In the spring of 1998, early morning commuters along Route 22, a four-lane highway running west from Pittsburgh, woke to find a new billboard touting “Pittsburgh’s New Suburb ... in Ohio.”1 The billboard was part of an advertising campaign spearheaded by Alliance 2000, a progrowth coalition of local officials and business leaders formed in 1996 to take advantage of new transportation links extending across the Pennsylvania border through the narrow West Virginia Panhandle to eastern Ohio.2 “It accomplished what we needed to do,” explained Alliance member Gary Dufour. Pennsylvania residents and business leaders “began to think, ‘Oh yeah, it isn’t that far.’”3 Indeed, by the time the first billboard went up announcing the newest “Burb of the ‘Burgh,” metropolitan growth had already reached the community, with a new upscale residential project built by a Pittsburgh developer and a number of tenants in a new industrial park along the highway.4

Suburban historians from Sam Bass Warner to Owen Gutfreund have extensively documented the expansion of urban services to the metropolitan periphery in the wake of new transportation links.5 While the story of Pittsburgh’s new suburb may sound like just another

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1 Portions of this research will appear in Allen Dieterich-Ward and Andrew Needham, “Beyond the Metropolis: Metropolitan Growth and Regional Transformation in Postwar America,” *Journal of Urban History* (Forthcoming, 2009). I would also like to thank Ted Muller, Joel Tarr and the members of the Pittsburgh History Roundtable for their thoughtful suggestions on an earlier version of this paper.


3 Author’s Interview with Gary Dufour, August 2004. Hereafter cited as Dufour Interview.


narrative of decentralization and sprawl, however, the community seeking to attract new residents and businesses was the small city of Steubenville, a largely rural, polluted and poverty-stricken jewel of the deindustrialized Rust Belt.\(^6\) “You could let off a howitzer down on Market Street in Steubenville and not harm a soul,” declared one local resident in 1994. “In fact, I’m not even sure there would be enough people there [to notice] a big bang.”\(^7\) By the late 1990s, however, the completion of Route 22 and other highways fostered increased commuting for work and play and the articulation of a “post-industrial” vision of the landscape that provided an opportunity to symbolically recreate the battered hinterland as a vital part of the larger metropolitan region.

The story of the “Burb of the ‘Burgh” reflects a larger social and cultural evolution in the relationship between U.S. industrial cities and their metropolitan hinterlands during the latter half of the twentieth century. In their recent edited volume, Jefferson Cowie and Joseph Heathcott provide persuasive evidence that the narrative trope of deindustrialization (and its geographical auxiliary, the “Rust Belt”) dominating scholarly discourse in the 1980s and 1990s is no longer adequate for describing the multitude of economic and social changes taking place “beyond the ruins.”\(^8\) By acknowledging the limits of the postwar declension narrative, Howard Gillette’s recent study of Camden, for example, assigns agency to urban residents working to recreate the community after the decline of the region’s industrial base.\(^9\) Indeed, as Bruce Schulman and other “Sunbelt” scholars have pointed out, cities from Oakland to Phoenix to Charlotte faced the

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\(^7\) David Javersak, \textit{A Historical Perspective}, recorded on December 15, 1994, Wheeling Area Historical Database. Available from <http://wheeling.weirton.lib.wv.us/history/wahp/wahp.htm>


same issues of spatial inequality as their counterparts above the Mason-Dixon line, suggesting there may be greater disparities within metropolitan communities than between them.\textsuperscript{10}

Addressing the deficiencies of an overly simplified postwar declension narrative and expanding the historical record past the late 1970s also requires a new metropolitan framework that can encompass the changing spatial patterns of the late twentieth century. Over the last twenty-five years, two generations of suburban scholars have used the lens of urban social history to expand the field from an emphasis on the white middle and upper class to also include a more diverse landscape of industrial, working class, and African American communities.\textsuperscript{11} During the past five years, scholars including Matthew Lassiter, Robert Self and others have worked to combine these insights into a synthetic narrative of both city and suburb.\textsuperscript{12} In focusing on the metropolis as a whole, these new studies have highlighted the breadth of metropolitan spatial inequality, while connecting previously isolated movements – in Self’s case, Black power politics and suburban tax revolts in Oakland – and revealing unexpected political alliances, such as the cross-race working class alliance in favor of broad-based busing in Charlotte illustrated in Lassiter’s work.

Despite the considerable strengths of this new urban/suburban focus, the case of Steubenville suggests that the field remains limited in its ability to account for postwar changes taking place “beyond the metropolis.” While urban decentralization removed factories and residents from central cities to suburbs, equally powerful centripetal forces drew formerly discrete areas into closer contact with the metropolitan core. Postwar historians have largely


\textsuperscript{12} Lassiter, \textit{Silent Majority}; Self, \textit{American Babylon}. 

ignored the lessons of William Cronon’s *Nature’s Metropolis*, as well as other recent studies by historical geographers and urban theorists that underscore the interdependence of communities throughout wider regions. Edward K. Muller’s work on the Pittsburgh region, for example, convincingly links developments in the Steel City to changes in the mining communities and mill towns of the Pennsylvania countryside. While overshadowed in the postwar literature by suburban decentralization, these longer-term trends of economic centralization and increasing community interdependence suggest the need for a new “metropolitan regional” model that can encompass both aspects of the evolving postwar community.

In his research on nineteenth century Chicago, Cronon demonstrated that urban growth manifested itself not merely as changes within the city or in the expansion of residential landscapes, but in far ranging linkages between metropolitan centers, satellite communities, and rural hinterlands. William Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991).


For an expanding version of this call for a “metropolitan regional” history, see Dieterich-Ward and Needham, “Beyond the Metropolis.”
The story of the “Burb of the ‘Burgh” is ideal for pushing the narrative of postwar urban history both beyond the ruins and beyond the metropolis. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Pittsburgh industrialists refashioned an existing riverine economy of loosely connected frontier cities into the “Steel Valley” – a vertically integrated region extending from a metropolitan core in southwestern Pennsylvania to the satellite cities of Wheeling and Steubenville, and to the coal producing areas of the rural hinterland. As the center of global steel production in 1900, the triumvirate of steel, coal, and railroads united the far-flung communities of the Steel Valley culturally and economically, though not politically. Furthermore, the decline of heavy industrial production and the rise of the automobile beginning in the 1920s increasingly challenged the existing economic and spatial foundations of the metropolitan regional community.

By the mid-1940s, the decline in Pittsburgh’s fortunes prompted the creation of a powerful progrowth partnership that worked to reinvent the city, first as a center of corporate administration and later as a “post-industrial” hub of the high-tech and service sectors. In his masterful overview of twentieth century Pittsburgh, Roy Lubove highlighted the efforts among city boosters to refashion the region’s physical infrastructure as well as its symbolic imagery. The Pittsburgh “Renaissance” and its subsequent manifestations, however, remained largely confined to select neighborhoods and certain wealthy suburbs, while the remainder of the region continued to face chronic unemployment and out-migration. Failing to either develop sufficient

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16 While not fully developed in the essay in its present form, one of my overarching goals is to explore the idea of an integrated Steel Valley metropolitan region encompassing Pittsburgh and its hinterlands in Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia. In this article I use the term Steel Valley or Steel Valley region in reference to this larger area. I use the term Upper Ohio Valley to refer to the portions of the region in West Virginia and Ohio. I use the term metropolitan Pittsburgh to refer to the southwestern Pennsylvania portions of the region.

highway links to the metropolitan core or revitalize their urban infrastructure, older and smaller communities in the industrialized river valleys were generally left with few resources to overcome the massive economic dislocations following the collapse of the steel industry in the mid-1980s.

Steubenville’s efforts are thus best situated as part of a broader transition whereby former mill towns and rural mining communities in the Steel Valley struggled to find a place for themselves within the new economic and spatial order. By the 1990s, the strategy for urban economic development had shifted from serving the interests of existing heavy-industrial and other corporate employers to building highways that would connect the declining urban communities to growth centers in the postwar suburbs. Many communities also worked to attract potential employers to new suburban-style industrial parks along major highways, emphasizing their proximity to Pittsburgh while highlighting quality of life issues associated with small towns. In Steubenville, a community seeking to transcend its roots as an industrial satellite, the goal was not merely to build new highway links to the metropolitan core, but to define a new role for itself as a low cost/high service alternative to the traditional suburbs.

“A Community of Interest”

In 1909, industrialist Ernest T. Weir began construction of a new tin mill thirty-five miles west of Pittsburgh, just across the Ohio River from Steubenville. The site sat at the intersection of river and rail transportation with good connections to both Steubenville and Pittsburgh and featured a ready supply of cheap land. The relative isolation of the site also allowed Weir, a veteran of Pittsburgh’s contentious labor wars, more control over his employees’ environment.18

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18 Cities, Weir believed, “if not breeders, were certainly magnifiers of discontent among workers.” “In a small town,” he continued, “workers and management lived near each other; they belonged to the same churches and fraternal organizations; they participated in the same recreations; their children attended the same schools, and …
By 1920, the new community of Weirton already counted 9,500 residents and by 1940 its population of approximately 25,000 made it the largest unincorporated community in the nation. Despite Weir’s sentiment, however, the community of Weirton was not simply a self-contained island of industrious workers. Dohrman Sinclair, Cyrus Ferguson and other local boosters had been instrumental in attracting development to the area, including the first nonrailroad bridge and streetcar line spanning the Ohio River at Steubenville in 1905. Indeed, Steubenville and Weirton quickly formed a symbiotic relationship of “salesplace” and “workshop,” with many Steubenville residents including company executives such as David Weir and J.C. Williams commuting across the river to work and Weirton residents crowding the larger city’s business district on the weekends.

The development of Steubenville was part of the enormous growth in manufacturing and corporate reorganization of industrial production driving the spatial extension of development far beyond the region’s older urban centers. This trend gained momentum during the 1870s with the construction of huge integrated steel mills, such as Andrew Carnegie’s Edgar Thomson Works, completed in 1875 and located twelve miles south of Pittsburgh on the Monongahela River. A variety of factors contributed to the decentralization of industrial development in the Steel Valley. A new breed of industrial executives wanted to integrate various parts of the production cycle, while increasing demands for heavy industrial products created a need for a large physical plant. New mills required access to river and rail facilities, while the region’s rugged landscape prevented simple contiguous growth. As time went on, the construction of an extensive

workers and managers were friendly … relatives or close friends.” Ernest T. Weir as quoted in David T. Javersak, History of Weirton, West Virginia (Virginia Beach, VA: The Donning Company, 1999), 74.

19 Ferguson, who made his initial fortune as an oil speculator, sold the land to Ernest Weir and laid out some of the first lots in the new community. Sinclair, a dominant figure in Steubenville’s history, pushed for the Market Street Bridge and later extended the streetcar line to the new community of Weirton. In 1916, The Wheeling Intelligencer described him as “the dominant factor … in inducing industries to locate at Steubenville, Weirton, and Follansbee.” Javersak, History of Weirton, 68.

20 Dufour Interview.
transportation system made up of railroads, streetcars and inter-urban lines facilitated the continued dispersal of manufacturing centers. Finally, as the Weirton example suggests, while economic issues most often underlay the decision to develop a green field site at the turn of the century, management sometimes had social and political reasons as well.21

Edward Muller, Joel Tarr and others have observed that between 1870 and 1920, capital from Pittsburgh played a dominant role in knitting together and reorganizing the region’s physical and social landscape.22 However, while Pittsburgh was most successful in managing this transition during the late nineteenth century, other Upper Ohio Valley communities also reoriented their economies away from agriculture and small-scale craft industries toward heavy industrial manufacturing and the extraction of natural resources. Wheeling and Steubenville emerged as important centers of heavy industry with their own steel and iron producers, railroad links and burgeoning workforce. Nevertheless, the process of industrialization tended to centralize control in the urban areas, especially Pittsburgh, which by the late nineteenth century had established itself as the region’s dominant metropole, with its former downriver rivals increasingly looking to the city for economic and cultural leadership.23 “Pittsburgh overshadowed Wheeling and took the profit out of the iron and steel business here,” wrote a defeated Wheeling businessman to Andrew Carnegie in May 1899. “Should you ever care to interest yourself in [our] city, the appreciation and gratitude of a minority will be

21 For another example of a “model” industrial community in the Steel Valley, see Anne E. Mosher, Capital’s Utopia: Vandergrift, Pennsylvania, 1855–1916 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).
23 On the early economic development of the Pittsburgh region, see Catherine Elizabeth Reiser, Pittsburgh’s Commercial Development, 1800-1850 (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1951).
correspondingly keen and strong.”\textsuperscript{24}

The rise of the railroads and dispersal of manufacturing strengthened the connections between areas within the larger metropolitan region that had previously been largely autonomous. As new mills and mines sprang up throughout the rapidly urbanizing river valleys and the rural countryside, manufacturers, political leaders, and engineers developed an extensive railroad system spreading throughout the region. Trunk lines and regional carriers connected the major cities, while inter-urban lines and streetcars enabled speedy movement within communities and out to their growing hinterlands. By the late nineteenth century, a trip from Pittsburgh to Steubenville or Wheeling that had once been counted in days by steamboat or wagon road (if the season permitted the journey at all) could now be accomplished in a matter of hours (or less), no matter what the weather.\textsuperscript{25} This transportation system largely transcended municipal and even state boundaries and knit the region together culturally, socially, and economically if not politically.

Industrial decentralization in the Steel Valley region went hand in hand with the creation of new urban forms.\textsuperscript{26} Between 1880 and 1920, developers built dozens of enormous mills and factories that hugged the narrow flatlands up the Monongahela and Allegheny Rivers from Pittsburgh and down the Ohio Valley through Steubenville and Wheeling. In addition to Weirton, corporate managers laid out entirely new mill-oriented communities, such as Homestead (1881), Monessen (1896) and Follansbee (1905). These community-building projects were part of a larger North American phenomenon that belies the easy urban-suburban

\textsuperscript{24} Letter from Nelson C. Hubbard to Andrew Carnegie, May 12, 1899. Thanks to Dr. Charles Julian of the Robert C. Byrd National Technology Transfer Center for bringing this source to the author’s attention.
\textsuperscript{25} Muller, “Industrial Suburbs.”
\textsuperscript{26} There is an excellent and growing literature on the changing form and function of late nineteenth and early twentieth century mill towns and industrial “satellite” cities. See, Richard Harris and P. J. Larkham, Changing Suburbs: Foundation, Form and Function (New York: Routledge, 1999); Lewis, Manufacturing Suburbs.
dichotomy developed by later scholars. In contrast to the middle-class model, recent studies of pre-World War II suburbia have affirmed the importance of understanding mill towns and mining camps as a part of a heterogeneous landscape encompassing a wide variety of community types. This emerging model is particularly important for understanding the trajectory of the Steel Valley, which by 1920 featured the nation’s most decentralized metropolitan region.


involved the creation or expansion of local production systems. Consequently, older settlements that had previously been oriented toward riverine or agricultural economies experienced a massive influx of new immigrants as existing industries grew or entrepreneurs built entirely new facilities. The relationship between Steubenville and the new community of Weirton provides an excellent example of this trend. While Steubenville developed its own heavy-industrial base, thousands more residents crossed the Ohio River daily to work in the mills of Weirton Steel. Conversely, lacking a highly developed downtown core, Weirton consumers traveled to their larger neighbor for shopping. At midnight on a Saturday night, people had no room to walk on the sidewalks [on] 4th and Market Streets,” Steubenville resident Nicholas Kaschak recalled. “They spilled over into the street walking. It was absolutely tremendous.”

The expansion of massive vertically integrated corporations transformed the Steel Valley region’s physical and economic landscape into a form suitable for large-scale production and natural resource extraction. At the same time, mill towns and mining camps joined a preexisting pattern of river cities and market hamlets, creating heavily developed corridors that extended throughout the region’s river valleys. An extensive network of railroads, necessary for the centralized coordination of diverse corporate interests, connected Steel Valley communities, fostering industrial growth in some rural areas and allowing residents to commute to the larger cities for work, shopping, and leisure. Finally, smoke, sewage and surface mining increasingly spoiled the environment as corporations extracted resources and emitted pollutants that reshaped the relationship between Steel Valley residents and the region’s natural landscape. By the end of World War II, the Upper Ohio Valley, which had always been “closely identified with” its

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29 Muller, “Industrial Suburbs” 68.
30 Author’s Interview with Nicholas Kaschak, July 2004.
neighbors in southwestern Pennsylvania, had become “in effect, a continuation of the heavy industrial concentrations upstream toward Pittsburgh.”

**Issues in a Region of Contrast**

On a late November evening in 1973, the crème of Pittsburgh’s civic elite streamed into the beautiful surroundings of Oakland’s Carnegie Music Hall for the annual meeting of the Allegheny Conference on Community Development (ACCD), the progrowth coalition that had spearheaded the city’s economic “Renaissance” following World War II. As they walked through the grand foyer with its crystal chandeliers and elaborately carved pillars, the university presidents, industrialists, financiers, labor leaders, and politicians gathered there had reason to be proud of their accomplishments in the downtown Golden Triangle, new urban and suburban industrial districts, and the handful of state parks dotting the rural periphery. Oakland, home to Carnegie-Mellon University and the University of Pittsburgh, was also a good setting for the evening’s keynote speech, which touched upon the city’s growing reputation as a center for research.

That night’s speaker, former Appalachian Regional Commission executive director Ralph Widner, congratulated the audience on the many gains of the Pittsburgh Renaissance, but counseled that that “because of very poor and inconvenient highway access to the surrounding areas of western Pennsylvania, eastern Ohio, and northern West Virginia, Pittsburgh suffered from a shrunken retail trade area for a metropolis its size” as well as the inability effectively to

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31 Regional Industrial Development Corporation, *A Community of Interest between the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Area and the Upper Ohio Valley: A Preliminary Analysis* (Pittsburgh: RIDC, 1959), i.
33 On the role of the ACCD in supporting regional parks in western Pennsylvania, see M. Graham Netting, *50 Years of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy: The Early Years* (Pittsburgh: The Conservancy, 1982).
harness the tourism potential of the rural periphery.  

“The future of the region,” Widner concluded, “rests as much with what can be initiated in the outlying areas as with what can be done downtown.”

Despite its reputation as an industrial powerhouse, Pittsburgh reached its peak in the 1920s and by the 1950s showed the signs of decline associated with both older industrial cities and rural Appalachia, a combination that made it particularly difficult for the region to accommodate itself to the postwar economy. The makeup of the regional economy and contentious employee-employer relations combined with the geographical obstacles of a hilly, broken terrain to make the region unattractive to the growing industrial sectors of the postwar period. Compounding these issues were patterns of contentious local politics and a populace conditioned to expect corporate paternalism that made effective responses to industrial change difficult. As the authors of the landmark *Economic Study of the Pittsburgh Region* explained in 1963, “it is a long step from a coal miner to an electronics technician: from an obsolete steel mill to a modern industrial park; from a giant corporation to a multitude of innovators and ambitious small entrepreneurs.”

Despite these obstacles, the coalition between Pittsburgh officials and the corporate leaders of the ACCD had considerable success in reinventing the region in the 1950s and again in the 1980s, first as a center of corporate administration and later as a post-industrial hub of the high-tech and service sectors. The Pittsburgh “Renaissance” of the late 1940s and 1950s

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36 Ibid, 23.
centered on revitalizing the downtown Golden Triangle through a program of environmental improvements, such as smoke and flood control as well as the demolition and replacement of older mixed-use neighborhoods with gleaming skyscrapers and public facilities. A powerful partnership between Republican businessmen associated with the ACCD, particularly financier Richard King Mellon, and the Democratic administration of Mayor David Lawrence guided the Renaissance. “The city welcomed tomorrow, because yesterday was hard and unlovely,” Lawrence explained. “The town took pleasure in the swing of the headache ball and the crash of the falling brick. Pittsburgh, after all the grim years, was proud and self-confident.”

As Widner’s remarks suggest, the transformation of the Steel Valley region had as much
to do with outlying areas as it did with the celebrated urban redevelopment of the Pittsburgh
Renaissance. Postwar highway construction prompted a boom in middle class commuter
suburbs with available land and easy access to the city’s revitalized central business district.
Monroeville, a small farming community at the junction of the new Penn-Lincoln Parkway and
the Pennsylvania Turnpike, boomed from 3,100 residents in 1950 to 33,000 by 1976. Other
new suburban communities, including Cranberry Township north of Pittsburgh and the area
surrounding Pittsburgh International Airport west of the city posted similar gains in the 1960s
and 1970s. The growth in regional infrastructure mirrored attempts by boosters in the ACCD to
symbolically link the urban revitalization to improved quality of life in suburban and even rural
areas. Look around,” declared a 1972 advertisement in the Wall Street Journal. “You’ll find
parks that were once strip mines. New colleges, lakes, ski slopes and skating rinks [as well as]
the big city amenities of ... a rebuilt downtown Pittsburgh with its bustling new nightlife.”

This suburban boom came partly at the expense of older and more isolated river valley
communities, such as Steubenville, that, according to one 1961 report, were “losing many of
their traditional economic functions and, in the process … acquiring the mirror-image
characteristics of contemporary suburbia.” With the decline of river and rail transportation,
local officials increasingly saw highways as the key to economic development in many parts of
the region. Despite the challenges in building roads over hilly terrain and through densely
populated areas, the small city of Kittanning, in rural Armstrong County, had particular success

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40 Eileen Foley, “For Monroeville the Bloom is Not Off the 30-Year Boom,” Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, March 20, 1980.
41 “When We Brag About Our Area’s Growth, We Mean White Oaks and Mountain Laurel, Too,” Wall Street
42 Pennsylvania State Planning Board, Regional Development Reconnaissance: Region 12 [a Staff Working Paper]
(Harrisburg: The Board, 1966), 62.
in this regard. Following the completion of the Allegheny Valley Expressway in the mid-1980s, a 925-acre mixed-use industrial campus called Northpointe formed the centerpiece of a marketing campaign, “Armstrong County, The Best Thing Next to Pittsburgh,” emphasizing the community’s rural atmosphere combined with easy access to the metropolitan core.43 “We’re in a paradigm of change,” declared one local leader. “Look at Northpointe. We’re into new age manufacturing [and] jobs for the 24- and 25-year-olds.”44

When we brag about our area’s growth, we mean white oaks and mountain laurel, too.

During the 1970s, a regional marketing campaign by the Allegheny Conference on Community Development-sponsored Penn’s Southwest Association merged the diverse economic and urban development strategies adopted by business and political leaders during the 1950s and 1960s into a comprehensive regional vision. The narrative marketers presented was that of a regional “neighborhood” where children could “watch Slippery Rock Creek roar between snow-capped boulders,” while their parents’ employer took advantage of “an unlimited supply of professional, skilled and semiskilled workers” as well as “both private and public financial strength and expertise.” See also advertisements in the Wall Street Journal dated December 15, 1971 and April 24, 1973.

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The urban industrial river communities of Ohio and West Virginia faced even greater challenges in attracting new investment than their counterparts in Pennsylvania. During the 1950s and 1960s, workers in the Upper Ohio Valley’s numerous mills generally prospered, with median family income higher than the national average and, after a wave of strikes in the late 1940s, a high percentage of unionized workers with generous health and pension benefits.45 “If you were fortunate enough to work in a mine or a mill or a glass factory, that was the higher grade of employment,” recalled local resident Don Myers of his childhood during the early 1960s. “It was a struggle, but as long as … dad never got killed in a mining accident or a mill accident, you survived and you ate and you were clothed and you went to school.”46

While jobs in the local steel mills and factories remained steady during the 1950s and 1960s, the region’s traditional residential and commercial core along the river increasingly suffered from aging and poorly maintained buildings as well as air and water pollution from nearby steel mills.47 A steep rise in automobile traffic and frequent disruptions from the railroad lines crisscrossing the crowded river valleys also overwhelmed market areas designed for horse-carts. Despite relative prosperity for many residents, between 1950 and 1980 the Upper Ohio Valley lost nearly 6 percent of its population due to declining employment in the coal, steel and glass industries.48 Out migration among the young and better educated disproportionately affected older urban centers in Steubenville, Wheeling, and other river valley communities. “The children started to move away and the workforce started to get older,” explained Myers. “Older

45 Javersak, A Historical Perspective.
46 Author’s Interviews with Donald Myers, July 2004. Hereafter cited as Myers Interviews.
people do not have children the majority of times and they don’t produce like a twenty and thirty year old. Deaths started to exceed births. It just took your breath away.”

By the late 1960s, a study of the downtown concluded that Steubenville itself had also grown old, “with little or no attention given to the renewal, rehabilitation, design, and planning [necessary to establish] a new and inviting image of the downtown central business district in an urban community.” This is not to suggest that local leaders were blind to their community’s deterioration. Indeed, in 1966 John King Mussio, the Catholic Bishop of Steubenville, requested federal funding for a housing project that he believed would slow out-migration and “help in the process of keeping those young people near the downtown area, a move that would help in the process of revitalizing the central business district, now being discussed by [downtown] merchants.” The project was the latest from the energetic bishop who also helped build a new Catholic high school, the city’s first college, numerous churches and schools, and an expanded hospital. Municipal officials also embarked on a number of projects during the 1960s, including improvements to the central business district and the city’s roads.

Despite increasing federal funding from the War on Poverty, urban redevelopment in Steubenville faced a number of important obstacles. Comprehensive planning, the basis for many federally subsidized programs, had a limited history in many local communities. “

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49 Myers Interviews.
52 Mussio’s crowning achievement had come less than five years earlier with the dedication of a $1.5 million Diocesan Community Arena, the largest in the Steel Valley outside of Pittsburgh.
53 Kaschak Interview; Dufour Interview.
I arrived in Jefferson County, planning was regarded with suspect, with suspicion,” recalled one local official. “It was as if it had little ‘Pinko’ shades to it.”56 No single community commanded the political or economic resources needed for large projects, which left local officials at the mercy of competing politicians. In one of many instances, for example, colorful Democratic Congressman Wayne Hays of Ohio accused Ohio’s Republican Governor James Rhodes in 1968 of stealing credit for local development programs and threatened “that no other Appalachia project would be automatic in his district.”57

Dedication of a park swimming area in Flushing, Ohio, August 4, 1971. Second from left is Congressman Wayne L. Hays, the powerful and fiercely partisan boss of Ohio’s 18th District who was instrumental in funneling millions of dollars in federal Appalachian and urban development funds into southeastern Ohio until he resigned from Congress after a much publicized sex scandal in 1976.

Weak urban administrations also made it difficult to marshal the political power to make controversial decisions within a climate of ethnic, religious, and social divisions. “A serious


56 Kaschak Interview.

impediment to progress derives from the strange ethno-nationalism that prevails” in the region, reported one state official in 1972. “The various European émigrés’ and their offspring have retained strong ties to their region, thus a melting pot that didn’t melt, which has perpetrated factionalism that approaches total chaos.” Finally, the Upper Ohio Valley’s declining population helped remove potential challengers to the existing leadership and lessened the impetus for expanded services and opportunities. “With the industrial move to the Sunbelt … the college educated engineers, chemists, and business people left their hometown for greater opportunities in the South,” concluded one resident. “This trend has deprived Steubenville of fresh ideas and the potential leadership these people could provide.”

The decline of downtowns corresponded to and stimulated the development of hilltop residential areas throughout the Steel Valley region. Despite the desire of municipal authorities to strengthen downtown business districts, employers also began leaving the crowded and dirty river valleys. Under the auspices of Bishop Mussio and other religious leaders, the Catholic Church became a major employer and developer in Steubenville as well as an important part of the region’s religious life. The bishop also persuaded administrators of the local Catholic hospital to move from their downtown location to expanded quarters on the site and convinced a group of Franciscans to found a college on a bluff overlooking the city. Mussio “didn’t speak much, but when he spoke, people listened,” recalled a Steubenville resident. “Of course, [the

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new facilities] had an impact and still do, but they were not done in concert with the locals, the civic officials.”

Of course, not everyone was free to relocate to the region’s new hilltop neighborhoods as poverty among the elderly and racist housing practices against African Americans limited many residents to the aging urban core. In 1967, a group of civil rights activists, called Community Organization Members Build Absolute Teamwork! (COMBAT), dispatched a white couple to inquire about renting a home on Steubenville’s west end. “The figure they were quoted was $87,” recalled Rose Marie Schick. “But, when the owner’s next inquiry came from a COMBAT! planted black couple, it had jumped to more than $200.” “Steubenville [had] moved in terms of its population to the western part of the city,” explained Nicholas Kaschak. “The downtown is still populated with the poor and unemployed and so forth. It is not a desired place to live.”

Despite some successes in redeveloping the community’s infrastructure, urban redevelopment had a limited impact on the structure of the overall economy. Increasingly, economic development officials turned to highway construction as a potential way to connect the region to the national marketplace. Because railroads and trolleys declined in the face of competition from the automobile, volume on the twisting local highways grew dramatically as residents of the region’s relatively small and scattered communities traveled for work, education, and shopping. By 1973, Joseph Kennedy, vice president of the Steubenville Chamber of

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62 Kaschak Interview.
65 Kaschak Interview.
66 For the role of transportation in shaping the social and physical landscape in the Steel Valley, see Joel A. Tarr, Transportation Innovation and Changing Spatial Patterns in Pittsburgh, 1850–1934 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978); Muller, Edward and Joel Tarr, “The Interaction of Natural and Built Environments in the
Commerce, had come to equate highways with economic opportunity itself as he described watching “more affluent and seemingly more important counties enjoy the benefits of modern highways…and all the while our citizens are fighting to work in outmoded, substandard two-lane roads.” Kennedy went on to cite a poll in which 78 percent of local businesses listed “highways and access into the area as being the number one problem of our area.”

Pittsburgh’s progrowth coalition between the Allegheny Conference on Community Development and municipal officials provided a means to marshal the enormous political and economic resources necessary to build highways through the region’s rugged, densely populated terrain. The ACCD presented a vision of the region centered on an urban core functioning as a corporate headquarters, regional shopping area, and center for government and specialized services. Highways formed an integral part of this vision, knitting the region together and providing quick movement from the Golden Triangle to Pittsburgh International Airport west of the city as well as east to the Pennsylvania Turnpike. As in Monroeville, during the 1950s and 1960s rural Moon and Robinson Townships, for example, grew rapidly due to their location near new highway and airport investment. “Out in the coal-stripped hills that form the Western pocket of Allegheny County, giant townships are stirring from a deep slumber,” wrote journalist Edwin Beachler in 1951. “They have been awakened by the whoosh of jets at Greater Pittsburgh

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69 The Airport Corridor eventually consisted of 24 municipalities, including rural Moon, Robinson and Findlay Townships as well as the boroughs of Coraopolis, Greentree, and Crafton.
Airport and rumble of bull-dozers on the Penn-Lincoln Parkway West.”

Southwestern Pennsylvania’s relative success in highway construction contrasted with a glaring lack of development in the West Virginia and Ohio portions of the Steel Valley region, particularly around Steubenville. Larger regions with growing populations offered expanding tax bases to support new services and highway development, but a declining and increasingly elderly population doomed local communities to shrinking revenues and little state incentive to develop outlying areas. While the Upper Ohio Valley had more than 350,000 residents in 1950, a population scattered over two states meant the dispersal of funding through separate legislatures. Political calculations also played a major role in the distribution of highway funds. The Ohio portion of the region generally voted for Democrats during a period of Republican state control. Conversely, Wheeling and Weirton residents consistently returned Republican Arch Moore to Congress, while “it was the Democratic Party that ran West Virginia.” Consequently, explained an aide to Moore, who was elected governor of the state in 1969, “the northern panhandle historically did not get its share of any resources that had to be funneled through state government.”

The absence of strong support among the region’s heavy industrial employers also hindered highway planning and construction in the Upper Ohio Valley. “Weirton Steel was

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71 The construction of Interstate 70 through Wheeling between the mid-1950s and the early 1970s was the greatest postwar change in the Upper Ohio Valley’s highway system. Even before the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956, work had begun on the route that would become Interstate 70, which crossed the Ohio River at Wheeling and replaced US 40 through the southern part of the region. However, I-70 was designed by state and federal officials for through traffic and only served a small portion of the Upper Ohio Valley.
72 Kaschak Interview. Even federal funds flowed from different regional offices located in Chicago and Philadelphia.
73 Myers Interviews; Alexander P. Lamis, and Mary Anne Sharkey, Ohio Politics (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1994).
74 Author’s Interviews with Charles Steele, July 2004. Hereafter cited as Steele Interviews; Roger W. Haigh, Wheeling, West Virginia: A Community Profile (Wheeling: Center for Wheeling Area Studies, 1969).
employing about 13,000 people at that time,” recalled Weirton City Manager Robert Wirgau.

“'They were the powerhouse in this town, you know. I found that out quickly. You don’t do anything unless Weirton Steel says its o.k. They taught me what this town was about, it was about steel.”\textsuperscript{75} Many local business and civic leaders did take a strong stance advocating highway construction, but the issue was less important for a heavy industrial sector served by the river and the railroads. Some companies were interested in selected projects, but because most mills shared the flat lands adjacent to the river with the major highways, they often opposed road construction that might disrupt production.\textsuperscript{76} “I mean there were all of the big cities that had to

\textsuperscript{75} Author’s Interview with Robert Wirgau, August 2004. Hereafter cited as Wirgau Interview. See also, Javersak, \textit{History of Weirton}.

\textsuperscript{76} For example, a major bridge project between Steubenville and Weirton was delayed for nearly thirty years as residents wrangled over its precise location in the crowded river valley. Ohio Department of Economic and Community Development, “Community Attitude Survey: Steubenville”; Wilbur Smith and Associates, \textit{U.S. Route 22 Feasibility Study, Steubenville-Weirton Area} (New Haven: The Company, 1970), 93.
be taken care of, first, with federal dollars, and these communities were progressive in going after it,” Wirgau explained. In the Upper Ohio Valley, the mines and mills were “taken care of by the river and the railroad and the highway really wasn’t that big a deal. So therefore the powers that be [decided] it wasn’t important enough to organize and go after it.”

Despite these obstacles, increasing federal intervention by the mid-1960s offered new opportunities for highway planning and construction. The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962 required a “continuing, comprehensive and cooperative” process for regional highway planning and the 1966 Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act expanded these requirements to a wide variety of federal environmental and development programs. In response, local and state officials in the Steubenville-Weirton area formed the Brooke-Hancock-Jefferson (BHJ) Metropolitan Planning Commission, while to the south the Belmont-Ohio-Marshall (Belomar) Metropolitan Planning Commission encompassed the Wheeling area. At Belomar’s first meeting in March 1969, chairman Charles Steele declared that, “for the first time in the two-hundred year history of the area, various government bodies had agreed to cooperate in the establishment of an organization that can be of real assistance to the entire area.”

By the early 1970s, existing political rivalries already threatened the fledgling organizations, which had little local political support. “Self-interest is probably the key phrase to describe” the Upper Ohio Valley, concluded one 1970 report. “The federal government, with its

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77 Wirgau Interview.
79 The two new planning commissions grew out of earlier highway studies mandated for federal highway projects. Highway officials divided responsibility in the Upper Ohio Valley between the Steubenville-Weirton Area to the north and the Belmont-Ohio-Marshall metropolitan area. Before 1950, the entire area had been part of the Wheeling-Stebenville Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area. One might view the division of the region by the Census Bureau resulting eventually in the formation of separate regional planning commissions as a further example of the fragmentation of local resources.
offer of funds for updating the area, is the only measure which will bring the area together.””81

Commission members from smaller communities were “always suspicious of what Steubenville would do or not do,” recalled BHJ representative Nicholas Kaschak.82 The voluntary structure of the two commissions also left construction projects up to the local units, limiting the ability of staff to implement their designs. In 1971, BHJ completed a plan for Weirton, which emphasized civic and commercial improvements downtown.83 Concerned about the cost of carrying out parts of the renewal program, administrators in Weirton drastically reduced financial support for the commission. At the same time, leaders in Steubenville and Jefferson County, upset at the BHJ’s office location in Weirton, also cut payments. While the participating governments later reached funding agreements, this type of fiscal restraint kept BHJ’s staff to a minimum and limited its effectiveness.84 “Since we really didn’t have a history of an integrated area, we still thought in terms of Brooke Countians and Hancock Countians and Jefferson Countians, [each] pushing their own kind of agenda whenever they could. And it wasn’t really much in the way of progress as far as the general area was concerned.”85

Rivalry at the state and federal levels mirrored competition among local leaders. Ohio Congressman Wayne L. Hays used his connections in Washington and Columbus to control federal spending in his district, channeling it to local political supporters.86 Hays continually struggled with Ohio Governor James Rhodes over control of government spending in eastern Ohio, and, according to numerous local officials, violently opposed cooperation between

81 Ibid., 61.
82 Kaschak Interview.
84 Wirgau Interview.
85 Kaschak Interview.
86 Hays was rumored to be one of the most powerful men in Washington before being censured and removed from the House of Representatives in 1976 due to a sex scandal. A former schoolteacher, much of his power reputedly stemmed from his ruthless tactics and acerbic wit. Nicholas M. Horrock, “U.S. Investigating Charges on Hays,” New York Times, May 26, 1976.
communities in his district and those across the river in West Virginia. A staunch partisan, he had a particular animosity for the West Virginia Republican congressman, later state governor, Arch Moore. In one episode from the early 1970s, Hays was attending a meeting at a local country club when a county official announced funding approval for a highway study linking a local community to I-70. Upon hearing the news, however, the Congressman stood up, struck the table with his fist and with the entire room staring, declared, “God damn they will. That organization [Belomar] is controlled by West Virginia and Governor Moore.”

The possibilities and problems exposed by attempts at regional highway planning were part of a series of larger conflicts over control of Steel Valley markets and institutions. The self-image of most local residents remained firmly defined by those economic and social institutions developed during the region’s heyday in the early twentieth century. While paying lip service to the need for new roads, the region’s mills and mines remained well served by river and rail links. As a result, many business leaders saw little need to invest in construction projects that might disrupt operations at their plants in the narrow river valleys. Finally, a tradition of weak civic administration left Steubenville officials incapable of overcoming contentious local politics hindering economic and urban development programs. “The greatest inhibitor of economic development is unanimously reported to emanate from poor transportation linkages,” concluded a 1972 survey of local business leaders. But “the alternatives set forth have ripped the already

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88 Author’s Interviews with James Weaver, July 2004.
89 On the postwar role of industry in Ohio Valley politics, see Elizabeth Fones-Wolf and Ken Fones-Wolf, “Cold War Americanism: Business, Pageantry, and Antiunionism in Weirton, West Virginia,” Business History Review 77, no. 1 (2003) and Javersak, History of Weirton. There is also some evidence that business leaders were concerned about the effect of regional economic diversification, often presented as part and parcel of highway development, on the local labor pool.
fractionated community asunder.”

Due in part to the decline of transportation links to the larger Pittsburgh metropolitan region, the economic dislocation of the 1980s hit the more rural communities of the Upper Ohio Valley particularly hard. While Steubenville’s air was cleaner than in the mid-1970s when its coal-fired power plants and steel mills were still in full swing, the decline of heavy industry fueled an exodus that left the community at the very bottom of national census rankings for population loss during the 1980s and 1990s. While only forty miles away from Pittsburgh, a lack of funds to blast a bypass through the hills above Weirton and build a new bridge across the Ohio River had delayed a proposed highway project for more than two decades. The lack of highways further complicated urban redevelopment initiatives in local communities that already suffered from ethnic and religious fragmentation and a history of weak civic administration. “It was very hard getting an audience initially [for] new highways tying us to the Pittsburgh metro area and then the bridge across the river,” concluded Steubenville City Manager Gary Dufour. “They were struggles that went on for over 40 years.”

From Satellite City to Burb of the ‘Burgh

The groundbreaking for the final phase of upgrading Route 22 between Steubenville and Pittsburgh in May 1991 was thus heralded as a glimmer of hope in a community going through some of its most difficult days. While the four-lane expansion of the highway had reached the Pennsylvania border in 1971, it was not until 1990 that West Virginia’s Robert C. Byrd became

90 “Community Attitude Survey: Steubenville.”
93 On urban redevelopment in the Steel Valley, see Crowley, The Politics of Place.
94 Dufour Interview.
chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee and secured nearly $100 million from federal coffers to complete the project. With the long-awaited completion of the Veterans Memorial Bridge, which had taken nearly thirty years since the preliminary engineering report in 1961 to the opening of the bridge to traffic in 1990, Steubenville residents were finally reconnected to the region’s metropolitan core. Observing of the highway named in his honor that a community with “a future must have modern, efficient transportation,” the Senator predicted the new Byrd Expressway would provide access to the economic opportunities of southwestern Pennsylvania.

The economic opportunities to which Byrd referred were not mere abstractions, but could be found just thirty miles away in the tremendous growth of the so-called “Airport Corridor” surrounding Pittsburgh International Airport. During the 1980s, a reformed progrowth coalition between the Allegheny Conference on Community Development, local political leaders and administrators at the University of Pittsburgh’s two research universities looked toward the construction of a new $700 million Midfield Terminal at the airport as both a symbol of “post-industrial” progress and an economic generator for the entire region. The new “Airport of the Future,” as it was dubbed by boosters, opened to tremendous fanfare in September 1992. “The airport means far more than transportation,” declared regional marketing firm Penn’s Southwest

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97 Byrd, _Robert C. Byrd_, 515.

98 The Airport Corridor eventually consisted of 24 municipalities, including rural Moon, Robinson and Findlay Townships as well as the boroughs of Coraopolis, Greentree, and Crafton.

99 Tom Foerster, Pete Flaherty, and Lawrence W. Dunn, “The Allegheny County Commissioners Welcome You to the Airport of the Future – the New Pittsburgh International Airport,” _Beaver County Times_ (Special Supplement), September 13, 1992, 1. The $700 million price tag also included access to the terminal via a new 7 mile “Southern Expressway.”
Association director Steven George. “It means jobs, development, growth.” Allegheny County Commission chairman Tom Forester added, “I think whole new cities will grow up around the airport.”

![View from Steubenville across the Veterans Memorial Bridge, which opened on May 1, 1990 and provided four-lane limited highway access to Weirton, West Virginia and the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Area.](image)

Creating a modern airport had long been an important component of the Pittsburgh Renaissance partnership for remaking southwestern Pennsylvania’s image and economy. The dedication of the Greater Pittsburgh International Airport in 1952 provided the western anchor of the Penn-Lincoln Parkway extending through Pittsburgh to the Pennsylvania Turnpike in the

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101 Edward R. Weidlein, “Allegheny Conference Progress,” *Allegheny Conference Digest* 2, no. 1 (June 1947), 3, Allegheny Conference on Community Development Records, Box 129, Folder 5. Allegheny Conference on Community Development, “Allegheny Conference on Community Development...Presents” (Pittsburgh: ACCD, 1956), 14. Archives/Library, Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania. In May 1946, Allegheny residents approved an Allegheny Conference on Community Development-backed bond issue for highway construction, which earmarked $6 million for converting a military airport in rural Moon Township to civilian use. Of the total cost of the airport, the county provided $24.7 million, the federal government contributed $7.6 million, and the state added $600,000.
east. While progrowth boosters envisioned the new airport as complementing downtown redevelopment, during the 1950s and 1960s the Airport Corridor itself emerged as one of the region’s most significant commercial centers. In addition to single-family homes, the area also increasingly played host to multi-family and condominium developments. By 1963, the Airport Corridor formed the region’s second largest business center as several large out-of-town firms, such as Aetna Insurance and General Electric, chose to locate their regional branch offices along the Parkway rather than in the Golden Triangle.

Airport Corridor development formed a key component of the regional growth strategy promoted by the ACCD in the wake of rapid declines in the region’s traditional industries. In 1979, the publicly subsidized RIDC [Industrial] Park West opened just south of the and development officials went so far as to declare that the area offered “unlimited potential in terms of industrial and office development.” Private developers, too, flocked to the Airport Corridor, even as the region’s industrialized river valleys faced the shock of steel’s collapse. Unlike the colossal, interconnected mills abandoned in the river valleys that local developers had difficulty leasing, the new industrial parks met the demands for the small and medium sized firms driving

102 “Pittsburgh’s Airport Has Come a Long Way, Baby,” Beaver County Times (Special Supplement), September 13, 1992.
103 “Robinson Eyes Borough Status,” Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, June 7, 1977. One development, Pennbury Hills, featured the highest density in Allegheny County at fourteen thousand residents on forty-nine acres.
106 Michael Baker Jr. Inc., Allegheny County: Overall Economic Development Plan (Pittsburgh: Allegheny County Overall Economic Development Program Committee, 1977), 91. Thomas J. Porter, Jr., “RIDC West Park Gets Office, Lab Complex,” Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, October 24, 1979. According to L.R. Love, an executive at energy and environmental consulting firm National Utility Service (NUS), one of the site’s first tenants, the “RIDC West Park site helps combine our activities here making them more efficient… Our work involves a lot of air travel [and] we can reach the airport (Greater Pittsburgh) in a few minutes.”
107 Sam Spatter, “Small Industries Taking over Steel’s Role Here,” Pittsburgh Press, July 8, 1982. The 39-acre Vista Industrial Park off the Parkway West in Robinson Township had nine buildings containing more than 400,000 square feet of space, while construction of a fifteenth building in the adjacent Parkway West Industrial Park provided a total of about 540,000 square feet of industrial space.
regional growth during the 1970s and 1980s. A 1982 industrial site survey found that while purchases of manufacturing facilities had dropped by 50 percent from the previous year, sales of high-technology facilities, found predominantly in suburban industrial parks, rose 35 percent.108

Allegheny County commissioners began planning for an airport upgrade during the late 1960s, but political wrangling and a declining local economy stalled the project for over a decade.109 In January 1985, to break the log jam over airport expansion and other economic development initiatives, state representative Tom Murphy (D-North Side) persuaded officials in Pittsburgh, Allegheny County and the region’s two major research universities to coordinate their requests for state funding.110 The Strategy 21 report, coordinated by the ACCD, argued that airport construction “would have a dramatic effect on the region’s economy” by creating 18,000 jobs over the next fifteen years. “It would strengthen the region’s attraction as a corporate headquarters and convert seriously underutilized land to diverse, new business purposes with heavy job creation potential.”111 Construction on the airport began in 1987, and the $700 million Midfield Terminal and the seven-mile Southern Expressway opened in 1992. “The new airport,” declared county commissioners, “represents our collective efforts to pull ourselves up by our economic bootstraps and prepare to assume our proper place in the emerging world economy.”112

112 Tom Foerster, Pete Flaherty, and Lawrence W. Dunn, “The Allegheny County Commissioners Welcome You to the Airport of the Future – the New Pittsburgh International Airport,” Beaver County Times, (Special Supplement), September 13, 1992, 1.
State and local investment in the new terminal, billed by progrowth supporters as the “Airport of the Future,” quickly appeared to pay off in millions of dollars in private development nearby. Shortly after the start of terminal construction, work began on the Airport Corridor’s largest project to date, the Robinson Towne Center, a mixed-use development fifteen miles west of downtown and two miles east of the airport, which included a 435,000 square foot strip center, a large enclosed shopping mall, and more than 1.5 million square feet of office space with facilities for research and development. “We felt that the road system combined with the growth projects due to construction of the new Midfield terminal made Robinson Towne Center viable,” explained developer Michael Zamagias.  

Cover page of a special supplement to the Beaver County Times for September 13, 1992 celebrating the opening of Pittsburgh International Airport’s new Midfield Terminal.

Residents and officials in nearby Washington and Beaver Counties hard hit by declines in heavy industry also worked to tap into the growth of the Airport Corridor. In 1987, the

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Washington County Redevelopment Authority began planning a massive mixed-use
development on county land twelve miles southwest of the airport that was projected to generate
$500 million in private investment and create 4,000 new jobs.\footnote{Chriss Swaney, “Mixed Uses on a Farm Site,” \textit{New York Times}, February 7, 1993. By 1993, two housing projects, a golf course, and office buildings for a precision tool manufacturer, an engineering firm and Mitsubishi’s Rotary Nozzle Division were already open at the six hundred acre “Southpointe” development.} Lower taxes and the
completion of the Beaver Valley Expressway (BVE) through the southern portion of Beaver
County in the late 1970s, resulted in more than 1,800 employees of USAir alone living in the
helped pass a legislative initiative that provided for the completion of the BVE, which opened in

“All of us are disturbed about what has happened to the steel industry, but
I think we can’t look back,” declared state representative Nick Colafella (D-Aliquippa) in

Beaver native Jay Aldridge, the influential director of regional marketing agency Penn’s
Southwest, mirrored this optimism. “If you look at the employment figures today,” Aldridge
reported in 1988, “they exceed the numbers we had 10 years ago.” New jobs, he added, “are not
from J&L [Steel Corp.] like they used to be. They are from the new job generator -- the

Steubenville’s “Burb of the ‘Burgh” campaign can thus best be set into a context of older
industrial communities in the Steel Valley working to reshape their communities, both
symbolically and physically, into a form suitable for the “post-industrial” economy. Even before
the opening of the new expressway, community leaders in Steubenville had begun to organize
and local leaders were determined to capitalize on their new highway link. Uniting under the
Alliance 2000 coalition, public officials and businessmen sought to transform the image and reality of their community as a polluted, de-industrialized dead-end into a progressive, post-industrial “Burb of the Burgh.” Through an advertising campaign targeting southwestern Pennsylvania residents and businesses, Alliance 2000, subsequently renamed the Progress Alliance, emphasized low taxes, opportunities for outdoor recreation, culture, and proximity to Pittsburgh, less than forty miles away. According to one Alliance member, the campaign focused on reaching out to Pittsburgh’s civic and business leaders, with the message that, “Hey we’re right here. We're not all this distance, two states away from you. We're just a few miles down the road.”

The decision to focus marketing efforts on greater Pittsburgh involved an important shift in the regional vision of local leaders. In part, the postwar decline in the relationship between the Upper Ohio Valley and their neighbors in southwestern Pennsylvania was rooted in political and administrative policies that de-emphasized the social and cultural bonds between local communities in favor of development projects organized on the state level. Consequently, from the 1960s through the 1980s public officials in Ohio and West Virginia largely looked to more distant cities such as Cleveland, Youngstown and Charleston as potential economic partners.

The 1990s, then, were a period of “rediscovery” for local residents who suddenly found themselves within easy commuting distance of the universities, hospitals, shopping malls, and industrial parks of the metropolitan core. “We do not see ourselves as raiders,” declared

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119 Dufour Interview.
121 A number of newspaper articles appeared during the late 1990s and early 2000s “revealing” the proximity of the Upper Ohio Valley, and especially Steubenville, to Pittsburgh. See, for example, Stephanie Alarcon, "Smiles of a Summer Night; Who Says There's Noting to Do in Pittsburgh Late at Night? If You Keep Your Eyes Open, There's Plenty,” Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, August 6,1996, D-1; Catherine Rizzo, "Steubenville's Road to Prosperity May Be Route 22." The Associated Press State & Local Wire, February 17, 1999; "Charity Comes Every Thursday on
Progress Alliance director Rick Platt. “We want a strong Pittsburgh, and if it comes down to cheering for some other part of Ohio and Pittsburgh, we will cheer for Pittsburgh just like we cheer for the Steelers over the Browns.” Efforts to remake the Upper Ohio Valley had a number of important victories in the late 1990s, including the opening of a major Wal-Mart distribution center near Steubenville in 2001 and a mammoth Cabela’s retail store and distribution center east of Wheeling in 2004.

While the creation of new jobs was a welcome relief for local communities suffering from high unemployment and out-migration, Progress Alliance leaders recognized that the strategy of promoting themselves as a lost-cost alternative to suburban locations could not make up for the loss of high-paying industrial and coal mining jobs. However, the Upper Ohio Valley remained a junior partner in the process of metropolitan development, with little choice but to compete for those employment opportunities available as local communities continued to lose population in the face of ongoing plant closures. Indeed, Steubenville’s low-tax strategy of luring investment actually contributed to a stall in housing growth in the Airport Corridor itself during the late 1990s. “When it comes to homes in the $200,000 to $350,000 price range, you

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124 Mike Lafferty, “10-Month Job Action Is Costly; Steel Strike’s Legacy: Lost Homes, Hopes,” Columbus Dispatch, August 14, 1997, 1A.
125 "Heal(Th) of Airport Corridor Property Reflected in Big 50 Hotels Ranking," Pittsburgh Business
can drive another 20 minutes to save $300 to $500 a month (in taxes),” explained the owner of a Pennsylvania construction company. “There has been some growth there, but not what you think,” added Ron Croushore, CEO of Prudential Preferred Realty. “Lots of people still come from the north and south. The malls and shopping centers are drawing from all over. The traffic has been unbelievable, but the housing has not been ahead of the other parts of the city.”

Adopting a suburban strategy for metropolitan growth also implicitly acknowledged the failure of earlier urban redevelopment campaigns to substantially change the Upper Ohio Valley’s decaying central business districts and urban neighborhoods. “Right now we're … looking at reutilization strategies for brownfields,” explained Weirton City Manager Gary Dufour in August 2004. “I think one of the thing that has sort of evolved is the understanding that the entire community advances, not just a piece... We're judged by the quality of the total community, not just a piece.”

Despite the attempts of local officials, however, little new construction actually took place within Steubenville itself, as employers instead flocked to an expansive hilltop industrial park just off Route 22. Even the early promise of state and federal subsidies for brownfield development along the riverfront has faded in recent years from a lack of matching private funds for the removal of toxic wastes.

Conclusion

Times, August 18, 2000; “Still Waiting for Takeoff: Why Has Development on County-Owned Land Surrounding Pittsburgh International Airport Been So Slow?” Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, August 27, 2000. In 1999, only Moon Township, out of all Airport Corridor communities, placed in the top ten in the region for the number of building permits issued for housing construction.


127 This suburban strategy of economic development both complemented and reinforced the rapid growth of suburban communities that occurred even as the tri-state area’s overall population declined by nearly 11 percent between 1960 and 1990. U.S. Census Bureau and IUCPSR, County and City Data Book.

128 Dufour Interview

129 “Coal and Steel Town Sees Rebirth”; Fitzpatrick, “Alliance 2000 to Heinz”

During the postwar period the metropolitan regional bonds forged in the late nineteenth century between Pittsburgh and the Upper Ohio Valley slowly unraveled. Over time, outlying communities in Ohio and West Virginia lost population and actually grew more isolated from the cultural and economic activities of the metropolis. That is, in effect, they became more rural. Eventually this left residents of Steubenville and other local communities to face the collapse of heavy industry without access to the economic and institutional resources of their larger neighbor. Indeed, the process of postwar economic decline went hand in hand with Steubenville’s growing isolation from the larger metropolitan region. “You [still] had a two-lane road,” recalled Dufour of transportation links in the 1970s and 1980s, and “in Pittsburgh they would say, ‘Oh, you’re over in Weirton, West Virginia or Steubenville, Ohio. You’re clear over there?’”

As a result, though the more rural communities along the Ohio River continued to produce steel and mine coal through 1990s, they did not share in the economic transformation that helped Pittsburgh and select suburbs refashion themselves into “post-industrial” centers of high-tech manufacturing and service provision. Consequently, when Steubenville officials did begin to re-imagine their community as part of the greater Pittsburgh region during the late 1990s, like most other rural communities they did so as junior partners promoting a low-cost/low-wage alternative to suburban locations.

The shifting relationship of Steubenville to metropolitan Pittsburgh thus raises important questions about the nature of “Rust Belt” deindustrialization as well as the linear narrative of suburban expansion. The failure to maintain regional transportation links after the decline of the railroads isolated local communities from the metropolitan core, while new highway connections

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131 Dufour Interview.
during the 1990s allowed residents to reinvent themselves as members of an integrated, post-industrial metropolis. From the vantage of local officials, the process of suburban “sprawl” looked more like the re-establishment of economic and cultural bonds that had tied Steubenville and other outlying communities to the Steel City since the nineteenth century. Consequently, if we are to adequately explain postwar development, not to mention begin to address the spatial inequalities of the contemporary metropolis, we must first move beyond a simplistic city/suburb model to understand how residents of the metropolitan fringe reshaped their regional identities in response to larger economic trends. “If proximity is a measure of being part of the Pittsburgh area, Steubenville has it,” declared one local official. “We proudly call ourselves the “Burb of the ‘Burgh.” Steubenville is just 10 miles from the Post-Gazette Pavilion and just 30 minutes from Pittsburgh International Airport. How much more ‘Pittsburgh area’ can a city be than that?”

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132 A recent example of this issue is the debate over a portion of the hotly contested portion of the Southern Beltway, known as the Findlay Connector, which has an intersection with Route 22 only eighteen miles from Steubenville. “The Findlay Connector is the single most important highway project for this area,” declared Progress Alliance director Tom Bayuzik (himself a former aide to Pittsburgh Mayor tom Murphy), who predicted the route would channel Pittsburgh’s metropolitan growth to the west. Paul Giannamore, “Progress Alliance Exec Establishes Ground Rules of Future,” Steubenville Herald-Star, July 23, 2006, D1.