



The Next Generation Says...

The Future of Washington ~ from the Students' Perspective

On March 21, 2011, a group of students at Washington High School had an opportunity to provide their thoughts on the future of the City of Washington and East Washington Borough. The City and Borough are in the process of developing a multi-municipal comprehensive plan that will identify needed improvements for the next 10 to 20 years. The next generation of Washington area residents were asked by Mackin, the project consultant, what they felt should be the priorities of the City and Borough's elected officials.

The focus group consisted of 26 students representing grades 9-12, all of whom live in either the City or the Borough. The participation of the students exceeded expectations, "I have been doing this for 9 years, and this is by far the best group I have ever worked with. The students were really engaged and I was impressed with the level of detail they provided. They should be really proud of themselves," said Amy Wiles of Mackin.

The information collected from the students will be included as part of the Washington and East Washington Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan. The project, which began in November of 2010, is expected to be completed by the end of 2011.



Students from the Washington High School Focus Group (Mackin, 2011)

Youth Focus Group Activities:

- Postcard from the Future
- Map It!
- Top 10 Priorities
- 5 Programs that Should be Offered

Postcard from the Future



Students from the Washington High School Focus Group
(Mackin, 2011)

“Imagine it is the year 2025 and you have returned to the City of Washington and/or East Washington Borough for the first time since graduating high school. What has changed? Write a postcard to a friend/relative describing what you hope to see.”

This is the first thing that the students were asked to complete as part of the youth focus group. 26 postcards were received, each detailing their vision for the City and Borough.

While the specifics varied by student, the overall picture painted of the future included a vibrant downtown with active businesses, tree-lined streets, paved roadways, additional transit routes that serve the various neighborhoods, actively used parks, and safe neighborhoods.

POSTCARD FROM THE FUTURE

City of Washington & East Washington Borough Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan
Youth Focus Group - Washington High School, March 2011

It is the year 2025 and you have returned to the City of Washington and/or East Washington Borough for the first time since graduating high school. What has changed? Write a postcard to a friend/relative describing what you hope to see.

The city has changed so much since I have last been here. There is a brand new clean playground, the streets are cleaner now. The downtown buildings have gotten fixed up too. The sidewalks have been repaved and there's even a new building for kids and teenagers with sports areas and an arcade. Washington has changed immensely in a great way. There's more trees and plants around the city, it's brighter and more welcoming because of this.

POSTCARD FROM THE FUTURE

City of Washington & East Washington Borough Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan
Youth Focus Group - Washington High School, March 2011

It is the year 2025 and you have returned to the City of Washington and/or East Washington Borough for the first time since graduating high school. What has changed? Write a postcard to a friend/relative describing what you hope to see.

Washington has definitely changed throughout the years. It is still good old Washington but there are differences. Downtown has been redeveloped and new business has come into the city. It is in place of all the empty buildings that used to be there. Shopping is still in the same place but now surrounded by office buildings. The West End has been redeveloped and is now more safe and has better living conditions. East End is close to the same but some of the old, rundown houses have been torn down and replaced. Everything else is pretty much the same. Some things have been added up but besides that it is pretty similar.

Examples of Students' Postcards

The students were broken up into three (3) groups, given a map of the City and Borough, and asked to identify areas where they would like to see improvements.

Group 1

The first group divided their improvements into five categories: Housing Improvements and Building Renovations; Road and Sidewalk Improvements; Recreation Improvements; Bus Routes; and Business Development. Areas identified include Ward 8; the Central Business District; all public parks and playgrounds; and main roadways for road/sidewalk improvements and bus routes.



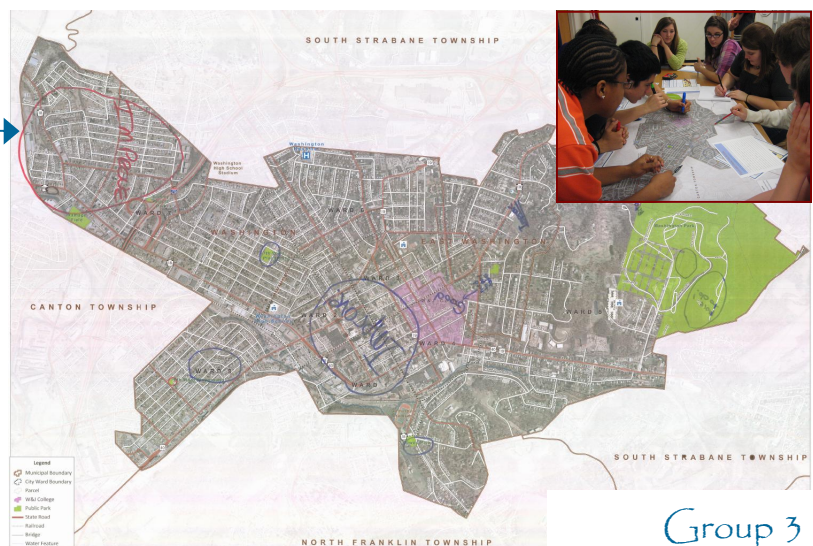
Group 2

The second group identified similar themes for improvements. Areas identified include the Central Business District and parking; Wards 7 and 8; all public parks and playgrounds; expansion of Wash Arts and Washington Elementary property as a living classroom; and road improvements.



Group 3

The third group also has a similar theme. Areas identified include the Central Business District; Wards 7 and 8 and East Washington Borough; and public parks and playgrounds (in particular, Washington Park, Dewey Park, and 7th Ward Playground).



Top 10 Priorities

Group 1:

1. Downtown Office Buildings Renovation
2. Park/Recreation Center
3. Wards 6 and 8 Housing Renovations
4. Road Improvements
5. Citywide Bus Routes
6. Small Business Incentives
7. New Housing near Washington Park
8. YMCA
9. New Teen Center
10. Active Police Force



Transit Shelter

Group 2:

1. More Businesses Downtown
2. Park Renovations
3. Demolish Abandoned Homes
4. Clean and Improve Street and Sidewalk Network
5. Upgrade Streets to be ADA Accessible
6. Expand Arts Programs
7. Expand Brownson House
8. Expand Vernon C. Neal Center
9. Beautification of Jefferson Avenue
10. Beautification of Washington



Washington Park

Group 3:

1. Improve Roads
2. Transportation System
3. Improve Housing
4. More Jobs
5. Attract Small Businesses Downtown
6. Improve All Playgrounds
7. Combine Police Forces
8. Brownson House
9. Movie/Arts Theatre
10. Add a Water Park to Washington Park



Main Street

5 Programs that Should be Offered

Group 1:

1. Concerts/Festivals
2. Winter Programs
3. Under 18 Club
4. Community Upkeep Events
5. Uptown Movie Theatre

Group 2:

1. Business Tax Incentives
2. Sports Teams
3. Arts/Theatre
4. Community Events
5. Teen Center

Group 3:

1. W&J Summer Camps—College Courses
2. Washington Park Festivals
3. Arts/Acting Summer Camps
4. Washington Park Summer Camp
5. After School Programs at W&J Football Field

1. **Welcome / Introduction**

Brandi Rosselli from Mackin opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. Sixteen people signed in.

2. **Project Description**

Brandi gave a presentation on the Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan including issues that have been identified to date as well as some recommendations that have been drafted to address the issues. The next steps for the project were outlined including a public meeting that will be held in October to further review draft recommendations and the process that both the City and Borough will undertake to adopt the plan.

3. **Group Discussion**

Meeting attendees provided feedback on the draft recommendations. The following input was given:

- Community identity is important
- LeMoyne Center is an asset for both communities, but it is primarily identified as a city asset (even though it is physically located in the Borough)
- There is a lack of recreation facilities especially for youth and seniors (facilities should be free or a low cost)
- Existing recreation facilities need to be maintained better
- Need a YMCA or a YWCA or some other indoor recreation space with community meeting rooms, computer rooms, etc.
- Need additional outdoor recreation space like an amphitheater
- Need to link the entire City and Borough to Washington Park – hard to get there now (especially if you live on the other side of the City) – perhaps offer shuttles
- Need better transportation options for the elderly and persons with disabilities
- Not enough youth programs
- Not enough senior and low income housing
- Marcellus shale drilling is an issue – people need to be informed of the benefits and issues
- Need to do door-to-door surveys to find out what citizens want to see for their community
- Too many group homes are concentrated in the Highland Ridge neighborhood
- Public Art is an important component to any community revitalization
- Need more communication with elected officials – want to know their opinions are heard
- Code enforcement / zoning needs to be more involved with new developments
- Businesses are encroaching on residential neighborhoods

- Highland Ridge's Elm Street manager is a good resource
- Citizen's Library and Nazareth Baptist church are historic resources
- Sight distance is a problem when making a left turn onto Central or Forest (off Highland Avenue)
- Wylie Avenue has no stop sign for turning right (off the interstate)
- There are no speed limit signs between Walgreens and the Rite Aid
- Need more street cleaning
- Need better recycling options
- Could utilize the people on probation to help with community service programs (volunteers)