Huntington, WV, Application to be America’s Best Community
Submitted November 5, 2015 by the Foundation for the Tri-State Community, the City of Huntington, and a Robust Community Partnership.
The City of Huntington, West Virginia, will be one of America’s best communities by transforming struggling neighborhoods and blighted spaces into hubs for advanced making and manufacturing, solar roof innovation, a health and medical corridor, and a mix of parks, green spaces, and sustainable community redevelopment – all connected by complete streets, a robust trail network, and the high-speed broadband infrastructure of the future. This revitalization will be first sparked by three key initiatives in our most distressed neighborhoods – Highlawn, Fairfield, and the West End – and will spread community-wide prosperity and opportunity. This Huntington Innovation Project (HIP) will renew our community, and be a gateway for revitalization for the broader Tri-State and Appalachian region. Huntington is hip to be America’s best community.

“Huntington, West Virginia, is a community that is poised to uplift our citizens and businesses to a new level of excellence and growth, overcoming the challenges of manufacturing- and coal-sector decline, to create a 21st century place marked by innovation and collaboration. The Huntington Innovation Project is hip, and we are ready to show how America’s best communities can put hip into action.”

Steve Williams – Mayor / Huntington, WV

“Huntington is a resilient community with robust partnerships among civic leaders, business, education, grassroots organizations, regional and national leaders, and philanthropy. Our collaboration has created amazing community revitalization already, and as one of America’s best communities, we are ready for more progress which benefits all our citizens.” Mary Witten Wiseman – President / Foundation for the Tri-State Community
Foreword by
Professor Ned Hill

Huntington, West Virginia, is a slice of America. It is experiencing disruptive change; change that has shaken work and home. In the face of closed factories and coal mines, brownfields, and a population wrestling with its place in a competitive global economy, Mayor Steve Williams is leading a community that is reimagining its future pragmatically and optimistically. The Huntington Innovation Plan is comprehensive, yet targeted; rooted in the reality of today's economy while coupled with a vision that respects the city's past and repositions its residents for the future; it is aspirational while tackling current barriers to achieving that aspirational future.

The people of Huntington have used America's Best Community competition the right way because they have already won. HIP is a strategic planning document that sets the course for comprehensive citywide regeneration. It is a catalytic document that identifies resources and pathways to a competitive future. HIP responds to architect-planner Daniel Burnham's 1907 charge:

Make no little plans. They have no magic to stir men's blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram once recorded will never die, but long after we are gone will be a living thing, asserting itself with ever-growing insistency. Remember that our sons and grandsons are going to do things that would stagger us. Let your watchword be order and your beacon beauty. Think big. ¹

HIP is not a physical plan that features grand architecture and urban design in the style of Burnham's City Beautiful movement. It does something that is much harder. It is a community development and economic development action plan that guides the regeneration of the competitive economic and social infrastructure of a city. The importance of HIP goes beyond three challenged neighborhoods, transcending the city's borders. HIP recognizes that Huntington is the anchor of the Tri-State region of Appalachian West Virginia, Northeastern Kentucky and the Southwestern corner of my state, Ohio.

The counties in the Tri-State region were the gateway to the American west in post-revolutionary America when founded in 1775. The city originally served hardscrabble farmers and then began to prosper as an industrial nation looked for coal and timber to power the industrial cities to its north and the mighty Ohio River took its natural resources south to the port of New Orleans. After its first 100 years, the city took a giant economic step when Collis P. Huntington built an enterprise that breached the Appalachians with rail linking the Tidewater ports in Virginia to the Ohio Valley and the cities of Cincinnati, Chicago, and eventually the West Coast. Huntington's founding in 1871 took place at the start of King Coal's century. Now, that cycle of prosperity has ended and a new century beckons.

The Tri-State region sits at the southern end of the Appalachian Basin. Natural gas deposits with rich pools of natural gas liquids, the building blocks of the plastics and chemical industries, are in the ground to its north. The barge, rail and pipeline traffic on and along the Ohio River is shifting from coal to natural gas, and its manufactured byproducts and investors are figuring out if the time is right to build multibillion-dollar cracking complexes in West Virginia, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. Collis Huntington's railroad has evolved into the CSX rail system, which has completed a multimodal land bridge from Virginia's Tidewater ports into America's Heartland, with a hub in Huntington. And, with HIP, the city of Huntington has rediscovered its front door—the Ohio River.

A word cloud of HIP highlights its elements. At its center is the driver—the city of Huntington. In the next level are Community, Neighborhood, Economy, Jobs, and Revitalize—the focus of HIP. Innovation, New, Health, Makes, Center, and Hub follow on and are HIP’s building blocks.

CEOS for Cities has developed an acronym or mnemonic device to guide city regeneration: CITY. **HIP is the embodiment of CITY.**

*C* represents the connected city. Huntington’s Gigabit City promises to deploy gigabit fiber optic cable throughout HIP’s neighborhoods, connecting Marshall University, health care providers, employers, and the target neighborhoods of Highlawn, the Hal Greer Health Innovation Corridor, and the West End to the world. But the connectivity is more than fiber, it is the West End’s Heartland Intermodal Gateway and the River-to-Rail infrastructure investments. Most important of all is the connection to a revitalized Ohio River. Water brings life to cities as well as to people.

*I* is the innovative city, and here HIP shines. HIP is a plan that is designed to ignite entrepreneurs. Advanced technology centered on the engineering excellence of Marshall University, industry-led innovation centered on polymer chemistry, and new product development in Poly-TeCH offer the promise of a new competitive economy. HIP’s celebration of microenterprises centered on local food and crafts-based woodworking recognizes that economic development can only take place through innovation and production of new goods and services. And that innovation is sustainable only if it is rooted in the competitive advantage of the region’s economy.

*T* is talent. A city does not prosper if it does not encourage and nurture its native talent and if it does not offer ladders of opportunity. A city does not attract talent if it is isolated intellectually as well as physically. And talent cannot be retained unless the city is an attractive and healthy place to live.

The city’s core must be vibrant—follow the example of Asheville, North Carolina. College towns offer a never-ending stream of talent and vibrancy—think of Ithaca, New York. And talented cities with natural amenities become regional anchors—this is where Portland, Maine and Portland, Oregon come to mind. HIP offers a distinctive combination attributed to all of these small city-centered regions.

HIP embraces highly-educated talent with its recognition of key anchor institutions. What distinguishes HIP is its emphasis on encouraging local talent that is searching for opportunity in a new economy. Coalfield Development’s WestEdge Factory promises to be a local talent incubator. Solar Holler Training Institute and the local food activities centered on The Wild Ramp open doors to self-sufficiency. And, the Hal Greer Neighborhood’s Health Innovation Corridor promises to provide work opportunities to the young and the talented. The revitalization of Northcott Court offers a neighborhood that will retain and nurture families.

*Y* represents your city’s distinctiveness. Y is admittedly a stretch, but it works because if a city and region are not distinctive and differentiated from other places and if their goods, services, and neighborhoods are not distinctive they cannot trade and attract new people and investment. Huntington is embracing its distinctiveness in HIP.

Huntington’s history, environment, and culture are the roots of distinction. Huntington’s cultural, environmental, economic, institutional, and architectural past are the basis for competing in the future. Through HIP, Huntington is celebrating its history but not using it as a closed door.

Huntington, West Virginia, is a city whose people know where they come from, are proud of who they are, and are willing to embrace newcomers to build a future. Huntington is the center of what can become a plug and play region. It is struggling to become a region that judges people on what they can do and how they can contribute; not one that judges you on who your people were and what they used to do. **Huntington, West Virginia, is a slice of America.**
Biography Highlights: Professor Ned Hill

- Professor of Public Affairs, Ohio State University, John Glenn College of Public Affairs & OSU College of Engineering, Department of City and Regional Planning
- Formerly Dean of the College of Urban Affairs at Cleveland State University
- Expert in urban policy, economic development, community revitalization, the manufacturing economy, metropolitan regional growth, and public finance
- Research and policy leader on manufacturing policy, including for the Center for Design and Manufacturing Excellence
- Senior Fellow at The Brookings Institute and its Metropolitan Policy Program
- Chairman of the Advisory Committee of the federal government’s Manufacturing Extension Partnership
- Author of Economy Adversity and Regional Economic Resilience (2015)
- PhD in Economics, Urban and Regional Planning, Master’s Degree in City Planning from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Bachelor’s Degree in Economics and Urban Studies from the University of Pennsylvania
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Hip [hip] Slang. – adj. Familiar with or informed about the latest ideas or developments: The City of Huntington is hip to the maker movement, advanced manufacturing, health innovation and sustainability as key strategies for economic revitalization.

Origin 1900-1905; earlier hep; of disputed orig.
Introduction & Overview

The City of Huntington, West Virginia, has been a wonderful place to live, work and raise families since its founding in 1871. Huntington has all of the ingredients for a quality of life that families desire – neighborhoods settled along tree-lined streets, spacious parks, a robust arts scene, a vibrant downtown and an expanding Marshall University that has strong ties to the community.

However, Huntington has suffered since the 1950s with a drastic decline in its economic base of heavy manufacturing and coal-sector businesses. The loss of industry and jobs led to a massive drop in population, resulting in blight and poverty. Huntington is still challenged by these issues with more than 30 percent of our citizens living in poverty, hundreds of abandoned houses, and swaths of brownfields where active factories once thrived.

Huntington has always been resilient, and the community is poised for a new generation of prosperity. Robust partnerships are in place, and community consensus has emerged on a strategy for revitalization. Huntington knows that its economic and community transformation will not come with a single or simple solution. It must be based on a multi-faceted strategy that uses several projects, each of which target different challenges. That is why the Huntington HIP revitalization plan has several projects and multiple tactics for reaching our overall goals. The Huntington strategy will harness a new approach to advanced manufacturing and making, solar roofing innovation, a health innovation corridor, neighborhood renewal, and continued investment by Marshall University. The hubs of Huntington’s strategy are:

- The transformation of closed factories and brownfields in the Highlawn neighborhood into an advanced manufacturing hub called the "Polymer Technology Center of Huntington (Poly-TeCH)" surrounded by mixed-use development.

- The revival of the West End through its "River-to-Rail Revitalization" initiative. This will be supported by the innovative social enterprise project at the "WestEdge Factory," which will put poor youth and dislocated coal workers into new, highly-skilled jobs at a solar roofing institute and a craft furniture-making operation. Surrounding the hub of the WestEdge Factory, Huntington will foster transformation of brownfields and vacant properties with commercial jobs sparked by a new intermodal freight center called the Heartland Intermodal Gateway. Along with this new economic development, Huntington will revitalize traditional neighborhoods with healthy foods at the Cabell County Tailgate Farmers Market and The Wild Ramp; modern housing; and main street renewal along 14th Street West.
The expansion of a health innovation corridor to boost health care jobs and healthy community designs along the city’s main artery into the downtown, Hal Greer Boulevard. This corridor will spring from the regional medical anchors Cabell Huntington Hospital, St. Mary’s Medical Center, the Center for Rural Health, and the Marshall University Medical School.

These economic hubs will be connected by the deployment of high-speed broadband infrastructure through Huntington’s “Gigabit City” initiative.

These are the “factories” of Huntington’s future, creating highly-skilled and family-wage jobs for our community and for the Appalachian region. The Huntington community is also committed to making this economic development sustainable, livable, and equitable for all of our citizens and our diverse neighborhoods. Altogether, this strategy for advanced manufacturing, clean technologies, health innovation, and neighborhood revitalization is dubbed the “Huntington Innovation Project.” – HIP.

These economic and community revitalization initiatives are underway. Huntington has an exciting vision, effective tactics, and an engaged community to ensure that we make steady progress. These projects have made great strides recently, gaining national recognition with new investments from the federal government, state government, philanthropic interests and the private sector. The HIP initiative took off beginning in 2014 as Huntington organized around the America’s Best Communities Prize competition www.AmericasBestCommunities.com.

This document puts forth Huntington’s HIP community revitalization plan. What follows:

- A long-term vision for Huntington’s future revitalization
- Background on Huntington’s heritage as the foundation for our progress
- A detailed plan with Huntington’s tactics for implementation
- A description of Huntington’s approach for engaging the community and the Appalachian region in our HIP revitalization, and leveraging resources for momentum

Huntington calls on all who read this document to get hip to the revitalization taking place, and to become part of this exciting progress. Together, Huntington can be a new frontier of community revitalization.
Huntington’s Vision for Revitalization

**Huntington, West Virginia, April 2021**

*It is 2021, and the City of Huntington is celebrating its 150th Anniversary.*

The weather on this April weekend is clear, blue and warm as the crowds of families gather at Harris Riverfront Park along the Ohio River, after what seems like a long winter. The beauty of the river frames a scene of excitement, laughter, friendship, and diversity. Of course, community members are donned in kelly green clothing, marking the strong ties between the city and Marshall University.

These generations have seen and been part of so much, and folks are eager to celebrate Huntington’s progress. It was 51 years ago that Huntington lost 75 sons and daughters in the Marshall football plane crash, and 20 years since it lost Dr. Paul Ambrose, a rising star in the field of public health. His trailblazing work on childhood obesity was cut short when the plane he was on crashed into the Pentagon on 9/11. However, Huntington’s people are assembled on the river on this sunny day to celebrate the city’s emergence as a national hub for commerce. It has just been five years since Huntington was named “America’s Best Community,” propelling the city’s economic and community revitalization to new heights.

The crowd gathering for the Huntington celebration is a reflection of what makes Huntington so vibrant. Near the stage, civic and political leaders mill about with one another. The mayor’s leadership in Huntington’s revitalization had been backed and propelled by local, state and federal representatives who were committed to improvement, regardless of their party affiliation. Long-time pillars of the business community are also joined by the hipper generation of entrepreneurs and innovators who have built a sustainable business culture on the rising maker movement, 3-D printing innovation, and advanced technology sectors.
The maker movement surged in Huntington after the city’s success in implementing its $24 million “Gigabit City” public-private partnership to deploy high-speed broadband. That Gigabit City effort connected economic hubs and the downtown. Business innovators in Huntington were also lucky to have such a talent pool from Marshall, whose growth and commitment has fueled our economic development. The Marshall University Research Corporation boosted this local innovation through the efforts of entities such as the Robert C. Byrd Institute for Advanced Flexible Manufacturing, which brought the maker movement to Appalachia. Huntington has also been sustained by leaders in philanthropy, who are gathered on the riverfront discussing how their investments helped Huntington rise from worst-to-first over tough times.

The day’s celebration is filled with the young millennials, artists and entrepreneurs who decided to stay in their hometown rather than move away like previous generations. The crowd is bustling as it reflects on the five years of solid population growth after 65 years of massive decline. A mix of generations, races and backgrounds mingle together, feeding off the positive buzz of the afternoon.

Many of these people walked, jogged or biked to the riverfront along the Paul Ambrose Trail for Health (PATH), a network of trails that has just been completed after two decades of effort. No longer was Huntington America’s unhealthiest city. The healthy foods and community kitchens movement in Huntington is well underway now as organizations like The Wild Ramp food cooperative spread healthy living approaches, community gardens, and inter-generational fitness and fun. Just this morning, many Huntingtonians ran the Happy 150th Anniversary 5K Run, one of the 50-plus runs held each year in the city. One large source of community pride is the drastic drop in drug use witnessed in Huntington after the Mayor’s Office of Drug Control Policy launched its “Portal to Recovery” strategy.
Even the setting for this gathering on the river reflects just how far Huntington has come. In 2015, the riverfront park was in dire need of a facelift. What had been a stigma and a legacy of failed industries is now an iconic waterfront community gathering place on this day. The Huntington riverfront is now covered in green infrastructure and urban tree canopies, bringing beauty and health while managing stormwater pollution and flooding. This space reflects Huntington’s deep dedication to progress in livability and sustainability, which further drives our economic prosperity.

The gathering of civic, business, philanthropic, academic and neighborhood leaders assembles near the riverfront amphitheater stage for the program to begin. The political and civic leaders kick things off by remembering the triumphs of Huntington’s progress. The three special keynote speakers talk about the game-changing economic revitalization initiatives that were launched in 2015. Huntington knew that the key to overcoming its challenges was to recreate an innovation economy to diversify the old industrial and coal-sector industries from its past. The community devised strategies to create new advanced manufacturing and maker movement approaches, to become a solar roofing hub for the Appalachian region, to create a health and medical innovation corridor and to make it all sustainable and livable.

Back in 2015, this package of initiatives was dubbed the “Huntington Innovation Project” with the tagline, “Huntington is HIP!” Today, the keynote speakers at the riverfront thrill the crowd as their remarks celebrate these transformational, hip projects:

**Brownfields Revitalization & Poly-TeCH:**

The MIT-educated Ph.D. who heads local company Rubberlite, Inc. talks about how the abandoned Highlawn coal barge site just downstream on the river is now producing hundreds of jobs and world-class learning opportunities at the Polymer Technology Center of Huntington. “Poly-TeCH” is an advanced technology center which has transformed the long-idled brownfields along the Ohio River situated near Marshall’s campus and the downtown.

Poly-TeCH is now helping companies from around the globe commercialize new polymer technologies and products that are revolutionizing aviation, aerospace, textiles, fashion, medicine, 3D printing, advanced electronics and dozens of other fields. Launched in 2015, Poly-TeCH is a regional force for Appalachian job creation and economic revitalization combining advanced research and development, product commercialization, academic research, workforce development, and the incubation of light-manufacturing factories. Poly-TeCH also revived dilapidated housing in the Highlawn neighborhood next door, a place that grew up among the factories from generations before but which, in 2015, was marked by high poverty rates. Poly-TeCH is part of the larger movement across the nation to reclaim our manufacturing heritage with innovation-driven approaches.
**Health Innovation Corridor:**

Like the turnaround on the riverfront, Huntington is excited about the resurgence of the Fairfield neighborhood along Hal Greer Boulevard, the main artery into the city from Interstate 64. The president of Marshall University, a biomedical engineer recruited in late 2015, takes the stage in front of the riverfront crowd and recalls the transformation of this corridor from a dangerous and blighted neighborhood to a showcase corridor of healthy, community living and health-sector jobs.

Hal Greer Boulevard is now a renowned health innovation corridor serving the Appalachian region, and the improvements in the neighborhood around it reflect Huntington’s commitment to healthy and livable community design. Hal Greer Boulevard is anchored on one end by Cabell Huntington Hospital, the Center for Rural Health and the Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine where the corridor begins, and by Marshall University’s main campus at the other end. Along this one-mile corridor, a cluster of medical offices, retail and commercial storefronts serving the neighborhood, medical research institutes and suppliers of medical devices has grown up in what were formerly vacant spaces.

The neighborhood surrounding this corridor is health-focused as well. Not too long ago, Hal Greer Boulevard was the epicenter of outdated, barrack-style public housing complexes at Northcott Court. Working with numerous stakeholders, Huntington took down the troubled housing complexes beginning in 2014. After that, Huntington forged ahead to renew the area with new affordable and mixed-use housing, a major Marshall student housing complex, a new grocery store and an expansion of the cherished A.D. Lewis Community Center. Hal Greer Boulevard is no longer a speeding, multi-lane road that locals cannot cross safely. It is now a beautiful complete street with landscaped medians, wider sidewalks, a dedicated bike lane and accessible bus transit stops. Here in this neighborhood, Huntington has shown that economic revitalization can take place in ways that are equitable.
West End River-to-Rail Revitalization:

Many people turned out on the river today to hear the speaker representing the West End of Huntington, where the transformation has been tremendous. When the mayor first launched the River-to-Rail Revitalization in that troubled section of town in 2014, the area was plagued by so much poverty, uninhabitable houses, and crime that many thought it was hopeless. But it has turned around, too. When the Heartland Intermodal Gateway Hub for rail freight and trucking opened a few miles away in November 2015, it sparked the reuse of abandoned warehouses and scrub lots in Huntington’s West End as a new center for distribution, logistics and light manufacturing, thanks in part to proactive efforts by the city to acquire and assemble properties for reinvestment. The launch of The Wild Ramp community foods center in the old Central City Market created a hub for healthy foods, community spirit and neighborhood action along the traditional streetscape and charm of 14th Street West.

Things really took off when the nonprofit group Coalfield Development Corporation reclaimed the 450,000-square-foot, abandoned suitmaking factory, now dubbed the “WestEdge Factory.” The group received an ArtPlace America grant in 2014 and additional funding from the Benedum Foundation, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Economic Development Administration, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in 2015. WestEdge is a place for social enterprise that empowers young, economically disadvantaged people to create new careers. Coalfield has implemented its successful “33-6-3” program, under which participants get 33 hours of paid work and job training, six hours of education that results in an associate’s degree, and three hours of life management skills to develop the whole person.

The young visionary who founded Coalfield Development Corporation and gathered other enterprising millennials to be part of its mission over this past decade takes the stage and inspires the crowd with ideas for even more progress. Coalfield’s crews are restoring dilapidated properties and disassembling unusable properties. They are using the high-quality, reclaimed wood for their craft furniture-making enterprise in the WestEdge factory.
In 2016, Coalfield and Huntington deployed the largest solar roof in West Virginia on the WestEdge Factory. With the flip of a switch, it boosted the solar energy capacity in West Virginia by 20 percent. That same year, the community established the Solar Holler Training Institute to train and certify unemployed coal miners in the solar roofing construction trade. These workers are now at the epicenter of a solar roof endeavor that is moving across Appalachia. Huntington loves and often repeats the Solar Holler slogan that we are “mining the sun” for the next generation of clean-energy innovation.

Along with the craft furniture making factory and the solar institute, the WestEdge Factory has a sustainable farming training institute, a music venue, a small business incubator, and a retail store that moves these homemade products into commerce. The work of the Coalfield Development Corporation at WestEdge is now a national example of a project that helped promote economic diversification and community revitalization in the struggling coalfield communities.

The citizens of Huntington end this wonderful anniversary celebration with a festive gala at the restored Keith-Albee Performing Arts Center, a magnificent, Vaudeville-era theater that was restored and made usable again over the past several years. Along with the Huntington Museum of Art, the Huntington Symphony Orchestra, and the Marshall Artists Series, the Keith-Albee theater has made Huntington a regional center for culture and the arts. Many walk to the gala through the bustling Pullman Square shopping and lifestyle center that was opened in 2004 on the site of the failed “Superblock” urban renewal project of the 1970s that demolished this downtown area.
An eclectic group walks to the gala together -- a former addict who now runs the Recovery Point of Huntington rehabilitation center, the CEO of Huntington Steel, a longtime radio personality-turned-local-playwright, the city manager, a married couple who had decorated a slew of local restaurants and a solar roofing technician. “How did Huntington come so far when we were faced with so many challenges?” they ask themselves.

“It was the spark of high-tech entrepreneurs with cool ideas,” says the solar technician. “I think it was partnerships,” says the CEO of Huntington Steel. “It was a spirit of collaboration and lots of community engagement,” the married couple says. The city manager smiles and says, “Yes, it was all this -- a focus on advanced technologies that was built on our heritage of commerce, our partnerships, our commitment to healthy lifestyles and sustainable development. It all made a difference. But what really drove us was the vision of the mayor, a shared vision about who we were and what we could be.”

The riverfront program winds down to a close with the mayor at the podium. He echoes the vision set forth by John F. Kennedy, who came to Huntington in 1960 to declare a new frontier. The vision and progress laid out on this bright day in 2021 are a combination of accomplishments and dreams still pursued, but all of it real and moving forward now. The Tactics & Implementation section of this Community Revitalization Plan will tell you how.
Huntington, West Virginia, is a community with a rich heritage forged by the Ohio River, America’s first railroads, the burgeoning industrial revolution, enlightened educational approaches and strong neighborhoods.

Although much has changed in America and in Huntington since it was settled in 1775 and founded by railroad tycoon Collis P. Huntington in 1871, Huntington’s heritage remains the basis for our strength and opportunities. This heritage will help Huntington overcome its challenges and be the foundation for our future community progress – a gateway community to Appalachia, a center for commerce, an advanced manufacturing and health innovator, a hub of education and philanthropy, and a wonderful place for families. Some highlights of Huntington’s heritage:

**Birth of the Railroads:** The modern City of Huntington was founded by Collis P. Huntington as the western terminus for the Chesapeake & Ohio (C&O) Railway. Collis P. was one of the “Big Four” of western railroading who launched and built the first U.S. transcontinental railroad from here to the Union Pacific Railroad in the West. Huntington was created as a hub for the C&O. Once completed in 1873, the C&O fulfilled a long-held dream of the Virginias to have a rail link from the James River at Richmond and the coal piers on the Virginia coast to the Ohio River Valley and eventually to Cincinnati and Chicago, creating the spine of the modern CSX Railway system. Huntington continues as a major national commercial and transport hub, which will help drive revitalization in places including the distressed West End neighborhoods.
**Jewel of the Ohio River:** Huntington sits on the banks of the mighty Ohio River, which together with the railroads, made Huntington one of the most important hubs for commerce in the region, including for coal, steel and major manufacturing. The Port of Huntington remains the largest inland port in the United States, shipping more than 77 million tons of cargo annually. The Ohio riverfront will continue to be a major force in Huntington's progress moving forward, including new uses such as riverfront parks, recreation, advanced manufacturing and mixed-use innovation, which are all part of our HIP economic strategy.

**We Are Marshall:** Founded as a school in 1837 by a friend of eminent U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall, Marshall University is the driver for education, progress and economic development in Huntington and the Appalachian region. With a major campus in downtown Huntington centered around the original "Old Main" building, Marshall now offers more than 115 associates, baccalaureate, masters, doctoral, medical and other professional degrees to approximately 14,000 students. Marshall's educational excellence, its 20 centers and institutes for research and practical applications, its strong alumni community, and its major role in the regional medical and performing arts sectors make it a critical component of economic progress.

The Marshall Thundering Herd football team is the pride of Huntington, a team of tragedy and triumph that has seen two national championships, 44 consensus All-Americans, and more than 150 alums as professionals in the National Football League. Marshall will be a critical partner in Huntington's ABC economic strategy, particularly in the revitalization of the distressed riverfront neighborhoods in Highlawn and along the Hal Greer Boulevard corridor in the Fairfield West neighborhood. We Are Marshall!

**Great Neighborhoods:** Like many great communities, Huntington is a city of neighborhoods. That is why the Neighborhood Institute of Huntington has been such a big part of our vision and progress. That is also why our Huntington HIP initiatives are neighborhood focused, particularly in our most distressed neighborhoods including Highlawn, the West End and Fairfield West.

**Challenges:** Some of Huntington's history is not as bright and reflects many struggles in the decades following World War II. Huntington boomed between its founding and post-World War II but, like other places, our community has struggled over past decades with major economic decline and social challenges that affect us even today. Huntington reached a manufacturing peak in 1950 with tens of thousands of workers in the chemical, glassworks, steel and locomotive car/parts industries. Likewise, the transport of coal by rail and river barge made Huntington an Appalachian powerhouse in coal transportation, logistics, equipment and service sectors.

However, as the national economy changed, there was a fundamental weakening of the manufacturing and the Appalachian coal-based economic system on which the community was founded and under which it prospered for decades in its heyday. A vicious cycle of long-term, systemic economic decline has produced other social and neighborhood problems. The long, post-war contraction led to a massive population loss over decades from a peak of 86,000 people in 1950 to fewer than 50,000 today. This economic and population loss has resulted in declining neighborhoods and a daunting problem with blighted houses and vacant spaces including contaminated brownfields, which in turn has spurred pervasive poverty.

**According to the Center on Budget and Policy, Huntington ranks as the most poverty-stricken area in the second poorest state in the nation.** While the national poverty rate is 15.4 percent, Huntington's is nearly double that level at 30 percent in poverty. The areas targeted for revitalization under the Huntington HIP project are among the poorest sections of the city, with poverty rates up to a devastating 88 percent in key areas. Further, in some of the most distressed areas of the city, there is now a gap in core retail services, such as grocery stores, banks and other basic services. These troubles have, in turn, led to difficult social challenges.
In addition to being West Virginia’s poorest city, Huntington has also received the Center for Disease Control’s poorest health rating of any metro area in the nation. In a city plagued with economic distress, many residents do not have the time, money or opportunity to focus on health. The poverty-stricken population suffers from extraordinarily high rates of obesity, heart disease and diabetes. Indeed, Huntington was famously but sadly labeled in 2008 as America’s unhealthiest city by the Associated Press and was ranked near the very bottom of the 2010 Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index.

The challenges which Huntington has faced during the past 60 years of economic decline will not hold us back. When the Ohio River Flood of 1937 devastated Huntington, our community joined with President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to build an effective floodwall system and rejuvenate the community. When tragedy struck again in 1970 with the Marshall football plane crash, we pulled together in renewal to proclaim that “We Are Marshall!” and that we will move forward. Huntington and its people are resilient.

More than resilient, we are innovative and proactive about creating an exciting, prosperous and sustainable future. We are coming back and moving forward.
Model for Appalachian Communities: Huntington sits at the gateway to Appalachia, located at the point where West Virginia, Kentucky and Ohio come together as a central hub of the regional economy. Huntington celebrates and cherishes its Appalachian roots at the Heritage Farm Museum & Village, a living farm showcasing Appalachian heritage and serving as a regional cultural tourism resource (and WV’s first Smithsonian affiliate!). www.heritagefarmmuseum.com. Huntington plans to use its HIP revitalization projects to provide economic and job opportunities for the broader region, and to be a model for Appalachian revitalization and economic transition.

Philanthropic Partners: A strong and engaged philanthropic sector has been a key part of Huntington’s progress, and philanthropy will continue to be central to our revitalization. In times that have been rough economically for Huntington, philanthropy has been ready to use impact investing to continue community progress in economic development, education, health, culture, the arts, parks and recreation, and more. Large contributions from donors in Huntington have helped create world-class medical and engineering schools at Marshall University, robust collegiate athletic facilities, and renowned cultural venues including the Huntington Museum of Art and the Keith-Albee Performing Arts Center. Today, the City of Huntington is closely partnered with the Foundation for the Tri-State Community, an institution founded in 1972 that is serving 11 counties in three states.

This heritage of commerce, education, neighborhoods, and philanthropy will form the foundation for our voyage into a new frontier of hip innovation, advanced manufacturing and technology, health innovation, and infrastructure investment. This innovation forms the basis of our community revitalization plan, laid out in the next section.
Huntington’s Revitalization Tactics

In the preceding pages of this report, Huntington lays out a vision for transforming its struggling neighborhoods and blighted sites into a new innovation economy. This new economy will be driven by brownfields revitalization, the Polymer Technology Center of Huntington, the River-to-Rail neighborhood revitalization including the WestEdge Factory, and the Hal Greer Health Innovation Corridor – all connected by high-speed broadband.

These Huntington HIP initiatives will move forward if Huntington is deemed America’s Best Community under the ABC Prize competition in 2016-2017. The ABC Prize will foster even more community engagement and momentum among diverse organizations and citizens. It will attract positive attention and investment from beyond our borders. Further, the prize funding provided by the competition will be critical to Huntington’s effort to fund key planning studies and to match local, state and federal resources for implementation.

This section explains Huntington’s tactics for its HIP community revitalization, organized into these key areas:

- Action plan for the Poly-TeCH Riverfront Revitalization
- Action plan for the West End River-to-Rail Revitalization
- Action plan for the Hal Greer Health Innovation Corridor

Connecting these economic hubs with the Gigabit City broadband deployment

There are a handful of key drivers which characterize the implementation tactics for all three components of the HIP Huntington revitalization:

First, everything is partnership-driven, based on collaboration among diverse public, private, academic and non-profit sectors.

Second, each HIP initiative is focused on transforming the most challenged places in our community, the places marked by brownfields, blight, extreme poverty and lack of opportunity. If Huntington can transform these struggling places, which were once the lifeblood factories and working neighborhoods of the city, the revitalization will continue to spread into all our neighborhoods and beyond.

Third, Huntington’s revitalization approaches will use the brightest ideas and the most innovative development opportunities that America has to offer. Just as Huntington’s river, rail and manufacturing commerce were at the forefront of American growth more than a century ago, Huntington will use advanced manufacturing, renewable energy innovation, technology advances, the most modern infrastructure, the maker movement and other pioneering approaches to drive our “factories of the future.”
**Fourth**, Huntington will ensure that the benefits of the HIP revitalization are available to all and are equitable for our citizens. The endeavor is creating opportunities for a new millennial generation of makers while improving the quality of life of our most traditional neighborhoods.

**Lastly**, Huntington will continue to use the prize proceeds of our America's Best Communities effort to fuel further implementation of the HIP revitalization toward our ultimate vision. Huntington looks forward to the opportunity to be selected in the next round of the ABC Prize competition in early 2016 and will use the $100,000 proceeds from that stage of the contest to turn the corner from initial visions and plans to real implementation. Specifically, Huntington will use that funding plus other leveraged resources to establish a conceptual master plan for the revitalization of the Highlawn brownfields with Poly-TeCH and other development which will be critical in bringing additional users, investors, and businesses to those areas and to create surveys, studies and financial plans to move forward on this Community Revitalization Plan.

Following are detailed implementation plans for the three Huntington HIP revitalization components, as well as the strategy for connecting them with Gigabit broadband infrastructure, each with an outline of tactics using this format:

- **Goal**
- **Background**
- **Objectives**
- **Tactics**
- **Resources + Relationships**
  - **Expected Outcomes + How Success is Measured**
**GOAL:** Huntington will renew riverfront brownfields to launch the “Polymer Technology Center of Huntington” or “Poly-TeCH,” a regional center for the commercialization and advanced manufacturing of polymer technologies, creating hundreds of jobs and an academic and workforce training center with Marshall University. Poly-TeCH will be a 75,000-square-foot, $75-plus million campus on the Ohio River waterfront. It will provide highly-skilled, family-wage jobs; create academic research and learning opportunities for Marshall University students; and incubate advanced polymer manufacturing factories into other vacant spaces in Huntington and the greater Appalachian region. This Poly-TeCH Center will be the hub of mixed-use revitalization in these now-vacant spaces that will include a new baseball stadium, trail facilities, modern housing and commercial development to serve the visitors, workers, residents and Marshall University community in this area.
BACKGROUND: The Poly-TeCH initiative is well underway and has been unveiled publicly. Accomplishments thus far:

**Beginning of Polymer Technologies in Huntington:** In 1986, the West Virginia Development Office helped launch Rubberlite, Inc. in Huntington, a maker of innovative polymer products. Today, the company employs 160 manufacturing workers in a 300,000-square-foot manufacturing center. Rubberlite makes polymers, a chemical product that is ubiquitous in American manufacturing, for the aeronautics, aerospace, consumer electronics, fashion, footwear, additive manufacturing (3D printers) and medical technology industries.

**West Virginia Identifies a Major Opportunity for Job Creation and Business Expansion through Polymers:** In 2014, the West Virginia Development Office and Rubberlite leadership identified a major gap in the Appalachian region and national market – there is no commercialization center for polymer technologies that can help manufacturers bridge the gap between promising polymer research and development breakthroughs and their commercialization, thereby launching into production. West Virginia determined that a polymer commercialization center could attract companies, commercialize new polymer technologies and launch new light manufacturing enterprises. Rubberlite agreed to lead an effort to bring such an advanced polymer technology center into reality in Huntington.
OBJECTIVES: Huntington’s objectives in this HIP target area are to:

Transform brownfields, blight, abandoned factories and vacant spaces into a productive center of commerce and community;

- Create a vibrant, world-class economic hub at the Poly-TeCH center;
- Restore the degraded and inaccessible Ohio River waterfront for public use and recreation;
- Create opportunities for a vibrant, mixed-use district that could include a new baseball stadium, retail and entertainment destinations; and
- Provide job opportunities and quality-of-life improvements for the Highlawn neighborhood.

TACTICS: The Poly-TeCH partnership is poised to move forward with the following plan and key tactics under the timelines and milestones outlined below.

1.) Polymer Partnership Launch: In 2015, Huntington formed a partnership to design, develop and build the polymer technology center among the City of Huntington, the Huntington Municipal Development Authority (city’s development arm), Marshall University, the Marshall University Research Corporation and Rubberlite. **Timeframe: Launched in March 2015**

2.) Targeting Brownfields: The Huntington Polymer team has identified a section of the Highlawn neighborhood, the corridor of long-closed and vacant factories and brownfields along the Ohio River waterfront, as an ideal spot for the creation of the polymer commercialization and manufacturing center along with other economic development opportunities. This area includes the idled American Car Foundry (ACF) complex which had once been the largest rail car manufacturing factory in the nation, the abandoned Ohio River Terminal coal dock/rail facility, and several other sites.

Huntington sought and recently secured the prestigious U.S. EPA Brownfields Area-Wide Planning grant ($200,000) plus another EPA Brownfields Assessment grant ($400,000) in late 2015. These grants will be used to plan and design the productive and sustainable reuse of this brownfields area, plan needed infrastructure upgrades for the area, devise green infrastructure strategies to address stormwater and flooding, and address any environmental contamination issues. In fall 2015, the Huntington Municipal Development Authority is poised to begin obtaining control of the brownfield properties which are targeted for the advanced manufacturing expansion. **Timeframe: Launch of brownfields revitalization effort in January 2016.**

3.) Overall Huntington Plan for the Highlawn Brownfields Revitalization Advances: In 2015, the U.S. EPA designated Huntington for a prestigious brownfields revitalization grant that sparked the riverfront revitalization and followed up by naming Huntington a pilot community in its “Making a Visible Difference in Communities” effort. Under the Making a Visible Difference initiative, the federal government launched a plan to convene officials from up to a dozen agencies in Huntington in December 2015 to forge an inter-agency, inter-governmental, and public-private partnership to bring resources and solutions to the Huntington riverfront revitalization. These plans will include park and recreational facilities, mixed-use commercial, retail and housing development, and a space for a potential new baseball stadium to serve Marshall University and other teams. **Timeline: Brownfield revitalization design development in 2016-2017, with project implementation over the coming years with targeted completion in 2021.**
4.) Poly-TeCH Advances as a Strategy for Appalachian Transition: In summer 2015, the Benedum Foundation and the Appalachian Funder Network provided Huntington $100,000 in grant awards to support the Poly-TeCH initiative as part of a broader strategy to provide highly-skilled jobs to dislocated coal miners under an effort called the “Just Transition” initiative. The Just Transition initiative supports the Obama Administration’s POWER initiative (Partnerships for Opportunity for Workforce and Economic Revitalization), a bipartisan effort to boost economic transition in struggling coal communities like Huntington. This $100,000 in philanthropic investment will be used for feasibility and business planning analyses to ensure that Poly-TECH can serve local and regional needs and succeed as an enterprise. **Timeframe:** Feasibility and market studies for Poly-TeCH to be conducted by the Marshall University Center for Business & Economic Research from mid-September 2015 to January 2016.

5.) Land Acquisition: The Huntington Municipal Development Authority will use EPA funding already secured to do environmental/brownfields due diligence and to address any contamination issues. Huntington is moving forward on cooperative efforts with the landowners to acquire or dedicate these prime properties for reuse for Poly-TeCH and other community revitalization. **Timeframe:** 2016-2017

6.) Infrastructure Upgrades: Huntington plans to upgrade the infrastructure in this targeted riverfront revitalization area to support Poly-TeCH and other revitalization, including high-speed broadband, complete street improvements to roadways, and green infrastructure deployment to handle stormwater runoff and flooding in this area. The City and HMDA will take the lead on infrastructure upgrades, potentially using Tax Increment Financing, municipal bonding, state and federal grants, and other resources to transform this blighted brownfields area. **Timeframe:** 2017-2018

7.) Design & Engineering of Poly-TeCH Campus: The Huntington Polymer Team will work with skilled architects and community planners to design and engineer a state-of-the-art, green Poly-TeCH campus to be a center for learning, workforce development and business expansion. At the same time, the design process will use community input to open up this area of the Ohio River waterfront to public access and use through the continuation of the Paul Ambrose Trail for Health. The integration of the Poly-TeCH campus will also include mixed-use development in the brownfield area such as a new Marshall University baseball stadium, new hotel facilities, a retail entertainment area and potential expansion of Marshall University. **Timeframe:** 2017

8.) Construction, Launch & Operation: Over 2016-2017, the Huntington Polymer Team will hone its strategy for financing the construction and sustaining the operation of the Poly-TeCH campus through a combination of public, university, private sector equity and debt investments which may be backed with federal/state financing guarantees and incentives. Huntington will then launch the construction of Poly-TeCH and prepare for an exciting ribbon-cutting and commencement of advanced manufacturing operations. **Timeframe:** 2018-2020

**RESOURCES + RELATIONSHIPS**

**Resources:** The revitalization of the riverfront and the launch of the Poly-TeCH initiative will require a robust public-private-academic partnership to leverage resources for planning, design, construction and operation.

**Secured:** Huntington has already secured resources, including $600,000 in U.S. EPA Brownfields grant funding; $100,000 from the Benedum Foundation and Appalachia Funders Network; $25,000 in matching grant resources from Rubberlite, Inc.; $100,000 from the Huntington Municipal Development Authority; and tremendous levels of in-kind staff time from the local partners described below.
**Planned:** Huntington intends to seek additional funding to carry out the plan that will potentially include EPA Brownfield Cleanup grants, U.S. Economic Development Administration’s Public Works and Regional Innovation Strategy grants for Poly-TeCH development and infrastructure upgrades; local Tax Increment Financing proceeds for infrastructure and site upgrades; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Community Facilities and Business & Industry grants and loans for Poly-TeCH construction; West Virginia Infrastructure and Jobs Development Council grants and loans for Poly-TeCH construction; and New Market Tax Credits for Poly-TeCH construction.

**KEY PARTNER ROLES:**

- **City of Huntington** – Leverage resources and relationships, upgrade infrastructure
- **Huntington Municipal Development Authority** – Acquire and upgrade brownfield lands for new Poly-TeCH campus and surrounding mixed-use revitalization
- **Water Quality Board** – Design and deploy green infrastructure to manage stormwater and flooding
- **Marshall University** – Partner in funding and operating Poly-TeCH, lead on integration of university faculty and students in operation of Poly-TeCH, and training of students and workers for polymer sector
- **Marshall University Research Corporation (including the Center for Business & Economic Research and the WV Brownfields Assistance Center)** – Support in planning, feasibility studies, market assessments, and Poly-TeCH design
- **West Virginia Development Office** – Funding support and role in attraction of polymer companies to participate in commercialization and manufacturing initiatives at Poly-TeCH
- **Rubberlite** – Support in Poly-TeCH design and operational setup, support for participating business attraction, funding support
- **Appalachia Funders Network/Benedum Foundation** – Funding support, implementation planning, and help ensuring that Poly-TeCH provides economic support for broader regional needs and goals
- **Federal Agencies** – U.S. EPA, Economic Development Administration, and Corps of Engineers as project funders, and technical assistance on best practices for reuse of brownfields for innovative advanced manufacturing.
EXPECTED OUTCOMES + HOW SUCCESS IS MEASURED: Each quarter, the Huntington Polymer team will convene with City of Huntington leadership to evaluate progress, track milestones, evaluate ways to improve performance and outcomes, and report progress (or challenges) to key stakeholders in the public. Key milestones will include:

- Success in meeting timelines for land acquisition, infrastructure upgrades, campus design and engineering, commencement of construction, and completion of construction;
- Amount of investment attracted for construction of $75-plus million Poly-TeCH campus;
- Number of polymer companies or projects, and amount of investment, attracted to the future Poly-TeCH campus;
- Number of new jobs created and workers employed each year at Poly-TeCH operation from 2016-2021;
- Number of Marshall University faculty and students involved at Poly-TeCH;
- Degree to which community stakeholders are satisfied with Huntington’s ability to create a riverfront revitalization and Poly-TeCH campus that is green, walkable, accessible, and integrated with the surrounding neighborhood.
West End
River-To-Rail Revitalization

**GOAL:** Huntington will continue the “River-to-Rail Revitalization” in the West End to reduce blight, renew streetscapes, boost a healthy local foods campaign, redevelop old warehouses and brownfields with spin-off businesses from the Heartland Intermodal Gateway, and create quality jobs through the Coalfield Development Corporation’s new “WestEdge Factory” and its innovative “Solar Holler Training Institute.”
**West End**

**River-To-Rail Revitalization cont.**

**Huntington Launches River-to-Rail initiative for West End Revitalization:** When Mayor Steve Williams took office in 2013, he worked with the community to launch the “River-to-Rail” initiative. The goals of this initiative are to help transform the West End of Huntington with job creation, blight elimination, crime reduction and rejuvenation of the Central City commercial district of the West End with the Central City Market and neighboring antique shops on 14th Street West. River-to-Rail projects include streetscape revitalization, raingarden and green infrastructure upgrades and community beautification. Guided by a grassroots task force of engaged citizens, the River-to-Rail participants will continue to guide overall efforts in this section of the community.

**Coalfield Development Corporation:** Formed in 2009 as a not-for-profit organization, Coalfield is a community-based organization that provides affordable homes, creates quality jobs and generates opportunities for low-income families in southern West Virginia ([www.Coalfield-Development.org](http://www.Coalfield-Development.org)). It is a social enterprise that trains low-income people in the Appalachian region to learn highly-skilled jobs that are focused on reclaiming high-value materials from dilapidated buildings. Those materials are then turned into materials for construction reuse, creating craft furniture, restoring affordable housing and commercial business structures and deploying solar photovoltaic roofs on buildings owned by a variety of entities. Coalfield uses the “33-6-3” model, under which participants each week work for 33 hours for pay, receive 6 hours of associate’s degree education and obtain 3 hours of life and personal management skills to ensure development of the whole person.

**Solar Holler:** Solar Holler is a small, social enterprise company that finds innovative ways to finance solar roofs for civic, not-for-profit, charitable and affordable housing organizations, thus mining sustainable clean energy to save money for better uses ([www.SolarHoller.com](http://www.SolarHoller.com)). After completing successful projects on a church roof in Shepherdstown, WV and a library roof in Harpers Ferry, WV, Solar Holler is now launching its most ambitious project to date, having found an innovative financing approach that will deploy a 400 kilowatt solar roof on Coalfield Development Corporation’s WestEdge Factory. It will provide clean energy and monetary savings for the revitalization of Huntington’s West End. When the WestEdge roof begins operation in 2016, the solar energy capacity of West Virginia will increase by 20 percent with the flip of one switch. On Oct. 1, 2015, Solar Holler began its worker training program for solar roofing at the WestEdge Factory, with 15 workers and three supervisors training to be solar roofing experts for the roof on top of WestEdge and for dozens more solar roofs in southern West Virginia.
WestEdge Factory: After the Corbin Ltd. garment factory went bankrupt in 2003 and let 500 workers go at its factory in Huntington, its 450,000-square-foot building sat vacant for more than a decade. The community called in the salvage work crews in training at Coalfield Development Corporation to take it down, but Coalfield envisioned something different and better – creating a hub for craft enterprise that can put people in the region back to work. Coalfield obtained a $350,000 grant from Art Place America and leveraged other resources to buy and begin restoring the building. WestEdge is now the headquarters for Coalfield’s building reclamation operations, and plans are set for a much grander endeavor, as described below.

Central City Market: The city joined forces with innovative nonprofit organizations to transform the old Central City Market into a hub for fresh, locally-grown food. The Wild Ramp, which moved its consignment-based market from downtown Huntington to the Central City Market in May 2014, has teamed up with the Cabell County Tailgate Farmer’s Market to sell healthy, locally-grown foods to the community year-round. The Wild Ramp now has more than 150 producers from within a 250-mile radius, but approximately 75 percent of those producers come from within a 50-mile radius www.WildRamp.org.

Heartland Intermodal Gateway: Even bigger revitalization is possible for this neighborhood with the launch in November 2015 of the Heartland Intermodal Gateway. Strategically located between Norfolk, Va., and Chicago, this intermodal rail-truck facility just 12 miles south of Huntington will have direct access to the trade routes of 50 international shipping lines. This will create massive opportunities for warehousing, distribution, logistics, light manufacturing and product assembly in the region. It also bodes well for the empty warehouse space and lots in Huntington’s West End. As a result, Huntington will conduct a feasibility study to determine how to assemble and re-purpose these vacant sites for new commercial activities and job centers associated with the Heartland Intermodal Gateway’s rail and highway transportation opportunities.

OBJECTIVES: Huntington’s objectives in this HIP target area are to:

1.) Complete the reconstruction of the WestEdge Factory as a regional jobs training, empowerment and social enterprise center;

2.) Establish the Solar Holler Training Institute at WestEdge;

3.) Begin transforming buildings across Huntington and the Appalachian region with energy-saving solar roofs, and continue transforming lives by putting people into family-wage jobs with these projects;

4.) Create new spin-off businesses and jobs from the Heartland Intermodal Gateway;

5.) Improve quality of life through brownfields and blight removal, streetscape revitalization on 14th Street West, and healthy foods opportunities emerging from the Central City Market.
TACTICS: Huntington is teamed with the River-to-Rail Revitalization Task Force, The Wild Ramp, Coalfield Development Corporation, Heartland Intermodal Gateway and other partners to accomplish West End revitalization. The plan and milestones:

1.) Planning Funds from the Benedum Foundation and Appalachia Funder Network: These two philanthropies believe that the WestEdge Factory and Solar Holler endeavors can be a major force for economic diversification and job creation in Appalachia. These funders have provided $75,000 in resources to Coalfield to move this model of social enterprise forward. This funding will be used for critical planning for WestEdge. **Timeframe: Fall 2015**

2.) Plan for WestEdge Restoration: In November 2015, the City of Huntington and Coalfield submitted a grant to the U.S. Economic Development Administration to conduct a feasibility study and to craft the plan for how to fully restore the old garment factory. The vision calls for a craft furniture-making factory using wood and other materials reclaimed from Coalfield’s building de-construction crews and a Solar Holler Training Institute that will train low-income workers to become skilled work crews for construction of solar roofs for a variety of entities in Huntington and throughout West Virginia. **Timeframe: Spring 2016.**

3.) WestEdge Factory Construction: Huntington and Coalfield plan to use Economic Development Administration grants, HUD loan guarantees, secured bank lending and other resources for a $2 million restoration of the old garment factory for the envisioned WestEdge Factory, including the woodworking shop, the craft-furniture factory, the solar training institute, an incubator-education space for sustainable farmers, a music studio and performance space and a retail store that can market and move these hand-crafted goods. **Timeframe: Mid-2016 to Mid-2017**

4.) Solar Enterprise: There currently are no solar roofing contractors in Huntington or anywhere in the broader region. The Huntington team views the Solar Holler/WestEdge Factory as the headquarters of what can be a major solar enterprise that will train dislocated coal miners and other struggling workers to be a solar roofing workforce. Because these solar roofing projects are revenue-producing and because demand for these services is growing in the Huntington region, this plan can be put into action, but only by completing the WestEdge factory to create a viable headquarters for this enterprise. **Timeframe: 2016-beyond**

5.) Vacant Building Reuse: Huntington will use planning funding provided by the U.S. Department of Commerce and U.S. Economic Development Administration to conduct a study by Marshall’s Center for Business and Economic Research. It will also support action by the Huntington Area Development Council and the Huntington Municipal Development Authority to acquire, assemble, rehabilitate or demolish these former factories and warehouses and put them back into productive use. A key opportunity is to channel spin-off businesses from the new Heartland Intermodal Gateway into these West End spaces for transportation, logistics, distribution and light-manufacturing uses.

6.) Streetscape Revitalization of the West End Core on 14th Street West: The River-to-Rail Task Force and other community partners intend to use investments from Chase Bank, funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and other resources to conduct commercial façade improvements, streetscape upgrades, rain garden deployment and other beautification to the 14th Street West commercial district.
**RESOURCES + RELATIONSHIPS**

**Resources:**

**Secured:** Huntington/Coalfield have already secured resources including $350,000 in ArtPlace America funding, $75,000 in Just Transition funding from the Appalachia Funding Network and the Benedum Foundation, and $800,000 in U.S. Department of Health and Human Service funding for job training. The River-to-Rail Revitalization is being supported with $120,000 of investments from Chase Bank aimed at 14th Street West improvements.

**Planned:** Huntington intends to use $1-plus million in U.S. Department of Commerce/Economic Development Administration funding for improvements to WestEdge and construction and establishment of the Solar Holler Training Institute. A portion of this EDA funding will also support the effort to repurpose idled buildings and vacant lots for spin-off businesses from the Heartland Intermodal Gateway.

**KEY PARTNER ROLES:**

- **City of Huntington** – Applicant for EDA resources to invest in WestEdge planning and construction
- **River-to-Rail Task Force** – This grassroots task force of neighborhood, nonprofit, business and civic leaders from the West End will continue to guide and support the revitalization of this neighborhood, including through the WestEdge Factory and Solar Holler initiatives
- **Coalfield Development Corporation** – Leader of the social enterprise that is creating WestEdge and training its high-skills workers
- **Solar Holler** – a company dedicated to bringing solar photovoltaic to civic, non-profit, affordable housing, and other roofs of organizations using innovative and affordable financing models
- **Marshall University Research Corporation’s Center for Business & Economic Research** – conducting business feasibility and planning support for WestEdge and the broader West End revitalization
- **Huntington Area Development Council** – this non-profit economic and industrial development organization will help recruit new business investment into the vacant spaces in the West End which will be attracted by the new Heartland Intermodal Gateway and WestEdge factory innovation
- **Appalachia Funders Network / Benedum Foundation** – Funding support for implementation planning
EXPECTED OUTCOMES + HOW SUCCESS IS MEASURED: The City of Huntington will work with its River-to-Rail task force and Coalfield Development Corporation to track, evaluate and disseminate information on progress and outcomes, gauged by milestones which include:

- **Extent of the suitmaking factory building converted to full envisioned use for Coalfield’s and Solar Holler’s social enterprise activities;**
- **Number and level of craft furniture production from WestEdge;**
- **Number of solar roofs installed by Coalfield crews, in terms of roof sizes, kilowatts capacity, distribution among different kinds of buildings, and money saved by entities with the new roofs;**
- **Number of workers, including wage levels, who succeed in becoming trained in solar roofing and craft furniture-making, and number who succeed in maintaining full employment levels**
- **Number of facade improvements on 14th Street West and other key corridors**
- **Number of blighted houses rehabilitated, demolished or otherwise improved**
- **Number of rain gardens installed and urban trees planted in the neighborhood**
Hal Greer Health Innovation Corridor

**GOAL:** To renew the one-mile Hal Greer Boulevard corridor into Huntington as a “Health Innovation Corridor” that connects key health, medical, academic, and research centers and fosters an expansion of the health innovation sector for both Huntington and the Appalachian region. This Health Innovation Corridor will also create a healthy and connected community in some of Huntington’s most distressed areas with a walkable and green roadway reconstruction of Hal Greer Boulevard. In addition, it will transform the outdated Northcott Court public housing complex into a sustainable mixed-use development of affordable housing, student housing, and the first grocery store in this economically distressed minority neighborhood.

Rendering courtesy of Alex Nelson
OBJECTIVES: Huntington’s objectives in this HIP target area are to:

1.) Renew the Northcott Court public housing slums with a new, sustainable mixed-use center that includes a quality grocery store, housing for Marshall medical students and faculty, and a mix of affordable housing for residents of the Fairfield West neighborhood.

2.) Improve the safety, beauty and sustainability along a key one-mile segment of Hal Greer Boulevard by designing and constructing complete street upgrades including walkability and biking improvements, traffic calming, and green infrastructure for stormwater and other ecological improvements.

3.) Craft and implement a plan for improvements and expansion of the A.D. Lewis Community Center.

4.) Enhance the partnership among the City, Cabell Huntington Hospital, St. Mary’s Medical Center, Marshall University, Marshall Medical School, the Huntington Housing Authority, the private medical sector and others, to create a more robust health innovation corridor that connects these entities through research, collaborative community and regional projects. The involvement of all will lead to the creation of a healthier Fairfield West neighborhood.
TACTICS: The Fairfield West neighborhood along Hal Greer Boulevard is poised for positive transformation under this plan:

1.) Safe Streets & Neighborhoods Strategy: After violent crime and open air drug activity in the neighborhoods located along Hal Greer Boulevard reached a peak in 2005 with the deaths of four high school students, Huntington adopted an aggressive community policing and “Weed and Seed” approach to public safety in this neighborhood. This resulted in a 35 percent decrease in drug offenses and 28 percent decrease in violent crime in this neighborhood. Huntington plans to enhance neighborhood safety even further now with targeted police patrols that will be directed via high-tech GIS and data analytics. As Huntington moves into more pro-active “seeding” approaches of urban and neighborhood revitalization, the Police Department will continue this robust community policing approach. **Timeframe: Launched in 2005, ongoing**

2.) Removal of Blighted and Problematic Housing: The Huntington Housing Authority, Housing Development Corporation, Huntington Urban Renewal Authority, the city’s Code Enforcement Unit, the Huntington Land Bank and other partners are partnering on a major effort to acquire blighted and dilapidated houses. They will be transformed into livable, affordable housing. Since 2011, Huntington Urban Renewal Authority has acquired 30 dilapidated houses and, working with Habitat for Humanity and the Housing Development Corporation, the community has created more than 50 affordable duplex and multi-family units. In 2013, Huntington developed and approved new smart-growth zoning and established the Fairfield West Redevelopment Plan. The tipping point has now come with the decision and steady action to demolish and remove the blighted, crime-plagued, 1940s barrack-style Northcott Court public housing complex centrally located on Hal Greer Boulevard. The first demolitions came in 2014, and this removal continues today. **Timeframe: Ongoing, with focused removal of remainder of empty public housing units in 2016-2017.**

3.) Northcott Revitalization: The ultimate plan for Hal Greer revitalization is to take advantage of the prime location and 25,000 daily traffic count at the old Northcott Court area to create a new, mixed-use, sustainable development to serve the neighborhood. Huntington is moving forward on a plan to partner with the Huntington Housing Authority, Marshall University, its medical school, and the private sector for the construction of a mixed-housing center that includes Marshall medical faculty and student housing plus affordable housing, atop a grocery store that would serve this neighborhood. This project would also expand and improve the A.D. Lewis Community Center, a gathering, recreational, and education center across Hal Greer Boulevard from Northcott Court. **Timeframe: Partnership with private sector for project development in 2017-2018.**

4.) Creating a Health Innovation Corridor: Huntington is a major hub of health and medical innovation for the Tri-State region of West Virginia, Kentucky and Ohio, with an astounding 34,260 jobs in medicine, health care, and medical research in the metropolitan area. This accounts for more than 30 percent of the total jobs in the region. This health sector is anchored by Cabell Huntington Hospital, St. Mary’s Medical Center, the Marshall Medical School, the Center for Rural Health and several health and medical providers. Huntington seeks to expand this health and medical sector further with a focus on collaboration among these key institutions. This is pivotal along the one-mile stretch of Hal Greer Boulevard where these health institutions are anchored, because these health entities can play a critical role in renewing the troubled neighborhoods around Hal Greer Boulevard and become a major force in its economic transformation.
5.) **Greening the Hal Boulevard Corridor for Community Health:** An effective health corridor is more than growing the medical and health-related institutions on the roadway. It is also about creating a neighborhood that is more walkable, green and livable. As Huntington prepares to move forward on expansion of the medical buildings and the revitalization of Northcott Court, the city will also develop a plan to transform the wide, unsafe Hal Greer Corridor into a “complete street” with wider sidewalks, traffic calming measures, crosswalks, a dedicated bike lane, and streetscaping that incorporates an expanded urban tree canopy and green infrastructure for stormwater management. Huntington’s transportation planning organization launched an effort in fall 2015 to craft a plan for addressing stormwater challenges at this troubled spot.

During the next year, Huntington will use local funding and transportation grants to conduct a community-driven process to transform Hal Greer into a complete street. Huntington will seek U.S. DOT TIGER grant funding, and potentially use tax increment financing, to construct the complete street transformation in 2018-2020. **Timeframe:** Community design of Northcott Court revitalization and Hal Greer complete street in 2016-2017; public-private partnership for Northcott confirmed and transportation funding and financing established in 2017-2018; construction in 2018-2020.

**RESOURCES + RELATIONSHIPS**

**Resources:**

**Secured:** Already, millions of dollars of local funding from the Huntington Housing Authority, the Huntington Urban Renewal Authority, and other city agencies are being used along with Low Income Housing Tax Credits and other public resources for the blight removal and community rebuilding process.

**Planned:** Huntington will consider the establishment of a tax increment financing district to fund a bulk of the complete street and other infrastructure upgrades needed to transform the Hal Greer Boulevard corridor, and to leverage these funds with state and federal transportation infrastructure grants, notably a planned effort to secure a 2017 U.S. DOT TIGER grant.
KEY PARTNER ROLES:

**City of Huntington** – Complete street design and improvements, leadership on design and support of Northcott Court revitalization

**Huntington Housing Authority and the Huntington Housing Development Corporation** – Continued leadership in the creation of new affordable and mixed-income housing in the neighborhoods surrounding Hal Greer Boulevard

**Marshall University and the Marshall Medical School** – Partnership with city and private sector for construction of mixed-use center with student housing.

**Cabell Huntington Hospital / St. Mary’s Medical Center** – At the time that this Community Revitalization Plan was completed, these two health systems were in the process of merging, so that they can better continue and further expand their roles in creating a health innovation community. These roles will be vital to the HIP revitalization of Huntington, as these health systems are major drivers of job creation at all levels, innovators in healthy living approaches, and key participants in neighborhood and community improvements in Huntington’s neighborhoods.

**Fairfield West Improvement Council** – The Fairfield West Improvement Council is the neighborhood association for this area and will work with other key partners to achieve the redevelopment goals.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES + HOW SUCCESS IS MEASURED: The City will work with the health-care institutions, Marshall University and neighborhood groups to regularly track, access, disseminate and evaluate information on the following factors:

- Levels of continued crime and drug activity reductions;
- Number of blighted and uninhabitable housing structures removed;
- Number of affordable housing units created;
- Levels of commitment of key partners for Northcott revitalization plan;
- Levels of commitment by key partners for Hal Greer complete street transformation;
- Effectiveness in leveraging funding and reaching milestones on design, engineering, and construction of Northcott revitalization and Hal Greer upgrade;
- Number of urban trees and green infrastructure facilities deployed in revitalization projects;
- WalkScore level increases on corridor after implementation of projects; and
- Number of new health and medical sector jobs created for all skill levels along the Hal Greer Health Innovation Corridor.
GOAL: The City of Huntington will partner with the private sector to design, engineer, fund and construct a $24 million, gigabit-speed broadband upgrade on key corridors and targeted areas that have already been identified by the “Gigabit City” initiative sponsored by the West Virginia Broadband Development Council. This upgrade will connect established broadband hotspots at Marshall University, Cabell Huntington Hospital and St. Mary’s Medical Center to newly-deployed gigabit infrastructure in downtown Huntington, the Poly-TeCH riverfront area, the Hal Greer Health Innovation corridor and the West End revitalization areas.

BACKGROUND:

In 2013, the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission issued a “Gigabit City Challenge” calling on all states to have at least one city with gigabit-speed Internet access in the short-term. The State of West Virginia and its Broadband Development Council chose Huntington as its pilot city and, in 2014, a gigabit feasibility study was developed. It has a city-wide broadband viability analysis, street-by-street network geospatial mapping analysis with initial design scenarios, a network-cost analysis, a demand and use analysis, and a pricing plan analysis for capital debt service and operations.

This Huntington Gigabit City pilot feasibility study has identified a core gigabit deployment that would cost an estimated $24 million that would be feasible from a physical and financial standpoint. Huntington is excited that the most feasible areas for a Huntington gigabit broadband deployment are the very areas targeted for HIP economic revitalization – the manufacturing innovation area along the Ohio River in Highlawn, the Hal Greer Health Innovation Corridor, and the West End revitalization area, along with the core downtown and the Marshall University campus and hospitals. Since the completion of the Gigabit City study, Huntington has considered how it will work with private sector broadband developers and providers to explore the potential for a public-private partnership to implement this Gigabit City initiative.

OBJECTIVES:

1.) Deploy gigabit-speed broadband infrastructure to key commercial, educational, and health assets, including areas targeted for revitalization under the HIP community revitalization plan;

2.) Use Gigabit City progress to attract the best and brightest companies, entrepreneurs, millennials and investors to Huntington.
**TACTICS:** Huntington is ready to move forward on implementing the Gigabit City program to connect and unleash our key economic hubs, including the three priority areas identified in this Huntington Implementation Plan/HIP project.

1.) **Establish “Dig-Once” Policies and Requirements:** The City of Huntington will identify how to implement “dig-once” policies and requirements that ensure that roadway improvements, streetscape improvements, stormwater infrastructure upgrades, sewer and water upgrades, and other public works projects are coordinated with the gigabit broadband deployment to ensure cost efficiencies. **Timeframe: By end-2016**

2.) **Establish Public-Private Partnership:** Huntington will form a partnership with a private sector broadband developer/operator for the Gigabit City deployment, with agreements on priority deployment areas, financing, price/rate agreements, and operation. The City expects a robust response to its offer for a partnership, and looks forward to seeing which providers wish to be on the frontier of broadband deployment in this region. **Timeframe: Request for statements of interest from developers/providers issued by City by mid-2017, proposals considered in mid-2017, negotiations and MOU agreements completed by end of 2017.**

3.) **Design & Engineer the Network:** In 2017, Huntington will team with key entities in Huntington including the leadership of the HIP projects, Marshall University, the hospital and health providers on the Hal Greer Corridor, the Huntington Regional Chamber of Commerce and others to confirm the priority areas for broadband implementation. Huntington will facilitate a plan for public-private financing to conduct a more thorough design and engineering of the broadband deployment. **Timeframe: 2017-2018**

4.) **Funding the Deployment:** A key task will be to establish the funding/financing model that will be used for the expected $24 million deployment, which could include municipal bonding, TIF financing, private equity and debt contributions to be repaid with rate returns, and/or grants from the West Virginia Broadband Development Council and/or U.S. Department of Agriculture. **Timeframe: 2017-2018**

5.) **Deployment:** Huntington will seek to have the gigabit system deployed in 2018-2021, and will take advantage of dig-once opportunities at key project areas.

**RESOURCES + RELATIONSHIPS**

**Resources:** Huntington was already designated the pilot community for the West Virginia Gigabit City initiative, and the City and its partners have established a comprehensive feasibility study. Huntington now seeks to leverage local bonding/financing tools, together with a private sector partner’s resources along with potential state and federal grants and finance incentives, for the design and deployment of the system.
KEY PARTNER ROLES:

City of Huntington – Form public-private partnership; convene community to confirm priority deployment areas; role in funding/financing

Marshall University: – Major user of gigabit broadband, support for design project

West Virginia Broadband Development Council – Guidance on deployment design; potential funder, along with USDA

Private Sector Partner: Key role in design, engineering, funding, deployment and long-term operations

EXPECTED OUTCOMES + HOW SUCCESS IS MEASURED: The Huntington Gigabit City team will regularly track, assess, report, and evaluate for improvements the following milestones and targets:

- **Number of households, businesses, students, health care providers and institutions reached with gigabit speed broadband**
- **Role of gigabit deployments in boosting HIP initiatives on Ohio Riverfront, Hal Greer, and West End;**
- **Additional private sector economic investment in areas that obtain gigabit access**
Engaging Huntington &
the Appalachian Region

The vision and action strategy for the Huntington HIP revitalization has emerged from a robust, ongoing community engagement process that has truly energized the city. This Community Revitalization Plan serves as a record of a key touchstone point in the Huntington endeavor to move these initiatives to fruition and to create real benefit for all citizens. Moreover, Huntington seeks to use HIP to benefit the Tri-State region, and to be a model for economic transition and vibrancy in the Appalachian region around us. Huntington also notes that, although this document was drafted as part of the city’s participation in the America’s Best Communities Prize competition, the City aims to have it serve as a guiding force in our economic revitalization efforts, no matter how that ABC Prize may turn out.

This final section of the plan describes how Huntington is engaging its citizens, neighborhoods, key organizations and the broader region in an effort to create America’s best community. It explains how Huntington has:

1.) Organized a Strong Leadership Team to craft Huntington’s HIP Community Revitalization Plan;
2.) Engaged Key Organizations, Stakeholders, and Citizens to inform and enhance the Huntington HIP plan;
3.) Utilized Project Teams to propel the key HIP initiatives;
4.) Used Traditional and Social Media to boost community knowledge and participation in the HIP revitalization;
5.) Leveraged Additional Investment into the Huntington HIP revitalization; and
6.) Spread the excitement to the broader Appalachian region
The Huntington HIP Revitalization and the ABC Prize endeavor was led and coordinated by Huntington Mayor Steve Williams, Foundation for the Tri-State Community Director Mary Witten Wiseman, City Manager Margaret Mary Layne, City of Huntington Communications Director Bryan Chambers, and community revitalization consultant Matt Ward of the national firm Sustainable Strategies DC. This core group was the best able to inspire community participation, facilitate the creation of a vision, and mobilize resources for implementation. This core group formulated key concepts for the initiative, convened key entities and individuals to lead core projects and components, facilitated public engagement and interaction, and led the drafting of this Community Revitalization Plan. This core team conducted substantial interaction with key City of Huntington departmental leads and their staff to discuss and plan the HIP revitalization, including the city’s Director of Economic Development, Tom Bell, and its Director of Planning and Community Development, Charles Holley.

The leadership team was guided by a robust and diverse team of public, private, academic and non-profit representatives who formed the ABC Executive Work Group. The Work Group held, in-depth workshop meetings to review, discuss, and confirm Huntington HIP concepts and plans, and to ensure that these plans were realistic, achievable, and connected to real community needs. The Work Group also engaged heavily in HIP plan drafting and review. These organizations are at the forefront of Huntington’s revitalization, and closely tuned to the needs of the economically distressed neighborhoods and struggling citizens who most need this endeavor to succeed. The Work Group was composed of the following representatives:

- **Tom Bell, Director**  
  Huntington Municipal Development Authority
- **Bryan Chambers, Communications Director**  
  City of Huntington
- **Cathy Burns, President**  
  Huntington Regional Chamber of Commerce
- **Michele Craig, Executive Director**  
  Region II Planning & Development Council / KYOVA Interstate Planning Commission
- **Ed Dawson, Executive Editor/Publisher**  
  The Herald-Dispatch Newspaper
- **Brandon Dennison, Executive Director**  
  Coalfield Development Corporation
- **Mike Emerson, CEO**  
  Huntington Steel
- **Buffy Hammers, Executive Director**  
  Marshall Health / Marshall Medical School
- **Charles Holley, Director**  
  Huntington Department of Planning & Development
- **Brandi Jacobs-Jones, Chief of Staff & SVP for Operations**  
  Marshall University
- **Margaret Mary Layne, City Manager**  
  City of Huntington
Huntington HIP Team cont.

- Vicki Lester, Executive Director
- Alan Letton, President
- David Lieving, Executive Director
- John Maher, Executive Director
- Bishop Samuel Moore
- Reverend Franklin Murphy, President
- Bob Plymale, Associate Vice President
- Wendy Thomas, Retired Educator
- Matt Ward, CEO
- Monte Ward, Chief Financial Officer
- Steve Williams, Mayor
- Mary Witten Wiseman, Executive Director
- Huntington Housing Authority
- Rubberlite, Inc.
- Huntington Area Development Council
- Marshall University Research Corporation
- Huntington Black Pastors Ministerial Association / Fairfield West community
- Huntington Black Pastors Ministerial Association / Fairfield West community
- Marshall University Research Corporation for Economic Development / WV State Senator
- Fairfield West community leader
- Sustainable Strategies DC
- Cabell Huntington Hospital
- City of Huntington
- Foundation for the Tri-State Community
Community Engagement

With a strong concept for the Huntington HIP revitalization approach formed by the core team and the Work Group, Huntington took the concept to the broader public, to obtain input and guidance from key organizations, stakeholders and citizens. This community engagement included:

**Community Stakeholders:** Huntington has engaged 80+ key stakeholders representing neighborhoods, organizations, institutions, business, local government, non-profit and other entities who have been convened, consulted, and kept in the loop on the development of the Huntington HIP revitalization. These folks are also our representatives out in the community engaging citizens on the HIP revitalization and its progress. This diverse group includes local officials, Marshall University stakeholders, economic development and planning organizations, labor unions, manufacturers, business leaders, health and hospital leaders, infrastructure agencies, public safety officials, the media, transportation entities, philanthropic foundations, healthy foods non-profits, art and cultural organizations, banks, realtors, railroads, maker movement organizations, churches, housing authorities, state and federal elected representatives, and others representing the assets, diversity, and hope of Huntington. Huntington has a well-crafted contact database that enables us to reach out to these key stakeholders on a regular basis about our plans, progress, and needs for community input.

**Public Meetings:** Huntington has conducted a series of public and key stakeholder meetings, with information and outreach provided by both traditional and social media, to discuss the concepts and plans for Huntington HIP. This includes a kick-off workshop and another held two weeks before Huntington and the Tri-State Foundation submitted the community's ABC Prize plan, at which the team convened our stakeholders to unveil the final plan, take input, and build the community excitement for this effort.

**Common Story Forum:** Huntington convened in August 2015 a “Common Story” forum led by the Marshall Center for Business and Economic Research, which brought together 25 representatives from key entities to identify the most important community values, needs and ideas that were shared among the Huntington community, and to discuss how these perspectives aligned with the Huntington HIP plan. These stakeholders met as a group, and also broke into five task forces to discuss the most important concerns and needs in the community, and the keys to enabling progress and changes on those concerns. This session focused on a wide range of topics including livability, economic development, jobs, housing, infrastructure, education, workforce development, crime, taxation, and other issues.
Community Engagement cont.

The Common Story forum identified clear priorities among this diverse group of community stakeholders, who conveyed that "economic development", "jobs" and "livability" were the most important areas and keys to success for Huntington’s future. Importantly, the Common Story group confirmed that the core Huntington HIP initiatives – the Polymer Technology Center and riverfront brownfields revitalization, the Hal Greer Health Innovation Corridor, the West End River-to-Rail Revitalization, and the Gigabit City deployment – could provide tremendous benefits and forward progress for Huntington on these core issues of economic development, jobs and livability. The Common Story workshop was memorialized and analyzed in a 27-page report provided by the Marshall Center for Business and Economic Research, a report which informed this HIP revitalization plan. The participants in the Common Story forum included among others:

- Mayor Steve Williams
- Barnes Agency (communications firm)
- Coalfield Development Corporation
- Create Huntington
- Foundation for the Tri-State Community
- The Herald-Dispatch
- Huntington City Council Members
- City of Huntington, City Manager
- City of Huntington, Communications Director
- City of Huntington, Director of Planning and Community Development
- Huntington Municipal Development Authority
- Huntington Area Development Council
- Huntington Steel
- Huntington Urban Redevelopment Authority
- Marshall University
- Marshall University Research Corporation
- Marshall University Health Systems
- Neighborhood Institute of Huntington
- Recovery Point
- Walnut Hills Action Team
- West Huntington Neighborhood Association
- West Virginia State Delegate
- West Virginia State Senator
- Sandra Clements, Chairwoman
- Joyce Clark
- Bill Rosenberger
- Frances Jackson
- Gary Bunn
- Mark Bates
- Scott Caserta
- Tom McGuffin
- John David Short
- Rebecca Thacker
- David Ball
**Diverse HIP Donors:** In order to utilize the $50,000 in prize funding provided by the America’s Best Communities Prize to Huntington, as an ABC Quarter-Finalist, the community was required to raise $15,000 in matching funding. The way that this match came about demonstrates the robust community engagement in the Huntington HIP initiative: Huntington’s contributions did not come from just one or two traditional entities, but instead from a broad cross-section of multiple donors that included a variety of meaningful contributions from:

- The Neighborhood Institute of Huntington
- Coalfield Development Corporation
- Cabell Huntington Hospital
- The West Virginia AFL-CIO
- The City of Huntington Foundation
- A medley of individuals, private sector entities including manufactures, banks, and real estate enterprises

Moreover, Huntington went beyond its required $15,000 in ABC matching – raising a full $25,000 for the ABC Community Revitalization Plan endeavor. Even better, Huntington was so pleased when a long-time local radio personality and playwright held an encore performance of the production “Collis P.” (the story of Huntington’s founder), and donated all of the proceeds from that showing to the ABC revitalization effort. See the curtain call at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BistgJKEiYc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BistgJKEiYc).

**Spreading the Word:** The 20-plus members of the Work Group and the 75 additional key stakeholders who were most engaged in the HIP Community Revitalization Plan were also part of the outreach into the community, by providing information to their own organizational constituencies, and posting on their own social media outlets, thereby spreading the word to wider circles of Huntington citizens. The Huntington team also development a short briefing sheet on the HIP Revitalization and provided hundreds of copies to stakeholders for distribution around the community.
The Huntington HIP initiative has multiple components that are integrated to form a comprehensive economic revitalization strategy for the community. Each of the core components of the Huntington HIP revitalization – the Polymer Center and the waterfront revitalization, the West End River-to-Rail Task Force, the Hal Greer Health Innovation Corridor, and the Gigabit City initiative – have their own, focused project teams. These project teams are each conducting their own, substantial community engagement, convening key stakeholders, and coordinating with the City of Huntington on the overall endeavor. These project teams include:

**The Huntington Polymer Team:** For more two years, a team including the Huntington Municipal Development Authority, the Marshall University Research Corporation, the Center for Business and Economic Research, the West Virginia Brownfields Assistance Center, and Rubberlite have been leading the effort to plan and implement the Poly-TeCH initiative.

**The Huntington Brownfields Task Force:** The City Huntington has convened a Brownfields Task Force to guide the effective use of EPA brownfields grant funding and ensure that it supports the revitalization of stranded properties on the riverfront and other HIP revitalization project areas. This Task Force includes the Mayor, the City Manager, the Director of the Huntington Municipal Development Authority, the Director of the Department of Planning and Community Development, the Marshall University Associate Vice President for Economic Development (who chairs this task force), the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection’s Brownfields Director, the Director of the West Virginia Brownfields Assistance Center, the Huntington Director of Stormwater, and key consultants and advisors.

**The River-to-Rail Revitalization Task Force:** A citizen-led committee guides the revitalization of the struggling West End, and conducts community improvement and beautification projects to boost the value of community assets such as the 14th Street West corridor and the Boys & Girls Club.

**The Reclaim Appalachia Team:** Led by Coalfield Development Corporation, a “Reclaim Appalachia” team is working on the establishment of the WestEdge Factory and the revitalization of the distressed West End of Huntington.

**The Health Innovation Team:** The transformation of the Hal Greer Corridor into a more healthy neighborhood, and the expansion of the critical health and medical sector, is led by a strong team that includes leadership of the Cabell-Huntington Hospital, the Center for Rural Health, the Marshall University Medical School, Saint Mary’s Hospital, Marshall Health-University Physicians Group, the Huntington Housing Authority, the Huntington Department of Planning and Community Development, the Huntington Police Department, the Huntington Urban Redevelopment Authority, the Huntington Land Bank, the A.D. Lewis Community Center, and many others.

**The Gigabit City Team:** The team that is leading the Gigabit City initiative for Huntington is managed by the Office of the Mayor together with leadership of the West Virginia Broadband Development Council, WVNet [a state-created entity which is trying to boost telecommunications and computing infrastructure, connections, and services to educational organizations in West Virginia], Marshall University, and the private sector in Huntington.
Huntington conducts ongoing engagement with the community through print, broadcast and social media. The development of the Huntington HIP initiative was heavily covered by local television and radio, and the executive editor/publisher of the highly reputable Herald-Dispatch newspaper was a regular participant in HIP activities, serving on the project’s Work Group. The City of Huntington took the lead to regularly engage Huntington through active social media tools including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and two dedicated online platforms called “EngageHuntington.com” and “What’s Next Huntington?” www.facebook.com/WhatsNextHuntington.

City officials also used the quarterfinalist banner at large community events to take photos with community members and inform them of the city’s efforts. Other representatives engaged in the HIP revitalization spread the word through their own social media accounts. The Huntington HIP effort took a major boost when a skilled and highly-engaged local filmmaker made a video about the effort, called “Huntington IS America’s Best Community,” which was spread widely throughout the community and on social media. See https://vimeo.com/123149860, and also see this video with remarks by key players in our revitalization: https://vimeo.com/139431572.
A key component of our approach to success and community engagement is to leverage resources to move initiatives forward. Huntington is bringing together local funds including municipal commitments, innovative financing, grassroots fundraising, and local/regional philanthropic contributions with federal grants, state government investments, private sector investments, and other resources to propel our revitalization. Over the years, Huntington has secured and leveraged hundreds of millions of dollars in resources for our community revitalization. Listed below are some of the ways that we have leveraged our efforts just since the launch of the ABC Prize competition in mid-2014, on those projects that are central to our ABC effort, with $3,000,000 in resources raised in just a year. This demonstrates Huntington’s solid ability to leverage resources, which will continue to be a part of the HIP revitalization implementation moving forward.

- **$400,000 Brownfields Assessment Grant (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency),** to overcome brownfield barriers in all three of the HIP revitalization project areas of the Highlawn neighborhood, the Hal Greer Corridor, and the West End.

- **$200,000 Brownfields Area-Wide Planning Grant (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency),** to plan the productive reuse of the Highlawn waterfront area including Poly-TeCH.

- **$75,000 Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation Grant and $25,000 Rubberlite match to create the business and strategic plan for the Poly-TeCH initiative.**

- **$644,000 Drug Treatment Courts Grant from the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for addiction recovery programs,** so that the heroin scourge does not hold the community back.

- **$450,000 provided by Cabell Huntington Hospital for complete street and walkability improvements to Hal Greer Boulevard on the planned Health Innovation Corridor.**

- **$50,000 Benedum grant for the WestEdge factory revitalization by Coalfield Development Corporation initiatives.**

- **$800,000 job training grant to Coalfield Development Corporation from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, to boost the WestEdge and Solar Holler 33-6-3 workforce initiatives.**

- **$120,000 in impact investment provided by Chase Bank for the revitalization of 14th Street W. in the West End.**
Leveraging Additional Investment cont.

$25,000 Just Transition grant from Appalachia Funders Network & Rockefeller Family Fund, to support planning on Poly-TeCH, WestEdge and the Health Innovation Corridor.

$175,000 in in-kind professional service commitments from a variety of private sector entities on these HIP revitalization projects.

$50,000 America’s Best Community Prize, along with $25,000 in community matches from a wide variety of stakeholders – to create this community revitalization plan.

With $3,000,000+ already leveraged during this Huntington ABC initiative, just think what we can do when Huntington wins the $3 million ABC Prize.
As discussed throughout this plan, Huntington is a gateway to the broader Appalachian region of southern West Virginia, eastern Kentucky, and southern Ohio, and a key source of jobs, hope, growth and progress for this region. This region is struggling with unemployment, poverty, and health and social challenges. If Huntington can show how it can move from worst-to-first through community engagement, a strong vision for revitalization, and smart implementation and action plans, we can be an important source of positive momentum and a key model for other communities in Appalachia.

Already, the City of Huntington, the Foundation for the Tri-State Community, Marshall University, the Marshall University Research Corporation, the Cabell-Huntington Health System, Coalfield Development Corporation, and other dedicated community entities are fully engaged in this broader region, and working daily to improve the lot of struggling families. Through the Huntington HIP initiative, these partners intend to do even more.

At the time that this Community Revitalization Plan was produced, Huntington was moving forward on a national-level initiative to promote economic diversification and community revitalization in the region. The “Just Transition” initiative is backed by a coalition of philanthropic organizations including the Appalachia Funders Network, an initiative launched in 2015 to promote new opportunities and approaches for struggling coal-reliant communities in the region. Huntington is helping lead the way on Just Transition, and is actively engaged as well in the new initiative launched by the federal government called “POWER – Partnership and Opportunities for Workers and Economic Recovery”, to support economic diversification and growth in coal-sector communities.

Through these kinds of initiatives, Huntington can be a force for good in Appalachia, and a model for America’s best communities. The Huntington community calls on everyone to be part of this forward progress, to roll up their sleeves, and to be part of a new frontier for community revitalization.

Thanks to all of our community partners for sharing your time, resources, photographs and vision to move Huntington forward to be America’s Best Community.
“Communities can be shaped by choice, or they can be shaped by chance. We can keep accepting the kind of communities we get, or we can start to create the kind of communities we want.”

– Richard Moe, National Trust for Historic Preservation

“Give me a place to stand, and I will move the world.”

– Robert Kennedy