

the borough of  
**Aspinwall**  
IMPLEMENTABLE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



***Adopted  
June 2023***



# ***acknowledgements***

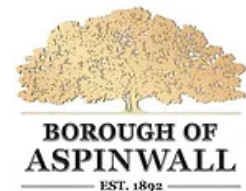
The following individuals generously contributed time, expertise and advice that shaped this plan. The end result would not have been possible without their valuable assistance, as well as input and perspective from a variety of stakeholders and many people who live and/or work in the Borough of Aspinwall.

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The plan was prepared with assistance from:

**PASHEK**  **MTR**

## ***Planning Commission***

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# introduction





**OFFICIAL**

**BOROUGH OF ASPINWALL  
RESOLUTION NO. 2023-5**

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOROUGH OF ASPINWALL,  
ALLEGHENY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA, ADOPTING THE  
BOROUGH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

**WHEREAS**, Article III of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, 53 P.S. §§10301-10307, as amended, authorizes the Borough of Aspinwall (“Borough”) to develop, adopt, and implement a comprehensive plan as a policy framework for coming years; and

**WHEREAS**, the previous most recent Comprehensive Plan for the Borough was completed by the Guyasuta Joint Municipal Planning Commission decades ago, and the Borough recognizes the potential of the comprehensive plan as a tool for establishing and intentionally implementing long range community development goals and managing future development, conservation, land use and community character; and

**WHEREAS**, Section 302 of the MPC, 53 P.S. §10302, sets forth the procedures for the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan; and

**WHEREAS**, a draft 2023 Implementable Comprehensive Plan has been prepared for Aspinwall Borough under the direction of a Steering Committee appointed by Borough Council and with the assistance of consultants, Pashek+MTR, in accordance with the procedures of Section 302 of the MPC; and

**WHEREAS**, plan development has complied fully with the applicable procedural process outlined in the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code and has involved engagement efforts well beyond what is required; and

**WHEREAS**, the Aspinwall Borough Planning Commission recommended adoption of the Comprehensive Plan at its April 26, 2023, meeting; and

**WHEREAS**, Borough Council held a duly advertised public hearing on June 6, 2023, in order to obtain additional public comment on the proposed comprehensive plan; and

**WHEREAS**, all comments received by the public in writing and at public meetings and the public hearing have been duly considered; along with all comments received from Allegheny County Economic Development and adjacent municipalities; and

**WHEREAS**, as a result of the aforementioned process, the Borough has prepared the attached Aspinwall Borough Implementable Comprehensive Plan, which consists of a bound volume entitled “Aspinwall Borough Implementable Comprehensive Plan,” including all maps, charts and illustrations, a true and correct copy of which is attached hereto and incorporated herein as Exhibit “A,”; and

**WHEREAS**, Borough Council has reviewed and considered the Implementable Comprehensive Plan and desires to adopt the same pursuant to the powers granted by the MPC.


**NOW THEREFORE**, the Council of the Borough of Aspinwall hereby resolves as follows:

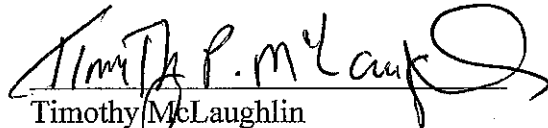
- Section 1.** The Implementable Comprehensive Plan for the Borough of Aspinwall, as attached hereto as Exhibit “A,” consisting of all maps, tables, figures, and textual matter, including any and all appendices, is hereby adopted by the Borough pursuant to Article III of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code.
- Section 2.** All previous Comprehensive Plan documents are hereby rescinded.
- Section 3.** This Resolution shall be appended to, or annotated on, the Implementable Comprehensive Plan.
- Section 4.** This resolution shall take effect in accordance with applicable law.

RESOLVED this 14<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2023, by the Council of the Borough of Aspinwall in lawful session duly assembled.

ATTEST:

BOROUGH OF ASPINWALL

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Melissa Lang  
Borough Manager

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Timothy McLaughlin  
President, Borough Council





A photograph of a community meeting or public consultation session. A group of people is gathered around a table covered with a white cloth, looking at a large architectural plan or map spread out on the table. The scene is outdoors, with a building on the left and trees in the background. String lights are visible hanging from the building. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent green filter. The text "using the plan" is written in a white, italicized, sans-serif font in the lower-left corner.

*using  
the plan*

## ***A comprehensive plan built for action***

This Comprehensive Plan is organized as a practical workbook that will guide the Borough of Aspinwall in delivering a decade of projects that advance the shared values and visions of its residents. This document is full of checklists, how-to strategies and useful references.

The plan is the record of the work done by Aspinwall's citizens, elected officials, appointed officials and professional staff, all the way from an initial visioning workshop in 2019 to the plan's official adoption in early 2023. It was those individuals who decided what issues were important to tackle in the coming years. This document summarizes the community's thought process and provides practical next steps, timelines and other tools for moving forward.

## ***Workbook organization***

The layout of the plan is action-oriented, with sections as follows:

- Introduction** This section includes a summary of the plan and acknowledgement of the groups and individuals who contributed ideas, guidance and expertise.
- Key Issues** The heart of this plan are the three Key Issue chapters, which represent the most important issues the Borough identified to address in the next 10 years.
- Other Topics** This section includes additional issues that are important to include in the Comprehensive Plan but required less detail and focus. It also includes details on how the plan complies with the state Municipalities Planning Code.
- Appendices** This section includes additional data, analysis and context that helped shape the plan and may be useful to reference as implementation unfolds. This includes a detailed inventory of parking supply and demand by block.





*Implementation: Where the rubber hits the road*



## 12-Month Start-up To-Do List

What happens after the plan is adopted? The following action steps – in no particular order – represent practical ways the Borough can implement this plan during the first year.

### Action step

Apply for construction grants and finish assembling local funding and in-kind donations for Recreational Area Phase I (four pickleball courts, a multi-use court for basketball, deck hockey and futsal and an accessible path from the parking lot to the court area).

Establish and appoint a Sustainability Advisory Committee.

Begin the process of installing public electric vehicle charging stations within Borough-owned parking lots.

Meet with PennDOT to review and coordinate transportation and public realm improvements, including the long-range Green Boulevard vision as well as the more immediate implementation of projects in the Traffic Flow and Safety Master Plan. This could take the form of a PennDOT Connects on-site half-day workshop involving stakeholders (See p. 71). Begin painting crosswalks along Freepoint Road, especially at Brilliant Avenue into the RiverTrail Park.

Reconfigure traffic patterns on Second and Fourth avenues in the blocks near Delafield Avenue (see p. 52).

Establish a project work group for the Brilliant/RiverTrail Park connection to identify and break down barriers to success (see p. 57).

Finalize a design for the reconfigured Municipal Parking Lot layout.

Appoint an ad hoc group of volunteers to coordinate Alley A activation. Reach out to adjacent business owners Add: via Chamber of Commerce or other means to present the idea, open up lines of communication and engage those who are interested in helping.

Begin preparing a zoning ordinance update led by Planning Commission.

Appoint a working group (potentially an ad hoc advisory committee to Council) to lead a detailed parking study and implementation of its recommendations. Budget and/or otherwise assemble funding to undertake a detailed Parking Management Study that will include collection and analysis of primary parking data (\$10,000 to \$40,000, depending on scope). Create and issue an RFP for the study (see p. 104).

## What's the big deal?

- Taking action to affirmatively get implementation moving is important to sustaining the momentum built during the planning process.
- Residents have identified needs and priorities. They expect follow-through.
- Making changes has costs (time, money, effort). Doing nothing also has costs (citizen resentment, development inconsistent with vision, environmental deterioration, missed opportunity).
- This plan contains a playbook of strategies built around achieving a big-picture vision for Aspinwall's future – this is how the Borough can sustain and further enrich the high quality of life residents enjoy here.





# process



## ***Planning from the bottom up***

Aspinwall Borough created this plan in the Implementable Comprehensive Plan model, which focuses on generating the capacity and momentum to take action on consensus community priorities. This requires a serious foundation of public input to ensure that the plan addresses **real issues people care about** in a way that inspires them to get involved. Accordingly, engagement was the cornerstone of the planning process and informed how the plan developed at each major milestone.

## ***Visioning session***

Following a meeting with the state Department of Community and Economic Development to gain insight on planning strategies, the Borough staged a public visioning session in May 2019. The purpose was to define the key issues that should factor into the Comprehensive Plan.

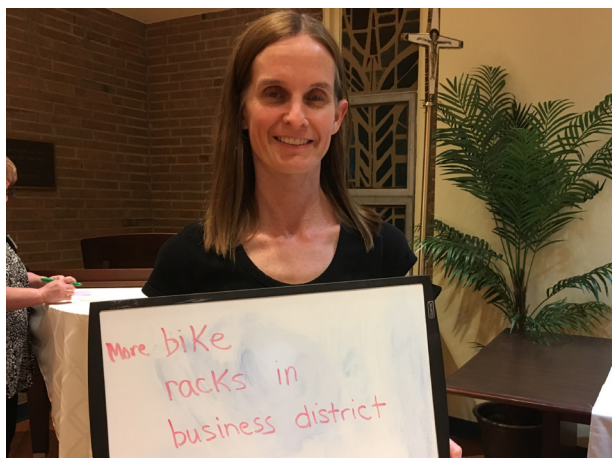
Attendees contributed hundreds of ideas on sticky notes. Major themes included:

### *What's great about Aspinwall:*

- Warm and friendly neighbors
- Small-town community feel
- Walkability
- Tree-lined sidewalks throughout
- Service from first responders

### *Ideas for improvement:*

- Entrance to RiverTrail Park at Brilliant Avenue
- Creating a river trail to connect to the Three Rivers Heritage Trail into Pittsburgh
- Enforcing parking regulations
- Slowing traffic along Freeport Road





## ***Steering Committee***

Borough Council appointed a committee to lead the development of the Comprehensive Plan. This committee was vital to the project, providing leadership and direction for public engagement, discerning the plan's key issues and developing practical strategies and approaches. The committee engaged with residents at all public events and played a major role in helping to analyze and interpret a tremendous amount of input.

## ***Project website***

The Borough released a project website, [aspinwallplan.com](http://aspinwallplan.com), early in the process to serve as an ongoing source of information and platform for engagement. Updates appeared at project milestones, and email blasts provided news to anyone who submitted contact information on the website to keep updated on the project.

## ***Community questionnaire***

More than 600 residents responded to a digital questionnaire that the Borough published and promoted in Spring 2021. The Borough encouraged participation using social media, the project website, distributing door hangers and leveraging the networks of committee members. Detailed results from the questionnaire appear in the appendices.

## ***Key person interviews***

The plan consultant invited 29 members of the community to schedule an interview to inform the plan, based on suggestions from the Steering Committee. These contacts included a variety of official and non-official perspectives, including both long-time and new residents, representatives of civic groups, business owners, municipal staff and others with specific expertise that could inform the plan.





## **Summer 2021 public meeting**

The Borough hosted an open house public meeting at Allegheny River Trail Park on July 22, 2021. The goal of this event was to present the key issues that were beginning to take shape based on the results of the visioning session and questionnaire. Committee members staffed stations for each potential key issue and engaged attendees in activities to collect more sentiments and ideas for each. More than 70 residents attended the event and submitted nearly 500 written comments or votes. This meeting allowed the committee to confirm the selection of key issues and gain additional context on each.

## **Spring 2022 public meeting**

As recommendations developed for each of the plan's key issues, the Borough staged an open house on May 16, 2022, at St. Scholastica Church. A digital version of the meeting was available at [planaspinwall.com](http://planaspinwall.com) to allow those who could not attend in person to review materials and provide feedback. More than 50 residents attended and offered ideas and perspective, in addition to input submitted online.

## **Elected and appointed officials**

Throughout the process, the Borough sought to keep Planning Commission and Council up to date with plan development by way of providing updates at project milestones. Prior to plan adoption, Planning Commission will make a recommendation on the plan and Council will advertise and host a public hearing.





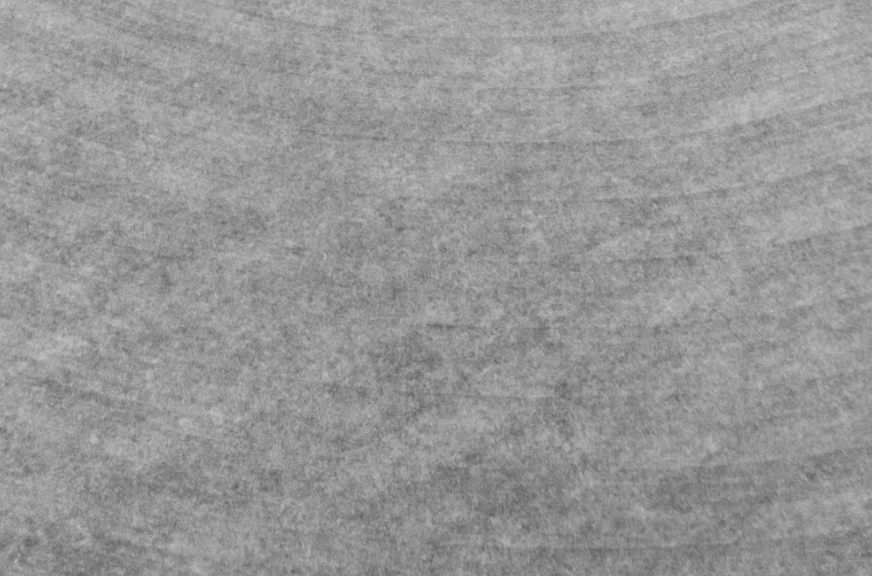


# park improvements





01







*introduction*

## **context**

Parks and green spaces in Aspinwall provide diverse opportunities for recreation and relaxation, as well as natural infrastructure to support a healthy and resilient community:

- Aspinwall Recreational Area (5 acres): This site on Field Avenue offers play areas, a spray pad, pavilion, ball fields, horseshoes, basketball courts and a concession area.
- Fireman's Park (2 acres): With an entrance off of West 9th Street, this community park offers a pavilion, play areas, bocce and a view of the Allegheny River.
- Allegheny RiverTrail Park (10 acres): This privately owned park, available for public use, offers a rentable events space, walkways, play areas, boat docks, a dog park and viewing areas along the Allegheny River. The park's owner is working to complete a master plan for the recently acquired four acres of land between the existing park and the Highland Park Bridge.

These locations offer the potential to further enrich the community's quality of life.

## **vision**

**Aspinwall Borough is a healthy community that offers access to a wide array of recreational experiences that serve the needs of current and future residents.**

- Parks help maintain property values by providing an important resource for the community.
- Public engagement for this plan demonstrated the high value that residents place on access to local parks.
- Residents really love access to and views of the Allegheny River, and this can be maximized through improvements at Fireman's Memorial Park and Allegheny RiverTrail Park.
- Parks provide opportunities to enhance stormwater management through the addition of green infrastructure and tree plantings.
- Accessibility is important.
- Residents would like to see easy connections between parks and neighborhoods, bike routes and regional trails.

**talking points**



## ***the directive***

The availability of high-quality green space is important to Aspinwall residents. Many of the hundreds who completed the community questionnaire in Spring 2021 cited the Borough's parks and trees as favorite aspects of living here, and 97% agreed that green space preservation and park use represent an important issue.

Across all forms of public and stakeholder input, suggestions arose for ways to update and/or repurpose the offerings of Aspinwall Recreational Area to meet new needs and desires. One particularly common theme was discussion of whether and how there could be a higher and better use for the ballfield space. There were calls to broaden the park's appeal to a more inclusive user base. And there was especially strong support for maintaining and expanding the Borough's tree canopy.

## ***investment focus***

The Borough, as owner of Fireman's Memorial Park and Aspinwall Recreational Area, has control of what happens within those properties and can most adroitly pursue improvements there. The main barrier to implementation is funding.

When it comes to the RiverTrail Park, the Borough should focus on improvements to park connections, as the park's owner already has concept plans in place for the future of its properties. To strengthen the beauty and function of the park's connection with Aspinwall, the Borough should collaborate with the park's owner, PennDOT, the City of Pittsburgh and owners of contiguous properties. This concept is further explored in the following chapter.









# existing conditions



*aspinwall recreational area*



*fireman's park*



*allegheny river trail park*





### ***description***

Aspinwall Recreational Area is tucked between an entrance ramp to Route 8 and the Field Avenue residential neighborhood. The park is a popular destination for baseball and softball as well as for informal basketball games, picnicking, deck hockey, pickleball, informal soccer and playground fun.

### ***issues***

- The main ball field should be reoriented to conform to design standards.
- The southern ballfield should be replaced by amenities that will meet the diverse needs of many residents, including pickleball courts, nature paths and picnic facilities.
- A vast increase in tree cover will improve the park's character and sustainability.

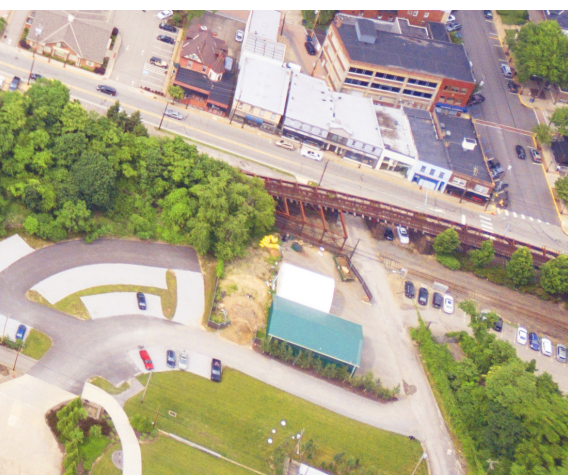


### ***description***

Fireman's Memorial Park is situated atop a bluff in the upper area of the borough near the Oakhurst Apartment complex. A quiet park, it offers a gentle walking loop with a permanent StoryWalk display, benches and a picnic pavilion that is popular for family gatherings.

### ***issues***

- Safety could be improved by formalizing parking spaces and separating the play equipment areas from the parking lot.
- The lack of an Allegheny River viewing area is a big missed opportunity for residents.
- A second bocce court would enable local hosting of tournaments.



### ***description***

With river access, this park complex is popular for residents of Aspinwall and the Pittsburgh region. As its owners advance plans for future development, this property represents an important future connection to the regional trail network along the Allegheny River.

### ***issues***

- The current entrance to the park and connection with Aspinwall's commercial areas is a hard-to-find drive that intersects with Freeport Road mid-block. A new park entrance should be planned and constructed at the intersection with Brilliant Avenue.





*key issue  
strategies*



## Strategy 01:

# Implement Aspinwall Recreational Area Master Plan

A new master plan for the Borough's community park developed during the Comprehensive Plan as residents identified ideas for how this treasured space could best serve local needs during the next decade. The overarching goal is for this park to offer great recreation experiences for residents of all ages and abilities, becoming an even better place to gather and spend time.

The following pages outline an overall master plan for Aspinwall Recreational Area followed by details on how to implement the first phase.

## Overview:

The master plan provides:

- New uses for park spaces, including intensive tree plantings and new stormwater management facilities.
- Reconfigured baseball field to conform with design standards for the sport.
- A walking loop and also smaller pathways to provide new passive recreation opportunities.
- Four pickleball courts and an improved multi-purpose court to encourage active play for all ages.

### Nature area concept images

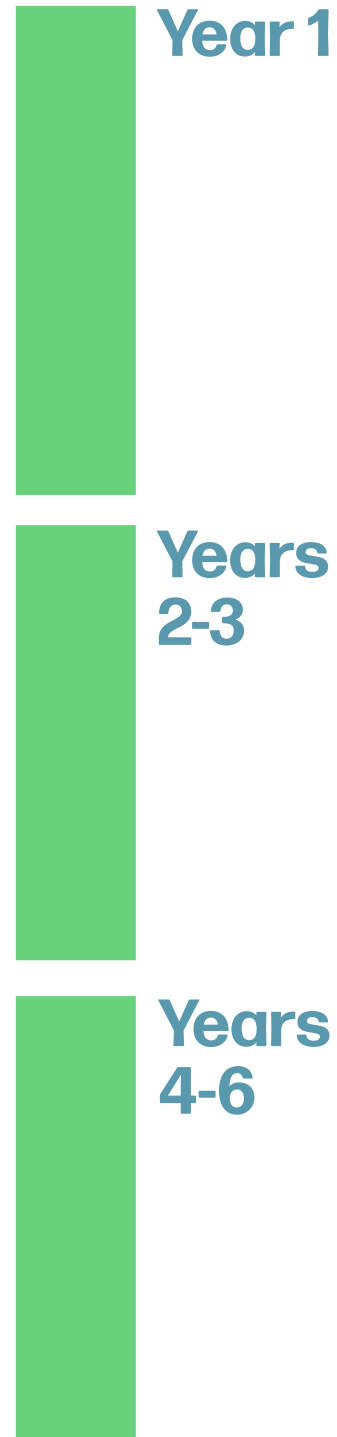


From left: Boulder play, Largo Hansen; Bienenstock Natural Playground (Hamilton, ON); Willow structure, Urban Village Designs

**Action Steps:**

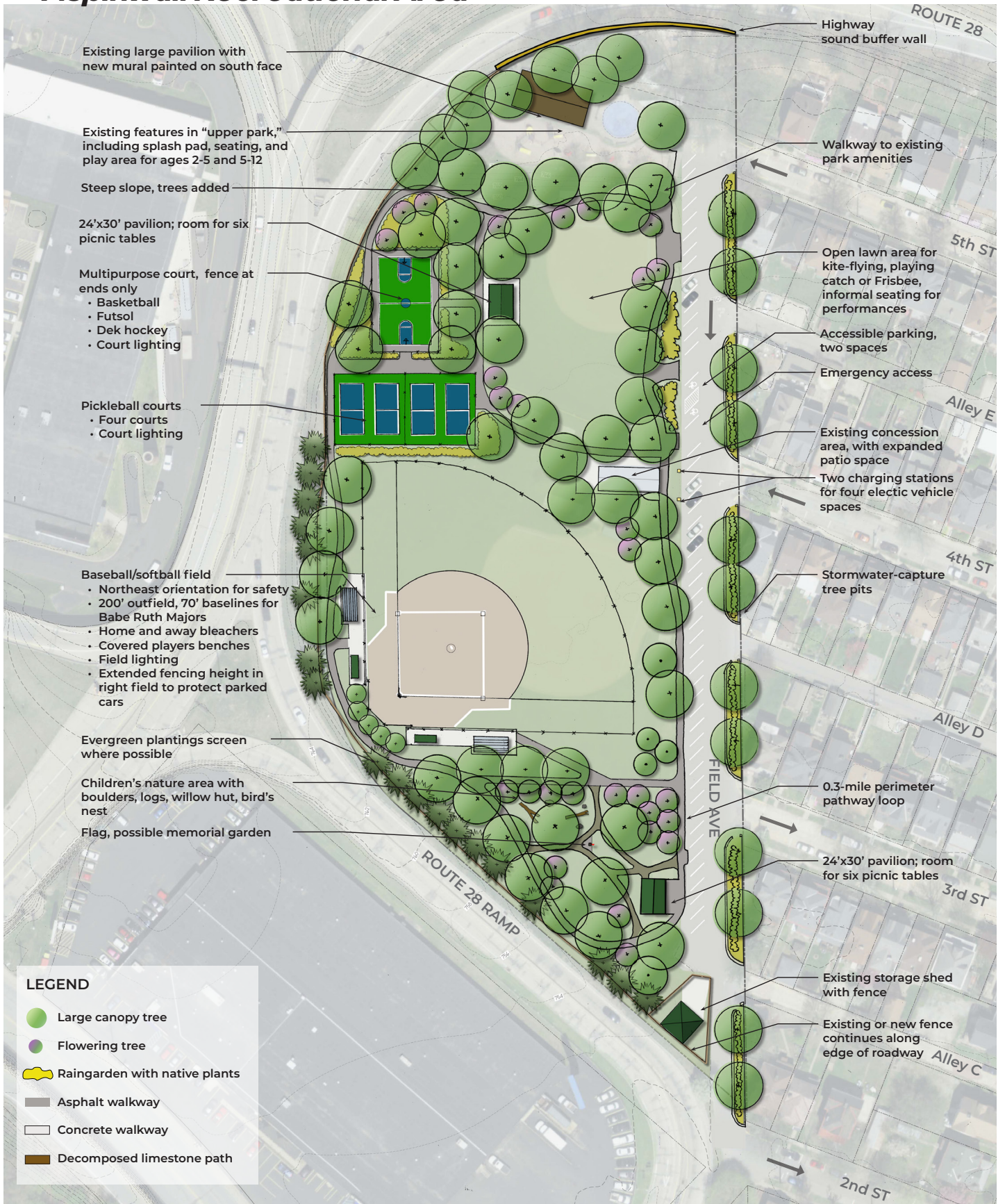
- A.  Review the master plan and related Opinion of Probable Construction Costs to identify a starting point for implementation
- B.  Review funding options and begin to include one or more line items into the annual budget for required matching monies.
- C.  Apply for construction grants and finish assembling local funding and in-kind donations for Phase 1: Four pickleball courts, a multi-use court for basketball, deck hockey and futsal and an accessible path from the parking lot to the court area.
- D.  Once a grant is received, complete construction documents and permits for Phase 1
- E.  Publicly bid and construct Phase 1
- F.  Apply for construction grants and finish assembling local funding and in-kind donations for Phase 2, creating a first-class ballfield and an open play lawn with a picnic shelter
- G.  Complete construction documents for Phase 2
- H.  Publicly bid and construct Phase 2
- I.  Apply for construction grants and finish assembling local funding and in-kind donations for Phase 3, creating a perimeter trail, memorial garden, picnic shelter and nature play area
- J.  Complete construction documents for Phase 3
- K.  Publicly bid and construct Phase 3

**Timeline:**





# Master Plan Concept Aspinwall Recreational Area



# Master Plan

## Opinion of Probable Construction Costs

<i>Item description</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i>Unit cost</i>	<i>Total item cost</i>
<i>Site preparation</i>				
Erosion and sedimentation controls	1	LS	\$5,500	\$5,500
Electrical service to EV charging stations	1	LS	\$5,000	\$5,000
Remove and dispose of chain link fence along Field Ave.	1	LS	\$3,000	\$3,000
<i>Subtotal Site Preparations</i>				<b>\$13,500</b>
<i>Baseball field replacement</i>				
Backstop fence (20'x75')	1	EA	\$20,000	\$20,000
8' Chain link fence	750	LF	\$95	\$71,250
Outfield barrier netting (20'x160', installed)	1	EA	\$35,000	\$35,000
5-Row bleachers	2	EA	\$2,250	\$4,500
10'x25' Dugout structures (includes chain link fencing, backless bench, installation)	2	EA	\$18,200	\$36,400
Concrete pad for dugouts and bleachers	356	SY	\$115	\$40,889
Locked storage chest on concrete pad	2	EA	\$1,000	\$2,000
Scoreboard	1	EA	\$40,000	\$40,000
Infield mix	1	LS	\$10,300	\$10,300
Reseed disturbed areas and overseed outfield	37,776	SF	\$0.08	\$2,833
Bases and pitchers mound	1	LS	\$625	\$625
Field lighting	1	LS	\$120,000	\$120,000
<i>Subtotal Baseball Field Replacement</i>				<b>\$383,797</b>
<i>Walkways and trails</i>				
Bituminous walkway	1,669	SY	\$50	\$83,433
Natural surface trails in nature area	296	LF	\$5	\$1,480
<i>Subtotal Walkways and Trails</i>				<b>\$84,913</b>
<i>Pavilions and concession</i>				
Pavilion (24'x30') with concrete pad (30x36'), installed	2	EA	\$90,000	\$180,000
Pavilion picnic tables	12	EA	\$750	\$9,000
Pavilion grills	2	EA	\$1,500	\$3,000
Pavilion trash receptacles	4	EA	\$1,500	\$6,000
Concession area expanded concrete patio	136	SY	\$115	\$15,640
Concession area picnic tables	6	EA	\$750	\$4,500
Concession area trash receptacles	4	EA	\$1,500	\$6,000
Expanded restrooms	1	ALLOW	\$80,000	\$80,000
Mural for existing shelter, upper park area	1	LS	\$1,500	\$1,500
<i>Subtotal Pavilions and Concession</i>				<b>\$305,640</b>

continued...



<i>Item description</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i>Unit cost</i>	<i>Total item cost</i>
-------------------------	-----------------	-------------	------------------	------------------------

<i>Sports courts</i>				
Bituminous full court basketball pad	923	SY	\$50	\$46,167
Basketball court surface and line painting	1	LS	\$9,000	\$9,000
Basketball goals	2	EA	\$1,200	\$2,400
Basketball 10' end fences	144	LF	\$115	\$16,560
Bituminous pickleball double-court pad (two adjacent courts on one pad)	414	SY	\$50	\$20,694
Pickleball court surface and line painting (for all courts)	1	LS	\$9,000	\$9,000
Pickleball permanent court net posts, installed (concrete footers)	4	EA	\$1,000	\$4,000
Pickleball nets	2	EA	\$1,250	\$2,500
Benches	2	EA	\$3,000	\$6,000
<i>Subtotal Sports Courts</i>				<b>\$116,321</b>
<i>Nature area</i>				
Willow hut	400	EA	\$15	\$6,000
Twig birds' nest with rounded "roller" boulder eggs	1	LS	\$3,000	\$3,000
Landscape boulders, delivered and set	8	EA	\$2,500	\$20,000
Logs, delivered, trimmed and set	4	EA	\$50	\$200
Telescoping 30' flagpole, installed	1	EA	\$6,000	\$6,000
Benches	4	EA	\$3,000	\$12,000
<i>Subtotal Nature Area</i>				<b>\$47,200</b>
<i>Parking facilities</i>				
Parking lot EV charging stations (two chargers per pedestal)	2	EA	\$8,000	\$16,000
Deliver power to EV charging stations	1	LS	\$7,500	\$7,500
Parking lot line EV symbols (paint)	1	LS	\$250	\$250
Parking lot EV signs	4	EA	\$300	\$1,200
<i>Subtotal Parking Facilities</i>				<b>\$24,950</b>
<i>Planting and landscape features</i>				
Reseeding along trails (3' both sides)	15,018	SF	\$0.25	\$3,755
Reseed former baseball field area	23,800	SF	\$0.25	\$5,950
Trees on steep slope and upper park area	14	EA	\$500	\$7,000
Trees at open lawn/main entrance area	21	EA	\$500	\$10,500
Trees at sports courts	13	EA	\$500	\$6,500
Trees surrounding baseball field area	21	EA	\$500	\$10,500
Evergreen trees buffering highway ramp	20	EA	\$500	\$10,000
Trees at nature play area	24	EA	\$500	\$12,000
<i>Subtotal Planting and Landscape Features</i>				<b>\$66,205</b>

continued...

<i>Item description</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i>Unit cost</i>	<i>Total item cost</i>
<i>Park area stormwater/Rain gardens</i>				
TBD ALLOWANCE from engineer	1	ALLOW	\$250,000	\$250,000
<i>Subtotal Stormwater/Rain gardens</i>				<b>\$250,000</b>
SUBTOTAL SITE WORK				\$1,292,526
Contingency (15%)				\$193,879
Bonds and Insurance and stakeout and mobilization (15%)				\$193,879
Design fee				\$258,505
Site survey				\$15,000
<b>TOTAL SITE WORK</b>				<b>\$1,953,789</b>

Note: Opinion of Probable Construction Costs is made based on the experience and qualifications of Pashek + MTR, Ltd. and represents reasonable judgment based on familiarity with the industry. Pashek + MTR, Ltd. has no control over the cost or availability of labor, materials or equipment, or over market conditions or the provider's method of pricing. Pashek + MTR, Ltd. cannot and does not guarantee that the opinion of probable cost provided the Owner will not vary from the actual cost experienced by the Owner. Periodically, construction cost estimates should be updated to reflect current costs.



# Master Plan Concept: Phase I Only



## Master Plan Cost Estimate Phase I Only

<i>Item description</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i>Unit cost</i>	<i>Total item cost</i>
<i>Site preparation</i>				
Erosion and sedimentation controls	1	LS	\$2,000	\$2,000
<i>General site improvements</i>				
Bituminous pathway to court area - 6 ft wide, 12 ft between courts	350	SY	\$60	\$21,000
Minor grading of court area	1	LS	\$5,000	\$5,000
Minor seeding	1	LS	\$1,000	\$1,000
<i>Court improvements - Pickleball</i>				
Bituminous paving	800	SY	\$60	\$48,000
Court surfacing	800	SY	\$18	\$14,400
Court posts and netting	4	EA	\$3,000	\$12,000
Court fencing	300	LF	\$65	\$19,500
<i>Court improvements - Multi-purpose court</i>				
Bituminous paving	600	SY	\$60	\$36,000
Court surfacing	600	SY	\$18	\$10,800
Court goals and netting	2	EA	\$4,000	\$8,000
Court fencing - 4'	240	LF	\$65	\$15,600
Court fencing - 12'	120	LF	\$125	\$15,000
<i>Additional costs</i>				
Design and engineering	1	LS	\$29,000	\$29,000
<b>TOTAL PHASE I COST</b>				<b>\$237,300</b>

### **Proposed funding strategy:**

Proposed Funding Strategy: It is recommended that the borough apply for a DCNR Small Communities grant in the spring of 2023. In addition to the grant funded portion of the park improvements, the borough would use public works to do needed removals, line painting on the ADA parking spaces and benches. The Tree Commission will work to plant trees around the new courts.



## Strategy 02:

# Develop elements of Fireman's Park concept plan

### Overview:

Fireman's Memorial Park is situated off River Oaks Drive and West 9th Street, more than 200 feet above the Allegheny River. The passive-use park currently includes a 0.18-mile walking loop, picnic shelter, play areas and a bocce court. The loop trail teases visitors with views up and down the river; however, these are obscured by vegetation, particularly in warm-weather months. A new overview could open the panorama while also protecting the integrity of fragile steep slopes below. This should be designed as a community-scale (as opposed to regional) attraction. Park improvements should incorporate accessibility and safety features.



Existing view from park



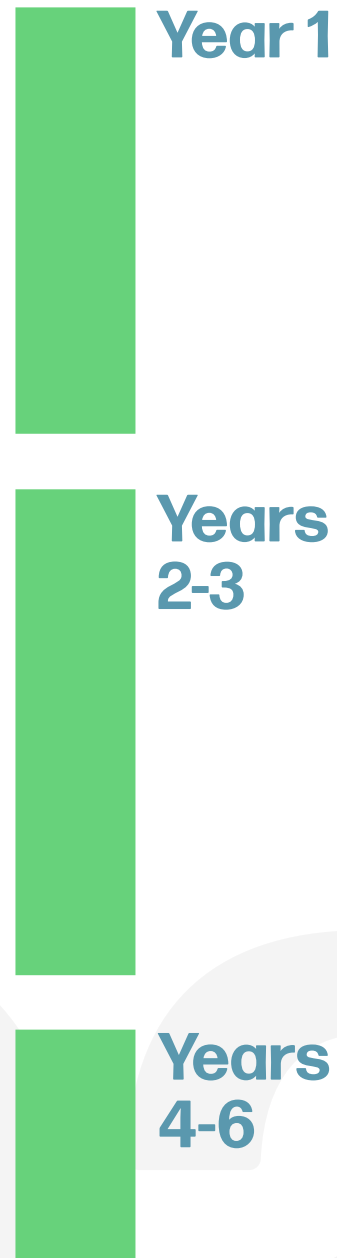
Concept images for river overlook



**Action Steps:**

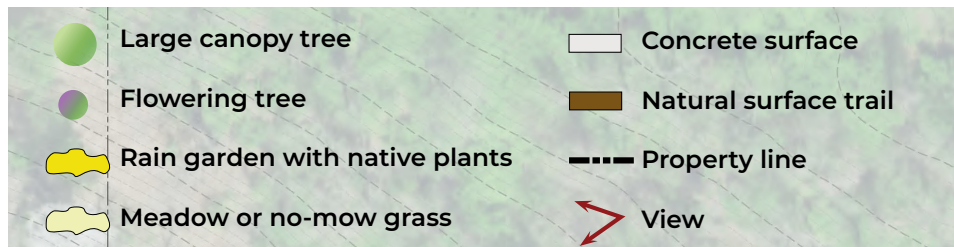
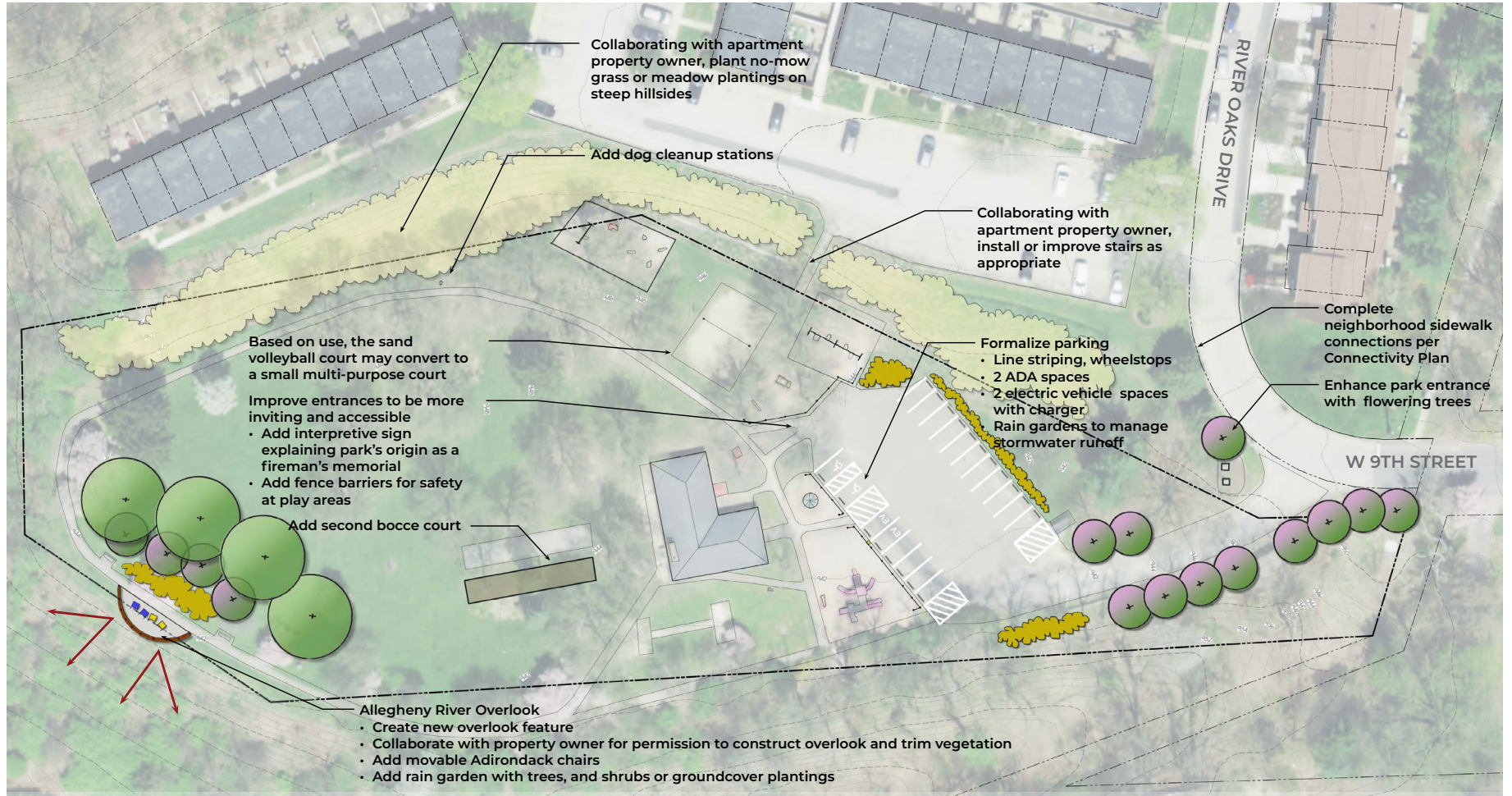
- A.  Review master plan and opinion of probable construction costs to identify a starting point for implementation
- B.  Review funding options and begin to include one or more line items into the annual budget for required matching monies
- C.  Apply for grants and finish assembling local funding and in-kind donations for Phase 1, the river overlook
- D.  Once a grant is received, complete construction documents for Phase 1, the river overlook
- E.  Publicly bid and construct Phase 1
- F.  Apply for grants to complete implementation of the remaining items recommended in the master plan (parking lot realignment, play area buffer, bocce court and any updates to existing facilities needed at the time of this phase)
- G.  Once a grant is awarded, complete design, construction documents and permits
- H.  Publicly bid and construct remaining items

**Timeline:**





# Fireman's Park Master Plan







# Fireman's Park Master Plan

## Opinion of Probable Construction Costs

Item description	Quantity	Unit	Unit cost	Total item cost
<b>Site preparation</b>				
Erosion and sedimentation controls	1	LS	\$1,500	\$1,500
Electrical service to EV charging station	1	LS	\$5,000	\$5,000
Overlook fill	44	CY	\$50	\$2,222
<i>Subtotal Site Preparations</i>				<b>\$8,722</b>
<b>Site improvements</b>				
Overlook retaining wall (interlocking manufactured stone)	210	SFF	\$90	\$18,900
Overlook barrier railing ornamental fence	60	LF	\$195	\$11,700
Overlook concrete pad (4" thick)	44	SY	\$115	\$5,111
Overlook Adirondack chairs	4	EA	\$300	\$1,200
Overlook benches	2	EA	\$3,000	\$6,000
Overlook concrete pad for benches	2	EA	\$500	\$1,000
Dog cleanup station	1	EA	\$250	\$250
Bocce court	1	EA	\$5,000	\$5,000
Parking lot barrier railing ornamental fence	165	LF	\$195	\$32,175
Parking lot EV charging station (2 chargers/one pedestal)	1	EA	\$8,000	\$8,000
Deliver power to EV charging station	1	LS	\$5,000	\$5,000
Parking lot wheel stops	19	EA	\$200	\$3,800
Parking lot line striping and symbols (paint)	1	LS	\$1,000	\$1,000
Parking lot ADA and EV signs	4	EA	\$300	\$1,200
Concrete sidewalks leading to park (4' wide, 4" thick)	71	SY	\$115	\$8,178
<i>Subtotal Site Improvements</i>				<b>\$108,514</b>
<b>Planting and landscape features</b>				
Seeding along trail	9,552	SF	\$0.25	\$2,388
Overlook planting bed shrubs	119	EA	\$35	\$4,153
Overlook trees	7	EA	\$500	\$3,500
Entrance trees	11	EA	\$500	\$5,500
Meadow seeding on steep slopes (share cost with apartment complex owner?)	22,000	SF	\$0.50	\$11,000
<i>Subtotal Planting and Landscape Features</i>				<b>\$26,541</b>

continued...

<i>Item description</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i>Unit cost</i>	<i>Total item cost</i>
<i>Parking lot stormwater/rain gardens</i>				
Excavation, gravel base, amended soils	1,550	SF	\$50	\$77,500
Underdrains, piping, sawcutting, trenching	250	LF	\$75	\$18,750
Shrubs	258	EA	\$35	\$9,042
<i>Subtotal Stormwater/Rain gardens</i>				<b>\$105,292</b>
SUBTOTAL SITE WORK				\$249,069
Contingency (15%)				\$37,360
Bonds and Insurance and stakeout and mobilization (15%)				\$37,360
<b>TOTAL SITE WORK</b>				<b>\$323,790</b>

Note: Opinion of Probable Construction Costs is made based on the experience and qualifications of Pashek + MTR, Ltd. and represents reasonable judgment based on familiarity with the industry. Pashek + MTR, Ltd. has no control over the cost or availability of labor, materials or equipment, or over market conditions or the provider's method of pricing. Pashek + MTR, Ltd. cannot and does not guarantee that the opinion of probable cost provided the Owner will not vary from the actual cost experienced by the Owner. Periodically, update construction costs estimated for these improvements to reflect current costs.



### **Strategy 03:**

# ***Use Borough green spaces as a starting point for sustainability initiatives***

### **Overview:**

The Borough recognizes the importance of pursuing sustainability and supporting natural infrastructure to mitigate issues such as:

- Air and water quality
- Stormwater runoff and flood risk
- Urban light pollution
- Heat island effect
- Waste management and recycling
- Extend the tree canopy
- Improve green spaces
- Energy generation and energy consumption

### **Action Steps:**

- A.**  Establish a Sustainability Advisory Committee by ordinance to identify and prioritize sustainability improvements. Alternately, start by appointing an ad hoc sustainability advisory group with a more narrow, project-specific scope. This group could advise Council on issues of:
- Public education
  - Recruiting and mobilizing volunteers for high-priority projects
  - Environmental quality monitoring
  - Climate resiliency initiatives, specifically Borough implementation of the CONNECT Climate Action Plan
  - Green energy and energy audits
  - Sustainability certifications

**B.**  Pursue EcoDistrict or Sustainable Pennsylvania Community Certification benchmarks to implement within the Borough

1. Assign the Sustainability Advisory Committee to review and select relevant criteria from the EcoDistrict and Sustainable Pennsylvania Programs
2. Implement feasible high-priority initiatives. Example: Install solar arrays or other green infrastructure at the municipal building and on municipal properties
3. Plan to support the Committee in applying for EcoDistrict or Sustainable Pennsylvania Community certification once significant sustainability practices are implemented

**C.**  Educate residents about sustainability initiatives and practices

1. Assign the Sustainability Advisory Committee to review sustainability issues prioritized by residents in public input for the Comprehensive Plan
2. Create materials with steps that inform residents of the steps they can take to improve sustainability within the Borough and actions that the Borough is taking
3. Promote materials in the form of a Borough newsletter or addition to the Borough website

**D.**  Install public electric vehicle charging stations within Borough-owned parking lots where feasible, the municipal parking lot and at Aspinwall Recreation Area and Fireman's Memorial Park.

Financial incentives are available through PA DEP to support the acquisition, installation, operation and maintenance of certain electric vehicle infrastructure technologies, as well as grants to retrofit vehicle fleets. Duquesne Light offers advisory services and programs to support charging station development and fleet electrification.

**E.**  Continue supporting the Shade Tree Commission in its work to replace lost street trees and plant new trees in parks and other appropriate locations. The Commission has planted more than 150 trees through the TreeVitalize program and could ultimately pursue a goal of planting one tree per resident.



## Context

# How would an overall sustainability framework look in Aspinwall?

The EcoDistricts protocol is a comprehensive framework to guide urban and community development from planning to implementation, putting equity, resilience and climate protection at the heart of every decision.

In 2017, the boroughs of Etna, Millvale and Sharpsburg formed the Triboro EcoDistrict, which promotes sustainable and equitable community development utilizing the themes of equity, food, water, energy, air quality and mobility. In 2018, the Triboro Ecodistrict was awarded \$2.3 million by the Henry L. Hillman Foundation for its work.

## Criteria relevant to Aspinwall:

### EcoDistrict Priority Areas

<b>Place</b>	Strong civic engagement; preservation and celebration of culture and history; diverse and affordable housing; and accessible public spaces and services for daily needs.
<b>Health + Wellbeing</b>	Active living based on walkability and recreation; equitable health outcomes based on accessible, affordable health care; local fresh food; remediated toxic environments; and strong public safety.
<b>Connectivity</b>	A street network accommodating diverse ages and abilities using multiple travel modes and shared mobility options, and a high-quality digital network providing equitable connectivity and leveraged community data.
<b>Living Infrastructure</b>	Healthy soils, water, trees, and wildlife habitat; accessible nature; and natural processes integrated into the built environment.
<b>Resource Restoration</b>	Increase efficient water use; divert waste from landfills; productively reuse remediated land; and pursue energy efficiency, technology advancements, and clean, renewable energy production that reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

### Sustainable PA Community Criteria

- Waste and materials management
- Energy
- Land use and housing
- Municipal operations
- Parks and land conservation
- Public health and safety
- Strategic engagement and resilience
- Transportation
- Water

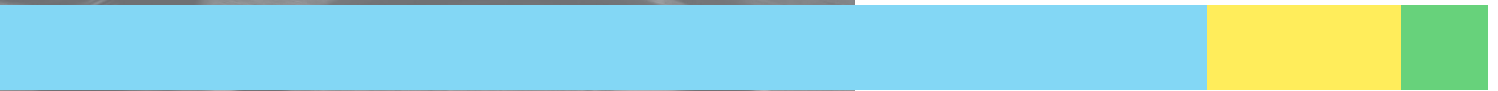


**transportation and  
the public realm**





02







*introduction*



## **context**

Aspinwall's streets are a setting for movement, for access, for connection and for gathering. Beyond the purpose of conveying people and goods between locations, streets here are a platform for building value for those who live and operate businesses along them. and they are a stage for shared experiences.

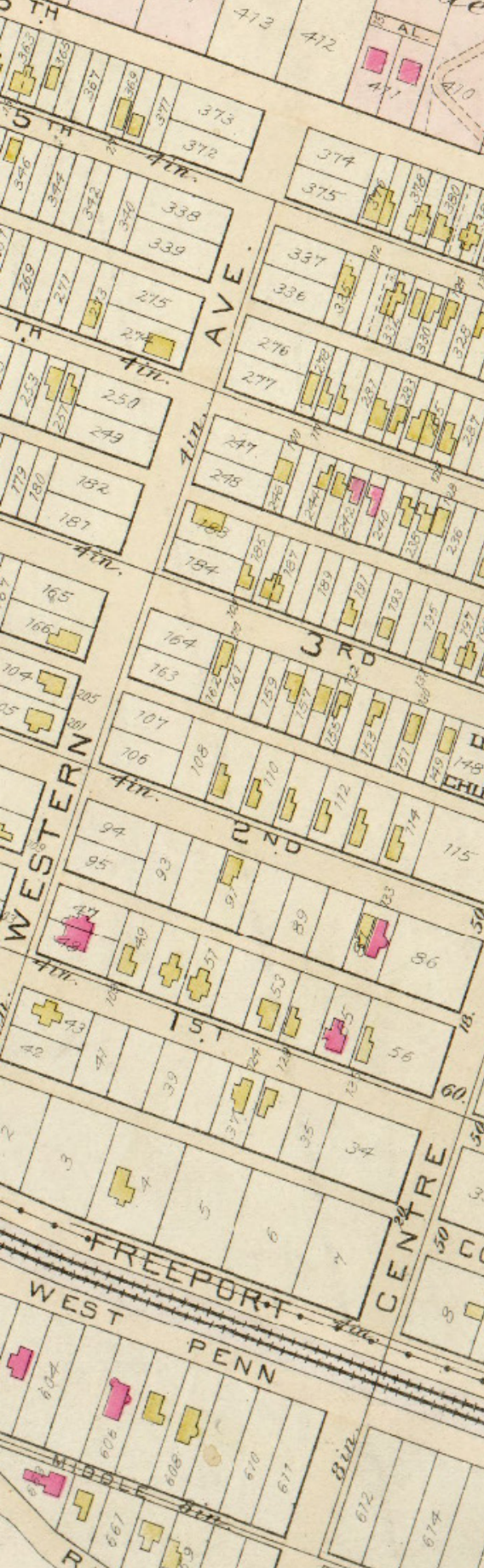
The Borough's public realm includes its publicly owned spaces and places, of which its streets are the largest component. This chapter recognizes that a high-quality public realm is at the heart of what makes Aspinwall a special place. It advances policy initiatives and physical projects to even further enhance these spaces and increase their utility and appeal to users of all ages, abilities and transportation modes.

This chapter articulates a long-range vision for Freeport Road and associated stepwise actions to advance it. Additionally, it includes strategies to improve overall connectivity across the Borough and establish policies for management and maintenance.

## **vision**

**Aspinwall Borough will be known for high-quality public spaces and distinctive destinations where people love spending time. The Borough's main routes will become safer, and more convenient and comfortable for users of all ages and abilities regardless of their transportation mode, and new connections will increase active transportation opportunities.**

- The pedestrian experience in Aspinwall is an innately important component of the community's identity and appeal, an aspect prized by residents and visitors alike.
- Transforming Freeport Road is a difficult but highly worthwhile aspiration that can be achieved in piecemeal steps over many years.
- Demand continues to increase for safe, convenient routes to reach recreation amenities on foot or bike.
- Further activating public spaces such as Alley A will reinforce what is unique about this place, create new ways to connect people and generate momentum for additional investment.
- A systems approach to connectivity will help the Borough prioritize improvements that connect destinations.
- Intentional policy approaches to street maintenance will simplify future decision-making.



1897 Plan of Aspinwall, Plate 24. G.M. Hopkins & Co.

## building on history

Aspinwall's most well-known characteristics – stately residential architecture, an expansive tree canopy and a walkable grid layout – date back to the Borough's original platting and development following incorporation in 1892. Borough Council passed an ordinance in 1893 providing for trees, tree boxes and walkways, which initially took the form of wooden boardwalks. Aspinwall grew as a streetcar suburb starting in 1910, when Pittsburgh Railways service began along Freeport Road.

Widespread uptake of private vehicle ownership dramatically changed the landscape of many Allegheny County communities, as car-centric planning hollowed out dense, walkable areas to optimize vehicle speed and convenience with wide roads, expansive parking lots and sprawling land uses. Aspinwall, by and large, does not bear these scars: It remains a community designed for people, not cars.

This underlies many of the qualities that are most important to Aspinwall residents about living here. People love that the Borough's streets are safe for children to play and ride bikes. They enjoy comfortable, convenient and tree-shaded walks to park amenities or dining. They appreciate the color that history gives a well-preserved built environment. And they enjoy a sense of neighborliness that develops where people live close enough for front porch conversation.



Pittsburgh Railways 1199 at terminus of line at Brilliant Avenue and Freeport Road, 1960. C.W. Lahickey, rpicturearchives.net



## ***what makes Aspinwall's streets walkable?***

The strategies in this chapter intend to preserve and enhance Aspinwall's public realm, recognizing that the following qualities contribute to the quality of the experience it provides:<sup>1</sup>

- **Enclosure:** Walkable streets feel like an outdoor room with walls formed by building facades or tree columns, reflecting pleasing proportions between building height and street width with continuity along the boundary formed by buildings, fences and hedges.
- **Comfort:** Street trees and awnings provide protection from sun and weather.
- **Safety:** Slow, narrow streets allow pedestrians to feel safer from dangers posed by vehicles. Streets where windows, storefronts doors and balconies look over the public realm give a sense of natural surveillance that helps people feel more secure.
- **Connection:** Networks of interconnected streets give people choices of routes and experiences. A community's best-connected streets tend to see the most traffic and business.
- **Something to look at:** We are attracted to beautiful, memorable places where "the three-dimensional geometry of urban design and architecture is employed, in conspicuous or subtle ways, to create street scenes that unfold in some theater-like progression."



<sup>1</sup> Walkability principles from *Street Design: The Secret to Great Cities and Towns*. Dover, Victor and Massengale, John. Wiley, 2014.



# picture it

## Freepport Green Boulevard

### ***setting a North Star***

Transforming Freepport Boulevard is no small lift. Improvements would require capital investments at a level largely prohibitive for a local government of Aspinwall's size. They would also require coordination with a variety of agencies, including Norfolk Southern Railway and PennDOT, the roadway's owner. Nonetheless, these improvements are critical to achieving a commonly held vision for Freepport Road to deprioritize the efficiency of pass-through traffic and better serve those traveling on foot or bike. This plan's Steering Committee felt strongly that the 0.6-mile stretch of Freepport Road through Aspinwall should be a public realm that embodies the pride in place so evident on the Borough's other streets, presenting a worthy gateway. Thus this plan sets as its long-term aspiration the realization of the Freepport Green Boulevard concept.





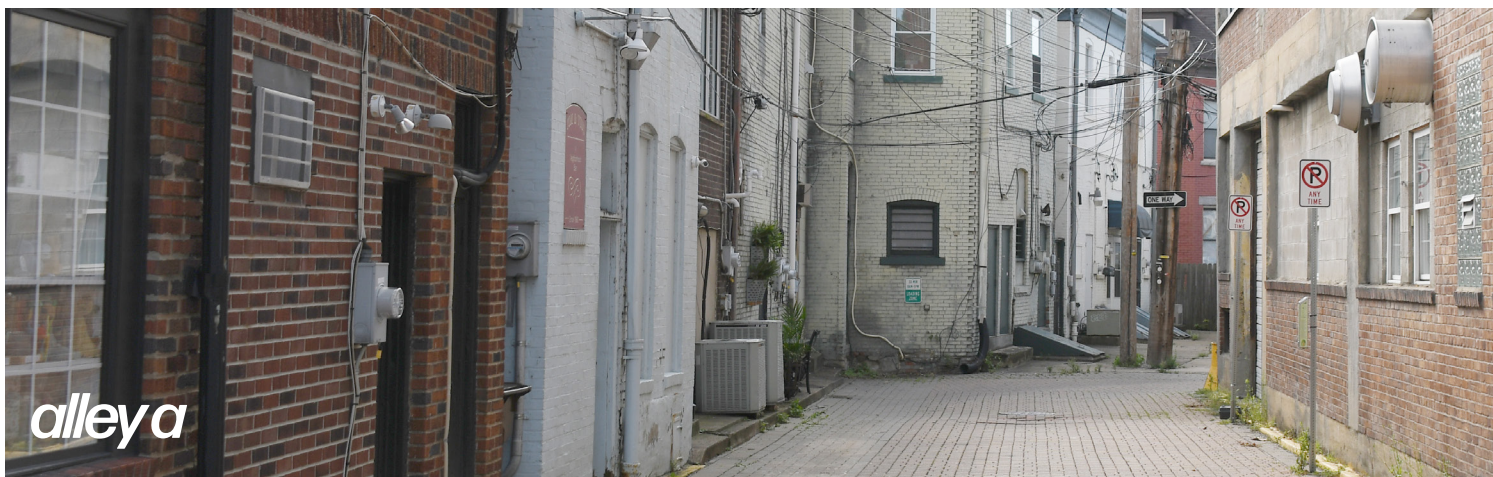
### ***making progress***

Implementation strategies 1 through 6, as numbered above and in the box to the right, detail action steps for components of this concept. Some strategies are simple and inexpensive, and others represent challenging undertakings. The Borough can make progress toward the long-range vision for Freeport Road with stepwise actions over time. For instance, following through with safety improvements recommended by TranSystems (strategy 1) is a relatively simple early step that is consistent with an eventual reconfiguration of the Brilliant/Freeport intersection (strategy 2), the complexities of which may take years to iron out. The concept can be realized through division into small, achievable pieces.

- 1** *Knock out initial safety improvements*
- 2** *Realign the Brilliant connection to RiverTrail Park*
- 3** *Improve Municipal Parking Lot*
- 4** *Maintain high-quality streetscaping*
- 5** *Activate Alley A*
- 6** *Create a Freeport cycle track*



# existing conditions







**Freeport Road** is a PennDOT road (SR 1001) classified as a minor arterial, with annual average daily traffic of 12,000 in 2021. The Freeport Road Safety Study Report analyzed 2019 conditions, recommending improvements to address deficiencies relative to current design standards and safety guidelines. The report identifies problems centered on facilities for pedestrians and cyclists: Narrow and/or obstructed sidewalks, faded crosswalks, inaccessible ramps, a proliferation of conflict points, ineffective lighting, geometry that induces vehicle speed and a lack of safe bicycle routing. This plan's steering committee identified a need to better control speed on Freeport. PennDOT has not implemented local requests to reduce the posted speed limit to 25 mph.



Two-thirds of those who responded to the community questionnaire identified a need for more trees and plants at gateways into Aspinwall along Freeport Road. This public desire for **further greening the Borough** echoed through comments about the parks and business districts as well, with many appreciating the aesthetic, functional and environmental benefits of plantings.

**Residential streets** in the lower section of the Borough (south of Route 28) typically take the form of one-way thoroughfares with sidewalks and street parking on both sides. Blocks face outward from service alleys lining garages and backyards. This is an urban design best practice, as the numbered streets (2nd, 3rd, etc.) are high-quality pedestrian-oriented spaces, while garbage cans, surface parking and other auto-oriented uses are relegated to the alleys.



Alley A represents a key connection between the Brilliant and Commercial business districts where there is intense potential to engage surrounding property owners to collectively create a unique walking route and gathering space.

Sidewalks are less consistent in the layout of the Borough's upper section, where multi-family housing is more prevalent, and traveling north/south on foot along Center Avenue is challenging.

Brick streets comprise a significant portion of the Borough's network. Balancing the historic and aesthetic value of brick streets with the cost of restoring them remains a challenge that requires intentional policy.



*key issue  
strategies*



4Runner  
PENNSYLVANIA  
LKZ-7684

PENNSYLVANIA  
LBT-3416



## Strategy 01:

# Knock out initial safety improvements

The Traffic Flow and Safety Master Plan completed for Aspinwall Borough in 2021 by TranSystems identifies safety deficiencies along Freeport Road and recommends projects to address them. The related Safety Report includes a Prioritization Matrix with project breakdowns for specific locations with costs and timeline.

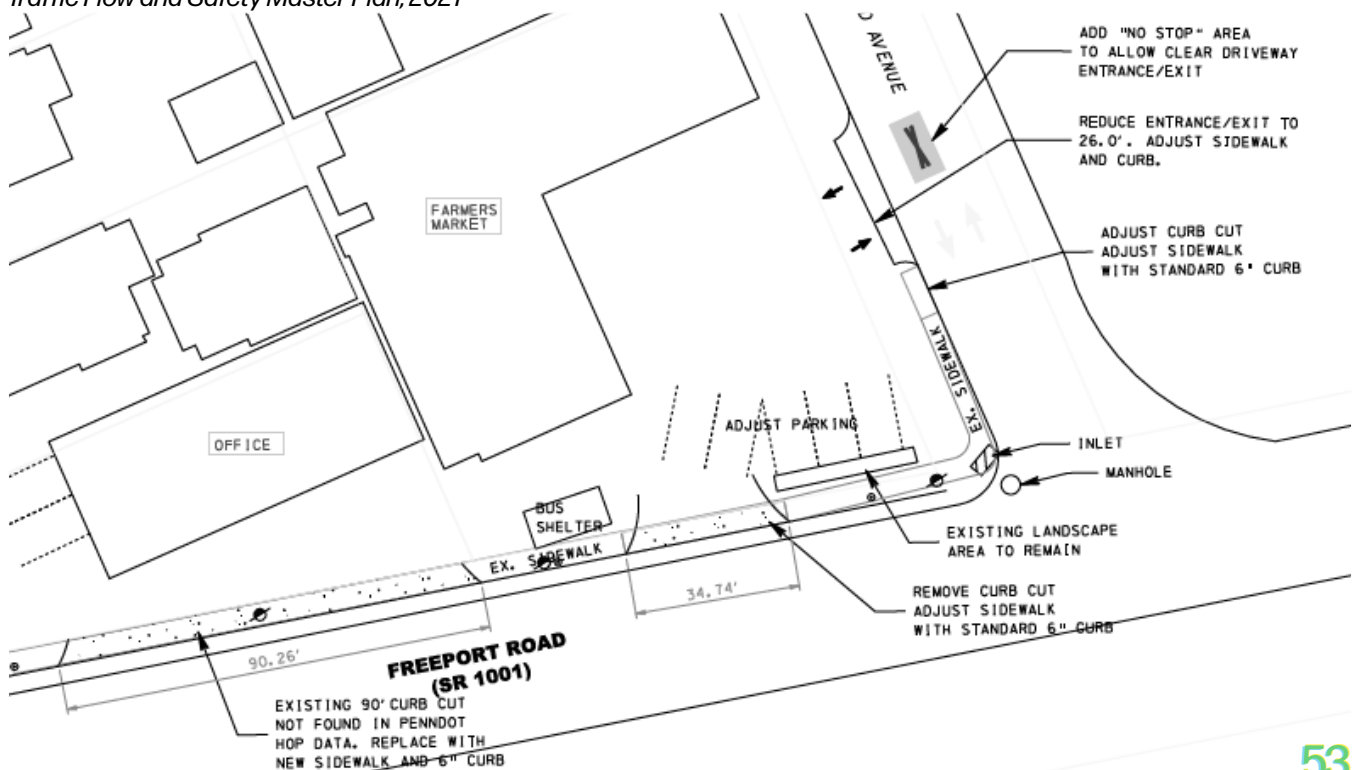
The Freeport Green Boulevard concept includes a cycle track along Freeport Road. Recognizing that this will not happen overnight, establishing and marking an off-Freeport bike route as proposed in the master plan will offer a safer, calmer alternative in the meantime.

Improving access management and adjusting traffic flow at specified locations will immediately improve safety for users of all modes.

## Overview:

- Make short-term safety improvements by undertaking a series of targeted, relatively simple and inexpensive projects.
- Most of these undertakings will involve coordination with PennDOT, property owners and potentially other parties.
- More detailed specifications and costs for individual intersections appear in the 2021 Traffic Flow and Safety Master Plan and associated reports.

*Suggested sidewalk and curb modifications for Delafield Avenue at Freeport Road  
Traffic Flow and Safety Master Plan, 2021*



## Action Steps:

- A.  Meet with PennDOT to review and coordinate improvements, including the long-range Green Boulevard vision as well as the more immediate implementation of projects in the Traffic Flow and Safety Master Plan.
- B.  UPMC St. Margaret Exit onto Delafield: Coordinate with UPMC and PennDOT's Route 28 project; adjust ingress/egress, include wayfinding signage and pavement marking. This includes reconfiguring traffic patterns on Second and Fourth avenues in the blocks near Delafield Avenue where they are currently two-way: Make Second Avenue one-way east and Fourth Avenue one-way west.
- C.  Introduce traffic flow changes, turning restrictions and safety improvements at the intersection of Eastern and Commercial avenues.

*Traffic pattern reconfiguration at Commercial and Eastern, from TranSystems plan*



## Timeline:

Year 1

Years 2-3



Construction drawings envision shared lane pavement markings and signage to define an off-Freeport bike route through the Borough



- D.  Coordinate with PennDOT to adjust access management and incorporate pedestrian safety improvements at properties along Freeport Road as specified in the Traffic Flow and Safety Master Plan.
- E.  Improve Freeport Road intersections as specified in the TranSystems plan. This would include upgrades such as new signals and retiming, new street lights, signage, rapid flashing beacons and painted and lighted crosswalks. The plan estimated that costs will total \$100,000 to \$250,000 per intersection. The plan envisions new sidewalks, curbing, drainage and traffic calming as part of a larger corridor reconstruction project (see Strategy 6).
- F.  Create an off-Freeport bike path/route through the Borough as specified in the Master Plan to connect Delafield Avenue with Aspinwall Recreation Area and Allegheny River Trail Park, unite Second Street and Brilliant Avenue. Include pavement markings, signage, crossings and flashers. The plan estimates the cost for this project between \$50,000 and \$100,000.

**Timeline:**

**Years  
2-3**

## Strategy 02:

# Realign the Brilliant connection to RiverTrail Park

Aspinwall Borough, Allegheny RiverTrail Park and other partners have long sought to create a visual connection and safe, inviting pedestrian path between the Brilliant Avenue business district and the park. Currently:

- The park entrance is at an awkward location near but off-kilter with the intersection of Brilliant Avenue and Freeport Road. The entrance is easy to miss, tucked between pillars supporting an inactive rail line.
- There is no designated pedestrian path into the park, and walking conditions at the intersection and along Freeport Road require safety improvements.
- All traffic into the park must cross an active at-grade rail line. Up to 20 trains per day pass through this area at up to 55 mph on no set schedule. The railroad expects train traffic to increase.

## Overview:

- Connecting Brilliant Avenue with the RiverTrail Park entrance remains an important and well-supported priority.
- This project would address safety concerns as well as enhancing the community's pedestrian network in a critical location. It would also encourage foot traffic between the business district and park.
- Accomplishing the reconfiguration has proven challenging and will require significant resources and cooperation.
- The view from Brilliant Avenue toward the river terminates at a small parking lot and the inactive railroad trestle, representing a missed opportunity to reinforce flow between the park and businesses.
- Vehicles turning left into the park from Freeport Road may back traffic up into the nearby intersection while waiting for a gap in oncoming traffic.

Existing conditions





## Known challenges:

In 2014, the Borough and RiverTrail Park sold state funders on the importance of addressing these problems by creating a four-way intersection between Freepoint Road, Brilliant Avenue and the park entrance. A new traffic signal would include appropriate devices and phasing to accommodate railroad pre-emption (i.e. to operate in a special control mode when trains approach). A crossing arm would improve safety.

At that time, park owners had received written support from Norfolk Southern, which operates the active line, and completed a traffic impact assessment and certified cost estimates for improvements.

The project remains on hold due to a combination of challenges, including:

- **Many entities involved:** The project requires cooperation among the RiverTrail Park owners, Aspinwall Borough, PennDOT (which owns Freepoint Road), the City of Pittsburgh (where part of the project area lies), Norfolk Southern (the active rail operator) and Allegheny Valley Railroads (the inactive rail owner), among others.
- **Cost:** Project cost estimates from around 2014, detailed at right, totaled around \$2.7 million. This included design and construction of an overhead protection structure required by AVR. Costs for the same work now will be substantially higher.

## Original project costs:

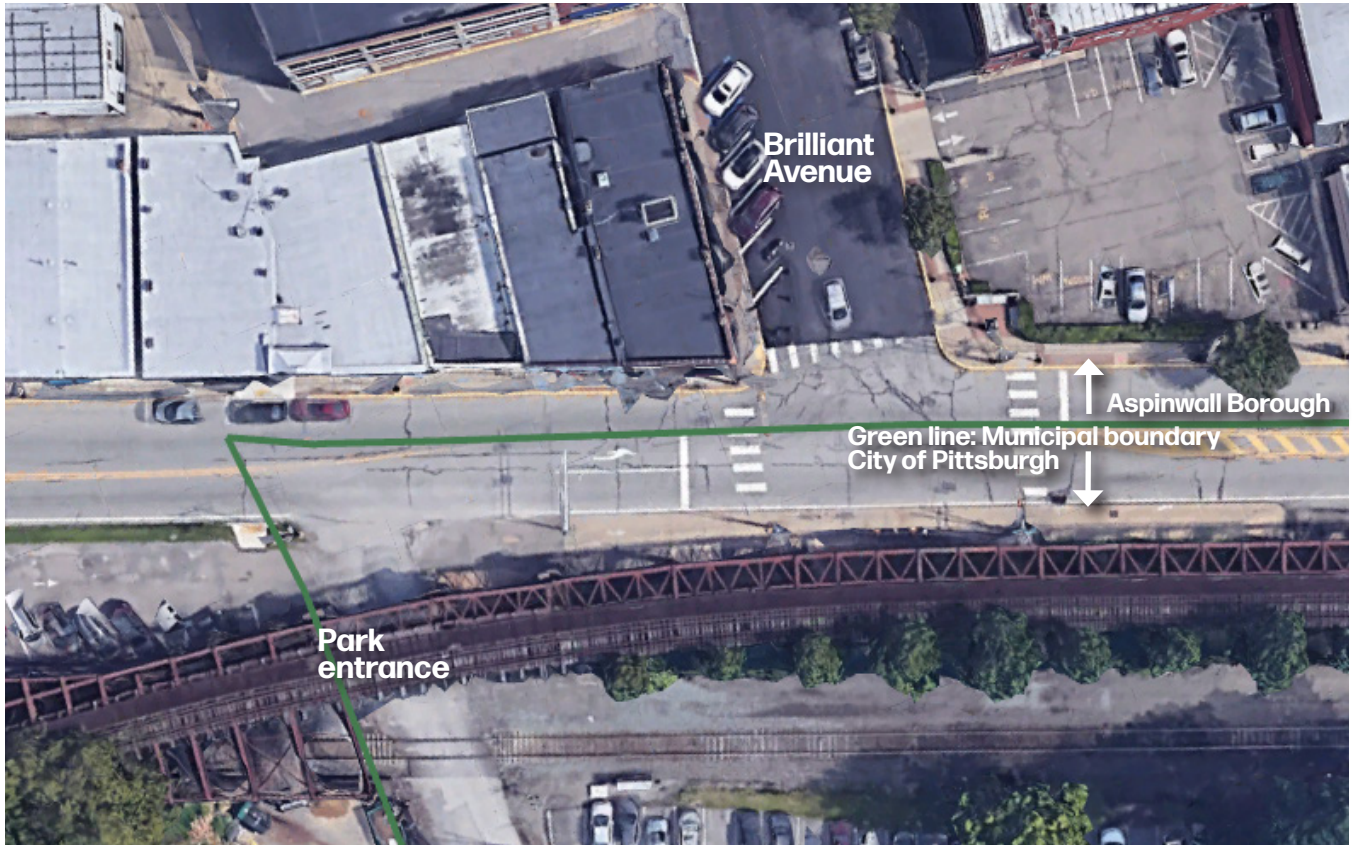
Item description	2014 estimate
<i>Traffic signal, grade crossing, Brilliant Avenue extension, turn lane, drainage upgrades</i>	
Design	\$312,479
Construction	\$1,450,000
Inspection	\$217,500
	<i>Subtotal</i> <b>\$1,979,979</b>
<i>Park road</i>	
Design	\$41,000
Construction	\$309,000
	<i>Subtotal</i> <b>\$350,000</b>
<i>Overhead protection structure</i>	
Design	\$87,000
Construction	\$250,000
	<i>Subtotal</i> <b>\$337,000</b>
	<b>TOTAL \$2,667,000*</b>

\* The same estimate adjusted for inflation alone would be \$3,325,562 in 2022 dollars.

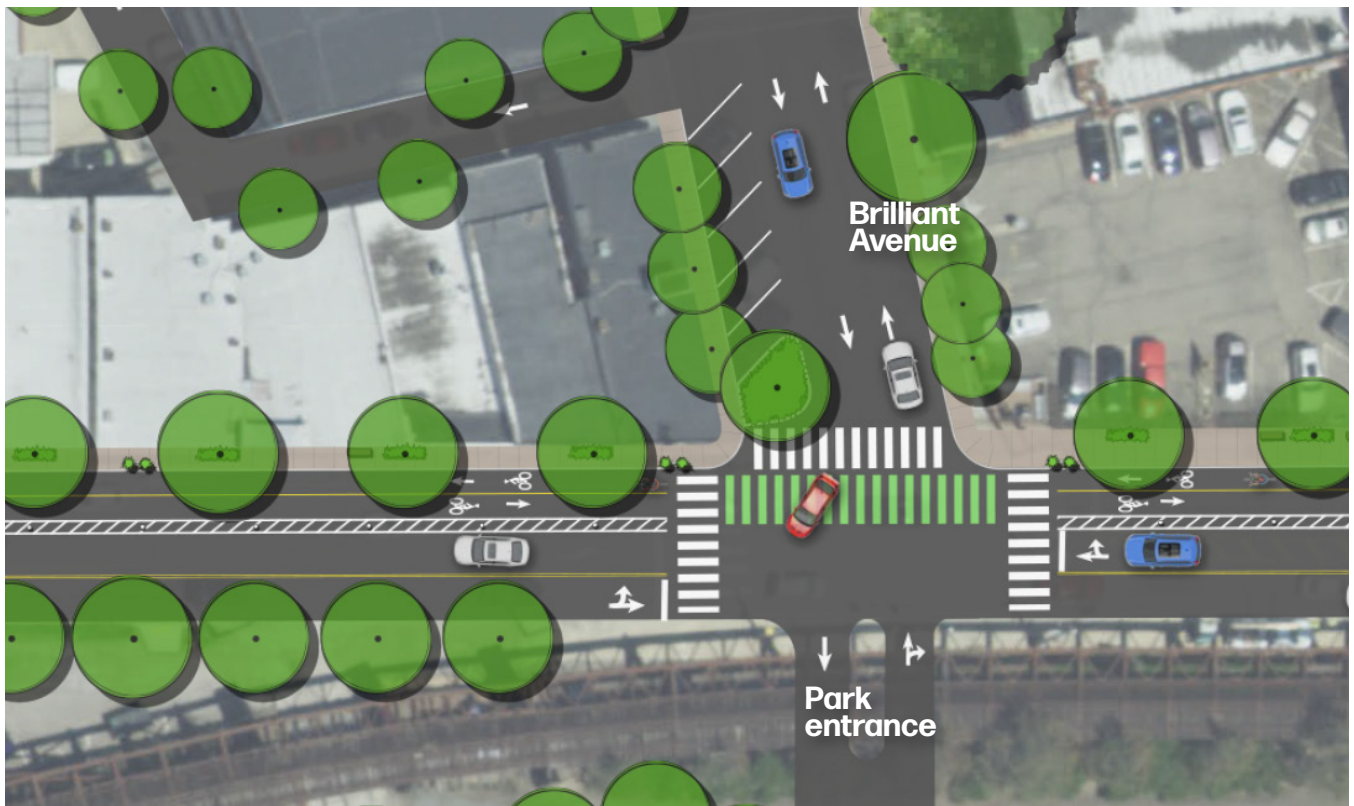


View of Freepoint Road from RiverTrail Park

Existing intersection conditions



Realignment concept

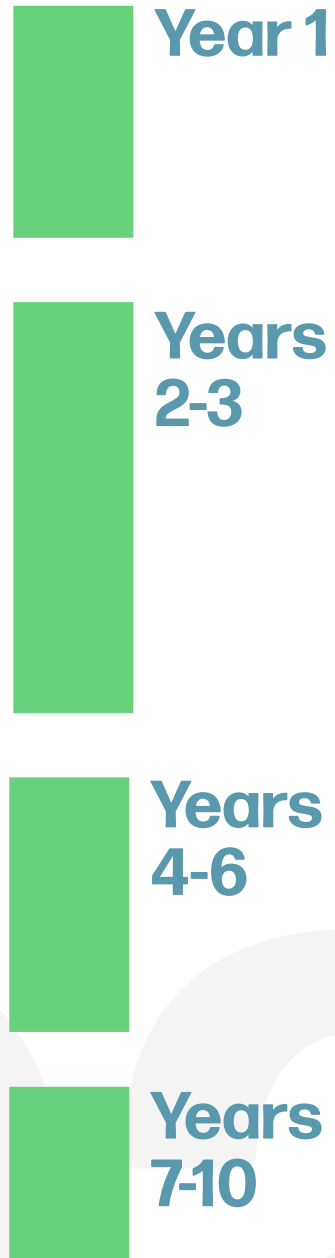




**Action Steps:**

- A.  Establish a project work group. Appoint two members from Borough Council and recruit two members of the RiverTrail Park board of directors to meet. This group's primary charge would be identifying and breaking down barriers to success, advancing the project through creative collaboration.
- B.  Revisit the scope of the project and whether adjustments are in order (example: plans for the trestle). Prepare an updated project cost estimate.
- C.  Re-engage involved parties to discuss project status and steps forward.
- D.  Review funding options and begin to include one or more items into the annual budget for required matching monies.
- E.  Continue work with the RiverTrail Park to proceed with agency review and approvals as required (ex. PennDOT highway occupancy permit).
- F.  Continue work with the RiverTrail Park to assemble funding.
- G.  Complete construction documents.
- H.  Publicly bid and construct the project.

**Timeline:**



## **Strategy 03:**

# **Improve Municipal Parking Lot**

The Commercial Avenue municipal parking lot occupies prime real estate along Freeport Road, between a thriving strip of local retail and restaurant attractions and the RiverTrail Park. The lot has 70 parking stalls overall, part of a larger municipal surface parking supply that also includes on-street spaces. Coin meters are in effect from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays through Saturdays. The lot has four points of ingress/egress, two on Commercial Avenue and two on Freeport Road.

The TranSystems Traffic Flow and Safety Master Plan recommends reconfiguring the Municipal Lot and changing the direction of one-way traffic on Commercial Avenue to improve traffic safety and flow.

This plan further identifies lot reconfiguration as an opportunity to incorporate additional greening, something that residents identified as being generally very important, in a location at the heart of the Borough's attractions. Adding rain gardens in the islands will help absorb some of the stormwater runoff created by the lot. Additionally, maintaining native shade trees in this area enhances the quality of place, adding shade and beauty, and supports the local ecosystem. Plantings should be coordinated with the Borough's Shade Tree Commission.

A concept sketch on the next page presents one idea for reconfiguration. In this scenario, access points would be limited to one way in and one way out, as recommended by TranSystems, in order to improve traffic safety and flow. Hedges would screen views of the parking surface. Islands with rain gardens and additional trees would improve the function and appearance of the space. The tradeoff as shown is a loss of 13 spaces. Adjusting the fee could offset the associated loss of revenue, and ultimately the Borough would want to consider these changes in the larger context of parking management policy.

## **Overview:**

- Updating the layout of the Commercial Avenue Municipal Parking Lot is necessary to improve access management and traffic safety and flow.
- Reconfiguration is an opportunity to green up the lot, enhancing its appearance as a community asset and improving stormwater capture.
- This project should happen in concert with the previously described traffic flow changes, turning restrictions and safety improvements on Eastern and Commercial avenues (Strategy 01).

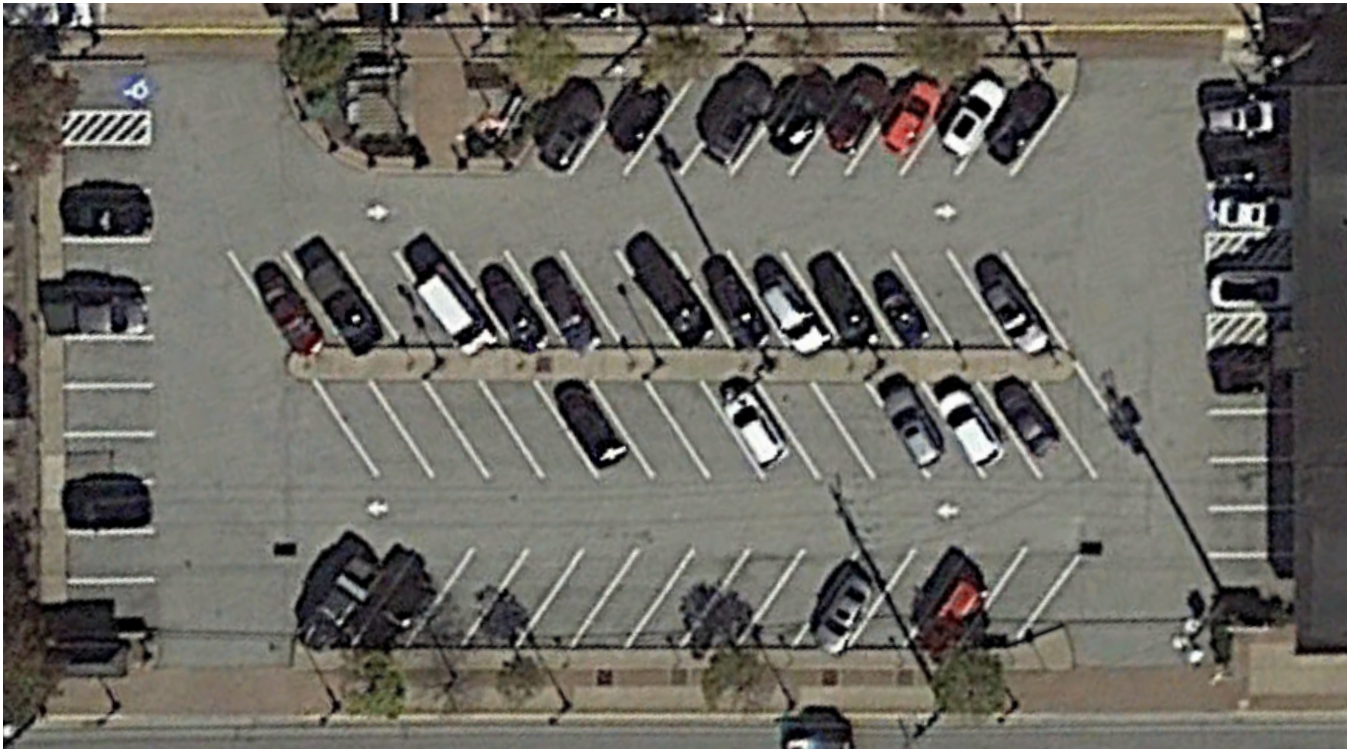
## **What about a parking garage?**

Parking management strategy, covered in the next chapter of this plan, involved consideration of whether building a parking structure on this site to add spaces would address frustrations about limited parking supply at certain times.

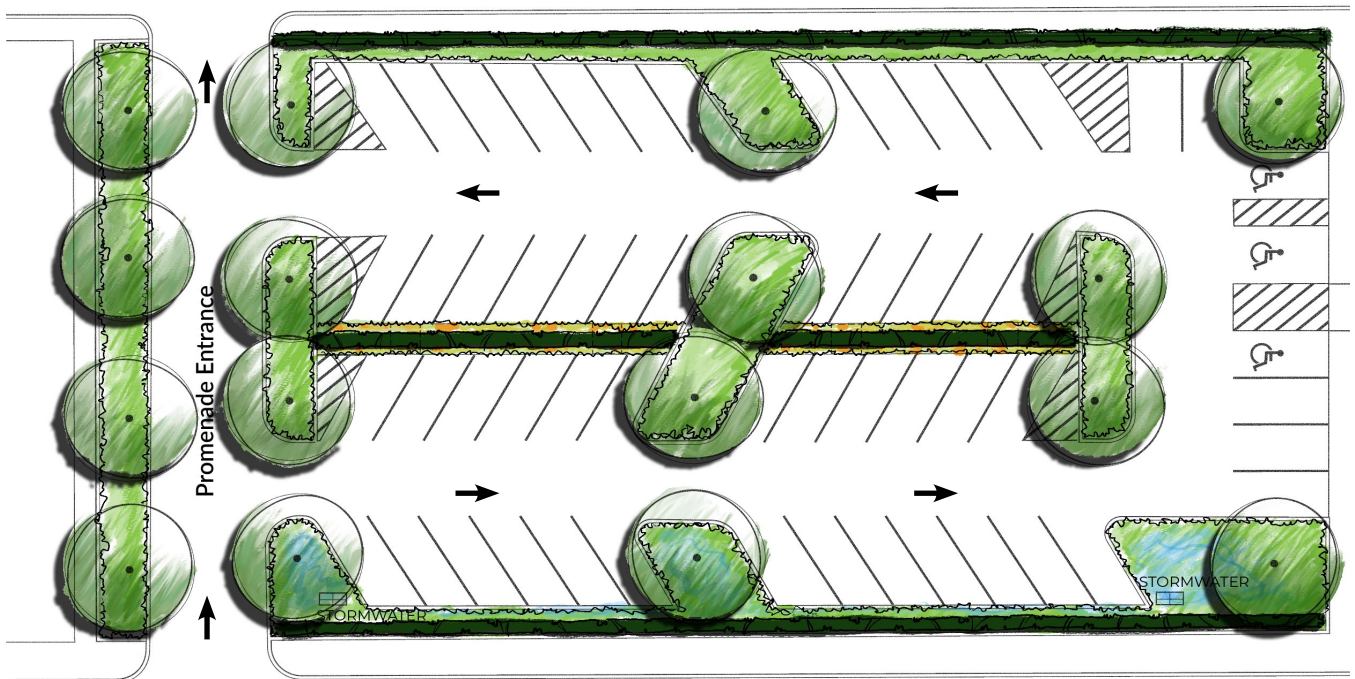
If money and soil/flood conditions were no object, sinking a multi-level below-grade parking structure into this site could add capacity without taking away from the charming street environment in this business district. However, in this case, the mismatch between parking supply and demand is a problem much more economically addressed through simpler interventions.



Existing Municipal Lot layout



Proposed reconfiguration for access management and greening



**Action Steps:**

- A.  Finalize a design for the reconfigured Municipal Parking Lot layout.
- B.  Coordinate timing with traffic flow changes, turning restrictions and safety improvements on Eastern and Commercial avenues.
- C.  Secure highway occupancy permit from PennDOT to vacate one access point from Freeport Road.
- D.  Review funding options and include line items in the annual budget as needed to complete the project at an expected cost between \$50,000 and \$100,000.
- E.  Complete construction documents.
- F.  Publicly bid and construct the reconfiguration.

**Timeline:**



03



## Strategy 04:

# Activate Alley A

The stretch of Alley A between Brilliant and Eastern avenues, roughly 700 feet, is a convenient footpath between the Borough's most charming business districts. With intentional coordination and some relatively inexpensive improvements, it could reinforce both by becoming something even better: A flexible space, an outdoor gathering place, an exciting expression of creativity and community values, a point of pride. This strategy envisions bringing Alley A to life.

### Project extent



View from Alley A toward Brilliant Avenue



## Overview:

- Alley A, particularly the section that connects the Brilliant and Commercial business districts, is an important piece of the pedestrian network already improved by stormwater management investments.
- With some creativity and the introduction of some relatively inexpensive features, this space could become a stronger connection and iconic attraction.
- Coordination with property owners will be necessary for the alley to continue providing for necessary service uses versus occasions when it is reserved for foot traffic.





The elements listed below could be added incrementally, as coordination and funding come together. Each plays a part in creating a more inviting and distinctive experience for those passing through the alley on foot or bike.

- **Public art** – The Borough could seek grant funding to commission a mural or sponsor a local mural contest. Identify a building face where the art would be highly visible and negotiate with the owner as needed.
- **Lighting** – LED string lighting can help create a festive appearance and sense of enclosure, as shown here. In-ground path lighting and mural illumination enhance the effect.
- **Portable elements** – Planters, seating, heaters and/or other pieces of a comfortable outdoor gathering space can be set up in the thoroughfare when it is closed to vehicles.



Alley A cannot be closed to vehicles full time, as it still has service uses that include garbage pickup and resident access to rear parking. Locking removable bollards, such as the one shown here, are a relatively inexpensive way to limit access for specified events or time intervals.



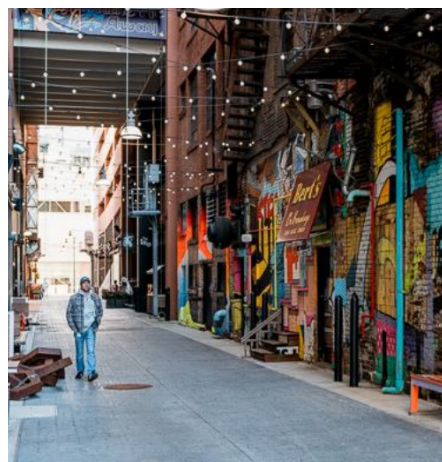
## **Implementation ideas:**

- The Borough could focus first on the alley section closest to Brilliant Avenue, where access needs may be easier to navigate.
- A pop-up event that closes all or part of the alley to vehicles for one afternoon or evening could be a way to test concepts and get residents excited about possibilities. The food truck roundup shown at right is one idea.
- Owners of businesses along Alley A could capitalize on the creation of a signature attraction by creating temporary or permanent secondary frontage along the Alley to invite business from passersby.
- Ideally, given some initial momentum and organization from the Borough, nearby business owners would organize ongoing programming and maintenance for this space.

*Concepts: Adding pop-up activity to the alley bend, formalizing the footpath to Freeport Road near the rain garden*



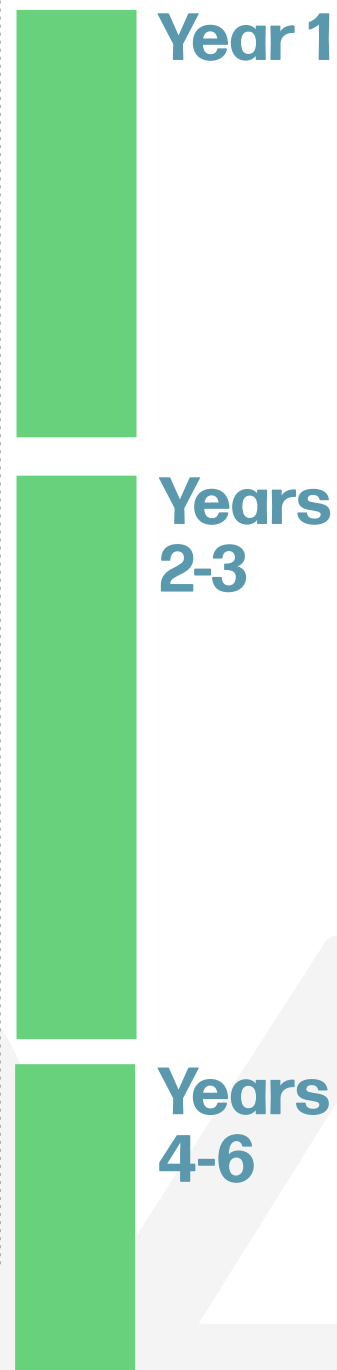
*Examples from elsewhere: From left, Upper Darby Township, Philadelphia, Detroit*



**Action Steps:**

- A.  Appoint an ad hoc group of volunteers to coordinate Alley A activation.
- B.  Reach out to adjacent and nearby businesses to present the idea, open up lines of communication and engage those who are interested in helping.
- C.  Explore and pursue funding opportunities, both for alley activation overall and for specific components that might qualify for targeted programs (public art, pop-up events, active transportation).
- D.  Navigate practical realities of incremental installation. Example: When and how could bollards limit vehicle access to the alley? How could this be coordinated with alley property owners? How would electricity be provided for LED string lights?
- E.  Plan an initial pop-up event to generate interest in and buzz around the project. This should be celebratory and inviting, and it is an opportunity to test features, configurations and traffic flow.
- F.  Start with simple, relatively inexpensive steps to add value to the space: Work with Borough Public Works to make sure that the alley is kept generally clean, add lighting.
- G.  Undertake a local mural contest or commission an artist to create uniquely Aspinwall public art in partnership with an alley property owner.
- H.  Work with alley-area property owners and businesses to build upon progress and further enhance the space. Add Alley A signage, encourage businesses to add canopy or frontage on the alley side.

**Timeline:**





## Strategy 05:

# Maintain high-quality streetscaping

Streetscaping in Aspinwall transforms public thoroughfares into places where people enjoy spending time and interacting. The Borough has some especially beautiful and functional shared spaces that support local economic vitality and lend experiences that give residents pride and keep visitors coming back.

Sustaining and further enhancing the visual quality and traditional appearance of Aspinwall's business districts in particular is important. In future streetscape upgrades, the Borough should prioritize features that support greening and stormwater capture goals, as well as improvements that reinforce what is uniquely Aspinwall.

## Overview:

- Investment in streetscape improvements have created destinations within Aspinwall that entice people to walk around, gather and patronize area businesses.
- Streetscape quality, especially along Brilliant and Commercial avenues, will continue to be an important priority for community character and economic development.
- Future streetscaping plans should incorporate features that will help meet other Borough goals.



## Elements of a streetscape

Facilities typically considered part of streetscape improvements include:

- Stormwater management
- Green infrastructure
- Street trees
- Sidewalk materials and patterns
- Street furniture, such as trash receptacles, planters and seating
- Accessibility features
- Crossings
- Lighting
- Public art



## Concepts to consider

# Streetscape elements serving multiple purposes

These concept images illustrate streetscape features that beautify their spaces and enrich the pedestrian experience – in addition to providing additional value in the form of stormwater capture, improving air and water quality, enhancing the urban ecosystem, supporting a variety of transportation options and/or creating inviting spaces to linger.

## Bioretention at Bakery Square



## Stormwater curb extension



From left:  
Hoboken, NJ;  
Philadelphia,  
PA



## Gathering spaces in the right-of-way



Below and left: Outdoor cafe seating in San Francisco, CA



Left: Bae Bae's Greenhouse, Downtown Pittsburgh (Merritt Chase)

## Understory planting



Project 180 Streetscape, Oklahoma City, OK

|||||

**Action Steps:**

- A.  Apply for grants to implement streetscape improvements within street rights-of-way on a rolling or opportunity-driven basis, such as when utility or road maintenance work is scheduled within the business districts. Review the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance to identify and address any local regulatory barriers to installing desired features.
- B.  Make local property owners aware of funding sources for facade improvements to enhance appearance and make properties more accessible.
- C.  Explore working with business owners to open up opportunities for temporary seating or gathering installations within the right-of-way, balancing the fun and novelty such features or events can provide with the continued need for the street and sidewalk to equitably serve users.

|||||

**Timeline:**

**Year  
1 and  
ongoing**



05



## Strategy 06:

# Dedicate space for cyclists along Freeport Road

The Freeport Green Boulevard concept envisions a safe, slow and multimodal space that serves all users – not just vehicles passing through. Rather than relegating cyclists through the Borough on a bumpy brick-street back route, this vision elevates their priority on Freeport Road by carving out and protecting space. The result will be increased safety for *all* users, as reconfiguring vehicle lanes, adding green features and adding visibility and space for pedestrians and cyclists will change the way everyone moves through the space. This is a classic traffic-calming technique, and it would make Freeport Road safer for drivers, cyclists and pedestrians crossing the road to the park and back.

In 2016, Aspinwall Borough Council adopted a resolution “**designating Freeport Road through Aspinwall as a ‘bicycle corridor’**” for the purpose of exploring, designing and securing funding for cycling, pedestrian and mass transit infrastructure within the existing public right of way. The intent was to find ways to provide the safest possible passage through the Borough for all users of Freeport Road. The resolution articulated a priority.

Freeport Road is state-owned, meaning that the Borough’s ability to influence its design is limited. However, there is some precedent for bike lanes on this road. PennDOT designed a road diet for Freeport Road between Powers Run Road in O’Hara Township and the border with Harmar Township. The redesigned cartway reduced lane width and the overall number of lanes to create space for two 8’ wide bike lanes. The Township and PennDOT did not reach an agreement on physical protection for the bike lanes, which the Township determined was necessary due to vehicle speed in that section. PennDOT installed the road diet without bike lane pavement markings, and a landslide later turned the shoulder into a debris area.

## Overview:

- A long-term vision to reconfigure the design of Freeport Road includes elevating the priority of pedestrians and cyclists, creating safe and inviting conditions for all users.
- Achieving this change is a heavy lift, especially with regard to funding and coordination. However, the upside cannot be overstated.

By comparison, Aspinwall Borough’s stretch of Freeport Road is densely developed traditional neighborhood space, an environment in need of a complete street that is safe and comfortable for all users regardless of age, mode or ability – a great place to start retrofitting Freeport Road as a quality public space.

This plan recognizes that achieving a full redesign and reconstruction of this road segment is a significant challenge, but also an important one that could transform the experience of entering the community and the safety and convenience of all traveling within it.

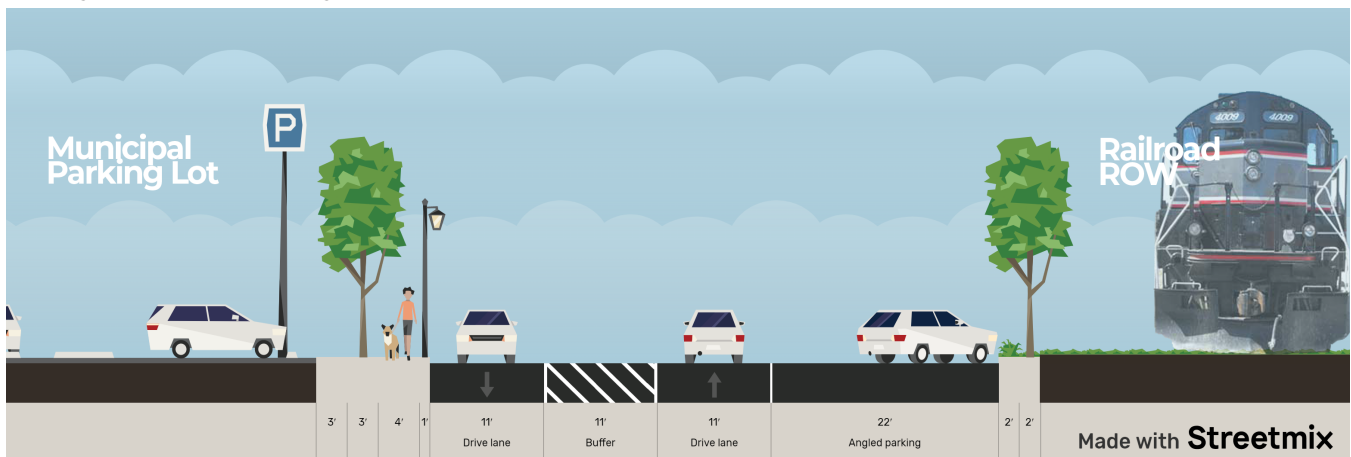
## Reallocating space

One idea for accomplishing this, illustrated below, involves moving and narrowing the median to protect a two-way cycle track (lanes of 6' each), keeping the existing 11' vehicle lanes and changing to rear angle parking. This combination – vehicles passing in closer proximity, the presence of cyclists and the need to slow down and pay attention to vehicles backing into parking stalls – will have the effect of calming through traffic to a level more appropriate for a downtown area with pedestrian activity.

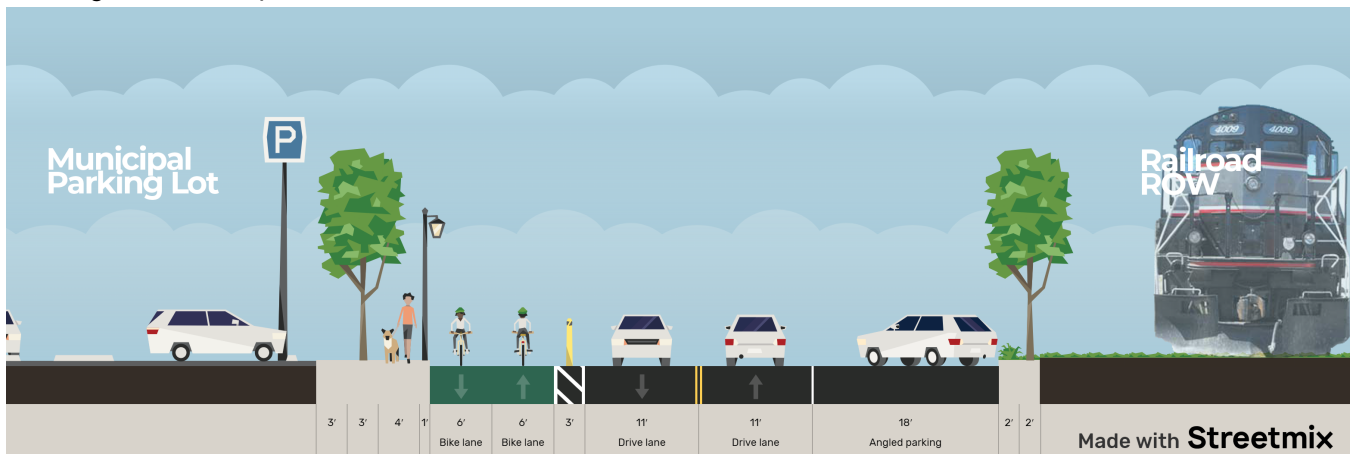
The striped median does not extend fully along this stretch – there are also turn lanes. Designers will need to account for bike routing where turn lanes are a necessity.

In the Freeport Road Safety Study, TranSystems estimated that corridor construction/rehab could cost up to \$2 million. This accounts for road rehab/ replacement, new drainage facilities, traffic calming devices, new sidewalks and curbing, new ADA facilities and upgrades, access adjustments, new streetlights, signals and hardware. This estimate did not include a cartway redesign with cycle track, which would increase the cost.

Existing Freeport Road configuration



Reconfiguration concept

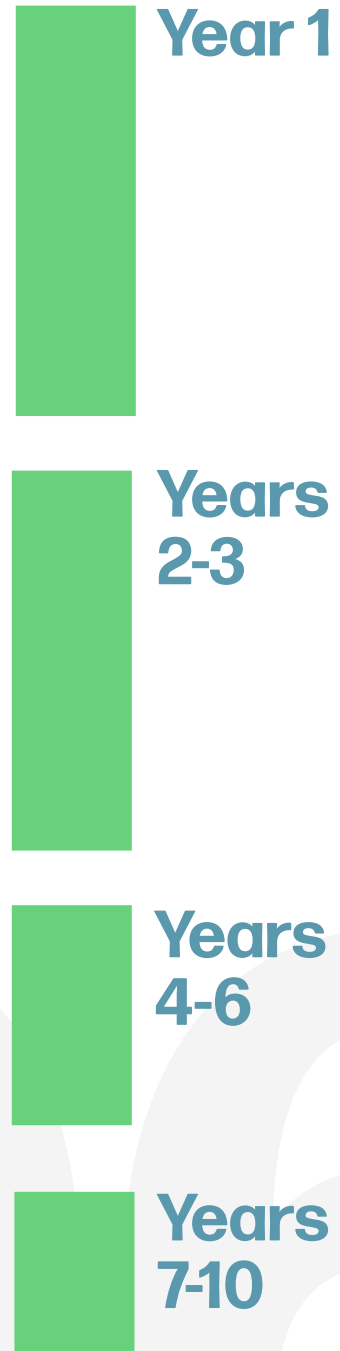




**Action Steps:**

- A.  Initiate a consultation with PennDOT Connects Municipal Assistance to request an on-site half-day workshop involving PennDOT planners and partners from the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC). Present the long-term vision for the Freeport Green Boulevard and seek input on advancing the project and assembling a funding strategy. Invite Aspinwall's state representative and state senator to take part, as well as BikePGH and others who could inform design and implementation.
  
- B.  Endeavor to engage PennDOT District 11 in sponsoring this project for the SPC Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the region's prioritized list of federally and state-funded transportation improvement projects. Most TIP projects receive funding to cover at least 80% of project costs.
  
- C.  Remain actively engaged in project planning and scoping during the TIP project definition and initiation phases.
  
- D.  If the project is funded and proceeds, advocate for the Freeport Green Boulevard vision in design, and work to make sure impacted property owners and other local stakeholders are aware of the project and opportunities to offer input and respond to proposed concepts.
  
- E.  Continue complementary work on local projects to enhance the corridor, such as streetscaping, tree maintenance, connectivity enhancements and wayfinding.

**Timeline:**



## Strategy 07:

# Undertake projects to enhance connectivity

This planning process involved an analysis of destinations within and beyond the community, with a focus on evaluating the routes for foot and bike travel to and among community amenities. This included mapping existing and proposed sidewalks and trails, as well as field work to assess conditions and opportunities.

The following map identifies priority gaps to address in enhancing connectivity across the whole Borough. This does not include projects described in greater detail elsewhere that will also improve connectivity, such as the Brilliant Avenue/RiverTrail Park entrance realignment and the TranSystems off-Freeport bicycle route.

The projects within this strategy are individually fairly straightforward, able to be implemented without great expense or feats of coordination.

*Adding lighting to the Center Avenue underpass would improve the sense of safety for this important north-south route.*



## Overview:

- Based on a full-picture analysis of walking and biking routes through Aspinwall, this plan recommends a set of relatively minor projects to address gaps and enhance connectivity.



# Priority connectivity improvements

- 1** Enhance Commercial Avenue as a pedestrian way.
- 2** Repair sidewalk and handrail, trim vegetation along Center.
- 3** Add lighting to enhance underpass safety.
- 4** Remove invasive overgrowth on Borough-owned parcel.
- 5** Add bus shelter to match nearby stop on same route.
- 6** Implement improvements to Delafield from Allegheny County Roadway Pedestrian and Bicycle Assessment (2019).
- 7** Improve Delafield crossing to UPMC St. Margaret.
- 8** Connect Fireman's Park with Camp Guyasuta in O'Hara.
- 9** Complete sidewalk on 10th Street.
- 10** Complete sidewalk on 9th Street.

 Crosswalk upgrades



---

**Action Steps:**

- A.  Review the list of projects to identify a starting point for implementation.
- B.  Review funding options and begin to include one or more line items into the annual budget.
- C.  Complete construction documents and permits as needed.
- D.  Publicly bid and construct improvements or complete in house.
- E.  Review the list of projects in each subsequent year to identify those that should be funded and completed.
- F.  Complete construction documents and permits as needed.
- G.  Publicly bid and construct improvements or complete in house.

**Timeline:**



07



## Strategy 08:

# Formalize a brick streets policy

The Borough's brick streets are a treasured element of community character, an historic feature that complements the architecture of Aspinwall's oldest homes and its mature tree canopy to reinforce a sense of traditional neighborhood charm.

Brick streets also have sustainability benefits. They tend to be durable, with a life expectancy of up to 100 years, and can be repaired without full reconstruction. They slow stormwater runoff and traffic. Light-colored bricks such as those prevalent in Aspinwall reflect sunlight, helping to limit the urban heat island effect.

However, maintaining this feature is a challenge for local governments. The up-front cost of brick restoration or replacement far exceeds asphalt, and the latter is in some cases a safer surface for steep or high-volume streets. Sourcing brick is increasingly difficult, and the surface presents challenges for snow clearing and other roadway maintenance practices.

## Overview:

- Aspinwall's brick streets are a public asset that residents highly value primarily for the aesthetic and historic quality they add to neighborhoods. Brick streets also have environmental benefits.
- In some cases, conditions call for conversion of surface from brick to asphalt.
- In general, the up-front cost for brick restoration and replacement is substantially higher than asphalt, though brick requires less maintenance over time.
- The Borough can prioritize brick streets for preservation with an intentional policy.

A 2021 Carnegie Mellon University study for Mt. Lebanon's brick streets includes a comparative financial analysis. Across a 100-year life cycle that considers the typical frequency of repair and reconstruction for asphalt vs. brick streets, the study determined that a brick street would cost \$284,721 less to maintain than asphalt, given brick's relative durability!<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/25r6d8tn>



## Policy Recommendations

# What should Aspinwall's brick streets policy consider?

Research for this plan included review of brick streets policies in other communities, including the City of Pittsburgh; Mt. Lebanon; Oakmont; Lafayette, IN; Bloomington, IL; and Wilmington, NC.

These efforts provide insight that can inform a brick streets policy specific to Aspinwall Borough.

### 1. Decide on criteria for classification

Create a system that separates brick streets into categories based on history, current condition and public input. This will require analysis of available data on cost, flood risk, street condition as well as consideration of location, land use and where residents feel most strongly that preservation is critical.

For example, Wilmington, NC, created a decision tree. Historic all-brick surfaces will be preserved, as well as part-asphalt streets that are local, low-volume (<4,000 vehicles/day) and slow (<25 mph). Other part-asphalt streets will be repaved with asphalt and bricks harvested. Identified "Main Street" or "Special Character Street" status factors into decisions when there is a major project.

### 2. Create a maintenance plan

Identify immediate and longer-term maintenance needs for brick streets and factor them into annual budgeting.

Create a system for sourcing and storage of bricks, including inventory information on number, type and source of bricks.

### 3. Factor in stormwater management

The Borough's proactive efforts to control stormwater runoff will become increasingly important given the ever-escalating frequency and severity of storm events. Brick streets are one way to decrease strain on drainage infrastructure, as their texture and varied surface slows runoff (as compared to asphalt). The City of Pittsburgh is one jurisdiction that has preserved brick streets in certain cases expressly for this purpose.



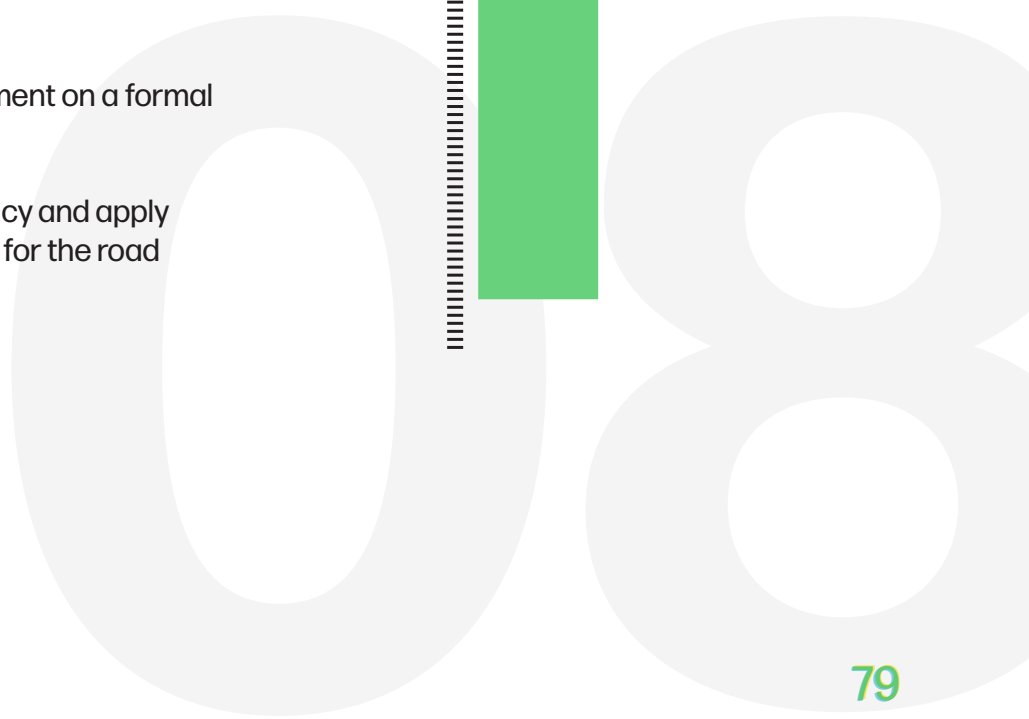
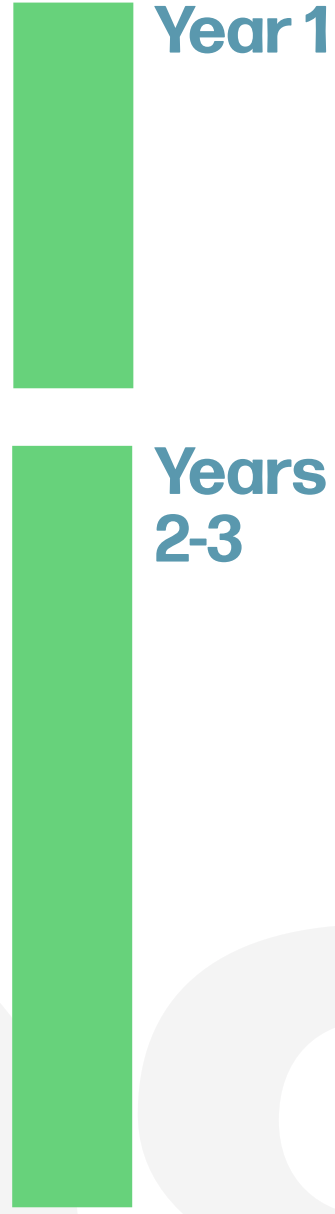
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**Action Steps:**

- A.  Collect all available data and input on the current condition and maintenance needs for brick streets across the Borough. Analyze cost data to determine up-front unit costs of brick repair, restoration and replacement vs. asphalt and past budget dedicated to each, if specified.
- B.  Identify streets with high preservation value, by virtue of location and land use and/or resident sentiment.
- C.  Initiate Council discussion on budget threshold for road maintenance and tradeoff between brick and asphalt work (making brick preservation a higher percentage of the total maintenance budget will result in fewer projects, given the higher up-front cost).
- D.  Given general budget parameters, select criteria for classifying brick streets that are in the highest category for preservation, those that make the most sense to asphalt and those where other considerations will make the call.
- E.  Draft and seek public comment on a formal Brick Streets Policy.
- F.  Adopt the Brick Streets Policy and apply it as a decision-making tool for the road maintenance program.

|||||

**Timeline:**



## Strategy 09:

# Implement a data-driven road maintenance program

Currently, the Borough's annual road maintenance schedule reflects *squeaky-wheel* input: The roads identified as being in the greatest need for improvement each year are those that make the schedule.

Creating a maintenance program with a longer-range outlook and annual schedule could help maximize the efficiency and use of funds, incorporate a more deliberate consideration of community needs and enhance the public perception of fairness and equitability.

For maximum benefit, this effort should be coordinated with the development of a brick streets policy (Strategy 08). Comprehensive data on the condition of individual brick streets will help the Borough determine the priority, feasibility and cost of preservation in the context of funds expected to be available each year for overall local road maintenance.

## Overview:

- Assessing the condition of all locally owned roads would allow the Borough to create a long-term Road Maintenance Program that makes the most of limited maintenance and construction dollars.
- Implementing a Road Maintenance Program (sometimes called a pavement management system) involves using data to ensure that road project priorities are selected in a consistent, rational manner that helps reduce costs and reinforce a sense of fairness. Software options are available to aid in this effort.





**Action Steps:**

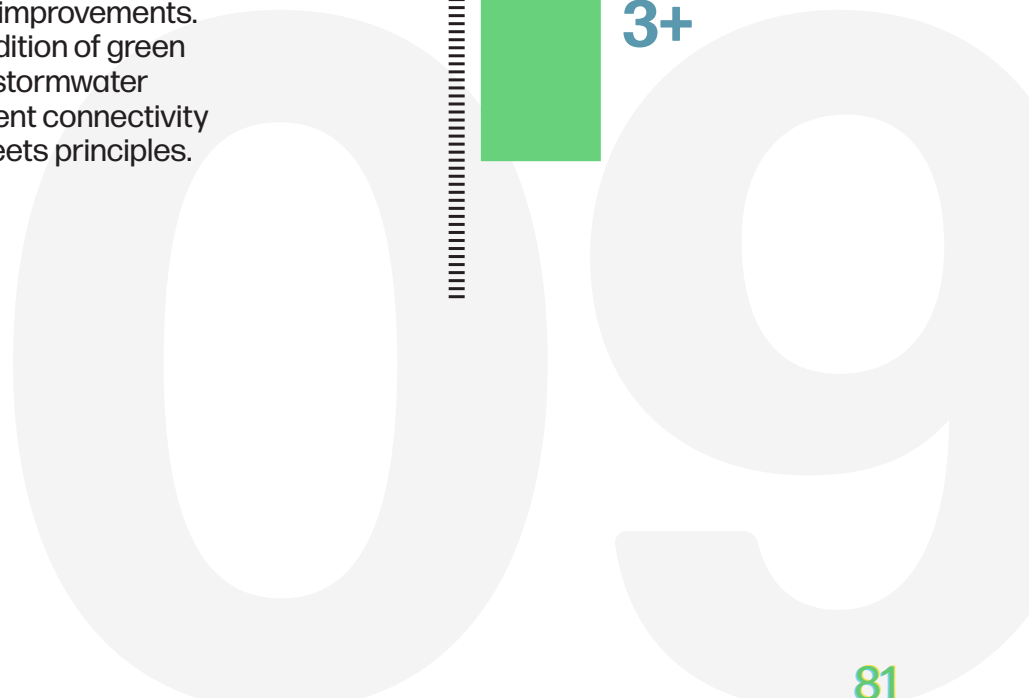
- A.  Collect data on the condition of Borough-owned local roads and conduct a needs analysis for repairs, resurfacing or repaving based on condition and use patterns. This could be done manually or with help from a contractor who uses camera data analysis to generate ratings. Some larger engineering firms have this capability, as well as specialized tech companies such as RoadBotics.
  
- B.  Review the analysis and develop a list of priorities, taking into consideration the timing of any Allegheny County or PennDOT repairs or maintenance schedules that could affect Borough plans.
  
- C.  Transform the prioritized list into a rolling 10- or 15-year road improvements schedule that will help the Borough to budget effectively for future projects and to proactively address problems. Present the public with the opportunity to submit comments on project rankings.
  
- D.  Annually review and evaluate upcoming road maintenance projects for their potential to include related improvements. These could include the addition of green infrastructure facilities for stormwater runoff as well as to implement connectivity and/or apply Complete Streets principles.

**Timeline:**

**Year 1**

**Year 2**

**Years 3+**







# retooling policies and programs

RIVER OAKS DR

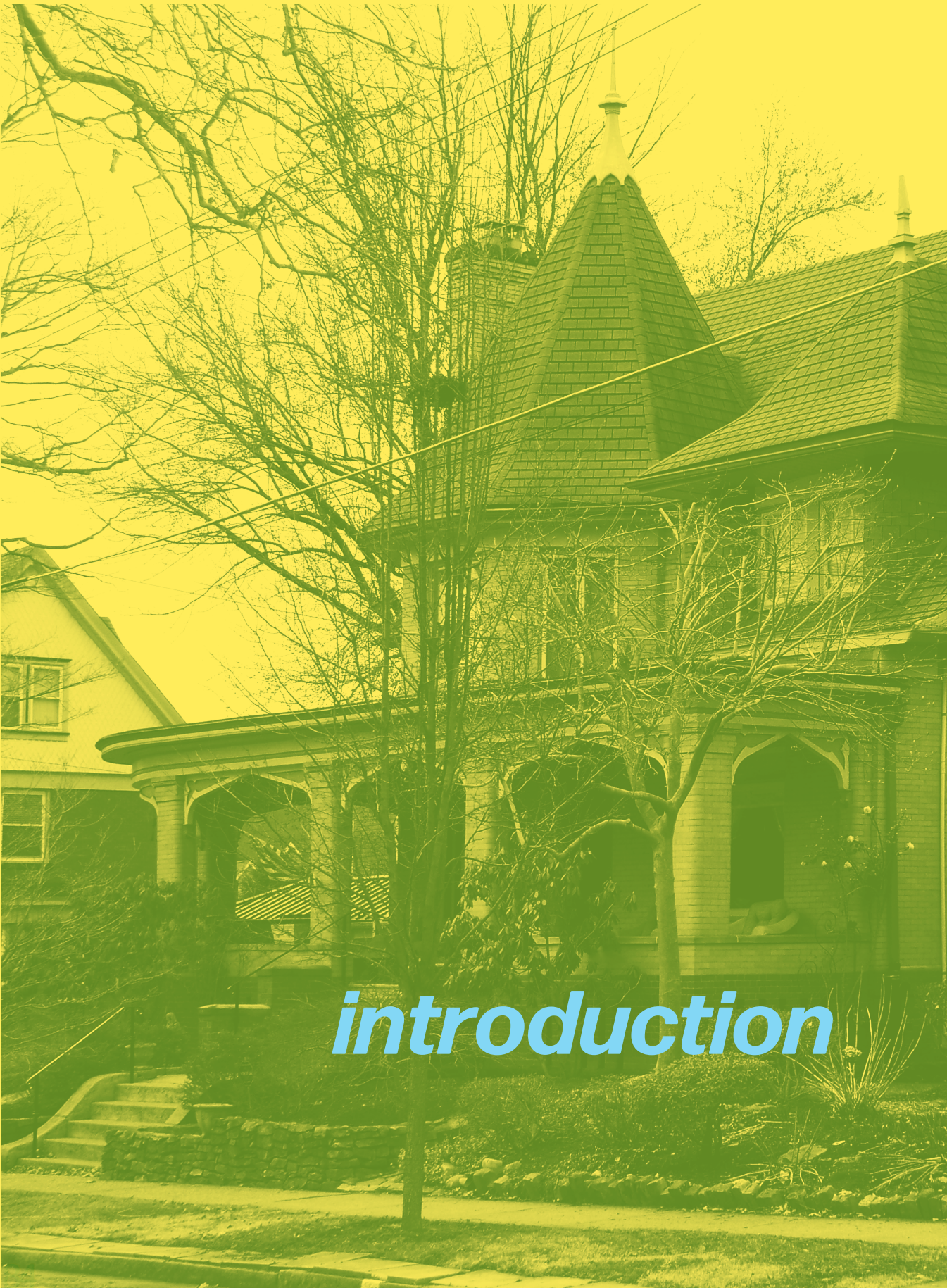




03







***introduction***



## **context**

Aspinwall Borough's own policies, practices and regulations represent a powerful set of tools for directly defining and upholding community standards. A zoning ordinance is often the most effective tool a local government has to bring its comprehensive plan to life, as it establishes the ground rules for development and redevelopment for the foreseeable future.

Neighborhood quality is a point of pride in Aspinwall. This planning process identified a need to intentionally continue to maintain safe and healthy conditions and an attractive living environment. This Key Issue includes proactive approaches to encourage property maintenance, as well as ordinance amendments to further enliven and enrich the Borough's business districts.

It also addresses a point of perennial consternation: Parking. The amount of space available in both residential and commercial areas for vehicle storage seems to be increasingly squeezed, due primarily to an increase in the number and size of vehicles per household. The Borough must address this issue with nuance, as expanding parking supply comes with both obvious and hidden costs.

Finally, this Key Issue includes suggestions for ordinance updates that support resilience and sustainability.

## **vision**

**Aspinwall will continue to provide excellent public services and enforce well-calibrated regulations to reinforce a built environment that inspires civic pride, a beautiful neighborhood appearance and a thriving scene for local businesses.**

- During the last 10 years, the average Aspinwall household size increased from 2.06 to 2.27 people as the Borough attracted families with children. Vehicles per household have also increased.
- About 63% of Aspinwall households are homeowners, an increase from 49% in 2010. Vacancy is relatively low, but there is need for a continued focus on property maintenance.
- The Covid-19 pandemic caused seismic changes to work location and daily travel patterns that the Borough should address with zoning.
- Adjustments to local rules for signage, parking, use and design in the business districts can make them even more prosperous.
- Getting parking right is not as simple as expanding supply. Aspinwall's strategies must manage both supply and demand in residential and business districts.

## ***the big picture***

Highlights from 2010 and 2020 Census data are relevant to the way the Borough regulates housing and parking:

- The total population has increased by 115 to 2,916, while the total number of households has *decreased* by 164 to 1,186, indicating the growing average size of households.
- 36% of Aspinwall households include children under age 18, compared to 29% in 2010. This bucks a national trend of decreasing household size and more people living alone. Aspinwall is increasingly attracting young families.
- The median age of Aspinwall residents decreased from 38.9 in 2010 to 35.6 in 2020. Allegheny County's median age remains above 40.
- Aspinwall is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. The Borough's population was 85% white non-Hispanic in 2020, down from 90% in 2010. There were increases in residents identifying as Black, Asian, Hispanic and multiracial.
- The total number of housing units remained stable, with no significant growth or loss. The Borough's housing stock is largely historic: 61% of units were built prior to 1940.
- 63% of Aspinwall households own their homes, up from 49% in 2010.
- The median contract price for a monthly home or apartment rental in Aspinwall increased faster than inflation, reaching \$934 in 2020. Rocket Homes reported that the median home sale price for Aspinwall was \$340,000 between October 2021 and November 2022.
- Aspinwall residents owned more vehicles in 2020 than in 2010. According to the most current figures, only 42 households do not have access to a vehicle. This amounts to 4% of all resident households, compared to 14% in 2010. Nearly half of households (47%) have access to two or more vehicles, compared to 38% in 2010.



## ***post-pandemic considerations***

The most obvious lasting impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has been the prevalence of remote work. In 2019, the Census Bureau estimated that 1,431 people (96% of those with jobs) left Aspinwall each day for job sites elsewhere, most commonly in Oakland, Downtown Pittsburgh or neighboring O'Hara. Nationally, 62% of workers worked from home at least occasionally in 2022. Assuming the trend holds in Aspinwall, this would look like 927 residents who previously commuted out of the Borough each day at least occasionally working from home.

This means that Borough residents are saving money and time commuting. Their vehicles are more often remaining in place during the day. It also likely means an increased appreciation for local amenities. The Borough offers lunch, bakery, grocery and service options that for many are a quick walk or bike ride away.

At the same time, the market for office real estate remains soft. In October 2022, Colliers Pittsburgh remained “cautiously optimistic” about a rebound of the region’s office market, while noting the conversion of 1.2 million square feet of office space across four buildings in Downtown Pittsburgh to residential/hospitality.

Aspinwall can reasonably anticipate increased interest in coworking spaces, home-based business and more opportunities to dine, gather and walk outdoors. The design of commercial spaces and demand for curb access will continue to adapt to follow consumer preferences, and so the Borough should re-evaluate its ordinances periodically to stay nimble in response.





# existing conditions







Aspinwall Borough's Code of Ordinances is available and easy to navigate online, per a consolidated and revised edition codified in 2003. Various parts of the ordinance have been enacted or amended over time. Borough Council enacted Chapter 23, Stormwater Management, relatively recently in 2018. Chapter 27, Zoning, dates back to 1983 and was amended in 2014, and Chapter 22, the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO) dates back to 1991. The Borough has adopted the Uniform Construction Code and International Property Maintenance Code.



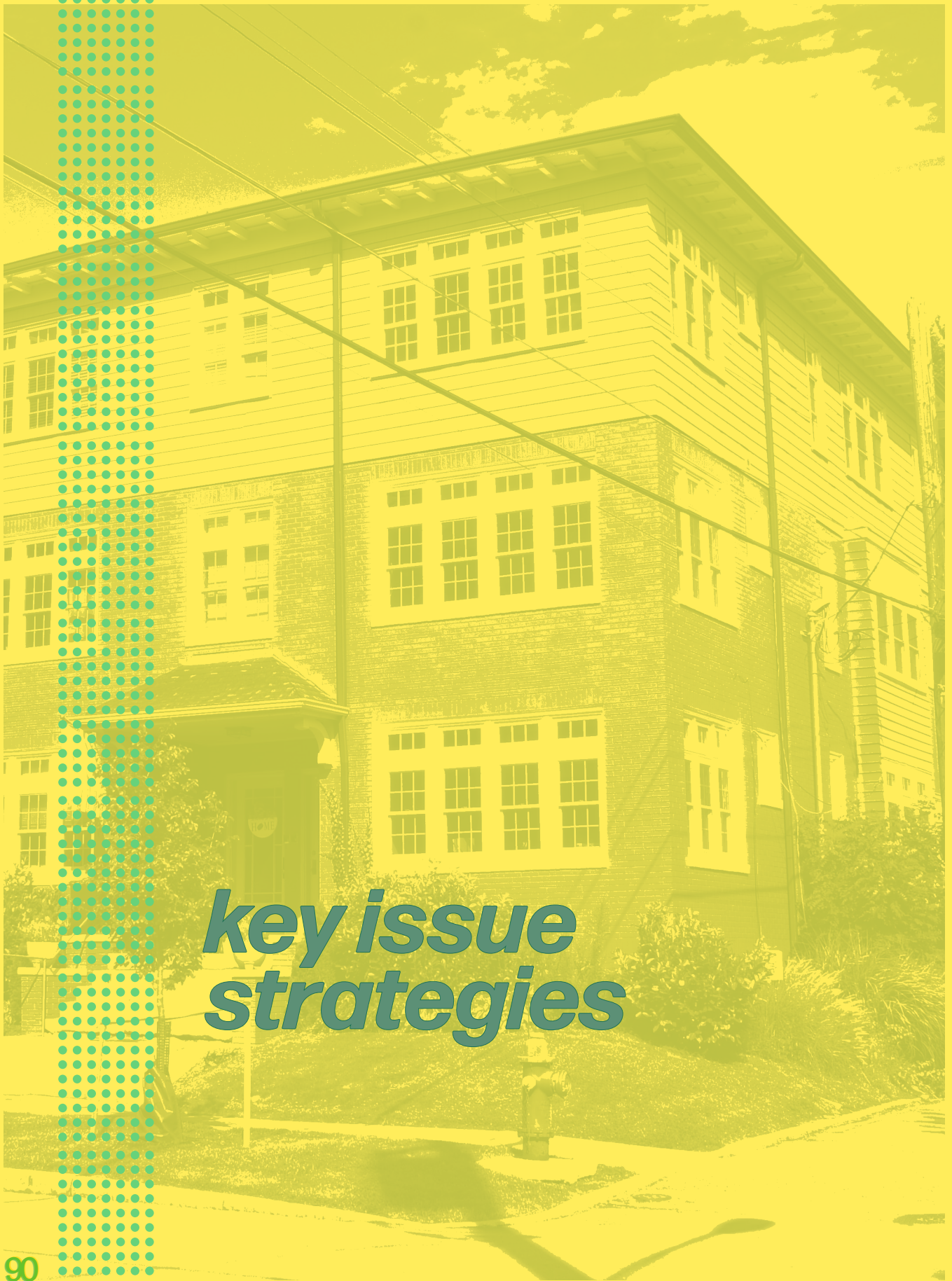
The Zoning Ordinance divides the Borough into five residential districts, two commercial districts, an industrial area and conservation district, each of which has a set of permitted or conditional uses, standards for lot and structure design and other specifications. A map of zoning districts appears on a following page.

The AC-1 Community Business District category covers a limited area containing the Commercial Avenue and Brilliant Avenue business districts and the associated stretch of Freeport Road. This allows the Borough to apply standards that concentrate and enhance the best qualities of its pedestrian-oriented downtown scene: Active storefronts, neighborhood-oriented businesses, a sense of continuity and order, a pleasant and inviting public realm.



Aspinwall's residential neighborhoods are generally stable, characterized by low turnover, low vacancy and high housing values. The quality of the street environment and its maintenance reinforce the sense that these are places well cared for. However, pockets of vacancy, disrepair and disorder call for proactive and targeted strategies to prevent problems from compounding.

The issue of parking has vexed Borough residents, business owners and officials for decades. In the Brilliant and Commercial areas, business owners have complained that a lack of available convenient parking spaces deters customers. In residential neighborhoods, the availability of on-street parking is limited by a few factors, chief among which is that households tend to have more and larger vehicles than they did when Aspinwall was laid out.



***key issue  
strategies***



## Strategy 01:

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# Amend the Zoning Ordinance

Creating a new comprehensive plan represents an opportune time to take stock of the ordinances a community has in place and evaluate whether they should be updated. This section presents recommendations for zoning amendments to incorporate current best practices, address new topics and adjust standards for consistency with the plan's vision.

Aspinwall's Planning Commission has considered potential zoning amendments for the business districts based on recommendations from the Allegheny Together community development program. These are evaluated and applied in this section, as well as suggestions for other ordinance changes to support local aims.

Recommendations center on the AC-1 Community Business District, the heart of Aspinwall's walkable downtown area. Ideas here for off-street parking are part of a two-pronged approach: right-sizing regulations and changing the way parking is used. Strategy 02 in the next section paints a fuller picture.

Zoning updates should proceed with consideration of the Borough's building code to avoid potential conflict.

## Overview:

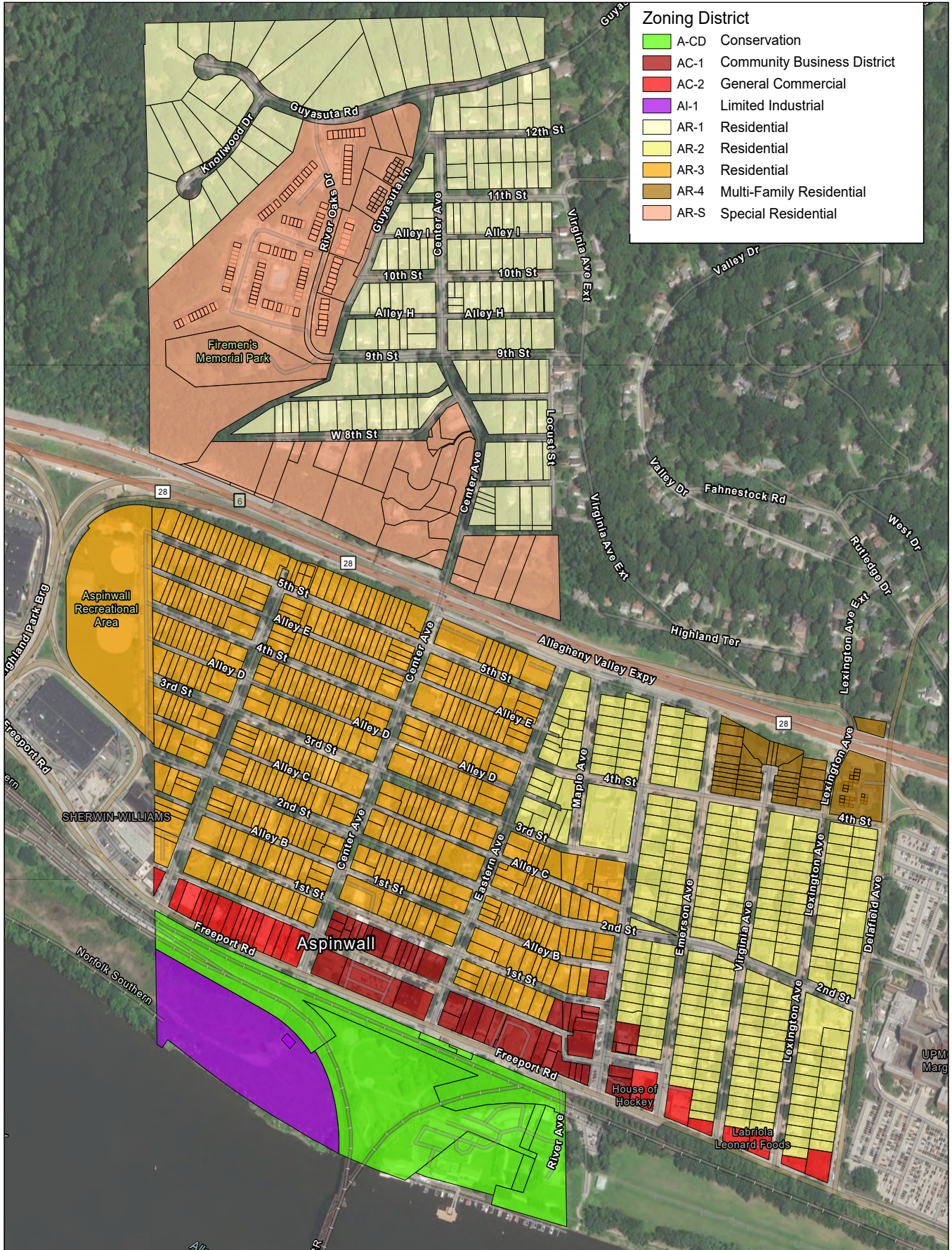
Updates to the Zoning Ordinance should:

- Target the limited ground-floor frontage in the Brilliant and Commercial business districts for uses that will generate maximum foot traffic, provided that occupancy and demand in these areas remain strong in the post-pandemic market.
- Double down on the AC-1 district as Aspinwall's charming pedestrian-oriented area.
- Consider recalibrating parking requirements, in addition to implementing a parking management approach as described in Strategy 02.
- Add tools that clarify the ordinance and make it easier to understand.





# Borough zoning map





# Ordinance adjustments for consideration

Aspect	Recommendation	Rationale
AC-1 Community Business District	<p>Limit certain uses within the AC-1 district to upper-floor only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Multi-family dwellings</li> <li>▪ Medical, dental offices or clinics</li> <li>▪ Business and professional offices</li> <li>▪ Financial institutions and services</li> <li>▪ Insurance and real estate offices</li> <li>▪ Private school or day care center</li> <li>▪ Private school for dancing, music or similar art or craft institution</li> <li>▪ Private clubs and fraternal organizations</li> </ul> <p>Remove funeral homes as a use permitted in AC-1.</p>	<p>Reserving street-level spaces in this district for activity that generates foot traffic is intended to maintain and enhance the district's vibrancy. The idea is to cluster and concentrate local-scale businesses in viable nodes where they represent complementary destinations.</p> <p>Given the market challenges of the pandemic, some communities facing increased commercial vacancy have updated their ground-level downtown use restrictions to add flexibility. They expanded the permitted ground-floor uses to also include limited manufacturing (such as makerspace, craft brewing/distilling or artisan workshops), galleries and studios and offices, not necessarily limited to customer-oriented types such as banks and medical or dental.</p> <p>The correct mix of ground-floor uses for Aspinwall will depend on market conditions. To the extent that occupancy and demand are strong, the Borough can afford to prioritize ground-floor space in this district for the most active uses.</p>
AC-1 Community Business District	Prohibit drive-throughs in this district for all uses (for instance, restaurants, banks, coffee shops, pharmacies)	This is Aspinwall's least auto-centric district; the pedestrian experience is the priority. An increasing number of cities are banning the construction of all new drive-through windows in efforts to improve walkability, reduce litter and reduce emissions.
AC-1 Community Business District	<p>Strengthen design requirements for parking structures and lots in this district. Surface parking lots as a principal use should be strongly discouraged or prohibited. in any case, lots should be located so as to minimize their impact on the visual environment and required to provide generous screening and landscaping.</p> <p>Parking lots and structures in this district shall maintain an active retail or restaurant presence along at least 50% of the street-level, streetside perimeter. For the purpose of this provision, active uses shall include those that typically have user-occupied areas expressed through building fenestration, articulation and signage.</p> <p>Lots dedicated to new parking should include bicycle parking, generally to accommodate at least four bicycles, with an additional space for every 25 vehicle spaces.</p>	<p>The conversion of building or green space to surface parking in this district should be carefully considered to avoid the deterioration of the area's dense, vibrant and walkable character and reduction in financially productive land use. Requiring liner buildings or an active first-floor use will help maintain the district's integrity in cases where Council determines that parking as a primary use is warranted.</p> <p>Note that adding parking tends to induce people to drive. There is now a significant body of evidence demonstrating that the more cheap, abundant parking that cities build, the more traffic and automobile dependence they get.<sup>1</sup></p>

1 See Donald Shoup's *The High Cost of Free Parking*, Planners Press, American Planning Association, Chicago, 2005.

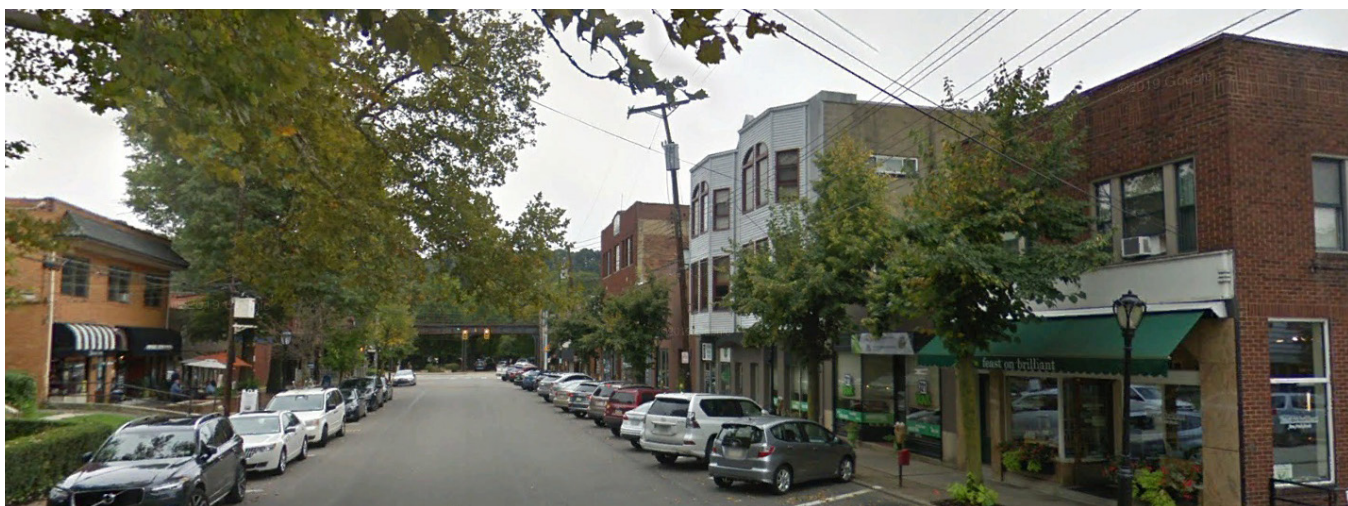


Commercial Avenue

Aspect	Recommendation	Rationale
AC-1 Community Business District	<p>Adjust dimensional requirements for this district. Town Center Associates recommended a maximum of 5,000 square feet.</p> <p>Adjust setback requirements to establish a maximum front and side yard of zero feet, zero inches. Rear yard setback shall be a minimum of 10' to allow for building service functions. The exception is the blocks of Center Avenue and Eastern Avenue bounded by Commercial Avenue and First Street, where the minimum front setback shall be 20'.</p> <p>Accordingly, change the maximum lot coverage of 70% to a minimum of 70%.</p> <p>Consider adding a minimum building height in this district.</p>	<p>Adding a maximum lot area and requiring buildings to line the sidewalk across the full lot width ensures that new development or redevelopment will stay consistent with the area's fine-grained, small-scale and local business environment.</p> <p>Adding a minimum building height (such as two stories and 24' or three stories and 35') would prevent new low, one-story buildings that resemble suburban strip retail.</p>
AC-1 Community Business District	<p>Require visual screening at grade level for building service functions, such as garbage receptacles.</p> <p>Require visual screening or setbacks for all roof-mounted equipment in order to ensure that it is not visible at eye level from the opposing side of the street.</p>	<p>Increased screening requirements are appropriate in this type of district to preserve the visual quality of the walking environment.</p>



<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Rationale</i>
Sign Regulations	<p>Amend §27-408, Signs, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Add an exemption for personal expression signs in all districts, provided that they are not illuminated and do not exceed a size limit, typically three to six square feet.</li> <li>▪ Clarify sign lighting rules. Specify that internal illumination must be static in intensity and color, and external illumination shall be a steady, stationary light source shielded and directed solely at the sign, static in color. Clarify whether any type of electronic sign (including LEDs) is permitted and if so, where, and what limits there are on its brightness level and message change frequency.</li> <li>▪ Clarify the use of sandwich board, inflatable and other temporary signs. Subsection 3 specifies that they are not to be permanently used, but they are also not expressly permitted or prohibited. Are there conditions under which temporary use would be appropriate? (For instance, sandwich boards must be kept indoors between certain hours.)</li> </ul>	<p>Case law has changed the landscape for municipal sign ordinances, particularly the 2015 <i>Reed v. Gilbert</i> (576 U.S. 155), in which the Supreme Court clarified when local governments could impose content-based restrictions on signs. For reference, Montgomery County, PA, has a strong content-neutral model sign ordinance.</p> <p>The Borough's sign ordinance has regulations specific to the AC-1 district (and Conservation District) that are appropriate for a vibrant, walkable retail node. Generally, in places like this it's ideal to allow a wide variety and larger number of smaller signs, as opposed to fewer and larger signs in an vehicle-oriented district.</p>



*Brilliant Avenue*

Aspect	Recommendation	Rationale
Off-Street Parking Regulations	<p>Consider recalibrating the required minimum off-street parking spaces per land use in the AC-1 District. The Borough could allow the market and the application to determine how much parking is needed on a case-by-case basis instead of applying categorical minimums.</p> <p>Note that the Borough's minimums are higher in most cases than generally accepted standards for a community of its dense, walkable character. A few example comparisons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Dwelling unit</b> (any type): Aspinwall requires two off-street parking spaces. Alternative: 1 space/unit for multifamily dwellings.</li> <li>▪ <b>Business/professional office:</b> Aspinwall requires 1 space/300 square feet gross floor area. Alternative: An office over storefronts could be as low as 1 space/1,000 square feet gross floor area, especially post-pandemic.</li> <li>▪ <b>Personal services:</b> Aspinwall requires 1 space/100 feet gross floor area plus 1 space/2 employees. Alternative: 1 space/300 square feet gross floor area</li> <li>▪ <b>Sit-down restaurant:</b> Aspinwall requires 1 space/four seats at tables, plus 1 space/2 seats at a bar or counter, plus 1 space/2 employees. Alternative: 1 space per 75 square feet gross floor area.</li> <li>▪ <b>Other commercial</b> (including retail): Aspinwall requires 1 space/200 square feet gross floor area. Alternative: 1 space/300 square feet gross floor area.</li> </ul>	<p>A growing number of municipalities have struck their parking minimums, recognizing that these somewhat arbitrary<sup>1</sup> requirements often create places where human activity comes second to free car storage – see <a href="http://parkingreform.org/resources/mandates-map/">parkingreform.org/resources/mandates-map/</a>. Parking minimums in dense areas can result in the demolition of buildings to proliferate surface lots, which results in breaking up the urban fabric and reducing the value of land to the tax base. They also result in developers walking away from desirable projects that on-site parking requirements make impossible.</p> <p>Aspinwall's minimums at §27-409.3 are high, by general planning standards. This seems ironic given the ongoing sense of parking shortage in commercial areas, but it's largely because existing uses are grandfathered in. If every business in the Commercial and Brilliant corridors provided one off-street parking stall for every 200 square feet of gross floor area as required, these business districts would much more closely resemble the sprawl along McKnight Road.</p> <p>Aspinwall requires parking stalls to be at least 9' x 18', or 162 square feet. When drive aisle and other clearance space is added in, the land footprint of each space is closer to 250-300 square feet. The Borough requires one off-street space for every 200 square feet of retail, meaning that for a new store, potentially <i>more than half of the site</i> would need to be devoted to parking.</p> <p>Allowing the market to determine how many spaces are built could be one part of a multi-faceted parking management program for the Borough (see next action step).</p> <p>This isn't to suggest that there isn't a parking supply problem in the AC-1 district. It is to suggest that maintaining high off-street parking minimums is not solving it.</p>

<sup>1</sup> The parking minimums that appear in most zoning ordinances are based on general parking generation data that was collected decades ago at suburban greenfield sites with free parking. The resulting standards tend to be excessive for traditional downtowns with transit, walkability and priced parking. Only the most recent edition of the Parking Generation Manual considers differences between types of neighborhoods.



Aspect	Recommendation	Rationale
Off-Street Parking Regulations	<p>Consider adding a provision to the shared parking flexibility to reduce the number of required stalls in exchange for bicycle parking built to a specified standard – say, a reduction of one stall for every six bicycle spaces up to a maximum of two stalls.</p> <p>For sites within a certain distance of a transit stop, perhaps 0.25 miles, the Borough could consider reducing required off-street parking by 10% to 20% to encourage transit-oriented development.</p>	<p>The shared parking provision at §27-409.2.H is consistent with best practices for right-sizing parking based on the demand of nearby uses. Increasing the amount of bike parking at destinations across the Borough will help increase the appeal of this travel mode.</p>
Fair housing	<p>Consider amending the definition of family to remove the cap (of three people) on the number of unrelated people who may live as a functional family unit.</p>	<p>This broadens inclusion for non-traditional households, leaving maximum occupancy per dwelling as a matter of safety regulated by the building code.</p>
Fair housing	<p>Clarify regulations pertaining to group residences and family homes, which are protected by the Fair Housing Act. These should generally be permitted to exist anywhere a single-family home would. The Borough should review the separation requirement in §27-504.A in particular.</p>	<p>Imposing conditions on group housing for persons with disabilities that are not imposed on families may violate the Act. See 2016 HUD/DOJ guidance on state and local land use laws.<sup>1</sup></p>



1 <https://tinyurl.com/y43yyy7a>

<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Rationale</i>
Fair housing	Clarify regulations pertaining to group residences and family homes, which are protected by the Fair Housing Act. These should generally be permitted to exist anywhere a single-family home would. The Borough should review the separation requirement in §27-504.A in particular.	Imposing conditions on group housing for persons with disabilities that are not imposed on families may violate the Act. See 2016 HUD/DOJ guidance on state and local land use laws. <sup>1</sup>
Overall administration	Confirm that every land use mentioned in the ordinance has a definition, and that terms are used consistently across the ordinance.	Keeping a clean and precise set of definitions will leave less to interpretation.
Overall administration	Create a parcel-based, color-coded Zoning Map and make it publicly available online, ideally as an interactive GIS map. The map should include the boundaries of the Riverfront Overlay District, which do not appear on the current map.	Modernizing the Zoning Map will help property owners, real estate professionals and would-be investors quickly research what zoning regulations apply to any given parcel.
Overall administration	Create a Use Table as a quick reference for which principal and accessory uses are permitted in each zoning district.	The Use Table is simple to assemble and will save ordinance users time in researching districts and uses. Additionally, putting all of the districts and uses in one place makes it easy to analyze the ordinance as a whole, for instance, to see how a new use might be classified or where a use is permitted.

<sup>1</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/y43yyy7a>



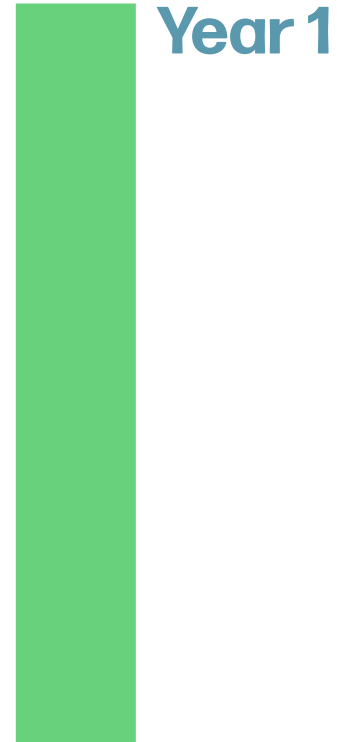
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**Action Steps:**

- A.  Planning Commission should review and discuss potential updates to the ordinance based on the Comprehensive Plan.
- B.  Formally prepare a proposed amendment to the ordinance, with the assistance of the Borough Solicitor or a consultant. Planning Commission would recommend the amendment to Council for consideration.
- C.  Proceed with review of the amendment as required by the Municipalities Planning Code, including advertising and holding a public hearing following a 45-day Allegheny County Planning Division review.
- D.  Adopt the amendment and incorporate updates into the online edition at [ecode360.com](http://ecode360.com).
- E.  Provide information to the public on the zoning update, providing a high-level overview of the intent and effect of changes.

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**Timeline:**



## Strategy 02:

# Establish a parking management program

As the adage goes: Anywhere really worth visiting has a parking problem. High-quality, dense walkable environments achieve an exciting concentration of desirable destinations *due to*, not in spite of, a lack of free surface parking. In this sense, the long-standing issue of limited parking supply in Aspinwall's business districts represents an ironically good problem to have.

Drivers cruising Brilliant Avenue and Commercial Avenue in search of a space may not see it that way. Merchants in these locations have expressed frustration to Borough Council – in a discussion that has spanned decades – that a lack of available, convenient parking deters would-be visitors.

A separate but related problem exists in the Borough's residential neighborhoods, where competition for curb space has risen along with the number and size of vehicles parked on-street overnight.

This section recognizes that parking is an economics problem, one within the power of the market to solve: Where does demand for parking exceed supply? How can regulating parking change the way drivers use it? The Borough can implement a targeted parking management strategy to help balance the use of space without compromising the quality of its built environment.

## Overview:

Reforming the way parking is managed in Aspinwall can serve a number of aims, including:

- supporting prosperity in the business districts by increasing turnover
- reducing the traffic congestion and emissions caused by people circling in search of parking
- incentivizing alternative modes, and
- promoting the most beneficial use of space and facilities.

The Borough should use an inventory analysis generated as part of this planning process to select blocks for primary data collection, then modernize meters, adjust pricing and roll out targeted strategies to address supply/demand mismatch where it exists.

*I don't know where the parking lots and decks are in the French Quarter. I looked around last time I visited and I just couldn't find 'em. News flash: They aren't there. The best districts in the country and around the world don't offer abundant parking. That is why they are the best districts. This is the attraction factor at work. Good urbanism is the hook, good businesses are the pull.*

– Jeff Siegler,  
Revitalize or Die



## Supply side

In commercial areas, the Borough has 128 metered street spaces with two-hour limits, enforced between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. all days except Sundays and legal holidays. The municipal lot has 70 spaces and, while it is occasionally full, there are often spaces available in the evening, perhaps because visitors may be unaware that parking in the lot is free after 5 p.m. The Borough also leases a set of separate spaces (restricted parking permits) along Field Avenue and Freeport Road.

The Borough reserves some areas, such as the western side of Delafield Avenue, for resident parking only. The Borough issues free resident parking permits for this purpose.

The Borough upgraded its parking management software and equipment and raised fines in 2022. Fines for an expired meter are \$10. Fines for violations at a no parking sign, in a one-hour area, in a resident-only area, in a merchant lot or in the leased areas along Freeport Road are \$50, as are fines for obstructing traffic, a fire lane or hydrant or a driveway.

As a part of this planning process, a volunteer compiled a detailed inventory of parking supply (both on- and off-street) in comparison with adjacent land uses – housing units, square feet of office, retail and restaurants/bar, auto-oriented uses and recreation facility capacity. This table appears in the Appendix and represents a highly useful starting point for understanding what's happening at a granular level.

Applying the existing requirements for off-street parking in the Zoning Ordinance, the analysis identifies blocks where the gap is greatest between the number of off-street spaces that would be required if the uses were built today (as a proxy for relative demand) and the supply of existing parking of all types. The gap is largest for the 00 and 100 block of Brilliant Avenue and in the vicinity of the 200 and 300 block of Freeport Road and Commercial Avenue.

Residential blocks tend to be relatively close to parity, with smaller gaps or surpluses. Supply on residential blocks is most constrained where multi-family housing does not include off-street parking. Across the entire Borough, the 2020 Census estimated that 16% of all housing units were in multi-family buildings.



*Municipal lot between Commercial Avenue and Freeport Road*

## ***Demand factors***

The supply/demand mismatch in commercial areas takes the form of visitors being unable to find optimal parking and 1) circling around in search of it, 2) parking illegally, 3) parking farther away and walking, or 4) giving up. The use information available at this point is anecdotal: Observations about when spaces seem to be consistently full, frustrations about business parking spilling over into residential areas, theories about employees occupying meter spaces all day.

In commercial areas, visitors generate parking demand. There is some elasticity in mode choice – for instance, a person visiting an area known to have limited free parking might choose instead to walk, bike or take a bus there. By contrast, parking demand in residential areas is related primarily to car ownership. Peak demand is the middle of the night, and everyone who owns a vehicle will need to store it somewhere.

The problem of adequate on-street parking in residential areas has grown along with the propensity of households to own more and larger vehicles than they once did. This is a national trend. Census data shows that the number of households with two or more vehicles climbed from 22% in 1960 to 59% in 2020. In 2019, three large American auto manufacturers exited the sedan market as demand surged for trucks and SUVs – and vehicles are getting larger across all categories. A Toyota Camry is now 21% larger than it was in the early 1980s, and a Ford F-Series truck is now 25% larger than the first generation.<sup>1</sup>

In Aspinwall, the Census estimated that there were 1.48 vehicles per household in 2020, compared to 1.23 in 2010. Renters tend to own fewer vehicles per household than homeowners, though the percentage of renters who didn't have access to a vehicle decreased from 22% in 2010 to only 5% in 2020.<sup>2</sup> All of this translates to increased demand for on-street overnight parking.

Other factors behind constrained on-street parking supply in Aspinwall:

- The off-street parking minimums specified in the Zoning Ordinance do not apply to uses that existed prior to the adoption of the regulations. Older multi-family buildings don't necessarily provide off-street parking to accommodate all of the vehicles their residents and visitors own, which increases competition for street parking.
- Some property owners with garages use those structures for storage and park on the street.
- While the number of total households in the Borough has decreased overall since 2010, households are added when large single-family homes are converted to multi-unit rentals.
- The Borough's neighborhoods are generally historic, dense and stable, which means that land to develop additional off-street parking is both scarce and expensive, even if asphaltting more space for private car storage proved to be worth detracting from a neighborhood's visual quality.

The Borough is largely built-out and is unlikely to experience major land-use change during the next 10 years. Considerations for future parking demand include the continued enhancement of Allegheny River Trail Park and its trail connections and improvements as suggested in this plan for the Borough's parks. For instance, the vision for the overlook at Fireman's Park is a community-scale facility, not a regional attraction that would draw a large volume of visitors.

<sup>1</sup> "Study: Average car size is increasing – will roads still be safe for small cars and pedestrians?" May 2021, *The Zebra*. [thezebra.com/resources/driving/average-car-size/](https://thezebra.com/resources/driving/average-car-size/)

<sup>2</sup> 2020 American Community Survey, Table B25044, Tenure by Vehicles Available



# what we heard

*These are some of the more than 400 comments Aspinwall residents shared about parking in the community questionnaire.*

## **Business districts**

- "@#\$\$%&^!!"
- "Driving down from upper Aspinwall to events down in lower. Parking in upper is fine."
- "Frankly, it seems it'll always be a balancing act: if we have successful businesses and a lot of visitors, parking will always be a bit tight."
- "The meters are outdated and clunky."
- "I don't carry cash and they require quarters."
- "It is a relative problem. i.e. relative to Pittsburgh city, it is peanuts. Higher ticket prices/parking fees around businesses might be good. It is rather cheap."
- "Business owners should be careful where they and employees park."
- "Employees park at meters and many times customers wonder why they can't park."

## **Residential streets**

- "Homes should have assigned parking spaces."
- "Business owners and ballfield users park in residential areas"
- "We often see people working at the hospital parking outside of our house just because it's free and nobody enforces the residents' rule."
- "Renters not using their provided parking lots and taking up spaces on the street for homeowners."
- "People parking on streets to avoid paying for the hospital parking."
- "There are no longer any streets without street cleaning regulations - if I have to be out of town for a week, there is nowhere I can park my car and not get a ticket."
- "You can give everyone 5 spaces in front of their house and they would still be complaining about parking."
- "I live on 2nd and Brilliant and have to street park and often people park on second who work on Brilliant. There is often no place to park, especially on street sweeping day."
- Aspinwall is car-heavy "and on street parking is a crowded affair. We cleared out garages to have places to park."
- "There is no parking."
- "I can always find parking."
- "I don't have a driveway or garage and am forced to move my cars CONSTANTLY from April to November due to street cleaning. This is a huge issue and one reason I'd leave Aspinwall."
- "Nothing is being done to enforce non resident parking violators."
- "Difficult parking for guests."

## ***Strategies to consider***

Best practices in parking management for vibrant business districts focus on both reducing parking demand and managing supply. Doing so not only supports an optimal balance of parking occupancy and availability, but also encourages active transportation (walking, biking, transit), reinforces the beauty and safety of the business district's street scene and improves environmental quality by reducing vehicle miles traveled.

Some strategies to consider include:

- Adding limited short-term parking and loading at the curb in areas with significant take-out business. A five-minute “quick stop” parking stall in the right location could accommodate increased demand for pick-ups that has outlasted the pandemic, increasing turnover and reducing illegal parking.
- Adjusting the pricing and time limits, as relevant, of parking in the business districts to achieve an average occupancy rate of 85%. A new parking meter policy could specify prices for a given district or set of blocks, or dynamic pricing could adjust according to demand or time of day.
- Continue to promote creative solutions such as shared parking to match supply needs with any underused lot space. In particular, private lot space in the vicinity of the business districts could potentially accommodate employee parking that currently competes with customers for relatively inexpensive metered space.
- Ensuring that signage clearly directs visitors to parking of the appropriate type and encourages visitors to use the municipal lot in the evenings.
- Prohibiting the conversion of single-family homes to multi-family, in certain districts or overall. Other Pennsylvania communities have enacted such regulations with the intent of preserving historic residential neighborhoods and easing parking demand. Further, the Borough could incentivize the *deconversion* of such structures back to single-family through offering grants, streamlining the process, reducing fees and/or offering tax incentives.
- Reforming the residential parking permit program to manage street parking, particularly to disincentivize storing multiple vehicles on the street and to promote off-street parking on the part of those who own access to that space (garages, spaces in multi-family lots). The Borough could establish specific street/block zones within which only residents of *that area* may park, as regulated by Borough-issued passes. Because curb space is a public good that has value, it would be reasonable for the Borough to charge for permits. This could look like annual permitting that is free or nominal for the first vehicle per household, higher (\$25-\$50) for the second vehicle and higher still (\$100-\$250) for the third or fourth vehicle. Annual costs are an effective tool for ensuring available parking for all permit holders in areas where scarcity is an ongoing problem.



- Install and program electronic parking meters that work in conjunction with parking apps, either by replacing meters where they are now installed or by installing multi-space kiosks. Smart meters can deploy dynamic pricing, which is a good strategy for keeping occupancy around the target of 85% at different times of day. They can also track and report parking utilization data, which would provide information to keep the parking management program well calibrated in future years.
- Exploring transportation demand management options, such as landing bikeshare facilities, improving pedestrian infrastructure and working with Pittsburgh Regional Transit to improve bus stops and encourage transit ridership. As trail connections to Aspinwall develop, ensure that safe and appealing routes connect users to the business districts and hospital.



*Mobile parking is one high-tech approach to managing public parking spaces. Aspinwall Borough now includes the ParkMobile app (also used by the City of Pittsburgh) as an option for paying for parking. The app is integrated with parking enforcement, opening up some new options for parking data management.*

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**Action Steps:**

- A.  Appoint a working group (potentially an ad hoc advisory committee to Council) to lead a detailed parking study and implementation of its recommendations.
- B.  Ensure that resident-only parking areas are clearly signed and ensure regular enforcement.
- C.  Budget and/or otherwise assemble funding to undertake a detailed Parking Management Study that will include collection and analysis of primary parking utilization data. Depending on scope, a parking management study can range generally from \$10,000 to \$40,000. Consider involving UPMC, the Riverfront Trail and other local partners in funding and scoping the effort.
- D.  Create and issue a Request for Proposals for a Parking Management Study. This should build upon existing data, particularly the inventory of parking supply and land use classifications compiled in the appendix of this report. Review RFPs for similar projects elsewhere to inform what is included.

Further research must include parking utilization counts in a targeted study area, including specified extents of Brilliant and Commercial Avenues and Freeport Road. It may also include utilization counts in targeted residential areas. Recommendations should address all aspects of Aspinwall’s parking system, including the pricing and time restrictions set for publicly owned street and lot spaces; the residential permit program; shared parking scenarios and preferred solutions for addressing a mismatch between supply and demand where it exists. The end result should be clear and simple steps forward for the Borough in optimally managing parking supply.

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**Timeline:**

**Years  
1-2**





- E.  Report the results of the parking utilization study to Council and the public and discuss what specific interventions would address the problems it reveals. Consider whether and how to incorporate the strategies contained in this section to reduce parking demand and manage supply.
- G.  Begin budgeting to implement the program, including such costs as modern electronic parking meters, new signage and distributing information about new policies and/or permitting requirements.
- H.  Continue to provide signage and information that clearly communicate parking rules and consistently enforce them.

**Timeline:**

**Years  
2-3**

**Ongoing**

## Understanding parking utilization

Collecting local data to learn how parking is being used is a critical step in deciding what to do about it. Community staff and volunteers can work with specialists to select a methodology and identify:

- Who is using parking and for how long (i.e. are employees spending eight hours in retail-adjacent spaces where high turnover is needed?)
- Where are there empty spaces that could be better used?
- Where do people tend to park illegally?
- Are there infrastructure or other problems that prevent use of designated spaces?

Such studies are useful in providing real-life demand data that can precisely inform how to effectively address real and perceived shortages.

### Strategy 03:

# Weave resiliency into local land use and development ordinances

### Overview:

The Borough's Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance, Grading and Excavating Ordinance, Stormwater Management Ordinance and Trees Ordinance represent opportunities to incorporate prevailing best practices in sustainability, resilience and climate adaptation.

A review and update of these ordinances could introduce incentives and/or requirements for technology and approaches that maximize energy efficiency, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, ensure resilience of physical structures and promote sustainable approaches to development.

### Action Steps:

- A.  Appoint an ad hoc advisory committee to Council to further explore and make recommendations on sustainability initiatives including, but not limited to, those in this plan.
  
- B.  Review the CONNECT Climate Action Plan and other resources for adapting local regulations to meet the challenges of a changing environment.<sup>1</sup> Consider crafting changes to Aspinwall's ordinances to enable or further promote the following:
  - Energy-efficient technologies (solar, cool or green roof, triple-glazed windows, ground-, air- and water-source heat pumps)
  - Renewable energy (solar photovoltaic, hot water and space heating)

<sup>1</sup> Examples of "green codes" include Somerville, MA and Seattle, WA.

### Timeline:

Years  
1-2



- Energy management technology, including electric vehicle charging infrastructure, battery storage and thermal energy storage
- Incentives for high-performance building standards, such as Passive House, LEED Zero, Living Building Challenge or WELL Building Standard

**B.**  Consider and promote locally appropriate incentives for the installation and use of energy-efficient technologies. For instance, provide information on the Borough's website about federal rebates and tax credits for solar energy systems (30% credit effective until at least 2032), as well as state programs (inventory at <https://programs.dsireusa.org/system/program/pa>). Clear a regulatory path with Borough ordinances for accessory solar uses, making approval simple and inexpensive to obtain. Consider allowing density bonuses or other zoning flexibility in exchange for the installation of specific energy-efficient systems. Ordinance updates should be practical and flexible, making approvals quick and simple for desired improvements.

**C.**  Planning Commission should prepare a proposed amendment to the ordinance(s), with the assistance of the Borough Solicitor or a consultant. Outside organizations such as CONNECT and Sustainable Pittsburgh may offer input and suggestions on best practices.

Planning Commission would recommend the amendment to Council for consideration.

**D.**  Proceed with review of the amendment as required by the Municipalities Planning Code, including advertising and holding a public hearing following a 45-day Allegheny County Planning Division review.

**E.**  Adopt the amendment and incorporate updates into the online edition at [ecode360.com](http://ecode360.com).

**F.**  Provide information to the public on the updates providing a high-level overview of the intent and effect of changes.

**Timeline:**

**Years  
1-2**

## Strategy 04:

# Enact strategies to strengthen property maintenance

## Overview:

Municipal governments can apply policies, practices, regulations and enforcement efforts to help maintain healthy and safe conditions and an attractive appearance. Maintaining and upholding Aspinwall Borough's community standards will require a continued focus on property maintenance, in terms of both proactive enforcement and finding creating solutions to help property owners understand and address what's required. Prevention is incredibly important to keeping properties in fair condition from deteriorating and negatively impacting their surroundings.

## Action Steps:

- A.  Evaluate and consider incorporating the following strategies, based on the combination of efforts the Borough already has in place and the capacity of staff and volunteers.
- Educate owners and tenants about their responsibilities.
    - » Create a brochure that is mailed, emailed or distributed to all and includes 1) basic information about code requirements, such as when trash bins may be left at the curb or how grass must be maintained, and 2) contact information for people seeking more details or help.
    - » Generate "friendly letters" to owners of properties with initial signs of property deterioration to encourage them to fix problems early.
  - Promote repair and improvement programs for homeowners and commercial property owners. Compile resources and add them to the Borough website, including grant and loan programs, the 2-1-1 Infoline and assistance available through area nonprofits.

## Timeline:

Years  
1-2



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## Action Steps:

- B.  Ensure that the Borough has in place a comprehensive set of policies and regulations that will help hold property owners accountable, in addition to its Uniform Construction Code, International Property Maintenance Code and Rental Property Registration and Inspection program, including:
- **Pre-sale inspections** – to ensure prior to title transfer that all residential properties comply with basic safety and maintenance standards. If violations are found, the seller must abate them or the buyer must execute a notarized statement acknowledging that they shall begin to abate the violations within 30 days of taking possession and fully comply within six months.
  - **Vacant property ordinance** – Requiring owners of vacant properties of all types to register with the Borough and continue to comply with relevant code requirements and routine inspections. Such ordinances can require property owners to carry insurance and pay an annual registration fee. Properties being actively marketed can receive a waiver.

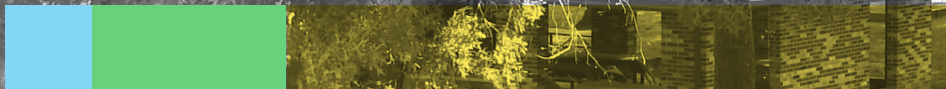
Connellsville Borough implemented a vacant property ordinance in 2014 and extended it in 2019, charging annual fees of \$30 for residential property owners, and fees starting at \$250 for commercial property owners, up to \$4,000 for properties classified as a dangerous public nuisance. The city's ordinance requires out-of-county owners to designate a local agent.

## Timeline:

Years  
1-2











**other issues**



## ***Community development objectives***

The community development objectives that underpin Aspinwall Borough's current Zoning Ordinance date back to Resolution 85-3, adopted by Borough Council in 1983:

- To preserve and enhance the established quality and character of the Borough's residential neighborhoods and community business district.
- To maintain a mixture of housing types and compatible economic activities to achieve a balanced community and a diversified tax base.
- To recognize Aspinwall's role in the Guyasuta region and support cooperative approaches to the issues and problems which mutually affect the region.
- To maintain stable residential neighborhoods. Using zoning and building codes, to prevent the intrusion of incompatible land uses or adverse environmental effects. Ensure that the conversion of single-family homes to multi-family dwellings meet standards. Provide a variety of housing types to meet the needs of all age and income groups and provide for the rehabilitation of substandard or deteriorating residential structures.
- To develop a cohesive business district and encourage the district to improve its visual appearance and appeal. Planning will provide for adequate traffic access and off-street parking areas.
- To identify suitable types of uses and standards for industrial businesses within Aspinwall's limited industrial area. Vehicle access to the industrial zone will be improved and environmental standards adopted to avoid adverse environmental impact.
- To upgrade community facilities and services in the areas of recreation and utilities. Aspinwall will improve its major regional recreation facilities to serve a broad range of age and interest groups in the community, and it will develop a regular maintenance and replacement program for existing water and sewer lines and assure a safe supply of water for residents and businesses.

These objectives remain relevant, and many of the strategies in this plan will continue to address them. This plan adds:

- To enhance safe, efficient and pleasant routes for bicycle and pedestrian movement.
- To continue to integrate environmentally sustainable approaches and practices.

## ***Future land use***

Aspinwall Borough is nearly fully built out, providing traditional neighborhoods with rich historic quality and excellent proximity to vibrant local business districts, recreation amenities and the destinations of daily life. The Borough does not anticipate transformative change in land use during the next decade. Future site-specific investments will be held to standards ensuring that they reinforce and enrich the built environment and public realm of each neighborhood while opening inclusive opportunities for people to live in, work in and visit this proud and thriving community.



## ***Consistency with the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code***

This Comprehensive Plan is required to achieve consistency with Allegheny County’s comprehensive plan, and it must meet the requirements of the state’s Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) Article III, Section 301. The following is a summary of those MPC requirements and a reference for how this plan addresses them.

<b>MPC requirement</b>	<b>Where it appears in the Comprehensive Plan</b>
Statement of community development objectives	Page 110
Plan for land use	Page 111
Plan to meet housing needs	Statement in CDOs on page 111, certain recommendations in the Zoning Ordinance update strategy, page 93 and on page 112
Plan for movement of people and goods	Transportation and the Public Realm, page 40
Plan for community facilities	Parks Improvements, page 14, statement in CDOs on page 111
Statement of interrelationship among various plan components	The nature of Implementable Comprehensive Planning is to focus on major issues in the community. Each issue tends to address multiple planning elements in an integrated manner. For example, the location-specific improvement and activation strategies in the plan involve economic development, placemaking, infrastructure, environmental considerations, community facilities, branding and marketing.
Short- and long-term implementation strategies	Found in each chapter for the specific issue.
Statement that existing and proposed development is compatible with existing and proposed development in adjacent communities and consistent with the County Comprehensive Plan	The strategies in this document are consistent with “Allegheny Places,” the county comprehensive plan. The county’s plan identified areas of Allegheny Land Trust Greenprint along the river, where the RiverTrail Park now provides public access to natural amenities, and north of Route 28 surrounding Fireman’s Memorial Park, which are sloped areas where the plan identified opportunities for trail connection and a scenic overlook. Aspinwall does not contain any of the identified “places” in the county plan but has patterned its strategies, particularly for multi-modal facilities and its historic business districts, after the blueprint laid out in “Allegheny Places.”
Plan for protection of natural and historic resources	The protection of natural resources and green space is embedded throughout plan strategies, particularly as the Borough looks to incorporate additional trees and green infrastructure throughout its built environment and continue to protect and preserve the historic assets that make it a special place.
Plan for reliable supply of water	Aspinwall Borough maintains a Water Authority. The Borough’s water source is the Allegheny River via Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority and Fox Chapel Water Authority.

## ***Community pride, inclusivity and belonging***

During the public input process, residents, staff members and other stakeholders contributed additional ideas, issues and concerns that the Borough intends to address during the next 10 years. These matters are gathered in this chapter because they required less detailed analysis, in some cases because they represent topics over which the Borough currently lacks direct control or capacity, or in other cases because the path for progress has already been set and is straightforward.

For Aspinwall, one of these issues is to foster community pride and a sense of belonging. This need surfaced in public comments and perspective from interviewers. In some cases, it reflects societal issues, such as lack of access to community services, transportation, mental health care, food or housing. Perhaps most potent and most feasible is for the Borough to improve access to transit, as lack of transportation can be the primary barrier to reaching jobs, health care, groceries or other fundamental services.

Strategies include:

- » Improve the comfort, safety and convenience of accessibility to public transit stops along Freeport Road. In coordination with Pittsburgh Regional Transit, this could include improving one or more stops with seating, shelter and appropriate streetscape design, as well as “first and last mile” routes to enable pedestrians and cyclists to more comfortably and easily access buses.

- » Through policies and land use regulations, promote housing equity by expanding housing options while taking care to maintain the existing urban fabric and historic character of neighborhoods. This might include:
  - » Permitting accessory dwelling units (ADUs) on single-family lots if parking and all other requirements can be met, which could enable in-law or bounce-back housing for family members
  - » Maintaining and increasing density where appropriate to support walkability, sustainability and transit-oriented development.
  - » Ensuring that zoning accommodates a wide housing typology. The Allegheny Places website includes a toolbox with model ordinance resources for inclusionary zoning.
- » Continue to improve accessibility to all public facilities, including sidewalks and crossings, shops, parks and civic spaces.
- » Focus Borough attention on issues that create inequities through a volunteer Equal Opportunity (or Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, or Community Relations) advisory board. This should include collaboration with the school district, law enforcement and other partners
- » Ensure that Borough enforcement policies are conducted equitably by reviewing a 5-year history of actions taken by code enforcement, police or other public service agencies. Set evaluation criteria as a first step.



## ***Continued focus on infrastructure***

Aspinwall Borough maintains aging water, gas and sewer infrastructure systems. Absent a major bond issue, financing large-scale improvements to upgrade this infrastructure is well beyond the Borough's capital budget. Borough staff and volunteers should expect to continue responding to system incidents, such as the series of water main breaks that occurred over Christmas Eve and Day in 2022. Weather-related failures will increase along with the frequency and severity of weather emergency events, and this should continue to be a part of the Borough's emergency management planning. Staff and elected officials should continue to coordinate information sharing to identify and address the highest-priority system needs to, where possible, mitigate emergency system incidents and potential public safety problems.

## ***Statements of support***

This Comprehensive Plan establishes a high-level blueprint for the continued development and improvement of Aspinwall Borough during the decade to come. By the nature of its organization as an Implementable Comprehensive Plan, it is focused primarily on the three Key Issues that rose to the highest priority level during the public process: Parks Improvements; Transportation and the Public Realm; and Retooling Policies and Programs. As the Borough makes progress implementing strategies in each category, it will continue to provide excellent local government services and collaborate with other agencies, governments, groups and individuals to pursue shared goals.

To that end, this plan specifically memorializes support for initiatives included in, but certainly not limited to, this list:

- » The CONNECT Climate Action Plan
- » Connection to the Three Rivers Heritage Trail through Allegheny River Trail Park
- » ALCOSAN's Green Revitalization of Our Waterways program
- » Active Allegheny active transportation initiatives





# appendices

Appendix information in digital format is on file in the Borough Administrative Offices.

## ***Appendix A***

Public and Stakeholder Engagement Summaries

- Questionnaire Results
- 2019 Public Visioning Results
- July 2021 Public Meeting Summary
- May 2022 Public Meeting Summary

## ***Appendix B***

Summer 2022 Parking Supply and Land Use Inventory



