SCRANTON

STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

LETTER FROM MAYOR PAIGE GEBHARDT COGNETTI

Dear Reader:

We like to say that all roads lead to Scranton.

We're known internationally as the hometown of "The Office," and as the hometown of the President of the United States, Joseph R. Biden, Jr.

But it's more than that — wherever you go in this country, if you have just a few conversations you'll meet someone whose grandmother was from Scranton, or whose cousin went to "The U," or that they went to summer camp in the Poconos and visited the Steamtown National Historic Site and went 300 feet underground at the Lackawanna Coal Mine Tour.

We are a city of around 80,000 residents, but we punch above our weight.

Scranton's economy affects every resident in the city — and Northeastern Pennsylvania — in critical ways. At the City of Scranton, we understand the importance of establishing a Strategic Economic Development Plan, which will help us better align our strategies and resources with community and regional partners to improve the welfare of businesses and citizens alike.

With Scranton's exit from Pennsylvania's Act 47 "distressed" municipality program early this year, the development and implementation of a Strategic Economic Plan is timely, as we continue to work hard to further secure our financial health now and for future generations.

Scranton applied for funding from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) for the development of a Strategic Economic Development Plan. The ARC grant award in the amount of $50,000 was matched by commitments from the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce in the amount of $12,500; the Scranton Area Community Foundation in the amount of $12,500; and the city's Office of Economic and Community Development in the amount of $25,000.

After a robust bidding process, we were proud to partner with Fourth Economy, a national community and economic development consulting firm that focuses on fostering action to create great communities, impactful organizations, and strong economies.

The City of Scranton, in conjunction with Fourth Economy, engaged the community, performed economic analyses, defined priority areas of focus, and developed an actionable plan for progress. We established an advisory committee and engaged with key stakeholders, including community, business, non-profit, and academic leaders, the public sector, and owners of previous plans.

The adopted Strategic Economic Development Plan will be integral to achieving measurable, sustainable economic growth and improving quality of life for our residents. By putting this formal plan in place, the City of Scranton can take control of its economic development.

We can honestly assess the hurdles in front of us, and with data and relationship-building, look with clear eyes at the challenges many of our residents face. With this we can set clear and attainable economic development objectives, and design policies and programs to achieve them.

As the City moves from development to implementation of the Strategic Economic Development Plan, we will identify key projects and programs that are upcoming or in progress, as well as short, medium, and long-term goals, and will consider costs associated with implementation.

We are going to continue to grow. We are excited. But we must be smart about how we grow.

Scranton is like many communities where a tale of two cities exists.

In Scranton we have a quality of life that stands out – you can take the dog for a walk around a lake before work, and after work go to dinner at a great restaurant. You can ski on the weekends and then go see a Broadway play. We have five colleges and universities within the city limits.

Another view sees a Scranton where the median wage of $30,000 is set against a living wage of $50,000. Average rents are $1100, and more than half of homes are rentals. Too many Scranton families are paying too large a percentage of their income just to meet their basic needs. Additionally, with 75% of the total student population considered "economically disadvantaged" or low-income, Scranton needs to develop more equitable funding mechanisms for public schools.

With this Strategic Economic Development Plan, we'll be able to focus on our topline growth and our community development. We need to recognize and emphasize improved educational outcomes as economic development. We have to focus on building up our families, who need a boost, just as much as we focus on building up amenities and investment opportunities.

Economic growth cannot mean leaving our residents behind. These efforts are all related, part of our overarching goal of lifting up everyone as we shape the city we know that Scranton can be.

Paige Gebhardt Cognetti
Mayor, City of Scranton

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Organizations

Center for a Living City
Children's Advocacy Center
Career Center of Lackawanna County
County of Lackawanna Transit
DiscoverNEPA
Friends of the Poor
Governor's Action Team
Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce
Junior Achievement of Northeastern Pennsyl-
vania
Lackawanna County Department of Aging
Lackawanna County Land Bank
Maternal and Family Health
National Association for the Advancement of
Colored People
NeighborWorks
NEPA Alliance
NEPA Moves
New Wave Project
Penn's Northeast
Pennsylvania Department of Community and
Economic Development
Scranton Area Community Foundation
Scranton Small Business Development Cen-
ter
Scranton City Council
Scranton Housing Authority

Scranton/Lackawanna County Continuum of
Care
Scranton Launchbox
Scranton Police Department
Scranton Public Library
Scranton Redevelopment Authority
Scranton School Board
Scranton Tomorrow
TecBRIDGE
The Black Scranton Project
United Neighborhood Centers
University of Scranton
Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport

Neighborhood Associations & Residents Groups:

Keyser Valley Citizens Association
Weston Field/Bulls Head Residents Group
Green Ridge Neighborhood Association
Hill Neighborhood Association
Oakmont Neighborhood Association
The Plot Neighborhood Association
South Scranton Neighborhood Association

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

About the Plan

In August 2021, the City of Scranton embarked on a planning process to develop a Strategic Economic Development Plan designed to serve as an actionable and forward-looking vision for the city. With strategic support from Fourth Economy, a national strategy firm focused on community and economic development, the City of Scranton engaged in six months of analysis, stakeholder conversation, and community engagement to define a vision for Scranton and its economic potential moving forward. We're proud to note over 1,000 residents engaged in the planning process.

As we navigate the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and continue to respond to the shifting realities of a more globally connected world, the importance of strong, data-supported strategy has never been more clear. This Strategic Economic Development Plan is meant to seed action over the course of the next decade. It clearly identifies the opportunities to seize and the challenges to mitigate, leaving room for nimble adjustments that may be necessitated by the emergence of new realities and opportunities.

This plan was completed with financial support from the Appalachian Regional Commission, the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce, the Scranton Area Community Foundation, the City of Scranton's Office of Economic and Community Development, and with input from Scranton City Council. Most importantly, this plan was shaped by the perspectives and experiences of those who live, learn, and work in the city of Scranton.

Funders

Planning Support

Timeline

2021

AUGUST — **Planning Team Engaged**

Planning began in late summer 2021, convening a Planning Team and Advisory Committee to provide guidance and ongoing feedback throughout the process.

SEPTEMBER — **Baseline Understanding Established**

Initial economic and demographic data analysis was executed by the Fourth Economy team prior to community engagement efforts, providing a baseline understanding of Scranton's economy and identifying areas of opportunity, challenge, and improvement.

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER — **Interviews Conducted**

30+ one-on-one interviews were completed with residents, leaders, and key stakeholders. An additional 20 residents were engaged across a series of three small-group sessions prioritizing community perception and quality of place.

DECEMBER — **Ideation and Strategy Framing**

Initial strategic priorities were identified based on quantitative data insights and qualitative insights gleaned during the interview process.

2022

JANUARY — **Build Sessions & Community Survey Issued**

60+ residents and stakeholders engaged with the Fourth Economy and Connect the Dot's teams across five build sessions to solicit community input and strategy co-creation. As follow up to these workshops, a town-hall-style meeting was held with more than 65 community members and a community survey was issued, which generated 963 responses from local residents.

FEBRUARY — **Strategy Development**

Coming out of the build sessions, the planning team leveraged resident feedback to frame a community-oriented vision for economic progress in Scranton. These insights formed the foundation for final strategy development.

MARCH — **Final Plan Drafted and Presented for Approval**

Following a presentation at the City Council Caucus in February, the final plan was drafted by the Fourth Economy team and presented to Mayor Cognetti and the planning team for approval.

Vision, Objectives, & Goals

Vision: Circa 2032

In 2032, people will know Scranton for its thriving community of diverse residents, growing businesses, and rapidly expanding industry as well as its strong, resilient, and equitable economy that provides all of its residents with accessible pathways to prosperity and all of its businesses with access to resources to support present and future growth.

As the sixth largest city in the state of Pennsylvania, Scranton has held a historically significant place in the regional and state economies. Dating back to the city's early history, entrepreneurship and industry – in the form of mining, railroads, and manufacturing – have driven economic activity across northeastern Pennsylvania. Industrial activity was matched by immigration, as thousands flocked to the Electric City for new opportunities.

Today, these key themes of industry, entrepreneurship, diversity, and opportunity remain important to Scranton. New leadership, improved accessibility, and greater regional collaboration and connectivity are the building blocks of a future Scranton that offers equitable opportunities for residents, growth and sustainability for businesses, and strength and resilience within the city's economy.

Objectives

The City of Scranton, key stakeholders, residents, and community leaders will work together to cultivate resources and advance initiatives that equitably increase opportunities for Scranton residents and businesses. Economic growth, economic prosperity, economic resilience, and economic opportunity will be upheld as priorities, making Scranton an excellent place to build a career, scale a business, raise a family, and simply call home.

Photo: DiscoverNEPA

New leadership, improved accessibility, and greater regional collaboration and connectivity are the building blocks of a future Scranton that offers equitable opportunities for residents, growth and sustainability for businesses, and strength and resilience within the city's economy.

Goals

Over the next 10 years, the City of Scranton intends to:

- Close the income gap between the median wage and livable wage
- Increase connectivity between employers and the workforce development system, with a goal of increasing local hiring and talent retention
- Retain, expand, and attract employees in industries with high-paying jobs
- Increase capital access, mentorship, and resources for small businesses and entrepreneurs
- Increase broadband access for residents and businesses
- Support employers in attracting and retaining talent, including investments to enhance remote and flexible work capabilities
- Remove barriers to employment, such as lack of childcare, transportation, and training
- Increase the local tax base and cultivate new resources to expand capacity for community and economic development
- Increase access to high-quality, affordable housing

- Increase educational attainment to be on par with the state of Pennsylvania
- Foster greater trust between families and schools, and securing greater educational outcomes
- Close the income disparity gap between white and non-white residents
- Reduce the number of cost-burdened homeowners and renters
- Reduce the relative earned income and real estate tax burdens as much as possible
- Advocate for more equitable funding mechanisms for public schools
- Seek partnerships with overlapping and neighboring government entities to consolidate costs where possible
- Improve quality of life for all residents and neighborhoods
- Foster a greater pride of place and sense of community

Education Diversity Legacy Housing

Entrepreneurship Culture Well-being

Connectivity Industry Region

Neighborhoods History

Impact Inclusion Residents Resources

Community Health Collaboration Equity Affordability

Access Resilience Small Business

Belonging Preparation Action

Outcomes Talent Sustainability

What We've Heard

The following represent some of the themes gleaned from conversations with community members. While this is not a comprehensive list of the ideas and lived experiences shared during community engagement sessions, more detailed insights were used to shape both the planning process and the plan itself.

When it comes to quality of place, community members celebrated the progress being made through reinvestment, but acknowledged that there is more work to be done for Scranton to reach its full potential. The history, culture, diversity, and familial nature of the area are Scranton's major strengths, but more can be done to enhance neighborhood assets and programming in order to promote a vibrant community and stronger pride of place.

Community members noted push factors such as vacant properties, maintenance needs, the perception and existence of high real estate and wage taxes, and a struggling school district as reasons individuals and families choose to live in surrounding areas rather than the city of Scranton. They believe maintenance, beautification, and quality affordable housing are necessary to improving life in Scranton.

Employers noted having difficulty hiring across industries, skill sets, and experience levels, a trend that is common in communities across the country. Specific to Scranton, many companies believe there simply isn't a large enough talent base from which they can recruit. While some attribute this to prospective employees' lack of required education or training, others note the overall low number of job applicants. That being said, many community members acknowledge the city's location as a strategic advantage when it comes to talent attraction and retention, especially given the shifts in remote work trends which can help to grow the local talent pool.

Residents recognized a need for investment in outdated infrastructure, particularly related to transportation, to ensure the competitiveness of the city and foster private investment in job creation. Updates to roads, bridges, street signs, lighting, and public transit infrastructure were among some of the needs described.

Importantly, many Scrantonians acknowledged the strong presence of community activism and investment throughout the city. There is a shared sentiment that, with greater collaboration amongst individuals and organizations, Scranton is on the cusp of changing how it is perceived, from a city defined by scarcity to a city known for opportunity. Many community members are optimistic and energized about the future of Scranton.

Photo: DiscoverNEPA

Strategy Overview

By adopting this Strategic Economic Development Plan, Scranton can be a place where:

Industry growth is spurred by building a supportive environment that helps new and existing businesses thrive

Diverse talent is welcomed, celebrated, and fostered as a core strength of Scranton

Community pride serves as a driver for neighborhood investment and inclusive engagement that promotes Scranton's unique identity

Affordable and quality housing is accessible for new, longtime, and prospective residents, ensuring Scranton is an inviting place to call home

Infrastructure is developed and maintained to better connect and equip those who live, work, learn, and play in Scranton

These five pillars form the basis of this plan's strategic recommendations to advance and expand Scranton's economy.

INDUSTRY GROWTH

For Scranton to strengthen its economy and restore its reputation as a hub for industry and entrepreneurship, it must build an environment where business creation and growth are fostered through entrepreneurial support services, streamlined administrative processes, and business investments and incentives. The City of Scranton will focus its attraction and retention efforts on businesses providing living-wage and high-wage jobs, in order to ensure equitable economic growth. Scranton must adapt to meet the changing needs of businesses as they continue to face market challenges related to supply chain constraints, labor shortages, and shifts to hybrid and remote work.

Strategic Priorities

- Promote business creation through small business and entrepreneurial resources, regulatory efficiencies, and incentives
- Promote investment in business and industry to support sustainable growth
- Encourage businesses and industry to directly support the local K-12 education system

Measures of Success

Process Metrics

- Increase in low-cost or free programming made available to existing and future business owners
- Increase in non-white participation in entrepreneurial training, investment, and mentorship programs
- Increase in recognition of entrepreneurial accomplishment – success stories, work-in-process stories, and even failures from which to learn
- Increase in training program enrollment for in-demand jobs and placement rates following program completion

Quantitative Metrics

- Increase in number of new business starts
- Increase in number of minority-owned businesses
- Increase in number of loan/grant applications
- Increase in number of loan/grant approvals
- Increase in amount of capital deployed into local businesses
- Increase in expansion, retention, and attraction of high-opportunity jobs in Health Care, Education, Finance, and Manufacturing
- Decrease in business contraction and increase in relocation to Scranton

DIVERSE TALENT

Talent attraction and retention strategies will be critical drivers of future economic growth and resiliency in Scranton, particularly by meeting labor needs, improving the tax base, and building a stronger sense of community. While the city has nearly recovered the jobs lost from the Great Recession, the number of employed residents has not recovered. Furthermore, although wages are growing, they are losing ground relative to the US. While Scranton remains a job center with 8,210 more jobs than employed residents, more must be done to ensure all Scranton residents have equitable access to opportunity.

Strategic Priorities

- Engage college students during their time in school and retain students upon graduation
- Better connect jobseekers, including high school and post-secondary graduates, with industry through development and promotion of career pathways and skills training
- Help businesses develop resources for employees surrounding flexible scheduling, child care, transportation, sick care, and other support services

Measures of Success

Process Metrics

- Increase in educational attainment – certificates, degrees, and overall graduation rates
- Decrease in Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) households, larger number of families earning above a living wage

Process Metrics

- Increase in exposure to career pathways
- Increase in training program enrollment for in-demand jobs and placement rates following program completion
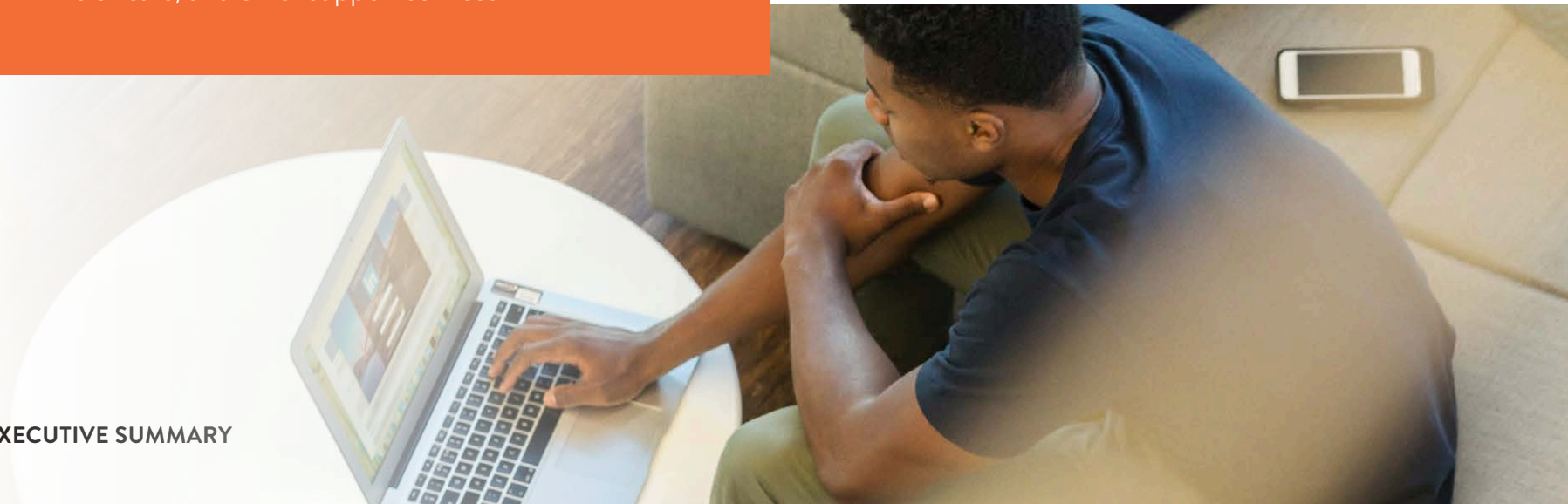
COMMUNITY PRIDE

Whether due to associations with President Biden or the popular television show *The Office*, Scranton is a city that is familiar to most Americans. While this familiarity presents an opportunity, it also presents a challenge, as people's perception of the city is sometimes at odds with community objectives for growth and advancement. This perception challenge extends from those who have only been introduced to the city through media to long-time residents, who sometimes struggle to relinquish negative associations with the past or who have had experiences with bias, discrimination, and inequity.

Strategic Priorities

- Empower local organizations and residents to lead community engagement efforts to foster a greater sense of inclusion and belonging for all neighbors
- Ensure neighborhood vitality by implementing landlord accountability measures and expanding maintenance incentives for all community members
- Advance equitable economic development strategies to benefit all Scrantonians, particularly those in historically underserved communities, in an effort to enhance quality of life and opportunity in the city

Measures of Success

Process Metrics

- Increase in number of ambassadors who represent the diversity of the community, across neighborhoods, industries, etc.
- Increase in number of event applications processed per neighborhood
- Decrease in number of vacant properties

Quantitative Metrics

- Increase in city services provided in multiple languages
- Increase in dollars invested in historically underserved and/or underinvested neighborhoods
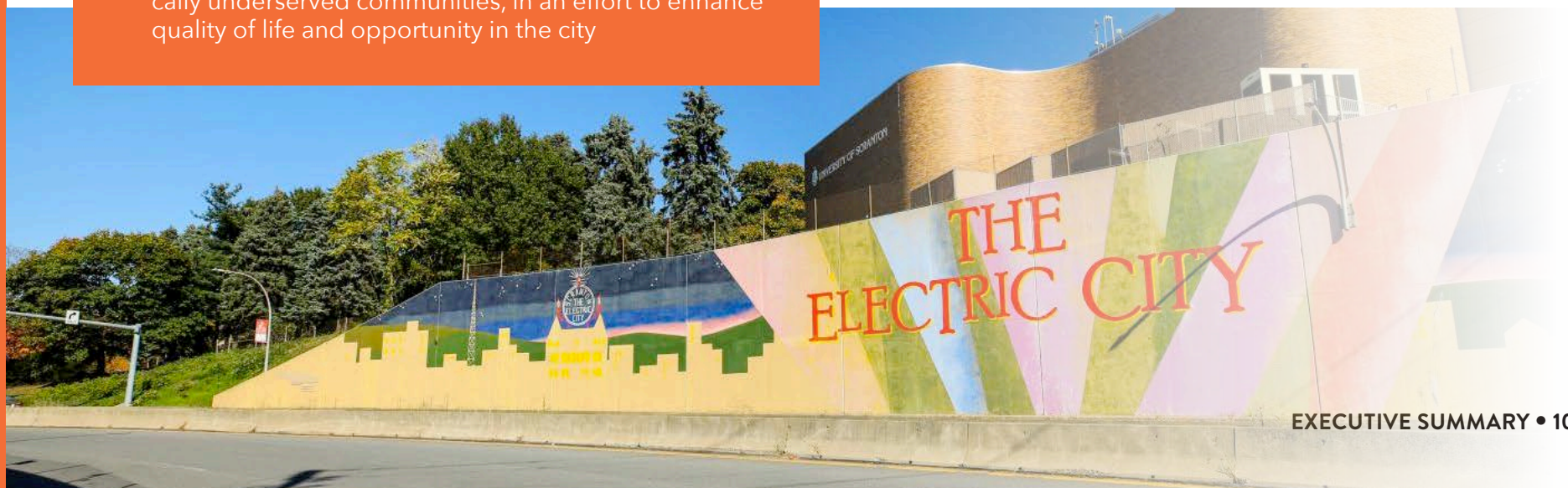
AFFORDABLE AND QUALITY HOUSING

Housing is a basic need, but also directly supports the economy and schools through property taxes. While rents have increased in Scranton over the last decade, housing prices remain stagnant. With a median home value of $103,000, less than half of the US average, homeownership in Scranton remains generally affordable – although 25% of homeowners are cost burdened, compared to the state rate of 21%. Despite relatively affordable housing, less than half of Scranton houses are owner-occupied, compared to 69% in Pennsylvania and 64% nationally. Homeowner vacancy is greater than PA and the US overall, while rental vacancy is below average.

Strategic Priorities

- Improve access to affordable, quality housing for renters and owners
- Encourage new development without spurring displacement

Measures of Success

Process Metrics

- Decrease in percent of people paying 30% or more on housing (cost-burdened)
- Increase in rate of affordable housing development (less than $751 per month)

Process Metrics

- Decrease in violations and improvement in code enforcement outcomes during "safety check"
- Increase in quality affordable housing located within walking distance to grocery stores, doctors offices, libraries, and public transportation
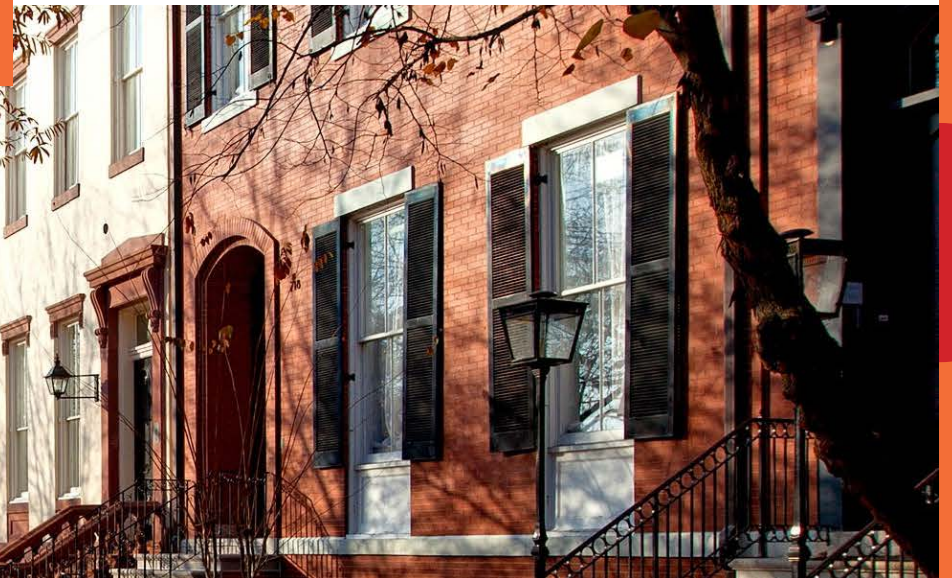
INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure sets the boundaries for future economic development. The Federal infrastructure bill signed into law in November 2021 will funnel billions to state and local governments to improve roads, bridges, ports, and airports, expand access to clean drinking water and high-speed internet, and advance environmental justice. Particularly important to Scranton is the $66 billion in additional rail funding to eliminate the Amtrak maintenance backlog, modernize and connect the Northeast Corridor, and bring world-class rail service to areas outside the northeast and mid-Atlantic. In Amtrak's June 2021 comprehensive plan, it proposed three daily round trips between Scranton and New York City. Scranton's location and the recently signed infrastructure bill are two key considerations as the city builds solutions around infrastructure to drive economic development through enhanced connectivity – locally, regionally, and globally.

Strategic Priorities

- Develop infrastructure to better equip and connect Scranton's neighborhoods, including Downtown
- Enhance infrastructure to improve accessibility and connect people with high-opportunity jobs, while connecting employers with the talent they need
- Develop sustainable infrastructure that effectively bridges the community's built and natural environment in support of climate change mitigation and adaptation and climate-compatible economic development
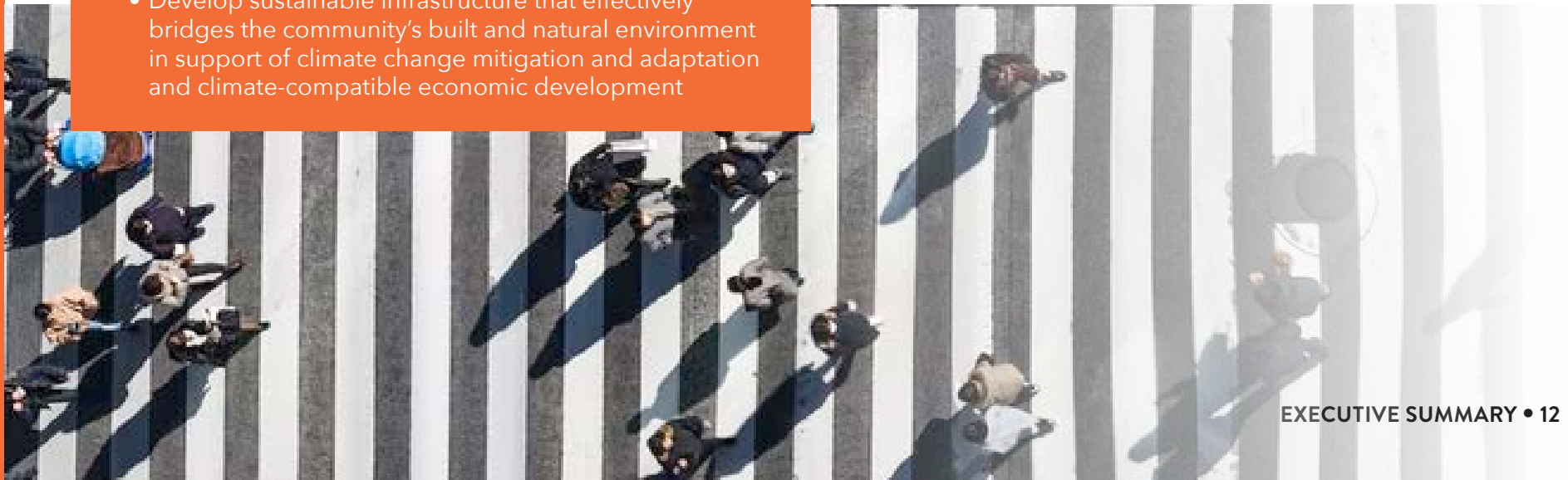
Measures of Success

Process Metrics

- Improvement of bridge ratings
- Increase in use of public transit
- Increase in number of façade improvement projects

Quantitative Metrics

- Increase in broadband access and affordability
- Decrease in flooding and stormwater management control costs
- Increase in creation and tracking of sustainability metrics

SCRANTON TODAY
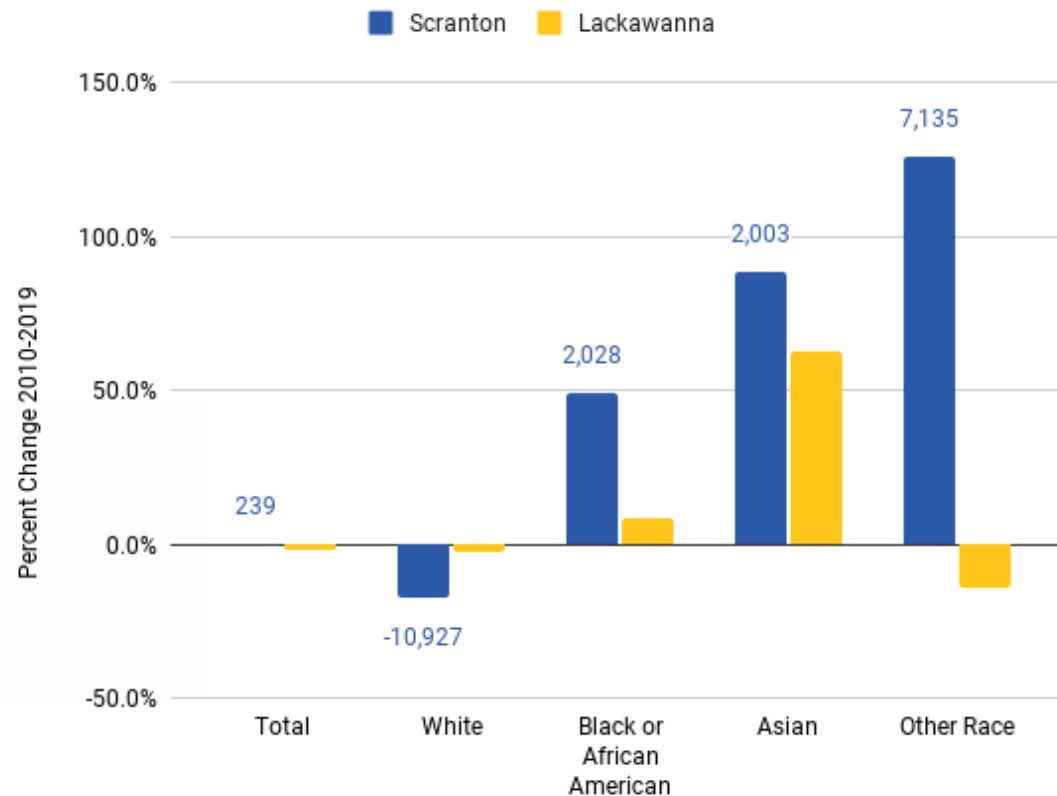
Scranton's Economy

Overview

Scranton's economy is evolving, as the city's population and mix of industries shift to match the realities of a more globalized economy. Scranton's total population is 76,328, having rebounded from a historic low in 2014 following the Great Recession. Since 2010, the overall population of the city has increased less than 1%, compared to a 2% population loss in Lackawanna County at large. That being said, changes in overall population levels do not adequately represent the demographic shifts experienced in Scranton over the course of the past decade. City officials estimate the population to be higher than Census data states, consistent with the undercounts being noted by the U.S. Census Bureau[1].

Over the past decade, the populations of Scranton's Asian, Black/African-American, and other non-white communities have grown, some more than doubling in size. They now comprise a larger share of the city's total population than they did in 2010. The city lost roughly 11,000 white residents over the same period, but is still majority white.

Through the lens of economic output, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in Lackawanna County is less than $44,837, representing 79% of per capita GDP in the state of Pennsylvania, which is $56,723. This measure, used to gauge overall prosperity of a community, indicates that Scranton is currently less prosperous than other areas of the state, suggesting lower levels of economic productivity.

> In the past decade, non-white populations have seen significant growth in Scranton.

Population Change by Race in Scranton, 2010 to 2020

Scranton's Economy

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Population Change by Race in Scranton, 2010 to 2020

1. https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2022/2020-census-estimates-of-under-count-and-overcount.html

Industries contributing to overall GDP include Healthcare; Logistics, Warehousing, & Transportation; Advanced Manufacturing; Building Construction Trades & Utilities; and back-office supports for companies like Prudential Financial, Bank of America, Metlife, and PNC Bank. Additionally, Scranton is home to a growing downtown business district and several institutions of higher education – including University of Scranton, Marywood University, Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine, Lackawanna College, and Johnson College – rounding out the proverbial "eds and meds" known to anchor Scranton's economy.

It is important to note that education and medicine are two discrete industries that can contribute to economic growth when they act in partnership with each other and their surrounding communities. While the hospital systems are strong in and around Scranton, there needs to be greater collaboration between the hospital and higher education systems beyond clinical space and rotations. There is also opportunity to better align the healthcare industry and its community impact with the City of Scranton's initiatives for equitable economic development.

In addition to a strong mix of legacy industries, location is a major asset for Scranton, with Philadelphia, New York City, Newark, Syracuse, and Harrisburg all within a two-hour driving radius. This proximity has enabled Scranton to serve as a regional hub for talent, with 20.5% of residents commuting more than 50 miles for work. However, a majority of Scranton residents, (64.6%) work within 10 miles of their home, and the remaining 35% of residents both live and work within the city.

Fuel for Economic Growth

Small Size, Big Impact

Small businesses contribute 64% of the total new jobs created in the United States and employ 47.3% of the nation's total workforce, placing them at the forefront of economic growth[2]. Additionally, *new* businesses account for nearly 20% of all new jobs, with 1.5 million jobs annually created by US firms less than a year old[3]. In Scranton, small businesses are critical to the fabric of the community, driving job creation, raising quality of life, and strengthening the resilience of Scranton's economy.
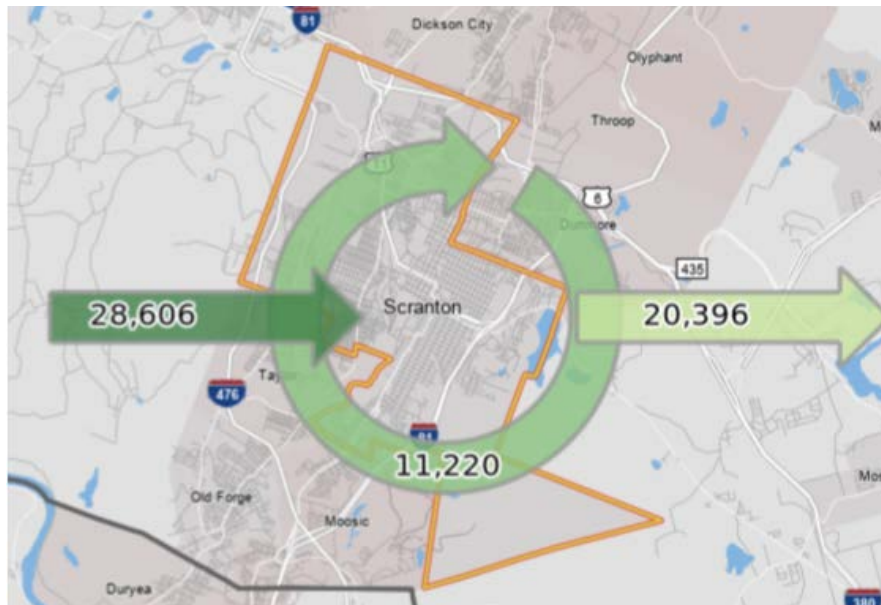
Live-Work

35% of people living in Scranton work within the city.

A majority of Scranton residents (64.6%) work within 10 miles of their home.

However, 20.5% of residents are long-distance commuters - commuting more than 50 miles for work. Clusters of these jobs occur in Philadelphia, Bethlehem/Allentown, and New York City.

The rate of business births in Lackawanna County, like Pennsylvania, has consistently been below the national average. These rates collectively have been on a steady decline, which can be attributed to demographic changes, the Great Recession, the growth of national chains, and an overall lack of access to capital. However, data on new business starts are becoming more readily available for the two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, revealing its impact on labor markets; the trend of increased micro business starts is likely to be evident in Scranton, as it is across the country.

Access to capital is viewed as the lifeblood of a small business or entrepreneurial venture, often serving as the most important indicator of a company's future success and viability. Small business loans per capita in Scranton are $100 below the US and state averages and $200 below per capita lending in Lackawanna County as a whole. Although Scranton has 37% of the county's population and 40% of its jobs, only 28% of the small business loans made in Lackawanna County go to Scranton businesses.

To address this, the City recently launched a microgrant program, offering between $2,500 and $5,000 in funding for new businesses working with the University of Scranton's Small Business Development Center (SBDC). The city also offers Business Loan to Grants for developing businesses, with potential funding of $35,000 for each job created. Additional initiatives to support investment in entrepreneurship include Lackawanna College's Venture Lab program and Penn State University's Scranton LaunchBox. These efforts have proven successful and suggest more can be done to foster innovation throughout Scranton.

Considerations of Scranton's economic future must include support for small businesses and entrepreneurial ventures, with an eye towards new venture creation.
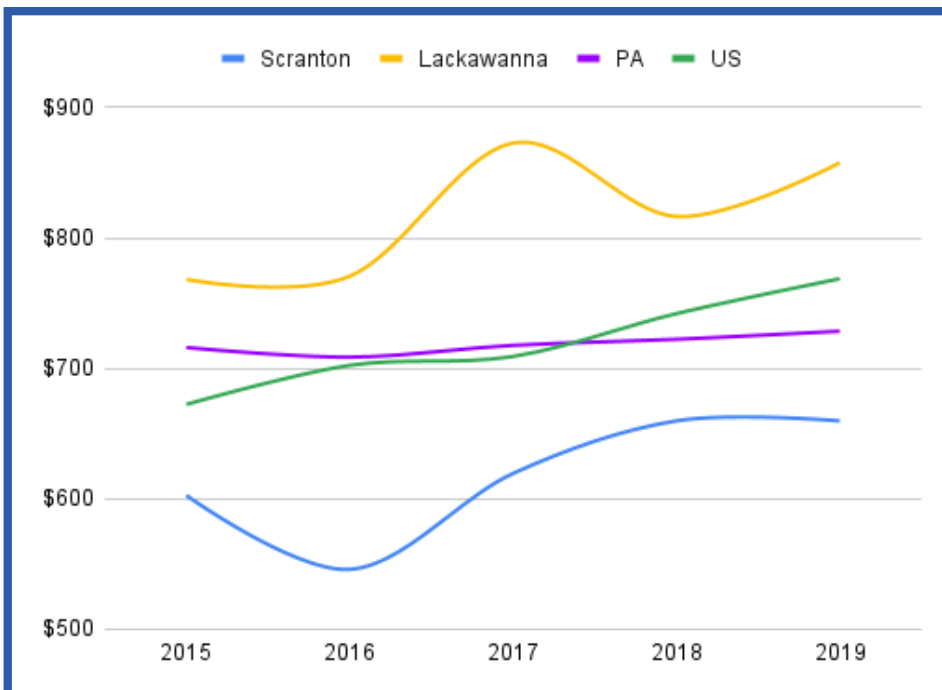
Areas of opportunity include:

- Removing regulatory barriers, such as complex permitting processes, exorbitant startup costs, and lack of guidance about the steps required and resources available to establish operations

- Cultivating a culture of entrepreneurship, including regular events and programs that engage the entrepreneurial community, including historically underserved communities, as well as provide K-12 students with exposure to entrepreneurship

- Embracing immigrants, who have been found to be nearly twice as likely as native-born Americans to start businesses[4]

- Increasing levels of educational attainment, as higher levels of education are associated with increased entrepreneurial activity

2. US Small Business Administration: https://advocacy.sba.gov/2019/04/24/small-businesses-drive-job-growth-in-united-states-they-account-for-1-8-million-net-new-jobs-latest-data-show/
3. Kauffman Foundation: https://www.kauffman.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/entrepreneurship_policy_digest_september2014.pdf
4. Harvard Business Review, https://hbr.org/2021/08/research-why-immigrants-are-more-likely-to-become-entrepreneurs#:~:text=A%202012%20study%20found%20that,and%2025%25%20of%20startup%20founders.

Small Business Loans per Capita

Small business loans per capita in Scranton are $100 below the US and PA levels and $200 below the per capita lending in Lackawanna as a whole.

Scranton has 37% of the county's population and 40% of the jobs, but only 28% of the Small Business Loans.

Education as Economic Development

It is no secret that the dynamics around the public school system in Scranton have been intense and fraught with concerns. In the past year we have seen enormous community debate, a three-week-long teacher strike, and tight negotiations resulting in a new contract between the Scranton Federation of Teachers and the Scranton School District. These challenges stem from a much longer legacy of mismanagement, both structural and financial, that predates the current board and has resulted in $200 million in debt, $145 million in additional unmet capital requirements, and a general air of distrust amongst all parties involved. This reality will continue to be a factor of consideration and priority for economic development efforts moving forward.

From a data perspective, the Scranton School District serves as an early indicator of what Scranton's population might look like one day. Scranton schools currently serve 60% non-white students and 10% of students are currently English language learners (ELL). In addition, 75% of the total student population is considered "economically disadvantaged" or low-income, as reported by the Local Education Agencies and used by the federal government as a component of the qualifications in designating low-income schools[5].

Enrollment in the school district has increased over time, rising 5% in the years between 2010 and 2017. Yet the Pennsylvania Department of Education projects a 14% decline in enrollment for 2020-2030[6]. This prediction is likely exacerbated by the realities of the COVID-19 pandemic, the impacts of which are still unclear. There are additional concerning trends, however, as we consider educational attainment.
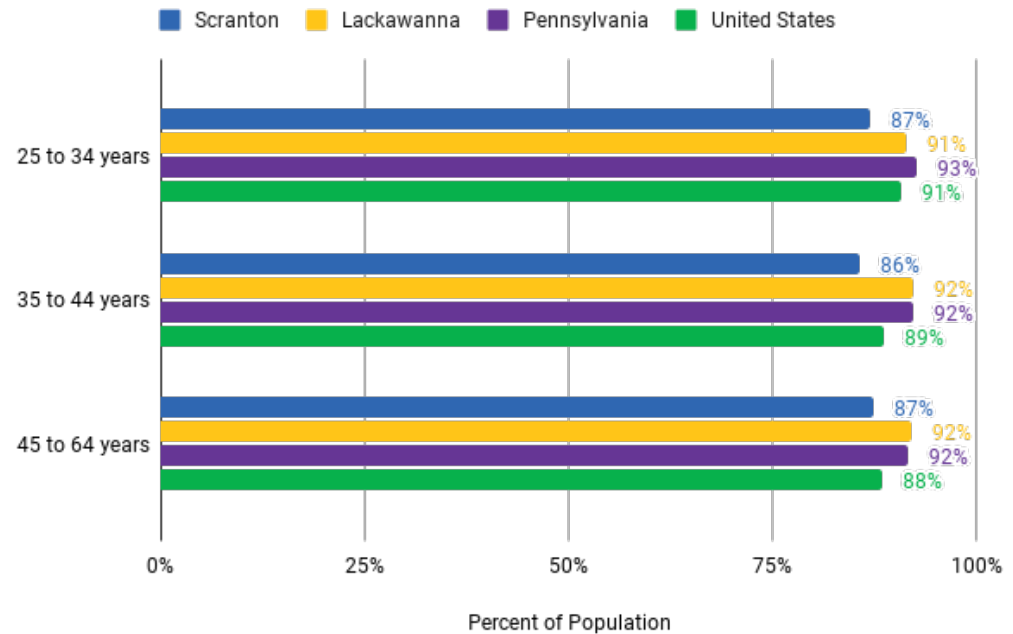
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5. Pennsylvania Department of Education: https://www.education.pa.gov/DataAndReporting/LoanCanLowIncome/Pages/PublicSchools.aspx
6. Pennsylvania Department of Education: https://www.education.pa.gov/DataAndReporting/Enrollment/Pages/EnrProjections.aspx
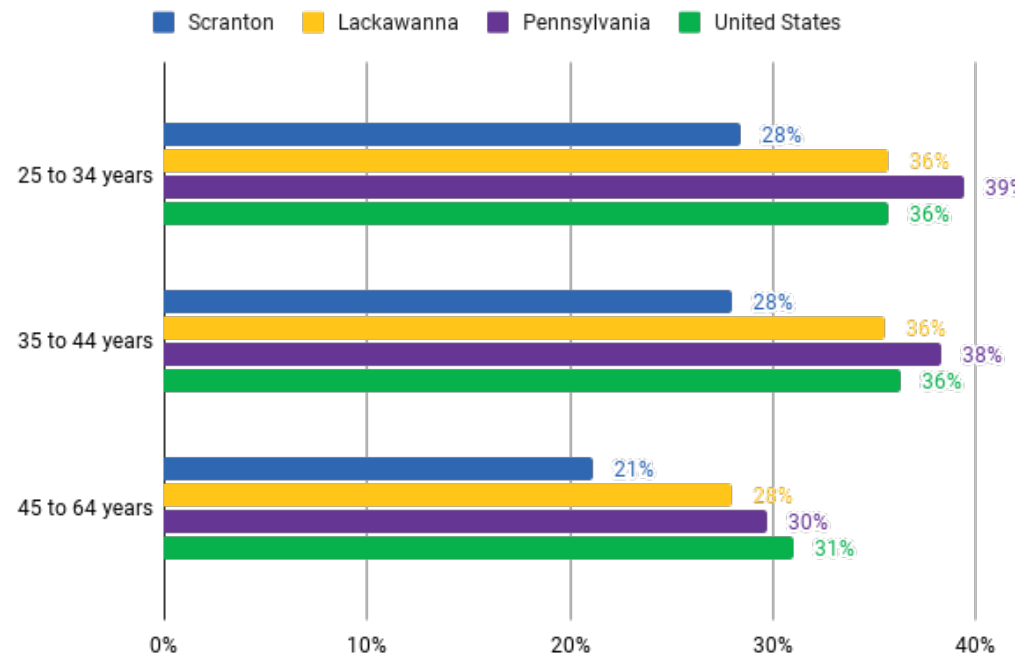
Scranton lags behind the county, state, and national averages in educational attainment, with 85.9% of the population aged 25 or older possessing a high school diploma or higher, and only 22.2% of the same population possessing a bachelor's degree or higher. If Scranton had the same high school or higher educational attainment rate as PA, there would be an additional 2,011 residents with a high school diploma or equivalent. A significant portion of Scranton's population is over the age of 65, and due to generational differences, individuals in this age group may have been less inclined to pursue higher education. That being said, educational attainment in Scranton for age groups 25 to 34 and 35 to 44 also lag behind county, state, and US averages. This has grave implications for the city's ability to match the needs of industry and to grow the city's economic base.

For this reason, education must be embraced by the economic development community as an area of responsibility and investment. While the traditional economic development dashboard focuses on jobs created, newer models will have to prioritize closer relationships with employers, tracking not only jobs created, but jobs filled. As communities large and small compete for talent, it is imperative that Scranton ensure its ability to produce high quality talent within its schools and, of equal importance, ensure a high quality school system to serve as a point of attraction and retention of top talent considering career opportunities within the city.

Educational Attainment by Age: High School or Higher

Legend: Scranton, Lackawanna, Pennsylvania, United States

25 to 34 years: Scranton 87%, Lackawanna 91%, Pennsylvania 93%, United States 91%

35 to 44 years: Scranton 86%, Lackawanna 92%, Pennsylvania 92%, United States 89%

45 to 64 years: Scranton 87%, Lackawanna 92%, Pennsylvania 92%, United States 88%

Percent of Population

Educational Attainment by Age: Bachelor's Degree or Higher

Legend: Scranton, Lackawanna, Pennsylvania, United States

25 to 34 years: Scranton 28%, Lackawanna 36%, Pennsylvania 39%, United States 36%

35 to 44 years: Scranton 28%, Lackawanna 36%, Pennsylvania 38%, United States 36%

45 to 64 years: Scranton 21%, Lackawanna 28%, Pennsylvania 30%, United States 31%

AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IMPERATIVE: SCRANTON SCHOOLS

Education plays a critical role in economic development, and this is especially true in Scranton. The City of Scranton will continue to partner with school district leadership to understand and support the needs of Scranton schools, in an effort to promote student outcomes and overall economic growth.

School systems are an economic development driver in every community. They are a large determinant of quality of life for existing residents and desirability for prospective residents. The quality of the education system influences property values and tax base. Beyond preparing students to serve as the next generation of local leaders and employees, a strong K-12 system improves the overall vitality of a community which can lead to greater investment and growth. For this reason, all residents and businesses have reason to support the success of their local school districts. For the Scranton community to grow its economy, it must continue to improve the Scranton School District. To achieve transformational and timely progress, all community members must work together to improve educational outcomes, both for this generation and those that come after it.

After a particularly challenging year that included teacher strikes, tough negotiations, and ongoing changes brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Scranton School District continues to examine and balance its short- and long-term goals. The priorities of the School District remain student-centered, but the needs of the student population have shifted, in part due to the impacts of the pandemic that prevail even as case counts improve. Learning loss and the mental health of students are two areas of focus that Scranton schools are working to address to ensure positive educational outcomes.

Maintaining safe and effective learning environments for all students is also imperative. The district continues to enhance day to day processes and procedures and invest in necessary capital improvement projects.

Missy McTiernan, Superintendent of the Scranton School District, recognizes the exceptional challenges of recent years, but she also acknowledges the resilience of the community. The Superintendent realizes the significance of this moment, noting that "sometimes crisis brings new opportunities." Even before the pandemic, the education system across the US was shifting to a more individualized approach to meeting the learning needs of students. This trend will continue, but the current environment is ushering in a new era of innovation when it comes to developing educational tools and practices. Scranton's Cyber Academy is one such example of a new and growing learning environment. The School District is also developing learning pathways that support a variety of career aspirations. A college degree is just one of the many routes a student can take to launch a successful career. Scranton schools are partnering with colleges, universities, technical and trade schools, and businesses to strengthen student connections to these pathways and to ensure the unique needs of students are being met.

The School District is also developing learning pathways that support a variety of career aspirations. A college degree is just one of the many routes a student can take to launch a successful career.

In addition to academics, the School District is working to promote a welcoming environment for both students and parents. Scranton's K-12 student population is strong in its diversity. In addition to fostering a quality learning environment for all students, the district recognizes the importance of engaging parents, who play a critical role in education. Scranton's proximity to large metropolitan areas like New York and Philadelphia can create waves of enrollment and disenrollment as families relocate between Scranton and other cities. While the District can build systems to address the learning challenges associated with fluctuations in enrollment, this is also an issue that needs to be addressed by the community at large through attraction and retention efforts.

As the Scranton School District manages its student-centric goals, it must also achieve greater financial stability. There is still much work to be done in this regard. The District has explored and created cost efficiencies and continues to explore shared service opportunities with the City. There is also an opportunity to scale monetary support from businesses and individuals, through the development of a funding consortium for example. This type of collective action can also attract outside investment from large philanthropic organizations.

Areas of opportunity include:

Providing the community with an aspirational funding target that reflects the cost of a high-quality education with a clear explanation of what the funding is and what it's for. Districts can "provide the community with an aspirational funding amount that reflects what a high-quality education costs in order to guide budgetary conversations and encourage more private-public partnerships.[7]"

Convening school districts, city departments, the nonprofit sector, business leaders, and community stakeholders to envision and plan for a whole-city approach to public education, informed by an assessment of the needs of the school system. Lean on cross-sector collaboration to address the gaps in support.

Developing strong community partnerships to support schools. Initiatives that link schools to community resources can prove invaluable. Aside from academic instruction, schools provide innumerous and often unrecognized services to care for students and families. Cities and community partners can develop a plan for allocating dedicated resources to the district for the purposes of using schools as community hubs. For example, in Nashville, the Community Achieves model calls for deep engagement with school populations to understand what needs arise for families and leans on the external community – government agencies, faith organizations, non-profits, economic development agencies, and businesses – to help provide resources.

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7. 2021 Chamber Education Report Leadership Development: https://www.nashvillechamber.com/public-policy/education/education-report

A Changing Workforce

Scranton has recovered nearly all jobs lost in the Great Recession, but the number of residents employed has not recovered. While overall employment levels have stabilized, COVID-19 impacts withstanding, there remains a significant gap between jobs available and jobs held by Scranton residents.
This gap mirrors gaps in educational attainment.

All Jobs and Emplyed Residents
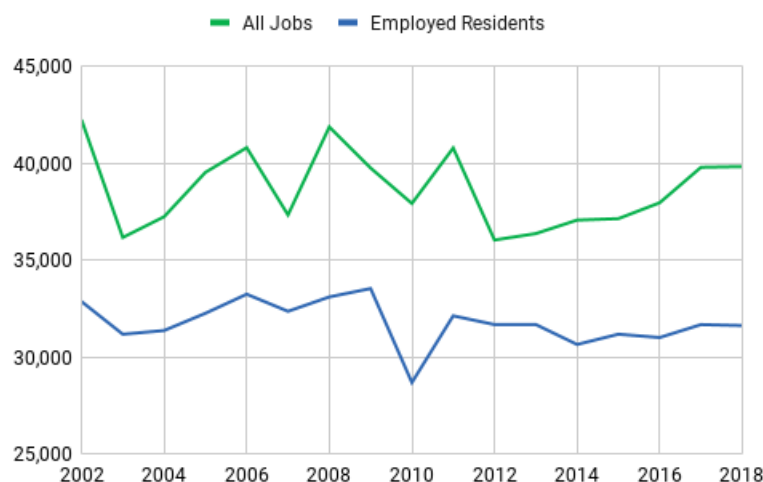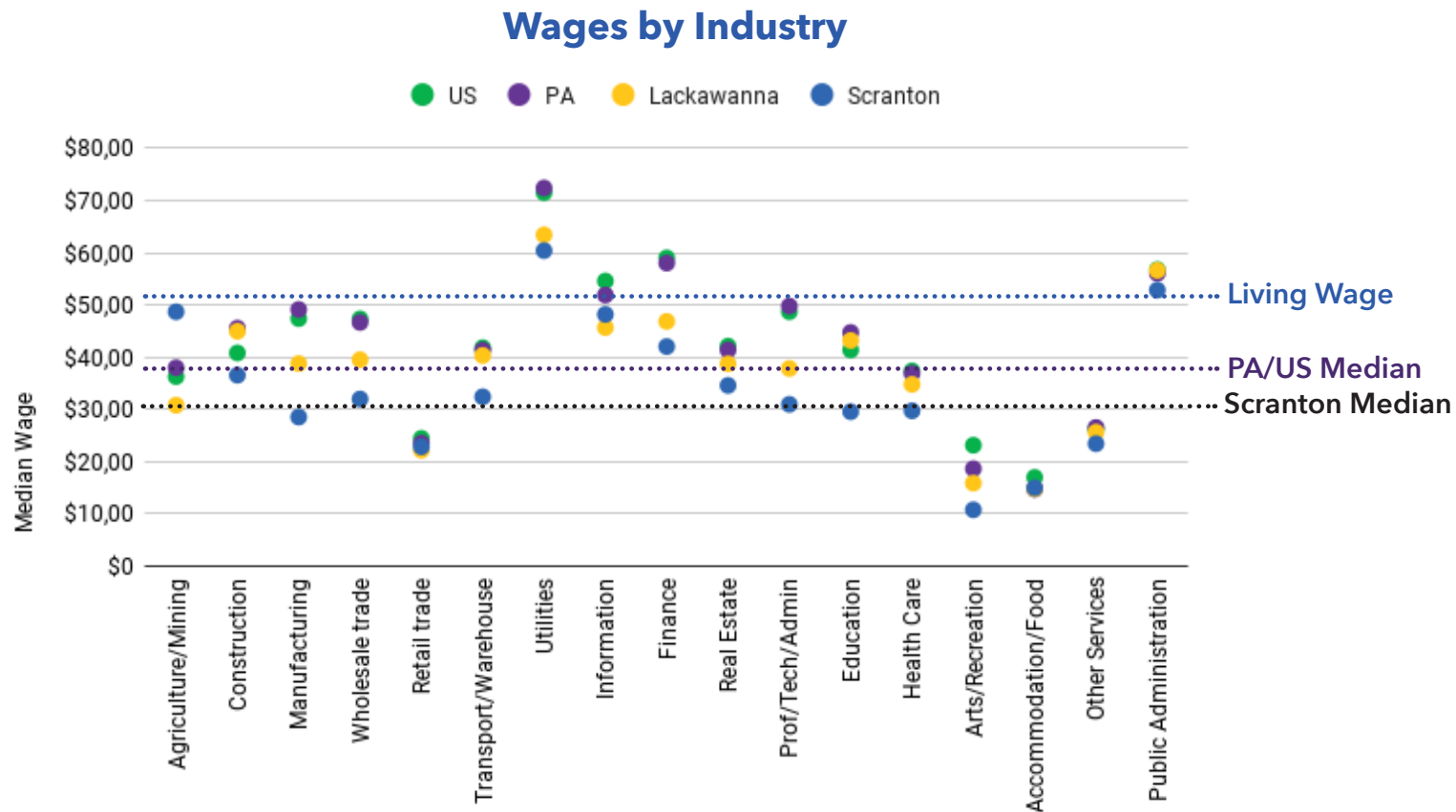

Jobs & Residents by Education
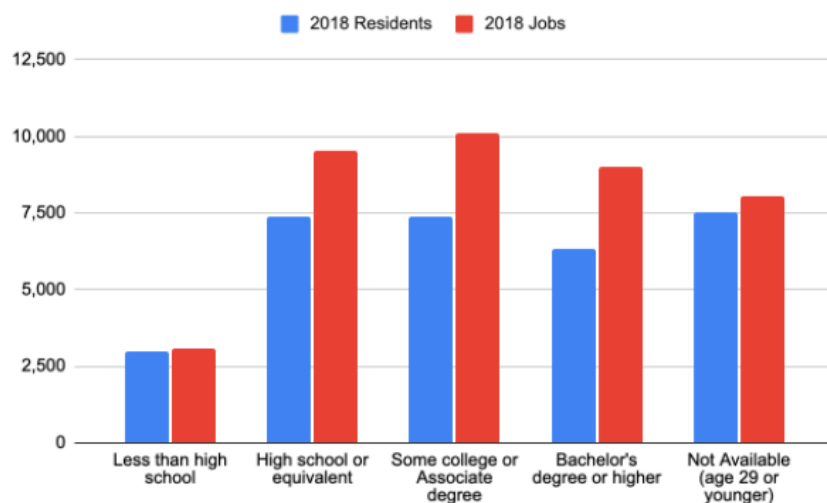
When comparing job opportunities that require a high school diploma or diploma equivalents, associate's degree, or bachelor's and higher, each category reflects a gap of 2,000+ available jobs that have gone unfilled by Scrantonians.

A Livable Wage

A livable wage is defined as the amount of income required to achieve a decent standard of living. In the public policy realm, this is often viewed as the minimum income necessary to meet basic needs, including adequate shelter, food, healthcare, and other necessities. This is also the threshold of income that can prevent an individual or family from falling into poverty. Analysis has shown that the livable wage in Lackawanna County for a two adult family, with one child and one adult working full time, is $50,732. The median wage in Lackawanna County is $35,712. The median wage in the city of Scranton is $30,057. It is even lower for every minority racial and ethnic group. This dissonance has emerged as one of the biggest barriers to economic growth and potential for Scranton.

In the decade spanning 2008 to 2018, the city lost roughly 2,000 jobs, 85% of which paid above the city's median wage[8]. This loss of jobs, paired with a loss of 1,500 residents in the same timeframe, has exacerbated the problem and lessened the city's opportunities to invest in strategies that would expand economic opportunity for its residents.

An additional layer of this issue is the prevalence of poverty and disconnected youth. 20% of Scranton residents are currently in poverty; including students enrolled in the area's secondary education institutions brings the total to 23%. There are also roughly 2,500 disconnected youth – young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are disconnected from work or school – in Lackawanna County, representing 10.6% of all youth in the county. Measure of America's analysis has shown that "experiencing a period of disconnection as a young person can have profound effects on earnings, employment, homeownership, and health that last into one's thirties."[9] This reality has the potential to significantly impair Scranton's future economic potential.

Wages by Industry

Legend: US · PA · Lackawanna · Scranton

Median Wage (y-axis): $0, $10,00, $20,00, $30,00, $40,00, $50,00, $60,00, $70,00, $80,00

Reference lines: Living Wage, PA/US Median, Scranton Median

Industries (x-axis): Agriculture/Mining, Construction, Manufacturing, Wholesale trade, Retail trade, Transport/Warehouse, Utilities, Information, Finance, Real Estate, Prof/Tech/Admin, Education, Health Care, Arts/Recreation, Accommodation/Food, Other Services, Public Administration

A livable wage provides social benefits such as enabling workers to adequately provide for themselves and their families, reducing debt, reducing or eliminating the stress of holding multiple jobs, and creating scenarios that allow workers to be more present with their children and families. But the benefits are not purely social. Economic research has shown the direct correlation between livable wages and economic progress. In simple terms, increased wages serve to increase consumer demand, ultimately fueling economic growth.[10] From the employer perspective, oftentimes a livable wage also leads to increased employee retention, ultimately saving money for employers and supporting future job creation.

The delta that has emerged between median and livable wages is one that must be addressed. Next to education and educational attainment, it stands as the biggest potential threat and area of opportunity on Scranton's economic horizon.

8. US Census on the Map: https://onthemap.ces.census.gov, US Census Bureau, American Community Survey: https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs
9. Measure of America: https://measureofamerica.org/DYinteractive/#County
10. Living Wage Network: https://www.livingwagenetwork.org/#:~:text=Paying%20a%20living%20wage%20creates%20an%20economy%20that%20works%20for%20everyone.&text=Paying%20a%20living%20wage%20leads,creation%20and%20helps%20small%20business

Affordability & Quality of Life

Income levels have a great impact on a city's economic performance. While Scranton's median household income is $12,000 lower than the state of Pennsylvania's, the city's median rent is just $10 less per month. Rents and prices for goods and services are high, relative to incomes, creating a scenario in which there are more cost-burdened homeowners and renters. Cost-burdened is defined as paying more than 30% of income on housing (rent or mortgage payments), plus utilities. It is estimated that 25% of Scranton's homeowners are cost-burdened, compared to 48% of its renters. These households often have difficulty affording basic necessities such as food, clothing, transportation, and healthcare. These data indicate that affordability is an issue for many residents.

Scranton has a first-time homebuyer program which is administered by NeighborWorks and funded through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. In the last year and a half, the program has assisted nearly two dozen first-time homebuyers. To complement this program, the City of Scranton is developing additional strategies to expand resources and paths to affordable home-ownership.

Median Household Income by Race/Ethnicity
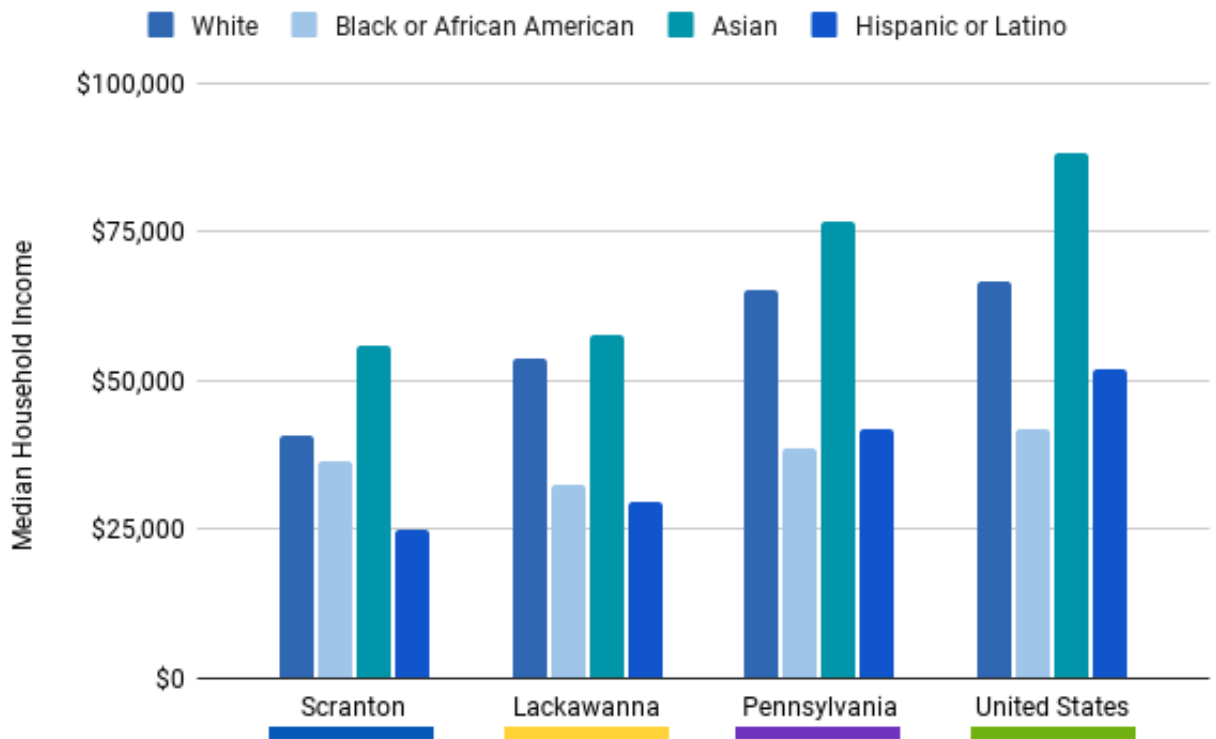
Median Household Incomes in Scranton are lower for every racial/ethnic group.

For Black residents, unemployment is **37%** of the U.S. rate, but the median household income for Black households is **87%** of the U.S. median for Black households

When it comes to affordability and quality of life, it is important to consider the needs of Scranton's older population, which is increasing. *U.S. News & World Report* ranked Scranton #21 on its list of Best Places to Retire in 2021-2022, based on the city's relative affordability, plentiful amenities, and proximity to New York City. In order to retain residents and support aging in place, Scranton will work to preserve naturally occurring affordable housing and promote quality of life measures for its retired residents.

Cost of living and housing affordability are clear areas where intentional action is needed. But social vulnerability is an additional factor to consider. The social vulnerability index considers four categories of vulnerability—socioeconomic status, household composition and disability, minority status and language, and housing and transportation. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) classifies much of Scranton as socially vulnerable, meaning residents in these areas are particularly at risk of suffering from health problems or climate disasters.[11] Residents of certain census blocks, many in the South Side, are the most vulnerable according to the index.

Life expectancy is similarly divided along neighborhood lines. Average life expectancy in the city of Scranton is less than 75 years old, three years below the Lackawanna County and US averages of 78 (as of 2017). Yet three Scranton census tracts have life expectancies of only 70 years. Within these census tracts, the population is 20% non-white, non-Hispanic and 60% of households have median incomes below $35,000.

Intentional action is needed to drive equitable outcomes across Scranton's various communities. Focus must be placed on decreasing wage disparities, increasing housing access and affordability, and providing supports to meet the needs of cost-burdened residents.

Scranton residents are further burdened by taxes, as tax rates in Scranton exceed those of the surrounding area. The city levies a lower real estate tax rate than the school district does, but that is inconsequential for Scranton homeowners' bottom lines. Real estate taxes are a heavy burden for homeowners, especially those living on fixed incomes, and city and district officials should work together to find ways to limit tax increases or at least stagger them in order to avoid simultaneous large rate hikes.

More than real estate taxes, it is Scranton's wage tax that sets it apart from the rest of the region. The region's cities, towns and boroughs generally levy a 1% tax for schools, but Scranton charges an additional 2.4% earned income tax for city residents. This tax is a deterrent and efforts must be made to decrease the percentage as quickly and as much as budget pressures allow.

At the same time, Pennsylvania has a low personal income tax relative to neighboring New York and New Jersey and nearby Connecticut. Northeastern Pennsylvania should be able to attract retirees, families, and young people looking for a relatively more affordable place to call home. Officials would be wise to market the area's quality of life, local airport, and proximity to major East Coast cities to these populations.

11. CDC/ATSDR Social Vulnerability Map: https://svi.cdc.gov/map.html

Neighborhood Demographics

While Scranton's population was stable between 2010 and 2020, population change occurred at the neighborhood level. Scranton's neighborhoods are diversifying. Together, Scranton experienced a 68% increase in the number of non-white residents from 2010 to 2020. Noting the changing demographics of Scranton, city leadership is pursuing an equity study. The study will arm Scranton with an equity plan, aimed at promoting equitable outcomes and enhancing belongingness for all Scranton residents.

No prior neighborhood level data analysis was identified during the planning process and therefore a creative approach was employed. The Statistical Atlas, using US Census Bureau data and neighborhood boundaries as defined by Zillow, offered demographic and economic characteristics at the neighborhood level. Statistical Atlas calculates neighborhoods by weighing the sum of block groups within neighborhood boundaries. While this data provides the closest geographic estimates of neighborhoods, it is not perfect.

Thus, the following data should be used with caution and the understanding that it is an estimate.

Race

In 2016 (the most recent year with neighborhood level data), the population of Scranton was 75% white, compared to the US average of 72%. At the neighborhood level, Downtown, South Scranton/Minooka, Pine Brook, and North Scranton are more racially and ethnically diverse than Scranton overall.

Race/Ethnicity by Neighborhood

Legend:
- White, Non-Hispanic
- Black, Non-Hispanic
- Hispanic
- Asian, Non-Hispanic
- Multiple Racial Indentities
- Other Racial Indentity

Neighborhood	White, Non-Hispanic
Scranton	75%
Downtown	58%
Hill Section	74%
South Side/Minooka	68%
North Scranton	74%
Green Ridge	83%
Pinebrook	60%
West Scranton	83%
East Mountain	88%

Percent of Population
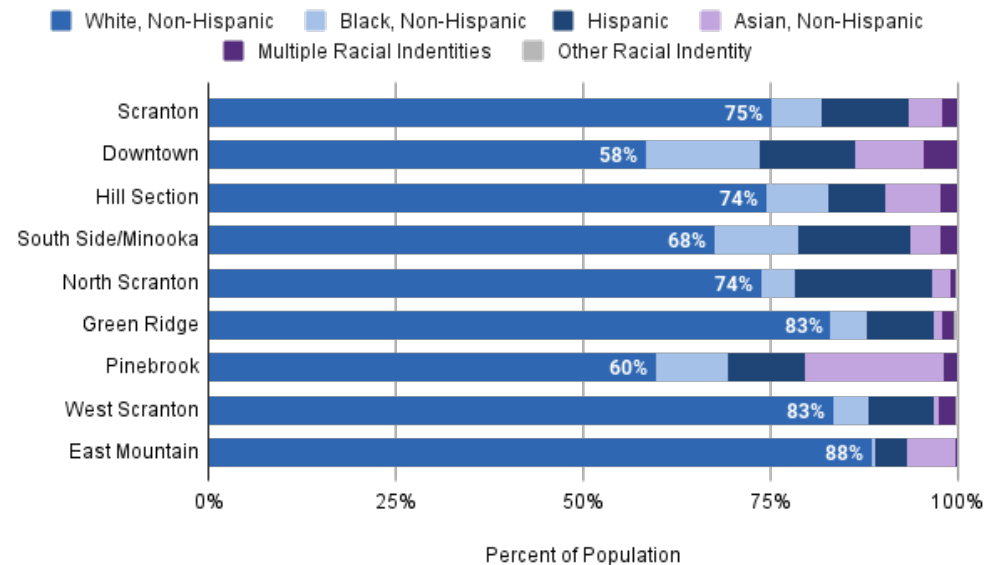
Source: US Census Bureau via Statistical Atlas 2010

Median Income by Neighborhood

Source: US Census Bureau via Statistical Atlas 2013

North Scranton
$33,100

Green Ridge
$45,500

West Scranton
$48,700

Pinebrook
$26,600

Downtown
$27,500

Hill Section
$44,900

Southside
$38,700

Scranton Average
$38,200

East Mountain
$50,100
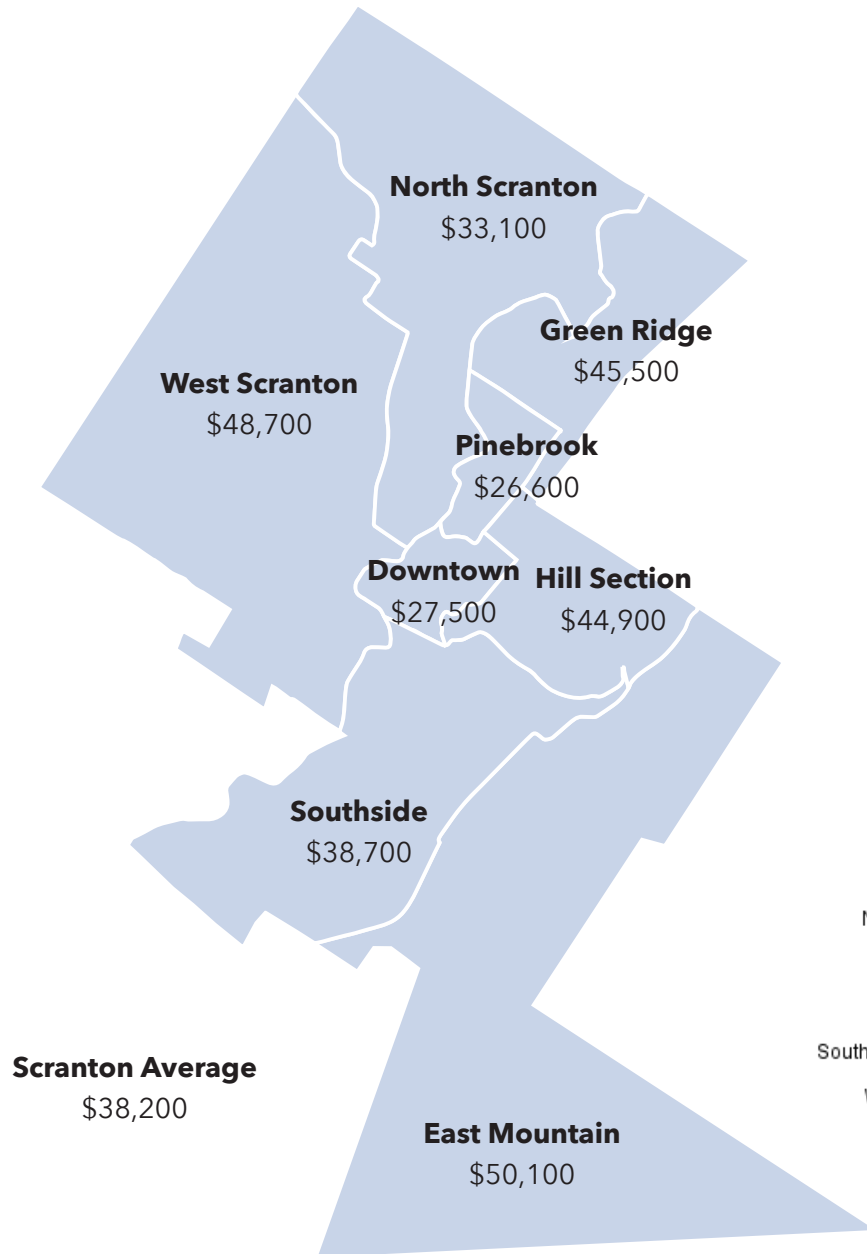
Income

Median income widely varies by neighborhood in Scranton. There is a division between Green Ridge, Hill Section, and West Scranton, which surpass the city average, and Downtown, North Scranton, and Pine Brook, which fall below the average. The presence of university students, however, skews this number at the neighborhood level.

Education

Educational attainment varies less significantly across neighborhoods.

Educational Attainment by Neighborhood

Legend: No HS Diploma, Bachlor Degree holders
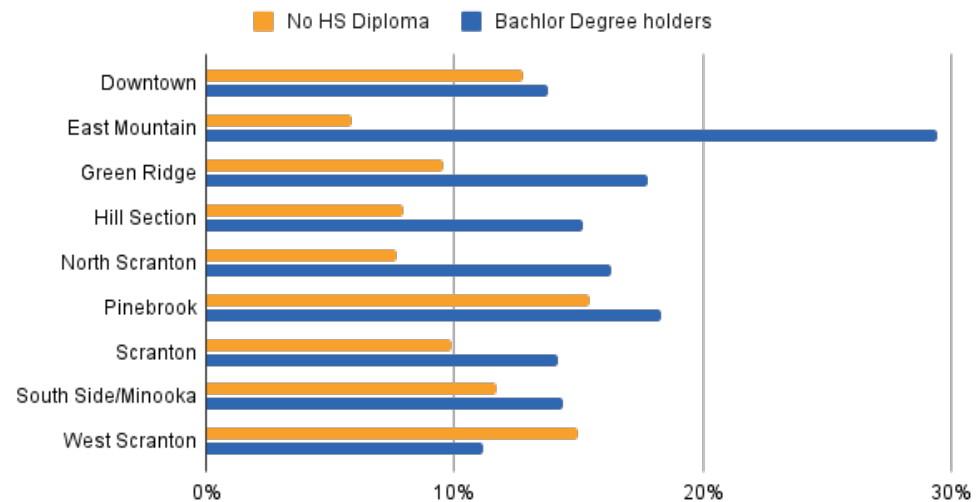
Source: US Census Bureau via Statistical Atlas 2013

Neighborhoods and Community Identity

Scranton's neighborhoods, including Downtown, Hill Section, South Scranton, Minooka, West Scranton, North Scranton and the Plot, Green Ridge, Pine Brook, and East Mountain, are defined in terms of history and culture, rather than civics. This means that while Scranton residents know neighborhood boundaries, the census does not. However, data at small geographies, like a census tract, are very helpful for benchmarking economic indicators at the neighborhood level. Using a standard geography will allow indicators identified in this plan to serve as benchmarks for future program evaluation.

Through our community engagement process, we heard a desire for increased interaction between neighborhoods. Neighborhoods undergoing revitalization programs can learn from and promote each other. Community events or competitions are another opportunity for inter-neighborhood collaboration. For instance, the streamlining of event approval or permits for all neighbors can improve accessibility, and thus promote a greater number of diverse community events.

The individual identities of Scranton's neighborhoods can help strengthen the popular perception of the city overall. Enhancing the specialities (branding, events, destinations, history, etc.) will help each neighborhood stand out in its own distinct way.

Zillow Neighborhoods

1. West Mountain
2. Keyser Valley
3. Providence
4. Tripp's Park
5. Hyde Park
6. The Plot
7. Bull's Head
8. Green Ridge
9. Pinebrook
10. Downtown
11. The Flats
12. Minooka
13. South Side
14. East Mountain
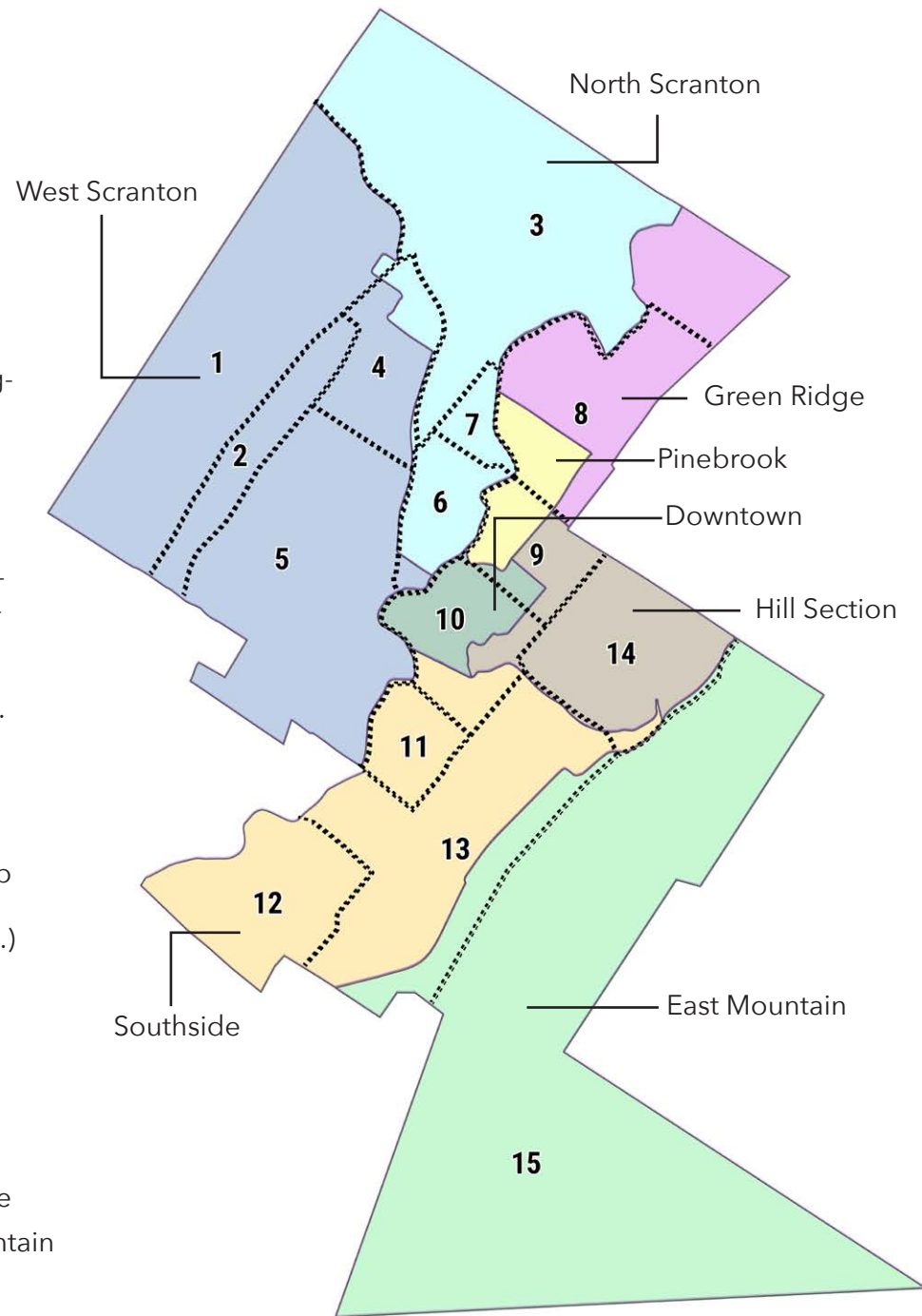
Jane Jacobs' Community Legacy

Scranton boasts many remarkable residents, but not every city can claim a legendary urban thinker. Jane Jacobs' first urban environments were Scranton and neighboring Dunmore, where she grew up.

Jacobs graduated from Central High as Scranton's industrial base began to decline. Jacobs recalled that a teacher claimed, "Scranton's greatest export these days is its young people."[12] Today, a similar exodus challenges the city. However, Jacobs' understanding of neighborhood planning provides lasting suggestions for Scranton.

Jacobs saw urban renewal, or the mass razing of blocks and displacement of residents, as crime against the very organic nature of cities themselves. Jacobs championed cities built at people-scale, rather than at car scale. Cities built for people allowed for planning at the neighborhood level, encouraged eyes on the street through small businesses and porches, and orchestrated the "sidewalk ballet" that is central to understanding and being present in your community.

Jacobs continues to influence Scranton today. Planning often occurs at the neighborhood level in Scranton, as undertaken previously in the South Side and now in Pine Brook and West Scranton. Unique place-based events at the neighborhood level also practice authenticity. Porch Fest, organized by Scranton Fringe and partners, exemplifies how porches are neighborhood strengths that can activate the street and encourage creativity.

Disciples of Jane Jacobs preach about the authenticity of place: neighborhoods that offer unique, real experiences. Assuring authenticity is not just about promoting arts and culture, but ensuring equity in neighborhood resources and processes.

We considered the unique features across neighborhoods to raise potential for collaboration and development beyond the downtown.

The Scranton Plan

Once the "Anthracite Capital of the World," Scranton's early industrial economy centered around coal and railroads. [13] However, after World War II, alternative forms of energy and transportation increased in popularity. Recognizing the need to retool in light of technological changes, Scranton's economic development leaders created The Scranton Plan in 1945. The plan promoted diversifying local industry and mitigating population loss. [14]

The Scranton Plan provided great foresight. As coal showed signs of decline and economic instability earlier than other manufacturing industries, the Scranton Plan became a model for legacy communities experiencing industrial decline.

In the 75 years since its release, The Scranton Plan is responsible for industrial parks and development throughout the county. The tradition also inspired additional plans and campaigns, such as Rediscover Scranton, an initiative that seeks to attract professionals and families back to the area.

With the principles of "attract, sustain, grow," the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce continues to use The Scranton Plan structure for future planning.[15] Today, Scranton's economic development tactics continue to follow in the tradition of The Scranton Plan by recognizing the need for a variety of economic drivers and desire to attract more residents and encourage homeownership.

12. Glenna Lang, Jane Jacobs's First City: Learning from Scranton, Pennsylvania (New York: New Village Press, 2021).
13. "Scranton." https://www.britannica.com/place/Scranton-Pennsylvania

14. Scranton Chamber of Commerce, "The Scranton Plan Archives": https://www.scrantonchamber.com/tag/the-scranton-plan/
15. Scranton Plan, "Attract. Sustain. Grow.": https://www.scrantonplan.com/
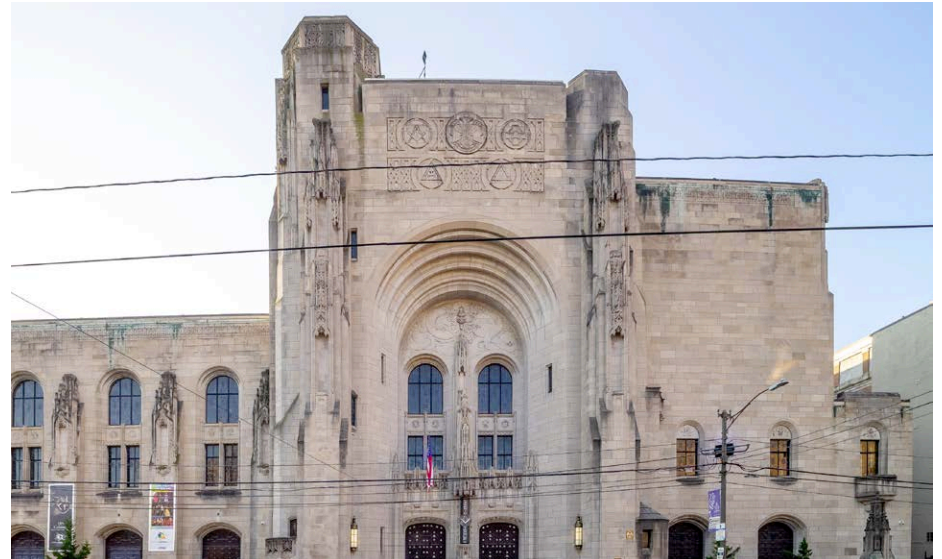
NEIGHBORHOODS
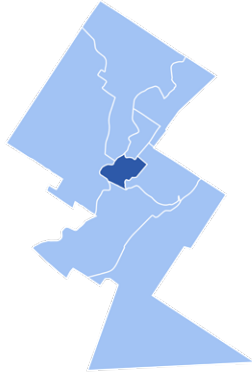
Downtown

With its notable architecture, downtown Scranton remains a destination and educational center. Expanding luxury and student housing signals that downtown is also becoming an increasingly desirable location to live. Downtown offers a variety of arts and cultural activities year-round. With central commons and open spaces such as Courthouse Square, Downtown hosts parades, like the St. Patrick's Day and Santa Parades, and events like the Steamtown Marathon, First Fridays, La Festa Italiana, Scranton Latin Festival, and the Scranton Fringe Festival.

Tucked within the downtown grid, the Bogart Court arts district is a unique escape. The funky, walkable strip is designed for pedestrians to shop, wander through art galleries, enjoy local restaurants, and visit the elevated park built on former train tracks which serves as a mini-High Line overlooking the entire city. The city will soon close a nearby street to traffic and create a "living alley" with still more restaurants and activities.

Downtown exemplifies Scranton's adaptability. Consider the Marketplace at Steamtown, at the location of the former Steamtown Mall. Instead of typical national-chain tenants, the mixed-use marketplace offers a variety of retail, dining spaces, and entertainment spaces, including an impressive aquarium. Medical tenants Geisinger and Delta Medix recently moved to Steamtown. Within the marketplace, an old food court has been transformed into a public market with both permanent and pop-up/seasonal retail and food offerings.

The Scranton Cultural Center, formerly the Masonic Temple and Scottish Rite Cathedral, is an Art Deco masterpiece that exemplifies the abuindant architectural and cultural history of Downtown Scranton.

NEIGHBORHOODS
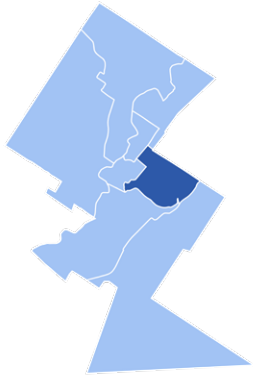
Hill Section

The Hill Section neighborhood developed as the coal industry boomed in Scranton. Seeking relief from the pollution of their industry, coal barons built their sprawling estates on these hillsides in the late 19th century. As the price of coal fluctuated and other forms of energy became more popular, large estates were subdivided. Lower and middle class families moved to Hill Section, signifying upward mobility. Hill Section became a receiving neighborhood for newcomers to Scranton. Rather than splitting into insular ethnic enclaves, Hill Section became home to immigrants of different European backgrounds and Black southerners relocating during the Great Migration. Resident and community activist Jack Shean theorizes that the changing nature of the coal industry, compared to cyclical manufacturing in many similar places, lead to integration.

Nay Aug Park, often referred to as the jewel of Scranton, offers natural amenities amid the beautiful landscape. An impressive array of tree species fill the park grounds and line the Roaring Brook Gorge, which can all be taken in from the Wenzel Treehouse. During the summer there are concerts twice a week, and the park hosts multiple annual car shows, craft shows, and a holiday light show that offers an especially important, safe, no-cost family activity during months when COVID-19 cases are typically highest. The Everhart Museum offers rotating art exhibits and cultural options. Summer arts camps enliven the park with children learning. With a focus on food access and public health, the Nay Aug Greenhouse Project and its community gardens exemplify how community space can serve to educate youth and adults.

Hill Section maintains a close relationship with the University of Scranton. Additionally, Geinsinger has a substantial campus in this neighborhood.

Practicing the authenticity of place, Hill Section playfully recognizes its name-sake geography during the Electric City Classic. The classic consists of both bike and running events, but features special hill heats that challenge athletes to take on the slopes.
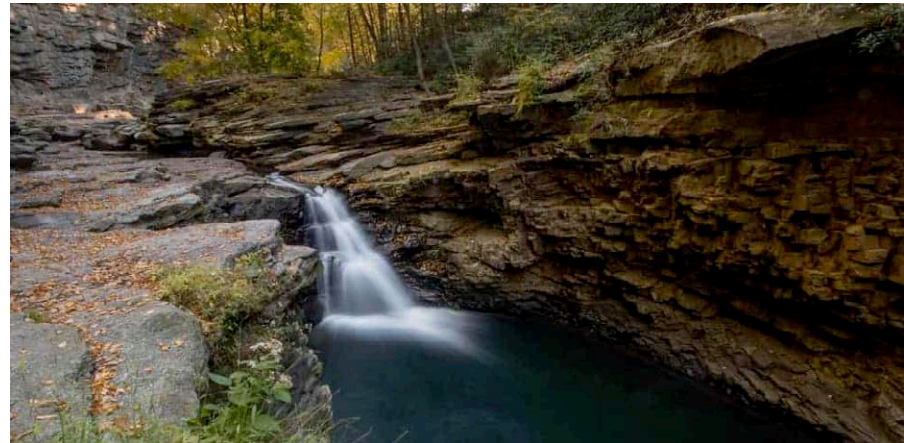
Nay Aug Park is an urban oasis that offers access to exquisite natural beauty.

The topography of the Hill Section provides challenging conditions during the Electric City Classic

NEIGHBORHOODS
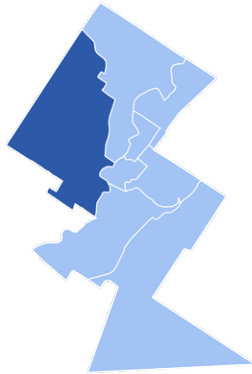
West Scranton

West Scranton, across the Lackawanna River from downtown, is the most populous Scranton neighborhood, home to 29% of city residents. Walkable West Scranton, commonly referred to as West Side, practices Jane Jacob's ideal of eyes on the street through the mix of public and private space and proliferation of porches. West Side's classic neighborhood design has schools, churches, and parks set amidst neat residential blocks. It is home to West Scranton High School, one of the oldest schools in the area. Opened in 1935 as a junior high, the facility now serves approximately 1,000 students in grades 9 through 12.

Through the tenets of New Urbanism, many newer suburbs are now trying to retrofit elements already central to West Side – particularly sidewalks throughout residential blocks, which improve walkability to community amenities, parks, and business districts dominated by small businesses. The neighborhood is also known for its places of worship, with myriad denominations and national origins, and sprawling, historic cemeteries. The annual Memorial Day ceremony held at Cathedral Cemetery in West Scranton, for example, has become a tradition for many families who join together to pay tribute to service members.

Integral to West Side, North Main Avenue is primarily a business district, full of local restaurants and bars, salons, a music venue built in a former bank, and more. The City of Scranton is planning a $1.4 million streetscape project on North Main Avenue. With these amenities, there is opportunity for West Scranton to draw in regional visitors.

Similar to the South Side a decade ago, West Side is beginning to undergo neighborhood planning efforts. Recognizing its walkability and small business concentration, West Side was recently designated an "Elm Street," which makes it eligible for special grants.[16] NeighborWorks Northeastern Pennsylvania is spearheading efforts, identifying four catalyst zones for larger investment: Allen Park, Clover Field, the Luzerne Street Shopping Center, as well as green space for recreation also along Luzerne Street.[17]
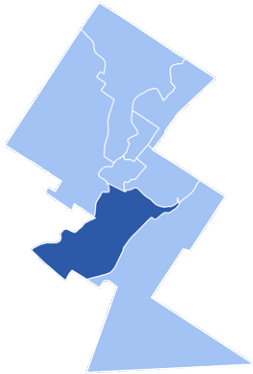

West Side's classic neighborhood design has schools, churches, and parks set amidst neat residential blocks.

16. PA Downtown, "Elm Street Program": https://padowntown.org/programs/elm-street-program/.
17. wnep.com, "Plans Announced for Scranton Revitalization," January 5, 2022: https://www.wnep.com/article/news/local/lackawanna-county/plans-announced-for-scranton-revitalization-neighborworks-elm-street-neighborhood-west-side/523-16b40908-14ae-48df-979b-a6d34fd3f5bd.

South Scranton, Minooka

Scranton's "South Side" is on the rise, driven by small businesses.[18] In 2008, the United Neighborhood Centers of Northeastern Pennsylvania (UNC) facilitated a neighborhood plan in South Scranton, centered around Cedar Avenue. South Side, or the Cedar Iron District, is a state-designated Elm Street Community.

Almost 20% of the population of South Scranton identities as Hispanic or Latino. Nearly 40% of Scranton's Hispanic/Latino population live in South Scranton.

The South Side Farmers Market is a neighborhood staple, drawing large weekend crowds. Started in 2010, the indoor/outdoor market is now year-round.

Restaurants, bakeries and groceries with a wide range of ethnic foods proliferate.

Events celebrate South Scranton's history and culture. The Bonfire at the Iron Furnaces and Arts on Fire spotlight take place at the neighborhood's gateway and showcase the local arts scene. October 2021 marked the first South Side Restaurant Tour, sponsored by the UNC and the University of Scranton, to celebrate Hispanic Heritage month.[19]

City parks are spread throughout South Side and Minooka, with Connell Park in South Side featuring a new dog park and pump track, a very popular attraction for neighborhood kids and a destination for others from around the entire area.

Past South Scranton, Minooka is a suburban neighborhood of Scranton. Historically home to a large Irish population, many long-time small businesses and cherished neighborhood restaurants, bars, and shops make this neighborhood shine. Minooka features a double main street loop at the center of the neighborhood and a new development of town homes, a higher-density housing feature that could serve the rest of the city well as the population grows.
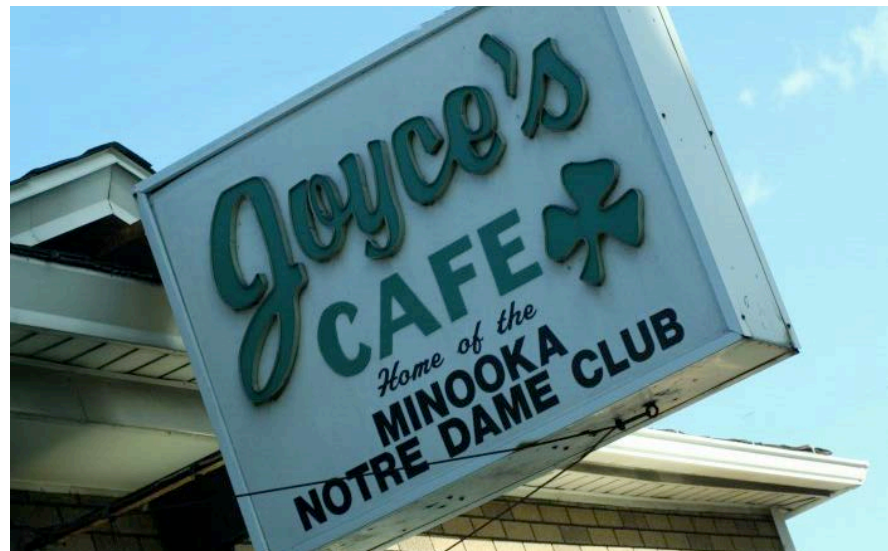

Many long-time small businesses and cherished neighborhood restaurants, bars, and shops make this neighborhood shine.

18. wnep.com, "South Scranton on the Comeback: New Neighbors, New Faces, New Life for Part of the Electric City," August 5, 2021: https://www.wnep.com/article/entertainment/television/leckey-live/south-scranton-on-the-comeback-new-neighbors-new-faces-new-life-for-part-of-the-electric-city/523-ba8a30da-e2ae-40d8-b719-5ccf70c5f0f0.
19. "South Side Restaurant Tour to Celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month | Royal News: November 10 2021." Accessed February 2, 2022. https://news.scranton.edu/articles/2021/09/article.shtml.
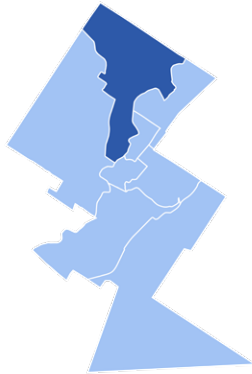
North Scranton

North Scranton, first known as the borough of Providence, merged with Scranton in 1866. Railroads and the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail hug the river in North Scranton, accompanied by light industry and historic housing. Rather than a clustered business district, small businesses are scattered throughout North Scranton, particularly along North Main Avenue and Providence Road.

North Scranton boasts several unique sites. Historical North Scranton is home to Lackawanna County's oldest home, the Tripp House. The home now serves as an elegant event space proximate to downtown. The Theater at North, an 800-seat theater operated by Goodwill Industries, is an entertainment center in North Scranton that hosts live music and events. Located within the former Gothic-Revival style North Scranton Junior High School, the theater is an example of the creative reuse of a historic building. The building is now mixed use, with 58 units of senior housing in addition to the theater.

At Providence Square, the Black Scranton Project is restoring a former PNC Bank. This space will serve as a center of community as well as a museum and arts space. Neighborhood restaurants and churches line the area, and the Houdini Museum – the only one of its kind in the world – is just down the street. The area is ripe for redevelopment.

North Scranton is also home to many green spaces and parks. The Lackawanna River Heritage Trail runs nearly the length of the neighborhood, before crossing the river. A nature park for kids is a family-friendly feature on the trail, and city parks are walkable from most of the neighborhood.

The Theater at North and the Tripp House are two excellent examples of adaptive reuse of historic buildings.
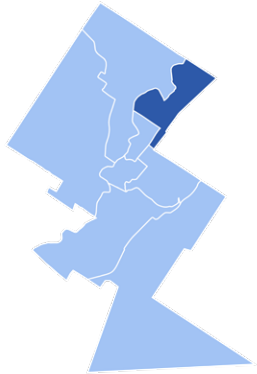
Green Ridge

Similar to Hill Section, Green Ridge's development was driven by industrial elites and businessmen. Also like Hill Section, Green Ridge diversified over time due to the changing nature of industry. Green Ridge maintains beautiful Victorian housing stock. Tree-lined Green Ridge Street provides a beautiful gateway into the city from Dunmore.

Green Ridge is the neighborhood where President Joe Biden grew up, and the intersection in front of his childhood home was designated "Joe Biden Way" in the weeks following his election in 2020. Other prominent politicians from the neighborhood include Governor William W. Scranton, Governor Robert P. Casey, and current US Senator Bob Casey.

Jane Jacob's family, the Butzners, settled in Green Ridge when they migrated to Scranton in the early 20th century. At that time, "Green Ridge had become an ideal mixed-use neighborhood, one far different from later suburbs, which Jacobs viewed as lacking "the room for great differences among neighbors."[20] Jane celebrated the neighborhood's diversity and proximity to downtown.

Green Ridge remains a mixed use neighborhood. Small businesses, churches, and community amenities, like a library and public and parochial schools, occupy block corners.

Green Ridge was Scranton's elite streetcar suburb during the late nineteenth century. The neighborhood features grand mansions and humbler homes that have housed more than a few famous residents.

20. Glenna Lang, Jane Jacobs's First City: Learning from Scranton, Pennsylvania (New York: New Village Press, 2021).
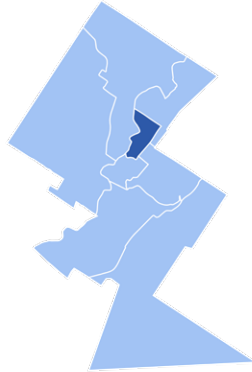
Pine Brook

Pine Brook stands out for its concentration of schools. When discussing investments in the Scranton School District, the neighborhood could be positioned as an educational district.

Pine Brook includes social, cultural, and natural resources. Many social services are situated between downtown and Pine Brook and offer basic needs and crisis intervention services, from food and clothing to housing support and workforce training. [21]

In terms of recreation in Pine Brook, the Penn Paper Building, seen in the opening credits of *The Office*, is a stop on The Office Tour of Scranton. Additionally, the Olive Street Trailhead offers access to the Lackawanna County Heritage Trail. Many events in Pine Brook are water focused, such as the Lackawanna Riverfest and ShiverFest at Sweeney's Beach and boat launch.

Pine Brook's iconic National Bakery, opened in 1946, is a third-generation bakery known for their breads and pastries. On and On is a vintage marketplace that serves as a shop for fans of Scranton and *The Office* to buy gear to send or take home to friends. An axe-throwing space opened up in 2021 and more business openings are planned.

UNC is currently facilitating a neighborhood plan in Pine Brook. The plan kicked off with neighborhood cleanups and community meetings. Neighbors can join or follow the planning efforts here.
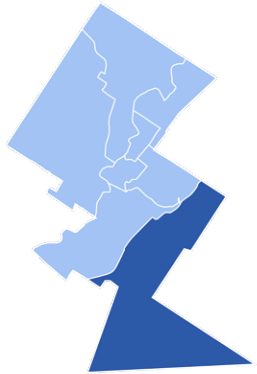
UNC applied for an Elm Street designation for Pine Brook and is actively involved in the revitalization of the area.

The Penn Paper building plays a starring role in the opening sequence of *The Office*. The National Bakery is a third-generation bakery and local favorite.

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21. wnep.com, "The Pinebrook Plan," October 6, 2020: https://www.wnep.com/article/news/local/lackawanna-county/the-pinebrook-plan/523-69e09e5c-f812-4ce1-af49-487a25431a63.
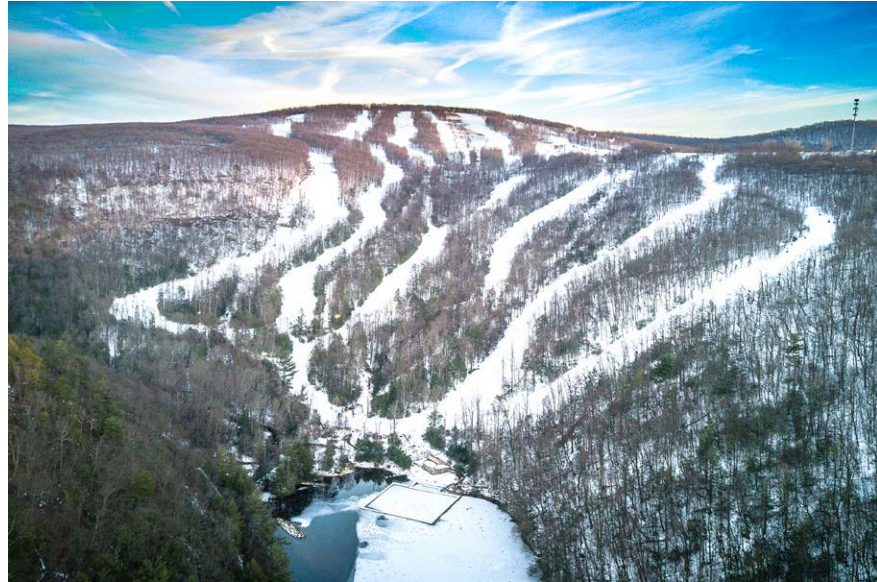
East Mountain

Set between Lake Scranton and Nay Aug Park, East Mountain is a tree-lined residential neighborhood with substantial access to outdoor amenities. The development of East Mountain closely followed the development of Scranton as a city. In Scranton's earliest days, East Mountain served as a lumber supplier to the city as it developed. Then, a railroad was built to connect to the ore mines to aid in industrial development. The Pennsylvania Coal Company operated out of East Mountain, even building a gravity railroad. [22]

After the shift away from coal mining and heavy industry, East Mountain became a popular picnic spot. Recreation in East Mountain centered around Lake Scranton and the Mattes Community Center, now the Marine Corps League Museum.

East Mountain homes and properties are generally newer and larger than the housing stock in the rest of the city. As noted previously, education levels are highest in this neighborhood.

Many of the features of East Mountain are connected, creating a recreational network. Robinson Park, which features a playground and greenspace, leads directly to the Lake Scranton Walking Trail. Given its height, East Mountain offers a beautiful lookout point with views of downtown Scranton.

22. Donna Adler, "EastMountain, My Neighborhood," *The Lackawanna Historical Society Journal* 41, no. 3 (Summer 2011): 6.

East Mountain offers outdoor recreation in all seasons and is the home of Montage Ski Resort. East Mountain homes and properties are generally newer and larger than the housing stock in the rest of the city.

A New Era: The Act 47 Exit

2022 ushered in a new era of opportunity in Scranton, as the city formally exited Act 47, a Pennsylvania statute enabling the state's Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) to help municipalities avoid financial distress and ensure the health, safety and welfare of their residents. Scranton was officially designated a distressed community, subject to Act 47 on January 10, 1992, following a vote from city council. This determination was considered appropriate after years of recurring deficits, questionable financial management practices, and unfavorable political, economic and demographic trends.

In a ceremony held at Lackawanna College on January 25, 2022, Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) Secretary Dennis Davin signed a determination letter articulating findings that termination of the city's distressed status was appropriate under Section 255.1 of Act 47. The decision was made after a thorough review of the city's audits, financial data, and the record from a public hearing held in November 2021. Sec. Davin was joined by Mayor Paige Cognetti, City Council President Kyle Donahue, Pennsylvania Economy League Senior Research Fellow Gerald Cross, and other local leaders. Scranton is one of only 16 municipalities to successfully exit Act 47, a testament to the city's leadership and the deliberate actions taken in recent years to improve Scranton's economic outlook.

In many ways, this successful exit from Act 47 is ushering in a new era for Scranton, signaling that the city is in control of its future, open for business, and ready for investment.

Mayor Cognetti expressed gratitude to the advisors, staff, and elected officials who made the exit possible over the course of three decades. She commented:

"

As Mayor, I can sleep at night knowing we have cash on hand to meet an emergency, a luxury some of my predecessors did not enjoy. We cannot thank them enough for making tough calls to get us where we are today.

While we are eager to shed the "distressed" label, this doesn't mean we've arrived at our destination. We have a tremendous amount of work ahead to create a financially stable future.

In the first two years of our administration, standing on the other side of difficult decisions made by officials before us, we achieved annual budget surpluses despite economic headwinds from the pandemic; we have been able to decrease the amount we borrow to fund ourselves at the beginning of each year; we have been able to continue to decrease our debt obligations; our credit rating is stable; the case is evident for our credit outlook to improve.

We have implemented new internal controls, improved processes, increased transparency, set up an internal whistleblower hotline, passed investment and fund balance policies, and taken the bold step of implementing a Payroll Preparation Tax.

The fiscal challenges are steep for all cities of our size and economic profile – but we are confident that the bumpy road of the past thirty years is behind us and we are working hard to move forward.

We're pushing to secure our long-term financial health by making tough but necessary decisions on prospective healthcare benefits and retirement structures.

We're advocating for legislative changes to give us more local determination of how we govern.

We're looking around every corner for revenue solutions to try to lower taxes over time.

Running a city means difficult decisions are always around the bend – but Scranton and its residents have proven time and again that we are resilient.

"

Complementary Plans

Connecting planning processes to achieve a shared vision

When it comes to securing a vibrant future for Scranton, it is important to acknowledge the work and achievements that have already led to significant progress across the city. Throughout the strategic economic development planning process leading up to this report, an assessment of ongoing and prior planning initiatives was conducted to determine areas of past success to leverage and identify new opportunities to pursue. Recognizing that economy, environment, and equity are overlapping elements of strategic development, this plan runs in tandem with the Scranton Recreation Needs Assessment & Master Plan and Scranton and Wilkes-Barre Bicycle and Pedestrian Study, as well as the upcoming City Equity Plan, Walkability Study, and Downtown Scranton Master Plan. While the focus of each plan differs, Scranton's changing demographics, existing challenges, and emerging opportunities inspired the need for these initiatives. They share similar goals, and together, will build a stronger community so that Scranton may reach its full potential. Strong communications and marketing is critical to the success of all three plans and the city's growth overall. The city will also be contracting a marketing specialist to develop a brand that will raise the profile of Scranton and promote community and economic development.

Scranton Recreation Needs Assessment & Master Plan ("Parks Study")

Released in October 2021, the Scranton Recreation Needs Assessment & Master Plan serves as a comprehensive needs assessment and resource guide to evaluate the current state of neighborhood parks, exploring possible funding and design solutions.

An initial park user survey identified primary uses of the parks system, maintenance conditions, and ongoing programming or events. In addition to gauging resident's interactions with park space, the survey also asked residents about their specific experiences of, and needs for, their local parks. The study breaks out each specific green space by zip codes across the city. The study inventories and assesses the condition of all the existing green and open spaces in the city.

Source: Scranton Recreation Needs Assessment & Master Plan
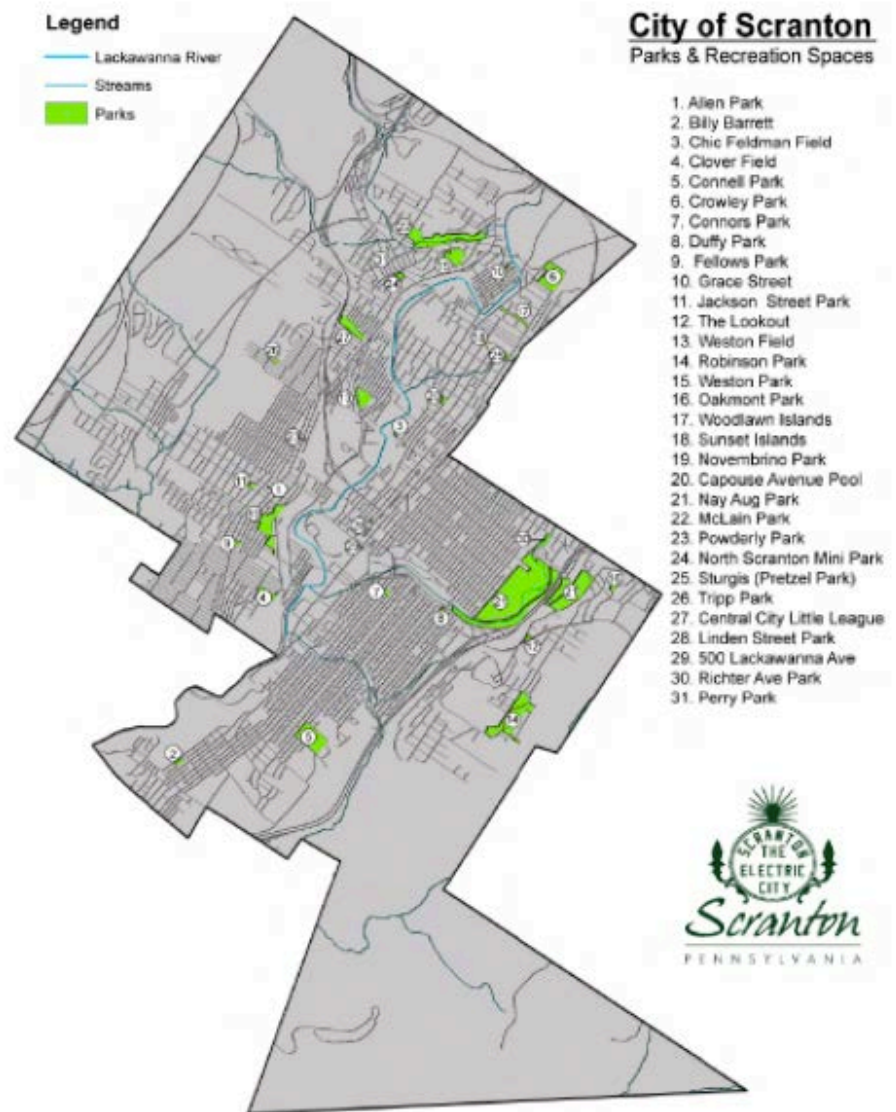
City Equity Plan

The City Equity Plan is still ongoing at the time of this plan's release. The plan will address resilience and how equity is a driver of economic measures. A response to the changing demographics of Scranton, the plan will consider how to promote inclusion and belonging in the city. During this process, the City of Scranton is partnering with the Scranton Area Community Foundation to convene community partners and service providers to create an Equity Commission, conduct a community equity analysis, and advance initiatives that improve equity outcomes for all community members.

Downtown Scranton Master Plan

The Downtown Scranton Master Plan will offer a roadmap of investment to enhance life and promote economic vitality in the city's downtown. The plan has identified five focus areas for investment, including gateways and strategic corridors, eds and meds, the riverfront as a destination, heritage, and the use of incentives as a catalyst for growth. This will continue the important work laid out in the 2016-2020 *Our Transformative Period Community Revitalization Plan* for Scranton's Central Business District.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Study

The Scranton and Wilkes-Barre Bicycle and Pedestrian Study was published in December 2020 and provided an action plan for Downtown Scranton. It has since been incorporated into the pending Downtown Scranton Master Plan. The proposed downtown Scranton bicycle and pedestrian improvements are designed to create a network for active transportation that enables enhanced connectivity for all ages and abilities. The plan includes a well rounded and phased approach to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, ordinances, public education, and more.

Walkability Study

After overcoming delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic and with the introduction of ARPA funding, Scranton will now be able to execute on the Walkability Study by Speck & Associates. This will include assessment of and potential updates to the existing street network, number and width of lanes, design of turn lanes, intersection signals, bicycle facilities, on- and off-street parking including prices, multi-modal transport connections, traffic signage. The overall goal of the study and updates will be to ensure the safety, mobility, and success of downtown Scranton.

Marketing Strategy

The City of Scranton will also be contracting a marketing specialist to develop a brand that will create strong public perception and raise the profile of Scranton as a desirable location to do business, work, and live. This marketing strategy will celebrate community, collaboration, and the future of work, inspiring investment and assisting with talent attraction and retention. The plan will offer fresh, innovative, and interactive approaches to engage business decision-makers, site selectors, tourism partners, influencers, and media. It will help prospective residents to understand the assets and affordability of Scranton relative to high-priced coastal cities and highlight the advantages of geographic proximity to major metropolitan areas such as New York and Philadelphia.

Photo: DiscoverNEPA

FIVE
STRATEGIC PILLARS

Five Strategic Pillars

The strategies with this plan are categorized across five strategic pillars and based on timing of implementation. The plan represents a balanced portfolio of strategies to ensure actionable and implementable initiatives. The impacts of these action steps are not alway easy to measure, and oftentimes data is not readily available. While these impacts describe the desired outcomes of each action step, the quantitative metrics and process metrics at the end of each strategic section serve as performance indicators with accessible data. These measurements will be used to track progress and adjust action steps as necessary.

Think of Scranton as a place where....

Industry growth is spurred by building a supportive environment that helps new and existing businesses thrive

Diverse talent is welcomed, celebrated, and fostered as a core strength of Scranton

Community pride serves as a driver for neighborhood investment and inclusive engagement that promotes Scranton's unique identity.

Affordable and quality housing is accessible for new, longtime, and prospective residents, ensuring Scranton is an inviting place to call home

Infrastructure is developed and maintained to better connect and equip those who live, work, learn, and play in Scranton.

Implementation & Defining Success

It will take strong collaboration between community leaders and residents to successfully realize the vision, objectives, and goals of this plan. The City of Scranton and its partners are committed to acting as conveners, catalysts, and all-around champions of economic development. The action items of this plan serve to uplift and leverage the important work of community members who have long been leading the way in their areas of expertise. The plan's action items also call for the formation of new partnerships to take advantage of opportunities for alignment. By bringing people and organizations together,

Scranton can synchronize new and existing efforts in order to accelerate and amplify economic growth. The City's implementation roles that you'll see throughout this plan are defined as follows:

Owner: City serves as primary lead in implementation.

Information Developer: Leads and supports the collection of information and analysis to inform possible actions, for example, research into trends and identification of promising practices

Catalyst: Serves as a nudger and investor to advance actions that tackle challenges and pursue opportunities

Convener: Brings together leaders and organizations to explore shared impact potential and system needs

System Builder: Invests in capaCity building with individuals and groups of organizations

To establish a balanced approach to economic development within this plan, it was important   to consider both the level of impact and level of difficulty to implement each strategy. The action steps are thus wide ranging, to promote overall success in achieving the plan's vision. The strategy timelines denoted throughout this report are defined as follows:

"Think Now" goals can be accomplished in a 2-3 year timeframe. Goals need to be obtainable and prioritized.

"Think Next" goals can be accomplished in a 3-7 year timeframe. The goals need to be obtainable, prioritized, and impactful on the City's economic and community development future.

"Think Beyond" goals can be accomplished in a 10-20 year timeframe. These goals for the City will serve as a capstone to the "Think Now" and "Think Next" goals to keep the City of Scranton and its people on target to reach their full potential.

For each strategic pillar, the plan includes success metrics and sources for tracking key performance indicators. These include both quantitative and process metrics, which provide a means for assessing progress and effectiveness. As the City implements strategies for strengthening Scranton's economy and community, it will work to ensure equitable development across all neighborhoods. By continually reviewing implementation metrics, the team can adapt and adjust its tactical approach as needed. The strategic plan also includes promising practices, which provide specific examples of initiatives that have proven successful in achieving similar goals across other communities. They serve as inspiring, exemplary models that can be tailored and refined to leverage the existing assets and meet the specific needs of Scranton.

INDUSTRY GROWTH

Summary of Need & Opportunity

Scranton's economy is supported by a strong mix of legacy industries and anchor institutions. Considering historical context, the City was built by entrepreneurs and innovators, a legacy Scranton must continue to preserve and grow. Location is also a major asset, with Philadelphia, New York City, Newark, Syracuse, and Harrisburg all within a two-hour driving radius.

Industries contributing to overall GDP in Scranton include Healthcare; Logistics, Warehousing, & Transportation; Advanced Manufacturing; Building Construction Trades & Utilities; and back-office supports. The City is also known for its downtown business district, including professional services and main street businesses. From a regional perspective, however, Lackawanna County's 2019 GDP per capita is less than $45,000, representing 79% and 77% of per capita GDP in the state and US, respectively. This indicates that Scranton and its surrounding municipalities have relatively lower levels of economic productivity.

Scranton has long been a regional job center, but it lost more than 2,000 jobs from 2008 to 2018, and the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on businesses and the labor market is uncertain. While wages in Scranton have been growing, they are growing more slowly than elsewhere in PA and the US, eroding the benefits of the City's lower cost of living. Scranton's median wage is $30,057, lower than the median wages of Lackawanna County, PA, and the US, which are $35,712, $39,550, and $38,270, respectively.[23] Scranton's median wage is also well below the living wage in Lackawanna County, which is $50,732 for a two-adult family with one working adult and one child.[24] This differential between median and livable wage, which is even greater for minority racial and ethnic groups, has emerged as one of the biggest barriers to economic growth and potential for Scranton.

INDUSTRY SECTOR	CITY EMPLOYMENT 2018	CHANGE, 2008-19	MEDIAN WAGE, 2019
Utilities	1	-94	$60,417
Public Administration	2,167	-461	$52,852
Agriculture	56	-37	$48,711
Information	711	-860	$48,200
Finance	1,984	563	$42,047
Construction	512	-103	$36,563
Mining	0	-3	$36,563
Real Estate	209	-102	$34,596
Transport/Warehouse	860	599	$32,423
Wholesale	1,288	-259	$31,994
Management	270	-333	$30,975
Administration	2,048	572	$30,975
Health Care	13,294	280	$29,741
Education	4,435	993	$29,569
Manufacturing	2,794	-170	$28,550
Other Services	1,212	-395	$23,448
Retail	2,975	-1,630	$22,849
Accommodation/Food	2,759	384	$15,000
Arts/Recreation	616	216	$10,785

Source: Jobs from the US Census On the Map, 2008-2018, Median Wages for Residents - Census ACS

23. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2019 5-Year Estimates, Median Earnings by Industry and Sex for the Past 12 Months: https://www.census.gov/acs/www/data/data-tables-and-tools/subject-tables/
24. MIT Living Wage: https://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/42069

The City's two largest industry employers are Health Care and Education, which account for 34% and 11% of total jobs, respectively. Both industries also experienced growth between 2008 and 2019. As a legacy industry, Manufacturing accounts for 7% of total jobs.[25] The Finance industry is another area of strength, with a relatively strong median wage and an increase in the number of jobs. Ensuring a strong mix of businesses, not just across industry but also in firm size, is important to economic resilience in Scranton. Fostering innovation and entrepreneurship, particularly around the health care sector, presents a significant opportunity.

Business Births

The rate of business births in Lackawanna has consistently trended below US, and more recently, state levels. As of 2018, the county's business birth rate was 6%, compared to the national and PA rates of 8% and 9%, respectively.[26] Overall, business birth rates have been on a steady decline as a result of demographics, the Great Recession, the growth of national chains, and a lack of financing. However, new business starts data are becoming more readily available for the two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, revealing its impact on labor markets; the trend of increased micro business starts is likely to be as evident in Scranton as it is across the country.

In Scranton, specifically, small businesses are not getting access to the financing they need to grow, as indicated by the City's lower loans per capita, which lag US and PA levels by $100 and Lackawanna County as a whole by $200. Scranton has 37% of the county's population and 40% of its jobs, but only 28% of small business loans made in the county go to Scranton businesses.[27]

Business Births per 100 Establishments
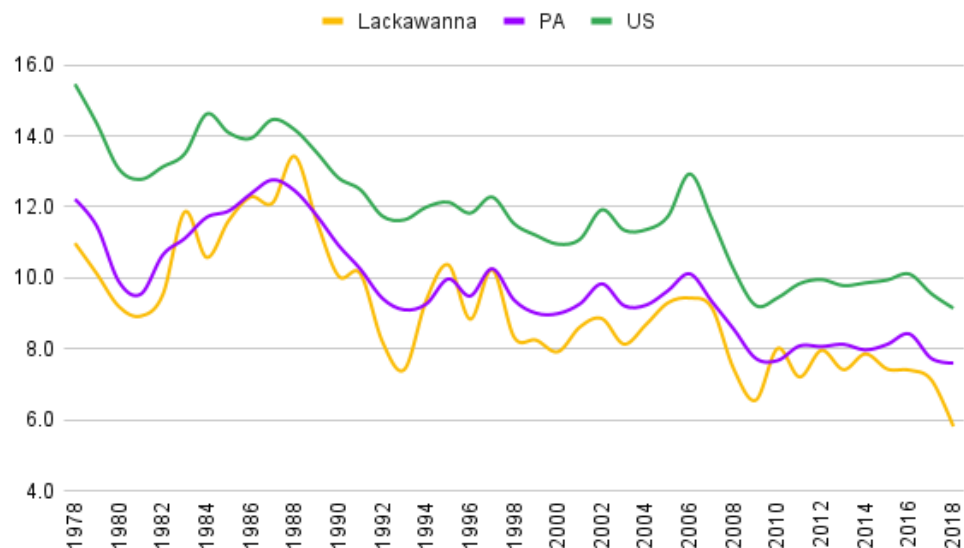
Source | US Census, Business Dynamics Statistics, 2018

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25. US Census on the Map: https://onthemap.ces.census.gov
26. US Census, Business Dynamics Statistics: https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/bds.html
27. Community Reinvestment Act: www.policymap.com at https://plcy.mp/cFlgs28

INDUSTRY GROWTH

Despite challenges related to wages and small business creation, there are several aspects of Scranton's economy that make it competitive and full of potential. The City is within close proximity to major population centers and an overnight delivery area reaching about 96 million American and Canadian consumers. Its location along the I-80 and I-81 corridor, access to two Class-1 main line rail carriers, and passenger and cargo air service are assets to be leveraged.

Scranton's proximity to New York City and Philadelphia puts the City in a unique position when it comes to supporting industry and business. Embracing remote work trends will be important in this effort. Scranton's relatively low cost of doing business makes it an ideal place that industries serving remote markets can relocate to. By continuing to enhance its quality of life assets, the City can also be an attractive home for remote workers. By expanding remote work capabilities, the City will be able to welcome more businesses and residents, thus growing the overall talent pool, tax base, and vibrancy of the community.

When it comes to supporting small business and entrepreneurship, there are many existing organizations and programs making important contributions across the City. These include, but are not limited to, the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce's Metroc Action, Scranton Area Community Foundation's Women In Philanthropy, Scranton LaunchBox, TecBRIDGE, the SBDC, the Ben Franklin Technology Partners NEP, and the City's microgrant and Business Loan to Grant programs.

For Scranton to strengthen its economy and restore its reputation as a hub for industry and entrepreneurship, it must build an environment where business creation and growth are fostered through entrepreneurial support services, streamlined administrative processes, and business investments and incentives. The City of Scranton will focus its attraction and retention efforts on businesses providing living-wage and high-wage jobs, in order to ensure equitable economic growth.

Scranton must adapt to meet the changing needs of businesses as they continue to face market challenges related to supply chain constraints, labor shortages, and shifts to hybrid and remote work.

Action Steps

Develop Focused Incentives & Subsidies

The City of Scranton will explore public incentives and subsidies for development that will create jobs paying higher than a living wage, with particular focus on the Health Care, Education, Finance, and Manufacturing industries. Creating jobs in technology across industries will also be critical. As part of this process, the City will examine existing incentives and their effectiveness in order to identify gaps in need. Additionally, it will support the rehabilitation and reuse of sites for highest and best use, particularly locations with existing infrastructure to support development, for example industry growth along existing rail infrastructure.

Streamline the Licensing and Permitting Process

The licensing and permitting process has historically been a challenge for local businesses and entrepreneurs. The City of Scranton has begun improving this process by bringing it online, making it faster, easier, and more accessible for community members who are submitting applications and City staff who are completing requests. The OpenGov system used to automate portions of the process creates a single location for users to apply, pay for, and track violation notices. The City will continue to explore options for making the process easier and more accessible, including evaluating the business licenses themselves. Reducing the administrative burden of the licensing and permitting process will make it easier for community members to conduct business in Scranton.

Expand and Align Entrepreneurial Training and Support for Youth and Adults

Building a strong entrepreneurial support system creates opportunities for wealth building within a community. It can also invigorate main street business districts, and, in turn, strengthen pride of place and bolster talent attraction and retention efforts. In order to foster a supportive environment for small businesses and entrepreneurs, the City of Scranton will convene existing leaders in this space to further develop a range of resources that are both inclusive and accessible to existing and future business owners.

As part of this work, the City will partner with TecBRIDGE and the Scranton School District to explore formal entrepreneurial programming options for elementary and high school aged students. This programming has the potential to create additional pathways for earnings and employment and offer greater opportunities for youth to stay and thrive in Scranton.

Entrepreneurial resources and support for adults already exist throughout Scranton. However, there is an opportunity to expand programminging in a strategic and focused way. The City will collaborate with Ben Franklin Technology Partners NEP, the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce, SBDC, and Scranton Launch-Box to further develop inclusive and proactive mechanisms for outreach and programming, such as multilingual services, a mentorship program with representative leadership, and an incubator/accelerator program focused on minority entrepreneurship. The City will explore using ARPA funding to support entrepreneurial resources for historically underserved communities.

The entire downtown footprint is a Keystone Innovation Zone, and the City is home to a business incubator, the Scranton Enterprise Center, along with the Scranton LaunchBox in South Scranton. This investment in Scranton's entrepreneurial infrastructure provides a home and resources for entrepreneurs. This infrastructure has been leveraged to create thousands of jobs. This provides an opportunity to promote entrepreneurial successes and align resource providers to encourage others to build their business in our City.

Create a Funding Consortium

Baseline economic analysis demonstrates the financing and capital needs of small businesses. In order to catalyze investment in businesses and entrepreneurs, the City of Scranton will assess the feasibility and potential impact of creating a new funding consortium that could support business creation and growth across sectors, including tech, hospitality, and retail. As part of this initiative, a mobilization fund for Minority Business Enterprises and Disadvantaged Business Enterprises will also be considered. The consortium might research and develop initiatives such as micro-grants, collaborative grant writing and fundraising, and encouraging participation of large financial institutions. The consortium might also help businesses leverage grants, including those from the Small Business Administration and Economic Development Administration, to complement Historic Tax Credits and credit-driven investments through the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA). The City will work with the SBDC, Scranton LaunchBox, Ben Franklin Technology Partners NEP, and the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce to develop the specific goals and roles of the consortium. Other potential partners include local financial institutions, higher education, and the Scranton Area Community Foundation's Women in Philanthropy.

INDUSTRY GROWTH

Enhance Remote Work Capabilities

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused rapid changes to industry and labor, including a significant shift from in-person to remote work. Scranton must adapt to keep up with these changes, but there is also an opportunity to develop a more proactive strategy to leverage remote work trends. As such, the City of Scranton will assess how it can promote growth for industries that can leverage lower operational costs while serving geographically diverse markets remotely from Scranton. The City will help gather the information necessary to develop possible actions by community partners, including Penn's Northeast, the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce, and DiscoverNEPA. Such actions include supporting the development of a co-working space and expanding broadband access, which is also a separate initiative being considered as part of Scranton's broader infrastructure goals. The City will also be contracting a marketing specialist to develop a brand that will raise the profile of Scranton as a desirable location to do business, work, and live. This marketing strategy will celebrate collaboration and the future of work, inspiring investment and assisting with talent attraction and retention.

Support Downtown Revitalization

The heart of Scranton is beating stronger and stronger each day, with private investors actively acquiring and developing properties. Their investment creates a rejuvenated residential community with new apartments and refurbished street level storefronts. Scranton Tomorrow completed a strategic plan for downtown designed to entice the region's residents to shop, dine and enjoy the entertainment venues located here.

The City will support Scranton Tomorrow, the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce, private developers, shop owners, and tech entrepreneurs as they lead revitalization efforts, creating workforce and entertainment opportunities in Scranton's Historic Business District.

Support Wraparound Services to Enhance the Education System

The strength of a community's education system is a strong determinant of its economy overall. It is not only critical in developing local talent, but also in attracting prospective residents who will broaden the talent pool and increase demand for products and services. Many of these prospective Scrantonians will consider the strength of the school system in their decision to move. As such, business and industry leaders have an interest in supporting the education system, its students, and learning outcomes.

In order to encourage industry to support the education system, the City of Scranton will engage and convene business leaders across sectors to support wraparound educational services. As part of this long-term initiative, partners will determine the greatest areas of need within the City's student and family population in order to provide supplementary enrichment opportunities that will create a stronger learning environment. Services will be provided, in large part, by individuals and teams from the business community, and will directly support the strategic plans for Scranton schools. Wraparound services may include: after-school activities, tutoring, enhancements to classroom supplies and aesthetics, food and clothing drives, career readiness, family engagement, health and wellness programs, and teacher appreciation events. Resources provided through PA CareerLink, UNC, and the Agency for Community Empowerment would be leveraged to support this initiative.

INDUSTRY GROWTH

Action Steps

Promote business creation through small business and entrepreneurial resources, regulatory efficiencies, and incentives

Action	Impact Metrics	City Role	Partners	Timeline
Develop focused incentives & subsidies	• Increase in number of existing business opening new location or relocating • Close the income gap between median wage and livable wage • Increase employment in industries with average wages higher than $50,732	Owner	None	
Streamline the licensing and permitting process	• Decrease in time to complete the process: time to complete application (businesses) and time to complete approval (City)	Owner	None	
Expand and align entrepreneurial training and support for youth and adults	• Increase in low-cost or free programming made available to youth and adult, existing and new businesses • Increase in non-white participation in entrepreneurial training, investment, and mentorship programs • Increase in number of new businesses starts • Increase in number of minority-owned businesses	Convener, System Builder	**Youth:** TecBRIDGE, Scranton School District **Adult:** City of Scranton, Ben Franklin Technology Partners NEP, Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce, SBDC, Scranton LaunchBox	

INDUSTRY GROWTH

Action Steps

Promote investment in business and industry to support sustainable growth

Action	Impact Metrics	City Role	Partners	Timeline
Create a funding consortium	• Increase in number of loan applications • Increase in number of loan approvals • Increase in amount of capital deployed into local businesses	Convener, Catalyst	SBDC, Scranton LaunchBox, Ben Franklin Technology Partners NEP, Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce	
Enhance remote work capabilitie	• Increase in broadband access • Increase in flexible workspace options	Information Developer	Penn's Northeast, Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce, DiscoverNEPA	
Support downtown revitalization	• Increase in storefront occupancy • Increase in shopping, dining, and entertainment venues • Increase in number of downtown residents and workers	Convener, System Builder	Scranton Tomorrow, Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce, private developers, shop owners, tech entrepreneurs	

INDUSTRY GROWTH

Action Steps

Encourage businesses and industry to directly support the local K-12 education system

Action	Impact Metrics	City Role	Partners	Timeline
Support wraparound services to enhance the education system	• Increase in wraparound programming offered through K-12 education system • Increase in number of participating businesses, volunteer hours, and sponsorship	Convener, Catalyst	Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce, Scranton Area Community Foundation	

Implementation Metrics | Quantitative

METRIC	SOURCE OF INFORMATION
Increase in number of new business starts	Tracked through business permits
Increase in number of minority-owned businesses	Minority business census
Increase in number of loan/grant applications	SBA and City data
Increase in number of loan/grant approvals	SBA and City data
Increase in amount of capital deployed into local businesses	SBA
Increase in the expansion, retention, and attraction of high-opportunity jobs in Health Care, Education, Finance, and Manufacturing	US Census American Community Survey
Decrease in business contraction and increase in relocation to Scranton	Census on the Map, City and SBDC data

Implementation Metrics | Process

METRIC	SOURCE OF INFORMATION
Increase in development of low-cost or free programming made available to existing and future business owners	Organizational reporting
Increase in non-white participation in entrepreneurial training, investment, and mentorship programs	Organizational reporting
Increase in recognition of entrepreneurial accomplishment – success stories, work-in-process stories, and even failures to learn from	Local media outlets and organizational reporting
Increase in training program enrollment for in-demand jobs and placement rates following program completion	Organizational reporting - enrollment/placement metrics

Promising Practices

Pathway Lending in Nashville, TN aggregates federal, state, local, and private funding to make startup loans. In its first 10 years, Pathway has made loans worth more than $30 million to 300 companies. Pathway loans have helped borrower companies create 1,000 new jobs. A similar program in Scranton could support the businesses and entrepreneurs affiliated with local universities.

Rent and Utilities Rebate: Marion, SC, a small town with only 8,500 people, struggled with storefront vacancy and high turnover for storefront businesses because of a lack of capaCity and business knowledge. By working with the local community college, the Marion Business Association offers free classes to aspiring entrepreneurs. The 8-session class includes lessons on marketing, finance, banking, insurance, and more, and participants leave the class with a complete business plan.

After completing the class, businesses that are eligible can receive a rebate on their rent and utilities. The business association forms relationships with the property owners, providing the list of certified businesses, and lets them know they have completed the class and are likely trustworthy.

Nashville's Community Achieves Model: Nashville's Community Achieves model calls for deep engagement with school populations to understand what needs arise for families, and then leans on the external community – government agencies, faith organizations, non-profits, and businesses – to help provide resources. Aside from academic instruction, schools provide numerous, and often unrecognized, wraparound services and enrichment opportunities to care for students and families. Such services include college and career readiness, parent/family engagement, health and wellness, and social services.

DIVERSE TALENT

Summary of Need & Opportunity

Talent attraction and retention strategies will be critical in driving future economic growth and resiliency in Scranton, particularly by meeting labor needs, improving the tax base, and building a stronger sense of community. While the City has nearly recovered the jobs lost from the Great Recession, the number of employed residents has not recovered. Scranton remains a job center with 8,210 more jobs than employed residents.[28] Although wages are growing, they are losing ground relative to the US.

When examining talent, it is important to consider the live-work dynamic that exists in Scranton. Of Scranton's 77,000 residents, 35% of people work within the City. A majority of residents, 64.6%, work within 10 miles of their home. However, 20.5% of residents are long-distance commuters who travel more than 50 miles for work.[29] Clusters of these jobs exist in Philadelphia, Bethlehem/Allentown, and New York City.

When it comes to fostering local talent, the City is recognized for its number of higher education institutions, and the vibrancy that this student population brings to the community. That being said, only 22% of Scranton residents ages 25+ have a Bachelor's degree or higher, notably lower than the state and US at 31% and 32%, respectively.[30] In 2019, there were 2,500 disconnected youth in Lackawanna County. In other words, 10.6% of young people in the county between the ages of 16 and 24 were not in school and not working – slightly higher than the rate of disconnected youth in the state at large.[31]

Unemployment rates, overall, are low, but there is high unemployment among Hispanic residents. The City's labor force participation rate of 57% is very low, about 3 points lower than the county and nearly 7 points lower than the US, contributing to the City's high number of unfilled positions. [32]

Anecdotally, employers are having difficulty hiring across industries, roles, and levels of experience. They recognize the need to develop career pathways for jobs of the future, but filling immediate openings is often prioritized. Collaboration between educators and industry leaders will be important in developing innovative and effective approaches to career pathway development. Addressing perception issues related to the trades and raising awareness about existing career opportunities in Scranton will also be critical in connecting residents to good paying jobs. In addition to fostering local talent, including those who are underemployed or looking to re-enter the workforce, Scranton will need to recruit talent from outside the community. Many residents note the strong community ties that exist in Scranton; one targeted approach to this effort is the opportunity to welcome "boomerang" residents – those who have moved away for a period of time – back to the community.

As communities large and small compete for talent, it is imperative that Scranton ensure its ability to produce high quality talent within its schools and, of equal importance, ensure a high quality school system to serve as a point of attraction and retention for top talent considering career opportunities within the City. Fostering talent will also require expanding opportunities for education and learning outside of the K-12 system, including workforce development and career pathway programs.

28. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2015-2019: https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs
29. US Census Bureau, LEHD, 2018: https://onthemap.ces.census.gov
30. US Census QuickFacts: https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/sis/resources/data-tools/quickfacts.html
31. Measure of America: https://measureofamerica.org/DYinteractive/#County
32. US Census QuickFacts: https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/sis/resources/data-tools/quickfacts.html

Action Steps

Host a K-12 Education Visioning Session

Together with local colleges, universities, and other education entities of Scranton, the City of Scranton will host a K-12 education visioning sessions to brainstorm and ideate on what Scranton schools can be and how the education system can get there. The visioning session and resulting action plan will support the needs of Scranton schools in an effort to promote student outcomes and overall economic growth.

Develop an Engagement and Retention Program for College Students

In 2019, college-age residents (18-24) made up 13% of Scranton's population.[33] The City of Scranton will help develop a program to engage and retain a greater number of college students through internships, volunteer opportunities, and other programing. As part of this initiative, the City will act as information developer and catalyst, working with higher education and industry partners to welcome college students into the workforce earlier, while they are still in school. The program will enable college students to begin building their network within the community, connecting to both people and place, and serve as a launching point for their life and career in Scranton following graduation.

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33. US Census QuickFacts: https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/sis/resources/data-tools/quickfacts.html

Increase Awareness of Career Pathways

Increasing exposure to career pathways that link early educational pipelines with family-sustaining careers for students of all socioeconomic backgrounds is incredibly important to economic development in Scranton. The City of Scranton will work with local educational entities to convene relevant leaders from across the Scranton School District, Career Technology Center of Lackawanna County, and local 4-year colleges. This will include examining the current state of workforce development in Scranton by mapping organizations and initiatives based on category and service type. Referral partners will be identified by program in order to ensure job seekers are aware of available resources and how to access them. By clearly tracking utilization and outcomes, the implementation team can identify opportunities and needs for service while also expanding outreach through the communication of success stories. This initiative will also explore options for introducing elementary, middle, and high school aged students to the variety of career opportunities that exist in Scranton, including strong career pathways that do not require a four-year degree.

Encourage Industry-Education Collaboration for Training Development

Together with Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce, the City of Scranton will catalyze partnerships between local businesses, industry leaders, and educators to advance training and curriculum development for in-demand skills and jobs. This will include developing and sharing best practices for implementing internships, co-ops, shadowing, upskilling and mentoring opportunities, with a particular emphasis on paid earn-and-learn programs.

DIVERSE TALENT

Create a Wraparound Service Resource Guide for Local Business and Organizations

Increasing workforce accessibility is vital to equitable economic development. The City of Scranton has already partnered with the Scranton Area Community Foundation and others to launch NEPA Thrives, which will identify wraparound services for low to moderate income earners in workforce training programs. As an extension of this work, the City will explore how it can act as an information developer, creating a resource guide to assist employers in implementing these wraparound services in order to remove barriers to employment and create more inclusive workplaces.

Resources might include:

- Navigating local and state regulations and identifying local funding opportunities
- Inventory of childcare options, including locations and hours
- Inventory of behavioral and mental health resources
- Inventory of public transportation options, and framework for implementing employer-sponsored transportation programs (carpooling, payroll deduction program, bulk purchasing, etc.)

Action Steps

Support the needs of Scranton schools in an effort to promote student outcomes and overall economic growth

Action	Impact Metrics	City Role	Partners	Timeline
Host a K-12 education visioning session	• Increase in educational outcome metrics	Convener	Local colleges, universities, other education entities, Scranton School District	

Engage Scranton college students during their time in school and retain students upon graduation

Develop an engagement and retention program for college students	• Increase in number of college students enrolled in local internships • Increase in retention of college graduates	Information Developer, Catalyst, Convener	Local colleges, universities, businesses	

DIVERSE TALENT

Action Steps

Better connect jobseekers, including high school and post-secondary graduates, with industry through development and promotion of career pathways and skills training

Action	Impact Metrics	City Role	Partners	Timeline
Increase awareness of career pathways	• Increase in enrollment in training programs connected to target industries	Information Developer, Convener	Scranton School District, Career Technology Center of Lackawanna County, local 4-year colleges	
Encourage industry-education collaboration for training development	• Increase in job placement rates for training programs	Information Developer, Catalyst	Local colleges and universities, Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce	

Help businesses develop resources for employees surrounding flexible scheduling, child care, transportation, sick care, and other support services

Action	Impact Metrics	City Role	Partners	Timeline
Create resource guide for local business and organizations to implement wraparound services for employees	• Decrease in number of days positions remain unfilled	Catalyst	Scranton Area Community Foundation	

DIVERSE TALENT

Implementation Metrics | Quantitative

METRIC	SOURCE OF INFORMATION
Increase in educational attainment – certificates, degrees, graduation rates	US Census Bureau, US Census American Community Survey, five-year estimates
Decrease in ALICE households, increase in number of families earning above a living wage	MIT Living Wage data, United Way's ALICE reporting

Implementation Metrics | Process

METRIC	SOURCE OF INFORMATION
Increase in exposure to career pathways	Organizational reporting - Marketing metrics (e.g., website traffic)
Increase in training program enrollment for in-demand jobs and placement rates following program completion	Organizational reporting - enrollment/placement metrics

Promising Practices

Campus Philly – which partners with over 30 colleges and universities, as well as various institutions, employers, and cultural organizations in the Philadelphia region – takes a proactive approach to the challenge of student retention. They provide opportunities for students to connect with employers through career fairs, launch events, and internships, but recognizing the broader challenge of making students feel attachment towards the local community, they also sponsor various cultural events. Campus Philly began in the early 2000s and, as of 2017, it had become a $1.3 million

non-profit, which receives around two-thirds of its funding from grants and contributions and one-third from partnerships and sponsorships (including both schools and employers).

The **Pittsburgh Passport** program, led by the Allegheny Conference on Community Development, is a six week program that brings together college interns working at different companies throughout the City. The program includes learning and recreational events that encourage students to network with each other, as well as with business and community leaders, while exploring life beyond their college campuses. It allows students to establish a better connection to both people and place, helping them build the groundwork for a future in Pittsburgh.

Make It. MSP. is a strategic initiative led by the GREATER MSP Partnership of the Greater Minneapolis-Saint Paul region to attract, welcome, and retain community members. This includes a coalition of organizations and individuals who work in teams to welcome and connect newcomers, build more inclusive workplaces, and amplify the region's stories. Make It. MSP. celebrates the multifaceted culture and community of Minneapolis-Saint Paul by elevating the voices of its residents. Its resources, which include a job board and neighborhood guide, provide insights into life, work, and people across the region.

Wheels to Work is an employer-sponsored transportation provider in Kent County, MI that provides transportation to and from work for a fee paid by both employee and employer. The program operates through payroll deductions, with the employer and employee sharing the cost. The employee portion of the fee is deducted from the employee's paycheck, and employers are billed for total usage. The program uses buses and software from a regional non-profit Christian organization in West Michigan. This program works because of its sustainable source of funding and employer involvement.

COMMUNITY PRIDE

Summary of Need & Opportunity

Whether due to associations with President Biden or the popular television show *The Office*, Scranton is a City that is familiar to most Americans. While this familiarity presents an opportunity, it also presents a challenge, as people's perception of the City is sometimes at odds with community objectives for growth and advancement. This perception challenge extends from those who have only been introduced to the City through media to long-time residents, who sometimes struggle to relinquish negative associations with the past or who have had experiences with bias, discrimination, and inequity.

The demographic data demonstrates how the City of Scranton steadily diversified over the past decade. From 2010 to 2019, the white population decreased by 10,927, while non-white populations have increased by 11,166.[34] The City is growing more diverse, but there is a lack of representation in school, business, and government leadership. More expansive and coordinated support of Scranton's immigrant community is needed in order to ensure the City is welcoming to all. Additionally, there is a "Tale of Two Cities" that has emerged; life expectancy, median household incomes, food access, and social vulnerability differ greatly depending on where a person resides within the City.

When it comes to cultural and recreational assets, Scranton has strengths and areas of opportunity. While certain areas of Scranton are considered walkable, others areas need improvements to support pedestrian mobility. Additionally, Scranton can continue to bolster its arts, entertainment, and adaptive reuse assets. The baseball and hockey sports franchises, Lackawanna River, Montage Mountain, Coal Mine Tour, and ongoing cultural festivals are just a few of the community's unique assets to be celebrated.

The history, culture, diversity, and familial nature of the area create strong community ties for residents, and even for community members who have moved away but continue to support and invest in the City. When it comes to quality of place, there has been significant progress through revitalization and reinvestment efforts, but there is more work to be done to build vibrancy and attract and retain residents. As the City implements strategies for strengthening community, it will work towards equitable investment across all neighborhoods.

Community Action Steps

Streamline Event Regulations and Procedures

Celebrating the diversity of Scranton's neighborhoods and their unique assets is an important way of fostering pride of place and improving the vitality of the community as a whole. The City of Scranton will utilize the OpenGov system to streamline event regulations, reduce administrative burdens, and increase accessibility through multilingual services and other means, so that community organizations from all neighborhoods can more easily lead programming and community-building efforts.

Implement a Community Ambassadors Program

The City of Scranton will serve as a catalyst, partnering with Scranton's neighborhood associations, Scranton Police Department, and UNC to welcome and connect community members by engaging ambassadors from all backgrounds and age groups to share stories of life in Scranton. Scranton's Stories, an initiative led by the University of Scranton and funded by a National Endowment for the Humanities grant, can serve as a resource and inspiration for this program. Ambassadors will help promote the City and its assets by sharing their experiences of living, studying, and working in Scranton.

34. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2015-2019 & Decennial Census 2010: https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs, https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/decade.html

COMMUNITY PRIDE

Maintenance Incentive Program

Working in partnership with NeighborWorks and Scranton Tomorrow, the City of Scranton will act as a system builder, working to expand new and existing incentive-based maintenance initiatives such as steward stipends funded via nonprofit grants, or neighborhood clean-up competitions utilizing lendable toolkits. While there are several active maintenance programs in Scranton, such as the Lackawanna County Land Bank Side Yard Program and NeighborWorks Beautiful Blocks program, the City will help raise awareness and financial support for maintenance assistance programs. Additionally, the City will work to implement maintenance controls over student housing.

Ensure Alignment of City Equity & Economic Development Plans

Increasing Scranton's median wage to a livable wage, fostering small business creation, and promoting education as economic development are three of this plan's major points of focus and are relevant to all five strategic pillars. Part of the vision for this plan is to make median wage jobs, entrepreneurial resources, and educational attainment more accessible to all Scranton residents. As the City of Scranton implements both its Equity Plan and Economic Development Plan, it will continue to assess points of alignment in order to advance equitable development and build a stronger community. Improving equity outcomes is an immediate priority of the City, but this work will be ongoing in nature. As such, this initiative has been categorized as a "Think Beyond" idea due to its potential for long-term transformation.

Action Steps

Support the needs of Scranton schools in an effort to promote student outcomes and overall economic growth

Action	Impact Metrics	City Role	Partners	Timeline
Streamline event regulations and procedures	• Decrease in submittal and approval time for event applications • Increase in number of events across neighborhoods	Owner	None	
Implement a community ambassadors program	• Increase in representation in leadership across organizations in Scranton	Convener, Catalyst	Neighborhood Associations, Scranton Police Department, UNC	

COMMUNITY PRIDE

Action Steps

Ensure neighborhood vitality by implementing landlord accountability measures and expanding maintenance incentives for all community members

Action	Impact Metrics	City Role	Partners	Timeline
Maintenance incentive program	• Increase in use of community maintenance toolkits, resources, and programming	System Builder, Catalyst	NeighborWorks, Scranton Tomorrow	

Advance equitable economic development strategies to benefit all Scrantonians, particularly those in historically underserved communities, in an effort to enhance quality of life and opportunity in the City

Ensure alignment of City Equity Plan & Economic Development Plan	• Increase in dollars invested in historically underserved and/or underinvested neighborhoods • Improvement of long-term economic and education outcomes by DEIB categories	Owner	None	

Implementation Metrics | Quantitative

METRIC	SOURCE OF INFO.
Increase in number of ambassadors who represent the diversity of the community, across neighborhoods, industries, etc.	City data
Increase in number of event applications processed per neighborhood	City data
Decrease in need for property condemnation	OpenGov

Implementation Metrics | Process

METRIC	SOURCE OF INFO.
Increase in City services provided in multiple languages	City data
Increase in dollars invested in historically underserved and/or underinvested neighborhoods	City data

COMMUNITY PRIDE

In New Orleans, LA, the **Mow to Own** program enables residents to address lot vacancy in their own neighborhoods. Residents who maintain a vacant lot for a full calendar year are eligible to establish ownership of the property. Approved applicants must pay a $650 deposit towards purchasing the property. After one full year of maintaining the grass and keeping the property clean, the participant will receive a closing date and an additional $875 credit for taking care of the lot. Upon completion of the Mow to Own program, the property is cleared of taxes and other fees owed to the City.

In Albuquerque, NM, the City launched a **national marketing campaign** and independent content hub to increase interest and investment in the City. The campaign acknowledged the City's well known attributes, such as wineries, hot air balloons, and being the backdrop of the popular TV show Breaking Bad, while shifting messaging to focus on their community's innovation, unpretentiousness, and openness. The integrated campaign included a biweekly newsletter and strategies to drive web traffic, such as daily social media posts and paid promoted content on Facebook and Instagram. To reach entrepreneurs around the country, the City sponsored relevant conferences, including Collision in New Orleans, Next Gen Summit in New York City, and Hustle Con in Oakland, California. They also participated in a 26-page advertorial buy in Southwest Airlines' in-flight magazine and issued press releases when the City was ranked No. 1 in the country for gender equality in education, pay, and homeownership.

In Paducah, KY, the **Lowertown Artist Relocation Program** provides a model for revitalization. Paducah's Lowertown neighborhood was once marked by "condemned buildings, grand Victorian homes chopped up into apartments, drug use, crack sales and prostitution." The Lowertown Artist Relocation Program was instituted to reinvent the area as a vibrant cultural district. Applicants submit a proposal for the reuse of a vacant house or lot that they can buy for $1.

They get $2,500 for architectural services, a 30-year loan for 100 percent of the renovations and grants up to $15,000 to acquire privately-owned property. The entire Lowertown area is designated as an enterprise zone, giving artists an additional incentive as construction materials are sales tax free.

In Long Beach, CA, the City followed a four-step process, known as the **Framework for Reconciliation**, to acknowledge the existence of systemic racism in their community, listen to community members' accounts and experiences of inequity, convene with stakeholders to shape policy, and catalyze racial equity in the City. A report was publicly issued to transparently share findings and recommendations for action to be advanced by the City of Long Beach, including 21 distinct strategies and 107 potential action plans.

Summary of Need & Opportunity

Housing is a basic need, but also directly supports the economy and schools through property taxes. While rents have increased in Scranton over the last decade, housing prices remain stagnant. With a median home value of $103,000, less than half of the US average, homeownership in Scranton remains generally affordable, although 25% of homeowners are cost burdened (compared to the state at 21%). Despite relatively affordable housing, less than half of Scranton houses are owner-occupied, compared to 69% in Pennsylvania and 64% nationally. Homeowner vacancy is greater than PA and the US overall, while rental vacancy is below average.

While medium home value is relatively low, rents are high considering residents' average incomes. In fact, 48% of renters are cost burdened, compared to the state at 44%. Scranton's Median Household Income is over $1,300 per month lower than PA's, yet median monthly rent is just $149 lower.[35] Invisible or absent landlords, including out of town investors, have caused issues by degrading the housing stock. Additionally, vacant properties have been an ongoing issue.

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35. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2015-2019: https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs

Median Household Income vs. Median Gross Rent
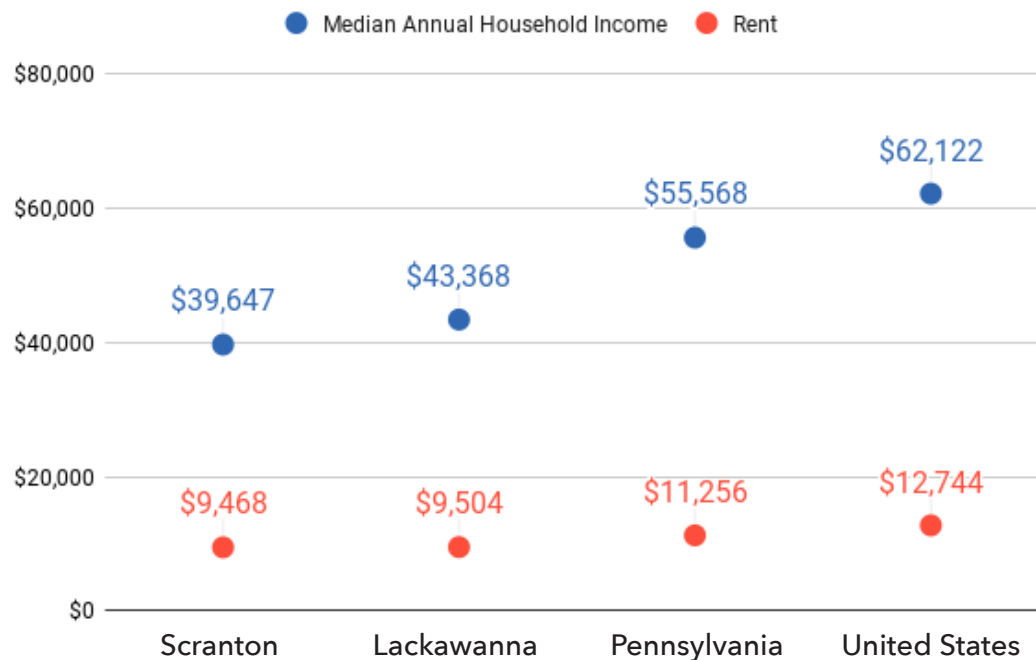
Scranton's Median Household Income is over $1,300 per month lower than PA's, yet median monthly rent is just $149 lower.

With 55% of homes built before 1939, Scranton's housing stock is aging.[36] Anecdotally, new apartments cannot be built fast enough, especially downtown, indicating a difference between demand and existing supply.

Property recovery is promising. The Lackawanna Land Bank, for example, has acquired upwards of 500 properties since its establishment in 2017. In its first two years, the land bank sold over 100 properties, generating approximately $70,000 in new tax revenue.

As Scranton seeks to become a destination for remote workers and people relocating from nearby cities, it should not come at the cost of displacing existing residents. Securing long-term affordable housing with access to transportation, grocery stores, jobs, and amenities will be especially important as the market begins to pick up. Without targeted policies and practices, the City risks increased residential vacancy due to aging housing stock, pricing changes due to inventory and demand, and other market factors.

Action Steps

Update Tiered Homeownership Incentives

Funded through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, Scranton has a first-time homebuyer program which is administered by NeighborWorks. In the last year and a half, the program has assisted nearly two dozen first-time homebuyers.

The City of Scranton is developing a plan to support first-time homebuyers through American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, which would be used to help to expand access to those who are in need but ineligible for other assistance based on income threshold requirements.

In partnership with NeighborWorks, the City will also explore other homeownership incentives, such as conservatorship and stewardship programs, graduated payment schedules, and incentive programs through large employers, similar to the existing program at the University of Scranton.

Create a Community Land Trust

In partnership with the Scranton Area Community Foundation, the City of Scranton will explore the creation of a community land trust. Other potential partners include the Lackawanna County Land Bank and Scranton Redevelopment Authority. A land trust helps to ensure permanently affordable housing, mitigate displacement, and reduce debt exposure for residents. A land trust sells homes, holding the land in perpetuity and leasing it to the homeowner. The homeowner is able to build equity from their investment and may resell the home at a restricted, affordable rate to another lower income buyer in the future. This model helps to maintain the vibrancy of properties that may otherwise be left vacant or in declining condition, and allows residents to remain in their residences regardless of market-driven cost increases.

Implement Landlord Accountability Ordinance Update

In order to help maintain the quality and safety of housing stock, the City of Scranton will create greater accountability, particularly for invisible or absent landlords, by updating the rental registration ordinance to include a "safety check." Additionally, the City will use the OpenGov system to trace property transactions and ensure properties are known and regulated.

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36. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2015-2019: https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs

AFFORDABLE & QUALITY HOUSING

Expand Housing Coalition

The City of Scranton will serve as a catalyst, expanding Scranton's housing coalition. This is a public-private partnership that combines efforts to mitigate blight and improve affordable housing and new development. The coalition will assess current needs and implement initiatives such as customized homeownership assistance programs that are focused on accessibility, accounting for differences in language and education level of the individuals and families it serves. The coalition will also explore financial assistance opportunities, particularly as a way to encourage homeownership for those working in in-demand occupations. Such programs may include closing cost and down payment assistance, matching funds for mortgage-related costs, rent-to-buy programs, and home rehabbing assistance.

Promote LERTA Program

The City of Scranton will serve as a systems builder, partnering with the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce, to raise awareness and usage of the Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance (LERTA) program, which offers credits on new construction. This initiative will particularly benefit developers working on smaller projects.

Action Steps

Improve access to affordable, quality housing for renters and owners

Action	Impact Metrics	City Role	Partners	Timeline
Update tiered homeownership incentives	• Increase in number of first-time homebuyers	System Builder	NeighborWorks	
Encourage industry-education collaboration for training development	• Increase in job placement rates for training programs	Information Developer, Catalyst	Local colleges and universities, Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce	

AFFORDABLE & QUALITY HOUSING

Action Steps

Encourage new development without spurring displacement

Action	Impact Metrics	City Role	Partners	Timeline
Create community land trust	• Increase in number of affordable housing units held in trust	Convener	Scranton Area Community Foundation, Lackawanna County Land Bank, Scranton Redevelopment Authority	
Promote LERTA program	• Increase in awareness and usage of LERTA program	System Builder	Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce	
Expand housing coalition	• Increase in quality affordable housing located within walking distance to grocery stores, doctors offices, libraries, and public transportation • Increase in number of units of workforce housing, accessory dwelling units, and rehabbed homes that are high quality and affordable for workers, families, and seniors	Catalyst	Scranton/Lackawanna County Continuum of Care, UNC, NeighborWorks, Housing Authority, other community partners in housing and homelessness	

Implementation Metrics | Quantitative

METRIC	SOURCE OF INFO.
Decrease in percent of people paying 30% or more on housing (cost-burdened)	US Census Bureau American Community Survey
Increase in rate of affordable housing development (housing costing less than $751 per month)	Building permits

AFFORDABLE & QUALITY HOUSING

Implementation Metrics | Process

METRIC	SOURCE OF INFO.
Decrease in violations and improvement in code enforcement outcomes during "safety check"	OpenGov
Increase in quality affordable housing located within walking distance to grocery stores, doctors offices, libraries, and public transportation	Walkscore

Promising Practices

Community land trusts can be built on the foundation of land banks to assure that recovered properties remain affordable in perpetuity. Trusts distinguish between the sale of a property's structures and land. A trust sells homes, just like a land bank, but holds the land in trust to assure long-term affordability. Trusts not only help improve properties, but challenge speculation – where developers benefit from degrading housing stock at the expense of communities. For example, **City of Lakes Community Land Trust** in Minneapolis, started in 2001, now has 300 properties in trust, having served 400 households.

Down Payment Assistance can serve as an incentive for buyers to complete homebuyer courses. Cities, government agencies, or nonprofits can partner to facilitate these programs. For example, **Buying into Baltimore** enters recent homeownership counseling certificate earners into a lottery for a $5,000 forgivable loan for down payment and closing cost assistance. Baltimore also offers similar benefits to City employees.
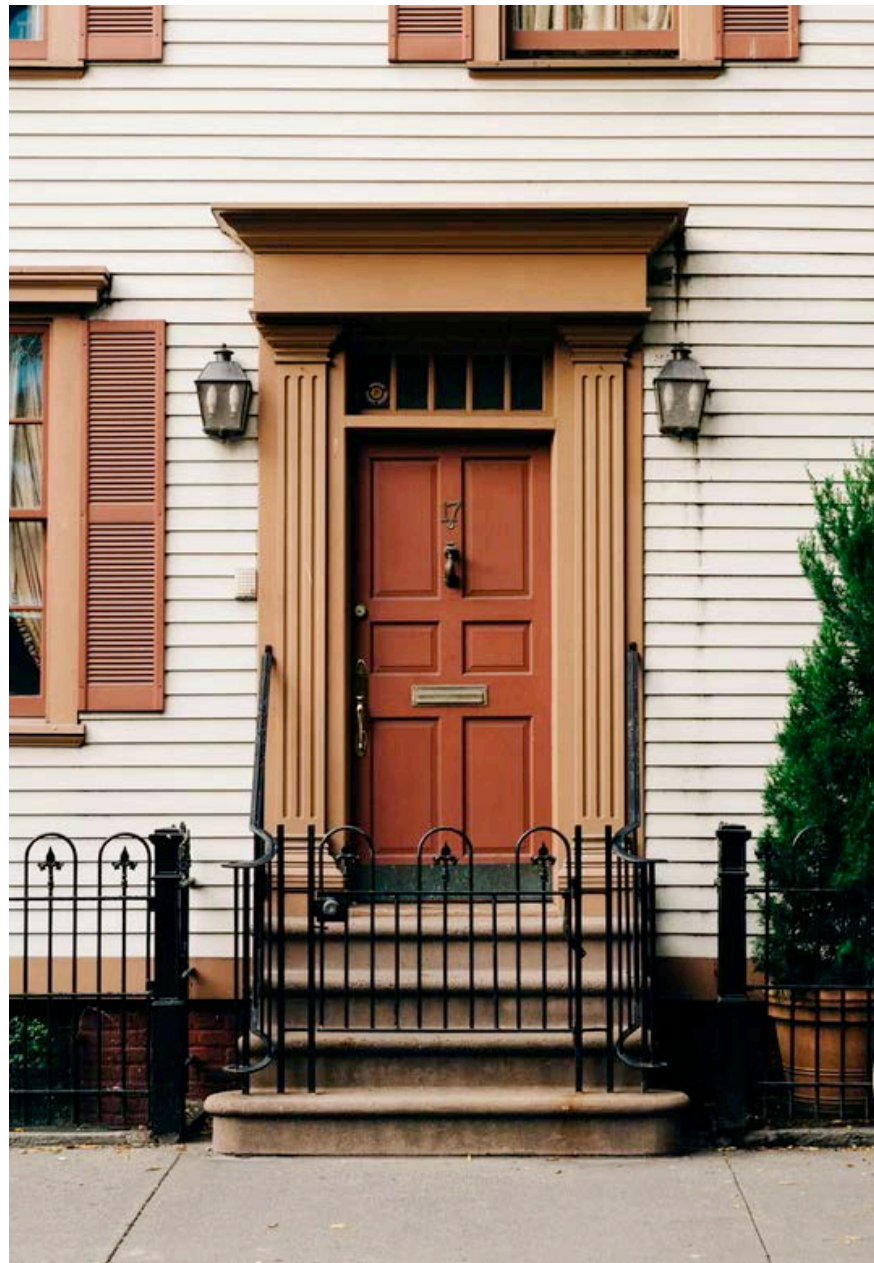
Summary of Need & Opportunity

Scranton's location and connectivity are recognized as two of the City's greatest strengths and opportunities. The City is located along the I-80 and I-81 corridor, two hours from New York City and Philadelphia and within an overnight delivery area reaching about 96 million American and Canadian consumers. The Wilkes-Barre Scranton International Airport offers daily direct service to major US cities including Atlanta, Charlotte, Chicago, Detroit, Newark, Orlando, and Philadelphia, as well as one-stop service to hundreds of destinations worldwide. The airport also supports cargo service including FedEx. When it comes to rail, Lackawanna County is serviced by two Class-1 main line carriers, Canadian Pacific and Norfolk Southern, and has several business parks situated alongside pre-existing rail infrastructure. Scranton's Greyhound bus terminal offers daily routes to New York, Philadelphia, New Jersey, and throughout Pennsylvania.

Infrastructure sets the boundaries for future economic development. The infrastructure bill signed into law in November 2021 will funnel billions to state and local governments to improve roads, bridges, ports, and airports, expand access to clean drinking water and high-speed internet, and advance environmental justice. Particularly important to Scranton is the $66 billion in additional rail funding set to eliminate the Amtrak maintenance backlog, modernize and connect the Northeast Corridor, and bring world-class rail service to areas outside the northeast and mid-Atlantic. In Amtrak's June 2021 comprehensive plan, it proposed three daily round trips between Scranton and New York City. Scranton's location and the recently signed infrastructure bill are two key considerations for the City as it builds infrastructure solutions to drive economic development through enhanced connectivity – locally, regionally, and globally.
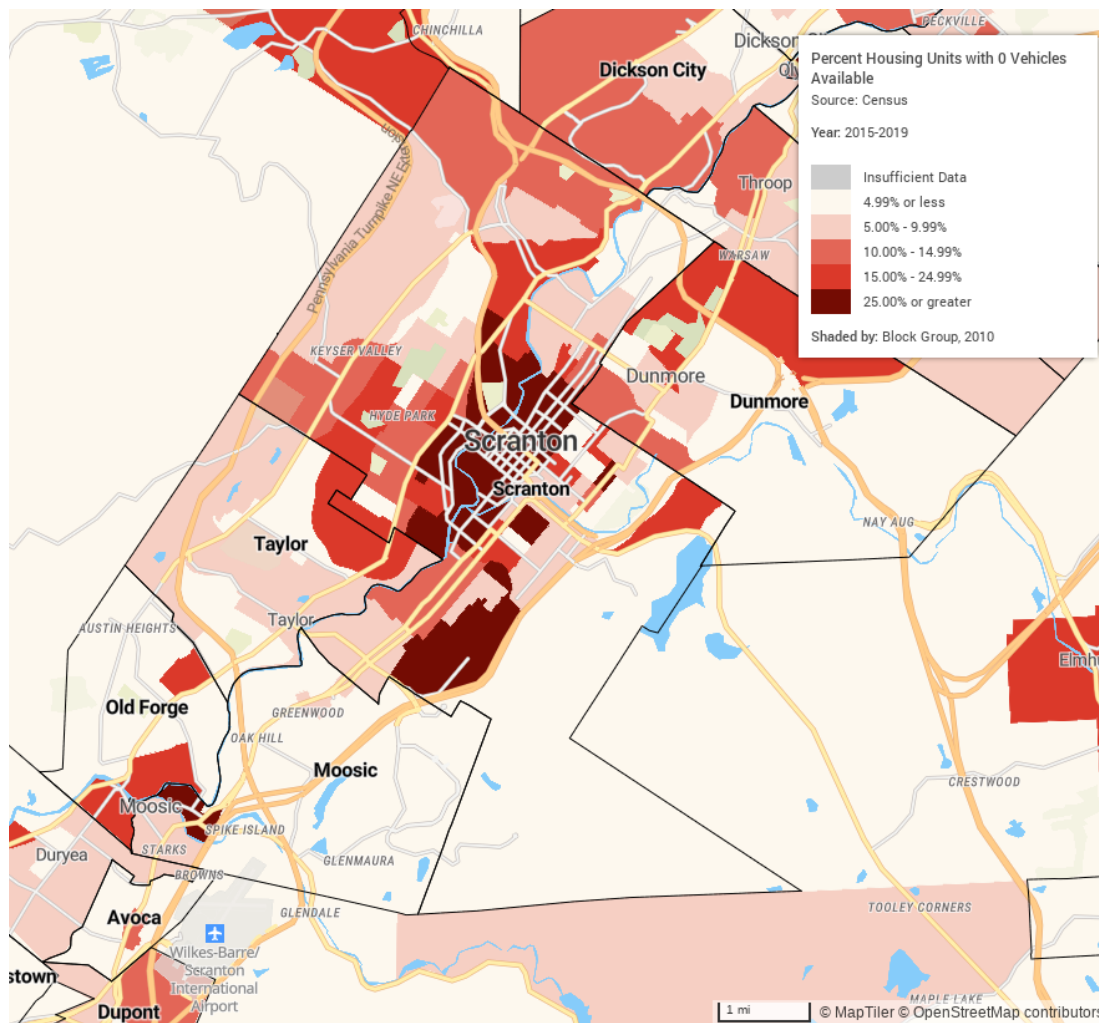
Percent of housing units with 0 vehicles available. Source: Block Group 2010

INFRASTRUCTURE

Regionally, the main types of available public transit include fixed route bus service, urban bus routes, and shared-ride services. The agencies providing fixed route services include County of Lackawanna Transit System (COLTS) and Luzerne County Transportation Authority (LCTA). COLTS and LCTA provide shared-ride, curb-to-curb service between any addresses within each county, providing more accessible transportation alternatives for seniors and persons with disabilities living in rural areas.

Anecdotally, residents recognize a need for investment in outdated infrastructure, particularly related to transportation, to ensure the competitiveness of the City and foster private investment in job creation. Updates to roads, bridges, street signs, and lighting are needed. 16.3% of occupied housing units in Scranton have no vehicles available, compared to PA at 10.9% and the US at 8.6%.[37] Improved public transportation could help alleviate Scrantonians' issues with getting to their jobs, particularly those located in business parks, and help those parks access the workers they need to grow.

Many residents are hopeful for passenger rail expansion, recognizing the benefits that would result with better regional connectivity, including more convenient access between Scranton and New York City. There is also an opportunity to encourage greater development along existing rail lines. There are sites that already exist but require significant investment for acquisition and site preparation, costs that might otherwise disincentive companies from developing along these corridors.

Stormwater Improvements

The City of Scranton will work with neighboring municipalities within Lackawanna County to prioritize and implement stormwater management improvements. As part of this initiative, the City will consider how it might use green infrastructure in City parks to alleviate street flooding.

It will explore the creation of a stormwater authority to meet regulatory compliance and implement flood control measures that can be extended to meet future needs. In addition to mitigating flooding and its resulting costs, green stormwater infrastructure can improve water quality, lower capital costs for developers, and reduce public costs for ongoing maintenance and controls. This work will provide measured economic impact, improve quality of life for residents, and ensure the long-term sustainability of Scranton's neighborhoods. The City plans to use ARPA funding to support stormwater projects and the creation of a stormwater authority.

Improve Roads & Bridges

Improving Scranton's existing infrastructure, including its roads and bridges, is critical to maintaining the connectivity of the community, bolstering commerce, and enhancing overall quality of life. This work is already underway, including PennDot's planned upgrades to five bridges in Scranton. The City of Scranton will expand this work by implementing a short- and long-term plan for paving streets and improving bridges, developing a systematic approach to necessary repairs and maintenance. The City plans to use ARPA funding to support this initiative.

Streetscape Improvements and Walkability Study

The City of Scranton will act as a systems builder, partnering with Scranton Tomorrow, UNC, and neighborhood associations to improve streetscapes. This initiative will address accessibility and safety issues while also helping to drive increased foot traffic. With a focus on main and elm streets, these streetscape improvements will include enhancements such as uniform wayfinding systems, lighting and sidewalk improvements, and public art installations. The City will also conduct a walkability study that examines infrastructure needed for safe pedestrian travel for residents and visitors. The City plans to use ARPA and CDBG funding to support this initiative.

37. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2015-2019: https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs

Support Expansion of Public Transit and Infrastructure

NEPA Moves and Wilkes-Barre Connect are currently working with individual businesses to identify specific transportation barriers affecting their ability to attract and retain workers. They are providing tools for businesses to develop and implement customizable and cost-effective transportation solutions. The City of Scranton will partner with NEPA Moves and Lackawanna County to ensure that adequate infrastructure is available to support this important work. This might include station and stop enhancements to improve safety and accessibility and increase utilization.

Increase Internet Access for Community and Business Use

The City of Scranton will work with Lackawanna County and NEPA Moves to increase internet access by exploring various methods, including community-owned broadband networks and provider-based internet access programs that reduce costs or provide public access points. As part of this initiative, the City will work with partners to assess and develop an execution plan for increasing access to technologies and educational resources for all demographics, from equipping students with low-cost tools to helping older generations build technology skills through training and mentorship. This could include a broadband study to determine existing and needed access across the community. The team will also explore connecting neighborhoods to the fiber trunk running through the City. The City will consider the use of ARPA funding to support this initiative.
Sustainable Infrastructure

Sustainable Infrastructure

Sustainable infrastructure is a tool for climate change mitigation and adaptation, and sustainable economic development. Communities across the country are facing challenges as a result of climate change, which can threaten existing infrastructure and human health. Green infrastructure can be used to build more resilient communities, slowing climate change and offering solutions for adapting to current conditions. Whether the goal is to improve water accessibility or enhance school facilities to ensure equitable and productive learning spaces for students, infrastructure investments have direct and indirect impacts on economic development. Sustainable infrastructure provides climate-compatible development and growth opportunities through the services it provides to households and businesses, including energy and water supply, waste management, digital and physical connectivity, and social and economic services distributed by way of buildings and facilities. Green infrastructure can improve productivity and efficiency in delivering such services, while also creating jobs and improving health outcomes.

As the City of Scranton invests in long-term resiliency and growth, it is committed to developing sustainable infrastructure that effectively bridges the community's built and natural environment. This will include developing strategies ensuring that the provision of services through infrastructure meets the needs of residents, business owners, and visitors, including historically underserved communities. As part of this initiative, the City will also assess how processes can be updated to ensure climate resilience is examined during all phases of infrastructure planning and development. To support sustainable development, the City will provide support to local organizations to ensure built assets are created and updated using the principles of the circular economy, to minimize carbon impact, improve resource efficiency, and reduce waste.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Action Steps

Develop infrastructure to better equip and connect Scranton's neighborhoods, including downtown

Action	Impact Metrics	City Role	Partners	Timeline
Stormwater improvements	• Decrease in water volume/flow rates • Increase in safety and accessibility of streets	Owner	Neighboring municipalities	
Improve roads and bridges	• Improvement of bridge ratings • Increase in number of repaired roads	Owner	None	
Streetscape improvements and walkability study	• Increase in wayfinding, signage, and lighting • Increase in number of facade improvements • Increase in foot traffic along main and elm streets	System Builder	Scranton Tomorrow, UNC, neighborhood associations	

Enhance infrastructure to improve accessibility and connect people with high-opportunity jobs, while connecting employers with the talent they need.

Action	Impact Metrics	City Role	Partners	Timeline
Support expansion of public transit and infrastructure	• Increase in safety and accessibility of stations and stops • Increase in use of public transit	Catalyst	Lackawanna County, NEPA Moves	
Increase internet access for community and business use	• Increase in access to technologies (hardware and internet) • Increase in access to training/education	Convener	Lackawanna County, NEPA Moves	

INFRASTRUCTURE

Action Steps

Develop sustainable infrastructure that effectively bridges the community's built and natural environments in support of climate change mitigation, adaptation, and climate-compatible economic development

Action	Impact Metrics	City Role	Partners	Timeline
Develop sustainable infrastructure	• Increase in implementation of green infrastructure • Increase in number of green jobs • Improvement of sustainability metrics and outcomes • Improvement of health outcomes	Owner	Lackawanna County	

Implementation Metrics | Quantitative

METRIC	SOURCE OF INFO.
Improvement of bridge ratings	Department of Transportation
Increase in use of public transit	Transit agencies
Increase in number of facade improvement projects	Grant, loan, and/or permitting data

Implementation Metrics | Process

| METRIC	SOURCE OF INFO.
Increase in broadband access/affordability	City data, US Census Bureau
Decrease in flooding and stormwater management control costs	City data
Increase in creation and tracking of sustainability metrics	City data

Promising Practices

The **Center on Rural Innovation** demonstrates how the small town members of its Rural Innovation Network have implemented models for gigabit-speed fiber to home networks in order to address the digital divide hindering students, workers, and residents without access to broadband. These communities have implemented various models, including co-op, independent, municipal, and publicly-traded models. Governance has also varied between private, non-profit, and public models. Regardless, their implementation strategies demonstrate the ability of communities, rural or urban, to expand high-speed internet access to more of its residents.

Photo: DiscoverNEPA

The Electric City has a rich history of being at the forefront of infrastructure innovation. The Scranton Suburban Electric Railway began operating on November 29, 1886 with service from the City center to the Green Ridge neighborhood, making this one of the first commercial electric-street car services in America. The Scranton Railway Company built and operated electric trolleys in and around Scranton from 1896 until 1954. By 1923 Pennsylvania had more than 4,625 miles of electrified streetcar lines.

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38. First Electric Cars Historical Marker, ExplorePAhistory.com: https://explorepahistory.com/hmarker.php?markerId=1-A-39E
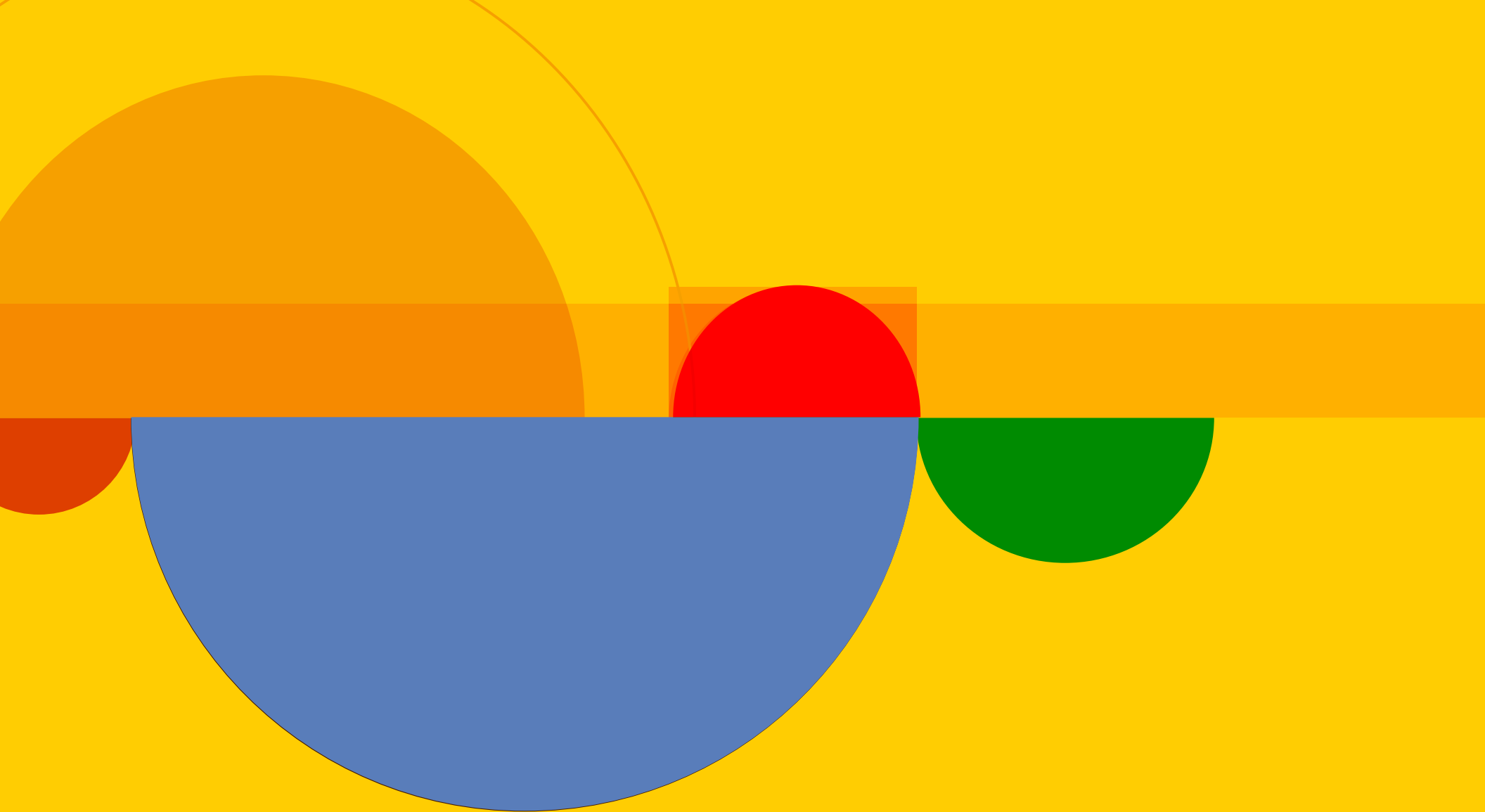
CONCLUSION

Communicating for Impact

Communication strategies are an important component of the success of any economic development plan. Marketing, messaging, and communication about the plan's contents, key initiatives, and long term impact are critical to ensure awareness and ongoing investment in a local economy. This ongoing communication, when supported with well-crafted branding, can prove the difference in whether or not a community is able to effectively compete with its peers.

For Scranton, the opportunity is clear. Scranton's quality of life, affordability, storied history, and industry mix are the building blocks of a strong, competitive brand. Yet from current Scranton residents, we heard mixed perceptions. Many residents and local business owners expressed sentiments of disconnection, skepticism, or disappointment regarding the city's progress. Additionally, concerns about support for diversity, equity, inclusion, and fairness all loomed large in many residents' minds.

The opportunity now lies with the City of Scranton and its stakeholders across the community to communicate with residents, business owners, visitors, and industry leaders about this plan, and the present power and future potential of Scranton.

Immediate Priorities

Attracting Industry

Marketing and communications efforts are a critical component of the work of business attraction, retention, and expansion. While geography, workforce, and site availability continue to be important factors in the work of economic development, reputation, quality of place, and a city's brand are increasingly determining where talent, industry, and tourism flow. Increasingly, cities are partnering with their local destination marketing organizations (DMOs) and economic development organizations (EDOs) to integrate efforts that attract interest, investment, and engagement in their community.

For Scranton, there is opportunity to foster greater collaboration amongst local stakeholders, galvanizing efforts around a core set of messages and priorities to drive industry growth and further investment.

The Scranton Brand

A city's brand is the perception of place held by residents, business owners, visitors, and industry. In many ways, a city's brand sets the foundation for the work of economic development, naturally attracting businesses, talent, and prospective residents who are drawn to the values and opportunities the brand represents. Additionally, this brand provides a blueprint to frame decisions around city planning, infrastructure investments, and public policy creation. When done correctly, a well crafted brand can infuse a city with new life, driving a sense of energy, invigoration, and cultural activity.

A brand is not just about a logo or a tagline, it's about a community's characteristics, its competitive advantages, and its core identity. As a major city, Scranton has an existing brand that communicates its key attributes; however, this brand has not been intentionally cultivated or harnessed for impact. Investment is needed to clearly communicate Scranton's values, attributes, and assets to residents, visitors, and those considering a career or business opportunity within the city.

Competing for Talent

Millennials and Generation Z, born between 1981 and 2012,[39] currently comprise 38% of the workforce.[40] By 2030, roughly 75% of the workforce will be dominated by this group. For the majority of this demographic, their associations with Scranton include its status as the backdrop for the television show, *The Office*, and hometown of current President Joe Biden. While these associations are positive, they do not speak to the ample career opportunities available within the city. Additionally, with the rise of remote work and a more globally connected economy, competition for talent is no longer isolated to the surrounding region. Scranton's employers will be competing on a national and international basis for talent to sustain local industry. This competition for talent will extend beyond millennials and Generation Z, covering the full spectrum of workers from ages 25 to 64.

To address this reality, dedicated efforts to effectively highlight Scranton's career pathways, quality of life, diversity, and overall affordability are needed to ensure a competitive future workforce. These efforts should take the form of:

• Social media campaigns
• Videos
• Advertising
• Dedicated web presence

These efforts could be owned or incubated by local economic development organizations, as seen in Minneapolis - Saint Paul with MAKE IT. MSP., a strategic initiative of the GREATER MSP Partnership, and in New Orleans with 504ward, incubated by the New Orleans Business Alliance.

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39. Pew Research Center: https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/
40. CNBC: https://www.cnbc.com/2019/03/05/how-millennials-and-gen-z-are-reshaping-the-future-of-the-workforce.html

Instilling Confidence in Scranton

As the City of Scranton advances the strategies included within this plan, it is critically important that the progress and impact of these efforts are transparently shared with the community. This continued communication earns the confidence of residents and business owners, while serving to attract the investments of industry and philanthropy. Public-facing dashboards, regularly issued reports, digital assets, and resident engagement opportunities will prove critical tools in this work.

To kickstart the advancement of these priorities, the City of Scranton recently issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for a vendor to support delivery of marketing and communications services, covering initiatives included within this plan as well as others on the horizon.

Continuing to Enhance Scranton

Scranton is at a critical moment of opportunity. As the city's demographics shift, industries grow, and new leaders assume critical positions, the stage is set for a renaissance. The city is one of only 16 municipalities to successfully exit Act 47, a testament to the city's deliberate actions taken in recent years to improve Scranton's economic outlook. With this momentum, it is time to usher in a new era of confidence as the community shifts from a mindset of scarcity to opportunity.

In January 2022, the George W. Bush Institute-SMU Economic Growth Initiative named Scranton-Wilkes-Barre-Hazleton, PA in its list of "cities of opportunity" based on living standards and net domestic migration rates, as well as upward mobility as measured by the non-profit organization Opportunity Insights.[41] Not only does this designation signify the great potential of Scranton, it emphasizes the importance of working regionally to build a stronger, more resilient economy.

This Strategic Economic Development Plan is a living document and tool for galvanizing community engagement and investment. The City of Scranton is committed to the strategies within this report, which range from initiatives with near-term impacts to long-term transformational change. Amplifying this plan are other efforts and economic-development related initiatives, as well as strategies being explored as separate planning initiatives.

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41. The Evolving Geography Of Opportunity: Leading Cities of the Past, Present, and Future: https://gwbcenter.imgix.net/Publications/Reports/gwbi_Evolving_Geography_of_Opp_2.1.pdf
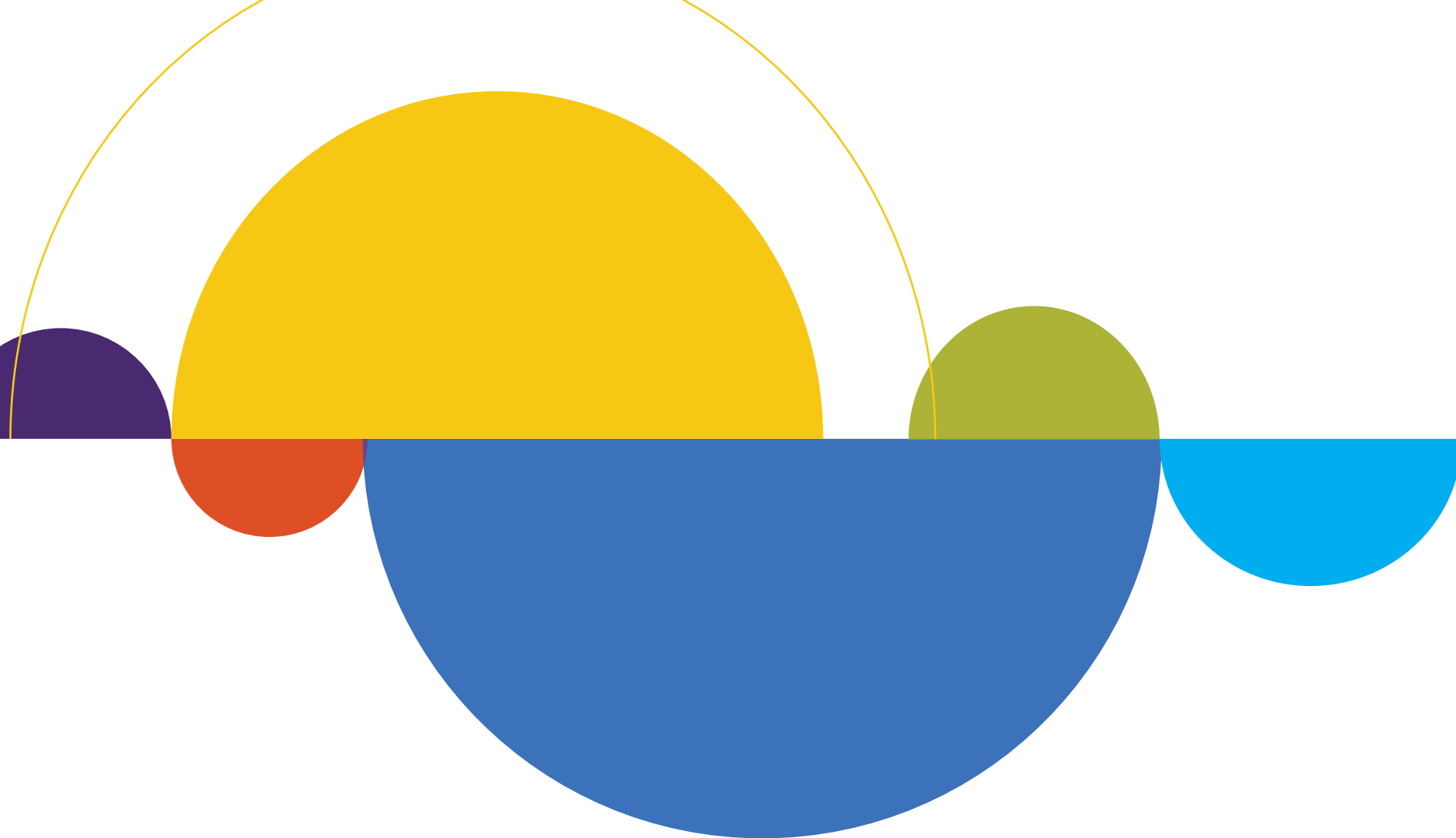
In addition to the Recreation, Equity, and Downtown plans, the city is also assessing and developing the following economic development measures:

- Creating a centralized community event resource
- Launching a neighborhood research & resource guide
- Supporting localized job centers
- Developing an Open Street program
- Enhancing the Lackawanna Transit Center and preparing for the expansion of rail
- Land use, community asset, infrastructure, and entrepreneurial ecosystem mapping
- Developing social enterprise opportunities
- Continuing to support improvements to the education system

Scranton, its residents, business owners, and community members are energized and have demonstrated their willingness to learn, reflect, and act. The city will honor its rich history, while acknowledging that the Scranton of today requires a new definition. It is a transforming community that will continue to grow stronger by fostering a welcoming environment for all residents and visitors, and by investing in the opportunities of tomorrow. The work of the City of Scranton, its partners, and community members does not end with the publication of this report. This strategic plan will serve as a catalyst for action so that Scranton, and its residents, can reach their fullest potential as a city where all can thrive.

Photo: DiscoverNEPA

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