



Town of Star City Comprehensive Plan



DRAFT



**Updated and Adopted
[Month] 2023**

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Acknowledgments

The Star City Comprehensive Plan Update is intended to be utilized by the entire community. By its very nature, a comprehensive plan should be inclusive, transparent, and holistic. It is necessary during the creation or an update of the comprehensive plan to involve all people, groups, and organizations. The process to update the Star City Comprehensive Plan has included several participants.

Involving the community early, often, and throughout the comprehensive planning process was an important consideration for Star City and kept the focus on providing opportunities to provide meaningful input into the comprehensive plan update draft.



The first opportunity for public participation occurred at an open house in September 2022, along with other local jurisdictions completing their comprehensive plan updates. The multi-jurisdictional open house was widely publicized and well attended. During the open house, Star City officials were able to interact with several citizens. The discussions at the open house provided Star City officials with direction developing recommendations for the comprehensive plan update.

The Town also created an online survey that was widely distributed. Hard copies of the online survey were available at the municipal building for individuals that did not have internet access. Many individuals completed the online survey and provided meaningful input regarding future goals and objectives.

Additionally, the planning commission developed personalized stakeholder surveys. The stakeholder surveys were sent out to individuals, businesses, organizations, and agencies who could provide unique insight and recommendations to better achieve future goals and objectives. Lastly, all planning commission meetings during the comprehensive plan update were open to the public in accordance with the West Virginia's Open Governmental Proceedings Act.

By law, the planning commission is tasked with preparing a comprehensive plan. The planning commission is a volunteer board made up of Star City residents. The commission has dedicated countless hours preparing the comprehensive plan update.

The Star City Planning Commission has been steadfast, efficient, and flexible in preparation of the town's comprehensive plan update. The commission has met most months over a sixteen (16) month period. The planning commission has gathered public comments, reviewed the existing comprehensive plan, and analyzed current conditions in Star City as part of the update process.

Town Council is the elected body that is responsible for approving the comprehensive plan and any subsequent updates. The town council is also responsible for appointing the planning commission. In large part the town council is responsible for implementation of the plan after it has been approved. Town Council sets policy and will finance or find grants to finance the implementation of recommendations set forth in comprehensive plans.

Star City Town Council

- Sharon Doyle, Mayor
- Steve Blinco, Recorder
- Lyn DeChristopher, Council Member
- Gregory Epps, Council Member
- Todd Gregg, Council Member
- Andy Laskody, Council Member
- Jim Morris, Council Member

Star City Planning Commission

- Barb Solly
- Sharon Doyle
- Cindy Ulrich
- Lana Simmons
- Gregory Epps
- Jennifer Hunt
- Jim Morris



Star City Staff

- Lea Hassler, Treasurer
- Bobby Doyle, Building Code Official
- Tim Stranko, Esq., Town Attorney
- Jessica Colebank, Police Chief
- Phillip Davis, Public Works Director

The town was assisted by the West Virginia University, College of Law, Land Use and Sustainable Development Law Clinic. The Land Use Law Clinic's mission is to "Provide legal and planning services to conserve land and water, support local land use planning, and offer educational opportunities for law students and citizens of West Virginia."ⁱ The Land Use Clinic provided technical assistance, helped facilitate meetings, and ensured that proper procedures were followed during the preparation of the Star City Comprehensive Plan Update.

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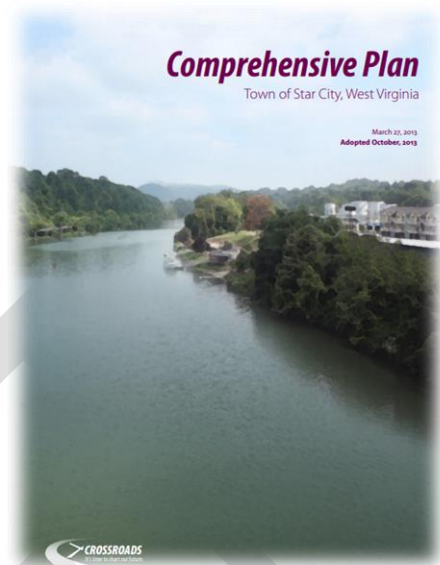
Chapter 1: The Star City Comprehensive Plan Update Process

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Summary

The town of Star City initially adopted a comprehensive plan in 2013. Prior to that, the town had never adopted a comprehensive plan. The comprehensive plan process in 2013 was part of a regional planning initiative, along with the City of Morgantown and the Morgantown Monongalia Metropolitan Planning Organization (MMMPO) entitled “Crossroads-It’s Time to Chart Our Future.” A regional vision was developed and there were numerous public participation opportunities as part of the regional comprehensive plan initiative. While Star City was involved in the regional planning initiative the comprehensive plan that was adopted by town officials was unique to Star City.



West Virginia Code requires that “after the adoption of a comprehensive plan by the governing body, the planning commission shall follow the comprehensive plan, and review the comprehensive plan and make updates at least every ten years.”ⁱⁱ Communities are encouraged to review and update their comprehensive plan as needed, including reviewing and updating more frequently than every ten (10) years.

In 2021, town officials determined that the comprehensive plan needed to be reviewed and updated, pursuant to the West Virginia Code. Town officials contracted with the West Virginia University, College of Law, Land Use and Sustainable Development Law Clinic (hereinafter “Land Use Law Clinic”) to complete a review of the existing plan and to update the plan. The retainer agreement between the Town and the Land Use Law Clinic was executed in December 2021 and work began on the review and update in the Spring 2022.

Plan Purpose

A comprehensive plan focuses on the future of a community. As the name implies, the plan is required to look at the community holistically. Required components include housing, land use, infrastructure, historic preservation, public services, recreation, and transportation all need to be discussed, reviewed, and analyzed.

The comprehensive plan identifies and prioritizes goals and objectives based off the community’s analysis of the issues. By memorializing the needs of a community and setting out a detailed list of recommendations, town officials are charting a course to ultimately achieve the overall vision of Star City.

The Chapter 4: Action Plan of the comprehensive plan update is particularly instructive as each recommendation is listed, the relative priority of the recommendations is assigned, who is responsible for completing the action item, any partners, costs associated with completing the action step, and possible

funding sources are all detailed in the Chapter 4: Acton Plan- Implementation Matrix. The level of specificity in the comprehensive plan charts a clear pathway to address the issues and concerns identified by the community.

This comprehensive plan update has been developed so that staff, elected officials, and residents can reference the plan when making day-to-day decisions. The plan should be considered “fluid” and “living” meaning that it should be integrated into daily operation of the town and as conditions and circumstances change the comprehensive plan should be amended to reflect those changes.

Legally, the purpose of the comprehensive plan is to provide a foundation for making future land use control decisions, including zoning or subdivision regulations decisions. A community’s land use controls must be consistent with the comprehensive plan. The plan provides guidance to staff, property owners, municipal boards, the planning commission, and the elected body. A land use decision such as a conditional use permit should be consistent with the comprehensive plan. Each zoning decision is based on the comprehensive plan, the specific language of the zoning ordinance, and the particular facts of each situation.

Review and Update Process

The town initiated the comprehensive plan review and update process by ensuring that all seats on the planning commission were filled. The Land Use Law Clinic then conducted educational sessions for town council and the planning commission. The training included a discussion of the powers and duties of the planning commission, the purpose of the comprehensive plan, and the process to complete a comprehensive plan update.

As part of the review process, the planning commission analyzed existing conditions and identified issues and concerns. Emphasis was placed on changing conditions observed in the time since the 2013 Comprehensive Plan was adopted. The planning commission also reviewed the recommendations from the existing comprehensive plan and identified recommendations that had been completed or that were no longer priorities. The basis of the review and update process was to analyze existing conditions and to update recommendations based on the changing priorities of the community.

The planning commission updated to town’s vision statement based on their analysis of existing conditions and input from the public via stakeholder surveys, online surveys, and the open house.

Town of Star City- Vision Statement

Star City is a diverse and sustainable community of choice for people to live, work, operate a business, and play, as a result of its safety, vibrant neighborhoods, businesses, educational and cultural opportunities, connectedness, and vitality.

The planning commission also created procedures for public input. The public input procedures outlined how town officials would solicit public involvement during the comprehensive plan review and update process. The planning commission exceeded the requirements set forth in the town's public input procedures and as articulated in the West Virginia Code.

As part of the review of existing conditions, the planning commission completed a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) exercise. The SWOT Exercise assisted the planning commission in starting to articulate the issues and concerns, as well as practical solutions.

Early in the comprehensive plan update process, the Town was invited to participate in a regional open house with several other local jurisdictions. The Open House was held on the WVU Campus in September 2022. Star City, along with Granville, Westover, Morgantown, and Monongalia County all participated in the event. The open house was well attended and provided a great venue for community members to learn about the Star City comprehensive plan update and to provide feedback.

The planning commission also identified community stakeholders to send individualized surveys. These surveys served multiple functions. The surveys provided notice to stakeholders that town officials were reviewing and updating the comprehensive plan.

The surveys also provided stakeholders with an opportunity to provide recommendations based on their observations and experiences.

Who are Stakeholders?

People, groups, organizations, or businesses that have interest or concern in the community.

To ensure that there were additional opportunities to provide input, an online survey was created. The link for the online survey was published in the Dominion Post and distributed through social media. The survey asked several questions regarding the conditions, issues, concerns related to Star City and asked survey participants to provide recommendations or ideas for town officials to consider. The online survey was open to anyone with a computer and physical copies of the survey were available to

Both the stakeholder surveys and the online survey results were reviewed and analyzed by the planning commission. Several ideas from the public were integrated into the comprehensive plan update. The planning commission also reviewed the recommendations of the 2013 Comprehensive Plan and updated the list of recommendations. Some of the original recommendations have been addressed, other recommendations are not relevant given the existing conditions in Star City. Through analysis of current conditions in Star City and reviewing public input the planning commission was able to develop updated recommendations.

The planning commission also produced existing and future land use maps. These maps serve different purposes. The existing land use map shows how land in Star

City is currently being utilized. The future land use map visualizes the desires of the community for future growth and development.

Once the planning commission had completed a draft of the comprehensive plan update, the commission set a date for a public hearing. The hearing is an opportunity for the public to provide comment on the comprehensive plan update. Written comment can be provided by citizens prior to the public hearing and will be considered at the public hearing.

After the public hearing, the planning commission voted to submit and recommend the comprehensive plan update to town council. Once the planning commission submitted the comprehensive plan update, town council reviewed the comprehensive plan and decided to take the draft to public hearing. After the public hearing, town council decided to adopt the comprehensive plan update, replacing the comprehensive plan that was adopted in 2013.

Chapter 2: Where we were, where we are, where we are going?

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As Star City looks to the future, the community must account for where it was and is now. To do that, we can look at its history, safety, land use, housing, transportation, infrastructure, public services, rural areas, recreation, economic development, community design, preferred development areas, renewal areas, historic preservation, and life in the community. This snapshot will inform the vision for the future of Star City.

History

Star City is a town located in Monongalia County, West Virginia. It is home to 1,779 residents. ⁱⁱⁱ

A suburb of Morgantown, Star City offers a variety of outdoor activities; locations to dine, shop, and socialize; and access to the Monongahela River, a popular spot for boating and fishing.

Star City was founded in 1907.⁴ Louis Kauffeld, the general manager of Star Glass Company, named the town.⁵ The glass industry was vital to the community. The community was home to Star Glass Company, the first lamp chimney producer in West Virginia.⁶ In 1911, Seneca Glass was established and added to the established glass industry in Star City.⁷ The success of the glass industry saw Star City receive an influx of many diverse groups that moved into the area looking for work, including many Polish and Slovak individuals.⁸



By the 1920s, coal mining had become a booming industry around Star City.⁹ Scott's Run Coal Mine, a local coal mining site, grew considerably and began employing many Star City residents.¹⁰ In the early years of the coal boom, miners would ferry across the nearby Monongahela River to commute to work since there were no nearby bridges.¹¹

In 1951, a signature sight in Star City was introduced—the Star City Bridge.¹² The miners no longer had to ferry to get across the river. The nearby communities, including Morgantown, quickly found the bridge essential to traveling throughout the community. By 1973, Interstate 79 reached Star City.¹³

The coal and glass industries that helped build the Star City of today have largely moved out of the community.¹⁴ Today, Davis-Lynch Glass is the only factory left.¹⁵ As Star City moves forward, the community values its riverfront access for recreation,

shopping, and socializing. Interstate 79 remains central to the community as a high-traffic route for visitors and residents of the Greater Morgantown community.

There are currently no federally designated historic structures or districts in Star City. No historic landmarks commission has been established in Star City. This does not mean there are not any historically significant places in Star City. Rather it means that there has not been formal designation of such places at the present time. There are several historical landmarks in Star City that have been identified by a private historical preservationist via a windshield survey in 2002 for the West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and can be found on the Office's online map viewer.



Population

Monongalia County has continued to see a rise in population particularly over the past two decades. Between 2010 and 2020, Monongalia County experienced a 10% gain in population.¹⁶ Star City receives the benefits from a growing county but has remained relatively small.

Star City decreased in population by 2.5% between the 2010 and 2020 Censuses.¹⁷ The community saw a decline in the total number from 1,825 to 1,779.¹⁸ Although Monongalia County lags slightly behind projections, the West Virginia College of Business and Economics data suggests that the overall growth trend should continue.¹⁹ The surge in young professionals in the area is projected to continue.²⁰ By the 2030 Census, forecasts call for Monongalia County's population to be around 120,000 people.²¹ Unless there is significant redevelopment or Star City annexes additional land, the population will likely not deviate too much over the next 10-15 years. According to the US Census, the town has a relatively high population density of 3,015 residents per square mile making it the fourth (4th) most dense community in West Virginia.²²

Median Age

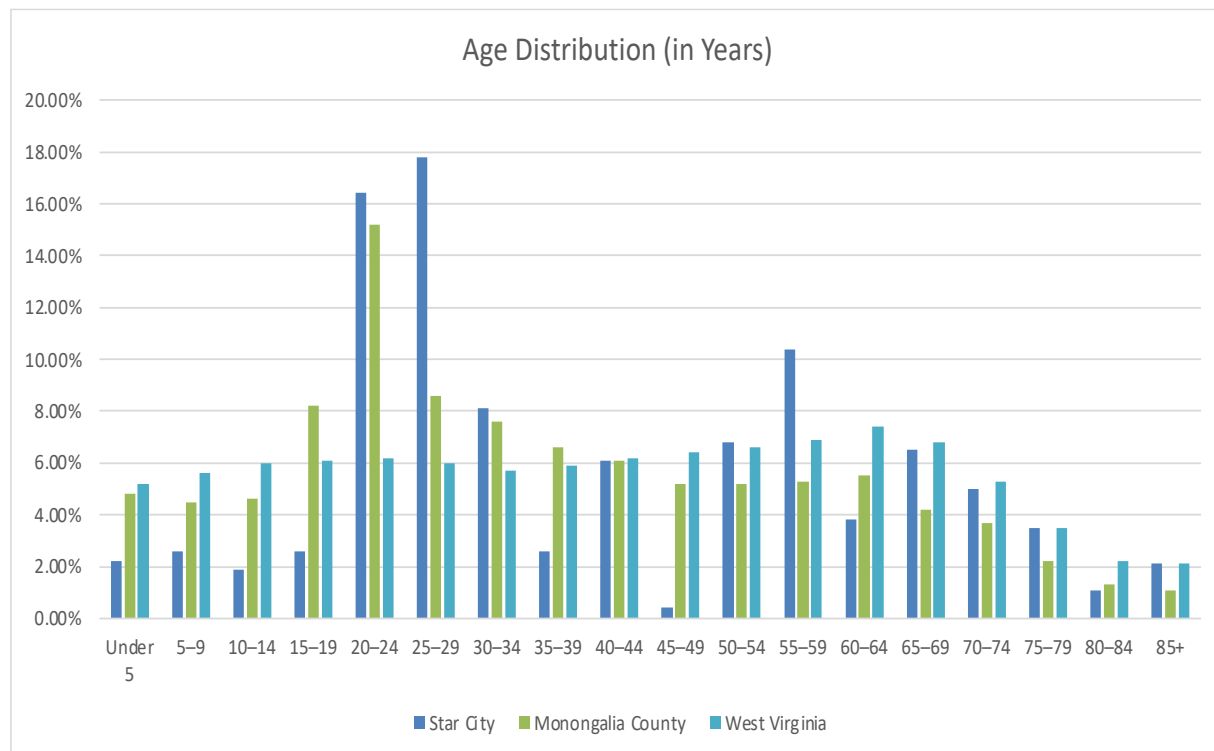
According to the 2021 Population Census Estimates, the median age of Star City residents is 34.2 years, slightly older than the Monongalia County median of 33.0.²³ A previous estimate had Star City's median age at 32.2, a two year decrease in

median age.²⁴ The entire area exhibits a substantially younger median age than West Virginia, which is 42.8.²⁵

These numbers reflect the college atmosphere of Monongalia County young professionals searching for opportunities in this growing community.

Age Distribution

Much like the median age, the age distribution can show “how old” or “how young” the community is. Age distribution can be crucial in planning and prioritizing recommendations in the comprehensive plan. For example, if a sizable portion of the population is nearing retirement age, recommendations addressing senior citizen concerns might be higher priority than a community where a significant portion of the population is in their 20s and 30s with families.



As shown in the above age distribution table, Star City and Monongalia County exhibit similar age distributions, in stark contrast to the general age distribution makeup in West Virginia. Star City and Monongalia County have substantially higher populations in the 20–24 year old demographic, at 16.4% and 15.2%, respectively, compared to the statewide distribution of 6.2%.²⁶ Star City also claims a strong representation of the 25–29 year old demographic, at 16.4%, compared to Monongalia County’s 8.6% and West Virginia’s 6%.²⁷ This population focus on younger adults is countered by Star City’s relative low distribution of middle-aged adults, with only 2.6% in 35–39, 6.1% in 40–44, and 0.4% in 45–49, where Monongalia County and the state of West Virginia are consistently around 6% for all of those demographic cohorts.²⁸

Race/Ethnicity

According to the 2020 Census Population Estimates, 79.9% of Star City citizens identify as "White," while 7.2% identify as "Black or African American," and 4.2% identify as "Asian."²⁹ In Monongalia County, 85.1% identify as "White," while 3.9% identify as "Black or African American," and 3.5% identify as "Asian."³⁰ In West Virginia, 89.8% identify as "White," while 3.7% identify as "Black or African American," and 0.8% identify as "Asian."³¹ Star City has a high proportion of Black or African American and Asian citizens compared to the county and the state of West Virginia. However, none of these jurisdictions exhibit high racial diversity compared to jurisdictions outside of West Virginia.

Governance

Police

A municipal police department provides law enforcement for Star City, the Star City Police Department. Also, the town is served by county law enforcement, the Monongalia County Sheriff, and the West Virginia State Police which has a detachment located in Morgantown near the Star City boundary.

Fire

The Star City Volunteer Fire Department provides primary fire and rescue services.³² The Department operates out of a single station located along University Avenue.³³ The department responds to approximately 1,000 calls per year.³⁴ The station houses two Class A pumpers, a Utility Pickup, and a quick response command vehicle, in addition to 11 volunteer firefighters, and one career/paid personnel.³⁵

Municipal Government

The town of Star City has a mayor-council form of government. The town government is composed of the mayor, a recorder, a town attorney, and five council members.³⁶ Government operations are subdivided into eight committees: Sanitation/Recycling Committee, Building Committee, Traffic Committee, Ordinance Committee, Finance Committee, Beautification/Farmer's Market Committee, Street/Paving Committee, and Personnel Committee.³⁷

Star City also has an office staff consisting of five (5) positions.³⁸ The office staff is the utility



clerk, finance clerk, treasurer, court clerk, and code enforcement officer.³⁹

From the West Virginia State Auditor—Local Government Services Division website, during F.Y. 2022–2023, Star City has an operating budget of 2.7 million dollars.⁴⁰ Some of the most significant expenditures include the Police Department (\$640,000), Storm/Sewer (\$291,727), and Garbage (\$270,000).⁴¹ The most significant revenues for Star City include, Business and Occupation Tax (\$500,000), Contributions from Other Funds (\$430,545), and Refuse Collection (\$338,000).⁴²

Transportation

Star City is a travel hub, with immediate access to Morgantown and serving as a gateway for I-79 traffic. Star City and the Star City Bridge are essential connectors for the community and the local area. Transportation access is an asset to the community as it makes Star City an attractive location to live and work.



Source: https://transportation.wv.gov/highways/bridge_facts/Modern-Bridges/Pages/StarCity.aspx

Interstate I-79, is oriented North-South, from Charleston, West Virginia, to Erie, Pennsylvania. The Interstate is a critical thoroughfare, connecting the economic areas of Charleston, Morgantown, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In addition, it is an essential transportation corridor to Canada.

Star City is also only a short drive from Interstate 68. I-68 is oriented East-West, from Morgantown, West Virginia, to Hancock, Maryland. It serves as an essential corridor for traffic into the large metropolitan areas of Washington, D.C., Baltimore, and Northern Virginia.

Nearby communities include those in the Morgantown Metropolitan Statistical Area, including Morgantown, Cheat Lake, Brookhaven, Cassville, Granville, Kingwood, Terra Alta, and Westover. As of 2020, the MSA had a population of 140,000 which was an 8% increase from 2010.

Star City residents enjoy multiple nearby options for air transportation. Options include the Morgantown Municipal Airport in Morgantown (5.1 miles away), North Central West Virginia Airport in Clarksburg, West Virginia (35 miles away), and Pittsburgh International Airport in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (76 miles away).

There are no active commuter rail lines in Star City. However, the abandoned rail line going through Star City have been repurposed into a popular local recreation trail. The existing rail lines along the opposite side of the river are in use for rail freight purposes.

The Mountain Line Transit Authority provides bus routes throughout Star City, and ridesharing infrastructure has significantly expanded complementing existing taxi operations in the area.

The Monongahela River has long been an integral part of Star City. For many years, a ferry operated in Star City, primarily to take coal miners across the river for work and back home.

Boating has long been a recreational activity on the “Mon” River and the boat ramp at the Riverfront Park is still well utilized today for recreational boating.

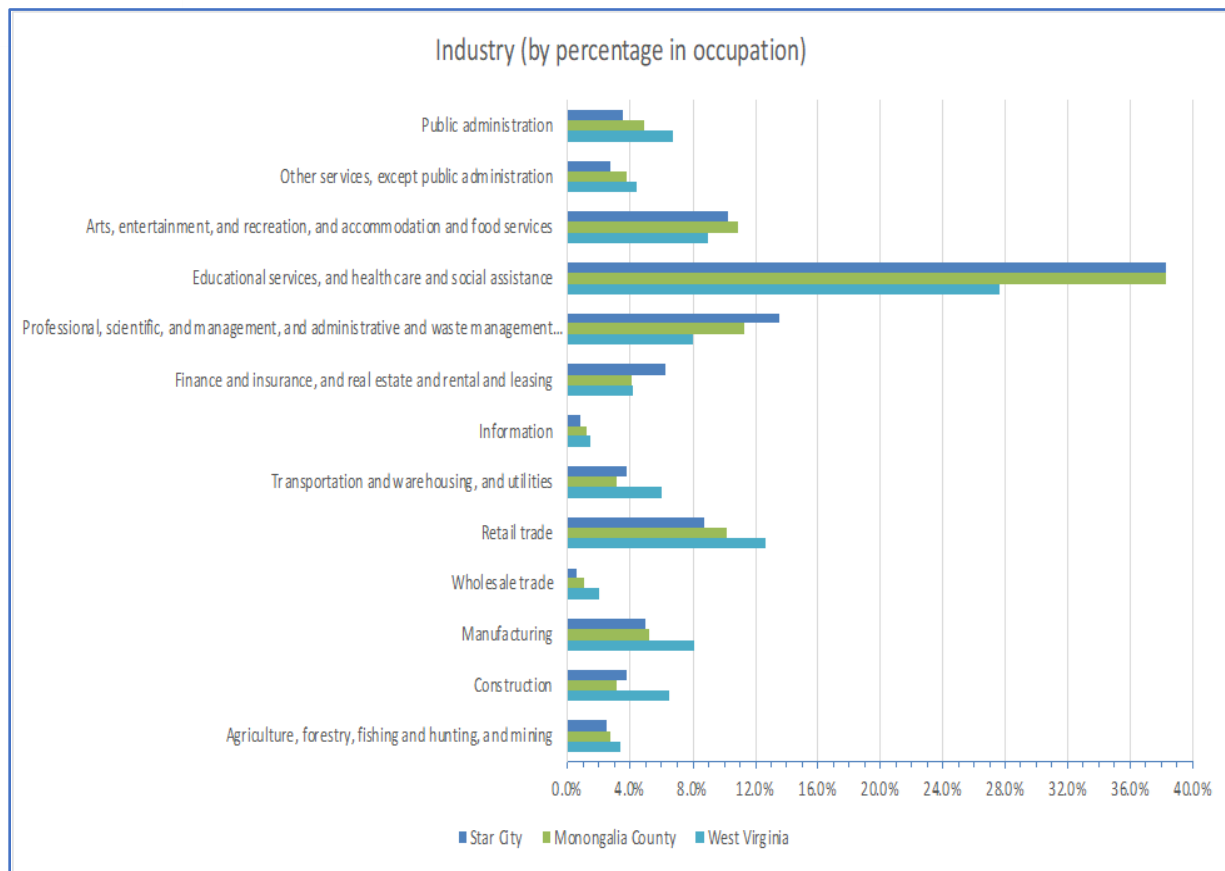
The Monongahela River has also been a major transportation route for barges. Barges transport approximately \$1 billion of goods a year.⁴³ The primary cargo transported by barge on the Monongahela River is coal, steel, coke, and iron carried in open dry cargo barges.⁴⁴



Intermodal transportation occurs via the Monongahela River and the rail lines across the river from Star City. There are no freight services in town. However, the greater Monongalia County area uses multiple modes of transportation for freight purposes.

Jobs and Industry

Star City benefits greatly from its strong relationship with neighboring communities of Morgantown, Granville, Westover, and close proximity to West Virginia University and other major regional employers. This is reflected by the comparatively high numbers of Star City residents that work in the “Educational services, and health care and social assistance” industry. In addition, the community’s location makes it ideal for West Virginia University and WVU Medicine employees to live in Star City and commute into work.



Star City residents work in the professional, scientific, and management, finance, and insurance industries at a higher rate than Monongalia County residents. Star City's labor force comprises of a significantly lower proportion in retail, manufacturing, and construction industries than the state of West Virginia.

Employment and Income

According to the 2021 Census Estimates, the median household income in Star City was \$61,310, compared to \$56,347 in Monongalia County, \$51,248 in West Virginia, and \$69,717 in the United States.⁴⁵ The City of Morgantown had a median household income of \$36,991.⁴⁶

The employment demographics in Star City largely aligns with surrounding jurisdictions that exhibits a higher-than-average number of young working professionals. The below table provides a comparison of the percentage of employment by age cohort.

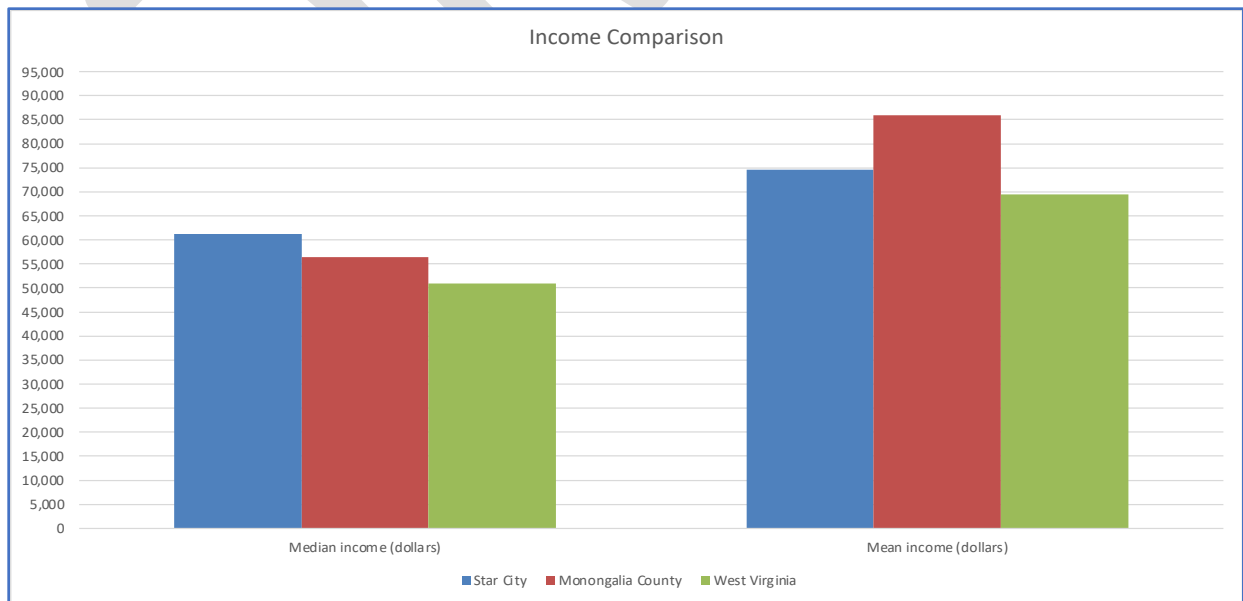
The unemployment rate is the percentage of people seeking employment that are not employed at a given time. Individuals who are not seeking employment and

are not employed are not in the labor force and are not counted in the unemployment rate.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics provides unemployment rates throughout the country. The unemployment rate in Star City, as of 2021, is 1.6%. This number is substantially lower compared to the United States unemployment rate for 2021, at 6.3%.⁴⁷



Star City exhibits excellent results for both mean and median income. As shown by the chart below, Star City claims a higher median income than both Monongalia County and the state of West Virginia. This reflects a general level of financial well-being for residents and signals a robust economic environment. For mean income, Star City ranks higher than the state of West Virginia but lower



than Monongalia County. This, along with the mean income being relatively similar to the median income, suggests that Star City has less economic stratification, which is an excellent metric for the community's financial health.

Education

The Monongalia County Board of Education maintains eighteen (18) schools in the county: ten (10) elementary schools, four (4) middle schools, two (2) high schools, one (1) combined middle/high school, and one (1) technical school. These schools serve approximately 11,500 students throughout the county. The Board of Education employs approximately 1,500 employees throughout the school year. Suncrest Elementary School, Suncrest Middle School, and Morgantown High School all serve Star City. Additionally, the West Virginia Academy, a public charter school, serves the entire region and is located in close proximity to Star City.

The West Virginia Department of Education publishes the West Virginia General Summative Assessment (WVGSA) results. The assessment analyzes proficiency in math, reading, and science. In 2021–2022, 47% of Monongalia County School students were proficient in math, 53% in reading, and 42% in science. In West Virginia, only 33% were proficient in math, 42% were proficient in reading, and 28% were proficient in science. The state's proficiency levels were 14% lower than the county in math, 25% lower in reading, and 14% lower in science. Suncrest Elementary School had the following proficiency levels: 54% in math, 55% in reading, and 50% in science, all higher than state proficiency levels and slightly higher but in line with the county proficiency levels.

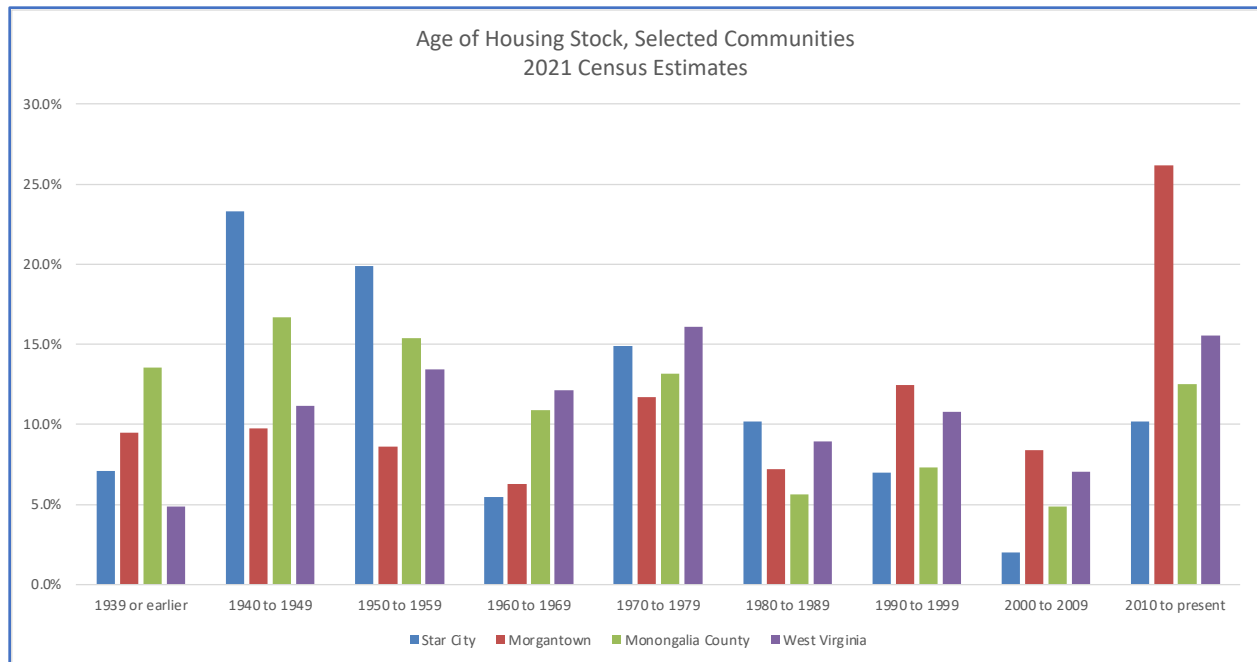
The Morgantown Public Library serves Star City along with the rest of the region. The library is in a centralized location in downtown Morgantown, making it easily accessible by residents of Star City.

Housing

Housing is an essential component of any community. When considering recommendations for future growth and development, understanding the quantity and overall quality of the housing stock in Star City is essential. Several indicators can help the community better understand and evaluate the current housing stock in Star City.

As of 2021, there were 1,060 housing units in Star City. 8.5% of all housing units in Star City were considered vacant (90 units), leaving 91.5% inhabited. The age of the housing stock is a good indicator of the housing condition in a community. Generally, the older the housing stock, the more issues there are with deterioration and dilapidation.





Star City has a relatively older housing stock. Very few housing units have been built since 2000. A high proportion of Star City's housing stock was built in the 1940s and 1950s. Recent population growth in the area has not drastically increased Star City's housing stock most likely due to the town being largely built out. It appears that the City of Morgantown and Monongalia County have accounted for most of the new housing units built recently to accommodate the increased population of the region.

The total number of occupied housing units in Star City, according to the 2021 U.S. Census Estimates, was 970. Of those units, 514 or 53% were owner-occupied, leaving 47% renter occupied. Meanwhile, 73.9% of occupied housing units in West Virginia were owner-occupied, leaving 26.1% renter occupied. The average household size for owner-occupied units in Star City was 2.11 persons. In comparison, the average household size for renter-occupied units in Star City was 2.03 persons.

Of the owner-occupied housing units in Star City, 38.7% had a mortgage, while 61.3% of owner-occupied housing units were without a mortgage. These numbers are compared favorably to the numbers in West Virginia, in which 46.7% of owner-occupied housing units had a mortgage, while 53.3% of owner-occupied housing units were without a mortgage.

Given the slow-down of development of housing units recently and the 8.5% vacancy rate of housing units in Star City, it is unlikely that many new housing units will be needed in the next 10–15 years. However, demands may shift with continued growth in the area and the high-growth environment in Greater Morgantown. With improvements to town amenities, Star City may become more desirable place to live and could see even demand for additional housing units.

Tourism

Located just below the Mason-Dixon line, less than 10 miles from Pennsylvania, and alongside Morgantown, WV, Star City is surrounded by booming economic opportunity and travel, as well as some of the most beautiful locations in West Virginia.

The town is home to iconic sights, such as the Star City Bridge, parks, like John F. Kennedy Memorial Park, and is an opportune stop along the Mon River Trail system, which was recently inducted into the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's Hall of Fame.



The banks of the Monongahela River line the western limits of Star City and provide several great spots to fish, walk, and enjoy the local scenery. Cooper's Rock State Forest is a convenient 15-mile drive on I-68 via I-79 and provides opportunities to capture one of the most scenic views in the state. Cheat Lake is a 20-minute drive and offers incredible opportunities for boating, fishing, and other water activities.

Mountaineer Country CVB, the visitor's bureau for Monongalia County, has an excellent website that can direct visitors to recreation and tourism amenities found in Monongalia County.

Nearby state parks include Prickett's Fort State Park and Valley Falls State Park both in Marion County, Tygart Lake in nearby Taylor County, and Cathedral State Park in neighboring Preston County. Other nearby attractions include whitewater rafting on the Cheat and Youghiogheny Rivers, rock climbing in local areas such as Cooper's Rock, sightseeing at Cranesville Swamp.



Many recreation enthusiasts use the Monongahela Rail Trail, which goes right through Star City, to get their fill of exercise and play. The area boasts golf courses such as Mountain View Golf Course, Mountaineer Golf Course, and Lakeview Resort Golf Course, as well as private clubs including the Pines Country Club and Pikewood National Golf Club.



Chapter 3: Star City Issues and Concerns

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The purpose of a needs assessment is to identify the critical issues, concerns, and needs of the community over the next 10-15 years. The community must analyze current and future needs related housing, land use, infrastructure, transportation, public services, historic preservation, and other comprehensive plan components required under Chapter 8A of the West Virginia Code.

By identifying the needs of the community, the planning commission can prepare a comprehensive plan that includes recommendations aimed at addressing the most pressing issues facing Star City. Through the comprehensive plan process, which included an online survey, stakeholder surveys, participation in a countywide comprehensive plan open house, the planning commission was able to identify the following primary issues:

- Maintaining and improving infrastructure
- Fostering an environment that helps expand existing businesses and encourages new business development
- Promoting efficient land usage and governance in Star City
- Safety of citizens, visitors, and businesses

These issues are discussed in Chapter 3 and recommendations to address these issues are articulated in the Chapter 4: Action Plan.

Maintaining and Improving Infrastructure

There are few issues as foundational to community well-being as infrastructure. Water and wastewater treatment, stormwater, roads, and internet tend to be integrated into everyday life to the point that most people do not think about these amenities unless there is a problem. Failure of one or more of these amenities can result in significant issues including damage to property, health risks, and dangerous vehicular and pedestrian conditions. Some amenities are beyond the control of the town and therefore town officials will need to work with other organizations that are responsible for the care and control of those infrastructure systems.

Stormwater

Stormwater is a significant concern in some areas of the town due in part to the natural topography of the town. The town is situated on land that generally slopes downward towards the river. Unfortunately, stormwater is inundating certain developed areas in Star City, causing property damage as well as dangerous driving conditions, and putting an undue strain on existing infrastructure. The



Fenwick Avenue area is prone to significant stormwater inundation and is a particular area of concern for town officials.

There are many areas of town that have combined sanitary and stormwater collection lines. There are several issues related to combined sewers. The first concern is the wastewater treatment plant treating graywater (stormwater) that does not need to be treated unless it is contaminated with wastewater, putting unnecessary strain on the facilities.

There is also the concern of combined sewer overflows (CSOs) during storm events. CSOs occur when the lines that collect both stormwater and wastewater overflow into natural water bodies without first being treated. CSOs present several health-related concerns. A priority for Star City is to separate all stormwater and wastewater lines. Anytime there are projects where infrastructure is being improved, fixed, or updated, water drainage should be considered and designed so that stormwater conditions will be improved and not made worse.

The town has contracted with a private consultant to complete a study of existing stormwater facilities in Star City. The consultant has analyzed stormwater and sanitary sewers along Fenwick Avenue, utilizing dye testing and inspecting the lines via cameras. Additionally, the town should create an electronic mapping inventory of all stormwater lines and integrate the inventory into geographic information systems (GIS) geodatabase that can be updated periodically. A GIS geodatabase should not only show where the collection lines are located but also collection line materials, size, and a description of any work completed on a particular line.

The town can also implement practices to reduce the amount of stormwater runoff and thus mitigate some of the problems associated with storm events. In areas that are maintained by Star City, the town can plant native vegetation, particularly within buffer areas and along waterways. Any increase in permeable green space will lessen the amount of offsite runoff thus mitigating effects of stormwater. Future municipal land development regulations can require structurally-sound pervious surfaces for a portion of required off-street parking in new developments.

Water and Wastewater Infrastructure

The town operates both a municipal water and a wastewater treatment utility, with MUB treating wastewater collected by the town within its boundary. Many of the water distribution lines have been in the ground for over one hundred years. With aging lines there are going to be issues that need to be addressed. For example, in recent years the town had a loss ratio of over 30%, meaning almost one-third of all treated water that left the treatment plant did not reach paying customers. A large leak was discovered and fixed and now the loss ratio for the water treatment system is at 13%, indicating the system is running much more efficiently.

The town should eliminate cast iron water distribution lines, particularly the 2-inch cast iron pipes which are creating most of the issues related to water leakages. Another issue identified by the water department personnel is the need to upgrade the water meters to real radio read meters that can be monitored remotely. Personnel also indicated that the isolation valves need to be updated and additional valves installed throughout the system.

Star City maintains a wastewater treatment collection system that includes miles of collection lines and six (6) lift stations. The collection lines take sewage to the treatment plant in Star City, which is owned and operated by MUB. Many of the main collection lines are 6-to-12-inch terra cotta lines. A long-term priority for the town is to replace those lines. While the main lines are not having too many issues, several terra cotta service lines are having issues particularly with roots and the lines shifting. These residential service lines are often the responsibility of the property owner but are nonetheless causing issues with the collection system. Town officials would like to reevaluate the agreement with MUB to ensure the town is paying the actual costs of MUB treating the town's wastewater.

Like stormwater, the town also needs to have all wastewater collection lines, water distribution lines, and appurtenances mapped electronically, and updated routinely. The mapping can include relevant information that will assist future employees and decisionmakers understand what is below ground, what has been replaced, and what may need to be updated.

To encourage private investment, the town should prioritize infrastructure improvements near infill or redevelopment sites. A commonsense approach for Star City is to develop a Capital Improvement Plan or CIP. CIPs are defined as "a community planning and fiscal management tool used to coordinate the location, timing, and financing of capital improvements over a multi-year period — usually 4-6 years. Capital improvements refer to major, non-recurring physical expenditures such as land, buildings, public infrastructure, and equipment."⁴⁸ In many states a CIP is required by law for every local government. While not required in West Virginia, the CIP can be an especially useful tool for local decisionmakers to plan for specific infrastructure needs. Utilizing a CIP will also allow the town to be more proactive rather than reactive to issues related to roads, water, wastewater, and stormwater amenities.



Fostering an environment that helps expand existing businesses and encourage new business development

Business expansion, growth, and new business development are high priorities for many decisionmakers and citizens of Star City. Proximity to interstate access, moderately dense residential development, and two primary transportation arteries that transect Star City make the town's location appealing for business growth and development. Town officials are interested in keeping existing businesses in Star City encouraging those businesses to grow and prosper. At the same time, where it is feasible and appropriate, town officials want to encourage new business development.

There are some challenges in Star City particularly as they relate to economic growth and development. Star City is almost entirely surrounded either by the Monongahela River or the City of Morgantown making it difficult for Star City to expand its corporate boundary. The town is also largely "built out," meaning there are few undeveloped parcels of land that could be developed in Star City. However, there are opportunities for adaptive reuse, redevelopment, and infill development. Adaptive reuse is a term describing when a property is originally built and utilized for a specific purpose and is later utilized for a different and distinct purpose. An example of adaptive reuse is a warehouse that is later redeveloped into loft condominiums. The use of the property went from commercial to residential. It is important for town officials to understand the current conditions and needs of the community prior to encouraging or requiring adaptive reuse concepts.

Redevelopment is another tool to encourage business growth and expansion. Through zoning codes, Star City should promote redevelopment and business structures that are either vacant or in use but in need of rehabilitation. Related to redevelopment, infill development is the process of "developing vacant or under-utilized parcels within existing urban areas that are already largely developed."⁴⁹ Due to the lack of land available the value of infill development in Star City cannot be overstated.

Star City officials are interested in bringing in businesses that are



unique to Star City. Businesses that are only available in Star City would cater to a much larger regional population. Town officials want to encourage development that will cause people to stop, shop, and recreate in Star City. The most likely area for future development would be in the town's Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district along Boyers Avenue. "Tax increment financing captures the projected increase in property tax revenue gained by developing a discrete geographic area and uses that increase to assist in paying for the project. This funding makes it possible to go forward with projects that otherwise would not be built."⁵⁰ Because the TIF district was created with assistance from the Monongalia County Commission, there should be some discussion with the county commissioners as to how to best utilize, promote, and develop the TIF district in a sustainable and strategic manner that with aligns the goals and objectives of the community.

Star City officials should utilize existing partners to enhance the town's specific economic development needs. Organizations including Visit Mountaineer Country CVB and the Morgantown Area Partnership can be valuable partners. The CVB takes a portion of the town's hotel and occupancy tax in exchange for promoting the region's tourism and businesses. There is a desire to meet, at least quarterly, with regional leaders to work on economic development initiatives that raise the profile of the entire area. While regionalism is important especially for smaller communities such as Star City, it is also important for the town to continue to develop its own economy and identity. Star City wants to be a distinct community which operates as part of a larger metropolitan area.

Develop Community Amenities

Star City offers many advantages for increased economic development and business growth, but some amenities need to be more developed to realize full growth potential. One specific need that was identified during the comprehensive plan process is to create an ADA-accessible connection linking the Mon River Trail with various areas of Star City. Improved bicycle and pedestrian connectivity will allow for greater utilization of the rail trail...a high priority for the town.



One of the greatest assets of Star City is the Mon River Rail Trail, which was recently inducted into the Rail Trail Hall of Fame. The trail connects Star City to nearby communities including Morgantown, Fairmont, Preston County, and Point Marion, PA. With the completion of the Sheepskin Trail in Pennsylvania, other points of interest that will be accessible from Star City include Cumberland, Md, Pittsburgh, and Washington DC via the Great Allegheny Passage and C&O Towpath Trail, respectively. Being able to provide amenities that are related to the rail trail and outdoor recreation would be a key catalyst for Star City. Alongside the rail trail is the Town's Riverfront Park which has playground equipment, a gazebo, and a boat launch. There are several amenities including Interstate access only a few miles away, therefore town officials need to continue to implement the Riverfront Revitalization Master

Plan and prioritize development of the Riverfront and Trail Corridor.

One recommendation is to make the Riverfront Park more of a year-round attraction. Largely seen as a fair-weather park, there should be coordinated activities particularly when the weather is cooler. A group of interested individuals that are focused on the park, such a parks and recreation board should be created. The board would be tasked with budgeting, identifying new amenities for the park, events, attractions, festivals, and capital improvements, all designed to bring more visibility and utilization to the park.

Preferred Development Areas

A preferred development area (PDA) is a "geographically defined area where incentives may be used to encourage development, infill development or redevelopment in order to promote well designed and coordinated communities."⁵¹ During the comprehensive plan process, the planning commission identified two preferred development areas in Star City. The first area is the University Avenue corridor. This is one of two primary transportation corridors in Star City. The corridor is largely built out but there might be some opportunities for adaptive reuse and for redevelopment of existing commercial properties that are either vacant or need updating. Because the University Avenue Corridor is a mixture of



residential and commercial uses, development needs to be scaled and “right sized” to the existing built environment, which is primarily mixed-used with some residential and smaller scale commercial development.

The other PDA is along Mon Boulevard. This corridor is the most visible and most highly traveled corridor and connects Star City to the interstate. The corridor has several parcels of land that could be developed or redeveloped particularly for commercial purposes. The Mon Boulevard corridor is larger in scale than the University Avenue Corridor, therefore more intense commercial uses should be focused along the Boulevard Corridor. There are opportunities for both turnkey business development and for new brick and mortar development along Mon Boulevard. Some consideration related to new development along the corridor include limited signage and safe ingress/egress.

Constraints on Development

There are few naturally occurring constraints on development in Star City. Fortunately, only a small portion of land in Star City is within the special flood hazard area (SFHA), also known as the floodplain or the 100-year flood area. There are a few areas along the river including land immediately adjacent to Popenoe Run that are in the floodplain. Even though little land in Star City is in the SFHA does not mean the town is safe from flooding. Nationally, over 25% of all flood damage occurs outside the SFHA.

There are some steeper slopes in Star City that would be difficult or infeasible to develop. Those areas are found along the rail trail and are likely to remain undeveloped. Karst topography⁵² can be a constraint on development. However, according to the West Virginia Geological and Economic Survey (WVGES) Karst map, there does not appear to be karstic features in Star City. Recently there was a sinkhole that was observed along Mon Boulevard which was likely caused by manmade development and not from naturally occurring features.



Promoting efficient land usage and governance in Star City

Land Usage

Land is a valued commodity anywhere, but it is particularly valuable in a community that is largely built out. Because of its location, small size, and limitations on growth, land in Star City is valuable. Having the proper ordinances and policies in place can promote orderly development and redevelopment of Star City that is consistent with the vision, goals, and objectives of the community.

The Existing Land Use Map illustrates how the land in Star City is currently being utilized. For the purposes of this comprehensive plan, the planning commission divided existing land use into six (6) classifications; Commercial, Industrial/Manufacturing, Public/Semi Public, Recreation, Residential, and Undeveloped/Conservation. The Existing Land Use map only shows how the land is being utilized at the present time and does not reflect any future desires or preferences.



The existing land use map is a useful tool when analyzing current conditions of Star City particularly when thinking about whether to encourage more residential uses or more commercial use if more land needs to be conserved or made into recreation.

Zoning regulations need to be analyzed to ensure that they accurately reflect the desires of the community. Star City's zoning ordinance was originally developed in the 1970s with some amendments being made in 2008. The planning commission, along with the town council, should analyze existing conditions and review the goals and objectives of the comprehensive plan, alongside the zoning ordinance to ensure the existing zoning ordinance and map are consistent with current desirable land development patterns.

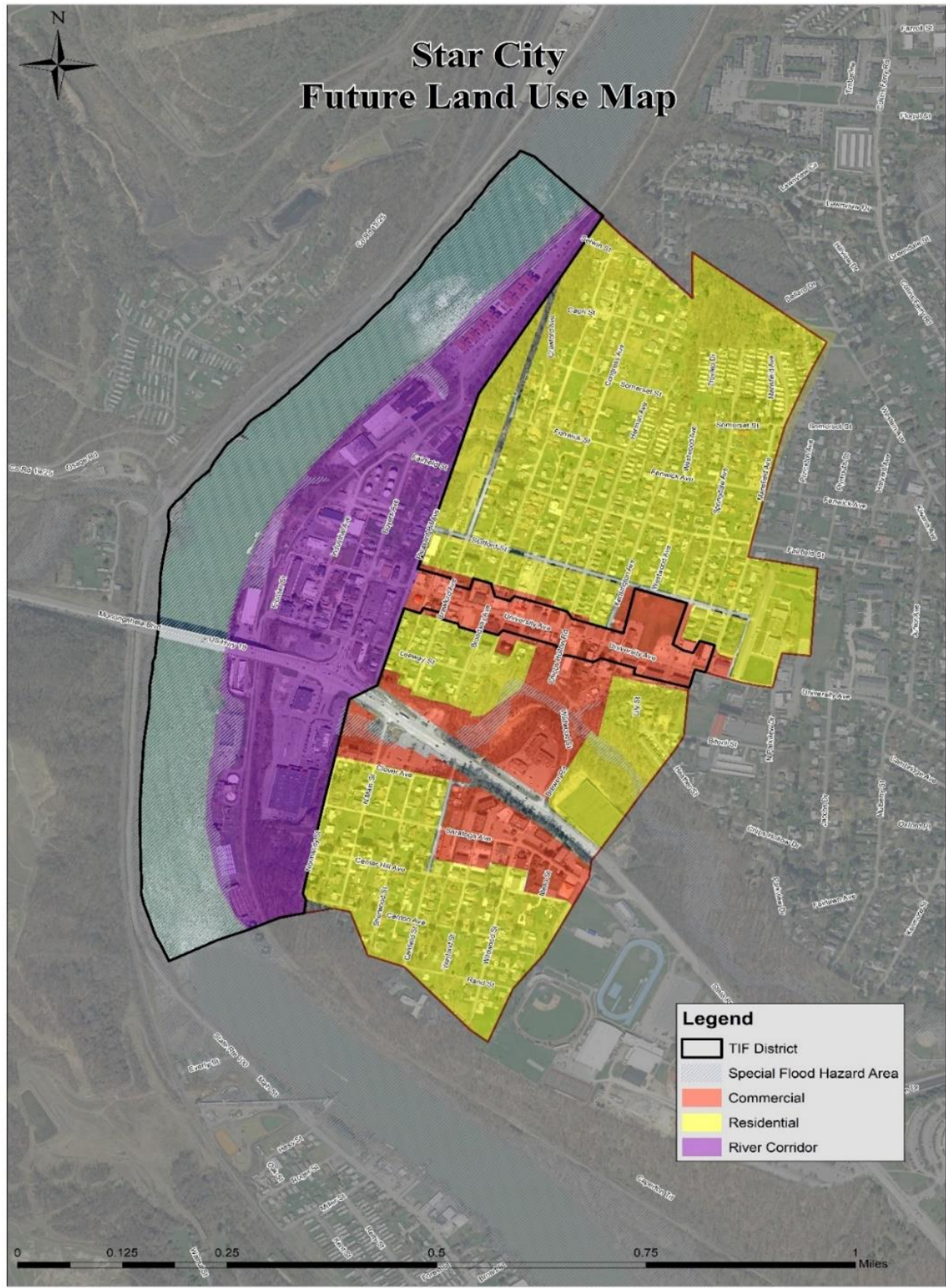
Subdivision and Land Development Ordinances (SALDOs) are another tool that can be utilized to ensure that new land development or subdivisions have adequate services, utilities, access, infrastructure coordinated to minimize issues prior to completion of development. Currently Star City does not have subdivision regulations enacted.

Star City is almost entirely surrounded by the river and the City of Morgantown, limiting annexation opportunities for the town. However, there are a few areas adjacent to the town's corporate boundary that should be considered for annexation. In West Virginia, annexation can occur three (3) different ways, Annexation by Election, Annexation by Petition, and Annexation by Minor Boundary Adjustment.

Prior to any annexation proceeding, town officials should gain an understanding of the different options for annexation. As part of this analysis, officials should try to discuss options with the property owners of the land to be annexed. It is important to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of annexation from both the town perspective as well as the property owner's perspective. While it may not be possible to come to a complete understanding regarding annexation, engaging with property owners prior to starting any annexation proceeding can help inform decisionmakers to make educated decisions relating to annexation.

The future land use map "shows the amount and type of development the community would like to see in a particular area at some point in the future."⁵³ The future land use map or FLU map is a required component of the comprehensive plan and shows how the community wants to develop in the future. The importance of the FLU map is most apparent when a community is either enacting a zoning ordinance or amending an existing zoning ordinance. The FLU map, which is part of the comprehensive plan, shows the desires of the community regarding land utilization. Therefore, state law requires a zoning map to be consistent with the future land use map.

Star City's FLU Map is divided into three (3) land use classifications. The FLU map also highlights the TIF District and the Special Flood Hazard Area. The residential land use area is predominantly residential units, encompassing single family and multi-family residential. While other uses may be found in the residential land use



classification, the primary purpose is for the use and enjoyment of residential living. The commercial land use classification consists primarily of retail, wholesale, food, and service industry, with some manufacturing and industrial uses. The River Corridor is a mixed-use area, typified by its proximity to the Monongahela River and is meant to be a mixed-use area that balances the need for growth with conservation.

Abandoned and Dilapidated Structures

Often cited as one of the most pressing issues in West Virginia, abandoned and dilapidated structures cause a myriad of issues, particularly at the local level. Star City has code enforcement personnel to address most issues and there are development pressures that keep many properties from otherwise being neglected. There are tools including vacant and uninhabitable property registries that the Town can implement that have been successful in other jurisdictions.



The vacant property registry is a tool only available to municipalities in West Virginia. Once a community adopts an ordinance to create a vacant property registry the municipality can add properties that fit the statutory definition of “vacant” to a registry. Once listed on the registry, the property owner is required to pay an annual fee for having a property on the registry. Municipalities typically have a tiered fee schedule which means that the longer a property is on the registry the higher the annual fee. The property owner can take steps to remove their property from the registry including renovating the property or selling the property.

The uninhabitable property registry is similar to the vacant property registry. The primary difference is that there needs to be a building code violation for a property to be placed on the uninhabitable property registry. The uninhabitable property registry can also have a tiered fee schedule and a property can be placed on both registries simultaneously if the property meets each of the registry’s requirements independently.

Local Governance

Another principal issue discussed during the comprehensive plan process is to increase civic participation in Star City. Officials want more people involved in the day-to-day operations of the town. More citizens serving on boards and commissions and volunteering with community events is a high priority.

One way to get increased civic participation is to better disseminate information regarding community activities and events. Purchasing an electronic message display board and placing the sign in a highly visible location can help get information out to the public. Ideally the message board could be changed remotely and would focus on community events including town meetings, events, and other information relevant to citizens. There are other options for dispersing information, including a changeable copy sign at the fire department, and increased municipal visibility through different forms of communication.



Town officials are also interested in purchasing new holiday lights and seasonal signage, including military signage, to place throughout town. Improved holiday lighting and seasonal signage will add to the aesthetics of the town and help celebrate all things Star City.

One specific idea to improve local governance is for town officials to work with the Monongalia County Board of Education to select local students who have an interest in civics and local government to shadow town employees and officials for a day. The students would create a report to present to the Star City Council providing recommendations, ideas, and their general thoughts on their experiences including what it was like to be a part of the Star City town government for a day.

The planning commission must prepare an annual report that summarizes the status of the comprehensive plan. This report is given to town council and provides an update of recommendations outlined in the comprehensive plan. The report should also list accomplishments, upcoming priorities, and any lessons learned. The annual report provides information that allows town council to determine the priority of specific recommendations for the upcoming year.

An important consideration stemming from the 2023 comprehensive plan update is to ensure that Star City citizen planners have the tools needed to make informed land use decisions. Citizen planners are individuals that make up the town's planning commission and board of zoning appeals. While these are unpaid positions, these bodies often make important municipal decisions.

The town should conduct annual training for both the planning commission and the board of zoning appeals members. These trainings would include any updates on laws that are related to boards, ensuring that the citizen planners are keeping up to date with minutes, notices, agendas, how to conduct meetings properly, ensuring new members understand their role, and how to properly implement the comprehensive plan. Part of the training should also be geared towards how to interact with town staff, developers, and applicants, focusing on what is permissible and what are best practices.

Civic Participation

There needs to be a targeted effort to include people from various parts of town at community functions. Particularly residents from the western side of Mon Boulevard. This neighborhood is within town limits but there has been limited interaction from that neighborhood related to municipal functions. Town officials want to improve efforts to include these residents.

Working with a neighborhood focus group is a good first step to understand the best ways to get better participation. Town officials want to understand their concerns and how to get more participation from individuals living in areas of Star City where there has historically not been much civic participation.

Door to door invitations of town representatives, messages on the water bill, distributing flyers, inviting folks to participate in municipal functions is particularly important. The town can also have information available at popular functions such as the farmer's market and information at the town park and along the rail trail.

Holding more communitywide events is a recommendation that is widely supported. The idea is to supplement existing events and to expand the number of events throughout the year. The primary challenge for holding more communitywide events is getting the volunteers needed to make such events possible. From organizing and event planning to parking and logistics there needs to be a champion.

Sometimes it is an individual champion but often it is a group or committee comprised of individuals that have an interest in coordinating events. West

Virginia Code 8-21-9 enables municipalities to create Boards of Park and Recreation. A recreation board could be tasked with event planning and organizing year-round utilization of Star City's public spaces including Riverfront Park.



The Riverfront Park is one of the greatest assets in Star City. One idea that has gained popularity is to hold a "food truck rodeo" in the park. This could be a standalone event, or it could be combined with other events. Consideration should be given to nearby brick and mortar restaurants in Star City to limit disruptions to their normal operations or to allow them to set up a table alongside the food trucks.

As one of the most important and heavily utilized amenities in Star City, there should be a park plan created that identifies the feasibility of park expansion as well as identifying improvements to park facilities and costs associated with each project. Park expansion and improvement would ultimately be overseen by the

Mayor and Council. Creating a group to focus on the park is the best way to ensure success in achieving park-related goals and objectives.

Housing

While not without some concerns, the housing situation in Star City is much better than many communities in West Virginia. Participants of the online survey were asked to rate housing options in Star City. Nine percent said “excellent,” 18% said “Good,” 42% said “Fair,” and 15% said “Poor.” According to the United States Census Bureau in 2022 there were 1,023 residential units in Star City, 916 were occupied, leaving only 107 vacant housing units (approximately 10% housing vacancy rate in town).



In terms of the number of housing units needed, there has been relatively flat growth in Star City primarily due to limitations on developable land. In Monongalia County there has been growth and it is forecasted for continued growth, necessitating more demand for housing overall in the county. Therefore, it is expected that some residential development must occur in Star City over the next 10-15 years. New residential development will likely need to be a mixture of single family, multi-family, and residential over commercial units.

There is likely going to be more demand for housing than what Star City can accommodate given the current corporate boundaries. Because Star City is part of a larger metropolitan area housing a large R-1 Land Grant University, there will be consistent need for additional housing. However, most of the housing needs will be met outside Star City limits unless there is annexation or significant residential infill in the town. Star City should try and encourage small scale residential growth. For example, for every residential unit lost to demolition or adaptive reuse, town officials should encourage replacement of those units. The town should also strive add approximately 10% more residential structures in Star City over the next 15 years to account for natural growth and to promote some commonsense densification designated area of town, while protecting the town’s existing single family residential areas.

Additional one-story single family residential units should be encouraged. Single story housing is often more affordable than larger multistory single-family units. Affordable single-family housing in Star City should be encouraged. Ranch style housing can be appealing to young families just starting out, retirees, and persons with disabilities. As more people want to age in place, the desire for one-story single-family homes will continue to increase. These units can more easily be retrofitted with ramps and other amenities that make day to day living for older individuals and persons with disabilities easier.

If market appropriate housing is developed and built in Star City there will be an immediate demand. According to the online survey, when asked what type of development should be prioritized in Star City over the next 10 years, 49% of respondents said single family residential, 21% said multi-family residential and 33% said mixed used development. Town officials need to focus on protecting existing single family residential neighborhoods and commercial areas in Star City. Most new residential development in Star City will consist of infill development with limited adapted reuse, along with redevelopment of existing structures and complete demolition-rebuild situations.

Safety of citizens, visitors, and businesses

Public safety is of the utmost importance in Star City. The town desires to be a safe, inviting, and accommodating community that values all citizens, visitors, and businesses. Some issues were identified during the comprehensive plan process that are highlighted in this section. The primary areas of concern are public services, sidewalks, and transportation.

Public Services

Public services include law enforcement, fire, and EMS. The town provides police service and has mutual aid agreements with neighboring jurisdictions. The police department should develop an inventory of needs that can be reviewed by council periodically. Prioritization and costs are important consideration in deciding if equipment and personnel needs can be accommodated.



The fire department, while not technically part of the town, serves an undeniably significant role in Star City. One of the biggest issues facing the fire department is the lack of active volunteers and significant financial concerns. There are very few individuals that are actively volunteering for the department which means that each volunteer is doing more work than what should be expected of them by the community that they serve.

There are other ways that town officials can assist local public service providers. For example, town officials can assist in fundraisers and community events for the fire department including the utilization of the town park. Town officials can use their public platform to advocate and encourage for greater numbers of active fire

department volunteers. The town of Star City can also participate in National Night Out which is “a national community-building campaign that promotes police-community partnerships.”⁵⁴ National Night Out is one example of an event that allows for interaction between with public service personnel and citizens in a safe, fun, and inclusive environment.

Sidewalks

Sidewalks provide physical separation between vehicular traffic and pedestrians. Safety concerns arise when there are no sidewalks or existing sidewalks are in a state of disrepair. One of the first projects that the town needs to complete, possibly with assistance of the MMMPO, is to inventory and map all existing sidewalks, including intersections and to identify whether existing sidewalks meet ADA accessibility standards. As part of the inventory, all areas in Star City that are without at least one sidewalk should be identified and mapped.



Ensuring that all new or renovated sidewalks are ADA accessible should be a high priority for town streets and for state-controlled roads within Star City. Additional pedestrian safety concepts should be considered including raised crosswalks, crosswalks lights that indicate to drivers a pedestrian’s desire to cross the street, and painted crosswalks to delineate where people should be crossing. On the online survey, when asked what the most important ways are to beautify Star City, the most popular answer was to address sidewalks, over 80% of survey takers said sidewalks should be a priority. Residents view sidewalks not only as a safety concern but also a beautification enhancement.

A sidewalk inventory has been completed along University Avenue and could be completed throughout the rest of the town in much the same way an inventory of the town’s water and wastewater facilities is completed, utilizing GIS. Mapping would show where there are sidewalks on both sides of the right-of-way, where there are sidewalks on one side of the right-of-way, and where there are no sidewalks. The information for mapping should also note when work was completed. Mapping the sidewalk network will give decision makers a better idea of how to plan for future capital improvements.

There needs to be an annual or semi-annual municipal wide notice sent out to residents reminding them that they are responsible for maintaining the sidewalks

that are contiguous to their property, including snow and debris removal. Such a reminder could be placed on town signage or sent through social media.

There are several areas where there is insufficient or a complete lack of lighting. Insufficient lighting makes it difficult for pedestrians to walk in the evening and presents safety concerns. Star City officials want to work with the utility company to provide additional light fixtures throughout town. When there are new fixtures to be placed in Star City and when there needs to be some updates to existing streetlights would prefer that the utility install LED lighting with shielding on the fixtures, forcing light downward and limiting light pollution.

Transportation

Vehicular transportation is the most common form of transportation, although pedestrian and bicycle transportation are also common in Star City. Two primary transportation routes traverse through the town, presenting safety and a volume of traffic concerns. The town is limited to addressing some of the safety concerns, especially along University Avenue and Mon Boulevard since they are state roads, maintained by the Division of Highways.

Addressing clear sight distance at intersections, through zoning, is another way to improve pedestrian safety in Star City. "Sight triangles identify areas at the corners of intersections of roads and driveways where views of approaching traffic should not be obstructed."⁵⁵ Keeping the sight distance clear from vegetation, fences, or accessory structures is particularly important because it gives drivers more visibility and thus more time to react to vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Having a clear sight distance triangle eliminates the need for drivers to enter the intersection to see other traffic or pedestrians.

Traffic patterns were discussed during the comprehensive plan process. One suggestion was for the town to make some of the narrower side streets one way. There is also a concern for peak hour traffic congestion. At certain times, particularly in the early evening, traffic is congested particularly along University Avenue. Seeking solutions to alleviate peak traffic congestion should be discussed with the DOH, the MMMPO, and with surrounding jurisdictions. Several participants in the comprehensive plan process also indicated that speeding was a problem, particularly on side streets that are likely being utilized as cut through routes during times of congestion. Adding safety features including a lowered speed limit, additional speed humps, and "slow down- kids playing" signs should be considered. Traffic calming through the neighborhood streets



has already been completed in some locations but could be enhanced and expanded.

There are few town streets that are gravel. A priority for Star City is to pave all streets in town. Additionally, there are some streets that have a concrete base underneath asphalt. These streets have issues and should be high priority for milling and re-asphalting. Fortunately, the town was able to resurface several blocks of town-maintained streets in 2022.

Transportation is largely a regional issue, therefore much of the planning for transportation must be coordinated with county, regional, state, and federal transportation agencies, and organizations. Elected officials should work with partners to support transportation and pedestrian safety improvements and encourage the improvements of traffic control devices along state-controlled roads in Star City. As part of this collaboration, Star City officials should meet with representatives from regional, county, state, and federal transportation agencies to discuss coordinated solutions for addressing regional transportation concerns.



Chapter 4: What is our plan of action?

Chapter 4 Contents

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The purpose of the Chapter 4: Action Plan is to identify goals, objectives, and action steps that systematically address the issues, concerns, and needs identified in Chapter 3 of the comprehensive plan. The structure of Chapter 4 provides a succinct and easy to read narrative for moving the community forward over the next 10-15 years. The action plan is broken down into four (4) goals. These goals are aimed at achieving the vision statement that was developed during the comprehensive plan process.

Within each goal there are a series of objectives. Each objective aims to address a portion of the goal. The objectives taken in total should fully address the overarching goal. Lastly, there are specific action steps for each objective. The action steps are specific, discrete actions that need to be taken to address the objective and the goal. The action steps are highlighted at the end of Chapter 4 in the implementation matrix. The implementation matrix is part of the comprehensive plan. However, the matrix has been developed so that it can be utilized as a standalone document.



The implementation matrix looks at each action step and assigns a "priority," "timeline," who is responsible, any partners, costs, and where funding may come from. The priority is how important the community believes the recommendation is compared to other recommendations. Not every recommendation can be a high priority, some need to be lesser priorities so that future elected officials can determine where limited resources can be focused. Timeline identifies when the recommendation should be

addressed. Not every recommendation can be completed in the first 24 months after adoption of the comprehensive plan, some recommendations take longer or are not necessary at the current time but will need to be addressed in 10-15 years. The responsible party is the group, person, organization, or agency that should take the lead on addressing the particular recommendation.

While the town council is responsible for adopting the comprehensive plan, it is not reasonable or advisable for Council to be responsible for all recommendations. Potential partners are groups, persons, organizations, or agencies that can supplement the responsible party in achieving a particular action step. The costs and financing column identifies any monetary or non-monetary costs associated with completing a particular recommendation. The last column is funding, this column is used to identify how each recommendation is going to be paid for. If there are any grants that might be applicable, they are listed, also listed are any loan programs, in-kind work, and lastly the town's general fund.

Goal 1: Ensure Infrastructure is Routinely Maintained and Dependable

Objective 1.1 – Evaluate and remedy stormwater and flooding issues

- Action Step 1.1.1. Continue to monitor and enforce stormwater ordinance
- Action Step 1.1.2. Plant native vegetation within buffer areas and along waterways
- Action Step 1.1.3. Create an inventory of all stormwater drains and intakes, ensure intakes are periodically checked and any debris is removed
- Action Step 1.1.4. New development is required to create structurally sound pervious surfaces for a portion of their off-street parking
- Action Step 1.1.5. Continue to separate combined sanitary and storm sewers
- Action Step 1.1.6. Evaluate stormwater fees to ensure that such fees remain competitive with neighboring jurisdictions, while supporting the cost of stormwater infrastructure



Objective 1.2- Continue to provide safe, clean water and dependable wastewater treatment

- Action Step 1.2.1. Evaluate sewer and water service capacity to determine if existing infrastructure is adequate to support anticipated growth
- Action Step 1.2.2. Prioritize capital improvements near infill or redevelopment sites to encourage private investment
- Action Step 1.2.3. Identify and replace water lines that are leaking or are prone to leakages, particularly the 2-inch cast iron lines

- **Action Step 1.2.4. Upgrade water meters to remote radio read technology**
- **Action Step 1.2.5. Update and purchase additional water treatment isolation valves**
- **Action Step 1.2.6. Replace terra cotta wastewater collection lines**
- **Action Step 1.2.7. Work with MUB to adjust tariff placed on town to ensure Star City is paying for the actual amount of sewage that gets pumped into the treatment plant**



Goal 2: Encourage Business Development that aligns with the needs and desires of the Star City Community

Objective 2.1- Continue to develop the riverfront/rail trail as a hub of commerce in Star City

- **Action Step 2.1.1. Create an ADA-accessible pedestrian connection linking the rail-trail with various areas of Star City**
- **Action Step 2.1.2. Continue to implement the Riverfront Revitalization Masterplan**
- **Action Step 2.1.3. Add amenities to the Riverfront Park that promote year-round utilization from all members of the greater Star City community**



Objective 2.2- Encourage sustainable and unique business enterprises

- **Action Step 2.2.1.** Ensure that taxation and municipal regulations are business friendly and conducive to sustainable economic growth
- **Action Step 2.2.2.** Work with developers and property owners to develop business establishments unique to Star City
- **Action Step 2.2.3.** Utilize *Visit Mountaineer Country CVB* and MAP (Morgantown Area Partnership) for Star City-specific economic development opportunities
- **Action Step 2.2.4.** Meet quarterly with surrounding jurisdictions to collaborate on economic development initiatives that raise the profile of the region and consequently benefit Star City

Objective 2.3- Identify Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district possibilities

- **Action Step 2.3.1.** Continue Boyers' Avenue streetscape improvements
- **Action Step 2.3.2.** Consider a separate zoning designation for the University Avenue Corridor that incorporates mixed use development at an appropriate scale given the surrounding area
- **Action Step 2.3.3.** Use Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District to encourage infill and redevelopment
- **Action Step 2.3.4.** Ensure residents and elected officials understand what it means to have a TIF district, including any limitations on development within the TIF district
- **Action Step 2.3.5.** Identify and inventory properties where business may be established, routinely maintain inventory



Goal 3: Ensure Efficient and Effective Land Usage and Governance in Star City

Objective 3.1- Analyze feasibility of annexation as a tool for growth and development

- **Action Step 3.1.1.** Develop an annexation policy based on compatibility with the comprehensive plan
- **Action Step 3.1.2.** Work with affected property owners, ensure concerns are heard and considered regarding annexation
- **Action Step 3.1.3.** Analyze the advantages and disadvantages of annexation not only from the town's perspective but also affected property owners
- **Action Step 3.1.4.** Understand the different methods of annexation prior to any annexation proceedings

Objective 3.2- Promote widespread participation in community functions and greater utilization of existing town amenities



- **Action Step 3.2.1.** Place an electronic message board, in a visible location, which alerts citizens to upcoming events and provides valuable information
- **Action Step 3.2.2.** Prioritize participation on town boards and commissions of citizens from all areas of town
- **Action Step 3.2.3.** Encourage and facilitate more communitywide events at the riverfront park, including a "food truck rodeo," designed to bring more people to the park
- **Action Step 3.2.4.** Each year school students shadow town employees and attend a council or planning commission meeting, students will provide recommendations to council at a meeting

Objective 3.3- Be proactive in plan implementation

- **Action Step 3.3.1.** Create a park plan that identifies sites for potential recreational expansion and improvements to facilities and includes a financial program for funding each project
- **Action Step 3.3.2.** Prepare an annual report that summarizes comprehensive plan implementation and outlines annual accomplishments, priorities, and lessons learned

Objective 3.4- Promote sound land use development within Star City

- **Action Step 3.4.1.** Conduct annual training for planning commission and board of zoning appeals (BZA) members that focuses on land use law, meeting procedures, organizational dynamics, and how to implement the comprehensive plan
- **Action Step 3.4.2.** Ensure consistency in rezoning and other major development approvals
- **Action Step 3.4.3.** Work with the development community to identify potential concerns regarding the zoning ordinance and the development process
- **Action Step 3.4.4.** Hold bi-annual meetings with the planning commission to address the status of comprehensive plan implementation and discuss other long range planning issues

Goal 4: Continue to Prioritize the Safety of Residents, Businesses, and Visitors

Objective 4.1- Coordinate and support, where possible, local emergency services

- **Action Step 4.1.1.** Assist in fundraisers for fire department and law enforcement, allow utilization of Riverfront Park for fundraising events
- **Action Step 4.1.2.** Encourage increased participation in the number of active volunteers with the fire department

- **Action Step 4.1.3.** Inventory Star City Police needs and develop a plan to address those needs in systematic and timely manner

Objective 4.2- Increase public safety by maintaining, creating, and providing upkeep of pedestrian safety facilities

- **Action Step 4.2.1.** Repair existing sidewalks that are in poor condition and add new sidewalks where there are none
- **Action Step 4.2.2.** Remind homeowners, at least annually, that they are responsible for maintenance of sidewalks that adjoin their property
- **Action Step 4.2.3.** Utilizing Geographic Information Systems (GIS), to map and inventory where there are no sidewalks, where sidewalks are in disrepair, and where sidewalks have recently been created or repaired. Updated mapping and database no less than annually
- **Action Step 4.2.4.** Request LED Street lighting when power company is updating existing lighting or adding new street light fixtures



Objective 4.3- Support improvement of vehicular and pedestrian safety amenities

- **Action Step 4.3.1.** Work with local, regional, and state transportation partners, including the MMMPO, to support intersection and pedestrian safety improvements and the improvement of traffic control devices along state-controlled roads in Star City
- **Action Step 4.3.2.** Continue to participate in meetings with the County, MMMPO, and neighboring municipalities focusing regional land use and transportation issues
- **Action Step 4.3.3.** Pave town-maintained streets that are currently gravel or otherwise not surfaced with concrete or asphalt

ENDNOTES

ⁱ <https://landuse.law.wvu.edu/home>.

ⁱⁱ W. Va Code §8A-3-11(a)

ⁱⁱⁱ Bureau, U.S. Census. "Star City Town, West Virginia." *United States Census Bureau*, <https://data.census.gov/all?q=Star+City+town,+West+Virginia>.

⁴ "About Us." *Star City, West Virginia*, <http://www.starcitywv.com/about-us/>.

⁵ "About Us." *Star City, West Virginia*, <http://www.starcitywv.com/about-us/>.

⁶ "About Us." *Star City, West Virginia*, <http://www.starcitywv.com/about-us/>.

⁷ "About Us." *Star City, West Virginia*, <http://www.starcitywv.com/about-us/>.

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<https://data.census.gov/table?q=Star+City+town,+West+Virginia&tid=DECENNIALPL2010.P1>.

¹⁹ https://business.wvu.edu/files/d/f8369e53-f149-499a-b92e-9e622e339776/wvtables_mar_2017.pdf.

²⁰ https://business.wvu.edu/files/d/f19bf112-b0e1-42a3-883e-fa1288d77179/countytables_mar_2017.pdf.

²¹ https://business.wvu.edu/files/d/f8369e53-f149-499a-b92e-9e622e339776/wvtables_mar_2017.pdf.

²² <http://www.usa.com/rank/west-virginia-state--population-density--city-rank.htm>

²³ <https://data.census.gov/table?q=Star+City+town,+West+Virginia&tid=ACSST5Y2021.S0101>;

<https://data.census.gov/table?q=Monongalia+County,+West+Virginia&tid=ACSST1Y2021.S0101>.

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⁴⁰ <https://www.wvsao.gov/localgovernment/>.

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⁴⁸ https://www3.uwsp.edu/cnr-ap/clue/documents/planimplementation/capital_improvement_plan.pdf

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⁵¹ WV Code 8A-2-1(?)

⁵² Karst topography refers to natural landscape that is largely the result of chemical weathering by water, resulting in caves, sinkholes, cliffs, and steep-sided hills called towers. (<https://earthathome.org/quick-faqs/what-is-karst-topography/>)

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⁵⁴ <https://natw.org/>

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