



## RAISE MAIN STREET & CENTRAL PARK PROJECT FAQ

### HOW MUCH IS THE CITY SPENDING ON THE MAIN STREET AND CENTRAL PARK PROJECT?

**Response:** The City has a total of \$17,000,000 for the design & construction of the Main Street and Central Park Project. Final design will be completed in the spring of 2024. Early estimates value the proposed work within Central Park somewhere in the \$6,000,000 - \$8,000,000 range, depending on several factors. The remaining funds will be spent on streetscape upgrades on Main Street from Johns Street to Adams Street.

### WHERE DOES THE FUNDING COME FROM?

**Response:** There are three sources of funding that are supporting the Main Street Project. The primary source of funding is from a United States Department of Transportation grant awarded to the City in FY 2021, called RAISE. The RAISE grant will also fund improvements to the Inclined Plane, CamTran, Train Station, and connections to the area's trail networks for a total of \$24,448,164. The Main Street Project was one of five City projects that make up that grant award. This is the largest public investment in local infrastructure in decades. An additional \$2 Million was secured from Pennsylvania's Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program; one million toward the Main Street Project, and one million toward the Train Station Project. The balance of funds comes from the American Rescue Plan Act, which was part of COVID relief.

### WHAT IS THE RAISE GRANT?

**Response:** The U.S. Department of Transportation's Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant was created to support projects that will have a significant regional or local impact, with quality of life, safety, mobility and community connectivity, environmental sustainability, economic competitiveness, innovation, and supporting underserved communities being the priority goals. More information can be found at: [www.transportation.gov/RAISEgrants](http://www.transportation.gov/RAISEgrants).

### WHY DOESN'T THE CITY DO SOMETHING ELSE WITH THIS FUNDING?

**Response:** Grant funds are allocated to the specific project in which those funds are awarded and are NOT flexible. The grantee is contractually obligated with the funder to spend the money on the project submitted. The funding that the City is contributing to the project is through the American Rescue Plan Act funding allotment and is being used as matching funds on the project. This means that those matching funds become part of the same project and cannot be moved towards another project. The remaining funding source of this project is through the State of Pennsylvania, also in the form of a grant, so these funds cannot be moved to another project either. Because this is a grant-based project, the money must be used to improve Main Street sidewalk areas, Central Park, and the two parklets near City Hall.

### WHAT IS THE SCOPE & PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT?

**Response:** The scope is to make pedestrian and stormwater improvements to Main Street from Sargent's Stadium to Adams Street (.65 Miles), make improvements to Central Park (1.25 Acres), and improve two City-owned parklets across from City Hall. The project will make much needed improvements to Downtown's infrastructure, including stormwater management, lighting, and pedestrian accessibility improvements. By improving the quality of life for everyone that lives or visits

downtown, the improvements will help to grow businesses and attract residents.

## HOW WILL THIS PROJECT BENEFIT THE COMMUNITY?

**Response:** This project will improve the gap in access to green space, improve the city's infrastructure and connection to transportation hubs and trails, improve access to high quality park space and biking infrastructure, and improve overall accessibility for all. [Research proves](#) parks are a vital public resource that have strong health benefits for individuals and communities. This project is a major step toward improving environmental health in our community and physical health for our residents. Johnstown has a great downtown for walking and biking, and these improvements will encourage more people to spend time outdoors. This investment in public infrastructure will aid in economic development efforts by promoting economic growth, competitiveness and economic inclusion, and will increase investment opportunities in our City.

## HOW IS THE PROJECT HELPING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES?

**Response:** The design team was able to hear from and learn from local disability advocates on the negative impacts of inaccessible spaces downtown. The team participated in a detailed tour that highlighted the challenges of getting around downtown in a wheelchair. They were instructed on the positive impacts the needed improvements will have for people with disabilities, and how the necessary updates will make a more welcoming and inclusive downtown for everyone. The project will improve all the sidewalks and crosswalks along the length of Main Street and the accessibility of all areas in Central Park and the parklets. The project will also replace and add new street trees, selecting appropriate species with room for roots to grow without pushing up pavement over time and causing issues for mobility.

## WHO IS INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT?

**Response:** The project is managed by the City of Johnstown, CamTran, and the Johnstown Area Heritage Association, who hired SCAPE Landscape Architects, an acclaimed landscape architecture practice that has completed comparable projects around the country. SCAPE's team includes Partners in Public Design, who is leading public engagement, and CJL Engineering, a major local employer based in Hornerstown with a strong track record of building the region's infrastructure. The City, CamTran, and JAHA have hired Michael Baker International Inc., a leading provider of engineering and consulting services, to complete the required National Environmental Policy Act ([NEPA](#)) and Historic Preservation ([Section 106](#)) clearances.

## HOW HAS THE PUBLIC BEEN INVOLVED?

**Response:** On May 31, 2023 the design team hosted an open house to hear the public's aspirations for the project. The design team also had dozens of meetings with the property owners, the business community, local artists and makers, outdoor recreation enthusiasts, students, young adults, people with disabilities, and veterans who were concerned about the future of the monuments in the park. The team also talked with people about the project at events like Juneteenth, Polkafest, and Pride. At the second public meeting on July 19, 2023, over 250 people came to review the three initial concept designs and express their preferences. Another 250 people completed an on-line survey. The design team used this information to make the preferred concept plan. At a third public meeting on August 30, 2023, the concept plan was presented to the public.

## HOW HAVE YOUNG PEOPLE BEEN INVOLVED?

**Response:** The project team joined community days in Roxbury and Coopersdale with Vision Together and the Community Foundation. A "My Central Park and Main Street" activity book was created for kids to participate. A design workshop was hosted with the Flood City Youth Academy, in which youth were asked what they would like to see in Johnstown's future downtown. At the design unveiling on August 30, 2023, these visions of the future were displayed and the young people were given awards for their

participation and for the best visions of the future.

## WHAT ARE THE PROJECT GOALS?

**Response:** The design team has laid out the following ten priority goals to guide this project:

INCLUSIVE - Can public space make Johnstown more welcoming and friendly for everyone?

ACCESSIBLE - Can this streetscape be a model for universal design?

HEALTHY - Can the project promote health and wellness by creating a pedestrian friendly walking environment?

ECOLOGICAL - Can the region's natural beauty be reflected in the design?

TRANSPARENT - Can the public design process build trust between government and community?

BOLD - Can the project strengthen Johnstown's position as an emerging center of creativity and innovation?

FUN - Can Main Street and Central Park be more fun than it has ever been?

MAINTAINABLE - Can we make public space that is easy to keep beautiful and safe?

RESILIENT - Can the project build upon the resilience of the people of Johnstown?

PROUD - Can the project honor Johnstown's history, especially those who have dedicated their lives to service?

## WHAT IS THE CHOSEN DESIGN CONCEPT?

**Response:** After a series of public meetings, community outreach and surveys, a clear consensus for a bold redesign of Central Park was determined. The preferred design includes a new accessible performance area in front of an elevated lawn for seating and gathering. Throughout the park there will be stone outcrops along accessible pathways with improved lighting and plenty of seating. There will be a memorial walk along stormwater glen on the Franklin Street side. Thanks to the strong voices of the Veterans, the park will retain important historical monuments like the 54th Regiment statue, while at the same time reflecting the changing nature of downtown. There will be space for children and adults to enjoy and a unique water feature. There will be flexible, programmable space along Main Street and in a pedestrian-friendly Gazebo Place for markets and special events. Healthy trees and plantings in the park will be kept, while others will be removed to make way for new trees and planted areas, appropriate for the new park and for ease of maintenance. The two parklets by City Hall will become spaces for small gatherings and to enjoy public art.

## WHERE CAN I VIEW THE CHOSEN DESIGN CONCEPT?

**Response:** The conceptual designs are on the City website at [Johnstownpa.gov/raise-project](http://Johnstownpa.gov/raise-project), along with the project goals and survey results.

## IS THE CITY CUTTING DOWN ALL THE TREES IN CENTRAL PARK AS PART OF THE MAIN STREET PROJECT?

**Response:** The City will be replacing many of the existing trees that are dying, diseased or beyond the lifespan of an urban street tree. Unfortunately, many of the existing trees in Central Park meet these criteria and would need to be replaced in the near future even if the project was not taking place. That means they drop large limbs, become home to bees and heave sidewalks. The end result of the renovation of Central Park will leave the park with more trees than are currently present within Central Park.

## WHY IS THE FOUNTAIN BEING REMOVED FROM CENTRAL PARK?

**Response:** The Pasquerilla Fountain has been a victim of Western Pennsylvania weather for decades. The fountain basin has cracked severely and is in need of replacement, and the pump system has deteriorated. The new design of the park will include a major re-grading of the park, and add elevation in the center of the park to increase capacity and improve viewing experience of people attending events

within Central Park. The site where the current fountain exists will be elevated, and not able to accommodate a fountain. A discussion was held regarding the fountain during a Main Street Business Focus Group meeting, and it was suggested that it be relocated to Sandvyle Memorial Gardens Park. The Sandvyle Park Executive Board has agreed to accept the fountain. It will remain in the city for people to enjoy.

## IS THE CITY COMPROMISING THE HISTORY OF CENTRAL PARK?

**Response:** The City of Johnstown is partnered with the Johnstown Area Heritage Association (JAHA) on not only the Main Street Project, but all of the United States Department of Transportation grant projects that will occur within the City. JAHA is the organization that is most knowledgeable about the history of the City and is guiding the City and our consultants throughout the project. Items currently within Central Park like the gazebo, fountain, and monuments, are under 50 years old and not deemed historic. The history of Central Park includes being a farm field, farmers market, a jail, and eventually as a public park. It is the goal of our project to respect the City's history and create a Central Park to last the City at least 50 years. Creating a park for not only now, but also the future, requires an extensive amount of innovative thinking, and the City's consultant team has successfully designed and built [impressive park projects throughout the world](#). The design of the new Central Park will help the City create more events and attract more people to the City.

## WHY A BIKE LANE?

**Response:** The public showed support for a bike lane on Main Street. Johnstown is not crowded with people on bikes today, but a bike lane through the center of town will be a clear signal to the world that Johnstown is open for business for an outdoor recreation economy. When bikers and hikers come to town with the National 9/11 Trail that connects Washington to Shanksville to New York City, Main Street will be a must-see destination and the central hub for recreational trails and parks within the region.

## WHAT ABOUT PARKING?

**Response:** The bike lane will replace some parking on Main Street west of Franklin Street. There are about 3,000 parking spaces downtown. Much of this parking was built decades ago when there was more commercial, retail and industrial activity downtown. There is currently an oversupply of parking in the downtown, and many of the bike lane spaces are lightly used. Another more recent factor is that there are fewer office workers coming downtown on a daily basis due to the increase in remote work post COVID. The minimal loss of parking will be balanced by these factors, and the expressed desire to utilize the bike lane as an indicator that Johnstown's recreation economy is open for business.

## WHAT IS THE PROPOSED PLAN FOR THE GAZEBO?

**Response:** The Gazebo is outdated, not ADA accessible, and needs to be replaced. It will be replaced by an updated and accessible covered performance area in a better location with an adequate viewing area.

## WHAT IS THE PROPOSED PLAN FOR THE MONUMENTS?

**Response:** The design team hosted a series of meetings with Veterans to plan, together, the best way to treat the monuments respectfully. After several meetings, the group agreed that the project could help create a Veterans Memorial Walk at Sandvyle Memorial Gardens, a 12-acre, riverside park one mile south of downtown. The Johnstown Military Service Memorial (aka, the "Eagle Obelisk") will be relocated to the Veterans Circle in Sandvyle, as will the Pasquerilla Fountain. The Joseph Johns Statue, the Civil War Statue, the Military Police Memorial will remain in Central Park but in new locations.

## WHAT IS THE PROPOSED PLAN FOR GAZEBO PARK PLACE?

**Response:** The concept plan proposes to partially-pedestrianize Gazebo Park Place. This means having bollards at Locust and Main Street, which can be retracted to allow vehicles access for loading or emergencies. This will create space for an enlarged plaza area with shade trees and fixed and moveable



seating. It will be designed to accommodate events.

### WHAT ABOUT MAINTENANCE?

**Response:** Today, Central Park is maintained primarily by City staff with assistance from volunteers from the Garden Club, Discover Downtown Johnstown Partnership, Kiwanis Clubs and other groups. This project aspires to make a park that is easy to maintain. The City is confident that City staff and current volunteer groups will be fully capable of maintaining a new, more efficient Central Park and Main Street.

### WHAT ABOUT ART?

**Response:** Art is an important component of this project. Traditional and unconventional artwork will be considered, as this is an opportunity to energize the community, liven the downtown and promote a stronger sense of identity and belonging. Along Main Street, in Central Park, and in the City Hall parklets, there will be opportunities for public art. The design team is proposing project funding to be dedicated for arts programming, which will hopefully be matched by local philanthropy.

### WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

**Response:** A major project like this takes time and hard work to go from concept to completion. SCAPE is now proceeding with the technical design and documentation of the selected concept. This is expected to be completed in the spring of 2024. Then, contractors will be selected to implement the project. If all goes well, groundbreaking will occur sometime in 2025. In the meantime, there are many ways to stay involved in this transformational work. Please join the mailing list to stay up to date on the project.



To view the chosen concept design, visit [JohnstownPA.Gov/raise-project](http://JohnstownPA.Gov/raise-project).

Questions or comments may be directed to the City’s Project Coordinator at [JDubnansky@cojtn.com](mailto:JDubnansky@cojtn.com) or [thad@partnersinpublicdesign.com](mailto:thad@partnersinpublicdesign.com) of Partners in Public Design.

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