

YOUNGSTOWN

2010



Sharing a vision for a better tomorrow.

The City of Youngstown
Youngstown State University



Urban Strategies Inc.

Accepting
that we are a
smaller city

1. Accepting that we are a smaller city

1.1 Youngstown is a mid-sized city in Ohio

The population of Youngstown has been stabilizing at around 80,000 people. Although the population is smaller than it used to be, the area of the city is still the same. Youngstown has exceptional resources as a result of having been larger, but there are questions about how to operate a town at this size.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION



- What is a long-term sustainable size for Youngstown?
- How much housing is needed?
- How many jobs?
- How much infrastructure?
- How much open space?
- Where should new development be directed?

1. Accepting that we are a smaller city

1.2 Making difficult choices

Servicing new land is costly and probably unnecessary. Maintaining services in areas where there are few or no residents or businesses is not financially sustainable. Choices need to be made to restore the City's financial health.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION



- Need to define which parts of the city are sustainable and what to do with those areas which are not supportable
- Understand and categorize the condition of our neighborhoods
- Identify the best locations for reinvestment and new services
- Deciding what to do with vacant buildings and “brownfields”

1. Accepting that we are a smaller city

1.3 Maintaining less infrastructure

The City could save money by rationalizing and consolidating its infrastructure. This would create a more sustainable system that allows re-investment where it is most needed. The city cannot sustain all of the serviced land that it currently has.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION



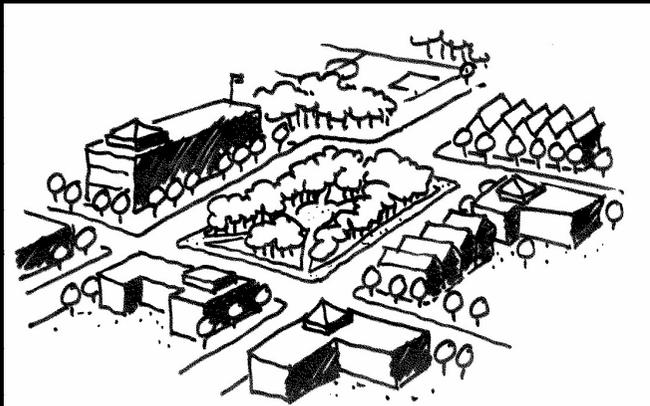
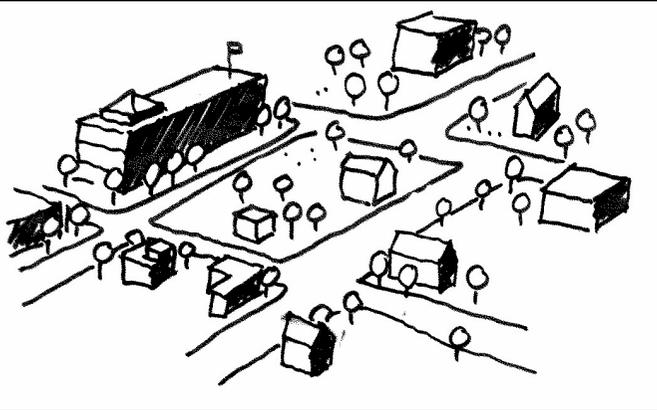
- New development should be directed to locations where infrastructure is already in place
- Currently undeveloped areas should not get new infrastructure or be urbanized
- New public and private investments should follow these principles

1. Accepting that we are a smaller city

1.4 Be generous with our urban land

In light of tax delinquency, more land is coming under the City's control. As a place with fewer people but the same amount of land, Youngstown can afford to be generous with its urban land as it explores new options for the city's neighborhoods and open space systems.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION



- Reforming the City's land banking program to accelerate the process of assembling vacant land and transferring it to those who can use it
- Seeking appropriate support from the County and the State
- New uses could include new neighborhood parks, expanded residential lots, or community gardens

1. Accepting that we are a smaller city

1.5 Youngstown is part of the Mahoning Valley region

The Mahoning Valley functions as one regional unit. The health of the region is tied to the health of Youngstown, and vice versa. We need to discover the issues that require a “metropolitan approach.” Mill Creek Metro Parks is a great example of what’s possible when the region cooperates.



ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

- What are the real boundaries of the region?
- Understand the size and character of the regional economy
- Identify the issues which require a regional approach and explore opportunities for cooperation with other jurisdictions
- Develop joint marketing plans

1. Accepting that we are a smaller city

1.6 Evaluating governance

Now that Youngstown is smaller, and given the increasing number of regional issues, there is a feeling that the City's governing structure may need to change too. A wide-ranging community discussion should be held about the best way to represent the citizens of Youngstown and how to deliver public services most efficiently.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION



- Does the size of City Council need to change?
- Do the ways of electing Council representatives need to change?
- Does Youngstown need a permanent City Manager?

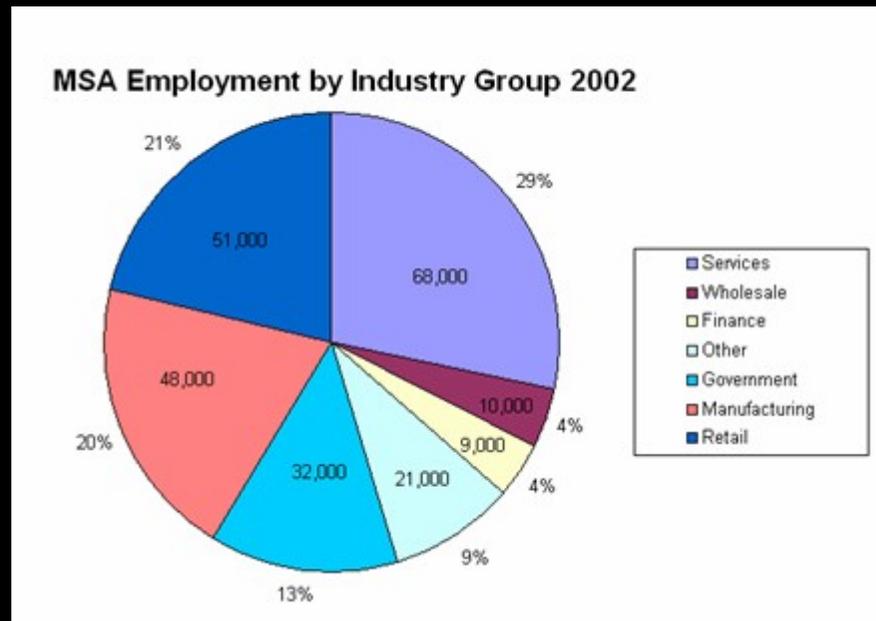
Defining
Youngstown's
role in the
new regional
economy

2. Defining Youngstown's role in the new regional economy

2.1 Aligning ourselves with the region's new economy

The days when Youngstown's economy was dominated by steel are gone. Most people work in different jobs today – particularly health care, education, government, and light industry. Our Comprehensive Plan policies need to reflect these new forces driving our economy.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION



- What do the core sectors of Youngstown's economy need to be successful?
- Where can these sectors expand or achieve economies of scale?
- Attracting and supporting the businesses that serve these main sectors

2. Defining Youngstown's role in the new regional economy

2.2 A health care center for the Mahoning Valley

In Mahoning County more than 17,000 people are employed in the health care sector and many thousands more come to Youngstown each year for treatment. Health care will continue to be a major economic driver in the new economy.



ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

- How to encourage more health care workers to live in Youngstown?
- In what locations should we promote health care facilities?
- How do we improve the connections between our educational system and the health care sector?



2. Defining Youngstown's role in the new regional economy

2.3 Youngstown is a university center

Youngstown State University has a major presence in the local economy with 12,500 students and more than 1,500 employees. YSU will play a key role in the Comprehensive Plan and the City's revitalization.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION



- How do we convince faculty and students to live in Youngstown?
- How do we keep students in the area once they graduate?
- What can the City do to support YSU's mission?
- Linking YSU's teaching with the needs of the local economy

2. Defining Youngstown's role in the new regional economy

2.4 A center for government and administration

Youngstown has a substantial concentration of public sector jobs and facilities. Many of these are in the downtown area. We need to discover what would make Youngstown an even more attractive center of government.



ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

- Retain and attract county, state & federal offices and functions
- What is the best place for new public facilities?
- Policies to locate new facilities downtown to maximize their beneficial effect

2. Defining Youngstown's role in the new regional economy

2.5 Arts, culture and entertainment

Youngstown has an exceptional endowment of arts groups and facilities. Arts groups are by nature very resilient and they benefit both residents and visitors to Youngstown. The arts and entertainment sector also has a unique ability to attract people to the downtown area.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION



- How do we increase the role of festivals and public events?
- Make the most of the multiple venues available
- How do we keep arts patrons in town spending money?
- Make the city friendly to creative people and groups

2. Defining Youngstown's role in the new regional economy

2.6 Be "open for business"

Small businesses account for most of the jobs created in today's economy. The City of Youngstown should do everything possible to help these businesses. The Youngstown Business Incubator helps new technology firms and it is expanding – it's an example of a step in the right direction.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION



- What are the obstacles facing local businesses and how do we remove them?
- Attracting & retaining good jobs
- Provide businesses with "one-stop shopping" at City Hall
- Clearly identify responsibilities for business promotion
- Identify and market our competitive advantages

Improving
Youngstown's
image &
enhancing quality
of life

3. Improving Youngstown's image & enhancing quality of life

3.1 Capitalize on our authentic urban environment

Youngstown has an authentic urban environment – downtown buildings, attractive houses, an urban network of streets, parks and infrastructure. These are features that the suburbs cannot offer and they should be taken advantage of.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

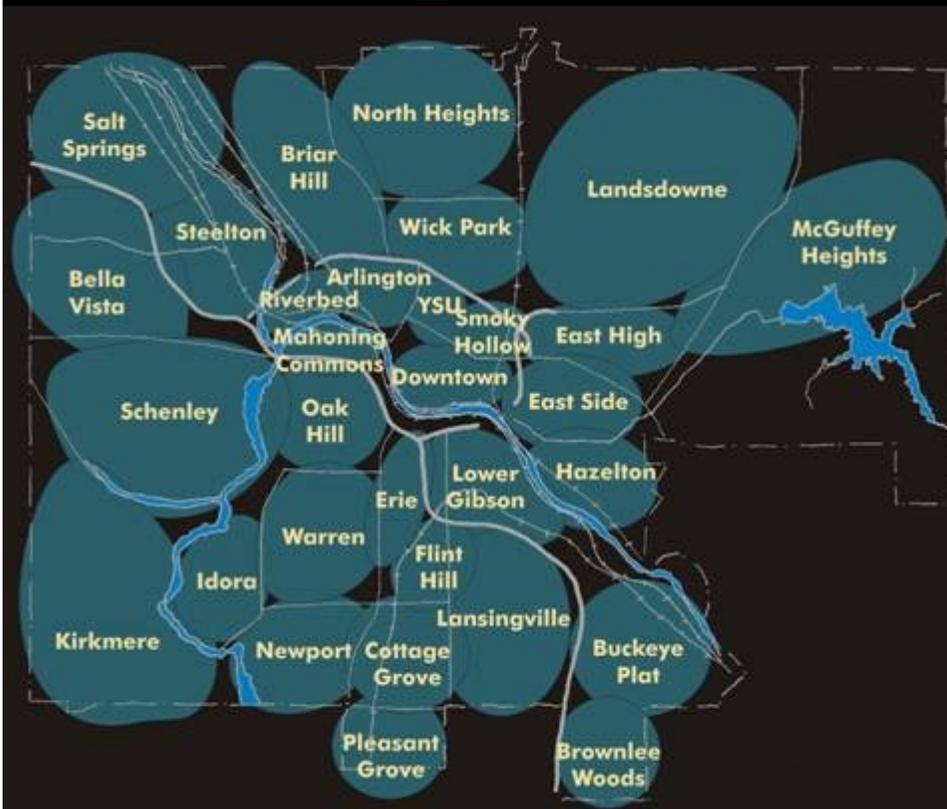


- Understand which built features are unique in Youngstown, as well as their quality and physical integrity
- Develop a plan to take advantage of those features, targeted at those who value them
- Develop an inventory of buildings, available land and floor space
- Designate one point of contact for investment attraction and retention

3. Improving Youngstown's image & enhancing quality of life

3.2 Neighborhood-based planning and action

Throughout the city there are many people who care about their neighborhoods and who are working hard to make them better places. Youngstown has many neighborhoods, and these grass roots should be the basis for the comprehensive plan.



ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

- Define the location and characteristics of each of the City's neighborhoods
- Prepare neighborhood-level marketing and land use plans
- Involve residents in the planning for their own neighborhoods
- Take neighborhood-level steps to improve neighborhood safety

3. Improving Youngstown's image & enhancing quality of life

3.3 Rethinking and re-energizing downtown

Downtown used to be a place where everyone went to shop, to work, & to be entertained. That is no longer the case and it is unlikely to be so in the near future. Some “out of the box” thinking about downtown’s role is required. Key downtown anchors will likely include YSU, government, & the courts.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION



- Redefine the purpose and boundaries of “downtown”
- Better link the existing attractions and anchors in the area
- Explore what roles institutions like YSU, hospitals or the arts should play

3.4 A greener community

Parks, open spaces, and a clean natural environment are important elements in public health, active lifestyles, quality of life and even economic development. Youngstown already has some wonderful “green” assets, but the question is how to do more.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION



- Mill Creek Park is an outstanding legacy from the past – are there opportunities to create a new legacy for the future?
- Creating more neighborhood parks & improving existing ones
- Meeting recreational needs

3.5 Restoring the Mahoning River

The Mahoning River has been abused in the past, but it should be a resource in the revitalization of Youngstown. A vision for the future of the river must be implemented which includes environmental clean up, public access and recreational opportunities to serve the region.



ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

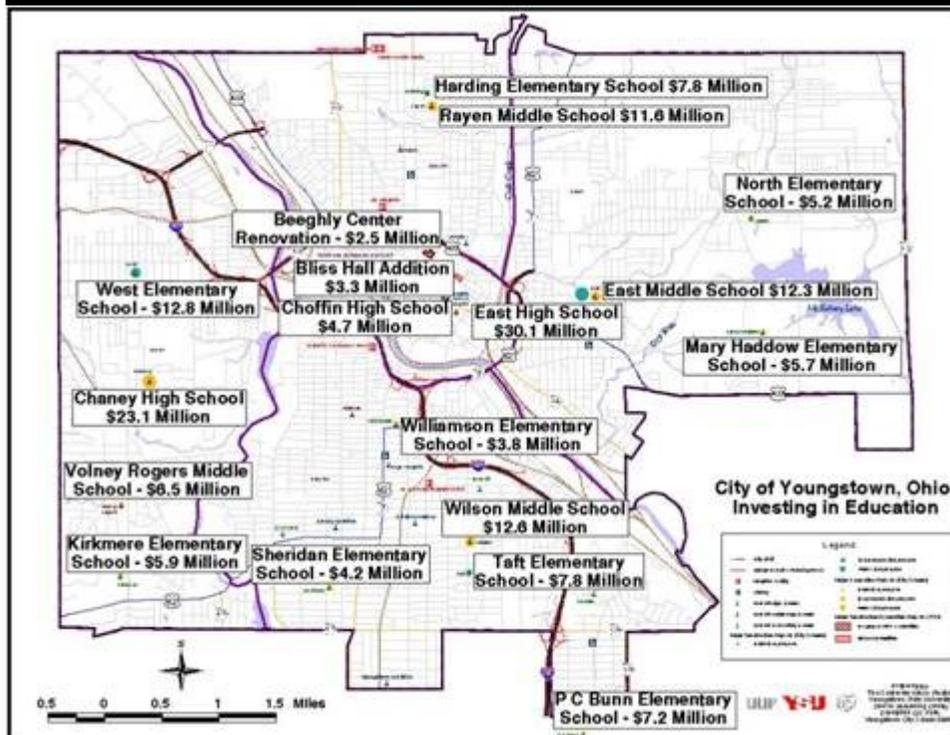
- Cleanup and regeneration of the Mahoning River
- The potential for the river to tie the communities in the Valley together
- Enhancing the public accessibility of the river
- Understanding the economic benefits of a clean river

3. Improving Youngstown's image & enhancing quality of life

3.6 Making education everybody's business

Education is essential in allowing people to access jobs, opportunities, and their government. Families place a very high value on local school quality when deciding where to live. Youngstown must have a local school system that works. More than 10,000 student residents of Youngstown depend on it.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION



- Support the School District in fulfilling its mission
- Develop plans to leverage the current \$180 million re-investment program to promote neighborhood improvement
- Promoting continuing education and adult learning to strengthen the workforce

3. Improving Youngstown's image & enhancing quality of life

3.7 Fixing broken windows

Over time people become accustomed to seeing rundown buildings & streets, and they begin to tolerate them at increasing levels. Urban decay sends a strong message that nobody cares about the community. Youngstown needs to show that it does care by fixing its broken windows.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION



- Target property maintenance and upkeep for both public and private property
- Stop the spread of urban decay in the city
- Send a positive message by cleaning up
- Improve the streets leading into the city

3. Improving Youngstown's image & enhancing quality of life

3.8 Improving neighborhood safety

People must feel safe if they are to participate fully in their communities and feel confident in their neighborhoods. Youngstown must make the enhancement of public safety a very high priority – especially if families are to move back to the city. Everyone can contribute to making Youngstown safer, including the media.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

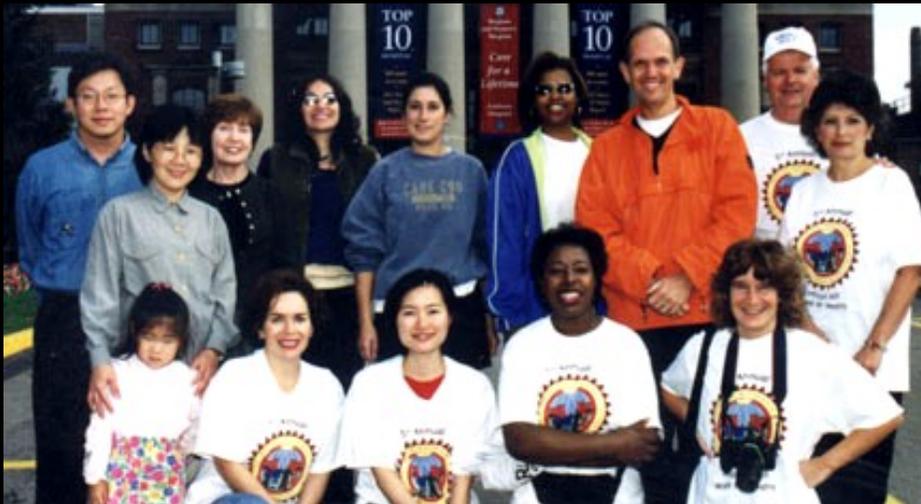


- Develop a cooperative plan to improve public safety
- How do we make Youngstown a safer place? What can be done at the neighborhood level?
- Improving the physical environment to make our streets feel safer
- Prioritizing initiatives to have an immediate and visible impact on community safety

3.9 Addressing the divisions in our community

Members of our community have said that there are divisions – especially racism – which are holding Youngstown back. The Comprehensive Plan will not be able to resolve these divisions, but we must begin to take steps to improve the situation.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION



- Create forums for on-going dialogue and discussion in the community
- Supporting community events that bring people together
- Identifying strategies to turn our diversity into an asset

A call to action

4. A call to action

4.1 A specific, organized & action-oriented plan

Youngstown must develop a Comprehensive Plan that is specific, organized, and action-oriented in order to get results. The Plan will only help the community if it is implemented.



ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

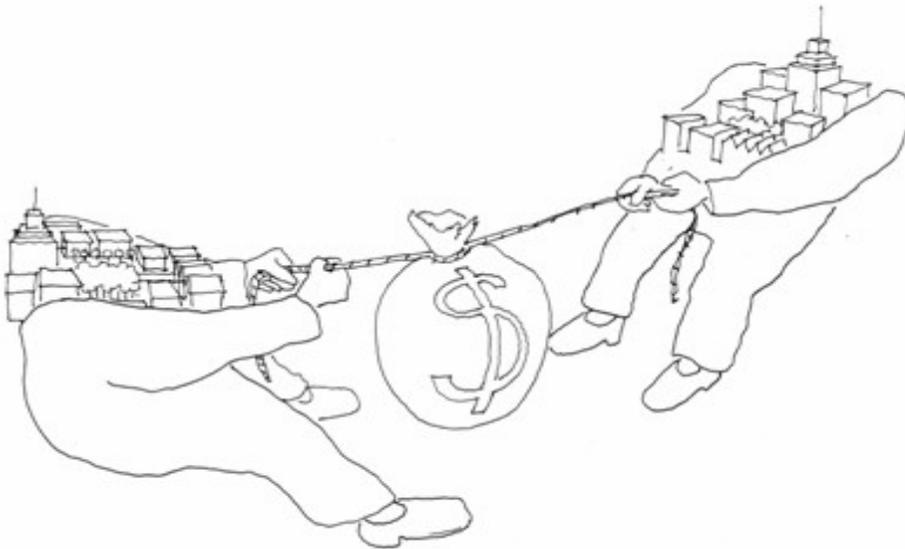
- Identify clear, specific and achievable goals for the plan
- Set the priorities
- Create a checklist of targets (big & small) that can be achieved by 2010
- Set up a committee to continuously monitor progress against an established list of indicators and benchmarks

4. A call to action

4.2 Compete successfully for all available funds

There is fierce competition among cities and regions for public funds. The money only goes to those places that have a solid plan, a strategy for getting things done and demonstrated results. Youngstown must succeed in this competition.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

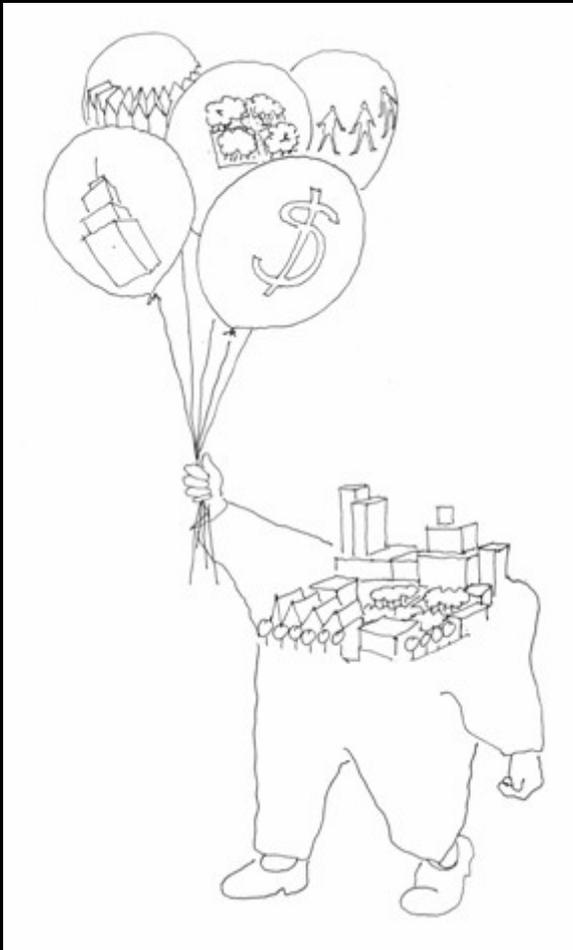


- Success requires a vision and a detailed plan that has been adopted by the City
- Applications for funds should be targeted to specific implementation measures
- Build on successes like the Renewal Community designation

4. A call to action

4.3 Leverage opportunities

Public policies, initiatives and investments should always be coordinated in order to achieve the maximum catalytic effect. Achieving both symbolic and financial leverage will allow us to maximize the return on our investments.



ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

- Look for ways to link existing assets (e.g. YSU and the health care sector)
- Use programs and funding to achieve multiple goals (e.g. hire local workers to build new schools)
- Coordinate the Comprehensive Plan with other institutions like YSU, the hospitals and schools

4. A call to action

4.4 Empower the local leaders we already have

The people of Youngstown are ready for change. Fortunately, the city already has a large number of local leaders – in the churches, schools, community organizations & small businesses – who want to involve others and make a real contribution. Individual people *can* make change happen.



ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

- Create an inventory of community leaders and their skills
- Identify opportunities to use volunteers
- Support initiatives being undertaken by community groups
- Find ways to increase the involvement of youth in the community

4. A call to action

4.5 Celebrate our successes

If people are to be hopeful about the future of Youngstown, they need good reasons to support that belief. Celebrating each and every success story in the community is critical to building a feeling that the city's problems can be overcome.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION



- Hold public parties to celebrate successes
- Tell the good news stories: brownfields, government clean up
- Use positive media coverage to improve perceptions of the city
- Be active in marketing the strengths of Youngstown to both businesses and visitors

Summary

Accepting that we are a smaller city

**Youngstown should strive to be a model
of a sustainable mid-sized city**

Defining Youngstown's role in the
new regional economy

**Youngstown must align itself with the
realities of the new regional economy**

Improving Youngstown's
image & enhancing quality of life

**Making Youngstown a healthier and
better place to live and work**

A call to action

**An achievable and practical action-oriented
plan to make things happen**

How to get involved

Send us your comments!

Youngstown 2010
City Hall, 6th Floor
26 S. Phelps Street
Youngstown, OH 44503

Phone 330-742-8842

Fax 330-742-8997

Email **youngstown2010@cityofyoungstownoh.com**

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