

CITY OF SHARON

FINAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



OCTOBER

2025





TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| INTRODUCTION | 08 |
| Using The Plan | 09 |
| The Planning Process | 11 |
| Public & Stakeholder Outreach | 12 |
| CONTEXT & PRINCIPLES | 14 |
| Existing Conditions/Trends | 15 |
| Demographics | 16 |
| Existing Land Use | 22 |
| Vision & Goals | 24 |
| PRIORITY FOCUS AREAS | 26 |
| Downtown / Economic Development | 27 |
| Neighborhood / Community Revitalization | 38 |
| Quality of Life | 50 |
| IMPLEMENTATION PLAN | 62 |
| Overall Implementation | 63 |
| Implementation Matrix | 64 |
| Investment Priority Map | 78 |
| APPENDICES | 92 |
| Additional MPC Provisions | 93 |
| Public Outreach Summary | 94 |
| Additional Recommendation Details | 96 |
| Marketing Study Executive Summary | 108 |

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The preparation of the Comprehensive Plan was made possible through the support of the City of Sharon, staff, and appointed officials as well as resident volunteers.

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**CITY OF SHARON, PENNSYLVANIA
RESOLUTION NO. 68-25**

A **RESOLUTION** of the Council of the City of Sharon, Mercer County, Pennsylvania, adopting the City of Sharon 2025 Comprehensive Plan.

WHEREAS, Article III of the Municipalities Planning Code (the "MPC") sets forth the procedures and requirements for municipalities to adopt comprehensive plans; and

WHEREAS, the most recent comprehensive plan for the City of Sharon (the "City") was adopted in 2007; and

WHEREAS, City Council retained the consulting firm of Mackin Engineering & Consultants to assist with the new Comprehensive Plan; and

WHEREAS, the City of Sharon 2025 Comprehensive Plan was developed with assistance from a Steering Committee comprised of a diverse group of residents, business and organization leaders throughout the community, as well as input from City staff, boards and commissions and the general public; and

WHEREAS, the planning process began in the fall of 2023 and continued throughout 2024 and 2025 and included issues identification and the evaluation of: existing land uses; demographics; and visioning, along with the completion of a market study, and the identification of goals and recommendations for future land uses; and

WHEREAS, the City of Sharon 2025 Comprehensive Plan was developed by reaching out to the general public with a survey, web and social media presence and public meetings and meetings with stakeholder and focus groups representing all sectors of the community; and

WHEREAS, the City of Sharon 2025 Comprehensive Plan was forwarded by the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee to the Sharon Planning Commission, and on October 13, 2025, the Sharon Planning Commission voted to recommend the plan to City Council for its consideration and adoption; and

WHEREAS, all of the adoption procedures of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code have been met for the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, including review by the County Planning Commission, a Planning Commission public meeting, a City Council public hearing held on September 3, 2025, submission of the draft to the Sharon City School District and adjacent municipalities, and required legal advertisements; and

WHEREAS, City Council desires to adopt the City of Sharon 2025 Comprehensive Plan.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SHARON, MERCER COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA, IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED BY THE AUTHORITY OF THE SAME AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. That the Council of the City of Sharon hereby adopts the City of Sharon 2025 Comprehensive Plan as the comprehensive plan for the City of Sharon.

SECTION 2. All resolutions or parts of resolutions conflicting with any of the provisions of this Resolution are hereby repealed insofar as the same affects this Resolution.

SECTION 3. This resolution shall become effective upon its enactment.

ADOPTED IN COUNCIL this 15th day of October 2025.

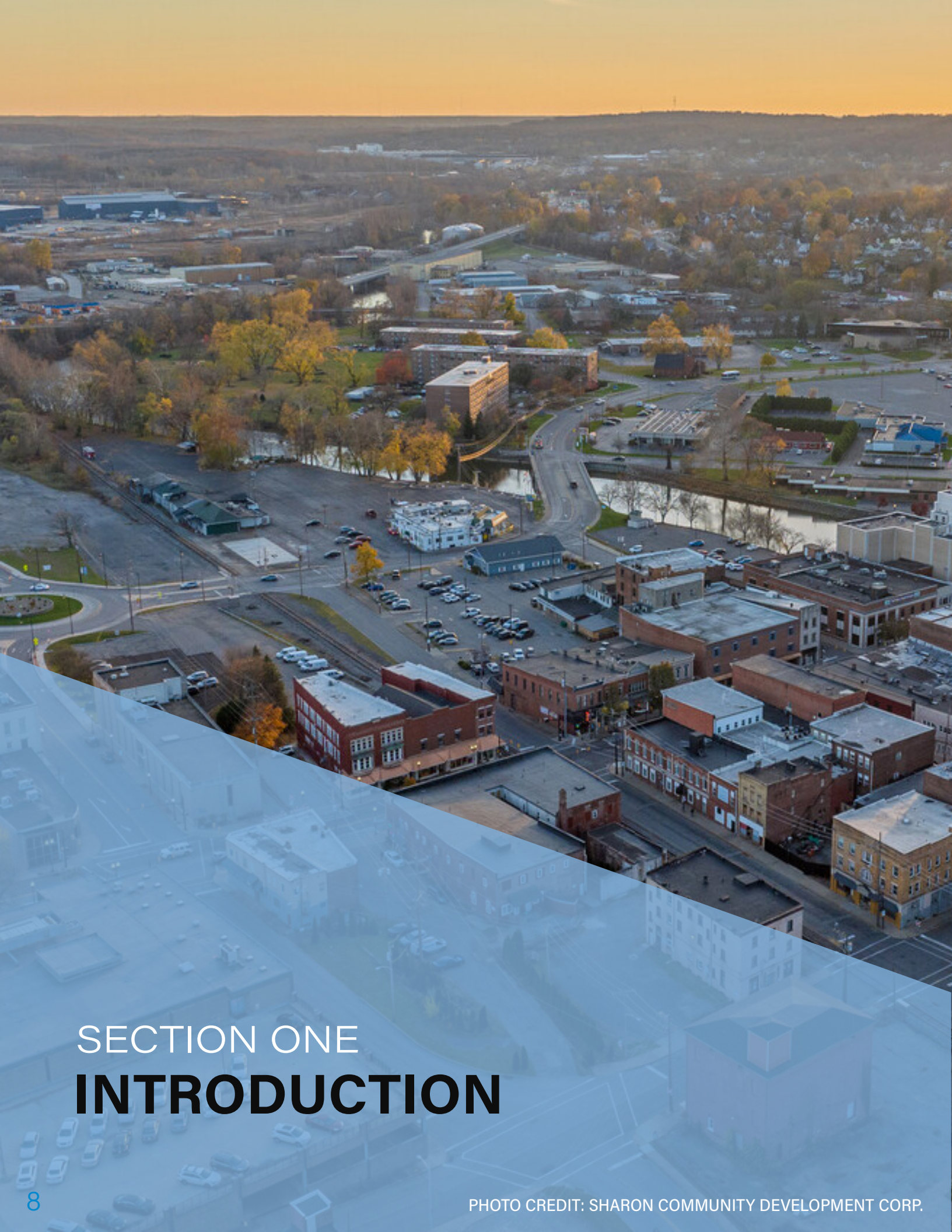
CITY OF SHARON

By 
PRESIDENT OF COUNCIL

ATTEST:


CITY CLERK

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SECTION ONE
INTRODUCTION

USING THE PLAN

WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

Authorized by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), a community's Comprehensive Plan outlines strategies for guiding the nature, pace, and location of physical development, as well as addressing future economic and social conditions.

In general, a comprehensive plan serves as:

- An educational tool to understand current conditions, issues, and opportunities
- An assessment and prioritization of community needs
- A statement of an ideal vision for future growth and development
- A public policy guide for decision-making, formally adopted by the governing body

Traditional Comprehensive Plans typically focused on analyzing specific elements such as housing, transportation, and others in isolation. While this approach provided detailed insights into each sector, it often lacked a comprehensive view of how these elements interact to shape the overall community. By addressing each topic independently, the traditional approach missed opportunities to create more cohesive and interrelated strategies that could tackle broader community issues.

The City of Sharon's updated plan takes a more integrated approach, aligning with the "implementable plan" model recommended by Pennsylvania's Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED). Rather than studying each planning topic separately, the new plan frames priority issues within the context of all related elements. This interconnected approach allows for more effective, actionable solutions that address the community's pressing concerns in a way that is practical, comprehensive, and adaptable to changing needs.

WHAT THE DOCUMENT CONTAINS

This document identifies a future vision for **City of Sharon** and includes a playbook of projects and strategies that will help the City realize its vision. The plan will function as a decision-making guide for the City's elected and appointed officials. The project's Steering Committee assisted with gathering input to identify key issues and devise strategies to address them.

The **Context and Principles** includes demographic information from the 2020 Census; a description of the planning process; and the vision and goals of the plan.

Three Focus Areas were developed as targeted areas for the plan: Downtown/Economic Development, Neighborhood/Community Revitalization and Quality of Life. This section includes priority objectives and action steps for each Focus Area.

The **Implementation Tools** provides details on how the City can set this plan into motion. This section includes details on partners, cost, and potential funding sources for all of the priority action steps.

The **Appendix** includes supporting information for the plan including additional provisions from the Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), a public outreach summary, additional information for key actions, and an executive summary of the Market and Real Estate Analysis.

PREVIOUS PLANS & STUDIES

Existing planning documents are very important when undertaking a Comprehensive Planning Process. For the City of Sharon, the 2007 Joint Comprehensive Plan, the 2002 Recreation Park & Open Space plan, the 2011 Sharon Vision Plan, the 2017 Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, the 2020 Comprehensive Blight Strategy Plan, the 2020-2024 Consolidated Plan, 2020-2024 Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice, the 2022 Revitalization Plan for Downtown Sharon, and the City of Sharon 2022 Visioning Retreat Summary were all reviewed to determine what is still relevant for this process as well as to help to identify trend data.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

City staff, elected and appointed officials, community stakeholders, and the public collaborated to update the Comprehensive Plan with support from Mackin Engineering & Consultants. This effort included background research, mapping, and analysis of demographic trends.

Community outreach began with identifying key stakeholders, followed by the release of an online survey, and three focus group sessions (housing, economic development, and students) to gather initial feedback. The consultant team then worked alongside the Steering Committee to establish the plan’s primary focus areas, vision, and goals. Action items for each focus area were developed and presented at a public open house, and additional public feedback was gathered through a second online survey.

The planning process concluded with a public plan review, a public hearing, and formal adoption of the plan.

PROJECT MILESTONES



PUBLIC & STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH

In addition to regular meetings with the City's Steering Committee and staff, the planning process included a variety of outreach methods designed to publicize the plan, generate excitement and get people involved in determining what the City's future should be.

STAKEHOLDERS

The Steering Committee and staff identified a list of individuals who could offer valuable insights and perspectives for the plan. These stakeholders included representatives from agencies and organizations, long-standing business owners, community leaders, and large businesses invested in future development. The primary goal of engaging these stakeholders was to gather information that would help the City understand and prioritize local issues and shape practical, well-calibrated strategies to address them effectively.

Stakeholder input was gathered in a variety of ways including:

- Surveys
- Phone Interviews
- Focus Groups to gather initial feedback

SURVEYS

An initial online survey was made available to the public early in the planning process to gather insights on the City's key assets and issues. Later, a second survey allowed those who couldn't attend the public input session to vote on priority recommendations, mirroring the activity held at the public open house.

FOCUS GROUPS

Three separate focus groups were held to gather initial feedback on the City's future priorities. Each group was tailored to a specific demographic or area of expertise: one focused on downtown and business development, another on housing, and a third included selected students to discuss ways the City could improve and become a place they'd want to stay. This approach helped capture diverse perspectives on how best to support the community's growth and vitality.



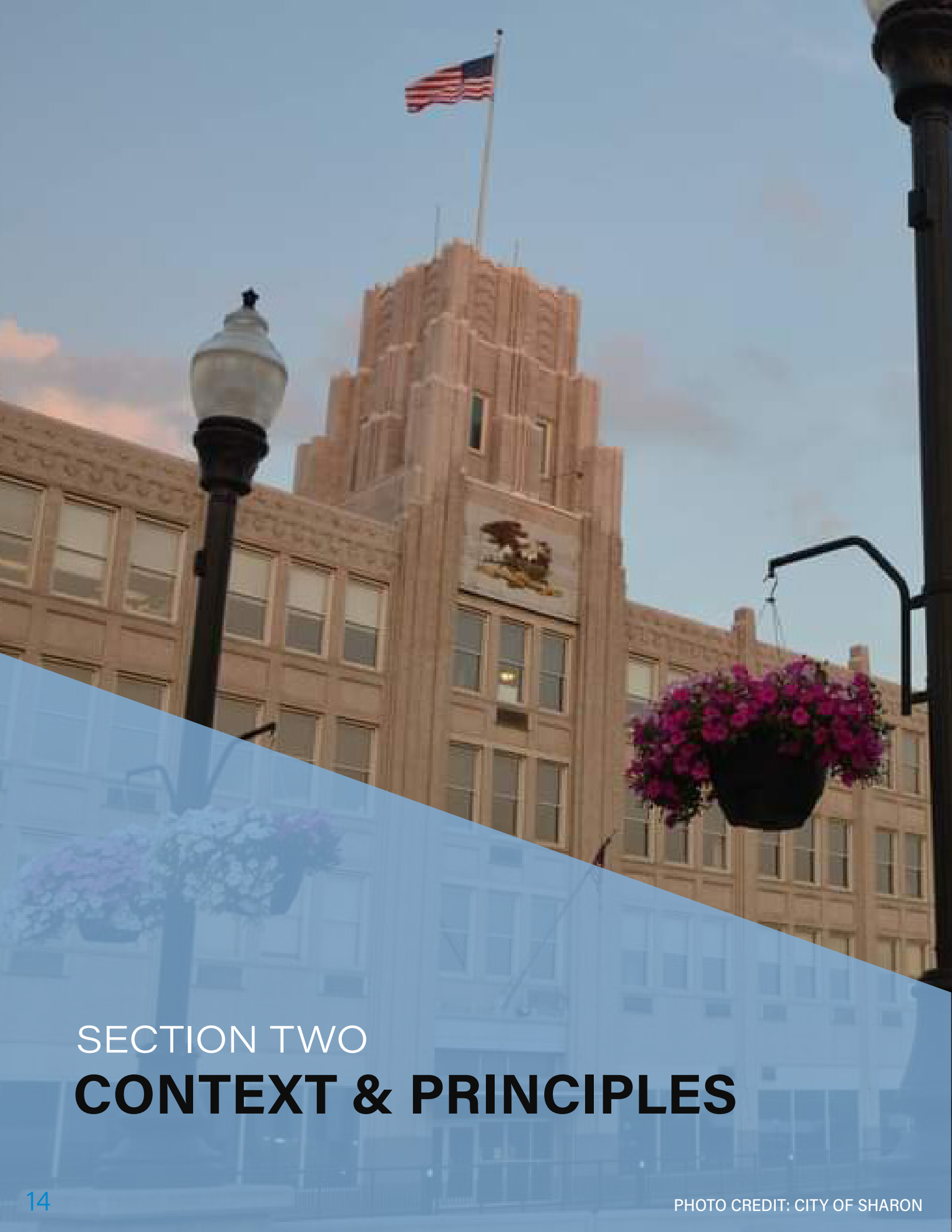
Business Focus Group Session

PUBLIC INPUT SESSION

After drafting the goals and recommendations, a public open house was created to invite residents to review and provide feedback. To help prioritize actions, attendees participated in a 'money exercise,' where they allocated funds to the action items they felt should be top priorities.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD & PUBLIC HEARING

Once the draft plan was finalized, copies were sent to adjacent municipalities, the School District, and Mercer County. The plan was also published online and in print for the general public to review and comment. Comments received during the comment period were reviewed and considered prior to adoption. Council held a public hearing to solicit final comment on the plan prior to its adoption.

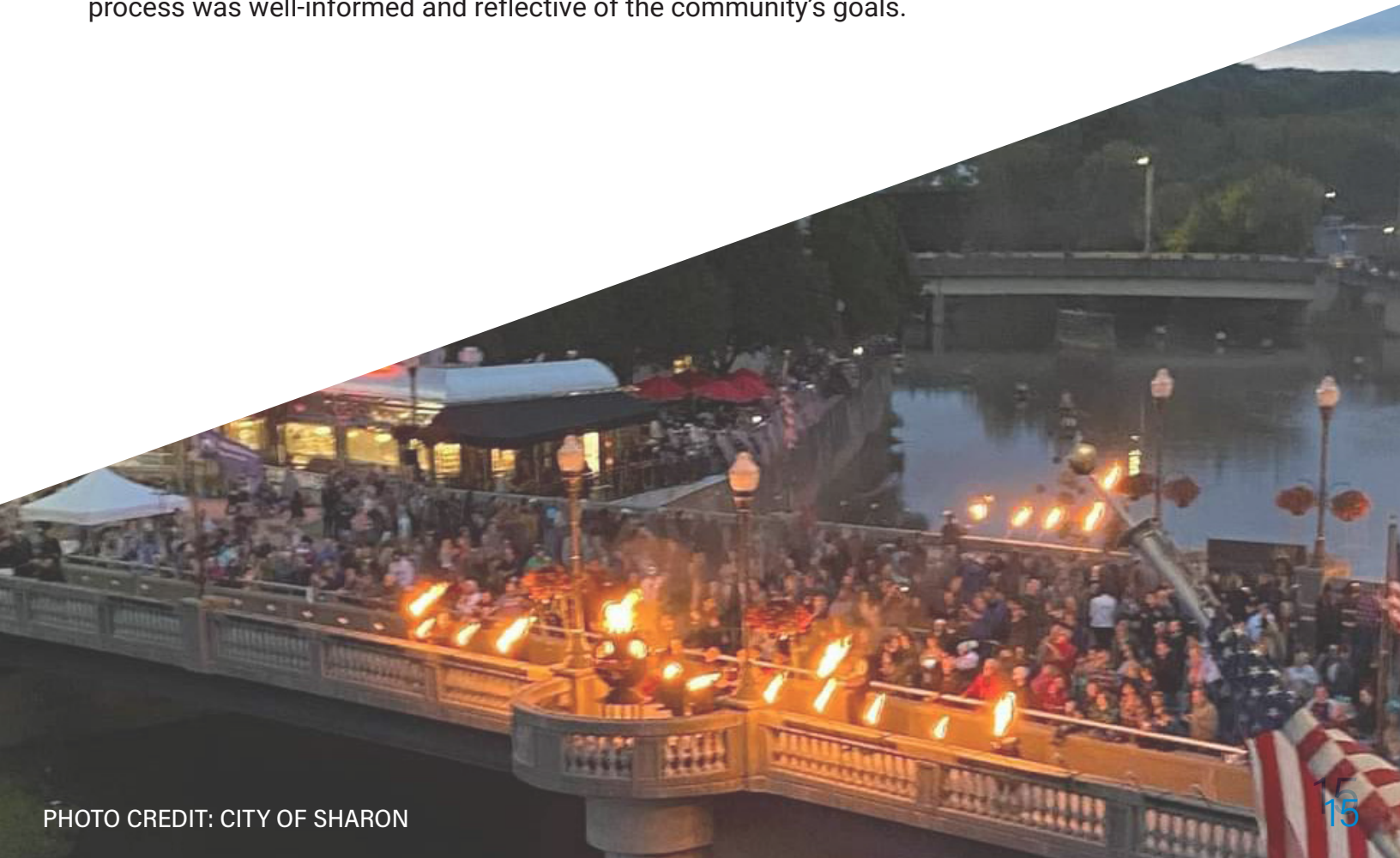


SECTION TWO
CONTEXT & PRINCIPLES

EXISTING TRENDS & CONDITIONS

The planning process involved an in-depth examination of the City of Sharon's current trends and conditions through extensive research and collaboration. By analyzing demographic data, land use patterns, and zoning regulations, the Planning Team developed a thorough understanding of the City's existing landscape. This data-driven approach offered a clear assessment of the community's progress, identifying both strengths and areas for improvement. The data presented in the following pages is derived from the 2020 Decennial Census and the 2022 American Community Survey estimates. Additionally, 4ward Planning conducted a Market and Real Estate Analysis as part of the research effort, providing valuable insights into market dynamics within and around the City (see executive summary in Appendices).

In addition to quantitative analysis, conversations with key stakeholders offered valuable insights. Engaging with local residents, business owners, and community leaders uncovered perspectives on the City's needs and opportunities. These discussions added depth to the understanding of current conditions by incorporating firsthand experiences and expectations, ensuring the planning process was well-informed and reflective of the community's goals.



DEMOGRAPHICS

BACKGROUND

Founded in 1795 and established as a City in 1918, Sharon built a rich steel heritage, attracting diverse ethnic groups to work in its mills and factories. Following deindustrialization in the 1970s and 1980s, this Rust Belt City sought a new path forward. Through efforts in downtown revitalization, neighborhood beautification, historic preservation, and lively events, the City of Sharon now offers a vibrant quality of life, thanks to its dedicated leaders, residents, and volunteers. Data cited from this section is from the 2020 Decennial Census, the 2023 Five-Year ACS, OntheMap and the City of Sharon.

2023 Census:



Population: 12,813



Land area: 3.77 sq miles



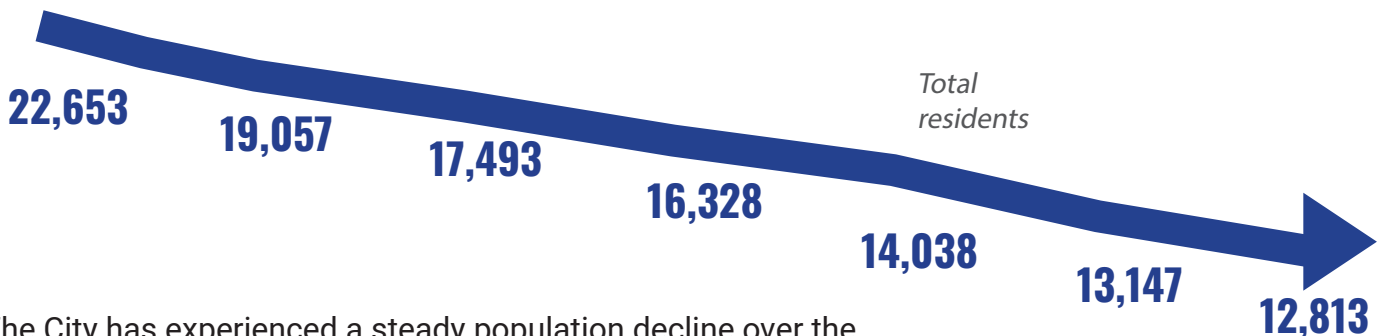
Households: 6,015



Median household income: \$44,595

POPULATION

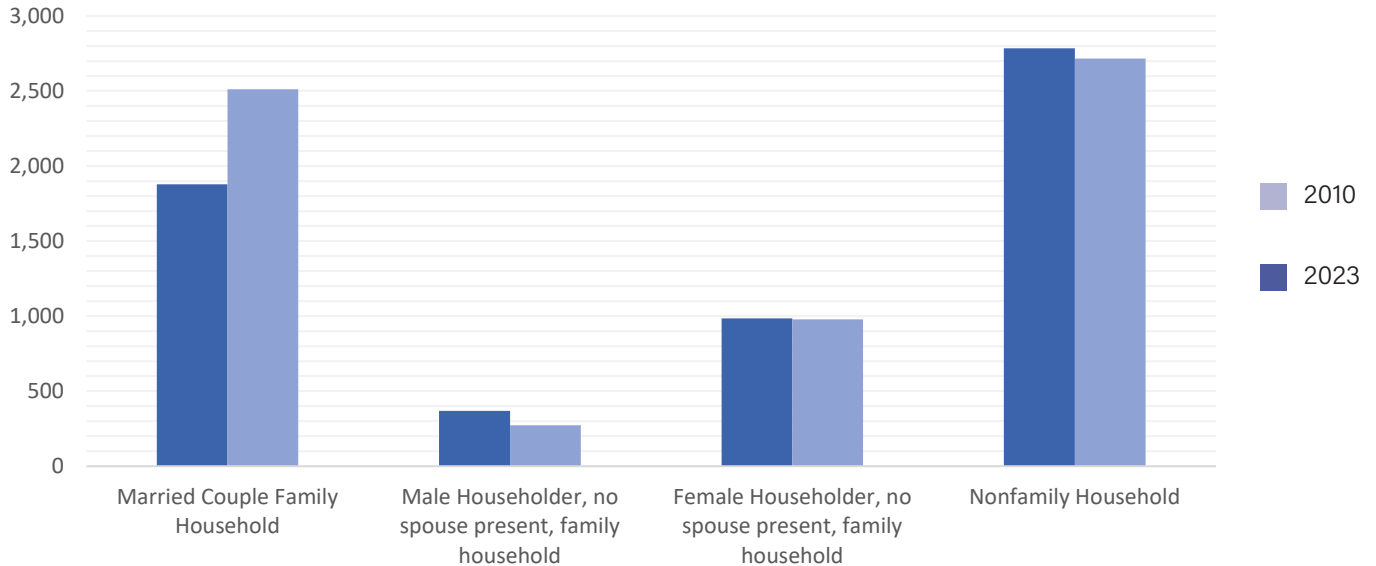
1970 1980 1990 2000 2010 2020 2024



The City has experienced a steady population decline over the past 70 years, with a 21.1% decrease since 2000.

HOUSEHOLD TYPE

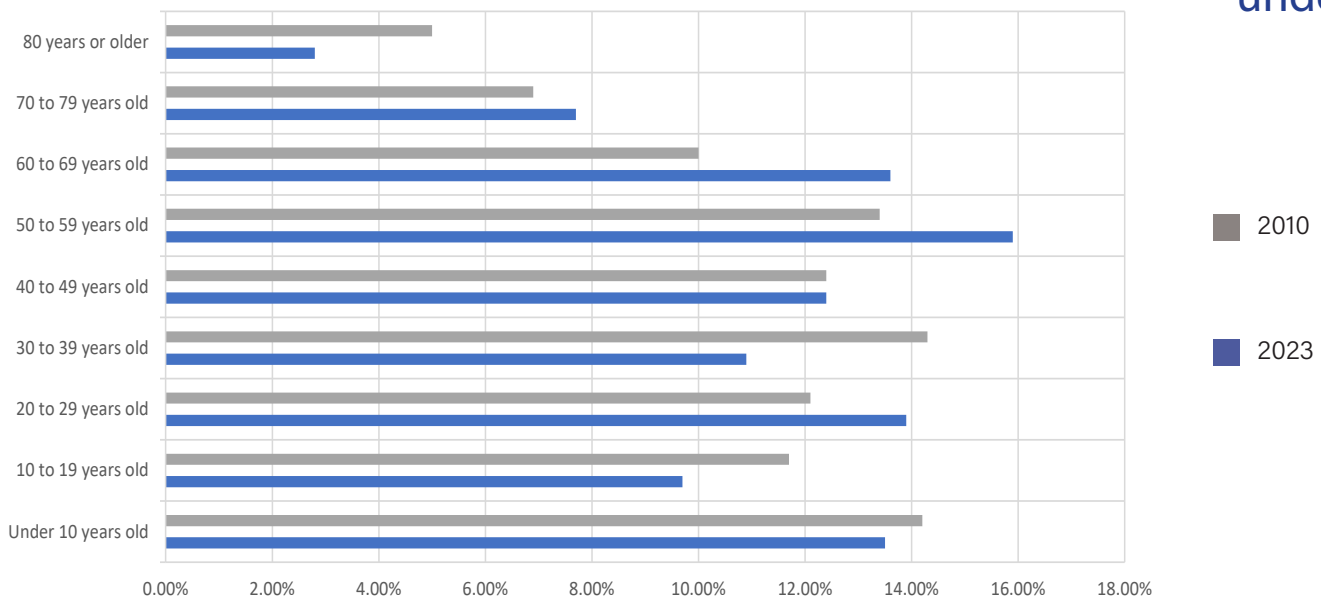
While the total number of households in the City of Sharon has declined over the past decade, the composition of household types has remained relatively the same excluding Married Couple Family Households which have experienced a significant decline, with a decrease of 634 households since 2010. These shifts reflect changing social and demographic patterns, such as smaller household sizes and evolving family dynamics.



AGE

Sharon’s age distribution has shifted over the last decade. There has been a loss of people under the age of 19 (-5%), but the City has gained people aged 50 to 69 (+6.1%). Sharon’s median age increased since 2000, but it was still lower than the median age in Mercer County (44.5).

Sharon’s median age increased from 39.0 in 2010 to 42.8 in 2023, possibly reflecting the loss of residents under 19.

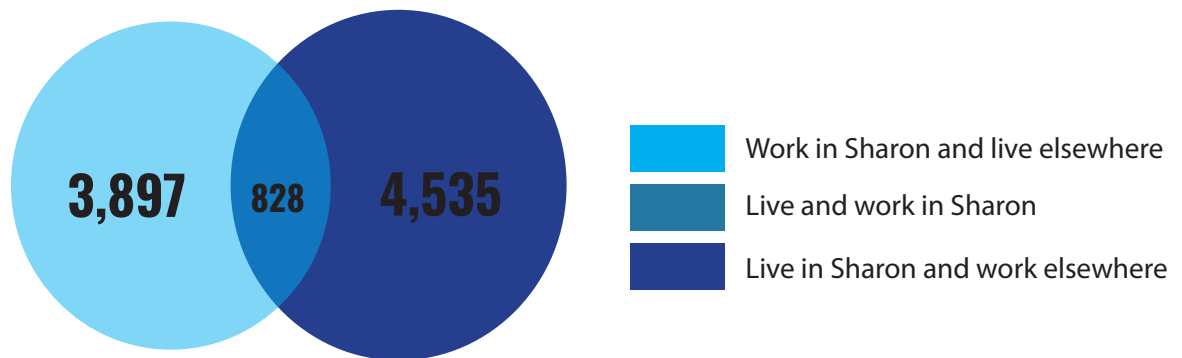


LOCAL ECONOMY

The Census platform Onthemap estimates that Sharon employed 4,725 people in 2021. The diagram below illustrates the volume of people flowing into and out of the City of Sharon each day for work.

The largest category of jobs within the City was Health Care and Social Assistance (1,617 people). Other top industries included Educational Services (406 people), Management of Companies and Enterprises (372 people), and Manufacturing (366 people).

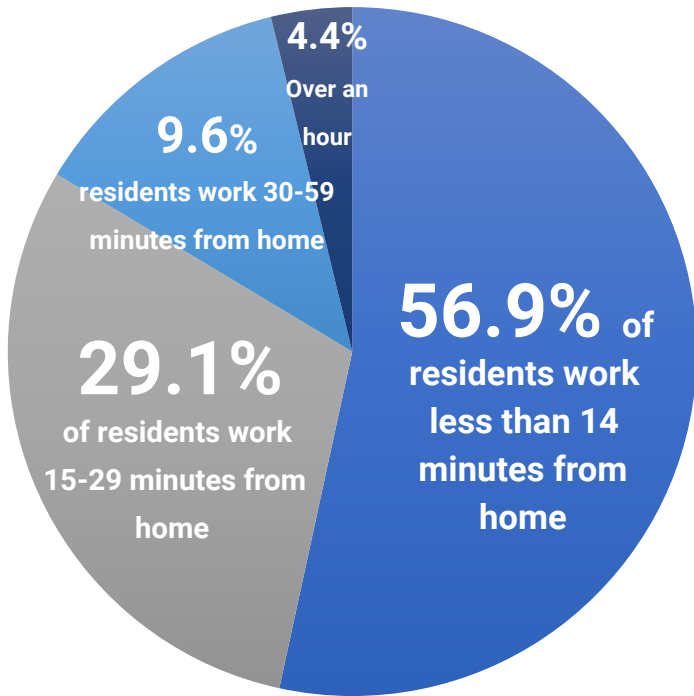
Sharon’s workforce education consists of 89.3% of those age 25 and over having attained at least a high school diploma and 20.6% with a bachelor’s degree or higher. This is slightly lower than Mercer County for high school diplomas (90.4%) and bachelor’s degrees (24.1%).



The table below shows the principal types of businesses and industries in the City for the most current year available (2022).

| Jobs in Sharon by Business/Industry Type | 2022 | |
|--|--------|-------|
| | Number | % |
| Health Care and Social Assistance | 1,536 | 32.5% |
| Manufacturing | 389 | 8.2% |
| Management of Companies and Enterprises | 377 | 8.0% |
| Educational Services | 373 | 7.9% |
| Accommodation and Food Services | 366 | 7.7% |
| Retail Trade | 287 | 6.1% |
| Finance and Insurance | 240 | 5.1% |
| Other Services (excluding Public Administration) | 210 | 4.4% |
| Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services | 204 | 4.3% |
| Wholesale Trade | 184 | 3.9% |
| Public Administration | 127 | 2.7% |
| Information | 91 | 1.9% |
| Construction | 91 | 1.9% |
| Other | 268 | 5.4% |

COMMUTE



Sharon workers scatter to a variety of destinations across the region. These locations include the City of Hermitage, Sharpsville, Farrell, etc.

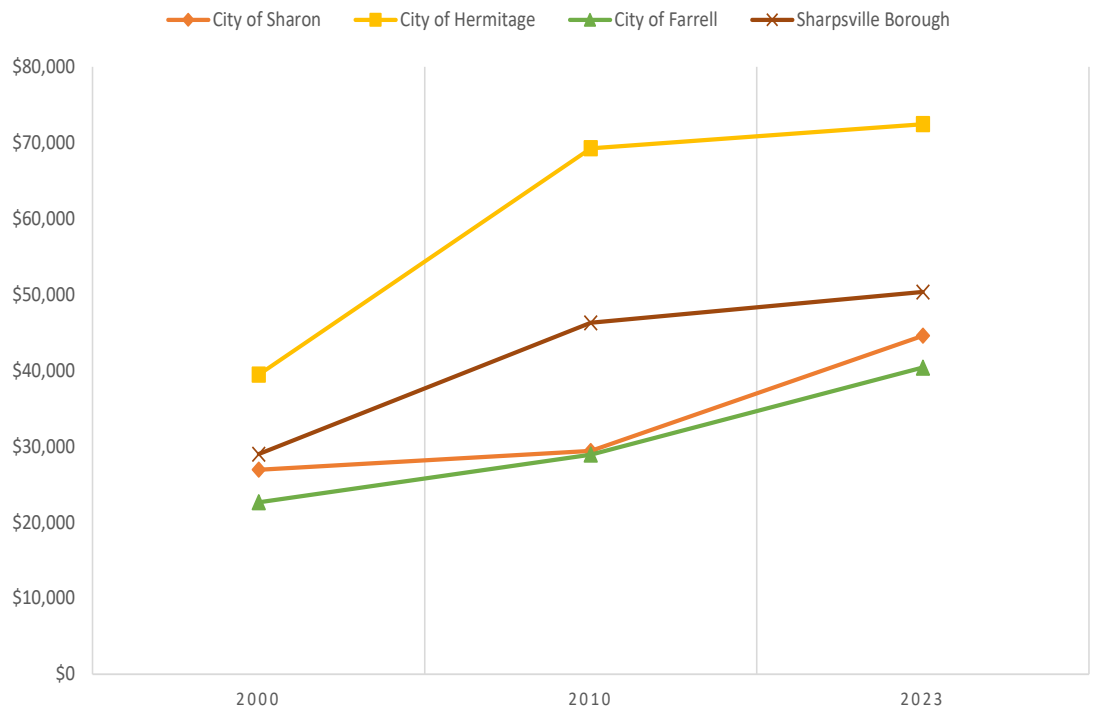
Commuting is relatively quick for the 86% of Sharon workers who travel less than 30 minutes from work to home. The average commute time for Sharon workers is approximately 17 minutes.

4.3% of working Sharon residents work from home

INCOME

The majority of household incomes in Sharon fall between \$10,000 and \$74,999 per year. An additional 38.2% of households made less than \$25,000 and only 11.7% make more than \$100,000

The median income across Sharon households was \$44,595 in 2023, which is much lower than the Mercer County median of \$57,618.



HOUSING UNITS

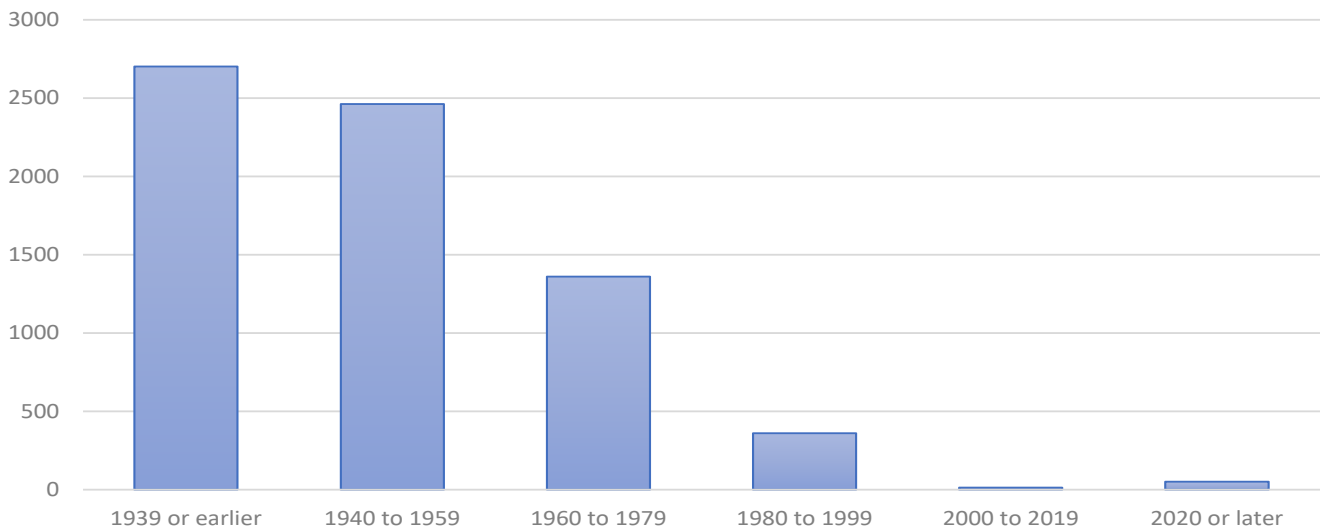
The City of Sharon counted 6,679 total residential units in 2024, compared to 7,136 in 2010, a net loss of 457 units. This includes new units in single-family or multi-unit configurations minus any units lost to demolition, abandonment or conversion. (This additional detailed data was recorded by City sources).

As the graph below illustrates, the housing market in Sharon has been on a consistent gradual decline dating back to its peak (1939 or earlier).

Sharon's homes are 50.4% renter-occupied.

Note: The concentration of rental properties vary significantly between neighborhoods and an overall increase since 2010 when the rate was 41.5% city-wide.

Year Structures Built

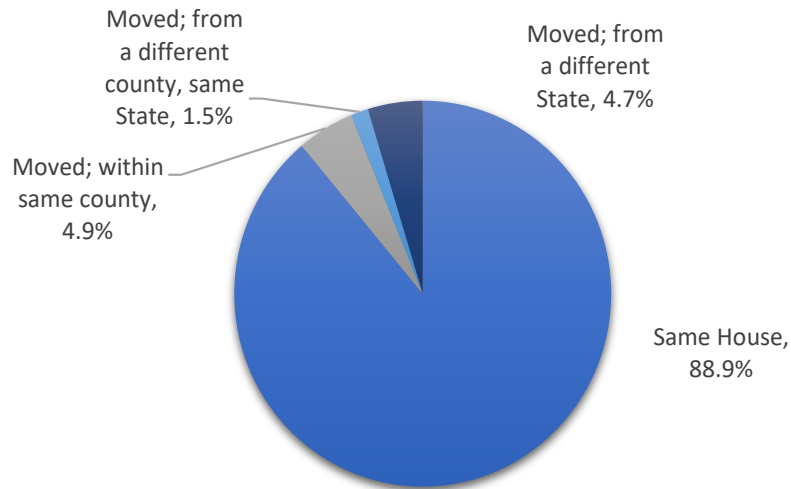


HOUSING/MARKET TRENDS

Since 2010, Sharon, PA has seen significant growth in both home prices and rental costs. In 2025, the average home value stands at \$79,120, a rise from individual 2010 sale prices that ranged around \$65,200. Rental prices have also increased, with the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment climbing from \$595 in 2010 to \$747 in 2025. Despite these increases, Sharon remains highly affordable compared to national averages, offering cost-effective living options. Additionally, the City has shifted to a buyer's market, and its overall cost of living is about 21% lower than the national average.

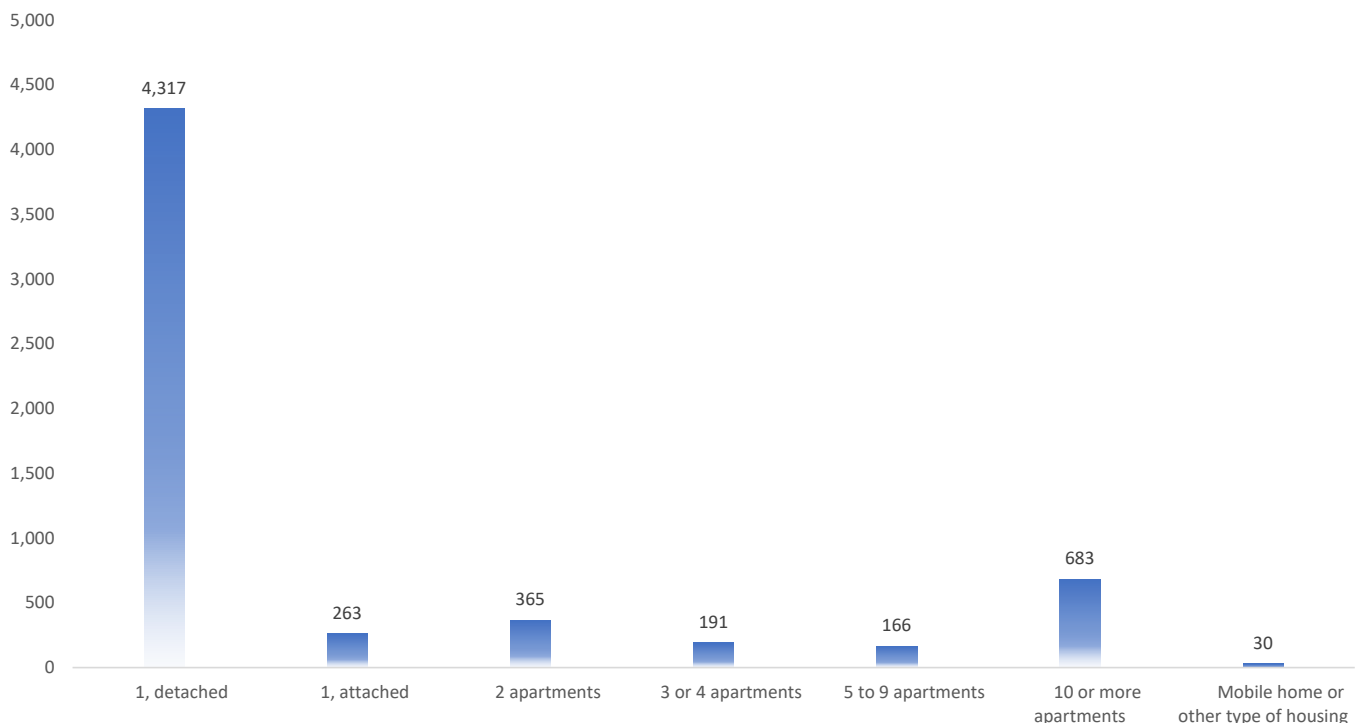
MOBILITY

Sharon's exceptional residential stability is evident in the share of residents who remained in their homes over the past decade: 88.9%. During the same year, 4.9% moved in from elsewhere within Mercer County, 1.5% moved in from a different County and 4.7% moved from a different state or country. The rate of those in the same home is slightly higher than Mercer County, which was 91.6%.



HOUSING TYPE

Approximately three fifths of the City of Sharon homes are single-family detached structures (71.8%). The next most common type is 10 or more apartment units accounting for 11.4% of homes. The other types of homes include 2 apartments (6.1%), single-family attached (4.4%), 3 to 4 apartments (3.2%) 5 to 9 apartments (2.8%), and mobile homes (0.5%).



EXISTING LAND USE

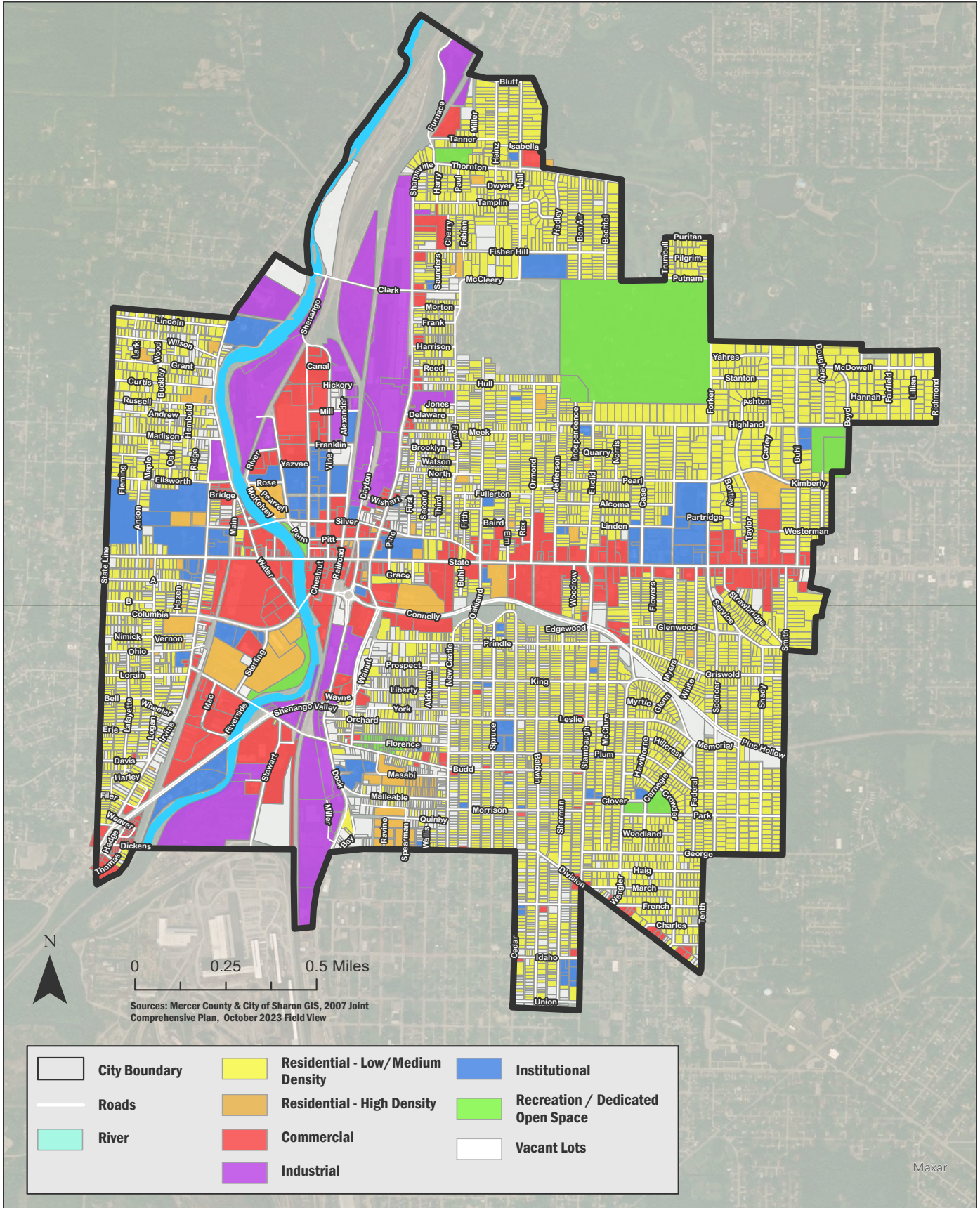
An Existing Land Use Map, shown on Map 1, is a detailed visual representation of how land within a specific area is currently utilized. The map also classifies land into various categories providing a snapshot of existing development and spatial patterns. Its importance lies in its role as a foundational tool for planners, local governments, and community stakeholders, offering valuable insights that can guide future zoning, development, and conservation efforts. Illustrating current land uses supports informed decision-making on growth and infrastructure, promotes sustainable resource management, and facilitates community engagement by making land use information accessible and transparent. An Existing Land Use Map also serves as a baseline for comprehensive planning, helping to identify areas where change or improvement is needed to align with long-term community goals. The land use inventory for the City of Sharon was created using land cover data from Mercer County and was refined and updated based on field views and meetings with the Steering Committee. Below is a breakdown of land uses along with the percentage each category covers:

- **Residential Low/Medium Density (73.57%)**: Applies to residential areas including single-family and/or two-family duplexes.
- **Residential High Density (1.32%)**: Applies to residential areas that include multi-family, apartments, etc.
- **Commercial (5.54%)**: Applies to commercial areas and uses including downtown and businesses along State Street as well as other businesses areas throughout the City.
- **Industrial (0.81%)**: Applies to properties where light manufacturing or heavy industry occurs.
- **Institutional (1.39%)**: Applies to civic, governmental, religious, and community sites.
- **Recreation/Dedicated Open Space (0.71%)**: Applies to properties designated for recreational purposes, including parks, sports facilities, trails, greenways, etc.
- **Vacant Lots (16.75%)**: Applies to empty lots or areas without built structures.

Key Insight

Utilizing existing land use planning provides a framework to envision future possibilities, such as addressing the high percentage of vacant lots (16.75%). These underutilized spaces present an opportunity to enhance areas with lower representation, such as Recreation or Dedicated Open Space, which currently accounts for only 0.71% of land use. Strategic planning can transform vacant lots into valuable assets, contributing to community well-being and creating a balanced, sustainable land use profile.

Map 1: Existing Land Use



Maxar

VISION & GOALS

Every planning initiative begins with a Vision that encapsulates the fundamental values, aspirations, and priorities of the community. The Vision for the Comprehensive Plan update was developed through input from citizens, leaders, and stakeholders who participated in focus groups, meetings, and surveys. This Vision serves as the cornerstone for the priority focus areas and recommendations outlined in the plan. As we move forward, this Vision should be used as a benchmark for evaluating any proposed community projects or initiatives, prompting the essential question: “Does this contribute to the Vision?”

Central to the Vision are the City’s unique assets, which define its character and enhance its appeal as a place to live and visit. These assets are vital for sustaining vibrant neighborhoods, attracting customers to local businesses, and providing a skilled workforce for the City’s industries and institutions. It is important to recognize the value of these assets and to commit to their stewardship and reinvestment. The community should actively strive to enhance, promote, and leverage these unique features to ensure their continued vitality and relevance.



VISION STATEMENT:

Sharon is dedicated to fostering a community where economic revitalization and neighborhood renewal intersect, creating unique quality of life improvements through a blend of history, innovation, and creativity, to benefit all residents, workers, and visitors alike.

GOALS FOR FOCUS AREAS:



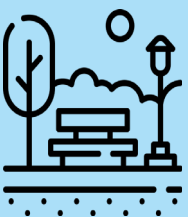
DOWNTOWN / ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

The City is committed to revitalizing downtown amenities to foster a vibrant Main Street that aims to support existing businesses as well as attract new prospects.



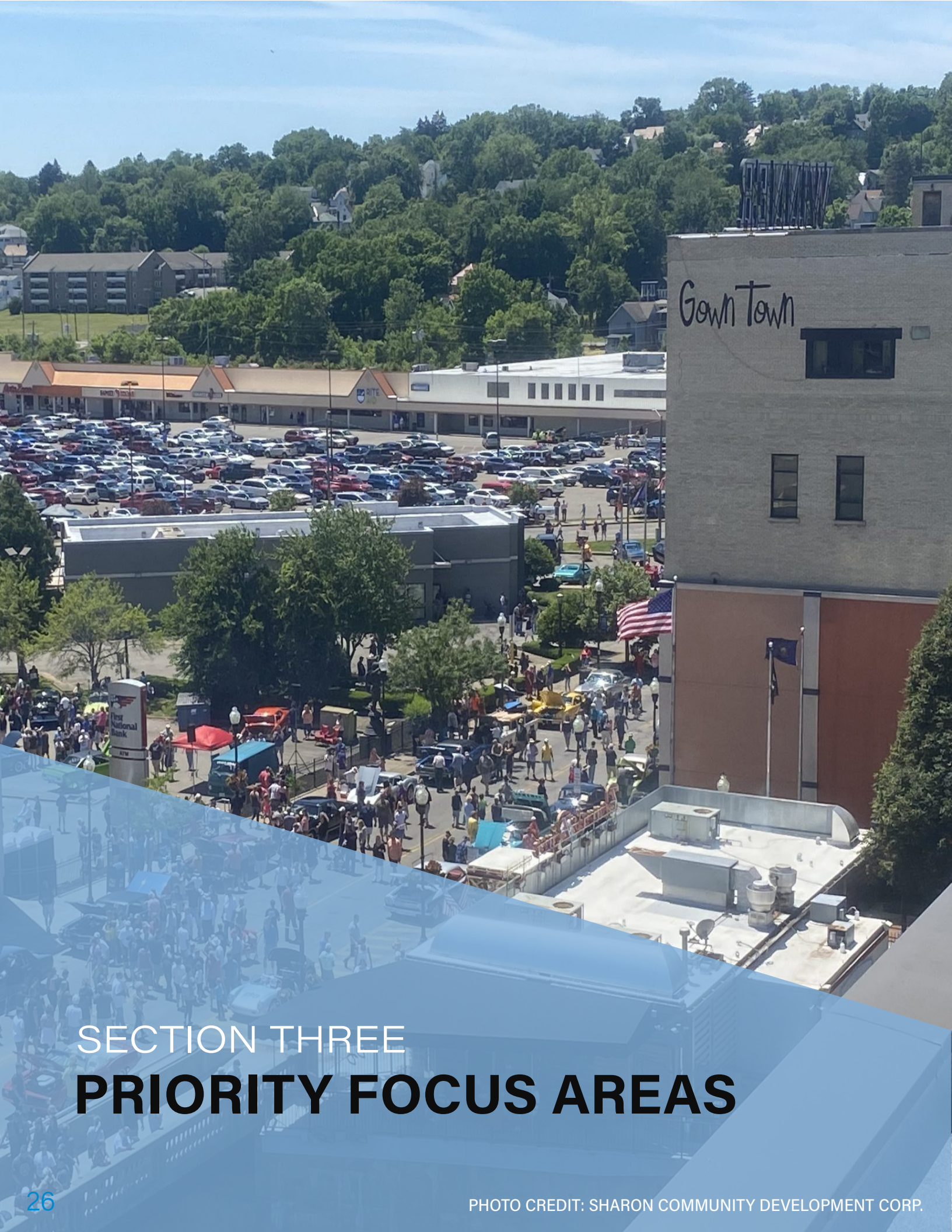
NEIGHBORHOOD / COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION:

The City is dedicated to enhancing community vitality by providing quality housing along with safe and reliable infrastructure.



QUALITY OF LIFE:

To enhance quality of life, the City strives to cultivate a holistic environment that promotes physical and mental well-being, social inclusion, economic prosperity, environmental sustainability, and cultural enrichment for all residents.



Gown Town

SECTION THREE
PRIORITY FOCUS AREAS

DOWNTOWN / ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Downtown & Economic Development focus area is dedicated to revitalizing the heart of the City of Sharon by enhancing its retail, dining, and experiential options, thereby creating a vibrant and welcoming atmosphere for both residents and visitors. This initiative aims to diversify downtown offerings to attract a mix of businesses that cater to various interests and needs, fostering a dynamic environment that draws people into the city. By doing so, it not only enriches the downtown experience but also stimulates local job growth, providing new employment opportunities that strengthen the economic base. Revitalizing the downtown core is viewed as a crucial step in positioning Sharon as a regional destination, increasing foot traffic, supporting the success of local businesses, and fostering a sense of community.

To help guide this revitalization, collaboration with the Sharon Community Development Corporation (SCDC) has been instrumental; the SCDC has partnered with Town Center Associates to assess the downtown business mix, building conditions, and available spaces, using this information to inform strategic decisions. Also as a part of the planning process, 4ward Planning Inc. conducted a comprehensive market study (*See Appendices for executive summary*), providing data-driven insights into economic trends and opportunities. Together, these efforts aim to transform downtown Sharon into a thriving, economically robust, and culturally rich community hub.

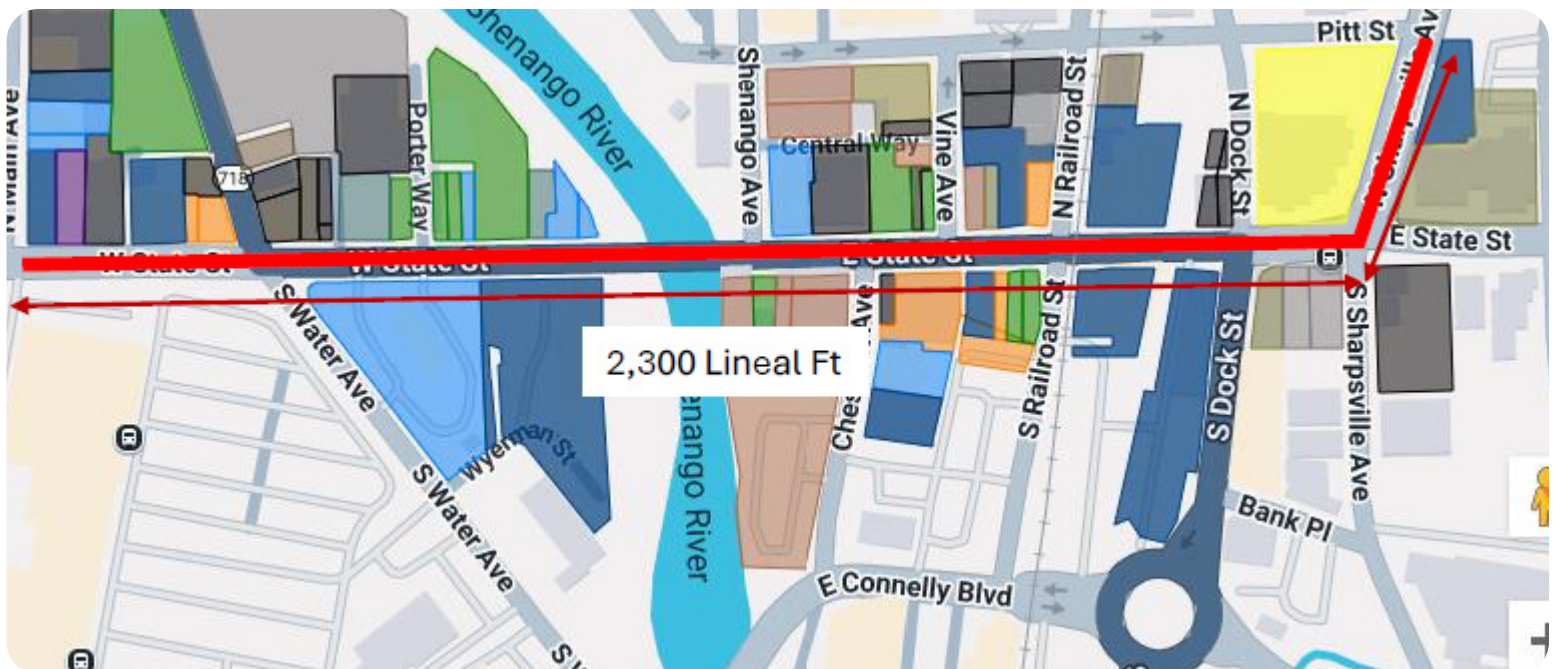


KEY RECOMMENDATION: PURSUE MAIN STREET DESIGNATION

Downtown Sharon is the heart of the community and a key driver of the local economy. Pursuing an official Main Street designation will provide a focused framework to revitalize this core area. The Sharon Community Development Corporation (SCDC) will serve as the lead organization for this effort, coordinating partners around the Main Street Program's four pillars: Economic Vitality, Design, Promotion, and Organization. In March 2022, the City launched a Downtown Revitalization Plan that marked the beginning of this work.

Why Utilize the Program: Downtown Sharon's primary business district spans roughly a 2,300-foot walkable stretch along West and East State Street, encompassing about 111 business units. A recent inventory revealed an imbalanced business mix and higher-than-desired vacancy. Too many street-level spaces are used as offices or other non-retail uses, while there are fewer shops, restaurants, and entertainment venues than a thriving downtown would ideally have. For example, retail and dining establishments occupy a much lower percentage of storefronts than industry benchmarks recommend, whereas offices and other inactive uses make up a higher share. The downtown vacancy rate (approximately 31%) exceeds the healthy target of under 10%, highlighting the need for business recruitment and retention.

Additional challenges include the costly building code upgrades required to modernize older structures (accessibility, fire safety, etc.), the sustainability of small businesses in the face of economic pressures, and historically high turnover of downtown merchants. Yet these challenges



also represent opportunities. By filling vacant spaces with the right uses, reactivating historic buildings, and improving the downtown experience, Sharon can re-establish a vibrant center of activity. Identifying key focus areas that are primed for redevelopment and adaptive reuse, can help spark further investment. Enhancing walkability and placemaking in the downtown, from safer, attractive streetscapes to inviting public spaces, will be critical to supporting current businesses and attracting new ones.

Benefits of the Program: Pursuing a Main Street designation for Downtown Sharon is a critical step toward revitalizing the heart of the community and unlocking new opportunities for sustainable growth. This designation brings with it access to resources, technical assistance, and a proven framework that empowers local stakeholders to shape a more vibrant, resilient, and inclusive downtown. It aligns seamlessly with Sharon’s transformative vision to become a thriving destination for residents, businesses, and visitors alike. Through the Main Street approach, the City can channel collective energy and investment into strategies that foster long-term economic vitality and elevate quality of life for all.

Strategies of the Program: Central to this pursuit are three transformative strategies that define Sharon’s future. First, by fostering a dynamic and evolving entrepreneurial ecosystem, Downtown Sharon can attract and nurture local businesses that contribute to a distinctive retail and dining environment. Second, by positioning the downtown as a healthy, active community hub—complete with diverse healthcare options, outdoor recreation, walkable streets, and inclusive public spaces—Sharon supports wellness and connection among its residents. Third, enhancing the City’s emerging arts and culture scene will celebrate Sharon’s unique identity, elevate local talent, and draw new audiences to its historic downtown. Together, these strategies not only guide downtown’s revitalization but also ensure it remains a vibrant center of commerce, culture, and community.



OBJECTIVE 1

BUILD A STRONG DOWNTOWN ORGANIZATION

The “Organization” pillar of the Main Street Program establishes the leadership, partnerships, and resources needed to sustain Downtown Sharon’s revitalization over the long term. A strong downtown management organization provides the backbone for all other initiatives by coordinating efforts and maintaining momentum. In Sharon, this means formalizing the Main Street program under the Sharon Community Development Corporation (SCDC) as the lead entity, ensuring there is dedicated capacity to drive projects forward. By empowering SCDC to serve as the downtown’s champion, the City can effectively attract investment, coordinate stakeholders, and channel collective energy into transformative improvements. This organizational focus aligns with Sharon’s broader vision of a vibrant, resilient City center, as pursuing an official Main Street designation brings a proven framework and access to resources that will unlock new opportunities for sustainable growth.

Opportunities and Challenges: This area addresses key organizational challenges, such as the need for consistent leadership and funding, which Sharon has historically struggled with due to grant-driven, short-term projects. By instituting formal management and broad stakeholder buy-in, the City turns this challenge into an opportunity: harnessing community pride and volunteer energy to propel downtown initiatives. For example, recruiting volunteers for clean-ups, events, and marketing not only amplifies capacity but also deepens local pride in Downtown Sharon’s success. The anticipated outcome is a well-coordinated revitalization program with the institutional stability to guide downtown’s rebirth for years to come. A strong organization will ensure that improvements are implemented cohesively and continue to thrive. In essence, the “Organization” pillar lays the foundation for all other Main Street actions by ensuring longevity, consistency, and collaboration at the heart of Sharon’s downtown revival.





FORMALIZE THE MAIN STREET PROGRAM UNDER THE SHARON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION'S (SCDC) LEADERSHIP

Strong collaboration and alignment among key players in the downtown area is vital for fostering connections. Regular engagement builds trust, encourages shared ownership of revitalization efforts, and helps avoid duplication or missed opportunities.

- Create a communication network that brings together City officials, downtown business and property owners, community organizations, and residents.
- Hold regular meetings or roundtables to share updates, collaborate on projects, and maintain alignment on downtown initiatives.

Establishing a formal Main Street program ensures there is dedicated leadership and organizational capacity to drive revitalization efforts. This will allow SCDC to effectively coordinate projects, attract investment, and engage stakeholders in a sustained and strategic way.

- Secure funding and support for SCDC (e.g. through grants, City support, and private sponsors) to hire staff and coordinate downtown revitalization.
- Establish a Main Street steering committee and workgroups for each of the four pillars to involve local stakeholders and volunteers.

COORDINATE A DOWNTOWN STAKEHOLDERS NETWORK



Leveraging local partnerships and engaging volunteers expands the reach, creativity, and resources available for downtown improvements. It also deepens community pride and participation, making revitalization a shared mission rather than a top-down initiative.

- Partner with organizations like Laurel Technical Institute, Penn Northwest's Homegrown Initiative, E-Academy, LaunchBox, CareerLink, neighborhood groups, and nearby municipalities to pool resources for events and improvements.
- Recruit volunteers for Main Street activities (clean-ups, events, marketing) to build broad community investment in downtown's success.



PROMOTE PARTNERSHIPS AND VOLUNTEERISM

A diversified and dependable funding strategy is essential to maintain momentum and implement long-range projects. Reducing reliance on short-term grants ensures ongoing support for maintenance, programming, and improvements that keep downtown vibrant and thriving.

- Develop a diversified funding strategy for downtown revitalization – for example, explore a Business Improvement District, corporate sponsorships, and fundraising campaigns (building on efforts like SCDC's Giving Week). This will provide steady resources for Main Street projects year after year.

ENSURE LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY



OBJECTIVE 2

BOOST DOWNTOWN PROMOTION AND IMAGE AS “THE DOWNTOWN OF THE SHENANGO VALLEY”

The “Promotion” pillar of the Main Street Program focuses on marketing Downtown Sharon’s assets and shaping a positive identity that draws people and investment. Objective 2 emphasizes positioning Downtown Sharon as “the Downtown of the Shenango Valley,” underscoring its role as the vibrant hub of the wider region. This means actively promoting Sharon’s unique advantages – from its historic charm and riverside location to its specialty shops and emerging dining scene – to create an appealing narrative and brand that attracts visitors, businesses, and new residents. By highlighting the advantages of living, working, and spending time in Sharon’s walkable center, the City can capitalize on its strengths to change perceptions. For instance, a “Downtown Living” campaign is proposed to showcase new housing opportunities, the convenience of downtown amenities, riverfront recreation, and the close-knit community feel of Sharon. Such efforts directly support the broader revitalization goal of making Sharon a thriving destination for both locals and visitors. Developing a consistent downtown brand and visual identity will help unify all promotion efforts – from online media to physical signage.

Opportunities and Challenges: This addresses the challenge of a historically underappreciated or inconsistent image of Downtown Sharon. In the past, the lack of a unified marketing message and limited awareness of downtown’s offerings have hindered revitalization. Now, by investing in promotion, Sharon has the opportunity to reshape its identity and claim its place as a regional focal point. The City’s rich heritage and recent improvements are assets to build upon. A coordinated marketing push can leverage these assets to attract foot traffic and new businesses, reinforcing economic growth. Anticipated outcomes include increased visitor numbers, higher downtown sales and event attendance, and a stronger sense of pride among residents as they see their downtown celebrated. This pillar helps translate the physical and economic changes into a heightened reputation and vitality for Downtown Sharon, fully realizing the community’s vision of a lively, welcoming downtown core.





DEVELOP A BRANDING AND MARKETING CAMPAIGN

Create attractive entry points and signage that welcome people into downtown.

- Develop new gateway signs at key entrances to the City and consistent directional wayfinding signs guiding visitors to parking, shops, restaurants, parks, and cultural sites (See examples in Appendices).
- Place visually appealing banners, murals, and public art along downtown streets to reinforce Sharon's brand and make the district more memorable.
- Use decorative crosswalks and pavement markings at entry points with custom patterns or designs that reflect local character and reinforce the downtown brand.



SUPPORT EVENTS TO DRAW FOOT TRAFFIC

As part of promotional efforts, highlight the advantages of living and investing in Sharon.

- Develop a "Downtown Living" campaign that could showcase new housing opportunities, walkable convenience, riverfront recreation, and the close-knit community feel.
- Promote Sharon's commitment to sustainability and beautification (such as the "Lots to Love" program and upcoming green initiatives) to demonstrate a forward-looking, quality community – an appealing message for prospective businesses, residents, and visitors alike.

Create a positive narrative about downtown by building on Sharon's strengths – from its historic charm and riverside location to its specialty shops and eateries.

- Develop a strategic marketing approach to showcase the City of Sharon's welcoming business climate and the resources of the City to new and existing businesses (See examples in Appendices).
- Enhance the City's online presence with up-to-date websites and social media campaigns that highlight downtown attractions, events, and opportunities.
- Expand outreach tools like the "16146 Newsletter" to engage a wider audience and regularly feature downtown businesses and happenings.

IMPROVE GATEWAYS AND WAYFINDING



Promote a year-round calendar of events that bring the community into downtown and attract visitors from the region. Build on recent successes (Fourth of July fireworks, summer concert series, Small Business Saturday, the holiday Night of Lights, etc.).

- Continue to work with relevant organizations to expand events such as street festivals, art walks, farmers' markets, and holiday celebrations. These activities not only generate foot traffic for local businesses but also strengthen downtown's identity as a vibrant social hub.
- Provide mini-grants or marketing assistance to organizations hosting public events downtown. Expand digital promotion through social media, regional event calendars, and tourism websites.

MARKET SHARON'S LIVABILITY AND AMENITIES



OBJECTIVE 3

STRENGTHEN ECONOMIC VITALITY THROUGH BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

The “Economic Vitality” pillar of the Main Street Program is about energizing Downtown Sharon’s economy by nurturing businesses, reducing vacancies, and capitalizing on local talent and market opportunities. The planning process identifies a pressing need to strengthen the economic base: the downtown vacancy rate stands at roughly 31%, far above the healthy target of under 10%, and too many ground-floor spaces are occupied by offices or non-retail uses. Objective 3 directly confronts these challenges by focusing on business development strategies that will fill storefronts and create a dynamic mix of uses. A key approach is to cultivate local talent and entrepreneurship so that new businesses can grow from within the community.

Opportunities and Challenges: Economic revitalization of downtown comes with both significant challenges and promising opportunities. Challenges include reversing the trend of merchant turnover and overcoming the costly code upgrades that have deterred reinvestment in Sharon’s beautiful but aging building stock. However, these challenges are countered by clear opportunities: the many vacant and underutilized spaces represent potential for new shops, restaurants, and cultural venues that can re-establish a vibrant center of activity. By filling these spaces with the right mix of businesses and reactivating historic buildings, Downtown Sharon can spark a broader renaissance, as each new investment builds confidence and attracts additional interest. The anticipated outcomes of Objective 3 include a lower vacancy rate, a healthier balance of retail, dining, and service businesses, and more jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities for residents. A thriving downtown economy will also broaden the City’s tax base and provide services and amenities that improve quality of life. These efforts will position Downtown Sharon as a regional destination with a dynamic, sustainable economy, fulfilling the plan’s goal of making the City a hub of commerce and community in the Shenango Valley.





LEVERAGE MARKET DATA TO TARGET BUSINESS RECRUITMENT

To reduce downtown vacancy, the City should focus on activating empty storefronts with suitable, customer-oriented tenants. A mix of short-term pop-ups and long-term incentives can help attract businesses while discouraging non-active ground-floor uses.

- Match vacant spaces with retail, dining, and creative tenants.
- Launch a “Pop-Up to Permanent” program to support local startups and artisans.
- Provide incentives for customer-facing uses, such as retail and cafes.
- Review zoning and building codes to support active storefront uses.
- Explore tools like location-based tax incentives or façade grants tied to occupancy.

Utilize the findings from recent economic studies and analyses to identify which types of businesses are underrepresented downtown.

- If there is unmet demand for certain retail categories or restaurants, actively seek out entrepreneurs in those sectors.
- Focus on businesses that complement Sharon’s existing strengths – e.g. attracting more health and wellness enterprises to build on the healthcare cluster, or adding entertainment venues to enhance the dining and shopping experience.
- Develop a data-driven recruitment plan that will help ensure each new business increases downtown’s overall draw.

FILL STOREFRONTS AND REDUCE VACANCIES



Strengthen the support network for downtown businesses to improve their longevity and reduce turnover. Organize regular workshops, networking events, and mentorship programs for local entrepreneurs.

- Institute an “Adopt-a-Business” mentorship program partnering established professionals or even students with new businesses to assist with marketing, bookkeeping, or problem-solving.
- Continue and expand initiatives like the façade improvement grant program to help business owners upgrade their buildings, which improves customer appeal and business performance.



SUPPORT AND RETAIN SMALL BUSINESSES

Partner with educational institutions to create a pipeline of talent and new business ideas for downtown.

- Promote internships and job shadowing placements at downtown businesses, student-run pop-up ventures, and entrepreneurship training programs that connect graduates with opportunities to open businesses in Sharon.
- Collaborate with the School District’s students’ career plan to promote entrepreneurship and foster career opportunities.
- Hire interns for City departments, community entities, and businesses using CareerLink program to pay for percentage of wages.

CULTIVATE LOCAL TALENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP



OBJECTIVE 4

ENHANCE DOWNTOWN DESIGN & INFRASTRUCTURE

The “Design” pillar of the Main Street approach is about creating an attractive, safe, and inviting physical environment in Downtown Sharon. Objective 4 focuses on enhancing downtown’s design and infrastructure – from streets and sidewalks to buildings and public spaces – so that the downtown core not only looks appealing but also functions effectively for pedestrians, drivers, businesses, and visitors. A high-quality downtown environment is critical to supporting Sharon’s broader revitalization goals: safer, walkable streets and beautiful public spaces encourage foot traffic, which in turn boosts local businesses and makes the City center a more enjoyable place for everyone. Beyond the streetscape, the plan targets key sites and structural assets in downtown. Several catalyst redevelopment projects can dramatically improve downtown’s landscape and economic prospects.

Opportunities and Challenges: The design of downtown addresses tangible challenges in Sharon’s environment, such as infrastructure in need of repair, underutilized spaces, and the need for better connectivity and aesthetics. A specific challenge noted in the plan is the requirement for costly building code upgrades in older structures (for accessibility, safety, etc.), which can be a barrier to reuse. By providing guidance and incentives to overcome these hurdles, the City turns a challenge into an opportunity to save and repurpose beloved historic buildings. There is also the challenge of balancing modern needs with historic character – something that design guidelines will help manage. The opportunities in this objective are significant: enhanced public spaces and amenities can create social gathering spots and improve quality of life downtown. Objective 4 aims to have a visibly rejuvenated downtown streetscape, preserved architectural heritage, and a built environment that supports economic activity (through increased pedestrian traffic and curb appeal). These design improvements reinforce and magnify the impact of having a beautified, accessible downtown which makes promotion efforts more compelling (people are more likely to respond to marketing of a charming, attractive City center), and rewards the organizational effort by showcasing the results of careful planning.





PURSUE KEY REDEVELOPMENT & ADAPTIVE REUSE PROJECTS

Develop and carry out a streetscape enhancement plan to make the downtown core more walkable and visually appealing. Where feasible, integrate Complete Streets principles – designing roads to accommodate bicyclists and transit users, not just cars. These improvements will invite people to park and stroll the district, increasing foot traffic for businesses.

- Fix or upgrade sidewalks and crosswalks.
- Add pedestrian amenities like benches, bike racks, planters, and decorative lighting.
- Incorporate more greenery along State Street.
- Introduce traffic-calming measures and marked crosswalks.
- Continue the City’s efforts to connect downtown and neighborhoods with Buhl Park and River Gardens Park by expanding the pathways.

Concentrate revitalization efforts on key catalyst sites. In all these projects, the City can assist by assembling parcels, if needed, offering tax abatements or facade loans, and streamlining permits, especially helping owners navigate code upgrades for older buildings.

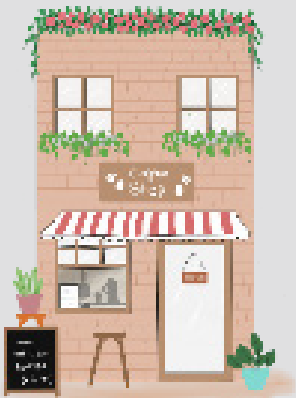
- Columbia Theater: Potential arts and entertainment venue, bringing performances and events downtown.
- The “Phoenix” Corner: Encourage mixed-use redevelopment. This could become a signature project with street-level commercial space and offices or apartments above.
- Former McDonald’s Site (including adjacent plaza/ parking lot): Envision new uses that engages the street, such as restaurants or a public market space, and better connects to the riverfront and surrounding businesses.

IMPLEMENT STREETScape & PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS



Adjust local zoning/development standards to support a traditional downtown feel. By updating regulations, the City can make it easier for property owners to “right-size” older buildings into modern uses.

- Reduce or eliminate front setbacks in the downtown zone so that new buildings align with the sidewalk, maintaining a cohesive street wall of storefronts (See *examples in Appendices*).
- Relax or remove excessive parking minimums for downtown properties to encourage reuse of historic buildings and infill on small lots (allowing the market to dictate needed parking, and using shared public parking instead of each site requiring its own).



UPDATE DESIGN GUIDELINES & POLICIES

Invest in downtown parks, plazas, and riverfront areas to make them more usable and inviting.

- Activating riverfront green spaces with seating, public art, and programming encourage people to naturally gravitate there before or after visiting downtown businesses.
- Create small gathering spots or pocket parks on available lots.
- Ensure the downtown has adequate lighting, cleanliness, and landscaping year-round.

ENHANCE PUBLIC SPACES & AMENITIES



NEIGHBORHOOD / COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION

The City of Sharon is committed to enhancing community vitality by ensuring access to quality housing, investing in infrastructure, and revitalizing neighborhoods. Over the years, the City has undertaken a variety of initiatives aimed at improving the built environment and overall livability of its neighborhoods. These efforts include the demolition of unsafe and blighted structures, strengthened code enforcement, and the transformation of vacant lots into community assets. Together, these actions have improved the appearance, safety, and functionality of many parts of the City—making Sharon a more attractive place to live, work, and invest.

However, revitalization is not a one-time achievement—it is a continuous process that must evolve with the community. Sharon faces ongoing challenges related to aging infrastructure, housing affordability, and disinvestment in certain areas. As the City continues to grow and change, it must remain proactive and flexible in addressing these needs through thoughtful planning and strategic partnerships.



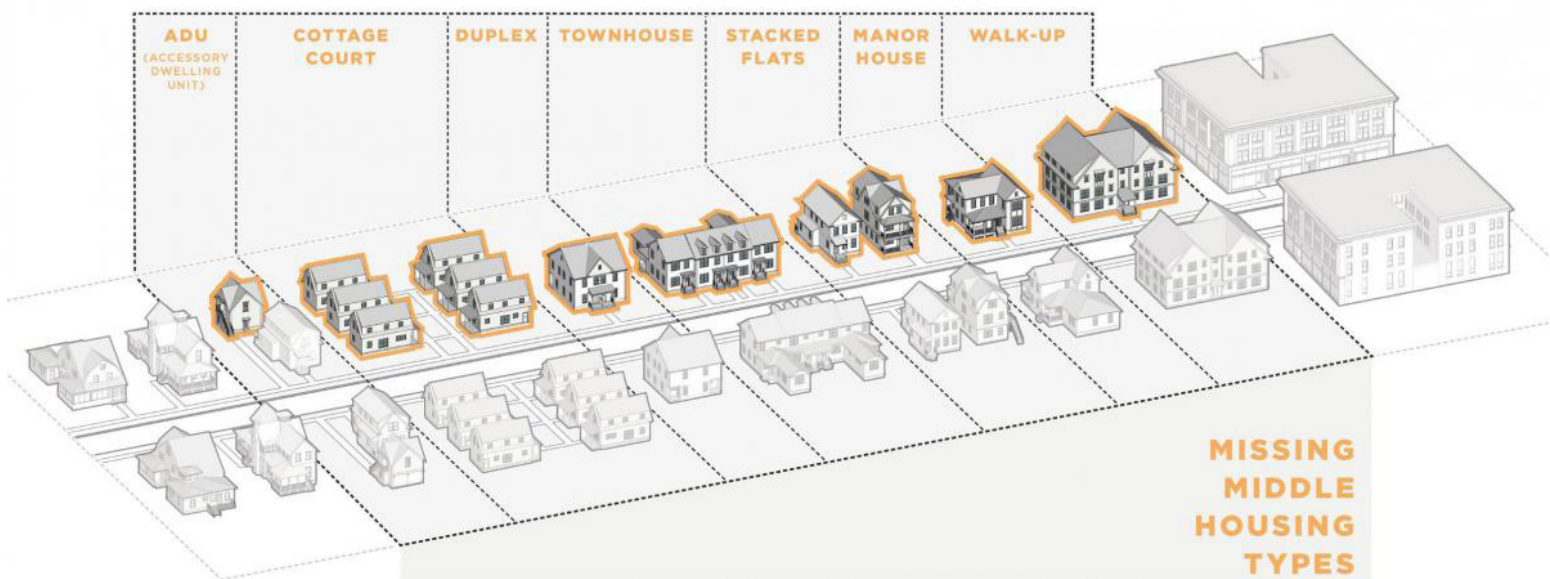
KEY RECOMMENDATION: BUILDING A STRONGER SHARON

To challenges regarding neighborhood revitalization, Sharon will advance a comprehensive strategy to stabilize struggling areas, preserve the character of thriving neighborhoods, and expand housing options for residents across all income levels. This includes targeted support for low-income households, the creation of “missing middle” housing to attract and retain middle-income families, and the preservation of high-quality residential areas that are already thriving.

This neighborhood revitalization strategy integrates multiple tools and approaches:

- Housing rehabilitation and development
- Infrastructure improvements
- Community engagement and stewardship
- Strategic reuse of vacant and underutilized properties

This strategy balances targeted redevelopment in distressed areas with protections and enhancements for already stable neighborhoods. It also emphasizes housing diversity across income levels, encourages reinvestment in the City’s historic and emerging residential corridors, and improves pedestrian access and public infrastructure. Supported by the Sharon Planning Commission, Sharon Community Development Corporation (SCDC), Mercer County agencies, and local institutions, this revitalization framework promotes active neighborhood engagement, supports homeownership, cultivates long-term community pride, and will serve as a roadmap for sustained progress toward a vibrant and equitable community.



OBJECTIVE 1

ADAPT AND PROMOTE CURRENT HOUSING STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE INCREASED QUALITY OF LIFE IN ALL NEIGHBORHOODS

The City of Sharon is implementing a comprehensive Neighborhood Stabilization Strategy to ensure all neighborhoods have access to quality housing and a strong quality of life. This approach recognizes that each neighborhood has unique strengths and challenges, and it tailors revitalization efforts accordingly. In areas facing greater disinvestment, the strategy prioritizes housing rehabilitation, blight removal, and supportive services, while in neighborhoods with fewer immediate needs, it emphasizes proactive maintenance and early action to sustain community vitality. Strict enforcement of property maintenance codes remains central to this effort, holding all property owners accountable for maintaining buildings and yards to shared community standards. This citywide initiative is designed to foster pride and confidence among residents, as visible improvements and consistent care reinforce the collective vision for a vibrant Sharon.

Opportunities and Challenges: The implementation of this strategy is not without challenges. High concentrations of poverty in certain neighborhoods hinder reinvestment efforts, making economic revitalization more complex. Consistent property maintenance and code enforcement are essential to curb decline, yet these require substantial resources and community cooperation. Efforts are further complicated by the presence of absentee landlords, many of whom are difficult to locate and hold accountable, exacerbating property maintenance issues and slowing revitalization. Moreover, even the stronger neighborhoods are at risk of decline without ongoing investment and attention. The variability in local leadership and resident engagement across neighborhoods further complicates the uniform application of revitalization efforts. Despite these challenges, the strategy presents significant opportunities. By directing resources efficiently and focusing on both immediate needs and long-term sustainability, Sharon can leverage its stronger neighborhoods as anchors to support adjacent areas in need of stabilization.





DEVELOP CITY HOUSING PLAN WITH PRIORITIES BASED ON EACH NEIGHBORHOOD

Proactive and consistent code enforcement is essential for preserving neighborhood integrity, deterring neglect, and sending a clear message that Sharon takes pride in its built environment. Offering support to homeowners alongside enforcement helps ensure compliance without displacement.

- Launch a public awareness campaign about property upkeep standards.
- Develop partnerships with nonprofits to provide repair grants or volunteer support.
- Review and update codified ordinances.

Tailor strategies to each neighborhood’s needs through prioritization and early intervention. Maintain stable areas and revitalize distressed ones to protect Sharon’s tax base and quality of life.

- Prioritize funding and resources based on neighborhood conditions
- Continue cleanups and beautification with more volunteer support
- Improve communication on housing assistance and resources
- Upgrade streets, parks, and lighting for safety and curb appeal
- Monitor properties and respond quickly to blight or abandonment. Use grants and tax abatements to encourage reinvestment

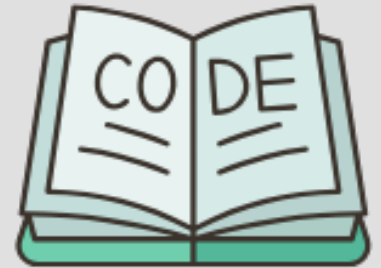


SUPPORT NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATIONS

Protecting Sharon’s existing affordable housing is essential to prevent displacement and ensure all residents have access to safe, quality homes. Preserving these units is often more cost-effective than building new ones and provides stability for seniors, low-income families, and people with disabilities.

- Partner with Mercer County Housing Authority, local for-profits, non-profits, and financial institutions to rehabilitate aging public and subsidized housing.
- Support responsible landlords in maintaining naturally occurring affordable housing, including repair grants or low-interest loans.
- Explore the creation of an Affordable Housing Trust Fund to finance critical improvements and rent assistance.

STRENGTHEN CODE ENFORCEMENT



Empowering residents to organize and lead change at the block or neighborhood level builds pride and improves responsiveness to local issues. Resident-led groups can serve as powerful allies in revitalization efforts.

- Provide mini-grants, toolkits, and training to help residents form and sustain block clubs and neighborhood associations.
- Host regular forums and networking events to connect neighborhood leaders with City staff, encouraging open dialogue, idea-sharing, and coordinated problem-solving.
- Collaborate with schools, churches, and nonprofits to expand the reach of neighborhood organizing, and promote recognition programs.
- Partner with local churches, schools, institutions with neighborhood leaders to co-host and promote activities.

PRESERVE AND IMPROVE AFFORDABLE HOUSING



OBJECTIVE 2

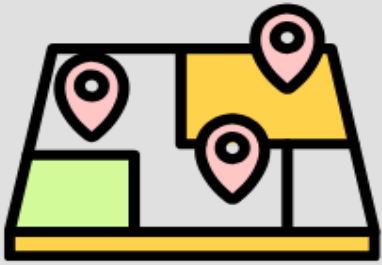
EXPAND HOUSING OPTIONS FOR ALL INCOME LEVELS

Sharon is committed to diversifying its housing stock to meet the evolving needs of current residents while attracting new ones. A healthy and thriving community requires a full spectrum of housing options that accommodate different income levels, life stages, and lifestyle preferences. To achieve this, the City will focus on three interconnected priorities: maintaining and improving affordable housing for low-income families and seniors; enabling the development of new, attainable “missing middle” housing for middle-income households; and preserving and enhancing high quality residential options to attract professionals and higher-income earners.

“Missing middle” housing—such as duplexes, townhouses, courtyard apartments, and other medium-density residential forms—offers a critical bridge between single-family homes and large apartment complexes. These housing types provide high-quality, moderately priced options that appeal to young professionals, first-time homebuyers, and empty-nesters seeking to downsize without sacrificing comfort or neighborhood character. At the same time, Sharon will invest in retaining and improving its existing affordable housing to prevent displacement of vulnerable residents and ensure long-term housing stability. The City recognizes their importance in maintaining a balanced housing market and remaining competitive within the region.

Opportunities and Challenges: The City’s aging housing stock and underutilized apartments require significant investment to meet current standards and demands. There’s a notable lack of new middle-income, family-friendly housing construction, which limits options for working families seeking affordable yet quality homes. Additionally, there’s a growing demand for accessible senior and healthcare-related housing, reflecting the City’s changing demographics. On the other hand, Sharon has untapped potential for quality housing, which could attract professionals and boost the local economy. Addressing these challenges and leveraging these opportunities will be crucial for Sharon’s housing strategy moving forward.

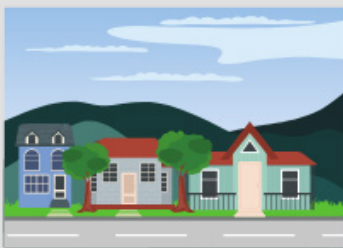




MODERNIZE ZONING FOR HOUSING DIVERSITY

To ensure housing is accessible across income levels, Sharon should promote development that includes both affordable and market-rate units.

- Offer tax abatements, expedited permitting, or density bonuses for projects that include workforce or affordable housing.
- Leverage tools like the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) to support mixed-income developments.
- Collaborate with housing developers to identify suitable sites for mixed-income communities.



SUPPORT OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION

Updating zoning and land development regulations allow a wider variety of housing types that meet the needs of modern residents. By encouraging a more flexible and inclusive zoning framework, the City can promote neighborhood-scale development that respects community character while expanding housing choices.

- Revise zoning codes to permit duplexes, townhomes, accessory dwelling units (ADUs), and small-scale apartments in more residential areas.
- Create form-based codes or overlay districts to guide the design of new housing types.
- Review dimensional requirements to ensure minimum lot sizes, setbacks, etc. do not limit infill development.

INCENTIVIZE MIXED-INCOME DEVELOPMENT



By marketing available space and supporting new quality residential development, Sharon can position itself as a desirable alternative to regional suburbs for professionals and new talent.

- Identify future land use sites suitable for quality housing and work with builders to develop them
- Enhance public amenities and infrastructure in all neighborhoods to maintain high standards of livability.
- Partner with economic development agencies like Penn-Northwest to link housing promotion with job recruitment efforts.

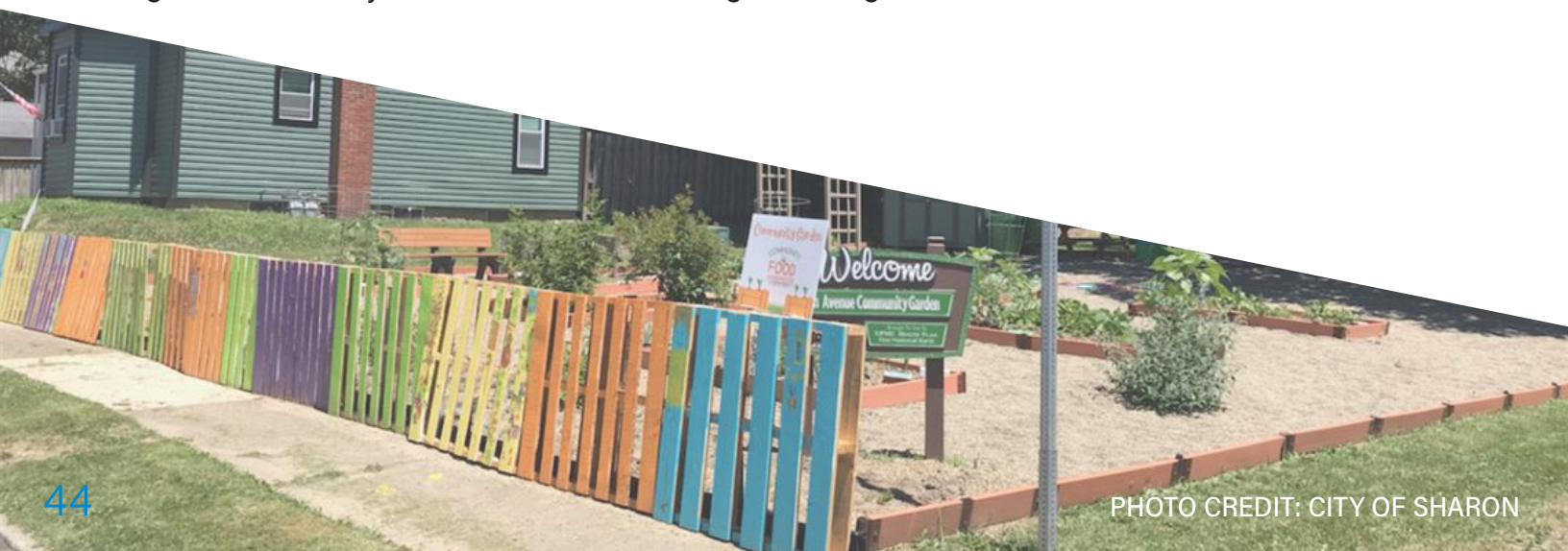
OBJECTIVE 3

LEVERAGE HOUSING REHABILITATION, LAND BANKING, AND INFILL DEVELOPMENT TOOLS

Sharon has made significant progress in addressing blight, most notably through the demolition of over 400 unsafe structures over the past four years. While this improved safety, it also left behind numerous underutilized vacant lots across the city. These parcels now represent both a challenge and a major opportunity. To respond, the City launched initiatives like Lots to Love, which transfers vacant lots to residents and community groups for beautification and reuse—boosting neighborhood pride and reducing public maintenance costs.

Alongside public efforts, signs of private and residential reinvestment are emerging, as homeowners, contractors, and small developers begin to improve properties, especially in areas where blight has been cleared. The City is working to support this momentum through partnerships with groups like the Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation (YNDC), whose expertise in revitalization and engagement has added value to local initiatives (see *YNDC programs in Appendices*). These collaborations, paired with targeted incentives, aim to transform vacant spaces into neighborhood assets and attract further reinvestment. Moving forward, the City must shift from demolition to transformation—using new tools to repurpose vacant properties and reinforce community vitality.

Opportunities and Challenges: A key challenge in this effort is the cost and complexity of rehabilitating older housing stock, much of which requires substantial upgrades to meet modern safety and energy efficiency standards. These expenses can deter private investment, especially among small-scale developers and homeowners who lack access to affordable financing. Meanwhile, the visual impact of unmaintained vacant lots and deteriorating structures continues to weigh heavily on property values and neighborhood morale. To move forward, the City must expand access to grants or low-interest loans, support partnerships with community organizations, and create a robust land banking program that can assemble and market properties for redevelopment. Transforming underutilized parcels—whether into affordable housing, community gardens, or infill housing with pre-approved designs—will require a coordinated, strategic approach. With the right tools and support in place, Sharon can turn these remnants of blight into visible symbols of renewal and long-term neighborhood resilience.





ACTIVATE THE LAND BANK PROGRAM

Many of Sharon’s older homes can be stabilized through rehabilitation programs. Investing in housing rehab not only preserves neighborhood character and affordability but also prevents the need for future demolitions.

- Strengthen partnerships with the Community Action Partnership of Mercer County, YNDC, and local developers to identify and rehab priority homes.
- Promote financial literacy and home maintenance workshops to support long-term homeowner success.
- Allocate CDBG funds or pursue state/federal grants to support a robust rehab grant/loan program.
- Work with Penn Northwest on initiatives like ‘Make My Move’ to attract residents who are seeking middle range housing.



OFFER INCENTIVES FOR PRIVATE / RESIDENT INVESTMENT

Sharon should continue to advocate for vacant lots to be turned into productive uses—from green infrastructure and public amenities to sites ready for new housing.

- Promote and expand the “Lots to Love” program for side yards, community gardens, and lot sponsorships.
- Identify select lots for infill housing and create a “shovel-ready” catalog of small home or modular designs (See examples in Appendices).
- Develop vacant lots as pocket parks or urban gardens to support neighborhood beautification and stormwater management (See examples in Appendices).

A Land Bank can serve as a powerful redevelopment tool by acquiring and preparing properties for reuse—transforming blighted sites into new homes, green spaces, or side-lot expansions. This approach reduces eyesores and creates a path for public and private reinvestment.

- Collaborate with strategic partners to reestablish the operational capacity of the Sharon Land Bank to strategically acquire, manage, and repurpose vacant, abandoned, and tax-delinquent properties
- Prioritize acquisition of severely blighted or tax-delinquent properties.
- Work with legal and title experts to clear ownership issues and make properties redevelopment-ready.

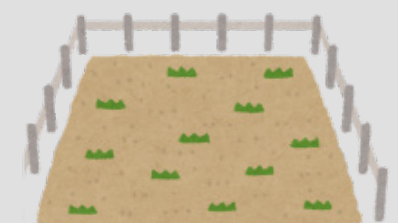
EXPAND HOUSING REHABILITATION EFFORTS



To stimulate reinvestment in Sharon’s aging housing stock, the City should reduce financial barriers for private property owners and small-scale developers.

- Establish a Residential Tax Abatement Program (RETAP) for substantial renovations or new infill builds.
- Pursue funding opportunities for housing rehabilitation to supplement the City’s CDBG rehabilitation program with partnerships with financial institutions.
- Expand support for residential and commercial property upkeep through enhanced façade improvement grants, shared tool lending program, and volunteer “neighbors helping neighbors” days to assist elderly or disabled residents.
- Collaborate with residents in the neighborhood design that reflect neighborhood history and create a sense of place

TRANSFORM VACANT LOTS INTO ASSETS



OBJECTIVE 4

DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A COMPREHENSIVE INFRASTRUCTURE MAINTENANCE PLAN

Maintaining and modernizing infrastructure is fundamental to Sharon's efforts to revitalize neighborhoods and enhance overall livability. To ensure long-term sustainability and safety, the City will implement a comprehensive infrastructure maintenance plan that systematically addresses the condition of roads, alleys, sidewalks, and stormwater systems. This proactive strategy will include routine inspections, prioritized repair schedules, and the use of asset management tools to guide capital investment decisions. In addition to improving the physical condition of neighborhoods, the plan will also incorporate a public education campaign to help residents understand their role in maintaining sidewalks adjacent to their properties—reinforcing shared responsibility for community upkeep.

Opportunities and Challenges: Much of the City's transportation network is aging, with roads and alleys showing signs of deterioration and safety hazards due to years of inconsistent maintenance. Limited funding for resurfacing and infrastructure upgrades poses a significant barrier, making it essential for the City to strategically allocate resources and pursue outside funding where possible. Deferred maintenance on City-owned facilities, such as the public works building, further complicates the picture by adding pressure to an already strained infrastructure budget. Despite these obstacles, a well-executed maintenance plan offers significant opportunities: it will improve safety, boost public confidence, and support economic development by demonstrating the City's commitment to long-term stewardship and neighborhood investment.





DEVELOP A STREET AND ALLEY MAINTENANCE PROGRAM

Incorporating green infrastructure, such as rain gardens, permeable pavements, and urban tree canopies, can effectively manage stormwater, reduce urban heat islands, and enhance air quality. These sustainable practices contribute to environmental resilience and community well-being.

- Pinpoint areas prone to flooding or with high impervious surface coverage for the installation of rain gardens and bioswales.
- Support green infrastructure initiatives and programs in neighborhoods, including replacing traditional pavements with permeable materials.
- Expand city-wide tree and other landscaping campaigns to mitigate heat islands and improve air quality.

A well-maintained roadway network is vital for public safety, mobility, and neighborhood appearance. By performing a detailed evaluation and creating a long-term maintenance schedule, the City can prioritize improvements and ensure consistent upkeep moving forward.

- Conduct a condition assessment of all roads and alleys across the City.
- Prioritize repairs based on usage, pavement condition, and safety risks.
- Create and implement a rolling maintenance schedule to guide future investment.

UTILIZE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABILITY



Basic service improvements—such as stormwater system upgrades and better waste management—are critical to improving neighborhood quality of life. Sharon faces ongoing issues related to outdated stormwater systems and aging infrastructure. In addition, evaluating the current condition and location of the public works building will help optimize City services and prepare for future growth.

- Conduct a feasibility study for a stormwater fee or ordinance to fund infrastructure upgrades.
- Prioritize stormwater maintenance projects that reduce flooding and property damage.
- Incorporate garbage tote pads in areas in the City where litter or collection issues are most common.
- Develop a phased plan for improving or relocating the public works building.



MODERNIZE PUBLIC SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

To ensure infrastructure investments are sustainable, Sharon must invest in its own operational capacity and community outreach. From sidewalk repairs to stormwater improvements, clear communication with residents is crucial.

- Upgrade internal systems for tracking maintenance needs and service requests.
- Use newsletters, social media, and public meetings to share progress and gather community feedback.
- Improve communication network to share progress and gather community feedback.

STRENGTHEN CITY MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS AND COMMUNICATION



OBJECTIVE 5

IMPROVE ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE AND CONNECTIVITY

Improving active transportation infrastructure is essential to strengthening quality of life in the City of Sharon. Safe, well-connected streets, sidewalks, and transit options not only support mobility but also enhance the livability, safety, and appeal of residential areas. Many of Sharon’s neighborhoods still suffer from deferred maintenance—cracked sidewalks, inadequate lighting, and underdeveloped bike infrastructure—that creates barriers to accessibility for residents of all ages and abilities. To address this, the City will invest in repairing aging sidewalks, filling in critical gaps, and ensuring routes comply with ADA standards and complete streets principles. These improvements are especially important for children walking to school, seniors, and residents without access to a personal vehicle.

Opportunities and Challenges: Sharon recognizes the value of alternative transportation modes and the need to reduce reliance on cars, particularly in areas with limited income or car ownership. Expanding bike lanes and trail connections will help residents reach parks, schools, commercial districts, and the riverfront safely and efficiently. The City also plans to work with the Shenango Valley Shuttle Service to enhance bus service coverage and frequency, ensuring that transit serves the daily needs of all residents. To reduce traffic stress on neighborhoods, Sharon will explore strategies to reroute heavy truck traffic onto designated arterials. Looking ahead, the development of a Citywide Active Transportation Plan will help coordinate these initiatives, guide investment in priority areas, and position Sharon to pursue competitive funding opportunities. By aligning infrastructure upgrades with broader revitalization goals, Sharon will create safe, accessible, and connected neighborhoods that support long-term growth and equity.





DEVELOP AN ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

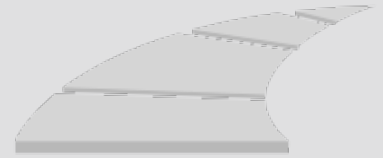
Well-maintained and continuous sidewalks are vital for safe, accessible neighborhoods, especially for children, seniors, and residents who rely on walking as a primary mode of transportation. Many areas in Sharon have broken or missing sidewalks, which hinder mobility and contribute to disrepair in the public realm. Addressing these gaps will enhance walkability, encourage physical activity, and ensure equity in transportation access across neighborhoods.

- Create a sidewalk repair fund or loan program to support low-income and elderly homeowners.
- Distribute brochures and online resources outlining sidewalk maintenance responsibilities and repair funding options.
- Include sidewalk condition and gaps in the City's infrastructure database for proactive planning.

Creating a comprehensive Active Transportation Plan will help Sharon chart a clear course toward becoming a walkable, bike-friendly City. This plan will serve as the blueprint for future infrastructure investments by identifying current gaps in sidewalks, bike routes, and transit access. A plan will guide improvements and position the City to secure state and federal transportation grants.

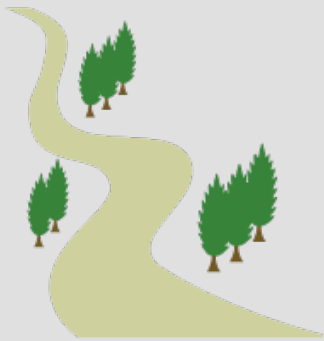
- Partner with the Mercer County Regional Planning Commission and PennDOT to draft the plan.
- Inventory sidewalks, trails, and bike facilities and assess current conditions.
- Partner with Shenango Valley Shuttle Service to implement their shuttle service coverage.

REPAIR AND COMPLETE SIDEWALK NETWORKS



Bicycle infrastructure is a critical component of active transportation and supports both recreation and commuting. Sharon's bike network is limited and lacks safe connections. By enhancing and expanding the network, the City can improve mobility, attract residents who value outdoor amenities, and promote healthy lifestyles.

- Conduct an assessment of existing trails/bicycle routes and identify opportunities to enhance connectivity between them.
- Explore 'Complete Streets Policy' allowing for safety of all modes of transportation.
- Develop off-road multi-use paths linking neighborhoods to parks and the riverfront.
- Explore 'Safe Routes' program that connects residents to downtown, school, and other amenities and ensure accessibility compliance.



ENHANCE BICYCLE ROUTES AND TRAIL CONNECTIVITY

Heavy truck traffic on neighborhood streets creates serious safety risks, noise, road deterioration, and damage to property. Reducing truck presence will not only improve quality of life but also protect infrastructure and support the City's broader revitalization goals.

- Work with PennDOT and regional partners to improve designated truck routes along major arterials.
- Identify routes with recurring truck traffic and install signage or enforce weight restrictions.
- Explore the design of a bypass or industrial access road to keep trucks off local streets.

REROUTE TRUCK TRAFFIC



QUALITY OF LIFE

Quality of life in Sharon centers on creating a safer, healthier, and more enriching environment for all residents. This begins with strengthening partnerships between the City and key educational and community institutions, such as the Sharon School District, HopeCAT, Laurel Technical Institute, and others. Fostering these relationships helps align community development with educational advancement and workforce readiness. Additionally, offering diverse cultural, recreational, and wellness opportunities encourages a more active and engaged population, while robust public services ensure residents feel secure and supported in their daily lives.

By investing in parks, trails, and public spaces, celebrating local arts and heritage, and encouraging civic participation across all age groups, Sharon can nurture a sense of belonging and community pride. Strategic initiatives such as complete streets planning, Citywide branding, and recreation improvements promote connectivity and reflect Sharon's commitment to equity and livability.



KEY RECOMMENDATION: INVESTING IN COMMUNITY WELLBEING

Investing in community wellbeing is a cornerstone of Sharon's strategy to enhance livability, resilience, and equity. This approach encompasses initiatives that promote physical and mental health, foster social cohesion, and improve access to essential services. For instance, the City's Community & Economic Development Department administers programs like the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), which supports various projects aimed at revitalizing neighborhoods and enhancing public spaces. Such investments not only address immediate needs but also lay the groundwork for long-term community empowerment and economic growth.

However, Sharon faces several challenges in its pursuit of community wellbeing. Economic disparities, aging infrastructure, and limited access to healthcare services are pressing issues that require comprehensive solutions. The recent efforts to reopen the local hospital highlight the community's commitment to restoring vital healthcare services. Additionally, initiatives like the Sharon Beautification Commission's community-wide clean-up events demonstrate the importance of civic engagement in overcoming these challenges. By fostering partnerships among local institutions, residents, and stakeholders, Sharon can continue to build a more connected, safe, and vibrant community.



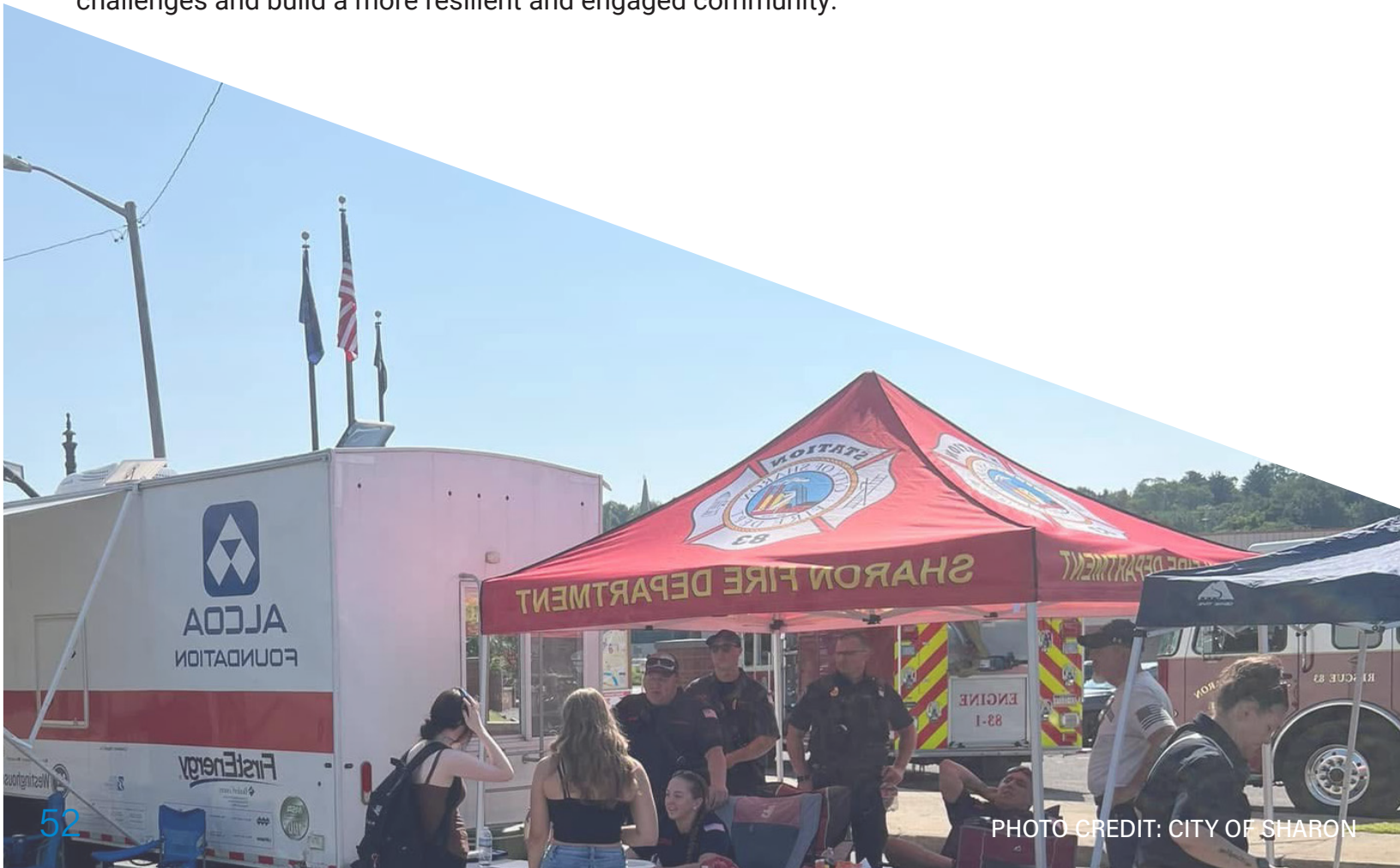
Sharon Beautification Commission

OBJECTIVE 1

DEVELOP A PUBLIC INFORMATION AND SAFETY AWARENESS STRATEGY

The City of Sharon is embarking on the development of a comprehensive public information and safety awareness strategy aimed at enhancing communication between City departments and residents. This initiative focuses on safety education and media outreach to keep the community well-informed and engaged. By highlighting positive initiatives, educating the public on safety and code issues, and building trust through transparency, the City seeks to foster a more connected and informed community.

Opportunities and Challenges: Sharon faces several challenges in providing public information. Issues such as urban blight, high volumes of emergency service calls, and a lack of resident engagement have been persistent concerns. Additionally, nearly 45% of homes in Sharon are not owner-occupied, which can contribute to a lack of community investment and complicate communication efforts. Despite these challenges, opportunities exist to improve public information dissemination. Initiatives like the Neighborhood Citizen Captain Program and Neighborhood Sweep Program aim to involve residents directly in reporting issues and maintaining community standards. By leveraging these programs and enhancing communication channels, Sharon can address its challenges and build a more resilient and engaged community.





IMPLEMENT PROACTIVE OUTREACH PROGRAMS

Establishing a unified communication platform encompassing the City website, social media, newsletters, and local news outlets is a vital component to a centralized approach. This ensures that residents receive accurate and timely information, thereby enhancing transparency and keeping the community well-informed.

- Develop a centralized information hub on the City's website that aggregates all safety-related information, updates, and resources.
- Increase utilization of social media platforms to disseminate real-time information, engage with residents, and address their concerns promptly.
- Regularly issue press releases highlighting community initiatives, success stories, and departmental achievements.
- Hold periodic briefings with local journalists to provide updates and address any concerns or misinformation.
- Develop a crisis communication plan to ensure timely and accurate information dissemination during emergencies, minimizing panic and confusion.

Outreach programs led by the police, fire, and code enforcement departments can educate residents on safety, fire prevention, health, and emergency preparedness. Hosting regular workshops in schools and neighborhoods—such as fire hall open houses, crime prevention seminars, and code compliance Q&A sessions—enhances public awareness, promotes preparedness, and strengthens partnerships between residents and local authorities.

- Increase efforts to educate residents on safety protocols, fire prevention techniques, and emergency preparedness plans.
- Provide brochures, flyers, and digital content that outline safety guidelines, emergency contact information, and steps to take during various emergencies.
- Work with local leaders and organizations to identify specific safety concerns within their communities and tailor workshops accordingly.
- Implement feedback systems post-events to gather insights and improve future workshops.

ESTABLISH UNIFIED COMMUNICATION NETWORK



OBJECTIVE 2

PROMOTE AND SUPPORT COMMUNITY EVENTS AND CULTURAL PROGRAMS

The City of Sharon is actively working to promote and support community events and cultural programs, recognizing their vital role in fostering civic pride, economic development, and social cohesion. By empowering local organizations and volunteers to lead festivals and programs, Sharon aims to cultivate a diverse event calendar that reflects the interests of all residents. This strategy not only sustains beloved traditions like WaterFire Sharon—a signature arts and music festival that has drawn tens of thousands of visitors since 2013—but also introduces new cultural, artistic, and recreational activities that enhance community spirit and regional identity .

Opportunities and Challenges: Economic constraints can limit funding for events, and coordinating among various stakeholders requires significant effort. Additionally, ensuring inclusive participation across diverse community groups remains an ongoing endeavor. Despite these challenges, opportunities abound. Collaborations with local and regional organizations have led to engaging programs and themed events that celebrate the City. Furthermore, leveraging social media platforms and the City’s official website can enhance outreach and community engagement. By continuing to support and expand community events and cultural programs, Sharon can strengthen its social fabric, attract tourism, and stimulate local economic growth. These initiatives not only enrich the lives of residents but also position the City as a vibrant and inclusive community.





COLLABORATE FOR COMMUNITY EVENT LEADERSHIP

Promoting Sharon’s event calendar to include a wider range of cultural and recreational activities helps foster inclusivity, attract new audiences, and create a year-round sense of vibrancy.

- Host public input sessions or develop surveys to identify new event ideas.
- Pilot seasonal themes (e.g., “Fall Food Truck Fridays,” “Summer Sunset Concerts”). (See *Appendices for additional community event options*).
- Promote co-hosting opportunities with schools, faith groups, and local creatives.



SUPPORT GRASSROOTS EVENTS

Transform the Sharon Fire Hall into a modern space for civic gatherings, public education, and cultural programming. By incorporating flexible areas for events, training, and creative expression, the facility can serve as a focal point for community life and a catalyst for Sharon’s cultural identity.

- Conduct a facility needs assessment and design renovations that prioritize community use, education, and cultural programming.
- Establish a cultural advisory group to guide partnerships with statewide programs and local artists.
- Integrate storytelling, art, and historical interpretation into community events hosted at the facility.
- Pursue regional, state, and federal funding to support both capital improvements and cultural programming.

City leadership plays a pivotal role in empowering local organizations, building capacity, and fostering resident ownership of public life. By supporting community groups in leading signature events, the City ensures that these programs remain vibrant and deeply rooted in local identity.

- Establish a policy and procedure for events hosts, including specific events
- Provide access to City-owned spaces, materials, and event-day staff support.
- Establish a support system within City departments to assist with logistics, permitting, and safety measures.



PROMOTE A DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE CALENDAR

Supporting neighborhood-level and grassroots initiatives ensures that community life thrives beyond downtown and across all corners of the City. Small-scale events like block parties, pop-up performances, and walking tours enrich the civic landscape and give residents the tools to shape their own neighborhoods.

- Develop a policy and procedure for event hosts, including safety guides and information.
- Support event hosts with following policy and procedure, permitting, and marketing.



DEVELOP A COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AND CULTURAL HUB

OBJECTIVE 3

STRENGTHEN EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

The City of Sharon recognizes the importance of empowering its youth and views educational partnerships as a cornerstone for building a stronger, more vibrant community. By deepening collaboration with the Sharon City School District, local colleges, workforce training programs, and youth-serving organizations, the City aims to expand access to educational and extracurricular opportunities that inspire leadership, civic involvement, and lifelong learning. These partnerships are critical to preparing young people for future success while ensuring they feel valued and engaged in shaping their community today.

Opportunities and Challenges: Limited funding for youth programs, coupled with the complexities of coordinating across institutions, often hinders the scale and consistency of these efforts. Additionally, equitable access remains a concern, as not all neighborhoods or student populations have the same resources or opportunities. Yet, these obstacles also present opportunities. With intentional outreach and creative program design, the City can build on its existing collaborations. Digital platforms and new communications tools also provide an avenue to reach more families, share success stories, and increase youth involvement in civic life. Moving forward, continued investment in youth engagement and education will be essential for building a resilient and forward-looking Sharon. These efforts not only nurture future leaders but also contribute to a welcoming environment that encourages families to stay, grow, and contribute to the City's collective success. By making young people central to its community-building strategy, Sharon strengthens its identity as a place of opportunity, inclusion, and shared progress.





INCREASE YOUTH REPRESENTATION IN GOVERNMENT

Hands-on exposure to municipal operations encourages long-term civic engagement. An annual “Meet the Government Day” offers students a behind-the-scenes look at City departments and introduces them to public service careers.

- Organize a structured itinerary for student tours of City Hall, the police and fire departments, and other agencies.
- Invite students from surrounding school districts to broaden regional participation.
- Include interactive activities and Q&A sessions with elected officials and department heads.

Involving youth directly in local governance fosters civic responsibility and brings valuable perspectives to decision-making processes. Appointing a student to City Council (in a non-voting advisory role) offers young people a platform to voice their ideas while building a deeper connection to public service.

- Create an annual application and selection process for a student advisory role on City Council.
- Partner with Sharon School District and other institutions to identify interested and qualified students.
- Provide onboarding and mentorship to help the student representative meaningfully engage with Council activities.

PROVIDE CIVIC EDUCATION & GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT



Connecting students with educational institutions, City departments, and local employers through internships and mentorships prepares them for future careers and helps retain young talent in Sharon. Collaboration with higher education opportunities strengthens workforce development efforts.

- Facilitate partnerships between schools, businesses, and City departments to create internship and job-shadowing opportunities.
- Coordinate with the Homegrown Initiative to identify industries with high local demand and align career programs accordingly (See *examples in Appendices*).



PROMOTE WORKFORCE READINESS & CAREER PATHWAYS

Expanding after-school, summer, and extracurricular activities supports student achievement, reduces risk factors, and gives youth meaningful outlets for expression and leadership.

- Collaborate with partners like HopeCAT, the eAcademy, and the Sharon School District to launch new art, STEM, and entrepreneurship clubs.
- Promote and support student-led service projects that benefit neighborhoods or address local issues.
- Formalize City support for the Shenango Valley Library by assisting with youth-focused programming and positioning it as a key learning and enrichment hub.

INCREASE ENRICHMENT & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT SPACES



OBJECTIVE 4

DEVELOP A REGIONALIZATION STRATEGY FOR SHARED SERVICES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

The City of Sharon is taking proactive steps to strengthen community safety and improve service delivery through the development of a regionalization strategy. By coordinating key public services such as police and fire protection, emergency communications, and transportation with neighboring municipalities, Sharon aims to enhance operational efficiency while reducing redundancies and long-term costs. This regional approach not only makes services more sustainable but also ensures that residents across the area benefit from consistent, high-quality public safety infrastructure.

Opportunities and Challenges: Regional collaboration does present both logistical and political challenges. Aligning budgets, governance structures, and operational protocols across jurisdictions requires ongoing dialogue, mutual trust, and careful negotiation. Differences in service capacity, geographic needs, and community expectations can further complicate integration. Despite these hurdles, the potential for cost savings and enhanced emergency responsiveness creates a compelling case for shared services. At the same time, Sharon continues to invest in community-level initiatives such as community policing and innovative public safety programs that foster stronger relationships between law enforcement and residents. These efforts build trust, encourage public participation, and help ensure that safety solutions are not only efficient but also equitable and responsive to local needs. By balancing regional coordination with neighborhood-based safety strategies, Sharon is pursuing a comprehensive approach that strengthens both its internal operations and its role as a leader in the Shenango Valley. This dual focus positions the City to address present challenges while preparing for the future.





COLLABORATE FOR REGIONAL PUBLIC SAFETY

A regional transportation strategy enhances connectivity between Sharon and its neighbors, making it easier for residents to access employment, education, and healthcare. Improving public transit, paratransit, and non-motorized trail links will reduce barriers to mobility and support equitable, sustainable transportation options.

- Partner with local transit authorities to assess existing transit gaps.
- Extend or realign public bus routes to better serve the Shenango Valley.
- Work with trail groups and municipalities to connect bike/pedestrian paths across borders.

Forming a regional services task force opens the door for more efficient and effective delivery of emergency and protective services throughout the Shenango Valley. Through shared dispatch, mutual aid, and coordinated training, municipalities can reduce costs, eliminate duplication, and improve emergency response times. Establish a formal regional task force with representation from nearby municipalities.

- Assess feasibility of joint 911/emergency dispatch and cross-jurisdictional fire/EMS coverage.
- Create intergovernmental agreements for mutual aid and shared training facilities.

ESTABLISH A COORDINATED TRANSPORTATION NETWORK



STRENGTHEN CRISIS RESPONSE AND PUBLIC SAFETY CAPACITY

Request peer review and technical assistance from the PA Department of Community and Economic Development's Governor's Center for Local Government Services improve coordination, staffing, and management practices within Sharon's police and fire departments. These reviews can guide operational improvements, enhance efficiency, and strengthen service delivery for residents.

- Submit a request for a police department peer review to evaluate staffing, management, and coordination practices.
- Request a separate peer review for the fire department to assess operations, training needs, and resource allocation.
- Implement recommendations from reviews to improve efficiency, inter-agency coordination, and service quality.

Upgrade tools, training, and technology to improve crisis response, reduce strain on police, and build community trust.

- Invest in technology upgrades (surveillance, body/dashboard cameras, electronic reporting).
- Partner with mental health agencies to develop a coordinated crisis response protocol.

STRENGTHEN PUBLIC SAFETY OPERATIONS



OBJECTIVE 5

ENHANCE RIVERFRONT RECREATION AND TRAIL CONNECTIVITY POINTS

The City of Sharon is placing a renewed focus on enhancing its riverfront and trail connectivity to improve quality of life, promote public health, and build a stronger sense of place. With the Shenango River as a central natural asset, the City is working to create a more accessible, interconnected network of parks, trails, and riverfront amenities that link neighborhoods, downtown, and surrounding communities. These improvements are not only about recreation—they are strategic investments in Sharon’s long-term identity as a livable, family-friendly community that embraces its natural landscape.

Opportunities and Challenges: Aging infrastructure, limited funding, and the need to coordinate across multiple jurisdictions and property owners can slow progress. Environmental concerns—such as outdated dams and flood risks—also present obstacles that require technical expertise and collaboration with partners like the Shenango River Watchers. Still, these challenges are matched by meaningful opportunities. With growing regional momentum around outdoor recreation and environmental sustainability, Sharon is well-positioned to leverage state and federal resources, build partnerships, and attract new investment. As the City moves forward, a focus on equitable access, environmental resilience, and regional trail integration will ensure that riverfront and recreation improvements serve all residents while enhancing Sharon’s appeal as a destination for outdoor enthusiasts and families alike.





DEVELOP A CITYWIDE RECREATION PLAN

Transforming key riverfront properties into mixed-use areas that integrate recreation with retail, dining, residential, and community spaces will generate year-round activity and attract both residents and visitors. These vibrant, active spaces can become economic catalysts while preserving public access to natural resources.

- Inventory underutilized riverfront parcels suitable for redevelopment (See examples in Appendices).
- Develop zoning and design guidelines that prioritize walkability and public space.
- Partner with developers to attract investment in recreation-oriented, mixed-use projects.



EMPHASIZE RIVER ACCESS & ENVIRONMENTAL SAFETY

Enforcing rigorous floodplain management standards is critical to ensuring that new riverfront development remains resilient in the face of flooding and climate risks. This protects public investments, safeguards natural ecosystems, and ensures that recreation and infrastructure projects are sustainable over the long term.

- Review and update the City's floodplain ordinance to meet or exceed state and federal guidelines.
- Provide training and enforcement support, especially for new development in flood-prone areas.
- Integrate green infrastructure practices (e.g., riparian buffers, bioswales) into riverfront planning.

This is essential for aligning Sharon's parks, trails, and public amenities with the community's current and future needs. The City can ensure recreational investments are equitable, accessible, and coordinated with regional initiatives such as the Upper Shenango River Water Trail. This approach will also foster partnerships with neighboring communities and maximize shared resources.

- Conduct public outreach and needs assessments to inform the Recreation Plan.
- Identify trail and park expansion opportunities, particularly along the riverfront.
- Coordinate with regional partners to align trail connections and recreation programming.

ENCOURAGE RIVERFRONT MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT

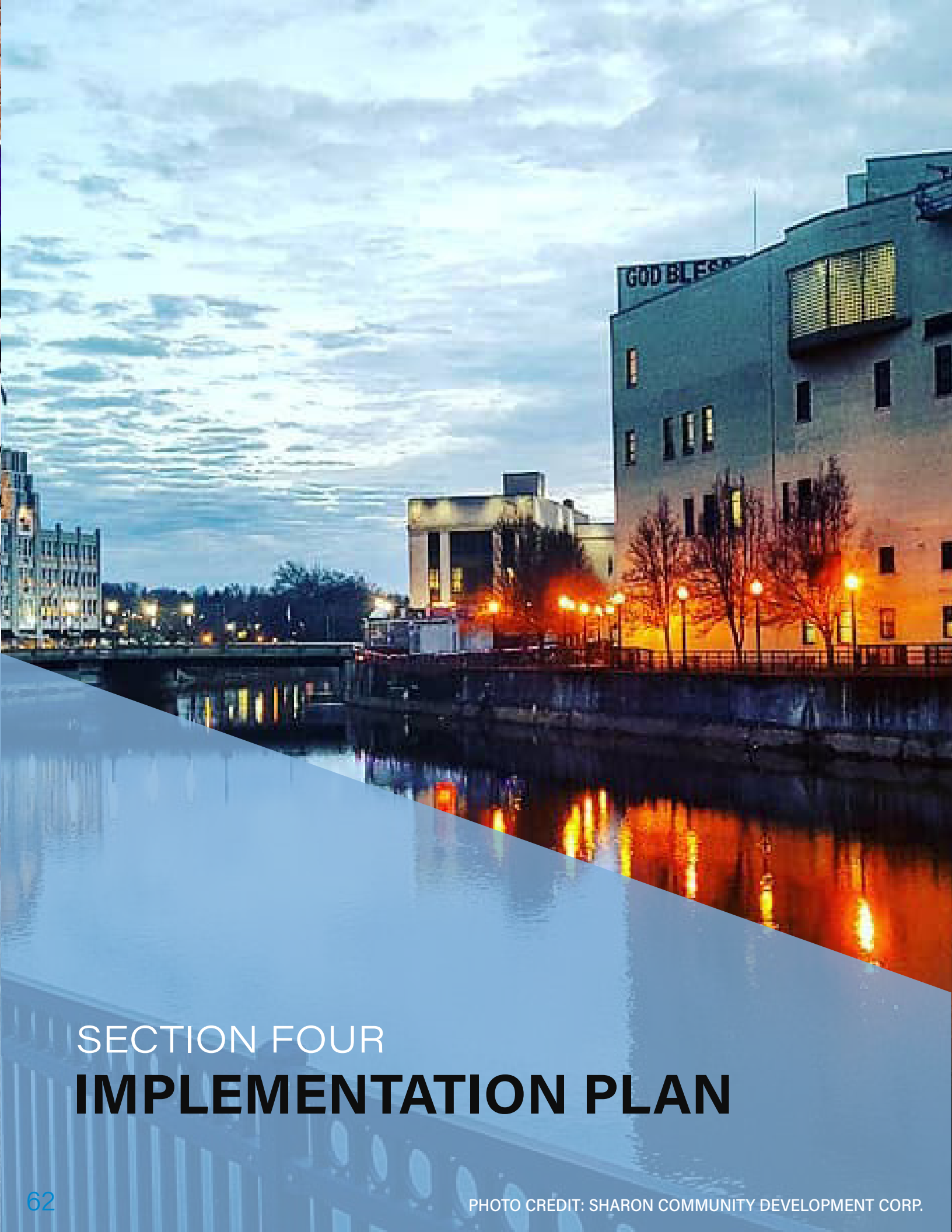


Improving the safety and usability of the Shenango River through dam removal and new recreational access points can transform the riverfront into a dynamic outdoor destination. These efforts will restore natural river flow, reduce environmental risks, and increase opportunities for paddling, fishing, and scenic enjoyment.

- Collaborate with Shenango River Watchers and other environmental partners to assess dam modifications.
- Secure funding for the construction of launches, docks, and river access points.
- Promote public education on river safety and environmental stewardship.

MAINTAIN RESILIENT FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT





SECTION FOUR **IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

OVERALL IMPLEMENTATION

Successful implementation of the Comprehensive Plan will depend on ongoing commitment from the City. This involves:

- Designate the Planning Commission or another entity to oversee the implementation process. While they will not directly carry out tasks, it will identify actions to discuss with the City Council and staff.
 - This group should also conduct an annual review of the Comprehensive Plan's implementation. Document the actions taken over the past year, assess progress towards the Vision and Goals, and provide recommendations to City Council for any necessary modifications. Include these updates as appendices to the Plan document to maintain a continuous record of progress.
- Incorporate priority implementation projects into City budget discussions. Ensure they are presented and discussed well in advance for thorough review.
 - Research grant opportunities as identified in the Implementation Matrix to help fund projects. The best place to begin would be the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED). They are a primary source of funding in Pennsylvania for implementation projects from Comprehensive Plans.
- Update the zoning ordinance to achieve consistency with the Comprehensive Plan. Specific methods to implement the Plan's goals are included in this chapter.

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

The Implementation Matrix is a strategic tool designed to consolidate and organize all priority recommendations within a comprehensive plan. By providing detailed information for each action item—including responsible parties, timelines, required resources, and performance indicators—it serves as a centralized reference point for stakeholders. This structured approach facilitates efficient tracking of progress, ensures accountability, and aids in the systematic execution of initiatives.

The Implementation Matrix enables city officials, community organizations, and residents to align their efforts effectively. It supports informed decision-making by highlighting dependencies and resource allocations, thereby enhancing transparency and fostering community engagement. Ultimately, the Implementation Matrix transforms strategic objectives into actionable steps, ensuring that the vision for community development is realized through coordinated and measurable actions. Partners listed in bold are identified as the primary partner for each distinct action.

Note: A key for acronyms in the Matrix is located on page 75.



DOWNTOWN/ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ACTION

PARTNERS

BUDGET

FUNDING

TIMELINE

OBJECTIVE 1

| | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| Formalize Main Street Program under the Sharon Development Corporation's (SCDC) Leadership | SCDC | \$25,000–\$50,000 (planning consultant) | DCED MAP; CDBG; EDA | 2025-2026: Seek Main Street Designation. 2025-2029: Implement Downtown Plan. |
| Coordinate a Downtown Stakeholder Network | SCDC; Local Businesses; Property Owners; Community Organizations | Staff Time | N/A | 2025-2026: SCDC build network and lead initial meetings. 2026+: Local businesses lead meetings. |
| Promote Partnerships and Volunteerism | City Commissions; SCDC; Community Organizations; Penn Northwest; Educational Institutions | Staff Time | N/A | 2025-2026: Create volunteer recruitment/retention strategy and identify volunteer coordinator. 2026-2027: Volunteer coordinator work with city commissions and community organizations. 2026+: Community organizations implement volunteer strategy. |
| Ensure Long-Term Sustainability | SCDC | Dependent on Projects | Fundraising Campaigns; Corporate Sponsorships; DCED NAP; NEA | 2025-2026: Build funding strategy (including measurable goals). 2026+: Implement funding strategy. |

**DOWNTOWN/
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

ACTION

PARTNERS

BUDGET

FUNDING

TIMELINE

OBJECTIVE 2

| | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|---|
| Develop a Branding and Marketing Campaign | SCDC; Visit Mercer County | Marketing plan: \$15k-20k for consultant and dependent on projects for implementation | DCED; CDBG; EDA; PDC; NEA; Community Heart & Soul; Visit Mercer County | 2026-2027: Form marketing campaign. 2027+: Implement marketing campaign. |
| Improve Gateways and Wayfinding | SCDC; Surrounding Municipalities; Sharon Beautification Commission; Visit Mercer County; Local Arts Organizations | \$500-\$2k annually | DCED MAP; DCNR; PennDOT; ARC, CDBG; Sharon Beautification Commission; Visit Mercer County | 2026-2027: Inventory areas and begin funding strategy. 2026-2029: Install improved gateways and wayfinding. |
| Support Events to Draw Foot Traffic | SCDC; Community Organizations; Local Businesses; Community Events, LLC | Dependent on Events | Visit Mercer County, NEA, Community Foundation of EOWP | 2025-2026: Inventory of events. 2026+: Implement event strategy. |
| Market Sharon's Livability and Amenities | Local Real Estate Professionals; SCDC; Visit Mercer County; Planning Commission | Dependent on Projects | DCED; CDBG; Visit Mercer County | 2026-2028: Develop "Downtown Living" Campaign and Promote Sharon's commitment to sustainability. 2028-2032: Implement housing plan. |

DOWNTOWN/ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ACTION

PARTNERS

BUDGET

FUNDING

TIMELINE

OBJECTIVE 3

| | | | | |
|---|--|-------------------------|---|---|
| Leverage Market Data to Target Business Recruitment | SCDC; PDC; TCA; Penn Northwest; LaunchBox; Mercer County; Property Owners; Realtors | \$10,000+ | CDBG; DCED MAP | 2025-2026: Compile data/inventory and survey of wants. 2026+: Business recruitment. |
| Fill Storefronts and Reduce Vacancies | SCDC; Downtown Property Owners; Elected Officials; Penn Northwest; LaunchBox; Realtors; RDA; Planning Commission | Dependent on Projects | DCED;CDBG; ARC; EDA | 2025-2026: Update zoning ordinance and continue facade program. 2027+: Build vibrancy (Vibrancy index). |
| Support and Retain Small Businesses | SCDC; LaunchBox; Visit Mercer County; Penn Northwest; Shenango Valley Chamber of Commerce; SBDC; Ben Franklin Innovation Center | Dependent on Project | SPP, NAP, DCED, Sharon Revolving Loan Program, CDBG, Shenango Economic Development Fund | 2025-2026: Update zoning ordinance and continue facade program. 2027+: Implement current and future support programs. |
| Cultivate Local Talent and Entrepreneurship | E-Academy; Penn Northwest Homegrown Initiative; CareerLink; Local Businesses; Educational Institutions | \$5k-\$15k (city match) | PA CareerLink/ WCJP; DCED; ARC; Educational Institutions; Penn Northwest | 2026-2028: Format and establish program. 2029+: Run program. |

DOWNTOWN/ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ACTION

PARTNERS

BUDGET

FUNDING

TIMELINE

OBJECTIVE 4

| | | | | |
|--|---|-----------------------|---|---|
| Pursue Key Redevelopment & Adaptive Reuse Projects | RDA; Planning Commission; SCDC; Property Owners; Private Developers; Mercer County; Community Foundation; Penn Northwest | Dependent on Projects | CDBG, DCED, EDA, RACP | 2028-2029: Planning |
| Implement Streetscape & Pedestrian Improvements | SCDC; PennDOT; Sharon Beautification Commission; MCRPC; Elected Officials | \$100,00+ per block | PennDOT MTF; CDBG; Mercer County, DCNR, Mercer County Trails Association, DCED MAP | 2028-2029: Planning |
| Update Design Guidelines & Policies | Planning Commission; Mercer County; SCDC | Staff Time | N/A | 2025-2026: Update zoning ordinance and analyze assistance from PDC/TCA. |
| Enhance Public Spaces & Amenities | SCDC; Elected Officials; Sharon Beautification Commission; Local Arts Organizations; Planning Commission | Dependent on Projects | CDBG; NEA; Local Sponsors; DCNR; DCED MAP and NAP; Visit Mercer County; Mercer County | 2025-2026: Identify Projects. 2027-2028: Implement Projects. |

NEIGHBORHOOD / COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION

ACTION

PARTNERS

BUDGET

FUNDING

TIMELINE

OBJECTIVE 1

| | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|---|
| Develop City Housing Plan with Priorities Based on Each Neighborhood | City of Sharon; Sharon Blight Task Force; Sharon Beautification Commission; Mercer County; Mercer County Housing Authority; Sharon City School District; Local Churches; Local Nonprofits; YNDC; Private Developers; Landlords; Local Financial Institutions; Local Realtors; Community Organizations; SCDC | Dependent on Projects | DCED; CDBG; PHARE; BRP; FHLB; HOME; YNDC | 2025-2026: Continue cleanups and beautification efforts. 2026-2027: create prioritization strategy for neighborhoods. |
| Strengthen Code Enforcement | City of Sharon Code Dept; Sharon Blight Task Force; Non-profits; Mercer County; Sharon City School District; YNDC; DCED | Solicitor and other Staff Time | Code Funding Source, including technical assistance | 2025-2027: Review codified ordinance. 2028+: Implement code strategy. |
| Support Neighborhood Organizations | Local Churches/Non-profits/Organizations (Neighborhood Anchor); SCDC; Local Businesses; Educational Institutions; YNDC; PDC; | Dependent on Projects | CDBG; Community Heart and Soul | 2026-2027: Engage local anchors to outreach. 2027+: Implement neighborhood strategies. |
| Preserve and Improve Affordable Housing | RDA; Planning Commission; Mercer County Housing Authority; Mercer County Housing Coalition; YNDC; Mercer County; Landlords; Local Non-profits | Dependent on Projects | DCED; CDBG; YNDC | 2025+: continue housing rehab program and apply for other programs. |
| Modernize Zoning for Housing Diversity | Planning Commission; RDA; Local Financial Institutions; Mercer County; Developers; Realtors | Staff and Solicitor Time | N/A | 2025-2026: Update zoning ordinance. 2026-2027: Determine models for neighborhoods. |
| Incentivize Mixed-Income Development | Planning Commission; RDA; Elected Officials; Realtors; YNDC; Private Developers; MCRPC; Local Financial Institutions, | Dependent on Projects | LERTA abatements; LIHTC; DCED; FHLB; PHARE | 2026-2027: Engage housing developers |
| Support Opportunities for New Construction | Planning Commission; RDA; MCRPC; Real Estate Developers; Local Financial Institutions; Local Realtors; Property Owners; YNDC; Penn Northwest; Elected Officials | Primarily private investment – City infrastructure upgrades \$100k+ as needed (assumed) | CDBG; DCED; Private Financing | 2028-2035: Implement housing plan |

NEIGHBORHOOD / COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION

OBJECTIVE 3

| | ACTION | PARTNERS | BUDGET | FUNDING | TIMELINE |
|--|--|--|--|---|---|
| | Activate the Land Bank Program | RDA; Planning Commission; Elected Officials; MCRPC; CAPMC; Local Legal/Title professionals; Local Realtors; Developers; Non-profits; Penn Northwest | 75k-\$150k annually | DCED; CDBG; PHARE; Federal HOME/ ARPA; Penn Northwest; Land Bank Funding Sources (See Appendices) | 2025-2026: Engage taxing bodies to activate land bank. 2027-2028: Implement funding plan to go with or without County. 2028+: Implement land bank plan. |
| | Expand Housing Rehabilitation Efforts | City of Sharon; CAPMC; LCCAP; Mercer County; YNDC; Local Financial Institutions; Real Estate Developers | \$20k-\$70k per home | DCED MAP; CDBG; PHARE; BRP; YNDC; Penn Northwest; HOME; FHLB; NAP | 2025-2026: continue and expand housing rehab programs. 2027+: implement additional housing rehab programs. |
| | Offer Incentives for Private / Resident Investment | City of Sharon; Mercer County; Local Financial Institutions; Developers; Realtors; Residents; Sharon City School District | Dependent on Projects | DCED; CDBG; PHARE; Federal HOME Funds; Penn Northwest; Private/Resident funding; DCNR; Local Sponsors | 2026-2027: Plan for small-scale residential projects. 2027+: Begin to implement small-scale residential projects. 2028-2035: Plan and implement larger residential projects |
| | Transform Vacant Lots into Assets | Planning Commission; Sharon Beautification Commission; CAPMC/ L2L; Western PA Conservancy; Educational Institutions; YNDC; RDA; Realtors; Developers; Trails associations; Sharon Recreation Commission | Pocket Parks - \$10k-\$50k; Urban Gardens - \$5k-\$10k | CDBG; EPA; DCNR; NFWF; NRPA; Penn Northwest; Safe Routes to School (SRTS) | 2026: Identify locations. 2027+: Start first project. |

NEIGHBORHOOD / COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION

OBJECTIVE 4

| | ACTION | PARTNERS | BUDGET | FUNDING | TIMELINE |
|--|--|---|---------------------------|---|---|
| | Develop a Street and Alley Maintenance Program | City of Sharon; Sharon Street Dept; PennDOT; Elected Officials | Dependent on Projects | PennDOT; PIB; SRTS; MTF; CDBG | 2026-2027: Inventory of streets and alleys with funding strategy. 2027-2028: Implement strategy. |
| | Utilize Green Infrastructure to Support Sustainability | Mercer County Conservation District; PA DEP; Western PA Conservancy | Dependent on Projects | DEP; DCNR; PennVEST; EPA; CDBG | 2028+: Expand tree/landscaping program. 2028-2029: Develop green infrastructure education with partners. 2029+: Implement small-scale projects. 2032+: Implement large-scale projects |
| | Modernize Public Services and Infrastructure | City of Sharon; Sharon Sanitary Authority; Mercer County; PA DEP; PennVEST | Dependent on Projects | PennVEST; EPA; CDBG; DCED | 2026-2027: Inventory stormwater and sewer infrastructure. 2027-2028: determine implementation of stormwater fee. |
| | Strengthen City Maintenance Operations and Communication | SCDC; Mercer County; Local Business; Residents | \$50-\$75k for consultant | CDBG; EPA; DCNR; NFWF; NRPA; Penn Northwest; Safe Routes to School (SRTS) | 2026: Hire Consultant. 2027+ Implement suggestions. |

NEIGHBORHOOD / COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION

OBJECTIVE 5

| ACTION | PARTNERS | BUDGET | FUNDING | TIMELINE |
|--|---|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| Develop an Active Transportation Plan | MCCOG; MCRPC; Surrounding Municipalities; PennDOT; Shenango Valley Shuttle Service | \$40k-\$50k for consultant | DCED; PennDOT MTF; RTP | 2025-2026: Support updated plan of SVSS. 2026-2028: Develop active transportation plan. 2028-2032: Implement active transportation plan. |
| Repair and Complete Sidewalk Networks | City of Sharon; Property Owners; PennDOT | Costs vary by extent: est. \$250+ per linear foot of sidewalk | DCED; CDBG; PennDOT; MTF; SRTS; RTP | 2026-2028: Inventory sidewalks. 2028-2029: Outreach/research of sidewalk repair program. 2029+: Implement sidewalk repair program |
| Enhance Bicycle Route and Trail Connectivity | Shenango Valley Trail Organizations; PennDOT; Surrounding Municipalities; MCRPC; Planning Commission | Dependent on Projects | DCNR; PennDOT; MTF; NFWF; SRTS; RTP | 2028-2032: Implement active transportation plan |
| Reroute Truck Traffic | City of Sharon; MCRPC; Northwest Commission; PennDOT; Surrounding Municipalities | Dependent on Projects | PennDOT; Federal Transportation Funds | 2026-2028: Begin discussions with partners. 2028+: Implement strategies. |

OBJECTIVE 1
OBJECTIVE 2

| | ACTION | PARTNERS | BUDGET | FUNDING | TIMELINE |
|-------------|---|--|---|--|---|
| OBJECTIVE 1 | Implement Proactive Outreach Programs | City Depts (Fire, Code, PD); Educational Institutions; Residents | Dependent on program/session | DCED; Local Sponsors | '2026-'27: Create materials and begin outreach. 2027+: Outreach programming |
| | Establish Unified | SCDC; Local Media Outlets; Residents; Community | \$15k-\$45k for website redesign | DCED; CDBG | 2025-2027: Begin city website redesign and communication strategy. 2027-2028: Complete website redesign and implement communication strategy |
| | Collaborate for Community Event Leadership | SCDC; Event hosts; City of Sharon; City Depts | Logistical/ Planning training \$5k to \$10k; Staff Time | DCED; CDBG | 2027-2028: Attend logistical/evening planning training and develop policy and procedure. 2028-2030: Develop policy and procedure and adapt where needed. |
| | Promote a Diverse and Inclusive Calender | Shenango Valley Chamber of Commerce; SCDC; Visit Mercer County; Community Events, LLC; Community Organizations | \$500-\$5,000 per event | N/A | 2025-2026: Feedback sessions and surveys 2026-2027: Promote events and pilot new activities/themes. 2027+: Promote diverse event calendar. |
| | Support Grassroot Events | SCDC; Mercer County; Residents | Staff Time | N/A | 2027-2028: Develop policy and procedure. 2028-2030: Implement policy and procedure and adapt where needed. |
| | Develop a Community Resilience and Cultural Hub | City of Sharon; HopeCAT; Fire Dept; Sharon Beautification Commission; Educational Institutions; Visit Mercer County; Local Arts Organizations; Historical Society | \$5k+per project | DCNR; NEA; PA Council on the Arts; Local Fundraising; Various Grants | 2026-2028: Conduct facility and community needs assessment. 2028-2029: Identify priority projects 2030+: Pursue funding and implement projects. |

OBJECTIVE 3

| ACTION | PARTNERS | BUDGET | FUNDING | TIMELINE |
|---|--|-----------------------|--|--|
| Increase Youth Representation in Government | Elected Officials; Sharon City School District, City Commissions | Staff Time | N/A | 2025-2026: Create application and select process. 2026-2027: Identify interested students and begin onboarding. 2027-2028: First student advisory role. |
| Provide Civic Education and Government Engagement | City Depts; Educational Institutions; Surrounding Municipalities | Staff Time | N/A | 2026-2027: Create structured itinerary and interactive activities. 2027-2028: First round of Sharon student tours. 2028-2029: First round of local school districts student tours. |
| Promote Workforce Readiness & Career Pathways | Sharon City School District; CareerLink; Local Businesses; SCDC; Penn Northwest/ Homegrown Initiative; Other Educational Institutions | Dependent on Projects | DCED; PA CareerLink; ARC; Educational Institutions Federal Job Training Funds; PennNorthwest | Follow Sharon City School District's Comprehensive Plan (2025-2028) |
| Increase Enrichment & Youth Development Spaces | Sharon City School District; Other Educational Institutions; The Library; Community Organizations; Homegrown Initiative | Staff Time | N/A | 2028: Begin collaborating with partners and student led services 2029: Formalize support for Shenango Valley Library |

OBJECTIVE 4

| | ACTION | PARTNERS | BUDGET | FUNDING | TIMELINE |
|--|---|---|--|--|---|
| | Collaborate for Regional Public Safety | City of Sharon Police, Fire, and EMS; Surrounding Municipalities; Mercer County | Dependent on Projects | DCED | 2026-2027: Engage surrounding municipalities. 2027-2028: Establish formal regional task force. 2028-2030: Assess feasibility of regional services. 2030-2032: Implement intergovernmental agreements. |
| | Establish a Coordinated Transportation Network | MCCOG; Mercer County; Surrounding Municipalities; PennDOT; Shenango Valley Shuttle Service; Northwest Commission | \$30k-\$50k for regional transit study | DCED; PennDOT MTF | 2025-2026: Support updated plan of SVSS. 2026-2028: Conduct regional study and develop active transportation plan. 2028-2032: Implement small-scale transportation projects. 2032-2035: Implement large-scale transportation projects |
| | Strengthen Crisis Response and Public Safety Capacity | City of Sharon City of Sharon; Police and Fire Departments; Mercer County Behavioral Health Commission; Buhl Regional Health Foundation; Healthcare Providers; | Dependent on Projects | DCED; PCCD; DOJ or DHS grants for mental health co-responder programs; | 2026-2027: Engage Commission and BRHF & upgrade related technology. 2027-2028: Consider developing crisis response protocol. |
| | Strengthen Public Safety Operations | City of Sharon; City of Sharon Police and Fire Departments | Dependent on Projects | DCED | 2026: Submit formal requests to DCED/PA Governor’s Center for both police and fire peer reviews. 2027: Conduct police and fire department peer reviews; collect findings and recommendations. 2028: Develop action plans based on peer review results; begin implementation of priority recommendations |

OBJECTIVE 5

| | ACTION | PARTNERS | BUDGET | FUNDING | TIMELINE |
|--|---|--|---|---|---|
| | Develop a Citywide Recreation Plan | MCRPC; Sharon Recreation Commission; Planning Commission; Mercer County; Trails associations; Sharon City School District; Buhl Park; Shenango River Watchers; HopeCAT; Mercer County Conservation District; Western PA Conservancy | \$50k-\$70k | DCNR; PA WalkWorks; RTP; NRPA | 2026-2027: Engage partners to develop recreation plan. 2027-2029: Build recreation plan. 2029+: Implement recreation plan. |
| | Encourage Riverfront Mixed-Use Development | SCDC; Mercer County; Local Financial Institutions; Developers; Local Realtors; Shenango River Watchers; Penn Northwest | Dependent on Projects | DCED; CDBG; DCNR; EPA; RACP; NRPA | 2025-2026: Update zoning ordinance. 2026-2028: Engage developers on priority investment areas. 2028-2032: Development begins in priority investment areas. 2032-2035: Development expands outside priority areas |
| | Emphasize River Access & Environmental Safety | Shenango River Watchers; PA DEP; AQUA; PA Fish and Boat; US Army Corps; DCNR; Western PA Conservancy | Dependent on Projects | DEP; DCNR; PA Fish and Boat; NOAA; NFWF; U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service; American Rivers; ARC | 2026-2027: Engage partners to develop recreation plan. 2027-2029: Build recreation plan. 2029-2032: Implement small-scale projects while planning large-scale projects. 2032-2035: Implement large-scale projects |
| | Maintain Resilient Floodplain Management | City of Sharon; Shenango River Watchers; PA DEP; FEMA; US Army Corps; DCNR; Western PA Conservancy | \$15k-\$30k (Flood Plain Ordinance Review and Update) | FEMA; DEP; DCNR; NOAA; NFWF | 2025-2026: Review and update (if needed) floodplain ordinance. 2026+: Provide floodplain management training and enforcement guidelines. 2027+: Educate and enforce floodplain management, especially with focus on priority investment areas. 2032-2035: Integrate green infrastructure practices (if applicable) |

IMPLEMENTATION KEY

| Acronym | Full Name | Description | Provider |
|---------|---|--|------------------------|
| ARC | Appalachian Regional Commission | Often a key funding partner for planning, implementation, and infrastructure development | ARC |
| BRP | Blight Remediation Program | A Pennsylvania program aimed at creating blight plans or demolishing, acquiring, and/or rehabilitating blighted properties. | Housing Alliance of PA |
| CDBG | Community Development Block Grant | Provides federal funds to develop viable communities through modest housing and suitable living environments. | PA DCED |
| DCED | PA Department of Community & Economic Development | Fosters opportunities for businesses to grow and for communities to succeed and thrive in a global economy. | PA DCED |
| DCNR | PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources | Conserves and sustains Pennsylvania's natural resources for present and future generations' use and enjoyment | PA DCNR |
| DEP | Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection | Protects Pennsylvania's air, land, and water resources while ensuring the health and safety of all residents and visitors. | PA DEP |
| EDA | Economic Development Administration | Assists public and non-profit organizations with funding for community and economic development projects. | EDA PA |
| EPA | Environmental Protection Agency | Federal agency responsible for protecting human health and the environment. | EPA PA |
| LWCF | Land and Water Conservation Fund | Provides matching grants for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities. | PA DCNR |
| LCCAP | Lawrence County Community Action Partnership | Partner with the City of Sharon on housing rehabilitation projects. | Lawrence County |
| MCRCOG | Mercer County Regional Council of Governments | Administrators of Shenango Valley Shuttle Service and Mercer County Community Transit. | Mercer County |
| MCRPC | Mercer County Regional Planning Commission | Assist the county's member municipalities to undertake and implement a variety of community and economic development plans/projects each year. | Mercer County |
| MTF | Multimodal Transportation Fund | Provides grants to encourage economic development and ensure a safe and reliable transportation system. | PennDOT |
| NEA | National Endowment for the Arts | Federal agency supporting and promoting cultural participation in American communities. | NEA PA |
| NFWF | National Fish and Wildlife Foundation | Advances parks, recreation, and environmental conservation efforts to enhance the quality of life for all people. | NRPA |
| PCCD | Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency | Convenes experts across criminal and juvenile justice, victim services, and related fields to collaboratively address public safety challenges. | Commonwealth of PA |
| PDC | Pennsylvania Downtown Center | Dedicated solely to the revitalization of the commonwealth's core communities, downtowns, and traditional neighborhood business districts. | PA Downtown Center |
| RDA | Redevelopment Authority of the City of Sharon | Works with the community stakeholders to revitalize neighborhoods and the business district established under the Urban Redevelopment Law. | RDA |
| RTP | Recreational Trails Program | Provides funds to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities. | PA DCNR |
| RACP | Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program | Provides grants for the acquisition and construction of regional economic, cultural, civic, recreational, and historical improvement projects. | PA DCED |
| SRTS | Safe Routes to School | Promotes safe walking and biking routes for children to and from schools. | PennDOT |
| WCJP | West Central Job Partnership | Serve the communities of Lawrence and Mercer Counties through the administration and operation of job training and workforce development programs. | WCJP |
| YNDC | Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation | Works to improve the quality of life in Youngstown by building and encouraging neighborhood development. | YNDC |

INVESTMENT PRIORITY MAP

This section outlines the City of Sharon's key Investment Priority Areas (or future land use). These areas, indicated on the Map 2, represent strategic opportunities to advance the City's vision by focusing redevelopment, housing, and recreational enhancements where they can have the greatest impact. This map highlights key areas identified as catalysts for positive change, along with the existing land use patterns in the City. Unlike regulatory tools such as zoning ordinances, the Investment Priority Map focuses on areas identified through the planning process as prime candidates for redevelopment or enhancements. These sites have been selected based on their potential for transformative projects that align with the City's goals.

Since the City is mostly built out, achieving the vision outlined in the plan will be a gradual process, especially where current development does not align with future aspirations. Changes will need to be phased in over time as opportunities arise, and existing patterns slowly shift to reflect the desired future state. Patience and strategic planning will be essential in guiding change and redevelopment. The Investment Priority Map provides a strategic framework for local leaders, illustrating a direction for channeling market interest and investment towards these priority areas. By focusing efforts and collaborating with partner agencies, the City can effectively direct funding and resources to areas most likely to yield significant improvements, paving the way for a gradual realization of the vision.

Following this framework, eight target areas have been prioritized for investment. Each area is categorized by its primary opportunity type – Redevelopment, Housing, or Riverfront – reflecting the focus of potential improvements. The sections on the following pages detail each area's current conditions, envisioned future, and strategic importance to Sharon's overall revitalization strategy.



#1. Downtown Redevelopment Opportunity and #1.a Reyers Property

Current Conditions: Downtown Sharon is characterized by its traditional ‘Main Street’ layout, offering approximately 2,300 linear feet of storefront potential, bisected by the Shenango River. This natural division creates two distinct commercial areas: east and west of the river.

East of the River: The area spanning roughly 1,300 linear feet between Dock Street and the Shenango River represents the heart of Sharon’s traditional downtown, forming the core of the Central Business District (CBD). This stretch includes the highest concentration of active storefronts, with a balanced business mix including retail, food and dining establishments, and personal services (exact counts to be verified). Storefronts line both sides of the street, offering a walkable, pedestrian-friendly environment ideal for downtown exploration and shopping. This corridor has the strongest “Main Street” feel, creating a cohesive identity that aligns with best practices for vibrant urban districts.

West of the River: On the west side, downtown is anchored by two key regional destinations: ICG Hobbies & Games and The Winner apparel store. These businesses consistently attract visitors from more than an hour away, generating reliable foot traffic from identifiable demographics. However, the areas between these anchors include multiple underutilized or vacant storefronts, many of which do not contribute to a vibrant street-level experience.

Additionally, significant changes have occurred west of the river, including the demolition of historic storefront buildings along West State Street from the river to Irvine Street. This parcel includes retail space with a large surface parking totally 12.74 acres. Further west, the Columbia Theater, a once-prominent 1,200-seat multi-level theater, remains vacant and has been unused since the 1980s.



#1. Downtown Redevelopment Opportunity and #1.a Reyers Property

Opportunities: Downtown Sharon is well-positioned for strategic reinvestment and district-level placemaking. By leveraging existing assets and implementing intentional planning strategies—including appropriate zoning, architectural standards, and signage guidelines—Downtown Sharon can continue to grow as the Downtown of the Shenango Valley.

Central Business District (East of the River): This area should be prioritized for continued investment and enhancement. With a natural length of 1,300 feet, this walkable corridor aligns with best practices for downtowns, which indicate that most pedestrians are willing to explore up to a quarter-mile before returning to their vehicles. This makes the east side ideal for a concentrated mix of retail, food and dining, arts and entertainment, personal services, and government or civic storefronts. Enhancing this area’s vibrancy should include support for small business development, façade and building interior improvements, pedestrian amenities, and consistent branding.

Downtown West District (West of the River): This area offers significant redevelopment potential. If McDonald’s is expected to vacate its site within the next two years, that location becomes a prime opportunity for infill development that better aligns with traditional downtown design. Similarly, if the City or its partners can secure site control of the Columbia Theater and adjacent properties at the corner of State Street and Water Avenue, it would allow for transformational redevelopment, potentially incorporating mixed-use or arts and cultural programming.

The existing plaza on State and Water Streets also presents an opportunity. With careful design, the large parking area could be reconfigured or subdivided (outparceled) to accommodate new buildings suitable for drive-through or destination retail. Further, the section of the lot that faces State Street could be redeveloped with a façade and massing that complements the traditional storefront character found to the north, strengthening the identity of the Downtown West District and better connecting it to the broader downtown fabric.



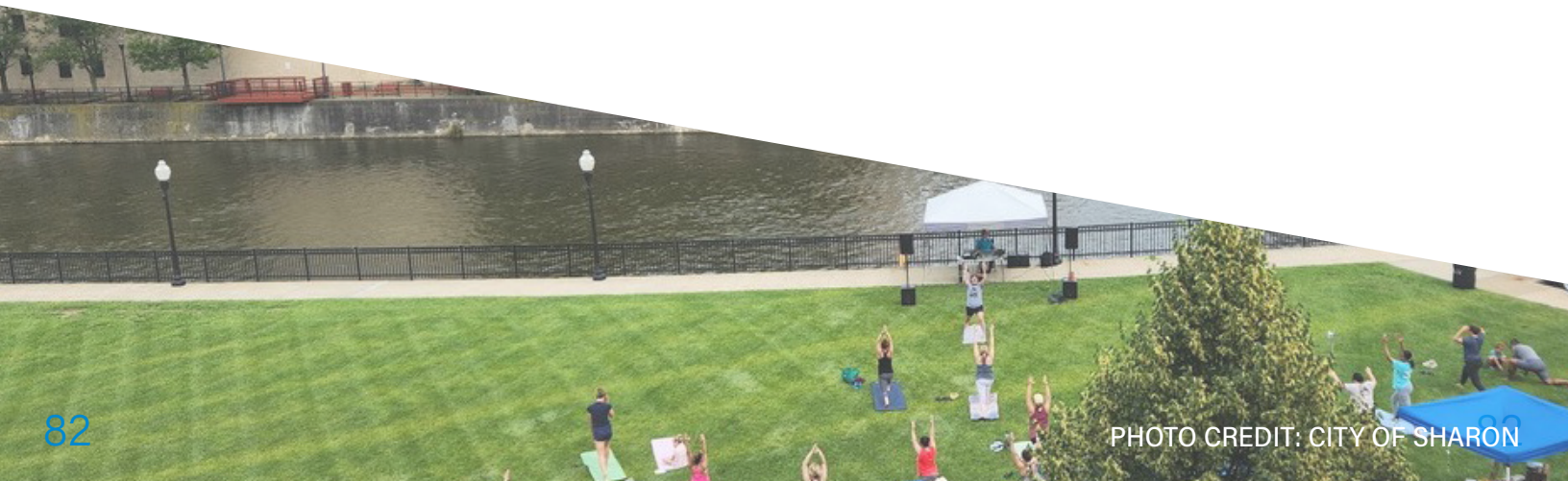
#2. Riverfront Development

Current Conditions: The Shenango River is a defining natural asset of the City of Sharon, flowing through the heart of the community and offering tremendous untapped potential for recreation, placemaking, and development. Historically, the river supported industrial uses, the remnants of which are still visible along its banks. While these uses contributed to environmental degradation in the past, significant improvements have since been made.

The Shenango River has become an increasingly valued natural asset for the region, offering opportunities for recreation, tourism, and environmental stewardship. However, outdated public perceptions—particularly concerns about water quality and the safety of consuming fish—continue to limit the full use and enjoyment of the river. Despite these challenges, the Shenango River was recognized as Pennsylvania’s “River of the Year” in 2021 and plays a vital role in a larger network of regional water trails that connect communities and promote outdoor recreation. Recent private investments in areas just north of downtown—commonly referred to as The Flats—are demonstrating the river’s potential as a catalyst for growth. These developments include new housing and recreational amenities, with more projects anticipated as infrastructure and public access improve.

A key public asset along the river is the Sharon Riverwalk Trail, envisioned as a walkable and bikeable path connecting neighborhoods, downtown, and new developments. While several segments of the trail have been completed, progress has been slowed by land ownership complexities and the close proximity of active rail lines. A particularly strategic undeveloped portion of the trail runs along the river from State Street to East Silver Street, adjacent to downtown and near the soon-to-be-former Penn State Shenango Campus. This area includes a large green space created after the City demolished a multi-level bank building in 2023.

While this green space offers significant potential, its proximity to an aging retaining wall along the river presents a structural and safety concern. The Sharon Bicentennial Park Master Plan concluded that the wall is not designed to safely accommodate large crowds, which limits its use during major events such as WaterFire, where public access to river views is currently restricted due to safety fencing. Additionally, two low-head dams in the river that runs through Sharon prevent boats from navigating through the central portion of the City, cutting off access to a continuous water trail and limiting the river’s recreational and economic potential.



#2. Riverfront Development

Opportunities: The Shenango Riverfront is one of Sharon’s most valuable and underutilized assets. It offers multiple opportunities for strategic investment, environmental stewardship, public engagement, and economic development.

- 1. Complete and Expand the Riverwalk Trail:** The Riverwalk Trail should be a top priority for completion and expansion. Efforts should focus on resolving land ownership and rail-related access barriers to create a continuous path that connects emerging riverfront developments north and west of downtown with the City center. A complete trail network will serve residents, attract visitors, and support new investment.
- 2. Redevelop Downtown Riverfront Green Space:** The centrally located green space along State Street offers a rare opportunity for creative placemaking. The City should invest in transforming this site into a dynamic public plaza or parklet, with features such as:
 - A permanent stage for concerts and performances, flexible outdoor dining and seating areas, a seasonal ice rink or splash pad, dedicated space for community events (e.g., a Christmas tree, markets, art installations), and river-access improvements (such as a tiered or terraced wall system) to enhance safety, allow fishing access, and create a destination for boaters.
- 3. Improve River Access for Boaters:** Addressing the presence of the two low-head dams in the city should be a long-term priority. Their removal—or the construction of navigable bypass systems—would reconnect Sharon to the broader water trail system and open the City to recreational boat traffic. This would support eco-tourism and increase foot traffic in the downtown riverfront area.
- 4. Align Zoning with Riverfront Goals:** The City should proactively align its zoning and development codes to encourage river-oriented development. Mixed-use buildings, public-private partnerships, and design guidelines that emphasize pedestrian access and river views should be prioritized. Zoning should also signal to developers that Sharon is ready and welcoming of thoughtful riverfront development.
- 5. Ensure Ongoing River Stewardship:** Maintaining the environmental health and public perception of the Shenango River is essential. Continued efforts to monitor water quality, mitigate pollution sources, and promote public education around river safety and usability will support long-term success.

#3. The Avenues

Current Conditions: The East Hill neighborhood, situated between Buhl Park and downtown Sharon, holds strong potential for targeted residential reinvestment. According to a 2024 housing inventory study conducted by the Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation (YNDC) and the City’s Beautification Commission, the areas closest to Buhl Park exhibit some of the city’s highest levels of housing stability. However, as one moves downhill toward the downtown core, housing conditions show signs of modest disinvestment, though not to the extent of the city’s most distressed areas.

In recent years, the City of Sharon has prioritized the demolition of blighted properties, removing over 400 structures citywide. Within this neighborhood, a high concentration of demolitions have created vacant lots, now positioned for infill development and housing rehabilitation. As a result, the area is shifting from a focus on demolition to one centered on rebuilding and reinvestment.

Opportunities: The residential areas of ‘The Avenues’ are well-positioned for continued growth and revitalization through targeted investment in housing, infrastructure, and community partnerships. Reinvestment in this area should focus on a multi-faceted strategy centered around housing, infrastructure, community engagement, and neighborhood identity. The City should prioritize housing rehabilitation and infill development by leveraging cleared lots from recent demolitions for context-sensitive new construction and supporting the revitalization of aging but structurally sound homes through grant programs, tax incentives, and affordable financing.

Collaboration with organizations such as the Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation (YNDC) can help shape a targeted housing strategy and secure outside funding. In tandem with housing efforts, public infrastructure should be enhanced to improve livability, including street resurfacing, sidewalk repairs, ADA accessibility upgrades, modernized lighting, and consistent signage—all contributing to a walkable, cohesive streetscape. Community partnerships will be critical, with opportunities to deepen relationships with anchor institutions like the Buhl Club and Covenant Presbyterian Church, while also encouraging the formation of a neighborhood association to give residents a stronger voice in future planning. Finally, the neighborhood would benefit from a clear and unified identity, supported through thoughtful branding, signage, and placemaking elements such as public art and wayfinding, to celebrate its assets and build a renewed sense of place.



#4. The Flats

Current Conditions: Located immediately north of Sharon’s Downtown Central Business District, The Flats is a strategically positioned area with significant redevelopment potential. Bordered by the Shenango River and set between railroad tracks, The Flats was historically home to heavy industry and manufacturing. Today, it is characterized by a mix of vacant and underutilized industrial structures, large-scale warehouse spaces, and open tracts of land—all remnants of its industrial legacy. Major anchor sites within The Flats include the former Tube Mill property, currently undergoing private redevelopment, and the Penn State Shenango campus, which is anticipated to be fully vacated by 2028.

Opportunities: The Flats is one of Sharon’s most promising areas for mixed-use redevelopment, offering opportunities to blend riverfront living, adaptive reuse of legacy industrial structures, and expanded cultural and recreational assets. Ongoing private investment signals confidence in the area’s future, and the City should respond with strategic public-sector actions that reinforce this momentum. Key priorities include:

- **Infrastructure Modernization:** Right-size streets and utilities to support residential, commercial, and recreational uses. Apply complete streets principles to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety.
- **Trail and Connectivity Improvements:** Extend the Shenango Riverwalk through The Flats, with safe crossings across rail lines and major roads to reconnect fragmented parcels.
- **Flexible Zoning and Adaptive Reuse:** Promote redevelopment of industrial buildings for housing, innovation hubs, and small-scale manufacturing. Zoning should accommodate mixed uses and support phased, market-driven development.
- **Riverfront Access and Green Infrastructure:** Activate the waterfront with public spaces, plazas, and greenways, while integrating stormwater features and tree canopy to boost resilience and visual appeal.
- **Catalytic Site Development:** Treat key sites like the Tube Mill and Penn State campus as anchor projects, using public-private partnerships (P3s) and strong design standards to guide redevelopment.

With its strategic location and growing investment interest, The Flats is poised to evolve into a walkable, vibrant district that complements Sharon’s downtown and strengthens the City’s broader revitalization efforts.



#5. State Street Corridor

Current Conditions: The State Street Corridor, stretching from Dock Street to the Hermitage border, serves as a key gateway into Sharon and one of the region’s busiest commercial routes. It features a mix of institutional, medical, commercial, and residential uses, anchored by landmarks like Sharon High School, Diehl Automotive, Buhl Mansion, Sharon Regional Medical Center, and several historic churches.

Despite these assets, the corridor struggles with vacant properties—including former Walgreens, Rite Aid, and an unused apartment building—that disrupt its continuity and visual appeal. Inconsistent design, limited pedestrian infrastructure, and underused parcels create a fragmented environment that underperforms its potential as a prominent entry into the City.

Opportunities: The State Street Corridor holds strong potential as a gateway into Sharon, offering opportunities for reinvestment, placemaking, and economic development. A coordinated strategy can enhance its identity and functionality through the following priorities:

- 1. Gateway Branding:** Create a unified entrance to the city with branded signage, landscaping, decorative lighting, and entry treatments—especially near the Hermitage border—to establish a clear sense of arrival.
- 2. Redevelopment of Vacant Sites:** Prioritize adaptive reuse of vacant buildings like the former Walgreens, Rite Aid, and apartment complex for retail, medical office, or affordable housing, supported by site readiness and institutional partnerships.
- 3. Streetscape & Mobility Enhancements:** Implement complete streets improvements with sidewalks, bike lanes, crosswalks, lighting, and transit amenities to improve safety and accessibility.
- 4. Institutional Frontage Improvements:** Partner with schools and Sharon Regional Medical Center to enhance the visual and pedestrian experience along their frontages, including public art or shared amenities.
- 5. Support for Small Businesses:** Activate underused storefronts through pop-ups, incubators, and flexible zoning to attract local entrepreneurs and new retail models.
- 6. Zoning & Land Use Updates:** Align zoning to support mixed-use, higher-density residential, and institutional growth. Consider parcel consolidation and form-based codes to ensure cohesive development.



#6. Sharpsville Avenue

Current Conditions: Sharpsville Avenue is a historically industrial corridor with a mix of large-scale industrial, commercial, and residential uses. It borders The Avenues neighborhood and plays a key role in Sharon’s economic landscape. The corridor is anchored by the former Westinghouse Electric facility—nearly 1 million square feet—now partially redeveloped as The Landing, home to WestWin Urban Ag, artist studios, and community spaces, with plans for a year-round public market. A dedicated bike lane runs from Buhl Park to downtown but faces safety issues due to hillside runoff. Heavy truck traffic further conflicts with growing pedestrian and retail activity, especially near East State Street. The City has secured some funding to reroute truck traffic around more pedestrian-sensitive areas.

Opportunities: The Sharpsville Avenue Corridor is actively transitioning from a hybrid residential-industrial zone into a more defined employment and innovation district, with strategic opportunities to improve safety, leverage adaptive reuse, and align with broader economic development goals.

- 1. Adaptive Reuse & Innovation District:** Leverage the Westinghouse site for green tech, light manufacturing, food systems, and creative industries. Support reuse through zoning, incentives, and infrastructure upgrades.
- 2. Truck Traffic Management:** Implement the City’s truck rerouting plan to reduce conflicts with downtown foot traffic. Explore long-term street redesign to better balance industrial and pedestrian needs.
- 3. Bike Lane & Green Infrastructure:** Improve bike lane safety by addressing stormwater runoff with green infrastructure. Enhance markings, signage, and separation to increase ridership.
- 4. Employment-Focused Land Use:** Support the corridor’s shift toward commercial and employment uses through updated zoning and appropriate residential buffers.
- 5. Placemaking at The Landing:** Partner with The Landing to expand indoor market space and cultural programming, creating a regional draw and linking the corridor to downtown.
- 6. Streetscape & Infrastructure Improvements:** Invest in sidewalks, lighting, intersections, and wayfinding to improve access and reinforce the corridor’s evolving mixed-use identity.

By focusing on adaptive reuse, corridor safety, and economic clustering, the Sharpsville Avenue Corridor can evolve into a model for post-industrial regeneration, blending innovation with historic identity and regional connectivity.



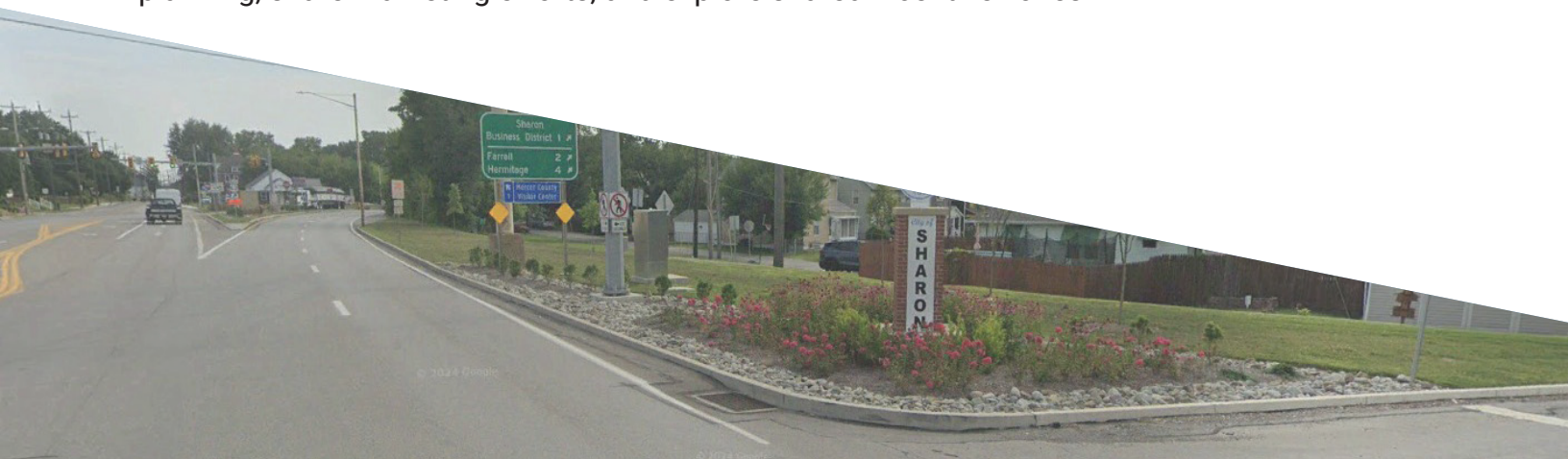
#7. South Irvine Avenue

Current Conditions: The South Irvine Avenue Corridor marks a key gateway between Sharon, PA, and Brookfield Township, OH, offering strong potential for regional connectivity and economic growth. Recent improvements on the Sharon side—including signage, landscaping, and road upgrades—enhance the city’s visibility. While the Ohio side has seen modest commercial growth, Sharon’s side remains underutilized, with a mix of residential and vacant parcels. To support future development, the City has rezoned the area to allow broader commercial uses, laying the groundwork for long-term reinvestment and corridor transformation.

Recognizing the corridor’s long-term potential, the City of Sharon has recently rezoned the South Irvine Avenue area to allow for a broader mix of land uses, including commercial development. This includes parts of the residential area, which may transition over time as strategic development opportunities arise. The rezoning provides a strong foundation for positioning the corridor as a future commercial node and welcoming entrance to the city.

Opportunities: South Irvine Avenue offers a prime cross-border economic development opportunity, with the potential to become a vibrant commercial gateway serving both Pennsylvania and Ohio markets.

- 1. Development-Ready Sites:** Vacant and underused parcels are well-suited for commercial use. The City should complete a site-readiness assessment and market the area with zoning, infrastructure, and traffic data to attract investment.
- 2. Long-Term Redevelopment Strategy:** Selective acquisition and land banking may be needed to support larger commercial footprints. Public-private partnerships and incentive zoning can guide this transition.
- 3. Infrastructure Planning:** Evaluate and upgrade roads, utilities, and stormwater systems to support future development and ensure safe, efficient access.
- 4. Cross-Border Coordination:** Partner with Brookfield Township and regional entities to align planning, share marketing efforts, and explore shared incentive zones.



#8. Walnut Avenue (Southside)

Current Conditions: The “Southside” refers to a primarily residential portion of Sharon along Walnut Avenue that has undergone significant change in recent years. This older neighborhood, once dense with housing, suffered from decades of disinvestment and blight. In response, the City and its partners have undertaken extensive demolition of condemned or dilapidated structures on the Southside. The result is a patchwork of cleared lots and open spaces where houses once stood. While the loss of population and historic homes is a challenge, this clearance has also created a blank canvas for new development. The Southside area is notable for its topography – it sits on a hillside that offers scenic views of the City skyline and the Shenango Valley below.

Opportunities: With many blighted structures removed, the Southside has emerged as a prime Housing Opportunity Area. Its abundance of vacant, buildable lots presents a rare chance to introduce new residential development at scale—ranging from single-family homes to clusters of townhouses or a small planned subdivision. The availability of contiguous parcels allows for larger projects that are difficult to achieve in built-out neighborhoods. With scenic hillside views and proximity to the City core, the Southside can be marketed to families, young professionals, and retirees seeking modern, low-maintenance housing options.

Revitalizing the Southside advances several strategic goals: it expands the City’s housing stock, turns vacant land into productive use, stabilizes the neighborhood, and strengthens the local tax base. As new homes bring new residents, nearby businesses will also benefit. Redevelopment will require a phased approach, beginning with a pilot project on a targeted cluster of lots to demonstrate success and attract continued investment. Over time, this area can evolve from a post-demolition landscape into a vibrant residential neighborhood that supports Sharon’s long-term growth.

#9. Steward Avenue (Industrial Property)

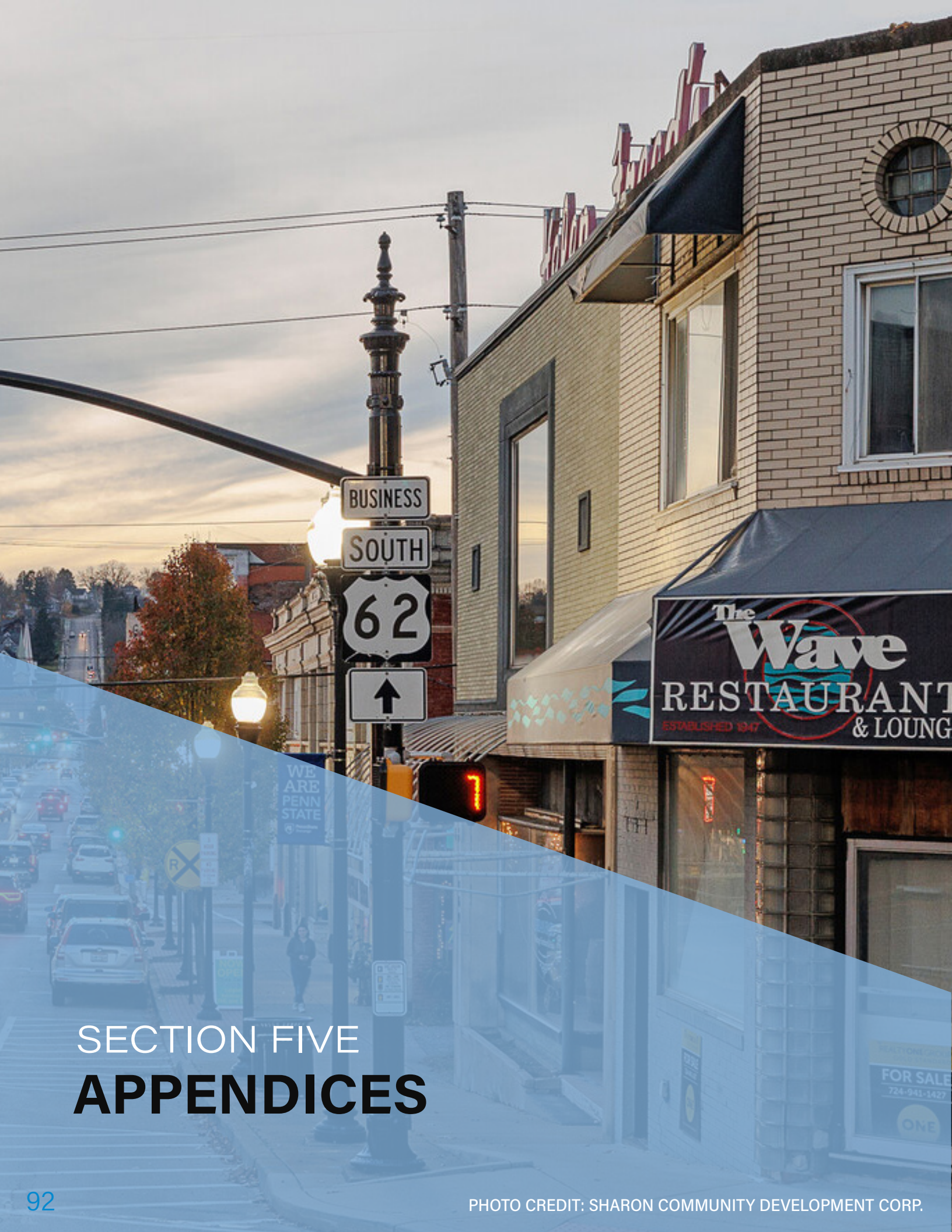
Current Conditions: The Steward Avenue area is a predominantly industrial zone situated along the Shenango River. Historically, this area housed manufacturing and warehouse operations that took advantage of rail and river access. Today, much of the land along Steward Avenue is underutilized or contains aging industrial facilities, some of which are no longer in active use. While the large parcels here are prime for redevelopment, one major challenge has been the area's limited access. Currently, Steward Avenue and its connecting streets provide only a single primary route in and out of this riverfront industrial enclave. The lack of multiple access points creates difficulties for traffic flow, especially for heavy trucks, and raises concerns for emergency response times.

Opportunities: Despite current access limitations, Steward Avenue presents a major redevelopment opportunity due to its size and riverfront location. Several properties along this corridor could be repurposed for new industrial, commercial, or even mixed-use development that takes advantage of river views. Unlocking this potential will require infrastructure improvements—most notably, extending an existing signalized intersection deeper into Steward Avenue to better manage traffic and improve accessibility.

With improved access, Steward Avenue could become a hub for modern industry or commerce aligned with the City's long-term vision. Redevelopment would reclaim underutilized riverfront land, offering the added potential for public amenities such as greenways or trails as obsolete structures are removed. These enhancements could complement new businesses or light industrial uses while improving environmental and recreational connections along the Shenango River. The City will need to work with state transportation agencies and regional partners to fund and implement these infrastructure upgrades. Over time, success on Steward Avenue could serve as a model for transforming isolated industrial sites into vibrant, multi-use districts that support economic growth and community well-being.



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SECTION FIVE APPENDICES

ADDITIONAL MPC PROVISIONS

This section incorporates themes and language aligned with the City of Sharon’s plan to comply with Pennsylvania’s Municipalities Planning Code (MPC). The MPC served as the primary framework for the plan’s development, ensuring that the planning process meets and exceeds its requirements.

Adjacent Communities

In accordance with Article III, Section 301 (5) of the MPC, the relationship between existing and proposed developments in Sharon must be analyzed in relation to developments in adjacent communities and the region. During the planning process, the City of Sharon provided a copy of the draft plan to all adjacent communities, the Mercer County Regional Planning Commission, and the Sharon City School District.

Interrelationship

A key aspect of effective community planning is the integration of interrelated activities to address issues and challenges. In this context, the elements, goals, and action items of the Sharon Comprehensive Plan are interconnected and should work together to advance the overall Vision of the plan.

State Water Plan

In line with Article III, Section 301 (b) of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, the Sharon Comprehensive Plan supports efforts to ensure a reliable water supply and to protect water sources. These efforts are developed with consideration of current and future water resource availability and usage limitations. The plan aligns with the Pennsylvania State Water Plan and acknowledges that:

- Lawful activities such as mineral extraction impact water supply sources, with such activities governed by statutes that require the replacement and restoration of affected water supplies.
- Commercial agricultural production also impacts water supply sources.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

To maximize participation from City residents, stakeholders, and other interested parties, multiple outreach methods were employed. A summary of these efforts is provided below:

Appointed Steering Committee

- The consultant team held regular meetings with the Steering Committee to gather essential information, review plan documents, and support outreach activities.

Stakeholders

- Various stakeholders identified by the City were interviewed and surveyed as part of the planning process. These individuals and organizations possess a vested interest or specific expertise relevant to the City's needs. The stakeholders included City staff, County representatives, housing agencies, realtors, social service agencies, economic development groups, redevelopment organizations, businesses, religious institutions, healthcare providers, wellness organizations, educational institutions, and others were contacted as a part of the process.

Public Surveys

- An initial public survey was created to gather initial information for the plan, was released in the winter of 2023 and received 459 responses (summary of responses below).
 - The majority of respondents were homeowners (55.4%) or individuals who work in the City (33.2%).
 - 80.97% of respondents reported feeling somewhat or very optimistic about the future of Sharon.
 - The top strengths identified were the police and fire departments, faith-based organizations, historic buildings, and community events.
 - The greatest weaknesses included the quality of housing, limited shopping/retail options, a lack of diverse housing choices, the City's image, and limited cultural amenities.
 - Residents prioritized addressing blighted homes/buildings, expanding retail/shopping options, providing more youth activities, revitalizing downtown, attracting new businesses, and enhancing parks and recreation.
 - Respondents' favorite features of Sharon included the strong sense of community, rich heritage, existing businesses, the downtown area, Buhl Park, and local community events.

Public Surveys

- A second public survey was conducted in the fall of 2024 to give those unable to attend the public meeting an opportunity to rank the draft recommendations. The survey received 108 responses.
 - The highest-ranked recommendations, as outlined in the Priority Focus Areas chapter, included develop a strategic marketing approach, increase collaboration with education institutions, strategically identify and attract industries and businesses that compliment existing ones, continuing the City’s demolition efforts, rehabilitating vacant and occupied homes addressing vacant lots, strengthening enforcement of property maintenance codes, creating a road maintenance plan, hosting additional community events, and developing riverfront properties.

Focus Groups

- Three separate focus groups were held to gather initial feedback on the City’s future priorities. Each group was tailored to a specific demographic or area of expertise: one focused on downtown and business development, another on housing, and a third included hand selected students at the high school.
 - The Business/Economic Development focus group highlighted several key assets, including the higher education opportunities, the river, walkability, and strong local leadership (elected officials, business owners, and organizational leaders). Top challenges identified were a persistent negative mindset (with the same individuals consistently involved), a declining and aging population, low-income housing, limited housing options, and concerns about housing quality.
 - The Housing Focus Group identified the top assets of the City as programs offered by Buhl Park and HopeCAT, a strong sense of community, a robust social services system (both within the City and surrounding areas), and the overall cost of living. The key issues highlighted were the need for quality job opportunities, safe and affordable housing, improvements in housing quality, and expanded and flexible public transportation options.
 - The Student Focus Group identified key interests in the City, including WaterFire, community events, school programs, the downtown area, art installations/murals, and the public library. Desired changes included addressing empty and vacant lots, improving public transportation, creating more places for children and teens, expanding dining options, and increasing entertainment opportunities.

Public Meeting/Hearing

- The City of Sharon held a public input session on September 17, 2024. During the meeting, attendees participated in a budget exercise where they allocated “fake money” to rank the proposed recommendations by funding priority.
 - The highest-ranked recommendations, as outlined in the Priority Focus Areas chapter, included continuing the City’s demolition efforts, rehabilitating vacant and occupied homes, conducting a housing assessment, developing a marketing strategy, enhancing collaboration with educational institutions, strengthening enforcement of property maintenance codes, creating a road maintenance plan, and developing riverfront properties.
- A public hearing was held on September 3rd, 2025.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATION DETAILS

The following pages provide additional supporting details for the key recommendations outlined in the Priority Focus Areas chapter. These expanded elements are intended to guide implementation efforts, offer context for proposed initiatives, and serve as a resource for partners and stakeholders involved in advancing revitalization goals. They cover a wide range of strategies and tools to enhance the community's vibrancy, livability, and long-term sustainability.

Included in these pages are marketing strategies to promote community assets, proposed design standards to elevate the appearance and function of key corridors, and information on successful programs such as those implemented by the Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation (YNDC). Additional resources highlight potential housing projects, urban greening efforts through pocket parks and gardens, expanded event calendars to increase community engagement, and economic development initiatives like the Homegrown program. Finally, emerging opportunities along the riverfront are detailed as critical components for recreation, connectivity, and placemaking. Together, these supporting materials help translate recommendations into action.



Marketing Programs or Ideas (Referenced on Page 31)

The following “programs” could be developed and promoted through the Sharon marketing strategy:

Corridors Program - Establish “corridors” and market these as companions to Sharon’s Downtown Corridor:

- *Arts and Cultural Corridor: Continue to promote outdoor murals, art sculptures, throughout the downtown.*

Gateways Program - Create welcoming gateways at key entry points into the City with signage, landscaping, and public art that celebrate Sharon’s unique character.

Sustainability and Quality Municipal Program - Market existing programs and sustainable initiatives, as well as invest in others as they are developed (i.e. alternative energy options, additional stormwater best management practices, etc.).

Local Organizations/Volunteer Program - Partner with volunteer organizations and market their creative programming, which also supports local businesses.

Pop-Up Shop Program - Partner with property owners to temporarily activate vacant storefronts, public spaces, or underutilized areas by allowing small businesses, artisans, and entrepreneurs to set up short-term retail or service locations.



Example of Art Walk; Roanoke, VA



Example of Gateway Signage; Pittsburgh, PA



Lots to Love Program; Sharon, PA

Reduce or eliminate setbacks

In walkable downtown areas, buildings are commonly required to be set at a build-to line, with exceptions for specified architectural elements, in order to create a cohesive street wall and sense of space. A consistent setback and continuity of building height would help reinforce this effect in Downtown Sharon.

Complete Streets

Refers to streets designed to accommodate a variety of users (pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, etc.), including people of all ages and those with disabilities. The specific design of complete streets vary according to the community setting (i.e. rural, urban, suburban) and the type of road. Typical elements of complete streets include: sidewalks, bike lanes or wide shoulders, painted crosswalks and pedestrian signals and traffic-calming measures.

Parking Minimums

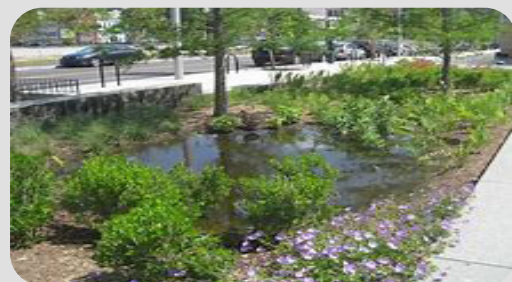
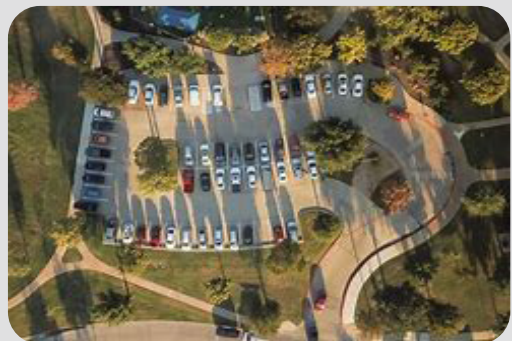
Many communities set no minimum requirements for downtown off-street parking, allowing market demand to dictate the necessary amount. Another option is to permit developers to leave some required parking spaces as unpaved green space unless it is later determined that they need to be constructed (which, in practice, is rarely the case).

Context Sensitive Design

This is an approach to transportation infrastructure that preserves or enhances an area's scenic, aesthetic, historic, and environmental resources and reflects community needs and priorities. Typical elements of context sensitive design include: natural features such as street trees, rain gardens, hanging flower baskets, and planter boxes; street furniture that meets people's needs while enhancing community aesthetics such as benches, recycling bins, kiosks, bike racks, and newspaper containers; signage such as banners hanging from light poles.

Envision landscaping and lighting

Design standards should include specific provisions for the type and placement of amenities such as street furniture, landscaping and lighting in the downtown.



Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation Active Programs (Referenced on Page 42)

These programs are part of YNDC's work to transform neighborhoods into meaningful places where people invest time, money, and energy into their homes and neighborhoods; where neighbors have the capacity to manage day-to-day issues; and where neighbors feel confident about the future of their neighborhood.

Homes for Sale

YNDC fully renovates vacant homes to a high standard for sale to new homeowners at an affordable price.

REVITALIZE Rentals

YNDC's REVITALIZE Rental program offers an opportunity to rent a quality rental unit.

HUD-Approved Housing Counseling

YNDC is a HUD-Approved Housing Counseling Agency dedicated to helping people achieve sustainable housing.

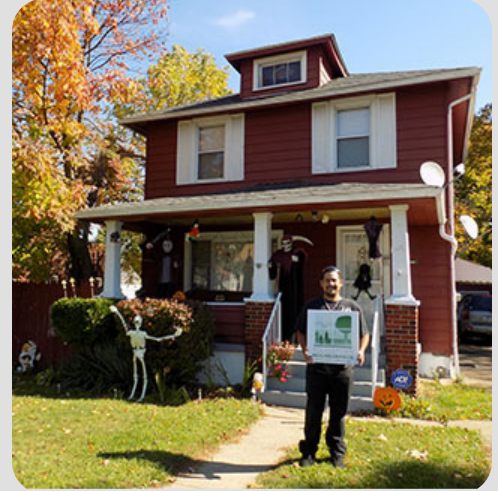
- Pre-purchase & Homebuyer Education: This includes guidance on homeownership readiness, FHA financing, housing selection, fair housing and lending, budgeting, credit, and loan comparison. It covers purchase procedures, closing costs, money management, choosing a real estate agent, and home inspections.
- Non-Delinquency Post-Purchase Counseling: These sessions help homeowners with financial management, home maintenance, escrow, budgeting, refinancing, home equity, improvements, and energy efficiency. They also cover loan and grant options, housing codes, accessibility features, non-discriminatory lending, universal design, and managing construction projects, including dealing with contractor issues.

Roof Replacement

YNDC offers a Roof Replacement program to assist residents of owner-occupied, single family homes with leaking roofs at NO COST to owners.

Emergency Home Repair

YNDC offers an emergency home repair program to assist residents of owner-occupied, single family homes with emergency repairs such as furnace and plumbing repairs at NO COST to owners.



yndc.org/programs

Pocket Parks & Urban Gardens (Referenced on Page 43)

Pocket Parks: A pocket park, also known as a mini-park or vest-pocket park, is a small public green space typically found in urban areas where land is limited and expensive. These parks usually occupy less than an acre and are often created on underutilized parcels such as vacant lots, alleys, or spaces between buildings. Despite their modest size, pocket parks serve as vital community assets by providing accessible recreational areas, enhancing neighborhood aesthetics, and offering residents a place to relax and socialize. By transforming neglected spaces into inviting environments, pocket parks promote social interaction among residents.



DUC Park (still under development) in St. Louis, MO

Urban Gardens: Urban gardens are cultivated spaces within city environments where individuals or communities grow plants, including vegetables, fruits, herbs, and flowers. These gardens can take various forms, such as community gardens, rooftop gardens, vertical gardens, or container gardens on balconies and patios. Urban gardens also foster community engagement by bringing people together to cultivate shared spaces, thereby strengthening neighborhood ties and promoting a sense of ownership and pride among participants.



Example of an urban garden; Philadelphia, PA

Shovel Ready Housing Projects (Referenced on Page 43)

Identifying select vacant lots for infill housing and developing a “shovel-ready” catalog of small home or modular designs is a strategic approach to revitalizing urban neighborhoods. This method focuses on utilizing scattered-site infill programs, where municipalities pinpoint underutilized parcels within existing communities for new housing developments. By offering pre-approved home designs, cities can streamline the planning and permitting process, saving developers significant time and resources.

South Bend Neighborhood Infill | Pre-Approved Building Types



SOUTH BEND NEIGHBORHOOD INFILL; City of South Bend, IN

South Bend, Indiana, has implemented an innovative pre-approved plan catalog to facilitate infill housing development on vacant lots within the city. This initiative offers a range of housing types—including single-family homes, duplexes, and six-unit apartments—that have been pre-vetted to comply with local zoning regulations and neighborhood aesthetics. By providing these ready-to-build designs, the city aims to streamline the permitting process, reduce construction costs, and encourage the revitalization of underutilized urban spaces.

Additional Event Opportunities (Referenced on Page 53)

January

- Winterfest (snow necessary)
- bonfire, sledgings, snow sculptures, s'mores, carriage rides
- Winter picnic in a park

February

- Valentines Day
- Black History Month
- National Bird Feeding Month - winter bird hike, education on best bird feeding methods for winter

March

- St. Patrick's Day
- Community Clean-Up Day
- Cultural Food Festival

April

- Easter Egg Hunt/Flashlight Egg Hunt
- Easter Bunny Walk
- First Day of Trout - PA Fish Commission presentation

May

- Mother's Day Activities
- Garden Planting - warm weather crops
- Memorial Day

June

- Flag Day
- Beginning of Summer - water related activities
- National Fishing Day (Fishing Tournaments)

July

- Summer picnic in a park
- Parks & Recreation Month
- Christmas in July

August

- Geocaching - utilize local businesses or points of interest in the City
- Back to School

September

- Labor Day
- National Grandparents Day

October

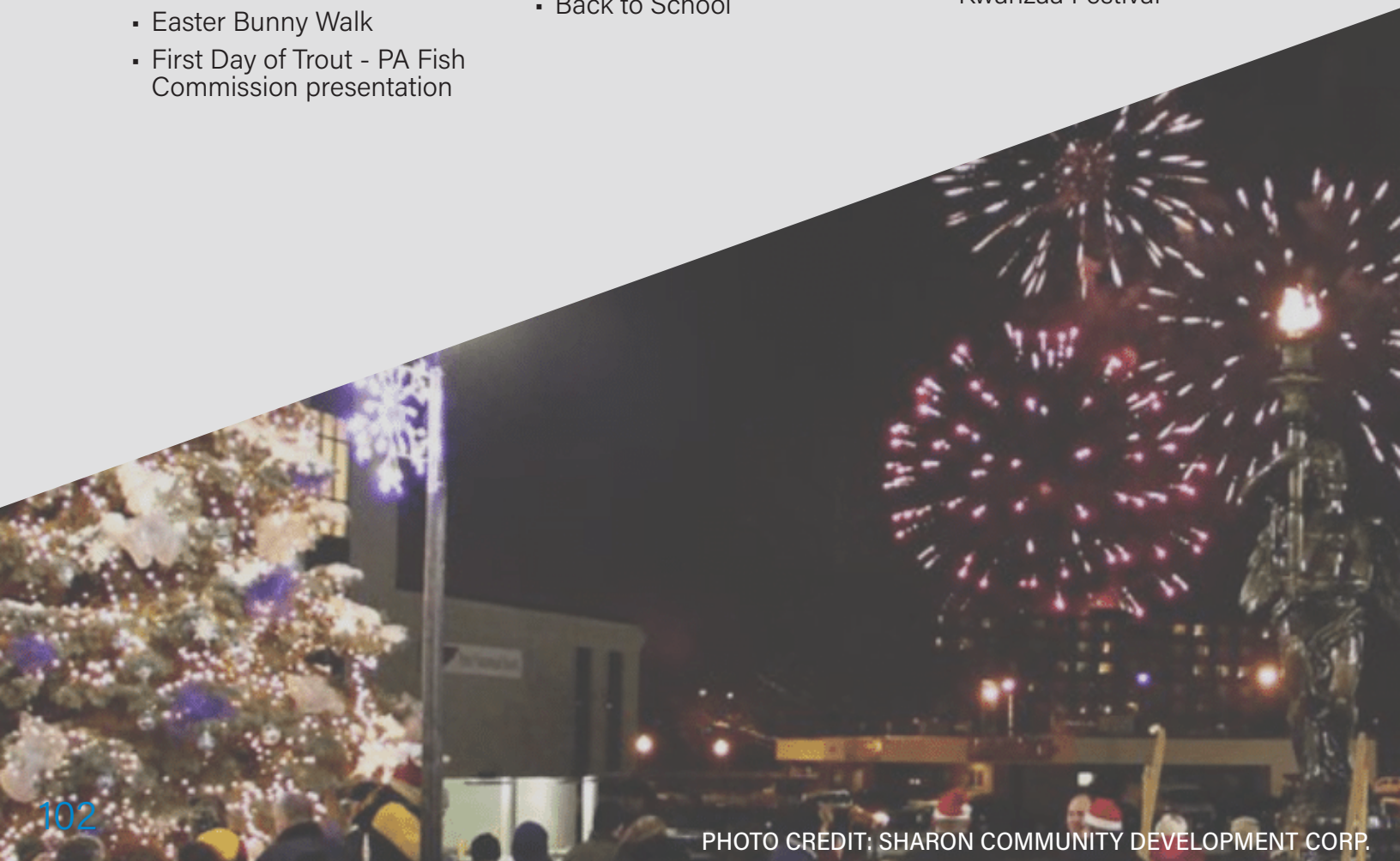
- Halloween Party
- Haunted Walk
- Costume Contests

November

- Veterans Day
- Friendsgiving - potluck
- Diwali Celebration (note: this holiday changes depending on the lunar month)
- Warm Clothing Drive

December

- Holiday Light Scavenger Hunt
- Hanukkah Celebration
- Kwanzaa Festival



The Penn-Northwest Homegrown Initiative (Referenced on Page 55)

The directive to “coordinate with the Homegrown Initiative to identify industries with high local demand and align career programs accordingly” refers to a strategic collaboration aimed at enhancing workforce development in Mercer County, Pennsylvania. The Homegrown Initiative, spearheaded by the Penn-Northwest Development Corporation’s Future Leaders, is dedicated to connecting residents with employment opportunities, housing, education, and community activities within the region.



Inaugural Run for the Roses; Buhl Mansion

This collaboration enables the alignment of educational and vocational training programs with the specific needs of these high-demand sectors, ensuring that residents acquire relevant skills that lead to gainful employment. Such a targeted approach not only addresses workforce shortages but also fosters economic growth by retaining talent within the community and reducing unemployment rates.

Implementing this strategy involves several key actions:

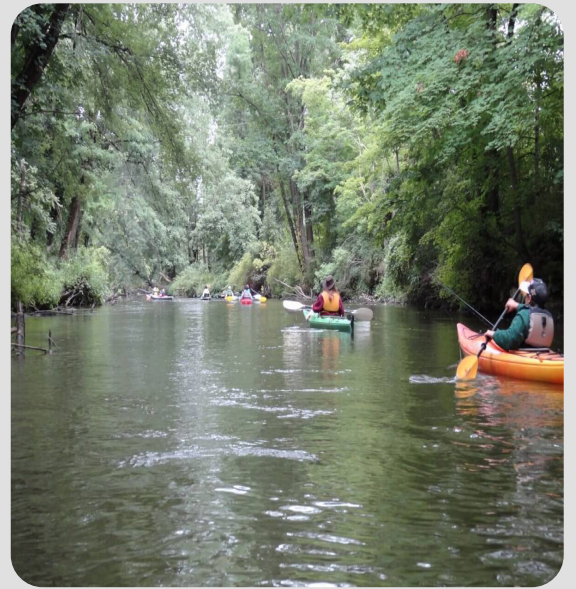
- **Labor Market Analysis:** Conduct comprehensive assessments to identify current and projected industry demands within the City.
- **Curriculum Development:** Collaborate with educational institutions to design or modify training programs that reflect the skills required by these industries.
- **Employer Engagement:** Establish partnerships with local businesses to provide internships, apprenticeships, and job placement opportunities for program graduates.
- **Continuous Feedback Loop:** Maintain ongoing communication between the Homegrown Initiative, educational providers, and employers to adapt programs as industry needs evolve.

Upper Shenango River Water Trail:

Shenango River, PA

The Upper Shenango River Water Trail offers 23 miles of scenic paddling for canoeists, kayakers, and even inner tube enthusiasts, with the trail ending at Shenango Lake. Expanding the trail's accessibility and connectivity could provide a valuable tourism opportunity, drawing more visitors into the City of Sharon.

By improving access points and linking the water trail to downtown areas, it could serve as a recreational hub, encouraging both locals and tourists to explore the riverfront, boosting local businesses, and enhancing the City's appeal as a tourism destination. Expanding this water trail network could create a continuous experience for paddlers, while also promoting economic growth through recreational tourism.



Riverfront Development Case Study:

City of Warren, PA

The City of Warren, Pennsylvania is actively working on revitalizing its riverfront as part of a larger regional initiative to enhance recreational opportunities and boost tourism. A key component of this effort is the proposed development of a new boat launch, which would improve water access along the Allegheny River, an important waterway for the region.

Proposed upgrades include widening roads for improved traffic flow, also adding downtown parking, installing new sidewalks, and improving streetscape elements. Furthermore, the project envisions the creation of a new trail along the river to enhance accessibility and encourage tourism.



Additional Land Bank Funding Sources (Referenced on Page 68)

Land Bank Funding Sources

Common Funding Sources Used by Land Banks in Pennsylvania

| Funding | Project Type | Funding Source | Availability | Award Type | Are Land Banks Eligible? | Award Size | Application Due Date | More Information |
|---|---|--|--|-----------------|---|--|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Act 137 Optional Affordable Housing Funds Act | Affordable housing | County | County specific | Grant | Determined by county | Determined by county | N/A | Link |
| Act 152 Demolition Funds | Demolition | County | County specific | Grant | Determined by county | Determined by county | N/A | Recent Report |
| Blight Remediation Program | Remediation planning, remediation | State - CFA | Competitive | Grant | Land banks eligible, unique benefit of higher administrative cost allowance | Up to \$25,000 for planning, up to \$300,000 for remediation | 2020 - July | Link |
| Community Development Block Grants | Housing rehabilitation, public services, community facilities, infrastructure improvement, development and planning | State - DCED, Federal - HUD (for CDBG entitlement jurisdictions) | DCED program has entitlement component and competitive component | Grant | Municipalities and counties (Land banks must partner with funded jurisdictions) | DCED competitive program has a minimum request of \$100,000 and has no ceiling limit; Formulaic funding to entitlement communities | | Link |
| Community Revitalization Fund Program | Affordable housing in commercial corridors | State - PHFA | Competitive | Grant | Land banks eligible | Between \$500,000 and \$1 million | 2020 - December | Link |
| EPA Brownfield Grant | Assessment and cleanup of brownfields | Federal - EPA | Competitive | Grant | Localities, Local public authorities, agencies or instrumentalities of local government, COGs, RDAs, nonprofits | Assessment grants: \$200,000-\$600,000; Cleanup grants: up to \$500,000; Multipurpose grants: up to \$800,000 | Deadline for FY2021 was Oct 28, 2020 | Link |
| HOME Investment Partnerships Program | Affordable housing | State - DCED, Federal - HUD | Competitive (DCED allocations) | Grant | Units of local government (may also apply on behalf of others) | Maximum funding availability varies by eligible activity. | | Link |
| Interest Income | Land bank specific | Land bank investments | Land bank specific | Interest income | Land bank eligible | Related to investment size | N/A | |

Summary of Land Bank and Partner Funding Sources

as of January 12, 2021



| Funding | Project Type | Funding Source | Availability | Award Type | Are Land Banks Eligible? | Award Size | Application Due Date | More Information |
|--|--|-------------------------------------|---|---|--|---|----------------------|----------------------|
| Keystone Communities Program | Community and economic development projects | State - DCED | Competitive | Multiple types of grants | Land banks eligible | Specific to the grant and program | | Link |
| Local Share Account (Gaming Funds) | County Specific | County | County specific | Grant | Determined by county | Determined by county | N/A | Link |
| Member Contributions | Land bank specific | Land bank member jurisdiction(s) | Land bank specific - based on ICAs with municipalities or a direct general fund allocation to the land bank | Agreed upon amount | Land bank specific | Based on ICA or other agreement | N/A | |
| PHARE (RTT and Marcellus Shale) | Demolition, affordable housing, rehabilitation, community development, homelessness prevention, housing services | State - PHFA | Competitive; county specific for Marcellus Shale funding | Grant | Land banks eligible | Up to \$500,000 for most projects; up to \$1 million for LIHTC projects | 2020 - November | Link |
| Philanthropic Funds/ Private Donations | Funder specific | Philanthropies, other funders | Funder specific | Grants | Determined by funder | Determined by funder | N/A | |
| Property Sales | Re-investment into Land Bank | Sales of properties by Land Banks | Land bank specific | | Land bank specific | | | |
| Tax Revenue Sharing | Redeveloped properties | Land Bank member taxing authorities | Land bank specific - Based on ICAs with municipalities | 5 years of sharing 50 % of increased property taxes with taxing jurisdictions | State authority granted only to land banks | Based on ICA | N/A | Link |

Acronyms:

- CFA - [Pennsylvania Commonwealth Finance Agency](#)
- DCED - [Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development](#)
- HUD - [U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development](#)
- ICA - [Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreement, example agreements can be found here](#)
- M - Million
- PHARE - [Pennsylvania Housing Affordability Fund](#), the state housing trust fund
- PHFA - [Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency](#)
- RTT - Realty Transfer Tax, imposed by the state and local taxing authorities

Summary of Land Bank and Partner Funding Sources

as of January 12, 2021



Other Potential Funding Sources for Land Banks and/or Their Partner Organizations

| Funding | Project Type | Funding Source | Availability | Award Type | Applicant Type | Award Size | Application Due Date | More Information |
|--|--|-------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|---|--|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Business in Our Sites | Acquisition and development, including demolition and rehabilitation | DCED, CFA | Competitive | Loan, Combined Grant and Loan | Municipalities, RDAs, municipal authorities, IDAs, private developers (construction loans only) | No limit for loans, maximum \$4M or 40% of total combined award (whichever is less) for grants | Contact CFA | Link |
| Industrial Sites Reuse Program | Environmental site assessment and industrial site remediation | DCED | Competitive | Grant, Loan | Public entities, private nonprofit economic development entities, companies | Grants and loans up to \$200,000 for environmental assessments; Grants and loans up to \$1 million for remediation | Rolling submissions | Link |
| Low Income Housing Tax Credit, 9% | Construction and rehabilitation of affordable housing | IRS, PHFA | Competitive | Tax Credit | Developers | \$800,000 - \$1.25M (range of awards in 2020) | March 5, 2021 | Link |
| Mixed-Use Incentive Program Tax Abatement | Construction and rehabilitation | Taxing authorities | Taxing authority specific | Tax Abatement | Property owners | Depends on value of improvements | New program, waiting for guidelines | Link |
| Neighborhood Assistance Program | Affordable housing, blight mitigation, other investments in distressed neighborhoods | DCED | Competitive | Tax Credit | Nonprofit community organizations and businesses | Tax credits of 55%-80% of business contributions | 2020 - August | Link |
| Public Works; Economic Adjustment Assistance Programs | Economic development | EDA | Competitive | Grant | Municipalities, nonprofits | \$100,000 - \$30M | Rolling submissions | Link |
| Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP, RCAP) | Acquisition and construction | PA Office of the Budget | Competitive | Grant | Any entity with an eligible project | \$250,000 - \$10M (range of awards in 2020) | 2020 - August | Link |
| Section 108 Loan Guarantee | Economic development, housing, and infrastructure projects | HUD, DCED | Noncompetitive | Loan Guarantee | Municipalities | | | Link |

Summary of Land Bank and Partner Funding Sources

as of January 12, 2021



Sharon Comp Plan

Market and Real Estate Analysis



Prepared For:

City of Sharon

Prepared By:

4ward Planning Inc.

May 13, 2024

Executive Summary

Study Purpose

The City of Sharon is currently updating its comprehensive plan and would like to identify market-viable prospective redevelopment/development opportunities and business attraction strategies for recruiting and/or expanding businesses within the city. Working in collaboration with Mackin, 4ward Planning Inc. performed a high-level market analysis to better understand existing market conditions within and surrounding the city of Sharon in order to make redevelopment/development recommendations.

Study Background

Like many post-industrial cities in western Pennsylvania, the city of Sharon has faced challenges in the mid-20th century due to factors such as a decline in the steel industry and an increase in blighted properties from disinvestment due to population and jobs losses. In response to economic challenges, Sharon has undergone various adaptation and revitalization efforts over the years and has actively pursued community development initiatives aimed at revitalizing its downtown area, addressing blighted properties, attracting businesses, and enhancing the quality of life for residents.

Previous Revitalization Efforts

Armed with \$14.7 million in COVID relief funds through the American Rescue Plan (ARP), in 2022, the City of Sharon hired two economic development officials to support businesses, attract new enterprises, and promote destination happenings. The downtown development director and downtown events coordinator positions were tasked with helping to attract and retain business as well as coordinate events for the downtown business district. The City of Sharon received a Keystone Communities Program grant from the Pennsylvania Downtown Center (PDC), the state's Main Street America program partner, to develop a strategy and future funding streams to become a designated Main Street America community through a public/private partnership. The Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development prioritizes grants funds to designated Main Street America communities. Since then, the Sharon Community Development Corporation (SCDC) was formed to pursue façade improvement program funding and, ultimately, for designation of the downtown as a business improvement district.

The ARP funds were also applied to a \$2 million endowment in partnership with the downtown Sharon Penn State Shenango campus to help attract and support new businesses in the city, and \$750,000 to assist existing businesses and use as an incentive to attract new enterprises. Powered by the Greater Sharon Community and a program of the Invent Penn State Initiative, the Shenango LaunchBox program assists early-stage startups with accelerator support through free and low-cost targeted programming, coaching, resources, and mentor connections. As a community resource open to all entrepreneurs, in October 2023, the Shenango LaunchBox program opened a new space at the Hope Center for Arts and Technology, Inc. (HopeCAT) located in Sharon north of West State Street. HopeCAT is a non-profit organization that provides free after school youth arts programs, adult training programs, and a resident artist house program.

The LaunchBox initiative has already made great strides in its new space - engaged with approximately 70 area entrepreneurs, collaborating with the local Gannon SBDC representative, and hosting a monthly

Sharon Comp Plan Market and Real Estate Analysis

Meet Ben lunch-and-learn speaker series. Between programming activity at HopeCAT and LaunchBox, and Penn-Northwest Development Corporation's *Homegrown Initiative* industry outreach to area K through 12 students, there is a growing, concerted effort in Sharon and the Shenango Valley to provide education and training for local career and entrepreneurial pathways. Additionally, new industry developments such as the WestWinn Urban Ag aquaponics farm that recently opened in the former Westinghouse plant in downtown Sharon is testament to the city's focus on new industry and job creation.

In particular, the City of Sharon is interested in answering the following questions:

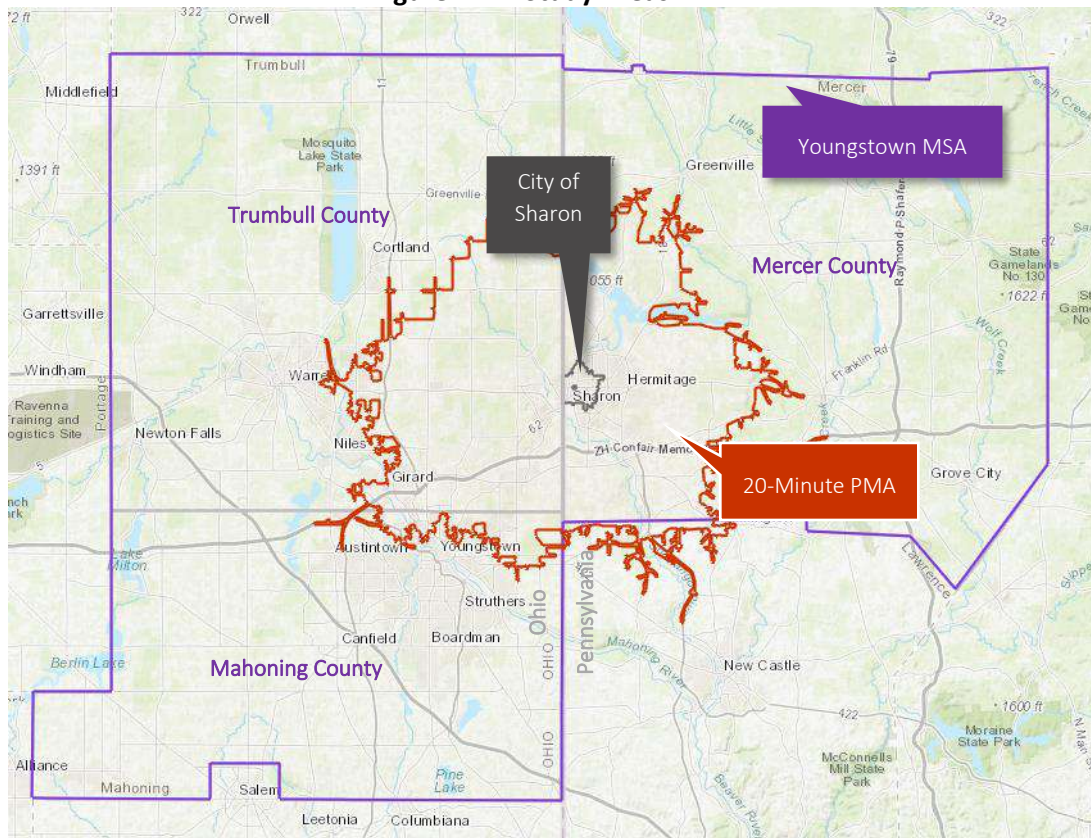
1. **Quality of Life:** What actions or strategies will best promote quality of life for current and future city residents?
2. **Housing:** How can we develop and implement wise policies, legislation, and programs to enhance housing for changing community and economic conditions and lifestyles?
3. **Commercial:** What can the City of Sharon do to improve commercial development areas and promote future development and redevelopment?
4. **Economic:** What strategies can we pursue to promote overall economic development and employment opportunities in the city and region?

Study Areas

The market and real estate analysis examines the following study areas:

- **City of Sharon:** Serves as the base area.
- **20-Minute PMA:** This contour represents the 20-minute drive-time contour from the intersection of State and Railroad Streets, serving as the primary market area (PMA) and representing the catchment area from which 70 percent or more of potential visitors would originate.
- **Youngstown-Warren-Boardman, OH-PA Metropolitan Statistical Area (Youngstown MSA):** This three-county MSA is represented by Mercer County in Pennsylvania and Mahoning and Trumbull Counties in Ohio.

Figure 1. Study Areas



Source: Esri

Market Takeaways

Near-term housing demand will continue to be driven by shifts in housing needs and preferences as households from the region move or change.

Given relatively flat near-term household growth, housing demand will come from shifts in housing needs and preferences as people from the region move due to various factors (e.g. employment opportunities, lifestyle changes, healthcare considerations, and financial situations).

For example, between 2010 and 2023, the number of residents ages 35 to 54 (representing early and late-stage families) living in both the city and the PMA declined, while the number of residents between ages 60 and 80 increased (representing aging empty nesters). This trend reflects an aging population and outmigration of younger residents.

The recent loss of prime workforce age city residents was likely due to the decline in local job opportunities (the city lost 1,340 primary jobs from 2020 to 2021), with people moving out of Sharon in search of employment. New private or public sector investment (e.g., façade improvements and CDBG funding for home repairs) in the city can help attract new households from the region and increase market demand for new goods and services, which can help create more jobs.

New downtown studios or one-bedroom apartments could help alleviate the existing housing supply/demand mismatch in Sharon, as well as begin to attract younger residents to Sharon.

Likely driven by strong recent growth among non-family households, there is a current mismatch between housing size and household size in the city, with the share of one-person households more than twice the share of studios and one-bedroom units, combined. As a result, some individuals living alone in the city might prefer to reside in smaller, more affordable studios or one-bedroom units if available but are paying more for larger housing units.

Renovating upper floors of several of the buildings downtown into studios or one-bedroom apartments could help alleviate the existing housing imbalance in Sharon, as well as attract younger residents to Sharon.

Market Opportunities

The following market-viable prospective redevelopment/development opportunities were identified based on market and real estate findings.

Mixed-Use Redevelopment

The 12.74-acre underutilized community shopping center presents a mixed-use residential development opportunity. An in-depth redevelopment study is needed to identify the type and scale of project which would be financially feasible. Planning grant funds from the state could help facilitate this effort.

Largely due to a considerable number of physically obsolescent housing units, by 2028, there will be an estimated net demand for approximately 1,755 residential units in the 20-minute PMA. Assuming between three and five percent of these units could be accommodated in the city of Sharon, the downtown could accommodate between approximately 53 and 88 units by 2028.

The 12.74-acre community shopping center on West State Street at Water Ave (the site of the former Reyers shoe store¹) has the potential to be redeveloped as mixed-use residential (e.g., townhouses and duplexes), which could help meet unmet housing demand and attract new residents and visitors, bringing back much-needed foot traffic to downtown businesses. Furthermore, given the site's location, its redevelopment could create a more attractive gateway into downtown Sharon and feature new retail.



Encourage education and further discussion about the benefits of land bank development.

Although there has been countywide discussion about land bank development, with many interested communities showing support, creation of a land bank has not been approved. This lack of consensus may be due to misunderstanding of the benefits of a land bank for all municipalities involved. A case study review of county-level land bank creation and their impacts may be helpful in educating all involved parties. The first step in this process could be facilitating a meeting open to county officials and interested stakeholders to hear of the benefits, challenges and steps associated with establishing a land bank program.

¹ Due to falling regional consumer traffic to downtown Sharon and rising internet sales, the Reyers shoe store (once known as the world's largest shoe store) ended its 135-year run in downtown Sharon in 2021 and moved 15 miles away to the Eastwood Mall in Niles, Ohio.

Downtown Revitalization Recommendations

Continue to encourage residential use above the ground-floor retail along Main Street.

Continuing to encourage residential use above the ground-floor retail along Main Street through a combination of initiatives (zoning updates, financial incentives (CDBG and RCAP funded), and community engagement strategies) will help attract new residents and visitors from the region, bringing back much-needed foot traffic to downtown businesses. These residential units should be marketed and priced with both Penn State students and young professionals in mind.

Address negative perceptions of downtown safety.

As negative perceptions of downtown safety can be as detrimental to attracting new residents, businesses, and visitors as actual safety issues, the City of Sharon should consider creating a public education campaign juxtaposing the perceptions versus the reality of downtown safety. Engaging one or more local media outlets to feature stories in support of this effort is strongly recommended.

Business Attraction Strategies

The following business attraction strategies were identified for recruiting and/or expanding businesses within the city.

Implement a survey to identify any unmet retail service, dining, or entertainment offerings which could be accommodated downtown.

A brief survey should be created and distributed to residents and visitors (perhaps during the city's various annual events such as WaterFire Sharon, Spring Fling, Father's Day Car Show, and the Holiday Extravaganza). Survey findings could help identify unmet retail services, dining, or entertainment offerings which could be accommodated downtown.

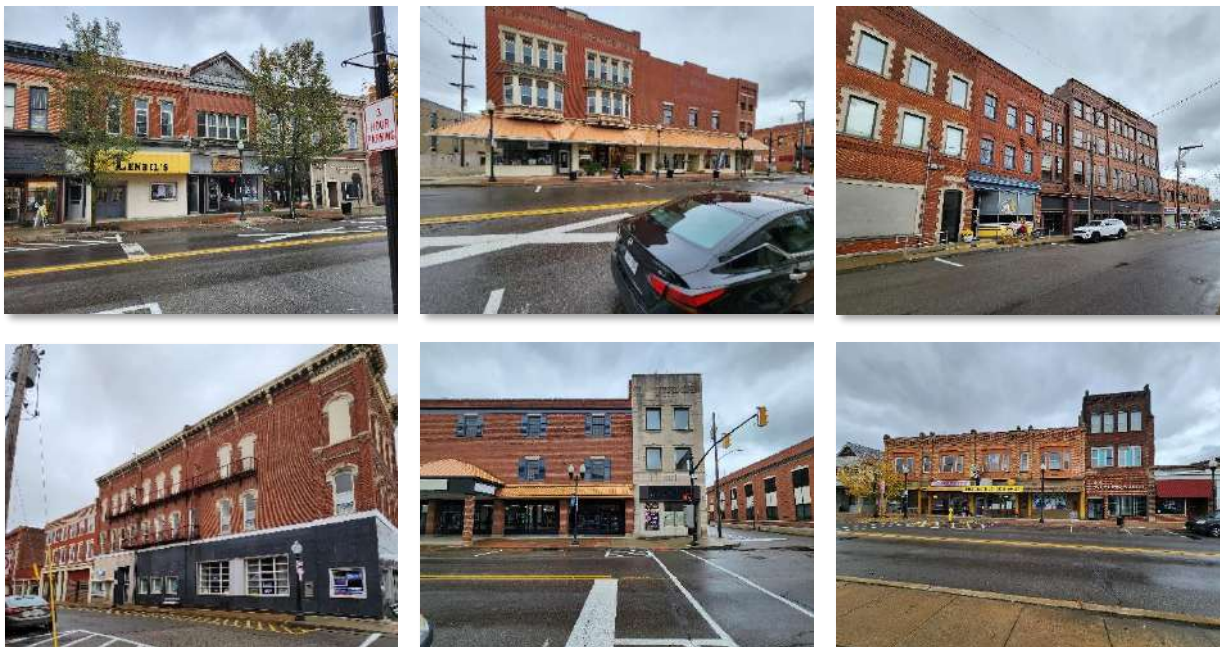
Continue to implement the downtown façade improvement program to leverage the city's historical mixed-use properties.

Many of the buildings along Main Street could greatly benefit from inexpensive façade improvements (e.g., a fresh coat of paint, a new signage, an awning repair or replacement), which could help improve downtown Sharon's overall appearance and potentially attract new businesses and customers.

The Sharon Community Development Corporation (SCDC) recently announced its new façade improvement grant program with funding from Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) allocations approved for the 2021 program year. The maximum grant amount is \$5,000 and requires a 25 percent match of the total project. The goal of the façade grant program is to improve real estate property aesthetics, create unified character, and drive visitation and business through curb appeal.

Additionally, the SCDC is awaiting news of state funding for its joint Sharon/Hermitage Façade Improvement Program, which would represent a \$25,000 allocation for projects in downtown Sharon.

Figure 2. Main Street Businesses



Continue to enhance downtown Sharon's identity as a center for artists and entrepreneurs.

Communities and districts seeking revitalization often need more than brick-and-mortar improvements to turn the tide. Creating an identity or enhancing one which reflects the spirit and character of the location can serve to attract business investment, drawing visitors and residents seeking the out-of-the-ordinary. This can be thought of as the community's brand.

The mix of historical buildings, retail shops, small eateries and art displays found in downtown Sharon are the basis of its brand and should be embraced. Further, the city's relatively low cost of living and the charm of its diverse land uses will continue to attract creatives and entrepreneurs who will contribute their talent in ways that amplify downtown Sharon's brand and make it a recognizable and inviting place to work, shop, and live.

The non-profit Random Acts of Artists (RAA) street art initiative, the ACTS Performing Arts Center, WaterFire festival, and annual Love Local Artisan Market are examples of Sharon's creation of unique appeal to potential makers (artisans and crafts people).

The ACTS theater, WaterFire festival, and Love Local Market have become regional attractions. The City of Sharon should continue to partner with HopeCAT and develop a strategy to make downtown Sharon a more unique and attractive place for artists and young entrepreneurs.

Create and inventory of properties in need of renovation to attract investment.

Millennials are increasingly becoming a significant force in the housing market, with some choosing to move to afford purchasing a home, particularly those able to work remotely or start a new business.

Sharon Comp Plan Market and Real Estate Analysis

To attract potential residents and business entrepreneurs, the City of Sharon should create an inventory of historic properties in need of renovation that are available for purchase or lease. These properties should be marketed online and in social media to help attract remote workers/business entrepreneurs drawn to Sharon's low cost of living and artistic vibe. Property details could include high-quality photos, virtual tours, overview of current building condition, asking purchase price, renovation possibilities, and estimated costs, property disclosures, and potential financial incentives or resources (tax breaks, grants, or special financing options).