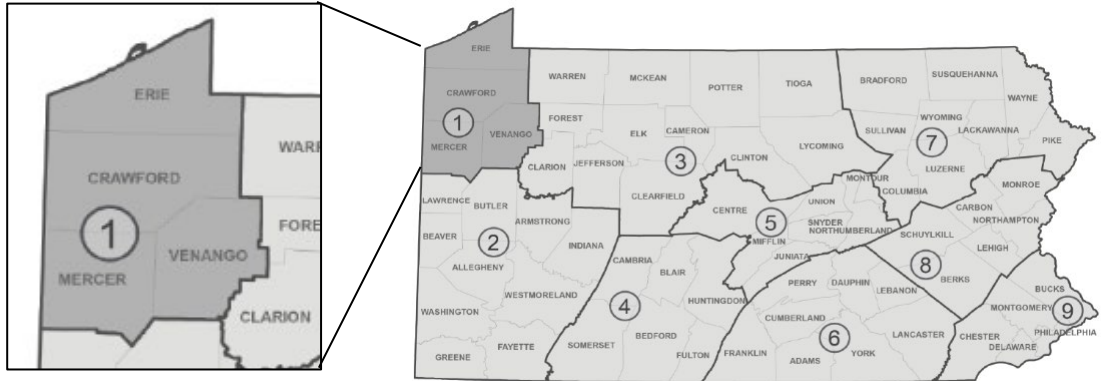




Focus Area 1

Crawford
Erie
Mercer
Venango



Demographic Profile

Key Findings and Conclusions

- There are 168 municipalities in the focus area including nine cities: Erie, Hermitage, Sharon, Meadville, Oil City, Corry, Franklin, Titusville, and Farrell.
- The focus area’s population was stagnant between 1960-1980 but has been stagnant or decreasing in the past 40 years. Since 2000, the population has decreased by 33,174, or a 6% decrease.
- The majority of the population is distributed amongst small communities, with 150 (89%) of the municipalities having populations of 5,000 or less. 122 (72%) of those communities have populations of less than 2,500.
- The focus area’s population is predominantly White/Caucasian, with White Alone (Non-Hispanic or Latino) representing 87% of the total focus area population.
- Erie County is by far the most diverse county by non-white residents as a percentage of total population (17%) and in number of non-white residents (45,778).
- Cities within the focus area typically have a higher proportion of nonwhite residents (25%) than boroughs (8%) or townships (7%) within the focus area.
- Poverty within this focus area (14.5%) is higher than the statewide average (11.8%). However, this poverty is not evenly distributed. Cities and boroughs in the focus area have high poverty rates of 22.7% and 14.7%, while townships have a lower rate of 9.5%.
- Homeownership rates are mixed throughout the region. Historically, most of the region’s municipalities have had homeownership rates that are close to the statewide average (69%). This trend has continued into 2020, with the region at 70%.

Potential Implications for Historic and Cultural Resources

- Sustained population decline suggests that some communities will contract in size and services. The region’s cities and boroughs are at greatest risk for declining population, which may lead to abandonment of housing and decline of institutional and commercial buildings. Strategies to assist communities make strategic decisions about how to best manage their built environment in the face of this trend should be considered.
- The proportion of ethnic groups other than those that are historically associated with the region may suggest that the established narratives of historical significance of communities and buildings may not carry the same meaning with these groups. It may also suggest that there are places that these groups consider significant and worthy of preservation that may not have been documented or considered previously.



- An aging population could have several implications for historic resources. The first is the impact of fixed incomes on the ability to maintain historic properties. Second is the mobility and access needs of individuals who wish to age-in-place and the changes that might necessitate to historic buildings and communities.
- The poverty rate may present economic challenges to property maintenance, investment, and revitalization efforts.
- The relatively small size of the municipalities in the region may present challenges with matching funds, leadership and administrative capacity for preservation programs and projects.

Current Population

- The 2020 population of the 4-county focus area was 515,920, or 4% of the total population of Pennsylvania.
- There are 9 cities within the focus area: Erie, Hermitage, Sharon, Meadville, Oil City, Corry, Franklin, Titusville, and Farrell.
- Erie County has the highest population in the focus area, while Venango County is the smallest county in the focus area. Venango County’s population is 18.6% the size of Erie County’s population.

Total Population:

	Crawford	Erie	Mercer	Venango
City	18,312	101,041	33,635	15,690
Borough	9,292	26,584	24,767	8,536
Township	56,334	143,251	52,250	26,231
TOTAL	83,938	270,876	110,652	50,454

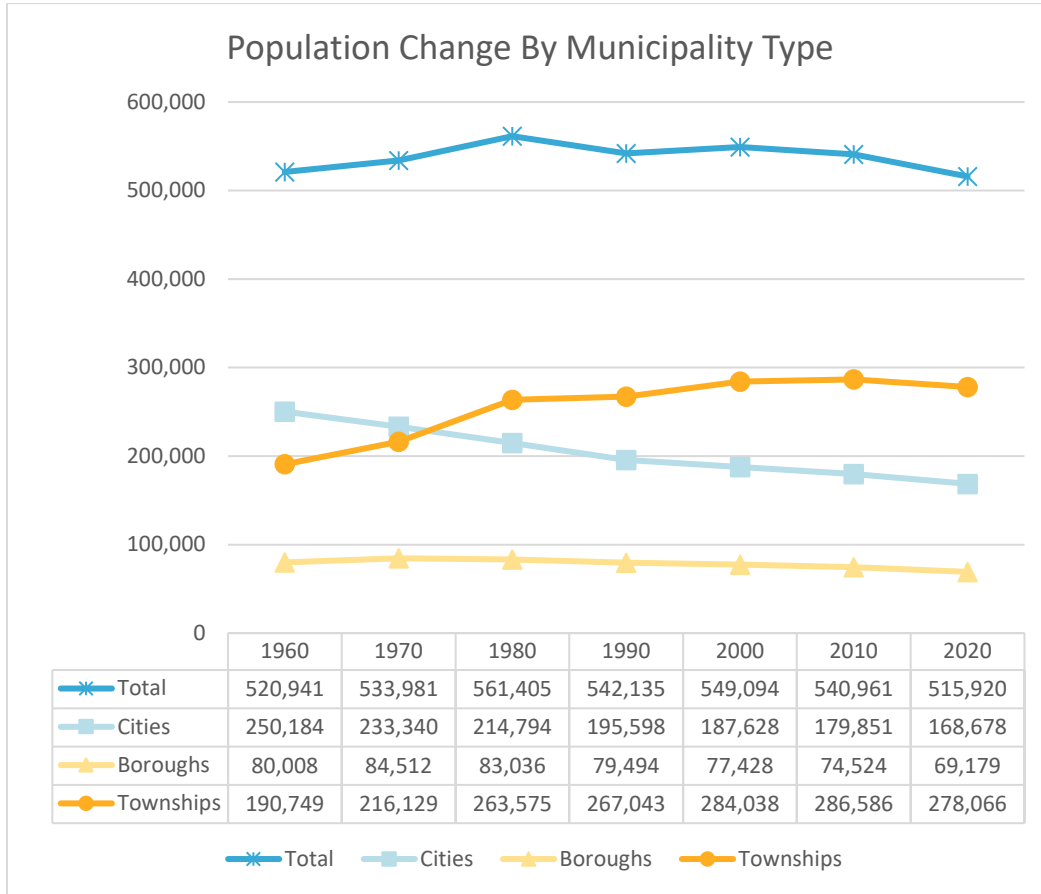
- As this focus area contains some of the most rural counties in Pennsylvania, most of the municipalities have very small populations, with 150 (89%) having populations of 5,000 or less. Just 7 have populations over 10,000. These include in descending order Erie, Millcreek, Harborcreek, Hermitage, Sharon, Meadville, and Fairview.
- Erie has the highest population among municipalities in the focus area at 94,831 (2020 Census). Erie’s population declined from over 100,000 residents in the 2010 Census. Despite this decrease, Erie is currently the fifth most populous city in Pennsylvania.

Number of Municipalities by Population:

	Focus Area 1	Crawford	Erie	Mercer	Venango
<2,500	122	43	17	35	27
2,500 to 4,999	28	4	14	9	1
5,000 to 9,999	11	3	3	2	3
>10,000	7	1	4	2	0
TOTAL	168	51	38	48	31

Population Trends 1960-2020

- The focus area’s population was stagnant between 1960-1980 but has been stagnant or decreasing in the past 40 years. Since 2000, the population has decreased by 33,174, or a 6% decrease.
- Following a pattern seen in many other focus areas across Pennsylvania, population in cities and boroughs has decreased, while population in townships has increased. Since 1960, cities have decreased by 33%, boroughs have decreased by 14%, and townships have increased by 46%.
- The 33% decrease in cities since 1960 amounts to a loss of 81,506. About half of these losses can be attributed to population changes in Erie, which net lost 43,609 residents over that same period.



Homeownership

- Overall, the focus area’s homeownership rate (70%) is very close to the the statewide average (69%).
- However, this varies by municipality. The homeownership rate is lowest in the focus area’s cities at 54%, higher within boroughs at 64%, and highest in townships, where it is 82%.
- Mercer County has the highest county homeownership rate in the focus area at 77.7%. Erie and Venango counties are the lowest in the focus area, but both are still slightly higher than the statewide average.

Home ownership by county:

	Focus Area 1	Crawford	Erie	Mercer	Venango
Homeownership Rate	70.0%	71.2%	70.8%	77.7%	70.1%

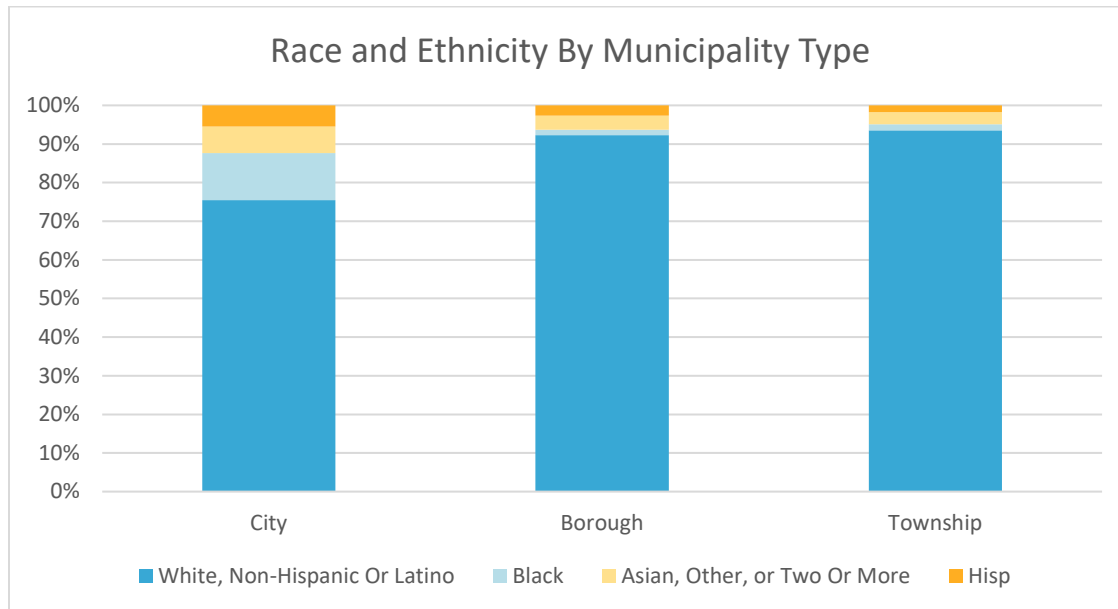


Race and Ethnicity

- The focus area’s population is predominantly White/Caucasian, with White Alone (Non-Hispanic or Latino) representing 87% of the total focus area population. This is above the state average of 75% White Alone (Non-Hispanic or Latino).
- Erie County is the most diverse in the region. In 2021, White Alone (Non-Hispanic or Latino) made up 83% of the population. While this is lowest among counties in the focus area, is still above the state average (75%). Erie County has the largest Black population in the focus area at 7%. It also has the highest Hispanic and Latino population, and the highest population identifying as Asian, Other Race, and Two or More Races.
- Crawford and Venango counties are the least diverse, both with over 94% White Alone (Non-Hispanic or Latino), around 1% Black Alone, around 3% Hispanic or Latino, and around 1% Asian, Other or Two or More Races.
- Though this region is predominantly White, the focus area’s cities are more diverse. Among cities in the focus area, 12% of the focus area population is Black while across the focus area the population is only 5% Black.

Race and ethnicity by county:

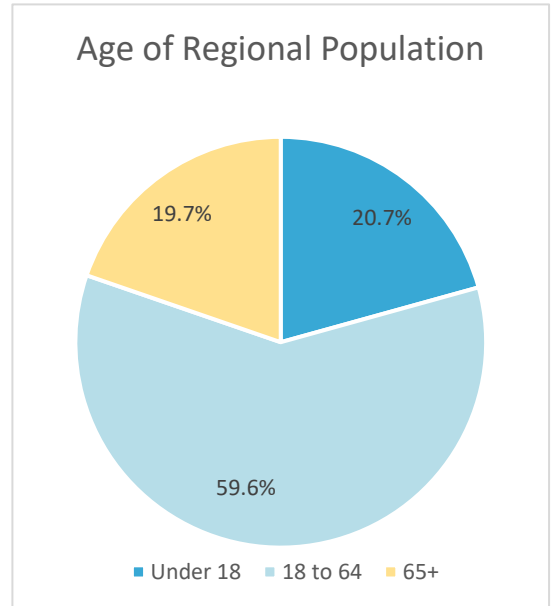
	Focus Area 1	Crawford	Erie	Mercer	Venango
White, Non-Hispanic Or Latino	87.4%	94.2%	83.1%	89.3%	94.8%
Black	5.1%	1.5%	6.7%	5.9%	1.1%
Hispanic Or Latino	3.1%	1.4%	4.6%	1.6%	1.1%
Asian, Other Race, or Two or More	4.4%	2.9%	5.7%	3.3%	3.0%
TOTAL	515,920	83,938	270,876	110,652	50,454





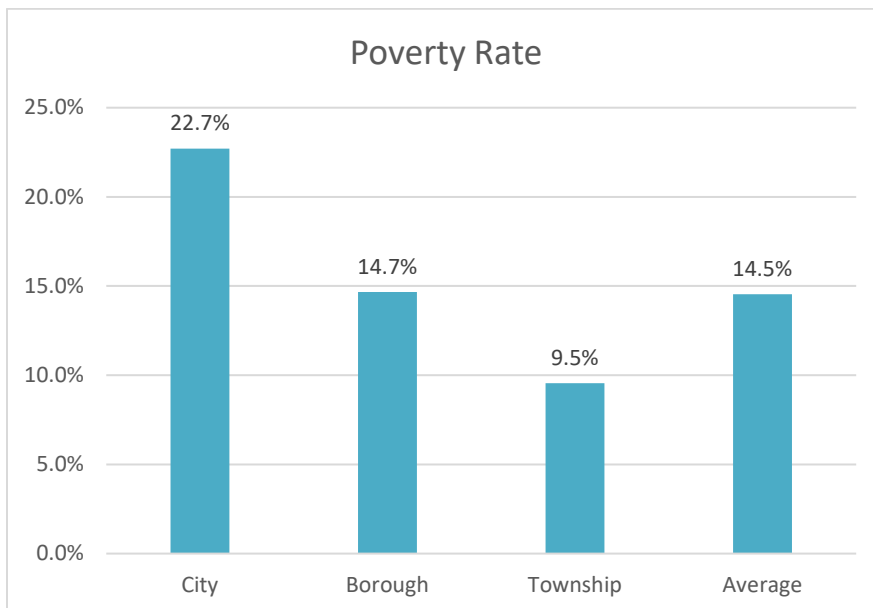
Age

- As of 2021, 60% of the focus area’s population was between 18-65; 21% was under 18, and 20% was over 65. The statewide averages are Under 18 (20%), 18-64 (61%) and over 65 (18%), so this focus area matches Pennsylvania averages closely, though it has a slightly higher population over 65.
- Cities within the focus area had a slightly higher proportion of residents 18-64 (61%), and a lower proportion of residents over 65 (17%).
- Townships had a slightly higher proportion of residents over 65 (22%), while residents 18–64 was lower than average (58%).
- The focus area’s population over 65 has grown from 17% of the population in 2014 to 20% in 2021. This mirrors growth in the statewide population over 65.
- The median age has been increasing since 2010 across all counties. Crawford, Mercer, and Venango counties are above the statewide median age of 40.8, but Erie County is below at 39.9. The highest county median age in the focus area is Venango County at 47.4.



Poverty

- Poverty within this focus area (14.5%) is higher than the statewide average (11.8%). However, this poverty is not evenly distributed. Cities and boroughs in the focus area have high poverty rates of 22.7% and 14.7%, while townships have a lower rate of 9.5%.
- Poverty rates also vary widely across the counties. Poverty is highest in Erie County at 15.7%. This is likely due to a large proportion of Erie’s population being in the city of Erie, which has a higher poverty rate. All counties within the focus area are above the statewide average poverty rate.





Survey Results

The following findings and survey results are from PA SHPO’s unscientific online public survey developed to inform the 2024-2034 statewide plan. It was available to the public, partners, stakeholders, and others from September 2023 through May 2024.

Key Findings

- This focus area values historic properties for their contributions to community and regional identity.
- Respondents are very interested in the preservation of historic downtown commercial districts and are less focused on the preservation of agricultural properties, buildings, and landscapes.
- When asked what types of places they feel are most threatened, the categories most chosen both statewide and in this focus area were places that reflect local/regional history and culture and traditional downtown shopping/commercial areas. However, respondents from this area are also particularly concerned about residential areas built before 1950, much more than statewide respondents.
- When asked which factors they thought were most threatening these places, respondents in this focus area were much less likely than statewide respondents to mark developmental pressures. As this area’s population has been declining. Instead, respondents from this focus area highlighted changing demographics, vacancy/disinvestment/deferred maintenance, and despite local interest in preservation, a lack of knowledge about where to start.
- Statewide, the most common answer to what would improve historic preservation is increased funding. Particularly in this focus area, respondents also highlighted the importance of better connecting preservation to sustainability, economic development, and planning. Similar to the lack of knowledge focus area respondents cited above, this focus area was more likely to select access to qualified contractors and tradespeople.
- Finally, when thinking about funding, respondents from this focus area were particularly uninterested in funding for surveys to identify historic places, and instead, were particularly interested in funding for residential historic property owners.

Focus Area Highlights

For this section, comparisons were drawn between statewide responses to select survey questions in contrast to focus area responses. Cells below are highlighted to show which responses are over or underrepresented by the focus area’s respondents. In total, this focus area had respondents out of the 2,238 statewide respondents.

Legend:

Response rate 10%+ higher than statewide
Response rate 3%-9% higher than statewide
Response rate within 2% of statewide
Response rate 3%-9% lower than statewide
Response rate 10%+ lower than statewide



Q5. Which of the following are the most important contributions you think historic places make to your community or region? Select up to 2.	Focus Area Responses	Statewide Responses
They help sustain my community through heritage tourism.	22%	15%
They provide unique economic development opportunities.	17%	12%
They help teach and remind us about the past.	22%	40%
They protect Pennsylvania’s unique stories and heritage for future generations.	60%	64%
They encourage sustainable, walkable, ‘green’ communities.	6%	10%
They improve the beauty and quality of life of my community.	27%	25%
They are a big part of our community/regional identity.	41%	28%
Not sure / I haven't really thought about it before.	0%	0%
None of these / I don’t think they make valuable contributions.	0%	0%
Other (please specify)	4%	3%

Q6. Which of the following types of older and historic places would you prioritize for preservation in your community? Select up to 3.	Focus Area Responses	Statewide Responses
Cemeteries/burial places	31%	35%
Pre-historic archaeological sites	17%	18%
Historic archaeological sites	38%	36%
Sacred spaces/religious properties	11%	18%
Transportation infrastructure	7%	7%
Residential neighborhoods	35%	30%
Downtown commercial districts	47%	31%
Public buildings	26%	21%
Institutional buildings	5%	6%
Educational buildings	10%	7%
Agricultural properties	5%	18%
Industrial areas	4%	5%
Landscapes	19%	27%
Recreational places	21%	13%
None of these should be preserved	0%	0%
Other (please specify)	7%	9%



Q7. What types of places do you think are most threatened in your community? Select no more than 3.	Focus Area Responses	Statewide Responses
Places that reflect local/regional history and culture	49%	43%
Buildings constructed from 1960 through the early 1980s	7%	10%
Archaeological sites	13%	14%
Places associated with underrepresented histories (for example, African American, LGBTQ+, specific ethnic/racial communities)	18%	24%
Recreational places (for example, amusement parks, swimming pools, etc.)	15%	11%
Older industrial areas	15%	15%
Traditional downtown shopping/commercial areas	42%	33%
Residential areas built before 1950	38%	24%
Planned suburban housing developments/neighborhoods built after 1950	1%	2%
Religious buildings/sacred spaces	15%	14%
Agricultural buildings/landscapes	18%	27%
Unusual and/or landmark buildings	27%	28%
Cemeteries/burial places	18%	14%
Other (please specify)	7%	6%

Q8. Thinking about your response to the above question, what do you think is threatening those places? Select all that apply.	Focus Area Responses	Statewide Responses
Development pressures (rural, suburban, urban, etc.)	39%	65%
Gentrification	12%	19%
Changes in community demographics (aging populations, loss of population, etc.)	59%	39%
Vacancy/disinvestment/deferred maintenance	68%	50%
Lack of local protection/regulation	39%	43%
Local zoning practices	18%	24%
Little or no interest in historic preservation	44%	46%
Few or no preservation advocate(s)	31%	27%
Misguided or misinformed development (parking lots, housing density, widescale demolition)	41%	39%
Interest in preservation but don't know where to start	25%	14%
Other (please specify)	17%	11%



Q10. Choose up to 5 things that you think would encourage and/or assist historic preservation efforts where you live.	Focus Area Responses	Statewide Responses
Increased public funding for historic preservation.	78%	72%
Municipal employees with greater knowledge of local, state, and/or federal preservation programs.	49%	41%
Access to knowledgeable technical experts.	18%	18%
Access to qualified contractors and tradespeople.	37%	21%
Access to reputable and easy-to-understand online resources.	18%	23%
Local ordinances/regulation to protect older and historic places.	39%	48%
Informed elected officials knowledgeable about historic preservation.	52%	46%
Increased public awareness of the older and historic places in the community.	51%	59%
Adding more properties to the National Register of Historic Places.	8%	15%
Gathering and maintaining up-to-date information about older and historic places, including archaeological sites.	19%	28%
Identification and preservation of places associated with underrepresented history.	22%	25%
Connecting preservation with sustainability, economic development, and planning.	62%	52%
Other (please specify)	6%	4%

Q11. When you think about needing more funding/money for historic preservation, what 3 specific things would you like to have?	Focus Area Responses	Statewide Responses
Financial support for private residential property owners.	42%	30%
More money to history/preservation organizations and municipalities for construction projects.	47%	45%
Expand access the Pennsylvania Historic Preservation Tax Credit for income-producing properties.	30%	28%
Funding for preservation plans to help manage change in communities.	22%	31%
Money for surveys to identify historic places in a community.	7%	18%
Funding to support or restart local preservation networks and advocates.	30%	26%
Financial support for municipalities interested in starting a historic preservation program.	27%	28%
Grant or other incentive to preserve specific threatened resources.	51%	52%
Funding for local training programs for municipal employees, tradespeople, contractors, etc.	24%	21%
Other (please specify)	3%	5%



Q12. If you think education about and greater awareness of historic preservation is important, what 3 tools do you think would be most useful?	Focus Area Responses	Statewide Responses
Specific and replicable examples of successful preservation construction projects.	46%	47%
Specific and replicable examples about community archaeology projects.	8%	12%
Case studies of successful preservation planning efforts or save a threatened resource.	40%	38%
User and resource guides for finding information, researching a historic property, using state or federal preservation programs, etc.	57%	58%
Toolkits for preserving specific types of historic places, like agricultural buildings or cemeteries.	47%	40%
Toolkit for talking about historic preservation and the importance of historic places.	35%	35%
101-type information about historic preservation, including vocabulary, state and federal laws, etc.	33%	34%
101-type information about archaeology, including vocabulary, types of sites, etc.	7%	9%
I don't think education/awareness is important.	0%	0%
Other (please specify)	8%	6%

Q14. Did you know that Pennsylvania has a state preservation agency, the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office (PA SHPO)?	Focus Area Responses	Statewide Responses
Yes	72%	70%
I think so, but I'm not sure	15%	12%
No	14%	18%
Other (please specify)	1%	1%

Themes & Issues Summary

Analysis of the data compiled through the statewide planning process:

- The three top historic preservation themes for Region 1 are: incentives, community, and planning.
- The three top historic preservation issues for Region 1 are: apathy, preservation trades, and funding.
- Local residents in this focus area believe intentionally working with non-traditional preservationists such as planning offices, community groups, consultants, church organizations and civic groups will advance preservation in the coming decade.
- Stakeholders want to build the capacity and offerings of both the Erie City Historic Preservation Program and Preservation Erie.
- Residents see an opportunity to improve collaboration and communication between the programmatic goals of DCED, DCNR, other Commonwealth agencies and the SHPO and History Code.
- Residents envision a thriving economy in the region supported by historic preservation (among other economic drivers) and that saving historic places is imperative to identity and economic recovery.