



Great things are happening here!

Great Neighborhoods

Washington Park

Civic organizations

Rich History

Tree Lined Streets

Washington & Jefferson College

Brownson House

County Seat

National Road - US 40

Religious Institutions

Main Street

Lemayne House

Washington Area School District

Washington Hospital

Historic Homes

Community Arts

Farmers' Market

Home of Pony League World Series

Small Businesses

Neighborhood Playgrounds

Access to Interstates 70 & 79

Public Facilities & Services

Executive Summary

Thank you to the following, all of whom put valuable time and effort into making the City of Washington / East Washington Multi-Municipal Plan a success:

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Planning is a vital aspect of everyone’s daily lives. People plan before they even get out of bed in the morning—what they will wear; what they will accomplish at work; what they will eat for dinner. People also plan ahead for the future—where to go on vacation; how to save for retirement. As people plan everyday it only makes sense that municipalities plan as well. However, municipal planning is a difficult concept to grasp. It’s not readily understood why municipalities should take the time to figure out what kind of community they want to be and what services they offer. By planning for the future, communities can achieve their vision and offer a good quality of life for its residents. Planning is essential to communities in terms of infrastructure, roads, parks and recreation, schools, etc. It is only when a community knows where it’s going that it will be successful.

The City of Washington and East Washington Borough realized that working together *now* lays an important foundation for *future* efforts. Collaborating across municipal boundaries enables both the City and the Borough to utilize limited resources more efficiently and effectively.

Communities need a vision. What do they hope to be? What do they want to look like? A vision statement was created for the City of Washington and East Washington Borough to capture the essence of their main goal – to embrace the old while encouraging new as a means of invigorating civic pride and propelling the communities into the future. The vision was created through stakeholder and public input and not only serves as a guide for the plan itself, but should be used to help citizens and business owners understand the direction in which the City and Borough are moving.

“We will engage our citizens to achieve a balance between the old and the new; preserve the historic character while offering modern amenities; instill civic pride and community identity while transcending traditional boundaries; and form strong partnerships with local assets that will allow our community to grow and thrive.”

*~ City of Washington & East Washington Borough
Vision Statement*



City of Washington/East Washington Borough Community Development Objectives

Strengthen partnerships to provide high quality facilities, services and community events for our residents, businesses, workforce, students, and visitors.

Preserve our natural, historic, and cultural amenities.

Utilize the historic district designation to strengthen the residential vitality of East Washington.

Ensure the recreation amenities offered meet our community's needs.

Capitalize on our location and availability of infrastructure to retain existing businesses and attract new investment.

Revive the Core Downtown Area.

Ensure that local ordinances are compatible with the goals and objectives of our plan.

Promote the continued investment in our vibrant and thriving neighborhoods.

Focus rehabilitation efforts to encourage new investment in our declining neighborhoods.

Enhance gateways to welcome visitors into our community.

Provide a safe and reliable transportation network within our community and connect to the larger metropolitan region.

Ensure that our public facilities and services are accessible to people of all ages, race, income and disabilities.



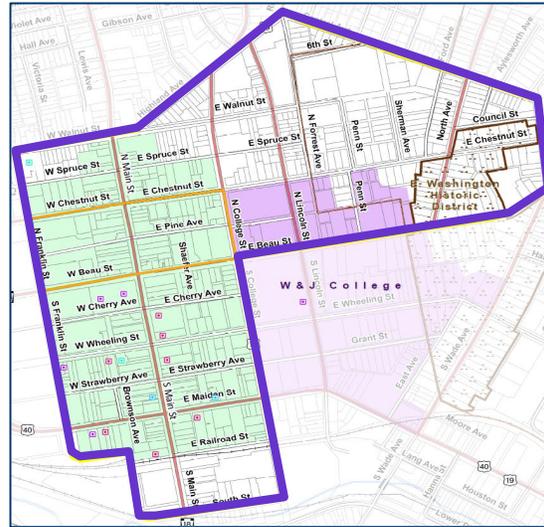
PRIORITY ISSUES

1. Revitalize the Core Area

The communities recognize that the heart of the City and Borough is the downtown and surrounding area.

Major issues include:

- * *Parking Rates*
- * *Vacant and Underutilized Buildings*
- * *Property Maintenance*
- * *Marketing and Promotion*
- * *Safety and Connections*



2. Capitalize on the Proposed Chestnut Street Intermodal Transit Facility

The project area has a significant potential node for transit oriented development (TOD): the proposed East Chestnut Street Intermodal Transit Facility.

3. Attract Workers to Relocate to the City

Although the institutions and businesses, such as Washington Hospital and Washington & Jefferson College, within the City employ thousands of workers, many of these workers live outside of the project area.

4. Revitalize the At-Risk Neighborhoods

Neighborhoods identified as being “at-risk” include the Highland Ridge Neighborhood (which is a designated Elm Street Neighborhood), portions of the 7th Ward, and portions of the 8th Ward.

5. Develop a Unified Vision for the City/Borough

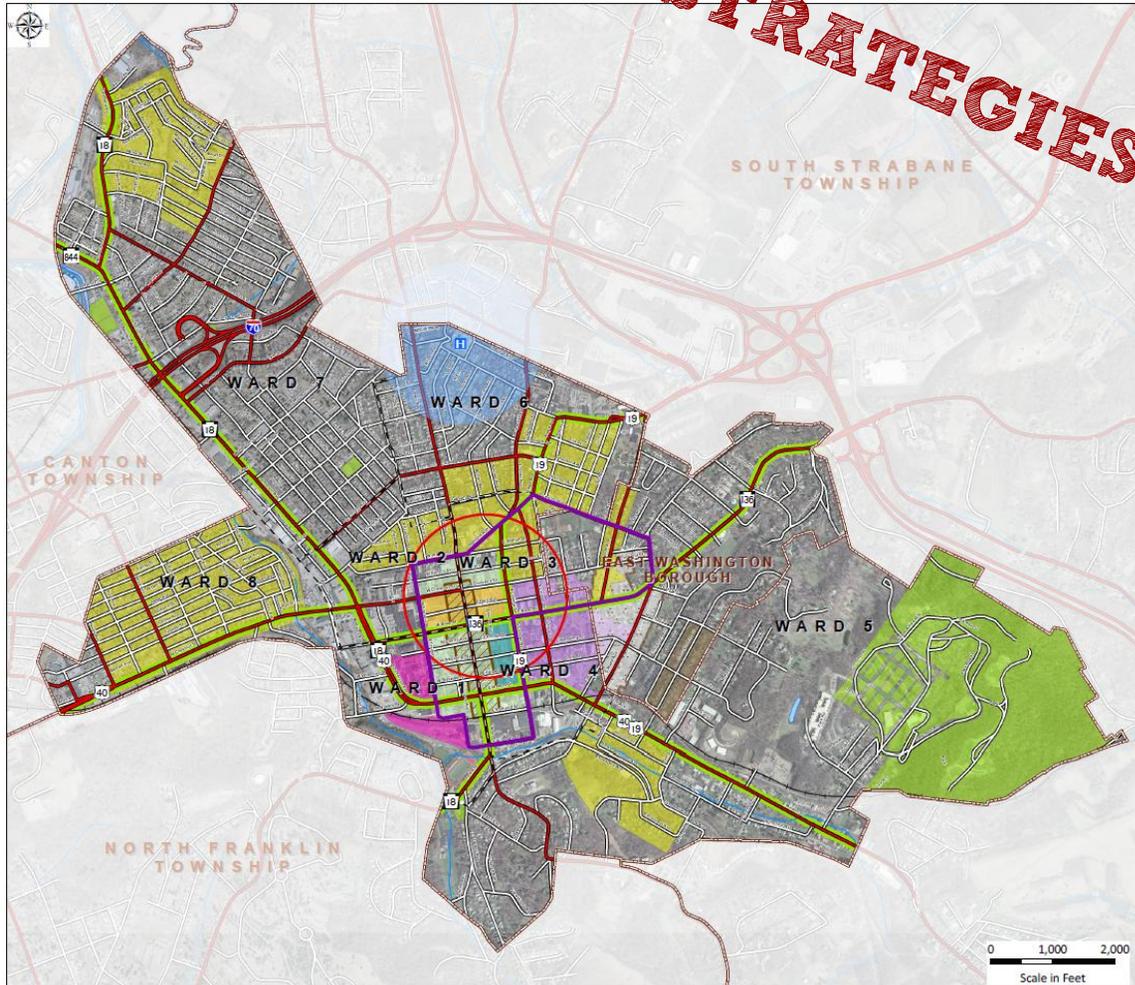
The project area is many things. It is the county seat. It is a college town. It is a Main Street community. It is historic. While all of these assets are important to the economic vitality of the future, the City and the Borough need to establish a unified vision and create a thematic approach to reinforce their community identity.

6. Update Land Use Ordinances to Implement the Vision

One of the primary methods of implementing the comprehensive plan is through land use ordinances. The City and the Borough need to update their zoning as well as subdivision and land development ordinances. Partnering together would save resources and establish consistency.



STRATEGIES



-  Update Design Guidelines for the Business Improvement District
-  Implement the City's Central Business District (CBD) Master Plan
-  Utilize historic preservation tools to incentivize redevelopment
-  Institute a Catalytic Investment Zone between W&J and the CBD
-  Create a TOD District around the proposed Chestnut Street Intermodal Facility
-  Create an Investment Zone around Washington Hospital
-  Redevelop vacant and underutilized sites
-  Revitalize "At-Risk" neighborhoods to attract new residents
-  Enhance the appearance of the main corridors into the City and Borough



PRIORITY ISSUES



- 1. Absentee Landlords and Property Maintenance**
Various properties throughout the project area are not being maintained due to owners that live outside the project area, lack of money to afford upkeep and the need for increased enforcement.



- 2. Conversion Apartments**
There are many large, older homes—especially in East Washington—that are very costly to maintain so they are being converted to multi-family units. This is detracting from the surrounding neighborhoods and negatively affecting property values.

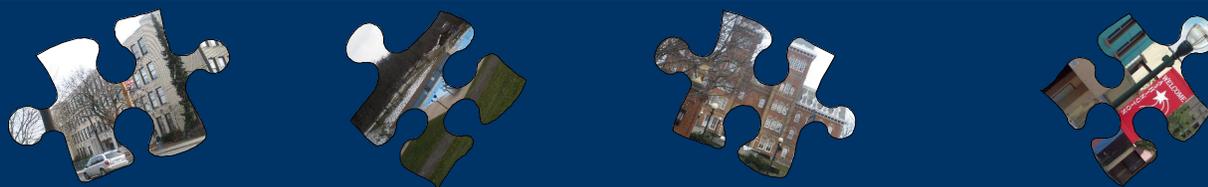


- 3. Lack of Housing Variety**
There are housing gaps within the project area especially for those looking for moderate priced housing (own and rental), accessible housing and elderly or assisted living housing.



- 4. Improving Housing Energy Efficiency**
Not a lot of homeowners are aware of programs that are available to help reduce heating and cooling costs through energy efficient products and renovations.

A Plan for Housing



STRATEGIES

- ✓ Utilize Act 900 provisions to increase actions against owners with property maintenance violations

Under Act 900, Communities now have greater ability to address properties that have violations. The City or Borough can bring civil action against violators if certain conditions are not being met. This reduces the amount of time previously spent in court trying to address these issues.



- ✓ Continue to implement the Elm Street Plan for Highland Ridge

An Elm Street Plan was created for the Highland Ridge neighborhood to help address deteriorating housing conditions and crime. The Community Development Corporation has begun to implement the action items from the plan, and it is recommended that they continue to do so in order to ensure the future sustainability of the neighborhood.



- ✓ Offer incentives, such as bulk purchasing, for energy efficient renovations

The City and Borough should offer “sign-up” lists at their municipal buildings and on their websites for people to indicate if they are interested in purchasing various materials and products. After a certain number of people sign up, the cost for products could be reduced through a bulk purchase.

- ✓ Offer incentives for upper story housing in the Central Business District

There is capacity to accommodate second story residential development within the CBD. The condition of most of the buildings, however, makes this type of renovation very costly. Public / private partnerships or master lease agreements would need to be put into place in order to provide this type of housing.

An example of a public/private partnership is found in Carlisle, PA, where Dickenson College partnered with a local developer to renovate a former YMCA building for student housing.



PRIORITY ISSUES



1. Lack of Central Organization for Economic Development

There are many activities and projects going on in the City of Washington's downtown area, but there is no strategy or single organization to coordinate and lead these efforts. New and existing businesses often do not know where to go to get information about doing business in the City.

2. Poor Condition of Buildings in the Central Business District (CBD)

Many of the buildings located in the CBD are aging and in disrepair. The cost of renovations (especially to bring them up to code) is very costly. This is leading to disinvestment in the CBD.



3. Business Retention and Expansion

In order for the CBD to continue to grow, strategies need to be in place to not only attract new businesses, but to retain the loyal businesses that have been helping to sustain the City's economic development.



4. Lack of Identity

Identifying what the City and Borough want to be known for is key in terms of providing opportunities for a marketing campaign to attract new investment and retain existing assets. The feeling is currently there is no cohesive identity for the City and Borough.

5. Price and Availability of Parking

The cost of street parking (\$0.25 per 15 minutes) as well as the availability of the free parking were mentioned as major deterrents in attracting people into the downtown.

A Plan for the Economy



STRATEGIES

- ✓ **Consolidate economic development services and programs under one City organization**

The city is currently forming a new economic development organization. This organization should be the one-stop shop for economic and business development within the City.

- ✓ **Create a marketing strategy to capitalize on the Historic Town theme**

A concentrated marketing campaign should be undertaken that builds upon the historic theme identified by the City and Borough.

The Marketing campaign should include:

- * *Tourist packages (in conjunction with regional attractions such as the Meadows Racetrack and Casino*
- * *Washington Passport Program*
- * *QR codes at key sites*
- * *Discount programs such as UPromise and Groupon*

- ✓ **Establish a “Catalytic Investment” zone**

There is a perceived disconnect between W&J College and the CBD. The blocks between the college and downtown should be targeted for specific businesses that appeal to the students, professors, and others. Improvements to these areas should be made as well to make it inviting for people to walk.



- ✓ **Identify, assess and prioritize anchor buildings**

There are several high profile buildings within the CBD. The newly formed economic development organization should proactively track these buildings to identify redevelopment opportunities.

- ✓ **Address parking issues**

While there are opportunities for free parking within the CBD, not many people know about them. These spaces should be advertised through signs, websites, local business organizations and other promotional material. The City should also work with local businesses to validate customer parking.



PRIORITY ISSUES



1. *Jefferson Avenue / I-70 Interchange*

The Jefferson Avenue Interchange on I-70 is located within the City limits and causes heavy congestion. Needed improvements include turning arrows, signage and signal synchronization.

2. *Lack of Directional Signage*

There is a lack of signing to direct motorists into the Washington Business District and other attractions such as W&J College and Washington Park (Pony Field).

3. *Traffic Congestion & Intersection Improvements*

Synchronizing traffic signals throughout the City would help to alleviate congestion at peak times. In addition, several intersections were identified as areas of concern and in need of improvements.

4. *Corridor Improvements*

Major corridors leading into the City and Borough such as Route 40, Route 19 and Route 18 are unattractive gateways. Also, several major roadways have either no pavement markings or they are faded, including Jefferson Avenue, West Chestnut Street and Beau Street between Jefferson Avenue and Franklin Street.

5. *Lack of Comprehensive Public Transportation*

The Washington City Transit Authority stops service at 4:30 PM and does not offer Sunday service; leaving a gap in service during evenings/weekends. Similarly, transit to the City of Pittsburgh is only available on weekdays.



6. *Improve Pedestrian/Bicycle Connections*

There is a need for more pedestrian and bicycle connections, particularly from downtown to Washington Park. The sidewalk network is lacking in areas; not meeting ADA standards as well as poor maintenance.



STRATEGIES

- ✓ **Improve the Jefferson Avenue I-70 Interchange**

This interchange is currently on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for 2013-2014, and is to be upgraded with new traffic signals. The City needs to lobby to ensure that this project is completed.

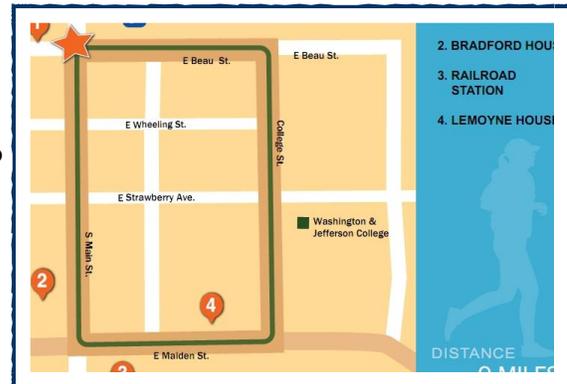
- ✓ **Develop a comprehensive wayfinding signage program**

The City and Borough should inventory their directional and street signs and implement a plan to upgrade or install signs as needed. Decorative wayfinding signs should also be utilized.



- ✓ **Develop new and enhance existing pedestrian connections**

A feasibility study should be completed on a potential trail that would connect downtown to Washington Park. Other efforts should include instituting the WalkWorks campaign, which is designed to increase walking opportunities in the downtown. A sidewalk maintenance plan should also be developed to identify and schedule areas for replacement.



Washington WalkWorks Route

- ✓ **Provide a comprehensive public transit system**

The City is currently undergoing a study regarding improvements and changes to their existing routes, which will help to determine if service can be offered on nights and weekends as well as more service to the City of Pittsburgh. An opportunity that should be explored is whether there is interest to establish a Countywide transit system, which would help the City with expanding service.

- ✓ **Improve energy efficiency within the transportation system**

Currently, Washington County is replacing all traffic signal heads with LED lights to save energy. Other efforts that should be made include purchasing fuel efficient buses and vehicles and offering smaller shuttles; removing unnecessary traffic signals at intersections; and developing an application for smart phones that would provide commuter information, schedules and routes.



PRIORITY ISSUES



- 1. Lack of Resources to Provide All Services**
Municipal resources are limited, making it challenging for the City and Borough to continue to offer the highest quality municipal services.
- 2. Cost of Fire and Police Protection**
The City has paid fire and police departments with pensions, which are very large portions of the annual budget.
- 3. Perceived Lack of Safety within the City**
Safety at night, particularly in the downtown, was noted as a concern. Contributing factors include lack of lighting, vacant structures, and businesses closing early.
- 4. Poor Perception of Washington School District**
While students of Washington School District receive a great education, the District battles negative attention within the media.
- 5. Local Perception of Washington and Jefferson College (W&J)**
W&J owns a large percentage of tax exempt property in the project area, and as such, are often perceived as a drain on municipal resources. However, W&J contributes to the community in other ways which need to be publicized to the residents.
- 6. Lack of an Indoor Community Center**
While the City and Borough offer neighborhood playgrounds, Washington Park, and the LeMoyné Center, there is a need for an additional indoor facility to provide recreation opportunities as well as community and social space.



STRATEGIES

- ✓ **Improve the capacity of the City and Borough to identify and implement priority projects through partnerships**

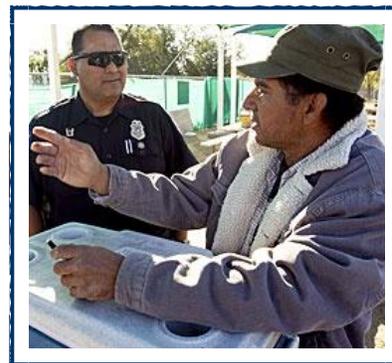
Communities that participate in a multi-municipal plan should be committed to partnering on implementation projects. Strategies include enacting an intergovernmental cooperation agreement; holding regular retreats with a joint planning commission; and forming a regional Council of Governments (COG).

- ✓ **Form a Town and Gown committee with W&J College**

Establishing a committee, comprised of members from the City, Borough and College would help formalize partnerships and agreements between the municipalities and W&J. This committee could also help to publicize the positive contributions that W&J makes to both communities; improving the perception of W&J to the local residents.

- ✓ **Improve safety throughout the City and Borough**

There are several ways that the City and Borough can improve the safety, and perception thereof. Strategies include instituting police walking beats within the downtown and neighborhoods; and working with businesses to light up storefronts at night.



- ✓ **Publicize the positive aspects of the Washington School District via media and local real estate agents**

While the school district offers a semi-annual newsletter, they should host quarterly breakfast or lunch briefings with local media and real estate agents to share the positive activities happening in the district.

- ✓ **Offer an indoor recreation center**

Opportunities include working with the National Y to locate a new facility in the City and working with W&J to construct a shared recreation center. In addition, the City and Borough are currently working on a multi-municipal recreation plan, which will identify additional recreation needs and strategies.



- ✓ **Increase energy efficiency of public facilities and services**

The City underwent an energy audit in 2011, which identified a number of energy efficient cost saving measures that the City will need to implement. The Borough should undertake a similar effort.



PRIORITY ISSUES



1. *Protect historic homes in East Washington*

The distinctive architecture and proximity to both the CBD and W&J makes this neighborhood an ideal foundation for the revitalization for the project area. However, it appears that various neighborhoods are in a state of transition. Some of the largest homes have been converted to multi-family housing. While this is permitted by current zoning, these conversions change the nature of the neighborhood.



In addition, alterations to irreplaceable historic building fabric have occurred with the conversions, which can destabilize a community by lowering property values and driving away its base of residential property owners.

Currently the Borough's ordinance for their Historic District only requires a permit prior to demolition of a property.

2. *Capitalize on historic properties for economic development*



Several buildings and districts within the City of Washington have been deemed eligible by the National Register of Historic Places. The most important is the Central Business District (CBD). There has been little recent private development in these historic buildings. The preservation of these buildings is not only important for the buildings themselves, but also essential for the revitalization and growth of the downtown business district, W&J, and the neighborhood housing. There is significant research that suggests that one of the best ways to support a thriving CBD is to provide economic incentives to help bridge the gap between cost of renovation and expected returns.



STRATEGIES

Strengthen and expand the East Washington Historic District Ordinance

The existing ordinance only restricts demolition. This restriction does not go far enough to produce the desired result of neighborhood stabilization and economic improvement. The existing ordinance should be strengthened in terms of both implementation & enforcement procedures. The Borough should appoint qualified individuals to an Historic District Commission to review demolition permits and renovations to the exterior of buildings within the public right of way. In order to assist the commission with making decisions, the Borough should adopt the Design Guidelines for the Historic District, which are included in the Comprehensive Plan.

Submit a nomination form to the National Register to create a new historic district for LeMoyne Avenue

Upon nomination, the Borough should then consider providing the newly created LeMoyne Avenue Historic District under the same incentives (and protections) as we have recommend for the East Washington Historic District. LeMoyne's distinctive character is a key asset that should be protected for all the same reasons cited for the East Washington Historic District.

Submit a nomination form to the National Register to create an historic district in Washington's Central Business District (CBD)

Listing on the National Register opens access to funding sources such as Historic Tax Credits, which can help revitalize buildings in the CBD.

To obtain Federal Historic Tax credits, a three part application must be completed:

Part 1—Establishes the property's historic and / or architectural significance

Part 2—Describes the proposed development's effect on the historic characteristics of the property

Part 3—Project is reviewed and approval for tax credit is forwarded to the IRS

Commission feasibility studies for key vacant or underutilized buildings

A feasibility study is usually conducted by an Architect or Engineer who determine how to best renovate and reuse existing buildings. These studies include cost estimates for converting the building as well as required code upgrades, including ADA requirements. They also help building owners quantify the seemingly overwhelming scope of work for the reuse of old buildings.

