

# CITY OF MEADVILLE: COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



One of the best tools available to a municipality to address its future, particularly in terms of redevelopment is the comprehensive plan. Municipal officials who institutionalize the use of a comprehensive plan in their decision making are more likely to achieve the desired goals and vision of the municipality. Smaller communities/cities like Meadville stand to gain a lot from the use of a comprehensive plan as they often have limited resources and a restricted tax base, thereby needing to plan more carefully.

A vision statement was created to guide the Comprehensive Plan process and provide City Council, boards, commissions and staff with a common understanding of the direction the City and its residents would like to move in for the years to come.

### CITY OF MEADVILLE VISION STATEMENT

In the year 2025, the City of Meadville will continue to be recognized for its integrity, productivity and prosperity; demonstrating how sound planning leads to a vibrant future.

**Integrity**...a City of municipal officials and community leaders who work closely with their citizens to ensure the highest quality of life in terms of municipal services, recreational opportunities, housing choices, and economic development.

**Productivity**... a City that is a County Seat, home to major employers and facilities such as Allegheny College and Meadville Medical Center and thriving industrial and business communities; making it the center of employment for the surrounding region.

**Prosperity**...a City of innovation which offers arts and culture, institutions of learning and higher education, active and passive parks and recreation, a flourishing downtown center, unique residential neighborhoods, and entrepreneurs and small business owners; creating a strong and welcoming sense of place for residents and visitors.

### HOW TO USE THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Meadville Comprehensive Plan Update should be used by the City Council, all community boards and organizations as well as Crawford County and state agencies when making decisions, providing grants or offering comments regarding growth, redevelopment and conservation.

**Community Development Objectives**—The Community Development Objectives were developed to provide guidance to the City to direct growth and redevelopment to appropriate areas of the City, to plan on a broader scope and to build partnerships in order to promote redevelopment and growth in an orderly manner. The eight (8) objectives served as a means for analyzing the City, identifying core assets, evaluating opportunities, and recognizing challenges. Using these as a baseline, recommendations were developed for each that built upon the assets, took advantage of opportunities and attempted to address the challenges.

**Implementing Priority Projects**—The Comprehensive Plan identifies specific projects and policies for implementation that will assist the City in achieving its vision and objectives. Public input as well as ease of implementation were taken into consideration when identifying high priority recommendations.

**Ordinance Updates**—The Comprehensive Plan should be used as a guide for future zoning and subdivision and land development ordinance revisions, which should be implemented following adoption of the plan. These regulations are the City's primary tool for managing the amount, character and intensity for future development and redevelopment.

**Review Development Plans**—Until all ordinance updates are complete that are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, Planning Commission members should use the Plan to evaluate proposed development plans and projects.

**Annual Plan Review and Updates**—The Meadville Comprehensive Plan Update will only be useful if it is implemented, evaluated and updated on a regular basis. The City's Planning Commission should prepare and submit an annual written report that summarizes their evaluation of the Comprehensive Plan, the past year's implementation activities, the upcoming planned implementation activities and crucial issues that may impact the community. If necessary, modifications should be made to ensure the Plan remains useful in terms of guiding development and redevelopment in Meadville.

### HIGH PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following pages outline the high priority recommendations for each of the Community Development Objectives.

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE #1: EXPAND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS  
BY SUPPORTING EXISTING BUSINESS AND INCREASING NEW BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES  
TO STRENGTHEN THE CITY'S TAX BASE**

**HIGH PRIORITY ACTION ITEM:** Provide incentives to the owners of identified vacant and underutilized sites to revitalize their properties

**Description:**

There are many properties and sites within Meadville that are either vacant or underutilized (Economic Investment Zones have been identified on **Map 4.1: Future Investment Areas**). These sites are located in the Central Business District as well as other locations throughout the City. Many times owners of these properties are unable to develop or redevelop them due to lack of resources, especially funding. The City could provide much needed assistance to willing property owners by directing them to technical assistance and funding partners.

The Redevelopment Authority offers a revolving loan fund, which could be used as a basis for jump starting this program. Currently the loan fund is not very large and is only used for a small number of projects. Additional funds could be sought through partnerships with local banks, large employers and other institutions within the City. For example, the Main Street Committee in the City of Washington, PA has successfully worked with local banks to develop a revolving loan fund for development within its downtown area.

Once the fund is developed applications could be sought through networking with local property owners to apply for this funding to rehabilitate or redevelop their property. Guidelines should be developed by the City and the Redevelopment Authority for the application that would give applicants clear direction in terms of the types of projects they could apply for, the length of the loan and any other stipulations in terms of job creation, etc.

Other guidance that the City could provide to interested property owners could include technical assistance. This could include directing property owners to City, County, State or other departments that could provide advice for developing their properties. An example could include Keystone C.O.R.E. Services, which is a subsidiary of the Pennsylvania Downtown Center and whose mission is to act as a redevelopment partner for the reclamation and rehabilitation of blighted and deteriorated properties in which the private sector has not reinvested or redeveloped in areas where they are invited to come in and partner with local redevelopment agencies.

**Responsible Party:** City of Meadville Redevelopment Authority

**Potential Partners:** Crawford County, Keystone C.O.R.E. Services, local banks and employers (for the revolving loan fund)

**Cost:** Staff time; Additional funding if the City participates in the revolving loan fund



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### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE #1: EXPAND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS BY SUPPORTING EXISTING BUSINESS AND INCREASING NEW BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES TO STRENGTHEN THE CITY'S TAX BASE

#### HIGH PRIORITY ACTION ITEM: Develop and coordinate a Main Street Model Program



#### **Description:**

Meadville has an active downtown with surrounding residential and institutional land uses (especially since it is home to Allegheny College, Meadville Medical Center and the County Seat of Crawford County). While the state program for Main Streets is no longer funding a Main Street manager, there are still resources available and the structure outlined is one that Meadville can use to strengthen and build upon its downtown core (Main Street District identified on **Map 4.1: Future Investment Areas**). The City should designate a Main Street committee made up of volunteers from the local business community and work with the Meadville Redevelopment Authority to assign a

staff person to oversee the activities (a staff person is necessary in order to receive funds from the state). The committee would meet monthly. Their focus areas could include:

- Develop a three dimensional marketing program with a theme for Downtown
  - Residents
    - \* Implement a Shop Meadville Program (ex. Shop Arlington - <http://shoparlington.org/>) or a cash mob ([www.cashmob.com](http://www.cashmob.com)) - encourage people to shop locally
  - College Students
    - \* Encourage businesses to offer discounts to students at Allegheny College on certain days
    - \* Partner with the College to submit articles in the College Newspaper/e-mail blast
    - \* Use social media (i.e. Twitter and / or Facebook) to market events
  - Visitors
    - \* Work with local business to create tourist packages
    - \* Promote downtown businesses/attractions at festivals/events in the region
- Encourage local businesses to participate in discount programs such as Groupon
- Hold monthly events—First Friday events, Arts Festival, Holiday events
- Network with other Main Street programs on how to plan successful events
- Regularly update the City's website and create brochures to include current information
- Construct kiosks at key locations that offer a map of downtown Meadville and local attractions
- Host downtown clean up days—Sponsor events along Main Street to reward volunteers
- Utilize vacant storefronts for displays to advertise local events, development opportunities, etc.
  - ⇒ (examples:<http://novacancyproject.wordpress.com>, [www.cudc.kent.edu](http://www.cudc.kent.edu))
- Implement a façade improvement program with Design Guidelines
- Develop a business retention strategy—Survey businesses annually to identify needs

**Responsible Party:** City of Meadville—City Manager should be the lead in identifying a staff person

**Potential Partners:** Local business community, Meadville Redevelopment Authority, Crawford County Convention and Visitors Bureau.

**Cost:** Staff time

**Potential Funding Sources:** PA DCED, Keystone Communities Program (<http://www.newpa.com/community/community-housing-and-development/keystone-communities>)

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE #2: REVITALIZE THE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT BY ADDRESSING AESTHETICS, PARKING AND VACANT/UNDERUTILIZED STRUCTURES**

**HIGH PRIORITY ACTION ITEM:** Revisit the Business District Action Plan to implement existing projects and update as necessary

**Description:**

In 2007 the City updated their Business District Action Plan (BDAP) which outlined a five year strategy to address priorities for revitalizing the central business district in Meadville (Main Street District identified on **Map 4.1: Future Investment Areas**). This is the fifth year of that plan, and while many of the recommendations / strategies have been implemented (discussed in Chapter 2), there are still some that should still be addressed such as:

- Developing gateways
- Reevaluating public space needs
- Wayfinding signage project
- Shared elevator feasibility project to facilitate second story development

The City should also begin the process of the next five year plan. It is imperative that they continue to prepare and implement these plans to keep the revitalization of the central business district at the forefront. The Main Street program (discussed in a previous action) could be integral in completing this update.

**Responsible Party:** City of Meadville—City Manager

**Potential Partners:** Main Street Community (if created)

**Cost:** \$20,000—\$25,000

**Potential Funding Sources:** PA Department of Community and Economic Development—Municipal Assistance Program (<http://www.newpa.com/find-and-apply-for-funding/funding-and-program-finder/municipal-assistance-program>)





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE #2: REVITALIZE THE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT BY ADDRESSING AESTHETICS, PARKING AND VACANT/UNDERUTILIZED STRUCTURES

#### HIGH PRIORITY ACTION ITEM: Continue efforts to enhance the Central Business District streetscape



#### **Description:**

Enhancing the aesthetics of the Central Business District (CBD) through streetscape improvement projects was a priority of the City's latest Business District Action Plan (BDAP), which was discussed previously. By enhancing and extending these improvements, the City will receive many benefits including improving the overall look and feel of the CBD as well as improving the walkability of the area. Through the planning process, many people voiced concerns over lack of parking in certain areas and / or the cost of parking in the CBD. By improving the streetscapes people may not be as reluctant to park in the fringe areas of downtown and walk to the various downtown destinations making the parking issue less important.

Efforts have been made on a development by development basis to complete these streetscape enhancements. This type of activity should be continued and incorporated into all new development or redevelopment projects in the CBD. The streetscape enhancements should include lighting, street furniture, sidewalk repairs, crosswalk improvements and plantings.

As noted in the BDAP, a comprehensive streetscape plan probably will not yield benefits to offset the costs, but these improvements can be made as new development and redevelopment occurs in the CBD (including road projects like the North Street project for example). While these projects will happen in phases, care should be taken to ensure that they are consistent with each other and the overall look and feel of the CBD. The City's Streetscape Committee should review all streetscape plans that are submitted with the development plans.

The City may also want to consider participating in the America in Bloom program. This is a national program designed to

promote beautification and community pride ([www.americainbloom.org](http://www.americainbloom.org)). There is a cost to participate (between \$750 and \$1,000). A local example of a community that participated in the program is North East, PA located outside of Erie.

**Responsible Party:** City of Meadville—Streetscape Committee

**Potential Partners:** Developers, PennDOT, County

**Cost:** Dependent on project

**Potential Funding Sources:** Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) - <http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/about/what-we-do/MAP-21/Map21.aspx>, Local Developers (as they develop property)

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE #3: PROVIDE A DIVERSE MIX OF HOUSING THAT APPEALS TO ALL RESIDENTS****HIGH PRIORITY ACTION ITEM:** Create a round table to discuss housing issues and potential opportunities**Description:**

As part of the Comprehensive Plan, a housing focus group was established. This focus group was made up of housing professionals, real estate agents, landlords, developers, and members from the banking community. During the focus group sessions, the attendees felt it was important for them to continue to meet to discuss issues that were facing residents (both current and potential, market as well as subsidized and home owner versus renters) and potential solutions. An initial topic of discussion should include the available programs (grants, loans, etc.) that are available to the City, County and the non-profit community that are not being fully explored at this time. During the Comprehensive Planning process, it was discussed that it has been several years since federal grants and programs have been explored by the City and County for housing assistance. Tapping these sources should be a priority to assist local home owners with needed upgrades to their homes, especially in the current economy when they may not be able to afford even basic improvements.

The list of focus group invitees should be used as a basis for a Housing Round Table which should continue to meet on a regular basis. The meetings should be held at least semi-annually or quarterly and should be hosted by the City. An annual report of this group should be submitted to City Council.

**Responsible Party:** City of Meadville—City Council**Potential Partners:** Round Table invitees (See Appendix A)**Cost:** Staff time**Potential Funding Sources:** N/A

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE #3: PROVIDE A DIVERSE MIX OF HOUSING THAT APPEALS TO ALL RESIDENTS

**HIGH PRIORITY ACTION ITEM:** Work with the College and Medical Center on their mortgage assistance programs



#### **Description:**

During the Comprehensive Plan process various stakeholders were consulted to get input into the plan. Meetings with Allegheny College as well as Meadville Medical Center revealed an interest in encouraging employees of their respective institutions to live in the City of Meadville.

The College indicated that they had a Mortgage Assistance Program already in the works and the Medical Center discussed their interest in participating in such a program. The particulars of the College's program are still being worked out, but it would basically be available to existing employees of the college. The program would provide down payment assistance (or other financial assistance) to the employee to purchase a home within a certain radius of the college (Elm Street Neighborhood—See **Map 4.1: Future Investment Areas**). Some additional benefits included in the program may include the college co-signing on a mortgage loan and forgiving half of the loan if the employee stays in the property for seven years as well as a guaranteed buy-back option by the College. This type of program would greatly enhance the housing stock around the College, which would benefit the College as well as the City.

While these programs would be led by the College and the Medical Center, the City can keep in contact with both entities to assist with finding available properties, helping new residents understand local ordinances or regulations, etc. If these programs become successful, the City may want to approach other large employers to determine if there is interest from others in participating in similar programs.

**Responsible Party:** City of Meadville—City Manager

**Potential Partners:** Allegheny College, Meadville Medical Center

**Cost:** Staff time

**Potential Funding Sources:** N/A



**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE #4: INCREASE REHABILITATION EFFORTS AND CODE ENFORCEMENT IN TARGETED RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS**

**HIGH PRIORITY ACTION ITEM:** Work with local developers to purchase homes in need of renovation or demolition

**Description:**

There are many residential properties within the City of Meadville that are in need of renovation or demolition. Often times, the property owners do not have the means to make the necessary repairs or refuse to do so. The Meadville Redevelopment Authority currently purchases homes when the opportunity arises and demolishes those that are beyond repair.

Demolitions are an expensive and lengthy process, however. By working with the City and possibly local developers the Redevelopment Authority can develop a prioritized list (which can be linked to a GIS map that can be easily updated) of properties that should be purchased (Housing Investment Zones have been identified on **Map 4.1: Future Investment Areas** as a starting point). This list can be further refined to determine which properties can be renovated and resold and which properties should be demolished. Prioritizing areas also provides the ability to revitalize whole neighborhoods and blocks rather than completing projects in a piecemeal fashion, which provides no real comprehensive benefit to the City. This does not mean that the Redevelopment Authority or the City should not demolish individual properties that are dangerous to the health or welfare to its residents on a case by case basis.

**Responsible Party:** City of Meadville Redevelopment Authority

**Potential Partners:** City of Meadville, local developers

**Cost:** Dependent on property

**Potential Funding Sources:** CDBG funds for demolition



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE #4: INCREASE REHABILITATION EFFORTS AND CODE ENFORCEMENT IN TARGETED RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS

#### HIGH PRIORITY ACTION ITEM: Establish a loan or grant program for home renovations



#### **Description:**

There are many property owners within the City of Meadville who would benefit from assistance with home renovations. There are several ways that the City could provide assistance. One way would be to work with local institutions and businesses to develop a revolving loan fund that could be accessed by employees of those institutions and businesses to complete home renovations. A list of guidelines should be developed that would outline the types of renovations that can be funded through the program along with an application form for interested property owners to complete. These guidelines could be made available online as well as through the participating institutions, businesses and the City. Local banks should also be approached to be partners in the fund.

Another option is for the City to partner with others such as the County to apply for state and federal funds to assist owners with upkeep of their property. These programs, such as HOME or the Homeowner Choice Programs (through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency respectively), can be distributed to low-income residents within the City for home rehabilitation efforts. In discussions held throughout the Comprehensive Plan process, it was noted that it has been several years since the County or City has applied for federal housing assistance. Identifying these programs and developing a plan for submitting applications should be on the agenda for the meetings that are recommended in the Action Item noted on page 4.12.

**Responsible Party:** City of Meadville Redevelopment Authority

**Potential Partners:** City of Meadville, Housing Coalition, Local businesses

**Cost:** Staff time

**Potential Funding Sources:** U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development—HOME program ([http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program\\_offices/comm\\_planning/affordablehousing/programs/home](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/comm_planning/affordablehousing/programs/home)), Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency—Homeownership Choice Programs (<http://www.phfa.org/hsgresources/hcp.aspx>)

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE #5: INCREASE COMMUNICATION WITH ENTITIES SUCH AS CRAWFORD COUNTY, ALLEGHENY COLLEGE, MEADVILLE MEDICAL CENTER, ADJACENT MUNICIPALITIES, LOCAL FOR-PROFITS AND OTHERS TO ESTABLISH MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL PARTNERSHIPS**

**HIGH PRIORITY ACTION ITEM:** Form a task force, comprised of City, County, major institutions and employers

**Description:**

In order for any comprehensive plan to be successful, significant capacity needs to exist for implementation. The City does have an excellent staff, council and planning commission, but they all have additional tasks that they must complete on a day to day basis. In order to provide some assistance with implementation, the City should appoint a task force of local individuals who will commit to guiding the plan's implementation. There are successful examples of this in other municipalities such as Lowell, MA, where they created a Task Force for implementation, Johnstown, PA created "Lift Johnstown ([www.lift-johnstown.com](http://www.lift-johnstown.com))" and more locally in Washington, PA where a Leadership Group was formed to help implement the recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan.

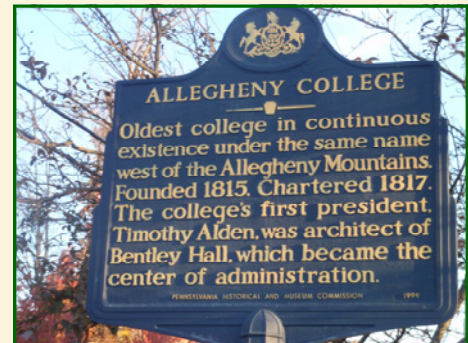
This group should be appointed by the Mayor or City Council and should include City Staff (preferably the Manager or Assistant Manager); Meadville Redevelopment Authority; leaders of local intuitions such as Allegheny College, Meadville Medical Center, Wesbury; Crawford County staff; Meadville Tribune; Crawford Central School District. The committee should meet regularly (once a month or once a quarter) and discuss items that need to be implemented in the Comprehensive Plan. Roles and responsibilities should be clearly defined for each of the committee members (a chair should be appointed) and everyone should be held accountable for their tasks. This will help greatly in the success of the Comprehensive Plan in the capacity building alone.

**Responsible Party:** City of Meadville—Mayor or Council

**Potential Partners:** Major institutions, businesses owners, Meadville Tribune, Crawford County, Crawford Central School District

**Cost:** Staff time

**Potential Funding Sources:** N/A





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### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE #5: INCREASE COMMUNICATION WITH ENTITIES SUCH AS CRAWFORD COUNTY, ALLEGHENY COLLEGE, MEADVILLE MEDICAL CENTER, ADJACENT MUNICIPALITIES, LOCAL FOR-PROFITS AND OTHERS TO ESTABLISH MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL PARTNERSHIPS

**HIGH PRIORITY ACTION ITEM:** Designate a staff person to meet regularly with Crawford County Planning staff to discuss issues specific to Meadville



#### **Description:**

The City of Meadville is the County seat of Crawford County and therefore is in a unique situation regarding partnership opportunities between the City and County. Due to the fact that County offices are located in the City and what each does greatly affects the other, regular meetings between the City Planning Commission and County Planning Staff should occur to discuss issues common to both. These meetings should occur on a monthly or quarterly basis and are especially timely since the City is adopting this Comprehensive Plan update and the County (as of the printing of this document) was in the process of updating their Comprehensive Plan as well.

A number of topics should be covered at these meetings, but items of particular importance at least in the near terms should include:

- Impacts of the gas industry on the County and how Meadville can position itself to take advantage of the benefits—the Marcellus Shale Coalition has a website (<http://www.marcellusonmainstreet.org>) that can help communities market themselves to this industry. There are benefits from serving workers (in terms of retail and services) as well as providing office space for the gas companies. Williamsport, PA is an example of a County Seat, with a main street, hotels, office space, etc. that has taken advantage of the oil and gas drilling happening elsewhere in the County.
- Revitalization of the Central Business District (and the relocation of City and County facilities)
- Central Crawford School District

**Responsible Party:** City of Meadville—Planning Commission

**Potential Partners:** Crawford County

**Cost:** Staff time

**Potential Funding Sources:** N/A



## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE #6: ENCOURAGE MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION NETWORK THAT INCORPORATES UPGRADES TO TRANSPORTATION ROUTES, PUBLIC TRANSIT OPTIONS AND PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE CONNECTIONS

### HIGH PRIORITY ACTION ITEM: Implement a sidewalk improvement plan

#### Description:

The City of Meadville is fortunate in that it has an extensive sidewalk network, which allows its residents, workers, and others to travel on foot throughout the City. Over time, however, the sidewalks have become worn and in need of repair. Property owners are responsible for the maintenance and repair of sidewalks in front of their property, but the City could put a plan in place for sidewalk improvements. This plan could include financial incentives, but in place of that (if funds are not available) the sidewalk network should be mapped to identify priority areas for replacements and missing connections (as the network is not fully complete). The plan should be comprised of three parts:

- *The Sidewalk Improvement Policy:* details the purpose, goals and requirements of the sidewalk improvement program. This policy also includes the criteria used to prioritize sidewalk projects.
  - \* Criteria can include: walking routes to schools, accident history, pedestrian traffic volume, connectivity, constructability, and condition of sidewalk
- *Sidewalk Improvement Program:* scores potential sidewalk projects based on the specific criteria listed in the Sidewalk Improvement Policy.
- *The Existing and Future Sidewalks Map:* shows where the city's potential sidewalk projects will fit with the existing sidewalks throughout the city.

The City could utilize an intern to map the conditions of the sidewalk network and identify problem areas. The City does have a sidewalk policy in place, however, enforcement is an issue. A sidewalk improvement plan could help identify key problem areas for the City to target enforcement.

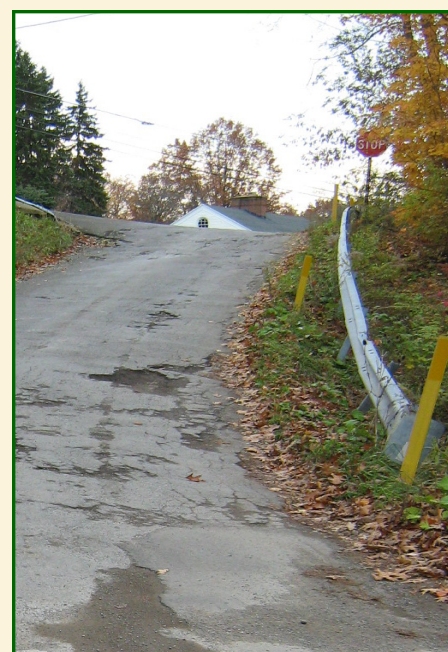
An additional item that could help with enforcement is allowing residents to log complaints online as well as providing a phone number on the website for people to call.

**Responsible Party:** City of Meadville—City Manager

**Potential Partners:** Public Works, Allegheny College—Environmental Studies Department

**Cost:** Staff time (if consultant is hired to assist, approximately \$10,000—\$15,000)

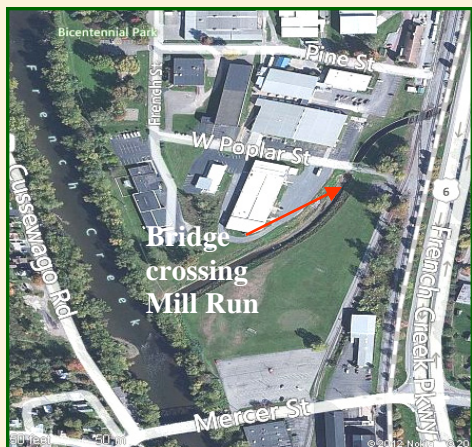
**Potential Funding Sources:** N/A



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### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE #6: ENCOURAGE MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION NETWORK THAT INCORPORATES UPGRADES TO TRANSPORTATION ROUTES, PUBLIC TRANSIT OPTIONS AND PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE CONNECTIONS

**HIGH PRIORITY ACTION ITEM:** Work with the French Creek Trails committee to bring the Ernst Trail into Meadville



#### **Description:**

Amenities such as trails, are huge assets anywhere, but especially in urban areas. Being able to provide walkability is so important. This is especially true in Meadville because of the existing natural amenities such as French Creek. Currently the Ernst Trail is located just outside of the City of Meadville, being able to connect into the trail would greatly benefit the City as well as trail users.

The French Creek Trails committee would like to bring the trail into the City and is currently working on plans to do so. The City should support this effort and assist the trail committee with whatever they may need. Meetings are being scheduled between the City and Seco Warwick Inc, the property owner that allows the City to use an easement on their property to get emergency vehicles over a bridge that crosses Mill Run on the western side of the French Creek Parkway, to extend that easement, which expires in January of 2013. The City would like the French Creek Trails committee to be a part of that meeting as well to determine if the easement across the bridge could be used by trail users.

Currently the conceptual plans are to bring the trail in to the City by crossing the Mercer Street Bridge and follow local roads into Bicentennial Park where a trail head could be constructed (See **Map 4.1: Future Investment Areas**). Once in the City, additional connections could be made to other attractions such as the Meadville Area Recreation Complex, Allegheny College, and the Central Business District, just to name a few.

**Responsible Party:** French Creek Trails Committee

**Potential Partners:** City of Meadville, Seco Warwick Inc.

**Cost:** Staff time

**Potential Funding Sources:** N/A



## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE #7: CREATE ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TO PROVIDE SOCIAL AND RECREATIONAL OPTIONS FOR RESIDENTS AND VISITORS

### HIGH PRIORITY ACTION ITEM: Develop a Comprehensive Recreation, Park, and Open Space Plan

#### Description:

There is an extensive network of park and recreation facilities within the City of Meadville (See **Map 4.1: Future Investment Areas**). These areas provide a great asset for those living, working and visiting the City. However, over time, lack of funding and other resources has caused a large number of the recreation facilities to fall into decline. Because the City has such a large number of facilities, the best way to catalogue the needs and prioritize the upgrades and projects, is to complete a Comprehensive Recreation, Park and Open Space Plan. The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources has funds in place to help communities create these plans, and then also has funds to help with the implementation projects.

By hiring a consultant (with a certified Park and Recreation Practitioner on the team) to complete this plan, the City will have a blueprint in place to begin tackling its recreation needs. This is especially important since the City will likely be losing HP Way Park due to the replacement of the reservoir and it has been a long time since a comprehensive look has been taken at the maintenance needs for a number of the parks, including Huidekoper Park. The plan will also look at facilities such as the Meadville Area Recreation Complex (MARC). MARC is a great asset for the City, and the region, but unfortunately funding shortages may force the facility to cease some of the operations if additional funds are not found. The plan can help identify potential partners for this facility as well. In addition to facilities, the plan will explore options for trail connections, program opportunities and areas appropriate for open space.

If the City can find willing participants from some of its neighboring communities to complete a multi-municipal recreation plan (which would make sense since a lot of the facilities, including MARC, are used on a regional basis), the application for funding assistance would be much stronger.

**Responsible Party:** City of Meadville—City Manager

**Potential Partners:** Adjacent municipalities

**Cost:** \$40,000-\$45,000 (could increase depending on number of municipalities participating)

**Potential Funding Sources:** Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources—Community Conservation Partnerships Program ([http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/ucmprd1/groups/public/documents/document/D\\_001230.pdf](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/ucmprd1/groups/public/documents/document/D_001230.pdf))



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### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE #7: CREATE ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TO PROVIDE SOCIAL AND RECREATIONAL OPTIONS FOR RESIDENTS AND VISITORS

#### HIGH PRIORITY ACTION ITEM: Create a parks maintenance plan



#### **Description:**

The City of Meadville needs to put in place a maintenance plan for the park facilities. A plan such as this is designed to eliminate major issues before they arise. The Comprehensive Recreation, Park and Open Space Plan, discussed previously will help define this, but in the interim the parks are in need of a long term maintenance plan. This formal plan will help to reduce liability risks and assist in the coordination of planning for recreation projects.

To prepare a successful maintenance plan, the City should complete the following tasks as recommended by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR):

- Involve all employees to get their support.
- Inventory the resources.
- Develop a standard for each resource, which is a short description of what the resource should look like when the maintenance is complete. Standards can include specifics such as grass cutting heights and frequency.
- List tasks to perform so that the resources are maintained up to standards. The tasks should be described in enough detail so that anyone would know how to perform them.
- Determine the amount of time it takes to do each task.
- Decide how often each task needs to be done. The frequency will determine the quality and cost of maintenance.
- Divide the tasks up to develop a schedule for each staff person. This will be adjusted in the future if the staff is increased.
- Implement and monitor the work schedules so adjustments can be made as needed. Have staff track how long it takes to complete each task and then monitor the quality.

Two other aspects of the maintenance plan involve a replacement schedule for equipment and proper record keeping. Regular inspections of equipment will maximize the efficiency and help prevent accidents and unwarranted breakdowns. Good record keeping practices will help to justify any budget requests.

**Responsible Party:** City of Meadville—City Manager, Public Works

**Potential Partners:** N/A

**Cost:** Staff Time

**Potential Funding Sources:** N/A



## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE #8: ENSURE ALL MUNICIPAL POLICIES AND ORDINANCES ARE CONSISTENT WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN VISION

**HIGH PRIORITY ACTION ITEM:** Update the Zoning Ordinance to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan's goals and objectives

### **Description:**

The City recently underwent amendments to its zoning ordinance and in large part the ordinance is consistent with the goals, objectives and vision of this Comprehensive Plan. However, there are a few minor tweaks that can be made to bring the ordinance into full consistency. The Zoning Ordinance refers to Community Development Objectives. These objectives should be updated to be consistent with the ones developed for the Comprehensive Plan which include:

- Expand economic development efforts by supporting existing businesses and increasing new business opportunities to strengthen the City's tax base.
- Revitalize the central business district by addressing aesthetics, parking and vacant/underutilized structures.
- Provide diverse mix of housing options that will appeal to all residents.
- Increase rehabilitation efforts and code enforcement in targeted residential neighborhoods.
- Ensure all municipal policies and ordinances are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan's vision.
- Increase communication with local and regional entities such as Crawford County, Allegheny College, Meadville Medical Center, surrounding municipalities and others to establish mutually beneficial partnerships.
- Encourage a multi-modal transportation network that incorporates upgrades to transportation routes, public transportation options and pedestrian and bicycle connections.
- Create additional opportunities to provide social and recreational options for residents and visitors.

The definitions in the Zoning Ordinance should be reviewed as well to ensure that they are consistent with the most recent amendments to the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code as well as include updated language from other state statutes such as the Fair Housing Act.

**Responsible Party:** City of Meadville—City Manager, Zoning Officer

**Potential Partners:** N/A

**Cost:** Staff time

**Potential Funding Sources:** N/A



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE #8: ENSURE ALL MUNICIPAL POLICIES AND ORDINANCES ARE CONSISTENT WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN VISION

**HIGH PRIORITY ACTION ITEM:** Update the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO) to meet state requirements



**Description:**

The City's existing SALDO is very old and outdated. It has not been significantly updated since its adoption in the 1960s. Therefore, a comprehensive re-write is needed to bring the document into compliance with state regulations. The City is fortunate in that a model SALDO was created as part of the multi-municipal comprehensive planning effort that Meadville was part of in 2007. This model ordinance should be used as a basis for a complete update to the City's SALDO. In addition to the model ordinance, the City can consult other organizations such as Growing Greener (<http://www.greenerprospects.com/PDFs/Growing%20Greener%20Version%202.pdf>) for model ordinance language for SALDOs especially in terms of conserving recreation land and open space.

**Responsible Party:** City of Meadville—City Manager, Zoning Officer

**Potential Partners:** City Council

**Cost:** Staff time (funding to hire a consultant or help offset the internal cost could be sought from DCED see below)

**Potential Funding Sources:** Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development—Municipal Assistance Program (<http://www.newpa.com/find-and-apply-for-funding/funding-and-program-finder/municipal-assistance-program>)

