



**Smart Growth America**  
Making Neighborhoods Great Together

## Pittsburg, KS

### Planning for Economic and Fiscal Health

### Report and Suggested Next Steps

Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities Program

**To:** Becky Gray, Director of Housing and Community Development, City of Pittsburg  
Daron Hall, Pittsburg City Manager  
John Ketterman, Mayor of Pittsburg

**From:** John Robert Smith, Smart Growth America  
Alex Hutchinson, Smart Growth America  
Christiaan Mader, Smart Growth America

**Date:** February 3, 2017

### Executive Summary

Pursuant to our technical assistance award with the City of Pittsburg, this Memorandum constitutes Smart Growth America's report summarizing the recent *Smart Growth 101* workshop, and suggesting possible **Next Steps** the city could take to craft a vision for the City of Pittsburg's future development.

Alex Hutchinson, John Robert Smith, and Christiaan Mader, representing Smart Growth America (SGA), met with regional leaders and residents on October 11 and 12, 2016 to provide assistance via the *Smart Growth 101* tool, supported by a cooperative agreement with the Environmental Protection Agency. SGA also conducted and delivered a *Fiscal Impact Analysis*, underwritten by USDA Rural Development.

Following a productive discussion with various stakeholders — including residents, advocates, business owners and elected officials — the following **Next Steps** are recommended:

1. Cultivate a mindset of change
2. Map ownership of downtown building stock
3. Compel downtown owners to care for and update their buildings
4. Make street design that incorporates Complete Streets principles relating to active transportation options part of all planning efforts.
5. Develop alleyways as new public spaces

6. Strengthen the community's partnership with Pittsburg State University (PSU)
7. Bolster the Downtown Advisory Board's efforts by dedicating a portion of current staff time to matters of the Downtown Overlay District.
8. Explore short term programming for redevelopment of the Dickey Clay site
9. Explore options and feasibility for reusing the Washington School building

## Need for assistance

Pittsburg currently has a wealth of economic opportunities before it in the form of developable land, new capital investment, population growth and strong employment numbers.

In the last three years the city has seen roughly \$260 million in combined capital investment associated with the university, the medical sector, its major employers and public infrastructure. The city is currently growing, with new subdivisions coming online to accommodate an expected 1,200 new residents per year through 2018.

Located in one of the poorest counties in Kansas, many of the traditional mining towns surrounding Pittsburg rely on the city as a commercial and cultural hub. It has low unemployment — anecdotally, virtually none — but residents report low wages for the same jobs found in other markets. The city has struggled to attract and retain high-level talent and knowledge-economy jobs.

Many of its young residents seek cultural and employment opportunities outside of Pittsburg in nearby regional anchors like Springfield, MO and Kansas City, despite the presence of a regional university.

While technically a college town, Pittsburg has not yet been able to fully capitalize on its resident student population. On top of its base population of roughly 20,000 people, Pittsburg State University adds another 7,500 students to the city when in session. The university offers in-state tuition to neighboring states. As a result, it attracts a diverse student population.

There are programs in process — like the Block 22 initiative described later — that could prove the potential of greater partnership between the city and the university. Nevertheless, the university and city seem separate from one another despite sharing many common goals and common spaces.

Pittsburg has a long and proud mining tradition. Early 20th century prosperity left the city with an inheritance of historically significant buildings, most of which are located along Pittsburg's downtown city grid. Several historic hotels currently serve as affordable housing properties. Some students live in these buildings, although Pittsburg's officials would clearly like to see better residential integration of the student population.

Adjacent to Pittsburg's downtown is a 350 acre brownfield site that was once the operating location of a Dickey Clay pipe manufacturing plant. About 100 acres of that site is currently occupied by the manufacturing operation itself, including kilns, chimneys and a warehouse.

Years of smelting have left the site contaminated with heavy metals. Clearly, any future development of the site would require environmental remediation and removal of the standing structures.

Pittsburg has sought assistance in considering development plans for the Dickey Clay site. City officials have begun a planning process for the brownfield, with some preliminary plans already in consideration.

Smart Growth America's (SGA) [Smart Growth 101](#) toolkit was requested as a means to guide the city's ongoing planning toward a sustainable model. If the city can properly plan to accommodate its current and future growth, its downtown would not only survive yet more decades but thrive as a new asset for attracting greater economic prosperity.

The Dickey Clay site and an informally designated "warehouse district" are assets that, considered in tandem with downtown, provide a platform for Pittsburg to build a more walkable and vibrant public sphere in its traditional urban core. The Smart Growth 101 toolkit addresses precisely this sort of need.

SGA also performed a [Fiscal Impact Analysis](#) pursuant to a grant by USDA Rural Development, which will assist Pittsburg in taking inventory of the infrastructure cost of potential development patterns.

## Workshop Review

Our two-day workshop began with a guided tour led by Becky Gray; Jeff Wilbert, general manager of Memorial Auditorium and Convention Center; Kim Vogel, director of Pittsburg's Parks and Recreation department and Leah Posterick, a local business owner and Downtown Advisory Board member. We explored Pittsburg's wealth of civic and natural resources, including [Downtown](#), [Pittsburg State University](#), the informally designated "[Warehouse District](#)" adjacent to downtown, the abandoned [Dickey Clay Plant Brownfield Site](#), and the water-filled coal pits in Pittsburg's unincorporated perimeter.

Pittsburg's original downtown grid is lined with mostly preserved deco and masonic building stock. Along Broadway Street, a four-lane U.S. highway that is the downtown's main thoroughfare, the city boasts an updated streetscape of wide sidewalks that convey light commerce among the two- and three-story building stock. Sidewalk and building infrastructure on blocks off of downtown's long main stretch are in poorer condition.

We visited several [Downtown](#) buildings that are currently slated for, or in process of, redevelopment like the Colonial Fox Theater, an ongoing preservation and renovation project, and the future Block 22 student housing development planned for two historic buildings at the corner of 4th Street and Broadway.

We toured the [Warehouse District](#) adjacent to downtown, paying particular attention to the Washington School, a privately owned historic schoolhouse that the city would like to acquire for redevelopment. There is some talk of warehouse conversion projects in the area, including a brew pub, which will take advantage of the area's vacant stock.

[The Dickey Clay Plant Site](#), a 300-acre brownfield just east of Downtown and the Warehouse District, is directly accessible by both Downtown and the university's campus south of the plant site. After touring the site on foot, we reviewed current mixed use and recreation plans for the site under consideration by the city.

A system of bike trails is built in segments around the city's main nodes, including a recreational area anchored by a farmer's market and a community football field, the university, and downtown. Several new megastructures including an indoor track center, a performing arts center, and a joint student community center and national guard base are located near the back outskirts of campus. Conventional single lot neighborhoods are currently under construction outside of the city's traditional grid.

After the city tour, we concluded our first day with a brief introduction to our staff and mission at that evening's city commission meeting at city hall, followed by a broad overview of the Smart Growth 101 curriculum in Memorial Auditorium. The evening presentation walked a gathered audience of elected officials, local business owners, and city employees through a brief history of the evolution of 20th century urban development, current economic and demographic trends, and some discussion of the implications thereof for small communities like Pittsburg.

We dug further into an examination of current development patterns and their economic consequences during our second day workshop, presenting quantitative evidence of the trend of urban migration among millennials and the businesses seeking to employ them. We discussed the emergence of the millennial generation as the predominant driver of economic demand, emphasizing that generation's interest in walkable, bikeable, vibrantly social cities.

Our presentation compared the infrastructure cost associated with suburban-style development patterns and single-use zones to the cost of compact, mixed growth and infill patterns, which take advantage of existing roads, pipes, and power lines, etc.

Breakout sessions gave attending elected officials, business owners, and civic leaders the chance to hammer out a vision for Pittsburg's identity, taking stock of the city's history and its current state of affairs. A healthy back and forth developed through rotating small-group discussions, revealing common aspirations and perceived

obstacles.

Pulling examples of technical work and research done in communities like Waterloo, IA; Bethlehem, PA; Greenville, SC; Rifle, CO; and Macon-Bibb County, GA gave participants some real world points of reference. With preliminary figures for Pittsburg on hand, we were able to demonstrate the cost savings, in terms of percentage, associated with compact and efficient infill-oriented development by showing similar studies performed for Macon-Bibb and Rifle. Greenville provided aesthetic and visual reference for what can be accomplished with compact planning that emphasizes walkable, traditional town center/downtown development. Bethlehem's transformation of a former steel mill brownfield into the SteelStacks Arts and Cultural center spoke to the possibilities posed by redevelopment of the Dickey Clay Plant.

We guided the groups through exercises that narrowed a brainstorm of ideas into an organized set of actionable goals. Participants identified [Downtown](#), [The Dickey Clay Brownfield Site](#) and the informally designated [Warehouse District](#) as geographic areas of focus in which to address actionable [Housing](#), [Mobility](#), and [Cultural Programming](#) items.

Organizing the community's aspirational vision this way created a structured, prioritized approach to tackling issues that ranged in scope and degree of achievability. Tasks identified were as simple and narrowly defined as mapping the ownership of downtown buildings, or as comprehensive and programmatic as the creation of a complete streets policy.

Action items were assigned to the City, the Downtown Advisory Board, community organizations like Live Well and Pittsburg Beautiful, as well as to the university and private partners.

Much of what Pittsburg needs to thrive is already on hand: A willingness to take critical self-reflection of the city's current obstacles, an openness toward exploring new ideas, and an energized core of leaders committed to progress, change and data-driven fiscal judgment.

[Attending leaders from local agencies, civic organizations included:](#)

- Daron Hall, City Manager
- Jay Byers, Assistant City Manager
- John Ketterman, Mayor of Pittsburg
- John Baily, Engineer, City of Pittsburg
- Becky Gray, Director of Housing and Community Development
- Kim Vogel, Director of Parks and Recreation
- Jeff Murphy, Crawford County Commissioner
- John Long, Downtown Advisory Board
- Sydney Anselmi, PSU Small Business Advisor

- Dick Horton, SEK-CAP
- Brad Snow, WATCO
- Cameron Alden, City of Pittsburg
- Jeremy Johnson, City Commissioner, City of Pittsburg
- Martha Murphy, Kansas State University Research and Extension
- Matt Hess, Pittsburg Land Bank Board
- Amanda Marney, Kansas State University Research and Extension
- Marty Beezley, Economic Development Advisory Committee, Chair

Representatives from the EPA included:

- Ashley Murdie
- Kumud Pyakuryal

## The built environment and fiscal and economic health

Communities around the nation are always concerned about their fiscal and economic health. This is especially true of small towns and rural regions.

By *fiscal* health, we mean a local government's bottom line: Does the life cycle cost of a project's investment—upfront infrastructure, ongoing service provision and eventual repair and maintenance—cost more than what it produces in tax revenue?

By *economic* health, we mean the general economic well-being of the community and its region: How does new investment and development add to or detract from the creation of economic competitiveness, fiscal efficiency and sustainability, jobs, jobs access, retention of local youth, cultural identity and wealth?

In approaching these questions in Pittsburg, as in any part of the country today, it is important to bear three trends in mind:

**Our nation's demographics are changing in a way that profoundly affects the housing market in large cities and rural areas alike.**

Demographic trends are moving the housing market strongly away from conventional suburban housing.<sup>1</sup> That presents a significant opportunity for rural communities to compete for new growth. The two biggest demographic groups in the nation—retiring

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<sup>1</sup> See; "The Changing Shape of American Cities," Luke J. Juday, Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, University of Virginia, March 2015.

"Demographic Reversal: Cities Thrive, Suburbs Sputter," William H. Frey, Brookings Institution, State of Metropolitan America Series, June 29, 2012.

baby boomers and millennials (18-39 year-olds) — both express strong preferences for a more walkable, urban/village lifestyle.

Data tells us that ten percent of all city-dwelling Americans would prefer to live in rural locales if those places are walkable, connected to the larger region and possess a strong sense of character and place. That represents a pool of 26 million potential transplants that Pittsburg could compete to attract. Indeed, forty percent of millennials prefer to live in rural places, provided those places have a vibrant rural fabric. The vast majority of net new households formed have no children at home, and most of them are one- and two-person households, which are much more likely to prefer a walking lifestyle.<sup>2</sup> These trends depart from those experienced in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **The formula for economic growth is changing.**

Business growth used to be driven by large corporations that operated in a fashion that was both private in ownership structure and linear in manufacturing and production. In the past, new research breakthroughs occurred in sealed research laboratories controlled by the companies that owned them. Manufacturing and other business processes occurred in assembly line situations, with little interaction across or inside industries. These conditions led to communities that featured large, sealed-off campuses and tended to be linear in their arrangements.

Today, business growth is driven by collaboration among many types of entities — private companies, research institutions, universities, and others — that must interact frequently and work together creatively. This trend requires cities and communities that encourage interaction and collaboration — the opposite of the older model described above. How communities are designed directly impacts their ability to create interactive and collaborative environments.

Most significantly, the innovation economy, as it is sometimes called, depends heavily on skilled workers. The companies that are driving innovation are pursuing highly educated talent, especially among millennials. Increasingly, companies find it

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<sup>2</sup> “Suburbs Try to Prevent an Exodus as Young Adults Move to Cities and Stay,” Joseph Berger, New York Times, April 16, 2014 (on-line at, [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/17/nyregion/suburbs-try-to-hold-onto-young-adults-as-exodus-to-cities-appears-to-grow.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/17/nyregion/suburbs-try-to-hold-onto-young-adults-as-exodus-to-cities-appears-to-grow.html?_r=0).)

“See ya, suburbs: More want to live in the big city,” Greg Toppo and Paul Overberg, USA TODAY, March 27, 2014.

“Why urban demographers are right about the trend toward downtowns and walkable suburbs,” Kaid Benfield, bettercities.net, February 28, 2014.

“NAR 2013 Community Preference Survey: Americans Prefer to Live in Mixed-Use, Walkable Communities,” National Association of Realtors, November 1, 2013.

necessary to locate in places that their target workforce wants to live in. Increasingly, that means walkable communities. **People on the move are looking to relocate to places with a high quality of life. In fact, they are willing to sacrifice salary for location. High quality of life is defined more and more by the character of the town center than by the size of a front yard or square footage of a home.**

Similarly, the market for retail is changing. Suburban shopping malls and retail centers that thrived for decades are struggling as a result of oversupply and a shift in shopping preferences. With online buying playing a bigger role for consumers (especially for bargain hunters), many are looking for a more authentic experience when they shop in person. Consumers are demonstrating strong preferences for shopping locally at unique establishments that offer handcrafted, regional products. They prefer this experience to be a short distance from their homes and offices and within a comfortably walkable town center. This is bringing new value to traditional walkable main streets. Pittsburg and its neighboring communities, oriented with traditional main street districts, are well suited to taking advantage of this shift in consumer choice.

**Sprawling development patterns are making it more difficult for local governments to balance their budgets.**

Development patterns that sprawl outward from town center require extensive investments in capital infrastructure and ongoing service delivery. Sprawling development requires more infrastructure to serve relatively few people and requires service providers such as firefighters and school buses to travel farther. More compact development patterns reduce both life-cycle infrastructure costs and operating costs.<sup>3</sup>

A 2013 study by Smart Growth America, *Building Better Budgets: A National Examination of the Fiscal Benefits of Smart Growth Development*<sup>4</sup>, concluded that, compared to conventional suburban development, smart growth patterns can achieve savings of one-third or more in upfront infrastructure cost, and 10% annually in ongoing operating expenses. Smart growth development patterns can generate up to ten times more revenue on a per-acre basis.

More recently, SGA's *Core Values: Why American Companies are Moving Downtown*<sup>5</sup> examines the characteristics, motives, and preferences of companies that have either relocated, opened new offices, or expanded into walkable downtowns between 2010

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<sup>3</sup> For more information, see: <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/research/the-fiscal-implications-of-development-patterns/>

<sup>4</sup> The full report can be downloaded at <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/building-better-budgets>.

<sup>5</sup> The report is available for download from <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/resources/core-values-why-american-companies-are-moving-downtown/>

and 2015. Smart Growth America partnered with global real estate advisors Cushman & Wakefield to identify nearly 500 companies that have made such a move in the past five years. Of those, we interviewed representatives from more than 40 companies to gain a better understanding of this emerging trend. These companies' new locations are in areas that are dramatically more walkable than previous sites. The average Walk Score of the companies' previous locations was 52; the average Walk Score of the new locations is 88. Similarly, Transit Scores grew from an average of 52 to 79 and Bike Scores bumped from an average of 66 to 78.

This trend is visible across the country, in big cities and small ones alike and should be a factor in the economic development strategy of all communities, including Pittsburg.

**Note:** *Not all of these trends will be completely relevant in every situation. Rural communities are more reliant on private automobile ownership, and transit is often less feasible in these situations. But it is important to bear all three in mind in considering the fiscal and economic health of any community.*

## Participant viewpoints

Many workshop attendees expressed validation by the information explored in our consultation. To be sure, much of what is typically recommended for communities like Pittsburg is already in process thanks to the initiative of city officials and a core group of private business owners, property managers, and civic leaders.

Participants recognized that, in the last few years, the city has made strides toward revitalization through initiatives which have saved historic buildings, beautified portions of downtown through streetscaping, integrated the arts into the community's diet of activities, and have built parks, bike trails, active outdoor gathering spaces like the farmers market. Those assembled did not take these amenities for granted.

Despite recent gains, a persistent frustration with the lack of implementation in key areas remained. Streetscaping along Broadway had been confined to only the main portion and not significantly improved adjacent blocks. Brick sidewalks off of downtown's central artery are cracking and crumbling, putting the city at risk for suit and discouraging their use. Downtown activities like the city's periodic art walks remain undesirably infrequent. The city's nightlife is improving yet is not considered robust in terms of programming or diversity of attractions.

Recommendations similar to what SGA presented have been made in the past, yet an informal consensus believed that implementation had not taken place, or in some cases had been reversed. As an example, bump-out and other traffic calming features

were once planned for Broadway, but were later removed from ongoing planning efforts. A downtown tree canopy was removed when some citizens found the flocks of birds attracted to the shady branches to be a nuisance. While certainly interested in continuing the planning conversation, attendees expressed a readiness for action that no doubt stemmed from exasperation with a lack of sustained action on the city's best laid plans.

Breakout sessions by and large produced a consensus about the city's key cultural assets. Pittsburg's rich mining history and role as a regional player in turn-of-the-century labor politics were points of boastful pride for most of the attending residents. Several prominent American figures — Susan B. Anthony, Eugene V. Debs, Teddy Roosevelt — have spoken from a parapet balcony of the Hotel Stilwell, now primarily an affordable housing development. The Dickey Clay site was identified as an obvious development point for leveraging the city's cultural identity into modern growth. The saying, 'Mining built Pittsburg. Smelting made it a city,' resonated with participants during these working sessions.

Participants recognized that programs like the Block 22 initiative promise to bring a youthful energy to the downtown by better integrating the student population. As a joint venture between the city, the university and a private developer, it served as an oft-repeated example of the kinds of projects and initiatives that participants wanted to see more of. Despite the need for continued cooperation, some participants were concerned that the university "overshadowed" the city in terms of identity, and that a balance of prominence ought to be struck. Nevertheless, attendees clearly felt that the presence of PSU provided the city with a much needed conduit for growing a 21st century economy that would retain and attract a younger and more modern workforce, and build a platform for sustained prosperity.

### **Actions for Success**

- Completion of the Colonial Fox Theater restoration
- More art walks or similar community gatherings
- Locating a grocery store in downtown
- More students living in downtown
- A sustainable solution for downtown property maintenance
- Better amenities for boomers in their second adulthood
- Bike trails running through the warehouse district
- A Dickey Clay development plan that speaks to Pittsburg's identity
- Better connectivity for university, public bus routes

## Obstacles

- Poor property maintenance among some downtown building owners
- A sense that PSU overshadows the city's identity
- Poorly defined boundaries of responsibility between the city and private owners
- Low buy-in outside of the core change agents
- A reputation as a sleepy city that lacks nightlife or a magnetizing culture

## Opportunities

- Washington School building in the "warehouse district"
- Block 22 initiative
- Careless, international student population at PSU would thrive downtown
- Otherworldly structures of the Dickey Clay site
- Wide alleyways adjacent to downtown
- Second and third story spaces above downtown buildings
- Connectivity to the farmers market pavilion

## Participants discussed the following topics during small group sessions:

### Assets

- Coal pits in Pittsburg's unincorporated perimeter
- Nearby Crawford County Museum
- Farmers market
- New casino development
- Historic buildings throughout the urban core
- Generous local companies like Miller's Professional Imaging
- Europe Park
- A city-operated land bank
- Immigrant Park
- Pittsburg State University
- A wealth of civic groups like Pittsburg Beautiful, Downtown Advisory Board etc.
- Small business development program at PSU

### Targets for near term success

- Completion of ongoing civic projects like Block 22
- A condition assessment of current building stock
- Revisiting bump outs and other traffic calming measures
- Revisiting the replanting of the tree canopy in downtown
- Relocating the Crawford County Historical Museum into Pittsburg
- Opening upper-story windows along downtown to build a sense of life
- Having live music in public spaces
- More frequent art walks

- More involvement from the arts community
- Capitalizing on existing cultural recreation like “Fried Chicken and Polka”

## Recommendations

### 1. Cultivate a mindset of change

Before any progress can be made, city officials, civic leaders and business owners must commit themselves to a process of change that can be contentious and difficult. As noted, a desire for a better Pittsburg is palpable among the city leaders that took part in the workshop, but that must be extended outside of the usual channels and into the community. If residents have complained about initiatives in the past, no doubt they will vocalize their discontent in the future.

Communicating why the city must progress is essential. Fortunately, a common vision among Pittsburg’s leadership has emerged. Selling that vision to the community will hinge on the ability of political and civic leadership to make the case that its ideas are not merely change for the sake of change but present tangible, measurable outcomes that benefit the economic vitality of the community as a whole.

Consistent messaging, a momentum of small successes, proof of concept projects and courting vigorous community input will pay dividends in the future, and afford the city to attempt more ambitious projects with even greater benefit.

### 2. Map ownership of downtown building stock

Before any steps can be taken toward beautifying, regulating, or rehabilitating downtown building stock, the city must first take inventory of property ownership in the district. It was suggested during the workshop that several historic properties downtown are owned by interests located outside of the city of Pittsburg. Identifying who these owners are — and the local ownership, for that matter — will enable the city, through the Downtown Advisory Board and other leadership, to approach these owners about the city’s goals for downtown.

Two private, downtown developers with knowledge of the area — John Kutz and John Long — offered to help take stock of known local building owners. County GIS maps and research conducted by the Downtown Advisory Board can round out the list.

Stated goals like sealing buildings through roof repair, opening up top floor windows and vistas to sunlight and confronting delinquent ownership cannot happen until all parties are known. With a standing inventory, communication between change agents with the city and the owners will be more efficient.

Once an inventory is populated, the owners and regulators can begin reviewing and revising codes in downtown to compel or encourage rehabbing, updating and

maintaining Pittsburg's impressive collection of historic properties.

### **3. Compel downtown owners to care for and update their buildings**

Allowing a building to languish in disrepair reflects poorly on Pittsburg as a whole, not just the building's owner. Policies or practices which encourage— and compel, when necessary—downtown building owners to take civic pride in their properties should be implemented to help effect the community's vision for downtown.

Besides harming the city's image, blighted stock discourages new investment. As the community courts new retail to revitalize the downtown, many companies will avoid buying buildings that require hefty investments to make structures usable. A bad roof can negate a good deal.

Both rewards and penalties should be utilized to convince owners to take care of their business and take part in community development. Owners could be heavily fined for "demolition by neglect." Fines will push them to invest into building maintenance to avoid expensive penalties. As discussed in the workshop, a \$500 per day penalty for neglect can quickly persuade business owners to care for their properties.

The city can explore cost sharing arrangements for green roofs or other efficient and environmentally friendly improvements to down stock. This also presents another proof of concept opportunity. Downtown owners could compete for city-awarded funds for projects that meet the community's desire for a more attractive downtown. With a few successes recorded, other owners may come around to partnering with the city for these kinds of projects and taking a shared responsibility for the downtown's appearance.

Partnering with local banks to provide interest loan programs for this type of maintenance could be means for overcoming cost barriers for building maintenance and improvement.

The bottom line is that unsightly or blighted properties hurt the downtown's ability to attract business and customers. Owners may tend to see the issue narrowly. They may think of maintenance as a private issue. The city's policies and practices should encourage downtown owners to see blight for what it truly is: a community problem that threatens economic vitality.

### **4. Make street design that incorporates Complete Streets principles relating to active transportation options part of all planning efforts.**

Based on workshop feedback, Pittsburg seems primed to incorporate Complete Streets design characteristics into its planning efforts to help achieve its vision of a more active community lifestyle.

Groups like Live Well Crawford County have already brought bikeability and walkability into focus, as evidenced by the burgeoning system of bike routes, trails and sidewalks seen throughout the city.

Traffic through the downtown already moves at relatively low speeds, with light travel density along the corridor. This helps make walking and biking safe throughout the area.

However, there clearly remains much work to be done. Workshop attendees mentioned an interest in several safe street features like reverse angled parking in downtown, expanded sidewalks, and reducing four-lane arterials —e.g. Broadway — to three lanes.

By including Complete Streets design principles as a part of project planning, the city can explore these transportation ideas of interest to the community. At the same time, this will help to encourage new developments, new roads, and new infrastructure to both accommodate and promote multimodal use.

This could be particularly effective in expanding the city's bus service and improving the travel corridors between the university, downtown and whatever plans come to fruition in the nascent warehouse district and the Dickey Clay site. These all present tremendous economic opportunities that can be magnified by making street design a part of the planning process for projects such as these.

The city can revisit traffic calming tools like bump outs and road diets to build the downtown that they want.

Pittsburg is growing. Including Complete Streets design principles in the planning process can help it grow smarter and safer as well as more economically diverse and fiscally sound.

Refer to Appendix B of this document for resources on a Complete Streets approach to design.

## **5. Develop alleyways as new public spaces**

Several of the alleyways tunneling through and around downtown are wide enough to consider backfacing design and attention. For example, the alley that sits diagonally across the parking lot from the preserved corner of the Masonic Wall could easily be re-scaped into a unique back-alley space.

Hanging lights, outdoor dining, and cafe seating could easily be installed in these spaces and make for engaging pockets of activity. People visiting the city will enjoy discovering these troves. For reference, the development and public design in Springfield, MO provides a good example of what could be done with these spaces.

To be sure, the city would face some obstacles here. Trash pickup that currently uses back entrances would have to be reconfigured or adjusted. Because the city does not employ a single contract for trash pickup, that would need to be considered and planned for on a building-by-building basis.

## **6. Strengthen the community's partnership with PSU**

The university figured prominently into each of the three discussed geographic areas, particularly as it pertains to [housing](#) students, [programming](#) for students and creating better [mobility](#) for students.

Following through on some of the city's current plans for Block 22 and the greater expansion of student housing in current affordable housing stock — e.g. the Hotel Besse and Hotel Stilwell — will serve to strengthen the partnership through mutual benefit. Integrating student housing into an active downtown and accommodating student travel around the city will make the university more attractive for prospective students. A more engaged student population will make the downtown a more vibrant commercial district for developers, retailers, restaurant owners, and civic events.

International students are an obvious target to become downtown residents. PSU has nearly 1000 foreign students enrolled, many of whom do not own cars. Downtown residences with direct travel access to campus via bike lanes or bus routes can attract these students into the district. Once there, they create the market that retailers like grocers need to thrive.

Block 22's business development center, operated by the university, could also serve as a launching point for new Pittsburg-based businesses that retain student talent.

Another opportunity for building on a greater student presence would be joint programming with the Colonial Fox Theatre. Student plays, musicals and concerts promoted by student life committees can attract regional interest if programmed and promoted to non-students in the community as well. Student productions and planned events can also keep Colonial Fox in operation with a steady supply of bookings.

## **7. Bolster the Downtown Advisory Board's efforts by dedicating a portion of current staff time to matters of the Downtown Overlay District.**

Conversations among workshop participants indicated that there is no singular responsible party for downtown's variety of maintenance issues. Because of that vacuum of responsibility, little is done to see to the removal of litter associated with the district's nightlife, tending to downtown's landscaping, and generally caring for the district's day-to-day appearance.

By dedicating a portion of current staff time to the Downtown Overlay District,

additional eyes would focus on these issues day in and day out. This would resolve the transience of responsibility for how downtown looks.

These staff hours could include a small cleanup crew to keep the streets clean on a regular basis. Labor sources could come from existing public works employees or from litter abatement sentences for city or county offenders working off fines or jail time.

Existing staff could also help plan events and promote area amenities like the farmers market.

### **8. Explore short term programming for redevelopment of the Dickey Clay site**

The brownfield Dickey Clay site has tremendous economic potential over both the near- and long-term. While the city should continue to work toward a master plan that unlocks the development potential, some opportunities can occur on a timeline shorter than, for example, a twenty year vision plan.

As discussed at the workshop, the site's existing structures like the clay kilns and brick chimneys speak to a tangible history that an on-site museum or historic walking tour could harken to. Community engagement could uncover new ideas for activating the space that could be achieved short of the envisioned large-scale redevelopment.

For general reference, the city should continue to study brownfield redevelopment examples presented at the workshop, such as the SteelStacks in Bethlehem, PA and the Sloss Furnace in Birmingham, AL. The EPA maintains a list online of other successful brownfield redevelopments that could prove useful to the city's efforts to unlock the Dickey Clay site's potential.

### **9. Explore options and feasibility for reusing the Washington School building**

Repurposing the Washington School building in the city's informally designated "warehouse district" could prove to be a lynchpin development in that area's revitalization. The city should take the steps necessary to acquire the building or influence its immediate use.

Workshop participants were excited by the idea of relocating the Crawford County Historical Museum to the site. Attending county officials expressed informal amenability to that idea.

Whether or not it becomes the landing site for the Crawford museum, the building should remain a focal point of redevelopment in that area. Considering some of the development possibilities for the warehouse district floated during our visit — talk of a brew pub, for instance — the city could build momentum toward these goals by

finalizing reuse plans for the school building and completing a first step toward greater revitalization in the area.

The building is yet another beautiful city asset that could define its area as a cultural or civic anchor through concerted and thoughtful planning.

## Fiscal Impact Analysis

Appendix A provides the results of the fiscal impact analysis conducted by Smart Growth America for Pittsburg.

Appendix A: Fiscal Impact Analysis Results for Pittsburg

# Fiscal Impact Model

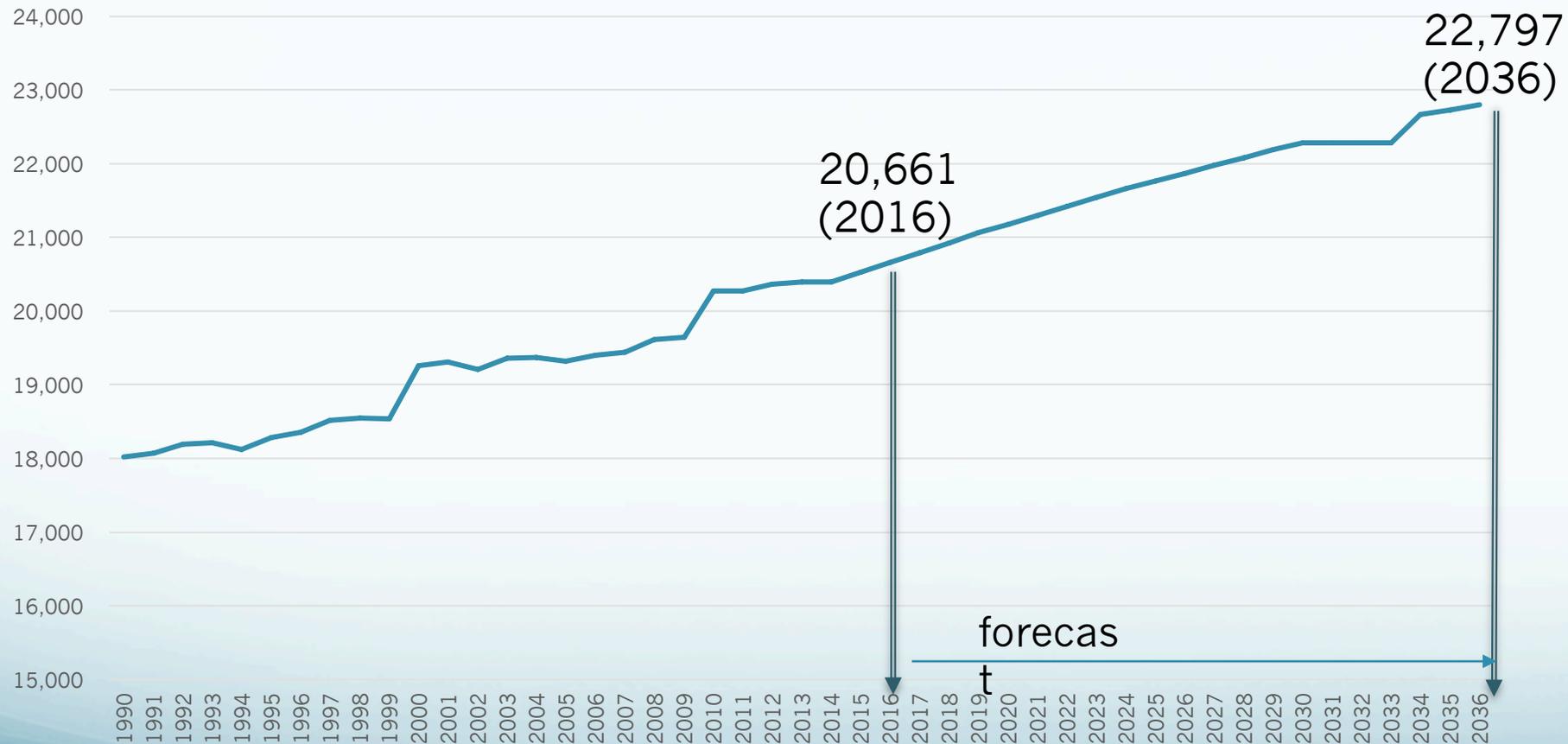
Pittsburg, KS

# Pittsburg Population Forecast

Outlook for Growth

# Population Forecasts

Pittsburg, KS Population



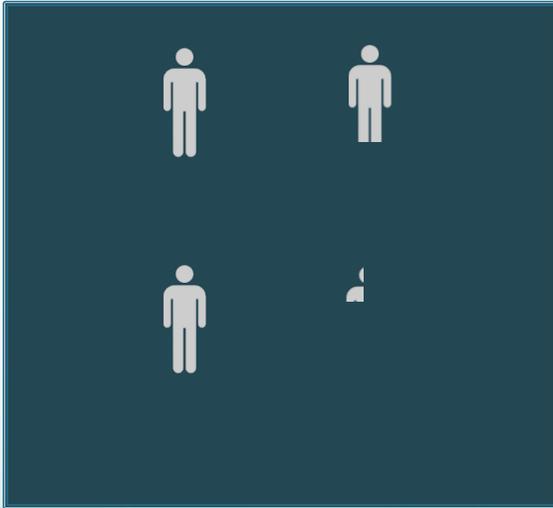
- 20-year forecast
- Assuming 0.49% annual growth vs 0.59% last 10 years.
- 10.3% more residents over 20 years
- 2,136 more people

# Scenarios

How to add an additional 2,136 (+10%) people  
in the next 20 years

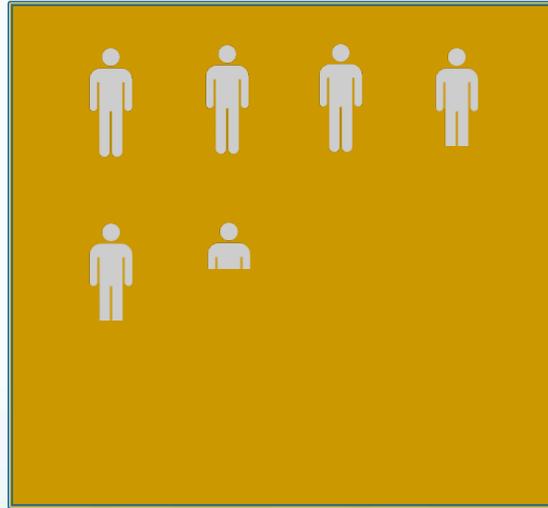
# Density Options – Per Person

## Baseline



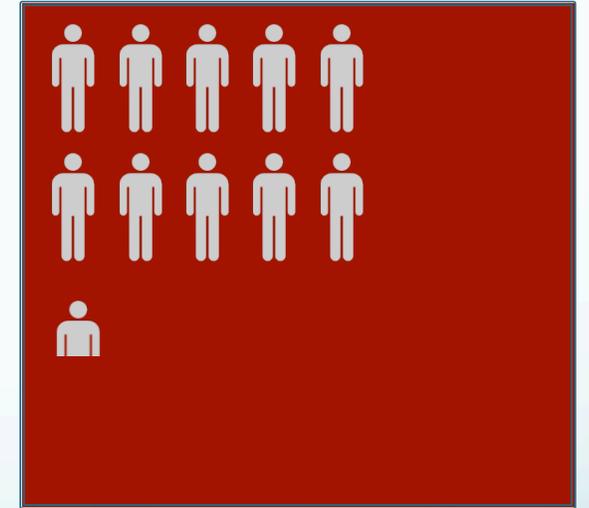
Existing Median Density  
(Observed Data)  
3.15 People / Acre

## Alt. A



Double Existing Density  
6.3 people / acre &

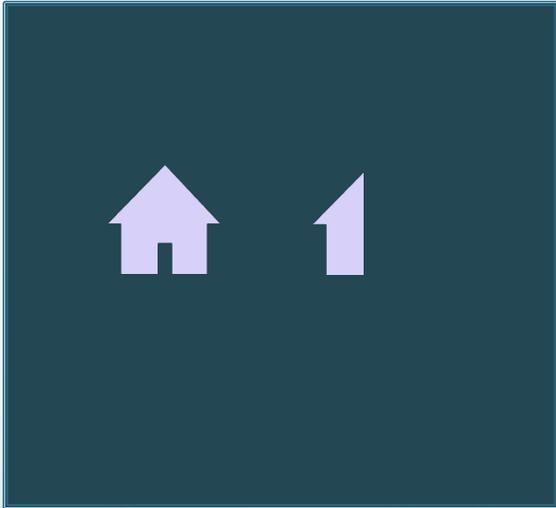
## Alt. B



Dense Areas of City  
(95% Percentile)  
10.3 people / acre

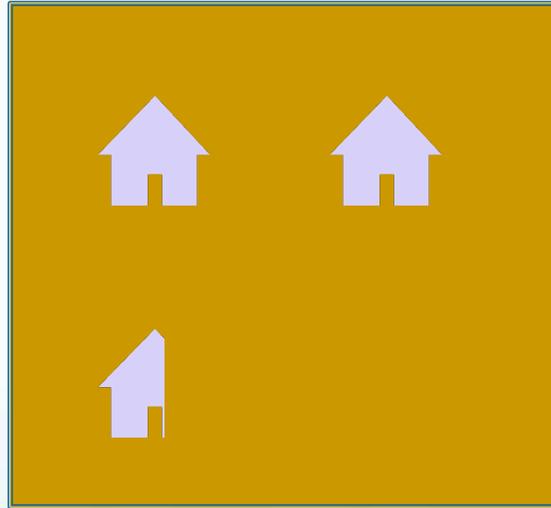
# Density Options – Per Household

## Baseline



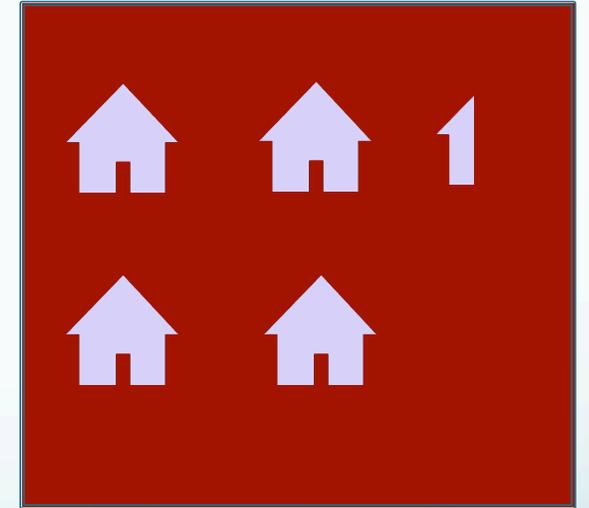
Existing Median Density  
1.3 Households / Acre

## Alt. A



Double Existing Density  
2.6 households per acre

## Alt. B



Dense Areas of City  
(95% percentile)  
4.2 households per acre





# Fiscal Costs

# Fiscal Costs Considered



Roads



Sidewalks



Sewer/  
Manholes



Storm Pipes  
Hydrants

# Fiscal Model Theory

- Denser development
  - distributes costs over more people.
  - requires less infrastructure per person
  - requires less infrastructure, overall
- City needs to accommodate +10% more people in 20 years
- Choose to build more or less infrastructure?
  - Density matters!

# Pittsburg Budget 2015

## Tax Revenue



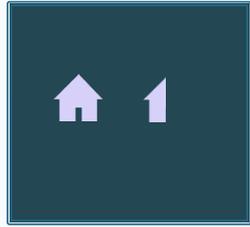
\$16.3 M

=\$787 per person

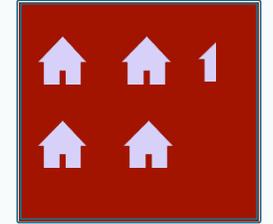
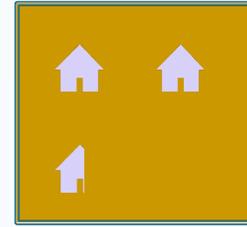
=\$1,921 per  
household

# Pittsburg's Budget

- The revenues (\$16.3) best reflects comparison, especially regarding infrastructure items
- Roads, sidewalks, water, and sewer are paid for by combination of general fund, as well as other sources

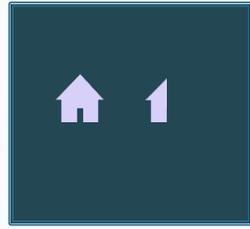


# Results

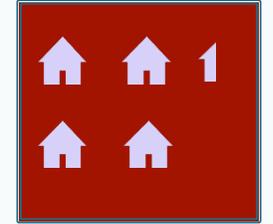
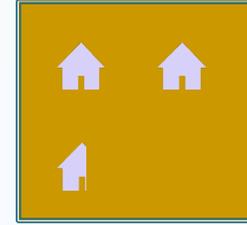


	Baseline	Alt A	Alt B
Capital Costs – 20 years	\$14.8 M	\$8.8 M	\$4.5 M
Amortized Costs (20 years at 2.2% rate)	\$18.6 M	\$11.0 M	\$5.6 M
Maintenance Costs – 20 years	\$0.7 M	\$0.4 M	\$0.2 M
<b>Total Costs – 20 year</b>	<b>\$19.3 M</b>	<b>\$11.4 M</b>	<b>\$5.8 M</b>
<b>Fiscal Cost per year</b> (additional revenue needed)	<b>\$965 K</b> (+5.9% to revenue)	<b>\$572 K</b> (+3.5% to revenue)	<b>\$290 K</b> (+1.8% to revenue)

**Study costs to accommodate +10% more residents**



# Results



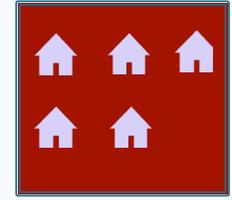
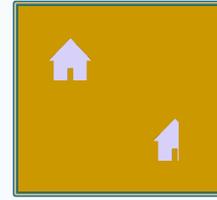
	Baseline	Alt A	Alt B
Total 20-year Costs per <b>Additional</b> Person	\$9,039	\$5,356	\$2,712
Annual Costs per <b>Additional</b> Person	\$452	\$268	\$136
Annual Costs per <b>Additional</b> Household	\$1,103	\$653	\$331

To have net-zero fiscal costs under existing Baseline Density:

- Either additional households pay *additional* \$1,103 in taxes
- Or the other 20.6 K people in the City *subsidizes* new resident costs (raise taxes)
- Or also tax businesses
- Or hope funds are generated from somewhere else
- Or some combination



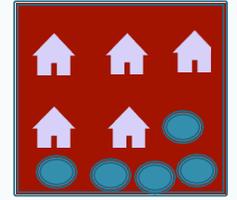
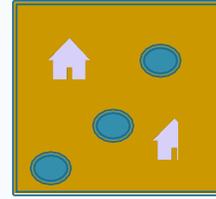
# Results



	Baseline	Alt A	Alt B
Total 20-year Savings	-	\$7.9 M	\$13.5 M
Savings per year	-	\$393 K	\$676 K
Annual Savings per <b>Additional</b> Person	-	\$184	\$316
Annual Savings per <b>Additional</b> Household	-	\$449	\$772



# Results



	Baseline	Alt A - INFILL	Alt B - INFILL
Total 20-year Savings	-	\$15.8 M	\$17.5 M
Savings per year	-	\$794 K	\$879 K
Annual Savings per <b>Additional</b> Person	-	\$372	\$411
Annual Savings per <b>Additional</b> Household	-	\$907	\$1,004

## Appendix B: Complete Streets Resources

## General implementation

- Complete Streets Implementation Resource Hub, includes examples of plans, policies, and programs that support changing process and procedures, offering training and educational opportunities, reviewing and updating design guidance, and measuring performance. [www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets/implementation](http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets/implementation)
- Taking Action on Complete Streets: A Toolkit for Implementation, a 2013 report from the National Complete Streets Coalition: <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets/implementation>
- Complete Streets in the Southeast—A Toolkit, from the National Complete Streets Coalition and AARP, features best practices in policy development and implementation from the Southeast United States. It also includes policy customizable outreach tools, such as letters to the editor and op-eds. [www.smartgrowthamerica.org/documents/complete-streets-southeast-toolkit.pdf](http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/documents/complete-streets-southeast-toolkit.pdf)
- Completing Our Streets: The Transition to Safe and Inclusive Transportation Networks.
- [www.completingourstreets.com](http://www.completingourstreets.com). Barbara McCann's book on the Complete Streets implementation process told through the stories of practitioners.

## Costs

- Complete Streets Guide to Tackling the Costs Question. Guide with companion PowerPoint file. [www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets/implementation/cost-concerns](http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets/implementation/cost-concerns)
- Shapard, J. and Cole, M. (2013). "Do complete streets cost more than incomplete streets?" Proceedings, Transportation Research Board Annual Meeting, 2013. Paper 13-4283. <http://amonline.trb.org/2ve3qr/1>

## Funding priority systems and programs

- Project Solicitation & Evaluation: Scoring criteria. Mid-America Regional Council (Kansas City, MO region). [www.smartgrowthamerica.org/documents/cs/impl/mo-marc-evaluation.pdf](http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/documents/cs/impl/mo-marc-evaluation.pdf)
- New Jersey Complete Streets program, with links to Local Assistance program:
- [www.state.nj.us/transportation/eng/completestreets/implementation.shtm](http://www.state.nj.us/transportation/eng/completestreets/implementation.shtm)
- Atlanta Regional Commission Livable Centers Initiative. See case study in The Innovative DOT. [www.smartgrowthamerica.org/the-innovative-dot](http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/the-innovative-dot)

## Street design and typology examples

- Urban Street Design Guidelines. Charlotte, NC. <http://charneck.org/city/charlotte/transportation/plansprojects/pages/urban%20street%20design%20guidelines.aspx>
- Implementing Complete Streets: Major and Collector Street Plan. Nashville, TN.
- [www.smartgrowthamerica.org/documents/cs/impl/tn-nashville-streetplan.pdf](http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/documents/cs/impl/tn-nashville-streetplan.pdf)
- Right-of-Way Improvements Manual. Seattle, WA.
- [www.seattle.gov/transportation/rowmanual/manual/](http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/rowmanual/manual/)

## Road diets

- Federal Highway Administration. (2010). "Evaluation of Lane Reduction 'Road Diet' Measures on Crashes" [Summary report]. Publication Number FHWA-HRT-10-053. [www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/research/safety/10053/10053.pdf](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/research/safety/10053/10053.pdf)

- Federal Highway Administration. (n.d.). "Proven Safety Countermeasures: 'Road Diet.'" Publication Number FHWA-SA-12-013. [http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/provencountermeasures/fhwa\\_sa\\_12\\_013.htm](http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/provencountermeasures/fhwa_sa_12_013.htm)
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center. (2013). "Road Diet Conversions: A Synthesis of Safety Research." Reported prepared for the Federal Highway Administration DTFH61-11-H-00024. <http://bit.ly/14KJfJq>

### **Policy development**

- Complete Streets Local Policy Workbook. Provides a step-by-step guide to the 10 elements of an effective complete streets policy. <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/guides/complete-streets-local-policy-workbook>
- Complete Streets Policy Analysis Report (issued annually) ranks every written policy in the United States. <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/documents/cs/cs-policyanalysis.pdf>
- The Coalition also provides downloadable PowerPoints that explain Complete Streets as a concept, policy adoption and policy implementation, as well as fact sheets on the benefits of Complete Streets. [www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets/a-to-z](http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets/a-to-z)