TASKFORCE PURPOSE:

To generate recommendations for Warren County to improve tourism, encourage economic development and investment, and workforce recruitment. These recommendations will include actionable and achievable projects that can make an immediate impact on the aesthetics, efficiency, and effectiveness of the general efforts to market and promote the entirety of Warren County, Pennsylvania.
Facing the ongoing challenges of population decline accompanied by the dynamic rise in recreational opportunities in Warren County with no corresponding rise in economic impact brought about by tourism, and the abundance of potential actionable studies without implementation plans; in July of 2017, the Warren County Commissioners Eggleston, Ben Kafferlin and Cindy Morrison adopted a resolution creating the Warren County Marketing Taskforce to explore and report on actionable strategies to turn the tide.

The Taskforce was to be comprised of seven members representing diverse sectors of the County charged with the mission “To generate recommendations for Warren County to improve tourism, encourage economic development and investment, and workforce recruitment. These recommendations will include actionable and achievable projects that can make an immediate impact on the aesthetics, efficiency, and effectiveness of the general efforts to market and promote the entirety of Warren County, Pennsylvania.”

**TASKFORCE MEMBERS:**

**Jim Decker**, Warren County Chamber of Business & Industry, President and CEO

**Jeff Eggleston**, Warren County Commissioner

**Charles Gray**, Struthers Library Theatre Artistic Director & Taskforce Chair

**Lisa Hagberg**, Youngsville Borough Manager

**Dave Sherman**, Warren County Visitors Bureau, Executive Director

**Sherry Tune**, Allegheny National Forest Supervisor

**Piper VanOrd**, Allegheny Outfitters, Head Outdoor Guru and Activist
Photo by Gary Lester
The Taskforce's first public meeting was held on August 23, 2017\(^1\), and used Compression Planning\(^2\) to identify five actionable focus areas that would make a significant positive impact on Taskforce objectives. Taskforce – and community – members present fully participated in this process and generated over 40 focus areas for consideration. Contributions from local leaders interviewed by Taskforce members prior to this public first meeting were also shared. All Taskforce members voted and the top five objectives to be pursued were identified. Taskforce members and shareholders present then self-assigned into five sub-committees to investigate, enlarge, and report their findings through a series of work sessions. Monthly public meetings were also implemented to share each subcommittee's progress with all Taskforce members and meeting attendees.

The five areas of focus identified and elucidated within this report include:

**SHAPE THE NARRATIVE**
Create a campaign of positive, cohesive and accurate communication about and for Warren County to be implemented collaboratively and at every potential level of communication.

**DESTINATION MARKETING**
Connecting community and visitors to our region by selecting, developing, and marketing a singular County asset to a tipping point of self-sustaining tourism growth before continuing process with next singular County asset.

**VIRTUAL WARREN COUNTY, PA**
Launch an internet promotional strategy and infrastructure that includes an online, countywide calendar of events with expanded functions to promote tourism, wayfinding, and community collaboration. Promote universal broadband Internet coverage throughout Warren County.

**PROMOTING & PREPARING FOR GROWTH**
Promoting Warren County through the development of seminal events and attractions, offering enhanced marketing opportunities to existing events and attractions, and growing infrastructure to support large-scale events.

**COMMUNITY GROWTH INITIATIVES**
Devise strategies to successfully recruit, connect, and settle “nest-eggers” (active individuals of independent means) and “millennials” (a person reaching adulthood in the early 21st century) in Warren County. A focused effort will be made to promote area resources for prospects interested in active lifestyles, the arts and crafts community, and ecological awareness. This effort will result in an increase of population that will bring generations of workers, investors, volunteers, and entrepreneurs to Warren County.

The following pages provide a systematic exploration of each focus area from root causes to solutions.
Over the years, Warren County has tried to develop a brand. Homegrown efforts and external experts have labored to identify, brand, and promote what is unique about Warren County. To date, these efforts have brought great ideas to the fore, but none has succeeded in fully implementing or having their outcomes widely adopted by the community, government, and business interests.

Meanwhile, the Pennsylvania Tourism Office (under the Department of Community and Economic Development) (DCED), and cooperative alliances throughout the commonwealth have been working to establish statewide and regional tourism brands and promotional strategies.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has adopted a new brand that is central to all their tourism efforts: “Pennsylvania – Pursue Your Happiness.” The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation has developed the “Pennsylvania Route 6 Bicycle Master Plan Design Guide.” The PA governor’s office has developed brand standards for usage and placement. The PA Wilds have published a Design Guide for Community Character Stewardship.

The PA DCED has revamped the official tourism guide of the Commonwealth with a modern look and attitude and has divided Pennsylvania into eleven regions united under geographic or city center attributes. The eleven regions or “Destinations” being promoted by the DCED include: Pennsylvania’s Great Lakes Region, Pittsburgh and Its Countryside, Laurel Highlands, Pennsylvania Wilds, The Alleghenies, Dutch Country Roads, Valleys of the Susquehanna, Upstate PA, Pocono Mountains, Lehigh Valley, and Philadelphia and the Countryside. Each of these destinations is featured on the Pennsylvania tourism website, VisitPA.com. The Visit PA website offers deeper information about each destination and links with regional sites.
Downtown Warren/Allegheny River
Photo by Ben Kafferlin
Upon researching each of these destination areas, Taskforce members found that most of these regions have adopted a logo and a mantra. Some areas seem further ahead in the development of their messaging, website content, and cohesive look, but each seems to be developing along a path of integration with the overall “Pennsylvania—Pursue Your Happiness” look and message. All share links with the Visit PA website. Most share the #VisitPA hashtag, social media feeds, and linkage to at least one aggregator website or other promotional websites such as VisitTheUSA.com, TripAdvisor.com, NatGeoTourism.com, and DestinationsInternational.org.

Below is a compilation of many logos currently published by the PA destination websites.
Warren County occupies the northwest corner of the PA Wilds destination region and shares the PA Wilds designation with Cameron, Clarion, Clearfield, Clinton, Elk, Forest, Jefferson, Lycoming, McKean, Potter, and Tioga Counties. There are numerous groups outside of Warren County working to develop tourism in the region including: the Route 6 Alliance, the PA DCED, PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), PA Department of Transportation (PennDOT), PA Wilds Regional Marketing Corporation (Partnership of the region’s eight tourist promotion agencies), PA Wilds Planning Team (Binds the 12 counties of the PA Wilds region and creates a way for other local stakeholder organizations to have a voice in the Initiative), PA Wilds Center for Entrepreneurship, PA Wilds Artisan Trail, and others. The results of these efforts have been multifaceted. The most profound and prolific impact on the promotion of our region has been the PA Wilds brand, look and collaborative force.

Recently, PA Wilds spent two years restructuring regional marketing, finding funding, and forming partnerships. One result was the reboot of regional visitor website, PAWilds.com. PA Wilds’s new strategy “moves away from promoting the region by counties and focuses instead on Landscapes and Journeys, the headliner experiences the PA Wilds is known for.” The Journeys map from PAWilds.com is shown below:
Attractions that have already achieved positive growth in tourism such as Cook Forest, Kinzua Bridge, PA Grand Canyon, Cherry Springs Park’s Dark Skies, and Elk Country already populate the PA Wilds map. Placement on this map and features on the PA Wilds website (and the multiplying effect of linkage with VisitPA.com) is a boost to any grassroots tourism marketing plan.

With over 10,324 square miles of land and water, the PA Wilds map has more tales to tell. Looking at the map becomes obvious that the communities that are organizing, promoting and sharing their assets with other promotion avenues like the PA Wilds are benefiting from increased visibility and consideration in travel planning. It also becomes clear that it is up to us to overcome any obstacles to uniting the county in a clear statement or mantra of who we are to residents and visitors. It is up to us to carefully tell our story. Through the work of Destination Marketing we can begin to fill the blank spaces of the map within Warren County so our best assets are shared.

The Warren County Marketing Taskforce recommends developing the stories of each of our County’s assets and – over time – helping to fill the PA Wilds map with unique, amazing tourism draws within the County. That each of these stories together will tell part of a larger story that best represents Warren County. (See Destination Marketing)

*Photo by Gary Lester*
Shape the Narrative advocates that Warren County study the assets that will be developed and marketed to attract tourism through Destination Marketing and craft a narrative that unites these locations, attracts interest in the County, and reflects the spirit of our area. The primary goal of Shape the Narrative is a mantra that briefly conveys the character of Warren County, gives an indication of what may be found here, serves as an overarching story that each of the asset stories will fit within, sets our area apart from already established locations, entices readers to act and visit and/or stay, and does this all from the perspective of the wants and needs of the consumer. Once the mantra is selected and chosen, it should be featured on all promotional materials alongside Visit PA and PA Wilds logos. The mantra should be adopted by County government and become a universal talking point about Warren County, PA. Marketing materials should be created and shared via businesses and organizations countywide. In short, the mantra needs to be consistently and prevalently used over time to make implementation successful. Efforts to communicate the Warren County mantra and assets should be guided by use of the PA Wilds Design Guide for Community Character Stewardship.

The Taskforce also recommends the compilation of an asset master list including all relevant data on each asset. This work will not only inform Shape the Narrative, but will also create content for Virtual Warren, PA, PA Wilds, Destination Marketing, and all other partners and linkages that can be made to help promote the county.
Shape the Narrative is an earnest effort to identify and engage target market segments with the greatest potential to visit and/or settle in Warren County, Pennsylvania. This objective seeks to speak to potential consumers with authenticity and consistency about the unique assets of Warren County in terms of alleviating consumer pains and maximizing consumer gains.

The resulting communications campaign developed by this effort should be one of sharing stories and perspectives that will resonate with target audiences. Stories would be organized somewhat like a well-developed plant root system. The plant merges into a single, healthy strand (a compelling story or mantra) that is supported by a multitude of bifurcating roots (sub-stories). These roots fan outward and downward to cover more ground and provide a strong foundation for the plant above. Each root from large to small are each important strands of story that become even more valuable to the plant’s existence when organized in a system. Together, these roots send nutrition and water upward to the plant, reinforcing its purpose. In turn the plant collecting energy from the sun, nourishes and gives common purpose to the roots below.

The Warren County Marketing Taskforce has been moving forward with precision, speed and care. Working with many county residents, the volunteer Taskforce members have developed a surfeit of strategies and ideas from numerous perspectives that have clear potential to benefit our county.

Chuck Gray, Taskforce Chairperson
Once the campaign is developed, it needs to be shared consistently on all levels of communication from governmental talking points, to promotional websites and materials, among businesses, residents, organization, advocates, project partners and media outlets. The message needs to be clear, concise, and thoroughly adopted to be of the greatest benefit.

What follows is the suggested steps to bring about this goal along with vital content and resources collected through this process.

Develop a mantra or call to action that communicates the unique essence of Warren County, PA to potential consumers in terms of their needs. Develop talking points and data that reinforce and expand the mantra while each being a piece of the whole. Create, launch, evaluate, and refine a communication/marketing campaign that reaches target audiences, is used consistently and is shared widely over time. NOTE: A decision must be made as to the target market of the mantra. A mantra to attract people to visit will be different from one recruiting putting down roots in Warren County, PA.

To best achieve these goals, the Taskforce amassed guidance and information from many sources.
The Taskforce consulted with a marketing professional and graduate of Columbia Business School who has been responsible for destination marketing campaigns for American Express, The Walt Disney Company, and others. This volunteer consultant grew up in Warren, PA, has a strong love of the area, and visits annually. The steps shared to create a successful campaign follow:

**Step 1: Identify Target segments**

Identify the customers most likely to come to Warren County. Who are you trying to reach that will be receptive? Base customer selection on evidence. Define audiences further and assess if you can you reach these segments through marketing channels. If you cannot actually communicate with a target, you need to choose a new target.

Sample Targets (for illustrative purposes)

- Entrepreneurs and small businesses with less than 50 employees seeking permanent relocation for lower operating costs.
- Eco-tourists 25-54 who just want a weekend getaway.

**Step 2: Understand Consumer Needs**

Talk to your target customers, tap into trends in Warren's census data, seek anecdotal evidence from focus groups or people who have recently relocated to Warren County, broader economic and travel trends, etc., that will help you to establish the need for Warren as a product in the minds of consumers. Are the entrepreneurs seeking affordable housing? Are they nature lovers seeking forests and mountain biking trails for the weekend? Are they young couples seeking a good school system and safe community to build their families around? There should be data-driven consumer insight, that is at the core of your product...in this case Warren.

**Step 3: What are the "Benefits" of Warren County that Solve Consumer Needs?**

The goal is to understand how Warren's benefits can solve consumer needs and identify the feature/s (i.e. Kinzua reservoir) that will resonate based on those needs. Tourism is a different target so the benefits will be very different:

- What exactly are the financial, emotional, and psychological benefits that Warren provides? Understand the key 3-5 consumer benefits Warren can provide based on the needs you have identified.
- Map out these different types of benefits against what each target market is seeking, focusing on areas where Warren has a truly unique advantage and can realistically and authentically compete.
The video you shared features a lot of beautiful footage, but the video highlighted "features" of the Warren, without describing the unique benefits. If I were one of the targets, it would be difficult to understand how Warren meets my needs and why I should choose to visit or relocate to Warren over other destinations. Develop messaging from perspective of target market needs.

**Step 4: The Competition**

Your brand strategy should consider Warren’s competitive set. Who is Warren competing against and what is the white space that Warren has a right to claim? Is Warren competing against other small towns in PA, against towns in Ohio or New York, or is it competing against suburbs that don’t really offer much local flavor? Understand your competition for each segment and what Warren offers that is unique from its competitive set. For example, if you have identified the Kinzua reservoir as a product feature, your competition may be Lake Erie or even Chautauqua, NY. The creative should highlight (voiceover or text), the benefit of why Kinzua is unique among these options.

**Step 5: Positioning**

Once you have clearly established your target and Warren’s competitive advantage, craft a positioning statement that may be used to explain Warren’s position in the market, using any existing vision/mission language for Warren to inform your positioning statement. The positioning statement is like your brand mantra combining your benefits and your customers relative to your competition...something like this:

*(for illustrative purposes)*

"Warren is for eco-tourists 25-34 from the tri-state area, seeking nature, solace, adventure, and an affordable vacation. Unlike other small towns in Pennsylvania, Warren offers these adventurers: ### miles of mountain biking trails, fresh-water fishing, and the opportunity to see ###% of the nation’s bald eagles in their natural habitat”.

The result should be your key strategy statement that can then be used on the campaign level to create a tag line for your ad creative or inform more explicit talking points for public officials. Follow the advertising of your competitors and make sure you develop an approach that is 100% different and unique from how the competition is positioning themselves in the market. If you can guess your competitors’ positioning based on their ad creative than you know they have a strong campaign.
Step 6: Campaign Development

Based on incorporating all of the above, a decision needs to be made on the timing and duration of the campaign, accessible marketing channels, and the overall message you want to use in your ad creative (the mantra/tagline):

- **What is the goal of the campaign**: What is the overarching action you would like the consumer to take after seeing your ad based on their level of familiarity with Warren? Is it sign up to learn more? Is it visiting Warren? Is it taking a canoe trip over the fourth of July? Be specific.

- **Timing**: What is the time of year, month, and day when your target will be most receptive--i.e. post New Year when people make resolutions? After they pay their taxes? In the summer when they are planning their vacations? Every Thursday when they are planning their weekend?

Media channels and Partnerships:

- **Paid Media**: What are the media channels that reach your targets? Local newspapers? Outdoor sidewalk takeovers? LinkedIn B2B messaging targeting the tech community?

- **Social Media**: How can this campaign be shareable? Is there a community element to the message? Are there locals featured in the creative that can be used to amplify the message within their networks? Is there an Instagram-driven contest tied to your business contest?

- **Events**: Are there regional events and conferences where you can market your message?

- **PR**: Is there a PR or editorial strategy for reaching travel and trade magazines?

- **Partnerships**: Your goal of aligning with other partners like PA Wilds is spot on. Who are the partners like PA Wilds that can help you reach your target? If it's targeting business for local relocation, then maybe you want to partner with the PA DCED or PA startup groups. Is it working with local business leaders or politicians who can provide compelling messages to start-ups and go on a mini speaking tour? Research and identify the right partners, what they want and what you can provide to them in return.

- **Creative**: Based on the target and the channels where you can best reach them, do a creative audit based on medium best practices. The format of the medium will dictate the messaging. If it's a younger target, maybe a custom :15 digital video that can be shared on Instagram. Maybe it's an outdoor billboard
that can be placed on border areas of PA and other states to encourage discovery across state lines. Maybe it's a physical postcard that can be sent to someone you think would be interested in Warren County.

- Our recommendation would be to focus your funds and campaign efforts on communicating with Warren County's largest reachable target segment (the lowest hanging fruit), crafting a multi-year strategy that incorporates the other segments in later initiatives.

**Step 7: Measurement**

Make sure there are ways you can evaluate the success of your campaign including your ability to reach your target. What are some realistic ways of measuring success? For example, is it to increase awareness of Warren as a tourism destination through more inquiries to Warren County Visitors Bureau? Is it to increase the number of small businesses that comprise Warren's economic footprint? Is it to generate leads to create a database for future marketing efforts?
TARGET MARKET

Taskforce discussed numerous potential target markets. Recommended target market segments are listed below. Final target market must be selected and used through this process.

- **Ecotourist** families and individuals (20s to 50s) from the tri-state region looking for pristine wilderness in which to adventure or unwind - Visitors should largely be desirous of outdoor stay from primitive camping to recreational vehicle campsites and electrified cottages. (Radius distance should be expanded as funding permits)

- Enclaves of outdoors adventure gatherings and events nationwide with strong followings looking for wilds adventures and desirous of stay alternatives from primitive camping to electrified cottages or recreation vehicle campsites.

- Outdoors and wilderness-based enterprises with less than 50 employees who make products or offer adventure and support experiences run by up-and-coming entrepreneurs who bring to the region family-sustaining jobs and seek in return relocation in a natural setting lower operating costs.

*Photo by Stratos Drone Services*
CONSUMER NEED/BENEFITS

Brainstorming was used to identify the top assets of Warren County seen to fulfill consumer needs that may be expressed as benefits when campaign messaging is developed. This list is not exhaustive and may grow during the campaign development process. This is a list of what was considered to be the top “macro” assets that may serve as inspiration for the creation of the mantra. Some of these assets would only apply if target market is defined as tourism, others only if target market is defined as relocation. Taskforce members suggest further query by interviewing those individuals who already make Warren County part or their vacation plans as well as those who have relocated here to get their input on the top assets that drew them to Warren County.

- Ecotourism
- Vacation Volunteerism
- Healthy, active lifestyle
- PA’s only National Forest, a state forest and park, 3 creeks, 3 lakes, 2 swamps and 1 river – Scenic and Wild Designations – River of the Year designations
- Extensive water and land trails / land trails all conveyances
- Clean water advocacy – clean water, stewardship of resources, bioremediation of old oil wells, River and watershed clean-up, the return of the eagles.
- Wide range of camping opportunities and an abundance of land and water for event set-up, recreation, interaction and observation
- Historic County
- Real Wilderness
- Rural setting
- Short commutes
- Low crime
- Cost of Living/Affordability
- Available land, camps, cottages, historic homes (housing stock)
- Room to Stretch
- Oil/gas/refinery business
COMPETITION

Taskforce members have investigated the mantras and messaging of the regional “destinations” throughout Pennsylvania as designated by the PA DCED and PA Wilds marketing long with contiguous counties in New York and Ohio. For the sake of communicating what is unique about Warren County, it is vital that none of the sentiments being used by competitors, be used in any form in our efforts.

In studying these messages, it became clear that many of the examples communicate a list of assets rather than a statement of benefit for the visitor. Seen objectively, the most successful messages are the ones that communicate with an engaging attitude or site a relief of a consumer pain or indication of a consumer gain. These examples prompt excitement and action. This should be considered when writing Warren County messaging.

Two examples of this success are PA Wilds messaging for both Cherry Springs Park and Allegheny National Forest and Surrounds. These examples feature: data, consumer benefit and true uniqueness of offerings that distinguishes the locale from others. They also share compelling messaging that is some of most successful text found in this study.

During the gathering of information about the messaging practices of competitors, it became obvious that many photos, events, and landscapes featured on the promotional websites seemed interchangeable. This led to the impression that one area was the same as another. This is a lesson to truly select what is unique and compelling about Warren County to set our messaging apart.

Green highlighted items below demonstrate effective focus on unique benefits. Bold/italic text indicates mantra/catchphrase used in that estination.

What follows is a list of messaging staked out by each location investigated:

- **Pennsylvania's Great Lakes Regions, PA** - *Four counties, with about a million things to do!* Looking for an affordable, accessible and fun family getaway? Pennsylvania's Great Lakes Region is the perfect vacation destination filled with endless opportunities including amusement parks, casinos, museums, shops, scenic byways and trails, vibrant night life and cultural entertainment. Escape to our “great” outdoors for adventures including boating, fishing, swimming, hunting, hiking, birding and camping amidst our natural beauty. Don’t forget, some of the country’s best shopping can be found here, with no sales tax on clothing or shoes.

- **PA Wilds, PA** - *Lose (or find!) yourself in Pennsylvania Wilds* Landscapes and Journeys, covering one of the biggest blocks of green between New York City and Chicago with 2 million acres of breathtakingly beautiful public land.
- **Pittsburgh Surrounds, PA** – Come out to play in southwestern Pennsylvania, where there's a world of fun waiting outside your door.


- **Dutch Country Roads, PA** – *Amish Country*

- **Upstate PA, PA** – Greetings roof-rackers. Welcome to Upstate PA, proud home to thousands of miles of breathtaking terrain ripe for hiking, biking, skiing, camping and everything else you’re up for. *All you have to do is Mount Up.*

- **Laurel Highlands, PA** – A magnificent mountainous region, the Laurel Highlands spans 3,000 square miles of Fayette, Somerset and Westmoreland Counties in southwestern Pennsylvania. Located just east of Pittsburgh, our beautiful four-season destination offers spectacular natural scenery, outstanding outdoor recreation venues, historic sites & attractions, family activities and world class resorts.

- **Susquehanna, PA** – *Every turn a treasure*

- **The Pocono Mountains, PA** – offers *four seasons of endless fun* and a tremendous variety of diversions, such as luxurious resorts, fun things to do for the whole family, outdoor adventures, bed and breakfasts and more.

- **Lehigh Valley, PA** – *Lift your spirits* and discover Lehigh Valley. Set amid gentle hills and charming countrysides, Lehigh Valley, Pa. is home to Allentown, Bethlehem, and Easton, as well as dozens of small towns and picturesque boroughs, parks, trails, and waterways. Steeped in pre-Colonial, Early American, and industrial history, the region’s storied past became its uplifting present, bestowing visitors anything from crayons and craft beer to Martin Guitars and museums, covered bridges, and nationally-recognized events like Musikfest and Christkindlmarket. A stay in Lehigh Valley will lift your spirits, too. And there’s plenty of options to keep them soaring: an 80-foot roller coaster climb, a ghostly presence as it saunters up to you at a local tavern, a chance to savor the flavors of the region. We’ve rounded up suggestions to put a smile on your face.
Allegheny National Forest and Surrounds, PA – 500,000 acres of beautiful – The Allegheny National Forest (ANF) is Pennsylvania’s only national forest. It dominates the western end of the Pennsylvania Wilds and contains within it and around it some of the region’s most treasured places and experiences. Open skies, rolling mountains, and forest abound in the Allegheny National Forest (ANF). Established in 1923, the ANF covers 517,000 acres. The Allegheny National Forest’s motto "Land of Many Uses" speaks to the balance of outdoor recreation, watershed protection, wildlife habitat management, and sustainable forestry practices. The ANF contains an 87-mile meandering northward segment of the North Country National Scenic Trail (NST).

Marienville, PA – Snowmobile Capital of PA

Elk Country, PA – Elk Capital of PA – See elk closer than ever. This is a place that lives up to its name. Home to the largest free-roaming elk herd in the northeastern United States, Elk Country features two large visitor centers to welcome you. If you come to Elk Country for the Elk, you won’t be disappointed. But if you stick around to see what’s all around you, you’ll be delighted you did.

Dark Skies in Cherry Springs Park, PA – Named the Most Beautiful Spot in Every U.S. State for Pennsylvania by MSN Travel in 2017: "Cherry Springs is possibly the best spot for stargazing in all of the U.S. On a given night, 10,000 stars are visible to the naked eye." See the stars like you’ve never seen them before, with an unforgettable visit to Cherry Springs State Park! Honored with the 2017 PA Wild’s "Great Places Award," the park’s incredible, awe-inspiring dark skies attract a high volume of astronomers and stargazers for views of the Milky Way, planets, and hard-to-see astronomical objects and phenomena.

PA Grand Canyon, PA – Located in the Tioga State Forest, the Pine Creek Gorge, typically referred to as the Grand Canyon of Pennsylvania, stretches for over 45 miles with depths of nearly 1500 feet. The dynamic topography features stunning forested views and steep canyon walls. Colton Point on the west rim and Leonard Harrison on the east rim of the canyon are the "Must See" vistas to visit.

Cook Forest and the Ancients, PA – Known as a land of giants because of the “forest cathedral” of ancient pines and hemlocks, this landscape is an ode to the majesty of the Pennsylvania Wilds and home to many of the tallest hemlock and pine trees in the Northeast. If an adventure among Cook Forest & The Ancients sounds mystifyingly exciting to you, rest assured that you’ll rest well during your exploration. So what are you waiting for? The Ancients are calling. Come see the tallest pine tree in the Northeast, the longfellow pine, at 184 feet of awesome!

Photo by Stratos Drone Services
Chautauqua/Erie Counties, NY – Play, Laugh and Learn in the Chautauqua-Lake Erie Region – (assets are given seasonal flare in online presence) Autumn in Western New York is a celebration of annual harvest festivals, foliage boat tours on Chautauqua Lake's Summer Wind and Chautauqua Belle vessels, paranormal encounters at the Dunkirk Lighthouse and wine tasting in Lake Erie County. Visit craft breweries, hike area trails or get your adrenalin pumping at Peek ‘n Peak Resort's Mountain Adventures Course. Cultural attractions like the National Comedy Center, Lucille Ball -Desi Arnaz Museum and Roger Tory Peterson Institution of Natural History in Downtown Jamestown and beyond are a great way to spend a chilly afternoon. Choose from dozens of experiences with culinary, creative and cultural themes, all listed on the Colors of Chautauqua Calendar. Tag us in your #TourChautauqua adventure so we can follow along on social media.

Cattaraugus County, NY – Enchanted Mountains – Cattaraugus County is the Enchanted Mountains of Western New York! We are home to Allegany State Park, Amish Trail, Ellicottville, NY, Holiday Valley, Rock City Park, Sculpture Park, Seneca-Allegany Casino and so much more.

Allegany County, NY – Discover what Allegany County has to offer – As our special guest, you will find that Allegany County's many bed & breakfasts, motels, and special lodgings offer you every luxury and creature comfort. You can find a home away from home, you can camp, or enjoy a unique and exciting lodging experience. If you need a location for a business/professional conference/getaway session, we have a variety of places for you to consider.

Trumbull County, OHIO – Explore Trumbull County Ohio – Trumbull County is home to a wide variety of places to explore and things to experience. Whether your getaway is for the day, weekend or week, you'll find affordable fun around every bend. Here you can roam with the buffalo. Cruise among classic Packard cars. Drive the back roads of Amish Country. Pedal our bike trails. Cast a line for bass or walleye. Tee off at 25 different golf courses. Or step back in time at our many museums and historic sites.

Ashtabula County, OHIO – Where our lake awaits – Situated along the Lake Erie shoreline on the glaciated terrain of Ohio's Northcoast, Ashtabula County covers 26 miles of beautiful Lake Erie shoreline, Ohio's largest viticulture district and the largest collection of covered bridges in the state. Whether you are here for a sporting event at the SPIRE Institute or camping at Pymatuning or Geneva State Parks, you will find your vacation destination here.

Lake County, OHIO – Remarkable Lake County, OH – Where the Lake Erie shore meets with rustic hills, heritage destinations, delicious wines, and two of Ohio’s Top 10 Beaches (Fairport Harbor and Mentor Headlands). Lake County Ohio is home to
the James A. Garfield National Historic Site, the Grand River Valley (Ohio's Premier Wine Region), and several Fine Arts venues (Fine Arts Association- Willoughby, Mentor Fine Arts Center, Rabbit Run Theatre).
The Taskforce focused its mantra/messaging efforts on the ecotourism market identified in the TARGET MARKETING section of this report.

- Ecotourist families and individuals (20s to 50s) from the tri-state region looking for pristine wilderness in which to adventure or unwind – Visitors should largely be desirous of outdoor stay from primitive camping to recreational vehicle campsites and electrified cottages. (Radius distance should be expanded as funding permits)

If development of this campaign focuses on attracting major outdoor events and gatherings or recruiting small business entrepreneurs to relocate to Warren County, PA, messaging efforts should be revisited.

For any mantra/messaging selected the following recommendations apply:

- All mantras (with differing inflections) should be recorded by one voiceover artist with a distinct, likable, warm, quirky voice that instill confidence, experience, and fun. The objective is to make our own brand magic much as Tom Bodett did for Motel 6’s “We’ll leave the light on for you” campaign¹. A voice like this personifies the brand it communicates. So the major points we want to communicate about ourselves need to be present in the voice selected. **NOTE:** Consumer response to Tom Bodett's voiceovers was so massively positive and indelible that Tom Bodett’s voice is linked with and still reinforces the Motel 6 campaign, no matter the context in which Tom is speaking. As messaging is expanded beyond mantra, the same vocal artist should be employed. Contracting should be done at the start to guarantee long-term affiliation and non-compete considerations.

- Mantra should also be developed as a hashtag.

- Mantra should be something that may be said by visitors in their own videos.

- Strive to share what is unique about Warren County, PA in the mantra.

- Do not duplicate mantras from existing campaigns in any way.

- Mantra should be an invitation, a hand reached out for a firm, trustworthy handshake and welcome.

- Assets need to be expressed as benefits and pain relievers for consumer rather than list of what may be done, as pain/gain messaging is proven to be key in consumer action.
Music or jingle should be developed that is used consistently throughout marketing with any sound. Just as a voice, a logo, a look is vital to impart and invoke brand, so is music. Rights should be secured in perpetuity.

A logo should be developed that shares the message and will function as an umbrella that relates to the images and logos of sub-stories. Recommended that this effort work with those pursuing the Destination Marketing narrative so that all branding developed is of one piece and fits in the schematic of the whole. Logo should be developed with deference to the PA Wilds Design Guide for Community Character Stewardship and in alliance with PA Wilds and working with Destination Marketing Project. Logo and font/s used should work within the PA Wilds context, impart a feeling of the message/area and be unique. Logos currently developed for destination regions of PA are included in the Shape the Narrative Area Focus for reference to make certain elements from existing logos are not duplicated. Logo may have more than one color, but should work with one color and be able to be applied to a dark or a light background with clarity of image and message. Logo should be simple and inventive, something that would make you want to buy and wear the tee shirt.

Any unifying illustrations or graphics should be developed. A style should be selected that ties elements together. Graphics that will later be used to identify attractions or illustrate text and should look all of one piece. Again, once artist is identified who has the right style for the project, a long-term contract should be secured. Graphics should be developed with the PA Wilds Design Guide for Community Character Stewardship as a reference point.

URL should be developed and a domain should be purchased.

Assets throughout the county should be collected and categorized. Messaging should be developed for each category and/or asset site or event. Messaging should conform to the PA Wilds Design Guide for Community Character Stewardship, reinforce and expand the mantra, include pain/gain and data points, be insightful, fun, and a pleasure to read and read more. Once a writer is selected for this effort, they should be contracted to guarantee long-term affiliation.

Photography and video of campaign should all have a style and voice of its own and should be consistent. Some treatment beyond photorealism that captures the image like a moment in time, or like a hint of illustration or painting. An effect that is both realistic and epic. Something that elevates the snapshot into a story. The best example to hand of the genre of photo essay being advocated is the work of Piper VanOrd, samples are shown on the following page, and throughout this report. Once photographer/videographer with the perfect sensibility is found to communicate area, long term contract should be sought to support campaign.
Photo Samples
The top recommendations for a mantra developed by the Taskforce are listed below:

- **Our idea of a rush hour** (or **Warren, PA rush hour**) with a photo/video campaign differing images...some of adrenaline pumping activities, others of utter relaxation, deer standing in the road, river otters sliding down a bank, etc.)

- **Find your outside voice** (This is a phrase developed by Allegheny Outfitters and is attached to a clothing line already in production.) The phrase invites, gives a playful sense of fun and discovery, invites all ages to feel wonder, and fits hand in glove with the lifestyle and ecotourism brand we are advocating. This may not be possible to use due to competing interests, but door is open for discussion.

- **It’s Yours** (To endorse sentiment of stewardship. Members felt this may be best paired with another short phrase authentic about the area)

If additional mantra development is desired, the Taskforce advocates for a competition to be held with clear guidelines and objectives that enlists locals as well as school groups, businesses, and college classes to develop their best mantra for consideration.

- Warren County Visitors Bureau has approved a $500 prize for a mantra competition award.
- It is recommended that the competition have preliminary contact with any groups who would need to organize to enter the contest such as businesses, schools, and colleges.
- Newspaper articles describing the competition prior to contest launch should be written for each paper or magazine in the County.
- Contest should be conducted over Facebook with a two-week submission window.
- Contest rules should be disclosed online and in articles.
- In the case of duplicate entries, the first received will be honored as valid.
- If winning entry is a group effort, monies will be given to the group in the name of the individual making the entry with the expectation that the funds will be split among the entrants.
- Winners may keep or donate the money as they please.
- The entry winning the award may need additional work to be used, but it should be the strongest statement of brand and contest objectives.
CAMPAIGN DEVELOPMENT/MEASUREMENT

Once the previous steps are complete, campaign development and measurement should be reated around the outcomes. The Taskforce did not delve deeply into the last two phases of the process, as until the steps leading up to them equired for full understanding. Otherwise, recommendations would be conjecture. That said, Taskforce members did collect and categorize insights occurring within this creation process. These lists will be shared below for reference at a later date.

Campaign should consider utilizing:

- Testimonials
- Social media advertising/consumer feedback/ Facebook live
- Hashtags
- Advertising outside of area
- Outreach to charter groups – Trek America and Cruise America
- Working with regional airports to offer fly-in and out regionally so people can wander (Buffalo to Pittsburgh or Cleveland) Those flying could take a side journey to explore between cities.
- Photos/Videos from visitors
- Drone footage
- Accommodation inventory – from primitive camping areas to RV campgrounds supplied by the ANF to hotels, B&Bs, motels...any and all placed a visitor may choose to stay locally. Should be searchable by location, amenities, price, reviews, and supply all contact, reservation information, and pet friendliness.
- Dining inventory – searchable by location, specialties, price, and reviews as well as supply all contact and reservation information
- The quirkiness and character of our area
- Listing: 365 days of Warren, PA (Grow to 10,000 things to do in Warren, PA with supporting stories and assets)
- Developing or using an Application that suggests trips/outing based on time allotted and location. For example, if a family had an hour at a specific location, what suggestions might they receive...a walk and virtual tour of historic homes, a walk along the river, a trip to a nearby amazing vista?
- Ecotourism...sharing success stories
- Treasure hunts or trash/treasure hunts
Advocates/Partners

- Gas stations
- Grocery stores
- Visitor centers
- Commissioners
- Businesses
- Tourism activities
- Campgrounds
- Recreational activity providers

Challenges/Opportunities

- Multiple audiences
- Elevation/support of frontline services
- Connection – how people get informed and educated
- Wayfinding – both virtual and real world
- Framework to facilitate media collection
- Accessibility to free activities/outings/events
- Education and stewardship

Master List of Assets

- Invite in groups to share assets
- Gather and be informed by demographics from PA Wilds/ANF
- Combine in a database that could be shared universally and connected with other efforts
Long-term Success Depends upon (Serial) Destination Marketing Efforts

Based on market research and case studies of successful destination marketing campaigns, it is clear that to most expediently achieve a tipping point of tourism draw where success begets success and the message effectively reaches and attracts mass market participation, the marketing campaign needs to be laser focused on a singular message. Some growth was observed to be achieved through a scattergun approach where numerous messages are communicated simultaneously; however, studied outcomes of this approach were significantly outperformed by singular focus methodology.

It is also apparent that Warren County has many assets and asset groupings to promote as destinations and none should be ignored in an effort to market the County. To this end, the Taskforce recommends that a single asset group be selected to be marketed first. It also recommends that marketing goals be set for this asset group that would indicate when the tourism draw will sustain itself and continue to grow with a maintenance marketing effort. When the first asset group reaches projected goals, a second asset group would given the singular focus destination marketing efforts afforded the first until it reaches a similar prominence that allows it to continue and grow tourism goals with only maintenance marketing efforts. Each asset grouping, in turn, would receive this sharply focused messaging and advertisement in a serial effort to include all major county assets and ultimately develop a web of inter-related large-draw assets whose existence collectively within the footprint of Warren County drives visitorship and relocation at an even more significant rate than any one asset would alone.
To prioritize assets or asset groups to be developed, it is important that first a comprehensive list of all major assets be established and adopted. Currently, the Taskforce has identified twelve asset groupings in the county that would most likely provide game-changing regional draw. The Taskforce recommends public input and consensus on this list be pursued prior to official adoption. Identified areas are listed below in alphabetical order.

- Allegheny Reservoir/Kinzua Dam/Bent Run Waterfall/Rim Rock/Jake’s Rocks/Kinzua Beach/ Numerous Trails/Campgrounds/ Numerous major events including Kinzua Country Tango Adventure Race and Jake’s Witch Project
- Bear Lake and environs
- City of Warren/Historic District/Washington Park/Cultural & History Attractions and environs
- Chapman Dam/Clarendon area/Johnny Appleseed Festival/Rocky Gap Trail/Tanbark Trail and environs
- Hearts Content/Rocky Gap and environs
- North Country Trail and surrounds
- PA Game Lands #86/Tidioute/Boardinghouse Trail/Tanbark Trail/Bridge at Remagen
- PA Game Lands #282/Akeley Swamp/ Sheffield/Hector Falls and environs
- Sugar Grove and environs
- System of land and water trails of the county
- System of PA Game Lands 29, 86, 263 and 282
- Youngsville/Warren County Fair/Beanfields Trail/ Anders Run Natural Area/Buckaloons Recreation Area/Brokenstraw Creek Bike Hike Trail and environs
Once consensus is reached, work may begin on the development of marketing efforts for the first priority asset grouping, bearing in mind that marketing logos and messaging for each area to be developed needs to be integrative with logo, messaging and wayfinding. Think of the asset groups as a jigsaw puzzle. Each piece has its information, but when put together, they form a cohesive and pleasing image. It should also be kept in mind that each destination identity piece should fit not only within context of one another, but should also fit within or complement the PA Wilds destination marketing brand already established.

To identify which asset group should be promoted first, Taskforce members thoroughly reviewed current tourism draws throughout the County, making an apples to apples comparison of these locations including: current tourism levels, amenities, accessibility, multiplicity of offerings, accommodations, ability to support growth in usage, potential to be developed, existing and potential asset identification and wayfinding, consumer interest, history, activities offered, events, Internet availability, established identity and uniqueness within a five-hour drive. When the comparison was complete, all sites and their attributes were discussed and analyzed for best likelihood for mass appeal, marketing success and growth potential.

This review led to the nomination of the Allegheny Reservoir as the epicenter for focused tourism marketing and asset enhancement, with special preliminary emphasis on the lands and waterways from the Kinzua Dam (west) to Rimrock (east) and from Dewdrop Campground (south) to Handsome Lake Campground (north).
Having established the first asset group to be promoted, the group deliberated on what was needed as a base for each asset group entering this process. NOTE: All effort should reference PA Wilds Design Guide for Community Character Stewardship and should be pursued in collaboration with PA Wilds staff.

- A motto reflective of the opportunities available within the area is needed. This motto should be developed to fit under the umbrella of the County mantra suggested to be developed in Shape the Narrative.

- A logo for the area which, as with the motto, is reflective of the opportunities and culture being marketed. The logo will be incorporated into a county-wide marketing design to provide ease of recognition by visitors. When developing each logo it should give a sense of place as in geolocation. So when these multiple asset groupings are all developed and working together, a visitor can easily see what is available to their location and what is nearby. Again, Logos should fit within and alongside the Warren County logo developed in Shape the Narrative and work with the PA Wilds and PA state tourism logos.

- Messaging that focuses on consumer pain/gains and data that is written in a compelling and authentic way.

Taskforce members recognized that any asset group studied had unique opportunities as well as challenges and that asset development would be pivotal in the success of each. It is recommended that each asset groups (in turn) not only be marketed, but also be developed with the necessary support services, amenities and added events and attractions necessary to most fully strategically the destination area to provide a remarkable experiences for residents and visitors alike.
PROJECT | WAYFINDING

Overview
In order for tourists and casual adventurers to find their way to our “destinations”, they’ll need directions. One of the challenges to living in a rural area is a lack of directions/wayfinding for travelers to follow to enjoy amenities. This project will involve “mapping the system” and providing physical (as well as virtual) maps and data to help visitors traverse Warren County's environments and find appropriate amenities.

- Identify all assets currently existing within the target region and develop an easily discoverable map available in both virtual and physical worlds.

- Develop “wayfinding” signage from major traffic routes of I-86, SR 219, SR 6 and others as appropriate

- Expand cellular connectivity to all identified assets within the region (work with Virtual Warren, PA) – Important for enjoyability of visit as well as safety.

- Virtual Docent – Google Earth based including stories of the history of the region, facts on the relocation of communities and societies to establish reservoir, seek personal stories from individuals involved in the relocation efforts. Virtual Docent has been begun by a Leadership Warren County class who would be willing to partner to accomplish. Pennsylvania Kinzua Pathways should also be approached to participate.
PROJECT | POSSIBLE ATTRACTIONS / UPGRADES

Overview
Many of Warren County’s assets are either on federal land or have been neglected or underdeveloped. In order to expand their utilization and further promote our natural strengths, investments will need to be made in key areas.

- Develop a floating stage at Kinzua Beach and promote regular concert/performance series
- Install water slides at Kinzua Beach
- Develop bike/hike trail on railroad grade on north side of Allegheny River from Eagles Club to Kinzua Dam with bridge connector to the Visitors Center at Big Bend.
- Suspension bridge from Rim Rock to Jakes Rocks
- Develop commercial activities within the region such as zip-line or ropes courses perhaps as connectors between assets
- Create database of searchable hikes, paddles, cycling trips that include backstories of important areas and historic events
- Celebrate the water trail of the Wilderness Act, the waterfalls of the Alleghenies, hiking trails, and bike routes connecting historical, cultural and environmental features and assets
- Bus excursions with narrators
- Expand slippage availability at Kinzua Wolf Run Marina
- Attract and support entrepreneurism throughout the region
- Develop outdoor-based educational programming with regional colleges and universities
- Develop Eco-challenge events

Photo by Ben Kafferlin
PROJECT | AMENITIES

Overview
Again, due to the prevalence of federal land and other state-managed properties in Warren County, it is difficult at times to “develop” or make certain areas “marketable”. This project will help expand access to amenities, but also make sure they are properly managed and monetized so that dollars can flow into the local economy.

- Formalize and monetize current non-designated camping sites
- Lodging and restaurant development at Kinzua Beach
- Categorize and redevelop existing campgrounds to provide different camping experiences and styles, such as:
  - “Primitive” – no services provided, challenge to get there locations such as Handsome Lake and Morrison
  - “Rustic” – toilet facilities and showers provided, minimal RV connectivity available – Dewdrop and Tracey Ridge
  - “RV” – full electric connectivity availability – Kiasutha
  - “Luxury” – high quality individual cabins – Red Bridge
- Cultivate food trucks and other non-traditional, mobile services as well as restaurants
- Develop outdoor recreation based multi-day outing packages
- Utilize Kinzua Beach as a mass use/resources area including package drop-off provision for North Country Trail through-hikers, hardline phone access, wi-fi hot spot, etc.
- Develop linkage to the Seneca Casino
Rural Areas Left Behind the Connectivity Curve

Warren County is geographically large, ranking 16 out of 67 counties in Pennsylvania by landmass – 884 square miles of land and 14 square miles of water. Though Warren County and its portion of the Allegheny National Forest appear significant on maps, its virtual footprint is much less impressive. Warren County, Pennsylvania still struggles to be discovered by the larger world, despite noteworthy inroads made by tourism promotion groups such as PA Wilds, Warren County Visitors Bureau, and the Warren County Chamber of Business and Industry.

Zack Frank of BBC Travel called the Allegheny Forest region “one of the most bypassed sections of the eastern United States. In a part of the country that is often dominated by urban sprawl, Allegheny’s nearly one million acres of land has no major cities, battlefields or popular historic sites, so the natural environment remains similar to the way the first settlers would have experienced it. In fact, no other place in the US northeast offers such a vast network of forests, rivers, rock formations and trails.”

Warren County indeed has the cure to urban woes and an impressive array of homegrown events, attractions and opportunities. Warren County is situated within the “PA Wilds.” The PA Wilds is the largest “destination” land area promoted by the state of Pennsylvania and includes the totality of the Allegheny National Forest. The PA Wilds inhabit 10,324 square miles (22% of the land mass of the state) along the north central border of Pennsylvania and is a compilation of Cameron, Clarion, Clearfield, Clinton, Elk, Forest, Jefferson, Lycoming, McKean, Potter, Tioga and Warren Counties. The remaining destination area promoted by the state of Pennsylvania include: Pennsylvania’s Great Lakes Region, Pittsburgh and Its Countryside, Laurel Highlands, The Alleghenies, Dutch Country Roads, Valleys of the Susquehanna, Upstate PA, Pocono Mountains, Lehigh Valley, and Philadelphia and the Countryside. Despite its
relative landmass and inclusion of a national forest, the PA Wilds region earned only 4.1% of tourism dollars spent in the state in 2016 according to Tourism Economic’s report, “The Economic Impact of Travel and Tourism in Pennsylvania.” Of the $1,711,700 tourist dollars earned throughout the PA Wilds in 2016, Warren County drew 10% or $182,300.

A deeper dive into tourism spending across the PA Wilds region in the last 10 years shows a concerning trend. Between 2006 and 2011 across all counties of the PA Wilds, tourism dollars grew at an average of 42%, compared to a 3.58% average rise between 2007 and 2016. The outcome is more troubling when contrasting growth rate by county during these two 5-year periods. By this measure, Clinton and Lycoming Counties have lost tourism dollars in the last five years; Tioga, Clearfield, and Potter Counties have each grown tourism income by less than 5%; McKean, Jefferson, Clarion, and Cameron Counties have grown tourist dollars by less than 10%; and the merely three counties that won an increase over 10% throughout the PA Wilds are Forest County (14%), Warren County (15%), and Elk County (35%).

A quick survey of the Internet sheds some light on Elk County’s impressive growth at a time largely tending toward reversal and stagnation. A Chrome search of “What to do in Elk County” returned seven pages of relevant and good quality content directly related to Elk County, PA, including videos, photos, articles, organizations, and numerous appearances on high-quality aggregation websites such as visitpago.com, pavisnet.com, uncoveringpa.com, and keystoneedge.com.

Although the query originating from Warren, PA, entering of “What to do in Warren County” in the same Chrome search engine ended quite differently. In fact, only five of the eleven first-page search results were relevant to Warren, PA and they ranked third, fifth, seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth. Results ranked first, second and fourth were for Warren County, Ohio. Ranked sixth was an entry for Warren, New Jersey and eleventh was an entry for Warren, Virginia. A search of subsequent results pages, returned even more dismal outcomes.

Despite the complication of Warren being a common U.S, county name, there is much to learn from this simple comparison. The first lesson is that these results may be improved by increased use of metadata, alt tabs, quality links, geotagging, search engine optimizing practices, and evaluation. The second – more poignant lesson – is that our current entreaties to be discovered by those outside of Warren County are largely being obscured by electronic competition. This is especially true as more and more people planning their adventures are leaving behind traditional maps in favor of the Internet superhighway.
WARREN MUNICIPAL BUILDING
To succeed, Warren County, Pennsylvania needs to be easily discoverable online. Its events and attractions should be shared not only with tourists, but with its residents. Visitors and locals alike need to quickly find multiple listings on quality sites, videos, photos, compelling writing, reviews, travel tips, amenities, accurate directions, calendars of events, and more. Anyone searching for Warren County needs to immediately land on a site that is reliable, organized, easily navigated, content-rich, and all-encompassing while requiring minimal clicks with maximum benefit.

This Taskforce believes that it is essential that web content to be generated, geolocated, linked, calendarized, search engine optimized, evaluated, and made accessible for the satisfaction of residents, the growth of tourism, and the resettlement of Warren County. The Taskforce recommends that the first step in this process be the creation of a comprehensive countywide calendar of events website that is thoroughly and accurately populated with area offerings in a searchable and bookable format that is kept current and functioning, linked to relevant regional content, partnered with content suppliers and other promoters local to international, optimized for both mobile devices and search engine rankings, and with a calendar that may be easily replicated on as many sites as possible. It is also recommended that website creation be done with attention to the online marketing lessons learned from the study of ten areas succeeding in attracting tourism as well as the motto and logo development endorsements included in the Destination Marketing section of this report. Creators of this website should also work hand in glove with messaging priorities recommended in the Shape the Narrative section of this report.

To pursue this goal, Taskforce members investigated developing a community calendar website from scratch as well as exploring the features of existing community calendar/event booking software that may be used for the project. The existing software candidates included: Calendarwiz, eTrak, Eventvilla, G Suite, Localist, Tendenci, Time.ly, and Trumba. Taskforce members also reached out to organizations hosting community calendars and tourism websites that were already succeeding online to learn from their experiences as well as glean ideas that could be successfully adapted to a Warren County promotional site. The sites selected for contact were Chq.org, Cleveland.com, GoErie.com, VisitBend.com, VisitBuffaoNiagara.com, VisitMtShasta.com.

Along with the recommendation that Warren become discoverable to people outside the County, the Taskforce also endorses that the outside world be discoverable to Warren County residents through universal Broadband connection throughout the region to enable the levels of planning, marketing, education, safety, communication, and economic growth needed to be a viable community into the future.

Photo by Ben Kafferlin
About 19 million Americans still don’t have access to broadband Internet, which the Federal Communications Commission defines as offering a minimum of 25 megabits per second (Mbps) download speeds and 3mbps upload speeds. Pennsylvania is the 12th most connected state in the nation and 90.9% of Pennsylvanians have access to broadband 1000 Mbps or faster and an average download speed of 43.48 Mbps. In Warren County, approximately 16,000 people do not have access to 25 Mbps wired broadband and the average download speed 12.57 Mbps. This is 71.1% slower than the average in Pennsylvania and 220.6% slower than the national average.

It is not financially rewarding for Internet service providers to expand broadband to sparsely populated, challenging terrains like Warren County. Even with federal grants designed to make these expansions more affordable, hundreds of communities across the U.S. are essentially Internet deserts.

The economic and social benefits of all-inclusive broadband coverage are myriad. Connectivity is the next economic revolution for rural Counties like Warren and the digital revolution is just as game-changing as the oil and timber rush that grew Warren County in the late 1800s. Broadband brings needed services and opportunities to rural locales. Ubiquitous broadband coverage brings essential social, economic and educational benefits that not only increase quality of life, but make beneficiary communities more competitive in the next gen economy. Of upmost importance to Warren County, the social benefits of broadband listed in Intel’s white paper “Realizing the Benefits of Broadband,” work hand-in-glove with each of the goals of this report and most immediately the Warren County Resettlement Plan. These
benefits include: increased economic opportunities in rural areas, reductions in desire to relocate to urban areas for opportunities, improvement in skills and education that reduce strain on social services, and decentralized work environments that improve productivity while also reducing energy demands, noise pollution, vehicle emissions and other forms of pollution.

According to this same Intel report, "Governments around the world increasingly view broadband as the ‘fourth utility’ alongside water, heating and electricity. The power of broadband has been confirmed by recent research, which shows that broadband fosters GDP growth, creates jobs and stimulates innovation, while also enabling improvements in education, health care and other social services."

Despite the challenges, leaders in rural communities across the U.S. are dedicating their resources to implementing 100% broadband coverage throughout their communities through a multitude of ingenious strategies and collaborations as detailed in “Rural America is Building Its Own Internet Because No One Else Will,” featured in the Motherboard series “Broadband Land” reporting on the digital divide in America and Beyond.

To this end, the Warren County Marketing Taskforce recommends that Warren County, PA adopt a policy of universal broadband implementation throughout the County with a high standard for upload and download speeds that will support foreseeable growth in every neighborhood.

Photo by Jeff Eggleston
Since the Internet gained prominence, residents of Warren, PA have been requesting an easily searchable, centralized electronic hub of information detailing events, opportunities and adventures throughout the county. There are numerous reasons why an electronic community calendar would be helpful to life-long residents as well as new arrivals, businesses, organizations and visitors.

- Residents of Warren County have a deep tradition of volunteering to organize activities that help neighbors, showcase talent, raise money for worthy causes, and create fun. However, without a clearinghouse for events, organizers are deprived of the opportunity to easily find symbiotic alliances to make their events more impactful and less draining on resources or to select dates and times for new events that do not conflict with existing events.

- On the other side of this same coin, the work of advertising small events around the county to potential attendees is difficult and costly. Most events create a Facebook page, perhaps place ads in the newspaper or on the radio, post flyers and posters and depend largely on word-of-mouth. Without a central hub for information, organizers struggle to get the word out.

- Warren is a county that appreciates personal privacy and human contact. There are many events, clubs and outings that are open to all, but knowledge of their existence is slow to spread because it is either shared largely through acquaintanceship or isn’t spread due to lack of funding or because the opportunity has existed for such an extended period of time that it is assumed that residents know of its existence…and many do. However, still more do not. New arrivals to the county report extreme difficulty in “breaking into” the community, finding things to do, or even knowing where to begin to meet others with whom they may share interests.

- Traditionally, pinning down enough details to plan a trip to a new destination has been difficult. Being told that there are lots of great waterfalls in an area, won’t enable a person to find them. Tourists and residents alike need more information to guide their adventures not just to events, but also to local assets.
A virtual hub listing assets and events needs to be easily searchable by category, date, and location. It also needs to include additional information such as directions, fees, reservations, times, details, photos, videos, history, etc. To provoke action, often a would-be traveler needs to be immersed and excited about an outing before a trip will be undertaken.

More and more people plan their trips on the Internet. Booking flights, viewing hotel rooms, previewing activities, picking restaurants, and viewing photos of attractions. Entire vacations are being reserved one click at a time from couches and desks. If destination marketing materials are not present, discoverable and easily searchable online, a destination will not be an attractive option – or possibly an option at all – to the bulk of vacation or getaway planners. The easier it is for people to find a destination and make their plans, the more likely they are to travel. To this end, not only must the website supply information relevant to the traveler in an easily-understood format, it also needs to allow for booking travel, stays and events.

Community calendars are sought by aggregator sites to supply event information which – in turn – is shared more widely (and often for free) in the interest of providing content. Locations with a limited or no electronic presence do not receive this significant third-party boost in visibility.

Websites providing schedules, booking and asset information should be linked to larger tourism presences such as the ANF, PA Wilds, the Route 6 Corridor, VisitPA, Trip Advisor, etc.

A strong online presence is the most economical means of putting out the welcome mat.

There have been numerous, diligent attempts over the years to gather all Warren County event and asset information and make it accessible online. So far, these efforts have not been successful for many very good reasons.

- The scale of data collection, organization and distribution required for a successful launch of such a system is a mammoth undertaking.

- Many attempts to provide countywide calendars and/or event listings proceeded the advent of accessible, cost-effective, fully-integrated software solutions that make the work of searching and accessing great amounts of data possible on this scale.

- Many attempts at data collection have been based on a self-service model that require organizations to enter data for their events into a passive system.
Many websites working toward this goal kindly offer free inclusion and invite participation, but without human interaction to get the information flowing or a large enough data pool to make inclusion seem worth the work of entering information, a critical mass cannot be achieved.

The labor, resources, and funding needed to achieve and maintain such an effort have been beyond the reach of many organizations.

Any model that promises longevity must include a perennial revenue stream.

Without the option for users to book events, offerings and amenities, monetizing the system through membership or other revenue model has been unlikely to succeed.

Successful implementation will most likely require a pooling of efforts and sharing of resources.

Software used on sites to date does not have the scalable capacity to search, sort, and display rapidly when loaded with the staggering amounts information required to document every event and asset in the county.

No existing sites allow for the creation of one master calendar that may be shared across any number of websites with the introduction of a simple widget, making the calendar function on all websites, with the necessary computing power residing with the site of origin.

The Warren County Marketing Taskforce has taken a deep dive into the world of online calendars as well as event booking and management software to see if the factors that have impeded the creation of an online, searchable and bookable website may be surmounted at this time.

Taskforce members investigated custom-built websites as well as existing software systems that would deliver – at a minimum:

- A simple, one-stop, online tool for residents and visitors to:
  - Find all events that meet selected search criteria – by date, location or interest
  - View detailed content about events including photos, text, forms, directions, videos, etc.
  - Contact event organizers
Interactively RSVP or purchase tickets
Get directions or arrange transportation
Add events to personal calendars
Signup for email or text reminders
Delve into asset and/or event history, stories, testimonials, etc. to enhance their experience whether it be in the planning phase or while on their trip
Offer feedback and experiences
Share across social media
Review assets and events

A calendar, planning, and publicity tool for event organizers to:

- Take the guesswork out of scheduling by reducing conflicts with competing similar events and finding an optimal date for their target audiences
- Find dates with compatible events that encourage "chaining" to produce mutual benefits – allowing themed events to self-organize around specific dates
- Provide official, accurate method of informing the public about an event
- Create links to social media and other Internet websites such that information will receive a measurably wider distribution
- Recruit volunteers and supporters

A platform that is:

- Affordable to operate
- Beneficial enough to promote monetizing membership to sustain effort
- Scalable to absorb asset and event information as it grows
- Able to perform searches and deliver relevant results at high speeds regardless of data set size or when being queried by large numbers of users simultaneously
Guided by these objectives, Taskforce members investigated industry-leading calendar and event management software alternatives to find the best match to project needs. Software services analyzed include: Cvent, etouches, Eventzilla, Eventbrite, Hubilo, Konfeo, Ploxel, Raklet, Ticket Tailor, Trumba, and XING Events. Many of these systems were impressive and powerful. That said, the system that had the greatest feature set desired including prioritized financial transaction security, scalability, data set query speed, customization, affordability and calendar replication features was Trumba. Known as “the calendar experts,” Trumba provides calendar and event management software services for: the Smithsonian Institution; the Seattle Seahawks; Omni Hotels and Resorts; Dell; Pepperdine University; City of Ogden, UT; UC Davis; Trinity College Dublin; Tufts University; 101 CorpusChristi.com; Cedars-Sinai; Chautauqua County Visitors Bureau; Colorado State University; City of Edmonton, Canada; NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory; City of Fresno, CA; Harvard University; City of New Orleans; United Parcel Service; Princeton University; City of Oakland, CA; Da Vinci Schools; CTV; Erie County Public Library; New York State Department of Labor; City of Seattle; Wake County, North Carolina; YMCA Boston and over 130 other prominent clients.

The Warren County Marketing Taskforce recommends that a mobile-optimized, destination marketing website be created and maintained using Trumba software to publish and promote the events and assets of Warren County. This would be an important step in becoming a highly connected, accessible, and electronically documented region with a commanding online presence, allowing the growth of events, tourism and resident satisfaction while preserving and promoting our pristine wilderness areas.
Website personnel should be work with and supply content to every existing local agency, business, organization, and group large or small that advocates the region, such as WarrenCountyFair.net, WarrenCountyPA.net, AlleghenyOutfitters.com, HortonHousebb.com, CraryArtGallery.org, WCCBI.org, WCVB.net, Warren County Rocks, WarrenHistory.org, WarrenPAJuly4.com, etc.

Website content should be linked and shared with regional, state, national, and international travel/trip planning websites and aggregator websites such as TripAdvisor.com, PennLive.com, VacationIdea.com, DCNR.pa.gov, AtlasObscura.com, VisitPa.com, VisitANF.com, PAWils.com, UncoveringPa.com, TravelUSNews.com, AARP.org, TravelChannel.com, BuzzFeed.com, USAToday.com, AirBNB.com, TravelAndLeisure.com, etc.

The website should be search-engine optimized and positioned to score well and stay up to date with algorithms modifications to consistently fill the first page (and beyond) of search results on the top three search engines: Google, Bing and Yahoo.

Content needs to be fresh, linked, relevant and of value. The website should be built and maintained by a minimum of one dedicated position. Use of system should be documented fully and cross-trained to preserve institutional knowledge over time.

It is further recommended that Virtual WarrenCounty work with Singular Focus Destination Marketing to achieve universal broadband coverage throughout the county so that visitors may take advantage of event, trail, wayfinding, historical, etc. data whether they are taking a historic walking tour in a population center or questioning the last turn they took on the deep forest hike.

**Trumba example on Smithsonian website**

![Smithsonian Events Calendar](image)

The Smithsonian Institute’s calendar includes 12 event types for 19 museum venues displayed in the Table View. Site visitors can filter by event category and museum, and can download workshops, event series, performances and more to their personal calendars.
Visibility online, particularly on smartphones and social media, is paramount when considering an entity’s, whether a business’, public figure’s, or community’s, ability to attract investment and tourism. Most rural communities have not had the tools or wherewithal to make major investments online and Warren County is no exception. In some sense, a community’s presence online is a form of infrastructure, much like their highways, waterways, or other modes of transportation and needs to be invested in to provide the greatest opportunity for access by outside entities.

For the purpose of this report, the Marketing Taskforce is recommending an investment in regional online marketing infrastructure, particularly online advertising, video, and social media.

**Online Advertising Investment**

Whether through the Visitor Bureau’s webpage, the County Website, or another entity, online banner and video advertising on all platforms needs to be generated and promoted on platforms like Google, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, and other similar platforms. Examples could include the videos created by Panama Rocks scenic park in New York State which created and promotes simple drone videos and pictures online to build a following both on Facebook and generally on the web. The ads are dynamic, trendy, and involve “calls-to-action”. Panam Rocks is a “private” park which charges admission, yet has far more attendance than many of Warren County’s amenities, in large part due to a robust promotional effort online.

Online advertising efforts should stretch into New York State and Ohio, and should shift between promotions of general amenities (i.e. the Dam, Jack’s Rocks, the Mountain Bike Trails, the River Systems, etc.) and events (i.e. Jake’s Witch, Allegheny River Clean-up, Johnny Appleseed Festival, Rally in the Valley, etc.). Advertising should be upbeat, positive, and feature upscale/professional photography. Videos should be no more than 15 seconds to 1 minute long at most.

Some portion of the advertising should also be used to grow the County’s social media properties. Plans for advertising should incorporate a method to secure more “likes” and “follows” on social media channels. This will increase the reach of general, “free” posts and promotions on the channel and reduce the dependence (over time) on paid advertising.

Even a budget of $500 to $1000 a month should allow for substantial coverage on Facebook and Google. This minimum investment of roughly $10,000 a year in online advertising is recommended starting out. With the money currently being spent on print advertising that has a limited effect and short visibility window, it should not be difficult to develop a strategy for online promotion and allocate funding for a pilot program.
Video Production

There are few video production resources available to Warren County, but there are resources available and they need to be pooled and organized for maximum impact. For the purpose of regional promotion, a plan needs to be developed to systematically produce video around a variety of topics and utilization. Generally, a small crew with a limited and focused agenda can produce a great deal of quality content for promotion. At this stage, long videos or comprehensive video productions are unnecessary for generating content.

A sample production setup would include a videographer with access to a drone and high-end (but even affordable) cameras, a video editor who can work quickly and efficiently, a production manager who oversees the production and maps out the content to be generated. All of this, with the right organization and direction, can produce marketing content at a low cost.

Videos produced would include interviews and features on regional thought leaders, brief promotional overviews of important organizations, quick snippets related to various events, general promotional pieces on amenities and attractions, and more. All videos should be short and be cataloged on the County site and other related websites as well as posted on Facebook and other social media.
Social Media Marketing

As a part of the overall internet marketing strategy, a plan needs to be developed to grow promotional social media channels. These channels are networks created by the promotional agencies that they can then use to spread their messaging. When the Visitor’s Bureau, or the County, generate new followers they get a life-long channel to those followers that they can then contact repeatedly and share their priorities. This passive communication model is incredibly cost effective and efficient when compared to other, more antiquated models. The more followers you have, the larger the audience you have to gather information from, share information with, influence, and attract to your cause.

For this report, it is recommended that the County make some type of investment in a social media contractor who can work with the County’s social media properties and grow and curate them. The idea, for most business and tourism-related issues, would be to have a single (branded) stream where the bulk of the County’s event and promotional effort goes. A “Mega-channel” if you will, where all content is published and promoted through. Whether the property was a “Visit Warren County” property which had a Facebook Page, Twitter Account, and accounts on Instagram, Pinterest, and other major platforms, or not remains to be seen. The point is, the County should focus on one entity and work to build it up which will benefit all of the related systems.

“I attended the Marketing Taskforce as an interested member of the public and was pleasantly surprised to observe a meeting of some incredibly minds. The ideas put forth were innovative ones for Warren County, and I'm really excited to see some of those ideas already being put into motion!

Heidi Halcomb, Citizen who attended meetings
Infrastructure and Legendary Events Essential for Mass Tourism Growth

"Today festivals are considered to contribute significantly to...cultural and economic development. The festivals have major impact on the development of cultural tourism to the host communities."1 "Events have the potential to generate a vast amount of tourism when they cater to out-of-region visitors, grants, or sponsorships."2 Festival organizers are now using historical and cultural themes to develop the annual events to attract visitors and creating cultural image in the host cities by holding festivals in the community settings.1 "Festivals and events are crucial tourism resources. Tourism plays an important role in stimulating a local economy at host communities...and could be a mean to revitalize economically depressed a region."3

Everyone has dreamt of jumping in the car or boarding the plane to be part of an epic gathering of kindred souls to experience a music, art, and/or cultural event that makes their heart beat with excitement. Worldwide, these festivals boast millions of visitors and significant economic impact. Festivals such as Lollapalooza, Coachella Music & Arts Festival, New Orleans Mardi Gras, Tomorrowland, Montreux Jazz Festival, Burning Man, South by Southwest, Splendour in the Grass, King of the Hammers, Rio Carnival, Melt Festival, Gilroy Garlic Festival, Pitchfork Music Festival, Austin City Limits Music Festival, and so many more draw people from around their nations and around the world to be part of these significant happenings.
Photo of Soča Outdoor Festival which takes place in Slovenia
Creating a world-class festival or event is a long and precarious pursuit. But a study of successful festivals showed that many started small, based around unique assets of the host community that expressed shared values and gave residents a sense of pride. These events grew naturally through community involvement and commitment. Many festivals with the greatest longevity grew over decades, with infrastructure and offerings being planned long-range and added each year to meet rising demand. The success of festivals impacted other cultural opportunities offered at different times during the year rescheduling to take advantage of the festival tourism influx. Beyond festival season, many cities and regions have become synonymous with their festivals to become year-round tourism draws.

But what about the impact of major events and festivals on residents? Addressing this concern is the University of Massachusetts Amherst’s study “The Influence of Festival and Local Events on Community Quality of Life.” Data from this study demonstrates that major festivals and events improve “community quality of life... by life satisfaction, health condition, financial satisfaction, income, age, and residents' leisure experience.” Livability.com’s "Best Places to Live" sites that “nothing brings a community together like tradition, and nothing is as traditional as an annual festival...Festivals can be a source of pride for communities, as well as big sources of income for local businesses and government.” “A Festival Testifies to a Village's Turnaround,” an article featured in The New York Times attributes the renaissance of Patchogue, New York largely to the village’s free PAC MAC festival (Patchogue Arts Council, Music Arts and Cinema). The festival is credited as a major part in the town’s turnaround following a decline that began in the 1980s with the arrival of big-box stores on a nearby highway. “All the business...
on Main Street disappeared, and the downtown was dark,” Mayor Pontieri said. But owing in part to the festival, the village is become a mini-mecca for the arts. “We’re kind of becoming a small urban area in the middle of the suburbs,” said local resident John Cino.

One Warren County event that demonstrates strong civic investment, pride, values, commitment, and natural grass-roots growth over time is the Allegheny River and Watershed Clean-Up, which just completed its 10th year of river stewardship and celebration. The Clean-Up has been built around assets that exist in Warren County. Though the Clean-Up is an event in its own right, it also paves the way for the success of other local events that prize environmental cleanliness and nature-based activities.

Though a world-famous festival in Warren County may be a decade or more away, the Warren County Marketing Taskforce proposes that the county take steps to promote and support homegrown events that show the hallmark signs of longevity, growth and community investment seen in successful large-scale festivals. That the county look for ways to assist the health of these events through promotion and the development of infrastructure to aid growth and visitor satisfaction. That these events be considered for natural affiliations to see if growth may occur through collaboration, partnerships, or the symbiotic scheduling of events. It is the desire of this Taskforce to witness the creation of a legendary Warren County festival that is in harmony with local assets and values, based on the organic growth and/or merging of existing festivals and events that takes advantage of necessary infrastructure growth and raises the local quality of life.
Though a world-famous event or festival in Warren County will take some time to grow, the Warren County Marketing Taskforce proposes that the county take steps to promote and support homegrown events that show the hallmark signs of longevity, growth and community investment seen in successful large-scale festivals. That the county look for ways to assist the health of these events through promotion and the development of infrastructure to aid event growth and visitor satisfaction. That existing events be considered for natural affiliations to see if growth may occur through collaboration, partnerships, or the symbiotic scheduling of activities. It is the desire of this Taskforce to witness the creation of a legendary Warren County festival that is in harmony with local assets and values, based on the organic growth and/or merging of existing festivals and events that takes advantage of necessary infrastructure growth and raises the local quality of life.

Suggested steps for creating and epic event in Warren County include:

- Assemble a list of existing Warren County events and festivals with significant tourist draw and local investment
- Create a calendar of all events in Warren County and work with "Virtual Warren, PA" focus area detailed in this report to create an easily searchable online calendar of events with all County events listed, detailed, and bookable
- Make contact and work alongside large-scale event planners to learn the challenges and opportunities their events provide
- Analyze the growth and local investment in each event over time, the needs
expressed by organizers for additional growth, the scheduling of events especially with an eye to what events may naturally combine to create and even larger public draw, and area resources that may link and support larger appeal and faster growth

- Complete market research to gauge uniqueness of event offerings within a 6-hour drive with a goal of identifying “blue sky” opportunity
- Identify target markets – set visitorship goals, timelines and strategies
- Support combined marketing of existing events and festivals to reach target markets outside of Warren County
- Study statistics and offerings of existing events/festivals to discern the most proven return on investment offerings to help guide development of Warren County event

- Craft a long-range plan for infrastructure development that will support growth in all areas from online presence and booking to lodgings and amenities to wayfinding to event site building to public art creation – All efforts should be phased to keep pace with projected growth of events and should support events identified to have the most growth potential and uniqueness.

- Grow an epic one-of-a-kind multi-day event that is expressive of Warren County and earns the support of local residents that attracts a minimum of 100,000 people to participate annually.
The success of this project will require extensive boots-on-the-ground work with festival and event organizers who are succeeding to most articulately and effectively discern what projects, offerings, marketing, infrastructure and alliance-building will be the most beneficial.

Understanding that real-world event study of this type may lead efforts in other directions, the Taskforce has assembled two draft lists (open for amendment and revision) to assist in this work. The first is a list of Major and/or unique events existing in Warren County and the second is a compilation of potential infrastructure development opportunities.

**Major and/or unique events with growth potential in Warren County, Pennsylvania**

- Allegheny River & Watershed Clean-up
- Bikes, Blues & BBQ
- Boonies Film Festival
- Bridge at Remagen Reenactment
- Brokenstring Music Festival
- First Fridays
- Jakes Witch Project
- Johnny Appleseed Festival
- Kinzua Country Tango Adventure Race
- Kinzua Heritage Arts & Music Festival
- Industrial Memorial Softball Tournament
- Music on the Mountain
- Warren Christmas Parade
- Warren County Fair
- Warren County Fright Nights
- Warren County Winterfest
- Wildwind Festival
- Women's Outdoor Workshops

Offerings, investments, and development opportunities identified by Taskforce as Topics of discussion included the creation of an amphitheater, creating a major festival, researching festivals and events, the promotion of the existing festivals and events. PA Wilds is looking at developing KPIC, so that was tabled. An action plan based on the initial conversation is outlined below. Items may be added during future discussions.
Lodgings: Large events to date have been plagued with dissatisfaction due to length of drive to available hotels/motels

- RV site development
- Foster Air B&B establishment and training to expand beds as well as bring these businesses on the tax rolls, help them market, and train
- Attract entrepreneurs to renovate and reclaim historic homes as Boutique hotels

Travel: Backroads and circuitous driving routes have been cited as problematic

- Advocate for through route from
- Connector roads – 80, 86, 79
- Make the backroad travel part of the adventure and attraction
- Improve wayfinding from Interstates, from surrounding arteries and through to event location

Marketing Events

- Create apparatus for regional promotion of existing events
- Events must be marketed outside of the county
- Develop and Arts-Entrepreneurship Council
- Document and promote events through unified professional photo and video
- Compile strong narratives of events
- Ask local businesses with strong connections to major amusement parks, attractions and marketing to contribute ideas for marketing (Where money best spent? – Best way to draw?)

Potential Activities

- Bouldering
- Mountain Biking
- Kayaking
- Hiking
- Kayak Fishing
- Geocaching
- Stand-Up Paddle Boarding
- Yoga
- Massage
- Drum Circle
- Live Music
- Cornhole
- Outdoor Films
- Stargazing (With telescopes - If we choose new moon phase, beginning of October.)
- Gear Expo & Sale
- Food + Brew
- Outdoor Films (Boonies?)
- Live Music – create amphitheatre – (work with Singular Destination Marketing to assess creating a floating stage at Kinzua Beach.

**Potential Workshops + Classes (Organizations may wish to lead)**

- Leave No Trace (AO)
- American Canoe Association (ACA) SmartStart Kayaking Course (AO)
- Kayak + SUP Demo (AO)
- Kayak Fishing Demo (AO + Jackson Kayak)
- Intro to Bouldering (Goat Fort – Dana Harrington)
- Mountain Bike Race (NAMBA)
- Mountain Bike Maintenance (NAMBA)
- Guided Hikes (ANF Chapter of NCT - Allegheny Outdoor Club)
- Drum Circle (Diane Scarcella)
- Backpacker 101 (AO)
- Geocaching 101 (Kinzua Cachers)
- Massage + Yoga (Peace, Love & Wellness)

**Potential Food + Brew (Local is the key word – keep income local)**

- Local – grass-fed – organic food purveyors
- Local restaurants
- Food trucks
- Farmers Market Vendors and regional organic farmers
- Local breweries, wineries, and distilleries

Potential Festival Locations:
- Kinzua Beach and environs
- Betts Park
- Birdsall Eddy
- Fairgrounds
- State Hospital Grounds
- Farm Colony

Some Event Ideas
- Growing Allegheny and Watershed Clean-up into a Countywide festival celebrating WATER, stewardship, and ecotourism
- Work with businesses, watershed folks, Army Corps of Engineers, Game Commission, and other groups to create different festival opportunities on every pond, river, swamp, lake in the County. Can be more impactful from the start when numerous entities with similar interest are involved.
- Marry to week of River cleanup - advertise volunteer vacations - attract millennials and get across message of ecotourism and stewardship - not a party that wrecks our resources, but enhances them.
- Flugtag and/or engineering float challenge
- Yellow ducky race down Allegheny and/or Obon-style lantern float – if either is done it should be done using materials that benefit the river
- Tarzan boat
- Wibit floating water park (They can even be used to spell out words)
- Walk/run on water with giant bubbleballs
- Amphitheatre
- Link to Boonies or other events to increase attractiveness and lessen burden of band booking
- Duck boats
- Paddle boats
- Peddle bikes
- Swamp tours
- Art installations on water - Kind of Floating Man (as opposed to Burning Man)
Artists create and bring installations - Locally, commission one permanent attraction per year at different water sites around the county

Creating Music and Arts-based weekend at Kinzua Beach and Betts Park

- Goal of growing each to longer and larger festival
- Family friendly festival with town and country stages

Prepper Event – Safety/Survival Fair

Festivals to study – stand-outs

- Appalachian Trail Days (Mid-May; Damascus, Virginia)
- Outdoor Retailer (August; Salt Lake City, UT)

“What I took away most from the work sessions and meetings was that we had multiple independent perspectives, from different positions within the county, and we created a general consensus, without the purpose of realizing personal financial gain, as to how both locals and visitors alike could benefit from this strategic approach.”

Dave Sherman, Executive Director, Warren County Visitor's Bureau

Photos from "Outdoor Retailer" example event
Addressing Warren County’s Demographic Challenges

Over the last four decades, Warren County’s population has dwindled away. Settled in the 1800s, population peaked in 1970 and has ebbed lower ever since, following long-term national and global trends as people leave rural areas (and lifestyles) for the amenities and economic dynamism of cities.

According to USDA, declining populations in most rural counties in the US result from “natural decrease”—more deaths than births—and to population outflows caused by changing economic conditions, such as the demise of family farming and the loss of manufacturing jobs.

Here in Warren County, depopulation is easy to see—baby boomers retire to the sunbelt (or pass away), millennials move to cities for jobs and a vibrant social scene, and online shopping and big box stores drive out small business. The results of this depopulation are equally obvious—schools and churches close or consolidate, our neighbors’ homes become blighted, medical professionals leave, and farmland lies vacant.

Many hold out hope that improvements in the national and global economies will stimulate local business and population growth, but most benefits flow inevitably to cities while rural areas continue to decline.
According to USDA, even rural areas with energy resources that have "experienced population gains from energy-related job growth. . such as the Williston Basin in western North Dakota and eastern Montana, the Permian Basin in west Texas and southeastern New Mexico, and the Eagle Ford Field in south Texas" are now experiencing a "significant reversal in population growth." [citation]

Declining population in Warren County has occurred in slow motion for so long it now seems like the norm. If nothing is done, or if something insufficient is done, Warren County may soon fall below a viable population threshold, below which businesses have too few customers to remain profitable, home values fall, and tax revenues dip below the level needed to maintain critical infrastructure and services. Such an event can be a point of no return (as may already have happened in neighboring counties).

Can Warren County everse these demographic challenges and stabilize, sustain, or even grow population? Can we cultivate a fundamentally new economy with lasting vitality? Or, will we remain trapped in the played-out, historic patterns that limit local economic opportunity and lock us into inevitable decline?

This Taskforce believes the demographic challenges can be addressed, but it will require an ambitious and unprecedented intervention involving exploration of new ideas and a committed coalition of community resources, both public and private.

So, what can a county of 40,000 residents do to escape the fate currently occurring in 640 other rural counties across the United States? This Taskforce believes it can only be accomplished by engaging in bold thinking and taking chances on new ideas to improve recruitment of new citizens and the retention of our young people. This will result in locals and new people being energized by innovative businesses, eager for emergent opportunities, and drawn to an affordable, environmentally clean, and active lifestyle.
The Warren County Community Growth Initiatives are intended to increase (and sustain) existing population over the long run by expanding local economic opportunity beyond the 19th and 20th century industries, and to cultivate and grow businesses and communities relevant to the present and future generations. This plan relies on five major initiatives to stabilize or increase population, revitalize existing businesses, germinate and incubate new businesses, increase property values and restore neighborhoods, sustain and create vibrant arts and cultural venues, and reclaim the natural environment for the health and recreational benefit of locals and visitors. The size, complexity, and expense of these initiatives are commensurate with the enormity of the task. These are not simple tweaks to a viable system in need of slight adjustments. Rather, these actions recognize we are at a historic turning point, and that the future is calling us in a new direction.

The initiatives of the Community Growth Plan are as follows:

1. **The designation of Warren County as the nation’s first College Graduate Student Loan Deferment/Repayment Zone (SLDRZ)**, where college graduates who meet specific criteria and who live in the County and work in the County (or who participate in authorized entrepreneurship or intern programs within the County) will be selected to have student loans deferred and repaid for up to five years. This program may focus on a specific existing industry such as agriculture, outdoor recreation, ecology, or energy; or may be broadened to encompass any industry perceived as a need in the county. Program costs may be achieved through public, private, corporate, or individual funds or an amalgamation of any of these sources. Primary to this consideration is investment in attracting graduates needed for hard-to-fill positions by the industries seeking employees both through financial backing and collaborative position recruitment.

2. **The Warren Prize** is a national or international competition seeking to identify and relocate individuals, organizations and businesses creating the next wave of products, projects and business models that will promote economic development and long-term population growth. The Warren Prize may attract artisans, businesses and projects from every field of study (Arts to Zoology) or from an intentionally focused selection of strategically targeted fields (cryptology to permaculture). Competition for the prize would be open to those willing to commit a specific term of personal and professional residence in Warren County. Competitors will be selected from those currently residing outside of Warren County or those residing within Warren County who are poised to realize significant new growth owing to revolutionary projects. Winners would receive prize monies to help fund their endeavors, mentoring, and other incentives to grow their winning ideas in Warren County. The Warren Prize could be adopted by one exclusive backer who would be given naming rights or could be achieved through the partnership of financial backers.
3. Retirement today is fluid. People are retiring from jobs and careers, but not retiring from life. “Nest-Eggers” for the purpose of this report are people of independent means irrespective of age seeking an active lifestyle, a change of scene, a new location. The Nest-Egger Relocation Project will recruit active individuals of middle-to upper-income with either pensions or independent means—such as law enforcement officers, firefighters, teachers, business owners, state and federal employees, entrepreneurs, and veterans—who seek to leave expensive, crowded cities for a more affordable rural location where decent retirement incomes may be stretched or conserved and significant assets may purchase more. This project will include temporary property tax reductions for those who purchase homes here, the development of an “Elder University,” and the development of a “Warren County Elder Volunteer Center” within Warren County government that channels relocatee energy, expertise, and financial resources to community projects.

NOTE: Many of the active lifestyle and cost-of-living incentives that attract nest-eggers will also attract entrepreneurs and millennials. Attracting entrepreneurs and millennials adds demand for expanded connectivity, earth-first opportunities and other quality of life incentives to build their lives here.

Many of these additional incentives identified to attract millennials are covered in other proposed actions of this report. Possible incentives for Nest-Egger relocation include: (existing inducements) federal and military retirees do not pay state income tax when they live in PA, and (proposed inducements) declaration of Warren County as an income-tax free zone for retired federal employees and veterans, a 10% tax credit for living in Warren County, time-limited property tax discount, sales tax on outdoor recreation, and time-limited tax break for home purchase.

4. Educational Incubator / Elder University is an interweaving of Warren County’s existing educational opportunities, retiring and emeritus professors drawn through the Nest-Egger Relocation Project, and any other public or private entities offering specific expertise in a designated field of study. The Educational Incubator / Elder University could function as a specific focus research setting (e.g. permaculture, cryptography, alternative energy) in direct support of economic development and/or Warren Prize winners or as a local family-sustaining career-training entity such the Manchester Bidwell Corporation. Project suggestions include using the outdoors as the classroom and rehabilitation of the Warren State Hospital as co-housing.

Potential partners identified include: Northern Pennsylvania Regional College, Warren and Forest Higher Education Council, Warren County Career Center, Appalachian Regional Commission, corporations, and private investors.
5. Establishing Warren County as a **North American Safe Haven (NASH)**—a geographic region determined to be (and designated as) “an area exceptionally resilient to foreseeable future crises.” The NASH certification will identify and showcase known community strengths, including social cohesiveness and preparedness (among other “small town values”), availability of locally-sourced foods and other agricultural products, abundance of freshwater and natural resources, healthy ecosystems and environmental services, diverse and adaptive energy systems, sustainable infrastructure, local craft and manufacturing knowledge and skills, and the individual self-reliance of residents. These natural and social advantages will be combined with long-range emergency management plans and targeted infrastructure improvements that enhance preparedness and resilience of residents, communities, local governments, law enforcement, medical facilities, commerce, and agriculture. A key NASH component is that preparedness and resilience are incentivized through entrepreneurial programs (focused on sustainable agriculture, small-scale manufacturing, and sustainable energy systems), property tax breaks, business subsidies, and low-interest guaranteed loans.
Student Loan Deferment / Repayment Zone (SLDRZ)

The concept of a "student loan deferment zone" is incredibly complicated, and honestly beyond the scope of this report. The group did; however, want to attach some rough concepts to the SLDRZ project proposal which are listed below. One of the biggest challenges is the Federal Government itself. Regardless, this concept is a worthy enough proposal to mine further, therefore the committee will continue to research and develop proposals around this idea.

Background

Student Loan Debt

- Current national student debt is $1.4 trillion
- 68% of Pennsylvania college graduates have student debt
- Pennsylvania college graduates have an average $35,759 in student loan debt

Warren County Population[2]

- Warren County population peaked at 47,682 in 1970
- At the current rate of decline, by 2050 the population will decrease by approximately 2,000 people (800 households) to 38,000
- To maintain current population, 330 people must move into Warren County each year through 2050

Purpose

The Student Loan Deferment/Repayment Zone (SLDRZ) program will

- Incentivize college graduates to relocate to Warren County
- Stabilize Warren County population to sustain current economic activity and tax base

This program—a partnership between federal and county governments and the private sector—allows college graduates with student debt (who meet Program Requirements below) to defer payment on education loan principal and interest as follows:

Year 1 -3:

- Federal government defers loan payment. Interest does NOT accrue.
- Warren County (and/or private partners) pays $5,000/year per participant in loan principal.

Years 4 – 5

- Loan payments are recalculated to reflect principal paid by the program during years 1 – 3, and new principal and interest rate payments resume.
- Warren County (and/or private partners) pays up to $2,400/year per participant in loan repayments.
**Program Requirements**

1. Must be a U.S. citizen

2. Must have completed one of the following educational programs from an accredited US institution:
   - Science, Technology, Engineering, Math (STEM) bachelor’s degree (or higher)
   - Doctor of Medicine (or similar)
   - Doctor of Veterinary Medicine
   - Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS), Doctor of Dental Medicine (DMD) (or similar)
   - Master of Laws or Juris Doctor
   - Master of Business Administration
   - Technical certificate

3. Must have at least $30,000 in federal student loans (on the program application date).

4. Relocate to Warren County and/or remain in Warren County during the time enrolled in the program.

5. Rent or own a home in Warren County, or live in an approved SLDRZ facility, e.g. buildings on Pennsylvania State Hospital Grounds or other rehabilitated facility.

6. Must be one or more of the following:
   - Employed in Warren County
   - Enrolled in an approved Warren County entrepreneurial or business incubator program
   - AmeriCorps member serving (at least part-time) in Warren County
   - Disabled combat veteran

Other requirements may include any of the following:

- Volunteer hours for Warren County
- Volunteer hours for or an approved nonprofit.
- Serve as an SLDRZ program ambassador or administrator

**Participant Selection Priorities**

Those who have bachelor or graduate degrees in STEM subjects who are employed in Warren County (or enrolled in approved entrepreneurial incubator programs) and satisfy one or more of the following ranked criteria:

1. Graduates of Warren County high schools
2. Graduates of Pennsylvania colleges
3. STEM graduates in priority fields
Overview

The general goal of the “Warren Prize” concept is to create incentives to encourage entrepreneurship and business development in Warren County. All of Warren’s top businesses today were created and built in Warren County by motivated entrepreneurs. The Warren Prize creates a system to jumpstart that type of innovative thinking. The “Prizes” are incentives (rent discounts, coordinated assistance, grants, etc.) to help spur and secure growth to qualifying entities.

Warren County Background

- Warren County was founded on agriculture and grew rapidly on the boom and bust economic cycles of large-scale timber and fuel extraction accompanied by their affiliated service industries.

- These founding industries remain and have been joined by rises in the following industries: Healthcare, Education, Financial Institutions and Retail Trade. According to the National Census, the economy of Warren County, PA employs 18,282 people and is specialized in mining, quarrying, oil, gas extraction; manufacturing and agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, which employ respectively 3.65; 2.06; and 1.66 times more people than what would be expected in a location of this size. The largest industries in Warren County are Manufacturing (3,888), Healthcare and Social Assistance (3,388), and Retail trade (2,575). The highest paying industries are Utilities ($57,722), Mining, Quarrying, Oil, Gas Extraction ($51,756) and Educational Services ($40,610).

- The National Census reports that the median household income in Warren County is $44,977. This amount is roughly 10% less than the median annual income throughout Pennsylvania and the nation.
Lower earning potential in Warren County helps to drive population out of the area to communities with greater diversity in employment pursuits as well as higher compensation.

The economic balance of Warren County could be crippled by the relocation or closure of a minimal number of large-scale employers.

To stabilize and grow Warren County’s economy for future generations, the county must attract and invest in revolutionary ideas that will keep current industries ahead of the competitive curve as well as bring new industries and business to the area.

**Industries on the Rise**

- Innovative industries currently on the rise include: virtual reality, medical marijuana, family volunteer vacations, green energy, drones, mobility technology, biotechnology, content marketing.

- Almost 70% of the 2017 Next Billion Dollar Startups List, produced by Forbes in partnership with TrueBridge Capital, are concentrated in just five industries: fintech, healthcare and biotech, “new space (space and satellite data),” data and analytics and logistics.

- Forbes lists the top $10+ Billion big Industries of the future as: sharing economy, electric cars, Internet of things, 3-D printing, Smart cities, Open source licensing, governance and management, solar power, online education and training, cryptocurrency, and smartdust: programmable matter and nanotechnology.
Purpose

The Warren Prize will:

- Help Warren County escape prevailing boom-bust cycle of economic growth, reverse population drain and diversify business opportunities and outlets through the establishment of next-generation industries and jobs.

- Revolutionize, grow, and retain traditional Warren County industries, preparing them to compete for generations to come through innovative exploration of products and services in an affirmative and upwardly mobile work environment.

- Foster growth in economic activity, diversity, and stability.

- Promote growth in area population, home ownership, and tax base.

- Resulting population influx will enable an accompanying rise in quality of life amenities.

Program Specifics

- A national or international competition for the best new ideas for economic development. Attract the next wave in any field or a specific field – Artists, Entrepreneurs and Industries. Competition would also allow existing businesses and industries to compete to expand operations in revolutionary ways that would promote long-term growth.

- Selection criteria could:
  
  - Be focused on specific industries: easily adaptable to the area, with a solid foundation in existing businesses, share environmental and develop goals of area, etc.
  
  - Be open to any competitor determined to make a commitment to live and grow their company in Warren County
  
  
  - Possibly use an Agricultural or Rural theme - Plant or Grow your business
  
- A specific number of winners would receive time-limited incentives to locate
personally and professionally in Warren County, committing to duration of stay and giving back to community

- Incentives may include:
  - Free rent
  - Space sharing
  - Prize money
  - Support/mentorship
  - Coffee ups / wine downs
  - Co-working spaces
  - Use of empty storefronts
  - Central point to live - Front porch idea to cross pollinate
  - Help investigating the region when looking for where to grow

**Costs and Partners**

- Possible Partners / Funders:
  - Annenberg Foundation
  - Appalachian Regional Commission
  - PA Wilds Center for Entrepreneurship
  - Corporations financial, in-kind and collaborative
  - Private investors
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