Fall 2003

Revitalizing New Kensington/Arnold

Urban Laboratory

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Welcome to New Kensington/Arnold!

Let's Connect: Carnegie Mellon University Urban Lab
The mission of the Carnegie Mellon Urban Laboratory is building hope through visions. The enclosed designs offer three different, distinct visions of New Kensington/Arnold after the addition of rail service, visions that help the members of those communities hope for a better future for their cities.
New Kensington was founded in 1891. In 1890 the Burrell Improvement Company considered the advantages of the level land south of its home in Lower Burrell, and deemed it a prime location for a city and named the area "Kensington" (later changed to "New Kensington" for postal purposes).

Thousands of people flooded the area and investors began bringing industry with them. The first large company was the Pittsburgh Reduction Company (which later became ALCOA). They acquired a 3.5 acre that allowed them to exploit their closeness to the riverfront.

Early achievements included a railroad station, the 9th Street bridge, a passenger boat that navigated the Allegheny, a street car line that ran to Natrona, the "Kensington Dispatch" newspaper, hotel, opera house, and YMCA. Throughout the middle of the twentieth century, New Kensington maintained its reputation as a prosperous center for social activities, a booming economy, and a great place to raise a family.

Arnold was first settled in 1852 by Indian fighter Major Andrew Arnold, however it was not until January 14, 1896, that it was incorporated as a borough. What is now Arnold was at one time part of New Kensington.

A tract of land situated on the east side of the River Ohio in Westmoreland County, containing two hundred twenty-two acres, allowance of 6% for roads and accepting and reserving one fifth part of all gold and silver ore for the use of the Commonwealth. The community name of Arnold comes from Andrew Arnold after purchasing the land from the Jack family.

The Arnold Station was so named because the land on which it occupied was given by the Arnold family. At the time, the area was covered with woods and orchards, and less than fifty people. Through a very unusual agreement signed by the railroad people and W.H. Crawford, every train that passed through Arnold was required to stop. Soon, the town of Arnold was flourishing with economic growth and development.

Many of the current residents in both of these communities still remember this rich history. Although the times have changed and major industries such as the ALCOA corporation have left, the people still carry a strong sense of pride in the fabric of their communities and a powerful identity with these two towns. Throughout our proposals to revitalize New Kensington and Arnold, we have acknowledged this historical information in order maintain a connection to the past, however, we have also set forth the challenge to envision a dream of endless possibilities for the future.

Images and information provided by the New Kensington and Arnold Websites: http://www.newkensington.org/ and http://www.arnoldpa.org/ammain.shtml
"A tattered, nearly empty parking lot expands across a plot of land. Citizens of New Kensington have gone home for the evening after a long day at work. The air is light and the sky remains calm. Gracefully swaying in the breeze, a single oak tree proudly stands tall, its size more abundant than last year; its roots breaking through the solid asphalt of the lot. It has remained bountiful and charming for the last 30 years, maybe more. It has been witness to both the most grieving and most marvelous times of its community; and now, it lives on, wiser and more resilient than ever before."

—from a student assertion piece

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<td>developments.</td>
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| Analysis                    | Connected with local        |
|-----------------------------| community members, civic    |
|                             | leaders, small business     |
|                             | owners and other key        |
|                             | stakeholders to solicit     |
|                             | feedback on initial         |
|                             | program designs.            |

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<tr>
<th>Community Charrette</th>
<th>October 27</th>
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| Design Development          | Combining urban design      |
|-----------------------------| principles and policy       |
|                             | recommendations, we         |
|                             | redeveloped our sketches    |
|                             | to incorporate the voices   |
|                             | of the individuals that     |
|                             | would eventually be         |
|                             | impacted by our designs.    |

| Community Presentation      | Final presentation of       |
|-----------------------------| design schemes and policy   |
| November 19                 | analysis to the community   |
|                             | leaders, Weed and Seed      |
|                             | representatives, elected    |
|                             | officials and small         |
|                             | business owners at the      |
|                             | New Kensington City Hall.   |
Our class planned, advertised, and held a community charrette in order to share our ideas halfway through the semester. The meeting was held October 27 at the local Valley High School, and over 50 community members attended. The success of the meeting was measured by the enthusiasm from the community and the large amount of feedback received. To the right are samples of work we shared at the meeting.

As the visitors arrived, they mingled and looked over our initial analysis completed earlier in the semester.

Below are some comments from community members:

"I liked their forward thinking and not just limiting us to what we have and where we've been."

"The ideas are fresh and encouraging."

"Try to incorporate existing efforts by city and redevelopment authority."

"I think the community has the potential to be a "South Side" type image in this northern sector of Pittsburgh."

"It was obvious they had done a lot of work and were aware of our issues and history. Very brave."
This scheme focuses on the development of New Kensington and Arnold around a single rail stop located at the eastern end of the existing rail spur, parallel to Hellman Drive. The rail stop is strategically situated between New Kensington and Arnold to service both cities. The driving force behind this scheme is to create a “new heart” for New Kensington and Arnold. Economic growth radiates from this central transit hub into a commercial boulevard on Fifth Avenue. Housing has also been in-filled to create density around the heart of New Kensington and Arnold. A green boulevard leads from the transit hub to the waterfront area, which contains maximized uses for greenspace, entertainment and cultural activities. To take hold of the full potential of the waterfront, industrial areas have been moved to the periphery of the site. Besides the rail line stopping at the transit hub, there are also other trolley lines that run throughout New Kensington and Arnold as well as to Penn Mills Mall, servicing all residential areas within a two-block walk to the nearest transportation line. The three areas that we will focus on in further detail are the transit hub, green boulevard and the waterfront.
The transit hub is the eastern focal point of the green boulevard, along with a fountain. It is at the heart of New Kensington and Arnold. Support functions around the transit hub are a daycare facility, outdoor seating area, supermarket offices and commercial areas. A mixed use corridor aligns Fifth Avenue with retail, offices, banks, laundromat, convenient stores, cafes and other commercial uses on the ground floor while residential uses are on the upper floors.

A structured parking garage with rooftop parking is extended off of the overpass to accommodate the commuters and visitors to the area. To increase density in this central area, we have infilled housing creating new single family units as well as town houses. Industrial uses have been added adjacent to the gas station to compensate for some of the industrial buildings we would be removing to create the green boulevard.
The existing patternbook housing on the other side of the rail line on Constitution Boulevard creates a nice backdrop for the transit hub. To service the Hill area and to make it pedestrian friendly, we have created a pedestrian bridge by the daycare. The transit hub will also be directly accessible off of Constitution Boulevard onto its rooftop garden. An existing street along the northern side of the transit hub will also be made pedestrian friendly.

A pedestrian bridge makes the new heart of New Kensington and Arnold pedestrian-friendly. The structured parking garage, extending off of the overpass, provides parking for commuters.

Focal points on the eastern end of the green boulevard: transit hub and fountain.

Mixed use corridor on Fifth Avenue: commercial and retail on the ground floor with residential on the upper levels.
The Green Boulevard is the new civic center of the town which connects the transit hub to the waterfront. This new linear greenspace features focal points on either end with the transit hub to the east and the skating pavilion to the west. Though the skating pavilion is not an actual building, it creates an object of interest to mark the location of the waterfront and frames the view from the transit hub to across the river, and from across the river back up to the transit hub. A gazebo has also been placed in the center of the green boulevard providing a focal point where Industrial Boulevard meets the center of town. Each of these focal areas is linked by a water feature, which is a small stream, that runs the entire length of the boulevard. It starts in front of the transit hub as a fountain and flows through the greenspace down to the waterfront where it culminates in a waterfall.

This stream provides interest in the center of the boulevard and is intertwined with gardens and walking paths to create an attraction in the center of town. Surrounding the green boulevard are a variety of mixed-use buildings which house all the businesses that one would need to visit on a regular basis. Outdoor cafes are also located along the new main street, which will receive sunlight year round. Besides structured parking, there is also convenient ground parking available behind the mixed use buildings.
The idea behind the creation of the waterfront was to incorporate as many uses as possible along the river to make it a destination not just for the two towns, but for the whole region. Our proposed waterfront is a mix of recreational, office, entertainment, and housing uses.

The central focal point of the waterfront is the skating pavilion which houses an ice skating rink during the winter months and other forms of skating during the rest of the year. Located next to the pavilion is the new marina area, which features restaurants overlooking the river and the waterfall that terminates the water feature of the green boulevard.

To the north of the pavilion are the athletic uses. This area features an indoor sports complex with its parking located underground. On the roof of the sports complex is an outdoor running track which allows the user a great view to the river as well as an interesting view for residents of the nearby apartment buildings. Next to the sports complex are outdoor fields for tennis, basketball, soccer, and football. There is also a playground and picnic pavilions in this area.

To the south side of the pavilion is a large terraced greenspace separated from the street by trees. This serves as a general recreation field as well as an amphitheater showing outdoor movies in the summer. Next to the amphitheater is an entertainment complex which consists of an indoor movie theater and bowling alley. There is a small green space between the two buildings which serves as a drop off area for the facility.

A new office park complex is located next to the movie theater to house the businesses that would be attracted to the revitalized area. Next to the office park, the old Alcoa buildings have been renovated as loft housing and an Alcoa museum.
With the museum being the focal point, this area would become the cultural center of New Kensington and Arnold. Galleries and an art center offering classes to all ages would be incorporated into the office park on the first floors of the buildings. A sculpture garden has also been placed in the center of the office park. These functions would help keep the office park area active in the evenings and on weekends as well as during the weekdays. In a similar manner, the office park shares structured parking with the entertainment complex, which would require most of its parking when the offices are closed.

Another important element of the waterfront is walkability. A walking/biking trail runs along the river and provides views of and access to all the amenities previously mentioned. There are also trails, paths, and small roads which run through the waterfront area.

The final element of the waterfront is the addition of new high density housing along the river. Apartment buildings were placed next to the waterfront attractions, giving residents both a view of the river and convenient access to all the amenities of the town. Townhouses and single family homes were also incorporated.
Our early studies of New Kensington and Arnold yielded observation of a disconnect between the strong street grids that are separated by the vacant railroad tracks. We saw a new train station and the possibility of redevelopment as an opportunity to re-connect these areas, bringing residents down to the business district, encouraging the use of new facilities and in the end, bringing the community together.

The first move, in anticipation of a new transit line, was to build a train station on Fifth Avenue and extend North and Catalpa Streets across the old abandoned rail spur, to a point between two newly renovated Industrial buildings on the waterfront. New growth spins off from the rail station, with neighboring commercial buildings, and strong commercial development along the axis to the waterfront.

Approaching the newly defined waterfront, the commercial district gives way to a strong civic center, supported by a new library, Alcoa Museum, and a small amphitheater. Several industrial buildings will remain to maintain light industrial functions. The waterfront reclaims a new identity, through the use of an iconic glass tower, new high end housing, and the ability to interact with the water’s edge.

Walkability is maintained throughout, through careful development of the new street connections over the rail line, wide urban parkspace anchoring the business corridor, and trails along the water’s edge. Further housing development to support these new businesses are immediately adjacent, building up new communities.
Roots, Routes, and Rejuvenation
We began with a vision entitled Roots, Routes and Rejuvenation. Recognizing strong roots in New Kensington and Arnold, we saw the quaint character of the downtown business districts and the strong residential areas as assets. Fourth and Fifth Avenues, Constitution and Industrial Boulevards are strong routes connecting both cities, however a disconnect in street grids still remains. The rail line and river have the potential to be strong connections, but are currently unused. The process of rejuvenation could address old industrial sites, the unused rail spur and low-income housing.

Districts and Corridors
1. The new transportation hub, centrally located
2. New businesses activate area immediate to hub
3. Reconnection of grid ties existing residential district to riverfront
4. Riverfront mixed-use housing, retail, and open spaces
5. Some Industrial sites maintained
6. Redevelopment of housing to provide new residences and address current economic disparity

New, Renovated, and Existing buildings
Most of the newly proposed buildings are located near and around the commercial corridor in the middle of our masterplan, on currently undeveloped or abandoned sites. Renovated buildings are mostly existing abandoned industrial buildings, often turning old factories into high-end loft apartments or re-instating light industrial functions.
Throughout our research and development of ideas through feedback from the community, we learned that a new train station could be a powerful new symbol in these communities. Our major goal for the proposed train station was to make it easily accessible from the existing downtowns and residential areas as well as the newly designed commercial corridor. By connecting Catalpa street and North street with our proposed strip of development, we have created a new site for the train station which is designed to be an interactive transportation hub. Directly adjacent to the station are new shops and a parking garage, making it easy for people to drive to the station and commute downtown on the train.

This plan shows the proposed train station with a car drop-off circle, the bus and trolley street directly in front of the station, and the adjacent retail shops on either side. There is an elevation change in the connecting streets and the station addresses both 5th avenue and the residential neighborhoods above.

This axonometric drawing begins to show the possibilities of what this neighborhood train station could look like. Heading up one end of the new commercial corridor, its welcoming entrance and classic appearance allows for it to stand out as a new and exciting feature in the town, surrounded by new shops a great view down the green boulevard.

5th avenue access to car drop-off circle
Entrance at street level or stair access to roof gardens
Shops and cafes line the ground level
Trolley and bus stop at the front of the station
Sky lights and open air platform allow for natural light to penetrate the station
Constitution Avenue now has two new intersections that bridge over the existing wall along the rails
As one progresses to the waterfront from the rail station, they are immediately met by new retail development with housing and offices above. Towards the waterfront, where the axis crosses the extension of Industrial Boulevard, is a new civic center with a new library, YMCA, Alcoa museum, and small amphitheater. Multiple parks lie in the center of this axis, providing the community with a gathering space and a variety of activities to participate in throughout the year, from a farmer's market to ice skating rink. All new businesses are supported through extensive housing developments to address the economic disparity currently created through the isolation of low-income housing. Additionally, unique angle of the street grid allows visitors to see the new businesses sweeping before them immediately after leaving the train station.

Progressing across the new axis, one moves from housing to commercial buildings bordering park space to high-density and low-density housing, which eventually feeds into existing commercial areas.

Parks become lively and activated through child playgrounds and an ice skating rink. Corners are treated carefully, inviting residents to turn the corner and explore the residential area.

A view from the parks towards new commercial buildings and an apartment building.

Drawing below shows northern street front, walking from the waterfront on the left to the train station on the right. En route: new amphitheater, constructed in shell of existing industrial building, Alcoa museum, movie theater, and mixed-use retail with housing and offices above.
This new waterfront along the Allegheny River is a celebration of the new transit hub and a revitalization of New Kensington/Arnold. This newly developed waterfront can be defined as a destination of a journey. The new transit hub brings visitors and residents from all over Pittsburgh to New Kensington/Arnold. And they walk through an exciting central corridor and parks. At the end they arrive at this grand open space where people can gather around and experience what these two towns can offer such as river activities, outdoor sports facilities, retails/restaurants, and green spaces.

There are two major loft apartments for young professionals and families to move in and enjoy a beautiful river view of the river and parks. The glass tower/building is located in the center of New Kensington/Arnold as a symbol of celebration and as a landmark of the two towns. Also boating dock is accessible to the public from the grand open space. At last, the newly proposed pedestrian bridge connecting two loft apartments is an attraction for many couples and families. This new bridge promotes water activities such as boating and waterskiing in summer and ice skating in winter.
CONCLUSION

Throughout our process of analyzation, community discussion, conceptual design, and final development, the strongest point that continuously stood out to us was that of potential. Although the communities of New Kensington and Arnold are struggling through difficult times, their hope and desire has allowed them to endure and dream about a better future. With our designs, we attempt to encourage a new vision about all of the possibilities for a prosperous tomorrow. With the investigation of a new rail line and transportation hub, the development of a green commercial corridor, and the new identity of the waterfront, we hope to allow these communities the opportunity for not only economic growth, but also motivation to make a change.
The two station group consists of six students planning six different neighborhoods in the New Kensington/Arnold area. The Nature scheme focuses on implementing a water element while forming a conversation with the college town. The Civic plan places a large green space and plaza around the New Kensington rail station. The College Town establishes a university along the waterfront and addresses the history of the old Alcoa industry. The Waterfront and Housing schemes focus on funneling the residents of New Kensington down to the revamped water's edge. The Arnold scheme focuses on the re-centering of the downtown and establishing a connection between the main residential areas.
Wouldn't it be great if hospital patients could look out their window to see a clean river and a forest beyond? What if there was a stadium in the middle of commerce that connected college students to their community? What if boaters could dock their boats, be entertained for the evening and stay through the night?

The Nature District proposal combines many uses in order to cater to housing, recreational, and retail needs of both residents and visitors. A stream runs the length of the site and creates an axis from the rail station, bringing people to the riverfront through a number of experiences. The stream represents a reconnection of the river to the people of New Kensington/Arnold. This intermingling of nature and urbanity creates a unique place to live and visit.
The riverside commercial district includes several uses of this highly valuable waterfront property. Places for sitting, walking, and playing line the stream and waterfront. The buildings bordering the open public spaces hold residential and retail tenants. There is ample room for outdoor eating and performing.

The same stream takes many forms as it makes its way from rail station to river. By varying landscaping and urban design elements, each space provides a different experience for the occupant, therefore giving reason to continue towards the activity and community of the riverfront.
The Civic Square is the center of New Kensington. It is an active urban space that connects to many areas in the city and in the larger region. Designed around the modern, 21st-century New Kensington Fast Rail Transit Station, the Square accommodates multiple means of transportation, such as cars, buses, trains, and pedestrians. Spanning across Constitution Boulevard and the tracks, the Station both welcomes Rail passengers and connects them to significant areas within New Kensington/Arnold.

Located at the end of Ninth Street, the Square is within walking distance of the residential district above and the commercial district below. It contains all of the most significant public buildings in New Kensington, such as the new library, the new YMCA, and the new Railroad Museum, which is located in what was once the city's rail station. Together, these buildings define the Square as the most important public space in the city. The Civic Square will not only provide New Kensington/Arnold with a quality urban space in the present, but will serve as the catalyst for future revitalization of the two cities.
Made of glass, the Fast Rail Transit Station helps to give New Kensington/Arnold a modern, 21st Century identity. The turnaround in front allows cars and buses to drop off passengers. A large interior hallway makes circulation between the two sides of the Station very convenient, creating an important connection between the residential district above and the commercial district below.

Several cafes and shops face into a new outdoor plaza located behind the Station, giving Fast Rail passengers a comfortable place to relax, enjoy a snack, and wait for the train to arrive. Nearby, tree-lined walkways make the nearby railway museum accessible on foot and encourage Fast Rail passengers to visit it.
The new Housing District partially encloses the new Industrial Park shown in blue. In this section of the town between 11th Street and 15th Street, there are three goals we wish to accomplish. First we want to reestablish a street grid that was lost in this area. Second we want to reconnect the communities from both sides of the railroad track with each other as well as with the waterfront. Finally we want to introduce a variety of new housing types shown in red. Some of the new development in this section beside the new buildings are the extension of North Street and Catalpa Street from across the railroad track, the new Industrial Road and the new Riverfront Drive.
These sketches depict a mixture of building types ranging from mix-used apartments to row houses. Also shown are the interaction of the building with the spaces around it. In our vision, there will be new public green spaces for leisure and play, outdoor sitting areas as well as plazas for community gathering.
These sketches depict a mixture of building types ranging from mix-used apartments to row houses. Also shown are the interaction of the building with the spaces around it. In our vision, there will be new public green spaces for leisure and play, outdoor sitting areas as well as plazas for community gathering,
Development of a college campus on the waterfront using the existing Alco activate this area. Creating a visual corridor from Civic Square to the waterfront docks and a green belt/ walking path along the river will attract more people.
A new library and mixed use commercial shops line the college green.

Classrooms and an athletic facility along the waterfront, make good use of these existing Alcoa buildings.
Imagine taking the “PARK” out of the term “INDUSTRIAL PARK” and giving it back the community.

The proposed INDUSTRIAL PARK CENTRAL seeks to be a link to the riverfront, not a barrier. A central park in the core of the industrial estate creates a pleasant space for recreation and dining to attract people to energize the space.

MASSING:
Proposed building typology that houses retail and dining on level one of the office and light industry.

FORM:
Double skin facade over upper levels end on the ground to form sheltered walkways for visitors.

SUNLIGHT:
Buildings on the Southern side of the estate will be 2 stories high to ensure sunlight reaches the central park.
Prospective Perspective

Perspective of the vibrant park that is surrounded by dining and retail activities on the ground level. Outdoor dining on patios keeps the space active even after office hours. Visual cues to river draw the eye outwards and beckon people to walk to the riverside.

Massing show how the built forms on the Southern side of the site are 2 stories high while those on the Northern side are 4 to 5 stories high. Jetty fans out into the river providing a location for picnicking, fishing and bbqs for the entire community.
After visiting downtown Arnold, I noticed a number of destination spots that lacked a connection of any kind; Arnold Park, Roosevelt park, the waterfront, the downtown shopping district. The existing rail line also established an impenetrable barrier between the residential areas to each side of it and made it difficult for residents to cross it into the commercial district.

This proposal features a pedestrian bridge that allows residents to cross through the proposed train station. Immediately visible from the station doors is the pedestrian pathway that allows visitors to circulate among the smaller businesses that Arnold has to offer as opposed to the Pittsburgh Mills Mall. A larger residential area then completely surrounds and supports the local businesses.
Not only will re-centering the downtown allow for more natural light and activity, but with the newly defined axis, one is able to walk from one residential area to another via the pedestrian bridge and pedestrian pathway. The perpendicular street closest to the station is left open for vehicles to allow for parking steady vehicular circulation during the day. A new multi-family apartment is proposed to the north of train station along with a green space that surrounds the multi-family complex to the south. The perspective shows the intersection of the residential area with the proposed pedestrian path depicting what it may look like walking home from a long day at work. The axonometric drawing gives an idea of how the train station becomes a featured destination spot that can be seen from the residential area at the other end.
Introduction
The proposed transit system will impact the surrounding region in many different ways. It will provide New Kensington/Arnold residents access to the surrounding region and ultimately to downtown Pittsburgh. Additionally, this system will also provide residents in the region the opportunity to travel to all of the proposed transit stops - one of those being New Kensington/Arnold.

As a result, urban design, planning, public policy and community involvement are all critical components to the overall success of the transit system. It is within this context that we have decided to study how the transit system will impact the central business district in NKA. One of the first steps in this effort was to conduct a market study of the area and region.

Market Study
A comprehensive market study is comprised of many factors. These factors include the history of the community, public transportation, infrastructure (roads, sewers and water), school district information, zoning, community demographics, community assets, green spaces, public amenities and a business component. Furthermore, we decided to focus this study on the business development component of the market study.

It is our belief that businesses will play a critical role in the development of the urban core in NKA. We have identified two specific surveys that will help us to map out the current business climate in NKA.

CTAC Survey
To create an understanding of the current business climate, we modeled our survey after the Community Technical Assistance Center (CTAC) survey. This survey creates a baseline inventory of the types of businesses that currently exist in the central business district. This survey is a parcel based system that records the parcel number, property and land use, existing building conditions and occupancy status of the specific business. Furthermore, this survey collects information on off-street parking and type of business that currently exists. Since all of this information is based on the parcel number and the perception of the building conditions, it does not necessitate the involvement of the property owner.

The CTAC survey is significant because it provides information pertaining to land-use and occupancy status. However, the CTAC survey does not provide other vital pieces of information. The Wisconsin Main Street (WMS) survey will assist to shore up some of the holes left by the CTAC survey.
Wisconsin Main Street Survey

The WMS survey targets the same central business district but collects information on marketing, workforce and employment statistics, total square footage, business challenges and opportunities, and finally, sales information.

The WMS survey targets specific marketing, sales and workforce to be able to provide the necessary information to formulate an analysis of the business climate in the region. While the CTAC survey provides information that is relatively accessible to the general public, the WMS survey inquires about more sensitive information. Depending on how the business owners respond, we may create an anonymous portion of the survey where business owners may feel more comfortable to answer questions pertaining to sales and revenue information.

The reason this survey is important to our study is because it provides us with the opportunity to conduct a leakage and void analysis based on the participation and results of the survey. Based on the Bureau of Labor Statistics, individuals spend a specific portion of their per capita income on specific goods and services.2 If we are able to document the revenue of the businesses within New Kensington/Arnold, we will be able to conclude whether or not businesses are capturing their fair share of the local economy, or if they are allowing dollars to “leak” from or leave the community.

The following table provides an analysis of the estimated population and per capita income of NKA and the aggregated estimated total expenditure potential for these two cities.

This model focuses heavily on the retail portion of the purchasing potential of New Kensington/Arnold. Additionally, this model does not account for the projected growth that may potentially occur as a result of a new commuter transit line.

Table: Purchasing Power of New Kensington/Arnold

| Total Estimated 2003 Population | 20,368 |
| Estimated 2003 Per Capita Income | $14,545.48 |

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<th>% of PCI</th>
<th>Per Capita Retail Sales</th>
<th>Est. Total Exp Potential</th>
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<td>Convenience Goods</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food stores Selling Liquor</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
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<td>All other food stores</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
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<td>1.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>General merchandise</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>$1,192.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home furnishing &amp; household appliances</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>$218.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialty retail</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>$669.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison goods subtotal</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td>$2,283.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating and drinking</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>$669.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total expected retail expenditure potential</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
<td>$4,683.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mills Mall

Additionally, to understand the impact that the proposed commuter transit line could potentially have on the business community of New Kensington/Arnold (NKA), it is imperative to map out the existing economic conditions that currently exist within this community. Specifically, it is important to understand any potential projects that are under construction in the broader region. One such project is the development of the Pittsburgh Mills Mall.

The Mills Corporation is a self-managed real estate investment trust that owns, develops, leases, acquires, redevelops, expands and manages retail and entertainment destinations. The most recent Mills Corporation endeavor is the Pittsburgh Mills Mall which is scheduled to open during the Spring of 2005. This 285 million dollar project is estimated to generate approximately 3,900 jobs during the construction phase as well as 2,230 full time equivalent jobs during the operation phase. Sales are expected to top 450 million and the taxes are anticipated to generate over 3 million dollars for the Deer Lakes School Districts, Allegheny County and the City of Frazer.

This suggests that the Pittsburgh Mills Mall has the potential to benefit as well as damage the NKA local economy. The potential benefits of the Mills Mall are twofold. These benefits include employment opportunities for NKA residents during construction and operation and an expanded economic base and traffic count that the local businesses may be able to capitalize on.

The potential drawbacks are much more severe. While the Mills Mall may potentially create an expanded economy that NKA could hopefully spillover into their economy, the creation of the Mills Mall may also negatively impact the NKA economy. Specifically, the Mills Mall has the potential to create an economic vacuum in the region, providing a one-stop destination center for consumers in the region. This in turn would attract most retail consumers away from the smaller cities and towns, like NKA, and potentially devastate the local economy.

(Footnotes)
1 www.millscorp.com
2 www.PittsburghLIVE.com

Analysis and Action Plan

Our intention is to conduct both of the surveys in the central business district next semester. More importantly, we hope to create an analysis and action plan based on the survey results that will be of value to the various small business owners in New Kensington/Arnold. The four specific areas that we plan to elaborate on are as follows:

- Identify organizations that provide technical assistance to small businesses
- Identify foundations, organizations and/or government agencies that provide financial incentives to small businesses
- Outline a Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats (S.W.O.T.) analysis
- Initiate a branding/imaging campaign to discover what comparative advantages NKA possesses
Policy Analysis: The Impact of Commuter Rail on Property Values in New Kensington/Arnold

In 1999, the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC) investigated the possibility of establishing a commuter rail link between New Kensington/Arnold and Pittsburgh’s Strip District. The study noted that the Allegheny Valley Railroad (AVR), which provides freight service between the downtowns of the two cities and the city of Pittsburgh’s Strip District, runs trains only at night. This fact gives the Pittsburgh region an unusual opportunity for establishing commuter rail.

Many cities across North America have experienced home property value increases near terminals located on newly established commuter rail lines. These increases occur because of decreased household transportation costs and because of the convenience of living near a commuter rail line. Cities where property value increases occurred include:

- Toronto—where property values increased by as much as 107% for properties located near terminals
- Philadelphia—where a $1 savings in household transportation costs added an average of $443 to the value of each property
- Atlanta and Washington D. C.—where properties near terminals show increased values of $3 to $4 per square foot.

New Kensington and Arnold have suffered from low property valuations, and thus low property tax revenues, for many years. Our studio’s plans for the new community promise to enhance the community’s desirability to prospective land buyers. The rail line stands to complement this new development. Because not all cities have experienced the same property value changes—in fact some have experienced property value decreases, due to the prevalence of “car culture” and noise & other nuisances—we will study the elements that impact property values. We will look at the current valuation patterns, the proximity of existing parcels to our proposed rail stops, projected ridership levels and current commuting patterns. In addition we will interview real estate valuation experts to find out what prospective property buyers value in the community.

We intend to ensure that our vision plan incorporates a commuter rail line so as to provide the most beneficial outcome to the New Kensington-Arnold communities.

(Footnotes)
3 M. A. Cockerill and Denise Stanley; “How Will The Centerline Affect Property Values In Orange County?”, Institute for Economic and Environmental Studies; Oct. 28, 2002; http://business.fullerton.edu/iees/octa/CenterLinePropertyValueStudy.pdf

Left Photo source: http://www.marp.org/detroitcommuter.htm, May 2001
Right Photo Source: Urban Lab Studio, October 2003

New Kensington and Arnold’s rail line lies mostly unused. It is a vital asset in reestablishing the vibrancy of the community.
In gaining an understanding of the people and community of New Kensington and Arnold, we saw a great hope in its people. A hope that one day their town would regain the hustle and bustle that once existed, and that others would be equally enamoured by its charm, and be moved to come there to shop, dine and live. Through extensive research and planning, we too have found in ourselves hope for the community, recognizing that there is room for growth, vast amounts of potential for varied activities, and a spirit in the community to drive this process. Our aim is to stimulate ideas and conversation, and point out that their dreams can certainly come true if they are conscious in their efforts to make it happen. In preparation for the possibility of a future rail line to this area, we challenge New Kensington and Arnold to prepare themselves and their cities, welcoming it with open arms and preparing for it through thoughtful redevelopment.

In her book The Death and Life of Great American Cities, Jane Jacobs points out the need for varied uses of buildings within a community, encouraging and stimulating activity and involvement, and giving a city definition. She note, “A mixture of uses, if it is to be sufficiently complex to sustain city safety, public contact and cross-use, needs an enormous diversity of ingredients... City diversity itself permits and stimulates more diversity.” Many of our plans recommend a variety of uses, creating pockets of commercial development, integrating park spaces, carefully placing housing, and providing space for job growth in light industrial buildings. These aim to revitalize New Kensington and Arnold, giving them a new identity, and encouraging and suggesting further growth. Additionally, new growth has the ability to feed back into existing conditions, rejuvenating the existing business districts.

Through extensive community presentations, and individual interviews with business owners, we were impressed by the dedication these citizens have to their community and to each other. While they covet the vibrance of their past, their desire for change in the future remains strong. This unity and enthusiasm should be embraced, as it can only help to drive plans like the ones we have recommended forward to realization. As with any major undertaking such as this, they will have to invest substantial time, energy and funds. The results, however will be tenfold, putting New Kensington and Arnold back on the map, and in creating a new identity, reclaiming the spirit of bygone days.