

Land Use Focus

Much of the effort associated with the development of this Comprehensive Plan was focused toward redevelopment issues. Early in the planning process, many important issues began surfacing about steps the City can take to cause redevelopment and reinvestment in certain areas. The City of Beckley invited residents to attend special planning meetings on September 21, 1999 as part of the Comprehensive Planning Process. The meetings allowed residents to discuss issues and concerns with their ward Council Members in individual break-out groups. The discussions included a review of demographic profiles for the ward, the identification of various neighborhood areas within the ward, a discussion of neighborhood problems, and the prioritization of issues of concern for each ward. Each ward's individual report is included in the Appendix. This chapter will discuss planning for the five ward areas. Recommendations regarding strategies for development and/or redevelopment have been developed, specifically as they relate to land use and zoning.

Beckley Neighborhoods

Strong cities are made up of strong neighborhoods. Residents of most wards were able to identify neighborhood areas within the City. The following section lists the names and locations of neighborhood areas provided by residents at the ward meetings. These names are used in text and maps throughout the Comprehensive Plan.

- Ward 1 residents were not able to identify "neighborhoods" within their area and felt that even the ward boundaries carried little significance to most residents. For descriptive purposes in this Plan, the areas of Maxwell Hill, Exit 44, Crescent Road, and Northwestern Avenues were used as area identifiers.

- Ward 2 residents identify themselves with the ward boundaries and did not feel that there are any individual neighborhoods within Ward 2, although the Uptown area south of Neville and Main, the area to the west of Byrd Drive, and the Woodlawn Avenue areas of the ward were recognized to have unique planning needs within the ward.

- In Ward 3, four distinct neighborhoods were identified: East Park; New River Park; Harper Hill, and Uptown. The neighborhood of East Park is roughly defined as the eastern end of Ward 3, east and south of the CSX Railroad line and north of the Uptown area. The New River Park Neighborhood is geographically at the center of Ward 3 and is composed of the area west of Robert C. Byrd Drive (SR 16), east of Ewart Avenue, and north of Harper Road. The neighborhood of Harper Hill is roughly defined as the southwestern portion of Ward 3. The area has a backbone composed of Westwood Drive and Harper Road east to Ewart Avenue and includes the feeder streets of Fairview Avenue, Hillcrest Street, and West Avenue. The Uptown area of Ward 3 is the Central Business District north of Neville, Main, and South Kanawha Streets. The northern boundary of Uptown is roughly the CSX tracks, Croft and Wilson Streets. The eastern boundary of Uptown is generally considered as far east as Williams Street.

- Ward 4 is a long and narrow area extending from the northeastern reaches of the City to the College of West Virginia near Uptown. This ward has four distinct neighborhood areas: the North-Plaza Mall Area; the Woodcrest Neighborhood; the Pinecrest area; and the Bowling Addition/CWV Area. The North-Plaza Mall area is at the northern reaches of ward 4 generally on the east side of North Eisenhower Drive and

Chapter 9

State Route 16 and is largely commercial. The area includes the Beckley Plaza and Mall. The Woodcrest Neighborhood is found in the north-central parts of Ward 4 and includes the recently-platted residential subdivision which ties into Woodcrest Drive. Major nonresidential uses in this area include Wilson High School, the Beckley Appalachian Regional Hospital, and the Raleigh County Vocational Technical Center. The Pinecrest area is in the south-central part of Ward 4 and includes a number of large institutions and developments. These institutions and developments include the Pinecrest Sanitarium, the Armory, Beckley-Stratton Jr. High, and Pinecrest Business and Tech. Park. Located in the far south end of Ward 4 is an area called the Bowling Addition or CWV area. This area is predominantly residential and commercial. Homes in this area are generally older than homes in the Woodcrest neighborhood.

- In Ward 5, residents noted that in the “old days,” the ward was nicknamed “Froggy Bottom.” Other names provided by participants for various neighborhoods within the ward included the Bibb Avenue Area, the Hill, East Beckley, and the Redbrush Area. However, several people indicated sensitivity to the name Redbrush, which they felt conjured up a negative connotation in the minds of the

general public. The Table 9-1 indicates the physical conditions of various neighborhood areas in each of the Beckley wards.

The following map indicates the ward boundaries and identifies neighborhoods and areas of the City of Beckley.

Neighborhood Organizations

Strong neighborhoods are found where caring and proud residents live in an environment that encourages self-determination and the belief that anything is possible through partnerships and a shared purpose. The City of Beckley recognizes that the most direct path toward developing and maintaining more livable neighborhoods is to pursue a strategy toward greater neighborhood-level involvement and empowerment. This strategy represents a significant shift in thinking toward a more complete and realistic view of neighborhood development. The City seeks to foster an environment that empowers neighborhoods to take a greater role in revitalization and development activities. Residents identified the following neighborhood-based organizations in Beckley:

- In Ward 1, the only community organizations included two Parent-Teacher Organizations (PTO’s) and the Exit 44 Associa-

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Table 9-1 Neighborhood Conditions

	Thriving	Stable buy Threatened	Challenged	Transitional
Ward 1	Maxwell Hill Crescent Rd. Northwestern			West Harper Rd
Ward 2	Woodlawn	West of Byrd Dr.	Uptown (South)	
Ward 3	Harper Hill	New River Park		
Ward 4	Woodcrest	Uptown (North)	East Park	
Ward 5		Bowling Addition		
		Froggy Bottom	East Beckley Bibb Ave Area Redbrush	

Map of Neighborhood Areas in the City of Beckley

Chapter 9

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Neighborhood-based organizations can be at different points of evolution, leadership development, and effectiveness in meeting the needs of their neighborhoods.

tion, which includes the businesses around the SR 64/SR 77 interchange. There is no crime-watch organization in the ward.

- In Ward 2, the Ward 2 Block Watch works closely with police assigned to the Ward 2 Community Policing facility to assist in the prevention of crime in the area.
- In Ward 3, the neighborhood organization is the United Neighbors Neighborhood Crime Watch. The organization involves residents throughout the ward and also includes some residents from the Bowling Addition of Ward 4. As its name implies, the organization works closely with police assigned to the East Park Community Policing facility to assist in the prevention of crime in the area. In addition, the association has undertaken efforts to improve recreational activities for children in East Park and to report abandoned housing and overgrown vacant lots.

It was noted by several residents that the organization should begin to hold monthly ward meetings as they once did. It was suggested the ward Councilperson and neighborhood residents could use the meetings to discuss areas of concern and to invite key City staff (such as the building inspector or the park's manager) to assist residents develop strategies for community improvements.

- In Ward 4, the Woodcrest Neighborhood Organization is an active neighborhood group focused on issues which pertain to the Woodcrest development. The United Neighbors Crime Watch organization (from Ward 3) is active in parts of the Bowling Addition of Ward 4.
- Ward 5: The participants mentioned that they had no viable neighborhood organization that could help with some of their needs. The only organization mentioned was the East Beckley Community Association or Organization, but many thought that this group existed only on paper. Ward

5 residents appear to want a Block Watch.

Neighborhood-based organizations can be at different points of evolution, leadership development, and effectiveness in meeting the needs of their neighborhoods. Three terms generally used to describe the status of neighborhood-based organizations are: functioning; emerging; and potential. These terms are defined as follows:

- **A functioning neighborhood-based organization holds regular meetings that focus on activities that will lead to neighborhood revitalization or maintaining the living and working conditions of a defined area** of common geography and neighborhood issues within the City. It has organizational capacity and resources indicated by representational membership (with most of the membership from within the neighborhood), elected leadership, and legal status as an organization incorporated as an Ohio nonprofit corporation.

In addition, the organization should have a determination from the IRS that it is a charitable organization meeting the Federal tax-exemption requirements of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code which enables it to directly apply for funds from philanthropic organizations. It is suggested that the Woodcrest Neighborhood Organization, the Exit 44 Association, and possibly the United Neighbors Crime Watch could be considered functioning neighborhood-based organizations.

- An emerging neighborhood-based organization is typically an existing neighborhood association or a fledgling nonprofit corporation dedicated to neighborhood revitalization, but does not meet the definition of a functioning neighborhood-based organization. It is

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Chapter 9

thought that the Ward 2 Block Watch and the East Beckley Community Association are examples of emerging organizations that, with a little more guidance, could become even more effective for neighborhood improvement fully functioning.

- A potential neighborhood-based organization is one that does not currently exist, but could begin functioning with a little encouragement. The key ingredient for a potential neighborhood-based organization to emerge is leadership with a mission to involve fellow residents in activities to improve their neighborhood. In some cases, more than one neighborhood-based organization could serve the same area due to activity focus differences (as an example, a block watch, a neighborhood housing/economic development organization, and a service club could co-exist within a neighborhood and each achieve great results). Areas which could benefit from neighborhood-based organization activities and which appear to have the key leadership ingredients include Maxwell Hill, Harper Hill, the western area of Ward 2, East Park, and the East Beckley/Redbrush areas.

Functioning Neighborhood-Based Organizations in Thriving Neighborhoods

Ultimately, functioning neighborhood-based organizations in thriving neighborhoods are desired for the City of Beckley. There seems to be a desire for more contact between ward councilpersons, City staff, and neighborhood residents.

The City approach for neighborhood revitalization is to become engaged with functioning neighborhood-based organizations, as well as to nurture emerging neighborhood-based organiza-

tions and establish new neighborhood-based organizations in appropriate areas to assist them with becoming functioning entities. The implications for the City providing neighborhood walking patrols and using police to staff Block Watch organizations is that these efforts have been the historical first step in many cities for neighbors to get involved in the revitalization of their communities and have often spurred the creation of neighborhood improvement organizations. The City can and should take steps to foster and encourage residents to participate in neighborhood betterment groups.

Neighborhood-based organizations function at different levels. Some are organizations that focus on neighborhood organizing for crime-watch, clean up, and image-building campaigns. Highly functioning neighborhood-based organizations have also become active players in the development arena, implementing real estate development projects.

None of the neighborhood-based organizations in Beckley currently have the capacity or training to undertake home construction, rehabilitation, etc., and it would likely take years to develop this capacity. However, it is an effective and efficient policy for the City to direct energy and resources toward involving neighborhood-based organizations in determining neighborhood priorities, consensus building, project identification, leverage of additional resources, and formation of project development teams to cause the implementation of key projects.

Neighborhood-based organizations can help spotlight problems regarding street conditions, traffic patterns, neglected property, and related problems. The City can look to neighborhood-based organizations to aid in efforts to market its housing and economic development programs (such as housing rehabilitation, first-time home buyer programs, demolition, etc.,) to

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help provide the greatest program impact. Over the long term, many neighborhood-based organizations want to increase internal capacity to provide more substantial responsibilities in real estate development projects. A City strategy to partner with neighborhood-based organizations and help them meet goals to revitalize their neighborhoods can expedite solutions to current problems and increase the overall revitalization activity within the City. In order to continue to support the evolution and growth of neighborhood groups, some City staffing priorities could be changed to include responsibilities for assisting organizations meet regularly, provide assistance in the preparation of detailed strategic neighborhood revitalization plans, and coordinate City resources as neighborhood needs arise.

Neighborhood-based Organizations And Local Institutions and Businesses

One way to promote the internal capacity and potential success of neighborhood groups is to encourage the development of relationships between neighborhood-based organizations and public and private institutions and/or businesses located in a particular neighborhood.

The fact that business owners desire a better, safer community is often overlooked by neighborhood groups. The talents and resources of corporate managers with an interest in the revitalization of the neighborhood can be useful to help solve neighborhood problems. Institutional partners may include hospitals, churches, schools, and government representatives. Access to capital can be secured through the participation of banks that recognize potential market opportunities in neighborhood lending or that seek to satisfy Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) requirements. Nonresident small business merchants in a neighborhood are often motivated to help improve the neighborhood environment out of safety concerns or to

build a stronger market. The promotion of these relationships can help create a synergy between local residents and nonresidential entities that are already part of the neighborhood fabric and character. Therefore, facilitating and encouraging such relationships is a recommended approach.

Potential Development Partners

Neighborhood groups need administrative and project-related resources to develop additional organizational and development capacity. The City, through its resources and contacts, can encourage and pursue local and national funding and development partnerships/relationships that will assist neighborhood organizations with direct services, funding, and other requisite skills to undertake revitalization projects.

Some of the largest support organizations for neighborhood-based development organizations include the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), The Enterprise Foundation, Neighborhood Housing Services of America, and the Structured Employment/Economic Development Corporation (SEEDCo).

- LISC is the nation's largest support organization for grassroots community building with its mission to mobilize partnerships to help local people rebuild deteriorated neighborhoods and rural areas across America. Established by the Ford Foundation in 1979, LISC provides funding and technical know-how to neighborhood-based development organizations to create affordable homes for working families, spur commercial investment, create jobs, and expand opportunity in low-income neighborhoods. LISC works with neighborhood-based development organizations because it believes they are accountable to local residents and they produce tangible results through working part-

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Chapter 9

nerships in neglected areas that encourage private sector investment. By channeling funds to local neighborhood development organizations and providing any needed technical support, LISC believes it empowers residents to set their own priorities and shape the process of community renewal.

LISC supports programs that help rebuild communities such as community-based housing development programs, programs aimed at large scale retail developments, anti-crime partnerships with local police, programs that enhance local efforts at building civic involvement, community-based childcare programs, those aimed at employment and training partnerships, and those that build partnerships among neighborhood-based development organizations and local housing authorities to redevelop communities. LISC has 43 local programs working in over 100 cities and urban counties across the country with a track record of direct assistance to over 1,500 groups who created over 80,000 homes, and 10.3 million square feet of commercial and industrial space.

- The Enterprise Foundation is a national, nonprofit housing and community development organization created in 1982 by Jim Rouse. The Foundation's mission is to cultivate, collect, and disseminate expertise and resources to help communities across the United States successfully improve the quality of life for low-income people and bring lasting improvements to distressed communities. In order to achieve that mission, Enterprise works through a network of more than 1,500 community-based nonprofit organizations by providing opportunities and solutions for low-income housing, community development, and social services.

- SEEDCo was established in 1986 with

a grant from the Ford Foundation to provide technical and financial assistance to neighborhood-based organizations and local "anchor" institutions that are working in partnership to revitalize disadvantaged neighborhoods. These anchor institutions include colleges, universities, hospitals, community health centers, community foundations, youth-serving agencies, workforce development organizations, and government entities.

SEEDCo has helped to catalyze partnerships between 105 institutions and 90 neighborhood-based groups in 58 localities. A key SEEDCo program is the Historically Black Colleges and Universities project which seeks to engage institutions in community development efforts. SEEDCo also has a program which provides technical assistance to nonprofit human service groups, especially on workforce development and youth development.

- Neighborhood Housing Services (NHS) of America is a private, nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation created in 1974 to form partnerships with neighborhood residents, business leaders, and local government officials who make a commitment to each other to provide the resources necessary to revitalize their neighborhoods. NHS partnership programs are active in 47 states and serve more than 1,004 communities (45% serve minority neighborhoods).

NHS offers its partners technical services, core operating support, capital grants, and five major types of loan products which include: rehabilitation and secondary financing recourse loans; recourse first mortgages for problem properties; non-recourse first mortgages; multi-family permanent financing; and interim real estate development financing. A major tool is the creation of a locally funded and controlled revolving loan fund, which is

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used to make affordable loans (individually tailored to the client's ability to pay) to residents who do not qualify for conventional loans.

Neighborhood Strategic Planning

One of the most important steps for neighborhood revitalization undertaken by neighborhood-based organizations is the preparation of a strategic development plan to improve the neighborhood. The purpose of the neighborhood planning should be to determine priorities, develop action plans, and create internal organization capacity and relationships with development partners for implementation.

The City should play a major role in the neighborhood-level strategic planning process. It should outline the desired plan contents, insist on and help to maximize neighborhood participation, and ensure that there is consensus on an initial list of parties responsible for data gathering and ultimate implementation of various potential components of the plan.

Small planning grants using public or private sources of funds could be awarded to selected organizations to enable them engage planning consultants to lead the planning process. (The State of West Virginia has recently increased the funding available for planning grants funded by Community Development Block Grants from \$60,000 to up to \$100,000.) Upon completion of a neighborhood plan and adoption by the neighborhood, the City should review and adopt each plan.

The contents of a neighborhood plan should consist of at least the following elements:

- **Neighborhood History:** This component is a brief overview of the history of the neighborhood and its relationship to the community, as a whole.
- **Neighborhood Analysis:** This component

should include both a subjective and objective analysis of neighborhood strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The objective analysis should entail a general description of the area through U.S. Census data, surveys, auditor information, real estate data, and crime statistics. Identification of trends would also be helpful.

An existing land use inventory of the neighborhood should be prepared along with zoning information, a description of the housing stock, a listing of identifying characteristics of the neighborhood (boundaries, physical attributes, historic/architectural features, natural features, average lot sizes and configurations), a description of open space and recreational areas, an inventory of vacant lots, a map of the existing transportation and circulation system, and a listing of capital improvement needs.

- **Environmental Scan:** This component is an assessment of the local political, social, and economic conditions that may or may not impact the neighborhood.
- **Overview of Existing Local Plans:** The neighborhood should be aware of existing City and County plans and determine how they may impact the development of the neighborhood (e.g., Master Plan, Capital Improvements Plan, Community Economic Development Strategy, transportation plans, park, and bicycle trail plans, etc.) Another benefit of this kind of review is that it allows the neighborhood to be compared with the rest of the City and adjoining neighborhoods.
- **Formulation of a Vision Statement, Goals and Objectives:** Assuming the best possible scenarios, how do residents see their neighborhood in ten to twenty years? This vision should be crafted into

Chapter 9

a short statement that could possibly be adopted as the mission of the NBO. The general objectives, goals, and implementation activities identified in the plan should flow from and lead to implementation of the vision.

- **Formulation of Neighborhood Plan:** At a minimum, this component should address the following issues: housing, parks and open space, future land use, vacant land reuse, zoning changes for inappropriately-zoned areas (e.g., overuse of multi-family zoning), neighborhood retail, traffic circulation, listing of needed capital improvements (lighting, storm drainage, sewer work, curb, roadway improvements, tree trimming, sidewalks,) and recommendations for improved City services (police, fire, refuse, street/alley cleaning, leaf pickup, and enforcement of housing, zoning, building, and health codes).

- **Prioritization:** The plan should prioritize those elements of high importance that need to be implemented first based on neighborhood consensus.

The plan should be reviewed and approved by the residents in order to maximize their agreement and involvement in implementation. The plan should also be submitted to the City Planning Commission for their review and comment and the finished plan to City Council for approval and inclusion in the overall City Comprehensive Plan by amendment. Information summary data can also be forwarded to the City's Consolidated Plan.

Participation in Public Decisions

The City of Beckley should continue to seek advisory participation from neighborhood-based organizations in legislative decisions. Where a neighborhood has created a strategic plan that has been

adopted by the City, the neighborhood organization should be contacted for matters related to the municipal services, capital improvements, law enforcement, rezoning, code enforcement, nuisance abatement efforts, the identification of buildings for demolition, and targeting of federal community development funds. This request for input should be part of the formal deliberative process undertaken by City Council. Some communities copy neighborhood-based organizations with information sent to City Council members when these matters are brought up for discussion.

Neighborhood Identity:

The City should attempt to help neighborhoods create a unique identity characteristic of the area and its history. Efforts to create neighborhood identity could include unique street lighting, street and sidewalk treatments, boulevard creation, individualized zoning overlays, signage treatments, tree planting, beautification themes, public open space located at key neighborhood street intersections with benches and gazebo-style bandstands, etc. The use of decorative street lighting and a return to brick streets provides an immediate sense of identity for historic areas and has the added effect of enhancing property values and the quality of life.

A neighborhood could choose an identity based upon its place in the history of the City, ethnic or ancestral themes, leading industries, a sports affiliation or sports heroes, etc. A neighborhood's physical layout and original housing design should provide cues for new development. New development should be designed with respect to the existing housing patterns whenever possible, thus creating a coherent whole, rather than introducing entirely new and inconsistent styles and patterns of architecture.

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issue of density during the redevelopment process. With the apparent out-migration of some of Beckley's population, care should be taken to incorporate lower densities and more open space amenities into new construction, allowing this housing to compete with new suburban developments, creating more sustainable communities.

Ward Issues

As part of the Comprehensive Planning process, residents were invited to attend special planning meetings on September 21, 1999 to discuss issues and concerns in neighborhoods in their ward. The discussions included a review of demographic data for the ward, a discussion of neighborhood problems, and the prioritization of issues of concern. The demographic profiles for each ward are attached in the Appendix to this Comprehensive Plan.

Additional park and recreation are the highest priority desired in ... Ward 4.

The following issues were identified by participants as concerns and ideas for the improvement of the community. Some issues were unique to a single ward, and others were presented in more than one ward of the City. The issues have been grouped by topic with recommendations following each topic group.

Quality of Life Issues:

Ward 2: Several Quality of Life issues were prioritized in Ward 2 including historic preservation, elementary schools, and the promotion of higher education opportunities within Beckley. Participants felt that great efforts should be made to preserve historic buildings within the Uptown area. Participants were very concerned that the elementary schools which have been closed or will be closed in the near future within the ward will destroy the fabric of the neighborhood. They feel that families are less likely to move into the neighborhood if elementary-age children have to be bussed significant distances, and that families with young children will be forced to move out

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of the neighborhood. Residents would like to see the buildings reused for a public purpose that fosters a sense of community. Participants felt that the City needs to continue to support Mountain State University with any ongoing or proposed expansion projects.

Ward 3: Participants from Ward 3 expressed concerns for continued improvements to recreation facilities in East Park. It was suggested the City should complete the remodeling of the East Park Pool, Playground, Fence, and Parking Lot. Another suggestion was to improve the East Park School/Head Start Community Center by the construction of a recreation facility (such as a game room, gym for basketball and volleyball, tennis courts) and provision of funds to engage a recreation supervisor, especially in the winter.

Participants mentioned that illegal dumping occurs at a vacant triangular lot which is formed by Broadway Street, Scott Avenue, and Powerline Drive, and suggested the City could partner with residents to convert the "Triangle" to a Community Garden, possibly calling it the East Park Botanical Garden.

Ward 4: Additional park and recreation are the highest priority desired in this ward. This includes expansion and/or development of existing parks along with the development of new parks. Residents suggested many ideas for park and recreation improvements.

Ward 5: According to the participants, a woeful deficiency in Ward 5 is the lack of adequate parks, playgrounds, and open space areas. Many mothers voiced concern that their children had no place close to home to play ball safely as there are no parks in East Beckley. With 23% of the population between the ages of 0-17, this was seen as a high priority for

Chapter 9

the ward. Participants expressed disappointment that their neighborhood Stratton Jr. High was relocated to Grey Flats Road (even though the building will be reused as an elementary school). Several expressed concern that too many churches are locating in storefronts causing parking problems. There was also concern that the recently built neighborhood police station is never manned.

Observations and Implications Concerning Quality of Life

Issues:

Preservation of historic buildings and architecture is felt to be an important cultural element of the City. Two historic landmark organizations recommended that two additional areas be designated as districts for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places (residential area on North Kanawha between Wilson and Quesenberry Streets and an area immediately south of the Courthouse Square Historic District). The City could enlist the assistance of a sympathetic professor at CWV or high school teacher to use the process for nomination of historic landmarks as a class assignment.

Many historic buildings in Uptown are vacant or underutilized and are not being maintained well according to several participants. The implications of this is the potential loss of properties and architectural heritage that have helped to define and provide character for the City.

Ward 2 is concerned about the proposed loss of Central and Institute Elementary Schools, and Ward 5 has expressed regret for the conversion of the Stratton Junior High School into an elementary school. Central Elementary could most likely be used by CWV. The Institute Elementary School could possibly become a com-

munity center, a recreation center, housing for senior citizens, student housing for CWV, or a business incubator, among other possibilities. The City should work with residents to prioritize potential uses for the facility.

The community feels it is important to assist CWV every way possible (expansion, zoning, recognition, etc.) The implications of such community support are that the growth of CWV is desired for the community, and the City can and should take steps to support this growth.

Wards 3, 4, and 5 want development, expansion, or continued improvements to parks and recreation areas. The significance of these desires are that residents can and should be involved in defining park locations, amenities, and designing the park trail system. Locations of future new parks should be sought with these considerations in mind. Generally, parks should be as large as possible in order to facilitate municipal maintenance and management of these open space resource.

These three wards have increasing amounts of untended vacant lots which should be reused and, whenever possible, converted into private ownership, or assembled into large parcels for new developments. Vacant lots can remain unmanaged trash-strewn menaces that have a blighting influence on the surrounding neighborhoods for years. In addition to their unsightliness, the growing quantity and persistence of these lots decreases residents' quality of life, discourages investment in the City, and contributes to trends of depopulation and disinvestment. However, vacant lots, in and of themselves, are not intrinsically negative. As pressure mounts to contain suburban sprawl by redirecting development inward and reusing urban land, the City's vacant lots could become valued assets. Creating a system that both manages vacant lots and facilitates their transfer for reuse will open

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Undevelopable lots in the community should be reused for open space amenity helping to reduce densities somewhat and provide existing homes with side/rear yards, whenever possible.

Participants voiced concerns regarding deteriorating housing stock.



Vacant Land provides significant neighborhood challenges and opportunities

new possibilities for redevelopment of these Beckley neighborhoods, which in turn will expand the potential for community groups to expand capacity, create job opportunities for residents, and shape the future of their neighborhoods. The basis of this system should be an asset management approach to vacant land that is comprehensive, strategic, and ongoing. The New Kensington Open Space Management Program, located in neighborhood in north Philadelphia is a successful example of this new vacant land management approach. Recent studies have shown that the City of Philadelphia will reap \$1.38 for every dollar invested in this form of vacant land management, breaking even in 12 years.

Ward 3 has proposed that its Powerline Triangle could become Botanical Garden. Generally areas that are illegal dumping grounds and other undevelopable lots in the community should be reused for open space amenity helping to reduce densities somewhat and provide existing homes with

side/rear yards whenever possible. Other potential uses include community gardens, tot-lots, off-street parking/garages.

Some communities have even experimented with urban agriculture, tree farms, herb gardens, as well as teaching gardens associated with schools, and any number of innovative and creative solutions for the vacant land problem. Assisted by the proposed Community Development Department, Beckley's neighborhoods should be encouraged to undertake similarly creative approaches to effectively reusing what is currently a negative influence in their communities and converting them into assets.

Housing Issues:

Ward 1: It was noted that housing in the Ward 1 area sells for between \$150,000 and \$250,000. No housing problems were raised.

Ward 2: Housing issues were considered a priority for the ward. Many homes in ward 2 need maintenance and rehabilitation. Participants voiced concerns regarding deteriorating housing stock. Vacant homes need to be rehabilitated or razed for the health and safety of the neighborhood.

Ward 3: The participants felt that too many homes in East Park need maintenance and rehabilitation. Many residents have not been successful in efforts to obtain financing for home ownership. Many vacant homes need to be razed for the health and safety of the neighborhood. (Residents have been told by the City that demolition is a minimum of a 60-90 day process, but cannot understand why some homes are still standing after several years.)

Ward 5: To bring in more middle income residents to the area, the partici-

Chapter 9

pants felt that the City should now encourage mixed-income housing developments in the ward. Though they liked the public housing units that are built there, the residents feel they have absorbed their fair share of low-income housing units, and now want more moderate-income housing development. Participants described several problem properties that needed demolition.

Observations and Implications from the Housing Issues:

Little, if any, new residential construction is occurring within the City except in recently annexed subdivisions. Additionally, some areas of Beckley have many homes that are candidates for demolition, replatting, and new construction. Because of declining household sizes, the City needs to add homes just to maintain population. Continued aggressiveness to pursue annexation for residential development is needed. Progress toward this goal could involve the formation of a nonprofit corporation to acquire land for annexation and development.

With new construction, conservation of sound housing units is also needed. Many residents do not seem to be aware that there is City financial assistance for acquisition and rehabilitation. An implication of this is that the City Housing Programs may need to be better marketed. If issues such as credit qualifications prevent people from becoming homeowners, the City should explore joint-programs to assist households with credit problem assistance.

Several areas of the City suffer from low property values and are not viewed as places where residential property values are increasing. This implies that focused actions at a neighborhood level are needed to remove dilapidated units coupled with strategic new construction

to help lift property values. Such focused actions could be defined in neighborhood plans.

Several areas expressed concern with the length of time it takes for the City to take action on neighborhood nuisances. This implies that changes are needed to State laws which do not allow Cities to demolish structures without owner consent.

Economic Development Issues:

Ward 1: The need for good-paying jobs is a priority for participants from this ward. They felt that most of the new jobs being created are low-end jobs (retail/commercial) with low wages and few or no benefits. It was stated that people cannot raise families on incomes provided by these jobs, therefore, the young people with training and education are leaving Beckley. (A good example is that people in Beckley are driving to Huntington and Charleston to work in their Toyota plants.)

Economic development incentives offered by the City, County, State, etc., should be tied directly to the quality of the jobs being created. Incentives should be provided to companies to locate in Beckley and/or to annex into Beckley. "Clawback" provisions should be included in the agreements to reclaim public funds given to companies that do not keep their job creation/retention promises. (It was stated that some newer companies (telemarketing) hire people who never seem to make it through their probationary period, which is when the benefits kick in.)

Ward 2: Job creation, commercial development, and elimination of nuisance businesses are priorities for Ward 2. Residents want to see more business growth within the Uptown area. New businesses should be encouraged to preserve the historic character of Uptown. Concerns were expressed with the number of vacant commercial storefronts being used for

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storage. This is attributed, in part, to buildings being held for speculative purposes; waiting to see if they will be needed for additional parking around the new Federal building. Concerns were leveled that the numerous bars in the Uptown area will create additional crime problems.

Ward 3: Residents of East Park are anxious for new job opportunities, especially industrial employment which offers better wages and benefits.

Ward 5: The participants were quite united that Ward 5 needed businesses in their neighborhood, specifically, neighborhood retail. Residents have to get in a car and drive to establishments that should only be a walking distance away. Many comments were made that when the old time business owners retired, no other folks replaced them. A drug store was seen as a high priority for the ward.

Observations and Implications Concerning Economic Development Issues:

Notwithstanding the construction of the Federal Building and the ongoing efforts of Beckley Main Street, the Uptown business district revitalization process has been slow and uncertain for many property owners. The myriad of plans developed over the years for the area appears to have caused some confusion for many property owners. Some have expressed hesitation to invest in buildings and businesses until a plan of action is adopted that meets basic needs of business and consumers. One of the implications of this is that property owners may be hesitant to invest when the very buildings they might improve may be slated for demolition as parking garages.

The growth of Mountain State University is important for the development of the Downtown. An implication of this is that

the City needs to align municipal land use plans with campus plans for growth. There is a need to develop a special "university" zoning district to formalize the CWV campus growth area and include mechanisms to minimize procedural delays. The City can encourage the University's growth to the north toward the Uptown area. Student housing could be considered north of the campus to enable students to support entertainment night life in the Uptown area. (See Chapter 10.)

People want better paying job opportunities in Beckley. It is felt that the City needs to be more successful in landing jobs, although economic development efforts are commendable, to date. One method to be more aggressive is to offer incentives for companies to locate or annex in the City (incentives need to be tied to the "quality" of jobs provided and should include "clawback" provisions to ensure businesses comply with their stated employment goals). One of the strengths of the area are transportation opportunities via the airport and the interstates. Beckley could target airport-related and high-technology industries, especially along the proposed SR 19 Bypass area. Proper planning along this corridor could help provide a special identity to this area as the "place of choice" for new industrial development in the State. Other potential industries to target for this Bypass area include warehousing and distribution, recreation opportunities along the slopes of Piney Creek (skiing and toboggan runs, etc.,) and retirement community industries.

The Ward 5 area seeks retail development. This kind of development has been provided in many areas of the Country through neighborhood economic development planning. Focused planning studies need to identify and

The growth of Mountain State University (CWV) is important for the development of the Downtown.

Many participants reported that they do not feel safe in the Uptown area.

Chapter 9

describe existing retail buildings, their ownership, and existing/intended uses. The neighborhood market must be analyzed to determine perceptions, competition, and market needs. Resident-suggested needs include a small grocery store and a drug store. A market study of these and other potentially desired businesses could be undertaken to relate demand to businesses which normally operate within the parameters provided in the neighborhood. One growing method to encourage businesses to locate in a neighborhood is to provide them with a retail incubator; this is typically done by acquiring available or vacant properties and offering them to targeted businesses at leases below market value for a period of years until they are established and able to purchase the property.

Many participants reported that they do not feel safe in the Uptown area. The implication of this statement is that the perception of safety is important to draw people to the Uptown area. Methods to enhance the perception of safety include brighter and cheerful lighting, pedestrian paths, cleanliness, and a visible police presence.

Transportation Issues:

Ward 1: Ward 1 participants discussed several transportation issues:

A priority for Ward 1 is the elimination of “unbearable” traffic congestion at Exit 44, which is considered a major problem area. Suggestions included the addition of a fourth lane on Harper Road where there are currently three, but several members of the group questioned if there was adequate right-of-way for the fourth lane. (Right-of-way problems may also include an existing cemetery and gas station.) Since I-64 and I-77 are State highways, some members of the group felt certain the City cannot make

improvements at the overpass (the City maintains the road, but the State resurfaces it). They suggested that there are too many traffic lights on Harper Road at Exit 44, or that better synchronization of the lights would help relieve congestion.

It was suggested that pedestrian crosswalks or safety islands are needed for Harper Road at the Pikeview Drive/Exit 44 interchange. Traffic is so heavy that, too often, people can only cross halfway, and then must stand in the middle of the road to wait for the opposite lanes of traffic to clear or stop. There was also the suggestion that a pedestrian overpass over Harper Road was needed, but agreement could not be reached where it should best be located or whether there is adequate right-of-way. It was also thought that sidewalks are needed along Harper Road at Exit 44. Once again, there was a question as to whether or not there was adequate right-of-way.

Participants felt more sidewalks are needed in the ward as well as throughout the City.

Ward 2: Participants stated the installation of new sidewalks and repair or replacement of existing sidewalks is a priority.

Ward 3: Several transportation issues were discussed by Ward 3 participants:

The residents of Harper Road in Ward 3 are extremely concerned with the traffic congestion and the unsafe conditions and delays for residents attempting to pull out on Harper Road from the neighborhood, especially at the intersection of West Avenue. Moreover, there is concern that the remedies the City may undertake to relieve the congestion could encourage more commercial development, more congestion, and, ultimately, a decrease in residential property values. For example, the residents felt that if the City chooses to install more traffic lanes or additional traffic lights, this will temporarily relieve congestion, but could encourage more

A priority for Ward 1 is the elimination of “unbearable” traffic congestion at Exit 44.

Participants felt more sidewalks are needed in the Ward as well as throughout the City.

Residents of Ward 4 strongly encourage the development of land-use planning along the new By-Pass.

All neighborhoods need to be more walkable.

Participants considered the continued existence of the North Beckley sewer service area was a problem.

commercial development and actually increase the impact of traffic on the neighborhood.

Residents have been informed the new Crosstown Connector has an estimated construction start up within the next two years. There is great hope that this will relieve traffic congestion along Harper Road; however, in the meantime, the residents are requesting the use of police to promote safety and relieve traffic congestion in the area, especially during peak traffic hours.

Participants noted that the intersection of East Prince, East Main, and Williams Streets in the Uptown area is very dangerous because too many drivers do not stop. They felt strongly that this intersection needs to be improved to promote safety. Residents of East Park want to begin discussions on how sidewalks can be installed throughout the neighborhood, especially along school routes and near play areas.

Ward 4: Several transportation issues were discussed by Ward 4 participants:

Residents of Ward 4 strongly encourage the development of land-use planning along the new By-Pass to be located on the east side of Ward 4. It is expected that this new roadway will create commercial and industrial development activity, and there are grave concerns that it may not be properly planned.

Sidewalks are needed for safety reasons in the ward, especially for the elderly and children. There is a desire to expand pedestrian linkages throughout this ward. More connections to existing and proposed bike trails are also desired.

Observations & Implications Regarding Transportation Issues: Harper Road is a critical east-west traffic arterial experiencing significant problems that need to be addressed. The solution

depends on where you live on Harper. There appears to be three distinct areas along this corridor. Exit 44 is the auto-oriented commercial area that serves the highway businesses. East of this area is the hospital/commercial area that is of a more general commercial nature. Further east is a purely residential area. Finally, at the far east of the corridor, the Downtown area emerges and some commercial development extends outward from Downtown. Each of these areas must be dealt with separately. Ward 1 and the Exit 44 Association want more lanes, lights, and attention to pedestrian safety, while Ward 3 does not want Harper to have more lanes or lights. It is important to recognize the differences between these areas and closely examine existing zoning regulations.

The Cross Town Corridor is felt to be an extremely important element for the relief of traffic congestion on Harper Road, as well as in the Downtown area.

Residents in Ward 5 complained that the area has narrow streets. On the surface, this implies that streets should be widened to ease traffic problems. On the other hand, narrow streets are not necessarily bad because in some cases, narrow streets can help clam traffic flow and help increase the sense of community and safety. This issue requires further study.

All neighborhoods need to be more walkable. Given this perception, it seems City efforts to improve sidewalks would be generally supported. All crosswalks should include handicapped accessible ramps that meet the latest provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act. (ADA) Walkways should connect residential areas with parks/commercial areas improving pedestrian movement.

Chapter 9

Ward 3 residents reported a dangerous intersection at East Prince, East Main, and Williams Street. The implication is that the City should undertake an intersection study to recommend improvements.

Several key person surveys noted that certain areas along Eisenhower Drive could benefit from turning lanes or service roads. The City, working with Ward 4 residents, could prioritize intersections for analysis and appoint a task force to make recommendations for improvement.

Infrastructure Issues:

Ward 1: Several infrastructure issues were discussed by Ward 1 participants:

The participants considered the continued existence of the North Beckley sewer service area was a problem, as the rates have doubled or tripled, recently. It was explained that this County sewer district was bankrupt last year and that the EPA had intervened. A bond issue was passed recently and capacity has been increased; however, plans to connect the system to Beckley and turn it over to Beckley have not been implemented as planned. Participants felt that since the City of Beckley has 5,500 sewer customers, while North Beckley has only 1250 customers, the North Beckley sewer rates are much higher to cover costs. It was felt that Beckley's sewer system is in good financial condition and that the two systems should become one.

Participants felt more fire hydrants are needed in the Shadow Wood area.

There were some questions as to whether or not the City could take over the private water company and provide the same or better service for the same rate. It was felt that only one rate could be charged, but that this might be difficult

to implement.

Ward 3: Several infrastructure issues were discussed by Ward 3 participants:

Participants noted there are storm sewer problems at the intersections of William and East Prince Streets; William and Hargrove Streets; Sour Street; Stanbury and Kessinger Streets; and the Scott Avenue dip.

Participants stated that several of the streets in East Park need to be repaved.

Ward 5: One of the greatest needs in Ward 5 is storm drainage work. Participants pointed out that a tremendous amount of flooding occurs after it rains.

Observations and Implications Concerning Infrastructure Issues:

It is an issue in Ward 1 that something should be done about the continued existence of the North Beckley Sewer District. The City recently attempted to merge the two systems in Beckley; however, the merger did not occur. The question whether continuing two systems is in the best interest of the community, as a whole, has been advanced, and it seems logical to conduct a cost feasibility study to evaluate the cost savings if the two entities would merge.

Public Services Issues:

Ward 1: Participants from Ward 1 felt that annexation of the unincorporated areas inside Beckley is important for the City: The issue of annexation is complicated by misinformation about fees and taxes and who pays what, whether you're in or out of the City. Possibly literature clearly explaining these issues is needed. People need to know if City residents actually pay higher rates and taxes than nonresident. This applies to water, sewers, electric, taxes, etc.

Most of the car dealerships in the area are

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Participants from Ward 1 felt that annexation of the unincorporated areas inside Beckley is important for the City.

located in the “donut hole.” Thus, the City collects no B&O tax from them. There are only two car dealership in the City.

If land is annexed to the City, the City’s 2% B&O tax is levied on utility charges. Members of the group stated that the utility companies (which are private) had a law passed that allows them to pass the B&O tax onto the property owners. People in the County do not pay the City B&O tax, therefore, this is a disincentive to annex into the City. However, part of the B&O tax pays for police and fire services, which is what these people in the donut hole feel they need.

Several intergovernmental public service issues were discussed by Ward 1 participants:

Provision of emergency public services to families in the unincorporated areas inside Beckley are a key issue, specifically, because of the “donut hole” and uneven boundaries of the corporate limits. In many instances, City services (police/fire) are within 5 minutes of the population base, but since the area is in the sole jurisdiction of the County, residents must wait 15-20 minutes for the State Police or County departments to respond. The City has 56 police officers to patrol the City compared to the County Sheriff, who has 40 officers to patrol the entire County. Potential life threatening situations could occur because of the locations of corporate limits. Also, insurance is higher for residents living outside the City.

Regarding annexation of the “donut hole,” several members of the group felt that the few anti-annexation “radicals” do not represent the majority of residents living in the donut hole. Because the City Police travel through the unincorporated areas to cross town, the unincorporated areas gain the appearance of higher crime protection.

Since the City is on one side of the I-77/ Harper Road interchange and the County is

(basically) on the other, intergovernmental coordination is sometimes a problem, especially with the State owning the highway. Delivery of fire protection is also a problem in this area, as the City cannot provide service to the west side of the interchange, although its Pikeview Drive Road fire station is within a half mile of the interchange.

Ward 3: Several public service issues were discussed by participants:

Residents of East Park feel that additional police protection is warranted.

Many lots in Ward 3 have overgrown vegetation. Trees and shrubbery in East Park need to be cut back from the road.

Several vacant lots contain tires and other garbage, especially in the Broadway, Scott, and Powerline “Triangle.”

Several lots have abandoned cars or the residents are parking in the front yard.

Residents do not understand why it takes so long for the City to enforce codes, especially when public health and safety are a concern.

Several participants felt that East Park need more police patrols.

Ward 5: Many participants expressed that they have a hard time getting around the City for shopping, medical appointments, etc. Participants expressed frustration they have a police substation, but it is not staffed with police.

Observations and Implications Concerning Public Service Issues:

The continued existence of unincorporated areas within the City causes an unnecessary duplication of fire and

The continued existence of unincorporated areas within the City causes an unnecessary duplication of fire and police services by the County for these areas.

Ward 5 residents feel they would benefit from public transportation.

Chapter 9

police services by the County for these areas. The consolidation of public service providers to best meet the needs of the population, not the service provider, must be the preeminent concern.

One approach to address this includes the mandatory inclusion of unincorporated land in the City's coverage area whenever the City boundaries surround the unincorporated area. It is recognized that this could require changes to State law and coordination with the County.

Ward 5 residents feel they would benefit from public transportation. Many communities provide special needs populations with subsidies for the use of private taxis or shuttle services.

Zoning Issues:

Ward 3: The residents of Harper Road in Ward 3 are concerned with the current zoning along Harper Road, which allows commercial development and actually promotes more congestion and development blight. Residents fear loss of property values and an extension of the "mess" found at I-77, Exit 44.

Ward 4: Residents of Ward 4 desire greater efforts to beautify commercial corridors. They generally feel that there is a lack of landscaping and architectural treatments that would help make these areas more attractive to area residents and shoppers.

Ward 5: Several participants stated that too many churches are locating in commercial storefronts in the ward.

Observations and Implications from the Zoning Issues:

Zoning needs to be revisited along Harper Road. The City cannot afford to

see this corridor clogged with heavy traffic and commercial development between Exit 44. The residential areas of Harper Road should remain residential.

Mountain State University's growth could be expedited through a "campus" zoning classification.

The new By-Pass and Cross-Town Corridor projects require immediate creative and innovative land-use planning classifications, overlays, and access management standards. (See Chapter 12.)

We have a concern that the Redbrush Neighborhood has an extensive use of commercial zoning. The issue of too many churches occupying storefronts can be prevented in the future through parking restrictions and a change of the desired use of the land.

Residents of Ward 4 desire greater efforts to beautify commercial corridors.

Zoning needs to be revisited along Harper Road.

The new By-Pass and Cross-Town Corridor projects require immediate creative and innovative land-use planning classifications, overlays and access management standards.