

City of Monessen: Comprehensive Blight Plan Summary



Adopted May 11, 2023



Acknowledgments

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Additional thank you to those who provided input and assistance during the planning process:

City of Monessen

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Blighted Property Review Board

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Nehemiah of Monessen CDC

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May 2023



What is a Blight Plan and Why Do We Need One?



A Blight Plan Should Contain the Following:

- 1) Assessment of the Nature and Extent of Blight
- 2) Prioritized Strategies Based on Local Conditions, Public Input, and Capacity
- 3) A Work Plan that Identifies Timeline and Resources Necessary to Implement

We need a Blight Plan because it is important to have all of the information in one document that is:

- ✓ Adopted by City Council
- ✓ Publicly Available
- ✓ Shares our Strategy and Plan with Potential Funders
- ✓ Allows us to Track our Progress

Review of Existing Conditions

The population is not only shrinking, but aging.

- Population fell 11.8% from 2010 to 6,811 in 2021.
- Monessen's median age increased from 46.2 in 200 to 47.3 in 2020.



30.3% of population is age 62 or older

Median household income is significantly lower than the Countywide average, but the home ownership rate is comparable.

- Monessen's median housing income is \$45,658, which is 71% of the County's.
- Monessen's home ownership rate is 76.6% compared with the County's—77.6%.



Low and-moderate income homeowners may lack resources to address deferred home maintenance

Sources: U.S. Census, Monessen Comprehensive Plan, RealSTATs

Review of Existing Conditions

An older housing stock is costly to maintain and suffers from high vacancy rates.

- 97% of Monessen's housing stock was built before 1980.
- 19% of Monessen's housing stock is vacant, roughly twice the Countywide average.



Roughly 1 in 5 homes in Monessen are vacant

Housing values vary greatly, and median sale prices have increased significantly in the past two years.

- Monessen's median housing income is \$45,658, which is 71% of the County's.
- In 2014 Monessen's median home price was \$40,000. In 2021, it was \$85,000.

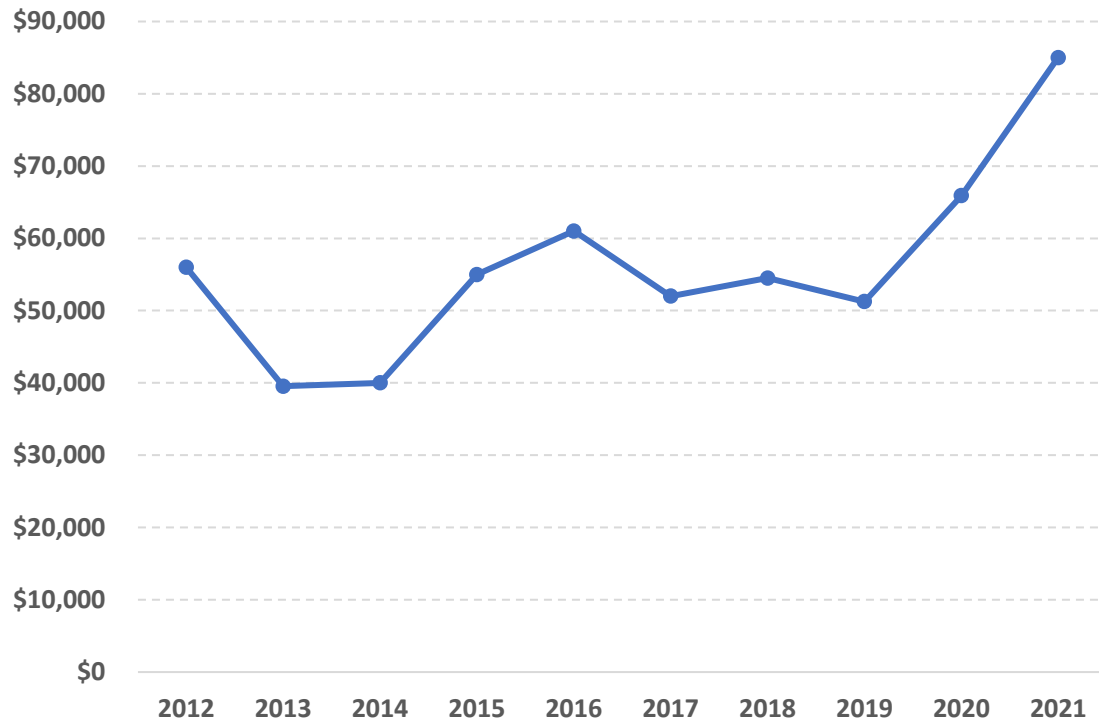


Median home sale price in Monessen has more than doubled since 2014

Sources: U.S. Census, Monessen Comprehensive Plan, RealSTATs

Review of Existing Conditions

Median Sale Price of Residential Properties in Monessen



Year	Median Price	High Price	% \$100K +
2012	\$56,000	\$159,900	12.5%
2013	\$39,550	\$135,000	10.0%
2014	\$40,000	\$160,000	10.3%
2015	\$55,000	\$176,000	12.9%
2016	\$61,000	\$283,750	17.8%
2017	\$52,000	\$185,000	18.6%
2018	\$54,500	\$173,000	11.4%
2019	\$51,250	\$168,900	20.8%
2020	\$65,900	\$225,000	25.2%
2021	\$85,000	\$220,000	39.0%

Source: RealSTATs

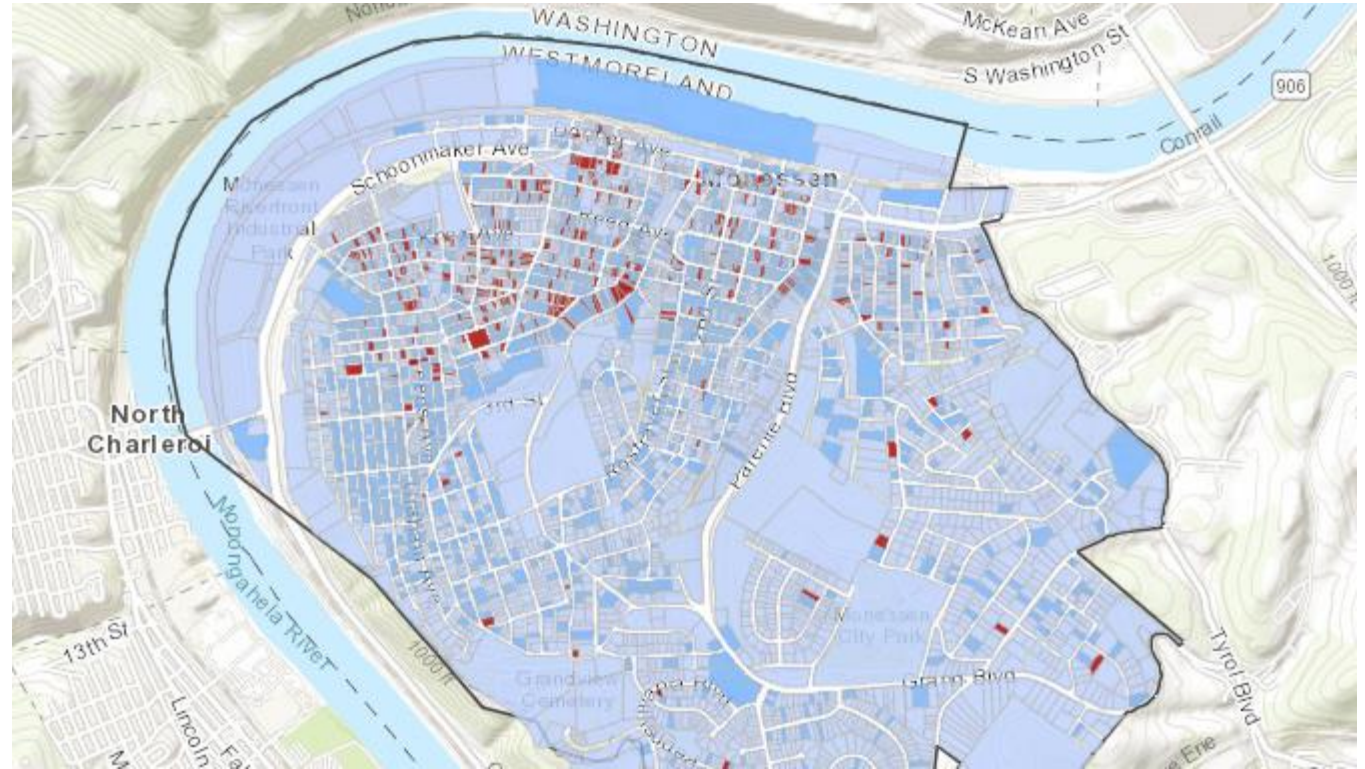
Significant increase in median price since 2019

Review of Existing Conditions

City of Monessen Blight Inventory

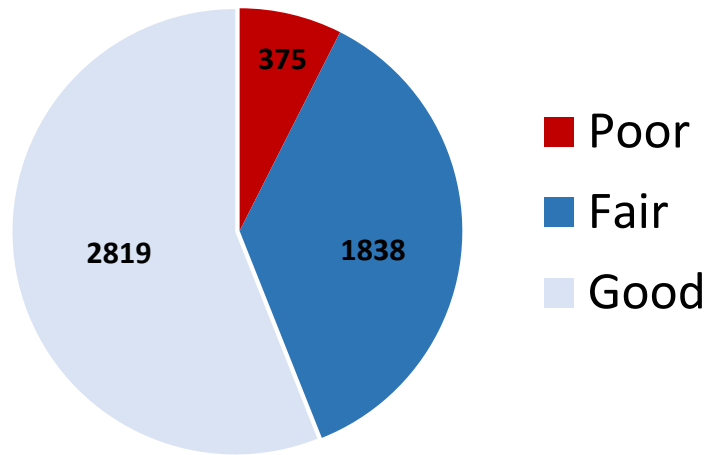
Collected in 2019 & Updated in 2021

Conducted by Westmoreland County Planning Department of Planning and Development in Partnership w/ City of Monessen, Mackin Engineering and MGR Consulting and available [here](#).



Source: Westmoreland County Department of Planning & Development

Property Condition



Monessen's blight is concentrated in between downtown and the adjacent neighborhoods.

Key Insights

- 1 Monessen's median home price is rising, yet still affordable to households earning 80% or more of the City's median income -- ~ \$36,500. Lack of savings and credit remain barriers to homeownership.
- 2 Monessen's existing home owning population has a significant number of elderly households, many of whom may lack resources to maintain an older home.
- 3 Addressing the extent of blight in Monessen will involve demolition of vacant structures that are not feasible to renovate—proactive planning to re-use resulting vacant lots is necessary.



Examples of how other communities have re-purposed former blighted sites to community gardens, housing, and playgrounds.

Review of Blight Work to Date

Planning & Data Collection

- Monessen Comprehensive Plan
- Blight Inventory Update
- Target Area Update Using codePRO

Legislative

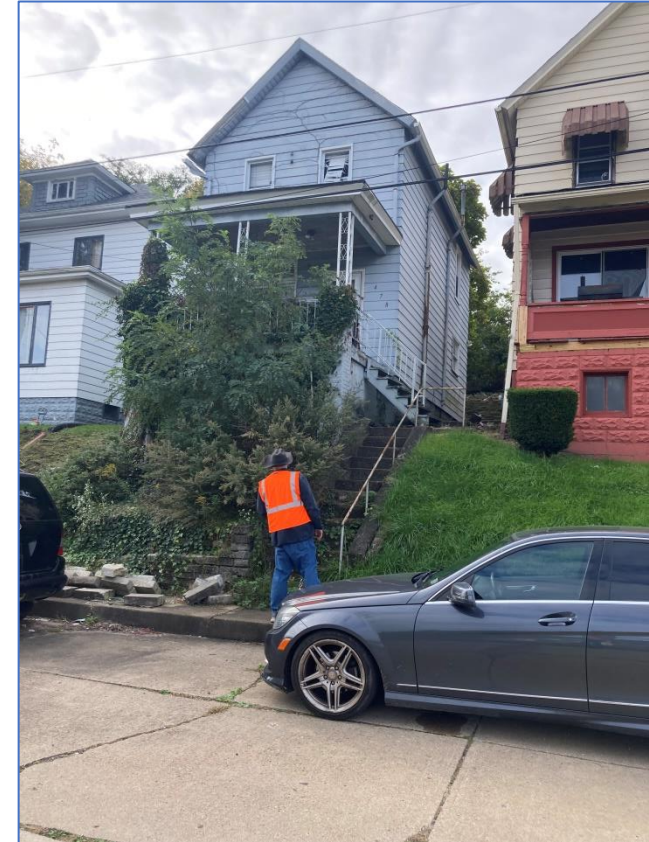
- Blighted Property Review Board
- Rental Registration Ordinance
- Municipal Code & Ordinance Compliance (2020)
- Vacant Property Registration
- Real Estate Tax Forgiveness Program (2022)

Technical Assistance

- Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania / Tom Hardy (via DCED Grant)
- HUD Technical Assistance Contract

Partnering & Building Capacity

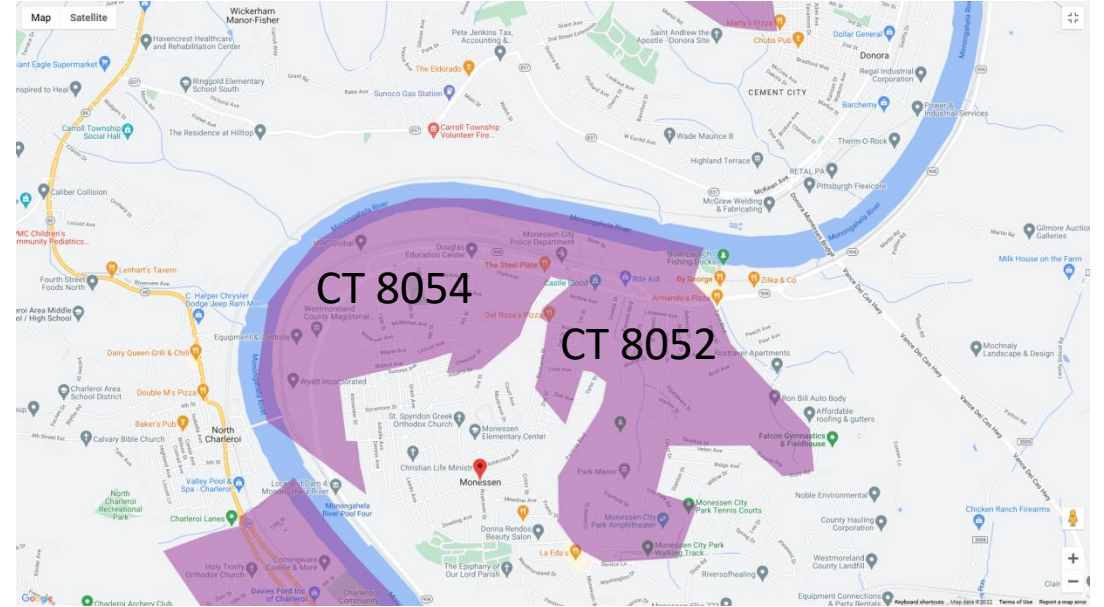
- Westmoreland County Blight Remediation Program
- Nehemiah of Monessen Community Development Corporation



Mayor Mozer surveying property using codePRO

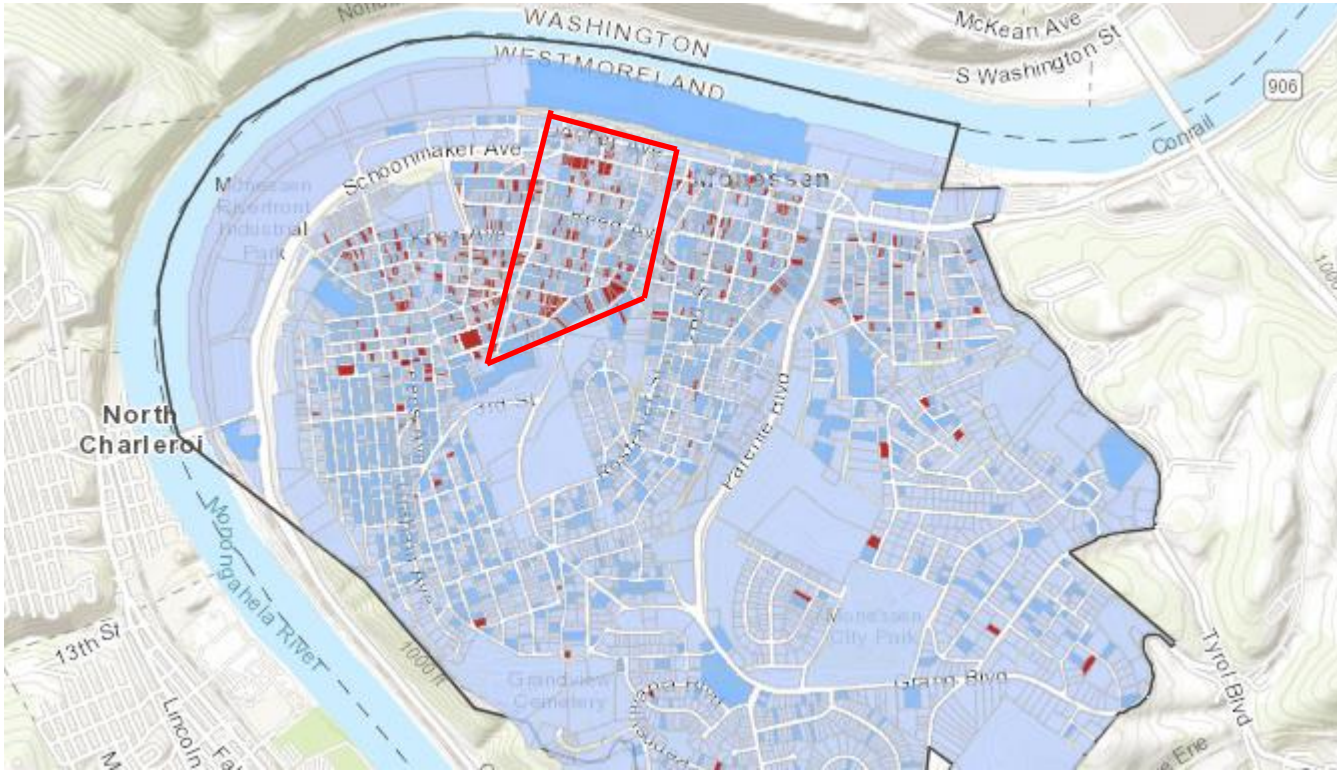
Program Spotlight: Westmoreland County Demolition & Rehabilitation Program

- Westmoreland County has committed \$10.4M to doing demolition and rehabilitation in 10 eligible census tracts within the following communities--Greensburg, Jeanette, New Kensington, Arnold, Vandergrift, Penn Borough and Monessen.
- The program is being administered by the Westmoreland County Redevelopment Authority and Land Bank with participation from local communities.
- 533 total properties have been identified as candidates for demolition—305 of them are in Monessen. 5 projects have been completed and another 12 have been bid. Current info is available here: bit.ly/arpadashboard
- This program will have a major impact on blight—and Monessen must proactively plan for what comes after demolition.



There are two eligible census tracts in Monessen—8054 & 8052

Priority Area



Downtown: Donner & East Schoonmaker

Adjacent Neighborhoods: Between 3rd and 6th Avenues from Downtown to Alberts Drive.

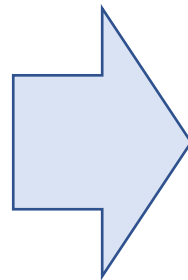
This priority area draws from Monessen's Comprehensive Plan is improving the City's Downtown. Blight is shown in red and concentrated in neighborhoods adjacent to Downtown.

Prioritization of Blight Strategies

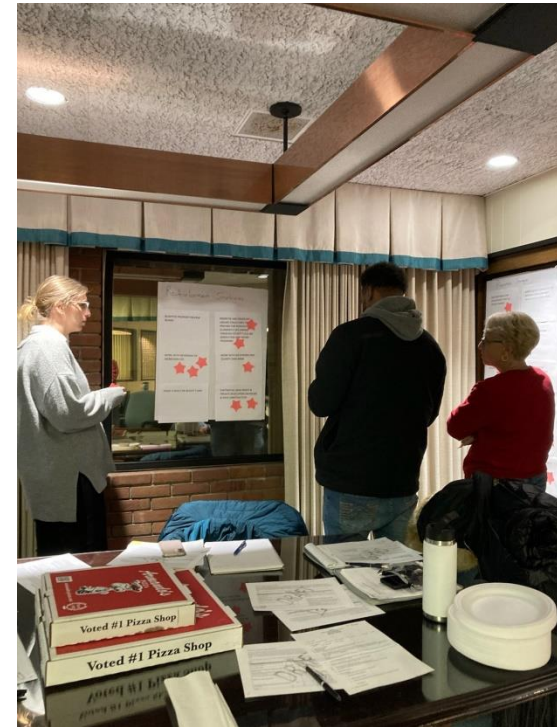
Monessen's Comprehensive listed several potential blight strategies. The Blight Planning process gathered input on which of these should be priorities. The prioritization process will include the Blighted Property Review Board, Nehemiah of Monessen Community Development Corporation, City Council and public input.

Toolkit of Blight Strategies

- Hire additional code enforcement
- Improve record keeping and tracking of code enforcement data
- Adopt latest International Property Maintenance Code
- Educate residents and property owners on property maintenance
- Enact rental registration ordinance
- Adopt a quality-of-life ticketing ordinance
- Enact tax forgiveness program
- Adopt mixed-use tax abatement program
- Develop programs to encourage property maintenance
- Connect Households w/ Small Mortgage Lending & Other Home Repair Resources
- Prioritized and demolish unsafe structures to prepare for reinvestment
- Work with County Land Bank
- Work with local Community Development Corporation
- Partner with Qualified Developers on Rehabilitation and New Construction



Which 3-5 strategies are the right priorities for Monessen?



Participants work through process of prioritizing blight strategies.

Monessen's Priority Blight Strategies

Prevention

Enhance Proactive Code Enforcement

Remediation

Prioritize & Demolish Unsafe Structures—Westmoreland County Demolition & Rehabilitation Program

Connect Households w/ Small Mortgage Lending & Other Home Repair Resources

Redevelopment

Support Capacity Building at the Nehemiah of Monessen Community Development Corporation

Partner with Qualified Developers on Rehabilitation and New Construction

Monessen's Priority Blight Strategies

Prevention

Prevention Strategy	Rationale	Key Components
Enhance Code Enforcement	Proactive code enforcement can address violations before they result in blight. With over 300 existing blighted properties to address, preventing additional blight is important.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Add Code Enforcement staff hours.2. Utilize codePRO tool which can interface with the Westmoreland County Land Bank.3. Adopt and implement most recent version of the International Property Maintenance Code.

Monessen's Priority Blight Strategies

Remediation

Prevention Strategy	Rationale	Key Components
Prioritize & Demolish Unsafe Structures	375 properties are in poor condition which represents nearly 7.5% of the building stock in Monessen. These properties impose direct and indirect costs to Monessen's residents.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Continued participation in Westmoreland County's Demolition & Rehabilitation Program. Complete quarterly property survey updates and provide updated blight records through codePRO.
Connect Households w/ Small Mortgage Lending & Other Home Repair Resources	Many of Monessen's homeowners are elderly with fixed-incomes. These homeowners may struggle with the cost of maintaining an older housing stock.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information on existing programs to residents utilizing multiple communication channels. Identify a coordinator that can assist w/ applications.

Monessen's Priority Blight Strategies

Remediation

Prevention Strategy	Rationale	Key Components
Support Capacity Building at the Nehemiah of Monessen Community Development Corporation	CDC's can provide community led capacity. Communities that have successfully addressed blight and redeveloped often have had a CDC directly involved in this work. CDCs are eligible for funding that municipalities may not be eligible for.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with City to create and implement plan for vacant lots. 2. Take lead on coordinating housing assistance programs for existing homeowners. 3. Partner with other non-profits that provide credit and homeownership counseling for potential homeowners.
Partner with Qualified Developers on Rehabilitation and New Construction	Non-profit and private sector developers bring technical and financial capacity to complete developments in communities like Monessen that need multiple funding sources to be financially feasible.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. City to complete HUD's Technical Assistance program. 2. Develop process for pre-qualifying potential development partners. 3. Work with Westmoreland County Land Bank on properties it owns to refer interested parties.