



# Warren Worx

*Together as one team... One Warren County.*

Warren Worx is a collaborative effort lead by Warren County, The City of Warren, Council of governments (COG) and the Warren County Chamber of Business & Industry (WCCBI) to align the stakeholders of our community to foster community and economic development in response to population decline. In short, we will work to make Warren County, the City of Warren, and our townships “Communities of Choice”

The Center for Rural Pennsylvania recently released population projections from 2020 through 2050. Their study indicates that the Warren County population of 38,516 in 2020 will decline to 34,223 by 2050...a decline of 12 percent. Of compounding impact the study shows our school-age population to decline by 1 percent but our population in the cohort over 70 years of age to increase by 15% and the labor pool cohort of ages 20 through 69 declining by 22 percent.

These population trends are the reality Warren County faces and will make staffing our local operations unsustainable leading to business decline and relocation pressures. If we allow these projections to be proven accurate the entire economic landscape of Warren County will be irreversibly and devastatingly altered.

Warren Worx will serve as a collaborative working group using the County and City comprehensive plans as our guide to address community and economic objectives. These are the objectives as identified by Mackin Engineers – the community planning consultants that produced our comprehensive plans (for both the County & City). Warren Worx will ensure that projects throughout the county reflect, support, and enhance the county brand and agreed upon goals as established by the stakeholders of Warren Worx.

## **Alignment**

I’m happy to report that our county commissioners and city council have embraced their respective comprehensive plans, have acknowledged the population trend, and have signaled a desire to work as partners in addressing this issue. This is especially encouraging considering that most commissioners and council members have full-time day jobs and have never been asked to address long-term strategic challenges. We are creating partnership and purpose from scratch as there is no “playbook” providing the recipe for success. We are negotiating financing, authority, and organizational structure, and expect to have final agreements and MOU’s ironed out by January 30, 2024. Having state objectives would provide much needed focus and clarity.

## **Accountability**

Conducting comprehensive plans has been a part of county and city responsibility for a long time. As far as anyone on our team can determine, acting on those plans has not always been a priority. One elected official even asked if this initiative will fall by the wayside and be forgotten. Since planning is in large part funded by state agencies, we need an accountability process to ensure that funds spent on the planning process generate actionable plans that are enacted, properly managed, and reviewed by funders.

## **Pilot Projects**

Warren County is committed to making Warren Worx a success. While our recipe is still being developed, and our team is being assembled, our resolve and energy to do great community and economic development work are steadfast. We could use your help. Do we need funding, probably. Do we need resources, definitely. Aligning Pennsylvania's existing considerable organizational resources along with a cross functional manager would be more impactful than grant money. We invite you to work with us to develop a playbook that can be shared with other communities by making us a pilot project.

## **Our Request for Help**

1. Establish organizational oversight and engagement
2. Provide real and actionable data
3. Create a culture of accountability
4. Foster top-down and bottom-up alignment
5. Fund and support Pilot Projects
6. Create the playbooks and "recipes" for success

Submitted by

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Second Generation Owner and Board Member Whirley-Drink Works!

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