



REIMAGINING OUR  
**WESTMORELAND**  
a plan for a more livable & prosperous county

December 20, 2018



**Resolution #R- 46 - 2018**

**RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF THE COUNTY OF WESTMORELAND ADOPTING THE 2018 WESTMORELAND COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AS THE OFFICIAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OF THE COUNTY OF WESTMORELAND, PENNSYLVANIA.**

WHEREAS, it is the intent of the Board of Commissioners of the County of Westmoreland, Pennsylvania, to provide for the planned and orderly development of the County, to foster the prudent use of land within the County, to meet the housing needs in the County, to plan for the movement of people and goods throughout the County, to plan for community services and utilities, and to coordinate the County's existing and proposed development with the existing and proposed development of contiguous municipalities; and

WHEREAS, in accordance with the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, the Westmoreland County Department of Planning and Development has prepared the 2018 Westmoreland County Comprehensive Plan (hereinafter referred to as "the Plan") that addresses among other things the existing and future land use, housing, transportation, community facilities and other development needs of the County and the coordination of the County's development with contiguous municipalities, as well as implementation of the Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Plan consists of the following seven core objectives: Align Workforce, Education, Employers and Entrepreneurship; Discover Westmoreland; Reposition Our Towns; Connect With Parks and Nature; Build Healthy and Whole Communities; Plug Into The New Economy; and Create Transportation Choices.

WHEREAS, the Westmoreland County Department of Planning and Development has recommended that the Board of Commissioners of the County of Westmoreland approve and adopt the Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Board of County Commissioners of the County of Westmoreland held a public hearing on December 17, 2018 to solicit and consider public comment on the Plan.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Commissioners of the County of Westmoreland as follows:

That the Board of Commissioners of the County of Westmoreland hereby adopts the Plan, which consists of maps, charts, textual matter and other matters intended to form the plan, as the official Comprehensive Plan for the County of Westmoreland, Pennsylvania.

RESOLVED AND ENACTED this 20th day of December, 2018 by the Board of Commissioners of the County of Westmoreland at a duly advertised public meeting with a quorum being present.

COUNTY OF WESTMORELAND  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

  
Gina Cerilli

  
Ted Kopas

  
Charles W. Anderson

ATTEST:

  
Vera Spina, Chief Clerk

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Charles Anderson, Secretary

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## FUNDING PROVIDED BY

Economic Growth Connection

First Energy Foundation

Westmoreland County

Westmoreland County Chamber of Commerce

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# DEFINITIONS

Jargon can cause confusion when reading any document. This section is intended to minimize difficulty in comprehension and use of this Plan by defining the key terms used throughout. Understanding the terms below provides a greater understanding of the intent of the Westmoreland County Comprehensive Plan.

## CORE OBJECTIVES

Core objectives are value-based statements that are not necessarily measurable.

**Example:** “...a County containing a balanced variety of housing types.”

## STRATEGIES

Strategies are more specific, measurable statements of desired ends.

**Example:** “...increase the amount of multi-family units in the County.”

## POLICIES

Policies are rules or courses of action that indicate how the plan’s core objectives and strategies should be realized.

## PROGRAMS

Programs are a series of related, mission-oriented activities aimed at carrying out a particular policy or group of policies.

## PROJECTS

Programs often consist of a series of projects, which are specific actions or “brick-and-mortar” recommendations.

## IMPLEMENTATION

The action steps provide staff with a tool to prioritize implementation items over the life of the Plan. In addition, this tool allows the County to approve specific actions on an annual basis and evaluate progress based upon completed implementation strategies.

## COST ESTIMATE

Costs estimates are represented by a scale ranging from \$ to \$\$\$\$. The costs refer only to public costs. Descriptions of the scale are as follows:

**\$:** Primarily internal staff time with limited outside funding required.

**\$\$:** Outside consulting assistance is expected or capital expenditures are to be more than \$25,000 but less than \$100,000.

**\$\$\$:** Capital improvements greater than \$100,000.

## TIME ESTIMATE

Time estimates indicate, in years, how long it would take to complete a specific action. Descriptions of each timeframe are detailed below:

**◇:** Short-term, less than two years.

**◇◇:** Mid-term, two to five years.

**◇◇◇:** Long-term, greater than five years.



# INTRODUCTION

## WHAT'S HAPPENING?

The Westmoreland County area has played a key role in the country's growth, from our strong historical impact to the physical development of the nation through steel, coal, and glass production. However, like most of the world, our community has changed and is changing rapidly. Following the collapse of our prominent manufacturing industries of the 1970s and 1980s, many residents were forced to move out of the County to seek employment opportunities. Many of these residents were of the age to start families. As such, we are now experiencing the effect of a missing generation. This missing generation is now in their early 30 to late 40s and would be having their own children, but that will not be occurring in Westmoreland County. This has created a ripple effect that continues to spread throughout our County.

Coupled with this effect, families across the country are having fewer children and having them later in life. Families, on average, are much smaller than they were just a generation ago. As such, our graduating classes at local high schools continue to get smaller and smaller. The youngest generations are saddled with high student-loan debt, pushing family life further and further down the road. Consider that in 1976, across the United States, 40 percent of mothers had four or more children. By 2014, that figure dropped to 14 percent.

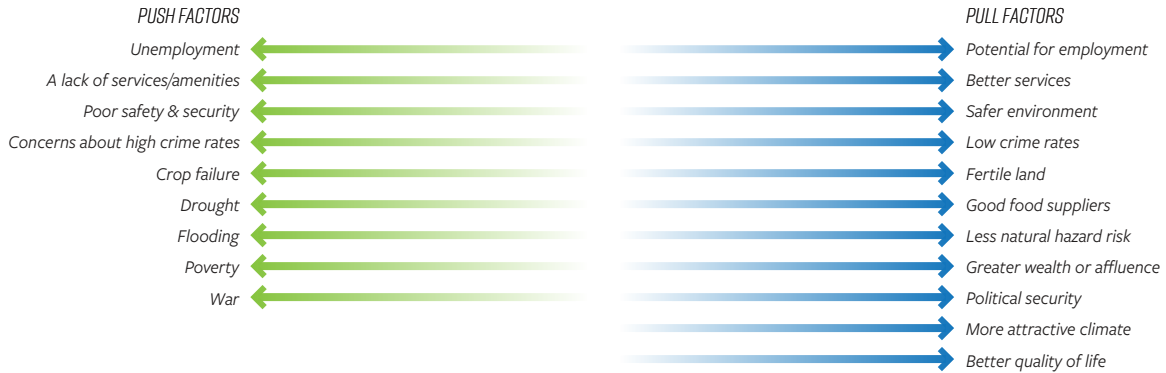
At the same time, mothers having one child increased from 11 percent in 1976 to 22 percent in 2014. To be clear, this is a national change in family creation and child-rearing trends.

Together, these two factors drive deaths to outpace births by 1,000 people per year, in Westmoreland County. Such a large natural population loss negates any growth we might have experienced through migration. These figures remain true for nearly all of the Southwestern Pennsylvania region. Therefore, we are not going to solve our population issue by just attracting from neighboring counties. The whole region will have to begin attracting residents from a more diverse world. Today's youngest children represent the most diverse population the United States has ever seen, and the generation after it will be the most diverse yet. We must understand that this Plan is not only for the people who are here today, but the people who will be here tomorrow. This means that migration is essential to our ability to compete for jobs and employers. This figure is likely to increase in the future as almost 25 percent of our population are between 45 and 59 years old. The single largest age group, at almost 9 percent of the population, is 50 to 54. As a result, the median age increased by five years between 2000 and 2010. By 2020, it could be as high as 51. For context, the US median age in 2010 was 37, while ours was 45.

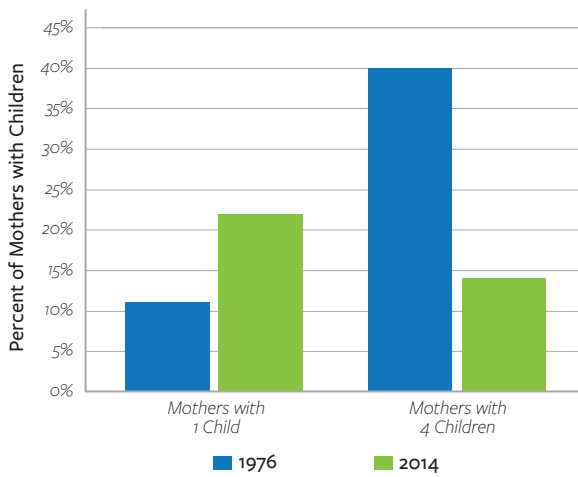


# POPULATION CHANGE

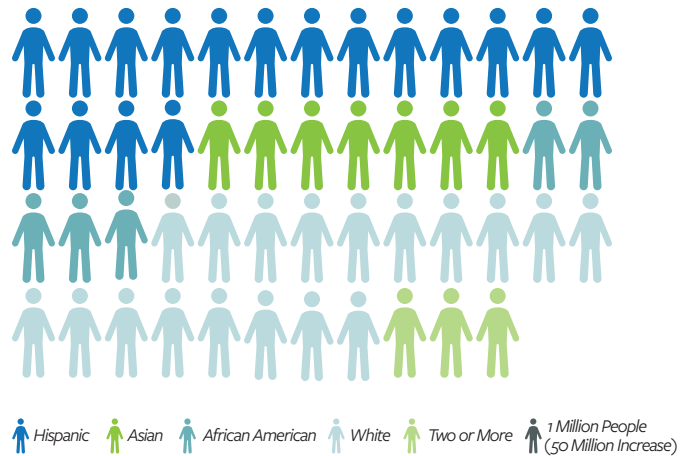
## PUSH/PULL MIGRATION FACTORS



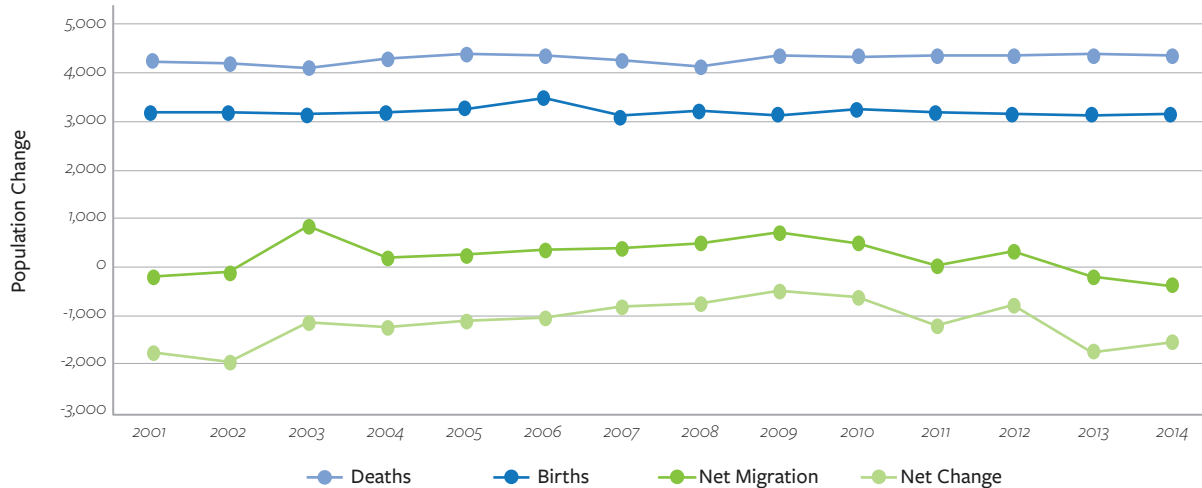
## NUMBER OF CHILDREN U.S. (1976 AND 2014)



## POPULATION GROWTH ALL U.S. POPULATION GROWTH (2000 TO 2014)



## COMPONENTS OF POPULATION CHANGE WESTMORELAND COUNTY (2001 TO 2014)



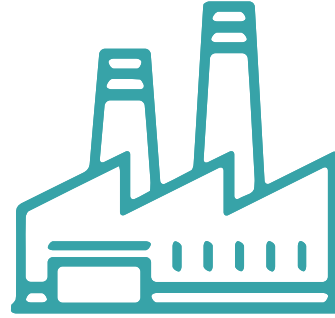
## FACTORS OF PRODUCTION



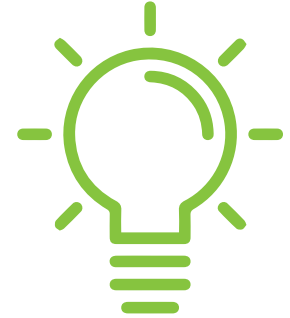
Land



Labor



Capital



Enterprise

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO ME?

Ultimately, the effect of these demographic shifts creates significant challenges for our continued economic development and job creation. A generation ago, the quantity and quality of jobs were the main factor in economic development and, by extension, community development. While that is still true today, our economic growth depends evermore on the quantity and quality of our labor force. To illustrate this, one of the most consistent refrains expressed by employers is that they would hire more, but the people are not available. We need people to make, buy, and service goods and to transport, stock, market, and sell those goods. People also provide services to our communities in health care, social services, retail and information services.

A positive relationship between producers of goods and services and markets (consumers) creates healthy local economies, identifies new business opportunities, and establishes new markets. A negative relationship between these two becomes a self-reinforcing feedback loop of declining local economies, fewer business opportunities, and smaller markets in which to sell. Bluntly, if employers do not have the workforce necessary to run their businesses, they are likely to leave, close, or automate. If this happens, we will begin that negative feedback loop. This means that it will be harder for our children and the next generation to open a business, find a job, buy a home, and raise a family. Fewer of these opportunities lead to a reduced tax base, which further depresses local government's ability to address the quality-of-life elements that are essential to attracting a new generation.

These changes are already happening in our neighborhoods. Nearly every community is suffering from the impact of vacant, abandoned, and blighted properties. Within the next generation, it is likely that many more homes and businesses will become blighted as fewer and fewer relatives and loved ones are willing or able to take care of the homes many current residents will leave behind. Compounding the issue further is significant growth in single-person households who are expressing interest in multi-family housing. These individuals are not seeking the standard three-bedroom, two-bath home on a quarter-acre lot.

Another impact is on finance for local government. Earned income taxes are a major source of revenue for many communities. As the workforce retires, social security and other retirement income is not subject to those levies. At the same time, services for an aging population will put strains on the system that delivers these services. In at least one community in the County, the number of people collecting social security increased by 20 percent in a period of only six years.

Demand for maintenance and replacement of existing infrastructure will likely outstrip tax revenues, as well. Consider that today, our population is nearly exactly the same as it was in 1960. With fewer and fewer resources resulting from this population loss, how do we maintain all the roads, sewer, water, natural gas, and other infrastructure that we have built over the past 50 years?

The quality of life that residents have come to expect in Westmoreland County may well be the best attractor of future workforce. However, given all the other demands for the public dollar, how do these items continue to receive an appropriate share in light of declining revenue?

# WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

*The overarching goal of this Comprehensive Plan is to enact strategies that attract, develop, and retain a diverse and stable workforce that will sustain a healthy economy. To do that, we must plan, investigate, and reimagine our Westmoreland.*

## PRINCIPLES FOR ACTION

### ACCOUNTABILITY

Throughout the planning process we regularly heard comments like, “If only we had \_\_\_\_\_, we would/could solve these problems.” There is no big company or big developer just waiting to solve our problems. If there were, they would have to pass up dozens of other comparable places to open their business or redevelop that old downtown building. There is no single infrastructure or transportation investment that will change our fate. If that was the case, we would already be doing it. There is no single grant from the state or federal governments or loan program that will suddenly make unrealized potential successful. Ultimately, the accountability rests with us. We are responsible for making the communities and opportunities that will attract, develop, and retain a diverse and stable workforce.

### PARTNERSHIP

At the same time, County government alone cannot, and in many cases should not, do all the things necessary to change our trajectory. Many of these demands exceed the County’s official capacity and expertise. Therefore, this Plan will identify partnerships to carry forward these actions. We will work hard to create meaningful partnerships with agencies, municipalities, nonprofits, school districts, and others to carry out the implementation. Ultimately, this is an exercise in division of labor.

### BUILD OFF OF ASSETS

We know that efforts related to many strategies in the Plan are already underway. This Plan does not aim to replace or duplicate those efforts. In many cases, they can be enhanced or reconfigured to support the strategies and action steps. Moreover, we want to highlight those successes and do so throughout the Plan as models for action.

### ACTION ORIENTED & ATTAINABLE

Expressed throughout this Plan is a vision for our future. And while that is a necessary ingredient for success, so too is action. The Comprehensive Plan will not sit on a shelf. It will become the overarching policy guide for implementation at every level. Implementation will be guided by the maxim of incrementalism. Change does not occur overnight. Our aim should always be to answer the question, “What’s the next best thing to do?” This approach saves us from taking unwarranted risks, but more importantly, it focuses our efforts on continual improvement.

### CREATIVITY, EXPERIMENTATION, & NEW WAYS OF THINKING

The world is changing rapidly, and it seems the pace of change only increases year after year. Unfortunately, as our County has aged, much of our thinking has, as well. There is a world of experiences and best practices out there ready to be deployed in our communities. If only we had the willingness to embrace new ideas and technologies, we could improve our communities. In some cases, this will cause controversy. However, we must not continue to allow the ways things have been done to be the barometer for the ways things should be done. One of the greatest risks to successful implementation of this Plan is the notion of, “We’ve always done it this way.” If we continue to do that, why should we expect different results?

### COMMUNICATION & COLLABORATION

Too often the things we care about in our communities come to the forefront only after things have gotten so bad that we cannot change it. Breaking through the noise of our daily lives takes persistent, timely, relevant, and directed communication about the Plan and its efforts. If we believe this effort to be of incredible importance, it deserves to be heard by every resident and spoken by every partner agency.

### PERFORMANCE MONITORING, METRICS, & BENCHMARKS

Every strategic effort requires monitoring of its impacts, and this Comprehensive Plan is no different. For every action we have identified policies, programs, or projects to accomplish our strategies. It will be up to us to monitor their implementation, measure their success, and benchmark ourselves against comparable counties.

## WHAT HAVE WE DONE SO FAR?

Over the past two years, we have engaged the community through several phases of public conversation. We have worked hard to uncover what matters to our residents and businesses, which inform the strategies in this Plan. We believe these strategies will begin to address this fundamental, yet difficult problem.

In total, over 5,000 people have been involved in the process and in each phase we asked for something different. We began with education, by informing the community and County leadership about significant demographic shifts. Then, we asked citizens to identify the core components of the problem and help identify solutions. Additionally, we consulted with regional and national leaders to develop a series of strategies and action steps. From this process, as a community, we have identified one goal, seven core objectives, and nearly 40 strategies to attract, develop, and retain a diverse and stable workforce that will sustain a healthy economy.



## HOW ARE WE GOING TO DO IT?

At the heart of all of these matters are dozens, if not hundreds, of individuals, agencies, businesses, nonprofits, school districts, departments, boroughs, cities, and townships that have the ability to shift our trajectory. Each one is answerable to a set of stakeholders, whether that is the electorate or the board of directors or to each other. As citizens, we have a responsibility to our neighbors and to our greater community. So, from the bottom to the top, it will depend on partnership and leadership at every level. These are regional issues that will not and cannot be answered by local action alone. Simply put, we will do it through partnership.

Partnership of the type we are proposing requires formalized structures for implementation. We are proposing three tools to drive implementation:

### RESOLUTIONS OF SUPPORT

Leadership changes and elections have outcomes. Many times, long-term plans have a way of falling from view. Our belief is that formalized resolutions of support for this Plan, its goal, core objectives, strategies, and action steps are necessary to embolden leaders at every level of our County to follow through. This also includes partner organizations. Resolutions of support will be requested (optional) from each municipality. These documents carry forward decisions made today for the future of our County. They memorialize the importance and weight they carry.

### PLANNING DISTRICTS

The County is a large and diverse place of over 1,000 square miles and 65 distinct cities, boroughs, and townships. Each has very different capacities, services, and needs. Yet, natural groupings of municipalities exist that follow larger school district, geographic, cultural, economic, and transportation clusters. We propose the creation of seven Planning Districts that reflect those realities and to craft smaller sub-County regional plans (optional) that guide implementation at the local level. We recognize that certain strategies make more sense in some places and not in others. Over the next three years, we will work to contextualize the higher-order County Comprehensive Plan strategies to make sense at the sub-County, regional level. We want to help local communities uncover the answer to the question, “What does all this mean to us?” Whether you’re in Ligonier or Allegheny Township, the City of Greensburg or Latrobe, or the Borough of West Newton or Youngwood, this Plan must speak to you.

## TRAMS

Short for Technical Resources and Municipal Services, the TRAMS program aims to support local municipal planning efforts. We have recognized that of the County's 65 municipalities, very few have regular access to planners to assist them on local comprehensive plans, zoning ordinance updates, transportation planning, community development activities, and so on. Too many of our municipalities are not engaged in the pursuit of planning for their futures. Unfortunately, such circumstances hamper neighboring communities and affect the County as a whole. TRAMS helps connect municipal officials to recognized best practices through the County Planning Department.

## PLANNING WORKS

Our 2005 Comprehensive Plan represents a solid foundation for the planning that we do today. Many specific elements were implemented that changed the complexion of our communities. Efforts to work with Seton Hill University to expand their presence in downtown Greensburg led to the construction of the Performing Arts Center and the Arts Center. Partnering with PennDOT and Murrysville to install Intelligent Transportation Systems on Route 22 reduced congestion and improved travel times. The Center Avenue Extension project in New Stanton improved transportation access to economic drivers at the UPS facility. The 2005 Plan also led to the creation of the Westmoreland Land Trust, which has protected hundreds of acres of open space for the enjoyment of future residents. In summary, planning for our future is not an academic exercise. It is both practical and necessary for our communities, our County and our region.

## ACTION STATEMENTS

*Over the next 10 years, we will...*

- » Cultivate the entrepreneur, the builder and the entertainer;
- » Build vibrant communities, plan for and expect well-designed places;
- » Create unique and inviting places to play;
- » Plug into technology and innovation;
- » Enjoy nature and wide-open spaces;
- » Embrace all people—old and new—and
- » Tell the world Westmoreland County is expecting you!

## OUR IMMENSE OPPORTUNITY

It is easy to become callous and hardened toward these issues and leave our fates to chance. However, research and more importantly, practice, shows that communities who plan for their future are more likely to capture the future they want, rather than the one that arrives by happenstance. Communities that build off their existing assets and opportunities are also more successful than the ones that attempt to build them from scratch.

Throughout the planning process, we were reminded of the basic amenities that make Westmoreland a great place to live, work, and play. Our considerable school districts, safe neighborhoods, abundant natural resources and beauty, rich culture and history, affordable housing, reasonable cost of living, and location between our big city neighbor in Allegheny County and the amenities of the Laurel Highlands are all assets to be built upon.

This planning process is finishing at a pivotal time in the County's history. In our not-so-distant past, we overcame the geographic frontier of the Allegheny Ridge to settle what would become Southwestern Pennsylvania. Today, we face a demographic frontier. The realization that we have overcome struggles before, through partnership, hard work, and a devotion to community informs our approach today. The strategies proposed here may take a generation to fully implement. Indeed, the issues we intend to overcome are generations in the making. Recognizing the long-term goal and working daily to achieve it, will lead us to a better future.

It is not the intent of this Plan to lay the groundwork for Countywide zoning. Nor is the intent of this Plan to dictate land use decisions to local governments. Although land use issues can transcend municipal boundaries, the County steadfastly believes that land use decisions and zoning are, and should remain, the prerogative of the local governments.

Moreover, the recommendations put forward in the Plan may work in certain municipalities, and not in others.



# CORE OBJECTIVE 1: ALIGN WORKFORCE, EDUCATION, EMPLOYERS, AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

There is an inextricable link between population growth and the presence of high quality employment opportunities. To reverse Westmoreland County's trend towards continued population decline, it is imperative that Westmoreland County focus on strategies to retain existing jobs and create new ones. As the prospects of finding quality employment in the County improve, it is only logical that the desirability of the County as a place to lay roots and personally invest in its communities will improve in parallel. Whereas push-pull migration factors have worked against the County in recent decades, increased employment opportunities can only serve to improve the likelihood of existing residents to remain in the County and dramatically bolster the probability of attracting new ones.

## STRATEGIES

The following strategies are intended to help implement the Core Objective. Each is accompanied by specific action steps that ensure the objective can be appropriately achieved and monitored throughout the life of the Plan.

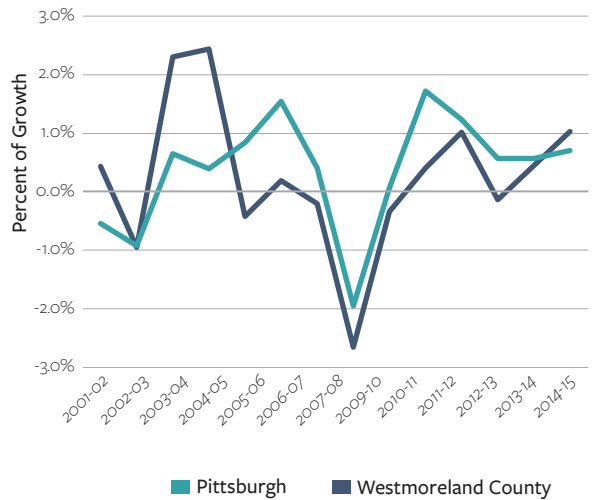
1. Champion Skilled Labor
2. Leverage Local Talent
3. Assist Small Businesses
4. Advance Entrepreneurialism
5. Connect with Tech
6. Provide Development-Ready Sites

Within Westmoreland County today, employers and employees are largely mismatched, creating a disconnect that challenges economic development. During outreach and engagement, major employers indicated difficulty in finding the skilled workers and employees they require to be successful within the County. At the same time, residents indicated a lack of available and attainable employment opportunities. Together, these sentiments demonstrate a misalignment between the employees companies are looking for and the jobs residents are hoping to obtain.

To best ensure the stability of employment and industry in Westmoreland, the County must take steps to better align workforce and employers to combat its steadily decreasing labor pool. This should include efforts to provide education and investment in developing a highly skilled workforce to meet the needs of existing and future employers. This should also be aligned with projects to support entrepreneurship, small business, and manufacturing. For example, the County has several opportunities to better align curricula of local educational institutions to meet the needs of area employers, including the Corner, an entrepreneurial center in downtown New Kensington, in partnership between the Westmoreland County Industrial Development Corporation and Penn State New Kensington.

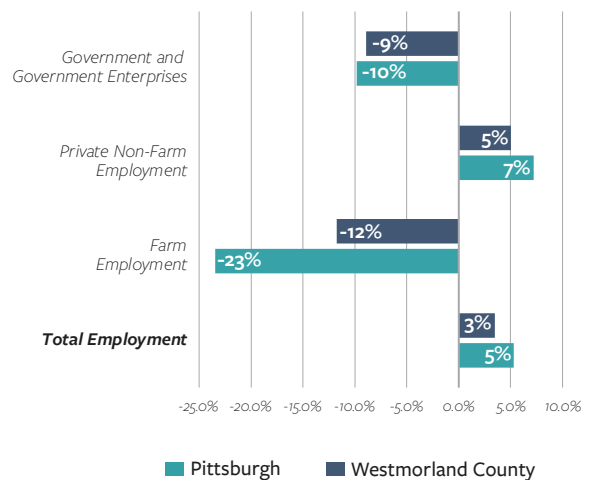
### ANNUAL EMPLOYMENT GROWTH

(2001 TO 2015)



### EMPLOYMENT GROWTH IN MAJOR SECTORS

(2001 TO 2015)



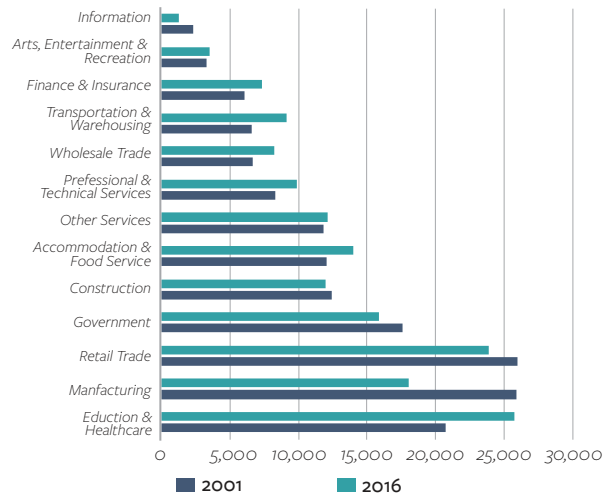
# STRATEGY 1.1 CHAMPION SKILLED LABOR

Manufacturing is critical to Westmoreland's economy. It is one of the County's largest industries and is expected to remain a significant element of employment and economy in the region. In 2015, manufacturing employed over 14 percent of the County's workforce and multitudes of other downstream supply chains. To support this, the County must invest in manufacturing and provide the foundation to support it, now and in the future. The same is true for the construction industry. Efforts to promote professional trade jobs and other skilled-labor positions could help attract students to industry and generate additional interest in local manufacturing careers. Further, increased investment in vocational training should manifest itself into a more skilled, effective labor pool that supports the vitality and stability of manufacturing in Westmoreland County.

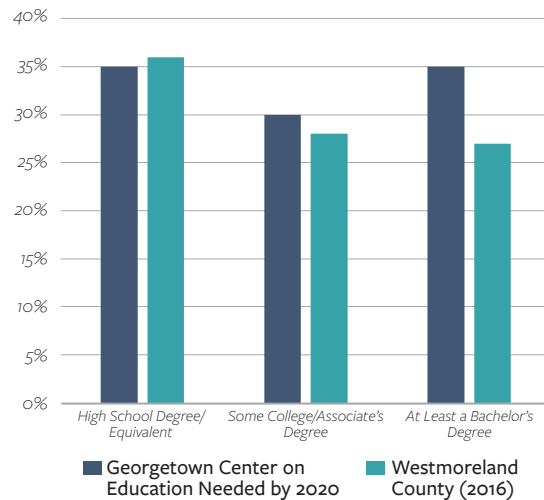
According to the Georgetown Center on Education and Workforce, by 2020, 65 percent of all jobs in the country's economy will require post-secondary education and training beyond high school. Of these, 35 percent will require at least a bachelor's degree, 30 percent will require some college or an associate's degree, and 35 percent will not require education beyond high school. As the economy continues to evolve and technology advances, these percentages are likely to shift towards a great need for post high school education. Currently, over 92 percent of Westmoreland's population has a high school diploma or equivalent. However, only 36 percent have at least an associate's degree. This is over 10 percentage points less than the national average. In order to be competitive, the County will have to increase its workforce population with advanced education, specifically in trade industries, as manufacturing continues to be a core industry and construction continues to grow.

**Desired Result. A thriving manufacturing and construction industry supported by students and young professionals that recognize the importance of skilled-labor careers and have the ambition to pursue them.**

**CHANGE IN NUMBER OF JOBS**  
(2001 AND 2016)



**EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT**  
WESTMORELAND COUNTY & GEORGETOWN CENTER ON EDUCATION COMPARISON





STRATEGY I.1  
**ACTIONS**

**PROMOTE SKILLED LABOR**

Incentivize and provide opportunities for County residents, particularly students, to enter the skilled labor force.

**Program.** Partner with local schools to host a “Career Day” to connect students with local trade professionals from various industries to showcase careers. (\$,∅)

**Program.** Develop events that celebrate high school students entering trade careers. (\$,∅)

**Program.** Create and promote a Countywide job shadowing program that allows local students to explore different trade careers. (\$,∅)

**Program.** In coordination with local schools, businesses, and trade associations, develop a program to train students in skilled-labor professions. (\$,∅)

**Program.** Establish an apprenticeship program to directly connect high school students to local trade companies. (\$,∅)

**Program.** Develop a “Made in Westmoreland” program that promotes, distributes, and provides information about materials, products, and goods that are manufactured within the County. (\$,∅)



Westmoreland County Chamber of Commerce

# WORKFORCE FORUM

Southwestern Pennsylvania is experiencing a shrinking labor market affecting businesses across all industry sectors. The tightening labor market is due to an aging population and a structural misalignment between education and industry at the regional level. This results in unemployment, underemployment, and the exporting of talent to other areas—the often cited “brain drain” from the region. While workers can be retrained, this leads to inefficiencies in the workforce development system, higher costs, lost productivity, and added stress for both companies and employees.

Recognizing the importance of this issue, leaders in economic development partnered with superintendents of County school districts to develop a plan of action. A core stakeholder group began meeting regularly to discuss ways to address this critical issue. In 2015, the Westmoreland County Forum for Workforce Development was formed. The Forum is a unique partnership that now includes school districts, higher education institutions, career and technology centers (CTCs) from four different counties, economic development entities, the Westmoreland-Fayette Workforce Investment Board, industry representatives, and others. The mission of the Workforce Forum is to “Empower employers, educators, and community as partners to foster a vibrant regional economy.”

Empowerment of the partnership developed from a strategy that called for the creation of three task forces, each having a specific goal. The first task force worked at developing programs, events, and opportunities for students to have greater exposure to careers available within the region. The second task force is developing curriculum pathways that directly correspond to the five regional career clusters: Advanced Manufacturing and Technical Sciences; Energy, Agriculture and Natural Resources; Financial and Business Services, Hospitality, and Public Administration; Allied Health and Human Services; and Information and Communication Technology. These pathways will guide students through the curriculum needed for them to achieve their career goals. The third task force is working to implement a regional internship program, which will provide employers with a central hub to match with students from across multiple districts.

Career discovery is a vital part of helping students navigate the ever-changing employment landscape. The Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau, was quoted at the World Forum in Davos, pointing out that, “The pace of change has never been this fast, yet will never be this slow again.” When confronted with an ever-evolving menu of career choices, it is more critical than ever that students begin exploring careers in much more meaningful ways, and at a much earlier age.

Once students narrow down their career interests, pathways will guide them through the plethora of available class options to ensure that they receive the education needed to excel in their chosen profession. Rather than silos that isolate students, pathways will operate more like highway systems, offering multiple on and off ramps to allow students the ability to correct their course should their exploration lead them to a different career destination.



**STUDENTS, PARENTS, AND  
TEACHERS**

**BUSINESS OWNERS AND  
EMPLOYERS**

[careerhubconnect.com](http://careerhubconnect.com)

As exploration and pathways lead students ever closer to their ultimate career goals, internships, externships, and apprenticeships will help ensure that they get real world experience with companies within the region. A new regional internship hub website will allow businesses to have one centralized location to match with students from districts across the region, as opposed to having to deal with multiple districts, each having different procedures and requirements. It will also allow students greater access to employers, some of which would have previously been unavailable to them. Standardized procedures and guidelines will encourage greater participation by establishing a common set of rules for employers and districts to follow.

Much of the work since 2015 has been on the education side. Now, with much of the groundwork completed or well underway, the next step for the Forum is to actively engage employers from within the region. Not only can employers help to define pathways, provide experiences for younger students to help them learn about new and emerging careers, but they will also play a vital role in establishing the regional internship program, which will ultimately see thousands of students across multiple counties having positive experiences in hundreds of companies. These mutually beneficial partnerships between employers, education, and community will help to propel Southwestern Pennsylvania to new heights of economic vibrancy, improving the quality of life for all within our region.

## STRATEGY 1.2

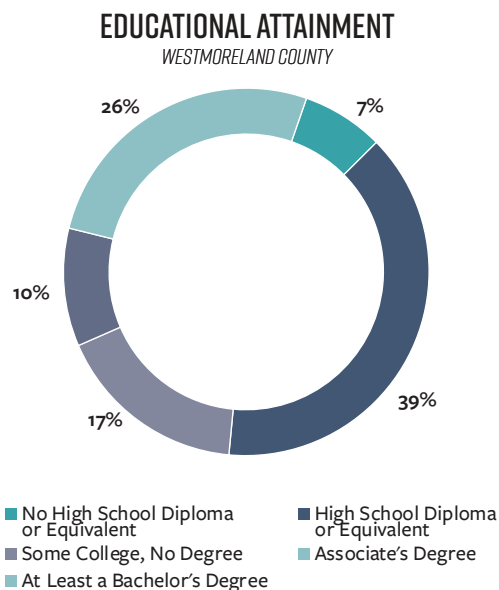
# LEVERAGE LOCAL TALENT

Westmoreland County is home to several colleges and universities, including Saint Vincent College, Seton Hill University, University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg, Penn State New Kensington, and Westmoreland County Community College. These institutions educate students from around the world on a diverse range of subjects that directly correlate to industries and careers across the country. Universities and their students are an invaluable resource to a community, helping to rejuvenate the local economy by building a highly skilled and desirable workforce.

Westmoreland, however, is a temporary home for those receiving an education, and many students choose to leave the County, either following graduation or to receive an education elsewhere. This is not only true for the students that temporarily move to the County for their education, but also those born here that choose to remain for a post-secondary education. This two-tiered problem requires a multi-tiered approach to help expand its declining workforce. It is essential that Westmoreland County leverage the direct access to diverse student bodies to better understand how to retain students after graduation, attract new students, and cultivate work environments for new and young professionals in the County.

In the Southwestern Pennsylvania region, roughly half of the area's 40,000 college graduates leave due to a lack of applicable job opportunities. This so-called "brain drain" is not only reducing the region's workforce but also its number of, and potential for, competitive businesses. Working with higher-ed institutions to gain a better understanding of graduate needs will be critical in helping the County leverage its local talent throughout the life of this Plan.

**Desired Result. A highly skilled pool of workforce-eligible residents with the knowledge to be successful as professionals in the County as well as the desire to live in the County.**



### CASE STUDY: PHILADELPHIA, PA

*In 2015, a study executed by the nonprofit organization, Campus Philly, presented Philadelphia's success in attracting and retaining college graduates in the greater metropolitan area. It was reported that 64 percent of college graduates stayed in the region, compared to 50 percent in Boston and 37 percent in Baltimore. Philadelphia came in first out of all metro areas in the US for growth in population over age 25 with a college degree. The report mentioned how millennials are attracted to density, diversity, transportation, restaurants, arts, and culture. However, the chief drawing factor was the combination of high quality of life and available job opportunities. Through finding ways to better connect students to employers and providing an attractive place to live, Philadelphia was able to retain graduates and expand its educated workforce base.*

## STRATEGY 1.2 ACTIONS

### COORDINATE AND PROMOTE OPPORTUNITIES

Work with the Westmoreland County Forum for Workforce Development to create and promote local and regional job opportunities.

**Program.** Work with local companies and organizations to create an internship program that matches local students with companies and programs. (\$,∅)

**Program.** Work with school districts, local colleges, and universities to adapt curricula to respond to the needs of the region's employers. (\$,∅)

**Program.** Evaluate existing job-board platforms to ensure coordinated efforts to target County and regional residents. (\$,∅)

**Program.** Create and promote a Countywide job shadowing program that allows local students to explore different career options available in the County, including in local government, like the job shadowing program at Hempfield Area School District. (\$,∅)

**Program.** Coordinate with local school districts, colleges, and universities to provide dual enrollment where high school students can take classes that offer higher education credit at local institutions. (\$,∅)

### LEVERAGE SENIOR TALENT

Capitalize on the breadth of knowledge and experience held within the County's senior workforce members to expand the entire workforce and help young professionals moving to Westmoreland.

**Program.** Develop a senior workforce program to help older workforce members nearing retirement or retirement eligible to remain in the workforce if they choose. (\$,∅)

**Program.** Create a program for senior workforce members to mentor younger residents in the workforce. (\$,∅)



## STRATEGY 1.3

# ASSIST SMALL BUSINESSES

Setting up and operating a small business is a complex process, requiring a critical understanding of financing, staffing, cash flow, a range of rules and regulations, and general business management. Simply because someone is an expert in their technical field does not mean they are best suited to run a business in that field. Small businesses comprise the majority of companies in Westmoreland County, thus providing the resources to effectively operate an independent business is essential. Access to helpful resources and information in the County is fragmented, furthering difficulties for small businesses. Efforts to support and enhance small business communities in the County should help ensure thriving local economies, attract new companies, and foster a welcoming environment for the small businesses to prosper.

One such effort is focusing on the succession of existing and future small businesses. As our workforce ages, it also means that sole-proprietor and small family businesses may be looking to transfer ownership or operations. As such, they will need several resources on how to do so including legal requirements, transfer of ownership, and a reliable individual with whom to transfer the ownership. The latter of which is critical if a family member or trusted individual does not exist for that owner. Keeping these small businesses alive in Westmoreland County is also critical to its employment base. Many of the jobs held in the County are at businesses with less than 20 employees. If small businesses continually dissolve it will not only harm the local community but the County as a whole. This presents a very unique opportunity for new and veteran entrepreneurs to find a place in turn-key businesses in our communities. Support to educate business owners on the process of transferring ownership, including legal assistance, business planning and finance can help keep thriving businesses here.

**Desired Result. A County where small businesses thrive and are able to start and expand through easily accessible and comprehensive resources.**



### CASE STUDY: BRENTWOOD, MO

*Brentwood, Missouri is a centrally located community within the St. Louis region, offering premier highway access. Commercial uses along the City's major corridors focus primarily on a regional market, including "big box" stores and national retailers. Aiming to diversify retail options, the City prioritized small business growth within their Brentwood 20/20 Comprehensive Plan. The document identifies programs and policies to support local entrepreneurship and create a unique retail atmosphere that offsets regional commercial. This includes local restaurants, cafés and coffeeshops, specialty stores and niche retailers, and businesses that cater to the surrounding neighborhoods.*

## STRATEGY 1.3 ACTIONS

### PROVIDE SMALL BUSINESS RESOURCES

Equip small businesses with the resources necessary to not only establish themselves in Westmoreland but also to expand and flourish.

**Program.** Evaluate and restructure the current business outreach program to maximize effectiveness. (\$,0)

**Program.** Establish a group of advisors made up of lawyers, accountants, real estate agents, Chamber partners, SCORE, and the St. Vincent SBDC who could provide technical assistance to family-owned businesses. (\$,0)

**Program.** Create an online database or “one-stop shop” for resources to guide entrepreneurs in all stages of starting and growing a business in Westmoreland County. (\$,00)

**Program.** Work with the Small Business Development Center to develop programs, resources and informational materials to assist individuals interested in opening and operating a restaurant. (\$,00)

**Program.** Identify grants and other funding sources specific to starting a small business to help local entrepreneurs get started. (\$,0)

### SUPPORT SMALL BUSINESS EDUCATION

Identify and support educational resources for small businesses as a means for their owners and operators to help them advance in their industry.

**Program.** Partner with the County's larger companies to start an educational program where entrepreneurs can learn about business management and setup from executives or business leaders with specialized knowledge. (\$,00)

**Program.** Coordinate with local universities and institutions to offer a comprehensive range of classes and coursework related to entrepreneurship, business management, and starting a business. (\$,00)

**Program.** Evaluate opportunities for free or reduced higher education coursework in business or related fields for existing small business owners meeting established criteria. (\$,0)

**Program.** Develop and implement a succession planning program for small businesses. (\$,0)



## STRATEGY 1.4

# ADVANCE ENTREPRENEURIALISM

The entrepreneurial spirit is an integral part of America's history, helping to shape the economy and character of our nation. Entrepreneurship helps to create and distribute wealth at all levels of the economy, from independent, small businesses to multinational companies with tens of thousands of employees. Cultivating and advancing entrepreneurialism in Westmoreland can promote the growth of small business, stimulate innovation, and bolster local employment. Small businesses account for two-thirds of all new jobs created in the County. Many of the County's existing major employers began as small businesses and startups. Companies like Kennametal that started with 12 employees in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century now employ thousands. Kennametal and many other Westmoreland County businesses like it, were fostered from their beginning into key employers for the County. Overall, efforts to foster entrepreneurship will help expand and diversify the County's economy, making Westmoreland business-friendly and business-forward.

As noted in the previous Strategy, resources for small businesses are fragmented across Westmoreland County, especially since the individual municipalities do not have the same regulations and requirements for starting a business in their community. Fragmentation and inconsistency hinder new businesses and startups from establishing themselves in Westmoreland. When each city, borough, or township establishes its own set of business requirements it creates a divide among the 65 communities and more importantly confusion for potential small businesses looking to start in Westmoreland. While two-thirds of all new jobs exist at small businesses and startups, of the total existing jobs held in Westmoreland County, over 80 percent of them are at firms over a decade old. This further indicates the need for small business growth and subsequently the advancement of entrepreneurialism throughout the County. Turning away these businesses knowingly or unknowingly is detrimental to Westmoreland's economy.

**Desired Result. The ability to start and grow a business in the County is simple and easy to understand, with resources available online and from County staff.**



### CASE STUDY: WILDWOOD, MO

*Wildwood, Missouri is a western suburb of St. Louis, known for its great residential areas, schools, institutions, open spaces, outdoor recreation, and community events. However, the community recognized that their commercial areas were not meeting their fullest potential. As a bedroom community with 15,324 residents—most who work outside of the community—Wildwood adopted the 2016 Economic Development Guide to boost their local economy and foster entrepreneurialism. The guide supports local job creation, establishing a standing economic development sub-committee, developing Wildwood as a center for new startups in the St. Louis region, and collaboration between the public and private sectors. Following these goals, Wildwood has made many advancements towards igniting a spirit of local entrepreneurialism that will establish its presence in the regional market.*



## STRATEGY 1.4

# ACTIONS

### PREPARE RESOURCES

Identify and promote resources for individuals and entities looking to establish a startup in Westmoreland County to help simplify and ease the process.

**Program.** Utilizing strategic corporate and educational partnerships, establish a comprehensive entrepreneurial program to support the creation and growth of businesses. (\$,00)

**Project.** Develop promotional materials to market Westmoreland for entrepreneurship and provide individuals with information about available programs, grants, activities, and regulations related to starting a business in the County. (\$,0)

**Program.** Develop an entrepreneurial center network and enhance the existing programs and networks to accelerate small business startups Countywide. (\$,00)

### ASSESS ADVANTAGES

Regularly evaluate assets within the County for starting a new business to ensure they are promoted and supported to help increase Westmoreland's competitive advantage in the region.

**Project.** Conduct periodic assessments to identify competitive advantages for attracting emerging industries. (\$,00)

**Program.** Initiate a program where all colleges and universities meet periodically to discuss how their programs impact entrepreneurs and small businesses and the opportunities to enhance support for them. (\$,0)

### SUPPLY SPACE

Select existing spaces or opportunities for spaces for startups to work from and operate their business. This is especially critical in the early stages of a company's development.

**Policy.** Encourage municipal partners to allow for live/work spaces, shared-use facilities, incubator spaces, and other types of development that support innovation and entrepreneurship, particularly in downtown communities. (\$,0)

**Project.** Develop a network of co-working facilities in downtown communities that provide flexible work spaces to existing independent contractors, small businesses, and small business startups. (\$\$\$,000)

**Program.** Identify potential partnerships with Pitt-Greensburg, Seton Hill University, or both, to expand and enhance their entrepreneurial programs with the goal of developing an entrepreneurial accelerator in Downtown Greensburg. (\$,00)

**Policy.** Encourage local colleges and universities to develop off-campus live/work spaces to establish incubators for upperclassmen. (\$\$\$,000)

## STRATEGY 1.5

# CONNECT WITH TECH

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Technology is an integral component of the modern world, driving change throughout the national and global economies. Today, new technologies and innovation are impacting how products are conceptualized, assembled, distributed, and purchased across the entire market. Given the importance of manufacturing within Westmoreland, it is essential that the County is at the forefront of technological advances. This will ensure that local industries can embrace innovation and activate technology to support a thriving economy in Westmoreland. Establishing connections between technology, entrepreneurs, and the County's manufacturing leaders will help Westmoreland "plug-in" to the global marketplace.

Technology is not only important in manufacturing. Other industries, such as healthcare depend on technology for all of its processes and procedures, from data collection, to individual research, to data distribution, and overall communication. The healthcare industry is constantly on the lookout for the next technological advancement to help save lives and provide a better quality of life for the global population. The healthcare industry is now, and for the foreseeable future, Westmoreland's largest employment sector, with companies like Excela Health providing jobs for individuals across the County. Since 2001, jobs under the umbrella of healthcare and social services have increased by 17 percent, and this number is projected to grow through the life of this Plan. To help keep these jobs and companies like Excela Health as well as those in other employment industries, it will be critical for the County to not only bring new technologies and the companies that develop them to the region, but also to help implement them Countywide.

**Desired Result. A business community that supports innovative ideas and projects with a multitude of resources including education, workspace, and technical assistance.**



## STRATEGY 1.5 ACTIONS

### PROMOTE TECHNOLOGY IN BUSINESS

Determine resources and opportunities for individuals to start a technology-based business in Westmoreland.

**Program.** Launch a manufacturing working group to work with the Scalable Innovation program at Innovation Works in Pittsburgh. (\$,0)

**Project.** Research and identify local, regional, and national funding sources for starting and continuing technology-based businesses. (\$,00)

**Program.** Develop a technology business development group in partnership with local companies to create outreach materials and incentives to encourage new startup companies to form or move to Westmoreland County. (\$,0)

**Project.** Incentivize the development of makerspaces to enable students to design and test prototypes in collaboration with other individuals, private companies, nonprofits, and educational institutions. (\$,00)

### DISSEMINATE TECHNOLOGY

Increase interest in technology among businesses, local governments, students, and others in Westmoreland County.

**Policy.** Participate in state-wide, national, and global programs that promote innovation and progress through technology, such as conventions, certifications, professional organizations, and interest groups. (\$\$,000)

**Policy.** Promote private sector participation in local and regional planning efforts to help foster collaboration and innovation. (\$,00)

**Program.** Partner with existing and future local technology companies such as RoadBotics to integrate their products and processes into municipal and County planning efforts where appropriate. (\$\$,00)

**Program.** Foster interest in coding and other computer-based careers among the County's youth by implementing coding classes and camps into schools. (\$,00)



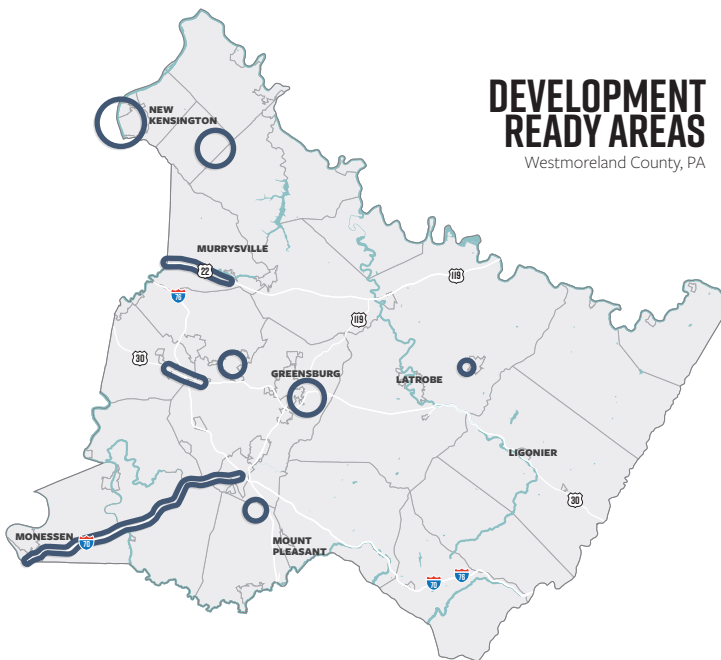
## STRATEGY 1.6

# PROVIDE DEVELOPMENT-READY SITES

Directing development to the appropriate sites is an essential element of growth within a community. While Westmoreland has ample space for growth and investment, much of this area is not prepared for immediate investment. As a result, many “available” sites would require costly improvements to make them development-ready. To support investment that is viable for the County, development should be guided to the urbanized footprints of Westmoreland, near existing infrastructure and potential workforces. Infill projects have a substantial return on investment per acre when cost of infrastructure investment is considered as a factor. Focusing on these areas will help provide sites that are “pad-ready” and align with growing industry segments, and support growth of the existing industry base while making it easier to attract new businesses to Westmoreland.

Many of these sites exist throughout the County, particularly in established neighborhood centers, town centers, and regional urban cores. They are also readily available along major roadways, which provide easy and direct opportunities for the distribution and reception of goods. Having these sites identified and readily available not only shows potential new businesses that there is a place for them in Westmoreland County, but also that they have options from which to choose. This can increase their likelihood of locating in the County. It also shows existing, growing businesses that there are places for them to expand around Westmoreland as well.

**Desired Result. New companies and industries are able to choose where they are located in the County due to an abundance of available, easily identifiable properties for redevelopment.**



### CASE STUDY: CHICAGO, IL

*In 2017, the Mayor of Chicago implemented Planned Manufacturing Districts (PMDs) which identified 15 industrial corridors with a focus on growing the manufacturing and tech-related industries of the City. This land use development initiative restricted residential uses within the districts and created plans based on market data, infrastructure analysis, financial planning, and community needs that would steer future investment into each corridor. The PMDs also worked to improve transportation access required for manufacturing and methods to foster employment growth. By identifying specific development-ready districts, Chicago has directed industrial growth to these priority regions.*

## STRATEGY I.6 ACTIONS

### DEVELOP POLICY

Design a policy that establishes the provision for “pad-ready” sites across the County to speed up the development process by minimalizing time-consuming barriers.

**Policy.** Direct new large-scale, development along Interstate 70 to capitalize on the connection to the highway, abundance of available land, and the investment already being made to update the Interstate. (\$\$\$,000)

**Policy.** Coordinate with municipal partners to consider infrastructure capacities and identify areas within specific communities that are best situated for economically sustainable investment. (\$,00)

**Policy.** Incorporate land use design requirements to include access to amenities, mix of uses, public transit, and improvements to support walkability and connection to neighboring developments for all appropriate land development projects. (\$,00)

**Policy.** Prioritize and advocate for public funding to support the development of listed projects. (\$,0)

### DEVELOP SITES

Upon completion of the policy, begin identifying and improving specific sites in Westmoreland to help spur both large- and small-scale development.

**Project.** Develop a corporate campus in or near Greensburg to support regional and local administrative headquarters and corporate activity and growth. (\$,00)

**Program.** Develop a list of factors that influence location decisions of small businesses versus a national or regional chain to help identify appropriate sites throughout the County. (\$,00)

**Project.** Identify, prioritize, and rehabilitate viable existing buildings in downtown communities to support and provide modern work space and amenities by bringing them up to code. (\$\$\$,000)

**Project.** Expand the Westmoreland Business and Research Park to increase its capacity for new and growing businesses. (\$\$\$,000)

**Program.** Continue partnering with the Regional Industrial Development Corporation (RIDC) and prioritize the re-purposing efforts of the RIDC Westmoreland site. (\$,0)

**Program.** Continue to prioritize the redevelopment of the former Schreiber Industrial Park in New Kensington for mixed use and advanced manufacturing. (\$\$\$,000)

**Project.** Complete the Derry Redevelopment Project. (\$\$\$,000)

**Project.** Develop sites for office use along US Route 30 near the Pennsylvania Turnpike – Irwin Exit, as well as along US Route 22 in Murrysville and Penn Township. (\$\$\$,000)



Conceptual Rendering of Commerce Crossing at Westmoreland



## CORE OBJECTIVE 2: DISCOVER WESTMORELAND

Westmoreland County has a lot to offer, from our significant history celebrated regularly through festivals, museums, and historic sites, to its picturesque landscape comprised of rural agriculture, state and local parks, and a growing multiuse trail system. The County also has distinct cultural amenities, such as the Palace Theatre, the Geyer Performing Arts Center, and the Westmoreland Museum of American Art. While long-time residents are well aware of these tremendous community assets, those living in other parts of Pennsylvania, the Midwest, and even the rest of the country and world, are probably not very familiar with our rich traditions and places of natural beauty.

### STRATEGIES

The following strategies are intended to help implement the Core Objective. Each is accompanied by specific action steps that ensure the objective can be appropriately achieved and monitored throughout the life of the Plan.

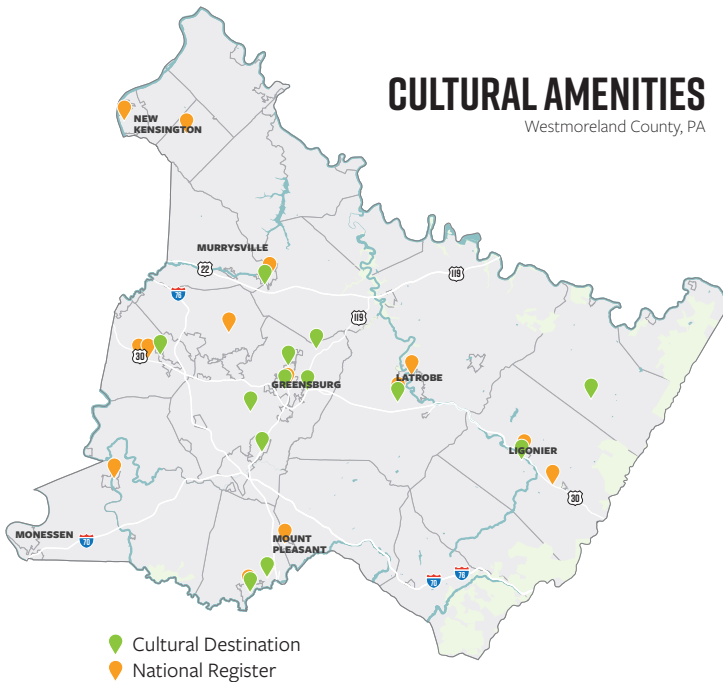
1. Create & Promote a County Brand
2. Cultivate Arts & Entertainment
3. Welcome Everyone
4. Grow Local
5. Develop Recreational Destinations

Visitors who come to Westmoreland County have a myriad of opportunities to immerse themselves in nature and recreation. For example, the Laurel Highlands are 3,000 square miles of hiking, biking, skiing, and all manner of water activities. It is a year-round attraction that even includes ziplining through certain areas. There are also a host of events happening around the County throughout the year including the Westmoreland County Fair, which happens around mid-August at the County Fairgrounds each year. The Fair has carnival rides and games, various livestock contests and competitions, automobile events, and concessions. The Delmont Apple 'n Arts Festival, Fort Ligonier Days, and Arts and Heritage Festival are other events that boast activities such as live music, a petting zoo, and over 150 arts and crafts vendors from around the region.

Underscoring its rich history, the County includes many sites that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Bushy Run Battlefield, for example, is a 213-acre site of the battle near Bushy Run during Pontiac's War. Today, visitors can tour the grounds and learn about the historical significance of the battle, as well as watch live reenactments. In Laughlintown, the Compass Inn is another historical destination operated by the Ligonier Valley Historical Society. Visitors can take a tour guided by period-appropriate chaperones to experience daily life in the 19th Century. Activities covered during the tour include, cooking, blacksmithing, and learning the origin of making a "toast." There are 49 other sites throughout Westmoreland that are listed on the Register, some of which are entire districts with numerous individual sites.

Some of the County's cultural facilities and organizations are a part of the Westmoreland Cultural Trust, a nonprofit organization established in 1992 to not only operate the Greensburg Garden and Civic Center, but also lead the development and growth of arts and culture in Westmoreland County. Today, the Trust operates four facilities and partners with several more organizations around the region including the Westmoreland Symphony, Laurel Ballet, and Apple Hill Playhouse. There are a host of other organizations that facilitate and enhance cultural life in the County from museums to art galleries and festivals to local events. Each bring their own unique qualities not only to their local community but to the County as a whole.

A key element of Reimagining Our Westmoreland is changing the County's regional presence and elevating Westmoreland's brand on a regional and national scale. This should include efforts to support arts and entertainment, and foster excitement that will attract the attention of new investors, potential residents, and visitors. This will include both the physical improvements and uses to create vibrant destinations within the County as well as steps to bolster the image, identity, and character of the Westmoreland community. The County should be nationally recognized and sought out, inviting individuals to discover and explore Westmoreland. As such, the strategies and actions presented in this chapter call out the need to promote its cherished community by creating a recognizable County brand, continuing to cultivate its cultural resources, and establishing a welcoming environment to tourists and new residents, alike.



## STRATEGY 2.1

# CREATE & PROMOTE A COUNTY BRAND

There is a classic phrase in business: “Your brand is what they say about you when you’re not around.” Creating a brand is how you ensure people are saying what you want. More importantly, it is how you influence individuals that have not yet been to your community to understand your brand and to eventually come and experience it firsthand. Although government is very different than a consumer-products business, every community ultimately has a narrative about its place that the public tells each other. That story is told through kitchen conversations among family and friends, through the media, and through a variety of organizations that represent a part of the Westmoreland community to the marketplace—it’s about reputation.

Westmoreland County is a large, complex place, and it has many brands. Brands will be different for obvious reasons, but collectively they are helping to shape Westmoreland County’s image, identity, and ultimately its reputation. While each organization needs to target their own audience and communicate their specific message, there are opportunities to better coordinate activities and present a consistent thread that speaks to Westmoreland as part of formal branding efforts. This will help unify the County and create a comprehensive place where people of all ages want to live, work, and play. This desire is fostered through the knowledge that no matter where they are in the County, be it Latrobe or Monessen, Vandergrift or Seward, visitors and potential residents have a sense of what to expect because that place is Westmoreland County.

**Desired Result. A distinct and clear Westmoreland County “brand” that speaks to its rich history, natural beauty, and exciting future.**



[labtroberevitalization.org](http://labtroberevitalization.org)

### BEST PRACTICE: CARY, IL

*Refining Cary, Illinois’s image and identity is one of the driving principles in the community’s 2015 Village of Cary Comprehensive Plan. A major part of this initiative is to create a local brand by giving its employment areas a recognizable identity. Cary has been able to establish its regional presence by focusing on marketing and business recruitment and coordinating with private property owners to add branding and placemaking enhancements to their sites. It has established Cary’s industrial area as a prominent, competitive location within the Chicago region.*



## STRATEGY 2.1 ACTIONS

### ESTABLISH A BRAND

Identify and establish the character, ideas, and themes that are important to describing the County to create a comprehensive brand for Westmoreland.

**Project.** Conduct a formal study of ongoing branding efforts and identify the major thematic components of the region's messaging, including assets and the County's focus on quality of life. (\$,0)

**Program.** Reconstruct current marketing programs, specifically for business recruitment locally, regionally, and nationally. A national program should be based on a partnership with regional and state organizations and the strengths of the County and region. (\$,00)

**Policy.** Utilize the 2 percent hotel occupancy tax to support LHV B efforts to brand, market and promote the County and implement the plan. (\$,0)

**Project.** Establish a series of visitors centers to highlight County and State assets. (\$\$,000)

### PROMOTE THE BRAND

Utilize any and all outreach methods through partnerships with various agencies and organizations to distribute the brand around the region and across the nation.

**Policy.** Ensure use of the brand is incorporated into all County outreach materials, resources, and events. (\$,00)

**Program.** Develop a program to market Westmoreland County to a regional market, including direct marketing to university students in County-based schools and beyond. (\$,0)

**Program.** Develop a program through a partnership with regional entities to market the region nationally. (\$,00)

**Program.** Share marketing materials with key organizations that attract people and businesses to Westmoreland. (\$,00)

**Program.** Allocate funding for down payment and closing cost assistance programs to the graduates of local institutions of higher education or those with skills in predetermined industry clusters (e.g., healthcare and manufacturing). (\$\$,00)

**Program.** Develop a program specifically for assisting employers with workforce recruitment. (\$,0)

**Program.** Create an online video program highlighting new and exciting things happening around the County. (\$,0)

**Program.** Work with local news and media outlets to encourage stories regarding events, restaurants, and venues across the County. (\$,00)



## STRATEGY 2.2

# CULTIVATE ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Art, entertainment, and culture are defining features of exciting and vibrant communities. This includes theaters and performance venues, art galleries, restaurants, breweries, distilleries, wineries, public art, and other amenities that create a place where individuals want to visit and spend time. Throughout the outreach and public engagement process it was stated that the County did not have enough entertainment options for young people. Personal leisure opportunities are important for both children to spend time outside of school and home, and young professionals desiring engagement and to relax outside of work.

Efforts to cultivate arts and entertainment across Westmoreland can help to create these unique destinations that attract visitors and support quality of life. Concentrating arts and entertainment within neighborhood centers, town centers, and regional urban cores will help bolster activity and define community character. These could be further supported by art communities and distinct destinations for entertainment that will draw individuals into Westmoreland and clearly communicate those assets the County has to offer.

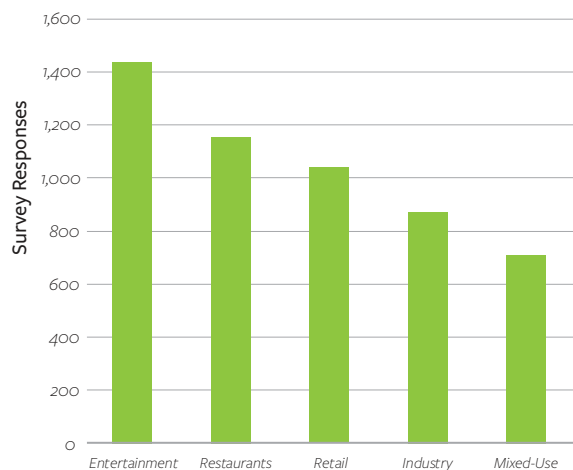
The County currently has several organizations and businesses devoted to supporting the arts, sports, and other types of entertainment. Many host their own events throughout the year that attract both Westmoreland residents and visitors. Taking a larger role in cultivating arts and entertainment will help the County boost resident engagement, increase its visitors and ultimately bolster the economy.

**Desired Result. Thriving entertainment destinations and arts communities that are active with local residents and visitors from outside the County.**



Westmoreland County, SkySight Photography

### DESIRED NON-RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT TOP 5 SURVEY RESULTS



## STRATEGY 2.2 ACTIONS

### CREATE A FRAMEWORK

Develop a framework for the support and integration of new arts and entertainment venues in order to create unique destinations for residents and visitors in Westmoreland County.

**Program.** Partner with existing Countywide organizations such as, Westmoreland Cultural Trust and Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau to support arts and entertainment, by establishing a network of art resources. (\$\$,000)

**Project.** Create a list of spaces that would be appropriate for public art throughout Westmoreland based on a set of criteria such as visibility, exposure to elements, size of the space, among others. (\$,0)

**Policy.** Encourage the creation of Arts Districts in downtowns, which can grow Westmoreland's creative arts economy. (\$\$,00)

**Project.** Promote the development of "Town Squares" within urban cores for use as engaging venues for performances by local artists and entertainers. (\$\$\$,000)

**Project.** Utilize vacant warehouse and industrial buildings for active entertainment venues such as indoor skydiving, trampoline parks, or indoor dog parks, which are growing in popularity across the country. (\$\$\$,000)

**Project.** Coordinate with municipal partners to encourage the development of public art installations, with an emphasis on art that is interactive, creative, and imaginative. (\$\$,000)

**Program.** Encourage the creation of municipal- or district-specific brands that incorporate artistic elements and communicate a distinct community character. Use the Latrobe signage program as a starting point. (\$,0)

### FOSTER PARTNERSHIPS

Seek out partners in the County to help sponsor and create new public events across Westmoreland.

**Policy.** Continue to support existing local festivals including Fort Ligonier Days, Arts and Heritage Festival, and Mt. Pleasant Glass and Ethnic Festival to draw people to the County, build community pride, and bolster the economy. (\$,0)

**Program.** Partner with local arts organizations such as the Westmoreland Museum of American Art to establish new venues and events to showcase local artists. (\$\$,00)

**Program.** Establish incentives and programs to encourage businesses that relate to art and entertainment, particularly within urban cores. (\$,0)

**Policy.** Utilize the 2 percent hotel occupancy tax to support LHVB efforts to brand, market and promote the County and implement the plan. (\$,0)

**Project.** Partner with cultural and historical organizations to explore and develop new museums, galleries, and cultural institutions. (\$\$\$,000)



## STRATEGY 2.3

# WELCOME EVERYONE

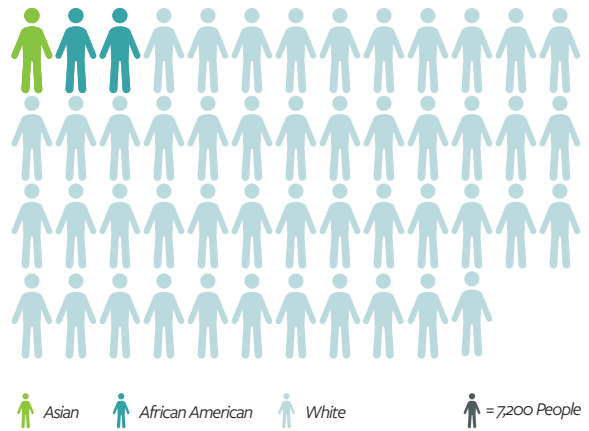
To foster growth and development, Westmoreland County must be willing to welcome new residents. As new residents look to make their homes in the many municipalities within Westmoreland, the County will become more reflective of the nation. Nurturing and implementing an open and inclusive environment within the County is critical to attracting and retaining new individuals and families to Westmoreland.

For example, CNN reports that immigrants are twice as likely to start a business than US-born citizens and Fortune reports that black females are the fastest growing group of entrepreneurs. Therefore, the County, in its desire to grow its economy and become a leader in the region, should support and promote the entrepreneurial spirit of diverse populations by creating a welcoming place for them. To become a global destination for people from around the world, the County must embrace diversity, respect minorities, and likewise inclusivity, to establish itself as a desirable community for people of differing backgrounds and cultures.

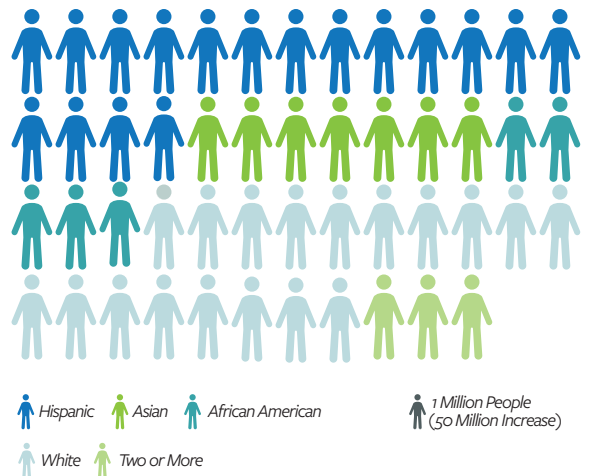
Ultimately, establishing a “welcoming” County is about local culture. Local attitudes and behaviors will shape slowly over time, so it is important to identify strategies that build momentum while also creating a foundation. This approach must match existing County residents who are exuberant about their communities with those who are new to it. The passion must be shared. It must engage the big employers that recruit new faces to town and work to have them put roots in Westmoreland. And it must bring new ideas to the table in organizations across the County. These efforts should be delivered through a warmth that reflects the core character of the County and the unique small towns within it. As such, diversity and equity are assets to be nurtured and promoted by the County.

**Desired Result. A welcoming population that supports inclusivity and celebrates the diverse cultures throughout the County.**

### WESTMORELAND COUNTY RACIAL MAKEUP (2014)



### POPULATION GROWTH ALL US POPULATION GROWTH (2000 TO 2014)



## STRATEGY 2.3

# ACTIONS

## CREATE A WELCOME PROGRAM

Create various organizations and resources to attract and welcome people from across the country to Westmoreland County.

**Program.** Establish a network of local ambassadors to represent Westmoreland County in a wide variety of formats, available via an on-call, volunteer basis who are culturally matched. (\$,000)

**Program.** Coordinate with major employers, including Elliott and Cenveo to promote living locally in the County and have them directly link new residents with community ambassadors early in their relocation process. (\$,000)

**Project.** Create a welcome packet for new resident households, and have designated community ambassadors, such as the Realtors Association, follow up six months later with a community satisfaction survey and a “How Can I Help?” interface. (\$,000)

**Project.** Consider a marketing campaign where all new resident households receive a unique community item and publicize the program through news and social media. (\$,000)

**Program.** Establish a team to regularly meet with area real estate agents and brokers to track, monitor, and identify the community attributes that attract new residents as well as the weaknesses that deter them from locating in the County. (\$,0)

**Policy.** Encourage local organizations that feature a membership board to recruit at least one new member who has not previously been active in their organization, but shares their mission and interests. (\$,000)

**Program.** Create a “Why I Love This Place” program organized around walking tours, site visits, and special events (e.g., restaurant open houses) that provides a forum to learn more about positive news in Westmoreland in a social setting. (\$\$,00)

## PRIORITIZE INCLUSIVITY

Embrace and promote multiculturalism in education, communication, celebration, and commerce.

**Program.** Establish an independent diversity and inclusion committee to make recommendations of policies, programs, and projects and track and communicate progress. (\$,0)

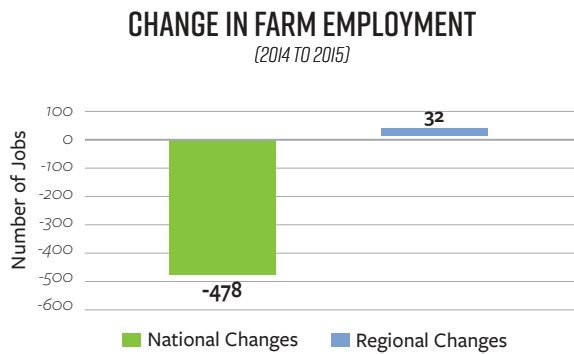
**Program.** Promote educational opportunities designed to address cross-cultural communication, discrimination, language learning, history, citizenship, and job training to promote cultural understanding. (\$,0)



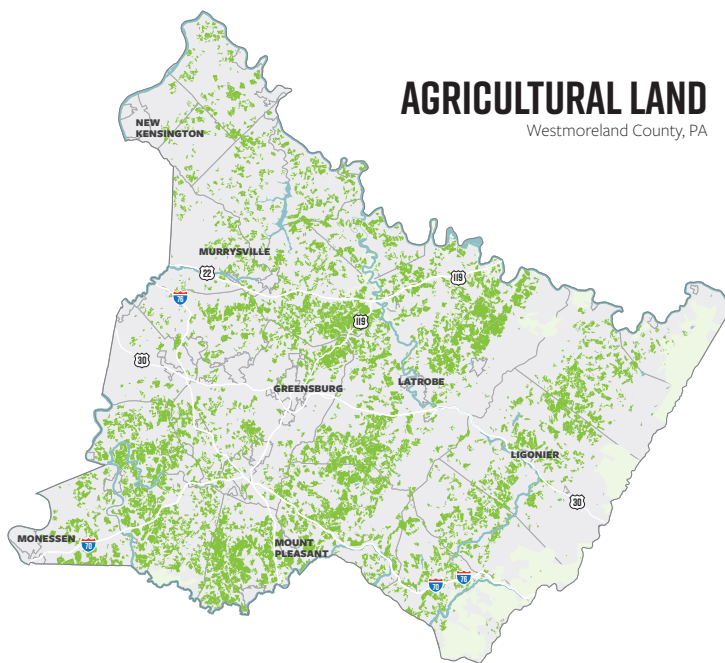
# STRATEGY 2.4 GROW LOCAL

Westmoreland is well known for its beautiful rural character, defined by the County’s abundant farms, rich agricultural tradition, and verdant landscape like Schramm’s Farm, Kerber’s Dairy, and Greendance Winery. These agricultural producers represent an important opportunity to create additional entertainment resources and destinations by promoting agritourism within the County. Relatedly, a significant portion of Westmoreland’s land uses are designated as agricultural. This use is not concentrated in one or two locations but rather spread throughout the County creating areas for potential agritourism destinations in communities all over Westmoreland, both large and small such as the aforementioned farms.

Likewise, proximity to a population hub like Pittsburgh provides continual access to new and regular visitors. Agritourism activates agricultural uses and activities as a foundation for tourism, utilizing an existing economic industry to enable new investment and opportunity. With organizations like the Westmoreland County Agricultural Land Preservation (WCALP) working to conserve agricultural land across the County on a regular basis, these uses will continue to be abundant in Westmoreland’s foreseeable future. According to the Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development, “agritourism may bolster the profitability of small family farms, and help communities retain the economic, employment, resource stewardship, and lifestyle benefits offered by farms.” This means that agritourism is a viable opportunity for resident farmers, particularly those in more rural areas, to increase their presence and growth ability. By encouraging agritourism, Westmoreland can expand upon its agricultural base and support greater tourism while preserving a defining element of the County’s unique character.



**Desired Result.** Existing farms throughout the County open up their processes and products to the public to provide a new source of income for both the farmers and the County.



### BEST PRACTICE: VIRGINIA OYSTER TRAIL

In 2015, the Virginia Tourism Corporation created an oyster trail to promote the state’s farm-raised oyster industry, one of the largest in the country. The trail highlights the state’s seven different oyster regions and connects producers with seafood restaurants and raw bars. The trail has been leveraged for festivals and other events and helps to support other agritourism ventures such as wineries and breweries.

## STRATEGY 2.4 ACTIONS

### SUPPORT FARM-DIRECT

Broaden access to locally grown food throughout the County by providing consumers opportunities to purchase goods directly from the source.

**Program.** Working with local farmers, develop a program to market farm-direct food. (\$,0)

**Program.** Expand farmers markets like those in Ligonier, West Newton, and Export to other areas of the County to provide fresh, locally grown food to all residents. (\$,00)

**Program.** Connect with local farmers to promote organic, farm-to-table restaurants. (\$,000)

**Program.** Develop a controlled environment agricultural facility program. (\$\$,000)

### PROMOTE AGRITOURISM

Encourage local farmers to engage in agritourism to turn their current revenue sources into additional revenue opportunities.

**Program.** Continue to support agriculture-related festivals such as Delmont Apple 'n Arts Festival and Westmoreland County Fair as local and regional entertainment attractions. (\$,0)

**Program.** Explore the establishment of a route, tour, or "trail" through the County that guides individuals to key agritourism destinations. (\$,00)

**Policy.** Review existing codes and policies that promote and incentivize agritourism. (\$,0)

**Program.** Develop materials that offer information regarding starting and expanding an agritourism business, partnering with organizations that provide assistance to small businesses within the County. (\$,0)

**Program.** Educate local agricultural businesses on the benefits of establishing an agritourism program. (\$,00)

**Program.** Establish a program to help local farmers establish themselves as an agritourism businesses via partnerships with farms that are already in the industry. (\$,00)

**Program.** Launch a Countywide campaign to promote agritourism and related tourism and entertainment uses both within the County and across the larger region. (\$,00)

**Project.** Explore the feasibility of developing a visitors center for the County that teaches about and promotes agritourism, including promotional materials for existing destinations. Use Round Hill Park as an example. (\$,00)



Westmoreland County, Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau

## STRATEGY 2.5

# DEVELOP RECREATIONAL DESTINATIONS

Westmoreland has a vast amount of natural land and open space that supports a myriad of outdoor recreational activities such as hiking and skiing. Areas such as the Laurel Highlands draw in thousands of visitors from outside the County every year with over 3,000 square miles of natural land for a plethora of outdoor activities. Destinations like the Laurel Highlands are not only entertainment options but also key economic generators for Westmoreland County. They also act as opportunities to improve community health by providing space for exercising through both structured and unstructured activity.

Organized sports are also popular within the region in spring, summer, and fall, particularly for youth and young adults. Developing recreational destinations, such as a multisport complex, attracts tournaments, teams, and spectators on a regional scale. A multisport complex has the potential to draw in families, collegiate teams, traveling league and club teams, and others from all over the Commonwealth to compete in various sports year-round, creating an active economic catalyst in Westmoreland. This would attract related economic development and tourism related to sports and recreation amenities. Recreational destinations enhance the livability of the County and should be held in that regard through maintenance and utilization.

**Desired Result.** Recreational destinations that are enjoyed year-round by local, regional, and national visitors serving to enhance and expand the County's recognition.



Westmoreland County, Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau



## STRATEGY 2.5 ACTIONS

### PURSUE RECREATIONAL DESTINATIONS

Assess the County's potential for developing and sustaining a regional recreation complex.

**Project.** Develop a formal indoor/outdoor recreation destination strategic plan with all partners to identify projects, investments, and development that would enhance the County's competitiveness as a destination for a wide variety of visitor activities. (\$\$,000)

**Project.** Identify missing elements of the regional indoor/outdoor recreation tourism marketplace and establish approaches to recruit such users or construct such infrastructure as part of economic development efforts. (\$,0)

**Project.** Regularly evaluate the market demand for niche indoor/outdoor recreation retail and service businesses; identify needs and unmet demand in the trade area; and then target business recruitment efforts to these types of potential tenants. (\$,000)

### DEVELOP BRICK & MORTAR

Build the regional sports complex to attract teams and tournaments from around Southwestern Pennsylvania and beyond.

**Project.** Develop a modern, multidiscipline sports complex to support tourism by regularly attracting visitors to the County and providing local families and associated sports programs with modern facilities. (\$\$\$,000)

**Project.** Develop a convention center with enough capacity to support large conventions and exhibits (i.e., 1,000 attendees and 300+ exhibitors) to help draw in large-scale events to the County. (\$\$\$,000)

**Policy.** Utilize the 2 percent hotel occupancy tax to support LHVB efforts to brand, market and promote the County and implement the plan. (\$,0)

### MAINTAIN ONGOING EFFORTS

Continue existing efforts to promote and expand sports and recreation in the County.

**Program.** Host Countywide and regional sports tournaments, partnering with existing organizations that facilitate organized sports in the County as well as outside associations. (\$\$,000)

**Program.** Establish an indoor/outdoor recreation tourism branding plan and target key markets, including within Pennsylvania and also in neighboring states. (\$,0)

**Program.** Continue the coordinated and collaborative effort between natural area management agencies and the Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau that regularly meets to promote the region's outdoor recreation assets. (\$,000)





# CORE OBJECTIVE 3: REPOSITION OUR TOWNS

Westmoreland County's cities, boroughs, villages, hamlets, and rural crossroads—from New Kensington to Crabtree, Jeannette to Wilpen, Hunker to Herminie, Irwin to Norvelt—are places of enduring value. Despite decades of perceived decline spurred by deindustrialization and suburbanization, these places remain as centers of community life. It is at the fire halls, social and civic clubs, athletic fields, coffee shops, restaurants, sidewalks, neighborhood markets, and corner stores, where the social fabric of our communities are sown. In a world now dominated by impersonal big-box stores, our neighbors still yearn for connection and community engagement.

## STRATEGIES

The following strategies are intended to help implement the Core Objective. Each is accompanied by specific action steps that ensure the objective can be appropriately achieved and monitored throughout the life of the Plan.

1. Invest in Downtowns
2. Provide Housing Options
3. Cultivate a Restaurant Industry
4. Utilize Planning Best Practices
5. Direct Density

There are some who believe that recent trends among younger and older generations showing interest for viable neighborhood centers, town centers and regional urban cores is a fad that will pass. The reality is that these types of places exist in abundance in various regions of the country as our County's greatest competitors. So, while an opportunity presents itself to capitalize on these trends, our neighborhood centers, town centers and regional urban cores will need to focus on repositioning themselves for that opportunity and serve as our drivers of growth.

Despite their reputations, these centers of community hold more than their share of jobs and generate more than their share of local, school district and County property taxes. These are centers of strength that, if properly leveraged, can be drivers for community renewal and investment. They are commonly viewed as relics of a past built on antiquated modes of commerce and transportation. Yet still, they endure. It's because they are built on more than concrete, timber and asphalt. They're built on principles and values like prudence, responsibility, authenticity and incrementalism.

## NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

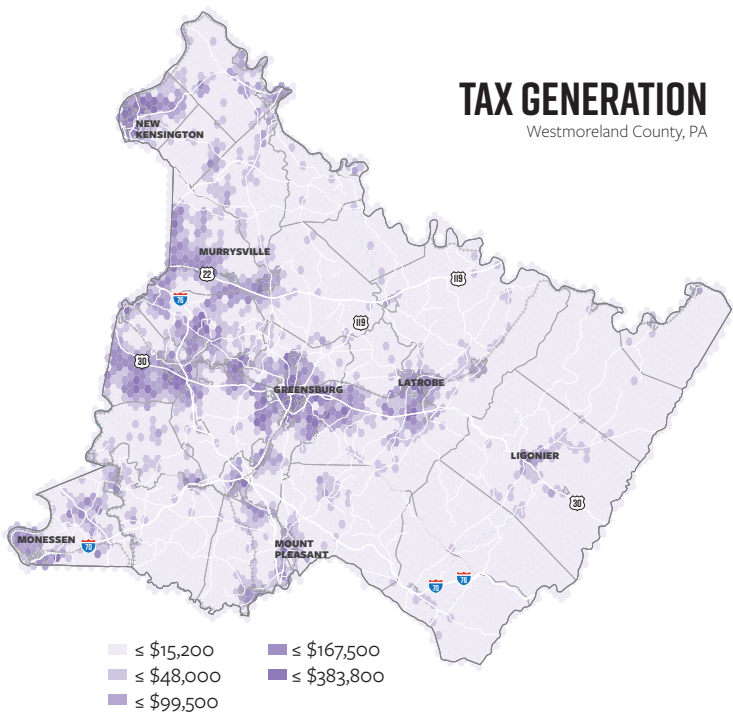
Neighborhood centers are the smallest scale and pattern of development; they're also the lowest intensity. They have a definable center and edge. At the center, a mix of uses focused on a neighborhood corner store and small-scale retail, office and manufacturing. A small park or square provides opportunities for public life. The center will also offer the greatest number of housing options, but residential uses are predominantly single family and single story. Transportation options are available, but frequent transit service is less likely, based on the density of development. Walking and biking are simple options and available on practically every street. Streets are designed for low speeds, owing to the presence of homes and children. Moving outward, commercial uses taper off and residential uses become sparser. At the edges, development ceases and open spaces, preserves, greenways and trails are typical. From center to edge, one quarter of a mile is typical.

## TOWN CENTER

Town centers are the moderate scale and pattern of development. They have a definable center and edge. At the center, a mix of uses focuses on two and three-story live/work buildings. Moderate intensity development will use more of each parcel, with buildings coming closer to streets. Transit is more frequent, with walking and biking as more viable options for work and most daily activities. Streets are designed for low speeds, recognizing the role of walking and biking. Larger squares and plazas are found near the middle, along with important civic structures like schools and government buildings.

## REGIONAL URBAN CORE

Regional urban cores are the most intense development in their scale and pattern of development. They also have a definable center and edge. At the center, buildings are typically three stories or taller with many buildings above 10 stories. They have a much broader range of residential, office, retail and light manufacturing uses. Civic and public buildings like theaters, libraries and music venues are more common. Their grid pattern of streets allow for the maximum use of streets for connectivity and access. Transit options are the greatest and most frequent owing to the density of origins and destinations. Walking and biking are primary modes for many trips, as well. Large plazas, promenades and landmarks accentuate public space. At the edges, neighborhood centers support and use urban core services.



# STRATEGY 3.1 INVEST IN DOWNTOWNS

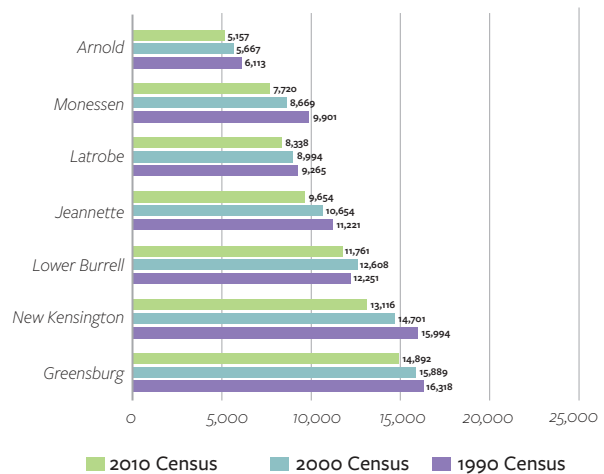
Neighborhood centers, town centers, and regional urban cores are the defining feature of almost any community and are often synonymous with the community itself. They are a community's focal point, a crucible of commerce, government, socialization, idea exchange, entertainment, and more. Most regions cannot thrive without healthy neighborhood centers, town centers, and regional urban cores as vibrant focal points. This is true from both a social and an economic standpoint.

Across Westmoreland County, the denser, more urbanized neighborhood centers, town centers, and regional urban cores generate the most taxes. Due to their density, the top 100 tax-generating areas (noted on the Tax Generation map) account for 24 percent of the County's property tax revenue while only making up two percent of the land area. These unique areas of Westmoreland are the hearts of their respective communities, but some have struggled over the past few decades as previous generations adopted attitudes leading to disinvestment. Now, more than ever, the County's downtowns are uniquely poised for revitalization and transformation, as their importance is being appreciated again and a national wave of new attention and investment is igniting downtowns across the country.

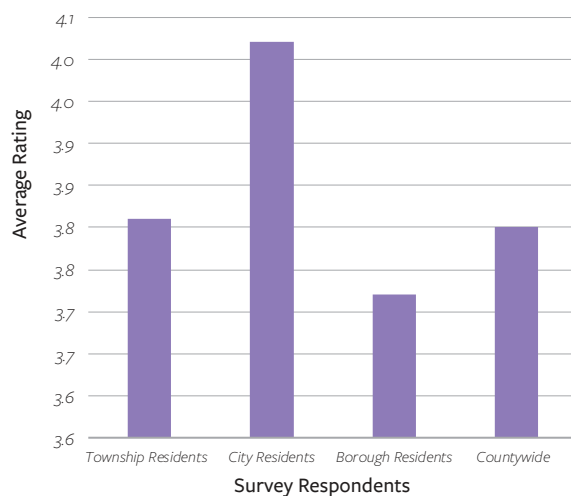
Likewise, established cities and even boroughs act as the downtowns of their surrounding townships. These rural areas still have and need a focal point for commerce, even if they have to travel a longer distance to reach it. Thus, investment in the County's neighborhood centers, town centers, and regional urban cores is mutually beneficial for those communities with these established areas as well those that may not have them but are directly adjacent.

**Desired Result. Revitalized downtowns as evidenced through increased activity and investment in neighborhood centers, town centers, and regional urban cores throughout the County.**

**POPULATION GROWTH & DECLINE  
IN WESTMORELAND CITIES**



**INVEST IN DOWNTOWNS  
AVERAGE SURVEY RATING (0-5) OF STRATEGY 3.1**



## STRATEGY 3.1 ACTIONS

### INITIATE INVESTMENT

Identify and prioritize neighborhood centers, town centers, and regional urban cores for primary investment areas for repositioning County towns.

**Policy.** Help each Planning District prioritize a select number of downtowns for strategic investment and revitalization. (\$,00)

**Policy.** Leverage existing infrastructure and institutional assets and focus future development within the bounds of neighborhood centers, town centers, and regional urban cores. (\$,000)

**Project.** Develop downtown master plans for individual communities to identify specific assets, issues, and opportunities that are unique to each one. (\$\$\$,00)

**Program.** Identify and build partnerships to begin addressing issues and utilizing opportunities from the plans. (\$,00)

### STREAMLINE THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Update policies and regulations to remove barriers to the development process.

**Project.** Identify specific sites for infill development based on the land use and market needs of the area. (\$,0)

**Program.** Review and simplify the development process in downtown areas by establishing a clear method for developers to create a product that is market-viable and financially feasible. (\$,00)

**Program.** Develop a portfolio of sites for developers to use when identifying new opportunities. (\$,0)

### INCENTIVIZE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT

Seek and advertise various resources, programs, and tools to help spur development in the County's neighborhood centers, town centers, and regional urban cores.

**Policy.** Prioritize grants, tax credits, and other incentives, where necessary, to attract new investment to targeted areas

within neighborhood centers, town centers, and regional urban cores. (\$,0)

**Policy.** Remove barriers to corporate investment in downtowns through key property consolidation and development and public funding sources, such

as the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development Neighborhood Assistance Program, as incentives to future businesses. (\$\$,0)

### DEMONSTRATE DESIRED CHANGES

Act as a model for all 65 municipalities by developing guides and templates for them to use not only as development begins to occur but also to encourage additional new development.

**Policy.** Work with local and regional partners to establish a model for Tactical Urbanism, indicating how it should function within the context of Westmoreland. (\$,0)

**Program.** Work with municipal partners to target specific areas that may be best suited for Tactical Urbanism projects. (\$,0)

**Policy.** Where regulations allow interpretations, establish policies that reduce burdens for small actors, projects, and businesses. Where applicable, utilize SmartCode principles to reduce entitlement barriers to expedite the process for preferred development types. (\$,0)

**Policy.** Encourage the integration of local artists and community art within infrastructure and "sense-of-place" improvements within downtowns, such as seating, sidewalks, or lighting. (\$,0)

## STRATEGY 3.2

# PROVIDE HOUSING OPTIONS

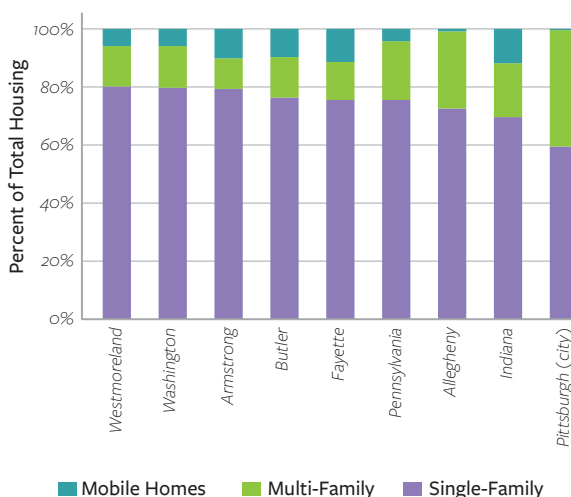
Different generations have varying preferences for their housing options—from a traditional single-family home to an apartment above a restaurant. Providing these options can accommodate as many peoples’ preferences as possible, allowing more of them to live in the County. The public engagement process identified the Westmoreland community’s need for additional housing options, particularly multi-family. Outreach participants expressed the desire for this housing type to support the desires of aging seniors and young professionals. A variety of types would not only accommodate the need of the existing population but also help attract new residents. Need for additional housing options is not only supported by type but also tenure, i.e. homes for owners and homes for renters. Over 77 percent of the households in Westmoreland County are owner-occupied. However, national trends show a continual increase in the desire for renter-occupied housing and for Westmoreland to be competitive we must acknowledge this trend.

An important question concerning denser, mixed-use communities is whether people actually want to live in these kinds of places. The clear answer is that some do, and some do not. In support of low-density environments, some people, for example, point to decades of rapid growth in these types of communities, coupled with population declines in urban centers (though recent years have seen some reversal of this trend). On the other hand, advocates of denser development point to such things as higher sales prices of comparable homes in denser areas to demonstrate that people are willing to pay a premium for the benefits that density provides and point out that homes in neighborhoods that are more walkable and well-designed sell for more than similar homes in neighborhoods without these characteristics. Providing housing options throughout the County will help attract new residents to areas across Westmoreland and allow them to stay as they progress through various stages of life.

**Desired Result. Varying housing types that meet the needs and wants of all County residents, regardless of their stage in life.**

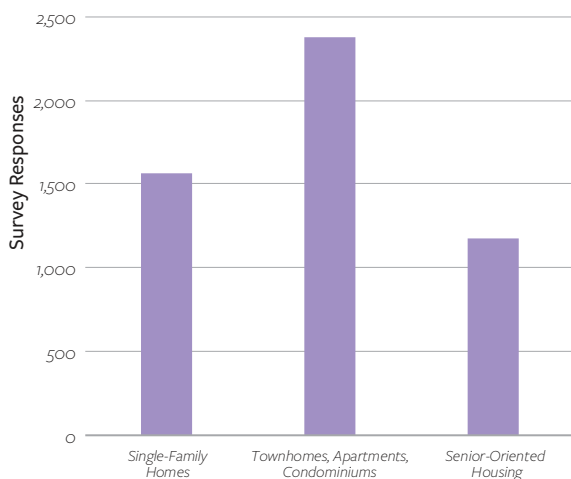
### TYPES OF HOUSING UNITS

(2015)



### TOP RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

SURVEY RESULTS



## STRATEGY 3.2

# ACTIONS

## CONDUCT HOUSING ASSESSMENTS

Analyze the existing housing market in each municipality to understand strengths, weaknesses, and needs to help prioritize future residential development.

**Project.** Undertake housing market studies in each of the Planning Districts to identify the types of housing missing and needed in each. (\$\$\$,∅)

**Policy.** Utilize applicable SmartCode ordinances that direct housing types to compatible areas in the County and amend zoning ordinances to reflect market analyses. (\$,∅)

**Program.** In neighborhood centers, town centers, and regional urban cores, identify and redevelop underutilized office and commercial spaces as mixed-use buildings with upper-floor residential units. (\$\$\$,∅∅∅)

## PROVIDE HOUSING GUIDANCE

Help private developers, local governments, and nonprofit agencies as they work to build and renovate housing across the County to ensure standards are met efficiently and effectively.

**Program.** Host regular meetings with real estate experts familiar with the County to identify emerging trends, issues, and potential projects related to housing. (\$,∅)

**Project.** Create a guidebook of housing types for developers and municipalities to use when inquiring about future residential projects. (\$,∅)

**Policy.** Review and modify current policy on Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) to permit the use of financing programs for smaller residential and mixed-use developments in neighborhood centers, town centers, and regional urban cores. (\$,∅)

**Policy.** Amend zoning ordinances to allow for multiple housing types and tenure. (\$,∅)

**Policy.** Amend zoning ordinances to allow for flexible parking regulations. (\$,∅)

## ENCOURAGE MULTIFAMILY HOUSING

Utilize financial incentives, regulatory adjustments, and other resources to increase multifamily housing options in Westmoreland County.

**Policy.** Permit accessory dwelling units on single-family lots to expand and increase housing options. (\$,∅)

**Policy.** Work with municipalities to adjust zoning codes to allow for the expansion of multifamily units, including the conversion of large homes into multitenant buildings. (\$,∅∅)

**Policy.** Work with individual municipalities to establish target goals for multifamily development and total units. (\$,∅)

**Project.** Coordinate with municipal partners to seek funding to support the development of multifamily housing. (\$,∅)

**Program.** Establish a local, multifamily priority-development program to incentivize developers. (\$,∅)

## STRATEGY 3.3

# CULTIVATE A RESTAURANT INDUSTRY

Establishments that offer food and drink are a core element of what makes a great place, acting as their own destination and contributing to the character and vibrancy of the surrounding area. In addition, restaurants help to spur investment and attract shops, entertainment venues, and even other restaurants. Likewise, restaurants are also supportive uses for commercial and entertainment districts. By cultivating a thriving restaurant industry and community, the County can increase downtown vitality, augment tourism clusters, and create jobs.

Restaurants can also create spaces for cultural inclusivity through various cuisines from groups around the world. In this way, restaurants act as entry points into a specific culture's diet, nutrition, tradition, and even celebration. For example, the quick casual restaurant sector has been experiencing relative growth over the past few years. This sector is defined as more sit-down than a traditional fast-food chain but less formal than a casual dining restaurant. The focus on ethnic foods as a niche market in this restaurant sector has further spurred its growth and thus a possible new market for Westmoreland County. Cultivating a comprehensive restaurant industry that includes all types of restaurants from high-end formal to a walk-up food truck with no seating, with all types of cuisines, will help expand the economy across the County.

Further, offering resources to encourage restaurant growth will result in greater food options and diversity as well as establishing a food culture that contributes to the character of Westmoreland.

**Desired Result.** A multitude of diverse dining and drinking options that are both specific destinations and components of vibrant commercial centers and urban cores.



Westmoreland County, Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau

### BEST PRACTICE: ELMHURST, IL

*Downtown Elmhurst, Illinois is home to over 25 restaurants that support the city's emerging entertainment fabric. The 2016 Elmhurst Downtown Plan recognized restaurants as catalysts for other entertainment developments such as bars, shops, bowling alleys, and movie theaters. Elmhurst has been using restaurants to create an environment that attracts both residents and visitors, fostering livelihood, tourism, and business. By offering a diverse array of restaurants at a variety of price points, the City has been able to draw in a wider crowd of diners and better serve the community.*



STRATEGY 3.3

# ACTIONS

## ENCOURAGE NEW FOOD OPTIONS

Develop policies and programs to allow for new types of restaurants around the County focusing on semi-permanent serving spaces.

**Policy.** Amend local regulations to allow for pop-up and semi-permanent restaurant areas, including those that could accommodate food trucks, carts, and kiosks. (\$,0)

**Program.** Promote the expansion of Westmoreland County Community College's culinary program to include food trucks. (\$,0)

**Project.** Develop and coordinate a weekly rotating food truck program across the County. (\$,00)

**Program.** Identify financing programs to support the expansion of food trucks. (\$,0)

## PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR BRICK & MORTAR

Publicize the County's well-established restaurants as well as provide small-scale and/or semi-permanent space for new restaurants to become established.

**Program.** Evaluate the development of a restaurant incubator and public market space to house pop-up restaurant concepts. (\$,0)

**Program.** Include a dining guide in the County's new-resident welcome guide to exhibit Westmoreland's best restaurants to residents and visitors from around the region. (\$,00)

**Program.** Provide training and technical assistance to local restaurants on establishing and expanding their internet and social media presence. (\$,00)



# PUBLIC MARKET

The concept of a public market is nothing new, having existed since the agora in ancient Greece. However, the public market is experiencing a resurgence as a model for local economic development, entertainment, and placemaking for many communities across the country. Westmoreland County is home to successful farms producing fruits, vegetables, meats, and dairy products; aspiring entrepreneurs looking to make it in the restaurant industry; and a public that enjoys entertainment. In an effort to build off of and centralize these assets, this Plan proposes the development of a public market and restaurant incubator to bring local goods to market, ideas to fruition, and cities to life.

The benefits of a public market are numerous. The local food system is a force for regional economic development. Public markets help grow and connect urban and rural economies and mutually support each other. They encourage development, enhance real estate values and the tax base, and keep money in the local community. Public markets also offer low-risk business opportunities for vendors. They provide access to fresh, healthy food, and serve as public gathering places for people from different ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic communities.

The development of a public market and restaurant incubator supports and realizes several strategies and actions throughout the Plan regarding entrepreneurialism, agritourism, downtown investment, restaurants, and health.

Typically, markets work as entry points for new entrepreneurs because they are relatively inexpensive to start and operate. Vendors often only have to invest in minimal stall infrastructure which requires fewer resources and risk than building up a stand-alone business. Likewise, restaurant incubators consisting of fully-outfitted commercial kitchens and dining areas, provide the infrastructure for chefs to bring their concepts to market at low-risk and for low-cost. Chefs run their own restaurants in the space with the autonomy to run their businesses the way they've always dreamed. They set the menu, hire staff, and interact directly with customers to build their following before investing in the necessary equipment and brick-and-mortar locations. A public market and restaurant incubator will promote the growth of small businesses, stimulate innovation, and bolster local employment.

This project is supported by several strategies throughout the Plan, including:

- » 1.4 Advance Entrepreneurialism
- » 2.4 Grow Local
- » 3.1 Invest in Downtowns
- » 3.3 Cultivate a Restaurant Industry
- » 5.5 Get Healthy



Westmoreland County, Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau

Such a destination brings people of different ages, genders, races, ethnicities, and socioeconomic status from various locations together around the experiences of food, shopping, entertainment, and conversation. The County has an opportunity to capitalize on activating and reviving the neglected buildings and vacant spaces that exist in many of our downtown areas by developing a market and incubator space. Creating and providing such an active public space in a downtown, the market will serve as an anchor for local businesses, encourage spin-off development, and infuse our cities and surrounding neighborhoods with new energy, social, and economic activity. Additionally, restaurants help to spur investment and attract shops, entertainment venues, and even other restaurants, adding to the vibrancy of the area.

A public market will also promote public health by improving access to fresh fruits and vegetables, especially for those without grocery stores, and serving as a public gathering place to help reduce social isolation and depression.

Currently, local farmers markets and efforts are scattered and temporary. An established public market would be a hub for existing farmers markets, providing a permanent location for year-round business and support. Combining local market products and flavor with local preparation, eating, and entertainment experience in a downtown area is a recipe for success. The public market and restaurant incubator concept is initially planned for a regional urban core, with the goal to replicate its model and programming to other areas throughout Westmoreland, creating a network of test kitchens and markets. Potential programming partners include local farmers, social enterprises, and Westmoreland County Community College's culinary arts program.

## STRATEGY 3.4

# UTILIZE PLANNING BEST PRACTICES

Much of this Plan will be implemented locally, by municipalities throughout the County who make most land use decisions. Promoting planning “best practices” can help ensure local decisions are well guided and contribute positively to the County’s long-range vision of environmental sustainability, economic stability, a variety of housing options, efficient and effective transportation, and more. Comprehensive plans and updated zoning ordinances that are consistent with Reimagining Our Westmoreland are two critical best planning practices.

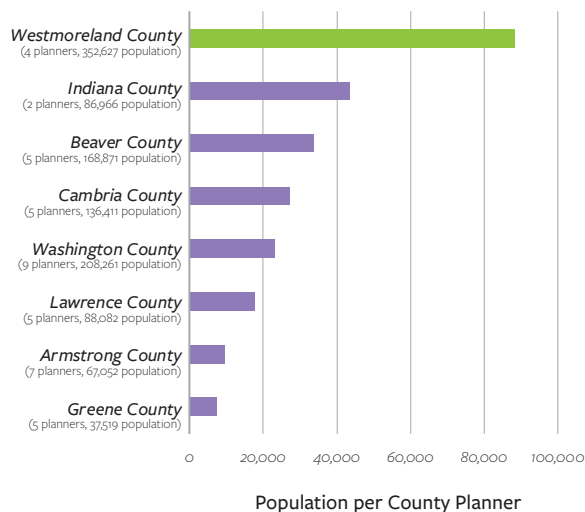
As such, a local comprehensive plan should provide a framework and foundation for local decision-making regarding land use and development. Comprehensive plans throughout the County should establish community goals and objectives and be supported by a land use plan (and other plans) that dovetail with goals and objectives, designating how areas are to be used and developed. These comprehensive plans should include recommendations for the future development of residential areas; commercial and industrial uses; community facilities; transportation; and parks, recreation, and open space. In addition, to be effective, local comprehensive plans should contain implementation actions that identify steps to be taken to achieve each community’s goals and objectives.

Zoning remains one of the most powerful tools available to implement comprehensive plans. More importantly, form- and transect-based zoning ordinances are becoming more useful in defining and creating communities, than outdated, use-based zoning ordinances. Model ordinances like SmartCode are essential to creating communities of lasting value. The SmartCode vignette in the following section outlines the SmartCode model and its benefits to the individual municipalities and the County as a whole.

The County Planning Department’s Technical Resources and Municipal Services program (TRAMS) represents a new approach to helping our communities reach their potential. We recognize a gap in planning at the local level that holds communities back. As noted in the Introduction, TRAMS is the County’s tool for ensuring each of the 65 municipalities has the opportunity and capacity to engage in good planning. Through this program, County Planning staff can help each of its communities develop their own comprehensive plans, update their zoning ordinances, oversee community development efforts, and more.

**Desired Result. Every community in the County is well planned and positioned for the future, through planning education programs, current local comprehensive and other plans, and transect or form-based zoning ordinances that are consistent with Reimagining Our Westmoreland.**

### COUNTY PLANNERS TO POPULATION



### BEST PRACTICE: WESTMORELAND COUNTY TRAMS

Since the TRAMS program’s beginning in 2013, several important community planning projects have been completed. The most significant has been the Department’s work with Youngwood Borough. At first, we helped draft the Borough’s first comprehensive plan. From that work, developing a new vision for the Route 119 Corridor was identified as an important task. County Planners then set out on creating a Corridor Plan that re-envisioned the corridor to become a community asset, rather than a liability. In the future, the Borough will work with County Planners to draft a 21st-century zoning ordinance that positions future development to match the community’s vision. In every case, the Borough has accepted and implemented many of the recommendations.

STRATEGY 3.4  
**ACTIONS**

**APPLY BEST PRACTICES**

Employ planning best practices throughout the County in all sectors of planning to ensure consistency and efficiency.

**Policy.** Work with individual municipalities to encourage and support the creation of new or updated comprehensive and other plans, and transect or form based zoning ordinances. (\$,◇)

**Policy.** Prioritize regional or state funding for communities whose planning efforts align with the strategies of Reimagining Our Westmoreland. (\$,◇◇)

**Program.** Continue to provide education and resources about planning to local officials, planning commissions, and other decisionmakers. (\$,◇)

**Program.** Identify partner communities to master plan and reimagine the County's aging commercial centers and transportation corridors to outline existing conditions, assets, opportunities, and create an overall vision and plan. Potential opportunities include Westmoreland Mall in Hempfield Township and the JC Penny's/Wards complex in Lower Burrell. At least one master plan should be developed per Planning District. (\$\$\$,◇)



Westmoreland County



Westmoreland County

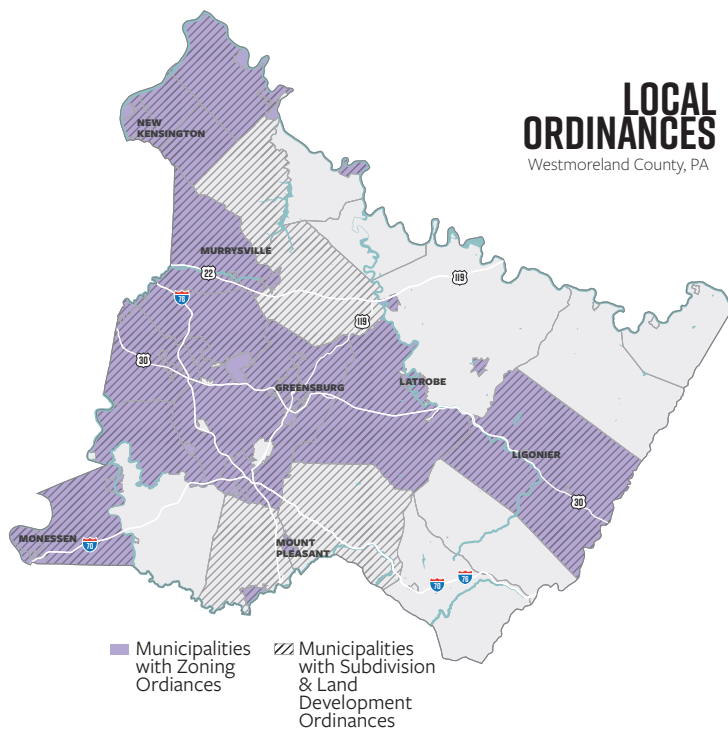
# SMARTCODE

Since zoning was first established in 1916, its aim has been to separate land uses from one another. At the time, that made a whole lot of sense as the industrial revolution crept further into communities, displacing residents, and causing environmental health problems. Separating smokestacks from homes and businesses was clearly in the public’s interest.

Public health campaigns and entire movements in the early 20th century focused on ensuring clean air, light and water. Thankfully, the net effect of those efforts substantially improved our air and water quality. Many industrial operations cleaned up and unfortunately, many closed during the deindustrialization of the 1980s. Yet, in the ensuing years, zoning morphed from keeping the smoke out of nurseries to segregating not only individual uses, but exceedingly narrow uses within uses.

Soon, minuscule distinctions were made between single-family homes and two-family homes, bowling alleys and movie theaters, offices and professional offices, and none of them are allowed to exist in proximity to one another. All of this separation creates single, narrow use pods of land development scattered across the landscape.

Making matters worse, since the process of making all these splitting hair distinctions becomes more contentious, fewer communities take the time to update their ordinances. Many have ordinances that reflect an era when the predominant method of communication was by rotary phone. Many more communities, observing the public furor and nightmare administrative processes, decide their community’s design is better left to chance and don’t adopt zoning ordinances.



This implementation strategy supports multiple elements throughout the Plan, including:

- » 3.2 Provide Housing Options
- » 3.4 Utilize Planning Best Practices
- » 3.5 Direct Density
- » 4.3 Preserve Open Space & Protect Natural Assets
- » 5.7 Create a “Design Playbook”
- » 7.1 Enhance Transit, Increase Ridership, & Promote Transit Oriented Development
- » 7.3 Increase Walkability and Biking Options



Center for Applied Transect Studies

And since everything is separated from everywhere, the only way to get around is by car. Transit of any sort, that is somewhat reliable, timely and cost effective becomes geometrically impossible as distances become too far with too few destinations.

Once these ordinances created car dependency, we made elaborate regimes for free parking everywhere, further distancing people from the places they live, work, shop, worship, recreate and dine by huge parking lots. In some communities, the adherence to minimum off-street parking creates an insurmountable obstacle to rehabilitating a building. In at least one borough in our County, to rehabilitate a 10,000 square foot office building would require the demolition of another 9,000 square feet just for a parking lot.

Entrepreneurs find single-use zoning ordinances hostile to their intentions of small scale manufacturing and home based businesses. And despite generations of small business owners successfully operating in a building's first floor and generating revenue from second floor living areas, these arrangements are now, nearly universally illegal.

Developers, contractors, and builders often find themselves in front of a zoning hearing board and governing body seeking relief from the zoning ordinance. It's easy to see how they might become jaded after jumping through hoop after hoop attempting to conform to obscure dimensional and use standards that bear no resemblance to the community's vision for itself.

Residents, especially those in suburban areas, who might like to stay in their neighborhood as they age are unable to because the housing options are limited to single-family homes. Without options for single-floor, or multi-unit living, it's likely that they have to say goodbye to friends and routines they've had for years. Compounding this problem is the issue of driving and a lost license. Without any close-by doctor's offices, pharmacies, or social locations, many seniors begin a decline in health. Not only is this scenario difficult for the elderly person, but also family and caretakers who have to make multiple trips.

Many of these land use decisions are also divorced from public infrastructure investments in roads and sewer lines. Roads once meant to connect communities, now choke on the development that line them, requiring ever larger intersections, longer and more turning lanes, and elaborate traffic signals, just to accommodate one more development. Sewer lines installed in our older communities are failing and polluting the environment, while new lines are extended to more single-use pods of development, extending the cycle further into wooded and agricultural areas.

Use-based zoning ordinances are almost always void of diagrams and graphics that depict the kind of community residents want. Reading all of the existing 40 or so ordinances across the County would lead one to believe we don't know what kinds of places we want, except that they have plenty of parking; homes of one type, separated from one another; and businesses of one type, separated from one another; and so on. The result is everywhere and nowhere places that appear virtually no different than replications of national chain developments.

What gets lost in the development of these zoning ordinances are the types of places people value most. Some of our most loved neighborhoods and main streets are utterly illegal. Ligonier's Diamond is regularly cited as one of the best places in the County worth emulating. Yet, it's likely that very few, if any zoning ordinances in the County allow such a pattern of development, by right.

In these ways and others, single-use zoning limits options for individuals and our communities to better themselves. The question then is: Why are we making illegal, what we value most? What can we do to make what we want, easier to build? How do we change our focus from what goes on inside a building, to what we experience everyday outside of it? How do we incentivize the development we want? Traditional zoning spends too much time and effort stipulating what development we don't want, rather than providing a template for what we want our communities to be.

Thankfully, in the late 20th century, a new approach to zoning began forming around the concept of the rural to urban transect. Rather than a complacent adherence to use and density, the transect thinks of land uses and community form in a continuum, from the most natural state to the most intense urban development. Within those transects, multiple uses are arranged around neighborhood centers, town centers and urban cores. Rather than basing zoning on the separation of uses, SmartCode is a model ordinance that turns zoning inside out, shifting focus to the outside of buildings, what's known as the public realm.

From this basis, we can plan and design the multiple elements that create a successful neighborhood. The zoning of 1916 fails at this task because it lacks the integration of these elements, from street design to landscaping to stormwater management to civic space.

The adoption of SmartCode ordinances Countywide (by communities that so choose) offers a new way of designing our communities around what matters to residents. Through our exhaustive public outreach, reaching over 5,000 people, it's clear that choices of housing, transportation, recreation, entertainment, and a connection to community are essential. In other words, residents want healthy and whole communities.

SmartCode ordinances are also scalable. Specific elements are designed for the region, the municipality, the neighborhood, the block, the street and finally, the building. This means that the ordinances can fit together or nest within multiple scales to create a consistent framework for land use decisions across the County. Some municipalities may choose to regulate individual architectural patterns in some places, while many more will likely only address the neighborhood form. Ultimately, SmartCode attempts to influence the form of communities more than the individualized uses within large swaths of municipalities.

SmartCode zoning maps identify growth opportunities and prioritize them in graphical form. This makes communicating infrastructure and transportation needs much clearer and ties community form to those needs. This is especially important because these decisions typically require compliance with the County Comprehensive Plan and regional investment, like the Transportation Improvement Plan.

A shift in thinking about how we regulate land use is essential if we are going to begin creating the communities for the next generation of Westmoreland County residents and businesses. To help this shift in thinking, the County Planning Department is going to do its part within the County's seven Planning Districts to create locally-driven regional land use plans that are consistent with the SmartCode approach. From there, we can help coach municipalities through the process of adopting SmartCode ordinances, if they choose to.





**FLORENCE GARDENS** CITY OF GULF PORT, MISSISSIPPI  
 PRELIMINARY MASTER PLAN  
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**REGULATING PLAN**

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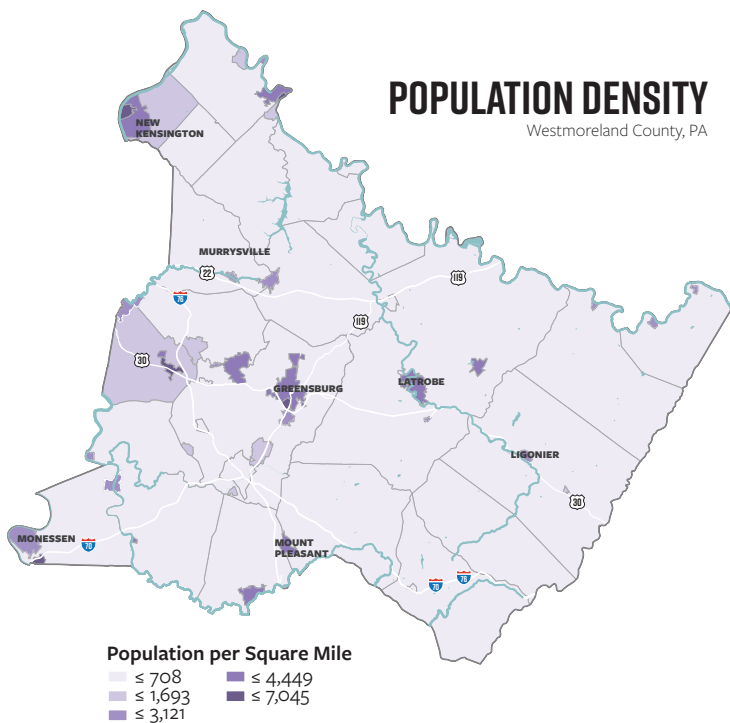
## STRATEGY 3.5

# DIRECT DENSITY

National trends show a growing preference for urban, higher-density development. Particularly among young adults and seniors, individuals desire dense, livable areas that offer immediate access to a range of goods, services, and amenities. Focusing investment into concentrated areas helps to preserve open space and limit unnecessary outward expansion while fostering active and vibrant neighborhood centers, town centers, and regional urban cores. Further, higher-density development in Westmoreland would support mixed-use housing options and create transportation options by supporting access to transit and walkability.

Some of the County's existing urban areas like Greensburg have a high density for the County (3,672 people per square mile). This is to be expected as it is one of the most established communities in Westmoreland as well as the County seat. This area is a prime example of a regional urban core with the potential for increased density as the population follows the national trend and returns to urban areas. The City of Arnold, as another example, is a small city on the western edge of the County but it has the highest population density of all 65 municipalities at 7,045 people per square mile. The City has a significant population of over 5,000 residents, considering its small land area size. However, suburban and rural areas should not be excluded simply because they are not an existing urban area. Directing density where development has already occurred allows the County to maintain its identity while establishing sustainable places to live regardless of the desired level of urbanization.

**Desired Result.** Active dense areas with well-patronized shops, restaurants, and offices in communities throughout the County.



### CASE STUDY: GENEVA, IL

*In 2012, Geneva, Illinois created the Downtown Geneva Masterplan to guide growth and development decisions that would address housing supply, economic expansion, and methods to further develop the built environment. One of its main visionary goals was to establish greater density within the downtown area, while preserving its authentic character. Through infill development, mixed-use development, and land use reconfigurations, the city has been increasing downtown density and, as a result, fostering economic growth to reinvigorate the area.*

STRATEGY 3.5

# ACTIONS

## CONDUCT INITIAL PLANNING

Establish a clear direction for increasing density in the County through adjustments to zoning regulations and initial planning for the Planning Districts.

**Policy.** Utilize SmartCode principles that encourage growth in neighborhood centers, town centers, regional urban cores, and near transit. (\$,∅)

**Project.** Update land use plans at Planning District level to reflect denser urban uses, including multifamily and mixed-use residential. (\$\$\$,∅∅)

## PROMOTE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Density is driven by housing and the County should utilize various practices to increase residential development in its neighborhood centers, town centers, and regional urban cores.

**Project.** Identify suitable locations for TOD including existing and proposed rail lines, bus stops, and near college campuses. (\$,∅)

**Program.** Market residential development opportunities to multifamily homebuilders. (\$,∅)

**Policy.** Prioritize infill development to utilize vacant properties and existing infrastructure to decrease costs and increase density. (\$,∅)

**Project.** Amend local zoning ordinances to allow for multifamily development near employment centers to place workers in close proximity to their jobs. (\$,∅)

## PRIORITIZE PARTNERSHIPS

To create truly dense areas that can support a strengthened labor force and growing population, the County should partner with various organizations and agencies to realize development of all types including residential, commercial, entertainment, office, and industrial.

**Policy.** Work with municipal partners to offer incentives that encourage investment in neighborhood centers, town centers, and urban cores. (\$,∅)

**Program.** Work with municipal partners to explore the feasibility and impact of developing downtown associations, committees, and improvement districts to address neighborhood centers, town centers, and regional urban cores and make improvements over time. (\$,∅∅)

**Policy.** Work with municipal partners to support adaptive reuse projects and incorporate existing structures and amenities within new, higher-density development. (\$\$,∅∅)



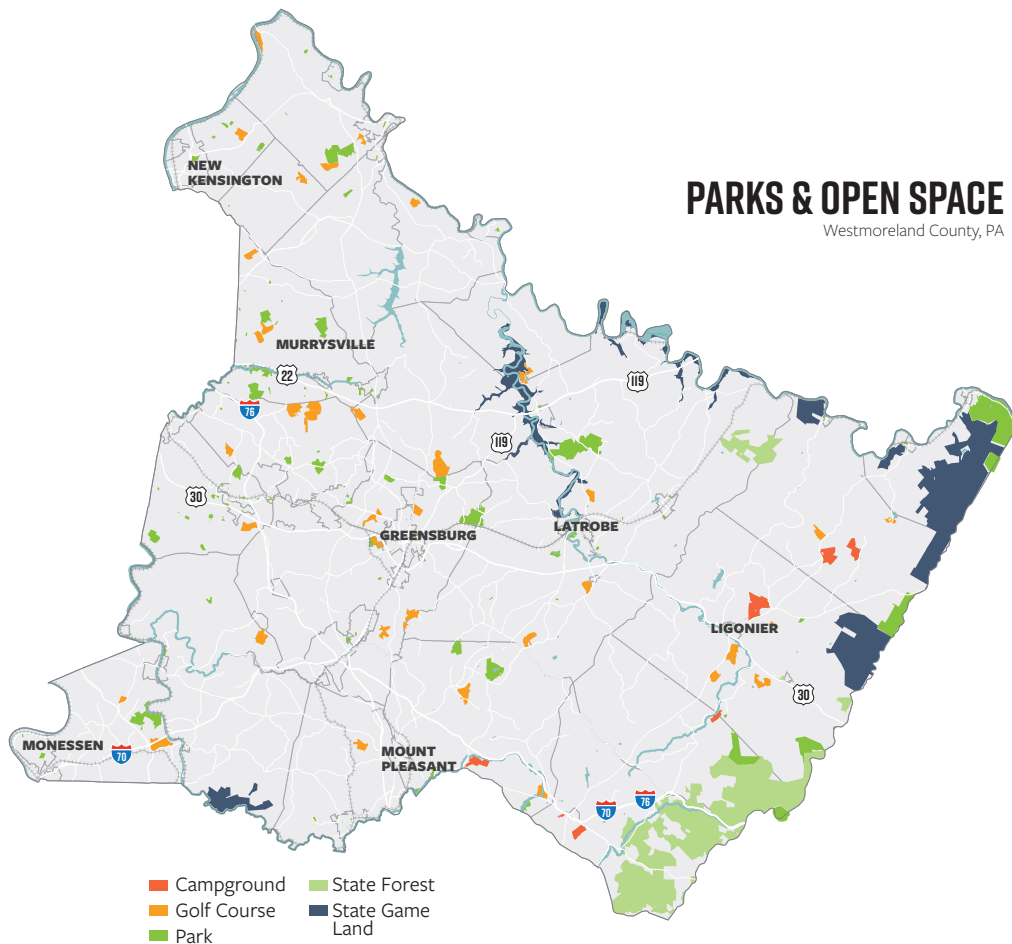
## CORE OBJECTIVE 4: CONNECT WITH PARKS AND NATURE

**Parks and recreation are an important part of our community life. Parks provide opportunities for social interaction, physical activity, and connection with nature. Recreational programs offer opportunities for activities that strengthen character, reduce the likelihood of childhood obesity, and provide adults with opportunities to practice healthy lifestyles. Both also strengthen community character and provide a sense of local pride and stewardship in our communities.**

### STRATEGIES

The following strategies are intended to help implement the Core Objective. Each is accompanied by specific action steps that ensure the objective can be appropriately achieved and monitored throughout the life of the Plan.

1. Enhance Trail Systems
2. Make Parks Welcoming & Accessible
3. Preserve Open Space & Protect Natural Assets
4. Improve & Sustain Water Resources



## PARKS & OPEN SPACE

Westmoreland County, PA

In Westmoreland County, parks, recreation, and the environment represent some of the community's greatest assets, supporting not only quality of life within the County, but also attracting visitors and tourists from across the region. These include state and local parks, such as Linn Run and Twin Lakes Park, as well as multiuse trails and recreational opportunities, such as biking and cross-country skiing. Given their significant benefit, the County must preserve and leverage these valuable assets, looking to further elevate Westmoreland as a recreational destination. This should include efforts to enhance parks, open spaces, recreational amenities, and environmental features to improve quality of life for residents, attract new residents and investment to the County, and position Westmoreland as a national destination for recreation and leisure in the outdoors.

As an important element of Reimagining Our Westmoreland, the County should seek to improve the condition of all its parks, open spaces, and natural features by making sure all residents have reasonable access to natural areas. This effort will require the County to work in close coordination with municipalities, local neighborhood groups and nonprofits, regional and state agencies, residents and business owners, and other partners. Achieving this goal will require innovative strategies and techniques that will enhance the County's existing natural and environmental assets and ensure that all its residents and visitors can enjoy them readily and safely.

The strategies and actions presented in this chapter outline a roadmap that can guide the County in ensuring that its rich natural resources are preserved and protected for future generations of residents and visitors. In addition, this roadmap helps establish a clear direction for all Westmoreland's communities as they seek to prioritize efforts to ensure a sustainable future.

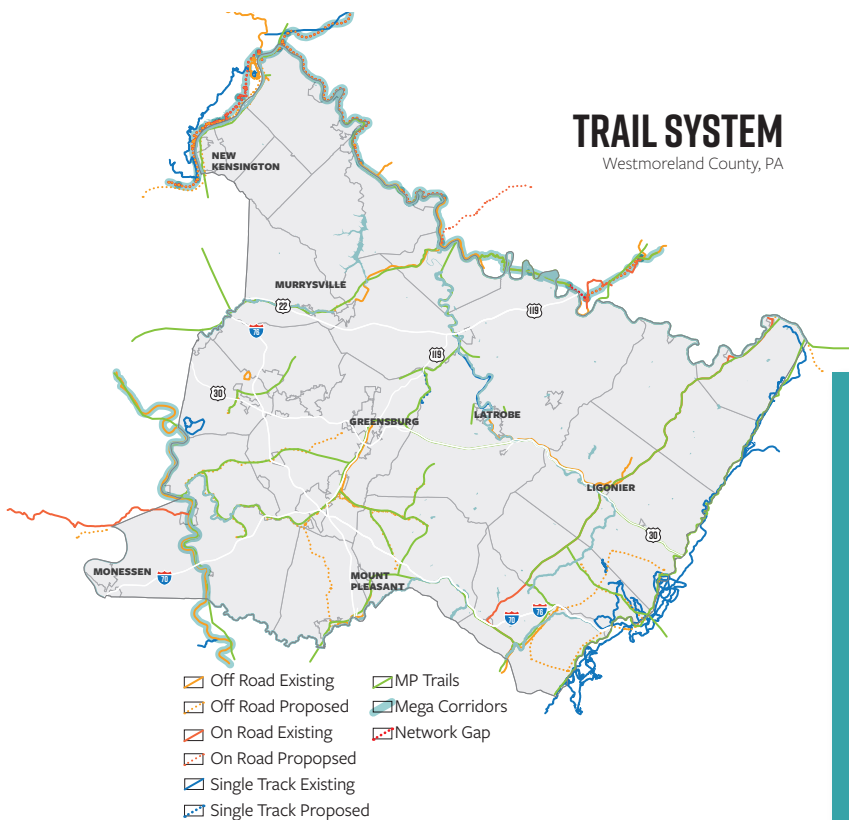
# STRATEGY 4.1 ENHANCE TRAIL SYSTEMS

The County has over 225 miles of trails connecting multiple communities throughout the County to one another, as well as connecting the County to other trails in the region, including the Great Allegheny Passage. Currently, Westmoreland is in the planning and construction phase of the Westmoreland Heritage Trail, which will extend from Saltsburg to Murrysville, and eventually to Trafford. The Westmoreland County Bureau of Parks and Recreation oversees 10 parks and five trails within the region. In 2008, the County established New Horizons, a comprehensive land use, parks, recreation, and open space plan, to identify opportunities for a Countywide greenways and blueways network. The plan aspires to unify Westmoreland through a series of trails that create a cohesive outdoor recreational system to be used by residents and visitors alike.

In general, trail systems provide infrastructure for alternative modes of transportation. They also directly connect users to open spaces and the outdoors. As residents throughout the United States increasingly strive to live in walkable and bikeable communities, the demand for complete trail systems is increasing as well. Completion of the trail system would create a comprehensive transportation network that connects pedestrians and cyclists to key destinations for recreation and tourism across Westmoreland County.

**Desired Result. A comprehensive, interconnected multiuse trail system that demonstrates increased usership from year to year and is consistently cited as a valued community asset by the County’s residents.**

## TRAIL SYSTEM Westmoreland County, PA



### CASE STUDY: BROWNSBURG, IN

*Brownsburg, Indiana has been making significant efforts to better improve its trails and greenways. Through assessing potential trail corridors, opportunities for trail network linkages, and constructing multiuse trails for pedestrians and cyclists, the town has been able to connect key destination points and create outdoor recreation opportunities. Town residents—old and new, alike—have cited enhancements to the trail system as contributing significantly to the desirability of the community.*

## STRATEGY 4.1 ACTIONS

### INITIATE NEW PROJECTS

Identify and complete new trail projects to create a comprehensive and well-connected trail system across the County.

**Policy.** Prioritize the importance to develop a new County recreation, trails, and greenways plan. (\$,0)

**Project.** Identify strategic locations for local trails and connections to regional trails. (\$,0)

**Project.** Acquire the necessary land to build trails. (\$\$\$,00)

**Project.** Complete the entire trail network in Westmoreland County, with a particular focus on the Westmoreland Heritage Trail. (\$\$,00)

**Program.** Focus on completing the trail network in Westmoreland County, with a focus on the following: Westmoreland Heritage Trail; Little Crabtree Creek Trail; trail network along the Kiski-Conemaugh River; and trail network along the Allegheny River. (\$\$\$,000)

**Policy.** Encourage municipalities to plan and construct connections between the County trails and key sites within their municipalities such as residential areas, parks and historical sites, schools and other key destinations. (\$\$\$,000)

### MAINTAIN EXISTING ASSETS

Focus on the maintenance and upkeep of existing trails to assure that they are safe and attractive for all users.

**Policy.** Prioritize investments and support for towns located on or near trails for pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, restaurants, tourism, and bike and boat outfitters. (\$,0)

**Program.** Create a County trail fund for the maintenance of existing trails. Include funds to restore trails damaged by floods, heavy rains and other weather-related events. (\$\$\$,00)

**Policy.** Encourage municipalities to enter into Intergovernmental Agreements with the County that commit municipalities to assist with the construction and maintenance of trails and access areas that are located within their boundaries. (\$,00)

**Program.** Work with the Regional Trail Corporation to strengthen the volunteer Trail Chapters that assist in the operation, maintenance and funding of County trails. Currently these include the Westmoreland Yough Trail Chapter, the Westmoreland Heritage Trail Chapter, the Five Star Trail Chapter and the Coal & Coke Trail Chapter. (\$,00)



Jacobs Creek Watershed Association



Westmoreland Heritage Trail

## STRATEGY 4.2

# MAKE PARKS WELCOMING & ACCESSIBLE

Parks are the easiest way for most residents to spend quality time outdoors, for either recreation or passive activity. Equitable access to and within parks can be difficult for some people including seniors and differently abled individuals. The County's Boundless Playground and Neos Inclusive Electric Playground, both at Twin Lakes Park, are two examples of park facilities that are equitable and accessible for all users. Westmoreland should aim to include accessible playground equipment and other reasonable accommodations in every park throughout the County. Updating infrastructure can also ensure everyone feels welcome in the County's parks.

The County has extensive amounts of parkland at both the County and municipal level. However, many residents face barriers that prevent them from easily accessing County parks such as busy roads that are difficult to cross, or a lack of sidewalks or bike lanes connecting parks to neighborhoods. These barriers are especially onerous to families with young children, differently abled individuals, and the elderly. As the key opportunity for recreational activity of any kind for a majority of residents across the County, parks should be welcoming and easy to get to. Increasing and improving access to the parks system will ensure all residents, regardless of age, ability, or geographic location can use these amenities.

**Desired Result.** Easy accessibility to existing parks and recreational assets by residents of all the County's communities by way of walking, biking, or short car trips.



Westmoreland County



Westmoreland County

### CASE STUDY: STREAMWOOD, IL

*Streamwood Park District in Illinois is made up of 48 parks, including neighborhood parks, mini parks, community parks, and trail systems. Though it boasts an impressive number of parks, the Park District pinpointed the need to remove pedestrian barriers to provide adequate and safe access to park and recreation facilities. In order to ensure access for all ages, the Village of Streamwood identified in the 2011 Park & Recreation Master Plan main arterial streets that create unsafe crossing conditions, especially for children and the elderly. By doing so, the Village has advanced towards creating a parks system that can be reached and utilized by the entire community.*

### BEST PRACTICE: HARRISONBURG, VA

*Initiated by a group of Girls Scouts, PlayCore's Play & Park Structures and Southern Playground paired up to construct A Dream Come True, an ADA-accessible playground in Harrisonburg, Virginia. The Girls Scouts wished to have a place where all children, with or without a disability, could play by each other. In about 10 years, the girls were able to raise \$1.4 million to build the facility, which is ranked as one of the best playgrounds in the nation. The site includes Made-for-Me swings for those who need extra body support.*



STRATEGY 4.2  
**ACTIONS**

**ENSURE ADEQUATE FACILITIES**

Work to provide all residents in the County with well-maintained park facilities by regularly evaluating the system for upgrades and improvement.

**Program.** Reevaluate the parks system to identify areas without adequate access to parks. (\$,0)

**Program.** Develop a model Safe Routes to Parks program that can easily be used by municipalities in the County. (\$,0)

**Program.** Coordinate efforts with municipalities and regional partners to complete the trail network and increase access to parks. (\$,00)

**Policy.** Continue to renovate and upgrade County parks to add new key recreation facilities that residents both need and desire. (\$\$\$,000)

**ENSURE ACCESSIBLE FACILITIES**

Renovate parks with the newest infrastructure to guarantee equitable access to and within parks for all residents, particularly those with limited mobility.

**Policy.** Provide support to municipalities for accessible facility improvements such as portable lifts or easy access stairs at pools, soft surface base and play elements, or equitable programming. (\$\$\$,00)

**Policy.** Encourage all parks within the County to consider people of all ages and abilities. (\$,0)

**Policy.** Continue to renovate and update County parks to meet ADA standards in all areas including: parking, walkways, restrooms, playgrounds, picnic areas, pavilions, buildings and sports/recreation facilities. (\$\$,00)



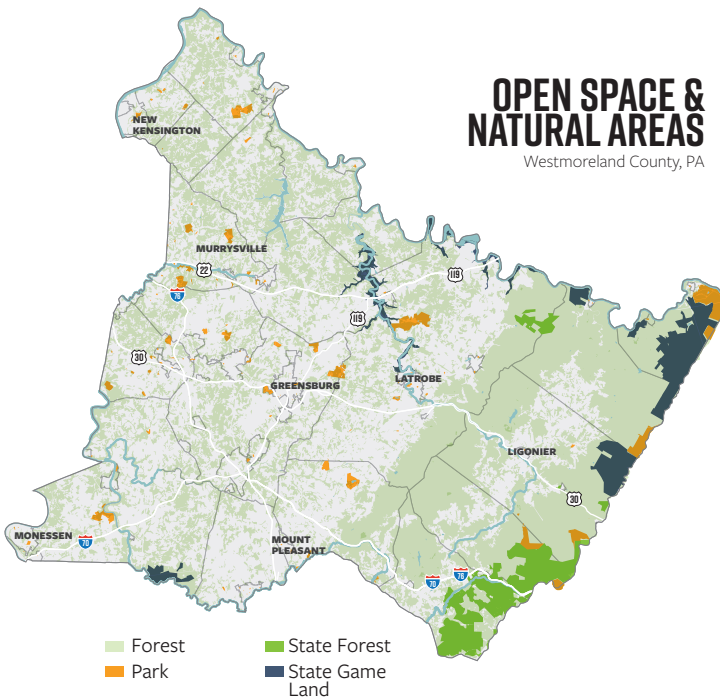
## STRATEGY 4.3

# PRESERVE OPEN SPACE & PROTECT NATURAL ASSETS

As noted in Strategy 2.5, natural land is the most abundant land use in Westmoreland County at nearly 52 percent of the land area. Open space and natural lands contribute greatly to the overall character and setting of Westmoreland County. These natural features benefit all municipalities in the County by providing improved environmental quality and ecological health; passive and active recreational opportunities for fitness and relaxation; vital wildlife habitat; education and stewardship opportunities; and cultural and historic resources. Each of these benefits also provide direct and indirect benefit to the County's economy. Subsequently, the primary focus of this strategy is to preserve land such as forests, meadows, fields, wetlands, floodplains, fertile agricultural lands, and other natural areas that are relatively undisturbed.

Communities within the region each identify their own open spaces as priorities for preservation. They also define partnerships and protection strategies to help ensure the identified areas are preserved. Depending on the amount of open space to be addressed within a community or region, a number of factors may be evaluated in the identification and prioritization process. These include location, proximity, linkages, water-quality protection value, accessibility, aesthetic quality, use and utility, and threat of loss. Several implementation tools can be used to preserve open space, including comprehensive plans, regional planning organizations, zoning, acquisition, land banking, trusts, and more.

**Desired Result.** An abundance of high quality, protected natural resources and open space by focusing development within areas already served by existing infrastructure.



### BEST PRACTICE: WASHINGTON COUNTY, WI

Washington County, Wisconsin began its open space conservation efforts in 1977 when it realized the value of preserving the existing parkland and natural features. Over the years, the County kept an inventory of existing parks and analyzed the future need for green space based on population growth, land acquisition, and development trends. In 1998, the Regional Planning Commission adopted a plan that created four large parks and 52 miles of Countywide trails. The plan gave preservation priority to regions with high levels of natural resources, establishing them as “environmental corridors.” Through strategically planning based on available resources and projected needs, Washington County has made great efforts to both maintain and expand its open space and natural assets.

## STRATEGY 4.3 ACTIONS

### ESTABLISH A PRESERVATION POLICY

Develop a model policy for municipalities around the County to protect valuable open space and natural areas.

**Policy.** Discourage the conversion of farmland and open space to development. (\$,0)

**Program.** Create a model zoning ordinance for open space preservation that can be implemented in municipalities across the County. (\$,0)

**Policy.** Research and utilize applicable SmartCode ordinances that discourage growth in areas similar to its Preserved Open Space (O1) and Reserved Open Space (O2) sectors. (\$,0)

**Policy.** Inform local ordinances and policies through the dissemination of SmartCode principles to prevent the overextension of infrastructure, except in those circumstances that require improvement to the quality and quantity of public drinking water. (\$,00)

**Policy.** Encourage adjacency and concurrency requirements to ensure all future development is within the bounds of existing infrastructure. (\$,0)

**Policy.** Develop a natural features protection ordinance to protect the character-defining natural features of Westmoreland County, including wetlands, streams and riparian areas, ravines, steep slopes, wooded areas, and other areas or features deemed to be of environmental or ecological significance. (\$,0)

### ACQUIRE AND PRESERVE ASSETS

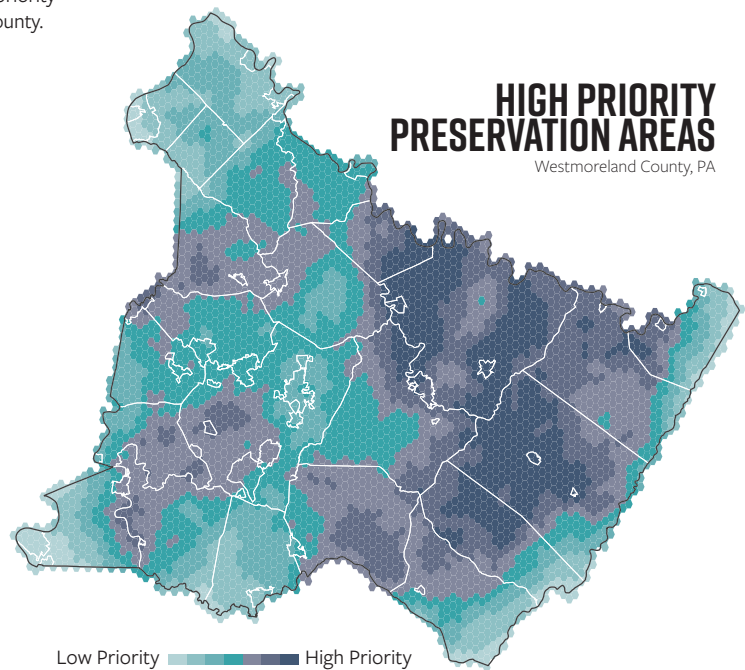
Use partnerships to acquire new land and develop policy to smartly preserve it.

**Policy.** Support the Westmoreland Land Trust, in the implementation of its land preservation priorities and its acquisition of key properties. (\$,0)

**Program.** Acquire any large parcels that become available near County parks to enlarge them and their surrounding buffer areas. (\$\$\$,000)

**Project.** As with the Turtle Creek Greenway Plan, continue to strategically acquire high-priority parcels throughout the County. (\$\$\$,000)

*The map shown to the right demonstrates the work of the Westmoreland Land Trust (WLT) to acquire and preserve properties of exceptional ecological, recreational, and historic or scenic value. Over 20 datasets were analyzed to determine the locations where those opportunities and priorities align best. This map is provided to demonstrate the work of the WLT to use a scientific method to prioritize property acquisition. It in no way binds any individual property owner to conservation, nor any municipality to those efforts.*



## STRATEGY 4.4

# IMPROVE & SUSTAIN WATER RESOURCES

Westmoreland County's more than 350,000 residents interact with water on a daily basis and in many ways: from drinking water to producing wastewater, from using water in commercial enterprises to dealing with stormwater runoff, and by enjoying water-based recreation. Water resources, including rivers, streams, lakes, wetlands, floodplains, and groundwater, are inextricably linked to our interaction with the landscape around us and how we use the land. Impacts from land development, industry, and the resultant stormwater runoff and pollutants can cause erosion, poor water quality, flooding and property damage. Our challenge is to encourage growth in the County while lessening our impacts on our water resources to achieve better water quality and more sustainable water resources.

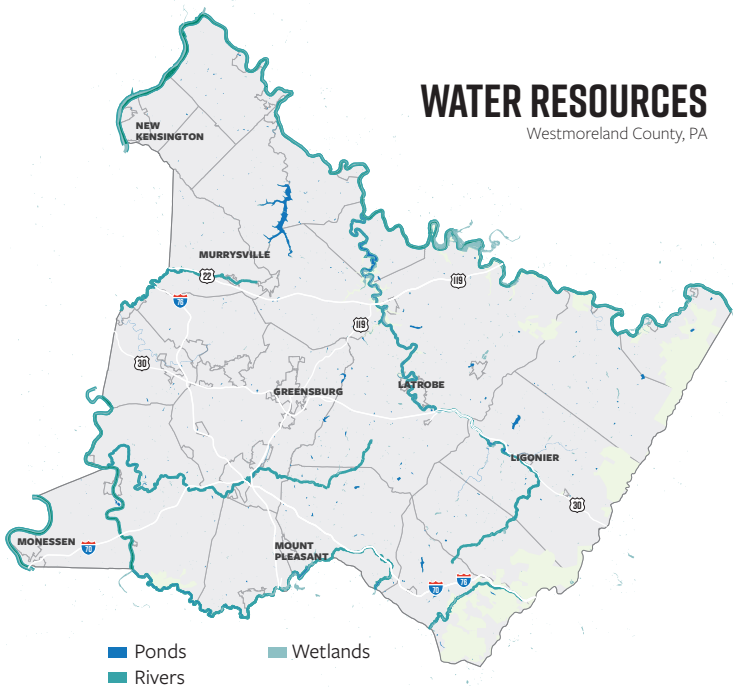
**Desired Result.** Sustainable water resource management and watershed restoration programs established through new development and redevelopment policies that reduce pollution and degradation.



Westmoreland County, Blurt Digital Design



Westmoreland County, Clare Kaczmarek



### BEST PRACTICE: LANCASTER, PA

The City of Lancaster has recently implemented a 25-year green infrastructure plan to solve its stormwater challenges. The mission of the plan is to provide more livable and sustainable neighborhoods for City residents and to reduce combined sewer overflows and nutrient loads. Through the use of green infrastructure, the natural environment is enhanced to manage rainwater where it falls, allowing the water to soak into the ground, evaporate and transpire through plants into the air, or collect in storage systems. Green infrastructure practices can include permeable paving, landscape areas with infiltration capabilities, tree plantings, green roofs and other techniques that capture runoff, breakdown pollutants, and use the water naturally. Beginning with a study that identified the impervious cover that generates runoff and pollutant loads by type and land ownership, they identified potential green infrastructure project sites and funding to understand the cost and benefit. After determining the citywide benefits, they created an action plan and policy to establish a green infrastructure program.

## STRATEGY 4.4

# ACTIONS

### ADVANCE SUSTAINABLE WATER RESOURCES

Identify opportunities to maintain or improve the quality and availability of the County's water resources.

**Policy.** Encourage municipalities to adopt and enforce the Model Stormwater Management Ordinance. (\$,0)

**Program.** Establish a water resource management program to provide oversight of local water resources. (\$,00)

**Program.** Prioritize County watersheds and identify projects to restore impacted watersheds. (\$,0)

**Program.** Assist municipalities to secure funding for projects that address local needs and comply with the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4) program. (\$,00)

**Project.** Pursue acid mine drainage (AMD) projects to improve priority watersheds. (\$,00)

**Project.** Identify key areas for green infrastructure and pursue funding opportunities for installation. (\$,0)

### ENCOURAGE PARTNERSHIPS

Promote new cooperative partnerships to address water resource issues in impacted watersheds that cross municipal boundaries.

**Policy.** Prioritize programs and projects for sustainable water resource management that involve partnerships in impacted watersheds. (\$,0)

**Program.** Investigate the establishment of municipal or joint municipal environmental advisory councils to address water resources. (\$,0)

**Project.** Support AMD treatment of Crabtree Creek (Loyalhanna Watershed) with cooperation from Hempfield, Unity, and Salem Township. (\$\$\$,000)

**Project.** Support regional stormwater management along Sulfur Run (Loyalhanna Watershed) with cooperation from Derry Township and Latrobe. (\$\$\$,000)

**Project.** Support AMD treatment of Tinker's Run and Brush Creek (Turtle Creek Watershed) with cooperation from North Huntingdon and Penn Township. (\$\$\$,000)

### PROVIDE ACCESSIBLE WATER RESOURCES INFORMATION

Maintain and enhance resources to provide information on water-related regulation and planning issues, and up-to-date information for decision makers that address water resource issues.

**Policy.** Periodically review and update the Integrated Water Resource Plan (IWRP) as an online resource for water and planning issues. (\$,0)

**Program.** Increase monitoring points across the County and maintain a BMP/rainfall monitoring dashboard to provide realtime data for decision makers. (\$\$\$,00)

**Program.** Provide educational programs for stakeholders on sustainable water resource management. (\$\$\$,000)

**Project.** Create a public awareness campaign to improve water quality and sustain water resources. (\$,0)

**Project.** Create an online forum for the exchange of ideas between decision makers on water resource management issues. (\$,0)



## CORE OBJECTIVE 5: BUILD HEALTHY AND WHOLE COMMUNITIES

Across the County, individuals are consistently looking for communities and homes that are affordable, low- or no-maintenance, and offer immediate access to a variety of well-maintained amenities. This includes both millennials and young families, as well as seniors looking to down-size while remaining in their community. In Westmoreland, the frequency of sprawl and lack of housing options limits the community's ability to attract new residents as well as provide necessary options for those already living in the County.

### STRATEGIES

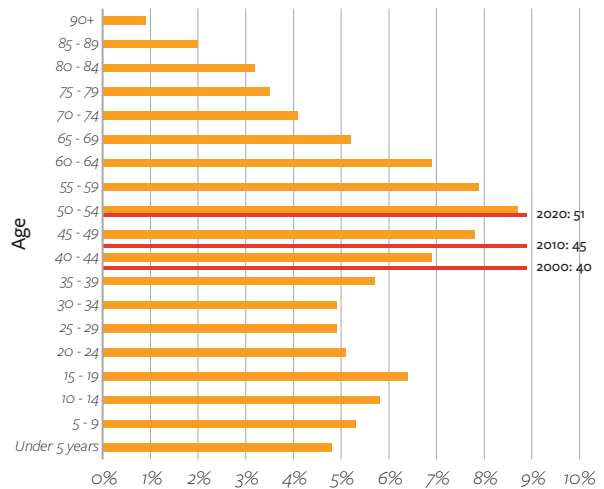
The following strategies are intended to help implement the Core Objective. Each is accompanied by specific action steps that ensure the objective can be appropriately achieved and monitored throughout the life of the Plan.

1. Eliminate Blight
2. Invest in Beautification
3. Go Green
4. Bolster Age-Friendly Communities & Services
5. Get Healthy
6. Address Fragmentation
7. Create a Design "Playbook"

The comprehensive planning process presents an opportunity to address public health impacts, identify and promote positive health outcomes for residents, and embrace some of the discipline’s founding principles by improving individual and community health. Local land use and zoning decisions can have a tremendous impact on public health by enhancing a community’s walkability, a resident’s access to health-related services and healthy food options, and a commuter’s access to safe and affordable transportation options. The County’s built environment will have a direct impact on future public-health outcomes and is a fundamental component in the creation of vibrant, active places that can positively impact a resident’s physical and social wellbeing.

As the County begins to implement this important Plan, it must place an emphasis on reinvigorating the distinct locales that comprise Westmoreland, ensuring the County can offer healthy and whole communities that appeal to a diverse population. This must include efforts to foster greater housing choices, focus on creating active, higher density neighborhood centers, town centers, and regional urban cores, and providing the amenities desired by current and future residents. The strategies and actions presented in this chapter are focused on eliminating the physical conditions that can have a detrimental effect on creating healthy and whole communities. They are intended to enhance the quality of life in Westmoreland County by emphasizing community-level improvements that can have a tangible and lasting effect on individual residents.

## AGE OF POPULATION AS PERCENT OF TOTAL (2010)



## STRATEGY 5.1

# ELIMINATE BLIGHT

Blighted and abandoned buildings was one of the key issues noted across all community engagement activities. Subsequently a priority action was to address these buildings in an appropriate capacity. Blighted buildings are not only a safety risk, but they also decrease property values and diminish the aesthetic of a community. Lower property values correlate to a smaller tax base and less funding to provide and maintain necessary services. As noted by a study completed by the US Census in 2013, housing is the number one reason why 48 percent of Americans move to a new community. Not all blighted buildings are residential, as many are also commercial or industrial. However, blighted homes diminish neighborhoods to a greater extent.

The County's blight issue is not only affecting current residents, but it is also reason for potential new residents to choose a community other than Westmoreland. Many municipalities across the United States are employing innovative methods to remediate blight such as housing receivership, a mechanism which allows municipalities to be appointed as the responsible caretaker of deteriorated properties. Designated redevelopment areas is another tool that allows the County to initiate and support private investment and redevelopment of aging and obsolete properties, thus returning them to an active, revenue-generating space. Stabilizing, rehabilitating, or demolishing blighted properties can restore and enhance neighborhoods across the County.

**Desired Result.** Every neighborhood in the County is vibrant and free of blight, where people choose to purchase or rent homes and have the resources and knowledge to maintain their properties.





STRATEGY 5.1  
**ACTIONS**

**IMPLEMENT A BLIGHT PLAN**

Utilize the Five-Step Fast-Track Blight Plan Process for all communities as a guide to address blight, as well as strategic partnerships with public and private entities to implement completed plans.

**Program.** Gain consensus for developing a comprehensive blighted-property strategy. (\$,◇)

**Program.** Assess the nature and extent of blight. (\$,◇)

**Program.** Engage municipal officials. (\$,◇)

**Program.** Convene a blight task force. (\$,◇)

**Program.** Identify priority action steps and implement. (\$,◇◇)

**UTILIZE PLANNING TOOLS**

Promote and utilize various planning tools to address blight across Westmoreland County.

**Policy.** Encourage all communities to join the Land Bank. (\$,◇)

**Program.** Investigate the establishment of a property court to provide a specific means of handling property-related infractions, expedite enforcement, and help maintain properties at higher standards. (\$,◇◇)

**Program.** Establish and deploy funding programs to support blight elimination and façade improvements. (\$,◇◇)

**Policy.** Provide all communities with technical assistance to address and combat blight. (\$,◇◇◇)

**MAINTAIN PROGRESS**

Review and update databases and plans to monitor and address blight in all areas of the County.

**Program.** Identify and prioritize brownfield and grayfield sites for remediation. (\$,◇◇)

**Program.** Identify a downtown community and develop a specific blight plan for that community to accelerate restoration and revitalization efforts. Develop at least one blight plan per Planning District. (\$\$,◇)



Land Bank Before



Land Bank After

## STRATEGY 5.2

# INVEST IN BEAUTIFICATION

Well-maintained and aesthetically pleasing neighborhoods not only attract new investment and increase property values, but they are also correlated with reductions in violent and petty crime. Community campaigns to clean up, paint, and fix up neighborhoods are good ways to foster pride in ownership, encourage the development of social capital, and leverage limited funding. Westmoreland should work with municipalities to support the creation of neighborhood and business associations and help empower residents to transform their communities.

However, the responsibility also falls on the shoulders of each individual municipality. They must first care about themselves and their appearance to the outside world before anyone else makes the determination to put forth effort into doing so. Maintaining and improving their character requires strategic self-investment as a guide to others who eventually want to help improve the community. Investing in beautification begins with identifying critical areas of need and subsequently the tools with which to make the investment. For example, using native plants provides life to an area that not only matches the surrounding natural environment but also minimizes certain environmental impacts such as stormwater runoff. In addition, appropriately positioned public seating can establish an aesthetic character or theme that can be carried throughout the community. Furthermore, urban design elements such as street trees, landscaping, lighting, and pedestrian and bike amenities can contribute to increased office rents, retail rents and revenues, and residential for-sale and rental rates.

**Desired Result.** Westmoreland is comprised of a network of well-maintained, inviting, and aesthetically pleasing neighborhoods that contribute to the character and vibrancy of their communities.



### BEST PRACTICE: OSHKOSH, WI

*The 9th Avenue Corridor in Oshkosh, Wisconsin is comprised of mainly residential and commercial buildings, many of which have shown signs of deterioration over the years. With the goal to redevelop this corridor as a prominent entrance into the City, Oshkosh set out a development and design framework in its 2018 City Center and Corridors Plan. A highlighted objective is to work with the Oshkosh Public Art and Beautification Committee to beautify the strip through public art. By incorporating sculptures, murals, and installations by local artists into its urban landscape, the city can create a greater sense of place that is both engaging and attractive.*

STRATEGY 5.2

# ACTIONS

## BEAUTIFY PUBLIC SPACES

Identify and improve prominent areas in the County through various beautification tools to match the desired character of both the municipality and the County as a whole.

**Project.** Identify key corridors, intersections, and gateways for improvement. (\$,0)

**Program.** Develop partnerships with community organizations to maintain areas. (\$,0)

**Program.** Encourage the development of volunteer networks and neighborhood associations that work to maintain aesthetic standards. (\$,0)

**Program.** Provide an annual award to a community that exemplifies beauty in Westmoreland County. (\$,000)

**Project.** Design identified areas and procure funding to make the improvements. (\$,00)

## DEVELOP AND ENFORCE STANDARDS

Develop design guidelines and enforce them along with property maintenance standards that maintain community character.

**Policy.** Encourage municipalities to adopt the International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC) to establish uniform standards of quality for neighborhoods. (\$,0)

**Program.** Encourage the establishment of regional or multi-municipal partnerships to enforce locally-adopted elements of the IPMC. (\$,00)

**Program.** Encourage municipalities to incorporate design requirements for private development to maintain community character. (\$,00)

**Program.** Partner with local organizations and foundations to develop neighborhood plans that establish a vision and goals for the future of communities. (\$\$\$,000)

**Program.** Work with municipalities and local organizations to create and administer facade improvement programs. (\$\$\$,000)



## STRATEGY 5.3 GO GREEN

Sustainable communities have a vibrant economy, a healthy environment, and a livable society. They achieve this by thinking about future needs as well as current needs. This strategy does not stand alone, like many others, but is connected to more than possibly any other one. Investing in beautification, for example, can implement sustainable practices that all also improve the aesthetic appearance of a community such as using native plants or porous pavement. Both actions reduce stormwater runoff and reduce costs for the municipality and thus the taxpayer. Growing local food in community gardens creates local, healthy food options for area residents while increasing the amount of green space. Reusing dilapidated buildings and redeveloping them with green infrastructure reestablishes a revenue-generating property, utilizes existing infrastructure and improves the appearance of the community. Many actions identified in each of the strategies throughout this Plan have a sustainability component.

Sustainable practices aim to balance the needs of the environment, economy, and society. Promoting green initiatives can help conserve natural resources, energy, and costs for municipalities, property owners, and residents. Individual efforts are certainly applaudable and beneficial, however, a larger group effort among the municipalities is where the actions outlined in this strategy can produce the greatest return. This begins with improving the County community's understanding and acknowledgment of the role a healthy environment plays in creating a successful community. As such, the County should work with all of its municipal leaders to go green in their everyday and long-term practices.

**Desired Result.** The promotion of green best practices have helped to conserve resources and increase quality-of-life indicators for residents.



### CASE STUDY: LAWRENCE, KS

*The City of Lawrence was the first community in Kansas to receive a 4-STAR rating for excellence in sustainability based on economic, environmental, and social factors. Lawrence has been venturing on numerous projects to promote energy-efficiency, healthy living, and the reuse of resources. The City provides single-stream recycling for residents, operates four hybrid buses, cultivates community gardens through the Common Ground Program, and provides free biosolids to area farmers through the wastewater treatment plant, along with many other initiatives. Through such measures, Lawrence has gained national recognition as one of the leaders in sustainability.*

STRATEGY 5.3

# ACTIONS

## INCREASE RECYCLING AND MANAGE WASTE

Implement the Solid Waste Management Plan. (\$,∅)

## ENCOURAGE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Utilize innovative environmental practices to reduce energy usage and improve the environment.

**Project.** Complete an energy audit of all County facilities to identify cost-effective energy saving measures to pursue. (\$,∅∅)

**Project.** When necessary, replace County vehicles with alternative-fuel vehicles. (\$\$\$,∅∅∅)

**Program.** In coordination with the Westmoreland Conservation District, identify high-impact areas for green infrastructure improvements. (\$,∅)

**Project.** Amend zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances (SALDOs) to allow the use of green infrastructure. (\$,∅)

**Project.** Establish and deploy best practices for each area. (\$\$\$,∅∅∅)

**Program.** Establish incentives for the use of green infrastructure. (\$,∅)

## PROMOTE COMMUNITY GARDENS

Incentivize and promote community gardens in neighborhoods throughout Westmoreland County to provide direct access to healthy food.

**Policy.** Amend zoning ordinances to allow for community gardens. (\$,∅)

**Program.** Identify appropriate locations for community gardens, with connections to residences and trails. (\$,∅)

**Program.** Identify partners for community gardening education. (\$,∅)

**Program.** Utilize community gardens to enhance neighborhood character by providing additional amenities such as outdoor seating and public gathering space. (\$,∅∅)



Community Garden Before



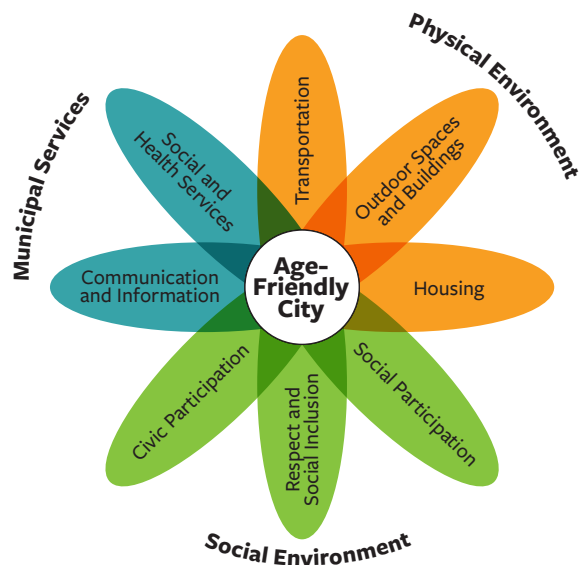
Community Garden After

## STRATEGY 5.4

# BOLSTER AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES & SERVICES

Seniors are the biggest age cohort in Westmoreland making up more than 21 percent of the total population. They are also the fastest growing age group and are projected to grow by five percent by 2030. This trend is consistently seen in communities across the country, however, not at this pace. An increasingly aging population will greatly affect many sectors of the County including healthcare, housing, and recreation, as well as the workforce and the economy. As baby boomers age, they are seeking new housing options that allow them to stay in their community while downsizing their home. Often called “aging-in-community,” this trend is pushing a demand for smaller, low-maintenance units with close proximity to basic goods and services. An aging population means an aging workforce, which in Westmoreland’s case, correlates to an overall declining workforce. The overall population that is of the age to work in the County is predicted to remain stable through 2030, but with an aging population, the overall labor force will decline along with the employed labor force. This change is critical for the County to address in its desire to maintain and reinvigorate its economy. Understanding the changing needs of a growing senior population is essential to Westmoreland and must be carefully considered and addressed across the County. Bolstering its services to seniors will be a key factor in shaping the County’s future in the coming years.

**Desired Result.** The availability of diverse senior housing options and related senior services in the County has helped to retain Westmoreland’s senior population.



**WORKFORCE POPULATION**  
(2000, 2010, AND PROJECTED 2020)



### BEST PRACTICE: AARP 20-MINUTE VILLAGE

The 20-Minute Village, also known as the urban village, is an area where residents can walk from home to work, shopping, restaurants, parks, and other amenities in just twenty minutes. The popularity of this type of environment is increasing. A community preference survey conducted by the National Association of Realtors found that 85 percent of participants believe that sidewalks are a positive factor when purchasing a home, and 79 percent placed importance on being within easy walking distance to amenities. In addition to attracting new residents, walkable neighborhoods can also impact property values. Walk Score, which rates the walkability of neighborhoods, found that homes with a high walk score were more than \$3,000 more valuable than comparable homes with a lower walk score. The American Association of Retired People, an organization with more than 35 million members, recognizes the importance of walkable neighborhoods to help people age in community. The organization maintains a list of 20-Minute Villages to help inform members on the best places to live.

## STRATEGY 5.4 ACTIONS

### IDENTIFY SENIOR NEEDS

Engage with the senior community to understand their needs as they exist today and how they will change over time in all aspects of life.

**Program.** Work with municipal partners to establish a multidisciplinary task force on aging to identify senior needs, with an emphasis on housing and transportation. (\$,0)

**Program.** Host regular outreach and social events with senior populations to identify current and emerging issues as well as potential solutions. (\$,000)

### SUPPORT SENIOR HOUSING

Promote and support the inclusion of senior housing options throughout Westmoreland using various programs and partnerships.

**Policy.** Incentivize senior housing and aging-in-community projects in neighborhood centers, town centers, and regional urban cores throughout the County. (\$,0)

**Project.** Work with individual municipalities to amend zoning ordinances to allow for a variety of housing types to accommodate senior needs. (\$,0)

**Program.** Work with municipal partners to identify areas that are best suited for senior housing based on proximity to related services and transit options. (\$,0)

**Program.** Explore the implementation of creative senior living solutions, such as Elder Cottage Housing Opportunity units that are placed in the backyards of loved ones. (\$,0)

**Program.** Work with developers and municipal partners to seek state and federal funding to support the development of senior housing options that are affordable and provide necessary services in neighborhood centers, town centers, and regional urban cores. (\$,0)

**Policy.** Review and modify current policy on Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) to permit the use of financing programs for senior housing and aging-in-community projects in neighborhood centers, town centers, and regional urban cores. (\$,0)



## STRATEGY 5.5 GET HEALTHY

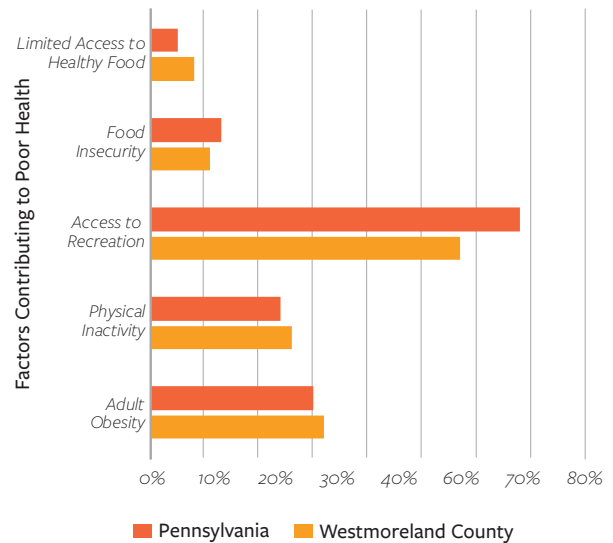
Many factors comprise the overall healthiness of both an individual and a community including obesity, level of activity, exercise opportunities, food insecurity, and more. In Westmoreland County, nearly one-third (32 percent) of all adults are obese. Obesity is defined as having a body mass index (BMI) of 30 or higher. However, this number is just slightly higher than Pennsylvania's 30 percent. Roughly 26 percent of adults over the age of 19 report having no leisure time physical activity. Again this is slightly higher than Pennsylvania's 24 percent. Regarding food insecurity (lacking adequate access to any food), 11 percent of Westmoreland's population reports being insecure compared to the Commonwealth's 13 percent. These numbers, while not far off from that of all of Pennsylvania, still indicate a need for direct, health-related planning efforts.

Health is not only determined by an individual's genetics or lifestyle choices, but policy, systems, and environmental factors can also impact health outcomes. Fifty percent of health outcomes are determined by access to physical, social, and economic opportunities. By examining the laws, rules, and environments that impact an individual's behavior, Westmoreland can help make healthier choices an option for all community members. When working to develop a vibrant and thriving County, it is paramount to ensure that residents have access to healthy food, physical activity, and affordable healthcare. Westmoreland County should emphasize getting healthy to its residents through access to educational resources and necessary services, which include an improved built and natural environment.

**Desired Result.** Residents in Westmoreland are healthy, active, engaged, educated, and living in environments in which they can thrive.



### HEALTH FACTORS



### CASE STUDY: CHICAGO, IL

Over the past several years, Chicago, Illinois has been making tremendous progress in realizing health for all residents. City residents were experiencing issues like poor life expectancy, economic hardship, and inaccessibility to healthy foods. These issues were disproportionately affecting minority communities. Using 2016 Healthy Chicago 2.0 as its guide, Chicago is continuing to tackle this issue with initiatives that work to ensure accessible grocery store locations, increase funding for health programs, and improve educational quality and attendance.



## STRATEGY 5.5 ACTIONS

### INCREASE ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

Support the expansion of healthcare to people with limited or no access to better serve all areas of Westmoreland County.

**Program.** Pursue partnerships with local and regional health networks to address issues identified in the Community Health Needs Assessment. (\$,0)

**Program.** Identify areas in the County with limited access to physical activity, healthy foods, and work with municipalities to resolve barriers. (\$,0)

### ENCOURAGE HEALTHY EATING

Ensure that residents have safe and convenient access to healthy and fresh food choices.

**Program.** Build awareness and support for local, healthy food through community events and targeted institutional trainings. (\$,0)

**Program.** Develop sustainable programs for youth to encourage growing, cooking, and marketing fresh food, and exploring the food system. (\$,00)

**Program.** Promote healthy eating and physical activity at Westmoreland County schools, worksites, and other settings where the public is served. (\$,000)

**Policy.** Advocate for the adoption of policies that require healthy food in venues where the public is served. (\$,0)

### PROMOTE EXERCISE

Maintain existing and provide new spaces for indoor and outdoor recreation in Westmoreland.

**Policy.** Ensure communities have adequate active and passive recreation space to meet current and anticipated needs. (\$\$,000)

**Policy.** Prioritize and support large-scale recreational developments. (\$\$\$,000)

**Program.** Review municipal ordinances to allow for outdoor and recreational activities. (\$,0)



## STRATEGY 5.6

# ADDRESS FRAGMENTATION

When government is fragmented, there are often unnecessary costs and barriers resulting in inefficient systems. Governmental fragmentation and duplication of services was another well-highlighted issue from the public outreach process. Currently, many local governments are having difficulty filling elected positions as well as maintaining critical elements to their operations including assets, budget, infrastructure, and services. This only serves to further separate the individual municipalities from one another creating a disjointed community with difficulty communicating needs and wants. Thus, to effectively address fragmentation in Westmoreland County, the municipalities have to work together to find solutions that help one another. Emphasis must be placed on collaboration instead of competition.

Addressing fragmentation of local government at all levels can achieve better results when they share resources including, funding and financing ability, experience and knowledge, staff resources, and creative energy. Partnership options are nearly limitless for pursuing strategies that move public agencies jointly toward common goals. Such cooperative efforts can be formal or informal, issue-specific or more generalized, temporary or permanent, and range from a partnership of two entities to a complex, multilayered organization. In almost all cases, there is a common thread—a “synergy” results from the shared efforts of the participants and greater benefits accrue to each individual agency than could otherwise be achieved without combined authority and coordinated strategy. Overall, actions can take many forms including consolidation, disincorporation, shared services, and cooperation.

**Desired Result.** All government entities in Westmoreland work cooperatively through coordination and communication.

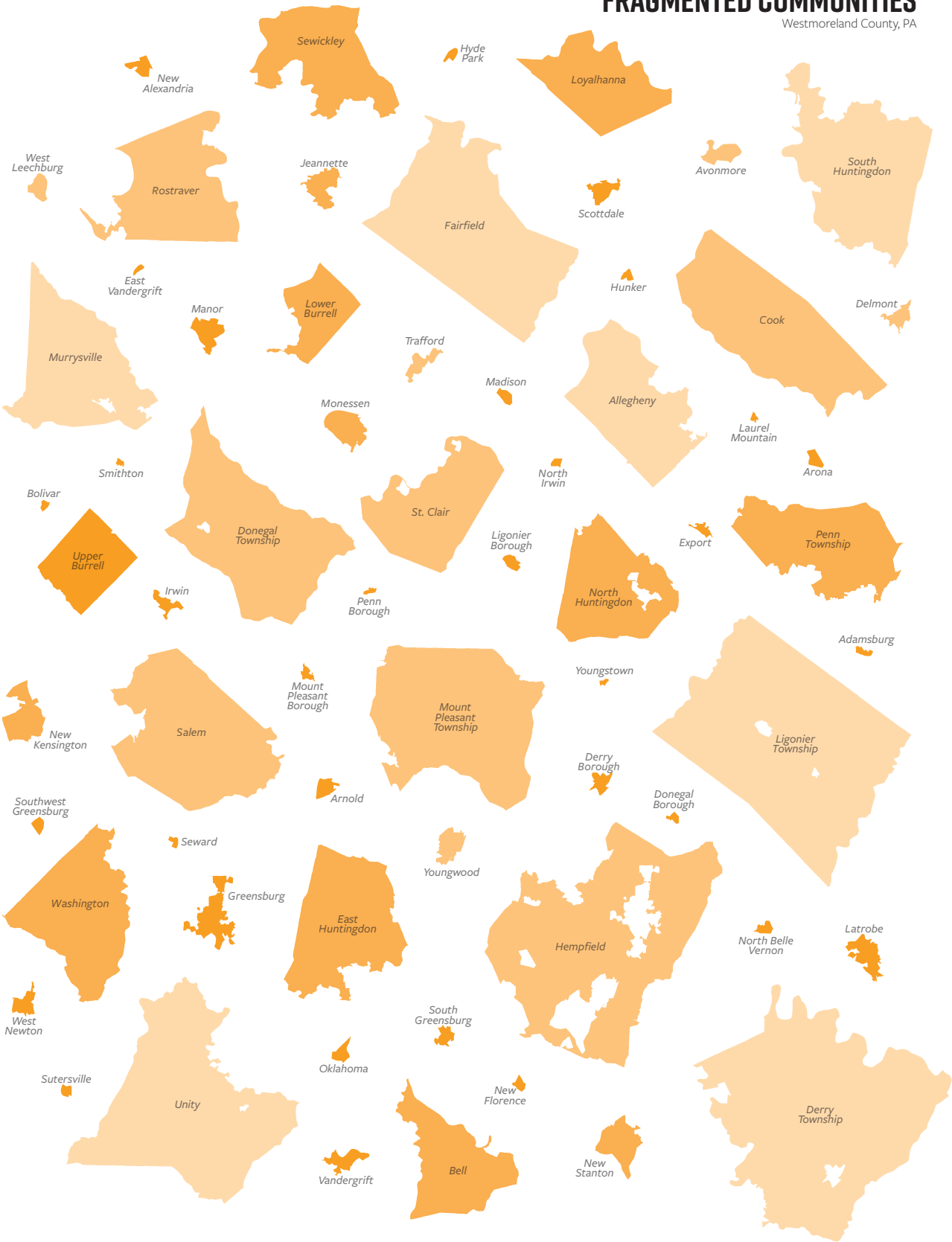
### ACTION

**Program.** Implement the Planning Districts.



# FRAGMENTED COMMUNITIES

Westmoreland County, PA



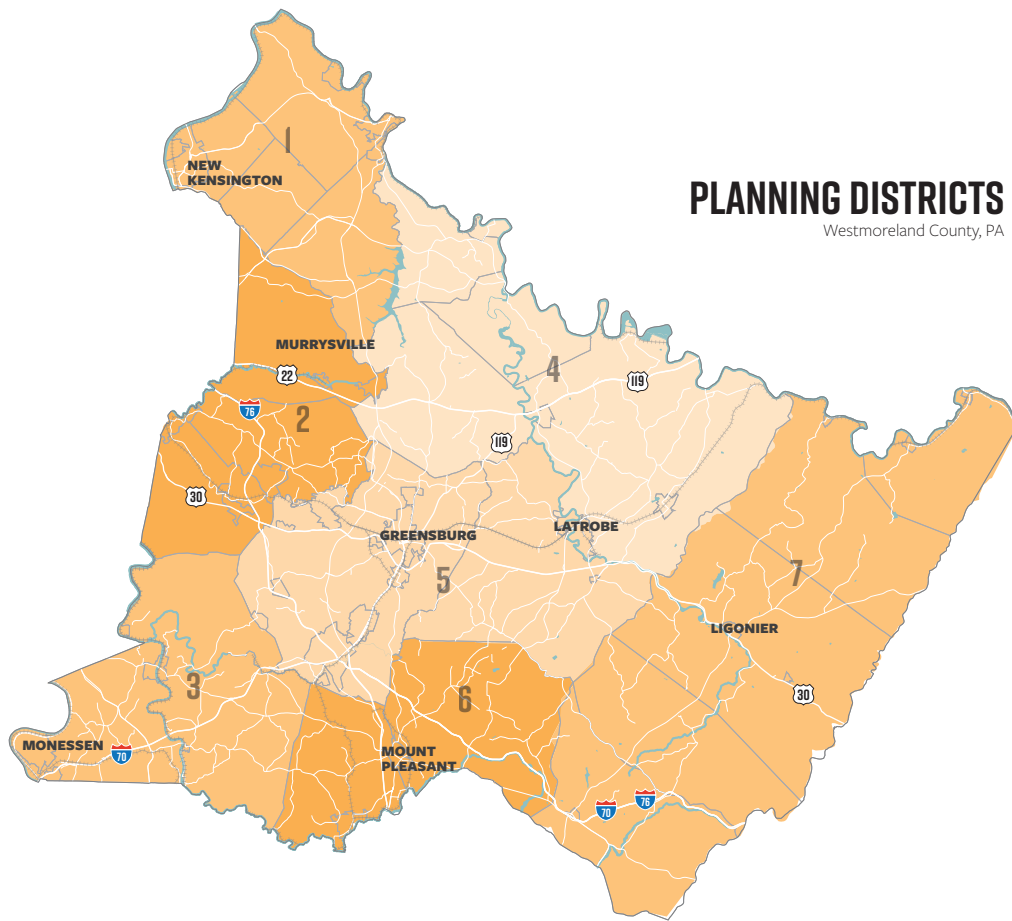
# PLANNING DISTRICTS

Implementation of nearly every strategy presented in this Comprehensive Plan relies on collaboration and coordination of efforts at multiple levels; including the state, Southwestern Pennsylvania region, county, municipality, and neighborhood. Some of the strategies are broad in their perspective, offering guidance to decision makers on key public concerns County-wide. For instance, Strategy 1.4 Advance Entrepreneurialism, suggests the creation of a Countywide small business resource guide. In other cases, the Plan offers specific policies and actions in specific places. As an example, Strategy 3.4 Utilize Planning Best Practices supports the idea that many of our aging shopping centers are in need of reimagining and repositioning in an era of retail decline and e-commerce. As a practical matter then, we are forced to make decisions about which commercial centers will require such analyses and effort.

Given scarce resources and multiple choices, we must look to build regional alliances among and within our seven Planning Districts to arrive at some amount of consensus on these matters. Too often though, neighboring communities don't make choices in tandem. This isn't too surprising, given Pennsylvania's fragmented local government system. Moreover, there are few incentives to support regional decision making. We've heard from municipal leaders that they understand the need for and are in support of regional thinking and local action. Yet, they feel their hands are tied. After all, they were elected to represent the interests of their community, not the one's next door and certainly not of the County.

This implementation strategy supports numerous elements throughout the Plan including:

- » 2.2 Cultivate Arts & Entertainment
- » 3.2 Provide Housing Options
- » 3.4 Utilize Planning Best Practices
- » 3.5 Direct Density
- » 5.6 Address Fragmentation
- » 7.2 Create Mobility Plans

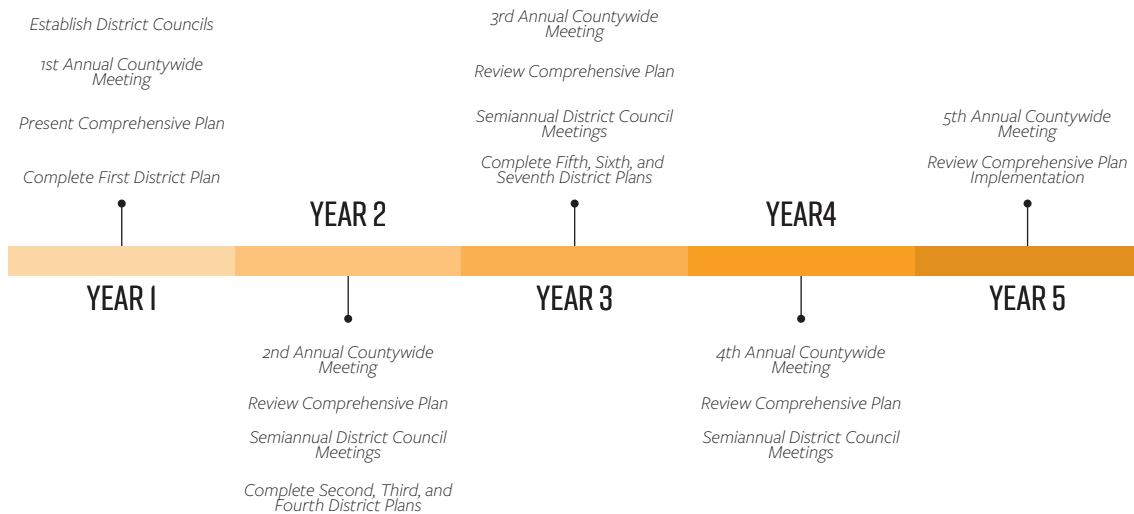


## PLANNING DISTRICTS

Westmoreland County, PA

The most obvious downside to this state of affairs is that we all rise and fall on the collective fates of the 65 municipalities in Westmoreland County. To illustrate, residents across the County recognize that their community is only as healthy as the one next door or surrounding it. Traditionally, our cities and boroughs have been under significant strain following deindustrialization and years of outmigration. Yet, residents of mostly suburban and rural townships identified the need to reposition our towns just as favorably, and in some cases, more favorably than those in urbanized towns. Suffice it to say, none of our communities exist in a vacuum.

Counties in Pennsylvania are not a higher form of government. In fact, municipalities, being the most local form of government, have overriding authority for sewer and water infrastructure, zoning and land use, parks and recreation, and numerous other elements of public life. As far as this Plan is concerned, that creates a huge gulf between our regional intentions and local implementation.



Local government has changed dramatically since William Penn created the Commonwealth. New trends in community design, telecommunications, transportation, the environment, and so on, hold the potential to exert greater pressure on local municipal governments. Frustrating matters further, significant numbers of communities have few resources to address these complex, interconnected issues. By the County's estimate, only 17 municipalities have professional managers and fewer than 10 have a professional planner. And even in those cases where professional staff exists, their immediate concern may tend toward the here and now, not 10 years out.

While the County cannot drive local priorities, we do have the technical and resource capacity to help facilitate a process by which communities arrive at those priorities for themselves. This forms the basis for what we hope to accomplish by creating seven, smaller, sub-County planning documents. It begins with recognizing three essential elements:

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

## VALUE PROPOSITION



### SHARED SERVICES & REGIONAL DECISION MAKING

*Regional problems deserve regional solutions*



### INFORMATION SHARING AMONG MUNICIPALITIES

*Best practices and new approaches can be shared, when a platform is prepared*



### BRIDGE DIVIDE BETWEEN NEED & RESOURCES

*Lack of capacity keeps local municipalities distant from resources*



### TRANSPARENCY WITH THE PUBLIC & DEVELOPERS



### INFORMED DECISION MAKING

*Good decisions depend on good information*



### EFFICIENT PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY

*Thinking regionally recognizes economies of scale*

Each planning district plan would feature common elements. For starters, the County Planning Department will complete descriptive assessments and analyses to help each district understand their place in the region. Second, we will facilitate a process by which each District defines their vision within the seven Core Objectives of this Plan. Third, we will work with the constituent municipalities to create a cohesive land use plan and mobility plan. The graphics on this page and the previous one highlight the timeline developing said plans as well as common goals and objectives they set out to achieve. Fourth, we will help communities identify potential service sharing arrangements. The distinguishing feature of this process is that we will work in partnership with the Districts. This will be a bottom-up process, leaning on municipal leaders to define their own vision within the context of the County's. Ultimately, all of this will be included in a final set of strategies, in report format, that are immediately aligned with this Comprehensive Plan.

Without creating these seven Planning Districts and the planning documents to follow, the task of directing 65 individual municipalities will remain elusive. The net result of that scenario is a County comprehensive plan that isn't taken seriously and the risk of failure to implement increases dramatically.

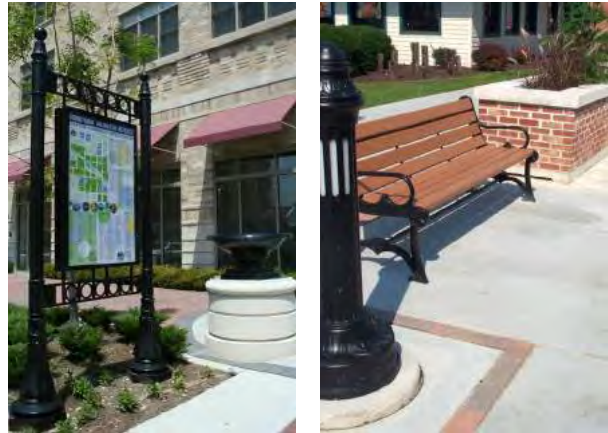
Nothing in this section should be construed as an abridgment of the local authority of municipalities in Westmoreland County. This effort is wholly and exclusively voluntary. No punitive actions will be taken against municipalities who choose not to participate in the Planning Districts effort.

## STRATEGY 5.7

# CREATE A DESIGN "PLAYBOOK"

High quality community design creates vibrant and active places where people desire to live and work. When utilized appropriately it can even create distinctive destinations that attract people from around the region and the country. Urban design best practices help create a cohesive and functional community that supports growth and investment. Creating a "playbook" of design standards can guide municipalities towards encouraging or developing standards for high-quality land development, protection of community character, and establishment of new destinations. A detailed set of design guidelines can even be used to incorporate the County's historical heritage as a basis for aesthetic appeal and overall character. A design playbook can also help encourage development in the County by reducing or eliminating uncertainties for developers. Specific guidelines for specific areas of the County outline parameters for developments to meet, which helps reduce confusion and generalization. As an example, the planning firm DPZ developed SmartCode, an open source zoning code that can be calibrated and customized to specific communities. The County could utilize a similar template to create a guide for individual communities regarding design standards. Guidelines can also be hierarchical with an overarching set applicable to any area of the County, and then each municipality could also have some unique guidelines that help memorialize and foster the character of their communities.

**Desired Result.** High quality and cohesive development is encouraged by municipalities and easily implemented by developers.



### BEST PRACTICE: WESTMONT, IL

*Bounded by major corridors, the Village of Westmont, Illinois contains a variety of commercial districts that are a destination for both local residents and people throughout Chicago's western suburbs. Within the last decade, numerous infill and redevelopment projects began taking place, which prompted the Village to establish the 2015 Commercial Area Design Guidelines plan. The guidelines set standards for both Downtown and the gateway and corridor areas, which encourages new developments to fit the image and character the Village desires. The guidelines have been helpful in influencing characteristics like building height, lighting, architectural style, and signage, to ultimately make Westmont an attractive locale that will pull in business and new residents.*



# STRATEGY 5.7 ACTIONS

## ESTABLISH GOOD DESIGN

Emphasize the unique character of neighborhoods across the County through strategic design standards and guidelines.

**Program.** Provide a template consisting of design guidelines, visuals, and scenarios for development projects to illustrate the demand for and encourage mixed-use development, pedestrian orientation, and quality of place within any development. (\$,◇)

**Program.** Utilize the knowledge of County staff related to planning and development best practices to guide municipalities towards encouraging or developing standards for high quality land development. (\$,◇)

**Project.** Develop a model Complete Streets ordinance to be utilized by local governments. (\$,◇)

**Program.** Establish a model for dense neighborhood centers, town centers, and regional urban cores to be implemented (optional) in municipalities throughout the County. (\$,◇)



City of Elmhurst North York Street Corridor Plan, Houseal Lavigne Associates

A photograph of a woman and a man looking at a laptop in a computer lab. The woman is pointing at the screen while the man looks on. The background is filled with other people working at computers, all under a warm, orange-toned light.

## CORE OBJECTIVE 6: PLUG INTO THE NEW ECONOMY

Westmoreland has a long and proud tradition of commerce and industry. The County, like many communities in the region, transformed and prospered as the country changed from a largely agrarian society and economy to an industrial powerhouse. During this time, Westmoreland County was a major supplier of coke for the steel and glass industries, and, due to the abundance of natural resources in the area, manufacturing companies emerged and flourished. The prosperity of its manufacturing industry during that time exemplifies the County's ability to reconstruct and reestablish itself as the economy changes. As new technologies spur an economic transformation once again, Westmoreland County can undoubtedly make another smooth transition, adapting in a manner that will lead to a new era of prosperity and growth.

### STRATEGIES

The following strategies are intended to help implement the Core Objective. Each is accompanied by specific action steps that ensure the objective can be appropriately achieved and monitored throughout the life of the Plan.

1. Develop Broadband Capacity
2. Integrate New Technologies
3. Invest in Industry 4.0
4. Embrace Hemp



To remain viable and competitive in the global market, Westmoreland must embrace the trends, innovations, and direction of the new economy, such as the need for increased broadband capacity or growth in the hemp industry. This is essential to ensure Westmoreland can attract modern and emerging industries and businesses that provide high-paying jobs that appeal to young professionals and college graduates. Further, the integration of technology throughout the County can help to support technology-related industries as well as communicate the County's openness to innovation. Ultimately, the County must move its economy forward, fostering greater business diversity that will yield new jobs, greater employment, and new residents. This will ensure Westmoreland is competitive with its regional partners and ensure not just business stability, but business growth and innovation.



## STRATEGY 6.1

# DEVELOP BROADBAND CAPACITY

In this modern age, the internet is an increasingly integral part of nearly every aspect of life. Per the Commonwealth: "High-speed internet access is essential to growing our economy, expanding educational opportunities for our children, increasing access to modern healthcare, and improving the safety of our communities. [The goal is to] close the digital divide ensuring every citizen and business has the access it needs to connect to the ever-expanding digital world in which we live and work." As such, in early 2018, the Governor of Pennsylvania established the Office of Broadband Initiatives to spearhead the Commonwealth's move toward expanding its service and access to all residents. Currently over 800,000 Pennsylvanians do not have access to reliable high-speed internet, roughly 65 percent of which live in rural areas. As part of its new broadband initiative, Pennsylvania has established the Broadband Investment Incentive Program. The program provides \$35 million in financial incentives to private providers to expand services into unserved or underserved areas in the Commonwealth. As providers look to move into or expand in Westmoreland, the County now has a larger tool to not only incentivize these providers, but also help them establish service more effectively and efficiently. The Commonwealth and the county recognize the importance internet access plays in everyday life. Aggressively expanding and enhancing the County's technology infrastructure will work to close the digital divide and will help attract new businesses and promote the growth of existing ones.

**Desired Result.** The County's robust technology infrastructure is a key selling point for Westmoreland and helps to attract and retain businesses and industry.



### BEST PRACTICE: STATE OF IOWA

*The Commonwealth is not alone in its recognition of the importance of investment in expanding access to high speed internet. Since 2009, the United States Department of Agriculture, through its Rural Development program has partnered with the state of Iowa and private broadband providers to invest more than \$345 million in rural communities throughout the state. In 2015, the investment in broadband helped to create or retain more than 1,000 jobs and helped nearly 2,500 families purchase homes in rural areas such as Carroll County and Crawford County. The success of this significant investment further reiterates the economic and community development power increased access to broadband has in rural areas.*

STRATEGY 6.1  
**ACTIONS**

**EXPAND BROADBAND ACCESS**

Increase and bolster broadband capacity in Westmoreland County through detailed analysis, strategic partnerships, and applicable resources.

**Policy.** Ensure that Westmoreland County businesses and residents have access to appropriate and scalable high-speed broadband and internet services. (\$\$\$,000)

**Program.** Establish a broadband entity or committee to oversee the implementation of strategy. (\$,0)

**Program.** Conduct a comprehensive Countywide analysis of existing conditions to establish a basis for improvements and develop a plan of implementation to increase bandwidth. (\$\$,00)

**Program.** Focus on downtown areas as small businesses and co-working locations will require a minimum bandwidth as well as appropriate access. (\$,0)



Blackley Construction



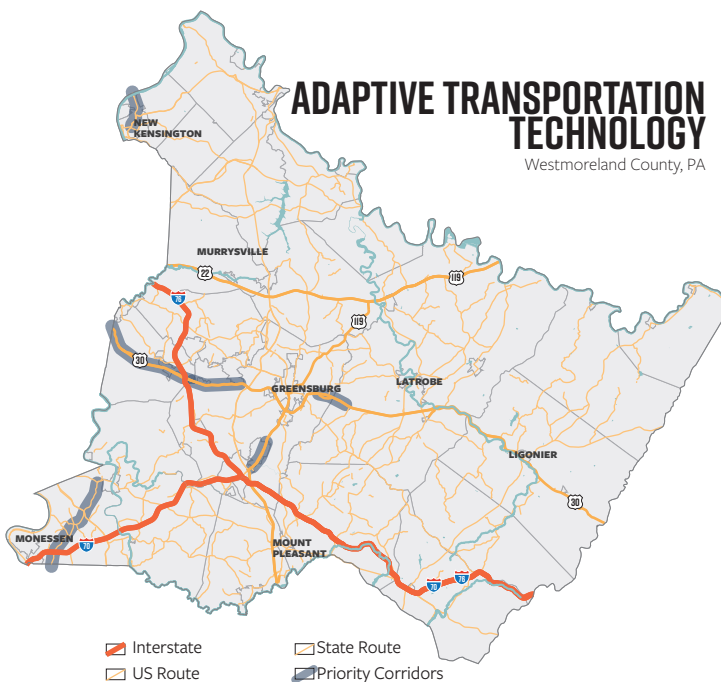
## STRATEGY 6.2

# INTEGRATE NEW TECHNOLOGIES

Technology is constantly growing, changing, and being developed to help enhance and improve all aspects of life. Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) is just one example of new technology that works to make everyday life easier. ITS is an emerging technology that provides the means to achieve greater effectiveness in managing the road system. ITS provides real time information to operating agencies and motorists to help maintain reliable travel times and to respond to nonrecurring conditions. The US Department of Transportation offers several resources for learning about and integrating ITS in local transportation planning. The ITS Joint Program Office provides free training to all public sector agencies on all ITS-related topics from systems engineering to autonomous vehicles. Courses are available from introductory level to advanced through a variety of options including online sessions, live webinars, and in-person trainings. These and other initiatives from the Joint Program Office are ideal tools for helping the County and its municipalities integrate new technologies into the transportation system.

The County has identified key roadways for immediate implementation of ITS to help improve the overall transportation system. These priority corridors experience the highest daily traffic levels. Reducing congestion and improving traffic time along these routes will spread to other less-used roads over time. In addition to integrating new technologies like ITS into County systems, Westmoreland should work to prepare for emerging technologies like autonomous vehicles. Autonomous vehicles have the potential to impact many aspects of the built environment, including land use patterns, right of way width and usage, traffic management, and other related infrastructure. Identifying and implementing new technologies like ITS and proactively planning for emerging technologies like autonomous vehicles is critical for Westmoreland to adapt and thrive in the modern age.

**Desired Result.** Westmoreland has enhanced and streamlined planning efforts by thoughtfully integrating emerging technologies into systems throughout the County.



### CASE STUDY: STATE OF MICHIGAN

Roughly 40,000 Americans die each year from car accidents, 95 percent of which are because of human error. The City of Detroit, Michigan DOT, and Planet M have been working rigorously to develop vehicle-to-infrastructure (V2I) technology that will allow signals, signs, and pavement markings to alert vehicles of potential operating risks. This would not only decrease accidents but would also alleviate congestion. The 2018 Michigan Council on Future Mobility Annual Report announced Michigan as the leader in Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) as it has been making major progress in engineering traffic technology that could save many lives.

STRATEGY 6.2  
**ACTIONS**

**INCORPORATE TECHNOLOGY**

Ensure the continued and proactive review of existing and emerging technologies and communicate their potential use and impact to local municipalities, land use, and the economy. Examples include: autonomous vehicles, the online economy, and the internet of things.

**Program.** Incorporate adaptive technology into the County’s transportation control system to reduce congestion, maximize traffic flow, support the movement of goods and commerce, increase access to job opportunities for commuters, and create the safest possible road system. (\$\$\$,000)

**Program.** Use adaptive technology to reduce or eliminate the need for expensive capital improvements to County road systems, an increasingly important factor as resources become ever more competitive. (\$\$\$,000)

Priority corridors include:

- » US Route 119 (Youngwood),
- » US Route 30 (North Huntingdon to Allegheny County line),
- » PA Route 201 (Rostraver),
- » US Route 30 (Hempfield and Jeannette), US Route 30 (Hempfield from Westmoreland Mall to Mountain View in Unity), and
- » PA Route 366 (Tarentum Bridge to Parnassus).

**PREPARE FOR AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES**

Monitor autonomous-vehicle technology to determine appropriate applications in Westmoreland County as well as a timeframe to implement it into the transportation system.

**Program.** Explore the potential for public-private-partnerships that would help the market shift from privately owned automobiles to a predominantly shared use, electric vehicle model. (\$,0)

**Policy.** Incorporate autonomous vehicles into Complete Streets policies to address the impacts of curbside pickup and drop-off on other modes of transportation. (\$,0)

**Program.** Promote cooperation among municipalities throughout the County and region to develop a regional autonomous vehicle strategy that works to coordinate infrastructure changes, regulations, pricing, and other policy mechanisms; as well as address effects on regional land use and employment patterns. (\$,00)



Waymo, arcpaper.com

## STRATEGY 6.3

# INVEST IN INDUSTRY 4.0

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The linking of technologies through digitization is ushering in a new era in industrialization. Increasingly identified as Industry 4.0, this next industrial revolution, or “innovation revolution,” is being built on advances in technologies such as robotics, artificial intelligence, 3D printing and augmented/virtual reality. However, it is the connectivity of billions of pieces of data these technologies produce that is the backbone of the digital world. Interconnectivity of devices, factories, cars, people, and much more is producing a world in which assessment and prediction, on demand and additive manufacturing, and innovation are creating efficiencies and developing markets at an amazing pace. The internet is the new global highway linking cities, businesses, industries, and citizens to markets, customers, products, and services. Cities such as Pittsburgh are rebuilding themselves as destinations on this roadway. However, smaller cities and rural areas have not been as fortunate.

Westmoreland has the opportunity to become a model for how a rural and small urban area county can take advantage of the digital age. By developing the innovative mindset and skills in its workforce, building broadband capacity across its borders, enhancing the ability of existing companies to participate in Industry 4.0, and developing the assets that attract startups, entrepreneurs, and advanced manufacturing companies, Westmoreland can be a leading Industry 4.0 county. In many ways Westmoreland has numerous advantages. Many areas are not mired in existing digital infrastructure and can explore various and innovative ways to provide broadband service. Its school districts have been working together on developing innovation and creativity in learning. It has many of the ingredients that have been shown to be keys to successful transformation in larger cities such as universities, engineering and technology expertise in its companies which has led to innovation, a strong base in manufacturing, and leaders across the County that are visionary and engaged.

**Desired Result.** Through an industry and university led partnership, smart towns across the County provide existing residents, industries, and businesses access to technology, bandwidth, skills, and support to participate and compete effectively in the digital age.





# ACTIONS

## BUILD A WORKFORCE FOR THE FUTURE

Through a strong industry and university led partnership, align student skills with the changing needs of business and industry to provide Westmoreland with the best prepared and sophisticated workforce for the digital age.

**Program.** Refine and test the Industry 4.0 skill sets and knowledge base identified by Penn State New Kensington in partnership with industry leaders like Siemens and Arconic. (\$,00)

**Policy.** Align ABC Create and Westmoreland County Forum for Workforce Development initiatives and partner with other organizations to augment and enhance programs for regional impact. (\$,00)

**Program.** Conduct a gap analysis of current school offerings, curricula, and best practices and the additional skill sets required for the digital age. (\$,00)

**Program.** Use the Penn State New Kensington's Factory Simulator to enhance awareness and skill development in the K-12 environment. (\$,00)

**Policy.** Work with CMU's CREATE Lab to develop teaching and learning technologies that enhance Industry 4.0 skill sets and knowledge base. (\$,00)

## DEVELOP DIGITAL MAKERSPACES AND SMART CITY HUBS

Establish a state-of-the-art digital makerspace in New Kensington in partnership with PSNK to support small business enterprise and entrepreneurs with traditional machinery and equipment augmented with digital software and hardware to create the digital twins of products and support other digital age needs.

**Program.** Conduct an assessment of equipment, machinery, software and hardware requirements, and facility type and size for a makerspace based on existing County business enterprises. (\$,00)

**Program.** Initiate capital campaign and partnership to support the development of the digital makerspace. (\$,00)

**Project.** Develop real estate and facility requirements based on completed assessment, fundraising, and programming. (\$,00)

**Project.** Identify strategic areas with existing resources and/or the interest in investing in technology and broadband as well as "Smart City" technologies. (\$,0)

## EXPAND OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPORT INDUSTRY 4.0

Pursue expanded funding opportunities to support small business and the start-up environment in Westmoreland County as well as develop support for the Countywide efforts to bring rural and rust belt towns into the digital age.

**Program.** Develop a comprehensive communication, education, and outreach program to provide information and awareness to small businesses on Industry 4.0. (\$,00)

**Program.** Engage a grant writer to research and apply for federal, state, and foundation opportunities related to workforce, startups, and "Smart City" development. (\$\$,0)

**Program.** Identify and pursue early startup funding investors outside the County who might be interested in expanding access into the local startup market. (\$,00)

**Program.** Work with the Penn State LaunchBoxes as well as Pitt-Greensburg, St. Vincent, and Seton Hill entrepreneurial centers to develop pitch competitions to bring new companies into designated cities. (\$,0)

## STRATEGY 6.4

# EMBRACE HEMP

Between 2007 and 2012, Westmoreland's agricultural industry saw a steep decline in the market value of products sold (-17 percent) resulting in the closure or decline of farmland in production. Industrial hemp is a versatile agricultural plant which could be a valuable crop option for County farmers. Industrial hemp can be used in numerous applications such as hygiene, healthcare, home/office, geo-textile, construction, industrial, automotive and clothing products.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has taken some important steps toward making that a reality. Following the Governor's signing of the Industrial Hemp Research Act, Number 92 in 2016, the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture launched the Industrial Hemp Research Pilot Program for the 2017 growing season. Pennsylvania's industrial hemp legislation was sparked by the passage of the 2014 Farm Bill, which gave federal permission for institutions of higher education or state Departments of Agriculture to research the cultivation and marketing of industrial hemp. As part of Pennsylvania's Research Pilot Program, industrial hemp would once again be legally grown in the Commonwealth for the first time in 80 years. Interest regarding industrial hemp continues to increase across our national agricultural sector. Not only is the crop relatively easy to grow, but the increased consumer interest in sustainability and renewable resources suggests that potential markets can emerge from the oil and fiber products derived from hemp.

While there appears to be opportunity for industrial hemp cultivation and production in Pennsylvania and Westmoreland County, the industry in both the agricultural and production sectors, face legislative and regulatory challenges and difficulties in starting and establishing industrial supply chains, relationships, and end markets. Fortunately, there has been a renewed interest towards utilizing industrial hemp in the United States with Pennsylvania taking rather conservative steps to establish this agricultural commodity. Westmoreland County, with its relatively large agricultural (114,000 acres) and industrial sectors, is positioned well to be at the forefront of this budding economy. In order to position itself to take advantage of this opportunity, the County will take a proactive approach supporting growth of the industrial hemp market.

**Desired Result. Establish Westmoreland County as a leader in the industrial hemp cultivation and production sectors.**



### CASE STUDY: COLORADO HEMP INDUSTRY

*From 2016 to 2017, the number of acres licensed to cultivate hemp grew 140 percent nationwide while the number of hemp farmers doubled. The Colorado Department of Agriculture has taken an innovative approach to the hemp industry by undertaking a feasibility study of industrial hemp by-products as animal feed ingredients. Existing research has shown hempseed by-products to contain promising nutritional content, which the 2017 study is now in the process of proving. Already the producer of more than half the nation's hemp yield, Colorado is setting an example for the rest of the nation to take advantage of the booming market and expand its agricultural base through creative methods while the industry is still young.*

## STRATEGY 6.4 ACTIONS

### SEEK LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT

Garner legislative support for the growing of industrial hemp in Westmoreland County.

**Policy.** Advocate and lobby for passage of federal farm bill to include the de-scheduling of industrial hemp. (\$,000)

**Policy.** Advocate and encourage Pennsylvania's continued supportive interpretation of 2014 Federal Farm Bill and the expansion of permitted acreage for cultivation purposes. (\$,000)

### CULTIVATE LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS

Take advantage of local agencies, organizations, and private companies to foster and develop an industrial hemp industry.

**Policy.** Identify local banks and financial institutions to provide depository services for businesses in the industrial hemp market. (\$,000)

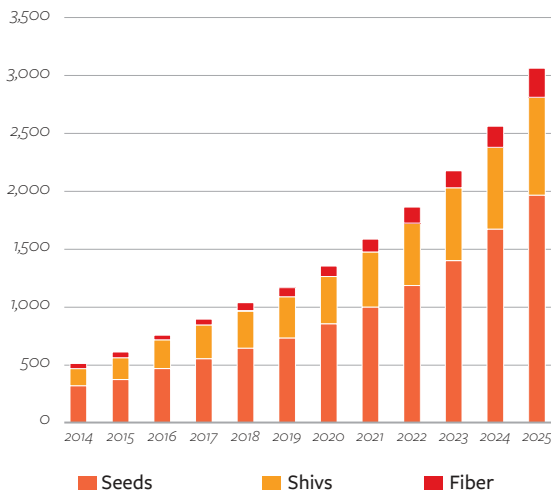
**Policy.** Identify and prioritize public funding to support the growth of cultivation and production activities locally. (\$,000)

**Program.** Organize and host events and provide resources focused on awareness and education on the regulations and opportunities surrounding industrial hemp. (\$,000)

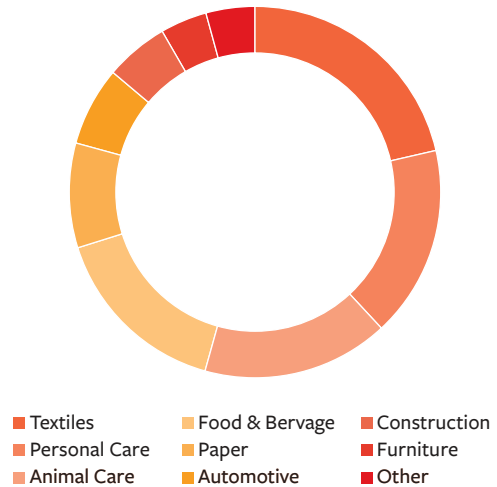
**Program.** Establish partnerships with agricultural organizations to develop collectives or co-ops to access capital for common use equipment and facilities. (\$,000)

**Program.** Assist and identify downstream markets and develop initiatives for manufacturers to access those markets. (\$,000)

**US INDUSTRIAL HEMP MARKET SIZE**  
BY PRODUCT (2014 TO 2025)



**GLOBAL INDUSTRIAL HEMP MARKET SHARE**  
BY APPLICATION, 2017 (%)





## CORE OBJECTIVE 7: CREATE TRANSPORTATION CHOICES

Transportation in Westmoreland is generally defined by the County's roadway network, particularly major traffic corridors like Interstate 70, Interstate 76, US Route 30, and US Route 22. Public transit within the County is limited and faces decreasing ridership. Many areas of Westmoreland are accessible exclusively by automobile, placing greater stress on existing infrastructure. Further, despite an opportune regional position and high demand from County residents, transit options to Pittsburgh and other major destinations are minimal.

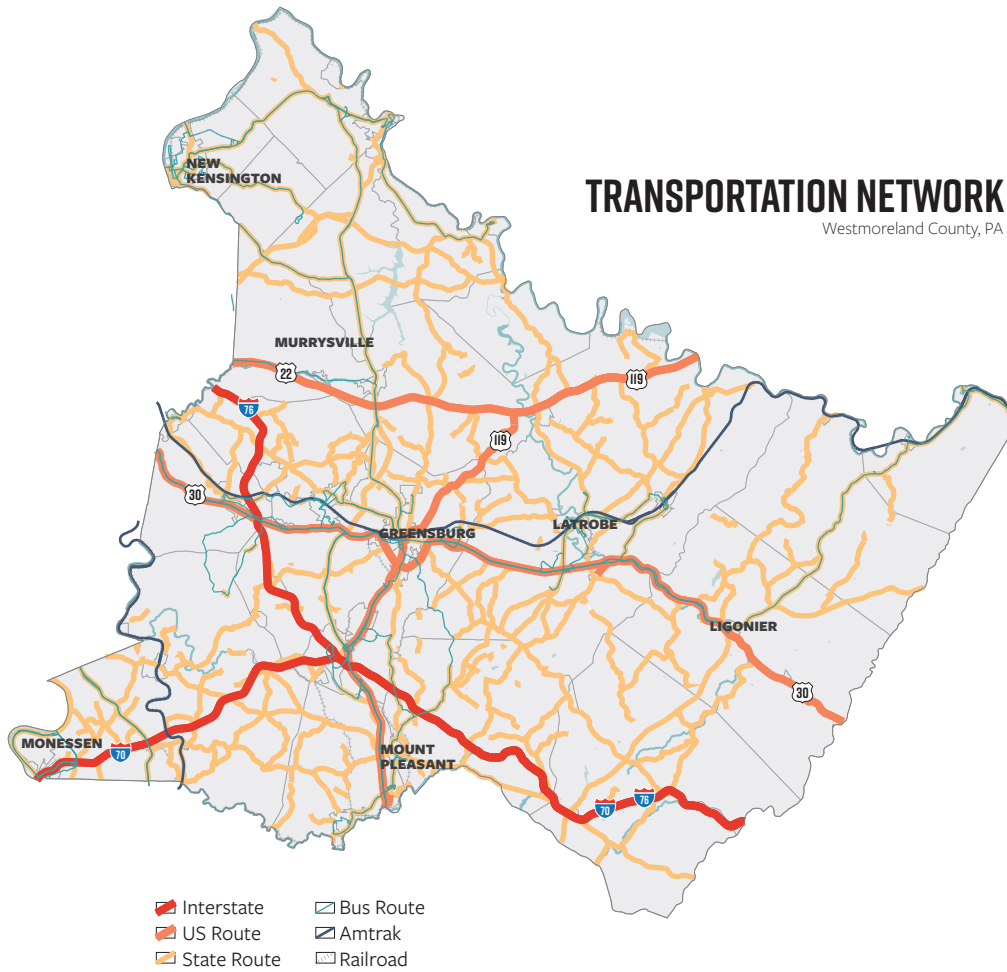
### STRATEGIES

The following strategies are intended to help implement the Core Objective. Each is accompanied by specific action steps that ensure the objective can be appropriately achieved and monitored throughout the life of the Plan.

1. Enhance Transit, Increase Ridership, & Promote Transit Oriented Development
2. Create Mobility Plans
3. Increase Walkability & Biking Options
4. Increase Flight Options
5. Improve Passenger Rail Service
6. Augment Ridesharing Options
7. Focus on Freight

## TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

Westmoreland County, PA



At the same time, recent innovations in information and communication technologies and artificial intelligence are starting to significantly impact transportation and travel infrastructure across the country. In addition, shared mobility—a collection of transportation services that are pooled among users, including public transit, taxis, bikesharing, ridesharing, ride-sourcing, shuttle services and commercial delivery services—is becoming an increasingly prominent aspect of everyday transportation and mobility systems.

In the future, connected vehicles and self-driven, autonomous vehicles will greatly influence how people travel, how transportation systems are upgraded, and how land use decisions are made. Traffic signals, street signs, and even lane striping may take very different forms due to the real-time communication capabilities among vehicles and between vehicles and roadway infrastructure.

The County's connections to the larger region, the rest of the country, and even the world must also be nurtured and enhanced to ensure that the local economy thrives in a future characterized by ever-increasing connectivity. Passenger rail service, freight rail, and commercial air travel must remain as viable options today and be enhanced in the coming years if Westmoreland County is to become an attractive option for new residents and a desirable location for business and industry.

To address the ever-changing nature of today's transportation landscape, the County must create new, high quality transportation choices that support mobility within the County and offer access to major regional and national destinations. This should include policies, programs, and projects to enhance the transportation network and bolster transit options and walkability. While emphasis should be placed on public transit, the County must also ensure the vitality and maintenance of existing roadway infrastructure, ensuring Westmoreland has a comprehensive and high quality transportation network. In addition, the County should prepare for an entirely new era in transportation. The County can be a regional and national leader in exploring partnership opportunities for potential pilot projects involving autonomous and connected vehicles, data sharing, and other related, applied-technology initiatives.

## STRATEGY 7.1

# ENHANCE TRANSIT, INCREASE RIDERSHIP, & PROMOTE TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

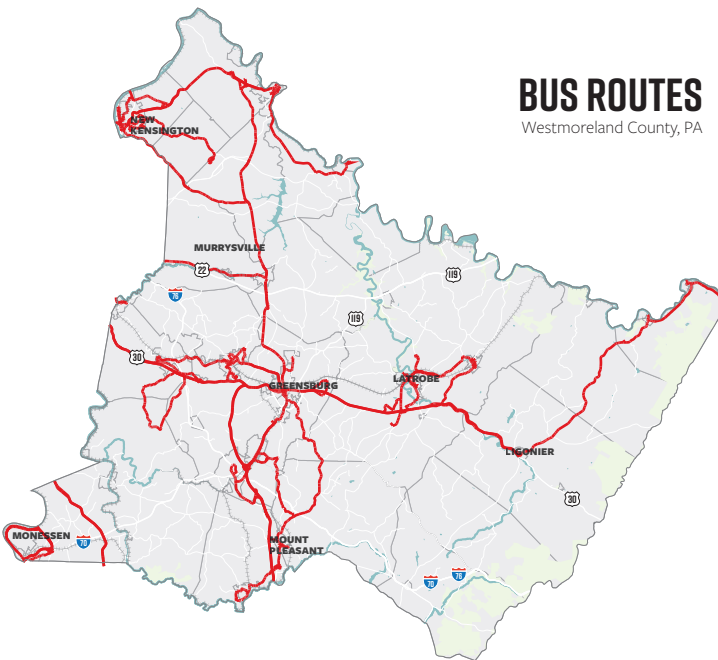
Transit oriented development (TOD) is a form of development that is dense and walkable, with most basic needs accessible by foot or bicycle, with businesses and other amenities clustered around a busy transportation node. TODs are typically compact, mixed-use activity areas that are centered around a transit station, bus stop, multimodal facility, or park-and-ride location, that by design encourage residents, workers, and shoppers to drive their cars less and utilize transit more. For local municipalities, TOD represents opportunities for more intensive development and less sprawl, resulting in reduced auto congestion, reduced air pollution, lower infrastructure costs, and vibrant and desirable neighborhoods.

Public transit could potentially be a primary mode of mobility for many Westmoreland County residents. By bolstering public transit services, individuals who are already transit dependent will have improved access to jobs, homes, schools, and other necessary services. The Westmoreland County Transit Authority, the primary agency for bus services in the County, has experienced declining ridership since 2014. High levels of ridership are critical to the maintenance and operation of the bus system. During community outreach, public transit was identified as one of the top three disadvantages to living in Westmoreland County by 30 percent of resident survey takers. Transit oriented development is one strategy that encourages the use of public transportation through the design, configuration, and mix of buildings and activities in areas surrounding transit stops. Main elements of TOD are: compact, mixed-use development; pedestrian-friendly design; and carefully designed parking and access management. A mix of housing options is another component of TOD. Through the cohesive development of single-family homes, townhomes, and apartments, TODs become compact and diverse communities that result in synergistic connections between new businesses and residents. TODs encourage increased ridership on existing transit routes and create an environment that encourage further development and investment.

**Desired Result. A public transit system that is accessible and convenient for choice and dependent riders alike, increasing connectivity to employment opportunities and creating environments for commercial expansion and a mix of housing options.**

### CASE STUDY: BENTON HARBOR, MI

*Benton Harbor, Michigan adopted its 2011 Master Plan which details its goals to improve local transit and mobility. The city has since set out to: connect transit routes with key destination points like shopping centers, increase ridership for all age groups, maintain an affordable fare, and improve access to jobs and schools. The city has also implemented pedestrian-friendly and bus-friendly designs. As a result, Benton Harbor has facilitated employment, trade, and TOD within its community.*



STRATEGY 7.1  
**ACTIONS**

**INCREASE RIDERSHIP**

Advocate for refined transit connection timings and adequate infrastructure and amenities to increase access to the bus system and bolster ridership.

**Program.** Identify tools to improve the access and usage of WCTA services, like online scheduling for GO Westmoreland paratransit. (\$,0)

**Project.** Work with WCTA to explore microtransit. (\$,00)

**Project.** Upgrade existing bus stops to provide passengers safe shelter from the elements while waiting for the bus. (\$\$,00)

**Project.** Provide connections from bus shelters to fronts of stores and services. (\$\$,00)

**Project.** Work with WCTA to modify and optimize routes to increase frequency and ensure connections to employment centers, key destinations, and within communities. (\$\$\$,000)

**Program.** Incorporate bicycle amenities and Wi-Fi in the transit system to help increase ridership. (\$\$,00)

**Program.** Review and implement a strategic park-and-ride system to provide access to employment centers. (\$\$\$,000)

**Policy.** Align land use practices to be transit supportive. (\$,00)

**IMPLEMENT TOD**

Concentrate development in neighborhood centers, town centers, and regional urban cores to connect them to nearby communities and employment hubs by public transit.

**Policy.** Encourage municipalities to take the necessary steps to allow and attract TOD. (\$,0)

**Program.** Convene and host a TOD working group with representatives from municipalities in the County, non-profit agencies, developers, and others to discuss and coordinate TOD initiatives. (\$,00)



firstgroup.com



brasco.com

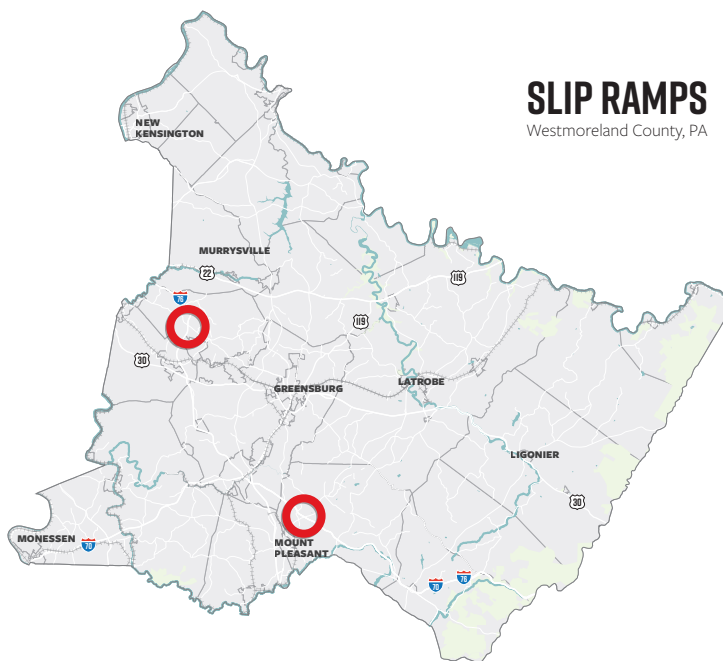
## STRATEGY 7.2

# CREATE MOBILITY PLANS

Transportation infrastructure is paramount to the mobility of people and goods throughout the County, connecting one municipality to another as well as Westmoreland to other regions. Westmoreland County has 3,675 linear miles of roadway, the most of which (1,185 miles) is under the jurisdiction of the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT). Just over 2,400 linear miles are spread across the jurisdictions of the 65 individual municipalities. This creates fragmentation within the system creating difficulty in the operation and upkeep of the entire system. Like many other counties in the United States, Westmoreland's transportation infrastructure is aging and in need of reinvestment. By upgrading the infrastructure through prudent investments, the County can improve connectivity, shorten commute times, and improve the safety of drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians. The improvement of the County's existing transportation infrastructure through focused, deliberate interventions will help to bolster economic development by eliminating barriers to access and connection. Interventions are identified through a strategic planning process that outlines and understands not only the existing mobility system but also the future system and by what processes it will be changing.

There are several tools, procedures, and resources for understanding and improving a community's transportation network such as Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS). ITS provides the means to achieve greater effectiveness in managing the road system. These approaches provide a substantial increase in the amount of real time information available to operating agencies and the motorist. Such information can be used to maintain reliable travel times and to respond to nonrecurring conditions. These operations automatically assemble real time information about transportation conditions including travel time on various roads and time schedules for public transit. Variable message signs are installed along most freeways providing motorists with important traffic condition information. This is particularly useful when incidents occur which may block roads. ITS technology also aids the operation of traffic signal systems. Creating a mobility plan will be critical to the County's ability to effectively manage its transportation system.

**Desired Result. A modern, connected, and safe infrastructure system that efficiently bridges municipalities throughout the County.**



**SLIP RAMPS**  
Westmoreland County, PA

### CASE STUDY: CROTHERSVILLE, IN

*Like many existing towns in the US, residents of Crothersville, Indiana rely primarily on the network of roads to get from place to place. One of its minor collectors, Bethany Road, proved to have overly steep side slopes, putting drivers at risks for severe accidents if the vehicle were to leave the roadway. With the goal to increase safety and improve the Bethany Road crossing, the 2013 Comprehensive Plan proposed the addition of guardrails to widen its width. It also envisioned sidewalks to the Town's car-oriented streets, encouraging walkability within the community. Both infrastructure improvements are conducive to enhancing the health, safety, and connectivity within the locality.*



STRATEGY 7.2

# ACTIONS

## MANAGE AND MAINTAIN INFRASTRUCTURE

Proactively update infrastructure.

**Policy.** Consider regional service consolidation, specifically for sewer and water. (\$,00)

**Project.** Create a digital twin of the County's infrastructure system by conducting a detailed inventory of all County assets to help monitor budgeting, maintenance, and upkeep. (\$\$,000)

**Project.** Through the use of new technology, conduct a lifecycle assessment of all infrastructure across the County to help plan and prioritize future reconstruction projects. (\$\$,00)

**Policy.** Encourage that aging infrastructure be replaced with modern and efficient materials and technologies to improve efficiencies and lower costs. (\$\$\$,000)

**Project.** Develop a comprehensive database of transportation infrastructure to identify maintenance needs and budgeting. (\$\$,00)

## PLAN FOR FUTURE INVESTMENT

Develop Countywide mobility plans that include analytical approaches to identifying the most critical investments that can be made to improve the function of the overall transportation system.

**Program.** Develop a local long range plan in coordination with SPC and PennDOT that systematically addresses asset management, congestion mitigation, safety improvements, mobility, and funding, through the Planning Districts process. (\$\$,0)

**Project.** Focus on finding an opportunity to develop new slip ramps at the Laurel Valley Transportation Improvement Project in Mount Pleasant Township, and Route 130/ Pennsylvania Turnpike in Penn Township. (\$,0)

**Program.** Identify strategic regional arterials for new or enhanced infrastructure. (\$,0)

**Project.** Implement Intelligent Transportation Signals (ITS) to coordinate signal timing along prioritized roads to reduce congestion. (\$\$\$,000)

## STRATEGY 7.3

# INCREASE WALKABILITY & BIKING OPTIONS

Safe, attractive, and convenient pedestrian infrastructure is an important transportation option to connect people to goods, services, and amenities in their own neighborhood as well as connect one neighborhood to another. A lack of sidewalks coupled with minimal pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure was a prominent issue noted by the Westmoreland community during the public outreach process. While most urban areas within the County include sidewalks, there are several areas that lack safe pedestrian access. These are generally newer, suburban-scaled commercial areas along corridors such as Route 22 through Murrysville and Route 30 in North Huntingdon, Hempfield, and Unity Townships. The non-motorized transportation infrastructure is disjointed in many communities across the County with few neighborhoods having sidewalks within, and even fewer having sidewalks and bike routes to connect to one another.

Access to an active transportation infrastructure system is also important to residents' health and wellness. Walking, running, and biking, are main sources of exercise for many residents, especially those in rural areas. Community health is directly correlated to the availability of public walking and biking routes. Key demographic groups like baby boomers and millennials are choosing to move to areas with high levels of walkability. To attract and retain these cohorts it is essential to expand pedestrian infrastructure to increase walkability and create enhanced opportunities for people to live, work, and play in their neighborhoods. This does not mean sidewalks along every road, but also other various forms of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure in appropriate areas to accommodate the need of current and future users.

**Desired Result.** People safely and conveniently walk throughout and between their neighborhoods to their homes, work, shopping, parks, schools, and other destinations.



### CASE STUDY: AMES, IA

*Ames, Iowa adopted the 2018 Lincoln Corridor Plan to bring improvements to the city's primary thoroughfare, including increased mobility and safety for pedestrians. Ames has been implementing features like defined crosswalks, pedestrian access to public entrances, curbed islands, intersection improvements, and enhanced signage. As a result, more people choose to walk to their destination and feel at ease doing so.*

STRATEGY 7.3  
**ACTIONS**

**IMPROVE SAFETY**

Ensure residents have safe walking and cycling infrastructure to schools, parks, and other amenities throughout Westmoreland.

**Project.** Work with various public and private entities to implement safe routes to parks and schools. (\$\$,000)

**Program.** Utilize funding available through the Safe Routes to School program to provide sidewalks and other infrastructure near schools within the County. (\$,000)

**Program.** Explore the funding available through the Safe Routes to Parks Action Framework to provide sidewalks and other infrastructure near key parks within the County. (\$,0)

**Program.** Establish an education program for all users (motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians alike) on transportation-safety methods and practices for navigation, interaction, and new infrastructure or features.(\$,0)

**INCREASE ACCESS**

Develop incremental programs for the improvement of deficient sidewalks and the construction of new infrastructure to ensure all pedestrians have equitable access to necessary services and key destinations in Westmoreland.

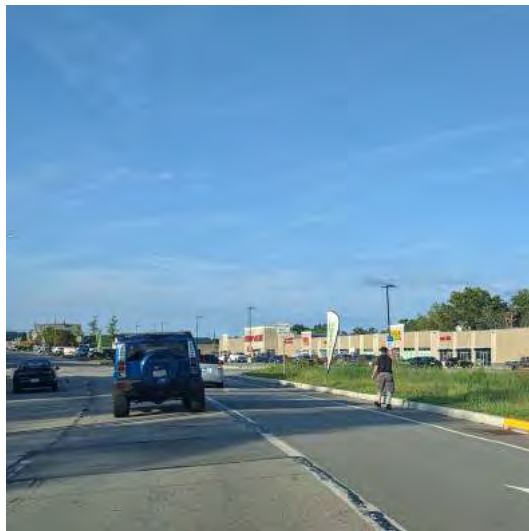
**Policy.** Work with local municipalities to create development regulations to provide a safe and well-connected pedestrian and bicycle network. (\$,0)

**Policy.** Assist municipalities to develop zoning ordinances that focus on the pedestrian scale. (\$,0)

**Project.** Identify key intersections to prioritize ADA accessible crossings to ensure schools and the County's parks are accessible to pedestrians. (\$,0)

**Project.** Work towards completing projects that create a comprehensive and connected pedestrian and bicycle system in the County to ensure that workers have safe and direct access between transit facilities and places of employment. (\$\$\$,000)

**Project.** Develop a sidewalk system or bike and trail network along key road corridors to provide safe access to commercial amenities, such as Route 30 in North Huntingdon, near Westmoreland Mall in Hempfield, and Route 22 in Murrysville. (\$\$\$,000)



## STRATEGY 7.4

# INCREASE FLIGHT OPTIONS

Arnold Palmer Regional Airport (APRA) provides passenger airline services to a limited number of key destinations around the United States. Commercial passenger service at APRA has risen from zero in 2009 to nearly 350,000 annually with Spirit Airlines, and has generated an economic impact of nearly \$200 million in 2016. This service almost exclusively supports the leisure market by accessing major vacation destinations in Florida and South Carolina. However, the frequency and variety of flight options offered by regional airports can play a critical role in attracting and retaining businesses and industries. Finding new direct flight options from APRA to Pittsburgh International Airport or other airport hubs is essential to successfully addressing the public's request to increase flight options for business and leisure travel. Connections to new airports such as Newark Liberty, Boston Logan, New York City's JFK and La Guardia, Washington Dulles, Charlotte Douglas, Detroit Fort Wayne, Chicago O'Hare, Atlanta Hartsfield, and/or areas with related or partnered economies, can expand Westmoreland County's access around the country and improve its prospects in courting new opportunities. Whether the County is successful at expanding service or attracting a new carrier, additional resources and improvements will be required to fully maximize the growth potential at APRA.

While expanding services at APRA is the primary objective, it is important to recognize that there are other or parallel options to consider. Pittsburgh International Airport (PIA) is western Pennsylvania's primary commercial airport with access to national and international markets. Unfortunately, PIA's location in the western portion of the region requires much of the County's residents and business users to travel through downtown Pittsburgh via the I-376 Parkway East. This less than ideal travel route is consistently impacted by congestion resulting in the uncertainty of time, often requiring 1-2 hours to access. Distance and lack of proper access limits the County's ability to attract new opportunities. Fortunately, a new highway system is being developed after decades of planning. The new PA Turnpike facility will provide a beltway of sorts and provide Westmoreland's residents and businesses improved access to PIA.

**Desired Result.** Arnold Palmer Regional Airport plays a critical, supporting role for the County's business community and makes Westmoreland an attractive place for residents, businesses, and industries to locate.



### CASE STUDY: MARION, IA

*The City of Marion, Iowa recently purchased a small, private airport with the goal of expanding and enhancing it to foster the development of the adjacent industrial and business parks. The City applied for and received grant funding from the Iowa Department of Transportation to hire a consultant to assist them in developing an airport layout plan (ALP). The ALP establishes detailed plans for the Marion Municipal Airport to reach an Airport Reference Code C-2 level of service which accommodates approach speeds of 121-140 knots and planes with a wing span of 49-78 feet. The ALP also includes plans for a new, cross winds runway which will allow the airport to better function despite wind or weather patterns.*

## STRATEGY 7.4 ACTIONS

### IMPROVE AIRPORT ACCESS

Continue to update the County's infrastructure to improve resident and business access to Arnold Palmer Regional Airport.

**Policy.** Through the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission, support the completion of the Mon-Fayette Expressway and Southern Beltway projects to reduce travel time and provide consistent access to the Pittsburgh International Airport and eliminate the need to navigate the congested routes through downtown Pittsburgh. (\$\$,000)

**Project.** Complete the Laurel Valley Transportation Improvement Project to provide APRA improved access to the highway system near New Stanton. (\$\$\$,000)

**Program.** Continue to monitor the development of personal drones and how new advancements may impact travel. (\$,0)

### PURSUE AIRPORT EXPANSION

Work with Arnold Palmer Regional Airport to increase its number of airline operators to improve national access to and from Westmoreland County.

**Program.** Identify and establish commuter flight options with the Pittsburgh International Airport to connect with a larger network of destinations. (\$,000)

**Policy.** Encourage Spirit Airlines to expand service to additional destinations focusing on hubs for potential business connections. (\$,000)

**Program.** Identify and secure new and expanded operating revenue sources to support expanded flight services. (\$,000)

**Program.** Complete an economic impact analysis periodically to accurately track and communicate the impact of air service locally. (\$\$,0)

**Policy.** Encourage and attract additional airline operator(s) to augment destination services, not relying on a single carrier. (\$,000)



## STRATEGY 7.5

# IMPROVE PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE

Passenger rail service is a transportation element that conveniently connects residents in suburban and rural communities to workforce centers and urban cores. Westmoreland County is over 1,000 square miles in area but has only one commuter rail line that runs once a day. The existing service line connects the County to major destinations like Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and New York. It is critical for Westmoreland's resident population as well as its workforce population. Many residents commute out of the County to Pittsburgh every day for work and just as frequently for leisure. Likewise, Pittsburgh residents (that choose to live in a more urban area) commute to Westmoreland for outdoor recreation and adventure. The passenger rail line is a simple, hassle-free mode of transportation and expanding that service would greatly impact the accessibility, character, and economy of Westmoreland County. However, there are many barriers to expanding passenger rail service, possibly the foremost of which is the lack of infrastructure.

A single rail line crosses the County and it is not used solely for passenger commutes. In fact, freight transportation comprises the majority use of railroads in Westmoreland County. Funding is another barrier to expanding rail service. A study was completed on the Keystone West Corridor from Harrisburg to Pittsburgh to address the issues on the track owned by Norfolk Southern. The study determined that significant improvements at high costs along the line were necessary to improve trip times. While expanding passenger rail service comes with many challenges, to attract and retain those residents who prefer suburban and rural lifestyles but work or recreate in neighborhood centers, town centers, and regional urban cores, the County must improve its service to these key destinations.

**Desired Result.** Residents throughout Westmoreland County are connected to employment centers and urban areas by a convenient alternative to single occupancy vehicles.



### CASE STUDY: ARDMORE, OK

Ardmore, Oklahoma first sprouted as a rail stop along the Santa Fe Railroad in the late 1800s. Over the next century, the rail service played a major role in the city's growth, economic prosperity, and accessibility. The City of Ardmore Comprehensive Plan focuses significantly on the railway and how to take full advantage of the asset. The city has been working to promote the availability of passenger rail service, improve signage, and enhance station design, which has promoted rail transit ridership throughout the community.

STRATEGY 7.5  
**ACTIONS**

**REVIEW PASSENGER RAIL**

Continually review the passenger rail system in Westmoreland for opportunities to expand this service to be more than twice a day.

**Policy.** Monitor and pursue opportunities to expand passenger rail services from Westmoreland County to Pittsburgh along the Allegheny River and through central Westmoreland County to connect the communities of Latrobe, Greensburg, Jeannette, and Irwin. (\$,◇)

**Program.** Coordinate with Amtrak to develop a plan, potentially increasing the frequency of the most utilized passenger rail lines. (\$,◇)

**Program.** Assist Amtrak in marketing the “Pennsylvanian” route and stops, including Greensburg, New York City, and Pittsburgh. (\$,◇◇)

**Program.** Partner with Western Pennsylvanians for Passenger Rail and the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership to advocate for increasing passenger rail service. (\$,◇)



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patch.com

## STRATEGY 7.6

# AUGMENT RIDESHARING OPTIONS

Ridesharing and bikesharing services expand transit options and users' overall access in an area. Services like Uber are currently operating in Westmoreland, however, at minimal capacity. As one full-time Uber driver told TribLive in February 2018, ridesharing service requests are increasing and there are not enough drivers to meet the demand. Rideshare services are being used to connect residents within the County and to popular destinations in Pittsburgh like PNC Park. In other communities, ridesharing services are even being used to complete last-mile connections. For example, Uber is testing a pilot program in Altamonte Springs, FL. It partnered with the City to subsidize rides within city limits, expanding ridesharing services. Altamonte Springs gave Uber a \$500,000 grant to subsidize 20 to 25 percent of a rider's cost within the City's limits. A rider receives a 20 percent discount if their trip begins and ends in Altamonte or a 25 percent discount if one of the two is the City's rail station. Similar partnership could be implemented in Westmoreland County to improve its overall transportation network. This places even greater weight on increasing the number of drivers in Westmoreland. Attracting and enhancing these and other services in Westmoreland County can help residents, businesses, and visitors move throughout the County and region.

Unlike ridesharing, bikesharing services have not yet arrived in Westmoreland County, despite being widely popular in surrounding communities. For example, Healthy Ride Pittsburgh announced plans to expand their bikesharing services to 175 stations and 700 bikes in 2018. Ample opportunity exists to capture the demand for bikesharing and to establish bikesharing opportunities at the County's many trails, parks, and urban centers and university campuses. Bikesharing provides alternative, environmentally friendly modes of transportation to residents and visitors. They are also another opportunity for exercise in Westmoreland County.

**Desired Result.** Westmoreland residents are connected to the region and throughout the County by dependable and easily accessible ridesharing and bikesharing services that are transit supportive.



denver.org

### BEST PRACTICE: PITTSBURGH, PA

Founded in 2015, Healthy Ride is a small 501(c)3 non-profit bike share system located in Pittsburgh. The system is at the frontier of ridesharing as it can be managed easily through a smartphone app, allows for temporary freestanding parking with cable lock, and gives riders unlimited 15 minutes trips when they use their Port Authority bus pass or ConnectCard. Bike sharing has proven to be an environmentally friendly, affordable, and enjoyable mode of transit, which through Health Ride, Pittsburgh has been able to implement throughout its neighborhoods.



## STRATEGY 7.6 ACTIONS

### IMPLEMENT BIKESHARING SERVICES

Analyze the County's capacity for bikesharing services and foster partnerships to help bring the services to those identified areas.

**Program.** Work with Healthy Ride Pittsburgh to expand their bikesharing services in Westmoreland's larger downtowns, university campuses, and at major trailheads. (\$\$,00)

**Policy.** Offer bikeshare companies exclusivity in the area for a predetermined number of years to eliminate competition. (\$,0)

**Project.** Work with local municipalities to identify appropriate locations for bikeshare stations. (\$,0)

### IMPROVE RIDESHARING SERVICES

Work with ridesharing companies to increase drivers in Westmoreland County and work with local municipalities to discuss the future impacts this service will have on their community.

**Program.** Partner with Uber and Lyft to encourage and promote driver signup in Westmoreland County to expand capacity. (\$,0)

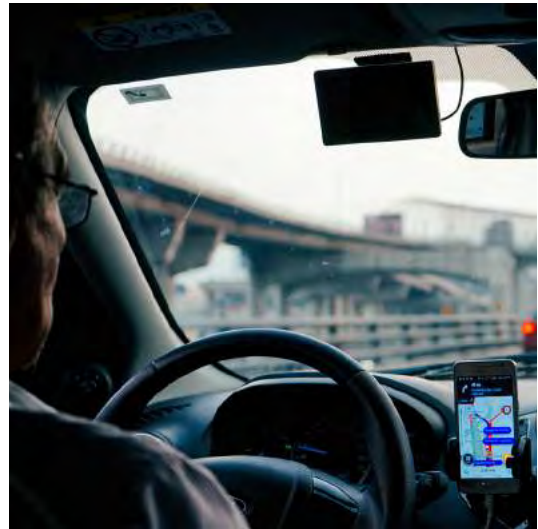
**Program.** Partner with Uber and Lyft for first and last mile connections. (\$,0)

**Policy.** Work with municipalities to adopt zoning ordinances that prioritize multiple transportation modes. (\$,0)

**Policy.** Communicate with communities about ridesharing's potential land use impacts. (\$,0)



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## STRATEGY 7.7

# FOCUS ON FREIGHT

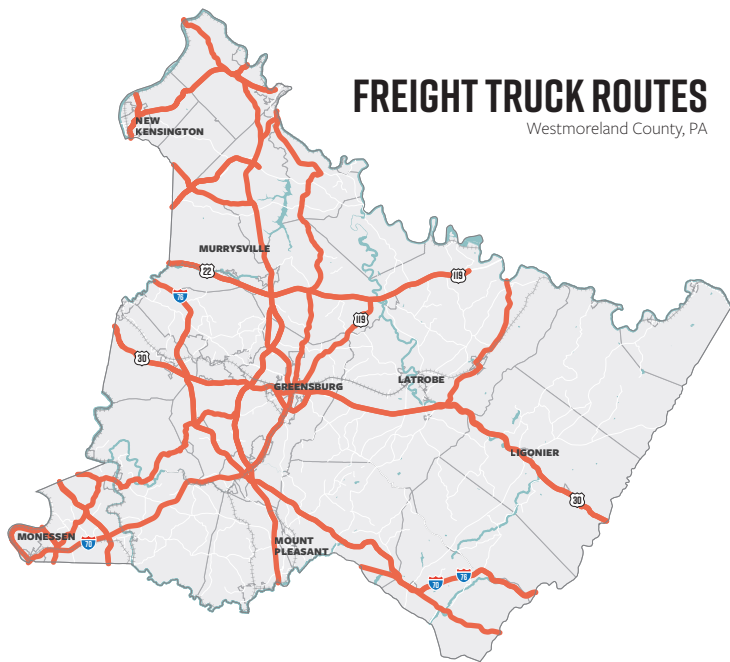
Freight services move key goods through and from the County by various modes of transportation. Compared to the other counties in the region in regards to freight, Westmoreland County is first in terms of geographic size and third in overall commodity tonnage movement. In 2014, 13.1 million tons of goods moved inbound and 13.8 outbound. This can be best attributed to the County's strong manufacturing and retail trade industries. In most cases, freight movement is noted by specific corridors, however, in Westmoreland it's better established among its prominent communities. This is due to key companies being located in or near those communities.

For the key companies that utilize freight and their corresponding connecting routes, annual average daily traffic count is roughly 742,000. Freight traffic accounts for about 10.3 percent (76,161) of the total. New Stanton has the largest amount of freight-truck traffic for both average daily freight-truck count (9,794) and as a percentage of the total average daily count (25.6 percent). This is due to the four major roadways that intersect the borough: I-70, I-76, US 119, and PA 66. The rest of the routes around the key communities average between 1,000 and 4,000 freight trucks daily.

About 13 percent (463 miles) of Westmoreland County's roadway system has weight-restricted access, which causes delays via detour during the transportation process and increases costs. This includes Route 130, Route 259, and Route 381. The County has 85 bridges with weight restrictions as well. Height restrictions also exist under 13 bridges, five highway and eight railroad. In terms of congestion, arterial streets in urban areas experience the greatest delays. These include US 30 in North Huntingdon, US 119 in Greensburg, PA 56 in Vandergrift, and a section of PA 217 through Derry and Blairsville.

Westmoreland's existing freight system is centered on its transportation system, including its interstate connections and interchanges, and railroads that help make the County one of the strongest manufacturing bases within the region. Over the next 10 years, freight movement is projected to increase by 40 percent. As a key economic generator, improving the efficiency of the freight system would improve the County's appeal to transportation and manufacturing, which in turn would bolster the economy. Focusing on freight will help Westmoreland continue its economic success and potentially spur new points of growth.

**Desired Result.** Westmoreland's comprehensive freight system has attracted transportation and manufacturing focused industries to locate in the County.



### CASE STUDY: ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN RAILROADS

*In June 2018, the Association of American Railroads released a study on the environmental benefits of moving freight by rail. Data showed that rail transportation decreases highway gridlock, lowers greenhouse gas emissions by 75 percent, and reduces emissions of nitrogen oxides and particle pollution. Freight trains are also four times more fuel efficient than trucks, and a single freight train can replace several hundred. Following the report's results, if railroad infrastructure were to be invested into at a County level, manufacturing shipment could become far more efficient and boost the regional economy.*

## STRATEGY 7.7 ACTIONS

### ENHANCE FREIGHT

Utilize the County's strategic advantages and upgrade and strengthen the freight system.

**Program.** Conduct a study to identify the County's competitive position of freight rail transportation in the region by assessing capacity, predictability, and eco-friendliness of current freight options. (\$\$,0)

**Program.** Prioritize areas for additional freight transportation options such as rail, barge, and truck. (\$,0)

**Program.** Prioritize the development of freight infrastructure and facilities to help support the economic goals of the County by leveraging its location in the region. (\$\$,00)

**Policy.** Align local land use plans to support existing freight infrastructure. (\$,0)

### IMPROVE INFRASTRUCTURE

Support the renovation and rehabilitation of infrastructure that is critical to the movement of freight throughout the County.

**Policy.** Prioritize and support the Port of Pittsburgh's lock and dam system. (\$,0)

**Program.** Partner with regional organizations and private businesses to advocate for funding, maintenance, and improvements for the region's lock and dam system. (\$,0)

**Project.** Complete the Laurel Valley Transportation Improvement Project. (\$\$\$,000)

**Policy.** Support the completion and modernization of Interstate 70 and the Pennsylvania Turnpike. (\$\$\$,000)





# CONCLUSION

Throughout this Plan, we have examined the circumstances facing the County and offer specific objectives, strategies, and actions to address them. Transparency and engagement with the community have been of the utmost importance during the process. Because of that, we owe substantial thanks to the thousands of everyday citizens and leaders who participated in lengthy meetings, have shared the Plan with their neighbors and friends, and completed exhaustive surveys.

The vision for the County presented in this Plan is ultimately an attempt to mobilize our communities, agencies, businesses, schools, and non-profits for action to address the challenges we face. These are regional issues that deserve regional solutions. At times, we may disagree with one another about the methods and investments by which we implement this Plan, but this vision of our County is indelibly marked by the hands of our citizens. And therefore, deserves continued work to accomplish it.

*Special thanks are due to all those involved in the County's 2005 Comprehensive Plan for showing strong leadership and developing the initial strategy and guide for the County's future.*

As this work continues, we must also be mindful of the fact that this Plan could not address every single issue. Despite its being called a comprehensive plan, no single plan can answer each question. In fact, this Plan accepts that there is an array of issues that evade even the best of intentions. The seven core objectives and their associated strategies and actions weave together to create a fine mesh of community supportive ideas. And yet, even the smallest issue may find a way through.

The world is increasingly changing. Opportunities and challenges may arise over the next 10 years that will deserve our recognition and response. Partnerships cast by this Plan, as well as new partnerships will be positioned to embrace those opportunities and elevate Westmoreland further.

Before us is an opportunity to take advantage of the energy that this Plan has generated across the County. The momentum is already starting to turn talk and research into action and results. Today, we celebrate our community and the completion of this Plan. Please join us now and tomorrow, in Remaking Our Westmoreland.

Our most sincere thanks are due to those listed who offered their guidance, time, and facilities to support the creation of the Plan. Our apologies in advance if a key individual or agency was left off of the list.

Alan Blahovec	Dr. Mark Rubino	Lori Latta	Senator Don White
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Andy Walz	Excelsa Health	Martha Frech	Seward Volunteer Fire Company
Ann Nemanic	First Energy Foundation	Mary Finger	Sidney Beehler
April Kopas	Four Seasons Brewing Company	Mary Moximchalk	Smart Growth Partnership of Westmoreland County
Barb Ciampini	Gabe Monzo	Melanie Harrington	Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission
Betsy Aiken	George Shaner	Michael Washowich	Steve Gifford
Bill Doney	Greater Latrobe-Laurel Valley Chamber of Commerce	Mike Langer	Tay Waltenbaugh
Bill Mohler	Greensburg Hempfield Area Library	Mike Turley	Terri Knupp
Bob Brooks	Greg McCloskey	Mimi Brooker	Terry Carcella
Bob Starzynski	Greg Phillips	Mon Valley Alliance	Terry Daughenbaugh
Brad Roth	Greg Primm	Mountain Laurel Chamber of Commerce	Tim Philips
Brian Anderson	Holiday Inn Express - Donegal	Municipality of Murrysville	Tina Mechling
Bruce Corna	Jake Silvis	Murrysville Economic and Community Development Corporation	Tom Ceraso
Caleb Crousey	James Kunkel	Norman Hipps	Tom McKee
Carlotta Paige	Jamie Protin	PA Department of Community and Economic Development	Tom Tallerico
Carly Dobbins-Bucklad	Jane Menchyk	Palace Theatre	Trafford Borough
Carnegie Mellon University	Jarod Trunzo	Patrick Shattuck	United Way of Southwestern PA
Casino Theatre	Jeff Landy	Patty Horvatich	University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg
Chad Amond	Jeni Cooper	Paul Konieczny	West Overton Museum
Chris Bova	Jennifer Miele	Penn State New Kensington	Westmoreland Community Action
Chris Whitlatch	Jessica Hickey	Penn Township	Westmoreland Conservation District
Christina Jansure	Jessica Jewart	Phil Koch	Westmoreland County Chamber of Commerce
Chuck Duritsa	Jill Cooper	Pittsburgh Tribune Review	Westmoreland County Community College
City of Greensburg	Jim Morrison	Ralph Liberatore	Westmoreland County Forum for Workforce Development
City of Monessen	Jim Smith	Regional Trail Corporation	Westmoreland County Historical Society
Comcast	Joe Szczur	Representative Eli Evankovich	Westmoreland County Housing Authority
Commissioner Charles Anderson	John Turack	Representative Eric Nelson	Westmoreland County Industrial Development Corporation
Commissioner Gina Cerilli	Judy O'Toole	Representative Frank Dermody	Westmoreland County Land Bank
Commissioner Ted Kopas	Kevin Jansma	Representative George Dunbar	Westmoreland County Transit Authority
Community Foundation of Westmoreland County	Knead Community Cafe	Representative Joseph Petrarca, Jr.	Westmoreland Cultural Trust
Corinne Coulson	Kristin Ecker	Representative Justin Walsh	Westmoreland Diversity Coalition
Dan Griffith	Lamp Theatre	Representative Mike Reese	Westmoreland Land Trust
Dave Totten	Larry Larese	Representative Ryan Warner	Westmoreland Library Network
David Kahley	Laura Fisher	Rob Ritson	Westmoreland Museum of American Art
David Reese	Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau	Ronald Bondo	Will Hoffman
Debra Mason	Leadership Westmoreland	Ronald Ott	Yellow Bridge Brewing
Denny Puko	Leann Chaney	Saint Vincent College	
Dirk Matson	Lee Frye	Saint Vincent SBDC	
Dr. Bill Kerr	Level Green Lions Club	Sam Reiman	
Dr. Bobbi Watt Geer	Lew Vilotti	Samantha Stephens	
Dr. Don Smith	Ligonier Borough	Scott Harshman	
Dr. Gary Quinlivan	Ligonier Valley Chamber of Commerce		
Dr. Kevin Snider			