

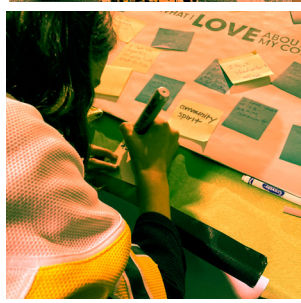
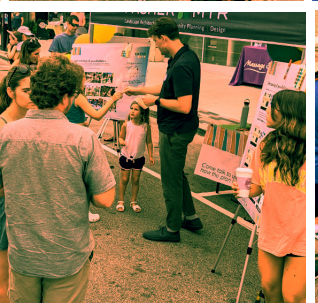
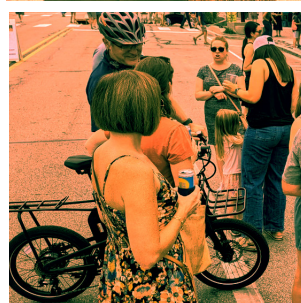
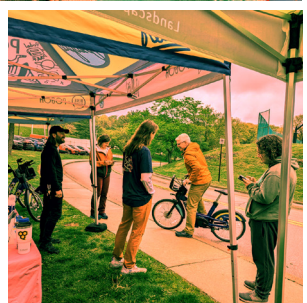


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L E B O

Comprehensive Plan
Mt. Lebanon Municipality
January 3 edition







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acknowledgements

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Where unspecified, photo credits belong to Stephanie Hacke, Ken Lager, Judy Macoskey, George Mendel, Jacqueline Radin and John Schisler





this is home.

Mt. Lebanon is a special place. The community is well known as one of the Pittsburgh region's most livable by virtue of its thriving business districts, distinctive neighborhoods, National Blue Ribbon schools, quality recreation opportunities, expansive tree canopy and first-rate municipal services. This is a place rooted deeply in history, where architecture and the built environment reinforce a distinct and authentic local identity. It's a place with significant social infrastructure, where neighbors gather in the streets to celebrate more than 100 block parties each year, where volunteers find countless ways to contribute to the quality of life, and where cultural offerings are abundant. It's a place where it's easy to feel like you're part of something.

Mt. Lebanon bears the imprint of past leadership and vision that positioned the community to flourish through the upturns and downturns of decades past. This is resiliency: Where Mt. Lebanon has doubled down on what makes this place special — its tree-lined, walkable streets, its historic character, the fine-grained variety of its business districts, its exceptional public services — it has fostered a sense of pride in place that has been and remains existentially important.

This Comprehensive Plan is the result of a community conversation about what happens next. **What kind of place should Mt. Lebanon be a decade from now? What policies, initiatives and investments will bring that vision to life?**





about the plan

Charting a course for Mt. Lebanon's next decade

A municipality's Comprehensive Plan is its officially adopted playbook for long-term prosperity. The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) enables local governments to adopt Comprehensive Plans to proactively guide future growth and development. Such plans draw on public and stakeholder engagement to identify community needs and aspirations, as well as to test and refine recommendations and implementation strategies.

A Comprehensive Plan is, by nature, a big-picture advisory document. Its guidance is at times abstract, positioning the plan as a reference point for making future decisions. Adopting a plan does not compel a local government to undertake all of the action steps it contains.

That said, Mt. Lebanon has a reputation for delivering on plans made. The municipality achieved significant success in the implementation of its last Comprehensive Plan, *Elevate Mt. Lebanon* (2013). The municipality completed or significantly addressed 53 of the 56 action items in the plan. Results include:

- Renovation of the public works complex on Cedar Boulevard
- Upgrades to the rink and swimming pool
- A permanent home for the Historical Society of Mt. Lebanon
- The Vibrant Uptown streetscape project
- Expansion of code enforcement activities
- A zoning ordinance update
- A traffic signal upgrade at Bower Hill Road, Firwood Drive and North Wren Drive

This is due to the extent that staff and officials integrated the plan into governance, through such efforts as tying the Capital Improvement Program to Comprehensive Plan goals and updating the Planning Board and Commission annually on implementation progress. Mt. Lebanon's Code and Home Rule Charter states that "The Comprehensive Plan shall serve as a guide to all future Commission action concerning land use and development regulations, urban renewal programs and expenditures for capital improvements."

This Comprehensive Plan recognizes that Mt. Lebanon is already a great place with strong capacity and boundless potential. It intends to set the municipality up in continued leadership as a community boldly facing the policy challenges of the next decade. From its current position as a standard-bearer for livability,

Mt. Lebanon is poised for greater achievements, with an eye on the largest issues facing the nation and our world.

the process

Audacious ambition, sensible strategy

The planning process sought to deliver a new Comprehensive Plan for Mt. Lebanon that is both worthy of bold aspirations and well-calibrated to the practical realities of feasibility and available resources. This meant 1) involving as many residents as possible, and 2) building in opportunities throughout the plan's development to incorporate the perspectives of staff, a variety of local experts, partner agencies and others with specific insight.

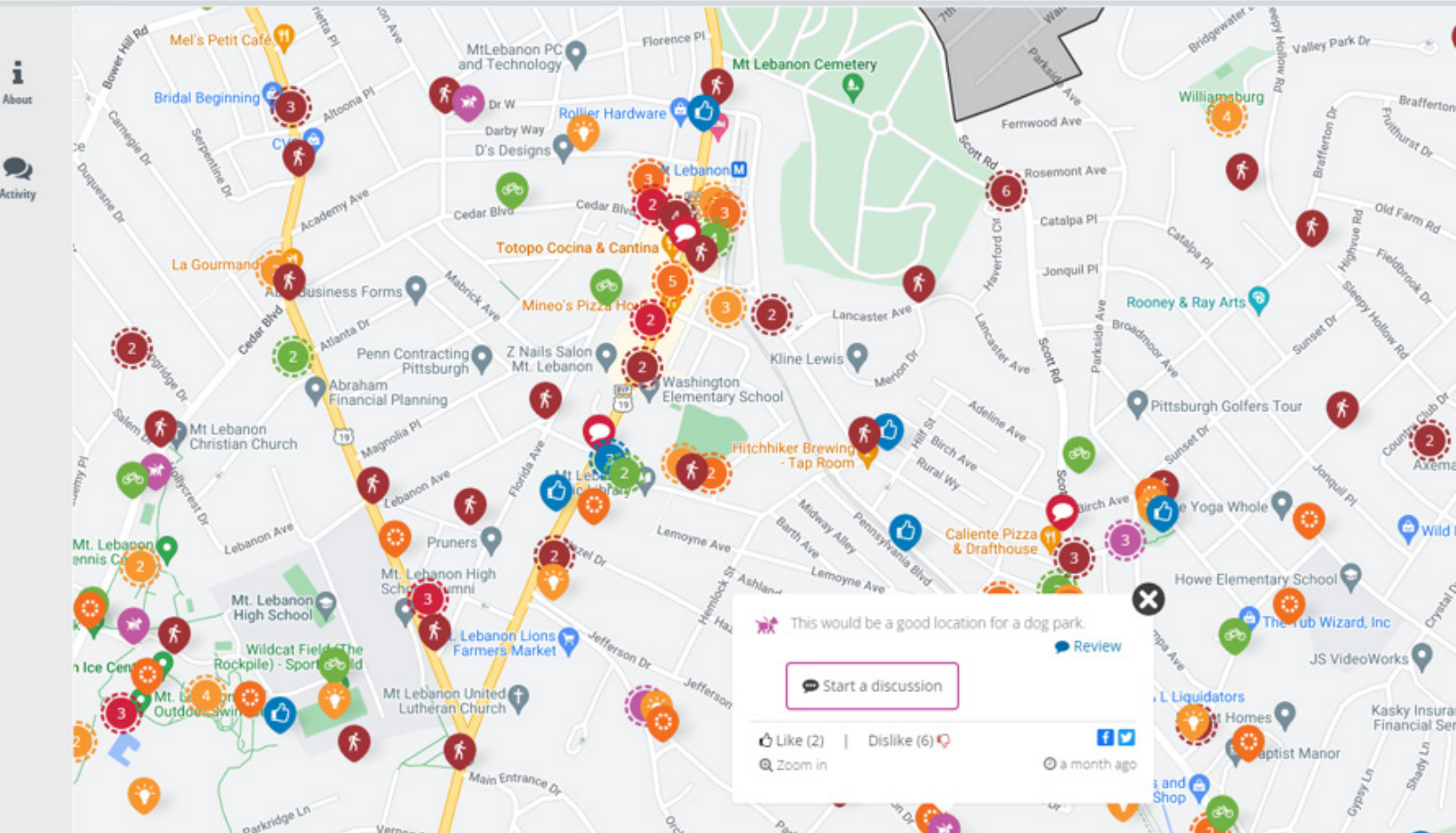
The project had three distinct phases:

- 1. Explore:** An initial process of discovery and evaluation focused primarily on intensive public engagement. The project team developed an engagement strategy and launched *ascendlebo.com*, a digital clearinghouse for information and interactive activities related to the project. Residents contributed more than 5,000 points of input, across responses to the initial survey, the online map and conversations at a wide variety of community events. This stage also involved field work, past plan analysis and interviews with key stakeholders.

*Growth is inevitable and desirable, but destruction of community character is not. The question is not **whether** your part of the world is going to change. The question is **how**.*

— Edward T. McMahon,
Urban Land Institute Senior Fellow
for Sustainable Development





2. Test: The project's second phase was devoted to learning which types of strategies would best address what the community said it would like to see happen. This involved analyzing all inputs to date, translating this information into draft visions, policies and strategy ideas, then ground-truthing and workshopping the results.

Major components of the test phase included multiple meetings of three advisory groups (resiliency, engagement and mobility) and a round of topic-specific public surveys that garnered hundreds of responses. The planning team also drew upon the insight of a group of community liaisons, which met multiple times to involve representatives of appointed boards and community partner agencies in the planning process. Finally, the test phase involved additional in-person engagement events to pilot specific ideas, such as an e-bike demonstration and associated survey.

3. Build: The final planning phase centered on building research and support to fine-tune the recommendations and best set them up for implementation. It has involved engaging senior municipal staff, the topic advisory groups and the public in vetting and refining draft plan recommendations, leading up to a public engagement push to re-engage the community in shaping how the plan is coming together. The intent was not only to ensure that the project team has gotten the plan right — that its recommendations will efficiently and effectively address the needs and opportunities the plan identifies based on the foundation of public input — but also to get people who live and work in Mt. Lebanon excited about and involved in what its future holds.



HELP US CREATE A NEW SLOGAN FOR MT. LEBANON

Mt. Lebanon wants your help creating a slogan that represents the identity and vision of the community.

Place up to 3 green stickers on what words represent Mt. Lebanon best

Place up to 3 red stickers on what words represent Mt. Lebanon least

WELCOME	BUZZING
CHARACTER	VIBRANT
HOME	SUBURB
SAFE	URBAN
BEAUTIFUL	WALKABLE
VISIONARY	EASY-GOING
FRIENDLY	TRADITIONAL
GREEN	DIVERSE
OPEN	TIMELESS
ENERGETIC	DESTINATION

Dreaming of possibilities ...

South Garage is an aging structure that will likely require major repair or replacement within the next decade. **WHAT IF** this represents an opportunity to create a mixed-use development? What issues could we design this site to address?

750 Wood Road needs these kind papers to form during construction. Looking for a sell for 2020-2021

PLACE A MARK to indicate how important each of the following issues are to consider if the site is redeveloped.

High-quality building design that enhances Uptown's appeal	Low	High
Focusing density near transit stations	Low	High
Adding amenities to make Uptown more of a "one-stop shop"	Low	High
Expanding housing options for people at all stages of life	Low	High
Creating housing attainable at a range of income levels	Low	High
Making sure Uptown has adequate parking	Low	High
Providing additional space for municipal recreation features	Low	High
Providing additional space for gathering, events or meetings	Low	High
Adding EV charging, a bike share station, secure bike parking	Low	High

Scenes from project events, clockwise from opposite page top left: 1) The interactive map at ascendlebo.com received more than 900 comments, 2) The project team collected input from the public on forming ideas at Uptown Unveiled, 2) Teaming up with POGO allowed residents to evaluate e-bikes as a possibility for future active transportation, and 4) Materials from pop-up events started many great conversations about potential recommendations.

setting a north star

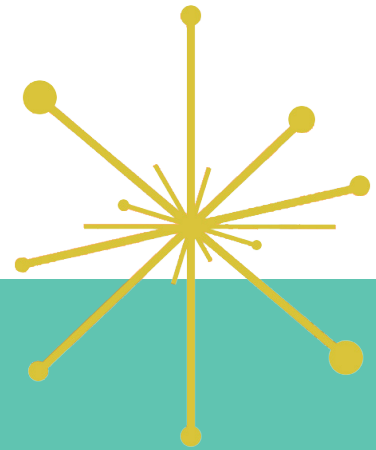
The following vision and guiding principles represent the articulation and interpretation of community values revealed during the plan's development, setting the context for each topic area and its associated recommendations.

Guiding principles:

- Think generationally: Decisions made today should support the Mt. Lebanon our children will inherit, reflecting a commitment to environmental, economic and social sustainability.
- Embrace comparative strengths: Focus on the unique aspects of Mt. Lebanon that make it a great place to live.
- Maximize equity and accessibility: Ensure that all residents have the opportunity to take advantage of community assets and are welcome participants in community life.
- Keep information flowing: The municipality is committed to transparency and participatory decision-making. With technology advancements, remain adaptable over the next decade to make information accessible and easily understood and interacted with over a variety of mediums.

Overall vision:

Mt. Lebanon sets the standard for communities across the region as a sustainable, prosperous, healthy and welcoming place that offers an exceptional quality of life.



using the plan

Built for implementation

This plan advances a bold and novel approach to operationalizing long-term planning: Reorganizing the community's municipal advisory boards to align with major focus areas and orienting the plan to create new marching orders for each. In 2023, as the results of comprehensive plan engagement were coming into focus, Mt. Lebanon Commission adopted Ordinance No. 3356. to amend the Administrative Code to comprehensively restructure advisory boards. This change, which becomes effective in April 2024, translates 11 advisory boards to five new groups:

- Civic Engagement
- Mobility and Transportation
- Parks and Recreation
- Community Sustainability and Economic Development (Resiliency, for short)
- Financial Management

The restructuring effectively consolidates the activities of some related boards — for instance, separate boards for traffic and parking — but more broadly, it redefines the purpose for each board, positioning the groups to address the community's most important issues in a way that respects their intersectionality. The major sections of this plan comprise the same five categories.

Built for coming alive

This document lives in two forms: In print and online. The print (or PDF) edition lays out plan content in a traditional way to facilitate the public and agency review and approvals process. The online version, which will be fully integrated at mtlebanon.org after plan adoption, allows users to interactively navigate the material and check in on updates, especially regarding plan implementation and benchmark results. Each major chapter contains metrics for measuring progress, in terms of both change the municipality can directly control and indicators that are subject to other forces.

Built for context

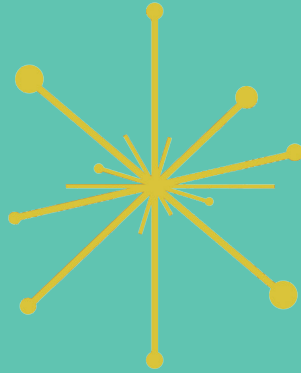
This plan and the process by which it developed comply with the applicable provisions of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code. The planning process involved review of *Allegheny Places*, the county's comprehensive plan, as well as plans for neighboring communities. This plan was developed with consistency in mind, especially where Mt. Lebanon faces challenges and opportunities that its neighbors share.



resiliency

This topic focuses on improving the community's ability to sustain itself over the long-term, including decision-making that values sound economic development principles and care for the future of the natural environment as well as for Mt. Lebanon residents and community at large.





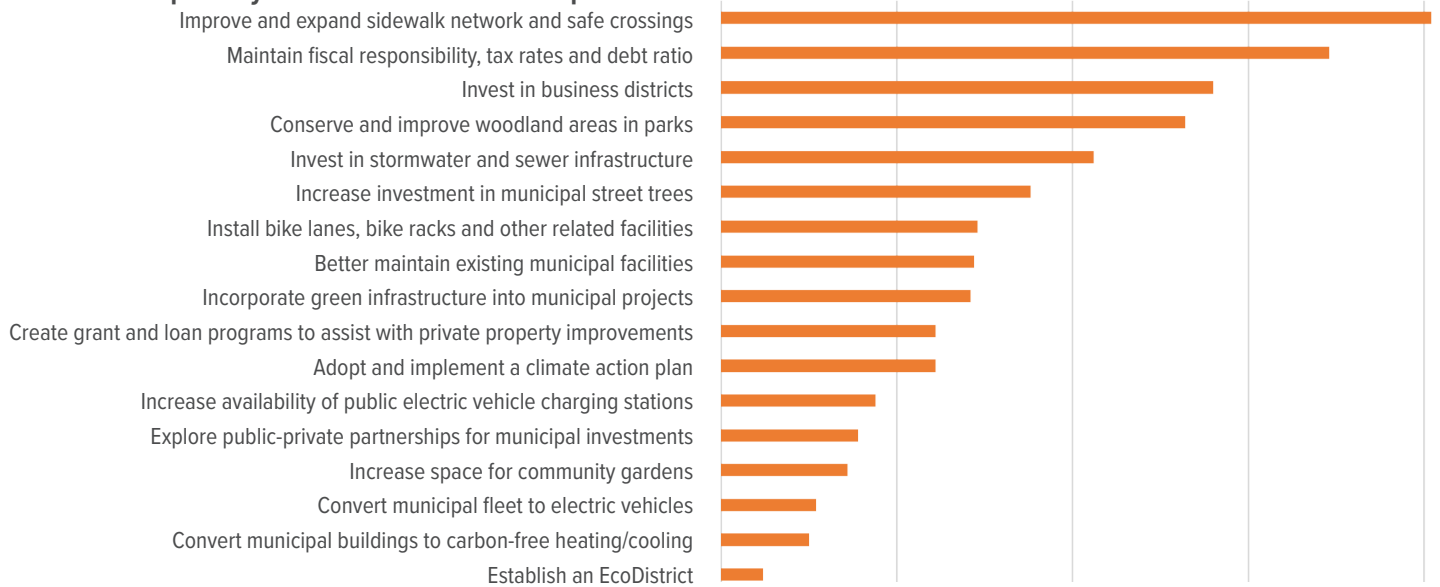
vision

Mt. Lebanon positions itself for the future through decision-making that values sound financial and economic development principles and care for the future of the natural environment. It preserves historic character, prioritizes ecological resilience, and enables robust commercial, residential and nonprofit sectors.

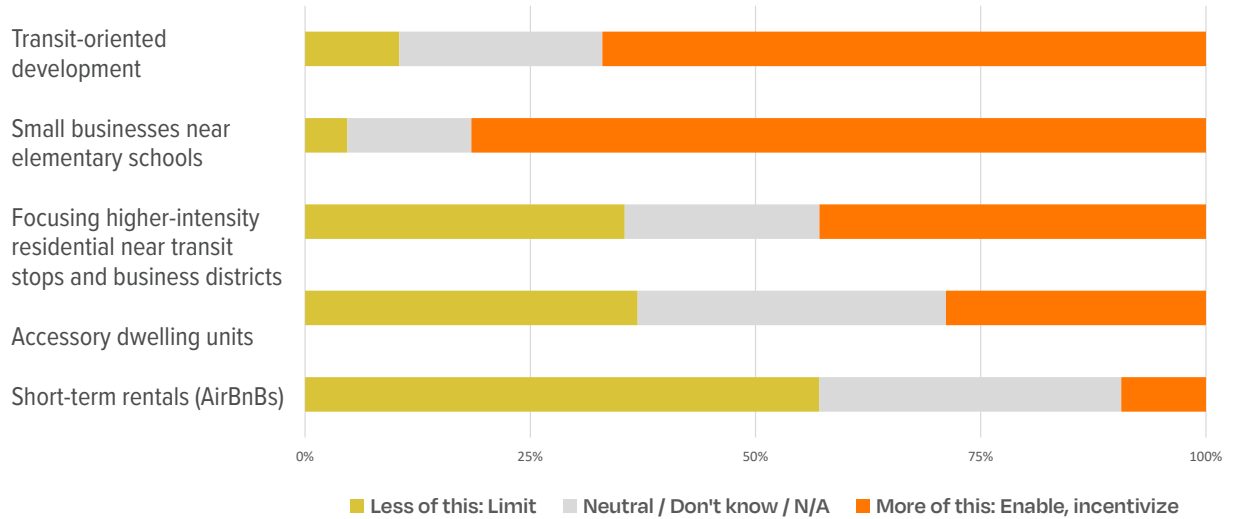
talking points

- This topic incorporates local ecology and sustainable practices, land use and development, historic preservation and business districts because all factor into the community's resiliency – its ability to succeed in the face of the headwinds such as economic downturns, climate change, new societal expectations, changing demographics and other challenges.
- Mt. Lebanon values its history. The community has a registered historic district, and survey responses indicated a strong appreciation for the nature and character of neighborhoods. The most popular sentiment in the second community questionnaire conducted for this plan was for the statement, "Future development or redevelopment should respect Mt. Lebanon's historic character." Few participants registered strongly disagree/disagree responses.
- The second most popular sentiment was the statement, "As a community, Mt. Lebanon has a responsibility to take actions within its control to address climate mitigation, such as those that would reduce greenhouse gas emissions." The municipality recognizes that climate mitigation is a global issue that requires regional solutions. This plan aims to propose actionable recommendations that are within the municipality's purview and ability to complete within the next decade that can have a local impact and improve the quality of life.
- Many proposed service level recommendations will depend on funding levels.

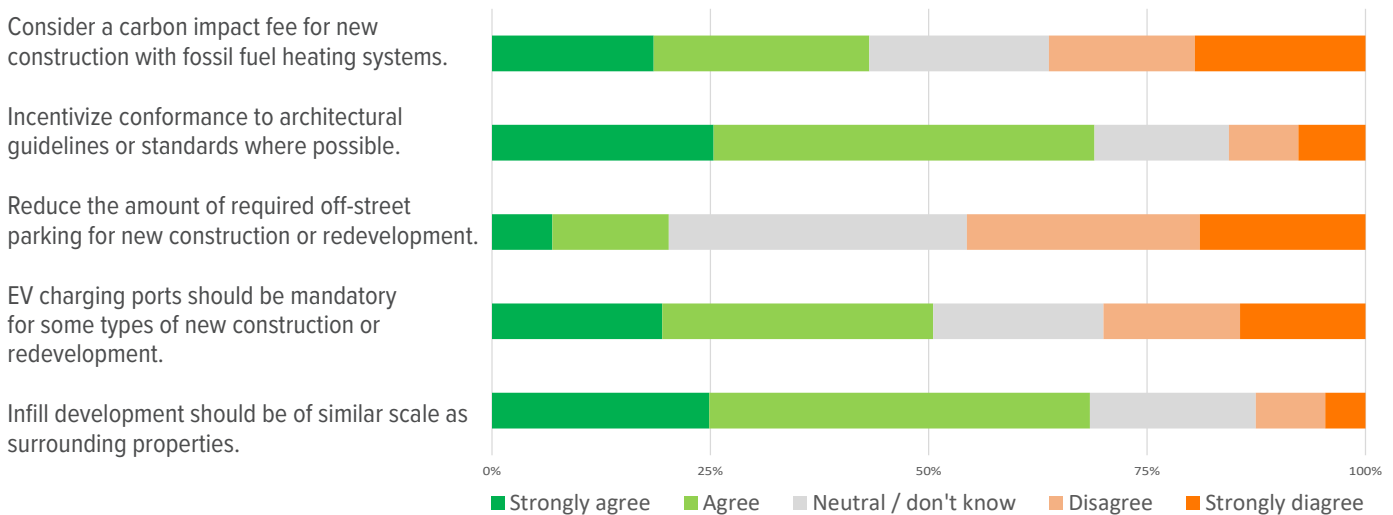
Of the following list of possible sustainability and resiliency priorities for Mt. Lebanon's next 10 years, select the top five you feel are the most important.



How would you prefer to see Mt. Lebanon approach each topic during the next decade?



Rank your level of agreement with the following ideas.



context

This chapter addresses several linked topics that represent facets of resiliency. These are matters that contribute to a thriving community: local ecology, sustainable practices, land use and development, historic preservation and business districts.

Stated directly: The community is most likely to prosper if the local government supports natural resources like trees, water and air; sustainable practices that save tax dollars and serve the environment well; development that contributes to the tax base and adds value to community life; and convenient commercial areas that provide needed goods and services. Many of these affect each other.

What do residents want to see happen?

People who responded to a questionnaire about these aspects of “resiliency” had robust agreement about a few matters regarding spending and investment. They adamantly desire better walking routes, including an expanded sidewalk network and safer crossings. This should be a top investment, they said. Meanwhile, the municipality should be prudent with its resources, respondents said in the questionnaire. The second highest priority, behind better pedestrian routes, was to remain financially resilient through careful management of budgets and debt.

Walkability is explored in much greater detail in the Mobility chapter. It relates to Resiliency as follows:

- More trips on foot means fewer trips by car. Fewer trips by car means less fossil fuel consumption (climate action) and more personal exercise (community health).

- Greater walkability implies more human-scale interaction with neighbors (social resilience).
- Walking to more local destinations suggests a greater likelihood of taking advantage of local assets such as shops and services (commercial resilience).

The third and fourth priorities identified in the survey also reflected a desire to invest in two very different aspects of community life that make Mt. Lebanon special: business districts and woodland parks.

Other investment into “people-planet-prosperity” forms of sustainability also appeared in the top half of the list, including stormwater and sewer infrastructure and municipal street trees.

From this and many other forms of input collected throughout the planning process, it appears that residents feel that the municipality should do what it can, responsibly, to mitigate climate change and demonstrate care for the natural world. Some individual comments reflected a belief that climate change solutions fall well outside the purview of one suburb of one city in one state in one country. But many others said, essentially, that Mt. Lebanon should do what it can, in ways that make financial sense.

As is true for the nation as a whole, “sustainability” drew passionate comments from different perspectives. But a significant majority of people stated in numerous forums that they value a “green” approach to municipal priorities, either for reasons related to climate change, or simply because trees, clean streams and nice woods where people can enjoy the natural environment are important to Mt. Lebanon’s character, appearance and community life.



The Beverly Road commercial area is well known for a charming mix of retail and services.

In 2022, the Commission unanimously adopted a comprehensive resolution to formalize “efforts to promote a resilient and sustainable community.”¹ It includes commitments to achieve community-wide net-zero carbon emissions before 2050, to continue having municipal facilities use 100 percent renewable energy and to update the Climate Action Plan at least every 10 years.

This resolution stakes out regional leadership on the issue. Mt. Lebanon has the vision and capacity to forge creative ways to achieve these aggressive goals. The recommendations in this section provide direction for how it can begin to happen in the next decade, given the alignment of policies, initiatives and action steps on multiple related fronts.

Who does what regarding issues related to resiliency in Mt. Lebanon?

Resiliency is a broad topic, so it should come as no surprise it has many centers of gravity in municipal government:

- The municipality’s Commercial Districts Manager works closely with Mt. Lebanon Partnership, a nonprofit economic development organization. The municipality helps to financially support the organization as well.
- The community’s green infrastructure – its trees, parks, walking and biking routes, stormwater management – all are managed by the Department of Public Works.
- Land use and development issues fall mainly to the Planning Office, with attention from Commercial Districts and many other departments as well. Redevelopment and new development can enhance the community’s economic resiliency, as well as support environmental and public health goals.

- The Finance Department helps to keep the municipality on track in terms of financial resiliency.

In recent years, three different volunteer advisory boards had a piece of this action: Environmental Sustainability Board, Economic Development Council and Historic Preservation Board.

Going forward, the Community Sustainability and Economic Development Advisory Board will provide research and advice on these matters to the Commission. The board's purpose, officially, is "to provide recommendations to the Commission on policies, initiatives, projects, and programs whose goal is to preserve and improve the infrastructure, public facilities, services, economic prosperity and sense of place of the municipality, to improve the sustainability and resiliency of municipal facilities and services, and to further the goals established by the municipality's comprehensive plan; to recommend initiatives; and to advise the Commission in connection therewith."

1 mtlebanon.org/r-10-22

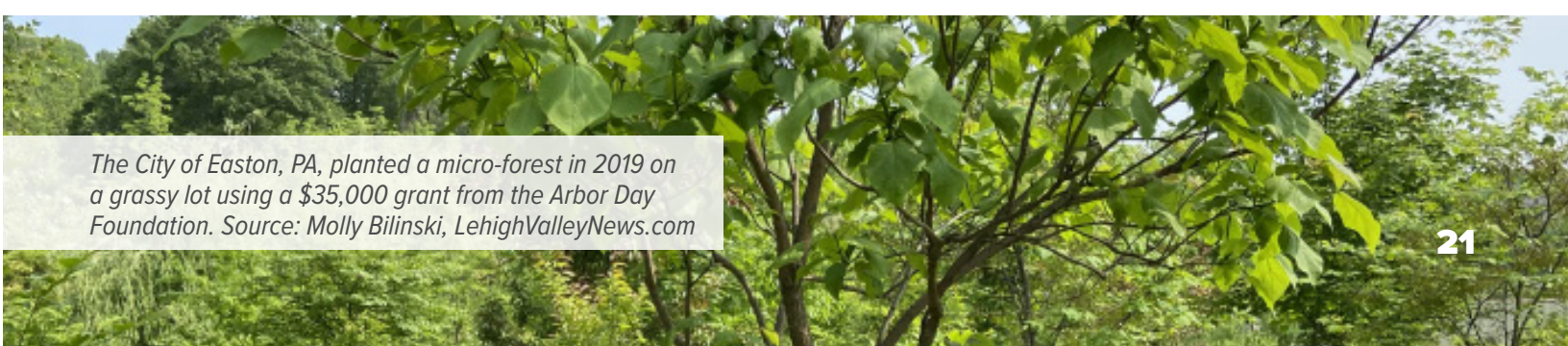
recommendations

Local ecology

1. Expand the tree canopy management plan.

As a certified Tree City USA and accredited arboretum, Mt. Lebanon appreciates its trees. This plan recognizes the community's tree canopy as a facet of its infrastructure network. This includes trees on public property, including parks, as well as street trees and trees on private property. Trees capture rainwater and pollution, regenerate soil quality, provide shade, reduce heat island effect and enhance quality of place. Mt. Lebanon's forestry division maintains more than 10,000 municipal street trees, in addition to trees in parks and on other municipal property.

- a. Determine the full annual cost of proactive maintenance of municipal street trees as a future budget consideration.
- b. Implement a forest management and stewardship plan for municipally-owned parks and open spaces as noted in the Parks and Recreation chapter.
- c. Link sidewalk maintenance and tree canopy management as appropriate. When replacing municipal street trees, consider their planting location in relation to current sidewalk locations or potential future sidewalk installations.
- d. Reduce impact of diseased and dying trees through replacement strategies.
- e. Plant tree types best suited to thrive in a changing climate, with guidance provided in the municipal code of ordinances.
- f. Install a tiny forest (Miyawaki forest) as a pilot project on a visible site. A potential location is the steep hillside on Cedar Boulevard, across from the tennis courts. Based on natural reforestation principles, this method is a way to quickly generate diverse forest ecosystems in urban environments. It involves the dense, multi-layered planting of native species.



The City of Easton, PA, planted a micro-forest in 2019 on a grassy lot using a \$35,000 grant from the Arbor Day Foundation. Source: Molly Bilinski, LehighValleyNews.com

Climate-resilient tree species

Pennsylvania's Department of Conservation and Natural Resources anticipates that tree species that do not thrive in contiguous wet conditions could significantly decline in coming decades, as the state's climate shifts faster than plants can adapt. This would limit the abundance of northern/upland species, such as American beech, American mountain ash, balsam fir, mountain maple, paper birch and quaking aspen.

The following tree species are more resilient for this area, as they tolerate or prefer wetter soil:

- Sycamore
- Hackberry
- Eastern redbud
- Pin oak
- Black oak
- Shagbark hickory
- Mockernut hickory
- Black gum
- Eastern hophornbeam

— PA DCNR Climate Change Adaptation Plan, 2018



American Sycamore

2. Partner with the school district and community groups to create and implement planting plans and native tree acquisition for elementary schools, to increase shade and capture stormwater.

The Parent-Teacher Associations and the Mt. Lebanon Nature Conservancy could take part in this effort.

- a. Consider installation of community gardens on school properties.
- b. Continue annual tree planting celebration of Earth Day at elementary schools.
- c. Consider the creation of educational spaces within parks areas to create learning opportunities for students.

3. Revise ordinances to address issues related to site ecology and climate action:

- a. Revise ordinances to better enable property owners to intentionally transition their lawns to native plant landscapes while maintaining harmony with property maintenance requirements.
- b. Develop a noxious weed ordinance to address highly aggressive invasive plants such as knotweed, bamboo and Tree of Heaven on public and private property. Provide public education on this issue.
- c. Implement a planting ban of state-listed noxious and invasive plants such as Callery pear, privet, burning bush, English ivy, vinca and honeysuckle. Provide education to encourage property owners to remove invasive plants.

4.

Begin a long-term effort to bury overhead wires in strategic locations.

Undergrounding overhead wires minimizes service interruptions from high winds, snow and ice accumulation, lightning strikes and contact with vehicles, trees or animals. Burying wires is a way to limit the impact on the electric grid of storms that have become increasingly frequent and severe in recent years and will likely continue. It also beautifies the community and allows for the addition of street trees and reduction in pruning.

However, the barriers to implementation are significant. Installing lines underground can run up to 10 times the cost of stringing lines overhead, and burying lines involves coordination of multiple agencies and reconfiguring of connections to individual properties. Service to underground lines can be more challenging. Finally, not all utility lines are in the street right-of-way, as some are in rear-yard easements between residential properties. Accordingly, this plan establishes an intention for Mt. Lebanon to pursue undergrounding as opportunities arise in strategic locations.

- a. Plan and coordinate with electric and communications utility companies. Evaluate whether planned infrastructure projects, municipal or otherwise, present an opportunity to incorporate this work.
- b. Identify priority locations. This might include areas with the worst-performing electrical distribution lines, in terms of outage frequency and duration, areas where outages have the most significant economic or social impacts, areas with special scenic and/or tree canopy value or walkable commercial or mixed-use areas. Avoid any areas prone to subsurface flooding. Where undergrounding is targeted to address resiliency needs, prioritize undergrounding the mainline and lateral portions. Leaving secondary and communications lines overhead is an option.
- c. Budget for implementation. Grants may be available to support the work, such as FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities program, which generally covers 75% of project costs.

Sustainable practices

5. Undertake a local Climate Action Plan by 2030.

This process should identify the most significant climate-related risks the municipality faces and identify solutions that fall within the municipality's control. Partner with Allegheny County and other public and private entities to implement the plan. This could localize and expand upon the Climate Action Plan adopted by the Congress for Neighboring Communities (CONNECT) in 2022, which provides an active framework for member communities to address contributions to climate change as well as equitably adapt to its impacts.

6. Encourage a transition to carbon neutrality.

The planning process revealed enthusiasm on many fronts to transition to renewable energy sources, including interest from many property owners in installing on-lot energy systems.

Barriers to doing so, according to survey results, include access to information about options, the price of installation, regulatory requirements and other considerations. For one, mounting rooftop solar panels could impact a property's historic designation. Finding ways to address these barriers will enable meaningful progress during the next decade.

- a. Identify and address barriers to installing off-grid energy creation, both for residents and for the municipality.
 - i. Continue conversations with Duquesne Light regarding the feasibility of creating a microgrid system at the multi-tenant or community scale within Mt. Lebanon. Determine whether federal funding is available to conduct a level one feasibility study, potentially in partnership with the school district or other agency.
 - ii. Review zoning and other local code requirements to identify rules that make the installation of renewable energy systems more expensive and/or challenging, determine whether and how these could be amended to increase incentive.

Making a microgrid happen

A community microgrid is a system of electricity generators, storage batteries and controls that can power residences and facilities – including emergency shelters, emergency services, hospitals and nursing homes – when the larger electric grid fails. Hyper-locally generated power and regular grid power is stored in an array of battery storage structures in the community. During a power interruption, the microgrid area consumes electricity from the storage batteries and from the local generators, such as rooftop solar arrays or electric vehicles returning power to the grid.

The microgrid should detach and reattach to the larger electric grid seamlessly and be able to start up during a blackout.

In a community with the context of Mt. Lebanon, these would be among the next steps:

- Identify what should be powered during a blackout.
- Identify a location for the battery storage structures and power generation sources (such as solar or wind farms). Open space for this will be challenging in a built-out community.
- Identify the power needs of the target locations and determine whether they can be linked by distribution wires from the battery storage structures.
- Identify who pays for a microgrid.

Further information on this topic appears in the appendix.

- iii. Identify and/or create grant or other incentive programs to make the installation of renewable energy systems more accessible for property owners. Possibilities include:
 - Creating a group purchase campaign for solarization: Recruit property owners into a purchasing pool, prepare RFP for solar vendors, select a vendor and establish a contract.
 - Creating a property-assisted clean energy financing program: Enable residential or commercial property owners to finance the up-front cost of clean energy on a property and to pay the costs back over time (up to 20 years) through an assessment directly attached to that property via a locally filed lien. (Annual energy savings often exceed the annual assessment payment.)

- b. Provide education to property owners to encourage reduced reliance on fossil fuels.
 - i. Work with the library to create and disseminate information to help residents or business owners understand the steps or decision points in incorporating renewable energy systems at their properties.
 - ii. Provide information on green energy solutions, electric heat pumps and other alternatives to reduce reliance on fossil fuels.
 - iii. Encourage and track green energy conversion among commercial properties.
 - iv. Implement pilot projects at municipally owned sites to demonstrate effectiveness.
 - v. Work toward reduction of the use of gas-powered landscaping equipment.
- c. Continue to identify opportunities for feasible, cost-effective solar panel installation on municipal property.
- d. Continue adding electric vehicle charging stations, both in areas accessible to the public and for municipal use.
- e. Begin conversion of the municipal vehicle fleet to electric vehicles.

Steps for transitioning the municipal fleet

Mt. Lebanon can initiate efforts to develop a fleet of electric vehicles as it reduces reliance on fossil fuels. Detailed considerations for how to plan and carry out this effort appear in the appendix.

1

Set the stage with policy and process

- Convene stakeholders and start conversations
- Firm up commitments, goals and objective with local leaders
- Understand the playing field

2

Tackle the technical considerations

- Assess the fleet
- Use the right-sizing principle
- Start with low-hanging fruit
- Plan for future conditions

3

Figure out the financials

- Promote, capitalize on lifetime savings
- Optimize charging schedule
- Regard charging infrastructure as a long-term asset
- Navigate potential barriers
- Cover capital costs

7. Encourage and incentivize household waste reduction.

- a. Continue to educate residents and business owners about recycling options and the benefits of participation.
- b. Educate residents about household composting.
- c. Create a municipal composting program or lead a regional composting initiative. Consider scenarios that recognize the community's capacities and space constraints, such as one in which Mt. Lebanon administers a program, and a partner municipality hosts the composting site. Anaerobic digesters could be space-saving options.
 - i. Launch a food waste composting program, beginning with a pilot project then scaling up. A pilot program, modeled on Durham, N.C. could work as follows: Provide volunteer households with an indoor countertop container and an outdoor cart, as well as educational and instructional materials. Volunteers place food scraps in the cart for collection weekly by municipal truck. Food waste is transported to a municipal composting facility to be composted by a contractor. Volunteers periodically complete surveys about the experience.
 - ii. Consider expansion of the yard waste collection program. Currently, the municipality operates a monthly "woody waste pickup" from spring to fall. Residents can drop yard waste off at the golf course during summer months for it to be mulched and reused.
- d. Educate businesses and residents on alternatives to single-use plastics, including grocery bags, straws and cutlery.

8. Reinforce local systems for emergency management to serve during climate/weather or other emergencies.

- a. Encourage and promote sign-ups to Mt. Lebanon's LeboEmergency Emergency Alert system.
- b. Develop a non-cellphone/landline emergency alert system, such as an outdoor warning siren.
- c. Maintain and publicize availability of emergency shelters.

9. Continue to invest in stormwater management solutions, prioritizing green infrastructure for its ecological, environmental and aesthetic advantages.

Mt. Lebanon was one of the first communities in Pennsylvania to adopt a dedicated Stormwater Fee. Since 2011, the municipality has made significant investments into the storm sewer system as a result of funds raised and the grants they have leveraged. Additional ordinance updates occurred in 2018 and 2020 to require on-site stormwater management when impervious area is increased by more than 500 square feet and to require homes with sump pumps to tie into a storm sewer if one is available. The latter will decrease icing conditions on public roadways, making them safer for all forms of travel, as well as prolong the useful life of the street surface. Stormwater systems on private properties capture rainwater where it falls and retain it to keep the system from becoming overwhelmed, preventing flooding.

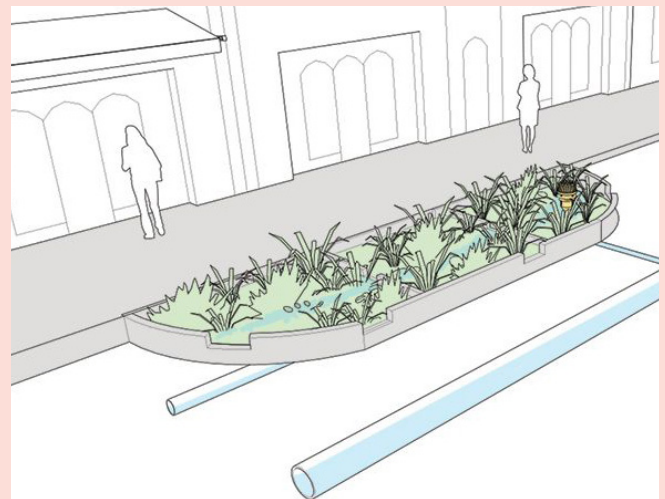
- a. Continue to work to expand the storm sewer network over the next decade to mitigate flooding conditions from increasingly heavy rainfall events.
- b. Consider investments in green infrastructure (including bioswales, tree pits, green roofs, and rain gardens) where feasible to capture and retain stormwater on site, thereby keeping it from entering the storm sewer system altogether.

Stormwater infrastructure: Seeing green

Conventional “gray” stormwater infrastructure uses subsurface structures to convey the largest volume of water quickly from a site. Sustainable “green” stormwater practices, by contrast, are designed to capture and treat water closer to the source. The benefits of this approach are as follows:

- Improving water quality by filtering sediment and pollutants
- Detaining stormwater flows with facilities that absorb and infiltrate water in place, which helps reduce erosion
- Potential cost savings, as compared to upgrading subsurface pipe networks
- Ability to incorporate natural-looking features that complement existing parks and landscaping

More details on green infrastructure appear in the appendix.



A bioswale is a shallow vegetated depression designed to capture, treat and infiltrate runoff.

— NACTO Urban Street Design Guide

Land use and development

10. Redevelop South Garage in a way that addresses community needs.

A 2023 engineering report determined that structural or maintenance work needs to begin on the garage in the next few years. Mt. Lebanon can choose at this moment of decision-making to identify "South Garage" as a redevelopment location. With frontage on Washington Road, the site could potentially be expanded to include the property currently occupied by a surface lot behind the Municipal Building. Should conditions allow, new development could be constructed atop garage parking levels. This new development could potentially provide desired improvements to the built environment and add uses that address public needs.

- a. Conduct an architectural/feasibility/geotechnical study to determine the scope of reconstruction.
- b. Pursue acquisition of contiguous parcels, as possible, to provide greater potential for future use, increased frontage along Washington Road and the ability to create a design that reinforces the quality of the public realm and pedestrian experience.
- c. Issue a request for qualifications or proposals to partner with the municipality in the redevelopment. This should involve:
 - i. Capitalizing on the site's location with a commitment to transit-oriented development and mixed use, particularly with an effort to incorporate uses that address public needs and desires revealed by the planning process.
 - ii. Discussion about potential tax incentives and other aspects of public-private partnership that can help achieve the site's greatest potential.
 - iii. Discussion on the relationship between the site and existing municipal facilities, as well as opportunities to integrate and/or improve the latter.
- d. Proactively communicate with business operators and the public regarding potential disruptions posed by construction, providing alternatives for those who use the current parking structure.



South Garage, viewed from Florida Avenue

Envisioning possibilities for the South Garage site

What would be viable?

This planning process included interviewing prominent figures in the region's development community regarding the viability of redeveloping the South Garage site, possibly including some neighboring parcels. Their ideas reflect 2023 economic conditions and their understanding of Mt. Lebanon's current and aspirational position in the metropolitan area. Interviewees viewed the location as a tremendous asset, given its proximity to the Uptown area, the T, schools and parks.

Most prevalent points of view

- There is tremendous potential for a mixed-use high-rise or mid-rise redevelopment.
- The municipality should emphasize a high quality standard for this project. This should set the bar for subsequent projects.
- Opinions on building height varied from "as high as zoning regulations allow" to "midrise, as a transition between the heights of neighboring buildings." Developers noted the value of the potential views.
- Developers need to know how serious local government is about encouraging affordable housing to determine unit size and type (condominium vs. apartment).

- Condos, particularly fairly high-end ones, could provide options for current residents aging out of their homes but who want to stay in the community.
- What commercial elements should occupy the lower floors at Washington Road street level? (Opinions from the public gathered for this plan suggested: community gathering space/plaza, a grocery store, a restaurant food court/casual space, market stall/casual space.)
- Developers uniformly felt that a national grocery chain would not be interested due to what they view as a saturation of large grocery stores in the area, but thought that a small, independent market or co-op could be viable.
- Opinions differed on whether a food hall would enhance or harm the existing restaurant business environment.

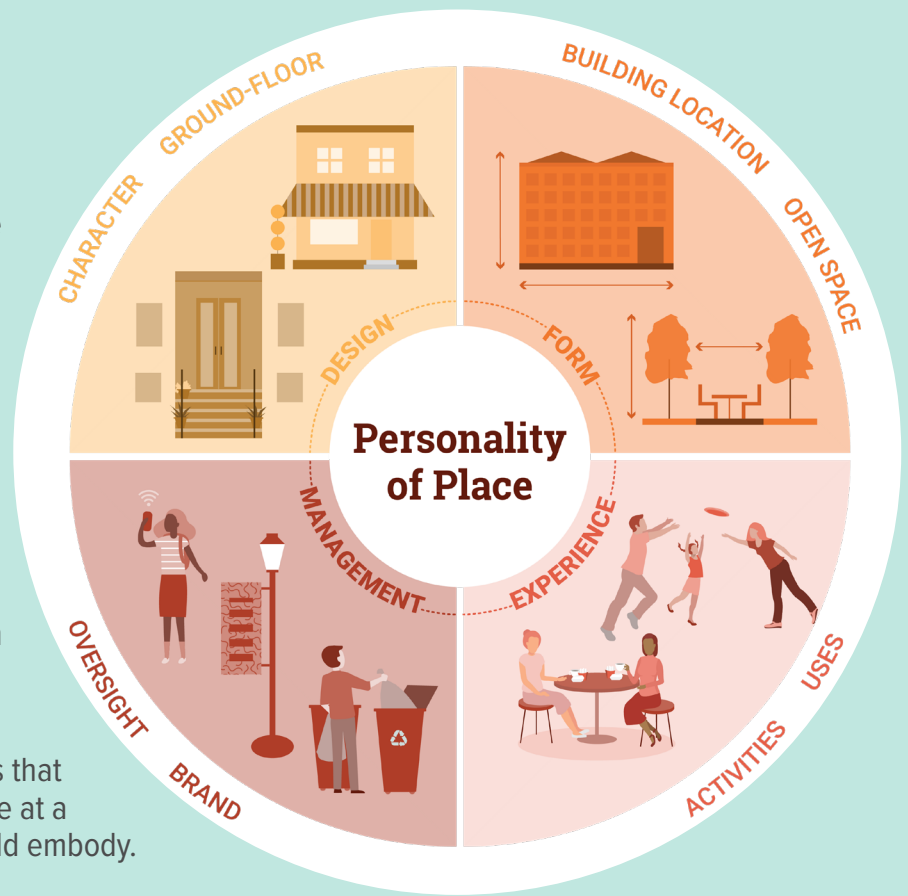
Contrarian view

One developer said a mixed-use project would neither benefit the community as a whole nor be economically viable. Rather, adding a central square – something Mt. Lebanon does not now have – would make the whole community far more desirable to existing and potential residents and to Uptown businesses because it creates a much-needed asset that everyone could enjoy.

Personality of place framework

Building off the findings and themes from the plan's engagement, the Resiliency advisory group completed a Personality of Place Process to discern key priorities for design, form, use, and operations for South Garage and the other key sites featured in this chapter. The community brand architecture analysis and slogan presented in the Engagement chapter also factor into ideas for what gets built, to problem-solve around unique aspects of challenging sites and demonstrate how the community identity can be reflected in the type of development the municipality supports.

Personality of Place (PoP) asks four questions that are answered on a spectrum of 1 to 5 to arrive at a desired personality that a development should embody.



1. Design

The development of this site should... fade to the background → boldly stand out in our neighborhood or city

2. Form

The development of this site should be... private feeling → public feeling

3. Experience

The development of this site should be... subdued, residential, or quiet → loud, boisterous, and full of energy

4. Management/Identity

The development of this site's brand should be... simple and user-focused → fun, celebratory, or boundary pushing

The scoring of these responses describes one or more of these personalities for a site:



Quiet

A mostly residential block with landscaped frontages, quiet internal courtyards and a simple and subdued brand.



Humming

A mostly commercial place centered around a central plaza with a brand that celebrates daytime experiences.



Active

A mixed-use experience with a strong and active street presence and a brand that celebrates storefront expression.



Buzzing

A dynamic and kinetic place with a prominent public plaza, creative and cultural hospitality, and a boundary-pushing brand.

General site considerations

South Garage currently contains 298 spaces, which randomly conducted parking utilization counts indicate generally tend to average about half occupied. As of June 2023, there were 174 garage permits issued, most (104) for daytime use. A significant elevation difference between Washington Road and Florida Avenue brings challenge to redevelopment, as well as the need to thoughtfully address both the vibrant Washington Road public realm as well as the more quiet residential landscape along Florida Avenue.

The three scenarios on the following page represent possibilities for redevelopment of the site. Each imagines what the municipality could do with the full frontage along the block, though this of course would be subject to negotiations with existing property owners. The existing uses could potentially work into a new building on the site.

During review of these concepts, advisory group members and officials expressed enthusiasm for the significant potential this site represents to advance community goals for transit-oriented development, further enliven public space in Uptown and attract desired uses, such as a limited grocery. In a community nearing full build-out, this site represents an opportunity to concentrate density that will fortify the tax base and add "rooftops" to Uptown that will support the viability of its businesses.

Current Zoning:

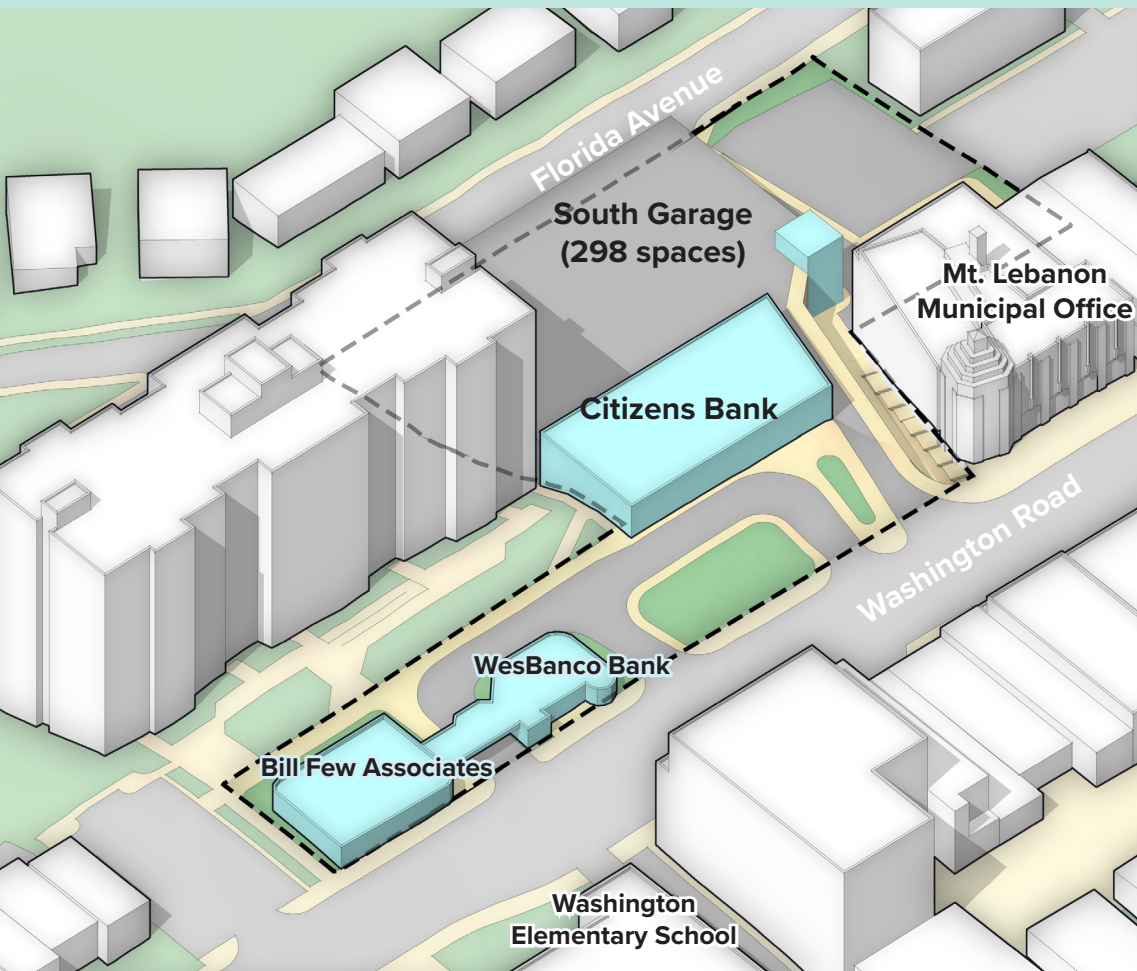
CBD with PMXD overlay

PoP Scores:

DESIGN:	4.5
FORM:	4.8
EXPERIENCE:	3.5
IDENTITY:	3.7
TOTAL:	16.3
PERSONALITY:	Active

Traits:

- » Bold/expressive design that complements but does not match municipal building
- » Bold forms that are deferential to the municipal building and neighborhood
- » Mixed-use experience that is active throughout the day, dinner hours, and weekends
- » Well understood identity as part of Mt. Lebanon's civic heart





Redevelopment scenarios

SCENARIO 1:

This configuration includes 22,000 square feet of first-floor retail, 9,500 square feet of office space, 155 residential units and 265 parking spaces in a new integrated garage. It envisions a civic plaza and visual terminus with pedestrian connection between the municipal building and higher-rise building.

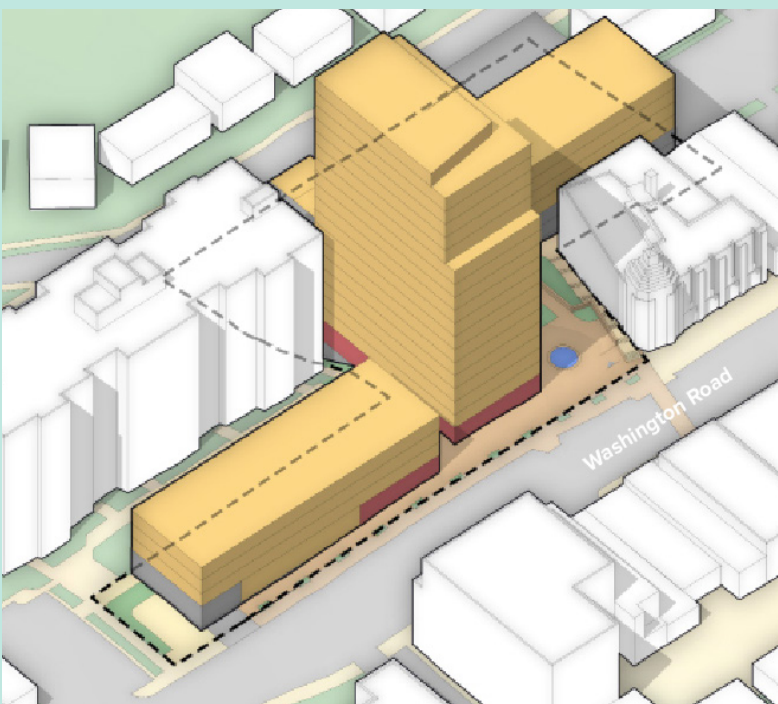
Compared with current zoning, this option would require an adjustment to density max to achieve the proposed 88 units/acre.



SCENARIO 2:

This configuration includes 10,700 square feet of first-floor retail, 312 residential units and 375 parking spaces in a new integrated garage. It envisions civic space along Washington Road.

Compared with current zoning, this option would require an adjustment to density max to achieve the proposed 178 units/acre and to exceed the current height maximum.



SCENARIO 3:

This configuration includes 14,200 square feet of first-floor retail, 305 residential units and 458 parking spaces in a new integrated garage. It envisions a civic plaza that threads through the center of the site.

Compared with current zoning, this option would require an adjustment to density max to achieve the proposed 174 units/acre and to exceed the current height maximum.

11. Undertake an update to the Zoning and Subdivision and Land Development ordinances.

Periodically evaluating and updating land use and development ordinances is an important way for a community to ensure that its rules continue to align with its values and keep up with modern issues and approaches to addressing them. A comprehensive plan adoption represents an opportune time for such an update, as these ordinances are among the most powerful tools a community has to achieve its long-range vision.

Public engagement during this process revealed a well-supported desire for the community to become more welcoming — hence the "This is home" slogan framework. Considering adjustments to existing regulations can help Mt. Lebanon substantively do so, finding opportunities where the community can strive to build the tax base within its largely built-out geography; provide housing in a range of prices; and create a wider range of housing options, better enabling seniors to stay in the community as they age.

Regulatory updates can also support environmental and economic sustainability, historic preservation and the vitality of the community's business districts. The following recommendations can guide a future separate project to comprehensively review and adjust regulations. This process will involve a highly public conversation about any specific changes and where they should apply

An update should address the following needs and opportunities:

- a. Organize the ordinances in an accessible, user-oriented way supplemented with illustrations and figures.
- b. Consider expanding administrative approvals for field changes.
- c. Provide for growth and development in ways that reinforce and enhance neighborhood character, with a goal of fortifying the tax base and increasing the share of Mt. Lebanon households that can reach daily necessities and services within a short walk or bike ride from home.





A variety of housing typologies within Mt. Lebanon supports social infrastructure, providing opportunities for households of different ages and family types to form ties as neighbors.

- d. Eliminate or reduce minimum unit sizes for residential and other uses where applicable.
- e. Add density where it is preceded and/or otherwise contextually appropriate and supported by access to amenities, potentially including adding instances of the Mixed Use overlay district.
 - i. Incorporate “gentle” residential density in neighborhoods.
 1. Consider expanding the array of housing typologies permitted as principal uses by right.

Gentle density

Communities across the country are re-examining zoning practices of decades past, which focused on categorically isolating uses — separating homes from businesses, for instance — making way for the automobile and, in some cases, reinforcing discriminatory redlining. In recent years, the AARP has published a series of guides on making communities more equitable, walkable and age-friendly by removing zoning obstacles that make it more difficult for people to find suitable housing near goods and services, enjoy public spaces and make where they live a lifelong home without having to rely on owning a vehicle.¹

In this context, enabling "gentle density" is a best practice. This refers to a range of house-scale buildings with multiple units, compatible in scale and form with detached single-family homes, located in a walkable neighborhood. Burlington, VT accomplished this by distinguishing smaller multi-family housing (duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes) from large multi-family housing, allowing smaller types in residential districts and streamlining development review.

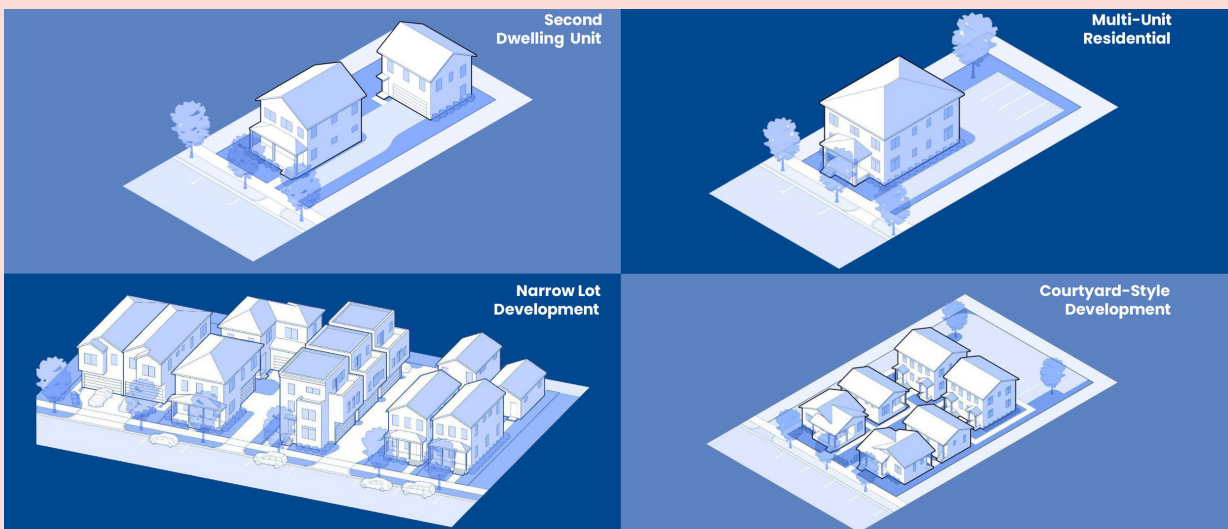


Image: Livable Places Houston

¹ See <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities>

2. Consider upzoning areas along corridors or proximate to community destinations, such as transit stops and business districts.
 3. Consider consolidating residential district categories. (R-6, for instance, covers a single parcel.)
 4. Consider expanding the districts where accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are permitted by right. Allowing height increases to accessory structures (beyond 14') for residential uses would enable converting attic garages to ADUs. Internal ADUs can also be a permitted typology.
- ii. Apply Office Boutique Overlay to properties zoned R-2 through R-7 within 300 feet of any public school building. Revisit permitted uses and standards to ensure compatibility with surrounding residential uses.
 - iii. Review SALDO with infill projects in mind, building in flexibility to solve design problems on challenging sites within the boundaries of existing neighborhood character and community development objectives.
 - iv. Examine where additional mixed use can be incorporated in higher-density residential areas.
- f. Address opportunities related to site ecology and climate action:
- i. Change zoning designation of municipally-owned parcels that are not zoned as parkland but are elements of existing or new parkland.
 - ii. Review ordinances applying to local food production, beekeeping and livestock to give residents additional options for their property.
 - iii. As mentioned elsewhere in this chapter:
 - Develop a noxious weed ordinance applying to required maintenance, removals and planting prohibitions.
 - Revise ordinances to better enable property owners to intentionally transition their lawns to native plant landscapes.

- g. Add clarity.
 - i. Encourage investment in existing properties by examining ordinances related to building additions. Infill development within the same zoning district should be of a scale similar to the permitted uses in that district. Review Design Guidelines for infill development (Section 705 of the Zoning Ordinance) to determine if additional options should be added. Design guidelines should be applied to like construction (single-family detached compared to single-family detached). Clarify how the design guidelines should be applied in districts where multiple use types are allowed (such as R-4).
 - ii. Review regulations applying to low-impact home-based businesses.
 - iii. Consider establishing regulations for short-term rentals.
- h. Adjust commercial district requirements.
 - i. Review model sign ordinances for commercial districts and revise standards to recalibrate the permitted mix of sign types, sizes and locations.
 - ii. In the Commercial Business District (CBD):
 - iii. Remove maximum lot coverage (85%).
 - iv. Remove 15' minimum front setback.
 - v. Adjust cap of 15 dwelling units per acre, a density maximum that in this district is out of sync with the building envelope (height and bulk) already permitted.



Sign requirements in commercial districts with high foot traffic should enable variety and creativity at human scale on the ground-floor level with consideration for visibility and balance at higher levels.



The Uptown Market remains an intensely popular weekly attraction, replacing surface parking with foot traffic and bustling small-scale commerce. Some residents and stakeholders suggested during the planning process that existing surface parking is overbuilt in certain areas where the space could be repurposed.

- vi. Adjust parking requirements in the CBD to reduce minimums. Consider adding maximums. Grant parking reductions based on proximity to transit and for incorporating bike parking into new developments. Consider providing a cash-out option for funding community parking assets.
- vii. Focus on ground-floor scale and frontage requirements in the CBD. Building height limits should be in stories (as opposed to feet) and be consistent with prevailing construction typology norms.
- i. Enhance connectivity and implement the Complete Streets framework.
 - i. Require easements for pedestrian connections for land development of sites of 1 acre or larger.
 - ii. Update street classification and design standards.
 - iii. Recalibrate parking requirements across the board. Consider eliminating, parking minimums, employing parking maximums and requiring parking to be determined by a parking impact study submitted by the developer.

Business districts

12. **Work with the Mt. Lebanon Partnership and other partners to build on the foundation of the Vibrant Uptown project and on related efforts to add life and value to the area’s public realm.**

Mt. Lebanon's Uptown area is an Nationally Accredited Main Street and an important part of its National Historic District. In 2023, the \$4 million Vibrant Uptown project was completed, providing a significant functional and aesthetic upgrade to the Washington Road streetscape at its core. Attention will turn next to placemaking and how spaces come to life.

- a. Encourage strengthened vitality of the Uptown business district.
- b. Build upon the Vibrant Uptown project to expand and enhance the placemaking nodes within the Uptown business district.
- c. Expand and improve the seating and plaza spaces in Uptown.
- d. Implement a façade improvement program providing grants or revolving loans to incentivize private investment to improve the appeal, appearance and function of Uptown storefronts or building premises according to official design guidelines.
 - i. Collaborate with Mt. Lebanon Partnership to create and administer the program.
 - ii. Explore creating a Business Improvement District to support new assets and programs.
- e. Support the installation of temporary and permanent public art as curated by the Partnership to reinforce and enhance Uptown’s unique historic environment and expression of place.
- f. Create outdoor rooms in the Uptown area by adding or enhancing existing potential gathering spaces.

- i. Build a flexible-space plaza with shade, seating and a reflecting pool or mister sprays in the Uptown district, perhaps as part of a larger project.
 - ii. Renovate Clearview Common to add shade and consider rethinking the fountain area as mister sprays or water steps. Potentially add a splash pad and/or play area at the surface parking lot.
 - iii. Consider property acquisition in key areas to support and enhance public space improvements.
 - iv. Negotiate with property owners regarding façade improvements and plaza-type features for locations such as Washington Road intersections with Cedar Boulevard and Academy Avenue.
 - v. Where feasible, add seating near key gathering areas at the entry points to the business district, potentially including Washington Elementary, outside of the Historical Society and at the intersection of Washington Road and Castle Shannon Boulevard.
- g. Support recommendations of Uptown Design Guidelines, Uptown Strategic Plan, Partnership Placemaking Plan.
 - h. Update the Uptown Strategic Plan after completing recommendations set forth in the 2017 plan.

13. Support redevelopment at underused Washington Road parcels.

The municipality owns the South Garage site and therefore can exercise a great degree of control over its future. While the other two sites below are privately owned, this plan recognizes the importance to Uptown and the broader community of their redevelopment and floats some possibilities for use and layout that are consistent with the plan's vision.

- a. Encourage renovation of the Denis Theater structure, possibly including additional parcels. Coordinate with Parse Way improvements.
- b. Support redevelopment of the vacant parcel at Bower Hill Road and Route 19.
- c. Support redevelopment as possibilities emerge at the South Garage site and adjacent parcels.



Top left: The rear of Denis Theater building, owned by a nonprofit organization, viewed from Parse Way.
Above: Redevelopment parcel, privately owned, at the southwest corner of Washington Road and Bower Hill Road
Left: The Washington Road entrance to the municipal South Garage.

Envisioning possibilities at Bower Hill and Washington

General site considerations

The site at the northwest corner of Bower Hill Road and Washington Road is privately owned, thus the municipality has limited control over how it develops. However, this site represents a key gateway into the community and great potential to enhance Uptown, so the municipality has a vested interest in working as a partner to help achieve the highest and best future use of the site.

The current zoning base district is R-7, residential with multi-family, multi-story uses by right, as well as townhouses, mixed-use with first-floor commercial and hotel.

Current Zoning:

R-7 with PMXD overlay

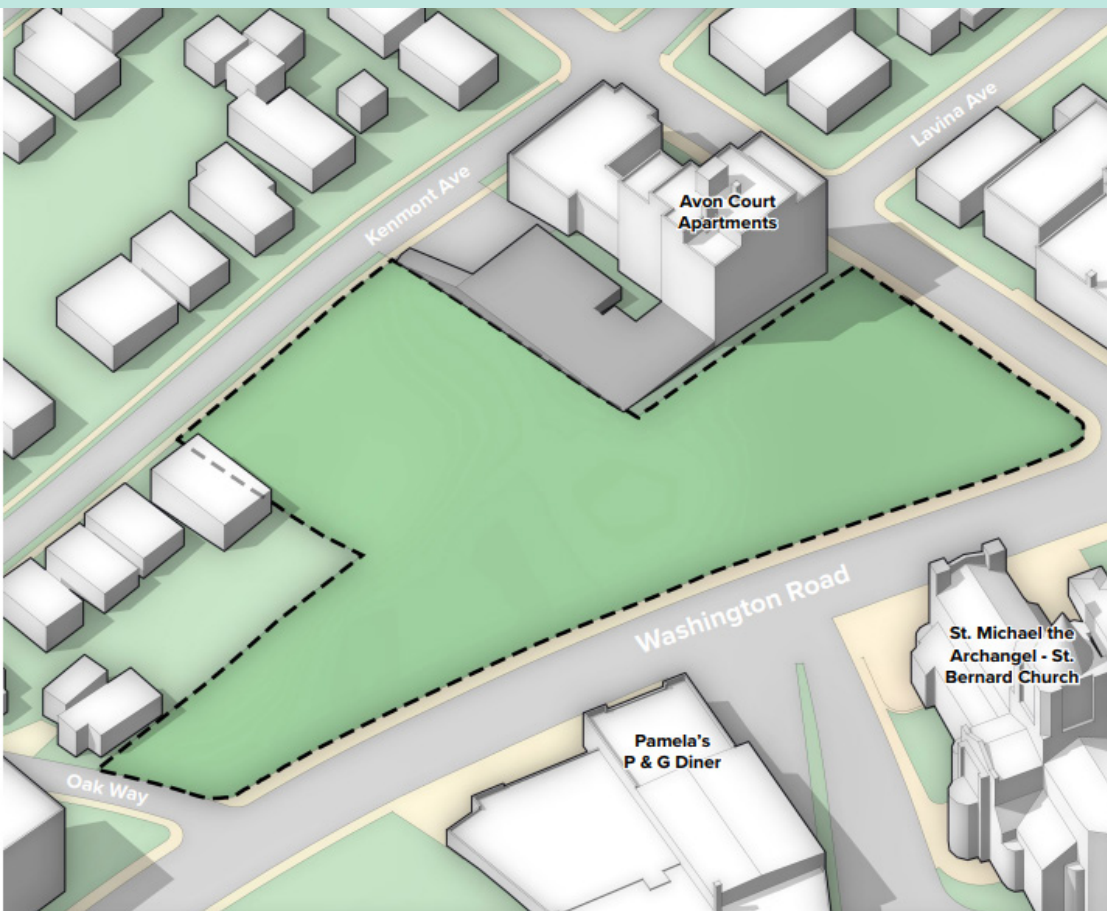
PoP Scores:

DESIGN:	3.7
FORM:	4.8
EXPERIENCE:	2.5
IDENTITY:	2.8
TOTAL:	13.8

PERSONALITY:
Humming/Active

TRAITS:

- » Traditional design with bold forms and density
- » Daytime expressions that become more tranquil into the evenings
- » Identity that blends into the neighborhood while celebrating the gateway to Mt. Lebanon





SCENARIO 1:

This configuration includes 17,800 square feet of first-floor retail, 16,500 square feet of office space, 187 residential units and 265 parking spaces in a new integrated garage. It envisions courtyard amenity spaces oriented to create a visual connection with the church.

Compared with current zoning, this option would require an adjustment to density max to achieve the proposed 110 units/acre and to build offices on a second story.



SCENARIO 2:

This configuration includes 17,300 square feet of first-floor retail, 19,800 square feet of office, 163 residential units and 249 parking spaces in a new integrated garage. It also envisions courtyard amenity space that connects through the site with a visual terminus of the church.

Compared with current zoning, this option would require an adjustment to density max to achieve the proposed 96 units/acre and to build offices on a second story.



SCENARIO 3:

This configuration includes 12,600 square feet of first-floor retail, 5,300 square feet of office, 206 residential units and 320 parking spaces in a new integrated garage. It also envisions courtyard amenity space that connects through the site with a visual terminus of the church.

Compared with current zoning, this option would require an adjustment to density max to achieve the proposed 121 units/acre and to exceed the current 98' height maximum.

Envisioning possibilities for the Denis Theater corner

General site considerations

Mt. Lebanon owns the air rights above the Pittsburgh Regional Transit light rail line that runs along Parse Way and sees the potential to use this space for development that further enhances the Uptown district. The corner of Alfred Street and Washington Road is a key intersection that has been the subject of excitement recently given a partnership between the Denis Theater Foundation and Row House Cinema to reopen the iconic theater.

The parcels are privately owned, thus the municipality has limited influence over future redevelopment. However, the following scenarios add to the conversation about potential for this corner and how the reactivation of the film, arts and cultural center could bring a center of gravity to a more consequential transformation for the area.

All three of the scenarios on the following page incorporate the existing Denis Theater structure.

Current Zoning:

CBD with PMXD overlay

PoP Scores:

DESIGN: 4.5

FORM: 4.8

EXPERIENCE: 4.2

IDENTITY: 4.5

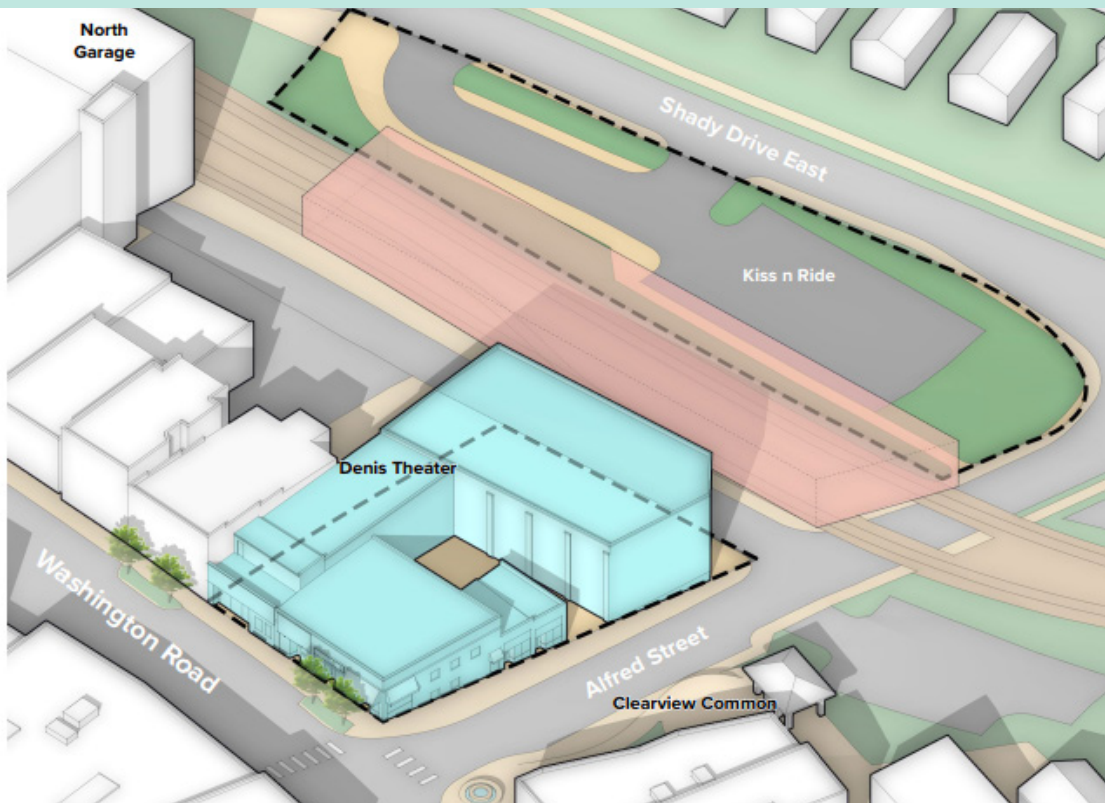
TOTAL: 18

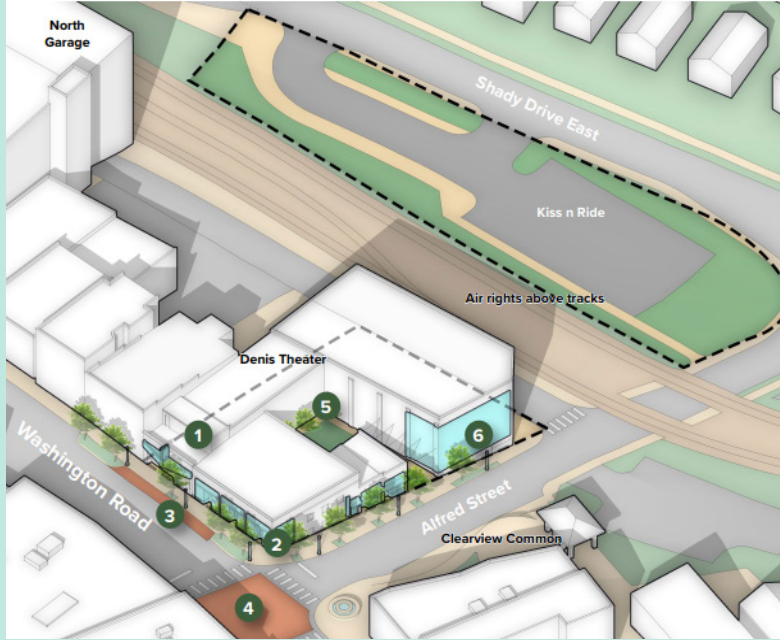
PERSONALITY:

Buzzing

TRAITS:

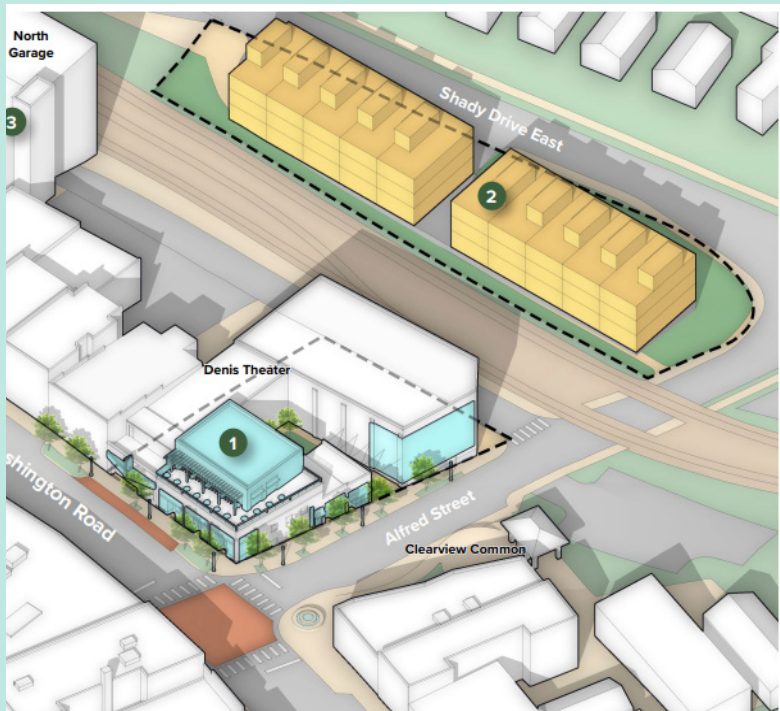
- » Boundary-pushing design that incorporates the Denis Theater as a destination in Uptown, for the municipality, and for the light rail system
- » Emphasis on social gathering, public space, on-street dining and street design
- » High on energy, culture and hospitality
- » Fun and celebratory place





SCENARIO 1:

This configuration builds on current interests, including 1) Reactivating the Denis Theater, 2) restoring and enhancing storefronts, 3) Adding a curbside drop-off zone, 4) Enhancing the intersection, 5) Creating a new courtyard and 6) Adding public art. It does not propose additional parking or square footage for retail or hospitality.



SCENARIO 2:

This "incremental growth" configuration envisions 1) Developing a second-story use, and 2) Building townhouses or walkup apartments over parking. It includes 2,200 square feet of new retail/hospitality, 32,000 additional total square feet and 22 additional off-street parking spaces.



SCENARIO 3:

This "marquee mixed use" configuration envisions a higher-intensity transformation around the theater, including 1) Restoring and incorporating frontage, 2) New ground-floor retail, 3) A screened parking garage with 220 spaces, and 4) 154 residential units* and/or hotel space. It includes 14,000 square feet of new retail/hospitality, 152,600 additional total square feet and 220 additional off-street parking spaces.

As pictured, this scenario would require zoning adjustments to comply with height and density maximums.

*Option to replace some units with hotel space

14. Implement improvements related to Parse Way.

The "Destination Uptown" plan recognizes Parse Way's potential as a pedestrian corridor and dynamic portal for the business district.

- a. Coordinate improvements with Pittsburgh Regional Transit.
- b. Incentivize and strive to create "second storefronts" on rear lower levels of structures facing Parse Way to build connectivity between T station and Uptown District.
- c. Improve signage and wayfinding between T station and Uptown District.
- d. Enhance stairway connecting T station and Washington Road. Coordinate improvements with redevelopment of vacant adjacent property.
- e. Consider partnership opportunities to provide rentable e-bikes or other options to provide alternatives to vehicles for "first mile/last mile" commute.
- f. Add covered and secure bike lockers at the T station or in the lowest level of the municipal North Garage.
- g. Work with Mt. Lebanon Partnership, businesses, and property owners to create a trash management program for Uptown business district, addressing the problems of eyesore dumpsters on Parse Way and the lack of an alley west of the 600 block of Washington Road.



Existing conditions along Parse Way represent a less-than-ideal gateway into Uptown for transit riders.

15. Strengthen the Beverly Road commercial district.

The stretch between Overlook Drive and Ralston Place is widely recognized as one of the region's most charming small business districts. Future investments should continue to provide a platform for small businesses to thrive and further enhance a lively pedestrian realm.

- a. Support continued livability, social-space and façade improvements.
- b. Add a library book locker for improved service and walkability for people living in northern areas of the community.
- c. Add secure, covered bike racks or bike lockers at the parking lot.

16. Strengthen the C-2 Highway Commercial areas.

The Cochran Road commercial area is located in central Mt. Lebanon and extends from Bower Hill Road to Cedar Boulevard. Along the municipality's southern border, the Galleria commercial area centers on the mall. Generally, these areas are automobile-oriented, providing ample parking and fewer pedestrian amenities.

- a. Cochran Road: Add street trees; façade improvements; consider creating a greenspace parklet in the vicinity of the Bower Hill intersection. Work with Scott Township to complete sidewalk connections along Cochran Road to the Virginia Manor grocery plaza.
- b. Galleria: Consider potential rental of some portions of the property for municipal recreation programming.
- c. Add pedestrian connections to the Galleria from surrounding neighborhoods.



Castle Shannon business district

17. Strengthen the Castle Shannon commercial district.

The Castle Shannon Boulevard commercial corridor offers a grocery store and other retail and service businesses near the Castle Shannon border and a light rail station. The portion of the corridor that runs from Sunset Drive to Mt. Lebanon Boulevard is automobile oriented. Sidewalks connect the area between Shady Drive East and Sunset Drive. The portion that runs from the underpass of the T tracks to Scott Road/Sunset Drive contains both neighborhood commercial and medium-density residential zoning. This segment has the capacity to become Mt. Lebanon's "third business district" as a walkable neighborhood asset.

- a. Support social-space, placemaking and façade improvements, including possible property acquisitions to add greenspace and enhance stormwater management on parcels near the T track.
- b. Add secure, covered bike racks or bike lockers at the parking lot.
- c. Improve marketing of Castle Shannon Boulevard as Mt. Lebanon's third business district.

18. Work with the Partnership, St. Clair Health and other community partners to create exciting, inclusive programming Uptown, Beverly Road and potentially the Galleria.

Consider staging the following events throughout Uptown or in other locations around the community:

- a. Pop-up rooftop events at the North Garage
- b. Art classes, open air drawings
- c. Sidewalk chalk art
- d. Walking or biking groups



Additional art in public spaces will further invigorate Mt. Lebanon's business districts, adding aesthetic and cultural value that reinforces economic vitality and a shared sense of pride in place.

setting the bar

The metrics identified for this section will help Mt. Lebanon track the impact of implementing recommendations.



Number of building permits by type and other municipal permits issued



Estimate reduction in carbon emissions from various municipal transition projects



Volume of landfill, recyclable and compost material collected



Business district vacancy rate: Target below 10% of first-floor storefronts



Tree canopy coverage, number of street trees, added trees



Parking utilization/leases



Municipal on-site power generation



Accessibility upgrades to municipal buildings (including items such as elevator repairs)



Document transition of fleet from fossil fuel

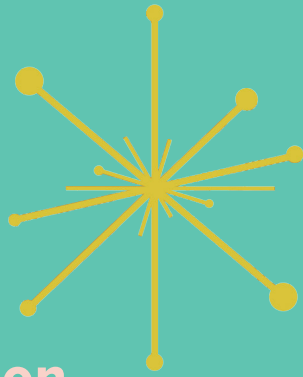


engagement

This chapter focuses on creating the platform for community to be built. It includes fostering positive community relations between citizens and effective two-way interaction between the municipality and residents.



vision

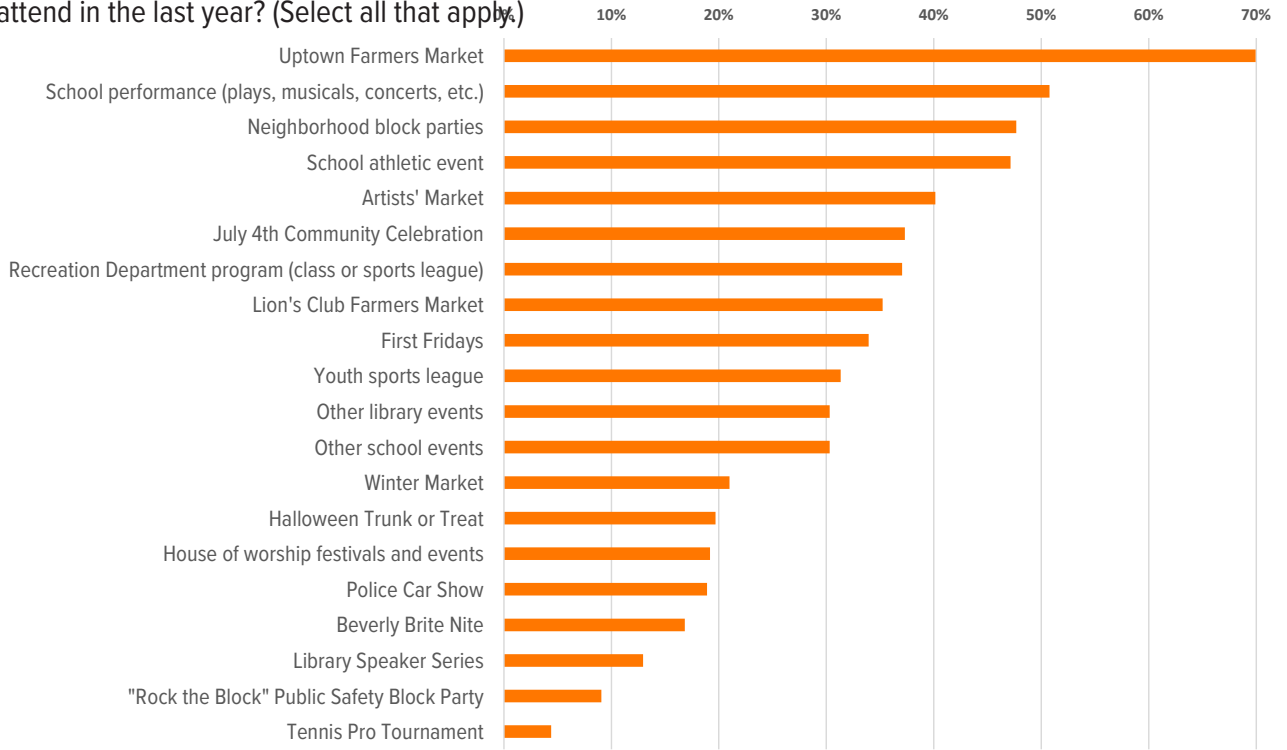


Mt. Lebanon encourages engagement in civic life and educates residents about municipal functions while demonstrating respect for all citizens and their rights.

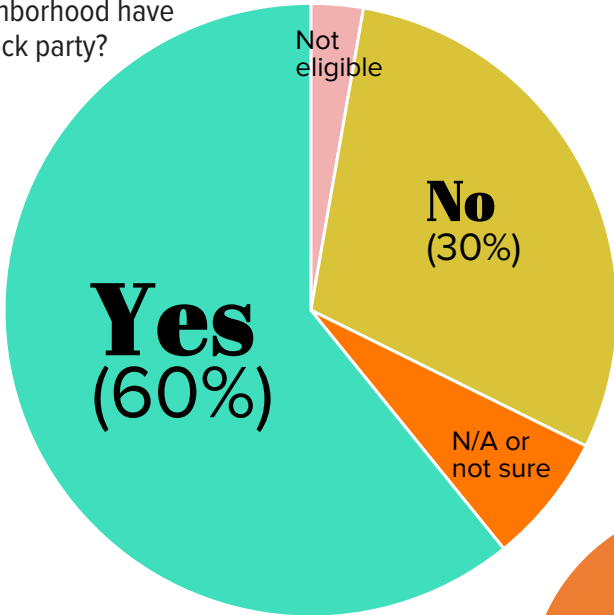
talking points

- An educated, informed and engaged citizenry is crucial to effective operations of municipal government.
- Respectful and effective two-way interaction between government and citizens contributes to community quality of life.
- In a community questionnaire for this comprehensive plan in 2022, just under 30% of respondents listed “diversity, equity and inclusion” as a high priority, and 11% of respondents felt that “enriching local identity, sense of belonging” was a high priority. These were the fifth and ninth priorities, respectively.
- Another aspect of engagement is participation in community life. Results on the following page, from a survey on the topic conducted in 2023 for this comprehensive plan, indicate a population that is highly participatory.
- A study of public information communications conducted in 2020 suggested many next steps, many of which are underway.

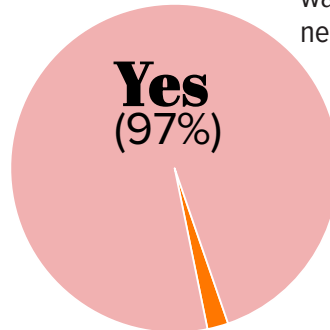
Topic survey question: Which events did you and/or members of your household attend in the last year? (Select all that apply.)



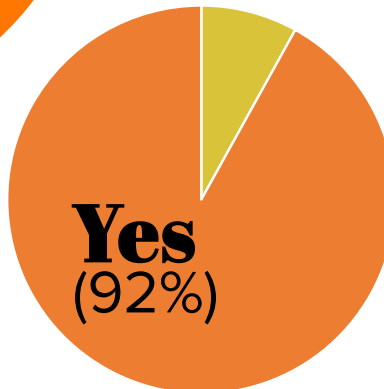
Does your neighborhood have a block party?



Do you go for walks in your neighborhood?



Do you have a library card?





context

Engagement, in the context of a comprehensive plan, includes many forms of interaction between local government and community stakeholders, including these elements of official duties:

- Providing channels of effective, clear communication with residents so that they may gain information they need and want via their preferred channels.
- Fostering interactions with property owners, business owners, residents and other constituencies that help everyone conduct their business or official duties fully and efficiently.
- Providing access to public information in a streamlined way.
- Seeking and respecting opinions of citizens about how the municipality operates.
- Providing opportunities for residents of all ages and abilities to interact with municipal departments.
- Modeling civility, transparency and fact-based communication in all aspects of public engagement.
- Enacting policies and creating programs that educate about local government functions; provide opportunities for residents to get to know municipal staff members and their duties; encourage volunteerism and other means of participation in community life; and foster neighborliness and a sense of welcome.
- Helping to position the community as a great place to live, work, run a business or visit.



A volunteer reads to families on Earth Day.

Why involvement and engagement matter

The idea of public or civic engagement occupies a long arc in both United States history and sociology theory. Most in the U.S. learn in middle school the foundational importance of voting by an informed citizenry. At its most fundamental, a local government’s public information office has the primary duty of providing accurate information so that residents may act on it.

But engagement and involvement matter in other ways. Sociologists have studied how to encourage residents to become informed about local issues and operations, and to be prepared to share opinions and ideas, or to participate actively as volunteers, or to run for office. Sociologists (and many others) also have explored the benefits people get from being actively part of their communities instead of living in a more isolated context.

At its heart, this chapter of the comprehensive plan offers recommendations for actions the municipality can take to help residents gain the information they

need and want from their local government, building on existing best practices. The chapter encourages the municipality to move increasingly toward two-way communication with residents, not only providing information they need and want, but also providing ways for the municipal government to “listen.” These recommendations include both “mechanical” steps such as simplifying applications and forms and also the more “invitational” steps of seeking ideas and input.

The chapter also delves into the practicalities of how to improve environments for residents’ interactions with local government, such as accessible physical locations and accessible information sharing methods.

And speaking of “listening,” the recommendations in this chapter also respond to input collected during this comprehensive plan’s engagement process — namely, that residents highly value a sense of community and feeling of welcome. Thus, this chapter recommends ways to strengthen that aspect of living, working or finding leisure in the community, that “This Is Home,” and you’re certainly welcome.

“ People active in various civic endeavors, the library, the communication systems in place (website, magazine, text and email alerts). ”

— Response to survey question "What do you like most about the community?"

Who does what regarding community engagement in Mt. Lebanon?

The main department for providing information about local government and municipal news overall is the Public Information Office. This office publishes Mt. Lebanon Magazine, which is by far the most popular means for residents to find out what’s happening in the community. This department also manages the *mtlebanon.org* website; runs the municipality’s social media accounts; produces the Seven Ten email newsletter; sends LeboALERTS and LeboEmergency alerts; fields inquiries; encourages residents to be involved in the community; promotes Mt. Lebanon as a wonderful community; publishes municipal brochures and reports; plans some events; and oversees use of copyrighted material.

Given market changes in the newspaper industry, suburban communities receive less coverage from major outlets than they did in the previous decade. This makes having a local public information office increasingly essential in getting accurate and timely information to residents.

Other departments handle their own or contribute additional information sharing, including the Recreation, Police and Fire Departments and Library. All departments handle queries from the public as well. The municipality has a designated Right-to-Know Officer.

For many years, an appointed volunteer Community Relations Advisory Board provided input to the Commission on matters relating to civic participation. This board has also provided mediation and conflict resolution services to residents to help alleviate neighborhood disputes. In addition, the municipality created an ad hoc committee to advise of matters of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Moving forward, through a realignment of citizen advisory boards as of early 2024, a Civic Engagement Advisory Board will provide research and advice to the Commission. The board will be responsible for setting priorities at the behest of the commission and working toward implementing this section of the plan.

recommendations

1. Continue to provide communications that reach all residents of the community, regardless of age or technological abilities.

Informed citizens are the beating heart of a robust and thriving local government, but providing information to all citizens can be challenging. Demographics, time availability, convenience and socio-economic factors all affect the means by which - or even the degree of interest - residents take in their local government. Mt. Lebanon should continue to strive to make its two-way communications engaging, convenient and accessible.

- a. Continue to implement previously recommended changes in municipal communications as demographics and technology change.

Mt. Lebanon conducted a communications study in 2020, assessing how residents wish to acquire information. The study found that Mt. Lebanon Magazine was the preferred method, followed closely by the municipal website (mtlebanon.org) and LeboALERT, the municipality's non-emergency email and text information system. The study recommended implementation steps, including revising the website, a task that is now mostly complete. The municipality should continue to implement this plan and adopt additional changes as technology changes.

This implementation should stay abreast of and respond assertively to contemporary issues such as misinformation and deep fakes.

Local engagement: Tougher now than ever

A municipality's job of engaging with and informing the public is becoming increasingly challenging. Mt. Lebanon maintains numerous social media channels, its website and Mt. Lebanon Magazine, among other forms of outreach. Still, people don't always find the information they need.

Here are for best practices for communication by governments, based on recommendations from the international Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD):

- **Transparency:** Communicate in an honest, clear and open manner. Disclose information, decisions, processes and data.
- **Inclusiveness:** Information should try to reach everyone, with attention paid to reaching disengaged, vulnerable, underrepresented or marginalized people or groups.
- **Responsiveness:** Resources should be dedicated to understanding and listening to questions and facilitating two-way dialogue.
- **Whole-of-society:** Governments should strive to counteract information "disorders."
- **Public interest-driven:** Communication should include measures to ensure clear authorship, impartiality, accountability, and objectivity.
- **Institutionalization:** A government should have a coherent approach that includes standards and guidelines.
- **Evidence-based:** Communications practices should be chosen by reliable data assessing effectiveness.
- **Timeliness:** Public institutions should act in a timely manner, recognizing how fast false information can travel.
- **Prevention:** Government institutions should pre-empt rumors, falsehoods and conspiracies.
- **Future-proof:** Government communicators should use strategic foresight to anticipate the evolution of technology.



The Mt. Lebanon Residents Academy, sponsored by the Community Relations Board, provides a nine-week overview of local programs and services.

- b. Employ a resident-centered design approach to ensure that solutions and processes reflect what people want and need. Recruit likely users of an improvement, platform, program, app or service to provide feedback on design before it is finalized. Such volunteers can help identify priorities, problems or opportunities based on the way they experience what is proposed.
- c. Continually explore technological improvements that access and make local government more transparent.
 - i. Annually review and reconsider whether to create a Mt. Lebanon mobile app or optimize the website to be increasingly mobile-friendly.
 - ii. Simplify how users log in or interact digitally with the municipality for the broad variety of possible two-way actions and operations, including reporting infrastructure or facilities problems, tracking permits and approvals, paying taxes, and registering for recreation programs.
 - iii. Build tools into the municipal website to allow residents to understand and track municipal undertakings and accomplishments more readily. Include tracking tools and dashboards for municipal planning and implementation, budgets, and capital improvement plans.
- d. Continue to employ free and openly accessible social media platforms to share information.
- e. Create and share flow charts, FAQs and other supplemental guides that can explain local processes and regulations in plain terms. Include diagrams showing ways the municipality interacts with residents/groups, and guides to typical permitting and approvals processes. To clarify regulations, create diagrams or illustrations in tandem with simplification of the Zoning Ordinance.

2.

Maintain and create opportunities for engagement.

Mt. Lebanon’s residents historically have contributed readily and significantly to municipal volunteer boards, responded to requests for input and have proved willing to provide expertise, opinions and ideas in public arenas. The municipality should continue to engage its citizens, pulling in additional voices — such as newer or younger residents — and demonstrating that it values participation.

- a. Integrate the new advisory board structure into municipal operations.

The municipality realigned its volunteer board structure in 2023 to coincide with development of this comprehensive plan. With implementation scheduled for 2024, newly constituted advisory boards will each align with a chapter of this plan: Civic Engagement, Mobility & Transportation, Parks & Recreation, Community Sustainability & Economic Development, and Financial Management, all with nine members.

This alignment between a comprehensive plan and local advisory boards is a best practice in the professional realms of community planning and local government communications.

The newly defined boards are charged with reviewing, monitoring and proposing policy changes in alignment with the municipality’s Comprehensive Plan, among other duties outlined in bylaws. They have the ability to create subcommittees based on specific topic areas.

Advisory Board Realignment

2024 ADVISORY BOARD	KEY FOCUS AREAS
Civic Engagement	Community relations; diversity, equity and inclusion
Mobility & Transportation	Traffic, parking, Complete Streets
Parks & Recreation	Recreation facilities and programming
Community Sustainability and Economic Development	Environmental sustainability, climate response, economic development, historic preservation
Financial Management	Pension investments, financial planning and operations

Boards and authorities that continue

Some Mt. Lebanon boards and authorities are mandated by law or contractual obligations:

- Board of Appeals
- Civil Service Board
- Hospital Authority
- Industrial Development Authority
- Library Board
- Medical Rescue Team South Authority
- Planning Board
- Zoning Hearing Board



Mt. Lebanon offers a Citizens Fire Academy, Citizens Police Academy and Residents Academy to enhance and develop the community's awareness and understanding of operations.

- b. Employ additional opportunities for public input into municipal idea generation and decision-making, both digitally and in person, following the reduction in the number of volunteer advisory boards. Ideas include creating ad-hoc advisory committees, providing surveys and additional structured community outreach.
- c. Continue to provide information to residents about local volunteer opportunities aligned with the municipality or allied community groups.
- d. Continue to demonstrate municipal appreciation for volunteer commitments.
- e. Continue to foster civic literacy through the Residents Academy, Fire Academy, Police Academy, and the appointment of students as junior commissioners and board members.
- f. Continue to foster relationships and educate the community by encouraging Police and Fire Department outreach at community and school district programs and events.
- g. Collaborate with the school district and local universities to inform students of public-sector career opportunities via career-day or other programs.
- h. Continue to empower advisory boards and ad hoc committees to make diversity-equity-inclusion recommendations to the Commission and to municipal departments as they strive to continually enhance interaction with the community.

3. Implement a slogan and branding framework that is aspirational but reflective.

- a. Adopt a new community slogan and activate it through a new campaign that can shape a Mt. Lebanon Place Brand. (See following pages.)
- b. Develop and implement a place brand. Next steps could look like:
 - i. Engage the community to gather input on what is Mt. Lebanon's brand through surveys, focus groups, pop-up events, and other methods to develop a shared vision and strategy.
 - ii. Analyze and test the brand strategy for authenticity and consistency.
 - iii. Design the new brand, including values, narrative, visual identity, name, and scope, aligned with the place and target audiences.
 - iv. Develop authentic brand values that foster belonging, purpose, consistency, and sensory appeal.
 - v. Implement the place brand through building short, medium, and long-term goals that reflect the community's brand principles.
- c. Create and distribute place brand kit for partner organizations.
- d. Create and market a new development scorecard that is aligned with the Comprehensive Plan, community slogan, and place brand to facilitate desired development.
- e. Create and market targeted development incentives that are aligned with the Comprehensive Plan, community slogan, and place brand to facilitate desired development.
- f. Use Place Brand as the identity for recruiting and facilitating the development of sites, including but not limited to, those identified in this plan.

What's in a slogan?

Considering a refresh

One directive for this planning process was to evaluate the municipality's slogan and use the results of public engagement to determine whether it could use a refresh. The community's logo – the Cedar of Lebanon – will remain unchanged. The current slogan, "a community with character," provides a lot to like, conveying a sense of history, tradition and high standards. However, public engagement revealed some room for realignment with some of the other shared values that rose to a priority level in the plan, particularly that the community should become more welcoming and inclusive. For some, "a community with character" brings to mind the predominantly white upper-middle-class suburb of the 1980s.

The planning team set to work analyzing the results of public engagement, the thousands of comments we received in various surveys and events, worked with the plan's community engagement advisory group and conducted some in-depth interviews to determine what about this place is important to people. **What does it mean to live in Mt. Lebanon? What are the distinct features of this community that make it stand out? What are our greatest sources of pride?**

On following page is the slogan concept that resonated the best during the planning process: **This is home.** This responds in particular to the suggestion that Mt. Lebanon should be more welcoming, more inclusive. "This is home" underscores a sense of belonging. Staff appreciated that the slogan could be adapted for different uses – "this is ____." And there are some concept variations that could come into play: "Welcome home."



THIS IS HOME.

Capturing the feeling of what it's like to be in Mt. Lebanon can be summed up in one word, 'home'. A place where generations of families of chosen to stay, and where new families are just beginning to lay down roots, Mt. Lebanon is home. This slogan concept can stand on it's own or could eventually spin off into marketing campaigns using This is ____.



A place brand for one and all

Bolstering local pride and identity

Separate from the official identity of a local government, which may aim to inspire public confidence in the efficient delivery of an appropriate level of public services and facilities, the **place brand** of a community captures what makes it iconic, authentic, memorable and different from all other places. A place brand is not a carefully owned and managed trademark; it's a messy thing that is proliferated through uptake by businesses, residents, local groups and anyone feeling inspired.

This plan positions Mt. Lebanon to continue development of its place brand. This will involve identifying brand principles and assets, then forming a strategy to create synergy between how businesses, the community and visitors talk and think about this place.



Does Mt. Lebanon need a local flag?

Place brand case study: City of Tulsa

Contrast the municipal brand for the City of Tulsa, shown below, with its unofficial place brand, which appears beneath. In this example, an open competition to design a new flag spun into a place brand that identifies the city's history, geography and beauty, clearly drawing upon purely local inspiration. Community members and businesses have made it their own.

Municipal brand:



Place brand:



“The residents are generous, kind and involved.”

“This is the first place I’ve lived where I feel like someone actually cares about my experiences and wants to make a positive impact on my life.”

— Survey responses

4. Foster opportunities for the municipality and community groups to undertake efforts that contribute to municipal goals for making Mt. Lebanon increasingly neighborly, welcoming and inclusive.

- a. Support municipal programs and/or education efforts that assist residents in need, such as the Snow Angels program or reminders to check on your neighbors.
- b. Work with a community partner to help foster an app-based grocery sharing system such as FoodShare or FoodyBag.
- c. Use municipal properties as pickup sites for CSA drop-offs or other shared community food assets.
- d. Consider an annual “Do Good” information fair that helps residents learn of volunteer opportunities.
- e. Clarify and educate groups about permitting and approvals processes for events or use of municipal property.

5.

Conduct quality of life satisfaction surveys every two years, and include communications as a topic within this survey. Consider participating in the ICMA National Citizen Survey or a similar benchmarking instrument.

In addition to communications as a topic, add pertinent local questions, such as those related to diversity, equity and inclusion or other matters of interest that Mt. Lebanon wishes to track.

6.

Review policies, ordinances and programs to identify those that foster or hinder community spirit, inclusion and belonging in the realms of housing, transit, walkability, public safety and livability or other areas of interest. Make improvements as warranted.

A review process is a significant undertaking because municipalities typically have large numbers of documented policies, years of ordinances and resolutions and potentially innumerable programs.

- a. New ordinances or policies should include a regular schedule for review to evaluate effectiveness and the need for any adjustments. For example, the Climate Resolution requires a report to be submitted to the Commission every two years and spells out its contents. The Overnight Parking Ordinance included a trial period when the municipality issued warnings prior to full enforcement.
- b. Utilize a tracking software to facilitate implementation and review of newly adopted ordinances and policies, building on the experience of the police department's use of a policy review software.
- c. Task each advisory board with review of one municipal policy or ordinance per year as part of its annual work plan.
- d. Applicable department heads and the municipal manager should review recommended changes to policies. Changes to any that initially required Commission approval should also require Commission approval.
- e. Applicable department heads, senior staff members and the municipal manager should review and enact recommended changes to programs. Applicable department heads, municipal manager and Commission should review and enact recommended changes to ordinances.



Coffee with a Cop events create an informal setting to build relationships between community members and police.

7. Track and adapt to societal expectations for police department operations.

- a. Revise enforcement policies and practices as needed.
- b. Continue partnerships with St. Clair Health, Outreach, Mt. Lebanon School District.
- c. Maintain the police department's standing in the region as a desirable place to work to attract higher numbers of top job candidates.
- d. Consider additional services, such as a mental health professional, as part of police department operations to improve quality of life for police officers and for the general public.

8. Adapt the interior architecture and design of municipal buildings and facilities to modernize and optimize the user experience, both for visitors and those working in the space.

- a. Continually enhance the accessibility of all municipal buildings and facilities to ensure that all residents have access to public spaces.
- b. Adapt for workplace trends among residents as well as employees; differences in the way residents access and interface with service delivery; safety and security; wellness, physical and mental health; and employee teamwork and collaboration.

9. Continually improve the employee environment to attract and retain the next generation of employees.

- a. Conduct an internal review of the employee manual, HR policies and job descriptions to be adaptive to changing needs of the next generation. Include general staff employees in the effort. Topics will include such matters as family leave, retirement savings accounts, remote work, safety, workplace comfort and employee wellness and mental health.
- b. Involve employees in planning for changes in the interior architecture and design of municipal buildings.
- c. Provide funding as feasible for recruitment costs, particularly for hard-to-fill jobs.

10. Maintain visitor information materials on the website.

This might include a map and/or listings of community attractions, running/walking routes, shopping, dining, recreation, and entertainment. Provide QR code cards for this web page at appropriate locations in or near Mt. Lebanon.

11. Maintain open lines of communications with real estate agents to market the community and stay abreast of consumer choices.

setting the bar

The metrics identified for this section will help Mt. Lebanon track the impact of implementing recommendations.



Number of hours volunteers donate to municipal boards, committees and other bodies



Participation in fire, police and resident academies



Performance over time in biennial nationally benchmarked community quality of life survey, both versus peer communities and previous survey ratings



Applications for appointed board positions



Participation in surveys and outreach



Website traffic



Library cards



Social media engagement



Municipal service requests/phone calls



Block party permits issued

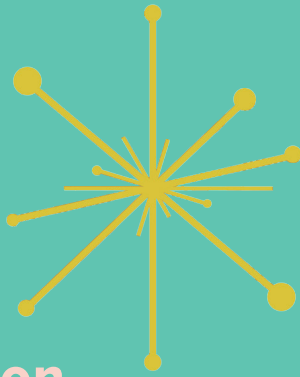


mobility

This topic focuses on the complete, safe, comfortable, and convenient movement of people within and beyond the community's borders. It includes means of human-powered and vehicular mobility, such as walking, driving, transit use and cycling, as well as related matters like parking, emergency services, and accessibility.



vision

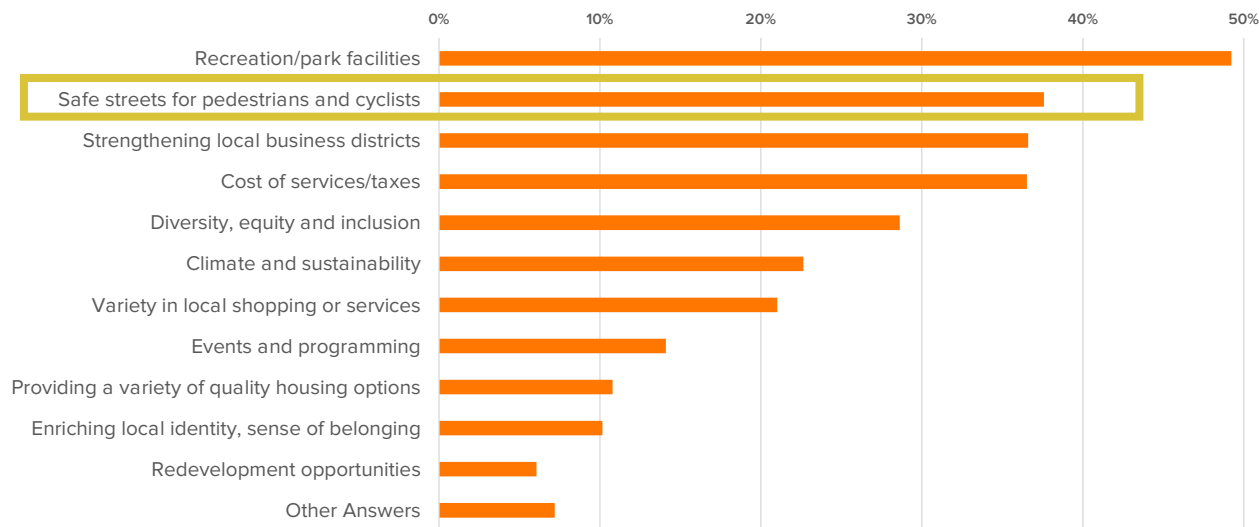


Mt. Lebanon maintains an inclusive, safe, accessible, connected, equitable, and resilient multimodal transportation network that enables people to move through the community and access chosen destinations via one's chosen mode.

talking points

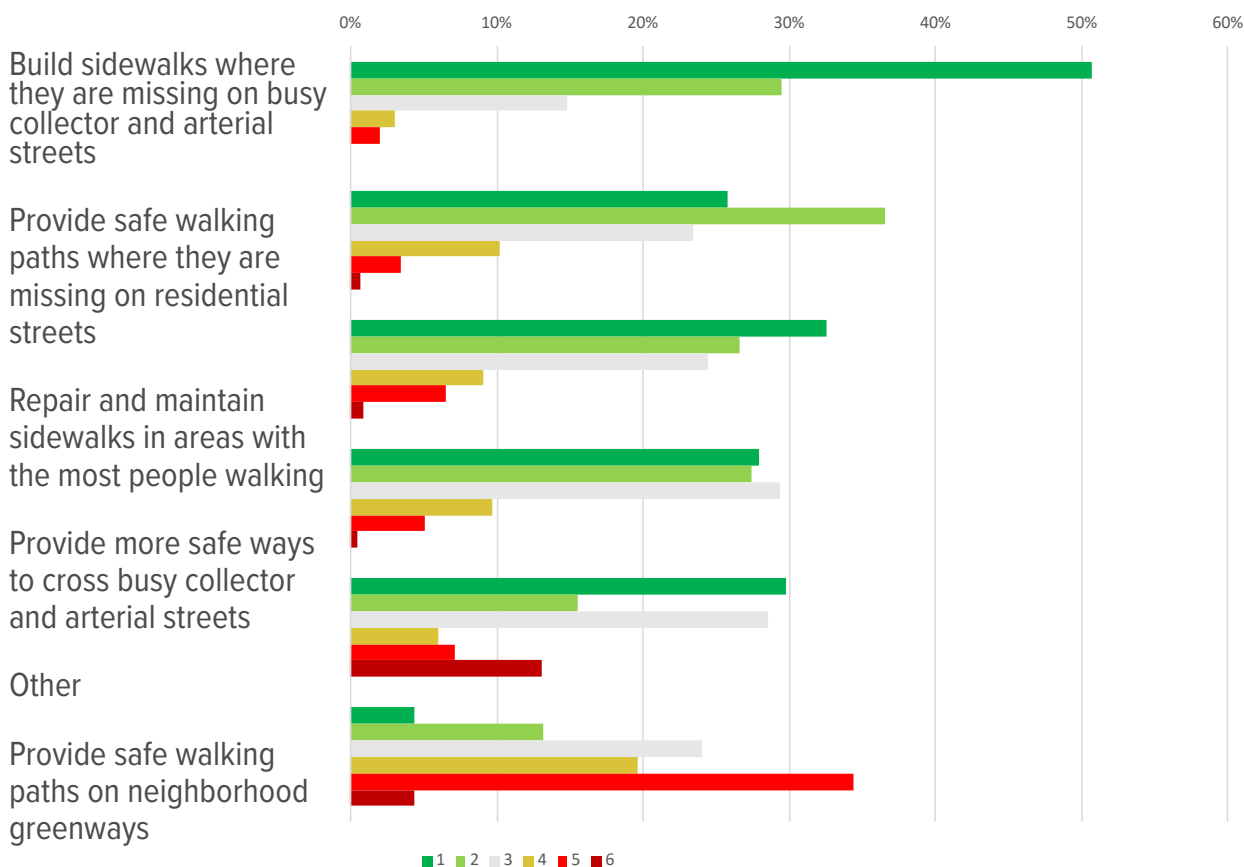
- Mt. Lebanon is known as a “walkable” community; still, public input into this comprehensive plan revealed intense interest in improving the walking network.
- Community input showed strong support for more opportunities to walk and bicycle. An active transportation plan will explore how to develop safer routes for those modes while balancing the need for transit and auto access.
- Some people at community events stated an interest in transforming Washington Road into more of a local commercial street. These residents described this as “right-sizing” the street to elevate the priority of pedestrians.
- Parents raised concerns during the planning process about the need for safer routes to school and Mt. Lebanon has engaged with the new school superintendent to begin collaboration on new programs and projects.
- Mt. Lebanon recently adopted a Complete Streets policy that should inform future decision-making. Alignment of goals and metrics across the municipality’s various transportation policies and programs will help to better achieve the desired outcomes.

Which of these issues should be a high priority for Mt. Lebanon to address during the next 10 years?



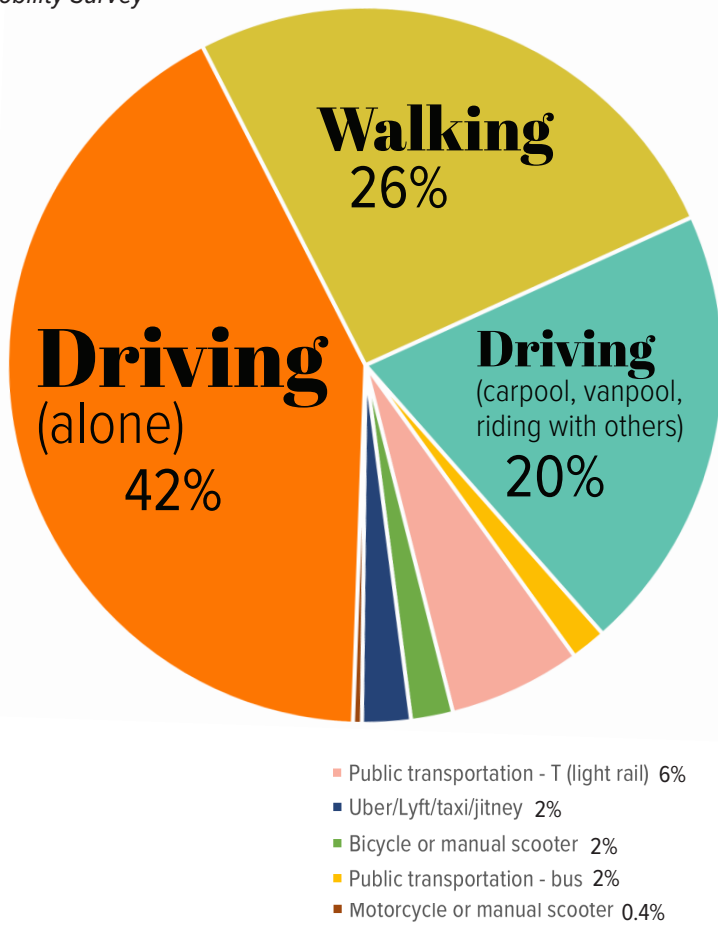
Initial survey

How should the following types of pedestrian improvements rank, in terms of investment priority?



Percentages refer to share of respondents ranking each item #1 (green) through #6 (dark red).

Mobility survey



context

Mobility is the ability to move around and access is the ability to get to a particular place. These elements of human movement are needed, together, for people to learn, work, shop, and do all the other things they want or need to outside of their homes.

In order to ensure mobility and access are optimized to serve the people of Mt. Lebanon over the next decade, community stakeholders determined that they should be inclusive, safe, accessible, connected, equitable, and resilient. This plan outlines the key opportunities that the municipality should pursue to advance this vision for mobility and access.

Among its suburban peers, Mt. Lebanon excels in providing an authentic multimodal experience and it has the opportunity to build upon its strengths to further its excellence. That opportunity has been recognized by municipal leaders and stakeholders, and this plan reflects that in its bold, specific recommendations to achieve a more accessible, multimodal community.

Existing conditions

The second phase of this planning process involved a mobility survey to provide the municipality and planning team with a more nuanced perspective of the issues. The survey asked people their most frequently used modes of travel (first, second, and third). Results on the previous page show those combined responses weighted for frequency. While driving alone is the mode used most often by Mt. Lebanon residents, walking is the second and that is uncommon. This is a testament to Mt. Lebanon’s identity as a walkable community, which was consistently confirmed throughout the planning process.



Top selection from Washington Road visual preference survey



Washington Road visual preference survey
 Source: evolve environment :: architecture

Input received during the planning process also revealed the following:

- While Mt. Lebanon is considered walkable and many people walk throughout the community, there are many opportunities to improve the safety and utility of the sidewalk network.
- Residents want to see more traffic calming, but not at the expense of more traffic on other residential streets.
- People want to be able to cycle more safely in Mt. Lebanon.
- Mt. Lebanon should enable safer and more multimodal trips to school.
- Washington Road is chaotic and does not feel safe to all users. Double parking is a problem.

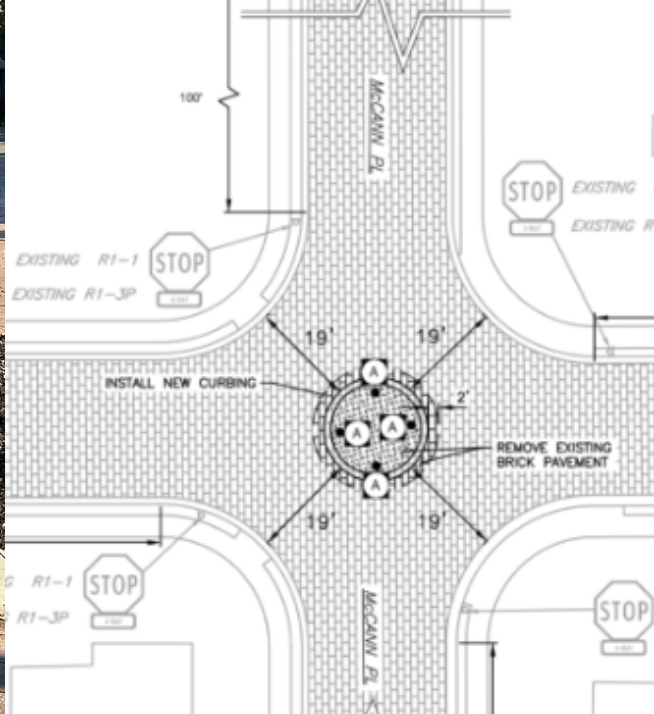
Several of Mt. Lebanon's major thoroughfares are owned and maintained by Allegheny County or PennDOT. Improvements to non-local streets will require coordination with these agencies.

Moving forward

To shape recommendations for access and mobility, the planning team utilized multiple data sources, including multiple points of community input as well as government data from relevant agencies. The planning team used all of these data points to understand the mobility and access challenges and opportunities in Mt. Lebanon and then incorporate best practices into the development of recommendations that meet the unique needs of this community.

Foundational to this plan is Mt. Lebanon's complete streets policy, adopted in November 2022. This policy sets an expectation for the municipality to advance multimodal streets at every opportunity, including routine maintenance. This plan calls for the vision and intent of the policy to be carried through to all mobility and access priorities. This means that some existing policies and programs must be updated to bring all transportation-related activities into alignment and ensure that they follow the municipality's most current position on access and mobility.

Another important point of reference for Mt. Lebanon's policies and programs on these topics is the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation.



A new traffic circle at McCann Place is part of a set of traffic calming improvements along Arden Road that also included speed humps, pedestrian facility improvements at Overlook Drive and a left-turn restriction onto Cochran Road.

Who does what in Mt. Lebanon regarding mobility?

The Department of Public Works holds primary responsibility for maintaining the municipality’s streets, parks and other mobility corridors. Sidewalk maintenance is generally the responsibility of private property owners.

This aspect of life in Mt. Lebanon – how people move within and through the community – takes a higher priority in this comprehensive plan than in the previous ones, because public input so clearly lined up behind improving Mt. Lebanon’s walkability, slowing vehicular traffic and enhancing bike routes and trails.

Previously, two citizen advisory boards helped to inform decision-making about issues related to the movement of people and goods: the Traffic Board and the Parking Facilities Board. Traffic and parking are still important, but this comprehensive plan also elevates “active transportation,” which is human-powered mobility like walking and biking. Moving forward, through a realignment of citizen advisory boards, a Mobility Advisory Board will provide research and advice to the Commission. The board will be responsible for setting priorities – at the behest of the Commission – for implementing this chapter of the comprehensive plan.

Streets and their sidewalks, the main public spaces of a city, are its most vital organs.

— Jane Jacobs, urban studies author and activist

recommendations

- 1. Organize mobility and access planning, design, construction, and advocacy to ensure consistency with and support of the municipality’s complete streets policy (CSP).¹**
 - a. Develop the process by which improvement projects follow directives from the CSP when they impact transportation facilities.
 - i. Per the adopted policy: “3.1. All municipal-owned new construction, reconstruction/retrofit, resurfacing, repaving, restriping, and rehabilitation transportation projects in the public right-of-way including, but not limited to, streets and all other connecting pathways should be designed, constructed, operated, and maintained so that all modes of transportation allow all users to move safely, comfortably, conveniently, and independently.”
 - b. Update the street types, definitions, and minimum street design standards in the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance to reflect CSP goals and PennDOT guidance. Continually explore technological improvements that access and make local government more transparent.
 - i. See PennDOT Publication 13M (DM-2), Table 1.2 for roadway typologies. Per PennDOT Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) data from 2021, there are no Regional Arterial roadways in Mt. Lebanon. Seek to maintain this.
 - ii. Strive to keep volumes below 25k AADT and speeds below 25mph on all roads in Mt. Lebanon to support safety goals. (Likelihood of death from crashes increases with speed; those risks double with SUVs and trucks.)
 - iii. Update street type definitions to reference AADT rather than Average Weekly Daily Traffic (AWDT); AADT is the standard and weekday counts are less reliable post-pandemic.
 - iv. Update the minimum street design standards for consistency with PennDOT Publication 13M (DM-2) and 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design.

1 *The resolution appears on mtlebanon.org [at this link](#).*



Streets for people

On August 5, 2023, Mt. Lebanon celebrated the official opening of streetscape improvements along Washington Road. At the Uptown Unveiled celebration, people had the opportunity to give input on this plan, and Washington Road in particular. With the completion of the Vibrant Uptown streetscape project, this plan encourages the use of the Uptown District for community gatherings.

Pittsburgh, Brentwood, and municipalities across the world regularly close streets to allow people to safely enjoy the space outside of cars. Mt. Lebanon closes Washington Road annually for Memorial Day and Halloween parades and a car cruise event. Prior to the pandemic, an Ultra Party block party event provided occasion to close the street on a Friday evening.

- c. Update the Neighborhood Traffic Management Program to ensure consistency with the goals of the CSP and PennDOT guidance, devising traffic solutions on a neighborhood level for methodical implementation.
 - i. Consider all roads eligible and update the Traffic Data Criteria and points system; at minimum, match the Project Ranking System in Figure 1 of PennDOT Publication 383, Pennsylvania’s Traffic Calming Handbook.
 - ii. Ensure that all transportation projects consider impacts on the Mt. Lebanon network as a whole.
- iii. Rename this program to better communicate its goals (e.g. Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program). According to the Institute of Transportation Engineers, traffic calming is, “The combination of mainly physical measures that reduce the negative effects of motor vehicle use, alter driver behavior, and improve conditions for non-motorized street users.
- iv. Create clear, simple public information explaining the process to make it easy for people to participate.

- v. Consider ways to streamline the process of approval to reduce time and subjective decision-making.
- d. Ensure that pedestrian detours are required and enforced when construction or other activities impact walkways.
- e. Update the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance to require multimodal transportation impact analyses rather than traffic impact studies.
 - i. Consider using Institute of Transportation Engineers’ “Multimodal Transportation Impact Analysis for Site Development Recommended Practice” as a guiding document.
- f. Consider additional street typologies for both street reconstruction projects and intersection enhancement projects. These could include but would not necessarily be limited to one-way streets, installations of bike lanes, roundabouts, woonerfs or others that meet the desired goals of the Complete Streets Policy and the community.
 - i. Utilize the Mobility Board to vet best practices, such as the National Association of City Transportation Officials' Urban Street Design Guide, for application on Mt. Lebanon's street network.

2.

Develop a plan that identifies strategies and prioritizes investment to create complete active transportation networks in Mt. Lebanon, potentially in cooperation with neighboring municipalities.

- a. Establish the terms of a project-based partnership with participating neighboring municipalities (including funding).
- b. Develop a request for proposals document and define a selection process.
 - i. Draft a scope of work to include in the RFP. Reference PennDOT Publication 787G, “How-To Guide for Developing Active Transportation Plans” for guidance. Ohio also has robust guidance on this topic in its, “Active Transportation Plan Development Guide.”
 - ii. This plan has revealed the following priorities for an active transportation plan:



Insight from NACTO'S Urban Street Design Guide appears in the appendix.

1. All transportation planning and design must consider impacts on the Mt. Lebanon network as a whole.
2. People want a complete sidewalk network.
3. People want more traffic management (i.e. calming).
4. Parents want safe routes to schools.
5. People support creating bicycle infrastructure in the context of a complete streets approach that ensures access for all modes.

3. Pursue strategies to maximize sidewalk availability in Mt. Lebanon.

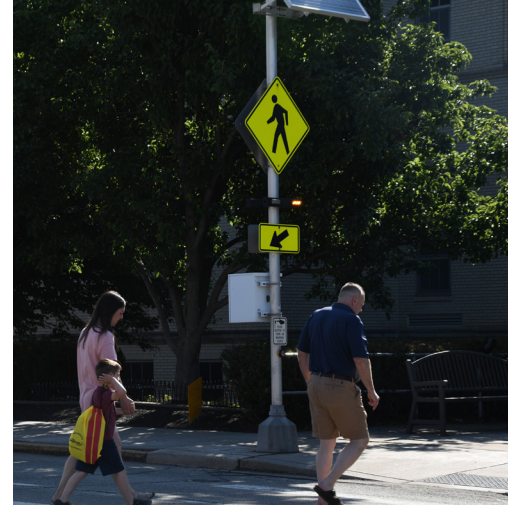
An updated sidewalk expansion policy was adopted on August 22, 2023.

- a. Review the sidewalk expansion policy (SEP) for consistency with the CSP. Per the adopted policy: “1.1. The Municipality shall develop a safe, comfortable, reliable, efficient, integrated and completely connected multimodal transportation network providing access, mobility, safety, and connections to all users.
- b. Review the SEP’s scoring methodology for consistency with its purpose, “to enhance Mt. Lebanon’s walkability,” and with the CSP.
 - i. The SEP states that priority will be given to streets, “proximate to public assets and common community destinations,” and all affected property owners agree to the terms.
 - ii. See CSP section 1.1.
- c. Promote the incentives that the municipality offers (i.e., municipal cost-sharing) to install or repair residential sidewalks.
- d. Create clear, simple public information explaining the process to make it easy for people to participate.
- e. Consider ways to streamline the process of approval to reduce time and subjective decision-making.
- f. Maintain or upgrade existing pedestrian thoroughfares that enhance the connectivity and walkability of neighborhoods. Consider expansion of pedestrian connections where opportunities exist on paper streets or unopened rights-of-way.

4.

Pursue strategies to protect and promote safe routes to school in Mt. Lebanon.

- a. Reorient Safe Routes to School (SRTS) efforts to the commonly used definition: “an approach that promotes walking and bicycling to school through infrastructure improvements, enforcement, tools, safety education, and incentives to encourage walking and bicycling to school.”
- b. Utilize the active transportation plan to identify appropriate safe school walking routes and safety improvement projects where needed along those routes.
- c. Establish an ongoing collaboration with the Mt. Lebanon School District to develop and implement safe routes to school walking programs throughout the year, in accordance with best practices.
- d. Consider zoning amendments to require land development plans on sites of 1 acre or larger to contain walking easements and trails to enable pedestrian connections.



Residents said in surveys that they want safer crossings.

5.

Plan and advocate for safety improvements to Washington Road.

Washington Road currently has two to four travel lanes and zero to two parking lanes.

- a. Coordinate Washington Road/West Liberty Avenue (PA-19) planning, design, and advocacy with the Borough of Dormont.
- b. Participate in the SPC-led road safety audit for Washington Road from McFarland Road or Potomac Avenue to Cochran Road.
- c. Utilize the completed comprehensive plan as well as the RSA process and active transportation planning to build the case for a safer Washington Road.
- d. Plan and advocate for reducing the automotive travel lanes on Washington Road in Uptown, in order to create more predictable automobile travel patterns and reduce the distance for people crossing the street.



The benefits of a road diet, according to the Federal Highway Administration, include a potential crash reduction of 19 to 47 percent, reduced vehicle speed differential, improved mobility and access by all road users, and integration of the roadway into surrounding uses that results in an enhanced quality of life.

- e. Advocate for road diets to consider potentially reducing automotive travel lanes and creating multi-modal improvements on other four-lane thoroughfares not owned by the municipality, including Bower Hill Road, Connor Road, Gilkeson Road and Washington Road between Cochran and Gilkeson

6. Explore solutions for safer and more efficient curb utilization in the Uptown business district.

- a. Examine on-street parking behavior and consider management changes to achieve consistency with best practices and a desirable turnover rate for available uses.
- b. Consider the creation of new types of spaces or zones designed for very short-term occupancy.
- c. Consider the creation of new types of spaces or zones for outdoor dining or passive recreation.
- d. Consider additional or new revenue-positive enforcement tactics.

7. Support the implementation of mobility and access goals in the annual Capital Improvement Program.

- a. Budget for an active transportation plan.
- b. Create new line item for active transportation projects arising from the plan that cannot be incorporated into ongoing Complete Streets and maintenance work.
- c. Increase annual paving and striping budget 3.5% to allow for complete streets, traffic calming improvements and repairs to historic brick streets.
- d. Budget to maintain an average Pavement Condition Index (PCI) of 60 or greater.
- e. Increase annual sidewalk repair and installation budget to allow for complete streets and safe routes to school improvements.
- f. Consider setting aside funds to serve as a local match for improvements to Washington Road.
- g. Amend the sections of the ordinance that prohibit the Commission from using debt or raising taxes to pay for street reconstruction. Given strong public support for elevating pedestrian priority and implementing the Complete Streets Policy, enabling Commission to consider using these mechanisms to finance implementation of the CSP is appropriate.

setting the bar

The metrics identified for this section will help Mt. Lebanon track the impact of implementing recommendations. These should be cross-referenced with Complete Streets Policy performance measures.



Mode split for all trip types



Number of applications for sidewalk expansion



Municipal street segments (and percentage) that are complete streets



Private dollars leveraged through sidewalk repair incentive



Non-municipal street segments (and percentage) that are complete streets



Private dollars leveraged through sidewalk expansion incentive



Municipal street segments (and percentage) where there is traffic calming



Number of safe routes to school programs



Municipal street segments (and percentage) where bicycle facilities are available



Total street miles of safety improvements within 0.5 miles of schools



Total street segments or miles (and percentage) where sidewalks are available

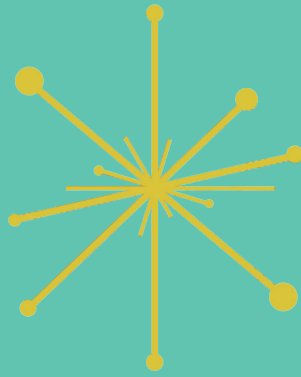


parks & recreation

This topic focuses on the facilities, programs, sites, and community assets that support active and passive recreation. The components are Connectivity, Recreation Programming, Facilities, and Nature Parks.



vision



Mt. Lebanon provides for the recreation and leisure needs of the community. It anticipates demographic changes, maintains assets to community standards, develops new facilities, and oversees creative and engaging programming appropriate to a range of ages and abilities. It recognizes that access to nature and thriving greenspaces is essential to the health and well-being of residents.

talking points

- Mt. Lebanon completed a Parks Master Plan and Recreation Center Feasibility Study in 2022 and is creating a master plan for Mt. Lebanon Park. This comprehensive plan supports implementation of those plans.
- The recommendations listed here draw extensively from the 2022 study and include specific priorities stated by the Sports and Parks advisory boards. They also incorporate ideas related to trails and connectivity and to environmental sustainability, topics that also are emphasized elsewhere in this . The recommendations also reflect input from Mt. Lebanon Nature Conservancy, an allied non-profit organization.
- Residents emphasized during the public input phase that adequate maintenance of existing facilities and staffing is as important or more important than new assets or initiatives.
- Many service-level recommendations for maintenance and programming noted in this chapter will depend on funding levels.
- Recreation and parks facilities was by far the top issue for residents participating in the initial questionnaire. “Parks and Rec” are typically a major contributor to quality-of-life satisfaction.

Survey Question: Which of these should be a high priority for Mt. Lebanon to address during the next 10 years?

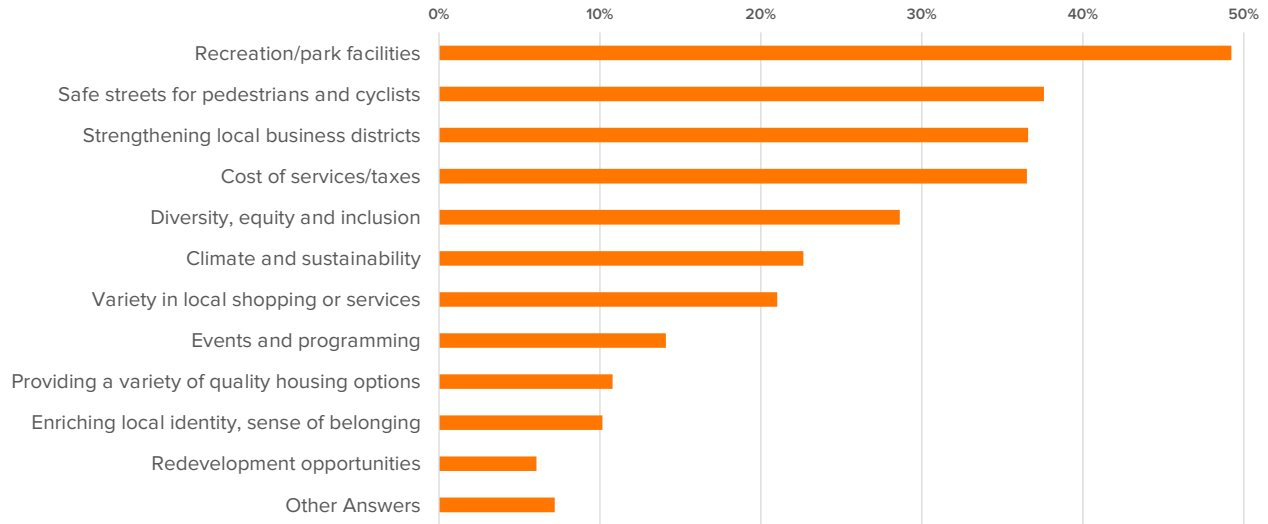


Image: Pashek+MTR



context

Access to recreation and parks often contributes significantly to how residents of a community view their quality of life. The municipality has maintained awareness of this. It commissioned a Parks Master Plan and Recreation Center Feasibility study, which was completed in 2022 and was developing a detailed Master Plan for Mt. Lebanon Park as this comprehensive plan was under way.

This comprehensive plan advocates for additional attention to recreation and parks in terms of staff, capital and budget resources. It recommends improvements that are unlikely to be possible with existing resources.

A fundamental building block for making a case for additional investment was resident input collected as part of this comprehensive plan. In a broad questionnaire early in the public input phase, residents were asked which three municipal services were their highest priority. Recreation and park facilities was the runaway top pick. In addition to being important to current residents, it is also important for attracting potential new residents, as having accessible and well-maintained parks and recreation areas is a key driver for people looking to move to a community.

What counts as recreation, or a park?

While “recreation” and “parks” seem to be common words with obvious meanings, it is worth noting some of the nuances and variations of each in the context of a comprehensive plan.

“Recreation” as described in this plan encompasses both “passive” and “active” types:

- “Active recreation” facilities generally are the sports fields, courts or rinks where competitive activities typically occur.



“More walking and biking trails through ... rights-of-way and parks, with neighboring community connections; more passive park space.”

— Comment on survey question "What would you like to see change?"

- “Passive recreation facilities” are those that enable non-competitive or unorganized activities like picnicking, walking, bird-watching, informal games like throwing a ball or playing tag. Passive recreation facilities include restrooms, trails/bridges/benches, playgrounds and pavilions.

“Recreation,” in the jargon of community planning, also includes activities, events and programs such as a holiday parade, July 4th celebration, movie night, pet parade, Earth Day observance, nature hike, painting class or outdoor concert series.

Similarly, the word “park” has different contexts. Mt. Lebanon has 16 parks, including, as most know, Mt. Lebanon Main Park. In addition, it has several “natural parks” that are primarily dedicated to passive recreation: Bird Park, Hoodridge Park, McNeilly Park, Robb Hollow Park and Twin Hills Trails Park. And there are eight neighborhood parks outfitted with pavilions, tables, benches and play equipment plus some courts for basketball, tennis and pickleball. Many residents also utilize playgrounds and fields at their local elementary schools and at the Mt. Lebanon High School. While these facilities are not owned or operated by the municipality, they are part of the overall fabric of available parks and recreation assets

for citizens to enjoy. Many people do not distinguish between facilities owned and operated by the municipality and those by the school district.

Therefore when residents provide responses in a community questionnaire that Parks and Recreation is their top priority, they could mean any or all of the above – facilities for active and passive recreation as well as the programs, activities and events that enliven Mt. Lebanon and bring people together.

What do residents really want?

Residents’ comments in questionnaires or on interactive maps clarify or add detail explaining people’s specific interests or wishes. For example, here are some comments that reflect what, exactly, respondents had in mind:

- “Would also like to see additional “sport/fitness” amenities at main park (e.g., fitness center for residents with monthly fee).”
- “More green space. We need more fields for sports and play. I realize the schools are part of this, but more areas for the sports teams to practice.”



Image: Pashek+MTR

- “Very little for older residents ... walking trails etc. There should be more to Lebo than youth sports, even if the young parents are the squeaky wheels.”

This plan supports providing for citizens’ diverse recreation needs. It advocates investment in many types of recreation facilities and programs while acknowledging the difficulty in identifying additional recreation space in a largely built-out community. It supports maintaining assets the municipality already has, focusing on maximizing use, while also adding features, assets and facilities that will enable the municipality to keep pace – in its own unique way – with neighboring communities.

Who does what in Mt. Lebanon Parks & Rec?

Mt. Lebanon’s Recreation Department runs the municipality’s recreation programs, events and activities, operates the municipal playing fields and racquet courts, and oversees facility rental and use. Meanwhile, the Department of Public Works is responsible for park open areas including mowing and trees, as well as play equipment, stormwater management and sidewalks/ trail infrastructure.

For the past several decades, Mt. Lebanon had two appointed citizen advisory boards for “Parks & Rec,” the Sports Advisory Board and Parks Advisory Board. Action by the Mt. Lebanon Commission realigned citizen advisory boards as of early 2024; thereafter, a single Parks & Recreation Advisory Board will provide research and advice to the Commission. The board will be responsible for setting priorities – at the behest of the Commission – for implementing the 2022 Parks Master Plan and this chapter of the comprehensive plan.

recommendations

Connectivity

1. Implement aspects of an active transportation plan [see Mobility and Access] that specifically address connectivity and trails in and through municipal greenspace and parkland.

The reasons to add or improve trails in green spaces and parkland include the practicality of convenient and connected walkability, but also the intention by the municipality to provide opportunities to be active and be outdoors in nature. Access to green space and nature is shown in numerous studies to improve physical and mental health.

- a. Connect neighborhoods and community assets via marked routes that include greenspace and park trails.
- b. Create a connected trail system between parks, to provide longer routes for community connectivity.
 - i. Begin with Robb Hollow Park, Bird Park and Main Park. Over time, also connect Hoodridge Park with Highland Terrace Park, and Sunset Hills Park with Williamsburg Park. Continue to explore other connections for greenway trails.
 - ii. Create official trails or sidewalks along paper streets, where feasible, for increased neighborhood and/or park connections.
- c. Add cycling infrastructure, including bike parking, at municipal parks and add bike repair stations at the larger parks. (Mt. Lebanon's parks, by acreage and trail lengths, are considerably smaller than would be optimal for constructed bike trail networks, and such trail development is not suggested here.).

Infrastructure improvements contribute to health

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in 2022 issued a recommendation for park, trail and greenway infrastructure interventions and other interventions to help communities encourage physical activity and better health. Improvements to the built and natural environments create or enhance public locations for physical activity, relaxation, social interaction, and enjoyment, the HHS Community Preventive Services Task Force said. The task force listed:

- Parks – designated public areas that often combine greenery with paths, facilities for physical activity and recreation, and places for relaxation and social interaction.
- Trails and Greenways – routes for walking, hiking, or cycling in urban, suburban, or rural areas (e.g., “rails to trails” conversion projects). These may involve street conversions that provide opportunities for walking and cycling (most often in urban areas).

The preventive services task force recommended the improvements to infrastructure be combined with programs that encourage activity. “Evidence from a systematic review showed that the combined interventions lead to a 18.3% median increase in the number of people who used the parks, trails, or greenways and a 17% median increase in the number of people who used them to engage in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity.”



- d. Create and implement a trail development and maintenance plan for sustainable pedestrian trails in the municipality’s public greenspaces and nature parks.
 - iii. Conduct a trail study that reviews existing trails and recommends changes, establishes priorities for primary and secondary sustainable walking trails, establishes trail construction and maintenance standards, and produces cost estimates for municipal implementation, potentially with volunteer involvement.
 - iv. Construct or reconstruct trails per the trail development plan. Conform with sustainable trail design standards that minimize forest fragmentation and mitigate erosion and damage to fragile steep slopes and watersheds. This is particularly important as increasingly severe and frequent storms add pressure to natural systems and the built environment.
 - v. Create a budget line item for trail construction and maintenance.

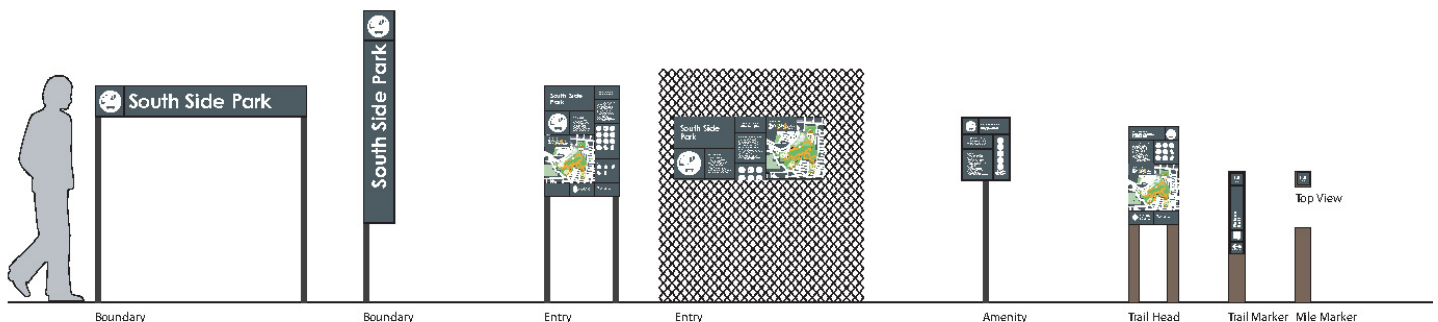
2. Implement a complete, unified signage plan for the park system.

Previous park master plans recommended implementing a sign family for Mt. Lebanon's parks. Park identification signs have been designed, with manufacture and installation expected soon. This is a first step; however, additional sign types should be designed and manufactured.

- a. Improve park branding and identity with a fully designed family of signs that serves users and visitors.
- b. Include park identification, wayfinding, trail marking, trail mile markers, park boundary markers and interpretive signs. Consider a programmable digital sign at the entrance to Mt. Lebanon Park that also serves as a highly visible park identification sign.
- c. Provide consistent kiosks at all significant trailheads, continuing to construct them through partnerships with local groups.
- d. Provide directional signs in the community to the destination parks.

Sign family

A signage plan defines and illustrates a collection of signs including size, location, type, function and material. Unifying design elements such as materials, colors, fonts and graphics help signs relate to each other for consistency and instant identification. Sign types in a family of park-related signs would provide park identification, facility identification, directional and wayfinding information and functional/safety signs such as boundary markers and mile markers. Many design firms can supply design services. Below is an example of sign family from a local firm, Kolano, which designed Mt. Lebanon's park identification signs.



3. Implement a trail amenities plan for the park system.

With “nature immersion” proved by studies to improve wellbeing, people increasingly seek time outdoors. Further, as more people work from home or seek additional opportunities to walk to chosen destinations, their activity in local parks has increased. The municipality should provide amenities for those using trails in different ways and for different reasons.

- a. Identify opportunities and develop unique, site-specific amenities (such as the bird blind in Twin Hills Trails Park).
- b. Provide comfort stations, water fountains, trash receptacles and dog stations that minimize site disturbance and conform with a new set of municipal design standards (see Facilities 2b below).

4. *Recreation Programming*

Diversify programmatic offerings.

- a. Implement recommendations of the 2022 Parks Master Plan. Expand program timing to attract work-from-home users and weekend users
- b. Include broadened programming intended to attract diverse audiences.
- c. Explore opportunities to collaborate with community partners on expanded programming, including periodic review of program effectiveness.

Recommended new programmatic content

- Programs that help more people engage in more outdoor activities and to get out in nature
- Educational classes, such as art, gardening, cooking
- Rock climbing
- Pickleball
- Fitness and training
- Athlete development
- Family entertainment



5. Evaluate the efficiency of field and court usage to inform potential recommendations.

- a. The 2022 Parks Master Plan recommended that the Recreation Department:
 - i. Gather and consolidate field usage data for athletic programs, such as types of sports, participant enrollment, number of games and practices, and facility schedules.
 - ii. Create a comprehensive database to store this information and distribute relevant content (such as facility availability schedules) as needed.

These steps should be completed promptly, as they will inform decision-making about scheduling policies and practices and also would be useful to help document any need for additional facilities.

6. Revise how scheduling works across fields, facilities and programs.

Scheduling should take into account parking demand and availability, because back-to-back scheduling can lead to twice the number of vehicles in a parking lot for arriving and departing players.

Facilities

7. Implement next steps to provide facilities, operations and maintenance that increase the recreation opportunities in the community.

- a. Expand the Recreation Center as recommended in the 2023-24 Mt. Lebanon Park Master Plan.
- b. Consider purchasing or renting property not currently owned by the municipality in order to expand available space for recreation offerings. This could be interim or permanent space for offerings such as courts, community space, meeting rooms, fitness/gym facilities, or other items identified in this plan and the Parks Master Plan as community needs
- c. Create additional sports fields and potentially other assets at McNeilly Park. For this, explore the potential of a multimunicipal approach to construction of sports courts, fields and a recreation center.
- d. Partner with the school district on shared programming and maintenance of recreation facilities
- e. Explore development of community gardens at elementary schools in collaboration with the school district.



Faced with a shortage of space for recreation facilities, Mt. Lebanon should consider creative possibilities such as property acquisition or rental. Some potential locations could be the Galleria, left, where rental space like this vacant storefront might be available for adaptation. The mall is a convenient location with ample parking and is a place where residents already assemble for walking, dining, shopping and socializing. McNeilly Park, right, is a municipally owned parcel that is not centrally located but does represent an opportunity for future recreation use, potentially in partnership with neighboring communities.

8.

Update and overhaul Mt. Lebanon parks according to a visual, community-wide master plan, so they address current and future community needs, provide inclusive recreation opportunities, improve connectivity and comply with community standards for aesthetics and functionality. The balance between passive and active recreation as well as open spaces, wooded areas, and “programmed” spaces should be considered.

- a. Add amenities on a community-wide basis to parks, parklets and greenspaces.
 - i. Add small spray parks at locations around the community, including neighborhood parks. This could potentially decrease overcrowding of the municipal swim center.
 - ii. Add permanent restrooms at the community parks and potentially at the larger neighborhood parks. Consider self-cleaning or automated public restrooms as temporary installations in areas where permanent restroom installations are challenging or infeasible.
 - iii. Consider sponsorships as a funding source, recognizing that administering annual sponsorships creates its own workload.
- b. Create and implement site furnishings standards: pavement and hardscapes, storage sheds, plantings,



A subcommittee of the Parks and Recreation Board could recommend site furnishings suitable for natural and more developed park settings, such as the examples above.

A visual plan would provide precedent images, such as those above, depicting recommended facilities or amenities, and plan-view drawings of proposed locations in municipal parks.

fencing, pavilions benches, trash receptacles, and signage. This can include two styles for purchased furnishings: urban and natural settings.

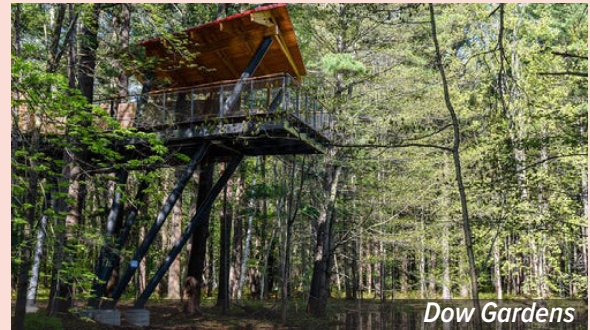
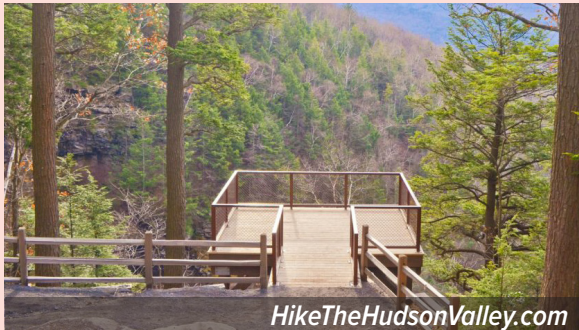
- c. Improve inclusivity and accessibility to and within parks:
 - i. Review the location and construction of park connections and internal trails to strive for at least one accessible route to and in each park.
 - ii. Make trail routes, amenities and features more inclusive, comfortable and accessible, including:

9. Implement recommended improvements at specific parks and recreation facilities.

- a. Implement improvements recommended in the 2022 Parks Master Plan.
- b. Implement Meadowcroft Park Phase III (basketball courts).
- c. Redesign and rebuild Sunset Hills Park, including Brafferton Field, to maximize park utility, including functionality of the field space, as recommended in the 2022 Parks Master Plan and emphasized by the Parks and Sports advisory boards.
- d. Implement improvements to the Golf Course.
 - i. Renovate and expand the clubhouse to include space to house community events, and add additional deck seating, improved locker rooms, kitchenette and other multi-functional components.
 - ii. Transition to EV golf carts, including adding charging stations.
 - iii. Add trail connectivity to Mt. Lebanon Boulevard commercial area and T stops and consider adding sports courts and a yard waste/composting location.
- e. As noted above, improve McNeilly Park to provide additional amenities, possibly in partnership with another municipality.
 - i. Create a driveway and small parking area to access nature trails as an interim first step before investing in a larger project.

Opportunities for additional accessibility and inclusivity

- At Mt. Lebanon Park, implement improvements articulated in the 2023-24 Park Master Plan.
- At the Bird Park Beadling Road parking lot: Add ADA spaces as part of planned parking lot improvements; add an accessible comfort station (near utilities); create an accessible out-and-back trail with at-grade seating areas to create inclusive woodland experiences; strive to create an accessible tree canopy platform to provide a distinctive visitor experience, as in these examples.



- At the Bird Park Drive parking area: Identify ADA parking spaces. Create an accessible trail through the flat area at least to the fire circle.
- At Robb Hollow, populate the Cedar Boulevard trailhead parklet with accessible features as were proposed to accompany parklet trail development. These should include a small pavilion with one or two tables, some bench swings and perhaps a wheelchair swing, in addition to nature-interaction elements. Also consider a comfort station.
- At Twin Hills Trails Park’s Twin Hills Drive entrance, create an accessible trail loop with seating at the flat park entrance area; also consider a comfort station at this entrance, near utilities. At the Carriage House Drive entrance, add an accessible loop to include the bird blind feature. If possible, in collaboration with the owners of this private street, provide one or two ADA parking spots at this park entrance. If geotechnical conditions allow, strive to create an accessible canopy viewing platform to provide a distinctive visitor experience.
- Create additional accessible routes to connect existing and new features or amenities at the neighborhood parks, including those recommended in the 2022 Master Plan.
- Add accessibility and bleachers at Middle / Seymour / Dixon fields. Consider installing accessible seat walls built into the steep slope along Cedar Boulevard for spectators.

10. Acquire vacant, undevelopable and/or tax-delinquent properties as well as easements on portions of properties to meet recreation, conservation and streambank restoration goals.

Parcel or easement acquisitions should be pursued to add or improve trails, expand parkland, improve neighborhood access, to provide additional community assets such as sports fields, courts and splash pads, and/or to protect stream valleys and steep hillsides. Examples appear in the Appendix.

11. Improve management of park areas with heavy stormwater runoff, including parking lots, play areas, structures, sidewalks and trails.

This includes providing or improving parking with green infrastructure and stormwater management at Bird Park (Beadling Road), Robb Hollow Park (Kelso Road), Twin Hills Park (Twin Hills Drive) and Hoodridge Park.

12. Assess field use efficiency (as noted in the Recreation Programming recommendations), then and evaluate potential field upgrades. Improve fields as appropriate to permit additional scheduling and improve player experiences.

Base field surface decisions on factors to include: player health, ecological ramifications, and cradle-to-grave costs. Life-cycle costs should include but are not limited to: initial capital costs; annual operating and maintenance costs; periodic renewal and replacement costs; stormwater management implications in terms of capital costs, MS4 permit requirements and downstream hydrologic and water quality impacts; and external environmental impacts such as waste disposal costs and life-cycle greenhouse gas emission uptake implications. Health and safety considerations should include: implications for the user of the fields in terms of impacts by age group, type of games played, potential for injuries and field surface temperatures.

- 13.** Work with allied organizations in general to identify mutual priorities and potentially collaborate on implementation.

Nature Parks

- 14.** As noted in “Connectivity,” above, create and implement a trail development plan for the municipality’s public greenspaces and nature parks, with greenspace trails contributing to both passive recreation and community connectivity goals.

- 15** **Implement a woodland stewardship plan.**
- a. Complete and implement the invasives management plan that is under way, and fully implement a stewardship plan addressing woodlands management and sustainability.
 - b. Continue wildlife management efforts through a deer management program.
 - c. Optimize green infrastructure stormwater management techniques to minimize erosion and sedimentation impacts.
 - d. Develop an education and enforcement system for residential yard waste dumping in parks.
 - e. Pursue the potential of creating a “display”/ interpretive planting area in each of the nature parks, in collaboration with Mt. Lebanon Nature Conservancy.

setting the bar

The metrics identified for this section will help Mt. Lebanon track the impact of implementing recommendations.



Resident satisfaction surveys after completion of recreation programs



Mileage of improved trails



Attendance at community events



Mileage of accessible trails



Registrations for recreation programs



Review field use analysis every two years and demonstrate adjusted scheduling



Percentage of households that live within in a 10-minute walk of a trail or park



Pool attendance, golf course rounds, pavilion rentals



Park plan goals implemented



Year-over-year percentage of programs that offer new content and those offered on weekends or at new times of day



Number of added recreational amenities, such as comfort stations, water fountains or bike repair stations

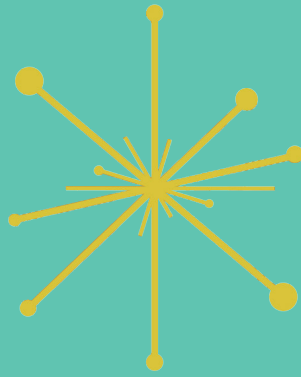


financial management

This chapter centers on fiscal policies, financial reports, pension investments, and other finance matters related to budgeting, municipal services, planning, and municipal management and operations.



vision

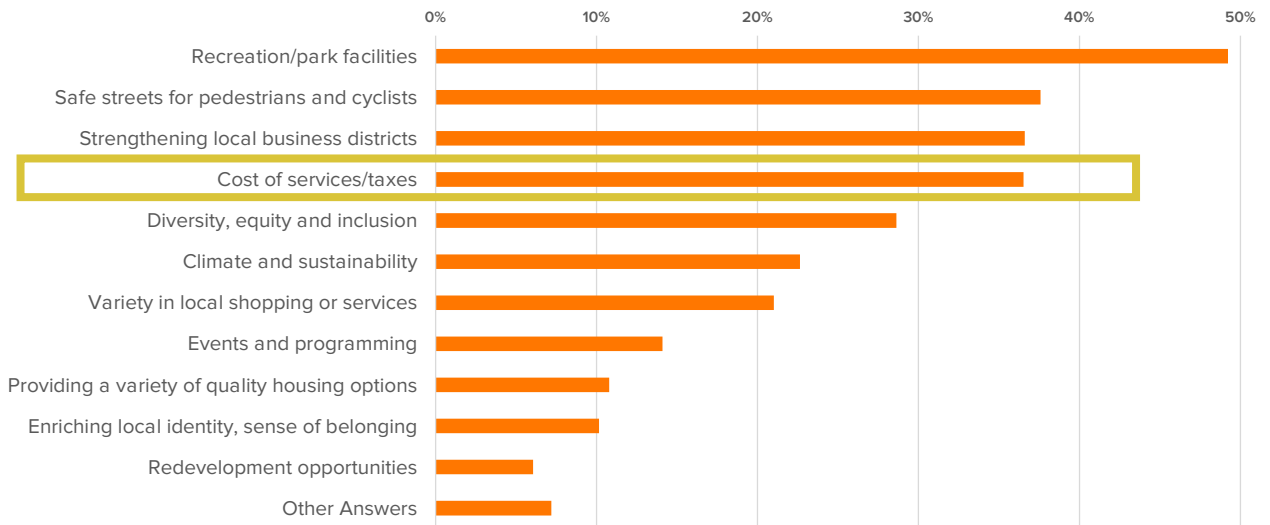


Mt. Lebanon plans, budgets, raises revenue, borrows, invests and spends prudently to ensure financial sustainability during periods of economic strength or downturns. It operates with transparency as it contends with current and anticipated community needs and priorities.

talking points

- Prudent use of tax- and fee-based revenue is one of the most important jobs of a municipal government. Residents expect high-quality services, delivered efficiently in return for their public investment.
- Mt. Lebanon has the capacity to provide regional leadership in some functional areas and to effectively initiate partnerships with other municipalities.
- Mt. Lebanon Commission wishes to incorporate “total cost of ownership” into its financial decisions.
- In a community questionnaire for this comprehensive plan in 2022, about 36% of respondents listed “Cost of services/ taxes” as a high priority. This topic tied for third (with “Strengthening local business districts”) in importance to respondents.

Which of these issues should be a high priority for Mt. Lebanon to address during the next 10 years?



context

A key element of local government responsibilities is to ensure prudent use of public funds while simultaneously planning for whatever the future may hold. Through careful long-term planning and policy choices, Mt. Lebanon can prosper even as economic, social, demographic and climactic changes occur.

This chapter touches on many aspects of financial management, including planning, budgeting, revenue (mostly taxes and fees), investment, borrowing and spending. It also covers the imperative to provide transparency.

What is "Financial Management?"

Mt. Lebanon manages a capital budget (on a five-year program schedule), bonds to finance debt, and an annual operating budget. For its operating budget, it employs "zero-based budgeting," which means that each year it establishes a from-scratch balance

sheet that rests on the next fiscal year's anticipated revenue and expenses. The Capital Improvement Program is updated annually.

The municipality strives to invest in existing assets and infrastructure to maximize what it already has. As a largely built-out community, it has few opportunities for new development to drive growth and enhance the tax base. Accordingly, Mt. Lebanon seeks responsible infill and redevelopment of existing parcels or properties as a means to maintain its community character and preserve resources while also boosting the tax base.

Finally, the municipality strives to take a long-range view when making decisions, recognizing that some community priorities might not have a positive financial impact but could still be the chosen direction. It therefore strives to consider both short- and long-term impacts of decision-making.



The cost-efficient provision of solid waste and recycling services grows ever more challenging, given escalating costs and logistical challenges.

Residents want value for their tax dollars

This chapter recognizes that the municipality will have important financial decisions to make within the anticipated life of this plan, including:

- tax rates
- major capital improvements desired, such as investment in pedestrian infrastructure and recreation assets
- approach to the South Garage as a potential redevelopment site
- a waste management contract that could, depending on direction, require a great deal of local investment.

These and others will require careful evaluation and prudent decisions that balance short- and long-term goals and recognize community priorities and Mt. Lebanon's overall competitive position among peer communities.

As tools for maximizing local tax dollars, Mt. Lebanon hopes to continue enacting multi-municipal partnerships; seeking new revenue sources; serving as a regional leader; and partnering with local organizations and institutions to provide services or reach other goals.

“ *Need continued progressive government & residents willing to pay the taxes for the entire twp's benefits, even after a taxpayer retires.* ”

— Comment on survey question "Which of these should be a high priority for Mt. Lebanon to address during the next 10 years?"

Who does what in financial management?

The municipality's Finance Department provides professional services to elected officials, municipal management, municipal departments and the public. It must operate with proper controls and procedures in place to manage and protect the public's resources.

The department ensures that transactions are transparent and responsible. Collected revenue – mainly fees and taxes – and expenditures must be managed and accounted for effectively and efficiently. Financial records must be presented in a timely, accurate and meaningful format.

Besides the employees in the Finance Department, Mt. Lebanon contracts with an outside firm for some collection services.

In addition, Mt. Lebanon has operated a Pension Investment Advisory Board comprising resident volunteers with expertise in pension investments. Action by the Mt. Lebanon Commission realigned citizen advisory boards as of early 2024; thereafter, a Financial Management Advisory Board, with broader responsibilities than the former "pension board," will provide research and advice to the Commission. The board will be responsible for setting priorities – at the behest of the commission – for implementing this chapter of the Comprehensive Plan.

recommendations

1. Continue providing high-quality public services with greater efficiencies and prioritized upgrades.

While the municipality is responsible to deliver a balanced budget, not every individual service has to break even or net revenue.

2. Sustain and continue to pursue creative partnerships with other municipalities and organizations to efficiently serve mutual goals.

- a. Seek opportunities in which the municipality can contribute leadership, capacity, expertise and/or access to equipment in support of collaborative initiatives that result in economies of scale or other shared advantages.
- b. Seek opportunities to collaborate with Mt. Lebanon School District or other municipalities on shared purchasing and/or shared contractual services.
- c. Continue making a regional impact through participation in the Congress of Neighboring Communities and its policy work.

3. Evaluate waste management options within the horizon of the current five-year contract to identify desired outcomes of the next contract.

- a. Determine whether in-house curbside solid waste/ recycling collection is a potentially viable option.
 - i. Considerations should include (but will not be limited to): Up-front cost and timeline of fleet vehicle acquisition, property to store and stage vehicles and equipment, automated vs. manual collection mechanisms, location and cost of disposal and recycling facilities, personnel, insurance and other ongoing costs.
 - ii. Considerations should also be made for curbside collections of yard waste, food waste, separated recyclables (such as glass or cardboard), household hazardous waste, etc.
- b. Factor in incentives to reduce household waste reduction and promote recycling. This could include unit-based pricing or pricing based on collection bin size vs. a flat fee.

4. Consider service-level expansions that provide additional municipal fee-based services or programs to incentivize private behaviors that benefit the public good.

Expanding the scale or scope of municipal service provision through the creation of special fee-based programs — for instance, a subscription for emergency or routine maintenance of trees on private property — would require expansion of municipal personnel, so this recommendation represents a reach goal. However, organizing such services could benefit the overall maintenance of the community in line with the aims of this plan. Another form of the same approach might be to establish a local property-assisted clean energy financing program or broaden options to work with the municipality on private sidewalk repair and installation.

5.

Plan for planning

Great places don't just happen. Rather, they are the product of determining what should change or not change to create desired outcomes. This involves identifying strengths and weaknesses, learning what residents want to see happen, recognizing how social/political/economic/demographic forces are affecting things, applying professional expertise, and determining how best to bring resources to bear.

This entire process is called planning. Some plans, such as comprehensive plans, are mandated in state code. Others are required as one step in allocation of federal, state or county funding. All plans provide guidance for elected officials and municipal staff.

Municipalities create plans of different types to solve problems, identify priorities and figure out how to proceed. What follows is a recommended schedule of upcoming planning efforts for the municipality to undertake on its own or with partners in the next 10 years. Additional needs or opportunities may arise

Timeline for undertaking future plans

Project Name	Previous plan adoption	Issue RFP	Begin Plan	Complete/ Adopt Plan
Active Transportation Plan		2024	2024	2025
South Garage Feasibility Study		2024	2024	2024
Zoning Ordinance Update		2025	2025	2026
RFP for Public-Private Partnership for Reconstruction of the South Garage		2026	2026	2026
Sustainable Trail Development and Maintenance Plan		2025	2026	2026
Uptown Strategic Plan	2016	2027	2027	2028
Climate Action Plan		2028	2029	2030
Comprehensive Recreation, Park & Open Space Plan Update		2029	2030	2031
Comprehensive Plan Update	2023	2031	2032	2033

6. Employ appropriate financial planning and management tools:

- a. Utilize grant funding where possible to offset the cost to taxpayers of municipal projects and initiatives.
- b. Maintain debt ratio below 10% of general fund expenditures (or \$1,000 per capita).
- c. Maintain fund balance ratio between 10% and 15% annually.
- d. Incorporate “total cost of ownership” into operating and capital spending decisions.
- e. Monitor pension investments to ensure that plans are growing and returning at rates that match the projected long-term actuarial discount rates.
- f. Periodically review municipal salary and wage structure to ensure that positions are compensated at market values for the job functions associated with the role.

7. Ensure that financial management and planning recognizes commitments of the 2022 Commission resolution "Adopting Mobilizing Efforts to promote a resilient and sustainable community."

- a. Determine a formula and method for calculating the total cost of carbon and incorporating this into financial projections. Begin using carbon pricing in future municipal budgets.
- b. Establish base guidelines for energy efficiency upgrades for municipal facilities.
- c. Implement changes to improve fleet fuel efficiency to align with broader climate mitigation efforts.
- d. Continue to procure 100% renewable energy.
- e. As noted elsewhere in the plan, operationalize a commitment to adopting a Complete Streets Policy.

setting the bar

The metrics identified for this section will help Mt. Lebanon track the impact of implementing recommendations.



Fee-based municipal service programs and participation levels



Maintain fund balance ratio



Municipality-wide commercial vacancy rate



Maintain desired debt ratio



Percentage of projects initiated with 12 months of funding authorization



Benchmark municipal tax rate versus peer communities



Benchmark and track pension plan assets



additional topics

This chapter covers other issues or matters that will be helpful during implementation of the comprehensive plan.



*Did you know? Mt. Lebanon is named for the Cedar of Lebanon.
The focal point of the municipal logo is an abstract of a Cedar of Lebanon silhouette.*

Consistency with the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code requires that this comprehensive plan be reviewed by Allegheny County for consistency with the county’s own comprehensive plan (*Allegheny Places*). The plan must also meet the requirements of MPC Article III, Section 301. The following table summarizes those MPC requirements and highlights where information that addresses them appears within this plan.

Consistency Table

MPC Requirement	Where it can be found in this plan
Statement of Community Development Objectives	Refer to the next section in the Additional Topics chapter.
Plan for land use	Refer to the Resiliency, Parks & Recreation and Additional Topics chapters.
Plan to meet housing needs	Refer to the Resiliency chapter and Community Development Objectives.
Plan for movement of people and goods	Refer to the Mobility and Parks & Recreation chapters and the Community Development Objectives.

Consistency Table

MPC Requirement	Where it can be found in this plan
Plan for community facilities	Community facilities are addressed in the Engagement, Mobility, Resiliency and Parks & Recreation chapters.
Statement of Interrelationship among various plan components	The <i>Ascend Lebo</i> plan is structured according to major issues in the Municipality. Each issue tends to address multiple planning elements in an integrated manner.
Short- and long-term implementation strategies	Found in each chapter for each issue.
Plan for protection of natural and historic resources	See Resiliency and Parks & Recreation chapters and Community Development Objectives.
Statement that existing and proposed development is compatible with existing and proposed development in adjacent communities and consistent with <i>Allegheny Places</i> the Allegheny County comprehensive plan.	The Community Development Objectives address consistency with adjacent municipality development. The recommendations in this plan are consistent with <i>Allegheny Places</i> .
Plan for reliable supply of water	See Community Development Objectives.
Plan to be reviewed in 10 years	This plan recommends in the Financial Management chapter that this process be updated in 10 years.
Careful analysis of all of the elements	We believe that the chapter topics identified by the community were developed in a careful manner that incorporated most of the planning elements of the MPC.
Review and adoption process	To take place in October 2023-January 2024

Continued, next page

Steering future community development

Zoning and Subdivision and Land Development (SALDO) ordinances should be revised following the adoption of a new Comprehensive Plan because these ordinances can support and propel the kinds of changes the plan envisions. Revised SALDO and zoning ordinances are tools the municipality can employ to make sure it is steering future growth and development in the chosen direction supported by a foundation of public engagement. For example, zoning ordinances and maps build on goals for community development by adding specificity about what kinds of development should occur, where, and in what manner. And the design and other standards for public and private improvements in a SALDO affect the quality of proposed development.

Revising land use and development ordinances could help Mt. Lebanon achieve its goals related to Mobility, Resiliency, Parks & Recreation and Financial Management.

This section of the comprehensive plan establishes Community Development Objectives, which are a primary building block of zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances. The objectives that follow align with the intention of the comprehensive plan and provide necessary context to enable Mt. Lebanon to undertake updates or revisions of its ordinances. Additional recommended changes are found throughout the plan but particularly in the Mobility, Resiliency and Parks & Recreation chapters.

Community development objectives

Land use and development

- Continue to respect the traditional neighborhood housing development schema throughout the municipality, including a desirable visual environment through urban design.
- Guide the design of the public realm to ensure quality, visually attractive development that becomes a significant asset to the community. Protect and enhance historic and cultural resources.
- Encourage a range of housing types, densities and price levels as appropriate to bring people of diverse backgrounds and circumstances, ages and abilities into daily interaction, strengthening community life.
- Incentivize mixed uses or other development types that maximize land-use in a largely built-out community. Require appropriate buffers and transitions between uses of greatly different intensity.

Transportation

- Respect pedestrians and the design of public space in accommodating vehicles, incorporating best practices for access management and the creation of Complete Streets. Ensure that parking is not overbuilt.
- Ensure safe and efficient pedestrian and bicycle movement, promoting the development of non-motorized mobility facilities and networks.

Environmental stewardship

- Steward and conserve natural resources by incorporating policies and measures that enhance environmental sustainability. These will include steps such as best practices for reducing stormwater runoff; improving groundwater and stream quality; creating buffer areas; protecting tree canopy and minimizing damage from invasive species; protecting steep slopes and green space; prioritizing non-motorized transportation; minimizing impervious surfaces such as parking lots; reducing night-sky light pollution and urban heat island effect; mitigating flood hazards; transitioning from fossil fuel consumption; encouraging reduction of material waste; improving air quality.
- Protect and enhance green space through existing public ownership of land, property acquisition or other forms of land preservation. When feasible, encourage multiple purposes for green space, such as tree canopy enhancement, stormwater management and passive recreation.

A prospering community

- Provide opportunities for people to enjoy leisure, exercise, meet others, interact, spend time in nature, learn and improve physical/mental health and well being.
- Enable robust community engagement with local government.
- Encourage the appropriate and efficient expenditure of public funds and position the municipality through policies and planning to prosper as economic, social, demographic and climactic changes occur.

Future land use planning

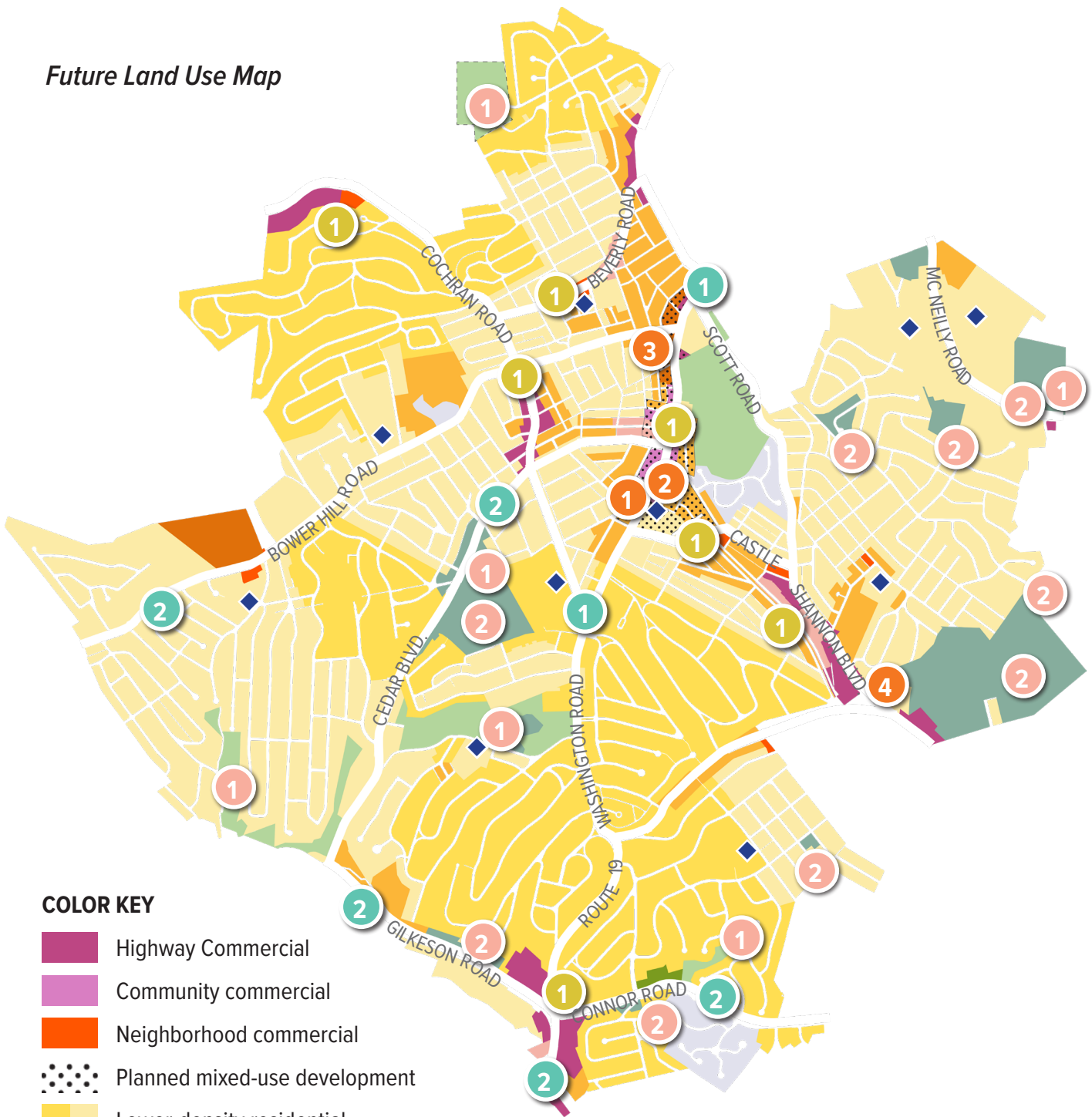
The focus of this plan regarding future land uses has been on targeted areas of redevelopment and reinvestment, as explained in the Resiliency and Mobility chapters, and on preserving and enhancing green space/open space as explained in the Resiliency and Parks & Recreation chapters. Otherwise, the plan focuses on enhancing existing development and improving quality of life in other ways.

The future land use component of this comprehensive plan exerts influence on future revisions of the Subdivision and Land Use Ordinance and zoning regulations. Mt. Lebanon's ordinances should be consistent with the land use vision of the plan. Consequently, the future land use priorities presented herein depict the municipality's vision for upholding quality neighborhoods and businesses while specifically supporting redevelopment and reinvestment at strategic locations, supporting commercial areas and green space preservation.





Future Land Use Map



COLOR KEY

- Highway Commercial
- Community commercial
- Neighborhood commercial
- Planned mixed-use development
- Lower-density residential
- Medium-density residential or mixed use
- High-density residential or mixed use
- Open space - active
- Open space - passive
- Conservation
- School

Future land use map

The map on the facing page represents another way of viewing the recommendations of this plan that relate to specific places or districts within Mt. Lebanon. The map is meant to be interpreted broadly, not to assign a specific land use to any specific parcel. Overall, the general land use patterns that currently exist will be maintained. The numbered sites on the map relate to the sections of the plan referenced below, which provide more detail on each.

While the municipality will purposely reserve the geography of any potential zoning change for the separate full public process such change would require, aside from sites identified on the map, the municipality intends to consider incorporating more mixed use into medium- and higher-density residential areas to give future property owners more options, and the municipality will seek to focus additional density and investment in the vicinity of transit stops.

NUMBER KEY

REDEVELOPMENT FOCUS

- 1 Redevelop municipal South Garage
Resiliency chapter, Recommendations 10 and 13
- 2 Private redevelopment site
Denis Theater area
Resiliency chapter, Recommendations 13
- 3 Private redevelopment site,
Washington & Bower Hill area
Resiliency chapter, Recommendations 13

MOBILITY FOCUS

- 1 Improve functionality of Route 19 /
Washington Road
Mobility chapter, Recommendations 5 and 7
- 2 Operationalize Complete Streets to
serve all users
Mobility chapter, Recommendations 1, 4, 5, and 7

COMMERCIAL FOCUS

- 1 Commercial development focus area
Resiliency chapter, Recommendations 14, 15, 16 and 17
- ◆ Office boutique overlay opportunities
near schools
Resiliency chapter, Recommendation 11

PARKS & RECREATION FOCUS

- 1 Improve trails, add trail amenities,
add accessibility
*Mobility chapter, Recommendations 1, 3 and 4
Parks & Recreation chapter,
Recommendations 1, 3 and 8*
- 2 Add or improve park and recreation
amenities and features, including
universal design
*Mobility chapter, Recommendation 1
Parks & Recreation chapter,
Recommendations 1, 7, 8 and 9*



ASCEND
L E B O

