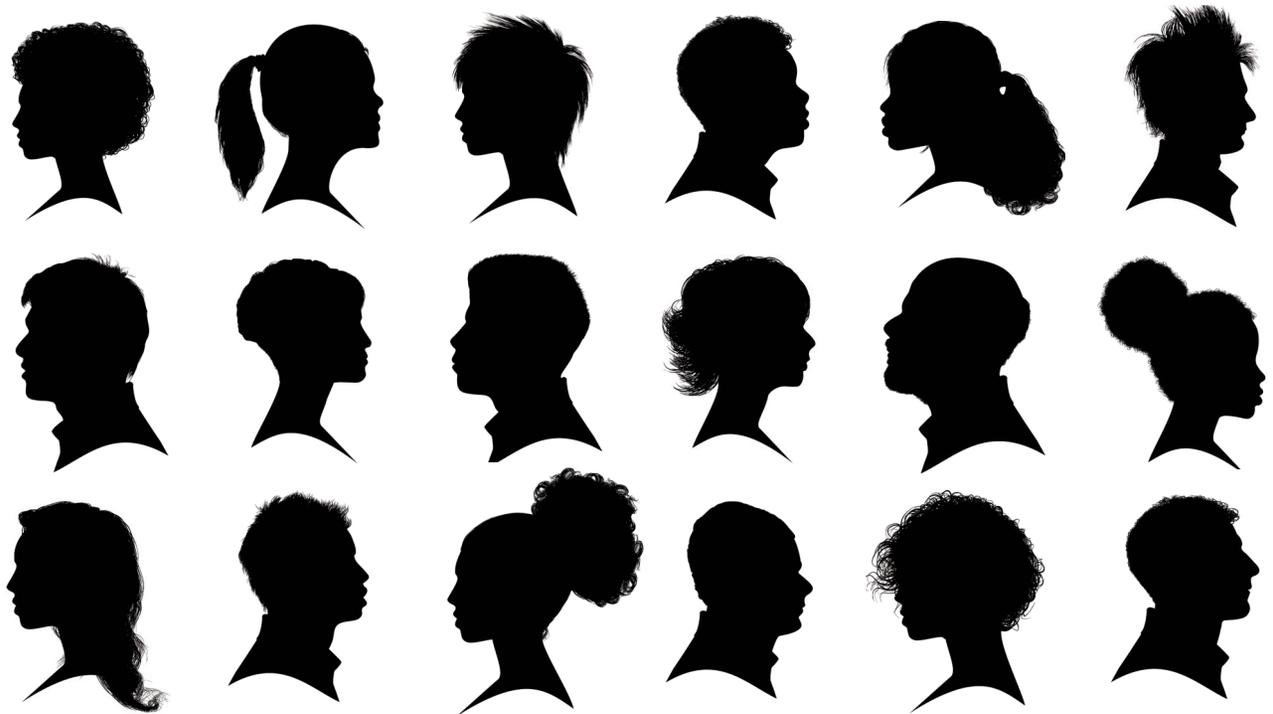


Pittsburgh TODAY

YOUNG ADULTS REPORT 2012



INTRODUCTION

The young adult population in any region is a preview of its future. For much of the past three decades, that has been a topic of concern around Greater Pittsburgh. The notion that the region is losing its young adults like few other places in the country became a mantra, a steady drumbeat—a local truism that’s no longer true. Young adults are moving into the region at a steady rate. Impressive numbers are settling in City of Pittsburgh neighborhoods. The region is getting younger. And those demographic changes portend future economic and civic strength for the region.

What follows is an in-depth look at who these young adults are who’ll shape our region in the coming years, from the demographic trends that deflate the myth of their steady exodus to their views on regional issues and experiences living and working in Pittsburgh and surrounding counties.

This report draws on PittsburghTODAY’s own reporting, extensive data and recent research, including a major regional survey and five focus groups, conducted by our research partners at the University of Pittsburgh’s Urban Center for Social &

Urban Research. The Pittsburgh Regional Quality of Life Survey asked 120 questions of more than 1,800 residents of the 32-county Pittsburgh region, including more than 400 young adults, aged 18–34. Completed in the spring of 2012, it stands as the most extensive survey to examine the Greater Pittsburgh region in more than a century.

We hope you’ll read the following report, written by PittsburghTODAY Senior Editor Jeffery Fraser, to gain a better understanding of the facts, behaviors and thoughts of our region’s young adults. Attracting and retaining talented young people is essential to the future of any region, and Pittsburgh is positioned well to attract more than its share. If you’d like to view the complete survey data and focus group transcripts, we invite you to visit the special reports section of pittsburghtoday.org, where you’ll find that information posted.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the support of The Benter Foundation, which made this project on young adults possible.

Douglas Heuck, Director of PittsburghTODAY
October 2012

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Young adults play a crucial role in defining southwestern Pennsylvania today and in the coming years as workers, consumers, parents, neighbors, voters and leaders.

This report draws the most comprehensive profile to date of the young men and women who are so vital to the region's future. It is based on PittsburghTODAY's reporting, as well as an extensive regional survey and focus groups conducted jointly by PittsburghTODAY and its colleagues at the University of Pittsburgh University Center for Social and Urban Research (UCSUR).

Here is a summary of the findings reported in more detail in the pages that follow.

★ The complete young adult data from the 120-question Pittsburgh Regional Quality of Life Survey and the transcripts from five young adult focus group sessions conducted this summer are available on the PittsburghTODAY website in the special reports section: pittsburghtoday.org/special_reports.html

||| YOUNG ADULT POPULATION TRENDS

The collapse of steel and other industries that had been the bedrock of the region's economy led young adults to leave by the tens of thousands in the 1980s, leaving a lingering impression of southwestern Pennsylvania as a place that struggles more than most to attract and retain young people. However, U.S. Bureau of Census and other data paint a more positive picture.

- The exodus was brief. At its peak in 1984, an estimated 50,000 residents left, and more than 70 percent of them were under the age of 39. By 1994, fewer than 9,000 residents were leaving the region. Young people made up a much smaller portion of those who departed, while retirees accounted for a larger share.
- Over the past five years, the population of 20-34-year-olds in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Statistical Area grew by 7 percent.
- An economic forecasting model used by the UCSUR predicts that population will grow another 8 percent by 2020.

Moreover, domestic migration has recently been positive. The majority of those who migrate into or out of a region are better-educated young adults in pursuit of job opportunities.

- In 2011, 3,740 more people moved into the region than moved out, continuing a trend that began in 2009. The region is drawing the largest number of migrants from Philadelphia, Washington, D.C. and New York.
- Some 70 percent of new arrivals are under the age of 35 and most are between 22 and 34. Such trends have several implications.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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- The education level of 25–34-year-olds has risen to where the region now has a young adult workforce that’s among the best educated in the nation. The Pittsburgh MSA ranks fifth in the nation for workers aged 25–34 with at least a bachelor’s degree and is one of only three regions where more than 20 percent of young workers hold advanced degrees.
- The City of Pittsburgh is getting decidedly younger. For example, the city’s population of 18-to-24-year-olds rose 17 percent from 2000 to 2010. Fifty neighborhoods experienced an increase. In 32 of them, the young adult population rose by 10 percent or more.



||| DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

The Pittsburgh Regional Quality of Life Survey conducted by UCSUR and PittsburghTODAY involved extensive interviews with more than 1,800 residents in the Pittsburgh MSA and 25 surrounding counties. Included were 417 young adults, aged 18-34, whose responses provide statistical characteristics of that population. Here are the highlights of those data:

- Nearly 77 percent of young adults have lived in the region for at least a decade.
- More than 59 percent live in homes they or their families own.
- Nearly half of young adults in the region earn at least \$50,000 a year or more and 22 percent

report earnings of \$75,000 or more.

- However, young adults are more likely than residents overall to report having difficulty paying their monthly bills, such as their rent or mortgage, water and electric.
- Although 9 in 10 young adults rate their health as good to excellent, 94 percent report stress levels ranging from mild to severe.
- More than 18 percent of young adults are without health insurance, making them the least likely of any age group in the region to have coverage.
- Young adults are much more likely than other age groups to frequently use public transportation.
- They are the most likely age group to attend an art or cultural event or visit a local museum or gallery more than 20 times a year.
- Fewer than 4 percent report having been a victim of a violent crime, but that is more than twice the rate reported by residents overall. And more than 1 in 4 of young adults were victims of property crime in the past year.
- Young adults have the lowest rates of voter participation of any age group. In fact, 1 in 4 report they never vote, even in presidential elections.



||| YOUNG ADULT PERSPECTIVES

The Pittsburgh Regional Quality of Life Survey data and focus group discussions among young

adults provide insight into their views on issues from the quality of life in the region to education, government and environment.

The survey, for example, found that:

- Most young adults give the region high marks for its quality of life with more than 47 percent rating it as excellent or very good. Only 5 percent rate it as poor.
- Nearly half of young adults say race relations are a problem in their neighborhoods, to some degree, although fewer than 4 percent describe the problem as severe.
- Pollution in the region's streams and rivers is of greater concern to young adults than the quality of the air they breathe. In fact, 52 percent feel air quality is not a problem at all.
- A majority of young adults advocate spending more on roads and bridges, schools, and on job creation and economic development in the region.
- Young adults are the least likely of any age group to favor spending less on teachers to balance school budgets.
- And 3 of 4 young adults consider arts education a "very" or "extremely" important component of a public school curriculum.

UCSUR's Qualitative Data Analysis Program further explored what young adults think about the region in a series of focus group sessions conducted this summer for PittsburghTODAY. The findings offer insight into the views and experiences of 32 recent college graduates, young adults who play a role in shaping the region and young adults with less than a bachelor's degree.

For example:

- The region's relatively low cost of living, universities, and cultural and recreational amenities

were among the positive qualities most often mentioned in focus groups by young adults, regardless of their level of education, leadership status or whether they were natives of southwestern Pennsylvania or transplants from other cities and regions.

- Public transportation issues were immediately identified in every focus group session as a regional weakness with complaints ranging from the cost of fares to unreliable service, recent service cuts and outdated payment procedures.
- Some young adults identified the job market as one of the region's strengths, while others viewed it as a weakness. In many cases, the local job market in their field influenced their views.
- Regardless of their education or background, the majority of young adults in the focus groups viewed the region as fairly diverse. But segregation by neighborhood was an issue raised by recent college graduates and young adults in positions of leadership.
- Entertainment, and recreational and cultural opportunities received favorable comments from many young adults for their quality and the variety of options available.
- And several young adults, particularly those in positions of leadership, felt there are ample opportunities for them to initiate change in southwestern Pennsylvania, perhaps more than in larger metropolitan regions. ■



THE YOUNG PEOPLE MYTH

PITTSBURGH IS ATTRACTING TALENTED YOUNG
WORKERS AND COULD BE POISED TO BECOME
ONE OF THE NATION'S MOST YOUTHFUL CITIES

written by **JEFFERY FRASER**

IN THE NOT-TOO-DISTANT PAST, Border Guard Bob was thought to have been a good idea. He was the face of a short-lived marketing campaign to staunch the flow of Pittsburgh's young to other cities, a problem perceived by some of the region's civic-minded to be grave enough to warrant aggressive action. Bob, a fictional character, was to be featured in ads in full uniform and campaign hat—think Smokey Bear—stopping the young at the border and convincing them to stay in a region of overlooked charms. If persuasion didn't work, Bob would hitch a bungee cord to the back bumper of the departing youth's car and confidently proclaim: "He'll be back."

Bob didn't have the job long. His creator, the Pittsburgh Regional Alliance, pulled the plug on the campaign before the ads aired amid criticism over the transparently desperate image of the region he conjured. As it turns out, his services weren't needed in the first place.

Just as Pittsburgh was undergoing a facelift that turned aban-

doned mills and factories and under-used riverfront into upscale shops, restaurants, apartments and bike trails, it was quietly experiencing a demographic shift that belied the hand wringing over whether it had become a place that young people would rather flee than want to be. Far fewer young people were leaving. Demographic modeling predicted that soon more people would move into the region from other cities than would depart and that young, mobile and better-educated migrants would drive the trend.

When the One Young World summit opens in Pittsburgh in October, the 1,500 international millennials expected to attend will arrive in a city and region that data confirm has become more of a destination than a point of departure and one that is getting younger by the day.

The trends have several implications.

Several of Pittsburgh's oldest neighborhoods are being transformed physically and demographically as young adults move into the city at an impressive rate.

The overall education levels of the region's 25-34-year-olds are today among the highest in the nation, which is a competitive advantage when trying to grow an economy. And incoming young talent is taking a little of the edge off of the very real concern over the depth and breadth of the workforce as more and more Baby Boomers age into retirement.

These young adults are also the most frequent users of the region's revenue-hungry public transit system. They're strong supporters of the arts at the box office. Most have lived in the region for at least a decade. And 6 in 10 are homeowners, according to the Pittsburgh Regional Quality of Life Study conducted by the University of Pittsburgh's University Center for Social and Urban Research (UCSUR) and PittsburghTODAY.

Such developments may come as a revelation to some, but Chris Briem is not among them. Briem, a regional economist at UCSUR, has long been haunted by Border Guard Bob and the fact-resistant notion that the region has a problem attracting and retaining the young, having reported evidence to the contrary in papers, op-ed columns, blogs and newsletters for almost two decades.

It's not that the concern over the region's ability to attract and retain young people has never been warranted. It's that it has persisted well beyond the brief period in recent history during which the exodus of young people from southwestern Pennsylvania was truly alarming and has tended to obscure evidence of the steady, marked recovery that has taken place over the past 30 years and is expected to continue well into the future.

The high water mark of the region's youth exodus came in the early 1980s and was a result of the catastrophic collapse of the steel industry that had been the staple of the economy for longer than a century. Broad recessions and industry-specific downturns come and go. But few regions have endured an economic upheaval as severe as the one in southwestern Pennsylvania. More than 100,000 jobs were lost, most of them permanently. And the flight of residents from the region profoundly reshaped its demographic makeup in ways that continue to be seen today.

"The workers who left weren't a cross-section of the region," says Briem. "This was very age-selective. Young people left. Older folks stayed. If you were a young worker concerned about a future career and you saw what was happening around you, you realized this was not the optimal place to be. And not only did the younger people leave, but they took their families and their future families with them."

The wholesale flight of the young was short-lived. At its peak in 1984, an estimated 50,000 residents left, and more than 70 percent of them were under the age of 39. But in 1994, fewer than 9,000 left, according to U.S. Census data. And young people

made up a much smaller portion of those who departed, while retirees accounted for a larger share.

Yet, the perception of a mass migration of young people out of the region lingered. "It's not a recent phenomena that you can say it isn't true that young people are leaving Pittsburgh any more than you would expect," Briem says. "But there is a persistence of memory in Pittsburgh. If you're older and have memories of that period when young people were streaming out you're probably going to believe that until you die."

The huge loss of younger residents in the 1980s, however brief, did leave an indelible mark on southwestern Pennsylvania. The disproportionately large number of older residents who stayed because of family or slim job prospects or other reasons continues to have an impact on the population, which today remains one of the oldest, if not the oldest, in the nation. As a result, the region experiences more deaths than births year in and year out. And that phenomenon has fueled a decline in population, which is often misread as a sign that residents, particularly young people, leave in numbers greater than in other places.

In fact, the region's population of 20-34-year-olds grew by 7 percent over the past five years, and the economic forecasting model used by UCSUR researchers predicts it will grow another 8 percent by 2020. And last year, 3,740 more people moved into the region than moved out, continuing a trend that began in 2009. While gaining 3,740 people might seem a meager accomplishment, it's a stunning reversal of the region's fortunes considering the 50,000 net loss endured in 1984 at the peak of the out-migration nightmare.

These newcomers arrive from cities across the nation with the largest numbers coming from Philadelphia, Washington, D.C. and New York. For the most part, they are the very people Border Guard Bob was assigned to round up. "Whenever you see a turnaround in migration, it's going to be driven by the flow of younger workers," Briem says.

Celia Franklin is among the recent wave of newcomers. The 26-year-old Chicago native and her husband of a few months decided to leave Washington, D.C., where she recently earned a law degree, to settle in Pittsburgh, where she took a job at the law firm Buchanan Ingersoll and Rooney. "I wasn't going to decide on a city first," she says. "The most important thing was the job.

I thought the firm was great. The people were very friendly and professional. And they had an opening in their energy group, which is the type of law I'm especially interested in. It was after I decided I liked the firm that I asked myself whether I could see myself living in this city."

IN **1984**, AN ESTIMATED
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THE YOUNG PEOPLE MYTH

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Southwestern Pennsylvania has weathered the recent recession and sluggish recovery better than many other areas, which, economists say, is contributing to the upswing in people migrating to the region. Its 7.1 percent seasonally adjusted jobless rate in July, for instance, was significantly lower than the national rate. Over the past four years, the seven-county Pittsburgh Metropolitan Statistical Area gained more jobs than it lost—an accomplishment that eluded all 14 of the other benchmark regions tracked by PittsburghTODAY.

Some 20 years ago, Border Guard Bob and other equally eclectic schemes were born from the worry that in a region leaking population there wouldn't be enough young talent left to fill the jobs necessary to grow and sustain the new, diverse economy led by medicine, technology, research and education that was rising from the shadows of idled smokestack industries.

The technology sector spinning out from university research labs was seen as particularly vulnerable, says Timothy Parks, director of business development at the Pittsburgh law firm of Morgan Lewis, who during the 1990s was director of the trade group, Pittsburgh Technology Council, and, later, the Pittsburgh Regional Alliance. Several success stories, such as FORE Systems, the computer network equipment company started by four Carnegie Mellon University professors that employed some 1,000 workers, offered convincing evidence that ideas coming out of local computer science, engineering and medical schools could spawn a robust new industry. "The thinking at that point was that we needed more people—people, people, people. We needed more young people and to get them we had to find a way of overcoming the baked-in perception of Pittsburgh as an industrial city going down the tubes, a dead end."

It was determined that the task required unconventional marketing concepts aimed at young talent that were "cool and hip and spoke their language." Border Guard Bob was thought to fit the criteria. The "mystery city" project was another concept born from such thinking. In that one, technology workers in California's Silicon Valley would be offered an all-expense paid trip to an undisclosed location described in terms that made it seem like heaven on earth. Only before boarding the plane would they be told it was Pittsburgh. But word leaked out, solving the mystery for anyone who cared and, like Border Guard Bob, the project was abandoned.

The lesson learned from such exercises, says Parks, is that while southwestern Pennsylvania can spread the word of its charm and attributes, marketing campaigns can't engineer what

it takes to convince someone to pull up stakes and relocate to the region. "There's no question that jobs and opportunity are what attracts people. People usually don't move to a city just to try it out. That's the way life is. What we're seeing today is the result of Pittsburgh having become a multi-faceted landscape of opportunity."

That economic diversity is reflected in the types of jobs that are luring out-of-towners to the region. The fields attracting the greater share of migrants range from life, physical and social sciences to healthcare, according to an UCSUR analysis of 2006-2010 data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey.

Today, the question isn't whether the region offers a diverse menu of job opportunities, but whether the market in specialized fields is deep enough to accommodate a greater number of highly educated young professionals eager to work here.

Lee Goldfarb, 29, wants to return to southwestern Pennsylvania someday. But that depends on whether the Sewickley native, who has an MBA, can find work compatible with his career path. College led him to leave the region. A job at a bank landed him in Philadelphia after graduation. And an opportunity to work at Booz Allen Hamilton, a McLean, Va. management and technology consulting firm, kept him within the Washington D.C. beltway for the better part of four years. "Opportunities in Pittsburgh are few and far between compared to places like New York, [Washington] D.C., San Francisco and Boston. When you're trying to make a career after you graduate from college, that's a pretty big deterrent."

Thomas Donahue has heard similar stories, although they don't apply to him. The 29-year-old, who grew up in Fox Chapel, is an attorney in the Pittsburgh office of the law firm Dinsmore & Shohl. He is also chairman of Propel Pittsburgh, a city commission of young Pittsburghers that advises Mayor Luke Ravenstahl and city council on policy matters important to young people. "It depends on the field," he says. "If you want to stay and work as a doctor you'll find a lot of opportunities. But I have friends who are passing the CFA [Chartered Financial Analyst exam] and now are demanding a higher salary and there aren't enough jobs in Pittsburgh for them."

And that's a difficult issue for Propel Pittsburgh, or city government in general, to get their arms around. "I think what it will take is to attract bigger businesses and generate growth in the kind of jobs those professionals want, because they want to be here."

Beyond jobs, quality of life issues, such as the cost of living,



THE REGION'S
POPULATION OF
20-34
YEAR OLDS
GREW BY

7%

IN THE PAST **5 YEARS**

BEST AND BRIGHTEST

are also important factors people consider when choosing a place to live and work. An attractive housing market, for instance, was one of the measures that led Moving.com to rank Pittsburgh among its 10 best cities for millennials this year.

What makes a housing market attractive? Appreciating prices, available housing that middle class families can afford and a low rate of foreclosure, according to Forbes Magazine. In 2010, Forbes reported that southwestern Pennsylvania has all three and identified it as having the most attractive market in the country.

Nick Smyth lives in Washington, D.C. in an apartment near Dupont Circle not far from the U.S. Treasury, where the Harvard University graduate works as an enforcement attorney for the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. He grew up in Sewickley with Lee Goldfarb and, like his friend, has designs on returning to the region. In fact, Smyth has set 2013 as his deadline for doing so. His list of reasons is long, but high on it is the region's budget-friendly cost of living.

"I miss being able to buy a beer for \$2 on Saturday night and having a really nice apartment that I can afford," he says. "I'd love to buy a place and be able to enjoy the outdoors. Pittsburgh has the rivers and bike trails. D.C. has the Mall, which is beautiful, and there are places where you can live and have outdoor space. But they're completely unaffordable. If you want to live near a park in Georgetown you might as well live in Manhattan."

After taking the job at Buchanan Ingersoll and Rooney, Franklin signed a lease with the Heinz Lofts, the upscale North Shore apartment complex of renovated century-old H.J. Heinz Co. buildings. For what she was paying for a studio apartment in Washington, D.C. she now has a two-bedroom within walking

PITTSBURGH'S YOUNGER WORKFORCE NEARS THE TOP IN EDUCATION

SOUTHWESTERN Pennsylvania's young adults provide a glimmer of hope that the region will be able to meet the daunting challenge of sustaining economic growth as its workforce rapidly ages in the coming years.

An aging workforce certainly isn't a concern exclusive to southwestern Pennsylvania. But the retirement of Baby Boomers, who number about 76 million nationwide, is particularly worrisome in a region that experienced a demographic upheaval three decades earlier when the collapse of the steel industry sent tens of thousands of young adults looking elsewhere for work, leaving a population that's grown older than most.

There are other challenges as well. The region's workforce is lacking in diversity, with no quick fix in sight. And there are serious questions about whether there will be enough less-educated workers capable of filling a growing number of middle-skill jobs that require a high-level of training, but not a four-year degree, such as electricians, legal assistants, healthcare workers and machinists.

The good news is that more people are moving to southwestern Pennsylvania than leaving. And 7 in 10 of the new arrivals are under the age of 35, mostly between the ages of 22 and 34.

Most are coming for jobs, or to look for them. The jobs they come for cover a

broad range of fields, but those that attract the greatest share of young migrants are in the life, physical and social sciences, computer and mathematical fields, architecture and engineering, healthcare, education, and business and financial operations, according to a University of Pittsburgh Center for Urban and Social Research analysis of U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey data from 2006 through 2010.

As those jobs suggest, much of the growth in regional employment is being seen in professions that demand a high level of education, often a college education. And in that regard, southwestern Pennsylvania's younger workers have become one of its greatest strengths going forward.

More than 48 percent of the region's workers aged 25-34 have at least a bachelor's degree. That's fifth highest in the nation, behind Boston, San Francisco, Washington, D.C. and Austin, according to Current Population Survey data compiled in 2010 by the Census Bureau and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Southwestern Pennsylvania is also one of only three regions in the country where more than 20 percent of young workers hold advanced degrees. And no other large metropolitan region has a smaller percentage of 25-35-year-olds who failed to earn a high school diploma. ■

distance of downtown and access to Three Rivers Park, part of a waterfront park system of walking and bike trails along the city's three rivers that connects with the Great Allegheny Passage to Washington, D.C. "I wanted a place on the bus line that was close enough to walk to work," she says. "I also wanted to be in a young

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THE YOUNG PEOPLE MYTH

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neighborhood, not in the suburbs. And being close to the river and trail is exciting.”

She is a member of a generation that studies suggest are much more likely to prefer living in a walkable, vibrant, diverse

REVERSE GRAYING

CITY NEIGHBORHOODS SHOW STRONG GROWTH IN YOUNG ADULTS

A SHARP INCREASE IN YOUNG RESIDENTS is reshaping many of Pittsburgh’s neighborhoods and helping it shed its image of as an aging city.

U.S. Census data show that over the past decade Pittsburgh gained more young people while it lost a significant share of its older residents.

City residents aged 18 to 24, for example, rose 17 percent in the decade from 2000 to 2010. No fewer than 50 city neighborhoods are experiencing an increase in young residents. And in 32 of those neighborhoods, the young adult population has risen 10 percent or more.

The city’s senior population, meanwhile, fell by more than 23 percent over the last decade, and nearly half of the city’s 80 neighborhoods lost more than a quarter of their residents aged 65 or older.

“Most demographic shifts are pretty evolutionary. They happen over a long time and you tend to notice them a decade after they happen,” says Chris Briem, a regional economist with the University of Pittsburgh’s University Center for Social and Urban Research. “There is nothing subtle or slow about what we are seeing in some of these neighborhoods.”

Although Pittsburgh continues to lose people to the suburbs, the losses aren’t occurring evenly across the city. In fact, the populations of 14 neighborhoods are growing, including the Strip District, near North Side, South Side and in around the university district of Oakland.

In general, those neighborhoods added new houses and apartments and had available housing that young adults find attractive. And with few exceptions, they experienced an increase in their young adult populations. ■

urban community than the generations that came before them. And it is not just new arrivals who are looking to settle in the city. Having been raised in the north suburb of Franklin Park, 26-year-old Annie Clough moved to the city’s Shadyside neighborhood last year when she was hired as programming and member development manager of Pittsburgh Urban Magnet Project, a nonprofit that connects the young and “young-thinking” to the city and one another through civic engagement, a sports league and other projects.

“Since moving, I’ve discovered a whole different part of the city and culture I didn’t know existed,” says Clough, who is among the 65 percent of the nonprofit’s 6,000 members who live within the city limits. “I was Pittsburgh’s Number One fan, but I didn’t know about a lot of its amenities or just how accessible everything is until I lived here.”

Economic modeling suggests the number of southwestern Pennsylvania residents under the age of 34 will continue to grow in the coming years, which is a good thing for a region whose oversized elderly population foretells of steep workforce challenges in the not-too-distant future. Pending retirements among Baby Boomers worry regional development experts, as does the prospect of encountering a shortage of less-educated workers who are able to adapt to the demands of a growing number of middle-skill jobs.

Just as troubling, southwestern Pennsylvania is one of the least diverse regions in the country at a time when diversity is a top selling point among corporations looking to expand, as well as young migrants shopping for a place to call home. “What we’ve heard from some companies is that they want to grow jobs in Pittsburgh, but they can’t find the diverse talent here. So those jobs are being filled in other cities where they have operations,” says Laura Fisher, senior vice president for special projects at the Allegheny Conference on Community Development.

While southwestern Pennsylvania has its work cut out for it, it also has some promising leads. With more than three dozen colleges and universities in the area, for example, there is an ample pool of young, diverse talent to draw upon, including foreign-born students, whom the region has struggled to attract. “If we’re to continue to grow the region and the economy we not only have to make sure that we have skilled workers for the jobs that will be available, but that we also have a diverse pool of talent to offer,” Fisher says. “The good news is that if we do this right, we could end up with one of the youngest populations in the country.” ■

DRILLING DOWN

THE PITTSBURGHTODAY SURVEY UNVEILS THE
FACTS ABOUT PITTSBURGH'S YOUNG ADULTS

THEY ARE THE SOURCE FROM WHICH community leaders will emerge. Their numbers and skills will define the region's workforce and the health of its economy for years to come. As citizens, they will shape the future of southwestern Pennsylvania.

Who are these young adults upon whose shoulders so much rests? What are their financial situations, housing arrangements, levels of education, voting habits? What are their views on where tax dollars are best spent and whether the air is clean enough or the rivers too polluted? What do they think about the quality of life the region has to offer? Are they happy?

Answers to those and other questions are found in the Pittsburgh Regional Quality of Life Survey, the most extensive survey of Greater Pittsburgh residents since the historic Pittsburgh Survey was published more than a century ago.

The survey was conducted by the University of Pittsburgh University Center for Social and Urban Research and the regional indicators project, PittsburghTODAY. Its findings are based on interviews with more than 1,800 residents that were completed in November 2011. The residents interviewed lived in a 32-county region that included the seven-county Pittsburgh Metropolitan Statistical and surrounding counties in four states. The 120 questions they were asked focused on categories ranging from overall

quality of life to the economy, environment and their health.

Among those interviewed were 417 residents aged 18–34. The facts and views they offered allowed researchers to draw a statistical profile of young adults in the Greater Pittsburgh area that is the most comprehensive to date. The complete survey data for that age group can be found on the PittsburghTODAY website in the special reports section at www.pittsburghtoday.org/special_reports.html. What follows are the highlights of their responses and a glimpse of the lives and the perspectives of the young adults who are so important to the future of the region.

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DEMOGRAPHICS

? What best describes your household's total annual income?

	AGE 18-34	ALL RESIDENTS
\$150,000 +	3%	5.6%
\$100,000-149,000	3.8%	8.1%
\$75,000-99,999	15%	14.5%
\$50,000-74,999	26.9%	21.9%
\$25,000-49,999	27.9%	29.2%
UNDER \$24,999	23.4%	20.6%

DRILLING DOWN

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||| OVERALL QUALITY OF LIFE

While it's true that young adults are more likely than other age groups to have lived in the region for fewer than five years, nearly 77 percent have made it their home for at least a decade. And, like all residents, a sizable majority award the region high marks for its quality of life.

More than 47 percent of residents aged 18–34 rate the quality of life as excellent or very good. Only 5 percent of young adults think the quality of life in the region is poor. The majority of young adults, like most residents, feel the quality of life has remained the same over the past year. And while one-third of young adults perceive the quality of life as having declined, they are one of the least likely age groups to feel that way.

||| NEIGHBORHOOD

Young adults are much more likely to give their neighborhood high marks as a place to live than not. One reason, perhaps, is that young adults in the region tend to see their neighborhoods as friendly places with more than 8 in 10 saying their neighbors will help others when needed.

More than one in three residents aged 18–34 rate their

neighborhood as excellent or very good. Another 31 percent give their neighborhood a “good” rating. Only 5.5 percent describe their neighborhood as “poor.”

Some 59 percent of young adults in the 32-county region covered by the survey live in neighborhoods they describe as being very or somewhat diverse. Such diversity, the survey suggests, has its challenges. Nearly half of young adults say race relations are a problem in their neighborhoods, to some degree, although fewer than 4 percent describe the problem as severe.

Not surprisingly, young adults are about twice as likely to say they expect to move from their current residence in the coming years than residents of all ages combined. But that doesn't necessarily mean they'll move to a different home or neighborhood in the region. Only about 63 percent see themselves living in the region five years from now—a retention rate far lower than any other age group.

||| ENVIRONMENT

Although the smoky skies that had defined southwestern Pennsylvania for the better part of a century cleared decades ago with the decline of heavy industry, the region continues to struggle to reduce ozone and fine particle air pollution. Yet, despite the fact this problem has been widely reported, most residents believe air quality is “not a problem at all,” young adults included.

For young adults, pollution in the region's streams and rivers is of greater concern than the quality of the air they breathe. About 52 percent feel air quality is not a problem, but only 29 percent feel the same about river and stream pollution.

Slightly more young adults feel the overall environmental quality of the region is becoming worse than believe it is getting better. And they are three times more likely to favor greater state government oversight of the environment than less.

Extracting natural gas shale beds that lie beneath southwestern Pennsylvania and many parts of West Virginia and Ohio is another high-profile regional issue. It is also one that young adults are much less likely to follow than residents overall.

Their views of the issue are mixed. On one hand, about twice as many young adults support natural gas drilling than oppose it,

GOVERNMENT

? Should your local government increase spending, spend the same amount or cut spending on schools?

	AGE 18-34	ALL RESIDENTS
INCREASE SPENDING	61.2%	53.3%
SPEND SAME AMOUNT	28.6%	34.5%
CUT SPENDING	10.2%	12.1%

? How often do you vote?



and 9 in 10 believe it offers at least some degree of economic opportunity. On the other hand, more than 82 percent see it as a threat to the environment and public health, and more than one in five describe it as a “significant threat.”

||| GOVERNMENT

Even as local governments struggle to make ends meet, a majority of young adults advocate spending more on roads and bridges, schools, and on job creation and economic development in the region. Whether such sentiments will have an impact on the political landscape is unclear given that, come Election Day, young adults are the least likely of any age group to vote.

Investing more public dollars for economic development and job creation is top on the list of spending priorities, drawing the support of 72 percent of young adults. More than 61 percent favor spending more on schools and 59 percent advocate spending more to improve roads and other critical infrastructure. Young adults are also more likely than other residents to support spending more on human services, public safety, and parks and recreation, although, in each case, the majority favors keeping spending levels the same.

In terms of their political leanings, more young adults in the 32 county, multi-state survey area describe themselves as conservative than liberal. But the majority identify themselves as politically moderate.

Regardless of their political persuasion, 1 in 4 young adults never vote, even in presidential races. Not only is that the highest rate of Election Day no-shows among age groups, but it’s four times greater than the percentage of 45–64-year-olds who never vote. Young adults also fall short in voting frequency: Nearly 58 percent of all residents vote in every election, but fewer than 28 percent of residents aged 18–34 vote with the same frequency.

||| ARTS

The region’s young adults are active participants and supporters of the arts. They are more likely than older residents to try their hand at creative writing, painting, playing a musical instrument, singing and other art forms. They’re more likely to frequently visit a museum or take in a show. They also feel strongly about keeping art education in the local schools.

TRANSPORTATION



How often do you use public transit?

	AGE 18–34	ALL RESIDENTS
5 DAYS A WEEK OR MORE	11.2%	5.8%
AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK	8.8%	4.6%
AT LEAST ONCE A MONTH	4.9%	4.3%
LESS THAN ONCE A MONTH	15%	13.2%
NEVER	46.6%	55.9%
NONE AVAILABLE	13.4%	16.2%

Young adults tend to support arts and culture more strongly at the box office than through direct donations. In the previous year, more than 38 percent of residents aged 18–34 attended an art or cultural event or visited a museum or gallery at least six times—a rate higher than that of all residents. They’re also more likely than any age group to attend an event or visit a museum more than 20 times a year. And they tend to like what they are experiencing with 2 in 3 rating the quality of the arts and cultural offerings they find as good, very good or excellent.

The notion of keeping art in public school curricula gets a big boost from the region’s young residents; three out of four consider doing so “very” or “extremely” important. Only about three percent feel that the arts as a public school budget item is expendable.

||| TRANSPORTATION

Young adults are much more likely than other age groups to frequently use public transportation. And nearly two in three are satisfied with the local bus or rail service they rely on.

One in five residents aged 18–34 say they use public transportation at least once a week—a frequency of ridership found among only 10.4 percent of all residents. And more than 11 percent of young residents use bus or rail service five days a week, making them the largest age group to rely on public transit every weekday.

Although overall satisfaction with their bus and rail service runs high, young adults are not necessarily pleased with its availability. Nearly 72 percent identify the availability of public transportation as a problem with one in four



HEALTH

? How would you describe your stress level during the past month?



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describing the problem as severe.

As with all residents, there are few young adults who don't see the quality of region's roads and bridges as a problem. When asked about traffic flow along those roads and bridges, about three in four young adults say congestion is a problem as well.

Traveling in and around the City of Pittsburgh is something 26 percent of young residents do at least once a week and 18.5 percent do five days a week. Still, 45 percent say they never travel to the city or do so less than once a month.

||| EDUCATION

Young adults are much less likely to have school-aged children than those who are older. But they do have strong opinions about education. They're more likely to be concerned about the adequacy of public school funding and school safety than residents overall. And they are much less likely to favor spending less on teachers to help balance school budgets.

Nearly two-thirds of all residents of the region feel the financial resources available to their public schools are adequate. But more than 44 percent of young adults consider those funds to be either generally or completely inadequate. That is in stark contrast to residents 65 or older, only 22.4 percent of whom feel school funding falls short of what is needed.

Like all residents, the majority of young adults believe the public schools are safe to some degree. But nearly 18 percent of young adults describe the public schools as somewhat or very unsafe, which makes them the age group

most likely to feel that way.

How schools should reduce spending is a particularly relevant issue at a time when shortfalls in revenues are placing considerable stress on budgets throughout the region. Here, significant differences are found among age groups. The largest gap is in support for cutting teachers and administrators. Nearly 19 percent of residents overall—and more than 26 percent of residents 65 or older—favor cutting funds spent on teachers. But only 10.6 percent young adults believe that spending less on teachers is an appropriate way to balance troubled school budgets.

||| PUBLIC SAFETY

Most residents throughout the region consider their neighborhood to be safer than others and young adults are no exception. And regardless of age, few residents report having been a victim of violent crime. But young adults—those residents aged 18-34—are more likely to have been victim of property crime.

Young adults are more likely than other age groups to feel their neighborhood is both less safe than other neighborhoods and to report an increase in crime over the past year. For instance, although only 13 percent of young adults believe crime is greater in their neighborhood than in others, that is almost three times the rate of adults aged 65 or older who feel the same about where they live. Nearly 1 in 5 young adults feel crime has risen in their neighborhood.

Perhaps such perceptions are colored by the higher rates of victimization found among young adults. Only 3.8 percent report having been a victim of a violent crime, yet that is more than twice the rate reported by residents overall. In addition, more than 1 in 4 young adults have been a victim of property crime, such as burglary or theft, which more than five times higher than the rate reported by residents 65 and older.

Most residents rate the performance of their local police as good, very good or excellent. But fewer young adults tend to do so. For example, only about 14 percent of residents aged 18-34 say police are do an excellent job compared to nearly 31 percent of residents who are 65 or older.

||| HOUSING

Not surprisingly, young adults are less likely to own a home than residents overall. Yet, a majority of them do, which likely reflects the affordability of the region's

housing market.

Some 59 percent of residents aged 18–34 report owning the home in which they live. In the 32-county survey region, the highest rate of homeownership among age groups—88 percent—is found among residents aged 45–64.

Young adults generally give the condition of their housing high marks. Nearly 84 percent rate the physical and structural condition of their home as good, very good or excellent and only three percent assess it as poor. More than eight in 10 give the condition of the housing found in their neighborhood high marks as well.

||| ECONOMY

Young adults are among the residents most likely to be employed in the region. Yet, they more likely than residents overall to report having difficulty paying their monthly bills, such as their rent or mortgage, and water and electric.

More than seven in 10 work a fulltime or part-time job and more than 76 percent work at least 35 hours each week. The employment sectors they work in are almost evenly split between the private sector and public sector with 13.5 percent reporting they work for a non-profit.

Like residents of all age groups, the majority of young adults report never having trouble paying for basic necessities. But nearly 31 percent say they do, at least sometimes, and 12 percent say they often or always have a problem making ends meet. Perhaps it's not surprising that more than one in three young adults feel it would be fairly easy or very easy to find a better job, which is something only 22 percent of residents overall believe to be the case.

On the bright side, financial circumstances are already improving for many young adults in the region. More than 42 percent say their financial situation has improved while fewer than one in four residents overall are able to say the same thing.

||| HEALTH

Younger means healthier, at least in self-reported ratings, in which 90 percent of young adults rate their health as good to excellent. But they're more likely to experience stress than residents overall. And no other age group is more likely to say they couldn't afford to visit a doctor when they needed to during the previous year.

Nearly 94 percent of residents aged 18–34 report stress levels ranging from mild to severe compared to 90 percent of the overall sample of

residents in the region. More than half of young adults rate their stress levels as either moderate or severe.

Health care coverage is a particular concern. More than 18 percent of young adults are without health insurance, making them the least likely of any age group to have coverage. Only 10 percent of all residents are without health insurance. Perhaps it shouldn't come as a surprise that the ability to pay prevented nearly 23 percent of young adults from seeing a doctor in the previous year when they needed to due to illness or another health concern.

||| DEMOGRAPHICS

Studies report the educational attainment of young adults in the southwestern Pennsylvania workforce is among the highest in the nation. The Pittsburgh Regional Quality of Life Survey suggests some reasons why that is. Fewer than four percent of the region's residents aged 18–34, for example, report having less than a high school education.

They are also the most likely age group to use the Internet and rely on cell phones. And in terms of their household incomes, nearly half of young adults in the region earn at least \$50,000 a year or more and 22 percent report earnings of \$75,000 or more.

||| HAPPINESS

Perhaps it's a characteristic of youth or the promise of untold possibilities that lie ahead, but in a region whose residents are pretty happy to begin with, young adults rate themselves among the happiest. ■

ECONOMY

? In the past three years, has your household's financial situation become...



OBSTACLES AND OPPORTUNITIES



FOCUS GROUP
PARTICIPANTS
SEE A CITY WITH
GREAT PROMISE

THIS SUMMER, 32 YOUNG ADULTS MET in Oakland for a series of wide-ranging conversations in which they discussed their thoughts and opinions about southwestern Pennsylvania and anecdotes about what it's like to be young and live and work in the region as a born-and-raised native, as well as a recent arrival from another city.

They discussed the region's strengths and weaknesses, their community involvement, ideas about change, and their views on employment, transportation, diversity, arts and culture and other issues. Affordable living was among the strengths they mentioned most often, as was the region's universities, and the research and ideas that flow from them. When discussions turned to weaknesses, transportation was a common complaint, particularly the reliability of public transit, and the fact that finding a taxi to take them across town is often a fruitless endeavor.

The discussions took place in focus group sessions conducted for PittsburghTODAY by the Qualitative Data Analysis Program of the University of Pittsburgh University Center for Urban and Social Research (UCSUR), which also provided an analysis of the young adults' responses.

Five sessions were held from July 30 to Aug. 30, 2012 with four categories of residents aged 22-34 years: recent college graduates; a "leaders" group of young adults raised in southwestern Pennsylvania who have a role in shaping the region; another leaders group of young adults raised outside the region; and young adults, aged 25-34, who have less than a bachelor's degree.

Data from this small-sample study cannot be generalized across the entire 22-34-year-old southwestern Pennsylvania population. The purpose, instead, is to offer insight into the views of a select group whose backgrounds and circumstances are part of the fabric of that population.

What follows is a summary of those findings, including comments from the young adults themselves. The complete focus group transcripts and the UCSUR report on its analysis of the data is available on the PittsburghTODAY website, in the special reports section: pittsburghtoday.org/special_reports.html.

REGIONAL STRENGTHS

In all of the focus groups, the young adults identified several regional strengths. High on the list was the relatively low cost of living found in southwestern Pennsylvania. Its universities, cultural amenities and recreational opportunities, relatively low rates of crime, job market and professional sports teams were also among the strengths most often identified by the young adults, regardless of their education, leadership status or where they were raised.

"At my work, we have offices on the coasts as well, and we have a lot of people transferring to our office because the cost of living here is substantially reduced, and it's easy to live in a nice place and be able to send your kid to a nice school. And it's harder in the Bay area," said one young adult in the "young leaders" focus group, who had moved to southwestern Pennsylvania from another region of the country within the past three years.

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PITTSBURGH CAN STILL
SURPRISE YOU. I'VE
LIVED HERE PRETTY
MUCH MY WHOLE LIFE
AND I STILL
FIND OUT NEW
THINGS TO DO.



“I’d say the universities are an asset because of investment in forward-looking industries like robotics at [Carnegie Mellon University] and healthcare here, and education and science research,” said a Pittsburgh-born member of the group of young adults in positions of leadership.

Difficult-to-measure qualities, such as the overall friendliness of the region’s residents and sense of community, were also mentioned. And many, but not all, of the young adults said they are usually not at a loss for entertainment, given options that range from Cultural District productions to happenings in the region’s club and bar scene.

“There’s just a lot of stuff to do here,” said a recent college graduate. “There are a lot of cool museums and places to go, and a lot of good restaurants and bars. And it’s very easy to meet friends and family in places, even if it’s not in your neighborhood.”

“Pittsburgh can still surprise you,” said one of the young adults without a college degree. “I’ve lived here pretty much my whole life and I still find out new things to do.”

They also mentioned changes taking place that they see as positive. Examples included the makeover of Market Square in Downtown Pittsburgh; construction of green buildings, such as Phipps Conservatory and PNC’s LEED-certified development; revitalization of the city’s East Liberty neighborhood; and efforts to improve conditions in the distressed Monongahela River community of Braddock. Even young adults who only recently moved to the region recognized such changes.

The young adults in the leadership group also identified less-apparent strengths. “I would say probably the foundation community,” said one in the Pittsburgh-born leaders group. “A lot of non-profits are funded by foundations and [they] fund a lot of vital assets in the community.”

And some felt the region is poised to continue to evolve as an attractive place in which to live and work. “I’d like to see Pittsburgh capitalize on some of its advantages, one of them being that it is kind of a pass-through city and it has that as an opportunity to pull people in,” one recent arrival to the region said. “And I think a lot of the development that’s happened—a lot of friends have moved here because they’ve

come to visit and just been really pleasantly surprised and impressed with the city. I think that Pittsburgh has the ability to do that. It’s able to kind of take advantage of the fact that it’s maybe an underdog right now, but can use that to be affordable and be an open place for people in their 20s.”

REGIONAL WEAKNESSES

Public transportation, Downtown Pittsburgh businesses closing early and the job market were issues identified in all groups of young adults as regional weaknesses.

Public transportation – the Port Authority Transit system, in particular—clearly touched a nerve. Port Authority transit service was immediately mentioned in every focus group session when talk turned to regional weaknesses, drawing a broad range of complaints from the cost of fares to unreliable service, recent service cuts and outdated payment procedures.

Funding shortfalls have led to a series of Port Authority service cuts in recent years. At the time of the focus group sessions, another round of route reductions were scheduled and were often mentioned in the discussions. One young adult referred to them as “Armageddon” and another as “devastating.” The proposed cuts, however, were averted not long after the last focus group met when labor concessions and additional funding from the state and Allegheny County provided the cash-strapped transit agency with short-term relief.

“We covered this in business school—that most CEOs want to move their companies back to their hometown. And



I DON'T KNOW HOW PEOPLE FROM OUTSIDE THE CITY
FIGURE OUT THESE BUS ROUTES... HALF OF THE STOPS
AREN'T LABELED... WHEREAS, YOU CAN GO TO
BOSTON OR D.C. OR NEW YORK AND JUST
PICK UP A MAP AND TICKET AND FIND YOUR
WAY AROUND. //



Pittsburgh’s Diaspora is amazing in terms of talent. But now... people want to bring their companies back, but they can’t because, ‘I can’t bring a 1,200-person company to this region if my workers don’t have a possible public transportation solution. Okay, I just won’t do it, because it wouldn’t make sense for the company.’ And you see that time after time after time, and it’s really holding us back. It’s very frustrating,” said a Pittsburgh-born young adult who took part in the leaders’ discussions.



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“I don’t know how people from outside the city figure out these bus routes and bus schedules,” said another. “And half of the stops aren’t labeled and they don’t announce them. Whereas... you can go to Boston or D.C. or New York and just pick up a map and a ticket and find your way around.”

Modernizing the fare system to enable riders to pay with a transit card rather than cash was among the suggestions offered to improve public transit. Expanding weekend service to and from the South Side and other entertainment destinations and extending rail service from Downtown to the student population in the city’s Oakland neighborhood were others. Finding a solution to chronic public transit funding shortfalls was also mentioned.

“I think with the cuts and everything, that’s just the battle between the state and Port Authority, so I think the people are the ones that are losing in that sense,” said a young man in the group of young adults who were not college graduates.

Bus and rail issues weren’t the only targets of complaints. Limited taxi service in the region was sharply criticized. “We need more taxis,” said a recent college graduate. “You can wait, like, two hours for a taxi. It’s really ridiculous. So, I would definitely add taxis. There’s none in Oakland. There’s actually a lot of people visiting for college. I’ve seen so many families on the corner of the street, and like, ‘Hey, do you, like, need help finding something?’ And they’re, like, ‘Is this a good place to find a taxi?’ I’m like, ‘No, no, you’re not going to find one at all.’”



IT’S EASIER
THAN IT MIGHT
BE IN OTHER
CITIES... TO BE A PART
OF [REGIONAL] CHANGE.



“I can only really speak to my area of the public and non-profit sector,” said another. “But for me and for a lot of friends, the job opportunities are mainly temporary and part-time jobs. So, coming right out of grad school with loans, you’re mostly looking at putting together two to three part-time jobs and creating your own benefits, which is kind of difficult, especially if you’re trying to just get started.”

The entrepreneurial climate in southwestern Pennsylvania was another topic of discussion, particularly among young adults who recently moved to the region from other places. They offered conflicting assessments of the region’s capacity to nurture job-producing entrepreneurs.

One, for example, identified as a regional strength “the opportunity to start something new—a lot of young entrepreneurs, both in the nonprofit and the private sector. And ever since I’ve been here—for about four years—that’s been something really impressive to me.”

Another, on the other hand, described the environment to support technology-related entrepreneurs as soft. “So if you want to start a tech company right now for a variety of reasons not necessarily having to do with Pittsburgh, it’s good

to do that in an eco-system like the Bay area or New York or somewhere there’s the resources to really get started and to network and so forth. Pittsburgh doesn’t quite have that, but it has more of an opportunity for that than I think other cities do, simply because of the sheer number of people streaming out of the colleges and universities. It’s regrettable that we don’t provide more infrastructure for that sort of thing.”

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The breadth and quality of the employment opportunities in a region are key factors in attracting and retaining young adults, who make up the most mobile population in the United States. The young adults who participated in the focus group sessions this summer were of two minds when discussing the job opportunities the region offers. Some saw the job market as one of the region’s strengths. Others viewed it as a weakness. In many cases, their opinions were colored by their assessment of the local job market in their field.

“The profession that I’m going to grad school for is genetic counseling,” said one young adult. “And genetic counselors in Pittsburgh get paid the least in the entire country. So, it’s not my top choice, just because the salary here for that profession is really low and there are more jobs on the East Coast.”

DIVERSITY

Regardless of their education or background, the majority of young adults who participated in the focus groups felt that southwestern Pennsylvania is a fairly diverse place, at least diverse enough for their tastes. However, segregation by neighborhood was an issue raised by recent college graduates and both Pittsburgh-born and transplanted young adults who have a role in shaping the region. Only young adults without a college degree failed to mention residential segregation in their discussions.

“I’ve spent a lot of time in New York. I’ve spent a lot of time in Philly and Richmond and a lot of cities on the East Coast. And they seem more diverse,” said a recent college graduate. “But I think that’s because everyone mixes more together. Here, it does seem very segregated by neighborhood.”

“In terms of ethnic diversity, Pittsburgh is one of the

most segregated cities in the country,” said a young adult in the Pittsburgh-born leaders group. “If you give me your zip [code] plus-four, I can tell you what you look like and how much money you make. And that’s very unfortunate.”

“I think it’s great to have these kinds of places where you can kind of identify a place for its local culture, you know, the people you might encounter there,” said a young adult who recently moved to southwestern Pennsylvania. “But at the same time, I feel like it would be better if all the neighborhoods and all the people were more interwoven across the city as a whole.”

CULTURAL ASSETS, RECREATION, ENTERTAINMENT

Young adults, for the most part, had good things to say during their focus group discussions about the region’s cultural assets and the opportunities for recreation and entertainment it offers.

“If you’re bored on a Friday or Saturday night, there is something wrong with you, not with the region,” said one young adult in the Pittsburgh-born leaders group. “Granted, you have to look in the City Paper... and in 18 different places to find what you want. But there is always something going on. The caliber of our cultural production companies is just phenomenal for the size of the city that we are.”

A young adult who recently moved to the region agreed. “Cleveland is kind of on the upswing culturally right now. But, when I came here from Cleveland, the cultural life in Pittsburgh is miles away for the better. There’s all the theaters [to see films]. And then the theater—I mean, not only the major Cultural Trust theaters, but there’s lots of smaller theater companies around. There’s also, for me personally, such an incredible and vibrant literary community here.”

For some, however, their options are narrowed by the limited availability of public transit on weekends. “Living in Shadyside, if I want to go... down to South Side, I could take

the bus. The buses stop—and now they’re going to stop even earlier—at like 10 [p.m.]. So how am I going to get home?” said a recent college graduate. “I have a taxi number in my phone. Every time I call, it’s the same thing, like, ‘Oh, we’ll be there in an hour.’ Ok, great, like, I want to go home now. So, half the time I don’t even get down to that scene because I’m, like, ‘Well, let’s just go somewhere we can walk.’”

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT & OPPORTUNITY

The topic of community involvement was mostly confined to discussions among young adults who are in positions of leadership and have an insider’s perspective of how things get done in the region. Among the insights they shared was the sense that young adults are afforded ample opportunities to initiate change in southwestern Pennsylvania.

“One thing that strikes me from time to time is that because Pittsburgh has been sort of changing over the years, it’s easier than it might be in other cities for you to be a part of that change,” said one young adult who had moved to the region from another city. “If you feel like you want to have bike lanes in the street, there’s a really effective bike advocacy organization, and they were able to make some really good progress. I feel like the barriers to them doing that are smaller here than they might be in a bigger city, or in a city with a more... established and rigid political structure or administrative structure.”

Similar sentiments were expressed in discussions among the leaders group of Pittsburgh-born young adults. One, for example, had this to offer: “I had to talk to my buddy’s poli-sci class. I said, ‘You guys don’t realize that in terms of major cities in America, with Pittsburgh’s size and all the resources you have here, if you get 10 or 15 of your friends on top of an idea, it happens. And I think that’s just one of the great advantages that Pittsburgh has over a lot of other cities in America.’” ■

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