumed that these occur over a short duration, thus becoming shocks to the system. The plan outlines the nature of the threat and possible regional response protocol. Additionally, the City of Allentown has over 130 active members of the Allentown Volunteer Medical Reserve Corps - members are trained, credentialed and available to assist first responders and community members during emergencies and disasters.

The Resilience Plan should also address longer-term issues that qualify as stressors, such as poor air quality or economic disparity and poverty. Stressors can be more difficult to identify and may be harder to rally resources to resolve them. The Rockefeller Foundation's 100 Resilient Cities Initiative has many resources, case studies, and plans that can be used as a model for a City of Allentown resilience planning approach.

NEXT STEPS:

- Convene and create a resiliency plan that will increase community resiliency and inform future decisions and investments.
- Coordinate with local entities such as businesses and nonprofits and align the plan with regional documents for effectiveness.

LIVING SYSTEMS

- LS2a Design for Public Safety.
- LS2b Neighborhood Health Centers.
- LS2c Community Health Programs.

Principle 2 Improve Community Health Outcomes

The design of a city and access to services within that city can determine health outcomes for residents. The City of Allentown strives to provide the foundation of a healthy community through ensuring safety, access, and health equity are addressed.

Zero Youth Violence- Promise Neighborhood

Source: The Morning Call, "Allentown Program to Reduce Gun Violence in City gets Boost from State"



LS2a Design for Public Safety.

Crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) is a way to create a built environment that results in safer neighborhoods. The framework relies on urban design principles like “eyes on the street” the idea that windows on a street-facing building creates a sense of surveillance. The research behind CPTED is that the decision to engage in criminal behavior is more influenced by the perceived risk of being caught than by the severity of punishment.

The six main concepts of CPTED are territorial reinforcement, surveillance, access control, image/maintenance, activity support and target hardening. Below is an overview of the concepts of surveillance, access control, and territorial reinforcement.

Surveillance deters criminal behavior by improving the visibility of those actions to the general public. Some suggested means of increasing the feeling of being surveilled are:

- Design streets to increase pedestrian and bicycle traffic
- Place windows overlooking sidewalks and parking lots
- Leave window shades open
- Create landscape designs that provide surveillance, especially in proximity to designated points of entry and opportunistic points of entry
- Use the shortest, least sight-limiting fence appropriate for the situation
- Use transparent weather vestibules at building entrances

Controlling Access to spaces using design interventions can limit the opportunity for crime by taking steps to clearly differentiate between public space and private space. Suggested interventions are:

- Use low, thorny bushes beneath ground level windows
- Eliminate design features that provide access to roofs or upper levels
- Use substantial, high, closed fencing (for example, masonry) between a backyard and a public alley instead of a wall which blocks the view from all angles

Territorial Reinforcement creates a sense of ownership around a property. Fences, porches, and stairs all create a layer of territory that gives a cue that the area is being watched.

- Maintain premises to suggest ownership
- Add motion sensor lights
- Have regularly scheduled activities in public spaces to show they are being used

The design features suggested by CPTED integrate with suggestions for Complete Streets and increasing access to and interest in public space.

NEXT STEPS:

- In design and upgrades to new and existing public spaces, consider how safety can be increased through these principles.
- Partner with the Allentown Police Department on safety through environmental design initiatives.
- Through the Allentown Community Ambassador Program and the Neighborhood Planning Framework, identify neighborhood and block-scale projects to advance these design principles in Allentown communities.
- Focus on lighting particularly in public spaces, sidewalks and alleys.

LS2b Neighborhood Health Centers.

Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) are community-based health care providers that receive federal funding to provide primary care services in under-served areas. FQHCs may be Community Health Centers, Migrant Health Centers, Health Care for the Homeless, and Health Centers for Residents of Public Housing. [1]

Vida Nueva at Casa located inside the Casa Guadalupe Center in the 1st and 6th Wards in Allentown provides culturally competent care for both primary and preventative health and wellness services, regardless of a patient's ability to pay.

In assessing existing neighborhood health services and resources, there is an opportunity to conduct an inventory on how neighborhood-based health services are distributed across the city and if there are accessible, and identify the possibility of expanding services in parts of the city that lack neighborhood-based health services and resources. Like Vida Nueva at Casa, neighborhood health centers and resources can have prominent locations within a community and be a central part of community gatherings to create a sense comfort and welcoming. Health Centers should be accessible and provide culturally competent care for the populations they serve, including health centers that offer non-judgmental, LGBT-inclusive healthcare. Neighborhood health centers should be known as a safe zone where care can be accessed before the need becomes acute.

[1] <https://www.hrsa.gov/opa/eligibility-and-registration/health-centers/fqhc/index.html>

NEXT STEPS:

- Through neighborhood planning activities and direct project work, encourage health care providers to develop physical centers that address the neighborhood-specific issues and to track them.

*Allentown Health Center-
Federally Qualified
Neighborhood Health Center
Source: Lehigh Valley Health Network*



LS2c Community Health Programs.

Coordinate with health networks, community health centers, medical providers and public health officials to ensure that the current and new populations are being served. Ensure that services are being promoted in a variety of ways, such as flyers, social media, and a centralized site to distribute information to build awareness of programs, and that informational materials are available in multiple languages. Work with service providers and community-serving nonprofits to verify that services exist and can be accessed, as well as unique population needs (such as obesity, smoking, or asthma) are being addressed. Promote wellness programs that advocate outdoor exercise to address both physical and mental health.

In the summer of 2019, the Allentown Health Bureau launched the “Healthy Kids, Healthy Allentown” Initiative focused on supporting a network of free meal sites across the city, offered by a variety of city partners including the Allentown School District, St. Luke’s University Health Network, Lehigh Valley Health Network, Greater LV YMCA, the Allentown Public Library, Allentown Parks and Recreation, the Allentown Fire Department, and the Lehigh Valley Food Policy Council. Funded by the National League of Cities and the Food Research and Action Center, the city and its partners received funding to expand after school and out-of-school meal programs, including a robust network of summer meal sites for anyone under 18. The collaborative partnership not only focused on expanding meal sites, but also on using innovative ways to promote and build awareness of the program. “Healthy Kids, Healthy Allentown” provides a strong example of how collaborative community partnerships can work to address significant public health issues in Allentown.

NEXT STEPS:

- Identify opportunities to continue and expand collaborative community health-focused partnerships.
- Utilize the neighborhood planning framework to identify a ‘healthy neighborhoods approach that looks at community health concerns at the neighborhood-scale.
- Ensure health programming and services are part of the multicultural center expansion.

Healthy Kids, Healthy Allentown Summer Meals Program

Source: City of Allentown



LIVING SYSTEMS

- LS3a** Neighborhood Clean Up
- LS3b** Noise Pollution Mitigation Program.
- LS3c** Zoning Update: Floodplain Alignment.
- LS3d** Support Expansion of Green Infrastructure.
- LS3e** Improve Air Quality.
- LS3f** Energy Efficiency Programs and Policies.

Principle 3 Increase Environmental Stewardship

Environmental health is important to the ecosystems that exist in Allentown's waterways and surrounding natural landscape, as well as to the residents of the city. Allentonians have an important role to play in the health of our environment—these recommendations outline both citywide and personal actions that can positively affect Allentown's environment.

*Lil' Le-Hi Trout Nursery -
City of Allentown*

Source: Consultant Team



LS3a Neighborhood Clean Up.

A more immediate solution to improving the environment is regularly scheduled neighborhood clean up days. These can be held by community groups as a neighborhood specific event, or can be sponsored by the city or a non-profit. Neighborhoods can engage in competitions to see how much rubbish can be collected, which could be facilitated across the city. The City of Allentown Recycling Office has a program to provide clean-up supplies and offers garbage service and recycling pick ups for participating neighborhoods and community groups.

This initiative is also supported on the state level. The Pennsylvania Chapter of Keep America Beautiful organizes the Great American Cleanup of PA, from March 1st to May 31st every year. During this time registered events can get free cleanup supplies such as bags, gloves and vests donated by PennDOT, the Department of Environmental Protection, and Keep America Beautiful. Additionally, during the Pick It Up PA Days, which is from April 13th to May 6th, sponsored by the Department of Environmental Protection, Pennsylvania Waste Industries Association, and participating landfills, registered events have access to reduced or free disposal.

NEXT STEPS:

- Support neighborhood clean up days through organization and refuse collection.
- Build awareness of programs and encourage neighborhoods or community groups to take part.



Tree Planting

Source: City of Allentown

LS3b Noise Pollution Mitigation Program.

According to the Allentown Police Department, noise pollution is one of the biggest quality of life concerns that they hear from residents. Whether it be from residential activities, noise from motor vehicles, or commercial activities such as refuse collection, urban sounds can be disruptive. The city's Noise Ordinance Article 710 (Noise Control), is in effect 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and awareness of the laws would help with compliance and aid enforcement.

Over the next three years, Allentown Vision 2030 will partner with a nationally funded study on noise pollution in Allentown. This Allentown-based, nationally funded project will study the noise pollution sources in the city and the negative effects that it has on quality of life. The effort will also encourage youth engagement and leadership in scientific research. This noise pollution study is being led locally by John Annoni – a teacher with the Allentown School District for 30 years and a local community leader – in conjunction with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in Ithaca, New York.

The unique noise pollution study has two core goals: to change the way science is experienced by those in under-served communities, and to collect relevant data that improve the quality of life for both humans and birds in these same communities. The study is being funded through the National Science Foundation and Allentown is part of a cohort of cities across the United States and Mexico that are conducting similar studies in their communities.

During the first year of the three-year noise pollution study, Mr. Annoni and his team of four “Community Science Collaborators” – all hailing from Allentown’s neighborhoods – will be conducting community surveys and conversations and utilizing an innovative research technique called PhotoVoice in which participants answer research questions using photography from their community. That information will be used to develop a special app that records and measures neighborhood sound levels. The app, to be developed at the Cornell University Lab utilizing community input, will even allow the user to indicate how they are affected by the level of noise.

LS3c Zoning Update: Floodplain Alignment.

Under normal weather patterns, green infrastructure can decrease the amount of waterflow and can improve water quality. As cities in the northeastern United States experience increased frequency of major storm events, green infrastructure alone may not be able to manage the precipitation intensity of high intensity storms.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) maps and Allentown’s city ordinances have recently been revised to reflect improved climate and floodplain data from FEMA. The FEMA designated AE floodplain represents areas at high risk for flooding. In Allentown there are relatively few occupied structures currently located in the AE designated floodplains with most of the areas being naturalized greenspace or parklands. While flood events can cause debris and tree damage in these areas, maintaining AE floodplains as naturalized greenspace or parkland is one of the most compatible land uses. The Lehigh Valley Hazard Mitigation Plan (2018) describes the regional threats and the strategies to mitigate flooding in Allentown.

NEXT STEPS:

- Continue to support community-led noise pollution research;
- Work collaboratively with the community researchers to identify noise mitigation solutions

NEXT STEPS:

- Examine floodplain alignment in Zoning Code Update.
- Coordinate across Department of Public Works, Bureau of Planning & Zoning, and Building Standards & Safety.

Flooding and cloudbursts can be positive forces for areas that have not been disturbed by development. In some places this naturalized approach may be appropriate, however, in most areas along Allentown's urbanized waterfront, flooding causes damage and limits development.

Some community members identified increases in upstream impervious surfaces as a cause of flooding. While it was not within the scope of the comprehensive plan to evaluate this, the city and regional advocacy groups can continue to investigate and push for better stormwater management practices upslope from Allentown.



LEFT

Cedar Creek Stormwater Park

Source: The Morning Call, "National Weather Service: Flood Watch Issued for Lehigh Valley"

RIGHT

Adam's Island Riverfront Housing

Source: Lehigh Environmental Initiative

LS3d Support Expansion of Green Infrastructure.

Green infrastructure, which diverts stormwater away from established drainage infrastructure is an important aspect of environmental health in Allentown. With heavy rains, stormwater can leak into Allentown's sewage system and cause contamination of waterways. This is dangerous for the natural ecosystems and the residents of the Lehigh Valley that may interact with these waterways.

Green infrastructure absorbs water from storms through gardens, holding areas, and even porous pavers. The more water that is absorbed the less that goes into the drainage system and the less that goes into waterways to cause flooding.

Green infrastructure works well, and can save significant money compared to replacing the existing drainage system. However implementing a green infrastructure program can be expensive, especially when the projects do not provide a short-term gain in revenue. Experts in this field have determined several ways of funding these systems. Federal sources are one way, but not a dependable source. Local funding, especially through public-private partnerships can be a creative way to fund this important work.

The Georgetown Climate Center Green Infrastructure Toolkit explains public private funding:
One approach that is common to infrastructure projects but has been limited in green infrastructure stormwater management is the use of public-private partnerships (P3s). P3s provide access to private capital and may provide a means to rapidly scale up green infrastructure project installation; however, local governments must take care to ensure that the program will take into account and ultimately reflect the community's needs.

NEXT STEPS:

- Conduct studies to determine the sources of pollution, and to plan for the placement and installation of stormwater management facilities throughout the city.
- Complete Hydrologic and Hydraulic studies to upgrade and protect infrastructure, and to address flood prone areas.
- Integrate pollution reduction goals into City development ordinances and planning.
- Promote the treatment of existing uncontrolled impervious area during redevelopment.
- Implement more green stormwater infrastructure.
- Incentivize partnerships between private property owners and developers to implement stormwater controls on a large-scale basis.
- Engage and educate the community in good stewardship practices which reduce pollution from residential properties and activities.

In 2018, the City of Allentown implemented an annual stormwater fee to assure that each developed parcel is charged for a share of the costs of operation, maintenance, repair, regulatory requirements, administration, and improvements related to the stormwater management system and stormwater services provided. This dedicated stormwater revenue assures that funds will be available to manage the stormwater drainage system, increase public safety, and improve water quality in our creeks and streams. Credit and Incentives Programs were developed to encourage voluntarily involvement from our community in the management of the quality and quantity of stormwater.

LS3e Improve Air Quality.

Air quality is an important factor in Allentown, especially because of the city's location in a valley, which causes pollution to stagnate rather than pass through. Allentown's car dependence and increased regional freight traffic along with regional point sources may be leading to increased ozone and smog (American Lung Association, State of the Air, 2019) and likely warrants a closer examination and increased public awareness. Highlighting its importance, especially for vulnerable populations like children and the elderly will help to increase lung health.

The Lehigh Valley is listed as one of the worst places to live with asthma. This designation has prompted health organizations to hold educational programs, and establish asthma tracking services. For example, 'Healthy Hoops' an outreach program from the Ameri-Health Cartias Partnership teaches children about exercising with asthma and is working with Allentown School District middle school students. [1]

Through the City of Allentown Health Bureau 'Healthy Homes' assessments are offered for eligible residents and provide consultative services and supplies to address household environmental conditions that may have an adverse effect, particularly in children.

Cutting down on traffic is the best way to address pollution that causes breathing disorders. The development patterns suggested in this document provide a framework for how to decrease automobile transportation. However, poor air quality can be addressed through behavioral modification like smoking cessation programs, and awareness and mitigation of environmental risks of hazardous materials like lead, asbestos, VOCs and other materials found in commercial buildings and homes.

[1] https://www.wfmz.com/news/area/lehighvalley/healthy-hoops-teaches-kids-about-asthma-in-allentown/article_70953082-f60c-5530-8f52-7f8b13dca7c9.html

NEXT STEPS:

- Form partnership with healthcare providers for behavior modification.
- Enforce of ordinances regarding smoking, building codes, and construction regulations.
- Align Allentown's Health Bureau with nonprofits or advocacy for clean air studies and enforcement.



Asbestos Abatement Professional

Source: ACM Associates

LS3f Energy Efficiency Programs and Policies.

The city and aligned nonprofits are well suited to secure funding for energy efficient retrofits on city property, private property, and in public places. For example, the Green Building Alliance in Pittsburgh was able to secure a \$500,000 grant for parking garage lighting retrofits for the Pittsburgh Parking Authority. Insert info on other commercial programs - state and fed programs.

Allentown could adopt high-performance building policies for its own buildings and could infuse criteria into building and zoning codes through point-based incentives.

Allentown can choose the most appropriate policies by using performance frameworks to set clear goals and track progress.

LEED Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design and the Living Building Challenge are building rating systems that advocate for building performance that is better than the national average or that is net positive (where the building makes more energy than it uses). ENERGY STAR Certification is another option to encourage and improve building energy performance, save energy and money, and decrease greenhouse gas emissions.

Many cities have adopted mandatory energy benchmarking ordinances to track energy consumption, comply with any local standards, and in some cities, publicly disclose their energy performance.

Energy efficient housing, whether retrofitted or new, enables owners and renters to spend less on energy and put money into the community in other ways. There are many programs available to different community partners (nonprofits and agencies) that can support retrofits through direct investment or by encouraging property owners to invest.

Energy efficiency is the first line of defense and should be implemented to make alternative energy sources more effective. Building rating systems such as the Living Building Challenge and Passive House provide guidance on how to get to net zero or net positive energy. Community centers with net zero energy or alternative energy technologies can become resiliency hubs where, in the case of power outages or weather emergencies, they can provide uninterrupted power until services are restored.

NEXT STEPS:

- Consider the adoption of high-performance building goals for city construction projects and evaluate incentives for others to adopt energy efficiency measures in new and existing buildings.
- Align with nonprofits to encourage energy retrofits in the commercial and residential sectors.
- Align with nonprofits who can manage district scale efforts and possible adopt mandatory energy reporting.
- Consider alternative energy in community centers to create resiliency hubs.



Solar Array

Source: Green Sun Energy Services

LIVING SYSTEMS

- LS4a Parks and Open Space.
- LS4b Stormwater Management.
- LS4c Urban Agriculture and Community Gardens.

Principle 4

Create Productive and Connected Urban Landscapes

Allentown's parks and greenspace are an incredible asset to the city and all Allentown residents and visitors. Allentown's parks and greenspaces not only provide wonderful recreation opportunities and serve as places to come together as a community, our parks and greenspaces also provide important ecological services like mitigating flooding and cleaning water before it enters our rivers and streams. Ensuring our parks and greenspaces are well-maintained and cared for is important for both recreational enjoyment and for enhancing the quality of Allentown's environmental and community health.

LS4a Parks and Open Space.

The City of Allentown is nationally recognized for its robust parks system. Allentown's parks are an important neighborhood and community resource for recreation to serving as gathering spaces to hosting regional and statewide events with thousands of attendees. Our parks also serve to meet connectivity and transportation needs by providing walking and biking trails and connecting to other parks and destinations. Trails provide space for exercise and an option to roll or walk away from vehicular traffic.

The city should update the "Allentown Parks and Recreation Master Plan" to reflect recent development and projected population growth. Some items from the 2006 plan are especially relevant to the current conditions, including access to parks in the densely populated northern neighborhoods and in the eastern neighborhoods. The need for active use parks and indoor facilities should be revisited for possible integration with other community services such as health clinics and new or offline schools. These facilities may also be provided through public-private partnerships in larger new developments.

NEXT STEPS:

- Update the Allentown Parks and Recreation Master Plan through the process of neighborhood planning and priority projects.
- Collaborate with community and advocacy groups to achieve shared goals and seek additional funding resources.

LS4b Stormwater Management.

Allentown is required to control stormwater by the mandates of the EPA'S Clean Water Act (1987) and the PA Department of Environmental Protection. Allentown's primary challenge is to control the quantity and to improve the quality of water discharged to creeks, streams, and rivers.

The city charges a stormwater fee and the revenue can only be used for the operation and maintenance of the stormwater system and for capital projects. The city is required to inspect the system, reduce pollution and sediment, conduct public education, and monitor and enforce rules preventing industrial site discharges. The fee is assessed by impervious area, creating many opportunities for property owners to make improvements.

The city plans to develop a Watershed Restoration Strategy to identify pollutant sources and causes of stream impairments. As part of this plan," the city can integrate green infrastructure into the neighborhood planning processes to address the community's desire for better water quality and improved community greenspaces. The citywide plan should address performance requirements as well as urban design and equity issues.

NEXT STEPS:

- Create a citywide Green Infrastructure Master Plan to supply data and prioritized projects for the neighborhood planning process.
- Collaborate with community and advocacy groups to achieve shared goals and seek additional funding resources.

LS4c Urban Agriculture and Community Gardens.

Urban agriculture is distinguished from rural agriculture in that it is integrated into the urban economic and ecological system. Ecologically this means that urban agriculture can have an impact on systems such as stormwater; rain barrels that water gardens divert water away from the drainage system. Economically, community gardens and urban agriculture can produce food for residents, which cuts down on grocery bills.

Another economic concern relates to land value. Vacant lots, especially those whose owners are not paying taxes, do not add value to the city. With minimal investment, that lot can become a community gathering space. This is especially important in areas that are densely populated and may not have backyards.

NEXT STEPS:

- Determine the inventory of vacant lots that are suitable for community gardening and develop a policy for use by the community.
- Partner with urban gardening advocacy groups as well as conservation offices or partners like Penn State Extension to assess the environmental issues on city sites, to help train residents on best practices to avoid contaminants like arsenic or lead and maximize yield.



*McKinley Elementary
School Community
Garden*

Source: Consultant Team

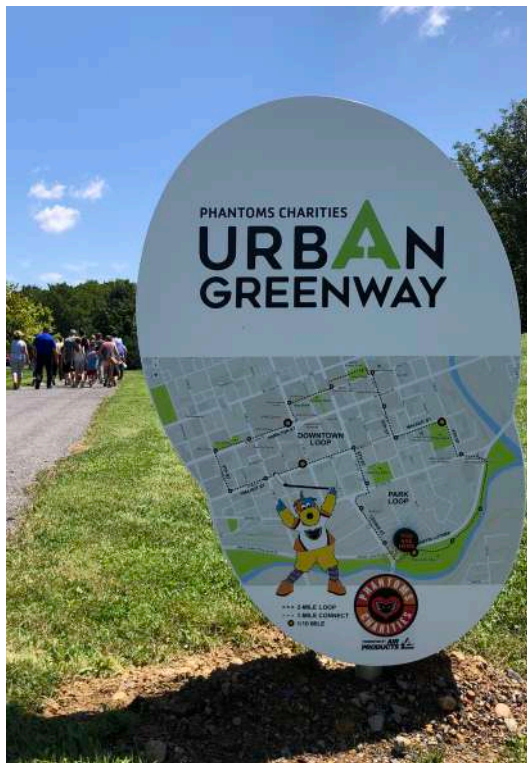
! Network of Greenways and Urban Trails

By linking greenspaces and parks throughout the city, create an alternative transportation network focused on pedestrians and cyclists.

Investments in parks and in walk/bike/roll infrastructure should prioritize connectedness and foster an alternative transportation network. Emphasis should be on projects that complete network links, connect high density areas to green space, and/or aligned with other investments such as new parks, community spaces, and mixed-use developments.

Urban Greenway Dedication

Source: City of Allentown



GOAL

- Link Allentown's parks and greenspaces through a network of greenways and urban trails that provide a safe, walkable and bikeable transportation network focused on connecting Allentown's neighborhoods, parks and greenspaces, employment centers, and local services and amenities (i.e. grocery stores, shops, restaurants, health centers, etc.).

NEXT STEPS

- Build on the existing and planned greenways and bike/pedestrian trails that follow the Little Lehigh Creek, Jordan Creek, Lehigh River, and discontinued railroad right-of-ways (where future connectivity of rail is not possible) to encourage a vision for a network of interconnected public spaces.
- Design and install legible wayfinding and branding.
- Create neighborhood-specific identities within the brand system, which could inspire neighborhood stewardship.
- Update the City of Allentown "Connecting Our Community" Plan and the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
- Collaborate with advocacy groups to achieve shared goals and seek additional funding resources.
- Align with LVPC's WalkRollLV planning process

SUGGESTED PARTNERS

City of Allentown Parks and Recreation; City of Allentown Bureau of Planning & Zoning; City of Allentown Department of Public Works; Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor; Wildlands Conservancy; PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources; PA Department of Community and Economic Development; Trexler Trust; THE LINK Trails Coalition

Living Systems Implementation Plan

CODE	STRATEGY	1-3 years	3-5 years	5-10 years
PRINCIPLE 01 - PLAN FOR A SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT ALLENTOWN				
LS1a	Climate Action Plan.	■	■	
LS1b	Resilience Plan.	■	■	
PRINCIPLE 02 - IMPROVE COMMUNITY HEALTH OUTCOMES				
LS2a	Design for Public Safety.	■	■	■
LS2b	Neighborhood Health Center.		■	■
LS2c	Community Health Program.	■	■	■
PRINCIPLE 03 - INCREASE ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP				
LS3a	Neighborhood Clean Up.	■	■	■
LS3b	Noise Pollution Mitigation Program.	■	■	
LS3c	Floodplain-Zoning Alignment.	■		
LS3d	Green Infrastructure Fund.		■	■
LS3e	Improve Air Quality.	■	■	■
LS3f	Energy Efficiency Programs and Policies.	■	■	■
PRINCIPLE 04 - CREATE PRODUCTIVE AND CONNECTED URBAN LANDSCAPES				
LS4a	Parks and Open Space.	■	■	■
LS4b	Stormwater Management.	■	■	■
LS4c	Urban Agriculture and Community Gardens.	■	■	■



Community Collaboration Meeting #2
Source: City of Allentown

Catalytic Actions Implementation Plan

URBAN SYSTEM	CATALYTIC ACTION
ACROSS ALL SYSTEMS	Zoning Code Update.
	Neighborhood Planning Framework.
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	Support the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem.
	Arts and Culture Economic Development.
HOUSING	Land Bank.
	Mobility Hubs.
ACCESSIBILITY & CONNECTIVITY	Investment in Digital Infrastructure.
	Youth Development through Pre-K.
SERVICES & AMENITIES	Community Centers: Improvements and Investment.
	Network of Greenways and Urban Trails.
LIVING SYSTEMS	

Allentown Vision 2030’s Catalytic Actions are foundational, early implementation policies, programs, and partnerships that will catalyze the principles and actions in the Urban Systems Chapters. Implementing the Catalytic Actions will significantly impact Allentown and have the potential to shift the way the city develops.

All Catalytic Actions will be underway within the first 3 years (2020-2022) of Allentown Vision 2030 Plan implementation. Beginning in early 2020, the City of Allentown Bureau of Planning & Zoning will begin implementation of the Zoning Code Update and the Neighborhood Planning Framework.

Implementation of the Allentown Vision 2030 Catalytic Actions will require both City of Allentown leadership and support from our public, private, nonprofit and institutional partners. Each Catalytic Action provides a list of “Suggested Partners” to highlight the potential for collaboration and leadership in implementation. In order to realize the goals of the Catalytic Actions, the City of Allentown and our partners must identify new and innovative ways to work together.

PARTNERSHIPS

Throughout the Plan there are some mentions of specific organizations related to recommendations. The organizations mentioned do not represent an exhaustive list. The City of Allentown has a great deal of organizations, both for-profit and non-profit, that regularly work with the city and serve its residents. The city is looking to partner with organizations as we move into implementation. We hope to continue working with the many organizations that currently serve the community and expand those partnerships. The successful implementation of this plan will rely on partners to achieve results.

REPORT CARD

The development of this plan has been community-led process from the beginning and intended to be open. As we move toward implementation it is important to maintain transparency. On an annual basis, the Bureau of Planning & Zoning will provide a report card on the progress of implementation. The intent of the annual report card is to provide an update on each of the actions outlined in the Plan and what work has been done throughout the year. Many of the actions listed in the plan will take time before fully coming to fruition, but it is important for people to know what steps have been taken throughout the year to move that action forward. If one of the actions has not moved forward, there will be information as to why. The Bureau of Planning & Zoning will make the report card available by March 1st of every year, beginning in 2021. The report will be available on the city’s website.

