

Borough of Forest City

Outdoor Town Action Plan

December 2021

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I. Introduction to the Outdoor Economy and Outdoor Towns

The Outdoor Economy

A newly recognized industry, outdoor recreation incorporates how people spend their hard-earned dollars either on gear purchases & vehicles or dollars spent on trips & travel. It's changing how we think about the time we spend outside, the communities in which we seek to live, and the wild places where we play. This has been amplified by the Covid pandemic.

Stimulated by an experience-driven lifestyle, people want to get outside and play, in their own regional "backyards". That is exploring nature like mountains, biking and hiking trails, lakes, and rivers. By re-thinking trails and tourism as potential revenue generators, communities can leverage their natural assets into a sustainable and supportive outdoor economy. Over time, effort adds up, and small yet robust economies that attract skilled workers and unique businesses emerge. In addition to building local economies, it has a positive impact on resident's health and the local environment.

The outdoor economy is an important economic driver to communities of all sizes because it stimulates the tourism and provides communities an opportunity to diversify their businesses and grow the commercial district.

Many different types of industries depend on the outdoor economy, including companies that make recreation gear, local retail shops that serve tourists visiting trails and parks, Even non-recreation businesses want to locate near nature-based assets to provide incentives, resulting in a "competitive advantage" for hiring and retaining workers. We are learning that people can now work from anywhere, so avid outdoor recreationalist will choose to be near someplace they can play too!

The Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) released updated economic data on (2020) outdoor recreation's powerful and positive economic impact on the U.S. economy showing \$788 billion in economic output, comprising 2.1% of U.S. GDP and supporting 5.2 million jobs.

A recent poll showed 69 percent of Americans have gained a renewed appreciation for the outdoors during the COVID-19 pandemic (source: Outdoor Foundation). People want to get outside for their physical and mental health. What's more, they yearn for social connection, which they can find through safely distanced activities in regional parks or local trails.

This economic sector was growing rapidly prior to the pandemic, and it can continue to lead as an economic growth engine and job creator for communities of all sizes Between 2012 and 2019 (pre-pandemic) the outdoor recreation economy grew nearly 2% annually.

Findings indicate that the economic impact of COVID-19 is historic and catastrophic in many industries, including the travel and tourism industry; year over year spending on outdoor recreation did drop overall by 2.3%, likely due to closures of lodgings, restaurant, ski resorts and other places to spend money due to COVID restrictions. However, within the many types of outdoor recreation, spending actually grew from 2019-2020 on boating & fishing by 27%, and on bicycling by over 10%.

And although spending may have dropped in some parts of the outdoor economy, participation in outdoor recreation significantly increased, suggesting that this industry has tremendous growth potential if those new participants continue to participate.

The 2021 Outdoor Participation Trends Report, commissioned by the Outdoor Foundation, reveals that in 2020, 53 percent of Americans ages 6 and over participated in outdoor recreation at least once, the highest participation rate on record. Remarkably, 7.1 million more Americans participated in outdoor recreation in 2020 than in the year prior. Nearly ¼ of these new participants engaged in running or cycling, this indicates a promising trend for a town like Forest City that lies along a multi-use trail.

This same survey revealed that 75% of new participants intend on continuing their outdoor activities. On a related note, new participants were younger, more likely to be female, more likely to live in urban counties (like nearby Lackawanna County) and more diverse.

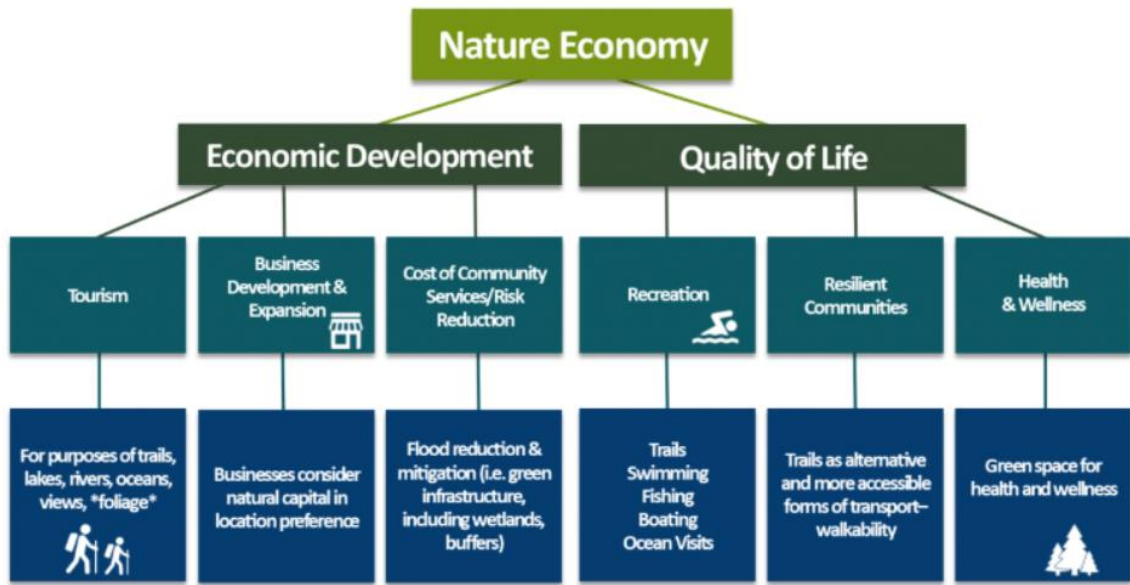
Outdoor recreation brings together private businesses such as outfitters and retail, nonprofits that focus on sustainability and conservation, and local governments interested in increasing their tax base while providing quality service delivery to their citizens. Outdoor recreation attracts visitors and increases the region's economic development while also creating buy-in to address environmental, sustainability, and service concerns of local residents and governments.

Stimulated by an experience-driven lifestyle, outdoor enthusiasts come in all shapes and sizes, sharing one common goal: to both work and play, as a way of life.

Business owners seek a work - life balance, too. Many owners ride the same dirt trails or paddle the same river as their employees further reinforcing an active lifestyle. Trails and associated amenities near the workplace like bike repair stations, cafes and select retail improves the workplace environment, by matching both passion and profession for workers of all kinds

By leveraging recreational assets in a balanced manner, communities can provide a high quality of life and drive economic benefits and opportunities, attracting new residents and businesses seeking a balanced lifestyle.

The following graphic represents the many benefits that the outdoor economy brings to communities:



Source: BackyardConcepts.org

The State-wide and Local Economic Impact of Outdoor Economy and D&H Rail Trail

As described above, the outdoor economy, including outdoor recreation activities such as cycling, camping, fishing, hunting, snow sports, water sports and off-roading, and the retail and service-based businesses that support these activities, is an enormous economic engine. In Pennsylvania, the outdoor economy in 2019 generated \$28.5 billion in total economic impact, \$19.8 billion in direct outdoor recreation sales, \$1.1 billion in tax revenue and over 245,000 jobs. There are more jobs in the outdoor economy than in the trucking sector or the food and beverage manufacturing sector of Pennsylvania’s economy (source: Pennsylvania Downtown Center).

Businesses along rail trails have experienced increased revenue from trail traffic, and new businesses have located in towns along multi-use trails like the D&H Rail Trail (sources: Economic Impact of the Great Allegheny Passage, Economic Benefits of Trails). In addition, businesses that promote themselves as “trail friendly” see increase in revenue and more customers. A recent survey of trail-friendly businesses along the Delaware and Lehigh Trail in Lehigh, Northampton and Bucks Counties revealed that 60% of these businesses saw an increase in business and 48% saw new customers as result of promoting themselves as trail friendly.

More locally, in 2019, visitors to the 7-county Upstate Pennsylvania region spent \$485 million on recreation when they visited; in Susquehanna County alone, visitor spending on recreation totaled \$32.8 million (source Pennsylvania Tourism Office).

In 2017, the Rail-Trail Council of NEPA, in partnership with NEP Sno-Trails and the Rails to Trails Conservancy, undertook an analysis of the economic impact of trail users on the D&H Rail Trail. They found that the annual direct spending by users was \$370,000, with cyclists and walkers spending an average of \$20 per person per trip on food and beverage. A survey of snowmobilers that was done as part of that study found that snowmobilers report spending an average of \$102 per trip on food, beverage, and fuel when they use the trail. As the D&H Rail Trail completes further improvements, it is likely that the economic impacts in Forest City would increase, as more people will use the trail.

This economic value of outdoor recreation provides a strong foundation upon which Forest City can base a revitalization strategy such as the Outdoor Town initiative provides.

Other Benefits of Being an Outdoor Town

Improving the local economy by attracting more visitors is a key focus for the Outdoor Town effort in Forest City, but the benefits of the Outdoor Town model also include benefits to residents. Providing more recreation opportunities for residents through additional bicycle and pedestrian routes, programming (like guided tours or snowshoeing) and better connections to the D&H Rail Trail will benefit the health of residents. As the most recent Community Health Needs Assessment by Wayne Memorial Hospital highlights, heart disease is a significant health issue in the Forest City area. Walking can reduce the risk of serious medical conditions such as heart disease (source: UAB Medicine). Recruiting businesses like more restaurants or a coffee shop will provide residents with more services and places to shop and can improve the tax base for the town. Installing public art like murals and sculptures that celebrate the history and heritage of Forest City provide an opportunity to showcase and honor that history, support key local institutions like the Forest City Area Historical Society and provide a basis for themed town events which residents (and visitors) can enjoy. Making improvements to the commercial buildings on Main Street will attract new investment and increase pride in the town.

In addition, national economic trends provide additional benefits for improving the outdoor economy in Forest City. The national economy is transitioning to a “work from anywhere” environment for many types of businesses, businesses are looking to recruit “knowledge worker” employees who have always been more footloose, and the labor market is now predominantly Millennials. Studies show that these knowledge workers and Millennial employees prefer to live in a place with outdoor recreation amenities like trails, rivers and mountains; recruiting younger people and families could be a significant benefit to Forest City (sources: International Economic Development Council, Michigan Future). Furthermore, quality of life is an increasingly important consideration in determining

business location. Amenity-laden locations are more desirable, particularly for high-technology and knowledge-intensive firms that are less dependent on traditional location factors like proximity to raw materials and transportation costs. Workers prefer places where they expect to enjoy a high quality of life that embraces sociability, recreation and alternative lifestyles (source: University of North Carolina). The D&H Rail Trail, Lackawanna River, Elk Mountain and other outdoor recreation places near to Forest City can serve as that business magnet for those types of businesses.

Outdoor Towns

The Outdoor Town program was developed by the Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC) to encourage Pennsylvania communities to use natural assets such as trails and rivers as a foundation for revitalization and growth. Using the trail town concept pioneered by the Progress Fund in western Pennsylvania as its foundation, Outdoor Towns expands that concept to embrace all types of nature-based recreation activities and the locations where those activities occur.

The Outdoor Town Program includes an online toolkit that “lays out steps along a pathway to help make your town a great place to live, visit, and explore the outdoors. It is intended to be an entry-level website for use by self-motivated communities. It will encourage outdoor and nature-based community development by providing easy to access educational content, inspiring case studies, best practices, tools, templates, and links to available resources.” (source: townsandtrailstoolkit.org)

As PEC describes it, an Outdoor Town is a place that brings people together, both visitor and resident, through nature. The benefits of being an Outdoor Town include economic vitality through visitor spending, quality of life for residents through enhanced recreation opportunities and more businesses, and health through participation in recreation activities.

The Outdoor Towns program is not intended to be a designation, but rather a process through which communities can develop and implement a plan for action. The process includes seven steps – creating an action team of local members, identify partners, create a vision, set priorities in an Action Plan, implement the projects recommended in the Plan, celebrate successes, track results and initiate new projects.

The Toolkit (www.townsandtrailstoolkit.org) is a robust online resource and contains details on each of the seven steps, sample agendas for Action Team meetings and public meetings, a variety of forms that are to be used when creating an Action Team, identifying partners, performing the town self-assessment, reviewing plans, undertaking a town survey, and creating a summary of public input. More details on these steps are contained in the “Outdoor Town Process” section. There are also various list of resources and a sample resolution of support for the local elected officials to consider.

II. Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Pilot Program and Background on Forest City

Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Pilot Program

In the fall of 2020, DCNR contracted with Eastwick Solutions to facilitate an Outdoor Towns program for two communities – Carbondale (Lackawanna County) and Forest City (Susquehanna County). Launched under the Peer Grant program, each community received a DCNR grant and matched it with local funds. In Forest City, the Borough, and the Rail-Trail Council of NE PA each contributed \$500 in matching funds.

A local Action Team was created, supported by staff members from DCNR and PEC whose input was invaluable in providing assistance and advice.

Forest City

The Borough of Forest City is located in southeastern Susquehanna County, adjacent to both Wayne and Lackawanna Counties. It has a distinct main street with a solid stock of commercial buildings lined along it and has the D&H Rail Trail located 3 blocks east from Main Street. The Lackawanna River is located just east of the D&H Rail Trail and another multi-use trail, the O&W Trail, is located just east of the Lackawanna River, both in nearby Clinton Township, Wayne County. Nearby outdoor recreation places include Kennedy Park, Elk Mountain ski resort, Pompton Lake State Park, Lackawanna State Park, Stillwater Lake and many more. The D&H Trail, developed, maintained, and owned by the Rail-Trail Council of NE PA, is a very popular biking and walking trail in warmer months, and is extensively used by cross country skiers and snowmobiling members of NEP Sno and ATV Trails. Forest City was also recently designated as a Trail Town by the Rail-Trail Council.

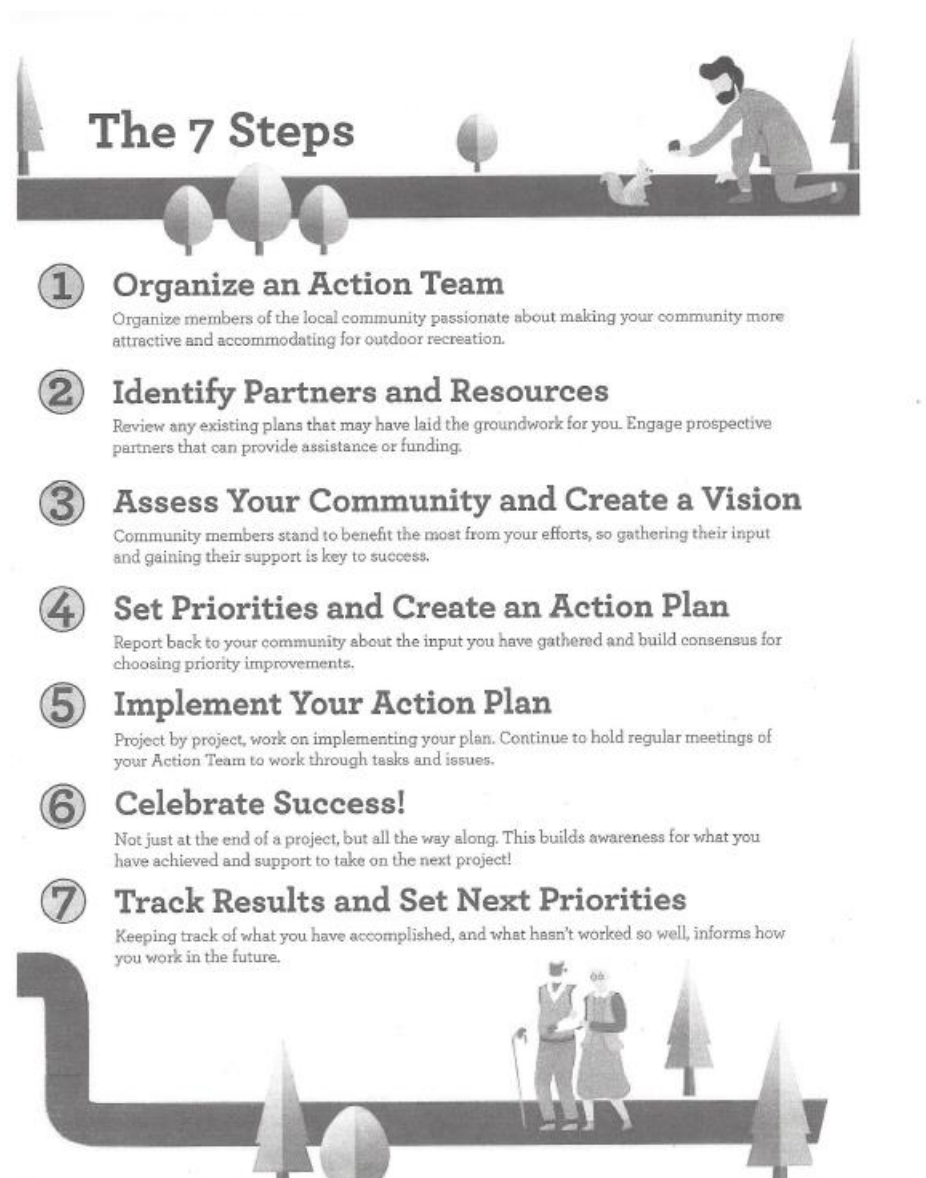
Forest City was developed as a coal and lumbering center and was the northernmost extent of the anthracite coal fields of northeastern Pennsylvania. The D&H Railroad and the Jefferson Branch of the Erie Railroad that ran from Carbondale to Lanesboro was the economic engine that drove the city's growth. With a peak population of about 6,000 persons in 1920, its current population has shrunk to 1,780 persons. With the closure of the rail line and subsequent decline in coal and lumbering, downtown Forest City is no longer the bustling commercial center it was in the early 20th Century. However, it still retains retail businesses and attractions that would serve outdoor recreation visitors – including a grocery store, a convenience market, several restaurants and bars, a library, a historical museum, and a local park with a disc golf course. Moreover, the purchase of the old D&H line and conversion into the D&H Rail Trail has created a significant regional outdoor recreation attraction.

Demographically, Forest City's median age is 49 years old, it is 93% white, 6% Black and 3.5% Hispanic, and has a median household income is \$45,338.

III. The Outdoor Town Process in Forest City

An early decision in the Outdoor Town effort was to follow the Outdoor Towns Toolkit as closely as possible since this was a pilot project for the initiative. This meant following the process as laid out in the Toolkit and using the various templates and forms contained in the Toolkit.

The seven steps for the Outdoor Town process is given below with a short description of activities occurring during those steps.



The 7 Steps

- 1 Organize an Action Team**
Organize members of the local community passionate about making your community more attractive and accommodating for outdoor recreation.
- 2 Identify Partners and Resources**
Review any existing plans that may have laid the groundwork for you. Engage prospective partners that can provide assistance or funding.
- 3 Assess Your Community and Create a Vision**
Community members stand to benefit the most from your efforts, so gathering their input and gaining their support is key to success.
- 4 Set Priorities and Create an Action Plan**
Report back to your community about the input you have gathered and build consensus for choosing priority improvements.
- 5 Implement Your Action Plan**
Project by project, work on implementing your plan. Continue to hold regular meetings of your Action Team to work through tasks and issues.
- 6 Celebrate Success!**
Not just at the end of a project, but all the way along. This builds awareness for what you have achieved and support to take on the next project!
- 7 Track Results and Set Next Priorities**
Keeping track of what you have accomplished, and what hasn't worked so well, informs how you work in the future.

Source: www.trailsandtownstoolkit.org

Action Team creation (Step 1)

In early 2021, an Action Team was created to help steward the process and provide local input. The membership included elected officials, borough staff, local organizations, business owners, property owners and interested residents. A list of members is included in the Appendix.

The Action Team met monthly, throughout 2021. They also were active participants in multiple public engagement activities and ran the final Community Action meeting. The Action Team oversaw the writing of this plan and will present it to Borough Council and the Mayor.

Identify potential partners and resources (Step 2)

Using the Toolkit's list of categories of potential partners, as well as the consultant's expertise from previous work a list of potential partners was created. These partners would provide input during the planning process and potentially be very helpful as the implementation of this plan takes place. A list of potential partners is included in the appendix,

As part of this step, a review of relevant local and regional plans and projects were reviewed and assessed to understand how they may inform this Action Plan. These plans included the Greater Forest City Business Alliance's strategic plan (2015), the Borough of Forest City's Comprehensive Plan (1990), the Susquehanna County Comprehensive Plan (2018), the Endless Mountains Heritage Region Management Plan, the Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission's Bike/Pedestrian Plan and the Upper Lackawanna Watershed Conservation Plan (2002).

The GFCBA's Strategic Plan's three priorities (Retain, Strengthen and Promote Existing businesses, New small business development, and Establish effective marketing and communication efforts) are supported by Outdoor Town effort. In addition, several of the objectives listed support recommended actions in this plan, including:

- Develop marketing plan to promote existing businesses
- Research resources available to help members improve and grow
- Research local, state, and federal programs to enhance small towns and their business communities and work with key partners to pursue
- Create available inventory list of [commercial] properties, meet with building owners to discuss efforts

- Network with investors, banks, loan funds to determine what financing is available for start up businesses

The Susquehanna County Comprehensive Plan supports Outdoor Town effort in several ways. The land use, community facilities and economic development goals support enhancing community centers (such as Forest City) and environmentally responsible economic development. Specific actions recommended include:

- Encourage the use of natural resources in creating value added industries in economic development efforts
- Support municipal efforts to provide recreation opportunities through grants,
- Support private entities in their quest for grant funds to provide recreational opportunities such as Rails-to-Trails
- Provide the necessary expertise to develop an effective Heritage Destination Development.
- Use the Endless Mountains Heritage Region Management Action Plan as a general guideline for heritage destination (tourism) development.
- Support private entities in their quest for grant funds to provide recreational opportunities such as Rails-to-Trails
- Include pedestrian and bicycle friendly design in new and existing roads.

The Endless Mountains Heritage Region Management Action Plan supports Outdoor Town efforts through its 5 goals of:

- attracting visitors
- engaging visitors and residents in appreciation of the region’s heritage
- protecting and enhancing heritage assets
- offering a wide range of outdoor recreation destinations and activities
- delivering an authentic experience.

This Management Action Plan also explicitly recognizes the D&H Rail-Trail as one of the Heritage Region’s “premiere recreational trails”.

The Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission’s (NTRPDC) Bike/Pedestrian Plan also supports the Outdoor Town initiative through its bicycling, sidewalks and trails recommendations.

The Borough’s Comprehensive Plan was also reviewed, but due to its being completed in 1990, was not considered up-to-date enough to cite.

The Upper Lackawanna Watershed Conservation Plan includes a recommendation for dam releases from the Stillwater Dam to provide recreational kayaking for the portion of river that lies along Forest City.

Current relevant projects identified during this step include the following:

- Lackawanna Flats plan for park – includes river access
- Endless Mtns Heritage Region (EMHR) is developing a 4 county bikepacking route (including Susquehanna County) that includes the D&H Rail-Trail, for the 2022 tourism season and is working with Route 6 Alliance to promote bike tourism
- Existing programs on the D&H Rail-Trail include Walking Mondays, Biking Wednesdays, Yoga, nature walks, history walks, trail clean-ups, bike to lunch, dog walks, night hikes, scavenger hunts, storyboard walks. Existing activities include walking, running, hiking, dog-walking, biking, and e-biking, nature exploration, history exploration, snowmobiling (with permit), snowshoeing, cross country skiing, fishing (walk-in), kayaking (for more expert paddlers). There is free wi-fi at Forest City (Commerce Blvd) trailhead
- Existing activities on O&W include ATV/UTV (with permit), fishing with vehicular access (early in trout season)
- Potential partnership with Anthracite Bicycle Coalition for bike rentals and livery
- Lackawanna River has public access at multiple points and has good water quality

- Sidewalk improvements
 - New Sidewalks and streetlights to be installed on east side of Main St from Iron Duke Gym to Hornbeck's in 2021
 - New sidewalk on Route 247 to Browndale to be constructed in 2022

- D&H Rail-rail Improvements
 - Bike Repair station at Simpson
 - Trail resurfacing in Union Dale area
 - Mileage markers – Union Dale to Ararat
 - New Trail Maps at Simpson, FC, Union Dale and Ararat Trail heads
 - Improvements to northernmost section (Stevens Point to NY Border)

- Business Expansion/Recruitment/Enhancement Potential
 - Zazzera's improvement – expanded retail space and indoor seating

- Air BnB under development
 - Desire by Greater Forest City Industries to develop something other than light industry - maybe retail/restaurant/brewery/bike & kayak rental with upper floor for lodging
 - EMHR wants to do a façade program in Susquehanna Co (has started one in neighboring county now, no timeframe for Susquehanna Co)
 - A proposed mural on privately-owned building on Main St.
 - Rail-Trail Council has polled businesses on trail-friendly amenities
- Marketing/Promotion
 - Forest City Historical Society is currently working on a welcome packet for new residents that may have useful info for marketing

Assess your community and create a vision (Step 3)

The Outdoor Town process has a very strong public engagement and public input facet that includes a strong Action Team, an initial public input meeting, a public survey, a town assessment (referred herein as the “Walkshop”), a Community Action Meeting, and a presentation to Borough Council. In addition, Borough Council was regularly updated by members of the Action Team.

The public input meeting, public survey, and Walkshop are all part of Step 3. The Community Action Meeting and presentation to Borough Council are part of Step 4 and are described in that section of the Action Plan.

Both public meetings, the survey and the walkshop were widely promoted through social media outlets and printed flyers that were distributed throughout the town. In addition, public survey and the Community Action Meeting were promoted using press releases; with additional promotion for the Community Action Meeting using Borough utility bills inserts.

The initial public meeting, called a Vision Workshop, was held on Saturday May 1, 2021, in Kennedy Park, a Borough Park. There were about 25 attendees. A short presentation on the Outdoor Town idea, goals and process was given and attendees were asked a series of questions about their concerns for downtown Forest City and ideas for improvements for downtown. This information was captured using flipcharts and then compiled. A representative of the Linde Corporation also attended and brought a copy of their plans for Lackawanna Flats, a former coal waste site along the Lackawanna that is planned to be rehabilitated as a public park and provide access to the Lackawanna River. An agenda for this meeting is included in the Appendix.

The public survey, based upon the Outdoor Town Toolkit, but modified to reflect Forest City's nearby outdoor recreation places, was released online and in a paper version in late April and active for one month. The survey asked a series of questions about the use of outdoor recreation places near Forest City, the outdoor recreation participation of respondents, favorite local destinations, events attended and potential future events they would like to see, concerns about downtown Forest City, and hopes and ideas for improving downtown. In addition, basic information (gender, age, home town) about respondents was collected.

A total of 177 responses were received, a very strong response rate. The responses assisted the Action Team in defining goals for the initiative, a vision for downtown Forest City, and potential recommended actions to improve downtown and better connect the town with outdoor recreation.

Public Survey summary – Key Findings

The following are key findings from the survey. A full summary of the survey is attached in the Appendix.

- Public concerns about downtown - Two themes emerged from the survey, the appearance of buildings and empty storefronts, and the limited number and type of businesses on Main Street.
- Value of Forest City to the public – The resounding response was that people valued the small town feeling of Forest City.
- Favorite Places to take out of town visitors – Local restaurants were identified as favorite places by an overwhelming number of respondents. Due to the limited number of restaurants within Forest City itself, this was interpreted to mean restaurants in the region.
- Hopes and aspirations – The most-identified items were keeping the small town vibe, and having more vibrancy and businesses downtown with a mix of businesses; improving the appearance of downtown also scored highly.
- Impediments to walking and biking – Poor sidewalk conditions, the speed of traffic on Main Street and lack of bike lanes were the top 3 impediments offered by respondents.
- New events – The most popular idea suggested by respondents was music-related events in Forest City.

The Walkshop

A walking self-assessment of town was done on Wednesday, May 13 in the evening. Using the form available in the Toolkit (with a few modifications to fit Forest City), members of the Action Team and the public assessed the existing downtown, the D&H Rail Trail through

the borough, and the connections between the trail and downtown. The assessment looked at the types of businesses in town, visitor amenities and information availability, cycling and pedestrian amenities. The assessment teams were asked to view the town through the eyes of a new visitor and determine, among other items, the visitor-readiness of the borough.

The self-assessment was held at the Forest City Area Historical Society on Main Street; about 15 people participated. It was performed using the assessment form contained in the Outdoor Towns Toolkit, which was revised to reflect Forest City's outdoor recreational assets. The assessment form is broken into six sections: bicycle and pedestrian improvements, gateway and signage improvements, tourism, marketing and promotion, trail access, sustainable practices, and business development.

The participants in the assessments were split up into two groups and asked to fill out the assessment forms as they walked the town and trail. The assessment lasted about one and one-half hours and the participants regrouped at the starting point to complete the forms and do a quick debriefing.

Both groups identified signage and visitor information as key missing pieces, and cited impediments to bicycling and walking. Both groups provided recommendations for bicycle and pedestrian improvements, trail and river access improvements, ways to improved marketing and promotion of Forest City, incorporate sustainability, and suggested ideas for improving Main Street's visual appearance. It was also noted that Zazzara's, the local supermarket, had purchased an adjoining building and was planning on expanding their current store.

Suggested improvements

The results of the Community Vision Workshop, survey and Walkshop culminated in numerous improvements for walking and bicycling, trail and river access improvements, the visual appearance of downtown, gateway and signage improvements, marketing and promotion, business attraction and expansion and sustainable practices were given by survey respondents, the walkshop participants and from the vision workshop.

Theses suggested improvements are listed below:

Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements

- Improved sidewalks and install new sidewalk on Rt 247
- Bike lanes (on Main St, Rt. 171 and Rt. 247)
- Bike racks/artsy bike racks
- Bike repair station
- Clean gravel from sidewalks & street
- Safer crossings on Main St

- Paint Erie St/Center St to encourage use from trail to town & install “inspirational” signs
- Create a street park (e.g. a park in an empty lot or a pocket park)
- Establish a crosswalk across Rt 247 (to Browndale)
- Improve lighting on Main St & across 247 to the D & H Trail
- Bicyclist and driver education (e.g. Share the Road and no bikes on sidewalks)

D&H Trail and River Access Improvements

- Erie St. trailhead improvements (bench, trellis, services, more signage)
- Establish an access point cross Erie St trail head to allow trail users to visit businesses
- Enforce a “zero tolerance” policy for ATV riders not wearing helmets
- Create Clifford access
- Host entertainment on the trail
- Install picnic tables
- At Commerce Blvd trailhead build a pavilion and bathroom
- Install more trash cans or empty existing ones more frequently
- Have food truck(s) at Commerce Blvd trailhead
- Post regulations
- More handicapped access
- Improve access for snowmobilers into downtown

Visual Appearance and Beautification Projects

- Improvements to existing storefronts (includes signage improvements)
- Streetscape Enhancements (lights, trees, flowerpots)
- Murals (in town and along trail)
- Selfie spots
- Sculpture
- Tear down vacant buildings and use for parking

Gateway and Signage Improvements

- More/enhanced directional signs and maps (to trail, downtown, Kennedy Park, dog park)
- Need welcome/gateway signs at North & South Main St. and at Kennedy Park
- Maintain existing signs (prune overgrowth)
- Install a sign for the D & H Trail going over bridge
- Check Pennsylvania Historic Museum Commission sign at northern end of Main St.

Marketing and Promotion

- Distribute trail maps at library
- Install QR codes through town and trail (with location and historical information)
- Market to powersports audience
- Undertake multi-town marketing effort with D&H trail as centerpiece
- Market Forest City (possible case study: Linden VT)
- Need some visual aid (i.e. renderings) to show what downtown could look like
- Look to attract retirees as visitors and future residents

Business Attraction and Expansion Strategies

- Fill empty storefronts with retail or restaurants
- Need funding for bldg. renovation/facades
- Need to use upper floors above commercial
- Need more businesses
- Need lodging
- Need destination businesses
- Need something unique
- Need developer/investor interest
- Need for more broadband access
- Encourage businesses to be open when people are using the trail (later and on weekends)

Sustainable Practices Improvements

- Plant more Street trees

Other Suggestions

- ATV access into town
- No ATV access into town
- Install a community garden next to 804 Main
- Need to attract younger people to this effort
- Use trail to connect towns (i.e. to create a regional identity)

Vision Statement and Goals (part of Steps 3 & 4)

The following vision statement for Forest City was adopted by the Action Team:

Forest City is a welcoming small town with a big backyard for outdoor recreation and is a place where families, businesses, culture, ideas, and sense of community thrive.

The Action Team also developed the following goals to guide the development of the Action Plan:

- Improve Main Street Appearance
- Enhance Erie St. and Forest City (Commerce Blvd.) Trailheads
- Connect Outdoor Assets to Main Street Business District
- Build Business & Community Development
- Improve Marketing Efforts

Set Priorities and Create Action Plan (Step 4)

The suggestions that were summarized above were reviewed by the Action Team. All of the suggestions were evaluated for inclusion as potential recommendations based upon feasibility, cost, and availability of potential partners. The resulting 27 suggestions were then presented to the public as “potential recommendations” at the Community Action Meeting.

Community Action Meeting

After the Action Team developed draft goals, a draft vision and generated a list of potential recommendations for the Action Plan, a Community Action Meeting was held on September 9. Held in the Forest City Area Historical Society’s museum and headquarters, in the former Methodist Church on Main Street, the meeting attracted about 50 participants. The Community Action Meeting’s primary purpose was to solicit additional public input on potential recommendations, providing the Action Team with valuable information on the public’s attitude and potential support for these ideas. The meeting also includes a summary of public input heard up until this point, and a summary of the next steps of the process.

The participants were asked for their input on the draft goals and vision, and then asked to prioritize the potential recommendations that had been developed by the Action Team based on the Vision Workshop, Community Survey, Walking Assessment and Action Team discussion.

During the Community Action Meeting, the 27 potential recommendations were presented under 5 categories and displayed on presentation boards. Meeting attendees were given 5 “sticky dots” that they could place on the potential recommendations that they felt were the highest priority. This “dot voting” method signified the attendees’ opinions and prioritization of the recommendations. This input was used by the Action Team as they drew up the final list of high priority recommendations to include in this Plan.

Final Recommendations

The Action Team carefully reviewed the public input received from the Community Action Meeting and evaluated the potential recommendations. Recognizing that the 27 potential recommendations would be too many to be feasible in the Action Plan, the Action Team determined that 8 recommendations, deemed “high priority actions” would be so listed in the Action Plan. Each of these high priority actions are described in more detail in the following section, after the final 3 steps of the Outdoor Town process are presented.

Next Steps

Implement the Action Plan (Step 5)

This Action Plan will be presented to Borough Council with a request to pass a resolution of support for it (a draft resolution of support is included in the Appendices).

Following that, the Action Plan will require implementation, starting with the high-priority actions and working through the grid based on resources and partner support. It is strongly suggested an organization or entity be designated to track the progress on the action items, keep Borough Council and the public informed of this progress, and organize the celebrations as successes occur. This might be the current Action Team, if they so decide, a newly reconstituted Action Team, or possibly an existing organization in the Borough, such as the Greater Forest City Business Alliance. Another possibility is for the Action Team to be a subcommittee of the entity tasked with the responsibility of tracking and overseeing progress.

Each action item listed in the Implementation Grid has a suggested lead organization, as well as partners who may assist in the implementation by providing technical assistance, time, funding, local approvals, or other resources.

The Action Team will be provided with a “roadmap” for the next steps to follow to implement the overall plan, as well as one for each of the high-priority that lists next steps towards implementation.

Celebrate Success (Step 6)

Throughout the implementation of the Action Plan, as emphasized in the Outdoor Town Toolkit, successes must be publicly celebrated. This may be a ribbon cutting, or a news release, or a public event. Celebrations will help maintain the momentum that has been generated by this plan and its creation, and keep residents, businesses and local officials informed of the progress of this Plan.

Track Results and Set Next Priorities (Step 7)

The Outdoor Town process strongly suggests tracking results in order to measure success. This suggests that metrics be developed to help track and measure the impact of the Outdoor Town effort. This might be another on-line survey, a survey of businesses, an update to the User Survey/Economic Impact of the D&H Rail- Trail, or trail user counts.

Finally, as high priority actions are completed, this Plan should be reviewed and other actions added, using the improvement ideas that were generated during the creation of this plan.

IV. High Priority Actions - Final Recommendations

The Action Team met subsequent to the Community Action Team to compile the final list of high priority recommendations to include in this plan. The Action Team determined that seven recommendations would be considered high priority recommendations for action. Each of these high priority recommendations were reviewed, a potential lead entity or person was identified to lead the implementation of that action, potential partners to assist in the implementation were identified, a rough cost estimate was determined (e.g. low cost, moderate cost, high cost), potential funding sources were identified and a timeframe for action was identified (e.g. short-term or long-term). All of this information was then compiled into a single document – the Implementation Grid.

A brief description of each of the eight high-priority actions is given below. The high-priority actions are listed in the suggested priority order of the Action Team. The Implementation Grid follows this description.

Improve building facades – Downtown Forest City has great commercial building stock that demonstrates the rich history of the town. The two and three story commercial buildings, many dating to the late 19th and early 20th century, provide a tremendous amount of potential retail space on the ground floors and other uses on the second and third floors. However, throughout the public input process, the visual appearance of the commercial buildings on Main Street were mentioned as an area for improvement. With the number of vehicles traversing Main Street, improving the exterior facades of the commercial buildings would have a significant impact on the “curb appeal” of downtown. The improvements are not needed for all buildings, some are in excellent condition. The improvements might include a simple repainting, or more extensive façade renovations to remove incompatible, damaged or unattractive facades that were installed in the recent past. Façade improvements may also include awnings or commercial signage, doorways or windows. This type of program, sufficiently funded, could make a significant difference in the appearance of the storefronts on Main Street. Typically, successful façade programs require a match from the property owner or tenant, have a trained and experienced grant review committee and could include design professionals like architects, residents, the Greater Forest City Business Alliance and elected officials; it should also have general design guidelines (e.g. respect the historical elements and integrity of the building, reflect the

historical period that downtown Forest City became a vibrant downtown). The Forest City Area Historical Society would be an excellent resource to provide historic photos of building fronts, as well as advice on appropriate historical elements for the buildings.

Create murals on Main Street buildings – One of the existing murals, facing the Zazzera’s parking lot on 603 Main Street is a great example of public art as it reflects some of rich heritage of Forest City. The other mural, celebrating the Borough’s 150th anniversary, is partially obscured by a fence and needs some touching up. Public art such murals are often a staple in revitalization projects by helping beautify downtowns and are increasingly popular across the state. Murals can memorialize historical events or people, be representational art, or be abstract art. Professionally overseen and installed murals, with a public input process, can add visual excitement and signal to the visitor the pride, heritage and culture in Forest City. Currently, discussions are underway of installing a mural that reflects Forest City’s Trail Town status on the side of a Main Street building. This is a great starting point to consider installing multiple murals in the Forest City commercial district.

Recruit investors and developers to develop new retail, restaurants, and lodging – Downtown Forest City’s significant inventory of underutilized commercial building stock presents a supply of commercial space for future uses. In addition, the vacant lots/parking lots on Main Street could potentially be redeveloped into commercial buildings. Marketing these buildings and lots to developers or to investors is necessary to transform them from their current uses to new retail or restaurant space. Regarding lodgings, it is unlikely that there is sufficient demand for a hotel-type lodging, however, there may be demand for smaller Air BnB or VRBO type units for people visiting the area for multiple outdoor activities. These could be on upper floors of commercial buildings or located off Main Street.

Create safe bicycle and pedestrian routes and connections to the D&H Rail Trail – The D&H is a regional (and beyond) recreational draw. Creating better and safer ways for trail users to get from the trail to Main Street is critical to getting trail users to spend time and money in Forest City. The topography is challenging and may require some more extensive or circuitous routes. There may be several connection points that should be considered, including PA Route 247 (from the Forest City trailhead), Erie Street (from the Erie St trailhead), near the new Dog Park, and near the former Franceski’s Lumber property. While Main Street appears too narrow to install bike lanes, the town could also consider installing “Share the Road” signs or sharrows on Main Street to encourage safe passage of cyclists.

Enhance Main Street streetscape – The streetscape of a downtown street, including street trees, benches, trash and recycling receptacles, bike racks, streetlights and planters have been shown to improve the economic activity of those commercial streets, as well as improve the experience of the walker and cyclists along those streets by providing shade and a place to park a bicycle or sit and rest. The Rotary Club has provided several benches along Main Street, the Borough recently installed new sidewalks on the west side of the street, and the Borough has PADOT funds to replace sidewalks on the east side from the Iron Duke Gym to Hornbeck’s. Before final plans are completed for the east side, consideration to creating tree wells should be explored. A full streetscape for Main Street, with the elements listed previously, may be cost prohibitive for the Borough to consider now, however, more modest streetscape improvements such as planters on the sidewalk and bike racks are worth considering.

Market Forest City as a Trail Town/Outdoor Town – Marketing Forest City is essential to attracting visitors. As part of this marketing effort, the benefits of being an outdoor town should be promoted to everyone in town: residents, businesses, and local officials. This type of marketing - internal marketing - is needed to create support for the Outdoor Town effort, highlighting how being an Outdoor Town benefits residents and businesses and results in a better quality of life. Moreover, a town that understands the benefits of welcoming outdoor visitors also improves the experience of those visitors and encourages them to return and to promote the town to their friends and family. A robust external marketing campaigns, targeting visitors from Northeastern PA, northern New Jersey, and New York can showcase Forest City’s outdoor recreation assets like the D&H Trail and visitor attractions like the Forest City Area Historical Society’s museum. Marketing to visitors at nearby Elk Mountain and Prompton State Park, and D&H Rail-Trail users might highlight the places to shop, eat and drink in Forest City. Coordination and collaboration with the Endless Mountains Visitors’ Bureau is strongly suggested, as they are the experts in tourism marketing. Moreover, the Endless Mountains Heritage Region (EMHR) is developing a 4-county bikepacking route, that includes the D&H Rail Trail; promotion including a map begins in spring of 2022. This is a tremendous opportunity for Forest City businesses to leverage bike tourism to attract more visitors. Coordinating marketing with EMHR would also be advised.

Create Murals and Gateway at D&H Trailheads – Both trailheads, the Forest City trailhead off Industrial Drive and the Erie Street trailhead, are high-profile locations to install public art like murals or sculptures or a gateway. These places are the “front door” to Forest City for D&H Rail-Trail users; creating a dynamic welcome will attract interest in town. The Forest City trailhead already has some important amenities, including a bathroom, Wi-Fi and benches. The Erie Street trailhead has an artistic bike rack. These are foundations upon which to build. Adding an amenity like a bike repair station would further

enhance the gateway as a welcoming destination at either trailhead. The Endless Mountains Heritage Region, as part of its 4-county bikepacking route project, has some funding available for improvements such as a bike repair station. With regard to creating mural near the trailhead, potential space could be under the Route 427 overpass, or nearby buildings.

Create better connections to allow snowmobilers off-road access to downtown restaurants & Turkey Hill – The Action Team recognizes the potential market of snowmobilers. Although many snowmobilers start their trip at Forest City, there are also users that start from other places who pass by downtown on the D&H Rail Trail. Providing better access for them to get up to Main Street and park their machines at a location convenient to walk to dining places, or the Turkey Hill will encourage them to stop and spend some time and money. Working with the Rail-Trail Council of NEPA and private landowners would be needed to create those connections.

IMPLEMENTATION GRID

GOAL	RECOMMENDATION	LEAD	PARTNERS	SHORT TERM (1-3 years)	LONG TERM (3+ years)	COST RANGE \$ = low cost \$\$ = medium cost \$\$\$ = high cost	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
Improve Main St	Improve building façades	Borough	GFCBA Greater FC Area Historical Society	x		\$\$ to \$\$\$	ARPA -Boro or County DCED Keystone Communities
Improve Main St	Create Murals on Main St	Valley In Motion Boro (Paul)	Sage and Salt Studios (Jacob) Boro Greater FC Area Historical Society GFCBA	x		\$\$	Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation PA Council on the Arts Creative Catalyst Grant PA Council on the Arts Creative Communities Grant LHVA Valley in Motion
Build Business & Community Development	Recruit investors/developers for new retail, unique shops, restaurants and lodging	GFCBA GFCI	Boro & Mayor Progress Authority	x	x	\$ to \$\$\$	Technical assistance from Progress Authority CFA Building PA loan

Connect Outdoor Assets	Create safe bike/ped routes	RTC	Boro PADOT The Zefrans		x	\$ to \$\$\$	Susquehanna Co. Marcellus Legacy Fund CFA Greenways/Trails/Rec (GTRP) CFA Multimodal Transp. Fund PADOT Transp Alternatives Program People for Bikes LHVA ARPA WalkWorks
Improve Main St	Enhance Streetscape including bike racks, planters, street trees	Boro	GFCBA Mountain View Garden Club PA State Master Gardeners		x	\$\$ to \$\$\$	Susquehanna Co. Marcellus Legacy Fund CFA Multimodal Transp Funds ARPA
Undertake Marketing	Market FC as Trail Town/Outdoor Town	GFCBA Endless Mtns VB	Endless Mtn VB Discover NEPA EMHR Other chambers Greater FC Area Historical Society	x		\$ to \$\$	Endless Mtns. Visitors Bureau Room Tax Grant DCED Marketing to Attract Tourists

			Other historical societies RTC NEP Sno Trails Businesses School District Boro				
Enhance Erie St/FC Trailheads	Create Murals and gateway at Trailhead	RTC	Boro Valley In Motion School District Pleasant Mount Welding Lackawanna Career Tech Center (school)	x		\$ to \$\$	Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation PA Council on the Arts Creative Catalyst Grant PA Council on the Arts Creative Communities Grant LHVA Valley in Motion
Connect Outdoor Assets	Create better connections to allow snowmobilers off-road access to downtown restaurants & Turkey Hill	NEP Sno Trails	Private landowners (Simpler Times and others) RTC Boro (via Dog Park)	X		\$ to \$\$	DCNR C2P2 Motorized Trail Grant

APPENDICIES

- Appendix A Seven Steps of the Outdoor Town Process
- Appendix B Action Team Members
- Appendix C Meeting Notes
- Appendix D Agendas and handouts for Vision Workshop and Community Action Plan
- Appendix E Community Survey form
- Appendix F Community Self-Assessment (“Walkshop”) form
- Appendix G Forest City News articles
- Appendix H Resolution of Support

Appendix A

Seven Steps of the Outdoor Town Process



The 7 Steps

1 Organize an Action Team

Organize members of the local community passionate about making your community more attractive and accommodating for outdoor recreation.

2 Identify Partners and Resources

Review any existing plans that may have laid the groundwork for you. Engage prospective partners that can provide assistance or funding.

3 Assess Your Community and Create a Vision

Community members stand to benefit the most from your efforts, so gathering their input and gaining their support is key to success.

4 Set Priorities and Create an Action Plan

Report back to your community about the input you have gathered and build consensus for choosing priority improvements.

5 Implement Your Action Plan

Project by project, work on implementing your plan. Continue to hold regular meetings of your Action Team to work through tasks and issues.

6 Celebrate Success!

Not just at the end of a project, but all the way along. This builds awareness for what you have achieved and support to take on the next project!

7 Track Results and Set Next Priorities

Keeping track of what you have accomplished, and what hasn't worked so well, informs how you work in the future.



Appendix B

Action Team Members

Name	Affiliation
Erin Debish, Action Team Leader	Greater Forest City Business Alliance
Susie Atcavage	Greater Forest City Business Alliance
Amy Bean	Borough Council
Katie Cicilione	business owner
Lynn Conrad	Rail-Trail Council of NEPA
Paul Daugevelo	Main Street Coordinator
Juliann Doyle	Forest City Area Historical Society
Brian Fitzsimmons	Greater Forest City Industries
Chris Ginton	Mayor
Deb McNamara	Greater Forest City Business Alliance
Sean Sheare	NEP Sno Trails and ATV
Katie Zefran	resident

Appendix C
Action Team Meeting Notes

Forest City Action Team Meeting

January 14, 2021, 6-7:30PM

Via Zoom

NOTES FROM MEETING

Attendees: Susie Atcavage, Amy Bean, Katie Cicilioni , Lynn Conrad, Paul Daugevelo, Erin Debish, Juliann Doyle, Brian Fitzsimmons, Donna Gasper ,Christopher Ginton, Amanda Howell, Cindy Klenk, Michelle Lipko, Bob McGraw, Deb McNamara, Meg Neubert, Christine Dettore (DCNR), Janet Sweeney PEC), Kim Stever (Eastwick Solutions), Steve Nelson (Eastwick Solutions)

1. Welcome – Kim welcomed everyone.
2. Zoom Orientation – Steve provided a quick overview of Zoom and its controls.
Introductions – Mayor Ginton, Lynn and Erin said a few words of welcome and everyone introduced themselves. Lynn shared the good news that the D & H has been named the “DCNR Trail of the Year”.
3. Introduction to Outdoor Town program – Kim presented an introduction to the Outdoor Town Program, its recent creation by PEC and support by DCNR, the 7 Step process that we will follow.
4. Roles & Responsibilities - Kim discussed the various roles and responsibilities of Eastwick Solutions as the consultant, and of the Action Team.
5. Timeline – Steve presented the timeline for 2021 and what is hoped to be accomplished month-by-month. The timeline is shared in the Forest City Outdoor Town folder on Google Drive.
6. Communication Plan – Kim discussed the need for a plan for communication and outreach by the Action Team to keep the community and elected officials informed and asked for some volunteers to work with her to create a draft plan for next month. Erin, Julianne and Susie volunteered to work with Eastwick to prepare a draft plan. Lynn also volunteered to write a short piece on tonight’s meeting and send it to the Forest City News. Erin mentioned a desire to have an on-going short update provided to Borough Council at their monthly meetings. Amy and Paul volunteered to provide this.
7. Sharing Information – Steve discussed using Google Drive as an online platform to share documents and collaborate on them and as a place for resource documents. A “Forest City Outdoor Town” folder has been created and Action Team members will be emailed an invitation to share. The PowerPoint presentation that was made tonight with also be in this folder.
8. Partners & Resources Brainstorming – Steve discussed the need for partners and resources and partners as the Action Plan is created and implemented and the Action Team brainstormed some potential partners. This information was collected on the List of Potential Partners

document and will be shared in the Google Drive. Action Team members were asked to review this document before next month's meeting and add to it.

9. Shared Partners/Resources with Carbondale – Kim discussed regional partners that may require collaboration with the Carbondale Action Team.
10. Inventory of Outdoor Recreational places – Steve discussed the need for an inventory and presented the initial list that has already been developed by the Action Team at their Oct. 2020 meeting. Additional information on the places will be needed and he asked for Action Team members to review the Inventory (shared on the Google Drive) prior to next month's meeting.
11. Meeting dates/times – Erin led the discussion for setting a meeting date and time for future Action Team Meeting and it was agreed that the 2nd Thursday, 6 – 7:30PM would be the meeting time. The next meeting will be Feb. 11.
12. Next steps – Erin summarized what the next steps and tasks are over the next month, including reviewing the List of Partners and the Inventory of Outdoor Places, noting the volunteers who volunteered to start work on the Communications Plan and making short presentation to Council and writing an article for the Forest City News.

Forest City Action Team Meeting

February 11, 2021, 6-7:30PM

Via Zoom

NOTES FROM MEETING - revised

Attendees: Amy Bean, Katie Cicilioni, Lynn Conrad, Erin Debish, Brian Fitzsimmons, Kyle Fitzsimmons, Donna Gasper, Christopher Glinton, Amanda Howell, Cindy Klenk, Michelle Lipko, Bob McGraw, Deb McNamara, Meg Neubert, Sean Sheare, Janet Sweeney PEC), Kim Stever (Eastwick Solutions), Steve Nelson (Eastwick Solutions)

1. Introductions – Sean, and Kyle introduced themselves, Donna had audio issues and could not be heard.

2. Comments from AT members

Erin summarized the comments that AT members made, including how to leverage Trail of the Year, the need for communication, marketing, and collaboration, and how do we fund projects. The Action Team also discussed continuing the use of the Google Drive and decided that it will continue to use it, Erin will send out reminders.

3. Possible LHVA Grant

Steve summarized the grant program and a potential joint application with Carbondale for the creation of a marketing brochure to highlight Forest City and Carbdonale as outdoor recreation destinations with a map, places to eat/drink, places to stay and things to do in region.

The Action Team discussed this idea, Amy stated that the Borough could not provide matching funds, Deb indicated that Endless Mountain Visitors Bureau funding may be a source for matching funds for Forest City's portion of the project.

Other existing brochures are out there (GFCBA and RTC), but Lynn stated that the RTC is just a map and not intended to be a marketing brochure and she felt there is a need for a marketing brochure. Michelle mentioned the possibility of using students from the Career Technology Center of Lackawanna County for design and production. Janet mentioned that this type of project would be eligible for the Pocono Forests and Waters Conservation Landscape grant.

The Action Team decided that the Mar. 5 deadline is just too soon of a deadline to accomplish and that they will wait for the expected fall round to apply.

4. Initial Goals discussion

Kim discussed the 4 initial goals that were presented at last month's meeting asked for a quick review of these. These goals are:

1. Make a community more attractive & accommodating for outdoor recreation visitor
2. Brings people together through nature & outdoor recreation
3. Connect people seeking adventure with retail, restaurants and local culture
4. Improve community's health, economy activity, access to nature and quality of life

Emphasis was placed on the need for AT members to consider how to modify existing goals or create new goals noting that there will also be an in-depth discussion of more specific goals and objectives for Forest City to become an Outdoor Town in June/July as part of the development of the draft Action Plan.

5. Partners & Resources

The Action Team was asked to review the list of Partners that is in the Google Drive, add any additional potential partners and fill in the missing information.

6. Communications Plan

Kim and Erin reviewed the objectives of the Communications Plan, the elements of such a plan (the “who/what/when/how”) and updated the Action Team on the work of the Communications Committee. The Committee has begun to collect information on key audiences, key messages, method(s) of communication and frequency/timing. This information is contained on the Google Drive. A draft of the Plan will be presented to the Action Team at the March meeting.

7. Community Input – overview, Community Input Meeting, Community Survey

Steve provided an overview of need for community input from residents, businesses, employees and others interested in the future of Forest City. The Outdoor Town program includes extensive community input, including the Action Team, 2 community meetings, a community survey, a community assessment, and a presentation to the Borough Council.

The Community Input meeting is tentatively scheduled for April 8, as part of the Action Team’s April meeting. Due to COVID restrictions, it will likely be an online meeting. It is intended to provide information on the Outdoor Town program and timetable in Forest City and to solicit input on attitudes/perceptions/likes/dislikes as well as ideas for how to make Forest City a more attractive place for outdoor recreation visitors to visit. The Action Team will have a very visible role at the meeting.

Following the Community Input Meeting, a Community Survey will be undertaken to capture input from people who were unable to attend the Community Input Meeting. It will be both online and paper. Distribution and collection of the paper surveys was discussed as was the need for assistance from Action Team for collecting them. Possible distribution locations/methods include: Zazzera’s Super Market, other businesses in Forest City, including survey as an insert in sewer bills, and including it in an edition of the Forest City News. Gender and age questions will be optional.

The results from the Community Input Meeting and the Community Survey will be analyzed by Eastwick and presented back to the Action Team in May. These results will help provide a foundation for goals/objectives, a vision for Forest City, and possible actions.

Eastwick will send a draft survey to Action Team members in the next 2-3 weeks and will use the results to develop the final survey.

8. Inventory of Outdoor Recreational assets

Kim discussed the need to evaluate the inventory to identify those outdoor recreation places/assets that have activities that will attract visitors from hour or more away, who will then visit Forest City to eat or drink or buy goods. She presented some possible criteria to use in the evaluation. These include: number of visitors, the visitor experience, public accessibility and

seasonality. The Action Team was also asked to review the Inventory on the Google Drive to complete the missing information in it.

9. Next steps/Homework
Review and add to documents in Google Drive
Communications Plan work to continue
Take survey when made available

10. Next Meeting – Mar. 11 6-7:30PM

Forest City Action Team Meeting
March 11, 2021, 6-7:30PM NOTES
Via Zoom

Attendees: Erin Debish, Julianne Doyle, Lynn Conrad, Chris Ginton, Paul Daugevelo, Megan Neubert, Cindy Klenk, Brian Fitzsimmons, Deb McNamara, Katie Cicilioni, Janet Sweeney, Kyle Fitzsimmons, Bob McGraw, Sean Sheare.

Note: Donna and Michelle have resigned.

1. Updates: Grant for digital marketing effort & Plan Review (ES) (10 min.)

Carbondale appears to be moving ahead with its application for LHVA, still wants to partner with FC. Tomorrow's Endless Mtns Grant Workshop webinar was mentioned.

2. Community Input meeting discussion (ES and Action Team) (20 min)

A discussion was held about waiting till May and trying to make it in-person (outdoors). A poll was taken and all AT members wanted to wait till May and hope that we can hold it outdoors. We will need to have a back-up plan to hold a virtual meeting. Kennedy Park, with a pavilion and power was identified as a great choice, Megan will check into its availability for an early May meeting there.

Steve reviewed the logistics that need to be dealt with, with a date and location being the first priority. Steve mentioned that the Action Team will be asked to help out with logistics and on the evening to make presentations and lead group discussions.

3. Communications Plan (Communications Committee) & Partner Outreach (20 min)

Julie summarized work to date. 13 different audiences have been identified, including residents, government, civic groups and others. The plan also includes the method of communication, message, and frequency. Additional information is still needed. Creating a Facebook page was also suggested by Susie (via Erin).

Kim discussed outreach to partners and the need to identify who should be contacted now, who should reach out to them and the message. Asked for 2 volunteers to help fill out form, Julianne and Sean volunteered. Kyle volunteered to reach out to state and federal elected officials.

4. Community Survey (ES and Action Team) (15 min)

Steve reviewed responses received from AT members and showed early mock-up of Community Survey. Action Team members provided input and suggested revisions to the survey. Another draft will be developed and sent out to members prior to next meeting. The survey will be the major discussion piece at the Community Input Meeting and paper and online copies will be distributed after it for those unable to attend the Input Meeting. There was also some discussion of new street lights being installed on Main St, the potential for bike lanes on Main Street and the need for bike racks in town.

5. Outdoor Recreational Places/Assets (ES and Action Team) (5 min)

Kim mentioned that there is still a need to complete this list and requested a volunteer. Cindy volunteered to work on it.

6. Next steps/Homework

Firm up details for Community Input Meeting in May

Continue updating List of Partners and Outdoor Recreation Places/Assets

7. Next Meeting – Apr. 8, 6-7:30PM

Forest City Action Team Meeting

April 8, 2021, 6-7:30PM NOTES

Via Zoom

Erin Debish, Juliann Doyle, Paul Daugevelo, Cindy Klenk, Susie Atcavage, Janet Sweeney. Guest: Katie Zefran

1. Updates: Partners and Outdoor Assets

Kim updated the Action Team on the list of Partners, Juliann has gone through and added useful information to the list, and why we want to reach out to them – general awareness, future funding potential and for implementation & programming. The partners were prioritized with some being contacted now and some to be contacted later. Those to be contacted now include: Endless Mountains Visitors Bureau, the Susquehanna County Commissioners, Forest City Regional School District, Camp Freedom, Discover NEPA, the Forest City Rotary Club, Johnson College, the Carbondale Chamber of Commerce and DCED.

Kim also updated the Action Team on the list of Outdoor Assets. The assets are the key places that outdoor recreation participants will use and those are the places that we want to get to and promote Forest City as a place to go to and spend time and money. The list needs to be vetted to list those places that attract the outdoor recreation participant, generally within a 30-45 minute drive time from Forest City.

The Action Team reviewed the list and suggesting keeping Lackawanna State Park (to target those users, but not to include in any promotional brochure of activities near Forest City), the public golf courses, and Panther's Bluff. It was uncertain whether Brace Brook Reservoir is private, if it is, it should not listed. Johnson College should just be listed as a Partner.

We should not list privately-owned places that RTC hosts hikes to, but might mention that RTC does host hikes to these unnamed locations.

Janet mentioned that DCNR & the Poconos Forests and Waters Conservation Landscape are creating ambassador training for DCNR staff this year, which will include a tear-off map, based on a similar map done in the Laurel Highlands.

2. Communications Plan

Kim updated the Action Team and stated that it is time to begin the outreach. The Communications Committee discussed the status of list, it still has some blanks that need to be filled in. Erin mentioned that in the GFCBA recent newsletter there was promotion of the upcoming community workshop. It was also mentioned in the Clifford Twp newsletter. After the workshop, there will be additional outreach for the survey, including an email blast. Susie has developed something and will send to Kim.

3. Community Input meeting

Steve updated the Action Team on the now-named Community Vision Workshop, reviewing logistical needs, the draft agenda and tasks. A sign up sheet for volunteering for tasks will be sent out.

4. Community Survey 2nd draft

Steve reviewed the second draft of the Survey, and it is in the final stages of development. Copies will be distributed at the Community Vision Workshop, an online version will be developed and paper copies will be distributed at central locations. Susie volunteered to take completed surveys at her office – Comprehensive Physical Therapy. Erin mentioned the Honesdale Bank and First National Bank may be willing to distribute the survey, she will follow up. The paper and online surveys will be released immediately after the Workshop.

5. Community Assessment

Steve briefed the Action Team on the Community Assessment (or “walkshop”), and its purpose to identify potential improvements in Forest City. This is another public event, with residents, businesspersons and others invited to participate. Steve suggested that the Assessment be held in place of the May Action Team Meeting (May 13) in the evening. The Action Team agreed and set a starting time of 6PM. The Assessment will take about 1.5 to 2 hours and be facilitated by Eastwick. Eastwick will send out the Assessment Form and suggested route(s) to the Action for comments prior to the Assessment.

6. D&H Access for fisherman

Although Brian was unable to attend, he asked that Eastwick mention his concern over the closure of the D&H for fishermen to use to drive their vehicles to access the Lackawanna River but providing access from the O&W. Cindy mentioned that she knew that there had been incidents between vehicular traffic and foot/cyclist traffic on the D&H in the past. Steve commented that multi-use trails, by their very nature, have multiple users who use them, and their interests do not always coincide.

This issue is an example of these types of conflicts, and that the Action Team will need to think through how and if they want the Action Plan to respond to them.

7. Next steps/Homework

Kim summarized next steps, including beginning outreach to partners, signing up for tasks for the Community Vision Workshop, attending the workshop and participating in the Assessment on May 13.

8. Next Meeting – June 10, 2021, 6-7:30PM. The May meeting will be the Community Assessment.

Forest City Action Team Meeting
June 10, 2021, 6-7:30PM NOTES
Elegante Restaurant

Attendees: Erin Debish, Juliann Doyle, Paul Daugevelo, Cindy Klenk, Susie Atcavage, Chris Ginton, Sean Sheare, Amy Bean, Lynn Conrad, Deb McNamara. Guest: Katie Zefran

NOTE: The regularly scheduled May meeting was not held, as the Assessment was performed that evening.

1. Input Summary Report

Kim updated the Action Team where Forest City is within the Outdoor Town process. Steve presented the Community Input Summary Report, using the template form from the Outdoor Towns Toolkit, which summarizes the community input received from the Vision Workshop, the Assessment, the Plan Review the Community Input Survey and previous Action Team meetings. A copy was sent to all Action Team Members before the meeting and is also filed on the Google Drive.

The Input Summary Report will be used as the foundation for a draft Vision Statement, draft Goals and Objectives and draft Recommendations for the Action Plan. All of these draft documents will be presented to the public at the Community Action meeting later this year.

2. Draft Vision Statement

Kim presented information on what a vision statement is, some examples of vision statements and key words that Survey respondents used when answering the question about their aspirations for Forest City. She also presented a draft Vision Statement to help get the conversation going. The Action Team discussed what a draft Vision Statement might look like but could not come to a consensus. The Action Team asked Eastwick to work up a draft statement that would be sent to Action Team members for their review and comment.

3. Draft Goals and Objectives

Steve presented information on draft goals and also reminded the Action Team of the four preliminary goals that were agreed to early in the Outdoor Town process. The Action Plan template from the Outdoor Towns Toolkit was also presented, which has sample goals and objectives and organized the recommendations by goals. The Action Team discussed additional goals and asked Eastwick to prepare a draft set of goals and objectives for the Action Team to review and comment.

4. Next Steps/Homework

Eastwick will prepare a draft Vision Statement and draft Goals and Objectives for Action Team review. The Community Action Meeting was also discussed and the need to target a date soon enough to have flyers stuffed into sewer bills. The tentative date is September 9, at the Forest City Historical Society. The date will be finalized at the July meeting.

5. Next Meeting – July 8, 2021, 6-7:30PM, via Zoom.

Forest City Action Team Meeting

July 8, 2021, 6-7:30PM NOTES

Via Zoom

Attendance: Deb McNamara, Lynn Conrad, Susie Atcavage, Juliann Doyle, Erin Debish, Janet Sweeney

Power outage about 15 minutes into meeting, ES' internet connection was lost, but the Action Team continued meeting.

1. Draft Vision Statement

Erin and Juliann presented the draft Vision Statement that had been sent out to Action Team members prior to meeting.

2. Draft Goals and Objectives

Susie presented the Draft Goals and Objectives that were developed by her, Juliann and Katie.

3. Draft Recommendations

Steve presented a suggested framework for the Action Team to follow to turn the 58 ideas generated as part of the public input into 15-20 draft recommendations to be presented to the public at the Sept. 9 Community Action Meeting

4. Community Action Meeting

The Action Team discussed the tentative date and time for the Meeting – Sept. 9 at 6PM, and potential location at the Forest City Historical Society. The Action Team agreed to hold the meeting at that time and that location.

Kim also presented a suggested agenda. Action Team members will be asked to participate as speakers during the meeting.

- a. Confirmation of date – Sept 9
- b. Agenda
- c. Location – Historical Society?

5. Next steps/Homework (5 min)

6. Next Meeting – August 12, 2021, 6-7:30PM – Location?

Forest City Action Team Meeting

Aug 12, 2021, 6-7:30PMDRAFT

Via Zoom

Attendees: Lynn, Susie, Erin, Debbie, Juliann, Katie C,

1. Draft Vision Statement

Kim presented a draft. Erin – residents want ownership.

Final draft: Forest City is a welcoming small town with a big backyard for OR and is place where families, businesses, culture, ideas and sense of community thrive.

2. Draft Goals and Objectives

Susie presented the work that she, Juliann and Katie Z did, with some input from ES. Some objectives and draft recommendations are similar.

Re: Goal #5, FC persona is not as a trail town, it is a town that has a great trail. Marketing will be key. Need to build momentum at public meeting. Concern about losing Boro Council support. D&H Trail along old railroad is a key cultural element of town, railroad built Forest City. Forest City is a trail town with access to great outdoor recreation.

3. Draft Recommendations

Erin/Juliann/Paul – combined several ideas together. Some ideas are already underway (mural, repair station at Kost), these need to be presented at meeting. Juliann suggested that there be a graph with a goal, an idea(s), short term/long term/underway. Someone from AT will develop this further.

4. Community Action Meeting

- a. Confirmation of date – Sept 9, 6PM
- b. Agenda (see next page for suggested agenda)
- c. Participants/Volunteers
- d. Location – Historical Society

Lynn wants to hear from the public at Community Action Meeting

5. Outreach

- a. Partners
- b. Council

Juliann is reaching out to County Commissioners, state rep, state senator, Clifford Twp

6. Next steps/Homework

7. Next Meeting – Oct. 14 6-7:30PM

Forest City Action Team Meeting

Oct. 14, 2021, 6-7:30PM

Rail-Trail Council of NEPA Offices

NOTES

Attendees: Lynn Conrad, Deb McNamara, Susie Atcavage

1. Recap of Boro Council Presentation

Susie and Juliann presented at Oct. meeting. Susie stated it went well, presented letter and top 3 recommendations from 5 goals. At end, Pres. Cost stated that you have full support of Council.

2. Outline of Action Plan & Presentation to Council

Steve presented a suggested outline for the draft Action Plan. He asked for any comments to be sent to Eastwick. Eastwick will start writing draft. A draft will be circulated to AT. It is anticipated that the full draft will be completed and sent to Council by Dec 2, and be presented to Council Dec. 6.

Steve distributed a draft of a Resolution of Support for review.

3. Implementation Grid and High Priority Actions discussion

ES suggested that the Action Team needed to reduce the number of recommendations to include in the draft Action Plan down to a feasible number of high-priority recommendations that could be implemented. While the attendees were reluctant to make a final decision without additional input from other Action Team members, Susie suggested that any recommendation that received more than 10 votes at the Community Action Meeting be included as high-priority. This suggestion will be communicated to the other members of the Action Team for their consideration.

ES will email this list to all members of the Action Team, and will also ask members to identify potential lead entities or partners for them. ES will also look more closely at potential funding sources to include in the Implementation Grid in the draft Action Plan.

There was some discussion about funds from the American Rescue Plan Act that the Borough will be receiving that might be used in the implementation of actions. We need to understand how much funding the Borough will be receiving and what projects might be funded. It is ES' understanding that these funds can be used for several actions, including façade improvements and improvements to the D&H Rail Trail. ES will look further into this funding source.

Lynn mentioned an active transportation plan that she is involved with in Susquehanna Borough that may be relevant for Forest City's Outdoor Town initiative.

4. Next steps/Homework

At last night's Carbondale public meeting, Chris Ginton attended and informed ES that he was asking Council to include funding for a part-time grant writer for Forest City for the 2022 Borough budget.

ES will email the list of possible high-priority actions.

ES will begin drafting the draft Action Plan for Action Team review and comment.

Es also noted that their contract will end at the end of December and that they want to provide the Action Team with as much support as possible before then to allow the Action Team to continue to function into 2022 and begin implementation of the Action Plan.

5. Next Meeting – Nov. 11 6-7:30PM.

Forest City Action Team Meeting

Agenda - NOTES

Nov. 11, 2021, 6-7:30PM

Via Zoom

ATTENDEES: Lynn, Erin, Susie, Amy, Deb, Juliann, Paul, Brian

1. Pittston Art Tour

Lynn and Deb gave a summary of recent trip with AT members. Mayor of Pittston gave a tour of the public art and the public art gallery (run as a coop). Co-op art gallery could be a great idea for Forest City. Deb noted the importance of partners, need to support projects and work together. What was done in Pittston can be done in Forest City. They could also be a resource. Maybe repeat this for entire Action Team in the future.

Kim mentioned that there are some grants from PA Council on the Arts, they like holistic approach that includes other elements like community gardens/stormwater mgmt. These include the Project Stream grant, Creative Communities grant. Deb tried to write a Project Stream grant a few years ago but was unsuccessful, but is optimistic about potential.

2. Implementation Grid discussion – partners and funding

Steve gave an overview of the Grid, which shows the high priority actions, suggested lead entity, time frame, cost range and potential funding sources. The Action Team discussed suggested lead entities.

Paul mentioned that the Mayor had requested Council fund a part-time grant writer for the Borough for 2022. In addition, the Northern Tier can provide assistance with grant writing – Katie Pritchard, kpritchard@northerntier.org

An additional high priority actions was added to improve access to downtown for snowmobilers Paul also mentioned that the Borough is considering using some of the ARP funds for improving commercial building facades.

3. Draft Action Plan

ES is completing the draft and will send out to AT early next week.

4. Presentation to Council Dec. 6

The Action Team will present the draft Plan to Council, Paul will request 15-20 min. of time at Council meeting.

5. Looking ahead to 2022

ES will create some “roadmaps” to help the Action Team. Will be putting more material on Google Drive.

New Action Team members – Jacob from Sage and Spirit is interested.

6. Next steps/Homework

Next Meeting – Dec 8 6-7:30PM, in-person, 3rd floor of Boro Hall

Forest City Action Team Meeting

Agenda NOTES

Dec. 9, 2021, 6-7:30PM

Borough Hall

1. Recap of Presentation to Borough Council Meeting

Susie summarized meeting, resolution was approved Dashboard was handed out. Some disappointing comments: several Council thought that AT was GFCBA, Boro does not have capacity to undertake all these items. A lack of understanding of the project. None of Council got a copy of full Plan. No questions from Council.

Unlikely that Boro will be a lead or front cheerleader.

Mayor volunteered to be a cheerleader for it and be the liaison.

Important for Council to approve things, looking forward. Keep them informed, perhaps on a project-by-project.

Maybe a sit down with Sharon would be helpful as part of implementation process.

2. Roadmap memos

Draft, still some things to add. Presented Roadmap for Action Team memo. Immediate actions: news article celebrating plan support, smooth things over with Boro. Need to do education. Set next meeting date.

Presented the outline of the Roadmaps for the 8 High Priority Actions

Add contact public and others to Roadmap to keep everyone involved.

3. Debrief on Outdoor Towns effort

Should not bring resolution to year end meeting (budget adoption)

Process should have more time given than a year

Monthly meetings were good, but too long, should be an hour. Some were overwhelming.

In-person are more productive

Do reviews of stuff off-line, get into discussion immediate

Walkshop form was confusing, use check off lists of things. Was the most disappointing. Was enjoyable, not as diligent. Smaller groups were better. Exercise was valuable. Note-taker not being leader was good.

Having a consultant writing the report was good./Understanding AT role & making it explicit.

Value of Toolkit? Must be read to be used. Action Team rated it: 4, 7, 8, 7 (scale of 1-10, 10 being best). Consultant was useful

Survey should be out longer, maybe start it earlier in process.

Community Action Mtg was good.

4. General Wrap Up

Eastwick expressed their appreciation and thanks to the Action Team members for their hard work and diligence throughout the process. The Action Team presented Eastwick staff with a beautiful gift basket.

Appendix D
Agendas and Handouts from Vision Workshop and
Community Action Meeting

Forest City Community Vision Workshop

May 1, 2021

Kennedy Park

Agenda

- **Welcome**
- **Introductions**
- ***Outdoor Towns Overview***
- **Objectives for Forest City**
- **Survey & Discussion Groups**
- **Discussion Groups Report Out**
- **Wrap-up and Next Steps**

For more information about the program, visit the Greater Forest City Business Alliance Facebook page or the Forest City Borough website: www.forestcityborough.com/outdoor-towns

***SAVE THE DATE** – Join us May 13 at 6:00 PM for a “walk-shop”, a walking assessment from the D & H Trail through town to identify opportunities for improvement in Forest City. Meet at Erie St or Commerce Blvd Trailhead.*

Funded by a grant from the PA Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources, and funding from the Borough of Forest City and the Rail Trail Council of NEPA



Revitalize Forest City through Nature & Outdoor Recreation

Thank you for attending the Community Vision Workshop for Forest City. Being selected as a pilot town for *Outdoor Towns* gives us the opportunity to participate in a dynamic initiative to revitalize Forest City by using the region's trails and outdoor recreation assets. Forest City can become a vibrant hub for outdoor recreation visitors like hikers, cyclists, snow mobile enthusiasts, the fishing community, and others to visit, shop, eat and drink! Benefits include downtown revitalization, safer places to walk and bike, and more things for residents and visitors to do.

The **objectives** for this initiative are:

- ✓ Make Forest City more attractive & accommodating for the outdoor recreation visitor – make it welcoming and inclusive to everyone
- ✓ Bring people together through nature & outdoor recreation
- ✓ Connect people seeking adventure with retail, restaurants, and local culture
- ✓ Improve Forest City's health, economic activity, access to nature and quality of life

The initiative is **managed by an Action Team**, comprised of residents, local government, and business owners. They will develop an **Action Plan**, based upon community input, with recommended priority actions to make Forest City a more attractive and inviting place for visitors. A draft of the Action Plan will be discussed with the community in a Community Action Workshop later this year and then presented to Council.

We know that **outdoor recreation is big business** in Pennsylvania, the region and locally:

- In Pennsylvania, the outdoor recreation industry generates \$28.5 billion in direct spending
- In our region, visitors spent over \$464 million on outdoor recreation (2019)
- In Susquehanna County, visitors spent over \$168 million when they visited (2019)
- Locally, the economic impact of walkers, runners, and cyclist on the D&H Rail Trail = \$370,000
- The average walker, runner, and cyclist on the D&H spent over \$20 per person per visit on food/beverage
- Snowmobilers on the D&H spent \$102 per person per visit on food/beverage/fuel

We also know that there is a **great foundation** for the initiative:

- Forest City is already recognized as a Trail Town
- Forest City has a distinct image
- The D&H Rail Trail is a tremendous outdoor recreation asset
- There are many more outdoor assets nearby, including Elk Mtn., Lackawanna River, Prompton State Park, and others to satisfy a wide range of activities and interests

We don't know:

- **Your** ideas, feedback, and suggestions

Your input will help develop a Vision and an Action Plan. Please help us by spreading the word about the Community Survey and the *Outdoor Town* initiative.

Forest City Community Action Meeting

Thursday, Sept 9, 2021

Forest City Area Historical Society

Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
- Vision Statement Review
- Goals & Draft Recommendations
- Vision Statement Discussion
- Voting for priority Draft Recommendations
- Priority Draft Recommendations discussion
- Wrap Up & Next Steps



WELCOME TO THE COMMUNITY ACTION MEETING!

Using the Outdoor Town model, **Forest City can become a vibrant hub** for outdoor recreation visitors like hikers, cyclists, snowmobilers, the fishing community, and others to visit, shop, eat and drink!

Benefits include downtown revitalization, safer places to walk and bike, and more activities for residents and visitors to do.

Draft Vision Statement for Forest City:

Forest City is a welcoming small town with a big backyard for outdoor recreation and is a place where families, businesses, culture, ideas and sense of community thrive.

Funding provided by the Borough of Forest City, the Rail-Trail Council of NEPA, and a grant from the PA Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources.



Outdoor recreation is big business in Pennsylvania, the region and locally:

- In Pennsylvania, the outdoor recreation industry generates \$28.5 billion in direct spending
- In our region, visitors spent over \$464 million just on outdoor recreation (2019)
- In Susquehanna County, visitors spent over \$168 million when they visited (2019)
- Locally, the economic impact of walkers, runners, and cyclist on the D&H Rail Trail = \$370,000
- The average walker, runner, and cyclist on the D&H spent over \$20 per person per visit on food/beverage
- Snowmobilers on the D&H spent \$102 per person per visit on food/beverage/fuel

Forest City has **a great foundation** for the initiative:

- Forest City is already recognized as a Trail Town
- Forest City has a distinct image
- The D&H Rail Trail is a tremendous outdoor recreation asset
- Forest City is surrounded by many outdoor assets nearby, including Elk Mtn., Lackawanna River, Prompton State Park, and others to satisfy a wide range of activities and interests

For more information about the initiative, visit the Greater Forest City Business Alliance Facebook page, the Forest City Borough website: www.forestcityborough.com/outdoor-towns; or for the full resources available visit the Outdoor Towns website: www.townsandtrailstoolkit.com. AND take a look at the great video produced by Penna. Downtown Center that describes how efforts like this can revitalize downtowns - <https://padowntown.org/programs/nature-based-placemaking-program/>

NOTES:

Appendix E
Community Survey Form

5. How would you like to see downtown Forest City improved?
 Fill empty storefronts with new retail and restaurants
 Storefront Improvements (e.g., facades, signage)
 Streetscape enhancements (trees, benches, flowerboxes, etc.)
 Other
6. What local events do you like to attend?
 Vendor's Market at Kennedy Park Steamtown Marathon
 D&H Half Marathon Street fairs
 Other (please provide name) _____
7. Are there new events you would like to see in Forest City?
 ADD ENOUGH SPACE FOR ANSWER
8. Are there impediments to walking and biking in downtown Forest City? If so, please list.
 ADD ENOUGH SPACE FOR ANSWER
9. What concerns do you have about downtown Forest City? How can your concerns be addressed?
 ADD ENOUGH SPACE FOR ANSWER
10. What are your hopes and aspirations for Forest City? Please describe how you would like Forest City to be in 10 years.
 ADD ENOUGH SPACE FOR ANSWER
11. About you:
- Zip code**
 18421 18407 18413 18472 18470 other
- Age**
 18-24 25 – 39 40 – 54 55-64 65+
- Gender (optional)**
 Male Female Other Prefer not to answer

Appendix F

Walkshop Form

Walkshop Form (“Community Self-Assessment Booklet”) can be accessed from Outdoor Towns Toolkit: <https://townsandtrailstoolkit.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Community-Assessment-Booklet.pdf>

Appendix G

Community Input Summary

Forest City Community Input Summary Report

A total of 177 surveys were returned:

- Gender: 53% female, 43% male;
- Age: 31% age 40-54, 24% aged 25-39, 23% age 65+, 13% age 55-64, 6% age 18-24, 4% under 18.
- Hometown: 69% in Forest City zip code (18421), 13% in 18470 (Clifford Twp), 7% in 18407 (Carbondale), 11% other

Responses by total number of responses:

- what people value about Forest City (170 total responses),
- places to do outdoor recreation (167 responses),
- type of outdoor recreation (165),
- places to take out of towners (162),
- suggestions for improvements to FC (161 responses)
- events (142 responses)
- vision of FC in 10 years (95 responses)
- concerns about downtown (90 responses)

Type of outdoor recreation participation:

- Walking on trails was most popular (69% or 114 responses)
- Fishing was second-most popular (50% or 83 responses)
- Hiking (82 responses)
- ATV riding (60 responses)
- Hunting (56 responses)
- Bicycling on rail-trail (53 responses)
- Snowmobiling (37 responses)
- Mountain biking (25 responses)
- Downhill skiing (16 responses)
- Activities receiving 3 responses = Snow shoeing, running, golf
- Activities receiving 2 responses = Walking in town, yoga, kayaking

1. Relevant info gathered from existing plans/partners

- Outdoor Recreation Plans and Existing Programs
 - Dam release idea – Lackawanna River Conservation group
 - Lackawanna Flats plan for park – includes river access
 - Endless Mtns Heritage Region (EMHR) is developing a 4 county bikepacking route (including Susquehanna, for 2022 tourism season) and is working with Route 6 Alliance to promote bike tourism
 - Borough Council supports biking
 - Existing programs on D&H include: Walking Mondays, Biking Wednesdays, Yoga, nature walks, history walks, trail clean-ups, bike to lunch, dog walks, night hikes, scavenger hunts, storyboard walks. Existing activities include walking, running, hiking, dog-walking, biking and e-biking, nature exploration, history exploration, snowmobiling (with permit), snowshoeing, cross country skiing, fishing (walk-in), kayaking (for more expert paddlers). There is free wi-fi at Forest City (Commerce Blvd) trailhead

- Existing activities on O&W include ATV/UTV (with permit), fishing with vehicular access (early in trout season)
 - Rail-Trail Council is very “town-minded” and works with regional visitor bureaus
 - Potential partnership with Anthracite Bicycle Coalition for bike rentals and livery
 - EMHR support for Forest City’s Outdoor Town initiative
 - Lackawanna River has public access at multiple points and has good water quality
- Sidewalk improvements
 - New Sidewalks and streetlights to be installed on east side of Main St from Iron Duke Gym to Hornbeck’s in 2021
 - New sidewalk to Browndale to be constructed in 2022
- D&H Trail Improvements
 - Bike Repair station at Simpson
 - Trail resurfacing Union Dale area
 - Mileage markers – Union Dale to Ararat
 - New Trail Maps at Simpson, FC, Union Dale and Ararat Trail heads
 - Improvements to northernmost section (Stevens Point to NY Border)
- Business Expansion/Recruitment/Enhancement Potential
 - Zazzera’s improvement – outdoor dining and café (doublecheck)
 - Air BnB under development
 - Desire by Greater Forest City Industries to develop something other than light industry - maybe retail/restaurant/brewery/bike & kayak rental with upper floor for lodging
 - EMHR wants to do a façade program in Susquehanna Co (has started one in neighboring county now, no timeframe for Susquehanna Co)
 - Mural on Main St.
 - Rail-Trail Council has polled businesses on trail-friendly amenities
- Marketing/Promotion
 - Forest City Historical Society is currently working on a welcome packet for new residents that may have useful info for marketing
- Support for Outdoor Towns in local and regional plans:
 - GFCBA Strategic Plan’s 3 priorities are supported by Outdoor Town effort (Retain, Strengthen and Promote Existing businesses, New small business development, and Establish effective marketing and communication efforts)
 - Susquehanna County Comprehensive Plan supports Outdoor Town effort in several ways:
- Land use, community facilities and economic development goals support enhancing community centers (such as Forest City) and environmentally responsible economic development.
- Specific actions recommended include:

- Encourage the use of natural resources in creating value added industries in economic development efforts
- Support municipal efforts to provide recreation opportunities through grants,
- Support private entities in their quest for grant funds to provide recreational opportunities such as Rails-to-Trails
- Provide the necessary expertise to develop an effective Heritage Destination Development.
- Use the Endless Mountains Heritage Region Management Action Plan as a general guideline for heritage destination (tourism) development.
- Support private entities in their quest for grant funds to provide recreational opportunities such as Rails-to-Trails
- Include pedestrian and bicycle friendly design in new and existing roads.
- Endless Mountains Heritage Region Management Action Plan supports Outdoor Town efforts through its 5 goals of attracting visitors, engaging visitors and residents in appreciation of the region’s heritage, protecting and enhancing heritage assets, offering a wide range of outdoor recreation destinations and activities and delivering an authentic experience. The Action Plan also explicitly recognizes the D&H Rail Trail as one of the Heritage Region’s “premiere recreational trails”.
- Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission’s (NTRPDC) Bike/Pedestrian Plan also supports the Outdoor Town initiative through its bicycling, sidewalks and trails recommendations.
- Culture and Historical Heritage
 - Forest City has an active Historical Society with programming
 - Coal Miners Memorial
 - Railroad and mining history are important

2. **What concerns about downtown did people have?** (from Survey, open-ended question: 90 responses)

Themes:

Appearance of buildings and empty storefronts

Limited number & type of businesses

Other: Local government - A small number of respondents mentioned concerns about local government, including some criticism of both Mayor and Council. ATV - The few responses regarding ATVs were mixed, with 2 mentioning the need to be more welcoming and one with concerns about ATVs on D&H Trail. Lack of activities (for both adults and youth), loss of young residents (i.e. a “brain drain”), increased law enforcement (without specifying topic), drugs, and fishing access to the D&H Trail all received 2 responses.

One comment of note – one responder (we assume a Clifford Township supervisor) stated that “We (Clifford Twp Supervisors) want to see Forest City grow in a way that enhances our Township also.” A good sign for inter-governmental cooperation in the future.

3. **What do people value about Forest City?** (from Survey, multiple choice: 170 responses)

Small Town Feeling most valued - (75% or 142 responses)

Availability of outdoor recreation next most valued (86 responses)

Friendliness (85 responses),
Community (82 responses)
Having four distinct seasons (81 responses).

4. **Hopes and Aspirations/Vision of Forest City in 10 years** (from Survey, open-ended: 95 responses)
Keep small town vibe
More vibrant/more businesses
Like Honesdale/Jim Thorpe/New Hope – mix of businesses
Improved appearance
A destination town
5. **Favorite Places to take out of town visitors** (from Survey, multiple choice: 162 responses)
Local restaurants is the most popular answer (77% or 124 responses) *NOTE: Probably means restaurants in the area, not just in Forest City*
D&H Trail was second-most popular answer (44% or 72 responses)
Kennedy Park was third-most popular (54 responses)
O&W/ATV Trails (4 responses)
Elk Mountain (3 responses)
6. **Favorite places for walking and biking** (from Assessment)
D & H Trail, Kennedy Park, Cemetery
7. **Impediments for walking and biking** (from Survey, open-ended : 70 responses, Assessment & Workshop)
Themes:
Poor sidewalk conditions
Speed of traffic on Main St/Safety in crossing Main St
Lack of bike lanes
Lack of bike racks
Erie St Trailhead not “inviting”
8. **Favorite places for outdoor recreation** (from Survey, multiple choice: 167 responses)
D&H Trail was most popular (65% or 109 responses)
Kennedy Park was second-most popular (85 responses)
O&W Trail was third-most popular (67 responses)
Stillwater Lake was #4 (61 responses)
Lackawanna River was #5 (53 responses)
Elk Mountain was #6 (48 responses)
State game lands was #7 (46 responses)
Panther’s Bluff was #8 (21 responses)
9. **Events: Popular existing ones and suggestions for new ones** (from Survey, open-ended: 142 responses & Workshop)

A. Popular events:

Vendor's Market was most popular (75% or 107 responses)

Street festivals was second-most popular (90 responses)

Steamtown Marathon (46 responses)

D&H Half Marathon (20 responses)

Old Home Week (5 responses)

B. Suggested New Events:

Music was most popular (13 responses)

New street fairs, tied for #2 (8 responses)

Old Home Week, tied for #2 (8 responses)

Trail or trail-related events, tied for #4 (6 responses)

ATV-related, tied for #4 (6 responses)

Adult-oriented (i.e. wine/beer related) (5 responses)

Children/Family oriented (5 responses, including at Workshop)

No new events (4 responses)

Specific themes: Classic Car, First Friday, Oktoberfest

Also, more events (of various types) at Kennedy Park was mentioned in 9 responses, including at Workshop

New events receiving 2 responses: Food trucks, Farmer's Market, parades, cultural/heritage events, sidewalk sales

Other suggestions: Weekly event like a First Friday, Art Walk, Wine walk, Taste of Forest City, Create a weekend event (similar to Old Home Week)

C. **New businesses or services needed and/or desired** (from Survey and Assessment)

Various restaurants – Café, restaurant for lunch, sit down family dinner, "more food options"

Brewery

Outdoor product/recreation store/outfitter

Coffee shops

Niche clothing

Bakery

Theater (not clear if this means movie theater or live theater)

Hunting/fishing store

Spa

Entertainment like movies or music

Air B&B

Hardware / lumber store

E-charging station (bikes or cars)

Recommendations for Improvements (from Survey, Workshop and Assessment)

Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements

- Improved sidewalks and install new sidewalk on Rt 247
- Bike lanes (on Main St, Rt. 171 and Rt. 247)
- Bike racks/artsy bike racks
- Bike repair station
 - Clean gravel from sidewalks & street
- Safer crossings on Main St
- Paint Erie St/Center St to encourage use from trail to town & install inspirational signs
- Create a street park (a park in an empty lot/pocket park?)
- Establish a crosswalk across Rt 247 (to Browndale)
- Improve lighting on Main St & across 247 to the D & H Trail
- Bicyclist and driver education (e.g. Share the Road and no bikes on sidewalks)

D&H Trail and River Access Improvements

- Erie St. trailhead improvements (bench, trellis, services, more signage)
- Establish an access point cross Erie St trail head to allow trail users to visit businesses
- Enforce a “zero tolerance” policy for ATV riders not wearing helmets
- Create Clifford access
- Host entertainment on the trail
- Install picnic tables
- At Commerce Blvd trailhead build a pavilion and bathroom
- Install more trash cans or empty existing ones more frequently
- Have food truck(s) at Commerce Blvd trailhead
- Post regulations
- More handicapped access
- Improve access for snowmobilers into downtown

Visual Appearance and Beautification Projects

- Improvements to existing storefronts (includes signage improvements)
 - Streetscape Enhancements (lights, trees, flowerpots)
 - Murals (in town and along trail)
 - Selfie spots
- Sculpture
- Tear down vacant buildings and use for parking

Gateway and Signage Improvements

- More/enhanced directional signs and maps (to trail, downtown, Kennedy Park, dog park)
- Need welcome/gateway signs at North & South Main St. and at Kennedy Park
- Maintain existing signs (prune overgrowth)
- Install a sign for the D & H Trail going over bridge
- Check PHMC sign

Marketing and Promotion

Distribute trail maps at library
Install QR codes through town and trail (with location and historical information)
Market to powersports audience
Undertake multi-town marketing effort with D&H trail as centerpiece
Market Forest City (possible case study: Linden VT)
Need some visual aid (i.e. renderings) to show what downtown could look like (use FCR students?)
Look to attract retirees as visitors and future residents
Lackawanna River was PA River of the Year 2020
D&H is PA Trail of the Year 2021

Business Attraction and Expansion Strategies

Fill empty storefronts with retail or restaurants
Need funding for bldg. renovation/facades
Need to use upper floors above commercial
Need more businesses
Need lodging
Need destination businesses
Need something unique
Need developer/investor interest
Broadband (? – need for broadband??)
Encourage businesses to be open when people are using the trail (later and on weekends)

Sustainable Practices Improvements

Plant more Street trees

Other Suggestions

ATV access into town
No ATV access into town
Install a community garden next to 804 Main
Need to attract younger people to this effort
Use trail to connect towns (i.e. to create a regional identity)

Appendix H

Resolution of Support

**FOREST CITY BOROUGH
RESOLUTION #9-2021**

**A RESOLUTION FROM THE FOREST CITY BOROUGH MAYOR AND BOROUGH
COUNCIL TO SUPPORT THE OUTDOOR TOWNS ACTION PLAN**

WHEREAS, the Borough of Forest City has been selected by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources ("DCNR") to be a pilot community for the Outdoor Towns initiative;

WHEREAS, the Outdoor Town initiative's goals are to revitalize downtown Forest City and improve the quality of life for residents by leveraging nearby outdoor recreation places such as the D&H Rail Trail;

WHEREAS, the Borough has received a grant totaling ten thousand (\$10,000) dollars from DCNR to support this effort;

WHEREAS, the Borough has committed five hundred (\$500) dollars to match the DCNR grant;

WHEREAS, the Rail-Trail Council of NEPA has contributed five hundred (\$500) dollars to also match the DCNR grant;

WHEREAS, an Action Team, consisting of residents, business owners, Rail-Trail Council of NEPA representatives, borough officials and other interested stakeholders has been created to oversee and provide direction for the Outdoor Town initiative and has met regularly since January, 2021;

WHEREAS, the Action Team has held several public meetings and workshops and hosted a walking assessment of downtown Forest City; and

WHEREAS, the Action Team has developed a draft Action Plan that includes recommendations for actions to revitalize downtown Forest City and improve the quality of life for residents; and

WHEREAS, the Action Team has presented this draft Action Plan to the Mayor and Borough Council at a public meeting.

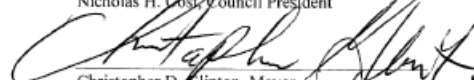
THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Forest City Borough Mayor and Borough Council formally support this Action Plan and will work with the Action Team and others to implement the actions contained therein.

Approved this 6th day of December, 2021.

ATTEST:


Sharon M Vannan, Secretary/Treasurer


Nicholas H. Cost, Council President


Christopher D. Glinton, Mayor