

Remaking Our Westmoreland

A Plan for the
Mon-Yough District

—
2025



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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MON-YOUGH PLANNING DISTRICT

City of Monessen
North Belle Vernon Borough
Rostraver Township
Sewickley Township
Smithton Borough
South Huntingdon Township
Sutersville Borough
West Newton Borough

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Introduction

As a county, we've been experiencing demographic shifts that pose considerable challenges to our economic growth and growth as a community. Over the past two decades, Westmoreland County has lost nearly 20,000 residents. In general, people are having fewer children and deaths are outpacing births. For every four people that pass away, only three are born in Westmoreland County. Although it's often thought that the county's population is rapidly changing due to migration – people leaving and coming into the county – this number is essentially neutral. And even though similar trends are playing out across the region and country, the effects of these challenges are more strongly felt here at home.

Following this trend, an immediate concern is that local employers and companies will be unable to fill vacant positions as the workforce continues to shrink. Many local businesses will be faced with the tough decision to either close, automate, or leave the county. All options present significant risk to the future growth of our economy and community.

Attract, develop, and retain a diverse and stable workforce that will sustain a healthy economy

The county's comprehensive plan, *Reimagining Our Westmoreland*, is our response to these challenges. The plan establishes seven core objectives, 38 strategies, and more than 300 action steps, with one overarching goal – *to attract, develop, and retain a diverse and stable workforce that will sustain a healthy economy*. Set before us is a unique opportunity to coordinate efforts among the county's 65 municipalities to collectively achieve a more livable and prosperous Westmoreland.

There's no single person, agency, organization, or grant that will instantly change our circumstances. We must take ownership and be accountable for our future. We must be diligent, resourceful, and creative. And we must work together. Just as the county relies on its municipalities, municipalities rely on the county and one another.

This document represents the collective ambitions, engagement, and aims of the 8 municipalities that make up the Mon-Yough Planning District to improve our communities and county as a whole. We commend your efforts thus far during this planning process and encourage your continued collaboration and implementation of the strategies and actions laid out in this plan.

This plan is the third in a series of seven for the county's planning districts.

PURPOSE OF THE DISTRICT

The Planning Districts approach attempts to further implement *Reimagining Our Westmoreland's* overarching goal and address the challenges stemming from an aging and declining population at the local level. This approach to planning regionally and acting locally, recognizes that distinct groupings based on geography, economics, culture, education, and transportation already exist and that these existing relationships can be leveraged to address many shared challenges among communities.

The Mon-Yough Planning District is one of seven districts outlined in the county's comprehensive plan. The notion is that by looking beyond municipal boundaries to communicate, collaborate, and work together, neighboring municipalities can better support and empower each other to get stuff done.

GUIDING CONCEPTS

Principal to the Planning Districts approach is the idea that communities benefit more when they participate in the planning for their future. While the county cannot drive local priorities, we do have the technical and resource capacity to help facilitate a process by which communities arrive at those priorities for themselves. The Planning Districts approach recognizes three essential elements:

1. County government and regional partners are best suited to deliver planning and technical assistance.
2. Local government is best suited to understand local needs/wants and to carry out recommendations in the plan.
3. Collaboration between the two is the formula for implementation.



VALUE PROPOSITION

 <p>Shared Services & Regional Decision Making <i>Regional problems deserve regional solutions.</i></p>	 <p>Bridge Divide Between Need & Resources <i>A lack of capacity keeps local municipalities distant from resources.</i></p>	 <p>Information Sharing Among Municipalities <i>Best practices and new approaches can be shared, when a platform is prepared.</i></p>
 <p>Informed Decision Making <i>Good decisions depend on good information.</i></p>	 <p>Efficient Public Service Delivery <i>Thinking regionally recognizes economies of scale.</i></p>	 <p>Transparency With Public & Developers <i>Communication of regional needs is simpler than dozens of identical individuals needs.</i></p>

APPLICATION OF THE DISTRICT

Local partnerships are forming, and relationships strengthening, among the Mon-Yough communities through a locally-driven, facilitator-led, and county-supported process. The strategies, actions, and projects proposed within this plan are intended to provide a menu of options for implementation and are merely advisory in nature. Additionally, the plan is not intended to be a static document; it is expected to be worked and evolve as circumstances and expectations change over time.

Just as the planning process has relied heavily on the trust and effort of those participating, the implementation of this plan is even more dependent on trust, effort, and participation across multiple levels. Like others, the Mon-Yough Planning District is a group that moves at the speed of trust. The ultimate success of projects and pace at which strategies and actions are implemented depends on the continued participation and degree of trust among those involved.



Mon-Yough District kickoff meeting
Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Mon-Yough District kickoff meeting
Source: Westmoreland County Planning

Overview of the District

Located in the southwestern section of the county, the Mon-Yough Planning District is comprised of the 8 municipalities of City of Monessen, North Belle Vernon Borough, Rostraver Township, Sewickley Township, Smithton Borough, South Huntingdon Township, Sutersville Borough, and West Newton Borough.

Each of these communities offers its own unique identity and history. From Jacobs Creek to major commercial, industrial, and cultural hubs, to places of urban, suburban, and rural character, the Mon-Yough communities are eclectic. Common assets include proximity to Pittsburgh via Route 51; Monongahela River and Youghiogheny River; Greater Allegheny Passage Trail, Cedar Creek Gorge, Bells Mills Covered Bridge; Dick Building, Plumer House, Rostraver Airport;

Vinoski and Greenhouse Winery; Westinghouse Electric Co. and I-70 Industrial Park, Commerce Crossing at Westmoreland Industrial Park, Douglas Education Center, Westmoreland County Community College Public Safety Training Center, Belle Vernon Area School District, Yough School District, and Monessen City School District.

This region shares natural beauty, recreational assets, and significant transportation assets. Each municipality's future will be significantly determined by the interdependencies among its individual municipalities. This necessitates a commitment to cooperation, consensus, and concerted effort to developing effective mechanisms for working together on key issues.



MON-YOUGH PLANNING DISTRICT



Sutersville Memorial Park

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



South Huntingdon Farmland

Source: Westmoreland County Planning

DEMOGRAPHICS

As the impetus for *Reimagining Our Westmoreland* came from the realization that our entire county's population is aging and declining, it is important to understand the local conditions to put this regional issue into a local context.

When compared to the county, the Mon-Yough Planning District shows similar trends with an aging and declining population. In 2021, the age groups with the greatest increase were those 60-69 and 50-59. The median age for the district increased by four years to 48 years old from 2010 to 2021. The characteristics of demographic change at the county level are mirrored at the district level as evidenced by the district's population decline of 2,323 people, or 6.2%, between 2010 and 2021.

DISTRICT POPULATION LOSS 2010 - 2021

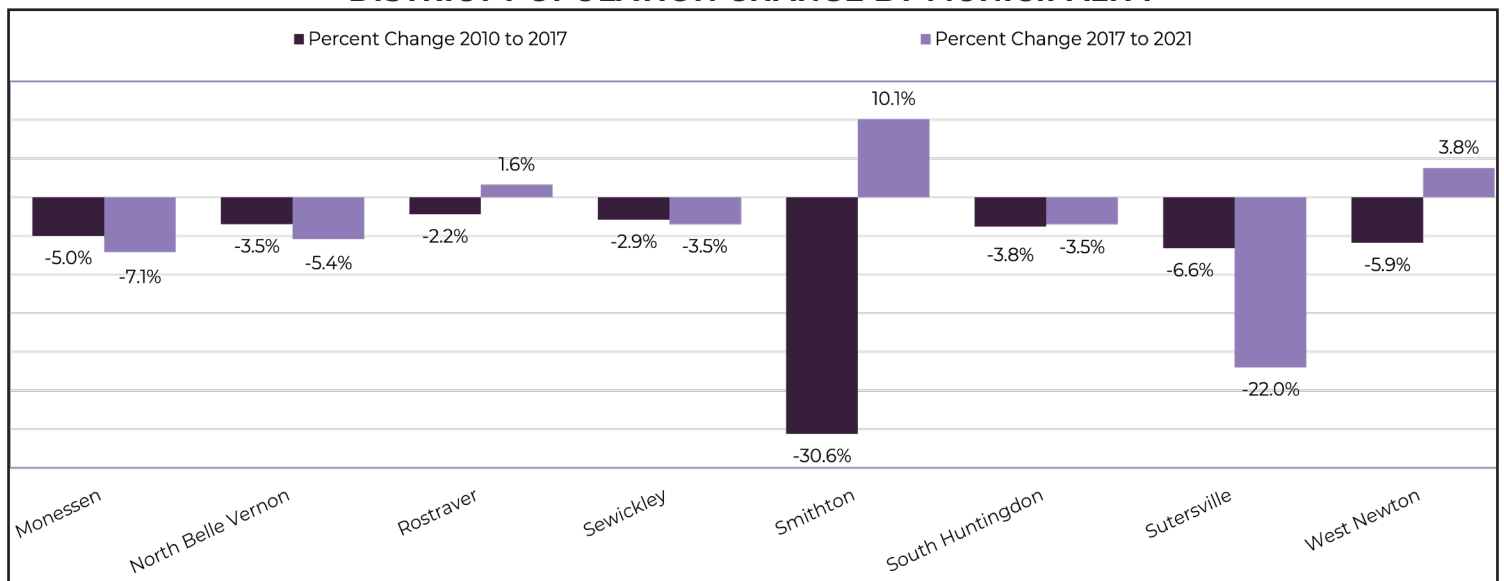
-2,323

Population change among the municipalities in the district generally trends downward. However, municipalities with smaller populations to begin with are likely to see greater percentage changes. For example, from 2017 to 2021, the population in Sutersville Borough decreased by 22% while the population in South Huntingdon Township decreased by only 3.5%.

DISTRICT MEDIAN AGE 2010 - 2021

44 → 48

DISTRICT POPULATION CHANGE BY MUNICIPALITY



HOUSING

Housing is one of the most basic components of any community. In many ways, it is both a determinant and a result of strong communities. A healthy housing stock with a good mix of housing options and low vacancy rates supports quality of life. While, a weaker housing stock with few housing options, blighted and abandoned housing units, and higher vacancy rates can further weaken a strong local economy.

During the development of *Reimagining Our Westmoreland*, residents clearly identified apartments, townhomes, and condominiums as a top priority and expressed the need to add more housing options to the available mix. Additionally, the location of these options are important as residents also expressed a strong desire for additional transportation choices.

Despite residents' reported housing priorities, since 2010, the county's increase in housing units has been primarily composed of single-family detached units. The same is true for the Mon-Yough Planning District. Overall, total housing units in the Mon-Yough Planning District decreased since 2010 with a total decrease of 289 units or 1.6%.

DISTRICT HOUSING UNIT DECREASE 2010 - 2021

-289 or

-1.6%

"Affordable housing brings stability, economic diversity, and improves the physical quality of the neighborhood" -

John Woods



Apartments in Rostraver Township
Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Houses in Monessen
Source: EagleView



House in West Newton
Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Houses in Smithton
Source: Westmoreland County Planning

ECONOMICS

Even more important than housing, the economy of an area provides residents with jobs and supports a tax base. While the quantity and quality of jobs support our quality of life, in light of demographic change, the quantity and quality of our labor force will further define local economies. From 2015 to 2021, there was a decrease of 4,425 jobs countywide, or a 2.6% decrease. This decrease could be attributed to the Covid-19 pandemic, which began in 2020.

Employment has been declining in the Mon-Yough Planning District from 2010 to 2021 with a loss of 512 jobs, or a 3% decrease. Despite this employment change, industries that saw the most growth include Utilities, Real Estate/Rental/Leasing, and Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation. As of 2021, Retail Trade remains the largest industry with roughly 25% of all jobs in the district. Transportation and Warehousing (12.3%) and Accommodation and Food Services (11.6%) round out the top three industries.

Wages across the county have increased by 39.5% from 2010 to 2021, despite the negative trend in employment. For the Mon-Yough Planning District, wages have

steadily increased since 2010. As of 2021, the average wage in the district was \$44,550, which is about an 18% increase from 2010.

COUNTYWIDE JOB GROWTH 2010 - 2021

-4,425

DISTRICT JOB LOSS 2010 - 2021

- 512

TOP THREE DISTRICT INDUSTRIES, 2021

Retail Trade

25%

Transportation and Warehousing

12.3%

Accommodations

12%



Westinghouse, Sewickley Township
Source: Westmoreland County Planning

4. INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

This last element brings all of the others together. By establishing a framework that defines how neighboring municipalities within a given district can work together, communities will be well poised to collectively take actions to make their economic and community goals a reality.



Mon-Yough District Meeting #6
Source: Westmoreland County Planning

Local Issues, Common Opportunity

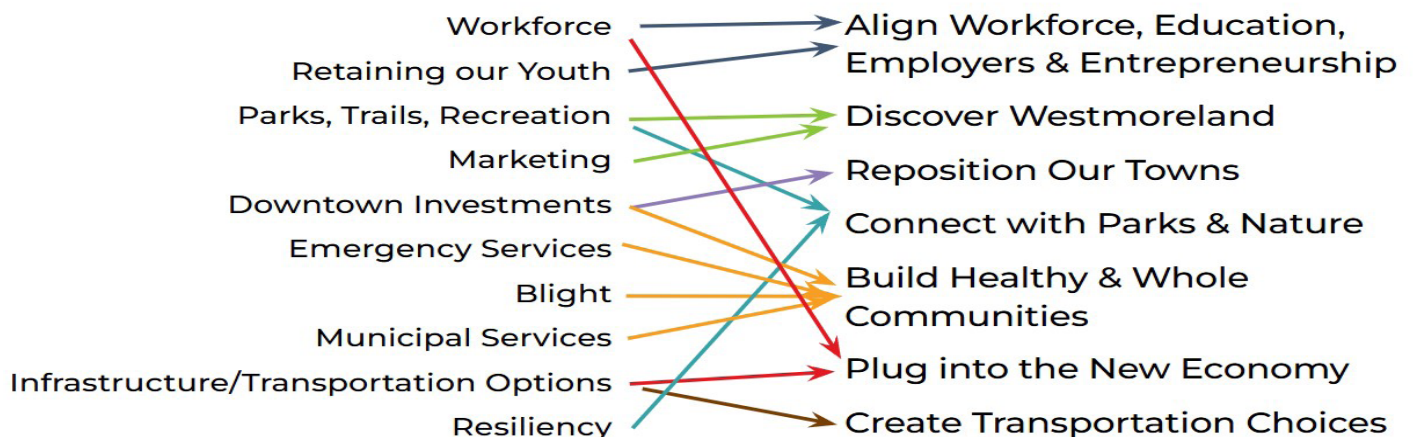
Early on in the Planning District process, municipal leaders were surveyed to identify the biggest issues or challenges they were facing in their respective communities. Listed below is a summary of responses in order from most-shared to least-shared. Local leaders were able to discover that their issues are not especially unique to within their municipal boundaries, and in fact, are not only shared with neighboring communities, but also align with the core objectives of *Reimagining Our Westmoreland*. These identified issues helped inform the land use and mobility planning processes, and present opportunities for intergovernmental cooperation.

“By far the greatest and most admirable form of wisdom is that needed to plan and beautify cities and human communities”

- Socrates

KEY ISSUES

CORE OBJECTIVES



Land Use

Across the landscape of the Mon-Yough Planning District, there are many assets and characteristics that are central to and signify the district including its open space and farmland, history and culture, neighborhoods, urban centers, commercial centers and much more.

How communities grow, transform, or re-develop affects access to jobs, housing, transportation, and population density. Understanding the communities needs and future aspirations is critical to developing habitable spaces and sustaining future growth. Proper land use planning can help community leaders to allocate their resources and establish policies to help facilitate the best land development that benefits the residents.

By making informed land use decisions at the local and regional levels, communities can better utilize land resources to attract, develop, and retain a diverse and stable workforce that will sustain a healthy economy.

The following principals, objectives, future land use map, strategies, and actions provide a guide for targeted and strategic municipal and private investment.

HOW TO IMPROVE REVENUE PER ACRE

1. Make fiscally savvy development the easier choice.
2. Calculate revenue per acre for all areas.
3. Encourage infill development and building up rather than greenfield development and building out.
4. Understand how building and zoning regulations impact revenues.
5. Understand where cross-subsidization is happening and consider charging for it.

Source: Rethinking Revenue: The Root of Local Government Revenues



Rutter's Construction at Commerce Crossing
Source: Westmoreland County Planning

LAND USE PRINCIPLES

Principles represent a fundamental understanding or proposition that serves as the foundation for a system of belief or behavior or for a chain of reasoning. They help to conceptualize land use in a set of value statements.

The set of principles listed below represent commonly held values that guide the process of land use planning in the district. They are presented below in a chain of reasoning, but not necessarily hierarchically.

1. GROWTH IS INEVITABLE

Despite the region's soft growth demand, growth and development will occur. Sound land use planning, guided by the concepts of preservation, enhancement, and transformation, will inform how and where development occurs.

2. GROWTH HAS IMPACTS

Growth and development have both positive and negative impacts on economies, the environment, and society. Focused efforts of preservation, enhancement, and transformation will support the positive and mitigate the negative effects of growth.

3. PRESERVATION, ENHANCEMENT, AND TRANSFORMATION DEPEND ON PUBLIC DECISIONS

The public, both in its broadest sense (countywide) and narrowest sense (the individual), has an opportunity to shape land use in ways that maximize the financial, environmental, and social impact of local decisions.

4. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IS ESSENTIAL

Since preservation, enhancement, and transformation depend on public decisions, the public has a right to be a part of the decision-making process.

5. IMPACTS OF LAND USE DECISIONS EXTEND BEYOND MUNICIPAL BOUNDARIES

Decisions made regarding preservation, enhancement, and transformation in one community can have financial, environmental, and social impacts on neighboring communities.

6. PRESERVATION, ENHANCEMENT, AND TRANSFORMATION PRIORITIES VARY AMONG INDIVIDUALS AND WITHIN COMMUNITIES

Some communities may value a rural setting, others may favor an intensely urban environment, while more may prefer a suburban development pattern. The same is true among individuals. Furthermore, these priorities can vary within communities. Balance among these priorities is essential to highly valued communities.

7. PLANNING IS ESSENTIAL AT THE SMALLEST AND LARGEST SCALES

A cohesive community that balances the financial, environmental, and social impacts of growth and development relies on planning at the site, street, block, neighborhood, village, town, city, county, and regional level. The approach of preservation, enhancement, and transformation provides a framework for land use planning.

LAND USE OBJECTIVES

Objectives help to contextualize the unique circumstances and geography of the district. They also identify specific places that are of special value for preservation, enhancement, and transformation.

1. Preserve - *To keep alive or in existence; make lasting. To keep safe from harm; protect or spare.*

Preserve parks, recreational areas, and open space, natural areas, farms, agricultural lands, historic areas, main streets, creeks, wetlands, scenic areas.

Specific locations include: Cedar Creek Park, Cedar Creek Gorge, District Farm Land, 9th Street Park, Herman Mihalich Memorial River/Boat Launch, Columbus Park, Monessen City Park, Monongahela River, Youghiogheny River, Greater Allegheny Passage Trail, Crabapple Community Park, Bells Mills Covered Bridge, South Huntingdon's Rural Nature.

2. Enhance - *To raise to a higher degree; intensify; magnify. To raise the value of.*

Enhance rural centers, neighborhood centers, town centers, urban cores, job centers, community gateways, and parks.

Specific locations include: Belle Vernon High School, Yough School District, Monessen City School District, Rostraver Airport, Sutersville, Smithton, West Newton, Rostraver Square, Westinghouse, State Route 51 Corridor, Commerce Crossing at Westmoreland Industrial Park, Lowber, Hutchinson.

3. Transform - *To change in form, appearance, or structure. To change in condition, nature, or character.*

Transform blighted neighborhoods, abandoned properties, industrial areas, brownfields, greyfields, failing commercial areas, and areas of potential new or re-development.

Specific locations include: Patch Town of Webster, Sutersville, City of Monessen CBD, I-70/SR 201 Interchange, Pricedale, Charleroi/Monessen Bridge, Herminie, Yukon



Cedar Creek Park, Rostraver

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



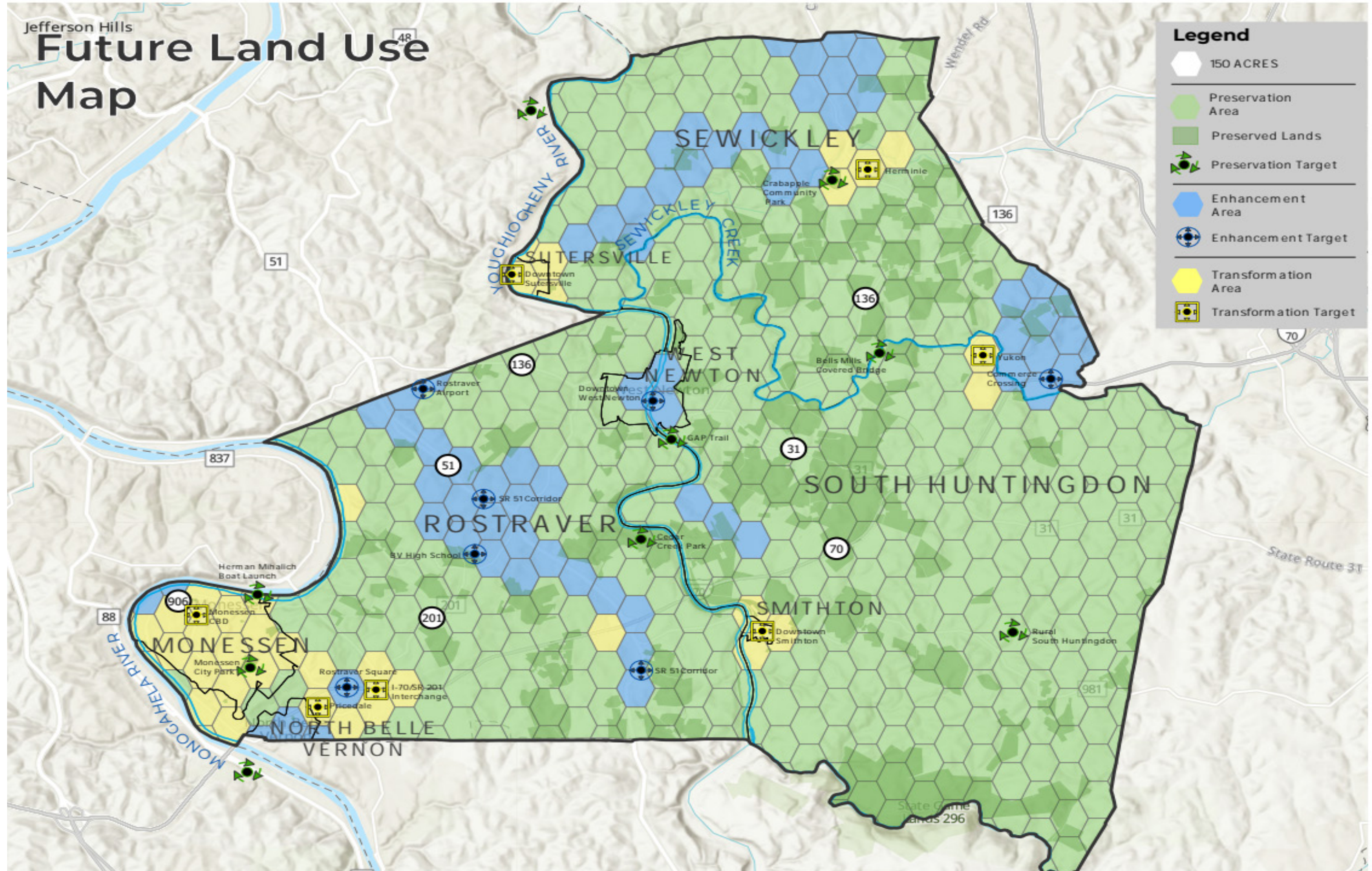
Belle Vernon High School

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Blighted Structure in Monessen

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



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LAND USE STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

Strategies are the specific ways to achieve the land use objectives, while actions are the steps for implementation. The land use strategies are listed below as they pertain to the particular areas of preservation, enhancement, and transformation. Just as the type and intensity of development changes on the spectrum of change, so do the strategies for preservation, enhancement, and transformation, building from one area to the next.

GUIDING STRATEGY FOR ALL AREAS

1. **UTILIZE PLANNING BEST PRACTICES***
 - a. Create new or update existing zoning ordinances, SALDOs, and comprehensive plans. Zoning ordinances, specifically, should be informed by and aligned with the future land use map.

The Mon-Yough Planning District specifically identified the strategies of Investing in Downtowns, Eliminate Blight, Make Parks Welcoming and Accessible, Invest in Beautification, Improve and Sustain Water Resources, and Utilize Planning Best Practices as top priorities (*), in order. These strategies are listed firstly for their respective area, followed by additional land use and other objective-supportive strategies.



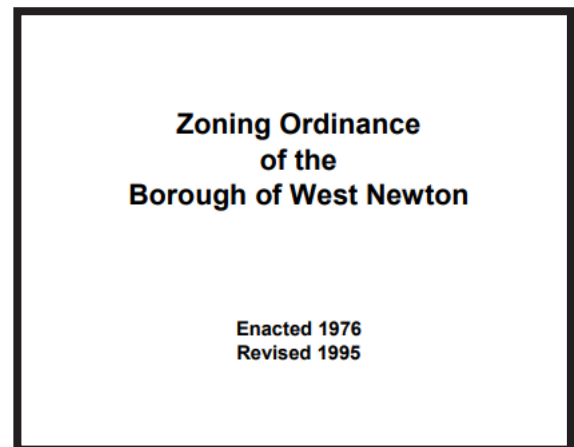
Mon-Yough District meeting #4

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



City of Monessen, Comprehensive Plan

Source: City of Monessen



West Newton, Zoning Ordinance

Source: West Newton Borough

Local Ordinances

Planning tools such as comprehensive plans, subdivision and land development ordinances (SALDOs), and zoning do not create development in and of themselves, however, their intent is to enable and guide the type of development desired by communities. Updating these documents is crucial for communities to adapt to changing needs, promote affordable housing, and foster economic development.

There's a saying in planning, "If your land use ordinances are older than your youngest staff member, it's time to update." Typically, comprehensive plans are to be updated every 10 years.

Municipalities should consider updating their existing (or creating new) guidance documents to be able to address the needs of today and the desires of the future.

STRATEGIES FOR PRESERVATION AREAS

1. GROW LOCAL

- a. Revise zoning ordinances to allow for agritourism as an accessory use on farms.
- b. Expand and promote local farmers markets.

2. PRESERVE OPEN SPACE & PROTECT NATURAL ASSETS

- a. Work with the Westmoreland Conservation District, Westmoreland Land Trust, and Westmoreland County Agricultural Land Preservation to preserve areas of significant environmental, ecological, recreational, scenic, or agricultural value.
- b. Revise zoning ordinances to include agricultural protection zoning (APZ).
- c. Support the Westmoreland County Land Trust in implementation of its land preservation priorities and its acquisition of key properties.
- d. Adopt adjacency and concurrency policies to ensure all future development is within the bounds of existing infrastructure.
- e. Utilize parks and trails to preserve open space and protect natural assets.

3. IMPROVE & SUSTAIN WATER RESOURCES

- a. Administer and enforce local stormwater management ordinances.
- b. Identify restoration and improvement projects in the Sewickley Creek, Youghiogheny River, Monongahela River, and Jacobs Creek watersheds.
- c. Pursue acid mine drainage (AMD) projects.



South Huntingdon Twp Farmland
Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Cedar Creek Park, Rostraver
Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Lower Project, Sewickley Township
Source: Westmoreland County Planning

4. GO GREEN

- a. Amend zoning ordinances and SALDOs to encourage green infrastructure.
- b. Revise zoning ordinances to allow for community gardens.
- c. Complete an energy audit of all municipal owned facilities to identify cost-effective energy saving measures to pursue.

STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCEMENT AREAS

1. INVEST IN DOWNTOWNS*

- a. Focus development within the bounds of existing infrastructure in neighborhood centers, town centers, and urban cores.
- b. Develop downtown and corridor master plans.
- c. Identify specific sites for infill development and develop a portfolio for developers to use when identifying new opportunities.
- d. Review and update policies and regulations to remove barriers to the development process.
- e. Implement tactical urbanism or pop-up projects and events to demonstrate desired changes and encourage new development.
- f. Integrate art in infrastructure and placemaking improvements.

2. MAKE PARKS WELCOMING AND ACCESSIBLE*

- a. Renovate and upgrade park facilities and equipment.
- b. Ensure parks are accessible to people of all ages and abilities.
- c. Identify areas without adequate access to parks as potential locations for new parks.
- d. Coordinate efforts with municipalities and regional partners to complete the trail network and increase access to parks.

3. INVEST IN BEAUTIFICATION*

- a. Identify key corridors, intersections, and gateways for improvement.
 - i. Examples: State Routes 51, 201, and 31.
- b. Develop partnerships with community organizations and volunteers to maintain areas.
- c. Incorporate landscaping and design requirements in zoning ordinances and SALDOs, as applicable, to maintain and improve community aesthetics.
- d. Adopt and enforce property maintenance codes to establish standards of quality.



Flower Garden, Smithton Borough

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



West Newton Borough

Source: West Newton



Smithton Park

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



State Route 201, Rostraver

Source: Westmoreland County Planning

4. PROVIDE HOUSING OPTIONS

- a. Amend zoning ordinances to allow for multiple housing types and tenure.
- b. Permit accessory dwelling units on single-family lots.
 - i. Examples: duplexes, triplexes & fourplexes, courtyard apartments, bungalow courts, townhouses, multiplex apartments and condos, live/work units, etc.
- c. Revise zoning ordinances to allow for the expansion of multifamily units, including the conversion of large homes into multi-tenant buildings.
- d. In neighborhood centers, town centers, and urban cores, identify and redevelop underutilized commercial spaces as mixed-use buildings with upper-floor residential units.
- e. Amend zoning ordinances to allow for flexible parking regulations, reduce minimum parking requirements, or eliminate parking minimums.
- f. Establish a local, multifamily priority-development program to incentivize developers.
- g. Review and modify current policy on Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) to permit the use of financing programs for smaller residential and mixed-use developments in neighborhood centers, town centers, and regional urban cores.

5. PROVIDE DEVELOPMENT READY SITES

- a. Identify, prioritize, and rehabilitate existing buildings for modern uses.
- b. Partner with the WCIDC, RIDC and Redevelopment Authority/Land Bank to provide sites.
- c. Promote the Commerce Crossing at Westmoreland Business Park and Westmoreland I-70 Industrial Park.
- d. Incorporate land use design requirements to include access to amenities, mix of uses, public transit, and improvements to support walkability and connection to neighborhood developments.



Clair Manor Rostraver Township

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Duplex in Sewickley Township

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



WCIDC Industrial Building

Source: Westmoreland County Planning

6. ADVANCE ENTREPRENEURIALISM

- a. Revise zoning ordinances to allow for live/work spaces, shared-use facilities, and incubator spaces in rural centers, neighborhood centers, town centers, and urban cores.
- b. Develop a network of co-working facilities in downtown communities that provide flexible work spaces to existing independent contractors, small businesses, and small business start-ups.

7. CONNECT WITH TECH

- a. Identify specific areas that require broadband enhancements beyond basic connectivity and work with the county to pursue funding.
- b. Use adaptive technology to reduce or eliminate the need for expensive capital improvements to County road systems, an increasingly important factor as resources become ever more competitive.
- c. Amend zoning ordinances to allow for the provision or expansion of broadband infrastructure.
- d. Collaborate with Westmoreland County IDC, private companies, nonprofits, and local educational institutions to develop makerspaces.

8. CULTIVATE ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

- a. Partner with the Westmoreland Cultural Trust, Westmoreland Museum of American Art, and local art centers to identify potential areas for public art.
- b. Create arts districts in rural centers, neighborhood centers, town centers, and urban cores.
- c. Utilize vacant lots, warehouses, and industrial buildings as active entertainment venues.
- d. Consider hiring staff as an events coordinator to program and schedule events, activities, festivals, and celebrations.
- e. Create municipal- or district-specific brands that incorporate artistic elements and communicate a distinct community character.
- f. Establish incentives and programs to encourage businesses that relate to art and entertainment, particularly within urban cores.
- g. Utilize vacant warehouse and industrial buildings for active entertainment venues such as indoor skydiving, trampoline parks, or indoor dog parks, which are growing in popularity across the country.



Verizon Truck

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Cedar Creek Park

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Sewickley Township Public Art

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Public Art in Monessen

Source: Westmoreland County Planning

9. DEVELOP RECREATIONAL DESTINATIONS

- Continue to renovate and update parks to meet ADA standards in all areas including: parking, walkways, restrooms, playgrounds, picnic areas, pavilions, buildings, and sports/recreational facilities.
- Review municipal ordinances to allow for outdoor and recreational activities.

10. CULTIVATE A RESTAURANT INDUSTRY

- Amend local regulations to allow for pop-up restaurants and food trucks, carts, and kiosks.
- Connect with local farmers to promote organic, farm to table restaurants.

11. DIRECT DENSITY

- Focus growth within neighborhood centers, town centers, and urban cores near transit.
- Prioritize infill development to utilize vacant properties and existing infrastructure.
- Amend zoning ordinances to allow for more housing types (including multifamily) and a greater mix of uses.
- Amend zoning ordinances to allow multifamily development near job centers.
- Support adaptive reuse projects that incorporate existing structures and amenities within new, higher-density development.
- Explore the feasibility of developing downtown associations, committees, and improvement districts to address neighborhood centers, town centers, and urban cores and make improvements over time.

12. ENHANCE TRAIL SYSTEMS

- Identify strategic locations for local trails and connections to regional trails.
- Prioritize investments and support for towns located on or near trails for pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, restaurants, tourism, and bike and boat outfitters.
- Work with the Regional Trail Corporation to strengthen the volunteer Trail Chapters that assist in the operation, maintenance and funding of County trails. Currently these include the Westmoreland Yough Trail Chapter, the Westmoreland Heritage Trail Chapter, the Five Star Trail Chapter and the Coal & Coke Trail Chapter.



John DiVirgilio Sports Complex

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Morris Farm, Sewickley Township

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



West Newton Public Library

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



GAP Trail Near Smithton

Source: Westmoreland County Planning

13. INCREASE WALKING AND BIKING OPTIONS

- a. Utilize funding available through the Safe Routes to School Program to provide sidewalks and other infrastructure near schools within the County.
- b. Explore the funding available through the Safe Routes to Parks Action Framework to provide sidewalks and other infrastructure near key parks within the County.

14. BOLSTER AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES & SERVICES

- a. Amend zoning ordinances to allow for a variety of housing types to accommodate senior needs.
- b. Ensure senior housing and aging-in-community projects are located in neighborhood centers, town centers, and urban cores near related services and transit options.

15. AND APPLICABLE STRATEGIES FOR PRESERVATION AREAS



Monessen High School Entrance

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



West Newton Senior Center

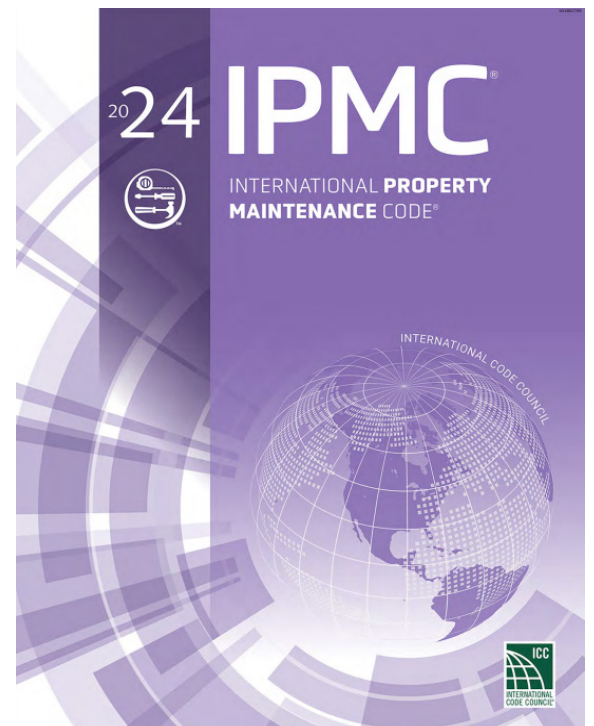
Source: Westmoreland County Planning

STRATEGIES FOR TRANSFORMATION AREAS

1. ELIMINATE BLIGHT*

- a. Conduct a comprehensive property conditions assessment and develop a blight plan utilizing the Five-Step Fast-Track Blight Plan process.
 - i. Examples: City of Monessen Blight Plan
- b. Encourage municipalities to adopt the International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC) to establish uniform standards of quality for neighborhoods.
- c. Enforce property maintenance codes.
- d. Join the Westmoreland County Land Bank.
- e. Identify and prioritize brownfield and greyfield sites for remediation.
- f. Utilize the county's Act 152 Demo Fund to remove structures and eliminate blight.
- g. Increase investment in code enforcement.
- h. Establish a rental property registration inspection program.
- i. Utilize Quality of Life Ticketing under Act 34 of 2015.

2. AND APPLICABLE STRATEGIES FOR PRESERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT AREAS



2024 IPMC

Source: ICC

MITIGATING BLIGHT

Blight is a troublesome issue. Lack of proper care, deferred maintenance, disinvestment, vacancy, and the ultimate abandonment of homes and businesses leave open sores in our neighborhoods. These conditions of blight are plaguing many of the county’s communities, and the story is no different in the Mon-Yough Planning District. In fact, the issue and challenge of blight quickly rose as one of the top priorities among the Mon-Yough municipalities.

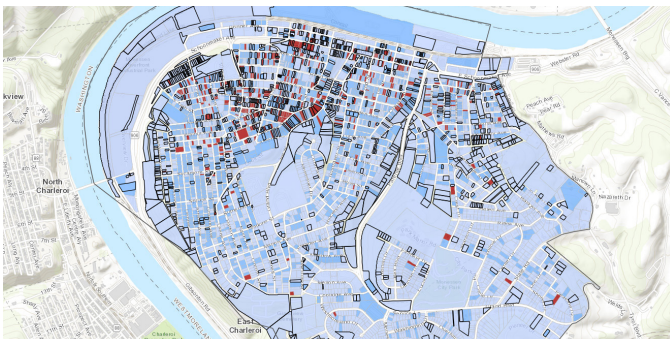
Blighted properties and buildings not only pose a safety hazard, but they also decrease property values, diminish community aesthetics, and hinder growth and development. And blight is not just limited to residential areas, it can exist in commercial or industrial areas also.

The strategy of eliminating blight and its actions are not just limited to Transformation Areas but are applicable to sites and areas within the areas targeted for enhancement as well as preservation. However, the process of eliminating blight is, by its nature, transformative and transformational.

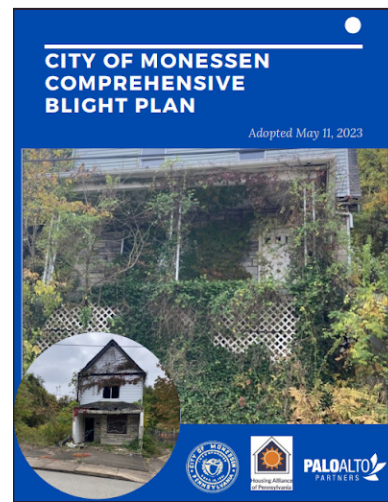
Tackling blight involves not only dealing with the worst-of-the-worst properties but also addressing those buildings and properties, that if left unattended, could decline into a blighted state.



Blighted Property in Monessen
Source: Westmoreland County Planning



City of Monessen Blight Plan Mapping
Source: Westmoreland County Planning



City of Monessen Blight Plan
Source: City of Monessen



Blighted Property in Monessen
Source: Westmoreland County Planning

Mobility

Just as land use defines the location and places worth connecting to and within, transportation connects us to and within the places that matter. Decisions that are made today concerning growth, redevelopment, zoning, subdivision and land development, public water and sewage, and broadband infrastructure impact future access, mobility, and transportation.

How do residents get from one place to another? Can they safely walk or bike? Do they have to drive? Is transit available? How long does it take to reach the destination?

During the initial public engagement for *Reimagining Our Westmoreland*, some 34% of resident survey responses cited transportation as a top priority. By making informed transportation decisions at the local and regional levels, communities can better provide a modern, connected, safe, and efficient infrastructure system to attract, develop, and retain a diverse and stable workforce that will sustain a healthy economy.

The following principles, objectives, strategies, actions, and projects provide a guide for targeted and strategic transportation investments.

Madison Exit, I-70
Source: PennDOT



MOBILITY PRINCIPLES

Principles represent a fundamental understanding or proposition that serves as the foundation for a system of belief or behavior or for a chain of reasoning. They help to conceptualize transportation in a set of value statements.

The set of principles listed below represent commonly held values that guide the process of mobility planning in the district. They are presented below in a chain of reasoning, but not necessarily hierarchically.

1. LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION ARE INEXTRICABLY LINKED

Simply put, transportation is the movement of people or goods from one location to another. It is the very location of people and places that determine the mode, route, duration, etc. of travel. Sound land use planning will inform how and where transportation occurs.

2. TRANSPORTATION HAS IMPACTS

Transportation has both positive and negative impacts on economies, the environment, and society. Thoughtful planning and focused efforts will support the positive and mitigate the negative effects of transportation.

3. TRANSPORTATION DEPENDS ON PUBLIC DECISIONS

The public, both in its broadest sense (countywide) and narrowest sense (the individual), has an opportunity to shape transportation in ways that maximize the financial, environmental, and social impact of local decisions.

4. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IS ESSENTIAL

Since transportation depends on public decisions, the public has a right to be a part of the decision-making process.

5. IMPACTS OF TRANSPORTATION EXTEND BEYOND MUNICIPAL BOUNDARIES

Decisions made regarding transportation in one community can have financial, environmental, and social impacts on neighboring communities.

6. TRANSPORTATION PRIORITIES VARY AMONG INDIVIDUALS AND AMONG COMMUNITIES

How a community chooses to grow and develop impacts how people connect to and within it. Individuals themselves may also desire or rely upon certain modes of travel. Balance among priorities to ensure accessibility and mobility for all is essential to highly valued communities.

7. PLANNING IS ESSENTIAL AT THE SMALLEST AND LARGEST SCALES

A cohesive community that balances the financial, environmental, and social impacts of transportation relies on planning at the site, street, block, neighborhood, village, town, city, county, and regional level.

MOBILITY OBJECTIVES

Objectives help to contextualize the unique circumstances and priorities of the district. They also identify specific places that are of certain importance for alignment, maintenance, and creation.

1. **Align** - *To put into correct or appropriate relative positions. To give support to; come together in agreement or alliance.*

Align transportation policy, investments, projects, and improvements to land use priorities.

Utilizing the future land use map, ensure that the transportation system assists and is compatible with efforts towards preservation, enhancement, and transformation.

2. **Maintain** - *To cause or enable to continue; keep in good condition. To give support to.*

Maintain and manage transportation infrastructure to ensure a safe and high-quality network.

Implement a data-driven, prioritized, and coordinated approach to maintaining the physical infrastructure as well as financial commitments.

3. **Create** - *To bring into existence; cause to happen.*

Create transportation choices to ensure accessibility and mobility for all.

Working with county, regional, and state partners, develop and plan projects for the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and other funding opportunities.

ALIGN & MAINTAIN

=

POLICY & APPROACH



CREATE

=

DO

Local Active Transportation Plans

The *Smithton-Scottdale Active Transportation Plan* is all about making it easier and safer for people to walk, bike, and use other active ways to get around. One of its main goals is to connect neighborhoods, schools, parks, and local businesses with better sidewalks, bike lanes, and trails. The plan encourages people to live healthier lifestyles while also helping the environment by reducing traffic and pollution. It's also focused on making sure everyone in the community has access to safe and reliable transportation options.

Another important part of the plan is getting feedback from the community so that local residents can have a say in what changes are made. The hope is that improving trails and other infrastructure will boost the local economy, attract tourists, and make it easier for people to shop and get to work. The plan also aims to make streets safer by slowing down traffic and reducing accidents. Overall, the goal is to create a community where walking and biking are normal, enjoyable, and practical ways to get around while improving the quality of life for everyone in the area.

MOBILITY STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

Strategies are the specific ways to achieve the mobility objectives, while actions are the steps for implementation.

1. INCREASE WALKABILITY & BIKING OPTIONS

- a. Revise zoning ordinances and SALDOs to focus on the pedestrian scale, requiring sidewalks and/or street trees for new development.
- b. Develop an active transportation plan and complete streets policy.
 - i. Example: Smithton Borough's Active Transportation Plan. Smithton Borough's Complete Streets Policy.
- c. Identify key corridors and intersections for pedestrian/bicycle infrastructure and improvements.
- d. Conduct a sidewalk inventory. Complete gaps, repair, or replace based on findings.
- e. Utilize the safe Routes to School and Safe Routes to Parks programs to provide sidewalk and other infrastructure near schools and key parks.
- f. Utilize Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding (where qualified) to install sidewalks and ADA curb ramps at crossings.
- g. Actively participate in the PennDOT Connects process for local projects to ensure that pedestrian and bicycle needs are incorporated into the project, where applicable.
- h. Work with local municipalities to identify appropriate locations for bikeshare stations.

2. UTILIZE PLANNING BEST PRACTICES

- a. Update and revise zoning ordinances and SALDOs to allow for and encourage development that supports multiple modes of travel.
- b. Actively participate in the PennDOT Connects process for local projects to explore their full potential.
- c. Identify specific transportation corridors to study and develop improvements for.
 - i. Example: Route 201 at I-70 Interchange Planning and Environmental Linkages Study.

3. ENHANCE TRANSIT, INCREASE RIDERSHIP, AND PROMOTE TOD

- a. Revise zoning ordinances and SALDOs and align land use practices to be transit supportive.

The following strategies are listed in order of priority as determined by the Mon-Yough Planning District.



West Newton Trail Access

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Fayette Street, North Belle Vernon

Source: Google Earth Pro



Monessen City Park Sign

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



PennDOT Connects Logo

Source: PennDOT

- b. Work with CommuteInfo to identify and coordinate vanpooling and carpooling options for residents.
- c. Concentrate development in neighborhood centers, town centers, and urban cores so that transit can be an option.
- d. Incorporate land use design requirements to include access to amenities, mix of uses, public transit, and improvements to support walkability and connection to neighboring developments for all appropriate land development projects
- e. Provide first-mile/last-mile connections (side-walks) to bus stops so that people can safely access transit service.
- f. Upgrade existing bus stops to provide passengers safe shelter from the elements while waiting for the bus.
- g. Work with the Westmoreland County Transit Authority (WCTA), Mid-Mon Valley Transit Authority (MMVTA), and Fayette Area Coordinated Transportation (FACT) to modify and optimize routes to increase frequency and ensure connections to job centers, key destinations, microtransit, and within communities.
- h. Support the development of a countywide multimodal hub in Greensburg and smaller district hubs in Monessen.
- i. Prioritize and develop Route 51, Route 201, and Route 906 into multimodal corridors.

4. ENHANCE TRAIL SYSTEM

- a. Identify strategic locations for local trails and connections to regional trails
 - i. Example: Smithton Borough and Sutersville Borough connections to the GAP Trail.
- b. Construct connections from trails to residential areas, parks, historical sites, schools, and other key destinations.
- c. Prioritize investments near trails for pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, restaurants, and bike and boat outfitters.
- d. Work with the Regional Trail Corporation to strengthen the volunteer trail chapters and assist in the operation, maintenance, and funding of trails.

5. IMPROVE PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE

- a. Participate in any and all opportunities to com-



WCTA Bus in Sewickley Township
Source: Westmoreland County Planning



SR 201 Park n Ride
Source: Westmoreland County Planning



GAP Trail Access near Sutersville
Source: Westmoreland County Planning

municate the district's desire for passenger rail service to and from Pittsburgh and beyond.

- b. Continue to advocate for improvements at the Greensburg, Connellsville, and Latrobe Amtrak stations.
- c. Partner with Western Pennsylvanians for Passenger Rail and the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership to advocate for increasing passenger rail service.

6. INCREASE FLIGHT OPTIONS

- a. Support Arnold Palmer Regional Airport's and Rostraver Airports efforts to attract additional airline operator(s) and expand current service to additional destinations.
- b. Complete an economic impact analysis periodically to accurately track and communicate the impact of air service locally at the Rostraver Airport.

7. FOCUS ON FREIGHT

- a. Align local land use to support existing freight infrastructure.
- b. Support the renovation and rehabilitation of infrastructure that is critical to the movement of freight.
- c. Prioritize areas for additional freight transportation options such as rail and truck.
- d. Develop freight infrastructure and facilities to help support the goals of the region.
- e. Account for freight and delivery vehicles in complete streets policies and develop curbside management strategies.
- f. Support the completion and modernization of Interstate 70 and the Pennsylvania Turnpike.
- g. Direct new, large-scale development along Interstate 70 to capitalize on the connection to the highway, abundance of available land, and the investment already being made to update the Interstate.

8. ENHANCE INTEGRATE NEW TECHNOLOGIES

- a. Investigate opportunities to incorporate broadband in large-scale road projects.
- b. Incorporate connected and adaptive traffic signal controls, including leading pedestrian intervals, in signal upgrade and modernization projects.
- c. Encourage that aging infrastructure be replaced with modern and efficient materials and technologies to improve efficiencies and lower costs.



Greensburg Amtrak Station

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Rostraver Airport

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Levin Warehouse, South Huntingdon

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



I-70

Source: PennDOT

ENHANCING TRANSIT

During public engagement for the county comprehensive plan, 30% of residents surveyed stated that transit was a top disadvantage to living in Westmoreland, and 24% of businesses surveyed cited transit as a top disadvantage to locating their business in the county. In an effort to improve public transit service and increase ridership in the Mon-Yough, county planners developed the following conceptual ideas for the district.

The routes consider area demographics, potential ridership, coverage, frequency, density, walkability, linearity, and proximity. It is a recommendation of this plan and the district municipalities that the Westmoreland County Transit Authority (WCTA) and Mid-Mon Valley Transportation Authority consider revising its current fixed route service to these routes. These proposed routes do not incorporate other WCTA or MMVTA routes within/outside the county or the routes and service provided by other transit operators. Further coordination with WCTA and MMVTA service and other transit operators will be required. Revisions to the fixed route service will not affect current paratransit (Go Westmoreland) service provided to communities.

Additional considerations for conceptual routes include:

1. Connection to and from City of Greensburg and surrounding amenities i.e. Casino and Mall
2. Dedicated bus lane on Donner Avenue and Schoonmaker Avenue
3. Connections to Mon-Valley Hospital
4. Connections for elderly services
5. Connections to regional amenities: grocery stores, senior living, pharmacy, shopping, medical facilities
6. Continued service to City of Pittsburgh
7. Utilization of rail service to Pittsburgh
8. West Newton Train Station Revamp
9. Ability for seniors to plan trips in advance
10. New Service: Micro-transit for small/regional trips to medical appointments, etc.
11. Transit/Car Pooling/Van Pooling for Commerce Crossing Development



Live Casino

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Bus only lane, Minneapolis, MN

Source: Tony Webster, flickr.com



West Newton Giant Eagle

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Micro Transit: Metro Metro

Source: American Public Transportation Assoc.

ON-DEMAND SHARE MOBILITY

Transportation is critical to so many different aspects of life, especially in rural areas of Westmoreland County. And when public transportation is unavailable, there is a limit to where people can work, shop, seek healthcare, and find other opportunities to support their daily lives. Smart phones, web applications, and a wide variety of new public transportation technology have provided new, flexible transportation options.

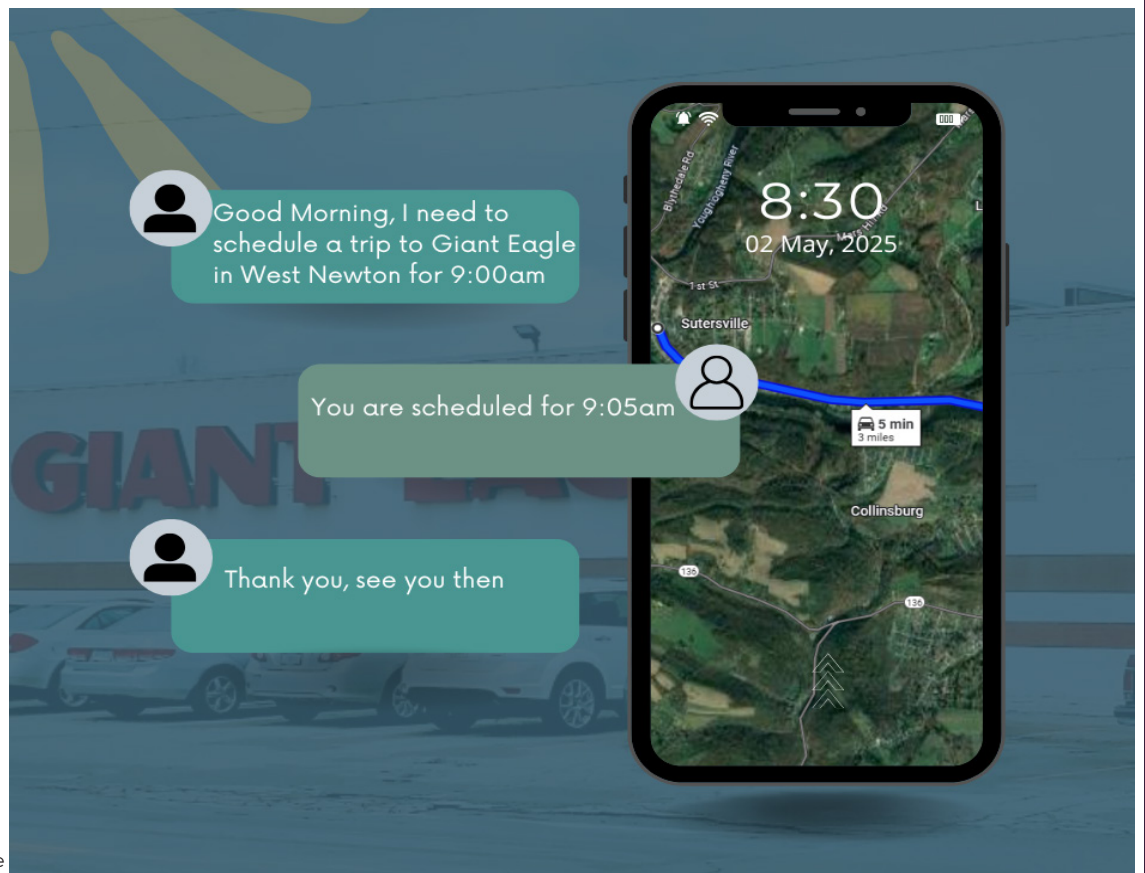
A program similar to the Rural County Mobility Platform (RAMP) pilot program could be implemented to support the needs of residents in the Mon-Yough Planning District. The program could offer free/small fee, on-demand transportation in the planning district for essential services such as healthcare, grocery stores, governmental services, and more. Similar to the RAMP pilot project, service could be available Monday through Friday (8am to 5pm) operated by vans or SUV's. One van could operate as a fixed service route between the planning district and City of Greenburg, while the others (1-3 vans) would serve as on-demand service.

Taking this concept to the next level, the advancement of self-driving technologies could take the need for a human operator out of the drivers seat. Instead of a call center, the communication would happen via smart phone application, where the requestor can provide a precise location, which then picks them up and drives them to their desired destination. Companies such as Waymo, EasyMile, and many more have developed similar concepts.



Waymo Van

Source: Business Insider/Waymo



On-Demand Example

TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS

A major impetus for mobility planning as part of the Planning District process is to develop a list of projects for the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and other funding opportunities to ensure a modern, connected, safe, and efficient transportation network.

Transportation projects take a long time to develop, and oftentimes funding opportunities are passed up due to a lack of planning capacity at the local level. Transportation planning and programming also requires collaboration and coordination at the municipal, county, PennDOT district, and 10-county regional levels. Furthermore, projects are very expensive, and therefore must be logical, economical, and maintained.

The following lists of prioritized transportation projects and corresponding maps identify desired road, bridge, active, and operations and safety improvements within the district. These projects were developed based on several factors including future land use, mobility strategies, pavement and bridge conditions, regional freight network, sidewalks and trails, and congestion and crash locations.

These projects should be systematically submitted for funding, advocated for, and constructed by the district and its municipalities. The county will also support and advocate for the implementation of the projects on behalf of the Mon-Yough Planning District.

The 10-county (including Westmoreland) region's long range transportation plan is implemented through a series of short term investment programs know as the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TIP is a four-year program that is updated every two years. It identifies priority roadway, transit, and multimodal transportation improvements programmed for advancement and construction.

**MON-YOUGH
PLANNING
DISTRICT**



8 MUNICIPALITIES

65 MUNICIPALITIES

4 COUNTIES

10 COUNTIES



Meeting #7, City of Monessen

Source: Westmoreland County Planning

ROAD PROJECTS

Projects are listed in priority order including road name, location, project type, and municipality.

1. Second Street/3029 from Smithton Borough Line to Jacobs Creek, Preservation/Reconstruction, South Huntingdon Township
2. Fellsburg Road from Webster Hollow Road to SR 51, Preservation/Reconstruction, Rostraver Township
3. SR 981 from Sager Road to Dutch Hollow Road, Preservation/Reconstruction, South Huntingdon Township
4. Summit Street Slide, Reconstruction, West Newton Borough and South Huntingdon Township
5. Water Street from SR 136 to Giant Eagle, Preservation/Reconstruction, West Newton Borough
6. State Road from SR 906 to Jackson Drive, Preservation/Reconstruction, City of Monessen
7. Nicholls Hill Road/3017 from McKenery Drive to Crawford Lane, Preservation/Reconstruction, Rostraver Township
8. Mars Hill Road/1st Street from County Line to Clay Pike, Preservation, Sutersville Borough/Sewickley Township
9. Sutersville Road from 2nd Avenue to Robertson Street, Preservation, Sewickley Township/West Newton Borough
10. Sewickley Avenue from Keystone Road to Pike Street, Preservation, Sewickley Township
11. Rankin Road from Webster Hollow Road to Fells Church Road, Preservation, Rostraver Township
12. Leeds Avenue from 3rd Street to Rostraver Street, Preservation, City of Monessen
13. McKee Avenue from 4th Street to 9th Street, Preservation/Reconstruction, City of Monessen
14. Rebecca Street from Eastgate Avenue to Indiana Avenue, Preservation, City of Monessen
15. Graham Avenue from Beatrice Street to Cemetery, Preservation, City of Monessen
16. Budds Ferry Road, Preservation, Rostraver Township
17. Orr Road from Vernon Drive to Budds Ferry Road, Preservation, West Newton Borough and Rostraver Township
18. Mars Hill Road, Preservation, Sewickley Township



Second Street, Smithton

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Sutersville Road

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



City of Monessen

Source: Google



Water Street, West Newton

Source: Westmoreland County Planning

BRIDGE PROJECTS

Projects are listed in priority order including bridge number, road name, location, project type, and municipality.

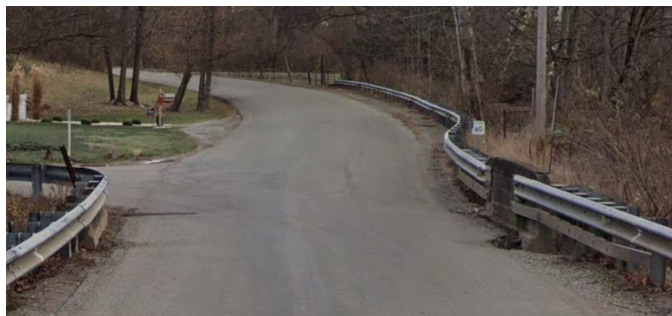
1. SR 3016 over Branch of Sewickley Creek, Rehabilitation/Reconstruction, Sewickley Township
2. SR 3016 over Little Sewickley Creek, Rehabilitation/Reconstruction, Sewickley Township
3. Ridge Road over Cedar Creek, Rehabilitation/Replacement, Rostraver Township
4. Vernon Drive over Tributary to Youghigeny River, West Newton Borough
5. Sutersville Road over Sewickley Creek, Preservation/Rehabilitation, Sewickley Township
6. SR 981 over Tributary to Youghiogheny River, Preservation/Rehabilitation, Smithton Borough
7. Concord Lane over Cedar Creek, Preservation/Rehabilitation, Rostraver Township
8. 1st Street over Gillespie Run, Preservation/Rehabilitation, Allegheny County/Sutersville Borough
9. Shaner Road over Trib. to Youghigeny River, Replacement, Sewickley Township

ACTIVE PROJECTS

Projects are listed in priority order including description and municipality.

1. West Newton Bridge, Sidewalk Width and/Or Temporary Bridge, West Newton Borough
2. 1st Street from Gap Trail to 3rd Avenue, Multi-use path and lighting, Sutersville Borough
3. Route 981 from SR 51 to Smithton, Multi-use path, Rostraver Township and Smithton Borough
4. Route 981 from town to Smithton Park, Sidewalk, Smithton Borough
5. 2nd Avenue in Sutersville Borough, Sidewalks, Sutersville Borough
6. Donner Avenue & Schoonmaker Avenue, Sidewalk Conditions, City of Monessen
7. Municipal Drive from Concord Lane to Cedar Creek Park, Bicycle Infrastructure, Rostraver Township
8. West Newton CBD, Bike Racks, Dock, wayfinding, sharrows, bike lanes, West Newton Borough
9. Sewickley Avenue, Main Street Projects, Sewickley Township
10. City of Monessen Boat Launch, Rehabilitation, City of Monessen

11. Route 981 at GAP Trailhead/Smithton Beach Road, Accessibility, Rostraver Township
12. Timms Lane from John DiVirgilio Sports Complex to Cedar Creek Park, Sidewalks/Trail/Biking, Rostraver Township
13. Belle Vernon School Campus to Rostraver Shopping Center, Sidewalks, Rostraver Township
14. Grand Boulevard (Monessen City Park), Euclid Drive to Willow Drive, Park/Trail Maintenance, City of Monessen
15. Water Street, Wayfinding signage to Goehring Park, West Newton Borough



Lower Road/SR 3016 over Little Sewickley Creek

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



GAP-Smithton Trailhead

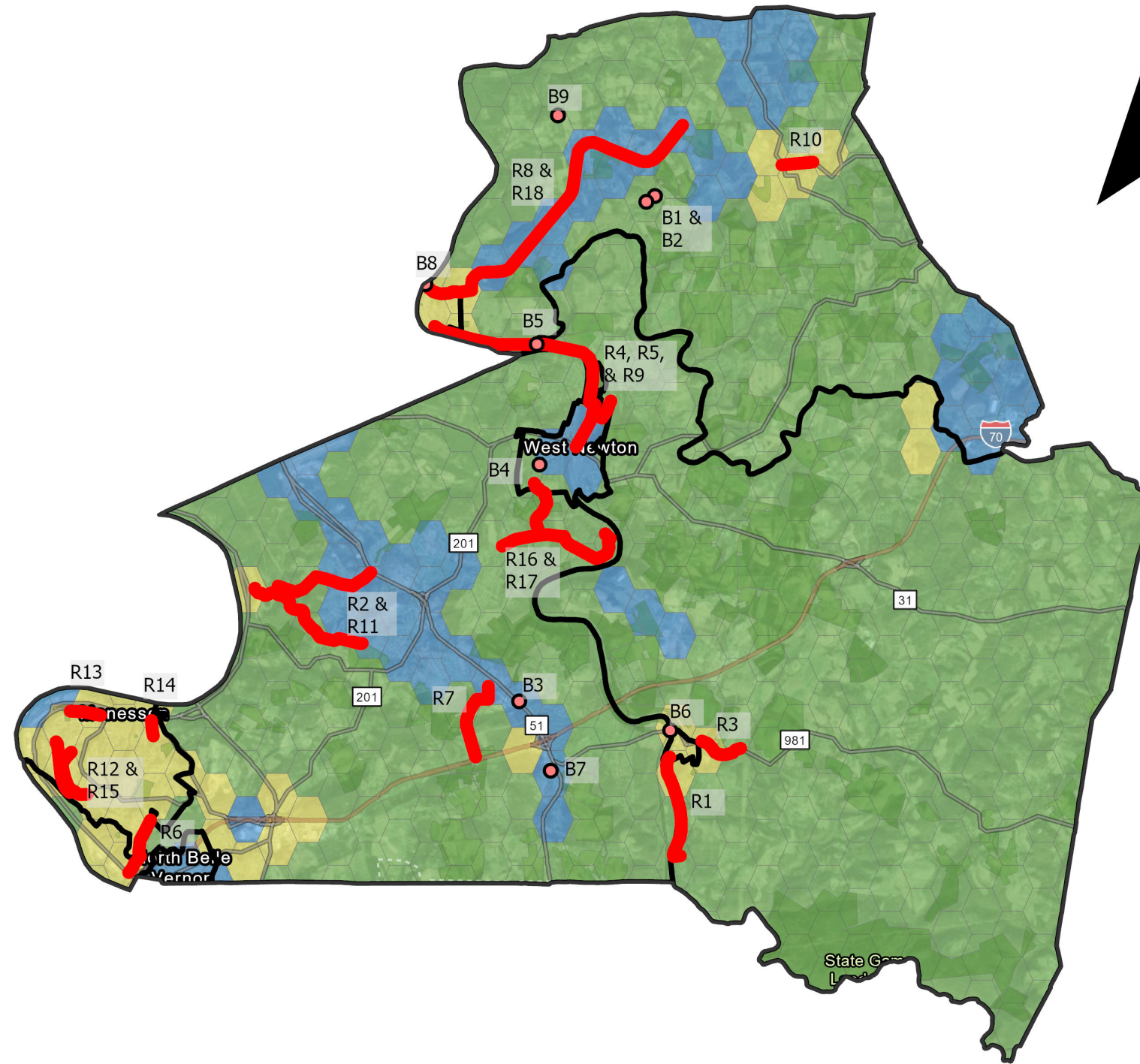
Source: Westmoreland County Planning



City of Monessen Boat Launch

Source: Westmoreland County Planning

Mon-Yough Planning District Road Projects & Bridge Projects



Legend

150 ACRES

Preservation Area

Preserved Lands

Enhancement Area

Transformation Area

Road Projects

Bridge Projects

Earth

Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, ancors, and the GIS User Community

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OPERATIONS & SAFETY PROJECTS

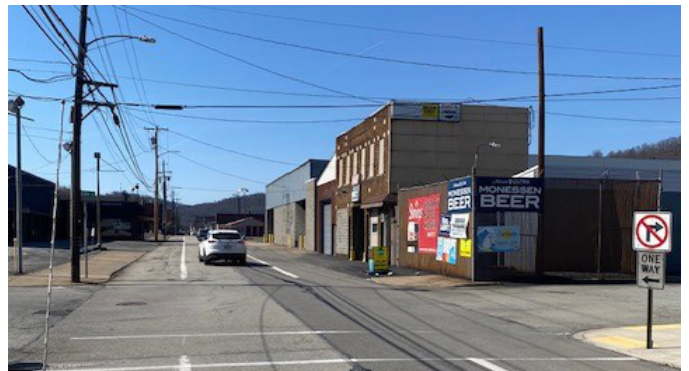
Projects are listed in priority order including road name, location, project type, description, and municipality.

1. State Route 201 from Pricedale Road to Dollar General, congestion, access management, left turning vehicles, Rostraver Township
2. SR 136 Guide Rail and Curve Warning, South Huntingdon Township and West Newton Borough
3. Donner Avenue, speeding/need for road diet, traffic signal coordination, City of Monessen
4. 1st Street at 8th Avenue, truck traffic/signage to Commerce Park, Sutersville Borough
5. Train Warning Lights, Updated system and signage, West Newton Borough
6. SR 136 at GAP Trail Crossing, Need for Pedestrian/Bike Crossing Warning Signs/lights, West Newton Borough
7. Riverside Drive, EMS with Train Tracks, West Newton Borough
8. Donner Avenue & Schoonmaker Avenue, cars going wrong way, Road Safety Audit Candidate, City of Monessen.
9. Donner Avenue at 1st Street and 3rd Street, parked cars/sight distance, City of Monessen
10. Smithton Bridge at Greater Allegheny Passage, pedestrian crossing signal/signage, Smithton Borough and Rostraver Township
11. SR 51 at Webster Hollow Road, speeding, sight distance, Rostraver Township
12. SR 51 at Fells Church & SR 906 Split, Google directions, Rostraver Township
13. Clay Pike, Speeding, Sewickley Township



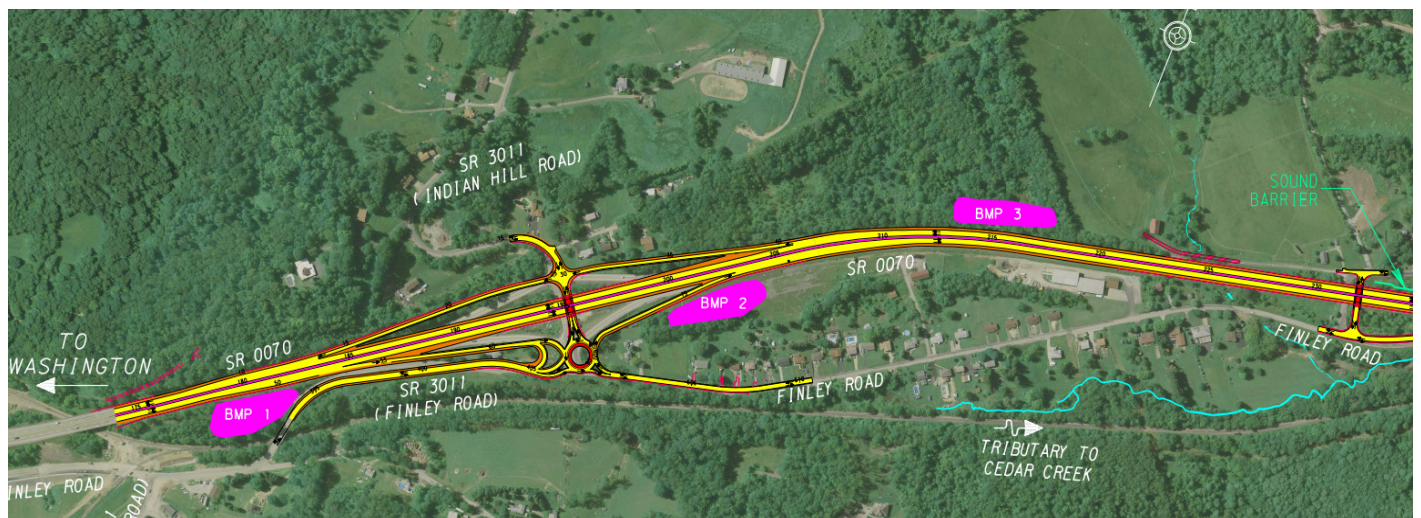
Congestion along SR 201

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Donner Avenue, City of Monessen

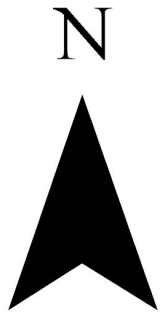
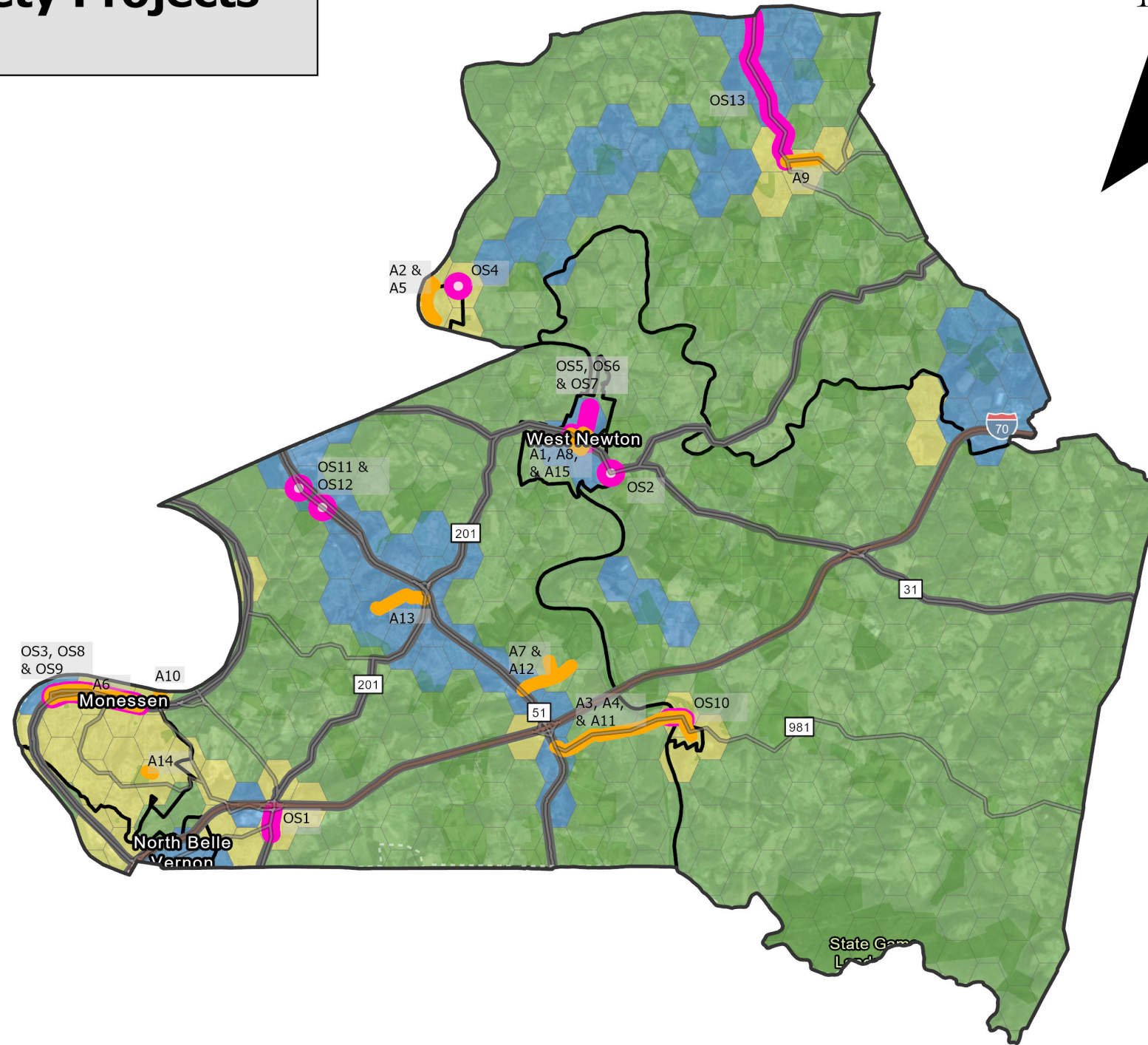
Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Arnold City Project Rendering

Source: PennDOT

Mon-Yough Planning District Active Transportation & Operations and Safety Projects



Legend

- 150 ACRES
- Preservation Area
- Preserved Lands
- Enhancement Area
- Transformation Area
- Active Transportation
- Operations & Safety



Earth: Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and rs, and the GIS User Community

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Intergovernmental Cooperation

Across Pennsylvania, municipal boundaries divide geographic, social, economic, and interdependent communities. As a result, there often exists a significant lack of intergovernmental communication, duplication of services, inefficiencies, lack of cross-boundary visioning and planning, and cumbersome coordination and decision-making.

Active cooperation and coordination among local governments through councils of governments (COGs) and other intergovernmental organizations can go a long way to support economic vibrancy and fiscally healthy regions. Additionally, through locally-approved, citizen-based processes, municipal consolidation is another alternative that can lead to improved economic productivity and quality of life among communities.

Collaboration allows for joint decision-making and sharing of fiscal and human resources, enabling municipalities to achieve more than they could individually. The primary example includes joint purchasing for shared code enforcement officers.

The Planning District process itself has facilitated a degree of intergovernmental cooperation among the 8 municipalities of the Mon-Yough by meeting together to discuss common issues and challenges with the desire to take action. This document represents the plan of action, and the time for action is now.

The PA Intergovernmental Cooperation Law (53 Pa. C.S.A. § 2301) is the enabling statute for intergovernmental cooperation among municipalities in Pennsylvania. This law permits all local governments to cooperate with one another in any action or service that the governments have the power to do alone.



Mon-Yough Meeting #2

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Mon-Yough Meeting #4

Source: Westmoreland County Planning

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION IN THE MON-YOUGH

In addition to identifying common values and increasing the understanding of issues facing individual municipalities and the collective group, municipalities of the district worked together to set land use and transportation priorities and expand their intergovernmental abilities and explore ways to continually and intentionally work together.

During the intergovernmental cooperation phase of the Planning District process, local leaders were asked to reflect on their own governance and community's direction, satisfaction with public service, and the importance of and willingness to cooperate with other municipalities. All were relatively high rated and regarded, signifying potential among district municipalities and leadership to build from as they pursue opportunities for cooperation. In addition, Municipal leaders were also asked about past obstacles to cooperation, failed initiatives, and what could have been done differently. It was revealed that past intergovernmental efforts were mostly hamstrung by capital, staffing, and public perception.

There's a connection between a strong commitment to service and good government, the desire to accomplish better governance and improved services, and the reflection on obstacles and past failures. The Mon-Yough District is a group that seeks greater cooperation.

Five hypothetical projects were explored during this phase including multimunicipal action against blight, Transit Circuit, forming a council of governments, Marketing and Placemaking Recreational Assets, and Regional Code Enforcement. Opinions were expressed, discussions occurred. What was revealed was that this region is ripe with intergovernmental cooperation potential.

The following recommended next steps and actions promote cooperation. Many of the next steps and actions in this plan are not singular or pertain to only one or a few municipalities. Instead, they deliver on a multiple

of concerns – cross cutting the issues and opportunities in the district. By continuing to focus on activities that lend themselves to intergovernmental solutions, the municipalities in the Mon-Yough position themselves to take full advantage of the guidance and support that *Reimagining Our Westmoreland* offers, and the assistance that Westmoreland County government provides.



Mon-Yough Planning Meeting #3

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Mon-Yough Planning Meeting #8

Source: Westmoreland County Planning

BE OUTCOME-ORIENTED

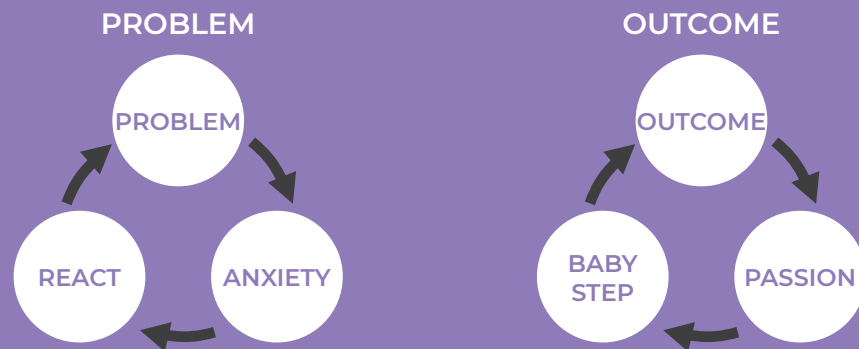
Intergovernmental cooperation can be difficult. Indeed, it's often considered nearly impossible. However, this assessment may reflect our propensity to focus on problems more than outcomes. As part of the Planning District process with the Mon-Yough participants engaged in training on how to stay outcome-oriented. This is important because we can get stuck – not only on problems, but on the feelings of “stuckness” as well. Oftentimes, the problem, as it turns out, is the reaction to the problem.

What we choose to focus on affects our inner state, and our inner state shapes our behavior. Focus only on the problem and we soon find ourselves looking for ways to manage our reaction (inner state) to the problem. And as soon as the anxiety about the problem is alleviated, we lose focus. Over time, this leads to being stuck.

Instead, pause. Focus on the outcome, and take incremental “baby steps” towards that outcome. Over time those small steps, even with setbacks along the way, will lead to results. This outcome-orientation keeps momentum towards sought-after results.

Moving forward, the Mon-Yough leaders will be well-served to be intentional about having an outcome-orientation. That intentionality will help leaders keep an eye on where they want to be and will help them engage the passion and commitment to get there. Small steps along the way will help to stay the course and overcome the encumbrance of “politics as usual”.

Source: David Emerald, Three Vital Questions



*“Coming together
is a beginning;
keeping together is
progress; working
together is success.”*
-Henry Ford



Mon-Yough District Meeting #2

Source: Westmoreland County Planning

TOP 10 LESSONS LEARNED FROM INTERGOVERNMENTAL EXAMPLES

1. Recognize there's no one-size-fits-all approach to intergovernmental cooperation. Each endeavor is developed through an iterative design led by local stakeholders. Learn from others, but create your own approach that meets your region's needs. Engaging the public and ensuring transparency in the processes is vital for maintaining public trust and legitimacy.
2. Successful intergovernmental cooperation requires well-defined legal and institutional frameworks. Clear agreements, memorandums of understanding (MOUs), and contracts outline each government's role and responsibilities.
3. Commit to establishing an ongoing intergovernmental organization as an outcome of the current facilitated process. This will provide staying power that will outlast election outcomes, changes in staff, and the appetite for the program of the day. Successful intergovernmental cooperation is often the result of long-term relationships that have been nurtured over time.
4. Cooperation works best when there is a shared understanding of goals and objectives. When different levels of government are aligned in their vision, it reduces the chances of misdirection and conflict. Setting common goals helps to prioritize resources, efforts, and strategies in a way that benefits all parties involved.
5. Target specific services, for the region as a whole or group(s) of municipalities, based on priority needs as identified throughout the facilitated Planning District process.. Transparent and regular communication helps clarify roles, responsibilities, and expectations, ensuring that all parties are on the same page.
6. Consider obtaining professional assistance throughout planning and implementation. A neutral facilitated process can provide independence, objectivity, and help navigate the political, financial, and administrative environment.
7. Revisit the team statements often. This provides an opportunity to deal directly with problems that may arise among the many individuals or perspectives. Debate and a diversity of perspective strengthens the process when occurring within a team with trust, communication, and commitment.
8. Ask for help. In an environment of networked governance, you are not going at it alone. Civic groups, arts organizations, schools, foundations, and members of the business community that share your commitment to the future well-being of the region are your allies.
9. Build on success. Momentum is powerful. Take on those challenges that you can do well. Align your action with your competencies and interests. It's also important to track the progress of cooperative efforts to ensure they are achieving the desired outcomes. Establishing clear metrics for success and regularly evaluating performance helps identify gaps and areas for improvement.
10. Focus on the long-term. You are building a legacy. Future leaders will be better equipped to handle what may come their way thanks to you investing your time and energy in intergovernmental endeavors today.



Central Planning District Meeting #7

Source: Westmoreland County Planning

RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS FOR THE MON-YOUGH PLANNING DISTRICT

1. MEET REGULARLY

It sounds obvious, but it bears mentioning that the Mon-Yough municipalities should continue to meet regularly. It's recommended that evening meetings take place to accommodate the schedules of elected officials at a mutually accessible location.

Additionally, local managers, secretaries, and staff should meet regularly virtually or in person to provide intentional networking opportunities, information sharing, and support, and to advance the progress of cooperation in the district. Regularly scheduled meetings among the professional staff is a key feature of numerous successful intergovernmental organizations throughout Pennsylvania.

This group should determine a process to provide coverage at the evening meetings of elected officials to facilitate communication.

2. FORM AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL COUNCIL OR SIMILAR ORGANIZATION

Throughout the Planning District process, the assembled municipalities identified various items or actions that may require administrative support. For example, a regional approach to code enforcement may need administration, contract administration, and scheduling. As such, an early focus of the ongoing working meetings should be to establish the basic features needed to develop an IGC or other IGC-like organization.

Develop an ordinance or other founding documents. An Act 177 ordinance to form a council of governments (COG) will provide the most robust support and flexibility in pursuing intergovernmental endeavours. However, other intergovernmental cooperation agreements may be enacted by resolution, should it be a more achievable option in the near term. Also consider a nonprofit or civic organization to support intergovernmental initiatives via memorandum of understanding.

Establish bylaws to set rules of operation. This guiding document will reduce to writing matters of protocol and policy that stakeholders will rely upon to guide operations over time.



Mon-Yough District Meeting #10

Source: Westmoreland County Planning

ALLE-KISKI INTERGOVERNMENTAL COUNCIL

When government budgets are tight or extended, tools like sharing services, lending or borrowing equipment, and joint purchasing, can be used to help communities realize cost savings and better provide efficient services.

The AK IGC is currently made up eight communities including Allegheny Township, Arnold, East Vandergrift, Lower Burrell, New Kensington, Vandergrift, Upper Burrell Township, and West Leechburg.

The AK IGC is a voluntary organization of member governments which meet for the purpose of discussing, planning, and undertaking joint, intergovernmental activities. The Council serves as a forum for the identification of intergovernmental issues, facilitates agreements and actions for specific programs and projects, and administers these activities as agreed to by its member governments.

Hold regular meetings and consider a working group or committee structure. Ensure sustainability of the group by arranging for meetings to occur on a regular and predictable basis and adapt to changes in governance (elections) within participating municipalities. Projects and programs shouldn't be dependent on one person for execution and a plan to share and diversify responsibilities in a structured fashion should be established, such as rotating chair duties and term limits.

Determine representation. This establishes the responsibility of municipalities to attend meetings, lays out expectations for communication between the intergovernmental organization (structured or ad hoc) and local governing bodies, and ensures all voices are heard.

Broadly speaking, capacity building is whatever is needed to bring the group to the next level of operational, programmatic, financial, or organizational maturity, so it may more effectively and efficiently advance its mission and vision.

Capacity, in this case, amounts to any activity that allows leaders to act on their vision. The focus is on the evolutionary needs of the region and getting those needs met through various actions and activities such as strategic planning, forming a COG (or similar organization), education and outreach to member governing bodies on the benefits of regional approaches, leveraging civic relationships to jointly pursue priorities and engage their ongoing support of cooperative endeavors, program management, and fundraising.

3. REGIONAL CODE ENFORCEMENT

Building upon recommended step #2, regional code enforcement was identified as a top priority for the communities. Regional code enforcement and/or administration can be as simple as a single full time inspector/officer serving a geography or it can be a substantial department with a director, inspectors, reviews, and support staff. Code enforcement ensures that businesses, residents, and people are in compliance with public health, safety, and welfare standards.

The key is that by working together, smaller municipalities with limited resources can reach the level of a full time professional. Joint efforts in this realm can result in economic development wins, cost savings, and "more bang for your buck". In other words, economies of scale is doing things more efficiently with increasing size.



Mon-Yough District Meeting #4

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Mon-Yough District

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



The action item here or next steps is to begin planning for how the Mon-Yough communities can come together to share this type of service.

4. DEVELOP A REGIONAL BLIGHT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Based on its priority ranking during the Planning District process, addressing and preventing blight should be a priority for the Mon-Yough communities. It envisions forming a blight task force, conducting a region-wide blight inventory, and identify shared needs. This could outline steps like joint-code enforcement, shared legal counsel, tax delinquencies, and land banking.

Early cooperation should occur with the sharing and listing of concerns among municipalities to identify mutual interests that lend themselves to an easy regional response. Build capacity to develop a strategy and administer activities that get to the root of blight. Start by conducting a regional property conditions assessment and blight inventory. Then, develop a regional blight plan and pursue shared proactive code enforcement to enforce property maintenance codes as mentioned previously.

Establish consistency in regulations and processes that are understandable, uniform, and transferable for maximum benefit to district communities. For example, one organization or process could be deployed to oversee work in multiple communities such as shared staff or other efficient programs that provide value to municipalities. Joint purchasing of professional services could also provide affordable acquisition of services outside the reach of individual municipalities. Adopt the International Property Maintenance Code to establish uniform standards of quality across the region and provide clarity to the public, property owners, developers, etc.

Utilize this plan and continued intergovernmental cooperation to demonstrate alignment with state agency policies and priorities supporting regional cooperation and attract private and foundation funding for blight efforts, being seen as a good investment that makes a difference in the community.

See also Mitigating Blight strategy.



Blighted Property in Smithton

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Blighted Property in South Huntingdon

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Blighted Property in Sutersville

Source: Westmoreland County Planning

5. MARKETING RECREATIONAL ASSETS

The Mon-Yough communities have a lot to offer, from significant historical sites, county and local parks, to direct access to two major waterways. While long time residents are well aware of these tremendous assets, those living elsewhere in the Commonwealth do not.

In order to foster productive relationships, the Mon-Yough communities should develop a marketing and community relations plan to market the planning districts recreational assets, which includes the trails, parks, playgrounds, fields, and other attractions. The Mon-Yough District is home to a wide range of remarkable and unique recreational assets. These include over 20 parks and playgrounds, 6 boat launches, and two major waterways.

A marketing committee should be formed to work together to develop and implement effective marketing strategies and collaborate on strategic marketing initiatives that boasts the regions profile.

Some marketing efforts could include newsletters, cable advertisting, municipal website information, press releases, emails, public meetings, paid advertisements, flyers, banners, signs, posters, and social media.

6. TRANSIT CIRCUT

It is no secret that the the county’s population is getting older with seniors making up over 20% of the total popultion in the county. This trend is no different for the communities in the Mon-Yough District. An increasingly aging population will greatly affect many sectors of the county including health-care, housing, recreation, and transportation.

Understanding the changing needs is essential to the county and bolstering its services to senior mobility will be a key factor in shaping not only the county but the Mon-Yough communities for the future years to come.

Navigating transportation options for seniors can present unque challenges but various programs and services are aimed to address the needs and enhance senior independence through a transit circut. A transit circut refers to the availability of accessible transportation options that enable sen-

Over 20 Parks and Playgrounds

10 miles of the GAP Trail

6 Boat Launches

2 Golf Courses

9 Historical Sites and Markers

3 Wineries



West Newton Senior Center

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



West Newton Public Library

Source: Westmoreland County Planning

rios to travel conveniently and affordably within their community. This is extremely important to access vital medical appointments, social participation, and much more.

The Mon-Yough communities should explore a senior-focused microtransit service to help bridge the growing mobility gap among older adults. A shuttle could provide curb to curb rides throughout the district via a phone call or mobile app.

This type of service not only allows seniors to continue to age in place but also delivers measurable environmental and economic benefits by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, creating full or part time jobs, and supporting local employment and businesses in the community.

See also Enhancing Transit & On-Demand Share-Mobility



Go Westmoreland, Senior Shared-Ride Program

Source: WCTA

MUNICIPAL CONSOLIDATION

In Pennsylvania, local government officials as well as citizens have the ability to put municipal mergers and consolidations on the ballot for consideration by voters. There are various steps to the process. This was not a focus of the planning district process or a discussion item from any of the municipal officials present.

At the same time, as host to a number of small municipalities, Mon-Yough regional leaders may want to consider consolidation or merger if it is a path to capacity building. Would pooling resources and reducing duplication deliver improved services and effective governance for the citizens? This is a question the communities must ask when considering such an option. Structural change to local governments is not a solution in and of itself. However, we would be remiss to not include it among the options for the Mon-Yough district.

Municipality	Total Population 2017	Total Population 2021	Percentage Change
City of Monessen	7,474	6,941	-7%
North Belle Vernon Borough	1,829	1,731	-5%
Rostraver Township	11,176	11,352	2%
Sewickley Township	5,858	5,651	-4%
Smithton Borough	386	425	10%
South Huntingdon Township	5,628	5,432	-3%
Sutersville Borough	592	462	-22%
West Newton Borough	2,550	2,648	4%

LEAVE NO STONE UNTURNED

Stormwater, Water Quality (MS4), Sewage, & Resiliency

Recognizing the damaging impact that extreme weather events, including flooding, have on communities, the Mon-Yough participants identified linkages between their separate but related work in stormwater management, water quality, MS4 compliance, Sewage, and resilience planning. While the Planning District process did not expand on this interest, the expression of interest is documented here.

It's recommended that the Mon-Yough municipalities use the skills and tools developed during the Planning District process, as well as rely on the knowledge and skills of professionals within the municipal and county governments, to continue to form connections between their individual work and the broader ecology. For example, the levels of agreement tool and exercise could be used by the group to test the viability of a project and the planning, funding, and program expertise of staff could be shared in order to effectuate the proposal. The capacity challenges of individual municipalities should not stand in the way of leaders exploring complex and interconnected issues and areas, particularly when there's interest, as expressed in the Planning District process.

Investing In Our Downtowns

The Mon-Yough's cities, boroughs, townships, villages, and rural crossroads – from Sutersville to Monessen and Smithton to Rostraver – are places of lasting value. Despite decades of perceived decline prompted by deindustrialization and suburbanization, these places remain as centers of community life.

The Mon-Yough communities should begin to take actions and identify ways to continue to invest in their downtowns. Initiating investments will help to leverage existing infrastructure and institutional assets as well as identifying and building partnerships to begin addressing issues and utilizing opportunities from this plan. A starting point

should be to develop downtown master plans for individual communities to identify specific assets, issues, and opportunities.

One of the significant challenges to Investing in our downtowns is the ability to seek and advertise various resources, programs and tools to help spur development. The Mon-Yough communities should prioritize grants, tax credits, and other incentives to attract new investment to targeted areas. Another avenue to consider is streamlining the development process by updating policies and regulations to remove barriers to the development process.

Emergency Services

One of the significant challenges of local governance is the varying levels of capacity and interest among communities and officials, as evidenced among the region's municipalities, especially when it comes to emergency services.

There is a significant opportunity for the Mon-Yough communities to develop cooperative agreements for Police Services, Regional Policing, Contracted Policing, Equipment Sharing, Joint Purchasing, Emergency Preparedness, Fire Equipment and Mutual Aid, and Volunteer Fire Company Preservation.

As municipal responsibilities become increasingly complex and more expensive, the Mon-Yough communities must seek the best way to provide these services and cooperation is a major part of the solution.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR THE MON-YOUGH DISTRICT

Intergovernmental cooperation in the Mon-Yough will grow by doing. While the land use and mobility actions of this plan may be implemented individually, or collaboratively, these actions specifically lend themselves to cooperation and should be carried out with others in the region.

1. Develop a Corridor Management Plan or Access Management Plan for the State Route 201 corridor.
2. Establish criteria and develop and maintain a listing of development-ready sites. Work with local business and civic leaders to market these properties.
3. Continuously Assessing Current Services and Existing Intergovernmental Activities.
4. Utilize Professional Assistance
5. Work with county planners to review local policies and regulations to remove barriers and standardize and streamline the development process.
6. Develop a downtown master plan to identify specific assets, issues, and opportunities.
7. Develop a master plan for a vacant or aging commercial center or corridor to outline existing conditions, assets, opportunities, and vision.
8. Coordinate efforts with neighboring communities to expand and complete the trail network.
9. Identify opportunities for joint purchasing and shared use of vehicles and heavy equipment.
8. Identify capital projects on an annual basis.
9. Coordinate capital improvement projects such as road paving, water and sewer, and facility construction and upgrades.
10. Conduct a thorough review of municipal services to determine other shared service or joint purchasing opportunities.
11. Continue to intentionally utilize the tools and processes like team wiki and levels of agreement moving forward. They are an effective means for divergent viewpoints to come together and get something done, and the Planning District process was specifically developed to help local decision-making and action.

Utilize Professional Assistance:

Because the municipalities within the Mon-Yough region are small, professional assistance can expand regional capacity. Additionally, this assistance can provide independence, objectivity, and help navigate political, financial, and administrative challenges.

Budgetary constraints can be overcome by aligning activities with supports that are available through like-minded agencies, such as:

- Westmoreland County Planning Department
- Westmoreland County Redevelopment Authority and Land Bank
- PA DCED
- Local Government Academy
- PA Association of Realtors
- Mon Valley Initiative
- Mon Valley Alliance
- Regional Trail Corporation
- Community Foundation of Westmorland County

Conclusion

The need for greater collaboration and coordination with local municipalities was quickly apparent during the *Reimagining Our Westmoreland* planning process in order to affect change across the county and within the region. This plan addresses the specific challenges facing the Mon-Yough District and builds upon the progress being made in the district. The plan is also a testament to the local leaders within the Mon-Yough Planning District and their commitment and resolve to improve their communities and region as a whole. Though, for any plan to be successful, it must be put into action. It's the collective actions of local municipalities, planning districts, and county that will move us forward. May our efforts remake Westmoreland into a more livable and prosperous county, together.

Westmoreland County Planning's Technical Resources and Municipal Services (TRAMS) program can provide additional assistance for local planning efforts. Services include GIS mapping, blight inventories, comprehensive plans, zoning ordinances, SALDOs, corridor plans, master plans, and other studies and analyses.



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T R A M S

TECHNICAL RESOURCES AND
MUNICIPAL SERVICES PROGRAM

Appendix

DCED Intergovernmental Resources

DCED Regional Police Services in PA Manual

DCED Municipal Assistance Program

Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreement Example

SPC Funding Programs

SPC Local Bridge Programs

Root of Local Government Revenues

Westmoreland County Planning TRAMS Program

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