



MAHONING RIVER CORRIDOR REVITALIZATION

CHALLENGE

AN OHIO REGION WANTED A PLAN TO BRING COLLECTIVE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES AND SHARED PROSPERITY, CONNECTING 13 DISTINCT COMMUNITIES.

SERVICES

- Comprehensive Planning
- Urban Planning
- Public Engagement
- Water Resources
- Land Use Analysis
- Data Analysis
- Branding + Marketing

MAHONING RIVER CORRIDOR REVITALIZATION PLAN

In northeast Ohio, the Eastgate Regional Council of Governments is leading the Mahoning Valley's effort to revitalize its river corridor by removing industrialization-era low-head dams and planning for the region's future. As industry in the area declined, it burdened the Mahoning Valley region with a polluted river and weakened economy—resulting in the underuse of the river as a regional asset and prosperity driver.

Dam removal has begun, along with planning for how the river corridor can be better used in the future.

ms consultants, inc. coordinated the creation of a Mahoning River Corridor Revitalization Plan that will bring collective economic opportunities and shared prosperity to the Mahoning Valley.

A PLAN FOR MANY COMMUNITIES

The plan rebranded the Mahoning River as the “River of Opportunity,” setting the stage for economic prosperity through regional connection and environmental protection. Thirteen diverse communities were included in the study area, ranging from rural farmland to downtown urban cores and active industrial complexes.

The 13 communities included in the planning:

- Newton Township, Ohio
- Newton Falls, Ohio
- Braceville Township, Ohio
- Leavittsburg, Ohio
- Warren, Ohio
- Warren Township, Ohio
- Niles, Ohio

- McDonald, Ohio
- Girard, Ohio
- Youngstown, Ohio
- Campbell, Ohio
- Struthers, Ohio
- Lowellville, Ohio

Each riverfront community has a unique character and identity, as well as specific wants and needs.

To accommodate for each community’s unique attributes, the project strategy included working with each community to create individualized implementation plans. These community-specific plans gave each locale concrete action steps and funding recommendations for projects and initiatives to implement as part of the Mahoning Valley regional vision.

LAND USE ANALYSIS

The planning process began with a comprehensive analysis of existing conditions within the Mahoning River study area. Land use constituted a large portion of the discovery period and included identification and

analysis of vacant parcels, brownfield sites, publicly-owned land, desirable privately owned land, public right-of-ways, and rail line ownership.

PRIORITY OPPORTUNITY SITES

Data from the discovery period was compiled and analyzed to identify potential priority redevelopment areas within all thirteen riverfront communities. These developable areas were further scrutinized to determine the most desirable parcel assemblies and best uses, resulting in one priority opportunity site per community (13 total).

Throughout priority sites and all plans, the Mahoning River Corridor Revitalization Plan focuses on three pillars: connect, protect, and prosper. These three principles set a precedence for a unified vision that includes each community’s individual success to allow for the entire corridor to become successful.

- **Connect:** a focus on recreation. Restoring the free-flowing Mahoning river and implementing a continuous greenway network that connects the local communities and boosts tourism through recreation.

- **Protect:** a focus on wildlife and water. Preserving land along the river improves water quality while providing habitat for wildlife, recreational space for people, and flood protection for communities.
- **Prosper:** a focus on the local economy. By coming together, the Mahoning Valley can build on its legacy, strengthen its industry and business community, and provide ample opportunity for future investment.

By connecting and protecting the Mahoning River corridor communities, the plan aims to build a resilient region that can offer new economic opportunities while providing a foundation for a better way of life.

BRANDING AND MARKETING

Branding the Mahoning River Corridor Revitalization plan and creating distributable material was a key piece of the project.

Branding and marketing efforts included:

- Logo development
- Community education and outreach
- Video product to highlight the beauty and potential of the Mahoning River
- Online engagement tools
- Development of a project information website, MyMahoningRiver.com

The thoughtful marketing and branding allowed the team to efficiently market the initiative to bring prosperity to the future of the Mahoning River Corridor region.