

**MIDTOWN REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT
CITY OF MONESSEN, WESTMORELAND COUNTY, PA**

**REDEVELOPMENT AREA PLAN
AND
REDEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES
AND STRATEGY**

JUNE 2009

**PREPARED BY: The Redevelopment Authority
Of the City of Monessen**

**PREPARED FOR: The Planning Commission
Of the City of Monessen**

THE MIDTOWN REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT (REVISED)
CITY OF MONESSEN, WESTMORELAND COUNTY, PA

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THE MIDTOWN REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT (REVISED)

CITY OF MONESSEN, WESTMORELAND COUNTY, PA

PART ONE: THE REDEVELOPMENT AREA PLAN (AS REVISED)

A. INTRODUCTION -

The purpose of the Redevelopment Plan is to examine a portion of the City of Monessen in terms of its qualifications as a “redevelopment area” in accordance with the Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law (1945, May 24, P.L 991-35 P.S. §1701-1719). The project area is generally bounded by; the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie Railroad (P&LE) on the north; Seneca Street and Parente Boulevard on the east; the alley south of and parallel to Schoonmaker Avenue on the south; and Eighth Street on the west. A Project Boundary Map – Map No. 1 has been prepared to delineate the Project Area. A more precise description of the Project Area is included in the Project Boundary Description (Exhibit “A”).

The Redevelopment Area Plan is one element of a detailed process that leads to the reorganization and redevelopment of a blighted area. An understanding of the legal and procedural steps in the redevelopment process helps to define the purpose of the Redevelopment Area Plan and its sequence in the overall redevelopment process.

Pennsylvania’s Urban Redevelopment Law (35 P.S. § 1701-1747) grants the power to Redevelopment Authorities to exercise the right of eminent domain for the purpose of eliminating blight and rehabilitating blighted sections of communities. The Act prescribes the manner in which redevelopment programs can be carried out. Before a Redevelopment Authority can prepare a Redevelopment Proposal, the Planning Commission must approve a Redevelopment Area which examines existing conditions within the redevelopment area as the basis for certification of blight. Blight must be determined in accordance with measures defined within the Act, including;

- Unsafe, unsanitary, inadequate, or overcrowded conditions of dwellings therein;
- Inadequate planning of the area;
- Lack of proper light, air and open space;
- Defective design and arrangement of buildings thereon;
- Faulty street and lot layout; and
- Economically or socially undesirable land uses

The local Planning Commission need not find that each and every one of the above conditions exists within the redevelopment area in order to render a determination of blight. The existence of any such condition or a combination of one or more conditions is generally sufficient to warrant certification.

Furthermore, all of the neighborhood deficiencies and constraints to development outlined in the Redevelopment Area Plan need not be corrected in a single Redevelopment Proposal. A series of Redevelopment Proposals may be prepared over time to address the needs of the Redevelopment Area. Once a determination of blight has been rendered for a broad area such as the Midtown Redevelopment Area, a series of successive redevelopment actions may be carried out over a period of time as opportunities arise.

The Act further sets forth the required elements of a Redevelopment Area Plan as follows:

- Definition of the area's boundary;
- A map which depicts the existing use of land within the area;
- A land use plan showing proposed uses following redevelopment;
- Standards of population densities, land coverage and building intensities;
- A statement of the proposed changes, if any, to the municipality's zoning ordinance;
- A statement of any proposed changes in street layouts and proposed traffic circulation;
- A statement of the extent and effect of the rehousing of families which may be necessary for the redevelopment of the area, and the manner in which such rehousing may be accomplished;
- A statement of the cost of acquisition within the redevelopment area, and of all other costs necessary to prepare the area for redevelopment; and
- A statement of such continuing controls as may be deemed necessary to effectuate the purposes of the Act.

The Planning Commission of the City of Monessen reviewed the conditions of the Project Area, and on November 17, 1997, made the initial finding of blight by certifying and designating the Midtown Redevelopment Project Area as a Redevelopment Area. This area included the properties generally bounded by the P & L E Railroad on the north; Seneca Street (Parente Boulevard) on the east; the alley south of and parallel to Schoonmaker Avenue on the south; and Fourth Street on the west. By subsequent action of the Planning Commission of the City of Monessen on November 12, 2001, the original certified area was expanded to include the properties on both sides of Donner Avenue and Schoonmaker Avenue from Fourth Street on the east, to Eighth Street on the west.

B. EXISTING LAND USE -

An updated reconnaissance survey was performed for the Redevelopment Area in March 2008. Based on that survey work, there are two hundred seventy-seven (277) parcels of land in the Redevelopment Area of which sixty-five (65) are residential; five (5) are mixed residential/commercial; one hundred and six (106) are commercial; two (2) are public use (fire station and the City hall); sixteen (16) are parking lots; and sixty-three (63) are vacant/undeveloped lots.

**TABLE 1 - MONESSEN MIDTOWN REDEVELOPMENT AREA
EXISTING LAND USES**

LAND USE	NUMBER	PERCENT
Residential	65	23%
Mixed-Use Res./Commercial	5	2%
Commercial	106	38%
Public Use	2	1%
Semi-Public Use	12	5%
Park and Open Space	7	3%
Parking Lots/Garages	16	6%
Vacant/Undeveloped Lots	63	23%
TOTALS	277	100%

Major businesses/uses in the area are the Monessen Coke Works, the Douglas Education Center, Foodland Supermarket, Rite Aid Pharmacy and the Monessen CDC Business Center.

C. STRUCTURAL CONDITIONS-

There are 200 primary structures in this study area. Based on an exterior visual conditions survey there are 71 buildings which are considered sound, without any rehabilitation or maintenance work needed; there are 69 structures which are in need of maintenance; and 49 structures which are code deficient and in need of major rehabilitation work. There are 11 buildings which are economically infeasible to rehabilitate.

Thirty-six percent (36%) of the buildings located in the Study Areas are in sound condition, 35% show that maintenance is needed, and 24% were code deficient and 5% of the structures in the area are economically infeasible to rehabilitate. This is illustrated in Table 2.

**TABLE 2 - MONESSEN MIDTOWN REDEVELOPMENT AREA
STRUCTURAL CONDITIONS**

BUILDING CONDITION	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Sound Condition	71	36%
Maintenance Needed	69	35%
Code Deficient	49	24%
Economically Infeasible	11	5%
TOTALS	200	100%

D. BOUNDARIES OF THE AREA -

The Boundaries of the proposed Redevelopment Area are described in the attached EXHIBIT "A" and are graphically illustrated on the attached Project Boundary Map – Map No. 1

In addition to the Project Boundary Map, there are several other maps that show the existing conditions in the Project Area. The first map is entitled "Existing Land Use" which illustrates the existing land uses in the Redevelopment Area. The second map is entitled "Structural Conditions" which illustrates the existing structural conditions of the buildings within the Redevelopment Area. Both of these maps are also included in the Project Eligibility Report and the information was presented to the Planning Commission as documentation for certification of a redevelopment area.

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EXHIBIT “A” – PROJECT BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

BEGINNING at the point of intersection of the easterly right-of-way line of Seneca Street and its point of intersection with the southerly right-of-way line of the former P&LE Railroad, now known as the Three Rivers Railroad Company, thence westwardly along the southerly right-of-way line of the Three Rivers Railroad Company to its point of intersection with the easterly right-of-way line of an unnamed alley which is perpendicular to the southerly right-of-way line of the Three Rivers Railroad Company and between Eighth and Ninth Streets; thence southwardly along the easterly right-of-way line of said unnamed alley to its point of intersection with the southerly right-of-way line of Donner Avenue; thence eastwardly along the southerly right-of-way line of Donner Avenue to its point of intersection with the westerly right-of-way line of Eighth Street; thence southwardly along the westerly right-of-way line of Eighth Street to its point of intersection with the northerly right-of-way line of Schoonmaker Avenue; thence southwardly at a 90 degree angle across Schoonmaker Avenue to its point of intersection on the southerly right-of-way line of Schoonmaker Avenue; thence eastwardly along the southerly right-of-way line of Schoonmaker Avenue to its point of intersection with the westerly property line of Parcel 200 in the Westmoreland County Lot and Block System, Map Number 20-02-03; thence southwardly along the westerly property line of said parcel to its point of intersection with the northerly right-of-way line of McKee Avenue; thence eastwardly along the northerly right-of-way line of McKee Avenue to its point of intersection with the property line separating Tax Map Parcels 200 and 218 as shown in the Westmoreland County Lot and Block System, Map Number 20-02-03; thence northwardly along said property line to its point of intersection with the southerly right-of-way line of an alley which is parallel to and south of the southerly right-of-way line of Schoonmaker Avenue; thence eastwardly along the southerly right-of-way line of said alley to its point of intersection with the easterly right-of-way line of Rostraver Street; thence northeastwardly along the easterly right-of-way line of Rostraver Street a distance of approximately 30 feet to its point of intersection with the rear property lines of those properties fronting on the southerly side of Schoonmaker Avenue; thence eastwardly along the said rear property line of those properties fronting on the southerly side of Schoonmaker Avenue extended to its point of intersection with the easterly right-of-way line of First Street which is also the point of intersection of the center line of an alley which is parallel to and approximately 135 feet south of the southerly right-of-way line of Schoonmaker Avenue; thence eastwardly along the center line of said alley to its point of intersection with the easterly right-of-way line of Oneida Street; thence northwardly along the easterly right-of-way line of Oneida Street to its point of intersection with the southerly right-of-way line of Schoonmaker Avenue; thence eastwardly along the southerly right-of-way line of Schoonmaker

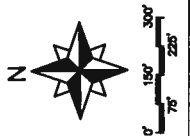
Avenue to its point of intersection with the easterly right-of-way line of an alley; thence southeastwardly along the easterly right-of-way line of said alley a distance of approximately 41.37 feet to its point of intersection with the rear property line of those properties fronting on the south side of Schoonmaker Avenue; thence eastwardly along the rear property line of those properties fronting on Schoonmaker Avenue a distance of approximately 106 feet to its point of intersection with the westerly right-of-way line of Parente Boulevard; thence northwardly along the westerly right-of-way line of Parente Boulevard to its point of intersection with the westerly right-of-way line of Seneca Street; thence northeastwardly along the westerly right-of-way line of Seneca Street to its point of intersection with the southerly right-of-way line of the Three Rivers Railroad Company; **THE POINT OF BEGINNING.**



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Prepared For: The Redevelopment Authority of the City of Monessen • 100 Third Street • Monessen • PA • 15120
 Prepared By: Urban Design Ventures, LLC • Planning Consultants • 212 East Seventh Ave. • Homestead • PA • 15120



Urban Design Ventures, LLC
 Community Planning & Development Consultants

Project Boundary Map

----- Project Boundary

Map No.:

1

APRIL 2008



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EXISTING LAND USE MAP

Residential	Public	Parking
Mixed Use/ Res. / Comm.	Semi-Public	Light Industrial
Commercial	Park / Open Space	Vacant
Project Boundary		



EXISTING STRUCTURAL CONDITIONS MAP

- Sound, No Rehabilitation Required
- Minor Rehabilitation, Maintenance Needed
- Major Rehabilitation Work Required
- Economically Infeasible to Rehabilitate
- Project Boundary

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E. STANDARDS OF POPULATION DENSITIES, LAND COVERAGES & BUILDING INTENSITIES -

The population density and intensity of land coverage by buildings within the Midtown Redevelopment Area are controlled by the City of Monessen Zoning Ordinance which delineates this Project Area as Business District (C-2). No additional standards of population densities, land coverages, and building intensities are proposed other than those permitted in the Zoning Ordinance.

The following population densities, land coverages and building intensities are as outlined in the City of Monessen Zoning Ordinance for the Business District (C-2).

1. Commercial

a. Permitted Uses – The following uses are permitted in those areas designated as Commercial on the **Land Use Plan**.

- Automobile, Boat or Mobile/Manufactured Home Sales
- Bakery
- Beverage Distributor
- Bus or Railroad Passenger Station
- Car Wash
- Clothing Sales and Service
- Conference Center
- Construction Company
- Convenience Store
- Custom Crafts
- Equipment Sales and Services
- Exercise Club
- Financial Institutions
- Food Service
- Funeral Home
- Garden Center
- Health Care Services
- Hospital
- Hotels, Motels and Lodging
- Laundromat
- Medical/Dental Office
- Multi-Family Residential (above first floor commercial)
- Nursing Home or Personal Care Home
- Offices
- Personal Service
- Professional Service
- Recreational Facility (Indoor & Outdoor)
- Repair of Household Items

- Restaurant
- Retail Store
- Schools (Public and Private)
- Shopping Center
- Tavern
- Trade School
- Theaters and Auditoriums
- Veterinarian Office
- Wholesale Establishments

b. Contingent Uses – The following uses are permitted as conditional uses when authorized by the Planning Commission and City Council:

- Railroad Right-of-Way
- Utility Facilities and Sub-stations
- Parking Lots and Garages
- Automobile Service Station
- Bed and Breakfast
- Kennel
- Membership Club
- Treatment Center

c. Land Use Regulations – The following regulations shall govern the construction of buildings on the land:

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------|
| • Lot Size..... | No Minimum |
| • Lot Width | No Minimum |
| • Building Setback Line..... | None Required |
| • Side Yards | None Required |
| • Rear Yard | None Required |
| • Floor Area Ratio | None Required |
| • Height of Building | 45 ft. maximum |
| • Number of Stories | 3 Stories |

d. Parking – Parking Spaces shall be provided for each commercial use as follows:

COMMERCIAL USE	NUMBER OF OFF-STREET PARKING SPACES REQUIRED	PLUS ONE OFF-STREET PARKING SPACE FOR EACH:
Commercial Uses	All commercial uses, as applicable, shall provide additional parking or storage needed for maximum number of vehicles stored, displayed or based at the lot at any point in time. These additional spaces are not required to meet the stall size and parking aisle width requirements	
1. Auto Service Station or Repair Garage	5 per repair or service bay and 0.25 per fuel nozzle with such spaces separated from accessways to pumps.	1 per employee
2. Auto, boat, recreational vehicle or manufactured homes sales.	1 per 15 vehicles, boats, RVs or homes displayed	1 per employee
3. Bed and Breakfast	See section 402	
4. Bowling Alley	2 per lane plus 2 per pool table	1.2 employee
5. Car Wash	2 per washing lane or stall, which may be located in drying or vacuuming areas.	1.2 per employee
6. Day Care Center	1 per 10 children, with space designed for safe and convenient drop-off and pick-up	1.2 per employee
7. Financial Institution	1 per 200 sq. ft. of floor area accessible to customers, plus 3 convenient spaces for each automatic banking transaction machine.	1 per employee
8. Funeral Home	1 per 5 seats in rooms intended to be in use at one time for visitors	1 per employee

COMMERCIAL USE	NUMBER OF OFF-STREET PARKING SPACES REQUIRED	PLUS ONE OFF-STREET PARKING SPACE FOR EACH:
9. Golf Driving Range	1 per tee	1.2 per employee
10. Miniature Golf	2 per hole	1.2 per employee
11. Golf Course	3 per hole plus spaces required for any membership club or restaurant	1.2 per employee
12. Ice Skating/Roller Skating	1 per 200 sq. ft. of floor area accessible to users	1.2 per employee
13. Haircutting/Hairstyling	2 per customer seat used for haircutting, hair styling, hair washing, manicuring or similar work	1.2 per employee
14. Hospital	1 per bed	1.2 per employee
15. Hotel/Motel	1 per rental unit plus 1 per 4 seats in any meeting room plus any required by any restaurant	1.2 per employee
16. Nursing Home	1 per 6 beds	1.2 per employee
17. Personal Care Home	1 per 4 beds	1.2 per employee
18. Laundromat	1 per 3 washing machines	1 per on-site employee
19. Offices or clinic medical/ dental	6 per physician and 4 per dentist	1.2 per employee
20. Offices, other than medical/dental	1 per 225 sq. ft. of total floor area accessible to people	
21. Personal service use, other than haircutting/hairstyling	1 per 150 sq. ft. of floor area accessible to customers, min. of 2 per establishment	1 per employee
22. Indoor Recreation (other than bowling alley), membership club or exercise club	1 per 200 sq. ft. of floor area other than racquet ball courts, accessible to customers/members, plus parking required by any additional uses, such as restaurant) plus 2 spaces per racquetball court.	1 per employee

COMMERCIAL USE	NUMBER OF OFF-STREET PARKING SPACES REQUIRED	PLUS ONE OFF-STREET PARKING SPACE FOR EACH:
23. Outdoor Recreation (other than uses specifically listed in this table).	1 per 3 persons of capacity (50% may be on grass overflow areas with major driveways in gravel)	1.2 per employee
24. Restaurant	1 per 3 seats	1.2 per employee
25. Retail Sales (other than types listed separately) or shopping center (min. 5 per establishment, except 10 per video rental store)	1 per 175 s.f. of floor area of rooms accessible to customers, except 1 per 225 sq. ft. of total leasable floor area if use is greater than 20,000 sq. ft.	
26. Retail sales of only furniture, lumber, carpeting, bedding or floor covering	1 per 400 sq. ft. of floor area accessible to customers	
27. Tavern or Nightclub	1 per 30 sq. ft. of total floor area	1.2 per employee
28. Theater or Auditorium	1 per 4 seats	1.2 per employee
29. Trade School	1 per 1.5 students	1 per employee
30. Veterinarian Office	5 per veterinarian	1 per employee

e. Design and layout of loading facilities; Off-street loading facilities shall meet the following requirements:

- Each off-street loading space shall be sufficient in size to accommodate the largest vehicle that can reasonably be expected to use such space.
- Each space shall have sufficient maneuvering room to avoid conflicts with parking and traffic movements within and outside of the lot. No facility shall be designed or used in such a manner that it creates a safety hazard, public nuisance or a serious impediment to traffic off the lot.
- Each space and the needed maneuvering room shall be located entirely on the lot being served and be located outside of required buffer areas, paved area setbacks and street right-of-ways.

2. Public

a. **Permitted Uses** – The following uses are permitted in those areas designated as Public on the **Land Use Map**.

- Governmental Offices
- Police Station
- Fire Station
- Court house
- Community Center
- Public Library
- Public School and Educational Office
- Post Office
- Museum
- Public Works Garage

b. **Contingent Uses** – None

c. **Land Area Regulations** – The regulations governing the construction of buildings on the land are the same as commercial zoning above.

d. **Parking** – Parking spaces shall be provided for each public use as follows:

PUBLIC USE	NUMBER OF OFF-STREET PARKING SPACES REQUIRED	PLUS ONE OFF-STREET PARKING SPACE FOR EACH:
1. Governmental Office and Court House	1 per 200 sq. ft. of floor area accessible to the public	1 per employee
2. Police Station and Fire Station	1 per each vehicle	1 per employee
3. Library, community center or cultural center or museum	1 per 4 seats or 1 per 250 sq. ft. of floor area accessible to patrons and users if seats are not typically provided	1 per employee
4. School, primary or secondary	1 per 4 students aged 16 or older	1 per employee
5. Post Office	1 per 200 sq. ft. of floor area accessible to the public and 1 per vehicle	1 per employee
6. Utility	1 per vehicle routinely needed to service	

- e. Design and layout of loading facilities.** Off-street loading facilities shall meet the following requirements:

Each off-street loading space shall be sufficient in size to accommodate the largest vehicle that can reasonably be expected to use such space.

- Each space shall have sufficient maneuvering room to avoid conflicts with parking and traffic movements within and outside the lot. No facility shall be designed or used in such a manner that it creates a safety hazard, public nuisance or serious impediment to traffic off the lot.
- Each space and the needed maneuvering room shall be located entirely on the lot being served and be located outside of required buffer areas, paved setbacks and street right-of-ways.

3. Semi-Public

- a. Permitted Uses** – The following are permitted in those areas designated as Semi-Public on the Land Use Plan – Map No. 5.

- Church of Temple
- College or University
- Food Bank
- Non-Profit Agency
- Hospital
- Lodge or Private Club
- Parochial or Private School
- Social Service Center

- b. Contingent Use** – none

- c. Land Use Regulations** – The regulations governing the construction of buildings on the land are the same as commercial.

- d. Parking** – Parking spaces shall be provided for each semi-public use as follows:

SEMI –PUBLIC USE	NUMBER OF OFF-STREET PARKING SPACES REQUIRED	PLUS 1 OFF-STREET PARKING SPACE FOR EACH:
1. Place of Worship or Church	1 per 4 seats in room of largest capacity	1 per employee
2. College or University	1 per 1.5 students	1 per employee
3. Food Bank	1 per 200 sq. ft. of floor area accessible to customers	1 per employee
4. Non-Profit Agency	1 per 225 sq. ft. of floor area accessible to customers	1 per employee
5. Hospital	1 per bed	1.2 per employee
6. Lodge or Private Club	1 per 50 sq. ft. of floor area accessible to customers	1 per employee
7. Parochial School	1 per 4 students aged 16 or older	1 per employee
8. Social Service Center	1 per 4 seats or 1 per 250 sq. ft. of floor area accessible to patrons and users if seats are not typically provided.	1 per employee

- e. Design and layout of loading facilities. Off-street loading facilities shall meet the following requirements:
- Each off-street loading space shall be sufficient in size to accommodate the largest vehicle that can reasonably be expected to use such space.
 - Each space shall have sufficient maneuvering room to avoid conflicts with parking and traffic movements within and outside of the lot. No facility shall be designed or used in such a manner that it creates a safety hazard, public nuisance or a serious impediment to traffic off the lot.
 - Each space and the needed maneuvering room shall be located entirely on the lot being served and be located outside of required buffer areas, paved area setbacks and street right-of-ways.

F. PRELIMINARY SITE PLAN -

The following activities and redevelopment opportunities are proposed on a long-term basis for the redevelopment of the Midtown Redevelopment Project Area and are illustrated on the Preliminary Site Plan - Map No. 4:

1. Acquisition of Property

- Through land donations of property owners
- Sheriff Sale - free and clear title
- Vacant Property Review Board action

2. Demolition

- Vacant dilapidated property

3. Rehabilitation

- Commercial property - facades and store fronts
- Second floor residential use

4. Site Assembly & Disposition

- City owned property
- Redevelopment owned property
- Assemblage of suitable sites for building

5. Public Improvements

- Streetscape improvements
- Landscape improvements
- Street and walk repairs/replacement
- Development of open space

G. LAND USE PLAN -

The proposed land uses for the Redevelopment Area are in accordance with the City of Monessen Zoning Ordinance and Comprehensive Plan. The following uses are proposed:

- Commercial
- Public
- Semi-Public
- Public Parking

The proposed land uses are shown on the attached Land Use Plan – Map No. 5.

H. PROPOSED CHANGES IN ZONING -

There are no proposed changes to the City's Zoning District Map for the Redevelopment Area. A copy of the current zoning districts are shown on the attached map entitled Zoning District Map - Map No. 6.

I. PROPOSED CHANGES IN STREET LAYOUTS AND TRAFFIC CIRCULATION -

There are no proposed changes in street layouts and traffic circulation proposed in the Redevelopment Area Plan as revised, see Map No. 7.

J. EXTENT, EFFECT AND MANNER OF ACCOMPLISHING THE REHOUSING OF FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS -

The redevelopment of the project area may from time to time require that site occupants, businesses, and/or non-profit organizations be relocated do to the acquisition of the property in which they reside. This would be documented in the relocation plan that would accompany a Redevelopment Proposal. The Redevelopment Authority of the City of Monessen will abide by the Federal Uniform Relocation and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act if future acquisition and relocation be necessary.

K. ESTIMATED COST OF ACQUISITION AND OTHER COSTS NECESSARY TO PREPARE THE AREA FOR REDEVELOPMENT -

The following represents a preliminary estimate of costs to prepare the area for additional redevelopment. More detailed cost estimates will be prepared for each Redevelopment Proposal as the needs arise.

1. Acquisition Costs	\$ 500,000
2. Relocation Costs	-0-
3. Demolition Costs	\$ 300,000
4. Disposition Costs	\$ 50,000
5. Site Improvements	<u>\$ 150,000</u>
	\$ 1,000,000

L. CONTINUING CONTROLS -

The Redevelopment Area Plan shall remain in effect for a period of twenty (20) years from the date of approval of the initial Redevelopment Area Plan which was January 19, 1998.

M. PROCEDURES FOR CHANGES IN THE APPROVED PLAN -

The Redevelopment Area Plan may be amended from time to time in compliance with the provisions of the Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law. The Redevelopment Authority of the City of Monessen will be required to obtain the written consent of all redevelopers who have purchased project land, and who may be materially affected by an amendment to the Redevelopment Area Plan for the Midtown Redevelopment Project.



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Community Planning & Development Consultants



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Preliminary Site Plan


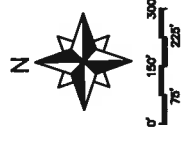
- Rehab / Renovate Buildings **PD** Expansion of Parking Deck
- New Construction **L** Library Expansion
- PSB** Public Safety Building
- Project Boundary

Map No.:


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APRIL 2008



 <p>Urban Design Ventures, LLC Community Planning & Development Consultants</p>		<p>MIDTOWN REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT (REVISED)</p> <p>CITY OF MONESSEN • WESTMORELAND COUNTY • PENNSYLVANIA</p> <p>Prepared For: The Redevelopment Authority of the City of Monessen • 100 Third Street • Monessen • PA 41520 Prepared By: Urban Design Ventures, LLC • Planning Consultants • 212 East Seventh Ave. • Homestead • PA 41520</p>	<p>Map No.: 5</p> <p>LAND USE PLAN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Commercial ■ Public ■ Semi-Public ■ Residential Project Boundary <p>APRIL 2008</p>
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 <p>Urban Design Ventures, LLC Community Planning & Development Consultants</p>	<p>MIDTOWN REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT (REVISED)</p> <p>CITY OF MONESSEN • WESTMORELAND COUNTY • PENNSYLVANIA</p> <p>Prepared For: The Redevelopment Authority of the City of Monessen • 100 Third Street • Monessen • PA • 15120 Prepared By: Urban Design Ventures, LLC • Planning Consultants • 212 East Seventh Ave. • Homestead • PA • 15120</p>	<p>ZONING DISTRICT MAP</p> <p>C-2 Zoning Designation</p> <p>— Zoning District Boundaries</p> <p>--- Project Boundary</p>	<p>Map No.: 6</p> <p>APRIL 2008</p>
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Community Planning & Development Consultants



MIDTOWN REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT (REVISED) CITY OF MONESSEN • WESTMORELAND COUNTY • PENNSYLVANIA

Prepared For: The Redevelopment Authority of the City of Monessen • 100 Third Street • Monessen • PA • 15120
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Right-Of-Way Adjustment Map

- One Way Traffic
- Project Boundary

Map No.:

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APRIL 2008

THE MIDTOWN REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT (REVISED)

CITY OF MONESSEN, WESTMORELAND COUNTY, PA

PART TWO: THE REDEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES & STRATEGY

A. INTRODUCTION –

The role of the traditional downtown commercial area as a retail commercial center has changed on a national level. The preponderance of contemporary growth in the retail commercial sector has been suburban, auto-oriented development. The City of Monessen has experienced this phenomenon, combined with a loss of industry, an aging population, nominal in-migration and a continuing decline in overall population. This has had a profoundly negative impact on the redevelopment area.

The Midtown Redevelopment Project addresses this decline through the maximization of the reuse of land to promote a more efficient and effective mix of appropriate development in the City of Monessen, with sound market-based redevelopment initiatives and strategies. Included are recommendations for potential reuses and businesses, an inventory of “developable”, and “development-ready” sites in the redevelopment area, and a summary of available financial resources and other incentives to address physical decline, prepare sites for development, and assist in retention, expansion and establishment of businesses in the area.

Monessen must also respond aggressively to the needs of existing companies which require more space or might be considering relocation. There is a variety of funding sources that may have potential to address these issues in Monessen.

B. POTENTIAL REUSES/BUSINESSES -

It is challenging for businesses in areas like the City of Monessen to compete against the large regional and super-regional centers, and the proximity of other convenience and neighborhood areas to Monessen further dilutes the market. The ongoing decline in population suggests that the local market will continue to erode. However, there are significant trends and untapped markets that represent opportunities to attract new investment and improve the mix of businesses in the City of Monessen. These opportunities include:

- Filling gaps in the market that are not being served by regional stores and centers

- Identifying, strengthening or accessing existing and potential niche markets
- Meeting the needs of underserved segments of the market area
- Taking advantage of national trends in shopping that present opportunities
- Highlighting and cultivating other attractive aspects of the community
- Enhancing and improving the business environment.

1. **Gaps in the Market**

There is a purchasing power in the City of Monessen that is being spent elsewhere. That trend suggests that the sales within the area are not what they could potentially be, given the local demographics. Although it is not possible for Monessen to capture all of that spending, there are opportunities to capture significant portions by filling leakages in convenience goods. In order to survive and remain viable in a shrinking market with intense competition, Monessen must concentrate efforts at the convenience and neighborhood levels. The types of businesses include locally-based restaurants, beauty salons, dry cleaners, convenience stores, specialty retail, and services:

- Locally-based restaurants
- Beauty Salons
- Dry Cleaners
- Clothing stores
- Local hardware stores
- Tailor Shops
- Gift/Card Shop
- Bakery
- Florist
- Coffee Shops
- Additional choices in local restaurants
- Neighborhood-oriented Pharmacy
- Conveniently-located senior living facility(s)
- Specialty Retail
- Shoe Repair

2. Niche Markets

Locally-based retailers in established shopping districts tend to rely on their established customer base, and do not spend much time or resources attempting to attract new customers. Although it is problematical to compete with large retailers on price or volume, niche products and services not available in regional centers and stores offer an opportunity to forge a unique identity. Some communities have been successful in fostering more than one such niche.

Attempting to create a new niche can be more challenging than trying to capture and enhance an existing niche. Development of new niches can be very risky, and they entail large public and private investments. A key component is to generate an environment in which niches can develop organically. Traditional business districts with challenges similar to those faced by the City of Monessen have been successful in encouraging the creation or expansion of niches by building on existing strengths. Examples of types of niches that have been successful in other communities include:

- **Home Fixtures and Furnishings** – Stores that concentrate on high quality, unique and/or unusual home furnishing.
- **Antiques** – Areas become destinations for antique shoppers.
- **Specialty Food Products** – Stores which offer unique and quality products.
- **Jewelry** – High quality pieces that are not found in shopping malls, such as Louis Anthony Jewelers in Bethel Park.
- **Entertainment Venues** – including small cinemas and theaters or art galleries.
- **Restaurants** – Locally based restaurants that provide unique cuisine.
- **Weddings** – Weddings are becoming increasingly more lavish and expensive. Clusters of businesses such as caterers, florists, venues, printers, photographers and bakeries can form such a niche.
- **Factory Outlets** – These stores are often clustered together to serve a "value retailing" niche.

3. Underserved Segments of the Population

There are underserved and growing segments of the local population, such as the elderly and employees of the businesses in the area that represent opportunities to offer new products and services and generate more local trade.

- **Elderly and Retirees** – The Monessen area, like the region in general, is aging and the number of elderly people as a percentage of the total population continues to increase. This segment of the population, due to mobility issues and other related factors, tend to shop locally when the opportunity exists.

Local officials have indicated there is a need in the community for convenient senior living facilities. Many of these elderly homeowners are no longer able to maintain their homes, but wish to remain in the community near friends and family, and in familiar surroundings.

- **Employees in the Area** – Employees may live within the Monessen Area, however they may also commute from outside the area, and given the opportunity, they could make more local purchases.
- **Users of Medical Facilities** – Doctors, chiropractors, physical therapy centers, etc. in the area, could be served by the retail trade in the area.
- **Students** – The Douglas Education Center draws students from a wide area. These students have purchasing power that is not being captured in the City of Monessen.

4. National Trends

According to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, there are national trends affecting retail shopping in communities like Monessen that represent opportunities to improve the mix of businesses. These trends include:

- Shoppers are increasingly turning to convenience shopping
- The variety of choices in retail threatens repeat business
- Retailers are looking again at traditional districts
- A significant percentage of malls will not survive as retail centers
- Sensitivity to sprawl is helping traditional districts
- Older shopping malls and strip centers are declining
- There is a glut of retail, but retail development continues to grow.

- There is an increasing amount of internet trade sourced in traditional business districts
- Shoppers view superstores as less convenient
- Chain stores are looking more at traditional shopping environments

These trends, which evidence themselves locally in both city and suburban shopping districts, indicate there are increasing opportunities for smaller neighborhood and convenience-oriented shopping districts to access non-traditional markets.

While businesses that transact a higher percentage of their business over the Internet do not rely as much on walk-in trade, they make new investments, create new employment opportunities, increase tax base and positively impact the local economy.

5. Capitalize On Attractive Aspects of the Community

- Community amenities are increasingly important in residential and business decision-making. Characteristics such as historic architecture, walkable streets, nearby businesses, neighborhood parks and proximate residential areas are viewed as desirable amenities.
- Market conditions, but also the intangible factor of quality of life. Quality of life is a factor in employee recruitment and retention, and businesses wish to be located in a vibrant environment.
- Assessing quality of life is quite subjective, however it includes cultural amenities, public facilities such as libraries, parks, and recreational activities, and quality of education.

6. Quality Business Environment

Commercial areas that have been successful in attracting new investment present a quality business environment where businesses can operate successfully. These areas are aesthetically pleasing, safe and secure, and have convenient ample parking. These areas have a consistent quality image and are thereby more inviting for investment. Where an area has a perceived investment, real estate, or taxation gap, various incentives are made available to prospective investors.

C. ASSETS AND CONSTRAINTS –

An analysis of the assets and constraints to new development was undertaken. This is illustrated on the attached map entitled **Assets and Constraints – Map No. 8.**

1. Parking Issues

- **Municipal Parking Garage** – The Municipal parking garage is underutilized and in need of major repairs and renovations.
- **Metered Parking** – Parking meters are scattered throughout the business district. There are broken meter heads. Meter enforcement is somewhat inconsistent, ranging from onerous to sporadic.
- **Municipal Parking Lots** – These lots are scattered throughout the business district to the west of Third Street. Most lots are underutilized and should be converted to lease parking.
- **Student Parking** – The increasing number of students attending the Douglas Education Center has created issues related to parking. Although this is a positive indication of growth, it illustrates a need for a parking management plan. There is a need for off-street leased parking spaces which would segregate the student parking from business parking. This is a potential added revenue source for the City to lease under-utilized parking lots such as Third Street/ Schoonmaker Avenue; the upper level of the parking garage off Schoonmaker Avenue; and the lot at Fourth Street and Schoonmaker Avenue.

2. Parks and Open Space

- **Riverfront Park** – There are long range plans to develop a walking trail along the riverfront, however this has not yet materialized. Plans should be formalized to provide a “green space” along the river, with direct connections to the new boat launch facility and to the commercial area.
- **Sixth Street Park** - Additional landscape improvements are required. Park maintenance should be improved, possibly in collaboration with a local service organization (Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, etc.) which would “adopt” the park for maintenance and improvements. This could be modeled after the arrangement with the walking track and the surrounding area at the City Park.

- **New Parklet** – Develop a new parklet along Donner Avenue in the “heart” of the business district as a place to meet, sit, eat lunch, relax, and a central point for the annual festival held downtown. The publicly-owned lots adjacent to the parking garage on Donner Avenue hold potential for such a use.

3. Streetscape Improvements

- **Donner Avenue** – There is a need to “buffer” the barren concrete and brick look and feel of the downtown. Planting street trees would enhance the aesthetic impression of the area. A memorial donation plan or sponsorship arrangement should be encouraged. The City could appoint a “Street Tree Commission” to supervise planting, fundraising and maintenance of the street trees. A local garden club, nurseries, etc. could be approached for donations of material and/or labor.
- **Entrance Portals** – The downtown lacks definition and presence. Entrance portals should be created on the east and west along the Donner/Schoonmaker approaches. A permanent, professionally-designed sign should be installed in front of the monument and pine trees on the island where Route 906 enters the City on the east. The western entrance portal is along the Schoonmaker/Donner divided road. A new sign should be placed in the median strip around Twelfth Street.
- **Façade Improvements** -The façade improvements program should be re-activated with new funding obtained, and a marketing campaign initiated to improve the business district.

4. Rehabilitation and Conservation –

- **Historic District** – There has been interest in developing a local historic district. The advantage of a local historic district is that historic resources are retained and historic standards enforced on all improvements to properties in the designated area. Implementing this will take time and a concerted effort to document the resources and obtain acceptance by property owners should be encouraged. The Monessen Historic Society should continue their efforts.

- **Code Enforcement** – There is an enormous need for stringent code enforcement throughout the City, however the requirement is particularly acute in the business district. The deterioration of vacant and largely abandoned commercial buildings is accelerating. Code enforcement efforts should be intensified.
- **Vacant Property Review Board** – The Redevelopment Authority has initiated this effort and the City Council has passed an ordinance establishing a Vacant Property Review Board (VPRB). The City government needs to appoint interested citizens to this Board and the VPRB members should be charged with identifying blighted properties as defined by the Pennsylvania Redevelopment Law for the purpose of acquiring the properties for condemnation, and reconveyance for redevelopment.
- **Building Renovations** – There is a need to rehabilitate the structures in the downtown. The reuse of the upper floors into “loft type” apartments for students or young families could be accomplished. The City needs to obtain additional funds for mixed-use development such as PHFA’s MUFFI Program, or DCED’s Housing and Redevelopment Assistance funds.
- **Real Estate Tax Abatements** – A deterrent to investment and improvement of commercial buildings is the predictable increase in real estate taxes that accompany such improvements. The Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance Act (LERTA) enables local real estate taxing authorities to enact strategic tax abatement plans for designated areas that provide tax relief on new investments for up to ten years.

5. Development Site Potentials – There are a number of publicly and privately owned properties in the redevelopment area that could support new development or could be rehabilitated. These sites are detailed in a subsequent section of this plan, however,

- **Publicly-owned sites** – There are seven publicly-owned sites located throughout the redevelopment area. These sites range in size from approximately 6,700 SF to approximately 43,000 SF. One site, on Donner Avenue could be combined with the former “Mini Mall” which also has vacant structures that are not in economically feasible to rehabilitate and should be demolished.

- **Privately-owned sites:** There are eleven (11) privately owned sites that have the potential for redevelopment. These sites range in size from approximately 5,700 SF to approximately 37,000 SF. The majority of these sites, (7), have vacant buildings in various states of repair.

6. **Public and Community Facilities**

- **Municipal Building:** The Municipal Building is in need of major rehabilitation work. It is functionally obsolete and inefficient in the use of available space. It is not accessible to the physically challenged and not in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The administrative offices for City government and Council Chambers are located on the second floor of the building, and there is no elevator.
- **Fire Department:** The Fire Department is located in the municipal building with an entrance from Third Street. The space is in need of major rehabilitation work and is inefficient. The Firemen should consider building a new building on the vacant lot on Donner across from the Municipal Building. When the fire department moves out, the City could convert that space to an accessible City Council Chambers and administrative offices.
- **Police Department:** The police department is located in the municipal building on street level with an entrance from Third Street. Also in need of major rehabilitation work, there is insufficient space to efficiently accommodate police functions. The Police Department could be relocated across the street on Donner Avenue with the fire department to construct a Public Safety Building.
- **Fireman's Club:** Corner of Third Street and Donner Avenue. Major rehabilitation work is required. The building is functionally obsolete. The Firemen could donate the building to the City which should demolish it. This land could be used for additional parking or a parklet.
- **Library:** On Donner Avenue at Third Street. This is a regional library that needs to expand its facilities. There is a vacant lot to the west of the Library that could be used for its expansion.

D. POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT SITES -





There are a number of locations that are considered opportunities for redevelopment. These sites were chosen based on the existing uses that are less than optimal, have deteriorated and obsolete buildings, underutilized sites, have key locations, and/or are potential development areas. These sites include both vacant lots and vacant buildings. Some of these sites are privately owned while others are publicly owned. The Redevelopment Authority does not necessarily need to acquire all these sites, but should be proactive in promoting new development. **Table 3** provides details regarding the sites in the Midtown Redevelopment Area.

**TABLE 3 – MONESSEN MIDTOWN REDEVELOPMENT
PROJECT POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT SITES**

S I T E	SIZE	STATUS	DESCRIPTION
A	17,600 SF	5 Vacant Buildings	Donner Ave/Johnny Dee's
B	22,000 SF	Vac Lots & Vac Bldgs	Mini-Mall Site
C	17,920 SF	Vac Bank & Lots	PNC Bank Site
D	6,720 SF	3 Vacant Lots	Donner and 4 th St. Site
E	6,720 SF	3 Vacant Lots	Schoonmaker Site
F	15,400 SF	Vacant Lot	Old Manos Theater Site
G	6,600 SF	Vac Bldg and 2 Lots	"Buzzy Byron" Site
H	43,600 SF	Vacant Lot	County Redev. Site
I	37,400 SF	Vacant Lot	Schoonmaker Ave Hsg Site
J	18,476 SF	Vac Lot and Bldg	Merinkovic Site
K	21,600 SF	Vacant Lots	Cupper Site
L	5,734 SF	Vacant Lots	Kunkle Development Site
M	7,617 SF	2 Vacant Lots	Bianchi Site
N	7,000 SF	Vac Bldg and Lots	Old Bowling Alley Site
O	37,400 SF	Vacant Bldg and Lots	Naretto Auto Dealer Site
P	4,400 SF	Vacant Lot	First St. & Schoonmaker Site (N)
Q	11,092 SF	Vacant Lot	First St. & Schoonmaker Site (S)
R	4,440 SF	Vacant Building	Eisenberg's Site

These potential development parcels are illustrated on the attached map entitled **Potential Development Sites, Map No. 9.**



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E. FINANCIAL INCENTIVES –

An array of public resources, programs and incentives are listed which address issues facing areas such as the City of Monessen. These resources and programs provide incentives for businesses to locate and/or otherwise invest in these areas. These resources and incentives are available on a local, state and federal level. The following represents a summation of some relevant resources and programs that may be applicable to elements of the Midtown Redevelopment Project. This list is by no means exhaustive as there are resources available to address more specific business targets and markets which may be available to meet unique and promising opportunities.

1. Local Incentives

- **Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance Act (LERTA)- Commercial Real Estate Tax Abatement Program**

The Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance Act LERTA is an Act of the Pennsylvania Legislature that enables local taxing bodies to provide real estate tax abatements for up to ten (10) years on the increased value of a property resulting from substantial improvements. Under LERTA, taxing bodies have the discretion to designate an area or property and develop an abatement schedule that suits the need of that designated area or property. The pre-existing value of the property or area is not subject to abatement, only the added value as a result of improvements.

The Act requires that a geographic area, or individual property be designated, and an abatement schedule be developed. For example, the taxing bodies, (school districts, municipalities and County) could designate the entire Midtown Redevelopment Area as a LERTA area. An abatement schedule would be adopted as well, for example, there could be a 100% abatement of taxes on the new value of the improved real estate for ten (10) years. Another example would be the adoption of a schedule wherein the abatement is reduced by a percentage for a number of years, after which, taxes would be payable on the entire new value of the property. Any commercial property owner or new owner located within in a designated LERTA area is eligible to apply for the tax abatement prior to commencing eligible improvements to their property.

The intent of the program is to provide an incentive for the business owner to invest the dollars saved in real estate taxes in building the business at that location.

Real estate tax abatements vary with the value of the real estate, the percentage of the abatement, and the adopted schedule. An abatement period and schedule can be adopted that fit the specific needs of a property or more generally the needs of a specified area.

- **Tax Increment Financing (TIF)**

Tax Increment Financing is a method of financing public costs associated with development wherein all or a portion of the new tax yield generated by a development pays for upfront costs associated with large scale developments. TIF is usually used for public infrastructure. TIF can be used with virtually any tax associated with new development, but the predominant taxes applied are real estate. Under a TIF, the taxing bodies essentially freeze the taxes on a site at pre-development levels, and use some or all of the expected post-development increases in taxes as a revenue stream to finance a bond or loan. The property owners are obligated to pay their new taxes, but rather than these proceeds going into the general funds of the taxing bodies, they are diverted to pay down debt on the project.

TIF can be quite complicated depending upon the number of taxing jurisdictions involved, but TIFs evolve from discussion with local economic development agencies or authorities.

Typically, TIF proceeds are used to finance public infrastructure costs associated with a development.

Every TIF is unique and the amount of funds available depends on the level of new taxes generated by the new investment.

- **Business Improvement District Program (BID)**

Authorized by the Pennsylvania Legislature under the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Neighborhood Improvement District Act (Act 73 of 2000) Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are designated geographic areas where special assessments of properties are permitted. Revenues from this assessment are then directed back to the area to finance a wide range of various community services. Motivation for the BID typically comes from business and property owners who want to attract new customers by improving conditions in and around the commercial area. These are business owners that desire enhanced community services and are willing to pay for them if the funds generated are spent directly in their area.

Eligible uses include business district needs such as marketing, economic development, parking improvements, maintenance and installation of infrastructure, improvement of community facilities such as parks, and the funding of special events

BIDs are created after a great deal of consultation with property owners. This typically includes public hearings where comments regarding the proposed BID are taken. After a BID plan is developed, there must be a vote taken among the potential ratepayers, and at least 60% of the vote must be positive. BIDs in Pennsylvania are established for a pre-determined period of time; after which the BID must be reauthorized by another vote of the participating property owners.

2. State Incentives and Programs

- **Office of the Budget – Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP) – Commonwealth of Pennsylvania**

The Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program is a Commonwealth grant program for the acquisition and construction of economic, cultural or civic improvement projects. The Pennsylvania General Assembly must authorize funding for projects before they can be considered by the Governor.

Applicants must be municipal entities or redevelopment authorities, however the end user may be a for-profit entity or a not for profit organization.

For brownfield or other economic development activities the RACP program is generally used for site preparation and development including certain infrastructure.

There is no limit on the amount of grant funding; however, the amount awarded by the Governor will not exceed the amount authorized by the General Assembly, or fifty percent (50%) of eligible project cost. The program reimburses 50% of documented project expenses, and as a result an interim source of funding is generally required.

- **Housing and Redevelopment Assistance Program – PA DCED** has an annual budget for Housing and Redevelopment projects. Funds are available for projects from \$ 100,000 up to \$ 400,000. Eligible activities include acquisition, demolition, rehabilitation and loans to businesses for renovation work.

- **Pennsylvania Main Street Program**

Grants are made to municipalities to help a community's downtown economic development effort through the establishment of a local organization dedicated to downtown revitalization and the management of downtown revitalization efforts by hiring a full-time professional downtown coordinator.

Grants help a community's downtown economic development effort through the establishment of a local organization dedicated to downtown revitalization and the management of downtown revitalization efforts by hiring a full-time professional downtown coordinator. Funds may be used for administrative costs associated with Main Street Manager positions and offices; Physical improvements supported by downtown plan for Downtown Reinvestment Component; Acquisition costs and physical building improvements for Anchor Building component.

The amount of Main Street funds is \$115,000 over a 5-year period; Downtown Reinvestment and Anchor Building components: up to \$250,000 or not to exceed 30% of project costs

- **Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development – Community Action Team (CAT)**

As described by on the DCED website, The Community Action Team is an all-purpose economic and community development tool for every community. Whether large or small, urban or rural, the Community Action Team will work with, or help develop a community comprehensive plan, and assist with the financing and implementation of that plan.

Patterned loosely on the Governor's Action Team, which addresses the business needs of prospective companies seeking to locate within Pennsylvania, the Community Action Team (CAT) maintains a philosophy of comprehensive engagement to create priority "impact" projects in a community through planning, technical and financial assistance, and implementation. To more efficiently delivery all state services and program funding; CAT was developed to open the lines of communication between agencies and departments, to allow for the coordination and focusing of attention and resources for identified projects.

The CAT process could begin with an inquiry through one of the DCED regional offices, or a direct request to the Community Action Team, or a program application to another state agency. Once originated though, CAT assists in every step of the process from developing a plan, to identifying public and private resources on the local, state and federal level, and through to implementation.

Appropriate time and effort must go into the planning process to ensure project success. If this initial step is not taken, a community risks the commitment of resources to a long-term project with no concept of its rate of return. To assist with planning, the Community Action Team often recruits the expertise of the Governor's Center for Local Government Services staff to consult on how a community can and should be developed.

The Community Action Team encourages working with as many local stakeholders as possible to not only get as much input as possible, but to ensure that everyone is committed and involved in the project once it is established.

No two (2) communities are alike, and therefore no two communities will have the same solutions. CAT encourages the exploration of all ideas, including the use of tax credits, creating a funding package through the Governor's Action Team, or inter-municipal cooperation.

- **Comprehensive Planning – Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development –**

Land Use Planning and Technical Assistance Program (LUPTAP)

The PA Department of Community and Economic Development may provide grant funds for the preparation of community comprehensive plans and the ordinances to implement them through the Land Use Planning and Technical Assistance Program (LUPTAP). The funds may be used for preparation and updating of comprehensive community development plans, policies and implementing mechanisms such as zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations, functional plans such as downtown revitalization, water resource plans and land development regulations

- **Renaissance Cities Initiative –**

As this Redevelopment Plan is being completed, State legislation has been announced that would create a program to invest \$500 million over the next five-years to help small cities in Pennsylvania like the City of Monessen. The “Renaissance Cities” initiative would invest \$100 million per year over five years in the state’s Third Class and Second Class cities. The funding part of a multi-bill package also addresses problems such as abandoned property, blight, and absentee ownership, along with pension and debt service issues. Other parts of proposed “Renaissance Cities” legislative package would:

- Enable cities to foreclose on blighted/abandoned property sooner
- Create a statewide abandoned property database that would require new property purchasers to first pay any outstanding debts and obligations on other properties they own.
- Complete a study of pension and fixed-cost obligations that project future costs.

The five-part, \$100-million-per-year Renaissance Cities funding would be distributed on the following schedule:

- Year 1: Public safety--funding may be used to purchase law enforcement equipment, create crime prevention programs, purchase firefighting apparatus or any other initiative that protects the health and safety of residents.
- Year 2: Blight removal--includes the clearance, demolition or removal of blighted areas, acquisition of blighted property, aggressive code enforcement or other blight prevention activities.
- Year 3: Economic development and housing--funds would be split between housing initiatives that provide direct home ownership assistance and rehabilitation assistance for owner-occupied properties and business initiatives such as environmental assessments, installation of infrastructure and site preparation.
- Year 4: Municipal Services--includes funding for public buildings, paving streets, repairing bridges, sidewalks and purchasing public works vehicles as well as encouraging service consolidations with surrounding communities.
- Year 5: Pension and Debt--funding is targeted as an offset for unfunded accrued pension liabilities, debt service and other financial obligations.

3. Federal Assistance

- **Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) –** U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development funded through Allegheny County

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) provides communities with resources to address a wide range of community and economic development needs. The program can be used for grants for site development and direct loans to businesses for activities that lead to the creation of employment opportunities for low and moderate income persons. The program must comply with applicable regulations and give maximum priority to activities which meet one or more defined objectives.

Local governments, authorities, non-profits and private enterprise using the funds for job creating activities are eligible to use CDBG funds.

Under the “Special Economic Development Assistance” provision eligible uses would include certain activities by private enterprise leading directly to job creation.

- **Economic Development Initiative (EDI) Special Projects Grants –** United States Department of Housing and Urban Development Congressional Grants Division

Congressional Grants are authorized each year in the annual HUD appropriation and accompanying conference report or congressional record. Congress authorizes a specific level of funding to a designated grantee, to undertake a particular activity cited in the appropriation or conference report.

Only those entities designated by Congress may apply for funds. Unsolicited applications are not accepted.

Congress authorizes a specific level of funding to a designated grantee to undertake a particular activity cited in the appropriation or conference report. These funds have been used to effectively on brownfield properties nationwide. Virtually any expense related to development of brownfields is eligible provided that those activities are cited in the appropriation or conference report. Early and effective communications with Congressional Representation is highly recommended.

There is no maximum or minimum funding amount. The level of funding authorized by Congress is the amount allocated to a particular activity.

- **Economic Development Administration (EDA) – Investments for Public Works and Economic Development Facilities**

EDA provides public works investments to assist financially and socially distressed communities upgrade and expand their physical infrastructure to attract industry, facilitate business expansion, diversify local economies and create new employment opportunities.

Applicants may include State, County, and local units of government as well as associated authorities. The activities proposed must be in compliance with the current "Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the region in which the activity will take place.

EDA prefers to make investments in facilities such as water and sewer systems, industrial access roads, industrial and business parks, port facilities, railroad sidings, redevelopment of brownfields and eco-industrial parks.

There are no minimum or maximum award amounts stipulated, however, EDA will not make an investment in excess of fifty percent (50%) of the project cost.

- **Small Business Administration (SBA) Section 504 Loan Program**

The SBA 504 loan program is the SBA's principal long-term financing tool for economic development. The 504 Program provides long term, fixed rate financing for fixed asset projects.

For-Profit Businesses with a tangible net worth of less than \$ 7 million and an average net income less than \$ 2.5 million are eligible for 504 financing. Applications are filed through designated local non profit corporations.

Loan funds may be used for the purchase of land and buildings, site preparation and infrastructure such as street improvements, utilities, parking lots and landscaping, and the acquisition of machinery and equipment. A typical structure for a 504 deal is 50% of the project is bank financing, 40% of the project is funded by SBA 504, and 10% is e.quity

The SBA sets a limit of \$ 1,500,000 in loan funds for job retention/creation projects, \$ 2,000,000 for projects meeting certain SBA public policy goals, and up to \$4,000,000 for manufacturing.

- **United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) – Rural Development Housing and Community Facilities Programs – Community Programs**

Community Programs administers programs designed to develop essential community facilities for public use. Programs include the Community Facilities Guaranteed Loan Program, the Community Facilities Direct Loan Program, and the Community Facilities Grant Program.

Community Programs can make and guarantee loans for essential community facilities in communities of up to 20,000 in population.

Loans and guarantees are available to public entities such as municipalities, counties, and special purpose districts, as well as to non-profit corporations. Grants funds may be used to construct, enlarge, or improve community facilities for health care, public safety and community and public service.

Eligible for facilities include schools, libraries, childcare, hospitals, medical clinics, assisted living facilities, fire and rescue stations, police stations, community centers, public buildings and transportation. Funds may be used to construct, enlarge or improve facilities. Refinancing existing debt is considered eligible under certain conditions.

Grant assistance may be up to 75% of the project cost. Grants depend upon median household income and population in the community where the project is located.

- Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program - The City of Monessen is a member of the Pennsylvania Section 108 Loan Consortium. The City is able to borrow funds for economic and community development type projects. The City could borrow another \$ 1.5 million to address some of the issues it faces.

F. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The following represents a summary of the recommendations in the areas of planning, administration and enforcement, and development:

1. Planning

- **Green Space** - Formalize plans to provide a “green space” along the river, with direct connections to the new boat launch facility and to the commercial area.
- **Parks and Recreation Plan** - Formulate an updated parks and recreation plan for development and maintenance of existing and future parks and recreational resources.
- **Parking Plan** - The increasing number of students attending the Douglas Education Center has created issues related to parking. Although this is a positive indication of localized growth, there is a need for a parking management plan. It is recommended that a new parking strategy to meet changing needs, including a plan for parking utilization and consistent and equitable enforcement of parking regulations be formulated.
- **Planning Applications** – Contact the DCED Regional Office and the PA CAT to identify funds, garner support, and prepare applications for funds.

2. Administration and Enforcement

- **Code Enforcement** – Become more assertive in the enforcement of codes in the redevelopment area.
- **Vacant Property Review Board** - Appoint interested citizens to this Board charged with identifying blighted properties as defined by the Pennsylvania Redevelopment Law for the purpose of acquiring the properties for condemnation, and reconveyance for redevelopment.
- **Demolition** – Prioritize the demolition of dilapidated hazardous structures in the commercial area, and become strategic in the selection of sites that represent development opportunities.
- **Parking Enforcement** – Do not allow overly-zealous parking enforcement to become a deterrent.
- **Local Historic District** – Designate a locally-defined and administered district to retain and reinforce the historic integrity of the downtown area.
- **Real Estate Tax Abatement** - Enact a real estate tax abatement plan for the entire redevelopment area under the LERTA Act. An acceptable abatement schedule should be negotiated among the City of Monessen, Westmoreland County and the Monessen School District.

- **State Legislative Initiatives** – Monitor State Legislation for initiatives which could provide funding or other tools which would assist in the implementation of the Redevelopment Plan.

3. Development

- **New Public Safety Building** - Construct a new Public Safety Building on the large vacant parcel located across Donner Avenue from City Hall. This site is approximately 43,000 square feet, more than sufficient space to efficiently accommodate both police and fire department uses.
- **City Hall Renovations** - Relocate City Council Chambers to the first floor of the municipal building where the Fire Department is currently housed. This will not only facilitate access to public meetings, but also use existing space more efficiently. This should be coupled with the development of a parklet and new entrance to the building.
- **Parking** - There is a need for off-street leased parking spaces which would segregate the student parking from business parking. This is a potential added revenue source for the City to lease under-utilized parking lots such as Third Street/Schoonmaker Avenue; the upper level of the parking garage off Schoonmaker Avenue; and Fourth Street and Schoonmaker Avenue. Recommendations include:
 - Lease under-utilized parking lots such as Third Street/Schoonmaker Avenue; the upper level of the parking garage off Schoonmaker Avenue; and Fourth Street and Schoonmaker Avenue.
 - Renovate the Municipal parking garage and explore the feasibility of extending the upper parking deck onto the adjacent vacant lot for leased student parking.
- **Donner Avenue Streetscape Improvements** – Implement landscaping improvements along Donner Avenue to highlight this corridor as the main shopping district.
- **Donner Avenue Parklet** - Develop a new parklet along Donner Avenue in the “heart” of the business district.
- **Entrance Portals** – It is recommended that the City create entrance portals on the east and west along the Donner/Schoonmaker approaches.. Also, consistent welcoming signs, district identification signs and directional signs should all be installed or improved
- **Façade Improvements** - Reactivate the façade improvement program – Seek and secure funding for improvements of commercial building facades in the Redevelopment area.

- **Building Stabilization** – It is recommended that the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Monessen, or other appropriate entities, acquire or otherwise gain control of strategic, historic or significant structures in the Redevelopment Area in order to secure, stabilize and/or maintain for future redevelopment purposes.