

# Remaking Our Westmoreland

A Plan for the  
Alle-Kiski District

—  
**2020**



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# Introduction

As a county, we are experiencing new demographic shifts that present significant challenges to our continued economic and community growth. Over the last two decades, Westmoreland County has lost nearly 20,000 residents. In general, people are having fewer children and deaths are outpacing births. For every four people dying, only three are born in Westmoreland County. Although it's often thought that the county's population is rapidly changing due to migration – people leaving and coming into the county – this number is virtually neutral. And even though these trends are rippling across the region and entire country, the effects of these challenges are strongly felt close to home.

With the size of our workforce following this trend, the immediate concern is that local employers and companies will be unable to fill open jobs. As the workforce continues to shrink, many local businesses will be faced with the decision to either close, automate, or leave the county. All options pose a risk for the future growth of our economy and community.

*Attract, develop, and retain a diverse and stable workforce that will sustain a healthy economy*

In response to these challenges, *Reimagining Our Westmoreland* offers a solution. The comprehensive plan establishes seven core objectives, 38 strategies, and more than 300 action steps, with one overarching goal – *to attract, develop, and retain a diverse and stable workforce that will sustain a healthy economy*. Presented before us now is the unique opportunity to coordinate efforts among the county's 65 fragmented municipalities to collectively achieve a more livable and prosperous Westmoreland.

There is no one person, agency, organization, grant, or government that can deliver us. We must take ownership and be accountable for our future. We must be resourceful and creative. And we must partner, as the county relies on its municipalities, and municipalities rely on the county and each other.

This document represents the collective willingness, involvement, and aspirations of the 11 municipalities that make up the Alle-Kiski Planning District to improve our communities and county as a whole. We commend your efforts thus far during this unique process and encourage your continued collaboration and implementation of the strategies and actions laid out in this plan.

## PURPOSE OF THE DISTRICT

The Planning Districts approach aims to further implement *Reimagining Our Westmoreland's* overarching goal and address challenges culminating from an aging and declining population at the local level. This approach to planning regionally and acting locally, recognizes that distinct groupings based on geography, economics, culture, education, and transportation already exist and that these existing relationships can be leveraged to address shared challenges among communities.

The Alle-Kiski Planning District is one of seven districts outlined in the county's comprehensive plan. The idea is that by looking beyond municipal boundaries to communicate, collaborate, and cooperatively work together, neighboring municipalities can better support and empower each other to get stuff done.

## GUIDING CONCEPTS

Central to the Planning Districts approach is the notion that communities benefit more when they participate in the planning for their future. While the county cannot drive local priorities, we do have the technical and resource capacity to help facilitate a process by which communities arrive at those priorities for themselves. The Planning Districts approach recognizes three essential elements:

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



## VALUE PROPOSITION



**Shared Services & Regional Decision Making**  
Regional problems deserve regional solutions.



**Bridge Divide Between Need & Resources**  
A lack of capacity keeps local municipalities distant from resources.



**Information Sharing Among Municipalities**  
Best practices and new approaches can be shared, when a platform is prepared.



**Informed Decision Making**  
Good decisions depend on good information.



**Efficient Public Service Delivery**  
Thinking regionally recognizes economies of scale.



**Transparency with the Public & Developers**  
Communication of regional needs is simpler than dozens of identical, individual needs.

Icon Source: Flaticon.com

## APPLICATION OF THE DISTRICT

Strong local partnerships are forming in the Alle-Kiski Planning District. That’s happening because of a locally-driven, facilitator-led, and county-supported process. The strategies, actions, and projects proposed within this plan are intended to provide a menu of options for implementation and are merely advisory in nature. Additionally, the plan is not intended to be a static document; it is expected to be worked and evolve as conditions and expectations change over time.

Just as the planning process has relied heavily on the trust and effort of those participating, implementation of this plan is even more dependent on trust, effort, and participation among multiple levels. The Alle-Kiski Planning District is a group that moves at the speed of trust. The ultimate success of projects and pace at which strategies and actions are implemented is dependent upon the continued participation and level of trust of those involved.



Alle-Kiski Planning District kickoff meeting  
Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Alle-Kiski Planning District meeting  
Source: Westmoreland County Planning

# Overview of the District

Encompassing most of the northwestern corner of Westmoreland County, the Alle-Kiski Planning District is comprised of 11 municipalities including Allegheny Township, City of Arnold, East Vandergrift Borough, Hyde Park Borough, City of Lower Burrell, City of New Kensington, Oklahoma Borough, Upper Burrell Township, Vandergrift Borough, Washington Township, and West Leechburg Borough.

Each of the Alle-Kiski communities offers its own identity and history. From major manufacturing and industrial hubs, to places of pastoral agricultural character, the Alle-Kiski communities are broad and diverse. Many common assets include a close proximity to Pittsburgh; the Allegheny and Kiskiminetas rivers; significant employment bases in the areas of New Kensington and Vandergrift; Business & Research Park, Arconic Technology Center, and Industrial Park II; Northmoreland Park; and major institutions like Westmoreland County Community College and Penn State New Kensington.



Beaver Run Reservoir, Washington Township  
Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Westmoreland County Community College, New Kensington  
Source: Westmoreland County Planning

## DEMOGRAPHICS

As the impetus for *Reimagining Our Westmoreland* came from the realization that our entire county's population is aging and declining, it is important to understand the local conditions to put this regional issue into local context.

When compared to the county, the Alle-Kiski Planning District shows similar trends with an aging and declining population. In 2017, the age groups with the greatest increase were those 50-59 and 60-69. The median age for the district increased by four years to 46 years old from 2000 to 2017. Evidencing that the characteristics of demographic change at the county level are mirrored at the district level, the district's population declined by 4,192 people, or 7%, between 2000 and 2017.

## DISTRICT POPULATION LOSS 2000 - 2017

# -4,192

While some municipalities within the district saw nominal gains and declines in population over nearly two decades, greater percent changes in other municipalities are likely due to their smaller populations. For example, from 2010 to 2017, East Vandergrift Borough's population increased by 30% while Allegheny Township's population increased by only 1%. Despite such increases, overall, the district's population has declined and trends downward among municipalities.

## DISTRICT MEDIAN AGE 2000 - 2017

# 42 → 46



Kiskiminetas River, Hyde Park Borough  
Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Houses on Washington Ave, Vandergrift Borough  
Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Business & Research Park, Upper Burrell & Washington Townships  
Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Blair Bros. Farm, Allegheny Township  
Source: Westmoreland County Planning

## HOUSING

Housing is one of the most basic components of any community. In many ways it is both a determinant and result of strong communities. A healthy housing stock, illustrated by a mix of housing options and low vacancy rates, supports quality of life. A weaker housing stock, illustrated by abandoned housing units, few housing options, and higher vacancy rates, can further weaken a strong local economy.

During the development of *Reimagining Our Westmoreland*, residents clearly identified apartments, townhomes, and condominiums as a top priority and expressed the need to add more housing options to the available mix. Additionally, the location of these options are important as residents also expressed strong support for additional transportation choices.

Despite residents' reported housing priorities, since 2000, the county's increase in housing units has been primarily composed of single-family detached units. The same is true for the Alle-Kiski Planning District. Although housing units in the district increased by 392 units from 2000 to 2017, 76% were single-family detached homes, while just 24% were apartments, townhomes, or condominiums.

### DISTRICT HOUSING UNIT INCREASE 2000 - 2017

# +392

# 76%

WERE SINGLE-FAMILY  
DETACHED HOMES

# 24%

WERE TOWNHOMES,  
APARTMENTS,  
OR CONDOS



Homes in East Vandergrift Borough

Source: Westmoreland County Planning

## ECONOMICS

Even more important than housing, the economy of an area provides residents with jobs and supports a tax base. While the quantity and quality of jobs support our quality of life, in light of demographic change, the quantity and quality of our labor force will further define local economies. From 2002 to 2015, despite significant population loss, there was an increase of 1.4% or 1,786 jobs countywide.

From 2002 to 2015, the Alle-Kiski Planning District's employment change was mostly flat, with an increase of just .2% or 25 jobs. Of this employment change, industries that saw the most growth include wholesale trade; mining, oil, and gas extraction; and administration support and waste management. When compared nationally, the Alle-Kiski Planning District has a higher concentration of jobs in educational services, utilities, and wholesale trade. The district also has a regional strength in construction compared to the county. As of 2015, manufacturing remains the largest industry with almost 19% of all jobs in the district. Retail trade (12.1%) and health care and social assistance (11.4%) round out the top three industries.

### DISTRICT WAGE INCREASE 2000 - 2017

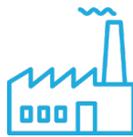
# +2.6%

Wages across the county have increased by 7.8% from 2000 to 2017, following the positive trend in employment. For the Alle-Kiski Planning District, wages increased by 2.6% since 2000. Although wages have increased both regionally and countywide, from 2000 to 2010, the district's median earnings decreased by 6%, compared to a flat change countywide. This suggests that the Great Recession impacted wages in the district at a greater extent than the county as a whole.

### TOP THREE DISTRICT INDUSTRIES 2015

#### MANUFACTURING

# 19%



#### RETAIL TRADE

# 12.1%



#### HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

# 11.4%



# Alle-Kiski Team Development

Establishing a base of mutual understanding and trust was critical to the development of working relationships among participating municipalities. Although each municipality has its own unique and separate characteristics, many also overlap and inform the Alle-Kiski Planning District as a whole. Through a series of exercises and questions early on in the process, it was made clear that the Alle-Kiski team members share several of the same values, motivations, and expectations.

The Alle-Kiski Planning District team is a group that values:

1. Fiscal responsibility, hard work, and continued progress;
2. Citizens, community, and public safety;
3. Working together and communicating to get things done; and
4. Mutual respect and fairness.

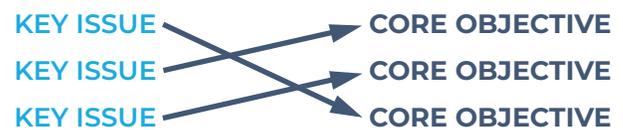
## Planning District Process

Honest, facilitated discussion has been the central focus of every meeting since the start of the Planning District process in the Alle-Kiski. By following the framework of the Planning District process, we have been able to develop a shared vision and plan of action for the region.

The Planning District process is designed around four key elements that include aligning strategies, land use planning, mobility planning, and intergovernmental cooperation.

### 1. ALIGNING STRATEGIES

Through municipal participation, local officials are able to take ownership of *Reimagining Our Westmoreland* strategies to address key issues in their community.



### 2. LAND USE PLANNING

By identifying the special places within our communities and designating areas as places to preserve, enhance, and transform, future land use decisions are more likely to be informed and line up with shared community values.



### 3. MOBILITY PLANNING

Recognizing the connection between land use and transportation, being able to access the special places within our communities means aligning policy, maintaining infrastructure, and creating transportation choices.



## 4. INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

This last element brings all of the others together. By establishing a framework that defines how neighboring municipalities within a given district can work together, communities will be well poised to collectively take actions to make their economic and community goals a reality.

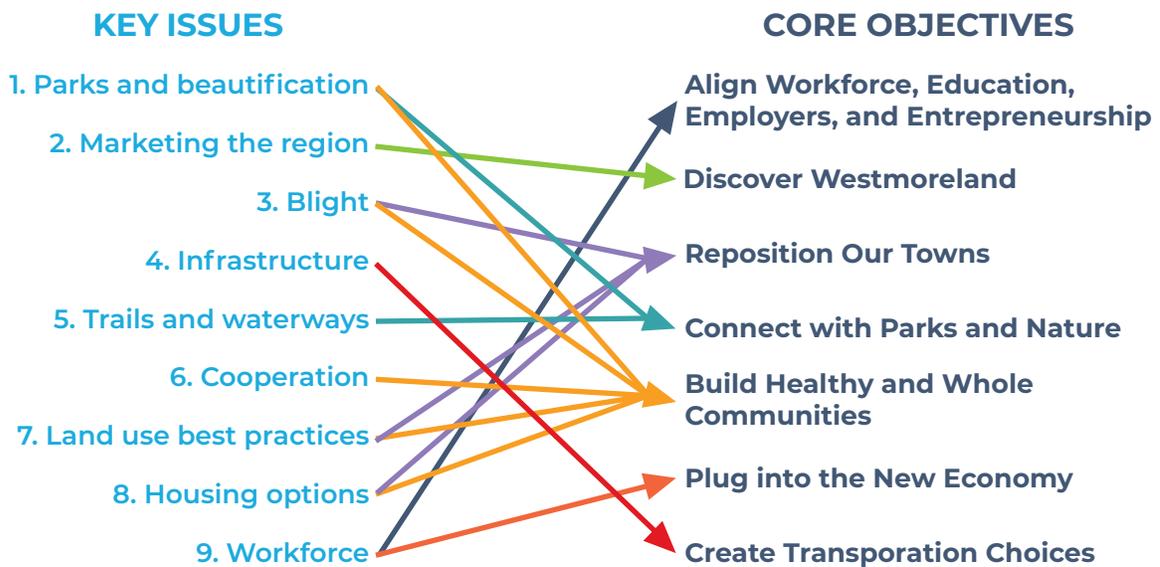


Icon Source: Flaticon.com

# Local Issues, Common Opportunity

Early on in the Planning District process, municipal leaders were surveyed to identify the biggest issues or challenges they were facing in their respective communities. Listed below is a summary of responses in order from most-shared to least-shared. Local leaders were able to recognize that their issues are not unique to within their municipal boundaries, and in fact, are

not only shared with neighboring communities, but also align with the core objectives of *Reimagining Our Westmoreland*. These identified issues helped inform the land use and mobility planning processes, and present opportunities for intergovernmental cooperation.



## Land Use

Across the landscape of the Alle-Kiski Planning District, there are many assets and characteristics that make the Alle-Kiski, the *Alle-Kiski* – namely the Allegheny and Kiskiminetas riverfronts, but also its open space and farmland, rich history, neighborhood and urban centers, and industrial legacy.

Places matter. How and where a community chooses to grow and develop has lasting economic, environmental, social, and mobility impacts. Are we creating communities where people want to live, work, and play? Are we creating communities that are sustainable, resilient, and economically productive? The communities that are growing and getting the development they desire have thought about their future.

By making informed land use decisions at the local and regional levels, communities can better utilize land resources to attract, develop, and retain a diverse and stable workforce that will sustain a healthy economy.

The following principles, objectives, future land use map, strategies, and actions provide a guide for targeted and strategic municipal and private investment.



Northmoreland Park, Allegheny Township  
Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Aerial view of West Leechburg Borough  
Source: Travis Bell



Firemen Memorial Park, Arnold  
Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Aluminium City Terrace, New Kensington  
Source: Westmoreland County Planning

## LAND USE PRINCIPLES

Principles represent a fundamental understanding or proposition that serves as the foundation for a system of belief or behavior or for a chain of reasoning. They help to conceptualize land use in a set of value statements.

The set of principles listed below represent commonly held values that guide the process of land use planning in the district. They are presented below in a chain of reasoning, but not necessarily hierarchically.

### 1. GROWTH IS INEVITABLE

Despite the region's soft growth demand, growth and development will occur. Sound land use planning, guided by the concepts of preservation, enhancement, and transformation, will inform how and where development occurs.

### 2. GROWTH HAS IMPACTS

Growth and development have both positive and negative impacts on economies, the environment, and society. Focused efforts of preservation, enhancement, and transformation will support the positive and mitigate the negative effects of growth.

### 3. PRESERVATION, ENHANCEMENT, AND TRANSFORMATION DEPEND ON PUBLIC DECISIONS

The public, both in its broadest sense (countywide) and narrowest sense (the individual), has an opportunity to shape land use in ways that maximize the financial, environmental, and social impact of local decisions.

### 4. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IS ESSENTIAL

Since preservation, enhancement, and transformation depend on public decisions, the public has a right to be a part of the decision-making process.

### 5. IMPACTS OF LAND USE DECISIONS EXTEND BEYOND MUNICIPAL BOUNDARIES

Decisions made regarding preservation, enhancement, and transformation in one community can have financial, environmental, and social impacts on neighboring communities.

### 6. PRESERVATION, ENHANCEMENT, AND TRANSFORMATION PRIORITIES VARY AMONG INDIVIDUALS AND WITHIN COMMUNITIES

Some communities may value a rural setting, others may favor an intensely urban environment, while more may prefer a suburban development pattern. The same is true among individuals. Furthermore, these priorities can vary within communities. Balance among these priorities is essential to highly valued communities.

### 7. PLANNING IS ESSENTIAL AT THE SMALLEST AND LARGEST SCALES

A cohesive community that balances the financial, environmental, and social impacts of growth and development relies on planning at the site, street, block, neighborhood, village, town, city, county, and regional level. The approach of preservation, enhancement, and transformation provides a framework for land use planning.

## LAND USE OBJECTIVES

Objectives help to contextualize the unique circumstances and geography of the district. They also identify specific places that are of special value for preservation, enhancement, and transformation.

### 1. **Preserve** - *To keep alive or in existence; make lasting. To keep safe from harm; protect or spare.*

Preserve natural lands, farm landscapes, historic areas, recreational areas, and water resources.

Specific locations include: Allegheny and Kiskiminetas riverfronts, Beaver Run Reservoir, Kotecki Park, Roaring Run Trail, Kunkle Park, Northmoreland Park, and Pine Run Creek.

The region should be cognizant of preservation-worthy elements beyond county and planning district boundaries.

### 2. **Enhance** - *To raise to a higher degree; intensify; magnify. To raise the value of.*

Enhance rural centers, neighborhood centers, town centers, urban cores, job centers, community gateways, and access to recreation.

Specific locations include: Schreiber Industrial Park, downtown New Kensington, downtown Arnold, downtown Vandergrift, Towne Center, North Washington Elementary School, and Business & Research Park.

### 3. **Transform** - *To change in form, appearance, or structure. To change in condition, nature, or character.*

Transform blighted neighborhoods, abandoned properties, riverfront, industrial areas, brownfields, grayfields, and failing commercial areas.

Specific locations include: western side of 9th Street New Kensington, 11th Street New Kensington, riverfront industrial areas (Braeburn Lower Burrell, Allegheny Ludlum West Leechburg, MSI Vandergrift), Hyde Park Plaza, former school in East Vandergrift, and area around PA 56 and Longfellow Street Vandergrift.



Kiskiminetas River, Oklahoma Borough  
Source: Westmoreland County Planning

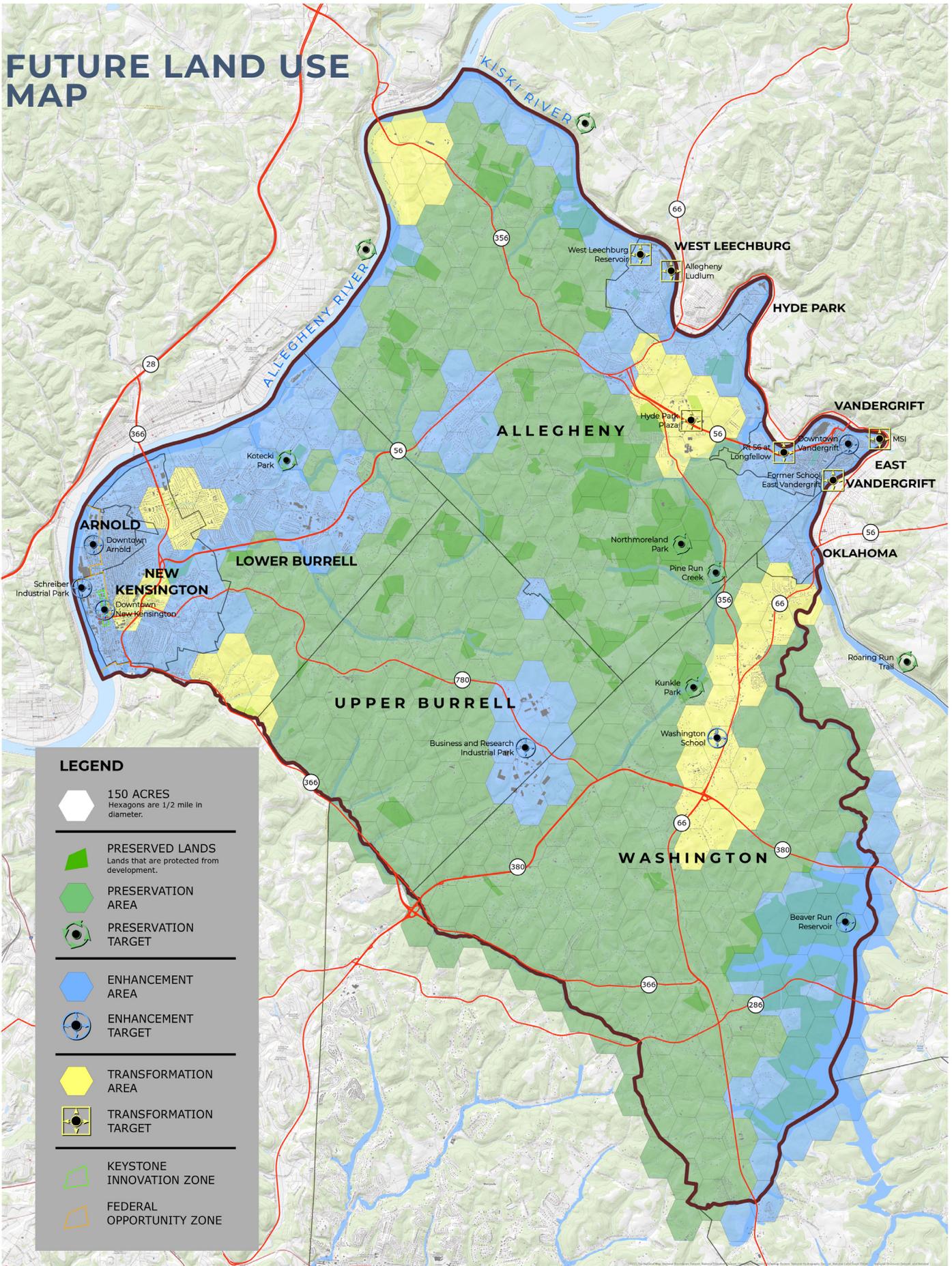


5th Ave, New Kensington  
Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Allegheny Ludlum, West Leechburg Borough  
Source: Westmoreland County Planning

# FUTURE LAND USE MAP



## LAND USE STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

Strategies are the specific ways to achieve the land use objectives, while actions are the steps for implementation. The land use strategies are listed below as they pertain to the particular areas of preservation, enhancement, and transformation. Just as the type and intensity of development changes on the spectrum of change, so do the strategies for preservation, enhancement, and transformation, building from one area to the next.

### GUIDING STRATEGY FOR ALL AREAS

#### 1. UTILIZE PLANNING BEST PRACTICES\*

- a. Create new or update existing zoning ordinances, SALDOs, and comprehensive plans.

Planning tools such as comprehensive plans, subdivision and land development ordinances (SALDOs), and zoning do not create development in and of themselves, however, their intent is to enable and guide the type of development desired by communities.

There's a saying in planning, *"If your land use ordinances are older than your youngest staff member, it's time to update."* Typically, comprehensive plans are to be updated every 10 years. According to county records, of the four

The Alle-Kiski Planning District specifically identified the strategies of utilizing planning best practices, eliminating blight, providing development-ready sites, investing in beautification, developing recreational destinations, and investing in downtowns as top priorities (\*), in order. These strategies are listed firstly for their respective area, followed by additional land use and other objective-supportive strategies.

communities that have adopted comprehensive plans, their average age is 29 years old, and all are due for an update. The average age of SALDOs among the communities that have adopted their own is 19 years old. And the average age of zoning ordinances within the Alle-Kiski Planning District is 24 years old.

Municipalities should consider updating their existing (or creating new) guidance documents to be able to address the needs of today and the desires of the future.

Municipality	Adopted Comp Plan	Adopted SALDO	Adopted Zoning
Allegheny Township	2005	1999	2004
City of Arnold	N	N*	1998
East Vandergrift Borough	N	N*	N
Hyde Park Borough	N	N*	N
City of Lower Burrell	2005	1969	1985
City of New Kensington	N	1994	1994
Oklahoma Borough	N	N*	1986
Upper Burrell Township	N	2007	2009
Vandergrift Borough	1964	1964	1986
Washington Township	1989	2007	N
West Leechburg Borough	N	N*	2008

\* Subject to Westmoreland County SALDO (2013)

## STRATEGIES FOR PRESERVATION AREAS

### 1. GROW LOCAL

- a. Revise zoning ordinances to allow for agritourism as an accessory use on farms.

### 2. PRESERVE OPEN SPACE & PROTECT NATURAL ASSETS

- a. Work with the Westmoreland Conservation District, Westmoreland Land Trust, and Westmoreland County Agricultural Land Preservation to preserve areas of significant environmental, ecological, recreational, scenic, or agricultural value.
- b. Revise zoning ordinances to include agricultural protection zoning (APZ).
- c. Adopt adjacency and concurrency policies to ensure all future development is within the bounds of existing infrastructure.
- d. Utilize parks and trails to preserve open space and protect natural assets.

### 3. IMPROVE & SUSTAIN WATER RESOURCES

- a. Adopt and enforce the model (or local) stormwater management ordinance.

### 4. GO GREEN

- a. Amend zoning ordinances and SALDOs to encourage green infrastructure.
- b. Revise zoning ordinances to allow for community gardens.

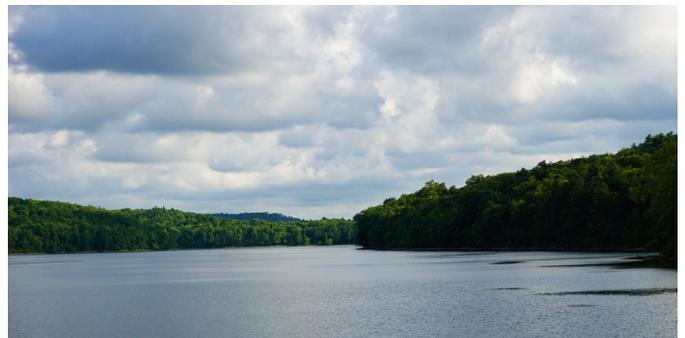
## STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCEMENT AREAS

### 1. PROVIDE DEVELOPMENT-READY SITES\*

- a. Identify, prioritize, and rehabilitate existing buildings for modern use(s).
  - i. Examples: Schreiber Industrial Park, downtown New Kensington, Arnold, and Vandergrift, North Washington Elementary School.
- b. Partner and coordinate with Westmoreland County IDC, Redevelopment Authority, and local redevelopment authority to provide development-ready sites.
- c. Incorporate land use design that enhances mobility and connection to amenities and services.
  - i. Example: Business & Research Park connectivity plan and hub civic space concept.



Blair Bros. Farm, Allegheny Township  
Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Beaver Run Reservoir, Washington Township  
Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Community garden, New Kensington  
Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Business & Research Park, Upper Burrell & Washington Townships  
Source: Westmoreland County Planning

## 2. INVEST IN BEAUTIFICATION\*

- Identify key corridors, intersections, and gateways for improvement.
- Develop partnerships with community organizations and volunteers to maintain areas.
- Adopt and enforce property maintenance codes to establish standards of quality.
- Incorporate landscaping and design requirements in zoning ordinances and SALDOs, as applicable, to maintain and improve community aesthetics.
- Create and administer facade improvement programs.

## 3. DEVELOP RECREATIONAL DESTINATIONS\*

- Identify potential locations (districtwide) for a regional indoor recreation complex and conduct a feasibility study. Proceed accordingly based on the results of the study.

## 4. INVEST IN DOWNTOWNS\*

- Focus development within the bounds of existing infrastructure in neighborhood centers, town centers, and urban cores.
- Develop downtown master plans.
  - Example: Corridor of Innovation New Kensington.
- Review and update policies and regulations to remove barriers to the development process.
- Implement tactical urbanism or pop-up projects and events to demonstrate desired changes and encourage new development.

## 5. ADVANCE ENTREPRENEURIALISM

- Revise zoning ordinances to allow for live/work spaces, shared-use facilities, and incubator spaces in rural centers, neighborhood centers, town centers, and urban cores.



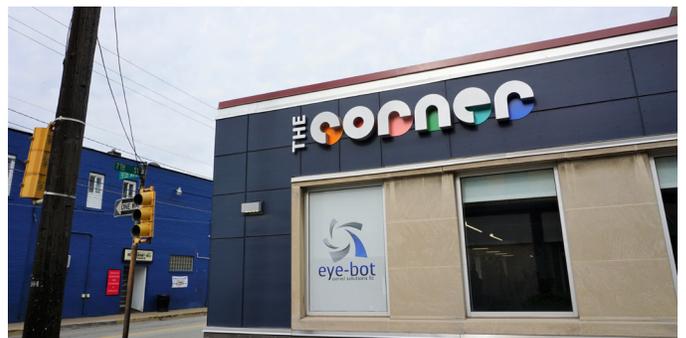
Building facade, New Kensington

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Tactical urbanism, Price, UT

Source: Utah Urban Design Committee



The Corner, New Kensington

Source: Westmoreland County Planning

**6. CULTIVATE ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT**

- a. Partner with the Westmoreland Cultural Trust and Westmoreland Museum of American Art to identify potential areas for public art.
- b. Create arts districts in rural centers, neighborhood centers, town centers, and urban cores.
- c. Utilize vacant lots, warehouses, and industrial buildings as active entertainment venues.
- d. Consider hiring staff as an events coordinator to program and schedule events, activities, festivals, and celebrations.



Mural, Arnold

Source: Westmoreland County Planning

**7. PROVIDE HOUSING OPTIONS**

- a. Amend zoning ordinances to allow for multiple housing types and tenure.
- b. Permit accessory dwelling units on single-family lots.
- c. Revise zoning ordinances to allow for the expansion of multifamily units, including the conversion of large homes into multi-tenant buildings.
- d. In neighborhood centers, town centers, and urban cores, identify and redevelop underutilized commercial spaces as mixed-use buildings with upper-floor residential units.



Voodoo Brewery, New Kensington

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Missing Middle Housing  
Source: Opticos Design

## 8. CULTIVATE A RESTAURANT INDUSTRY

- a. Amend local regulations to allow for pop-up restaurants and food trucks, carts, and kiosks.

## 9. DIRECT DENSITY

- a. Focus growth within neighborhood centers, town centers, and urban cores near transit.
- b. Prioritize infill development to utilize vacant properties and existing infrastructure.
- c. Amend zoning ordinances to allow multifamily development near job centers.
- d. Support adaptive reuse projects that incorporate existing structures and amenities within new, higher-density development.

## 10. ENHANCE TRAIL SYSTEMS

- a. Identify strategic locations for local trails and connections to regional trails.
  - i. Example: Allegheny Township trail connection to Freeport hub.
- b. Construct connections from trails to residential areas, parks, historical sites, schools, and other key destinations.
- c. Complete the trail networks along the Allegheny and Kiskiminetas rivers.
  - i. Example: Extension of the Wynn & Clara Tredway Trail north to Schenley and beyond to the Armstrong Trail, and south to New Kensington.
- d. Prioritize investments near trails for pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, restaurants, and bike and boat outfitters.

## 11. MAKE PARKS WELCOMING & ACCESSIBLE

- a. Renovate and upgrade park facilities and equipment.
- b. Ensure parks are accessible to people of all ages and abilities.
- c. Identify areas without adequate access to parks as potential locations for new park facilities.



Wynn & Clara Tredway Trail, Allegheny Township

Source: Allegheny Township



Playground, Hyde Park Borough

Source: Tifanie Gagen



Kotecki Park, Lower Burrell

Source: Westmoreland County Planning

## 12. BOLSTER AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES & SERVICES

- a. Amend zoning ordinances to allow for a variety of housing types to accommodate senior needs.
- b. Ensure senior housing and aging-in-community projects are located in neighborhood centers, town centers, and urban cores near related services and transit options.

## 13. AND APPLICABLE STRATEGIES FOR PRESERVATION AREAS

# STRATEGIES FOR TRANSFORMATION AREAS

### 1. ELIMINATE BLIGHT\*

- a. Conduct a blight inventory and utilize the Five-Step Fast-Track Blight Plan process.
- b. Join the Westmoreland County Land Bank.
- c. Identify and prioritize brownfield and grayfield sites for remediation.
  - i. Examples: Braeburn Lower Burrell, Allegheny Ludlum West Leechburg, MSI Vandergrift, Allegheny Plaza, Hyde Park Plaza.
- d. Enforce property maintenance codes.
- e. Utilize the county's Act 152 Demo Fund to remove structures and eliminate blight.

### 2. CONNECT WITH TECH

- a. Collaborate with Westmoreland County IDC, private companies, nonprofits, and local educational institutions to develop makerspaces.
  - i. Example: Corridor of Innovation New Kensington and the Digital Foundry.

### 3. AND APPLICABLE STRATEGIES FOR PRESERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT AREAS



Blighted homes, Arnold  
Source: Westmoreland Planning



Allegheny Plaza, Allegheny Township  
Source: Westmoreland Planning



Renderings of the Digital Foundry, New Kensington  
Source: R3A Architecture

# Mobility

Just as land use defines the location and places worth connecting to and within, transportation connects us to and within the places that matter. The choices made today about growth, redevelopment, zoning, subdivision and land development, and public sewage infrastructure impact future access, mobility, and transportation options available.

How do residents get from place to place? Can they safely walk or bike? Do they have to drive? Is transit available? How long does it take to reach the destination?

During the initial public engagement for *Reimagining Our Westmoreland*, some 34% of resident survey responses cited transportation as a top priority. By making informed transportation decisions at the local and regional levels, communities can better provide a modern, connected, safe, and efficient infrastructure system to attract, develop, and retain a diverse and stable workforce that will sustain a healthy economy.

The following principles, objectives, strategies, actions, and projects provide a guide for targeted and strategic transportation investments.

Pittsburgh

Source: Nathon Nicholson, Unsplash.com



Towne Center, Allegheny Township

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Houses in New Kensington

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Business & Research Park, Upper Burrell & Washington Townships

Source: Westmoreland County IDC



Icon Source: Flaticon.com

## MOBILITY PRINCIPLES

Principles represent a fundamental understanding or proposition that serves as the foundation for a system of belief or behavior or for a chain of reasoning. They help to conceptualize transportation in a set of value statements.

The set of principles listed below represent commonly held values that guide the process of mobility planning in the district. They are presented below in a chain of reasoning, but not necessarily hierarchically.

### 1. LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION ARE INEXTRICABLY LINKED

Simply put, transportation is the movement of people or goods from one location to another. It is the very location of people and places that determine the mode, route, duration, etc. of travel. Sound land use planning will inform how and where transportation occurs.

### 2. TRANSPORTATION HAS IMPACTS

Transportation has both positive and negative impacts on economies, the environment, and society. Thoughtful planning and focused efforts will support the positive and mitigate the negative effects of transportation.

### 3. TRANSPORTATION DEPENDS ON PUBLIC DECISIONS

The public, both in its broadest sense (countywide) and narrowest sense (the individual), has an opportunity to shape transportation in ways that maximize the financial, environmental, and social impact of local decisions.

### 4. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IS ESSENTIAL

Since transportation depends on public decisions, the public has a right to be a part of the decision-making process.

### 5. IMPACTS OF TRANSPORTATION EXTEND BEYOND MUNICIPAL BOUNDARIES

Decisions made regarding transportation in one community can have financial, environmental, and social impacts on neighboring communities.

### 6. TRANSPORTATION PRIORITIES VARY AMONG INDIVIDUALS AND AMONG COMMUNITIES

How a community chooses to grow and develop impacts how people connect to and within it. Individuals themselves may also desire or rely upon certain modes of travel. Balance among priorities to ensure accessibility and mobility for all is essential to highly valued communities.

### 7. PLANNING IS ESSENTIAL AT THE SMALLEST AND LARGEST SCALES

A cohesive community that balances the financial, environmental, and social impacts of transportation relies on planning at the site, street, block, neighborhood, village, town, city, county, and regional level.

## MOBILITY OBJECTIVES

Objectives help to contextualize the unique circumstances and priorities of the district. They also identify specific places that are of certain importance for alignment, maintenance, and creation.

1. **Align** - *To put into correct or appropriate relative positions. To give support to; come together in agreement or alliance.*

Align transportation policy, investments, projects, and improvements to land use priorities.

Utilizing the future land use map, ensure that the transportation system assists and is compatible with efforts towards preservation, enhancement, and transformation.

2. **Maintain** - *To cause or enable to continue; keep in good condition. To give support to.*

Maintain and manage transportation infrastructure to ensure a safe and high-quality network.

Implement a data-driven, prioritized, and coordinated approach to maintaining the physical infrastructure as well as financial commitments.

3. **Create** - *To bring into existence; cause to happen.*

Create transportation choices to ensure accessibility and mobility for all.

Working with county, regional, and state partners, develop and plan projects for the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and other funding opportunities.

## ALIGN & MAINTAIN

=

## POLICY & APPROACH

Consider the products and services of RoadBotics (or similar company) in municipal operations to inventory, analyze, and assess local roadway and sidewalk infrastructure.

## CREATE

=

## DO

## MOBILITY STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

Strategies are the specific ways to achieve the mobility objectives, while actions are the steps for implementation.

The following strategies are listed in order of priority as determined by the Alle-Kiski Planning District.

### 1. IMPROVE PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE

- a. Concentrate mixed-use transit supportive development in neighborhood centers, town centers, and urban cores along existing rail lines so that passenger rail service may be feasible.
- b. Partner with the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership and Western Pennsylvanians for Passenger Rail to advocate for passenger rail service.
- c. Participate in any and all opportunities to communicate the district's desire for passenger rail service to and from Pittsburgh.

### 2. UTILIZE PLANNING BEST PRACTICES

- a. Update and revise zoning ordinances and SALDOs to allow for and encourage development that supports multiple modes of travel.
- b. Actively participate in the PennDOT Connects process for local projects to explore their full potential.
  - i. Example: Ensure standard transportation projects are context sensitive, including design features and amenities, that support multiple modes of travel and add value to the community.
- c. Identify specific transportation corridors to study and develop improvements for.



Amtrak train

Source: Aris, Unsplash.com



### 3. ENHANCE TRAIL SYSTEMS

- a. Identify strategic locations for local trails and connections to regional trails.
  - i. Example: Allegheny Township trail connection to Freeport hub.
- b. Construct connections from trails to residential areas, parks, historical sites, schools, and other key destinations.
- c. Complete the trail networks along the Allegheny and Kiskiminetas rivers.
  - i. Example: Extension of the Wynn & Clara Tredway Trail north to Schenley and beyond to the Armstrong Trail, and south to New Kensington.
- d. Prioritize investments near trails for pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, restaurants, and bike and boat outfitters.

### 4. INCREASE WALKABILITY & BIKING OPTIONS

- a. Revise zoning ordinances and SALDOs to focus on the pedestrian scale, requiring sidewalks and/or street trees for new development.
- b. Actively participate in the PennDOT Connects process for local projects to ensure that pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure are incorporated into the project, where applicable.
  - i. Example: A more rural project may call for a wide shoulder to accommodate pedestrian/bicycle shared use, whereas a more suburban or urban project may warrant sidewalks and bike lanes.
- c. Conduct a sidewalk inventory. Complete gaps, repair, or replace based on the findings.
- d. Utilize the Safe Routes to School and Safe Routes to Parks programs to provide sidewalks and other infrastructure near schools and key parks.
  - i. Example: Kotecki Park.
- e. Utilize Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding (where qualified) to install sidewalks and ADA curb ramps at crossings.



Firemen Memorial Park, Arnold

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Hyde Park Foot Bridge, Hyde Park Borough

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Left: Washington Ave, Vandergrift Borough

Right: 5th Ave, New Kensington

Source: Westmoreland County Planning

**5. ENHANCE TRANSIT, INCREASE RIDERSHIP, & PROMOTE TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT**

- a. Revise zoning ordinances and SALDOs, and align land use practices to be transit supportive.
- b. Concentrate development in neighborhood centers, town centers, and urban cores so that transit can be an option.
- c. Provide first-mile/last-mile connections (sidewalks) to bus stops so that people can safely access transit service.
- d. Work with the Westmoreland County Transit Authority (WCTA) to modify and optimize routes to increase frequency and ensure connections to job centers, key destinations, and within communities.
  - i. Example: Conceptual fixed route service for the Alle-Kiski Planning District.



Bus riders

Source: Pau Casals, Unsplash.com



Multimodal infrastructure

Source: Scott Szarapka, Unsplash.com



Transit supportive development & infrastructure

Source: Clear Channel, Thisiscolossal.com



Transit oriented development

Source: Inhp.org

## TRANSIT IN THE ALLE-KISKI PLANNING DISTRICT

During public engagement for the county comprehensive plan, 30% of residents surveyed stated that transit was a top disadvantage to living in Westmoreland, and 24% of businesses surveyed cited transit as a top disadvantage to locating their business in the county.

In an effort to improve public transit service and increase ridership in the Alle-Kiski, county planners developed the following conceptual routes for the district. The routes consider area demographics, potential ridership, coverage, frequency, density, walkability, linearity, and proximity.

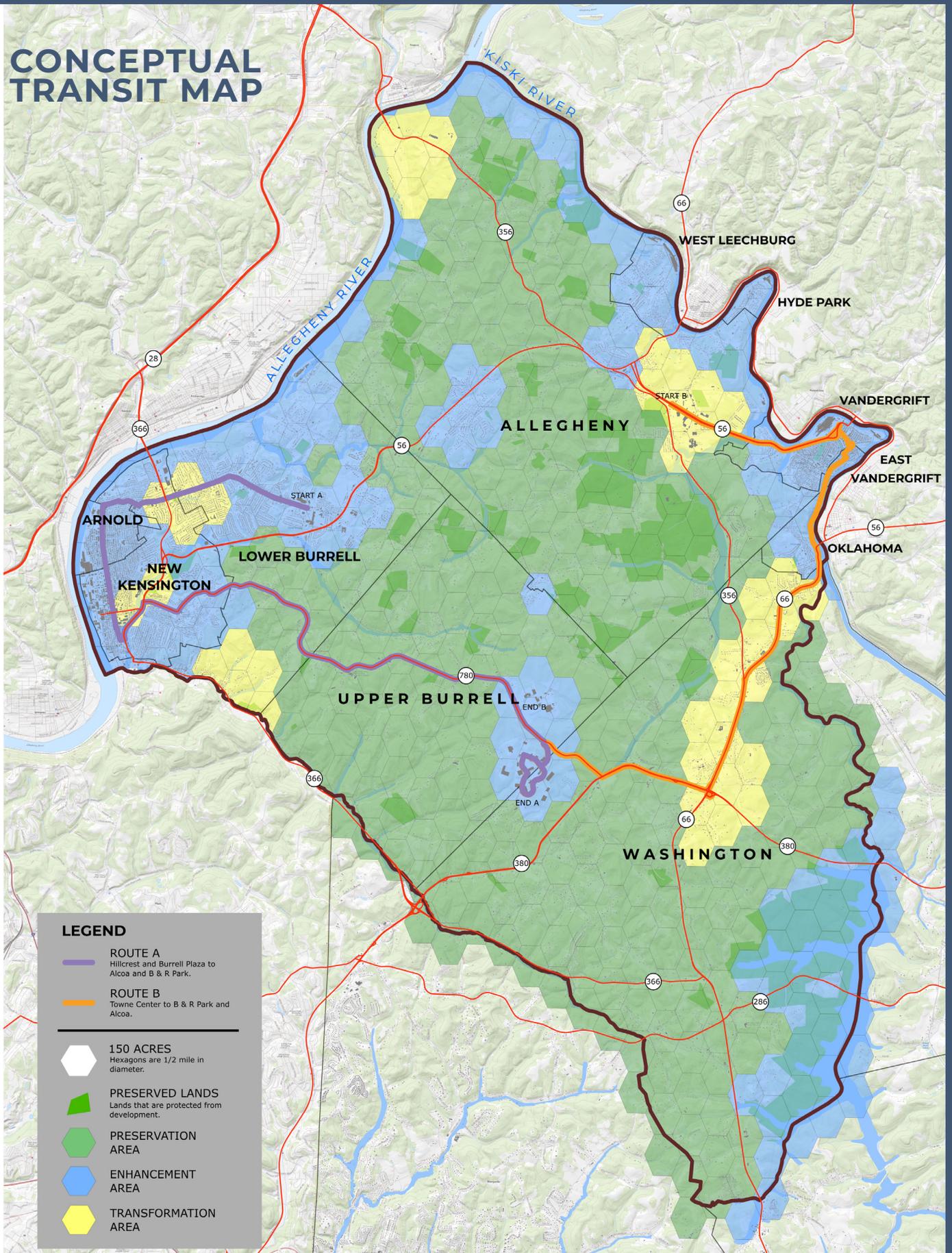
It is a recommendation of this plan and the district municipalities that the Westmoreland County Transit Authority (WCTA) consider revising its current fixed route service to these routes. These proposed routes do not incorporate other WCTA routes within/outside the county or the routes and service provided by other transit operators. Further coordination with WCTA service and other transit operators will be required.

Revisions to the fixed route service will not affect current paratransit (Go Westmoreland) service provided to communities.

Additional considerations for the conceptual routes include:

1. Weekday service from 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM, every 15-30 minutes, or at least 3-4 times a day. May need to consider shift work at Business & Research Park.
2. Potential weekend service.
3. Extend each route to close the gap and provide service to West Leechburg.
4. Connection to Greensburg, Murrysville, and Delmont.
5. Service to more downtown Pittsburgh destinations.
6. Coordination with, and service from, Port Authority of Allegheny County.
7. Service to Armstrong and Butler counties, and coordination with their transit service.

# CONCEPTUAL TRANSIT MAP



**LEGEND**

- ROUTE A**  
Hillcrest and Burrell Plaza to Alcoa and B & R Park.
- ROUTE B**  
Towne Center to B & R Park and Alcoa.
- 150 ACRES**  
Hexagons are 1/2 mile in diameter.
- PRESERVED LANDS**  
Lands that are protected from development.
- PRESERVATION AREA**
- ENHANCEMENT AREA**
- TRANSFORMATION AREA**

## 6. FOCUS ON FREIGHT

- Align local land use to support existing freight infrastructure.
- Prioritize areas for additional freight transportation options such as rail, barge, and truck.
- Develop freight infrastructure and facilities to help support the goals of the region.
- Advocate for funding, maintenance, and improvements for the region's lock and dam system.



Allegheny River Lock & Dam No. 4, Natrona Heights (Lower Burrell side)

Source: Westmoreland Planning

## TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS

A major impetus for mobility planning as part of the Planning District process is to develop a list of projects for the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and other funding opportunities to ensure a modern, connected, safe, and efficient transportation network.

Transportation projects take a long time to develop, and oftentimes funding opportunities are passed up due to a lack of planning capacity at the local level. Transportation planning and programming also requires collaboration and coordination at the municipal, county, PennDOT district, and 10-county regional levels. Furthermore, projects are very expensive, and therefore must be logical, economical, and maintained.

The following lists of prioritized transportation projects and corresponding map identify desired road, bridge, active, and operations and safety improvements within the district. These projects were developed based on numerous factors including future land use, mobility strategies, pavement and bridge conditions, regional freight network, sidewalks and trails, and congestion and crash locations.

These projects should be systematically submitted for funding, advocated, and constructed by the district and its municipalities. The county will also support and advocate for the implementation of the projects on behalf of the Alle-Kiski Planning District.

Projects that are currently under construction or programmed for funding are not included in the following lists.

The 10-county (including Westmoreland) region's long range transportation plan is implemented through a series of short term investment programs known as the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TIP is a four-year program that is updated every two years. It identifies priority roadway, transit, and multimodal transportation improvements programmed for advancement and construction.

**ALLE-KISKI  
PLANNING  
DISTRICT**

11 MUNICIPALITIES

+



65 MUNICIPALITIES

+



4 COUNTIES

+



10 COUNTIES

## ROAD PROJECTS

Projects are listed in priority order including road name, location, project type, and municipality.

1. SR 4304/Markle Rd, from near Newell Ln towards Spring Hollow Dr  
Preservation or reconstruction  
Allegheny Township
2. SR 4091/W Leechburg Rd, from Pleasant Hill Rd to S Leechburg Hill Rd  
Preservation or reconstruction  
Allegheny Township
3. SR 4032/Hunt Valley Rd/Camp Nancy Rd, from 7th Street Rd towards Turkey Ridge Rd  
Preservation or reconstruction  
Upper Burrell Township & Washington Township
4. SR 4042/Leechburg Rd, from Craigdell Rd to near Rodgers Dr  
Preservation or reconstruction  
Lower Burrell
5. PA 366/Greensburg Rd, from Logans Ferry Rd to near Westmoreland Ave  
Preservation or reconstruction  
Lower Burrell
6. SR 4087/2nd St, from Moss Aly to Freeport St  
Preservation or reconstruction  
New Kensington & Lower Burrell
7. SR 4050/Pleasant Hill Rd, from municipal line to Main St  
Preservation or reconstruction  
West Leechburg Borough
8. SR 4083/Falcon Park Rd, from near Evanwood Dr to Wildlife Lodge Rd  
Preservation or reconstruction  
Lower Burrell

## BRIDGE PROJECTS

Projects are listed in priority order including bridge number, road name, location, project type, and municipality.

1. Bridge #36211, PA 366/Greensburg Rd over branch of Pucketa Creek  
Preservation, rehab, or reconstruction  
Lower Burrell
2. Bridge #36766, SR 4081/Wildlife Lodge Rd over Little Pucketa Creek  
Preservation, rehab, or reconstruction  
Lower Burrell
3. Bridge #36761, SR 4073/White Cloud Rd over PA 56/Leechburg Rd  
Preservation, rehab, or reconstruction  
Allegheny Township

In addition to these priorities, several municipalities also expressed interest in, and the importance of, PA 28. Though located outside of the Alle-Kiski Planning District, given its proximity, PA 28 provides a certain level of service for the district and connection to the greater region. The district supports the improvement of PA 28 in addition to the efforts and aims of Allegheny, Armstrong, and Butler counties.

## ACTIVE PROJECTS

Projects are listed in priority order including description and municipality.

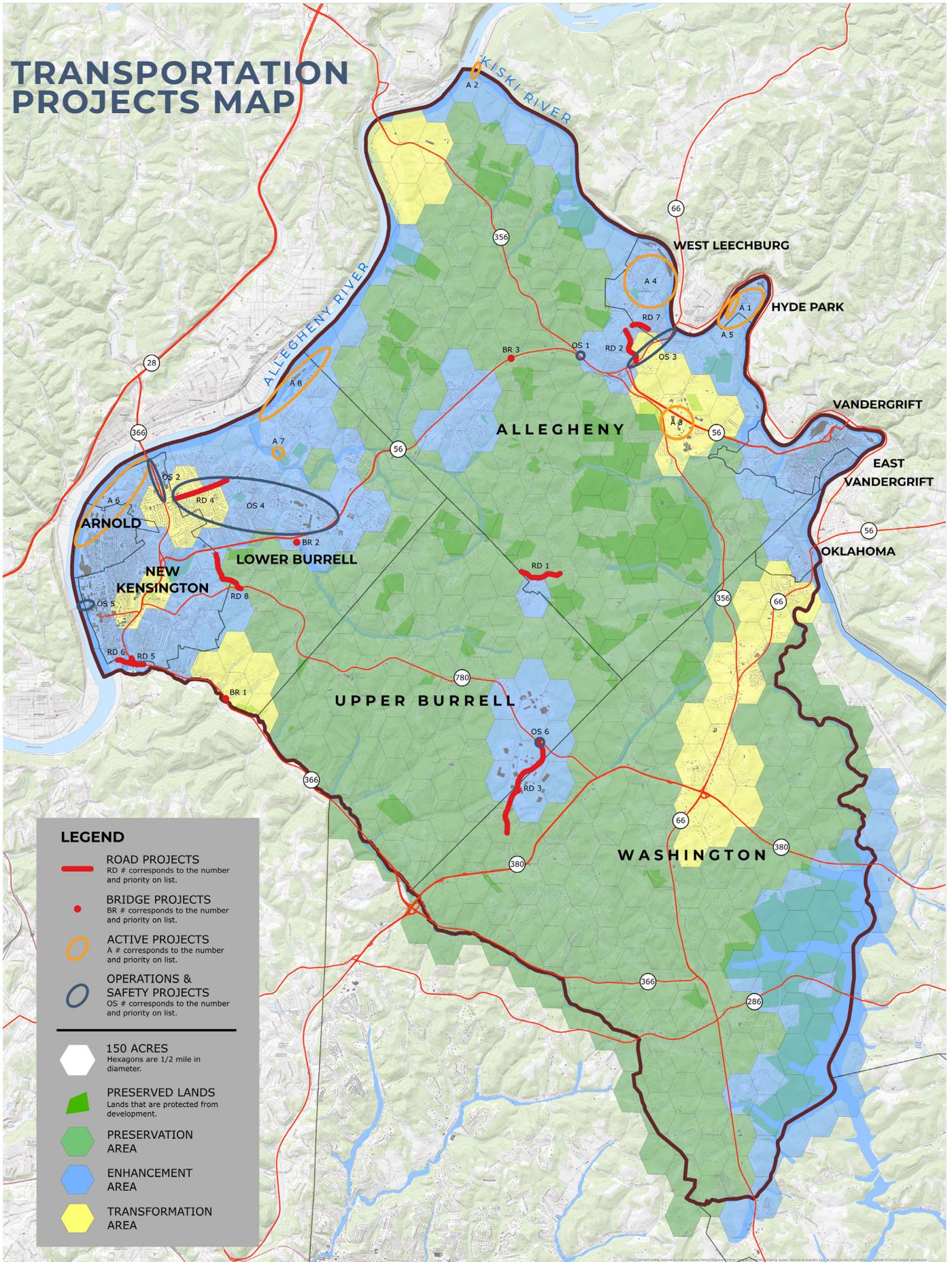
1. Trail connection from Hyde Park Foot Bridge to boat/kayak launch and enhancements  
Hyde Park Borough
2. Wynn & Clara Tredway Trail extension north including pedestrian bridge across river to connect to Baker Trail in Gilpin, Armstrong County  
Allegheny Township
3. Pedestrian connections between Towne Center and Hyde Park Plaza  
Allegheny Township
4. Community trail network to connect to Leechburg via Mill Bridge Rd  
West Leechburg Borough
5. Complete the community sidewalk network  
Hyde Park Borough
6. Trail from Firemen Memorial Park to Tarentum Bridge  
Arnold & New Kensington
7. Pedestrian improvements at Garvers Ferry Rd/Wildlife Rd intersection and Kotecki Park  
Lower Burrell
8. Wynn & Clara Tredway Trail extension south to Edgecliff Rd  
Lower Burrell

## OPERATIONS & SAFETY PROJECTS

Projects are listed in priority order including road name, location, project type, description, and municipality.

1. PA 356/PA 56/Leechburg Rd, intersection of PA 356 and PA 56/Leechburg Rd  
Operations & safety, signal upgrade and turn lane from Leechburg Rd  
Allegheny Township
2. Tarentum Bridge Rd, from Tarentum Bridge to SR 4042/Leechburg Rd  
Efficiency & operations, signal upgrade/timing  
New Kensington
3. SR 4093/S Leechburg Hill Rd, from PA 56 to Veterans Memorial Bridge  
Safety, stormwater/drainage issues and poor visibility  
Allegheny Township & West Leechburg Borough
4. SR 4042/SR 4044/Leechburg Rd, from Craigdell Rd to PA 56  
Efficiency, operations, and safety  
Lower Burrell
5. CL Schmitt Bridge  
Operations, ramps to bridge for industrial park traffic  
New Kensington
6. PA 780/7th Street Rd, intersection of PA 780/7th Street Rd and SR 4032/Hunt Valley Rd  
Operations  
Upper Burrell Township

# TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS MAP



**LEGEND**

- **ROAD PROJECTS**  
RD # corresponds to the number and priority on list.
- **BRIDGE PROJECTS**  
BR # corresponds to the number and priority on list.
- **ACTIVE PROJECTS**  
A # corresponds to the number and priority on list.
- **OPERATIONS & SAFETY PROJECTS**  
OS # corresponds to the number and priority on list.

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- ⬡ **150 ACRES**  
Hexagons are 1/2 mile in diameter.
- **PRESERVED LANDS**  
Lands that are protected from development.
- **PRESERVATION AREA**
- **ENHANCEMENT AREA**
- **TRANSFORMATION AREA**

# Intergovernmental Cooperation

Across Pennsylvania, municipal boundaries divide geographic, social, economic, and interdependent communities. As a result, there often exists a significant lack of intergovernmental communication, duplication of services, inefficiencies, lack of cross-boundary visioning and planning, and cumbersome coordination and decision-making.

Active cooperation and coordination among local governments through councils of governments (COGs) and other intergovernmental organizations can go a long way to support economic vibrancy and fiscally healthy regions. Additionally, through locally-approved, citizen-based processes, municipal consolidation is another alternative that can lead to improved economic productivity and quality of life among communities.

The Planning District process itself has facilitated a degree of intergovernmental cooperation among the 11 municipalities of the Alle-Kiski by meeting together to discuss common issues and challenges with the desire to take action. This document represents the plan of action, and the time for action is now.

The PA Intergovernmental Cooperation Law (53 Pa. C.S.A. § 2301) is the enabling statute for intergovernmental cooperation among municipalities in Pennsylvania. This law permits all local governments to cooperate with one another in any action or service that the governments have the power to do alone.

## INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION IN THE ALLE-KISKI

Consensus for an intergovernmental council (IGC) was developed through significant work performed at the regular planning district meetings and through the intergovernmental working group. In particular, the working group examined various governance options, sought greater cohesiveness as a group, and established thresholds for return on investment.

The Planning District process built shared understandings not only about important aspects of planning, but also about how decisions are made, and how municipalities can support each other as well.

*MUNICIPALITIES BENEFIT INDIVIDUALLY AS WELL AS COLLECTIVELY WHEN WORKING TOGETHER.*



Alle-Kiski Planning District kickoff meeting

Source: Westmoreland County Planning



Alle-Kiski Planning District meeting

Source: Westmoreland County Planning

## WHY AN IGC?

The intergovernmental working group of the Alle-Kiski Planning District examined four different common organizational structures and governance options:

1. Intergovernmental organization formed under the PA Intergovernmental Cooperation Act (typically a COG);
2. Organization incorporated into WEDIG (a 501(c)(3) nonprofit);
3. COG with an administrative arm within 501(c); and
4. Independent 501(c)(3) organization.

It was determined that an intergovernmental council (similar to options 1 and 3) was the best structure for continued cooperation moving forward. Both, forming a COG, and modifying WEDIG, proved to be too challenging regarding the administrative burden on member municipalities and the significant changes necessary to create equal representation, respectively.

In an effort to ease the administrative burden of the Intergovernmental Council, Westmoreland County Planning is committed to providing initial admin support to the IGC.

Founded in 2008, the Westmoreland Economic Development Initiative for Growth (WEDIG) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to build up a region known for its innovative economic opportunities, prepared and educated workforce, and quality of life. WEDIG is a collaboration of five municipalities in northern Westmoreland County including Allegheny Township, Arnold, Lower Burrell, New Kensington, and Upper Burrell Township.

The potential for similarly-minded WEDIG to assume the function of a formal intergovernmental cooperation organization was examined throughout the Planning District process and discussions on intergovernmental cooperation. Though not the chosen structure, WEDIG may provide significant support for intergovernmental cooperation as a civic organization.

It's recommended that WEDIG form a standing intergovernmental committee to support the work of the Alle-Kiski IGC by providing civic-sector based engagement, assistance, and guidance for the purpose of promoting and advocating for intergovernmental cooperation. This assistance could include the provision of research, analysis, and technical assistance; access to funds as a 501(c)(3) organization; and other activities that facilitate and advance the work of the Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council.

To accomplish this, WEDIG bylaws would need to be amended to establish such a committee. The intergovernmental committee should be charged with championing and advancing the activities of the Alle-Kiski IGC. Individuals representing the Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council should be included in the WEDIG committee. The Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council should be consulted regarding how the WEDIG committee would be best structured.

## FORMING THE ALLE-KISKI INTERGOVERNMENTAL COUNCIL

Building off of the Planning District process, team development, and communication and cooperation thus far, it is a recommendation of this plan for those municipalities that so choose, to form the Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council. Steps to forming the IGC include:

1. Adopt the resolution (see Appendix) to participate in the Intergovernmental Council.
2. Appoint a representative (delegate) and an alternate to the group.
3. Pay pro rata dues (see Appendix).

Once these steps have been accomplished by interested municipalities, those municipalities should begin to meet regularly. Meetings should take place in the evening to accommodate the schedules of elected officials and held at a mutually accessible location or online.

As established by the bylaws (see Appendix), the Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council should select officers as soon as possible and establish a policy for setting an agenda for each month.

Forming the Alle-Kiski IGC heightens the stature and influence of the local governments in the Alle-Kiski region. With a unified vision and action, the region well positions itself to accomplish important goals.



Alle-Kiski Planning District kickoff meeting  
Source: Westmoreland County Planning

## FUNCTIONS OF THE ALLE-KISKI INTERGOVERNMENTAL COUNCIL

Each delegate serves as a conduit of communication between their municipality and the Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council and acts as their municipality's representative.

Each municipality has one vote. The decision-making body, or assembly, will make decisions through discussion, consensus, and voting. A simple majority vote will enable action in all circumstances except for a bylaws amendment.

Delegates will elect a chairperson, vice chairperson, and secretary/treasurer as officers. The officers will also comprise the executive committee. The executive committee is responsible for preparing meeting agendas and the annual budget for consideration and approval by the group.

Nothing about this IGC organizational or representative structure precludes additional municipalities from joining the Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council, should its members see fit. Though the plan and Alle-Kiski IGC are Westmoreland County-focused, the region is inclusive of communities in other municipalities and counties. Despite being geographic and political boundaries, the Allegheny and Kiskiminetas rivers are of mutual interest and a shared asset to adjacent communities. Moving forward, members should remain open to defining and redefining the Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council area. Functional in nature, its adaptability is its strength.

## ROLE OF WESTMORELAND COUNTY PLANNING

The Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council will benefit from the support of county planning staff helping to build administrative capacity during the crucial launch period. This arrangement directly addresses concerns regarding the lack of administrative capacity identified during the Planning District process and the weakness of prior intergovernmental endeavors. This also avoids an over-reliance on volunteers which keeps the energy of the organization focused on action rather than administration.

County planning staff will primarily assist local leaders with convening and communications during the early stages of the Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council, and may also serve as fiscal agent and assist with grant applications. County planners will not have authority over the Intergovernmental Council, and staff members may not vote or hold office. Instead, planning staff will serve as a facilitator for IGC activities.

## CAPACITY BUILDING

One of the significant challenges of local governance is the varying levels of capacity and interest among communities and officials. Adding to this is the reality of bi-annual election cycles and varying administrative capacities.

Critical to the Planning District process is the ability for people to become involved regardless of the stage in the process and to share collective learning. The [reimaginingourwestmoreland.org](http://reimaginingourwestmoreland.org) website was created intentionally to accomplish this objective. All meetings, activities, content, and learnings of the district are available there.

Intergovernmental cooperation in the Alle-Kiski will grow by doing. Public learning will aid in the startup of the IGC by ensuring the region's leaders are ready to respond to local opportunities, state and regional planning efforts, and shifts in the political and funding landscapes.

This is a logical role for Westmoreland County Planning to play during the IGC's development. As a planning agency at the county level, Westmoreland County Planning relies on local governments for insight and information about what our mutual residents need and want. Furthermore, for local communities to avail themselves to many funding and programmatic opportunities, they may rely on the county's expertise to navigate the process. Westmoreland County Planning can also help facilitate interdepartmental cooperation within county government for those programs and functions that interact heavily with municipal governments, such as emergency services, elections, and parks and recreation.

By supporting the IGC, county staff will be taking active steps to be in touch and in tune with the local communities. This assures greater accountability for both levels of government working together.

Though Westmoreland County Planning will provide initial support, the Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council must develop capacity to be successful. By performing many of the perfunctory functions of the IGC, the organization can work towards becoming more self-sustaining. Such actions include deliberate communication and engagement with municipal leaders, staff, and citizens; maintaining updates on [reimaginingourwestmoreland.org](http://reimaginingourwestmoreland.org) for the Alle-Kiski IGC; maintaining a municipal directory for use by county staff and member municipalities; develop press releases and market intergovernmental projects and successes; and maintain a meeting schedule, agendas, minutes, and financial and grant reporting.

The Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council should also work together to identify and receive any necessary or beneficial training offered from resources such as Penn State New Kensington, Local Government Academy, and statewide agencies or associations.

## INFORMING IGC ACTIONS

Throughout the Planning District process and associated discussions and exercises on intergovernmental cooperation, local leaders identified many common interests, needs, issues, opportunities, and risks. This input not only led to the desire to form an IGC, but also informed actions for the Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council to take.

The Alle-Kiski Planning District identified key *Reimagining Our Westmoreland* strategies as they relate to local issues and aims, completed opinion surveys on municipal services and intergovernmental cooperation, identified capital projects, shared levels of agreement on various types of cooperation, and compared services.

## RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR THE ALLE-KISKI INTERGOVERNMENTAL COUNCIL

As resolved through the Planning District process, the Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council should focus its efforts on the following actions. While the land use and mobility actions may be implemented individually, or collaboratively, these actions are intended to be carried out through intergovernmental cooperation by the IGC.

1. Conduct a local road assessment using RoadBotics (or similar company) to manage and coordinate paving decisions.
2. Establish criteria and develop and maintain a listing of development-ready sites. Work with local business and civic leaders to market these properties.
3. Work with county planners to review local policies and regulations to remove barriers and standardize and streamline the development process.
4. Develop a downtown master plan to identify specific assets, issues, and opportunities.
5. Develop a master plan for a vacant or aging commercial center or corridor to outline existing conditions, assets, opportunities, and vision.
6. Working with Westmoreland County Planning and the Redevelopment Authority/Land Bank, conduct a regional blight inventory and develop a blight plan utilizing the Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania's Five-Step Fast-Track Blight Plan process.
7. Adopt the International Property Maintenance Code to establish uniform standards of quality across municipalities and execute a shared service agreement for proactive code enforcement to enforce property maintenance codes.
8. Develop and establish guidelines and standards for beautification including landscaping, signage, wayfinding, lighting, facades, etc.
9. Identify key corridors, intersections, and gateways for beautification and procure funding for improvements.
10. Identify opportunities for joint purchasing and shared use of vehicles and heavy equipment.
11. Identify capital projects on an annual basis.
12. Coordinate capital improvement projects such as road paving, water and sewer, and facility construction and upgrades.

While municipalities within the Alle-Kiski have had some successful efforts of intergovernmental cooperation, their strong commitment to service and good government, and desire for better governance and improved services, bodes well for a more robust intergovernmental future. The Alle-Kiski IGC provides a forum for continued open and honest discussions and is the agency for collective action.



Alle-Kiski Planning District meeting  
Source: Westmoreland County Planning

13. Investigate opportunities for coordinated regional planning, shared parks and recreation services, and public safety.
14. Conduct a thorough review of municipal services to determine other shared service or joint purchasing opportunities.
15. Advocate and support local transportation projects and grant applications within the region.
16. Annually review the list of prioritized transportation projects.
17. Inform and educate member governing boards on the benefits of regional cooperation.
18. Leverage civic relationships to jointly pursue priorities and engage ongoing support of intergovernmental cooperation endeavors (WEDIG).
19. As implementation progresses and capacity of the IGC grows, perform strategic planning to guide future efforts.
20. Periodically review and revise bylaws as necessary.
21. Evaluate potential towards independent administration including progress in participation rates, financial wherewithal and willingness to support, return on investment on programs and projects, and successful regional advocacy with state, federal, and philanthropic organizations.
22. Develop an ordinance to form a council of governments (COG), if desired, as capacity is established.

The levels of agreement exercise conducted during the Planning District process allowed for local governments to explore the acceptability of intergovernmental proposals in a safe, non-binary (yes/no) way. Four scenarios were explored including an ad hoc planning group, parks circuit rider, COG, and regional policing.

This noncommittal, variant approach encourages creativity and problem-solving. After repeat iterations, a proposal receiving an acceptable level of agreement should move into the formal stage of written agreement addressing governance, funding, operations, performance measures, etc.

The results were primarily positive, with no one in strict opposition to the scenarios. The majority wholly endorsed the ad hoc planning group, is open to discuss a parks circuit rider and regional policing, and can live with a COG.



## ALLE-KISKI CONNECTED

In this modern age, the internet is an increasingly integral part of nearly every aspect of life. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of and reliance on broadband infrastructure, and the issue of internet access. Not only were our government functions (and even Planning District process) forced to pivot, so too were our personal lives – from working from home and virtual learning to increased online shopping and the use of telemedicine, etc. Our businesses and industries were greatly impacted as well.

- 23. Partner with the county to expand broadband in unserved and underserved areas.
- 24. Seek and apply for funding for broadband infrastructure

High-speed internet access is not only crucial to maintaining everyday life, it's essential to growing our economy, expanding educational opportunities for our children, increasing access to modern healthcare, and improving the safety of our communities.

Closing the digital divide and expanding broadband access in the Alle-Kiski is an issue that necessitates action by the IGC. The Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council should work to develop this ever-recognized necessity for everyday life and the growth and prosperity of a region and county to attract and retain residents, workers, businesses, and industry.

- 25. Develop public-private partnerships by making targeted investments in basic broadband infrastructure like towers and dark fiber.
- 26. Investigate opportunities to incorporate broadband in large-scale road or utility projects.

## Conclusion

Throughout the *Reimagining Our Westmoreland* planning process, we quickly realized the need for greater collaboration and coordination with local municipalities to affect change across the county and within the region. This plan seeks to address the specific challenges facing the Alle-Kiski and builds upon the progress being made in the district. This plan is a testament to the local leaders within the Alle-Kiski Planning District and their commitment and resolve to improve their communities and region as a whole. For any plan to be successful, it must be put into action. It's the collective actions of local municipalities, planning districts, and county that will drive us forward. May our efforts remake Westmoreland into a more livable and prosperous county, together.

Not just limited to the members of the Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council, Westmoreland County Planning's Technical Resources and Municipal Services (TRAMS) program can provide additional assistance for local planning efforts. Services include GIS mapping, blight inventories, comprehensive plans, zoning ordinances, SALDOs, corridor plans, master plans, and other studies and analyses.



TECHNICAL RESOURCES AND  
MUNICIPAL SERVICES PROGRAM

# Appendix

Alle-Kiski IGC Resolution

Alle-Kiski IGC Bylaws

Alle-Kiski IGC Dues

Intergovernmental Resources

DCED Local Government Services

DCED Programs

DCED Municipal Assistance Program

DCED Strategic Management Planning Program

SPC Funding Programs

SPC Local Bridge Programs

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