

FIVE YEAR ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ERIE REFOCUSSED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND COMMUNITY DECISION-MAKING GUIDE

March 13, 2017
Final

ERIE REFOCUSSED

City of Erie, Pennsylvania

Comprehensive Plan and Community
Decision-Making Guide

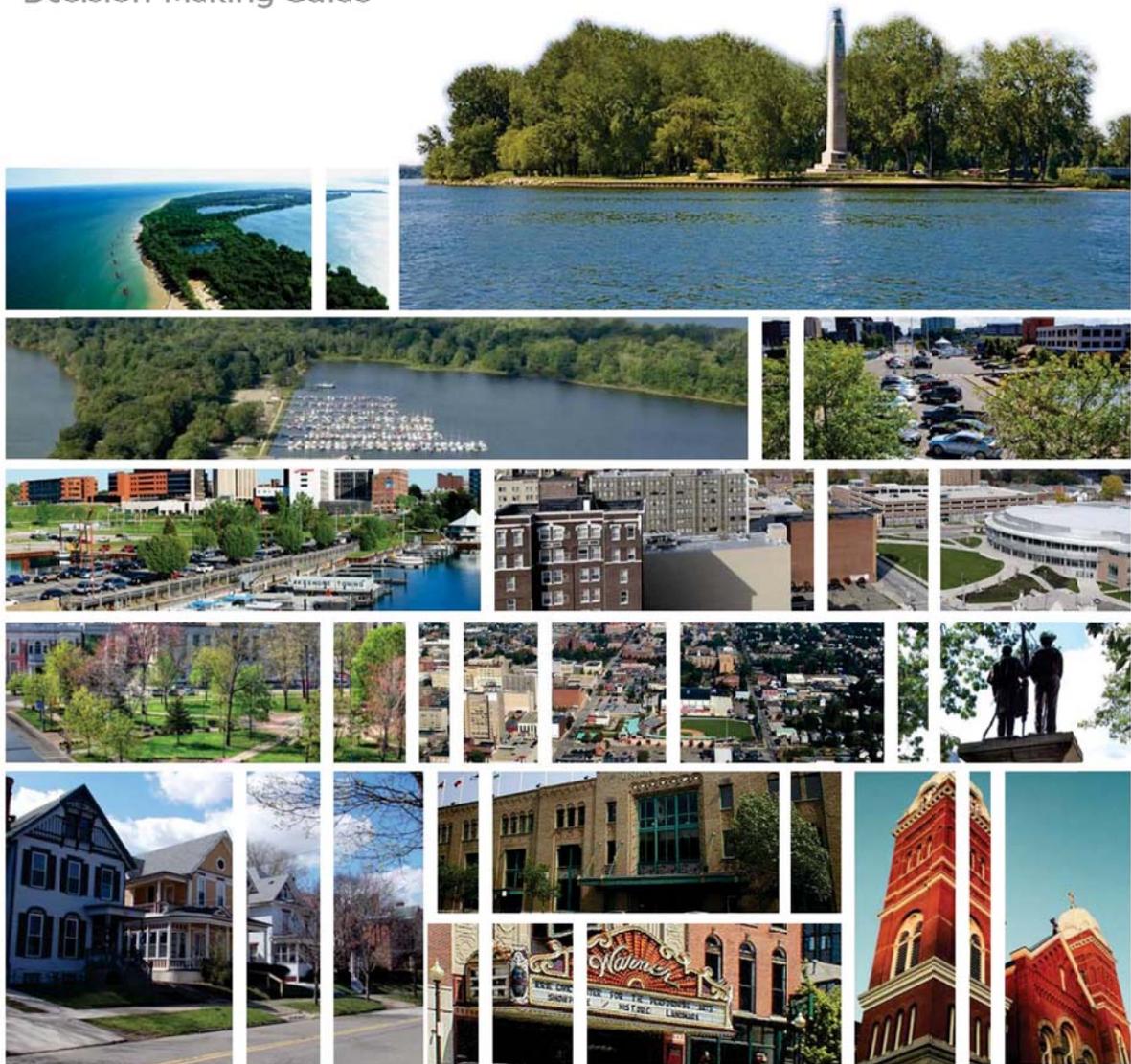


TABLE OF CONTENTS	Page
Acknowledgements	3
What is an Action Plan?	4
The Action Planning Process	4
Why Focus on the Core Strengthening Strategy?	5
ERAP Programs, Policies and Projects	7
Action Plan Projects and Financing Plan Exhibit 1-1	12
Multi-modal Network Exhibit 1-2	14
Neighborhood Strengthening and Stabilization Initiative	15
Appendix A	17
Figure 1	
Figure 2	

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

City Administration

Mayor Joseph E Sinnott, Esq.

City Council:

Casmir J. Kwitowski, Council President
Sonya M Arrington
David Brennan
Curtis Jones, Jr.

Robert Merski
James Winarski
Melvin Witherspoon

County Administration

County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper

Erie County Department of Planning:

Katherine Wyrosdick, AICP, Director
Mike Baker, GIS Coordinator

Christopher Friday, Transportation
Program Administrator
Ryan Anderson, Planning Intern

Action Team Representatives

City of Erie:

Chris Mong, Director, Department of
Economic and Community Development
Alison Schmidt, Assistant Director,
Department of Economic and
Community Development
Douglas E Mitchell, Director,
Department of Public Works, Property
and Parks

Jon Tushak, PE, Bureau of Engineering
LeAnn Parmenter, PE, Division of Traffic
Engineering
Andy Zimmerman, Manager of Code
Enforcement
Mathew Puz, Zoning Officer
Sarah Galloway, Recycling
Coordinator/Arborist

Community Stakeholders:

Scott Henry, Executive Director (past),
Erie Redevelopment Authority
Dave Deter, Executive Director, Erie
Redevelopment Authority and
past Executive Director, NRO
John Buchna, Chief Executive Officer,
Erie Downtown Partnership
Jeremy Bloeser, Executive Director,
BEST

Erika Ramalho, Director of Community
and Government Relations, Gannon
University
Anna Frantz, Executive Director, OWB
William Petit, PE District Executive,
PennDOT District 1
John Petulla, PE, Associate with
McCormick Taylor

Many thanks to the time and dedication of the Action Team whose tireless efforts to help the City of Erie are greatly appreciated.

What is an Action Plan?

The Action Plan was a recommendation from Erie's Planning Commission and City Council made during the adoption process for the City's comprehensive plan, Erie Refocused. The Action Plan is the next logical step in the comprehensive plan process that takes the recommendations from the comprehensive plan and defines how to execute them from the City's perspective. The process helps the City focus ideas and decides what steps it needs to take to achieve its goals. It is a statement of what a community wants to accomplish over a given period of time and in the case of this Action Plan, that timeframe is expected to be five years.

Once the plan is accepted by the City, the newly created City Action team (CAT), recommended as part of the Action Plan, will be responsible for ongoing review of the progress of the plan. By its nature, the Action Plan is a living document that will need to be continuously monitored, revised and reported to City leaders so that work does not stall. The CAT will be responsible for ensuring that the Action Plan is working and help identify where obstacles exist in moving important projects forward.

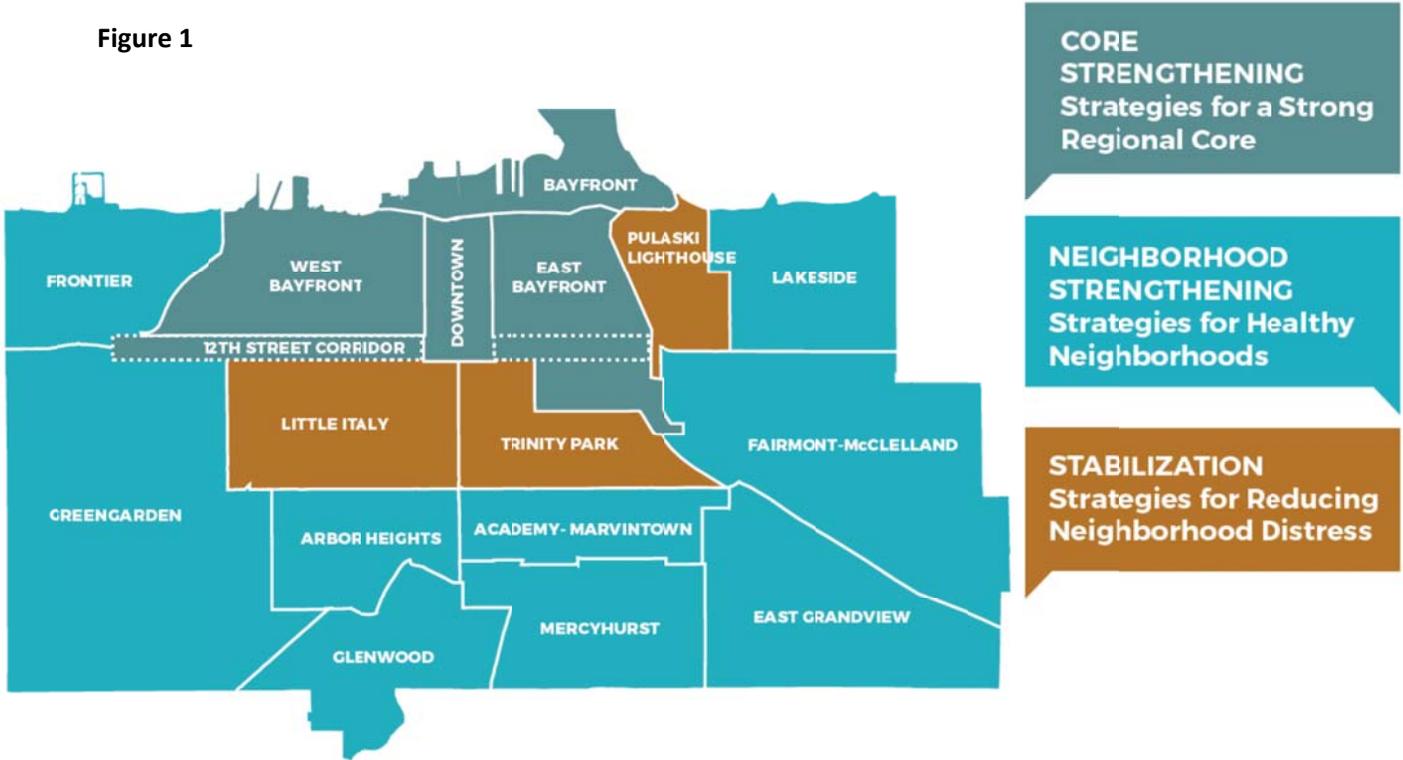
The Action Planning Process

The Erie Refocused Action Plan or ERAP is the product of a 3 month planning and prioritization effort by a core group of dedicated city staff and private sector representatives. This group was assembled with the assistance of the Erie County Department of Planning and was charged with the creation of an actionable plan to achieve the vision defined in the Erie Refocused Comprehensive Plan and Community Decision-Making Guide. The ERAP is the result of the work and extensive input from action teams that were focused on the Core Strengthening strategic area of the Erie Refocused Plan. The Core Strengthening focus area includes the downtown; the Bayfront, the West and East Bayfront neighborhoods, and the 12th Street corridor (see **Figure 1** below).

The City of Erie's Department of Economic and Community Development alongside representatives from the City's Department of Public Works, Property and Parks including the Bureau of Engineering, the Division of Traffic Engineering, the Office of Code Enforcement, Bureau of Parks and the Bureau of Refuse and Recycling in collaboration with the Erie County Department of Planning provided direction for the ERAP and coordinated with other community stakeholders. Major stakeholders in the public and private sectors within the Core Areas were consulted throughout the process and neighborhood level planning priorities were included within the ERAP to ensure that all recently completed planning efforts were aligned. Projects prioritized within other neighborhood plans such as the Community Plan for Our West Bayfront, the Bayfront Connector Study, and the Downtown Master Plan were included as part of the action planning process.

Although ERAP Teams primarily focused on the Core Strengthening Area of the City, they have made recommendations for strategic improvements to City internal processes that will benefit the entire city as well as made specific recommendations on how the City should begin to undertake initiatives in the other 2 Focus Areas of the Erie Refocused plan centered on neighborhood strengthening and stabilizing initiatives. The ERAP Teams support the creation of a robust neighborhood strategy to address the other areas of the City not fully encompassed within this report and an outline of that strategy and how to begin neighborhood revitalization is included in the latter part of the ERAP.

Figure 1



Why Focus on the Core Strengthening Strategy?

West and East Bayfront neighborhoods, 12th Street, the Downtown, and the Bayfront

The ERAP centers on the Core Strengthening strategy as outlined in the Erie Refocused Plan for a number of reasons including the strong support for this as a priority as noted in the City’s comprehensive plan.

The Comprehensive Plan notes that a primary directive of the City is to “Strengthen and protect Erie’s downtown and Bayfront—two of the region’s biggest assets and the key to creating an amenity-rich city that competes for households and businesses at a high level. A world class downtown and Bayfront surrounded on both sides by healthy neighborhoods and augmented by a vibrant 12 street corridor will put the city in a strong financial position and support neighborhood revitalization and stabilization efforts citywide.

This zone includes planning areas at and surrounding the Erie region's core – downtown, the central Bayfront, the neighborhoods that flank downtown to the east and west, and the 12th Street corridor. Although East Bayfront features levels of distress that are consistent with the city's "Stabilization" areas, its proximity to downtown and critical assets put it into strategic alignment with the "Core Strengthening" areas. "

The importance the core has on stabilizing and revitalizing the city and the region prompted the ERAP Teams work to focus on the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. However, other efforts currently planned or underway also made the Core Strategy area the obvious first order of business for the ERAP. Those efforts include recently completed neighborhood level planning by the Our West Bayfront organization and the Downtown Partnership's Downtown Master Plan both of which have identified housing and community redevelopment priorities many of which have received funding and are under development. The ERAP Teams wanted to make sure that the City was working alongside those efforts and supporting them where it was most critical.

In addition to planning efforts, significant job producing development projects have been announced for the downtown and the Bayfront including:

- Erie Insurance's new 346,000 sq. ft. building at French and E. 6th Streets
- UPMC Patient Care Tower of 177,000 sq. ft. at French and 2nd Streets
- Phase 1 of Harbor Place along the Bayfront including offices and a hotel
- Continuation of the GAF redevelopment – Bayfront Place
- Phase 2 of the EMTA Transportation Hub along 14th Street
- Velocity Net \$7 M investment within the W 10th and W 11th Street corridor

Where most soft market cities, like Erie, struggle to catalyze redevelopment, Erie's downtown is actually seeing a resurgence of interest and private sector investment. This level of investment needs to be leveraged as much as possible by the City to help strengthen the downtown core. By identifying these projects, ERAP teams were able to program City resources that would help support these investments in the core. They were also able to identify gaps between revitalization efforts and planning areas that were modified by working with the private sector.

In order to effectively understand and prioritize implementation of the Core Strengthening area, ERAP Teams developed a list of priority projects, programs and policies that provide the City with a roadmap for deployment of their resources over the next 5 years. Those priorities are summarized in the following section and are further illustrated in **Exhibit 1-1 and 1-2**. As stated previously, these recommendations include enhancing internal processes, building core competencies to tackle creative financing incentives, and adding programs like community planning within the City that will have a positive effect on the entire City, not just the core area. Additionally, the neighborhoods outside the core will be addressed by the Neighborhood Strengthening and Stabilization Initiative which is part of the ERAP.

ERAP Programs, Policies and Projects

The Erie Refocused Action Plan includes programs, policies and specific construction related projects. Policies and programmatic recommendations are more thoroughly discussed below while public improvement projects are detailed in the Action Plan and Financing Plan, **Exhibit 1-1** on page 12 and 13. Construction projects have been developed to support planned development within the core but are also aligned with the following policy and programmatic recommendations.

To ensure that ERAP recommendations are being benchmarked and are aligned with the comprehensive plan, all ERAP recommendations identify the comprehensive plan goals that are being addressed. A list of the comprehensive plan goals are within Appendix A of this report as a reference.

1. **Create a City Action Team (CAT):** During the ERAP process there were a number of private sector development projects announced in the core downtown and surrounding neighborhoods totaling close to \$500 million dollars of new investment projects. To support these endeavors and to support future development projects, the City should create a City Action team composed of existing city departments who will work in a more structured and collaborative manner to provide support for development projects.

The CAT will work with DCED, the Downtown Partnership, Neighborhood Organizations, and other non-profit and for-profit stakeholders to plan and program community development improvements that align with priority projects. This will help to ensure that investments can be leveraged to create highly competitive grant requests by the City to help implement public improvements and that City resources are programmed and planned to support new initiatives.

The CAT will also be tasked to vet future planning studies and needs within the community that will institute proactive decision making into City processes and budgets.

Implementation Responsibility: Director of Public Works
Director of Economic and Community Development

Goals Addressed: DG1, DG2, NG1

2. **Build Core Competencies for Creative Financing Incentives:** The City needs to position itself to compete in the local, State and global market. In order to do this the City will move towards developing core competencies in the areas of public/private partnerships and utilization of public financing tools. These types of creative development tools require capacity building in the City at both the governmental level and in the private sector.

Too much reliance on the Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance (LERTA) program where taxes on new buildings and improvements are deferred is detrimental to the City's ability to pay for many basic public services today. However, other development incentives such as New Market Tax Credits programs, Tax Increment Financing Districts, Historic District Tax Credits, Neighborhood Assistance Program Tax Credits and the like have been used successfully by many

cities throughout the nation to spur investment while providing them with much needed targeted funding for public improvements and place making initiatives. Since structuring financing proposals can be very complex due to the unique nature of development projects, technical expertise will be needed to help guide the City as new projects come forward.

In order to achieve this objective the City will need to build core competency within the Department of Economic and Community Development, the Erie Redevelopment Authority (ERA), and private sector funding partners to understand and package these more technically challenging financing tools. Outside funding for consulting expertise is needed until such time that the City and the ERA build staff capacity and private developers are able to cover the cost for feasibility studies and development plans. Funding from local organizations including Erie Community Foundation and Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority should be sought to cover the cost to retain experts in the field of public financing and public/private partnerships.

Implementation Responsibility: Director of Economic & Community Development
Erie Redevelopment Authority (ERA) Board
Executive Director of the ERA

Goals Addressed: DG1, BG2, NG4

- 3. Create a Focused Place Making Program:** The ERAP Teams have identified a priority multi-modal network within the core planning area. This priority network is identified in **Exhibit 1-2** located on page 14. This network will be built out to create a high quality and walkable environment to support and maximize the previously noted private development within the core and to support neighborhood revitalization.

Improvements within the network include new street trees, upgraded parking facilities, improved sidewalks, traffic calming, transit stops, pedestrian bridges to the Bayfront, and additional streetscape improvements per the Downtown Streetscape Master Plan. The network will also provide for expanded bike facilities and dedicated bike lanes creating mobility loops within the east and west Bayfront neighborhoods and connectivity to the Bayfront and Presque Isle Bay.

Implementation of these improvements will require focused investment into a City “Place Making Program”, developed and managed by the City Action Team (CAT). To the extent feasible, current City infrastructure resources (Municipal Liquid Fuels, County Liquid Fuels, CDBG, and Bond Proceeds) should be prioritized and leveraged through the “Place Making Program”. Through this process the CAT will ensure that infrastructure investments are made according to the Comp Plan and Action Plan.

The CAT will also ensure that all future competitive multi-modal grants are coordinated and targeted towards implementation of the “Place Making Program”. Additional funds generated through local financing incentives as noted in #2 above could also be prioritized to help complete the network.

Implementation Responsibility: City Action Team

Goal Addressed: DG2

- 4. Strengthen Planning Partnerships:** To fill the void of a formal planning department within the City Action Team and the Erie Redevelopment Authority will work with the Erie County Department of Planning to create a Neighborhood Strategic Plan program for City neighborhoods, Corridor Planning for redevelopment areas within the downtown, and a database and GIS system that can assist with analysis of land use decisions and redevelopment initiatives. The Neighborhood Strengthening and Stabilization Initiative are detailed on page 15.

Implementation Responsibility: City Action Team

Erie Redevelopment Authority (ERA) Board

Executive Director of the ERA

Goals Addressed: DG3, NG4

- 5. Establish Downtown Master Plan Districts:** The Downtown Partnership will work with the City’s Zoning Office to develop design standards for each district identified in the Downtown Master plan including the Bayfront, Perry Square, Renaissance, and Union Square Districts. These standards will be embodied in either a guidebook for the downtown and/or through updates to the City’s Zoning Ordinance.

The Downtown Partnership will also work with the CAT through the “Place Making Program” to help deploy resources that support investment opportunities and the development of the Downtown District concepts.

Implementation Responsibility: Executive Director of the Downtown Partnership

City Zoning Officer

City Action Team

Goal Addressed: DG3

- 6. Increase the role of the Waterfront District’s Design Review Committee:** The City is enriched with professionals in the field of design, architecture and historic preservation. Many of those professionals serve as volunteers to the City on the Design Review

Committee. Currently organized to review development within the Waterfront districts, this mission and duties of this Committee should be expanded to act as advisor's to the City in developing design criteria for redevelopment of the Core as well as how the City should position itself to advocate for effective preservation of its historic assets.

Implementation Responsibility: City of Erie
City Zoning Officer

Goals Addressed: DG3, NG2

- 7. Establish an Innovation District:** The comprehensive plan notes the potential for an innovation district to help spur reinvestment in the downtown core due to the number of universities in and near the City and their programs dealing with various technology industries. There is interest from those universities to develop innovation centers and business incubators within the City. The City should take the lead and assist in defining the Innovation District, its boundaries, and other incentives and improvements within the district. The CAT will work with private sector interests to define and establish the Innovation District for the City.

Implementation Responsibility: City Action Team

Goal Addressed: IG1, IG2

- 8. Create a City Land bank:** Through the City's early actions, the creation of a Land bank is well underway. The Land bank, in partnership with the Erie Redevelopment Authority, will help put tax challenged properties back into productive reuse.

Implementation Responsibility: City Administration
Erie Redevelopment Authority (ERA) Board

Goals Addressed: NG3, NG4

- 9. Advocate for Demolition Funding:** Support Erie County in the creation of a Demolition Fund as permitted by Senate Bill 486, Act 152 of 2016. This allows Counties to levy a fee of up to \$15 per transaction on real estate transfers. Estimated funding levels per year is \$200,000 which can be used by County municipalities to assist with costs of clearing property for redevelopment. This funding would also be available to the City's Land Bank and/or to the City's neighborhood organizations.

Implementation Responsibility: City Administration
Erie County

Goals Addressed: DG1, NG3, NG4

10. **Conduct City/County Social Services Study:** The City should request that the County assist in determining appropriate sites for delivery of efficient and effective social services that will provide for the needs of City and County residents requiring assistance. The County provides for a number of necessary human services either directly through their Department of Human Services or through support of other agencies and is uniquely positioned to assist the City in defining where those services are best provided.

Implementation Responsibility: City Administration
City Action Team
Erie County

Goal Addressed: DG4

11. **Finalize the Bayfront Parkway Study:** Work with PennDOT and the Study's Project Advisory Committee to finalize this 2 year study. The Study will identify improvements needed along the Bayfront that will connect the downtown to the new developments on the north including Bayfront Place and Harbor Place. Once the study is complete, the City will work with the Erie Metropolitan Planning Organization (Erie MPO), PennDOT and DCED as well as private investors to begin engineering and design of infrastructure improvements over the next five years of the ERAP.

Funding for this project will be significant and the City and the MPO should look towards creative financing tools outside of regularly allocated PennDOT funds so as not to deplete transportation resources needed to complete the multi-modal network and other City projects. Other sources of potential funding such as RACP or TIGER grants should be explored.

Implementation Responsibility: City Action Team
City of Erie appointees to the Erie MPO

Goal Addressed: BG1

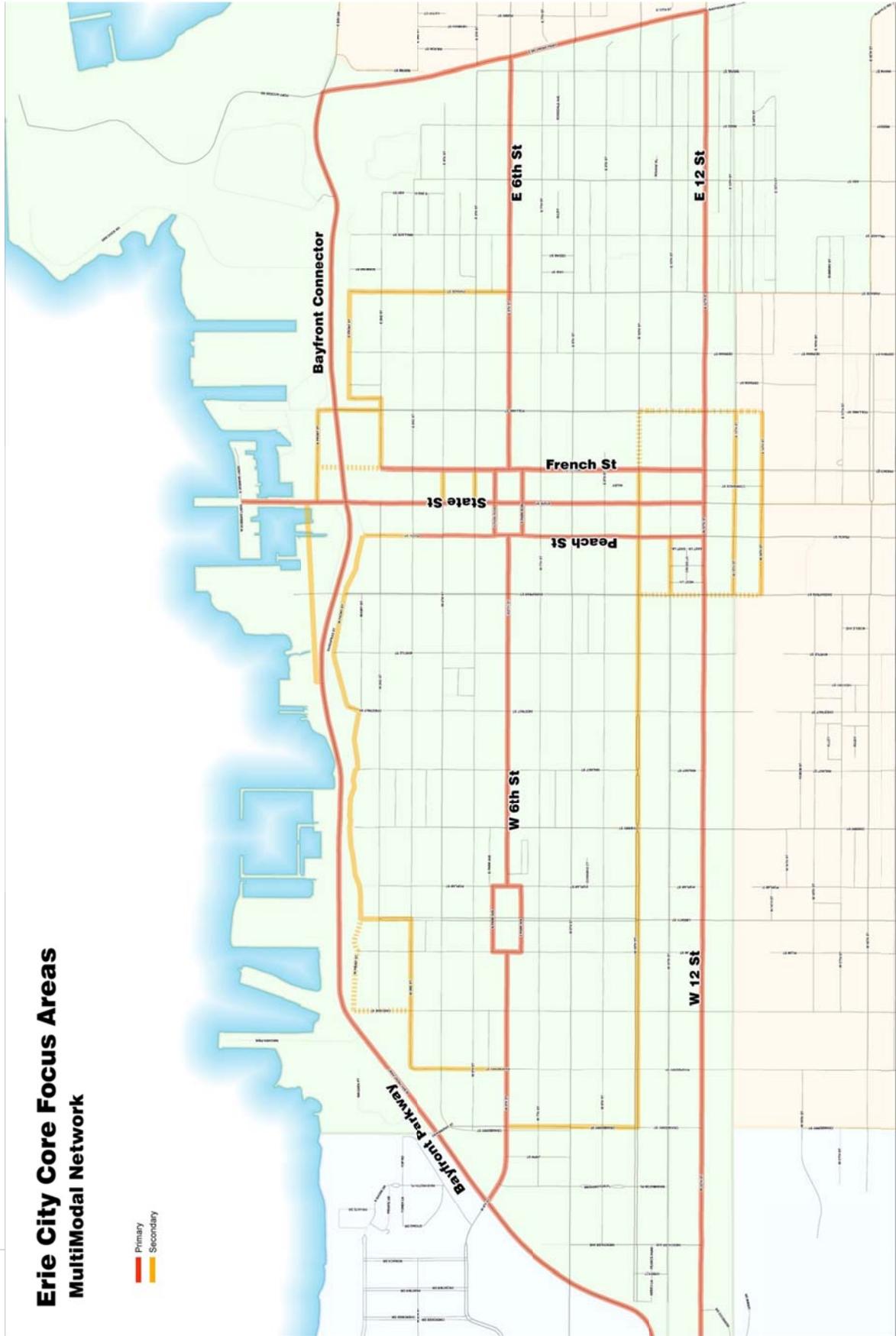
Action Plan Projects and Financing Plan

Exhibit 1-1

Implementation Action	Phasing Years	Estimated Cost	Lead Staff	Financing Source
Place Making Programs (Streetscape, parking, transit, park enhancements, bike/ped amenities)				
Bayfront Connector Pre and Final Engineering for State Street	2	\$6,177,000	City Engineer	TIP
Bayfront Pedestrian Bridge Connections	5	\$3,300,000	City Engineer	MMF/RACP
Primary Multi-Modal Network in Downtown & Neighborhoods	2	\$3,200,000	City Engineer	TIP/MMF/RACP
East Bayfront Trail to Bayfront Connector	2	\$500,000	City Engineer	MMF/RACP
Bike path on Sassafras Extension	2	\$25,000	City Engineer	MMF
State Street Improvements and Bike Lane	2	\$1,000,000	City Engineer	MMF/RACP
Gateway Features - 4 within the Downtown	2	\$100,000	City Engineer	DP Grant
Secondary Multi-modal network including bike lane on 6th Street and inner and outer bike loops in neighborhoods	2	\$175,000	City Engineer	MMF/RACP
OWB Connectivity Projects Including Liberty Street Steps and Cranberry Street sidewalk and crosswalk	5	\$2,000,000	City Engineer	MMF
Gridley Park improvements - Phase 1, Angle parking and park improvements	2	\$0	Arborist	OWB Adopt a Park
Sidewalk and lighting improvements within focus Area B of OWB	2	\$500,000	City Engineer	MMF/OWB
Bayview Park Improvement Projects	5	\$0	Arborist	OWB Adopt a Park
TOTAL ESTIMATED COST		\$16,977,000	ERA - Erie Redevelopment Authority; ECDP - Erie County Dept. of Planning; City Departments - DECD/Streets/DPW/Zoning/Enforcement MPO - Metropolitan Planning Organization; TIP – Trans Improvement Plan; DP - Downtown Partnership; OWB - Our West Bayfront; MMF-Multi-modal Fund; DCED - Funding Programs; RACP -Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program ECF – Erie Community Foundation; ECGRA – Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority	

Implementation Action	Phasing Years	Estimated Cost	Lead Staff	Financing Source
Planning Initiatives				
Expand corridor planning initiatives to support redevelopment projects and the creation of an innovation district	2	\$95,000	Director of Econ Dev ERA Director	ECF and ECGRA
Develop database for monitoring progress of the Action Plan	2	\$90,000	ERA Director	ECF and ECGRA
Create Neighborhood Strategic Plans E 6th to E 12th area of core. Create plans for Neighborhood Strengthening and Stabilization areas	5	\$150,000	ERA Director	DCED /NAP
12th Street land use and transportation study	2	\$100,000	City Engineer	TIP
Policies & Programs				
Expand mission of the Design Review Board to act as Historic Advisory Committee (Design Standards and Historic District for downtown)	2	\$0	Zoning Officer	City
Housing Court/EQUIP	2	\$0	Mgr. Code Enforcement	City
Create land bank	2	\$0	ERA Director	City
Social Services Needs Assessment	2	\$65,000	Director of Planning	County
Act 152 Demolition Fund	2	\$0	Director of Planning	County
Two-way feasibility study for W. 7th, W. 8th and W. 9th Street	5	\$50,000	City Engineer	City
Commercial Loading regulations to assist with mobility in the downtown	2	\$20,000	Zoning Officer	City
VPRO - Vacant Property Registration Ordinance	2	\$0	Mgr. Code Enforcement	City
TOTAL ESTIMATED COST		\$570,000	ERA - Erie Redevelopment Authority; ECDP - Erie County Dept. of Planning; City Departments - DECD/Streets/DPW/Zoning/Enforcement MPO - Metropolitan Planning Organization; TIP – Trans Improvement Plan; DP - Downtown Partnership; OWB - Our West Bayfront; MMF-Multi-modal Fund; DCED - Funding Programs; RACP - Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program ECF – Erie Community Foundation; ECGRA – Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority	

Exhibit 1-2



Neighborhood Strengthening and Stabilization Initiative

The Erie Refocused Action Plan centers on the Core Strengthening strategy as outlined in the Erie Refocused plan which encompasses 4 neighborhoods. In order to execute the Neighborhood Stabilization and Strengthening initiatives recommended as part of the comprehensive plan and to work on the 13 neighborhoods outside the Core, the following ERAP strategy is recommended.

Figure 1-2



The City Action Team, the Erie Redevelopment Authority, and the Neighborhood Growth Partnership will partner with the Erie County Department of Planning to build a neighborhood strategic planning model that will be used to determine the issues and priorities for each unique neighborhood within the City. The neighborhood strategic plan will be locally driven and informed by residents and stakeholders living in the City to help build grassroots leadership that can effect community change. Additionally, the strategic planning initiative will be used to seek funding from various sources for priority implementation projects.

In areas where abandonment is prevalent, demolition and land assemblage strategies will be considered to ensure that existing residents are protected from further decline and the neighborhood is placed in a position of strength. Primary funding for the neighborhood initiative will come from a number of sources including the Neighborhood Assistance Program

with DCED, competitive grant requests, and the sharing of staff resources from the City the ERA and the County.

This technique has already seen success in some areas of the City including the Bayfront Eastside Taskforce, Little Italy, SNOOPS, and more recently, Our West Bayfront. The difference from past efforts is that the City and the ERA will take the lead in neighborhood level planning, proactively prioritize projects and programs, actively seek funding and align City resources to ensure successful revitalization of the community. The Neighborhood Growth Partnership, as a neighborhood non-profit supported by the ERA, will support the effort through fundraising and promotion of neighborhoods.

APPENDIX A

GOALS FROM THE ERIE REFOCUSED PLAN

The following goals have been taken from the Erie Refocused Plan to ensure that the Action Plan is meeting the goals of the City's adopted Comprehensive Plan. The projects which support the goals are identified and italicized after each goal.

Downtown Goals

DG1: Stimulate market-rate housing and mixed-use development in targeted downtown nodes

Transitioning downtown's older properties into appealing, in-demand facilities that meet current market needs takes considerable effort and resources — and developers willing to take a risk. Given Erie's soft real estate market, a strong set of tools must be in place to help limit a developer's risk. Without such measures, development will not occur at the scale and pace necessary to transform downtown and to ensure that investments in public infrastructure pay off.

ERAP Projects Needed: 1, 2, 3

DG2: Make downtown streetscapes consistent, high-quality, and user-friendly — starting with State Street

The 2010 Downtown Streetscape Master Plan offers excellent guidance on this front. But it will be slow to happen unless Erie finds ways to pay for these improvements. Although state and federal funds can be tapped for this work, the city must use targeted investment principals to leverage those sources and have the financial capacity to maintain its improvements.

ERAP Projects Needed: 1, 4

DG3: Make distances within downtown more manageable by using districts to define space

Recent downtown plans have grappled with the issue of distance and size by recommending that downtown be defined by districts. This should be a priority. The districts need to be distinct and descriptive, and they must aid visitors in navigating and mentally mapping the downtown. As part of using districts to better organize downtown space, it is critical to link the health care cluster around UPMC Hamot physically and economically with Erie Insurance and Perry Square.

This area has the critical mass of employees and visitors necessary to be an amenity and service rich node for downtown. To live up to its potential, the institutional and commercial fabric of this area needs to blend together in a much more coherent way.

ERAP Projects Needed: 5, 6, 7

DG4: Begin planning for the relocation of human service functions

Many cities are struggling with the need to capitalize on downtown revitalization efforts by transitioning traditional human service functions away from downtown locations, where tax-exempt or underutilized facilities should be prime targets for private redevelopment, and toward alternative transit-accessible sites where agencies can be housed in more modern and functional settings.

While not all human service agencies should be considered for relocation, many agencies and their

clients would be better suited for alternative facilities where operating costs and access are more favorable.

ERAP Project Needed: 8

Neighborhood Goals and Projects

NG1: West Bayfront Neighborhood: Encourage reinvestment by homeowners on stable blocks with high leverage value

Matching grants for clustered home improvements: Often, confidence on stable but transitional blocks can be restored through a sense of collective reinvestment — where a homeowner is improving their home and can see that others on the block are doing the same. In this way, reinvestment can be just as contagious as disinvestment. One way to stimulate a sense of collective reinvestment is through a program that provides matching grants to groups of property owners who are committed to home exterior upgrades.

ERAP Project Needed: 1

NG2: Financial tools for historic home renovations

Over 100 buildings in the West Bayfront are listed on the National Register of Historic Places through the West Sixth Street Historic District, along with numerous other buildings that have local historic designations. The presence of the district is a tremendous marketing asset for the neighborhood and could be used to stimulate reinvestment throughout the West Bayfront by providing tools to assist property owners with costly renovation work.

ERAP Projects Needed: 6

NG3: Perform targeted demolition and rehab in proximity to assets and stable blocks

Vacancy rates in the West Bayfront neighborhood are at half the levels found in the East Bayfront. Therefore, demolition will play a less critical role in strengthening the neighborhood's housing market. Instead, it must be used in a very targeted way — along with home rehabilitation projects — to address blighted, negative-value properties that are diminishing the value of every other property on their block.

An efficient and systematic way of determining the future of such properties is through the tax foreclosure process, which has hindered revitalization in many areas by simply transferring properties to high bidders who either lack the means or the intention to invest what needs to be invested to properly renovate a home. Instead, the process should be used to identify properties of high strategic value that should either be demolished or transferred to new ownership through a much more selective process.

ERAP Projects Needed: 2, 9

NG4: Establish a network of new parks via targeted demolition and land assemblage

The East Bayfront's high levels of property distress, vacancy, and abandonment are perhaps the most tangible expression of Erie's supply-demand imbalance, as well as the class and racial disparities that closely track neighborhood conditions in the city. These conditions cannot be

adequately addressed without a significant effort to remove blighted and abandoned properties, as well as an equally significant effort to create the spaces and opportunities that will make the neighborhood far more livable for existing and future residents.

ERAP Projects Needed: 2, 3, 9, 10

Bayfront Goals

BG1: Create an iconic connection between the Bayfront and downtown

Downtown and the Bayfront feel far apart, with transitional areas including the slope down State Street and the Bayfront Connector that do not facilitate the safe and comfortable movement of pedestrians and bicyclists.

Connecting these two critical assets must accomplish four goals simultaneously:

- *Address the scale issue that makes the distance between downtown and the Bayfront feel vast and intimidating;*
- *Weave together assets in the transitional area between downtown and the Bayfront, including the marina and UPMC Hamot;*
- *Resolve the conflicting requirements of different users in a way that results in a much more safe and pleasant experience for pedestrians and bicyclists, and in traffic patterns that ensure rapid access to UPMC Hamot and limited gridlock for automobiles; and*
- *Create a public space that contributes both to downtown and to the Bayfront as distinct and yet connected civic places and which, in a resulting signature quality level of finish, becomes an economic development generator in its own right.*

All four issues can be addressed by a single project that would, by its very nature, become an iconic feature for Erie: a structure that would provide a high-quality transitional experience for pedestrians and bicyclists between downtown and the Bayfront by separating them from traffic and taking advantage of the dramatic change in elevation.

ERAP Project Needed: 11

BG2: Leverage Bayfront property as an income-generating resource for the city

Bayfront property has outstanding potential to generate revenue for the city — but not if valuable land is sacrificed for parking lots and garages, and not if tax incentives are so generous as to leave the city with little or no actual revenue benefit. Rather than allowing past precedents to shape the terms of future projects on Bayfront property, the city must treat the land as the prized commodity that it is and demand commensurate revenues.

ERAP Project Needed: 3

Innovation Goals

IG1: Redevelopment of industrial properties as modern, mixed use workspaces

The conversion of vacant or underutilized industrial facilities into shared-access “makerspaces” is driving redevelopment in urban innovation districts around the world. Although Erie has plenty of

character-filled industrial facilities that could serve this role (especially along the 12th Street corridor), the idea is relatively untested and therefore risky to local developers.

ERAP Project Needed: 11

IG2: Tax incentives for clustering among new, relocating and expanding businesses To become a genuine innovation district, a collection of economic, physical, and networking assets need to be present in a concentrated area. Erie is in a good position to achieve this because of its high share of employees in advanced industries. Although much of what happens in innovation districts flows naturally from the co-location of research centers, entrepreneurs, venture capitalists, and others, ensuring that a district emerges in Erie will require intentional cultivation and coordination.

ERAP Project Needed: 11