# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

# City of Fairmont

ADOPTED
NOVEMBER 2018

Prepared by:

Mackin

# Acknowledgements

The City of Fairmont Comprehensive Plan Update represents the collaborative effort of stakeholders committed to achieving the City's vision for a bright future. These stakeholders include elected officials, appointed officials, City staff, business owners and other community leaders. The City of Fairmont appreciates the time, energy and input that was provided by all of these parties throughout the planning process.

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# Contents

ORDINANCE NO. 1792

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF FAIRMONT ADOPTING THE 2018 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE FOR THE CITY OF FAIRMONT, MARION COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA, AND WHICH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN HAS BEEN APPROVED AND RECOMMENDED BY THE CITY OF FAIRMONT PLANNING COMMISSION, ALL IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF WEST VIRGINIA CODE §8A-3-1 ET SEQ.

WHEREAS, the City of Fairmont has historically, since at least 1959, provided, by ordinance, for planning and zoning within its corporate limits, pursuant to the provisions of West Virginia Code §8-24-1 et seq.;

WHEREAS, in 2004, the West Virginia legislature enacted the provisions of West Virginia Code §8A-1-1 et seq., repealing West Virginia Code §8-24-1 et seq., and radically revising the legislative enactments which authorized and empowered municipalities to provide for planning and zoning within their corporate limits;

WHEREAS, the 2004 enactment of West Virginia Code §8A-1-1 et seq., rendered the City of Fairmont's Comprehensive Plan adopted by Ordinance No. 1100 on July 13, 1999, obsolete;

WHEREAS, the City of Fairmont last adopted a Comprehensive Plan by Ordinance No. 1309 on July 12, 2005;

WHEREAS, the West Virginia Code §8A-1-11 requires that municipalities review their comprehensive plans and update them at least every ten years;

WHEREAS, the City of Fairmont Planning Department, in conjunction with the City's Planning Commission, through a series of public meetings, among other things, undertook a comprehensive survey and study of the existing conditions and services and probable future changes of such conditions and services within the City of Fairmont, addressing such factors as land use, housing, transportation, infrastructure, public services, recreation, economic development, community design, preferred development areas, financing, historic preservation, and others, for purposes of developing a comprehensive plan which meets the objectives, purposes and goals established by West Virginia Code §8A-3-1;

WHEREAS, throughout the process of surveying and studying the existing conditions and services and future changes in said conditions and services, the City of Fairmont Planning Department, in conjunction with the

City's Planning Commission, sought public input and input from county and local governmental entities;

WHEREAS, following said survey and study, the City of Fairmont Planning Department, in conjunction with the City's Planning Commission, prepared a Comprehensive Plan Update which contains all of the mandatory components required by the provisions of West Virginia §8A-3-4 and, further contains some or all of the optional components provided by West Virginia Code §8A-3-5;

WHEREAS, the 2018 Comprehensive Plan will replace the 2005 Comprehensive Plan in its entirety;

WHEREAS, on August 22, 2018, the City's Planning Commission held a public hearing, pursuant to notice duly published, for purposes of approving the Comprehensive Plan and recommending same to the Council for the City of Fairmont for consideration and adoption;

WHEREAS, following said public hearing, the City's Planning Commission approved said Comprehensive Plan and recommended same for consideration and adoption, all as set out in the minutes of said Commission;

WHEREAS, attached hereto is a copy of said Comprehensive Plan;

WHEREAS, on September 11, 2018, the approved and recommended Comprehensive Plan was presented to the Council for the City of Fairmont by the Planning Commission and said Council set a public hearing thereon for October 23, 2018.

WHEREAS, on October 23, 2018, said Council held a public hearing, pursuant to notice duly published, for purposes of reviewing said Comprehensive Plan;

WHEREAS, the provisions of West Virginia Code §8A-3-8(a) empower the Council for the City of Fairmont to adopt, reject or amend said Comprehensive Plan;

WHEREAS, the Council for the City of Fairmont, after public hearing and a thorough review and analysis of said plan, deems it in the best interest of the City of Fairmont to adopt said plan as recommended as an ordinance of the City of Fairmont.

WHEREAS, the Council has adopted said plan within the latter of 90 days

or three scheduled meetings of said Council since the Comprehensive Plan was submitted on September 11, 2018,

NOW THEREFORE, THE CITY OF FAIRMONT HEREBY ORDAINS THAT:

Section I. Adoption:  The 2018 Comprehensive Plan Update prepared and developed by the City of Fairmont Planning Commission, in conjunction with the City of Fairmont Planning Department and Mackin Engineering Company, be and is hereby adopted by reference in its entirety as the official comprehensive plan for the coordinated and compatible development of land and improvements within the territorial  jurisdiction of the corporate limits of the City of Fairmont, in accordance with present and future needs and resources.

Section II.  Filing: A copy of the Comprehensive Plan hereby adopted shall be filed in the Office of the Clerk of the County Commission of Marion County, West Virginia, in accordance with the provisions of West Virginia Code 8A-3-9.

Section III. Savings Clause:  The adoption of this Comprehensive Plan shall not, by express act or implication, cause the repeal of any Comprehensive Plan heretofore adopted by the City of Fairmont and said Plan(s) shall remain in full force and effect as to any zoning or planning ordinance, zoning or planning map, zoning or planning change, decision, or issue, which arose or was determined thereunder.

Section IV. Severability: The provisions of the Comprehensive Plan adopted hereby are severable, and if any provision or part thereof shall be deemed invalid, or unconstitutional or inapplicable to any person or circumstances, such invalidity, unconstitutionality, or inapplicability, shall not affect or impair the remaining provisions of said Plan.
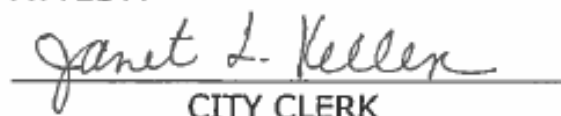
This ordinance shall become effective 30 days after passage.

Adopted this 13th day of November, 2018.

_____
MAYOR

ATTEST:

_____
CITY CLERK

# Introduction

> " A Comprehensive Plan is a plan for physical development, including land use, adopted by a governing body, setting forth guidelines, goals and objectives for all activities that affect growth and development in the governing body's jurisdiction."
>
> *as defined by the West Virginia State Code §8A-3 Land Use Planning*

**"A goal without a plan is just a wish."**

- Antoine de Saint-Exupéry *(French writer)*

# A comprehensive plan is...

"**a** plan for physical development, including land use, adopted by a governing body, setting forth guidelines, goals and objectives for all activities that affect growth and development in the governing body's jurisdiction," per the West Virginia State Code §8A-3 Land Use Planning, which is the enabling legislation for municipal planning in the state. In other words, a comprehensive plan is a blueprint for the future development (and/or redevelopment) of a community. The plan is developed through a public process that analyzes current conditions and trends, identifies a vision for the future and provides strategies for implementing that vision. The required elements that must be addressed by a Comprehensive Plan can be found on page 15.

The City of Fairmont adopted its previous Comprehensive Plan in 2005, which was prepared by the City's Planning Commission and Staff. §8A-3-11 requires that once a comprehensive plan is adopted, the Planning Commission shall follow, review and make updates at least every 10 years.

Stagnant population - Increased household income - Increase in housing value and cost of new home construction - Decrease in crime index - Parks and Recreation Master Plan - Connectivity Plan and Health Impact Assessment - Updated Zoning Ordinance

These are just some of the things that have changed or are new for the City of Fairmont since the 2005 Comprehensive Plan was adopted. The 2018 Comprehensive Plan Update will further identify and analyze these changes in order to develop an actionable plan that will help City officials target investment over the next 10 years. The desired vision for Fairmont seems to be maintaining the quality of life, historically and currently, offered. How does the City do that? What actions need to be taken to ensure a sustainable future? To answer these questions, the City undertook a Comprehensive Plan Update. The Plan Update will include a prioritized list of strategies and recommendations – projects that will have an impact – along with a path to success for City officials to follow.

The Comprehensive Plan is a process through which citizen participation and thorough analysis are used to develop a set of strategies that establish as clearly and practically as possible the best and most appropriate future development of the area under the jurisdiction of the Planning Commission.

A Comprehensive Plan aids the Planning Commission in designing and recommending to the governing body ordinances that result in preserving and enhancing the unique quality of life and culture in that community and in adapting to future changes of use of an economic, physical or social nature.

A Comprehensive Plan guides the Planning Commission in the performance of its duties to help achieve sound planning.

A Comprehensive Plan must promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare of the inhabitants, as well as efficiency and economy in the process of development.

The purpose of a Comprehensive Plan is to:

1. Set goals and objectives for land development, uses and suitability for a governing body, so a governing body can make an informed decision;

2. Ensure that the elements in the comprehensive plan are consistent;

3. Coordinate all governing bodies, units of government and other planning commissions to ensure that all comprehensive plans and future development are compatible;

4. Create conditions favorable to health, safety, mobility, transportation, prosperity, civic activities, recreational, educational, cultural opportunities and historic resources;

5. Reduce the wastes of physical, financial, natural or human resources, which result from haphazard development, congestion or scattering of population;

6. Reduce the destruction or demolition of historic sites and other resources by reusing land and buildings and revitalizing areas;

7. Promote a sense of community, character and identity;

8. Promote the efficient utilization of natural resources, rural land, agricultural land and scenic areas;

9. Focus development in existing developed areas and fill in vacant or underused land near existing developed areas to create well designed and coordinated communities; and

10. Promote cost-effective development of community facilities and services.

## Chapter 8A. Land Use Planning. Article 3. Comprehensive Plan.

### §8A-3-4. Mandatory components of a comprehensive plan.

- **Land Use** - Designate the current, and set goals and programs for the proposed general distribution, location and suitable uses of land

- **Housing** - Set goals, plans and programs to meet the housing needs for current and anticipated future residents of the jurisdiction

- **Transportation** - Consistent with the land use component, identify the type, location, programs, goals and plans to meet the intermodal transportation needs of the jurisdiction

- **Infrastructure** - Designate the current, and set goals, plans and programs, for the proposed locations, capabilities and capacities of all utilities, essential utilities and equipment, infrastructure and facilities to meet the needs of current and anticipated future residents of the jurisdiction

- **Public Services** - Set goals, plans and programs, to ensure public safety, and meet the medical, cultural, historical, community, social, educational and disaster needs of the current and anticipated future residents of the jurisdiction

- **Rural** - Consistent with the land use component, identify land that is not intended for urban growth and set goals, plans and programs for growth and/or decline management in the designated rural area

- **Recreation** - Consistent with the land use component, identify land, and set goals, plans and programs for recreational and tourism use in the area

- **Economic Development** - Establish goals, policies, objectives, provisions and guidelines for economic growth and vitality for current and anticipated future residents of the jurisdiction

- **Community Design** - Consistent with the land use component, set goals, plans and programs to promote a sense of community, character and identity

- **Preferred Development Areas** - Consistent with the land use component, identify areas where incentives may be used to encourage development, infill development or redevelopment in order to promote well designed and coordinated communities and prevent sprawl

- **Renewal and/or Redevelopment** - Consistent with the land use component, identify slums and other blighted areas and set goals, plans and programs for the elimination of such slums and blighted areas and for community renewal, revitalization and/or redevelopment

- **Financing** - Recommend to the governing body short and long-term financing plans to meet the goals, objectives and components of the comprehensive plan

- **Historic Preservation** - Identify historical, scenic, archaeological, architectural or similar significant lands or buildings, and specify preservation plans and programs so as not to unnecessarily destroy the past development which may make a viable and affordable contribution in the future

# Compliance with 8A

The 2005 Comprehensive Plan was organized around the mandatory components of a comprehensive plan, as outlined in §8A-3-4 of the West Virginia Code (see page 15 for more information) - meaning, each mandatory component had its own chapter.

This plan update is organized quite differently. Based upon public input received, the City created six goals that encompassed larger concepts: Attraction, Prosperity, Vitality, Neighborhoods, Connectivity and Sustainability. In addition, a final chapter is included in the Plan that focuses on Financing.

To ensure compliance with Chapter 8A, a matrix is included on page 17 that depicts which goal(s) addresses which mandatory component(s). As can be seen, many of the components are addressed under more than one goal.

## Matrix Legend:

"A1-A3" = Attraction objective

"P1-P3" = Prosperity objective

"V1-V3" = Vitality objective

"N1-N3" = Neighborhoods objective

"C1-C3" = Connectivity objective

"S1-S3" = Sustainability objective

"p." = page number

| | Land Use | Housing | Transportation | Infrastructure | Public Services | Rural | Recreation | Economic Development | Community Design | Preferred Development Areas | Renewal and/or Redevelopment | Financing | Historic Preservation | History | Environmental | Tourism | Safety |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 8A-3-4. Mandatory components of a comprehensive plan. | | | | | | | | | | | | | 8A-3-5. Optional components of a comprehensive plan. | | | |
| **Attraction** | A3 - p. 65 | | | | A3 - p. 65 | | | | A1 - p. 60 A2 - p. 63 | | | | | p. 19 | | A1 - p. 60 A2 - p. 63 | |
| **Prosperity** | P1 - p. 75 P2 - p. 81 | | P2 - p. 81 | | | | | P1 - p. 75 P2 - p. 81 P3 - p. 72 | | | | | | | | | |
| **Vitality** | V1 - p. 90 | V1 - p. 90 | | | V3 - p. 100 | | V2 - p. 94 | V1 - p. 90 V2 - p. 94 | V1 - p. 90 V2 - p. 94 | | | | V1 - p. 84 | | | V2 - p. 94 | V3 - p. 100 |
| **Neighborhoods** | N1 - p. 108 N2 - p. 111 | N1 - p. 108 N2 - p. 111 | | | N2 - p. 111 | | N3 - p. 114 | | | | | | N1 - p. 102 | | | | |
| **Connectivity** | C2 - p. 128 C3 - p. 136 | | C1 - p. 124 C2 - p. 128 C3 - p. 136 | C2 - p. 122 | | | | | | | | | | | C3- p. 136 | | |
| **Sustainability** | S1 - p. 144 S2 - p. 147 S3 - p. 150 | S3 - p. 150 | | S2 - p. 141 | S1 - p. 144 S2 - p. 147 | S3 - p. 150 | S2 - p. 147 | S3 - p. 150 | | S3 - p. 150 | S3 - p. 150 | S1 - p. 144 | | | S1 - p. 144 S2 - p. 147 S3 - p. 150 | | S2 - p. 147 |
| **Financing** | | | | | | | | | | | | Chap. 5 - p. 175 | | | | | |

# Project Timeline

## August 2016

### Phase 1:
### Where are we now?

- Review previous plans and studies
- Update demographics and current conditions
- Field views

### August 2016 - January 2017

- **Kick off meeting with City Council, Planning Commission and Staff**
- **Public meetings (10 - one in each City Council District)**
- **Online public survey (90 responses)**

### Phase 2:
### Where are we going?

- **Identify issues**
- **Create a vision**
- **Establish goals and objectives**

### November 2016 - May 2017

- **Stakeholder interviews**
- **Staff meetings**

### June 2017 - March 2018

- **Planning Commission meetings**
- **Public hearing**

### Phase 3:
### How do we get there?

- **Develop recommendations**
- **Identify priorities**
- **Create an implementation plan**

## 2018

# Implementation

# INTRODUCTION

# The process...

The City is committed to facilitating a planning process that will garner the support of the our residents, business community and municipal officials and provide the City with innovative strategies to lead the City of Fairmont to a bright and sustainable future.

The planning process followed a timeline that began in August of 2016 and culminated in 2018 with the adoption of the Plan. The process consisted of three phases:

## Phase 1: Where are we now?

The Mackin Team began the process by establishing a baseline that identified benchmarks in and around the City. Previously completed plans, studies and reports were collected and reviewed to identify what has been accomplished, identify past trends and incorporate pertinent recommendations. Phase 1 also consisted of updating the demographics and overall conditions of Fairmont since the 2005 Comprehensive Plan.

## Phase 2: Where are we going?

Phase 2 consisted of gathering information - through a combination of meetings, interviews and surveys in order to identify the key issues facing Fairmont over the next 10 years. City staff and officials worked with the public to develop a vision for the City and identify overall project goals. These goals were developed to address the key issues identified through the planning process.

Based upon market and demographic research conducted during the project as well as outreach to stakeholders, economic development specialists from the Mackin Team prepared a listing of target investment areas and opportunity corridors in the City.

## Phase 3: How do we get there?

Phase 3 involved identifying the priority projects and investment areas, evaluating public/private partnerships, grants, loans, tax credits, tax abatements and tax increment financing that might be available to incentivize development. Programs were targeted to offset the costs of site development, public infrastructure and facility construction/rehabilitation.

The final step of the process was to prepare an implementation plan that identifies a timeframe, responsible parties, potential partners and potential costs to help the City realize its vision.
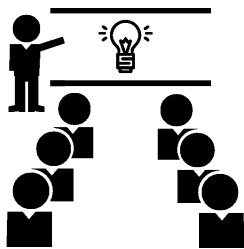
# The public said...

As shown in the project timeline on page 18, a variety of methods were used to gather public input as to what the vision and priorities should be for Fairmont moving forward.

## Public Meetings

• The City of Fairmont Planning Staff held 10 public meetings - one in each Council District - in October of 2016. Approximately 50 people attended the various meetings, with 31 surveys returned. Attendees were asked to identify their vision for the future, top priorities that should be addressed by the Comprehensive Plan Update and the biggest issues in terms of land use, infrastructure, recreation, transportation, housing, historic preservation, community design and economic development. A summary of the information collected is included in the Appendices.

• Public meetings were also held with the City of Fairmont Planning Commission on August 23, 2016, May 24, 2017, September 20, 2017 and January 23, 2018.

## Public Survey

• A public survey was developed and offered online, to supplement the input gathered through the traditional public meetings in October 2016. The survey was publicized through business cards with the survey link (distributed at the public meetings and other events), emailed out and publicized on the City's website.

• The survey received 90 responses over approximately a one-month timeframe. The survey consisted of 19 questions that were designed to gather input as to the most desirable characteristics of Fairmont and what the biggest issues in the City were. A summary of the information collected is included in the Appendices.



*Vision Board from 2016 Public Meetings*
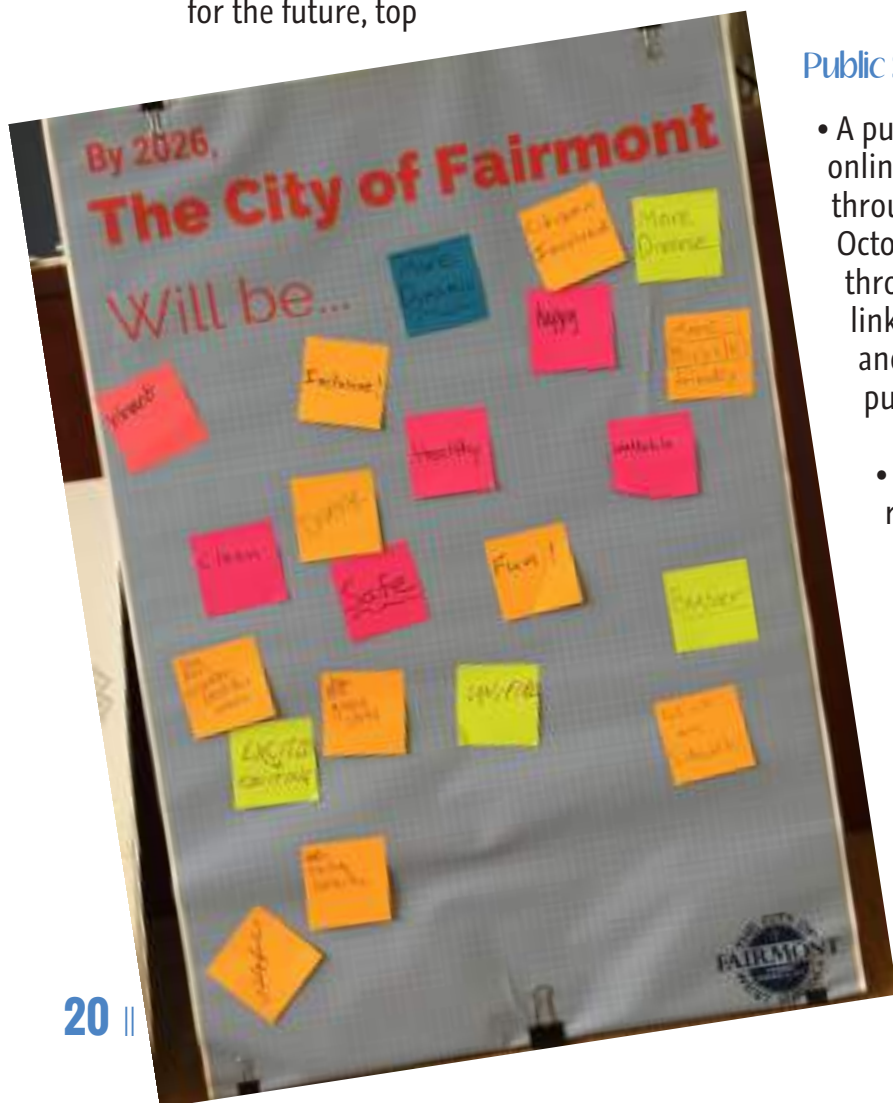
## Q13 How would you rate Fairmont in the following categories?

Answered: 85   Skipped: 5
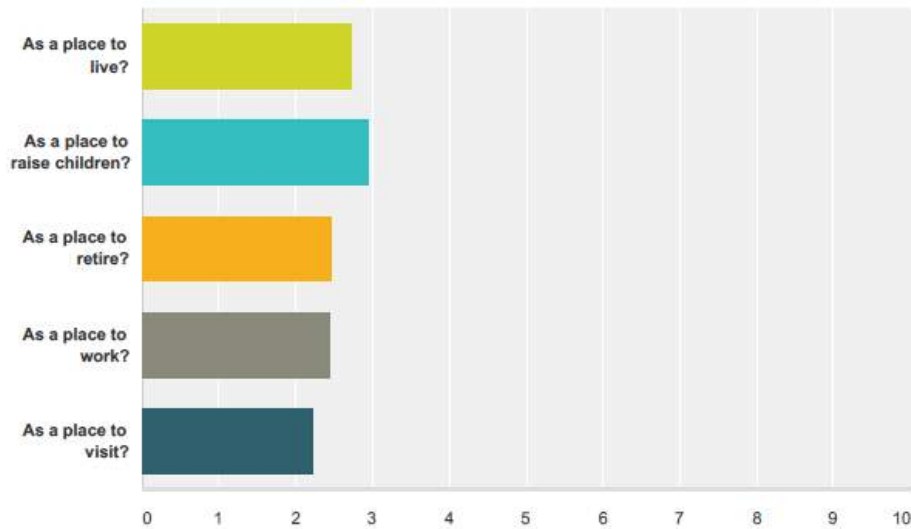


*Public Survey Results, Novmber 2016*

## Stakeholder Surveys and Meetings

- In addition to reaching out to the general public, a survey was developed and sent to stakeholders that were identified by City Planning Staff. As follow-up to the surveys, the Mackin Team also conducted in-person and phone interviews with various City organizations.

- The following organizations were included as stakeholders for the Plan:

  » City of Fairmont Police Department

  » City of Fairmont Fire Department

  » City of Fairmont Utilities Department Fairmont Community Development Partnership

  » Fairmont State University

  » Fairmont-Marion County Transit Authority

  » Fairmont-Morgantown Housing Authority

  » Main Street Fairmont

  » Marion County Chamber of Commerce

  » Marion County Convention and Visitors Bureau

  » Marion County Economic Development Authority

  » Marion County Parks and Recreation (MCParc)

  » West Virginia Department of Commerce

  » West Virginia University Brownfields Assistance Center

  » West Virginia High Technology Foundation / I-79 Technology Park

  » West Virginia University Land Use and Sustainable Development Law Clinic

# Fairmont Today

A snaphot of the current conditions in the City of Fairmont today and a review of the plans and studies that have been completed since the 2005 Comprehensive Plan.

Figure 1: Earliest known map of Fairmont (formerly named Middletown)
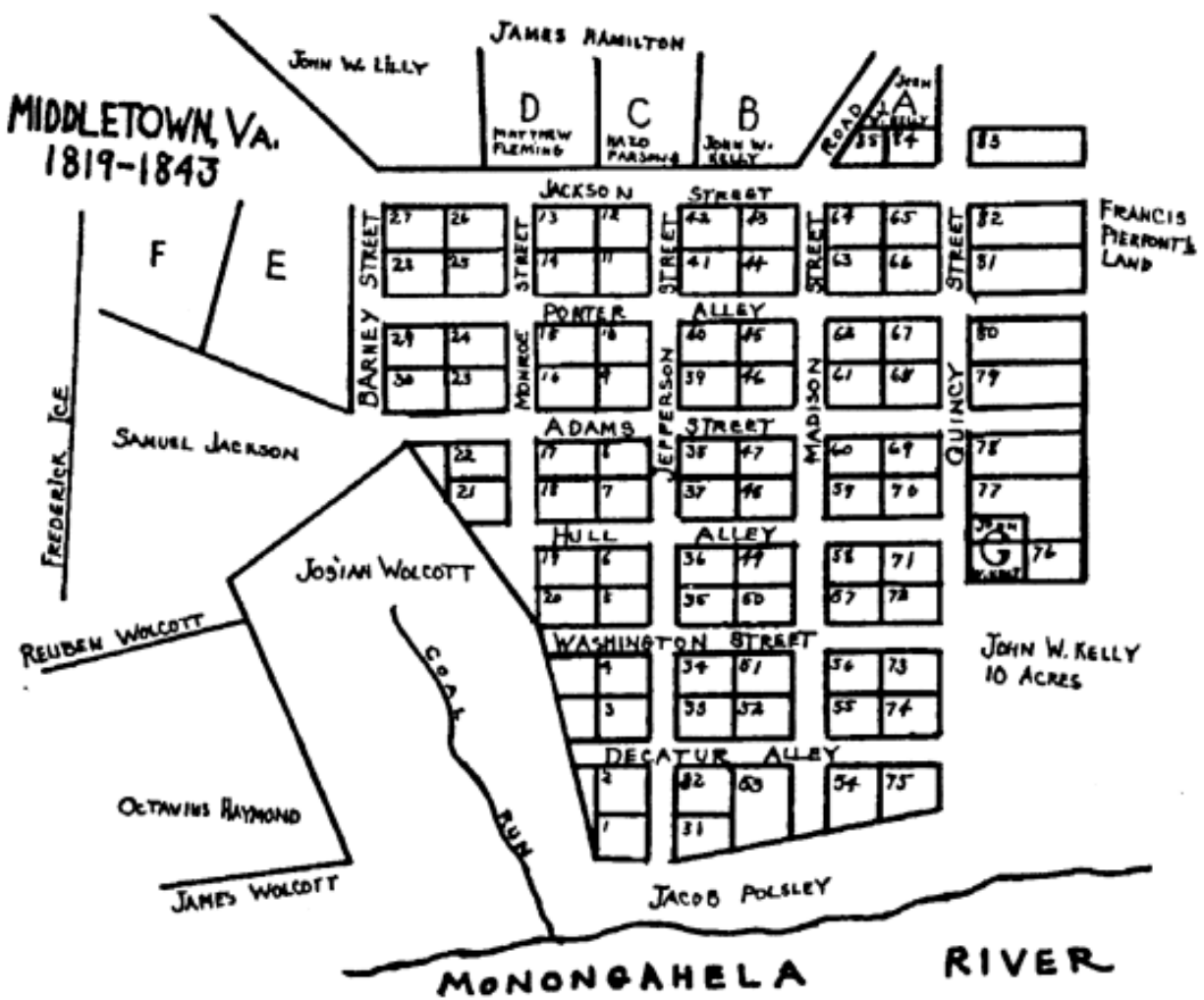


*Source: Lough, Glenn D. Now and Long Ago: A History of the Marion County Area. Morgantown Printing & Binding, 1969.*

# The beginning...

Fairmont dates back to 1819, when it was created from Boaz Fleming's farm and was laid out in a traditional grid pattern, as shown on"Figure 1: Earliest known map of Fairmont (formerly named Middletown)" on page 24. Originally founded as Middletown, Virginia, the origination of the name Middletown is debated. Some say that it was so named due to its location between the cities of Morgantown and Clarksburg. Others say it was named after Middletown, Delaware, which was the birthplace of Boaz Fleming's wife.

In 1843, the town changed its name to Fairmont, as there was already a Middletown, Virginia. The name Fairmont comes from an abbreviation of "Fair Mountain" and it became the county seat of the newly established Marion County. As the county seat, it became the center of attention for court days and market days.

Among the industries in the Fairmont area in the early nineteenth century were small waterpowered mills, blacksmiths, carriage works, and several "coal banks." The Barnesville Woolen Mill, located near the mouth of Buffalo Creek, is one such example. In 1852, a great flood swept away many of the riverside



*The Fairmont, Morgantown & Pittsburgh branch of the B&O Railroad had very heavy freight traffic, much of which was coal.*
*Source: Lough, Glenn D. Now and Long Ago: A History of the Marion County Area. Morgantown Printing & Binding, 1969.*

industries.

In 1852, two major events happened to spur the growth of Fairmont. First, the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad was completed, making Fairmont a railroad hub and helping to transport coal and other natural resources out of the City. The arrival of the railroad, along with the immigrants who built it, dramatically increased the population of Fairmont and drove up the value of local real estate.

The other significant event of 1852 was the construction of the 560-foot suspension bridge on Madison Street, over the Monongahela River, which connected Fairmont and Palatine

*Historic Downtown Fairmont. Source: National Register of Historic Places Registration Form for the Fairmont Downtown Historic District, 1995.*

(what is now the east side of Fairmont). By the early 1900's, a replacement for the bridge was required and the bridge was razed, and a new steel girder bridge (known locally as the "Nickel Bridge") was constructed. This bridge was demolished too in the late 20th century; although the bridge pylons remain standing, adjacent to the historically significant High Level Bridge.

The state of West Virginia was formed in 1863, when the delegates of the 40 western counties who opposed secession from the Union and formed their own government. Fairmont was mostly unaffected by the battles of the Civil War, but for the small skirmish in 1863, known as the Jones-Imboden Raid, when the Confederacy raided the area and tried to destroy bridges in an attempt to cut off the Union supply lines. Unsuccessful in destroying the new suspension bridge, the soldiers left town.

At this time, the buildings in Fairmont were wooden, a mixture of residences and businesses. On April 2, 1876, a large fire started at the corner of Adams and Madison Streets, but quickly spread and destroyed all of the buildings along both sides of the 300 block of Adams Street. As a result of the fire, the City required new construction to be made of brick.

In 1892, a metal bridge was constructed over Coal Run Hollow and the City continued to expand, outgrowing its original grid pattern. In 1899, a new chapter was granted which incorporated Fairmont, Palatine and West Fairmont as the City of Fairmont and the population reached over 5,000 residents in 1900.

Electric lights, natural gas and streetcars were all introduced to Fairmont by 1900. Fairmont became the central transportation and financial center for an extensive coal

mining region in north central West Virginia. This region was referred to as the "Fairmont Field." It included Barbour, Harrison, Marion, Monongalia, Preston and Taylor Counties. Fairmont's prosperity during these years was linked to a rapid increase in the expansion of coal mining in the Fairmont Field.

Overall, Fairmont reached the height of its industrial development in the early 1920s. By 1930, the population reached 23,159. The majority of the historic architecture found in downtown Fairmont today was constructed between 1890 and 1930.

The first World War contributed to an overall decline in the City. Material and labor were siphoned off to construct factories that supported the war. After the War, the Great Depression forced some companies into bankruptcy; others struggled along at reduced levels. The 1930s were particularly vexing for the coal industry, which suffered from

overproduction and excessive competition. Many mines were shut down and there was considerable unemployment. Fairmont eventually recovered and enjoyed another period of prosperity during the second World War (due to the increased demand for coal). It's population peaked in 1950 at 29,346.

Beginning in the 1960s, Fairmont's industrial base, particularly within the coal industry, suffered the same slow erosion that affected the region as a whole. Longwall machines began replacing coal miners and employment in the coal industry plummeted. Despite this, industry in Fairmont was still very active, with Monongah Glass, Owens-Illinois Glass and Westinghouse Electric prominent among them. Fairmont was headquarters for Fairmont Coal Company and later for Mountaineer Coal Division of Consolidation Coal Company.



*Fairmont Window Glass Company factory, open from 1905-1924, located along the B&O Railroad below Minor Avenue between Tenth and Eleventh Streets. Source: Lough, Glenn D. Now and Long Ago: A History of the Marion County Area. Morgantown Printing & Binding, 1969.*

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, two major events happened that would have a detrimental impact to Downtown Fairmont. First, Interstate 79 (I-79) was constructed, running north-south just a few miles east of Fairmont. Interstates provided alternate routes around cities and towns, reducing traffic in downtowns. Second, the Middletown Mall opened in White Hall (south of Fairmont) just off I-79, the first indoor mall in West Virginia. With quick access to a variety of stores all in one place, Downtown Fairmont began to feel the effects and the commercial core began to shutter.

In addition, the economy, the population and the condition of the remaining industrial architecture of Fairmont began facing the same fate as other cities during the de-industrialization of the early 1980s. During this period many important industries in the City closed and many sites were razed. Sharon Steel closed the Fairmont Coke Works facility in 1979. Owens-Illinois Glass Company closed plant #3 in 1980. At this point, the City's population decreased to 23,863.

Yet, Fairmont was not without thriving industrial plants in the 1990s. The Alcan Aluminum Corporation cold rolling mill and North American Philips Lighting Corporation light bulb plant operate efficiently and profitably with modern technology and labor management relation programs.



*Cook Hospital (former Board of Education Building) was recently purchased and is undergoing adaptive reuse for multi-family residential.*

While much of Fairmont's industrial base has been lost, the City still retains rich evidence of its industrial heritage. There are numerous fragments of older industrial sites, which can be interpreted in order to help keep Fairmont's history alive.[1]

The City of Fairmont has been undergoing a revitalization process over the last few decades. Brownfields are being remediated and redeveloped for new businesses. The I-79 High Technology Park opened. Historic buildings in the Downtown are being renovated and re-used. The Fairmont Gateway Connector opened, providing a direct link between I-79 and Downtown Fairmont. There is an energy in the City that his plan hopes to tap into and help to "refresh" Fairmont.

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1 Sources include the 2005 Fairmont Comprehensive Plan, "An Ornament to the City. Historic Architecture in Downtown Fairmont, West Virginia" by Debra Ball McMillan and Koon, Thomas J. "Fairmont." e-WV: The West Virginia Encyclopedia. 30 May 2013. Web. 24 January 2018.

# Who lives here?

The 2005 Fairmont Comprehensive Plan provided a full socio-economic profile, including a detailed analysis of population, race, education, employment trends, housing information and the labor force. The profile was completed for Fairmont, as well as Bridgeport, Clarksburg, Morgantown and Marion County.

The focus of this plan is to identify the socio-economic trends that have changed since 2005 and projected trends for the next 10 years. All data provided is from the US Census Bureau, 2010 Census and the 2016 American Community Survey (ACS).

### The City's population has stabilized.

• Over the last 50 years, the City of Fairmont has lost 36.2% of its population. The biggest losses occurred prior to 1990. Since then, the City's population has stabilized. Between 2010 and 2015, the City actually experienced a very slight increase.

• Marion County's population has followed a similar downward trend. Conversely, Morgantown has continued to experience population growth, reaching a peak of 30,708 in 2015.



CITY OF FAIRMONT, WV

WHO LIVES HERE?

2015 Population Estimate
18,733

-36.2%
POPULATION LOSS 1960-2010

8.62
square miles
2,169 persons per sq mi

7th
LARGEST CITY IN WV

Fairmont is getting YOUNGER & more DIVERSE.

MEDIAN AGE
35.3
compared to 39.3 in 2000

11%
non-white
compared to 9% in 2000

SOURCE: US CENSUS BUREAU

CITY OF FAIRMONT, WV

WHO LIVES HERE?

$36,731
Median household income 2014

43% increase since 2000

Living in Poverty
23% in 2015
Up from 20% in 2000

FOOD STAMPS/ SNAP BENEFITS PAST 12 MONTHS
18%

SOURCE: US CENSUS BUREAU

## The population is getting younger and more diverse.

- Since 2000, the median age has decreased from 39.3 to 35.3. For comparison purposes, the median age in Morgantown is 23.7 and 37.4 in the US. The largest age cohort is under 20 (26%), followed by residents in their 20s (17%).

- Fairmont State University is located in the City of Fairmont, which helps contribute to the number of young residents. However, enrollment has slightly decreased (approximately 4,049 total students in 2017 compared to 4,709 in 2010), so it is not the reason behind the drop in median age.

- The percentage of non-white residents has increased from 9% to 11% during the same timeframe. In comparison, West Virginia is less than 7% non-white.

## Over the next 5 years, the population is projected to remain constant.

- The compound annual growth rate was 0.19% for 2010-2015 and the projected rate for 2015-2020 is 0.33% for the city's population, 0.29% for households and 0.09% for families (US Census Bureau).

- In 2011, the West Virginia University College of Business and Economics Bureau of Business and Economic Research published population projections for West Virginia Counties. According to that report (based on Census 2010 population), Marion County is projected to see a 0.2% population loss from 2010 to 2030.

**Although household income is on the rise, the percentage of residents living in poverty is rising as well.**

- Household income has been steadily rising over the years ($36,731 in 2014); however, it is still significantly less than that of West Virginia ($41,751). The projected 2015-2020 compound annual growth rate is 0.94% for median household income and 1.0% for per capita income.

- The household income distribution by race is disproportionate. White family income is significantly higher ($49,631) than black family income ($23,095).

- 23% of Fairmont residents were living in poverty in 2015, compared to 20% in 2000. 18% of residents used food stamps or SNAP benefits in 2015.

**The cost of living is comparatively low in Fairmont.**

- The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics compiles a cost of living index based on the cost of groceries, housing, utilities, transportation, healthcare and other miscellaneous costs.

- Fairmont's overall cost index was 85.4 in 2015 (the U.S. average is 100). The highest cost indexes were transportation (100.7), miscellaneous (97.1) and healthcare (96.1). In contrast, the index of housing cost is just 59.3, which is what keeps the overall index low.



CITY OF FAIRMONT, WV

WHO LIVES HERE?

61.1%
owner-occupied

9,200
Total Housing Units 2010
(-5.7% change since 2000)

11.6%

VACANT HOUSING UNITS

Median Housing Value
$92,100 in 2014
Up from $61,600 in 2000

SOURCE: US CENSUS BUREAU

CITY OF FAIRMONT, WV

WHO LIVES HERE?

OCCUPATION

since 2000    since 2000    since 2000
31.6%         25.2%         25.0%

Management, Business, Science & Arts    Service Occupations    Sales & Office Occupations

INDUSTRY

27% EMPLOYED IN EDUCATION, HEALTHCARE & SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Unemployment Rate

5.9%

in 2014

Up from 5.1% in 2000

SOURCE: US CENSUS BUREAU

- In comparison, the cost of living in Morgantown was 92.7 and 84.8 for the state of West Virginia.

### While still low compared to the national average, housing values are increasing.

- The median housing value has increased dramatically since 2000 (49%). However, 21.7% of homes are still valued at less than $55,000 and 11% of homes are vacant.

- 78% of homes were constructed prior to 1970. Less than 4% were constructed since 2000.

- The majority of homes are single-family (73%), with 13% small apartment buildings, 10% apartment complexes and less than 2% townhouses.

### While unemployment rates vary, the annual unemployment rate for Fairmont was lower than the state.

- In 2014, Fairmont had an annual unemployment rate of 5.9%, but dropped to just 3% in 2016. West Virginia had an overall unemployment rate of 4% in 2016, compared to 5% in the United States.

### The most prevalent occupations are a mixture of white and blue collar jobs..

- The most common jobs in Fairmont (by number of employees) are in the Administrative, Food and Serving, and Sales occupations. The most common industries are Healthcare and Social Assistance; Educational Services; and Accommodation and Food Services.

- Compared to other Census places, Fairmont

has an unusually high number of Food and Serving; Fire Fighting Supervisors; and Health Technicians/Practitioners jobs. Fairmont has an unusually high number of Mining, Quarrying, Oil, Gas Extraction; Public Administration; and Utilities industries.

• The highest paid jobs in Fairmont (by median earnings) are in Computer and Mathematical; Architecture and Engineering; and Health Practitioners. The highest paying industries are in Mining, Quarrying, Oil, Gas Extraction; Utilities; and Professional, Scientific, Technical Services.

## City residents are well-educated.

• Almost 90% of residents are high school graduates, compared to 85% in West Virginia and 88% in the United States. Similarly, there is a higher percentage of college graduates in the City (23.7%) than in the state (19%).

• With the presence of both Fairmont State University (approximately 4,000 students enrolled) and Pierpont Community & Technical College (approximately 2,700 students enrolled), it is not surprising that 15% of City residents are enrolled in college.

## Commuting patterns are changing.

• City residents have a shorter average commute time (20.8 minutes) than the national and state average (24.8 minutes).

• The percentage of residents working from home has increased (up from 2.7% in 2000), as well as those using public transit (up from 1.1% in 2000).



CITY OF FAIRMONT, WV

WHO LIVES HERE?

EDUCATION
88.4% HIGH SCHOOL
23.7% COLLEGE

15% RESIDENTS 18+ ENROLLED IN COLLEGE

79% Drive Alone
7.4% Car Pool
6.6% Walk
4.1% Work from Home
1.8% Public Transit

20.8 minutes
average commute time

SOURCE: US CENSUS BUREAU
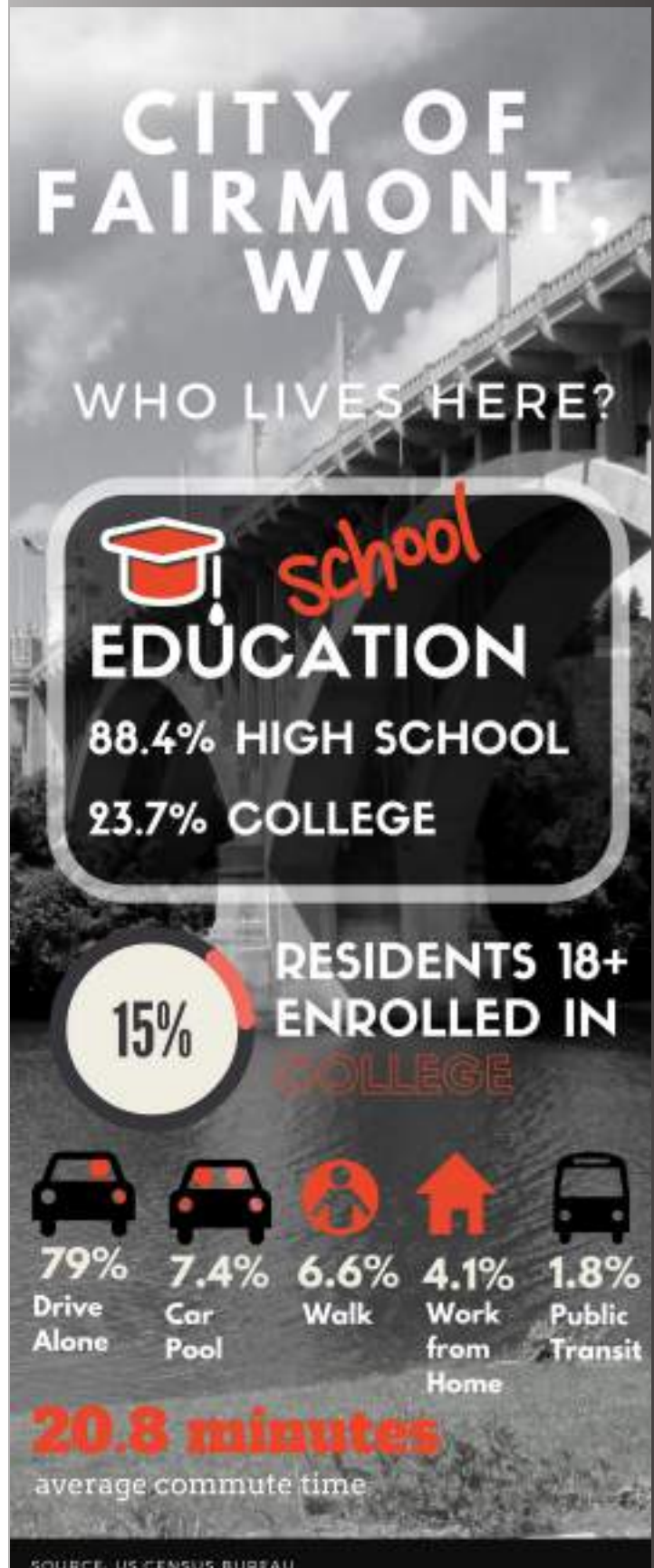
# Existing Land Use

An existing land use map, as shown on "Figure 2: Existing Land Use Map" on page 35, was prepared for the City of Fairmont using data from the Marion County Assessor's Office. The Office collects and updates real estate information on a yearly basis. Using this data, the existing land use map was created to show the following general classifications of land use:

## Residential

Residential land use is divided into three categories: single family, multifamily (2+ units) and vacant residential. Single family residential comprises the largest percentage of land use. For the most part, multifamily residential can be found in and near the Downtown, Locust Avenue (near Fairmont State University) and other major corridors. Vacant residential is scattered throughout the City.

## Commercial

Commercial land use is divided into two categories: commercial and vacant commercial. The bulk of commercial uses are found in the I-79 Technology Park, Downtown, and along major corridors including the Gateway Connector/I-79, US 250 / Fairmont Avenue, US 19 / Locust Avenue / Pennsylvania Avenue, Park Avenue and Speedway Avenue.

Vacant commercial includes land in the I-79 Technology Park, Beltline area, Speedway Avenue (includes the Big John's Salvage Superfund Site and Owens-Illinois Site).

## Industrial

Industrial land is mostly found along the railroad, the Beltline area and Speedway Avenue.

## Institutional

Institutional includes civic uses such as government facilities, churches, schools and cemeteries. As the County Seat, a significant portion of land in the Downtown is classified as institutional. In addition, the City is home to Fairmont State University.

## Recreation

Recreation was separated from institutional to show public parks. Discussed more in later chapters, the City owns seven parks and the Marion County Parks and Recreation Commission (MCPARC) owns four parks within City limits.

## Mixed Use

Mixed use includes land and buildings that have both residential and commercial uses. These are found almost exclusively in Downtown.

## Farm

There is one small farm located in the western area of the City.

## Utilities

Utilities include uses such as water/sewage treatment, electric, gas, etc.

Figure 2:   Existing Land Use Map



Legend

Existing Land Use

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| ▨ | Single Family Residential | ▨ | Vacant Commercial |
| | Multi Family Residential | | Commercial |
| ▨ | Vacant Residential | | Industrial |
| | Mixed Use | | Institutional |
| | Farm | | Recreation |
| | | | Utility |

Data source: Parcels & Land Use: Marion County Assessors Office

0          1          2 Miles
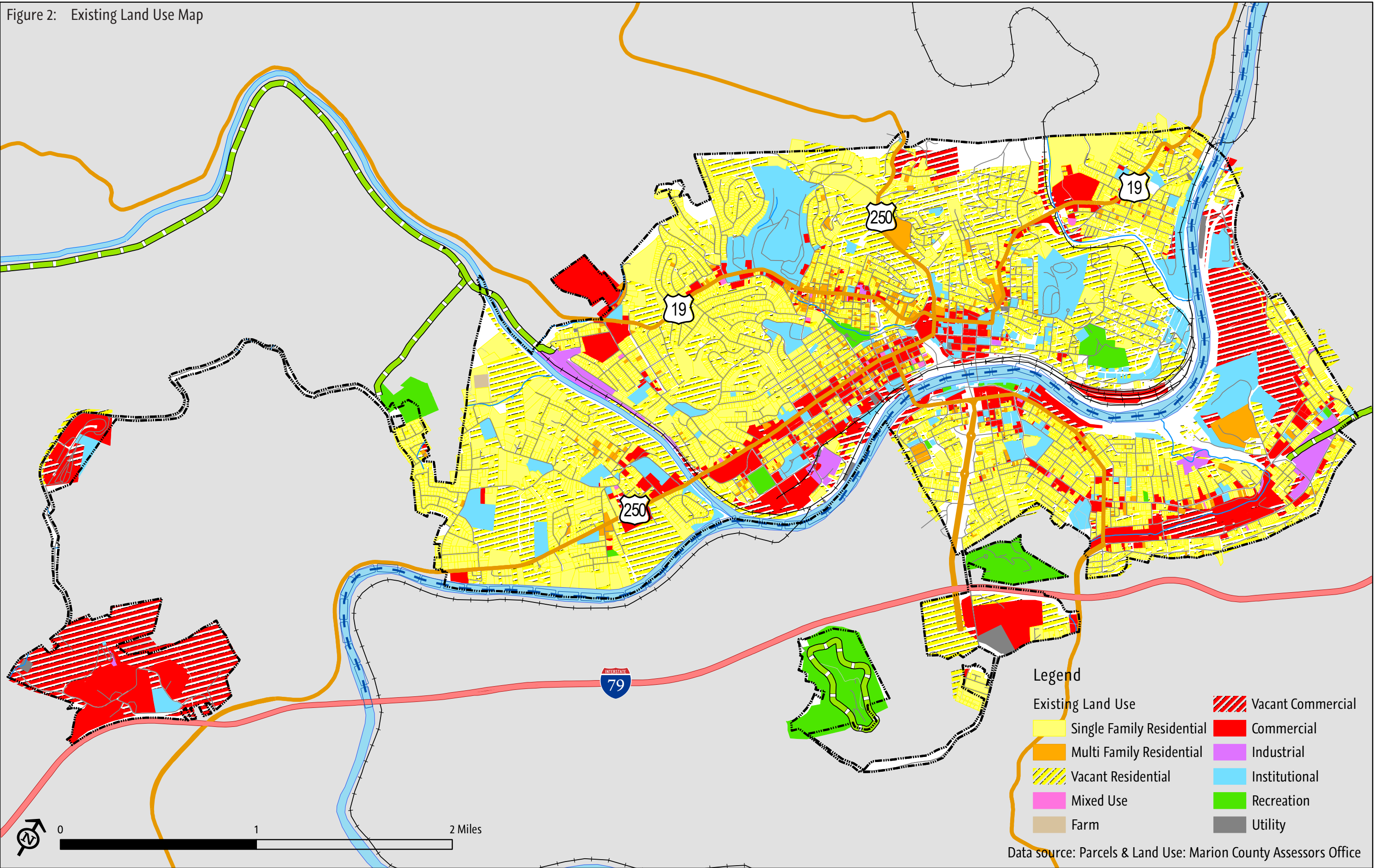
# What's been studied...

## PREVIOUS PLANS AND STUDIES

### Fairmont Renaissance Plan (2005)

The Fairmont Renaissance Plan (FRP) was prepared for the revitalization of a portion of the City of Fairmont designated as the Renaissance Area (RA), which is the Central Business District per the 2005 Comprehensive Plan. The impetus of the FRP is based on the decision to bolster the economy of the RA and the City by capitalizing on current physical and market opportunities prevalent around the RA.

### Central Business District Parking Study (2009)

This is an update of the 1999 Downtown Parking Study of the Fairmont/Marion County Multi-Modal Transportation Plan to highlight the issues and challenges that exist and what measures can be implemented to more appropriately meet the demands of the commerce of the Central Business District.

### Fairmont State University Student Housing Market Analysis (2011)

The study assessed the demand for student housing at Fairmont State University and Pierpont Community and Technical College. The study found that the on-campus housing demand cannot be met with existing housing. As a result, the University constructed new student housing in 2017 and razed the College Park apartments.

### Updated Evaluation of Options for Old Coke Works Site (2011)

The study was completed to re-evaluate the proposed usage of the Old Coke Works Site, which was initially researched and evaluated in 2005 and recommended an outdoor sports and recreation mixed use development. The updated study recommended that the City pursue a hotel anchor and a mid-scale outdoor adventure resort.
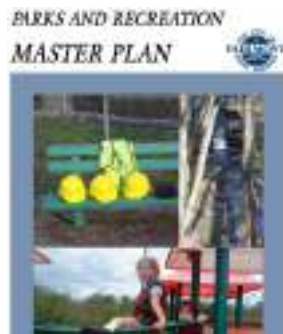
## Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2012)

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan was prepared for all city-owned parks, to review the entire park system, gather resident input into what they would like to see at City parks and plan and prioritize improvements that can be incorporated into a Capital Improvement Plan. In addition to specific park improvements, the Plan also recommended that the City hire a Parks and Recreation Director.



## Firehouse Creative (2013)

Part private enterprise, part creative arts incubator, part home for community arts and culture, the Firehouse Creative is, at its core, the collaboration of stakeholders working to foster arts and culture in Downtown Fairmont. This shared, creative work environment could house three independent businesses; provide a venue for outside performances; and offer rentable co-working space.



## ADA Sidewalks Study Report (2013)

The purpose of the study was for the WVDOH to utilize the data to determine where sidewalk work is needed. The study also aids the WVDOH in knowing were sidewalks need improvements adjacent to future road or bridge construction. When funding is available, the data collected in this study will provide an effective reference in locating sidewalk enhancement projects.



## Fairmont Connectivity Plan (2014)

The Connectivity Plan establishes a regional mixed use network of connections to key attractions such as population centers, business areas, schools, public parks, neighborhoods and long distance rail trails for pedestrians and bicyclists. In doing so, it helps create healthy alternatives for accessing work, school and play throughout Marion County, WV and promoting Fairmont as a healthy community.



## Fairmont Connectivity Plan Rapid Health Impact Assessment (2014)

The purpose of this rapid Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is to facilitate the integration of health into decision-making, especially where it relates to implementation of projects outlined in Fairmont's Connectivity Plan. The study recommends that the City focus on improvements around the key nodes in the City (2 miles for walking and 5 miles for cycling).

### West Virginia Economic Outlook (2014)

West Virginia's economy continues to improve, and the pace of improvement has exceeded that of the United States by several measures recently. We expect the economic recovery in West Virginia to continue, although at a somewhat slower rate that will likely fall short of the national pace on several key dimensions in the near-term.

### Fairmont Beltine Redevelopment Plan (2015)

The City, along with Marion County, Marion County Board of Education and Fairmont State University, prepared a redevelopment plan for the former Beltine neighborhood. The study addressed the potential for adaptive reuse of properties (the former Box Plant); potential for additional recreational facilities, including the rail-trail; strategies for housing, commercial and industrial markets; and recommendations for implementation.

### Downtown Fairmont Design Guidelines (2016)

A certificate of appropriateness is required prior to any change in a property within the Downtown Historic District. The Historic Preservation Review Commission (HPRC) prepared the Design Guidelines to ensure that new development and renovations to existing structures are appropriate to the historic period, architecture and style of the property, so that the historic authenticity of the property is preserved.
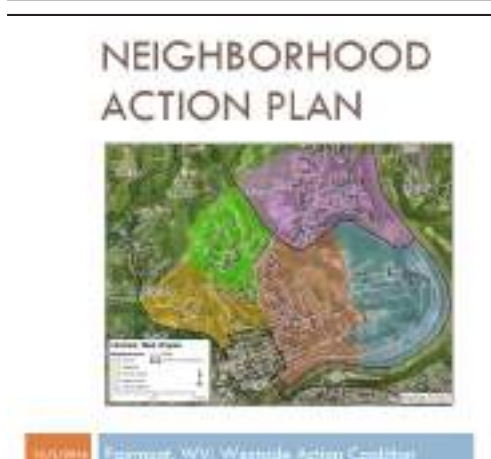
### Westside Neighborhood Plan (2016)

The Westside Action Coalition (WAC) partnered with West Virginia University (WVU) faculty and students to build community and economic sustainability within their community. This initiative is called the Fostering Fairmont project, which is designed to assist community members who want to see the assets in their community be put to better use. The project's purpose is to equip neighbors with the tools necessary to enhance their neighborhood through learning, mobilizing, planning, and then acting on the strategies necessary to enhance their community.

# The Vision: Fairmont 2028

"Build a better Fairmont" is the city's vision. To reach that vision, the City created six goals that focus on attraction, prosperity, vitality, neighborhoods, connectivity and sustainability. Each goal has corresponding objectives and actions that once taken, will implement the City's vision.
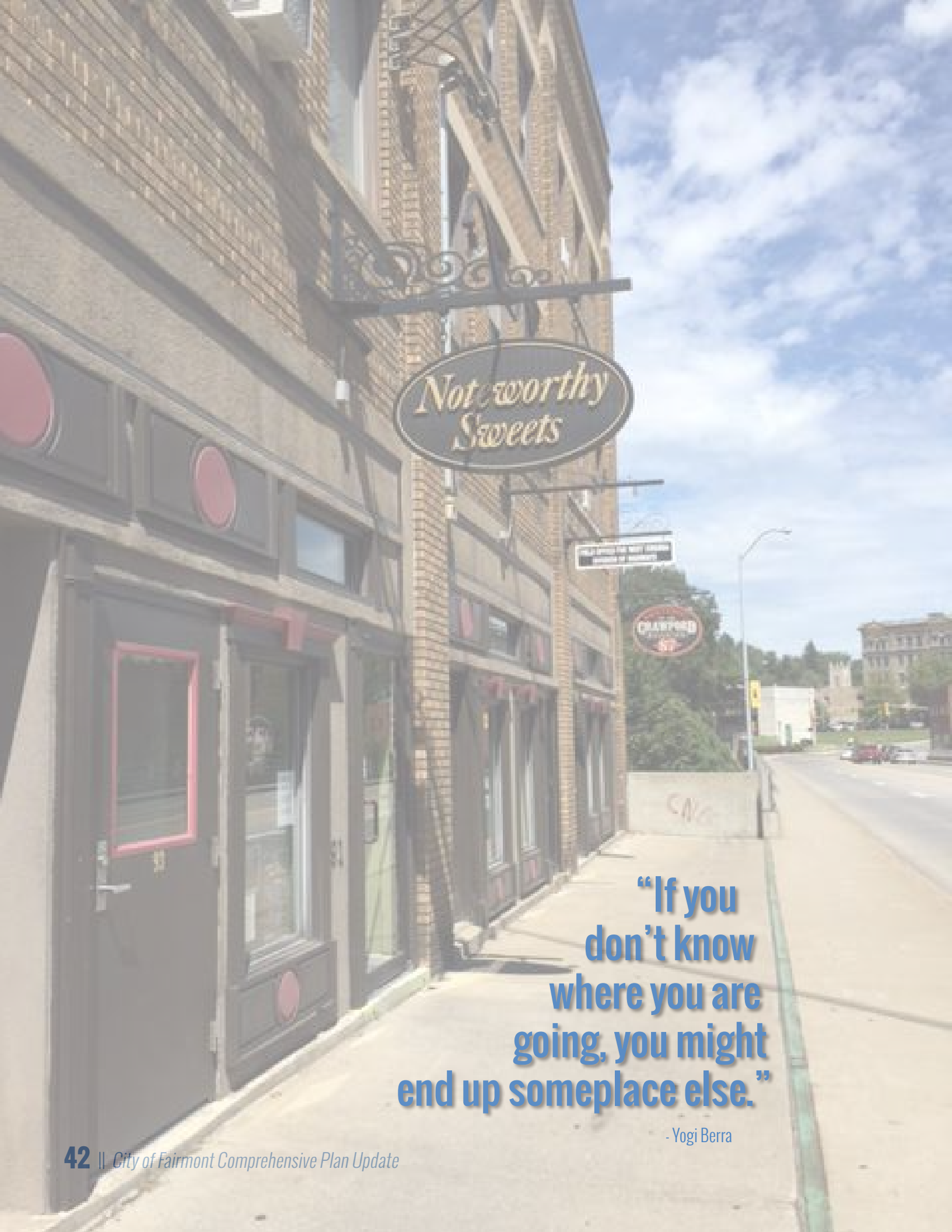
"If you
don't know
where you are
going, you might
end up someplace else."

- Yogi Berra

# "Fairmont Refreshed"

## What is a community vision?

A community vision is a picture of what the town should look like in 20 years. The community vision comes from a fair and representative process that everyone can be involved in. It comes from many groups of people from all parts of town. It is not one person's view or one group's view. The process used to create the vision should be community wide, easy to understand, and should motivate people to take action together. It is not too bold or too bland. It is achievable although it might be a stretch. It should make people feel hopeful and optimistic. Visioning is a way to cope with change. Change happens whether it is from people moving into town or moving out, people getting older, buildings falling down or buildings going up. Visioning works with change; it does not turn back the clock. The visioning process is a method of obtaining the opinion of the community in an organized public process.

## How a Vision relates to a comprehensive plan:

- The vision is the dream. The plan is the blueprint.

- The vision describes. The plan analyzes.

- The vision is poetry. The plan is prose.

- The vision is about possibilities. The plan is about politics.

- The vision describes what. The plan shows how.

- The vision appeals to imagination. The plan appeals to reason.

- The vision is striven for. The plan is implemented.

The vision and the rest of the comprehensive planning process should feed off of one another. Visioning without planning can be uninspired. Planning without visioning may be irrelevant. Visioning and good planning should strengthen each other.

### What is important to Fairmont?

To get the answers, we asked the public! Through a public outreach campaign that consisted of an online survey, stakeholder surveys and interviews, meetings with Planning Commission, City staff and public meetings, we collected input as to what the residents and business owners want to see Fairmont look like in 2027.

"Figure 3: Fairmont Visioning Word Cloud" on page 44 depicts the key themes that were identified by the public. A word cloud is an image composed of words used in a particular text or subject, in which the size of each word indicates its frequency or importance.

Figure 3:    Fairmont Visioning Word Cloud



*Source: http://www.wordclouds.com/*
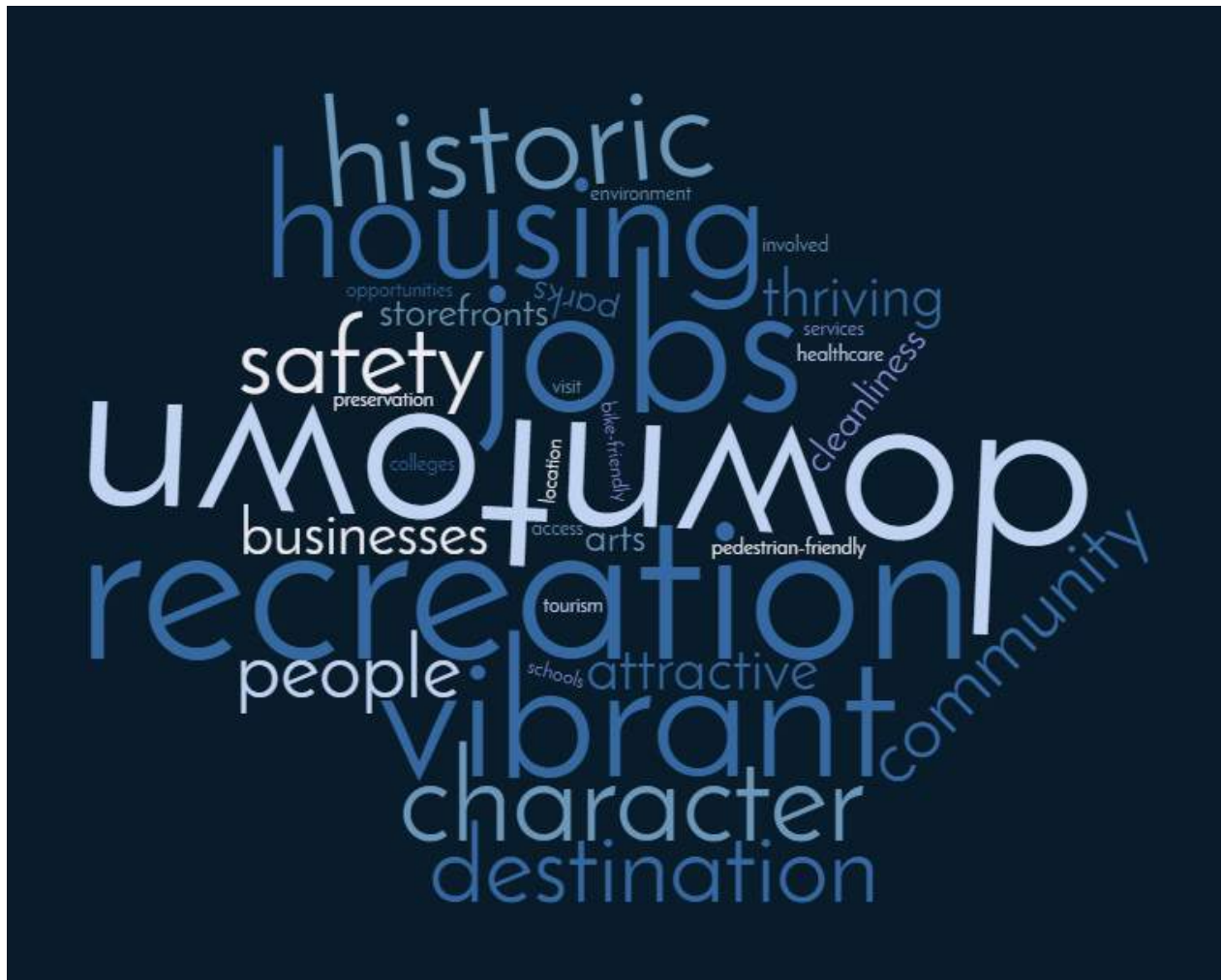
# What is the VISION for Fairmont?

## what others have said...

There have been a number of other plans and studies over the years that have identified a vision for Fairmont. In addition, there are also a number of organizations that have a vision for Fairmont.

Figure 4:   Visions for Fairmont

## what this plan is saying...

Fairmont Refreshed is just that, a "refreshed" look at the City's current state of affairs, needs and opportunities. It is an update to the City's 2005 Comprehensive Plan, which takes all of the various plans, studies and organizations' visions and missions and compiles them into one document, one vision, one plan that when implemented, will propel Fairmont forward for the next 10 years.

Overall, when it comes down to it, the vision for the City is simple.

> " *To build a better Fairmont.* "



## and the guiding principles are...

How does the City build a better Fairmont? Based on all of the input received in 2016-2018, the City developed guiding principles that capture the essence of the vision and priorities.

# 2018 Comprehensive Plan Goals:
# Fairmont Refreshed is...

**Attraction**     a well-known, unique regional destination.

**Prosperity**     an employment hub characterized by high opportunity within a growing and diverse local economy.

**Vitality**     a thriving downtown business district with a vibrant arts and culture scene.

**Neighborhoods**     a community of safe neighborhoods that feature high-quality housing and parks.

**Connectivity**     an accessible City that is well-connected by a multi-modal transportation network.

**Sustainability**     a sustainable City that capitalizes on its natural resources and is environmentally responsible.

# Fairmont Refreshed is...

"a unique, well-known regional destination"

# Goal #1:
# Attraction

"Great schools, affordable health care and safe streets all help create strong communities. But is there something deeper that draws people to a city – that makes them want to put down roots and build a life?" This is the question that a 2010 Gallup study called "Knight Soul of the Community" attempted to answer.[1] The study found that the communities with the highest levels of attachment had the highest rates of gross domestic product growth. In addition, what attaches residents to a community remains the same, regardless of the size of the city or the demographics of the respondents (age, race, etc.). Overall, community attachment boils down to three main things:

- **Aesthetics**
  The physical beauty of the community including the availability of parks and green spaces.

- **Social offerings**
  Places for people to meet each other and the feeling that people in the community care about each other.

- **Openness**
  How welcoming the community is to different types of people, including families with young children, minorities, and talented college graduates.

How attached are Fairmont residents to their community? What assets does the City have in these areas on which to capitalize? And what types of improvements can the City make to increase these attachments?

_____

*1 https://www.knightfoundation.org/sotc/overall-findings/*

# And the assets are...

The following assets relate directly to the ability of Fairmont to attract residents, visitors and businesses and have been identified by the public as strengths. This list is not intended to be exhaustive, but instead a summary of the most important assets that have either changed since the 2005 Plan or can and should be capitalized on over the next 10 years.

## Fairmont Gateway Connector

The Fairmont Gateway Connector truly provides a beautiful gateway entrance to the City from Interstate 79. It provides a sense of place immediately for visitors and serves as a memorable entryway to the downtown.

The Connector was completed in 2010 and consists of a 1.5 mile, four-lane highway that provides a direct connection from downtown Fairmont to I-79. The Connector features West Virginia's first two roundabout and utilized context-sensitive design to integrate the roadway into the surrounding neighborhoods. The project included decorative lighting, bus shelters, a bike trail, pavilion, playground and walking track and won the 2011 America's Transportation Award for Innovative Management.[1]



1  https://americastransportationawards.org/past-projects/2011-2/wv-fairmont-gateway-connector/

## Historic Architecture

The identity of a City is intrinsically tied to its architecture. The architectural style of a City's buildings, specifically within a downtown, provide a sense of place that is unique to the history of the community. In an effort to preserve the architecture, the City developed design standards for the downtown in 2016. In addition, the following sites are listed on the National Register of Historic Places:[2]

- **Fairmont Downtown Historic District**

  » Listed in 1995, the downtown district roughly encompasses Adams and Jackson Streets, Washington and Quincy Streets, and Cleveland and Fairmont Avenues, and includes 97 contributing buildings and two contributing structures.

  » Notable buildings include the Watson Building (1909-1911), U.S. Court House and Post Office (1940), Monongahela Valley Traction Freight House (1927), the Jacobs and Hutchinson complex, and the Library (1914).

  » The Marion County Courthouse and Sheriff's House and Robert H. Mollohan-Jefferson Street Bridge are located in the district and listed separately on the Register. The bridge, built in 1921 and restored in 2000; is an iconic landmark.

- **Fleming-Watson Historic District**

  » Listed in 2001, the Fleming-Watson Historic District comprises 365 buildings and 1 structure of architecture significance. It is in two irregular sections





*Bottom photo: Marion County Courthouse (Mackin); Upper photo: Hutchinson Mansion in the Fleming-Watson Historic District (By Generic1139 - Own work, CC BY 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=43496542)*

separated by a ravine, approximately bounded by Fairmont Avenue, Second and Fay Streets, Apple Crescent, Green and Emerson Streets, Coleman Avenue, Ninth Street, and Outlook.

  » High Gate, the James Edwin Watson House, also listed on the Register, is located in the district. Built ca. 1910-1913, it was restored in 2002 with assistance from the Vandalia Heritage Foundation and Friends of High Gate; it is now the Ross Funeral Home.

_2 https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/SearchResults/_

Downtown Historic District

Fleming-Watson Historic District

Sources: Esri, HERE, DeLorme, USGS, Intermap, INCREMENT P, NRCan, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri Korea, Esri (Thailand), MapmyIndia, NGCC, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community ston

0     500     1,000 Feet
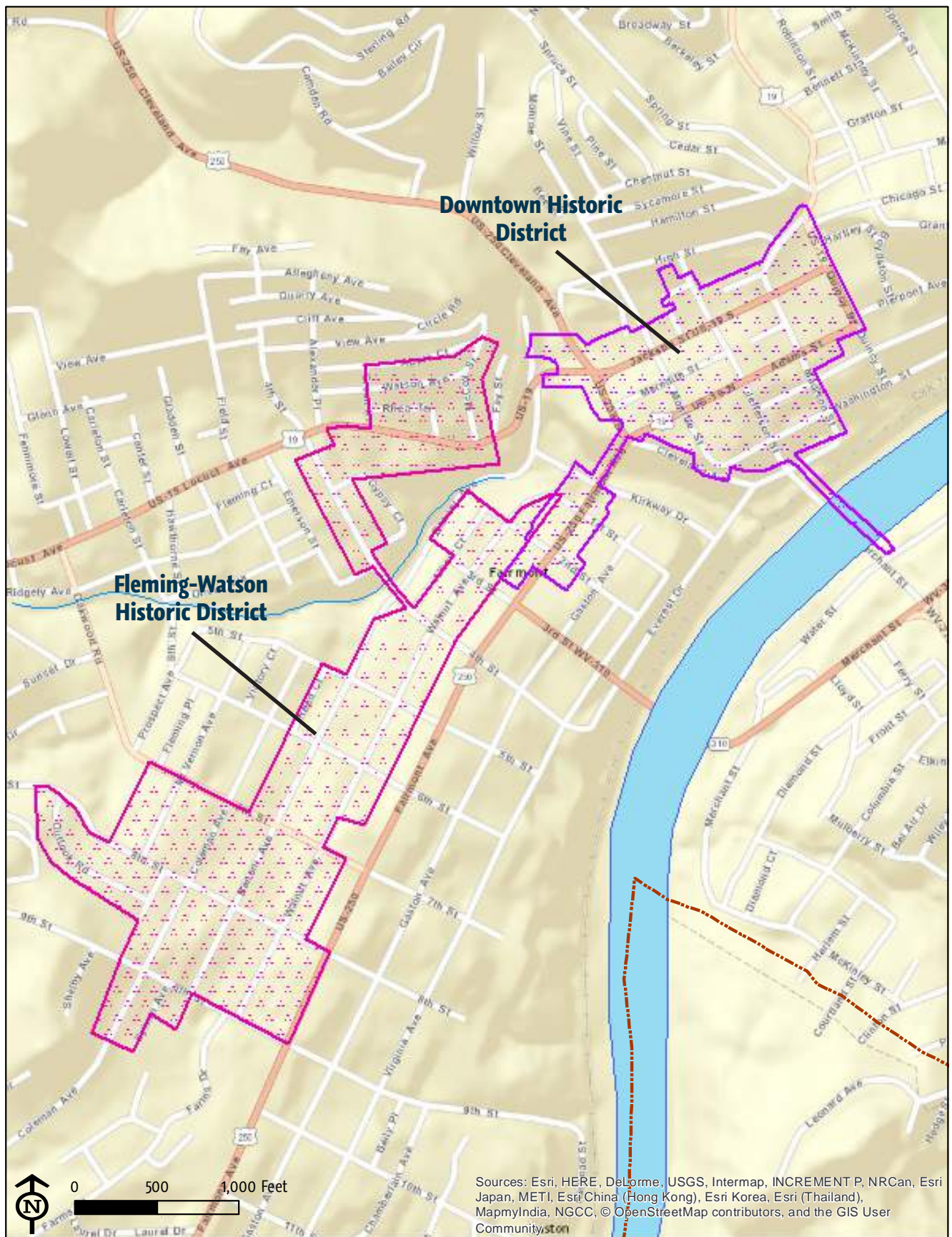
- **Colonial Apartments (Folklife Center)**

  » Listed in 2006 (also known as the Kennedy Dairy Barn), it was originally built in about 1900 as a barn, modified to an apartment building around 1942, and is now home to the Frank and Jane Gabor West Virginia Folklife Center, part of Fairmont State University's College of Liberal Arts.

- **Dunbar School**

  » Listed in 2015, Dunbar School was built in 1928 as a school for black children - the only one in Fairmont and the only black high school in the County. Permanently closed since 2007, the Dunbar School Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving the school and reminding the community what it stands for. Their goal is to renovate the building for use as a community center and local museum.



*Photo credit: Dunbar School (By Generic1139 - Own work, CC BY 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index. php?curid=43496449)*

- **Fairmont Normal School Administration Building (Hardway Hall)**

  » Listed on the NRHP in 1994, the building was constructed between 1915 and 1917 as one of West Virginia's six state teachers schools. Today, Hardway Hall is the oldest and most prominent of the buildings on the Fairmont State University campus.

- **Fairmont Senior High School**

  » Listed in 2002, this buildings was built in 1928. The building jointly held the public and normal schools of Fairmont until 1892.

- **Thomas W. Fleming House**

  » Listed in 1979. Originally built as a private home in 1901, it later served as the clubhouse for the Women's Club of Fairmont. Since 1938, the Women's Club of Fairmont serves as a philanthropic organization on beautification efforts throughout the City. The Mansion is a rental venue for weddings and events and is open for individual and group tours.[3]

- **Jacobs-Hutchinson Block**

  » Listed in 1995, it was originally built in 1902 as a five-story commercial structure. The building is currently occupied by the Arts and Antiques Marketplace.

- **Masonic Temple**

  » Listed in 1993, it was originally commissioned by Fairmont Lodge No. 9 and built in 1907. Currently, it is owned by the City and is awaiting redevelopment.

- **Thomas C. Miller Public School**

  » Listed in 2013, the Miller School was built in 1914 and was recently redeveloped into senior housing.

- **Shaw House**

  » Listed in 1988, Shaw House is an historic home and district, which includes a main house (built in 1919), garage, well house and entrance pavilion.

_3 http://www.fairmontwomansclub.org/_

*Palatine Park*

## Parks and Recreation

Fairmont is home to the following community parks, meaning that they serve the entire City and surrounding areas:

- **12th Street Pool** - owned by Marion County Parks and Recreation (MCPARC)

- **East Marion Park**- owned by MCPARC

- **Mary Lou Retton Youth Park** - owned by MCPARC

- **Morris Park** - owned by City of Fairmont

- **Palatine Park** - owned by MCPARC

- **Windmill Park**  - owned by City of Fairmont

In addition, the City also owns and operates the following neighborhood or special use parks:

- **5th Street Park**

- **Bellview Park**

- **Gateway Connector Park**

- **Morgantown Avenue Park**

- **Norwood Park**

- **Veterans Square**

# Diversity

According to the most recent Census statistics, Fairmont is becoming an increasingly more diverse City. In 2016, 12% of the population was classified as non-white; with 7% black or African-American, 2% two or more races, 1% Hispanic or Latino, and less than 1% Asian.

In October of 2017, the City passed an ordinance to establish a Human Rights Commission, responsible to "encourage and endeavor to bring about mutual understanding and respect among all persons and encourage and endeavor to safeguard the right and opportunity of all persons to be free from all forms of discrimination whether by virtue of race, religion, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, blindness or handicap."

In addition, the median age is decreasing. In 2015, the median age was 35.3, compared to 39.3 in 2000. Fairmont is home to both Fairmont State University (FSU) and Pierpont Community and Technical College, which share a 120-acre campus off Locust Avenue.

FSU had an enrollment of 4,100 in 2016, of which approximately 1,200 students live on campus. Many of the students are non-traditional with full-time jobs. Originally established in 1974 as the community college of Fairmont State, Pierpont separated from FSU in 2008. In 2016, Pierpont had an enrollment of 3,450 students in 2016.

The goal of the City of Fairmont is to become a college town, not just a town with a college. The connection between campus and downtown has been improving in recent years; FSU banners have been installed along Adams and Merchant Streets and will be added on Locust Avenue.

## Organizations

The City has many organizations that help to promote Fairmont, including but not limited to:

- **Main Street Fairmont (MSF) -** MSF is dedicated to encouraging new development and historic restoration in Downtown Fairmont. They have partnered with the Federal Home Loan Bank of Pittsburgh to offer the Banking on Business program, which helps eligible small businesses with start-up and expansion. MSF also hosts special events, such as the Feast of the Seven Fishes, First Fridays and Arts Market.[1]

- **Marion County Chamber of Commerce -** a nonprofit organization supported by investments from more than 450 member businesses and other contributions to chamber programs. Chamber staff and volunteers plan and implement numerous business and community events that enhance the quality of life for everyone in Marion County.[2]

- **Marion County Convention and Visitors Bureau -** a nonprofit marketing and sales

organization whose sole purpose is to take the leadership role in developing the area's tourism industry and advancing Marion County as a vacation, group tour and meeting destination.[3]

- **Marion County Historical Society -** chartered in 1908 to collect, preserve and interpret materials related to the community and has established a perpetual endowment fund with the Community Endowment Fund at WesBanco, the proceeds of which will be used to preserve the heritage of Fairmont and Marion County. Major contributions of the Society include Prickett's Fort and the Marion County Historical Society and Museum.[4]

- **Marion County Parks and Recreation Commission -** formed in 1977, MCPARC is committed to the purpose of providing the County with quality park and recreation areas for all leisure activities. Within the City, MCPARC owns and operates four parks (East Marion, 12th Street Pool, Mary Lou Retton and Palatine).[5]

1 Main Street Fairmont website: http://www.mainstreetfairmont.org/first-friday-arts-and-music-series.html
2 Marion County Chamber of Commerce website:  http://www.marionchamber.com/

3 Convention & Visitors Bureau of Marion County website: https://marioncvb.com/company/marion-county-convention-visitors-bureau/
4 Marion County Historical Society website: http://www.marionhistorical.org/
5 Marion County Parks and Recreation Commission website: http://www.mcparc.com/

# And the issues are...

Just as assets were identified, so were issues and obstacles that stand in the way of progress.

Overall, residents rated Fairmont highest in the category of a place to raise children and lowest as a place to visit. What issues are stopping residents from ranking the City higher for all of these categories? This list is not intended to be exhaustive, but a summary of the most important issues related to attracting residents/businesses that have either changed since the 2005 Plan or can and should be addressed in the next 10 years.

## Need to Market/Promote City

In order to attract new residents and businesses, the City of Fairmont will need to market and promote itself. "Smithsonian" magazine and other publications annually select America's best small towns using standards based on the type of traveler and the experiences available to visitors and potential new residents. Small towns with cultural attractions, sports activities and historic sites typically score high on the "best" lists, but other features, including relaxed settings, snag top honors. So what are some concepts that the City should consider developing a marketing strategy around?

Figure 5: How would you rate Fairmont in the following categories?



*Responses from the October 2016 public survey (85 responses).*

» Focus on the Outdoors - market and promote what people can DO in Fairmont. Market the experience, not the place.

» Focus on the Arts - advertise the historic architecture, arts, cultural events, etc.

» Business Friendly - market tax incentives, low cost of living, etc.

» Family Friendly - market the schools, parks, playgrounds, events, etc.[1]

The Fairmont/Morgantown Housing Authority (FMHA) and Augusta Development Corporation (ADC) thru it's partnership with Miller School Associates was awarded approximately $6.2 million of Low Income Housing Tax Credits from the West Virginia Housing Development Fund.  The funds will be paired with historic tax credits to adapt and reuse the Miller Junior High School Building in Fairmont into affordable housing for seniors. (photo credit: http://www.fmhousing.com/news_detail_T2_R6.php)

## Loss of Historic Structures

The historic character of Fairmont is one of it's strengths and was identified by residents as one of the most desirable characteristics of the City and an important reason in their decision to live here. While several historic buildings have been renovated for adaptive re-use (the Miller School is an excellent example - see above), there are several structures that are at-risk, particularly in the downtown.

At-risk historic buildings in the City include the Masonic Temple (City-owned), Fire Station (City-owned) and the YMCA (owned by the Fairmont Community Development Partnership).

While preserving historic structures are important to a community in terms of identity and pride, there is also an economic incentive. Studies have shown that historic preservation stimulates private investment, creates jobs (historic preservation is more labor intensive and requires more skilled laborers), saves time (approvals take less time than demolition and new construction) and provides financial incentives (30% historic rehabilitation tax credits on commercial properties and 20% for residences).[1]

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1 http://www.pawv.org/docs/econimpacts.pdf

# Lack of Wayfinding

Wayfinding can be defined "as spatial problem solving. It is knowing where you are in a building or an environment, knowing where your desired location is and knowing how to get there from your present location."[1]

While the Fairmont Gateway Connector is one of the City's biggest assets and offers an attractive gateway entrance to the City. The theme of the Connector (signs, lighting, etc.) should be replicated at other gateway entrances.

Another issue is a lack of directional signage to orient visitors to major attractions and locations within the City. While there are some public signs directing visitors to public parking lots/garages and other key attractions, major employment hubs and destinations lack signage.

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1 http://www.umich.edu/~wayfind/supplements/moreinfomain.htm



*Top photo: existing gateway signage along Fairmont Avenue (US 250). Photo credit: Google Streetview; image capture Sept 2013.*

*Photo to right: lack of entrance signage to the I-79 Technology Park on Fairmont Avenue (US 250). Photo credit: Google Streetview; image capture Sept 2013.*

# And the objectives are...

**A1** **Strengthen Fairmont's identity and sense of place.**

The visioning process has reinforced what is important to people about Fairmont, what type of place it is and what it can become. The City should express this vision in shaping the built environment and finding ways to convey a sense of community pride and excitement.

*And the actions are...*

☑ **Adopt and implement the Downtown Design Guidelines.**

The Downtown Design Guidelines were developed in 2016 to guide new development as well as preserve existing historic buildings within the downtown historic district. First, the City should formally adopt the guidelines. Next steps include:

» Evaluate the guidelines' impact on neighborhood form annually and update as necessary.

» Ensure that all new building owners are aware of the guidelines.

» Consider offering incentives to building owners / developers to implement the guidelines.

» Consider developing similar guidelines for the Fleming-Watson Historic District.

## ☑ **Implement a wayfinding program.**

Wayfinding is not just signage. Architectural clues are also part of it. Implementing a thematic wayfinding program would help to orient visitors that they have "arrived" in Fairmont.  Main Street Fairmont prepared a branding and signage plan in 2009; however it has not been formally adopted.

» Adopt an official signage plan for the City. It should include directional signs, welcome signs and design standards.

» Improve gateway entrances to the City to include the thematic signage and landscaping, modeled after the branding signage below and amenities along the Connector.

*Examples of recommended branding and signage by Main Street Fairmont, as prepared and presented in 2009.*

## ☑ Enhance landscaping along key corridors.

Outside of the Connector and Downtown Fairmont, there are many key corridors in the City that were identified as in need of aesthetic improvements. The City has landscaping requirements in the zoning code that apply to new and re-development projects; however, the City can partner with landowners to plant street trees along key corridors.

» The City should inspire and organize community members to take ownership of beautification, which could step up the appeal of gateways as well as increase the extent to which people feel invested in the City.

» Key corridors include Speedway Avenue, Locust Avenue, Fairmont Avenue, East Park Avenue and Morgantown Avenue.

Street trees provide more than just aesthetic improvement. Additional benefits include traffic calming, increased pedestrian safety, increased security, improved business revenue and home values, natural stormwater management, improved air quality and longer pavement life (http://www.walkable.org/download/22_benefits.pdf).

## Case studies: Street tree planting programs

The **City of Lancaster, PA**, offers an affordable Street Tree Planting Program to all residents and businesses. The program is free of charge except for the cost of the tree. Trees are sold to homeowners at-cost and range between $165 and $230; it includes the labor for installation by the City, which may involve removing concrete, removing a stump, digging the tree pit, and planting the tree. (http://cityoflancasterpa.com/resident/planting)



*Source: http://www.neighborsunitedlancaster.com/news/category/ross-street-umc*



*Source: https://www.columbus.gov/branch-out/*

The City of Columbus Ohio started a **Branch Out Columbus** initiative, with a goal of planting 300,000 trees in the next five years. Residents and businesses can get involved by planting a tree, requesting a street tree, donating a tree, adopting a tree, help organize an event, or talk to a tree ambassador.

## A2 Promote Fairmont and instill a sense of pride amongst residents and businesses.

The work of improving and promoting Fairmont does not fall on City officials and staff alone. Given a stronger sense of what is uniquely Fairmont, the City can attract visitors and potential residents and business owners by articulating a unified marketing pitch for this place.

☑ **Develop a branding and marketing campaign based on Fairmont's most distinctive assets.**

» Utilize social media to promote community events and good things happening in the City. Spotlight new businesses/up and coming entrepreneurs.

» Develop and distribute a promotional pamphlet for realtors and potential residents that highlights the City's assets. Individual brochures can and should be developed to market City-owned properties available for redevelopment.

» Continue coordination with the Convention and Visitors Bureau of Marion County and similar organizations in the region to promote Fairmont both locally and regionally.

» Update the City's website regularly to entice visitors/businesses/residents.

### ☑ Expand the City's Clean Up efforts to a semi-annual basis.

Main Street Fairmont hosts an annual spring clean-up day, in partnership with the "Make Marion County Shine" program. The City should consider expanding the program to offer on a semi-annual basis. Other considerations could involve offering prizes or incentives to landowners who participate.

### ☑ Identify new opportunities to expand public art.

Arts and culture can create an experiential economy in a place — an environment in which rich and unique cultural assets draw people to enjoy and experience a place in a meaningful way, creating an economic impact as well as enhancing quality of life. Fairmont should protect and capitalize on its existing cultural assets and find ways to continue growing its experiential economy.

In addition, public art programs can help provide that sense of place and help local artists and young residents feel vested in their community. The City has an Arts and Humanities Commission, comprised of 11 members appointed by the City Manager. The City should task the Commission with conducting a comprehensive arts survey to create a plan to install public art throughout the Downtown and City. The Commission hosts an annual Arts Week in August; there is potential to partner with Main Street Fairmont, Fairmont State University, the Boys and Girls Club and other organizations to enhance the City through public art.



*Palatine Park now has a mural on the retaining wall, completed by the Boys and Girls Club*

## A3 Ensure that equity and inclusion is a reality for all residents of Fairmont.

Cities that have a vibrant Downtown and arts and culture scene tend to attract diverse residents and in turn, create diverse businesses. The City of Fairmont wants to be sure that it not only does it embrace diversity, but that the City is truly a place where diversity and inclusion is a reality for all of its citizens.

<div style="writing-mode: vertical-rl">And the actions are...</div>

### ☑ Support the efforts of the City of Fairmont Human Rights Commission.

On October 1, 2017, Fairmont celebrated the passage of the Fairmont Human Rights Commission ordinance, which re-established the City's Human Rights Commission in recognition of shared humanity and support for a positive dialogue. The purpose of the Commission is to ensure that the City become a healthier and more inclusive community.

» Encourage and support city staff and elected officials in doing outreach to racially/ethnically diverse communities and attending multiple culturally-specific community events each year.

» Facilitate collaboration between local service providers, culturally specific organizations, and community non-profits to identify and address the community's basic needs for education, training, health care and social services.

## ☑ Ensure that land use policies and decisions are fair and equitable.

» Prioritize street improvements that provide families with safe routes to work, school and recreation, such as mid-block crossings between multi-family housing units and parks, street lighting, sidewalks, bike lanes, etc.

» Prioritize active transportation projects near low-income housing.

» Work with the Transit Authority to ensure that low-income housing neighborhoods are well-served by public transit.

» Ensure that representatives of racial/ethnic communities who use public transit the most are at the table when discussing current and future public transit options.

» Prioritize close proximity to parks and recreation centers in land use decisions and City expansion.

» Ensure that planning in new areas is not car-focused so that new housing options are not limited to the wealthy, but also provide options for low and middle class families.

## ☑ Build strong community relationships and trust through outreach and hosting informational events.

» Expand the presence of police at culturally specific community events.

» Expand arts and library programming for all ages, income levels, and neighborhoods. Focus on historically underserved populations and offer intergenerational opportunities to intentionally engage seniors alongside younger populations.

» Encourage/support workforce development programs and efforts to connect underserved communities with existing job readiness programs (e.g. employment-specific language training, job and interview clothing resources, preparation skills).

# The Differences Between Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

**DIVERSITY** includes all the ways in which people differ, encompassing the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. While diversity is often used in reference to race, ethnicity and gender, it should also embrace a broader definition of diversity that also includes age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language and physical appearance.

**EQUITY** is the fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. Improving equity involves increasing justice and fairness within the procedures and processes of institutions or systems, as well as in their distribution of resources. Tackling equity issues requires an understanding of the root causes of outcome disparities within our society.

**INCLUSION** is the act of creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions for all people. It's important to note that while an inclusive group is by definition diverse, a diverse group isn't always inclusive. Increasingly, recognition of unconscious or 'implicit bias' helps organizations to be deliberate about addressing issues of inclusivity.

## Why Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Matter

The market case states that organizations will better serve their customers if they reflect the diversity of their market base. In the private sector, companies recognize the buying power of minority populations and highlight that diversity is critical to growing market share and bottom line.

The results case is that diverse teams lead to better outputs. Scott Page, author of The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools and Societies, uses mathematical modeling and case studies to show how diversity leads to increased productivity. His research found that diverse groups of problem solvers outperform the groups of the best individuals at solving problems.

*Source: https://www.independentsector.org/resource/why-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-matter/*

# Fairmont Refreshed is...

"an employment hub characterized by high opportunity within a growing and diverse local economy"

# Goal #2:
# Prosperity

The City of Fairmont has a history rooted in the manufacturing and mineral extraction industries. As these industries suffered through down cycles and decline it became clear that the traditional mainstays of the City's economy could no longer sustain the employment or tax base that it once provided. And while the City did not lose hope for the continuation of these industries, it was apparent that diversification of the economy would be vital to the future of Fairmont and that the "new economy" and the venture into the fields of product and service technologies must be the first step in the revitalization of Fairmont.

Successful small towns and cities understand that economic revitalization is not just about recruiting large employers and manufactures in today's world. Rather, it is understanding what makes the town or city unique and playing to its strengths.

An EPA report called "How Small Towns and Cities Can Use Local Assets to Rebuild their Economies: Lessons from Successful Places" identifies the following key strategies:[1]

- **Identify and build on existing assets.**

- **Engage all members of the community to plan for the future.**

- **Take advantage of outside funding.**

- **Create incentives for redevelopment, and encourage investment in the community.**

- **Encourage cooperation within the community and across the region.**

- **Support a clean and healthy environment.**

1 *https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-05/documents/competitive_advantage_051215_508_final.pdf*

# And the assets are...

Fairmont seeks a growing, diverse and sustainable local economy characterized by business and employment opportunities. The City must work with stakeholders to attract new companies and entrepreneurs while supporting the growth of existing businesses. Workforce development efforts should focus on building the skills necessary for the evolving global economy.

The following have been identified as major strengths that contribute to Fairmont's prosperity. Quality of life issues are increasingly important to many innovative businesses and their workforce. A healthy local business environment can provide residents with access to jobs as well as necessary retail and services. The City and other stakeholders should strive to further capitalize on these assets over the next 10 years.

## Location

Fairmont is situated in close proximity to the rapidly growing communities of Morgantown, Bridgeport and Clarksburg. It is approximately two hours from Charleston, WV and Pittsburgh, PA, and under four hours from Washington D.C. The City is within a 500-mile radius of most major metropolitan areas on the east coast.

Fairmont's strategic location in the greater North Central West Virginia region can enhance revitalization efforts. General access and convenient mobility have been identified by the public as strong attributes of the City. Fairmont's is poised to attract new business, residents and tourists alike.

Completed in 2010, the Fairmont Gateway Connector now provides direct access from downtown and the university to I-79. The Connector has spurred economic development near the I-79 interchange. In 2015, Fairmont Federal Credit Union constructed a new 20,000 square foot main facility and a smaller structure nearby.[1] In addition, West Virginia University Medicine broke ground in 2016 for a new clinic, just off I-79 on the Fairmont Gateway Connector. Opened in 2017, the $13.9 million, 25,000-square-foot outpatient center is owned and operated by University Health Associates (UHA).[2]

## Major Institutions

The City of Fairmont is home to several major institutions, which are not only important to communities for the educational and medical services they provide, but are typically the largest employers. Often, these anchor institutions serve as real estate developers and help to encourage and spur economic revitalization and growth.

The 'Ed's and Med's' sector continues to increase its share of local employment. Regional initiatives to develop the high technology sector have resulted in significant Federal and private investment.

» Fairmont State University (FSU) occupies a 120-acre main campus off Locust Avenue and is part of the state's growing high technology corridor. Over the past decade, the main campus has been expanded with new construction including an Engineering Technology Building, student center, residence hall, parking garage, improved library facility and significant ADA accessibility improvements.[3]

» Pierpont Community and Technical College shares a campus with FSU; however, it constructed an Advanced Technology Center (ATC) in the I-79 Technology Park with a goal to deliver the technical training necessary to move West Virginia's economy forward.[4]

» Fairmont Regional Medical Center (formerly known as Fairmont General Hospital) is a community hospital founded in 1939. The hospital employs a staff of over 700 physicians, nurses, and personnel.[5]

» Interstate 79 Technology Park/West Virginia High Technology Consortium Foundation/Alan B. Mollohan Innovation Center is home to over 30 businesses

1 https://www.theet.com/news/local/development-taking-place-along-fairmont-s-gateway-connector/article_29df5e0e-03a7-5f7c-ad4a-a06bc15577a4.html
2 WVU Medicine Website (http://wvumedicine.org/news/article/wvu-medicine-breaks-ground-for-fairmont-clinic/)
3 Fairmont State University Website (https://www.fairmontstate.edu/aboutfsu/)
4 Pierpont Community and Technical College Website (https://www.pierpont.edu/about/quick-facts)
5 Fairmont Regional Medical Center Website (http://www.frmcwv.com/ourhistory/)

with approximately 1,500 employees. These businesses include Computer Sciences Corporation, Electronic Warfare Associates, Inc., First Energy Corp., Lockheed Martin, ManTech International Corporation, Northrop Grumman, TASC, Inc., Time Warner Cable, TRAX International Corporation and the West Virginia United Health System. The I-79 Technology Park is also home to federal programs including the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the FBI.

## Natural Resources

The energy sector is expected to remain a major driver of economic activity in the region. West Virginia's coal production continues to face challenges from market forces and the regulatory environment. Marcellus Shale development has the potential to also support growth in the chemical and manufacturing industries. Alternative fuels, including natural gas, will continue to play a larger role in efforts to reduce petroleum consumption in the transportation sector.

The environment also plays a key role in the tourism and outdoor recreation sectors of the economy. Home to the Monongahela River, the Tygart Valley River and the West Fork River, Fairmont has miles of riverfont property along with a regional trail network, which represent tremendous opportunities for the development of tourism related businesses. Fairmont's recreational assets can be leveraged not only to further enhance quality of life, but as a tool to attract new businesses to the region.

# And the issues are...

Small cities often lag in economic performance and struggle to advance revitalization efforts in the presence of weak market conditions. Despite the presence of significant regional assets, several obstacles limit opportunity and prevent greater prosperity. Major issues include the access to employment opportunities and vacant properties within commercial corridors.

## Access to Capital and Entrepreneurship

Small businesses and new start-ups drive our economy. They not only provide employment opportunities, but also essential products and services to the community.  According to the West Virginia Small Business Development Center, nearly 90 percent of the state's employers have fewer than 20 employees. However, West Virginia faces challenges related to small business development and entrepreneurship.

It is critical to provide access to financial and other resources necessary to support business formation and continued growth.  Analysis by the National Community Reinvestment Coalition found that all counties in West Virginia could be considered small business lending 'deserts' with low access to loans from both the private sector and federally supported lending .  Affordable and flexible financing options are needed to support small businesses in the state.  In addition, the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond in partnership with the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation have also investigated the challenges to credit access and deployment in West Virginia.

The annual Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation Index of Entrepreneurship measures U.S. entrepreneurial activity across national, state and metro levels.  Kauffman's Startup Activity Index focuses specifically on new business creation, market opportunity and startup density.  Within its peer group of the twenty five lower population states, West Virginia ranked 23rd in terms of overall business startup activity.

## Environmental Hazards

While brownfields present an opportunity for redevelopment, the known environmental hazards that have not yet been remediated, or in some instances, unknown potential hazards, may scare away potential developers. The

EPA and DEP are working on addressing the Superfund sites; however, there are other sites that will need to be cleaned up to attract new development.

## Brownfields and Vacant Property

As a 'built-out' city, Fairmont offers no large tracts of greenfield property available for development.  Future growth must be accommodated through the infill of vacant lots and the redevelopment of existing buildings and sites.  Several large former industrial brownfields exist within the City including:

> » Former Owens-Illinois Glass Plant
> » Former Fairmont Coke Works/Sharon Steel Site
> » Portions of the Beltline neighborhood

Downtown and other commercial corridors suffer from an abundance of vacant and underutilized properties.  These buildings and sites present a challenge due to higher cost and complexity of redevelopment efforts, especially when taking into account local market constraints.

## Workforce Development

A skilled workforce is necessary to retain existing businesses and facilitate their growth.  Residents of Fairmont need access to jobs that pay a sustainable 'living wage.'  Employment opportunities can also attract new residents to help stabilize residential neighborhoods and increase the local tax base.  The public has identified job creation as a major issue that impacts quality of life in the City.

Site selection experts continually site the importance of workforce development as a critical locational factor. According to Area Development's 2017 annual Corporate Survey, 47 percent of the respondents noted that the availability of skilled labor is having an effect on new facility and expansion plans . More than half the respondents cited concerns over the lack of basic reading and math competency skills.  A majority also believe workers lack the advanced skills, including critical STEM skills, pertinent to advanced manufacturing industries.

# And the objectives are...

**P1   Target economic development strategies to create high-profile, catalytic development and redevelopment undertakings that advance the City's vision.**

Given resource limitations, the City can leverage the biggest bang for its buck by focusing economic development interventions in targeted areas where they are most likely to inspire related private investment. The City can collaborate with property owners, community groups and other stakeholders to create new public attractions and spur investment in real estate development that will expand economic opportunity.

Priority re-development sites have been identified that provide significant opportunity to further the ability of the City to be a large-scale employer as well as revitalize under-served areas. These sites are included on pages 76-78 of this report.

## ☑ Continue to develop the Sharon Steel Corp (Fairmont Coke Works Site).

The Sharon Steel Corp (Fairmont Coke Works) is a Superfund site; approximately 97 acres in total, 64 of which were used for coke plant operations, waste treatment and waste disposal. The remaining 33 acres is a wooded hillside that descends to the Monongahela River. The United States Department of Environmental Protection (EPA) designated it as a Superfund site in 1996 in order to make it eligible for federal funding to remediate the site. The Fairmont Coke Works Site Custodial Trust (FCT) owns the site and the State of West Virginia is the Trustee. In December 2017, the EPA released the record of decision for the Sharon Steel/Fairmont Coke Works Superfund Site. The report states that to mitigate any future health risks, the EPA will construct a limestone trench/permeable reactive barrier to protect water quality, wetland remediation and continue long-term monitoring of the groundwater. Residential uses and extraction of groundwater as a potable water source will continue to prohibited.[1] Zoned Highway Commercial, a variety of commercial/civic uses are permitted, with the West Virginia State Police Troop 1 Headquarters and the Fairmont Armed Forces Reserve Center currently located on the site. The remainder of the 62 developable acres are well suited for commercial and industrial redevelopment.

Big John's Salvage Superfund Site is adjacent to the western boundary of the Sharon Steel site. This site covers 38 acres, approximately 20 of which were used for coal tar refining, salvage operations, and waste disposal (Uplands Areas). The remaining 18 acres include a low lying drainage area that discharges to the Monongahela River. In 2000, the site was formally added to the EPA's National Priority List, making it eligible for federal cleanup funds. Remaining clean up activities include the construction of a multi-layered landfill cap to contain contaminated soil and sediments.[2]

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1 *EPA Superfund Site: Fairmont Coke Works (https://cumulis.epa.gov/supercpad/cursites/csitinfo.cfm?id=0302883)*
2 *EPA Superfund Site: Big John's Salvage (https://cumulis.epa.gov/supercpad/cursites/csitinfo.cfm?id=0302947)*

## ☑ Develop the Speedway Business Park (former Owens-Illinois Site).

The former Owens-Illinois Glass Co. Plant No. 3 is a 26-acre brownfield located between Morgantown Avenue and Speedway Avenue. Originally operated as a glass plant from 1912 to 1983, the site has been abandoned since 2002 by Clean Metal LLC. In 2008, an environmental investigation of the site by the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) found that soil and groundwater showed contamination but was not in need of immediate cleanup.

Merrit Development Inc. currently owns the site and submitted a Voluntary Remediation Program application to the DEP.[1] Merrit is currently working with the City on a master site plan for the proposed Speedway Business Park. The site is a participant in the Council of Development Finance Agencies (CDFA) Brownfields Technical Assistance Program. Funded by a grant from the EPA, the program offers assistance to communities throughout the country that are looking to finance the redevelopment of brownfield sites. The program also provides on-site technical assistance from a team of finance and technical experts and CDFA staff. In September 2017, the CDFA Project Response Team visited Fairmont to review the proposed redevelopment and recommend financing strategies.

As the City works with Merrit on a master site plan, it is recommended that the plan include a road network that will integrate the site into the surrounding neighborhoods, pedestrian and bicycle connections and green infrastructure that may include daylighting the underground stream. The City has a great opportunity to work with the developer to ensure that the site benefits the surrounding neighborhoods and the City as a whole.

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1 *Times West Virginian Article August 4, 2015 (http://www.timeswv.com/news/remediation-effort-set-for-former-site-of-owens-illinois-plant/article_e4b10bfa-3a60-11e5-b6ab-53509f03aa6b.html)*

## ☑ Acquire property to redevelop the Beltline Area.

The Beltline Area of the City can be generally described as the 25-block area between Fairmont Avenue on the west side, 6th street on the north side, the Monongahela River on the east and the south side. The existing land use continues to be a mix of commercial (mostly along Fairmont Avenue), industrial (mostly between Minor Avenue and the River), residential (Virgina Ave and Gaston Ave) and Institutional (in addition to East-West Stadium and the 12th Street Pool, the Board of Education also has a bus garage here and the City constructed a new Public Works building here within the last two years).

The redevelopment of the Beltline Area has been discussed for years; however, past planning efforts have fallen short of realizing significant improvement to this area. The most recent planning effort culminated with recommendations for a new County Park, which was proposed to encompass the area east of Minor Avenue, from 14th Street to 11th Street.

One of the biggest obstacles to implementing any of the planning efforts is a lack of site control - the majority of the property is privately-owned. In order to redevelop this area as either recreational or residential, the City should work with property owners to determine their willingness to re-locate (in the case of the industry, perhaps to one of the previously-mentioned brownfields) and create a site large enough to attract potential developers.

☑ **Compile and promote an online catalog of available land, building or development site opportunities.**

Beyond those detailed previously, there are a number of other sites and buildings that are available for development.  An opportunity exists to expand the I-79 Technology Park for example. The City should partner with appropriate organizations to ensure that the information related to the status of these sites/buildings is readily available to potential developers and businesses, such as the following information:

> » Status of environmental clean-up
>
> » Acreage / square footage available
>
> » Zoning regulations
>
> » Development incentives available

☑ **Promote incentives and other funding opportunities.**

Fairmont's targeted redevelopment strategy actually commenced with the approval of the City's Redevelopment District No. 1 in 2015.  The City proposed an overlapping tax increment financing (TIF) district to provide financial assistance for various projects, including investments in the aforementioned priority development areas.  Enabled by Amendment One to the West Virginia Constitution and West Virginia TIF Act, this economic development financing program allows for the capture of increases in real property taxes resulting from new development to pay for public improvements like necessary infrastructure.  TIF can be a powerful tool to remediate blight, attract private investment and create jobs.

The City should actively partner with developers and businesses to better utilize the TIF program and facilitate redevelopment opportunities within the district. Further, additional state, federal and foundation funding sources may be available for priority projects. The City and other local stakeholders need to further enhance relationships with various potential funding sources.

☑ **Continue to promote local policies, procedures and plans that create a welcoming business environment.**

Local regulations and plans are one of the few ways the City can directly enhance the business environment. These public policies often represent a patchwork of items adopted or enacted over the years absent (or potentially inconsistent with) a unifying aim or strategy. Unfortunately, they can work at cross-purposes, imposing requirements or restrictions that can ultimately impede community goals. In order to fully implement the Comprehensive Plan, the City should undertake a review of its policies and ordinances to identify and address any such barriers. This could involve focus groups or interviews with developers, business owners and other stakeholders who would have perspective on the practical implications of regulations.

» Compare Fairmont's code requirements and tax burden for businesses to surrounding areas to identify and mitigate barriers to growth.

› Convene gatherings to raise awareness about business owner needs and city resources.

» Ensure priority development projects incorporate sound planning principles. By negotiating with developers, the City can ensure that the public realm benefits from private investment by incorporating sound and sustainable planning principles, such as:

› Green infrastructure, such as bioswales, rain gardens and permeable pavers.

› Connectivity to local neighborhoods, including adding through-streets to connect to the local street grid and pedestrian and bicycle trails.

› Incorporating the downtown design guidelines, where appropriate, to ensure that new development takes the history of the site and character of the surrounding neighborhood into account.

## Fairmont Development Review Committee (DRC)

The City of Fairmont established a Design Review Committee that is comprised of the Planning Director, City Engineer and representatives from building services, fire services, police services, transportation and streets and stormwater. The DRC meets on a weekly basis as needed to review and approve all site plans and subdivisions in the City. In addition, applicants may submit pre-applications to the DRC and attend a meeting to obtain preliminary feedback regarding a potential development proposal prior to a formal submission. The City also offers a Development Review Guidebook (available online at https://www.fairmontwv.gov/DocumentCenter/Home/View/1330) that provides potential applicants with a step-by-step guide to the development review process, including site plans, conditional uses, subdivisions, rezoning requests, building permits and historic preservation. All application forms are also available in the guidebook and on the City's website.

## P2 Partner with local and regional institutional initiatives to retool the work force, attract and prepare for growing industries.

Sustaining long-term prosperity for the City will require ensuring that its residents have access to jobs. The local labor market must adapt to changing industry forces, which might require access to specialized training or counseling. The City can attract more employers by boasting a qualified and prepared work force by fostering collaboration.

> » The most popular majors at Fairmont State University include: Civil Engineering Technology/ Technician, Criminal Justice/Safety Studies, Education, General, Registered Nursing/ Registered Nurse and General Studies.

> » Pierpont's Top 5 Graduate-producing Associate Degrees: Food Service Management, Early Childhood, Para-Education, Liberal Studies, Physical Therapist Assistant.

> » Pierpont's Top 4 Graduate-producing Certificate of Applied Science Degrees: Lab Assistant, Emergency Medical Services, Power Plant, Licensed Practical Nurse.

### ☑ Create a University District surrounding FSU, Pierpont and the Hospital to market to and support educational and medical related businesses.

In October 2017, Downtown Appalachia (a Benedum Foundation funded program of the Northern WV Brownfields Assistance Center) organized a University District Developers' Tour. The purpose of the tour was to jump start the process of making Fairmont a college town, rather than a town with a college.

The City should consider expanding the concept of the University District to also include Fairmont General Hospital, and seek to support the growth of education and medical related businesses in the area. The City can possibly encourage these institutions to offer employees low-interest loans to locate within the area to support neighborhood stabilization. Further, developers can be recruited to construct new housing and rehabilitate substandard structures.

*And the actions are...*

## P3  Encourage and facilitate entrepreneurship.

Dictionary.com defines an entrepreneur as "a person who organizes and manages any enterprise, especially a business, usually with considerable initiative and risk." Communities across the country are looking to reduce their economic dependency on larger industries, and instead pursue revitalization through locally-grown small businesses. The City should collaborate with stakeholders including the Small Business Development Center, Chamber of Commerce, Main Street Fairmont and local educational institutions to promote entrepreneurship.

### ☑ Create a guide to starting a business in Fairmont.

Potential start-ups often view ordinances and regulations as a hindrance to doing business in the City. To make it easier for prospective businesses, the City should create a "how-to" guide to starting a local business. It should include an overview of financial and other resources necessary to fully develop their business plans.

- » Provide an overview of the processes, permitting/regulations and available local technical/financial resources.
- » Promote a business friendly environment, quality of life and cost of living.
- » Publicize programs such as One Million Cups, Business After Hours and Start-up Drinks to help entrepreneurs network.
- » Publicize/market the public services (i.e. police, fire, stormwater) that businesses who locate in the City are receiving for their tax dollars.

### ☑ Identify potential markets and existing gaps in services and/or resources available to meet those needs.

- » Create a community buy local/buy diverse campaign that promotes local, racially/ethnically diverse small businesses.
- » Promote opportunities in the local tourism and outdoor recreation industries.
- » Continue to promote efforts to encourage entrepreneurism by Main Street Fairmont and Marion County Chamber of Commerce.
- » Work with Fairmont State University and/or Pierpont Community and Technical College to offer business development classes or semi-annual workshops to provide technical assistance.

**And the actions are...**

☑ **Facilitate the development of co-working and maker spaces.**

The City should foster community support for the collective economy and "maker movement." Vacant buildings, especially Downtown, can be redeveloped to provide flexible and inexpensive workspace. Shared access to capital-intensive equipment can enable the growth of small scale manufacturers.

Co-working spaces can be started as a commercial venture by individuals or created and run by the local government or nonprofits. Typically, co-working spaces use a membership model to fund the space, with monthly or drop-in memberships available. Required elements include open working areas with desks/tables/chairs; power outlets; strong wifi; and common spaces such as a conference room.

Another option is to encourage the creation of a makerspace, perhaps through a partnership with the Fairmont Library, local high schools, FSU/Pierpont or other local organizations. Makerspaces differ in that they provide the tools necessary for people to actually create things.

## What is makerspace?

A makerspace is a collaborative work space inside a school, library or separate public/private facility for making, learning, exploring and sharing that uses high tech to no tech tools.  These spaces are open to kids, adults, and entrepreneurs and have a variety of maker equipment including (but not required) 3D printers, laser cutters, cnc machines, soldering irons and even sewing machines.

These spaces are also helping to prepare those who need the critical 21st century skills in the fields of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).  They provide hands on learning, help with critical thinking skills and even boost self-confidence. Makerspaces are also fostering entrepreneurship and are being utilized as incubators and accelerators for business startups.

*Source: https://www.makerspaces.com/what-is-a-makerspace/*

# Fairmont Refreshed is...

"a thriving Downtown business district with a vibrant arts and culture scene"

# Goal #3:
# Vitality

"the power to live or grow"

— *dictionary.com*

Fairmont once enjoyed a thriving downtown anchored by a strong retail base and surrounded by densely populated neighborhoods. The commercial and industrial base of the city was strong on the east and west sides of the Monongahela River as the river itself and other key infrastructure provided the means for the exchange and production of goods and services.

Things took a turn in the 1960s, when the interstate highway system was completed, providing people unlimited access to find work and go shopping, located outside of the town in which they lived. Malls and highway-driven commercial corridors, with big box retailers, began popping up everywhere. The Middle Town Mall opened in 1971. And finally, the driving force behind many small towns, industry and natural resources (i.e. coal, steel and similar industries) either shrunk or disappeared altogether.

So what now? In the 2010's, people started seeing a return to small towns. Milennials in particular are showing an interest in living within three miles of where they work and are looking for walkable cities and towns. The City of Fairmont needs to build upon its unique assets to bring vitality back to the Downtown and re-create a thriving business district. The City will need to look towards developing a marketing plan that focuses creating economic development as a result of arts and culture and outdoor recreation and trails to drive the re-investment. The goal is to sell the experience of Fairmont.

# And the assets are...

Successful downtowns are destinations to live, work, shop and invest. Fairmont seeks a thriving downtown that offers shopping opportunities, entertainment and a vibrant arts and culture scene. The City must work with stakeholders to redevelop key historic properties and underutilized sites for a mix of uses. Investment is necessary to improve circulation, connectivity and walkability. Institutional anchors and new businesses can attract people back to Main Street.

Downtown is the civic, commercial and cultural heart of Fairmont and Marion County. A strong, 'healthy' urban core greatly contributes to the region's overall quality of life. The following assets enhance downtown Fairmont's vitality. These strengths should be further leveraged over the next 10 years to facilitate downtown revitalization efforts.

## Historic Building Stock

Completion of the Fairmont Gateway Connector greatly enhanced access to the downtown Central Business District from I-79. The value of preservation is well recognized in Fairmont, and the historic character of the City has been cited by the public as a unique advantage. The City established the Fairmont Historic

Preservation Review Commission (HPRC) to oversee the Downtown Historic District.

The City seeks to facilitate reinvestment in the urban core. Reuse of historic structures can offer Downtown residential development; increasing foot traffic and market demand for goods and services. It also provides an opportunity to create flexible workspaces that attract entrepreneurs and innovation in partnership with local institutions.

## Riverfront and Trails

The Monongahela River and West Fork River Trail are recognized community assets and have the potential to generate significant economic development. Outdoor recreation activities provided by the river and trails can support downtown revitalization through increased tourism. A strategy has been developed to extend the trail network via the Connectivity Plan, the City is actively working to implement that plan. Additional goals include to improve access to the riverfront and provide direct connections from these assets to downtown Fairmont. Maps, wayfinding signage and other promotional materials can further draw trail users into the commercial district.

## College Town

Fairmont has the long-standing reputation of a 'town with a college' instead of a 'college town.' Efforts are being advanced to address the

historic disconnect between FSU and the City. New facilities, including dormitories, research centers and space for retail and services, are necessary to accommodate continued growth of the university. An opportunity exists for creative economic development strategies that further leverage the economic impact of students, faculty and staff.

Replacement of the Fourth Street Bridge will relieve traffic congestion and greatly improve access to university facilities. The new bridge will provide direct connection to Locust Avenue from the David C. Morgan Bridge at Third Street. Stakeholders seek to develop a comprehensive revitalization strategy along the Locust Avenue corridor in an effort to create a mixed-use University District connecting to downtown.

# And the issues are...

As stated previously, sprawling commercial development along highways and in suburban areas has greatly impacted historic commercial districts in cities like Fairmont.  Like many smaller rural cities, the demand for office space continues to decline.  Downtown must rely on increased neighborhood population and/or regular visitors to sustain local businesses. Both new residents and tourists alike seek access to retail, entertainment/recreation and arts/culture.

Despite the advantages detailed above, Fairmont has little commercial activity downtown or along neighborhood commercial corridors.  Decades of disinvestment has resulted in significant blight and vacancy. The majority of survey respondents believe that Downtown Fairmont is staying the same or will continue to decline.  Major issues include the access to goods, services and amenities and a poor pedestrian environment.

## Physical Blight

Job losses have fueled a continual population decline in Fairmont. Competition from suburban shopping and entertainment centers has greatly impacted downtown and other commercial corridors. Too often, residents must travel beyond the City limits to access goods and services. The resulting abundance of blighted and underutilized properties continues the cycle of decline. Existing demand can only support a small portion of current vacant space. Although weak market conditions complicate revitalization efforts, these sites and buildings represent a tremendous opportunity for historic preservation, in-fill and redevelopment.

## Lack of Downtown Attractions

Although almost 40 percent of survey respondents believe the arts and culture scene is improving, many also noted that the lack of activities is one of the top 3 most important issues facing the city. Art and cultural assets greatly enhance quality of life. Their development spurs economic activity that results in employment opportunities, expansion of the local tax base and blight remediation. Many small cities and towns have turned to the 'creative economy' as a source of new economic development. A concentration of arts and culture can serve as the anchor to attract residents, visitors and new business to Downtown Fairmont. Further, exciting entertainment destinations, such as microbreweries, can further stimulate revitalization efforts.

## Connectivity and Walkability

One of the issues that residents identified repeatedly during the planning process was the overall lack of connectivity within the City and its neighborhoods. In particular, the downtown is not overly inviting from a pedestrian or cycling standpoint; there is a lack of adequate crosswalks and bike infrastructure.

## Drug Activity and Homelessness

The opioid crisis is killing nearly one hundred people per day in the United States and West Virginia has been hit the hardest, with a record 880 people dying of overdose in 2016.[1] Although the crisis has not affected Fairmont to the extent of other areas in the state, drug activity is an issue facing the City. In addition, the City is faced with a significant homeless population.

1 https://qz.com/1089723/the-opioid-crisis-is-so-bad-west-virginia-has-spent-nearly-1-million-on-transporting-corpses/

# And the objectives are...

## V1 Cultivate a safe, busy and functional 24-hour mixed-use environment.

Older buildings offer a sense of history and identity.  Further, the preservation and recycling of these buildings contributes to the City's overall environmental sustainability.  Much of Fairmont's historic urban core remains intact, but suffers from a lack of regular activity.

Despite weak market conditions, the City can work to address blight and recruit new businesses by leveraging existing assets.  Attracting new residents Downtown can provide the demand necessary to support local businesses.  Vacant spaces can be filled with retail and services that accommodate the local University population as well.  Outdoor recreation opportunities presented by the river and local trail network can also generate visitors Downtown.  Several significant opportunities exist downtown including:

» Masonic Temple (City)

» Fire Station (City)

» YMCA (Partnership)

» City Center (private)

» Deveny Building (private)

» Cook Hospital (private)

» Quarter Round property (private)

» Former Pitrolo Market property (City)

How  do we return Downtown to a place where retail and services are supported by office and residential uses in an inviting, safe and walkable environment? How can Downtown become a more complete, family-friendly place? Layering in mixed land uses, public amenities and infrastructure at a variety of scales can serve this purpose.

# High Priority Vacant Historic Buildings Available for Redevelopment

☑ **Facilitate the redevelopment of key historic properties for multi-family residential and creative ground floor uses.**

People across the country have increasingly come to value historic structures and unique commercial districts. Communities have realized that reuse and preservation are at the core of successful downtown revitalization strategies. The City should work to identify and mitigate any potential regulatory barriers to upper-story residential use. Projects should be required to include active 1st floor uses at the street-level. Further, stakeholders can identify suitable vacant spaces that can be made available for creative use, even if they only exist on a temporary "pop-up" basis. Additionally it is recommended the City:

> » Determine the feasibility, including potential benefits, of creating a landbank to hold vacant properties and assemble larger parcels for redevelopment.

> » Assist developers and businesses with reviewing potential funding opportunities and obtaining necessary financial assistance.

> » Renew the façade improvement program previously offered by Main Street Fairmont.

☑ **Actively recruit downtown anchor businesses and attractions.**

Successful downtowns have multiple attractions that generate traffic and create activity. These anchors in turn support the growth of additional small retail and service businesses. The City should partner with Main Street Fairmont and the Chamber of Commerce to actively recruit and promote business opportunities related to tourism and outdoor recreation. Investment in arts and culture can also draw visitors to Downtown.

> » Develop a Downtown Business Attraction and Marketing Strategy.

> » Continue to host public events Downtown to attract new visitors, promote recreation and showcase local businesses. Evaluate the feasibility of Open Streets or other public events Downtown to attract new visitors, promote recreation and showcase local businesses.

> » Work to increase access to arts and culture.

> » The City should engage stakeholders in an effort to create diverse new art spaces, galleries, museums and performance events.

> » Conduct a feasibility analysis to potentially court a boutique hotel/conference center downtown.

☑ **Identify suitable vacant buildings that could be made available to artists for creative or studio space, at least initially on a pop-up basis.**

While the long-term goal is to fill the vacant buildings downtown, these same buildings can be utilized as temporary homes for artists and start-up businesses. Neighborhood groups, artists and local business groups can turn empty commercial spaces into canvases and economic catalysts. Examples include:

» Project Pop Up hosted an array of displays and shops in abandoned Pittsburgh Storefronts (some of which have become permanent tenants)

» Chashama and SmartSpaces in New York

The City should work with the property owners of vacant buildings to determine the feasibility of a similar effort.

**This Building is Not Empty.
It is FULL of Potential**

For More Info, Contact the Realtor or Main Street Fairmont

ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING
MAIN STREET FAIRMONT
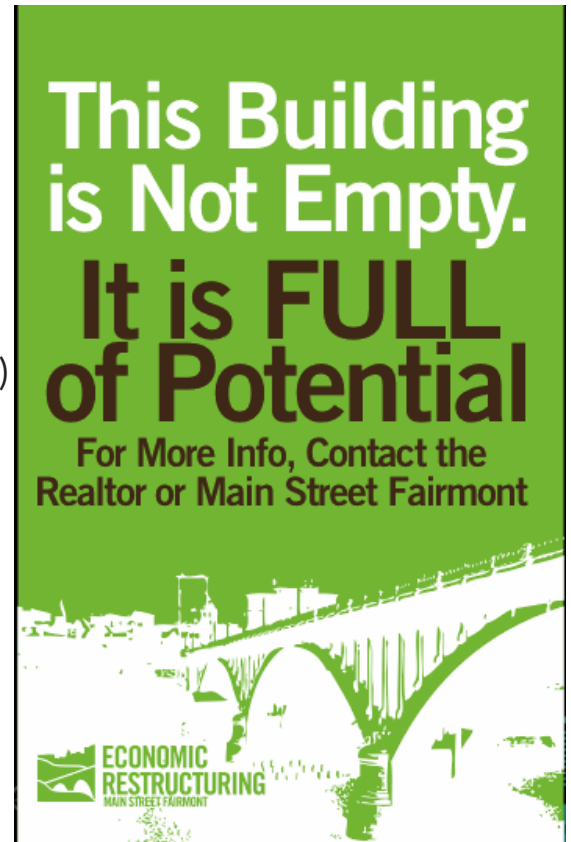
☑ **Establish a center for the performing arts.**

Another concept to bring vitality back to Downtown Fairmont is the creation of a performing arts center, in partnership with Fairmont State University. This would allow the University and City to host cultural and performing art events and theater productions, as well as special events throughout the year. Other potential opportunities for the center can include a dance studio, costume shop, scene shop, art studios, integrative arts and visual arts computer lab, art gallery and conference rooms.

# V2 Reinforce Downtown as Fairmont's central gathering place.

Physical design should create a consistent and coherent framework to support local goals —to foster a thriving local economy, to become a safe and friendly place for families, to respect the past while preparing for what the future may bring.

## ☑ Renew the façade improvement program.

Main Street Fairmont used to offer a facade improvement program; however, it was discontinued due to lack of funding. The City needs to partner with Main Street Fairmont to find funding to renew the program. One option could be to form a business improvement district - see page 98 for more information.

## Case Study: The City of Wheeling's Facade Improvement Program

The City of Wheeling's Façade Improvement Program (FIP) provides financial and technical design assistance for qualified façade improvements to privately owned commercial buildings within the Central Wheeling Business District. The purpose of the FIP is to support the revitalization of the City's Downtown business district by stimulating private investment in high-quality improvements that enhance the appearance of buildings and properties and eliminate blight and non-conforming design standards.

The FIP provides a one-time reimbursement, up to $15,000 per property. Eligible improvements include exterior building improvements (cosmetic and/or structural), signage, and roof repairs or replacement. Examples include, but are not limited to: exterior painting or surface treatment, decorative awnings, window and/or door replacements or modifications, storefront enhancements, streetscape, outdoor patios and decks, and architectural features.

*Source: City of Wheeling website (http://www.wheelingwv.gov/forresidents.php?id=2314)*

## ☑ Develop a Downtown streetscape and beautification plan.

A primary task of all building, site and landscape design in urban areas is to define streets and public spaces as places of shared use. Physical design should create a consistent and coherent framework to support local goals —to foster a thriving local economy, to become a safe and friendly place for families to grow and play, to respect the past while preparing for what the future may bring. This can be achieved in the details: adequate lighting, seating, shade and features of visual interest in facades lining the sidewalk create an inviting environment for pedestrians.

☑ **Create a permanent structure for the Farmers Market.**

The establishment of a permanent structure for the Fairmont Farmers Market has been discussed for many years. Currently, the Farmers Market is held at Veteran's Square Plaza, but without an overhead structure, is weather-dependent.

One of the sites that has been identified as an opportunity to construct an all-weather structure to house the Farmers Market is the 100 block of Adams Street, located between the Library and the Chamber of Commerce. This site is owned by the City and is currently undeveloped. A conceptual rendering of how the site could be developed is included on page 97.





100 Block of Adams Street - potential site for a permanent Farmers Market

# Conceptual Rendering: Opportunity to Construct a Permanent Farmer's Market



FOOD TRUCK/ ADDITIONAL VENDOR PARKING

18.00'

VEHICULAR CART PATH (GRASS PAVER OR ASPHALT SURFACE)

VENDOR PARKING WITH CONCRETE OR ASPHALT BASE (9 SPACES)

PAVILION WITH CONCRETE BASE (55' x 135')

12.00'

VEHICULAR CART PATH (GRASS PAVER OR ASPHALT SURFACE)

RESTROOMS (24' x 24')

PICNIC SEATING

CONCESSIONS (13' x 29')

OVERHANG

PERGOLA

GREEN SPACE

CAFE SEATING

ADAMS STREET

FAIRMONT, WV COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE
200 JACKSON STREET
FAIRMONT, WV 26555-1428
OWNER
CITY OF FAIRMONT
200 JACKSON STREET
FAIRMONT, WV 26555-1428

Mackin
Consulting Engineers Since 1960
RIDC Park West
117 Industry Drive Pittsburgh, PA 15275

### ☑ **Form a Business Improvement District.**

The West Virginia Code authorizes the creation of a business improvement district (BID). The purpose of a BID under Article 13A is to "promote the vitality of commercial business areas within municipalities, while serving as an effective means for restoring and promoting commercial and other business activity within the business improvement districts created herein." The only city in West Virginia with an approved BID is Morgantown, although the City of Charleston's Strategic Urban Renewal Plan recommends one. A BID may provide any of the following (but not limited to) services:

» Beautification of the district, by means such as landscaping and construction and erection of fountains, shelters, benches, sculptures, signs, lighting, decorations and similar amenities;

» Provision of public services, security and public facilities (i.e. sidewalks and public areas);

» Making payments on bonds issued by the municipality for public improvements located within and designated to improve the economic viability of the district;

» Providing financial support for public transportation and vehicle parking facilities;

» Constructing, operating and maintaining parking facilities;

» Developing plans for the design of public areas and future development of the district;

» Developing, promoting and supporting community events and activities; and

» Providing the administrative costs for a district management program.

The BID shall be overseen by a district board of at least seven members, the majority of which shall be owners of commercial property within that district. The board is tasked with developing a recommended program of services with a proposed budget and submits the annual report to the governing body, who may then levy business improvement service fees (only applicable to properties located within the district).[1]

1 West Virginia Code (http://www.legis.state.wv.us/mobile/article.cfm?chap=08&art=13A)

### ☑ **Implement a strategy focused on arts, culture and outdoor recreation.**

Downtown Fairmont should be a destination for visitors looking to experience arts, culture and outdoor recreation and capitalized on as an economic development strategy.

» Connect Fairmont to the regional trail network and become a trail town (see page 99).

» Continue to host public events Downtown to attract new visitors, promote recreation and showcase local businesses.

» Enhance the physical connections from Downtown to adjacent neighborhoods, recreational assets and institutional anchors to provide additional market demand.

# Trails Transform Local Economies: Opportunity for Fairmont to Become a Trail Town

What is a "Trail Town?" The simplest answer is that it is a community located along a trail that seeks to connect to and benefit from local trails. Benefits can range from a bolstered local economy to an increase in community pride and improved health and wellness. The concept is to position communities as visitor destinations and drive individualized business attraction strategies to fill service gaps with businesses with the greatest chance of growth and sustainability.

Fairmont is poised to become a trail town along the 238-mile Parkersburg to Pittsburgh (P2P) rail-trail, which is nearly 80 percent complete. Fairmont itself represents one of just a few short gaps within the West Virginia portion to unlock a contiguous 150-miles-plus stretch of the rail-trail from Parkersburg to the state's border with Pennsylvania. Completing these gaps will have a transformative impact on West Virginia's economy, drawing some of the 800,000 hikers and bicyclists who visit the Great Allegheny Passage (GAP) each year into the state, along with a share of the more than $40 million they spend annually in communities along the trail.

New rail-trail networks have been proven to revitalize communities, spark new local business opportunities, and attract and retain residents. They are powerful assets that will make local cities and towns better places to live, work and do business.

The City of Fairmont can begin to capitalize upon that impact, starting at Palatine Park. Beautifully situated along the East bank of the Monongahela River in the downtown area, Palatine Park provides the perfect place for peaceful walks and access to the river for boating and other water sports. Offering a boat launch ramp with courtesy dock, splash park, concert pavilion / band stand, Palatine Park is home to Arts in the Park and outdoor concert series.

But the continued development of the area surrounding the park offers many more, economic opportunities. Connected to the pedestrian and bike trail along the Connector and with plans to connect to the rail-trails in the City, this area can become an economic hub, catering to river and trail users.

*Source: "Connecting Parkersburg to Pittsburgh by Rail-Trail: Bringing a world-class trail network to West Virginia. A Rail-Trail Feasibility Study of the Industrial Heartland Trails Coalition's Parkersburg to Pittsburgh Corridor." Published April 24, 2018.*



*Omni Architects provided the City with a rendering of a building on site that could house canoe/kayak rentals and restaurants.*

# V3 Ensure that downtown is a safe and welcoming environment.

While the above objectives are aimed at improving the economics and appearance of Downtown Fairmont, one important aspect that is vital to address is the feeling of safety within the Downtown. Threats to the perceived safety of Downtown include illicit drug activity and the heavy presence of homeless people on the streets during the day.

## ☑ Provide a more visible police presence.

One method to increase the visibility of the police presence Downtown that was discussed with City Police includes bringing back foot patrols. Some benefits of doing so include:

» Improves the relationship between the Police Department and the local residents / businesses.

» Officers' understanding of the neighborhoods they patrol increases.

» Agencies can reduce citizen complaints and frivolous lawsuits due to increased trust.[1]

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1 https://www.policeone.com/community-policing/articles/225497006-Police-foot-patrols-3-pluses-and-3-pitfalls/

## ☑ Continue to partner with social services and local businesses to address the homeless problem.

The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty is a national organization dedicated to using the power of the law to end and prevent homelessness. The NLC is a great resource for local governments to address homelessness in their communities.[1] Possibilities include:

» Continue to work with the City Police Department to ensure that police officers work collaboratively with mental health professionals, housing advocates and other strategic partners to offer service options to homeless individuals that they encounter.

» Provide funding assistance for a day shelter to provide a place for the homeless to go during the day.

» Provide support for programs that provide employment options for the homeless and unemployed and/or professional services, such as free legal services.

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1 National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty. "Housing Not Handcuffs: Ending the criminalization of Homelessness in U.S. Cities. https://www.nlchp.org/documents/Housing-Not-Handcuffs

☑ **Continue to partner with the hospital, schools and public safety (police, EMS) to provide educational outreach programs regarding drugs and support services.**

The opioid crisis is far-reaching and will take more than local government to address. However, the City needs to be an active partner in combating this crisis and support any efforts that the local hospital, school districts, social services and/or public safety services are offering.

## Case Study: Drug Free Anaheim

Under Mayor Tom Tait's City of Kindness initiative, Social Model Recovery Systems, in partnership with the City of Anaheim and the Anaheim Police Department, have sought a collaboration where community members seeking help for addiction can walk into the police station and voluntarily ask for, and receive, treatment. The program's purpose is to connect drug users with treatment options as a potential alternative to arrest and prosecution.

Participants can enter the program by asking for help at the front desk of the police station and can submit small, personal amounts of drugs and paraphernalia directly to the department for destruction and will not be asked where the drugs were possessed or obtained and will not be arrested or charged with a crime. The participant's identification is also kept confidential.

The program was modeled after an Angel program in Gloucester, Massachusetts in 2015. As of June 2016, drug-related crime in Gloucester was down 27% from the year before and fatal opioid overdoses were down from five to one a year earlier.

*Source: City of Anaheim website*
*(http://www.anaheim.net/DocumentCenter/*
*View/16683)*

# Fairmont Refreshed is...

"a community of safe neighborhoods that feature high-quality housing and parks"

# Goal #4:
## Neighborhoods

A great city offers a variety of neighborhoods that are suitable to different lifestyles and life phases - neighborhoods that meet the needs of young professionals, families as well as older, retired residents. What makes a neighborhood great? A Forbes article[1] identified 12 components that are common to all great neighborhoods:

1. Pride in ownership - whether renters or owners, property maintenance is important.

2. Low crime rate - safety and security are important; transitional and improving neighborhoods are reflective of associated crime rates.

3. Great schools - families with young children often choose an area based on schools. Great schools keep property values high and attractive to people of all ages.

4. Outdoor activities - accessible parks and recreation, whether public or private, make neighborhoods more appealing.

5. Tree-lined streets - street trees give a feeling of older, established neighborhoods with charm and stability that is associated with safety and low crime rates.

6. Access to medical care - especially important to older residents and families with young children, easy access to quality healthcare is important.

7. Public transportation - easy access to public transportation is particularly attractive to commuting millennials and retirees.

8. Nearby shopping and restaurants - whether within walking distance or a short commute away, people want to live close to retail, restaurants, nightlife and entertainment.

9. Walkability - people choose to live in cities and towns for their walkability.

1 https://www.forbes.com/sites/trulia/2014/11/29/12-things-that-make-a-neighborhood-truly-great/

# And the assets are...

When looking at what assets Fairmont's neighborhoods offer that make them attractive, several things come to mind: low cost of living / affordable housing; good school district; historic neighborhoods; City and County parks; and the housing organizations that operate in the City to provide not only housing construction, but programs to serve the residents.

## Cost of Living / Affordable Housing

Cost of purchasing a home or renting an apartment was the number one factor for why people live in Fairmont, according to the 2016 public survey (90 responses).

According to Zillow, Inc., the median list price per square foot in Fairmont was $88, compared to $92 in the Fairmont Metro area, in September 0f 2017. The median price of homes currently listed in Fairmont is $129,900, compared to $249,950 in the Bridgeport area and $179 - 259,000 in the Morgantown area.[1]

In addition, the Zillow Rent Index for all homes in Fairmont was $847/month in September of 2017, down from previous years but still lower than that of the Fairmont Metro average of $851.

1 Zillow: www.zillow.com/fairmont-wv/home-values/

## Historic Neighborhoods

The Fleming-Watson National Register Historic District comprises 365 buildings and one structure of architecture significance. It is in two irregular sections separated by a ravine, approximately bounded by Fairmont Avenue, Second and Fay Streets, Apple Crescent, Green and Emerson Streets, Coleman Avenue, Ninth Street and Outlook.

## Quality Schools

*Schooldigger* calculates school rankings based on WV Assessment Mathematics, WV Assessment English Language Arts, WV Assessment Science test scores released by the West Virginia Department of Education.[2]

The City of Fairmont is served by Marion County Board of Education, which is ranked 7th overall in the state in 2016. Out of the 119 high schools in West Virginia:[3]

 » East Fairmont Senior High School ranked 4th (up from 15th in 2015).
 » Fairmont Senior High School ranked 12th (up from 18th in 2015).

## Parks and Recreation

Between MCPARC and the City, Fairmont is home to nine public parks, two rail-trails, a walking/biking pathway along the Connector and the Upper Monongahela River Water Trail.

## Housing Organizations

 » Fairmont Community Development Partnership is a private, non-profit organization which promotes community and economic development along with neighborhood revitalization and affordable housing in targeted low income areas.

 » The Fairmont-Morgantown Housing Authority is a quasi-governmental agency that brings government assisted programs, private partners and community service programs together. The FMHA provides public housing units in the City, Section 8 housing choice vouchers, Veterans Assisted Vouchers, Family Self-Sufficiency Vouchers, housing rehab programs, mortgage origination and housing loans, housing counseling, residential construction, and development and redevelopment programs.

 » The City is also home to three homeless / emergency shelters: Scott Place, Union Mission and Hope Inc.

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*2 SchoolDigger: www.schooldigger.com*
*3 SchoolDigger: https://www.schooldigger.com/go/WV/schoolrank.aspx?level=3*

# And the issues are...

While there are many high-quality neighborhoods in the City, several issues were identified during the planning process that once addressed, would create more complete neighborhoods that feature a variety of housing choices, local parks and improved pedestrian and bicycle connections.

## Substandard Housing

Overall, housing was the number one issue identified during the planning process that the City needs to address.

» Housing was not cited as one of the desirable characteristics of Fairmont, per the 2016 public survey. In addition, 30% felt that the quality of housing is getting worse.

» The number of housing units continues to decline - 6% between 2000-2010, compared to continued increases in Bridgeport and Morgantown.

» The City has an aging housing stock (78% was constructed prior to 1970). Many residents complain about the lack of property maintenance and overall condition of housing in some areas.
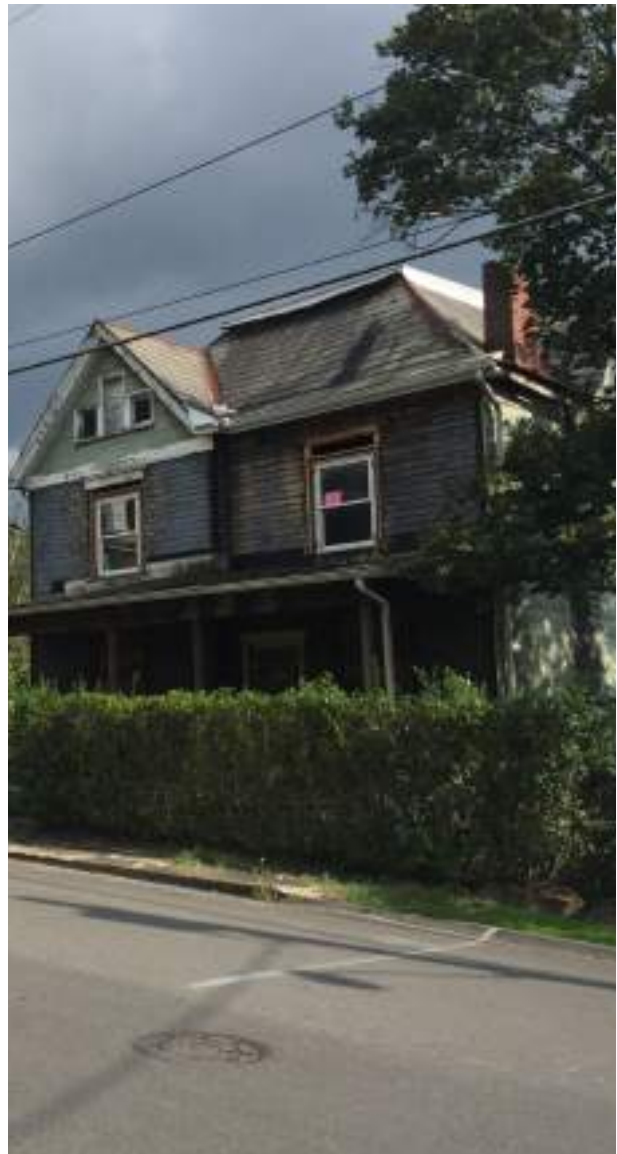
Figure 6:    Age of Housing Stock



Median year of construction
Before 1950 ▮▮▮ ▮▮▮ After 2000
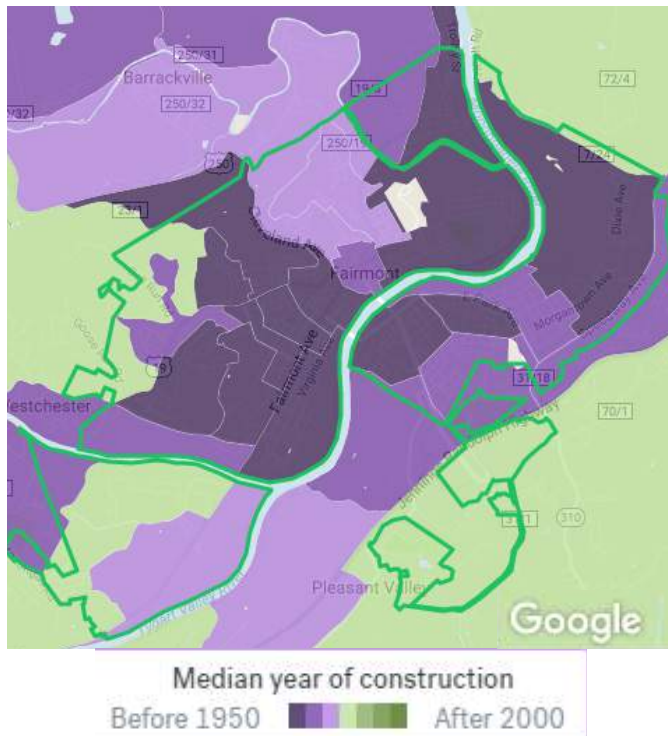
» The City continues to have a high vacancy
  rate (12%), as compared to Bridgeport (6%)
  and Morgantown (8%).

## Safety and Security

While generally a safe City, some residents
expressed concern for the decline of safety and
security within some neighborhoods. Most
people in particular expressed a concern with
the area between Fairmont State University and
the Downtown.

## Lack of Sidewalks

The overall walkability and connectivity of
Fairmont is discussed in detail under Goal #5:
Connectivity; however, the lack of sidewalks
in many neighborhoods is an issue that needs
to be addressed. Providing safe and secure
pathways to connect people to Downtown,
Fairmont State University and local / regional
parks and trails is a high priority.

## Maintenance of City Parks

Finally, residents expressed concern over the
condition of some of the City's parks. Over the
past few years, the City has put money back into
its parks to address issues; however, there is
still work to be done.

# And the objectives are...

## N1 Develop complete neighborhoods that can accommodate a variety of housing to meet current and future demand.

Fairmont's population loss has stabilized since 2000 and that trend is expected to continue, indicating that no new housing units are needed. However, an aging population and the shrinking average size of Fairmont households calls for attention to matching the housing stock to the needs of current and future City residents.

As some elderly homeowners require a downsize from large homes, those homes may need to be updated or retrofitted to become marketable to young families. Smaller housing options (such as patio homes and accessory dwelling units) will be in increasing demand for those in need of affordable, accessible living arrangements.

**And the actions are...**

### ☑ Encourage new housing developments that can attract young professionals and families.

There is a real need for mid- to upper-scale housing within the City of Fairmont. In talking to representatives at the High Tech Park, many workers live outside of the City because they cannot find suitable housing. In addition, as the City begins to redevelop its brownfields and create more jobs, those people are going to be looking for housing.

» Partner with the Fairmont-Morgantown Housing Authority to acquire property to construct mid- to upscale housing in the East Side of the City. The FMHA built 19 mid-market homes near Mary Lou Retton Park and has plans for 40 more units on 15 adjacent acres. The FMHA would like to do similar projects in the East Side off the Connector, focusing on building 1,500-1,600 square foot single-family homes that would sell for approximately $250,000.

» Consider creating an entity to serve as a "land bank" to acquire property, clear title, and assemble multiple parcels suitable for larger-scale infill housing development projects. They City could re-establish their Urban Renewal Authority, create a Land Reuse Agency, or partner with the Fairmont Community Development Partnership and utilize them in such a manner.

# Policy Toolbox: Providing Moderate Income Level Housing

The Morgantown Homecoming Program (MHP) was developed by the Fairmont-Morgantown Housing Authority (FMHA) in 2005 in response to a request by the residents of Morgantown to assist in the stabilization and preservation of the near campus neighborhoods.  In these targeted neighborhoods the MHP purchases, improves and converts existing rental units or existing owner occupied homes into single family owner occupied homes with a deed restriction for continued owner occupancy.  The MHP also constructs new homes on infill lots within targeted neighborhoods that also convey a deed restriction for continued single family owner occupancy. Representatives of the FMHA said that the program rehabbed 60 apartment conversion structures and re-converted them back to single-family homes.

*Source: http://www.morgantownhomecomingwv.com/about/index.php*

## Land Banks

Instead of addressing properties one by one, some communities use a more systematic approach by creating a staffed entity whose sole mission is addressing neglected properties. Often called "land banks," these entities specialize in the acquisition, redevelopment and sale or lease of neglected properties for the purpose of converting them to a more productive use. Frequently, land banks have an inventory or "bank" of properties that are targeted for redevelopment. Two West Virginia statutes authorize the creation of independent public entities intended to convert neglected properties to productive use: the Urban Renewal Authority Law of 1951 and the West Virginia Land Reuse Agency Authorization Act of 2014.

» An Urban Renewal Authority (URA) is a public body created to acquire, prepare, develop, redevelop, and sell or lease neglected properties in slum or blighted areas.

» A Land Reuse Agency (LRA) is a public body created to facilitate the return of vacant, abandoned, and tax-delinquent properties productive use.

*Source: https://wvleap.wvu.edu/land-banks*

☑ **Review and update the City's zoning ordinance to encourage flexibility and adaptive re-use to ensure that the current housing stock can meet future demands.**

The City has a minimum lot size of 6,000 square feet City-wide. This poses a barrier to infill residential development on existing lots in older neighborhoods, many of which are only 3,000-4,000 square feet. The City's ordinance allows for vacant nonconforming lots to be developed (i.e. lots smaller than 6,000 sq ft) but does not seem to permit the demolition and reconstruction of a home (to the original footprint) without obtaining a variance, which is costly and time-consuming. The City should consider updating the ordinance to permit such redevelopment of smaller lots, which would encourage infill development in older neighborhoods.

In addition, too often zoning ordinances effectively prohibit the "missing middle" of density between single-family detached homes and walk-up apartments. The City may want to look at expanding where it allows uses such as ground-level accessory dwelling units; cottage housing (small detached clustered around a common open space); townhouses; and/or low/mid-rise apartments.

☑ **Promote the advantages of living in historic neighborhoods.**

Fairmont has a rich architectural and historic tradition to build upon. This tradition communicates the intentions, lifestyles and sensibilities of the people who built, lived or worked in Fairmont, establishing a collective sense of meaning and identity for the City. Fairmont's history should be the foundation for its future, protected and enhanced to the greatest possible extent. The Fleming-Watson historic neighborhood is one of the most attractive neighborhoods in Fairmont. According to Zillow.com, 46 homes in this neighborhood have sold since 2014, ranging in price from $40,000 to $380,000. The City can take steps to help ensure that the historic value of this neighborhood is preserved for future generations.

» Continue work with Main Street Fairmont, the Historic Landmarks Commission, the Historic Preservation Review Commission and the Vandalia Heritage Foundation on public education and outreach.

» Continue to install historic marker signs.

» Continue collaboration to seek financial support for preservation projects.

» Emphasize adaptive reuse and infill development. Adopt policies and strategies that make this option comparatively attractive to developers.

☑ **Develop a strategic investment plan at the neighborhood level.**

Fairmont would benefit from establishing a framework for making investment decisions that reflect a big-picture vision for its future. Investment decisions should work in concert with other City policies to address neighborhood needs as well as serve the well-being of the community as a whole. While disinvestment affects the housing market for the entire City, it should be analyzed at the neighborhood level. The City earmarked $400,000 for demolition of dilapidated homes in 2017, demonstrating their commitment to improving the housing stock. Currently, the City uses the money to address the structures in the worst condition.

Figure 7:   Median House Value (Census Block Group)



Source: http://www.city-data.com/city/Fairmont-West-Virginia.html

The issue with this is that spreading the money out over the entire City reduces the impact. Rather, concentrating investment in targeted areas would allow the City to stretch the impact of their dollar. Coordinating housing demolition and rehabilitation with street, sidewalk and park improvements would increase the overall value of the investment.

» Downtown: addressed under Goal #3: Vitality, developing more mixed-use and upper-story residential units is a high priority. Many of the neighborhoods immediately surrounding Downtown have the lowest housing values ($30-40,000) in the City.

» Beltline: one of the most distressed neighborhoods, the Fairmont Community Development Partnership has done a lot of work in this neighborhood that has increased housing values. Investment should be centered around the rail-trail extension and opportunity to redevelop the riverfront.

» University District: addressed under Goal #2: Prosperity, the City should partner with Fairmont State University and the Hospital to encourage reinvestment in this area in relation to commercial and residential development.

» East Side: the Fairmont-Morgantown Housing Authority identified this as one of the target neighborhoods to support new mid-to upperscale housing. Close to the Connector and I-79, this area can be a bedroom community.

### ☑ Review and modify as needed the Rental Registration and Vacant Property Registration programs.

Two of the primary factors affecting the stability of the City's neighborhoods include the number of vacant properties and the large amount of rental property. To combat these issues, the City adopted registration programs.

Vacant Property: Over 300 buildings sit vacant, abandoned or dilapidated. The City created a registry in 2015, requiring owners of these structures to notify the City that they own the property. Once registered, owners have one year to improve the condition of the property. If they fail, the city sends them a raze or repair order to fix or demolish their property within 30 days. While a great program, the City should consider adding teeth to it by making participation mandatory and adding a penalty for not registering a vacant structure.

Rental Property: Almost 40% of the housing structures in Fairmont are rental units. Inspections are conducted every two years. The City should consider taking a more aggressive approach, such as conducting random inspections and/or a landlord certification program, where landlords would be required to obtain a business license and non-compliance would then result in losing that license.

### ☑ Ensure that the City has the capacity to enforce ordinances and conduct inspections.

Adopting ordinances is the first step, but the crucial step lies in enforcement. With 4,000 rental units, it creates a heavy burden on City staff. The City needs to ensure that moving forward, they have the capacity to be able to enforce their ordinances (such as the rental registration program and vacant property registration program) and conduct inspections. Any changes to the ordinances or programs will impact the ability of the City to enforce them.

## ☑ Encourage home-ownership by publicizing local and regional programs.

Increasing home-ownership is a priority of the City. To do so, the City can promote exisitng programs, such as those offered by the Fairmont-Morgantown Housing Authority HomeOwnership Center that provides the following programs:

» Housing Counseling process where an NeighborWorks Center for Homeownership Education and Counseling (NCHEC) certified counselor provides advice to potential homeowners prior to applying for a mortgage. The purpose of the counselor is to help families and communities have the knowledge and tools to achieve and sustain homeownership and financial security.

» Licensed Mortgage Originator and loans for all income levels.

» Home Repair loans and a certified Housing Rehabilitation Specialist for low to moderate income home owners.

» Mortgage Delinquency Counseling.[1]

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1  Fairmont Morgantown Housing Authority website: http://www.fmhousing.com/residents/index.php

## ☑ Ensure that there are no local barriers to providing affordable and supportive housing to disadvantaged persons.

In addition to making changes to the zoning ordinance that would encourage infill development on smaller lots, there are other steps that the City can take to reduce regulatory barriers to affordable housing, such as the following:

» Only require a final plan approval process for small subdivisions, as long as it meets certain criteria (no new streets, utility extensions, etc.)

» Reduce the timeframe for the approval process of small projects (i.e. up to 20 units) within 8-10 days of submission.

**Enhance the quality of life of neighborhoods through parks and recreation.**

Access to safe, appealing and enriching recreational options is an important component of community life and public health. Public recreation in the City of Fairmont is provided by either Marion County Parks and Recreation Commission (MCPARC) or the City itself; public parks are shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Public Parks
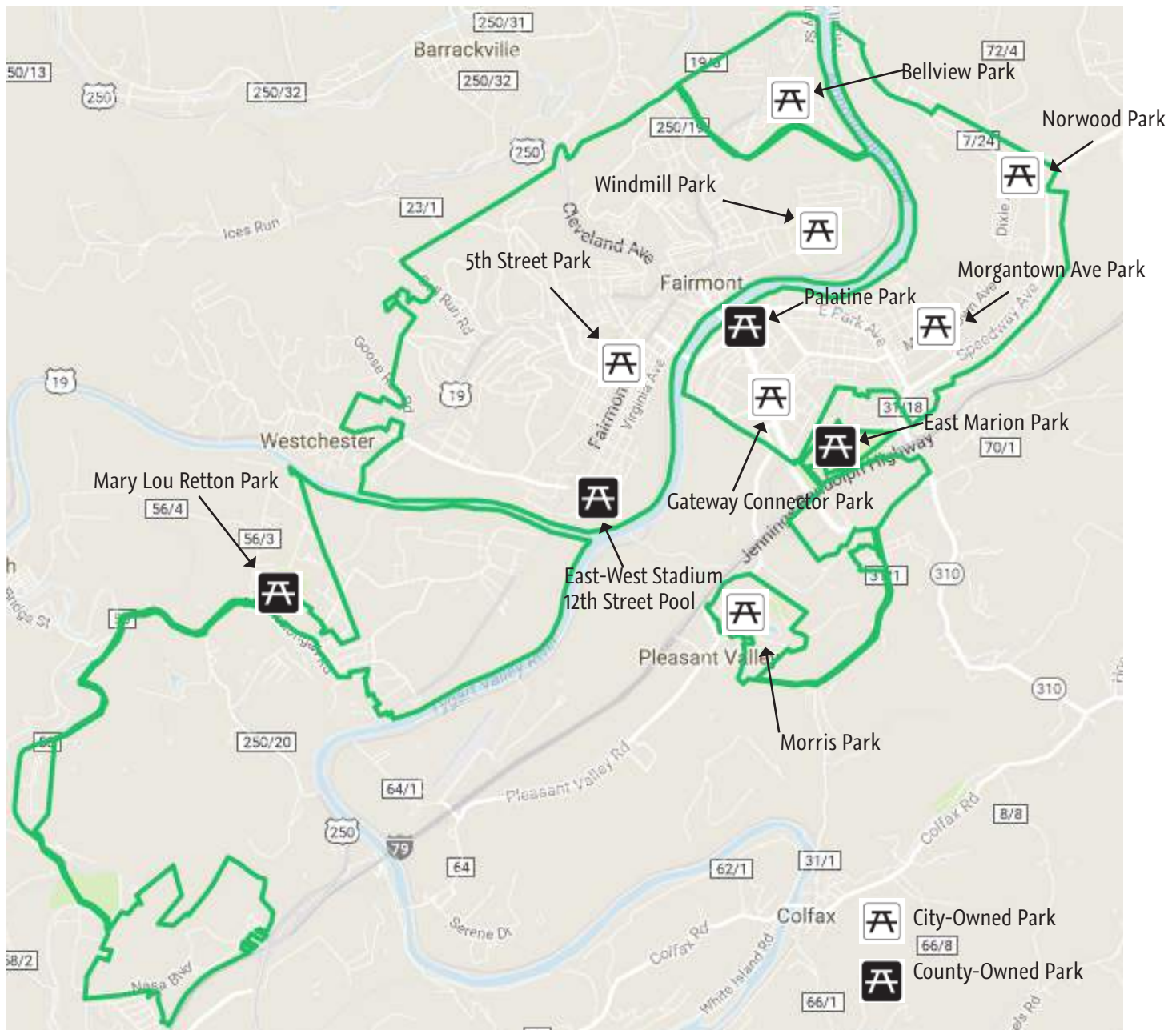
MCPARC owns and operates ten parks, four within the City limits:

- » 12th Street Pool - public swimming pool, home to swimming lessons and available to rent for pool parties

- » East Marion Park - 32 acres offering tennis, horseshoes, basketball court, softball field, playground, pavilions, picnic area, mini-golf, wave pool / waterslide, dog park, hiking and jogging trails

- » Mary Lou Retton Park - 25 acres offering baseball fields, football field, basketball court, playground, and pavilion

- » Palatine Park - concert pavilion / band stand, splash park, boat launch and docks, walking trails

The City of Fairmont also owns and operates the following parks:

- » 5th Street Park - basketball court, picnic shelters, picnic tables, playground

- » Bellview Park - basketball court, picnic tables, playground

- » Gateway Connector Park - bike trail, pavilion, playground, walking track

- » Morgantown Avenue Park - picnic tables, playground, tennis court

- » Morris Park - 112-acre park that offers a basketball court, disc golf course, pavilion, playground, restrooms, tennis court, walking track

- » Norwood Park - basketball court, playground, tennis court

- » Windmill Park - 20-acre park overlooking the Monongahela River that offers a pavilion, playground, mixed-use play fields, restrooms and a concession stand

## ☑ Continue to improve City parks and recreation areas.

The availability and quality of parks and recreation within the City was identified as a strength and desirable characteristic per the 2016 public survey. Additionally, 60% of respondents felt that the City's parks and recreation facilities and programs are improving. The City has been spending money on park improvements over the years, including recently replacing the fencing in 5th Street Park and resurfacing the tennis courts and adding a disc golf course in Morris Park.

» Continue to implement findings from the Comprehensive Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan for Recreation, which identified short- and long-term strategies to improve City Parks. Once the plan has been implemented, the City should update it.

» Add all-inclusive play equipment to Norwood Park.

» Connect the parks to surrounding neighborhoods (see Goal #5: Connectivity).

» Incorporate natural play areas to City parks to make nature more accessible to residents, particularly in the more urban neighborhoods. While nature play can take many forms, the concept is to provide less man-made playground equipment and allow children's imaginations to lead their play. Some concepts to consider include:

› butterfly gardens, berry patches

› climbing logs and hollow logs, tree stumps for balancing

› shallow water features (existing streams or man-made shallow ponds)

› digging pits and dirt mounds, sand pits

› narrow paths and trails cut through tall grass or shrubs

› tree houses / forts or make sticks and branches available for kids to make their own

## ☑ Pursue the development of an indoor recreation center.

An indoor recreation center has been discussed for years and was a recommendation in the 2005 Comprehensive Plan. While it has not yet come to fruition, MCPARC had conceptual renderings of a building prepared, at an estimated cost of $2-3 million. The City should work with MCPARC to pursue the development of an indoor recreation / athletic center, with the following in mind:

» Location: the site should be easily accessible to all residents of the City and able to provide enough on-site parking

» Amenities: determine what amenities are needed and desired. Is the facility to be designed to serve City residents or to attract regional events / tournaments? What types of facilities are available in the surrounding communities?

# Examples of Natural Play Areas in City Parks





*Image credits:*

*Top photo: Land Trust Alliance (http://www.landtrustalliance.org/blog/creating-places-nature-play)*

*Bottom photo: Smith Memorial Playground in Philadelphia (https://spiritnews.org/articles/play-time-in-fairmount-park/)*

# Fairmont Refreshed is...

"an accessible City that is well connected by a multi-modal transportation network"

# Goal #5:
## Connectivity

"the state or quality of being connected"

— *dictionary.com*

For purposes of the Comprehensive Plan, connectivity is analyzing the transportation system as it functions as a multi-modal network — not just roads!

As the 2005 Plan states, a good transportation system will:

1. optimize mobility, safety and compatibility with the environmental and developmental patterns of Fairmont;

2. link compatible land uses; and

3. serve as a buffer to separate incompatible uses.

Overall, Fairmont has the bones for a well-connected transportation system. It has access to major interstates (I-79), three rivers, major trail networks, mass transit, rail service and regional airports. And yet, connectivity was one of the major issues and concerns that was identified by the public to be addressed by the Comprehensive Plan Update.

The public survey conducted in October of 2016 identified "**poor circulation and connectivity**" as the #6 issue in Fairmont (22% of respondents).

# And the assets are...

The following assets relate directly to the connectivity within Fairmont, in terms of transportation that are major strengths for the City. This list is not intended to be exhaustive, but a summary of the most important assets that have either changed since the 2005 Plan or can and should be capitalized on over the next 10 years.

## Fairmont Gateway Connector

The Fairmont Gateway Connector is a 1.5 mile, four-lane direct connection from I-79 to downtown Fairmont. Completed in 2007, the Gateway Connector features two roundabouts, landscaped medians, historic period lighting and pedestrian walkways and bike paths. This project is the biggest change in terms of the transportation network in the City since the 2005 Comprehensive Plan.

## Intermodal Network

Fairmont is home to an intermodal transportation network comprised of airports, rail and river. There are three airports in the vicinity of Fairmont: North Central West Virginia Airport (CKB) is located in Bridgeport;

Morgantown Municipal Airport; and Fairmont Municipal Airport. While CKB and Morgantown serve major airlines, the Fairmont Airport primarily serves as a local cargo, flight instruction and small air hanger facility. Most regional passenger and cargo services, to and from areas outside the State, occur at the airports in Bridgeport and Morgantown.

The railroad system serving Fairmont is for freight service exclusively; owned and operated by CSX (Baltimore and Ohio Railroad). The nearest passenger service is available in Connellsville or Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

A series of locks and dams provide a minimum of navigable water depth of nine feet through the entire length of the Monongahela River for 128 miles from Fairmont to Pittsburgh. There are no navigable waters below the confluence of the West Fork River and the Tygart Valley River with the Monongahela River.

## Fairmont-Marion County Transit Authority

The Fairmont-Marion County Transit Authority (FMCTA) provides mass transit bus service to the majority of Marion County and the I-79 Corridor (including service to Morgantown and Clarksville), with 16 routes offered. Ridership is comprised mostly of senior citizens and lower income residents, in addition to Fairmont State University students and other commuters.

## Rail-Trails

MCTrail is a 2.5 mile paved trail that runs along Pricketts Creek, from the northeastern edge of Fairmont to Prickett's Fort State Park, where it connects to the Mon River Trail. The southern trailhead is located in Fairmont at the corner of Winfield Street and Morgantown Avenue.

The West Fork River Ralph S. Larue Trail is a paved and crushed limestone trail that is 14.5 miles along the West Fork River between Fairmont and Shinnston. Access is located off Edgeway Drive. Both rail trails are maintained by the Marion County Parks and Recreation Commission.

## Upper Mon Water Trail

The Upper Monongahela River is the first water trail for recreational boaters in West Virginia. The upper section of the Monongahela River is about 65 miles long. It starts in Fairmont and flows north to Ten Mile Creek, just downstream of Rice's Landing, Pennsylvania. Public access in Fairmont is located at Palatine Park.

# And the issues are...

As mentioned earlier, poor circulation and connectivity are major issues that residents want to see addressed. In particular, the priority issues related to circulation focus on the bicycle and pedestrian network in Fairmont.

## Traffic Circulation

Traffic circulation, congestion and bridges are an ongoing issue that need constant attention and upgrades to ensure proper traffic flow. While the Gateway Connector improved access to the Downtown from I-79, there are other issues that still need to be addressed to improve traffic patterns and circulation.

## Fairmont is the Missing Link

The Industrial Heartland Trail Coalition's (IHTC's) 1,500-mile-plus train network vision spans 51 counties across western Pennsylvania, northern West Virginia, eastern Ohio and the southwest corner of New York. The IHTC has identified the Parkersburg to Pittsburgh (P2P) Corridor as an opportunity to connect existing rail trails in West Virginia with the Sheepskin Trail in Pennsylvania and ultimately, the Great



https://www.traillink.com/viewnationalmap/
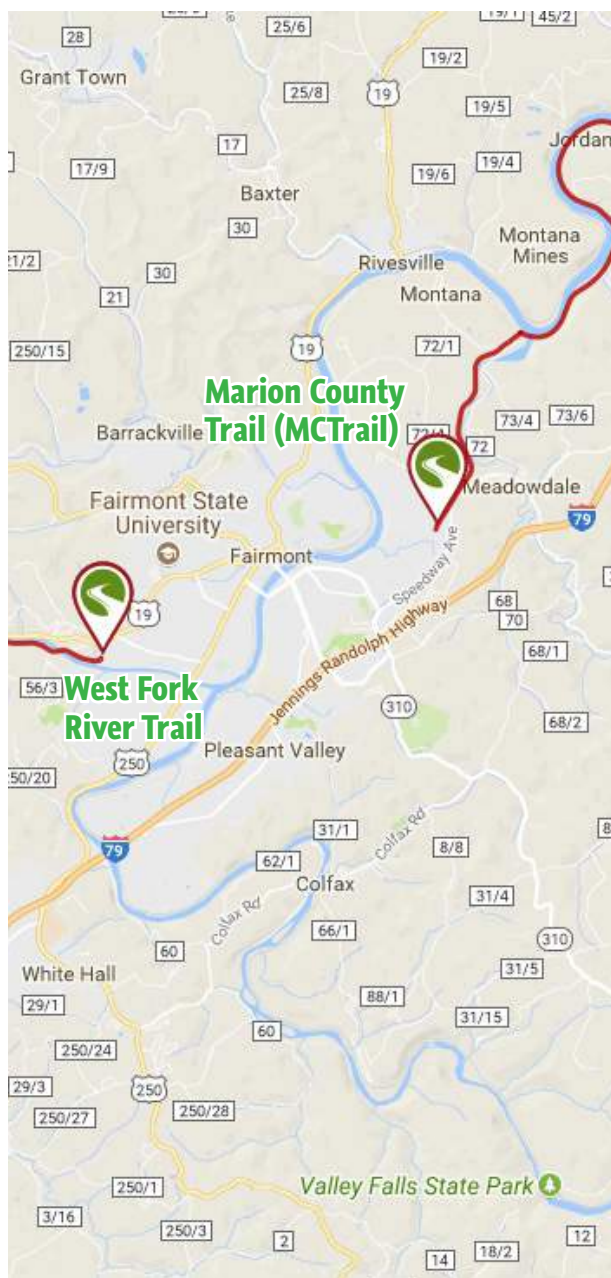
Allegheny Passage in Connellsville, PA. Once complete, the P2P corridor will create a 180-plu mile rail-trail, making it the fourth longest rail-trail in the United States. As of 2018, less than 52 miles of the corridor need developed as trail to close the gaps. As discussed under the Assets, Fairmont is home to two rail-trails. However, neither of these trails are directly connected to Downtown Fairmont. While connecting these two trails through the City will provide more opportunities for pedestrians and cyclists, it will also poise local businesses to take advantage of the economic impact of trails.

## Lack of Sidewalks

While there are sidewalks present in Downtown Fairmont, many neighborhoods don't have any. This has been identified as an issue for several years, with the City having identified several priority areas for new sidewalk construction as part of its Connectivity Plan, which was completed several years ago.

Of particular concern is the lack of a pedestrian or bicycle connection between Fairmont State University and the Downtown. One of the high priorities identified during the planning process was improving that connection to encourage students to walk/bike from campus to Downtown.
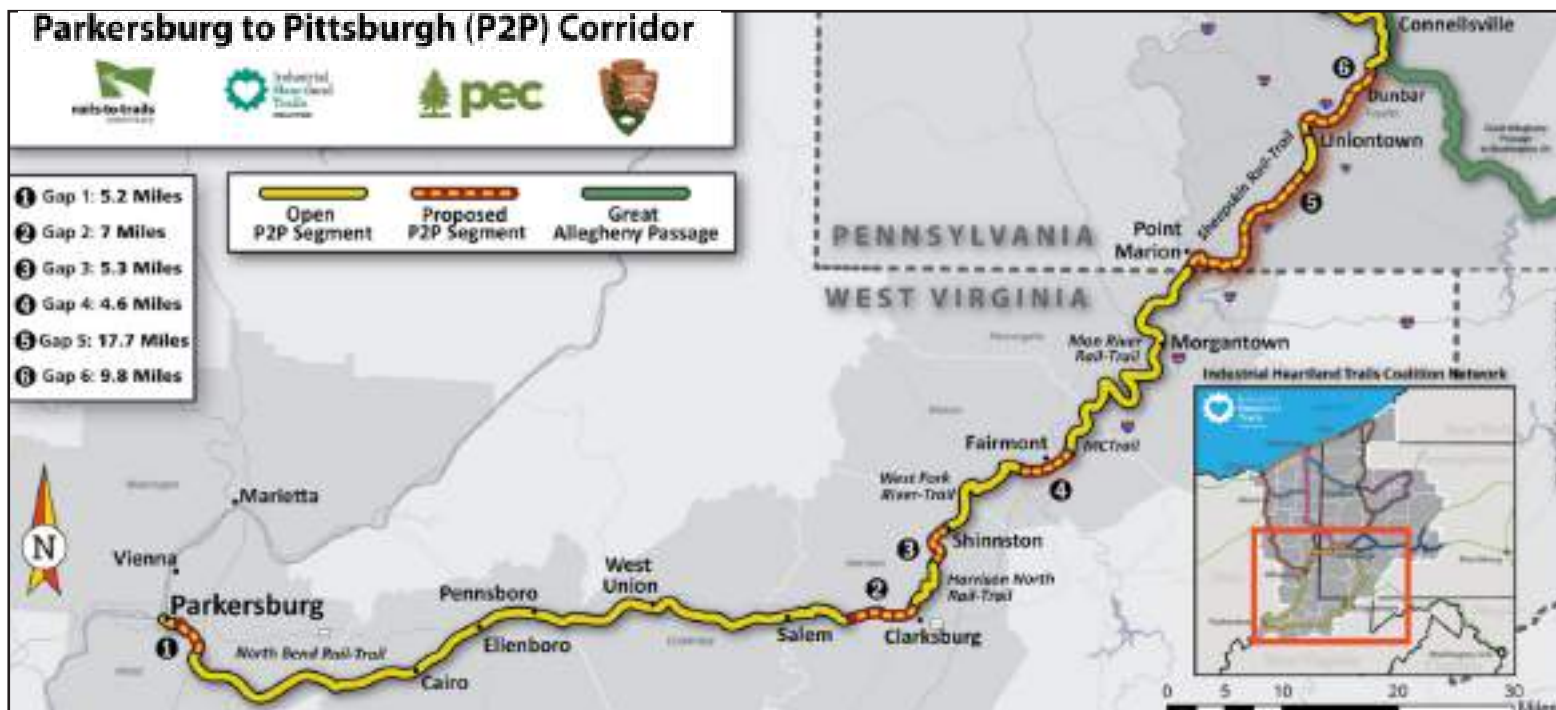


https://www.railstotrails.org/resourcehandler.ashx?name=connecting-parkersburg-to-pittsburgh-by-rail-trail-bringing-a-world-class-trail-network-to-west-virginia&id=14639&fileName=P2P_Feasibility_Study_042418.pdf

# And the objectives are...

## C1 Improve traffic safety and flow.

Providing adequate transportation infrastructure will require Fairmont to not only improve and maintain the existing roadway network, but also to envision how roads can be more than a conduit to move cars through a place as quickly as possible. They can also be a public realm for people to walk, bike, play and otherwise enjoy the community.

**And the actions are...**

### ☑ Form a subcommittee to continue to evaluate the City transportation system.

Recommended in the 2005 Plan, this has not yet been implemented, but is still a relevant recommendation. This subcommittee should then be responsible to:

1. Update the Fairmont Marion County Multi Modal Transportation Plan, which was completed and adopted in 2000.

2. Conduct a needs assessment, in order to identify potential projects to be included in the plan update. Priority projects, such as the Fairmont Gateway Connector and replacement of the Fourth Street Bridge, from the 2000 Plan have been implemented.

3. Recommend upgrades to problem intersections and suggest road widening that would alleviate congestion at problem locations.

4. Identify potential intersections and roadways to implement traffic calming measures to address concerns with speed and safety. One intersection that was identified as an area of concern is along Adams Street, at the intersection with Monroe Street and Madison Street. Currently there is a traffic signal, which encourages Adams Street to be used as a "race track." See page 125 for more information on traffic calming measures.

5. Recommend "road diets" along less-traveled corridors to accommodate bicycle lanes, sidewalks or other alternate transportation.

# Traffic-calming tools

## Narrowing streets and traffic lanes

Lane widths on a local road should be determined by intended function, traffic volume, intensity of adjacent uses and neighborhood design (lot sizes, setbacks, parking needs, etc.). Local and internal roadways tend to fall into one of three categories:

- **Primary distributor: Moves traffic from neighborhoods or subdivisions to larger arterial or collector roads at speeds of 25-45 mph and daily volumes of 750-2,500. Access should be more limited than on the following two local road types. On-street parking is inappropriate except in more dense villages.**

- **Secondary distributor: Moves traffic through a neighborhood or subdivision to a primary distributor, or directly to larger roads, at speeds of 15-25 mph and daily volumes of 200-1,500.**

- **Local access: Speeds should be 15 mph or less, daily volumes below 500. Design features will vary: A narrow cartway would be appropriate for a subdivision of large lots with off-street parking, but not necessarily for a local access street serving large commercial or industrial development.**

Lanes as narrow as nine feet can still be safe for driving on certain local roads, particularly local access. Primary and secondary distributors can carry traffic safely in lanes of 10-12 feet.

*Primary distributor*



10' - 12'    10' - 12'

*Secondary distributor*



10' - 11'    10' - 11'

*Local access*



9'    9'
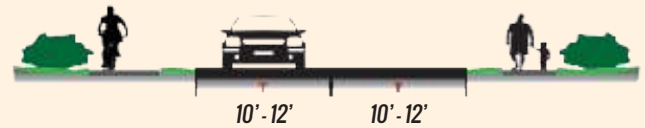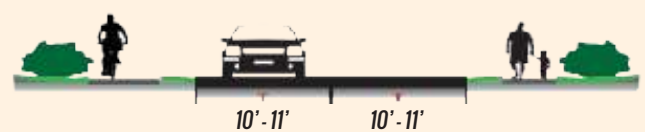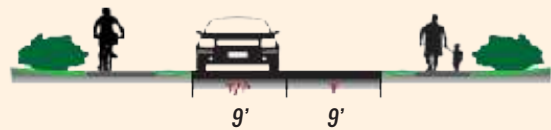
## Neighborhood traffic circles

Small roundabouts can replace intersections of local or collector streets to reduce mid-block speed by about 10% and impact an area about 200 feet upstream and downstream. Traffic is only minimally diverted, and collisions are typically sharply reduced by this configuration.



## Bulbs, chokers and neckdowns

Extensions of sidewalk and/or landscaping at intersections narrow the road to about 20 feet for two-way traffic, which improves pedestrian safety and typically reduces speeds by up to 14%. Some applications use an island that allows drainage and bicyclists to continue between the choker and original curb line. Islands also represent an opportunity to incorporate stormwater infiltration features.
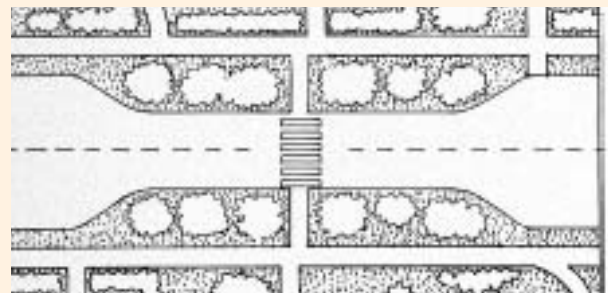
☑ **Conduct a traffic study to determine the cost-benefit of implementing one-way streets to improve traffic flow.**

The 2005 Plan recommended to investigate the feasibility of converting some two-way streets to one-way as a means to improve circulation. Specifically, Virginia Avenue, Gaston Avenue, Walnut and Benoni were identified as possibilities for one-way traffic flow.

The 2014 Connectivity Plan recommends a shared-use path along Gaston Avenue and Virginia Avenue, which would provide a vital link to the proposed North Central Connector Trail and connect the Watson Neighborhood and East Side to downtown Fairmont and the Beltline area. The City should evaluate the feasibility of creating a one-way loop for Gaston and Virginia Avenues, which could then accommodate a shared-use path, as shown below.

## ☑ Continue work with the WV DOH to expedite the widening of Locust Avenue.

In July 2014, the Fourth Street Bridge was closed to both foot and vehicle traffic by the recommendation of the West Virginia Department of Transportation, Division of Highways (DOH) and demolition began in April 2016. The new bridge links the David C. Morgan Bridge at Third Street and with Fourth Street, providing a direct connection from WV 310 to US 19 and US 250. Construction was completed and the new bridge opened in December 2017. The City would like to widen Locust Avenue and make it more pedestrian and bicycle friendly, as it is a major connection between Fairmont State University and Downtown.

## ☑ Coordinate with the WV DOH to improve Route 250 South (from the Watson Bridge to I-79).

The 2005 Plan recommended to investigate the feasibility of expanding Route 250 South into a three-lane highway. This route is a heavily traveled road and provides the connection between the Downtown and the I-79 High Technology Park.

Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) is the total volume of vehicle traffic of a highway or road for a year divided by 365 days. According to traffic counts from the WV DOH, there were 14,582 AADT on US 250, 0.1 mile north of Holbert Road. However, the traffic counts decreased from 18,077 in 2005, likely due to the completion of the Fairmont Gateway Connector in 2010, which provided a secondary access to I-79 for Fairmont residents.

Despite the reduced traffic, US 250 is a high priority corridor that needs improvement. As the High Tech Park expands, along with the continued commercial growth (car dealerships, big box retail, etc.), traffic volumes will increase. In addition to volume of traffic, it is also highly susceptible to landslides and road closures.

## ☑ Rehabilitate the Everest Drive Bridge.

Everest Drive Bridge carries Everest Drive over Coal Run Hollow and an unnamed access road. The structure was built in 1956 and owned by the City of Fairmont. The structure is in poor condition (deck drainage, excessively rotated rocker bearings, and main supporting members) and in need of rehabilitation.

## C2 Ensure that Fairmont is a pedestrian and bicycle friendly City.

West Virginia has the unfortunate distinction of being the state with the fewest people choosing to bike to work relative to other modes. This lack of people biking to work casts a shadow over some good state and local efforts to improve the safety and mobility of people who bike. These efforts include having more Bicycle Friendly Actions than average, a reported $5 million in state funding for bicycling and walking, and category scores that are close to average.[1]

The City of Fairmont would like to help change this statistic and become more pedestrian and bicycle friendly; a high priority for the next ten years. There are a variety of actions that the City can take to implement this goal and vision.

[1] "Bicycle Friendly State Report Card: West Virginia." The League of American Bicycle Friendly America. 2017.

### ☑ Adopt a Complete Streets ordinance to accommodate all types of users (pedestrians, cyclists, transit, etc.)

Complete Streets policies "formalize a community's intent to plan, design and maintain streets so they are safe for all users of all ages and abilities."[1] These policies can be implemented through updated ordinances and resolutions, inclusion into comprehensive plans and adopted policies by the governing body. According to Smart Growth America, there are ten elements of a comprehensive Complete Streets policy:

1. Includes a vision for how and why the community wants to complete its streets.

2. Specifies that 'all users' includes pedestrians, bicyclists and transit passengers of all ages and abilities, as well as trucks, buses and automobiles.

3. Applies to both new and retrofit projects, including design, planning, maintenance and operations, for the entire right of way.

4. Makes any exceptions specific and sets a clear procedure that requires high-level approval of exceptions.

5. Encourages street connectivity and aims to create a comprehensive, integrated, connected network for all modes.

[1] "Complete Streets." Smart Growth America. https://smartgrowthamerica.org/program/national-complete-streets-coalition/. Retrieved online October 2016.

6.  Is adoptable by all agencies to cover all roads.

7.  Directs the use of the latest and best design criteria and guidelines while recognizing the need for flexibility in balancing user needs.

8.  Directs that Complete Streets solutions will complement the context of the community.

9.  Establishes performance standards with measurable outcomes.

10. Includes specific next steps for implementation of the policy.

More information on Complete Streets and what the City of Fairmont can do to implement a Complete Streets policy can be found in the "Complete Streets Local Policy Workbook," available online at www.smartgrowthamerica.org.

# WHAT IS A COMPLETE STREET?

## ACTIVE SIDEWALKS

Sidewalks should be smooth, wide, feel safe, and have appropriate transitions to the street, making them easy to walk or use a wheelchair on

## DEDICATED BIKE LANES

Simple pavement markings creating a dedicated bike lane make both motorist and bicycle movement more predictable, and therefore safer for both. They may increase the likelihood of casual riders using bicycles for transportation

## ACTIVE ROADWAY

One lane of car traffic going in each direction with a two-way-left-turn-lane (TWLTL) in the center would reduce the amount of car crashes on Government Street by providing turning vehicles a refuge from through traffic, while keeping through traffic moving more efficiently

## SAFE CROSSWALKS

Clearly marked crosswalks allow pedestrians and wheelchair users to cross streets safely, while making sure cars know where to expect them

## PLANTING STRIP

Street trees and landscaping slow speeding traffic, improve the aesthetics of the roadway, provide shade, and create a buffer between cars and people, making a more inviting environment for pedestrians

## GREEN SPACES

Parks and public green spaces create a destination, encouraging community interaction and providing a rest from the surrounding urban environment

*Smart Growth America (www.smartgrowthamerica.org)*

☑ **Prepare a detailed sidewalk assessment and plan to prioritize areas to improve when funds become available.**

According to Walk Score, Fairmont is a car-dependent City where most errands require a car. It received a Walk Score of 42 (out of 100). The Downtown is the most walkable, with the scores dropping significantly as one moves farther away from the City center.

Walkability was identified as one of the biggest priorities that residents want to address through the Comprehensive Plan. There is a lack of sidewalks in many areas of the City. One area of particular concern is the lack of pedestrian and/or bicycle connection between Fairmont State University and the Downtown.

» Prepare a detailed sidewalk assessment plan, that identifies and maps locations in the City that have sidewalks (along with the condition) and then prioritizes locations to install sidewalks as funds become available.



Source: https://www.walkscore.com/WV/Fairmont

» Implement the recommendations for improving pedestrian connections and sidewalks contained in the Fairmont Connectivity Plan from 2014 as well as improving accessibility per the ADA Sidewalks Study Report from 2013. The City has applied for a $400,000 grant to install sidewalks along Locust Avenue from Bell Run Road to Country Club Road, which would connect the to Fairmont State University / Pierpont Community College Campus (0.6 miles), as shown on "Figure 9: Proposed Sidewalk Project along Locust Avenue" on page 131 below. This was identified in the Plan as a high priority for public safety.

» The Connectivity Plan recommends sidewalks as follows:

› Watson Neighborhood: along Mary Lou Retton Drive from Monongah Road to Fairmont Avenue

› Beltline and Downtown: along Beverly Road

› Country Club and West Side Neighborhoods: Country Club Road from US 250, West Side Connector (Sands, Avalon, Henry, Woodside Drive); Barry Street, Bell Run Road

› Windmill Park and Bell View Neighborhoods: Maple Avenue

Figure 9:    Proposed Sidewalk Project along Locust Avenue

## ☑ Extend the rail trails into Downtown Fairmont.

The Fairmont Connectivity Plan was completed in 2014 and identifies proposed pedestrian and bicycle connections throughout the City that would connect the two major rail-trails in North Central West Virginia and serve to place Fairmont at the center of the economic benefits of the recreational corridor. Since 2015, West Virginia adopted bicyclist safety as an emphasis area in its Strategic Highway Safety Plan as part of the Continuing Successful Safety Programs & Initiatives emphasis area, which should make it easier to fund bicycle safety improvements.[1]

The following projects are recommended in the Connectivity Plan to develop the North Central Connector Trail (NCCT):

» Phase I: Extension of the West Fork River / Ralph S. Larue Trail from its current ending near Edgeway Drive, parallel to Industrial Contracting Road, continuing underneath Fairmont Ave along an abandoned railroad bed and eventually making its way to connect with Minor Ave.

» Phase II: This phase of the NCCT is a Shared-Use Path on Virginia and Gaston Ave (see page 126 for details) through the Beltline and downtown Fairmont; Phase II also includes an on-road route along Minor Ave, 4th, 10th, 14th Streets and a section of Virginia Ave.

» Phase III: This section of the NCCT is arguably one of the most vital and important connections for downtown Fairmont. It is an on-road route along 1st Street, Adams Street, Monroe Street and Washington Street, crossing the Million Dollar Bridge (Jefferson Street) to Palatine Park.

» Phase IV: Transitions from the on-road route to a trail that works its way below the Million Dollar Bridge across Water St, through Palatine Park, then utilizes an old railway bed below the County building until it continues up the drainage way.

» Phase V: Follows an abandoned railway bed through the drainage way to meet Winfield St. The trail then becomes an on the road route along Winfield and crosses Morgantown Ave to continue up Winfield to the existing trailhead at the Marion County Trail.

The City will need to partner with Marion County to implement these recommendations to extend the trail system through Fairmont. While most of the off-road trail projects will likely be spearheaded by the County (which owns and manages the West Fork Trail and the Marion County Trail "MCTrail"), the City should take the lead on developing the on-road bicycle infrastructure ("Figure 10: Types of Bicycle Facilities and Infrastructure" on page 133) needed to connect these trails.

» Start small. The City should consider implementing pilot bicycle and pedestrian

Figure 10:    Types of Bicycle Facilities and Infrastructure



Bicycle Lane

Share the Road

Protected Bicycle Lane

Multi-use Path

Riding Sidewalk

Painted Bike Lane

**And the actions are...**

infrastructure improvements using temporary infrastructure to gauge feasibility and refine design. Partner with local artists and community organizations to install temporary or permanent crosswalks, bicycle lanes, etc., similar to what the City did several years ago in partnership with Main Street Fairmont.

» Evaluate the priority bicycle routes (identified in the Connectivity Plan) and provide infrastructure improvements needed to offer safe and convenient riding and parking for cyclists.

» Support the "MCTrail Group," i.e. Friends of Marion County Trails and Waterways by partnering on grant applications.

» Determine the feasibility to construct a rail trail across the Monongahela River to the East Side of Fairmont at Palatine Park using the existing bridge abutments. This has been identified in multiple past planning projects. A study should be done to determine the cost of providing such a structure.

» Conduct a traffic study to determine feasibility of adding a bike lane on High Level Bridge, which would require a road diet (shrinking the width of vehicular travel lanes).

☑ **Improve trailhead access on west side of City.**

Currently, the only access to the trail on the west side of the City is through private property off Edgeway Drive, which is a dead-end street in a small residential neighborhood. A small parking area is located off the trail and was recently paved. MCPARC would like to acquire land and build a trailhead near the Watson Bridge on Fairmont Avenue and extend the trail via Industrial Contracting Road, along the West Fork River. This is also identified in the Connectivity Plan, although the Plan identifies a vacant parcel off Edgeway Drive as the location of the proposed trailhead.

Figure 11:   Current Access to West Fork River Trail
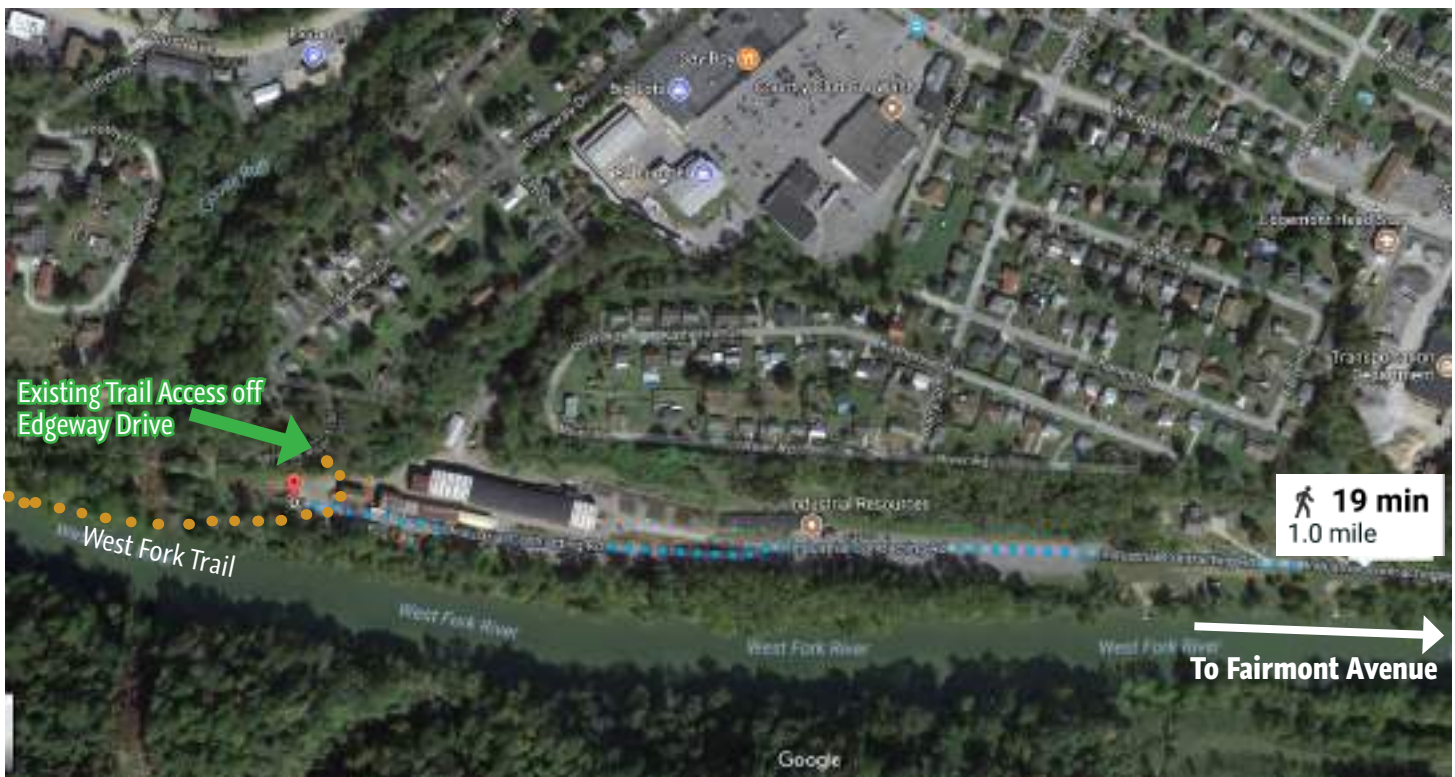


☑ **Improve directional signs to trailheads.**

Wayfinding was identified as an overall need for the City and addressed under Goal 1: Attraction. Specific to this section, there is a need to implement a better wayfinding program to direct visitors and users to and from the Trailheads / public access areas in the City. Wayfindings signs should be installed along major roadways and intersections; there are some small signs now, but they are too small to easily see and follow. In addition, the trailheads should have signage that directs trail users to local amenities to help spur economic development and better connect the trails to the local shopping/retail areas.

## ☑ Consider options to implement the Coal Run Greenway Project.

The Connectivity Plan identified the Coal Run Greenway as an opportunity for a recreational corridor that would link Fairmont State University to Downtown Fairmont. Since that Plan was completed in 2014, the Coal Run section of Benoni Avenue (5th Street to Kirkway Drive) has been closed to vehicular traffic as a result of the construction of the 3rd Street Bridge. As such, Friends of Marion County Trails & Waterways, the Disability Action Center, Marion County Parks and Recreation, Northern West Viginia Brownfields Assistance Center have partnered with the City of Fairmont to develop a plan to develop the Coal Run Greenway as a linear park. This would provide a pedestrian/bicycle connection to the 5th Street Park, the Fairmont Community Garden (Oliver Ave) and the Disability Action Center.



COAL RUN GREENWAY

## C3 Ensure that public transit can meet future demands.

The theory of induced demand holds that when a community designs for more vehicle traffic, they get it. When a community designs for a wide array of safe, feasible and accessible transportation alternatives, people will take advantage of them, reducing vehicle congestion, improving public and environmental health and enhancing the vitality and liveliness of public space.

The Fairmont-Marion County Transit Authority provides public transportation services to the City of Fairmont and throughout Marion County. The Authority provides fixed route service, non emergency medical transport and paratransit service Monday through Friday, with limited service available on Saturdays. Since the 2005 Comprehensive Plan, the Authority has constructed a new transfer station and bus shelters were constructed along the Gateway Connector.  Clientele of the FMCTA are primarily senior citizens and lower-income residents.

**Fairmont-MarionCounty Transit Authority**

400 Quincy Street • Fairmont, WV 26554 • (304) 366-8177

### ☑ Factor public transit fixed routes into future land use policy and decision making regarding major subdivisions and land developments.

The FMCTA offers 17 fixed routes throughout the City and County, including one route once a month to the Morgantown Mall. Clientele of the FMCTA are primarily senior citizens and economically disadvantaged residents, many using public transit for shopping and medical appointments. To ensure that City residents are being best-served by public transportation, the City should coordinate with the FMCTA on the following:

» Expand/revised fixed routes to serve new housing subdivisions, employment centers, shopping areas and large-scale land developments.

» Ensure that fixed route service is offered in low-income neighborhoods.

» Expand/revise fixed routes to provide service to rails-to-trails and major regional recreation destinations (Pricketts Fort, Sagebrush Roundup).

## ☑ Identify suitable locations for bus shelters.

There are no fixed stops along the routes outside of the bus shelters on the Gateway Connector and along Fairmont Avenue.

> » The City should partner with the Authority to identify priority locations for new shelters, to increase the visibility of bus service and provide more inviting bus stops for users.

## ☑ Install bike racks on all buses.

One fairly simple and inexpensive method of integrating bicycling and public transportation is installing bike racks on buses. Fairmont State University and Pierpont College students ride for free and the addition of bike racks could help to increase usership.

Bike racks have been shown to increase the use of transit, as it increases the catchment area of the bus (people will bicycle farther to a bus stop than walk).
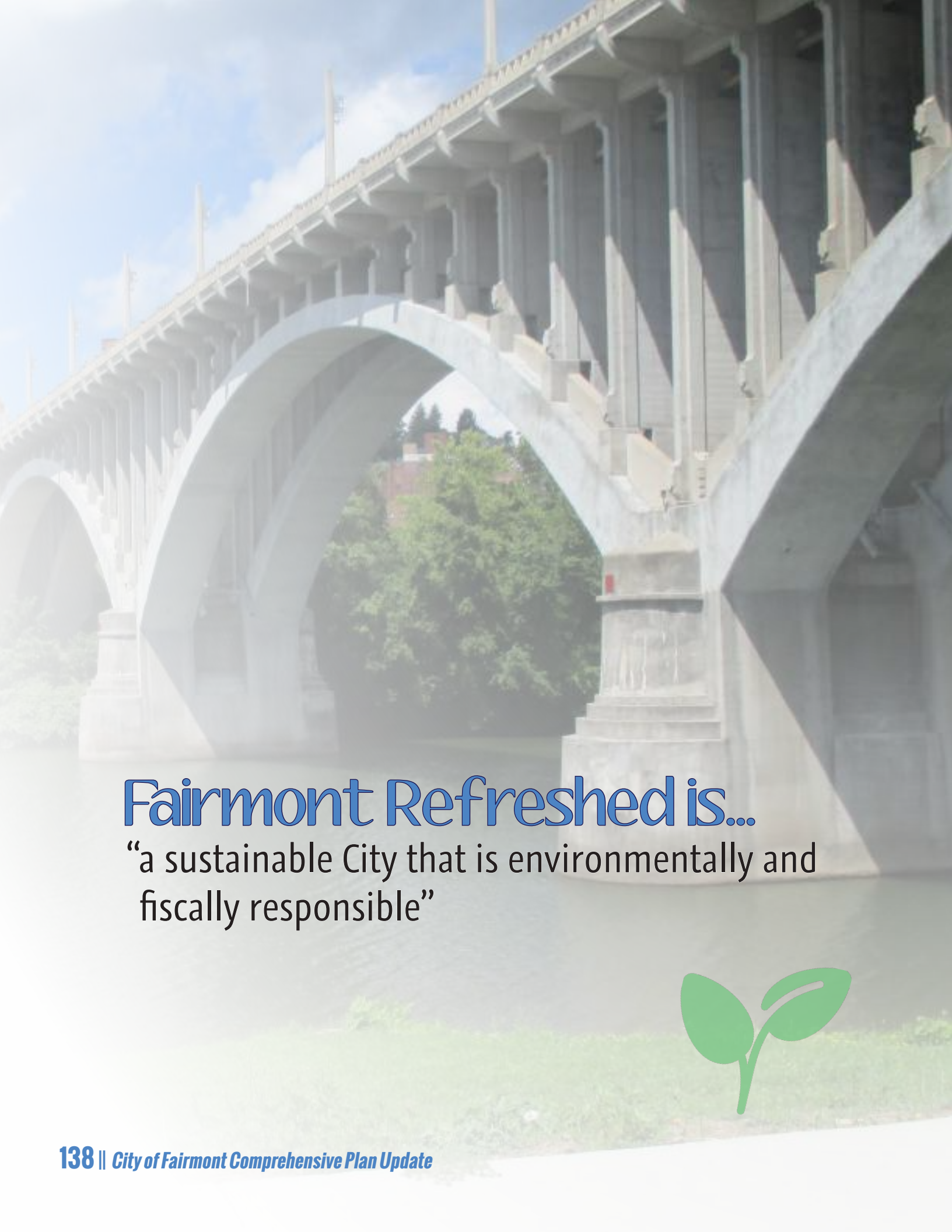
*Photo credit: http://cycle-works.com/product/bus-racks/*

## ☑ Determine the feasibility of installing alternative fueling stations in the City.

According to the American Public Transportation Association, due to the combined reduction in private passenger vehicle miles, reduced automobile congestion, and reduced travel distances due to the land use impact of public transportation, more than 4 billion gallons of gasoline are saved and 37 million metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions are avoided per year. The percentage of buses powered by alternative fuels (CNG/LNG, hybrid [electric and other] and biodiesel) reached almost 50% in 2015.[1]

> » The City should partner with the FMCTA to determine the feasibility of installing alternative fueling stations in the City, which would allow the FMCTA to purchase new buses that use these alternative fuels.

1 *"2016 PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION FACT BOOK ." American Public Transportation Association. http://www.apta.com/resources/statistics/Documents/FactBook/2016-APTA-Fact-Book.pdf*

# Fairmont Refreshed is...

"a sustainable City that is environmentally and fiscally responsible"

# Goal #6:
# Sustainability

*"the ability to be sustained, supported, upheld or confirmed"*

*— dictionary.com*

Sustainable cities, urban sustainability, or eco-city (also "ecocity") is a city designed with consideration for social, economic and environmental impact.

So, what makes a city sustainable? Here are ten ways that the City of Fairmont can become a more sustainable city in the future:

1. Communication - making sure City departments are working together.

2. Political support - having the elected officials support and promote sustainability.

3. Financing - providing the funding to implement sustainable projects.

4. Auditing - tracking sustainable measures to document the outcomes.

5. Networking - implementing new and innovative ideas from around the country/world.

6. Alternative transportation - promoting walking, bicycling and public transit.

7. Collaborative partnerships - working with local community organizations.

8. Climate resiliency - planning ahead for extreme weather (flooding, storms, etc.).

9. Alternative energy - permitting and encouraging the use of alternate forms of energy (solar, wind, geothermal, etc.).

10. Urban growing - encouraging community gardens, urban farming, etc.[1]

_____

1 *Smart Cities (https://www.smartcitiesdive.com/ex/sustainablecitiescollective/21-features-future-sustainable-city/285946/)*

# And the assets are...

The following assets relate directly to the ability of Fairmont to attract residents, visitors and businesses and have been identified by the public as strengths. This list is not intended to be an exhaustive list, but a summary of the most important assets that have either changed since the 2005 Plan or can and should be capitalized on over the next 10 years.

## Public Services

Fairmont offers a broad and wide range of public services to the residents of the community. Basic needs of the community are met through the medical, educational and social service community and non-profit providers. Public safety, disaster preparation and recovery needs are met by the City of Fairmont and other governmental agencies.

The City offers the following departments that are of particular concern to the Comprehensive Plan and future development efforts:

» Building Inspection & Rental Registration
» Communications
» Fire Department
» Parks & Recreation
» Planning & Development

» Police

» Public Works

» Wastewater / Filtration / Stormwater

## Development Review Committee

The City of Fairmont has a Development Review Committee (DRC), whose purpose is to review all site plans for compliance with all applicable codes, regulations, laws, ordinances and plans. The DRC consists of representatives from Planning & Development, Building Services, Fire Services, Police Services, City Engineer, Transportation and Streets and Stormwater. The DRC meets on a weekly basis, as needed.

## Fairmont Community Garden

The Fairmont Community Garden at Oliver Avenue was founded in 2013 with help from community members, local business owners and Fairmont State University. The purpose is to promote community growth through gardening, education and food sustainability.

The garden was built on existing outdated tennis courts that belonged to the City of Fairmont. Grant funds received by Fairmont State University not only allowed the building of the raised beds but also provided a new fence to be installed around the garden.

In April 2016, Learning Options, Inc. became the official adopter group of the Fairmont Community Garden at Oliver Avenue.

The Garden is open to the general public April 1 through October 30 annually, from dawn to dusk. Caretakers are required to pay a minimum donation of $25 per raised garden bed, per garden season; register and commit to care during the full season; and donate time (3 hours/week) to helping care for the Community beds, from which produce is donated to local organizations, including the Fairmont State University food pantry. More information can be found online at http://www.learningoptionsinc.org/fairmont-community-garden.

## Fairmont Farmers Market

Discussed in detail under Goal #3: Vitality, the Fairmont Farmers Market runs Tuesdays in downtown at Veterans Square and Thursdays at the High Tech Park. Both markets are from 4pm to 6pm, June through October.

# And the issues are...

The following issues were identified through stakeholder interviews during the planning process.

## Building & Property Utilization

The City owns several properties throughout the City, a combination of buildings and sites used to house City departments and services, parks and recreation and vacant lots. The utilization and/or capacity of some of these sites needs further examination.

## Stormwater Pollution

Stormwater runoff involves water not absorbed by the ground when it rains. Due to the urban expansion, this has become a growing concern as man-made impervious surfaces, such as rooftops, parking lots and roads increase the amount of stormwater runoff into our watershed. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) now considers this one of the leading causes of water pollution.

The EPA has designated Fairmont, like many other cities across the state, as a "Phase II" Storm Water Community. According to the Clean Water Act, a Phase II designation

requires cities to actively manage stormwater to the new EPA standards or face significant penalties. While a number of cities have brought challenges to this unfunded mandate, the Courts have upheld US EPA's ability to impose stormwater control requirements. Accordingly, Fairmont, along with dozens of other communities in West Virginia and thousands nationwide, is moving to implement a reasonable stormwater control program.

## Hazard Mitigation Plan

The City of Fairmont participated in the development and has adopted a Multi Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan for Marion County. This plan was mandated by the State Office of Emergency Services as a prerequisite for participation in the State Flood Mitigation Assistance Program. The planning process was facilitated by the Marion County Local Emergency Planning Commission.

The Assessment portion of the plan reveals that the City of Fairmont is susceptible to the following Natural Hazards:

1. Flooding- along the banks of the Monongahela River, West Fork River, Tygart River, Buffalo Creek and Coal Run.

2. Winter Storm/Sleet – Fairmont has suffered severe winter storm events.

3. Severe Thunderstorm- Thunderstorms occur with some regularity, causing flooding and high winds.

4. Hailstorms- Hail will sometimes accompany wind storms and thunderstorms.

5. Wind Storms- High winds tend to accompany thunderstorms.

6. Landslide and Erosion – Fairmont has a significant amount of development on steep slopes, which contributes to the risk of landslide.

7. Drought – Fairmont frequently experiences drought conditions.

8. Temperature Extreme /Heat Wave – Heat waves occur during summer months that can affect older residents and people with existing health conditions.

However, the 2005 Comprehensive Plan noted that the plan only addresses natural disasters and not man-made ones and recommended that the City complete a Hazard Mitigation Plan specific to man-made hazards and develop an Emergency Response Plan that is specific to the needs of the City of Fairmont for both natural and man-made hazards. Neither of these has been completed.

# And the objectives are...

**S1    Deliver competent and efficient public services.**

As public officials are well aware, residents and other taxpayers expect local government to responsibly steward public resources in the provision of public services and amenities. Effective and transparent local government is key to public confidence, which can impact the extent to which taxpayers feel well invested in the community and care about its welfare. City government should continue to strive to provide the highest-quality level of public services.

☑ **Continue to fund capital improvements to the City's infrastructure system according to a Capital Improvement Plan on a five-year basis.**

Section 5.05 of the City of Fairmont Charter requires that the City Manager as part of the annual budget process, prepare a five-year Capital Improvement Plan for the City, which lists all capital improvements that are proposed for the five fiscal years ensuing. The Plan includes cost estimates for the improvements along with a method of finance and the recommended time schedule for each improvement as well as gives an annual cost for the operation and maintenance of any facilities that are to be constructed or acquired.

Capital improvements include those non-recurring expenditures or any expenditure for physical improvements, including costs for: acquisition of existing buildings, land, or interests in land; construction of new buildings or other structures, including additions and major alterations; construction of streets and highways or utility lines; acquisition of fixed equipment; or landscaping.

☑ **Continue to review and assess needs for capital outlay for equipment and supplies to allow police, fire, public works and utilities departments to operate effectively.**

Interviews with the Police and Fire Chiefs revealed the following future needs and considerations to increase their capacity to provide the highest quality service:

» Determine the feasibility to transition from 2-man fire substations to 3-man fire substations.

» Purchase a ladder truck for the East Side (needed to reach mid- to high-rise apartment buildings).

» Ensure that the fire department is capable of swift water rescue.

» Consider changing some street names to reduce confusion with emergency responders due to similarities.

» Increase funding for police public safety personnel; more manpower is needed to handle investigations.

☑ **Implement a City-wide GIS system.**

Geographic information systems (GIS) integrate data with spatial mapping, which can help the City of Fairmont better coordinate information that can improve the capacity of a variety of departments, including Planning & Development, Utilities, Public Works, Parks & Recreation, Police and Fire. Some of the ways that a Citywide GIS system can help include:

» Utilities – Collecting data related to the location of facilities, age, planned improvements, issues, etc.

» Streets – maintenance schedule, planned projects, street lights, traffic signals, signs

» Sidewalks - locations, condition, planned projects

» Parks and Facilities – tracking revenue generation from facility rental, location and condition of city trees

» Capital Improvement Project Planning – tracking project locations may allow timing projects in close vicinity to each other, or grouping smaller projects together for efficiency

» Police & Fire – 911 data accuracy is a critical factor in emergency response timing. Uses range from routing to specific property access information, like emergency access or evacuation plans during natural disasters or large public events

» Code enforcement - tracking previous violations, vacant and rental property registration information

☑ **Increase the utilization of City-owned property and buildings.**

As discussed under the Issues section, the City owns multiple properties and buildings throughout Fairmont, some of which is not being utilized to their fullest extent.

» The City should conduct a feasibility / utilization study on the Public Safety Building, located at 500 Quincy Street. The building houses both Public Works and the Police Department, which have outgrown the space and there is no room for expansion. In addition, the maintenance costs for building repair (roof, landslides) have been costly. The study should look at what departments could be housed there, what improvements are needed and whether the cost of such improvements is cost-effective.

» City Hall is located at 200 Jackson Street and the 3rd floor is home to Planning & Development, Parks & Recreation, Building Inspection / Code Enforcement, Communication, Finance and Human Resources. The City should conduct a study to determine if moving these departments to another building Downtown would be beneficial.

» Vacant Property - although the City does not own a lot of vacant lots throughout the City, there are some, which can be costly to maintain. The City could explore creating an "adopt a lot" program for City-owned vacant parcels that would allow neighbors to temporarily use the lots for community gardens, rain / stormwater gardens, flower garden.

## S2 Incorporate environmental responsibility and sustainability into planning and public / private decision-making.

Countless opportunities exist for City government to take steps toward environmental sustainability. Fairmont can save money and protect natural resources by finding ways to advance environmental stewardship within City policies, programs and regulations. The City can also promote environmental stewardship on the part of property owners, residents and business owners by creating and promoting ways for people to protect and preserve environmental resources.

### ☑ Develop and adopt a Hazard Mitigation Plan and Emergency Response Plan.

In the broadest view, community resilience is a capacity to survive, adapt and grow in spite of any chronic stress or acute shock. Chronic stress might take the form of crumbling infrastructure, while an acute shock could be an extreme weather event, disease outbreak or terrorist attack. Fairmont can invest in its long-term sustainability by intentionally and proactively setting strategy to prepare for any possible future disaster. Recommended in the 2005 Plan, this has not yet been implemented, but is still a relevant recommendation and should include:

» Form a committee to develop a Hazard Mitigation Plan specific to man-made hazards and to undertake the planning process.

» Continue public education programs that inform the public of natural and man-made hazards as well as provide mitigation practices.

» Undertake planning process for the creation of a Natural and Man-Made Emergency Response Plan.

### ☑ Evaluate development proposals for their impact on public infrastructure and safety services.

As the City continues to expand (through annexation) and redevelop vacant sites, the Department of Planning & Development should closely coordinate with other City departments to identify potential impacts on the ability of those departments to provide adequate services. Of particular concern include water/sewer extensions and public safety / fire response.

☑ **Continue to incorporate green technology into public projects and reduce energy consumption.**

The City has been proactive in incorporating green technology into public projects, including four rain gardens as part of City parking lots. In addition, the City's website provides information on the City's stormwater management plan and some solutions for residents to utilize at home, such as use of fertilizers and grass clippings. Additional things that the City can do to improve stormwater management include:

» Continue to install rain gardens and other green technology on City property to improve on-lot stormwater management. City parks should employ green technology where feasible (permeable surfaces on courts, rain gardens and bioswales, rain barrels on buildings to collect rain water and re-use for watering plants, composting toilets, etc.).

» Utilize energy-saving methods such as switching to LED light bulbs, automatic light switches in public restrooms and other areas, constructing green buildings, etc.

☑ **Review City policies and ordinances to ensure they are effectively making Fairmont a sustainable community.**

In addition to public projects and outreach, the City can also take steps to ensure that their policies and ordinances are encouraging sustainability on the private-side.

» Determine whether or not to revise the stormwater flat fee to an impact-based fee.

» Identify possible incentives that the City can offer to encourage private developers to incorporate green technology into their buildings and site plans.

» Update the City's website to provide additional information for residents and businesses on how they can provide best management practices for on-lot stormwater management, such as rain barrels, rain gardens and permeable pavers.

» Provide recycling bins in all City buildings, parks and at all events.

» Update ordinances to permit alternative energy, such as windmills, solar energy, geothermal energy, etc.

» Update ordinances to allow compatible types and scales of urban agriculture. See the City of Moundsville case study on page 149.

# Case study: Moundsville, WV - Zoning for Urban Agriculture

The City of Moundsville recently updated their zoning ordinance to allow for Urban Agriculture, as follows:

Beekeeping. Beekeeping is permitted as an accessory use to a dwelling provided that:

» No more than three (3) hives, each with only one swarm, are allowed on lots of less than ten thousand (10,000) square feet; and

» Hives shall not be located within twenty-five (25) feet of any lot line except when situated eight (8) feet or more above the grade immediately adjacent to the grade of the lot on which the hives are located or when situated less than eight (8) feet above the adjacent existing lot grade and behind a solid fence or hedge six (6) feet high parallel to any lot line within twenty-five (25) feet of a hive and extending at least twenty (20) feet beyond the hive in both directions.

Community gardens. The responsibility of managing, maintenance, and operations of community garden sites shall be that of the land owner or designated public or civic entity, nonprofit organization, or other community-based organization. Processing and storage of plants or plant products are prohibited on site. Garden tools and supplies may be stored within an accessory structure.

Composting. Composting shall take place at least fifty (50) feet from any dwelling, except a dwelling associated with the use.

Keeping of fowl. The keeping of fowl is permitted as an accessory use to a dwelling, provided that the number of fowl on property less than one (1) acre shall not exceed six (6) and the number of fowl kept on property greater than (1) acre shall not exceed (12) twelve, and subject to the following provisions:

» A dwelling shall be located on the same lot as the fowl.

» Fowl shall be kept within a building, coop, or enclosure, and within a fully enclosed and fenced rear or side yard such that fowl may not be at large within the City. The building, coop, or enclosure in which the fowl are kept must be at least twenty-five (25) feet from any dwelling, except the primary dwelling situated on the property The building, coop, or enclosure shall be durably constructed and maintained in conformance with the West Virginia State Building Code.

» A permit is required for keeping fowl within the City. A permit may be obtained from the City Clerk after application to the Zoning Officer and an inspection performed by the Zoning Officer.

Incidental sales. Any sale resulting from beekeeping, composting, home agriculture, or keeping of fowl shall constitute a home-based business and is subject to all applicable provisions of this code.

Location. Beekeeping, composting, home agriculture, and keeping of fowl shall not take place in the front yard of any lot, except:

» Plants are integrated with the principal structure's landscaping and primarily serve an ornamental purpose; and

» Ten (10) plants grown for use or consumption may be cultivated in a front yard, separate from the principal structure's landscaping, provided such plants do not exceed four (4) feet in height and the planted area does not exceed twelve (12) square feet.

Prohibitions.

» Livestock shall not be kept within the City.

» Roosters shall not be kept within the City.

» Slaughtering and processing more than six (6) fowl per year is prohibited within the City.

# S3 Encourage efficient and sustainable land use and development patterns.

Chapter 8A requires that municipalities set goals and programs for the proposed general distribution, location and suitable uses of land and identify constraints to development, including identifying flood-prone and subsidence areas.

While the City is home to three rivers, due to topography, the only area that is prone to flooding is the Mid-City area, along Benoni Avenue and Coal Run. The Disability Action Center and Fairmont Bowling Center reported concerns.

Subsidence is the differential settlement of land and may be accompanied by frost heaving, shrink-swell of clay materials and sometimes landslides. Three types of subsidence common to West Virginia are related to mines, karst topography, and fills. Fairmont has experienced its share of mine subsidence. Built over a maze of coal mines, subsidence in Fairmont resulted in jammed doors, failed gas lines, snapped electric lines, sinkholes, and condemned properties. In 1983, 1,000 tons of grout were injected into the mine voids daily in hopes of preventing the downtown from collapsing.

## ☑ Establish preferred development areas.

Preferred development areas are where incentives may be used to encourage more efficient well-designed development either through infill or redevelopment. Development patterns that provide for a mix of uses within a general area allow people to walk or even bike to and from their homes for work, shopping, recreation and entertainment. Preferred development areas are also places that best integrate the use of open space and natural areas during development.

An important distinction to make at this point is that preferred development areas are not boundaries where the only growth within the municipality can occur. Development is not restricted outside of the preferred area. Instead the concept seeks to identify the areas of the City that at the time has distinct advantages to being developed over other areas of the community, i.e. proximity to major roadways, water and sewer services, critical mass.

With a lack of available land for new development, the City's future development trends will be grounded in redevelopment of current sites and through infill. The growth of the region and the pace of development to the north and south of Fairmont make Fairmont the next logical development area in the corridor. The City of Fairmont's challenge is to ensure that their policies

and ordinances are not only permitting, but encouraging infill development and redevelopment of vacant and underutilized sites that advances the City's vision - improving Fairmont and ensuring that the development allows the City to be sustainable.

As shown on "Figure 12: Future Land Use Map" on page 153, the preferred development areas include:

» Residential investment, primarily in the neighborhoods along the Gateway Connector. This area is best suited for new housing developments that capitalize on the easy access to I-79, nearby parks and riverfront views.

» Commercial investment, within the Downtown, near the I-79 Interchange with the Connector and along major commercial corridors including Fairmont Avenue/US 250, Locust Avenue/ US 19, Morgantown Avenue and Speedway Avenue.

» Industrial investment, within and surrounding the High Technology Park.

☑ **Establish renewal and/or redevelopment areas.**

Discussed in more detail under Prosperity and Vitality, many recommendations have been developed that are focused on the redevelopment of the City. As shown on "Figure 12: Future Land Use Map" on page 153, the renewal and/or redevelopment areas include:

» Downtown Historic Infill - focusing on the adaptive reuse of historic properties.

» Residential Historic Infill - focusing on the revitalization of historic residential homes.

» Riverfront Redevelopment - three areas are identified for riverfront redevelopment, which can include a mixture of higher density residential and commercial/retail/office development, including the Beltline neighborhood, Maple/Ogden Avenue area and near Palatine Park / 3rd Street / Merchant Avenue.

» Brownfield Redevelopment - high priorities include the Speedway Business Park (former Owens-Illinois Glass site) and the Sharon Steel/Fairmont Coke Works Superfund site.

» University District - capitalizing on the location of Fairmont State University and Fairmont Regional Medical Center to revitalize the surrounding neighborhoods and creating a "college town" campus (mixture of residential, commercial and institutional/civic uses), with improved pedestrian and bicycle access to Downtown.

## Preferred Development Areas

*"Preferred development areas. -- Consistent with the land use component, identify areas where incentives may be used to encourage development, infill development or redevelopment in order to promote well designed and coordinated communities and prevent sprawl."*

## Renewal and/or Redevelopment Areas

*"Renewal and/or redevelopment. -- Consistent with the land use component, identify slums and other blighted areas and set goals, plans and programs for the elimination of such slums and blighted areas and for community renewal, revitalization and/or redevelopment."*

## Rural

*"Rural. Consistent with the land use component, identify land that is not intended for urban growth and set goals, plans and programs for growth and/or decline management in the designated rural area." - Chapter §8A-3-4.C.6.*

There is no land in the City of Fairmont that is designated rural; it is a built-out. While there is no rural land in the city limits of Fairmont that requires preservation planning, proposed redevelopment sites are recommended to include green technology and sustainable development practices.

*Source: Chapter 8A West Virginia Code*

**Legend**

**Preferred Development Areas**
- Residential Investment
- Commercial Investment
- Industrial Investment

**Conservation Areas**
- Public Parks/Greenways

**Redevelopment / Renewal Areas**
- Downtown Historic Infill
- Residential Historic Infill
- Riverfront Redevelopment
- Brownfield Redevelopment
- University District

Potential Annexation Area

Potential Annexation Area

Potential Annexation Area

Potential Annexation Areas
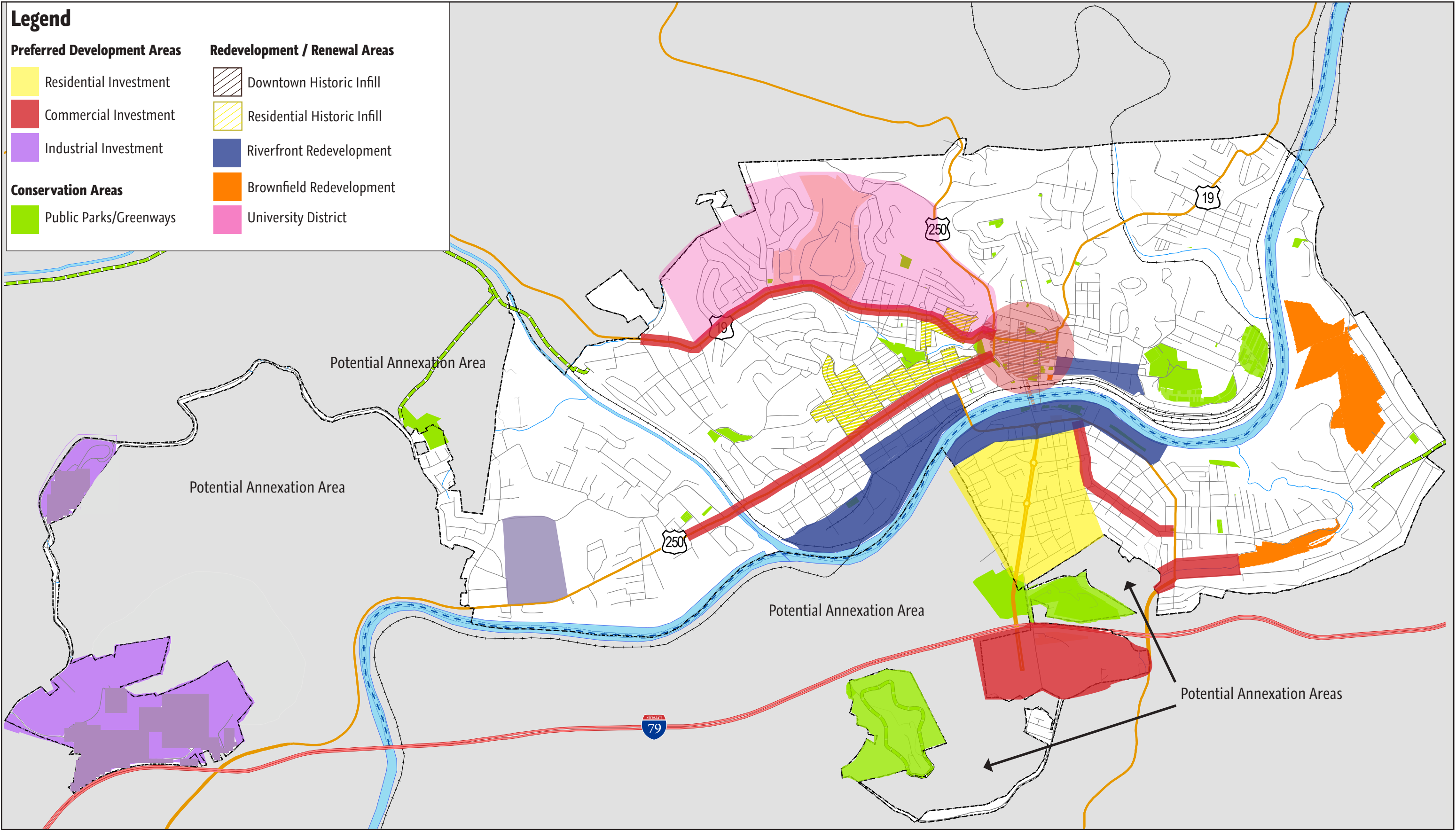
☑ **Update the City's Planning and Zoning Code to implement the Comprehensive Plan Update.**

After updating a Comprehensive Plan, the next logical step is to update the Planning and Zoning Code to ensure that it is implementing the vision established in the Plan. Although the City undertook a significant overhaul to its Planning and Zoning Code in 2015, there are still some updates to consider in order to better implement the vision:

» Planned Development Area - the purpose of this District is to encourage flexibility in the development of land in order to promote its most appropriate use; to improve the design, character and quality of new developments and to provide and promote redevelopment and reuse opportunities. The minimum acreage required is four (4) aces. To date, no one has utilized this provision. The City should review its requirements and talk to developers about how to make this a more attractive alternative to the base zoning.

» Minimum Dimensional Requirements - the City has a minimum lot size of 6,000 square feet and a 60-foot minimum lot width in all zoning districts, along with a minimum house size of 24'x40'. This can present a barrier to accommodating affordable housing, by way of infill development (many lots are only 3-4,000 square feet and cannot provide the minimum house size along with the required setbacks). The City should consider either revising this to allow for smaller lot development in older residential districts or revise the nonconforming lot requirements to avoid landowners needing variances to redevelop their lot in keeping with the existing neighborhood form.

» Nonconforming Uses - the purpose of this section is to establish regulations for lots, buildings and uses of land are either no longer permitted under the current Code or cannot meet the minimum requirements. This section should be updated to clarify the requirements; as currently written, is creating hardships for many property owners that cannot meet the requirements for either minimum lot sizes or setbacks.

» Conversion Apartments - include minimum standards and requirements for single-family homes that are converted into apartments. Sample regulations can include minimum square feet for units; no exterior alterations to the front of the structure (i.e. must remain the facade of a single-family home); maximum number of units; zoning districts where this is permitted.

» Sidewalks - consider requiring all new nonresidential developments and major residential subdivisions to construct sidewalks along all streets, or at the least, providing an alternative pedestrian/bicycle network. In addition, the City should encourage providing connections to existing rail-trails if the site is in close proximity.

# Implementation Plan

The objective of this Chapter is to provide the City with a framework with which to tackle implementation of the Objectives and Actions identified for each of the Plan Goals contained in Chapter 3.

| GOAL 1: ATTRACTION<br>A WELL-KNOWN, UNIQUE, REGIONAL DESTINATION | Priority Level | Action Required for Implementation | | | | | | Potential Partners |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (Short-term = 1-5 years; Long-term = 6-10 years; Ongoing = continuous) | Regulatory Action (policy/ordinance) | Capital Funds | Additional Planning | Staff Time/Resources | Educational/Outreach | Coordination | |
| **Objective A 1: Strenthen Fairmont's identity and sense of place.** | | | | | | | | |
| Continue to implement the Downtown Design Guidelines. | High - ongoing | | | | X | X | X | |
| Implement a wayfinding program. | High - short-term | X | X | | X | | X | |
| Enhance landscaping along key corridors. | Medium - short- | X | X | X | X | | X | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| **Objective A2: Promote Fairmont and instill a sense of pride amongs residents and businesses.** | | | | | | | | |
| Develop a branding and marketing campaign based on Fairmont's most distinctive assets. | High - short-term | X | X | X | X | X | X | |
| Expand the City's Clean Up efforts to a semi-annual basis. | Medium - long-term | X | | | X | X | X | |
| Identify new opportunities to expand public art. | Medium - long- | | X | X | X | | X | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| **Objective A3: Ensure that equity and inclusion is a reality for all residents of Fairmont.** | | | | | | | | |
| Support the efforts of the City of Fairmont Human Rights Commission. | High - ongoing | | | | X | X | X | |
| Ensure that land use policies and decisions are fair and equitable. | High - ongoing | X | | X | X | | X | |
| Build strong community relationships and trust through outreach and hosting informational events. | Medium - long- | | | X | X | X | X | |

| GOAL 2: PROSPERITY<br>AN EMPLOYMENT HUB CHARACTERIZED BY HIGH OPPORTUNITY WITHIN A GROWING AND DIVERSE LOCAL ECONOMY | Priority Level | Action Required for Implementation | | | | | | Potential Partners |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Regulatory Action (policy/ordinance) | Capital Funds | Additional Planning | Staff Time/Resources | Educational/Outreach | Coordination | |
| **Objective P1: Ensure that City policies and practices are welcoming to the business environment.** | | | | | | | | |
| Continue to develop the Sharon Steel Corp (Fairmont Coke Works Site). | High - short-term | | X | | X | | X | |
| Develop the Speedway Business Park (former Owens-Illinois Site). | High - short-term | X | | X | X | | X | |
| Acquire property to redevelop the Beltline Area. | High - long-term | | X | X | X | | X | |
| Compile and promote an online catalog of available land, building or development site opportunities. | High - short-term | | | X | X | | X | |
| Promote incentives and other funding opportunities. | High - ongoing | X | | | X | | X | |
| Develop local policies, procedures and plans that create a welcoming business environment. | High - ongoing | X | | | X | | X | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| **Objective P2: Partner with local and regional institutional initiatives to retool the work force, attract and prepare for growing industries.** | | | | | | | | |
| Create a University District surrounding FSU, Pierpont and the Hospital to market to and support educational and medical related businesses. | High - short-term | X | | X | X | | X | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| **Objective Encourage and facilitate entrepreneurship.** | | | | | | | | |
| Create a guide to starting a business in Fairmont. | High - short-term | X | X | | X | X | X | |
| Identify potential markets and existing gaps in services and/or resources available to meet those needs. | Medium - long-term | | | X | X | X | X | |
| Facilitate the development of co-working and maker spaces. | Medium - long-term | | X | X | X | | X | |

| | | Action Required for Implementation | | | | | | Potential Partners |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **GOAL 3: VITALITY** **A THRIVING DOWNTOWN BUSINESS DISTRICT WITH A VIBRANT ARTS AND CULTURE SCENE** | | Regulatory Action (policy/ordinance) | Capital Funds | Additional Planning | Staff Time/Resources | Educational/Outreach | Coordination | |
| **Objective V1: Cultivate a safe, busy and functional 24-hour mixed-use environment** | | | | | | | | |
| Facilitate the redevelopment of key historic properties for multi-family residential and creative ground floor uses. | High - short-term | | X | | X | | X | |
| Actively recruit downtown anchor businesses and attractions. | High - short-term | | X | X | X | | | |
| Identify suitable vacant buildings that could be made available to artists for creative or studio space, at least initially on a pop-up basis (requires utilities). | Medium - long-term | | | X | X | | X | |
| Establish a center for the performing arts. | Medium - long-term | | X | X | | | X | |
| **Objective V2: Reinforce Downtown as Fairmont's central gathering place.** | | | | | | | | |
| Renew the façade improvement program. | High - short-term | | X | | X | | X | |
| Develop a Downtown streetscape and beautification plan. | High - short-term | | X | X | X | | | |
| Create a permanent structure for the Farmers Market across from the Chamber of Commerce. | High - short-term | | X | X | X | | X | |
| Form a Business Improvement District. | Medium - long-term | | | | X | X | X | |
| Implement a strategy focused on arts, culture and outdoor recreation. | Medium - long-term | | | | X | X | X | |
| **Objective V23: Ensure that downtown is a safe and welcoming environment.** | | | | | | | | |
| Provide a more visible police presence. | High - short-term | | | | X | X | X | |
| Partner with the hospital, schools and public safety (police, EMS) to provide educational outreach progams regarding drugs and support services. | High - short-term | | | | X | X | X | |

| GOAL 4: NEIGHBORHOODS<br>A COMMUNITY OF SAFE, HIGH-QUALITY NEIGHBORHOODS | | Regulatory Action (policy/ordinance) | Capital Funds | Additional Planning | Staff Time/Resources | Educational/Outreach | Coordination |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Objective N1: Develop complete neighbohooods that can accommodate a variety of housing to meet current and future demand.** | | | | | | | |
| Encourage new housing developments that can attract young professionals and families. | High - short-term | | | | X | | X |
| Review and update the City's zoning ordinance to encourage flexibility and adaptive re-use to ensure that the current housing stock can meet future demands. | High - short-term | X | | | X | | X |
| Promote the advantages of living in historic neighborhoods. | Medium - long-term | | | | X | X | |
| | | | | | | | |
| **Objective N2: Improve neighborhood safety and stability throughout the City.** | | | | | | | |
| Develop a strategic investment plan at the neighborhood level. | High - short-term | | X | | X | | X |
| Review and modify as needed the Rental Registration and Vacant Property Registration programs. | High - short-term | X | | | X | | X |
| Ensure that the City has the capacity to enforce ordinances and conduct inspections. | High - ongoing | X | | | X | | X |
| Encourage home-ownership by publicizing local and regional programs. | Medium - long-term | | | | X | X | X |
| Ensure that there are no local barriers to providing affordable and supportive housing to disadvantaged persons. | Medium - short-term | X | | | X | | X |
| | | | | | | | |
| **Objective N3: Enhance the quality of life of neighborhoods through parks and recreation.** | | | | | | | |
| Continue to improve City parks and recreation areas. | High - ongoing | | X | | X | | |
| Pursue the development of an indoor recreation center. | High - short-term | | X | X | X | X | X |
| Utilize Coal Run Hollow as a greenway. | Medium - short-term | | X | | X | X | X |

# GOAL #5: CONNECTIVITY
# AN ACCESSIBLE CITY THAT IS WELL CONNECTED BY A MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

| | | Regulatory Action (policy/ordinance) | Capital Funds | Additional Planning | Staff Time/Resources | Educational/Outreach | Coordination |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Objective C1:  Improve traffic safety and flow** | | | | | | | |
| Form a subcommittee to continue to evaluate the City transportation system. | Medium - long-term | | | X | X | | |
| Conduct a traffic study to determine the cost-benefit of implementing one-way streets to improve traffic flow. | Medium - long-term | | | X | X | | |
| Continue work with the WV DOH to expedite the widening of Locust Avenue and replacement of the 4$^{th}$ Street Bridge. | High - Ongoing | | | | X | | X |
| Coordinate with the WV DOH to improve Route 250 South (from the Watson Bridge to I-79). | Medium - long-term | | | X | X | | X |
| **Objective C2: Ensure that Fairmont is a pedestrian and bicycle friendly City.** | | | | | | | |
| Adopt a Complete Streets ordinance to accommodate all types of users (pedestrians, cyclists, transit, etc.) | High - short-term | X | | | X | X | X |
| Prepare a detailed sidewalk assessment and plan to prioritize areas to improve when funds become available. | High - short-term | | X | X | X | | X |
| Extend the rail trails into Downtown Fairmont. | High - short-term | | X | X | X | | X |
| Improve trailhead access on west side of City. | Medium - long-term | | X | X | X | | X |
| Improve directional signs to trailheads. | Medium - long-term | | X | X | X | | X |
| Implement the Coal Run Greenway Project. | Medium - long-term | | X | X | X | | X |
| **Objective C3:  Ensure that public transit can meet future demands** | | | | | | | |
| Factor public transit fixed routes into future land use policy and decision making regarding major subdivisions and land developments. | Medium - short-term | X | | | X | | X |
| Identify suitable locations for bus shelters. | Medium - long-term | | | X | | | X |
| Install bike racks on all buses. | High - short-term | | X | | | | X |
| Determine the feasibility of installing alternative fueling stations in the City (natural gas, electric charging stations) to allow transit to move towards greener vehicles. | Medium - long-term | | | X | | | X |

## GOAL #6 SUSTAINABILITY
## AN ENVIRONMENTALLY AND FINANCIALLY SUSTAINABLE CITY

| | | Regulatory Action (policy/ordinance) | Capital Funds | Additional Planning | Staff Time/Resources | Educational/Outreach | Coordination |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Objective S1: Deliver competent and efficient public services.** | | | | | | | |
| Continue to fund capital improvements to the City's infrastructure system according to a Capital Improvement Plan on a five-year basis. | High - ongoing | X | | X | X | | |
| Continue to review and assess needs for capital outlay for equipment and supplies to allow police, fire, public works and utilities departments to operate effectively. | High - ongoing | | | X | X | | X |
| Implement a City-wide GIS system. | High - short-term | | X | X | X | X | X |
| Increase the utilization of City-owned property and buildings. | High - short-term | | X | X | X | | X |
| **Objective S2: Incorporate environmental responsibility and sustainability into planning and public / private decision-making.** | | | | | | | |
| Develop and adopt a Hazard Mitigation Plan and Emergency Response Plan. | High - short-term | X | | X | X | X | X |
| Evaluate development proposals for their impact on public infrastructure and safety services. | Medium - ongoing | | | | X | | X |
| Continue to incorporate green technology into public projects and reduce energy consumption. | Medium - long-term | | X | X | X | | |
| Review City policies and ordinances to ensure they are effectively making Fairmont a sustainable community. | Medium - short-term | X | | X | X | | X |
| **Objective S3: Establish Preferred Development Areas to encourage efficient and sustainable development.** | | | | | | | |
| Update the City's Planning and Zoning Code to implement the preferred development areas and overall vision. | High - short-term | X | X | X | X | X | X |

# Financing

The objective of this chapter is to provide innovative financial strategies for the short and long-term recommendations of this Comprehensive Plan in respect to the responsibilities of the City as outlined under the Implementation section of this Plan.

# Financing

It is important to note that significant funding constraints currently impact all levels of government.  Public financial assistance is increasingly competitive with a larger number of projects seeking less available dollars.  With that in mind, the planning process included a detailed investigation into innovative and emerging development finance tools. We must continue to explore potential new funding mechanisms and strategies to fill the capital stack for priority projects.  Specifically, the planning team reviewed tax increment financing, the Power of 32 Site Development Fund, New Markets Tax Credits, Impact Investing and the EB5 program.  Detailed summaries and strategies are provided below.

A variety of funding tools exist to implement components of the plan recommendations -debt and equity - public and private.  In some cases, it may be appropriate to utilize existing traditional funding resources.   Implementing priority projects and programs will most likely require new and innovative funding approaches.

## Tax Increment Financing

In 2002, West Virginia joined the growing list of states allowing the use of tax increment financing (TIF) to facilitate economic development and job creation.  Amendment One to the West Virginia Constitution enabled the use of TIF, and the State Legislature subsequently passed the West Virginia TIF Act to implement the program.  Fairmont City Council passed an ordinance creating a TIF District in 2015 following approval of the Redevelopment District No. 1 Plan by the state Development Office.

TIF allows for the capture of increases in real property taxes resulting from new development to pay for public improvements like necessary infrastructure.  All or a portion of new tax revenues generated above the initial tax base can be diverted to fund eligible project costs.  Nonrecourse debt, typically a revenue bond, is issued via an eligible authority of the sponsoring municipality to provide upfront financing.  Alternatively, investments can be reimbursed from the flow of annual tax revenues diverted and captured within the district ('pay-as-you-go' method).

The ability to generate incremental taxes within the district depends upon new growth and other economic activity that results in increased real estate assessed valuation. The City's Redevelopment Plan outlined an ambitious list of proposed area-wide and site-specific investments intended to facilitate development within the TIF District. However, weak local market conditions and other development constraints have hindered redevelopment opportunities in Fairmont. It is difficult to solicit financing to complete planned infrastructure improvements based upon speculative future development and uncertain pledged tax revenues. In such cases, other sources of upfront funding are often necessary to 'jump-start' development within a TIF District.

As of June 2017, approximately $350,000 has been collected within the City TIF Fund as assessed valuation of the district has increased. The most significant increment generated within the TIF District has been the result of a transfer that changed ownership to a for-profit entity thus bringing formerly exempt property back on the tax rolls. New development within the TIF District has generated limited incremental revenues to support the planned public improvements.

It is recommended the City pursue the following strategies to more effectively utilize the TIF District:

» Utilize City TIF Fund balance for infrastructure investment in targeted areas ('Pay-As-You-Go' projects) in an effort to generate future assessed value growth.

› Actively explore and pursue other funding sources to 'jump-start' priority redevelopment projects.

» Market the TIF program benefits to property owners and developers.

› Work with developers to determine potential TIF net proceeds, financing structure and eligible uses.

› Explore potential to divert a portion of site-specific TIF proceeds to City TIF Fund (excess increment)

» Develop relationships with potential TIF investors in the event financing becomes feasible (site-specific/'Bonded' projects).

## Power of 32 Site Development Fund

The Power of 32 visioning project identified common challenges and opportunities within the greater multi-state Pittsburgh region. The collaborative spans over 32 counties in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ohio and Maryland. Planned initiatives related to the economy, education, environment, community, government, transportation and infrastructure seek to create a thriving region.

The regional agenda recognizes that increasing the inventory of shovel-ready sites generates opportunities for greater business investment and job creation. The Allegheny Conference on Community Development led the effort to establish a fund to assist in the preparation of high-quality sites, emphasizing redevelopment of brownfields, to support business relocations and expansions in the region. Established in 2014, the Site Development Fund provides private investment to support site development.

To meet market demands, it is critical that sites are prepared for development including grading, infrastructure installation and environmental remediation. The Power of 32 Site Development Fund closes critical infrastructure financing gaps by making patient mortgage loans to sites that have the potential for regional impact or that are identified as a priority for the greater region. The Fund targets larger sites over 25 acres with a planned industrial, commercial or mixed use. The governing board has identified a preference for facilitating the redevelopment brownfield sites or land in underserved communities targeted by the Community Reinvestment Act.

## New Market Tax Credit

Established by Congress in 2000, the New Market Tax Credit Program (NMTC Program) aims to attract the private investment necessary to revitalize struggling local economies. It attracts private capital into low-income communities by permitting individual and corporate investors to receive a tax credit against their federal income tax in exchange for making equity investments in specialized financial intermediaries called Community Development Entities (CDEs). The credit totals 39 percent of the original investment amount and is claimed over a period of seven years. CDE's then provide subsidized financing to qualifying entities in low-income communities.

The US Department of Treasury CDFI Fund allocates tax credit authority to CDE's through a competitive application process. NMTC Program allocatees have approved service areas that range from local to national in scale. Figure 13 is a list of CDE's that currently service the state of West Virginia.

The NMTC program is flexible with regard to project type and purpose. Recipients of NMTC investments can finance equipment,

Figure 13: CDE's Serving West Virginia

| Awardee | City | State | Amount | Service Area |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Boston Community Capital Inc. | Boston | MA | $55,000,000 | National |
| CAHEC New Markets, LLC | Raleigh | NC | $45,000,000 | Multi-State |
| Harbor Bankshares Corporation | Baltimore | MD | $70,000,000 | Multi -State |
| Midwest Renewable Capital, LLC | Grimes | IA | $80,000,000 | National |
| People Incorporated Financial Services | Abingdon | VA | $65,000,000 | Multi -State |
| The Business Valued Advisor Fund, LLC | Chicago | IL | $45,000,000 | National |

business operations or real estate. Each CDE has a specific investment strategy with regards to geography, project type and other factors. Eligible projects typically include community health clinics, charter schools and manufacturing facilities. The most recent report by The New Markets Tax Credit Coalition detailed that an increasing number of projects included the financing of business s and shared entrepreneurial space .

## Impact Investing

Unfortunately, public sector and philanthropic resources are insufficient to address the challenges faced by underserved communities. Impact investing is an emerging area of the capital markets that links desired societal outcomes to sources of capital. Beyond financial returns, investors seek to generate social and environmental benefits. These outcomes are measured and reported to investors. It should be noted that this is not a new source of capital for projects. However, it represents a strategy to attract additional investors and funding dedicated to sustainable development.

Foundations, governments and development finance institutions have started to collaborate in an attempt to leverage investments that will address society's greatest challenges. For example, the Rockefeller Foundation seeks to provide philanthropic risk capital to develop innovative financing mechanisms that will mobilize private sector capital in new and more efficient ways for projects that create a more resilient and inclusive world. The Kresge Foundation recently launched Kresge Community Finance, a $30 million program-related investment offering available to development finance agencies working to expand opportunities for low-income people in America's cities. The Goldman Sachs Social Impact Fund is one of the first domestic impact investing vehicles sponsored by a major financial institution.

Impact investments can be made across asset classes, including but not limited to cash equivalents, fixed income, venture capital and private equity. Within Fairmont, impact investment strategies could focus on neighborhood revitalization, job creation/small businesses development, green infrastructure and the provision of social/educational services.

It is recommended that stakeholders explore a partnership with the local foundation community and major financial institutions operating in the region. They can further leverage commitments in an effort to seek additional support from the large national foundations actively seeking to further innovative finance mechanisms tied to social, economic and environmental outcomes. Many of Fairmont's priority projects closely align with the sustainable development policy goals of these organizations.

# EB-5

The Employment-Based Immigration: Fifth Preference (EB-5) Immigrant Investor Program allows foreign investors to achieve legal U.S. residency as a result of financial investments that create domestic jobs. Participants receive an employment-based fifth preference visa if they make the necessary investment in a U.S. commercial enterprise (project) and plan to create or preserve 10 permanent full-time jobs for qualified U.S. workers. The EB-5 is administered by United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

The program provides flexible, relatively low cost capital that can facilitate a range of projects. Successful projects using EB-5 financing have included large commercial developments, transit infrastructure, manufacturing and the redevelopment of closed military bases. These foreign investments in an eligible project are made either directly or more commonly through a USCIS designated regional center. West Virginia is currently serviced by eleven approved regional centers, one of which focus exclusively on projects within the state. Investments may be used as debt or equity capital, and total amount of potential funding depends upon job creation estimates (direct or project spending).

Approved by USCIS in 2013, the West Virginia Regional Center (WVRC) seeks to conservatively invest immigrant investor funds into EB5 qualified projects that are located within the state or contiguous counties.

WVRC's investment strategy focuses on the following project types:

» Mixed-Use Development
» R&D/Technology Center
» Energy Projects
» Infrastructure
» Manufacturing
» Entertainment Venues
» Assisted Living Facilities
» Hotels - Full Service and Flagged
» Rural Healthcare Centers

Preferred projects are between $5-20 million, result in significant job creation (direct, indirect and induced) and meet standard underwriting criteria. Typical EB-5 investments are structured as 5-6 year interest only balloon loans. See http://wvregionalcenter.com for additional information.