



let's get to work!

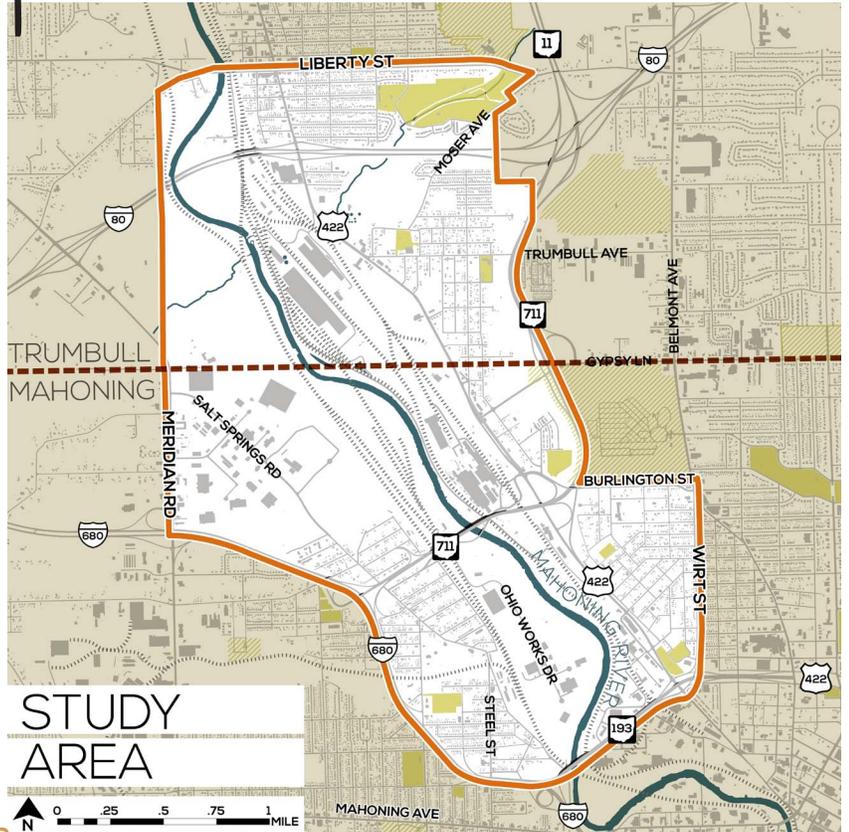
**US 422 CORRIDOR** REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# purpose of the plan

Now is a critical time for the US 422 Corridor. In recent years, the Corridor has experienced a significant boom, with investments of over \$1.2 billion in a state-of-the-art steel pipe mill facility with additional facilities related to this emerging energy industry on the way. These new industrial facilities promise to catalyze new investment and transform formerly vacant and blighted industrial land into a reinvigorated jobs center. The primary goal of this plan is to identify and direct the improvements necessary to help the Corridor reach its economic potential and attract outside investment.

Coupled with expanding economic growth, the other goal of this plan is to revitalize surrounding communities. The Study Area, as seen on the map to the right, includes a 3 mile stretch of the US 422 Corridor from Liberty Street in Girard to Rt.193 in Youngstown. It is home to distinct and historic communities that originally provided a home to workers of the nearby mills. Brier Hill, Parkwood and Steelton were once vibrant neighborhoods but the loss of nearby jobs brought with it a drastic loss of people and households from these communities. While there have been some revitalization efforts in these communities, they still suffer from considerable quality of life challenges, including building deterioration and vacancy. Their front door, the 422 Corridor itself, remains unsightly and underutilized, and in need of aesthetic improvements.



## what is the plan for?



This plan will be used as a fundraising tool to raise money for the proposed recommendations. It will also aid in integrating the vision for the Corridor with other planning initiatives and projects in the area, unite all key stakeholders in both the City of Girard and Youngstown, and to prioritize action steps for implementing the plan's recommendations.

## our process

The 9 month planning process for the Corridor began in July 2013. The process was led by the Interface Studio LLC and overseen by the Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation (YNDC), the Youngstown/Warren Regional Chamber (YWRC), and the Board of Trumbull County Commissioners, as well as a steering committee comprised of 25 diverse representatives of local government (in both cities and counties), businesses, and partners dedicated to economic development and community revitalization. To create a unified vision for the corridor, the process also engaged just under 350 residents, business owners, and other community stakeholders.



# VISION

The public process was designed not only to learn from local residents and businesses, but to ask them what their vision for the future is. They provided unique ideas about where they live and where they work, and what they would like to see changed. The following vision for the 422 Corridor is based on those ideas.

The vision- to create a 422 Corridor that **WORKS** to:

**EXPAND ECONOMIC GROWTH** where existing businesses are supported in their growth and where new business are created that provide job opportunities for residents;

**SERVE AS A MODEL FOR MODERN INDUSTRY** where new industrial development represents a national model that is attractive, economically successful and environmentally conscious;

**FOSTER GOOD NEIGHBORS** where industrial use is buffered from nearby communities and strategic investments are made to remove blight and improve the quality of life for local residents;

**DEVELOP A CONNECTION TO THE RIVER** where the Mahoning River is revived as a centerpiece and amenity for local employees and residents; and

**SERVE AS AN ECONOMIC FRONT DOOR TO THE REGION** where new businesses and revitalized communities serve to attract new customers, new investors and new residents to the 422 Corridor and the entire region.

This plan identifies a range of recommendations dedicated to reaching this vision not just in the long-term but in the first couple years as well. These recommendations are organized into 5 key themes:

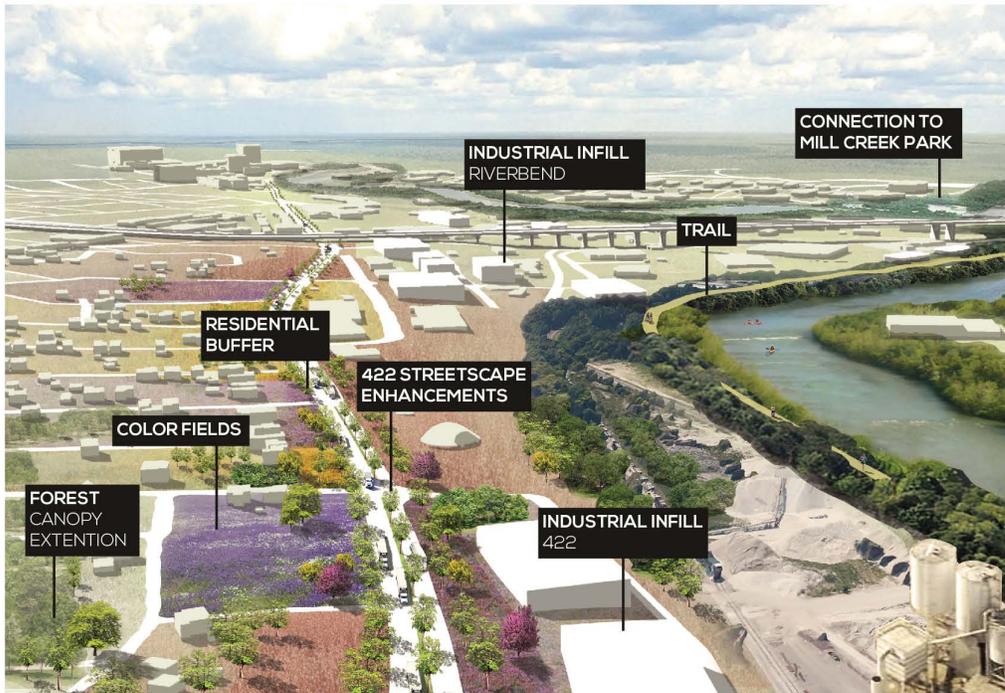
**1 IMPROVE THE 422 CORRIDOR** as the Region's Gateway to Jobs focuses on the look and feel of Route 422

**2 UNLOCK THE POTENTIAL OF LAND FOR JOB GROWTH** focuses on identifying the key opportunities for new industrial development

**3 SUPPORT AND MARKET LOCAL BUSINESSES** with strategies to help target resources toward new and existing businesses

**4 STABILIZE RESIDENTIAL AREAS** focuses on identifying and targeting investment to revitalize local neighborhoods

**5 ACTIVATE NATURAL ASSETS** targeted toward improving local parks, trails and access to the Mahoning River





# Improve the 422 Corridor as the Region's Gateway to Jobs

Throughout the community input process, time and time again the look and feel of the 422 corridor itself rose to the top of both the community's and business' priorities. In fact, 49% of businesses surveyed said they would improve the appearance or clean up the 422 corridor if they could only make one improvement in the US 422 Study Area. While there are some beloved and vibrant businesses, much of the corridor is plagued by vacant buildings, vacant land and poor pedestrian experiences. To put it simply, 422 is unkempt. The way this corridor looks and functions is critical to the success of economic development in the study area.

Key recommendations to revive the Corridor itself include:

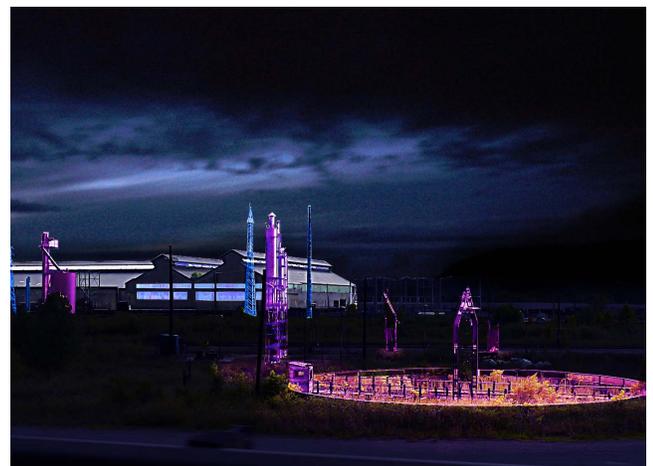
- > **REMOVE THE CLUTTER** including trash and 'material storage' to improve the appearance of the Corridor
- > **CREATING A 'PARK LIKE SETTING'** by redesigning the street with a continuous greened median and multi-use shared path
- > **IMPROVING THE PEDESTRIAN EXPERIENCE** by providing safety measures such as crosswalks
- > **SUPPORT MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION** to provide more options for residents and employees to get to and from the Corridor
- > **ADDRESS CIRCULATION CONCERNS** such as eliminating excess frontage roads and eliminating illegal u-turns
- > **IMPROVE GATEWAYS** to become the economic front door to the Corridor
- > **CREATE INDUSTRIAL BUFFERS** to protect residents from dust, noise, and truck traffic from industrial activity.
- > **IMPROVE THE APPEARANCE OF PRIVATE PROPERTIES** where necessary to overhaul the perception of the Corridor
- > **IMPROVE THE NIGHTSCAPE** to improve safety and enhance the experience of the Corridor at night.



Before & After rendering of the 422 Corridor in the Study Area, showing an enhanced median, shared multi-use path, and a landscaped industrial buffer.



Gateway Improvements at the intersection of US 422 and Interstate 80.



Colorful uplighting on industrial structures in the Corridor.

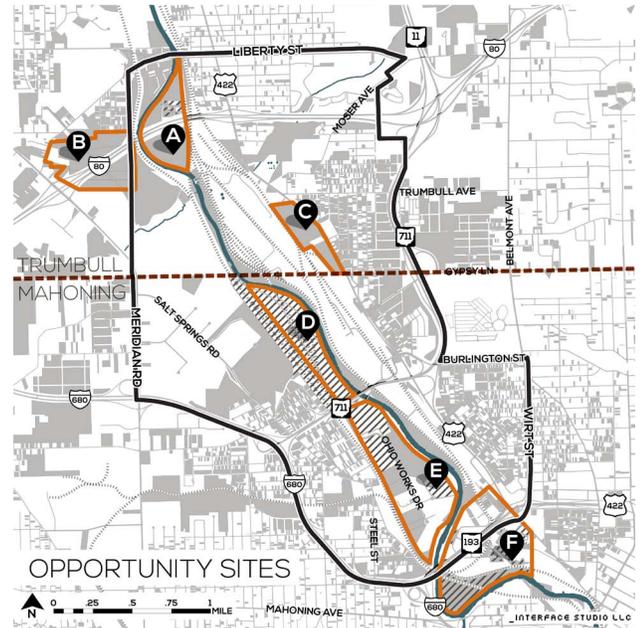


# Unlock the Potential of land for Job Growth

In order to identify specific redevelopment opportunities for economic expansion, the planning team mapped all of the vacant parcels in the study area, which turned out to be just over 975 acres of vacant land. In addition, 'underutilized' land, such as slack space, storage and excess parking lots, was identified as additional opportunities for redevelopment. After mapping all of the vacant and underutilized parcels in the study area, both site constraints, such as parcel size and environmental issues, where new development would be too costly or too difficult, and site assets such as access to rail and infrastructure were assessed. All of these different variables identified 6 opportunity areas as potential catalysts for economic development as seen to the map to the right.

Key recommendations for unlocking the potential of these sites include:

- > **PRESERVE LARGE RAIL-ACCESSIBLE SITES** for industries with high rail dependence to support future large scale industrial investment
- > **FILL IN THE GAPS TO CREATE ATTRACTIVE MANUFACTURING PARKS** by maximizing existing underutilized industrial parks.
- > **PURSUE INTERIM USES** for properties that have development challenges to provide both aesthetic and financial benefits until development occurs, such as a solar array.



# Support & Market Local Businesses

As economic development is taking center stage in the corridor's transformation, supporting and bolstering the current local business climate in the corridor is critical to the future of economic growth in the area. Currently there are just over 230 businesses in the corridor, comprised of 170 commercial business types and 64 industrial business types. This region is well served by a full range of business support services and the various organizations that offer these services have clear roles. Moreover, the organizations share a clear goal of driving continued economic growth in the Mahoning Valley. However, as with many cities, while resources exist many are not utilized to the degree that they could be. Further, there are local businesses that are vital parts of the economy that very few local residents and even other businesses, are aware of. In the 422 Corridor, some businesses are physically disconnected from one another due to rail lines, major roads, the Mahoning River, and other factors. These disconnections inhibit potential suppliers or customers for some businesses.

In order to support existing businesses, the Corridor needs to ensure awareness of local resources that are available to them and help them get the word out about their operations, products and services.

Key recommendations to boost local business around the Corridor include:

- > **CREATE A SHARED VOICE FOR BUSINESSES** on the Corridor by creating a Business Association and eventually a Special Improvement District
- > **INCREASE AWARENESS & ACCESSIBILITY OF BUSINESS SUPPORT SERVICES** available to existing and potential businesses in the Corridor
- > **TELL THE STORY OF THE CORRIDOR** through the creation of a website to market the Corridor
- > **BOOST BUSINESS TO BUSINESS COLLABORATION** with the creation of a supplier network
- > **INCREASE ACCESS TO CONSUMER MARKETS** by hosting a "Made in Mahoning Valley" festival to highlight local producers
- > **BECOME A MODEL FOR SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRY** to set an example for modern, clean industry





# Stabilize Residential Areas

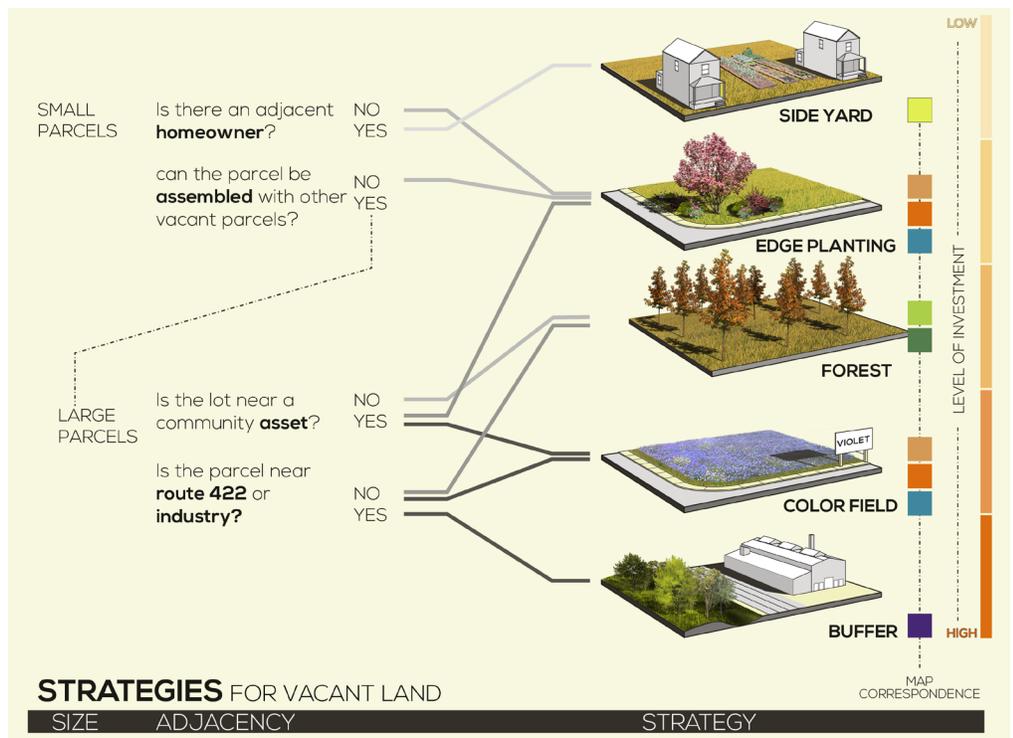
Historically, residential areas within the study area thrived in step with the local economy. The neighborhoods of Brier Hill, Steelton, and Parkwood housed much of the workforce of the nearby steel mills and manufacturing industry. At the height of steel production, Youngstown's population peaked in the 1950's at 168,000 in the study area. When the steel industry declined, it took the local residential neighborhoods down with it. In the 2010 census, the population was 67,000, a 60% decline from its peak population. That severe population decline has left a visible scar represented by large tracts of vacant land and abandoned homes in each of the surrounding neighborhoods.

Following the Youngstown 2010 plan, the City of Youngstown took an aggressive approach to demolishing vacant buildings that still continues to this day. Similarly, most of the vacant buildings in Parkwood have been demolished by City of Girard. In addition to tearing down vacant buildings, some newly vacant lots along the corridor were seeded with pilot meadow plantings. The meadows represent an innovative move to clean vacant lots but the end result has not been as successful as hoped due to limited maintenance funds. Community members involved in the process identified the need to expand and diversify the approaches to managing vacant land in the communities while stating 'removing blight' was their number one priority to improve their neighborhoods.

To address blight in these neighborhoods, stabilization efforts can build off recent investments and target limited funding where it can have the greatest impact, such as blocks with the highest level of home ownership rates, proximity to neighborhood assets, and highly visible locations along main roads like 422. In other areas, steps can be taken to enhance the 'rural' feeling that exists to transform vacancy from a blight into an amenity.

Key recommendations to stabilize these residential areas include:

- > **DEVELOP A TARGETED HOUSING STRATEGY** where top priority properties are targeted for code enforcement or demolition
- > **TARGET FUTURE LAND BANK ACTIVITIES** to preserve the land necessary to achieve economic development and aesthetic improvements as part of the vision for the Corridor
- > **TRANSITION TO A MORE RURAL CHARACTER** by employing different vacant land management strategies to maximize impact
- > **ADDRESS NEIGHBORHOOD CONCERNS** to improve the quality of life of the residents such as improving safety
- > **MARKET INDIVIDUAL CHARACTER** to improve the perception and bring more people into these of the neighborhoods



Above: A key for making decisions on how to treat vacant land in the study area, given that each solution has varying degrees of associated upfront and maintenance costs.

Below: Color fields of single species can take the place of meadows for a greater visual impact.





# Activate Natural Assets

Parks, open space and play space are essential ingredients to healthy communities. There are currently 123 acres of programmed open space in the study area. An analysis completed for this plan indicates that 90% of residents in the study area are within a ½ mile distance, or 10 minute walk, to a park. However, this does not speak to the distribution or quality of open space. Many parks are in disrepair and feel unsafe to residents. The remaining open spaces represent a varied mix of traditional parkland and recreational play spaces.

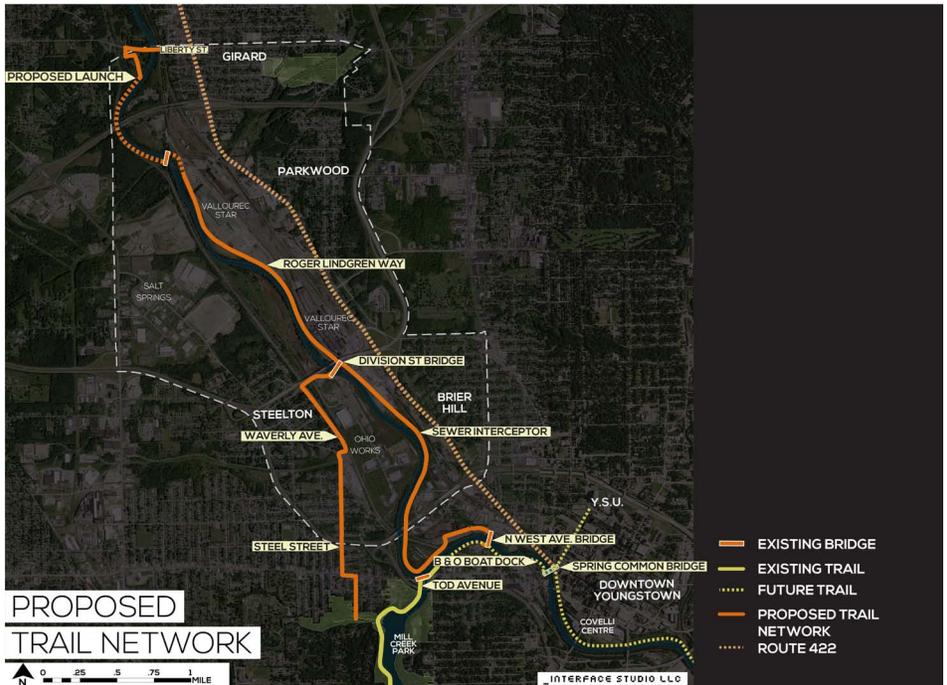
In addition to park space, and although it has long been physically distant and disconnected from the existing neighborhoods, the greatest open space asset in the corridor is the Mahoning River. The 4 mile stretch of the River has historically been known for legacy pollutants associated with nearby industry, however in recent times, the water quality has improved enough that multiple species of fish have returned. The improved water quality and rediscovery of the River as a real recreational asset has resulted in local kayaking tours and a move to construct new boat launches organized by a dedicated group of interested kayakers and River enthusiasts. Enhancing access to the Mahoning River for both nearby businesses in the corridor and the adjacent neighborhoods will further establish the River as an important asset for generations to come. It can become an integral recreational asset and link within a regional trail network that connects Downtown Girard to Downtown Youngstown as well as the 4,445-acre Mill Creek Park just to the south.

Key recommendations to improve open space and connections in the study area include:

- > **TAKE ME TO THE RIVER** which provides different alternatives toward creating an integrated trail network between Girard, Youngstown and the Mahoning River.
- > **BUILD UPON OTHER OPEN SPACE ASSETS** to improve existing parkland and recreational amenities.
- > **LEVERAGE STORMWATER INVESTMENTS** to mitigate combined sewer overflow with Green Stormwater Infrastructure, such as bioswales and rain gardens.
- > **TAKE ADVANTAGE OF "INDUSTRIAL RUINS"** to preserve the industrial heritage of the area and create a trail system that is truly unique.



Rendering of Proposed Mahoning River Trail near the Division Street Bridge preserving the existing abandoned rail structure



Map of the proposed Trail network

# LET'S [really] GET TO WORK... implementation

The final chapter of the plan outlines how to REALLY GET TO WORK toward implementing this vision. Businesses and residents expressed deep frustrations about the lack of actions resulting from past planning exercises that often contribute to disillusionment, or worse, a lack of community participation. This planning process was structured to address these perceptions and set the tone for future community involvement that empowers businesses and residents to guide and participate in implementation activities.

Each recommendation requires a different set of partners and volunteer efforts, enabling many proposals to be addressed concurrently. Regardless of who spearheads a given initiative, implementation of the plan will necessitate great cooperation, hard work, and persistence to ensure that the resulting change delivers success to the residents, business owners, and stakeholders in the 422 corridor.

This plan outlines new investment in community programs, public infrastructure, parks, housing and retail. It's important to note that economic investment brings economic benefits both to the local community but also to the cities of Youngstown and Girard, Mahoning and Trumbull counties, the region and State. These benefits emerge from both upfront construction as well as through ongoing of existing and new businesses. But to reach this potential, it will be important to keep the momentum built during the planning process alive. In fact, *THE STRATEGIES TO THE RIGHT CAN BEGIN IMPLEMENTATION IN YEAR 1:*

- > REMOVE THE CLUTTER
- > CREATE A "PARK-LIKE" SETTING ALONG 422 - TEMPORARY SOLUTIONS
- > IMPROVE THE PEDESTRIAN EXPERIENCE
- > IMPROVE AREA GATEWAYS
- > IMPROVE THE APPEARANCE OF PRIVATE PROPERTIES
- > CREATE A BUSINESS ASSOCIATION
- > INCREASE AWARENESS AND ACCESSIBILITY OF BUSINESS SUPPORT SERVICES
- > TELL THE STORY OF THE CORRIDOR
- > DEVELOP A TARGETED HOUSING STRATEGY
- > TARGET FUTURE LAND BANK ACTIVITIES
- > BUILD UPON OTHER OPEN SPACE ASSETS

## WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

Contact the Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation (YNDC) at 330.480.0423 or [info@yndc.org](mailto:info@yndc.org) for more information on upcoming events, clean ups, plantings and meetings.

to view the full plan, visit:

[HTTP://TINY.CC/US422CORRIDOR](http://tiny.cc/us422corridor)

## FUNDING PARTNERS

A special thank you to the funders of this plan, who committed significant financial and in-kind resources to see it through:

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BOARD OF TRUMBULL COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

TRUMBULL METROPOLITAN HOUSING AUTHORITY (TMHA)

TRUMBULL COUNTY LAND REUTILIZATION CORPORATION (TCLRC)

WESTERN RESERVE PORT AUTHORITY (WRPA)

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VALLOUREC STAR

YOUNGSTOWN/WARREN REGIONAL CHAMBER