

Press Release



For business and local editors

Westmoreland County Names Comprehensive Plan Consultant

County details goals for the implementable comprehensive plan and encourages community involvement

GREENSBURG, Pa., May 26, 2016 - The Westmoreland County Board of Commissioners approved today a contract with Houseal Lavigne Associates to serve as the consulting firm assisting the Westmoreland County Department of Planning and Development with the county's comprehensive plan update.

"Houseal Lavigne Associates is extremely excited to work with a community with the history and tradition of Westmoreland County. This initiative is not planning for the sake of planning. This is a plan that will build the foundation for the future of an iconic community," said Dan Gardner, principal at Houseal Lavigne. "Now is the chance to implement a plan that introduces a new generation to Westmoreland County. A plan for a community that embraces increased diversity on many levels. A plan that welcomes people that want to relocate to the County to live, open a business, raise their children, retire and call Westmoreland home for generations to come. While we are planning for the future, we also understand the value and importance of maintaining and building off of those things that have made Westmoreland County the cherished home for so many residents and businesses."

The Department of Planning and Development, in partnership with the Economic Growth Connection of Westmoreland, began the search for a consultant in March.

"After reviewing Requests for Qualifications and Proposals, our Consultant Selection Committee interviewed five highly capable consultant teams," explained Chris Bova, Deputy Director of the Department of Planning and Development. "Houseal Lavigne Associates set forth a strategy that we believe gives us the best opportunity to address critical issues facing the county while building upon the many positive attributes and amenities that exist throughout the county."

The implementable comprehensive plan approach differs from the county's current plan adopted in 2005. This new, issues orientated strategy will allow for the development of a plan that addresses the major obstacles currently affecting Westmoreland County, an aging demographic, blight and struggling cities and towns.

The overall project will take 18-24 months. During this time, the public and private sector will play a fundamental role. There will be many opportunities, across different platforms for participation, including but not limited to, public meetings, online surveys, and social media.

"Public input is critical to the success of this planning process because it is our citizens, businesses, municipalities and organizations that will guide the direction of the plan and participate in its implementation," said Gina Cerilli, chairman of the Westmoreland County

Board of Commissioners. "We are encouraging everyone to participate in this process. A comprehensive plan with high participation levels has a far greater chance of being successful, benefitting the entire community."

Two private sector contributors, the Economic Growth Connection of Westmoreland and the Westmoreland Chamber of Commerce, will bring funding and expertise to the process.

"We believe the new comprehensive plan will address the looming demographic crisis and allow us to find ways to attract and retain a younger demographic who will fill the critically needed workforce demands," explained Jim Smith, president and CEO of the Economic Growth Connection of Westmoreland.

Chad Amond, president of the Westmoreland County Chamber of Commerce, added, "We applaud the commissioners and the county's Planning Department for their vision in recognizing that the challenges we face cannot be solved with a conventional siloed approach. It's going to take a team effort, and a variety of perspectives to tackle such significant issues like a rapidly aging population and the growing workforce skills gap. We have to change the way we approach the problems that will shape our future."

Department of Planning and Development Director Jason Rigone stated that the plan, once adopted, will provide the county with broad policies to help guide future decision making, but will also include very specific action steps whereby resources, financial or otherwise, may be directed and invested.

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