Pillars of a Strong Community 2018
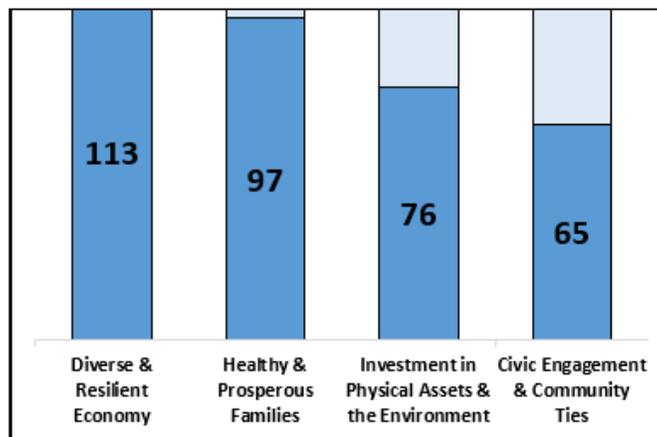
What does it take to be strong as a region, and how well are we doing at attaining it?

Pillars of a Strong Community is a model designed to systematically measure progress at achieving overall community strength, and provide a framework for benchmarking progress against similar regions around the United States. The index was prepared starting in 2016. This year, the index was again updated to reflect the most current data available.

The Institute identified four broad characteristics that make a community strong. They overlap with many of the topics covered in the 2018 Indicators report. They are:

- **Diverse and Resilient Economy.** A region's economy exhibits growth, is conducive to business and innovation, and is able to withstand periods of recession.

- **Healthy and Prosperous Families.** A region's residents are safe from violence, in good health, sufficiently educated, and have enough income to be financially secure.

- **Investment in Physical Assets and the Environment**. A region's physical attributes, including housing stock and public infrastructure, are well maintained, and environmental resources are well cared for.

- **Civic Engagement & Community Ties.** The region's residents are engaged as members of a community with a strong sense of citizenship and high social capital. This year, limited data was available to update this pillar.
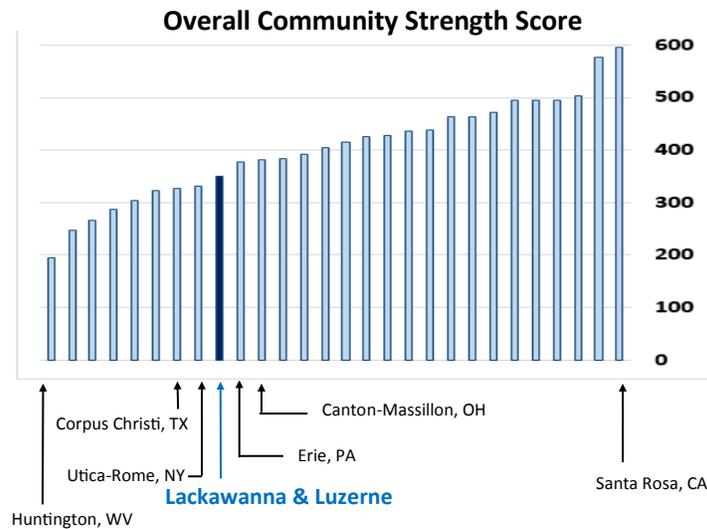
This chart shows scores for Lackawanna and Luzerne County for each of these areas where a value of 100 represents the average value of comparable metro areas around the United States.

How do we stack up against our peers?

The Lackawanna and Luzerne County region scores above average in **Diverse and Resilient Economy**, near average in **Healthy and Prosperous Families,** and below average in **Investment in Physical Assets and the Environment** and **Civic Engagement and Community Ties**. Compared with last year's index, there was a slight improvement in **Physical Assets** but declines in the other three pillars.

Comparable metro areas were identified based on demographic and economic characteristics. The chart below shows the Overall Community Strength Score, the sum of the four individual pillar scores for each metro area. Lackawanna and Luzerne County falls very close to two regions: Erie in the Commonwealth and Utica-Rome in New York.

Overall Community Strength Score

Canton-Massillon, OH

Corpus Christi, TX

Erie, PA

Utica-Rome, NY

Lackawanna & Luzerne

Santa Rosa, CA

Huntington, WV

As the 2018 Indicators Report shows, Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties perform very well in some measures of quality of life, but challenges remain in other areas. In this way, our region is not unlike the peer regions analyzed here. While specific areas of need differ from region to region, every community has its own challenges. Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties have significant strengths, as well tools that can help to improve upon shortcomings.

The **INSTITUTE** for
Public Policy & Economic Development
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A partnership among Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine, Keystone College, King's College, Lackawanna College, Luzerne County Community College, Marywood University, Misericordia University, Penn State Wilkes-Barre, Penn State Scranton, The Wright Center, The University of Scranton & Wilkes University