



# RENEWAL AND REDEVELOPMENT

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## RENEWAL AND REDEVELOPMENT

This chapter considers areas of the City that are suffering from years of disinvestment or deterioration. It focuses on needed community revitalization efforts and redevelopment needs in identified target areas of the City. Workshops held during September 2013 focused specific discussions on neighborhoods, corridors and districts, identifying assets and challenges in each, and proposing improvements that would enhance the areas.

## 16.1

## NEIGHBORHOODS

The 2001 Comprehensive Plan identified several neighborhoods and wards, which were used as a starting point to identify today's neighborhoods. Although neighborhoods differed greatly in terms of assets, problems, organization, identify, boundaries, and infrastructure concerns, many had several issues in common. Identified neighborhoods, and their key issues of concern, included:

**Maxwell Hill**—Located in the northwest section of the City, Maxwell Hill is bounded by the City limits to the north and I-77 to the west. Historically, it has been a middle- to upper-income neighborhood with single-family homes. Issues today include the need for additional sidewalks and addressing through-traffic from using the neighborhood as a short cut. Traffic going from Eisenhower Drive (US19) and Robert C. Bryd Drive (SR16) and their commercial areas to I-77 use neighborhood streets (primarily Pinewood Drive and Holliday Drive) to access Pikeview Drive and the Harper Road/I-77 intersection. Pinewood Drive is not designed for heavy traffic, and may see even more when the second leg of the East Beckley Bypass is completed in 2015. The Bypass will dump its northbound traffic at the SR16/US19 intersection with Pinewood Drive.

Although most traffic on the Bypass should likely be heading north on I-77, the City should look into how through traffic could be discouraged from continuing on through



the intersection westward to reach I-77.

Or, efforts should be taken to identify and improve a designated roadway, away from as many homes as possible, to make this short-cut to I-77 a safe and unobtrusive roadway.

**Woodcrest**—This neighborhood is one of the newest in the City and is located in the northeast area of the City, with the northern corporate limits and the eastern corporate limits forming its borders on two sides. To its west are Woodrow Wilson High School, Beckley Area Regional Hospital, the Beckley Housing Authority development, a mobile home park, and commercial areas along Stanaford Road. The East Beckley Bypass meets Stanaford Road just west of this area.

The major issue with the main subdivision within this neighborhood is the fact that it has only one ingress/egress—Woodcrest Drive. If an emergency blocked Woodcrest Drive near its intersection with Stanaford Road, the residents of this neighborhood would be stranded, with no ability to exit the neighborhood except on foot. The City should evaluate the possibility of creating a

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secondary access, possibly via an intersection of Eagle Road, Osprey Road, Woodtrush Lane, or Bluebird Lane with the East Beckley Bypass. Not only would this provide an alternative access, it could also help alleviate some of the traffic congestion on Stanaford Road.

In addition, sidewalks or pathways are needed within this neighborhood. With today's emphasis on walking and bike riding, as well as the need for accessibility for handicapped individuals, the elderly, and parents with baby strollers, pathways are a critical amenity.

**East Park**—North and east of the downtown is the East Park neighborhood, the boundaries of which are not well defined. There are many strong family units in this neighborhood and a good neighborhood spirit. Historically, the area has a high percentage of people receiving public assistance, and a high number of low- and moderate-income families and female-headed households.

Challenges include an increase in the amount of crime, especially around the 9<sup>th</sup> Street and Sheridan Avenue area. The general recommendations made for all neighborhoods are especially relevant here.

**East Beckley**—This neighborhood, located to the southeast of the downtown, has historically not included as high a number of low- and moderate-income families or households receiving public assistance. However, the area has been trending downward and needs substantial revitalization and beautification.

**Woodlawn**—On the southwestern edge of the City, the Woodlawn neighborhood was the first really nice neighborhood in Beckley. It is close to the downtown and is accessible to

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most key sites and facilities within the City. Over the past few years, the neighborhood has started on a downward trend, especially along Park Avenue.

The fact that the area has lost homeowners to renters has led to common issues with drunkenness, lack of property maintenance resulting in high weeds along sidewalks and other areas. Dog owners do not respect property, garbage cans are left on the sidewalks for days at a time, abandoned vehicles are parked in visible locations, the equipment in the park is in need of repair, and the port-a-potty in the park provides a poor image for the neighborhood.

The Alternative School located in this neighborhood should possibly be moved to a better location (maybe the Grey Flats area), especially since it offers evening classes, which is disruptive of residential neighborhoods. Part of the area is zoned manufacturing, which likely causes some of the problems for residents.

There is some concern that the City does not provide adequate code enforcement; while there is also concern that complaints are not being filed properly or with the appropriate City department. The entire neighborhood is starting to show its age and steps should be taken to revitalize the area, upgrade homes, and remove conflicting land uses, which could require a zoning change.

**Harper Hill**—The area along Harper Road, north of Mabscott, continues to thrive as a major commercial corridor along Harper Road, while residential neighborhoods continue to confront huge volumes of traffic

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passing through their neighborhood. The residential areas to the south of Harper Road would benefit from the provision of crosswalks for pedestrians, and in some cases, signalized pedestrian crosswalks.

**Bowling Addition**—Located west of US 19 between East Park and East Beckley is the Bowling Addition. SR 41 runs northeast-southwest through the neighborhood, which consist primarily of homes on small lots. Historically, low- and moderate-income households, female-headed households and the elderly comprised a considerable portion of the residents in the northern part of the Bowling Addition. Today, this middle-class neighborhood is starting to show its age.

The Rail Trail goes through this neighborhood, although there are not any trail heads or easy access points to the trail from the neighborhood. This was discussed at length during the planning process and it was decided that the neighborhood would prefer not to have a trail head in the neighborhood. Access to the trail was close enough, even though it would require driving to it.

**Upper & Lower Raleigh Heights**—Located in the very southeast corner of the City, Raleigh Heights is a small secluded neighborhood bounded on the north, east and south by I-64, Piney Creek and the railroad, and on the west by SR3. The terrain further divides the area into northern and southern sections. This is a stable neighborhood. More sidewalks are needed to provide for adequate pedestrian accessibility.

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**Redbrush**—Redbrush is located on the southern City limits, south of East Beckley and east of Woodlawn. Historically, this neighborhood has had the highest percentage of households receiving public assistance within the City, one of the highest percentages of low- and moderate-income persons, and highest numbers of female-headed households of all block groups within the City.

Major issues within the neighborhood include a high rate of crime. In addition to programs to prevent crime, overall revitalization of the neighborhood is needed. This should be a key target area for future CDBG entitlement funds when the City receives those funds in 2014. Housing rehabilitation, demolition of vacant and dilapidated structures, in-fill development, and other revitalization efforts are needed, along with infrastructure improvements, sidewalk replacement and extensions, pedestrian crossings, and off-street parking.

**McLean Addition**—This area is situated south of and between the Harper Hill and New River Park neighborhoods, west of the downtown and northeast of Mabscott. Similar to other neighborhoods, this area needs sidewalk improvements and pedestrian crossings.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALL NEIGHBORHOODS

As mentioned earlier, many of the problems experienced by any one neighborhood are similar to those experienced by many others. Recommendations to improve these

neighborhoods could include thousands of ideas. The following recommendations are the most critical to achieve revitalization and sustainability in the short-term. They are organized into five categories:

- **Organization**
- **Design**
- **Economic Restructuring**
- **Image/Promotion**
- **Safe, Clean & Green**

(These categories are recommended by the National Trust's Main Street program, and are augmented by the State of Pennsylvania's Elm Street program, which may become a national program.)

### Organization

If neighborhoods are to undertake a comprehensive revitalization effort, they will need direction and counseling from an authority, such as the City, that can provide professional assistance regarding steps to take, implementation strategies, and funding mechanisms.

- The 2001 Comprehensive Plan suggested, and this Plan recommends as well, that the City create a Planning Department to handle these kinds of tasks. This department could be an expansion of the Community Development Department, or a separate entity. Its mission would be to implement recommendations of the City's Comprehensive Plan, keep the Plan current, and assure that development regulations are adequate and up-to-date in order to attain the desired results.
- The City will become a designated CDBG Entitlement Community in 2014. (Refer to Chapter 7 for more information.) A portion of the CDBG entitlement funds could be used to pay for a staff person (in a new

Planning Department) and to implement many of these programs in targeted and eligible neighborhoods.

- A Consolidated Plan will be required by HUD to utilize CDBG Entitlement funds, and this effort could be completed by the new Planning Department. That Plan would address housing and community development needs within the City for CDBG and other grant expenditures. An annual Action Plan is also required, and this Plan should target and prioritize specific projects, starting with those in the most needy neighborhoods. (Refer to Chapter 7.)
- Some of the City and State ordinances and regulations that affect nuisance violations are overly burdensome and should be changed. A Planning Department could work with the Building and Zoning Officer and elected officials to see that these changes are made locally, and at the County or State levels, as needed.
  - The City's Zoning Officer should have citation powers to process cases through the courts more quickly. Currently, meeting due process for nuisances is overly cumbersome. To resolve some of these issues, the City is working on a new definition for "detractive nuisance" so that it can be more effective.
  - The State code has time limits that put restrictions on the City and what it can do. These should be adjusted to be more effective.
  - State codes require \$5,000 in insurance policies for demolition. This should be changed to \$10,000- \$15,000, which is closer to the actual cost of demolition.
- Neighborhoods should be empowered to create neighborhood-based organizations and become leaders in the transformation of their neighborhoods. Programs such as Block Watch should be encouraged and facilitated, not only to fight crime (with the

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police department), but also to address neighborhood safety, helping neighbors with mowing, providing eyes on the street, lighting up the neighborhoods--especially dark spots, maintaining the neighborhood, etc.

- Neighborhood groups could record and consolidate complaints and needs at the neighborhood level and then present those to the City.
- Champions should be recruited to spearhead specific projects within the neighborhoods.
- Churches and clergy should be asked to assist, especially with community gardens to support their food pantries.
- The effort to start and maintain a Landlord Association should be jump started again. Incentives could be developed and provided to incentivize landlords who participate in the program.

## Design

Today's cities need to be places that attract people. As discussed in Chapter 5, the young people of today are first choosing the place where they want to live, and then looking for a job in that location. If Beckley is going to attract these young people, and maintain current residents (especially the baby boomers who are now retiring), then neighborhoods must be attractive places to live and raise a family. **Design tasks that could help accomplish this include:**

- Rehabilitation of existing deteriorated or substandard housing and new housing construction, including a variety of housing types, costs, and styles.
- Provision of adequate infrastructure such as water and sanitary sewer, storm drainage, off-street parking, streetscaping, gateways, attractive signage, pedestrian-scale street lighting, public green spaces, parks, and safe walking and biking paths.

- The City's sidewalk replacement program should be enhanced and expanded. CDBG funds could be used for this in eligible areas in the future. A November 2011 sidewalk proposal could be used as a starting point for this program.
- Rail Trail connections and access from neighborhoods should be provided on a neighborhood basis. (Refer to Chapter 8.)
- Intersection improvements, pedestrian crossings and signals are needed in almost all neighborhoods, especially at intersections with major thoroughfares. (Refer to Chapter 8.)

## Economic Restructuring

For all of Beckley's neighborhoods to succeed, efforts at restructuring the current environment are needed. **These efforts will differ by neighborhood, but generally include:**

- Demolition of dangerous and abandoned buildings-- The City is demolishing ten houses at a time and does about 15-20 per year.
  - The demolition process is as follows: City inspects the property and verifies that it should be demolished. A certified notice is sent to the property owner and a public notice is published for three consecutive weeks. A court hearing is then held and the order is granted to demolish the structure. The Department of Public Works demolishes the structure and sends the bill to the Building and Zoning Officer, who then notifies the property owner. Property owners retain the rights to the property. The owner has 30 days to pay for the demolition costs or agree to a payment plan, or the City files a lien on the property. Only about two of ten property owners actually pay. Many lots worth \$2,000 have \$8,000 of liens on them, so there are no buyers.
- The City should work with the WV Municipal League to start a land bank program in West Virginia, and then in the City. More tools are needed to eliminate the liens from

the properties or otherwise recoup the lien funds, so that properties can be sold and reutilized. Investors need to be attracted to the properties to rehabilitate them or to build in-fill developments on existing vacant lots. Several states have identified ways to accomplish this and the West Virginia needs to do the same so that Beckley can better address the demolition of buildings.

- A “side-lot” program should be started to enable the City to sell vacant lots to adjacent properties owners for a small price, with agreement to maintain the lot. The extra lot could be used for housing additions, garages, gardens, or green space. (Lots would have to be acquired by the City, which is why a land bank is needed, before they can be sold to adjacent property owners.)
- The City or neighborhood group could also consider creating parking lots on vacant lots to remove parked cars from the streets in a particular block. Issues such as ownership, liability, maintenance, etc. would have to be worked out upfront.
- In-fill development should be encouraged and promoted— especially in terms of appropriate land uses and new construction on vacant lots in historic areas or neighborhoods.

### Clean, Green & Safe

Neighborhoods will be attractive places to live only if they can assure residents that they are clean, green, and safe. **Recommendations to achieve these goals in all neighborhoods include:**

- Neighborhood parks that are not being adequately utilized, or that cannot be maintained by the City or neighborhood groups, should be adapted to other uses, possibly community gardens, or sold for new housing. The City may want to consider an “Adopt a Park” program to divert some of the maintenance efforts to neighborhood or local groups.

▪ Safety along the trail needs to be enhanced along the entire Trail, but especially as the Trail passes through neighborhoods.

- Police are on the trail in cars every two hours—possibly this needs to be changed to hourly.
- There are lights every 100’ and they are in working condition. Maybe more lights should be added in key locations.
- Greenery needs to be cut away from the trail in some areas.
- The City could better utilize security cameras in key areas, and the cameras must have good enough resolution to identify violators.
- Neighborhood groups should work with their local school administrators to identify ways to provide safety to the children in the neighborhood school playgrounds. If fencing around the playgrounds at the schools is not desired because it presents a poor image for the neighborhood, then alternatives should be discussed with the administration.
- The City, specifically the Police Department, should consider participating in the “Crime Free Multi-Housing Program,” a program that operates in over 2,000 cities in the US and over 14 other countries ([www.crime-free-association.org](http://www.crime-free-association.org)). The program provides incentives to landlords to assure that housing is safe and in good physical condition for the residents.

### IMAGE/PROMOTION

The image projected by each neighborhood should be a positive statement of solid family structure; safe, affordable, and a variety of housing types; aesthetically pleasing landscapes; safe, walkable, and accessible paths and pedestrian crossings; impressive public parks and facilities; adequate public infrastructure; and a safe and clean environment.



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General neighborhood themes could be used to convey identity and image with uniform and unique street signs, lighting, stone walls, street furniture, plantings, bike racks, and/or entry features. Each neighborhood could have a distinct image that it projects to the City as a whole. (Refer to Chapter 14.)

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Neighborhoods, if organized properly, could promote themselves with neighborhood parties, events such as house or garden tours that invite other residents into the neighborhood, holiday parades or tours, holiday decorating contests, or other activities that reinforce community and communication that will strengthen the overall stability of the neighborhood.

## 16.2

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### CORRIDORS

Corridors provide access between key points within the community, and also generally provide areas for retail and service businesses for consumers. There are several major corridors with the City of Beckley that are heavily traveled resulting in congestion and other issues of concern. Visioning sessions held with the public in September 2013 discussed a number of corridors and the results of those sessions were further investigated to provide the following comments.

#### New River Drive

This corridor is discussed in Chapter 15.

#### Harper Road Corridor

Harper Road (SR 3) connects I-77 on the west side of the City, in a southeasterly direction to the downtown. SR 3 then turns into Fayette Street at its intersection with Robert C. Byrd Drive and then terminates in the southeast corner of the City at its intersection with Eisenhower Drive. It is characterized as home to a number of health care providers, as well as hotels and restaurants near the I-77 interchange. This interchange is considered the gateway into the City of Beckley. The width of the road is generally limited by existing development, and there is little vacant land for additional development. The

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roadway lacks sidewalks in most areas, and is cluttered with signage.

The City should consider development of a specific Corridor Plan for Harper Road to identify and address key issues. The MPO designation and subsequent funding opportunities may be able to assist with these types of improvements. **Key issues to consider in the Corridor Plan include:**

- Locations where the roadway width might be widened to reduce congestion.
- Addition of safe sidewalks or pathways along both sides of Harper Road, and especially across the I-77 overpass, including pedestrian signals at intersections. This is especially critical for hotel patrons who are walking to restaurants and other places of business from the many hotels at the I-77 interchange.
- Pedestrian access connecting this area to Tamarack and other key assets of the community.
- Access management strategies to calm traffic including traffic islands, curb extensions, textured or colored pavement, combining and reducing curb cuts, and traffic signal synchronization.
- Revised sign regulations to reduce the number of private signs, by grouping them and/or reducing the number permitted per business, and also restricting small temporary advertising signs placed in the ground along the roadway.

- Alternative uses for the vacant gas station near Westwood, possibly converting the area into a park or green space.
- Uniform streetscaping along Harper Road, including trees, attractive gateways, enhancement of the existing wayfinding signage system, decorative street lighting, etc.
- The potential for emphasizing and promoting Harper Road as a Health Care Corridor.

The City should also explore the overall signage system along I-77 and I-64, and identify alternative routes into the City and to the downtown and the Exhibition Coal Mine, to reduce congestion at the Harper Road intersection.

As addressed in Chapter 5, an alternative access road from Harper Road to New River Drive should be pursued.

### Robert C. Byrd Drive (SR 16)

Passing north-south through the City of Beckley, Robert C. Byrd Drive, or SR 16, is a major thoroughfare, generally five lanes in width. It passes near the downtown, near New River Park, and through the heaviest commercial area in the northern part of the City. Its most significant intersection is with Eisenhower Drive, or US 19, near Ragland Road. SR 16 also intersects I-77 south of Mabscott.

#### Some of the key issues that should be addressed include:

- The entire corridor should be landscaped, with common signage, street lighting, and unique architectural elements specific to Robert C. Byrd Drive.
- Signalized pedestrian crossings should be installed at key intersections.
- The intersection with Eisenhower Road should be studied and redesigned for better safety.

- The intersection of Robert C. Byrd Drive with New River Drive should be studied and redesigned to provide better visibility for turns, with possible signalization.

### Eisenhower Drive (US 19)

Eisenhower Drive starts in the southeastern corner of the City of Beckley and then merges with US 19 near Greenwood Cemetery. The two remain one roadway going northwest through the City. SR 41 combines with US 19 for a short distance near Harry Lewin Park, and then separates a little further north, where SR 41 becomes Stanaford Road. US 19 continues north, intersecting and combining with SR 16 north and continuing to the US 19 Spur.

#### Some of the key concerns regarding Eisenhower Drive include:

- Northbound traffic on Eisenhower cannot access Robert C. Byrd Drive without going through private property, primarily the shopping centers. A study should be done to determine if this short cut can become a City roadway, or if an alternative access can be provided.
- Pedestrian crosswalks, preferably with signalization, are needed at key intersections, but especially at McDonald's, Neville, City National Bank, and Ryan's.

### East Beckley Bypass

The Bypass has proven to be a major transportation route for traffic headed north from the southeastern section of the City. Its current termination at Stanaford Road causes some traffic congestion there, especially at Stanaford Road's intersection with Eisenhower Drive. The bike lanes and sidewalks along the Bypass are good examples of "complete streets" and what is needed throughout the City.

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**Some suggestions for the Bypass include:**

- The Bypass needs to be completed, going from its termination at Stanaford Road north to SR 16/US 19 at Pinewood Drive. This project should be completed by the end of 2014.
- Measures should be implemented to discourage Bypass traffic from continuing west, crossing the intersection with SR 16/US 19, and utilizing Pinewood Drive as a shortcut to Harper Road and I-77 on the western side

of the City. This shortcut requires traveling thorough a residential neighborhood, on streets that were not designed for heavy traffic. If this cross traffic is desired, then provisions should be made for designating and improving specific streets to serve as the connector.

- A traffic signal at Stanaford Road may be warranted soon and could be useful in creating a safer intersection.

# 16.3

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## DISTRICTS

Downtown Beckley, the East Beckley Bypass area, and New River Park are key districts within the City, and both are discussed in great detail in Chapter 15. Other districts that deserve some discussion include the regional commercial shopping district in the northern part of the City, and the Harper Road commercial area at I-77. Harper Road is discussed above in the Corridors section.

The regional commercial shopping district starts at the northern limits of the City of Beckley and extends along both Eisenhower Drive and Robert C. Bryd Drive south to about the New River Drive area. The difficult aspect of this area from a planning perspective is that much of it is NOT within the City of Beckley, but rather sits in one of the “donut holes.” Some developers opted to annex their developments into the City, while others have not. **So, recommending improvements for the City to consider is difficult at best, however some suggestions include:**

- As discussed in Chapter 13, a concerted effort should be made to annex the donut holes to the City. This would allow the City to plan and implement improvements along these key corridors and hopefully improve the traffic congestion, access management, signage, and other issues that frustrate so many consumers traveling through this area.
- The City and the County need to be more forceful with the State Department of Highways regarding synchronization of traffic signals along these corridors and especially in these congested areas.
- The County and City should work together to continue to address storm drainage problems in this area, especially with the maintenance of Cranberry Creek.
- Many of the recent developments have included landscaped islands in the parking lots, which has substantially dressed up the area. These efforts should continue.
- This entire commercial area would benefit from streetscaping, Rail Trail connections, signage improvements, the use of access roads when possible, and pedestrian signalization at intersections.