

# **“Monessen: A New Vision”**

*The Mayor’s Innovation Strategic Plan*

*The Office of the Mayor  
Hon. Mayor Matthew Shorraw  
City of Monessen  
MMXIX*



*“Non potest civitas abscondi supra montem posita.”*

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## **Introduction**

*“To achieve great things, two things are needed: A plan, and not quite enough time.” - Leonard Bernstein*

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## **About this Plan**

The purpose of this plan is to spark a conversation about Monessen’s future, how the city can grow, and how it can reinvent itself for the 21st Century. It is also to provide a road map of goals to accomplish and work towards. These goals consist of short, medium and long term goals, that could help drive inclusive growth, correct historical wrongs, change the perception of our city and its image, and pull us out of the rut of only focusing on one issue at a time. Investments and capital improvements attract economic development, which are all things our city needs in order to build a more successful and productive community. This plan focuses on various aspects of our city, but it is certainly not an end all be all solution to all of the problems Monessen faces. This is simply a start.

Some of the projects outlined in this plan, can be done with little to no cost, with volunteers, or other partnerships. In the instances where cost will come into play, unless otherwise noted in the plan, private funding through public-private partnerships, grant funding, foundation support and other donations will help to offset the costs, and grow the limited funding that the City of Monessen has. By doing this, we can get a bigger bang for our buck’, without placing an additional burden on the taxpayers.

*\*No portion of the creation of this plan was funded by taxpayer dollars.*

## **Executive Summary**

The City of Monessen is in a great position to grow with the Pittsburgh Region. We have many opportunities here, and we have room to grow and build. According to a report from George Washington University and Brookings, Pittsburgh is poised to see the urbanization and growth of its suburbs in the near future. Monessen can be part of that growth. Geographically, it is no accident that Monessen was established where it is. We were built to be a commercial and industrial hub for the area. Monessen is centrally located to five county seats. We are adjacent to the I-70 corridor, as well as the various major shipping centers nearby. We are close enough to easily access Pittsburgh markets, and attract new residents and businesses through that market. If done successfully, we will build up the entire Mid-Mon Valley area. Monessen is also the “Gateway to the Laurel Highlands”, and is situated near the middle, and on the westernmost border of the Laurel Highlands. The Laurel Highlands spans three counties - Westmoreland, Fayette, and Somerset. Not only is the city situated in the Mid-Mon Valley, but it is also located within the Rivers of Steel Heritage Corridor, the Mon Valley Creative Corridor, and the Greater Pittsburgh Region. Monessen is also a Mon River Town.

Monessen is lucky, in that it has a diverse population, a low cost of living, and a significant amount of vacant property to develop and rebuild. Our city has a walkable urbanized downtown, and walkable residential neighborhoods. This is important because many businesses are moving out of business parks and into walkable urban areas. It is also notable that jobs created by and driven by a knowledge-based economy typically go to walkable urban areas.

In order to improve Monessen for its current residents, and to attract new people and businesses, we need to invest in people, places, and infrastructure, and enhance our quality of place. We need to set projects and goals that are in the short term, medium term, and long term. We need to address local societal issues like the opioid epidemic, depression, generational poverty, and a lack of economic opportunities, and provide solutions to those issues. We also need to ensure that everything we do provides social equity to all of our residents. Studies show that metro areas that are ranked highly for economic performance also rank highly for social equity.

In order to attract businesses, we need great schools, arts and community programming, city-wide recreation, stable and safe neighborhoods, and a trainable workforce. In regards to workforce and business, we have the opportunity to attract Mid-tech jobs, which are essentially blue collar technology sector jobs. Given our economic history, and the workforce that we have available in Monessen and the surrounding region, this path forward makes sense. We can supplement the technology sector in Pittsburgh, by providing the production of parts needed in technology-related industries. This will provide jobs to Monessen, and will limit shipping cost and time for local companies in Pittsburgh and the rest of the region.

All in all, Monessen is built for success, we just need to refocus our energies on reinvigorating our city, and shaping it into a welcoming, productive, and progressive city. We have walkable neighborhoods, a walkable business district, a variety of homes, and reasonable cost of living, and the opportunity for growth. We could drive an hour north and be in the city, or an hour south and be in the mountains. We are in the perfect location to grow, and bring the rest of the Mid-Mon Valley with us!

This plan is not an 'end-all-be-all'. This plan is a road map to show us how we can move forward and implement changes that other cities and communities across the country have done, successfully. This plan is meant to be a long term plan to begin the process of rebuilding our city. We have a lot of work to do, but we have a lot of hope and opportunity. Our city and its people are resilient-even decades after the fall of steel. Our resilience is what will help move our city into the future.

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## **A City On A Hill:** **Monessen in a Snapshot**

*“The company’s first manager, Mr. M.J. Alexander, constructed a title for the proposed town out of the thought that there was to be a New World Essen on the Monongahela River, and the name, “Monessen” was adopted.” -H. Dallas McCabe, Land Surveyor*

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### **The City of Monessen, An Overview**

A Third Class City, Westmoreland County, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Land Surveyed: 1894-1897, Founded 1898, Incorporated as a City: 1921  
Named for the Monongahela River and Essen, Germany

**Population:** 7,474

**Land Area:** 2.8 Square Miles

**Region:** Greater Pittsburgh

**Corridors:** Laurel Highlands, Rivers of Steel Heritage, Mid-Mon Valley

**Economy:** The unemployment rate in Monessen is 4.4% (The US Average is 3.9%). Recent job growth is Positive. Monessen jobs have increased by 0.3%

**Rent vs. Own:** Rent: 30%, Own 70%

**Median Home Value:** \$74,500 (*National: \$184,700*)

**Median Rent:** \$595 (*National: \$949*)

**Median Household Income:** \$38,777 (*National: \$55,322*)

**Racial Diversity:** 78% White; 13% African American; 6% Two or More Races;  
2% Hispanic; 1% Asian

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*“Monessen: A New Vision” Mayor’s Strategic Plan*

**Cost of Living:** Compared to the rest of the country, Monessen's cost of living is 21.6% lower than the US average.

**Unemployment Rate:** 4.4%

**Poverty Rate:** 19.1%

**Estimated Population Change:** (Compared to 2010) -5.7%

**Households:** 3,660

**Bachelor's Degree or Higher (Of persons over 25 years old):** 19.7%

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# **Monessen Community Development Corp.**

## **Community Survey Data**

*“Everybody was busy, and consequently, everybody was happy, and so we laid the foundations of the city.” - H. Dallas McCabe, Land Surveyor*

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**Overview:** Monessen Community Development Corporation (MCDC) which was founded in 1987, has the stated purpose to *“foster, promote, and implement programs to ensure the economic revitalization and stability of the area; to establish and maintain channels of communication with public officials, neighborhood and civic group leaders, business and professional people of the area, and residents of the community in an effort to foster, stimulate, and promote ideas for the economic redevelopment and/or revitalization of Monesse; and, to advance, encourage, and promote the commercial, business, and industrial development of the business districts, in whatever way and by such means as shall improve the named growth and development of the area.”* MCDC, with the help of volunteers, circulated a community survey, to gauge the opinions of Monessen residents. This endeavor was undertaken between September and November, 2019. According to Monessen’s total population, a survey response count of 350 would have been ideal to get an accurate representation of all residents. This number was not obtained, due to volunteer limitations, and some reluctance among residents to take the survey. Overall, we obtained 36 survey responses. While this is not the desired survey response outcome, it is necessary to publish this data, and share the ideas of the respondents. This survey was conducted anonymously, and the responses below also reflect that.

Respondents were asked 25 questions. Each question and the data obtained are listed below. Some questions were multiple choice, some ranked choice, and others asked for written responses. Not all questions were answered by respondents.

## **Survey Questions and Participant Data**

### **1. Are you currently a stakeholder or resident of Monessen?**

35 answered "Yes"

0 answered "No"

1 No Answer

### **2. If you are a resident, how long have you lived in Monessen?**

3 answered 0-3 years

3 answered 4-10 years

3 answered 11-24 years

25 answered 25+ years

2 No Answer

### **3. If you relocated to Monessen, where have you previously resided?**

Monongahela, PA

Boynton, FL

Bethlehem, PA

Wilmington, NC

Columbus, OH

Charleroi, PA

McKeesport, PA

Ohioville, PA

Greensburg, PA

Pittsburgh, PA

Philadelphia, PA

New Eagle, PA

Greensburg, PA

West Newton, PA

Belpre, OH

Washington, PA

Armagh, PA

Bethlehem, PA

21 Not Answered

**4. If you've lived elsewhere, what is something you enjoyed in your previous community that Monessen lacks?**

- "Shopping"
- "Weekly concerts during the summer"
- "Community days, festivals, being able to go within the city for all needs"
- "All the little shops"
- "Theatre, bowling alley, train station, cinema, dinner and a movie, nice sidewalks, clean up yards (even in vacant houses)"
- "Town activities, theatre, arts, variety of stores, trails, nature paths"
- "Both communities are equal"
- "Shopping/entertainment district"
- "Small shops/restaurants"
- "Full shopping plaza"
- "Weekly events for community, dog friendly, retail stores, dance clubs, cultural activities"
- "More shops, less noise"

18 Not answered

**5. How do you usually hear about various community events, resources and information?**

2 Answered Sr Center

16 Answered Newspaper

5 Answered Social Media

3 Answered TV News

6 Answered Friends

1 Answered Radio

10 Answered Facebook

2 Answered Flyers

6 Answered Word of Mouth

1 Answered Newsletters

6 Not Answered

**Follow up Question: Are the resources you listed sufficient enough for gathering all of the information you need?**

- "Sometimes not sufficient"

- “Not always complete or unbiased”
- “Yes”
- “It’s ok”
- “Yes”
- “Need more knowledge of events and community info”
- “Not sufficient”

**6. What are three things that you would like to see in Monessen in the next 10 years?**

- “Clothing store, restaurant, ice cream parlor, coffee shop”
- “Store”
- “More stores”
- “Fix all streets”
- “More stores”
- “Youth STEAM education, cultural events”
- “Public areas with events”
- “More jobs, better roads”
- “Jobs, development; city officials, churches, and orgs getting along instead of bickering”
- “Better paved streets, movie theatre, no drugs/blighted properties”
- “Coffee shop with drive thru, better use of river, public transportation”
- “More businesses/shopping center”
- “Developed riverfront, tear down blighted homes, downtown rebuilt”
- “School system improved, transportation, downtown shopping”
- “Food court, theatre, downtown housing, hockey/outdoor ice arena”
- “Fewer abandoned buildings, better streets, better parks maintenance”
- “More businesses, tear down eyesore properties, more community gatherings, less drugs”
- “Litter cleanups, crime”
- “Lower taxes, better schools, more people moving here”
- “Businesses for revenue, industrial museum, craft shops, barber, downtown synergy”
- “Workplaces like a factory, movie theatre, housing”
- “Train to pittsburgh, movie theatre, bring back cultural heritage festival”
- “Fleatique”
- “Unity, better schools”
- “Clean abandoned properties, roads, more activities, more stores”

- “Store fronts, jobs, housing”
- “Lower crime rate, fix or tear down vacant buildings”
- “Clean streets, weeds, take care of properties”
- “Candy factory, movie theatre, bowling lanes”
- “Jobs”
- “Raze abandoned buildings, Gov. reps who get along”
- “A government that is for the people of Monessen”
- “Get rid of blight, make homeowners accountable for their properties”

3 Not Answered

**7. Do you feel that your community is affordable to live in? If you selected ‘No’, why?**

27 Answered Yes

7 Answered No

2 Not Answered

*Reasons given, for answering “No”:*

- “Taxes too high, property values too low”
- “Need lower taxes”
- “Taxes”
- “Taxes too high”
- “Taxes too high, results of spending very poor”
- “Rising taxes”
- “No” (No further reason given)

**8. What is your current housing situation?**

30 Answered Homeowner

2 Answered Rent Apartment

2 Answered Rent Entire House

1 Answered Other (Tenant)

1 Not Answered

**9. Do you feel safe in your own neighborhood?**

32 Answered Yes

2 Answered No

2 Not Answered

*Reasons given, for answering "No":*

- "Drugs"
- "Drug Trafficking is everywhere"

**10. Overall, does the City of Monessen feel safe?**

23 Answered Yes

10 Answered No

3 Not Answered

*Reasons given, for answering "No":*

- "Shootings, Drugs"
- "Some areas unsafe to walk at night"
- "No" (No further reason given)
- "At night, gangs are more dangerous"
- "Need more police patrols and faster response when making a call or complaint"
- "Too much crime"
- "Too many strangers"
- "Too many strangers"
- "Too many decaying properties"
- "Drugs, robbery"

**11. In General, how accessible are basic necessities to you? (food, healthcare, shopping, etc.)**

15 Answered Accessible

10 Answered Somewhat Accessible

7 Answered Fairly Accessible

1 Answered Not Accessible

3 Not Answered

## 12. Which, if any, are problems in your community?

- 22 Answered Vacant lots
- 23 Answered Lack of stable and gainful employment
- 5 Answered Violent crime and robberies
- 11 Answered Vandalism
- 28 Answered Blighted houses and buildings
- 9 Answered Racism/Prejudice
- 19 Answered Illegal drug use
- 8 Answered Lack of human services/community resources
- 2 Answered Cost of housing
- 4 Not answered

## 13. How do you identify?

- 6 Answered Male
- 27 Answered Female
- 0 Answered Other
- 3 Not Answered

## 14. How would you rate each of the following services in your community?

### **Emergency Services - (Police, Fire, EMS)**

- 12 Answered Excellent
- 16 Answered Good
- 3 Answered Fair
- 0 Answered Poor
- 0 Answered N/A

### **Mental Health Services**

- 4 Answered Excellent
- 9 Answered Good
- 8 Answered Fair
- 1 Answered Poor
- 15 Answered N/A

### **Addiction Rehab/Counseling**

2 Answered Excellent

5 Answered Good

10 Answered Fair

1 Answered Poor

17 Answered N/A

### **Code Enforcement**

2 Answered Excellent

4 Answered Good

10 Answered Fair

14 Answered Poor

9 Answered N/A

### **Business Development**

1 Answered Excellent

0 Answered Good

3 Answered Fair

21 Answered Poor

6 Answered N/A

### **Public Parks and Recreation**

4 Answered Excellent

13 Answered Good

12 Answered Fair

0 Answered Poor

5 Answered N/A

### **Library Services**

20 Answered Excellent

7 Answered Good

4 Answered Fair

0 Answered Poor

5 Answered N/A

### **Government Transparency**

1 Answered Excellent

2 Answered Good

5 Answered Fair

12 Answered Poor

13 Answered N/A

**Children/Youth Programming**

1 Answered Excellent

8 Answered Good

11 Answered Fair

5 Answered Poor

13 Answered N/A

**School District**

2 Answered Excellent

4 Answered Good

12 Answered Fair

12 Answered Poor

8 Answered N/A

**Public Transportation**

1 Answered Excellent

9 Answered Good

8 Answered Fair

3 Answered Poor

10 Answered N/A

**Childcare Opportunities**

1 Answered Excellent

3 Answered Good

10 Answered Fair

3 Answered Poor

19 Answered N/A

**15. How many people live in your household?**

8 Answered 1 Person  
13 Answered 2 People  
4 Answered 3 People  
2 Answered 4 People  
1 Answered 5 People  
0 Answered 6+ People  
3 No Answer

**16. What is your annual household income?**

4 Answered \$0-\$10,000  
2 Answered \$10,001-\$20,000  
4 Answered \$20,001-\$30,000  
6 Answered \$30,001-\$40,000  
4 Answered \$40,001-\$50,000  
6 Answered \$50,000+  
10 No Answer

**17. Which of the following best represents your racial/ethnic heritage?**

1 Answered Asian/Pacific Islander 1  
1 Answered Black/African American 1  
0 Answered Hispanic/Latinx 0  
1 Answered Native American 1  
0 Answered Middle Eastern  
28 Answered White/Caucasian  
7 Answered Prefer Not To Answer  
1 Answered Other

### **18. What is your age?**

1 Answered Under 21  
3 Answered 22-35  
0 Answered 36-50  
7 Answered 51-65  
22 Answered 65+  
3 No Answer

### **19. What was the last level of education you have completed?**

0 Answered Middle School  
2 Answered Some High School  
10 Answered High School Graduate/GED  
3 Answered Some College  
1 Answered Undergraduate  
15 Answered Graduate or Higher  
5 No Answer

### **20. What is your biggest concern for your community?**

- "Safety"
- "Getting along with people/community"
- "Tribalism, division among people"
- "Dwindling population causing higher taxes"
- "Getting jobs for people who need it most, and keeping people safe"
- "People leaving, no jobs, no pride in leaders, govt officials not supporting each other"
- "Quality jobs, good schools, safe housing"
- "Having businesses come so it may promote more families moving to Monessen"
- "Lack of employment"
- "School district, taxes, job opportunities"
- "Empty houses, lack of local businesses, lack of "team spirit ""
- "Leadership"

- “City is “dying” need new families, they don’t want to move here because school is horrible and taxes are too high”
- “Future development, loss of population, potential loss of schools”
- “Lack of employment”
- “People moving out, very little moving in”
- “People moving away”
- “That it will be able to survive”
- “It will succumb to ignorance and greed”
- “Tearing down old houses”
- “Our children, things for them to do, jobs”
- “Vacant homes, overgrown weeds, drugs, need more police, lack of activities for children, families, and adults”
- “Presentation”
- “Drugs, crime”
- “Blight, litter, high taxes, poor city planning, too much talk, too little action”
- “Lack of jobs
- “Jobs”
- “Blight/drugs”

8 Not Answered

## 21. What is your favorite thing about your community?

- “Library and senior center”
- “Good family”
- “Family and friends”
- “Family-like warmth once you get to know people”
- “Peaceful”
- “How supportive of ideas and open they are to making Monessen better”
- “I grew up here and I would like for it to have hope that things will get better”
- “Park and library”
- “Close relationships”
- “Small town feel, library, city park, affordable restaurants”
- “Our library”
- “Library”

- “Library and parks”
- “My hometown”
- “Parks, library”
- “Neighbors are nice”
- “No traffic, you know everyone”
- “Old friends, relatives; close to city and close to mountains”
- “People that I have known most of my life”
- “My friendships, greyhound pride, shoveling snow with my neighbors, the pictures of our service men and women on telephone poles”
- “Diversity”
- “Still know everyone in and around the town with young vision and old knowledge, we can have a good city again”
- “Nuzzaci's”
- “How involved everyone is”
- “Family, friends”
- “Monessen library”
- “Don't have one”

9 Not Answered

**22. List three positive things that can be used to rebuild Monessen, and attract new businesses?**

- “1. rehab buildings, 2. tear down abandoned houses 3. take out meters”
- “Roads”
- “Land/river/landscape, infrastructure/proximity to pgh, affordable living”
- “Sponsor world-class events to draw in revenue, create and art festival invitation and social media promotion create a play space (ie skateboard park) to attract kids/families”
- “Fixing potholes/ tear down blighted bldgs, regain population (in city and school)”
- “Jobs, development, leadership”
- “Honest hardworking citizens, DEC, better schools on elem and hs level”
- “More employment, more shopping areas, better marketing”
- “Riverfront, affordable housing, close to major highways”
- “Police dept. is great, DEC, there's open space to build businesses”

- “The river, riverfront property, homestead plan - allow a family to rehab and bring a house to code and after 5 years, they get a clear deed. Real estate taxes begin when deed is given to homesteader”
- “Safe communities, admin guidance, working together”
- “People paying their taxes”
- “Lower taxes, improve roads”
- “Clean up downtown, make it look inviting, offer tax breaks and incentives”
- “Remove parking meters, clean properties, fix the roads”
- “Jobs”
- “Cultural heritage fest again, summer playground programs again, food truck day once in the spring/summer/fall”
- “Leadership, community provide, growth development”
- “DEC is an asset we should use it to build a college town, unity, waterfront access, bike trails more park events”
- “Shopping, attractions, roads”
- “Better appearance”
- “Better appearance”
- “Tear down blighted properties”
- “Positive attitude of government, offer incentives to businesses, affordable housing, Clean up the city”

10 Not Answered

**23. Do you feel that transportation within Monessen and to other locations can be improved? If so, why?**

- “Happy with MMTA improvements”
- “Keeping roads cleaner”
- “Need more transportation on hills”
- “Yes - more public transport - rail to Pittsburgh”
- “Make and in-town transportation option for people who travel uptown and downtown”
- “Improved with MMVTA going onto the hill”
- “Go westmoreland makes people wait too long, easier and timely pickup”
- “If you don't drive or have friends who drive, you don't get out of town”
- “No”

- "It's sufficient"
- "Yes, most sr citizens no longer drive"
- "No"
- "Yes, needs expanded"
- "No"
- "Yes"
- "MMVTA trying to improve"
- "Try to get a taxi service for Monessen"
- "Yes - cabs"
- "Yes - has a lot of young adults w/ children that need to get them from park manor to highland manor that need to go to stores"
- "Yes - people who don't drive need more"
- "Yes - the bus line is good, improve taxi service"
- "Yes, more busses"
- "Yes"
- "All groups working on community improvements should coordinate efforts"
- "No"
- "Absolutely, there is nothing right now and Monessen has a high Senior rate, it would be great to have something available for them"

9 Not Answered

**24. Do you feel that amenities in Monessen parks and recreation opportunities for children could be improved? If so, why?**

- "Shouldn't charge so much for parks"
- "Could improve"
- "The park is nice, needs to be used more"
- "No - just keep them clean"
- "Yes - need playgrounds. bring back parks and rec programs"
- "No"
- "Fix tennis courts"
- "Nothing is perfect improvement is always helpful"
- "Yes, you can always improve parks - esp for handicapped kids"
- "Yes, will promote healthier children"

- “No”
- “Yes”
- “Yes - take advantage of the parks on holidays do lights up and other festive things”
- “Yes”
- “My family tries to enjoy the areas, but some people keep destroying these areas”
- “Yes, they need to be safe”
- “Need more activities for children families - free or reasonable priced”
- “Monthly activities for kids, keeping them within the community and improving interaction”
- “Yes”
- “Yes”
- “Yes, more recreation
- “No - we have parks & the Library, community groups who advocate for children”
- “Without a doubt, because there is none”

13 Not Answered

**25. What do you feel can be done to attract new businesses, and residents (eg. public art, better transportation, marketing, infrastructure, better ordinances, helping people rehab vacant homes and buildings, etc.)?**

- “Public Art, Marketing, Infrastructure, Better ordinances, helping people rehab houses and bldgs.”  
“Help people rehab vacant homes/bldgs.”
- “Need help with yard - disabled”
- “Develop program to rehab and occupy houses off incentives to renovate and occupy and own to get new residents”
- “More marketing, help fix abandoned homes, make grass and overgrown vegetation nicer, more fun things to do for teens, keep crime down to a low, interact with the community more”
- “Tear down blight, clean it up, seek some franchises, utilize waterfront, get a code officer that knocks on doors, help those that are not aware of finances to help with home repairs”

- “Rehab vacant homes/bldgs, plant trees along streets for shade and beauty, community gardens for fresh veggies, to teach kids how to plant/harvest, affordable rental properties with security”
- “Better transportation, marketing, infrastructure, rehab vacant homes”
- “School merger, marketing, put out positive news/success stories”
- “All of the above - form groups that can focus on the above, individual skills/interest can be used from the various groups focused on improvements for the community.”
- “Market to people willing to take chances with business, get outside of the box with new business ideas, work together, see what new businesses are trending in the area and talk to them, eliminate the negative press the city receives.”
- “Better administration”
- “Taxes very high, the more people move away, the higher the taxes, soon you will force sr. citizens to leave”
- “Fire the school board, and get new ideas and cost saving things that benefit homeowners, students, and staff”
- “Clean up abandoned homes, merge school districts, free parking downtown, riverwalk with different businesses - food venues, fishing, canoe rentals, bike shop, bike trail along river”
- “Bring in a factory making CDs for rappers like in NC, textile factory, low pay + benefits = good”
- “Fix our streets, movie theater, costco”
- “Reopen civic center with activities and programs run by coordinator, like everyday people, game nights, movies, etc”
- “Infrastructure, helping people rehab housing”
- “Fix vacant homes, demolish damaged buildings”
- “We need to develop downtown, develop riverfront, design a city that will draw people from near and far with quaint shops, build on our ethnic diversity, start fining people and have the fine fine those who dump trash “
- “The city could cut grass in lots of homeowners or businesses that do not cut their grass, then bill those owners”
- “Infrastructure, helping people rehab vacant buildings”
- “Marketing; make it desirable”

12 Not Answered

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## An Efficient City: General City Administration

*“A healthy city can take things that seem like liabilities and turn them into treasure.” - Pete Buttigieg*

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- **Overview:** A city government cannot function without dedicated employees. We need to ensure that the employees have all of the information they need in order to succeed in the workplace, and in order to make swift, proper, and efficient decisions. We need to re-establish the working structure of city government as a well-oiled machine, whose institutions and practices will work efficiently, no matter what the circumstance.
- **Work to reduce the city’s deficit, and improve annual cash flow.**
  - The city will fully examine its budget and processes, and explore ways to better spend revenue, and manage cash flow, so that the city can function efficiently throughout the entire year.
- **Prepare a Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).<sup>\*\*</sup>**
  - The city will work with the City Engineer, Committees, and Department Supervisors in order to create a Capital Improvement Plan, separate from the city’s regular budget planning. The process will include all proposed projects, with descriptions, estimated costs, estimated schedules, and potential funding sources for the projects. The plan will also identify the impact that each capital project will have on the operating budget for specific fiscal years.
  - “A Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) contains all the individual capital projects, equipment purchases, and major studies for a local government; in conjunction with construction and completion schedules, and in consort with financing plans.

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*“Monessen: A New Vision” Mayor’s Strategic Plan*

The plan provides a working blueprint for sustaining and improving the community's infrastructures. It coordinates strategic planning, financial capacity, and physical development. A CIP stands at the epicenter of a government's Planning, Public Works, and Finance departments." <sup>1</sup>

- **Restore administrative checks and balances.**
    - Ensure that the duties of the departments that collect revenue, such as the City Treasurer's department are kept separate from departments that deal with expenditures, such as accounts payable, payroll, and the city clerk's office. These checks and balances are essential to ensuring that money is handled properly, and that mistakes are caught promptly.
  
  - **Develop Updated Employee Handbooks That Provide Guidance for City Employees.\*\***
    - The city will develop a formal employee handbook that sets forth the policies, benefits, job descriptions, and rules of the city's organizational structure. The handbook will include, among other things, policies around benefits and leave, safety, use of technology, facility and equipment use, conduct and workplace rules, drug and alcohol policy, and disciplinary action. The employee handbook will be used and implemented, in order to foster teamwork among employees, ensure courteous relations in the workplace, and maintain an open channel of communication between management and the employees.
  
  - **Make the city's Boards, Authorities, and Commissions more effective and efficient.**
    - The city will make its boards, authorities, and commissions more effective and efficient by clarifying purposes, duties, term durations, and by promoting transparency within each entity.
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# An Accessible City: Transit and Mobility

*“Nothing about us, without us.”*

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- **Overview:** Transit is a crucial element to any city, large or small. In Monessen, we are lucky to have access to the Mid-Mon Valley Transit Authority (MMVTA). We, as a city, can do better in connecting our region more equitably, by working with municipalities across the region, in order to work towards the long-term vision of creating a regional transportation network. Essentially, people need freedom to move, a lack of that freedom hurts economic upward mobility. People who do not have access to vehicles or their own personal transportation rely on public transit to get to work and school, have access to healthcare, recreation, and other necessary destinations. Mobility is freedom, and we need to ensure that our residents have the ability to move about freely. Regionally and locally, this will spark economic development and build equity for our residents. Even though this is a long-term goal, we need to lay the groundwork now, so that we can reap the benefits in the future.
- **Work with regional leaders to create a Regional Mass Transit System to Lessen Motor Vehicle Emissions and Spark Economic Development.**
  - One of the major contributing factors to any city is that of motor vehicle emissions, and Pittsburgh and the greater region are no exception. Historically, Pittsburgh and its environs were planned for mass transit. At the turn of the last century, trolleys, passenger trains, passenger boats, and inclines (funiculars) dotted the landscape. By the 1950's, the motor vehicle was in vogue, due in part to post-war economic prosperity, and the obsession with the creation of a highway system.

- I propose to spark discussion on the creation of a regional passenger rail system that would connect the already-existing subway (“T”) system in Pittsburgh to the South Hills, and the Municipalities through the Mon Valley and Mid-Mon Valley Corridors, many of which were once serviced by the former Pennsylvania and Lake Erie Railroad. This proposed rail line could operate on already-existing lines that could be upgraded. Passenger rail could be coordinated with freight traffic that already runs on those lines. The rail cars would be environmentally sustainable, in order to ensure that the least levels of pollutants are emitted as possible.
  - The creation of a line such as this would create economic benefits for the City of Pittsburgh, the City of Monessen, and all the communities that the line would serve. By cutting traffic on major roads that lead into the city center, motor vehicle emissions and traffic congestion would decrease. A passenger train is a much more equitable mode of transit as compared to a personal vehicle.
  - This particular train would be modeled after the concept of the SunRail near Orlando, Florida. The SunRail is a passenger rail comprised of 16 stops, with proposed phases to add more stops at a later date. A passenger rail line would require the support of the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, the Federal Railroad Administration, rail companies that own the tracks – such as, CSX and Wheeling-Lake Erie, as well as Westmoreland and Allegheny Counties, and municipalities that the tracks run through. The benefits of having a passenger rail to serve the Greater Pittsburgh region far outweigh the funding and logistical hurdles, which can be overcome by coming together, collectively to pursue an ambitious proposal such as this.
- **Improve Monessen’s Public Steps and Sidewalks, as needed.**
    - Many Monessenites rely on walking as their mode of transportation. The city should, in the least, do spot repairs on well-traveled, heavily damaged sidewalks; especially, those that are in the Downtown District. A survey of city steps and sidewalks should be done, and any brush or debris should be removed from the steps, as needed. A survey can be done by retaining interns from local universities to work on this and other city initiatives, for college credit.

- **Summary:** In doing this, we will further improve Monessen’s walkability, which could attract new residents and businesses to the city. It will also improve mobility for Monessen’s residents, by making our streets, steps, and sidewalks safer for pedestrians.
  - **Work with the Transit Oriented Development Institute and similar organizations, to created Transit Oriented Development Districts and Transit Oriented Placemaking.**
    - The city will with with the Transit Oriented Development Institute, in order to learn more about Transit Oriented Development and Placemaking, and to implement the desired outcomes for Transit Oriented Development and Placemaking.
  - **Work with the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC) to help realize the initiatives in their *Smart Moves for a Changing Region*, regional Transportation Plan.**
    - The city will work with the SPC to find opportunities to collaborate, and incorporate their transportation goals for the region into future improvements and development within the city. The SPC plan can be found on their website: [spcregion.org](http://spcregion.org).
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# **A Well-Planned City:** **Zoning and Land Use**

*“Land is the only thing in the world that amounts to anything.”*  
*-Margaret Mitchell*

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**Overview:** Zoning and Land Use regulations are crucial to the development of a city. Monessen’s zoning and subdivision and land use rules are out of date. By updating these regulations, we will create clear and decisive guidelines for anyone who is interested in doing development work in Monessen. These guidelines will ensure equitable development practices are adhered to, and that conformity in already-existing neighborhoods is maintained. It can also ensure that construction first occurs where infrastructure already exists, within the city’s borders. The City of Monessen can and should be proud that much of its older neighborhoods are walkable, and have a lot of opportunities attached to them. This is something we can capitalize on - however, in doing this, we must ensure that the outcome is equitable. We want to avoid driving long-time homeowners out of their homes.

- **Update Land Use Regulations.**

- Update Zoning Ordinances and Subdivision and Land Development Ordinances (SALDO)
- **Summary:** Currently, the city’s zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances are severely out of date. The city will adopt the concept of a “livable” community, in order to address the desired lifestyles that are desired by residents of all ages. These include: walkable neighborhoods, public transportation options, affordable housing, safe streets, easy access to shopping, dining, and entertainment, parks and recreation, and indoor and outdoor places for people of all ages to gather.

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*“Monessen: A New Vision” Mayor’s Strategic Plan*

In regards to the updating of the city's Subdivision and Land Development Ordinances - these ordinances will provide guidelines and regulations for landscaping, street trees, and stormwater management (bioswales, rain gardens, and retention ponds).

Zoning and SALDO ordinances will be crucial in creating redevelopment opportunities in residential and commercial districts, within Monessen.

- **Establish a Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Zoning District in the Downtown, Eastgate, and Westgate Corridors.**
  - Transit-oriented development (TOD) is commonly defined as high-density, mixed-use development within walking distance (a 1/2 mile) of a transit station. TOD provides a range of benefits including increased transit ridership, reduced regional congestion and pollution, and healthier, more walkable neighborhoods.<sup>2</sup>
  - The city will enact zoning requirements, in the zoning updates to establish a TOD Zoning District spanning from Eastgate to Westgate, through Downtown Monessen. This will lay the groundwork for future development in the Downtown Corridor, and will open the door for increased transit opportunities and funding sources.
  - **Summary:** Some benefits of TOD include:
    - Higher quality of life with better places to live, work, and play
    - Greater mobility with ease of moving around
    - Increased transit ridership
    - Reduced traffic congestion, car accidents and injuries
    - Reduced household spending on transportation, resulting in more affordable housing
    - Healthier lifestyle with more walking, and less stress
    - Higher, more stable property values
    - Increased foot traffic and customers for area businesses
    - Greatly reduced dependence on foreign oil, reduced pollution and environmental damage

- Reduced incentive to sprawl, increased incentive for compact development
  - Less expensive than building roads and sprawl
  - Enhanced ability to maintain economic competitiveness
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## An Innovative City: Innovation District

*“Innovation opportunities do not come with the tempest, but with the rustling of the breeze.” -Peter Drucker*

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- **Overview:** An innovation district is a designated section of a city where creative thinkers, entrepreneurs, students, and tech-savvy innovators can collide and collaborate to conceive and implement new ideas. Innovation Districts have the ability to drive, not only innovation, but also development. They can help to foster new ideas that could benefit all of the residents in the City of Monessen. This long term initiative will create the opportunity for sustained growth in Monessen’s Downtown District.
- **Establish an Innovation District in Central Downtown Monessen.**
  - By establishing an Innovation District, we will further encourage the development of new places, ideas, businesses, and more. Innovation Districts should be visible and public - showcasing public spaces where people can connect, learn, and grow. Monessen’s Central Downtown Innovation District would be centered around the Monessen Public Library, and span the entire Central Business District.
  - **Summary:** The Innovation District would encourage a diverse mix of businesses and opportunities, which would attract people who are searching for liveliness, diversity, and opportunity. The Innovation District can be likened to that of a typical “Main Street” - which Monessen has. This concept includes, businesses of all types; places to live; and recreation spaces; all within a walkable, accessible district. Monessen’s Downtown District is perfect for implementing this concept.

- In creating this Innovation District, we will work with existing people and places. It is not the goal of this plan, or any other part of this overall proposal to drive existing people or businesses out of Monessen. The goal is to build off of them, help them to grow and thrive, while attracting more businesses and people to the city.
  
  - Other hallmarks of innovation districts are:
    - Socialization - Building and creating places and spaces that spark socialization. Doing this will bring people together and help repair Monessen's fractured community. People can be brought together through places and programming.
    - Proximity - Structures should be built close together on the ground, not just on a map. By building structures close together, like they were at the turn of the last century, you create a more appealing downtown district, and you open the door for more people and businesses to collaborate with each other, and allow their successes to play off of one another.
    - Mobility - Connecting the broader city and region through multiple transportation networks, including car, bus, ride sharing, bicycling, pedestrian access, and in the long term- rail can help further create a more vibrant, stronger Innovation District in downtown.
  
  - In making the whole endeavor successful, the city will work with other organizations in the community to apply Place Governance Principles in order to make sure that Public Spaces are functioning in the way they should, and so that they are kept clean.
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# A City of Opportunities: Opportunity Zones

*“If opportunity doesn’t knock, build a door.” -Milton Berle*

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- **Overview:** According to the IRS, an opportunity zone is an economically-distressed community where new investments, under certain conditions, may be eligible for preferential tax treatment. Localities qualify as opportunity zones if they have been nominated for that designation by the state and that nomination has been certified by the Secretary of the U.S. Treasury via his delegation of authority to the Internal Revenue Service. These zones are designed to spur economic development and job creation in distressed communities throughout the country and U.S. possessions by providing tax benefits to investors who invest eligible capital into these communities. Taxpayers may defer tax on eligible capital gains by making an appropriate investment in a Qualified Opportunity Fund and meeting other requirements.
  - **Work with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania towards establishing Opportunity Zones in Monessen.**
    - While Monessen currently does not have any designated opportunity zones, we should work towards identifying and nominating parcels to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, when the next opportunity arises. In establishing an opportunity zone in Monessen, we will be able to further spark investment and development.
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## **A Clean City:** **Code Enforcement**

*“Code Enforcement is essential to successful and sustainable community development.”*

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- **Overview:** Code Violations and Blight are two of the most pressing issues in Monessen. Properties must be maintained to the standards set forth in Monessen’s property maintenance ordinances. In keeping properties up to code, we will have the ability to rebuild our neighborhoods, and make them healthier and safer for people who live in them. We will also make our community more attractive to new residents and businesses. This endeavor will take a lot of work, but it is attainable - and the work is very important. We will be fighting to clean up decades of disinvestment, blight, and property violations, but in doing this, we will have a better functioning Code Enforcement Department, and a better city.
- **Make development, zoning and building inspection documentation more accessible.\*\***
  - All ordinances, planning studies, marketing information and permitting information will be placed online, and made accessible for anyone interested in that information. This will make the information more accessible, clear up any confusion with processes or help to answer some questions residents or business owners may have.
  - Other information that will be included online, in an accessible manner will consist of: updated zoning and ward maps, development ordinances, code ordinances, signage ordinances, development activity, permit request forms,

updated Fee Resolutions - showing the cost of each permitting fee, utility contact information (including Gas, Electricity, PennDOT, Etc.)

- **Adopt the latest International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC).\*\***
  - The city will adopt the more recent International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC), in order to establish uniformity and consistency within the city of Monessen.
  - **Summary:** The city adopted the 2009 IPMC, but many updates have been made to the code since then. Upon adoption, the city will begin to proactively and aggressively enforce the IPMC, in order to stay on top of blight and code violations.
- **Make turnkey packets and information available and accessible for residents, contractors, and developers.\*\***
  - The city will develop a checklist of items for developers, consisting of what is required for zoning permits, special exceptions, subdivision and land development applications and associated fees.
  - **Summary:** Residents, business owners, and potential developers view this favorably and appreciate the ease and understanding of what is expected of them. This routine information should be included online, and also should be readily available at City Hall.
- **Establish a 311 non-emergency system, and an equivalent online platform.**
  - A 311 non-emergency system works like the standard 911 emergency service does, except that 311 is for non-emergencies. A platform like this would allow residents to anonymously report code violations, report potholes, burnt-out street lights, and any other non-emergency issue that needs taken care of in the city, so the issues can be addressed in a fast and efficient manner.
- **Enforce Quality of Life Code Enforcement Ordinance.**
  - The city will Enforce the City's Quality of Life Ordinance, which was passed in 2018. The ordinance creates a ticketed system for code enforcement, similar to

the concept of a parking ticket. Residents would be given time to improve their properties and address code issues, before the ordinance would take full effect. Additionally, residents will be educated on the new ordinance, so that there is open communication on the subject.

- **Hire a certified, full-time Code Enforcement Agency.**
    - The city will aim to hire a full time code enforcement agency, in order to address Monessen’s code and blight issues. Monessen’s code deficiencies are one of the biggest problems in the city, and requires a full time agency to address the issues and stay ahead of them once they are addressed. This agency will be certified in all aspects of code, in order to save the city money. A fully functioning code enforcement department within the city, should be able to fully fund itself. The Code Department will be expected to enforce all rules and regulations, and issue violations based on the applicable ordinances. The department will also be expected to work with people at a reasonable level in order to ensure that everyone is being treated fairly, but with some level of dignity and mercy.
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# **An Equitable City:** **Community and Economic Development**

*“Drivers don’t make good window shoppers.”*

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- **Overview:** Development is necessary in order to move a city forward, and to create an ever-changing, ever-evolving city that can provide success for everyone. In Monessen, there is significant historic disinvestment, especially in the Westgate and 9th Street area neighborhoods. This disinvestment needs to be addressed in an equitable manner, by rebuilding and stabilizing these neighborhoods in ways that will attract new residents and development, all while improving the lives of those who already reside in those neighborhoods. We must build where infrastructure already exists, and we must improve that infrastructure, as needed. That simply makes sense for the future of the city. To do this, we should look to public-private partnerships, and enact local legislation and initiatives that build a demand for development projects. The current built-in demand is that the nearby Pittsburgh Metro area has higher prices, whereas there are lower prices in Monessen. We need to build off of this and other built in incentives. We should create mixed use development, incorporating commercial and residential for mixed incomes, in order to create sustained growth; especially in our Downtown District. Additionally, all of our economic development strategies should be tied to violence prevention, and sustained economic and social growth for all residents.
- **Improve Central Downtown Parking**
  - Determine the status of the Mid Downtown Parking Garage.
  - If it is determined that it would be more financially feasible to repair the parking garage, the following steps should be taken:

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*“Monessen: A New Vision” Mayor’s Strategic Plan*

- Repair the concrete, and reinforce and structural issues in the parking garage.
    - Improve the lighting, safety, and signage of the parking garage.
    - Renovate the facade of the parking garage.
  - If it is determined that it would not be more financially feasible to repair the parking garage, the following steps should be taken:
    - Demolish the parking garage.
    - Determine whether to construct a new garage in the same location, or install a paved lot.
  - Reconfigure parallel parking spaces in Mid-Downtown as diagonal configuration, in order to make it easier to enter and exit spaces, and improve vehicular and pedestrian safety.
- **Summary:** While a lack of parking in Monessen is not an issue, the parking that is currently available is not as accessible as it could be. Improved parking conditions will allow for already-existing businesses to improve, and will create an atmosphere for more businesses in the Downtown District.
- **Stabilize existing, salvageable vacant buildings in downtown Monessen**
  - The city will stabilize and improve the facades of vacant buildings in downtown Monessen, by doing the following:
    - Acquiring grant funding, and establishing public-private partnerships to improve facades.
    - Making the buildings safe enough to market to developers.
- **Summary:** In doing this, the city will not have the burden of ownership of these vacant structures, as long as developers meet conditions that will be laid out clearly, by the city, before title transfer takes place.
- **Develop and Adopt a Streetscape Plan\*\***
  - The city will adopt a streetscape plan for the Downtown District, implementing the Complete Streets Model. The plan should include building stabilization, property

acquisition, demolition, sidewalk and lighting improvements, and any other street-related upgrades, in regards to pedestrians, bicyclists, or vehicles.

- **Summary:** The Complete Streets Model is a policy and design approach that requires streets to be planned, designed, operated, and maintained to enable safe, convenient and comfortable travel and access for users of all ages and abilities, regardless of their mode of transportation. Complete streets allow for safe travel by those walking, cycling, driving automobiles, riding public transportation, or delivering goods.
- **Promote Central Downtown Development Opportunities\*\***
  - The City will make commercial property identification and development potential a priority. Once, all development ordinances are updated, desired development projects should be identified. State funding could be acquired to support identified projects.
- **Use a Request For Proposal (RFP) to solicit development proposals. \*\***
  - In order to alert private developers of development opportunities in Monessen - especially in the business district, the city will establish a Request for Proposal process. Details included in the RFP packet could include the following:
    - Description and details about the development site
    - Identification of utilities, roads, etc.
    - An updated Market Condition Analysis for the City and surrounding region
    - Financing and funding instruments that may be available to support the development.
- **Promote Equity in Development and Contracting**
  - The City will promote equity in development and contracting, by tightening the loopholes at the local level, in the Federal Housing and Urban Development's requirement on creating equality in regards to low income and minority residents in distressed communities. This will provide greater opportunities for minority and female contractors and business owners within the City of Monessen. It will make it harder for systematic discrimination to exist within the city.

- **Tackle historic disinvestment in Monessen.**

- In the Mid-Twentieth Century, Monessen underwent a large undertaking of major redevelopment projects, under the Urban Renewal Program. Many of those Urban Renewal Era projects led to the city's modernization, in regards to infrastructure and roads. It also led to the expansion of the city itself, by annexing a neighboring portion of Rostraver Township, constructing thousands of homes, and creating Monessen's Park Plan neighborhood. This was a much needed modernization, and we are better off for it today.
- Unfortunately, also under the guise of Urban Renewal, the city claimed eminent domain on hundreds of homes and businesses in the third ward (Westgate) section of Monessen, forcing families, many of whom were poor immigrants, children of immigrants, and people of color, to find other homes, or move elsewhere. A similar project was implemented in that same era in Pittsburgh's Hill District. The stated purpose in Monessen's case was to clean up the city's red-light district', and prepare the area for development. That red-light district was an issue that needed to be addressed, and it was, fortunately addressed. However, the city and its redevelopment authority at the time went beyond that, and decimated a large portion of Monessen's third ward, tearing down hundreds of buildings. In the official follow up report the city claimed that it had to do this because of the many "undesirable" people living in that neighborhood. There were also concerns that these "undesirable" people would move to other places in the city. This bad and racist policy decision has caused the slow decline and disinvestment over the past four decades within Monessen's Third Ward, surrounding 9th Street. The Urban Renewal projects saw the demolition and total eradication of Morgan Avenue and lower 12th Street, near eradication of Highland Avenue, as well as demolition of homes and businesses from 8th Street to 17th Street in order to construct a "highway" (the four-lane section of Route 906). Many of the redevelopment projects never happened, and many of the parcels remain undeveloped to this day, leaving a broken promise to residents in that neighborhood.
- It should be fully stated that the city's collective focus needs to encompass the entire city, and that it is necessary to maintain the assets that we already have;

however, the city needs to work with residents still residing in the Westgate neighborhood, in order to bring equitable development and investment to that neighborhood.

- We owe it to the residents to right the wrongs of these unfortunate and racist decisions of the mid-twentieth century. In doing this, we will close that chapter and heal these wounds that are still very much open and sensitive to the view of that neighborhood by others both in and outside of the community.
- **Work with the Congress for the New Urbanism to reinstate the design principles of New Urbanism in Monessen’s older neighborhoods.**
  - New Urbanism is a planning and development approach based on the principles of how cities and towns had been built for the last several centuries: walkable blocks and streets, housing and shopping in close proximity, and accessible public spaces. In other words: New Urbanism focuses on human-scaled urban design.
  - The principles, articulated in the Charter of the New Urbanism, were developed to offer alternatives to the sprawling, single-use, low-density patterns typical of post-WWII development, which have been shown to inflict negative economic, health, and environmental impacts on communities. These design and development principles can be applied to new development, urban infill and revitalization, and preservation. They can be applied to all scales of development in the full range of places including rural Main Streets, booming suburban areas, urban neighborhoods, dense city centers, and even entire regions.<sup>3</sup>
- **Establish a Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance (LERTA) Program.**
  - The city will explore establishing a LERTA program within its blighted neighborhoods, including the Downtown District. LERTA is a mechanism to implement strategic financial opportunities of older communities, like Monessen, in order to spark revitalization. Many Pennsylvania municipalities have developed a LERTA program for their municipalities in order to initiate reinvestment in the community. Municipalities that have a LERTA program allows property owners to

obtain a tax incentive to improve their properties within an area designated for revitalization.

- **Summary:** “While the specific terms of the tax abatement is decided at the local level, the state enabling legislation allows municipalities to exempt the value of all improvements made to a property (i.e., an exemption on the assessment attributable to the actual cost of such new construction or improvements) from local taxes for a certain period of time not to exceed ten (10) years. Unlike other tax abatement programs, properties still pay a local tax, but do not see any increase in local taxes upon the value of renovations made to the property within the LERTA boundary (*a property owner is still obligated to pay property taxes on the assessed value of the land*).”<sup>4</sup>

- **Work with Countywide Economic Development Organizations.**

- The city will work with the Westmoreland County Planning Department, the Westmoreland Regional Industrial Development Corporation (RIDC) and other economic development entities, in order to match Monessen’s efforts to the county’s plans for a regional approach to development.
- **Summary:** This will enable the city to acquire additional funds for projects, and show the county that we are serious about economic development.
  - Economic development activities are regionally based and require a regional approach.
  - County, State, and Federal Representatives are more likely to acknowledge and provide resources for a regional group.
  - There are currently programs and resources that may be available to the city through the county.
  - The city will be better perceived and better accommodated if there is a sense that the city is cooperating with its adjacent communities.

- **Work with local businesses and organizations to establish a Neighborhood Partnership Program (NPP) in the City of Monessen.**

- According to the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) a Neighborhood Partnership Program is “a component of

the Neighborhood Assistance Program (NAP) and is rooted in a community strategic plan, collaborations with partners, and long-term business relationships. The neighborhood organization, a nonprofit agency, must be the Applicant for NPP. The NPP is expected to create energy in the community by completing projects based on specific development needs in a targeted area that produce measurable outcomes. NPP is a long-term program that secures business commitments for five (5) years, six (6) years or longer. The tax credit for a five (5) year NPP commitment is up to 75 percent, and up to 80 percent for a six (6) year or longer commitment. Minimum contributions are \$50,000 per business, and the minimum NPP application is \$100,000. Applicants must have commitment letters from all Contributors at the time of submission. Due to the nature of NPP solicitation plans cannot be considered. If approved by the Department, the Applicant may engage in more than one NPP as determined by need and scope of projects.”

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# **A Welcoming City: Diversity, Inclusion, Community Building**

*“Ultimately, America’s answer to the intolerant man is diversity.”  
- Robert Kennedy*

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- **Overview:**
- **Establish an Office of Diversity, Welcoming, and Inclusion.**
  - **Implementation of a Diversity and Inclusion Officer**
  - **Creation of an Equity and Inclusion Plan**
- **Establish Equitable Contract Procurement Procedures.**
- **What Else?**
- **Creation of an Equity and Inclusion Plan**
- **Implementation of a Diversity and Inclusion Officer**
- **Creation of Office of Diversity and Inclusion**

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## **A Productive City:** **Business and Workforce Development**

*“There is joy in work. There is no happiness except in the realization that we have accomplished something.” -Henry Ford*

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- **Overview:** In order to attract new residents, provide upward mobility to current residents, and spark improved conditions of our city, we need to create a diversified environment, for businesses and workforce. It is imperative that we work to attract diverse new businesses, both large and small, and support the businesses we already have. Currently, our businesses and economic climate in Monessen is fragile. We must do what we can to strengthen it, by taking steps to modernize Monessen’s economy.
- **Attract Mid-tech, (‘Blue-Collar’) jobs in the Technology sector.**
  - Monessen was established in part to supplement the industry that was occurring throughout Pittsburgh, in the early twentieth century. With the technology industry continuing to succeed in Pittsburgh, it makes sense for Monessen to support Pittsburgh’s industry once again. The city should work to attract mid-tech, blue-collar technology-related jobs. Whether these jobs consist of testing equipment, or producing simple parts and components for technology, Monessen has the space and the workforce to support this type of economy. <sup>5</sup>
- **Attract startup companies and tech ventures.**
  - The city will create and implement strategies to attract and retain startup companies and tech ventures to reinvigorate our city’s economy, and fit the pattern of job growth in the tech sector, in the Greater Pittsburgh Region. <sup>6</sup>

- **Work with local and national partners to attract and support Women and Minority Owned business development.**
  - The city will work with local and national partners to develop a strategy for attracting women and minority owned businesses, and will establish long term goals to ensure the success of that strategy.
- **Work with organizations to support Small Business Training and Development.**
  - The city will work with partners such as the Small Businesses Administration, to train entrepreneurs on how to start their own business. We will also work with these partners to support and attract small businesses to Monessen.
- **Actively Attract and Promote Trades Jobs.**
  - The city will partner with the appropriate organizations to attract and promote trade-related jobs, in order to ensure economic diversity. We will also work to acquire workforce from those with associate's degrees and other marketable skills.
- **Encourage a culture of Experience-oriented retail.**
  - The city will work to attract and encourage the development of experience-oriented retail to relocate to the city. Experiential retail consists of several elements:
    - Creating an immersive and shareable experience
    - Prioritizing customer engagement, not sales
    - Stimulating customer senses
    - Addressing consumer needs <sup>7</sup>
- **Establish Long-term Job Growth Goals for the City of Monessen.**
  - Identify regional and national trends in job growth, and use that data to establish job growth goals in the city, and related programming to ensure the success of those goals.
- **Work with local and national partners to teach people trade jobs, by rebuilding vacant houses.**

- The city will work with local and national partners such as Habitat for Humanity and trade unions, in order to provide opportunities to teach carpentry, electrical, plumbing and other trades, by renovating vacant homes in Monessen. After completion the homes can be sold, in order to put them back on the tax rolls. The sale of each home, will go towards the long-term, sustainable funding of this program.
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## A Transparent City: Technology, Communication, and Transparency

*“Sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants.” -US Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis*

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- **Overview:** The city should adopt and embrace technology in ways that will benefit residents and the overall functioning of city government. We also need to ensure that we are truly as transparent as possible with our residents, and our partner organizations. Lastly, we need to improve communication between residents, departments, and organizations within city government. We must do this so that we have a safe, secure, and efficient local government that can look towards the future of the city, for the benefit of all residents.
- **Provide Agendas, Minutes, and Other Supporting Information on the City’s Website.\*\***
  - In order to establish full transparency and accessibility, the city will publish all agendas, minutes, and other supporting information that is public-facing on the city’s website. This will ensure that residents have accurate information, and can be kept informed as to what the city administration is doing to move the city forward in a just manner.
- **Begin to digitize all records, ordinances, and historical documents, in order to improve the organizational functions and retrieval of information.\*\***
  - The city will begin to digitize all records and documents, to create a digital backup copy, and to make it easier to retrieve information for residents, and for the functions of city government.

- **Begin to move to a paperless system of documents, for in-office purposes.**
  - To limit costs, the city will gradually phase out paper copies of documents that are of a low-level of importance. In creating paperless documentation as often as possible, the city will make it easier to keep files well-maintained, and located necessary files.
  
- **Establish a Long-Term Smart City Development Plan.**
  - “A "smart city" is one that has developed technological infrastructure that enables it to collect, aggregate, and analyze real-time data to improve the lives of its residents and visitors, spark economic development, and allow the government to make more accurate and efficient decisions.”<sup>8</sup>
  
  - Smart Cities can help monitor anything from air quality to sewer and water line conditions, public safety cameras, and traffic counts, to everything in between. The concept works by using the Internet of Things”, which allows different devices and technologies to communicate with each other. This technology already exists in products such as *Amazon’s Alexa*, *Nest*, and *Google Home*. The data collected could be useful for maintaining the cities infrastructure, attracting development, and acquiring grants and other funding streams for specific projects, within the city.
  
  - In order to make this project a reality, Monessen could form collaborations with utility companies, and local and regional universities and initiatives that are already doing work like this in other communities across the region.
  
- **Implement a Citizen Engagement App for non-emergency notifications.**
  - Implement an app, free of charge to residents, such as the Savvy Citizen App (<https://savvycitizenapp.com>) or a similar app. This will make it easy to notify residents, of power outages, non-emergencies, events, community meetings and more. This will help keep all residents informed. The app would be accessible from citizens’ phones, desktop computers, or tablets.

- **Create an electronic (and paper) newsletter funded with community advertisements and donations.**
  - In order to keep all residents fully engaged and up to date on city projects, finances, and other pertinent information, the city will create a newsletter, modeled after other local municipalities. The newsletter will be funded by private donations, and revenue from local business advertisements which will be displayed in each edition of the newsletter. Residents will have the option to receive the newsletter electronically or via traditional mail, so as to accommodate everyone and their needs.
  
- **Research a potential City of Monessen App.**
  - The city will research the possibility of creating a City of Monessen app, by working with local university students in order to develop and implement the app. The proposed app would be a way for residents to better interact with local government. Residents would be able to report potholes, blight, make anonymous code violation complaints, and suspicious activity, and more. They would also be able to access public data including public crime and fire data. This will allow the city to collect data to help make pinpointed and informed decisions, and to also use that data to acquire additional grant funding for specific projects tied to that resident-collected data. This app would also tie into the *Blight Strategy*, as listed in this plan.
  
- **Publish all city ordinances and resolutions online.**
  - The city will continue to update and publish all city ordinances and resolutions online, using Code360 or an equivalent system, in order to provide complete transparency and understanding towards city residents. <sup>9</sup>
  
- **Create more secure Information Technology (IT) infrastructure for city operations.**
  - The city will ensure that the city's emails, passwords, servers, and other IT-related equipment is secure, so that only the proper city employees and officials have access to the technology. Since sensitive information could be subject to nefarious schemes, it is important that we keep all of our technology safe, secure, and out of the wrong hands.



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## **A Stable City:** **Infrastructure**

“Investing in vital infrastructure will help to build more sustainable, equitable economies.” -Winnie Byanyima

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- **Overview:** Stabilizing and rebuilding our city’s infrastructure is paramount to ensuring the progress of Monessen. We need to make sure that we repair and make improvements to the infrastructure that needs to be improved, and rebuild where necessary. We owe it to our residents to provide them with improvements to roads, sewer lines, and other infrastructure. We as the city government need to accomplish this to the best of our abilities. By continuing the work on improving the city’s storm and sanitary sewer system, storm inlets, and working with the Mon Valley Sewage Authority to finalize and install the Storm Water Separation Equalization Tank, we will meet the DEP corrective action plan and consent decree, and ensure that our sewer system lasts another hundred years. Also, by paving as many roads as possible, and by properly sealing them, we will make sure that newly paved roads last, and that damage is halted from older roads. Improving our city’s infrastructure is one step to improving the quality of life for our citizens.
- **Continue Implementing the City-Wide Storm Sewer/Sanitary Sewer Project.**
  - The City-Wide Storm Sewer and Sanitary Sewer Rehabilitation project is being implemented under the DEP Mandated Corrective Action Plan. The project is preparing to enter Phase Three (III), and will take 17 years to complete the full plan. While 17 years is a long time, this project has a proposed lifespan of 100 years. Currently, many parts of our sewer system are almost as old as the city itself (121 years old).

- **Sewer Replacement:** The sewer replacement project was divided into eight phases during the initial planning period.
  - **Phase I** included the upgrade of the about one half of the separate sewers in the City Park / Grand Boulevard area and was completed in 2011.
  - **Phase II**, was a much smaller project completed in 2015. The project consisted of upgrading the sewers on Ridge and Center including an additional 21 man holes in the City Park / Grand Boulevard area.
  - **Phase III** would upgrade the major lines on 3rd, 6th, 9th and 12th Streets and feeder pipes to them from side streets.
  - **Phase IV** includes the pipe on Parente Boulevard, from Barts gas station to the Monongahela River, the Equalization (Retention) tank near the city maintenance garage, on Parente Boulevard, and the pipe from Shawnee Park to Parente Boulevard, and some work on Donner Avenue, as well as the unnamed alley way from 5th to 3rd Street.
  - The remaining phases of the work would be replacing or restoring the smaller feeder pipes everywhere including some lines in the City Park area that weren't completed in Phase I.
  - Phase I & II were done with a PennVest Grant – zero cost to the City.
  - Phase III: we are expecting to be financed through The USDA.
  - Phase IV: we are planning on going back to PennVest – PennVest is aware of the project and asked that we contact them immediately after the USDA project is processed. They need to know the interest rate, loan amount and line usage fee after the project gets approved.
  
- **The Corrective Action Plan (CAP):** The Corrective Action Plan (CAP) was developed in June 2010 as a result of a Consent Decree the City received from DEP for sewage overflows in the City Park area separate sewer system. The separate sewer system, the only separate sewer system in the City, encompasses the area from Parente Boulevard south including both sides of Grand Boulevard and City Park. The 2010 CAP covered repairs to only about 50% of the sewers in this separate sewer system. The City received a \$5.2 million grant from PennVest to complete the work. DEP required the City, as a

condition for approval of the CAP, to commit to building the retention tank if flows were not reduced to the amount that the Mon Valley Sewage Authority could accept. The CAP was revised in 2017 to include rehabilitation of the deteriorated combination sewers throughout the City that were identified by the Authority with video in 2009. The project to rehab all the remaining structurally deficient sewers in the City and build the tank was estimated to cost about \$43 million. The project was divided into phases of roughly \$5 to 7 million over a twenty year period that were viewed as more likely to receive grants or low interest loans from PennVest, USDA, etc.

- **DEP Mandated Consent Decree:** DEP's mandate was to eliminate overflows in the separate sewer system and to reduce the flow into the Authority sewer line at Parente. The completed Phase 1 sewer rehab work did not reduce the flow into the Authority's line enough so the City is required to build a retention facility to temporarily hold the flow during heavy rain events until the Authority's system can adequately handle the extra flow.
- **Why a retention tank?:** Essentially, the Equalization/Retention Tank acts as a buffer when there is a heavy storm, and excess water is flowing through pipes. This is necessary so that water does not back up into basements, through storm sewers and drains. The city continue to work with the Mon Valley Sewage Authority in order complete the Retention Tank Project.
- **Continue to Implement A City-Wide Street Rehabilitation Project.**
  - Below are a list of proposed roads for paving, based on traffic count, residents, and severity of damage. These may change with time, available funding, and public input. The roads are listed in alphabetical order. They can also be found, under each neighborhood section of this plan. Typically, the city uses Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) monies to fund road rehabilitation. The city will continue to explore alternate funding sources, so that roads that are not within the CDBG designated areas within the City of Monessen can be rehabilitated.
    - 3rd Street
    - 4th Street (McKee to Knox Avenue)

- 6th Street (Knox Avenue to Schoonmaker Avenue)
- 9th Street
- 10th Street
- Alberts Drive
- Arlington Avenue
- City Park Road
- Crest Drive
- Euclid Drive
- Evergreen Street
- Graham Avenue
- Herron Avenue
- Jones Street
- Knox Avenue
- Leeds Avenue
- Locust Street
- McKee Avenue (6th Street to 4th Street)
- Monessen Boulevard
- Nash Avenue

- **Develop a long-range street paving and street management plan.**

- The city will explore creating a long range plan in order to address the extensive road repairs needed within the city. This will ensure that the city will be able to leverage the Community Development Block Grant Funds it already receives, in order to complete additional road repairs on an annual basis. The funds could be acquired from a 2 mill tax levy, but would not require a tax hike to residents. The levy would designate funds that the city is already collecting, to be specifically used for road paving. This would dedicate about an additional \$104,000 per year to road paving and repairs.

- **Repair the Reed Avenue Viaduct.**

- A recent inspection of the Reed Avenue bridge deck which was performed in order to perform a “Priority Type 1” bridge deck repair shows that the deck is deteriorating and if action is not taken within the next few years it will require a deck replacement (\$1,500,000 constructed cost) instead of the less expensive

preservation job with latex modified concrete overlay (\$ 500,000). The city has done deck repairs on this bridge twice in the last ten years.

- Grant funding can be acquired for the rehabilitation of the Reed Avenue Viaduct. It will be more cost effective to complete the necessary repairs sooner rather than later.
  - Necessary repairs include replacing the rebar and decking to extend the life of the bridge, which is a vital artery within the City of Monessen.
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- **Explore crack sealing and micro-surfacing streets.\*\***
    - The city will explore the feasibility of micro-surfacing and crack sealing streets that are recently paved, or that are 5-years old. The sealant will stop water from penetrating the asphalt and causing potholes and cracks, from heavy rain, freeze-thaw cycles and de-icing methods. It will extend the life of the roadway, which will reduce costs for paving and patching. It will make it easier on vehicles traveling on roadways throughout the city.
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## A Peaceful City: Parks and Public Places

*“Laws change; people die; the land remains.” - Abraham Lincoln*

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- **Overview:** One of the biggest strengths of the City of Monessen is its system of parks and public places. The city boasts numerous parks of all types, located throughout the city. This provides residents and visitors of all ages the ability to lead a healthy life through recreation activities. The city’s library, civic center, and public safety facilities provide residents the resources they need to succeed in no matter what they pursue. Numerous community groups take advantage of our parks and public places, and the city’s residents and visitors utilize these facilities on a daily basis. Our city’s public safety officials risk their lives on a daily basis to ensure the safety of all. Our city must continue to work with local and regional organizations and statewide agencies, in order to ensure the continued success of these facilities. We need to continue to strengthen, support, maintain, and build upon these assets, for the good of every Monessenite.
- **Create a City Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan**
  - The city will create and implement a City Parks and Recreation strategic plan in order to maximize the use of the city’s park system. In order to do this, we will work with regional organizations and foundations, and also with the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. The purpose of this plan will be to:
  - Provide a plan to maintain and upgrade the city’s parks system for the next 15 years, including, marketing, maintenance, necessary improvements, upgrades, and funding sources for desired projects. Some upgrades in each park that have

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*“Monessen: A New Vision” Mayor’s Strategic Plan*

been identified by the city's residents are listed below. While this list is a good starting point, it is possible that some upgrades or issues have been overlooked.

- **Monessen City Park**
  - **Maintenance and Improvement of the City Park Tennis Court**
    - Including, Resurfacing, Replacing Equipment, Adding security cameras and lighting, and fence repair.
  
  - **Creation of a Dog Park at City Park**
    - In order to utilize unused space at the city park, the city could explore private funding and volunteers to create a small dog park at city park. This will give residents a place to convene and bring their dogs, in order to ensure safety and freedom.
  
  - **Replacement of Trees throughout City Park**
    - The city must curb the Ash tree blight that has been ravaging the city park's old trees. We should continue to work with organizations to cut these trees down and then begin replacing them, with a memorial plaque program, or through donations.
  
  - **Rehabilitation and Expansion of Pavilions**
    - Monessen City Park has a great pavilions and picnic groves, that could be improved and marketed in order to attract more visitors and users to the park. By improving the already existing pavilions, and expanding one of the pavilions, we can increase usage and revenue generated from the city park pavilions, in order to be competitive with other local and county parks.
  
  - **Addition of some lighting in the upper section of the park.**
    - For security purposes, the city should add lights and security cameras in the upper section of the park.
    - Upgrade lights to Solar/Battery Powered lighting, throughout the park to save on energy costs.

- **9th Street Park**

- Work with Team Humanity to realize the youth-driven initiatives at 9th Street Park.
  - Repair fencing around perimeter of park
  - Clear brush, weeds, and garbage
  - Improve park landscaping and signage
  - Install LED park lighting and security cameras
  - Install water fountains, benches, and garbage cans
  - Repair existing basketball courts
  - Create Half-courts from existing 9th Street tennis courts
  - Create a parking area across the street, at the corner of 9th and Knox.
    - The proposed parking area will be established by:
      - The demolition of former Billy T's Bar adjacent abandoned hotel
      - The installation of pavement, markings, lighting, cameras, and landscaping

- **Columbus Park**

- Improve security systems at the park
- Strictly limit the dumping of waste onto the hillside near the park entrance.
  - In order to ensure the safety of residents and visitors, and the stability of the hillside, dumping will be strictly limited.

- **Mihalich Boat Launch**

- Add directional signage,
- Install a Kayak/Canoe Launch
- Replace the fishing Dock
- Repair/Replace Lighting, as needed
- Repair Fencing
- Seal/Reline Parking Lot
- Install Mounted Trash Cans
- Upgrade Security

- **6th Street Park**
  - Clear Brush and plant new trees to prevent landslides
  - Paint Railings and fixtures
  - Repair Steps/Railings
  - Install permanent benches and trash cans
  - Improve Lighting and security to make the park safe for pedestrians and visitor
  - Repair retaining walls
  - Install signage
  
- **Motheral Park**
  - Repair lighting
  - Clean debris and landscaping, as needed
  
- **Madison Park (formerly the “Pumpkin Patch”)**
  - Continue to remove trash and debris from property.
  - Install lighting and cameras for security purposes
  - Create some dirt pathways, with some simple landscaping.
  - Work with a local university to install an arboretum
  - Install benches and picnic tables
  
- **Monessen City Soccer Field**
  - Installation of permanent bathrooms
  
- **Shawnee Park**
  - Improve Security and Lighting
  - Continue to support general upkeep and maintenance of the facilities, as needed.
  
- **Veteran’s Park (Eastgate)**
  - Improved lighting for pedestrian and vehicular safety
  
- **Monessen Library and Cultural Center**
  - Several maintenance-related repairs need to be made at Monessen library. Some of these repairs are needed from constant use of the library, and others appeared

after the library renovations in 2012. Most notably the issues related to drainage and facade repointing, which are most likely due to the increase in rainfall. The following repairs should be made, in order to maintain the upkeep of the library and ensure the safety of its patrons, and keep long term costs down. The Monessen Library and Cultural Center remains one of the most visited and most active libraries in the area, and that is something that we should be proud of.

- Repair Outdoor and lighting and signage
- Minor repairs to interior drywall and paint
- Repair basement drainage, and roof/gutter system
- Repoint exterior stone facade
- Minor bathroom repairs
- Additionally, the city will continue to support the library, via the tax levy, which was enacted decades ago. We will also:
  - Strive to support the Monessen library's childrens' program, in helping locate private funding for long-term success in that endeavor.
- **Monessen Civic Center**
  - Security Updates and Improvements.
  - Exterior Signage and Lighting Improvements
  - Continue to support general upkeep, maintenance, and improvement of the facilities, as needed, in order to ensure a safe and secure environment for the public and their wellbeing.
- **Monessen Fire Department #1 (Downtown)**
  - Continue to support general upkeep and maintenance of the facilities, as needed.
- **Monessen Fire Department #2 (Hilltop)**
  - Continue to support general upkeep and maintenance of the facilities, as needed.
  - Support the Hilltop Company in locating and securing funding to repair or replace the fire station's roof, in order to ensure long term success.
  - Rebuild the Toussaints Corner War Memorial by securing private donations and funding.
    - The memorial used to be on the corner of Marion and Grand Boulevard, but was struck by a car decades ago. The memorial is currently proposed

against the wall of the fire station. In order to honor those listed on the memorial, we will work with Hilltop and any other interested parties in rebuilding the memorial and placing it back in its prominent location (with safeguards to ensure that it will not be struck by a vehicle again).

- **Monessen City Maintenance Garage**

- Replace broken windows that create a safety and security hazard.
  - Replace existing lighting with energy efficient lighting.
  - Upgrade security cameras.
  - Continue to support general upkeep and maintenance of the facilities and equipment, as needed.
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## **An Outward-Facing City:** **Placemaking, Marketing and Data**

*“This is only the beginning of the story of Monessen, where there are many things yet to be accomplished...” - Mayor Hugo Parente*

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- **Overview:** The city needs to re-establish a sense of community pride, engagement, cultural and historical identity, and promote that message to a larger audience. In doing this, we will change people’s perceptions of Monessen as a whole, and will create an opportunity to promote the city’s assets and opportunities, while being truthful about our challenges. Many of these challenges are shared with other communities across the region. We must show that our city is resilient and is ready to change, in order to help our residents grow, and in order to attract new businesses and residents in order to strengthen our tax base, so we can provide more services and opportunities for the community as a whole.
- **Create and Implement a City Marketing Plan.**
  - Create a marketing plan for the city, and implement it, in order to attract new businesses and residents, and to build community camaraderie around a specific theme or brand that residents can relate to.
- **Rebuild the city’s website.**
  - The city will rebuild its website from scratch. The new website will be visually appealing, and will include all pertinent public information, in regards to permitting, park rentals, fees, zoning requirements, meeting minutes and agendas, ordinances, and other information. The website will also be used to promote the city’s assets, provide updated information to residents, and to attract

development in the city. The city's website will be secured to prevent cybersecurity issues.

- **Work with regional Chambers of Commerce and Tourism organizations to market Monessen.**
    - Work with regional organizations such as the Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau, Rivers of Steel: Mon Valley Creative Corridor, the Mon River Town Coalition, and, local and regional chambers of commerce and other tourism organizations to market Monessen, and promote the positive things about the city. At the same time, we must be truthful about the issues Monessen has, while we work at addressing them. We cannot dwell on the negative, but we must be truthful about it. Monessen has a lot of positive aspects about it, with a lot of good, resilient people. We need to showcase that, and our pride for our city.
  
  - **Implement a city-wide Placemaking strategy.**
    - The city will work with local organizations and residents to create a city-wide placemaking strategy to establish creative placemaking projects. The strategy will identify simple, high impact, low cost projects to create and implement community-led change. This approach aims to increase vibrancy, improve economic conditions, and build capacity among residents to take ownership of their communities. <sup>10</sup>
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## A Youth-Centered City: Youth Involvement and Education

*“Education at all ages is crucial to improving gender equality, health, and economic stability.”*

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- **Overview:** The future success of our city depends on our support, nurturing, and the education of our youth. We must create opportunities for our youth to be actively engaged in city government and community projects. Our youth are part of our community and it is our obligation to give them the tools for them to succeed. Not only is it the right thing to do, but it will also help them and the safety, health, and security of the city as a whole.
- **Work with Monessen Communities That Care (CTC) and the CTC Youth Council to provide community service projects and collaborations.**
  - Monessen Communities that Care (CTC) is a research-based community driven organization, that has been active in Monessen since 2001. Monessen CTC looks to provide programming to address youth delinquency and the issues facing at-risk youth, by using data and research-based methods. CTC relies on community support and action. It’s youth council consists of Monessen High School students, who act as advocates and role models for their peers, in order to support them, and encourage them to make smart and healthy life choices, and be engaged in the community. The youth council seeks our community development initiatives in order to be more engaged citizens in the community, and so they can learn, grow, and help wherever possible.

- **Partner with Team Humanity to engage the city's youth.**
  - Team Humanity is a community based organization that teaches students, particularly student athletes, skills in business. They do this by creating athletic apparel, and learning and participating in every aspect of the business such as, marketing, product development, production, design, sales, and shipping.
  - We will partner with Team Humanity, in order to further engage the city's youth, and to include them in the conversation about community development. This partnership will ensure that the youth take ownership of the city's improvements, and will help them to become more engaged and well-rounded citizens.
  
- **Establish a Youth and Family Department and Youth and Young Citizens Participatory Advisory Council within the city's organizational structure. Provide sustainability support for both in the city's annual budget.**
  - The City will establish a Youth and Young Citizens Advisory Council, modeled after a junior city council concept. The council will be made up of 7 high school aged students in Monessen. The seven students will be elected by their peers in the Monessen School District. The representation will consist of one student member from each of Monessen's five wards, and then two at-large student members.
  
  - The Young Citizens Participatory Advisory Council will learn the processes of local government, and will be an extended voice for the youth, as well as community members. The council will present issues identified by their peers, and will recommend project ideas and solutions to address those issues. This will provide an active outlet for the youth, and will bring a different perspective into the conversation. The will allow the city as a whole to support the youth and fully engage them in the process, so that their voices are heard, and so that we ensure that we are addressing issues that impact all segments of the community.

- **Work with the City of Pittsburgh and the National League of Cities to Implement Youth Participatory Budgeting 101 Program.**
  - The city will work with the City of Pittsburgh and the National League of Cities to Implement a Youth Participatory Budgeting Program within the City of Monessen, based off of the successful program that was implemented in Pittsburgh several years ago.
  - Youth Participatory Budgeting is a process in which youth gather in a formal setting, learn about the processes of local government, and identify problems they see in the community which could impact everyone. The youth would then identify one issue, create a solution, and propose that solution to the city's government official, for consideration. This cost of this endeavor could be leveraged with private funding to ensure that, if approved, the project can be implemented. This is just one additional way to build community involvement, and address systeming issues in our city.
- **Empower Youth and Young Organization through Equity Focused Youth Engagement Programs.**
  - The city will strive to work with and empower youth and youth-related organizations in order to promote and foster equity-focused youth engagement programs, by following the Aspen Institute's two goals:
    - Improving systems and programs for youth, based on youth expertise in the realities of their lives and viable solutions to challenges they face.
    - Developing a pipeline of youth leaders with the skills and expertise to lead this work in the future.
  - **Summary:** In doing this, the city will create a resilient generation of youth, that will help continue our work of making Monessen a better place in which to live, work, play, and do business. <sup>11</sup>
- **Work with Monessen School District to implement a high school class in advocacy**
  - The city will work with Monessen School District to implement a high school level class in advocacy, in order for students to learn about and solve local and

regional issues. This will allow students to be directly involved and engaged in positive outcomes and processes.

- **Work with Monessen School District and the Greater Monessen Historical Society to Implement a Local History and Local Government mini-class.**
  - The city will work with Monessen School District to implement a high school level class in local history and government, in order for students to learn about their community and how it functions. This will empower students to be more connected to their community, and understand how they fit into it, and how they can implement positive change in the future.
  
- **Form Partnerships to Implement a Monessen Kindergarten Savings Account Program**
  - The city will partner with local residents, foundations and organizations, to create and implement a Monessen Kindergarten Savings Account Program at a local credit union.
    - Every Kindergarten student in Monessen School District would receive a savings account with a \$50 deposit, at a local credit union. That investment will empower students and their families and set them on the right path, so they can have savings for college or trade school. The sole purpose for these accounts would be for post-high-school-graduation school-related expenses.
    - Funding would not come from tax revenue. The city would form public-private partnerships with outside organizations, in order to make this a reality.
    - This project would give Monessen children the ability to start on solid footing so that can achieve success. Not only is it the right thing to do to help our youth succeed - because it does, indeed, take a village to raise a child; but also, if we empower our students from a young age, we will help to rebuild Monessen's workforce and economy.
    - A similar project has been successful in St. Louis. <sup>12</sup>

- **Educate city council and staff on the need and value of investing in our youth using research based strategies.**
  - The city will use the Communities that Care model, and other research-based methods to show how we can improve the lives of our youth. Use data to show current delinquent and at-risk behaviors in Monessen, and how they have evolved over the past decade.
  
- **Encourage City of Monessen key leaders to support the development of an updated community action plan regarding delinquency prevention.**
  - The city will strive to work with the Monessen School District and other key community leaders to develop and implement a city-wide community action plan centered around delinquency prevention.
  - “Typically, juvenile delinquency follows a trajectory similar to that of normal adolescent development. In other words, children and youth tend to follow a path toward delinquent and criminal behavior rather than engaging randomly. Research has shown that there are two types of delinquents,
    - those in whom the onset of severe antisocial behavior begins in early childhood, and
    - those in whom this onset coincides with entry into adolescence.
  - In either case, these developmental paths give families, communities, and systems the opportunity to intervene and prevent the onset of antisocial behaviors and justice system involvement.”<sup>13</sup>

These issues can be tackled by community-driven early intervention, and positive youth development. By engaging youth in the community, in positive outcomes, we will not only be undertaking more equitable community development initiatives, but we will also be setting our youth up for success, and steering them away from delinquency and at-risk behaviors.

- **Work with County, Regional, and Community Partners to Provide relevant opportunities for city officials to become engaged key leaders with already existing delinquency prevention efforts in Monessen.**
  - A lot of work is already being done in the community by dedicated citizens and organizations, who have a heart for our youth and their success. The city will identify and work with those groups and citizens to ensure their work is strengthened, and to ensure the full support of Monessen’s city government.
  
- **Reestablish a fully functioning Monessen Recreation Authority. Contribute to fundraising efforts for center renovations and Monessen Youth Sports Leagues.**
  - The current Monessen Civic Center Board members and their volunteers have worked very hard to bring opportunities to our city’s youth, with very limited resources. The city will aim to re-establish the Monessen Civic and Recreation Authority, to provide more opportunities for our youth, and to give them autonomy from city government, so they have the ability to seek out their own funding and resources, in conjunction with the city. In doing this, more programming could be provided, not only to our youth, but to citizens of all ages.
  
  - Additionally, the city will aim to work with the proposed Civic and Recreation Authority in forming meaningful partnerships and leading essential collaborative efforts to offer wide ranging types of life skills and social emotional learning at the Civic Center in addition to the sports programs, and including but not limited to, music and the arts, as well as practical things, such as nutrition, budgeting, and other life skills that are not always taught before high school graduation.
  
- **Renegotiate the funding partnership with Monessen School District to rehire a full time Civic Center program director.**
  - In the past, the City of Monessen, the Monessen School District, and the Monessen Civic and Recreation Authority partnered to fund a full time program director at the Monessen Civic Center. The position, its funding, and duties should be revisited and renegotiated. A position at the civic center is important in order to provide consistent programming, ensure safety to visitors - especially youth, and to manage events and volunteers.

- **Work to overcome transportation barriers for citizens who do not have access to regular transportation.**
    - The city will develop a working relationship with WCHA to provide regular transportation for resident youth and families to overcome the transportation barrier and enable better participation in community programming. (Organizations such as Monessen Family Center and Salvation Army are limited to providing this service only to their clients).
  
  - **Find creative and sustainable ways to ensure funding for long term youth programming.**
    - The city will explore sustainability funding opportunities by building working alliances and grant application partnerships with potential area partners such as California University of Pennsylvania, Westmoreland County, Westmoreland Drug and Alcohol Commission, Community Foundation of Westmoreland County, and other local, regional, state, and federal partners.
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## A Livable City: Blight Strategy

*“Blight is often viewed as a liability; but, that liability can be turned into opportunity.”*

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- **Overview:** One of the city’s biggest issues is blight. We must look at blight as an opportunity to grow, redevelop, and change into a successful and prosperous city. We need to take a look at our inventory of blight, and identify what needs to be demolished, what can be salvaged, and any other opportunities that may be present. To do this, we must forge public-private partnerships, and think out of the box to tackle this systematically. We need to seek out funding to tackle this, and use every bit of power the law allows to address these issues. We can succeed in these endeavors by also utilizing data and community input, and in our efforts, we can attract developers and entrepreneurs to make these properties viable and taxable once again.
- **Develop, Maintain and Provide an Online Vacant Property Inventory**
  - The city will work to identify, develop, and maintain a vacant property inventory online. The properties listed will be properties that are owned by the city or any of its public entities. The list will include vacant lots, as well as lots with abandoned structures on them. The properties with structures on them will be ranked based on their structural condition, in order to prioritize for removal or intervention.
  - **Summary:** A property list has already been started, and simply needs to be updated. Maintaining this list and making it accessible, will spark growth and development of these empty and vacant properties. In doing this, we will stabilize

our tax base, taking some of the burden off of residents who are already living in Monessen.

- **Create a Blight and Vacant Property Task Force\*\***
  - A Blight and Vacant Property Task Force should include citizens and stakeholders, and will aim to create: safe, clean, and development-ready neighborhoods within the City of Monessen - in both residential and commercial districts.
  - The Blight and Vacant Property Task Force will use “From Blight to Bright” as its guiding source for action. Other best practice guidelines and methods could be used and adapted from other communities, as well. The City and the Blight and Vacant Property Task Force should do the following:
    - Adopt the Legal Framework to hold properties to clear standards in an equitable manner.
    - Create Register of Rental, Vacant, Foreclosed properties.
    - Require buyers to bring properties up to code.
    - Regulate entities who use vacant properties as tax write-offs.
    - Prioritize severely blighted properties based on legitimate health and safety issues.
    - Open estates of deceased property owners.
    - Appoint Conservators
  
- **Enforce PA Act 90 of 2010 within the City of Monessen**
  - The City of Monessen has adopted PA Act 90 of 2010, but has never used it to enforce severe blight within the city limits. Going forward the city will implement processes in order to enforce PA Act 90 of 2010.
  
  - **Summary:** “On October 27, 2010, the “Neighborhood Blight Reclamation and Revitalization Act”, known commonly as “Act 90”, was signed into law. This law took effect on April 25, 2011. It expands the powers the municipalities have to reduce blighted properties in their communities. Properties that are in “serious code violation”, as determined by local municipalities and zoning officers, can have the following legal actions taken against them. Also, buildings that are

determined to be a “public nuisance” by local municipalities may have the same actions taken.”

- Actions may be taken if after 6 months from the date of an order to correct violations, there has been “no substantial step” to correct those violations.
  - Liens can be placed against properties with code violations (*as per older laws*).
  - Municipalities can take property owners to court, to seek judgements against an owner’s assets (*new power*).
  - Municipalities may deny permits to owners of buildings that are in code violation (*new power*).
  - Municipalities may deny permits to owners of buildings that are behind in other municipal accounts (water, sewage, refuse collection, etc.) (*new power*).
  - Municipalities may deny these permits until all existing violations are remedied (*new power*).
  - Out-of-state property owners may be extradited back to Pennsylvania to be charged with property-related violations (*new powers*).
  - Magisterial districts may establish “housing courts” (*new power for judges*). *\*Judges are also encouraged to attend training and education related to new blight laws.\**<sup>14</sup>
- **Adopt and Enforce PA Act 135 of 2008**
  - The City will adopt and enforce PA Act 135 of 2008 - the Abandoned and Blighted Property Conservatorship Act. The Pennsylvania Conservatorship Act provides for “*court-appointed conservators to bring residential, commercial, and industrial buildings into municipal code compliance when owners fail to comply.*”
  - **Summary:** The Abandoned and Blighted Property Conservatorship Act “allows the court to appoint a conservator to rehabilitate deteriorating residential, commercial and industrial buildings. The conservator is then responsible for bringing buildings into municipal code compliance when owner fails to do so, and steps into the owner’s shoes for the purposes of filing plans, seeking permits, and submitting applications.

- The act does not relieve the actual property owner of any liability or obligation with respect to the property, and the property owner may become responsible for debts incurred as a result of the conservatorship.
  
- Some highlights of the Act, include:
  - **Expansion to Vacant Lots and Adjacent Property:** The amendment allows conservators to take over vacant lots, which is a boon to neighbors eyeing up a trash-filled lot for a community garden. Adjacent properties may now be considered in a single petition if they are owned by the same owner and used for a single or interrelated function.
  - **Definition of Abandoned Property and Standard for Assessment:** The act provides a definition of “*abandoned property*”, which was missing from the original text. The court must give “reasonable regard” to the conservator’s determinations when assessing the rehabilitation plan, including costs to develop the property.
  - **Expansion of Potential Conservators:** Neighboring residents or business owners, previously limited to a 500 foot radius, may now petition the court if they are located within 2,000 feet of the subject property.
  - **Shifting the Burden of Proof:** The burden to prove whether the property has been on the market in the past 12 months has been shifted to the owner, who must present “compelling evidence” that the property has been actively marketed.
  - **Petition Costs Recoverable:** The owner must reimburse the petitioner for costs of preparing the petition whether the owner elects to repair, the owner sells the property to the conservator, or the court approves the conservator’s petition. The ultimate goal of the petition - a repaired property - ends up being realized, even if conservatorship does not end up with control of the property, which incentivizes more petitions and workouts.
  - **Reduced Time To Sale:** The conservator must control the property for three months before sale (without a successful petition from the owner to terminate the conservatorship).

- **Miscellaneous**
    - Bids for contracts are no longer required if the conservator is financing the development.
    - If the owner opts to repair the property, a bond is required rather than left to the discretion of the court.
    - The petition requires the submission of title reports, and notice to certain municipal authorities, such as utility providers.
    - A hearing is no longer required for abatement if the court approves the submitted plan.
    - The developer's fee has been expanded to include a conservator's fee." <sup>15</sup>
  - **Establish a Blight and Revitalization Fund with tax revenue to address blight and dangerous conditions**
    - The City will enact an ordinance creating a Blight and Revitalization Fund, which will primarily be used to demolish or revitalize identified blighted properties within Monessen, and market them for resale, in order to get them back on the tax rolls.
    - **Summary:** A blight fund creates a dedicated source to finance blight elimination efforts and makes clear that addressing blight is a key municipal priority. Blight funds can be funded by tax revenue, fees, fines, or property sales.
    - A blight fund creates a source to pay for programs that eliminate blight and improve properties that pose a health and safety risk. A blight fund helps eliminate blight by creating a dedicated pot of money. In order to promote transparency and accountability, the city will report to the public on a regular basis on how the blight funds are used.<sup>16</sup>
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## **A Safe and Healthy City:** **Public Health, Crime, and Public Safety**

*“Police through the eyes of those you police; Govern through the eyes of the most vulnerable.”*

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- **Overview:** The City of Monessen owes it to its residents to address public health, safety and crime issues that regularly and systematically impact the city’s residents everyday. This strategy ties into all of the other strategies laid out in this strategic plan; especially, community and economic development. We need to recognize that violence is tied to economics and, in many cases, a person’s economic ability and their susceptibility to violence is generational - we must work to break the cycle. We must take action to establish a multi-pronged approach to stop violence today, but to also solve long term and underlying issues. Mental health, despair, violence, and drug-related issues are Public Health and Safety Crises that we must address, using targeted community and research-based intervention.
- **Join Cities United**
  - Cities United was launched in 2011, and is “a national movement focused on eliminating the violence in American cities related to African American men and boys. The 92 mayors participating in Cities United intend to reduce homicides in their cities by 50%, by the year 2025. Moreover, they are committed to restoring hope to their communities and building pathways to justice, employment, education, and increased opportunities for residents.”<sup>17</sup>
- **Continue Community Policing Model**
  - In 2018, under Monessen’s Police Chief Smith, the Monessen PD adopted a community policing model. The police have visited schools and public places,

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*“Monessen: A New Vision” Mayor’s Strategic Plan*

and have gotten to know residents and youth. Having the police officers meet the public in positive situations has proven to be beneficial for the overall feeling of safety within the community, as well as police-resident relations. These community policing efforts include, but are not limited to:

- Coffee With a Cop and Cookies with a Cop.
- Visits to Monessen schools, Monessen Library, and Monessen Senior Center on a regular basis.
- Basic safety tip sessions with Monessen senior citizens.
- Host roundtable talks about violence, trauma, addiction and other issues within various communities in the city.

- **Work with The Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association’s Accreditation Program on making Monessen’s Police Department eligible for professional accreditation.**

- “Accreditation is a progressive and time-proven way of helping institutions evaluate and improve their overall performance. The cornerstone of this strategy lies in the promulgation of standards containing a clear statement of professional objectives. Participating administrators then conduct a thorough analysis to determine how existing operations can be adapted to meet these objectives. When the procedures are in place, a team of independent professionals is assigned to verify that all applicable standards have been successfully implemented. The process culminates with a decision by an authoritative body that the institution is worthy of accreditation.
- The Pennsylvania Law Enforcement Accreditation Program was designed and developed by professional law enforcement executives to provide a reasonable and cost effective plan for the professionalization of law enforcement agencies within the Commonwealth. The underlying philosophy of the program is to have a user-friendly undertaking for the departments that will result in a “success” oriented outcome.”<sup>18</sup>

- **Create and Implement a Comprehensive Public Safety Plan for Monessen.**

- The city government will collaborate with the Monessen Police Department, and other state officials in the law enforcement, public safety and public health sectors, to create a comprehensive public safety plan for the city, which will focus

on long term and systematic solutions to address delinquency, gun violence, addiction, the opioid crisis, mental health, bullying, and drug trafficking. In having a long term systematic plan with goals set forth, Monessen will be able to improve the lives of residents, with a multi-pronged approach to addressing the public safety and public health issues that residents face each day.

- **Create a Civic Engagement Fellowship Program.**
  - The city will work with local organizations, foundations and universities, to identify funding sources, and establish a civic engagement fellowship program. This program will be geared towards youth and young adults, who either already have criminal records, or who are at risk for delinquency or acquiring a criminal record. The program will train these individuals in public service and criminal justice, through university and law enforcement partnerships. This program will help to train a new generation of police and public safety personnel in the region, and will help to provide them with opportunities to keep them out of trouble, and become successful.
  
- **Strengthen the work being done to combat the Opioid Crisis.**
  - The city will work with local and regional partners, in order to strengthen their efforts in combating the opioid crisis, and drug addiction as a whole, by connecting residents to already existing programs and support, and seeking new ways to help further curb this dangerous epidemic.
  
- **Appoint an Emergency Management Coordinator.**
  - Currently, the City of Monessen does not have an active Emergency Management Coordinator. This could have an adverse effect on the ability for the city's first responders to obtain grant funding for live saving equipment, and other needs. The city will identify a willing and qualified candidate for the position, make the official recommendation to the Governor, and ensure all of the requirements are met so that we ensure the public safety of residents in times of disaster, and preparedness in all other circumstances.
  
  - According to the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA), "Pennsylvania's Emergency Management Services Code (35 Pa. C. S. Section

7101–7707) became law in 1978 and replaced the State Council of Civil Defense Act of 1951.” “This state law requires that every county and municipal government develop and maintain an emergency management program consistent with the state and federal emergency management programs.”

- A valid emergency management coordinator is one who is appointed by the PA Governor, by recommendation of the municipality (in this case, the City of Monessen). The appointee needs to become certified by passing a series of intensive courses on public safety. The coordinator is an employee of the municipality and is responsible for implementing the program. This position is of the utmost importance for keeping residents safe, informed, and prepared in the case of a sudden emergency.
- Some typical functions of an Emergency Management Coordinator are as follows:
  - Prepares and maintains an Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) for the city, subject to the direction of the elected officials; reviews and updates as required. Develop and keep current emergency response checklists appropriate for the emergency needs and resources of the community.
  - Maintains coordination with the County Emergency Management Agency (EMA), and provides prompt information in emergencies, as available.
  - Coordinates with the county EMA, and in coordination with Police, Fire, and Emergency Medical Service, identifies hazards and vulnerabilities that may affect the city; recommends mitigation measures to reduce disaster effects; participates in the County Hazard Mitigation efforts and assists in pre-disaster mitigation planning and grant submission efforts.
  - Identifies resources within the City that can be used to respond to a major emergency or disaster situation and requests needed resources from the county EMA when needed.
  - Develop, maintain and organize personnel, equipment, and tools to work in the city emergency operations center (EOC) when activated.
  - Mobilize and manage the municipal EOC and act as the Command function within the Incident Command System (ICS) structure in the EOC

during an emergency/disaster when appropriate and as directed by the City of Monessen.

- Compiles cost figures for the conduct of emergency operations and recommends budgetary allocations for annual costs.
- Attend training, workshops, and seminars provided by the county and other sources to maintain skills and currency in emergency management and emergency response planning and procedures.
- Have current appropriate plans, procedures, guidance, and laws issued by the county, PEMA and the Commonwealth available within the EOC. Have knowledge of the federal and state required plans for a city's jurisdiction and coordinate with all applicable agencies dealing with emergencies at dams, chemical plants, schools, daycare operations, hospitals, nursing home facilities, and special events.
- Provide prompt and accurate information regarding city disasters and emergencies to the appropriate city, county, Commonwealth officials and the general public.
- Participate in all tests, drills, and exercises, including remedial drills and exercises that pertain to the city, as scheduled by the county or Commonwealth.
- Participate in the integrated flood warning systems program as applicable to the city.
- Develop mutual aid agreements, as applicable, with adjacent municipalities.
- Recommend to city officials the declaration of disaster emergencies when needed and send the signed disaster declaration to the county EMA when declared.
- Conduct damage reporting/assessment and expeditiously, when possible, within 24-hours of a disaster, provide the information to the county emergency management coordinator or the county EOC if activated.
- Respond to the location of a disaster as requested by city officials or the county emergency management coordinator.
- Attain Basic and Advanced certification in accordance with PEMA Directive 2003–5 and Title 35.

- Work with city officials to comply with the six components of the National Incident Management System (NIMS).
  - **Design and Implement an Updated Emergency Management Plan.**
    - Work with the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) to create an updated Emergency Management Plan for the City of Monessen, based on requirements and recommendations, by PEMA and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, in order to ensure the safety of all residents, during times of disaster and crisis.
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## A Sustainable City: Sustainability

*“You must not gamble your children’s future on the flip of a coin. Instead, you must unite behind the science. You must take action. You must do the impossible. Because giving up can never ever be an option.”*

*- Greta Thunberg*

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- **Overview:** Research has indicated that climate change and its effects will impact all citizens. If cities do not do the work now to mitigate the effects of climate change, cities, especially smaller ones, will have a harder forming partnerships and securing funding to make much-needed local infrastructure and development improvements.<sup>19</sup> We are already seeing the consequences of the climate crisis. We need to take action at every level of government, in order to ensure that we are all making responsible decisions and taking effective and efficient action to mitigate the impacts.<sup>20</sup> Locally, over the past decade, we have seen an increase in major weather events. Storms are getting more intense, and these intense storms and weather events are happening more frequently. Our local infrastructure was not built to handle these impacts, and we need to take action now, in order to secure a healthy and safe future for all of us. The initiatives laid forth will help us forge a path to sustainability, while realizing that we must do this in a way that supports and helps our residents and business community. Addressing Climate Change does not have to be seen as diminishing economic growth. We simply need to encourage more sustainable and responsible economic practices, improve our infrastructure to handle these climate changes, and taking into account our duty of raising residents up in the process, by creating jobs and training opportunities that fit a new economic model. This happens from the local level up, and Monessen can be a leader in this front.

- **Establish a Sustainability and Climate Action Plan.**
  - Create and implement a Sustainability and Climate Action Plan in Monessen, by outlining achievable and manageable goals, in order to bring the city to carbon neutrality by the year 2040.
  - **Summary:** Carbon Neutrality refers to reducing emissions of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere to the point of having a zero carbon footprint, and having zero carbon emissions. This can be achieved through carbon removal (through carbon offsetting) or eliminating carbon emissions altogether. In utilizing the carbon removal process, the carbon is removed or sequestered from the atmosphere. Some carbon-neutral fuels work in the same way. Eliminating carbon requires finding alternative fuel and energy sources that do not create large carbon emissions.
  - A Climate Action Plan is an evidence-based plan that provides measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and preventative measures to create the outcomes of climate change. In Monessen's case, these include severe and increased flooding, stronger storms, landslides, extreme humidity and health effects related to the issues just mentioned, as well as issues relating to poor air quality (such as asthma, MS, and other neurological disorders). A Climate Action Plan is a long term plan that shows how the city will adapt and improve its resilience and mitigate the impacts we are facing now, in order to improve public health, quality of life, and infrastructure.
- **Work with ArcelorMittal Monessen, and other industries in the area to support their ongoing sustainability initiatives.**
  - The city will work with ArcelorMittal Monessen in order to support the sustainability initiatives the industries are already undergoing, in order to find a solution that both supports business and commerce, as well as helps to solve our most pressing concerns surrounding the impacts of climate change in our region. We will help fill the gaps and support and magnify their sustainability efforts, wherever possible. In forming this partnership, we will ensure that all voices are heard, and that we tackle this issue in a multifaceted approach.

- **Institute air monitoring programs**

- Air monitoring programs will monitor emissions and help us collectively reduce them.
- **Summary:** The air quality in the Pittsburgh region is some of the worst in the nation, and Monessen is no exception. In using a similar approach as Pittsburgh, the city will collaborate with a local or regional university in order to help further research and collect data in the region. Poor air quality negatively impacts residents' quality of life, and their health. It has been known that Monessen has a larger number of individuals with MS, asthma, and other respiratory diseases. This could be contributed to the poor air quality. The intention of the city will be to work with business and civic leaders, both locally and regionally, in order to address the air quality issues, while not negatively impacting industries or job growth.

- **Establish an environmental education program within the City of Monessen**

- Work with the Monessen School District, the Monessen Public Library, and local, regional, and state environmental and sustainability organizations, including institutions of higher education, in order to provide youth and adults information on how to improve our shared environment, and make healthy, sustainable, and manageable choices.

- **Establish Active Greening projects in vacant areas of the city.**

- Use the strategy of active greening, in order to beautify and make use of vacant lots, within the city. There are several regional organizations that the city and its residents could collaborate with in order to make this a reality.
- **Summary:** Active greening could include cleaning trash and debris from vacant lots, establishing urban farming cooperatives, urban farm-to-table initiatives, urban beekeeping and native flower gardens. By doing this, we will help the environment, and we will be cleaning up vacant lots, and reinstilling pride in the neighborhoods and the residents that live in them. By cleaning and caring for these vacant lots, it could make them more attractive for developers. Active Greening is a concept of Green Infrastructure. Green Infrastructure encourages

the use of nature in connection with the built environment, in order to solve sustainability-related issues.

- **Initiate a comprehensive Street-Tree planting program.**
  - The city will institute a Comprehensive Street-Tree Planting Program by utilizing the already-existing ordinance for the city’s shade tree-commission, which was revised in 2018.
  - **Summary:** In replanting street trees in certain areas of the city, we will raise land values, which will help homeowners, if and when they look to sell their homes. The initiative will also help to lower Carbon Dioxide emissions and reduce heat island effects in the summertime.
- **Establish standards in sustainable development.**
  - The city will adopt general standards to promote sustainable development in new construction or renovations.
  - **Summary:** Establishing standards for sustainable development could attract developers who will take the time and care to make sure that their buildings not only look good, and are built to last, but that they are also built in a way that takes our global challenges to mind. Some of these standards could include passive solar, green roofs, and use of carbon-neutral materials. These challenges include, but are not limited to: extreme heat and humidity, increased flooding, and stronger storms.
- **Adopt the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.**
  - The city will adopt the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, with a target date of the year 2030.
  - **Summary:** The United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals “are the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. The address the global challenges we face, including those related to poverty, inequality, climate, environmental degradation, prosperity, and peace and justice. The goals interconnect and in order to leave no one behind, it is important that we achieve each goal and target by 2030”, collectively. <sup>21</sup>

- These goals include:
  - Poverty - Economic growth must be inclusive to provide sustainable jobs and promote equality.
  - Zero hunger - The food and agriculture sector offers key solutions for development, and is central for hunger and poverty eradication.
  - Good health and well-being - Ensuring healthy lives and promoting the well-being of all ages is essential to sustainable development.
  - Quality education - Obtaining a quality education is the foundation to improving people's lives and sustainable development.
  - Gender Equality - Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world.
  - Clean water and sanitation - Clean, accessible water for all is an essential part of the world we want to live in.
  - Affordable and clean energy - Energy is central to nearly every major challenge and opportunity.
  - Decent work and economic growth - Sustainable economic growth will require societies to create the conditions that allow people to have quality jobs.
  - Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure - Investments in infrastructure are crucial to achieving sustainable development.
  - Reduced inequalities - To reduce inequalities, policies should be universal in principle, paying attention to the needs of disadvantaged and marginalized populations.
  - Sustainable cities and communities - There needs to be a future in which cities provide opportunities for all, with access to basic services, energy, housing, transportation, and more.
  - Responsible Consumption and Production - Sustainable consumption and production is about promoting resource and energy efficiency, sustainable infrastructure, and providing access to basic services, green and decent jobs, and a better quality of life for all. Its implementation helps to achieve overall development plans, reduce future economic, environmental, and social costs, strengthen economic competitiveness, and reduce poverty.

- Climate Action - Climate change is a global challenge that affects everyone, everywhere.
  - Life below water - Careful management of this essential global resource is a key feature of a sustainable future.
  - Life on Land - Sustainably managing forests, combating desertification, halting and reversing land degradation, and halting biodiversity loss are crucial.
  - Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions - Access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable institutions at all levels.
  - Partnerships - Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.
- **Promote Energy Efficiency.**
    - Initiate a public awareness campaign to reduce energy consumption, promote clean, renewable and diverse energy resources, such as solar cell collectors, biodiesel fuel, micro wind turbines, and thermal energy.
    - **Summary:** If excess energy is created in this manner, residents could have the ability to sell their excess energy back to the electric company.
  - **Promote Passive Solar energy in new construction.**
    - Passive solar energy is an old concept. Many older homes used this concept, when heating and cooling were more of a luxury. Passive solar energy is using the design of the house of building to trap heat from the sun, when necessary. This ensures that the house is not too cold during the winter, or not too hot in the summer. This reduces energy consumption and lowers energy bills for homeowners.
    - Create a simplified process in zoning and permitting regulations for residents who want to transition to solar.

- **Promote the use of building that help to clean pollution.**
  - Numerous building materials are available to help combat pollutants. These materials should be promoted when structures are being built or renovated within the city. Some of these materials include but are not limited to, titanium dioxide (as used in paint and other materials), solar cells, and LED lighting.
  
- **Work with the City of Pittsburgh to create a Greater Pittsburgh Climate Change Consortium.**
  - A Climate Change Consortium for the Greater Pittsburgh Region would be made up of Mayors and other local and state leaders, as well as civic leaders, who are based in localities that have high levels of pollution and poor air quality, or have industries located within their boundaries that emit large amounts of pollutants into the air.
  
  - **Summary:** The consortium would be a way to bring local leaders together and keep them connected, in order to focus on the common goal of combating air pollution, and improving air quality for our residents. Even if the City of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County as a whole improve their air quality, unless we tackle this issue at a regional level, we will not see the full benefits. The group could also focus on regional approaches to tackling climate change, improving residents' quality of life, and supporting and attracting sustainable climate-friendly jobs. The consortium would use regional, publicly shared data in order to shape their initiatives.
  
- **Install trash, recycling, and cigarette butt receptacles in the Downtown District.**
  - By installing these receptacles, it will be easier to keep our streets and sidewalks clean in the Downtown District, and will help prevent trash from entering our storm sewer systems.
  
- **Partnership with Humane Action Pittsburgh's 'No Plastic Please' Campaign.**
  - "no plastic please" is a HUMANE ACTION Pittsburgh campaign aimed at reducing single-use plastic to protect our communities' health, wildlife, and environment. The is to have as many people as possible take the "no plastic

please" pledge and challenge themselves to eliminate single-use plastic to reduce the suffering of all living creatures. This is also one way residents can eliminate clutter in their homes, and litter in Monessen's streets.

- The campaign suggests starting with refusing several targeted items, because they are widely pervasive and easily and readily replaceable.
- The eight items that are encouraged, but not mandated to be replaced are:
  - plastic bags
  - plastic cups
  - plastic take out containers
  - plastic bottles
  - all styrofoam
  - plastic stirrers
  - plastic cutlery
  - plastic straws
- All eight of these single-use plastic items are constantly offered to us in cafes, restaurants, shops, schools, offices, etc. Some have even found their way into daily use inside our homes. They are also some of the most common items found littering our communities and floating in our waterways. Each of these eight instances of single-use plastic can be replaced by readily available reusable alternatives. All it takes is a commitment to change and a little preparation. Big changes can come from many small actions. <sup>22</sup>

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## **Proposed Ordinances**

*“Government can easily exist without laws, but law cannot exist without government.” -Bertrand Russell*

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**Overview:** The city will update all ordinances and resolutions currently on the books, as needed. We will make sure that these ordinances are not redundant, unlawful, or outdated. Those ordinances any any other future ordinances will be made available online for residents, so they understand our local laws and guidelines. Additionally, the following proposed ordinances will be discussed for future enactment:

- **Proposed Ordinance #1 Limit on Annual Fire Calls Per Property**

This ordinance would determine that Fire Department Calls that occur more than three times per year at the same address would be deemed unlawful and would impose a monetary fine on the property owner and/or the building manager, the person in charge , and/or the person responsible for the call. In addition, an investigation would be initiated to look into the reason for said calls (faulty alarm systems, electrical systems etc.). Following the investigation the owner would be required to fix any issues found; otherwise they will face penalties in relation to city code enforcement, and state and federal building code laws.

- **Proposed Ordinance #2 Sale and Use of Large-Scale Fireworks Limited**

This ordinance would determine that the use and sale of large-scale Fireworks shall be limited within City limits. This is an ordinance that will amend an already existing city ordinance, and support the newly enacted Pennsylvania law, regarding fireworks. Fireworks would not be able to be used within 150 feet of any occupied structure.

- **Proposed Ordinance #3 Anti-Bullying Ordinance**

Bullying by anyone of any age shall be unlawful as a summary offense (not including constitutionally protected speech). If found to violate this ordinance, a fine of not more than \$250 or up to 40 hours of community service shall be imposed. Discretion of imposing this law shall be left to the investigating law enforcement officer. This ordinance shall include bullying - in its many forms; cyber bullying, cyber stalking, harassment, and retaliation. A pattern of misconduct must emerge before the imposition of this fine. In the event the perpetrator is a minor, the parent/guardian as well as the minor shall be held responsible by a fine, community service, or another just remedy, as seen fit in the eyes of law enforcement or the courts, (such as counseling, etc.).

- **Proposed Ordinance #4 Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Ordinance**

- Creation of Office of Diversity and Inclusion

This ordinance would establish an office of diversity and inclusion within Monessen's Governmental Structure. The purpose of this office, shall be to ensure that all compliance measures at the local, state, and federal level are met. The office would also be responsible for seeking out private and public funding to help at-risk and marginalized populations within Monessen, and to be a public advocate for residents, in regards to the issues of equity, diversity and inclusion. The city will seek out best practice solutions from other cities, in order to establish and implement this office in an effective manner.

- Equitable Contract Procurement

- This ordinance would state that discrimination against businesses by reason of race ethnicity, age, geography, disability, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, socioeconomic status, citizenship status, religion, or national origin of the ownership of any such business is prohibited. Furthermore, that all vendors and contractors doing business with it shall provide to all businesses the opportunity to participate in contracting and procurement paid, in whole or in part, with monetary appropriations of the board without regard to race, color, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or national origin of the ownership of any such business. Similarly, it is the policy of the City of Monessen that the contracting and procurement practices of the City of Monessen should not implicate the city as a

passive participant in discriminatory practices engaged in by private contractors or vendors who seek to obtain contracts with the City of Monessen.

- **Proposed Ordinance #5 Vacant Property Registry**

This ordinance would require owners of vacant and abandoned properties in Monessen to register their properties with the city for an annual fee. This process will create a registry of vacant properties within Monessen. If an owner defaults on their mortgage, the city will inspect the property to determine if it is vacant. The ordinance would also provide for updated maintenance and security requirements, based on the International Building Code. Owners will also be responsible for cleaning weeds and debris, and securing the structure - especially windows and doors. Owners will also be required to keep the property free from pests - such as rats, mice, and the like. Those who fail to register or maintain their properties can be taken to court, and if convicted, could be subject to daily fines at a fixed rate. This ordinance is based on those in nearby West Newton Borough, as well as the City of Greensburg.

- **Proposed Ordinance #6 Re-establishment of Monessen Parking Authority**

This ordinance would re-establish the Monessen Parking Authority, which operated in the city for decades. It would establish updated regulations and guidelines for the authority, its purposes, and how it will be administered. The purpose of the authority, in part, will be to ensure that Monessen's Downtown District parking areas are safe, maintained, properly utilized. Additionally, the authority will be tasked with finding the most efficient ways to configure parking within Monessen's Downtown District.

- **Proposed Ordinance #7 Establish a Blight Fund**

This ordinance would establish a fund with tax revenue in order to expeditiously and systematically address blight and dangerous property conditions. This ordinance would be modeled after guidelines and best practices from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

- **Proposed Ordinance #8, Animal Safety Ordinance**

This ordinance would ensure that the safety of all animals within the city limits are protected. The ordinance would do the following:

- Ban traveling exotic animal performances.
- Ban live bird trapping.
- Provide a stricter hot car bill that supports current state law. (This prohibits animals from being left in hot cars).
- Provide stricter inclement weather provisions that support current state law. (This prohibits animals from being left in inclement weather.)
- Ban the ownership of certain dangerous, exotic reptiles.

- **Proposed Ordinance #9, Municipal Code and Ordinance Compliance Act**

This ordinance would require purchasers of property in Monessen, with known code violations to resolve the violation(s) within 18 months of purchasing said property. This will ensure that vacant properties are repaired upon purchase, and will limit the abilities of ‘ghost buyers’ from flipping properties or using them as tax write offs, without rehabilitating them.

- **Proposed Ordinance #10, Monessen Vacant Property Doors and Windows Ordinance**

This ordinance would impose fines for each missing or broken door or window on a particular vacant property. The purpose of this ordinance is to stop blight from spreading and help maintain properties, so they can be put back on the tax rolls more easily. This would also improve safety conditions for people living near vacant properties in Monessen.

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## **Resources**

*“I fill with pride and swell out my chest when I speak of Monessen.”*  
*-Colonel James M. Schoonmaker*

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### **A City on a Hill: Monessen In A Snapshot:**

- [Niche: Monessen](#)
- [Best Places: Monessen](#)
- [US Census Quick Facts: Monessen](#)

### **An Efficient City: General City Administration:**

- [New Rules for Attracting and Retaining Government Talent](#)
- [New ClearGov Feature Quickly Publicizes Capital Project Info](#)
- [What Duluth Can Teach America About Declining Political Civility](#)
- [National Institute for Civil Discourse](#)

### **An Accessible City: Transit and Mobility:**

- [What are Complete Streets?](#)
- [Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission: Smart Moves for a Changing Region](#)
- [Missoula Complete Streets Resolution](#)
- [Americans Shouldn't Have to Drive, but the Law Insists on It](#)
- [Parking Reform Will Save the City](#)

### **A Well-Planned City: Zoning and Land Use:**

- [The Particular Creativity of Dense Urban Neighborhoods](#)
- [‘Legalizing’ historic complexity is a silver lining to zoning reform](#)

### **An Innovative City: Innovation District:**

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*“Monessen: A New Vision” Mayor’s Strategic Plan*

- [TOWARD PLACE GOVERNANCE: WHAT IF WE REINVENTED CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE AROUND PLACEMAKING?](#)
- [How Mayors Can Drive Inclusive Growth](#)
- [Ideas for Pennsylvania Innovation: Examining efforts by competitor states and national leaders](#)
- [Brookings Report: Advancing a new wave of urban competitiveness: The role of mayors in the rise of innovation districts](#)
- [How to push your city to innovate like never before](#)
- [Brookings: Innovation Districts](#)

**A City of Opportunities: Opportunity Zones:**

- [IRS: Opportunity Zones, Frequently Asked Questions](#)

**An Equitable City: Community and Economic Development:**

- [A Better Way to Revive America's Rust Belt](#)
- [How to Bring Back Struggling Cities](#)
- [The Real Reason Your Downtown Died](#)
- [Why American Companies Are Moving Downtown](#)
- [Catalytic development: \(Re\)creating walkable urban places](#)
- [Footloose: Walkable Neighborhoods Attracting Investments While Burbs Die](#)
- [The economic power of walkability in metro areas](#)
- [Why Historic Preservation Needs a New Approach](#)
- [Courier Exclusive: 40 units of affordable housing coming to Hill District, labeled New Granada Square Apartments](#)
- [National Association of City Transportation Officials: Curb Extensions](#)
- [The Rise of the Rural Creative Class](#)
- [How Public Art can Boost the Pride \(and Resilience\) of Your Neighborhood](#)
- [Congress for the New Urbanism](#)
- [PA DCED: Neighborhood Assistance Program, Program Guidelines](#)

**A Welcoming City: Diversity, Inclusion, Community Building:**

- <https://www.govloop.com/fostering-diversity-in-local-government/>

**A Productive City: Business and Workforce Development:**

- [Akron's Northside Marketplace Provides a Prototype for Boosting Local Business](#)
- [Maps Reveal Where the Creative Class Is Growing](#)
- [The Rise of Experiential Retail](#)

**A Transparent City: Technology, Communication, and Transparency:**

- [Government 360: Amplifying Democracy Through Technology](#)
- [Smarter Solutions for a Connected Government](#)
- [Understanding Cloud Procurement: A Guide for Government Leaders](#)
- [Digital Transformation: Reinventing the Business of Government](#)
- [Preparing for a Digital Government](#)
- [How One City Embraced Transparency and Reimagined Public Engagement](#)
- [What Two Years of Open Data Has Done for Pittsburgh](#)
- [Seven Strategies for Data-Driven Economic Development](#)
- [Smart Cities: The Future Of Urban Development](#)
- [Smart cities: A cheat sheet](#)

**A Peaceful City: Parks and Public Places:**

- [Clean, green public spaces make us happier, study finds](#)
- [A Brighter Future for Run-Down Basketball Courts](#)
- [The Giving Grove](#)
- [Landforce](#)
- [20 things every city can do to boost the quality of public life](#)

**A Youth-Centered City: Youth Involvement and Education:**

- [Youth Involvement Task Force 2018 BEST PRACTICES REPORT](#)
- [Effects of Exposure to the Communities That Care Prevention System on Youth Problem Behaviors in a Community-Randomized Trial: Employing an Inverse Probability Weighting Approach](#)
- [Federal Policy Solutions to Prevent and End Youth and Young Adult Homelessness](#)
- [Students tell Pittsburgh City Council: Fight gentrification, buy a house](#)
- [Housing in Brief: Pittsburgh Youth Propose Community Land Trust](#)
- [A group of teenagers will decide the fate of a small portion of Pittsburgh's 2018 capital budget](#)

### **A Livable City: Blight Strategy:**

- [Greensburg to establish vacant property registry, fines for absentee owners](#)
- ['The unfortunate reality': Uniontown officials lament limits of blight ordinances](#)
- [West Newton Vacant Property Penalty Ordinance](#)
- [After 10 years and 8,000 demolitions, Cuyahoga Land Bank shifts focus to rehabs](#)
- [Cuero ordinance aims to bring life to vacant buildings](#)
- [Vacancy: America's Other Housing Crisis](#)
- [These Neighbors Got Together to Buy Vacant Buildings. Now They're Renting to Bakers and Brewers](#)
- [Black Beekeepers Are Transforming Detroit's Vacant Lots Into Bee Farms](#)
- [America's first urban 'agrihood' feeds 2,000 households for free](#)
- [Battling Blight: Four Ways Cities Are Using Data to Address Vacant Properties](#)
- [Will "Blexting" Help With Detroit Blight?](#)

### **A Safe and Healthy City: Public Health, Crime, and Public Safety:**

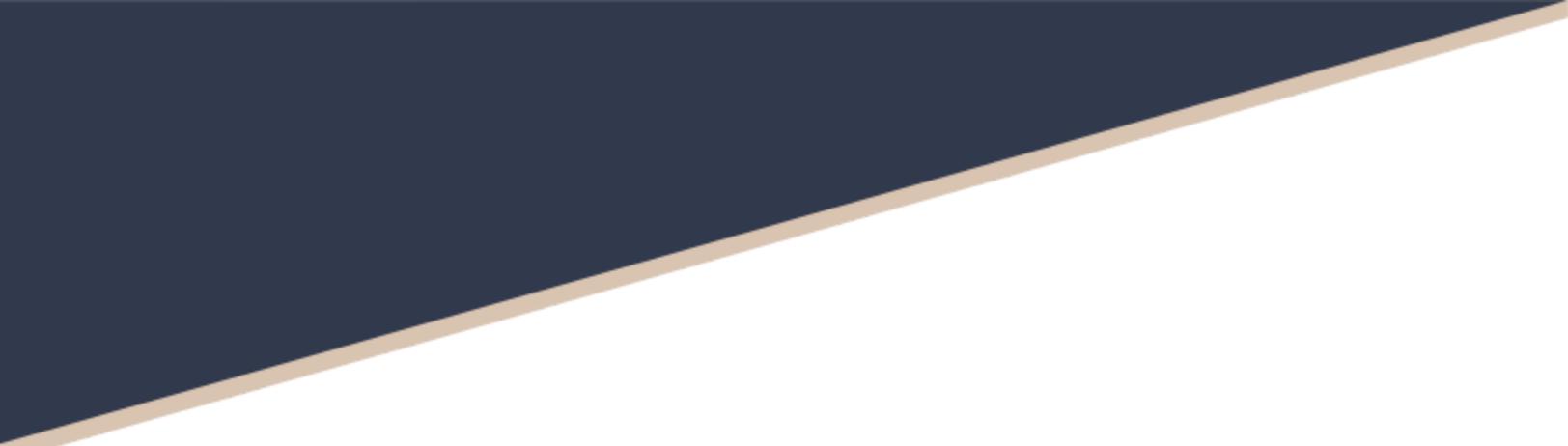
- [Storm Ready](#)

### **A Sustainable City: Sustainability:**

- [Cities Should Think About Trees As Public Health Infrastructure](#)
- [AME Solar Booklet: Eliminate red tape in zoning and permitting](#)
- [Making Sense of Energy Storage](#)
- [Former Pittsburgh steel mill is being redeveloped to support solar](#)

### **Ordinances**

- [Local Progress POLICY BRIEFS](#)
- [All In Cities - Policy Link](#)
- [NONDISCRIMINATION IN PURCHASING AND CONTRACTING](#)
- [PA Blight Library Policy](#)



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## **Citations**

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