

# A New Vision

## CREATING A COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY PLAN



New Visions strives to provide independent leadership and serve as a catalyst for positive change in New Castle and Lawrence County. We value active collaboration, community-driven planning, and an agenda that encourages citizens to take the lead in transforming their communities through direct neighborhood action.

FOR MORE ON NEW VISIONS:  
[www.newvisionslc.org](http://www.newvisionslc.org)

New Visions for Lawrence County is a group of community residents and leaders dedicated to a revitalized New Castle and a prosperous Lawrence County. As the desire for revitalization grew beyond city beautification, the former New Visions for New Castle was repurposed in 2011 to act as a catalyst for social change in Lawrence County.

Recognizing that no vision is realized without a plan, New Visions' first major project is to work collaboratively with community partners to develop a community plan for the county seat, New Castle. This document outlines a preliminary framework for New Visions and its community partners to conduct that planning initiative.

### WHY START WITH NEW CASTLE?

New Castle is the largest municipality in the county. As such, it represents a concentration of the urban challenges common in Rust Belt communities. A loss of nearly 50% of its population in the past 25 years has diminished its tax base and devalued the housing market. Over 21% of its citizens live in poverty and nearly 68% of the student population qualifies for the free/reduced school lunch program. New Castle has one of the highest crime rates in the country, scoring only 5 on a scale of 1 to 100 on the FBI crime index. Nearly all of these crimes are drug related. New Castle's original ACT 47 Recovery Plan concluded that, "The imminence of failure is not a debatable issue". New Castle's challenges therefore pose a threat to all of Lawrence County.

New Visions is determined to meet these challenges by serving as a catalyst for the city's positive transformation - not failure - through the creation of a community plan. Before undertaking the planning process, New Visions sought out the input of a range of community partners to better understand the need for a plan and learn how to best collaborate in its creation. Our work to date confirmed universal support for this critical next step and determined that the best place to start community planning is in the City of New Castle, the County's largest municipality and community in greatest need.

Our work to develop a shared framework identified an urgent need for creating a plan for a revitalized New Castle, one of several core reasons for undertaking a comprehensive community planning process:

- Create a shared vision for Lawrence County, starting with the City of New Castle, and build better connections across our communities
- Show a path to community progress and transformation
- Leverage our assets, connect the dots and address our needs head-on
- Be comprehensive, strategic, efficient & coordinated
- Grow and develop the community with goal of continuous improvement
- Establish renewed pride in the community for all community members
- Develop increased community participation and leadership
- Build more trusting relationships through transparency and visible progress
- Leverage the expertise, interest and commitment of a range of individuals and organizations who are eager to be a part of the plan
- Take advantage of new momentum and interest to create partnership
- Identify duplication of services to increase coordination and effectiveness
- Better tell our shared story to the community and the world



# What will a Community Plan include?

The New Castle community plan is designed to be a first step in working with Lawrence County and its municipalities to create a comprehensive, county-wide plan. Based on input from collaborative partners, New Visions will undertake creation of a collaborative community plan for New Castle that includes:

- A vision for the City of New Castle
- A comprehensive community needs assessment and asset inventory
- A market assessment
- A coordinated strategy, specific goals, and metrics for evaluation
- A five year, year-by-year plan with key focus areas including:
  - *Employment and Economic Development*
  - *Community Engagement, Health and Safety*
  - *Physical and Environmental Assets*
  - *Education*
  - *Housing*
  - *Culture and Heritage*
- A strategic approach for neighborhood renewal and transformation of Downtown
- A detailed land use plan
- A communications plan
- Effective coordination with the Act 47 Financial Plan
- A plan for action including:
  - *Action Teams focused on creating visible change and first successes*
  - *Early implementable action items*
  - *Clearly defined teams and roles*
  - *Timeline & budget*

## THE PLANNING PROCESS

The New Castle community planning process will be designed to be a collaborative, transparent, community-driven initiative designed to allow the people of New Castle to take the lead in the creation of their community's plan and to actively participate in its implementation. We will pursue a civic-minded process that understands that the most sustainable and effective plan must be driven by the community.

## Planning principles:

- Open, inclusive, early buy-in and coordination
- Building on existing plans and resources
- Identifying community assets and needs through a community-wide civic survey and one-on-one interviews with residents, business owners and community leaders
- Creating community innovation through open, collaborative planning sessions
- Regular, structured and effective public meetings to report out on progress and provide additional community input
- Realizing visible first successes through community Action Teams

# Planning Partners

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE

Key to the success of a community plan will be a broad group of community partners working together towards positive change. A preliminary group of project partners have been engaged to develop the preliminary framework. The goal will be to continue to grow the list of community partners throughout the planning initiative to create a highly coordinated effort and make best use of resources.

## EARLY COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTNERS

- City of New Castle
- Lawrence County
- New Castle Community YMCA
- Children's Advocacy Center of Lawrence County
- Lawrence County Economic Development Corporation
- Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce
- North Hill Organizing Neighborhood Watch
- Jameson Health Systems
- PA Workwear
- Paul Lynch Investments
- Eckles Group
- Lawrence County Drug and Alcohol Commission
- PNC Bank
- The Hoyt Foundation
- Community Foundation of Western Pennsylvania and Eastern Ohio
- Cray Youth and Family Services
- Hoyt Institute of Fine Arts
- Lawrence County District Attorney's Office
- United Way of Lawrence County
- Carbis Walker LLP
- FUEL Media
- Pizza Joe's
- Crisis Shelter of Lawrence County
- New Castle News

## NEW VISIONS BOARD

Our members constitute a broad range of respected community leaders dedicated to pursuing a renewed spirit of collaboration, transparency and visible progress in the Lawrence County communities. New Visions strives to coordinate the work of existing agencies to fuse ideas and coordinate efforts into one strategic vision with a single direction and shared resources. New Visions members include:

- President David Copper, *Cray Youth & Family Services*
- Vice-President Josh Lamancusa  
*Lawrence County District Attorney*
- Secretary/Treasurer Angie Mohr  
*Cray Youth & Family Services*
- Melissa Barnes, *Cray Youth & Family Services*
- Larry Corvi, *New Castle News*
- Chris DeVivo, *FUEL Marketing*
- Kathy Graziani, *Carbis Walker*
- Kimberly Koller-Jones, *Hoyt Art Center*
- Honorable Judge Dominick Motto
- Dayna Shaw Sear, *Penn-Ohio Arts and Innovation Initiative*
- Joe Seminara, *Pizza Joe's*
- Dan Vogler, *County Commissioner*
- Gayle Young, *United Way of Lawrence County*



## Doing What We Can Now

COMMUNITY ACTION TEAMS

New Visions will coordinate community-based action teams that can begin working right now to address community issues. Action teams will provide an opportunity for residents, business owners and community leaders to work together to achieve near-term progress. Initial Action Teams will include:

- COMMUNICATIONS Website, press, newsletter, speaker series
- CLEAN & GREEN Beautification, gardens, signage
- CELEBRATE! Events, awards
- SAFETY Block watch partnerships



## SHARED COMMUNITY VALUES & GOALS

Work with preliminary partners has resulted in a set of shared values and goals that will guide future planning:

- We have a clear vision & plan for the future of our community
- We practice transparency and actively share information
- We maintain a beautiful, clean environment
- We recognize and celebrate our assets
- We have safe neighborhoods & streets
- We have educated and employed residents
- We have active and healthy residents
- Our citizens actively participate & our leadership is responsive

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Regarding New Visions or the Collaborative Community Planning Initiative, please contact:

### Angie Mohr

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[www.newvisionslc.org](http://www.newvisionslc.org)

## WHAT IT WILL TAKE

A comprehensive Community Plan will require dedicated resources. The planning process will take 12 – 18 months to complete including a comprehensive community needs assessment and land-use plan and will require \$100,000 - \$150,000 worth of investment.

**PHASE 1:**  
**Community Needs Assessment & Vision**  
4 - 6 months      \$30,000 - \$45,000

**PHASE 2:**  
**Land-Use Plan & Market Assessment**  
9 - 12 months      \$75,000 - \$100,000

## NEXT STEPS

New Visions and its community partners will use this framework document to move quickly to secure the resources necessary to begin the New Castle community planning process.

- **Brief the funding community, elected officials and community partners**
- **Secure funds for the community planning process (at minimum, Phase 1)**
- **Enroll preliminary partners & develop MOUs regarding planning initiative**
- **Establish Planning Team and Action Teams**
- **Preliminary outreach and communications**
- **Public kick-off meeting to be held September 18, 2012**
- **Inventory of existing data and plans**

