

## Johnstown Community Woodworking Workshop

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### Step 1: The Johnstown Area

Johnstown is an area that has experienced much destruction, tragedy, and a decrease in industry. The community is made up of a central area with many surrounding smaller communities. See table 1.

**Table 1: Communities near Johnstown, PA by population (2018) U.S. Census**

Community	Total Population (2018)
Johnstown City, Pennsylvania	19195
Southmont Borough, Pennsylvania	2076
Westmont Borough, Pennsylvania	4685
Elim CDP, Pennsylvania	3376
Belmont CDP, Pennsylvania	2452
Geistown Borough, Pennsylvania	2410
Oakland CDP, Pennsylvania	1377
Dale Borough, Pennsylvania	1056
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>36627</b>

### Step 2: The Proposed Project- Community Woodworking Workshop

The Johnstown area has been faced with declining industries for years. Along with this, some infrastructures in the area built for some of these old industries has been left empty and unmaintained. Having a community woodworking workshop would not only bring new industry

and professional trade skills to the area, but it would bring in more economic growth, and fill some of these unused properties in the area. Johnstown has been re-innovating itself for decades. Along with this re-innovation has come a new love and fondness for the arts in the area. The woodworking workshop incorporates many aspects such as the community, area revitalization, fine skills, and the fine arts and woodworking arts.

### **Step 3: Background of Proposed Project**

My project is creating a community workshop in the Johnstown area. The area is highly affected by drugs and poverty. Johnstown is known for its history in ironmaking, being one of the nation's largest railroad producers as well as its three floods thanks to its location in a valley. After each flood, the area was given the opportunity to rebuild buildings and structures and honor those who died in the floods. After Bethlehem Steel Industry closed in 1992 and the steel and iron industry declined in general, the population of Johnstown also decreased (Johnstown Area Heritage Association, 2016). Many buildings became abandoned and with no large industry in the area, other large businesses moved out of the area. Many people were left without jobs and the area became very impoverished.

My hopes for creating a community workshop would be to not only help educate the community, teaching the community new woodworking and technical skills, but inspiring the community to once again take pride in the area and help to rebuild it. I think some of the old historic buildings that once housed the machinery for iron and steel making would be the perfect venue for a community workshop. Luckily, I think adding something like this to the community can be easily done since an organization similar to this exists in the area already. This organization is called the Center for Metal Arts.

Currently, the city has the old iron and steel mills still standing. Much of the old equipment from the 1890s is still instead the buildings. Most of the buildings are standing empty as the city has no use for them but they are marked as historical structures. The Center for Metal Arts based out of New York decided to move into some of those abandoned steel buildings to operate their school out of. This nonprofit teaches metal skills in workshops that are a couple of weeks long. For the school to relocate, a couple steps needed to happen.

Patrick Quinn, the head blacksmith and forging program coordinator found pictures of the steel mills in an article online and become very interested in them. He described the mills as a gem that he couldn't pass up. He contacted Richard Burket, the CEO of the Johnstown Area Heritage Center and asked for a tour of the facilities. Quinn then contacted the Johnstown Redevelopment Authority, the current organization that owns the buildings, where they created an agreement together for the organization to move into the buildings (Slussor, 2018). This agreement promised the Center for Metal Arts a lease for when the building was able to be occupied as well as time for the organization to move in (Brumbaugh, 2017). Quinn and another representative from the school, Dan Neville met with some other stakeholders in Johnstown to learn more about the history of the area and the building that they would be moving into (Slussor, 2018). Code enforcement staff then had to go through the building to make sure that there were no major issues (Brumbaugh, 2017).

To get the process on its way even more so, the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies gave the Center for Metal Arts a \$70,000 grant. Kathleen Sheehan Ortel, president and CEO of Johnstown's Korn's Galvanizing Co. Inc. helped Quinn and Neville come up with business plan and financial plan for the move into the new building. Their efforts didn't stop there. Before the organization could move into the building, they needed to restore it, making

sure that they were honoring the history and preserving the shop. Lucky, many of the original structures such as 10,000-ton hammers were still there as well as the original tools. One hammer owned by the Smithsonian Institution was leased to the Johnstown Redevelopment Authority. The Center for Metal Arts along with the Johnstown Redevelopment Authority will be working together to restore the hammer. This is an endeavor is expected to take 5-10 years to restore (Slussor, 2018). After receiving the grant and beginning to restore the workshop, Quinn and Neville began their journey from New York to Johnstown moving equipment, tools, and office supplies (Berkey, 2018).

Since moving in and starting classes, the Center for Metal Arts has been able to extend their blacksmithing program. They have added student housing as many of their students come to the area from across the nation and have established a new intern and scholarship program. They are also working on opening two new buildings and refurbishing the blacksmith shop which was part of the original historical workshop. The school is also working to expand their metalsmithing programming and opening a new studio for metalsmithing (Center for Metal Arts, 2020).

#### **Step 4: Limitations & Boundaries**

Any project no matter how good the idea is will have limitations. For the community workshop, some limitations may include the money needed to make the project happen, staff to keep the project going, and how accessible the workshop is to the community. Limitations are problems that any community needs to overcome in order for the change to happen. Without thinking about the potential limitations before the project takes place and plan ahead for the limitations, the entire change can be stopped. In this case for these limitations, fundraising can take place in the community as well as receiving grants. Stakeholders such as the Community

Foundation for the Alleghenies may be a very helpful resource in getting the funding to start the workshop. The staffing problem may be a bit harder to solve. Skilled and trusted members of the community may be able to donate their time, helping to run the workshop. Because the buildings that the workshop would go into are currently unused, there is no way for someone without transportation to get to the community workshop. CamTran Transportation, the Johnstown area's public transportation system, would be an excellent stakeholder to reach out to about getting the bus routes rerouted to the community workshop.

Thoughts from the community about the community workshop are probably going to be mainly positive. With the drug and poverty issue in the area especially amongst young people, many people will be glad that there is a constructive place that youth can go to spend their time and learn. According to *Vision Together 2025 The Johnstown Strategy*, one of the public's biggest priorities is to revitalize and modernize the empty buildings around Johnstown (2019, p. 16-17).

There are also some issues or negative points that the community may make about having the community workshop. Some of these concerns may be the amount of lumber needed for the project, the cost of maintaining the facility, safety of anyone being allowed into the building unsupervised, people of all ages, tools getting stolen or damaged, the workshop being geared towards men, and finally the issue of most of the Johnstown community using the bus system and not having a way to get their projects home. While these are all very valid concerns, almost all of them can be solved. The workshop should have a registration and continual fee based on how much the individual utilizes the workshop. This way, everyone, in order to register, must attend a safety and basic training course. Having a membership also ensures that everyone who is using the facility is being tracked. Charging individuals for using the tools and materials means

that the cost of the lumber, tool damage, and building maintenance is offset. The workshop can also offer workshops specific for certain demographics such as a family fun day where children can make a project with their family or a women's only class where women can learn and build a project together geared more towards women. If wood workers do not have a way of transporting their projects home, another small fee can get your project transported across town.

Hundreds of people can benefit from the community workshop. Almost 300 students attend the Center for Metal Arts every year (Slusser, 2018). The community workshop attendance would be something very similar to this as people from Johnstown, Richland, Windber, and Altoona may come to utilize the facility and attend workshops. Community members who do not attend the workshops or utilize the facility may still feel the impact of the community workshop as the skills and projects built at the community workshop can be seen around the community through revitalization projects, new park benches, and pieces put into art galleries. For those who don't have as much interest in the community workshop, they can still take part in the fun without having to do the actual woodworking part. Members of the community can also help in the effort by organizing community projects, taking part in the process of obtaining the correct approval and paperwork, fundraising for the project, or designing the project or woodworking piece itself. For those who prefer art, once a piece is finished in the woodworking shop, community members can help to paint the wood pieces.

The community is going to see a positive impact from the community workshop. The pieces made in the workshop and the skills obtained will be seen all throughout the city. For an area that does not have much to do, this gives members of the community of all ages an area to go and learn from. While the community will be affected in such a positive manner by this project, there are some logistical measures to be accounted for. As mentioned before the lumber

needed would not be very good on the environment. Lumber is also not a very cost-efficient material especially in our current economy where many people are buying lumber. The Center for Metal Arts has not started the renovation process as the buildings that they are in are being operated out of as is. They are also in the fundraising process to be able to renovate the buildings. Since the buildings are not renovated, the maintenance is very low, around \$2,500 per year. The organization's annual operating budget is around \$350,000 with \$30,000 of that being used for supplies and \$10,000 of the \$30,000 being used just for workshop supplies (Powell, 2020).

### **Step 5: Alternatives**

One of the best options for the community workshop project other than having the project housed in one of the old, unused steel buildings is to have the workshop as its own nonprofit. The limitations for having the community workshop as a nonprofit are similar to the limitations of the original project idea of cost, transportation to the workshop, facility maintenance, and safety. The ideas on how to overcome these limitations for the workshop in the original idea stated above would still apply to the limitations of if the project was its own organization. I think the project idea may even function better as a nonprofit because staff could be hired to watch the equipment, welcome community members, and help manage the workshops taught at the community workshop. Having the project as a nonprofit would also make maintaining the project easier than if it was a program addition to an existing organization that could easily discard the program to fund a different program a few years after the workshop was opened. The ideas and mission for this project could also fit into its own mission if it was run under a new nonprofit versus another organization taking on this project and trying to fit it under its own mission.

An option for the community workshop project may be to have the project be an extension of the Bottle Works Ethnic Arts Center. The Bottle Works is an organization that houses art exhibits, teaches the public about art, and houses live art performances. The limitations for extending the community workshop as a piece of the Bottle Works would be very similar to the limitations of the original project being held in one of the unoccupied steel buildings. One of the biggest limitations to the Bottle Works would be that the Bottle Works currently does not have enough space to make this possible. If the workshop would become part of the Bottle Works, an additional building would need to be secured or space from an existing Bottle Works program would have to be used for the community workshop. Another limitation of combining with the Bottle Works is that of associating the project with an arts-based organization. The Bottle Works is already struggling as an organization to keep their current programs running. The organization really isn't in a place to be adding another program on top of the programs they currently have. Having a community workshop unassociated with the arts and possibly with something else such as metalworking may be the better option of getting the program up and running and having the program run for a longer time.

Another option for this project could be to make the project an extension of the existing Greater Johnstown Career and Technology Center. The limitations of this project would be that very similar to the limitations seen in the original project idea as well as the limitations in the Art Works idea. In addition, because a community workshop with workshops to the community would become an extension of an existing school, the idea of the project would no longer be a community workshop if you as a community member would have to apply to the school to register for one of the workshops or in order to use the facility. Another issue with combining the community workshop with the Greater Johnstown Career and Technology Center is the location.

The school while holding the Johnstown name is actually located in Richland. Richland is a community located about 20 minutes from downtown Johnstown and contains a completely different atmosphere from Johnstown. Richland, being a wealthier area, does not have the same problems that the City of Johnstown has. Thus, some of the issues of the city that are trying to be solved by creating the community workshop would be obsolete if the workshop was outside of downtown Johnstown.

Of all four options for the community workshop, the idea of having the workshop run as its own nonprofit is probably the idea that has the least limitations. Having the workshop run as its own nonprofit would also probably produce the most benefits as the community workshop could also have its own program areas function under the idea of a community workshop. It would be easier for a separate nonprofit to maintain the community workshop rather than adding the workshop to an already existing organization. The original idea of having the community workshop being an extension of the Center for Metal Arts or of having the community workshop being an extension of the Bottle Works would probably be the most cost efficient options since both of these organizations may have some resources already such as staff, facilities, or equipment.

### **Step 6: Implementation**

The first step in implementing a project such as this is to get the opinions of the community about the project. This includes the opinions of various stakeholders as well as community members and the people most likely to actually use the workshop. See table 2 for an extensive listing of community stakeholders. If the community itself does not support the project, then it will be hard for the project to even begin or actually make a great impact on the area. Gathering these opinions may also be helpful so that you have feedback about the project from

the people who will actually be using the facility. The people using the facility would know best what they would want in the facility since they are the ones using it. After gathering these opinions, it may be necessary to make some changes to the initial plan.

**Table 2: Community Stakeholders**

<b>Name of Organization</b>	<b>Name of Organization</b>	<b>Name of Organization</b>	<b>Name of Stakeholder</b>
Johnstown Chamber of Commerce	Johnstown Area Heritage Center	Community Foundation for the Alleghenies	Mark Pasquerilla
Center for Metal Arts	PennDOT	The Bottle Works	Dr. Donald Zucco
CamTran Transportation	Johnstown Redevelopment Authority	Smithsonian Organization	Polacek Family

The next step in this process would be to find an official location for where the workshop can be built. Continuing in the initial plan of the workshop being housed in the old steel buildings, permission would be needed in order to start this project. Currently, the Johnstown Redevelopment Authority owns the buildings. Permission would be needed from the Johnstown Redevelopment Authority to house this project in the steel buildings and another process of paperwork, meetings, and a contract would need to be completed.

After receiving permission to create the project in this area, the building would need to be restored and turned into an area that could house the community workshop. Since the steel mills

are a historic area, rules would need to be researched and followed to determine what can and cannot be done to the building. Once the building has been renovated, tools and equipment will be needed to make the workshop complete. Some tools may be donated but others will need to be bought. Throughout this entire process, grants will be needed so that the renovating can be completed, and the tools can be bought. Once the workshop is completed, there will have to be some kind of program to let the public know that the workshop is open and available. A fund will also need to be created so that tools can be replaced, and the workshop can stay in operation.

Some major goals for completing this project would be having the project be a contributor for the revitalization of the Johnstown area. This can be accomplished by renovating the building for the workshop itself. The projects made in the workshop can also contribute to the rebuilding of the community. In order to measure this goal, like all goals it needs to be measurable and completed within a time frame. I would like to see one major community improvement project and three smaller community rejuvenation projects completed in Johnstown annually as a result of the community workshop. For this goal, a clear definition of what a large and small project would need to be defined. A large project could be considered adopting a park and making multiple park benches or picnic tables. Another example of a large project could be adopting a street and making flower planters for that street. Smaller projects could be making step stools for a daycare or preschool, making shelves for a community home, or creating a chess set for an after-school program. To ensure that this goal is being completed every year, the members of the community workshop should vote for which area of the community they would like to work on and vote again on which project they would like to complete. Then a workshop member should take the lead on the project, taking the necessary steps for the project to be completed.

Another goal for this project is to give community members, especially younger members of the community an area to hang out at and learn in. The community workshop is being created for the purpose of trying to reduce the crime and drug rate of the younger population. Within the first year of the workshop running, I would like the crime rate of middle and high school aged children to decrease in the Johnstown area by 10%. This goal can be measured by collecting information from the police department and conducting a questionnaire of our workshop members. By conducting a questionnaire, we will be able to tell if the workshop is the cause for the decrease in crime or if the decrease in crime is caused by something else by looking at how many members were children that year. The questionnaire can also ask questions such as what other hobbies or interests the workshop members have or what the workshop members would be doing if the workshop did not exist.

**Infographic:**

# JOHNSTOWN COMMUNITY WOODWORKING WORKSHOP

## A BEAUTIFUL JOHNSTOWN

JCWW members will have the opportunity to learn woodworking skills and participate in up to one large community project and three smaller community projects. These projects will be aimed in helping to rejuvenate the area as well as benefiting the overall community.



## FUTURE EDUCATORS

The classes taught at the woodworking workshop will provide on average 300+ new community members with a new skill in woodworking. These skills can then be passed on and taught to other community members.

## SKILLED EMPLOYEES

With so many community members learning woodworking skills, the JCWW plans on having a 5% increase of skilled woodworking laborers in the area within the first year of opening.



## LOVE FROM THE COMMUNITY

JCWW has the goal in mind of creating a safe productive space for everyone in the Johnstown community. We are expecting to see a 10% decrease in crime amongst middle and high school aged community members within the first year of opening..

Read more at  
[johnstowncww.com](http://johnstowncww.com).

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