

# YOUNGSTOWN



Sharing a vision for a better tomorrow.

*Recovery Renewal Rebuilding*  
Federal Reserve Foreclosure Series  
Washington, D.C. – October 20, 2008  
Mayor Jay Williams, Youngstown OH

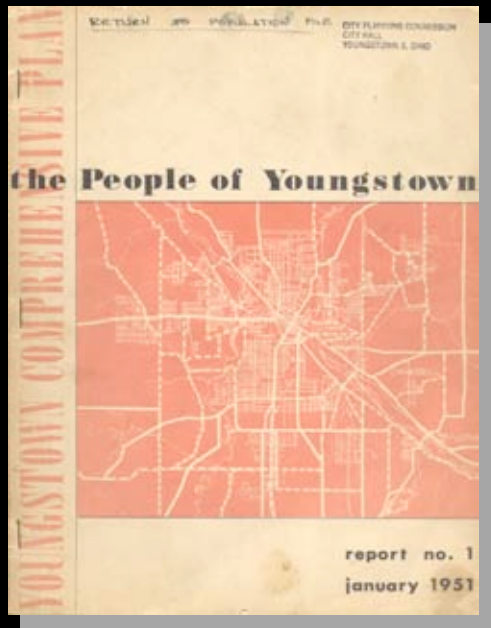
The City of Youngstown

Youngstown State University

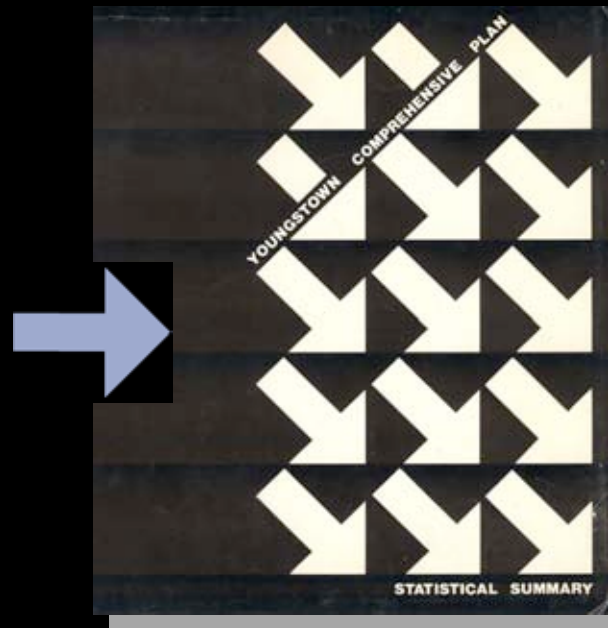


Urban Strategies Inc.

# Youngstown needed a new plan



1951



1974



2002

# Understanding Youngstown 2010

**Youngstown 2010** is the planning process that the City of Youngstown is used to develop first a Vision and then a new Comprehensive Plan

A **vision** is an agreed-upon set of goals and principles about the kind of place that Youngstown should be in the future and the changes that need to be made to get there.

A **comprehensive plan** is a detailed framework that puts the vision into action. It sets out the specific policies that will guide the City in making both big and small decisions to achieve the goals of the vision.

# The Vision

Accepting that we are a smaller city  
**Youngstown should strive to be the best  
mid-sized city in Ohio and America**

Defining Youngstown's role in the  
new regional economy  
**Youngstown must align itself with the  
realities of the new regional economy**

Improving Youngstown's image &  
enhancing quality of life  
**Making Youngstown a better place  
to live and work**

**A call to action**

**An achievable and practical action-oriented  
plan to make things happen**

## 1. Accepting that we are a smaller city

### Youngstown is a mid-sized city in Ohio

**The population of Youngstown has been stabilizing at around 80,000 people. Although the population is smaller than it used to be, the area of the city is still the same. Youngstown has exceptional resources as a result of having been larger, but there are questions about how to operate a town at this size.**

#### ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION



- What is a long-term sustainable size for Youngstown?
- How much housing is needed?
- How many jobs?
- How much infrastructure?
- How much open space?
- Where should new development be directed?

1. Accepting that we are a smaller city

## Making difficult choices

**Servicing new land is costly and probably unnecessary. Maintaining services in areas where there are few or no residents or businesses is not financially sustainable. Choices need to be made to restore the City's financial health.**



### ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

- Need to define which parts of the city are sustainable and what to do with those areas which are not supportable
- Understand and categorize the condition of our neighborhoods
- Identify the best locations for reinvestment and new services
- Deciding what to do with vacant buildings and “brownfields”

1. Accepting that we are a smaller city

## Maintaining less infrastructure

**The City could save money by rationalizing and consolidating its infrastructure. This would create a more sustainable system that allows re-investment where it is most needed. The city cannot sustain all of the serviced land that it currently has.**



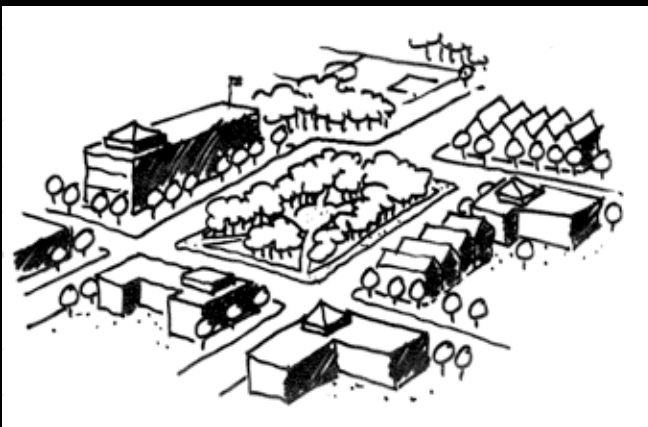
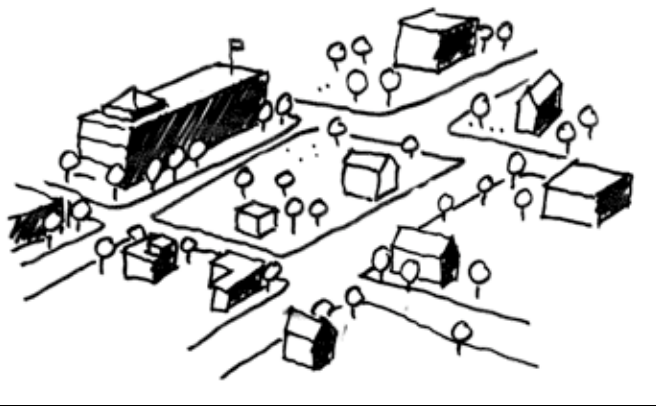
### ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

- New development should be directed to locations where infrastructure is already in place
- Currently undeveloped areas should not get new infrastructure or be urbanized
- New public and private investments should follow these principles

## 1. Accepting that we are a smaller city

### Be generous with our urban land

**In light of tax delinquency, more land is coming under the City's control. As a place with fewer people but the same amount of land, Youngstown can afford to be generous with its urban land as it explores new options for the city's neighborhoods and open space systems.**



### ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

- Reforming the City's land banking program to accelerate the process of assembling vacant land and transferring it to those who can use it
- New uses could include new neighborhood parks, expanded residential lots, or community gardens



1. Accepting that we are a smaller city

## Youngstown is part of the Mahoning Valley region

The Mahoning Valley functions as one regional unit. The health of the region is tied to the health of Youngstown, and vice versa. We need to discover the issues that require a “metropolitan approach.” Mill Creek Metro Parks is a great example of what’s possible when the region cooperates.



### ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

- What are the real boundaries of the region?
- Identify the issues which require a regional approach and explore opportunities for cooperation with other jurisdictions

### 3. Improving Youngstown's image & enhancing quality of life

## Capitalize on our authentic urban environment

**Youngstown has an authentic urban environment – downtown buildings, attractive houses, an urban network of streets, parks and infrastructure. These are features that the suburbs cannot offer and they should be taken advantage of.**

### ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION



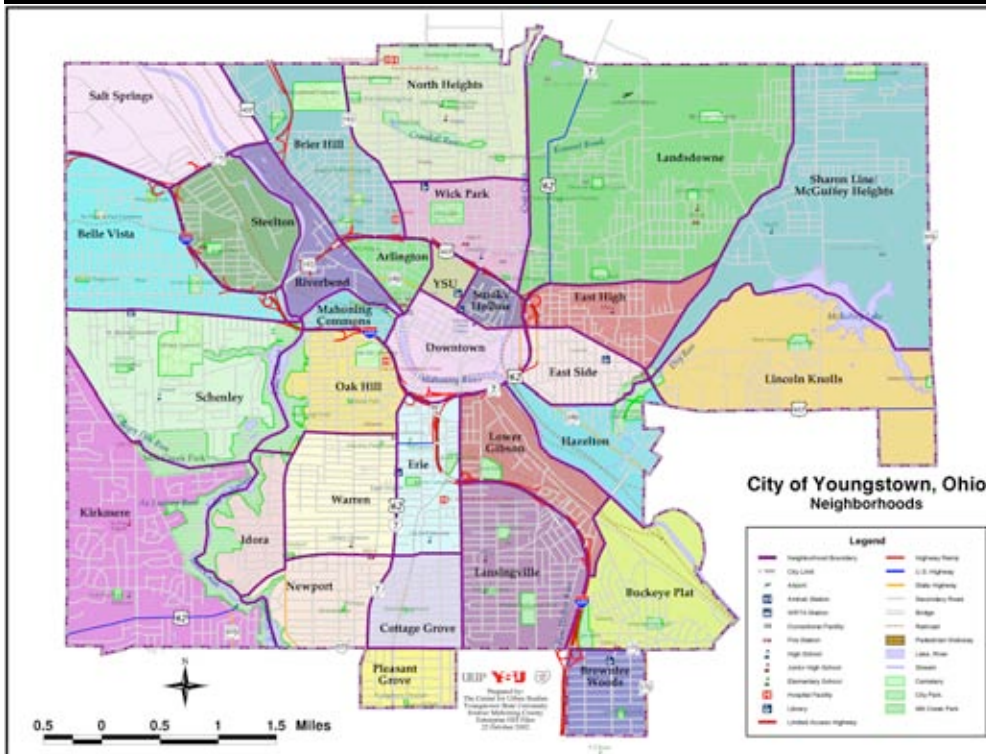
- Understand which built features are unique in Youngstown, as well as their quality and physical integrity
- Develop a plan to take advantage of those features, targeted at those who value them
- Develop an inventory of buildings, available land and floor space

### 3. Improving Youngstown's image & enhancing quality of life

## Neighborhood-based planning and action

Throughout the city there are many people who care about their neighborhoods and who are working hard to make them better places. Youngstown has many neighborhoods, and these grass roots should be the basis for the comprehensive plan.

### ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION



- Define the location and characteristics of each of the City's neighborhoods
- Prepare neighborhood-level marketing and land use plans
- Involve residents in the planning for their own neighborhoods
- Take neighborhood-level steps to improve neighborhood safety

### 3. Improving Youngstown's image & enhancing quality of life

## Fixing broken windows

**Over time people become accustomed to seeing rundown buildings & streets, and they begin to tolerate them at increasing levels. Urban decay sends a strong message that nobody cares about the community. Youngstown needs to show that it does care by fixing its broken windows.**

### ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION



- Target property maintenance and upkeep for both public and private property
- Stop the spread of urban decay in the city
- Send a positive message by cleaning up
- Improve the streets leading into the city

#### 4. A call to action

### A specific, organized & action-oriented plan

**Youngstown must develop a Comprehensive Plan that is specific, organized, and action-oriented in order to get results. The Plan will only help the community if it is implemented.**



#### ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

- Identify clear, specific and achievable goals for the plan
- Set the priorities
- Create a checklist of targets (big & small) that can be achieved within a specific timeframe
- Set up a committee to continuously monitor progress against an established list of indicators and benchmarks

## 4. A call to action

### Collaboration & Empowerment at all Levels

The people of Youngstown are ready for change. Fortunately, the city already has a large number of local leaders – in the churches, schools, community organizations & small businesses – who want to involve others and make a real contribution. Individual people *can* make change happen.



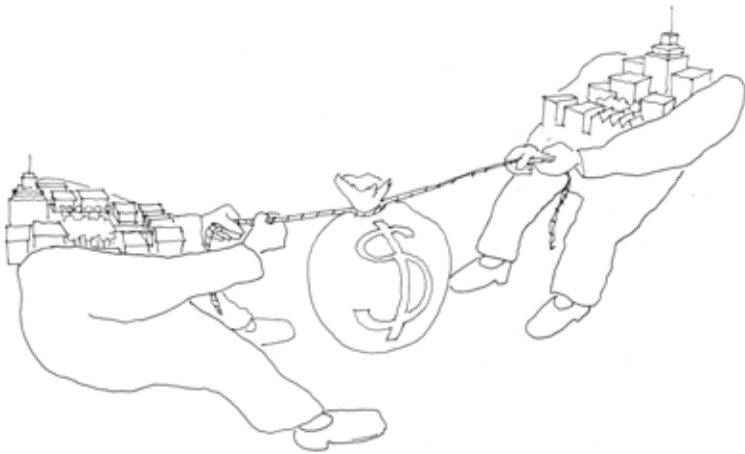
### ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

- Create an inventory of community leaders and their skills
- Identify opportunities to use volunteers
- Support initiatives being undertaken by community groups
- Find ways to increase the involvement of youth in the community

#### 4. A call to action

### Compete successfully for all available funds

**There is fierce competition among cities and regions for public funds. The money only goes to those places that have a solid plan, a strategy for getting things done and demonstrated results. Youngstown must succeed in this competition.**



- Use funding to attract private investment and to achieve multiple goals (e.g. hire local workers to build new schools)
- Coordinate planning with other community institutions

### Leverage Opportunities

**Public policies, initiatives and investments should always be coordinated in order to achieve the maximum catalytic effect. Achieving both symbolic and financial leverage will allow us to maximize the return on our investments.**

#### 4. A call to action

## Celebrate our Successes

If people are to be hopeful about the future of Youngstown, they need good reasons to support that belief. Celebrating each and every success story in the community is critical to building a feeling that the city's problems can be overcome.

### ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION



- Hold public celebrations to share successes
- Tell the good news stories: brownfields, government clean up
- Use positive media coverage to improve perceptions of the city



## Final Lessons

- Resources invested in needy but ill-prepared communities will result in a recipe for disaster.
- Must maintain a pragmatic approach of what can/cannot be accomplished and when.
- “Peanut Butter” strategies will typically fail to achieve measurable success; difficult choices are inevitable
- Must use public investment as a catalyst to attract additional private investment.
- Collaboration is critical.
- Remember, all politics remain local.

#### 4. A call to action

### The Fruits of our Labor

- ✓ **American Planning Association**

"Excellence in Public Outreach & Education Award"

- ✓ **Planning Magazine**

"Everything Old is New Again"

"Youngstown Embraces Its Future"

- ✓ **Governing Magazine**

"Smart Decline"

- ✓ **USA Today**

"As Older Cities Shrink, Some Reinvent Themselves"

- ✓ **New York Times Magazine**

"Creative Shrinkage"

- ✓ **The Wall Street Journal**

- ✓ **Pittsburgh Tribune Review**

"Extreme Makeover: City Edition"

**Citizens!**