



2024

10-Year Comprehensive Plan

CITY OF PRINCETON, WV

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2024-2034

Comprehensive Plan

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Comprehensive Plan Checklist

Mandatory Components of a Comprehensive Plan (WV Code § 8A-3-4)

A comprehensive plan shall meet the following objectives:

- ✓ A statement of goals and objectives for a governing body, concerning its present and future land development;
- ✓ A timeline on how to meet short and long-range goals and objectives;
- ✓ An action plan setting forth implementation strategies;
- ✓ Recommend to the governing body a financial program for goals and objectives that need public financing;
- ✓ A statement of recommendations concerning future land use and development policies that are consistent with the goals and objectives set forth in the comprehensive plan;
- ✓ A program to encourage regional planning, coordination and cooperation with other governing bodies, units of government and planning commissions; and
- ✓ Maps, plats, charts and/or descriptive material presenting basic information on the land included in the comprehensive plan, including present and future uses.

The comprehensive plan shall have, but is not limited to, the following components:

- ✓ Land use—Designate the current, and set goals and programs for the proposed general distribution, location and suitable uses of land, including, but not limited to:
 - (A) Residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, recreational, educational, public, historic, conservation, transportation, infrastructure or any other use of land;
 - (B) Population density and building intensity standards;
 - (C) Growth and/or decline management;
 - (D) Projected population growth or decline; and
 - (E) Constraints to development, including identifying flood-prone and subsidence areas.
- ✓ Housing—Set goals, plans and programs to meet the housing needs for current and anticipated future residents of the jurisdiction, including, but not limited to:
 - (F) Analyzing projected housing needs and the different types of housing needed, including affordable housing and universally designed housing accessible to persons with disabilities;
 - (G) Identifying the number of projected necessary housing units and sufficient land needed for all housing needs;
 - (H) Addressing substandard housing;
 - (I) Rehabilitating and improving existing housing; and
 - (J) Adaptive reuse of buildings into housing.

- ✓ **Transportation**—Consistent with the land use component, identify the type, location, programs, goals and plans to meet the intermodal transportation needs of the jurisdiction, including, but not limited to:
 - (K) Vehicular, transit, air, port, rail-road, river and any other mode of transportation system;
 - (L) Movement of traffic and parking;
 - (M) Pedestrian and bicycle systems; and
 - (N) Intermodal transportation.
- ✓ **Infrastructure**—Designate the current, and set goals, plans and programs, for the proposed locations, capabilities and capacities of all utilities, essential utilities and equipment, infrastructure and facilities to meet the needs of current and anticipated future residents of the jurisdiction.
- ✓ **Public services**—Set goals, plans and programs, to ensure public safety, and meet the medical, cultural, historical, community, social, educational and disaster needs of the current and anticipated future residents of the jurisdiction.
- ✓ **Rural**—Consistent with the land use component, identify land that is not intended for urban growth and set goals, plans and programs for growth and/or decline management in the designated rural area.
- ✓ **Recreation**—Consistent with the land use component, identify land, and set goals, plans and programs for recreational and tourism use in the area.
- ✓ **Economic development**—Establish goals, policies, objectives, provisions and guidelines for economic growth and vitality for current and anticipated future residents of the jurisdiction, including, but not limited to:
 - (O) Opportunities, strengths and weaknesses of the local economy and workforce;
 - (P) Identifying and designating economic development sites and/or sectors for the area; and
 - (Q) Type of economic development sought, correlated to the present and projected employment needs and utilization of residents in the area.
- ✓ **Community design**—Consistent with the land use component, set goals, plans and programs to promote a sense of community, character and identity.
- ✓ **Preferred development areas**—Consistent with the land use component, identify areas where incentives may be used to encourage development, infill development or redevelopment in order to promote well designed and coordinated communities and prevent sprawl.
- ✓ **Renewal and/or redevelopment**—Consistent with the land use component, identify slums and other blighted areas and set goals, plans and programs for the elimination of such slums and blighted areas and for community renewal, revitalization and/or redevelopment.
- ✓ **Financing**—Recommend to the governing body short and long-term financing plans to meet the goals, objectives and components of the comprehensive plan.
- ✓ **Historic preservation**—Identify historical, scenic, archaeological, architectural or similar significant lands or buildings, and specify preservation plans and programs so as not to unnecessarily destroy the past development which may make a viable and affordable contribution in the future.



Chapter 1

Princeton's Comprehensive Plan: Planning with a Purpose

Introduction

The City of Princeton has a codified responsibility to provide a plan for publication every ten years that details general efforts of municipal leadership to serve the residents, business owners, and community of its jurisdiction. This plan is only a broad description of what the City may do in this timeframe with the proposed services and projects detailed herein representing a general direction of administrative leadership; these areas are subject to change in a narrow sense with substantive additions mirroring approved future additions to this plan.

As businesses create business plans to direct spending and labor efforts, comprehensive plans similarly drive the direction of local governments as a benefit for elected officials and constituents

within these jurisdictions. The benefit to elected officials is that they can reflect on approved plans of previous leaders to determine future decisions. This also serves as a general gauge for constituents to understand the intent of their local governments to meet their general needs. In Princeton, our city leadership will take the impact of the 2024-2034 Comprehensive Plan seriously by using it as a statement of policy to guide objectives over the next ten years. The plan will be available both at Princeton City Hall and the Mercer County Courthouse for any Princeton resident or interested party to review and provide feedback. This is not a static document but rather a fluid text that can be changed by city leadership as the public deems necessary.

As codified by state law, the Princeton Planning Commission is the municipal agency tasked with making an advisory recommendation

Figure 1A: Princeton Planning Commission Members and Terms

| Member Name | Term Length | Appointed By |
|--|--|--------------|
| John Hickman, President | 09/19/21 to 09/18/24 | City Council |
| Vic Allen, Vice President | 07/01/20 to 10/09/23 | City Council |
| Dan Crutchfield | 01/01/22 to 12/31/25 | City Council |
| Vacant | N/A | City Council |
| Jim Hilling | 03/10/21 to 03/09/24 | City Council |
| JoAnna Fredeking | 07/01/23 to 06/30/27 | City Council |
| Bob Lohr | 01/01/21 to 12/31/23 | City Council |
| David Graham, Mayor | 07/01/23 to 06/30/27 | City Code |
| Mike Webb, City Manager | Term of Employment | City Code |
| Marshall Lytton, Councilman | 07/01/21 to 06/30/25 Ex-Officio, Non-Voting | City Council |
| Dewey Russell, Councilman | 07/01/23 to 06/30/27 Ex-Officio, Non-Voting | City Council |
| Mercer County Planning Commission Representative | Term of Office Advisory, Non-Voting | State Code |

to the Princeton Common Council as to what will be included in the 2023-2033 comprehensive plan. The Princeton Planning Commission is a public body that consists of the following twelve members at the time of writing this plan: John Hickman (President), Vic Allen (Vice President), Dan Crutchfield, Anthony Brown, Jim Hilling, JoAnna Fredeking, Bob Lohr, David Graham (Mayor), Mike Webb (City Manager), Marshall Lytton (Councilman), Dewey Russell (Councilman), and a Mercer County Planning Commission Representative.

The members of the Princeton Common Council who will review the Princeton Planning Commission’s recommendation include the following individuals at the time of writing: David Graham (Mayor), Joseph Allen (Vice Mayor), James Hawkins, Jacqueline Rucker, James Hill, Marshall Lytton, and Dewey Russell.

The contents of this plan were determined through a combination of input from both city officials and the public. Initially, the Princeton Planning Commission approved a 2024-2034 comprehensive plan blueprint which divided all state-determined required and optional sections into a specific meeting schedule for consideration of these areas in an individual manner. The blueprint can be found below as well in the appendix:

- **April 25, 2022 6:30 PM:** Approval of 10-Year Comprehensive Plan Blueprint.
- **May 23, 2022 6:30 PM:** Review of Rural Section (Required); Interview Railroad Museum Director, Pat Smith and Library Interim Director, Laura Buchanan.
- **June 27, 2022 6:30 PM:** Review of Historical Preservation (Required) and Historical (Optional) sections; Interview Chief Mould and Chief Gray.
- **July 25, 2022 6:30 PM:** Review of Public Services (Required) and Safety (Optional) sections; Interview Code Enforcement Director, Ty Smith.
- **August 29, 2022 6:30 PM:** Review of Land Use (Required) and Conservation (Optional) sections; Interview Finance Director, Brian Conner.
- **September 26, 2022 6:30 PM:** Review of Finance (Required) section; Interview Parks and Rec Director, Amanda McCabe.
- **October 31, 2022 6:30 PM:** Review of Recreation (Required), Environmental (Optional), Conservation (Optional), Natural Resource Use (Optional) sections; Interview Public Works Director, Jackie Phillips, and Assistant Director, Eric Gatchell.

Figure 1B: Princeton Common City Council Members and Terms

| Member Name | Term Length |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| David Graham, Mayor | 07/01/23 to 06/30/27 (At-Large) |
| Joseph Allen, Vice Mayor | 07/01/21 to 06/30/25 (Ward 4) |
| James Hawkins | 07/01/21 to 06/30/25 (Ward 3) |
| Jacqueline Rucker | 07/01/21 to 06/30/25 (Ward 1) |
| James Hill | 07/01/23 to 06/30/27 (At-Large) |
| Marshall Lytton | 07/01/21 to 06/30/25 (Ward 2) |
| Dewey Russell | 07/01/23 to 06/30/27 (At-Large) |

- **November 28, 2022 6:30 PM:** Review of Infrastructure (Required) and Review of Transportation (Required) sections; Interview City Manager, Mike Webb.
- **December 12, 2022 6:30 PM:** Review of Community Design Section (Required); Interview of PEDDA Director, Samuel Lusk.
- **January 30, 2023 6:30 PM:** Review of Economic Development (Required) and Tourism (Optional) Sections; Interview of Human Resources Director, Brian Blankenship.
- **February 20, 2023 6:30 PM:** Review of Preferred Development Areas (Required) and Renewal and/or Redevelopment (Required) Sections.
- **March 27, 2023 6:30 PM:** Public Meeting for residents and community members to convey input on miscellaneous topics related to planning.
- **April 3, 2023 6:30 PM:** Planning Commission Approves Draft of 10-Year Comprehensive Plan; draft is conveyed to Princeton City Council for April Council Meeting.
- **May 29, 2023 6:30 PM:** Agenda TBD based on Princeton City Council's review.
- **June 26, 2023 6:30 PM:** Agenda TBD based on Princeton City Council's review.

Referenced meetings happened on or about the same time approved in the blueprint. Each meeting was publicly noticed and took place in the City of Princeton Council Chambers. Appropriate City officials were included by the Princeton Planning Commission through an invitation to relevant meetings that referred to an area under that Department Head's jurisdiction. That topic was placed on the agenda and at an appropriate time during the meeting the Princeton Planning Commission President would ask the invited Department Head predetermined questions. These are provided below as well in the appendix (See "**Comprehensive Plan Interview Questions**," page 106):

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Background

- Can you provide your name and position?
- Can you briefly describe your department within the City?
- How would you describe your duties/responsibility as a department head?
- How many employees, part time and full time, are employed within your department?

Present

- What is the scope of your department, and how does that impact the people of Princeton?
- What would our community look like without your department as part of the City?
- Can you provide a brief description of the assets within your department?
- Other than salaries, what is the biggest expense within your department?

Goals & Objectives

- Can you describe three short term goals in your department (within a year)?

- How does your department plan on achieving these short-term goals?
- How can the City best assist in your department achieving its short-term goals?
- Can you describe three long term goals in your department (within 10 years)?
- How does your department plan on achieving these long-term goals?
- How can the City best assist in your department achieving its long-term goals?

Interdepartmental Foresight

- Where do you see your department in 2034?
- How do you believe your job will change between now and then?
- How can the City prepare for these changes now to better equip you or your successors in the future?

Comprehensive Municipal Foresight

- What do you personally believe the City needs to improve on the most between now and 2034?
- How should the City go about creating this improvement?
- What do you think will be the most defining characteristic of Princeton in 2034?

Each Department Head was provided these questions at least two weeks in advance. Every Department Head participated; the Fire Chief was the only one to submit a written response. His written response was reviewed and entered into record. For those that answered the questions in person, the Planning Commission was afforded the opportunity to provide input after each response by asking additional clarification questions as needed. All answers and additional responses have been documented verbatim within this plan.

Specific questions were chosen to be included in the questionnaire in order to prompt Department Heads to share their current

actions or things that will happen in the near future in addition to their planned goals over the next ten years. The gap between these answers should depict what steps the City should take to meet these needs. Additionally, both the answers and the perceived gap should sufficiently comply with the codified requirements regarding the various sections.

Mission Statement and Objectives

Our mission statement and objectives are a crucial part of the planning process. They help to not only guide the narrative of a plan but also those that choose to follow it.

Mission Statement: Strive to be an economic hub for Southern West Virginia by supporting initiatives that support the needs of residents, businesses, and the broader community in and around Princeton.

Objective 1: Expand existing borders of the City of Princeton to include a broader service area.

Objective 2: Prioritize public services and infrastructure.

Objective 3: Listen and meet the administrative needs of City Officials.

Objective 4: Listen and meet additional public service needs of businesses and residents.

Mission Statement

Strive to be an economic hub for Southern West Virginia by supporting initiatives that support the needs of residents, businesses, and the broader community in and around Princeton.

Objective 1

Expand existing borders of the City of Princeton to include a broader service area.

Objective 2

Prioritize public services and infrastructure.

Objective 3

Listen and meet the administrative needs of City Officials.

Objective 4

Listen and meet additional public service needs of businesses and residents.



Chapter 2

Princeton at a Glance

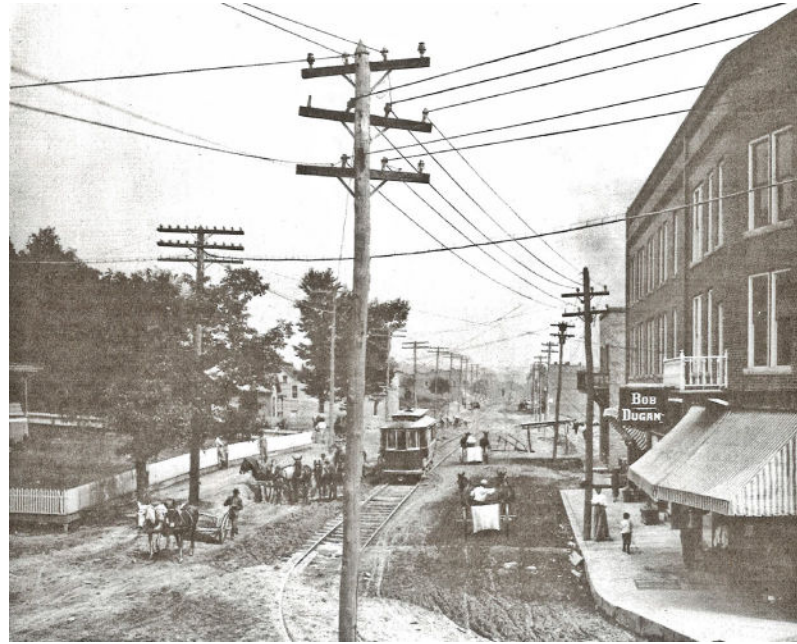
History of Princeton

Oppportunity at Work at the Crossroads of Southern West Virginia—this slogan was used to describe Princeton during the mid and late twentieth century. It depicted a community poised to grow as a result of its unique positioning within the mountain state. The opportunity within Princeton has and presumably will always be its access to infrastructure and transportation. A great many cities in West Virginia were the product of coal; Princeton was not. Rather than being a black diamond city, Princeton's first sign of true growth originated from rail. The railway "The Virginian" hauled coal from the mines at Deepwater through Princeton to Norfolk, Virginia.

Princeton did not incorporate before the Virginian railway was built in 1909, it was nothing more than a small township; however, it is worth noting that the town was the site of a Civil War conflict in 1863 which resulted in Confederate soldiers burning the town to prevent residents from giving aid to union soldiers. The only two buildings that survived the fire were the McNutt Home on North Walker Street and the Aspenwald on Douglas Street. Union soldiers aided in these two buildings surviving the blaze. Among them, Lt. Col. Rutherford B. Hayes (later the 19th President of the United States), who is documented as describing the area as a beautiful and romantic setting.

The years between the Civil War and the construction of the railway were unfortunate for the small township. Of the remaining residents, many were identified as Confederate sympathizers and could not vote nor participate in public affairs until 1870; thus, residents did not have proper representation in Charleston. This nearly cost them the County seat three years earlier to the neighboring Town of Athens. Population growth in the area was static until 1909.

Henry Rogers, a Standard Oil Empire



Executive, was the individual responsible for the construction of the railway through Princeton. He aimed to build a line of rail that was able to transport equipment and goods throughout the Appalachian Region. While retaining his position as the Vice President of Standard Oil, Rogers quietly invested more than \$40 million (\$83.5 million in today's money) into the construction of the Virginian. The undertaking that stretched from Deepwater, West Virginia, to Sewalls Point, Virginia, was completed shortly after Roger's passing in April 1909. The Virginian was the catalyst that made Princeton viable for growth and expansion.

Instead of able-bodied Mercer Countians moving to Bluefield or neighboring communities for gainful employment, the Virginian created opportunities that kept Princeton residents within the town while simultaneously drawing new ones in. The Princeton Railcar Shops along the City's designated rail stop employed as many as one-thousand workers by 1924; in addition, complimentary industries such as service and retail began to open their doors in town.

By 1927, Princeton had sixty stores, three banks, four hotels, two hospitals, two wholesale houses, two printing firms, five drug stores, a hosiery mill, two ax handle factories, two flour mills, two brick plants, an iron foundry, two

planing mills, a cabinet shop, an ice plant, a bottling plant, and a bakery.

Property values, which were \$8,500 in 1906, rose to \$25,250,000 in 1927.

The Princeton Chamber of Commerce, which became the Princeton-Mercer County Chamber of Commerce in the 1970s and merged with the Greater Bluefield Chamber of Commerce in the 2010s, was organized in 1927 and became one of the most influential groups operating on behalf of Princeton.

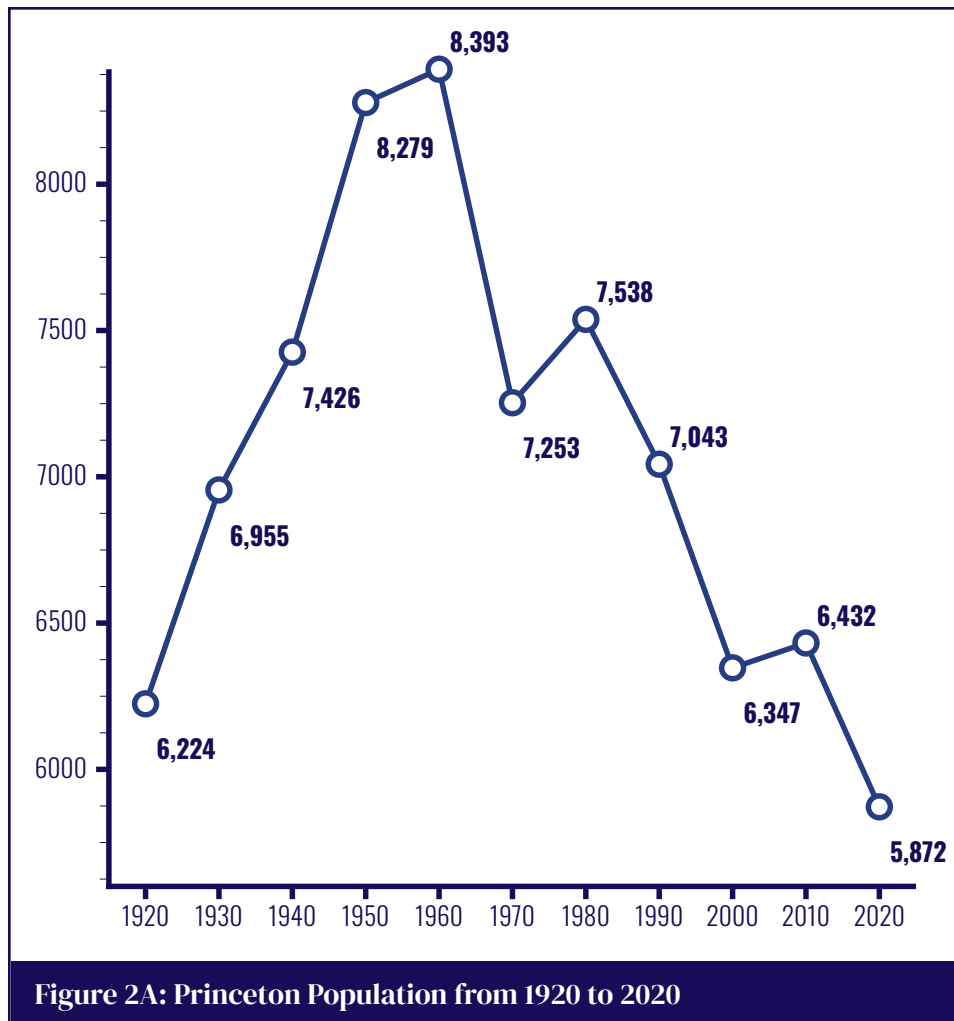
The late 1920s also saw Princeton receive the honor of being selected as the site for the Memorial Building, honoring those who served in World War I. The cornerstone was laid in 1928 and it was completed in time to serve as the temporary courthouse in 1930-31 while the current courthouse was being constructed.

The Princeton Public Library was located in the Memorial Building until the former was relocated to Center Street in the 1960s.

The 1930s saw the Amere Gas Utilities Company receive a 50-year franchise to supply natural gas to Princeton (November 14, 1932, later renewed by Mountaineer Gas Company).

In 1934, the Princeton Post Office was built at the corner of Park Avenue and Mercer Street at a cost of \$125,000. After renovations in 1964 and 1984, the post office moved to the former Temple Knob in the 2000s and the library moved to the building after another renovation.

In 1937, the Municipal Airport was completed and dedicated on August 14. Col.



Louis A. Johnson, a Clarksburg attorney and Assistant Secretary of War delivered the keynote address for the dedication. It served as a training center for Army Air Corps cadets stationed at Concord College during World War II. It shut down in the mid-1960s after the Mercer County Airport opened.

The City used the airport property in several different ways after the closure. Princeton Community Hospital was built on the north-western end in 1968-70. The Princeton Municipal Building was relocated and constructed on the east end in 1972. Southern Highlands Community Mental Health Center was built on the far western side and the Princeton Recreation Center was built in the middle of the property in 1980. The old hangars are still being used by the Princeton Public Works Department.

In 1947, on Radio Hill, WLOH began

broadcasting as the second radio station in the county. In the 1970s, an ownership change saw the station become WAEY.

In 1951, W. Grady Carper led the Princeton Youth, Inc. in a movement to build a swimming pool and develop a city park on property that had belonged to Emory & Henry College (University) before the City acquired it. In 1955, after an effort joined by civic organizations and private citizens, the City Pool was opened.

Jumping back in time, the State Legislature issued a charter to Princeton in 1874, but corporate powers were not exercised until 1905. Both major parties shared the government about equally until 1955 when A.R. “Duke” England became the first City Manager following a referendum two years earlier to change to the city manager form of government.

The city offices were relocated to Morrison Drive from Mercer Street on May 2, 1972.

The first Mayor, according to record, was C.B. Martin, who started in May 1905. The first City Clerk (recorder) was A.W. Reynolds, who started that same month.

The merger of the Virginian and Norfolk & Western railroads in 1959 had drastic reversal effects on the area’s economy. They were partially offset by the job opportunities at industrial plants located in Princeton in the 1960s, particularly the North American Aviation Company, Inc. (later Rockwell International), which opened in 1965. It closed in the late 1970s.

The Princeton Journal was the first newspaper published in Mercer County. The first issue was printed in 1878. The Evening Press was published in the 1930’s. The Princeton Observer, edited by Kyle McCormick since 1928, was sold in 1957; in 1961, The Princeton Times started as a daily and later became a weekly in 1964. Its last run was in 2022.

In 1965, a fundraising campaign was started to build a new community hospital. It netted over \$600,000. The 172-bed Princeton Community Hospital, now WVU PCH, opened in

1970. A \$7 million renovation in 1980 expanded it to 215 beds. WVU took it over last year.

In the early 1970s, Southern Highlands Community Mental Health Center was opened.

Growth was expanded on with the coal boom of the early twentieth century. As more coal was mined, the railway saw more traffic in the form of both commercial and passenger trains. The infrastructure of the town grew accordingly with some additions, including the Princeton Municipal Airport, the Virginian Hotel, and the Princeton Scrapyard.

By 1974, the footprint of the City would resemble, in part, what it is today. Mercer, Rogers, and Thorn Streets became thriving commercial hubs. Additionally, flooding concerns along Stafford Drive were mitigated with the City limits shifting to include thoroughfares that would be considered modern-day Princeton. Construction on Interstate 77, Highway 460, and the West Virginia Turnpike were completed by this time, which mitigated losses that the community felt from a declining rail industry and opened up the City to greater accessibility. Seemingly overnight, Princeton became accessible to a third of the United States population in less than a day’s drive.

Going into the twenty-first century, a revitalization began to take place in Princeton that sprouted from arts and culture. Vacant storefronts and properties were repurposed primarily by industrious third parties to create a vibrant community. One of the first signs of change in the downtown’s scenery was when the City converted an empty lot on Mercer Street into Dick Copeland Town Square; later adding an “in honor of all veterans” war memorial in 2002. Thereafter, the Charles T. “Chuck” Mathena Center opened in 2007 which gave a venue for creators and performers alike to share their talents with residents.

Within the last decade, a variety of organizations brought new meaning to downtown restoration. Grassroots leaders have led initiatives

that spawned the creation of unique murals, a lively street life, and occupancy in once vacant commercial spaces. This was accomplished by leveraging the artistic abilities of those with incredible talents and building a community that encourages even more talented individuals to come to Princeton to share their abilities.

The focus of much of this work has been concentrated along the Mercer Mile (a mile-long stretch at the epicenter of the City). Once a popular economic thoroughfare, home to corporate names such as Leggett's and others; however, the declining use of rail and quick access to products in adjacent communities forced these big names to abandon their operations in Princeton. The rejuvenation brought about by local talent sprung the creation of local businesses. Sites that were once corporate conglomerates are now occupied by niche "moms and pops" that serve to satisfy the needs of residents and travelers to the Mercer Mile.

Today, the Mercer Mile is home to a variety of specialty retail shops and art venues. Less than half a dozen properties on this strip remain vacant, with plans already in the works for occupancy/renovations at these locations.

While other parts of the City have grown in recent years, the Mercer Mile is a shining example of what is possible in Princeton. The City has attempted to further incentivize growth by bringing about public solutions, such as establishing the Princeton Economic Development Authority and Princeton Land Reuse Agency, while also relying heavily on the City's Code Enforcement Department. The hope is that similar revitalization is able to take hold throughout the City to create a better, stronger Princeton over the next ten years.

Princeton in Present

HISTORICAL PRESERVATION

The municipal leadership in Princeton values the historic roots of the City and has taken an active role in historic preservation through strategic concentration on structures and areas that have a historical significance to the greater community.

One example of this is the establishment of the "Princeton Downtown Historic District." This designation describes an area of Mercer (Main) Street from the 4th Street Block to the Virginian Industrial Park. Not only is this area composed of historically significant buildings, the City has also invested in two museums that portray the rich history of the area. One of these is the Princeton Railroad Museum which specializes in offering visitors a comprehensive understanding of how the Virginian Railway contributed to the creation of Princeton among other significant railroad related historical events. The other city-sponsored museum is the agriculture museum, which is a culmination of privately owned farm antiques that illustrate the value of agriculture in our community's history. While the City owns most of the Railroad Museum's displays, the agriculture museum is privately owned but administered by the City.

In addition, the historical district also has two other privately owned museums: Unauthorized Mythical Collections (UMC) and the Lonnie Gunter Museum of Natural History



(LGMNH). Neither of these are open to the public yet, as they are still in development; however, the City has taken an active role in both of these projects. With the UMC, the City has pledged to staff the museum as manpower is available at the Railroad Museum. Also, UMC has been incorporated as part of the official tour of the Railroad Museum, so visitors can have a cohesive experience in visiting the various museums. Additionally, the LGMNH has been supported by the City ever since its infancy in the late 2010's. This started by the City selling a piece of land adjacent to the Railroad Museum to the non-profit that organized the LGMNH. Later, the City then gave \$50,000 in funding to the project to fund architectural design work. In 2021, the LGMNH received a congressional appropriation of more than \$600,000, which the City wrote a letter of support for.

Another element of historical preservation can be seen in the two buildings in Princeton that are on the National Register of Historic Places: the McNutt House and the City Library (formerly the Princeton Post Office). The City takes care of the library building through its modern day uses and has, in recent years, completed renovations to ensure that the exterior of the building reflects its original architecture. Further, the City has worked closely with the Old Town Princeton Foundation to make sure that the McNutt House continues to be a historic landmark in downtown Princeton.

Lastly, the City has and will continue to work with artists, business owners, and property owners to support public works of art when appropriate. One such example is the war memorial mural at Dick Copeland Town Square. The City has paid for the labor and supplies to not only create the mural but also to maintain its look and impact. The City has also supported other murals along Mercer, Stafford, and Morrison, even partnering with other organizations to bring spaces alive. Other examples that the City or these organizations had a role in include: The Sophisticated Hound Mural, The Dog Park

Mural, Artist Alley, Mercer-Henderson Alley Murals, Cheap Thrills mural, and others.

Princeton's Qualities

PUBLIC SERVICES

Through the stewardship of public funds, governments are charged with the responsibility of properly using their resources to provide for the public safety and wellbeing of citizens under their jurisdiction. The United States Federal Government does this through their military and various federal agencies that protect American's interests both domestically and abroad. The state of West Virginia maintains a state guard, state police, and other regulatory agencies to protect the sanctity of those within the Mountain State. As West Virginia provides localized solutions for safety and wellbeing beyond that of the federal government, so do municipalities and counties within West Virginia.

Princeton, West Virginia, is no different. The City strategically invests its public monies into standing Police, Fire, Code Enforcement, and Public Works departments to provide for the needs of its citizens. These departments represent much of the City's yearly budget, workforce, and focus. The fire and police are always less than 5 minutes away to respond to life-threatening situations; their availability and proximity ensures that residents will have help in the worst of situations. Similarly, Princeton's Code Enforcement and Public Works departments work on projects that improve accessibility and the quality of life of the community. As a whole, all of these departments work together to ensure that Princeton is a community that both residents and outsiders want to become involved in.

Today Princeton's police department is the biggest department within the City. Per the 2022-2023 Regular Current Expense Levy, the City allocates \$2,411,477 yearly to their police

department. This is used to pay for salaries, equipment, and general upkeep of the department. To date, the department maintains 22 sworn officers, 2 service animals (K-9s), and a fleet of cruisers. All sworn officers and service animals must pass municipal and state police academy training (and any continuing education required) before being cleared for service. The department operates in a 24 hour, 7 day a week, 365 day schedule with three 8 hour shifts daily. Each shift has at a minimum three officers on duty with a Commanding Officer and Sergeant on standby. One non-sworn officer also works periodic shifts to assist with parking and traffic safety associated with roadways in proximity to schools. Two administrative assistants provide aid to officers and the public from the police department's headquarters at 100 Courthouse Road. These two employees perform officer logistics, record management, and the completion of state, federal, and third-party inquiries.

Princeton's Police Chief T.A. Gray has led the department since May 15th 2018. Since his appointment into this role, he has striven to continue to make Princeton's police force a community asset. Under his leadership, the department maintains active roles in Child Protect, Mercer County's Special Response Team, the Southern Regional Drug & Violent Crime Task Force, and the West Virginia Coalfields Highway Safety Program. Also, he has encouraged partnerships with K-12 and institutions of higher education, such as Concord University and Bluefield State University, to simultaneously overcome policing stereotypes and encourage recruitment.

Chief T.A. Gray in collaboration with Princeton's City Manager maintains a mutual aid agreement with the County to provide police response to incidents that may occur within a reasonable distance from the City's jurisdiction. In reality, this means the department services an area of 18,000 to 21,000 rather than the approximate 6,000 within the City limits.

Princeton's Fire Department maintains a similar mutual aid agreement with the County

with the same conditions of service to a reasonable distance outside the jurisdiction of the City; however the fire department is fiscally smaller with a yearly budget of \$1,339,238. The fire department's budget is used for staffing, equipment acquisition, and upkeep. There is currently 18 full-time firefighters and two volunteers which represents a full staff. The department also operates on a 24 hour, 7 day a week, 365 day schedule with varying shifts. At any point in time, there are 4 firefighters on duty to respond to an incident with others on standby in the event more aid is needed. The fire department enjoys an Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating of II, representing the second highest rank a department can be awarded for their quality of service. This equates to higher insurance rate relief among residents and business owners within Princeton's incorporated limits.

Chief Matt Mould had led the department since July 20th, 2021. Similar to Chief Gray, Mould has also continued practices that have fostered community involvement. One example is the department's HAZMAT initiative. The HAZMAT initiative invests department funds into trainings that ensure firefighters are well versed in the knowledge and skills necessary to mitigate a biochemical hazard. Princeton's fire department is one of the few in Southern West Virginia with these tools, thus the department extends its HAZMAT response beyond a reasonable distance outside of the City's incorporated limits to communities in neighboring McDowell, Summers, Monroe, and Raleigh counties. Additionally, the department spends considerable time every year training the public through general fire safety, fire prevention, and firefighting classes averaging nearly 4,000 hours of yearly manpower in community outreach.

In addition to other responsibilities, the fire department also inspects all buildings within city limits before they are either inhabited or commercially used. The department follows the National Board Inspection Code (NBIC) to make determinations. The Fire Chief is the final

authorizer on all fire department led inspections.

The City's Code Enforcement Department joins the fire department in their inspections and also identifies their own points of interest per the NBIC. Code enforcement is a three person department, consisting of a Code Enforcement Director, Animal Control-Property Maintenance Official, and a Floodplain Management-Property Maintenance Official. These three individuals strive to reduce neighborhood negatives such as crime, fire hazards, eye sores, and nuisances through means accepted within the spirit of the law. These are as follows:

Zoning

This is a regulatory tool used by Code Enforcement to govern how property within the City's jurisdiction can and cannot be used. The various zones include Industrial, Residential 1, Residential 2, Residential 3, Commercial 1, Commercial 2, Commercial-Residential, and Office Institutional. These areas were mapped by the Princeton Planning Commission and are upheld by the Princeton Zoning Board. Each zone has its own characteristics that are unique to that area. If an inhabitant or commercial tenant intends to occupy a particular zone, they can without consideration if their use falls within that zone's use; otherwise, their use is subject to review by the Princeton Zoning Board.

Building Inspection & Permit Issuance

The building inspection and the permit processes each serve their own purpose within Code Enforcement. Permits act as a feeder mechanism for developments within city limits to go before Code Enforcement officials, thus ensuring that they have the ability to be made aware of projects and their intended use. Officials can then determine if proposed plans are viable based on the NBIC and established zoning. Building inspections are follow-up tools to ensure the plans provided in the permit

process were completed in the described manner and the created project is in compliance with all regulations and is not a danger to those that would enjoy the use of the property.

Property Maintenance Inspection

The City and Code Enforcement officials understand that the integrity of buildings may degrade over time, thus there is a need for Code Enforcement to inspect areas of degradation to ensure that they are not a danger to the community at large. Once an area is identified through inspection, Code Enforcement officials work with the property owner to bring about NBIC compliance. This may come through owner-sponsored renovations or city and/or owner sponsored demolition; in either case, lawful means are used to restore the safety of the premise. All city funds exhausted through restoration of a property is billed to property owner or filed as a lien against the property.

Vacant Building Registry

The City established an ordinance in 2016 which acknowledged the nuisance and danger of vacant buildings. This ordinance empowered Code Enforcement to categorize vacant buildings between 1,200 and 15,000 in square footage and to send a determined fee to the owner in order to encourage use of the property. Fee amounts, exemptions, and structure are outlined in the ordinance. To date, there are 75 properties on the registry with another estimated 75 to 150 to be cataloged. All fees collected as part of this project are used for either administrative or demolition purposes.

Flood Plain Management

The City and Code Enforcement understand that Princeton's unique positioning within a valley subjects some of its residents and business owners to flooding. Code Enforcement's flood plain manager serves to educate those located within these areas about flood insurance and how

they can mitigate the damage to their property when a 100 or 500 year flood event occurs.

Animal Control

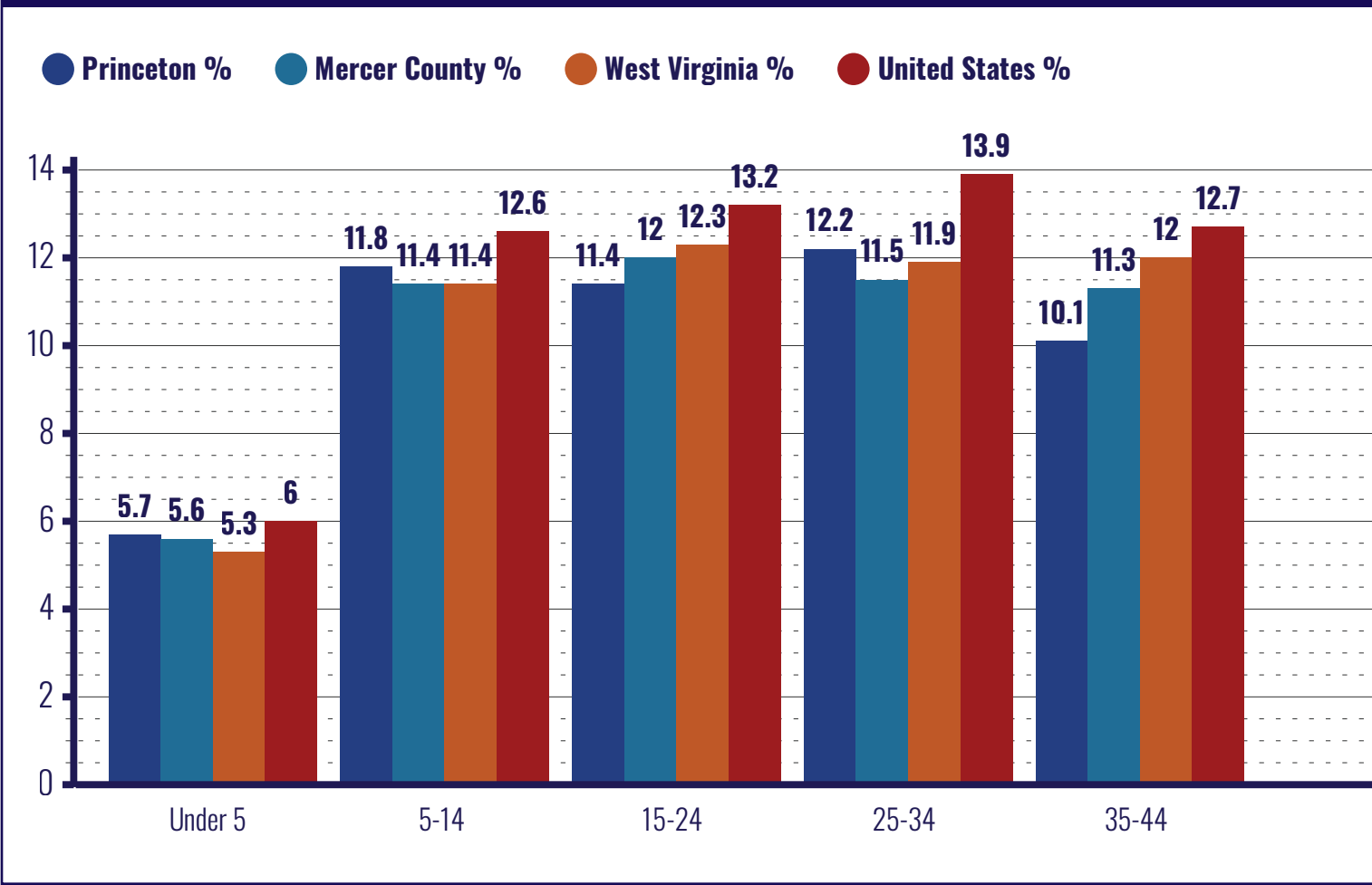
Princeton’s code outlines what animals are specifically allowed within city limits. It further explains that said animals need to be kept in a manner that is not a hindrance to others. Animal control acts when animals are within areas they are not supposed to be and/or when they become a nuisance and danger to others. All domesticated animals are brought to the Mercer County Animal Shelter to be processed for adoption or owner redemption. Non-domesticated animals are handled in conjunction with the state.

Demolition & Asbestos Inspection

The City allocates \$30,000 per year to demolition and delegates the use of these funds to Code Enforcement. The department may use it to demolish building(s) already identified through the NBIC that may pose a risk to the general wellbeing of Princeton residents. These identified buildings may be on the vacant structure registry or could have previously failed a building inspection. All monies used to demolish a building are billed against the property owner or filed as a lien against the property.

Princeton’s Public Works Department is another area where the City strives to improve its quality of life. Public works is a broad department that includes city functions such as

Figure 2B: Age Composition Comparison Chart (2020)



street maintenance, garbage collection, municipal (real and personal) property maintenance, storm-water maintenance and special project fabrication. A description of each are as follows:

Street Maintenance

All actions taken to ensure a roadway is safe for daily travel; this includes street sweeping, street painting, and street sign installation/upkeep, mowing of greenery adjacent to roadway, snow plowing, asphaltting, leaf collection, and sidewalk construction.

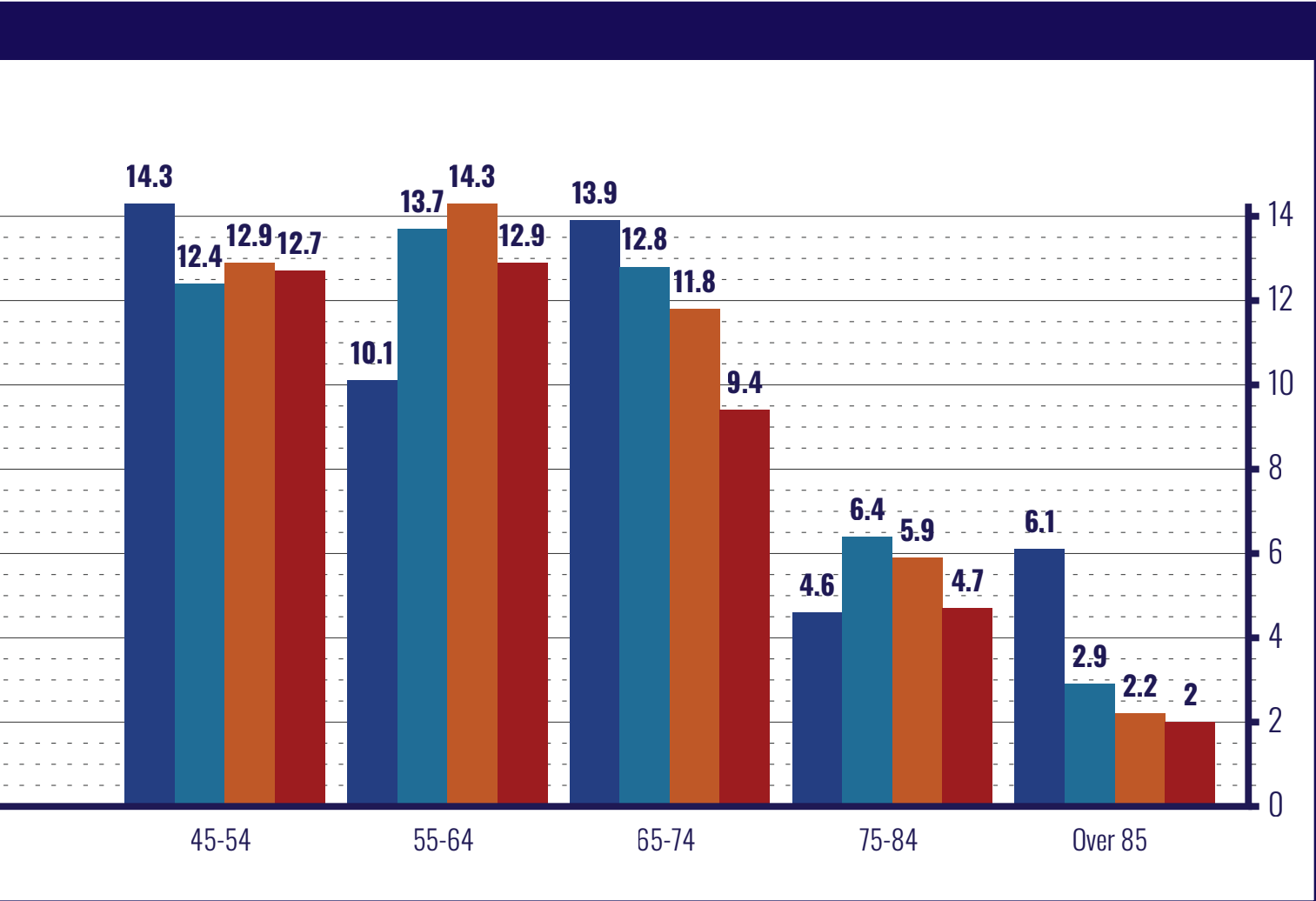
Garbage Collection

This is a public service that is provided through select employees within the department. These individuals collect trash on a predetermined schedule from both businesses

and residents within city limits. Those that use this service are billed a nominal rate determined within city code. Funds collected in this way are put back into public works for the administration of garbage collection.

Municipal (Real and Personal) Property Maintenance

All property deteriorates over time, thus public works strives to ensure that city assets do not reach the point of becoming unsafe for use; and, if they do, reverse this through appropriate action. With regard to real property, this may involve nominal jobs that may not necessarily need a contractor but improves the quality of a city-owned building. The same is true for municipal personal property. Public works provides vehicle maintenance for all city



departments and is responsible for ensuring that they are equipped with all necessary features to ensure safety of city employees while traveling.

Storm Water Maintenance

Storm water systems throughout the City protect high traffic junctions from experiencing travel-hindering flooding. From time to time, these storm water systems require maintenance to clean debris washed into them from a previous flood. Public works carries this responsibility by routinely cleaning these systems. Not only does this extend the longevity of the systems, it also maximizes their effectiveness. Further, the addition of storm water systems has most impacted the Stafford Drive and Rogers Streets thoroughfares. These areas have seen a surge in commercial investment over the last ten years, as the roads are no longer traversable in heavy precipitation.

Special Projects

As the City Manager has deemed necessary and proper, he has delegated special projects to public works for completion. In the past, this has include painting the railroad museum's train car, creating Christmas lights for the City, talking points on infrastructure logistics for a city event, and other duties as assigned.

RECREATION

Environmental

The City of Princeton has a strong foundation with its Parks and Recreation Department, which puts us in a unique position to grow and expand to meet the needs of the community. Programs are offered for all ages from toddlers to senior adults. The current facility offers a recreation center, outdoor pool, outdoor park, and six playgrounds.

The recreation center hosts organized community sports leagues for ages 3 and up, including 6 basketball leagues for boys and girls, cheerleading, co-ed volleyball leagues, disc golf,

youth and adult martial arts, and indoor soccer leagues. These group sport activities are essential to the youth of the community because most school sports do not start until age 11. The programs help provide younger children a safe, fun environment to learn the fundamental skills and structure of the game while teaching them the importance of instruction and teamwork. The programs not only provide fun for the kids, but they give them the ability to move on to school team sports as they enter middle and high school.

Based on CDC research, physical activity has a direct and positive impact on a person's physical and mental health. Psychological benefits to those who participate in physical activity are improved mood, reduced stress level, improved self-esteem, pride in accomplishment, increased satisfaction with oneself, increased energy levels, and improved confidence.

As the world has evolved with electronics it has changed the way the younger generation entertain themselves. The average youth (ages 8-18) spends approximately 6-8 hours per day online utilizing entertainment and/or social media. This in part has led to higher rates of heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, and obesity in children at much younger ages. West Virginia is ranked highest in the Nation for obesity. Statistics like this make it even more important to focus on offering a wide variety of community programs that will help improve the physical and mental health of the citizens both young and old.

The recreation center currently encounters more than 3,000 children who participate in youth organized sports and the day camp. They offer team sports 11 months during the year, and the indoor facilities are open 12-14 hours per day, 7 days per week to allow for practices and games. Annually the outdoor facilities see over 54,000 people. This includes those who utilize the pool, concerts, skate park, playgrounds, picnic facilities, disc golf, etc. Even though the new hiking trails are very popular, at this time the statistics on the number of hikers who enjoy the trails is unknown, however there is a plan

to add a system to help calculate the usage.

Princeton has a unique topographical makeup with great potential for expansion of green space. The City Park is 40 acres which will allow Princeton the ability to expand the natural surface, hiking trails, grassy picnic areas, and nature themed relaxation areas to de-stress and refocus. Improvements can be implemented with minimal cost while utilizing green space that is already owned by the City. These improvements can also be promoted to the community and area schools for outdoor enjoyment.

The short-term goals are to construct a pickleball court, install new basketball goals on all courts (including the pole, backboard, rim and net), and construct a fully handicap accessible playground in the City park. The total investment in these three projects will be approximately \$118,000. The recreation staff are very excited about these projects, especially the playground. This will be the only fully handicap accessible playground in Mercer County.

The long-term goals are to build a new gymnasium to expand the youth sports leagues, including basketball, soccer, and volleyball. Growth is a positive thing; however, it does create a need for expansion and investment to the current facilities. The current recreation facility offers community meeting space, birthday party rooms, bounce house rentals, conference room rentals, educational training, and a small concession area. All of these activities generate necessary revenue for the facility. With renovations to the current building or the construction of a new building, expansion of rental services to the community will help generate additional revenue to help meet the budget and allow for continued improvements.

The second long term goal is to construct a new outdoor pool area. The current pool opened in 1952, 70 years ago, and has been heavily utilized; however, now is the time to start fresh and upgrade to meet the needs and desires of the community. A plan will be to create an all-inclusive aquatic

area for all ages to enjoy. This would include a pool with slides, a splash zone for younger children, a large concession area, shower/changing facilities, and family oriented lounging areas. This should more than double the current pool usage and generate additional revenue to support the upgrades.

Finally, the third long-term goal is to upgrade the skatepark by resurfacing the existing area or building a new facility. Skateboarding continues to be a very popular sport with the area youth. It is a wonderful source of physical activity especially for those who prefer individual sports opposed to team sports.

The recreation department is trying to be proactive and plan for population growth as the City and County work to attract new industry to the area. The City of Princeton has recently welcomed WVU Medicine as they have joined Princeton Community Hospital to provide quality medical care to the community. As evident with other cities that WVU Medicine has joined, they will expand staffing by adding new physicians, specialty offices, nursing, and ancillary positions. This could bring in hundreds of new families into the area. This increase in population will bring new families into the recreation programs. A robust recreation program will be a wonderful addition when promoting the City of Princeton as a desired place to live and work.

With the upcoming improvements, it will be important to advertise and promote all of the services to the surrounding areas via brochures, websites, and social media communication. Currently the facility is utilized by 65% county residents, 35% city residents, and 5% visitors. As improvements are made it will be important to track the growth and changes in the current usage statistics and plan for additional funding to continue growth.

Conservation

Code Enforcement is the main way the City conserves the natural habitat of the region. Through a combination of zoning

enforcement, animal control, and floodplain management, these actions minimize residential impact on wildlife while simultaneously protecting the quality of life of those that live within Princeton's jurisdiction. These services are expected to continue for the next decade with any additions incorporated as the Council or the public deems them necessary.

Additionally, the City has tried to maintain the natural habitat of the region by investing in the conversion of properties into green spaces. This has already been done with existing city-owned property with strategic investments being made into city parcels that can have community and environmental impacts on the region. These are actions that will also continue as funds and identified spaces are available.

Natural Resource Use

Even though West Virginia has a rich history of natural resource use through its unique coal and salt deposits, the Princeton community is unlike the greater State in this regard. The City's location, in a valley of the Blue Ridge Mountains, positions it in a place where it is topographically

impossible to access these precious resources. As the historic section of this plan suggests, Princeton was once a town that relied on natural resources to grow through indirect commercial travel by rail and vehicle; but, this dependency no longer exists and Princeton has little to no impact on the area's Natural Resource Use.

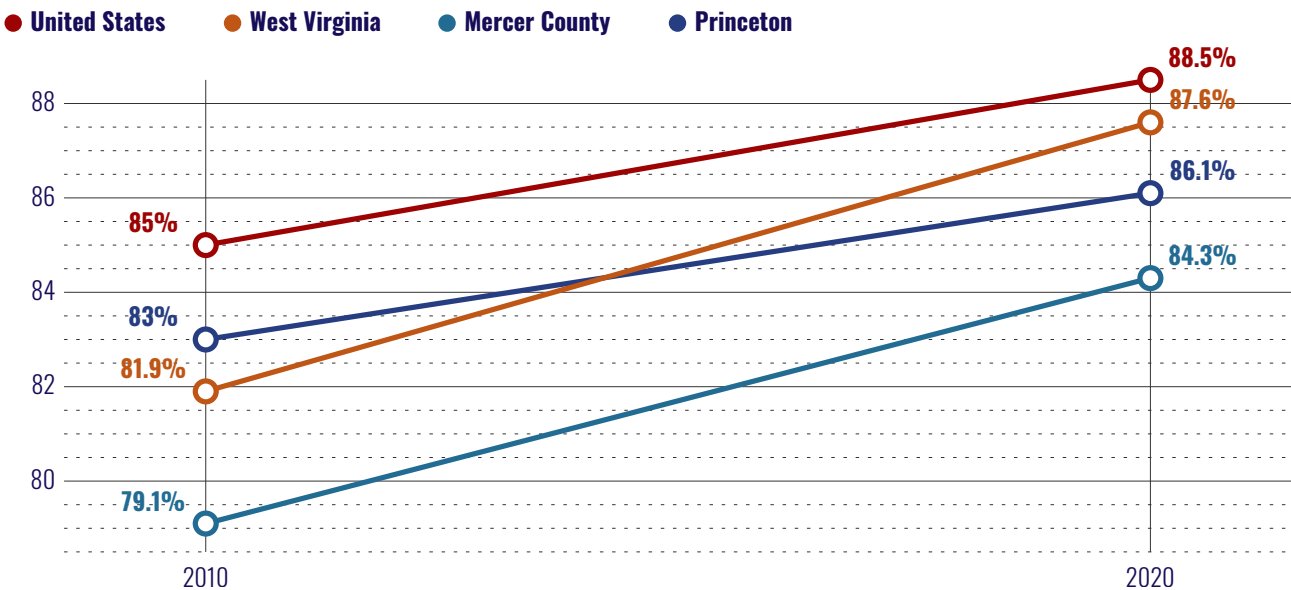
Infrastructure

The Princeton community is very fortunate to have access to several forms of infrastructure which empower its residents with the ability to live productive and meaningful lives. These can be categorized in three areas: utility, civic, and structural infrastructure.

Utility Infrastructure

Princeton's utilities are provided by several sources including the Princeton Sanitary Board (sewer), American Water (tap water), American Electric Power (electrical), and Princeton Public Works (trash). These are a combination of public and private services that each have varying

Figure 3A: Percentage of Population to Be High School Graduates from 2020 to 2020



commitments to the community. Princeton Sanitary Board is a City of Princeton affiliate organization. Though it is a separate legal entity, its board and administrative leadership are appointed by the Princeton City Council. The Princeton Sanitary Board maintains and expands public sewer lines in order to accommodate private growth. Whether this is a commercial or residential customer, the Princeton Sanitary Board ensures that their sewer lines are within a reasonable distance of property owners in order for them to need to invest minimal private dollars to tap into the existing network. American Water and American Electric Power are both private companies that are motivated by their own organizational missions, which may or may not cost the consumer additional money (above standard rates) to utilize depending on their geographic location within the community. However, generally these companies are equally as willing to accommodate residential and commercial consumers by building on to their respective networks. All these decisions are based on their own organizational policies. The Princeton Public Works Department handles trash pick up for properties (commercial and residential) in the City based on whether individuals choose to take advantage of this public service or pay a private company to provide this service. On July 1st, 2023 this service was raised to \$22 per customer with costs varying for special pickups.

Civic Infrastructure

Princeton is blessed with state of the art community amenities that ensure a high quality of life in the community. One of these is the Princeton Rescue Squad. Founded in 1961, they are a non-profit organization in the City that provides specialized medical response in emergency situations. They employ more than seventy skilled professionals including dispatchers, emergency medical technicians, paramedics, billing staff, administrative leadership, and support staff. They are located on Stafford Drive with several sub stations throughout the region,

ready to respond on a moment's notice when needed. Additional amenities include the Mercer County Board of Education, and their continuance of quality education in the area. They do this in Princeton by maintaining phenomenal educational facilities within the City, including a Technical Education Center, Princeton Senior High School, Princeton Middle School, Straley Elementary, Mercer Elementary, and Princeton Primary School. Within these facilities, there are thousands of students on an average school day, a mix of both Princeton residents and children from the greater community. Further, another piece of our civic infrastructure is the Princeton Public Library. This component unit of the City of Princeton is its own legal entity, however it is funded through a combination of public funds through several different sources: the Mercer County Commission, Mercer County Board of Education, State of West Virginia, and the City's yearly appropriation. The library has one full-time librarian (working on a Master of Library Science), eight full-time support staff members, and numerous volunteers working to maintain its services for the public. Library cards and services are free to all West Virginia residents. These services include more than 60,000 physical items, electronic books, and audio titles. Visitors may also take advantage of the library's free internet connectivity, public events, clubs, and youth services.

Structural Infrastructure

As already discussed in other areas of this plan, Princeton's proximity to Highway 460 & Interstate 77 provides the community with unlimited potential for growth and expansion. While this is at the center of structural infrastructure in the City, other assets in this regard include commercial building stock and the state maintained roadways within city limits. The commercial building stock is an asset, because there are already robust buildings that potential tenants could occupy in the City's downtown. In the last ten years, many of these buildings

have seen new life with specialty retail filling previously vacant buildings. There are still many older buildings within the City that could prove to be a profitable undertaking. These projects would continue to grow the City through tax revenue of new tenants and the drawing of more people into the City through the consumption of the offered goods. The State roadways within the City are a community asset, because the State has a wider array of resources to meet the needs of Princeton residents in this regard when regular maintenance or expansion is necessary. The State periodically paves sections of these Princeton roadways in accordance with a predetermined maintenance schedule, however Princeton has worked with the State to address individual problems as they arise. The State's work eases the burden of this upkeep from the municipality.

TOURISM

Through the Princeton Economic Development Authority (PEDA), the City is taking an active approach to marketing the City and its assets. This will continue to be done through working with community partners to organize business grand (re)openings, press releases, and social media postings. The primary purpose of these tasks is to inform the public of the benefits that they experience by visiting and living in the Princeton community. This is also a fundamental tourism tool that will be dialed in over the next decade to maximize the amount of visits in our community.

Princeton has 1,404 active businesses in city limits. Many of these are unique to Princeton and as such provide an opportunity for drawing new people off of the neighboring roadways to support commerce. PEDA will continue to improve the chances of this happening through continued marketing and partnerships with other similar organizations. The most relevant in this regard being the Mercer County Convention & Visitors Bureau. They are a county organization that specializes in tourism. The

City will work directly with them as much as possible to grow tourism initiatives in town.

Additionally, the City has invested substantially in the downtown Historic District on lower Mercer Street for the creation of museum row, including the Railroad Museum, the Agriculture Museum, the Lonnie Gunter Museum, and Unauthorized Mythical Collection. These destinations attract hundreds of visitors every year. The City expects that these museums will continue to offer more items over the next ten years, increasing the draw for more tourists to be brought from the Interstate and Highway to downtown. Other areas such as the Old Town Princeton Area (near the Mercer County Courthouse) are being developed as a historic site for walking tours.

COMMUNITY DESIGN

Activities of a community are reflected in the patterns of its land use. The type, location, and intensity of different land uses also affect how a community's future goals are met and are represented in the Future Land Use Map. One additional element beyond type, location, and intensity should be addressed. There is more to creating great places than simply providing the structure for the community's land uses. In order to be a community with an identity and strong sense of place, the City needs to have a community character and diverse community needs that reflects its values. This chapter seeks to define and translate into visually perceivable physical forms those components of the community that contribute to the quality and character of the City of Princeton.

Four different areas of physical design are examined in this chapter: gateways, commercial uses, residential uses, and civic/institutional uses. While focusing on these particular areas, many of the design principles can be applied across the City. These design guidelines have been developed to provide guidance relating to the design of the community. The intent of the guidelines is to encourage the creation of

useful and lasting community improvements that will be enjoyed for years to come.

These design guidelines offer specific recommendations for the design and placement of City design elements, including buildings, streetscape elements, open space, signs, etc. The main principles illustrated in these guidelines include a focus on pedestrian comfort and human-scale, accessibility, visual interest, and architectural and historic compatibility.

The design guidelines are based on three goals. First, they provide developers a tool for understanding the comprehensive design intent and character desired by the City of Princeton. Second, they provide standards by which proposed developments will be evaluated for their compliance with the design intent. Furthermore, they suggest and encourage design approaches that facilitate the design intent of the Plan.

These guidelines do not dictate design decisions, but rather, they provide standards or guidelines to be followed. These guidelines work to prevent incompatible new construction or rehabilitation by acting as a base for objective decision making. Each guideline describes and illustrates ways existing places and new developments may be designed, altered, and improved to achieve the most desirable solution. Each guideline also provides criteria to evaluate the appropriateness of specific design decisions involved in a project. Attention to these guidelines will help to contribute to a unique and attractive City, especially along the entrance corridors.

The framework and design of Princeton will continue to evolve and develop over time. Commitment to these guidelines will be necessary; and if successfully applied, these will contribute to an improved quality of life, economic vitality, and positive visual image for the City of Princeton.

Princeton has a strong manufacturing and industrial economy. There are several locations for employment land-uses within the City as illustrated on the Future Development Plan Map.

They can be divided into two basic use areas. Redevelopment areas focused on small-scale manufacturing and assembly and are extremely diverse in site size, building type, and scale. Future growth corridors are located close to major arterial roadways. While these areas are predominantly undeveloped, there are some more recently developed buildings. These areas should include large-scale warehouse and distribution facilities, often supported by a limited amount of office and light industrial uses.

The characteristics of the Employment Areas are described below. The guidelines should be considered when reviewing and approving development plans for renovation and new developments in-filled within the existing developed land use pattern and along the future growth corridors including I-77 and US 460.

Universal Guidelines

SIDEWALKS

Sidewalks are important for access from employment areas to adjacent employment areas, but will vary in width depending upon local conditions.

Sidewalks, a minimum of five feet in width, should be provided at all public roadways. Consideration should be taken into account of the location of these employment areas to future greenway/trail paths and surrounding neighborhoods.

Sidewalk design should facilitate access to public bus transit and existing and future greenways and trails.

STREETSCAPE AND PUBLIC AREA AMENITIES

Streetscape treatments will vary by employment area depending on location. However, the following basic guidelines will apply:

- **Streetscape design should be coordinated with boulevard improvements as discussed in the residential design guidelines.**

- **Connections should be created to adjacent recreation areas and trails.**
- **Where feasible and economically viable, off-street bike paths should be provided within employment areas.**
- **If connections to trails are provided, bicycle parking for employees should be conveniently located near building entrances.**

LANDSCAPING

Landscaping and site amenities should be considered an integral part of overall design. Landscaping should complement the building and other site improvements.

If street trees are utilized, then one should be placed at least every 40 feet.

Off-street parking areas, building foundations, and signs should all be landscaped.

Fences and barriers should be constructed of consistent and compatible high quality materials to create a coordinated appearance.

The perimeter of parking lots and loading areas adjoining residential and commercial uses should be characterized by continuous landscaping beams, low walls, or appropriate features. These areas should also be free of trash, boxes, and protected storage facilities.

LIGHTING AND UTILITIES

Lighting should be designed as an integral feature of the building and site.

Lighting at parking (including off-street) and loading areas should be mounted on walls or posts at a height of 25 feet or less.

Free-standing and wall mounted fixtures should incorporate cutoffs to screen the view of light sources from neighboring residential use.

Fixtures and posts should be consistent throughout the development.

Lighting should be used to highlight building entrances.

Where practical, utility lines along arterial rights-of-way should be located underground.

Ground-mounted utility boxes should be concealed with landscaping.

Signage should be in scale with building and site elements, and should complement, rather than compete with, the overall design.

Wherever possible, signs should be located low to the ground, in the driver's line of vision. Roof-mounted and pole signs are strongly discouraged.

Building sign sizes should primarily reflect viewing distances for drivers.

Building signs oriented to adjacent highways can be larger in scale.

At multi-tenant developments, shared monument signage should be encouraged.

Monument and wall signage should be designed appropriate for the scale of the building.

Sign support structures should be minimal or architecturally integrated with the overall development.

Parking lots may include directional signage. However, signage should be used sparingly and be of a consistent character and designed in conjunction with all other site signage.

Redevelopment Area Guidelines

OFF-STREET PARKING AND CIRCULATION

Key objectives of the redevelopment area design guidelines are to minimize the length of a walk between parking areas and buildings, and to safely separate auto and truck traffic.

Visitor parking may be located in front of a building. However, employee parking and truck loading areas should be located beside or behind the building.

Provide adequate on-site area for truck loading and maneuvering, where feasible as dictated by site constraints.

BUILDING SCALE AND MASSING

The scale and massing of buildings in the redevelopment area have typically been more oriented to drivers than pedestrians.

Street-facing facades of office buildings

should vary in height to create visual variety.

Warehouses should avoid blank elevations on street frontages through the use of building indentation and architectural details, such as “faux window treatments,” related to the “structure” of the building.

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

New industrial area buildings infilled into the existing fabric should consider incorporating the following features:

- New facades should be well composed, and articulated with a variety of materials and planes and should be compatible with surrounding, existing buildings.
- Building entrances should be highlighted with accent elements, lighting, or other features that aid in orientation.
- Visitor entrances should be prominent, preferably through the use of a portico or awning that will provide weather protection.
- Stairways, fences, trash enclosures, and other accessory elements should be designed as integral parts of the facility design.
- Service areas should be shielded from view of public rights-of-way to the extent possible (i.e., refuse containers, outdoor storage, transformers, loading docks, etc.).

BUILDING MATERIALS

In general, the selection of materials and colors should provide an enduring quality and enhance the architectural and massing concept of the building and be compatible with surrounding, existing buildings.

High quality materials should be used on exterior surfaces including masonry, metal, concrete panel systems, or tile.

Consistent finish materials should be used on all facades that are visible from public streets and/or auto parking areas.

Future Growth Corridor Guidelines

SITE DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

The following principles should apply:

In general, landscaping, site features, and finished surfaces of private buildings should be given particular attention around the perimeter of the development.

If the site is “double-fronted,” with visibility from an adjacent highway, the site layout should seek to minimize unfavorable views from the highway.

Cul-de-sacs within new planned business or industrial parks are strongly discouraged.

OFF-STREET PARKING AND CIRCULATION

A key objective of the future growth corridor design guidelines is to safely separate auto and truck traffic.

Truck and auto entrances should be separated, and auto parking areas should be isolated from truck movement and loading areas when feasible.

Adequate on-site area should be provided for truck loading and maneuvering.

Sidewalks along adjoining public streets should connect to pedestrian walkways within the development that provide safe connections to building entrances.

BUILDING SCALE AND MASSING

The scale and massing of buildings in the future growth corridors is generally large, being more oriented to motorists than pedestrians.

Street-facing facades of office buildings should vary in vertical plane to create visual variety but should retain a consistent high mark for standardization.

Warehouses should avoid blank elevations on street frontages through the application of architectural details, such as “faux windows,” related to the “structure” of the building.

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

New planned employment area buildings should consider incorporating the following features:

New facades should be well composed and articulated with a variety of heights and setbacks.

In developments with multiple structures, similar forms and materials should be used to tie the development together.

Building entrances should be highlighted with accent elements, lighting, or other features that aid in orientation.

Stairways, fences, trash enclosures, and other accessory elements should be designed as integral parts of the facility design.

Service areas should be shielded from view of public rights of way to the extent possible (i.e., refuse containers, outdoor storage, transformers, loading docks, etc).

BUILDING MATERIALS

In general, the selection of materials and colors should provide an enduring quality and enhance the architectural and massing concept of the building.

High quality materials should be used on exterior surfaces including masonry, metal, concrete panel systems, or tile.

Consistent finish materials should be used on all facades that are visible from public streets and/or auto parking areas.

Commercial Uses

CHARACTER OF PRINCETON'S COMMERCIAL AREAS

Princeton has diverse commercial areas. Within the City, commercial areas provide distinct functions to serve community needs. There is a wide range in the type and scale of commercial building clusters. Yet, there is a basic pattern to the City's commercial areas which should be supported and reinforced by the City's design guidelines. Existing commercial areas have been identified according to both their

function and level of pedestrian accessibility.

Provide adequate on-site area for truck loading and maneuvering, where feasible as dictated by site constraints.

BUILDING SCALE AND MASSING

The scale and massing of buildings in the redevelopments area have typically been more oriented to drivers than pedestrians.

Street facing facades of office buildings should vary in height to create visual variety.

Warehouses should avoid blank elevations on street frontages through the use of building indentation and architectural details, such as "faux window treatments," related to the "structure" of the building.

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

New industrial area buildings infilled into the existing fabric should consider incorporating the following features:

New facades should be well composed, and articulated with a variety of materials and planes and should be compatible with surrounding, existing buildings.

Building entrances should be highlighted with accent elements, lighting, or other features that aid in orientation.

Visitor entrances should be prominent, preferably through the use of a portico or awning that will provide weather protection.

Stairways, fences, trash enclosures, and other accessory elements should be designed as integral parts of the facility design.

Service areas should be shielded from view of public rights-of-way to the extent possible (i.e., refuse containers, outdoor storage, transformers, loading docks, etc.)

BUILDING MATERIALS

In general, the selection of materials and colors should provide an enduring quality and enhance the architectural and massing concept of the building and be compatible with surrounding, existing buildings.

High quality materials should be used on exterior surfaces including masonry, metal, concrete panel systems, or tile.

Consistent finish materials should be used on all facades that are visible from public streets and/or parking areas.

Future Growth Corridor Guidelines

SITE DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

The following should apply:

In general, landscaping, site features, and finished surfaces of private buildings should be given particular attention around the perimeter of the development.

If the site is “double-fronted,” with visibility from an adjacent highway, the site layout should seek to minimize unfavorable views from the highway.

Cul-de-sacs within new planned business or industrial parks are strongly discouraged.

OFF-STREET PARKING AND CIRCULATION

A key objective of the future growth corridor design guidelines is to safely separate auto and truck traffic.

Truck and auto entrances should be separated, and auto parking areas should be isolated from truck movement and loading areas.

Adequate on-site area should be provided for truck loading and maneuvering.

Sidewalks along adjoining public streets should connect to pedestrian walkways within the development to building entrances.

BUILDING SCALE AND MASSING

The scale and massing of buildings in the future growth corridors is generally large, being more oriented to motorists than pedestrians.

Street-facing facades of office buildings should vary in vertical plane to create visual variety.

Warehouses should avoid blank elevations on street frontages through the application of

architectural details, such as “faux windows,” related to the “structure” of the building.

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

In developments with multiple structures, similar forms and materials should be used to tie the development together.

Building entrances should be highlighted with accent elements, lighting, or other features that aid in orientation.

Stairways, fences, trash enclosures, and other elements should be designed as integral parts of the facility design.

Service areas should be shielded from view of public rights-of-way to the extent possible (i.e., refuse containers, outdoor storage, transformers, loading docks, etc.).

BUILDING MATERIALS

In general, the selection of materials and colors should provide an enduring quality and enhance the architectural and massing concept of the building.

High quality materials should be used on exterior surfaces including masonry, metal, concrete panel systems, or tile.

Consistent finish materials should be used on all facades that are visible from public streets and/or auto parking areas.

Neighborhood Node

REINFORCE THE “STREET WALL”

New and existing neighborhood nodes should encourage in-line storefronts along the right-of-way line. Placing structures up to the street facilitates pedestrian activity and encourages shared parking solutions and more compact development.

The front facades of new buildings and structures should be located at the street line. In existing “in-line” street district areas, expanded buildings should occupy at least sixty percent of the site frontage.

At least sixty percent of the building front should be devoted to windows and door openings.

OFF-STREET PARKING AND LOADING

A key objective of the neighborhood node is to ensure that buildings, not parking areas and curb cuts, dominate the street frontage.

While access and parking located between in-line buildings is not preferred, conditions often require an allowance for this purpose. Parking and access should not consume more than one third of the parcel width.

Parking should not extend beyond the front façade plane of the building.

Loading and service areas should not be visible from public areas (i.e., refuse containers, transformers, loading docks, etc.).

Service area access should be provided from an alley, when an alley is present.

ON-STREET PARKING

In some neighborhood nodes, on-street parking is not allowed. Yet the policy has the effect of further limiting already constrained parking and making these areas unpleasant for pedestrians. On-street parking has a traffic calming benefit that is important in pedestrian-oriented areas.

The City should reevaluate its off-street parking policy in neighborhood nodes sustaining in-line buildings to determine if on-street parking is feasible.

BUILDING SCALE AND MASSING

The overall massing and scale of new development should be consistent with surrounding structures. New structures and additions should be delineated horizontally and vertically and should convey a pedestrian scale.

New buildings should respect the traditional height of surrounding buildings. While one story buildings are acceptable, two or three story buildings should be encouraged.

New buildings or additions in adjoining storefront locations should be designed with simple rectangular volumes.

A clear visual division between street level and upper floors should be incorporated through a change of materials, colors, and/or canopies and awnings.

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

New commercial buildings should consider incorporating the following features:

- Building façade designs and levels of detail should reflect a pedestrian scale and convey a sense of detail from close viewing distances by people on foot and in slowly moving cars.
- Long, unbroken volumes and large unarticulated wall and roof planes should not be permitted.
- Long front facades on new “in-line” buildings should demonstrate a rhythm and articulation of “storefront” modules that correspond in scale and proportion with surrounding traditional buildings.
- In many cases, a parapet wall that conceals a flat roof behind will be the most contextual design solution for an “in-line” storefront building.
- Roof forms, where visible, should cover the entire width and depth of the buildings. Superficial roof forms, such as “mansards” affixed to the facades of a building, should not be allowed.

BUILDING MATERIALS

In general, building materials and color should help establish visual continuity for the area, reflecting the materials used on adjacent traditional buildings.

Use the highest quality materials on exterior surfaces including brick, metal, stucco, wood, stone, terra cotta, and tile.

Matte finishes are preferred.

Buildings designed with obvious reference to a style or period should be consistent with that style or period.

LIGHTING AND UTILITIES

Lighting should be designed as an integral feature of the site.

Lighting should be mounted on architecturally designed posts at a height of 16 feet or less in height, providing frequently spaced lighting at sidewalks.

Free-standing and wall mounted fixtures should incorporate cutoffs to screen the view of light sources to neighboring residential uses.

Fixtures and posts should be consistent throughout the project.

Lighting should be used to highlight building features.

Where practical, utility lines along arterial rights-of-way should be located underground.

SIGNAGE

Appropriately scaled signage is an important element in the neighborhood node.

In “in-line” storefront settings the use of wall and projecting signage is encouraged.

Free-standing signs are discouraged. Building-mounted signage should be integral with the facade design, centered within structural bays, and not obscure architectural details. Signs and sign locations should be an integral part of the overall design, not a later addition.

The market function of a commercial area is an important consideration in its physical design. Land uses that serve sub-regional or regional markets require large buildings and a substantial amount of off-street parking, for example, Walmart. Conversely, neighborhood uses such as a small restaurant require much less space for parking. The guidelines establish three basic commercial character areas in Princeton. They include:

1) the Neighborhood Node; 2) the Mixed Character Area; and 3) the Auto Oriented Area.

Princeton Commercial Character Areas

NEIGHBORHOOD NODE—MERCER ST.

Within the Traditional Community Residential Area, Neighborhood Nodes represent the smaller, traditional commercial concentrations that primarily serve local convenience shopping needs and contain commercial buildings built up to the street. Buildings are generally small in scale and may be mixed use including commercial on the first floor and residential on the second floor, with a heavy reliance on shared and on-street parking.

MIXED CHARACTER AREA—STAFFORD DRIVE

Within both the traditional and contemporary Community Residential Areas, Mixed Character commercial areas represent a combination of both traditional and newer commercial buildings of varying sizes and types. Many have dedicated off-street parking lots, but some may still have some on-street parking on side streets. Lots are often combined allowing access internally from shop to shop without having to exit onto Stafford Drive.

AUTO ORIENTED AREA—1-77 AND US 460

Within the Contemporary Community Residential Area, Auto Oriented commercial areas represent newer, commercial areas that contain large “big box” retailers and multi-tenant shopping centers that rely on large off-street parking lots. Lots tend to be larger and deeper, having been originally platted for commercial use.

Commercial Area Design Guidelines

UNIVERSAL GUIDELINES

Crosswalks

The ability for pedestrians to safely cross at intersections along collector and arterial streets is important.

Where feasible, street intersections with arterial and collector streets should have marked crosswalks.

At signalized intersections, pedestrian activated crosswalks should be installed

On wider streets (four travel lanes) the creation of a pedestrian median between lanes is desirable for pedestrian safety and reducing the psychological perception of street width. A side benefit of this is the aesthetic enhancement of the streetscape.

Sidewalks

Sidewalks are important for access to commercial businesses, but will vary in width depending upon local conditions.

Sidewalks, a minimum of three feet in width, should be provided. In areas where traditional “in-line” storefronts are positioned at the property line, such as along Mercer Street, sidewalks should be a minimum of five to eight feet in width to accommodate landscaping, signage, and utilities while maintaining an adequate clear width for pedestrian travel.

Public and private sidewalks should be coordinated to visually emphasize and provide safe access to building entrances, especially where off-street parking separates buildings from the street.

STREETSCAPE AND COMMERCIAL AREA AMENITIES

All Commercial streets should be provided with enhanced parkways and streetscape areas. Streetscapes will vary by commercial area depending on location. The City has begun to detail streetscape designs for lower Mercer Street which can apply to the rest of Mercer Street. However, the following basic guidelines should apply:

A variety of open spaces, plazas, courts and related features are encouraged. Exterior plazas or courts that are well defined, yet allow for clear views in and out, should be considered.

Streetscape designs should be coordinated with boulevard improvements as discussed in the residential design guidelines.

Appropriate pedestrian amenities such as pedestrian scale lighting, seating, and trash receptacles should be provided along the streetscape where streets connect to park and recreation facilities, public facilities, and institutional uses.

Building and site design should consider the provision of adequate weather protection at building entrances and transit stops.

LANDSCAPING

Landscaping and site amenities should be considered an integral part of the overall design of commercial developments. Landscaping should complement the building and other site improvements.

If street trees are desired, they should be provided with at least one every 40 feet. Additionally, street tree planting should compliment and continue the planting scheme designed for the site as a whole.

Off-street parking areas, building foundations, and signage bases should all be adequately landscaped.

Parking lot landscaping should include over story shade trees distributed evenly throughout the lot.

The perimeter of parking lots adjoining a public street and adjacent properties should be screened with continuous, low-height hedges and/or low walls or other appropriate features.

Evergreens should be incorporated into lots to break up the visual expanse of parking lots during all seasons.

Retention ponds, where required, should be designed as landscape features.

Landscaping should be used to conceal sign supports and highlight signage.

BICYCLE PARKING

New development in commercial areas should provide for adequate bicycle parking.

Bicycle parking for commercial uses should be conveniently located along the sidewalk or in front of courtyards or plazas where space permits.

Placement of bike racks should be carefully considered to minimize pedestrian conflicts.

Mixed Character Area

CREATE A CONSISTENT STREETSCAPE ENVIRONMENT

Where “in-line” buildings exist within mixed character areas, new buildings should be encouraged to reflect the same minimal setback. Placing structures up to the street facilitates pedestrian activity, and encourages shared parking solutions and more compact development.

In general, setbacks at new buildings should reflect the setback of neighboring buildings, in order to facilitate a consistent appearance and coordinated parking and access solutions.

OFF-STREET PARKING AND LOADING

A key objective in mixed character areas is to coordinate and consolidate access to off street-parking areas.

Where possible, connections should be made to adjoining parking areas and access to lots should be consolidated through the use of shared curb cuts.

Loading and service areas should not be visible from public areas (i.e., refuse containers, transformers, loading docks, etc.).

Service area access should be provided from an alley, when an alley is present. Parking areas should be screened by buildings or landscaping. Long, unbroken rows of parking should not be allowed. Large fields of parking should be adequately landscaped.

BUILDING SCALE AND MASSING

The scale and massing of buildings in the Mixed Character is highly diverse. Additions should be complementary to the original structure, and new structures should be delineated horizontally and vertically and convey a pedestrian scale.

False fronts, facades, and parapets applied to generic buildings should not

be allowed. Façade treatments should be applied to all faces of a structure and integral to the massing of the building.

Where buildings will be in close proximity to one another, they should relate to one another with regard to height, proportion, and massing.

Building facades interspersed among unrelated developments should seek to establish a compatible scale and rhythm as viewed from the public right-of-way.

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

New commercial buildings should consider incorporating the following features:

New facades should be well composed and articulated with a variety of materials and planes.

Building forms should be articulated by varying roof heights and wall planes. Long unbroken volumes and large, unarticulated wall and roof planes shall not be permitted.

Windowless expanses of wall are not appropriate on street-facing facades.

Roof forms, where visible, should cover the entire width and depth of the building. Superficial roof forms, such as “mansards” affixed to the building facade, will not be allowed.

BUILDING MATERIALS

In general, the selection of materials and colors should provide an enduring quality and enhance the architectural and massing concept of the buildings.

Use the highest quality materials on exterior surfaces, including brick, metal, stucco, wood, stone, and tile.

Consistent and high quality finish materials should be used on all facades that are visible from public streets and/or parking areas.

Glass curtain wall and synthetic cladding and trim materials should be used sparingly, rather than for large exterior areas.

Matte finishes are preferred.

Certain materials have an inherently insubstantial or garish quality. These materials

should not be used in new construction.

LIGHTING UTILITIES

Lighting should be designed as an integral feature of the site.

Lighting should be mounted on architecturally designed posts at a height of 16 feet or less, providing frequently spaced lighting at sidewalks.

Free-standing and wall mounted fixtures should incorporate cutoffs to screen the view of light sources to neighboring residential uses.

Fixtures and posts should be consistent throughout the development.

Lighting should be used to highlight building features.

SIGNAGE

Signage should be in scale with building and site elements, and should complement, rather than compete with, the overall design.

Most forms of signage allowed by the City are appropriate. However, similar to the neighborhood node, it is preferred that signage in these locations be building mounted and, if freestanding, consolidated as much as possible.

Pole-mounted and roof-mounted signs are strongly discouraged.

Building-mounted signage should be integral with the façade design, should be centered within structural bays, and should not obscure architectural details.

Wherever possible, signs should be an integral part of the overall design, not a later addition.

Building sign sizes should reflect viewing distances for both drivers and pedestrians.

Signs should coordinate, rather than compete, with landscaping elements. Sign support structures should be minimal or architecturally integrated with the overall development.

Parking lots may include directional signage. However, signage should be used sparingly and be of a consistent character and design with all other site signage.

Identification signs should not compete with traffic safety and regulatory signs for attention, especially near intersections.

Auto Oriented Area

LOT DEPTH

The auto oriented area primarily consists of large scale planned commercial developments along high traffic arterials, often occupied by “big box” retailers and/or large multi-tenant shopping centers.

To ensure adequate site area for buildings, circulation, and parking functions, a minimum lot depth of five to six hundred feet is typically desirable.

BLOCK LENGTH

In auto oriented developments, the width of development sites are typically one thousand to several thousand feet. Often, this has the effect of creating “super blocks,” cutting off vehicle and pedestrian access from adjoining neighborhoods to the arterial street(s) that the commercial development fronts onto. This approach also tends to create large building expanses that are out of scale with adjoining residential neighborhoods.

Auto oriented areas, while controlled under a unified development plan, should establish block lengths along primary street(s) that are no longer than nine hundred to one thousand feet in length (depending on the locations of adjoining minor residential streets).

Public streets with sidewalks should separate these commercial blocks, thereby providing connections between residential areas and the major commercial street frontage. Where feasible, mid-block pedestrian connections should also be incorporated to connect adjacent residential areas to commercial developments.

SITE DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

In the planning, design, or re-use of larger shopping centers, the following principles should apply:

- For more typical “rear set” centers, the use of out lots along the main commercial frontage is desirable to “hold” the corners of the development and minimize the visual impact of large fields of parking.
- The street system should include a special streetscape design complementary to the overall design of the development utilized on both public rights-of-way and private roadways.
- The main “shopping street” within a shopping center should be designed with a traditional streetscape treatment to create a unique shopping district atmosphere, similar to that of an “in-line” neighborhood node.

OFF-STREET PARKING AND CIRCULATION

Key objectives of the auto oriented area design guidelines are to minimize the length of a walk between parking areas and buildings, and to create a pedestrian-friendly environment.

To facilitate pedestrian circulation, rows of parking should be aligned perpendicular to the building face, and landscaped islands should be established at end rows for safer pedestrian crossings along the main aisle.

Circulation within the site should be provided with an internal roadway system, separated from parking fields by landscaped medians.

Entrances to developments from high volume arterials should include a median to separate incoming from outgoing traffic.

Sidewalks along adjoining public streets should connect to pedestrian walkways within the development that provides safe connections to store entrances.

Loading and service areas should not be visible from public areas (i.e., refuse containers, transformers, loading docks, etc.)

Parking areas should be screened by buildings or landscaping. Long, unbroken rows of parking should not be allowed. Large fields of parking should be adequately landscaped.

BUILDING SCALE AND MASSING

The scale and massing of buildings in the Auto Oriented area is generally large, being more oriented to drivers than pedestrians.

Long front facades on new buildings should demonstrate a rhythm and articulation of “storefront” modules that correspond in scale and proportion with traditional commercial buildings, to lend a pedestrian scale to the development.

TYPICAL SHOPPING CENTER

The facades of larger buildings should vary in vertical plane at least every two hundred feet to create a “storefront” rhythm on larger buildings. The offset in the plane should be at least two feet in depth.

IMPROVED SHOPPING CENTER

False fronts, facades, and parapets applied to generic buildings are not allowed. Facade treatments should be applied to all faces of a structure and integral to the massing of the building.

Where buildings will be in close proximity to one another, they should relate to one another with regard to height, proportion, and massing.

Building facades interspersed among unrelated developments should seek to establish a compatible scale and rhythm as viewed from the public right-of-way.

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

New commercial buildings should consider incorporating the following features:

New facades should be well composed, and contain a variety of material and planes. In developments with multiple structures, similar forms and materials should be used to tie the development together.

Facades should not appear false, tacked-on, or garish in design.

Building forms should be articulated by varying roof heights and wall planes. Long, unbroken volumes and large, unarticulated wall and roof planes shall not be permitted.

Windowless expanses of wall are not

appropriate on street-facing facades.

Building entrances should be highlighted with tower elements or other features that break up the building's mass and aid in orientation.

Self storage uses are heavily discouraged as they should not be incorporated in commercial and retail facades.

BUILDING MATERIALS

In general, the selection of materials and colors should provide an enduring quality and enhance the architectural and massing concept of the building.

Use the highest quality materials on exterior surfaces including brick, metal, stucco, stone, and tile.

Consistent and high quality finish materials should be used on all facades that are visible from public streets and/or parking areas.

Glass curtain wall and synthetic cladding and trim materials should be used sparingly, rather than for larger exterior areas.

Matte finishes are preferred.

Certain materials have an inherently insubstantial or garish quality. These materials should not be used in new construction.

LIGHTING AND UTILITIES

Lighting should be designed as an integral feature of the site.

Lighting should be mounted on architecturally designed posts at a height of 16 feet or less, providing frequently spaced lighting at sidewalks.

Free-standing and wall mounted fixtures should incorporate cutoffs to screen the view of light sources to neighboring residential uses.

Fixtures and posts should be consistent throughout the development.

Lighting should be used to highlight building features.

Where practical, utility lines along arterial rights-of-way should be located underground.

Ground-mounted utility boxes should be concealed with landscaping or signage.

Signage should be in scale with building and site elements and should complement, rather than compete with, the overall design.

Wherever possible, signs should be located low to the ground, in the driver's line of vision. Signs and sign locations should be an integral part of the overall design, not a later addition.

Pole-mounted and roof-mounted signs are strongly discouraged.

Building-mounted signage should be integral with the façade design, centered within structural bays, and not obscure architectural details.

Building sign sizes should reflect viewing distances for both drivers and pedestrians.

Signs should coordinate, rather than compete, with landscaping elements.

Sign support structures should be minimal or architecturally integrated with the overall development.

Parking lots may include directional signage. However, signage should be used sparingly and be of a consistent character and design with all other site signage.

Identification signs should not compete with traffic safety and regulatory signs for attention, especially near intersections.

Residential Uses

CHARACTER OF PRINCETON'S RESIDENTIAL AREAS

Traditional Community Area

Within the Traditional Community Area, a continuous grid pattern of streets is common, with a mix of single family and multiple family housing and ready access to commercial corridors.

Contemporary Community Area

Within the Contemporary Community Area, street patterns are more curvilinear and circuitous, with multiple family areas developed as discrete developments and limited access to arterials and commercial areas.

RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

Crosswalks

The ability for residents to safely cross at intersections with collector and arterial streets is important.

All neighborhood street intersections with arterial and collector streets should utilize marked crosswalks.

At signalized intersections, pedestrian activated crosswalks should be installed.

On wider streets (four or more travel lanes) the creation of a pedestrian median between lanes is desirable for pedestrian safety and for reducing the psychological perception of street width.

Sidewalks

Sidewalks are largely present, but vary in width throughout the area.

A minimum of three foot wide sidewalks should be provided.

Multipurpose paths should be a minimum of six to eight feet in width.

Streetscape

All residential neighborhood streets should be provided with planted parkways.

A minimum parkway depth of three feet is desirable, especially where on-street parking is allowed.

Parkways should be sodded. Taller decorative plantings are discouraged for visibility and safety reasons. Parkway trees should not obstruct view of drivers coming or going adjoining road. Parkway trees should be provided, at least one every 40 feet.

Appropriate pedestrian amenities should be provided where streets connect to park and recreation facilities, public facilities, and institutional uses. Pedestrian scale lighting, seating, and other conveniences such as trash receptacles would be appropriate.

Boulevards

Boulevards will provide vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian continuity between the existing and developed portions of Princeton, providing ready access to commercial and civic areas from residential neighborhoods. In the existing developed portions of the community, the design of boulevards should consider the following:

- Boulevard medians should be appropriately landscaped.
- Boulevard design may vary depending on right-of-way conditions. In some locations, due to right-of-way width constraints, special parkway, lighting, and signage enhancements may be more practical.

RESIDENTIAL STREETS AND ALLEYS TRADITIONAL COMMUNITY AREA

Streets

The basic rectangular, uninterrupted grid system within the traditional community area should be maintained.

In general, the length of new blocks should be consistent with those surrounding blocks.

The use of cul-de-sacs is strongly discouraged, except in limited locations where local streets connect directly to busy arterials.

Street design should consider access to public transit.

Alleys

Alleys should be at least 16 feet.

To maintain visibility for social oversight, fences adjacent to alleys should be no higher than six feet.

Parking garages should be set back at least three feet from the edge of an alley.

Refuse should be stored in buildings or enclosures on concrete pads out of the alley right-of-way.

RESIDENTIAL STREETS AND ALLEYS CONTEMPORARY COMMUNITY AREA

Streets

New streets should be designed to connect to adjoining street systems in adjacent neighborhoods, and should reflect a grid pattern wherever feasible.

Street design should consider access to public transit.

Alleys

Alleys are not encouraged in the Contemporary Community Area, but should they be used, the alley standards for Traditional Community Areas should be followed.

SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DESIGN UNIVERSAL GUIDELINES

Site Planning

Princeton's neighborhoods vary widely with respect to single family residential lot sizes, subdivision patterns, and building scales. New development or infill development should follow these basic guidelines:

- Primary dwelling entrances should be clearly defined and face the street. The use of porches, stoops, and other entryway features is encouraged.
- A consistent front yard should be provided, maintaining the setback established by adjoining existing buildings.
- The width of the "building face" of an infill project should not exceed the width of a typical residential structure on adjacent lots.
- New development should have finished heights within the range typically seen in adjacent neighborhood areas.
- Use building roof forms similar to those present in the neighborhood.
- Especially in neighborhood areas consisting of one story structures, the perceived scale of new, taller infill buildings should be

mitigated through the use of upper story setbacks and multiple façade planes.

- Sidewalks in poor condition should be reconstructed or replaced to maintain a continuous sidewalk system for the neighborhood.

Architectural Design

Infill and new development should comply with the following guidelines in all new residential areas:

New facades should be well composed and articulated with a variety of materials and planes.

Larger wall and roof plans should include three-dimensional design features such as chimneys, balconies, bay windows, or dormers.

All facades of a home, including side and rear elevations, should have the same vocabulary of forms, details, and materials.

Additions should be treated as subordinate to main structure.

Structures should meet the ground with a strong base, preferably with the main floor several feet above grade meeting ADA standards.

Front doors should be prominent, preferably through the use of a front porch or portico, as appropriate.

Roof forms should be consistent on all parts of the house and garage (whether attached or detached).

Stairways, fences, trash enclosures, and other accessory elements should be designed as integral parts of the home's architecture.

TRADITIONAL COMMUNITY AREA

Historic Styles

Several historic styles of architecture are present in Princeton. The concept of maintaining architectural "authenticity" in maintenance of the existing housing stock is important. New homes should maintain a consistent vocabulary of materials and detailing throughout the structure, drawing from an authentic style found elsewhere in the Traditional Community Area.

Guidelines written specifically for

Princeton's historic areas or established districts should be adhered to.

Building Materials

In general, the selection of materials and colors should provide an enduring quality and enhance the architectural and massing concept of the building.

"Traditional" building materials are encouraged to be used in new construction, including wood, stone, and brick. These materials should be the primary materials used in residential design.

Synthetic cladding and trim materials should be used sparingly for accent elements, rather than for large exterior areas.

All facades should employ the same materials, including window and door types that are appropriate to the vintage character and style of the home.

On corner lots, architectural materials should be consistent on both exposed elevations.

Parking Preferences

New infill homes should reflect this condition (see below).

Parking in the front yard is inappropriate.

Ideally, garages should be substantially set back from the front building line. In new construction, garages should be set back at least five feet from the front building lines.

Shared driveways are encouraged to reduce the amount of paving and the number of curb cuts.

Entrances and window, not garages, should be the dominant elements of front facades.

The width of an attached or detached garage should be no more than 60% of the lot width.

CONTEMPORARY COMMUNITY AREA

Building Materials

In general, the selection of materials and colors should provide an enduring quality and enhance the architectural and massing concept of the building.

A range of materials may be appropriate in this community area, including vinyl, aluminum, or concrete. Other materials may have an insubstantial or garish quality, and these materials should not be used in new construction (i.e., metal or sheet materials, composition roll roofing, etc).

All facades should employ the same materials, including window and door types that are appropriate to the vintage character and style of the home.

On corner lots, architectural materials should be consistent on both exposed elevations.

Multiple Family Residential Design Universal Guidelines

SITE PLANNING—SINGLE PURPOSE STRUCTURES

Single purpose multiple family residential structures should conform to the following guidelines:

Ground floor units should have direct access from streets or common outdoor spaces.

Unit entrances and windows should be oriented to streets and common outdoor areas to foster oversight and security.

Services for multiple family developments should not be visible from public areas (i.e., refuse containers, transformers, etc.).

Parking areas should be screened by buildings or landscaping. Long, unbroken rows of parking or detached garages should not be allowed. Parking should be broken down throughout a large site into more discrete paved areas.

SITE PLANNING—MIXED USE STRUCTURES

Mixed-use structures containing multiple family units could occur within or near Mercer Street or along the community's existing.

Mixed-use residential buildings should be oriented to take advantage of foot traffic and visibility from the street as well as have ADA features.

Mixed-use residential buildings should

provide residential unit entrances along residential streets where feasible.

Principles for storefront design can be found within the commercial section of these Guidelines.

Off-street parking need not be within the building, but should be provided within at least 300 feet from the building.

Parking may be placed to the side or rear of a building, but should never occur between the front of the building and the property line.

Building Scale and Massing

The overall massing and scale of new multiple family developments should be consistent with surrounding land uses.

Single buildings and smaller multiple family complexes should maintain a height consistent with adjoining land uses.

In larger developments, buildings internal to the project site may reflect a greater building height, provided the buildings that adjoin neighboring areas are similar in scale and height.

Architectural Design

The design of new multiple family residential buildings should consider the following:

Building forms should be articulated by varying roof heights and wall planes. Long, unbroken volumes and large, unarticulated wall and roof planes shall not be permitted.

Roof forms should be integral to the massing of buildings and cover the entire width and depth of the buildings. Superficial roof forms, such as “mansards” affixed to the building façade, will not be allowed.

False fronts, facades, and parapets applied to generic buildings are not allowed. Façade treatments should be applied to all faces of a structure and integral to the massing of the building.

Flat roofs are not allowed, except where parapet wall facades are a contextual element for mixed use buildings in Traditional Community Areas.

Lighting

Lighting should be designed as an integral feature to the building and/or site and follow the following guidelines:

Lighting should be mounted on architecturally designed posts at a height of 16 feet or less.

Free-standing and wall-mounted fixtures should incorporate cutoffs to screen the view of light sources from neighboring residential uses.

Fixtures and posts should be consistent throughout the project.

RURAL

Both the State of West Virginia and the United States Federal Government defines rural in a number of ways. Metrics can vary depending on context with population, GDP per region, and access to standard modern “conveniences” acting as common gauges. The West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy uses the (U.S. Census Bureau’s) definition that a rural area is defined as an area with 50,000 population outside of a metro (O’Leary, 2018). Technically, there are no metros in West Virginia with all cities currently maintaining populations under the 50,000 threshold, thus all areas within West Virginia can be characterized as rural simply based on population alone. When using other factors such as economic growth and income per capita, a number of communities within the state can be considered metro clusters. The West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy identified these as Beckley, Charleston, Huntington, Morgantown, Parkersburg, Weirton, and Wheeling in their 2018 State of Rural West Virginia Report (O’Leary, 2018).

In that same report, it was concluded that these metro clusters gain population at a faster rate and lose population at a slower rate than their more rural counterparts. This was illustrated by an average increase of 4.78% in population in these areas between 2000 and 2010, and an average 1.78% decrease in population in other rural areas of the state in that same time

Figure 2C: Land Use - Residential Zoning Districts

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| R-1 Residential | Community Development Objectives: To identify those areas in the City where predominately low-density residential development has taken place and will be encouraged. | | |
| Principal Uses <ul style="list-style-type: none">Single-family detached dwellings | Accessory Uses <p>Private garages, swimming pools, other accessory uses and structures customarily appurtenant to a principal permitted use, including home gardening, but not the raising of livestock or poultry, or any similar objectionable activity</p> | Special Uses <p>Churches, Sunday schools, and other places of wor-ship, planned residential developments, public parks, playgrounds, firehouses and libraries, bed and breakfast inns, and home occupations</p> | |
| R-2 Residential | Community Development Objectives: 1. To identify those areas which have been developed with one and two-family structures. 2. To protect the areas from the intrusion of incompatible land uses. | | |
| Principal Uses <ul style="list-style-type: none">Single-Family detached dwellingsTwo-family dwellings | Accessory Uses <p>Home occupations and all permitted R-1 Accessory Uses</p> | Special Uses <p>All permitted R-1 Special Uses, public schools, community buildings, social organizations, and multi-family dwellings</p> | |
| R-3 Residential | Community Development Objectives: To identify areas in the community for higher density development, as well as for mobile homes and mobile home parks. | | |
| Principal Uses <ul style="list-style-type: none">Single-family detached dwellingsTwo-family dwellingsMobile homes and mobile home parks, multi-family dwellings | Accessory Uses <p>All permitted R-2 Accessory Uses</p> | Special Uses <p>All permitted R-2 Special Uses</p> | |

C-1 Commercial

Community Development Objectives: To identify an area for concentrated retail commercial activity to serve the needs of the residents of the City.

Principal Uses

- **Apparel Services:** Dress makers, dry cleaning and clothes pressing establishments (using nonflammable cleaning agents), laundries (coin operated or commercial) shoe repair shops, tailors
- **Appliance sales and repairs**
- **Automotive:** Car washing establishments, new and used car dealers and showrooms without an auto repair garage
- **Banks and other financial institutions**
- **Barber shops and beauty parlors**
- **Commercial/residential mixed use buildings**
- **Food Service:** Eating and drinking places, soda fountains
- **Hotels and motels**
- **Industrial (enclosed):** Manufacturing of apparel, jewelry, toys, novelties, photo processing (printing and laboratories)
- **Locksmiths**
- **Offices (business and professional)**
- **Parking lots and parking garages**
- **Schools:** Professional, business, technical, photography, art, music, and dance
- **Storage units**
- **Stores:** Books and stationery, cigars, department and specialty, drug, dry goods and variety, florists, food, furniture, hardware (enclosed), paint and wallpaper, sporting and athletic goods, and apparel stores
- **Supplies and services:** Massage parlors, photographic equipment, radio and television sales and repair, telephone exchange and installations

Accessory Uses

Accessory uses and building customarily appurtenant to a principal permitted use, such as incidental storage, off-street parking and loading facilities, signs

Special Uses

Multi-family dwellings, rooming houses, club or lodge halls, advertising signs, automobile repair garages, automobile service stations, gasoline stations, churches or places of assembly, indoor amusement enterprises, including theaters, billiards or pool parlors, bowling alleys, or other similar places of assembly, and tattoo parlors

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| C-R Commercial-Residential | Community Development Objectives: 1. To identify those areas of the City where concentrated residential use of property exists in or near concentrated commercial use of land. 2. To protect existing residential property from the intrusion of incompatible land uses in close proximity to existing residential development. | |
| Principal Uses <hr/> Any permitted O-I Principal Uses | Accessory Uses <hr/> All permitted O-I Accessory Uses | Special Uses <hr/> Any C-2 Permitted Principal, Accessory or Special Uses |
| O-I Office and Institutional | Community Development Objectives: To identify areas within the City where offices, institutions, and higher density residential construction will be encouraged. | |
| Principal Uses <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single-family detached dwellings • Two-family dwellings • Multi-family dwellings • Professional, business, and government offices • Banks and investment houses • Hospitals, nursing homes, medical clinics • Funeral homes • Commercial, private, public, or professional schools • Veterinarian clinics or animal hospitals • Recreational uses, shops, restaurants | | Accessory Uses <hr/> Accessory Uses incidental to the Principal Uses Permitted Special Uses <hr/> Any permitted C-2 Principal, Accessory, or Special Uses |

Figure 2E: Land Use - Industrial Zoning District

| I-1 Industrial | Community Development Objectives: 1. To identify those areas in the City best suited for industrial development by virtue of location, topography, supporting facilities and relationship to other land uses. |
|---|--|
| Principal Uses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All permitted R-3 and C-2 Uses • Includes general industrial uses, the manufacturing, assembly, packing, storage or treating of merchandise • Mobile offices • Cell phone towers¹ | Accessory Uses <p>Accessory uses and buildings customarily appurtenant to a principal permitted use, such as incidental storage, off-street parking and loading facilities, signs, and all permitted C-1 Accessory Used</p> |
| Specially Prohibited Uses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abattoirs or slaughterhouses • Dead animal, offal reduction • Junkyards • Fertilizer manufacture • Massage parlors and adult book stores | Special Uses <p>Any permitted C-1 Special Use, gasoline stations, automobile repair garages and service stations, mobile offices, liquor stores, new and used car dealers and showrooms, with auto repair garages</p> |

¹ Cell phone towers, as limited by Article 1389, are expressly permitted provided that all other requirements of this Zoning Code and any other applicable laws are met.

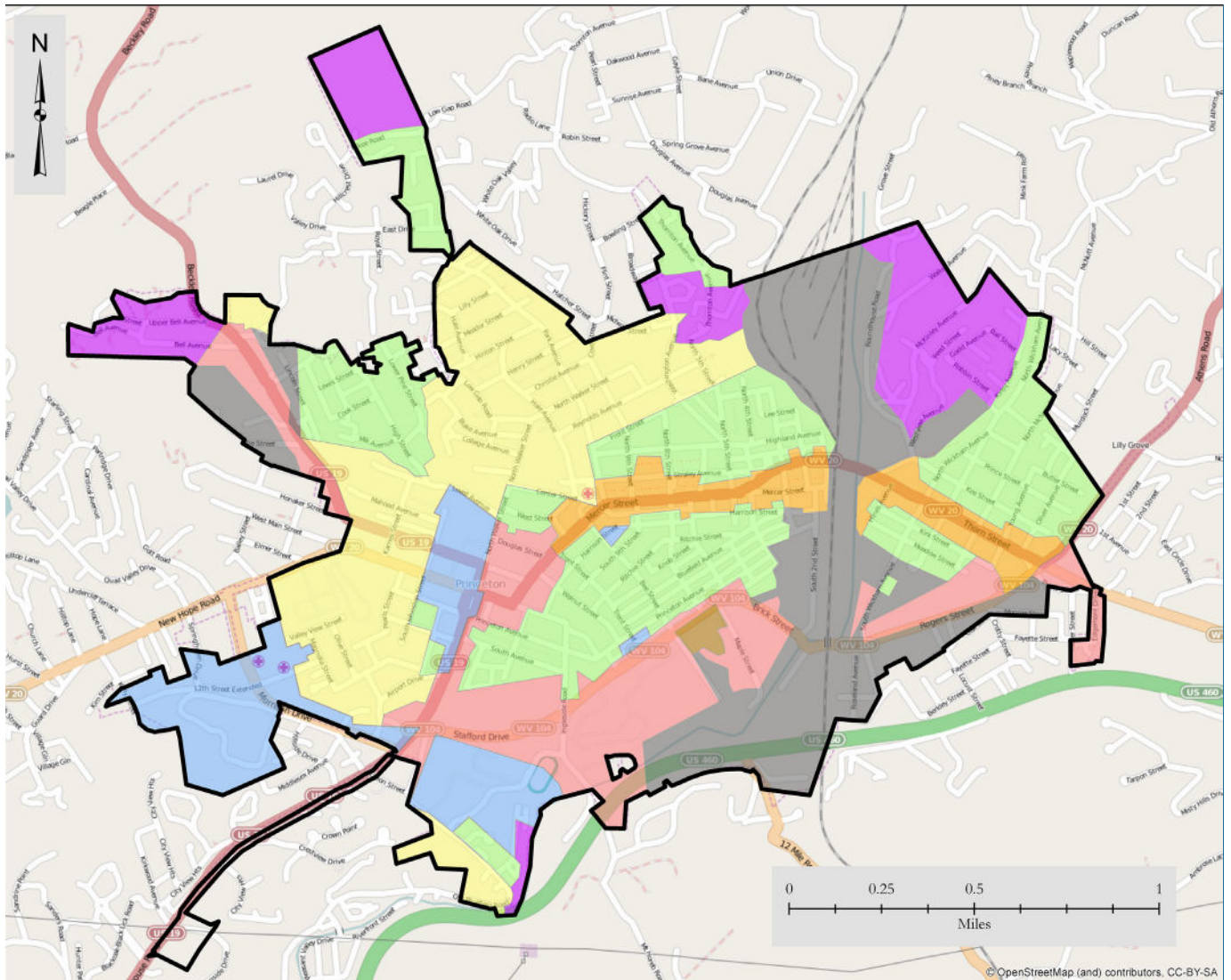
O’Leary, 2018). The 2010-2020 data is not yet available to be analyzed to this degree, however preliminary reports indicate an approximate 3.2% population decline throughout the state. It can be assumed based on the 2000 to 2010 findings that this decline was more concentrated outside of the previously identified metro clusters.

How does Princeton stack up to the trend? In 2000, Princeton’s population was 6,347. From 2000 to 2010, this increased by 1.3% to 6,432 and then decreased by 10.75% to 5,740 in 2020. Though the City’s population did increase between 2000 and 2010, the rate of increase was nominal when compared to the average increase of the identified metro

clusters. Additionally, the 10.75% decrease is substantially larger than the state’s projected average decrease between 2011 and 2020.

With nearly eleven percent of the population removed in the last ten years, the City may need to take cautionary measures to prevent this trend from continuing over the next decade. One solution is to look at characteristics of the metro clusters and try to grow using their strengths. Every identified metro cluster has jurisdiction and proximity over an interstate highway system. More will be discussed about Princeton’s infrastructure in that section, however Princeton has maintained proximity to both Interstate 77 and Highway 460 since their creation and has yet to

Figure 2F: Land Use - Princeton Zoning Map



Zoning Key

| | | | | |
|--------------|------------------------|----------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Industrial | Residential 1 | Residential 2 | Residential 3 | Commercial 1 |
| Commercial 2 | Commercial Residential | Office Institutional | | |

garner incorporation status for these sections of roadways and the businesses along them. This is a loss in opportunity cost that municipalities within the metro clusters are growing off of. Additionally, every city, other than Charleston, within the identified metro clusters are located on West Virginia's border (O'Leary, 2018). Princeton is not established on a border but may still be able to benefit from the border traffic through increased jurisdiction and roadway expansion. Even if an aggressive approach is taken over the next ten years, Princeton will still be a rural

community and all of the state will likely share the same classification; however, the actions taken over the next ten years will determine whether the City can grow at the pace of metro clusters or follow suit with the majority of the state.

Additionally, this section calls for the identification of land that is not intended for urban growth in order to establish goals, plans, and programs. As demonstrated in Princeton's previous comprehensive plans, these requirements will be illustrated broadly in other sections since all land under

Princeton’s jurisdiction is classified as rural.

LAND USE

As referred to in the Public Services Section, zoning governs the use of land within the City of Princeton’s jurisdiction. The several zoning districts of the City include R-1 Residential, R-2 Residential, R-3 Residential, C-1 Commercial, C-2 Commercial, C-R Commercial-Residential, O-I Office & Institutional, and Industrial; these zones are described in detail in the zoning map.

Each of these zones are present within the municipality in varying size and design. The City

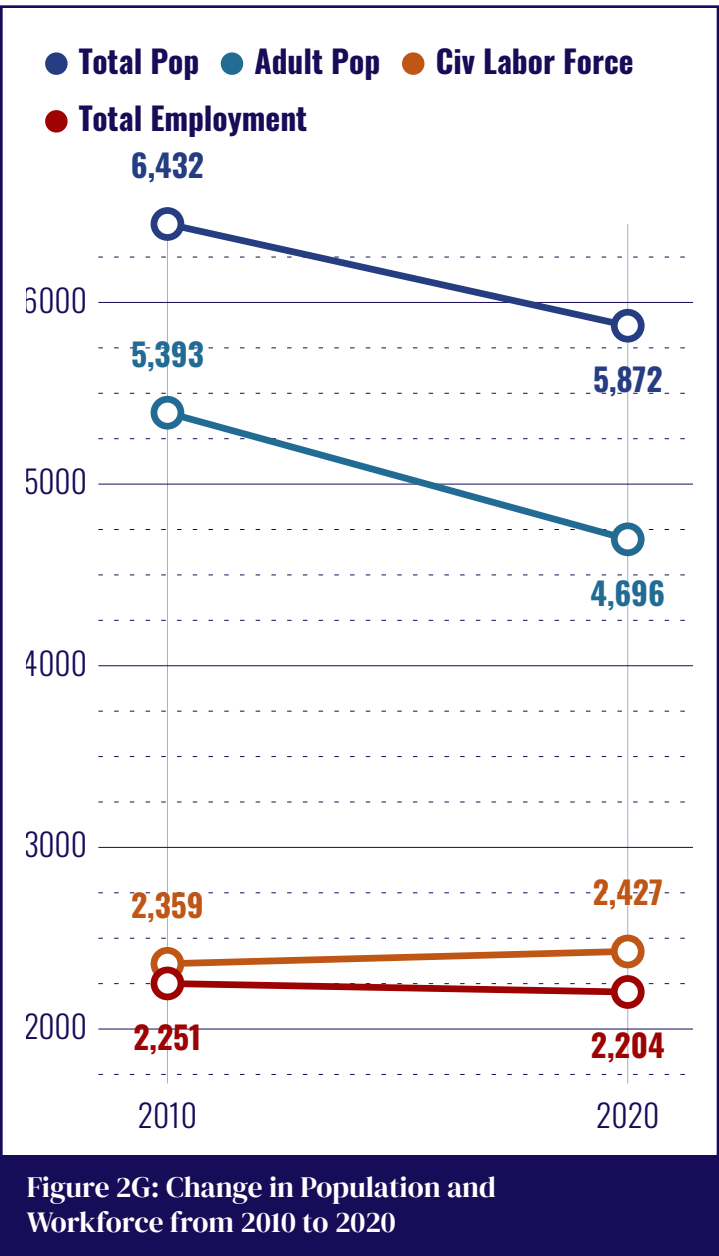
Zoning Official upholds these established zones through a permit and inspection process outlined in municipal code. Due to the nature of the Zoning Official’s administrative responsibilities, they do not have the power to change these zones. Rather, that falls within the purview of Princeton City Council through passed ordinances.

One area that enables change to take place to the municipal zoning code is through approved changes with the City’s current comprehensive plan recommended by the Princeton Planning Commission. At the publishing of this plan, the Princeton Planning Commission does not recommend any changes to the municipal zoning code for proposed land use, instead it supports the use of the already established zones over the next decade.

Population Density and Building Intensity Standards

Though the City’s population decreased at a rate of 10.75% between 2010 and 2022 to 5,740, this decrease has not substantially impacted the enforcement of land use in one particular zone. In the face of this population decline, the City has experienced fiscal growth in both business & occupancy tax and one percent sales tax collection. This has offset any shrinkage the municipality may have had to translate into services. The impact this had on land use is that more activity can be seen in both commercial and institutional districts. If this trend continues to 2034, the next comprehensive plan may look at adjusting commercial and residential zones accordingly. This is a trend that may be looked at by the City Manager and/or the Princeton Planning Commission in the interim with any findings recommended to the Princeton City Council.

The City of Princeton has adopted the following State Building Codes, The BOCA National Building Code, Thirteenth Edition, 1995; The BOCA International Plumbing



Code, First Edition, 1995; The BOCA International Mechanical Code, First Edition, 1996; The BOCA National Property Maintenance Code, Fifth Edition, 1996; The BOCA National Energy Conservation Code, Seventh Edition, 1993; The CABO One and Two Family Dwelling Code, 1995 Edition; and The NFPA 70 National Electrical Code, 1996 Edition. These codes protect homeowners from dangers associated with structural integrity and building proximity. As the State of West Virginia adopts new editions of the building code, the City of Princeton will consider these new editions accordingly through ordinances passed by the Council for better land use.

Growth and/or Decline Management

As population either grows or declines, the Princeton City Council and the Princeton Planning Commission will take a hands-on approach to adjusting land uses accordingly. There may be neighborhoods, streets, or other areas of interest that need to be identified for a change based on the density of peoples within that given area. Since this plan does not recommend current changes in zoning (i.e., Land Use), none of these areas are presently identified; however, this does not limit the identification of areas as an amendment to this plan after publishing.

PROJECTED POPULATION GROWTH OR DECLINE

West Virginia University predicts that West Virginia will experience population decline within the next decade similar to the 2010-2020 decline. Between 2010 and 2020, the state lost 0.6% in population or approximately 59,278 people. If this translates into similar decline in Princeton's population over the same period, the 5,740 would decline by another 10.75% resulting in a projected population of 5,122.

Constraints to Development, Including Identifying Flood-Prone and Subsidence Areas

The biggest and most blatant constraint for development is a projected population decline. While this may be mitigated in the short term with an influx of commercial activity within the incorporated limits, a growing population is essential for the continuance of city services to these commercial areas, for a healthy population is how a city justifies services such as fire, police, and administrative assistance. This means city officials may need to rely heavily on actions that could buck the projected state trend such as investing in economic development projects, marketing, and general incentives to build and grow the City.

Another constraint is the City's positioning within the floodplain. Municipal code requires the City to identify flood prone areas and communicate this information to residents and business owners that may be impacted; the City retains a Flood Plain Manager to do exactly this. However, the floodplain is not easily changed and can be caused by variables outside of the City's control. Rather than trying to shrink the floodplain, efforts are made to prevent it from growing and to educate those within it. The Code Enforcement Department requires that a flood plain permit be issued to those that choose to build within these areas. This acts as a safeguard against construction of structures that would either expand the floodplain or be subject to extensive damage as a result of a flooding event.

TRANSPORTATION

This section will highlight how Princeton is accessible by varying modes of transportation. It will describe whether particular modes are available in town; and, if they are, how city leadership will further develop this mode to further meet the needs of the residents and community members of Princeton.

1. Vehicular, Transit, Air, Port, Railroad, and River

- (a) **Vehicular:** This mode of transportation is the most prevalent among residents and visitors. Most roads in the City are maintained by the State of West Virginia and are on a repair schedule; however, particular cases can be handled between the State and City as needed. Others, non-State streets, are maintained by the City and are paved as needed. Both the State and the City streets are patrolled by the City's police department to ensure the safety and security of all of those on these roadways. Both the monitoring and the repairing of these roadways will continue over the next decade. The only changes that may occur could be over a potential change in jurisdiction which would impact the service area.
- (b) **Transit:** Public transportation in the City of Princeton is offered by the Bluefield Area Transit (BAT). They can effectively pick up any resident in the City because they maintain 17 stops in Princeton and deviate from each, with advanced notice, up to $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile in any direction. These stops include Springhaven Drive, Princeton Pine Plaza, Thorn Street, WVU Medicine Hospital, Kroger, The Princeton Towers, Stafford Drive, Mercer Street, Locust Street, North Walker Street, West Virginia DHHR, Mercer County Courthouse, Lovell Avenue, Athens Crossroads, West Main Street, Beckley Road, and High Street. The hope over the next decade is that BAT adds more stops, so they can deviate less to serve residents in close proximity.
- (c) **Air:** There is no Air travel in Princeton with the closest airport being Mercer County Airport. There are no plans for the development of air travel in Princeton at this time.
- (d) **Port:** There is no port travel in Princeton, for Princeton has no commercially

traversable body of water in its jurisdiction.

- (e) **Railroad:** Norfolk Southern maintains railway access in Princeton, however, it is not actively traveled by passengers. There are also no plans for this to change in the next decade; more to be provided in Intermodal Transportation.
- (f) **River:** Brush Creek runs through Princeton. While the City does not actively have plans to use this waterway for transportation. Private investment may make this a commercial attraction to the area over the next decade.

2. Movement of Traffic and Parking

As traffic needs fluctuate in the City, city leadership will look at adding more infrastructure to the roadways such as stop lights, speed bumps, and mile per hour adjustments to accommodate the increased or decreased demand. When needed, the City will also work with the State to service roadways that are not within their jurisdiction. Parking is an accommodation that is greatly needed in certain areas of the Princeton Business Loop, especially along Mercer Street. With this being a commercial issue, the City will work hand in hand with the Princeton Economic Development Authority to find creative solutions. Some solutions could be the conversion of vacant buildings into parking, the construction of a parking garage, or the implementation of curbside parking restrictions.

3. Pedestrian and Bicycle Systems

With the growth of the Princeton Business Loop, there has been an increase of pedestrian traffic in these areas. Consumers are often shopping at multiple venues at several spots along these streets, which require crossings. State regulations require very specific criteria for crosswalks; however, when situations meet these criteria, the City will work with

the State to place crosswalks in needed areas. Such collaboration has seen success with the placement of a crosswalk next to the Princeton Library on Mercer Street. Over the next ten years, efforts will be taken to attempt to place crosswalks on either side of the Mercer County Courthouse, Stafford Drive, Rogers Street, and an additional one on Mercer Street as appropriate and needed. There are currently no bicycling systems in the City other than the facilities in the City parks; however, this could be added as there is an identifiable need.

4. Intermodal Transportation

As explained in the rail section, Norfolk Southern maintains an active railway in Princeton. This is solely used as a commercial track, and Princeton is no longer a refueling stop for the railway. So, all intermodal cargo travels through the City simply due to the nature of the City being a bypass to the next stop; thus, there are no active plans by the City to expand intermodal transportation.



Chapter 3

Princeton's Priorities

Preferred Development Areas

Princeton currently has more than 1,400 actively registered businesses within its city limits. It is not financially sound for city leadership to equally distribute economic resources in an equitable manner, because these 1,400 plus businesses are not equally placed throughout the City; rather, they are clustered in central commercial areas. Investing in these places would be an effective strategic method leadership could use to encourage development, promote a well-designed community, and prevent sprawl.

One of these areas can be characterized as “Princeton’s Business Loop.” This label highlights a combination of commercial thoroughfares that make a circle in Princeton. This includes Mercer Street, Thorn Street, Rogers Street, Brick Street, Stafford Drive, S. Walker Street, and East Main Street back to Mercer Street. Hundreds of businesses, many community facilities, and between 12,000 to 20,000 cars per day can be found within this area.

Another is the 800 Bee Street block. Adjacent to the business loop, this is where the Princeton Municipal Complex can be found and where there are plans to build a Community Center, Emergency Response area, and other governmental facilities to have all of city

administration under one roof. This would not only be a boon (a great benefit) for City operations but also a convenient, centrally-located facility for Princeton residents to utilize when interacting with their local government. Once complete, this will be a place where hundreds of people a day will be providing critical services for Princeton residents and community members.

Morrison Drive is another street adjacent to the business loop that is prime for development. It features WVU Medicine, a state of the art 267 bed medical facility, as well as Princeton’s current Rec Center, Police/Fire Departments, and Public Works facilities. Since improved capacity will soon be offered by moving the Municipal Complex from Morrison Drive to Bee Street at the 800 block, this could create up to 11 acres of developable land, meaning future investment may incorporate community needs

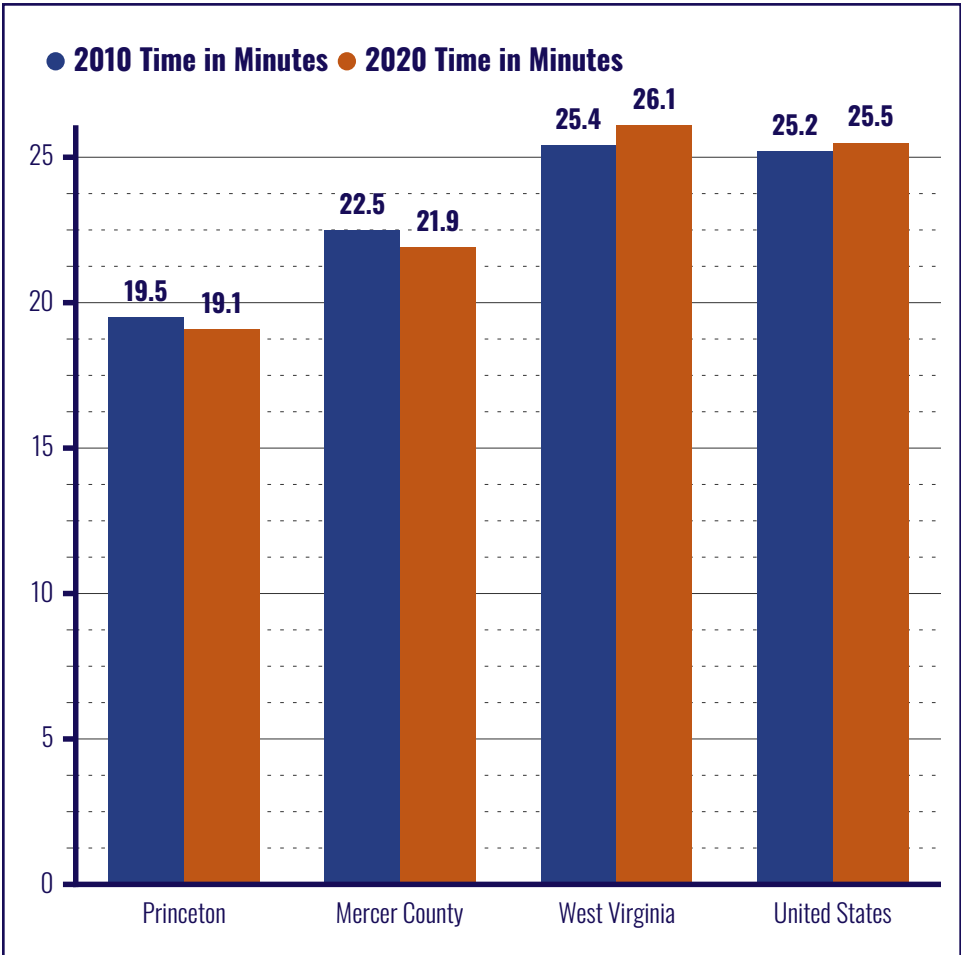


Figure 3B: Commuting Time Comparison between 2010 and 2020

in terms of medical capacity, patient services, or professional housing. Any of these could be of great benefit to the City and the region.

Additionally, the High Street Area, which includes High Street, its immediate connecting streets, Beckley Road, and Bell Avenue, has great potential for development within the next decade. This can be seen in the sporadic specialty businesses that have already popped up within this area and the plans for a new community center in the neighborhood, sponsored by the A-Palm Project. The City would like to take necessary steps to tighten the development in this area to reflect other commercial hubs in other parts of the City. Small steps already being done have included requests for sidewalk and LED light installation with the State and Appalachian Electric Power respectively.

Lastly, the City sees great potential in Interstate 77's Exit 9. It is already an economic driver for the area with its restaurants, hotels, and specialty retail; however, it is poised to grow further in these regards. If the City were to expand jurisdictionally, it would actively guide this growth in a way that would most benefit the greater community and those that choose to participate in commerce in this area.

The question is then: how does the City strategically invest in these areas? The answer is through the Princeton Economic Development Authority (PEDA). This is another component unit of the City of Princeton, which, as a separate legal entity, can make investments, fund raise, and act as an economic vehicle for the use of public funds. This could be represented in the acquisition of land for development, the partial funding/investment of business projects to provide initial capital for further private investment, or the maintaining of a network of businesses and like organizations for everyone in the network to work together for common training initiatives.

Urban Renewal

The City intends to address dilapidated areas within its jurisdiction, more specifically in the described preferred development areas, by relying on interdepartmental coordination of its staff. Urban renewal is a team sport that requires resources and knowledge over a broad scope to be able to effectively bring non-contributing land back to a point where it is viable for the private market.

This starts with Code Enforcement. The resources Princeton deploys in its Code Enforcement Department allows for continual review of at-risk buildings through an enforcement of the national building code. If a structure is in violation of these established standards, the Code Enforcement Department will take necessary steps to mediate the issue. Some possible actions could be issuing a violation to the property owner, condemning the structure until repair, and/or placing the structure on the City's demo list. The latter is only implemented after a reasonable assessment has taken place providing that the structure can not reasonably be brought back to a productive state.

Code Enforcement should keep a fluid list of all blighted and vacant structures in the City. Coordination comes into place by sharing this list and all of its updates with the Economic Development Department of the City. Economic Development Staff is to evaluate past uses of these buildings and determine what public resources can be leveraged to get tax producing or productive entities to become interested. This could include utilizing tax credits, government subsidized loans, and/or business development training of property owners.

It is understood that not all property owners have the on-hand resources to be able to make necessary property renovations. These will be treated on a case by case basis by both the Princeton Economic Development and Code Enforcement Departments depending on the

need of the property owner and the structure.

In the instances where slum or blighted properties within the City would be sent to the tax sale, the City will evaluate the economic value of each property through its Land Reuse Agency and determine at that time if it is in the best interest of the community to purchase the property either at the sale or through the right of first refusal. Once acquired the Land Reuse Agency would similarly act as a land owner and work with the Princeton Economic Development Department and the Code Enforcement Department to use municipal resources to repurpose the parcel for sale or lease to a productive tenant.

Economic Development

Completed in collaboration with WVU Extension Service.

INTRODUCTION

Princeton is the second-largest city in Mercer County. The area was originally settled in the 1820s with the County named for revolutionary war general Hugh Mercer; the City was named for the battle in New Jersey where the general was killed. It has served as the County Seat since its founding, except for a brief period immediately following the Civil War when the county government was moved to Athens.

Princeton grew in the last half of the 19th century as a railroad town. It was formally incorporated in 1909 to become the fifth municipality in Mercer County after Bramwell (1888), Bluefield (1889), Athens (1906), and Oakvale (1907). (Matoaka incorporated in 1910 but dissolved in 2018.).

Princeton is a Class III city in the south-central part of the County at close to half a mile in altitude (listed as 2,438 feet in elevation). The

City is in the Upper New (River) watershed with Brush Creek and several of its tributaries (forks) flowing in and through the City. Princeton is a bit over 3 square miles in size (3.01 square miles of land area; 3.05 square total area). It is the second-most populated municipality in the Bluefield Micropolitan Area (radius area of thousands of people, which consists of Mercer County, WV, and Tazewell County, VA). Much of the eastern part of the city is a Federal Opportunity Zone.

Princeton has connections to multiple transportation networks. It is near the southern terminus of the West Virginia Turnpike (Interstate 77), where it meets U.S. Route 460 (Appalachian Highway Corridor Q). There are several other prominent roadways as well. U.S. Route 19 (a multi-state north-south route that goes from Lake Erie to the Gulf of Mexico) runs through the City and provides access to the county courthouse. There are two West Virginia primary routes in Princeton. WV Route 20 is a north-south route that traverses the entire State from Wetzel County (New Martinsville) to Mercer County (Bramwell). WV Route 104 is a short route that links US Route 19 and US 460; it was the previous routing of US 460 before the completion of the corridor highway.

The City is served by a Norfolk Southern Railway connection operating on the lines that were once part of the Virginia Railway which had major operations in Princeton when the railroad merged with the then Norfolk & Western Railway in 1959. After four decades of reductions, Norfolk Southern had eliminated almost all railroad jobs in Princeton by the late 1990s. The shuttered former Virginian Princeton Shops were eventually torn down in 2006.

The Mercer County Airport Authority operates the general aviation Mercer County Airport with a 4,743-foot runway about 10 miles southwest of Princeton (near Bluefield). Princeton Community Hospital operates an emergency medical helipad. The nearest airport with commercial airline flights is Raleigh County Memorial Airport, located about 40 miles away

east of Beckley. It offers flights to Charlotte, NC, and Parkersburg via Contour Airlines as well as package shipping service from FedEx and UPS.

WVU Medicine Princeton (PCH) is a 203-bed acute care facility with a 10-county catchment area. And with the closure of the inpatient and ancillary diagnostic services at the former 57-bed Bluefield Regional Medical Center two years ago, it is the main medical facility serving the City, the County, and the region. PCH also operates emergency services in the former Bluefield Regional Medical Center.

The Mercer County Schools serve Princeton. The City is home to Princeton High School, Princeton Middle School, and four elementary schools (Mercer Elementary, Princeton Primary, Silver Springs Early Learning Center, and Straley Elementary) and the Mercer County Technical Educational Center. Valley College, a private career college, has an information center and offers courses in Princeton. A campus of the New River

Community and Technical College is located downtown. Four-year degrees are available nearby from Bluefield State University, Concord University (a public college in Athens), and Bluefield University (a private college in Bluefield, VA).

Princeton has two local Historic Districts: the Virginian Railroad Historic District and the Mercer Street Historic District. Individual buildings on the National Register of Historic Places include the Mercer County Courthouse, the former Princeton Post Office (which now houses the City library), and the Dr. Robert B. McNutt House. The Dr. James W. Hale House is also listed but has been demolished. The City is also home to the Mercer County Historical Society as well as the Mercer County War Museum and the Princeton Railroad Museum.

The City is home to the Chuck Mathena Center for the Performing Arts. It features a 1,000-seat amphitheater which hosts a variety of concerts, plays, and other shows. It also has

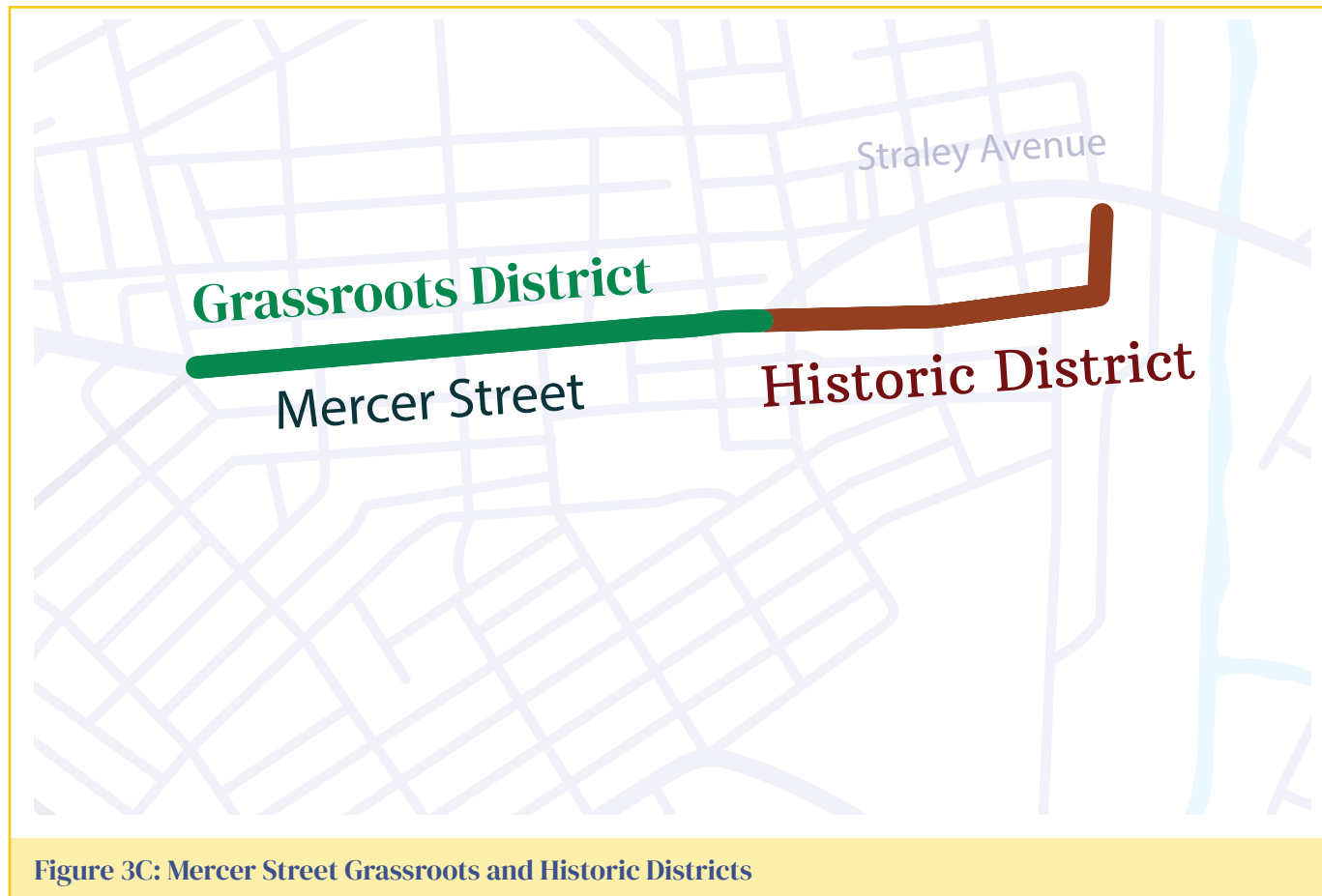


Figure 3C: Mercer Street Grassroots and Historic Districts

various festivals and special events throughout the year. The once neglected downtown has been transformed into the Mercer Street Grassroots District, an area of crafts, culture, and commerce. The City is also home to the Princeton WhistlePigs of the Appalachian League, a summer collegiate baseball league that plays from June to August at Hunnicutt Stadium.

The City Park is open year round. It features a swimming pool, ballfields, picnic shelters, recreation center, and a walking path. There are also five community parks and three state park facilities. Pinnacle Rock State Park, Camp Creek State Park and Forest, and Pipestem Resort State Park are located nearby.

Even with its long history and multiple assets, Princeton finds itself at an important crossroads. The City had a population of 5,872 in the 2020 Census. That is Princeton's lowest population since its initial census as a city (in 1910) and represented more than a 30 percent decline from the peak population of 8,393 (in 1960) and almost a 9 percent drop over the last decade (6,432 in 2010).

After this opening introduction, this report provides a brief description of SWOT Analysis and the methods used for this study. Next is a review and discussion of background data and descriptions of Princeton available from public (governmental) sources. Then the results of the SWOT Analysis, the Strengths and Weaknesses possessed by the City and the Opportunities, and Threats faced by the City, are detailed. The report closes with a summary and recommendations for Princeton moving forward.

METHODS

SWOT Analysis examines the internal characteristics and external setting in which an organization operates. Also known as situational assessment or environmental scanning, the purpose of this effort is to provide a framework for decision-making and eventual action. It is usually an early step in strategic

planning or strategic management activities, but it can be its own stand-alone activity.

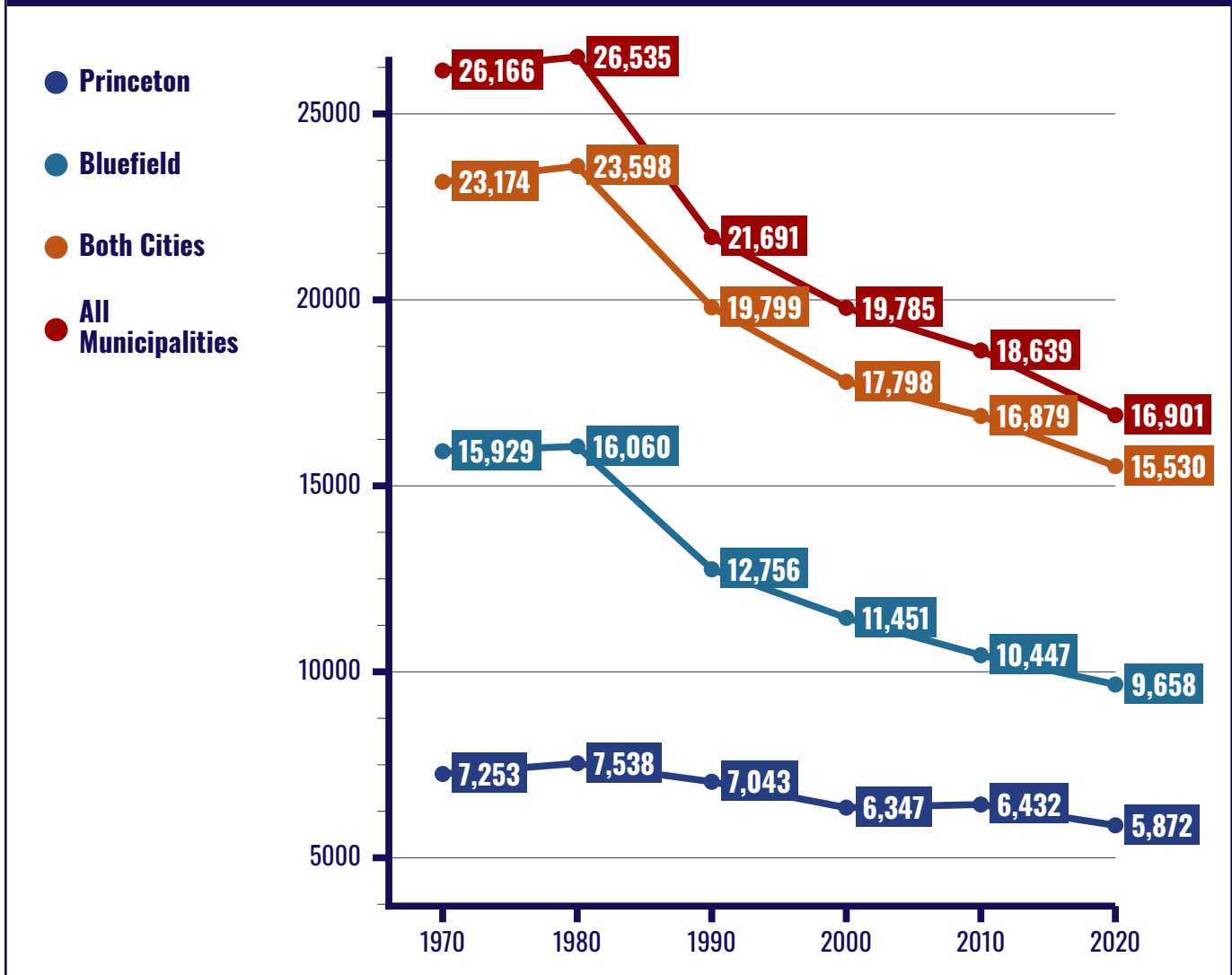
Like many current organizational planning tools, SWOT analysis originated in the private sector where it was initially associated with long-range planning. The concept was popularized for use in the public and non-profit sectors by John Bryson as he worked (originally with William Roering and others) on transforming strategic planning from being a private sector-only tool.

As noted above, the acronym SWOT refers to Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. Strengths and Weaknesses refer to internal characteristics and circumstances which are within Princeton's control. Strengths would be considered the assets of the City; they are what gives it an advantage or can serve as the foundation for efforts moving forward. Weaknesses are the opposite: the shortcomings of the City; they are things that need to be improved and are within the purview of the City to change and control.

Meanwhile, Opportunities and Threats are external challenges. These are items that are outside of Princeton's control that potentially can have a substantial impact on its future. Regardless of the type, it is crucial to be aware of the impact of these external events so that the City will not be surprised but instead prepared for whatever situation arises. Opportunities are thought to be positive as they represent situations that the City could use to its advantage. Conversely, Threats are thought to be negative as they represent possible problems that must be accounted for, overcome, or mitigated.

The City and its relatively new Princeton Economic Development Authority (PEDA) sought an analysis of the City's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. This SWOT analysis included an examination of available data (summarized in the next section), a tour of the City with stakeholder conversations, and an input session with PEDA. From that information, the following report was developed.

Figure 3D: Municipality Populations Comparison Chart (1970 to 2020)



BACKGROUND

Population

The 2020 census reported Princeton had 5,872 residents. This was the first time the City had less than 6,000 residents since its initial census as an incorporated municipality in 1910 when it had just 3,027 residents.

Princeton's population increased every census for each of its first five decades of existence, peaking in 1960 at 8,393 residents. Since then, the City has seen large intercensal declines occasionally offset by a modest decade-to-decade increase. The result is the City's population is now more than 30 percent below its peak.

Interestingly, the decline started just after the Virginian Railway, which had a major presence in Princeton, merged into the then Norfolk & Western Railway (which after another merger became Norfolk Southern Railway in 1990). However, this is more likely a case of coincidence than causation. Many older industrial cities, large and small, experienced their population peaks in 1950 or 1960. Additionally, the State has not experienced substantial population growth since 1930, peaked in 1950 (at just over 2 million residents), and shown declines in four of the seven Census counts since that time (including a 3.2 percent drop between 2010 and 2020).

Over the last three decades, Princeton has lost population from one census to the

next twice. Mercer County has experienced population losses all three times, and West Virginia once. The City, County, and State all experienced a population decline between 2010 and 2020. Conversely, the national population increased every decade, though at a slower rate each time period.

The situation throughout Mercer County puts Princeton's population decline into fuller perspective. The 2020 census county population of 59,664 is 5.6 percent lower than it was in 1970. The county population peaked at 75,013 in 1950 but has been below 65,000 for the last three censuses. Over that same 50-year period, Princeton's population has declined 19.0 percent, Bluefield's population has declined 39.3 percent, and the combined total population of all county municipalities has declined 35.4 percent (the disincorporation of Mataoka only accounts for only 0.7 percentage points of that drop).

As a result, just under one-out-of-10 county residents lived in Princeton in 2020, compared

to a bit more than one-out-of-nine county residents residing there half a century earlier. Still those are better than what was experienced by Bluefield (one-out-of-six in 2020 compared to one-out-of-four in 1970) and all county municipalities (two-out-of-seven in 2020 compared to more than two-out-of-five in 1970). Overall, while Mercer County has 3,542 fewer residents than it did in 1970, the unincorporated parts of the County have gained 5,723 residents.

This means that the population decrease that Princeton has experienced is not a unique situation, especially in the context of Mercer County and West Virginia. It also means there are probably as many, if not more people in the greater Princeton area than ever who rely on the City for services, shopping, recreation, and employment opportunities—even though they do not live within the formal city limits.

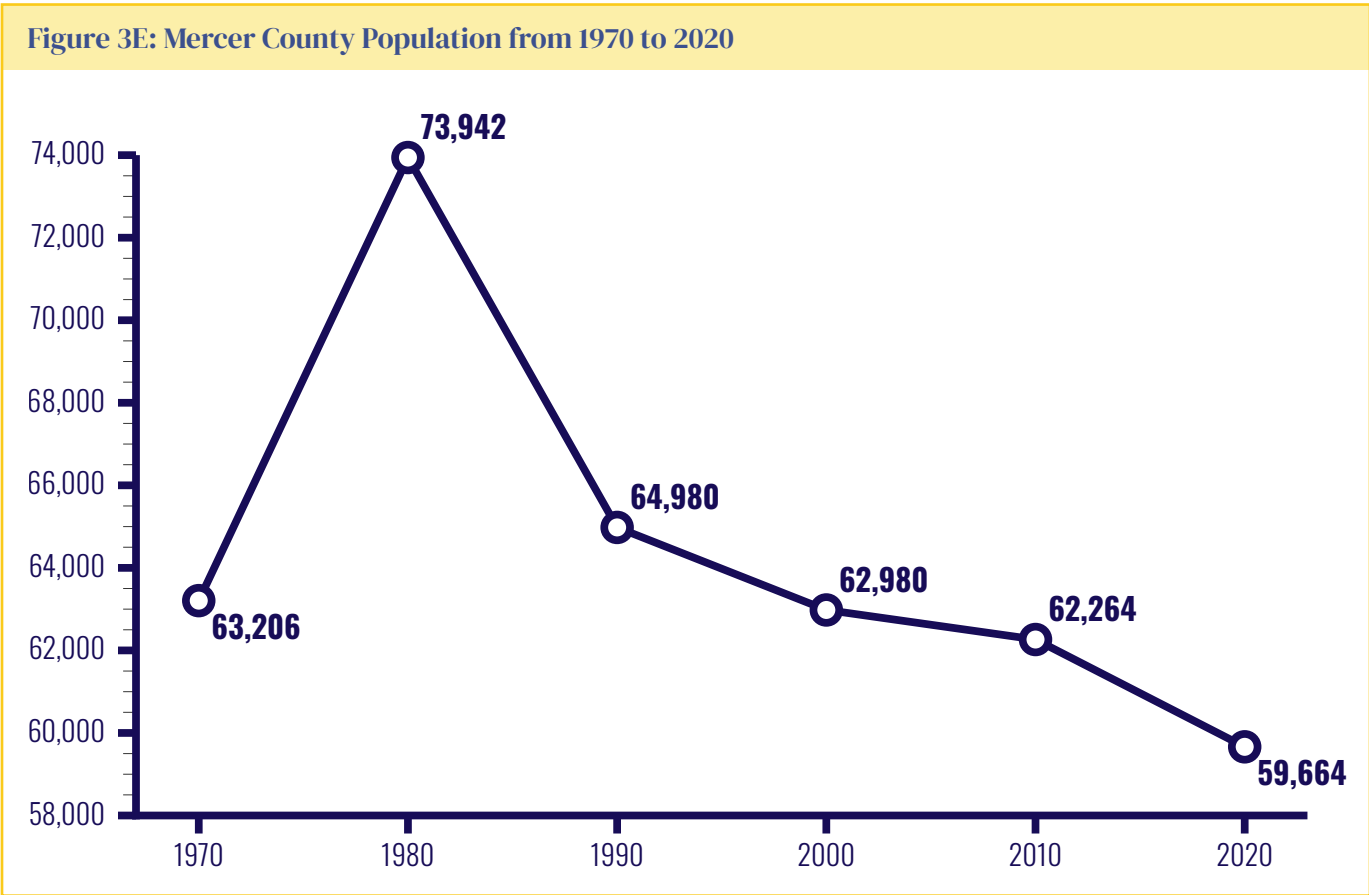
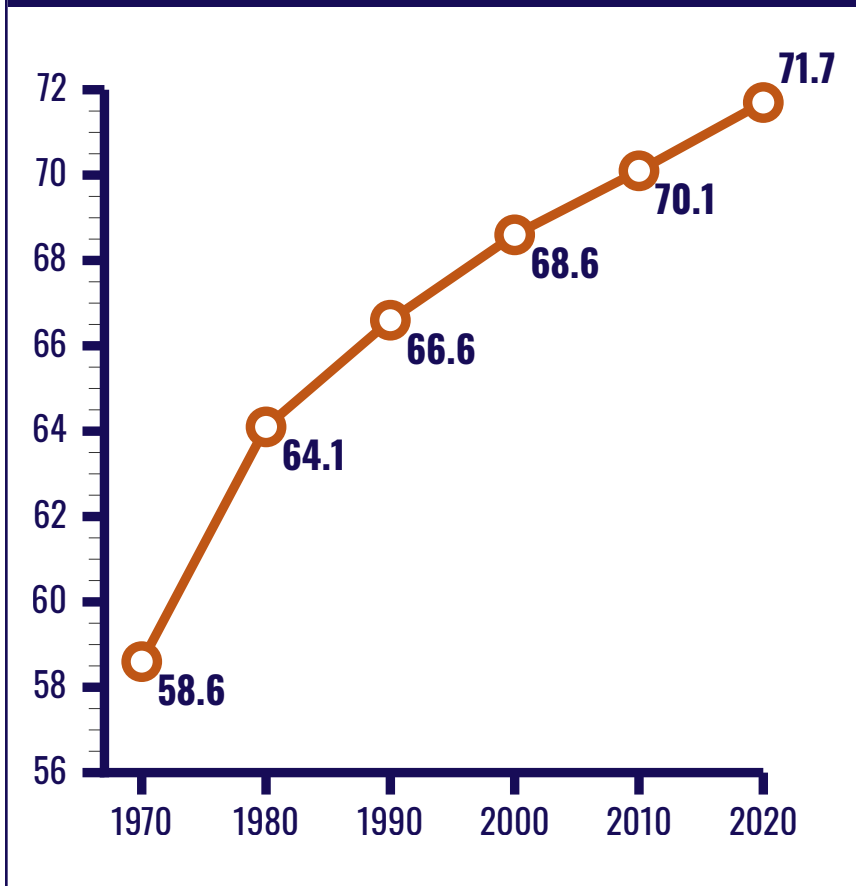


Figure 3F: Percentage of Mercer County's Population Living in Unincorporated Land



Economic Conditions

Despite the decrease in population, both overall and among working-age adults, Princeton's civilian labor force increased slightly over the last decade, according to census data. This was the result of an increase in labor force participation. Meanwhile, total employment was slightly down and the unemployment rate was up in 2020 as compared to a decade earlier.

It should be noted that data on employment and economic conditions come in a variety of sources. As a result, the values (numbers) for many indicators can be quite different, depending on when, how, and from where the data was collected. Complicating this situation even further is the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to sharp, temporary drops in employment. Thus, the data reported needs to be reviewed for overall directional trends and

general meaning rather than the levels of specific indicators.

The 2019 Workflow Data on Primary Jobs shows that Princeton is a net importer of workers. Overall, 1,542 more people have primary jobs working in the City than city residents with primary jobs, according to the Census Bureau's "OnTheMap" database (from its Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics program in its Center for Economic Studies).

The report also shows the labor market for Princeton is focused on Mercer County, Raleigh County, and Tazewell County, Va. Overall, 57.3 percent of city residents have their primary job somewhere in Mercer County, 63.0 percent in the Bluefield Micropolitan Area, and 72.6 percent in the tri-county area.

Meanwhile, 59.4 percent of those with a primary job in Princeton live in Mercer County, 63.6 in the micropolitan area, and 68.8 across the three-county region.

As a result of working so close to home, the average commute to work for Princeton residents is less than 20 minutes. This is slightly shorter than the commute for all Mercer County residents and substantially shorter (by at least five minutes) than the average commute in West Virginia or the United States.

The composition of the Princeton economy appears to be more oriented toward Goods Producing jobs, based upon the most recent census estimates, with almost one-quarter (24.1 percent) of all jobs in those sectors. Three large sectors have a larger share of total employment than the County, State, and Nation. Two are in the Goods Producing part of the economy: Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and

Mining; and Manufacturing. The third is in the Service Producing part of the economy: Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, and Leasing.

Three other large sectors in the Service Producing part of the economy have larger share of total employment than the national economy: Retail Trade; Education and Health Services; and Other Services (excluding Public Administration).

This data varies from year-to-year, however. Of note is the number of manufacturing jobs, which is quite lower in both the Census estimates from 2019 and from the WV Department of Economic Development data for 2021—even though the latter appears to use a much larger employment base for the City in its demographic reports. (There is no information on the base. However, including part-time, or non-primary, jobs or using ZIP Code information to “define” the geography (Princeton) could account for this difference).

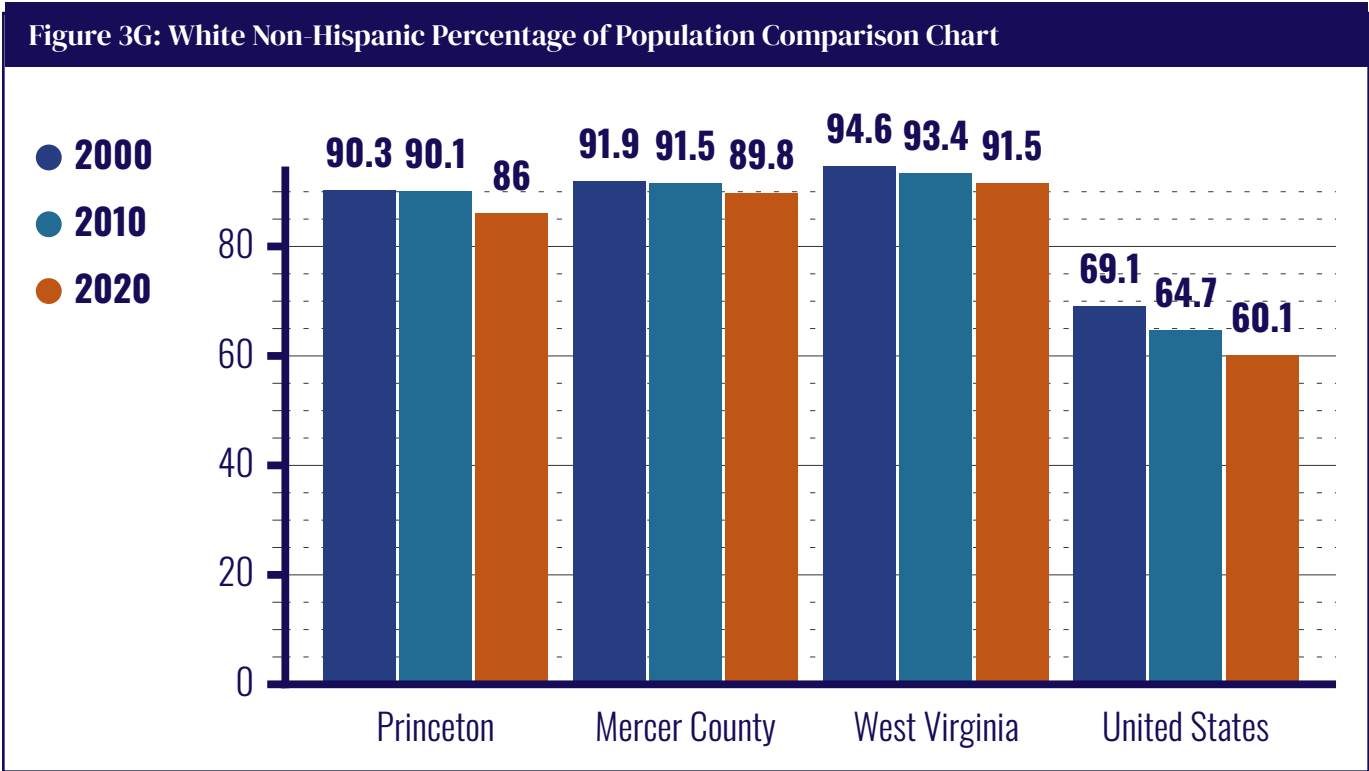
The state data show that more than three jobs out of five (61.8 percent) are in “Services,” which would include the large sectors of Education & Health Services; Arts, Entertainment,

Rec., Accommodations; and Other Services. This compares to only about two out five jobs according to the Census data (41.0 percent in 2019; 41.6 percent in 2020). Meanwhile, the state data show only about 6.0 percent of employment in the Goods Producing part of the economy, considerably lower than the census data (17.3 percent for 2019; 24.1 percent for 2020).

According to the West Virginia Department of Economic Development data for 2021, almost nine jobs out of ten in Princeton (89.3 percent) are associated with Service Producing activities. Besides “Services” (discussed above), the only large sector with more than 10 percent of the City’s employment is Retail Trade (16.8 percent). And based upon the business inventory conducted by the City, the lower employment numbers for the manufacturing sector appear to be more likely.

Meanwhile, the state data also show that nearly four-out-of-five establishments have less than 10 employees (79.4 percent) and nearly nine-out-of-10 have less than 20 workers (89.0 percent).

The most common types of businesses are



membership organizations (6.7 percent), legal services (6.2 percent), health and medical services (6.0 percent), and specialty stores (5.0 percent).

The most common occupations are Education/Training/Library (12.1 percent) and Office, Administrative Support (11.2 percent), Health Diagnosing and Treating Practitioners (8.9 percent), and Sales (8.4 percent). These all would be most commonly found in the Service Producing part of the category generally associated with Services, Retail Trade, and/or Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate.

The population of Princeton has some different characteristics than the rest of Mercer County or West Virginia. About seven-out-of-eight city residents are White, Non-Hispanic (86.0 percent), which is a lower proportion than the County or State residents. The City also has a smaller proportion of its population in the working age range of 18-to-64 (55.3 percent) because almost one-quarter of its population are seniors (24.5 percent). The result is a median age (44.5 years) that is higher than the County, State, or Nation—even though it was the lowest median age for the City since 1990.

Also noteworthy is the City had a greater share of population in 2020 in three of the standard census age cohorts when

compared to the County, State, and Nation. And all three were higher than the City's median age: 45-to-54 years old, 65-to-74 years old, and 85-and-above years old.

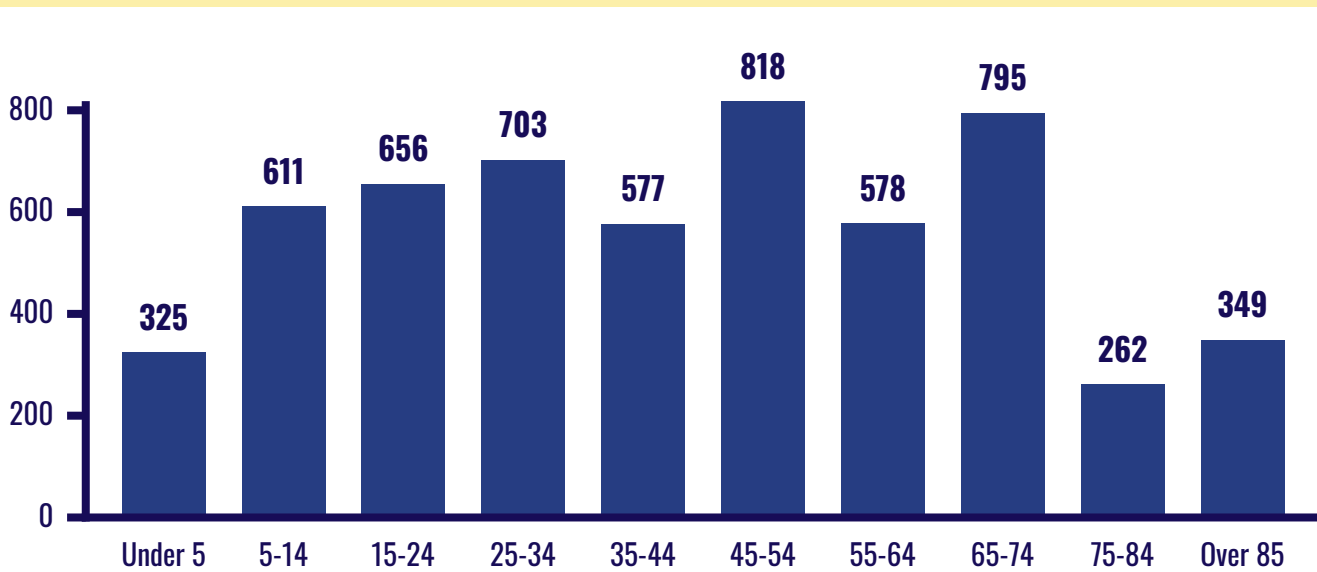
Other Indicators

Other measures present a mixed picture of the Princeton population. The median household income in 2020 for the City was higher than that for the County, which had not been previously. But the City still had a higher individual poverty rate. Also, the City fared worse on both these measures than the State or Nation as a whole.

Educational attainment showed a similar pattern. Princeton had a higher proportion of its age-25-and-over population with high school diplomas than Mercer County in 2020, but a lower share than West Virginia in the United States. However, the City had a lower proportion of college graduates than all other areas, both among the age-25-and-over and the age-25-to-34 groups. The latter is especially noteworthy—and concerning—as Princeton went from one-third of younger adults (33.3 percent) having college degrees in 2010 when it fared very well on this indicator to only about one-fifth (20.9 percent) in 2020.

Finally, housing in Princeton is somewhat

Figure 3H: Princeton Population by Age Cohort Bar Chart (2020)



cheaper, older, and smaller than what is found elsewhere. Just over three-quarters of the City's housing units are occupied (77.8 percent) and a majority are owner-occupied (73.7 percent). The cost of housing is lower, particularly for home buyers in the City. Almost all the units are pre-2000 (94.1 percent) with almost one-third being built before 1950 (32.2 percent). However, the units were still functional as less than 10 housing units across the City lacked heating fuel, kitchen facilities, and/or complete plumbing.

SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths

Princeton has multiple strengths that it can use to its benefit. The biggest advantage the City has is its location. It is almost in the center of Mercer County—befitting of status as the County Seat. It has multiple highway connections and direct (or near direct) access to the other municipalities in the County via state and federal highways (such as Interstate 77, US Route 460, and WV Route 20). It also has railroad connections and proximity to the county airport.

Related to this are physical attributes to the natural and built environment. The land in the City is relatively flat which makes it far easier to develop (or redevelop) and to provide services, utilities, and facilities. To that end, the City has recently completed a sewer upgrade and continues to undertake flood prevention and drainage projects. Combined with an ample fresh water supply, the City has the capacity to provide and process water for current and future customers.

The City itself is one of those entities that can expand. This is possible because of the location of the City offices and services in a former factory. It currently houses the City offices and meeting spaces, public safety departments, and public works garage. The City has plans to further transform the facility, by providing additional resident services and recreational opportunities on the site.

Princeton also has a positive economic climate. The City is working on an economic blueprint for the next decade. Since 2014, it has had over 100 new enterprises created or moved into the City. There are also a variety of sites, some owned by the City and others under private-ownership, that can be and are appropriate for redevelopment. These include the Virginian Industrial Park and the RJ Mine Service Building as well as properties around City Hall and Princeton Community Hospital.

The City continues to see positive change in the downtown area as the Grassroots District leverages arts, culture, recreation, and entertainment to transform a formerly troubled area into a destination location within the City. This includes the Chuck Mathena Center, the Railroad Museum, and other places discussed in the listing of assets above.

Medicine and education are also strengths for Princeton. The Education and Health Services super sector makes up a greater share of employment in Princeton than it does nationwide (and this was before the hospital in Bluefield was closed). Princeton Community Hospital is the primary medical facility in the County. It brings doctors and other professionals and services to the community. And its long-term viability is substantially improved with its recent alignment with WVU Medicine.

Meanwhile, Mercer County Schools provides public primary and secondary education for city youth. The Mercer County Technical Educational Center (secondary and post-secondary), a branch of the New River Community and Technical College, and the Princeton Information Center of Valley College provide career and technical education. Additional college-level offerings are available in campuses nearby. As a result, virtually all their educational needs of county residents can be met without ever having to leave the County (or the micropolitan area).

Finally, Princeton has many interested individuals and concerned citizens who want

to make the City a better place. This is seen in the year-old Princeton Economic Development Authority (PEDA). It is also evident in the work done by city officials and the local business community to improve and promote the City. This civic spirit is not a given everywhere; it needs to be recognized and cultivated to ensure its continued presence. Of course, it should not be a surprise that it is found in Princeton as the City gained Home Rule status in 2015, the first year that Class III cities received that designation.

Weaknesses

The biggest challenge facing Princeton is that the City is not growing. The near steady population decline over the last six decades has left the City with the fewest people in its corporate limits in over a century. Worse, part of this appears to include a “brain drain” as the proportion of younger college graduates in Princeton fell precipitously between 2010 and 2020. Also, the remaining population is older with a shrinking share of the population in the working age range (ages 18-to-64-inclusive). Some of this may be the result of people choosing to live outside the City, even though they may work, shop, or play in Princeton. However, the increase in choosing to live in incorporated areas of Mercer County is smaller than the population decrease experienced in the county’s cities and towns. This means that Princeton will have to figure out how to provide at least the same services and opportunities for a smaller number of people moving forward.

Partially explained by this inactivity is the relative lack of visibility the City has outside of the region or State. Almost one-tenth of the Nation’s population lives within a six-hour drive of Princeton. But the message about the City has not been widely shared. Thus, a branding campaign may be required to introduce the City and its potential to a wider audience.

Additionally, there is the issue that Princeton does not control anything that occurs outside

its corporate limits. Many people do not realize where the “invisible lines on the map” are located. Thus, the impressions of Princeton (or any municipality) may include things (good and bad) found in areas that are not within the City. This is not helped by cherry-stem annexations, donut holes, and other irregular borders which can give the City a unique shape. Regional cooperation to promote and protect key areas as well as deliberate actions on any future potential annexations are two ways to begin to address this situation.

There are also some infrastructure issues within the City. The biggest deficiency is broadband availability. While most of the City appears to have fixed broadband deployment according to the 2020 mapping of data from FCC Form 477 (with broadband defined as 25 Mb/s download and 3 Mb/s upload speeds), there are numerous spots in the City shown as having limited or no fixed broadband service. And many of the areas surrounding this city are shown to have faster Gigabit Services available. This puts the City at a disadvantage for development. Getting companies to expand their highest speed offerings into the City should be possible if there is enough demand for the higher speed internet offerings that would make the expansion profitable for the providers.

Meanwhile, the railroad access into Princeton is limited. This is ironic given the importance role the Virginia Railway played in the development of the community. However, today Norfolk Southern offers only a rail spur into the City along its “West Virginia Secondary” line. It idled the 33-mile mainline that ran from Princeton to the Elmore Yards in 2015. Expansion of this spur to include additional sidings would give businesses better access to this transportation network. If there was enough demand, it may even be possible to have that northward connection to the rail yards reopened.

Additionally, the City lacks an internal flood plan to be able to effectively respond to the impacts of external flood causing events such as Brush Creek, new developments,

and out-of-jurisdiction drainage systems.

As noted above, there is no four-year higher education institution in the City. However, the presence of a branch of New River Community and Technical College in downtown Princeton (from which credits may be transferable) helps to mitigate this problem. Likewise, there are three colleges/universities within a 30-minute drive which further minimizes the negative impact of this situation.

Princeton also suffers from a lack of diversity of big box chain stores within the main shopping districts of Princeton.

Finally, a major issue facing Princeton as it strives to move forward is that many of those who are involved are enthusiastic but inexperienced. The PEDAs are only about one year old. The lack of a formal focus on development activities for the City has meant that the administrative mechanisms necessary for such activities has had to be created. This has ranged from formulating organizational policy to creating a website to undertaking key projects of urgent need. Those working on development issues in the City realize this and that there is always room for improvement. As a result, this weakness should be overcome as time moves forward.

Opportunities

There are multiple ways for Princeton to use things around it to its own benefit. To start, bringing more activity to Princeton may be as easy as reaching out to those who might otherwise just be “passing through”—tourists stopping at the West Virginia Welcome Center on US Route 460 at the southern terminus of the West Virginia Turnpike. While the center and the businesses around it are not technically in Princeton, they are a potential gateway into the City. To do this, the City must invest in appropriate signage and promotional materials so those who stop to take a break at the rest stop know what is available just a few hundred feet away from where they are stopped.

One thing that the tourists would find interesting is the reinvigorated downtown “Grassroots District.” This downtown redevelopment effort has helped to change the central business district of Princeton from a place to be avoided to one that must be visited to be appreciated. The key to this effort has been locally driven and directed—and mostly locally-owned. This represents a model that should be replicated to reinvigorate other parts of the community that have potential that needs to be unlocked.

Another option for improving the local economic situation is to build upon what already exists. Generally, this takes the form of emphasizing sectors where the community has a greater proportion of its economic activity (usually defined as a larger-than-expected share of employment compared to the national economy). As noted previously however, the data for Princeton is conflicting and confusing, making it difficult to determine the exact economic base for the City. Nevertheless, from the data—and from common sense—it appears that health care expansion should be explored and likely emphasized as part of any development programming. Activities related to financing, insurance, real estate, and leasing also may fit these criteria.

Related to this, there are also development options associated with sectors which appear to make sense for the community but appear to be currently underrepresented in the local economy. Two such sectors are transportation and wholesale trade. Given its highway connections and access to railroad transportation—as well as its proximity to one-tenth of the Nation’s population—Princeton would appear to be an ideal potential location for trucking, warehousing, and/or distribution operations. This is worth further exploration.

Meanwhile, one thing the data definitively shows is the housing stock in Princeton is less occupied, somewhat older, and often priced lower than what is available elsewhere in the region or across the country. While to some this may suggest weaknesses in the housing

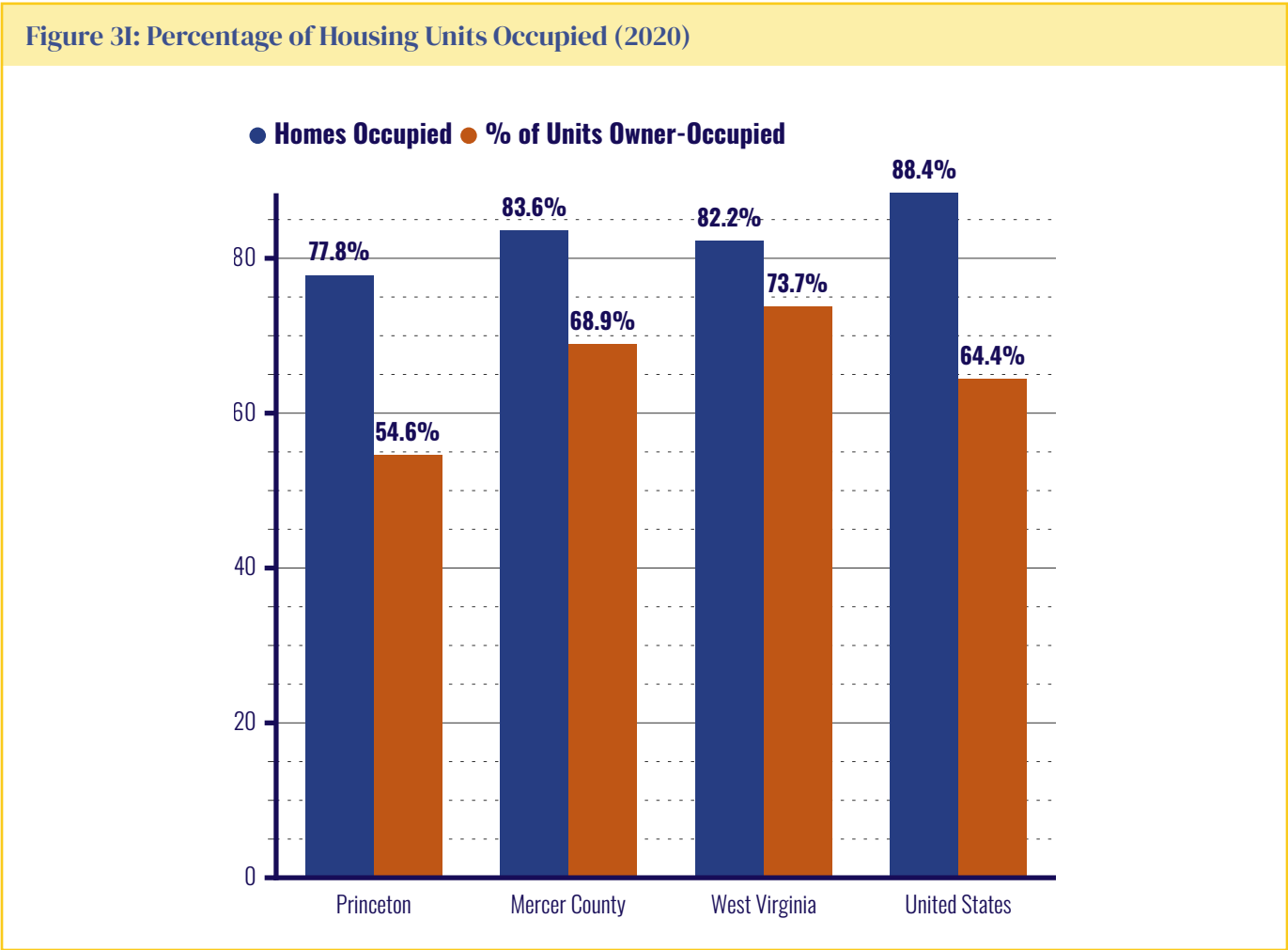
market, it also means that there appears to be affordable housing available for rent or purchase in the City. And while that housing may be older, the data also shows that it is not substandard or inadequate. Thus, as the City looks to reverse its long-term, slow population decline, it is in the position of having places to house potential new residents, something which is increasingly problematic in many places.

Additionally, there might be the chance to secure additional funding through infrastructure grants and any additional pandemic relief monies in the near-term. Over the next few years, it is anticipated that external funding may become harder to access because of a variety of factors. Nevertheless, the State is currently in a strong financial situation and may be looking to make immediate investments while it has available resources.

Finally, Princeton needs to not think locally but regionally. There are many useful programs for which the City is too small to get on its own and many potential projects which could have impacts beyond the borders of Princeton. Working with neighboring Bluefield, across the County, and throughout the two-county micro-politan region could bring benefits to a broader area that are also felt within the City borders. Such efforts could also help increase awareness of the City and what it has to offer over a much larger area, a current weakness for Princeton.

Threats

The location of Princeton, while beneficial in many aspects, also causes issues over which the City has no control. Princeton may be the County Seat, but it is not the largest city in Mercer County. Bluefield, the city after which



the micropolitan area is named, is older and larger. It has a larger commercial trading area with a more regional focus. It has interstate and other highway connections, remains on the main railroad line, and is closer to the county airport. It also has a twin-town in Virginia with the same name that is almost as large as Princeton.

The location of the City near waterways also has its negative side. Much of Princeton is at risk for potential flooding from Brush Creek and its Dave's Fork tributary. Large parts of the City are in either the FEMA 100-year floodplain or the updated floodplain area. Additionally, with the potential for changing weather patterns because of climatic shifts to increase rainfall in many places in West Virginia there is the potential for more flooding events in the future.

Meanwhile, that general proximity to Virginia presents another problem for Princeton. The Old Dominion is often thought by many to have a better business climate than the Mountain State, even though the actual differences vary. However, it is true that Virginia has traditionally had more programs and incentives to promote and assist current and prospective businesses. This support can make a dramatic difference with respect to development and is a situation faced by border communities statewide.

Related to this is the situation with respect to state legislative action. In recent years, there have been numerous attempts to limit the power of municipalities to set their own local rules and standards in a variety of areas. This preemption by the state government, combined with efforts to make it easier for voters to override government decisions through ballot initiatives, have the potential to negatively impact the proposed actions of any municipality, even those that seemingly have greater rights through the Home Rule program.

Princeton needs access to capital, including loans and grants, to help with projects and to aid businesses. However, such monies are becoming increasingly scarce from all levels

of government as more pressing needs are making the investments difficult to support. Furthermore, the current economic climate with generationally high inflation is decreasing the spending value of what funds are available.

Finally, the ability of Princeton to make decisions is sometimes limited because of data availability and accuracy. While some of this experienced by all places as estimates from the American Community Survey (ACS) have replaced decennial Census data from the "long form." However, the ACS uses five-year estimates for smaller places that are updated annually (as compared to once-a-decade for the Census which also involved some estimation), so it does not present as much of a problem as some may indicate. Still, there are issues. If Princeton's population drops below 5,000 residents, some sources may no longer collect data on the community. Already, the City's small size makes it difficult to get accurate information on some aspects of the City, as was seen by the variations on workforce data. Such inconsistencies make it difficult (if not impossible) to make strong recommendations.

Housing

As indicated previously in this plan, there is a clear and apparent need for housing in the Princeton Community. This is evidenced by the age of housing stock in Princeton. With 32.2% of the houses in town built before 1950 and 94.1% built before 2000, nearly all of the houses in Princeton are more than a quarter century old. When this is compared to the average home age in the US of 39 years old, it indicates that the majority of housing in the community is either at or well beyond its normal use if located elsewhere.

Further, the rising cost of building materials as a result of inflationary pressures has affected the overall price of home construction. The average 2023 cost to build an average home

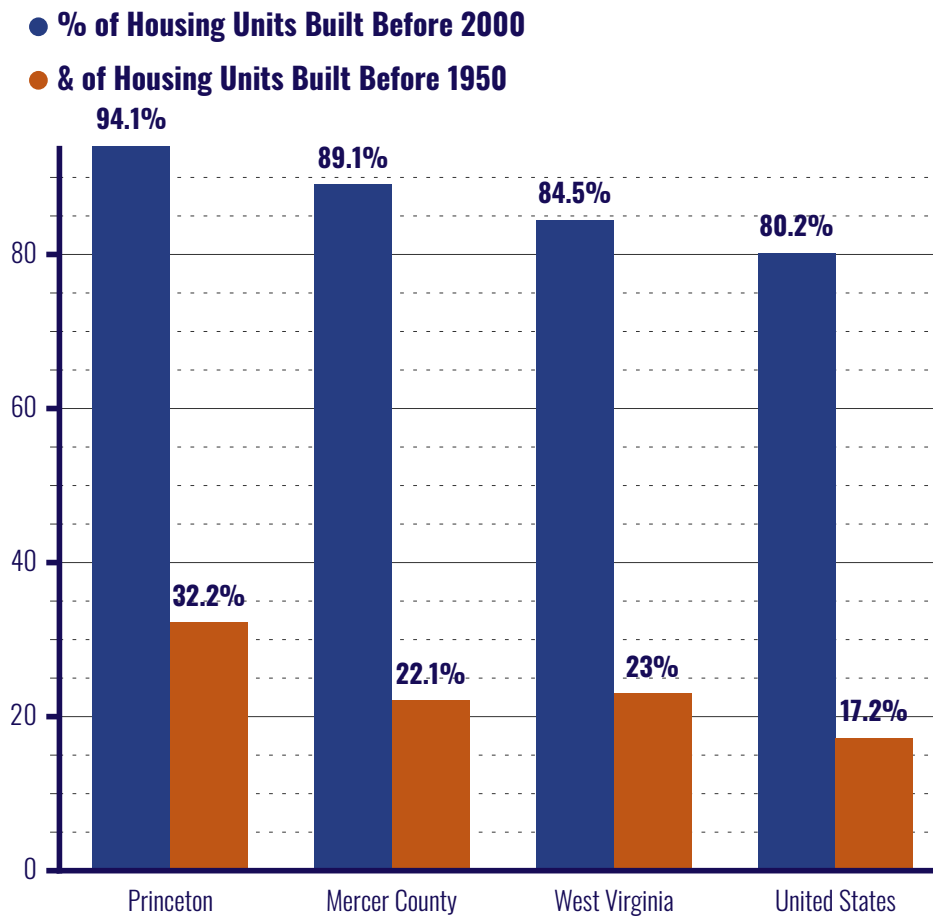


Figure 3J: Percentage of Housing Units Built before 2000 and before 1950

in West Virginia ranges between \$201,000 and \$310,000. Taking a median of this amount, the average Princeton resident could expect home construction to be about \$255,500. While household incomes in Princeton have risen the last decade from \$30,339 to \$41,925, this has not outgrown housing costs. Take, for example, a \$255,500 mortgage at 7.589% interest over 30 years (the current interest rate and the traditional term) would cost the loanee a monthly payment of \$1,675; for someone making the median household income, this would be \$20,100 a year or approximately 47.9% of their yearly pretax income. This is not a sustainable option.

While some residents may prefer not to own a home and choose to rent or lease, a high homeownership rate is a characteristic of an area with a strong standard of living. Thus,

this requires creative solutions to give the average Princeton resident a sustainable option. Two answers could be tiny homes (homes under 2,000 sq ft) or manufactured housing.

Tiny homes are exactly what they sound like: a miniature version of a traditional home with lax building standards with regard to size. These could vary from a structure just shy of 2,000 sq ft to one less than a hundred square feet. They differ from manufactured housing as they are built on a foundation on-site. Since the size of a tiny home can vary, so too does the price; however, builders could still construct one of these homes with the same type of materials found in a traditional home. As of the writing of this plan, the City of Princeton's codified ordinances do not support the construction of such structures. Edits

to zoning and structural inspection methods would need to be made to support such type of housing. One option is not to implement this in a broad manner, rather designate certain areas of the City as tiny home neighborhoods. The scope of this plan is not to identify these areas but rather suggest this as an idea to which further feasibility should be determined.

Additionally, manufactured housing could also be an option in addressing the aging housing stock in Princeton. These are homes of various sizes that are built in pieces in a factory then shipped and assembled on the site of where the domicile will be located. These can also vary in price, but are generally more expensive than tiny homes due to the fact that they are considered full sized homes. If a manufacturer is closer to a community, access to

manufactured homes within that community is substantially increased and prices may be cheaper due to reduced shipping distances.

In 2022, Omnis Building Technologies broke ground on a new facility in the neighboring community of Bluefield, WV. This company touted the creation of 150-300 jobs in the region for the construction of “high-efficient, pre-engineered, home building systems made up of Concrete Insulated Building Units that are shipped then assembled on-site to make pre-designed homes.” Such homes could range from just less than \$100,000 to \$200,000 or so depending on the model of pre-designed home. No matter the model, this would still be less than the average home construction of \$255,500.

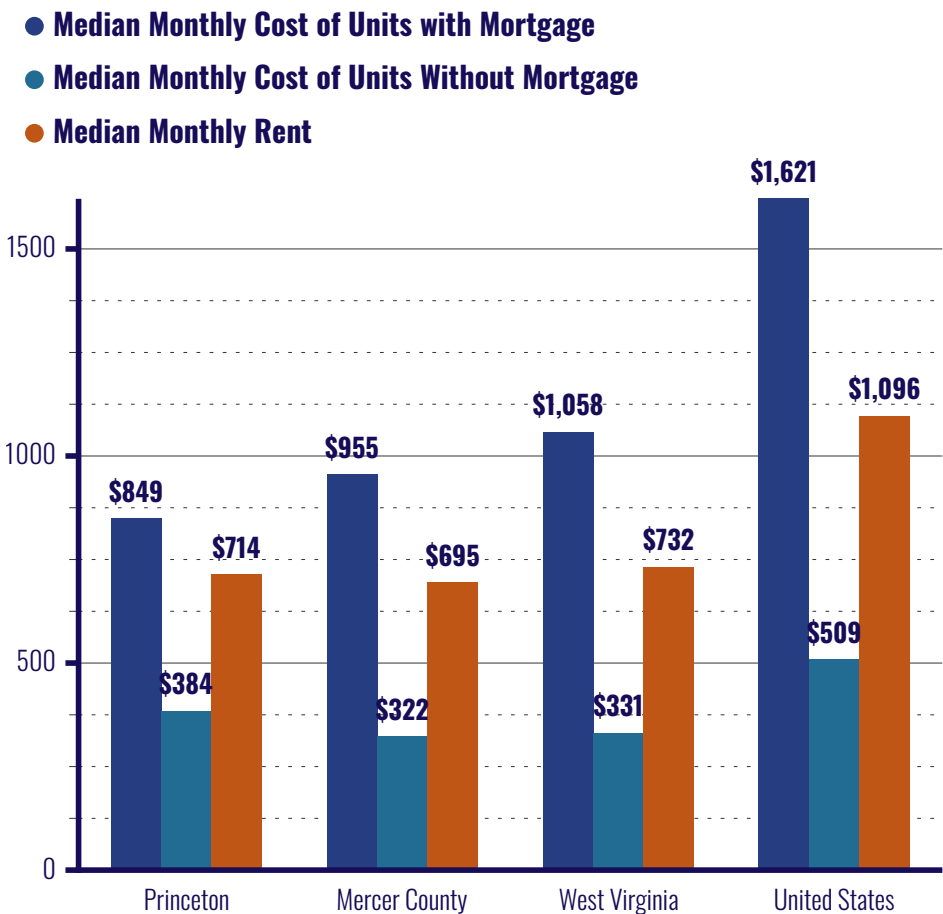


Figure 3K: Median Monthly Housing Costs in Princeton (2020)

Either manufactured housing or tiny housing could be a way to address the need for new housing, however, this assumes that older stock can not be updated to accommodate the 2024-2034 homeowner and this simply is not true; these are just options when the later is not feasible. The City will need to support the renovation of older stock housing by creating strategies that support such behavior. Some options could be incentives, relaxed Code Enforcement on these structures, or other solutions that are beyond the scope of this ten year plan. In either case, this needs to be done because the numbers indicate that no matter how much housing is added in the next ten years, older stock housing will be the majority of what is available to live in within the City.

Lastly, the Princeton Land Reuse Agency (PLRA) is one agency that works on behalf of the City to adapt land that is not utilized to its full potential to something that is most beneficial to the City and the community. Housing is one priority that the PLRA will concentrate on in the next ten years to adapt tax delinquent property into parcels that host new residents rather than exist as a drain to the area in which they are located. An example could be acquiring land for the purpose of establishing a tiny home district or for broad development of manufactured housing. As previously stated, the City has demolished more than 300 structures in the last two decades. This leaves plenty of opportunity for the PLRA to acquire the land these structures were located on and establish new housing.

Finances

Today, the two biggest funding opportunities for the City of Princeton is its Business and Occupancy Tax and its 1% Sales Tax. These taxes raised approximately \$2,850,435 and \$1,646,029 respectively in the 2021-2022 fiscal year (the most recent completed fiscal year to date). When combined with other sources of funding such as property taxes, excise tax on

utilities, refuse collections, and others, the City generated \$9,097,691 in revenue within that same fiscal year. This means that over the previous 8 years the City's revenue increased from 7,414,787 in 2014 to 9,097,691 in 2022. This reflects an increase of about 18.49%, which is slightly under the chained inflation rate of 19.68% for that same period. This means that even though the City reported an increase in revenue since the previous comprehensive plan, its buying power actually has decreased by 1.19%. The small nature of this amount can be looked at as a nominally equal buying power between 2014 and 2022.

The 18.49% increase in revenues can be calculated through a number of changes to the annual budget and outside factors. For instance, the City applied for home rule in 2015; as part of its application, it expressed interest in enacting 1% sales tax within its jurisdictional limits. The application was approved and that same year the City was able to create this new funding opportunity; even though retail B&O was simultaneously lowered from .0050 to .0035 to justify the new tax, B&O collection has shown a positive curve of collection through the years, increasing in lieu of the reduction. The first year the 1% sales tax was collected it was \$550,000. Such a substantial increase in both B&O and 1% sales tax is a direct reflection of the business environment within the City. Initiatives that have focused on local revitalization and economic development have strengthened the business environment of the City and have thus resulted in more revenues/expenditures to meet the new demands.

Additionally, they received 1.5 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding in fiscal year 2022. This federal allocation to all recognized municipalities within the US was to reimburse and provide aid for the loss of revenue experienced during the COVID-19 Pandemic. This brought expected revenues/expenditures from fiscal year 2022 from approx. 7.5 million to 9 million. If this aid did not exist, the City's buying power would have decreased from 2014 by approximately 17.94%.

The City is expected to receive another allocation of 1.25 million in FY 2023. The expected budget for that year is 7,745,287; when combined with the ARPA allocation, both 2023 and 2022 are projected to have similar revenues/expenditures. However, what happens when federal funding is no longer available?

As the cost of goods and services continue to rise, other municipalities have turned to fees as the answer. Fees pass the cost of a public good directly to the residents of a specific jurisdiction. Examples can be seen in Fire Service Fees, Street Maintenance Fees, City Service Fees, etc. While they do address a specific problem with funds collected for that purpose, fees can create an environment that can discourage new businesses, residents, and investors from coming to an area. The fear is that disposable income would lessen by living in an environment with fees.

The alternative is to cut government services; however, as indicated in both this section and others, the business environment of Princeton has grown substantially since the previous comprehensive plan. Cutting government services would be effectively punishing those that have chosen to invest in Princeton in recent years.

The only sustainable way to increase revenue without adjusting fees or removing services is to expand the area in which revenue is collected. Annexation would counter the negative effects felt from an inflation squeeze by allowing for more revenue to be collected from more jurisdictional entities. If annexation would take place in the commercial areas indicated in other sections of this plan, the 1% sales tax alone could sustain the needs of the City and leadership could look at eliminating B&O taxes altogether, making Princeton an even more suitable place for investment and residence.

Whether annexation happens or not, the City will continue to rely on previously established revenue streams to sustain the cost of expenses over the next ten years. Fees may be considered, however, their establishment will

not be considered lightly. Princeton is one of the few Class III fee free Cities in West Virginia. This is something that City officials do not have an inclination to change anytime soon.



Chapter 4

Princeton in Action

Objective

1.

Expand Existing Borders of the City of Princeton to Include a Broader Service Area

Objective

2.

Prioritize Public Services and Infrastructure

Objective

3.

Listen and Meet the Administrative Needs of City Officials

Objective

4.

Listen and Meet Additional Public Service Needs of Businesses and Residents

This Plan is a conceptual policy and physical document that must be flexible to adapt to the ever-changing conditions of the City. This chapter recommends strategies for implementation of the plan's recommendations. It is expected that these recommendations will be considered adjustments to existing activities or opportunities for new ones. When and how this action plan is implemented will be a function of the circumstances and conditions in Princeton, available staff time on the part of the City and its departments, boards and commissions, and the City budget. For this reason, periodic review and evaluation of the plan is recommended.

One of the main goals of a Comprehensive Plan is to help a community plan for the future. Therefore a detailed action plan with specific recommendations is essential in helping Princeton achieve its vision for the future. The Future Development Plan does not provide exact snapshots of how Princeton and the Greater Princeton area will look in 2034. The uncertainty associated with the timing and location of future development requires the community to remain flexible towards future possibilities.

Objective 1: Expand Existing Borders of the City of Princeton to Include a Broader Service Area

As previously indicated, the scope of this plan is too narrowly tailored to determine what a hypothetical expansion of Princeton's jurisdiction would look like, however, this plan does prescribe a determination of whether the City should expand its borders. The opportunity cost of not expanding City jurisdiction

is too great, especially with the perceivably perpetual offering of public services to individuals outside of the City's jurisdiction, forcing the residents to bear this cost. This type of hypothetical expansion could be any direction which directly introduces more residents and business owners into City Limits. In this regard, this plan recommends the following:

The creation of a Committee or City Agency that specifically exists to discuss how annexation and general outward city growth should be planned and to make recommendations to the City Council as to how to proceed.

The undertaking of a feasibility study to act as a companion to this plan that determines the opportunity cost of not annexing specific areas, the cost to those in given areas of not coming into the City, and a ten year tiered plan as to how and when these areas should be targeted for annexation efforts.

Access the interest of both residents and those that live in proposed annexation areas before deciding on any further plans; this should be coupled with equal education efforts so said individuals can make informed decisions.

Objective 2: Prioritize Public Services and Infrastructure

As referred to in the infrastructure section of this plan, there are three types of infrastructure that allow the residents of Princeton to live productive and meaningful lives: these are utility, civic, and structural infrastructure. They were prioritized in the last decade and they will continue to be into the next, for there is little reason to make plans if there is not capacity to support new and existing residents and businesses. This plan recommends the following as it relates to infrastructure and public services:

Continue to support utility infrastructure

by maintaining a strong working relationship with the Princeton Sanitary Board, the American Water Company, American-Electric Power, and other public service companies as necessary in order to quickly resolve issues and meet the demand of Princeton residents.

Support the most efficient manner to offer commercial and residential trash pickup to Princeton residents.

Maintain internal and support external existing public services in order to sustain and build upon civic infrastructure such as the Princeton Public Library, Princeton Rescue Squad, and partnerships with other government entities including the Mercer County Commission, the City of Bluefield, Town of Athens, and others.

Make every effort to support strong structural infrastructure such as new roads, bridges, homes, and commercial buildings.

Objective 3: Listen and Meet the Administrative Needs of City Officials

As part of previously established strategy in the creation of this plan, the Princeton Planning Commission interviewed all of Princeton's Department Heads with a series of predetermined, disclosed questions to evaluate what their individual goals and ambitions are for their respective departments. Their individual responses can be found in the appendix. This plan recommends the following based on each of their respective responses:

PRINCETON PUBLIC LIBRARY

- Support the Library and their board as they make improvements to their downtown location.

- Aid the Library, when applicable, with grant applications to help supplement the cost of providing their public services through computer systems, a public creation lab, and an outdoor event area.
- Use community partnerships to aid in the creation of mutual agreements that benefit the Library and said organizations. One example could be longer hours of bus pickups at the library.

PRINCETON RAILROAD MUSEUM

- Support the Railroad Museum marketing efforts in order to continue to drive up attendance.
- Aid the Railroad Museum in applying for a community facilities or like grant to purchase a trolley for community tours.
- Keep the Railroad Museum's facade up-to-date as well as make necessary improvements as needed to maintain a safe and welcoming museum.

CODE ENFORCEMENT DEPARTMENT

- Continue to invest in Code Enforcement's demolition program. On average, this has yielded 150 or so buildings every ten years removed.
- Provide the necessary resources for Code Enforcement to implement GIS capabilities so public assets and vacant buildings can be recorded in a more efficient map format.
- Invest in Code Enforcement and Fire Department for similar trainings so they are cross trained in property maintenance.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

- Support the construction of new, state-of-the-art police facilities at the Old Dean Company Facility.
- Work to establish a unique incentive package to increase the amount of applicants (quality and quantity) to the Princeton Police Department.
- Prepare for general capital expenses such as new cruisers, firearms, and protective gear.

FINANCE DEPARTMENT

- Give the Finance Department the necessary resources to convert paper documents into a digital format that is more easily accessible for staff and the public.
- Support activities that further expand the payment options available to residents when they pay their bills.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

- Make arrangements to provide new, up to date facilities for the Fire Department.
- Plan to purchase a new ladder truck to replace the Fire Department's 2006 model so their ISO Class 2 rating can be maintained.
- Look into the cost-benefits of additional full-time officers within the Fire Department.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

- Prepare to make investments within capital improvements for the purchase of a grapple truck and new trash truck to ensure efficient public services continue.
- Similar to Code Enforcement, invest in GIS capabilities so Public Works can also map city assets for better utilization.
- Invest in technology that may be GIS or otherwise to better track and distribute work responsibilities across the department.

PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

- Bringing the Princeton Community Center project at the Old Dean Company to completion, so Parks and Rec can plan accordingly.
- Support the Parks Board in their planned capital improvements for the seven existing parks throughout the City, such as a new ADA playground as well as pickleball and basketball courts.
- Assist in the creation of a new pool on the Old Dean Company complex to replace the current facilities at Princeton Park.
- Replace the skatepark on Morrison with a new location elsewhere as required by City Municipal Code.

CITY MANAGER

- Make the necessary steps to support staffing efforts in Fire, Police, and general administrative departments.

Specifically, make it more appealing for people to apply and be accepted as an officer within the City's police force.

- Focus on converting abandoned vacant buildings into productive commercial or residential uses.
- Make adjustments to insurance benefits as the State PEIA board raises rate; this could be 90-10, 80-20, or 70-30 to reflect the aggressiveness of the state's raises.
- Look at the possibility of jurisdictional expansion to add more businesses and residents in the City toward the ultimate goal of eventually removing the Business and Occupancy Tax.

HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

- Support efforts for ongoing trainings for a well educated, developed workforce that understands the impact of the policies and procedures of the City of Princeton's workplace.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

- Aid in the creation of an annexation plan that adds new businesses, residents, and developable land to the City, leading to the ultimate elimination of the Business & Occupancy Tax.
- Make the necessary steps to complete the Princeton Municipal Complex located at the Old Dean Company Property, so it may act as a local economic driver.

- Assist the Princeton Economic Development Authority in their completion of core development projects along main thoroughfares.
- Work with the Princeton Economic Development Authority to ensure that they have the resources they need to keep and maintain an accurate and marketable list of available lands within the City.

Objective 4: Listen and Meet Additional Public Service Needs of Businesses and Residents

WALKING TRAIL SYSTEM

As notated in the Princeton Planning Commission's 2.27.23 meeting, this plan supports the establishment of a walking trail system that connects all of the City's parks through a series of kiosks; each kiosk, located in a visible part of each park, should depict the distance that kiosk is from its counterpart in other parks and should also indicate the designated way to get there by foot or bike. This project will be part of a larger initiative to increase the walkability and accessibility of the City.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

The City does not have a comprehensive Capital Improvement Program (CIP) upon which to prioritize budgetary concerns. A long range CIP is an important planning tool to ensure that the City's facilities are cost-effective

and to ensure that the City will be able to fund needed public facilities and infrastructure programs and anticipated costs of improvements to serve anticipated growth for the next 15-20 years.

LAND USE AND ZONING AMENDMENTS

The plan is a statement of policy. However, it is not a regulatory document. The most common regulatory tools for implementing a comprehensive plan include local zoning and subdivision ordinances. By updating these ordinances and bringing them into conformity with the Plan, the City has two powerful tools making its vision become a reality.

REGIONAL PLANNING

The City must be proactive and coordinate with the County and PDSs, particularly in the areas of land use planning efforts. The Region 1 Planning Council is a regional planning agency. Princeton has a good relationship with Region 1 and needs to continue to build this relationship.

Sub-Areas

Sub-area planning, which is planning at the neighborhood level, the road corridor level, or for a downtown area, is an important step after completing the comprehensive plan. In addition, sub-area planning is known for leading to an overall increase in citizen involvement, leadership development, and neighborhood commitment. The City should continue its policy of leadership in the redevelopment of Mercer Street, Thorn and Rogers Streets improvements, and assisting in maintaining Stafford Drive as the main shopping corridor.

TRANSPORTATION

As new developments are proposed before the Planning Commission, the Planning Commission should evaluate the impact the proposed

development will have on the transportation network. Consideration should be given to the impact of any improvements such as turning lanes, widening of streets, and sidewalks.

REDEVELOPMENT AND REVITALIZATION ACTIVITIES

Mercer, Thorn, Stafford, and Rogers Streets should continue to be a focus of redevelopment and revitalization efforts. Proactive measures will be required to address the loss of historic buildings and forces of destabilization that have existed here. Vacant properties, public facilities deterioration, and private property decline have been common threats to these areas. Revitalization programs should continue to be implemented, including but not limited to business retention, commercial building rehabilitation, sidewalk installation/replacement, and park trail projects.

LEADERSHIP

The City of Princeton will continue to grow and change, and so should the Comprehensive Plan. The City should review the plan annually in order to determine whether or not its recommendations are still relevant.

COMMUNITY AESTHETICS

Appearance has much to do with a strong sense of community. Design standards, which can be contained in a zoning ordinance, are one way to make areas more attractive, while enhancing or protecting a certain character of the City. "Streetscape" standards for landscaping and signage can have a noticeable effect on the entire community and can be very effective along a roadway corridor. Efforts such as continued maintenance of public property and sidewalks enhance and impact community aesthetics.





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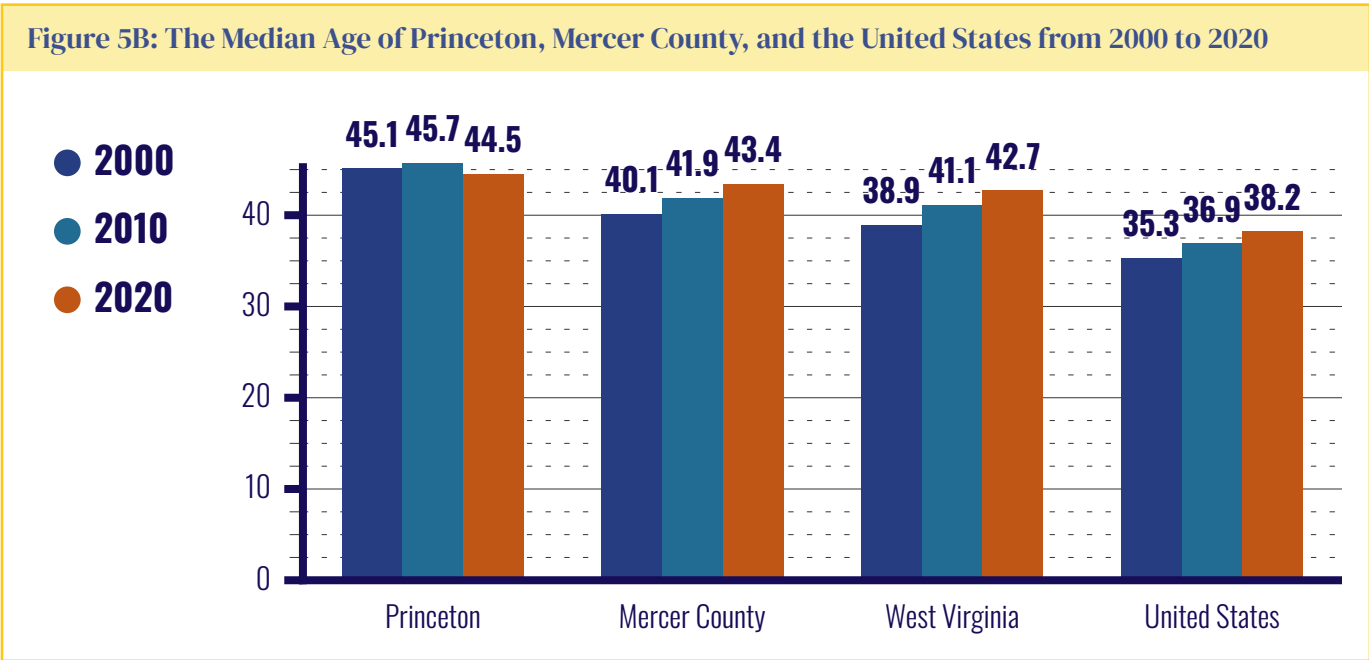
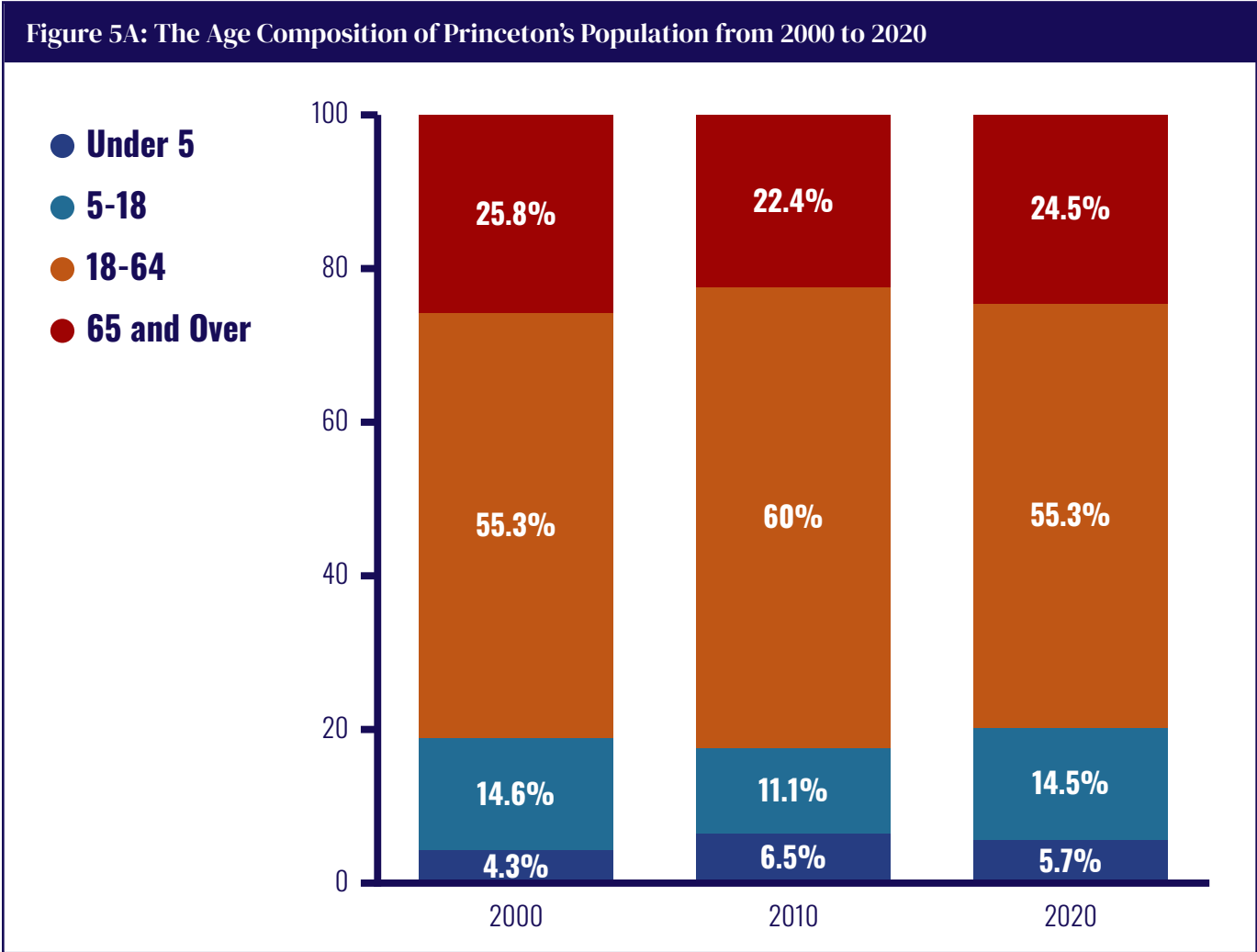


Figure 5C: Age Composition Comparison Chart (2020)

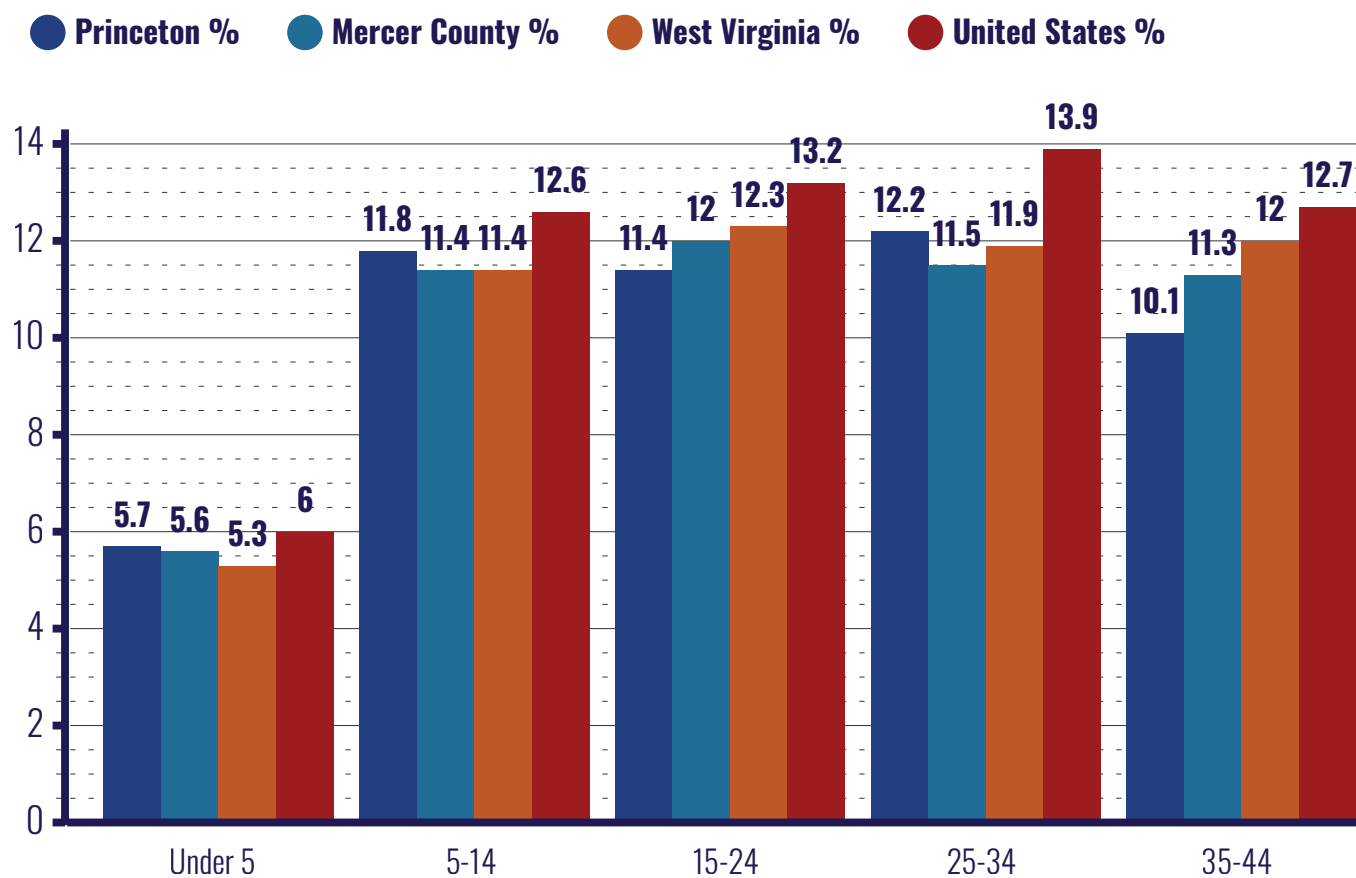
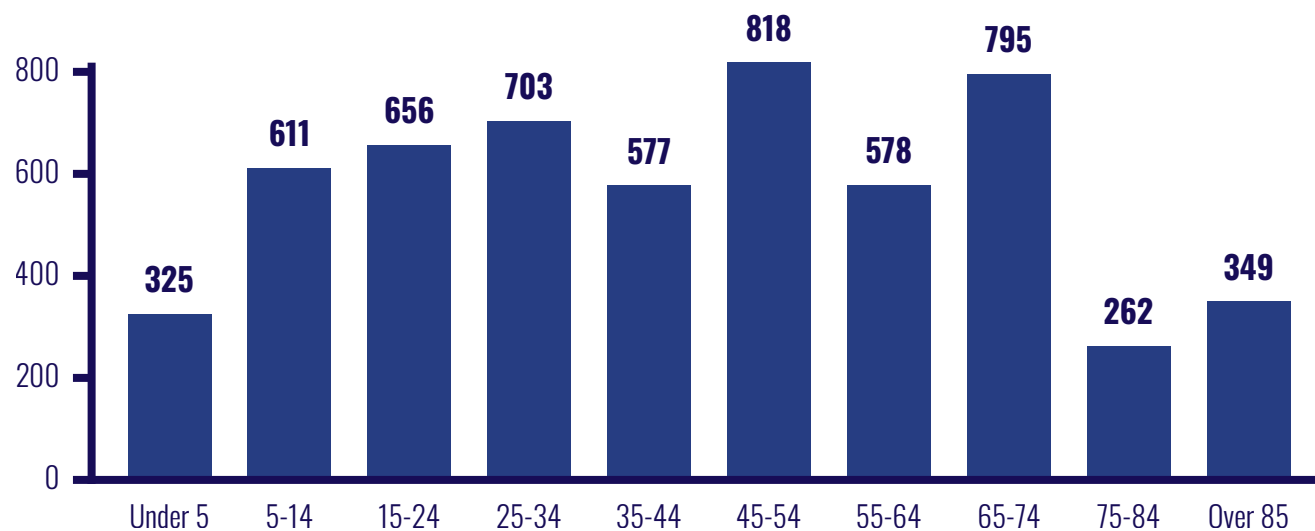


Figure 5D: Princeton Population by Age Cohort Bar Chart (2020)



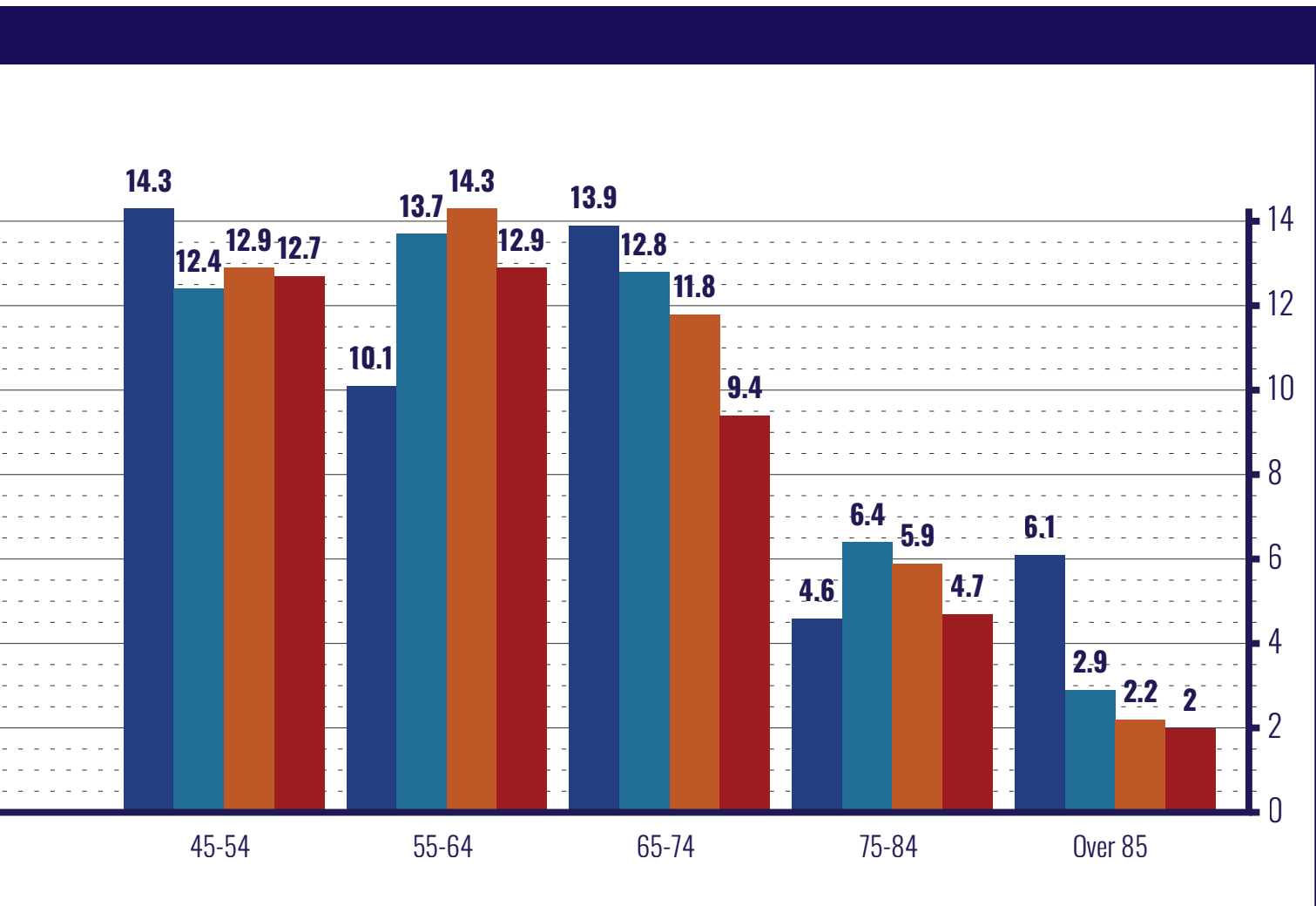


Figure 5E: Mercer County Population from 1970 to 2020

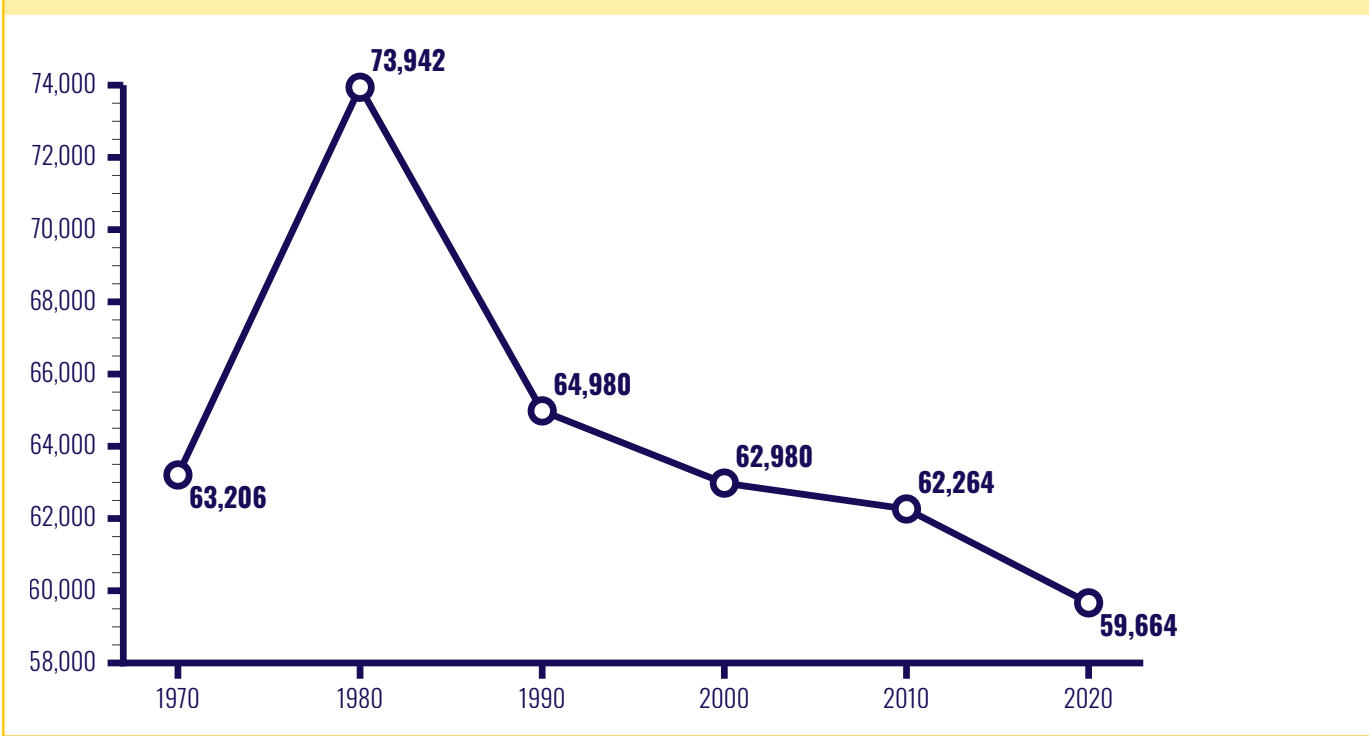


Figure 5F: Locality Population Change from 1980 to 2020 (All Municipalities and Mercer County)

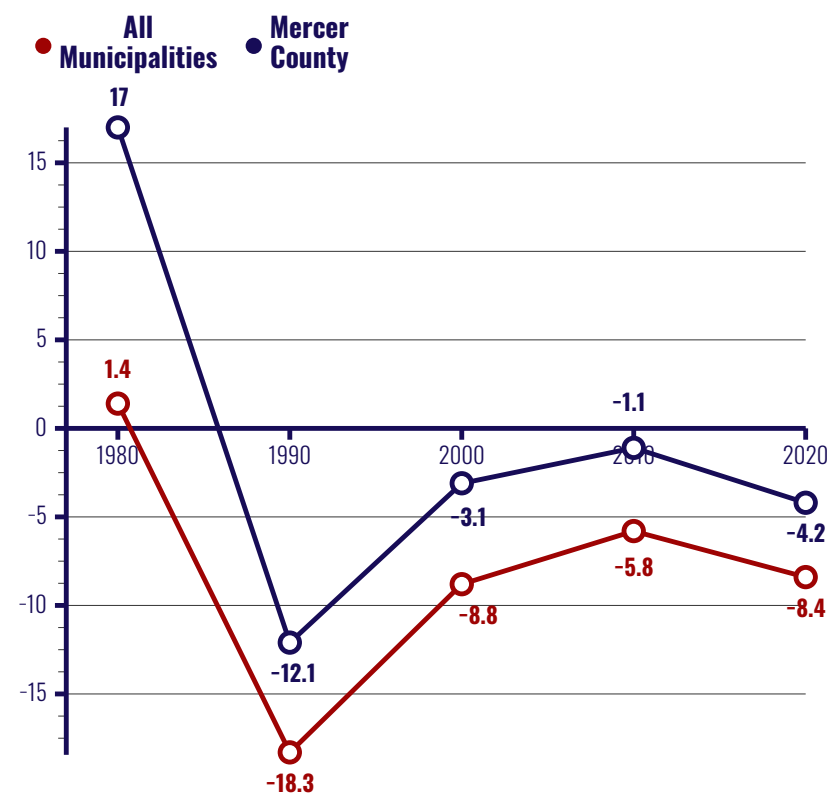


Figure 5G: Locality Population Change from 1980 to 2020 (Princeton, Bluefield, & Both Populations)

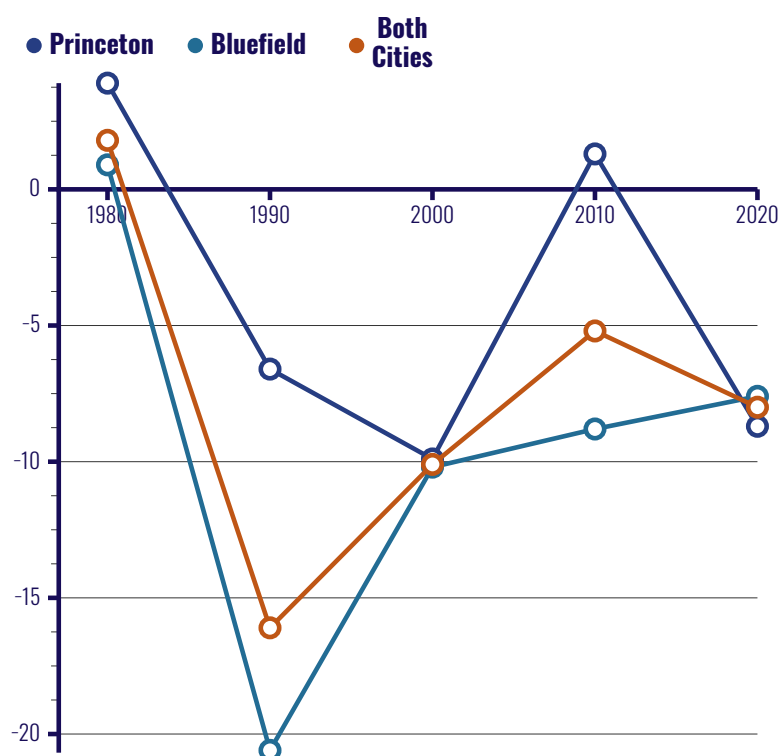


Figure 5H: Locality Population Change from 1980 to 2020

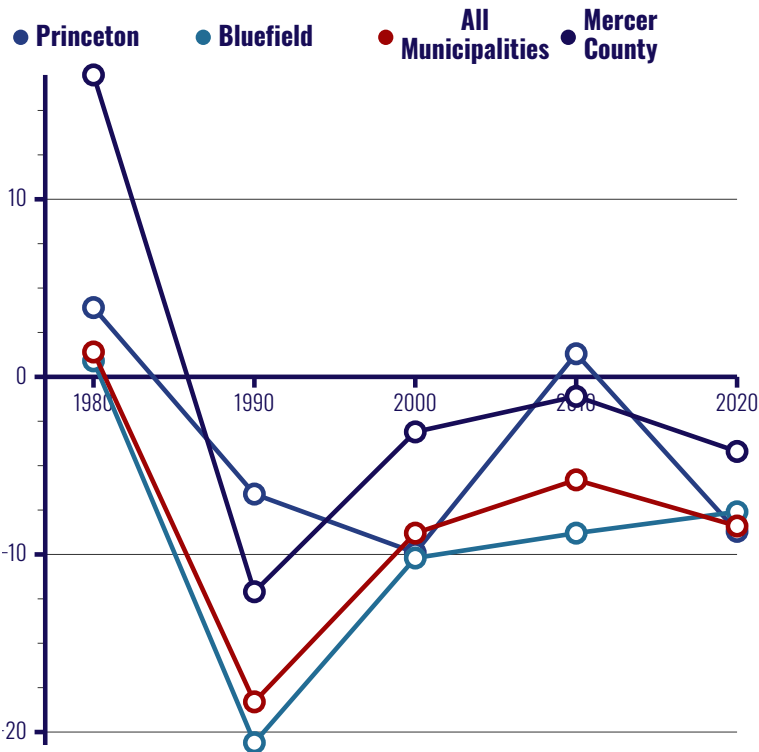


Figure 5I: Locality Population Change from 1980 to 2020 (Princeton and Bluefield)

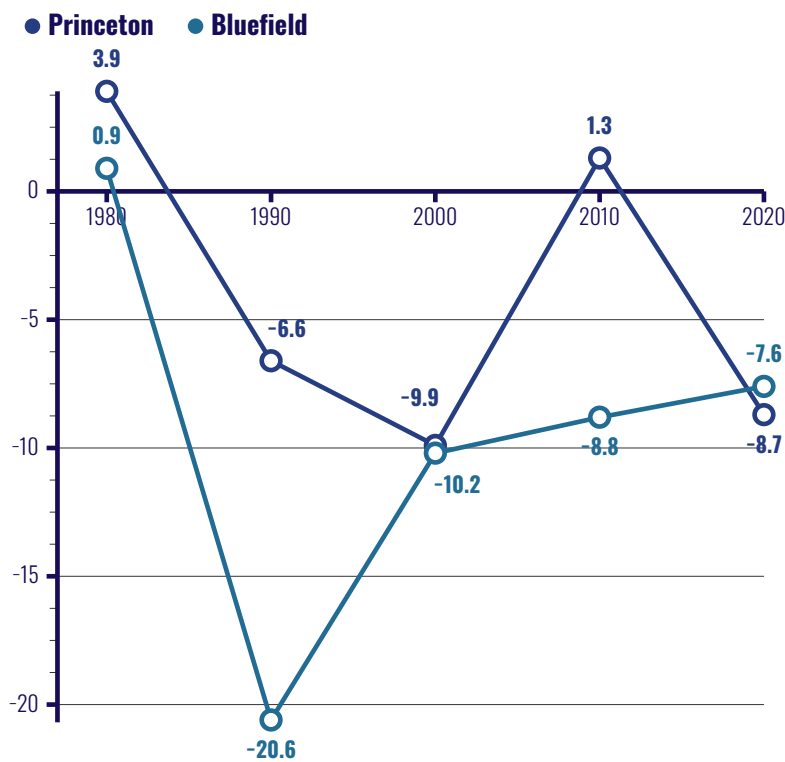


Figure 5J: Locality Population Change from 1980 to 2020 (Princeton and Mercer County)

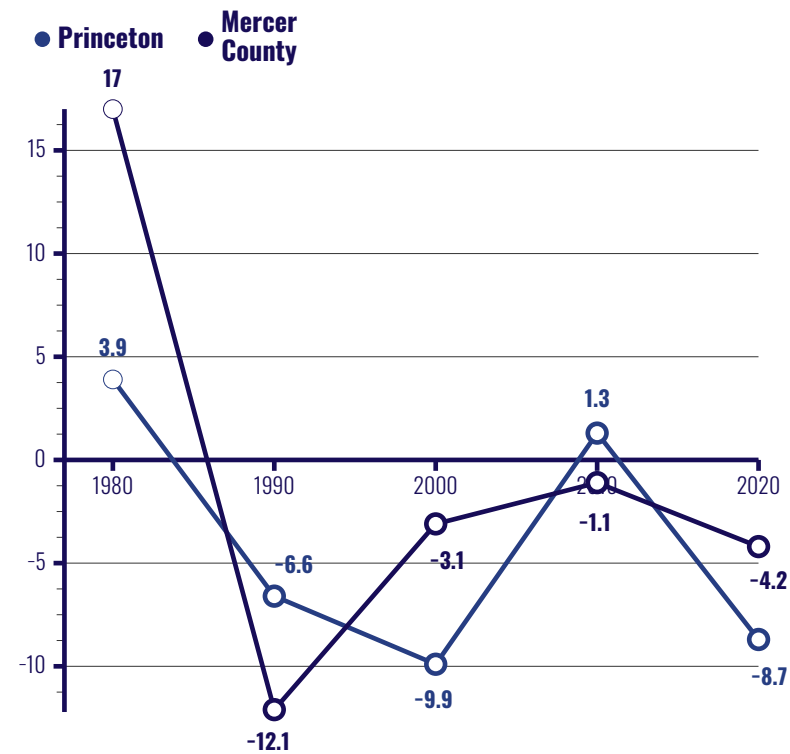


Figure 5K: Princeton Population Percent Change from 1920-2020

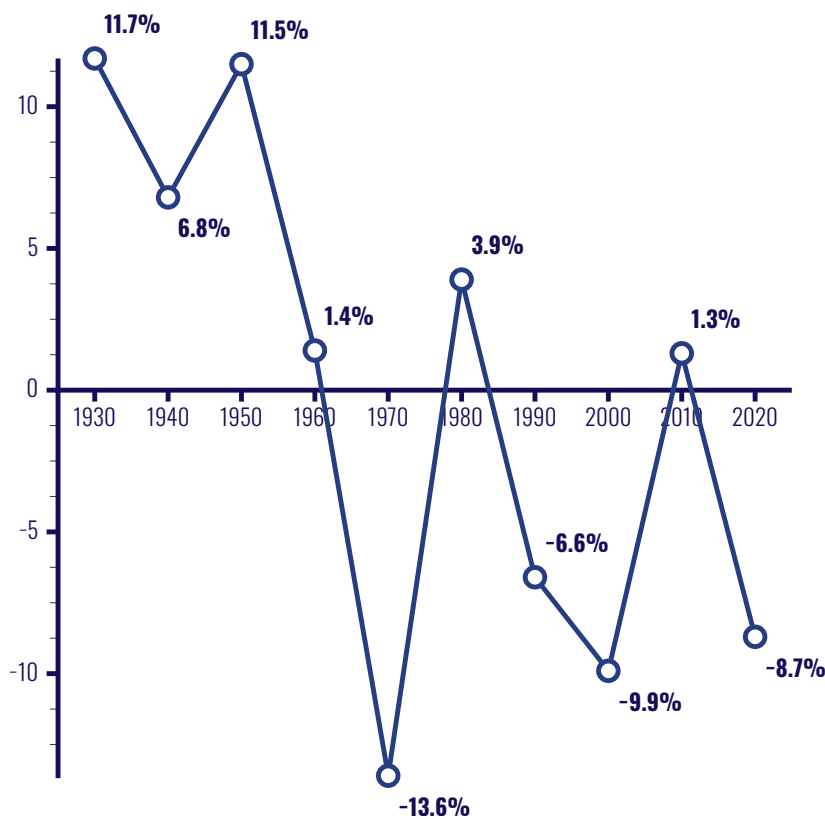


Figure 5L: Locality Population Change from 1980 to 2020 (Bluefield and Mercer County)

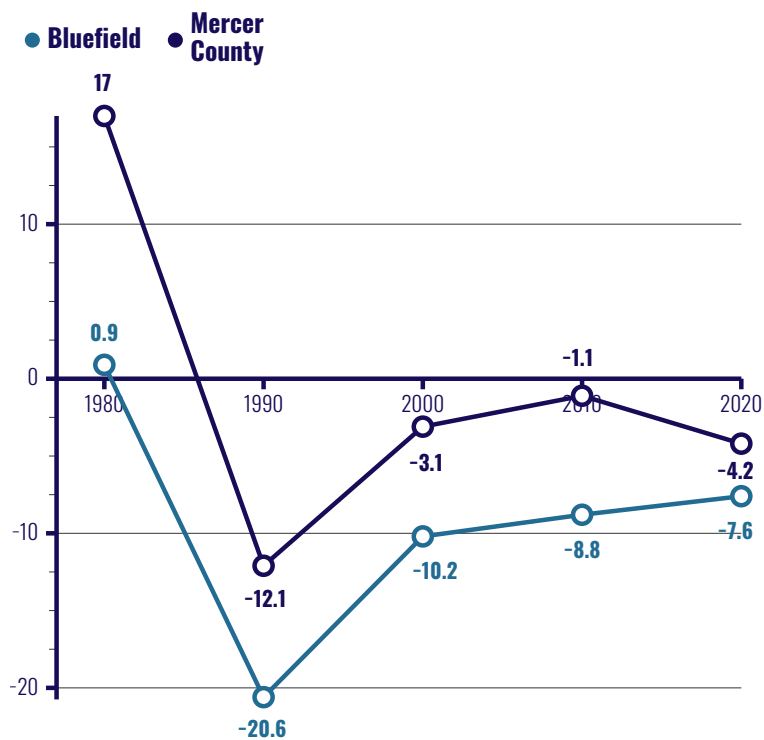


Figure 5M: Princeton Population from 1920-2020

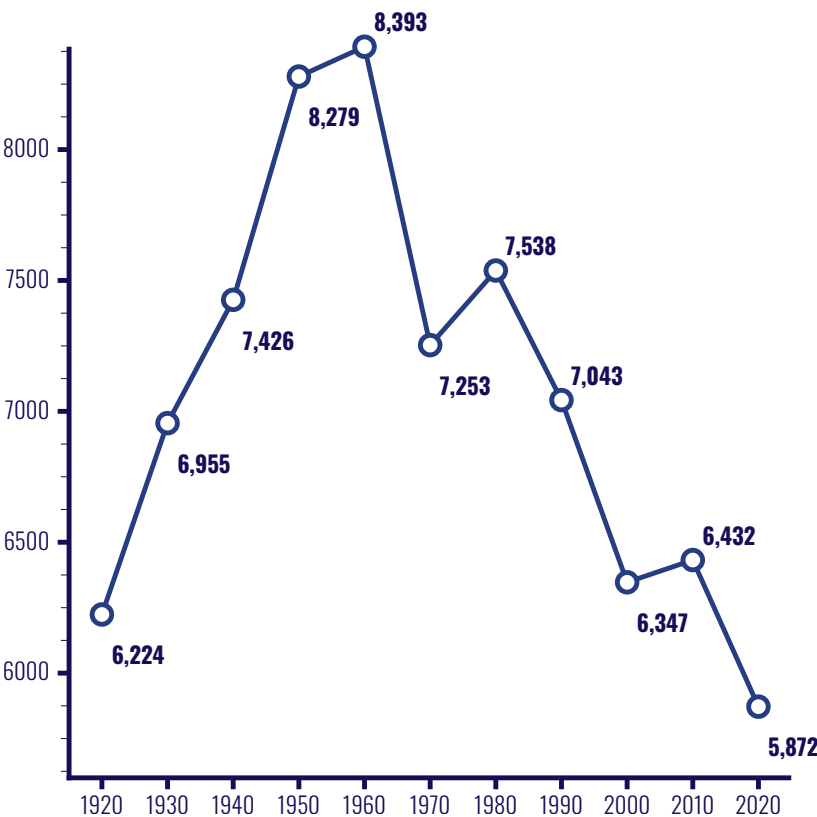


Figure 5N: Locality Percentage of County Population

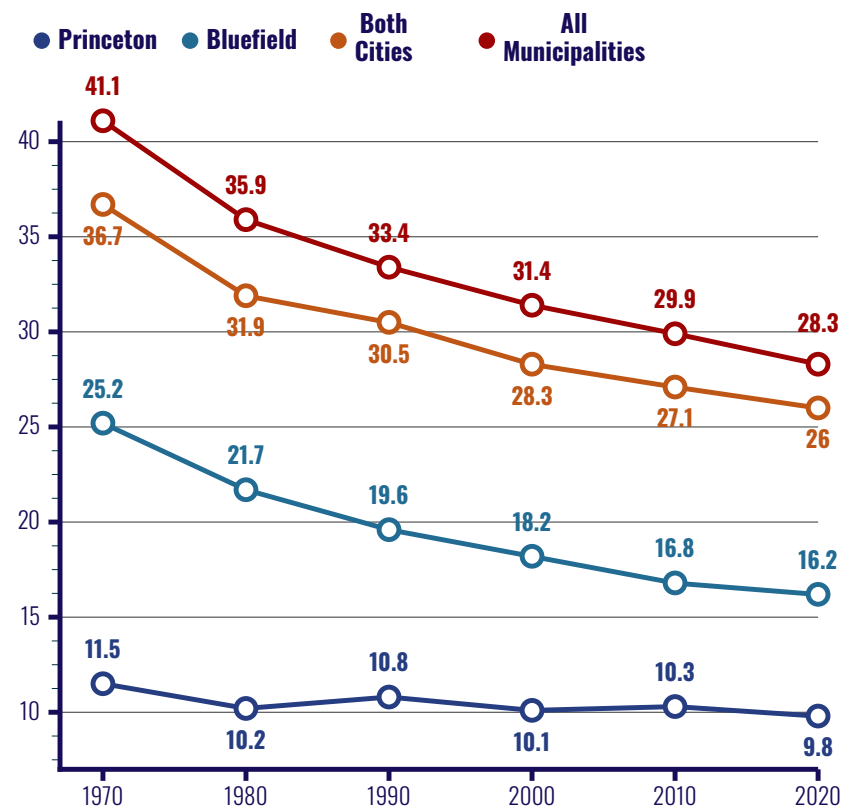


Figure 5O: Percentage of Mercer County's Population Living in Unincorporated Land

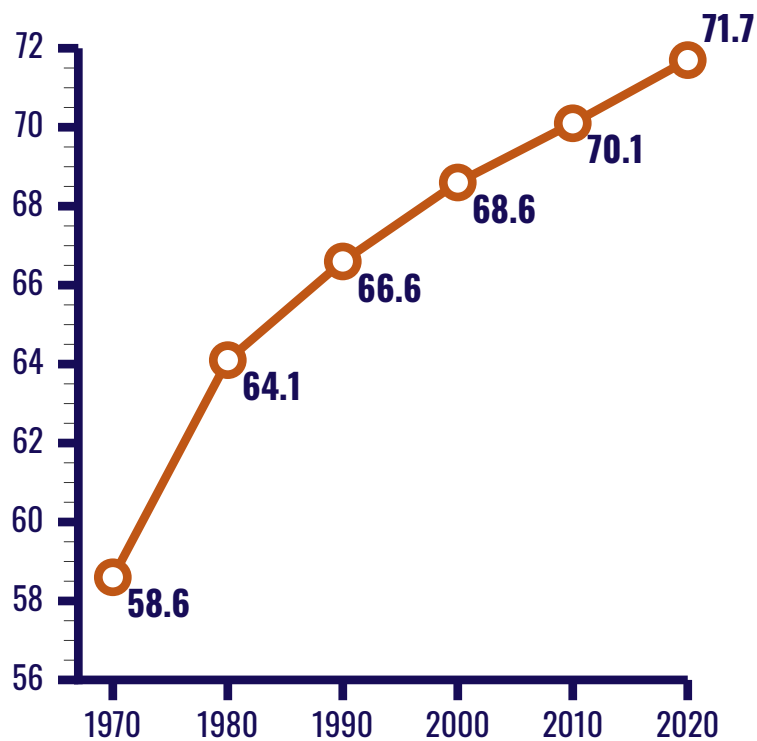


Figure 5P: Civilian Employment Composition Breakdown

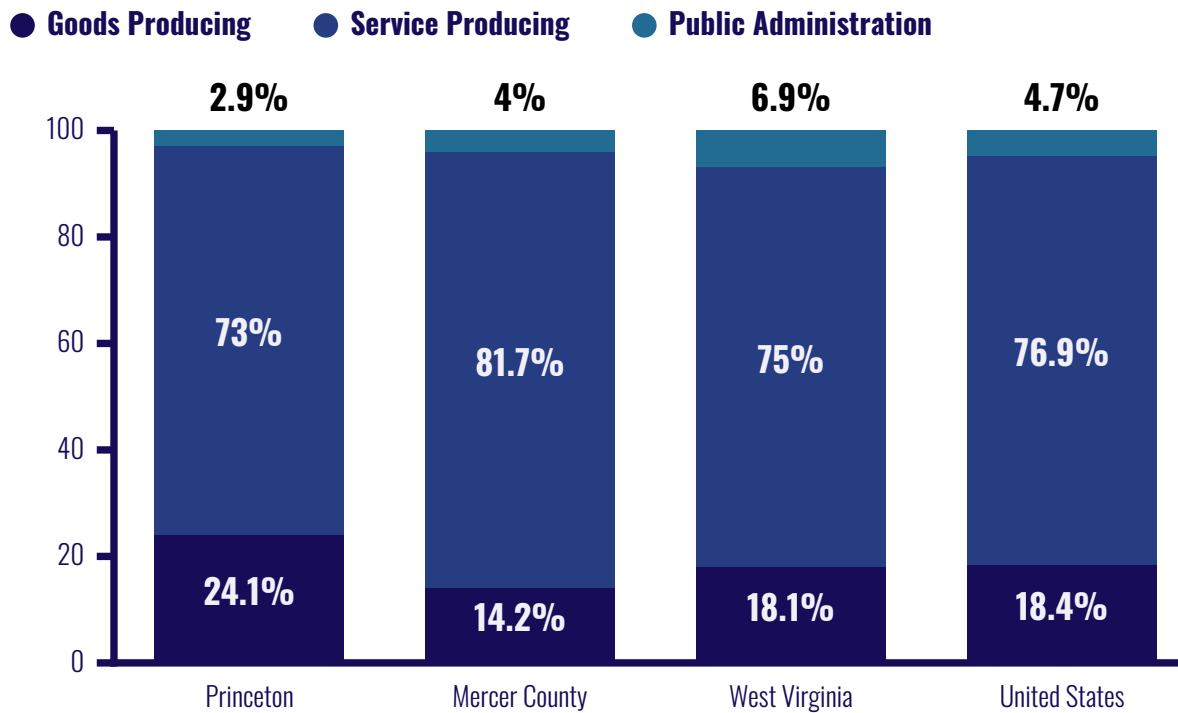


Figure 5Q: Municipality Populations Comparison Chart (1970 to 2020)

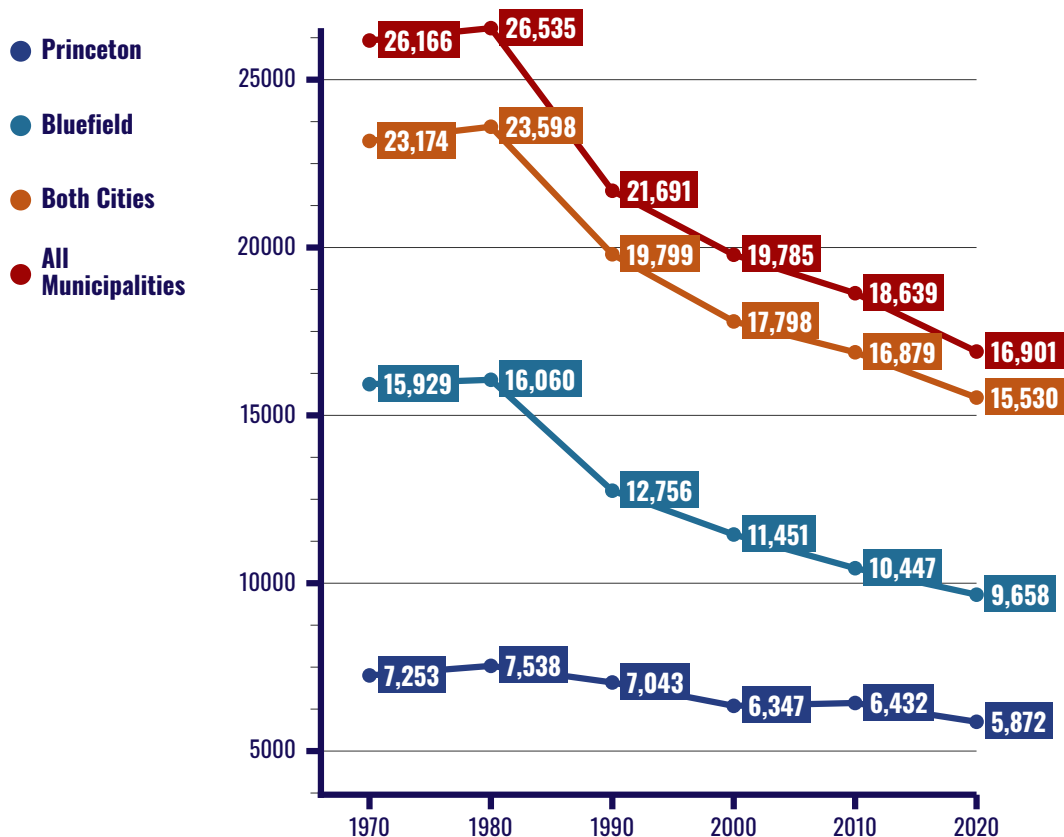


Figure 5R: Median Value of Owner-occupied Housing Units for Princeton, Mercer County, West Virginia, and the United States at 2020

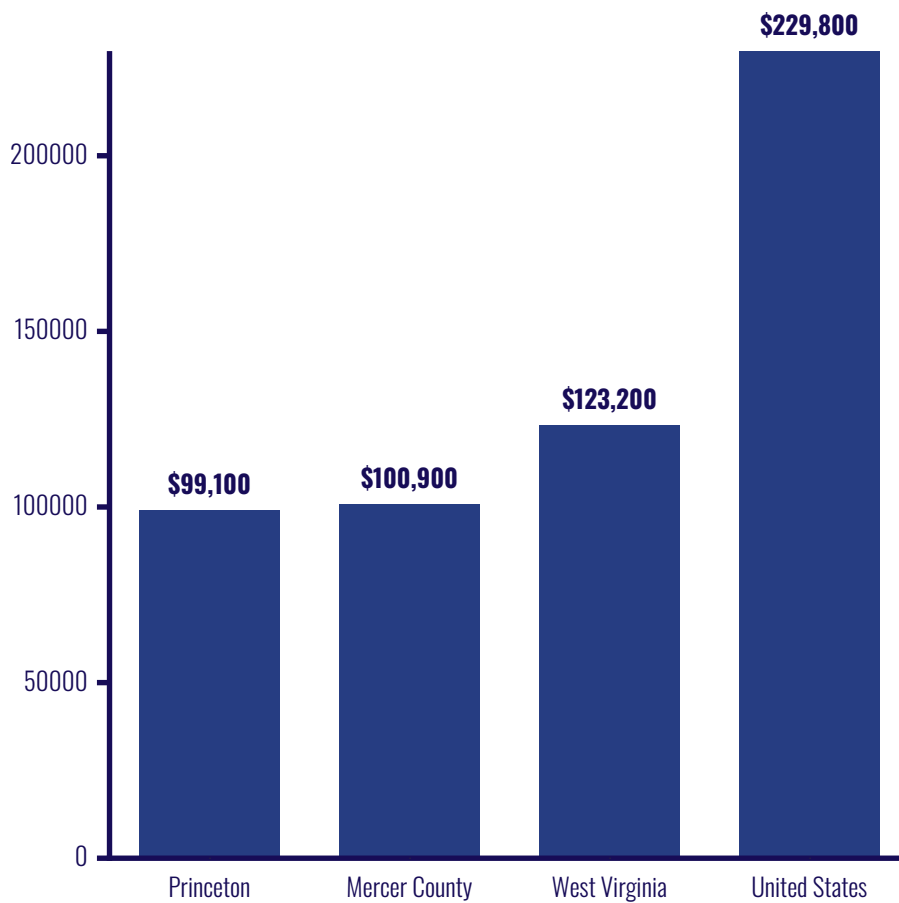


Figure 5S: White Non-Hispanic Percentage of Population Comparison Chart

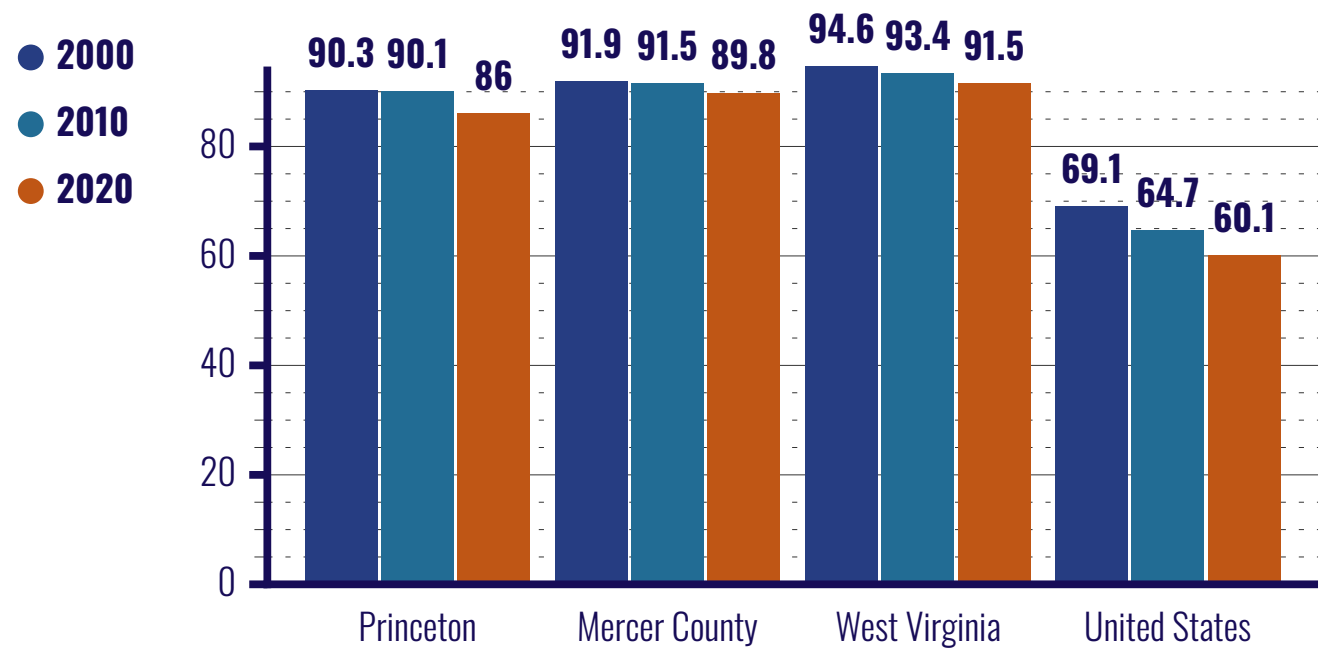


Figure 5T: Average Household Size in Princeton, Mercer County, West Virginia, and the United States in 2020

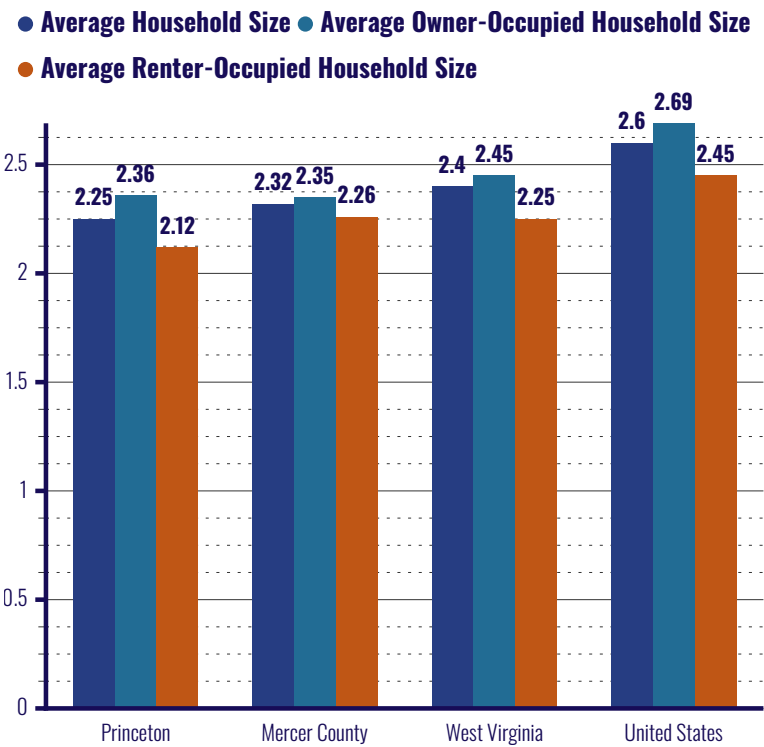


Figure 5U: Change in Population and Workforce from 2010 to 2020

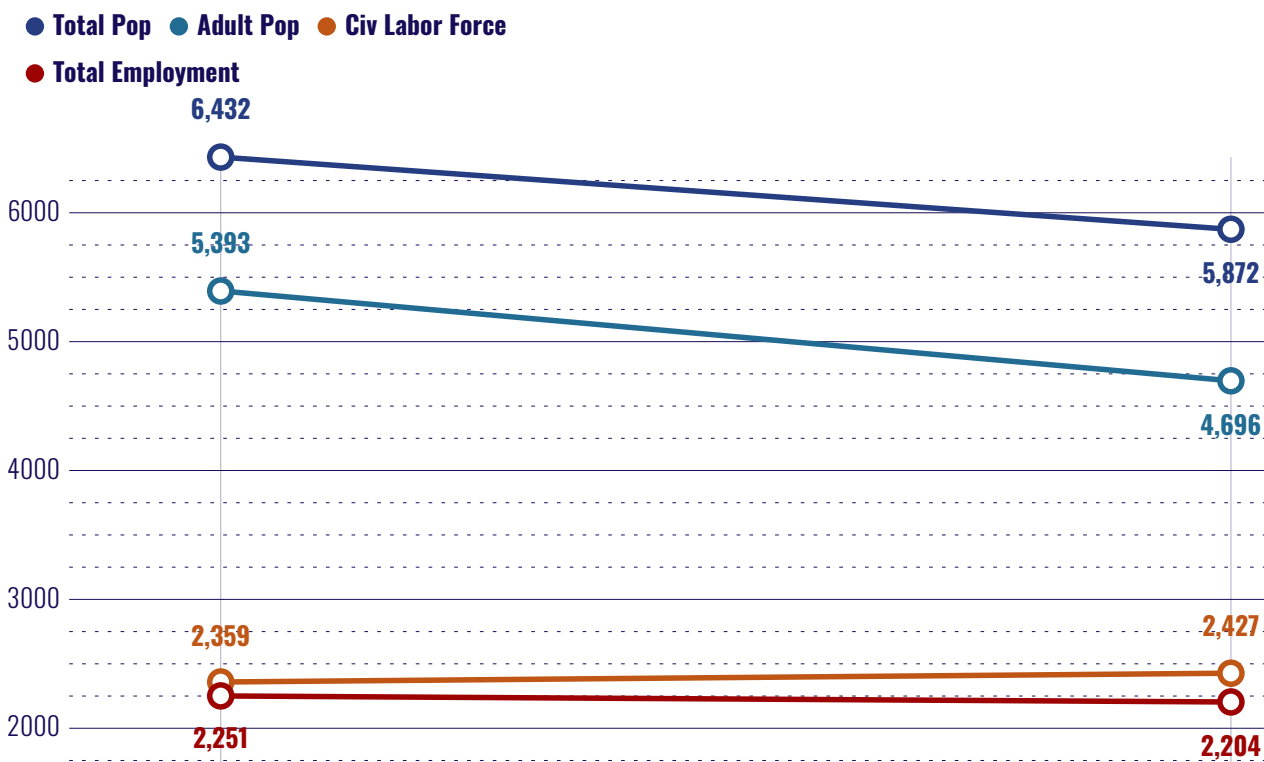


Figure 5V: Percentage of Housing Units Built before 2000 and before 1950

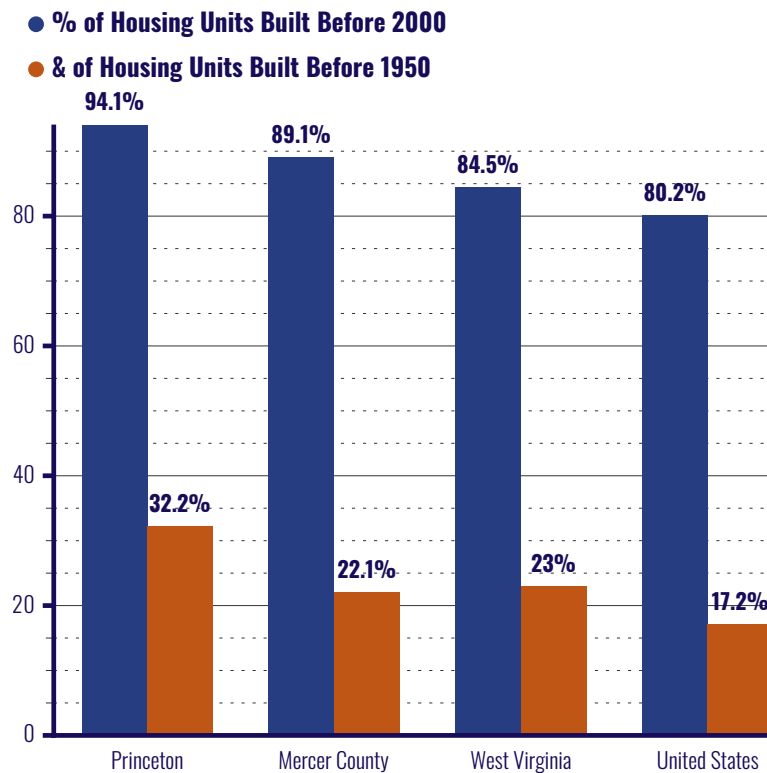


Figure 5W: Median Monthly Housing Costs in Princeton (2020)

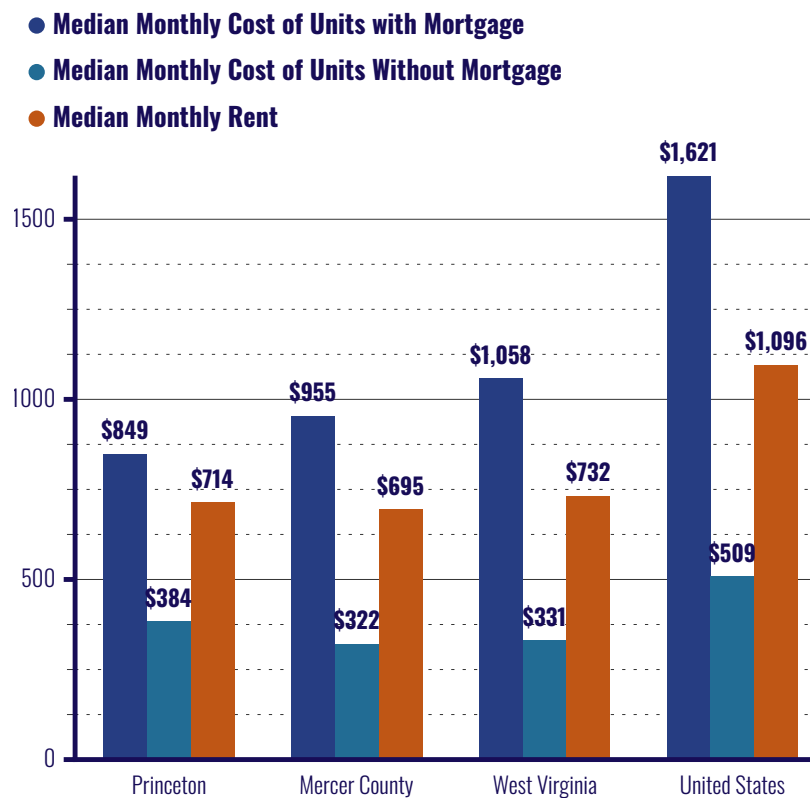


Figure 5X: Percentage of Housing Units Occupied (2020)

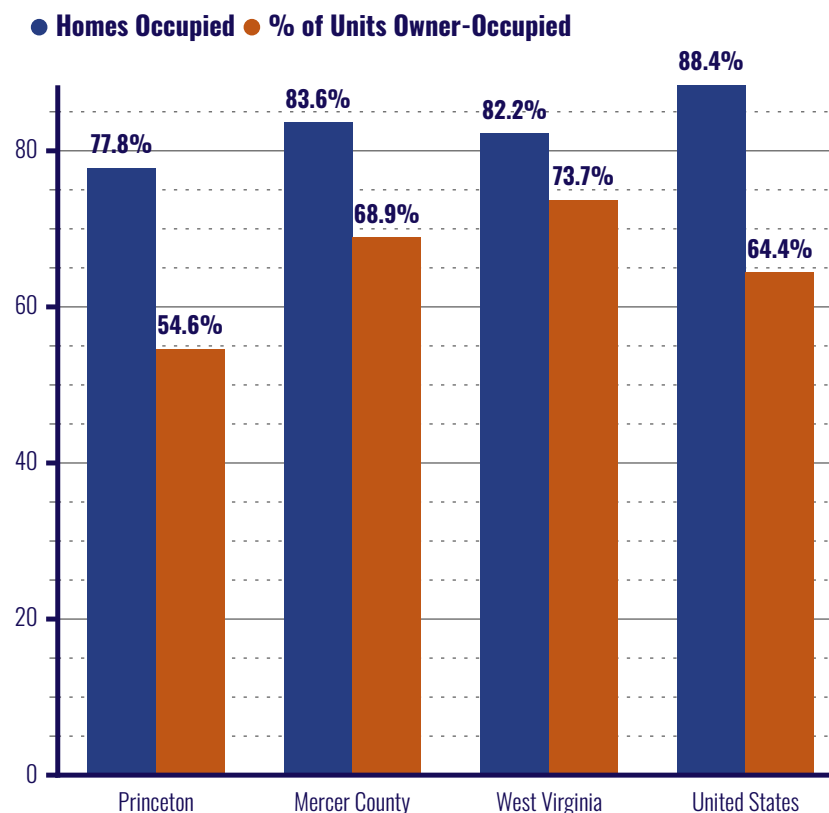


Figure 5Y: Commuting Time Comparison between 2010 and 2020

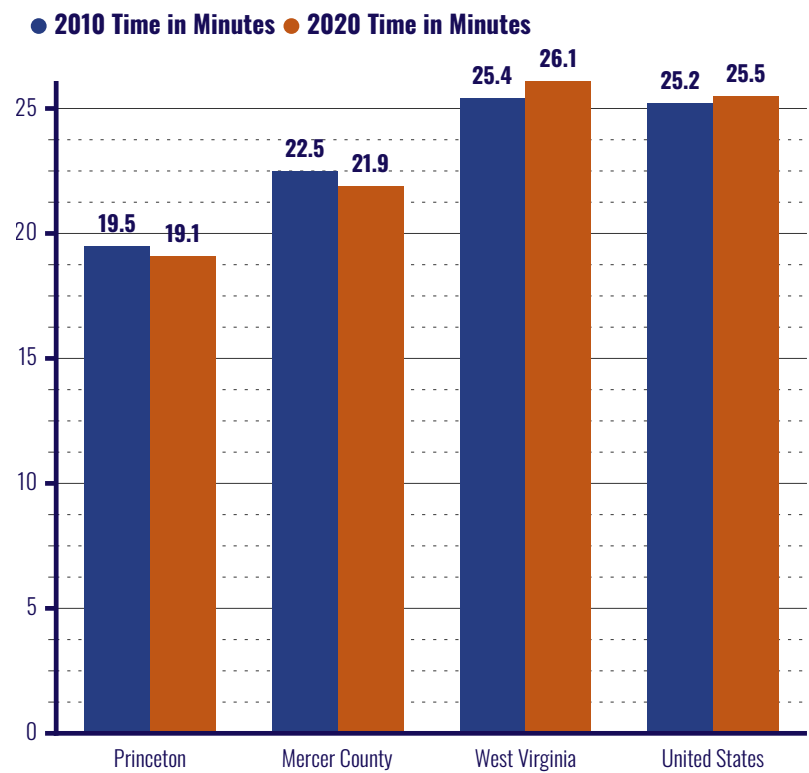


Figure 5Z: Household Income for Princeton, Mercer County, West Virginia, and the United States from 2012 to 2020

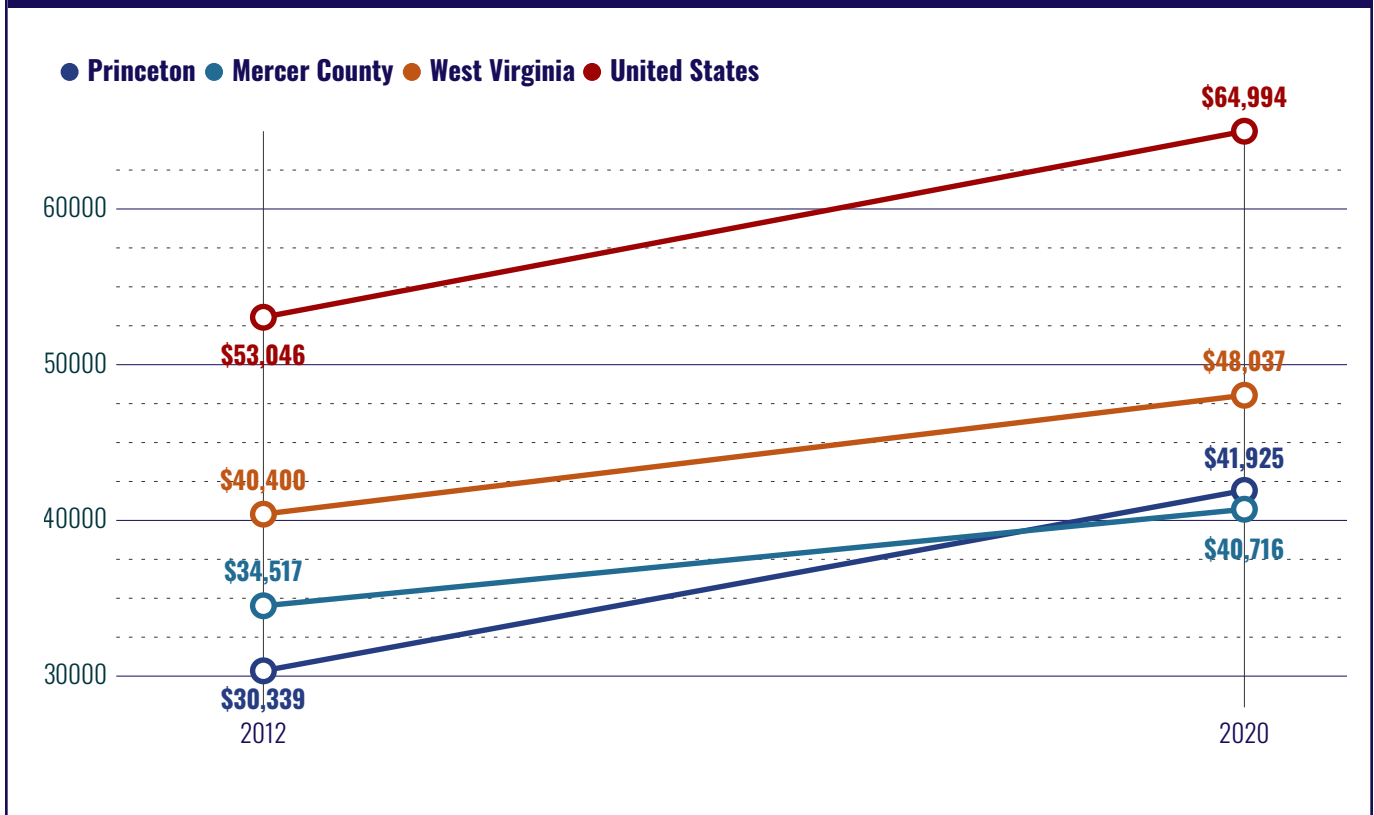


Figure 5AA: Individual Poverty Rate in Princeton, Mercer County, West Virginia, and the United States from 2012 to 2020

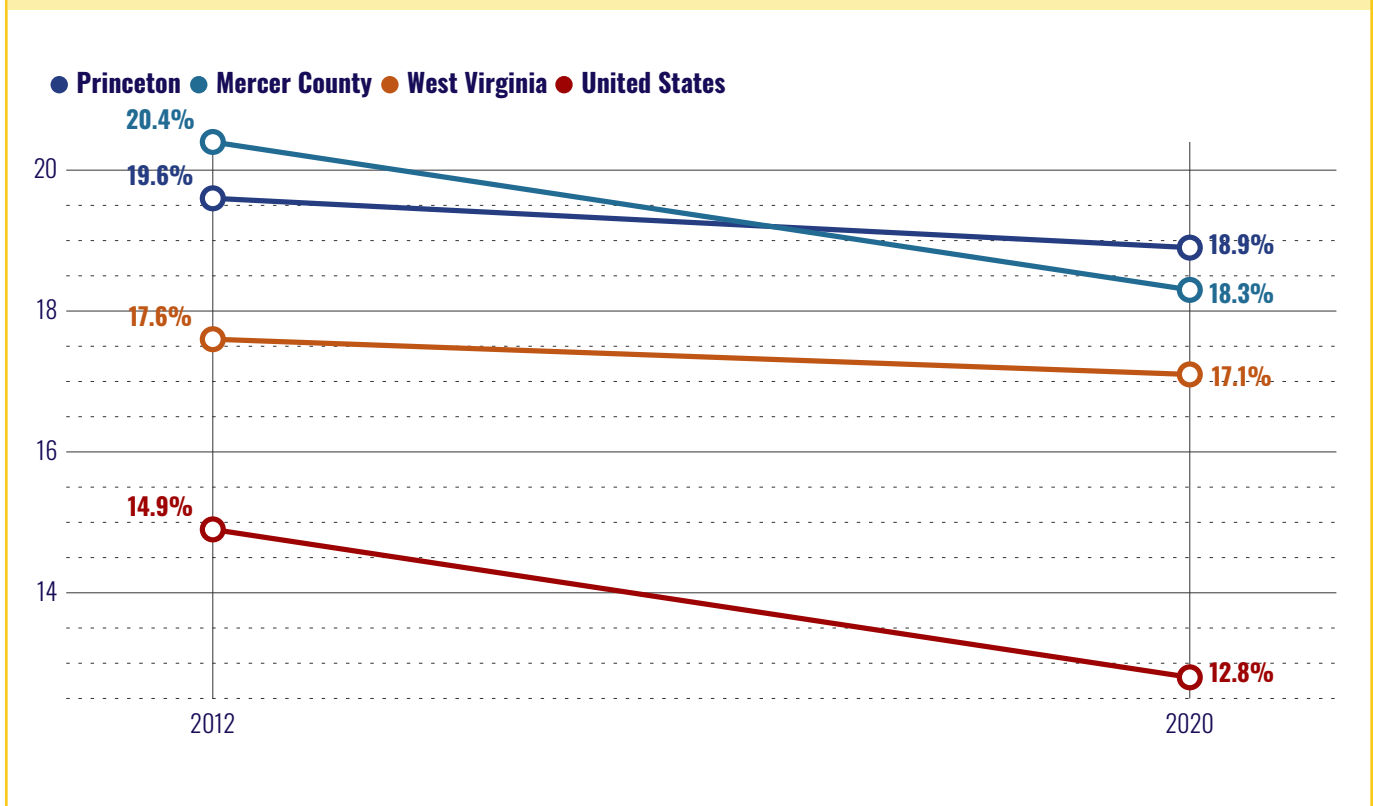


Figure 5AB: Percentage of Population with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher in Princeton, Mercer County, West Virginia, and the United States from 2010 to 2020

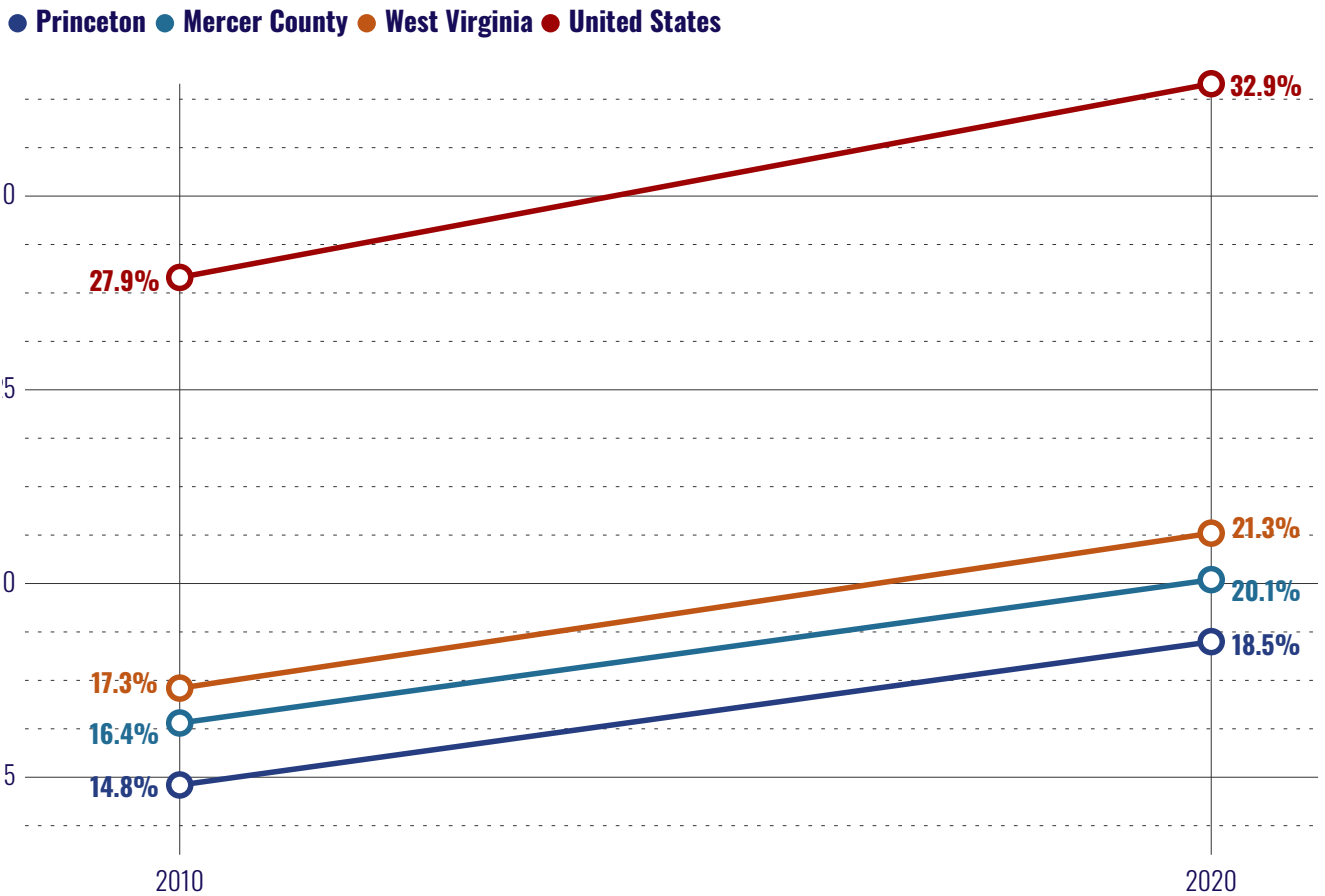


Figure 5AC: Percentage of Population to Be Younger College Graduates (between the Ages of 25 and 34)

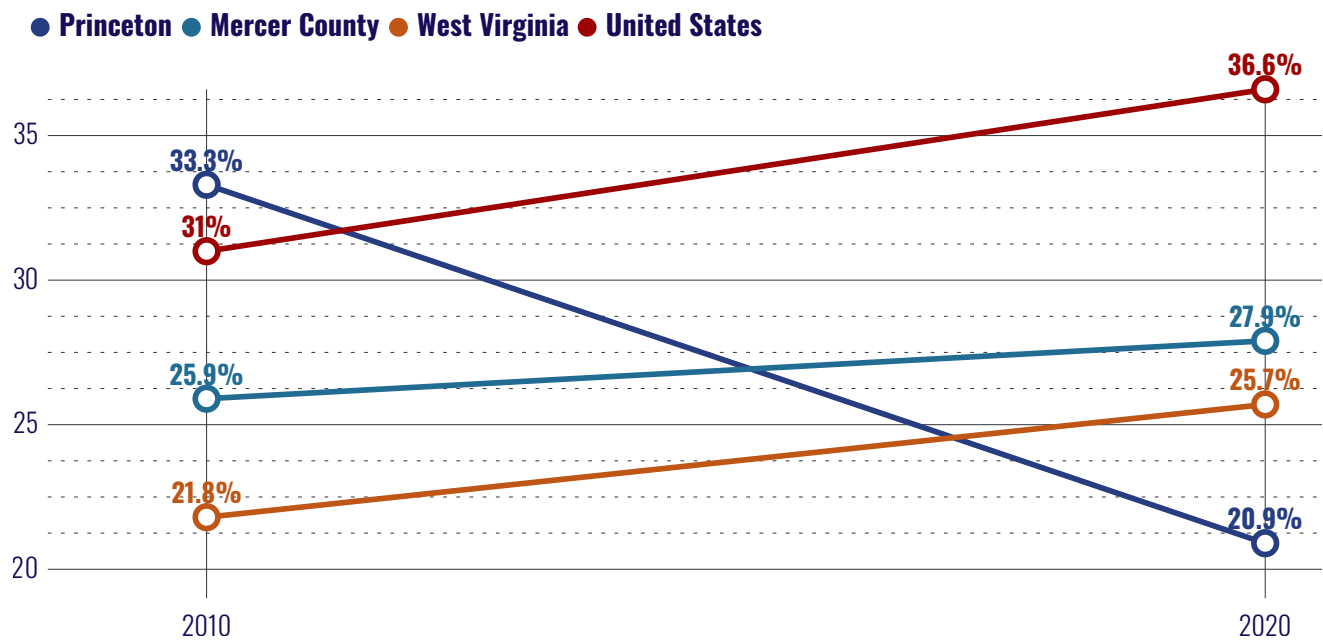
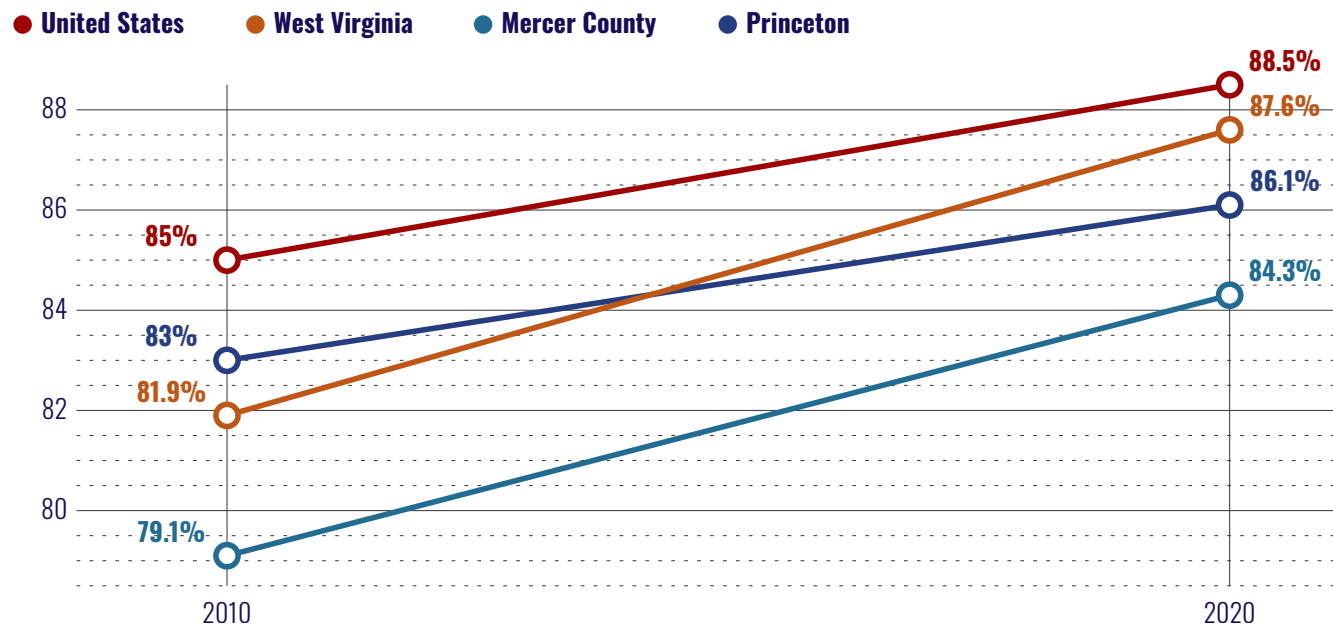


Figure 5AD: Percentage of Population to Be High School Graduates from 2010 to 2020



Comprehensive Plan Blueprint

April 25, 2022 6:30 PM

- Approval of 10-Year Comprehensive Plan Blueprint

May 23, 2022 6:30 PM

- Review of Rural Section (Required)
- Interview Railroad Museum Director, Pat Smith and Library Interim Director, Laura Buchanan

June 27, 2022 6:30 PM

- Review of Historical Preservation (Required) and Historical (Optional) sections
- Interview Chief Mould and Chief Gray

July 25, 2022 6:30 PM

- Review of Public Services (Required) and Safety (Optional) sections
- Interview Code Enforcement Director, Ty Smith

August 29, 2022 6:30 PM

- Review of Land Use (Required) and Conservation (Optional) sections
- Interview Finance Director, Brian Conner

September 26, 2022 6:30 PM

- Review of Finance (Required) section
- Interview Parks and Rec Director, Amanda McCabe

October 31, 2022 6:30 PM

- Review of Recreation (Required), Environmental (Optional), Conservation (Optional), Natural Resource Use (Optional) sections
- Interview Public Works Director, Jackie Phillips, and Assistant Director, Eric Gatchell

November 28, 2022 6:30 PM

- Review of Infrastructure (Required) and Review of Transportation (Required) sections
- Interview City Manager, Mike Webb

December 12, 2022 6:30 PM

- Review of Community Design Section (Required)
- Interview of PEDDA Director, Samuel Lusk

January 30, 2023 6:30 PM

- Review of Economic Development (Required) and Tourism (Optional) Sections
- Interview of Human Resources Director, Brian Blankenship

February 20, 2023 6:30 PM

- Review of Preferred Development Areas (Required) and Re-nawal and/or Redevelopment (Required) Sections

March 27, 2023 6:30 PM

- Public Meeting for residents and community members to convey input on miscellaneous topics related to planning

April 3, 2023 6:30 PM

- Planning Commission Approves Draft of 10-Year Comprehensive Plan
- Draft is conveyed to Princeton City Council for April Council Meeting

May 29, 2023 6:30 PM

- Agenda TBD based on Princeton City Council's review

June 26, 2023 6:30 PM

- Agenda TBD based on Princeton City Council's review

Comprehensive Plan Interview Questions

BACKGROUND

- Can you provide your name and position?
- Can you briefly describe your department within the City?
- How would you describe your duties/responsibility as a department head?
- How many employees, part time and full time, are employed within your department?

PRESENT

- What is the scope of your department, and how does that impact the people of Princeton?
- What would our community look like without your department as part of the City?
- Can you provide a brief description of the assets within your department?
- Other than salaries, what is the biggest expense within your department?

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

- Can you describe three short term goals in your department (within a year)?
- How does your department plan on achieving these short-term goals?
- How can the City best assist in your department achieving its short-term goals?

- Can you describe three long term goals in your department (within 10 years)?
- How does your department plan on achieving these long-term goals?
- How can the City best assist in your department achieving its long-term goals?

INTERDEPARTMENTAL FORESIGHT

- Where do you see your department in 2034?
- How do you believe your job will change between now and then?
- How can the City prepare for these changes now to better equip you or your successors in the future?

COMPREHENSIVE MUNICIPAL FORESIGHT

- What do you personally believe the City needs to improve on the most between now and 2034?
- How should the City go about creating this improvement?
- What do you think will be the most defining characteristic of Princeton in 2034?

Mandatory Components of a Comprehensive Plan

Copy of West Virginia Code §8A-3-4

Note: WV Code updated with legislation passed through the 2020 Regular Session. The West Virginia Code Online is an unofficial copy of the annotated WV Code, provided as a convenience. It has NOT been edited for publication, and is not in any way official or authoritative.

- (a) The comprehensive plan is a written statement on present and future land use and development patterns consisting of descriptive materials, including text, graphics and maps, covering the objectives, principles and guidelines for the orderly and balanced present and future economic, social, physical, environmental and fiscal development of the area under the jurisdiction of the planning commission.
- (b) A comprehensive plan shall meet the following objectives:
 - (1) A statement of goals and objectives for a governing body, concerning its present and future land development;
 - (2) A timeline on how to meet short and long-range goals and objectives;
 - (3) An action plan setting forth implementation strategies;
 - (4) Recommend to the governing body a financial program for goals and objectives that need public financing;
 - (5) A statement of recommendations concerning future land use and development policies that are consistent with the goals and objectives set forth in the comprehensive plan;
 - (6) A program to encourage regional planning, coordination and cooperation with other governing bodies, units of government and planning commissions; and
- (7) Maps, plans, charts and/or descriptive material presenting basic information on the land included in the comprehensive plan, including present and future uses.
- (c) The comprehensive plan shall have, but is not limited to, the following components:
 - (1) Land use—Designate the current, and set goals and programs for the proposed general distribution, location and suitable uses of land, including, but not limited to:
 - (A) Residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, recreational, educational, public, historic, conservation, transportation, infrastructure or any other use of land;
 - (B) Population density and building intensity standards;
 - (C) Growth and/or decline management;
 - (D) Projected population growth or decline; and
 - (E) Constraints to development, including identifying flood-prone and subsidence areas.
 - (2) Housing—Set goals, plans and programs to meet the housing needs for current and anticipated future residents of the jurisdiction, including, but not limited to:
 - (A) Analyzing projected housing needs and the different types of housing needed, including affordable housing and universally designed housing accessible to persons with disabilities;
 - (B) Identifying the number of projected necessary housing units and sufficient land needed for all housing needs;
 - (C) Addressing substandard housing;
 - (D) Rehabilitating and improving existing housing; and
 - (E) Adaptive reuse of buildings

into housing.

- (3) Transportation—Consistent with the land use component, identify the type, location, programs, goals and plans to meet the intermodal transportation needs of the jurisdiction, including, but not limited to:
 - (A) Vehicular, transit, air, port, railroad, river and any other mode of transportation system;
 - (B) Movement of traffic and parking;
 - (C) Pedestrian and bicycle systems; and
 - (D) Intermodal transportation.
- (4) Infrastructure—Designate the current, and set goals, plans and programs, for the proposed locations, capabilities and capacities of all utilities, essential utilities and equipment, infrastructure and facilities to meet the needs of current and anticipated future residents of the jurisdiction.
- (5) Public services—Set goals, plans and programs, to ensure public safety, and meet the medical, cultural, historical, community, social, educational and disaster needs of the current and anticipated future residents of the jurisdiction.
- (6) Rural—Consistent with the land use component, identify land that is not intended for urban growth and set goals, plans and programs for growth and/or decline management in the designated rural area.
- (7) Recreation—Consistent with the land use component, identify land, and set goals, plans and programs for recreational and tourism use in the area.
- (8) Economic development—Establish goals, policies, objectives, provisions and guidelines for economic growth and vitality for current and anticipated future residents of the jurisdiction, including, but not limited to:
 - (A) Opportunities, strengths and weaknesses of the local economy and workforce;
 - (B) Identifying and designating economic development sites and/or sectors for the area; and
 - (C) Type of economic development sought, correlated to the present and projected employment needs and utilization of residents in the area.
- (9) Community design—Consistent with the land use component, set goals, plans and programs to promote a sense of community, character and identity.
- (10) Preferred development areas—Consistent with the land use component, identify areas where incentives may be used to encourage development, infill development or redevelopment in order to promote well designed and coordinated communities and prevent sprawl.
- (11) Renewal and/or redevelopment—Consistent with the land use component, identify slums and other blighted areas and set goals, plans and programs for the elimination of such slums and blighted areas and for community renewal, revitalization and/or redevelopment.
- (12) Financing—Recommend to the governing body short and long-term financing plans to meet the goals, objectives and components of the comprehensive plan.
- (13) Historic preservation—Identify historical, scenic, archaeological, architectural or similar significant lands or buildings, and specify preservation plans and programs so as not to unnecessarily destroy the past development which may make a viable and affordable contribution in the future.

City of Princeton Planning Commission Meetings

Disclaimer: The meeting minutes in this section are a word-for-word copy of approved and recorded minutes for referenced Planning Commission meeting dates.

APRIL 25, 2022 MEETING MINUTES

The Planning Commission for the City of Princeton, Mercer County, West Virginia met in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building, 800 Bee Street, on Thursday, April 25, 2022, at 6:30 PM. In attendance were President John Hickman; Vice President Vic Allen; Commission Members Mike Webb, Mayor David Graham, JoAnna Fredeking, Bob Lohr, James Hilling and Dewey Russell (ex-officio); Economic Development Specialist Sam Lusk; and City Clerk Kenneth Clay. Absent were Pat Anderson, Anthony Brown, and ex-officio member Marshall Lytton. A quorum was constituted thereby.

CALL TO ORDER

Planning Commission President John Hickman called the meeting to order.

MINUTES

Meeting of April 15, 2021—Without correction, on motion of JoAnna Fredeking and second of Bob Lohr, the minutes of the meeting of April 15, 2021, were approved unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no Old Business.

NEW BUSINESS

TEN-YEAR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN BLUEPRINT, 2024-2034

Economic Development Specialist Samuel Lusk submitted a timeline to the Princeton Planning Commission for review and approval regarding the completion of Princeton's 2024-2034, Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Lusk also presented a document outlining the responsibilities of the Planning Commission and Mr. Lusk throughout the process.

As expressed during the Planning Commission's March 2022, Work Session, the City administration and Commissioners prefer to complete the Comprehensive Plan internally rather than rely on an external entity. Further, Mr. Lusk advised that the timeline he submitted will make this possible by sectioning off each of the state-required (and optional) sections into monthly submissions to the Planning Commission for review over the course of the time period specified in the timeline until the final product is completed. Also, the Planning Commission will interview the City's department heads to obtain the additional information for the section(s) following that particular month's interview. Mr. Lusk explained that, upon approval of the timeline, he will create a questionnaire that will be asked of all department heads during their respective interviews for continuity purposes.

Mr. Lusk made reference to a timeline he had prepared for the completion of the new Comprehensive Plan and explained that it assumes the following:

1. Economic Development Specialist Samuel Lusk, is given authorization to complete each section of the 10-Year Comprehensive Plan in a manner that he deems proper and necessary;
2. Economic Development Specialist Samuel Lusk will complete deliverables within 48 hours of the date of each monthly meeting for the Planning Commission to thoroughly review;

3. The Planning Commission will take on an oversight role during this process and will be responsible for reviewing continuity, syntax, and substance of each submission;

4. Approved submissions are representative of the Planning Commission and not that of the writer or any particular city employee unless specifically stated in the Comprehensive Plan. However, the Planning Commission will give the writer and City Employees credit for their contributions when appropriate; and

5. The Planning Commission authorizes \$5,000 in expenditures for this project and gives Samuel Lusk the permission to use the funding as deemed appropriate and necessary for the completion of this project.

Mr. Lusk further explained that if this document and timeline are approved by the Princeton Planning Commission, they will be placed in the appendix of the 2024-2034, Ten-Year Comprehensive Plan.

Following is the Comprehensive Plan timeline as presented by Mr. Lusk:

- **April 25, 2022: Approval of 10-Year Comprehensive Plan Blueprint**
- **May 23, 2022: Review of Rural Section (Required);** interview Railroad Museum Director, Pat Smith, and Library Interim Director, Laura Buchanan
- **June 27, 2022: Review Historical Preservation (Required) and Historical (Optional) sections;** interview Chief Mould and Chief Gray
- **July 25, 2022: Review of Public Services (Required) and Safety (Optional) sections;** interview Code Enforcement Director, Ty Smith
- **August 29, 2022: Review Land Use (Required) and Conservation (Optional) sections;** interview Finance Director, Brian Conner
- **September 26, 2022: Review Finance (Required) section;** interview Parks and Rec Director, Amanda McCabe

- **October 31, 2022: Review of Recreation (Required), Environmental (Optional), Conservation (Optional), Natural Resource Use (Optional) sections;** interview Public Works Director Jackie Phillips and Assistant Director, Eric Gatchell
- **November 28, 2022: Review of Infrastructure (Required) and Review of Transportation (Required) sections;** interview City Manager, Mike Webb
- **December 12, 2022: Review of Community Design Section (Required);** interview PEDA Director Samuel Lusk
- **January 30, 2023: Review of Economic Development (Required) and Tourism (Optional) sections;** interview of Human Resources Director, Brian Blankenship
- **February 27, 2023: Review of Preferred Development Areas (Required) and Renewal and/or Redevelopment (Required) Sections**
- **March 27, 2023: Public Meeting for residents and community members to convey input on miscellaneous topics related to planning**
- **April 3, 2023: Planning Commission approves draft of 10-Year Comprehensive Plan;** draft is conveyed to Princeton City Council for April Council Meeting
- **May 29, 2023: Agenda TBD based on Princeton City Council's review**
- **June 26, 2023: Agenda TBD based on Princeton City Council's review**

LIST OF PRELIMINARY IDEAS FOR THE 2024-2034 PLAN

Princeton Economic Development Specialist, Samuel Lusk, also presented the following list of preliminary ideas to add to the 2024-2034 Plan (no particular order):

- Broadband
- GIS mapping across all departments
- Storm water projects
- LED lighting throughout the City
- Solar technology

- **Princeton Land Reuse Agency (PLRA)**—Property acquisition through the County Tax Sale for redevelopment
- **Princeton Economic Development Authority (PEDA)**—expansion of tourism, marketing, public communication; creation of a Marketing & Communication Specialist Position
- Development of an Industrial Park owned by PEDA
- Annexation
- Consistent growth in the 1% sales tax over the decade
- Reduction and eventual elimination of B. & O. Tax
- Development of pedestrian walkways on thoroughfares
- Working with WVU Health to build and grow the medical industry within Princeton
- The creation of a Princeton Housing Authority to use land acquired by PEDA or PLRA that is not prime for commercial development and rather affordable for middle class housing

Planning Commission Member JoAnna Fredeking commented that the Planning Commission can complete the required tasks and compile the results of the new Comprehensive Plan in-house together with the City's administration. Otherwise, it will cost a lot of money to contract with an outside firm to draft a plan.

Samuel Lusk expressed agreement with Mrs. Fredeking's comments.

MOTION: JoAnna Fredeking moved the Planning Commission approve and follow the plan for the development of the 2024-2034 Comprehensive Plan for the City of Princeton, as submitted by Economic Development Specialist, Samuel Lusk.

Planning Commission Member Bob Lohr duly seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

Mrs. Fredeking asked what do we do now.

Samuel Lusk replied that it all is up to him now and added that he will update the Planning Commission at the next meeting as per the schedule he had presented. The Planning Commission will approve the work accomplished at each month's meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no Other Business.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, President John Hickman adjourned the April 25, 2022, meeting of the Planning Commission at 6:42 PM.

JULY 25, 2022 MEETING MINUTES

The Planning Commission for the City of Princeton, Mercer County, West Virginia met in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building on Monday, July 25, 2022, at 6:30 PM. In attendance were Vice President Vic Allen; Commission Members JoAnna Fredeking, Michael Webb, Jim Hilling and Bob Lohr; Economic Development Specialist Samuel Lusk, Code Enforcement Director Ty Smith and City Clerk Kenneth Clay. Absent were Commission Members John Hickman, Patricia Anderson, Anthony Brown and Mayor David Graham; ex-officio members Dewey Russell and Marshall Lytton; and City Attorney Paul Cassell. A quorum was constituted thereby.

CALL TO ORDER

Vice President Vic Allen called the meeting to order.

MINUTES

No minutes were presented for consideration.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no Old Business.

New Business

A. PUBLIC HEARING ON THE FOLLOWING:

(1) Proposal to Rezone a Residential Section of the City from Lower Pine Street to Lincoln Street and Encompassing High Street, from Residential-2 (R-2) to Residential-3 (R-3); (2) Proposal to allow tiny houses in the R-3 Zone; and (3) Proposal to add the option of an Agricultural Zone.

Proposal to Rezone a Section of the City from Lower Pine Street to Lincoln Street: Vice President Vic Allen opened the public hearing at 6:35 PM and called for public comments regarding the proposal to rezone a section of the City of Princeton from Lower Pine Street to Lincoln Street, encompassing High Street, from Residential-2 to Residential-3.

Code Enforcement Director Ty Smith recommended that the Planning Commission probably should make a motion to table this issue in that he had received negative feedback from some of the residents in the High Street area and expressed a belief that the residents had not received enough information regarding the proposal. Therefore, Mr. Smith recommended the proposed rezoning be tabled until additional paperwork has been distributed to all the targeted neighborhoods so as to have more of a response from the residents for the public hearing.

Since there was no one present to comment on the proposal and in response to Mr. Smith's information Mr. Allen called for a motion to table the public hearing until a later date.

MOTION: Bob Lohr moved the Planning Commission table the public hearing on rezoning a section of the City from Lower Pine Street to Lincoln Street and encompassing High Street, from R-2 to R-3.

JoAnna Fredeking duly seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

Proposal to Allow Tiny Houses in the R-3 Zone: Zoning Official Ty Smith also recommended tabling this proposal based

on the need to provide the public with more information before proceeding any further.

MOTION: Bob Lohr moved the Planning Commission table the proposal for tiny houses in the R-3 Zone to a later date.

JoAnna Fredeking duly seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING: Proposal to Add an Agricultural Zone as an Option: Both City Manager Mike Webb and Zoning Official Ty Smith recommended proceeding with the public hearing on the proposal to add an agricultural zone as an option in the City.

Mr. Allen asked if this would apply to the entire city.

Zoning Official Ty Smith replied it would only apply to specific areas of the City.

At 6:45 PM Vic Allen opened the floor for comments regarding the proposal to add an agricultural option to the City Code.

Ty Smith explained the proposal is to add an agricultural zone or include it as a permitted use in certain zones under the City of Princeton's Zoning Code. Doing so would make the activity available if someone wanted to be annexed into the City as an agricultural activity or business.

There being no further comments, Mr. Allen closed the public hearing at 6:45 PM and called for a motion.

MOTION: Bob Lohr moved the Planning Commission approve and recommend to City Council adding the option for an Agricultural Zone to the City's Zoning Code.

JoAnna Fredeking duly seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

B. PUBLIC SERVICES

Economic Development Specialist Sam Lusk explained that he had pulled this draft from the last Comprehensive Plan and this section of the draft addresses functions, duties, responsibilities and structure of the Police, Fire, Public Works and Code Enforcement Departments, as components of the City of

Princeton's public services. He further explained that as far as the Police, Fire, Public Works and Code Enforcement sections, he just tried to elaborate and add a little bit more detail for presentation to the Planning Commission today.

Mr. Allen asked if there were any comments regarding the Public Services' Draft.

There were no comments or questions posed pending Ty Smith's interview by the Commission relative to the Code Enforcement Department.

C. INTERVIEW OF CODE ENFORCEMENT DIRECTOR TY SMITH

Planning Commission Vice President Vic Allen posed the interview questions to Ty Smith.

Background/Name and position?

Ty Smith, Code Enforcement Director and Zoning Official.

Can you briefly describe your department within the City?

Code Enforcement covers everything from A to Z. What I mean by that is we cover everything from A to Z, Animal Control to Zoning and everything in between. If you will look at the list of Codes I have given you. We've also adopted several WV State Codes we have to follow.

How would you describe your duties/responsibilities as a department head?

My duties consist of managing employees invested in the City of Princeton. First those employees must be found. Then train them. That training has not been quantified in any manual or certification exercise. Providing training for this job is like separating fly crap from pepper. Consistently you have to train and become certified for various things. International Property Maintenance Inspector, International Residential Code Inspector, International Building Code Inspector, Mechanical, Plumbing, Gas Code, Pool Code, Zoning Code, Permitting. These are some of the certifications. What it does not qualify you for is maturity, professionalism, diplomacy, ethics, common sense,

courtesy, tenacity and intestinal fortitude.

How many employees, part time and full time, are employed within your department?

Three including myself. We are understaffed, but I can't include Public Works in our staff. There's a lot of ground to cover with three employees. We also work with every department in the City: Police, Fire, Public Works, Administration, including the City Manager. We have to. There are just too many things we have to know or source the information and pass it on to other people about everything from starting a business, buying a house; and people want to know what violations are being enforced.

If we ever consider adding the fourth person, what do you think they would do? Double up on inspections or would there be a new, additional responsibility? I think the wave of the future that's coming will be the merging of the Code Enforcement Department and Fire Department into a Building Safety Department with one person that administers it and who will have many inspectors working for him. I'll give you an example; Beckley, which has a combined department that is led by co-directors.

Also, when you talk about training, if you come to our council meetings or Public Safety Committee, the Fire Chief will get up and report something like we had 475 hours of training last month for our men or the Police Chief might say we had three officers gone for three weeks of training. When you start adding those hours up, that's a lot of hours for Code Enforcement, but we have to get those certifications to do our job. In other words, Melissa Meachum had to go to Animal Control classes and take a test to receive the required certification. Likewise, Ben Love had to take the certified Flood Plain Managers course, as well as take the International Property Maintenance test. These certifications are required by the State Fire Marshal and both of them passed, but to do anything else, other certifications are required.

Considering the Fire Department, they have

18 to 20 personnel who come on as firefighters, but do so much more, but Code Enforcement is starting small. The future, with all the State and local Fire Marshals, they supersede certain things we do, as well as the Fire Department, as far as Life Safety Codes are involved. Many of the Fire Department personnel already are involved in building, fire and life safety and all they need is a certified electrician to form a combined Building Safety Department. Whereas, if I look at one of my employees or myself, it's going to be a lot harder to get the certification, or a lot of other things.

So how would you go about administering that in the public arena? There's some diplomacy that must be used. You just don't walk out there with a badge on your chest stuck out there. That doesn't work because a lot of times you have to know what you're talking about and, if you don't have that cut with continuity, you have a problem. Everybody's going to know what you're doing otherwise.

For instance, there is a code out there called the Existing Building. They fall under the Code at the time they were built. Now if they don't need to receive a 50% remodel, then they don't have to be brought up to current codes. And even if they do receive a remodel, only a portion of the building that is being remodeled would be considered. That it would have to be 100 percent, everything else would be kind of piecemeal that meets the Code. So if I walked in and said all of it had to be sprinkled because that's what I want or if I said you have to build a wall right here no matter what the Fire Code requires. No, that is what you get into and I'm telling you that because whatever you do with the Code, you better do it like it's the Bible, because it's written down, someone else can find it. But if you don't want to look it up, then an inspector is not needed. The inspector's job is to rightly divide that Code. In other words, I don't want to put undue stress on you as a business or property owner or do something that you really should not have to do. But I do want to meet that safety reform, so I'm

going to let you take the first step by putting that building permit on the window. One thing I have fussed about enforcement for many years is the need to do inspections on weekends, because that is when the work is being done.

Commission Member JoAnna Fredeking commented that she and Jack (Fredeking) went for a ride on a Saturday and counted 14 places where there were contractors working without a permit.

And your work days are Monday through Friday, right? So how do you talk about that?

Mr. Smith replied that is what some of them are going to do. They're going to work on Saturdays and Sundays. Some of them will, but not all. I know when I was doing electrical work here, I had to get a City license and pay taxes. It's not a big deal anywhere you work, but the biggest thing is making sure they get that license.

What is the scope of your department and how does it impact the people of Princeton?

As for scope, we cover everything and work with or try to work with every department. We receive complaints, as well as requests for service from everyone concerning everything. We pass some on as we work together accordingly with different departments for different things. We receive numerous requests and complaints often from other departments as well. Part two of the question concerning the impact of Code Enforcement. I don't want to overstate or understate the total impact, but I think, if you just look around our area at anything nuisance related out in the County or in other localities. If you are asking bang for the buck or the cost versus the results or the lack of versus the results, we fare pretty well.

What would our community look like without your department as part of the City?

Honestly, not nearly as good as it does now. If you don't address a problem then you have to be prepared to live with the problem.

Can you provide a brief description of the assets within your department?

The employees are number one. I have two employees uniquely qualified to do about anything. Was there a learning curve and is there? Of course. Is there much they need to learn to do? Of course. We bring to a job what we have if it be knowledge, good work habits, bad work habits, a chip on our shoulder, ability to listen or not listen, adaptability, be you a dreamer or a master of the obvious, common sense or nonsense. We are all a mix of those things. This is now my employee to train and I must figure out a way to lead them to better training, better professionalism, common sense, and learned behavior. If you step out with the thought that all people want the best for their neighborhood, or if you think because a citizen has a problem with trash, grass or a nuisance that he or she is a bad neighbor, person or character, you are in for some frustrating moments and days. For example, no one that works in my department came here knowing what was expected. Maturity is probably our best asset. However, the problem that comes with time more than it does in training. City Management is a great asset. The City Council is an asset, other departments... assets abound. Each one of these assets must be used. Navigating personalities and agendas is a part of every job. The hardest things are the places I learn the most. In every circumstance we have to work together to be the most effective.

Other than salaries, what is the biggest expense within your department?

As far as equipment, our vehicles, computers, I-pads or tablets are our equipment. Data collection is the great separator. The GIS System is an important resource for our data collection and property information. Everything we do will be recorded and saved in that system for referencing at any time. If you click on any of those links, it brings up information on 60 structures scheduled for demolition, that includes about 30-some houses, and it has everything in there

from the owners and history of the property.

The drone, as far as I have seen, is an important asset that enhances our capabilities as a department. We have the ability to go out and do data collection. With this collection system, you see all the different things not accessible before. What apartment buildings are like overall and on building inspections you see much more previously unavailable.

Can you describe three short term goals in your department (within a year)?

Demolish 60 structures in the allotted time with a \$275,000 grant from HUD. We must organize our data collection and integrate the ability to get the best use of the information provided. We were the first one to submit our grant application under the State's Demolition Program since we already knew the process and had all the data entered in the system.

Another goal is to organize our data collection in order to get the best use of the fillable forms, print from the GIS system and access necessary working files and documents.

How does your department plan on achieving these short-term goals?

We have our application in place and monies are coming for the demolitions. We are working on our data collection system now. We are adding Zoning and Building Inspection to our dashboard along with all the forms, and so on.

How can the City best assist in your department achieving its long-term goals?

Support Code Enforcement by allowing us to develop a training program. Training for future Code Enforcement individuals to develop a pool for potential hiring. Also, tier level training for GIS use and development. Job/quality assessment data. Just because you give an employee two extra jobs to do doesn't mean they have the training or ability or want to do a quality job.

We work together for these things as far as budgeting. I don't have

any trouble with my budget.

I don't think I overspend, but we do need to appropriate more money into our budget or by moving money around for something more important. Everybody thinks it's the most unpopular job, but I think people appreciate us and thank us for taking the time to do our job. The first class I ever attended the instructor said "did you guys see that statue for Code Enforcement Officers that everybody in the classes must learn and enforce?" And he said firemen and policemen also don't get appreciated the way they should, but sometimes you have to work your job and it has to be enough just looking around knowing that things are what they should be.

Where do you see your department in 2034?

I see our department morphing into a Building Safety Department with the acknowledgment that the Code Book is our Bible of understanding.

How do you believe your job will change between now and then?

Understanding codes and being able to rightly divide the code is as important to Fire and Code Departments as the King James is to a preacher. That said, if there is no continuity in enforcement of all codes; if your inspector cannot understand what he is looking at when he picks up a set of prints or walks into a remodel; if they don't understand what is the correct occupancy without calling the Fire Marshal: Houston! We have a problem! It's not a matter of who has jurisdiction in a district or county or municipality, it's about getting it right. The time for feelings and posturing is past. The future depends on getting the correct information and rightly dividing the Codes. That just covers the Zoning, Building, Permitting and Inspecting Part.

Regarding the development of personnel to do Animal Control, Property Maintenance, Flood Plain Management: Floodplain Management is something that has never been

managed in Princeton. It has to be controlled or at least looked at and not just ignored.

How can the City prepare for these changes now to better equip you or your successor in the future?

The future of each of these things will be determined by what we do in three years, five years, seven years and next year. We don't have to reinvent the wheel, but it's out there turning now. I expect Code Enforcement to merge with the Fire Department and make the Building Safety Department. I'm not here to protect the Code Enforcement Department. My job is to make it part of something bigger that will best suit the needs of safety and service first when it comes to existing buildings and future buildings and the administering of all Building Codes.

What do you personally believe the City needs to improve on the most between now and 2034?

These are hard times and they will demand the hardest of choices. No one person in these municipal administrations has had to make choices that will be made going forward. Oversight and planning will be crucial. Your positions will become more important. Thinking outside the box and willingness to do the hard thing will be emphasized. The challenges are almost universal nationally. Big cities are not immune. We need housing, they need housing; we need the federal government just as they do, too. We need better communication between city and county. They do, too.

How should the City go about creating this improvement?

Prioritize housing and the administration of the building of such, develop better employees through training, develop better departments through training and continue to move forward. Nothing ever remains the same. It has to change.

What do you think will be the most defining characteristic of Princeton in 2034?

In 2034 there will be more jobs, more housing and the City will need to promote reaching out to the public more and keep them better informed. The City is moving in the right direction to make this a reality.

To do this the City will have to emphasize a mix of housing development and annexation, which creates a lot of animosity toward the City. The City will have to overcome this with creative ideas and a positive approach.

Vic Allen asked if the County had Code Enforcement and Zoning.

Mr. Smith replied that the County does not have zoning, but has Code Enforcement to address dilapidated buildings. The City is moving forward and doing what it needs to do for the future of the City, including the development of the land available to it.

As far as Princeton's characteristics in 2034, I see it as a great place to live and a movement of more people coming into the City.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no Other Business.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, on motion of Jim Hilling and second of JoAnna Fredeking, the July 25, 2022, Planning Meeting adjourned at 7:12 PM.

AUGUST 29, 2022 MEETING MINUTES

The Planning Commission for the City of Princeton, Mercer County, West Virginia met in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building, 800 Bee Street, on Monday, August 29, 2022, at 6:30 PM. In attendance were President John Hickman; Vice President Vic Allen; Commission Members Michael Webb, JoAnna Fredeking, Jim

Hilling and Bob Lohr; Economic Development Specialist Samuel Lusk; Finance Director Brian Conner; and City Clerk Kenneth Clay. Absent were Commission Members Anthony Brown, Mayor David Graham; ex-officio members Dewey Russell and Marshall Lytton; and City Attorney Paul Cassell. A quorum was constituted thereby.

CALL TO ORDER

President John Hickman called the meeting to order.

MINUTES

Meeting of July 25, 2022 – Without correction, on motion of JoAnna Fredeking and second of Vic Allen, the minutes of the meeting of July 25, 2022, were approved unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

ZONING

- (1) Proposal to Rezone a Residential Section of the City from Lower Pine Street to Lincoln Street and Encompassing High Street, from Residential-2 (R-2) to Residential-3 (R-3); and
- (2) To allow tiny houses in the R-3 Zone.

Economic Development Specialist Sam Lusk recommended these items be tabled once again until next month's meeting.

MOTION: JoAnna Fredeking moved the Planning Commission table the aforementioned Zoning proposals until the September meeting of the Planning Commission.

Vic Allen duly seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

A. INTERVIEW OF FINANCE DIRECTOR BRIAN CONNER

President John Hickman conducted an interview of Finance Director Brian Conner as required in the development process of Princeton's 2034 Comprehensive Plan, as follows:

Can you provide your name and position?

Brian Conner, Finance Director.

Can you give description of your department in the City?

The Finance department handles all receivables, payables, revenues, expenses, licensing, tax collection, anything financial on behalf of the City.

What are your particular duties and responsibilities?

I am particularly tasked with making sure that those transactions are reflected accurately and that they post properly. Also, managing the flow of those transactions and communicating with the state and other organizations on the status of those transactions.

How many employees are in your department?

We have two fulltime and two part time employees. What's curious is that our employees have changed recently because we had somebody who retired that caused a little bit of movement in the department. We hired on an additional part time person and I think we're looking to make her full time. But other than that, it's been the same.

Mr. Hickman asked how many hours the new part time employee is getting.

She gets 30 hours a week.

What is the scope of your department and how does that impact the people of Princeton?

The Finance Department pretty much touches everything. We're more or less serving the other departments with their financial needs. So it really impacts everyone in the City.

Mr. Hickman asked do you interact much with the general population.

The department in general does, because anybody that pays their garbage bill, anybody

pays their fines or has to get a license. So there is quite a bit of interaction there.

What would our community look like without your department?

It would look pretty rough and I'm not going to be arrogant enough to say that it couldn't be done, but basically those functions would still have to be performed. They just would have to be performed at a department level.

Can you give us a brief description of the assets within your department?

Our assets largely are our documentation. We maintain extensive records and transaction documentation and licenses and things. All those records are maintained in our department. As far as physical assets, the people are the biggest asset. We do have some computers, printers, credit card machines and other office equipment, but for the most part it is the documentation.

Other than salaries, what's the biggest expense within your department?

Well, one of the largest items on our budget is actually to facilitate the payment of insurance for the other departments. Our largest expense other than salaries would be the audit expense.

Can you give us three short term goals in your department (within a year)?

As far as short term goals we're trying to move all transactions from more traditional check- invoice type to the more electronic items, when that's possible and when the risk is minimal. So that would be one of the main things for money coming in as well as going out. Right now we're focusing on money going out so that we have a little bit more control, but that's another short term goal of mine: to start taking more electronic payments coming in. Also moving to the virtual payments like PayPal and the other wide variety of payment options out there.

How does your department plan on achieving these short term goals?

Right now we're reaching out to vendors that already provide that service and just deciding which transactions we can manage electronically without taking the risk of not being able to document the transaction and everything. That's been around for a long time.

You asked about the changes in the department. A lot of it involves people in the department now who are younger and have grown up using these transactions and they're a lot more comfortable with the format and the platforms that are out there. So that's enabling a lot of this.

How can the City best assist your department in achieving the short term goals?

Mainly just by continuing to be open minded and open to options that are available. Supporting what we're already in the process of doing with about three long term goals within the next 10 years. I would like to transform that wealth of documentation into a more electronic format, perhaps involving a dedicated server where all of the file cabinets can be put on a thumb drive.

Mr. Allen asked if the electronic formats would involve transactions coming in and going out.

Mr. Conner replied in the affirmative and added that the goal is to accept more electronic payments especially.

Can you describe three long term goals in your department?

So there's a lot of options out there, a lot of things that are really user friendly. Like SharePoint servers that would enable anybody in the City to upload documents and access them from their cell phones or whatever. Then we wouldn't have to dig through boxes and make copies of all that.

That would be my long term goal plus more of the electronic payments. I think the more we can expand on that, a lot of the business

owners and the people that were coming into Princeton and they're the younger generations, too. That's kind of where they're coming from, where those kind of things are already common. So they come here and they're really amazed that we don't have those options. I think that those are a couple of the bigger long term goals.

How does your department plan on achieving those long term goals?

We are just getting started on the electronic transactions. I'm cautiously optimistic about offering those services, although I consider myself to be in those younger generations, but still old enough to know that once something's gone, it's gone. It's electronic and you don't have the proper backups and all that. Once it's gone, you'll get it back.

So we're kind of dipping a toe in that area right now with the things that we can't control. Once we let that out of the box, it's going to take on a life of its own and we're just going to have to keep up.

How can the City best assist you in your achieving these long term goals?

Again, just being open and continuing to be supportive. I think, as a whole, the City really is transitioning into a more modern approach on a lot of things. And I think if we can just continue that effort to be open minded to gaining efficiencies without taking unnecessary risks. I think that's all the support that we really need and if you looked at the platforms that are available there's not a great deal of detail. I come from a background in banking and jaded to the expense because those are things that I've had for years if not decades.

Mr. Lohr asked Mr. Conner how that could be accomplished.

There are several platforms out there available and probably we just need to take a look at the cost and compare. But these platforms can help you manage, take everything and put it together and put it in a form for you so it's like

you're putting it in slots and it goes together and inter mixes and comes out with what you want. My son works for Silver Titan and he's a platform manager. So I've become more aware of it.

Moving on, where do you see your department in 2034?

I see it being very high tech with the financial transactions being very technical and technologically driven and that's not slowing down anytime soon. So if we can manage to catch up and keep up by 2030 it's going to be a very different department.

How do you believe your job itself will change between now and then?

Well, as department head, I kind of have to stay ahead of that. Our technology, even for the people that have grown up using it there, is constantly changing. So for me that's going to involve a lot of education and a lot of research and getting ahead of it. I can basically help them do their part in it and assist with answering their questions.

How can the City prepare for these changes now to better equip you or your successors in the future?

Well, like I was saying you research the expense associated with it and start to develop a plan with some numbers, together with a direction that we want to go as a city.

What do you personally believe the City needs to improve on the most between now and 2034?

Well, something that I've always struggled with as a citizen is parking since I'm a lifelong city resident. And I think especially as the new businesses open up and in order for them to have a place to serve people there, they're going to have to have a place to park. I think that's a big one. And hand in hand with that also is public transit because, even though more parking is needed, there's also this new foot traffic together with a variety of

different ways that people are getting around now. I see a girl on a little electric scooter all the time and, man, that's brilliant. So I think doing things to accommodate those, as well.

Of course the sidewalk projects have been great, as well as added bus stops. Those kind of things we're just going to have to continue to go down that route because, as the businesses come in, they will need a way for people to get to them.

Mr. Hickman remarked that Mr. Conner had gone on to the next question about how should the City go about creating that improvement?

With the added bus stops, more sidewalks, possibly even a bike route, I don't even know what it's officially called, but I know a lot of cities have a dedicated lane for bikes and that's something that, like with the little girl on the scooter, I would love to do that, but that just looks risky, if we had a dedicated lane for that.

What do you think will be the most defining characteristic of Princeton in 2034?

Well, I think its Mercer Street, which is well on its way. I think our downtown area is really picking up speed and it's getting noticed all over. So I think continuing in that area really will make a name for the City; something that people will hear about all over the state or all over the region. I think downtown is really starting to fill that void.

JoAnna Fredeking asked if Mr. Conner is responsible for the new cards that the Sanitary Board sends out instead of paper statements.

Mr. Conner replied, "No," adding that we still see it in paper.

City Manager Mike Webb remarked that one thing he would like to add, just to touch on some of the things, such as some of the technology. It's not so much with the data collection when he was talking about the future, but to some extent we can print out different reports now more so than what we could just two years ago. A couple years ago we put out a bid and we used severance money. I think they've been saved up for X amount of years and we've got a new software

system that handles not only Finance Department but also Code Enforcement, the court system for the City and everything else in that way. And it was about a \$200,000 system as far as they go. He added that people are beginning now to be able to make online payments, they're able to do different things as the City continues working to make it more efficient for them.

On the flip side I know Brian's situation and dealt with the previous Brian (Blankenship) who would have to close out the fiscal year of July 1 to June 30 using a notepad. I mean we're talking in the year 2020, he had to run the numbers from the previous year literally by hand to go along with what he had in the system. And he had to close out the year's \$8 million dollar budget. Also, give or take a week not two, in three months for most cities, they can kick it into the system and start the new year while the old one is finishing up.

So we are moving forward in a way that should be more efficient and hopefully more dependent on technology. I agree with Brian, and it is weird to say, but that entire filing cabinet is now inside of a computer and you hope everything's okay, that everybody else is not stealing it. But we are taking those steps to go in the direction he's talking about.

Mr. Conner added that the software is actually going to be the doorway to that because it has a lot of those features optional. Now we just have to give it a place to put those things.

Mr. Webb added that what we paid for in software now updates itself continually from here on out. So it's there, it's just a matter of us quite honestly jumping in and not wasting the capability the new software has available. In that it is just self-sustaining.

JoAnna Fredeking commented that it sounds like there's a ton of government money out there and asked if there is more for this sort of thing or not?

Mr. Webb replied that is to true to some extent and we can go after it. He added that he

thinks there's plenty of development funds, but I should say the capacity for building funds, for lack of a better phrase, and I know we can get it out there and match it. We can do a lot of things with it to help us along the way.

JoAnna Fredeking commented that after thirty years it's awfully hard to throw away a piece of paper. Everything I ever did for 30-some years in the school system was with paper. We didn't get to the computer age.

B. WRITTEN SUBMISSION BY FIRE CHIEF MATT MOULD TO THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Mr. Lusk explained that basically Chief Mould requested to submit written responses to the questions so he could remain available for duty at the Fire Station. His submission just needs committed to the record.

Mr. Hickman asked if we are going to have more departments doing that or is this the only one.

Mr. Lusk replied this one is just for emergency reasons.

Chief Mould's responses:

Can you provide your name and position?

Matt Mould, Fire Chief.

Briefly describe your department within the City.

Provide fire and life-safety services such as fire suppression, education and prevention; emergency medical services; vehicle accident response; hazardous materials response; and other technical rescue services.

Describe the duties and responsibilities of Fire Chief.

The Fire Chief is responsible to the City Manager for the administration, training, discipline, morale and effectiveness of the members, property, and equipment of the Fire Department. The Fire Chief provides a monthly report of all Fire Department activities to the City Manager and City Council.

How many employees are with- in the Fire Department?

There are 13 full-time employees, including the Fire Chief, as well as five to ten volunteer firefighters.

What is the scope of the Fire Department and how does it im- pact the people of Princeton?

In addition to emergency response, the Fire Department (FD) provides fire safety and prevention education to area schools, senior groups, and other agencies and individuals. Certified Fire Inspectors enforce the City's Fire Prevention Code and sign-off on certificates of occupancy for new businesses within the City Limits. All outdoor burning within the City requires a permit from the FD. FD members are responsible for all general maintenance of vehicles and buildings, and annual testing and inspection of fire hydrants, hose, water pumps, ground ladders, and aerial ladders. The FD provides supervision and upkeep of the Fire Training Center and manages a training program that provides a minimum of 220 hours of training for each member, annually.

The FD provides essential emergency and life-safety services to the people of Princeton. The efforts of the FD, WV American Water Co., and Mercer County 911 allowed Princeton to achieve an Insurance Services Office (ISO) Class 2 rating; the second-best rating on a scale of 1-10. This rating provides homeowners and businesses with the lowest insurance premiums in the area.

A Brief Description of the assets within the FD?

- (2) Fire stations
- (5) Fire apparatus
- (2) Engines/pumper
- (1) Rescue engine/pumper
- (1) 75-foot ladder truck used on residential fires

- (1) 100-foot ladder tower/plat-
form used for commercial fires
- (1) Ford F350 super duty service truck
- (2) Station vehicles
- (1) Chief's vehicle
- (1) 1936 antique Dodge Fire Truck

Other than salaries, what is the biggest expense within the FD?

Salaries account for 49% of the annual expenses. All personnel related costs (salaries, taxes, insurance, pension contributions) make up 80% of the FD budget. The next biggest expense is vehicle maintenance and fuel, and capital equipment; each which make up about 3% of the budget.

Describe 3 short-term goals for the FD (within a year):

- Replace the Ford F350 and one station vehicle with one super duty diesel pickup truck
- Replace six outdated Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBAs) that are used for hazardous materials incidents throughout Mercer County.
- Develop a capital equipment replacement schedule that can be shared with all FD members and City administration.

How does the FD plan on achiev- ing these short-term goals?

To replace the current vehicles, the FD must find an available vehicle, which is increasingly more difficult due to supply and demand. The FD is seeking various funding methods and cooperation from other fire departments and local, state and federal grants for the replacement of the SCBAs. PFD is also working towards getting more participation or assistance from other local fire departments for hazardous materials incidents. PFD will examine the age and condition of all capital equipment and prioritize the replacement needs

and financial costs. This information can be presented to City administration for discussion.

How can the City best assist in the FD achieving its short-term goals?

The City Manager has already applied and been awarded a USDA federal grant to cover the majority of the cost of a new super duty diesel pickup truck. The City Manager is developing a proposal for the Mercer County Commission requesting their assistance to fund the purchase of the SCBAs which are required to properly and safely handle hazmat incidents. The City can work with the Fire Chief on the capital equipment replacement schedule to develop an investment plan based on the identified priorities.

Describe three long-term goals (within 10 years):

- All FD operations will be carried out from a new fire station within the municipal complex at the old Dean Company property.
- Plan for the purchase of a new rescue engine/pumper to replace the 2011 model, as well as a new ladder truck to replace the 2006 model. All current fire trucks are required to maintain the City's ISO Class 2 rating.
- Add a new Fire Inspector/Training Officer position within the FD. This position would be a Monday-Friday, 40 hour work-week job that would be responsible for managing all fire inspections and coordinating with Code Enforcement, developing training programs, and serving as an Incident Safety Officer. This position would answer directly to the Fire Chief.

How do you plan on achieving these goals?

- Plans for constructing the new fire station are already on record. Myself or my successor(s) can follow these plans

and coordinate with everyone involved in the project to see it come to life as quickly and cost-effectively as possible.

- Implement the capital equipment investment plan mentioned above so that the City will be prepared for the substantial financial costs of purchasing new fire trucks.
- Develop a cost-benefit analysis to share with the City that will show the pros and cons of a new, fulltime, officer-level position within the FD.

How can the City best assist in achieving these goals?

- For constructing a new fire station, I believe the City can best assist by providing transparent information on the status or progress of the municipal complex development.
- The City needs to support the purpose for maintaining the current numbers and types of fire apparatus (fire trucks) in order to keep the Class 2 ISO rating. The City must also recognize the financial burden associated with vehicle replacement and the risk to firefighters and the public who would be depending on vehicles that have gone beyond their safe service life. The consequences or failure to replace these vehicles must also be shared with an understanding that the safety of the firefighters and the general public is most important.
- The City's investment in a fulltime Fire Inspector/Training Officer will increase the likelihood of the FD being able to maintain the ISO Class 2 rating. This position would improve efficiency for new businesses as they go through the initial permit and inspection process. This position will also create additional on-scene emergency personnel. The current average number of on-scene personnel is the biggest deficiency in

determining the ISO rating. The FD receives nearly full credit in every category except for the numbers of response personnel.

Where do you see the FD in 2034?

I see a fire department without me that is continually moving forward; one that is equipped and funded to continue leading the community and region in public safety. Each successive Fire Chief will be prepared to enter the position because time and effort will be invested into each individual for the purpose of developing future leaders.

How will the Fire Chief's position change between now and then?

I see the Fire Chief position shifting to a broader public safety role; working more closely with the Police and Code Enforcement Departments to develop and achieve a common public safety goal.

How can the City prepare for these changes now to better equip the Fire Chief and successors in the future?

I believe that providing the front-line responders with the equipment and training they need to perform their duties safely with a high level of confidence will allow the Fire Chief to focus on developing a solid vision for the department and creating and implementing the objectives to support that vision. A strong well-communicated vision can be passed down to future successors to give them a foundation to build upon.

What do you believe the City needs to improve on the most between now and 2034?

I believe the City needs to be more open and intentional about sharing or promoting information with the public in regard to special projects, infrastructure improvements, or other community endeavors. I also believe the City needs to expand its revenue base to ensure that secure, sustainable funds will be available for each city department and

to invest more back into the community to improve the quality of living for everyone.

How should the City go about creating this improvement?

I believe the City is moving forward in both ideas mentioned above. More information is being shared with more people than ever before, but more can be done to bring awareness to the public about the municipal complex development and other plans for community improvements.

PEDA is working to generate economic development to support sustainable revenue. The most commonly discussed solution is probably the most controversial: expanding the geographic boundaries of the City Limits. There is a lot of potential revenue sitting just outside of the City limits, but whenever news gets out that the City is discussing ideas for annexation, there is major pushback from the outside community. I believe one source of this pushback is lack of information or education about what the City will and will not do for those who would be affected.

What do you think will be the most defining characteristic of Princeton in 2034?

My hope is that Princeton will be a destination, not just for visitors or tourism, but for families to call home. I've seen too many of my childhood friends leave this area because of a perceived lack of opportunities. So, my hope is that Princeton will be defined by an abundance of opportunities.

MOTION: Bob Lohr moved the Planning Commission approve the written submission of Fire Chief Matt Mould.

JoAnna Fredeking duly seconded the motion.
The motion carried unanimously.

C. APPROVAL OF LAND USE AND CONSERVATION SECTIONS OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Mr. Hickman asked if there were any questions on the Land Use and Conservation Sections. He also asked Mr. Lusk if he

had added some things to the section.

Mr. Lusk replied in the affirmative, but explained it was the previous section and added that he didn't make the changes on his end. However, he further explained that at the very end of the comprehensive plan work, he would supply a copy for everybody here at that point.

Mr. Lohr mentioned the issue of the tiny houses in relation to the setting the required zoning.

Mr. Lusk replied there are three issues pending requiring zoning action, one of which includes addressing the difference between trailers and tiny houses. He also explained that wasn't included in the comprehensive plan, but is something that we'll address at next month's meeting.

Mr. Lusk then explained the Commission just needs a motion for approval of the Land Use and Conservation sections of the Comprehensive Plan.

MOTION: Vic Allen moved the Planning Commission approve the Land Use and Conservations Sections of the Comprehensive Plan as submitted.

Jim Hilling duly seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS

JoAnna Fredeking asked if we would be replacing Patty Anderson on the Planning Commission.

Sam Lusk replied that if anyone has someone in mind they should recommend them to the Planning Commission for consideration toward appointment.

Mrs. Fredeking explained that she was just asking since everybody knows that Patty Anderson died and didn't know if we needed that position to strengthen our core or not.

Mr. Lusk noted that he also could bring a recommendation to the Commission and, if the Planning Commission agrees, the candidate would be recommended to City Council for appointment.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, President Hickman adjourned the August 29, 2022, meeting of the Planning Commission at 6:55 PM.

SEPTEMBER 26, 2022 MEETING MINUTES

The Planning Commission for the City of Princeton, Mercer County, West Virginia met in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building on Monday, September 26, 2022, at 6:30 PM. In attendance were President John Hickman; Vice President Vic Allen; Commission Members JoAnna Fredeking and Jim Hilling; City Manager Mike Webb; Economic Development Specialist Samuel Lusk; and City Clerk Kenneth Clay. Absent were Commission Members Mayor David Graham, Anthony Brown, Bob Lohr, Marshall Lytton (ex-officio), and Dewey Russell (ex-officio). A quorum was constituted thereby.

CALL TO ORDER

President John Hickman called the meeting to order.

MINUTES

Meeting of August 29, 2022—On motion of Vic Allen and second of JoAnna Fredeking, the minutes of the meeting of August 29, 2022, were approved unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

PUBLIC HEARING

On A Proposal to Rezone a Residential Section of the City from Lower Pine Street to Lincoln Street and Encompassing High Street, from Residential-2 (R-2) to Residential-3 (R-3) and to Allow Tiny Houses in the R-3 Zone.

Mr. Hickman called on Economic Development Specialist Sam Lusk to explain the details involved in the proposed zoning measures.

Mr. Lusk explained there are two items being

considered and open for public hearing. The first item is for the purposes of rezoning a residential section of the City from Lower Pine Street to Lincoln Street, encompassing all of High Street from residential to residential three in that area.

The second item for public hearing is in regards to amending the Zoning Code in the Residential-3 to permit tiny houses. A tiny home can be described as a home that's a couple 100 square feet and will have all the amenities that one might need in that sort of living environment.

Mr. Lusk further explained how the public hearing would proceed when the Planning Commission does go into public hearing, in that each individual will have three minutes to provide their input and when those three minutes are up asked that the speakers conclude their comments to allow another person to speak their mind.

Mr. Hickman asked that an explanation be provided regarding what the Planning Commission is considering doing as far as the zoning proposals.

Mr. Lusk explained that the change from R-2 to R-3 currently allows for single family and two family dwellings. Whereas, the R-2 would include the single family detached dwelling, two family dwelling, and would add the permitted inclusion of mobile home parks and multi-family dwellings.

At this time President Hickman opened the floor for the public hearing regarding the aforesaid zoning proposals.

Rev. Darnell Palmer, 302 Karnes Street—Rev. Palmer commented as follows: This proposal is one that's is definitely going to decrease your property values in the area. They're talking about going from R-2 to R-3 and this is part of the City's Ten Year Plan. He added that this is talking about going from putting something temporary in that community to doing something that's permanent. Why don't you ask Quail Valley if you think that would go very well? I grew up in that area and there are a lot of people who are proud and I love the community

and I think if you're going to do something that you need to do something that's going to be permanent. Putting trailers in there, putting a tiny house, in addressing the second item, is definitely not going to increase the value of the property, nor is it going to increase.

And I want to be tactful to say that the quality of the people talking about trailers, there is a certain stigma that is associated with trailers. And, you know, we have people who have trailers, these are people who have been very responsible. You're talking about making a community full of trailers. I just don't see how that's going to be positive and how that would even be something.

Honestly, I'm kind of not upset, but a little bit appalled that you all would offer that as a means of revitalization, too. That neighborhood, telling it go from R2 to R3 is not going to help you talk about adding something and that element is not going to generate any capital in any way to that area. You're not going to set a standard of people who are going to move in that area. And I think that it would be something that would be more detrimental to the community as a whole. Thank you very much.

Peggy Clark, 403 Lower Pine Street—Hello, my name is Peggy and thank you for your bringing in what we have going on now. I have pictures of the sewer line, we have problems with that. Now we're on the same sewer line from, well from Valley, going all the way down the hill. I have gone through so many expenses, my basement started flooding. I had to get a new furnace, to put on the ceiling, and the sewer came up and flooded the manhole cover. So I went back up in my yard and it's like a big waterfall. Everybody's mess is in my backyard. When they come cut my grass, he's cutting through sewer, toilet, everything and you're going to bring in some more stuff. So is that for me up in my yard? No, no tiny house. Thank you very much.

Freddie Milner, 510 Upper Pine—I got a house on the corner of Upper pine, same thing,

no infrastructure. The City several years ago went in there and put the pavement over the drain. Family living in my house has a blind young lady. They took the drainpipe out between, I guess that's Cook Street, over time and now I have a huge gorge there. Insurance is about to cancel out on the house because I have blind lady living in the house, she walks out outside, falls into that huge boards there. We haven't been putting a dime in that area and infrastructure since I was a kid. I don't know whose idea this is, but all I see this is turning our area into a permanent slum.

I don't know who here is familiar with the history of redlining in West Virginia, but under, I mean in the United States under Roosevelt all areas in and around the cities in the country that black people live in were valued at 3/5 of the value of neighborhoods that white people live in. Now that has become the whole mantra for loaning money right now. A black person with the same income goes to the bank down here to try to borrow money. My house ain't worth 3/5 of what your house is worth. So I mean the City is really trying to do something to help that neighborhood. Y'all got millions of dollars coming in here through these Covid programs. I've been following the banks, the West Virginia Housing Development Fund, everything that could help this community is discriminatory, no money. I mean we pay taxes but nothing goes back into it ever. Nothing. Alright. I mean if they wanted to designate a small area for tiny homes, are they doing this anywhere else in town?

Incidentally, are they doing this anywhere else in Princeton? Because the parameters of it are 80% of the black community. What we're talking about, turning into a trailer parks or whatever. It would be nice if we could just get the services that everybody else gets up there. I don't know how many times. I've been talking to the City Public Works about that hole and they said they're going to fix it. But you know I mean I've got a lady living in the house, can't walk in the yard. I mean personally I think it's just a ghettoization

step down for everybody in the community.

I have friends that have just moved back here to retire that wanted to build in the high street area. They want to build something they sure not going to invest in and build a really nice house. Thank you very much.

Floyd Ricks, 1606 West Main Street—I oppose this move from R2-R3 and I got to come in the City. You've done a great job tearing down houses and how to raise the value of properties. That's a good thing, but dropping down from R2 to R3, I can't see that, especially with the border and immigration. And it's just a matter of time that we're going get some people in here that, you know, I mean anyone but the opportunity would be there. Thank you very much.

Anthony Miley, 410 North Fourth Street—I own the two properties at 700 Princeton Avenue and 304 Straley Avenue and I just picked up three or four straight today. But I'm totally opposed to the rezoning. I think I agree with everyone who's talking about the rezoning being a bad thing. I totally agree with you. But I'm a Vietnam veteran and we had, in the last Vietnam Veteran Magazine, a whole issue on small houses and how these small houses will help people who are homeless, especially veterans. So I wish that you would maybe look into using areas that are already zoned as R3 for this project. And maybe set aside, if there's anything comes up where you could create just a huge area just for veterans or just for all those people for these small houses. Because I have also invested in the company that makes small houses and they move them in and they could set them up and our whole thing. And this is a new process. Their process being the building of these houses on assembly lines. And so there's a need and a place for these houses, is what I'm saying, but it's not through this rezoning process I believe. So that's my message.

Dolly Pemberton, 200 McDowell Street—I live at 200 McDowell and it's been several times when the weeds and stuff growing up and we can't go down back the road because you can't

even see cars coming up and down the street. So I called several times for the City to come and cut the weeds down by the stop sign because that's a hazard. Somebody could get killed.

People go in go down the street and if somebody come up the street almost got hit by a car was coming up, the car that's going down can't see the stop sign and you have to get out in the roadway to see the car coming up before you can go into the street. And no, there's a lot of areas we had actually visited with some of the people that work on the street cutting the weeds. We had to tell them to cut the weeds down in our areas because, you know, there's a lot of things can happen with those reasons. No, you know, you just don't know the animals, wild animals and everything's coming there. And in zone two not getting that done in zone three. It will not get done. So I think that I'm not opposing the zone three myself and thank you.

Linda Harmon, 405 High Street—I'm opposed to zone three and one of the things that I truly feel that you all are overlooking is that, I believe everybody here would agree with me, that High Street is a historic community. We have a church that is 145 years old and there are so many people we have, family members and friends, that would love to come back and live here in Princeton, West Virginia. They would love to retire and come back to that community because we have something very special. Unfortunately sometimes we do not always realize what we have, but it is a very special place to us.

We have a very special memories there and we've always considered that High Street is a thoroughfare and I feel like it would be a reflection on the City and its ability to upgrade. We're thinking about upgrade. You're thinking you want to upgrade, but that's not upgrade, that's not upgrade. But you do really need to consider, I don't know about the Methodist Church or what used to be considered the Methodist Church, but I do know that Mount Calvary Missionary Baptist church is 100 and 45 years old and everybody comes together, all the churches, to

celebrate. That is such a history and a vital part of our community. Whether we're indifferent, I no longer live there, but I lived there for a good part of my life, let's put it that way. But I still consider myself a part of the high street community. And so I do not agree with the proposals.

Sharon Arnold, 394 Lower Pine—I think we all feel the same way. My name is Sharon I've been before the City council before about issues on the playground across from my house. I was promised several things that didn't come through. I did get a sign put there to keep people from doing fireworks in the Earl Muse Park because they did things that would set the house on fire. It wasn't little twisters or sparklers. It was setting off packages of fireworks. So they did, I did get the sign, but no police patrol that night to keep anybody from doing fireworks.

And so I'm saying that to say this, what have a lot of things that we need from the City that we asked when I did appear before Council. So we're going to have to be consistent. Everybody here come to these meetings to try to get what we want and nobody wants this. I mean, we're comfortable with what we have. We worked hard for our property, houses, our land and we don't want them to get to the point where there's bad results. I mean I've worked all my life since I was a little girl and I understand business, this is not benefiting us. I see the benefit because of what the City's going get out of it. It's not right. You need to take another look at it and think about the citizens that live in these zoning areas that you want to change.

Mr. Hickman explained that this body is not City Council, but the Planning Commission.

Earl Thompson, no address provided—Yes, it seems like everyone here seems to be disagreeing with the zoning or the changing of the zoning. And the question I would like to ask is, with the 10 year plan, is anyone that is still living there, and my wife owns property there, that is going to be in on the planning of the 10-year plan of the upgrade of the City. It says is a 10-year planning.

Planning Commission Member Vic Allen—What we're doing, sir, what we're trying to do in this committee is put together a recommendation for City Council and heretofore regarding the change to residential three zone, but I've got problems with the mobile homes, just like everybody out there does. The thing we've tabled time and time again at these meetings because we need more information on the tiny houses and to look at changing what you identify the R-3. You know, I think mobile homes and mobile home parks need to be in a different category than R-3. And that's basically where we have been in these meetings for the past three or four months. So we're with you.

So we do need someone from the community and what you're doing here is what we're looking for; input from the local community about what we're talking about so we can evaluate what we want to send to the City Council. So what we're looking at is what are we going to recommend based on the public input you provide? So we know what you want now. I don't think anybody in here agrees with the proposals.

Wait, you better believe it.

Thank you.

Arnold Palmer, 503 Lower Pine—Good evening committee. Just a couple of questions. First of all, I would like to know how did this plan come about and who or what has been responsible to implement this plan? Why was High Street included?

Commission Member JoAnna Fredeking—We did not initiate it. It was brought to us to bring to the people to see if this was anything that would work. I firmly agree that this is not the way to go. It's not something that I think is beneficial to any zone at this point? I'm like Vic, I have problems with mobile homes that sometimes come off of wheels and get moved around, in and out and leave the wide space that nobody can do anything with.

So we wanted to hear from you because your understanding of this is about like ours.

We weren't sure it was given to us and we would have a public hearing to see if anybody agreed because we had to bring it to you so we can do whatever we need to do. When things are brought to us on the Planning Commission, we have to either say yes or nay, and then it goes to the City Council. So it doesn't stop with us, but we don't know. So, we wanted to hear from you if you felt like what we have been feeling, because we've tabled this a couple of times and have not brought it to the public hearing. And last month we were supposed to have the public hearing and were getting ready to vote as soon as the public hearing is over.

This is not, as I said, we suggest to the City Council, so it goes to them to be approved. We don't officially decide, even if we would vote for it, it doesn't go into effect. We just recommend it to the City Council and then they implement it and go from there. They then would have to have more public hearings. Arnold, are you asking that or are you asking if there's something in this that would work for you all?

Arnold Palmer—If not in this plan, but if for something else, would we come back to it if it was approved. No, I'm not talking about tiny houses and mobile homes and these kind of things. I'm simply saying if there's some point in it, I think Sam Lusk mentioned some sidewalks and street lights and those kind of things. Well, city council could, you know, take this issue up and vote for it. But there again, they would have to have a public hearing just like this. And I'm sure y'all would show up if you have any sense. Thank you.

Patti Miller, 1145 Ellison School Rd., Camp Creek—I am an owner of some property on the McDowell Street in the R-2 zone and I've listened to all of y'all's concerns. And I have been there. I've lived there for a short period of time. I'm now renting out that property. I visited that property and I agree with Dolly that road, McDowell Street, is a dangerous road and it needs to be taken care of. But I have a couple of questions as a homeowner as a landowner. Number one, I

didn't know about this hearing until my tenants told me about it. Now, why wasn't I notified of this as a landowner. No one reads the newspaper anymore? I pay our taxes on that property every year. I should have been notified ma'am.

Sam Lusk—We published a legal ad in the newspaper and we also had a city employee go to every house within that district and knocked on the door and talk to the resident.

Patti Miller—If there was no resident, I'm the homeowner, I don't live there but I'm a homeowner. I own that land I should have been notified of the hearing. No one reads the newspaper. You contact the tax collector to find out who pays the taxes on the property. And number two we do pay the taxes on that property. We still do and I want to know what you're talking about the vacant property that may be opened for these tiny houses or whatever are their tax sales on this. So people could buy these lands themselves and maybe build a house. Why not?

Alright well there's a lot of land in the development that supposedly it was a mobile home, supposed to be more mobile home parks behind the property where I am. Now, if this is supposed to be coming, a tiny home development or whatever it is, are people paying taxes on that property? If not then why doesn't the City have a tax sale so people could buy the property? There should be no trailer parks in that zone that we're talking about. And also it would be like any other property. Someone build a tiny home there, they could sell it, do anything with it. I mean it's your option to build that. So why not take the some of the property that people haven't paid taxes on that you're trying to get these little houses on. Have a text for people that maybe want to like.

We're just talking about changing the zone first.

Denise Spicer, no address provided—Following up on this lady's comments, the question is if you're talking about this area that this gentleman was talking about here, what vacant lots do not

belong to some family members here, did you pay the taxes on this? But this free property that the City owned that you just want to come in and put tiny houses on, does this property belong to a descendant that does not no longer live here. That opportunity can go to another family member. We'd rather see the community build up. I've just moved from the Washington, D.C. world. I've seen the development where minority stayed in the developments. This development committee, same thing that's a little larger, move people out then they have to go to another community.

So, therefore, if they put these little tiny houses in your area all at one time your house might be worth \$200,000, but then all of a sudden when you get all of these other little houses and trailers moving in your community the value of your property goes down, not up. My mother and father were not in this zone to talk about at this present time, but it's all still community. Why can't if you all have empty property that you're going to build something, put a nice house on it and give it to a single family; give it to the veteran, give them a lower interest rate. The interest rates right now is unbelievable. But who comes up with the idea to put it in the black community? We want to upgrade, not decrease.

Come and pave roads next to my mother and father's house on Bell Avenue. I don't think that road has been repaved and I know Lincoln Street hasn't been. The City comes up Bell Avenue and all they do is cut around the edge. But I can understand some things belong to the family. But why can't we all have more? Whoever came up with this idea I think it's very wrong. I really do. I really think it's very wrong. And I think y'all could do and offer more. We want more time to pay taxes. If you got to be here to pay taxes, property taxes, y'all don't cut no slack.

Mr. Hickman remarked we're going to move on and close the public hearing at this time, 7:20 PM

Elizabeth Palmer—Is this the solution? No.

JoAnna Fredeking moved to table the

rezoning proposal indefinitely and commented, “I see no real reason to continue this. I think what it will do is to destroy a community.”

Mr. Hickman called for second to the motion.

The motion was duly seconded by Vic Allen

On voting, Mr. Hickman announced the motion carried unanimously and the proposal is tabled indefinitely. Therefore, the proposal doesn’t go any further.

NEW BUSINESS

Interview of Parks and Recreation Director Amanda McCabe—Mr. Lusk reported the tabling of Amanda McCabe’s interview until the next Planning Commission meeting.

Approval of the Finance Section - Mr. Lusk explained that the next item on the agenda under new business is the approval of the Finance Section of the Comprehensive Plan.

MOTION: Vic Allen moved to approve the Finance Section

JoAnna Fredeking duly seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

MOTION: JoAnna Fredeking moved to table Amanda McCabe’s interview until next month.

Vic Allen duly seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

Recommendation to City Council to Appoint Dan Crutchfield to Planning Commission—Mr. Lusk recommended Mr. Crutchfield for appointment to the Planning Commission to fill the vacant position previously held by Patricia Anderson and explained that Mr. Crutchfield is the owner of business known as Daydream Games on Mercer Street and added that he would be a great addition to the Commission.

Mr. Crutchfield explained that he is the owner of Daydream Games on Mercer Street that now offers catering and games while operating as a fairly new business having been there just over a year. His business on Mercer Street is located kind of diagonally across from the public library.

Also, he explained that he and his wife actually had their rehearsal dinner there when it was Joe’s Restaurant and then two years later it closed down. He noted that his wife grew up with one of their daughters. That’s the only reason why they sold us the building, he explained, because of their connection to the building the previous owners, in that the instantly attached to that space. However, he informed that he actually lives in the same building upstairs so they live right there on Mercer Street, which is great for them in running a business there. And, because it’s a tabletop game store, they see a lot of Princeton come into the building.

Mr. Crutchfield: Sam’s had a couple of discussions with me about plans that we have to continue to become part of Mercer Street and he thought that since there was a position here that it would be a good fit for me to become involved.

Sam Lusk explained this action will go to the City Council after a motion by the Planning Commission recommending Mr. Crutchfield’s appointment.

MOTION: JoAnna Fredeking moved the Planning Commission recommend City Council appoint Dan Crutchfield to the Commission

Vic Allen duly seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

October Meeting Date – Sam Lusk explained that next month’s meeting date currently is on October 31, Halloween. Therefore, he recommended moving it to the previous Monday of October 24.

MOTION: Vic Allen moved the Planning Commission set its October meeting of Monday, October 24th at 6:30 PM

JoAnna Fredeking duly seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, on motion the September 26, 2022, meeting of the Planning Commission adjourned at 7:35 PM.

OCTOBER 24, 2022 MEETING MINUTES

The Planning Commission for the City of Princeton, Mercer County, West Virginia met in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building, 800 Bee Street, on Monday, October 24, 2022, at 6:30 PM. In attendance were President John Hickman; Vice President Vic Allen; Planning Commission members JoAnna Fredeking, Michael Webb, Bob Lohr and Dan Crutchfield; Economic Development Specialist Samuel Lusk; and City Clerk Kenneth Clay. Absent were Commission Members Jim Hilling and Anthony Brown; and ex-officio members Dewey Russell and Marshall Lytton. A quorum was constituted thereby.

CALL TO ORDER

Vice President Vic Allen called the meeting to order.

MINUTES

Meeting of September 26, 2022—On the motion of JoAnna Fredeking, duly seconded by Bob Lohr, the minutes of the meeting of September 26, 2022, were approved unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no Old Business.

NEW BUSINESS

A. INTERVIEW OF PUBLIC WORKS' CO-DIRECTOR ERIC GATCHELL

As an essential element in the development of the 2024–34 Comprehensive Plan, Mr. Allen interviewed Public Works Co-Director as follows:

Can you provide your name and position?

Eric Gatchell, Co-Director of the Public Works Department

Can you briefly describe your department within the City?

We pick up the garbage, install and maintain storm drains and roadways, and mow city properties.

How would you describe your duties/responsibilities as a department head?

To coordinate with the Director, Jackie Phillips, and our new Field and Safety Supervisor Terry Blankenship to evaluate our workload and assign to the crews.

How many employees, part time and full time, are employed within your department?

We have nineteen employees, with one out injured at this time

President John Hickman arrived at this point in the interview to preside over the meeting.

What is the scope of your department and how does that impact the people of Princeton?

Trash collection, road maintenance, storm drain maintenance, installation and repair, mowing throughout the City on City properties. We coordinate with all other departments as needed, and we have great lines of communication.

What would our community look like without your department as part of the City?

Pretty bad.

Mr. Hickman responded, I agree, because you all do a good job.

Can you provide a brief description of the assets within your department?

Street sweeper, leaf truck, asphalt dump truck, 2 functional trash trucks with one backup (a new trash truck should be here in

late November, 6 functional pickup trucks, 2 Jeeps, 5 dump trucks, culvert cleaning truck, backhoe, new skid steer loader, 2 mini-excavators (one new), 3 tractors, wood chipper, endloader, bucket truck and a tow truck.

Other than salaries, what is the biggest expense within your department?

Vehicle maintenance and fuel.

Can you describe three short term goals in your department within a year?

Improve safety and equipment operations with more qualified equipment operators. Possibly move on purchasing a vacuum trailer in coordination with the Sanitary Board for joint usage. Look into installing a computerized sign shop for future needs.

How does your department plan on achieving these short term goals?

Work toward achieving these goals.

How can the City best assist in your department achieving these goals?

The City currently gives us great support.

Can you describe three long term goals that you hope to accomplish within the next 10 years?

Continue shop improvements at our new location, obtain a grapple truck for heavy lifting and orders, and streamline our work communications utilizing the GIS platform and new technologies.

And how do you plan on achieving these long term goals?

We are currently working on our new shop as time allows, and the GIS System we intend to use is in place by Region I and just needs some tweaks to start using it.

Where do you see your department in 2034?

The scope of our department will not likely change much by 2034. Technology

may change how we do the work, but the scope will likely remain the same.

So how do you believe your job will change between now and then?

Improvements in technology will help us better distribute and track work assignments, but I will be retired.

How can the City prepare for these changes now to better equip you and your successors in the future?

The City currently gives us great support and will continue to do so into the future.

What do you personally believe the City needs to improve on the most between now and 2034?

The City's roadways.

How should the City go about creating this improvement?

Keep rolling with the two-year Capital Paving Plan and patch as needed between paving projects.

What do you think will be the most defining characteristic of Princeton in 2034?

Mercer Street, which is the main street in Princeton. The improvements and future planning will make it the highlight of the City.

Mr. Hickman remarked that since he was late for the meeting he had a couple of questions and asked if Public Works has enough staff.

Mr. Gatchell replied that Public Works currently is down one employee.

Mr. Hickman offered that some of the employees have been there a long time.

Mr. Hickman then asked if Public Works was going to move to the New City Hall location?

Mr. Gatchell replied that Public Works already is here partially.

Mr. Hickman asked, since the time-frame that's not altogether yet, if Public Works has a time in mind as to when

everything will be here at this location.

Mr. Gatchell replied that he did not have a time in mind for the move.

Mr. Allen asked, "I mean one of your long term goals is to move completely out of the old hangar and get everything down here right?"

Mr. Gatchell replied that is the long term goal.

Mr. Hickman asked if that depends on the amount of grant money out there and if there might be a lot of grant money to help your situation out there?

City Manager Mike Webb replied that the main thing we've done for instance is purchase the sweeper that was \$130,000 or so, with the USDA paying about half of that. We also do that with their equipment in the Fire Department where we get about 50% assuming it's about \$100,000 piece of equipment the USDA will pay up to \$50,000. So there is help out there.

B. INTERVIEW OF PARK AND RECREATION DIRECTOR AMANDA MCCABE

Vice President Vic Allen interviewed Recreation Director Amanda McCabe, as follows:

Can you provide your name and position?

Amanda McCabe, Executive Director, Princeton Park and Recreation Department. Bachelor's Degree from Alderson Broaddus University in Recreational Leadership. I was the Assistant Director for our department for one year and have been the Director for over 21 years.

Can you briefly describe your department within the City?

The City of Princeton Board of Park and Recreation Commissioner has been in existence since 1970. The Park Board and its facilities have grown tremendously over the last 52 years. The Recreation Department started our operating the Princeton Youth Center located on Honaker Avenue where they offered some classes, martial arts and held

community dances. The building that we're currently in was actually constructed in 1981.

We've continued to expand our facilities, as well as the programming that we offer to the community. We are comprised of numerous facilities including the Rec Center, City Park, City Pool and then we have six playgrounds inside city limits. We actually have one within each ward of the City.

In addition to our facilities, we offer a wide variety of programs. I'm not going to go through those, but there is a handout in the back of the packet if you want to wade through those later. Most of what we do is for the youth. We do have some adult programming. But our largest and most popular programs are youth leagues which run back to back about 11 months out of the year. In addition to that we conduct a lot of special events and fundraisers throughout the year as well.

We operate seven days a week and anywhere from 12 to 14 hours every day. So we're open a lot. We are the only recreation center in Mercer County and also operate the only public swimming facility in Mercer County. We estimate that about 65% of our users are county residents, 30% city, and 5% other. We have approximately 3,000 children that participated on programs during the course of the year.

And we also estimate that we have approximately 60,000 individuals that utilize our facility or participate in our programs on an annual basis, which is actually a conservative number considering we can't gauge how many people are using our trail.

How would you describe your duties and responsibilities as a department head?

I view my job as a public service to the community. I was born and raised in Princeton with an athletic background. So this job is actually very rewarding for me.

Ultimately, I plan, direct and supervise the operation and maintenance of the Rec Center and all the other recreation

facilities inside the City. I also supervise the planning and development of programs and activities and special events.

Another description of my department specifically, can actually be viewed as running a business, making sure that our revenues exceed our expenditures, which sometimes can be challenging, but we've been very successful over the years. The job obviously entails creating and managing an annual budget for the expenditures of funds and basically just being fiscally responsible. Other duties and responsibilities include grant writing, seeking donations and sponsorships, long and short term planning, cultivating good public relations, personnel actions, record-keeping, recruitment, training, and supervision of departmental employees. Which has definitely become a difficult task since candidates are short for us.

How many employees, part time full time, are employed within your department?

We have three full time: myself, an Assistant Director/Program Coordinator, and a full time Maintenance Supervisor. We typically have about 12 to 15 part time employees year round. And then we hire another additional 25 to 30 during the summer for operation of the summer programs at the City pool, as well as additional maintenance staff during the summer months.

What is the scope of your department and how does that impact the people of Princeton?

We provide recreational facilities and programming for all of Mercer County. Our youth programming begins at the age of three, and throughout the course of the year we provide programming for boys and girls ages 3-18. We provide a safe and fun environment for children to learn and participate in organized sports. This opportunity actually allows children to learn the fundamentals of their chosen sport which helps them to grow and develop as an athlete before they actually make it to the middle school level.

In addition to programming our parks and the recreation center, are very popular venues for many different community and family events and gathering. We have a little bit of everything going on. Some examples are business meetings, training seminars, craft shows, baby showers, sport camps, beauty pageants, concerts, dances, weddings, banquets, health screenings, five K's festivals, athletic tournaments, wrestling events, and that's just to name a few. Also, we have the House of Bounce Party Room, which is probably one of the most popular places in town to hold birthday parties for Children.

What would our community look like without your department as part of the City?

Park and Rec programming is very vital in any community that values its youth and families.

People are naturally drawn to parks, recreation areas, and green spaces. Public parks provide people with the opportunity to exercise, live healthier lifestyles, relax and decrease stress. Parks also provide recreation at no costs to patrons. They are open for public use for free. Park and Recreation areas improve the quality of life and make communities livable.

Our Park and Recreation Department provides affordable, basic services for residents. We strive to keep fees and programming affordable so that all children can participate. Many individuals cannot afford Health and Fitness Center memberships, expensive dance, cheer, gymnastic classes, or private pool memberships. Without our department there would be very limited youth sports leagues available, especially basketball. At our Recreation Center children can begin playing basketball at the age of three. Also, we provide middle school and high school leagues for those individuals that either do not want to play for their schools or cannot make the team. We have nearly 1,000 kids annually that participate in our youth basketball leagues alone.

In addition, since we opened back up from Covid, we just created two new programs: Youth Co-ed Volleyball and Youth Co-ed Indoor

Soccer. Those have just been hugely popular right off the bat. There were almost 250 kids that participated. These two programs are not available anywhere else in Mercer County. The volleyball program has been an especially important addition to us. There were no youth volleyball programs in Mercer County. So most kids were attending their middle school without knowing anything about the rules or the skills that it takes to play the game. So I think this is really going to be a great feeder program for middle school and high school.

Kids need a place to be where there is a positive atmosphere and they need things to be involved and that's something that we provide. If we don't provide those services then kids find other things to do. They find trouble to get in or whatever. So I think that's a very vital service and Princeton would not be a desirable place to live, in my opinion, if it wasn't for the face of our Park and Recreation Department.

Can you provide a brief description of the assets within your department?

Obviously the Recreation Center is our home base through which our daily operations take place. It includes a gymnasium, conference room, summer day camp room, House of Bounce Party Room, concession stand, karate dojo, an outdoor playground with a swing set and two handicapped accessible swings, a large covered picnic shelter, outdoor basketball court, skate park, softball field, and the newly constructed dog park.

Princeton City Pool – Our pool is the only public pool in Mercer County and features a 35 foot water slide and baby pool. The facility was recently renovated with concrete repairs, new pool liners, and new RecDeck. Also, the waterslide received a fresh coat of paint and a new pump.

Princeton City Park – This facility includes three picnic shelters, an all-purpose stage, two mile walking trail system, a playground, and an 18 hole disc golf course.

Six Community Playgrounds/Courts:

- Washington Avenue Playground
- Oliver Avenue Playground
- Lower Pine Street Playground
- McKinley Avenue Playground
- Knob Street Playground
- Valley Street Outdoor Basketball Court

Other than salaries, what is the biggest expense within your department?

Employee wages and benefits are definitely the department's largest expense. Some other large expenditures include property and liability insurance, utilities, and concession supplies.

The largest expense (other than employees) is for our youth leagues and programs (\$64,450). These expenses include equipment, materials and supplies, uniforms, and contracted services (referees). Even though the programming requires many large expenditures, our youth leagues and programs are also our second largest sources of revenue (following the City of Princeton contribution).

Our next largest expense is operation of Princeton City Pool (\$61,500). The pool is a very expensive facility to operate and maintain. The facility is usually in the red, losing anywhere from \$5,000 to \$10,000 each summer. The Park and Recreation Board, as well as City Council, view the pool as a public service to the community.

Mr. Hickman inquired about the operation of the Recreation Department during closures last year.

Amanda McCabe replied that the department was closed several months for Covid and it took some time to recover the programming.

Can you describe three short term goals in your department (within a year)?

Three short term goals for our department are:

4. Construct two Pickleball Courts behind the Recreation Center building (\$1,140). This will provide another free recreational opportunity. This activity is fun for all ages and is a great alternative to tennis, especially for older adults and seniors.
5. Begin replacing all of the basketball goals on all outdoor courts, to include new poles, rims, and backboards. (\$47,500). Most of the outdoor basketball goal systems are very old and need replacing. The Park Board wants to replace all of the old style, fan-shaped backboards with new rectangular polycarbonate backboards.
6. To construct an all handicap accessible playground, including swing bays, in Princeton City Park (\$64,000 to \$70,000). This will be the only inclusive playground located in Mercer County and will accommodate all ages, types of disabilities, and mobility devices. The playground design will include an ADA accessible merry-go-round, numerous freestanding elements, and three swing bays with different seat options. One design even includes a component that will allow individuals to utilize the playground by using their ADA adaptive switch to interact. This capability will allow individuals with limited motor skills or impairment of the ability to activate auditory features of the playground.

Planning Commission Member Bob Lohr expressed that an ADA playground is an excellent program since the handicapped can enjoy the same kind of recreation as all others. Mr. Lohr then asked if the ADA playground would be accessible to residents outside the City.

On an inquiry as to the funding for the ADA playground, City Manager Mike Webb replied that the City had approved \$40,000 and that he was going to approach the County Commission for a matching amount.

How does your department plan on achieving these short-term goals?

Pickleball Courts: The department applied for grant funding through the Community Foundation of the Virginias to accomplish this goal. We were recently notified that we were awarded this grant funding and can move forward with the project.

Outdoor Basketball Goals: The department intends to use ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funding to achieve this goal.

Handicap Accessible Playground: City Council has approved \$40,000 in funds toward this project. The City Manager has submitted a request to the County Commission for \$40,000 of their ARPA funds as a match.

How can the City best assist your department in achieving its short term goals?

The City can best assist our department in achieving these goals by providing Public Works labor and equipment for installation. The Recreation Department currently is very short staffed in the Maintenance Department. Also, it does not own a lot of the necessary equipment for installation of the new basketball goals and playground. (The installation of the playground equipment may be included in the project costs.)

Can you describe three long term goals in your department (within 10 years)?

1. The most crucial long term goal for our department is the construction of at least one more gymnasium. We have continued to create new leagues over the years. After adding the recent Indoor Soccer and Volleyball Leagues, we have completely maxed out on the amount of programming that we can provide for the youth during the course of a year. This need has existed for the last decade, but has become even more crucial this past year. I would have

made this project a reality many years ago had it not been for the limbo that we have been in concerning the new property.

2. The second long term goal is to construct a new pool facility to include a slide(s), a splash pad or sprayground, nice shower house, and large concession stand. Our current pool facility was constructed in 1952 (making it 70 years old). Box-style pools are not what the public desires like it did decades ago. Families want more modern pool facilities with a variety of entertainment options for all ages.
3. Our third long term goal is to construct a new skatepark or resurface all of the existing equipment with new sheets or skatelite. The park was constructed in 2003 (19 years ago), and has only been fully resurfaced one time.

How does your department plan on achieving these long-term goals?

To achieve our long term goals, we must first determine whether we will be staying in our current location or moving to the new property. Our department has been in a holding pattern for close to 8 years now. Once the location can be determined, funds will be much easier to secure.

Funding sources for our long term goals will likely be a combination of government aid, ARPA funds, City funds, grant funds, and private contributions.

How can the City best assist your department in achieving its long-term goals?

The City can best assist in our department achieving its long term goals by allocating funds and/or securing other sources of funding.

Where do you see your department in 2034?

This is somewhat of a difficult question to answer because of the uncertainty of whether our future locations will change or not. If we move to the new property, then I see our department in a new state of the art facility to include three

gymnasiums, an indoor soccer field, Karate Dojo, classroom space, bounce house birthday party room, conference rooms, large fully functional concession area, additional office spaces, and storage. The new skatepark and swimming facility would be included, as well as multiple outdoor playing fields and plenty of parking. The new facility would open up opportunity for the development of additional facilities, programming, rentals, and other events.

If we remain on our current property, a new skatepark would need to be constructed in an alternate location and a new gymnasium constructed in its place. This would also allow for growth in programming.

How do you believe your job will change between now and then?

As the department grows in programming, it will certainly require the creation of an additional fulltime position to assist with programming and pool facility management. Additional support staff will also be necessary. Also, if the new facility is constructed, the larger building will require at least one more fulltime maintenance employee.

Growth in programming and space also will create many budget increases on both the revenue and expenditure sides.

To summarize, I believe my job will change and increase in responsibility in the areas of staff hiring and supervision, maintenance and operation of facilities, adjustment to technological changes, and budget planning. However, the new development will create fewer burdens with regard to building and grounds maintenance. The additional gym will also alleviate the difficulty of trying to squeeze so many programs into such short time frames throughout the course of a year. The additional space will enhance our programs allowing teams more time to practice their skills. Expansion will also allow for more rental and event opportunities.

How can the City prepare for these changes now to better equip you or your successors in the future?

The City can prepare for these changes by planning ahead to increase the Park Board's budget to enable our department to hire the additional staff necessary for programming, pool management and facility operations.

What do you personally believe the City needs to improve on the most between now and 2034?

The most recent problem for the Park and Recreation Department has become homeless people in the City Park, as well as our other properties. We have experienced this problem a little bit in the past, but this issue has increased tremendously over the last year. They leave huge messes with grocery carts, clothes, blankets, food and trash. Not always, but in some cases we also find needles and other drug paraphernalia.

As far as the City is concerned, I personally believe an improvement needs to be made with litter control. Also, Princeton needs some type of large industry that would not only create B. & O. for the City, but also create a lot of good paying jobs that would help boost our economy.

How should the City go about creating this improvement?

I don't necessarily have the solutions as to how the City should go about creating these improvements. Perhaps a shelter could be constructed to give the homeless somewhere to go.

As far as the litter problem, perhaps more cameras could be posted to catch people in the act and issue tickets. Or possibly another entity could be contracted out for litter cleanup inside the City.

Possibly the City could offer tax credits to recruit new industry into Princeton. Also, maybe local, existing structures at a low cost rent could be utilized for new industry.

What do you think will be the most defining characteristic of Princeton in 2034?

The new Recreation Center Complex. It would be the defining characteristic of the City, as well.

City Manager Mike Webb explained sending a request to our Congressional delegation to include the City Hall Complex in its Congressional Appropriations Bill. With the \$2.2 million we are in line to receive when they sign off on the budget in Washington, we have \$800,000 or our funds to match with that, along with the conditions that we can do here, giving us basically four million plus dollars to build the Rec Center that Amanda needs. Also, a lot of parking lot entrances will be outside to work with on the land over there, together with room to build a pool.

So a few things are set to happen for this to fall into place and we also are working with the Board of Education to really make it a full and completed project and we're involved in very good conversations right now concerning that prospect.

Mr. Hickman asked what's happening with the facility that's being planned for outside the City.

Mr. Webb replied he did not want to speak for the county. He didn't know everything about it, but the County is going to build additional fields and amenities out beyond the hotels. Additional fields, hotels, shopping whatever it may be.

Mr. Hickman inquired as to a timeframe.

Mr. Webb replied, I've heard some very large numbers with what they wanted to do, but I tell you I probably do not want to talk much about that one, but the flip side of everything, even if it goes fast, you're still looking at a few years down the line, not a long time, but a few years down the line, at least two or three years at a minimum of getting bids going and things of that nature. Therefore, if we can get all these bills going, you're looking at a pretty good opportunity to provide some potential tournaments.

JoAnna Fredeking commented this all

started with the discussion of building a new armory and moving the armory over to exit nine because the State owns a lot of property over there. It went from there to an equine center over there, but they could not get the government to move the armory, they had the property, but that never did happen and I don't know why.

Mr. Webb continued by stating that he thought the whole project just kind of took a back seat after Covid. When Covid struck things just kind of went away.

Mrs. Fredeking commented further that the County wanted the equine center so they could have horse shows now that Bluefield has discontinued the Shrine Horse Show at Bluefield City Park. It's a perfect opportunity though to try to get an equine center somewhere.

Mr. Webb continued by explaining the County wants fields for baseball, softball, and water recreations.

Mr. Hickman asked what the City's budget provided for the Recreation Department.

Mr. Webb replied the City budget's an annual contribution of \$140,000 that is paid in monthly allocations.

Planning Commission Member Dan Crutchfield explained that the City of Fort Collins, Colorado has a complex of playgrounds and recreational facilities with citizen access by paying a fee to use a plot of land to grow a vegetable garden. You actually work the garden and join. As a reward you get to pick the crops when they are ready. These have become a revenue source and created a lot of interest and conversation about visiting there.

Mr. Webb informed that the City's community playgrounds will have new LED's installed and already have new borders around all of the playgrounds.

C. APPROVAL OF RECREATION, ENVIRONMENTAL, CONSERVATION, AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Sections of Comprehensive Plan - Economic Development Specialist Samuel Lusk explained that we need to hear from a department head

first and then I write this section based on what the department head says in his interview. So since the appropriate department head did not speak last month, Mr. Lusk recommended to table this item until next month.

MOTION: JoAnna Fredeking move to table the Environmental, Conservation and Natural Resources Sections of the Comprehensive Plan.

John Hickman duly seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

D. AGRICULTURE ZONING (BY RECOMMENDATION OF CITY COUNCIL)

Mr. Lusk explained that this is something the Commission approved and sent to City Council, but didn't have any language for final approval. Also, at this point, City Attorney Paul Cassell is working on the language and he would have something next month to give them as far as what agriculture will be involved and then the Commission may decide how that should be adjusted.

Another update is, if we could create an agriculture zone, you would think farm animals would be allowed, but Article 505.23 of the Princeton City Code reads that "no person shall keep or permit swine, cow, sheep, goat, goose, duck, turkey, chicken, or other fowl within the City limits of Princeton." If you do, you may be fined \$500 and/or 30 days in jail.

However, if the City would annex an area abutting the City, they would be zoned agricultural and the farming activities would be "grandfathered" as preexisting economic activity. The option exists to do that, Mr. Lusk explained. So we're doing preventive maintenance in that regard.

MOTION: Bob Lohr moved the approval of permitting farm animals in the City of Princeton upon the annexation of agricultural properties into the City.

John Hickman duly seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no Other Business.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, President John Hickman adjourned the October 24, 2022, meeting of the Princeton Planning Commission at 7:23 PM.

DECEMBER 13, 2022 MEETING MINUTES

The Planning Commission for the City of Princeton, Mercer County, West Virginia met in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building, 800 Bee Street, on Tuesday, December 13, 2022, at 6:30 PM. In attendance were President John Hickman; Vice President Vic Allen; Planning Commission members City Manager Mike Webb, JoAnna Fredeking, and Dan Crutchfield; and Zoning Official Ty Smith. Absent were Planning Commission members Anthony Brown, Bob Lohr, and Jim Hilling; ex-officio members Dewey Russell and Marshal Lytton; Economic Development Specialist Sam Lusk; and City Clerk Kenneth Clay. A quorum was constituted thereby.

CALL TO ORDER

President John Hickman called the meeting to order.

MINUTES

Meeting of October 24, 2022—Without correction or addition, President Hickman declared the minutes of the meeting of October 24, 2022, approved and committed to the record.

OLD BUSINESS

Approval of Agriculture Zone Language for Recommendation to City Council – Code Enforcement Director and Zoning Official, Ty Smith, explained that a trend has emerged regarding an increased interest in local residents

for keeping a limited number of select farm animals on their property. As a result, to provide for the incentive for property owners to come into the City by minor boundary adjustment City officials recommend the Planning Commission approve and recommend the adoption of language in the City Code to create an Agriculture Zone for areas annexed into the City by minor boundary adjustment.

MOTION: Vic Allen moved the Planning Commission approved and recommended to City Council the adoption of the language to create an Agriculture Zone in the City of Princeton.

JoAnna Fredeking duly seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

Interview of City Manager, Mike Webb

As an essential element in the development of the 2024-34 Comprehensive Plan for Princeton, Mr. Hickman interviewed City Manager Mike Webb, as follows:

Can you provide your name and position?

My name is Mike Webb, City Manager for the City of Princeton.

Briefly describe your department within the City.

My position as City Manager involves the oversight of each of the seven departments, their operations on a daily basis, and the daily operations within the City Hall.

How would you describe your responsibilities with your department?

Communicate with each of the seven departments daily as best you can to interact with them. I don't have the luxury of permitting much time to pass, which then would mean I would have a gap in information. Also, communicate with the City attorney on a regular basis, communicate with the local businesses, community organizations, and communicate

with County, States, and Federal representatives when we need to do so. When it comes down to it communication I feel is my biggest job. At the end of the day, I've got to stay in touch with everybody, employees part-time and full time, as well as unemployed.

How many employees, part time and fulltime are employed within your department?

We have approximately seventy employees. During the summer months, we have about 90 because it takes in the City Pool with lifeguards and other things that we're hiring up there for their activities on a part-time basis.

What is the scope of your department and how does that impact the people of Princeton?

Obviously, my department is oversight of the entire operations of the City. When it comes down to it, we have a budget of about \$8.5 million by the end of the year and it takes in seven departments.

What would our community look like without your department as part of the City?

The City Council-City Manager form of government allows for quite honestly the professionals to run the day to day operations of the City. I consistently must have balanced budgets and the ability to work without emotions. Sometimes, with the elected officials, it's really hard, to use the phrase, it's hard to make everybody happy. And so hiring somebody that's not on City Council frees them up to be able to honestly say yes or no.

Can you provide a brief description of assets within your department?

The department heads are my assets. Although the City has trucks and other types of equipment and rolling stock. At the end of the day, we've got over 50 vehicles within work equipment that's in public domain that include Fire and Police vehicles. You're looking

at a fleet that is quite honestly in the millions of dollars, and when it's all said and done, on a regular basis it's moving around in the City, so that would be our assets if you will.

Other than salaries, what is the biggest expense within your department?

Other than that, a big expense is health insurance. We are one of the few entities in this state and a lot of places that still pay 100% of the premiums for the employees. They pay nothing for their insurance and it's about \$900,000 a year that the City is paying. That's a good inducement because we can't pay everybody \$50 an hour. We pay them lower wages in some cases, but at the same time, they have full benefits as far as insurance.

Mr. Hickman asked if health insurance is provided instead of more dollars an hour.

Mr. Webb replied every bit, because they have health, vision, and including that the insurance premiums are 100% covered for all the fulltime employees, and we're not planning on changing that any time soon. Continuing upgrades for Fire, Police, Public Works, and becoming more efficient within those departments without being able to track data. For example, with the Police Department better means of information gathering and communication capabilities that we have acquired we can actually say during this month we've got more going on in this area. We can actually focus our scheduling based on this and we are not scheduled all over the place and having to run like crazy. It's actually making it more efficient and that helps the budget.

Can you describe three short term goals in your department (within a year)?

Mr. Webb replied that one of his goals is to establish staffing stability in the Police Department. It's becoming tough to get somebody to become a police officer. It's not the same as what it was twenty-five years ago when you published a request for testing and you had 30

people respond. Now, you put out a request and you get seven. Then of just two or three that passed you get one that might be truly what you need. That's where it's changed. So we need to work on that, make it more even more efficient. We want to make it more apparent to then what they want to become police officers.

Another goal is to fill up the vacant buildings in the downtown area. We've gone a long way toward actually doing that already with so many of the buildings downtown filling up with businesses, let alone people living there. I lived there for multiple years. I want to let people know it was okay to be downtown.

How does your department plan on achieving those short term goals?

Again, we're going to keep on as far as achieving those goals with the capabilities we have and working with Region One Planning and Development Council. They actually work on a multi-county level and they have to deal with the provision of services to those jurisdictions. And we're getting those services really for half price for all of the departments. Hopefully, they can keep doing that on a three year basis.

How can the City best assist your department in achieving its short-term goals?

Work with City Council and make sure they're supportive of our budget initiatives when we meet in February and March in preparing a budget for July. City Council has been very good to work with myself to assure the department has what we need to really approach it from a fiscally sound and responsible manner. But we need to keep that process going.

Can you describe three long-term goals in your department (within 10 years)?

Mr. Webb replied probably addressing the budget concerns with PEIA at the end of the day. The State may not this year because everybody knows the state's got \$1.2 billion in excess and all these happy numbers right now,

and that's great. But it wasn't that long ago that every year we had about 5% increase in PEIA, give or take, and they were already talking about a 11% increase coming up, but they kind of quietened down from that. If that comes back up and if it's just 5% you're looking at an extra forty-five \$45,000 from the budget just like that. Just because the number clicked in Charleston we've got to figure out a way to offset that somehow. And then that's going to be a discussion that maybe everybody getting some skin needs elbows and we don't have 100% down the line.

Mr. Hickman inquired about prescriptions.

Mr. Webb replied The PEIA decided to start doing 5% increases each year at the same time we're going to mention that we have to pay into it as required, they go about 7% of the year just because that's the legislation. 7% guaranteed and we're already up to a combined \$400,000 for two of those over the next 10 years. You're looking at 7% increases annually at probably about a million dollars. You can't even imagine, if things don't slow down and we don't alleviate it somehow.

How does your department plan on achieving these long-term goals?

It's going to happen whether I want it to be a goal or not, it's going to be a goal that we address and approach. And however we may look at that from the City standpoint, I don't know yet. Mr. Webb continued by mentioning another goal which has been around for a while and that's taxation. And I've been very open about that since I've been here in 2016. I think one option we have now that we didn't have even in 2000 is the 1% sales tax. Quite honestly, if we can really make the conversations work for whether we reach out to whatever direction you want to reach in past times, the City did not have the tools to say we have a 1% sales tax.

If I can go up to nine and take it all at once we could do away with B. & O. tax across the board. I mean just do away with B. & O. Tax. That's my goal.

My next long term goal, the third one, is

eliminating the tax. I'm very upfront about that because we're one of the few states still have a B. & O. tax even going. But the 1% sales, it was 1985 and you're going out to 1990 and beyond and however you want to put it, it was the old city coming to get your dollars to all the business owners. Now it's a matter of going out there and saying we want your business. We want to be competitive. We want businesses in the City. You don't have to have the B. & O. Tax, we have 1%. And relatively speaking, it's triple, quadruple what we're getting in B. & O.

Right now, that's how serious a matter it is for us to figure out how to grow out there and then turn some of the problems with a pension on down the line because we are self-sustaining in a very good way without having to watch it every year on such a level. Again eliminating the B. & O. Tax is the long term goal.

As far as how the legislation when it comes down to it will help, taxation has three ways of doing it and one of these adjustments will be much tougher on municipalities and you do it once every two years now and it's really touchy. I now sit on the West Virginia Municipal Leagues Legislative Policy Board, which is good for us. We have a voice in there and can let them know what's going on and work with individual members of the Legislature in setting the agenda before the year ever gets started going in Charleston. In January I had discussions with different ones and the main thing is, at the end of the day it's going to have to come from the local level. The local level will have to come around and say it's okay for the City to grow. It's not a bad thing. It's good for everybody.

The County Commission is against us on annexation, but it's not so much the County Commission itself because they're not really losing anything. But when you mix that with some of the citizens, because we're trying to make a huge population, we're starting to affect the County because you're affecting the fire fees and things that affect the volunteer fire departments. It's a ripple effect at that point. As far as

direct if we just went out and said we want to get one business because they're interested in coming into the City. The commission's probably going to argue with that because it's a loss for them.

How can the City best assist your department achieving its long-term goals?

At the end of the day, for us to reach any of our goals its going have to be through budgetary constraint. If you're on an annual budget with a lot of the upcoming legislation, we can't just turn around and say we need to go buy this, and it's just because once you start doing that, you start losing chunks of \$50,000, \$75,000, \$100,000, and all of sudden it's up to \$25,000 that you had extra, it's just gone and now you're pretty much running at the line all the way to next year.

Where do you see your department in 2034?

Mr. Hickman: First question, do you believe you'll be serving the City and where do you see your department in 2034?

Even if things are going swimmingly, I'm probably going to be relaxing and retired by that time. In complete honesty maybe not too far into the future. But that's my goal.

Now, as far as I see the department in 2034, right down here, just from the notes steadily growing to put the times into perspective, real consideration needs to be made. And when I first came here in 2016, they hired me as the assistant manager, and one of my jobs really was to handle special projects if you will and allow the City manager to do the daily personnel responsibilities.

When they interviewed me for city manager they said, well, I'll tell you what, if you want to come in, we'll start you Assistant Manager and after about a year, they moved me up into the City Manager's position. We made a joint effort from the get go and I've always been grateful for that and I took it as, well they're interested in me, but I need to find out where all the potholes are before I jump into it. That's why

I've always been very appreciative of that and I think we've become much busier since then.

I'll be very honest with you we've developed the EDA and the Land Use Agency. We were growing. We're putting chemistry out there, we're starting to develop, growing I think and in due time we're going to need the position of a deputy assistant manager on a regular basis, not just one to shadow for a while and take over. I think you're going to have that department which will be needed to take on special projects. All those things so the manager will have time to manage the second part of the personnel side of it. Really handle that, knowing what's going on with the bigger projects. As we grow it is difficult to manage seven departments and special issues, plus any big projects you've got going on and you know it because you don't want to just hope that you get it right. That's the worst feeling, because this is a job of emotions that can take you up and down in a very quick time.

How do you believe your job will change between now and then?

Basically, one of the things I think we'll change is the impact of technology. We've got to be ready for technology to change because we are using it more and more as we go. Hopefully it's going to make operations more efficient as we go.

Each of the departments is going to jump in headfirst and really say I'm okay with whatever capabilities, desktop, and all these different dashboard systems. We've still got generations of people, including myself to some extent, that do not have technology front and center and we've got to really step into that and accept it. As to how to access to the Internet we've got to be prepared for what's better coming as far enhanced information delivery. And with us through several more years in 2028 broadband cable will be here. At least there has been talk about it. But I will believe it when I see it. To be quite blunt with you, there's probably an unprecedented speed here in 2023, through Frontier in certain locations. I know that for a

fact, because I know the library and different other buildings were probably equipped for it to come in because the Regional Council set it up in Huntington at that time. It's already here in some manner, being able to access it, that's the key. We just need to figure out how to unlock it and, when it comes down to it, how much cheaper would it be than what it is currently. How can the City be prepared for these changes now?

Also, you're just continually preparing really for the budgetary planning. We really start the budgetary planning sessions in January-February every year and I'm already looking at it in October, November, December, just to have an idea of what we want to start formulating and gearing up for as to what's important in the next fiscal year. It's not important where we're going to spend. If we were to go up to \$100,000 in revenue we have to spend \$100,000 for expenses. We can't just pocket it since the City is a not for profit entity. We have to use it.

So it's not like you're going to just say, OK, we've 3.2 million and it's all in our pockets. Now you can save a little bit of a rainy day but, for the most part, it's going to be consistency in their budgetary planning. That's going to be the healthiest thing for the City.

So what do you personally believe the City needs to improve on the most between now and 2024?

Police staffing is going to be what we need to adjust to do whatever is needed to get our staffing back up where we're comfortable at around 18-20 officers so as to have twenty-one on duty and three more on call. If we need that, we have a long way to go right now. That's going to become an important experience within the Police Department as good as the ones that we have. They're all young, they're not bad officers, but they're young to me. I would like to see a few more gray hairs even if it's just one or two with more experience. But just getting the experience and keep them here is important. The State Police, at the end of the day, they're paid by \$10,000

more and again for talking traditional one.

And at the end of the day, if you're Princeton or Shepherdstown, I don't care where you are, we can't keep up with those kinds of increasing pay and benefits. The sharks are going to be here for the officers and if they have an opportunity to become a police officer in the same area as their homes and you can get a \$10,000, \$15,000, \$20,000 more, I don't blame them. I wish them well. It makes it very difficult for us to retain officers.

So what do we need to improve on that? We have increased our pay, give or take, over the last few years from \$13, \$14, \$15 an hour to what it is now at \$20 an hour when they come out of the academy to receive over \$20 an hour as a brand new officers. Plus, they get overtime regularly because we are very short right now. So they're making good money in southern West Virginia relatively speaking, compared to Martinsburg. But we're trying to work with that because it's going to persist as an ongoing situation.

How should the City go about creating this improvement?

Well, I can trust that we're already doing it by working with the pay raises and fringe benefits. We've given the officers free access to the fitness center where they can go exercise and work out. But if you're in that kind of job and you're that wound up because something happened, you mainly just run for a while. You just do whatever to burn off that emotional side of things and keep yourself fresh. So we're working on that.

Also, I want to do additional trainings to really get them prepared again. They're not young officers, but they are young in relation to what we had even six or seven years ago. On average, I think we're considerably younger.

What do you think will be the most defining characteristic of Princeton in 2034?

I thought about this because, in some ways, we've got a lot of things happening. We're getting more and more outdoor activities going on in the park with disc golf,

and the upgrade to the swimming pool and we're going to build an ADA accessible playground and have an enhance stage for public performances, with all outdoor facilities.

But at the end of the day, I have a couple of different things. One of them is the B. & O. Tax will be gone and, hopefully, geographically the City will be bigger. What I truly see, Princeton Community Hospital becoming part of the West Virginia University Health System as of January 1st, has been a couple of years in the making and on the governing board there. This is one of those things that doesn't happen in many communities. This is one of those things that secures our community: having a hospital for the next 50 years. Look at it this way: having not done this, I wouldn't guarantee you how long the hospital would endure. But it's not like we were on a day to day basis. We certainly will be here for 50 years from guaranteed work by the community hospital becoming part of the WVU Health System.

Also, we have become much, much more appealing to bring businesses here. Doctors here, quite honestly, the medical world here, it's a nice day with the potential to see the growth. I hear things, probably more things than other people do. But there's going to be growth and it's going to be something that says our quality of life healthcare options are going to be here rather than having to wait or travel out of town for treatment. It's going to be interesting.

If you really want to get down to it, that hospital right now employees about 1300 people, give or take, but once you're done with it probably more like 1700 people. Now you're talking about much more dollars inside the City. If you want to talk about revenue, that's great. But just the ability to provide Southern West Virginia, that will be Princeton, West Virginia and, to me that will be the defining center of what we are at a City and region, hopefully in 2034 and beyond.

I'll be honest with you. Almost every question you've posed I could probably have

answered seven different ways. I'm very, very front. It's hard to say the Police are more important than the Fire and Fire is more important than the Public Works, or Code Enforcement is more important than the others because they all work together. You want to work together as one unit even though there are seven departments. That makes my job a lot easier.

Planning Commission member Dan Crutchfield remarked that now he had just a couple of questions for everyone because he was still trying to figure something out.

One question I have is related to the budget that we have. We've got the main expenses like insurance, salaries, that kind of stuff. Percentage-wise I don't know if you have a number from experience or just like an idea perhaps. What percentage of the total budget is not used, not consumed that can actually be used to push the City forward, expand the City. Kind of like for creating, is there anything that isn't it with municipal budgets, like I was saying before a one year, that would be just like used in another.

Mr. Webb replied at the end of the day if we say our annual budget is going to be a number like \$8 million and then you realize we're going to be closer to an \$82 million. Whenever we realized revenues coming in we've got to raise expenses we've got to justify. We put them into whatever department that already have that year. So when we're finished it's a balanced budget. We can't just go on we've got \$220,000 to get whatever. We need to make sure we go back to the budgeting come in February. We have to make sure if we need to budget for something you want to see growth? We can say here's a line item and the funds are available. You can plug it in because when you're coming towards the end of the year, that's going to be your best bet.

For example, we planned to buy a garbage truck and it wasn't in our budget, but the older one that we have a 2013 model about 10 years old. We've got one in 2017 to replace the 2007, give or take it costs about \$128,000. Well, we

have to have a garbage truck. We don't have an option. So we went ahead and said, "Okay, we'll go and get it. Even though it's not budget, we're doing it anyway." It cost \$220,000 now that in one moment we lost our added to the budget. Does that make sense? That's the reality we're in now. We thought it was going to be \$130,000 or \$140,000 was about \$250,000, but I think the final number is still pending and we've been waiting for almost six months.

Mr. Webb continued by explaining we used to do a 10-year lease with the hospital. Part of the hospital is on city property and they lease it every 10 years for a base number of like \$300,000 year. And it would just be based on the CPI and everything else included. But when we came up in 2018, I talked to them and I said, "How about this?" We'll do it up front instead of you guys paying us for a whole year decade, pay a total of what was going be like a total \$3.4 million. I said there's \$2.75 upfront and we're taking a lump sum. We used \$753,000 for new fire trucks that would have cost us almost \$2 million otherwise with financing.

But that's where we got to be outside the box. We've got to be able to think how we can get away from, maybe come up with a deal to help us get out of the regular budget, and that would avoid us doing leasing. One truck at the time was replaced by the 2019. We got lucky and I talked to the hospital again and figured out a way to do that in 2018 to have funds to revamp equipment. That way it frees up the budget for recurring expenses.

Mr. Crutchfield added he still had a lot of questions, but it's probably a lunch or something. But we're talking about taxing, I know that and added that he had lived in West Virginia since 1997, and had to move to Colorado. I know they were talking about that actually back then. So that's a discussion that has been going on for a long time. Is there a plan to actually get past discussion into steps, or is that just more of an imaginary idea, or is it a real idea?

Mr. Webb replied we try really hard to use different kinds of initiatives to help the City grow.

Mr. Crutchfield mentioned the option of minor boundary adjustment.

Mr. Webb replied that we can go about it a little different and we have again. We have the 1% tax now that we didn't have before, and Sam Lusk, the Economic Development Director, is working with a new plan that Council just passed that has to do with giving more incentive to somebody outside the City to request to come into the City so we can do a minor boundary adjustment. Whether it has to do with the B. & O. Tax or the garbage pickup fee or whatever it may be, we're working on things that way to make it more appealing for them to come into the City. But like I said before, until the state legislation on annexation is revised, it's tough to do.

Most of the State Legislature's session have been county focused. They really have been, and I think it's good or bad. I mean, they have their own agenda as far as it goes, but if you are in the City, it's made it tougher to just say let's just make a plan and go do it. What's the first business out of the City beyond Grand furniture? What's the first one? For instance, you just go out there and they want to come in and we said sure, as soon as we said sure, let him in, but we can't do that again for two another two years even is another business wants to come in, we have to wait two years because of the state law on annexation by minor boundary adjustment. It just came out in the last few years that that's where I'm on the board now.

But to your point, we have a plan in place and we've been working on a couple of other things. I tried to push it here a few years ago, really just in the last about three years ago, and it moderately blew up because include honesty, a lot of the volunteer fire departments are against it because it would affect the fire fees they receive from the State, and it would affect how much they were getting from the County

where we were taking in a geographical area.

So it's a balancing act. I want to talk to them. We were prepared to offset their losses, you know, within the fees and make them up so that they didn't lose anything. They would stay exactly where they were, nobody lost anything. We still gained by the 1% sales tax, and we can start to go down and be done with it. But it didn't happen, and I mean, it's just that they didn't want to tell him what to do, and that's part of it. But at the end of the day, we already have a mutual aid agreement with them to assist wherever they're going to come out on a call.

I mean, very upfront and outside of the saying, we'll make you whole if you're just on average numbers like you're getting \$90,000 year and you dropped to \$70,000. We'll give you twenty-four/seven of you to make sure you stay home and it's still medical issues. And it died on the line that way.

Mr. Crutchfield so you say you had a plan?

Mr. Webb replied, I was going to work with them on a bill regarding the hotel-motel tax. And there were three things for us to grow and everybody would be at or above where they started at and it didn't get accepted. I put it that way in the public eye. I'm okay with that because it just means we have to reshape it and figure it out.

Mr. Lusk is working on those things now. There's going to be more individual based incentives and it's going to be a more minor boundary adjustment approach to where if somebody wants to come in and we want to get five or six or seven at the time, and council kind of seems to be listening, we're going to see what that does and put it out there to see if we get any interest, hopefully within the next few months.

If you guys don't know, Princeton Health Care is probably about to open a facility here soon. They've bought the land and they already have a design going. If they had a little bit further back, they wanted to be an extension anyway. So whenever that happens, we've got to pull them into the City. Then we have to wait two

years and then plus five others. That's how it is.

There are three ways to act and two years waiting before acting on another boundary adjustment

I've asked the same question, and I think the answer is yes. I don't know that for a fact. You basically will be voting when it comes time to act on it. I think you could do one now, eight months later. But it takes so long to get together and it is just that I would like to get the business areas before I've ever tried the residential, just so we have the revenue coming in and then we can go after the residential. And you can also get in what needs to be done in those areas instead of just taking them in and not having any new, true revenue coming in. Again, it's a balancing act, and I know I'm preaching.

Some of you have been here for a while. I mean, you know, and you've heard and you've seen, but I'm very open about that kind of stuff. I don't try to sugarcoat. I don't try to change you. Just saying this is kind of what we did go by the geographical area. Also, you've gotten attached in that sense because we can just pick an island over here and get them. But, we would have to take in the road as well, in order to get them into the City. As you know, you just went up to the top of the hill to take in where the Health Care Center is and I would like to go on with the program down that way because there's a lot of businesses down there. I think there's a lot of opportunity if we provide positive communication to the businesses. I want to build trust and I think I'm working hard to try to do that with the County and I'm working hard on that.

I mean, it's one of those things. It's our best shot. If we don't, we're fooling ourselves. We think we can just stand here, not grow, not expand and not work together. We just sit right here. I can tell you one thing that will be coming with all the fees, just like every other city, that we don't have to do: water fees, fire fees, side fees, whatever fees like in a town really close to us. Hundreds of thousands of dollars if

you look at this now, I want to know because they're not the only one who does it, but their fees bring in \$1.2 million. They're not the only one. Trust me more in town willing Clarksburg, Huntington, Charleston also have all these fees. I'm familiar with a lot of people in each of those cities. They all have these. We don't.

Also, I guarantee you will have employees paying 80-20 on insurance and will be adding these other fees gradually, all at once and for all, within five or six or seven years. It would be paying \$45 a month or whatever the number is, and we'll put in an extra \$600,000 or \$700,000 a year. It's one of those things that is the worst thing in the world because those fees guarantee that money going to a specific things, even the outdoor venues.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, President Hickman adjourned the December 13, 2022, meeting of the Planning Commission at 7:35 PM.

JANUARY 30, 2023 MEETING MINUTES

The Planning Commission for the City of Princeton, Mercer County, West Virginia met in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building, 800 Bee Street, on Monday, January 30, 2023, at 6:30 PM. In attendance were President John Hickman; Vice-President Vic Allen; Commission Members JoAnna Fredeking, Dan Crutchfield; and City Manager Michael Webb; Human Resources Director Brian Blankenship; Economic Development Specialist Samuel Lusk; and City Clerk Kenneth Clay. Absent were Commission Members Bob Lohr, Jim Hilling, Mayor Graham, and Anthony Brown; and ex-officio members Dewey Russell and Marshall Lytton. A quorum was constituted thereby.

Call to order

President John Hickman called the meeting to order.

PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

MINUTES

No action was taken on the minutes of the last meeting

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

NEW BUSINESS

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2024-2034

A. INTERVIEW OF PRINCETON'S HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR BRIAN BLANKENSHIP:

Planning Commission President John Hickman conducted the interview of Brian Blankenship as follows:

Can you provide your name and position?

My name is Brian Blankenship with the City of Princeton, currently presiding over Human Resources as its Director. I came into this role a couple of years ago. I was a CFO for about six previous years and prior to that was a professional firefighter for the City. So this year is my 15th year with the City.

Can you briefly describe your department within the City?

Basically, as with any Human Resource Department, we manage every aspect of the employment process, including orientation and training of new staff members. And of course I'm in charge of all payroll management, benefits, W-2's, and general oversight of personnel policies and procedures.

How would you describe your duties and responsibilities as a department head?

See response to the previous question.

How many employees part time and full time are employed within your department?

Basically, as we stand right now, we carry about 66 full-time and about 13 part-time employees and that's on the City side. As far as the General Fund we have one full time personnel and about seven part time in the library component and three full time and on average, especially this time of year, we average about 12 part-time folks with Parks and Recreation as a component unit, as well.

What is the scope of your department and how does that impact the people of Princeton?

Basically the scope of my department is well laid out as I mentioned in question number three: to ensure that we are hiring great candidates and employees to serve our citizens and visitors of our great city.

What would our community look like without your department as part of the City?

Basically, I ensure that we have the qualified candidates that are committed to public service, of course. Without that our city couldn't guarantee good quality services.

Can you provide a brief description of the assets within your department?

Well, the only real asset, the way the format is here for the City of Princeton, there's only been one person over HR all this time. So basically what I put down for that as the only real assets of course, are my education and my real world experience over three decades relating to senior management, finance, banking, and human resources that has prepared me to take care of our employees and our constituency in the City.

Other than salaries, what is the biggest expense within your department?

The benefits.

Can you describe three short term goals within a year?

I would like to manage my time more efficiently to be able to dedicate resources toward goals. The recently purchased new software program that I had spearheaded here about two, two and a half years ago that was applied. Also, we need more training with staff over policies and procedures that will also help reduce costs over the long term.

How does your department plan on achieving these short-term goals?

We can manage my time and our department head's time more efficiently to be able to dedicate resources toward the goals.

How can the City best assist you in your department achieving short term goals?

Well, basically the key to human resources is our employees through continued cooperation with all department heads and senior management. That's what makes this thing work.

Can you describe three long term goals in your department (within 10 Years)?

We want to continue the efficiencies within the department and resources for all employees. Of course I'd like to prepare for a successor upon nearing year ten. My time frame here, I'd like to put in at least another 11 to get to certain personnel policy goals accomplished and similar things with retirement. So, near my 10-year anniversary is when I will really start preparing to look for a successor.

How does your department plan on achieving these short-term goals?

We're going to continue on with quarterly and annual training as we have been doing.

How can the City best assist your department achieving these long term goals?

Basically, we always have some of the best department heads and senior management that I have seen even with me being out in the private sector. But the department needs the participation and employee willingness to understand policies and procedures under the direction and support of city management.

Where do you see your department in 2034?

Of course we always want to look for more innovations that will lead to better record keeping and time clock processes while eliminating human errors. This will also strengthen this department and ensure timely processes with all the functions of human resources, namely paper.

How do you believe your job will change between now and then?

Well as I said, I mean HR is basically HR. It's been the same since inception and 100 years from now will be essentially the same, but I really don't anticipate much change with my role within this department.

How can the City prepare for these changes now to better equip you or your successors in the future?

Investing in better technologies by setting aside capital equipment expense funds.

What do you personally believe the City needs to improve on the most between now and 2034?

Continue to invest in systems and technology to improve tax revenue, fees, and payments, along with timekeeping tools, to eliminate errors and misunderstandings that cost in the long run.

How should the City go about creating this improvement?

Of course, as always, having a healthy capital expense revenue reserve or a capital expense reserve to take advantage of innovations

that improve our overall financial stability.

What do you think will be the most defining characteristic of Princeton in 2034?

Our growth and investments in our city will make us the shining light in Mercer County.

Commission Member JoAnna Fredeking asked if Human Resources is fully automated.

Mr. Blankenship replied, No, ma'am. Right now, we're doing a lot of record keeping with time sheets and leave slips and things like that which we've been very successful using for all these decades as well. But you know what, I have mentioned that particular topic. As we grow as a municipality we're bringing on more employees and we've expanded just in the past couple of years by adding an EDA and other agencies. So as we continue to grow and improve we will bring more services to the citizens and things like that. I thought about utilizing technology for the future, having a better time keeping processes and things like that as we continue to grow.

Commission Member Vic Allen asked if there were other employees in Human Resources.

Mr. Blankenship replied that he is the only one in Human Resources at this time.

Commission Member Dan Crutchfield: One of the questions I had, you mentioned training several times. Is that something that you could give us more information on just so we understand what type of training?

Mr. Blankenship: Sure. Most notably here recently we had all the City Hall staff, including the other departments, since we're kind of like sitting ducks at City Hall, one thing that I definitely wanted to address and I got our SWAT team and some other members of our Police Department come over and we held live active shooter training. We held that right here in this room and we engaged our employees. They had to do a lot of hands on training with our SWAT team. That's just an example of some of the training sessions that we have here that better our employees and prepares them for the world that we're in now.

Economic Development Specialist Sam Lusk: I have a question for the purposes of writing this and just looking at some things that are going to change over the next 10 years. Do you see some of the policies and procedures changing over the next 10 years?

Mr. Blankenship: Well of course we're always under the adaptations of the type of personnel that we have and we have to always have to adhere to equal employment laws and things like that. That will happen consistently with the addition of new employees and other employees that we have out of necessity had a chance to hire and that come forward wanting an employment opportunity with the City. That's always an ongoing change.

City Manager Mike Webb: Updating of the policy manual happens, give or take, about once a year, at least as far as any minimal updates. But in some years it's more than others. So it will always be ongoing.

Commission Member JoAnna Fredeking: In my experience sometimes change is day to day and hour to hour.

Mr. Blankenship: Definitely in the fiscal year and that's something that I had kind of changed when I became the CFO back at 2014. The structure here was a little bit different. This was before Mike's time, but that's been an ongoing thing for me to kind of rearrange things because of my outside previous history in the private sector. And we had, you know when JoAnna came in, she's a new employee where you saw three different people, you first started out with Human Resources for a little bit of your application process, then you went back to the CFO to finish up some payroll papers and things like that. Then we pass you off to our Tax Auditor and Accounts Payable Clerk to do benefits.

So when I came into the role, that was a goal of mine, retooling City Hall. We're finally there to where right now, with Human Resources, that department is now the central location for anything that's employee related, like payroll,

W-2's, benefits, time off, and things like that. It's now in one department when beforehand, it was spread out over several departments.

Mr. Webb: We were able to do that because when Wanda Donahue retired we moved Brian into HR. At that time he brought payroll with him in large part with the new Tyler Technology that we put in the software. So really the timing of it was spot on. So to answer your question, it was really Brian who headed that up and in the long term it made a lot of sense to bring it all together at the same time. Consistency should help in that regard.

Mr. Hickman asked is there anything different out there to help with that? Does the state have to help the cities in particular with benefits, the cost of the benefits?

Mr. Blankenship replied that everybody's in the same boat just right now. All of the municipalities are getting ready to sit down and plan our budget for fiscal year 2024 that's coming up. And you know the thing that's the dark cloud on the horizon is the increases with PEIA. We're potentially getting hit with a 10% increase in PEIA premiums this July.

Mr. Webb added what he's trying to say is we may be looking at other boats that might be for sale. If there's anything out there with all the money that the state has, anything short term we're probably staying the course. Long term we're going to probably take a serious look at other choices with PEIA. And other options that may be out there. That's just the reality of it. From what we understand it's going up 10% this July 1st on us and because it turned July one that's more than \$90,000 gone from our budget just like that.

Mrs. Fredeking remarked we know because the scale they put out three or four years ago we had been scared to death that will go up. When I was with the school system it was like every six months there was a change in premium and it was what I saw when they gave us that, but it was awful for us.

Mr. Blankenship replied you know municipalities also were worried that we've got 10% coming up the following two or three fiscal years and it may be several more percentage points. Four or 5% still added on. So as Mike alluded to we're always looking to spend the dollar the best we can and we may need to look at other options at some point down the road. PEIA used to be the shining light in the state but not any more unfortunately. It's just getting too cost prohibitive for a lot of municipalities and counties and other agencies of course to continue on. So we will always be diligent with the City. We always have and always will be looking for other options and making sure we're spending our taxpayer dollars the best we can.

Mr. Webb commented that it kind of stinks to say your state has a \$1.3 billion surplus and you're getting a 10% kick in the butt, when it comes to budget time, to your PEIA.

Mrs. Fredeking added that John (Hickman) is a pharmacist, but there are plans out there that I read all the time and I think it would be nice. And then I have to remember you can't have any other insurance. You cannot have another drug plan because if you do, they'll take the one you have away from you. And it was so hard. I was President of the Association for nine years and I remember I would say every meeting these plans look good, but you can't touch them. So don't go out here and sign up and come back next month and tell me I signed up and they cut my insurance off because that's exactly what they do. They will, if you take anything else and they find out about it, your drug plan is gone and your insurance is gone and I don't know how any of us could afford it.

John Hickman commented that he mentioned before until they actively go after the rebate system that they're getting from the manufacturer on the drugs it's not going to change and they're going to get hoodwinked until they do that. And I may have said at the last meeting we had with somebody that understood what was going on and I acknowledged

that he's getting there and losing tons of money, but he's too scared to move as far as changing until they do that and just keep going.

Mr. Blankenship replied and of course that's part of the state legislature. It's just back and forth. And one side doesn't want to keep throwing good money after bad. Nobody can come to the middle anymore and really resolve our issues. Just go down and sit to do my time, get my money and come home and then I'll wait two more years and I'll run again and I'll go here again and we're not getting any changes.

Mr. Webb commented one thing I did not say while you were asking Brian those questions about what the City could do to assist his department, he never mentioned money as the answer. So he's my favorite employee and you can put that on the record.

B. APPROVAL OF COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TABLE OF CONTENTS/FORMAT

Addressing the Planning Commission, Sam Lusk explained that he had printed off the table of contents and placed it in front of the members and added this is the format that Starry Eyes Media came up with and which I collaborated with them to make this. This is something that you all approved previously, but it wasn't in this format. You can see the different chapters that are going to be in the Comprehensive Plan.

Chapter One being "Playing with a Purpose. Chapter Two, "Princeton at a Glance", and I have different sections under the Princeton's priorities: Economic Development, renewal, redevelopment, housing finances, and sections like that.

Chapter Four, "Princeton in Action." There's not any content there yet. And the draft that I sent will mainly be how we are addressing our priorities.

And then the last section, the Appendix, is going to contain the minutes from all of our meetings we've held throughout the last year. And there will be other sections in that appendix mostly being references with the different sections and why I've

referenced material that's out there.

So, I wanted to place this table of contents in front of you to see if there was anything at the onset here that the Commission wanted me to add. I know Mrs. Fredeking mentioned parking, so I'm going to have parking incorporated in either one of the existing sections or make a new section.

He added that's going to be to the Council Minutes where they approved the Comprehensive Plan and then that's going to be all the minutes from the plan's development.

MOTION: Vic Allen moved to approve the table of contents as presented.

JoAnna Fredeking duly seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

Vic Allen commented that the table of contents was very well done.

Mr. Lusk remarked that's about 69 pages right now and I'm thinking when it's finished it will be 120 to 130 pages.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, President John Hickman adjourned the January 30, 2023, meeting of the Princeton Planning Commission at 6:53 PM.

FEBRUARY 27, 2023 MEETING MINUTES

The Planning Commission for the City of Princeton, Mercer County, West Virginia met in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building on Monday, February 27, 2023, at 6:30 PM. In attendance were President John Hickman; Vice President Vic Allen; Planning Commission members JoAnna Fredeking, Dan Crutchfield, and City Manager Michael Webb; Economic Development Specialist Samuel Lusk; and City Clerk Kenneth Clay.

Absent were Commission members Bob Lohr, Jim Hilling, and Anthony Brown; and ex-officio members Dewey Russell and Marshall Lytton. A quorum was constituted thereby.

CALL TO ORDER

President John Hickman called the meeting to order.

MINUTES

Minutes of the Meetings of December 13th, 2022, and January 30th, 2023—Vic Allen moved the Planning Commission approve the minutes of the meetings of December 13, 2022, and the January 30, 2023.

JoAnna Fredeking duly seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

NEW BUSINESS

Comprehensive Plan Update—Economic Development Specialist Sam Lusk advised the Planning Commission that this addresses an update of the Comprehensive Plan that he had emailed to all members. Mr. Lusk then proceeded to go over the fine points of his report to the Planning Commission, as follows:

This current draft is 135 pages. Keep in mind that the current draft is not formatted by Starry Eyes media yet. That draft is only a crude look at what the text will look like and we are not current with the original proposed blueprint. However, I built in extra time at the end in case it is needed. The sections that still need completed are the Community Design Section, the Renewal Section, the Housing Section, and the Intro in the ending. That's a total of five sections that must be completed at this point. And those remaining sections will be

done by our March 27th meeting, which will put us back on schedule. Doing so will put us back on schedule to approve the plan by April 3rd.

However, we still may need a little bit more time for Starry Eyes Media to create the necessary charts and formatting. But even if we do need a little bit more time, we'll still finish by the end of the fiscal year. That completes my report.

JoAnna Fredeking asked if Starry Eyes Media is going to compile the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Lusk confirmed that Starry Eyes Media will pull his text and make charts and compile it into a nice format and then they will print it into a book.

Mrs. Fredeking then asked if the Plan also has to include the City council minutes.

Mr. Lusk replied that it will include the minutes of the City Council meeting that hasn't happened yet. So when they do send it to City Council they will print those minutes off and incorporate them. But with the minutes and with my text, we're at 135 pages already. They're probably going to be able to insert that text so we can send a draft in the report that I sent you over the weekend. Mr. Lusk then asked if the Planning Commission members were able to access that?

Mrs. Fredeking replied that she could access the minutes, but couldn't access the agenda or the report.

Mr. Lusk asked if anyone else had any problems accessing it and offered to print a copy for those who needed one, adding that he would do so first thing the next morning.

Mr. Lusk then informed the Commission that the last person they would need to interview is him and his interview would be on March 27th. That will finish all the sections, and then his interview will be done and approved on March 27th, as well. Then, April 3rd the Commission will meet again, which will give you about a week to look over everything. So, on April 3rd, the Commission could actually approve the whole plan and send it to City Council for them to approve it. And if they

have any edits, they'll then send it back to you. Thereafter, the Comprehensive Plan will be submitted to the County Courthouse and the tentative date to have it completed is by the end of the fiscal year. But that's not set in stone. If it takes more time to review the Plan we can go over it a little if need be by the end of June.

Mrs. Fredeking asked if the Comprehensive Plan would go to Charleston, also.

Mr. Lusk replied that it isn't filed in Charleston, but must be filed at the County Courthouse by the end of June.

Mr. Hickman asked if that is as far as it goes and will the Comprehensive Plan be available online.

Mr. Lusk replied in the affirmative, but added that he doesn't know what they do with it after it's filed at the courthouse. I do know that they have it on file at the courthouse if anyone from the public would like to review it. However, it will be on file for public record at the City, as well.

Beautification Concept Plan – Planning Commission member Dan Crutchfield explained that at the last city council meeting he had mentioned a beautification program for the City's neighborhoods and remarked it would be great if we could make the concept plan a part of the Ten Year Comprehensive Plan to at least start talking about it.

We have eight neighborhood-City parks and the biggest change would be having a trailhead at each neighborhood park that has the mileage to the next park, and from that trail someone could bike or jog or walk and be able to actually walk around the City. And then each park would have a unique feature that the neighborhood would be able to have input in as far as those unique features. Something that would make each park to distinguish itself from others.

Mr. Crutchfield acknowledged that right now, some of the areas might be too small for that. So we might have to look at the restrictions in some neighborhoods, but as a concept plan,

if you could kind of imagine going to one park and being able to jog all the way around the City, which right now we don't have any way of doing that. Or, if you're a cyclist, have a way to cycle all the way around the City on a mountain bike. It would depend on what the trails look like, but that would really do a lot for the neighborhoods in regards to the value of properties and give easy access for recreation and be able to actually enjoy Princeton. I don't think that we have anything quite like that right now.

Mr. Crutchfield continued by remarking that's something that a lot of young people like to do. I'm putting myself in that, even though I'm about to turn 53, we like to recreate. Young people like to go somewhere and actually jog and enjoy the outdoors on nice days in a safe place and don't like to stay in one place. If there is a trail head that says 1.5 miles to the next park that gives me a target.

City Manager Mike Webb offered there could be a kiosk at each park and have an "X" to mark you are here and to determine the direction to get to the other parks, with the same type of instructions at the other parks directing runners and bikers to the next park. Now, whether you do it by bike or not, I know some of our traffic is heavier in some places more than others, but you can certainly plan out a day of going from one to the other by connecting all the parks as one.

Mr. Crutchfield asked which City department is in charge of the parks.

Mrs. Fredeking explained these parks that we have now used to be sponsored and cared for by different civic organizations. Each one would take responsibility for one of the parks and work to maintain it. As far as for the City, we helped them, but they were responsible for purchasing the materials.

Mr. Webb explained that, officially, the parks are under the Parks and Recreation Board, which is under the umbrella of the City, but it's run independently. The City gives them an allotment like we do the Library. Just for round

numbers, say we give the library \$130,000 a year in the budget and they do what they must with the funding based on their priorities.

The City also gives the Parks and Rec Board \$150,000 a year and they do what they do within their budgetary needs. Now, we can take suggestions to them and I, as City Manager, sit on their Board of Directors. So we can certainly bring your concept to them and guide them towards it as far as that goes. But I can say, certainly we can put it into the Ten Year Plan. To me, it makes sense as a city concept and then once we get our feet on the ground, you might say, work with the Park Board to make that happen. Then I think it makes sense and whether we can do it with just a featured kiosk at each park that could have an emblem directing to the next park on it that has something specific. Like you were saying we can make it happen. For example, this one has an emblem of a pickleball court or something else designed on it. Another one could have something else on it like biking or whatever. But some of the ideas have already come across by just talking with some of our residents.

Mr. Crutchfield added that one of the ideas was to have one park have musical instruments that were also like recreational things, which is not a unique idea. There are other cities that have a bench, but it's like a trombone in the back, and you can go blow into it. And it's unique and who doesn't like making music even if it sounds terrible through these kind of things? But it's just climbing on a musical instrument and being able to make noise. Another idea was having large granite boulders just piled up so you can climb on them that won't fade. They would never need to be replaced. But you're just climbing a mountain and it's a natural kind of spot where you can just climb and it could be graded where it's not where you don't need special equipment to climb. However, if we could make a list of unique features and then let the neighborhoods decide for themselves as to what is most appropriate for their particular area.

JoAnna Fredeking advised, with regard to

the financial aspect of the proposal, to look at where that kind of money could come from. She explained of being lucky enough when she went to Princeton Primary School that Walmart had just come in down here and they had \$5,000 they had not spent which had been set aside for obtaining building permits, but found out the County didn't require them. The lady at their grand opening out there said to me, you know, we'd like to do something with this money and I explained of having a new school and they gave the funds to me.

After brief closing comments, the City Manager directed that Mr. Crutchfield's concept be added to the Ten Year Comprehensive Plan so the City can begin to act on it.

Mr. Lusk commented that he would make that an addition to the Recreation Section, which the Planning Commission would see in the next draft for next meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, President Hickman adjourned the February 27, 2023, meeting of the Planning Commission at 6:42 PM.

APRIL 24, 2023 MEETING MINUTES

The Planning Commission for the City of Princeton, Mercer County, West Virginia, met in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building, 800 Bee Street, on Monday, April 24, 2023, at 6:30 PM. In attendance were President John Hickman; Vice President Vic Allen; Commission members Dan Crutchfield, JoAnna Fredeking, Jim Hilling, Bob Lohr, and ex-officio member Marshall Lytton; Economic Development Authority Director Samuel Lusk; and City Clerk Kenneth Clay. Absent were City Manager Michael Webb, Mayor David Graham,

Anthony Brown, and ex-officio member Dewey Russell. A quorum was constituted thereby.

CALL TO ORDER

President John Hickman called the meeting to order.

Public Input

There was no public input.

MINUTES

Meeting of February 27, 2023—On motion of JoAnna Fredeking and the second of Vic Allen, the minutes of the meeting of February 27, 2023, were approved unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

NEW BUSINESS

Comprehensive Plan Update by Brandon Gilbert of Starry Eyes Media—Samuel Lusk explained the agenda would be altered by beginning with item B. Comprehensive Plan Update, which would be presented via teleconference by Brandon Gilbert of Starry Eyes Media whose firm has been working to compile the City's 2034 Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Lusk added that Mr. Gilbert would explain the work he has done with formatting the plan.

Mr. Gilbert replied that he was pulling up the file as we get this and asked if Mr. Lusk had allowed him to share his screen?

Mr. Lusk prepared the connection at that time and remarked this is the draft of the Ten-Year Plan.

Following is the text of Mr. Gilbert's presentation:

My name is Brandon Gilbert. I'm the Creative Director and, while I'm not currently the lead designer on this project, I was the initial lead designer on this project to get it set up and to make the Plan as it was being worked up. I will go through some of the pages

in the chapters that we have right here.

First, we have the title page. After you open the cover and you have the first blank page, then you will have the title page. And then we have a very descriptive table of contents. When we first started working on this project, we landed on dividing it up into what we know as chapters and then each chapter would have the sections. And as you can see right here, each chapter has different sections of the Plan and we have a corresponding page number to it.

Now, I have a disclaimer: If, as I'm looking through the pages and you see a page that might not line up with the page number here, that's something. And in the end, once we have finalized the plan, the table of contents will be one of the last things that we will update to ensure that it is accurate. And just so you know, here each section of the table of content is a section of the state. So that way if someone will review us to see if we have all of our sections, I have our table contents and included the appropriate page and all that's given to us.

First, we have Chapter One and, as a note, the way that we have styled the chapters, each chapter will have a title page such as this that will feature a photo. Now, I don't believe we have all the photos set for these at this point. So you might see some placeholder photos or some repeat photos as we go through the chapters. But aside from your photo we have here we'll have a chapter name and the title. And then of course, we have the particular contents that chapter one needs. And in this case, right off, we have this nice table here for the various people involved here in the Planning Commission. This has a lot of very valuable information in it as we go through it and, as a disclaimer, of course, this is not complete.

There will be some sections that might have some space in case we get here you'll see some of the designer language for filling in text. So we have some filler text to fill in the space until we get the rest of the content. So

that's what you're seeing right there. It's just some filler pages for planning purposes to try to fill in the document and get it set up.

Next we have Chapter Two. So as you see on this page, we go over the history of Princeton and we have a placeholder here for the commercial zoning map. And then we go into the details of the history and then we have a placeholder here from Princeton in the present, which will go over the different things happening in Princeton right now and I'm sure Sam will probably be able to speak more to these sections. So I'll try not to fumble through them too much since he's the master of the information here.

I'm just open formatting it. So there's a couple of those sections we have budgeted time for like at the very end. So there's a couple of these chapters that are introductory and in the conclusion that we actually have budgeted in the timeline blueprint that I submitted. But I did budget for each of the sections. So a lot of the work for each of the state required sections is done. All I need to do is go in and complete those sections after I budget time for them. So what you're seeing now is close to a final draft and we should have that final draft here during the next meeting.

But this is, this is pretty close to what the final draft is going to be once we fill in some of those blanks. That's where the action plan is. I will scroll back and we will have the history of Princeton. Then we have some sections going over Princeton's qualities, such as the public services, different things relating to zoning in the different departments within City Hall. And one of the big features that we've contributed to as a vendor within this plan are the infographics and in most cases, Sam has provided us with information and we've interpreted that and put it into different graph formats and other ways to communicate the data in a visual, easy to understand way, one of which is Princeton's priorities.

Then here we discuss natural resource use and infrastructure, tourism, community

design, rural areas and land use. And in land use, we have subheadings for population density and building intensity, standards of growth, population decline management, and projected population growth or decline. We also go into transportation.

Then we go on to the preferred development areas here. You can see we have some different infographics communicating population change, comparison over a time period from 1990 to 2000, 2000 to 2010, and 2010 to 2020. So you can see those illustrated here for Princeton regarding those time periods for Mercer County, West Virginia as a whole, and then the whole United States. Then we look at the locality population change from 1980 to 2020. And in this particular graph you can see we're comparing Princeton to Bluefield, then to all municipalities, and then Mercer County as a whole. So we have those different metrics illustrated here on this graph.

The next graph goes over the counting percentage of county population. And this one compares Princeton and Bluefield and then a line reflects the sum of both cities. And then it gives a comparison for all municipalities on the red lines that you see right there.

The next major section goes over renewal and/or redevelopment. And then it goes into economic development with some different data here. So in the introduction we look at the changing population and workforce from 2010 to 2020. And so as you can see we have a lot of really good data here and, as Sam mentioned, this is something that the state requires. But I like to think that in doing this project that Princeton isn't just doing the bare minimum with this plan. I think we're presenting the information in such a way that's accessible to many different people, who may not be familiar with the information, in a way they can understand or at least begin to understand it. And if they need to do more research in order to fully understand it, I think that the way we're presenting and formatting this will empower them to do that.

As you can see, we have some more information by way of different comparisons of demographics, such as white, non-Hispanic percentage of population in 2010 and 2020. Then the next one down goes to 2028 with each composition comparison chart. This one breaks down different age groups beginning with under 55 to 14 years old, 15 to 24, 25 to 34, 35 to 44, 45 to 54, 55 to 64, 65 to 74, and 75 to 84. And then a catch all group for over 85. This one then displays the different percentages within those different categories and the colors of these different bars are Princeton, Mercer County, West Virginia is orange, and then the red is the United States as a whole.

Continuing to the next figure, it touches on percentage of housing units occupied in 2020. And the next one compares percentage of housing units built before 2000 and before 1950. This one, particularly the blue color, illustrates percentage of housing units built before 2000 while the orange color illustrates percentage of housing units built before 1950. So, ultimately, this is a good comparison of newer homes versus older homes. As you can see here, it looks to be that Princeton has more new homes compared to homes built before 1950.

The next set of bars compares Mercer County and then West Virginia as a whole and then the United States as a whole. So in comparing these different figures, it appears that Princeton is leading in percentages of homes built before 2000, as well as homes built before 1950. Once we get past that, we go into background which goes into population, economic conditions, as well as other indicators.

And then I think this is a really special section that I imagine Sam will probably want to touch on the SWOT analysis. For those who aren't familiar with what a SWOT analysis is, SWOT is an acronym for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. And if you want to look at those, if you're not really sure of that, strengths and weaknesses would be internal, whereas opportunities

and threats would be external qualities.

So the internal qualities are things that Princeton would have control over, strengths and weaknesses; whereas things that you wouldn't have control over would be opportunities and threats, these would be external factors. And we start with the strengths and then we go into weaknesses, then opportunities and the threats.

And I don't know if it's quite done yet, but there will be a SWOT chart that would kind of take a digest of all of this information and put it into quick bullet points as far as this is a strength, this is a strength, this is a weakness, this is an opportunity, this is a threat to correspond with the really good information here presented in the individual paragraphs.

Samuel Lusk remarked adding to that SWOT analysis, when I started with the EDA two years ago we actually hired the West Virginia Extension Service to do a SWOT analysis for the City, and all this information in this section is pulled up from that analysis. So I didn't come up with this, WVU did for this section.

Mr. Gilbert continued by explaining that once we go through the SWOT, the next major section is housing and then we go into finances and, as you can see here, these are parts of plans we're almost ready to finalize. You can see we kind of time stamped some of the drafts just to give us an idea that this section isn't done just to have checks and balances in place to assure a thorough, fully finalized, complete, and ready to print section.

Then the final chapter, Chapter Four, is "Princeton in Action" and this is the section that still needs to be completed that I'll have for the next meeting. In addition to the chapters at the end, there is an appendix and this is the main content of this area and also is the biggest part of the ten-year plan. The reason why is because it contains the City council minutes that are relevant to the plan as far as I understand. He then asked Mr. Lusk for clarification.

Samuel Lusk explained that the Planning

Commission minutes from each of the meetings that we've had in the last year will be located here and, in addition to the minutes, it also contains verbatim what each of the department heads have answered all the questions the Commission has asked of them. So all that's in the plan and then I'll actually go from that to create the action plan, and I'll answer questions that I put that to the department heads to envision what their goals are in the next few years and what does the City need to do to accomplish those goals. So I'll put that in the action plan.

Commission Member Vic Allen asked if that includes City Council minutes.

Mr. Lusk replied that at this point it does not include Council minutes and added that right now it just includes Planning Commission minutes, but when all of those are approved they will be sent to City Council for final approval. Then the Council minutes reflecting approval of the Comprehensive Plan will be included, as well.

Mr. Gilbert continued by remarking as you can see in the footer on the pages, we have page 74 of this section which starts on page 60. In addition to the minutes, another thing that this section has that makes it a little larger than the other ones is a complete grouping of the different infographics that are used throughout. As you can see, we are using a naming convention for each figure to keep things organized. So the figure 5T and these correspond with the infographics that you see in line within the previous chapters. This is just kind of like a quick reference area for different infographics that we completed for this plan.

Then we get to the Comprehensive Plan blueprint that has an overview of the time for the Comprehensive Plan. And then we have the interview questions, and then we get to meeting minutes right there, and I will make a note of that, of course, as part of our process for this in the end for which we intend to keep through everything and working with Sam trying to make sure that we've proofread it all

and corrected any mistakes or other issues.

Therefore, once we get past the meeting minutes here we've tried to establish a really good text hierarchy. Having a good text hierarchy to differentiate between the different sections helps keep it organized and keep it more accessible for those who are trying to read through it. And essentially there are more minutes as we go through it until right now we are at 131 pages, I believe, unless that hasn't been an update filed. But I believe my lead designer on these page counts. Then here we have some extra white spaces

Continuing, Mr. Gilbert explained that part of our process will be trying to identify various techniques from a design perspective on cutting down the page numbers where we're balancing information with not having too many pages, but making sure the formatting is still readable and accessible.

So that's one of the things we'll be doing here at the end: how to save some page real estate, so to say, to keep the printing at a small scale so when we have a final plan the Commission can talk about the process of what that's going to be converted into. So once we finalize the plan and everything is print ready, what we'll be doing is using one of our vendors to print the plan. We're also going to have five hardcover book copies of the plan that will be really good records to have on hand if someone wants to examine the Plan. City Hall will have these copies.

And of course there also will be the option to print these if you wanted to print just for low cost packets. In addition to this being a printed document in the form of the hardcover book, there will be the ability to print other copies from a file. This will be a living document on the new city website that we're also working on.

Planning Commission Member JoAnna Fredeking expressed that she had a question about footnotes and explained that she had read through all the sections and made some comments. She then mentioned

that seeing Bill Archer quoted lots of times after each section and since his name appears in the book, is there not some way to footnote that so it would be of better readability because she had read the section?

Mr. Lusk replied that references to other people will just be at the very end.

Mr. Gilbert noted that he would go ahead and put footnotes in the bibliography.

Vic Allen asked if this would be available in a downloadable file.

Mr. Lusk replied the final copy would be available to download and also will be in a virtual copy that can be emailed to whoever needs it.

Mr. Gilbert added that, in fact, that from his understanding the State Code either currently requires or will be requiring at some point in the near future access to the City Plan so people will be able to download it at will online.

Mr. Lusk added that the Plan has to be available on the website.

Mr. Gilbert then explained there will be a download link on the website and we will have a page dedicated to the Comprehensive Plan on the website. Regardless our direction with the new website is to not only to present information but to explain it, as well. So that the page dedicated to the Comprehensive Plan will explain what it is, why it's there, and try to help people understand what it is. Then it will have a very prominent download button or icon, something of that nature where people can click it and download a PDF version of all 131 pages or whatever the final amount will be.

So basically the Comprehensive Plan will be on the City's website. In fact, there will be a page dedicated to the Comprehensive Plan and that page will not only just give you the option to download it by either a button or icon that says download, but we also would like to take the time to explain what the plan is and its purpose and provide any related links. So we're not just giving the information, we're explaining how people can use that information

or what that information includes. That's kind of the general idea for most of the informational page that is on the new city website.

Commission Member Dan Crutchfield asked if icons also will be used for repetitive ideas to help save space and for clarity? After a request to clarify, Mr. Crutchfield explained if you have repetitive ideas in a large document you come up with an icon and instead of repeating the idea you can just show the icon and you don't have to have to repeat all the text.

Mr. Lusk replied that he didn't think we thought about that.

Mr. Gilbert replied that he thought that could be helpful if we identify a specific use case for it, but the one thing that perhaps he would want to do is consult City Attorney Paul Cassell to see if it would conform to the State Code. So that's something we can talk to him about, but agreed that it's a good idea to save space.

Mr. Gilbert continued by remarking, yes, we could do it if those opportunities like that can be identified. That's something that we could help put in play and it might be as long as it's just in there once, it might be useful, but I'll talk to Paul Cassell to see what he has to say.

Commission Member Bob Lohr commented that, most people are going to be like let me see some of those documents.

JoAnna Fredeking remarked, my theory on this whole thing is we've done this before and asked how many have we done taken through this process two or three? And history, for instance, doesn't change so far, and if we had a format to use when this process is repeated in the future, and asked is this a workable document? And is this a document that where there are places that need to be added, can they be added? So in other words, is this document static?

Mr. Lusk replied that the goal is for the Plan to be a full document, but we also have to think if we have to make changes, the Planning Commission and City Council will have to make those changes. So there

will be a process to make those changes.

JoAnna Fredeking asked but if changes can be made, in other words, if we send this in and they don't like some section would that be easy enough for us to add, take out, or do what we need to do.

Mr. Lusk replied that the Plan could not be changed.

Mrs. Fredeking then inquired if the Plan goes to a courthouse and somebody by default reads it and if there's information that needs to be changed, is it fluid enough that we can go back to make changes or is it like another contract?

Mr. Lusk replied that the Planning Commission and City Council would approve it before the end of the year and send it to the courthouse. Once this body and the City Council approve it and if a member of the public wants to make a change the Planning Commission has to approve the change, as well at the City Council.

Mrs. Fredeking then asked is there no entity after us and the City Council that can read this at the Courthouse and say you need to change this or you need to change that?

Mr. Lohr commented that you have to have a lock in because there's too many people who, if they have access to it or have editable resources that can go in and change a word or something, then we're all screwed.

Mrs. Fredeking asked is there a disclaimer on it that says no other person or body is able to change it.

Mr. Lohr remarked if someone can change it then we have problems. That's why it's got to go back to the process, back to the beginning, start over, again. I mean, when you get into this genealogy work too many people go in and screw things over and right or wrong. And people say don't change this and don't change it, but when you look at it, if it goes to court to change it to where paperwork comes back to those who did the original work. So we've got to make sure we lock it down where our process can't let anybody screw around with it and sends it back to the

beginning. The City Council, locks it down there.

The City Clerk commented that the Plan allows the departments to interpret the need for any changes and basically do so by ordinance of Council or other legal means. In other words, there's leeway as far as what Council can do, especially with zoning issues as we seen lately. I think the departments, through City Council action, can adapt to any needed changes based on the authority of the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Lusk clarified that we have to have claims in order to take some of these actions.

Mr. Crutchfield remarked that might be off topic slightly, but it's in the document on the priorities of Princeton that one of the things that was listed was tourism. He then asked is it possible to suggest that as a priority of Princeton that we actually put somebody in charge of tourism with the intention of having a tourism head at some point.

Mr. Lusk replied that could be a suggestion to be added to the Plan and City council approves it.

Mr. Crutchfield remarked that the bigger problem is tourism is growing and we don't really have anybody that's kind of responsible for it.

Mrs. Fredeking commented that one of the things you have to be very careful about is we don't generate tourism money. The County does and you have to be very careful with the toes you step on and I'm telling you right now, if you want money, then your money for tourism is going to come from the County and sometimes you have to walk on eggshells to get that money.

Mr. Crutchfield then remarked so that is what has happened around here for years and it will continue because Princeton is not allowed to generate tourism.

Mrs. Fredeking replied, we can do tourism, but we're going to be paying for it. I mean, if you want to get a grant or a lot of money and you start stepping on the lady who does tourism for the County; I'm saying you could do tourism, but for your bigger money you have to go outside.

Mr. Lusk commented that the way he looks at the Comprehensive Plan it is a loose guide for a lot of these topics.

Brandon Gilbert commented that he would imagine from his scope that ultimately the point is just to show that you have an action plan to show everybody where the taxpayer dollars are and how best to use them. There's a plan for it which is a working plan and like Sam said there's room to add to the plan, but as long as you meet the minimum requirements to show that you have planned out what the State wants you to plan out.

Mr. Gilbert concluded by expressing appreciation for the opportunity to go over this layout with everybody and he looks forward to getting this done and showing it off. However, he requested that he be sent a file for the Plan and he would send the call up to the members.

SAMUEL LUSK, PEDA DIRECTOR, 2024-2034 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Can you provide your name and position?

Samuel Lusk, Economic Development Specialist for the City of Princeton. Director of the Princeton Economic Development Authority.

Can you briefly describe your department within the City?

My department is responsible for coordinating economic efforts within the City. This includes a wide range of areas such as business retention, expansion, and procurement. The Princeton Economic Development Authority exists to make doing business in Princeton as easy as possible through making sure our local entrepreneurs have the tools that they need to succeed in an ever-going, competitive market. Such tools may be business start-up technical assistance, entrepreneurial-focused education, utilization of state/federal programs for start-ups, and expansion, as well as supplemental business subsidies through grants or investments.

How would you describe your duties/responsibilities as a department head?

As the Director of the Princeton Economic Development Authority, I am tasked with being the face of the organization and working directly with community stakeholders. This could see me aiding an entrepreneur in their efforts to conduct business in Princeton, working with a property owner to develop their assets for productive use, or interacting with the City administration to advocate for favorable policies to continue to make Princeton a viable, lucrative investment.

How many employees, part-time and full time, are employed within your department?

The Princeton Economic Development Authority currently has three employees- the Director, Outreach & Marketing Coordinator, and an AmeriCorps Worker. All of these positions are paid for through appropriations and payments made on behalf of the City of Princeton. While Director Position is a permanent position, the other two are temporary. The Outreach & Marketing Coordinator is a contracted position set for renewal in January of 2025, and the AmeriCorps will expire in August of 2023.

What is the scope of your department and how does that impact the people of Princeton?

As provided in question two, the scope of the Princeton Economic Development Authority relates to business retention, expansion and procurement. On a micro level, we impact the residents of Princeton by working with business owners to ensure that residents and visitors alike have exceptional options as they participate in commerce. One aspect contributing to quality of life is access to goods and services when they are needed. We strive to help facilitate business as the needs of our community grows. On the macro level, we impact the residents of Princeton by working in synergy with other EDA's and municipalities, building

a network to help impact our regional economy to grow and create economic growth together.

What would our community look like without your department as part of the City?

Princeton has existed since 1909, or 114 years, and the Princeton Economic Development Authority has only been active for two of those years. I think it's fair to say that the City could continue to operate without an EDA; however, without a mechanism to invest in itself, the City Could experience suitability issues long-term. As of now, the City's main revenue sources are Business & Occupation Tax and 1% Sales Tax. Though the Princeton Economic Development Authority currently has no interest in any specific business, its efforts should generally result in more economic participation among a broad spectrum of City-located businesses. This, in turn, should result in more sales and more tax revenue collected. The efforts of this department should strive to generate enough local GDP so the City's revenues can continue to grow to keep up with inflation and local need. Without this department, local businesses would not have a City advocate nor would the City have the ability to guide the direction of its tax base.

Can you provide a brief description of the assets within your department?

Talent and experience in my department is arguably our biggest asset. We are an office centric department, meaning we are not in the field doing inspections or operating equipment. We interact with the public mainly within City offices and on location at commercial property. Thus, instead of relying on physical capabilities, we must have strong mental capacity.

Starting with my department's AmeriCorps Worker, the Princeton EDA is his first experience with public service, however, he has already displayed great potential in his charismatic abilities by talking to several business owners through the collection of updated contact information.

Additionally, our Outreach & Marketing

Coordinator has spent nearly three decades in advertising, marketing, and graphic design; most recently, working as a sub-contractor for Princeton Community Hospital for seven years. He is an incredibly great communicator that has taken great strides in getting PEDAs branding and actions to the public.

Lastly, as the Director for nearly two years, I helped organize the Department and organization and get it operational. I have nearly a half decade of experience in government and Public Administration and have nearly completed two Master's Degrees in these areas.

Other than salaries, what is the biggest expense within your department?

Marketing: at the beginning of the department's creation, the City invested several thousand dollars into the creation of a website for the Development Authority. Even though this is still in process, we aim to use it as another tool for businesses to share their products and services. Businesses will be able to create a personalized profile that visitors to the site will be able to view to see what is available in Princeton. In addition, we added the Public Outreach & Marketing so we could have the capacity to continuously have a social media presence, as well as publish material in op-eds, newsletters, and in literature. Advertising campaigns are expensive, but they should pay for themselves, as any investment should.

Can you describe three short term goals in your department (within a year)?

1. Finalize the Princeton Development Website.

As just indicated, this project has been in the works for more than a year with involvement from all staff within the department. The completion of the site would give the Development Authority increased capacity to be able to share the various business assets that the City has to offer to residents and visitors. Additionally, the site could act as a

landing page for virtual advertisements so information can be given directly to potential investors or consumers—depending on the ad with interaction with a staff member.

2. Work through City Manager to create an Annexation task force or committee.

A huge hindrance to economic growth in our City is real estate. Businesses have chosen to locate closer to Interstate 77 & Highway 460, because we have very little real estate with direct access to these high traffic roadways. We are losing opportunities and the potential to grow if we stay the same size jurisdictionally. Our city has not received annexed property for nearly three decades. Recently, I helped advocate for aggressive annexation incentives. They were passed and yet no business or property owner outside the City expressed interest. A task force or committee should look at an economic development angle, weigh the pros and cons, and come up with a way to overcome this hurdle.

3. Finalize Development Project among main thoroughfares.

There are projects along heavy traffic veins in the City that I have worked closely with my Board and the City Manager to help bring across the finish line. I think some of these, if not all, will see some developments and public announcements later this year.

How does your department plan on achieving these short-term goals?

1. Through talking with all businesses in the City, my department's AmeriCorps Worker has collected public information about these establishments to be incorporated into the site. Additionally, we have worked closely with our contractor, Starry Eyes Media, to ensure that only correct and accurate information is published. The City can best assist our department in the completion of our site by allocating time through the City Attorney to complete legal documents related to the site. This is the final step before the site goes live and is expected to be accomplished once the City Attorney starts full time.

2. Work through City body of informed professionals whether that be Princeton EDA, the Planning Commission, or another group to start discussions about this topic and how to overcome it. This might start as a simple discussion, however it should evolve into planning an approach to recommend to City Council.

3. Continue to work with the necessary stakeholders to push these projects across the finish line. There is not much publicly that can be said here other than we will continue to work with the City Manager to rely upon his assistance when needed.

Can you describe three long term goals in your department (within 10 years)?

1. Complete the City Municipal Complex Project—While the City Municipal Complex is a project that will incorporate all departments, it is fundamentally an economic drive above all else. The opportunities the facility will give to the community will encourage residents and visitors to come to downtown Stafford Drive. I have no doubt there will be indirect spending at restaurants, grocery stores, and gas stations. This does not even include the potential for additional tenants in the Complex space.

2. Annex enough property to eliminate the Business & Occupation Tax – Ultimately, one of the many goals of the Princeton Economic Development Authority is to make Princeton as viable a location for investment as possible. Many locate right outside the City in order not to have to pay Business & Occupation Tax. While their decision makes sense from a business standpoint, it is unfair to those that are only located inches away and paying the tax. If a committee, as previously stated, would recommend a plan that would pass through City leadership and be implemented, enough new 1% sales tax producing businesses could be added to the City that offsets the lost funds in the potential removal of the Business and Occupation Tax.

3. Prioritization of Partnerships on a Regional Scale—When it comes down to

it, Economic Development is a team sport. My department could attract the best businesses and people to Princeton. However, if the region is suffering, these businesses and people won't stay for very long. Over the next ten years, I hope Princeton Economic Development has a history of completed projects with other organizations such as municipalities, EDA's, and college institutions.

How does your department plan on achieving these long-term goals?

See above.

How can the City best assist in your department achieving its long-term goals?

See above.

Where do you see your department in 2034?

In ten years, I see my department as no longer in its infancy; rather, I imagine a more refined organization that has economic development down to a science. This could be illustrated through a robust presence through social media, press, and public involvement. I imagine that the department has three full time staff members that are not on a predetermined term: a Director, Public Relations & Marketing Coordinator, and an Economic Development Specialist.

How do you believe your job will change between now and then?

My job will be equally as challenging, but with different obstacles. As one project is completed, other hurdles emerge. For example, I could see the needs of a new high paying employer being better housing, entertainment industries, and commodities in order to cater to their employees. The difficulty depends on who I'm serving, what their specific needs are. There would be substantially more challenges if the needs of exit 9 or other areas were considered.

How can the City prepare for these changes now to better equip you or your successors in the future?

The City needs to continue to invest in economic development so the department has the tools it needs to strategically concentrate on projects that forward the business interests of the area.

What do you personally believe the City needs to improve on the most between now and 2034?

Changing the status quo.

How should the City go about creating this improvement?

The City could go about creating this change by supporting unique answers to questions rather than accepting things the way they are. This brings me back to annexation. We have been the same size jurisdictionally for more than three decades. I believe we could change this and grow our jurisdiction out to exit 9, but it's going to take a group of people with a plan that is accepted by both leadership and the community. Other problems beyond the scope of economic development could also be solved this way.

What do you think will be the most defining characteristic of Princeton in 2034?

Leadership. If we make the necessary changes to overcome our restrictions and grow, other cities will look to us as an example of changes that can be made to improve a local economy. I already have seen this through the creation of the EDA. I was contacted by the cities of Hinton, Welch, and Sophia to help them establish their own EDA. This just shows that we already are seen as a community leader. We need to continue to show this to our region by making strides in other areas.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chairman Hickman adjourned the April 24, 2023, meeting of the Princeton Planning Commission at 7:11 PM.

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