



ALLENTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD
IMPROVEMENT ZONE
DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Assessment of

The Effectiveness of the City of Allentown Neighborhood Improvement Zone

2011-2023

Report prepared by



May 2024

Data gathering, analysis, assessment and report preparation were done by the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission at the request of the Allentown Neighborhood Improvement Zone Development Authority (ANIZDA)



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Seymour Traub, [Chairperson](#)

John D. Stanley, [Vice Chairperson](#)

Pedro Torres, [Secretary](#)

Dr. Ann Bieber, [Assistant Secretary](#)

Stephen Breininger, [Treasurer](#)

Eileen Aguilera, [Assistant Treasurer](#)

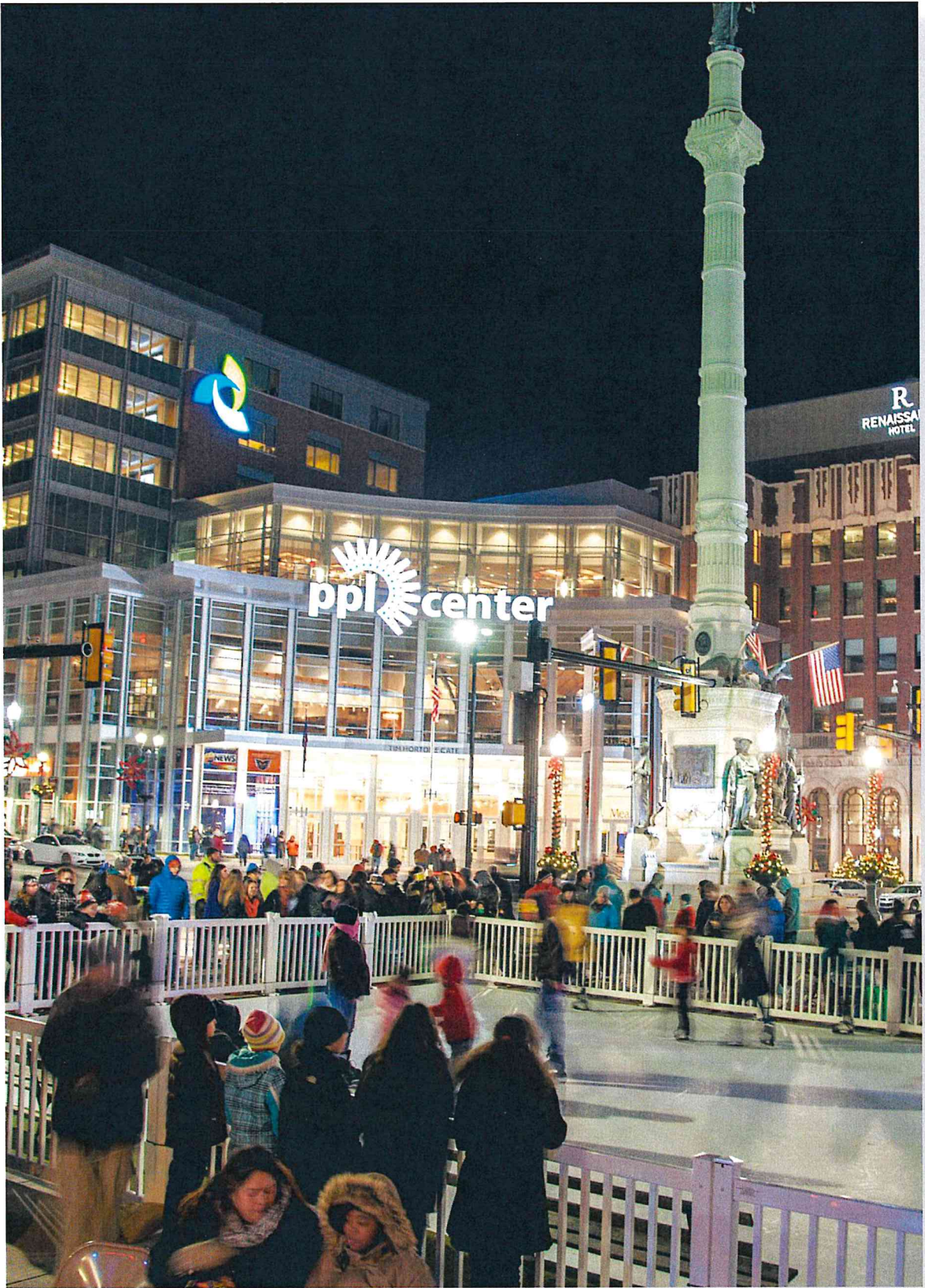
Nelson A Diaz

Tiffany Polek

STAFF

Steven K. Bamford, [Executive Director](#)

Selma Ritter, [Manager, Finance and Administration](#)



PPL Center during the winter 2023. Photo courtesy of ANIZDA.

Assessment of
**The Effectiveness of the City
of Allentown Neighborhood
Improvement Zone**
2011-2023

TABLE OF CONTENTS

What Is The NIZ?	6
Executive Summary	8
Historical Context	10
Conclusion 1	12
Project Profiles	13
Conclusion 2	18
Conclusion 3	24
Summary and Recommendations	34
Appendix	36

WHAT IS THE NIZ?

Allentown Neighborhood Improvement Zone Development Authority

The Allentown Neighborhood Improvement Zone Development Authority (“ANIZDA”) was created by the City of Allentown to administer development and the financing of projects in the Neighborhood Improvement Zone (the “NIZ”) and to manage its unique financing structure. ANIZDA is a public instrumentality of the Commonwealth and is authorized and empowered by the provisions of the Economic Development Financing Law of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 73 P.S. 371 et seq., as amended (the “Act”) as a commercial or industrial development authority to acquire, hold, construct, improve, maintain, own, finance and lease projects. The authority is governed by a nine-member board of directors. Its powers are limited to development activities within the NIZ.

The Neighborhood Improvement Zone

The provisions of Act 50 of 2009 of the Pennsylvania General Assembly, enacted on October 9, 2009, as amended and supplemented and cited as 72 P.S. sections 8901-B et seq. (the “NIZ Act”), authorize, among other things, the establishment of the NIZ in an area not greater than 130 acres located in the City of Allentown and the pledge of revenues derived from the taxes enumerated in the NIZ Act from all taxpayers associated with Qualified Businesses located in the NIZ, distributed to the Authority or its assignee by the Treasurer of the Commonwealth for the payment of debt service on bonds, notes or other evidence of indebtedness issued to finance improvements and developments within the NIZ. The NIZ Act defines a “Qualified Business” as an entity authorized to conduct business in Pennsylvania which is located or partially located within the NIZ and engaged in the active conduct of a trade or business for the taxable year. Real estate taxes collected by the city, county, and school district are not among the taxes enumerated in the NIZ Act and are not utilized to finance development within the NIZ.

Key Terms Throughout This Study

NIZ

References to the “NIZ” in the report refer directly to the area within the defined boundaries of the Neighborhood Improvement Zone as designated by ANIZDA.

Study Area

References to the “Study Area” throughout the document refer to a larger area surrounding and including the NIZ. The analysis includes areas around the NIZ boundary due to data that is available at specific geographies. Geographies used to identify the Study Area are Census Tracts 4, 5, 9, 10, 18 and 97.

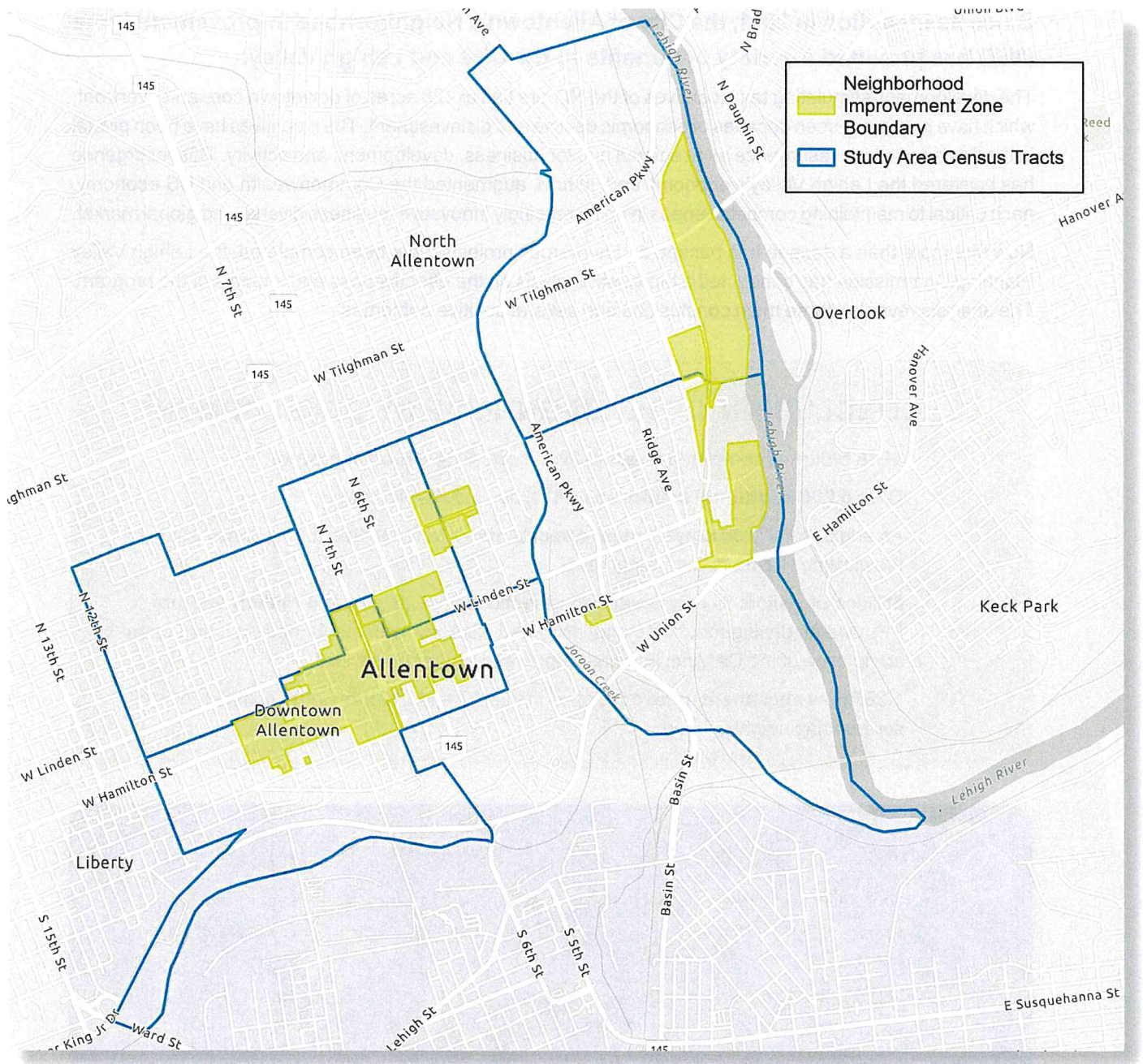
Downtown

Use of the term “Downtown” in the analysis refers to the area generally bounded by North Penn Street to the east, Liberty Street to the north, 12th Street to the west and Union Street to the south (Census Tracts 9, 10, 18 and 97).

Riverfront

Use of the term “Riverfront” in the analysis refers to the area generally bounded by the Jordan Creek to the west, Lehigh River to the east, Sumner Avenue to the north and Union Street to the south (Census Tracts 4 and 5).

The Neighborhood Improvement Zone



The NIZ includes 128 acres, highlighted in the map, in Allentown's Downtown and Lehigh Riverfront.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since its inception in 2011, the City of Allentown's Neighborhood Improvement Zone (NIZ) has provided a variety of benefits to the City and Lehigh Valley.

The development-stimulating tax incentives of the NIZ are tied to 128 acres of downtown core and riverfront, which have previously seen decades of economic decline and disinvestment. The incentives have been pivotal in the City's economic resurgence as a regional hub for business, development, and activity. This resurgence has bolstered the Lehigh Valley's economy and, in turn, augmented the Commonwealth and US economy, each critical to maintaining competitiveness in an increasingly innovative, business diverse and global market.

Now that more than a decade has passed and numerous projects have been completed, the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission has conducted a thorough analysis on the effectiveness and impacts of the program. The analysis revealed three main conclusions and several positive outcomes:



CONCLUSION 1: THE MAGNITUDE OF DEVELOPMENT

- **\$1.15 billion** of completed investment and over **\$1.4 billion** approved.
- **Over 5,000 additional employees** within downtown Allentown.
- An additional **27,190 employment opportunities** were created during construction of the existing NIZ-funded developments.
- Millions of visitors to new downtown attractions, including over **4 million visitors** to PPL Arena, driving foot traffic and increased vibrancy, with much more to come upon completion of the Da Vinci Science Center and Archer Music Hall.
- **1,287 new apartment units** developed in the NIZ and **243 new units** completed in the surrounding neighborhood.



CONCLUSION 2: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DENSITY

- Smarter, denser development has **concentrated 4.3 million square feet of occupiable space**, including class A office, retail, restaurant and entertainment space, apartments, hotels, and parking structures within the downtown area.
- NIZ funding has been used to improve streetscapes, parks, plazas, infrastructure, and other amenities downtown and along the Lehigh River.
- Increased business, resident and visitor traffic within the region's core.

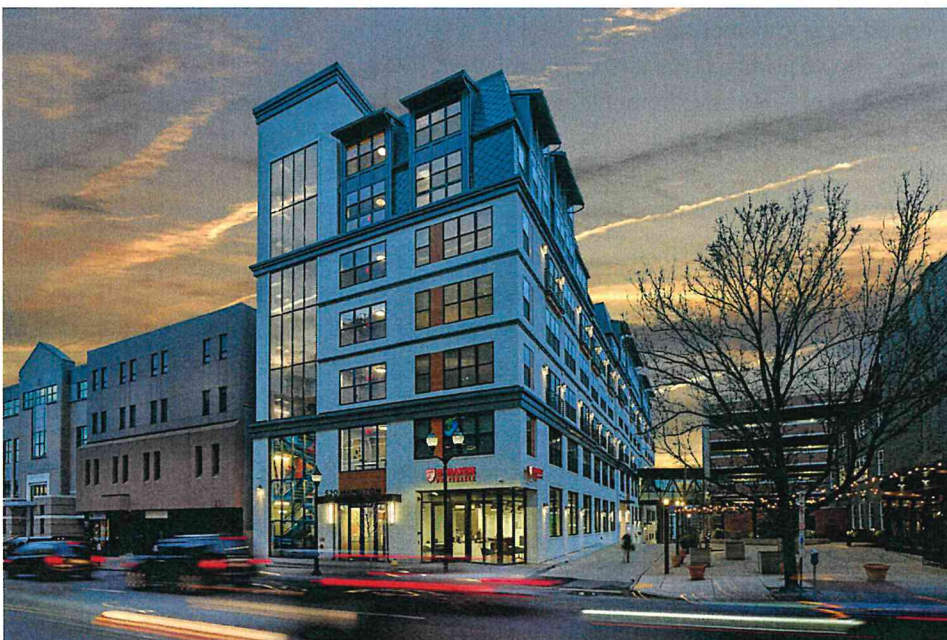


CONCLUSION 3: THE COMMUNITY IMPACTS

- NIZ developments have guided more eyes to the street, which has contributed to a **50% reduction in violent crimes**, outpacing the rest of the city, surrounding communities and other Pennsylvania Cities.
- Developments in the NIZ have supplied an additional **\$5.4 million in new annual property tax revenue** to the Allentown School District and an additional \$2 million for the City and County combined.
- **Over \$23 million** in approved public infrastructure and improvement projects.
- **A decrease in poverty from 49% in 2011 to 33% in 2021** and a 58% increase in median household income.
- Expanded interest in community development projects and events creating additional aesthetic appeal for the neighborhood.
- Greater access to critical services including medical and educational facilities parks, recreational and community arts facilities.

Successful downtowns are essential to successful, prosperous regions. The power of the NIZ and its positive wide-ranging impacts are transformative for the City, Region and Commonwealth. Considering late 20th century and early 21st century economic trends for industrial towns, stabilization or revitalization in Allentown's downtown and Lehigh Riverfront neighborhoods would have been unlikely in the best case and impossible in the worst without the NIZ incentivizing investment. The resulting reuse, redevelopment and revitalization is so remarkable that expansion of this community and economic development tool would benefit other areas of the Commonwealth experiencing economic, population and social decline.

“Successful downtowns are essential to successful, prosperous regions.”



520 Lofts, 2023.
Photo Courtesy
of ANIZDA.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Cities and their neighborhoods are continuously changing. During the mid-20th century, once-productive cities like Allentown saw declines in population and industry.

Many rust belt cities lost much of their economic activity to emerging suburbs, or for less costly opportunities elsewhere. Allentown, and the Lehigh Valley in particular, are often cited as examples of that decline. Allentown has suffered from a perception that its business district is unsafe and lacking quality educational and investment opportunities which accelerated decline and pushed growth to suburban locations.

A region is defined by the core of its downtowns. Potential investors and residents take notice of the economic activity and foot traffic and associate it with the entire region. If the downtown business and shopping district is empty and unmaintained, the investor or resident will move on to a better opportunity. Throughout the late 20th and early 21st century, this is exactly what occurred throughout previously vibrant rust belt cities. As storefronts and office buildings became vacant, many lower- and middle-class residents lost access to important nearby jobs and were required to find alternatives. Many needed to buy automobiles and commute further from their homes. Strains on families, infrastructure, institutions and governments emerged, leading to disinvestment, decline and a higher reliance on public and non-profit assistance.

While other similar urban areas have not been able to recover, Allentown has worked with state and federal representatives to develop innovative solutions, the most impactful of which has been the NIZ. This development incentive spurred unprecedented investment and has begun to erase old perceptions using mixed-use and transit-oriented development. Without sufficient public incentives and investment, developers were unwilling to take on the risk of redevelopment. Above all else, the NIZ legislation gave developers the confidence to invest and the

“The NIZ legislation gave developers the confidence to invest and the opportunity to build public-private partnerships that will shape the City for years to come.”

opportunity to build public-private partnerships that will shape the City for years to come. As redevelopment within the NIZ has continued, economic development and interest in the area have made projects not utilizing NIZ funds or those just outside the NIZ more feasible. Reversing Allentown’s urban decline needed buy-in from everyone – retail operators, service businesses, educational and medical institutions, entertainment venues, non-profits, residents, and governments at all levels.

Investments generated by the NIZ supported the reversal of decline. Vibrant and sustainable urban cores are essential drivers for a region’s community and economic development. In an increasingly global, innovative, and competitive era it is critical that the Lehigh Valley’s largest city maintain a central business district reflective of the quality and quantity of opportunity in the region. Without an injection of investment, long-suffering downtowns struggle to improve. Public-private partnership opportunities created by the NIZ raise confidence and viability of investment. The NIZ directs investment to where it is needed most, and where it will have the most impact, with large-scale local, regional and statewide impacts. As the Lehigh Valley moves from a medium to now a nationally recognized major metropolitan region, Downtown Allentown must reflect the entire Region’s success.

Allentown has experienced an **over 18,000 population increase between 1950 and 2023**, while population in other rust-belt cities, such as Pittsburgh, Cleveland and Detroit, have declined by more than 50%, according to US Census Bureau data.



*Hamilton Street 700 Block, 1958.
Photo Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.*



*Before One City Center, Hamilton Street 700 Block,
circa early 2000s. Photo Courtesy of ANIZDA.*



Two City Center, Current Day. Photo Courtesy of ANIZDA.

CONCLUSION 1

THE MAGNITUDE OF INVESTMENT

The impact of the NIZ as a funding mechanism and the confidence it has given investors has been considerable. It has prompted a still-growing \$1.4 billion dollars of commercial development, resulting in over 5,000 new jobs² in the downtown core of Allentown.

NIZ incentives have been used to develop modern business spaces for a variety of scales and uses, serving national, regional and local-scale businesses including PPL Electric Utilities, Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN), Truist Financial (formerly BB&T), Morgan Stanley, People's First, Bank of America, Talen Energy, Avantor, Captrust, Norris McLaughlin, Fitzpatrick Lentz & Bubba, Velaspan, American Bank and ADP.

Investments within the NIZ showcase different forms of development, including economic development projects, community development, transit-oriented development and brownfield redevelopment, and funded millions of dollars in neighborhood investments such as improvements to sidewalks and streetscapes with more projects planned and underway.

Development in the NIZ has also spurred the development of 1,287 new apartment units. Although the NIZ funding mechanism would not provide a significant benefit to an entirely residential development, it can and does benefit mixed-use developments which in addition to residential units include a commercial component capable of generating state and local business taxes that can be pledged to debt service.

² Estimates provided by City Center Group and Oakview Group for the PPL Center

Economic Development Project Profile

Five City Center

Developer: City Center Investment Corp.

Year Completed: 2019

Annual Real Estate Taxes

School District

\$1,038,365

City

\$210,839

County

\$173,342

NIZ funding helped develop Five City Center, a mixed-use project consisting of a 13-story class A office tower with street level retail connected to a 95-unit apartment building and parking garage. The office space is occupied by anchor tenant ADP, a global technology company providing human capital management solutions.

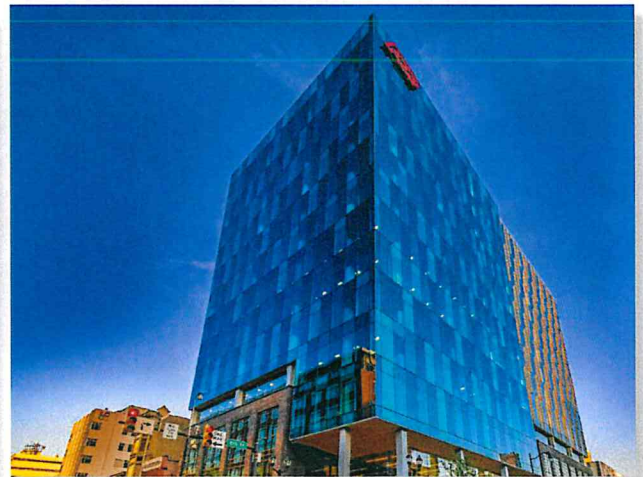
At the 2019 opening of the new state of the art office and Sales Centers of Excellence, ADP announced the Fortune 500 company was moving 1,000 associates into downtown Allentown.

Five City Center is one building of many funded through the NIZ that added a total of 1.4 million square feet of modern office space to the downtown and riverfront. The newly developed commercial

Class A office space has attracted or retained numerous employers and their employees within the downtown core. The availability of office space in a NIZ-induced office building gave PPL the option to remain downtown by occupying this more cost-effective space. The 100,000 square feet at Two City Center will retain the 400 employees that were occupying PPL Tower, but in half the space. It appears PPL Tower will undergo its own transformation into a mixed-use commercial, apartment and amenity space in the coming years.



Five City Center, circa 2000s. Photo Courtesy of ANIZDA.



Five City Center, 2023. Photo Courtesy of ANIZDA.

Community Development Project Profile

Community Services for Children and Valley Health Partners (CSC)

Developer: City Center Investment Corp.

Year Completed: 2023

Annual Real Estate Taxes

School District

\$117,054

City

\$40,941

County

\$19,541

NIZ funding helped redevelop a vacant downtown structure and establish a one-of-a-kind center, the Pat and Heather Browne Center for Education and Health, which offers a broad range of early childhood education, health, and social services to local children and families in need. The project transformed 80,000 square feet of space for non-profit anchor tenants Community Services for Children and Valley Health Partners serving the most vulnerable children and families in the community. CSC is now able to serve over 400 children, up from the 120 served in 2013.



Morning Call Building. Photo Courtesy of ANIZDA.



Community Services for Children and Valley Health Partners, Current Day. Photo Courtesy of ANIZDA.

Transit-Oriented Development Project Profile

LANTA Transit Plaza

Developer: Lehigh and Northampton Transportation Authority and Allentown Parking Authority

Year Completed: 2023

Annual Real Estate Taxes

Exempt

NIZ funding helped develop a redesigned transit plaza operated by the Lehigh and Northampton Transportation Authority. Serving 3,000 bus passengers daily, the 1.64-acre site is immediately adjacent to The Hive, a new 250-unit apartment building. The transit facility is in the pedestrian-friendly downtown core, within walking distance of residential, office, retail, and recreational development, fostering a reduction in car dependency.

Transit-oriented development maximizes the number of businesses, residences and amenities available within walking distance of public transportation. Concentrating development in areas with easy access to public transportation is a best practice in planning and is strongly supported in *FutureLV: The Regional Plan* as a way of ensuring access to the social and economic needs of all people.



*Allentown Transit Center, 2020.
Photo Courtesy of LANTA.*



*Allentown Transit Center for LANTA, Current Day.
Photo Courtesy of LVPC.*

Brownfield Redevelopment Project Profile

615 Waterfront Drive

Developer: The Waterfront Development Company

Year Completed: 2023

Annual Real Estate Taxes

School District

\$434,045

City

\$85,956

County

\$72,458

NIZ funding helped develop 615 Waterfront Drive, the first office building at The Waterfront, a master planned, mixed-use development on the former site of a former 29-acre scrap yard along the western banks of the Lehigh River. 615 Waterfront Drive is the first of 12 structures planned for the former Lehigh Structural Steel site. In addition to installing infrastructure including streets, curbs, sanitary sewer, stormwater systems, and electric service, the project also re-established public access to the river through construction of a riverwalk, plaza, and amphitheater.

While the majority of projects in the NIZ to date are located in Allentown's downtown core, the Lehigh Riverfront area is in the beginning stages of revitalization. Numerous brownfield sites

are located throughout the Riverfront area, and while not all are within the NIZ boundary, NIZ investments have served as a catalyst for other redevelopment projects. Significant investment in brownfield and blight remediation, infrastructure construction, park rehabilitation and trail gap closure are supporting neighborhood stabilization and revitalization in the lowest-income neighborhood in the region.

A foundational partnership was formed between over a dozen partners to build Riverside Drive, a complete street along an abandoned rail corridor that transects the Lehigh Riverfront portion of the NIZ. The project involves the City of Allentown, Whitehall Township, Lehigh County, the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, the Waterfront Development Company, ANIZDA, the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor among other partners, representing the largest public-private-non-profit partnership in the Lehigh Valley's history. Riverside Drive closes the two-mile gap in the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor trail and supports sidewalk, bikeway, vehicular and transit access to adjacent job centers, opens emergency access to isolated industrial and residential neighborhoods, and relieves congestion on Route 22. The initial NIZ-backed investment in Phase 1 of The Waterfront allowed the partnership team to win a \$21 million US Department of Transportation Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant to extend the complete street North into other neighborhoods and the adjoining community.



Riverside Drive pre-construction, 2019.
Photo Courtesy of Jaindl Enterprises.



The Waterfront on Riverside Drive, 2023.
Photo Courtesy of JTaylor Designs.

Neighborhood Investment

ANIZDA not only finances private development projects, but also public infrastructure projects. ANIZDA, working with the City of Allentown and other local partners, is advancing over \$23 million on public improvement projects. The health of public infrastructure is of the utmost importance to the viability of a walkable and productive downtown and these efforts have already had a major impact. Major projects include:

- ArtsWalk infrastructure and public space improvements.
- Modernized City parking infrastructure, including parking meters.
- Streetscape improvements along Hamilton, Linden, Turner, 6th and 7th Streets.
- Improvements to the downtown LANTA Bus Terminal.
- Public space improvements as part of the Da Vinci Science Center project
- Transportation and public space improvements at Center Square and the Soldiers & Sailors Monument.
- Infrastructure improvements at Hamilton and Front Streets.



ArtsWalk, 2023. Photo Courtesy of ANIZDA.

CONCLUSION 2

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DENSITY³

The Lehigh Valley is rapidly growing at a rate of 3,000 to 4,000 more people per year. Increasing density in the Region's urban cores is crucial to accommodating growth efficiently and sustainably.

FutureLV: The Regional Plan identifies Development Areas for growth, as those areas contain sufficient utility and transportation infrastructure as well as employment and community services suitable for more intense development.

Density in an urban format consists of vertical, higher-capacity structures rather than those built horizontally. Taller, denser structures utilize less land while supporting more residents and jobs, and generate more tax revenue than their suburban equivalents. Allentown's NIZ is identified as a Development Area, and as having the capacity to support significantly more residents and businesses with limited additional infrastructure development.

BENEFITS OF DENSITY

- Requires less/no new infrastructure than greenfield areas, saving financial resources
- Saves natural resources in undeveloped areas
- Allows residents to live, recreate and work all in the same neighborhood
- Provides easy transportation access to other areas
- Lower vehicle emissions
- Better connectivity between residential and job centers
- Conserves green space
- Preserves quality of life

Allentown's comprehensive plan, *Allentown Vision 2030*, conducted a resident survey and found that 61% of respondents chose pedestrian improvements as one of the top three needed infrastructure improvements⁴. Density promotes walkability and sustainability while placing less strain on existing infrastructure and our natural resources. Additionally, the Citywide Future Land Use Map in *Allentown Vision 2030* identifies areas within the NIZ for strategic planning areas with transit-orientated development opportunities.

The LVPC's BuildLV Development Data shows that, over the last decade, apartment and townhome developments accounted for 75% of units proposed within the City compared to 16% for single-family residences. Much of this has been infill development, and the NIZ has incentivized targeted investment in the City's urban core, following a strategic development pattern. These developments are more sustainable in the long term for both the taxpayer and the community. This contrasts with past housing booms in the Lehigh Valley which focused new sprawling housing developments on greenfield sites in suburban and exurban areas. While suburban-style developments do help to address the needs of a growing region, they also lead to increased housing costs, increased commuting times, lower air quality and the loss of greenfield areas that support community character.

From 2011 to 2021, the population of the Lehigh Valley region increased by 6.3%. The increases were even higher in the city and study area, growing by 6.7% and 11% respectively. With 100,000 more residents and 74,108 new jobs expected in the Lehigh Valley by 2050, facilitating denser development in urban areas is key to ensuring that new businesses have space to get started and existing businesses are able to expand, all in a strategic manner.

Increasing Property Values and Real Estate Tax Revenue

While most taxes generated by NIZ projects are redistributed through ANIZDA to pay down the debt for those developments in accordance with the NIZ legislation, a major exception is the real estate taxes generated for the County, City and School District. Real estate taxes generated in the NIZ are directed towards those governing bodies.

PROPERTY TAX REVENUE – NIZ BOUNDARY

AREA	2012	2023
Allentown School District	\$4,661,095	\$10,036,141
Lehigh County	\$1,124,362	\$1,675,409
City of Allentown	\$818,677	\$2,310,722
Total Real Estate Tax Revenue	\$6,604,133	\$14,022,271

The Allentown School District is the **largest tax beneficiary of the NIZ system, receiving over 71% of real estate tax revenue generated by properties in the NIZ.**

Additionally, a majority of the residential units developed within the NIZ have been studio apartments and one-bedroom units. According to data from City Center Group, the current resident mix contains very few children and features 27% studio apartments and 50% one-bedroom apartments, and the population occupying these new units are typically younger adults and singles or couples without children. The positive net benefit of the NIZ for the Allentown School District is therefore far greater than any perceived adverse impacts of residential development. Directing investment to disadvantaged communities and lower-performing school districts is important for community interests. Without these developments and the revenue that it brings, property taxes would have to be increased, or services would have to be cut.

Continued real estate investment has substantially increased real estate taxes collected within the Study Area. Denser development, in tandem with newer development that is generally appraised at a greater value, has more than doubled the tax revenue generated.

STUDY AREA AVERAGE PROPERTY ASSESSED VALUE

2012	2023
\$116,433	\$276,499

Total assessed value includes both taxed and untaxed properties

Considering City, County, and School District taxes from 2012 to 2023, Study Area parcels generated a tax revenue increase of 104%, from \$14.7 million to \$30.1 million. The increase within the NIZ boundary was even greater with a 112% increase, nearly three times the City of Allentown increase of 41%. In 2012, the NIZ parcels generated 5% of citywide tax revenue, while by 2023, that number rose to 7.6%. Additionally, with multiple projects in the development pipeline, these figures will grow.

From 2012 to 2023, the average assessed value of a parcel in the Study Area **more than doubled from \$116,433 to \$276,499.**

³ Property assessment data from Lehigh County GIS Office and Lehigh County Assessment Office. Additional analysis done by LVPC.

⁴ Allentown Vision 2030, City of Allentown

ALL REAL ESTATE TAXES COLLECTED

	2012	2023	\$ Difference	% Difference
City of Allentown	\$131,249,563	\$184,918,831	+\$53,669,268	+41%
Study Area	\$14,746,002	\$30,109,017	+\$15,363,015	+104%
NIZ Boundary	\$6,604,133	\$14,022,271	+\$7,418,138	+112%

For the Allentown School District in particular, property tax revenues⁵ collected in the Study Area increased by nearly 126%, from \$9.3 million in 2012 to over \$21.1 million in 2023. Had the NIZ-funded projects not occurred, the Allentown School District would either collect \$11.8 million less in funding per year or increase taxes by approximately 9% to achieve the same amount collected.

Tax Impacts from Recently Completed Residential Projects

NIZ investments have served as a catalyst for developers to construct apartment units in the Study Area, and these units have drastically increased tax revenue collected by the City, County and School District. Using the most up-to-date property evaluation completed by the Lehigh County Tax Assessment Office, analysis show how these residential projects have contributed to the tax base.

	950 Hamilton St.	23 N. 7 th St.	520 Hamilton St.
Total Taxable Value	\$6,692,100	\$18,000,000	\$6,897,200
Acreage	0.53	1.48	0.32
2023 Property Tax	\$210,117	\$566,526	\$215,592
School	\$151,531	\$407,577	\$156,175
County	\$25,296	\$68,040	\$26,071
City	\$33,291	\$90,909	\$33,346
Property Tax Revenue (Per Acre)	\$396,447	\$382,788	\$673,725
	26 N. 6 th St.	777 Walnut St.	20 S. 7 th St.
Total Taxable Value	\$6,505,000	\$13,125,400	\$14,115,300
Acreage	0.55	1.28	1.58
2023 Property Tax	\$204,814	\$412,699	\$447,345
School	\$147,294	\$297,201	\$319,616
County	\$24,589	\$49,614	\$53,356
City	\$32,931	\$65,884	\$74,374
Property Tax Revenue/Acre	\$372,389	\$322,421	\$283,130

⁵ The 2023 Allentown School District millage rate (22.6432 mills) was used to match the most complete and up-to-date property assessment data from 2023.

Density Comparison

To further assess the impacts of density, two mainly residential developments in Downtown Allentown were analyzed. Just a half-mile from each other, the STRATA Symphony development and Riverbend at Allentown development both offer apartments downtown but differ drastically in their utilization of available land. The STRATA Symphony was selected as a typical representation of NIZ and Study Area development and serves as a comparable example to the Riverbend at Allentown, which is outside of the NIZ. The STRATA Symphony includes 71 residential units with modern amenities and providing parking underground. The Riverbend at Allentown on the other hand is a typical suburban style apartment complex, consisting of 233 apartment units in two- and three-story apartment and townhouse style buildings, with parking throughout the development.

Although STRATA Symphony uses less land and offers fewer units, the denser development produced over 600% more property tax revenue per acre than the less dense Riverbend complex. The STRATA Symphony generated \$2,709 tax revenue per residential unit compared to \$2,103 generated per residential unit at Riverbend.



Riverbend in Allentown Apartments, 2022.
Photo courtesy of Riverbend in Allentown.



Strata Symphony Apartments, 2023.
Photo courtesy of City Center Investment Corporation

Riverbend at Allentown 442 W Union Street
Taxable Total = \$15,015,700
Acreage = 11.05
Total Property Tax = \$489,962
County = \$56,759
Municipality = \$93,199
School = \$340,003.50
\$44,340.43/acre

Strata Symphony 45 N 6 TH Street
Taxable Total = \$ 6,095,000
Acreage = 0.56
Total Property Tax = \$192,329
County = \$23,039
Municipality = \$31,279
School = \$138,010
\$343,444.13/acre

Although STRATA Symphony uses 5% of the land area and offers fewer units than Riverbend at Allentown, **the denser development produced over 600% more property tax revenue per acre** than the less dense Riverbend complex.

Historical Comparisons

VALUE BEFORE AND AFTER REHABILITATION

Rehabilitation of dense urban sites spurred by investments in the NIZ will also increase tax revenue. 902 Hamilton Street is one of City Center’s larger apartment buildings with 204 residential units and various amenities including ground level street-facing commercial businesses. Prior to being redeveloped, 902 Hamilton Street was a Holiday Inn hotel with an assessed value of \$3.4 million. While previously considered high value, reinvestment in the building has amplified the assessed tax value to \$15.8 million. The per acre value increased by more than four times and property tax revenue per acre increased 318%.

902 Hamilton Street 2012	902 Hamilton Street 2023
Taxable Total = \$3,432,000	Taxable Total = \$15,831,400
Acreage = 1.17	Acreage = 1.17
2023 Millage Rate = 54.4136	2023 Millage Rate = 54.4136
Total Property Tax = \$120,452	Total Property Tax = \$503,401
\$102,950/acre	\$430,257/acre

VALUE BEFORE AND AFTER REDEVELOPMENT

While 902 Hamilton represented a rehabilitation, an example of a complete redevelopment is Two City Center located at the corner of Hamilton and 7th Street. Prior to redevelopment into an 11-story mixed-use building, the 645 Hamilton Street site housed the former First National Bank. The office building was vacant for three years and largely obsolete before it was demolished in 2012. The redevelopment of the Two City Center site now has 2,776% more property tax revenue per acre than the previous use. Two City Center is another example of a project that has benefitted from increased activity and interest in the NIZ and is a vital property to center city’s tax core, providing a variety of amenities to visitors and residents alike.

645 Hamilton Street 2012	645 Hamilton Street 2023
Taxable Total = \$1,339,200	Taxable Total = \$45,000,000
Acreage = 0.772	Acreage = 0.772
2023 Millage Rate = 54.4136	2023 Millage Rate = 54.4136
Total Property Tax = \$46,172	Total Property Tax = \$1,316,365
\$59,808/acre	\$1,705,136/acre

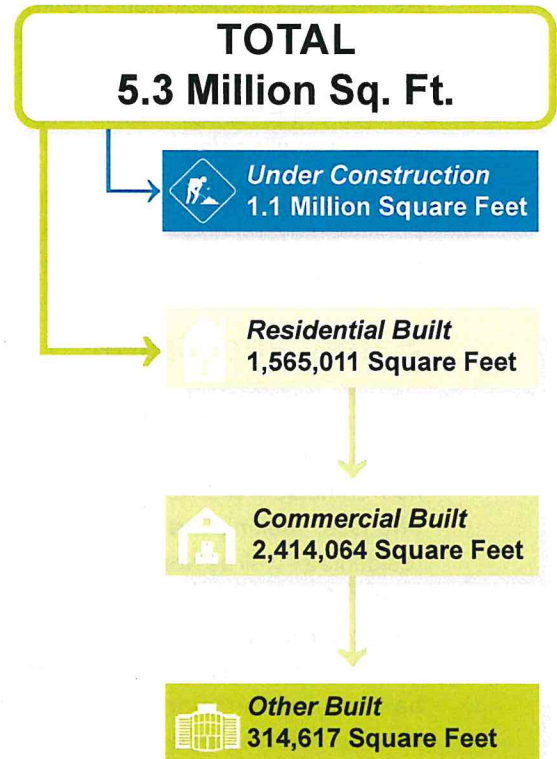
Greenfield Development Scenario

To better illustrate the differences in density, consider an alternate scenario in which the City's and Region's population continued to increase, but the NIZ-supported dense development never occurred. In the decade before the NIZ, the citywide population grew by 12% and LVPC is projecting a growth of 7,424 people in Allentown by 2050⁶. If the densely developed residential units were instead scattered across the region in greenfield development:

- Hundreds of acres of greenfield land would be lost forever.
- Developers, municipalities and taxpayers would be responsible for additional infrastructure development and maintenance.
- Millions of dollars in municipal and school tax revenue, especially in the areas that need it most, would be lost.
- Intensified transportation dependence would occur.
- There would be an increased burden on the environment.
- Community health and life expectancy would decrease and healthcare and public safety costs would increase.

A variety of large-scale mixed-use developments were analyzed to comprehend the benefits of density. For example, the 88.8-acre Madison Farms Development in Bethlehem is a highly thought of, successful mixed-use project and during its developmental review, it was determined to be consistent with the goals and policies of the County Comprehensive Plan. While its style is suitable for its specific location, it is much more suburban than those constructed in the NIZ. Both the Madison Farms and all NIZ-supported developments exist in optimal locations near major regional roadways, and support employment centers. NIZ funded projects cover approximately 4.3 million square feet with 1.1 million square feet currently under construction. If the completed projects were built on open green space, in the same manner as Madison Farms, they would take up an estimated 99 acres of valuable greenspace, open lands or farm fields, and this is comparing it to a development that is generally thought of to be consistent with our regional goals. This doesn't account for parking or open space requirements.

BUILDING AREA OF NIZ-FUNDED PROJECTS



In Allentown, the lowest density residential zoning district allows a maximum average density of eight units per acre for all dwelling types (City of Allentown Zoning Ordinance Section 1315.02). If the nearly 1,300 completed residential units within the NIZ were built to those standards, over 160 acres would be needed for their development. In the urban downtown setting of the NIZ, those units are accomplished in **approximately 11.2 acres.**

⁶ Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, Lehigh Valley Transportation Study, Workforce Board Lehigh Valley. DataLV Population and Employment Projections. 2023.

CONCLUSION 3

VAST COMMUNITY IMPACTS

Over \$1 billion of investment and dense mixed-use development in the NIZ has resulted in numerous benefits to the community.

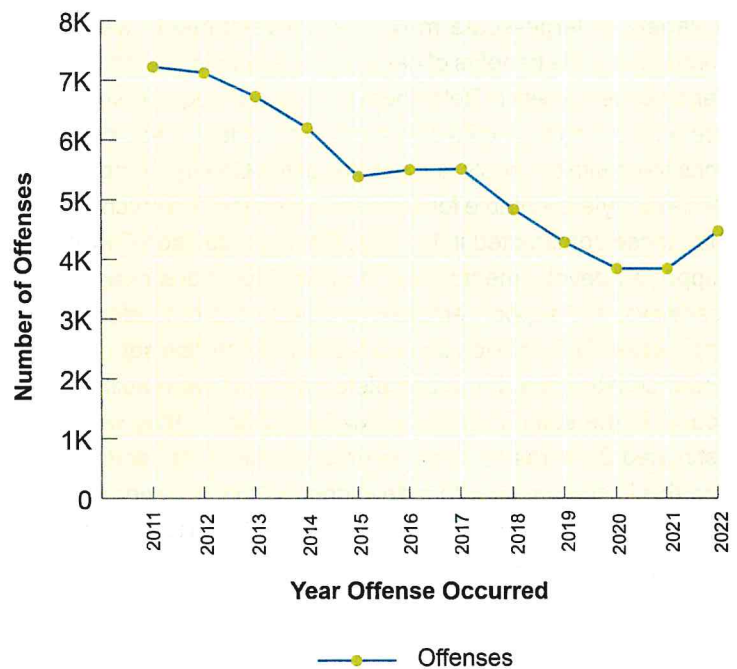
As discussed in Conclusion 2, revitalization provides substantial tax revenues to the City, Lehigh County and Allentown School District, and development density provides lifestyle and quality of life benefits to residents and visitors. Because the NIZ is accessible by public transit, walking and bicycling transportation options, car-only dependency is decreasing, which also improves air and water quality, increases public health and supports public safety.

Because of the NIZ as a development-incentivizing funding mechanism, downtown revitalization has provided several additional benefits including increased public safety, improved reputation for Allentown, and community-supportive educational opportunities, services and resources.

Safety and Crime

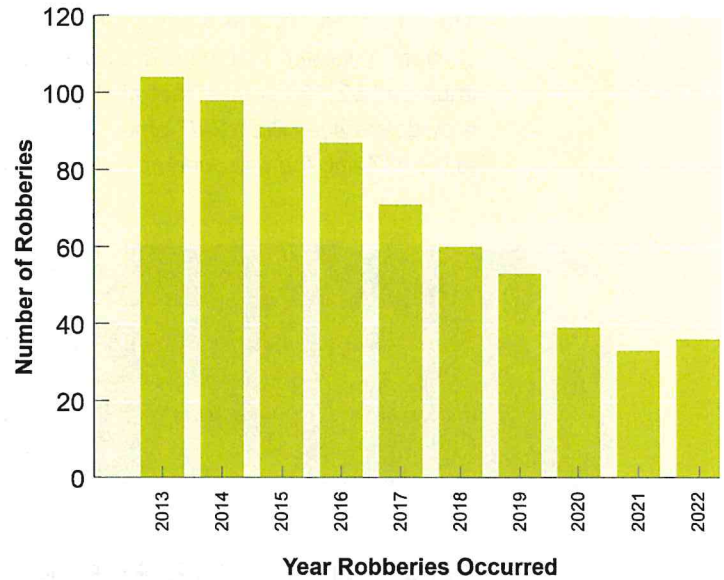
Analysis indicates that the economic revitalization in the City's downtown core has coincided with a decrease in criminal offenses, making it a safer community for residents as well as workers. Without a critical mass of people, a downtown core will feel empty, unviable and unsafe. The perception of downtown Allentown as an unsafe area has been a longstanding obstacle to its success. With more people on the street daily, creating a more vibrant, bustling atmosphere, criminal activity has declined. The 'eyes on the street' effect, combined with a more active environment, has created fewer opportunities for criminal activities to go unnoticed. As a result, the revitalization efforts in downtown Allentown have not only improved the economic landscape but have also made the area safer for residents and workers alike. Both the City of Allentown and the Study Area have seen a decline in criminal offences over the past 10 years, with the most drastic decrease in crime within the Study Area.

INDEX CRIME OFFENSES
CITY OF ALLENTOWN



According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Report (UCR), index crimes, or part one crimes, are offenses that are considered serious, are committed with regularity, and are tracked by most police departments across the country.⁷ Index offenses are generally better indicators of neighborhood and individual safety due to their violent and disruptive nature, and these offenses have dropped considerably. To standardize comparisons, analysis calculates the crime rate of part one offenses relative to the population of the study area. The most up-to-date crime data was provided by Allentown Police Department Chief Charles Roca and the Pennsylvania UCR. Compared to the City as a whole, Allentown's downtown has experienced greater growth and simultaneously greater drops in crime. The crime rate within the Study Area decreased by more than 50% over the decade.

REPORTED ROBBERIES IN THE STUDY AREA



Within the City of Allentown, the amount of index crimes decreased more than 30% in the past ten years. In 2012, there were 7,123 index crime offenses but that decreased to 4,472 in 2022. The index crime rate relative to increased population decreased by over 40%. This change is greater than that of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (-26%), the Lehigh Valley (-38%) and many similar cities such as Scranton (-33%) and Reading (-37%).⁸

Since the inception of the NIZ, cases of robberies and burglaries have decreased by over 60%. In the City of Allentown, three in every 100 people are likely to be a victim of a violent crime and an even lower rate of 2.5 in every 100 people are likely to be victims in the study area, which further contradicts the outdated perception of the downtown neighborhood as an unsafe place. Working with regional and local partners, initiatives to combat the harmful stigma of the area being an unsafe area to live or do business in should be encouraged. The decrease in criminal offenses, and the gradual change in study areas perception as an unsafe place, are among the most positive outcomes of the city's economic revitalization.

Over the past decade, the annual serious crime rate in the **Study Area decreased by 50%**, from 1,024 offenses to 514, outpacing Pennsylvania (-26%), the Lehigh Valley (-38%) and similar cities such as Scranton (-33%) and Reading (-37%).

⁷ U.S. Department of Justice. FBI. Criminal Justice Information Services Division. Crime in the U.S. 2019: Offense Definitions.

⁸ Pennsylvania Uniform Crime Reporting System. 2022.

Community Resources and Community Development

One of the primary benefits of the NIZ has been its ability to connect developers and the investment community to service providers within the Study Area, forming partnerships that ultimately increase opportunities for residents in and around the NIZ. Investments generated by the NIZ have resulted in both direct and indirect benefits to the community in the form of educational opportunities, services, and resources.



ST. LUKE'S SACRED HEART CAMPUS

The NIZ program was able to provide Sacred Heart Hospital, now part of St Luke's University Health Network, the ability to renovate their medical facilities. The project improved 62,000 square feet of medical office space, and the hospital is better able to provide services like a 24/7 emergency room, primary care and specialty health services to the NIZ and the surrounding neighborhoods.



LEHIGH VALLEY HEALTH NETWORK ONE CITY CENTER

Funding from the NIZ enabled Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN) to establish LVHN-One City Center in the heart of downtown Allentown, creating a fitness center with sports performance training and rehabilitation services, and supporting the headquarters of LVHN administrative offices.



COMMUNITY SERVICES FOR CHILDREN

As highlighted in Conclusion 1 as an example of Community Development, the NIZ enabled a new facility and location for Community Services for Children (CSC), a regional organization whose mission it is to "prepare young children and their families to succeed in learning and in life through innovative, comprehensive, leading-edge services". The project fully renovated an 85,000 square-foot facility, and includes a state-of-the-art early childhood center with 20 preschool classrooms and a family service center that brings health, housing, and social services to the disadvantaged community. The Head Start program provides preschool educational opportunities for 400 students, and summer school opportunities for 200 with advanced programming in literacy, science, math, and the creative arts. The site also offers fitness spaces, indoor and outdoor play areas, a library and a reading room.

⁹ Pennsylvania Department of Education Future Ready PA Index.



BUILDING 21

Re-establishing downtown Allentown as a business center has served as a catalyst for other community-supportive projects such as the development of Building 21. Corporate business leaders attracted to the new Class A offices in the NIZ have since directed support efforts to local community projects such as Building 21, an alternative high school providing educational opportunities serving over 400 students of which 79.5% are economically disadvantaged, 18.7% are special education students and 18.5% are English language learners.⁹



VALLEY HEALTH PARTNERS

Redevelopment in the NIZ facilitated a partnership between CSC and Valley Health Partners (VHP), enabling VHP to expand programming and services to children and families in downtown Allentown. The new VHP facility provides dental and vision care, and providers serve children as young as six months old. The facility's location across the street from the Lehigh and Northampton Transportation Authority (LANTA) transit hub makes it accessible to the children and families who need its services.



PPL CENTER EVENTS

The \$224 million PPL Center is one of the most widely renowned revitalization projects in the NIZ, a state-of-the-art multipurpose arena and the Lehigh Valley's largest events venue. Fans across the region and beyond are drawn in to rally around the Lehigh Valley Phantoms hockey games, and the PPL Center holds an average of 138 events annually¹⁰. Major events such as the Frozen Four regional college hockey tournament bring in thousands of residents and visitors from around the country, having a tremendous impact on the regional economy. These visitors, who may have a predisposition based on rust belt misconceptions that the city is unkept or unsafe, get a glimpse at the fastest growing city in Pennsylvania and the revitalization that has occurred. These events are often hosted on major cable networks which give further, free publicity to the City and region. Discover Lehigh Valley calculated that the economic impact of the Frozen Four event alone generated over \$4.37 million for the local economy. While this particular event may have drawn spectators from a wider area than most, every event pulls in dollars from outside our region.

PROJECTS UNDERWAY AND PLANNED

These examples illustrate only a few of the community-facing, building and sustaining examples that the NIZ has supported. Additional projects are currently underway, such as the Da Vinci Science Center, which is constructing a 67,000-square-foot education facility in the heart of downtown Allentown. The opening of the facility is highly anticipated due to the innovative educational partnership between Da Vinci Science Center and the Allentown School District, which also establishes the facility as an official secondary campus for elementary school students. This and many other facilities are made possible by the strength of NIZ financing. Future community-oriented facilities are expected to continue building lasting relationships and further improve social and economic outcomes within the NIZ.

¹⁰ Oakview Group for the PPL Center.

Evaluating Neighborhood Change¹¹

The NIZ was created by the State Legislature as a tool to generate commercial development activity. New offices and business spaces created a critical mass that supports the development of over 1,000 market-rate apartment units, however current residents in the Study Area remain among the lowest income communities in the Region.

While NIZ development incentives have been found to provide indisputable economic and quality of life benefits to the City, Region and State, communities across Pennsylvania and the United States have also associated revitalization with neighborhood change and gentrification¹². Although housing is not within the purview of the NIZ legislation, this study evaluates the extent of neighborhood change in the Study Area recognizing that economic inclusivity is found to increase prosperity, not just for those with lower incomes, but for everyone¹³. It is also noteworthy that the NIZ itself is not a mechanism for increasing housing attainability, and forming additional partnerships and collaborative efforts between entities such as the City of Allentown and local housing advocates can serve to maximize the benefits of NIZ revitalization for all residents in the Study Area and beyond.

Several factors are considered to determine how demographics in the Study Area have changed over the past 10 years. These factors are used as indicators to collectively evaluate the extent to which neighborhood change has occurred¹⁴ because comprehensive data to directly measure displacement does not exist. Each individual factor is inconclusive, and must be evaluated as a whole.

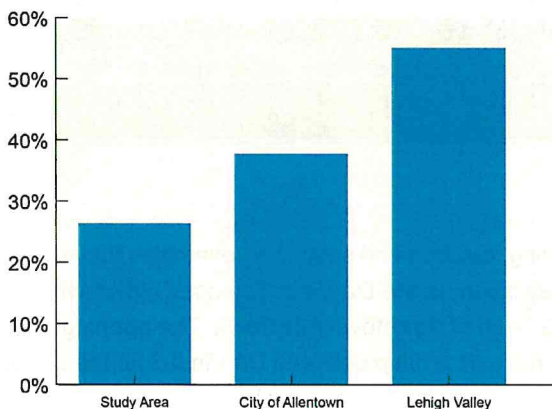
RESIDENT RETENTION

Resident retention measures the rate of households that have remained in the Study Area since the NIZ was established, and the rate of households who recently moved into the Study Area.

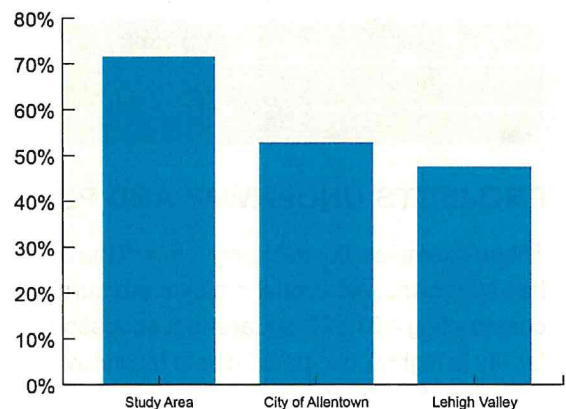
In the Study Area, about one quarter of households (26%) who moved in before 2010 remain in the neighborhood compared to 38% of overall City households and 55% of the Region's households, reflecting a greater degree of transiency within the Study Area.

Conversely, over 70% of Study Area households moved in as recently as 2015, compared to 53% of Citywide households and 48% of Lehigh Valley households. A higher rate of new residents is to be expected considering the 1,300 newly constructed apartment units that came on the market since 2015.

PERCENT OF RESIDENTS WHO MOVED IN BEFORE 2010 AND REMAIN IN THE STUDY AREA



PERCENT OF RESIDENTS WHO MOVED INTO THE STUDY AREA IN 2015 OR LATER



¹¹ All demographic and housing data is obtained through the U.S. Census Bureau.

¹² Gentrification is defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as 'a process in which a poor area (as of a city) experiences an influx of middle-class or wealthy people who renovate and rebuild homes and businesses and which often results in an increase in property values and the displacement of earlier, usually poorer residents'.

DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS – AGE

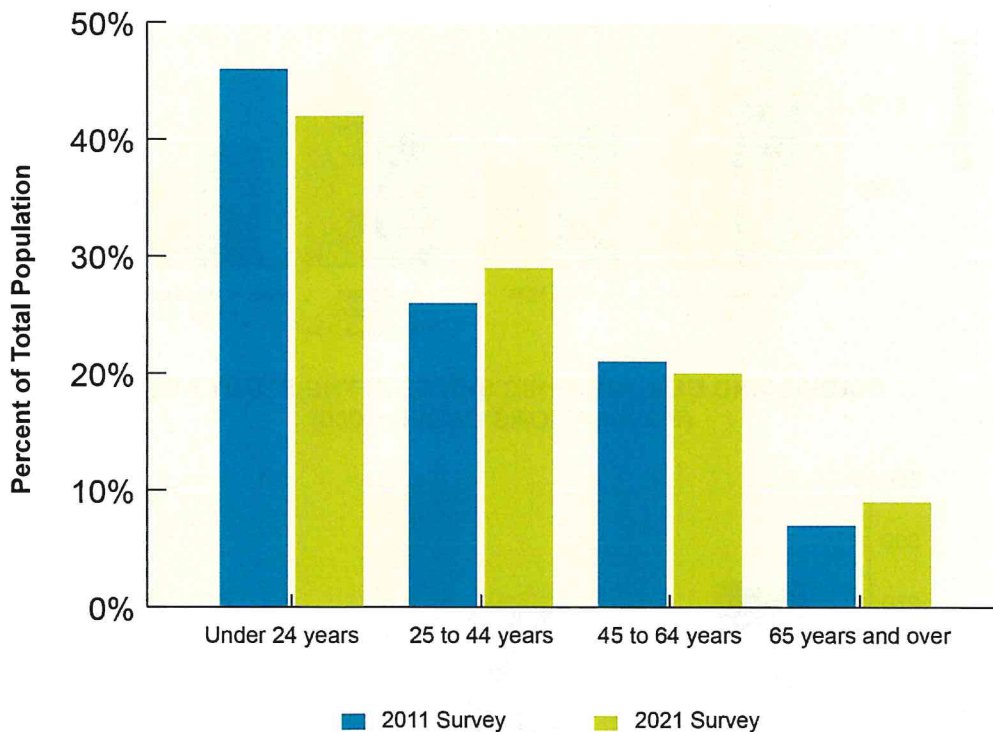
Resident demographics within the Study Area have seen little change over the last 10 years. The Study Area population increased by 11% (1,972 people) and included growth across all age groups, though at different rates, resulting in minimal proportional shifts for each age group.

Key Findings:

- The proportion of the population under 24 years old continues to be the largest age group, however shifted the most by decreasing 4%.
- The population between ages 25 and 44 increased by 3%.
- The proportion of the population ages 45 to 64 decreased minimally.
- The population proportion of seniors 65 and older rose from 7% in 2011 to 9% in 2021. This could be due to residents aging in place but is also likely due to empty nesters downsizing into newly built units.

These stable trends are similar to the proportions seen across the Lehigh Valley, with a significant difference being that the Region's senior population increased substantially over the last 10 years, by 25%, while adult age groups increased by 2.5% and the population under 24 remained the same.

AGE DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS IN THE STUDY AREA



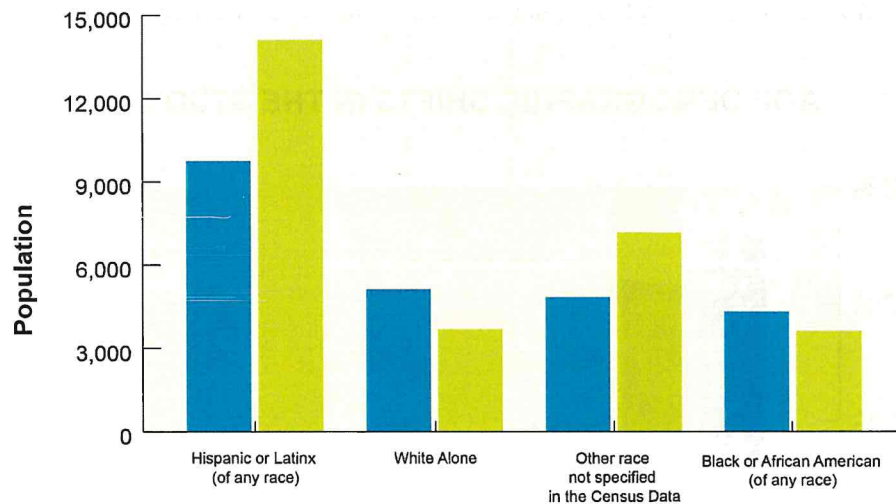
¹³ Buckman, Shelby R., Choi, Laura Y., Daly, Mary C., Seitelman, Lily M. (2021). *The economic gains from equity*. Brookings Institute
¹⁴ Cohen, Mychal, Pettit, Kathryn L.S. (2019). *Guide To Measuring Neighborhood Change To Understand And Prevent Displacement*. The Urban Institute and National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership

DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS – RACE AND ETHNICITY

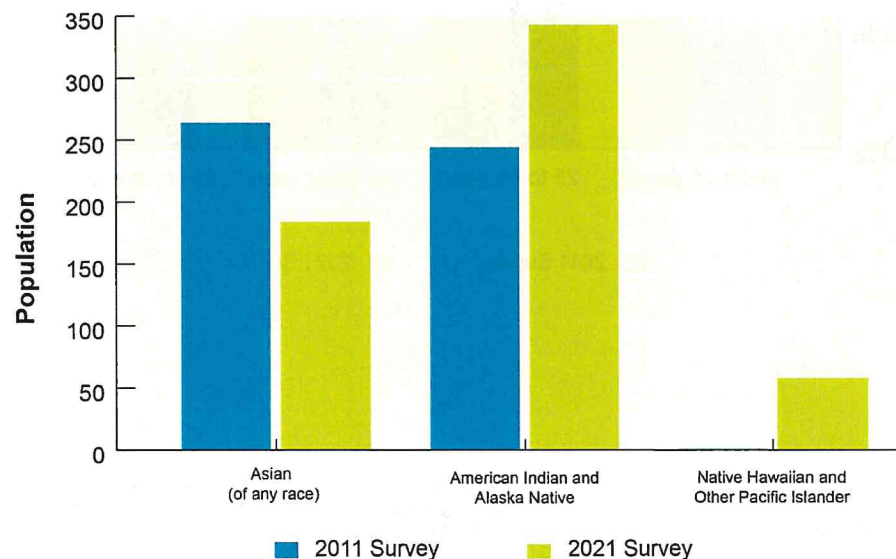
Over the last 10 years, the Study Area has experienced positive economic changes with poverty decreasing from 49% in 2011 to 33% in 2021, and a 58% increase in median household income. Most notably, the population identifying as Hispanic or Latinx, increased substantially to 68%.

A well-documented population trend in the Region over the last several decades has been the in-migration of Hispanic and Latinx community members seeking opportunities, coming largely from Puerto Rico, the Caribbean, Central America, New York and other cities in the Northeast which have become too expensive. The Hispanic and Latinx community has been thriving in the City of Allentown in particular for several decades, even before the inception of the NIZ, and the continued growth over the last 10 years can provide a key opportunity for the City and downtown developers is to tap into the City's predominant population, form new connections with other thriving corridors like 7th Street, and provide more connections between NIZ development and the surrounding community.

**RACIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS IN THE STUDY AREA
(POPULATION OF 1,000 OR MORE)**



**RACIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS IN THE STUDY AREA
(POPULATIONS UNDER 1,000)**



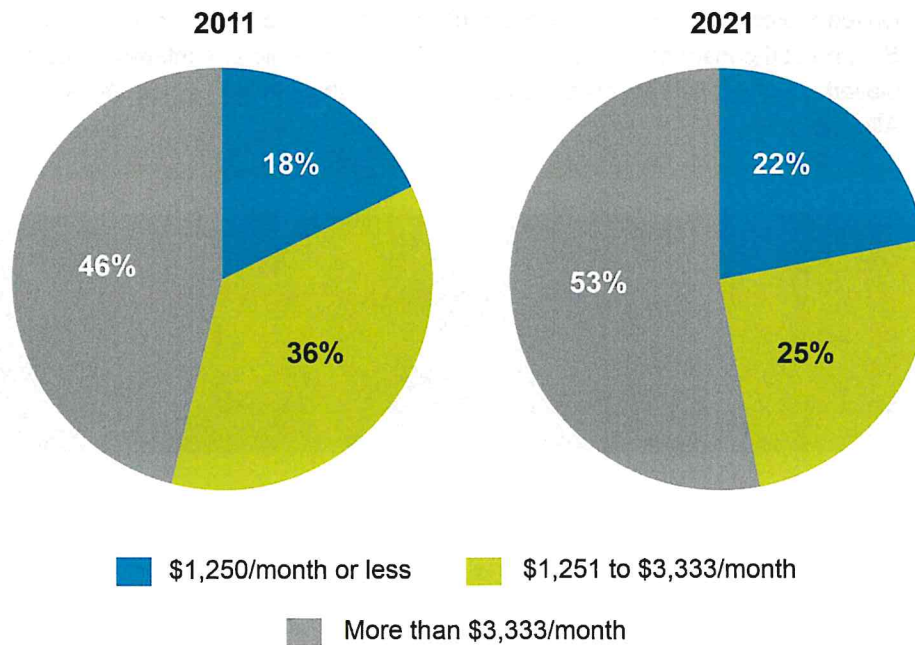
DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS – INCOME

Over the last 10 years, the Study Area has experienced positive economic changes with a 25% decrease in poverty, and a 58% increase in median household income¹⁵. The Study Area has also seen a shift towards higher earnings offered by job opportunities, making up 53% of jobs in the Study Area today compared to 46% of jobs 10 years ago.

The shift in higher-earning incomes can be attributed to upward economic mobility for traditional residents and higher-earning residents relocating into the Study Area to better access the newly created job opportunities generated by NIZ development. While NIZ investment has generated an estimated over 5,000 new job opportunities, higher-earning positions often require more educational or work experience and may not be attainable to residents already living in the Study Area prior to investment.

	2011	2021
Median Household Income	\$22,535	\$35,675
Homeowner Median Household Income	\$41,919	\$59,684
Renter Median Household Income	\$17,936	\$30,400

STUDY AREA JOB EARNINGS



¹⁵ Figures are adjusted by the Census Bureau to account for inflation.

Housing Considerations

Housing is an essential component to supporting and sustaining downtown business districts, providing foot traffic to support local businesses and contribute to a vibrant urban environment. Thriving business districts can provide residents with job opportunities, amenities, entertainment and cultural activities. While the NIZ was created as a tool to stimulate the business aspect of downtown Allentown and by itself is not a mechanism that benefits entirely residential projects, the interdependence between housing and downtown business districts warrant evaluation of how housing has evolved in the Study Area since the NIZ was enacted.



REGIONAL CONTEXT

When considering housing impacts in a neighborhood, it is important to first understand how national and regional market forces impact housing markets at the local level. The Lehigh Valley has had a substantial housing shortage caused by a dropoff in construction following the housing downturn. The market has picked up construction in more recent years, however housing units cannot be built at a rate to keep up with demand as the fastest-growing region in Pennsylvania. Building demand and limited supply have significantly expedited the rate that median housing sales prices increase across the Lehigh Valley, and those price increases have driven interest in Allentown's housing market, especially in the Study Area as one of the lower-priced markets in the Region.

While the Region's trend of population growth is unique compared to other regions in Pennsylvania, the overall housing trend is one seen at a national level. Following the burst of the housing bubble and recession in the late 2000s, housing markets across the United States underwent a period of recovery, steady growth and rising housing prices. Suppressed construction during the COVID-19 pandemic and interest rates have also played an influential role on more recent market shifts in the Lehigh Valley and City of Allentown.



DECREASED VACANCY

In 2011, the Study Area had a high housing vacancy rate of 13%, indicating the area had little demand and low levels of activity not sustainable for an urban downtown. As of 2021, the vacancy rate of the Study area has decreased to 8%, much closer to a rate experts generally consider healthy for housing markets¹⁶.

¹⁶ Florida, Richard. (2018) *Vacancy: America's Other Housing Crisis*. Bloomberg.

¹⁷ Cost burden is a national measure used to determine housing affordability by comparing a household's income to its housing costs. A household paying greater than the recommended 30% of income on housing costs is considered cost burdened.

¹⁸ Verzemnieks, Inara. (2021) *Reinvention in the Rust Belt*. CNN



INCREASED HOUSING SUPPLY

The number of housing units in the Study Area has increased 10% between 2011 and 2021. Providing a greater number of housing units increases options for households seeking to locate in or close to downtown Allentown, as well as opportunities for mobility within the Study Area.

New construction apartments have contributed to this growth, and data suggests that house conversion into multi-family units has also driven this growth. This is particularly evident in the Riverfront section of the Study Area, where although very little residential development occurred between 2011 and 2021, the number of the units still increased by 11%. While the Riverfront section is located near Downtown where development has occurred (about half a mile from the urban core), the buffered distance and little additional development suggests that housing trends within the Riverfront section have been more influenced by regional and national housing trends than new development in the NIZ.

A consideration for entities working to address the community's housing needs is the Study Area's decrease in homeownership and units available for sale. Homeownership in the Study Area decreased by 17% since 2011 and for sale units decreased by 11%, reflecting reduced opportunities to purchase a home and build financial equity in one of the Region's lowest-priced housing areas.



MORE ATTAINABLE, LESS AFFORDABLE

Across the Lehigh Valley, housing units are not being constructed at a rate that meets the continuously growing demand, causing market compression and competition which contributes to increased costs. Regionwide, 56% of renters are cost-burdened, and the rate that has been increasing over the last 10 years.

Within the Study Area, the number of cost-burdened renters increased by 6% (215 renters) between 2011 and 2021, indicating that rental units are less affordable than before. However, simultaneously the rate of cost burden among renters also substantially decreased from 75% to 65%, reflecting that housing is more attainable in the Study Area, because a greater number of renters are not cost-burdened¹⁷, reducing the prevalence among renters.

Attainable housing refers to housing needs across all income levels, and is influenced by entities like planners, realtors, housing developers and financial institutions that fund construction and purchases, all working to increase housing supply across the price spectrum. Affordable housing refers to low- and moderate- income households most susceptible to displacement when housing prices rise, and is influenced by city and county housing programs and community organizations that offer homebuyer education and support.

Commercial developments in the NIZ provided a critical mass of business activity to support the addition of high-density residential development, greatly increasing the availability of housing and making it more attainable to live in downtown Allentown. To address housing affordability, multi-jurisdictional partnerships in Allentown must come together to further address community needs. Developers in the NIZ have already begun working with community members to address these concerns¹⁸, supporting the creation of The Real Estate Lab, a public private partnership in the NIZ that provides mentorship and financial connections to help local residents buy and rehab distressed apartment properties.

SUMMARY

Prior to the enactment of NIZ legislation in 2011, downtown Allentown had been in a multi-decade decline which left the urban core lacking the necessary economic activity that once made the Lehigh Valley’s place to do business.

The NIZ incentives have made the downtown core and emerging Lehigh Riverfront a favorable environment for investment and development. This has helped attract and retain businesses and residents, reducing the brain-drain that prior to the development in the study area was threatening the Region and ultimately the Commonwealth’s economy.

The addition of planned and future projects downtown and in the Lehigh Riverfront section of the Study Area will continue momentum, but intentional partnerships between both community and economic development efforts must continue to expand. The robust public-private-non-profit partnerships that exist in the NIZ today will need to be nurtured and grown to continue to include and connect the surrounding community.

Overall, the NIZ has provided a net benefit to the Study Area. Based on the NIZ Legislation, ANIZDA is a financing authority and cannot finance programming for anything outside of the NIZ boundaries. However, in order for the community to take full advantage, several proactive steps can help sustain and grow success. NIZ projects should continue to involve community stakeholders, operate transparently, and consider the unique needs and characteristics of the neighborhoods it serves. The public participation process offered through the planning and development process managed by the City can be supported with continued and expanded coordination and collaboration. To this end, the spirit and intent of the NIZ Legislation is being met.

CONTINUE STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Continue to participate in efforts with the City, community organizations and other stakeholders to support community needs. This can be accomplished by encouraging developers to utilize the City of Allentown’s Comprehensive Plan and specific neighborhood plans when identifying economic development opportunities. Particularly relevant sections include Chapter 1 Economic Development within Section 2 City-Wide Urban Systems, and Chapter 4 Center Allentown within Section 3 Area Planning. It is of note that every development financed by ANIZDA is reviewed by an architectural firm for consistency with Allentown Vision 2030 Comprehensive and Economic Development Plan. This review has ensured that NIZ investments meet broader goals for public health, safety and welfare of the City as a whole.

Continue to seek opportunities to collaborate with regional partners working towards mitigating criminal activity and combating the stereotype that the downtown area is “dangerous” or an “unsafe” place to live and visit. This can be accomplished by continuing involvement with the Allentown Police Department, City Center Security, and others agencies to develop programs to ensure residents feel safe. Community design techniques have been used by developers through NIZ financing that support increased “eyes on the street” and contribute to a safe community for all.

INCREASED FOCUS ON TRANSPORTATION, TRANSIT AND OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE

ANIZDA financing further enhances community and public infrastructure investments through development. Every design that comes in is reviewed by an architectural design firm, and they review the design against the City's Comprehensive Plan. Continuing this process supports prioritizing dense development that requires less newly built or maintained infrastructure and provides additional tax revenue to the City and School District. The NIZ Financing Tool has invested in community infrastructure projects such as streetscape improvements throughout the NIZ that reflect the needs of a growing population.

As development continues, continue to consult with the Allentown Parking Authority to ensure that parking facilities can accommodate additional residents, workers and visitors as new developments require. New parking options also include new transportation technologies that provide for alternative transportation modes, such as electric vehicle charging stations. Continuing collaboration efforts with LANTA ensures proper connections to the Region's transit system, such as through the new Intermodal Bus Terminal and other major projects financed through the NIZ tool.

FURTHER SUPPORT THE COMMUNITY

The NIZ Financing Tool has established a bustling urban center by prioritizing dense mixed-used development that includes residential, commercial, public and recreational spaces. Investments through ANIZDA have served as a catalyst for neighborhood engagement opportunities provided by developers and tenants of new developments, including social events and informational gatherings that forge connections between NIZ developments and surrounding communities. Neighborhood engagements and culturally supportive businesses, services and resources cater to the community's demographics and support inclusive spaces and economic sustainability. NIZ financial investments have also supported the balance between nurturing the growth of the neighborhood while maintaining its historic and cultural identity by preserving historical buildings through redevelopment when possible, and the review of design in the NIZ by an architectural design firm ensures that developments are aesthetically compatible with neighborhoods and align with the City's Comprehensive Plan.

By collaborating with other regional agencies including the LVPC, Lehigh County and Community Action Lehigh Valley on housing efforts, ANIZDA indirectly supports the provision of more diverse housing options to increase community health and vibrancy of the NIZ, Study Area, City and the Region as a whole. Working together, these entities support the creation and preservation of quality housing at a range of price points and sizes to accommodate all family and household living arrangements and needs.

APPENDIX

This section contains data used in the development of this study.

Property Tax Revenue Data by Area

2023 NIZ-Boundary Tax Revenue		2012 NIZ-Boundary Tax Revenue	
ASD	\$10,036,141	ASD	\$4,661,094.55
Lehigh County	\$1,675,409	Lehigh County	\$1,124,361.98
City of Allentown	\$2,310,722	City of Allentown	\$818,676.51
Total Property Taxes	\$14,022,271	Total Property Taxes	\$6,604,133.04

2023 Study Area Tax Revenue		2012 Study Area Tax Revenue	
ASD	\$21,108,249	ASD	\$9,349,124
Lehigh County	\$3,523,759	Lehigh County	\$2,255,221
City of Allentown	\$5,477,009	City of Allentown	\$3,141,656
Total Property Taxes	\$30,109,017	Total Property Taxes	\$14,746,002

2023 City of Allentown Tax Revenue		2012 City of Allentown Tax Revenue	
ASD	\$124,448,062	ASD	\$82,214,178
Lehigh County	\$20,775,053	Lehigh County	\$19,831,929
City of Allentown	\$39,695,716	City of Allentown	\$29,203,456
Total Property Taxes	\$184,918,831	Total Property Taxes	\$131,249,563

Index Crime Reports in Study Area by Year

	Arson	Vehicle Theft	Larceny	Burglary	Robbery	Rape	Homicide	Offense Totals	Study Area Population	Crime Rate	% Change from 2013
2013	3	89	477	333	104	16	2	1,024	18,743	54.63	-
2014	5	75	501	230	98	20	3	932	19,264	48.38	-11%
2015	6	54	456	197	91	15	2	821	19,376	42.37	-22%
2016	4	72	488	163	87	16	3	833	19,649	42.30	-23%
2017	7	93	483	167	71	19	5	845	19,657	42.99	-21%
2018	3	81	470	126	60	13	2	755	19,733	38.26	-30%
2019	1	47	467	118	53	10	5	701	19,587	35.79	-34%
2020	4	60	390	77	39	13	1	584	20,013	29.18	-47%
2021	1	57	357	54	33	5	7	514	20,610	24.94	-54%

*Number of reported type 1 crimes in Study Area

¹⁹ Data from Allentown Police Department. Additional analysis by LVPC.

Demographic and Housing Data (Study Area)

	2011	2021
Total Population	18,638	20,610
Total Households	6,462	7,417
Race and Ethnicity		
White Alone	5,130	3,698
Black/African-American Alone	3,120	2,354
American Indian and Alaska Native Alone	-	84
Asian Alone	196	120
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Alone	-	-
Some Other Race Alone	12	-
Two or More Races	427	239
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	9,753	14,115
Job Earnings		
\$1,250 per month or less	2,346	1,728
\$1,251 to \$3,333 per month	4,787	2,037
More than \$3,333 per month	6,065	4,244
Worker Age		
29 or younger	2,158	1,473
30 to 54	7,868	4,413
55 or older	3,247	2,123
Household Tenure		
Owner-Occupied	1,775	1,682
Renter-Occupied	4,687	5,735
Median Household Income	\$22,534.50	\$35,675.25
Cost Burden		
Total Cost Burdened Households	4,152	4,065
Cost Burdened Owner Households	643	341
Cost Burdened Renter Households	3,509	3,724
Vacancy Rate	13%	8%
Year Householder Moved In		
Moved in 2019 or later	-	4,350
Moved in 2015 to 2018	-	10,108
Moved in 2010 to 2014	4,786	2,158
Moved in 2000 to 2009	10,004	1,858
Moved in 1990 to 1999	2,138	971
Moved in 1989 or earlier	1,375	746

The Lehigh Valley Planning Commission is the bi-county planning authority and federally-designated metropolitan planning organization for the region. LVPC's mission includes:

MISSION

PROMOTE

the health, safety + general welfare of Lehigh + Northampton counties

IMPROVE

the social + economic climate of the area + promote equity through planning

MAXIMIZE

utilization of the existing infrastructure + plan new infrastructure as needed to fulfill the goals + objectives of the regional comprehensive plan

ENCOURAGE

appropriate land use through implementation of the regional comprehensive plan

GUIDE

the orderly growth, development + redevelopment of the Lehigh Valley in accordance with the long-term objectives, principles + standards that are in the best interest + welfare of its inhabitants + political subdivisions

PROMOTE

conservation of energy, land, water + air in the Lehigh Valley + preservation of unique historic + natural features

**COLLECT, ANALYZE +
DISTRIBUTE**

useful regional data

**PROMOTE +
ACHIEVE**

a safe, well-maintained multimodal transportation system

**COORDINATE +
INTEGRATE**

the plans for orderly growth, development + redevelopment of the Lehigh Valley



This assessment was prepared by the
Lehigh Valley Planning Commission.

Planning Team

Becky A. Bradley, AICP

Executive Director

Jill Seitz

Senior Community Planner

Joseph Dotta

Regional Planner

Matt Assad

Managing Editor

MacKenzie Geisner

Geographic Information Systems Planner

Taylor Beasley

*Graphic Design and
Publications Coordinator*

Staff

Tracy L. Oscavich

Director of Administration

Vicki Weidenhammer

Controller

Geoffrey A. Reese, PE

Master Planner and Engineer

Susan Myerov, AICP

Director of Environmental Planning

Denjam Khadka

*Senior Civil/Environmental
Engineer*

Susan L. Rockwell

Senior Environmental Planner

Bambi Griffin Rivera

*Senior Community and
Regional Planner*

Brian Hite

Transportation Planner

Evan Gardi

Transportation Planner

Ben Dinkel

Transportation Planner

Christian Martinez

Environmental Planner

Corinne Ruggiero

Environmental Planner

Hannah Milagio

*Regional Planner for
Community Engagement*

Angela Ellis

Administrative Assistant



ALLENTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD
IMPROVEMENT ZONE
DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

5 N. Front Street
Allentown, PA 18102
(610) 467-8810
INFO@ALLENTOWNNIZ.COM