



3.0 Analysis :

Public Involvement

Downtown Strategic Plan

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3.1 Creating a Vision

The City of Morgantown charged the consultant team with incorporating a broad-based, meaningful citizen participatory approach during the Downtown Strategic Plan update process. To accomplish this objective, several methods were incorporated during nine (9) workshops that included open public forums and Ad-Hoc Committee work sessions. These visioning exercises provided invaluable information in documenting real and perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) within the central business district and the transition areas connecting the downtown with adjacent neighborhoods.

The following comprehensive vision statement evolved from these exercises:

“Downtown Morgantown is a safe, vibrant, 24/7, four season destination that honors and promotes its history, character, and position along the Monongahela River. It is attractive for permanent residents, visitors, and students and provides a hub for the region, where all ages can live, shop, walk, work, and enjoy cultural, educational, and recreational opportunities.”

3.2 Process

The first strategic visioning work session with the Ad-Hoc Committee was held between the City, the Community Land Use and Economics Group, and Design Workshop. The consultant team identified:

- Initial expectations for the Plan update project;
- Critical success factors; and,
- Foundations for preliminary metrics including environmental, economic, community, place-making, etc. that were used to guide project outcomes.

The consultant team also conducted an initial round of meetings with key public and private stakeholders to identify opportunities and constraints affecting downtown Morgantown and issues that are relevant to the Strategic Plan update.

Over the next few months, the team developed an initial conceptual framework plan based on the outcome of project analyses and the initial strategic visioning work session and stakeholder interviews.

During the second visit, Design Workshop presented a conceptual framework plan to the Ad-Hoc Committee and the Planning Commission. Design Workshop also facilitated an open public forum in City Council Chambers to present the major opportunities that emerged from the market analysis. Public input was collected on ways these opportunities might best be reflected in downtown Morgantown’s future land uses, public spaces, transportation options, development projects, and event programming.



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The third visit by the consultant team provided for intensive working sessions with the Ad-Hoc Committee and several policy committees of Main Street Morgantown as well as a second open public forum. Community Land Use and Economics Group met with Main Street Morgantown's several committees. Main Street leaders were presented with the results of the intercept survey and market analysis and discussed organizational programming opportunities and suggested economic and business development strategies.

Design Workshop organized and facilitated an intensive two-day work session with the Ad-Hoc Committee in which they discussed downtown Morgantown's existing and contemplated development. At the beginning of the workshop, the consultant team outlined their current understanding of the major challenges and opportunities, particularly with regard to the built environment; multimodal transportation and pedestrian circulation; interfaces between the downtown and the University and between the downtown and adjacent neighborhoods; potential nodes or centers of activity; potential civic uses; and, other important community assets.

The team presented the results of the Committee's conceptual framework workshop during an open public forum at the Met Theater. Participants were invited to place dots or markers on conceptual framework diagrams where they thought more plan focus was needed relative to:

- Narrowing "Themes" that would be used to development a vision for the downtown.
- Preferred areas of higher density housing.
- Traffic congestion, pedestrian circulation and connectivity; empty or underutilized lots; blighted buildings, etc.
- Staples or essential goods and services including grocery, hardware, pharmacy, etc.
- Urban open public space including plazas, pocket parks, trail systems, etc.

Following the third visit, the team shaped design themes and policy and programming goals and objectives within the ten "Character Areas" that evolved from project analysis, Committee leadership, and public participation.

A final Ad-Hoc Committee working session was held again over a period of two days. The team presented work completed to date and an explanation of the "Character Areas". The Committee developed several community and economic development and place-making scenarios within each of the "Character Areas". This final working session, along with several follow-up conference calls, were invaluable as they enabled the team to enhance recommendations, reinforce the plan's holistic nature, and advance the project toward a final draft document.

Although the results of this public involvement process are integrated throughout this document, a comprehensive list of the data collected during the Ad-Hoc Committee and public input exercises are provided in the Appendices B and C of this report.



