

Mount Washington Community Development Corporation

STRATEGIC PLAN 2018-2022



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Michael Grande, *President*
Talia Piazza, *Vice President*
Josh Whiteside, *Secretary*
Alaina Spanoudakis, *Treasurer*
Tom Brady
Darla D'Anna
Terry Moss
Joe Rewis
Curt Conrad
Chris Kail
Kevin Kerr
Jean Novak
Greg Panza
Tom Tighe

CONSULTANT TEAM

Valerie Beichner, élan evolutions, LLC
Chris Beichner, élan evolutions, LLC

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from President.....	3
Executive Summary.....	4
Vision & Mission.....	5
Strategic Priorities.....	6
Priority Projects.....	7-11
Key Partnerships.....	11-12

This plan was funded by the Mount Washington Community Development Corporation.

Photographs credited to the Mount Washington Community Development Corporation and Chris Cowman

Mount Washington Community Development Corporation

608 Virginia Avenue
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15211
412-481-3220
info@mwcdc.org

Dear Citizens, Business Owners, Partners, and Stakeholders,

It is my privilege to present the 2018-22 Strategic Plan for the Mount Washington Community Development Corporation. This plan was developed by our consultant, élan evolutions, at the request of the Board of Directors of the Mount Washington Community Development Corporation. It is the result of over 250 ideas generated by residents, stakeholders, and board members during an eight-month process which began in January, 2017. During that process, the community was engaged on four separate occasions to offer their insights and ideas for improving the quality of life in Mt. Washington and Duquesne Heights, the Board of Directors participated in a day long visioning retreat, and numerous residents, business owners, and stakeholders were interviewed individually by our consultant.

As a result of this process, it has become clear that our Mt. Washington and Duquesne Heights neighborhoods have yet to fully realize their potential. Consequently, the MWCDC must seek the resources not only to improve the quality of life of our residents, but also to increase our organizational capacity to fully support a resident driven approach to community development. We must seek to deliver on both the short-term goals and needs of the community while maintaining a vision towards the future which includes long term planning and sustainability both for the community and the MWCDC. Finally, the MWCDC will work on behalf of the community to achieve the goals and vision which are in our purview while advocating to our strategic partners, public servants, and stakeholders for the goals which reach beyond the scope of the MWCDC.

I have every confidence that if we follow the guidelines we have established during this process, plan for both the short and long term projects that have been identified, and continue to take guidance from our residents, we will be successful in helping Mt. Washington and Duquesne Heights to fully realize that potential we all can see.

Sincerely,



Michael Grande
President
MWCDC

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Mount Washington Community Development Corporation (MWCDC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, community development corporation focused on development, investment, and quality of life in the Mount Washington and Duquesne Heights neighborhoods of Pittsburgh. Our vision states *we will be the ideal community for diverse residents, businesses and visitors in Pittsburgh*. Our mission is *to engage community, promote development and provide opportunity*.

This strategic plan was commissioned by the MWCDC Board of Directors to focus priorities and projects for 2018 to 2022. The consulting team of élan evolutions, LLC was retained to work through a comprehensive, inclusive process to determine what the next five years will look like for our organization and the community. This strategic planning process took five months to reach completion in August 2017.

Our consultants developed a customized process which included five phases: (1) Discovery & Research, (2) Stakeholder Engagement, (3) Results Summary, (4) Verify Results and (5) Craft Final Plan. The Discovery & Research phase involved the review and analysis of various internal/external reports and board documents to help the consultants understand the status of the organization, current projects being discussed, future focuses, organizational challenges and needs. Stakeholder Engagement began with a six-hour MWCDC board retreat and included survey distribution and interviews with over 50 organizations and individuals.

The Results Summary phase included an in-depth and cumulative analysis of all data collected through the reports, retreat, surveys, and interviews to determine common themes, trends, and an idea of what future MWCDC priorities may look like. This first summary was shared at the June 2017 Community Forum to help with phase four – Verify Results. Additional information and ideas were gathered at the Community Forum and some were included in a draft strategic plan. In August 2017, a draft plan was presented to the MWCDC Board of Directors which helped continue the verification phase, and then presented to the community at the Community Forum. The final phase of Crafting a Final Strategic Plan was delivered to the board of directors in September 2017 once fine tuning of the priorities had been set.

The following are observations as a result of the above process:

- a) The Mount Washington and Duquesne Heights communities have enormous **potential** which is recognized by residents and businesses but is not yet fully realized. In part, this is a result of too many priorities and not enough resources to meet all the needs with each priority. In partnership with the Neighbors on the Mount (NotM) and other key partners, the MWCDC should stay focused on the forthcoming strategic priorities while supporting public safety and beautification efforts.
- b) A **resident driven approach** to community development is the best and preferred approach. The MWCDC board is fully committed to listening to and involving the community in current and future projects to improve the overall quality of life in Mount Washington and Duquesne Heights. Community involvement should be on-going and include a diverse sub-set of residents, business owners and property owners.
- c) A strategic plan needs to address the challenges of the neighborhood while recognizing the need to increase **organizational resources** to adequately create a structure that can purposefully improve the quality of life of the community and to increase the overall quality and capacity of the MWCDC.

This strategic plan took over 250 ideas generated from resident input, stakeholder advice, and board visioning to create a prioritized plan for the future of our organization.

Vision

“We will be the ideal community for diverse residents, businesses and visitors in Pittsburgh.”



Mission

“To engage community, promote development and provide opportunity.”

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Development – Cultivating sound, responsible residential and commercial opportunities, while capitalizing on inherent tourism opportunities.

Engagement – Actively engaging the community by strategizing a future vision for the Mount Washington and Duquesne Heights neighborhoods.

Advocacy – Advancing community concerns with local decision makers who can influence change on significant projects impacting the community.

Sustainability – Creating the right levels of board, staff, volunteer, and financial resources to adequately implement current and future development, engagement and advocacy initiatives

The following strategic projects are broken out by priority and categorized by length of time to complete. On-Going projects are projects already being implemented by the organization and will continue in the foreseeable future. Short-Term projects would begin within months of the Board adopting this plan and last for up to two years. Mid-Term means projects that might not begin until the year 2020 and could take at least two years to achieve. Long-Term projects are projects that may take a few years to plan for but would not start implementation until the fourth year and could last beyond five years.

On-Going = Current projects to continue

Short-Term = 0 to 2 years

Mid-Term = 2 to 4 years

Long-Term = 4 to 5 years and beyond

DEVELOPMENT

	Project	Timeframe
1	Restructure the existing Development Committee to best navigate the current collection of projects.	On-Going
2	Continue acquiring property through the property reserve and create processes to determine how to redevelop or pursue disposition of certain properties to partners.	On-Going
3	Engage neighbors in robust conversation about the importance of affordable housing in a strong community and the subsequent benefits in terms of attraction of neighbors, businesses, and revenue streams.	On-Going Short-Term
4	Begin to build a strong relationship with the Pittsburgh Land Bank Authority and their disposition process.	Short-Term
5	Create a structure for engaging with business and property owners in the neighborhood commercial districts to learn of and be proactive with their need of resources, advice, etc.	Short-Term
6	Create a new Curb Appeal Program that will increase the overall attractiveness of the neighborhood and encourage investment in housing, businesses, and tourism areas.	Short-Term
7	Create a business recruitment package that promotes the assets of Mount Washington, programs of the City, and available sites for commercial redevelopment.	Mid-Term
8	Use the business recruitment package to attract neighborhood-serving, community suggested businesses such as a hardware store, walk-in medical provider, diverse restaurants, and a consignment shop.	Mid-Term
9	Host a housing expo periodically to promote various financial and technical assistance programs available to property owners.	Mid-Term
10	Explore options to either build new or open access to a public restroom(s) along Grandview Avenue	Mid-Term
11	Determine where a visitor's center is most appropriate and practical.	Mid-Term
12	Foster a close relationship with the future developers of One Grandview to promote and offer resources towards the development and to ensure there is community support and buy-in for the proposed project.	On-Going Long-Term
13	Partner with local businesses, the URA, and others to create a local and sustainable buy local campaign .	Long-Term

ENGAGEMENT

	Project	Timeframe
1	Continue to utilize Emerald View Park Committee to aid in planning and visioning role with Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy.	On-Going Short-Term
2	Work with City Planning, the Port Authority, and Council to revisit the South Metro Area Revitalization through Transit (SMART) Transit Revitalization Investment District (TRID) Plan to determine if there are components of the plan which are still relevant or if continued corridor planning around the transit route should continue.	Short-Term
3	Work with City Public Works, business and property owners, and Council to revisit the Shiloh Street Vision Plan to determine if there are components of the plan which are still relevant or if continued planning makes sense for the Shiloh Street corridor.	Short-Term
4	Revise existing and develop commercial corridor plans for Virginia, Bailey, Boggs, Bigham, Grandview, and Republic Streets to responsibly plan future commercial opportunities, in cooperation with residents and business owners, to ensure there are sites identified and available for future desired businesses (e.g. a hardware store, medical store, office space, etc.)	On-Going Mid-Term
5	Craft a community-wide parking plan to address the perpetual parking issues that create less desirable residential areas, lower property values, access to the business district, and other issues associated with the community being a popular tourist destination.	Long-Term
6	Develop a set of residential design suggestions to assist property owners with façade restoration while maintaining the integrity and character of the community.	Long-Term
7	Develop steep slope and retaining wall guidelines for property owners responsible for maintaining topographic challenges while keeping neighborhood character.	Long-Term

ADVOCACY

	Project	Timeframe
1	Engage the City to improve law enforcement , participate in community policing practices and other public safety measures, in conjunction with Neighbors on the Mount and block watches.	On-Going Short-Term
2	Establish an Advocacy Committee to create campaigns for influencing decision makers and establishing advocacy priorities. The Advocacy Committee should develop a timeframe and create a plan to run several successful campaigns.	Short-Term
3	Prioritize infrastructure improvements (road resurfacing, sidewalks, curbs, street lights, steps, fencing, etc.) from around the neighborhood and advocate for inclusion in future City capital budgets.	Short-Term
4	Create a strategic vision for Grandview Avenue (infrastructure, amenities, the view, etc.) that will make this a crown jewel of the City.	Mid-Term
5	Build a sound relationship with the Port Authority to continue and expand transit routes, incline service, and development opportunities around South Hills Junction.	On-Going Mid-Term
6	Work with City Planning and Council to develop better participation in the planning and zoning process.	Long-Term

ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

	Project	Timeframe
1	Continue to engage the community and seek their input on projects important to the neighborhood.	On-Going
2	Continue to investigate funding sources that will sustain the organization in the short-term including tourism-based fees like a partial incline Port Authority revenue, fees associated with the Lamar sign, a parking improvement district, and other opportunities that may arise.	On-Going Short-Term

3	Create a fundraising plan to include strategy to attract individual, corporate, philanthropic, public, and other sources of funding.	Short-Term
4	Seek joint funding with the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy in partnership with the advancement of Emerald View Park and its management plan.	Short-Term
5	Build strong organizational messaging through Community Forums, online communications, and other outlets. Listen and respond to community concerns, to adhere to best practices of organizational transparency, promote successes.	Short-Term
6	Hire an executive director , as resources become available, to build capacity, lead the implementation of this strategic plan, help to coordinate board involvement, and to instill confidence with funders and the community.	Short-Term
7	Look at LMI and CDBG census tracts specifically for funding and project opportunities around housing, blight remediation, and vacant lot reuse.	Mid-Term
8	Organize one major event per year that will help to boost corporate sponsors, bring residents together, revive organizational leadership position in the community, and to market the community.	On-Going Mid-Term
9	Periodically review the organization's bylaws and employ sound document archival practices.	Mid-Term
10	Strive to diversify revenues to ensure the organization is not solely reliant on a few sources of income.	On-Going Long-Term

KEY PARTNERSHIPS

Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy – The Alliance between the MWCDC and Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy (PPC) will remain a function of the MWCDC. The MWCDC will continue to engage the community via the Emerald View Park Committee. The Alliance Agreement guides this work and ensures the Emerald View Park Master Plan is implemented. Emerald View Park is a neighborhood and City asset which significantly increases the quality of life for neighborhood residents, businesses, and tourists. The MWCDC will continue to honor the Agreement, including the EVP Committee, while looking for opportunities to engage residents on the EVP vision, volunteer events, and fundraising opportunities.

Neighbors on the Mount – The MWCDC was instrumental in helping to form Neighbors on the Mount. The organizations will continue to work closely together to ensure their efforts complement one another.

Hilltop Alliance – The MWCDC will continue to explore ways to partner with the Hilltop Alliance on housing redevelopment opportunities near Allentown and Beltzhoover. When appropriate, the MWCDC will explore a formal partnership with the Hilltop Alliance that would lay out specific responsibilities and deliverables per organization. While this would elevate the cooperation between the organizations, it would also increase potential positive media relations and funding opportunities.

Economic Development South – In certain situations, it may be appropriate to partner with Economic Development South (EDS) on specific projects where they could lend their expertise including specific areas like commercial corridor development and transportation issues.

Urban Redevelopment Authority – The URA is a diverse and valuable resource to CDCs helping to assemble land, provide low-interest financing, some grant funding, and various levels to technical expertise. The URA is also providing staff assistance to the new Land Bank helping to create policies and procedures. The URA could be in a position to help with commercial corridor planning, creating design guidelines and business recruitment programs.

VisitPittsburgh – VisitPittsburgh is an under-utilized resource for community-based groups to help with tourism attraction, retention and resources. This high capacity organization will be brought in to seek advice and input on creating a public restroom and visitor's center near Shiloh Street. VisitPittsburgh may be able to help determine ways the MWCDC could collect tourism-based revenues via the inclines, percentage of business sales from tourism, or other revenue ideas.

Port Authority – The Port Authority is a key partner due to the diverse interactions the MWCDC will be having with them. From advocating for increased transit routes to development opportunities around the South Hills Junction, there are several opportunities to build close relationships with staff and board members to increase opportunities for a public restroom and visitor's center near Shiloh Street and create new revenue from the inclines.

Elected Officials - The MWCDC will collaborate with local, state, and federal elected officials and their offices on projects including, but not limited to, code enforcement, funding sources, and relevant policy and legislative matters.

Local Groups – Grassroots groups like block watches, athletic leagues, church groups, social and service clubs are critical to the success of an overall community's well-being and quality of life. The MWCDC will seek opportunities to partner with local groups to implement their mission and to improve the quality of life.