GREATER HAZLETON AREA
Thrive 2035

The Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan for the City of Hazleton, the Borough of West Hazleton and Hazle Township.

Hailstone
ECONOMIC

BARRY ISETT & associates INC

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RECOGNITIONS

The Greater Hazleton Thrive team extends our deepest gratitude to all who contributed to the development of this comprehensive plan. This collaborative effort would not have been possible without the dedication, support, and engagement of countless individuals and organizations across the region.

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Note: A comprehensive plan is a policy guide that reflects a community's vision for land use, development, conservation, and quality of life. A multi-municipal plan enables municipalities to coordinate strategies, pool resources, and address shared challenges. For Greater Hazleton, this plan emphasizes both semi-rural preservation and the need for cooperative regional solutions. Implementation will depend on available resources, including time and funding, and the plan may be amended as circumstances and priorities change.

INTRODUCTION

The Greater Hazleton Area Multi-municipal Comprehensive Plan is driven by a set of overarching goals designed to enhance community coordination, promote regional development, and leverage the unique assets of the municipalities involved. Central to the plan is the objective of fostering a vibrant, interconnected community where Hazleton City, West Hazleton Borough, and Hazle Township work collaboratively to address shared challenges and capitalize on opportunities for growth.

Community coordination is essential in this plan, as it encourages all three municipalities to align their resources, strategies, and visions for the future. By pooling their strengths, the municipalities can create a unified approach to land use, economic development, and quality of life improvements. This cooperation enables them to effectively tackle common issues, such as housing shortages and infrastructure needs, while also enhancing local services and amenities.

Regional development is another critical focus of the plan, emphasizing the importance of strategic planning that considers the interconnected nature of these communities. By considering the broader regional context, the plan aims to facilitate economic growth that benefits all municipalities, attracting new businesses and industries while ensuring that existing local businesses thrive. This approach not only aims to diversify the economy beyond warehousing but also addresses the need for a skilled workforce that can support emerging job sectors.

Leveraging local assets is a vital component of the comprehensive plan. Each municipality possesses unique characteristics and resources that contribute to the overall vitality of the Greater Hazleton area. By identifying and promoting these assets—whether they be cultural, historical, or natural, the plan seeks to enhance community pride and attract investment. This cooperative planning approach, rooted in collaboration and mutual benefit, positions the Greater Hazleton area for a sustainable and prosperous future.

Community Description

The Greater Hazleton area, encompassing the City of Hazleton, Hazle Township, and West Hazleton Borough, boasts a rich historical context that dates to the early 19th century. Established on the traditional lands of the Susquehannock and Lënapehòkink peoples, Hazleton was incorporated in 1891, following Hazle Township's incorporation in 1839 and West Hazleton in 1887. The region's growth was initially fueled by the discovery of coal and the subsequent expansion of the lumber and coal industries, which attracted a diverse influx of immigrants seeking economic opportunities. At its peak in the 1940s, the population reached over 56,000 residents, a testament to the area's thriving economy during that era.

In recent years, the Greater Hazleton area has experienced significant demographic shifts, particularly since 2016. The population has surged by approximately 24.3%, adding nearly 8,700 residents, while other small cities in Luzerne County have struggled with stagnation or decline. This growth reflects the area's strategic location along major transport corridors, including the intersections of Interstate 80 and Interstate 81, providing direct access to larger metropolitan areas such as Wilkes-Barre, Scranton, Allentown, and even New York City.

Today, the economic landscape of the Greater Hazleton area is transitioning. While historically reliant on coal mining, the region is now seeing a resurgence through the establishment of new industries, particularly in warehousing and distribution. The area's proximity to key transportation routes has made it an attractive location for logistics companies, resulting in thousands of new jobs. However, this rapid industrial growth has also brought challenges, including rising housing costs and infrastructure demands, leading to the necessity for comprehensive planning to ensure sustainable development that meets the needs of both current and future residents.

The Greater Hazleton area stands at a pivotal moment in its history, balancing its rich heritage with the promise of a dynamic economic future. As community leaders and residents work together to address the complexities of growth and change, they are committed to preserving the area's unique character while fostering an inclusive, prosperous environment for all.

Population Change
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

City	Population 2021	Population Change 2016 to 2021	Population Change 2000 to 2016
Pennsylvania	12,970,650	+1.4%	+4.1%
Hazleton	29,339	+17.6%	+7.3%
West Hazleton	5,076	+12.3%	+27.6%
Hazle Township	10,069	+5.4%	+6.2%
Wilkes-Barre	44,086	+7.6%	-5%
Pittston	7,589	-1%	-5.4%
Nanticoke	10,588	+2.8%	-6.2%
Pottsville	13,413	-3.9%	-10.2%
Shamokin	6,981	-3.1%	-10.1%
Williamsport	27,908	-4.4%	-5%
Lebanon	26,611	+3.7%	+4.9%
Lancaster	58,034	-2.2%	+5.3%
York	44,692	+1.9%	+7.2%
Johnstown	18,647	-7.6%	-15.6%
Altoona	44,114	-2.4%	-8.7%

Population Change by City (2000-2016 and 2016-2021)
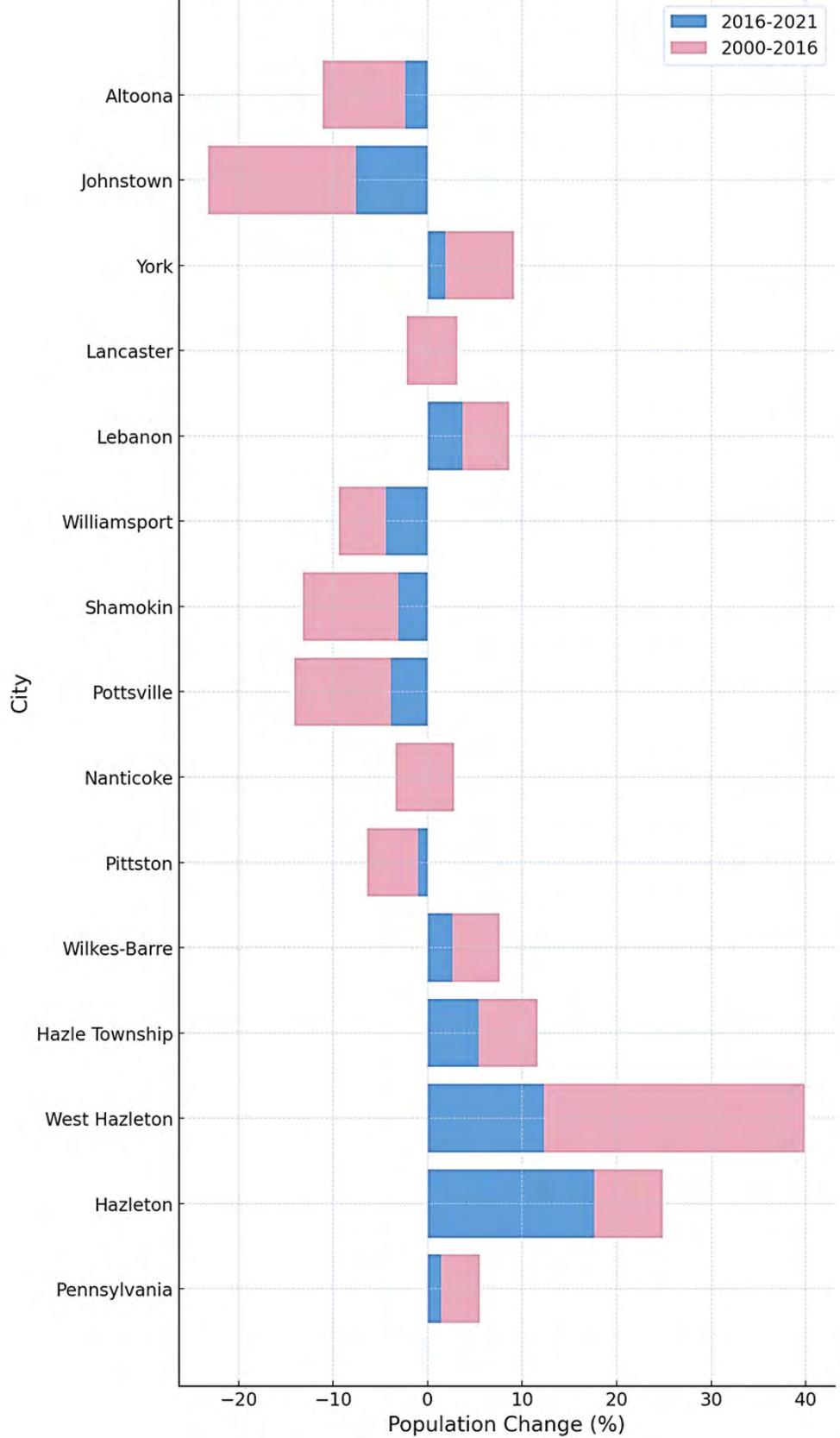
Comprehensive Plan Organization

The Greater Hazleton Area Multi-municipal Comprehensive Plan is structured into several key components that together support the development and execution of the community's vision and priorities. These components are:

- Priority Areas
- Implementation
- Existing Conditions
- Exhibits and Maps
- Appendices.

Priority Areas

This section delineates the main focus areas identified through community engagement and research. Each Priority Area outlines specific goals and strategies that address the needs and aspirations of the Greater Hazleton area. By concentrating on these areas, the plan ensures that resources and efforts are directed toward the most pressing issues, including housing, economic vitality, youth engagement, services and amenities, and resilient systems. This targeted approach allows for more effective problem-solving and resource allocation, thereby enhancing the overall quality of life for residents.

Implementation

The Implementation section provides a roadmap for how the plan will be put into action. It details the steps necessary to achieve the identified goals, including timelines, responsible parties, and potential funding sources. This structured approach ensures accountability and transparency, enabling stakeholders to track progress and make necessary adjustments. It also fosters collaboration among municipalities and external partners, reinforcing the commitment to collective growth and development.

Existing Conditions

This component offers a comprehensive analysis of the current state of the Greater Hazleton area. It includes demographic data, economic trends, infrastructure assessments, and environmental considerations. By understanding the existing conditions, the plan can identify gaps and opportunities, facilitating informed decision-making. This foundational knowledge is critical for developing strategies that are realistic and aligned with the community's capabilities and needs.

Exhibits and Maps

Exhibits and Maps serve as visual aids that enhance the understanding of the plan's content. These tools illustrate key data, such as land use patterns, demographic distributions, and infrastructure layouts. They provide stakeholders with a clearer picture of the area's strengths and weaknesses, making the information more accessible and engaging. Visual representations help to communicate complex ideas effectively, fostering greater community involvement and support for the plan.

Appendices

The Appendices section includes supplementary materials that provide additional context and resources for the comprehensive plan. This will encompass detailed survey results, technical analyses, relevant legislation, and best practice recommendations. By including these resources, the plan supports ongoing education and engagement among stakeholders, ensuring that all parties have access to the information needed to contribute to the plan's success.

Together, these sections create a cohesive framework that not only captures the community's vision but also provides a clear pathway for its realization. The organization of the comprehensive plan reflects a commitment to thorough planning, community involvement, and effective execution, positioning the Greater Hazleton area for a sustainable and prosperous future.

VISION AND GOALS

Vision

The City of Hazleton, West Hazleton Borough, and Hazle Township are vibrant, welcoming, prosperous communities where people work together to make this unique region thrive. The area is known for having a variety of good paying jobs, excellent public schools, well-maintained housing at every price point, charming small businesses and restaurants, exciting art and cultural experiences, and abundant parks and green spaces. The community is safe, open to and respectful of differences, and economically and environmentally resilient.

Overarching Goals

1. Create a variety of safe, affordable housing opportunities that align with job growth and improve the quality of an aging home stock.

2. Promote economic prosperity through living wage jobs, small business development, a spectrum of educational opportunities, and a thriving downtown.

3. Strengthen the school district by increasing capacity to accommodate population growth, improving schools' ability to communicate with and engage Hispanic and Latino families, and connecting young people to local employment opportunities.

4. Improve and expand public infrastructure in response to economic and population growth.

5. Conserve green space and create opportunities for outdoor recreation.

6. Facilitate respectful and rewarding relationships among neighbors.

7. Coordinate government services to improve planning, economic opportunity, and the quality of life.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Public participation is key to developing a comprehensive plan that reflects the community's vision. The public participated in the development of this plan through a steering committee, a survey, focus groups, individual interviews, and community events and public meetings.

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee met four times throughout the process. The Steering Committee was made up of representatives from each of the three municipalities, as well as leaders from business and community organizations, and representatives from the County Planning Commission, various State agencies, and the State Legislature.

Survey

A survey was developed and updated based on feedback from the Steering Committee to ensure it captured a wide range of community priorities and concerns. Recognizing the linguistic diversity of the Greater Hazleton area, the final survey was translated into Spanish and made available in both English and Spanish to encourage inclusive participation. Community members were informed about the opportunity to take the survey through a targeted outreach campaign, including advertisements and community engagement efforts. The survey was accessible online from March 1 to May 12, 2023, ensuring ample time for residents to participate.

The survey garnered 779 responses, with 753 completed in English and 26 in Spanish, reflecting an effort to engage the region's significant Hispanic and Latinx population. However, upon examination, 492 responses were identified as computer-generated and excluded to maintain the survey's integrity. This left a total of 287 valid responses, yielding a sample size with a 5.8% margin of error at a 95% confidence level. This means we can be 95% confident that the survey results reflect the views of the population within a 5.8% margin. The survey provided valuable insights into community priorities, including housing, economic development, public safety, and quality-of-life concerns, which have shaped the comprehensive planning process.

Website

A website was launched, www.hazletonspeaks.com, that was used to communicate with the public. The website connected the public to the survey tool and provided announcements and project updates.

Focus Groups

Eight focus groups were held to gather information to support the plan development. Between March and July 2023, the project leads met with the following stakeholders:

- Greater Hazleton Chamber of Commerce Board Members
- Latino Business Owners
- Hazleton Township Recreation Committee
- Hazleton Integration Project Adult ESL Students
- Hazleton Integration Project Grade School and High School Students
- Hazleton Active Adult Center Members
- West Hazleton Borough Leaders and Residents
- CAN DO Executive Committee

Community Events and Public Meetings

Information was shared and gathered during two community events. Postcards were distributed promoting the survey at the Greater Hazleton Chamber of Commerce Job Fair in March 2023. Information was also collected from participants of the DHAP Cinco de Mayo event in May 2023.

Information was gathered during a public meeting held in an open house format at the Laurel Mall in September 2023. Approximately 50 people participated in the event. The participants provided feedback on the following topics:

- Top Concerns and Solutions
- Activities for Kids and Teens
- Community Vision
- Priorities

Individual Interviews

Over 20 individual interviews took place over the telephone and in person. This was an opportunity to learn more about specific aspects of the community and the community's needs.

CATALYST PROJECT

Establish regional planning services through a council of governments.

The Greater Hazleton area has long held a reputation for an excellent quality of life, affordable housing, abundant parks, quality schools, and job opportunities that brought both people and industry to the area. This status, however, is being impacted by growth that is outpacing the evolution of community infrastructure and services. Due to the demand for warehousing and distribution, as well as the prime location of the Greater Hazleton area to the greater United States Interstate Highway network and population, it is anticipated that population and industry will continue to grow in the region. Many Pennsylvania communities would be envious of such growth; however, it is important to develop an infrastructure to appropriately plan for and support this growth. Much of the immense growth came more quickly than municipal systems could adapt, and like much of Eastern Pennsylvania, the housing market has become strained, with prices rising considerably, purchases becoming increasing competitive and supply diminished.

Other community resources are at risk too. Despite a rise in the regional industrial tax base, the school district remains stretched thin for resources. With a growing population, the district is having difficulty keeping up with other, more affluent districts, especially considering the additional necessity to educate a growing non-English speaking population. The school district lacks the necessary number of classrooms, especially those for specialty subjects, or enough teachers to fill them. Similarly, the transportation system has become strained. Formerly quiet streets throughout the three communities are beginning to back up with traffic, and roads and other infrastructure require additional maintenance than can be afforded. Retail and restaurant services are in demand, especially those that address a changing population, but resources are thin for starting such risky ventures. Additional assistance and resource allocation to these types of businesses is imperative for a vibrant commercial district.

The growing region needs to establish regional planning services to facilitate joint planning to capitalize on the assets of the region. While this plan focuses on three municipalities, the City of Hazleton, West Hazleton Borough, and Hazle Township as the community plans cooperatively, plans should include neighboring municipalities that are important pieces of the regional puzzle. Significant development is occurring throughout southern Luzerne County, and planning regionally has a number of positive benefits. Not only does working together facilitate efficiency but also effectiveness. State and Federal agencies also look positively on cooperatively developed grant and funding requests.

Pennsylvania has an extensive network of councils of government, including the Mountain Council of Governments (COG), of which these three municipalities are a member. Per the Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs, a primary purpose of a council of governments is to empower and encourage municipal cooperation, communication, and collaboration. As plans are further developed, those working to better the Greater Hazleton area should continue working with their neighbor communities. By working together to solve multi-jurisdictional problems, regional efforts can have a positive impact on all communities while helping to stretch valuable limited resources such as tax revenue and municipal workforce. It is imperative that once this plan is adopted, an organization is designated, staffed, and funded to coordinate regional planning efforts. It is recommended that this regional coordination entity is structured as a council of government.

Careful consideration should be taken into the formation of this COG and must represent the entire community. In addition to representatives from each of the municipalities who choose to join the council, additional representatives may include the following: water authority, sewer authority, Hazleton School District, CAN DO, Greater Hazleton Chamber of Commerce, healthcare institutions, and the Downtown Hazleton Alliance for Progress. The Mountain COG should be engaged in the conversation to decide how best to move forward with establishing the required infrastructure to appropriately plan for the future of the Greater Hazleton area and the communities throughout southern Luzerne County. The Mountain COG has existed for many years and can provide valuable knowledge. With 23 members, including three cities, seven townships, seven boroughs, two school districts, and two authorities, the organization is well versed at balancing municipal wishes with regional needs. The Mountain COG and community leaders need to discuss and determine the options for the best way forward to establish a regional planning arm. While a Greater Hazleton COG could learn much from the organizational structure and regional efforts, it must be noted the Mountain COG is not prepared to take on a role of this magnitude.

Fortunately, the community has numerous government, community and business leaders and organizations to rely on to support this much needed work. Through many conversations with community leaders there has been widespread interest in community and economic development, as well as a willingness to provide financial and leadership support throughout the effort. Identifying, funding, and empowering a group to lead the implementation of this multi-municipal comprehensive plan and the many regional planning efforts to come is key to the sustainable future of the region.

PRIORITY AREAS

The Greater Hazleton Area Multi-municipal Comprehensive Plan identifies five key priority areas, each crucial for fostering a vibrant, sustainable community. These areas are Housing, Economic Vitality, Youth, Services and Amenities, and Resilient Systems. Each priority area encompasses specific goals and strategies designed to address pressing community issues and promote long-term prosperity.

The plan identifies five priority areas:

#1 - Housing

#2 - Economic Vitality

#3 - Youth

#4 - Services and Amenities

#5 - Resilient Systems

Each priority area is organized as follows:

- o   Vision

- o   Introductory and Supporting Information

- o   Goals

- o   Strategies

Community Pillars

The "Greater Hazleton Thrive" plan lays out a transformative vision for the future of Hazleton, West Hazleton, and Hazle Township, grounded in an unwavering commitment to community stability, economic growth, youth empowerment, accessible amenities, and environmental resilience. Each priority area—Housing, Economic Vitality, Youth, Services and Amenities, and Resilient Systems—represents a pillar of a vibrant, sustainable community that meets the diverse needs of all residents. Through a series of targeted strategies, this multi-municipal initiative aims to cultivate an inclusive and prosperous environment where residents, businesses, and institutions work in harmony to ensure a high quality of life. Guided by a forward-thinking approach and a deep respect for local values, "Greater Hazleton Thrive" stands as a blueprint for resilience, opportunity, and lasting community success.

Housing

Housing is a fundamental component of community stability and quality of life. The plan aims to ensure a variety of affordable housing options that cater to diverse family sizes and income levels. Key strategies include improving the quality of existing housing stock through enhanced code enforcement and establishing rehabilitation programs. Additionally, the plan emphasizes the need for new housing developments that align with population growth and employment opportunities, addressing the pressing demand for affordable living spaces.

Economic Vitality

Economic vitality is essential for community growth and sustainability. This priority area focuses on diversifying the local economy beyond warehousing, promoting small business development, and attracting new industries. Strategies include conducting economic assessments to identify growth sectors, updating zoning codes to facilitate business creation, and collaborating with local economic organizations to enhance job opportunities. Encouraging living wage jobs and creating a business-friendly environment will help retain and attract talent to the region.

Youth

Investing in youth is crucial for the future of the Greater Hazleton area. The plan seeks to provide high-quality educational opportunities from preschool through higher education, while also fostering engagement in the community. Strategies include establishing partnerships with schools and local businesses to create internship and mentorship programs, as well as forming youth councils that allow young voices to influence local initiatives. By supporting youth development, the plan aims to cultivate a new generation of engaged residents who contribute positively to the community.

Services and Amenities

Access to essential services and recreational amenities significantly enhances the quality of life. The plan prioritizes improving public transportation, healthcare access, and recreational facilities. Strategies include developing a network of parks and trails,

enhancing public transit options and attracting local businesses that meet community needs. By focusing on these areas, the plan aims to create a well-rounded environment where residents can thrive and enjoy a high quality of life.

Resilient Systems

Building resilient systems is vital for addressing the challenges posed by rapid growth and climate change. This priority area focuses on sustainable government services, infrastructure improvements, and environmental resilience. Strategies include establishing regional planning services to coordinate development efforts, ensuring infrastructure can support population growth, and adopting practices that promote environmental sustainability. By fostering a resilient community, the plan aims to safeguard the Greater Hazleton area's future while enhancing its overall livability.

Each of these priority areas plays a critical role in shaping the future of the Greater Hazleton area. By implementing targeted strategies, the community can work collaboratively to achieve its goals and ensure a prosperous, sustainable environment for current and future residents.

PRIORITY #1 HOUSING

Vision

The Greater Hazleton area provides a variety of affordable, well-maintained housing options that accommodate residents of all types of family sizes, income levels, and needs. Housing includes both owner-occupied and rental units located conveniently near employment centers and essential community amenities like schools, healthcare facilities, transportation, and other vital services, creating a thriving community.

Introductory and Supporting Information

Across Pennsylvania, population growth from 2000 to 2016 was highest at 4.1%, followed by 1.2% growth from 2016 to 2021. In contrast, the Greater Hazleton area grew by 24.3% since 2000, equaling 8,686 new residents. Notably, much of this increase (5,459 people) has occurred since 2016, largely driven by job creation within the industrial sector. However, housing development has not kept pace, with only 1,595 new units constructed over the same period. As a result, vacancy rates have declined, household sizes have grown, and housing competition has intensified.

Although unemployment has remained low, rising housing prices and rents have increased faster than wage growth, exacerbating financial pressures for residents. Median home values have climbed in all three municipalities, with significant rent increases: from 2016 to 2021, median rent rose by 32.9% in Hazleton and 12.6% in West Hazleton, though it decreased by 2% in Hazle Township. Recent Zillow data (November 2023) indicates an average rent of $1,500 in Hazleton.

Approximately 23.8% of homeowners spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs, while 45% of renters are similarly burdened. Particularly vulnerable groups include seniors and residents on fixed incomes; for example, more than 46% of cost-burdened homeowners are aged 65 or older. Rising housing costs threaten to displace long-term residents, with cost-burdened households generally earning less than $50,000 for homeowners and $20,000 for renters. Limited resources make it challenging for residents to absorb additional housing expenses or afford relocation.

Several residential projects are proposed or underway to address housing needs:

- **Allen Ridge Associates, LLC** has approval for 248 townhouses and 11 single-family lots in Hazleton, with an additional 280 apartments anticipated.
- **A&J Zelenak's Ridgewood Development** in Hazle Township offers single-family building lots.
- **Richard E. Angelo** is constructing 16 apartments along Hollywood Boulevard in Hazle Township.
- **The Altamont Hotel** in Hazleton will open in 2024, featuring 68 residential units and nine commercial spaces.
- A proposal to redevelop the former St. Joseph's Hospital into 192 units was recently denied by the City of Hazleton Zoning Hearing Board.

With anticipated job growth primarily in the warehousing sector, the region requires approximately 790 new housing units for every 1,000 jobs created. To meet these demands affordably, housing costs must align with typical industrial salaries. A full-time worker earning $17 per hour, for example, could afford monthly rent of about $884. Data reveals a shortage of both smaller units for single residents and larger homes for families. There are 5,775 one-person households but only 2,863 studio or one-bedroom units, and 2,066 households with five or more people versus only 1,035 units with five or more bedrooms, straining all sectors of the market.

Location considerations are equally important, with opportunities across the Greater Hazleton area that should ensure residents have convenient access to resources and employment. Feedback indicates a community interest in urban, walkable settings in the City or Borough, and a desire for tranquil, rural, and less dense spaces in the Township. This variety is crucial for a changing community like Greater Hazleton. Planners should focus on identifying vacant and underutilized land and aligning zoning ordinances to proactively support the housing development needs of the community.

Feedback from surveys and community events has stressed affordability as a top housing priority. Employers have cited housing as a barrier to recruiting new talent.

Goal 1: Preserve and Improve the Quality of Existing Housing Stock

Strategy 1

- Enhance municipal code enforcement programs.
- Consider regionalizing and enhancing property maintenance code enforcement and quality of life operations to create consistent standards across all municipalities. Offering higher, competitive wages for enforcement officers will improve staff retention, while shared training initiatives will ensure best practices are followed throughout the area. Any regionalization will require approval by all participating municipalities.

Strategy 2

- Implement residential rehabilitation programs that support both homeowners as well as property investors.
- Actively pursue funding, including grants and loans, to support rehabilitation programs for various types of housing. Engage local contractors to assist with rehabilitation efforts.

Goal 2: Develop New Housing Units

Strategy 1

- Conduct a regional housing study to inform long-term housing strategy. The study should acknowledge appropriate placement of housing, including the Township's preference to remain a rural community.
- The study evaluates specific housing needs, and analysis, price points, and location preferences, while also identifying funding sources to support affordable and workforce housing.

Strategy 2

- Establish a regional housing coordinator to lead new housing development initiatives.
- The coordinator identifies viable locations for housing development, attracting both for-profit and non-profit developers, and would coordinate stakeholders to secure necessary funding.

Strategy 3

- Encourage employers to participate in developing workforce housing for employees.
- As developers initiate land projects, discussions should include job creation metrics and housing impacts. Local leaders can promote comprehensive community impact planning, including housing and transportation options.

Goal 3: Redevelop Blighted and Vacant Properties

Strategy 1

- Develop a plan for blighted and vacant properties.
- Establish short- and long-term blight remediation objectives, identifying specific properties and prioritizing interventions.

Strategy 2

- Leverage the Hazleton Land Bank and Redevelopment Authority to rehabilitate blighted and vacant buildings.
- Expand the land bank to include surrounding municipalities and partner with the Luzerne County Redevelopment Authority to maximize acquisition efforts.

Strategy 3

- Secure funding for the acquisition and rehabilitation of blighted properties.
- Coordinate funding sources, investors, and other stakeholders to convert neglected properties into housing opportunities.

Goal 4: Modernize Zoning Ordinances to Meet Housing Needs

Strategy 1

- Permit diverse housing types in appropriate areas through zoning amendments or overlays.
- Broaden the areas where multifamily housing is allowed by-right and ease restrictions on residential conversions and adaptive reuse. Consider incentives for owner-occupied landlords to offset rising costs.

Strategy 2

- Explore options for permitting accessory dwelling units (ADUs).
- ADUs provide affordable housing options for smaller households or caretakers and add flexibility within residential zoning.

Strategy 3

- Reduce residential parking requirements where feasible.
- Minimizing parking requirements can facilitate housing development and reduce housing costs.

Strategy 4

- Develop neighborhood parking solutions.
- Create neighborhood parking lots and encourage rear-yard off-street parking to alleviate on-street parking demand.

PRIORITY #2 VITALITY

Vision

The Greater Hazleton area is an economically thriving community that attracts engaged employers who offer living-wage jobs to a skilled workforce. This workforce is well-prepared to enter and advance in diverse industries, including logistics, manufacturing, early childhood education, and construction.

Introductory and Supporting Information

Recent employment and population growth presents a unique opportunity for the Greater Hazleton area to redefine its identity and establish itself as a vibrant economic and cultural hub. Amid this growth, residents have expressed a clear desire for a community that offers competitive quality of life, an affordable cost of living, and diverse job opportunities. Attracting and retaining younger residents, in particular, will require cultivating employment opportunities that are aligned with these goals, alongside investments in community infrastructure and amenities that create a lasting appeal.

In today's rapidly evolving economy, wages within the Greater Hazleton area still lag behind those in neighboring regions for many of the most common occupations. For example, the average hourly wage for material movers is $13.32 in Hazleton, $15.94 in West Hazleton, and $17.08 in Hazle Township—compared to $19.99 in the broader MSA. To sustainably attract and retain families, the region must prioritize jobs that offer a living wage; MIT estimates that a family of four with two working adults in the Scranton-Wilkes-Barre MSA requires an hourly wage of $23.02 to meet basic living costs. Fortunately, several in-demand occupations already offer wages at or above this level, including licensed practical nurses ($24.73 per hour), industrial mechanics ($28.21), and truck drivers ($25.17). By focusing on expanding such positions and incentivizing employers who offer competitive wages and career advancement, Hazleton can cultivate a robust economy that meets the needs of its residents.

For over 70 years, CAN DO has taken the lead in guiding economic development in the area. Now, as new employers and developers contribute to a diversifying economic landscape, it is critical to continue regional planning and oversight to ensure sustainable growth. Coordinating growth at a regional level is essential to managing shared resources, including infrastructure, housing, and school capacity, while ensuring that employment opportunities remain equitable and offer clear pathways for advancement. A regional approach also facilitates strategic development that is sensitive to local demographics, infrastructure limits, and community needs, thereby reducing the risk of fragmented growth that could strain public services or overburden infrastructure.

However, the voices of residents reveal additional areas of concern: employment practices that prioritize temporary or part-time roles over stable, full-time positions with benefits remain a challenge. Such practices can undermine community stability, as residents need secure employment to invest in the area and contribute to its long-term prosperity. Furthermore, as the region's workforce becomes more diverse, it is essential to address communication and language needs to create a welcoming environment for non-English-speaking workers. Investing in language training and inclusive workforce policies will not only support existing residents but also make Hazleton a more attractive place for prospective workers and families.

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted strategy that blends traditional economic development with contemporary insights into livable community design. Planners and policymakers must consider factors such as spatial equity, ensuring that

job opportunities, housing, and services are accessible across neighborhoods and municipalities, especially those with lower-income residents. Infrastructure investments in public transportation, walkable neighborhoods, and affordable housing can also strengthen local economic resilience by supporting the workforce in ways that reduce cost-of-living burdens and improve access to employment hubs.

In summary, the Greater Hazleton area's employment growth is impressive and filled with promise. Yet, as it continues to evolve, the region must prioritize inclusive growth that balances economic opportunity with a high quality of life, accessible community services, and diverse housing options. This balanced approach will not only serve the current population but will lay a strong foundation for attracting a future workforce and fostering a stable, prosperous community for generations to come.

Goal 1: Develop a Proactive-Strategic Economic Development Strategy

Strategy 1

- Align local economic development efforts with federal and state priorities, including the Governor's Economic Development Strategy, to diversify the economy through targeted investments in critical technologies such as energy, critical minerals, agriculture, life sciences, robotics, and artificial intelligence.

Strategy 2

- Foster strategic partnerships with educational institutions to develop programs and resources that support workforce development in technology-based industries, ensuring a pipeline of skilled talent to meet emerging economic demands.

Strategy 3

- Secure funding to support new educational initiatives and infrastructure that nurture growth in critical technology sectors, emphasizing alignment with state-led economic development goals as outlined in *Pennsylvania Gets It Done*.

Strategy 4

- Promote collaboration between public and private sectors to drive innovation, entrepreneurship, and commercialization of emerging technologies, enhancing regional competitiveness in key industries.

Goal 2: Employers Offer a Variety of Employment Opportunities That Pay a Livable Wage

Strategy 1

- Align efforts of economic development partners, including Penn's Northeast, CAN DO, and the Luzerne-Schuylkill Workforce Development Board, to attract and retain employers that offer living-wage jobs.

Strategy 2

- Develop targeted incentives to attract employers providing living-wage opportunities with potential for career advancement.

Strategy 3

- Identify and prepare locations suitable for business development to ensure a pipeline of viable sites for new employers.

Goal 3: Build Education and Workforce Training Opportunities Aligned with Employment Needs

Strategy 1

- Expand education and workforce programs that align with regional employment needs, connecting residents and students with training that supports career advancement.

Strategy 2

- Encourage employers to create in-house training programs to facilitate employee growth and retention within their organizations.

Strategy 3

- Develop language-focused programs to address communication barriers, offering training for employers, employees, and residents to foster an inclusive workforce environment.

Goal 4: Encourage Employers to Actively Support Community Growth and Stability

Strategy 1

- Create funding and tax incentives to encourage employers to provide supportive services such as childcare, employee transportation, and workforce housing.

Strategy 2

- Encourage employers to foster community involvement through volunteering, student mentoring, and participation on local boards.

Strategy 3

- Establish networking and social initiatives for young professionals, such as forming a Greater Hazleton Young Professionals Council, to foster community connections and enhance workforce retention.

PRIORITY #3 YOUTH

Vision

The Greater Hazleton area is a nurturing community where every child and young adult has access to a high-quality education, inclusive opportunities, and resources that enable them to thrive academically, emotionally, and socially. Our schools and community institutions are equipped to serve an increasingly diverse population, fostering a sense of belonging, resilience, and community pride that encourages young people to build their thriving futures here.

Note: It should be noted that the Hazleton Area School District serves communities beyond the Thrive study area; therefore, these strategies are intended as regional community goals rather than direct mandates of this comprehensive plan.

Introductory and Supporting Information

The Hazleton Area School District saw a 17.4% increase in enrollment from 2012 to 2023, reaching a total of 12,243 students across municipalities in Luzerne, Carbon, and Schuylkill counties. The rapid growth led to space constraints so severe that some kindergarten students attend remotely. The district's demographic composition has also evolved; today, as more than 2,500 students are English language learners. However, the school district staff and administration are not yet fully representative of this diversity, a point of concern among community members seeking a school environment that better reflects and understands its student body.

The district collaborates with higher education institutions and community organizations, including the Hazleton Integration Project, which provide critical resources such as tutoring, after-school programs, and sports activities. These partnerships, facilitated through an active education workgroup, seek to connect students with local academic and career opportunities. Community-based programs, when linked to educational institutions, foster a sense of belonging and increase the likelihood that youth will pursue professional lives in Hazleton.

Feedback from residents during the comprehensive planning process highlights the significance of educational improvements, especially for families with school-age children. A survey showed that 59.2% of respondents prioritized better schools, with a higher percentage among those under 45, underscoring the essential role education plays in the eyes of parents and young families. Community leaders, parents, and students all emphasize the importance of making high-quality education available to all children and recognize that schools must feel physically and emotionally safe for students to focus on learning and growth.

Moreover, many young adults leave Hazleton after high school, either to pursue further education or better employment opportunities elsewhere. This outmigration of the 21-24 age group, which has decreased by 10.2% since 2016, despite broader population growth, represents a challenge. Young people often cite the lack of professional opportunities and limited local options for their own children as reasons for not returning back to the area. For Hazleton to secure its future, it must develop pathways for young people to engage meaningfully with their community, form a connection to it, and envision a future thriving within it.

Addressing these needs involves creating a robust framework for youth engagement and development. The goal is to make Greater Hazleton a place where young people not only find their footing in the world but also view the community as their home—a place to grow, succeed, and eventually raise their own families.

Goal 1: Support Hazleton Area School District's Capacity to Deliver High-Quality Education to All

Strategy 1

- Establish a data collection and reporting system to aid in planning for adequate staffing, classrooms, and resources in response to population growth and employment changes.

Strategy 2

- Work with the district to explore temporary classroom space and support resources to alleviate current overcrowding while more permanent infrastructure solutions are developed.

Goal 2: Expand ESL and Spanish Language Offerings to Support Students and Families

Strategy 1

- Recruit and retain bilingual teachers and aides to improve language support, ensuring that all students feel supported in the classroom.

Strategy 2

- Enhance parental engagement by offering translation services and Spanish-language materials, including forms, school district communications, and website content.

Goal 3: Ensure Access to Early Childhood Education and Kindergarten for All Children

Strategy 1

- Work with local early childhood providers to identify barriers to expanding programs, developing plans to address these issues for greater access.

Strategy 2

- Engage national and regional early childhood education organizations, such as NAEYC and Pre-K for PA, in developing local solutions for early learning and funding.

Goal 4: Prepare Middle and High School Students for Post-Secondary Education and Career Pathways

Strategy 1

- Collaborate with local employers and higher education institutions to develop career-focused curricula that highlight regional opportunities and encourage community engagement.

Strategy 2

- Increase career counseling staff within the district to better assist students with academic and career planning, fostering readiness for post-secondary opportunities.

Strategy 3

- Partner with local businesses to create internships and apprenticeships for high school students, offering practical experience and a connection to the local workforce.

Goal 5: Engage Youth in Shaping Education and Community Programming

Strategy 1

- Establish a Youth Education Advisory Committee to gather student input on school and community issues, empowering youth with a role in decision-making.

Strategy 2

- Create an online platform for students to share suggestions and feedback, allowing the district to respond to the evolving needs and perspectives of its young residents.

Goal 6: Provide Accessible and Affordable After-School and Summer Programs

Strategy 1

- Assess current programming needs to identify gaps and develop new programs that engage youth of all ages and interests.

Strategy 2

- Offer scholarships and financial support to ensure equitable access to after-school and summer programs, making these resources available to all families.

Strategy 3

- Pursue grants and partnerships to expand the capacity of youth programs, coordinating with local stakeholders to increase access and reach.

Goal 7: Develop Initiatives to Retain Youth in the Community Post-Graduation

Strategy 1

- Promote local educational and workforce opportunities, including Hazleton's thriving quality of life, low cost of living, and family-friendly amenities, to encourage students to build their futures in the area.

Strategy 2

- Explore the formation of Youth Councils in each municipality, offering young people a voice in local government and fostering a strong connection to their community.

Strategy 3

- Engage directly with local youth to understand their aspirations and needs, creating a roadmap for targeted community improvements that supports a lasting commitment to the Greater Hazleton area.

PRIORITY #4
SERVICES & AMENITIES

Vision

The Greater Hazleton area offers an exceptional quality of life through an integrated network of services, amenities, and infrastructure. With a focus on creating a cohesive, welcoming community, Hazleton's residents enjoy revitalized downtown spaces, accessible recreational facilities, and robust local services. These elements work in harmony to strengthen the social fabric, support economic vitality, and create an environment where people are encouraged to gather, connect, and thrive.

Introductory and Supporting Information

The quality of life in Greater Hazleton is a dynamic synthesis of cultural diversity, rich recreational opportunities, and essential public services. This balance is the foundation of a thriving, resilient, and welcoming community where residents, both new and established, find a place to connect and belong. In recent years, Greater Hazleton has seen a transformative demographic shift, with Hazleton and West Hazleton now home to a majority Hispanic and Latino population. This cultural evolution presents immense opportunities to revitalize and enrich the community, drawing on the vitality and traditions of these new residents. At the same time, it underscores the importance of fostering strong, integrative frameworks to bring together long-standing residents with new community members, helping Greater Hazleton fully realize its potential as a multicultural hub.

A primary area of focus in this transformation is public safety, particularly in downtown Hazleton. With more than 80% of survey respondents citing safety as a priority, it's clear that creating secure and welcoming neighborhoods is foundational to Greater Hazleton's broader vision. Safe and vibrant neighborhoods are not only essential for attracting and retaining residents but also for supporting local businesses and fostering a lively cultural scene that draws visitors and encourages economic investment. Community input further emphasizes the need to develop more local retail and dining options, reducing the reliance on neighboring cities like Scranton, Wilkes-Barre, and Allentown for essential services and amenities. By bringing more diverse shopping and dining options into the area, Hazleton can cultivate a distinct sense of place and encourage residents to reinvest in their own community.

Healthcare accessibility also remains a significant concern, with limited options for timely emergency care, specialist visits, and general healthcare services. As Hazleton's population grows and diversifies, meeting healthcare needs will require innovative solutions and proactive planning. By increasing the number of healthcare providers and improving access to care through targeted partnerships with regional healthcare networks, the area can better serve the health needs of its residents, contributing to overall community stability and quality of life.

In recent years, the groundwork for revitalization has been set through the Downtown Hazleton Strategic Plan for Continued Revitalization, established in 2015. This plan has already spurred meaningful changes, such as the redevelopment of the historic Altamont Hotel into mixed-use spaces, the creation of the CAN DO Community Park, and the establishment of arts and cultural centers. These efforts underscore the essential role of a vibrant downtown in creating a cohesive community identity and driving sustained economic activity. However, to preserve and build upon this momentum, it's crucial to not only attract more businesses and visitors but to prioritize a pedestrian-friendly, accessible downtown that residents of all ages can enjoy.

Revitalization efforts should be viewed as ongoing, with constant recalibration to respond to changing community needs, emerging economic trends, and the evolving character of the region.

Equally important are the parks and recreational facilities that span the tri-municipal area. These spaces are not merely amenities; they serve as essential communal areas where residents gather, unwind, and enjoy the natural beauty of the region. Quality parks and recreational opportunities are central to Greater Hazleton's identity, contributing to tourism, resident well-being, and economic development. As the population grows, so does the demand for accessible, well-maintained recreational spaces that reflect the needs and interests of a diverse population. Enhancing and expanding these spaces is not only a matter of beautification but a strategic investment in social infrastructure that can boost resident satisfaction, attract visitors, and strengthen the overall economic resilience of the region.

In sum, the strategic enhancement of Greater Hazleton's services, amenities, and recreational spaces will provide the foundation for a more unified, vibrant, and inclusive community. These enhancements are not isolated improvements; they are part of a comprehensive vision that recognizes the interplay between safety, culture, economic opportunity, and quality of life. By embracing a holistic approach to urban planning, Greater Hazleton can foster an environment where every resident feels valued and engaged, creating a truly resilient community that will flourish well into the future.

Goal 1: Build Community Cohesion by Supporting Cultural Integration and Inclusive Services

Strategy 1

- Support events and activities that facilitate social interaction between new and longstanding residents, fostering a sense of community.

Strategy 2

- Evaluate and enhance existing community services, such as employment support and English language classes, to expand capacity and accessibility for all residents.

Strategy 3

- Develop a formal communication channel for Hispanic and Latino residents to share integration challenges and community feedback, fostering inclusivity in local government and services.

Goal 2: Ensure Safe and Welcoming Environments for Residents and Visitors

Strategy 1

- Create a public relations campaign to promote accurate information about crime trends in Hazleton, aiming to alleviate concerns and foster community pride.

Strategy 2

- Develop a downtown ambassador program to greet and assist residents and visitors, enhancing the sense of security and friendliness in public spaces.

Strategy 3

- Collaborate with local police departments to establish regular community outreach and relationship-building events, strengthening trust and cooperation between law enforcement and residents.

Goal 3: Enhance Downtown Hazleton as a Hub for Economic and Social Activity

Strategy 1

- Identify and promote underutilized downtown sites for new housing, retail, and commercial space development, targeting regional and national developers.

Strategy 2

- Support and expand a downtown façade improvement program to enhance visual appeal and attract more visitors and tenants to the area.

Strategy 3

- Encourage retail businesses and restaurants to align their hours to create a more vibrant and consistent downtown experience, especially during evenings and weekends.

Goal 4: Increase Access to Essential Retail and Services Within the Community

Strategy 1

- Conduct a market needs assessment to identify gaps in local retail and dining offerings, then develop a targeted recruitment plan to attract businesses that meet these needs.

Strategy 2

- Support local healthcare providers in expanding services, including specialists, emergency care, and general practice options, to address healthcare access gaps.

Strategy 3

- Investigate the feasibility of establishing a federally qualified health center to serve uninsured and underinsured residents, ensuring equitable healthcare access.

Strategy 4

- Encourage retail and service development in the Township, including addressing vacancies in Laurel Mall and ensuring access to essential services within Township boundaries.

Goal 5: Foster a Dynamic, Accessible Parks and Recreation System

Strategy 1

- Prepare a ten-year master plan for each park, providing clear guidance for park enhancements, recreational programming, and maintenance.

Strategy 2

- Conduct annual safety audits of all park facilities to ensure compliance with current safety standards, including playground surfaces, pathways, and structural elements.

Strategy 3

- Pursue ADA compliance for all parks and recreational facilities, ensuring that each area is accessible to residents of all abilities.

Goal 6: Create Safe, Pedestrian-Friendly Connections Between Key Community Areas

Strategy 1

- Expand the Hazleton Rail-Trail to create a spine for future trail connections throughout Greater Hazleton, linking neighborhoods, schools, and parks.

Strategy 2

- Develop pedestrian and bicycle pathways within a 10-minute radius of major parks, trails, and recreational areas, enhancing safe access for residents.

Strategy 3

- Work with local businesses and nonprofits to support trail network expansion and enhancements, such as bike racks, signage, and trail maintenance programs.

Goal 7: Ensure the Safety and Quality of Parks and Recreational Facilities for All Users

Strategy 1

- Incorporate CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) principles to maximize visibility, reduce hiding spaces, and encourage community use.

Strategy 2

- Engage neighborhood watch groups and public safety teams to monitor park facilities and report maintenance needs or suspicious activities.

Strategy 3

- Create a user-friendly, web-based system for reporting maintenance issues or safety concerns in parks, allowing residents to easily communicate with local authorities and track follow-up actions.

PRIORITY #5 RESILIENCY

Vision

Greater Hazleton is a community with robust and sustainable systems in government, infrastructure, environment, and economic development. These systems adapt to changing demands while prioritizing efficiency, resource conservation, and resilience to support a thriving and healthy community. This priority area focuses on strategic initiatives aimed at improving government services, transportation networks, waste management, and stormwater systems, ensuring that the community is prepared to accommodate future demands while safeguarding its natural resources.
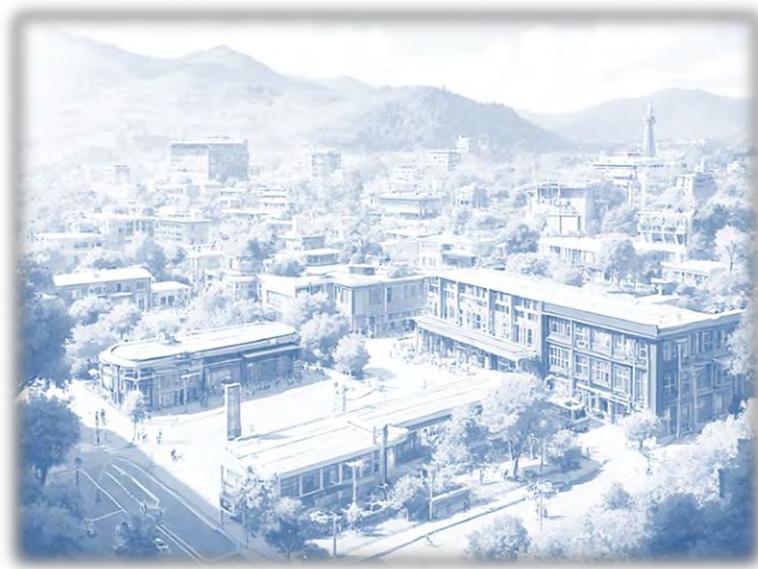
Introductory and Supporting Information

As Greater Hazleton continues to grow in population and industry, its infrastructure and governance face both substantial opportunities and complex challenges. Crafting a resilient, future-ready framework to support this sustainable growth requires a clear strategic vision, regional collaboration, and adaptable infrastructure systems capable of evolving with community needs. Climate change, with its intensifying weather patterns and shifting environmental baselines, paired with urban expansion, places increasing demands on resources. Thus, it is critical to invest in infrastructure systems that are robust, adaptable, sustainable, and equitable.

Central to this resilience strategy is Greater Hazleton's essential infrastructure: transportation networks, utilities, water and waste systems, and emergency services. These systems uphold every aspect of community life, from daily routines to economic activity and public safety. As growth accelerates, particularly in high-density and industrial areas, so does the demands on these networks. Proactive infrastructure upgrades, such as modernizing stormwater and sanitary systems, are necessary to handle more frequent and severe rainfall, fluctuating water tables, and the pressure of development. For transportation, ensuring roadways are equipped to support both residential and industrial growth is paramount. Regular traffic studies, systematic road improvements, and designated routes for freight and heavy vehicles will help balance the needs of commuters, freight operations, and recreational users, ensuring a smooth and efficient transportation network.

Effective governance is equally vital for resilience. Regional collaboration, streamlined service delivery, and coordinated policies among municipalities can reduce costs, enhance response times, and establish consistent standards that benefit the entire area. Efforts such as shared municipal services, long-term financial planning, and the integration of technology for smart services can optimize resource use and uphold high standards of service delivery. In a resilient governance model, inclusivity and accessibility are prioritized so that diverse communities can benefit from regional growth. Sustainable governance also includes advancing industrial development that aligns with Greater Hazleton's quality-of-life objectives by minimizing environmental impacts and integrating seamlessly with local infrastructure.

Strategic climate-conscious planning is integral to the resilience framework, with each infrastructure element designed to uphold both economic development and environmental stewardship. Effective stormwater management, essential in the era of extreme weather, will play a pivotal role in flood prevention and water quality. Compliance with MS4 (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System) regulations, which include proactive stormwater strategies, will be critical to safeguarding residents and properties against future environmental stresses.

Efficient solid waste management also underpins a clean, sustainable, and resilient community. With rising costs, collaborative regional solutions and shared service contracts can help maintain dependable trash and recycling services while managing expenses. Waste management, water conservation, and aligned land-use planning are core components of a resilient Greater Hazleton, ensuring that new developments reflect the goals of carbon reduction, water conservation, and green space preservation. These strategies reduce environmental impact while enhancing the area's overall livability.

Embracing these strategies and commitments to resilient systems will help Greater Hazleton not only meet present needs but also prepare for future challenges, creating a sustainable and vibrant community that endures through generations. A resilient Greater Hazleton will not simply sustain growth—it will use it as a tool to improve quality of life, making the community more adaptable, proactive, and enriched for all residents as they navigate evolving needs and challenges.

Goal 1: Ensure Financial Sustainability for Essential Services

Strategy 1

- Evaluate the impacts of Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance programs through a detailed study. This analysis should balance the need to attract new development with the long-term fiscal health of municipal resources, ensuring programs incentivize sustainable growth without undermining essential services.

Strategy 2

- Conduct long-term financial planning for key municipal services, including road maintenance, stormwater management, and capital improvements. A robust financial strategy will prioritize high-impact investments while identifying funding sources to support sustainable growth.

Strategy 3

- Pursue state and federal funding opportunities proactively to support municipal operations. By developing a streamlined process for grant applications and maintaining a comprehensive database of potential funding sources, Greater Hazleton can ensure financial support for essential community services.\

Goal 2: Enhance Service Efficiency Through Regional Collaboration

Strategy 1

- Consider regionalizing and enhancing property maintenance code enforcement and quality of life operations to create consistent standards across all municipalities. Offering higher, competitive wages for enforcement officers will improve staff retention, while shared training initiatives will ensure best practices are followed throughout the area. Any regionalization will require approval by all participating municipalities.

Strategy 2

- Consider establishing a regional planning and zoning team to coordinate development efforts. and provide unified oversight on issues that cross municipal boundaries, such as impacts on local schools, housing needs, and infrastructure capacity.

Strategy 3

- Evaluate opportunities for regional coordination in police, fire, and emergency medical services. A comprehensive cost-benefit analysis will help determine where collaborative approaches could enhance efficiency and responsiveness.

Strategy 4

- Streamline municipal permitting, planning, and property maintenance code enforcement and quality of life processes to reduce time and cost for contractors, developers, and landlords. This initiative could involve creating standardized applications and aligning fees across municipalities, facilitating development without compromising standards.

Goal 3: Foster Inclusive Representation in Municipal Governance

Strategy 1

- Promote active participation of Hispanic and Latino residents through appointed roles on municipal boards and committees. This representation will ensure that diverse perspectives inform community decisions and enhance inclusivity in government processes.

Strategy 2

- Increase the number of bilingual staff in municipal offices to improve accessibility and communication. Translating essential forms, instructions, and municipal website information into Spanish will further facilitate engagement.

Goal 4: Keep Ordinances Current and Reflective of Community Goals

Strategy 1

- Implement a structured annual review process for municipal ordinances, ensuring updates align with community goals, particularly in areas like housing, transportation, and environmental management. Designate staff or retain consultants as needed to draft amendments efficiently.

Goal 5: Develop a Transportation Network that Supports Growth and Accessibility

Strategy 1

- Create an official map of future roads, trails, pedestrian pathways, parks, and other public facilities, as outlined in the PA Municipalities Planning Code. This mapping will guide future development, aligning it with strategic community goals.

Strategy 2

- Prioritize complete streets, designing roadways that safely accommodate pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers. This design approach will enhance walkability, reduce congestion, and increase neighborhood connectivity.

Strategy 3

- Amend zoning and subdivision ordinances to incentivize developers to contribute to offsite improvements. Incentives could include density or height bonuses, allowing Greater Hazleton to manage transportation impacts while facilitating growth.

Goal 6: Ensure Public Transit Access Meets Community Needs

Strategy 1

- Regularly monitor ridership data to adjust and optimize routes. This flexibility will ensure that transit services remain responsive to community needs and are cost-effective.

Strategy 2

- Collaborate with major employers to provide targeted, off-hour transit routes for shift workers. Employer-subsidized transit could improve job accessibility and reduce employee turnover.

Goal 7: Ensure Efficient and Sustainable Solid Waste Management

Strategy 1

- Provide clear communication to residents on waste disposal guidelines, including pick-up times and procedures for specialty items. Consistent outreach and public education can help maintain community cleanliness and compliance.

Strategy 2

- Explore opportunities for joint waste service contracts among municipalities to increase competition and secure favorable rates.

Goal 8: Ensure Water and Sanitary Sewer Systems Support Development Needs

Strategy 1

- Monitor water and sewer demand closely, particularly from new developments, to ensure that systems are not overwhelmed. Coordinate with the Greater Hazleton Joint Sewer Authority to increase EDU capacity and the Hazleton City Authority for water availability. Capacity planning will help prevent service disruptions and protect public health.

Goal 9: Meet DEP Stormwater Management Requirements

Strategy 1

- Amend zoning and stormwater ordinances to incorporate MS4 regulations, incentivizing green infrastructure solutions like permeable pavements and green roofs. This approach will help manage runoff and improve water quality.

Goal 10: Adopt Policies to Foster a Sustainable Community

Strategy 1

- Partner with neighboring communities to develop a regional Climate Action Plan. A shared approach to reducing greenhouse gas emissions will have a larger collective impact and create synergies across the region.

Strategy 2

- Adopt advanced building codes to promote energy efficiency, encouraging developers to exceed minimum standards with incentives for green buildings and NetZero construction.

Strategy 3

- Promote collaboration between public and private sectors to drive innovation, entrepreneurship, and commercialization of sustainable technologies, enhancing regional competitiveness in green industries.

Goal 11: Manage Industrial Development with Regional Collaboration

Strategy 1

- Establish a multi-municipal agreement requiring large-scale developments near municipal borders to be reviewed by neighboring jurisdictions. This practice will ensure regional impacts are addressed comprehensively.

Strategy 2

- Amend zoning ordinances to require buffering and accommodations for truck parking, walking trails, and green spaces around industrial sites. These requirements will minimize the impact on nearby residential areas, enhancing community compatibility.

PLAN TO IMPLEMENT

The Greater Hazleton Area Multi-municipal Comprehensive Plan Implementation Strategy outlines a dynamic, layered approach to realize the ambitious vision for sustainable growth, resilience, and quality of life. Through intentional collaboration, phased actions, regulatory enhancements, and rigorous monitoring, this strategy will usher Hazleton into a new era of integrated community development, responsive governance, and environmental stewardship. This strategy not only places an emphasis on coordination among stakeholders but also prioritizes transparency, inclusivity, and ongoing assessment to maintain progress and address emerging needs.

Note: This multi-municipal comprehensive plan is a policy guide. Each governing body and organization identified retains independent authority to evaluate and implement the plan according to its own best interests.

1. Collaborative Governance Structure and Stakeholder Engagement

1.1 Regional Implementation Committee (RIC)

- **Lead Agency:** TBD
- **Supporting Stakeholders:** Greater Hazleton Chamber of Commerce, CAN DO, Luzerne-Schuylkill Workforce Development Board, Hazleton Area School District, environmental organizations, local elected officials, neighborhood associations, and business leaders
- **Timeline:** Established within 6 months
- **Background:** Will serve as a coordination entity, functioning as a communication hub and governance forum to maintain strategic alignment across municipalities. The RIC will not have authority over municipal law or operations unless municipalities specifically agree to shared zoning ordinances, joint services, or other cooperative arrangements. Membership should be fair and equitable, with equal representation of all municipalities. An operating agreement should define the RIC's powers and limitations, require that any decisions impacting municipal operations receive approval from each governing body, and mandate that the RIC elect its chair annually. Municipalities should also identify a Lead Agency and consider hiring an Executive Director to manage implementation.
- **Role in Greater Hazleton Thrive Initiative:** By fostering unified action and shared resource allocation, the RIC will ensure the plan's efforts contribute directly to economic stability, environmental resilience, and social equity.
- **Key Performance Indicators:** Formation of RIC, establishment of subcommittees by focus area (e.g., Housing, Economic Development, Infrastructure), and a publicly accessible meeting schedule.

1.2 Define Roles and Responsibilities for Stakeholders

- **Lead Agency:** RIC
- **Supporting Stakeholders:** Municipal Planning Departments, economic development boards, community organizations
- **Timeline:** Completed within 3 months post-RIC formation
- **Background:** Clear delineation of roles ensures each stakeholder maximizes their expertise while avoiding redundancy. Assigning primary responsibilities and support roles for each action phase will streamline processes and enhance accountability.
- **Key Performance Indicators:** Documented roles for all stakeholders, semi-annual reports outlining individual contributions, and an inter-municipal agreement detailing expectations and decision-making protocols.

1.3 Stakeholder Liaison Program

- **Lead Agency:** RIC Public Engagement Subcommittee
- **Supporting Stakeholders:** Local media, community organizations, cultural centers
- **Timeline:** Developed within 6 months
- **Background:** The Liaison Program will deploy representatives from the RIC as community liaisons, each tasked with maintaining consistent communication with specific resident groups, including minority communities, young families, and senior citizens.
- **Role in Greater Hazleton Thrive Initiative:** This program encourages inclusivity by ensuring all voices are heard, integrating diverse perspectives into planning decisions.
- **Key Performance Indicators:** Deployment of liaisons, biannual surveys to gauge community sentiment, and reporting from liaisons at quarterly RIC meetings.

2. Phased Implementation with Timelines and Project Milestones

Phase 1: Foundation and Regulatory Reinforcement (Years 1–2)

2.1 Initial Zoning and Land Use Updates

- **Lead Agency:** Municipal Planning Departments
- **Supporting Stakeholders:** RIC, zoning boards, legal consultants
- **Timeline:** Completed by Year 1
- **Background:** Harmonized zoning regulations across municipalities will form the regulatory backbone for housing, commercial, and industrial development, ensuring alignment with sustainability and community-oriented growth.
- **Key Performance Indicators:** Adoption of updated zoning ordinances; creation of a zoning map that reflects growth zones, conservation areas, and mixed-use districts.

2.2 Community Communication and Transparency Initiative

- **Lead Agency:** RIC Communications Subcommittee
- **Supporting Stakeholders:** Neighborhood associations, cultural organizations
- **Timeline:** Initial rollout within 3 months
- **Background:** The initiative will employ a multimedia communication strategy to engage residents, ensure transparency, and encourage ongoing feedback. Utilizing social media, community forums, and newsletters, this initiative will empower residents to stay informed and participate.

- **Key Performance Indicators:** Launch of a dedicated plan website, regular dissemination of quarterly updates, and public engagement metrics such as meeting attendance and online feedback forms.

2.3 Priority Projects Initiation

- **Lead Agency:** RIC
- **Supporting Stakeholders:** Environmental groups, economic development boards
- **Timeline:** Commence within Year 1
- **Background:** Immediate projects include standardizing code enforcement, establishing a Youth Advisory Council, and initiating green infrastructure studies.
- **Role in Greater Hazleton Thrive Initiative:** These efforts address urgent community needs while laying the groundwork for broader strategic objectives.
- **Key Performance Indicators:** Implementation of code enforcement standards, Youth Advisory Council formation, and completion of initial green infrastructure feasibility studies.

Phase 2: Project Expansion and Capacity Building (Years 3–5)

2.4 Youth and Education *before current Task 2.4* (renumber all following tasks).

- **Lead Agency:** HASD
- **Supporting Stakeholders:** Municipalities, community orgs, RIC
- **Timeline:** Commence Year 1
- **Background:** Support HASD classroom space + ESL services
- **Role:** High-quality inclusive education for all youth
- **KPIs:** Short-term classroom space solutions, bilingual staff/volunteer recruiting/training.

2.5 Expand Housing and Economic Development Initiatives

- **Lead Agency:** TBD
- **Supporting Stakeholders:** RIC, real estate developers, financial institutions
- **Timeline:** Years 3–5
- **Background:** This phase will focus on residential rehabilitation programs, promoting workforce housing development, and expanding workforce training programs in partnership with employers.
- **Key Performance Indicators:** Number of rehabilitated housing units, new workforce housing projects, and residents enrolled in workforce training programs.

2.6 Develop Green Infrastructure Projects

- **Lead Agency:** Municipal Public Works Departments
- **Supporting Stakeholders:** Environmental organizations, RIC

- **Timeline:** Begin Year 3
- **Background:** Projects will focus on stormwater management upgrades, tree planting, and permeable pavement installations to address flood risks and enhance community green spaces.
- **Role in Greater Hazleton Thrive Initiative:** These improvements support climate resilience, improve air quality, and foster health and well-being.
- **Key Performance Indicators:** Completion of stormwater upgrades, number of trees planted, and miles of permeable pavement installed.

2.7 Educational Programs and Workforce Pipeline Development

- **Lead Agency:** Hazleton Area School District
- **Supporting Stakeholders:** Local businesses, RIC, technical colleges
- **Timeline:** Years 3–5
- **Background:** Strengthening partnerships with local employers and higher education institutions will foster career-focused programming, job shadowing, and internships for high school students.
- **Role in Greater Hazleton Thrive Initiative:** This builds the local workforce pipeline and supports local business growth by equipping youth with the skills needed to fill emerging jobs.
- **Key Performance Indicators:** Number of students enrolled in career programs, number of partnerships formed, and job placement rates post-graduation.

3. Monitoring, Adjustment, and Long-Term Projects (Years 6–10)

3.1 Mid-Term Evaluation and Strategic Adjustment

- **Lead Agency:** RIC Evaluation Subcommittee
- **Supporting Stakeholders:** All plan stakeholders
- **Timeline:** Year 6
- **Background:** This phase includes a comprehensive assessment of progress toward each goal, using established performance indicators. Adjustments will be made to address areas of underperformance or emerging issues.
- **Key Performance Indicators:** Completed evaluations for each plan component, revised goals or strategies as needed, and publication of a mid-term report to the public.

3.2 Waste and Water Management Enhancements

- **Lead Agency:** Municipal Public Works Departments
- **Supporting Stakeholders:** Local waste management companies, environmental NGOs
- **Timeline:** Ongoing from Year 6

- **Background:** New waste management solutions, such as regional contracts and recycling programs, will address increased waste from population growth. Water conservation programs will ensure sustainable access to clean water.
- **Role in Greater Hazleton Thrive Initiative:** These improvements enhance environmental sustainability and public health.
- **Key Performance Indicators:** Reduced landfill waste, increased recycling rates, and annual assessments of water supply and quality.

3.3 Industrial Development Oversight and Environmental Compliance

- **Lead Agency:** Municipal Zoning and Environmental Committees
- **Supporting Stakeholders:** RIC, local developers, PA Department of Environmental Protection
- **Timeline:** Ongoing from Year 6
- **Background:** This includes monitoring environmental impacts of new industrial developments and ensuring compliance with sustainability and quality-of-life measures.
- **Key Performance Indicators:** Environmental impact assessments, number of industries in compliance, and resident feedback on industrial development impacts.

Performance Indicators and Ongoing Monitoring

A detailed **Key Performance Indicators (KPI)** framework will track progress across all activities, with indicators such as housing units developed, infrastructure improvements, job placement rates, and community engagement metrics. The KPIs will be assessed quarterly, and annual reports will document progress, identify challenges, and recommend adjustments. This dynamic monitoring process will help Greater Hazleton not only track its accomplishments but also remain responsive and adaptable to new challenges and opportunities, positioning the region as a model for resilient and sustainable development.

By aligning these projects with the Greater Hazleton Thrive Initiative, this implementation plan promotes the growth and stability of Hazleton's economic, social, and environmental systems. Through bold action, transparent governance, and shared responsibility, the Greater Hazleton area will emerge as a vibrant, resilient, and equitable community ready to thrive into the future.

Stakeholder Roles

Municipal Governments: The City of Hazleton, West Hazleton Borough, and Hazle Township will serve as the primary drivers of the implementation strategy. Each municipality will designate a planning coordinator to oversee and manage plan execution at the local level, ensuring alignment with community needs and priorities.

Community Organizations: Local nonprofits, the Greater Hazleton Chamber of Commerce, and other community groups will play a vital role in facilitating public engagement, gathering feedback, and implementing initiatives focused on economic vitality, youth engagement, and community services.

Educational Institutions: Schools and higher education organizations will collaborate with municipalities to support youth initiatives, workforce development programs, and community engagement projects.

Regional Planning Entities: Coordination with regional councils and planning organizations, such as the Mountain Council of Governments (COG), will enhance collaboration across municipalities, allowing for shared resources and expertise in addressing regional challenges.

Funding Sources

State and Federal Grants: Funding will be sought through various state and federal programs, including community development block grants, transportation funding, and educational grants to support specific initiatives within the plan.

Public-Private Partnerships: Collaboration with local businesses and organizations will facilitate funding for community projects, economic development initiatives, and infrastructure improvements.

Local Budgets: Each municipality will allocate a portion of its annual budget to support ongoing implementation efforts, ensuring that necessary resources are available for priority projects.

Impact Fees: New developments may be subject to impact fees, which can be used to fund infrastructure improvements, park enhancements, and other community needs.

Timeline for Actions

Short-Term Actions (1-2 Years): Initial steps will focus on enhancing code enforcement, conducting housing assessments, and establishing collaborative partnerships. These foundational actions will set the stage for more comprehensive initiatives.

Medium-Term Goals (3-5 Years): This phase will involve implementing new housing developments, expanding economic initiatives, and launching youth engagement programs based on community feedback and assessments conducted in the first phase.

Long-Term Vision (5+ Years): Continuous evaluation and reassessment of the comprehensive plan will occur, ensuring that it remains relevant and effective in addressing community needs as they evolve.

Regulatory Measures and Collaborations

Zoning and Land Use Regulations: Municipalities will review and amend zoning ordinances to align with the comprehensive plan goals, facilitating housing diversity and economic development.

Inter-Municipal Agreements: Collaborative agreements between municipalities will enhance shared services, streamline permitting processes, and improve resource allocation.

Monitoring and Evaluation Processes: A regional planning group will oversee the implementation of the plan, conducting quarterly reviews to assess progress and adapt strategies as necessary. Key performance indicators will be established to measure success across various priority areas, ensuring accountability and transparency.

Through this implementation strategy, the Greater Hazleton Area aims to create a cohesive and sustainable community that effectively addresses the evolving needs of its residents while fostering economic growth, social equity, and environmental resilience.

APPENDICES

The Greater Hazleton Area Multi-municipal Comprehensive Plan Implementation Strategy outlines a dynamic, layered approach to realize the ambitious vision for sustainable growth, resilience, and quality of life. Through intentional collaboration, phased actions, regulatory enhancements, and rigorous monitoring, this strategy will usher Hazleton into a new era of integrated community development, responsive governance, and environmental stewardship. This strategy not only places an emphasis on coordination among stakeholders but also prioritizes transparency, inclusivity, and ongoing assessment to maintain progress and address emerging needs.

Appendices Include:

A. Statement of Plan Compatibility

B. Survey Summary

C. Public Meeting and Focus Group Summary

D. Maps

E. Community Profile

Statement of Plan Compatibility

Greater Hazleton Area Thrive is the comprehensive plan for the City of Hazleton, West Hazleton Borough, and Hazle Township. This unified initiative creates a shared vision for future development, emphasizing collaboration with neighboring municipalities, Luzerne County, and state planning frameworks. Its goals and strategies align with regional and state objectives, fostering a sustainable, equitable, and thriving Greater Hazleton.

Alignment with Surrounding Municipalities

Greater Hazleton shares borders with Conyngham Borough, Sugarloaf Township, Butler Township, and Black Creek Township, among others. While these municipalities have distinct planning priorities, Greater Hazleton Area Thrive emphasizes regional collaboration to foster cohesive development strategies.

This approach:

- Strengthens Regional Connectivity: The plan prioritizes transportation linkages, such as road improvements and public transit expansions, ensuring seamless mobility between communities.

- Encourages Complementary Land Use: The plan promotes compatible land use policies to enhance economic development while preserving shared natural resources.

- Promotes Shared Opportunities: Through joint economic initiatives, recreational development, and housing strategies, the plan fosters a unified approach to regional growth.

By ensuring consistency with neighboring jurisdictions, the plan reduces conflicts, promotes resource efficiency, and builds a foundation for collective prosperity.

Consistency with Local and Regional Plans

1. Luzerne County Comprehensive Plan: The Greater Hazleton Area Thrive plan mirrors the county's focus on fostering vibrant communities, enhancing infrastructure, and advancing environmental stewardship.

    o Affordable Housing: Echoing the county's emphasis on "quality, affordable housing," the Hazleton plan advocates for diverse housing options, rehabilitation of older stock, and solutions for blighted properties.

    o Transportation: The county's vision for "accessible transportation options" is supported by Hazleton's proposed transit expansions, enhanced walkability, and road safety improvements.

    o Environmental Sustainability: Hazleton's commitment to green spaces, pollution reduction, and warehouse traffic mitigation aligns with the county's goals for sustainable growth.

2. Luzerne County Hazard Mitigation Plan: Hazleton's focus on public safety complements the hazard mitigation strategies outlined by the county. Key alignments include:

    o Increased law enforcement and street lighting.

    o Rehabilitation of flood-prone areas.

    o Improvements to emergency response infrastructure.

3. Luzerne-Lackawanna Long-Range Transportation Plan: The Greater Hazleton Area Thrive plan is consistent with regional goals for improved mobility and accessibility. Shared priorities include:

    o Maintaining road networks with durable materials.

    o Expanding public transportation to connect industrial parks with residential neighborhoods.

    o Enhancing pedestrian safety through better-designed crosswalks and sidewalks.

4. Lackawanna-Luzerne Counties Open Space, Greenways, and Outdoor Recreation Master Plan: Expanded park programming, community gardens and outdoor recreation spaces directly align with the regional focus on increasing access to natural areas and promoting greenways as recreational assets.

5. Pennsylvania State Planning Goals
   The plan adheres to state priorities by:

    o Promoting smart growth through mixed-use developments.

- o Supporting economic vitality through workforce training and downtown revitalization.

- o Ensuring environmental stewardship by integrating green infrastructure and conservation efforts.

Consistency with Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code

Greater Hazleton Area Thrive is carefully designed to meet the requirements of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), ensuring legal compliance and facilitating effective implementation.

1. Comprehensive Plan Elements: In compliance with MPC Section 301(a), the plan includes:

   - o A community development vision that outlines the desired future for land use, housing, and public amenities.

   - o Strategies for balanced growth through land use, housing diversity, and infrastructure planning.

   - o Proposals for natural resource conservation, historic preservation, and environmental sustainability.

   - o An analysis of economic, environmental, and social impacts to ensure an integrated approach.

2. Intergovernmental Cooperation: The plan fosters partnerships with adjacent municipalities, Luzerne County, and state agencies, addressing shared challenges like economic development, environmental preservation, and regional mobility.

3. Public Participation: Extensive community engagement, including surveys, focus groups, and public meetings, ensures the plan reflects the aspirations and needs of Greater Hazleton residents, consistent with MPC guidelines.

4. Plan Review and Updates: The plan commits to regular updates at least every ten years, as mandated by the MPC, to adapt to evolving community needs and priorities.

Greater Hazleton Area Thrive represents a model of regional compatibility, seamlessly aligning with the objectives of neighboring municipalities, Luzerne County, and Pennsylvania's state planning framework. The plan demonstrates a deliberate commitment to intergovernmental cooperation, shared regional priorities, and compliance with the MPC. By fostering collaboration, addressing mutual challenges, and leveraging shared opportunities, the plan lays the groundwork for a resilient, inclusive, and sustainable future for Greater Hazleton and its surrounding communities.

Appendix B

Greater Hazleton Area Comprehensive Plan

Public Meeting and Focus Group Summary

Prepared by:

Hailstone
ECONOMIC

Public Meeting Summary

September 6, 2023

A public meeting for Greater Hazleton Area Thrive was held in the Durham's Sports Wing at the Hazle Mall on September 6, 2023, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and from 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. The open-house format allowed participants to engage freely and at their convenience, resulting in approximately 50 people sharing insights and priorities. The meeting was held to gather community feedback, educate attendees on the significance of a comprehensive plan, and ensure the public's voice was integral to shaping Greater Hazleton's future. The event featured informational posters, facilitated discussions, and interactive activities to document ideas and identify priorities.

Key Themes and Takeaways

Participant Priorities

Residents identified these specific priorities for the plan:

1. Opportunities for Youth:
   - Affordable sports programs.
   - Recreational and mentorship opportunities.

2. Affordable Housing:
   - Meeting demand for diverse and cost-effective housing options.

3. Public Safety:
   - Expanded law enforcement efforts and street lighting.

4. Downtown Revitalization:
   - Shops, restaurants, entertainment, and public art.

5. Public Transportation:
   - Improved routes, particularly to industrial parks.

6. Environmental and Health Initiatives:
   - Becoming a Blue Zones community to enhance overall wellness.

Youth Activities

Organized activities for children emerged as a top priority. Suggestions included:

- Establishing a community center with after-school programs, mentoring, and tutoring opportunities.

- Expanding park programming with organized events.

- Adding new youth-oriented facilities such as:

  - A bowling alley

  - A movie theater

  - An arcade

  - Skateboarding and ice-skating spaces

- Enhancing job opportunities for youth to build skills and financial independence.

Quality of Life Concerns

Residents highlighted critical issues affecting quality of life:

- Trash and Litter: Persistent problems with trash buildup and litter were the most cited.

- Housing Quality: Many homes require rehabilitation, and participants expressed the need for programs to address substandard living conditions.

- Drug Trafficking and Substance Abuse: Participants linked this to broader safety concerns encouraging stronger law enforcement and drug prevention programs.

- Safety Enhancements: Recommendations included:

  - More frequent police patrols.

  - Additional street lighting.

  - Housing rehabilitation programs to improve living standards.

Vision for the Community

Participants shared aspirations for the future:

- Quality Education: Consistently ranked as the most critical element for the area's future.

- Clean and Safe Streets: A vision of streets free of crime, drugs, and litter.

- Economic Opportunities: Stronger, diversified job prospects to retain youth and support families.

Unity and Cohesion: Building a community where longstanding residents and newcomers feel equally valued.

Additional Public Engagement Events

Focus Groups and Outreach

Community outreach was complemented by several focus groups, providing further context and nuance to public input. Key events included:

1. Cinco de Mayo Event:

   o Residents emphasized unity, mental health resources, and a safer community.

   o Concerns included lack of family-friendly activities, high rents, and educational quality.

   o Vision included better sidewalks, diverse job opportunities, and more recreational events.

2. Latino Business Owners Focus Group:

   o Challenges included limited parking downtown, insufficient representation in leadership, and lack of resources for small businesses.

   o Vision focused on fostering a bilingual workforce, increasing opportunities for youth, and reducing crime.

3. HIP Student Engagement:

   o Students expressed frustration with educational systems, lack of bilingual teachers, and unsafe parks.

   o Priorities included better sidewalks, affordable housing, and youth programs.

4. Senior Center Focus Group:

   o Seniors emphasized the need for accessible public transportation, affordable housing, and expanded healthcare options.

   o Concerns included high property taxes, insufficient public amenities, and lack of senior-specific housing options.

5. Recreation Committee Focus Group:

   o Participants celebrated existing parks and playgrounds but identified the need for a public pool, roller skating rink, and more organized community events.

   o Suggestions included improved walkability and trail systems.

6. Hazleton Chamber Focus Group:

   o Business leaders identified challenges with parking, workforce retention, and public safety.

   o Opportunities included downtown residential development and a regional marketing campaign to address negative perceptions.

Public Outreach Summary

The public meeting held on September 6, 2023, and the subsequent engagement efforts provided a robust framework for shaping an inclusive, community-driven comprehensive plan for the Greater Hazleton Area. The feedback collected underscored a unified vision for the community, emphasizing safety, youth engagement, housing affordability, enhanced public amenities, and greater inclusivity. This vision was articulated through a mix of practical recommendations and aspirational goals, reflecting the diverse needs and values of residents. Key themes of public outreach include:

1. Economic Development: Participants emphasized the need for a multi-faceted approach to economic development. Emphasis on supporting small businesses through funding, mentoring and programs tailored to the community

   demonstrates a desire to diversify the local economy and foster entrepreneurship.

2. Infrastructure and Connectivity: Concerns about road safety, potholes, and limited public transportation were echoed across focus groups and community events. Expanding bus routes to connect residential neighborhoods with job hubs reflects a critical need for improved mobility. Infrastructure investments could serve as a catalyst for economic and social benefits. Improved walkability and streetscaping initiatives further highlight an intent on creating a more livable and accessible environment.

3. Community Engagement and Inclusivity: The call for increased bilingual outreach reflects a demographic shift and the need for greater inclusivity in communication and planning. Ensuring accessibility for non-English speakers is a pivotal step toward unifying long-term residents and newcomers. Furthermore, the desire for more public art, cultural events, and local festivals will foster stronger connections within the community.

4. Environmental Sustainability: The emphasis on green infrastructure and environmental initiatives points to a growing awareness of ecological challenges. Reducing warehouse-related traffic and pollution, enhancing park systems, and organizing activities within green spaces demonstrate a desire to balance development with sustainability.

The feedback gathered through this engagement process illustrates a community that recognizes its challenges yet remains hopeful and proactive about its future. The consistent prioritization of youth engagement, affordable housing, and enhanced safety underscores an understanding that long-term success depends on investing in the next generation while addressing foundational quality-of-life issues. By integrating these priorities into a comprehensive plan, the Greater Hazleton Area can position itself as a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable region. However, this will require strategic decision-making, cross-sector partnerships, and a commitment to transparent and equitable implementation.

Each recommendation must be evaluated for feasibility and alignment with overarching goals, ensuring that resources are allocated effectively, and community needs are met holistically. In essence, this process revealed not only the community's challenges but also its resilience and vision for a better future. The foundation laid by these engagement efforts will serve as a cornerstone for a transformative and inclusive comprehensive plan, guiding the Greater Hazleton Area toward a future where all residents can thrive.

Appendix C

Greater Hazleton Area Comprehensive Plan

Community Survey Results

August 2023

Prepared by:

This survey, conducted as part of the Greater Hazleton Area Comprehensive Plan offers a compelling window into the heart of the community, its challenges, aspirations, and shared vision for the future. By capturing the voices of residents across municipalities, age groups, cultural backgrounds, and socioeconomic demographics, the survey reveals not just statistics, but the stories and priorities that make Hazleton unique. It illuminates the diversity of perspectives within the community, highlighting both common goals and unique needs. From calls for safer neighborhoods and better schools to desires for more recreational opportunities, housing improvements, and expanded services, the survey serves as a powerful tool to guide meaningful change. This document dives into these findings, offering actionable insights and a roadmap for shaping a vibrant, inclusive, and thriving Greater Hazleton.

Survey Background

A survey was developed by Hailstone Economic in collaboration with the project Steering Committee to capture the community's insights and priorities for the Greater Hazleton Area Comprehensive Plan. The survey was thoroughly designed to be inclusive, with a final version translated into Spanish to ensure accessibility for the diverse population. It was distributed to the community in both English and Spanish through a combination of advertisements and targeted outreach efforts.

A total of 779 surveys were initially completed, with 753 in English and 26 in Spanish. However, upon careful review, 492 responses were identified as computer-generated and were excluded from the final analysis. After these exclusions, 287 valid responses were received, yielding a sample size with a 5.8% margin of error at a 95% confidence level. This means that we can be 95% confident that the survey responses reflect the views of the population within a 5.8% margin.

The final responses represent a diverse cross-section of the Greater Hazleton area, with participants from Hazleton, West Hazleton, Hazle Township, and surrounding municipalities. Despite outreach efforts, certain demographic groups, such as younger residents and Hispanic or Latinx populations, were underrepresented. Nonetheless, the survey captured critical community sentiments, providing valuable insights to guide the planning process.

Respondent Demographics

Survey participants provided a valuable glimpse into the community's composition, with the majority (80.5%) residing in the three participating municipalities: the City of Hazleton, West Hazleton Borough, and Hazle Township. A smaller percentage of respondents came from Luzerne County's surrounding areas, with a few from Carbon County and one from Schuylkill County. This regional participation reflects the interconnected nature of the challenges and opportunities facing Greater Hazleton while highlighting areas for improvement in engaging a broader audience.

Participation rates among the municipalities varied significantly. Hazle Township showed the highest engagement, with 0.7% of its population responding to the survey, while West Hazleton followed at 0.6%. The City of Hazleton had the lowest engagement at just 0.4%, underscoring the unique barriers to participation in more urbanized settings. These disparities highlight a critical need for innovative outreach strategies to better connect with residents who may face challenges such as limited internet access, language barriers, or competing priorities. Despite these limitations, the survey succeeded in capturing meaningful feedback, aligning with the diverse concerns and aspirations of the region's residents. Focus groups, targeted public meetings, and collaboration with trusted community organizations ensured that planning initiatives remain inclusive and equitable.

The geographic and demographic insights gathered from this survey emphasize the importance of tailoring future engagement strategies. For instance, leveraging bilingual resources, expanding digital outreach through social media, and partnering with schools, churches, and civic groups can bridge existing gaps. These efforts will be vital for crafting a comprehensive plan that reflects the diverse perspectives and priorities of the Greater Hazleton area.

	Hazleton	West Hazleton	Hazle Township	Total
Population	29,963 (66.2%)	5,163 (11.4%)	10,160 (22.4%)	45,286
Survey Participants	121 (52.38%)	33 (14.29%)	77 (33.33%)	231
Percent of Population	0.4%	0.6%	0.7%	0.5%

Age Demographics of Survey Respondents

The survey revealed notable disparities in age group representation, with those ages 35 to 74 significantly overrepresented compared to their share of the overall population with respondents aged 55 to 64 making up 22.7% of participants despite representing 17.1% of the population. This suggests that middle-aged adults may be more attuned to community issues, more available or motivated to contribute to planning discussions. This stands in sharp contrast to the underrepresentation of younger adults (ages 18 to 34) and seniors (ages 75 and older). While young adults comprise 27.5% of the population, they accounted for just 13.9% of survey participants. This may stem from barriers such as limited awareness, time constraints, or a perception that the survey's focus is less relevant to their immediate concerns. Similarly, seniors, a demographic crucial to community planning due to their specific needs, were also underrepresented, highlighting the necessity for outreach strategies tailored to their preferences.

These participation imbalances highlight the need for a multi-dimensional outreach strategy to ensure all age groups are adequately represented in future efforts. For younger adults, outreach could include targeted social media campaigns, partnerships with schools and community youth organizations, and interactive digital tools. For seniors, offering in-person support, collaborating with senior centers, and providing accessible materials could improve participation rates. Addressing these gaps will foster a more inclusive and equitable planning process, ensuring the plan accurately reflects the priorities and perspectives of the entire community.

	Population	Survey Respondents
Age 18 to 34	27.5%	13.9%
Age 35 to 44	16%	20.6%
Age 45 to 54	15.9%	19.5%
Age 55 to 64	17.1%	22.7%
Age 65 to 74	12.1%	18.8%
Age 75 and older	11.6%	3.5%

Gender Demographics of Survey Respondents

The survey revealed a notable gender disparity, with women significantly more likely to participate than men. While the overall population of the Greater Hazleton area is nearly evenly split between men (49%) and women (51%), 62.7% of survey respondents identified as female, compared to only 34.2% identifying as male. Additionally, a small percentage of respondents (0.4%) identified as non-binary, though no corresponding population data for this group is available. This disparity suggests that women were more likely to engage with the survey process, possibly reflecting differing levels of interest, availability, or perceived relevance of community planning topics.

	Population	**Survey Respondents**
Men	49%	34.2%
Women	51%	62.7%
Non-Binary	Unknown	0.4%

Representation of Hispanic Residents in Survey Responses

Hispanic or Latinx residents, who constitute a majority (54%) of the Greater Hazleton area population, were significantly underrepresented in the survey, comprising only 22.7% of respondents. This gap underscores ongoing challenges in fully engaging this vital demographic, despite targeted efforts to ensure inclusivity. To address linguistic barriers, the survey was translated into Spanish, and local partners were enlisted to promote participation through direct outreach. While these steps facilitated some engagement, the disparity in representation suggests deeper systemic challenges, such as historical mistrust, cultural disconnects, and logistical hurdles that may limit participation in planning processes.

This underrepresentation signals the need for more innovative and culturally attuned strategies to engage Hispanic or Latinx residents effectively. Future efforts should include building sustained relationships with community leaders, increasing outreach through trusted local organizations, and creating opportunities for dialogue in accessible and familiar settings. Integrating the voices of Hispanic or Latinx residents is critical for ensuring the comprehensive plan reflects the needs, aspirations, and priorities of all residents. As this demographic continues to grow and shape the fabric of the Greater

Hazleton area, their full participation in planning processes is essential for achieving equitable and sustainable community development.

	Population	Survey Respondents
Hispanic or Latinx	54%	22.7%

Survey Results and Analysis

The results of the survey provide a comprehensive snapshot of the Greater Hazleton community's priorities, concerns, and aspirations. This section delves into the key themes that emerged, highlighting the diverse needs across housing, transportation, education, community services, and more. By analyzing these responses, the results serve as a foundation for understanding what residents value most and where they see opportunities for improvement. These insights are crucial for shaping a strategic, inclusive, and forward-thinking comprehensive plan that aligns with the community's vision for the future.

Community Priorities: What Makes Greater Hazleton Home

Survey respondents were asked to share why they enjoy living or working in their community, revealing a diverse set of priorities and preferences. The survey responses offer a layered understanding of what residents and stakeholders value most about living or working in their respective communities, with notable variations across Hazleton, West Hazleton, and Hazle Township. The breakdown reveals distinct local needs and perspectives.

In Hazleton, the largest city in the region, social aspects like friendly people (30.6%) and access to dining options (35.5%) emerged as significant choices. However, economic opportunities such as job availability (19%) ranked slightly lower. This trend highlights Hazleton's need to balance social and economic infrastructure to appeal to a broad demographic, especially given its growing and diversifying population. West Hazleton displayed a markedly different pattern, with more than half of respondents (54.5%) prioritizing job availability. This underscores the importance of strengthening workforce development and transportation access to sustain this advantage.

	Hazleton n=121	West Hazleton n=33	Hazle Township n=77	All Respondents n=287
People are friendly	37 (30.6%)	11 (33.3%)	22 (28.6%)	90 (31.4%)
I can find a place to live within my budget	36 (29.8%)	8 (24.2%)	17 (22.1%)	81 (28.2%)
There is not a lot of traffic	29 (24%)	11 (33.3%)	18 (23.4%)	79 (27.5%)
Public buses make it easy to get around	10 (8.3%)	6 (18.2%)	5 (6.5%)	22 (7.7%)
Quality education	10 (8.3%	7 (21.2%)	6 (7.8%)	29 (10.1%)
Availability of jobs	23 (19%)	18 (54.5%)	17 (22.1%)	68 (23.7%)
There are lots of things to do	10 (8.3%)	6 (18.2%)	7 (9.1%)	30 (10.5%)
I can buy everything I need right here	22 (18.2%)	8 (24.2%)	12 (15.6%)	58 (20.2%)
There are places where I go out to eat with family and friends	43 (35.5%)	11 (33.3%)	29 (37.7%)	104 (36.2%)
I can buy the food I like to eat at a reasonable cost	33 (27.3%)	9 (27.3%)	20 (26%)	83 (28.9%)
There are parks close to where I live	18 (14.9%)	7 (21.2%)	21 (27.3%)	62 (21.6%)

Additionally, responses from West Hazleton residents indicated a relatively higher appreciation for public buses (18.2%) compared to Hazleton and Hazle Township, aligning with a greater reliance on accessible transit options. In Hazle Township, residents focused on different aspects of quality of life. Dining options (37.7%) and access to parks (27.3%) were key highlights, emphasizing the value of recreational opportunities and family-oriented amenities. These variations suggest a need for

tailored strategies within the comprehensive plan. Hazleton would benefit from initiatives to expand economic opportunities, such as attracting diverse employers and addressing gaps in education and workforce training. West Hazleton's responses point to the importance of enhancing job accessibility, public transportation, and signage.

Meanwhile, Hazle Township's focus on parks and livability highlights the need to preserve green spaces, improve recreational infrastructure, and maintain its appeal as a residential community. Across all three municipalities, the relatively low prioritization of "lots of things to do" (10.5% overall) and "quality education" (10.1%) underscores ongoing challenges in fostering cultural vibrancy and enhancing educational opportunities. Strengthening connections between these priorities and economic development, such as investing in youth programming and expanding recreational offerings, will be critical to achieving the broader goals of the Greater Hazleton Comprehensive Plan.

Community Priorities: Hispanic and Latinx Insights

Survey responses reveal notable differences in priorities and perceptions between Hispanic or Latinx respondents and non-Hispanic respondents, reflecting diverse experiences and needs within the community. Differences highlight opportunities for targeted planning and development to better serve all residents. Hispanic or Latinx respondents were more likely to report finding housing within their budget (47.7% vs. 21.1%), suggesting differing affordability thresholds or housing patterns.

Housing initiatives should consider economic and cultural factors influencing preferences. Transportation perceptions also varied, with Hispanic or Latinx respondents nearly twice as likely to agree that "there is not a lot of traffic" (43.1% vs. 22.5%) and more likely to find public buses convenient (13.8% vs. 6.1%). This indicates a greater reliance on public transit within this demographic, emphasizing the importance of enhancing transit services and infrastructure to support mobility and access to opportunities.

Economic opportunities were a strength for Hispanic or Latinx respondents, with 43.1% citing job availability as a positive, compared to 18.3% of non-Hispanic respondents. This reflects the prevalence of industrial and service-sector jobs, though broader concerns about job quality and stability suggest a need for economic diversification and pathways to secure higher-paying employment.

Economic development should prioritize diversifying job opportunities and creating stable career pathways. Education ranked higher among Hispanic or Latinx respondents, with 16.9% citing "quality education" as a reason for living in the area, compared to 8.5% of non-Hispanic respondents. This emphasizes the focus on education as a vehicle for upward mobility. Conversely, fewer Hispanic or Latinx respondents highlighted dining out as a key reason for living in the area (21.5% vs.

41.3%), pointing to limited options that cater to diverse cultural preferences. Expanding local dining and recreational amenities could address this gap while fostering inclusivity. These insights underscore the importance of nuanced, culturally informed approaches to community development.

	Hispanic n=65	Not Hispanic n=213	All Respondents n=287
People are friendly	19 (29.3%)	71 (33.3%)	90 (31.4%)
I can find a place to live within my budget	31 (47.7%)	45 (21.1%)	81 (28.2%)
There is not a lot of traffic	28 (43.1%)	48 (22.5%)	79 (27.5%)
Public busses make it easy to get around	9 (13.8%)	13 (6.1%)	22 (7.7%)
Quality education	11 (16.9%)	18 (8.5%)	29 (10.1%)
Availability of jobs	28 (43.1%)	39 (18.3%)	68 (23.7%)
There are lots of things to do	11 (16.9%)	19 (8.9%)	30 (10.5%
I can buy everything I need right here	13 (20%)	45 (21.1%)	58 (20.2%)
There are places where I go out to eat with family and friends	14 (21.5%)	88 (41.3%)	104 (36.2%)
I can buy the food I like to eat at a reasonable cost	18 (27.7%)	64 (30%)	83 (28.9%)
There are parks close to where I live	11 (16.9%)	48 (22.5%)	62 (21.6%)

Community Priorities: Age-Inclusive Priorities

The survey revealed noteworthy differences in perceptions across age groups, shedding light on how priorities and satisfaction levels vary by life stage. These differences provide a nuanced understanding of the community's needs and expectations, which is critical for crafting age-inclusive planning strategies for Greater Hazleton. For those aged 18 to 24, the availability of places to eat with family and friends was highlighted, with 55.6% identifying this as a strength, significantly higher than the 36.2% average. This suggests social and recreational opportunities centered around dining are particularly valued by younger residents, reflecting their need for spaces that encourage social interaction.

Interestingly, 44.4% of respondents in this age group also cited a lack of traffic and the reasonable cost of food as positive attributes. However, fewer younger respondents saw job availability (11.1%) or quality education (11.1%) as significant strengths, potentially reflecting dissatisfaction with career prospects or educational resources. Respondents aged 25 to 34 showed a notable emphasis on job availability, with 25.8% selecting it as a reason for living in the area. However, this dropped to 17.9% for those aged 45 to 54, signaling potential discontent with the quality or stability of job opportunities as residents advance in their careers. While the percentage of those citing "lots of things to do" was relatively low for all age groups, it was especially low among those aged 25 to 34 (6.5%) and 45 to 54 (5.4%). This aligns with feedback suggesting that the area lacks diverse recreational and cultural amenities, particularly for working-age adults seeking a vibrant lifestyle.

For older respondents, community attributes like friendliness and accessibility were more pronounced. Half of respondents aged 65 to 74 valued the friendliness of people, compared to just 31.4% of all respondents. Similarly, 59.3% of respondents in this age group appreciated the availability of places to eat, highlighting the importance of social and leisure activities for older residents. This age group also placed greater emphasis on affordable housing and the proximity of parks, with 35.2% and 38.9% respectively identifying these as strengths. These findings reflect a desire for a quality living environment and access to green spaces that support healthy, active lifestyles.

The differences in responses across age groups underline the need for age-targeted strategies in community development. For younger residents, enhancing job opportunities, promoting affordable housing, and fostering social hubs could improve retention and satisfaction. Efforts to diversify recreational and cultural offerings are particularly crucial for middle-aged adults, who are more likely to perceive a lack of activities. Older adults, on the other hand, expressed satisfaction with aspects like friendliness and dining options, but there remains an opportunity to expand services such as senior housing, public transportation, and accessible recreational facilities. These improvements support aging in place while enhancing the overall quality of life.

	18 to 24 n=9	25 to 34 n=31	35 to 44 n=59	All Respondents n=287
People are friendly	2 (22.2%)	6 (19.4%)	19 (32.2%)	90 (31.4%)
I can find a place to live within my budget	2 (22.2%)	10 (32.3%)	20 (33.9%)	81 (28.2%)
There is not a lot of traffic	4 (44.4%)	12 (38.7%)	14 (23.7%)	79 (27.5%)
Public busses make it easy to get around	1 (11.1%)	3 (9.7%)	4 (6.8%)	22 (7.7%)
Quality education	1 (11.1%)	4 (12.9%)	8 (13.6%)	29 (10.1%)
Availability of jobs	1 (11.1%)	8 (25.8%)	20 (33.9%)	68 (23.7%)
There are lots of things to do	2 (22.2%)	2 (6.5%)	8 (13.6%)	30 (10.5%)
I can buy everything I need right here	2 (22.2%)	5 (16.1%)	11 (18.6%)	58 (20.2%)
There are places where I go out to eat with family and friends	5 (55.6%)	8 (25.8%)	12 (20.3%)	104 (36.2%)
I can buy the food I like to eat at a reasonable cost	4 (44.4%)	5 (16.1%)	16 (27.1%)	83 (28.9%)
There are parks close to where I live	3 (33.3%)	4 (12.9%)	9 (15.3%)	62 (21.6%)

Survey respondents highlighted numerous other positive aspects of living or working in Greater Hazleton. These included close connections with family, the convenience of proximity to employment opportunities, and access to entertainment, recreation, and arts activities. Respondents appreciated the area's small-town charm and

neighborliness, as well as its beautiful natural scenery and affordability. The community's diversity, particularly its strong and vibrant Hispanic population, was also recognized as a strength, contributing to a dynamic and culturally rich environment.

	45 to 54 n=56	55 to 64 n=65	65 to 74 n=54	75+ n=10	All Respondents n=287
People are friendly	12 (21.4%)	23 (35.4%)	27 (50%)	1 (10%)	90 (31.4%)
I can find a place to live within my budget	11 (19.6%)	13 (20%)	19 (35.2%)	1 (10%)	81 (28.2%)
There is not a lot of traffic	12 (21.4%)	20 (30.8%)	14 (25.9%)	3 (30%)	79 (27.5%)
Public busses make it easy to get around	3 (5.4%)	5 (7.7%)	5 (9.3%)	1 (10%)	22 (7.7%)
Quality education	3 (5.4%)	8 (12.3%)	4 (7.4%)	0	29 (10.1%)
Availability of jobs	10 (17.9%)	15 (23.1%)	11 (20.4%)	2 (20%)	68 (23.7%)
There are lots of things to do	3 (5.4%)	6 (9.2%)	8 (14.8%)	1 (10%)	30 (10.5%)
I can buy everything I need right here	11 (19.6%)	12 (18.5%)	16 (29.6%)	1 (10%)	58 (20.2%)
There are places where I go out to eat with family and friends	18 (32.1%)	24 (36.9%)	32 (59.3%)	5 (50%)	104 (36.2%)
I can buy the food I like to eat at a reasonable cost	13 (23.2%)	20 (30.8%)	24 (44.4%)	1 (10%)	83 (28.9%)
There are parks close to where I live	10 (17.9%)	14 (21.5%)	21 (38.9%)	0	62 (21.6%)

Survey respondents highlighted numerous other positive aspects of living or working in Greater Hazleton. These included close connections with family, the convenience of proximity to employment opportunities, and access to entertainment, recreation, and arts activities. Respondents appreciated the area's small-town charm and neighborliness, as well as its beautiful natural scenery and affordability. The community's diversity, particularly its strong and vibrant Hispanic population, was also recognized as a strength, contributing to a dynamic and culturally rich environment. However, respondents also identified areas where they would like to see improvements.

Common themes included a desire for walkable shopping featuring boutiques and high-quality restaurants, more recreational opportunities for children, reduced traffic and crime, better quality housing, and a lower cost of living. Concerns extended to the availability of professional, well-paying jobs, a reduction in warehouses, improved school quality, upgraded infrastructure, and stronger community pride. Better relationships among neighbors and fostering a sense of unity across the diverse population were recurring aspirations. The community envisioned by respondents is one that is vibrant, charming, quiet, and safe. A place that balances economic vitality with an enhanced quality of life.

Housing Priorities: Improving Quality and Expanding Options

Respondents expressed a strong desire for improvements in housing quality, which emerged as a higher priority than reducing housing costs. Overall, 41.1% of respondents emphasized the need for better quality housing, while 34.1% highlighted the importance of more housing options to accommodate diverse needs, including housing for families, seniors, and low-income residents. The survey responses also revealed interesting geographic variations. In West Hazleton, 57.6% of respondents identified housing quality as a priority, the highest among the three municipalities. Similarly, a significant percentage of respondents in Hazleton (51.2%) and Hazle Township (46.8%) prioritized this issue. While lowering housing costs was a concern for 27.2% of all respondents, it was more pronounced in West Hazleton (42.4%), suggesting localized affordability challenges.

These findings highlight key opportunities for housing development in the Greater Hazleton area. Strategies to address housing quality should focus on rehabilitation programs for aging or substandard housing stock, enforcing stricter building codes, and encouraging landlord accountability. Expanding housing options is critical, with a focus on creating affordable, high-quality housing for various demographics, including workforce housing near employment centers and senior-friendly developments. The desire for a walkable shopping district aligns with broader goals for downtown revitalization, enhancing economic activity while fostering a sense of community. Addressing crime, improving infrastructure, and strengthening schools are essential to

creating the vibrant, safe, and cohesive community respondents envision. By addressing these housing and community development priorities, Greater Hazleton can position itself as a place where residents of all backgrounds and life stages can thrive.

	Hazleton n=121	West Hazleton n=33	Hazle Township n=77	All Respondents n=287
Lower housing costs	42 (34.7%)	14 (42.4%)	21 (27.3%)	78 (27.2%)
Better quality housing	62 (51.2%)	19 (57.6%)	36 (46.8%)	118 (41.1%)
More housing options	56 (46.3%)	15 (45.5%)	26 (33.8%)	98 (34.1%)

Housing Priorities: Hispanic and Latinx Insights

Survey results reveal that Hispanic and Latinx respondents demonstrated a stronger desire for changes in housing compared to those who were not Hispanic or Latinx. While both groups identified housing quality as the most critical area for improvement, the intensity of this priority was significantly higher among Hispanic and Latinx respondents. Specifically, 63.1% of Hispanic and Latinx respondents emphasized the need for better quality housing, compared to 34.7% of non-Hispanic or Latinx respondents. Lower housing costs were also a notable concern, with more than half (53.8%) of Hispanic and Latinx respondents identifying it as a priority, compared to only 19.2% of non-Hispanic or Latinx participants. Similarly, 47.7% of Hispanic and Latinx respondents expressed a desire for more diverse housing options, such as family-sized units, apartments, and affordable rentals, compared to 30% of their non-Hispanic or Latinx counterparts.

These findings underscore the importance of addressing housing disparities in the Greater Hazleton area, particularly for its Hispanic and Latinx populations, which form a growing and dynamic segment of the community. Efforts to improve housing quality should prioritize areas with high concentrations of Hispanic and Latinx residents, ensuring that housing rehabilitation programs, landlord accountability measures, and stricter enforcement of building codes reach those most in need. Affordable housing development is another critical priority, requiring tailored strategies to provide cost-effective yet high-quality options for families, seniors, and low-income residents. Expanding housing diversity, including townhomes, apartments, and mixed-use

developments, will also help meet the varied needs of the community. Addressing these disparities not only promotes equity but also aligns with broader goals for economic and social development. By ensuring that all residents, particularly those in underserved populations, have access to safe, affordable, and high-quality housing, the Greater Hazleton area can create a more inclusive and vibrant community.

	Hispanic n=65	Not Hispanic n=213	All Respondents n=287
Lower housing costs	35 (53.8%)	41 (19.2%)	78 (27.2%)
Better quality housing	41 (63.1%)	74 (34.7%)	118 (41.1%)
More housing options	31 (47.7%)	64 (30%)	98 (34.1%)

Housing Priorities: Age-Inclusive Perspectives

Survey results reveal significant variations in housing priorities across age groups, with younger respondents expressing greater urgency for improvements in affordability, quality, and diversity of housing options. Lower housing costs were most important to those aged 25 to 34, with 58% identifying this as a priority. This reflects the challenges faced by younger adults, often at the start of their careers or building families, who may struggle with rising rents and limited affordability. Interest in affordability declined significantly among older age brackets, with only 26.8% of respondents aged 45 to 54 and 13% of those aged 65 to 74 prioritizing lower costs. Notably, no respondents aged 75 and older highlighted affordability as a concern, suggesting that many in this group may already own homes or benefit from stabilized housing situations.

Better housing quality was a shared priority, though it was strongest among younger adults. Respondents aged 35 to 44 emphasized this need the most, with 62.7% citing it as a priority, followed closely by those aged 25 to 34 (64.5%) and 18 to 24 (55.6%). This trend indicates that individuals in the early to mid-stages of life are particularly invested in housing improvements, likely due to their reliance on rental properties or the challenges of purchasing a first home. Interest in housing quality declined steadily with age, with only 25.9% of those aged 65 to 74 prioritizing it. The desire for more housing options, such as apartments, townhomes, and affordable single-family homes, was strongest among those aged 25 to 44, with 41.9% of those aged 25 to 34 and 39% of those aged 35 to 44 selecting it as a priority. These groups are likely seeking housing

that accommodates growing families or offers flexibility for different lifestyles. Interest in housing diversity remained steady among older age groups but at lower levels, with approximately 30% of respondents aged 45 and older prioritizing this need.

The survey results highlight the necessity of tailoring housing strategies to meet the diverse needs of Greater Hazleton's population. For younger age groups, policies and programs that address housing affordability are critical. This could include incentives for the development of affordable rentals, down payment assistance for first-time homebuyers, and the expansion of mixed-income housing projects. Improving quality should remain a focus across all age groups, with targeted efforts to rehabilitate aging housing stock, enforce stricter building codes, and hold landlords accountable for maintaining safe and livable conditions. Investments in energy-efficient upgrades and modern amenities could also enhance the appeal of existing properties. Expanding housing diversity will require innovative zoning and land use policies promoting a mix of housing types and densities. Encouraging affordable apartments, townhomes, and smaller single-family homes will provide greater flexibility to meet the needs of residents at different life stages.

	18 to 24 n=9	25 to 34 n=31	35 to 44 n=59	All Respondents n=287
Lower housing costs	3 (33.3%)	18 (58%)	22 (37.3%)	78 (27.2%)
Better quality housing	5 (55.6%)	20 (64.5%)	37 (62.7%)	118 (41.1%)
More housing options	3 (33.3%)	13 (41.9%)	23 (39%)	98 (34.1%)

	45 to 54 n=56	55 to 64 n=65	65 to 74 n=54	75+ n=10	All Respondents n=287
Lower housing costs	15 (26.8%)	12 (18.5%)	7 (13%)	0	78 (27.2%)
Better quality housing	18 (32.1%)	20 (30.8%)	14 (25.9%)	3 (30%)	118 (41.1%)
More housing options	17 (30.4%)	21 (32.3%)	17 (31.5%)	3 (30%)	98 (34.1%)

Housing Priorities: Diverse Opinions

Respondents provided a wealth of housing-related suggestions that highlight the multifaceted nature of housing needs in Greater Hazleton. Beyond simply expanding the quantity of housing, these responses emphasize the importance of thoughtful planning to ensure housing is accessible, functional, and contributes positively to community vitality. A recurring theme was affordability, not just in terms of rental prices but also for older adults and veterans. Respondents emphasized the need for housing with supportive services, such as transportation and proximity to amenities, to allow seniors and vulnerable populations to live independently. There was also a strong call for more workforce housing to support local employees, especially as the area's industrial and service sectors grow.

Suggestions for housing diversity reveal a nuanced understanding of the community's evolving needs. Respondents called for affordable contemporary apartments, upscale condos, townhouses, and family-sized homes with off-street parking to balance the dominance of one-bedroom rentals and subdivided single-family homes. Respondents value aesthetically pleasing neighborhoods, stressing the importance of design standards and cohesive planning to enhance the area's visual and cultural identity. Many respondents advocated for robust blight remediation, including the demolition of unsafe structures and the redevelopment of vacant buildings into usable housing. Expanded code enforcement, contractor registration requirements, and accountability measures for absentee landlords were seen as critical tools for improving living conditions and addressing exploitative practices.

The community also recognized the importance of stability and support for homeowners and renters. Suggestions included first-time homebuyer programs, assistance for older adults in maintaining their homes, and services to prevent or address homelessness. These initiatives align with broader goals of fostering resilience and equity in the housing market. Interestingly, several responses reflected housing's interconnectedness with other community priorities. Calls for lower property and school taxes, improved water quality, and expanded gas service indicate the broader infrastructure improvements required to support housing. Ideas like better bus service, passenger rail to major cities, and improved internet access underscore the need for holistic community development to enhance livability and economic opportunity.

Finally, respondents also voiced non-housing-related needs that contribute to quality of life, including more parks, a community or recreation center, art programs for children, and better-maintained roads. These suggestions demonstrate the community's understanding that housing cannot be addressed in isolation; it must be part of a broader strategy to create a vibrant, well-connected, and equitable community. The breadth of these responses highlights the need for a comprehensive approach to

housing and community planning that goes beyond addressing immediate needs. By integrating these diverse priorities, Greater Hazleton can build a resilient, inclusive future that meets the aspirations of all its residents.

Transportation Priorities: A Connected Future

The survey reveals diverse transportation needs across Greater Hazleton, with notable variation based on geography and community demographics. While less traffic emerged as the top priority overall, the underlying responses highlight broader desires for a more functional, equitable, and connected transportation network that supports both daily life and long-term growth. Reducing traffic was most frequently mentioned, particularly in Hazleton (46.3%) and Hazle Township (41.6%). This underscores the strain placed on existing roadways by the region's growing population and industrial expansion, highlighting the need for more robust transportation planning, including traffic flow analysis, strategic road expansions, and improved coordination of industrial trucking routes. This is compounded by the concentration of industrial parks and warehouses, increasing heavy vehicle traffic, particularly in Hazle Township.

The importance of more bus routes (31%) outpaced the desire for more frequent buses (22.6%), especially in Hazleton and West Hazleton, where demand for better connectivity to key destinations was strongest. Notably, Hazle Township respondents placed less emphasis on public transportation, reflecting either greater reliance on personal vehicles or lower accessibility to existing transit options. These findings suggest a need for route expansions that connect residential areas with employment centers, industrial parks, and community hubs as well as investments in multimodal transit options to ensure underserved populations, including seniors, low-income residents, and non-driving individuals, can access reliable transportation.

Interest in more areas to bicycle (35.2%) reflects growing community support for alternative transportation modes and recreational infrastructure. This demand is consistent across municipalities and presents an opportunity for the region to expand its trail networks and incorporate cycling-friendly design into urban planning. Initiatives such as bicycle lanes, greenways, and safer intersections would not only enhance transportation but also improve health outcomes and reduce reliance on cars. Hazleton and West Hazleton residents emphasized public transit improvements, including both expanded routes and increased frequency, aligning with the higher density, where reliance on public transit is likely greater. In Hazle Township, the emphasis on traffic reduction reflects its role as a growing residential and industrial hub, where congestion significantly impacts quality of life.

The survey highlights the interconnectedness of transportation with broader regional goals, including economic development, housing affordability, and environmental sustainability. Integrating land use and transportation planning to balance residential,

commercial, and industrial needs while minimizing congestion. Expanding public transportation infrastructure to improve equity and access, particularly for residents in areas with limited car ownership or who work in industrial parks. Promoting active transportation options like biking and walking to enhance connectivity, reduce traffic, and align with sustainability goals. Ensuring equitable access to transportation, reducing bottlenecks, and promoting alternative modes of transit will position the region for sustainable growth while addressing the immediate concerns of its residents.

Transportation Priorities: A Connected Future

The survey results reveal significant differences in transportation priorities between Hispanic and Latinx respondents and their non-Hispanic counterparts, highlighting the need for targeted improvements to the region's transit infrastructure. A substantial majority (61.5%) of Hispanic and Latinx respondents identified the need for more bus routes as a top priority, compared to just 22.1% of non-Hispanic respondents. This disparity underscores the critical reliance on public transportation within Hispanic and Latinx communities, where access to reliable transit can significantly impact daily life, employment opportunities, and access to essential services.

Hispanic and Latinx respondents also placed a much greater emphasis on more frequent buses (46.2%) than their non-Hispanic counterparts (16%), suggesting that the availability and reliability of transit services are just as critical as geographic coverage. This highlights the importance of a well-functioning transit system that meets the needs of residents who depend on it for mobility and economic stability.

Interestingly, while reducing traffic was the most frequently cited transportation need overall, only 23.1% of Hispanic and Latinx respondents prioritized it, compared to 47.4% of non-Hispanic respondents. This likely reflects differences in transportation usage patterns, with Hispanic and Latinx residents potentially relying less on personal vehicles and experiencing fewer direct impacts from congestion. Instead, their focus on public transportation suggests a greater need for affordable and accessible mobility options. The interest in more areas to bicycle was also notably higher among Hispanic and Latinx respondents (43.1%) than non-Hispanic respondents (33.3%), pointing to an opportunity to enhance active transportation infrastructure. Expanding bicycle lanes, trails, and pedestrian-friendly spaces could not only support recreational needs but also provide affordable, sustainable alternatives to traditional transit options.

These findings emphasize the importance of addressing the specific transportation needs of Hispanic and Latinx residents to ensure equitable access across the Greater Hazleton area. Expanding and improving public transportation, enhancing active transportation networks, and fostering multimodal connectivity will not only benefit Hispanic and Latinx communities but also support broader regional goals of sustainability, inclusivity, and economic development. By prioritizing these targeted investments, the region can create a transportation system that better serves all its residents.

	Hispanic n=65	Not Hispanic n=213	All Respondents n=287
Less traffic	15 (23.1%)	101 (47.4%)	118 (41.1%)
More frequent buses	30 (46.2%)	34 (16%)	65 (22.6%)
More bus routes	40 (61.5%)	47 (22.1%)	89 (31%)
More areas to bike	28 (43.1%)	70 (33.3%)	101 (35.2%)

Transportation Priorities: Age-Inclusive Perspectives

The survey reveals distinct age-based preferences for transportation improvements, reflecting varying priorities across the community's demographics. Younger respondents, particularly those aged 18 to 24, overwhelmingly supported the need for more areas to bicycle (66.7%), showcasing a preference for active transportation and recreational opportunities. This aligns with broader trends in promoting healthier, more sustainable transit options for younger populations. Conversely, respondents aged 75 and above emphasized the importance of less traffic (80%), highlighting concerns about congestion and its impact on safety and mobility, particularly for older adults who may rely more heavily on driving.

Respondents aged 25 to 44 displayed a balanced interest in both more bus routes and more areas to bike, reflecting the needs of working-age adults who may prioritize connectivity to employment hubs, schools, and recreation. Meanwhile, older respondents (aged 55 to 74) leaned towards less traffic, aligning with concerns about navigating increasingly congested roads. These findings underscore the need for a transportation strategy that accommodates diverse age-based priorities. For younger residents. expanding biking infrastructure, such as dedicated bike lanes and safe cycling paths, to promote active transportation and align with community health and environmental goals.

For older residents, prioritize traffic flow improvements, including better traffic management systems and road expansions, to reduce congestion and enhance roadway safety. For working-age adults, focus on improving bus routes to provide reliable public transit access to key destinations, particularly industrial parks and

commercial areas. Integrating these age-specific preferences into the broader transportation plan will ensure that the community's infrastructure meets the needs of all residents while fostering inclusivity and long-term sustainability.

	18 to 24 n=9	25 to 34 n=31	35 to 44 n=59	All Respondents n=287
Less traffic	2 (22.2%)	12 (38.7%)	26 (44.1%)	118 (41.1%)
More frequent buses	4 (44.4%)	9 (29%)	18 (30.5%)	65 (22.6%)
More bus routes	5 (55.6%)	14 (45.2%)	24 (40.7%)	89 (31%)
More areas to bike	6 (66.7%)	13 (41.9%)	25 (42.4%)	101 (35.2%)

	45 to 54 n=56	55 to 64 n=65	65 to 74 n=54	75+ n=10	All Respondents n=287
Less traffic	21 (37.5%)	26 (40%)	23 (42.6%)	8 (80%)	118 (41.1%)
More frequent buses	11 (19.6%)	14 (21.5%)	9 (16.7%)	0	65 (22.6%)
More bus routes	16 (28.6%)	15 (23.1%)	13 (24.1%)	1 (10%)	89 (31%)
More areas to bike	14 (25%)	25 (38.5%)	15 (27.8%)	2 (20%)	101 (35.2%)

Transportation Priorities: Diverse Opinions

Respondents also identified a broad spectrum of other transportation needs aimed at enhancing connectivity, safety, and accessibility while fostering a more livable and engaging community. Public transit improvements were a key theme, with suggestions for expanded bus routes, including a second north/south route and better linkage

between Hazleton, Wilkes-Barre, and Berwick. Calls for more frequent buses, 24-hour service, and routes tailored to industrial parks and shift workers reflected the need to align transit options with employment patterns. Improved communication regarding bus schedules and stops, safer bus terminals, and programs like the Ride to Work initiative connecting Hazleton to Humboldt were also emphasized. Regional connectivity was highlighted, with ideas for commuter rail and train services linking Hazleton to major cities. Transportation for older adults, better school transportation, and expanded ride-share services like Uber and Lyft were also cited as important enhancements. Additionally, respondents noted the need for medical transportation and even fun bus day trips to enrich community engagement.

Infrastructure upgrades were a recurring concern, including improving road quality, reducing truck traffic, addressing potholes, and ensuring consistent street signage at intersections. Respondents expressed the need for better sidewalk maintenance, uniform sidewalks in the business district, and bike lanes to promote safer active transportation. Suggestions extended to innovative options like electronic bike rentals, extended rail-trails, and pedestrian-friendly zones, including potential pedestrian mall areas in the city center. Parking was another major focus, with calls for more free parking, better parking enforcement, and strategies to address congestion in residential areas.

Concerns regarding traffic safety spurred ideas such as increased enforcement of traffic laws, stoplights in residential zones, and driver education programs. Additionally, respondents proposed banning ATVs on city streets to improve safety and reduce noise. Several people connected these transportation needs to broader community goals, such as improving quality of life and fostering health and wellness. Ideas like marathons, spaces for bocce ball and shuffleboard, and healthy recreational areas for young people underscored the desire for infrastructure that supports both practical transit needs and vibrant community activities. These diverse suggestions reflect a strong commitment to building a transportation network that is inclusive, efficient, and aligned with the community's evolving needs and aspirations.

Education and Employment: Advancing Opportunities

The survey results underscore significant community aspirations related to education and employment with a clear emphasis on improving schools and providing better-paying jobs. Most (59.2%) identified better schools as a priority, signaling the recognition of the critical role education plays in fostering future economic growth and stability. Those from Hazle Township particularly prioritized education, with nearly 65% identifying better schools as an area of need, reflecting the township's focus on educational development as a cornerstone for community vitality. Better-paying jobs emerged as the top priority overall, with 63.1% of respondents emphasizing this need. This highlights the pressing challenge of economic inequity and the community's desire for opportunities that provide financial security and career advancement. Interestingly,

respondents in West Hazleton were the most likely to prioritize better-paying jobs, with 66.7% selecting this option, suggesting a heightened focus on economic improvement.

While improving schools and job quality were the dominant themes, other areas of focus emerged. A third of respondents (33.8%) highlighted the importance of job training resources, pointing to the community's recognition of the value of skill development and workforce readiness. West Hazleton respondents were most likely to prioritize this, with 45.5% identifying it as a need, reflecting the borough's interest in equipping residents for better employment opportunities. Interestingly, fewer respondents (20.2%) prioritized having jobs closer to where they live, suggesting that while proximity is a consideration, the quality and pay of jobs are more critical. However, this could reflect the region's reliance on industrial parks and larger employers located outside of residential areas, necessitating enhanced transportation solutions.

The need for more Spanish-speaking teachers and administrators was identified by 23.3% of respondents, reflecting the importance of inclusivity in education for the area's diverse population. West Hazleton respondents (39.4%) were significantly more likely to prioritize this, likely reflecting the borough's higher proportion of Hispanic or Latinx residents. This need aligns with broader community calls for better representation and accessibility within local institutions.

These results demonstrate the interconnected nature of education and employment as foundational elements of the community's vision for progress. Enhancing schools and creating well-paying jobs are not just standalone goals but are critical drivers of Greater Hazleton's broader aspirations for equity, inclusivity, and economic resilience. Having better schools is more important to Hispanic and Latinx residents than having more Spanish speaking teachers and administrators. Hispanic and Latinx respondents selected every option more frequently than those who are not Hispanic or Latinx.

Education and Employment: Hispanic and Latinx Insights

The survey results reveal notable differences in education and employment priorities between Hispanic and Latinx respondents and those who are not. These differences highlight the distinct needs and aspirations within the community, emphasizing the importance of culturally and economically inclusive planning initiatives. Hispanic and Latinx respondents placed a significantly higher emphasis on better schools, with 76.9% identifying this as a priority compared to 54.9% of non-Hispanic respondents. This underscores the vital role education plays in creating opportunities and fostering upward mobility within Hispanic and Latinx communities. This group also prioritized more Spanish-speaking teachers and administrators (61.5%), a striking contrast to the 12.7% of non-Hispanic respondents who identified this need, reflecting the critical value of linguistic and cultural representation in education.

In terms of employment, 72.3% of Hispanic and Latinx respondents prioritized better-paying jobs, compared to 60.6% of non-Hispanic respondents, highlighting the

community's desire for economic security and advancement opportunities. Similarly, nearly half of Hispanic and Latinx respondents (47.7%) emphasized the need for more job training resources, compared to 30.5% of non-Hispanic respondents. This demonstrates a recognition of the value of skill development in achieving sustainable employment. Interestingly, Hispanic and Latinx respondents were more likely to prioritize jobs closer to where they live (38.5% vs. 15% for non-Hispanic respondents), suggesting a greater reliance on local employment opportunities. This preference aligns with broader transportation challenges faced by the community, emphasizing the need for accessible and convenient job locations. Addressing these needs requires a multifaceted approach, including investment in educational infrastructure, the recruitment of diverse educators, targeted job training programs, and localized economic development strategies.

	Hispanic n=65	Not Hispanic n=213	All Respondents n=287
Better schools	50 (76.9%)	117 (54.9%)	170 (59.2%)
More Spanish speaking teachers and administrators	40 (61.5%)	27 (12.7%)	67 (23.3%)
More job training resources	31 (47.7%)	65 (30.5%)	97 (33.8%)
More jobs closer to where I live	25 (38.5%)	32 (15%)	58 (20.2%)
Better paying jobs	47 (72.3%)	129 (60.6%)	181 (63.1%)

Education and Employment: Age-Inclusive Perspectives

The survey results highlight how age influences priorities for education and employment, with better-paying jobs emerging as the top concern across most age groups. However, younger respondents (18 to 24 years old) diverged from this trend, prioritizing better schools (88.9%) above all else. This emphasis on education among younger participants underscores the critical importance of quality schooling as a foundation for long-term opportunities and success, especially for those still in or recently out of the education system. As respondents age, the importance of better

schools gradually declines. Among those aged 65 to 74, only 40.7% identified better schools as a priority, and for those 75 and older, this figure dropped to just 10%. This trend may reflect a generational shift in priorities, with older participants more focused on immediate concerns like job quality, economic stability, and access to services.

	18 to 24 n=9	25 to 34 n=31	35 to 44 n=59	All Respondents n=287
Better schools	8 (88.9%)	27 (87.1%)	42 (71.2%)	170 (59.2%)
More Spanish speaking teachers and administrators	5 (55.6%)	12 (38.7%)	19 (32.2%)	67 (23.3%)
More job training resources	5 (55.6%)	8 (25.8%)	34 (57.6%)	97 (33.8%)
More jobs closer to where I live	3 (33.3%)	9 (29%)	19 (32.2%)	58 (20.2%)
Better paying jobs	7 (77.8%)	24 (77.4%)	43 (72.9%)	181 (63.1%)

	45 to 54 n=56	55 to 64 n=65	65 to 74 n=54	75+ n=10	All Respondents n=287
Better schools	30 (53.6%)	38 (58.5%)	22 (40.7%)	1 (10%)	170 (59.2%)
More Spanish speaking teachers and administrators	9 (16.1%)	14 (21.5%)	8 (14.8%)	0	67 (23.3%)
More job training resources	12 (21.4%)	20 (30.8%)	14 (25.9%)	2 (20%)	97 (33.8%)
More jobs closer to where I live	10 (17.9%)	9 (13.8%)	7 (13%)	1 (10%)	58 (20.2%)
Better paying jobs	35 (62.5%)	38 (58.5%)	28 (51.9%)	3 (30%)	181 (63.1%)

Better-paying jobs were consistently ranked as the most critical need across most age groups, with respondents aged 35 to 44 most frequently prioritizing this issue (72.9%). This finding highlights the community's widespread recognition of the need for jobs that provide financial security and upward mobility. However, interest in better-paying jobs slightly declines among respondents aged 65 and older, reflecting a potential shift toward concerns related to retirement or other priorities. Job training resources were especially important to respondents aged 35 to 44 (57.6%), reflecting a heightened focus on career development during peak earning years. Interestingly, younger respondents (18 to 24) also identified job training resources as a significant need (55.6%), likely reflecting an interest in building skills for entering the workforce.

More Spanish-speaking teachers and administrators were identified as a priority by a notable percentage of younger respondents, particularly those aged 18 to 24 (55.6%) and 25 to 34 (38.7%). This aligns with the community's emphasis on inclusivity and the need to address language barriers in education. Across all age groups, "more jobs closer to where I live" was a lower priority compared to better-paying jobs, indicating that job quality and wages take precedence over proximity. However, younger and middle-aged respondents placed greater importance on local job availability, reflecting the practical challenges of balancing work, transportation, and family responsibilities.

These results illustrate the diverse needs and priorities of different age groups in Greater Hazleton. While better-paying jobs and improved schools remain central to the community's vision for progress, targeted strategies that address age-specific concerns, such as vocational training for younger residents and economic stability for older residents, will be crucial in fostering a well-rounded, inclusive approach to regional development.

Education and Employment: Age-Inclusive Perspectives

Respondents provided a wide array of suggestions for improving education and employment opportunities in the Greater Hazleton area, highlighting both gaps in current services and innovative ideas to address them. These suggestions reflect a community deeply invested in the quality of its educational systems and workforce development. Many emphasized the need for greater inclusivity and accessibility in education, particularly for children with disabilities. This includes calls for more private school options tailored to specific needs, expanded before and after school programs, and smaller class sizes to foster individualized attention. Additionally, respondents advocated for a stronger focus on students' emotional health, recognizing the growing need for mental health support in schools.

The importance of bilingual and Latino representation in education was a recurring theme. Suggestions included offering language classes for school district staff, hiring more bilingual and Latino teachers, and integrating Spanish instruction into school curricula. Respondents also called for a welcome center for children who do not speak English, providing resources to help non-English-speaking students transition smoothly

into the school system. Parental engagement was another key area of focus. Ideas ranged from establishing a Parent-Teacher Association at the high school level to creating an app that allows parents to monitor their children's progress in school. Respondents suggested educational fairs at the community park and more opportunities for parental input in school policies. Concerns regarding school safety were frequently mentioned, with specific attention to improving safety on buses and ensuring secure learning environments. Respondents pointed to the need for life skills education, such as financial literacy and practical problem-solving, to better prepare students for adulthood.

Suggestions for adult education and workforce development revealed a strong desire for career advancement opportunities and diversified job sectors. Respondents advocated for apprenticeship programs, expanded trade school offerings, and adult continuing education, and called for more entrepreneurial support and opportunities, recognizing the role of small businesses in fostering economic growth. Suggestions emphasized the need for better-paying jobs and job diversity, with calls to halt warehouse development and instead focus on attracting more white-collar roles, unionized jobs, and manufacturing positions. Also highlighted was the importance of providing more opportunities for Spanish-speaking workers, including Spanish classes for non-Spanish-speaking employees and expanded ESL programs.

Senior education and workforce participation also featured prominently. Ideas included financial seminars for seniors, more educational programs at senior centers, and job training for older adults to remain active in the workforce. Several respondents highlighted the need for institutional expansion and community-based learning opportunities, such as an expanded Penn State campus to increase access to higher education. Additional suggestions included more art classes to foster creativity and training programs for first responders to improve community safety.

The breadth of these suggestions reflects a community committed to addressing both immediate and systemic challenges in education and employment. Expanding vocational and bilingual programs aligns with the growing need to integrate diverse populations and prepare a workforce ready to meet evolving economic demands. Similarly, enhancing school safety and mental health resources create a more supportive environment for students and families, fostering long-term community stability.

The emphasis on entrepreneurship, trade skills, and unionized jobs highlights a desire to diversify the local economy and creating more sustainable career pathways. Efforts to improve adult education and senior resources can further strengthen community resilience and participation. Implementing these ideas will require strategic partnerships between local governments, school districts, businesses, and higher education institutions. By aligning these efforts with the comprehensive plan's broader goals, Greater Hazleton can create an inclusive, thriving community where education and employment opportunities meet the needs of all residents.

Building Connections: Safety, Recreation and Culture

Responses reveal that respondents prioritize community safety above all other factors, with safer neighborhoods identified as the top concern across all regions. This emphasis on safety reflects a broader desire to create an environment where residents feel secure and protected, a foundational element for fostering a thriving community. The desire for better relationships between newer and older residents was the second most frequent response, highlighting the importance of addressing cultural and generational divides that can arise in diverse and evolving communities. Strengthening these connections can create a more cohesive and unified region, where all residents feel a sense of belonging and mutual respect.

Community events and festivals also ranked highly, underscoring the importance of opportunities for residents to come together and celebrate their shared identity and culture. Events that highlight the region's rich diversity, such as the Cinco de Mayo celebrations, could serve as pivotal moments for fostering inclusivity and building relationships among diverse groups. Respondents expressed a strong interest in arts, cultural activities, and outdoor recreation, amenities play a vital role in enhancing the overall quality of life by providing residents with opportunities for leisure, self-expression, and connection to nature. Outdoor recreation was particularly popular in Hazle Township, with nearly 65% of respondents identifying it as a priority.

 Addressing community's concerns about neighborhood safety requires targeted investments in public safety, such as increased police patrols, better street lighting, and crime prevention programs. Collaborative community safety initiatives can also bridge gaps between newer and older residents, fostering trust and cooperation. Developing programs encouraging intergenerational and cross-cultural connections is critical to addressing the desire for better relationships. Mentoring programs, cultural exchange events, and neighborhood improvement projects can bring residents together and foster mutual understanding.

Investing in parks, trails, and community centers will support the growing demand for outdoor recreation. Meanwhile, expanding arts and cultural programming, such as public art, community theater, and music festivals, can enrich the area's cultural landscape and attract visitors. Community events and festivals not only strengthen social bonds but also stimulate economic activity. Planning more inclusive events that reflect the area's cultural diversity can bridge divides while promoting the region's identity as a vibrant and welcoming place. As the region grows, ensuring that outdoor and cultural spaces are accessible to all residents, including children, seniors, and individuals with disabilities will be essential. This approach fosters a sense of equity and inclusivity in line with the comprehensive plan's vision. By prioritizing safety, recreation, and cultural engagement, Greater Hazleton can strengthen its community fabric while aligning with the broader goals of fostering a vibrant, connected, and inclusive region.

	Hazleton n=121	West Hazleton n=33	Hazle Township n=77	All Respondents n=287
Better relationships between newer and older residents	68 (56.2%)	17 (51.5%)	37 (48.1%)	153 (53.3%)
Safer neighborhoods	99 (81.8%)	26 (78.8%)	61 (79.2%)	232 (80.8%)
More community events and festivals	66 (54.5%)	20 (60.6%)	43 (55.8%)	156 (54.4%)
More arts and cultural activities	59 (48.8%)	17 (51.5%)	41 (53.2%)	143 (49.8%)
More outdoor recreation	74 (61.2%)	20 (60.6%)	50 (64.9%)	177 (61.7%)

Education and Employment: Hispanic and Latinx Insights

Hispanic and Latinx respondents expressed a significantly higher interest in outdoor recreation, arts, cultural activities, and community events than their non-Hispanic counterparts, highlighting a desire for a community enriched with diverse and engaging opportunities. The vast majority (81.5%) of Hispanic and Latinx respondents prioritized outdoor recreation, significantly higher than the 55.9% of non-Hispanic respondents, suggested an opportunity to expand access to parks, trails, and recreational facilities, particularly spaces that accommodate group activities and family gatherings. Multilingual outreach and community-led design processes could ensure recreational investments meet the needs of all residents.

Hispanic and Latinx respondents expressed higher interest in arts and cultural activities (64.5%) and community events and festivals (67.7%), compared to 45.1% and 50.7% among non-Hispanic respondents. This highlights the importance of creating culturally relevant programming celebrating the region's diversity. Multicultural festivals, art exhibitions, and music performances could serve as unifying experiences, fostering greater engagement between newer and longer-standing residents.

Better relationships between newer and older residents were also emphasized by Hispanic and Latinx respondents (63.1%) at a higher rate than non-Hispanic residents

(51.2%), stressing the importance of addressing cultural and generational divides to promote understanding and inclusivity. Intergenerational and intercultural initiatives, such as mentoring programs, cultural events, and community dialogues, could serve to bridge these divides. Across all groups, safer neighborhoods remained a top priority, with relatively consistent responses from Hispanic and Latinx residents (78.5%) and non-Hispanic respondents (80.3%). This shared concern provides a foundation for collaborative safety efforts.

Hispanic and Latinx respondents envision a more vibrant and inclusive community by prioritizing investments in family-friendly parks, trails, and recreational facilities; hosting culturally diverse events that celebrate traditions, music, and art; fostering unity through programs that bridge cultural and generational divides; and ensuring safety and amenity improvements benefit all neighborhoods equitably, especially those with higher Hispanic and Latinx populations. Addressing these priorities will integrate their needs into broader development efforts, creating a thriving and inclusive Greater Hazleton.

	Hispanic n=65	Not Hispanic n=213	All Respondents n=287
Better relationships between newer and older residents	41 (63.1%)	109 (51.2%)	153 (53.3%)
Safer neighborhoods	51 (78.5%)	171 (80.3%)	232 (80.8%)
More community events and festivals	44 (67.7%)	108 (50.7%)	156 (54.4%)
More arts and cultural activities	42 (64.5%)	96 (45.1%)	143 (49.8%)
More outdoor recreation	53 (81.5%)	119 (55.9%)	177 (61.7%)

Building Connections: Age-Inclusive Perspectives

Younger respondents, particularly those under 45, expressed a distinct set of priorities in terms of community needs, emphasizing events, recreation, and relationships more heavily than safety compared to older age groups. This trend underscores the importance of fostering a vibrant, engaging, and socially cohesive community to attract and retain younger residents.

THRIVE

Among respondents aged 18 to 24, 100% expressed a desire for more community

events and festivals, and this priority remained high among 25 to 34-year-olds (74.2%) and 35 to 44-year-olds (61%), highlighting the role of community gatherings in building social bonds, especially for younger residents. Expanding culturally diverse festivals, recreational events, and youth-focused initiatives cater to these preferences and enhance civic pride. Outdoor recreation was another standout priority for younger age groups, with 88.9% of 18 to 24-year-olds and 80.6% of 25 to 34-year-olds emphasizing its importance. Investments in trails, parks, and sports facilities can help engage these residents while promoting health and environmental sustainability.

Residents under 45 also placed greater importance on better relationships between newer and older residents, with 66.7% of 18 to 24-year-olds and 64.4% of 35 to 44-year-olds selecting this option. This suggests a need for initiatives fostering intergenerational and intercultural understanding, such as mentorship programs, dialogue sessions, and collaborative community projects. While safer neighborhoods remained important to younger respondents, it was not as dominant a concern compared to other age groups. For instance, 91.5% of 35 to 44-year-olds selected safer neighborhoods, but younger groups emphasized events and recreation as equally critical, suggesting that younger residents are looking for a balance between safety and enhanced quality of life through engagement and activity. Those aged 45 and above consistently ranked safer neighborhoods as the top priority, including 90% of those over 75. Interest in outdoor recreation and cultural activities declined significantly in older age groups, reflecting a shift in focus toward stability and safety.

	18 to 24 n=9	25 to 34 n=31	35 to 44 n=59	All Respondents n=287
Better relationships between newer and older residents	6 (66.7%)	18 (58.1%)	38 (64.4%)	153 (53.3%)
Safer neighborhoods	7 (77.8%)	23 (74.2%)	54 (91.5%)	232 (80.8%)
More community events and festivals	9 (100%)	23 (74.2%)	36 (61%)	156 (54.4%)
More arts and cultural activities	7 (77.9%)	19 (61.3%)	28 (47.5%)	143 (49.8%)
More outdoor recreation	8 (88.9%)	25 (80.6%)	43 (72.9%)	177 (61.7%)

	45 to 54 n=56	55 to 64 n=65	65 to 74 n=54	75+ n=10	All Respondents n=287
Better relationships between newer and older residents	25 (44.6%)	32 (49.2%)	29 (53.7%)	5 (50%)	153 (53.3%)
Safer neighborhoods	44 (78.6%)	50 (76.9%)	41 (75.9%)	9 (90%)	232 (80.8%)
More community events and festivals	25 (44.6%)	38 (58.5%)	22 (40.7%)	3 (30%)	156 (54.4%)
More arts and cultural activities	22 (39.3%)	36 (55.4%)	27 (50%)	3 (30%)	143 (49.8%)
More outdoor recreation	27 (48.2%)	41 (63.1%)	29 (53.7%)	3 (30%)	177 (61.7%)

By addressing the nuanced preferences of different age groups, the Greater Hazleton Area can develop a community strategy that promotes inclusivity, engagement, and shared prosperity for residents of all ages. Programs designed to encourage social interaction, like cultural festivals, recreation leagues, and outdoor adventure opportunities, aligns with the values of residents under 45. Although safety is less of a priority for younger respondents, efforts to improve lighting, law enforcement visibility, and infrastructure safety can enhance perceptions across age groups. Programs aimed at bridging gaps between newer and older residents could foster greater cohesion, particularly as the community diversifies and evolves.

Building Connections: A Thriving, Inclusive Community

Respondents offered a variety of ideas for enhancing community life and quality of living in the Greater Hazleton Area, reflecting diverse priorities and aspirations. Safety emerged as a key focus, with calls for improved fire protection, ambulance services, and increased law enforcement. Proposals for neighborhood watch programs, traffic enforcement, and reducing issues like drug trafficking, gang activity, and noise disturbances, including limiting fireworks, highlighted the desire for safer and more peaceful neighborhoods. Recreation and environmental stewardship were also top

priorities. Many respondents expressed interest in revitalizing parks and playgrounds with better lighting, police presence, and regular maintenance. Suggestions for community beautification projects included replacing damaged trees, restoring impacted landscapes, and extending the rail trail. There was strong support for developing more areas for outdoor activities, such as fishing and hiking, as well as creating recreational hubs in repurposed spaces like abandoned coal mines. Ideas for these spaces ranged from dog parks to attractions like outlet malls and ski resorts.

Residents envision a vibrant and inclusive downtown area featuring more restaurants, boutiques, and leisure establishments. The focus on creating cute and walkable places to shop and dine reflects the community's interest in fostering a lively commercial core that supports local businesses. Upgrades to sidewalks, crosswalks, and public spaces were highlighted as essential to improving mobility, safety, and convenience. Expanding parking options and ensuring accessibility were also recurring themes. Respondents emphasized the need for diverse recreational facilities and venues, including community or recreation centers, ice and roller skating rinks, video arcades, mini-golf courses, indoor batting cages, bounce houses, and bowling alleys. These amenities were seen as vital for providing activities for families, children, and teens.

Opportunities for outdoor concerts, festivals, and cultural events were identified as key to strengthening community engagement and celebrating cultural diversity. Social programs for older adults, such as bus trips and leisure activities, were also highlighted as important to addressing the needs of seniors. By addressing these priorities, the Greater Hazleton Area can foster a more cohesive, active, and attractive community. Developing diverse recreational and cultural facilities for all age groups can enhance quality of life and encourage long-term investment in the region. Strengthening public safety through targeted initiatives, enhancing urban infrastructure, and promoting downtown vibrancy will create a foundation for economic and social resilience. Beautification projects, trail expansions, and recreational improvements will reinforce the area's identity as a scenic and welcoming community while aligning with broader goals of inclusivity, sustainability, and growth.

Enhancing Services: A Sustainable Future

Survey results reveal a community deeply invested in enhancing services to foster a more supportive, accessible, and vibrant region. Across all three communities, residents identified key areas for improvement, focusing on activities for children, healthcare services, and programs for older adults, highlighting a shared desire to create balanced and thriving environments for all generations. A significant finding is the overwhelming demand for services and activities for children, which emerged as the top priority for 57.1% of respondents. Hazleton led this sentiment, with nearly two-thirds of its respondents emphasizing the importance of youth-oriented services. Structured programs, such as before-school, after-school, and summer activities, are seen as essential not only to enrich children's lives but also to provide crucial support for

working families. Other notable needs include expanding preschool programs, particularly in West Hazleton, where 39.4% of respondents stressed their importance. Early childhood education is increasingly recognized as a foundation for long-term success.

Healthcare access is another critical concern, with more doctors and hospitals identified as a priority by 55.4% of respondents. This need is particularly acute in Hazle Township, where it was tied as the most pressing issue. As the population grows and diversifies, ensuring adequate healthcare resources becomes paramount. Addressing these gaps will enhance residents' quality of life while attracting professionals and businesses. The survey also underscores the importance of services for older adults, reflecting an aging population's needs. In Hazle Township, nearly 60% highlighted the importance of activities and programs tailored to seniors.

	Hazleton n=121	West Hazleton n=33	Hazle Township n=77	All Respondents n=287
Better internet or cell phone service	51 (42.1%)	15 (45.5%)	26 (33.8%)	113 (39.4%)
More doctors and hospitals	71 (58.7%)	17 (51.5%)	46 (59.7%)	159 (55.4%)
More services and activities for kids	77 (63.6%)	18 (54.5%)	44 (57.1%)	164 (57.1%)
More preschool programs	36 (29.8%)	13 (39.4%)	19 (24.7%)	80 (27.9%)
More before school, after school, and summer programs	50 (41.3%)	17 (51.5%)	33 (42.9%)	120 (41.8%)
More services and activities for older adults	61 (50.4%)	18 (54.5%)	45 (58.4%)	147 (51.2%)
More shopping	65 (53.7%)	17 (51.5%)	42 (54.5%)	154 (53.7%)
More personal services	18 (14.9%)	8 (24.2%)	10 (13%)	41 (14.3%)
More restaurants	53 (43.8%)	10 (30.3%)	38 (49.4%)	132 (46%)

Economic development is woven into residents' desires for more shopping and dining options, with 53.7% prioritizing shopping and 46% calling for additional restaurants. Hazle Township residents particularly emphasized the need for dining establishments, indicating a desire for more accessible and diverse amenities. Expanding these sectors stimulates economic growth and creates jobs, enhancing the community's appeal. Connectivity emerged as a vital issue, with better internet and cell phone service cited by 39.4% of respondents. Improved connectivity supports education, remote work, and telehealth, reflecting modern necessities. This reveals a community striving for balance, meeting the needs of youth, families, and seniors while fostering economic growth and connectivity. By addressing these priorities, the Greater Hazleton Area can move closer to realizing its vision of an inclusive, supportive, and thriving region.

Enhancing Services: A Sustainable Future

The survey results highlight a notable distinction in service needs between Hispanic or Latinx respondents and those who are not Hispanic or Latinx, with the former group consistently selecting all services more frequently. This trend reflects unique community priorities and underscores the importance of targeted approaches to service expansion and accessibility. For Hispanic or Latinx respondents, more services and activities for kids emerged as the most critical need, with 76.9% identifying this as a priority. This percentage is significantly higher than the 53.1% of non-Hispanic or Latinx respondents who selected the same need. The emphasis on youth programming aligns with a broader focus on fostering opportunities for the next generation, particularly in communities with growing populations of young families.

While more doctors and hospitals were slightly more important to non-Hispanic or Latinx respondents, 63.1% of Hispanic or Latinx respondents also identified this as a crucial need. indicating a shared recognition of healthcare gaps. This highlights the universal importance of improving access to medical care while suggesting that certain groups may experience distinct challenges in navigating the healthcare system. Other services such as better internet or cell phone service (58.5% vs. 33.3%) and more preschool programs (53.8% vs. 21.1%) also ranked much higher for Hispanic or Latinx respondents, pointing to potential disparities in digital connectivity and early childhood education access. These gaps can have far-reaching implications for educational outcomes, economic opportunities, and overall quality of life.

More before-school, after-school, and summer programs were prioritized by 63.1% of Hispanic or Latinx respondents, compared to 36.6% of non-Hispanic or Latinx participants, further emphasizing the critical need for youth-oriented services that not only provide educational enrichment but also support working families by offering structured activities during non-school hours. Interestingly, while more shopping opportunities (60% vs. 53.1%) and more restaurants (48.8% vs. 46%) were important to both groups, Hispanic or Latinx respondents were slightly more likely to emphasize

these amenities, suggesting a desire for diverse community spaces that reflect cultural and economic aspirations. Addressing these priorities requires a multifaceted approach that considers the unique challenges and aspirations of this growing demographic.

	Hispanic n=65	Not Hispanic n=213	All Respondents n=287
Better internet or cell phone service	38 (58.5%)	71 (33.3%)	113 (39.4%)
More doctors and hospitals	41 (63.1%)	114 (53.5%)	159 (55.4%)
More services and activities for kids	50 (76.9%)	113 (53.1%)	164 (57.1%)
More preschool programs	35 (53.8%)	45 (21.1%)	80 (27.9%)
More before school, after school, and summer programs	41 (63.1%)	78 (36.6%)	120 (41.8%)
More services and activities for older adults	34 (52.3%)	112 (52.6%)	147 (51.2%)
More shopping	39 (60%)	113 (53.1%)	154 (53.7%)
More personal services	14 (21.5%)	26 (12.2%)	41 (14.3%)
More restaurants	25	104 (48.8%)	132 (46%)

Enhancing Services: Age-Inclusive Perspectives

Survey responses reveal distinct age-based priorities, reflecting the diverse needs and interests of the community. Younger respondents, particularly those aged 18 to 44, expressed a strong demand for youth-focused services, shopping, and recreation, while older residents emphasized services tailored to their age group, including activities for older adults and improved healthcare access. For respondents aged 18 to 24, services

and activities for kids (77.8%), before school, after school, and summer programs (77.8%), and shopping (77.8%) ranked as the most critical needs. Those aged 25 to 34 and 35 to 44 also prioritized these categories, albeit at slightly lower rates. The emphasis on youth services among younger adults reflects their dual role as caregivers and as residents that seek vibrant, family-friendly activities and resources.

	18 to 24 n=9	25 to 34 n=31	35 to 44 n=59	All Respondents n=287
Better internet or cell phone service	3 (33.3%)	14 (45.2%)	30 (50.8%)	113 (39.4%)
More doctors and hospitals	5 (55.6%)	19 (61.3%)	37 (62.7%)	159 (55.4%)
More services and activities for kids	7 (77.8%)	21 (67.7%)	44 (74.6%)	164 (57.1%)
More preschool programs	4 (44.4%)	13 (41.9%)	22 (37.3%)	80 (27.9%)
More before school, after school, and summer programs	7 (77.8%)	14 (45.2%)	34 (57.6%)	120 (41.8%)
More services and activities for older adults	5 (55.6%)	16 (51.6%)	29 (49.2%)	147 (51.2%)
More shopping	7 (77.8%)	22 (71%)	37 (62.7%)	154 (53.7%)
More personal services	3 (33.3%)	4 (12.9%)	11 (18.6%)	41 (14.3%)
More restaurants	5 (55.6%)	14 (45.2%)	28 (47.5%)	132 (46%)

In contrast, residents aged 65 to 74 showed the highest level of interest in services and activities for older adults (61.1%), highlighting a growing need for programs and resources catering to the aging population. While respondents in this group also recognized the importance of better healthcare access (50%), their focus on age-specific services suggests a desire for initiatives that support healthy and active aging. Shopping was a significant priority for all age groups but was most prominent among younger respondents, particularly those aged 25 to 34 (71%) and 35 to 44 (62.7%). This

underscores the importance of accessible retail options as both an economic driver and a contributor to quality of life. The findings also reveal a decline in interest in better internet or cell phone service and more preschool programs among older respondents, reflecting generational differences in technological reliance and childcare needs. However, a universal concern across all age groups was the need for more doctors and hospitals, indicating widespread recognition of healthcare challenges.

	45 to 54 n=56	55 to 64 n=65	65 to 74 n=54	75+ n=10	All Respondents n=287
Better internet or cell phone service	23 (41.1%)	24 (36.9%)	17 (31.5%)	0	113 (39.4%)
More doctors and hospitals	32 (57.1%)	31 (47.7%)	27 (50%)	6 (60%)	159 (55.4%)
More services and activities for kids	25 (44.6%)	38 (58.5%)	26 (48.1%)	3 (30%)	164 (57.1%)
More preschool programs	12 (21.4%)	16 (24.6%)	11 (20.4%)	1 (10%)	80 (27.9%)
More before school, after school, and summer programs	18 (32.1%)	25 (38.5%)	21 (38.9%)	1 (10%)	120 (41.8%)
More services and activities for older adults	24 (42.9%)	35 (53.8%)	33 (61.1%)	5 (50%)	147 (51.2%)
More shopping	29 (51.8%)	32 (49.2%)	22 (40.7%)	4 (40%)	154 (53.7%)
More personal services	13 (23.2%)	5 (7.7%)	5 (9.3%)	0	41 (14.3%)
More restaurants	24 (42.9%)	34 (52.4%)	24 (46.3%)	3 (30%)	132 (46%)

Enhancing Services: Strengthening the Community

Survey results provide a snapshot of the community's aspirations for a more inclusive, accessible, and vibrant Greater Hazleton. They highlight both universal priorities such

as enhanced healthcare access and youth services as well as distinct preferences across demographic groups, reflecting the complexity of creating a balanced community. A key takeaway is the strong emphasis on fostering opportunities for younger generations, with services and activities for children emerging as the most critical need. Expanding youth programming, improving educational resources, and supporting families through accessible childcare and enrichment opportunities lays the groundwork for long-term community vitality.

Equally important is the focus on services for older adults, emphasizing the community's commitment to aging with dignity and inclusion. From social activities and recreational opportunities to improved healthcare and infrastructure, these initiatives address the needs of a growing senior population while promoting intergenerational cohesion. Disparities between Hispanic or Latinx respondents and non-Hispanic or Latinx respondents emphasizes the need for culturally attuned planning. Connectivity also emerged as critical themes, with better internet and cell phone service, improved transit options, and enhanced walkability ranking highly across demographic groups. These priorities align with the region's economic goals, highlighting the importance of modern infrastructure in supporting education, employment, and quality of life.

The emphasis on shopping, dining, and recreation speaks to the community's desire for a more self-sufficient and engaging local environment. Creating vibrant commercial spaces, enhancing cultural and recreational opportunities, and investing in community beautification will not only improve residents' daily lives but also attract visitors, foster economic growth, and enhance regional identity. By addressing these diverse priorities, the Greater Hazleton area can build a stronger, more unified community. This comprehensive approach—balancing the needs of families, seniors, and individuals of all cultural backgrounds will create a region where residents feel valued, connected, and empowered to thrive.

Survey Conclusion

The survey highlights the community's collective aspirations for a self-sufficient, accessible, and inclusive region. It reveals a desire to reduce dependency on larger nearby cities like Wilkes-Barre, Scranton, and Allentown by expanding local amenities, services, and infrastructure. Residents envision a community where diverse needs are met, fostering a higher quality of life for all demographics and age groups. This conclusion highlights actionable priorities across key sectors while aligning with long-term goals of equity, inclusivity, and regional resilience.

Public Safety and Emergency Services

Residents expressed an urgent need for enhanced public safety measures and emergency services including increasing the number of first responders, establishing paid firefighter programs, and improving ambulance response times. Healthcare emerged as a parallel concern with calls for expanding medical services including

women's healthcare, dental care, mental health resources, addiction treatment, and pediatric care. The vision includes a 24-hour veterinary hospital, shorter emergency room wait times, and the establishment of free or low-cost health services, reflecting the emphasis on comprehensive and accessible care.

Transportation and Connectivity

Improving transportation infrastructure is pivotal for fostering inclusivity and connectivity. Suggestions include free or low-cost transit options for seniors, individuals with medical needs, and students attending after-school programs. Expanding public transit routes to enhance connectivity with employment hubs, educational institutions, and neighboring cities like Wilkes-Barre is essential. Addressing road safety concerns, such as hazardous merge points at key locations like Conyngham Mountain and Broad Street, coupled with better road maintenance and expanded parking options, will ensure safer and more efficient mobility.

Recreation and Community Engagement

The survey highlights a demand for diverse, affordable recreational facilities and community spaces. Residents envision developments such as a YMCA, indoor swimming pools, upgraded playgrounds, and community centers catering to both seniors and children. Seasonal festivals, organized sports programs, movie nights in parks, and cultural events were frequently suggested as means to foster engagement and strengthen social bonds. Additionally, expanding access to trails, green spaces, and bicycle-friendly infrastructure aligns with broader goals of sustainability and public health.

Economic and Retail Development

Economic vitality hinges on supporting both small businesses and broader retail growth. The community desires a mix of stores, ethnic restaurants, coffee shops, and chain establishments to enhance the commercial landscape. Encouraging local entrepreneurship through improved communication between residents and municipal leaders is critical for fostering economic development. The inclusion of food truck courts and family-friendly businesses like Sky Zone reflects the community's interest in creating vibrant, multifaceted commercial spaces.

Housing and Social Services

Housing quality, affordability, and diversity remain critical areas of concern. Suggestions include eviction prevention programs, affordable housing options for families and seniors, and initiatives to address homelessness. Expanded affordable food access and targeted social services further reflect the need for a robust safety net. Efforts must also address systemic inequities, ensuring that underserved populations, including low-income families and minority communities, have access to safe, stable, and equitable housing opportunities. Integrating these priorities into the comprehensive plan can ensure that residents of all socioeconomic backgrounds can thrive.

Education and Youth Development

Education is a cornerstone of community aspirations. Expanding preschool programs, enhancing school safety, and fostering bilingual education are vital for meeting the needs of a diverse population. Youth programming, such as trips to museums, enrichment activities, and expanded summer camps, underscores the importance of investing in the next generation. Life skills education, job training resources, and vocational programs are also critical for preparing residents of all ages for economic success. Equally important is the focus on recruiting and retaining high-quality educators and integrating technology in classrooms to ensure students are equipped for the demands of a rapidly evolving workforce.

Beautification and Inclusivity

Community beautification efforts, including improved landscaping, updated infrastructure, and litter control, will enhance Greater Hazleton's aesthetic appeal and foster civic pride. Prioritizing accessibility for people with disabilities and encouraging intergenerational and intercultural connections will strengthen inclusivity. A focus on public art, cultural festivals, and community-led projects will celebrate the area's rich diversity and reinforce its identity as a welcoming, vibrant region.

A Vision for the Future

The comprehensive survey provides a clear roadmap for transforming Greater Hazleton into a thriving, self-sufficient, and inclusive region. By addressing the priorities of public safety, healthcare, housing, transportation, education, and recreation, the community can cultivate a resilient and connected future. Strategic investments in infrastructure, services, and economic development will ensure equitable access and opportunities for all residents, while fostering pride in a region poised for sustainable growth. Implementing these recommendations will not only strengthen the community's fabric but also position Greater Hazleton as a model for balanced and inclusive regional development.

Other Community Aspirations and Improvements

Respondents were asked what else they wish their community had in place. Their suggestions included:

- Community and Recreational Facilities
    - A community center for all ages
    - Ice skating rink
    - Aarts venues
    - An accessible dog park
    - Skate park
    - Public fishing areas
    - More basketball courts and soccer fields
    - A water park
    - ATV Park

- Bowling alley
- Roller skating rink
- Martial arts
- Indoor sports center
- Zip line in Eagle Rock
- Pool
- Recycling center
- Laser tag
- Businesses/Downtown
  - More restaurants and shopping options
  - Healthy and eclectic restaurants
  - Bookstore
  - Bicycle shop
  - Craft brewery
  - Improved appearance downtown
  - More specialty shops
  - Weekly farmers market
  - Better curb appeal of local businesses
- Things to Do
  - Outdoor art and music events
  - Art and cultural events
  - Activities and events for all ages
  - Flower show
  - Community festivals and events to bring the entire community together
  - Multicultural festival
  - Drive-in movie theater
- Services
  - More healthcare options
  - Improved ambulance service
  - More mental health services for all ages
  - More doctors
  - A trap-neuter-release program for stray and feral cats,
- Transportation
  - Improved road conditions
  - More public transportation and rail service to other cities
  - Less traffic
  - Better designed crosswalks
  - More parking downtown
  - A person working at the Wyoming Street parking garage
  - Bike share program
- Communication
  - Better promotion of natural recreational areas
  - Better communication about events, ways to get involved in the community, and resources that are available
  - Improved community reputation
- Education

- - Places for adults to learn English
    - Adult enrichment and technical education classes
    - Education about local history
- Housing
    - More affordable housing
    - More code enforcement
    - Removal of blighted buildings
    - Holding absentee landlords accountable
    - Safe and affordable housing
    - Long-term housing for older adults,
- Safety
    - Larger or regional police force
    - Gang task force
    - More security in schools
- Work
    - An initiative to attract creative workers to the area
    - More technology companies
    - Volunteer opportunities for teens
    - Job opportunities for veterans
    - Employers willing to hire people in recovery
    - More career options
- Other
    - More trees
    - Initiatives to create a stronger sense of community
    - Summer camps
    - Stricter zoning for warehouses to preserve forested areas
    - More cleanliness
    - Ties with larger cities to exchange ideas
    - Initiatives to keep young, talented people in the community
    - Assistance with the cost of childcare

Respondents were asked what they would change or create if they were in charge. They shared many ideas including:

- Safety and First Responders
    - Improved safety
    - Less violence, gang activity, and drugs
    - Regional police force and fire services
    - More frequent police patrols
    - Hire more police
    - Better enforcement of laws
    - More communication and follow-up about crime
    - More code enforcement officers
    - Explain the rules in English and Spanish
    - More police training
    - More funding for police, fire, and EMS
    - More enforcement of traffic violations

- ○
- Housing
  - ○ Use the old hospital for housing for older adults and people with disabilities
  - ○ More starter workforce rentals
  - ○ More affordable apartments and townhouses for all ages
  - ○ Affordable housing for veterans
  - ○ More funding for housing rehabilitation
  - ○ More high rise buildings
  - ○ Renovate vacant and run down buildings into housing
  - ○ Preserve older buildings
  - ○ More landlord accountability
  - ○ Incentives for historic preservation of homes
- Community Appearance
  - ○ Beautification programs
  - ○ Cleaner more welcoming neighborhoods
- School District
  - ○ Remove option for virtual learning
  - ○ More family involvement in schools
  - ○ Assistants on school buses
  - ○ More diverse school board
  - ○ Improved quality of education
  - ○ More crossing guards
  - ○ Another high school
  - ○ Prioritize the needs of students
- Healthcare
  - ○ More competition in the healthcare system
- Community and Recreational Spaces
  - ○ Dog park
  - ○ Playgrounds
  - ○ Recreation/community center with classes, events, and activities
  - ○ Community gardens
  - ○ Pool
  - ○ Bowling alley
- Jobs, Businesses, and Downtown
  - ○ Allow workers with long shifts to take flex time so they can participate in children's activities
  - ○ More white collar jobs
  - ○ More support for entrepreneurs; small business development coordinator
  - ○ Less warehouses
  - ○ Better paying jobs
  - ○ More housing to accommodate job growth
  - ○ Public-private partnerships to attract and retain diverse business and provide training
  - ○ Improve the appearance of downtown; organize volunteers
  - ○ Food truck court

- - More diners, restaurants
  - Tech center to attract innovative science companies with education to support workforce needs
  - Major performance venue with studios and rehearsal space
  - Invest in tourism
  - More taxi service options
  - More grocery stores
  - New mall
  - No warehouses on 309
  - Curtail building new warehouses until current buildings are filled
- Events and Activities
  - Events to showcase local talent
  - Multicultural exchange programs
  - More entertainment options
  - Winter market for the entire season
  - More educational programs for kids, afterschool programs
  - Community yard sales
  - Affordable art performances
  - Mural program
  - Indoor sports complex
  - Art/paint events
  - Video arcade
  - Indoor mini golf
  - Skate park
  - Ice skating rink
  - Police Athletic league
  - Community picnics/pot lucks
  - Community cleanup days
  - Community pride day
  - Free classes to learn Spanish and English
  - Better promotion of events and things to do
- Transportation
  - Improve potholes/road conditions with high quality long lasting materials
  - Weight restrictions on the Beaver Brook road.
  - Crossing arms at the railroad crossing
  - More frequent street sweeping
  - More streetscaping - lighting, sidewalks, etc.
  - Driver education
  - More walking and biking trails
  - Bus routes that connect with warehouses
  - Limit truck traffic in residential areas
  - More parking areas
  - Enforce traffic violations
- Government
  - Learn from other cities
  - More code enforcement

- - Create a city-owned impound lot
  - Regional zoning, first responders, code enforcement
  - Larger fines tied to code enforcement
  - Equity in tax liabilities
- Communication
  - More frequent communication from municipalities to residents
  - Community bulletin board
  - Better communication about activities
  - ways to get the word out that there are activities available to the community.
- Greening/Environment
  - More trees
  - City-wide green space plan
  - More environmentally friendly practices
- Volunteering and Community involvement
  - Fun fundraisers
  - Committee for implementation of new projects
  - Create a 5 and 10 year plan
  - Community advisory board that represents diverse interests in the community
  - Better promotion of public meetings
  - Joint town hall with set topics like public works, education, community gatherings, workforce development
- Other
  - A thriving community where people are shopping, walking around, and interacting with friends, family, and newcomers
  - More creativity

Respondents were asked how we can make our community a more inclusive and welcoming place. Practical suggestions included festivals, a community center or community space open to everyone, accessibility for all ages - employment, activities, events, bilingual signage, welcome center for new residents, multicultural education, events and activities that draw a diverse crowd, opportunities to discuss shared concerns, welcome signage, networking opportunities, community marketing, promote events as open to everyone, more people of color and Latino representation on local boards, agencies, first responders, and schools, highlight Latino-owned businesses, better communication between newcomers and established residents, block parties, overtly condemn prejudice, promote love and good news, provide translation and interpretation for medical appointments, multiethnic food festivals, free Spanish classes, decorate the city for all religious holidays, opportunities to interact, post on Facebook in Spanish, become more LGBTQIA+ friendly, make decisions to level the playing field, create a human library, community-building programs at libraries and in the outdoors, and have children interact with others at school. Unrelated suggestions made in response to this question include code enforcement, improve safety, improve housing quality and affordability, blight remediation, improve road conditions, support the local drop-in center/shelter, create connections with adjoining communities outside of the

Greater Hazleton area, more outdoor recreation, focus on arts and culture, and community cleanup.

Respondents were asked what their local government can do to make it better for them to live or work here. Suggestions included:

- Employment
  - More living wage jobs
  - Better pay for teachers
  - More work-life balance for warehouse workers
  - More job opportunities for young people
  - More jobs to keep young people in the region
  - More training and apprenticeship programs
  - Limit warehouse development
- Local Businesses
  - Downtown revitalization
  - More shops, restaurants, and activities downtown
  - Coordinate effort across communities
  - Learn how other communities attract businesses and keep downtowns safe and clean
  - Invest in the arts and music
  - Opportunities for local business owners to expand their businesses
  - Beautiful store fronts, nice places to shop, and many local restaurants
- Housing
  - First-time homebuyer (i.e. downpayment assistance) and rent to own programs
  - More affordable rentals
  - Work with housing developers
  - More housing options
  - Housing rehabilitation
- Crime/Law Enforcement
  - More police presence
  - More fire and EMS
  - More police training
  - Stricter ordinances
  - More code enforcement
  - More traffic enforcement
- Infrastructure and Transportation
  - Improve road conditions
  - More parks
  - More utility competition
  - More walkability
  - More safe downtown parking
  - Less truck traffic
  - More transportation for older adults and people with disabilities
  - More transportation for medical appointments
  - Public trashcans in parks and along sidewalks

- Clean and Green
  - Community cleanup and beautification
  - Blight remediation
  - Clean scarred mine land
  - Halt development
  - Maintain the tree canopy
- Government Services
  - Better publicity of garbage collection days
  - Better communication about resources available for veterans
  - Town hall meetings
  - Address vacant buildings
  - More diverse representation in local government
  - More representation of local leaders at community events
  - Have local municipal leaders say a few words in Spanish when addressing a Spanish-speaking audience
- Activities/Events and Amenities
  - More events, activities, things to do
  - Recreation center with activities all year long
  - More diverse restaurants
  - More parks, outdoor recreation opportunities like running, walking, hiking, and biking trails
- Education
  - School district welcome center for Spanish-speaking families
  - Free afterschool tutoring
  - Have school board members represent geographic areas rather than running at large
  - Start a charter school
  - Initiatives that focus on teen to adult transition, education about colleges and learning trades
- Healthcare
  - More healthcare options
  - Better quality healthcare

Appendix D

Maps and Figures

1. Current Zoning Maps

   a. Greater Hazleton Area Composite
   b. City of Hazleton
   c. Borough of West Hazleton
   d. Hazle Township

2. Current Land Use Maps

   a. City of Hazleton
   b. Borough of West Hazleton
   c. Hazle Township

3. Future Land Use Maps

   a. City of Hazleton
   b. Borough of West Hazleton
   c. Hazle Township
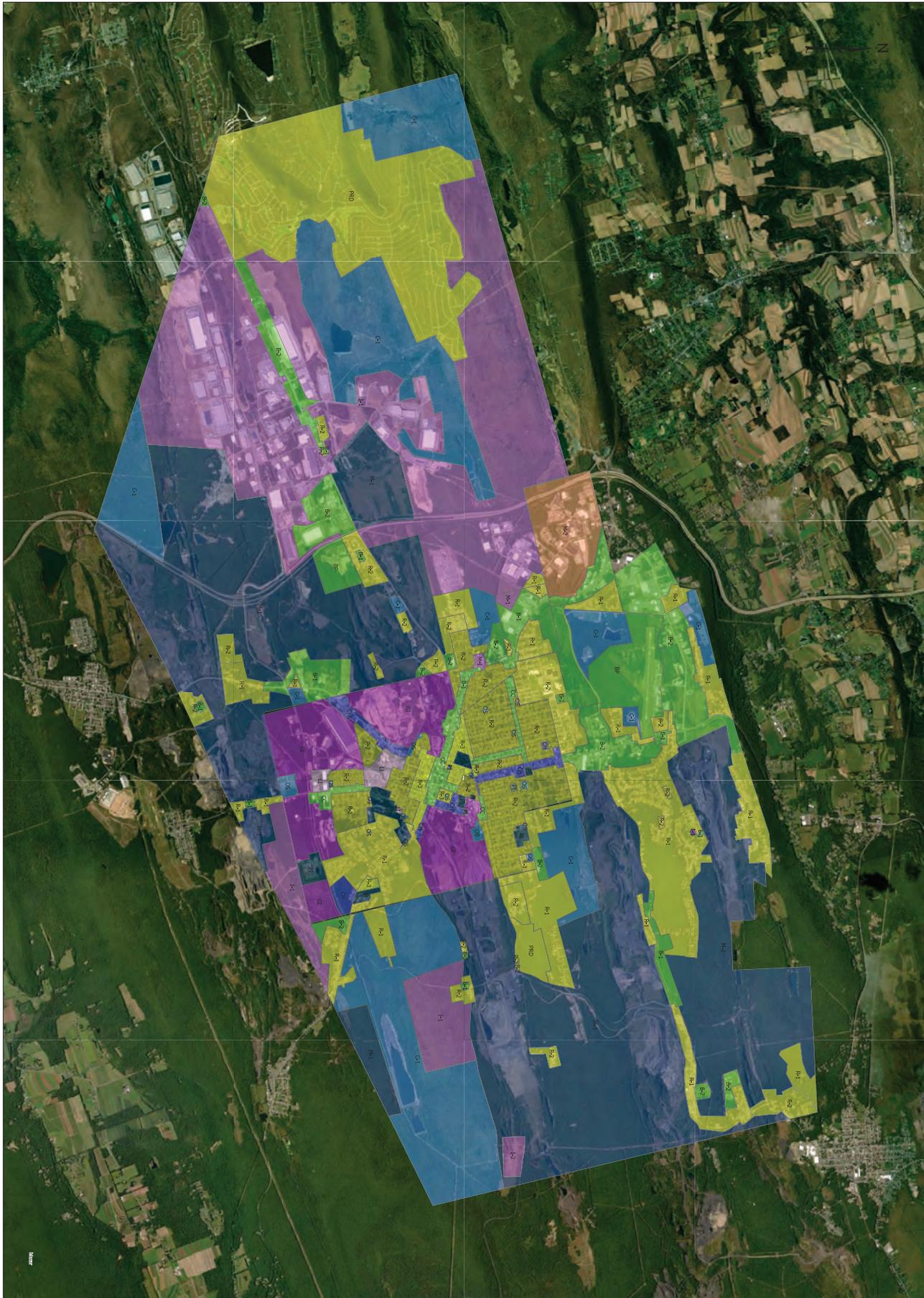
COMPOSITE ZONING MAP

Luzerne County, PA

MAPPING INFORMATION OBTAINED FROM
HAZLETON, WEST HAZLETON AND HAZLE
TOWNSHIP ZONING

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Miles

Legend

zoning_hazleton

Zone

- CC
- CH
- GI
- LI
- OS
- PI
- R-1
- R-2
- R-3
- <all other values>

CITY OF HAZLETON
ZONING

Luzerne County, PA

BARRY ISETT & associates
MULTI-DISCIPLINE ENGINEERS AND CONSULTANTS

☏ 610.398.0904
🖥 barryisett.com

0.1 0.05 0 0.1 0.2 0.3 0.4
Miles

**WEST HAZLETON BOROUGH
ZONING**

Luzerne County, PA

BARRY
ISETT&
associates

570.398.0904
barryisett.com

0 0,03 0,06   0,12   0,18   0,24
Miles

Legend

COMMERCIAL
CONSERVATION
INDUSTRIAL
MINING
RESIDENTIAL
all other uses

HAZLE TOWNSHIP
ZONING

Luzerne County, PA

MAPPING INFORMATION OBTAINED FROM
LUZERNE COUNTY GIS

BARRY
ISETT &
associates
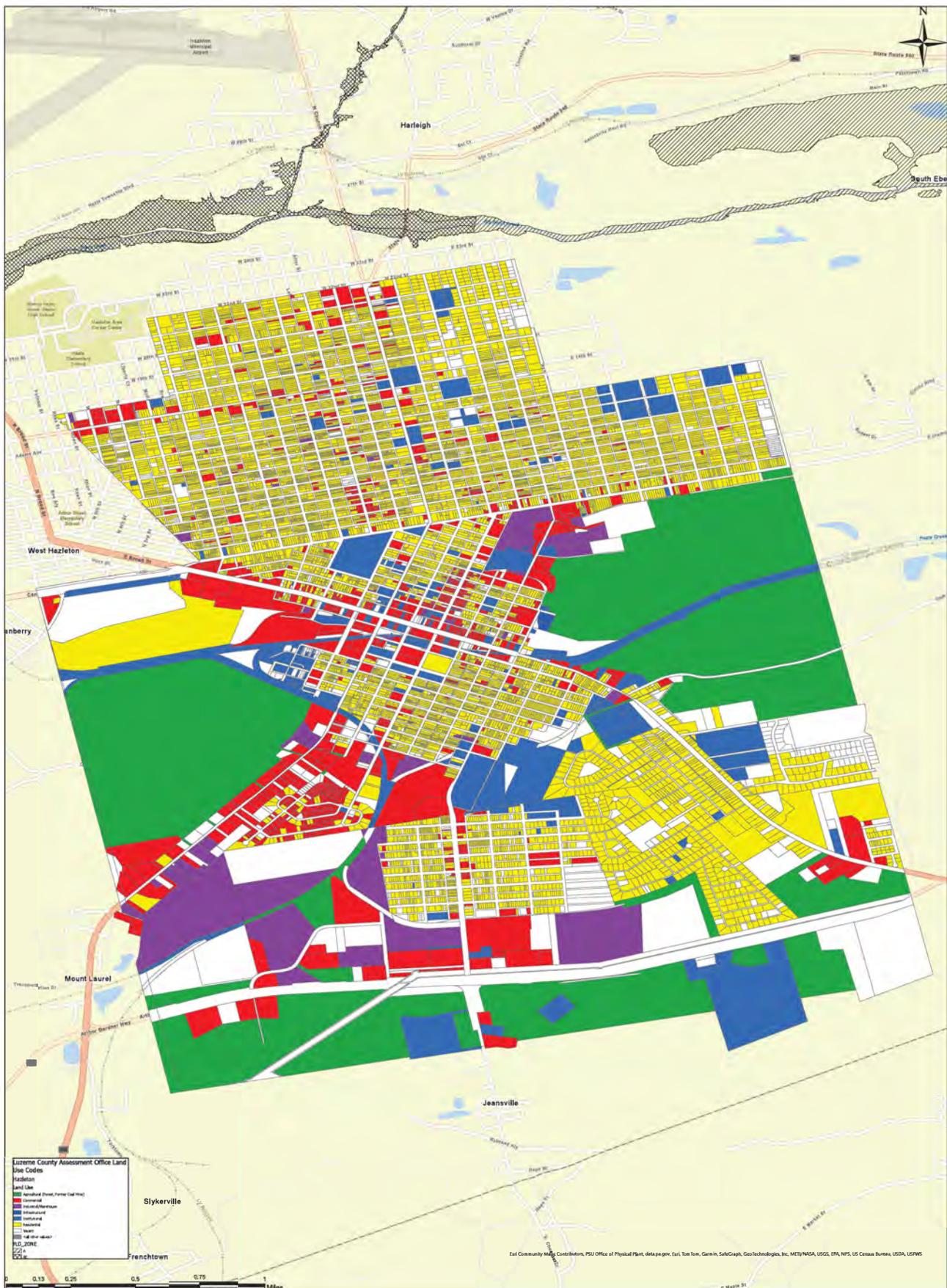
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Greater Hazleton Area Thrive - Current Land Use

City of Hazleton
Luzerne County, PA

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Data supplied by the Luzerne County Assessment Office.

**Greater Hazleton Area Thrive -
Current Land Use**

West Hazleton Borough
Luzerne County, PA

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**Greater Hazleton Area Thrive
- Current Land Use**

Hazle Township,
Luzerne County, PA

Luzerne County
Assessment Office Land
Use Codes

Hazle Township

Land Use

Agricultural Inst.

Commercial

Industrial/Warehouse

Residential

Vacant Land
- All other values -

Flood Hazard Areas

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**Greater Hazleton Area Thrive -
Future Land Use**

City of Hazleton
Luzerne County, PA

**Greater Hazleton Area Thrive -
Future Land Use**

West Hazleton Borough
Luzerne County, PA

Greater Hazleton Area Thrive - Future Land Use

Hazle Township,
Luzerne County, PA

Luzerne County
Assessment Office
Land Use Codes

Food Hazard Areas

Land Use
Agricultural Forest
Mining
Commercial
Industrial/Warehouse
Institutional
Residential
Vacant Land

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Appendix E

Community Profile

Prepared by 4ward Planning, Inc.

As part of the Greater Hazleton Comprehensive Plan, 4ward Planning, Inc. conducted a comprehensive socio-economic, labor market, and real estate analysis. This research supports the tri-municipal collaboration among Hazleton City, West Hazleton Borough, and Hazle Township, offering a nuanced understanding of the region's strengths, challenges, and growth potential. By identifying key trends and opportunities, the profile informs strategic investments and policy decisions essential for fostering sustainable and equitable development.

Key Insights

1. **Population Trends**
   While population growth across the Greater Hazleton area and the broader Tri-County region remains relatively flat, industrial developments, particularly in the Humboldt Industrial Park, are anticipated to drive workforce migration and new household formation. This highlights the importance of preparing for a potential influx of workers and their families by expanding local services and housing options.

2. **Diverse Demographics**
   The area boasts significant ethnic diversity, with Hispanic and Latino individuals representing over 60% of the population in Hazleton City and West Hazleton Borough. This diversity provides opportunities for culturally inclusive economic and community development, underscoring the need to integrate multicultural perspectives into future planning efforts.

3. **Housing Needs**
   The demand for affordable and workforce housing is a critical issue. While single-family units dominate the existing housing stock, the region faces a growing need for smaller, high-quality units to serve non-family households, multigenerational families, and the increasing workforce population. Housing rehabilitation programs and the development of new rental units are essential components of addressing these needs.

4. **Labor Market Dynamics**
   Dominated by manufacturing, transportation, warehousing, and healthcare sectors, the local economy shows strong potential for job growth, driven by ongoing industrial expansion. However, a tightening labor market presents challenges, making workforce training and retention strategies key priorities.

5. **Real Estate Insights**
   The I-81/78 corridor continues to see high demand for industrial space, with significant construction activity underway. Meanwhile, underutilized commercial spaces, such as Valmont Plaza and Laurel Mall, offer opportunities for transformation into mixed-use developments. These initiatives could provide much-needed workforce housing and support vibrant, walkable communities.

Recommendations

- **Housing Development**: Develop and rehabilitate affordable, high-quality housing to meet the needs of both existing residents and new workers.

- **Transportation Improvements**: Expand public transit routes to industrial hubs, enhance walkability, and improve road safety to support economic growth and community mobility.

- **Economic Strategies**: Strengthen workforce training programs, encourage entrepreneurship, and promote job diversity to address the region's relatively low household incomes and educational attainment.

- **Cultural and Community Integration**: Leverage the region's ethnic diversity by supporting ethnic businesses, culturally inclusive programming, and community events that foster engagement and economic development.

This profile underscores the importance of a holistic approach to planning, recognizing that sustainable growth in the Greater Hazleton area requires the seamless integration of housing, transportation, economic, and cultural initiatives. Addressing these interconnected priorities ensures that the community not only meets immediate needs but also builds a foundation for long-term resilience and inclusivity. By expanding housing options to accommodate diverse populations, enhancing transportation infrastructure to improve connectivity, and fostering economic opportunities through workforce training and business development, the region can support a higher quality of life for all residents.

Additionally, leveraging the area's rich cultural diversity through community programs, inclusive economic strategies, and culturally responsive public spaces can strengthen social cohesion and foster a sense of belonging. By aligning these efforts with regional and state planning priorities, such as the Luzerne County Comprehensive Plan and Pennsylvania's smart growth principles, the comprehensive plan positions Greater Hazleton as a model for balanced and forward-thinking development. This alignment not only secures access to vital resources and funding but also ensures the region's ability to adapt and thrive in an ever-changing economic and social landscape.

Greater Hazelton
Comprehensive Plan
November 4, 2022

4WARD PLANNING™
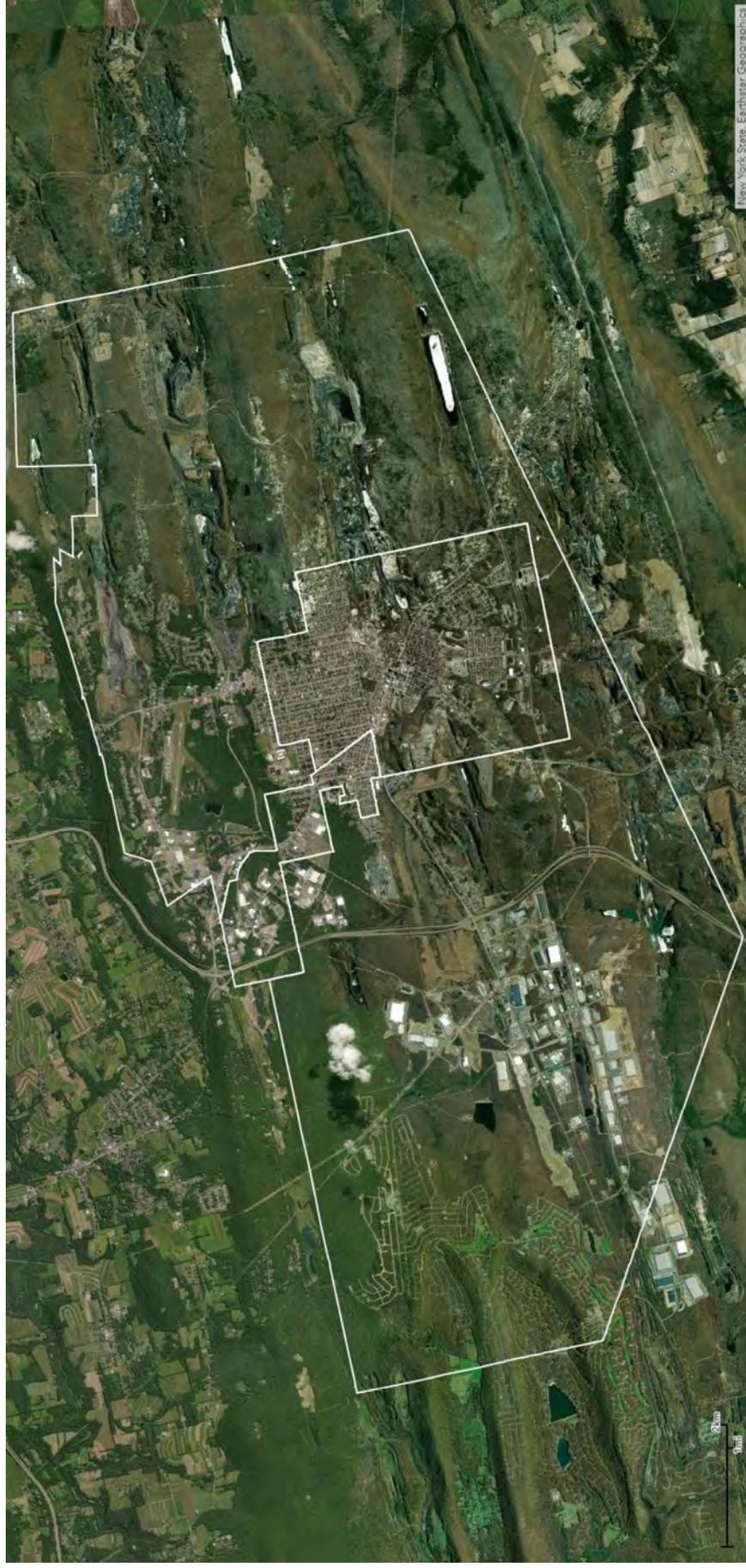
ECONOMIC AND REAL ESTATE ANALYSIS FOR SUSTAINABLE LAND USE OUTCOMES™

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

4WARD PLANNING™

Background: Project Scope

4ward Planning provided market and real estate analysis services for the City of Hazelton and Township of Hazle in support of the Greater Hazelton Comprehensive Plan. 4ward Planning conducted a cursory socio-economic analysis to better understand demand driver trends, setting forth expectations for local market potential and the identification of land uses which will be most market-receptive within the Greater Hazelton area, over the near and long term. As part of this study, 4ward Planning also conducted real estate trends and supply/demand analyses for residential, industrial, and retail land uses. Market analysis findings will help identify potential development needs and opportunities.

Real Estate Analysis

Labor Market Analysis

Socio-Economic Trends Analysis

- Job Clusters
- Travel Shed
- Labor Force
- Employment
- Unemployment
- Top Sectors

- Population
- Households
- Education
- Age
- Income
- Tenure
- Expenditures

Background: Consequential Issues

4ward Planning's background review and field tour of the study area's major light industrial and retail spaces allowed for a more comprehensive assessment of the consequential issues that should guide Greater Hazelton's path forward.

With the light industrial development boom embodied by the Humboldt Industrial Park in Hazle Township and Hazelton Creek Commerce Center in the city of Hazelton, it is clear Greater Hazelton should anticipate a significant influx of workers to be employed at these industrial parks, as well as a corresponding increase in demand for more workforce housing options - some of which could be addressed by the redevelopment of vacant community shopping center space (e.g., Valmont Plaza in West Hazelton) and adjacent land (e.g., Laurel Mall in Hazle Township) into mixed-use residential units.

The study area's anticipated influx of workers will also generate demand for other services and amenities, such as increased transportation options and daycare. The provision of public services and facilities to serve new development will have substantive fiscal impact implications, particularly for the City of Hazelton.
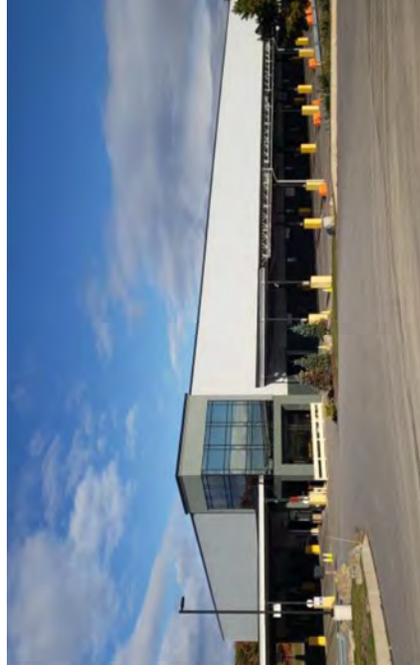
Background: Study Areas

The following study areas are utilized in this report:

- **Township of Hazle:** As defined by township boundaries
- **West Hazelton Borough:** As defined by borough boundaries
- **City of Hazleton:** As defined by city boundaries
- **Greater Hazelton:** Combined tri-municipal area including the Township of Hazle, West Hazelton Borough, and City of Hazleton
- **Tri-County Region:** Composed by Carbon, Luzerne, and Schuylkill Counties
- **Pennsylvania:** For comparative purposes, data is also presented for the state.
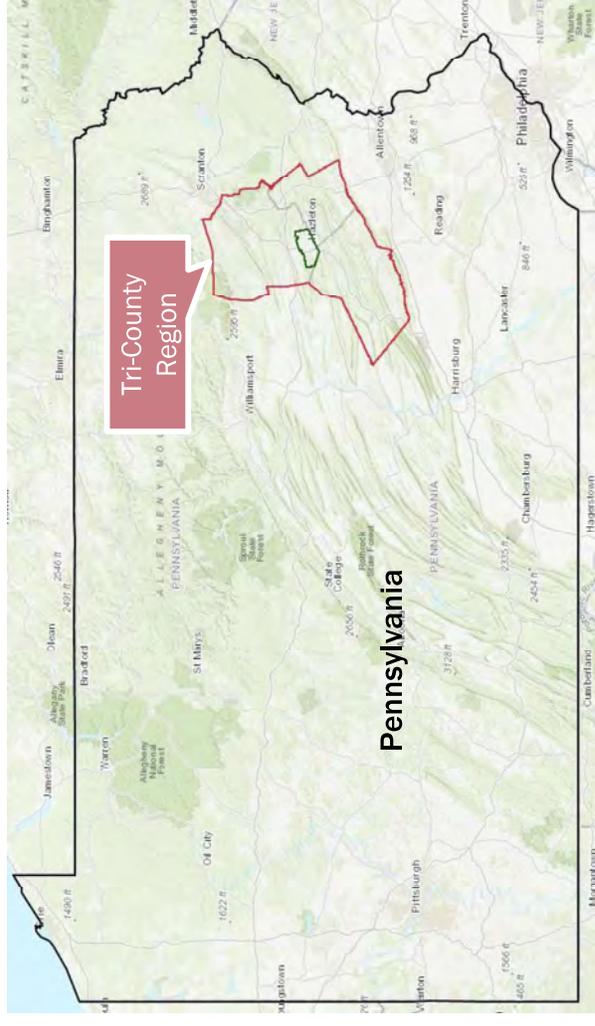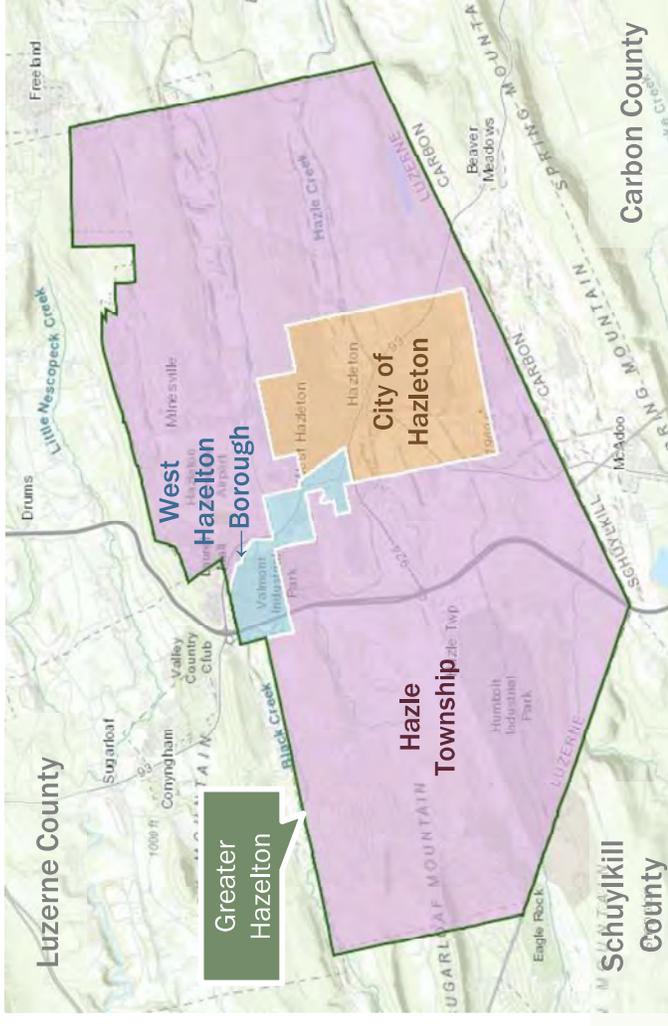
Source: Esri; 4ward Planning Inc., 2022

Socio-Economic Trends Analysis

4WARD PLANNING

Key Findings: Socio-Economic Trends Analysis

New industrial projects will drive population growth

Although Esri expects the population in the Greater Hazelton area and Tri-County Region will remain relatively flat through 2027, population and household formation in the region will likely be stronger given the number of industrial projects in the development pipeline (see Industrial section). New job opportunities in the region will greatly increase population and household formation by thousands of people, spurring demand for housing, retail, and other support services.

Greater Hazelton area's ethnic diversity should be viewed as an asset

Hispanic or Latino persons represent 61 and 64 percent of residents in West Hazleton borough and the city of Hazleton, respectively. The Greater Hazelton area's ethnic diversity should be viewed as an asset that can be leveraged to help create and support a diversity of area businesses (e.g., ethnic restaurants and retail shops) and housing types (e.g., accommodating multigenerational households).

Relatively low educational attainment and household income levels

Compared to the state of Pennsylvania, educational attainment is, currently, relatively low in the Greater Hazelton area, where just 15 percent of adult residents ages 25 and older hold a bachelor's degree or higher level of education (compared to 34 percent in the state). Since educational attainment levels are typically associated with income levels, it is not surprising that the median household income in the Greater Hazelton area ($46,790) is also lower than that in the state ($69,170).

Methodology: Socio-Economic Trends Analysis

Using a combination of published government data (U.S. Census, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry) and proprietary analysis software (ESRI Community Analyst), 4ward Planning prepared a series of data tables comparatively illustrating demographic trends for West Hazleton Borough, Hazle Township, the city of Hazleton, the Greater Hazelton area (the combined tri-municipal area), the Tri-County Region (Carbon, Luzerne, and Schuylkill Counties), and Pennsylvania. Specifically, demographic trends associated with population, households, age cohorts, income distribution, housing tenure, and consumer expenditure estimates were analyzed. Additionally, we analyzed income distribution, homeownership rates and tenure, and consumer expenditure estimates (including restaurant, and arts and entertainment expenditures). Esri provides estimates for the current year (2022) and short term (2027). Esri data for 2022 is based on the initial release of U.S. 2020 Census data for population, race, and housing.

Study Geographies

- Township of Hazle
- City of Hazleton
- Tri-County Region
- Pennsylvania

Socio-Economic Trends

- Population
- Households
- Education
- Age
- Income
- Tenure
- Expenditures

Market Demand Drivers

- Identification of Market Demand Drivers in Region
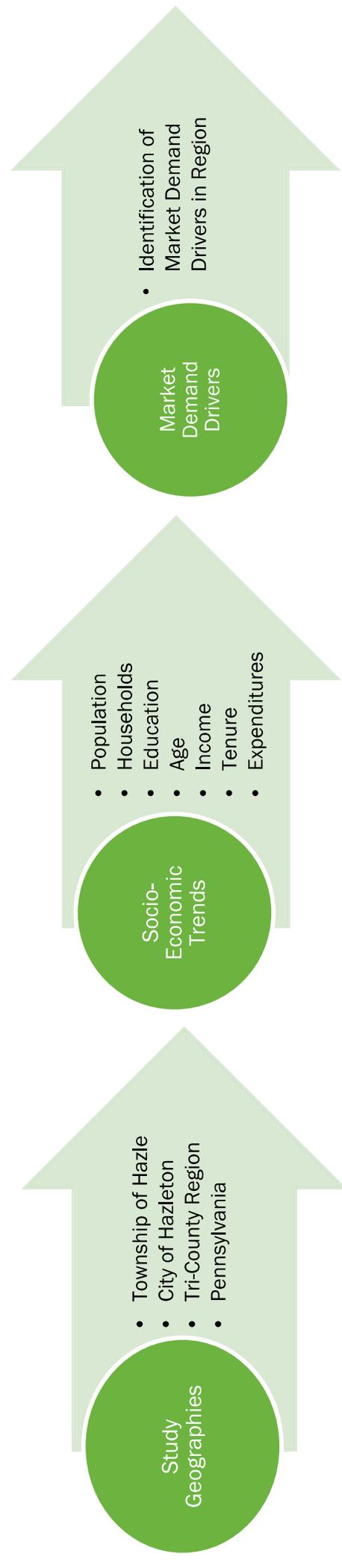
Total Population

The size and growth of a region's population influences markets for goods, services, housing, and labor. Areas where population is growing, particularly if it is growing rapidly, are more attractive than are areas where population is flat or in decline. Although Esri expects the population in the Greater Hazleton area and Tri-County Region will remain relatively flat through 2027 (changing by just 0.1 and -0.1 percent per year, respectively), population and household formation in the region will likely be stronger given the number of industrial projects in the development pipeline (see Industrial section). _New job opportunities in the region will greatly increase population and household formation by thousands of people, spurring demand for housing, retail, and other support services._

Annualized Percentage Change, Total Population
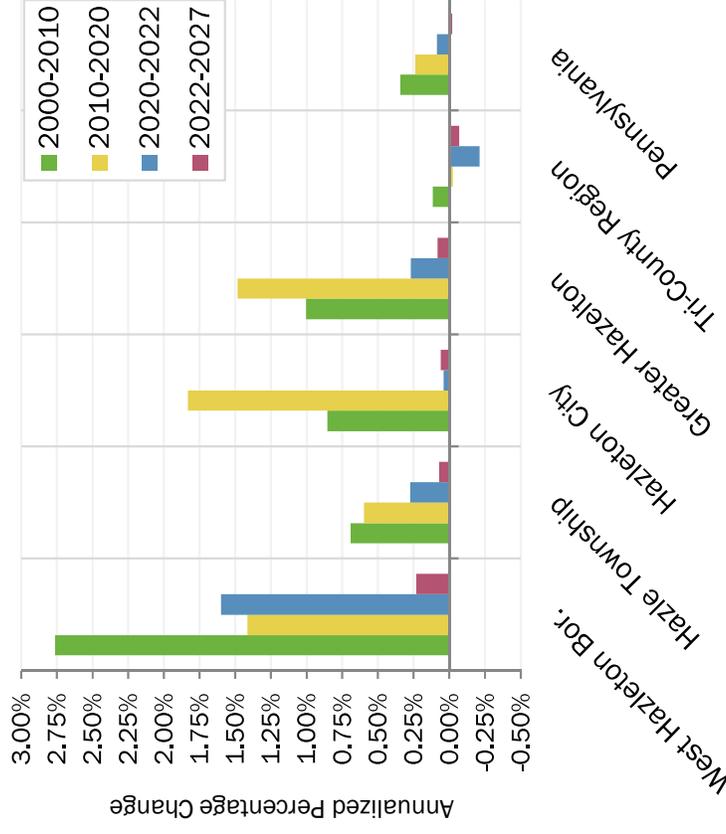
Population by Geography

	2000	2010	2020	2022	2027	2022-2027
West Hazleton Borough	3,560	4,540	5,180	5,350	5,410	60
Hazle Township	8,970	9,590	10,170	10,220	10,260	40
Hazleton City	23,340	25,330	29,970	29,990	30,080	90
Greater Hazleton	35,870	39,460	45,320	45,560	45,750	190
Tri-County Region	528,330	534,460	533,110	530,840	529,020	-1,820
Pennsylvania	12,281,050	12,702,380	13,005,090	13,027,450	13,011,300	-16,150

Sources: US Census Bureau; Esri; 4ward Planning Inc., 2022

Total Households

A household consists of all the people who occupy a housing unit, excluding persons residing in group quarters and institutions. A family household is a group of two or more people related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together; while a non-family household consists of a householder living alone or with unrelated persons. As illustrated in the chart to the right, across all geographies, household growth rates have varied widely by household type, with non-family households (top) generally experiencing stronger growth than family households (bottom).

Household Formation Trends

Annualized Growth Rate

Legend: 2022-2027, 2020-2022, 2010-2020
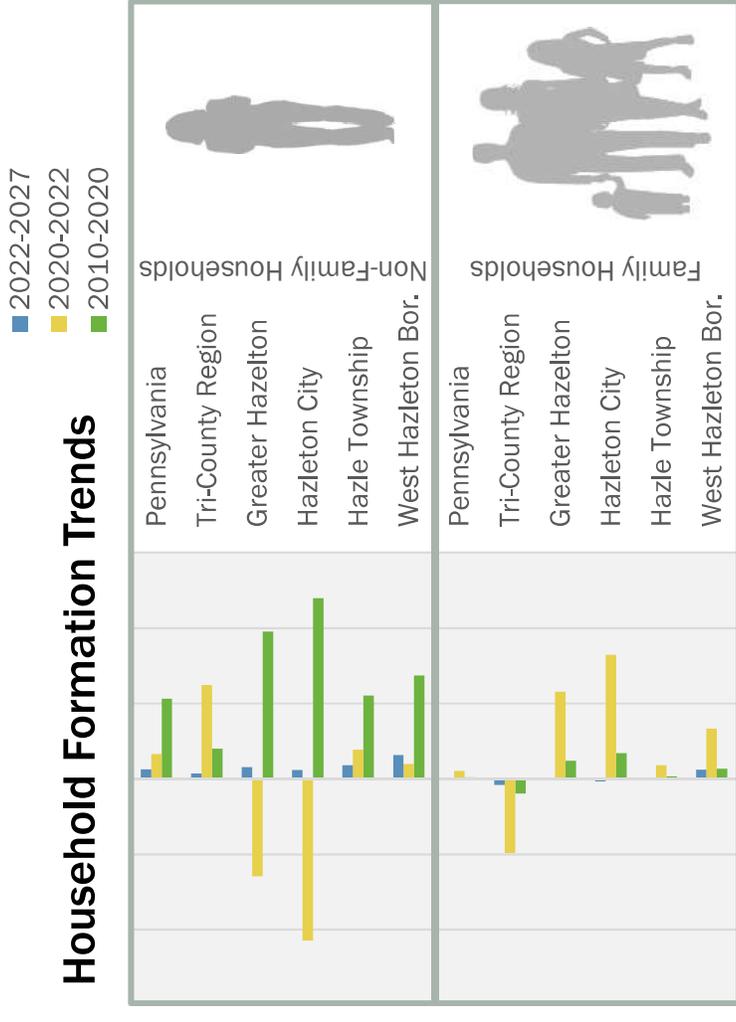
Households by Geography

	2000	2010	2020	2022	2027	2022-2027
West Hazleton Borough	1,640	1,770	1,880	1,900	1,920	20
Hazle Township	3,760	4,070	4,250	4,270	4,280	10
Hazleton City	10,280	9,790	10,880	10,890	10,900	10
Greater Hazelton	15,690	15,640	17,000	17,050	17,100	50
Tri-County Region	214,890	218,810	219,270	218,610	218,370	-240
Pennsylvania	4,777,000	5,018,900	5,213,130	5,232,790	5,244,450	11,660

Race & Ethnicity

While the population living in Hazle Township is predominately White (73 percent of residents), the population living in West Hazleton borough and the city of Hazleton City is significantly more diverse, with higher shares of persons identifying as either two or more races or some other race. Furthermore, Hispanic or Latino persons represent 61 and 64 percent of residents in West Hazleton borough and the city of Hazleton, respectively. The Greater Hazleton area's racial and ethnic diversity should be viewed as an asset that can be leveraged to help create and support a diversity of area businesses (e.g., ethnic restaurants and retail shops) and housing types.

Share Hispanic or Latino Population by Census Tract: Tri-County Region, 2022

Tri-County Region

Greater Hazelton

49.41%	to	76.75%
26.81%	to	49.4%
14.84%	to	26.8%
6.1%	to	14.83%
0.4%	to	6.09%

Race and Ethnicity, 2022

■ West Hazleton Bor. ■ Hazle Township ■ Hazleton City
■ Greater Hazelton ■ Tri-County Region ■ Pennsylvania
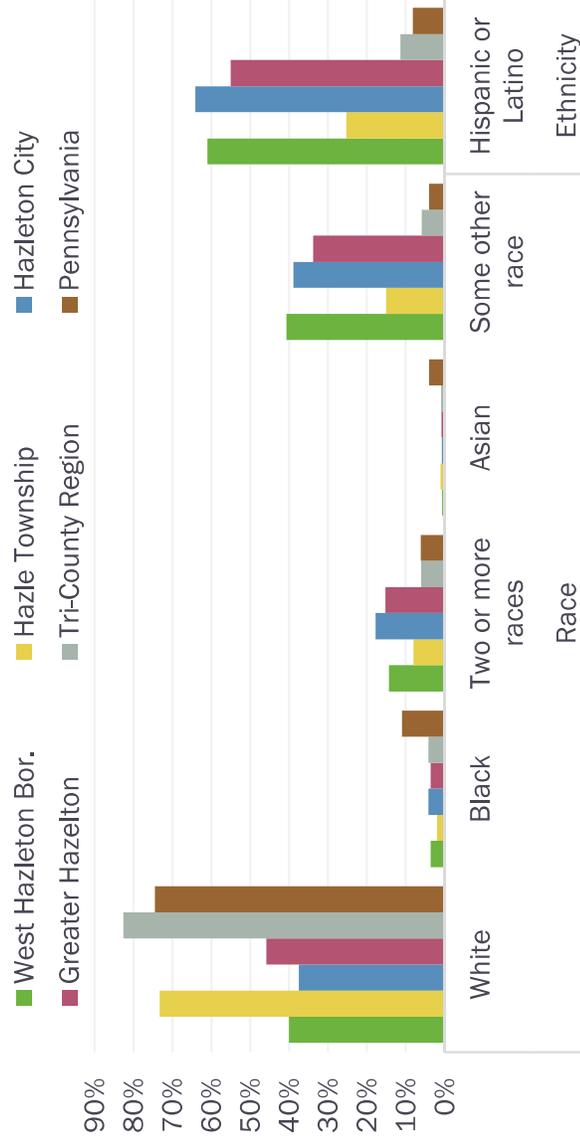
American Indian and Alaska Native and Pacific Islander categories are not included in the graph since they represents less than one percent of the population in all study areas.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau; Esri; 4ward Planning Inc., 2022

Household Size

As illustrated below, average household size is relatively small in Hazle Township (2.3 persons), with one- and two-person households, combined, representing 79 precent of all households in the township (reflective of an older demographic). In contrast, the average household size is relatively large in West Hazelton Borough and Hazelton city (2.8 and 2.7 persons, respectively), with one- and two-person households, combined, representing just 60 and 61 percent of households in the borough and city, respectively. Likley due to the high share of Hispanic or Latino persons in West Hazelton borough and the city of Hazleton, who are more likley to live in multigenerational households than White persons, there is a relatively high share of households with five or more persons (13 and 12 percent, respectively).

Average Household Size

Number of Persons in Households 2020
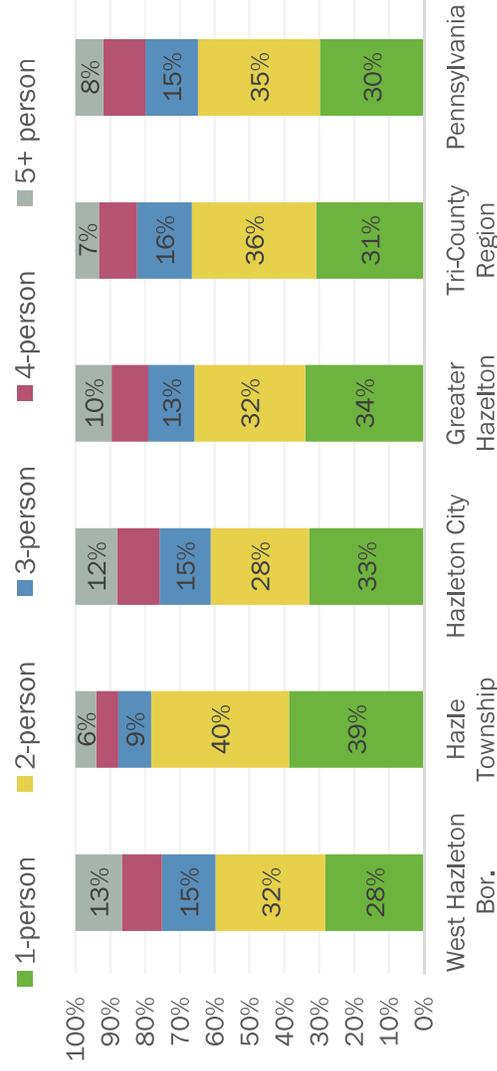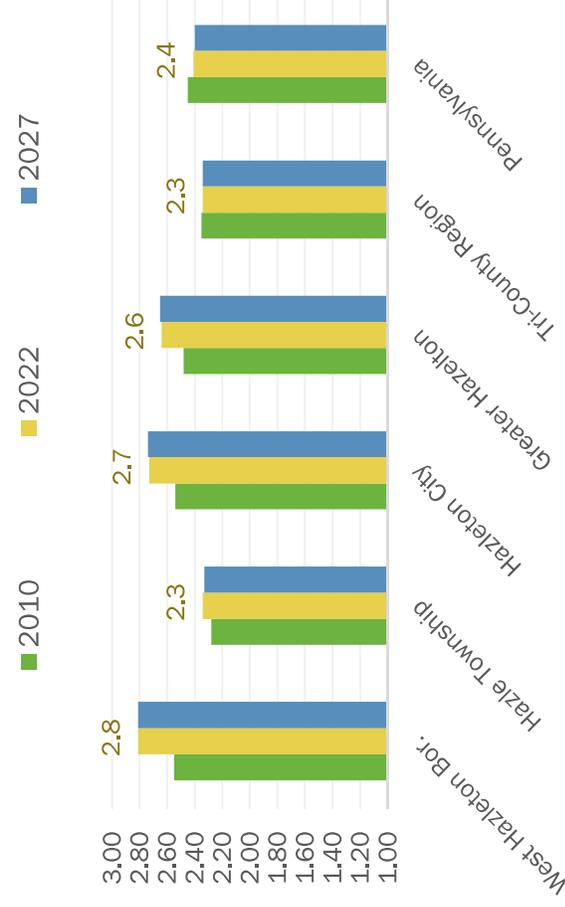
According to a Pew Research Center, roughly 25 percent of Asian, Black, and Hispanic Americans lived in multigenerational households in 2021, compared with 13 percent of those who are white. While White Americans are the least likely to live in these households, multigenerational living is also rising among non-Hispanic Whites.

Sources: Esri; 4ward Planning Inc., 2022; Pew Research Center, *Financial Issues Top The List of Reasons U.S. Adults Live In Multigenerational Homes*, March 24, 2022

Age Distribution

As illustrated in the chart to the right, the median age in Hazle Township (51 years) is relatively high compared to than that within West Hazelton Borough and the city of Hazelton (37 and 38 years, respectively). Although the median age in the township is projected to remain relatively flat through 2027, the median age in the borough is expected to decrease slightly (likely due to an increase family household formation). As illustrated below, the township has a relatively high share of persons ages 55 and older, while West Hazelton and Hazelton have relatively high shares of persons ages 44 and younger – reflective of a high share of young families and adults.

Median Age 2010-2027
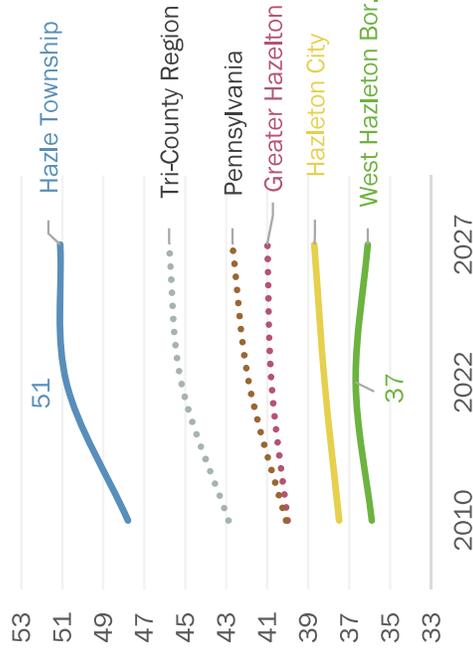
Age Distribution, 2022
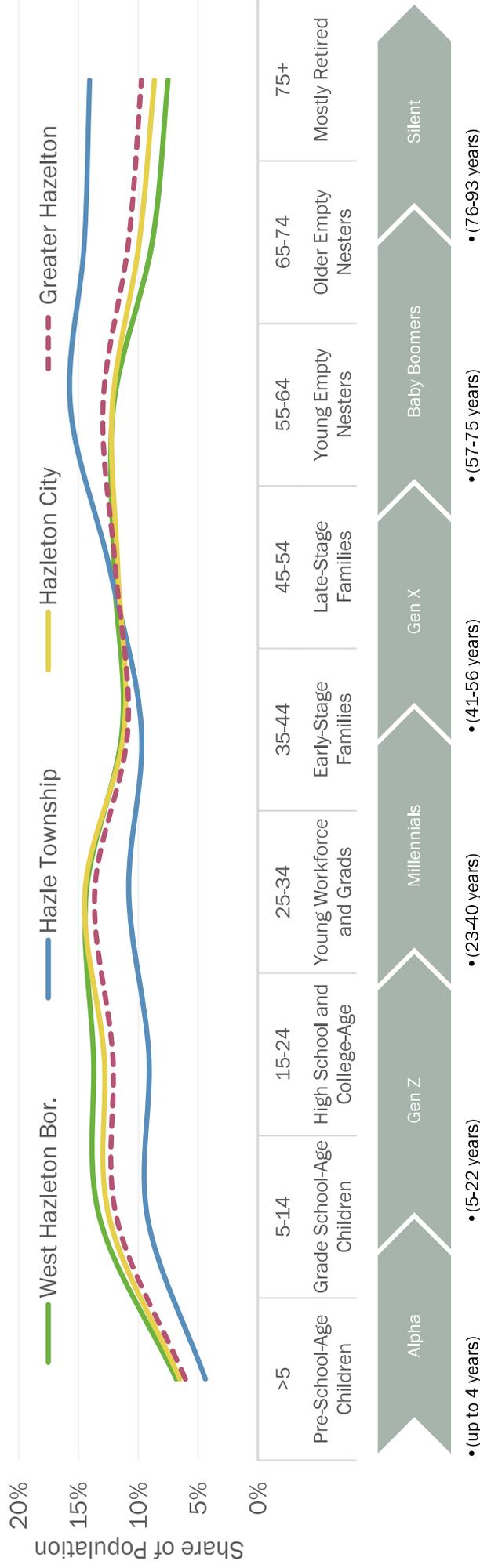
Source: Esri; 4ward Planning Inc., 2022

Age Distribution by Generation

The chart below compares population shares by generation across all geographies. Currently, within the township, baby boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964) compose the largest share (28 percent) of residents. With the oldest baby boomers now age 76, as this generation ages and increasingly leaves the workforce, its housing needs will likely change and drive demand for active adult residential units over the next 15 years. Conversely, within Wests Hazleton Borough, Gen Zers (those born between 1999 and 2016) represent the largest share (25 percent) of residents. Currently between ages six and 23, this cohort is just starting to enter adulthood and the workforce.

Generation by Population Share, 2022

Legend: West Hazleton Bor. ■ Hazle Township ■ Hazleton City ■ Greater Hazleton ■ Tri-County Region ■ Pennsylvania

Categories: Alpha (2017 or Later), Gen Z (1999 to 2016), Millennials (1981 to 1998), Gen X (1965 to 1980), Baby Boomers (1946 to 1964), Silent (1945 or Earlier)
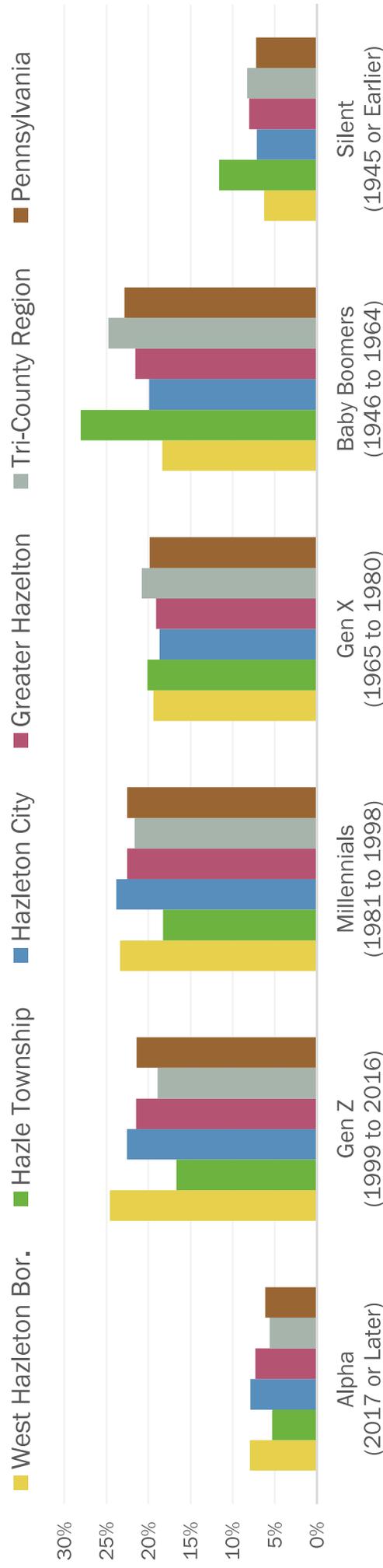
Source: Esri

Generation Trends

Research shows that each generation can exhibit distinct priorities and attitudes, goals, lifestyle choices, and purchasing behaviors. Understanding shifting purchasing behaviors and preferences is important for predicting changing housing and retail demand.

- **Silent & Greatest Generations** (those born before 1945) Grew up during the Great Depression and WWII.

- **Baby Boomers** (those born between 1946 and 1964) With the oldest baby boomers now age 76, this aging cohort holds the bulk of America's household wealth and is expected to create increasing demand for newer active adult housing, which ranges from lifestyle-focused to a middle-market rental options.

- **Generation X** (those born between 1965 and 1980) Currently between ages 42 and 57, this cohort is in the zenith of its career earnings. While Gen X is comparatively younger and still making purchases associated with family rearing, employment, and new or renovated housing, it is a much smaller generation and never exhibited the same strong consumer spending might of boomers and were, thus, less impactful on the bottom lines of retailers.

- **Millennials** (those born between 1981 and 1998) Currently between ages 24 and 41, this cohort is increasingly exiting rentership in pursuit of owning homes and starting families. The pandemic has accelerated the life shift of this cohort.

- **Generation Z** (those born between 1999 and 2016) Currently between ages six and 23, this cohort is just starting to enter adulthood and the workforce.

- **Alpha** (those born after 2016): This cohort is the youngest generation and will likely be the most technologically savvy generation to date.

Educational Attainment & Income

The chart below illustrates estimated 2022 educational attainment across all geographies. Compared to the state of Pennsylvania, educational attainment is, currently, relatively low in the Greater Hazleton area, where just 15 percent of adult residents ages 25 and older hold a bachelor's degree or higher level of education (compared to 34 percent in the state). Since educational attainment levels are typically associated with income levels, it is not surprising that median household income in the Greater Hazleton area ($46,790) is also lower than that in the state ($69,170).

Median Household Income

	2022	2027	2022-2027	% Change
West Hazleton Boro	$47,870	$51,580	$3,710	1.6%
Hazle Township	$47,600	$57,450	$9,850	4.1%
Hazleton City	$46,260	$53,070	$6,810	2.9%
Greater Hazelton	$46,790	$53,690	$6,900	2.9%
Tri-County Region	$58,870	$68,030	$9,160	3.1%
Pennsylvania	$69,170	$80,720	$11,550	3.3%

Source: Esri; 4ward Planning Inc., 2022

Share of Adult Population 25 and Older by Educational Attainment, 2022

Vulnerable Households

According to 2020 American Community Survey data provided by Esri, in the Greater Hazelton area, 19 percent of households are below the poverty level, 26 percent receive nutrition assistance via food stamps/SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), and 31 percent live with one or more persons with a disability. According to HUD, households that spend more than 30 percent of their incomes on housing are considered "cost-burdened" and may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation, and medical care. According to 2020 estimates provided by the U.S. Census Bureau, approximately 43 percent of all area renter households pay more than 30 percent of their monthly household incomes on rent – suggesting more affordable housing options are, likely, warranted within the Greater Hazelton area and within the city of Hazelton, in particular.

Share of Vulnerable Households by Geography, 2020

Legend: West Hazelton Bor. | Hazle Township | Hazleton City | Greater Hazelton | Tri-County Region | Pennsylvania

Categories: Below the Poverty Level (19%) | With Food Stamps/SNAP (26%) | With 1+ Persons w/Disability (31%) | Cost-Burdened Renter Households (>30%) (43%)
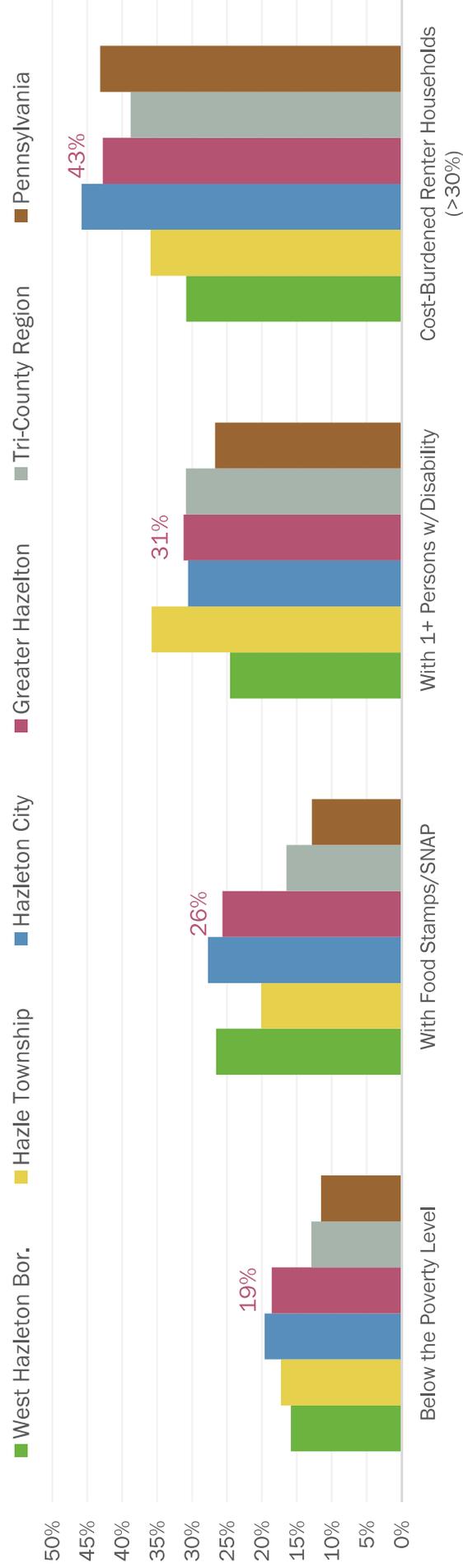
Sources: 2019 American Community Survey; Esri, 2022

Labor Market Analysis

4WARD PLANNING

Key Findings: Labor Market Analysis

15,750 primary workers commuted into the area in 2019

According to 2019 data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau (the most recent data available for this geography), there are approximately 23,080 primary jobs in the Greater Hazelton area. Approximately 15,750 of the area's primary jobs are held by persons commuting into the area. Since some of these commuting workers may prefer to live closer to work, they represent potential pent-up housing demand.

Employment growth is likely to increase rapidly given industrial growth

According to data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau, as it did in many areas around the country, the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent economic crisis had significant impacts on the Tri-County Region's employment levels - compared to August 2019, the region has 2,890 fewer jobs in August 2022. However, and based on current light industrial expansion in the city of Hazelton and Hazle Township, employment growth is likely to increase rapidly in the near term.

Tightening regional labor market will challenge local hiring

Based on non-seasonally adjusted unemployment data provided by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, unemployment rates in the Tri-County Region have reached levels lower than before the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, characteristic of a relatively healthy but tightening labor market. This tightening labor market will challenge near-term hiring by local employers.
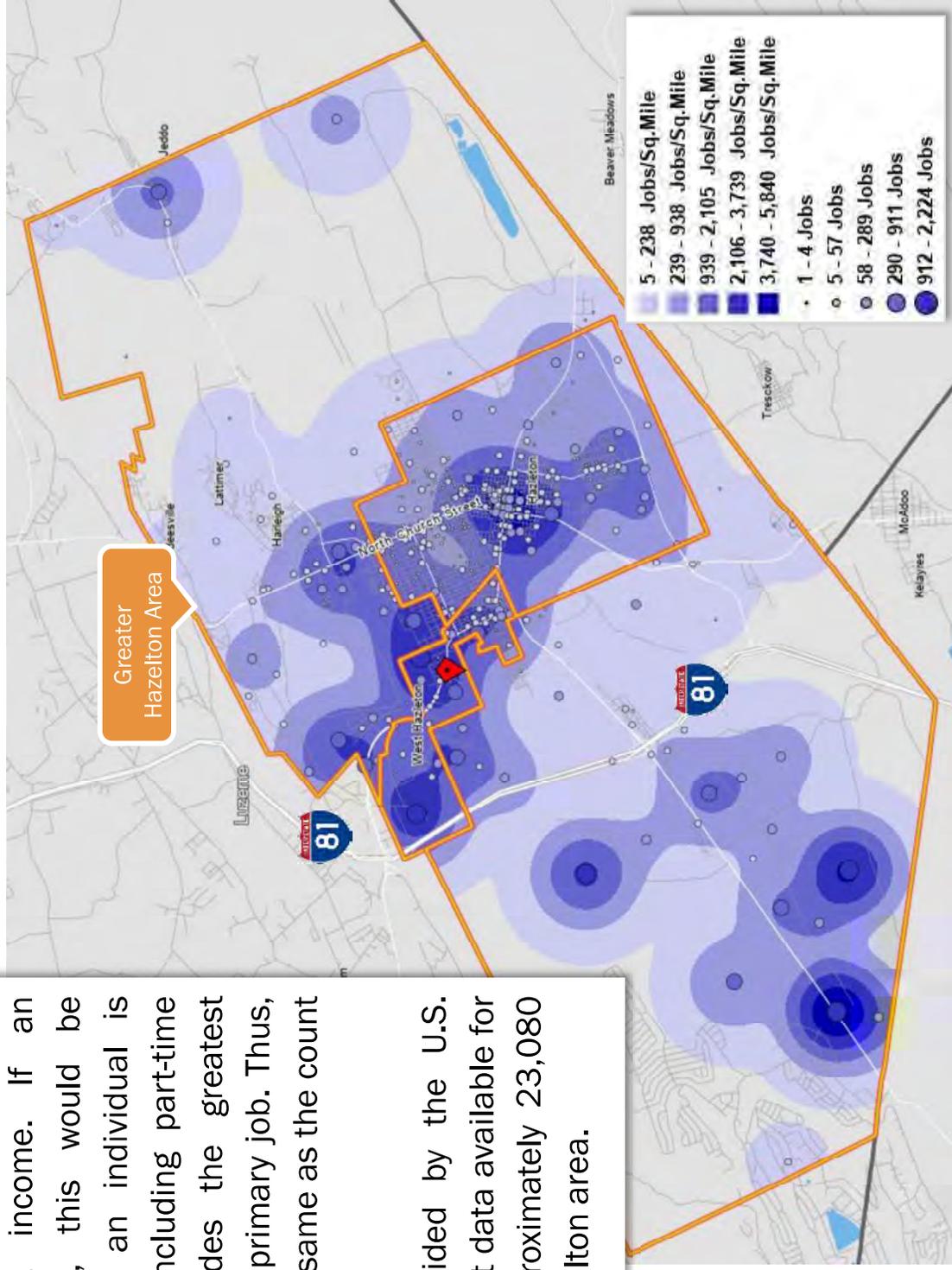
Methodology: Labor Market Analysis

The quality and availability of labor in a region is, perhaps, the most critical determinant of a local area's competitive market advantage, relative to neighboring jurisdictions. Consequently, establishing baseline metrics for area labor supply and quality, as well as examining trends, will allow the Greater Hazleton area to understand its competitive position, in this key asset area, against their regional competitors (e.g., other surrounding cities, townships, and boroughs).

Study Geographies
- West Hazelton Bor.
- Hazle Township
- Hazleton City
- Greater Hazelton
- Tri-County Region
- Pennsylvania

Labor and Industry Trends
- Job Clusters
- Travel Shed
- Labor Force
- Employment
- Unemployment
- Top Sectors

Competitive Market Advantage
- Labor Supply And Quality
- Trends
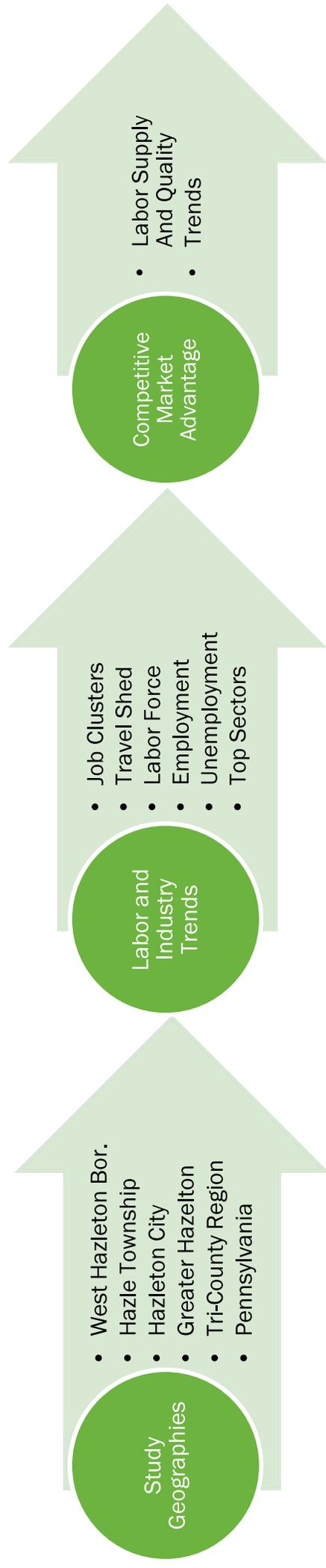
Primary Job Clusters: Greater Hazelton

A *primary job* refers to the job an individual has which provides the greatest income. If an individual has only one job, this would be considered a primary job. If an individual is employed by multiple firms, including part-time positions, the job that provides the greatest income would be considered a primary job. Thus, the count of primary jobs is the same as the count of workers.

According to 2019 data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau (the most recent data available for this geography), there are approximately 23,080 primary jobs in the Greater Hazelton area.

Greater Hazelton Area

Legend:

5 - 238 Jobs/Sq.Mile
239 - 938 Jobs/Sq.Mile
939 - 2,105 Jobs/Sq.Mile
2,106 - 3,739 Jobs/Sq.Mile
3,740 - 5,840 Jobs/Sq.Mile

1 - 4 Jobs
5 - 57 Jobs
58 - 289 Jobs
290 - 911 Jobs
912 - 2,224 Jobs

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies; 4ward Planning Inc., 2022

Inflow/Outflow Trends: Primary Workers

**Primary Job:
Greater Hazelton, 2019**

15,750 - Employed in Selection Area, Live Outside
9,798 - Live In Selection Area, Employed Outside
7,330 - Employed and Live In Selection Area

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the share of primary workers both living and working in the Greater Hazelton area has been falling in recent years. In 2019, 43 percent of regional workers also lived in the region, compared to 55 percent in 2002. The overall decrease in those working and living inside the region may be a result of an increasing job/housing imbalance. Approximately 15,750 primary jobs are held by persons commuting into the area. Since some of these commuting workers may prefer to live closer to work, they represent potential pent-up housing demand.

Historic Worker Inflow/Outflow, Greater Hazelton Area

Employed in Selected Area, Live Outside — — Share of Workers Living in PMA
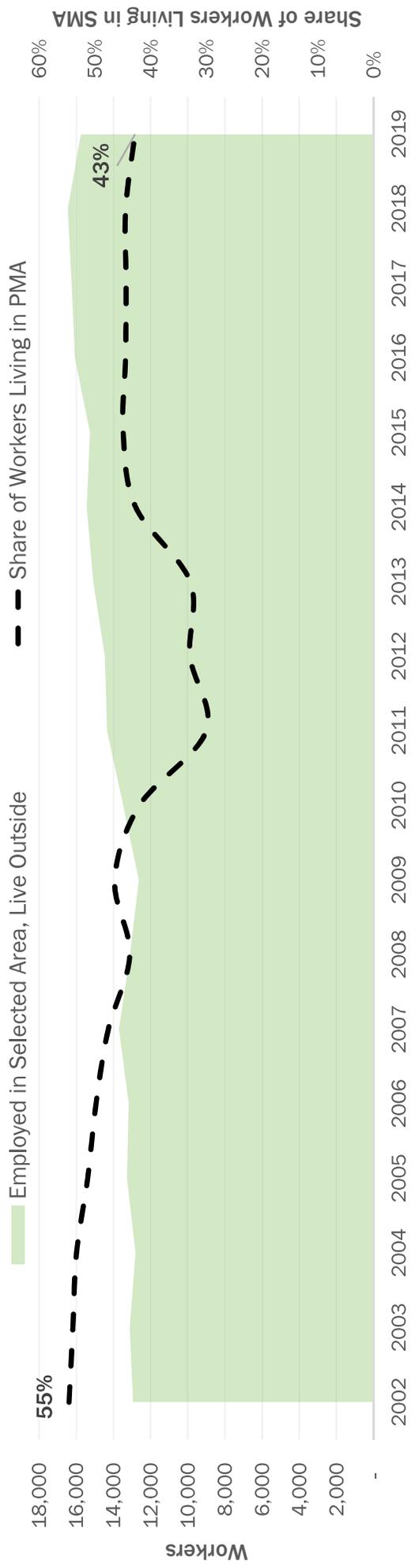
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies; 4ward Planning Inc., 2022

Historical Unemployment Trends: Tri-County Region

The unemployment rate measures the share of workers in the labor force who do not currently have a job but are actively looking for work. Based on non-seasonally adjusted unemployment data provided by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, in August 2022, the unadjusted unemployment rate in the Tri-County Region ranged from 5.4 percent in Carbon County to 6.0 percent in Luzerne County. Unemployment rates in all geographies have reached levels lower than before the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, characteristic of a relatively healthy but tightening labor market. This tightening labor market will challenge near-term hiring by local employers.

Recent Unemployment Trends
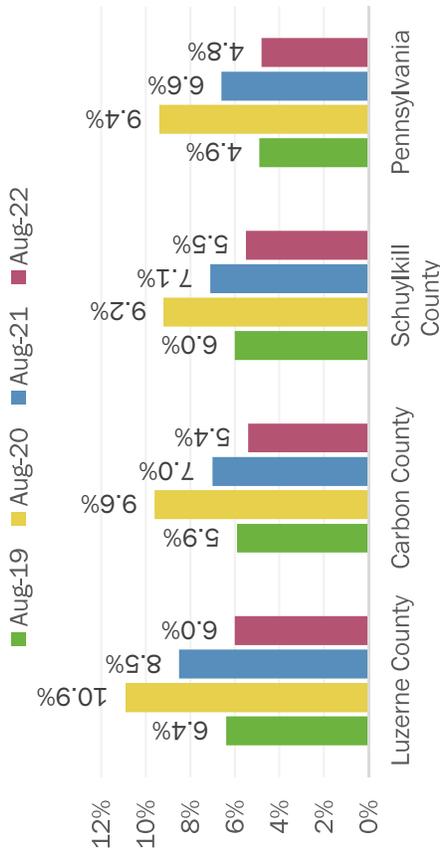
Historical Average Annual Unemployment Trends
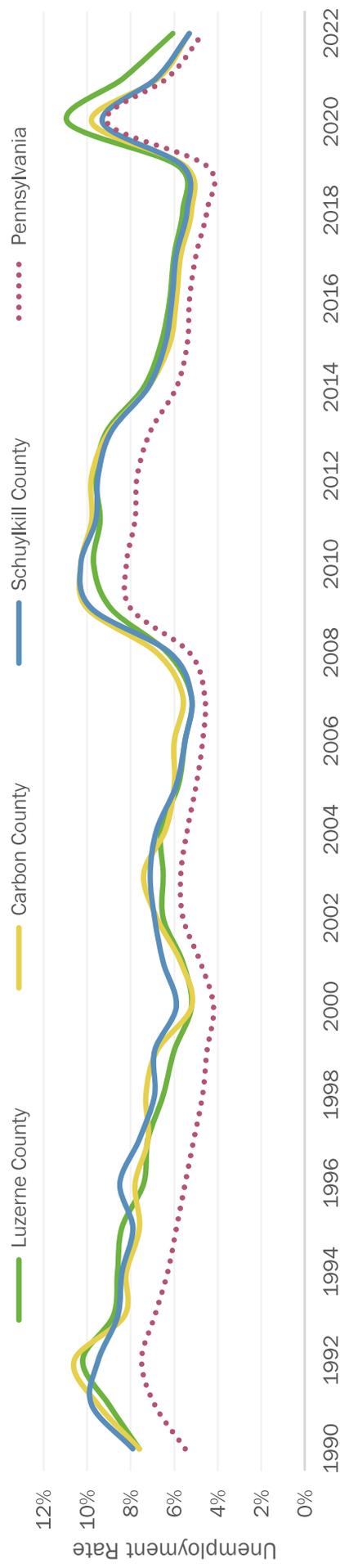
Note: Average 2022 data is as of August 2022.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics

Historical Employment Trends: Tri-County Region

The chart below illustrates historical average annual employment trends within the Tri-County Region, according to data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau, As of August 2022, the region had approximately 240,020 average annual jobs, with 62 percent of these jobs (147,791 jobs) within Luzerne County, 26 percent (61,360 jobs) within Schuylkill County, and 13 percent (30,870 jobs) within Carbon County. As it did in many areas around the country, the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent economic crisis had significant impacts on the region's employment levels – compared to August 2019, the region has 2,890 fewer jobs. However, and based on current light industrial expansion in the city of Hazelton and Hazle Township, employment growth is likely to increase rapidly.

Employment Trends: Tri-County Region
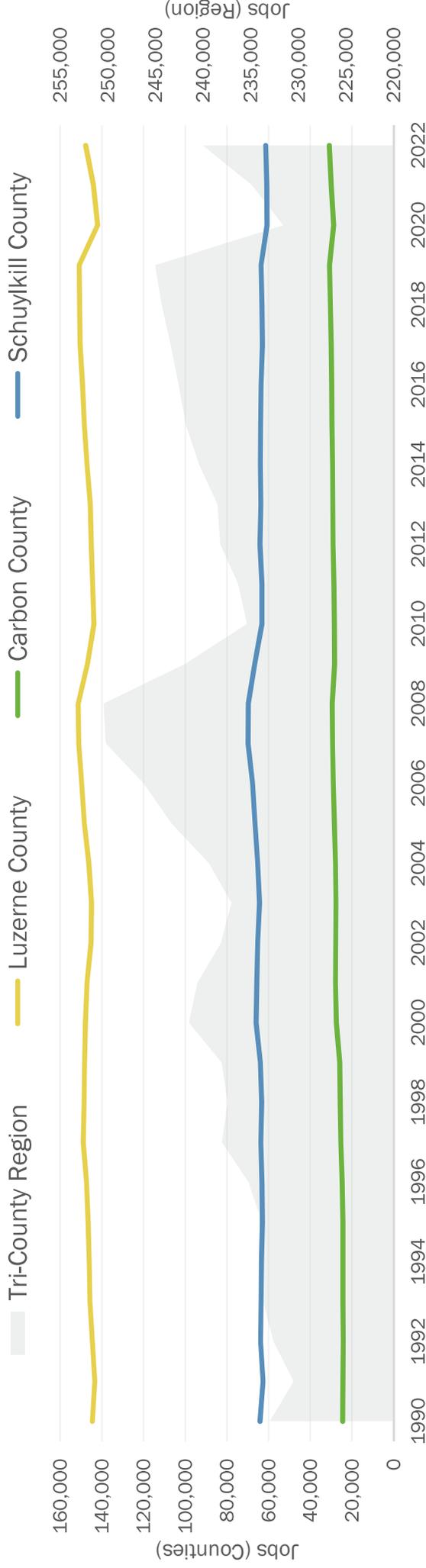
Note: Average 2022 data is as of August 2022. Not Seasonally Adjusted
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics

Industries by Employment Share

The table below highlights the top three sectors by employment within each geography based on 2019 data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau. The manufacturing, transportation and warehousing, and health care and social assistance sectors are the top three sectors by employment in the Greater Hazelton area. While the manufacturing sector is the top sector by employment within West Hazleton Borough, the transportation and warehousing sector is the top sector in Hazle Township, and the health care and social assistance sector is the top sector in Hazleton City.

Primary Job Share, 2019

	West Hazleton Borough	Hazle Township	Hazleton City	Greater Hazleton	Tri-County Region	Pennsylvania
Manufacturing	**27%**	**25%**	12%	**22%**	**15%**	10%
Transportation and Warehousing	3%	**31%**	2%	**18%**	10%	5%
Health Care and Social Assistance	**23%**	6%	**25%**	14%	**18%**	18%
Administration & Support, Waste Management...	9%	**9%**	23%	13%	5%	5%
Retail Trade	10%	9%	10%	9%	**11%**	10%
Accommodation and Food Services	4%	5%	4%	5%	7%	7%
Educational Services	3%	5%	4%	4%	7%	9%
Wholesale Trade	**10%**	3%	2%	4%	3%	4%
Construction	4%	3%	3%	3%	4%	5%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	2%	0%	3%	1%	3%	7%
Other Services (excluding Public Administration)	1%	1%	3%	1%	3%	3%
Public Administration	1%	0%	3%	1%	4%	4%
Information	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%	2%
Finance and Insurance	1%	1%	2%	1%	3%	5%
Utilities	1%	0%	2%	1%	1%	1%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	2%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, for Economic Studies, LEHD

Top three industries by employment are highlighted in **bold** and top sector in blue shading.

# Employment Trends by Top Six Industries: Tri-County Region

The chart below illustrates recent primary job trends for the Tri-County Region's top six industries by total jobs in 2019, according to data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau. The health care and social assistance sector became the region's top employer. Notably, from 2002 to 2019, the transportation and warehousing sector went from being the sixth top sector by employment to the fourth, growing by 12,990 jobs over that period.

Jobs Trends by Top Six Industry Sectors: Tri-County Region

Jobs Trends by Top Six Industry Sectors: Tri-County Region

Health Care and Social Assistance
Manufacturing
Retail Trade
Transportation and Warehousing
Accommodation and Food Services
Educational Services

40,000
35,000
30,000
25,000
20,000
15,000
10,000
5,000
-

2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019
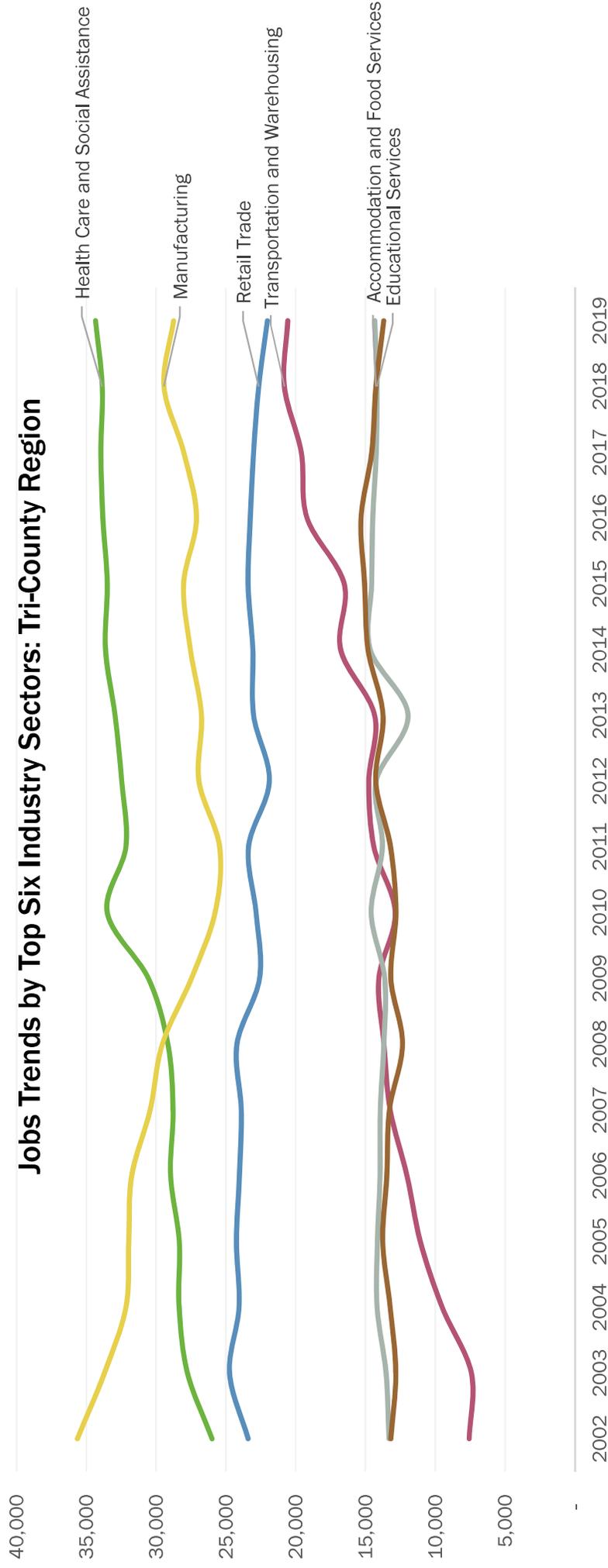
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies; 4ward Planning Inc., 2022

Employment Trends by Top Six Industries: Greater Hazelton

The chart below illustrates recent primary job trends for the Greater Hazelton area's top six industries by total jobs in 2019, according to data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau. Notably, from 2002 to 2019, the transportation and warehousing sector went from being the sixth top sector by employment to the second, growing by 3,407 jobs over that period.
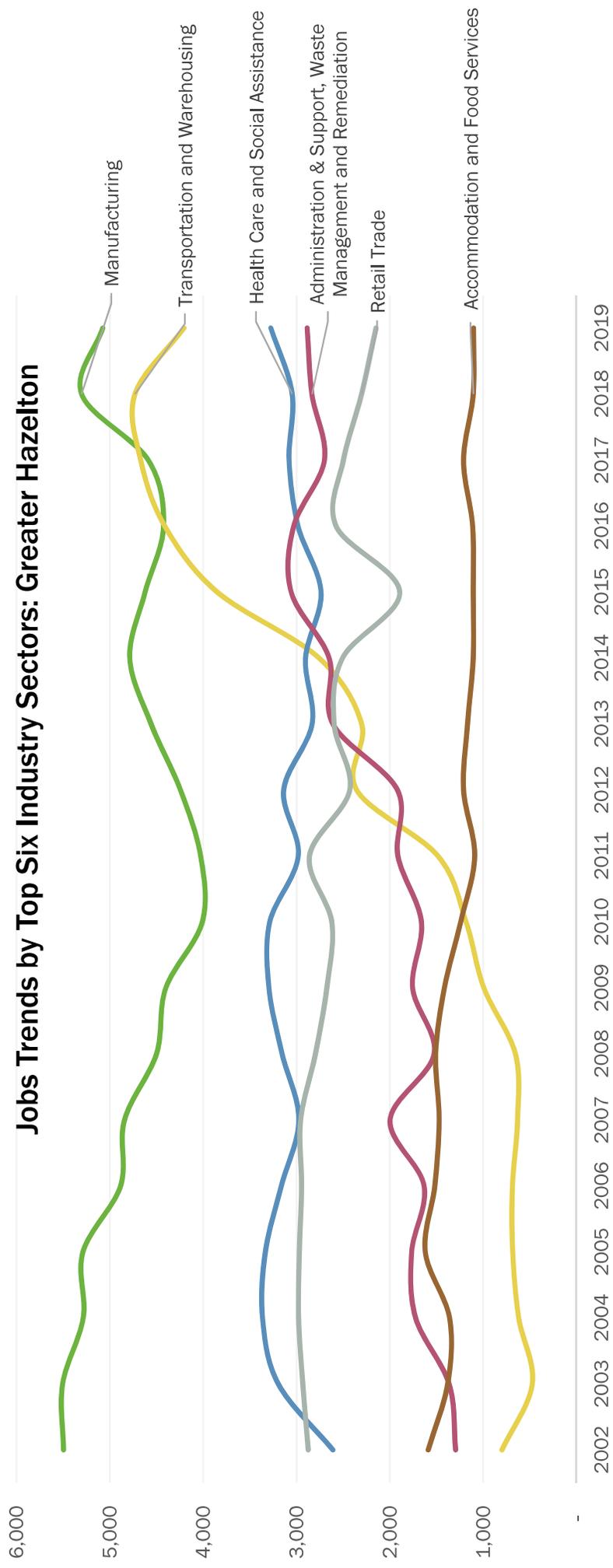
Jobs Trends by Top Six Industry Sectors: Greater Hazelton

Major Employers: Greater Hazleton

The chart illustrates major employers (with more than 200 employees) within the Greater Hazleton area, according to data provided by CAN DO, Inc. (a private, non-profit industrial and economic development corporation serving Greater Hazleton). Notably, many of the area's top employers are distribution and manufacturing companies.

Greater Hazleton Major Employers with More Than 200 Employees

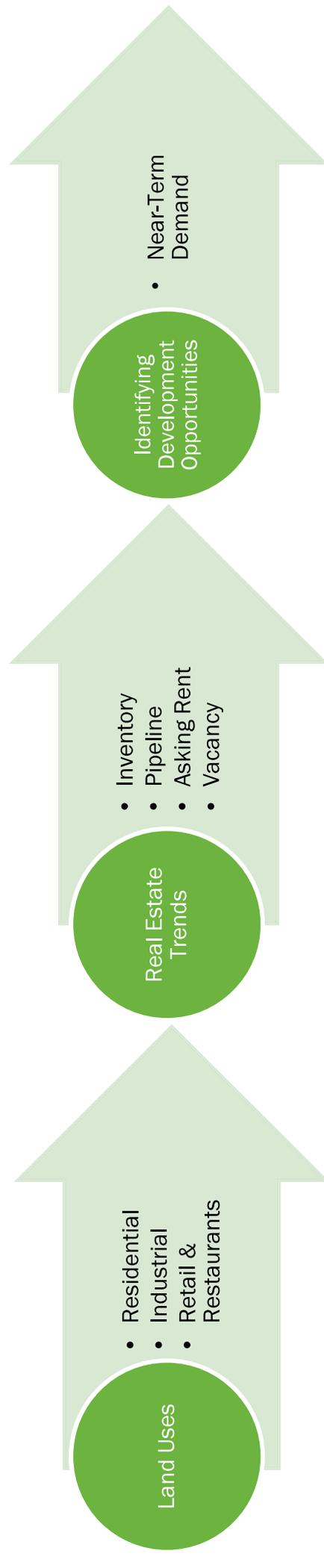| Company Name	Industry Type
Amazon	Northeast distributor of books, cds, dvds
American Eagle Outfitters	NE distributor young men's and women's clothes and accessories
Auto Zone	Northeast distributor of auto parts
Bemis	Manufacturer of extrusion & printing of polyfilm
Bradley Caldwell	Distributor of hardware, farm & pet supplies
Cargill Meat Solutions	Retail meat processing facility
Citterio USA Corporation	Manufacturer of Italian style meat products
DBi Services	Global leader in infrastructure operations and maintenance
Dial Corp (Henkel Consumer Goods)	Household laundry products
Fabri-Kal Corp	Manufacturer of packaging products
FedEx Supply Chain	Supply chain solutions
Gonnella Frozen Products, Inc.	Manufacturer of frozen bakery products
Hazleton Area School District	Education
Hershey Company	Manufacturer of molded chocolate products
Keystone Job Corp	Education
Lehigh Valley Hospital Hazleton	Hospital
Michaels Stores	Northeast distributor of handcraft products
Penn State University - Hazleton	Education
PFNonwovens	Nonwoven fabric
PPL Electric Utilities	Electricity provider
Silgan White Cap	Manufacturer of metal closures
Simmons Company	Manufacturer of mattresses
Tech Packaging, Inc.	Packaging and shrink wrapping for the food industry
The Nature's Bounty Co.	Distributor of vitamins
Walmart	Chain retailer

Source: CAN DO, Inc.

REAL ESTATE ANALYSIS

Methodology: Real Estate Analysis

Our primary objective, here, is to gain an understanding of local supply, demand, occupancy, and pricing factors for existing land uses within the Greater Hazelton area, inclusive of residential and industrial development and supportive retail and restaurants. Using a variety of primary and secondary resources, 4ward Planning examined and identified prospective real estate opportunities and challenges for each land-use category within the Greater Hazelton area. We examined the following land-use metrics for multi-family residential in terms of units, vacancy trends, apartment rental rates, and residential price points; and building permit activity.

Land Uses
- Residential
- Industrial
- Retail & Restaurants

Real Estate Trends
- Inventory
- Pipeline
- Asking Rent
- Vacancy

Identifying Development Opportunities
- Near-Term Demand

Residential

Key Findings: Residential

Single-family housing stock remains predominate

According to 2020 American Community Survey (ACS) data, single-family homes (both detached and attached) represent a relatively higher share of Hazle Township's housing stock (89 percent), compared to Hazelton City's housing stock (68 percent). According to data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau's Building Permits Survey, approximately 81 percent of housing permitted in the Greater Hazelton area since 2001 (600 units), is characteristic of single-family housing.

Housing permits have been increasing since 2018

Notably, while the number of housing permits dipped after the previous economic recession (2007 to 2009), it has recovered in recent years. Since 2018, approximately 180 units have been permitted in the Greater Hazelton area (including 120 multi-family units), suggesting there is a growing local housing demand.

One- and two-bedroom units could help accommodate smaller households

The share of one-person households in the Greater Hazleton area (52 percent) is much larger the combined share of studio and one-bedroom units in the area (14 percent). The development of one- and two-bedroom units in the city could help relieve the existing shortage of small housing units, relative to household size. Smaller units could also help accommodate growth in non-family households and the local workforce.

Housing Choice: Unit Type and Bedroom Size

According to 2020 American Community Survey (ACS) data, single-family homes (both detached and attached) represent a relatively higher share of Hazle Township's housing stock (89 percent), compared to Hazelton City's housing stock (68 percent). Low-density multi-family units (located in buildings with between three and nine units) represent the city's third largest share (18 percent) of housing stock type.

Housing Units Built & Structure by Type, 2020
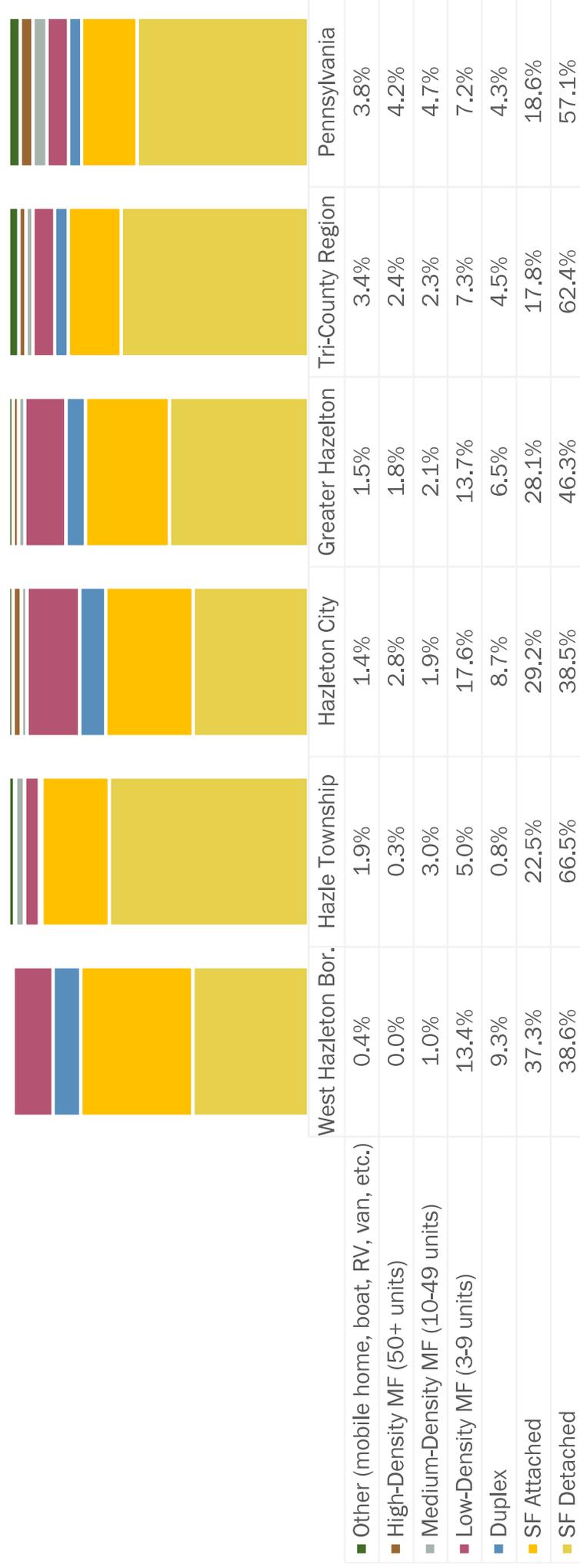
	West Hazleton Bor.	Hazle Township	Hazleton City	Greater Hazelton	Tri-County Region	Pennsylvania
Other (mobile home, boat, RV, van, etc.)	0.4%	1.9%	1.4%	1.5%	3.4%	3.8%
High-Density MF (50+ units)	0.0%	0.3%	2.8%	1.8%	2.4%	4.2%
Medium-Density MF (10-49 units)	1.0%	3.0%	1.9%	2.1%	2.3%	4.7%
Low-Density MF (3-9 units)	13.4%	5.0%	17.6%	13.7%	7.3%	7.2%
Duplex	9.3%	0.8%	8.7%	6.5%	4.5%	4.3%
SF Attached	37.3%	22.5%	29.2%	28.1%	17.8%	18.6%
SF Detached	38.6%	66.5%	38.5%	46.3%	62.4%	57.1%

Housing Pipeline: Greater Hazleton

These charts illustrate housing permit trends for the Greater Hazelton area based on data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau's Building Permits Survey. Approximately 81 percent of this development (600 units), permitted since 2001, is characteristic of single-family housing. Notably, the number of housing permits dipped after the previous economic recession (2007 to 2009) and remained relatively low until 2018. Since 2018, approximately 180 units have been permitted in the Greater Hazelton area (including 120 multi-family units).

Total Housing Permits: Greater Hazleton (2001-2021)

1-unit
600
81%

5+ units
116
16%

3-4 units
20
3%
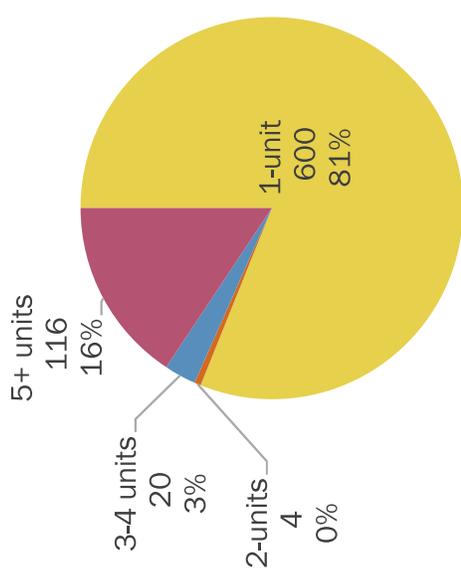
2-units
4
0%

Housing Permit Trends: Greater Hazleton

- 1-unit
- 2-units
- 3-4 units
- 5+ units
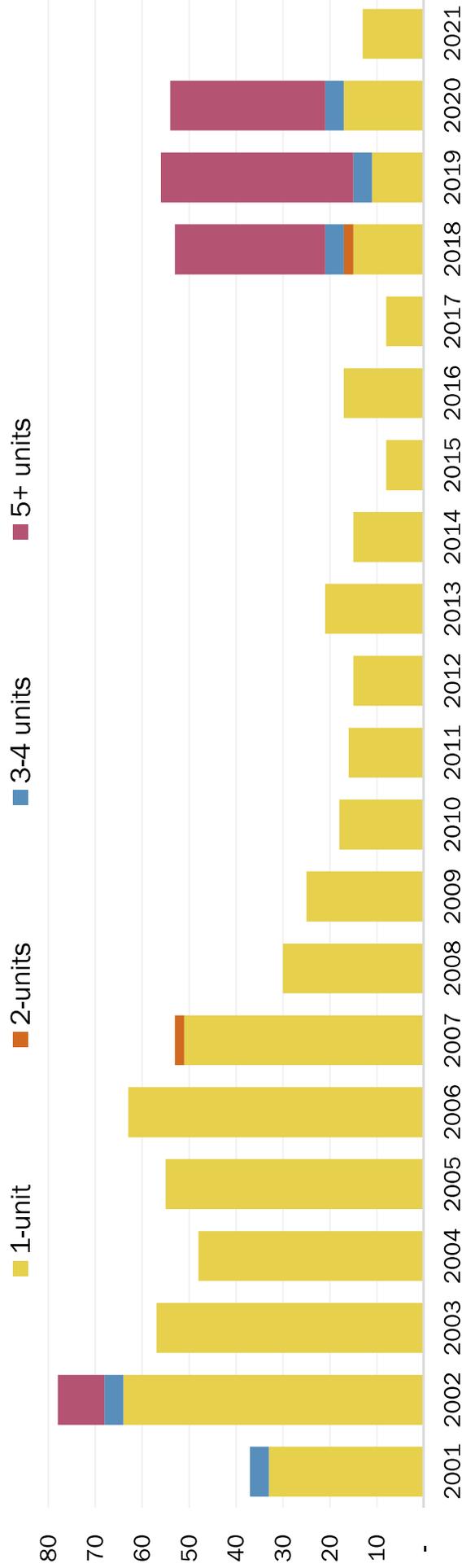
Household and Unit Size

One way to measure whether existing housing stock is suited to the local population is to compare household size to the number of bedrooms (unit size) within dwelling units in the local market's housing inventory. The share of one-person households in the Greater Hazleton area (52 percent) is much larger the combined share of studio and one-bedroom units in the area (14 percent). The development of one- and two-bedroom units in the city could help relieve the existing shortage of small housing units, relative to household size.

Housing Unit Size, 2020

Household Size, 2020
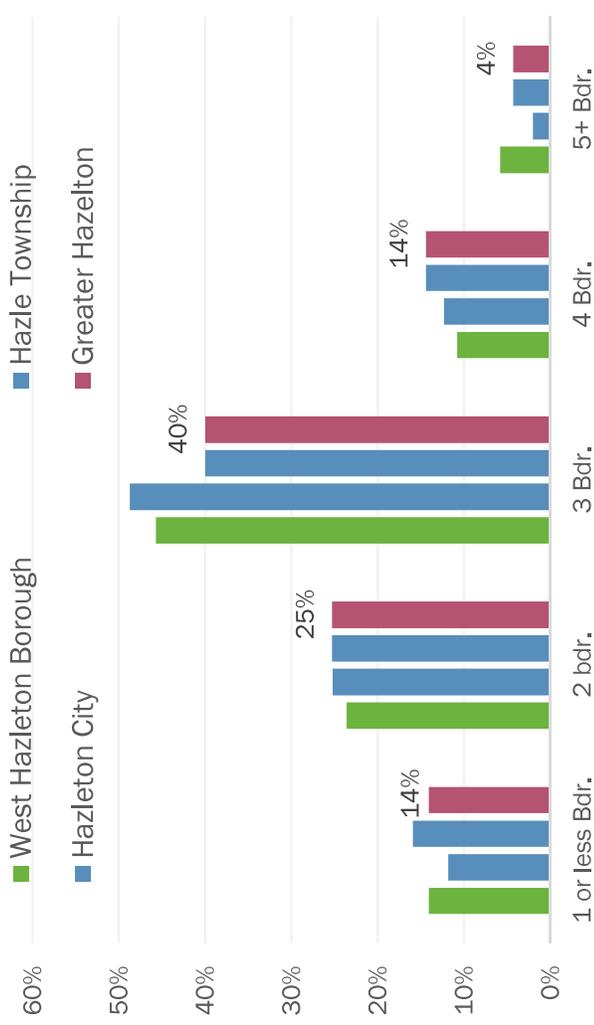
Housing Tenure Trends

As illustrated below (left), 44 percent of all occupied housing units in the Greater Hazelton area are renter-occupied, a share higher than that found in the Tri-County Region (29 percent). While the shares of renter-occupied housing units in the Greater Hazelton area increased from 2010 to 2022, Esri projects those shares will relatively flat through 2027. This may be due, in part, to fewer people seeking to live in more densely populated housing complexes, due Covid-19 concerns. Further, larger single-family homes (whether renter- or owner-occupied) are likely to see a rise in demand, as those who have lost jobs or work hours move in with family and friends for cost-reducing purposes.

Housing Tenure as Share of Total Occupied Units, 2022
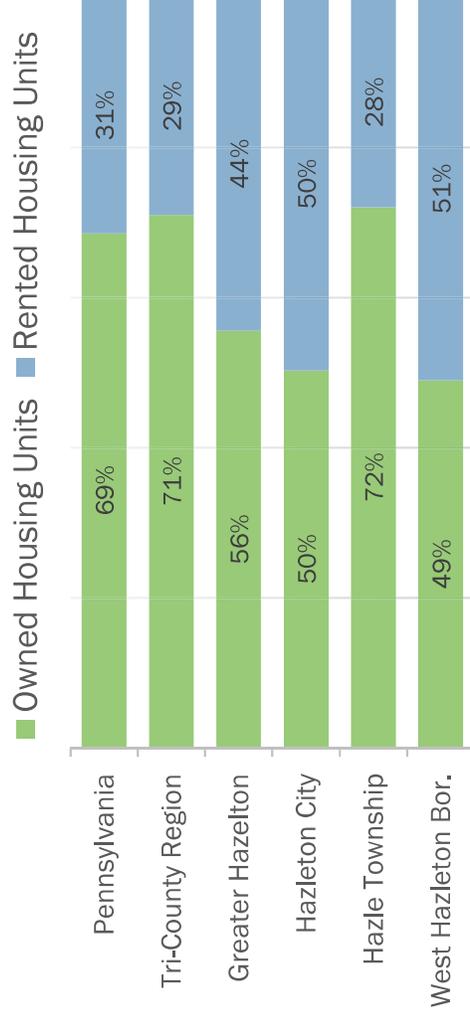

Share Renter-Occupied Housing
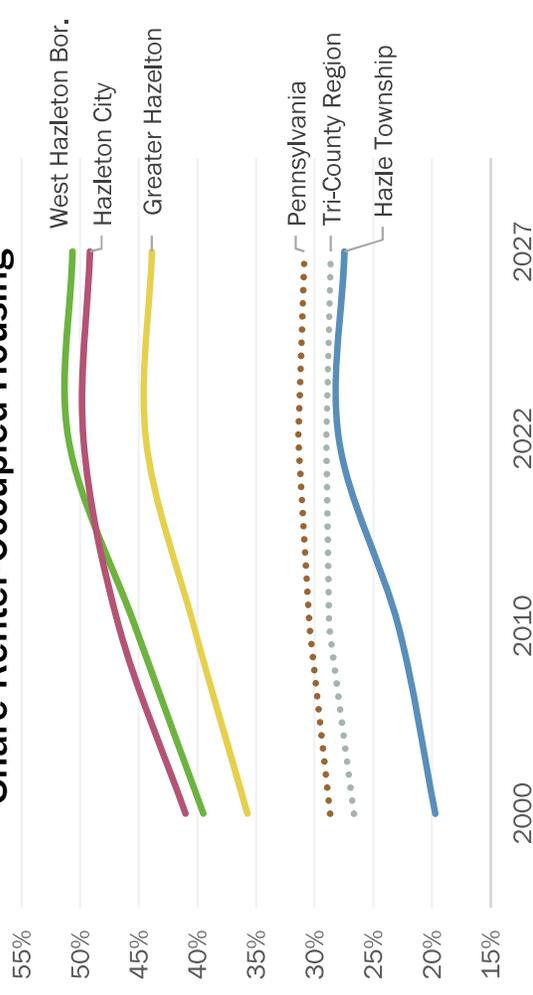
Source: Esri; 4ward Planning Inc., 2022

Average Median Listing Price: Greater Hazelton

According to September 2022 data provided by Realtor.com, the median listing home price in West Hazleton Borough was $148,900 and the median home sold price was $180,000 (equivalent to $100 per square foot). In Hazleton City, the median listing home price was $194,900 and the median home sold price was $162,900 (equivalent to $113 per square foot). In Hazle Township, the median listing home price was $256,700 and the median home sold price was $230,000 (equivalent to $135 per square foot). According to Realtor.com, both Hazleton City and Hazle Township are currently "buyer's markets (meaning that the supply of homes is greater than the demand for homes within each area), while West Hazleton Borough is a seller's market (meaning that there are more people looking to buy than there are homes available).

Median Listing Home Price vs. Median Home Sold Price

**West Hazleton Borough**

Hazle Township

Hazleton City

— Median Listing Home Price
--- Median Home Sold Price
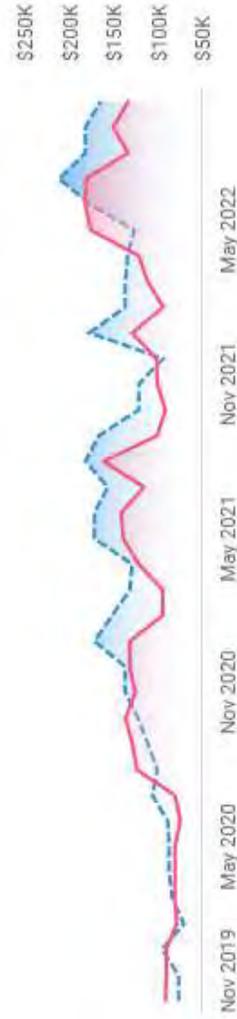
Apartment Rent Trends by Bedroom: City of Hazleton

According to data provided by Zumper, a rental platform that allows landlords to post rental listings, as of October 2022, the average annual median rent in Hazleton City (data is not available for West Hazleton Borough or Hazle Township) ranges from $900 for one-bedroom units to $1,120 for three-bedroom units. Notably, from October 2020 to October 2022, the average rent for a three-bedroom unit increased by $500 per month. It is likely that asking rents for larger units in the city experienced the greatest increases as a result of the Covid-19 health crisis, with a surge in persons working from home desiring more living space or sharing living quarters due to financial hardships associated with disruption to the labor market.

Average Median Apartment Rents: Hazleton City
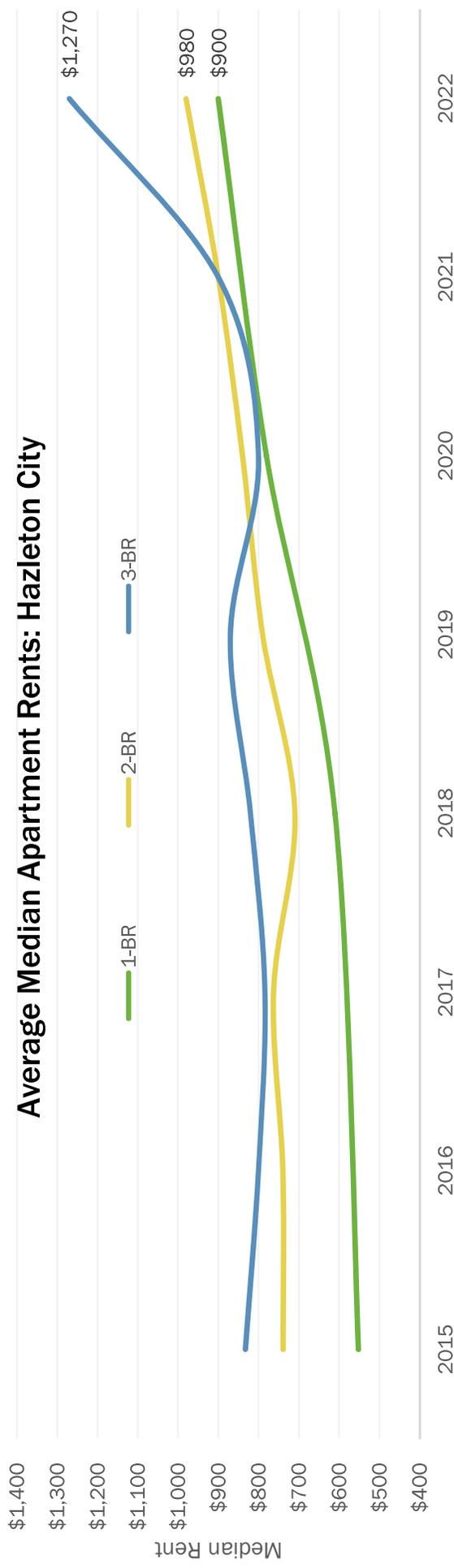
Source: Zumper. Not average 2022 rents are as of October 2022

Industrial

Key Findings: Industrial

1-81/78 industrial market vacancy continues to decline

According to third-quarter 2022 data provided by Newark, a national provider of real estate data, the I-81/78 corridor industrial market remains robust as industrial vacancies continue to decline, and average asking rental rates continue to increase. From third-quarter 2021 to third-quarter 2022, the average industrial vacancy rate in the I-81/78 corridor experienced a year-over-year decline from 8.6 to 5.3 percent, while the average asking industrial rental rates experienced a year-over-year increase of 3.9 percent.

8.7 million square feet under construction in submarket

Vigorous construction activity remains strong, with nearly 30 million square feet currently under construction within the I-81/78 corridor industrial market and 8.7 million square feet of this pending industrial space within the Northeastern Pennsylvania submarket. Compared to 2021, industrial demand has decreased a bit; however, it has not negatively impacted the market, as occupancy in the submarket remains solid.

Growing industrial market will increase demand for workforce housing

The Hazelton Creek Commerce Center, currently under construction in the city of Hazelton, is expected to deliver 5.5 million square feet of new light industrial building space into the local industrial market. With five total buildings and an estimated 500 jobs per building, this center will create demand for approximately 2,500 new workers. The scale of workers required for this facility, coupled with the strong demand for workers at the Humboldt Industrial Park, will increase demand for local workforce housing in the coming years.
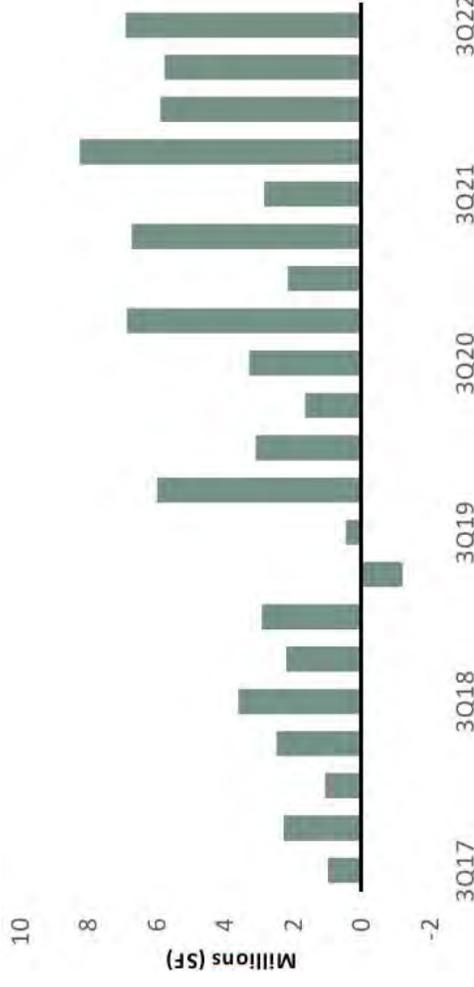
Industrial Market: I-81/78 Corridor

The Greater Hazelton area is located within the I-81/78 corridor industrial market. According to third-quarter 2022 data provided by Newark, a national provider of real estate data, the average industrial vacancy rate in the I-81/78 corridor industrial market declined to 5.3 percent in third-quarter 2022, compared to 8.6 percent in third-quarter 2021. Average asking industrial rental rates rose to $5.31 per square foot, an increase of 3.9 percent year-over-year. Positive absorption totaled just under seven million square feet, bringing the year-to-date number to 19.1 million square feet. Compared to 2021, industrial demand has decreased a bit; however, it has not negatively impacted the market, as occupancy in all three tracked remain strong. Vigorous construction activity is still a prominent trend, with nearly 30 million square feet currently under construction within the I-81/78 corridor industrial market area. With demand slowing, Newmark will be closely monitoring how much of the available speculative space coming online will be pre-leased before completion.

Net Absorption

Asking Rent and Vacancy Rate
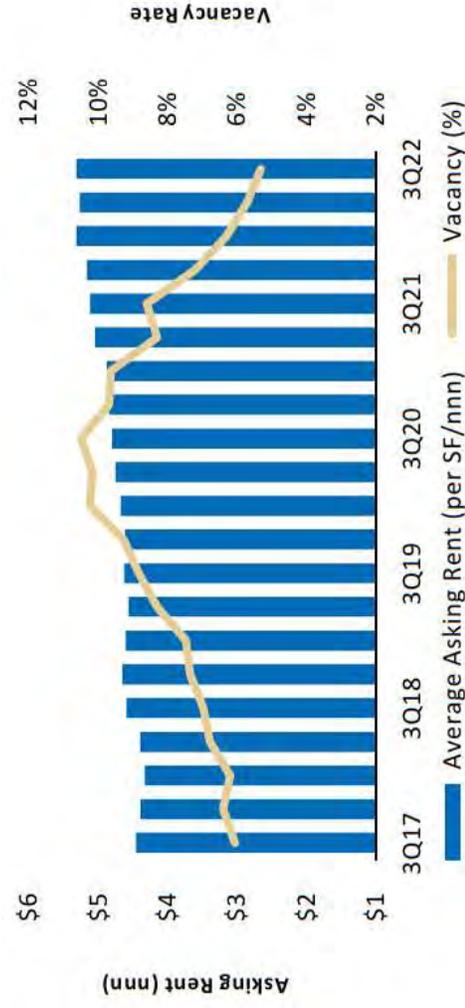
Source: Newmark, I-81/78 Corridor Market Reports, 3Q 2022

Industrial Submarket: Northeastern Pennsylvania

The Greater Hazelton area is located within the Northeastern Pennsylvania submarket of the I-81/78 corridor industrial market. According to third-quarter 2022 data provided by Newark, a national provider of real estate data, new construction activity within the Northeastern Pennsylvania submarket is solid, with 8.7 million square feet under construction and expected to deliver over the next 12 months. The overall vacancy rate for the Northeastern Pennsylvania submarket (4.3 percent) is lower than that within the Lehigh Valley submarket but higher than that in the Central Pennsylvania submarket. Activity this quarter, included Niagara occupying its newly constructed 1.2-million-square-foot warehouse building in Humboldt Northwest One in Hazle Township. Asking rents increased by 5.5 percent year-over-year to an average asking rate of $4.69 per square foot for warehouse and distribution space.

I-81/78 Corridor Market Industrial Submarkets

	Total Inventory (SF)	Under Construction (SF)	Total Vacancy Rate	Qrt Absorption (SF)	YTD Absorption (SF)	Warehouse Asking Rent (Price/SF)	R&D/Flex Asking Rent (Price/SF)	Total Asking Rent (Price/SF)
Central Pennsylvania	196,658,606	13,048,423	3.7%	3,143,443	8,611,824	$5.14	$10.07	$5.56
Lehigh Valley	152,419,543	7,816,060	7.8%	1,286,497	4,113,260	$5.34	$7.23	$5.46
Northeastern Pennsylvania	86,725,590	8,746,372	4.3%	2,470,959	6,418,396	$4.69	$5.33	$4.49
Market	435,803,739	29,610,855	5.3%	6,900,899	19,143,480	$5.08	$7.96	$5.31

Source: Newmark, I-81/78 Corridor Market Reports, 3Q 2022

Available Industrial Building Space: Greater Hazelton

According to CAN DO, Inc., there is approximately 1.8 million square feet of existing available industrial building space within the Greater Hazelton area, with another 807,000 square feet of available building space under construction and 768,800 square feet proposed. (Note this inventory doesn't include the 5.5 million square feet of industrial space currently under development in the Hazelton Creek Commerce Center to be presented on a subsequent slide).
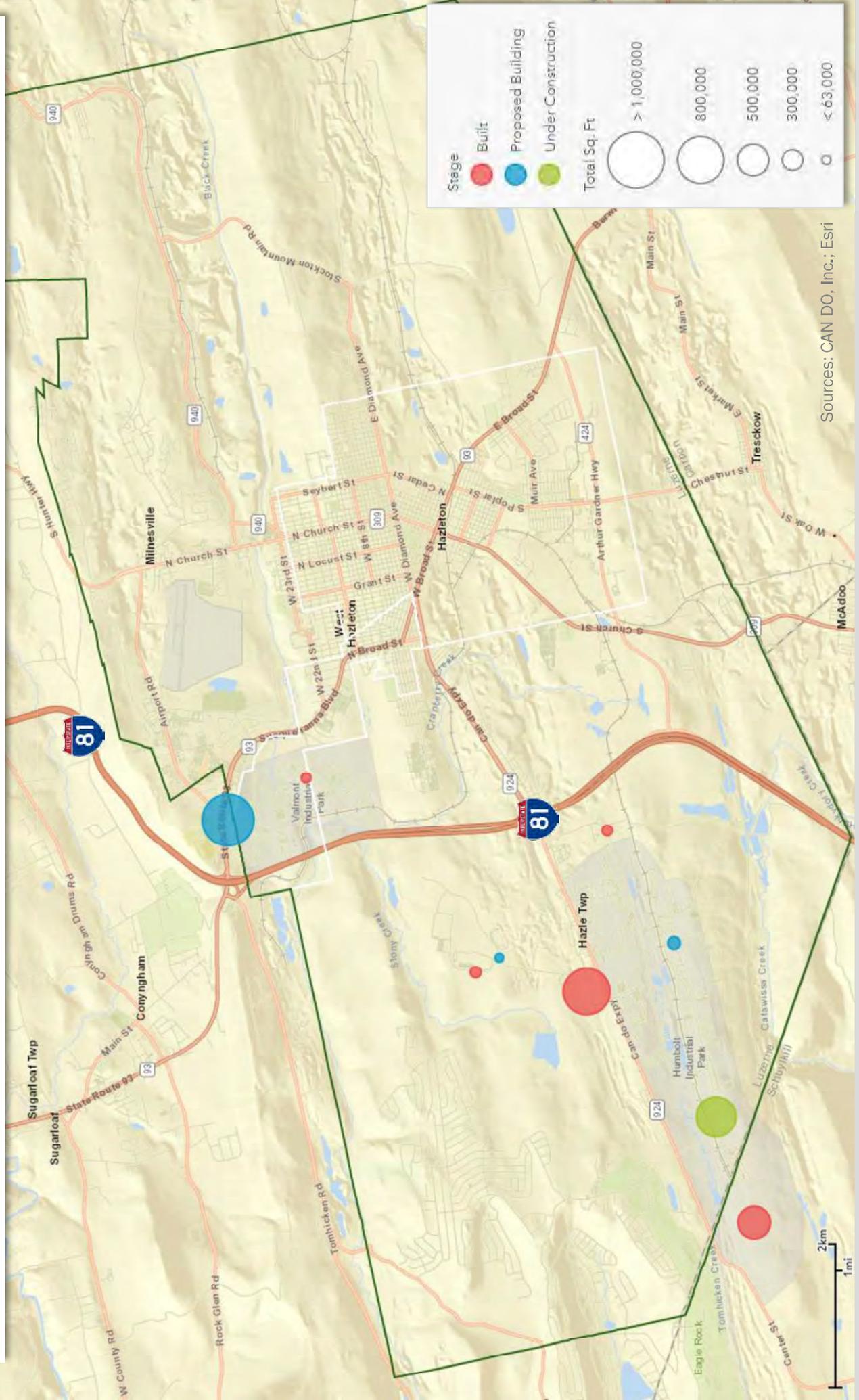
Available Industrial Building Space
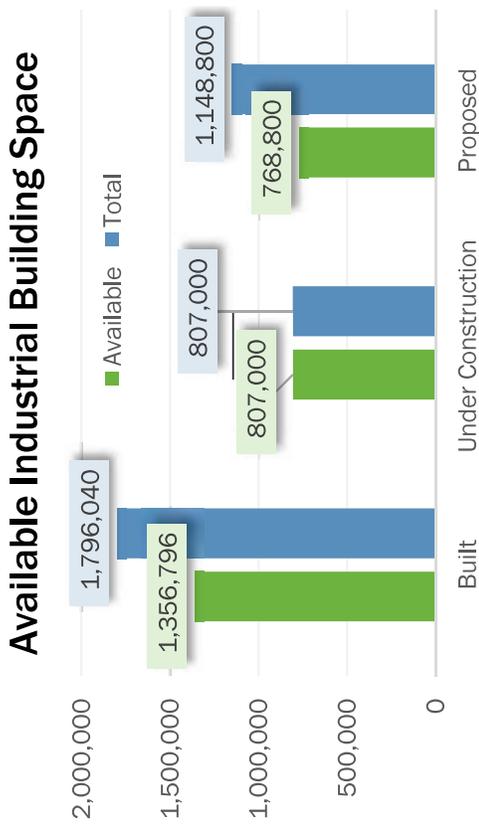
Available Industrial Building Space: Greater Hazelton

Park	Building Address	Location	Stage	Available Sq. Ft	Total Sq. Ft
Hazelton 424 Industrial Center	424 Industrial Center	Hazleton City	Proposed	620,000	1,000,000
Humboldt Industrial Park NW	1102 North Park Drive	Hazle Township	Built	895,960	895,960
Humboldt Industrial Park	610 Oak Ridge Road	Hazle Township	Under Construction	744,000	744,000
Humboldt Industrial Park West	69 Green Mtn. Road	Hazle Township*	Built	160,236	589,580
Humboldt Industrial Park	2 Cinnamon Oak Drive	Hazle Township	Proposed	148,800	148,800
Humboldt Industrial Park	407 Stony Creek Drive	Hazle Township	Built	115,500	115,500
Humboldt Industrial Park	420 Forest Road	Hazle Township	Built	105,000	105,000
Valmont Industrial Park	150 Jaycee Drive	West Hazleton Borough	Built	80,100	90,000
Humboldt Industrial Park	2290 North Park Drive	Hazle Township	Under Construction	63,000	63,000
Total				**2,932,596**	**3,751,840**

* Located just outside of township boundaries.
Source: CAN DO, Inc.

Available Industrial Building Space: Greater Hazelton (continued)

Sources: CAN DO, Inc.; Esri

# Available Industrial & Business Land: Greater Hazelton

According to CAN DO, Inc., there is approximately 128 acres of available industrial and business land within the Greater Hazelton area, and an additional 111 acres in neighboring municipalities (within McAdoo Borough and Drums Village).

Available Industrial Land

| Site	City	Available Acres	Type	Rail
Humboldt industrial Park North Site 1	Hazle Township	38.62	Industrial	No
Humboldt Industrial Park North Site 30 (Under Contract)	Hazle Township	22.69	Industrial	No
Valmont Industrial Park Site 1	West Hazleton Borough	22.64	Industrial	No
Valmont Industrial Park Site 16B	West Hazleton Borough	20.46	Industrial	No
Humboldt Industrial Park North Site 7	Hazle Township	18.68	Industrial	Yes
Humboldt Industrial Park Site 24	Hazle Township	5.00	Industrial	No
Greater Hazelton Subtotal		**128.09**		
McAdoo Industrial Park Site 7	McAdoo Borough	31.23	Industrial	No
McAdoo Industrial Park Site 1	McAdoo Borough	19.02	Industrial	No
CAN DO Corporate Center Site 18	Drums Village	15.75	Business	N/A
CAN DO Corporate Center Site 13	Drums Village	10.09	Business	NIA
CAN DO Corporate Center Site 14	Drums Village	10.01	Business	N/A
McAdoo Industrial Park Site 3	McAdoo Borough	6.17	Industrial	No
CAN DO Corporate Center Site 7	Drums Village	5.01	Business	N/A
CAN DO Corporate Center Site 8	Drums Village	5.00	Business	N/A
CAN DO Corporate Center Site 9	Drums Village	5.00	Business	N/A
McAdoo Industrial Park Site 48	McAdoo Borough	4.18	Industrial	No
Outside Greater Hazelton Subtotal		***111.46***		
Total		**239.55**		

Source: CAN DO, Inc.

Available Industrial & Business Land:

Greater Hazelton (continued)
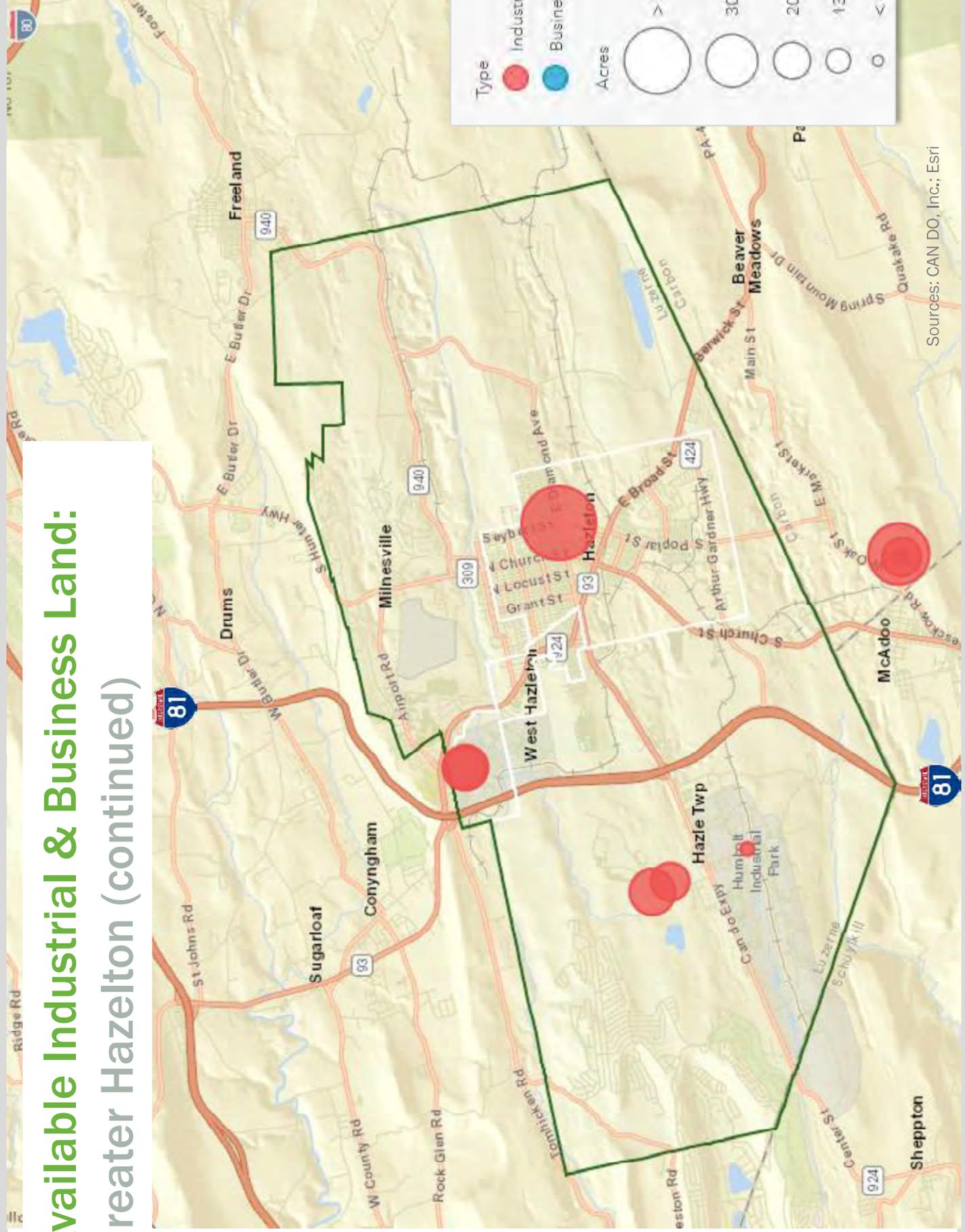
Sources: CAN DO, Inc.; Esri

Industrial Parks: Humboldt Industrial Park

Located off the I-81 exit 143 in Hazle Township, Humboldt Industrial Park is one of the state's largest industrial parks containing many large distribution and warehousing facilities. Construction of new industrial facilities is evident in portions of the park. Many of the newer industrial buildings are at least 150,000 to 200,000 square feet and sit on 10 or more acres of land. Older industrial buildings in another area of the industrial park are, generally, smaller (100,000 square feet or smaller and sit on much less acreage). CanDo Inc is listed as the developer of the park and industrial park sprawls across CanDo Drive, the main artery which leads from I-81 to the industrial park. According to CanDo Inc, the park is home to nearly 60 industries and 10,000 jobs. The industrial park is also served by rail.
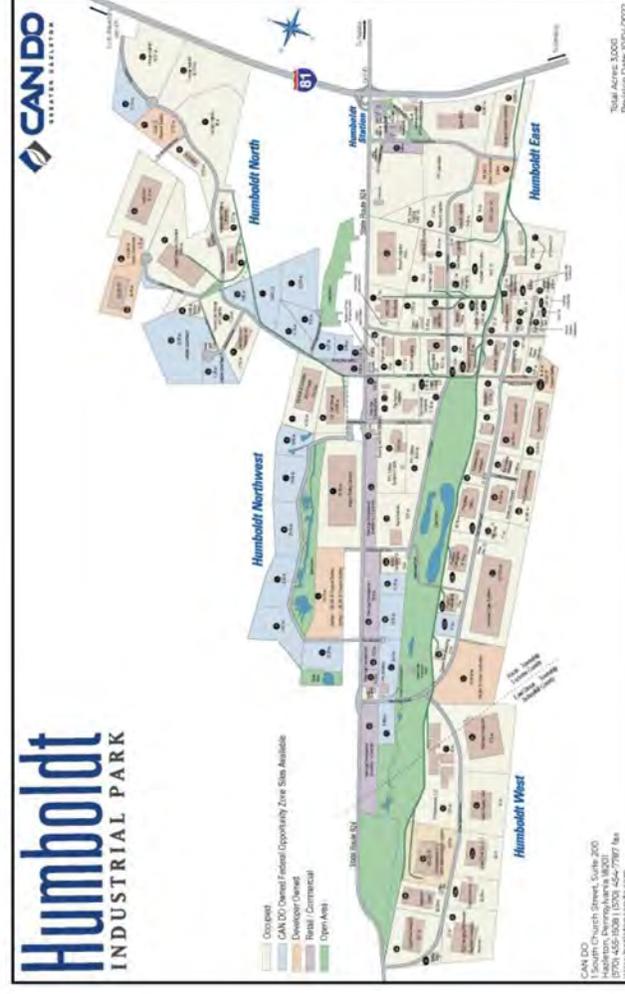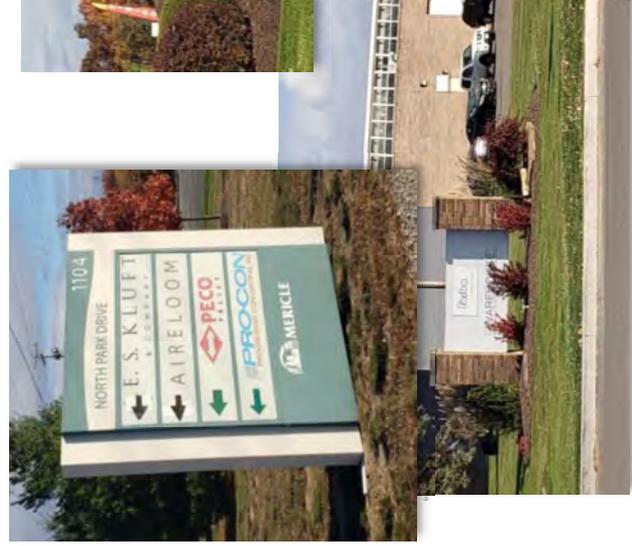
Source: 4ward Planning Inc; CanDo Inc

Industrial Parks: Valmont Industrial Park

Located in West Hazelton and Hazle Township off Exit 145 of Interstate 81, the 750-acre Valmont Industrial Park is home to industries such as Bradley Caldwell, Dial Corp (Henkel Consumer Goods), EAM Mosca, and Graham Packaging.

Source: 4ward Planning Inc.

Industrial Parks: Hazelton Creek Commerce Center

The estimated $500 million Hazelton Creek Commerce Center is a master-planned 5.5-million-square-foot light industrial park currently under development in the city of Hazelton on 393 acres of mine-scarred land located south of the city's downtown. Currently, Phase I work is underway for the development of a 1.4-million-square-foot building (Building 4) and a 550,000-square-foot building (Building 5).

Phase II contemplates three separate build-to-suit sites entailing building square footages of 550,000 square feet (Building 1), 800,000 square feet (Building 2), and 2.2 million square feet (Building 3). These sites have the potential to create at least 500 jobs per building - more than 2,500 jobs in total.

Regardless the precise number of workers required for this facility, coupled with the strong demand for workers at the Humboldt Industrial Park will significantly increase demand for local workforce housing within the Greater Hazelton area in the coming years.

5 buildings
±5.5M total sf
362 total acres
150' building height permitted
1,700+ dedicated trailer stalls
2,700 total car spaces

Rail service capability
Significant utility capacity

BUILDING 2
800,000 SF
BUILD-TO-SUIT

BUILDING 1
550,000 SF
BUILD-TO-SUIT

BUILDING 5
550,000 SF
SITEWORK UNDERWAY

BUILDING 4
1,400,000 SF
UNDER CONSTRUCTION

BUILDING 3
2,200,000 SF
BUILD-TO-SUIT

Source: Hazelton Creek Commerce Center

Retail & Restaurants

Key Findings: Retail & Restaurants

Laurel Mall site could potentially accommodate housing

While there are no noticeable vacancies at the Laurel Mall shopping center, other than a former Ground Round pad-site restaurant, the mall property represents approximately 74 acres, inclusive of various out-parcels and undeveloped land area. Furthermore, the Regal Cinemas site is quite large and underutilized. There may be future opportunity to redevelop all or a portion of this site for workforce housing.

## Valmont Plaza could be an opportunity for mixed-use residential

Given the relatively large amount of vacancy at Valmont Plaza and based on the struggles of brick-and-mortar retail, as well as its location off a well trafficked arterial, the site may be an opportunity for a mixed-use residential development within the next three to five years (dependent upon existing lease expirations, sales trends of the current retailers, and the opportunity cost associated a mixed-use redevelopment project).

Streetscape and façade improvements needed along North Wyoming Street

Intersecting with Broad Street and serving as the main commercial node within the city of Hazelton, North Wyoming Street is representative of a small secondary commercial district. While the majority of its observed storefronts are occupied, there is a small number of vacant storefronts and facades which exhibit blighted conditions. The street is active with pedestrians and should become a focus for streetscape and façade improvements within the comprehensive plan.

Shopping Centers: Laurel Mall

The 538,654-square-foot Laurel Mall shopping center, which opened in 1973, features three current anchor stores: Boscov's, Dunham's Sports (with one anchor jointly occupied by Planet Fitness and Hobby Lobby), and TJ Maxx (a junior anchor). The 10-theater Regal Cinemas and Aldi are out-parcels. There are no noticeable vacancies other than a former Ground Round pad-site restaurant located southeast of the front entrance to Boscov's. The mall property represents approximately 74 acres, inclusive of various out-parcels and undeveloped land area. The Regal Cinemas site is quite large (the theatre, associated surface parking, and immediately surrounding undeveloped land represents approximately 16 acres). *There may be future opportunity to redevelop all or a portion of this site for workforce housing.* A 200,000-square-foot Walmart Supercenter sits northeast of the Laurel Mall property and is accessible via the Airport Beltway.
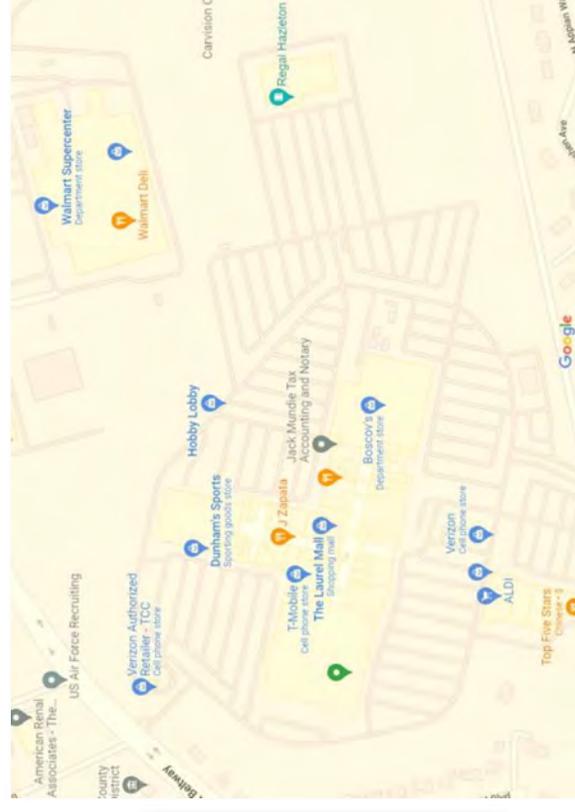
Sources: 4ward Planning Inc.; Google

Shopping Centers: Valmont Plaza

According to Bennett Williams, the shopping center's leasing agent, the 26-acre Valmont Plaza shopping center is located in the city of Hazelton along Susquehanna Boulevard. The shopping center's anchors include Lowe's, Big Lots, Michael's, and Tractor Supply. The nearly 176,000-square-foot community shopping center currently lists 93,567 square feet of vacancy (53.2 percent) asking between $10 and $14 per square foot, inclusive of two pad sites at the entrance of the center (one space serving as a former bowling alley). One of the vacant stores (a former PetSmart) represents approximately 80,000 square feet (86 percent) of the 93,567 vacant space. Given the relatively large amount of vacancy at the site and based on the struggles of brick-and-mortar retail, as well as its location off a well trafficked arterial, *the site may be an opportunity for a mixed-use residential development within the next three to five years (dependent upon existing lease expirations, sales trends of the current retailers, and the opportunity cost associated a mixed-use redevelopment project).*

Source: 4ward Planning Inc.; Bennett Williams

Shopping Centers: West Hazelton Plaza

West Hazelton Plaza is a nearly 33,000-square-foot neighborhood strip shopping center located at 180 Susquehanna Boulevard (PA Route 93) in West Hazelton and sits adjacent to the Valmont Plaza shopping center. Current tenants include Geisinger Health Systems, Wine Spirits, and Cosmo Prof Beauty Supply. The shopping center site contains approximately 3.2 acres of land and is located adjacent to a Lowe's anchored community shopping center site, which includes a Weis Market (supermarket), PetSmart, and an anchor restaurant (Applebee's). According to LMS, the commercial leasing agent of record, there is approximately 1,600 square feet of space available (representing slightly less than a five-percent vacancy rate for the shopping center). _This shopping center is likely to remain a viable commercial retail site for the foreseeable future._

Source: 4ward Planning Inc.; LMS

# Shopping Centers: Humboldt Station Retail Business Center

Located just off Interstate 81 on Route 924 within Humboldt Industrial Park, lies the 28-acre Humboldt Station retail business center. The center includes the Coordinated Health medical complex, Residence Inn by Marriott hotel, Turkey Hill Minit Mart gas station and convenience store, and Sonic Drive-In and Burger King fast food restaurants. Tru by Hilton has also been approved to build a limited-service hotel on the site.

Source: 4ward Planning Inc.
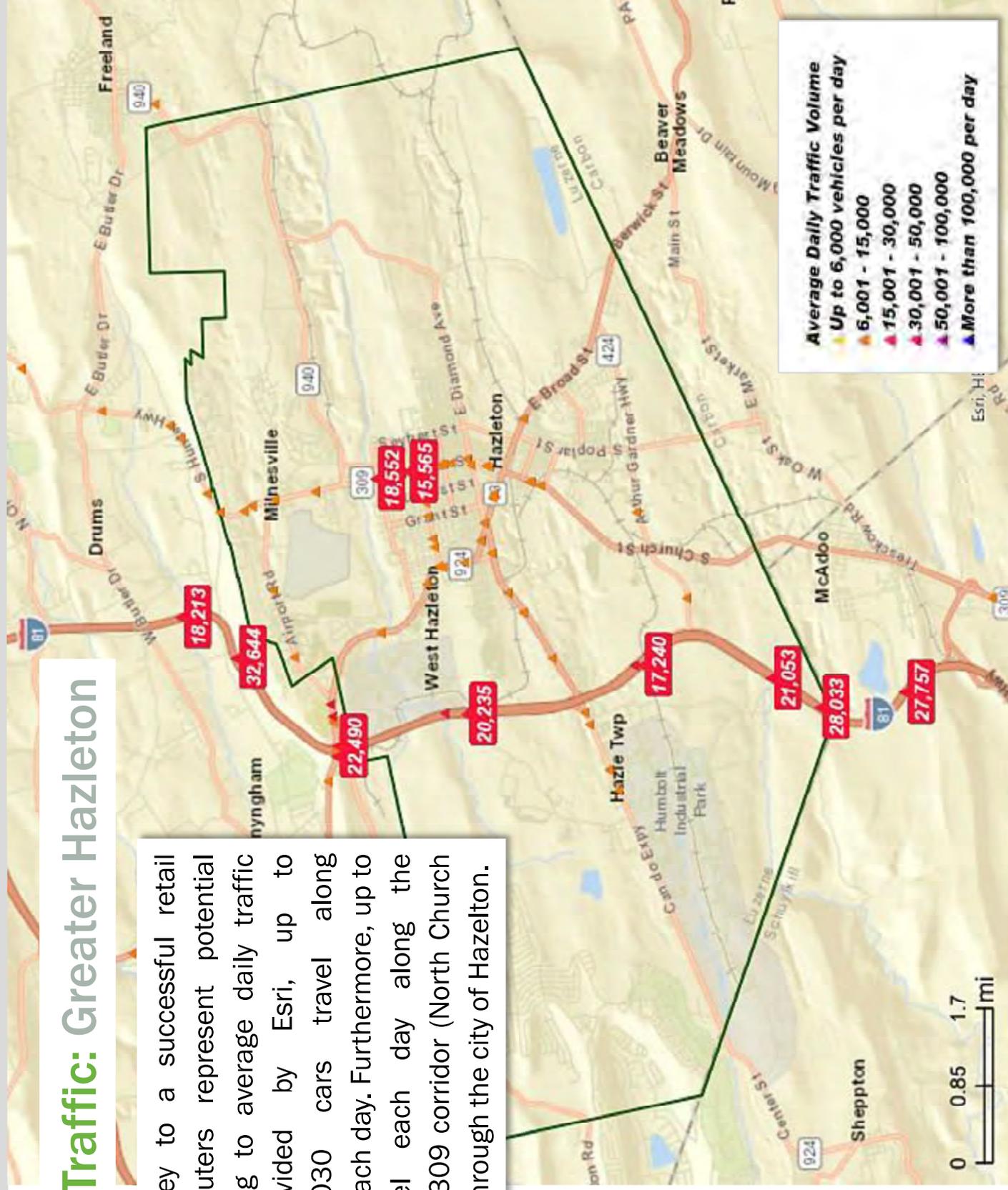
Commercial Corridors: North Wyoming Street

North Wyoming Street intersects with Broad Street (the main commercial node within the city of Hazelton) and is representative of a small secondary commercial district. It extends a relatively long seven blocks from West Broad Street north to East Holly Street. The buildings along North Wyoming Street are mostly a mix of two- and three-story masonry buildings, with some exhibiting original brick work and others with vinyl or stucco siding. The condition of buildings ranges from excellent exterior condition (a few buildings in this category) to needing façade rehab work. While the majority of storefronts observed are occupied, there is a small number of vacant storefronts and facades which exhibit blighted conditions. Additionally, there are a few two-story frame construction multi-family residential buildings dotting the seven-block strip – most of which look to be in poor condition from observation of the exteriors. Many of the businesses appear to be Latin American-owned and/or operated and represent an eclectic mix of goods and services, including personal services (salons and barber shops), food (groceries, and meat and fish markets), fashion, laundry, restaurants, and several shops offering money wiring, and income tax and immigration services. _The street is active with pedestrians and should become a focus for streetscape and façade improvements within the comprehensive plan._
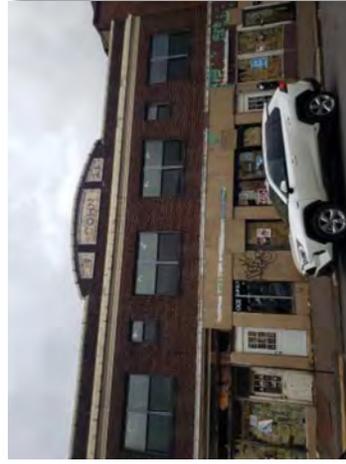
Source: 4ward Planning Inc.

Access and Traffic: Greater Hazleton

Vehicle traffic is key to a successful retail location, as commuters represent potential customers. According to average daily traffic volume data provided by Esri, up to approximately 28,030 cars travel along Interstate 81 (I-81) each day. Furthermore, up to 18,550 cars travel each day along the Pennsylvania Route 309 corridor (North Church Street) that passes through the city of Hazelton.
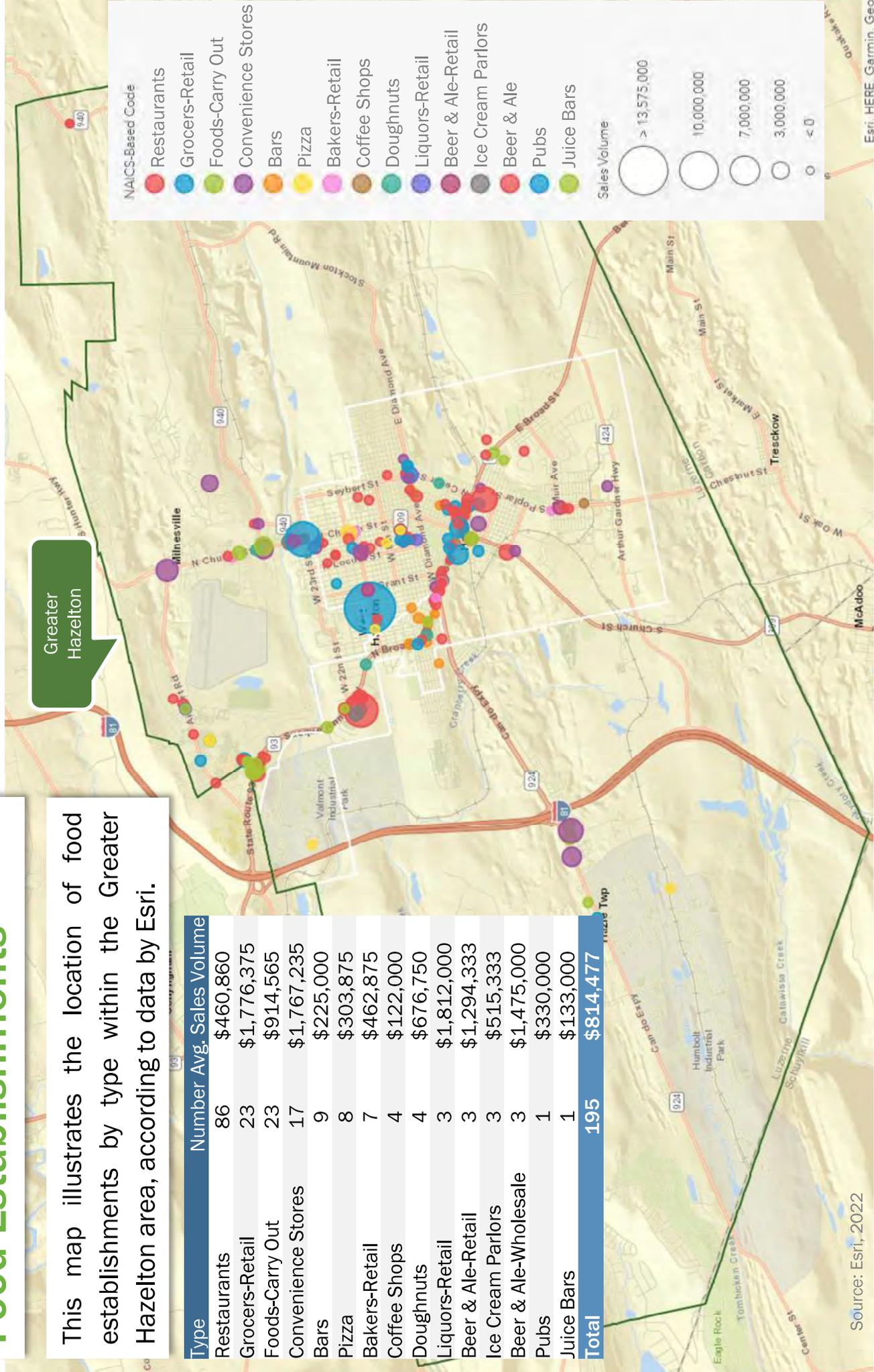

Average Daily Traffic Volume
Up to 6,000 vehicles per day
▲ *6,001 - 15,000*
▲ *15,001 - 30,000*
▲ *30,001 - 50,000*
▲ *50,001 - 100,000*
▲ *More than 100,000 per day*

Source: Kalibrate
Technologies, Q1 2022

Food Establishments

This map illustrates the location of food establishments by type within the Greater Hazelton area, according to data by Esri.

Type	Number	Avg. Sales Volume
Restaurants	86	$460,860
Grocers-Retail	23	$1,776,375
Foods-Carry Out	23	$914,565
Convenience Stores	17	$1,767,235
Bars	9	$225,000
Pizza	8	$303,875
Bakers-Retail	7	$462,875
Coffee Shops	4	$122,000
Doughnuts	4	$676,750
Liquors-Retail	3	$1,812,000
Beer & Ale-Retail	3	$1,294,333
Ice Cream Parlors	3	$515,333
Beer & Ale-Wholesale	3	$1,475,000
Pubs	1	$330,000
Juice Bars	1	$133,000
Total	**195**	**$814,477**

NAICS-Based Code
Restaurants
Grocers-Retail
Foods-Carry Out
Convenience Stores
Bars
Pizza
Bakers-Retail
Coffee Shops
Doughnuts
Liquors-Retail
Beer & Ale-Retail
Ice Cream Parlors
Beer & Ale
Pubs
Juice Bars

Sales Volume
> 13,575,000
10,000,000
7,000,000
3,000,000
< 0

Greater Hazelton

APPENDIX

Glossary of Terms

Employment by Industry: The industry is the type of activity that occurs at a person's place of work. Industries are classified through the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), the standard used by Federal statistical agencies in classifying business establishments for the purpose of collecting, analyzing, and publishing statistical data related to the U.S. business economy.

Empty-Nester Household: A household in which one or more parents live after the children have left home, typically represented by ages 55 through 74.

Family: A family is a group of two or more people (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together; all such people are considered members of one family.

Growth Rates: The chart below outlines how 4ward Planning defines growth rates. For example, flat growth reflects an annualized rate of change between -0.75 and 0.75 percent.

Strong Positive Growth	Greater than	1.50%			annually
Modest Positive Growth	Between	1.50%	and	0.75%	annually
Flat Growth	Between	0.75%	and	-0.75%	annually
Modest Negative Growth	Between	-0.75%	and	-1.50%	annually
Strong Negative Growth	Less than	-1.50%			annually

Household: A household consists of all the people who occupy a housing unit. A house, apartment, or other group of rooms or a single room, is regarded as a housing unit when occupied or intended for occupancy as a separate living quarter. The count of households excludes group quarters and institutions.

Household Population: Household population, as compared to total population, excludes persons living in dormitories, penal facilities, hospitals, and other institutional settings.

Non-Family Household: A non-family household consists of a householder living alone (a one-person household) or a householder sharing the home exclusively with people to whom he/she is not related.

Primary Job: According to the U.S. Census, a primary job refers to the job an individual has which provides the greatest income. If an individual is employed by a single job, this would be considered a primary job. If an individual is employed at multiple jobs, including part-time employment, the job that provides the greatest income would be considered a primary job.

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