



Alleghenies Ahead is a collaborative effort to implement strategies that will boost the region's ability to create and compete for jobs, attract and retain residents, and become a place with stronger and more vital communities.

Guided by the principle to "plan regionally and implement locally," Alleghenies Ahead is an effort that recognizes that no single project, issue, or entity can do this – that it requires sustained attention on multiple fronts that haven't traditionally been connected to the problem of job creation or household attraction, such as housing, recreation, and technology.

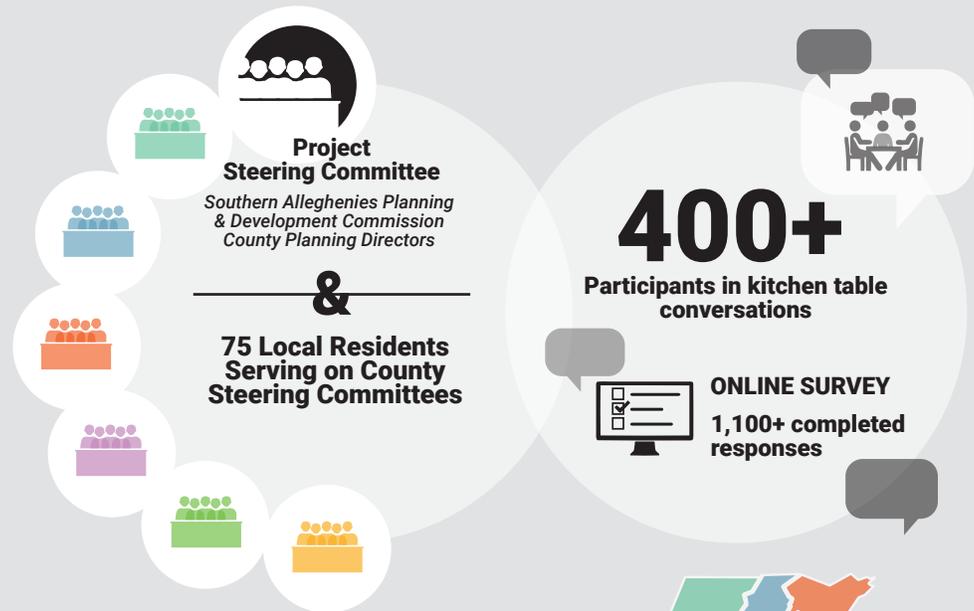
Businesses and families have countless options today, and helping them choose the Southern Alleghenies is something that every investment and policy decision in the region stands to influence.

Shared Strategies for a Stronger Region

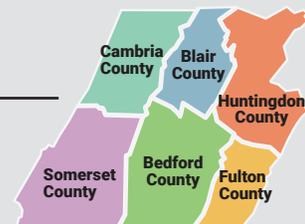
Alleghenies Ahead has been shaped by contributions from individuals throughout the region – including 75 residents serving on six county-level steering committees in Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Fulton, Huntingdon, and Somerset counties.

Committee members, in turn, engaged over 400 of their friends, neighbors, colleagues, and family members in "kitchen table conversations" to discuss the state of their communities, their core values, and how they make decisions. The work of steering committee members was supplemented by an **online survey**, a week of **open house events** throughout the region, and small **stakeholder meetings** with leaders in key sectors.

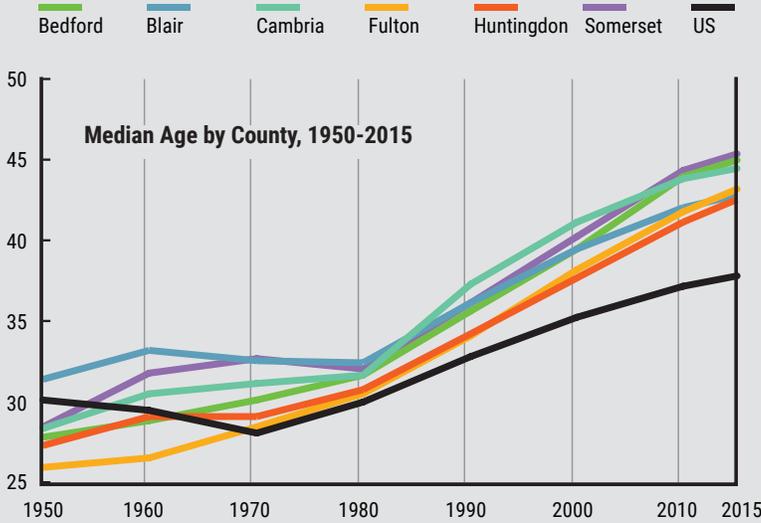
A community-driven process



Comprehensive Plan for the Southern Alleghenies Region



What key trends are shaping our region?



1

Demographic Disadvantage

The region's rapid aging is a problem not because of who lives here today – but who doesn't live here today. The small size of the region's younger generations, whittled down by decades of out-migration, has significant implications for labor markets, housing markets, and the sustainability of critical services.

Five Market Types

Implementation and Investment Capacity

Competitive Markets	HIGH
Stable Markets	MODERATE
At-risk Markets	SLIPPING
Weak Markets	TROUBLED
Distressed Markets	SEVERELY CHALLENGED

2

Varying Implementation Capacity

Six counties and over 230 local jurisdictions make decisions and investments that influence their own competitiveness and that of the region. But many of these jurisdictions have little capacity to invest in ways that are likely to make them more attractive to households and business. Alleghenies Ahead identifies five distinct market types that describe the region's communities and their ability to invest in themselves.

What issues do we need to address?

Eight critical issues were identified as having the biggest impact on the vitality and prospects of the Southern Alleghenies – impacting the region's ability or inability to compete for younger households and build financially sustainable communities.

Each issue is relevant to some degree in each county and is the subject of existing efforts.



Broadband and Cellular Service

Adequate internet speeds are essential to competing in the 21st Century, connecting otherwise isolated areas to a global economy.



Collaboration and Coordination

The region's ability to implement its priorities and maintain critical assets is tied to how well a variety of partners work together.



Business and Workforce Development

A healthier job market and more dynamic business environment is a key to limiting out-migration and stimulating healthy levels of in-migration.



Housing and Blight

Blighted and chronically vacant properties are a drag on the market and limit the levels of investment in new or existing housing stock.



Recreational Amenities and Natural Assets

The region's recreational amenities – which often intersect with its natural assets – play an increasingly vital role in attracting investment by contributing to the lifestyle options that help the region compete for households and visitors.



Agriculture

Agriculture is the region's single largest active land use and could play a significant role in the development of a diverse local food economy.



Public Health and Safety

Health outcomes are poor in much of the region and drug abuse has emerged as one of the major health threats to residents from all walks of life. This affects overall well-being as well as labor force engagement and family stability.



Transportation

For decades, expansion of transportation networks was an important focus, driven by a need to reduce isolation, boost economic opportunities, and improve safety. Today, preserving and maintaining this system is a priority and a challenge.

What guides our decision-making?

The region's communities are shaped by countless decisions made by hundreds of different boards, commissions, and committees. On what basis do they make these decisions, and is there any way to coordinate decision-making so that they have a positive cumulative effect on the region's ability to compete?

A set of core values and principles are central to consistent and coherent decision-making. These core values for our region reflect values expressed across all six counties. The planning principles reflect those values and the key issues we seek to address.



VALUES

We value our families, our strong social connections, and our neighbors

We value independence and self-reliance

We value our natural resources and connections to the land

We value our heritage and the sense of identity it provides



PRINCIPLES

We value our families, our strong social connections, and our neighbors

We value independence and self-reliance

We value our natural resources and connections to the land

We value our heritage and the sense of identity it provides

How will we focus our attention and resources?

What requires our focused attention as we work to overcome our demographic disadvantages and capacity limitations? Which areas of work – if addressed at a high level – will best position our communities to compete for households and business?

REGIONAL PRIORITIES



Broadband and Cellular Service



Collaboration and Coordination



Business and Workforce Development

COUNTY-LEVEL PRIORITIES



Bedford County



Fulton County



Blair County



Huntingdon County



Cambria County



Somerset County



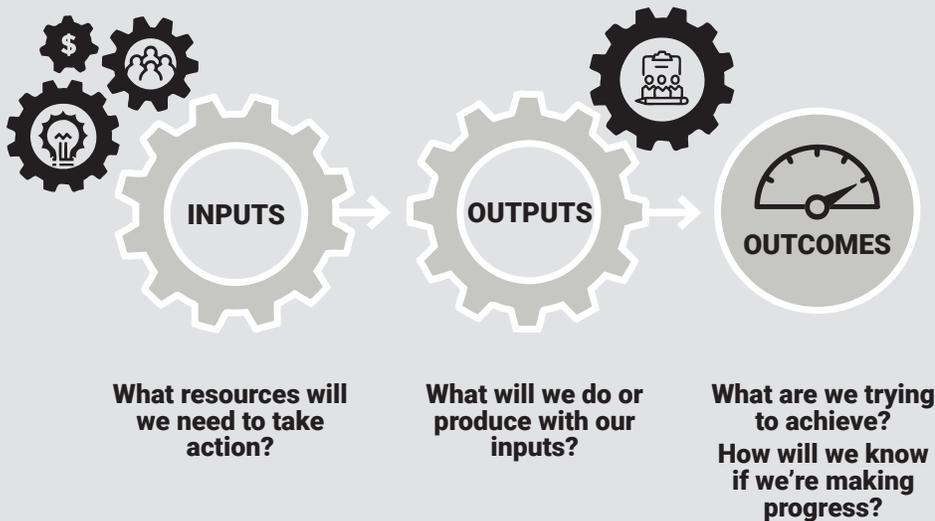
Steering committees in the six counties identified priorities around which to develop detailed action plans. They did so with an understanding that priorities can – and should – change over time as conditions change, but that focus is necessary at any given time to ensure that ideas become action.

How will we translate priorities into action?

Alleghenies Ahead is ultimately about taking action and includes updateable action plans to guide implementation of specific activities at the regional and county levels. These plans are based on a simple structure. Whatever the priority might be, there must be clarity about the outcomes being sought – about what a project or activity is intended to influence, why that's important, and how progress can be measured. Once outcomes have been defined, specific activities (or outputs) that can be expected to achieve the outcomes must be identified, along with the resources (inputs) that are needed to activate the chosen projects or initiatives.

Each year, action plans can (and should) be modified to respond to progress made, new conditions, and new opportunities.

Building Blocks of Action Planning



Cycle of Implementation and Experimentation



Get involved!

The work of Alleghenies Ahead will be ongoing. Honest dialogue about resource allocation, priorities, and trade-offs will be essential as residents and their elected leaders are faced with decisions both foreseeable and unforeseeable.



ALLEGHENIES AHEAD

To learn more about the action plans for the region's counties, visit AllegheniesAhead.com. And contact your county's planning commission to learn more about how to lend your experience and expertise to the implementation process.