

Chapter 9

The Plan

Introduction

As previously stated, this Plan is an update and revision of previous plans. It is based on the adopted Goals and Policies developed in the planning process. Included are a city-wide Land Use Element, a Transportation Element, an Annexation Element, a Housing Element, a Historic Resources Element, an Infrastructure Element, and a Parks and Recreation Element.

Also included are two Focus Area plans which provide additional detail for the North Wheeling neighborhood and the National Road Corridor through Woodsdale and Edgewood. It should be noted that in general this Plan is not meant to replace either the *Wheeling National Heritage Area Plan*, or the *Waterfront and Downtown Plan*, which were completed during the last six years. It is recognized that these plans are essentially current and deal with their respective subjects in more detail than is feasible within the scope of updating the overall Comprehensive Plan.

The basic thrust of those two plans is to build a new role for Wheeling as an entertainment center and tourist destination focused on the downtown and the riverfront areas in particular. This approach has been embraced by the City and by the citizens of Wheeling, and implementation of the recommendations is proceeding.

Completion of the Artisan Center occurred this year; the Intermodal Center is now under construction; demolition of the Wharf Garage is scheduled to occur following the completion of the Intermodal Center; and redevelopment of the riverfront will follow shortly thereafter. When finished, the Heritage Port will represent an investment of more than \$57 million in the downtown and waterfront area. In addition much of the rails-to-trails hike-and-bike trail system has been

the decline in both population and economic activity in Wheeling over the last thirty years (summarized in Chapter 6), there is little question that the long-term

or is being completed and is already enjoying great popularity.

In contrast with these two more focused plans, a comprehensive plan must deal with the City as a whole. While successful redevelopment of the



riverfront area will undoubtedly be of great benefit to the City, it alone will be insufficient to provide an adequate economic base for the City of Wheeling in the years to come.

Thus, the underlying strategy of the Comprehensive Plan is to enhance the ability of the City to compete for new business and residents within the larger region, a region which includes the Pittsburgh metropolitan area and the tri-state Pennsylvania-Ohio-West Virginia region, as well as the three county Wheeling metropolitan area. Given future of the City will depend on success in this endeavor.

To accomplish this purpose, it is necessary that the City identify assets that can be exploited for the purposes of stimulating new growth and development. At the same time the City must seek to preserve and enhance the existing stable neighborhoods of the City and revitalize those neighborhoods that have experienced decline. As people are offered a greater variety of choices regarding where they live and work, the maintenance of neighborhood quality and integrity becomes more than merely a comfort and convenience. Rather, it is the life blood of the City's ability to compete.

To this end, the Plan focuses on two areas that are critical to the achievement of these goals: economic development and quality of life. Obviously, the accomplishment of the Vision for Wheeling's future defined in this Plan will depend on the execution of much more than a physical plan, however, physical planning provides the context in which policy objectives can be pursued. For the City to successfully attract new business and residents to the City, it must first be established where such development can occur.

Land Use Element

The Land Use Plan establishes the types of land uses which are considered best suited to each area of the City based on evaluation of the character of the land, the surrounding uses, the available public facilities and services, and the adopted goals and policies upon which the Plan is based. As such, the Land Use Plan should serve as a policy guide to the Planning Commission, the Board of Zoning Appeals, and City Council. It will help make decisions regarding individual requests for rezoning of property, requests for conditional uses and variances, public investment in infrastructure, policy and prioritization regarding code enforcement and housing investment, and requests for State and Federal assistance.

Map #19 defines the Land Use Plan. The most fundamental concept which underlies the land use designations found in this Plan is that the City of Wheeling, to remain competitive within the region, must seek to maximize the potential of its developable areas, as they are few in number and small in size. In Wheeling this primarily requires redevelopment of land which has previously been or is now being used for other purposes. In many cases these areas have been the subject of previous plans. However, as previous plans have often led to

negligible results, some of these areas are revisited in this Plan Update.

Nine areas which have clear potential for development or redevelopment have been designated as *Special Planning Areas* and are discussed in more detail in the next section. Six of these areas are located within the City limits. They are:

1. The southern section of East Wheeling;
2. The area of Center Wheeling immediately north of I-470;
3. The riverfront section of North Wheeling;
4. The crest and west face of Wheeling Hill;
5. The industrial area to the northern end of Warwood between the river and Route 2;
6. The area at the mouth of Wheeling Creek and the riverfront warehouse area immediately south in Center Wheeling;

Three additional areas were identified that are located beyond the City limits. These areas were taken into consideration due to the scarcity of developable land in the City of Wheeling. They are:

7. The Elks property south of Elm Grove in Marshall County along Big Wheeling Creek;
8. An area known as the 5-Star Industrial Park located along the Ohio River approximately two miles north of the Pike Island Dam; and
9. The area in the Richland Magisterial District to the north of Wheeling east of Warwood and north west of Greggsville, Clinton and Potomac Road.

With the exception of the Special Planning Areas, the Land Use Plan is primarily focused on maintaining the stability and quality of life in the existing residential areas. From a land use standpoint, this is accomplished by protecting these areas from the encroachment of disrupting uses, maintaining the physical quality and character of the building stock and preventing the division of single

Map #19 - Land Use Plan

family homes into small apartments. **The City of Wheeling's many fine older residential areas are one of its greatest assets and should be protected as the valuable resource that they are.**

Thus, it is not surprising that an issue which was often raised by citizens during Plan development was the encroachment of commercial uses into the residential areas in several neighborhoods. In the Woodsdale and Edgewood neighborhoods especially, this issue has been a source of ongoing discussion for many years.



This Plan seeks to resolve this conflict by indicating clear boundaries around neighborhood business districts beyond which commercial uses should not be permitted to expand. Once established, it becomes the job of the Planning Commission, the Board of Zoning Appeals, and City Council to defend and maintain the integrity of this boundary. It is also recommended that a true residential transitional zone be established within the zoning ordinance. A transitional zone will provide the Planning Commission with an additional tool that can be used to provide buffering between residential and commercial areas. Typically, a transitional zone allows business uses that are low in profile, make use of the existing residential structures, generate low volumes of traffic, and have limited hours of operation. Judicious use of transitional zoning can soften the clash between residential and commercial areas. The most common use of such zoning is along the edges of a neighborhood business district to create a smooth transition from business uses to residential uses.

It is also recommended that the Planning Commission require landscaping as a buffer between residential and commercial areas wherever such encounters occur. This can also be done as a provision of transitional zoning, or it can be accomplished through the use of site plan review

authority. This authority is recommended for inclusion in the zoning ordinance (see Chapter 11, zoning recommendations).

In addition to commercial encroachment, the division of single family homes into apartments also represents a threat to the integrity of the older residential areas of Wheeling. The current Zoning Ordinance includes no provision for residential areas that are exclusively single family. The implementation section of this Plan includes a recommendation that the Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map be revised to include such a provision. The neighborhoods of Warwood, Woodsdale, Edgewood, and the northern end of Wheeling Island should be given careful consideration for such a designation.

It is also recommended that the City consider the addition of an institutional zone as a means of regulating the expansion of Wheeling Jesuit University, an authority it now lacks, as a University is a permitted use in all zones.

Downtown

As the 1990 *Waterfront and Downtown Plan* noted, downtown Wheeling's "... traditional retail district is quite large for a City of Wheeling's size," a fact that reflects the overall population decline in the metropolitan area. This, combined with changes nationally in the way retailing is done, means the downtown area has been placed at a severe competitive disadvantage. In reality, the time in which downtown Wheeling was the primary location for general merchandise retailing may have passed. This is not to say that downtown will no longer have a role as a shopping area. Rather it is likely that retail establishments in downtown will become increasingly more oriented towards specialty merchandise and the out-of-town visitor as the National Heritage Area gains momentum.