

YOUNGSTOWN 2010 PLAN

Youngstown, Mahoning County

Date Completed: 2005

Description: The City of Youngstown, in partnership with Youngstown State University, undertook an ambitious comprehensive planning effort, known as Youngstown 2010. The plan provides for a City that is smaller, greener, cleaner, makes efficient use of its available resources, and capitalizes on its many cultural amenities and business advantages. Youngstown is regarded as the first U.S. City to organize its planning around accepting it is and likely will remain a smaller city. The plan has received national and international recognition for its public outreach and innovation in dealing with shrinking cities concepts. The plan identifies a need to prioritize investments in sustainable areas of the city and at the same time not make long-term investments in areas of the city that are not sustainable.

Project Size: The City of Youngstown (34.2 square miles)



East-Federal Street in Downtown Youngstown
(Photo: Stephen Poullas)

Major Vision Principles: The Youngstown 2010 Vision is a guiding document that sets out a framework for understanding and addressing the issues that Youngstown faces. It provides a community-based agenda for positive change organized around four platforms:

1. Accepting that Youngstown is a smaller city.

The dramatic collapse of the steel industry led to the loss of tens of thousands of jobs and a precipitous decline in population. Having lost more than half its population and almost its entire industrial base in the last 30 years, the city is now left with an oversized urban structure. (It has been described as a size 40 man wearing a size 60 suit.) There are too many abandoned properties and too many underutilized sites. Many difficult choices will have to be made as Youngstown recreates itself as a sustainable mid-sized city. A strategic program is required to rationalize and consolidate the urban infrastructure in a socially responsible and financially sustainable manner.

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

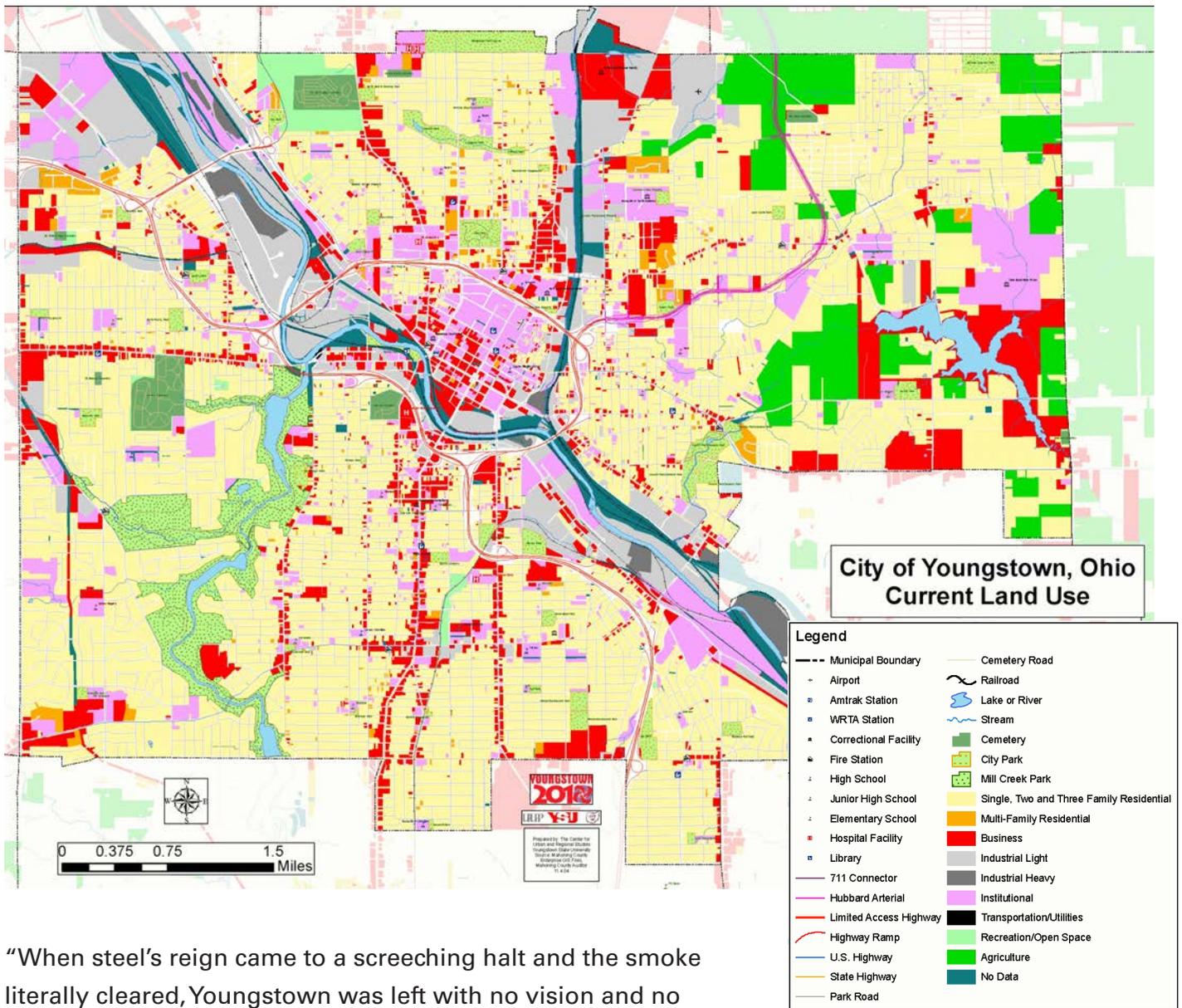
The steel industry no longer dominates Youngstown's economy. Most people work in different industries today. The city must align itself with the present realities of the regional economy. This new positioning means support for a more diverse and vibrant economy founded on the current strengths within the city and region, such as the university, the health care sector, and the arts community.

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

Youngstown must become a healthier and better place to live and work. Over time people have grown accustomed to seeing rundown buildings and streets. Urban decay is a constant and demoralizing reminder of Youngstown's decline. It is important that Youngstown begin to "fix its broken windows" and support initiatives to improve neighborhoods, the downtown, the river, and the education system. The city must also begin dealing with difficult issues such as public safety and racism.

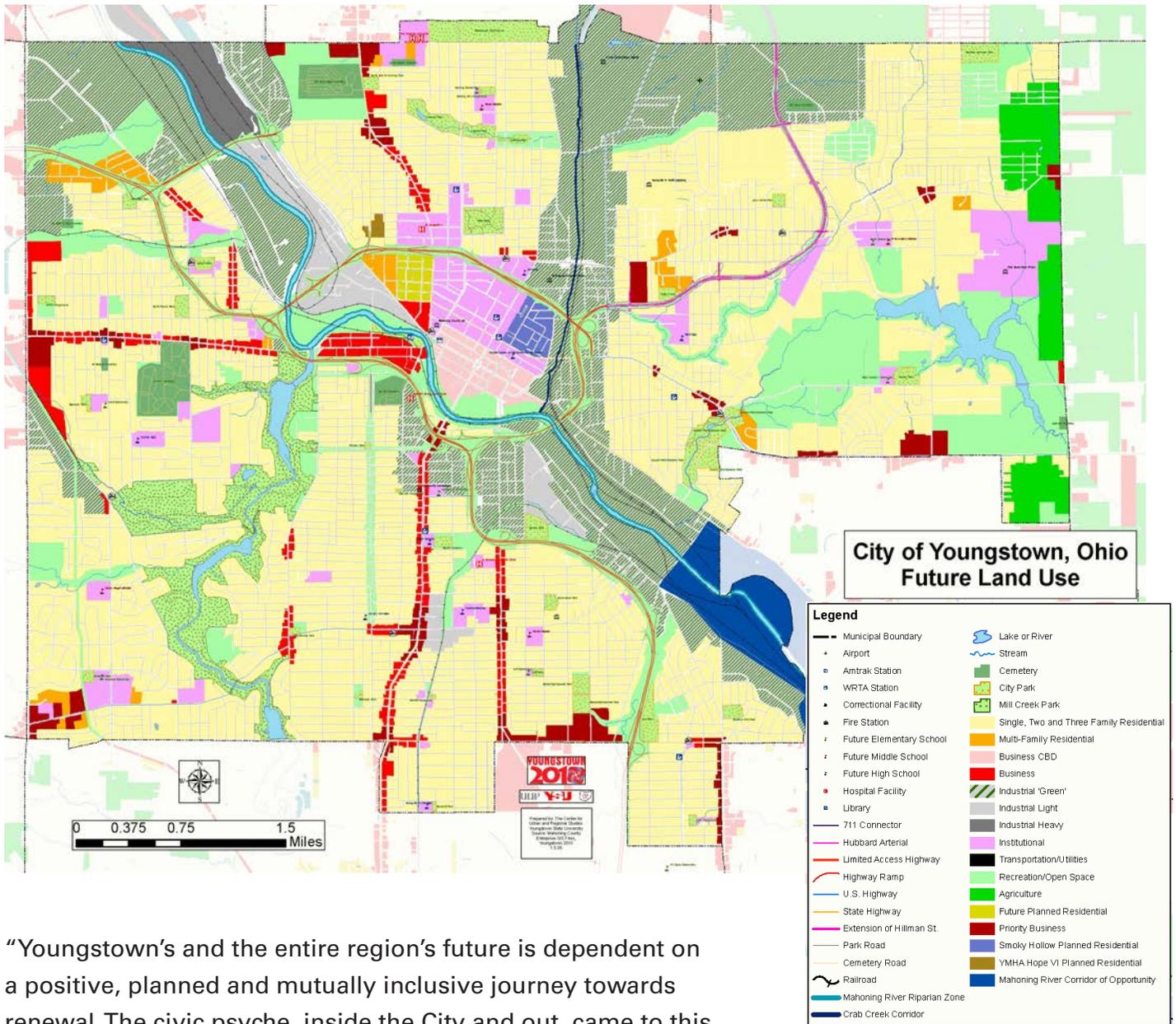
4. A call to action

The people of Youngstown are ready for change. The city already has a large number of local leaders who want to involve others and make a contribution. The citywide plan must ensure that the excitement and optimism fostered through the planning process is maintained and advanced. To that end, the city needs a practical, action-oriented plan and a process through which local leaders can continue to be empowered and the city's successes constantly celebrated.



“When steel’s reign came to a screeching halt and the smoke literally cleared, Youngstown was left with no vision and no plan to deal with the aftermath, not that any city so hard hit by similar economic forces did. Youngstown was operating on a comprehensive plan adopted in 1951 and updated in 1974 that was based on growth and expansion. By the late 1970s the plan was without foundation and virtually obsolete. Youngstown lacked direction through its decline, and without vision languished for the next twenty five years.”¹

1 Excerpt from the Youngstown 2010 Plan



“Youngstown’s and the entire region’s future is dependent on a positive, planned and mutually inclusive journey towards renewal. The civic psyche, inside the City and out, came to this consciousness in 2002 when the spirit of Youngstown 2010 was born. Youngstown 2010 is a planning process to pick up the pieces and organize them to set the stage for sustainable regeneration in the new economy of the 21st century.”²

2 Excerpt from the Youngstown 2010 Plan

Developer/Client/Owner:

City of Youngstown Planning & Zoning Department
3rd Floor, Suite 315
9 West Front Street
Youngstown, OH 44503
www.cityofyoungstownoh.com/city_hall/departments/planning/planning.aspx

Designers/Consultants:

A Two Step Process:

Vision

City of Youngstown, Planning & Zoning Department

Youngstown State University, Center for Urban and Regional Studies
1 University Plaza
Youngstown, OH 44555
http://web.yosu.edu/contentm/easy_pages/view.php?sid=25&page_id=913

Urban Strategies
197 Spadina Avenue, Suite 600
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M5T 2C8
www.urbanstrategies.com

Plan

City of Youngstown, Planning & Zoning Department

Youngstown State University, Center for Urban and Regional Studies

Keynote Media Group
201 E. Commerce St., Suite 199
Youngstown, OH 44503
<http://www.keynotemediagroup.com/>

Find a copy of the entire plan here:

http://www.cityofyoungstownoh.com/about_youngstown/youngstown_2010/

*Downtown Youngstown
(Photo: Ron Dressel)*



Features:

- Current Census population and household data.
- Population and household projections.
- Land Use projections.
- Integration of best practices land use policy.
- Public Decision Making process.

Time Frame: Phases 1 & 2 took three years to complete, Phase 3 continues to the present day.

- Phase 1: Vision
- Phase 2: Plan
- Phase 3: Implementation

Project Cost: \$325,000 (phases 1 & 2)

Funding Sources & Incentives:

- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds
- Additional in-kind time and services from community businesses and citizens

*Below: Youngstown Museum of Industry and Labor
(Photo: Gregory SJ Soltis)*



Maintenance Cost: When asked where the funds would come from to implement the plan, Mayor Jay Williams said, in effect *Our city has approximately 90 million dollar budget every year, a refocus/ redirection of this money can help implement the plan, alongside other community driven efforts.* Mayor Jay Williams was mayor of Youngstown from 2005-2011.

The loss of population results in a loss of taxes. Fewer people mean fewer dollars in the general fund. The serviceable area of the city remains the same and costs of maintenance tend to increase due to abandonment. A city caught between declining revenues and rising maintenance costs often have to cut staffing, so there are fewer minds and bodies available to deliver services and the remaining staff has to work smarter and get creative.

Applicable Zoning Regulations: One of the implementation projects was to update the city's zoning code. Having a plan that faced the reality of declining population was not enough. The new zoning code codifies a frame-work that encourages and simplifies reinvestment in parts of the city that are economically sustainable and discourages investment in areas that are not.

Find the new zoning code adopted in April 2013 here:

http://www.cityofyoungstownoh.org/Uploads/20135683912_Youngstown%20Final%20Adopted%20Published%20Version%204-13.pdf

Lessons Learned:

The Name of a Plan

- **Challenge:** It has often taken considerable energy to explain the significance of the name *Youngstown 2010*. The plan was started in 2005, and it was especially challenging for people to grasp after the year 2010 came and went. The human psyche has trouble following a perceived "old" plan. People outside of the planning profession may have expectations that what was set forth in a plan named "2010" should be completed by the year 2010.
- **Recommendation:** A plan's name should address the true issues at hand; the implementation of the plan, and movement forward with the revitalization of the city.

Public Participation and Engagement is Key to Success

- **Challenge:** The level of public involvement and buy-in to a planning process can determine the success of a plan. Planners in Youngstown were faced with apathy and distrust of the government within the community. To overcome those concerns the city co-convened the planning process with Youngstown State University a trusted and respected entity within the community.
- **Recommendation:** You must have an understanding of the challenges you will face when engaging the public. Make every effort to reach as many people as possible. "Brand" the plan and "market" it through conventional methods such as advertising and social media. Make special appeals to reach the hard to reach population.

Shrinking a City is Complicated

- **Challenge:** Planning tools (zoning) are mostly calibrated to control growth or may be considered “heavy handed” (urban renewal) when dealing with the effects of shrinking. While the growth of a city may have been planned and orderly – depopulation of a city occurs in a chaotic manner. The desire to decommission infrastructure in areas where few residents remain is complicated by a need to continue to service those residents as well as other areas that are part of a system that is looped and needs to remain in order for the system to work.
- **Recommendation:** Identify unsustainable areas and avoid making long term investments in them. Set a goal of finding an economic or environmental reuse of every vacant parcel of land and develop creative strategies to accomplish the goal. Long term, entire neighborhoods may be repurposed as business development opportunity sites, urban agriculture or farms, or as open space preservation areas.



Stambaugh Auditorium
(Photo: Stephen Poullas)