



# THE ARTS PART OF THE SOLUTION

## YOUNGSTOWN DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

### *Where Less is More*

Youngstown in Mahoning County is shrinking. It has less than half the population it did 40 years ago. Where bustling mills once churned out sheet metal and tubing, there are now abandoned buildings; busy streets once filled with children are now blighted neighborhoods of empty homes. But after waiting decades for boom times to return, the city is now



trying a different strategy: through an initiative dubbed Plan 2010, the city is embracing contraction—“shrinkage,” with fewer residents, services and physical size—as a road to sustainability. Green space is being created. Incentives are offered to homeowners in sparsely populated areas to move to more densely populated ones. And the arts and cultural assets of the area, many of which receive operating and project support from the Ohio Arts Council, are being positioned as the center of the recovery.

The city’s rich past means it has abundant treasures worth

celebrating. Federal Plaza and Federal Street are home to an amazing array of architectural jewels of early 20th century architecture, including the classical Sky Bank Building (1909), the neo-classical revival Reality Building (1924), and what was once a grand theater. And today, the Raymond Jean Wean Foundation is funding “an exploration of the arts and culture in Mahoning County”—specifically the Federal Plaza corridor, once a thriving retail hub in downtown Youngstown. A large-scale project is being developed in the warehouse of nationally-known artist James Pernotto, where planners envision an adaptive re-use facility featuring artist live/work space, studios and shops. The Butler Institute of American Art is even considering a satellite exhibition space there. Nearby, more than \$12 million has been invested in a Tech Block business incubator for technology companies and other start-ups.

The Wean Foundation sees the Federal Plaza Corridor as nothing short of “the key to revitalizing downtown Youngstown.” The project is still in the conceptual stages but is gaining momentum and support. Change won’t happen overnight, but the mood is shifting—and you can feel it. Today, Youngstown remains an example of Rust Belt glory days gone by, where streetscapes turned to eyesores and once-proud homes became empty lots. But tomorrow, with the vision of community leaders and an economic revitalization plan that embraces the arts, innovation and imagination, Youngstown’s best days may yet be ahead of it.

Economic  
Development

Downtown  
Revitalization

MAHONING COUNTY  
Youngstown, Ohio



*The Federal Plaza Corridor is nothing short of “the key to revitalizing downtown Youngstown.”*

Raymond Jean Wean Foundation