



# City of Clairton Comprehensive Plan

Adopted March 8, 2011







The City of Clairton Comprehensive Plan was prepared with the assistance of many groups, organizations and individuals. In particular, the following persons should be recognized:

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Context	1-3
Why Plan	1-3
Keystone Principles	1-4
Smart Growth	1-6
State Water Plan	1-6
How to Use the Comprehensive Plan	1-7
Implementing Recommendations	1-7
Ordinance Updates	1-7
Review Development Plans	1-7
Annual Plan Review & Updates	1-8
Contiguous Municipalities Statement	1-9
Allegheny County Comprehensive Plan	1-9
Jefferson Hills Borough Comprehensive Plan	1-10
Twin Rivers Council of Governments Comprehensive Plan	1-10
Interrelationship Statement	1-11

## Chapter 2: Community Overview

Demographics	2-3
Population	2-3
Housing Characteristics	2-5
Economic Characteristics	2-7
Historic Resources	2-12
Industrial City	2-12
Historic Sites	2-13
Natural Resources	2-15
Water Resources	2-15
Environmental Concerns	2-16
Land Use	2-18
Residential	2-18

Commercial/Office	2-22
Industrial	2-23
Railroad/Utility	2-23
Public	2-23
Vacant	2-23
Public Recreation	2-24
 Community Services and Facilities	 2-25
Public Safety	2-25
Public Works	2-26
Educational Facilities and Services	2-26
Public Water and Sewer	2-27
Planning	2-27
 Parks and Recreation	 2-29
Public Parks	2-29
Educational Recreation Facilities	2-32
 Transportation	 2-33
Road Network	2-33
Bridges	2-36
Public Transit	2-36
Railroad	2-38
River Transportation	2-38
Pedestrian Network	2-39
 Economic Development	 2-42
Economic Corridors	2-42
Mon Valley Works: Clairton Coke Works Division	2-43
Koppers	2-43
 <i>Maps</i>	
<i>Map 2.1: Water Resources</i>	
<i>Map 2.2: Existing Land Use</i>	
<i>Map 2.3: Neighborhoods</i>	
<i>Map 2.4: Community Resources</i>	
<i>Map 2.5: Zoning Districts</i>	
<i>Map 2.6: Transportation Network</i>	



## Chapter 3: Needs Assessment

Public Involvement Process	3-3
Steering Committee	3-3
City-School Partnership Group	3-4
Website/Blog	3-4
Economic Development Focus Group	3-4
Surveys	3-4
Stakeholder Interviews	3-5
Youth Involvement	3-5
Public Meetings	3-6
Issue Identification	3-7
Vision Statement: Clairton 2020	3-7
Community Development Objectives	3-8
Assets, Opportunities and Challenges	3-9

## Chapter 4: Action Plan

Recommendations	4-3
Revitalize the multiple business districts to help grown and stabilize the local tax base to become a self sufficient community.	4-4
Build upon municipal services and partnerships to enhance efficiencies and productivity.	4-20
Promote sound land use planning through the protection of open space and the enhancement of natural and cultural assets	4-27
Provide additional social and recreational opportunities for residents of all ages through partnership with other organizations and communities.	4-31
Provide a diverse mix of safe housing options that will appeal to young professionals, families, and older residents.	4-36

Ensure that all municipal ordinances are consistent and compatible with the desired future growth and development patterns. 4-39

Improve mobility to, from, and within the City of Clairton by enhancing major transportation routes, public transportation options and pedestrian circulation and connections. 4-44

## Implementation Matrix

### *Maps*

*Map 4.1: Implementation*

*Map 4.2: Future Land Use*

### *Figures*

*Figure 4.1: Pocket Park Artistic Rendering*

*Figure 4.2: Streetscape Enhancements Artistic Rendering*

## Appendices

Appendix 1: Public Meeting Summaries

Appendix 2: Economic Development Focus Group Meeting Summary

Appendix 3: Youth Focus Group Meeting Summary

Appendix 4: References

# CITY OF CLAIRTON

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March 1, 2011

Mayor Richard L. Lattanzi and  
City Council  
City of Clairton  
551 Ravensburg Boulevard  
Clairton, Pennsylvania 15025-1297

Dear Mayor and Council:

The Clairton Planning Commission Board Members met on Monday, February 28, 2011 to discuss the comments on the City of Clairton Comprehensive Plan Draft and to make recommendations to Clairton City Council.

Their motion was to adopt the City of Clairton's Comprehensive Plan Final Draft of December, 2010 and their recommendation was to accept as is with amendments that were stipulated in the summary of comments and send on to Clairton City Council for approval.

If you should have any questions in regards to this matter, please feel free to contact me.

Respectfully,

Jeffery Potts  
Chairperson / Clairton Planning Commission





**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF CLAIRTON, COUNTY OF ALLEGHENY, COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA ADOPTING THE CITY OF CLAIRTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, DATED THIS EIGHTH DAY OF MARCH, 2011; AS PREPARED BY THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE AND FACILITATED BY MACKIN ENGINEERING COMPANY, PURSUANT TO ARTICLE III OF THE PENNSYLVANIA MUNICIPALITIES PLANNING CODE.**

Whereas, the City of Clairton Comprehensive Plan, which includes text, maps, charts and any other items which form the whole of the comprehensive plan and was made available for public review at the City of Clairton Municipal Building and the City of Clairton Public Library is attached hereto as exhibit "A"; and,

Whereas, the Comprehensive Plan was sent to all contiguous municipalities, the Clairton School District, and the Allegheny County Department of Economic Development for review and comment on December 6, 2010; in accordance with Section 302 of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) and,

Whereas, the City of Clairton has received no substantial comments from the contiguous municipalities, the School District, and the Allegheny County Department of Economic Development within the required forty-five (45) day comment period and,

Whereas, notice of a public hearing was forwarded to the Daily News to be advertised and published on Monday, February 21, 2011 and Monday, February 28, 2011; and,

Whereas, the City of Clairton Council held a public hearing on Tuesday, March 8, 2011 to hear and consider public comments, and the comments received at the public hearing were duly noted; and,

Whereas, the City of Clairton Council, after consideration of comments received has determined that the Comprehensive Plan, as originally set forth in Exhibit "A", should not be substantially revised in whole or in part; and,

Whereas, the City of Clairton Council has found the comprehensive plan is beneficial to the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of the City.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY OF CLAIRTON COUNCIL AND IS HEREBY RESOLVED AND ENACTED BY THE AUTHORITY OF THE SAME:

SECTION I. The City of Clairton Council, by this resolution, adopts the City of Clairton Comprehensive Plan as attached hereto as Exhibit "A", as pursuant to Article III of the MPC.

Page 2

Resolution No. 1619

SECTION II. Any and all previous comprehensive plans prepared for the City are hereby repealed.

**Resolved and enacted this 8th day of March 2011.**

ATTEST:



Richard D. Cannone  
Municipal Manager/Finance Director

City of Clairton Council



Richard L. Lattanzi  
Mayor

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The overall purpose of the Clairton Comprehensive Plan is to provide elected officials with a blueprint for the future. The plan will allow for community leaders to focus on implementation of projects that will enhance the quality of life for the residents in Clairton.

Since 1988, the city has been declared a financially distressed community under Act 47, causing the city to begin this update to its Comprehensive Plan to ensure investment is directed to the appropriate locations. The City of Clairton first completed a Comprehensive Plan in the 1960's with an update then completed in 1994.

**Chapter 1: Introduction** includes the following:

- **CONTEXT**
- **WHY PLAN**
  - Keystone Principles
  - Smart Growth
  - State Water Plan
- **HOW TO USE THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**
  - Implementing Recommendations
  - Ordinance Updates
  - Review Development Plans
  - Annual Plan Review and Updates
- **CONTIGUOUS MUNICIPALITIES STATEMENT**
  - Allegheny County Comprehensive Plan
  - Jefferson Hills Borough Comprehensive Plan
  - Twin Rivers Council of Governments Comprehensive Plan
- **INTERRELATIONSHIP STATEMENT**



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## CONTEXT

A comprehensive plan tells the story of a community. As such, this story begins by charting the roots of the City of Clairton in **Chapter 2: Community Overview**. The City's historic legacy leaves a distinct footprint on the neighborhood today that affects the way in which residents experience the community on a day-to-day basis.



*Source: Flickr.com, 2010*

The next part of the story describes the community today. The analysis portion of the plan – **Chapter 3: Needs Assessment** – is a collection of maps, information, and pictures that bring together information gathered from participants in the planning process, those living and working in Clairton. This assessment represents the most important part of the planning process because it provides a window into the community that helps everyone see the neighborhood in which they live in new ways and opens up new possibilities that may not have been apparent before. The result of this assessment is a set of Community Development Objectives organized around general themes that range from housing to recreation to economic development.

The last portion of the story is about Clairton's future, detailed in **Chapter 4: Action Plan**. Ideas collected from residents and other key stakeholders served as the inspiration for many recommendations. The recommendations are organized around the Community Development Objectives and are detailed and comprehensive in scope including images, case studies, and potential costs, all of which aim to illustrate how the City could look and function in the future.

Now is a critical time in Clairton's ongoing story. This resident-driven plan was organized by the City Council on behalf of the community. It is the result of community members and stakeholders, empowered as proactive participants, documenting their collective vision for the future.

## WHY PLAN

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Code (MPC), Act 247 of 1968, as reenacted and amended, provides the legal authority to municipalities to prepare and adopt comprehensive plans. A comprehensive plan is both a physical plan and a policy document, intended to guide the development of a community. A comprehensive plan is also long range, in that it is a plan for ten to twenty years. It is also "utopian" in the sense that it is a picture of what the community desires to become; however, it is also realistic with regard to anticipated social, economic, and political constraints. The term comprehensive suggests exactly what it means—the plan covers the entire City of Clairton geographically, and it encompasses all the

functions that make the community work, and considers the interrelationships of these functions.

Comprehensive planning is also a continuous process. Formulation of this text and the accompanying maps is not the ultimate objective. No single document can pose solutions to all community needs so the comprehensive plan must be flexible and periodically updated based on changing conditions as well as the shifting of resources.



*Source: Mackin Photo, 2010*



*Source: Flickr.com, 2010*

Any good comprehensive plan uses the foundation that if a community knows where it wants to go, it possesses better prospects of getting there. This plan attempts to recognize the relationships between diverse development goals and objectives and establishes a meaningful basis for the resolution of conflicts. The plan intends to provide the essential background and perspective for decision-making in respect to regulations, land subdivisions, public investments, and capital improvement programs. The

comprehensive plan also provides guidance to businesspersons, investors, and developers regarding the development of policies and the future direction and intensity of growth. For the community at large, the plan (if properly implemented) assures that land use conflicts will be resolved if not avoided, misuses of land will be kept at a minimum, traffic congestion will be minimized or averted, community facilities will be located in areas where people can best use them, and growth will take place in an orderly, rational manner.

### KEYSTONE PRINCIPLES

On May 31, 2005, the Pennsylvania Economic Development Cabinet and its working group, the Interagency Land Use Team, created and adopted the Keystone Principles & Criteria for Growth, Investment & Resource Conservation (Keystone Principles for short).

**Redevelop First** – funding preference to reuse and redevelop “brownfield” and previously developed sites in urban, suburban, and rural communities for economic activity that creates jobs, housing, mixed use development, and recreational assets

**Provide Efficient Infrastructure** – “Fix it first” – use and improve existing infrastructure; require private and public expansions of service to be consistent with approved comprehensive plans and implementing ordinances

**Concentrate Development** – support infill and “greenfield” development that is compact, conserves land, and is integrated with existing or planned transportation, water and sewer services, and schools

**Increase Job Opportunities** – invest in businesses that offer good paying, high quality jobs, and that are located near existing or planned water & sewer infrastructure, housing, existing workforce, and transportation access (highway or transit)

**Foster Sustainable Businesses** – strengthen natural resource based businesses that use sustainable practices in energy production and use, agriculture, forestry, fisheries, recreation and tourism

**Restore and Enhance the Environment** – conserve and restore environmentally sensitive lands and natural areas for ecological health, biodiversity and wildlife habitat

**Enhance Recreational and Heritage Resources** – maintain and improve recreational and heritage assets and infrastructure

**Expand Housing Opportunities** – support the construction and rehabilitation of housing of all types to meet the needs of people of all incomes and abilities

**Plan Regionally; Implement Locally** – support multi-municipal, county and local government planning and implementation that has broad public input and support and is consistent with these principles

**Be Fair** – support equitable sharing of the benefits and burdens of development

The Keystone Principles do not replace state agency program guidelines or criteria, but rather, at each agency’s discretion, they will either be integrated into existing program criteria or used as additional, favorable considerations in the scoring or decision-making process. The Principles encourage multifaceted project development that will integrate programs and funding sources from a variety of state agencies into a comprehensive strategy to address issues affecting whole communities (<http://www.newpa.com/default.aspx?id=435>).

## SMART GROWTH

Smart growth recognizes connections between development and quality of life and attempts to leverage new growth to improve the community. While there is no "one-size-fits-all" solution, successful communities tend to have one thing in common--a vision of where they want to go and of what things they value in their community--and their plans for development reflect these values. The following are principles of smart growth (<http://www.smartgrowth.org/default.asp>):

- ❖ Create Range of Housing Opportunities and Choices
- ❖ Create Walkable Neighborhoods
- ❖ Encourage Community and Stakeholder Collaboration
- ❖ Foster Distinctive, Attractive Communities with a Strong Sense of Place
- ❖ Make Development Decisions Predictable, Fair and Cost Effective
- ❖ Mix Land Uses
- ❖ Preserve Open Space, Farmland, Natural Beauty and Critical Environmental Areas
- ❖ Provide a Variety of Transportation Choices
- ❖ Strengthen and Direct Development Towards Existing Communities
- ❖ Take Advantage of Compact Building Design

## STATE WATER PLAN

In recognition of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, Article III, Section 301 (b), the City of Clairton Comprehensive Plan includes recommendations to provide a reliable supply of water and recommends provisions aimed at adequately protecting water supply sources. In particular, **Community Objective 3** aims to promote sound land use planning through the protection of open space and the enhancement of natural and cultural assets (therefore directing development to areas with appropriate infrastructure). In addition, the City of Clairton Comprehensive Plan is in conformance with the Pennsylvania State Water and recognizes that:

- ❖ Lawful activities such as extraction of minerals impact water supply sources and such activities are governed by statutes regulating mineral extraction that specify replacement and restoration of water supplies affected by such activities.
- ❖ Commercial agriculture production influences water supply sources.

## HOW TO USE THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The City of Clairton Comprehensive Plan should be used by the City as a guide for making decisions regarding new development and redevelopment as well as updating city ordinances. In addition, the plan should be reviewed annually and updated as needed.

### IMPLEMENTING RECOMMENDATIONS

The City of Clairton Comprehensive Plan includes recommendations that will assist the City in achieving the identified vision and goals. The ease of implementing recommendations was taken into account during the compilation of the Implementation Matrix. Therefore, many high priority items are those which can be implemented with relative ease due to low cost or time commitments and not necessarily because they are vital to the future of the City.



*Source: Mackin Photo, 2010*

### ORDINANCE UPDATES

The Comprehensive Plan should serve as a guide for future zoning and subdivision and land development ordinance revisions following adoption of the plan. Due to the fact that the City's land use ordinances are the legal basis for managing the location, intensity and character of development within the City's boundaries, it is vital that they are consistent with the vision and recommendations within the Comprehensive Plan.

### REVIEW DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Until updates are made to the City's ordinances to make them consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, elected and appointed officials of the City (including Council, Planning Commission and the Zoning Hearing Board) should use the Comprehensive Plan to evaluate proposed development. Questions that Planning Commission members and municipal officials should ask include:

- ❖ Is the proposed development consistent with the Future Land Use Plan?
- ❖ How will this development affect the community or adjacent communities?
- ❖ Does the proposed development fit the scale and intended character of a district / area?
- ❖ How will adjacent sidewalks and streets fit together?

- ❖ Where and what type of landscaping is provided?
- ❖ How much traffic will be generated?
- ❖ How will stormwater runoff be handled?

## ANNUAL PLAN REVIEW & UPDATES

The City Planning Commission has many roles as set forth in the Municipalities Planning Code (MPC). In particular the City's Planning Commission is the entity responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Commission is to be the interpreter of the Comprehensive Plan and make recommendations as to whether or not proposed actions are in accordance with the objectives of the adopted plan. In order to help achieve successful implementation of the plan, it is recommended that the City Planning Commission perform the following actions:

- ❖ Evaluate the Comprehensive Plan annually and, if necessary, make modifications to ensure it remains useful in terms of guiding decisions regarding the development and/or redevelopment of the City.
- ❖ Prepare and submit an annual written report to the City Council and residents, summarizing this evaluation of the Comprehensive Plan, the past year's implementation activities, the upcoming planned implementation activities, and crucial issues that will, or may, impact the community.



## CONTIGUOUS MUNICIPALITIES STATEMENT

As per Article III, Section 301 (5) of the MPC, the relationship of existing and proposed development in the City of Clairton to existing and proposed plans of adjacent municipalities and the objectives of the region were analyzed. The following plans and studies were reviewed to determine consistency of proposed development:

### ALLEGHENY COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Allegheny Places, the Allegheny County Comprehensive Plan, was reviewed to ensure that the City of Clairton Comprehensive Plan is consistent with the goals and objectives of Allegheny County. Allegheny Places contains recommendations to guide the County and its municipalities in the future, as outlined in the following:

- ❖ Provide equitable access to opportunities
- ❖ Transform brownfields into attractive destinations
- ❖ Stimulate economic activity through transit oriented development
- ❖ Link the transportation system with hubs such as Oakland, Downtown Pittsburgh and the Airport
- ❖ Connect communities and amenities via greenways
- ❖ Provide good paying, stable jobs and high quality housing

Allegheny Places specifically calls out Clairton as a “Community Downtown Place” as well as a “Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Place.” Community Downtown Places are targeted to build upon existing businesses and infrastructure in older communities. Additional business development, such as that which occurs in a mixed use setting, is encouraged in these places. The TOD Places are envisioned to combine redevelopment with new development in areas with access to transit lines. These Places are also an important component of the County’s Equity and Diversity Plan since many people who do not have cars, including the disabled, elderly, young, and low-income, depend on transit.

The Clairton Comprehensive Plan seeks to advance the County’s vision by implementing these Places throughout the City, in particular by closely investigating the existing business districts to provide strategy to encourage revitalization of these areas as well as to maximize the use of the available transit within and around the City. Therefore the Clairton Comprehensive Plan is in compliance with Allegheny Places.

## JEFFERSON HILLS BOROUGH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

In June of 2010, Jefferson Hills Borough adopted their Comprehensive Plan, which included the following goals to help guide the plan.

- ❖ Provide and maintain adequate public infrastructure
- ❖ Expand the Borough's tax base
- ❖ Manage growth in undeveloped areas
- ❖ Provide an adequate number of new quality houses
- ❖ Ensure the Borough's land use and development ordinances are consistent with the Borough priorities and the MPC
- ❖ Make land use decisions based on the Comprehensive Plan
- ❖ Preserve the single family character
- ❖ Promote awareness and conservation of sensitive natural resources

The goals and objectives identified for the Clairton Comprehensive Plan fully support those included in the Jefferson Hills Comprehensive Plan, and are very similar in nature. In addition, the Future Land Use map for Jefferson Hills is also consistent with the Future Land Use map for Clairton. The adjacent areas in Jefferson Hills have been classified as greenway, conservation or residential, which is compatible with the residential and park classifications for Clairton.

## TWIN RIVERS COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Twin Rivers Council of Governments (COG) consists of fourteen municipalities in both Allegheny and Westmoreland Counties and encompasses most of the geographic area between the Monongahela and Youghiogheny Rivers. The communities include Elizabeth Borough, Elizabeth Township, Forward Township, Glassport Borough, Liberty Borough, Lincoln Borough, Madison Borough, the City of McKeesport, Port Vue Borough, South Versailles Township, Versailles Borough, West Mifflin Borough, West Newton Borough, and White Oak Borough. Of these, Elizabeth Borough, Liberty Borough, and West Mifflin Borough are immediately adjacent to the City of Clairton.

The Comprehensive Plan for these communities, adopted in 2003, examines land use, transportation, community facilities and services, and economic development. The plan evaluates existing conditions and provides recommendations to address shortcomings or anticipated future patterns; these recommendations are sometimes community-specific but in many cases are broken down by the type of community they pertain to (i.e. rural areas, older urban areas, etc.) in recognition of the fact that many of these communities are facing identical or similar issues. For older urban areas, such as Elizabeth and portions of Liberty,



reinvestment and infill is recommended; new residential and commercial development should be steered away from rural areas and into older urban ones as a way to both preserve scenic integrity and reinvigorate the traditional towns of the river valley. In West Mifflin, economic development in terms of more medium and heavy industrial uses should continue to be encouraged through creative financing strategies and site assistance; this includes maintaining the key employer of USS Irvine Works along New England Road, not far from the City of Clairton. The City of Clairton Comprehensive Plan supports these recommendations and seeks to complement them through its community development objectives.

## **INTERRELATIONSHIP STATEMENT**

The synthesis of interrelated activities to resolve issues and problems is an important foundation to good community planning. In this regard, there are linkages among the elements, goals, and recommendations of the City of Clairton Comprehensive Plan. All are related and should further the overall vision which is to maintain the character of the municipality while still allowing for complementary and orderly development.



In order to develop specific recommendations for the City of Clairton the existing conditions of the City must be documented, analyzed, and understood. This chapter is an extensive assessment of how Clairton was formed and what the City looks today. This chapter includes:

- **DEMOGRAPHICS**
  - Population
  - Housing Characteristics
  - Economic Characteristics
- **HISTORIC RESOURCES**
  - The Industrial City
  - Historic Sites
- **NATURAL RESOURCES**
  - Water Resources
  - Environmental Concerns
- **LAND USE**
  - Residential
  - Commercial/Office
  - Industrial
  - Railroad/Utility
  - Public
  - Vacant
  - Public Recreation
- **COMMUNITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES**
  - Public Safety
  - Public Works
  - Educational Facilities and Services
  - Public Water and Sewer
  - Planning
- **PARKS AND RECREATION**
  - Public Parks
- **TRANSPORTATION**
  - Road Network
  - Bridges
  - Public Transit
  - Railroad
  - River Transportation
  - Pedestrian Network
- **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**
  - Economic Corridors
  - Mon Valley Works: Clairton Coke Works
  - Koppers



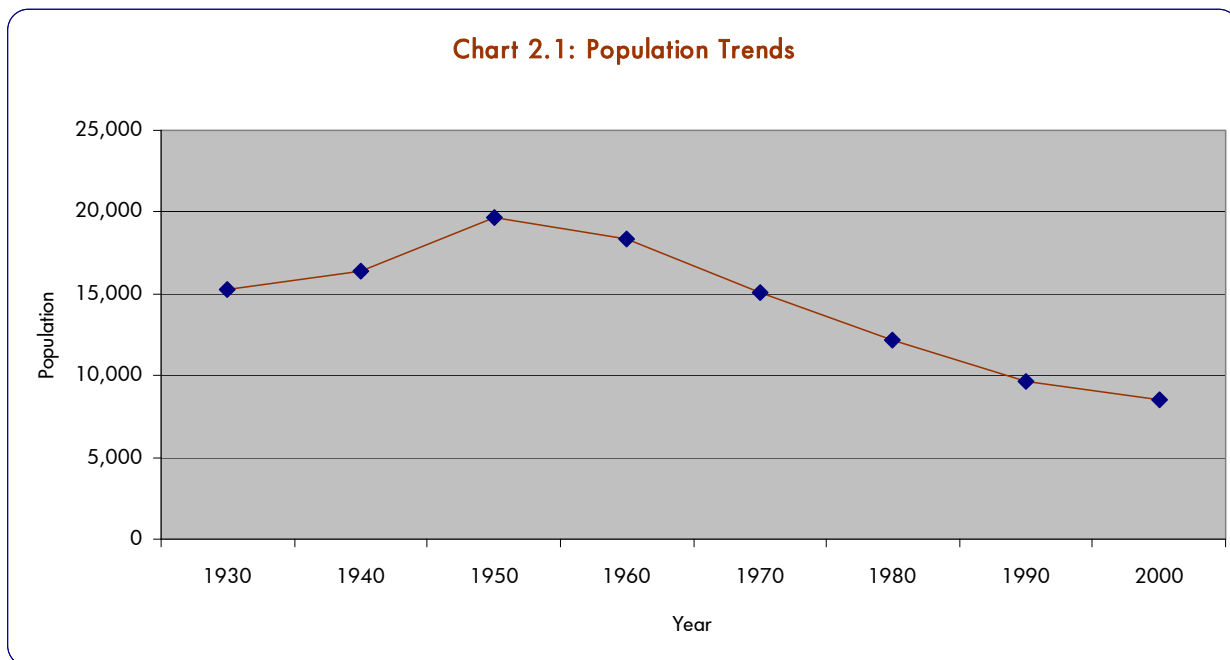
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## DEMOGRAPHICS

This section examines the population composition and socio-economic status of residents in the City of Clairton to determine trends and derive conclusions. Unless otherwise noted, data is derived from the United States Census Bureau's 2000 Decennial Census.

### POPULATION

Population trends in Clairton are typical of what is expected of southwestern Pennsylvania. The City of Clairton had a robust population between the 1930s and 1950s during the economic boom in the Pittsburgh region. The peak population of 19,652 occurred in 1950. After the 1950s the population began to decline steadily and in 2000 it was at 8,491 people, as shown in *Chart 2.1: Population Trends*.

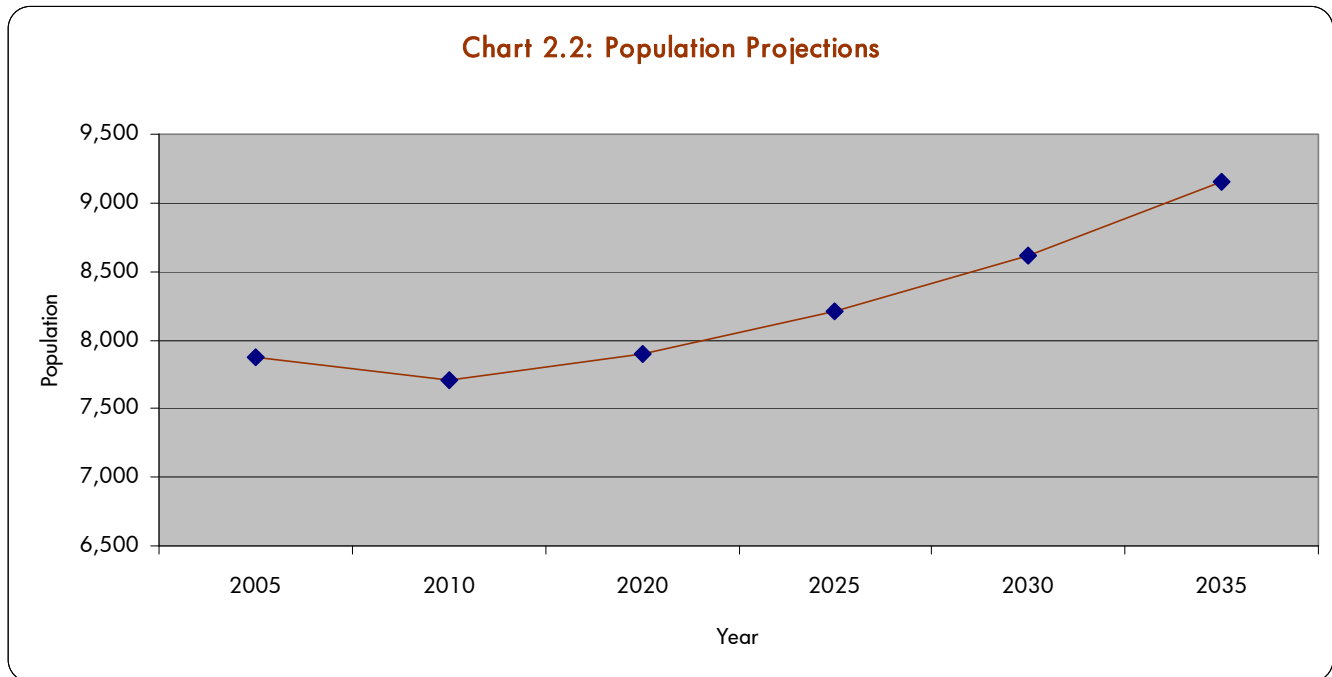


Source: US Census 2000

### PROJECTIONS

Population projections can be used to understand the pace of growth or decline in a community. The Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC) is the metropolitan planning agency for a ten-county region in southwestern Pennsylvania; including Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Lawrence, Washington, and Westmoreland Counties, as well as the City of Pittsburgh. SPC adopted the Cycle VIII forecast on June 28, 2007, which includes population projections by municipality and county for 2010, 2020, 2025, 2030, and 2035; using 2005 estimates as the base year. *Chart 2.2: Population Projections* depicts the projections for the City of Clairton. As the chart illustrates, the population is projected to decline from 2005 to 2010 but then grow to 9,157 persons by 2035.

It is important to note that many factors will ultimately influence population change, such as unforeseen economic growth or decline, new infrastructure projects, etc., and that a projection is not necessarily a hard and fast prediction of future population.



Source: Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission, 2007

### RACE/GENDER

According to the US Census Bureau, Clairton is approximately 69 percent white, with 28 percent of the population reporting as African-American. Approximately 54 percent of the City reports as female and 45 percent as male.

### AGE

The type and level of services provided by a municipality are influenced by the age of residents. For instance, growth in the school age population will affect the school district, demand for daycare and preschools, and playground facilities. Growth in the retirement to senior citizen age groups will often result in requests for community services, housing, recreational options and transportation services geared for persons with declining mobility.

The median age in the City of Clairton is 42.1 years, which is much older in comparison to Allegheny County's median age of 39.6 and Pennsylvania's 38 years. However, the City does have a significant younger population as well as 24 percent are classified as under 18 years of age.

Table 2.1: Age	
Age Range	% of Total
Under 5	5.8%
5 to 9	6.3%
10 to 14	6.5%
15 to 19	5.4%
20 to 24	5.3%
25 to 34	11.7%
35 to 44	13.4%
45 to 54	13.4%
55 to 59	4.1%
60 to 64	4.2%
65 to 74	10.9%
75 to 84	9.4%
Over 84	3.7%

Source: US Census, 2000

### HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

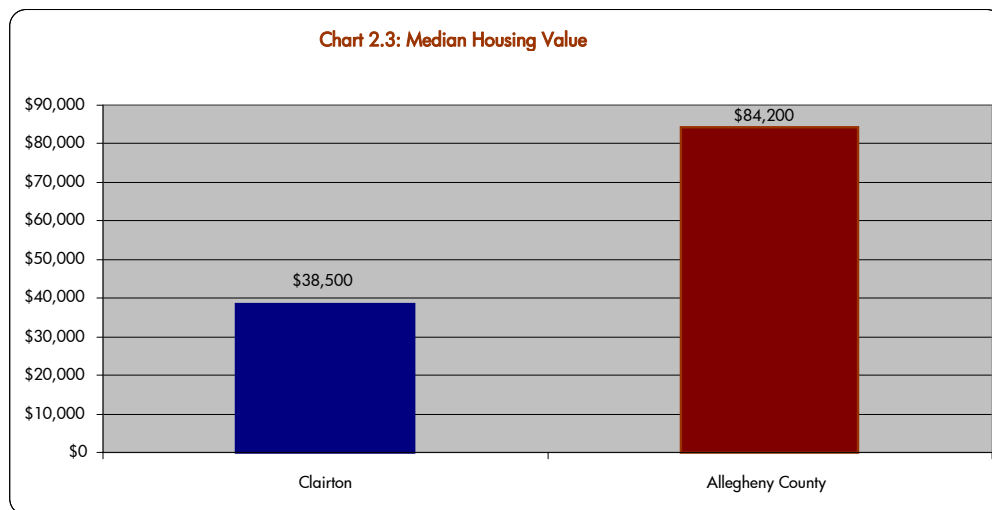
This section will examine current housing conditions and trends in order to develop recommendations on future housing needs within the City of Clairton.

#### HOME OWNERSHIP

In the City of Clairton there is a high rate of home ownership with 66.8 percent of residents owning their own home and 33.2 percent renting. Within the City there are a total of 4,350 housing units, of which 85.3 percent are occupied and 14.7 percent are vacant. Of the vacant housing units, 3.3 percent are homeowners and 13.9 percent are rentals. This illustrates a high housing vacancy rate as typical housing vacancy rates average from five to six percent.

#### VALUE OF HOMES

The value of homes plays an important role in the safety, vitality, and character of the overall community. As shown in *Chart 2.3: Median Housing Value* the median housing value was \$38,500, which is significantly lower than Allegheny County's median value of \$84,200 and indicates a lack of investment in the Clairton housing market. In addition, a recent housing study by RealSTATs, a local real estate information company, revealed that Clairton had the steepest drop in home prices in Allegheny County, 43 percent between 2005 and 2008 (2009, September 23 Pittsburgh Post-Gazette).



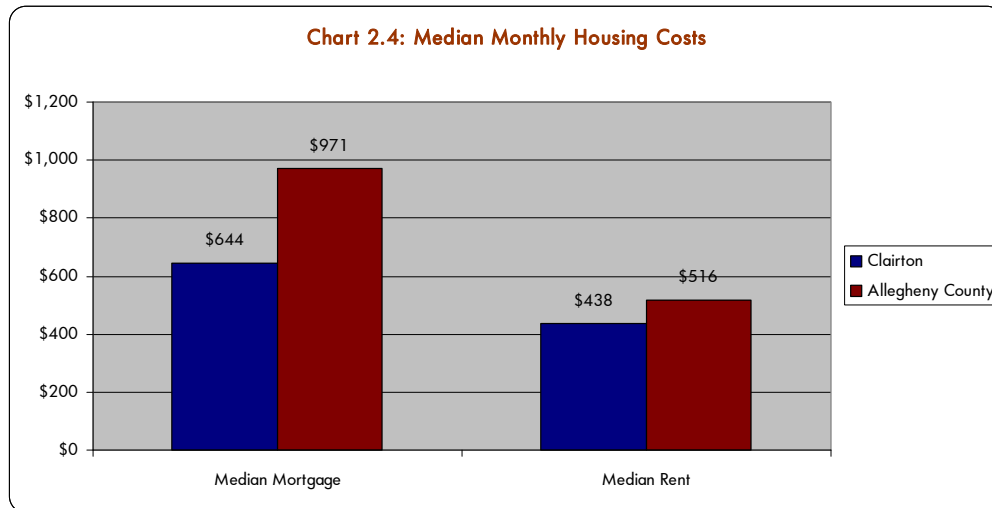
Source: US Census, 2000

#### AGE OF HOUSING

Age of housing is one indicator of housing condition and value. Older housing may require more maintenance and renovation than newer housing. The median year for residential structures in Clairton is 1942, compared to Allegheny County at 1952.

### HOUSING COSTS

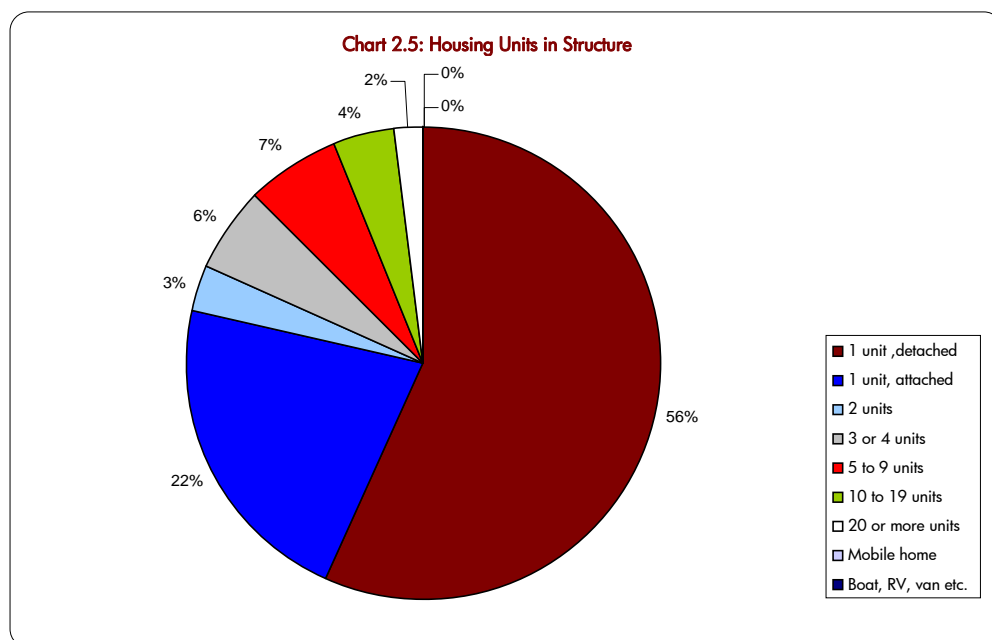
Housing costs in the City of Clairton are relatively low compared to Allegheny County's values. Approximately 49 percent of residents in Clairton have a mortgage and pay an average of \$644 a month compared to \$971 in Allegheny County. Median rent in Clairton (\$438) was also lower than Allegheny County (\$516).



Source: US Census, 2000

### TYPE OF HOUSING

Housing in Clairton consists mainly of single-family homes; however the City does have a significant amount of row homes or town homes. *Chart 2.5: Housing Units in Structure* depicts the type of housing within the City of Clairton.



Source: US Census, 2000



## ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

The economy and labor force within a community plays an important role in the overall financial shape of a municipality and its residents. This section will examine workforce characteristics.

### EMPLOYMENT STATUS

The City of Clairton has a higher number of residents that are not in the labor force when compared to Allegheny County as shown on *Table 2.2: Employment*. The unemployment rate in 2000 in Clairton was 3.4 percent, which at the time was actually lower than the rate for Allegheny County at 3.7 percent. Due to the recent economic downturn and recession that has affected the United States the unemployment rate has dramatically increased. Allegheny County's unemployment rate in October of 2009 was at 7.3 percent, a significant increase. (Source: <http://www.bls.gov/ro3/palaus.htm>).

Table 2.2: Employment		
	City of Clairton	Allegheny County
In labor force:	51.0%	61.1%
In Armed Forces	0.0%	0.1%
Civilian:	51.0%	61.1%
Employed	47.6%	57.3%
Unemployed	3.4%	3.7%
Not in labor force	49.0%	38.9%

Source: US Census, 2000

### EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

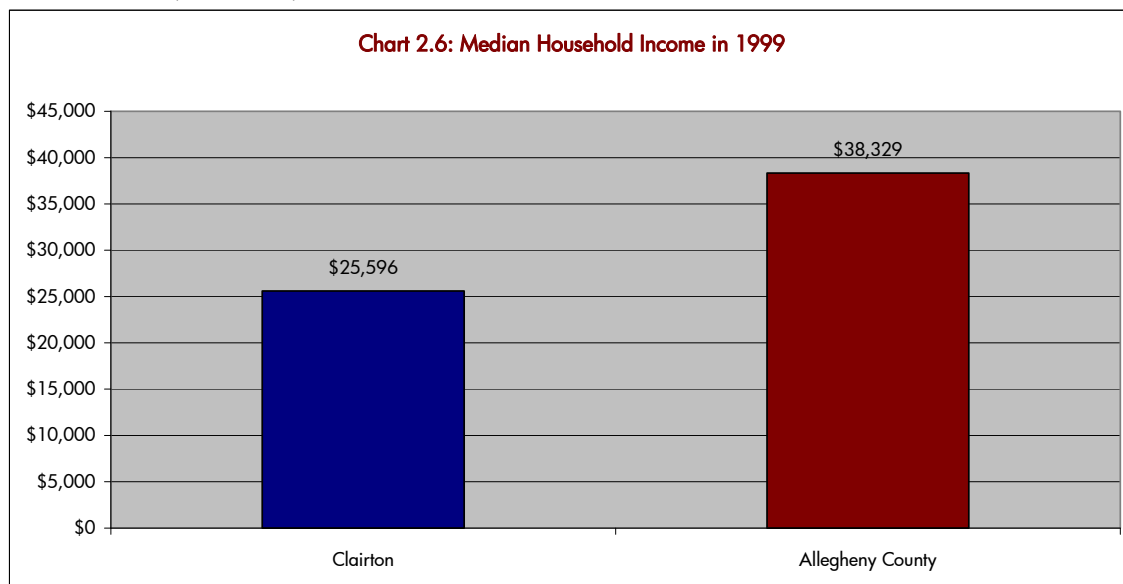
Of those employed in Clairton the main industry is educational, health, and social services as displayed in *Table 2.3: Employment by Industry*. Other high employment sectors for Clairton residents include retail trade; manufacturing; arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services. Compared to Allegheny County, Clairton has more residents in manufacturing and retail trade and fewer residents in finance, insurance, real estate and rental and leasing; professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services.

Table 2.3: Employment by Industry		
	Clairton	Allegheny County
Total:		
Educational, health and social services	24.8%	24.4%
Retail trade	15.7%	11.9%
Manufacturing	12.6%	9.0%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	11.9%	8.2%
Finance, insurance, real estate and rental and leasing:	6.4%	8.5%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	5.8%	6.0%
Construction	5.6%	5.4%
Other services	5.1%	5.1%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	4.3%	11.2%
Public administration	3.9%	3.3%
Information	2.3%	3.2%
Wholesale trade	1.5%	3.4%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining:	0.0%	0.2%

Source: US Census, 2000

## MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

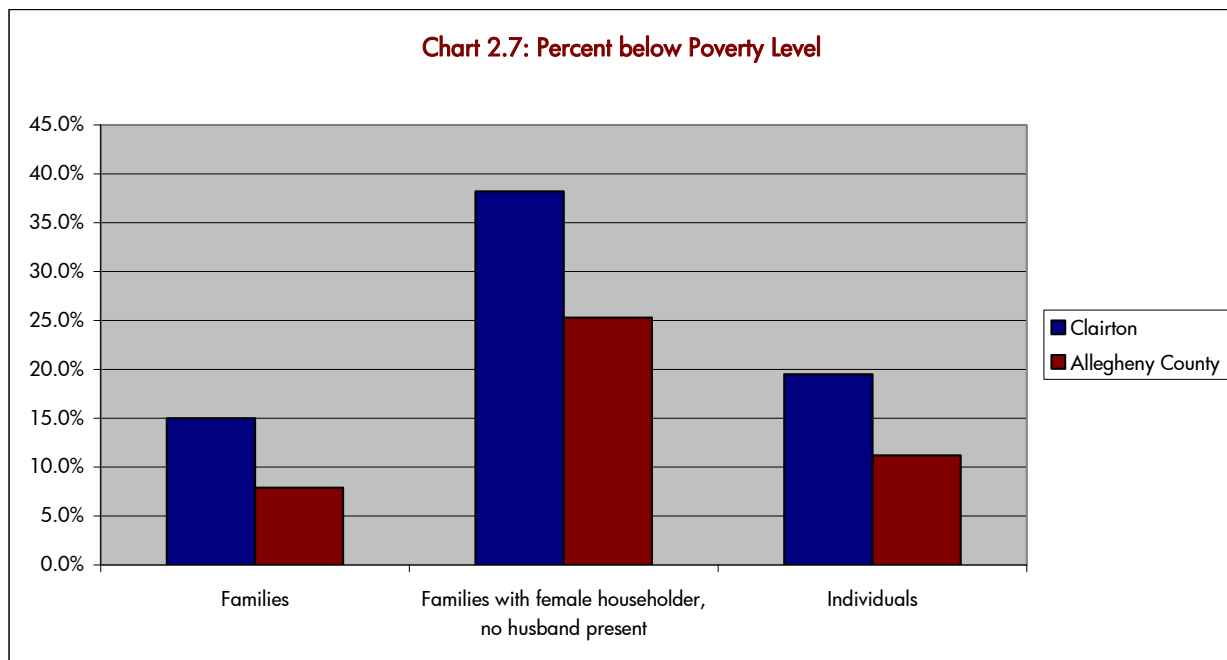
The average median household income in Clairton is \$25,596, which is significantly lower than Allegheny County's median of \$38,329. This could be attributed to the industry sectors that employ residents in Clairton (manufacturing, retail, etc.) as they are typically lower paying jobs than professional services, finance, and insurance.



Source: US Census, 2000

### POVERTY STATUS

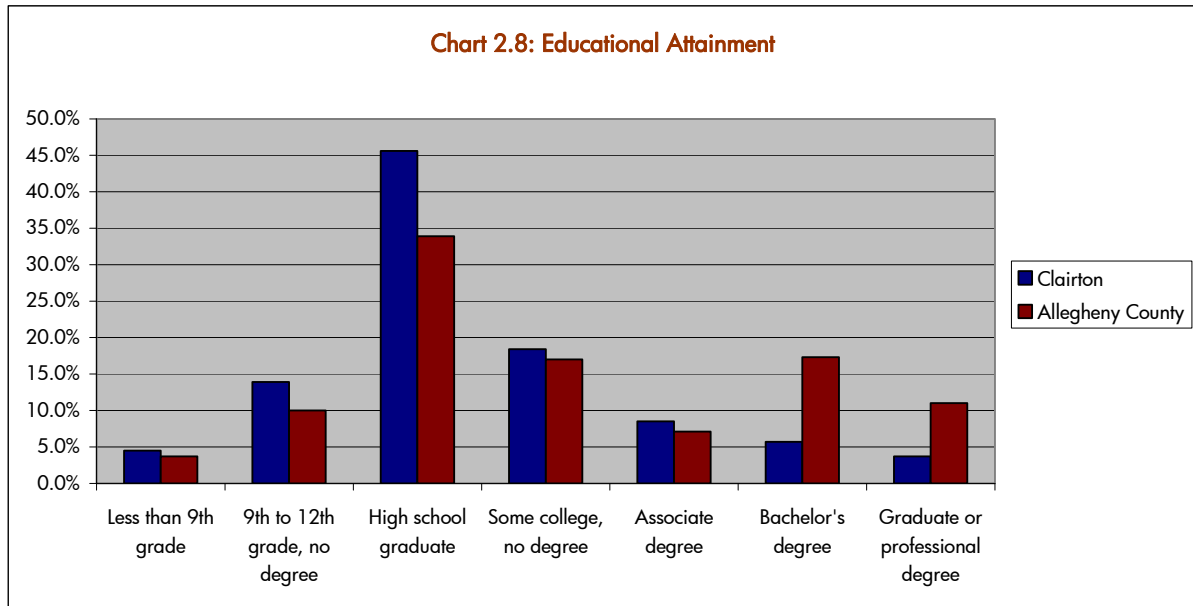
As the median household income in Clairton is significantly lower than Allegheny County, it is also important to look at the poverty status to determine how many residents within the City are struggling financially. *Chart 2.7: Percent below Poverty Level* illustrates that a considerable amount of residents within Clairton are financially unstable when compared to Allegheny County. Of the three groups shown below, the most impoverished are families with a female householder, no husband present with 38.2 percent below poverty level compared to 25.3 percent in Allegheny County.



Source: US Census, 2000

### EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Educational attainment also plays a critical role in the type of job and income a person receives. While more people graduate high school in Clairton than in Allegheny County, most graduates are not furthering their education by attending and graduating college. A very small number of Clairton residents have received a Bachelor's Degree or higher (9.4%) compared to Allegheny County (28.3%), shown in *Chart 2.8: Educational Attainment*.



Source: US Census, 2000

## PLACE OF WORK

Most employed residents of Clairton do not travel far from home to their occupation as shown on **Table 2.4: Place of Work for Clairton Residents**. The City of Pittsburgh employed over 23 percent of the workforce in the City of Clairton and a sizeable portion of Clairton residents work within the Clairton municipal boundaries. Residents also work in West Mifflin, Pleasant Hills, McKeesport, and Jefferson Hills, which are all very close in driving distance to Clairton.

Table 2.4: Place of Work for Clairton Residents				
#1	#2	#3	#4	#5
City of Pittsburgh-Allegheny County (23.2%)	City of Clairton-Allegheny County (20.6%)	West Mifflin Borough-Allegheny County (15.7%)	Pleasant Hills Borough-Allegheny County (7.5%)	City of McKeesport-Allegheny County (4.5%)

Source: US Census, 2000

People who commute to the City of Clairton for employment are shown in **Table 2.5: Place of Residence**. As mentioned previously a sizeable portion of Clairton residents work within the municipality. Residents in surrounding municipalities, such as Pittsburgh, Jefferson Hills Borough, and Elizabeth Township also commute to Clairton for employment.

**Table 2.5: Place of Residence of Clairton Workforce**

	<b>Residence</b>
#1	City of Clairton, Allegheny County (19.2%)
#2	City of Pittsburgh, Allegheny County (6.2%)
#3	Jefferson Hills Borough, Allegheny County (5.4%)
#4	Rostraver Township, Westmoreland County (3.3%)
#5	Union Township, Washington County (1.8%)

Source: US Census, 2000

**Table 2.6: County Residence of Clairton Workforce**

<b>County</b>	<b>% of Workforce</b>
Allegheny County	64.5%
Westmoreland County	15.0%
Washington County	9.1%
Fayette County	8.1%
Beaver County	1.2%
Butler County	1.1%
Indiana County	0.3%
Armstrong County	0.3%
Clarion County	0.2%
Crawford County	0.1%
Jefferson County	0.1%
Somerset County	0.1%
Total	100%

Source: US Census, 2000

While most of the workforce is from Allegheny County there are a significant number of employees that are from other counties as displayed in *Table 2.6: County Residence of Clairton Workforce*. A number of residents in the neighboring counties of Washington and Westmoreland travel to Clairton for employment as well as Fayette County residents. This could be attributed to US Steel, a major regional employer, being located within the City of Clairton.

## HISTORIC RESOURCES

The City of Clairton and its surroundings can trace its beginnings back to the early days of pioneer settlement in the eighteenth century. The city at one point was part of Mifflin Township, which was one of the three largest of the original townships in Allegheny County. Because travel to local courts and offices at the time was difficult and often expensive, in 1827, the southern portion of Mifflin Township broke off and formed the Township of Jefferson. At the time of its creation, Jefferson Township included much of what today comprises Baldwin Borough, Jefferson Hills Borough, Pleasant Hills Borough, and West Elizabeth Borough, as well as the City of Clairton.

For much of the first century of its existence, the Clairton area was primarily a rural, agricultural community that consisted of scattered farmsteads and small village hamlets. Most of these hamlets were concentrated settlements that arose due to the discovery and exploration of coal resources. These early settlements included Coal Valley, Peters Creek, Wilson, and Blair. As river navigation was the primary means of transport in those days, the Clairton area had the advantage of one of the earliest of the ferries due to its location on the Monongahela River. The location of the ferry in Clairton was an excellent fording place and therefore became an important point for river commerce.

Coal quickly became the primary industry associated with the growing area. Coal was heavily mined in the hills of Clairton and surrounding territory on both sides of the river. Early mining operations included those of R.M Blackburn (later the Foster Coal Company) and the John O'Neill Coal Company at Coal Valley.

*The historic profile of the City of Clairton was summarized from the information contained on the Mifflin Township Historical Society website (<http://www.mifflintownship.org>), from a website entitled "Early History of the Peters Creek Valley and the First Settlers" (<http://www.15122.com/YOHOGANIA/ClairtonHistory/clairtonhistory.htm>) and from the book "Elizabeth and Her Neighbors".*

## THE INDUSTRIAL CITY

Perhaps the most significant development, however, came in 1899, when large portions of the land closest to the Monongahela River were bought from by Henry Clay Frick, who by that time was an executive with Carnegie Steel. It was through his influence that the first of the many great manufacturing industries were located in Clairton and the town was officially established.

The new project along the river, named the St. Clair Steel Company, by Frick, was forward-thinking in several regards. In addition to erecting three blast furnaces, a network of rail tracks in the mill yard that connected to the existing Pennsylvania Railroad line, and a bridge over the river to connect to the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie line on the eastern shore, Frick also created the St. Clair Improvement Company. This organization began a project for establishing what was to be a model

town near the mill, and the new settlement included several hundred homes, a schoolhouse, a bank, a hotel, graded and paved streets, sewers, water and electric, a rarity at that time.

Around the year 1903 the steel works was acquired by the Carnegie Steel Company, a subsidiary of the newly created United States Steel Corporation, and in time its operations expanded to include the creation of a coking facility, the largest and most modern facility of its kind in the world.

By 1920, Clairton had grown and flourished and in November of that year, the Boroughs of Clairton, Wilson, and Blair, and the small unincorporated areas of Mendelssohn and Coal Valley, voted to become one municipality, a city of the third class. At the time, it was the third third-class city in Allegheny County, its two predecessors being the similarly industrial-aligned communities of McKeesport and Duquesne.

### HISTORIC SITES

As the City of Clairton has great historical roots there are several sites that are worth noting due to their historical value to the industrial age. While there are no sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the City does have one site that is listed as eligible.

The National Register of Historic Places includes districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association that are of significant value in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture. Properties must be at least 50 years old, unless they are of exceptionally significant value (National Park Service, 2006). The criteria used to determine whether or not a site is of national significance include the following:

- ❖ associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- ❖ associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

The eligible site located within the City of Clairton include:

- ❖ Monongahela River Navigation System

Other historical sites that played an important role in the formation and development of Clairton were identified throughout the planning process:

- ❖ St. Paulinus Church

St. Paulinus was established in 1923 to meet the needs of the Catholic community in what was then Wilson Borough. Church services were held in Walnut School and the Municipal Building. In the 1930's the church purchased land and parishioners built the church building. The stone came from a local quarry, the roof came from a sheriff's sale, and lumber came from old buildings in the area. The church was then renovated in 1976. In 1994, the church was merged with St. Clare of Assisi and St. Joseph due to declining population. As time went on the new parish could only support one church building and St. Paulinus Church closed in September of 2007 and is now vacant. (Source: Roman Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh, 2009)

### ❖ Peters Creek Cemetery

The Peters Creek Cemetery is located where Peters Creek flows into the Monongahela River along State Route 837 and many of the Clairton Areas earliest pioneers are buried here. One of the earliest dates on the tombstones is 1789. This area is also well known as an Indian Burial Ground and Indian camp. Skeletons, arrowheads, and pieces of pottery have been found buried here. The Pennsylvania Railroad was widened in 1889 and 1890 and a portion of the cemetery was disturbed. The remains were then moved and buried in a common grave, location unknown.



*Source: Mackin Photo, 2010*

The local Boy Scout troop has developed a path to access the burial grounds off of State Route 837.

### ❖ Central Park

An amusement park, called Central Park, was located in Clairton where US Steel now stands. The amusement park was home to a dancing pavilion, open dining room, and refreshment stands. A race-track was also nearby where races were run by pedigree horses.

### ❖ Mendelsshon Park

This park was located by Boundary Street and was used by many people, from around the region, some of which traveled from Pittsburgh by daily excursion boats. The park contained a bathing beach, large dancing pavilion, merry-go-round, dining room, refreshment stands, baseball fields, and hosted side-shows.



### NATURAL RESOURCES

Development can have a significant effect on the natural resources within any community. Therefore, the following resources within the City of Clairton have been identified to ensure that all future planning efforts take into consideration these effects. **Map 2.1: Water Resources** illustrates watersheds, rivers, streams, wetlands, and floodplains located within Clairton.

#### WATER RESOURCES

Every river, stream, and tributary has an individual watershed. The City of Clairton is located within the Ohio River Basin, which has a drainage area of 3,487 square miles in Pennsylvania (United States Department of the Interior, Geologic Survey). The Ohio River Basin is divided into five major sub-basins, and the City of Clairton is located in the Monongahela sub-basin. In addition, the Monongahela sub-basin is divided into many smaller watersheds. The Peters Creek sub-basin encompasses Clairton and is described below.



*Source: Mackin Photo, 2009*

#### PETERS CREEK BASIN

The Peters Creek Watershed, approximately fifty square miles, is located in southwestern Allegheny County and northeastern Washington County. Located within the watershed are many different types of land uses including farming, industry, commercial development, and suburban neighborhoods. The main stream within the watershed is Peters Creek, which is 16.2 miles long and begins in Washington County and discharges in the Monongahela River in Clairton.

#### FLOODPLAINS

Floodplains are essential to the health, safety, and welfare of communities as they hold back stream flows and reduce flooding downstream. Two major waterways and their floodplains are located within Clairton; the Monongahela River and Peters Creek.

Many of the communities along Peters Creek are experiencing rapid development which can contribute to higher storm water runoff, higher peak flows, and higher flood levels (Pittsburgh Geological Society, 2006). Therefore, floodplain management is essential to residents within Clairton as it is the last community along Peters Creek before it empties into the Monongahela River.

### WATER QUALITY

Water Quality is important to any community as major bodies of water provide drinking water and recreation to residents. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) protects three stream water uses: aquatic life; human health, and recreation. If a stream segment is not attaining any one of its three uses, it is considered impaired.

In 2009, Peters Creek was considered impaired for recreational use due to pathogens according to the DEP. In previous years the stream was also classified as impaired for aquatic life due to industrial point source pollution, municipal point source pollution, removal of vegetation, and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB's). In 2006, the Monongahela River was classified as impaired for human health due to PCB's.

### ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

#### AIR POLLUTION

Clairton is unique in that it deals with an environmental issue that is not as prevalent in other communities; air pollution. The Clairton facility of U.S. Steel's Mon Valley Works produces coke that is used at other U.S. Steel Plants to make steel. The facility is the County's largest coke operation with production of 4.7 million tons annually. The coke making process contributes to air pollution in the Pittsburgh Region, and Pittsburgh was rated by the American Lung Association in 2009 as one of the most polluted cities in the United States. Also in 2009, Clairton was named in an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) assessment as having a cancer risk of 762 in 1 million; the average for the nation is 36 in 1 million.



*Source: Mackin Photo, 2009*

In 2008, an agreement was reached between U.S. Steel and the Allegheny County Health Department that settled previous environmental violations and required the company to pay a fine, as well as make repairs and maintenance to the existing batteries. U.S. Steel has announced plans to invest approximately one billion dollars to replace two coke-producing batteries that are more than 50 years old with new technology that meets environmental regulations. By installing this new technology the plant would then eliminate 235 of the 816 coke ovens at the plant. The facility would also rebuild or rehabilitate six of the remaining 10 coke batteries. Construction of the two new coke batteries was to occur in 2009 but was delayed due to an economic slowdown and decreased demand for steel throughout the world. U.S. Steel will still have to repair six of its 12

coke batteries and shut down the remaining batteries by 2015 to comply with the legal agreement with the Allegheny County Health Department (United States Steel, 2009).

### LITTERING AND DUMPING

Illegal dumps may include old appliances, worn tires, trash, broken furniture, construction debris, and other items that should be placed in a permitted landfill. Illegal dumpsites pose a danger to humans, animals, and the environment and clean up costs for proper disposal can be significant. Illegal dumping in Clairton is an issue along the Montour Bike Trail, Ridge Road, Shaw Avenue, St. Clare Cemetery, Clairton Park and at bus stops throughout the City.

## LAND USE

Existing land use for the City of Clairton was derived from Allegheny County, as well as 2006 aerial photography and Steering Committee input and is shown on **Map 2.2: Existing Land Use** and on **Table 2.7: Existing Land Use in Clairton**. A good percentage of the land in Clairton is classified as Industrial due to the significant amount of land that U.S. Steel owns along the Monongahela River. The next highest category is comprised of Single-Family Residential due to the numerous neighborhoods located throughout the City. While most of the City is “built-out”, there is a lot of open space within the City that could be developed in the future.

Table 2.7: Existing Land Use in Clairton	
Category	Percentage of Total (land area)
Industrial	30.94%
Single Family Residential	21.15%
Open Space	12.46%
Public	10.84%
Railroad/Utility	7.53%
Public Recreation	5.95%
Multi-Family Residential	5.06%
Commercial/Office	2.91%
Vacant Commercial Land	1.97%
Mixed Use	0.59%
Vacant Industrial Land	0.42%
Unknown	0.18%
Source: Allegheny County Division of Computer Services, Geographic Information Systems Group, 2006	

## RESIDENTIAL

Many different neighborhoods, consisting of single family residential homes and multi-family residential homes, are located within Clairton. The City of Clairton is known for its strong sense of community with many unique neighborhoods where children play in the parks and on the streets and neighbors know each other’s name. Residents of Clairton value this close-knit atmosphere and believe that it is an asset to the City. Therefore, this section of the Community Overview focuses on each of the neighborhoods in the City. Neighborhoods are shown on **Map 2.3: Neighborhoods**.

### SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL

The single-family residential category encompasses all single-family detached residential structures and uses. The neighborhoods that are primarily single family residential in nature are described below.

### *Wilson*

The Wilson district of Clairton – also commonly referred to as the First Ward – is a distinct area in the City. Once an independent borough, Wilson was part of the consolidation of Blair (North Clairton), Clairton, and Wilson at the turn of the last century.

Walnut Avenue (State Route 885) is the main thoroughfare “up the hill” and includes a mixture of residential, light commercial and institutional uses, including the old Walnut Avenue Elementary school, Finney’s Funeral Home, and T and D’s restaurant. St. Clare of Assisi parish and Wilson Presbyterian Church are also local landmarks in the neighborhood.



*Source: Mackin Photo, 2009*



*Source: Mackin Photo, 2009*

The houses in Wilson date from the first half of the twentieth century. Lots in Wilson tend to be a little larger than in the main section of Clairton, and many homes have back alley access with detached garages. There are also several high-density housing developments: there is a large section of attached townhomes along New York Avenue and Holly Way, and there is a similar section along Pansy Way. Small neighborhood parks with playgrounds are scattered throughout Wilson, providing valuable recreational and green space for the neighborhood.

### *Colonial Village*

This subdivision neighborhood was planned out in a circular fashion and features detached single-family frame two story homes that recall the early suburban patterns of the United States in the 1940s and 1950s. The houses are in good condition and feature larger lots and many if not most have garages. It includes the streets of Lafayette, Grandview, Farnsworth, Independence, Constitution, and Thompson. The First United Methodist Church acts as a gateway to this neighborhood.



*Source: Mackin Photo, 2009*

### *Blair*

The Blair section of Clairton consists of the area from State Route 837, St. Clair Avenue, and Reed Street. Blair was originally an independent community – like Wilson- but was later incorporated into Clairton at the time the community became a City. Much of what was formerly Blair proper is now part of the US Steel property. State Street (State Route 837) still contains remnants of the former Blair business district; however, most of these structures have severely deteriorated and / or

are vacant. Immediately adjacent to the former commercial strip is the Blair Heights neighborhood, which consists of mostly detached single-family homes- although there are some multi-family units - that are relatively recent in construction.

### *Central Business District*

The central, and primarily oldest, section of Clairton is between Shaw Avenue, St Clair Avenue, and Ravensburg Boulevard. This neighborhood is anchored by Clairton's main commercial thoroughfare, but also consists of a large mix of homes, many more than one hundred years old, that were primarily constructed for housing mill workers at the turn of the century. Lot sizes and yards are somewhat smaller in this district, and condition of structures can vary greatly, from well kept and tidy to in need of minor repairs to vacant and abandoned. The educational center, which includes the elementary, middle, and high school, as well as Ascension Our Lord Byzantine Church and Morning Star Baptist Church are important local landmarks in the neighborhood.

### *Worthington Avenue*

The Worthington Avenue Neighborhood of Clairton is located in the western portion of the City along Worthington Avenue between Desiderio Boulevard and the City boundary with Jefferson Hills. It consist mostly of one-story red brick ranch homes dating from the post-World War II period as well as some older frame and brick homes that are two- to two-and-a-half stories in height. Worthington Avenue is somewhat mixed use in nature, with several small businesses interspersed with single-family and two-family homes. This neighborhood is immediately adjacent to the Dollar General, formerly the community's only grocery store. Homes along Toman and Gary Avenues are located on a steep incline that affords residents a view of the City and the bend in the Monongahela River. There is a small park and playground area, which includes play equipment and a basketball court, as well as a picnic pavilion. St. Clare's Cemetery is also located in this neighborhood.

### *Sylvania Heights*

The Sylvania Heights Neighborhood is located off of McKinley Drive and consists of single-family homes.

### *17 Acres*

The 17 Acres Neighborhood is located off of Woodland Avenue and offers resident's convenient access to recreation as a small park is located within the center of the neighborhood.



*Source: Mackin Photo, 2009*



### MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL

The multi-family residential category encompasses multi-family dwelling units, including row homes, townhomes, duplexes, triplexes, and apartments. In Clairton, the majority of multi-family residential homes can be found in the Century Townhomes neighborhood, the New Town neighborhood, the Southside neighborhood, as well as portions of the Wilson neighborhood.

#### *Century Townhomes*

This development is a multi-family residential development consisting of a mix of apartments and townhomes. It is somewhat secluded in location, located near the edge of the City limits on Woodland Avenue. It is newer in construction and generally in good condition, though there are some units in need of minor repairs. There is very limited commercial, as the area is mostly surrounded by open space, woodlands, and other housing developments. The neighborhood has the benefit of a playground and basketball court.



#### *New Town*

The historic Pine Run Methodist Church, one of the first Methodist congregations in the area, anchors this neighborhood which is located off of Pennsylvania Avenue. This neighborhood is unique in that it is somewhat limited in access, with streets mostly circling back on themselves. The neighborhood consists mainly of attached two-story townhomes. There are a few detached two-story single family homes and a few small commercial buildings.

*Source: Mackin Photo, 2009*

#### *Southside*

This neighborhood formerly had many vacant lots and homes in poor condition; however, due to recent efforts by the Redevelopment Authority of Allegheny County and the Community Economic Development Corporation of Clairton a new traditional housing plan has begun to replace the dilapidated structures and overgrown lots. The primary streets in this neighborhood consist of Mitchell, Wylie, and Baker Avenues. Most of the development is attached housing done in a traditional style with siding, with a few single-family detached homes intermixed. A new playground anchors the development. At the end of Wylie Avenue, there is access to Millvue Acres, a large, older multi-family residential development for low-income families.



*Source: Mackin Photo, 2009*

### COMMERCIAL/OFFICE

This category includes all commercial uses, including small-scale offices, retail uses, mixed uses, restaurants and other eating establishments, drive-thrus, automobile-oriented businesses including gas stations and automobile repair and service shops, and other miscellaneous small businesses. There are four business districts within the City of Clairton; the Main Business District (St. Clair / Miller Avenue), Wilson Business District, Blair Business District, and Worthington Avenue.



*Source: Mackin Photo, 2009*

### CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

Miller Avenue is a traditional commercial corridor that anchors the neighborhood to the east and features some smaller chains and retail outlets, including a Uni-Mart. Miller Avenue has some vacant commercial properties in fair to deteriorating condition.

St. Clair Avenue, features a wide variety of retail and small businesses, including a new Rite Aide. However, most of the businesses located along St. Clair are vacant.

### WILSON BUSINESS DISTRICT

The main business district for the Wilson neighborhood is located along State Street (State Route 837) between Division Street to the south and the Glassport Bridge to the north. It includes many small commercial office and retail spaces, including the Wilson Civic Center, a karate studio, the Boston Diner, insurance office, and other local commercial uses. Near the edge of this business district is the local VFW, at Connecticut and State Streets. Several of the businesses have been in their same locations for many years and are actively supported by local residents. There are some vacancies, and in particular, a few dilapidated buildings along State Street just north of Walnut Street.



*Source: Mackin Photo, 2009*

### BLAIR BUSINESS DISTRICT

The Blair Business District is located along State Street (State Route 837) and consists of mainly of vacant commercial buildings.



### WORTHINGTON AVENUE

The Worthington Avenue Corridor is somewhat mixed use in nature, with several small businesses including a Dollar General, towing business, auto body shop, and Johnny's Glass interspersed with single-family and two-family homes.

### INDUSTRIAL

This land use category encompasses all uses that are industrial in nature, including warehouse space, manufacturing facilities, and other similar uses that are higher impact than typical commercial establishments.

### STATE ROUTE 837

The State Route 837 Corridor is where most of Clairton's industrial uses are located. The largest industrial use is US Steel and its various industrial operations along the Monongahela River. While most of the Corridor is active industrial there are areas available for new uses in now vacant industrial lots.



*Source: Mackin Photo, 2009*

### RAILROAD/UTILITY

This category includes all land owned by a utility company, including electric, gas, telephone, cable, any pipelines, and transportation rights-of-way. In Clairton, the majority of land in this category is owned by the railroad company, Norfolk Southern.

### PUBLIC

This category encompasses all tax-exempt lands, which include schools, cemeteries, churches, and land owned by the government. The City of Clairton, the Clairton School District, the Allegheny County Housing Authority, and the Clairton Municipal Authority are the primary owners of the land in Clairton that is classified as public.

### VACANT

This category consists of three different vacant classifications; commercial, industrial, and open space. Generally the vacant category means that there was once a structure but it is now unoccupied or has been demolished. The open space category includes land that has not yet been developed, whether it



*Source: Mackin Photo, 2009*

is open space or wooded.

### VACANT COMMERCIAL

This category includes uses that were once thriving businesses but are now unoccupied. Of the commercial vacancies most are located in the Main Business District, but some also exist in the Blair and Wilson neighborhoods.

### VACANT INDUSTRIAL

This category includes uses that were once industrial in nature but are now unoccupied. Only a small portion in Clairton is classified as vacant industrial, along State Route 837.

### OPEN SPACE

Most of the open space in Clairton is located within the Southside and Blair neighborhoods. The open spaces in these neighborhoods at one time included residential structures but have since been demolished. The rest of the open space consists of lots that were never developed or wooded hillsides that are too steep to develop. A large tract of vacant land is also located in the northern portion of Clairton along Woodland Avenue that borders Jefferson Hills Borough.

### **PUBLIC RECREATION**

This land use category encompasses all public parks located within the City of Clairton. A more detailed description of Clairton's public parks is located on Page 2-29.

### COMMUNITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES

Clairton is 2.8 square mile Home Rule municipality in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania that was formerly a third class city. The city operates under a council/manager form of government. Council members are elected for four-year terms and the mayor presides over the council. The City Manager is appointed by City Council and is the chief administrative officer of the city.

Clairton offers many services to its residents and business owners, such as the provision of police and fire protection, maintenance of local roads, public water and sewerage, collection of solid waste, and code enforcement.



*Source: Mackin Photo, 2009*

Community Resources in Clairton are shown on **Map 2.4: Community Resources**.

### PUBLIC SAFETY

#### LAW ENFORCEMENT

The City of Clairton has 19 police officers, consisting of one police chief, eight full time officers, and ten part time officers.

The Department has three special programs, the T.I.P. (Turn in Pushers), Crime Watch, and the Missing Person Alert. The T.I.P. program allows local residents to report possible drug activity anonymously. Crime Watch consists of a group of citizens that meet once a month with representatives from each neighborhood. The Missing Person Alert is an alert system that the police have developed to inform each of the neighborhoods within Clairton of missing persons in the City, so that residents can be on the lookout for these individuals.

#### FIRE PROTECTION AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

The Clairton Volunteer Fire Department (VFD) was formed in April of 1988 and provides fire and emergency medical services to the residents of Clairton. The VFD is an all volunteer department with a chief and 50 volunteer fireman. The station is manned 24 hours a day, seven days a week by a minimum of a driver and a firefighter. All members are trained in the Essentials of Firefighting and some members have specialty training, including Hazardous Material Response, Vehicle Rescue, Confined Space rescue, Rope Rescue, Rapid Intervention, and SCUBA diving. The VFD also owns



*Source: Mackin Photo, 2009*

and operates Club 46, which is on Division Avenue. The club offers a full menu for lunch and dinner as well as entertainment and special events.

The EMS division of the VFD is a paid ambulance service with 30 part-time EMT's and Paramedics that provide residents with service 24 hours a day, as well as 16 hours per day in the neighboring Borough of Glassport. Each member of the department is certified in firefighter and EMS training.

### PUBLIC WORKS

The Public Works Department is responsible for the daily maintenance of the City. The department consists of eight full time employees and seasonal employees who work only in the summer when needed. Maintenance includes street cleaning, grass cutting, recycling, road repair, park maintenance and snow removal. The department also responds to resident complaints, such as clogged sewers and potholes.

The department is also in charge of recycling, which is picked up every two weeks on the same day as garbage. The first recycling bin for residents is free and can be picked up at the Municipal Building; additional bins are available for purchase.

Nickolich Sanitation picks up the garbage for Clairton every week. While garbage service is not run by the department any problems with pick-up should be reported to public works.

### ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

The City of Clairton contracts with KLH Engineering for engineering services.

### EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES AND SERVICES

#### CLAIRTON CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Clairton City School District serves all residents of Clairton. The mission statement of the School District is to "strive to empower its stakeholders to increase academic achievement so that students can become life-long learners and competitors in the global market place." The School District includes one elementary school (grades K-6) and one middle / high school (grades 7-12) with a total enrollment of 793 and staff of 32 housed in one building (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2009). Enrollment projections prepared by the PA Department of Education predict enrollment to decrease within the next ten years but then increase by 2018, for a total of 753 students.



Source: Mackin, 2009

The Clairton School District is well-known in the Pittsburgh region for its football team, the Clairton Bears. In 2009, the team won its first state football championship and has previously won six WPIAL championships.

### LIBRARY FACILITIES

Residents of Clairton are served by the Clairton Public Library, which is a member of the Allegheny County Library Association. The mission of the library is “to serve as a center to provide informational resources, programs, education resources, and enjoyment for everyone of the community.”

The library provides the following services to the residents of Clairton: computer usage, books and other reading materials, CDs and DVDs, summer reading program and holiday parties for children, meeting space for small groups, book clubs, and governmental forms. The library also has a Friends of the Library group that helps finance activities and sponsor children activities.

The Clairton School District also offers two libraries for students; one in the elementary school and one in the Middle/High School.

### **PUBLIC WATER AND SEWER**

The Clairton Municipal Authority operates public sewerage treatment and disposal in the City of Clairton, as well as Jefferson Borough and portions of South Park, Peters Township, Unity Township, and the City of Washington. The Authority was formed in 1958 and construction of the system began in 1960. Currently the plant operates at 6 million gallons per day and 14 million during wet weather conditions. The authority charges \$1.50 per thousand gallons of waste treated (<http://clairtonmunicipalauthority.org/index.html>).

No response was received from the public water provider, Pennsylvania American Water Company.

### **PLANNING**

#### ZONING REGULATIONS

The City of Clairton Zoning Ordinance was enacted in 1991. There are eight (8) districts delineated in the Ordinance, as shown on **Map 2.5: Zoning Districts**. The following are permitted uses within each zoning district:

- ❖ R-1 (Residential)- Churches, Parks and Recreation, Single-family dwellings, Schools, Accessory structures and uses
- ❖ R-2 (Residential)- Churches, Parks and Recreation, Single-family dwellings, Schools,

### Accessory structures and uses

- ❖ R-3 (Residential)- Churches, Parks and Recreation, Single-family dwellings, Townhomes, Two-family dwellings, schools, Accessory structures and uses
- ❖ B-1 (Central Business)- Banks, Business services, Clubs, Commercial recreation, Medical clinic, Offices, Parks and recreation, Personal services, Professional services, Restaurants, Retail businesses, Schools, Vehicular sales, Accessory uses
- ❖ B-2 (Neighborhood Shopping)- Banks, Business services, Local retail businesses, Parks and Recreation, Personal services, Professional services, Recreation clubs, Restaurants, Accessory uses
- ❖ I-1 (Light Industry)- Business services, Construction businesses, Data processing offices, Gas stations, Industrial incubators, Light manufacturing, Offices, Warehousing, Accessory uses
- ❖ I-2 (Heavy Industry)- Business services, Construction businesses, Laboratories, Light manufacturing, Offices, Recycling facilities, Regional service centers, Research facilities, Supply yards, Utility substations, Vehicle repair facilities, Vocational schools, Warehousing, Accessory uses
- ❖ S-2 (Conservation)- Cemeteries, Churches, Farms, Natural preserves, Parks and recreation, Single-family dwellings, Schools, Accessory structures and uses

### SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS

The City of Clairton's Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO) was enacted in 1991. A SALDO regulates subdivisions and land development within the City by requiring all plans for such to be submitted for approval to Council after review by the Planning Commission. The City of Clairton's SALDO address Application and Review Procedures, Design Standards, and Required Improvements.



## PARKS AND RECREATION

The City of Clairton offers its residents numerous parks and abundant recreation to enjoy. Residents can benefit from many different types of recreation; playgrounds, basketball courts, a bike and walking trail, and a swimming pool. This section will detail each recreational opportunity; existing parks are shown on **Map 2.4: Community Resources**.

### PUBLIC PARKS

The City of Clairton is home to 10 parks located throughout the community.

#### CLAIRTON PARK

Clairton Park is the biggest of all the park facilities within the City and is located in within the Wilson neighborhood. The park is home to the following facilities:

- ❖ Open space with several benches
- ❖ Four Baseball fields with lights
  - Pony field-Joseph Morock Memorial Field
  - Little League field (lighted)
  - Daily News field
  - Instructional field (lighted)
- ❖ Swimming pool with sliding board
- ❖ Playground
- ❖ Swings sets
- ❖ Basketball court
- ❖ Lodge with kitchen
- ❖ Four pavilions with picnic tables
- ❖ Memory lane which pays tribute to fallen soldiers and includes a shelter and concession stand



*Source: Mackin Photo, 2009*

The swimming pool is used to provide swimming lessons, water aerobics, life guard training, and swim parties for residents. The lodge can be rented for \$350 and pavilions can be rented for \$100.

#### WORTHINGTON AVENUE PLAYGROUND

The Worthington Avenue Playground is located within the Worthington Avenue neighborhood. The park offers the following the facilities:



*Source: Mackin Photo, 2009*

- ❖ Playground
- ❖ Swing sets
- ❖ Pavilion
- ❖ Basketball court
- ❖ Tennis Court

### CENTURY TOWNHOME PARKLET

The Century Townhome Parklet is located in the Century Townhome neighborhood and consists of the following:

- ❖ Basketball court
- ❖ Playground
- ❖ Shelter



*Source: Mackin Photo, 2009*

### DELAWARE AVENUE PLAYGROUND

The Delaware Avenue Playground is located within the Wilson neighborhood. The park offers the following facilities:

- ❖ Playground
- ❖ Swingsets
- ❖ Benches
- ❖ Teeter tot



*Source: Mackin Photo, 2009*

### FARNSWORTH PLAYGROUND AND BASEBALL FIELD

The Farnsworth Playground and Baseball Field is located on Farnsworth and Craig Street, near the Clairton Area School District Football Stadium. There are also basketball courts available to use.

### BLAIR FIELDS

The Blair Fields are located in the Blair neighborhood on State Route 837. There are two combination fields (softball/baseball), as well as a playground.



*Source: Mackin Photo, 2009*



### KABOOM PLAYGROUND

The Kaboom Playground is located in the Southside neighborhood of Clairton at the corner of Mitchell and Reed streets. Built in 2008, it is one of the City's newest parks. The park was constructed with help from the Community Economic Development Corporation of Clairton, the Junior League of Pittsburgh, KaBoom!, and citizens of Clairton. The playground was designed by Clairton children and has the following facilities:

- ❖ Playground (Ages 5-12)
- ❖ Twisty Slide
- ❖ Benches
- ❖ Swings
- ❖ Planters
- ❖ Monkey bars



*Source: Mackin Photo, 2009*



### REED STREET PLAYGROUND

The Reed Street Playground is located in the Southside neighborhood of Clairton and is also known as the Grant Hill Memorial Playground. The following facilities are located within this playground:

- ❖ Basketball court
- ❖ Benches
- ❖ Swing set

*Source: Mackin Photo, 2009*

### MILL-VUE ACRES PLAYGROUND

The Mill-Vue Acres Playground is also located in the Southside neighborhood of Clairton and is owned by Allegheny County Housing Authority. The following facilities are located within this playground:

- ❖ Basketball courts
- ❖ Playground
- ❖ 2 activity rooms

### JEFFERSON DRIVE PLAYGROUND

The Jefferson Drive Playground is located in the 17 Acres neighborhood and offers the following recreational facilities to residents:

- ❖ Playground
- ❖ Basketball Court

### EDUCATIONAL RECREATION FACILITIES

#### CLAIRTON EDUCATION CENTER

The Clairton Education Center, located near the Main Business District, offers the following facilities:

- ❖ Playground
- ❖ Basketball Court
- ❖ Multi-Purpose Field
- ❖ Neil C. Brown Stadium (located on Miller Avenue)

The School District offers the following athletic programs to its students:

- ❖ High School
  - Varsity baseball
  - Track and Field
  - Football
  - Girls and boys basketball
- ❖ Middle School
  - Junior varsity football
  - Girls basketball



*Source: Mackin Photo, 2009*

### ASSESSMENT OF PARKLAND

In order to better understand how Clairton's recreation options compare with other municipalities, an assessment of parkland within the City was analyzed and measured against guidelines suggested by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). For reference purposes, Clairton's population was 8,491 according to the 2000 US Census.

The National Park and Recreation Association (NPRA) standards include the following for parks:

- Neighborhood Park- 1-2 acres per 1,000 people
- Community Park- 5-8 acres per 1,000 people

Standards for activity / facility include:

- Baseball- 1 facility/ 5,000 people
- Softball / Little League – 1 facility/ 5,000 people
- Basketball Courts- 1 facility/ 5,000 people
- Football / Soccer Fields- 1 facility / 15,000 people
- Tennis Courts- 1 facility / 2,000 people
- Volleyball Courts- 1 facility / 5,000 people
- Swimming Pools- 1 facility / 20,000 people

Clairton has enough baseball fields (5), softball / little league fields (2), basketball courts (7), and a swimming pool (1) to meet the current standards based on the US Census 2000 population. The City is deficient in football / soccer fields, tennis courts, and volleyball courts.

Clairton has ten (10) neighborhood parks; Farnsworth Playground and Baseball Field, Blair Fields, Worthington Avenue Playground, Century Townhome Parklet, Delaware Avenue Playground, Kaboom Playground, Reed Street Playground, Mill-Vue Acres Playground, N 3<sup>rd</sup> Street Playground and Jefferson Drive Playground. A neighborhood park is the basic unit of a park system and serves the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood. Facilities include intense recreational activities such as fields, courts, play equipment and picnic areas. Most of the neighborhood parks are smaller than the 1-2 acre standard by NRPA, however most neighborhoods in Clairton are well served with local neighborhood parks.

A community park serves a broader purpose than the neighborhood park and is usually between 30 to 50 acres. The Clairton Park would be classified as a community park as it is approximately 66 acres and serves the entire City of Clairton not just a specific neighborhood.

As you can see, Clairton currently is meeting the standards for parks. The issue with recreation in Clairton is not the availability of parks but the need for different types of facilities, maintenance of parks, as well as lack of recreational programming.

### TRANSPORTATION

To determine traffic patterns and whether they are functioning properly an analysis of the present road network has been conducted. The transportation network is graphically shown on **Map 2.6: Transportation Network**.

An important focus of the Transportation component of the Plan is public transportation; the level of service that exists today and the connectivity between residential areas, employment centers, shopping centers, schools, and recreational areas. In addition, pedestrian and bicycle patterns were reviewed in conjunction with the Clairton School District.

### ROAD NETWORK

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) classifies all state-owned roads according to functional classifications. The classification of a roadway relates to its basic relationship to traffic levels of service and access. For the purpose of this plan, PennDOT Functional Classifications will be used to describe the road inventory. Functional Classifications include Interstate Highways, Other Freeways and Expressways, Principal Arterial Highways, Minor Arterials, Urban Collector or Rural Major Collector, Rural Minor Collector, and Local Roads. The City of Clairton contains Principal Arterial Highways, Minor Arterials, and Urban Collectors.

#### PRINCIPAL ARTERIALS

Principal arterials provide statewide or interstate travel to urbanized areas. Design of the roadway usually consists of two (2) 12-foot lanes with 8 to 10 foot shoulders with speeds typically ranging from 45 to 65 miles per hour.

#### *State Route 837*

State Route 837 travels near the Monongahela River and connects Clairton with State Route 51 and other communities throughout the Mon Valley. In Clairton State Route 837 can be described in three key segments:



*Source: Mackin Photo, 2009*

- ❖ The first segment from the municipal border of Jefferson Hills from SR 51 to the intersection of SR 837 and the Montour Trail has an average daily traffic count of 8,500 with five percent truck traffic.
- ❖ The second segment from the intersection of SR 837 and the Montour Trail to the Glassport-Clairton Bridge has an average daily traffic count of 9,300 with seven percent truck traffic.

- ❖ The third segment from the Glassport-Clairton Bridge to the municipal boundary has an average daily traffic count of 12,000 with five percent truck traffic.

### MINOR ARTERIALS

Minor arterials link cities, larger towns and other traffic generators to provide integrated interstate and inter-county service. Minor arterials are spaced at proper intervals consistent with population density. Design of the roadway usually consists of two (2) 12-foot lanes with 8 to 10 foot shoulders and speeds typically ranging from 35 to 45 miles per hour.

#### *State Route 885*

State Route 885 connects the City of Clairton with Jefferson Hills and intersects with State Route 837 near the Glassport-Clairton Bridge. State Route 885 has average daily traffic count 4,600 with two percent truck traffic. At the intersection of State Route 885 and State Route 837 there is an average daily traffic count of 9,700.



*Source: Mackin Photo, 2009*

#### *St. Clair Avenue*

St. Clair Avenue connects State Route 837 to Desiderio Boulevard and has an average daily traffic count of 9,100 with five percent truck traffic.



*Source: Mackin Photo, 2009*

#### *State Route 2038 (Glassport-Clairton Bridge)*

State Route 2038 connects Clairton with Glassport and has an average daily traffic count of 12,000 on the Clairton side of the Monongahela River, with one percent truck traffic.

#### *Worthington Avenue*

Worthington Avenue connects the City of Clairton with State Route 51, Jefferson Hills, and intersects with Desiderio Boulevard. Worthington Avenue also intersects State Route 51 very close to the Mon Fayette Expressway and the Park N Ride.

Worthington Avenue has an average daily traffic count of 3,360, with five percent truck traffic.



### URBAN COLLECTOR

Urban collectors are highways and streets that provide connections within towns by distributing trips to small areas or neighborhoods. They provide for a greater amount of mobility and access, and are intended to serve motorists between local streets and arterial roads. Collectors usually convey between 1,500 and 10,000 average daily traffic and their design consists of two (2) 12-foot lanes with 8 to 10-foot shoulders and design speeds of approximately 35 miles per hour or greater.

#### *Desiderio Boulevard*

Desiderio Boulevard connects Clairton with State Route 51 and intersects with St. Clair Avenue. The road has an average daily traffic count of 9,100 with eight percent truck traffic.

### OTHER ROADWAYS

While there are many well-traveled transportation corridors within the City, there are also several corridors outside of the municipal boundaries that play an important role in the flow and amount of traffic within Clairton.

#### *Mon-Fayette Expressway*

The Mon Fayette Expressway is a Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission project that is planned to relieve traffic congestion on many roadways and provide economic development potential to communities within the Mon Valley. Once completed the 70 mile toll-road will link Interstate 68 in West Virginia through Fayette County and I-376 in Pittsburgh. Currently, the Turnpike has 35 miles of the Expressway built.

The 17-mile Interstate 70 to State Route 51 segment of the Mon Fayette opened in 2002 and connects City of Clairton residents with communities in Washington County. The section from State Route 51 to Interstate 376 will connect residents with Monroeville/Penn Hills and the City of Pittsburgh, which should alleviate traffic volume on State Route 837. This connection was issued environmental clearance in 2004 and most of the final design has been completed, however funds are not currently available for property acquisition and construction.

#### *State Route 51*

State Route 51 is a principal arterial highway that provides the City of Clairton with connections to Fayette, Westmoreland, and Allegheny Counties. The average daily traffic count for State Route 51 as it travels through Elizabeth is 19,000, through Jefferson Hills it is 27,000 before the Mon-Fayette Expressway and is 33,000 after the Mon-Fayette Expressway.

### BRIDGES

Bridges are of two types: grade separation for highways and railroads, and waterway crossings. Bridges are critical to fully utilize a transportation network.

The Glassport-Clairton Bridge has been scheduled for repairs on the Allegheny County's TIP for the funding cycle 2009-2012. The total estimated cost is \$4,440,640. Pre-engineering is estimated to begin in 2009; final design, utilities, and right-of-way is scheduled in 2010, and construction is tentatively scheduled to begin in 2011.

### PUBLIC TRANSIT

The availability of public transit in Clairton is important in that it allows for increased mobility, access to goods and services, and connections to larger regional job markets, such as Pittsburgh. Public transit is also less costly to residents than driving, reduces emissions and dependency on foreign oil.

#### ALLEGHENY COUNTY PORT AUTHORITY

The Port Authority of Allegheny County is the primary agency that provides public transportation service throughout Clairton. The Port Authority is a county owned, state funded agency based in Pittsburgh and is overseen by a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and a ten-member board of directors, who report to the County Executive. The Port Authority system currently has more than 180 bus routes; three "busways," or corridors reserved only for bus traffic; and a light rail line which travels from Downtown Pittsburgh to the South Hills. Below is a brief listing of the routes that traverse through Clairton.

#### *46G Elizabeth Flyer*

This route provides service to residents of Clairton to travel to Elizabeth, West Elizabeth, Jefferson, Pleasant Hills, Century III Mall, West Mifflin, Brentwood, and Downtown Pittsburgh

- ❖ Travels along St. Clair Avenue with stops near State Street and Miller Avenue
- ❖ Travels along Thomson Avenue with a stop at Pine Lane
- ❖ Travels along Woodland Avenue with a stop at Century Townhomes

#### *55M Century III*

This route provides service to residents of Clairton to travel to McKeesport, Glassport, Jefferson Hospital, Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC), Pleasant Hills, Century III Mall, Wal-Mart in West Mifflin, Century Square, West Mifflin, Homestead, and the Waterfront

- ❖ Bus stop is located at the intersection of SR 837 and SR 885

### PARK-N-RIDES

While Clairton does not have a Park-n-Ride located within the City limits the 450-space Park-n-Ride lot near the Mon-Fayette Expressway is approximately 3 miles away. The lot, located in Jefferson Hills, was built for the Port Authority of Allegheny County. Bus service from the Port Authority is available for daily commuters. Clairton residents can also travel to the Park-n-Ride via the Montour Trail.

### ACCESS

Under the Port Authority-sponsored ACCESS program, private contractors provide door-to-door service to elderly and disabled passengers throughout the county, seven days a week from 6 a.m. to midnight. There are no restrictions on the purpose or number of trips which may be taken by riders, except that riders are required to share their vehicle with others traveling in the same direction at the same time. Reservations are placed one day in advance.

### WORKLINK

WorkLink is a free service with no income restrictions and provides scheduled van transportation to riders in the Mon Valley Region, which includes the City of Clairton as well as East Pittsburgh, Braddock, North Braddock, Swissvale, and Rankin. Transportation is provided to the Waterfront, McKessport's business district, Port Authority Routes, East Busway, and other locations.

WorkLink provides two routes to residents of Clairton.

#### *Clairton Route*

The Clairton route makes a complete loop every 30 minutes from 6:00 am to 8:00 pm Monday through Friday and 9:00 am to 8:00 pm on Saturday. The Clairton Route provides service to the 46G, 50B, and 55M Port Authority routes as well as several stops within the City:

- ❖ Marion Circle Community Center
- ❖ Marion Circle at Wylie Avenue
- ❖ Wylie Ave at Miller Avenue
- ❖ Miller Avenue at Baker
- ❖ Miller Avenue at St. Clair Avenue
- ❖ Waddell Avenue at Reed Street (Carver Hall)
- ❖ Waddell Avenue at Miller Street (Family Dollar)
- ❖ St. Clair Avenue at Fifth Street (Post Office)
- ❖ St. Clair Avenue (Rite-Aid)
- ❖ Route 885 at Ravensburg Bridge (T&D Pub)
- ❖ St. Clair Avenue (City Hall)



- ❖ Worthington Avenue & Desiderio Road (Dollar General)
- ❖ Washington Avenue (across from Uni-Mart)
- ❖ Soltis Drive and Lincoln Avenue
- ❖ 6301 Soltis Drive (Port Authority Stop)
- ❖ Soltis Drive and Wilson Court
- ❖ Soltis Drive and Desiderio Road
- ❖ Washington Avenue (at Uni-Mart)

### *Clairton-Glassport-McKeesport-Waterfront*

The Clairton-Glassport-McKeesport-Waterfront route connects riders with employment sites and job training centers and takes 60 minutes each way. Stops include:

- ❖ Dollar General in Clairton
- ❖ Foodland in Glassport
- ❖ Pizza Hut in McKeesport
- ❖ Waterfront

Service is available from 6:30 AM to 10:23 PM Monday through Saturday. The route also provides service to the 50B, 56C, and 61C Port Authority Routes.

### COMMUTE INFO

The Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC) directs a ridesharing program known as CommuteInfo. CommuteInfo operates in partnership with transportation management associations, transportation providers, businesses and non-profit service organizations throughout Southwestern Pennsylvania. It acts as an information clearinghouse and resource center for commuters and employers by allowing people to organize carpools and vanpools with others interested in the service.

### RAILROAD

Two major rail lines run through the City of Clairton; Norfolk-Southern and the BB railroad line.

### RIVER TRANSPORTATION

The Monongahela River plays an important role in river transportation for the City of Clairton due to the industrial nature of the river corridor. The Monongahela River was improved for year-round transportation by the Monongahela Navigation Company in 1837 when a series of seven locks and dams from Pittsburgh to the West Virginia state



*Source: Mackin Photo, 2009*

line were built. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE) took control in 1897 and began operation of the nation's oldest continuously operating slack-water river navigation system (USACOE, 2004). The present navigation system has nine locks and dams of several sizes and types constructed by the USACOE between 1902 and 1994. These locks allow boats to travel in a series of steps to accommodate the 147-foot difference in pool elevation from Fairmont to Pittsburgh (USACOE, 2005).

The Lower Mon Project has replaced the dam in Braddock (completed in 2004), will remove the lock and dam in Elizabeth, and construct two new larger locks in Charleroi, which will improve the affect of the Monongahela River. The overall goal of the project is to keep the river transport reliable and economical through the lower part of the Monongahela River (USACOE, 2009). Removal of Locks and Dam 3 will create a single pool, between Braddock and Elizabeth, and will cause the river to rise a nominal five (5) feet. Even though familiar river levels will change, there will be no increase in flood events along the Monongahela River. This project will result in a 30-mile unimpeded section of river from Braddock to Charleroi (USACOE, 2009). The project is estimated to be completed in 2022.

### PEDESTRIAN NETWORK

The pedestrian network within the City of Clairton is very important as it is one of the main transportation options that residents utilize every day. The availability and condition of sidewalks is important not only for connecting residential developments with businesses but also for the accessibility and safety of local students as there is no busing of students to the Clairton schools. Trails are important as well as they can provide vital connections throughout the community and the region.

#### SIDEWALKS

Many residents of Clairton rely on walking as a means of transportation in the City of Clairton. Overall the City of Clairton has extensive sidewalk network, however there are a few areas of concern due to lack of sidewalks, sidewalks in need of repair, or safety issues. Residents are responsible for the repair and maintenance of sidewalks.

#### TRAILS

Clairton has access to two different trails within the city limits; the Montour Trail and the Steel Valley Trail. Both trails are part of the Allegheny Trail Alliance. While the two trails are not complete in some portions, residents of the City of Clairton will have the ability in the future to use the trails to travel to the Pittsburgh International Airport, the City of Pittsburgh, and Cumberland, Maryland.

**Figure 1: Montour Trail and Steel Valley Trail**



*Source: Allegheny Trail Alliance, 2010*

### *Montour Trail*

The Montour Trail is a popular multi-use rail-trail that extends 40 miles through Allegheny and Washington Counties. The trail begins near Coraopolis and ends in Clairton. Portions of the trail are not finished yet but once completed the trail will extend 46 miles. The Montour Trail Council, a non-profit organization, operates and maintains the trail, except for a portion of the trail in Peters Township, Washington County, which is maintained by Peters Township.

The trailhead in Clairton is located off of State Route 837; approximately half of a mile south of the Glassport-Clairton bridge and next to the Clairton Municipal Authority plant. From the trailhead in Clairton a trail user could travel approximately 2 miles to Large at the Park-n-Ride where the trail stops due to a section being incomplete. However, users can use state and local roads to access other portions of the trail, directions are available on the Montour Trail Council website: [www.montourtrail.org](http://www.montourtrail.org)



*Source: Mackin Photo, 2009*

### *Steel Valley Trail*

The Steel Valley Trail is multi-use trail that once completed, will extend a total of 19 miles through the municipalities of Clairton, Glassport, McKeesport, Duquesne, West Mifflin, Whitaker, Munhall, Homestead, West Homestead, Pittsburgh, Swissvale, and Rankin. The Steel Valley Trail Council, a non-profit organization, is in charge of developing the trail.

In Clairton the Steel Valley Trail starts at the trailhead of the Montour Trail and travels towards Glassport and McKeesport. Currently the trail uses share the road to connect McKeesport, Glassport, and Clairton. The Council is currently working with the three municipalities on improved signage and lane striping.



*Source: Mackin Photo, 2009*

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development refers to not only the existing conditions, challenges, and opportunities for business retention and expansion, but also to larger regional trends in employment, industry, and commuting and working patterns. Examining this data and evaluating the potential for changes in the future is an important barometer in measuring the quality of life within a community, and can act as a tool for predicting future land use and housing needs. A change in the economic conditions of a community can drastically alter living conditions, housing availability, and service demands. For instance, if a new business would relocate and attract new employees, the community would need to increase services to meet rising demand. On the other hand, if a major employer leaves the community, infrastructure and services may need to be re-structured or scaled back in order to achieve maximum efficiency. As a result, the community may need to consider new business attraction and retention strategies in order to keep from experiencing further losses in industry or population.

### ECONOMIC CORRIDORS (STATE ROUTE 837 AND 885)

The primary economic corridor in the City is State Route 837, though in the past thirty years, it has experienced significant disinvestment. State Route 837, also known as State Street, was at one time a thriving series of small business districts, with a distinct commercial district in the Wilson neighborhood at the intersection of State and Walnut Streets as well as separate commercial corridor in the neighborhood commonly referred to as Blair. However, sustained population loss has destabilized this traditional commercial corridor, and much of the former Blair district has been razed or incorporated into the US Steel property. The corridor has become a shadow of its former self marked by empty parcels and vacant storefronts in poor condition. In Wilson, several businesses have managed to



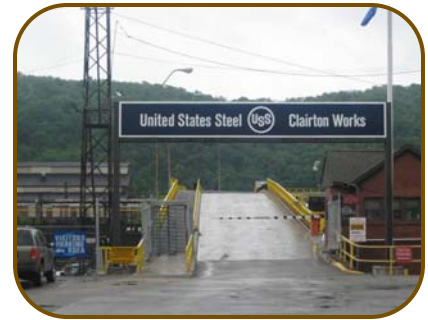
*Source: Mackin Photo, 2009*

sustain themselves, including several bars / restaurants, some local business services, a dance studio, and a judo / karate studio. The Wilson Civic Center also anchors the southwest corner of State (SR 837) and Walnut Streets (SR 885). However, there are still several vacant structures in deteriorating condition, particularly north of this intersection. Along Walnut Street (SR 885), there are numerous opportunities for revitalization- the corridor is traditionally mixed use, with some small scale commercial uses (such as T & D's Pub and Grub and the Finney Funeral Home) as well as, institutional uses such as churches and the former Wilson school. The school as recently as ten years ago, served several useful purposes as a place for local community events and provided storage and office space for local organizations. Now currently vacant and in fair to poor condition, the structure represents a prime economic development opportunity for Wilson.



### MON VALLEY WORKS: CLAIRTON COKE WORKS DIVISION

The most significant economic generator in the City is the Clairton Coke Works division of U.S. Steel's Mon Valley Works. U.S. Steel is an integrated steel producer headquartered in downtown Pittsburgh, with operations throughout the U.S., Canada, and Central Europe. Mon Valley Works contributes significantly to the economy of the Pittsburgh region and is an important part of the overall success of U.S. Steel. Included in Mon Valley Works are the Edgar Thomson (ET) Plant in Braddock, the Irvin Plant in West Mifflin, and the Clairton Coke Works. Each of these three facilities focuses on a different aspect of the process of steelmaking.



*Source: Mackin Photo, 2009*

The Clairton facility manufactures coke, a primary raw material in the steelmaking process produced from burning bituminous coal at extremely high temperatures, thus removing impurities that lessen the quality and strength of steel. The Edgar Thomson Plant converts this coke, along with iron ore and limestone, into steel slabs; which are rolled out in sheet products at the Irvin Works. Clairton Works has been producing high-quality metallurgical coke for many years. In addition to producing coke for the blast furnaces at ET, Clairton Works also ships coke to other U.S. Steel facilities in Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan. Clairton Works also produces a number of coke byproducts, including coke oven gas, which is used in U.S. Steel plant operations throughout the Mon Valley, and much of the electricity that provides power to the entire Mon Valley Works.

The Mon Valley Works is Pennsylvania's only remaining integrated steel operation. It remains competitive not only because of the hard work and productivity of its employees, but also because of the infrastructure in place that allows U.S. Steel to use the coke, gas, and electricity produced by the facility that is critical to the operations of the entire U.S. Steel Corporation.

While the economic benefits of the Coke Works have had a tremendous benefit on Clairton and the surrounding area, there are certain environmental affects and challenges that accompany the coke-making process. Clairton Works has improved the performance of its facility in recent years and continues to take steps to reduce emissions that affect air quality. However, these improvements will continue into the long term, as repairs and renovations of the facility are expensive and the majority of operating units within the works are more than fifty years old and were not built to meet the environmental standards of today.

### KOPPERS

Koppers is a global company that produces carbon compounds and treated wood products. Koppers employs 1,750 employees at 28 operating locations, one of which is located in Clairton. The Koppers Plant is located on 17 acres adjacent to the Clairton Coke Works and converts crude coke over tars into liquid pitch and other



*Source: Mackin Photo, 2009*

liquid products such as creosote and chemical oil.

*The economic profile of the City of Clairton was summarized from the information contained on U.S. Steel's website and Koppers website (<http://www.uss.com/corp/facilities/clairton-plant.asp> and <http://www.koppers.com> ).*



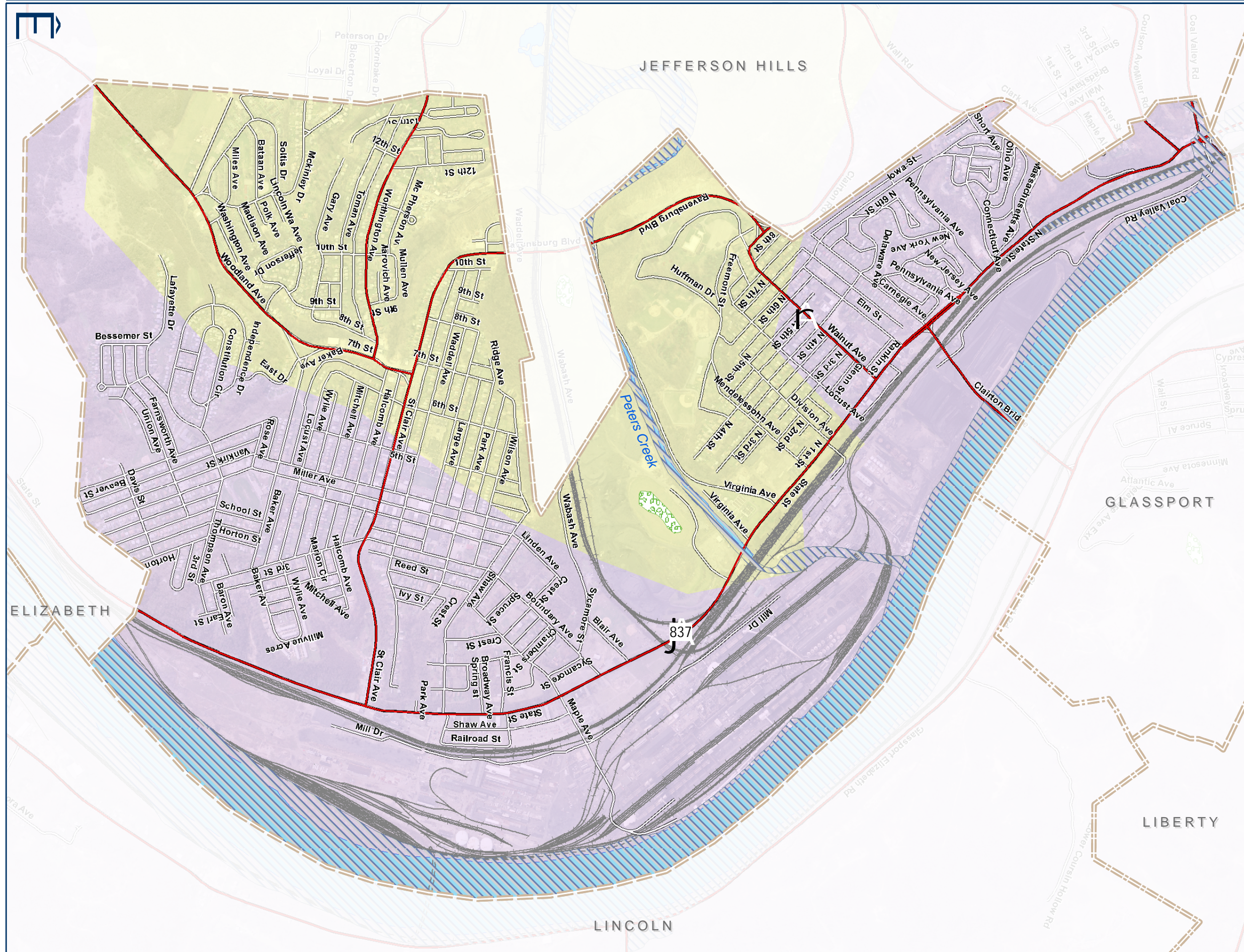


## Legend

- 
-  Municipal Boundary
  -  Water Body
  -  State Road
  -  Local Road
  -  Railroad
  -  Wetlands
  -  Floodplains
  -  Monongahela Watershed
  -  Peters Creek Watershed

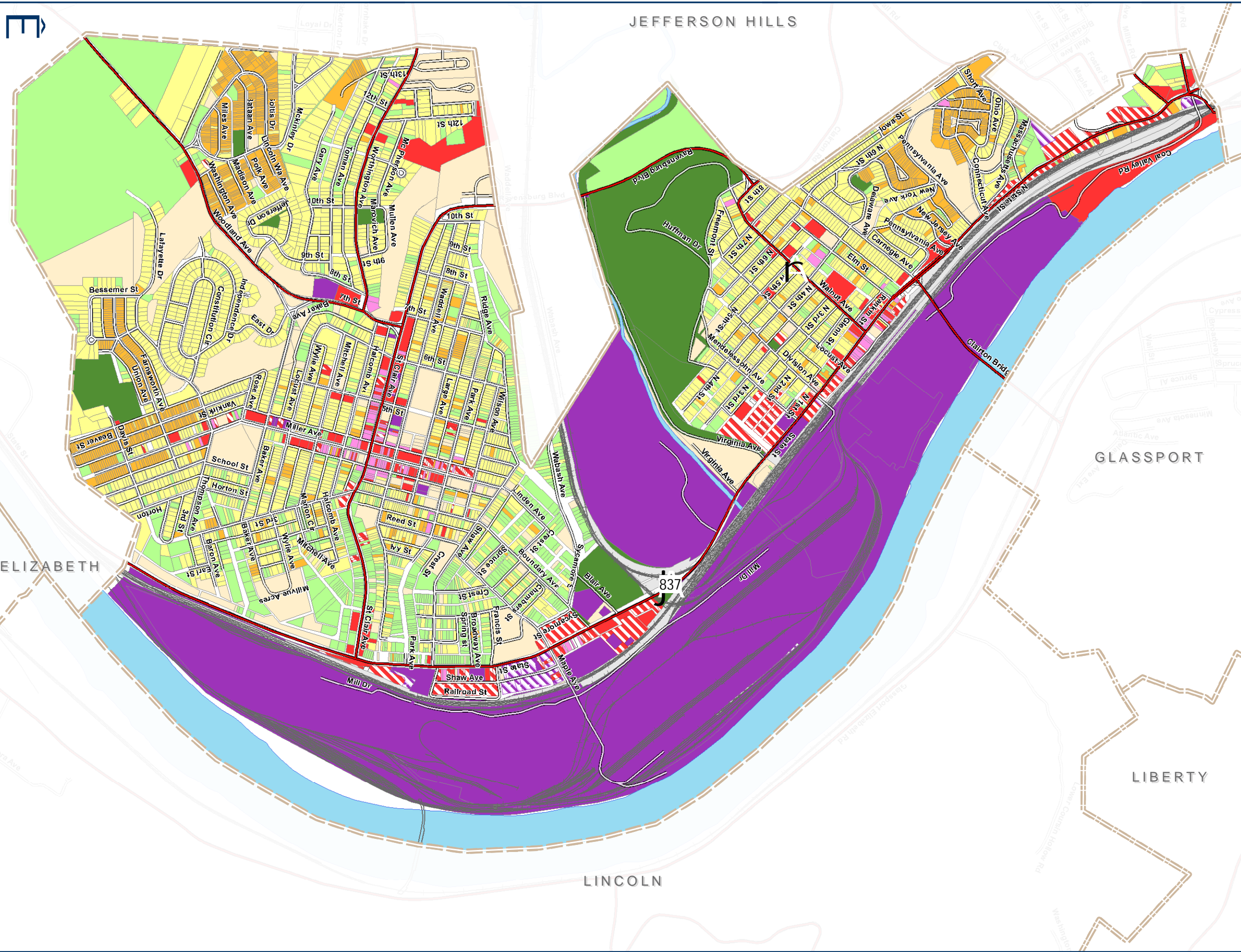


*Source: Data used is courtesy of Allegheny County and PASDA.*









# City of Clairton Comprehensive Plan

## Legend

- Municipal Boundary
- Water Body
- State Road
- Local Road
- Railroad
- Existing Land Use Category**
- Single-Family Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Commercial/Office
- Mixed Use
- Industrial
- Public
- Public Recreation
- Railroad/Utility
- Open Space
- Vacant Industrial Land
- Vacant Commercial Land
- Unknown



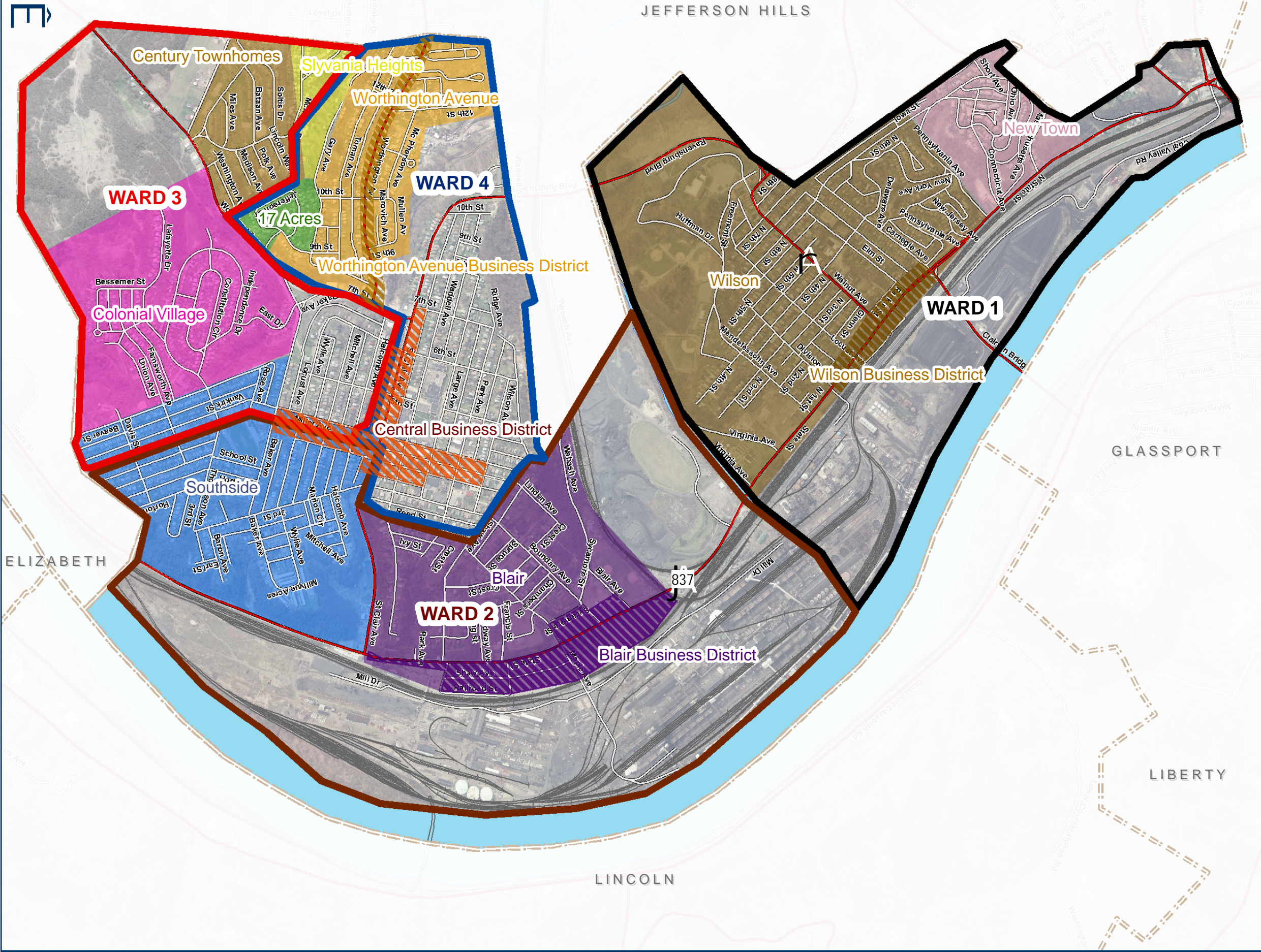
Adopted March 8, 2011

Source: Data used is courtesy of Allegheny County and PASDA.









City of Clairton  
Comprehensive Plan

**Legend**

- Municipal Boundary
- Water Body
- State Road
- Local Road
- Railroad

**Neighborhood**

- 17 Acres
- Blair
- Century Townhomes
- Colonial Village
- New Town
- Sylvania Heights
- Southside
- Wilson
- Worthington Avenue

**Business District**

- Blair Business District
- Central Business District
- Wilson Business District
- Worthington Avenue District

**Ward**

1	3
2	4

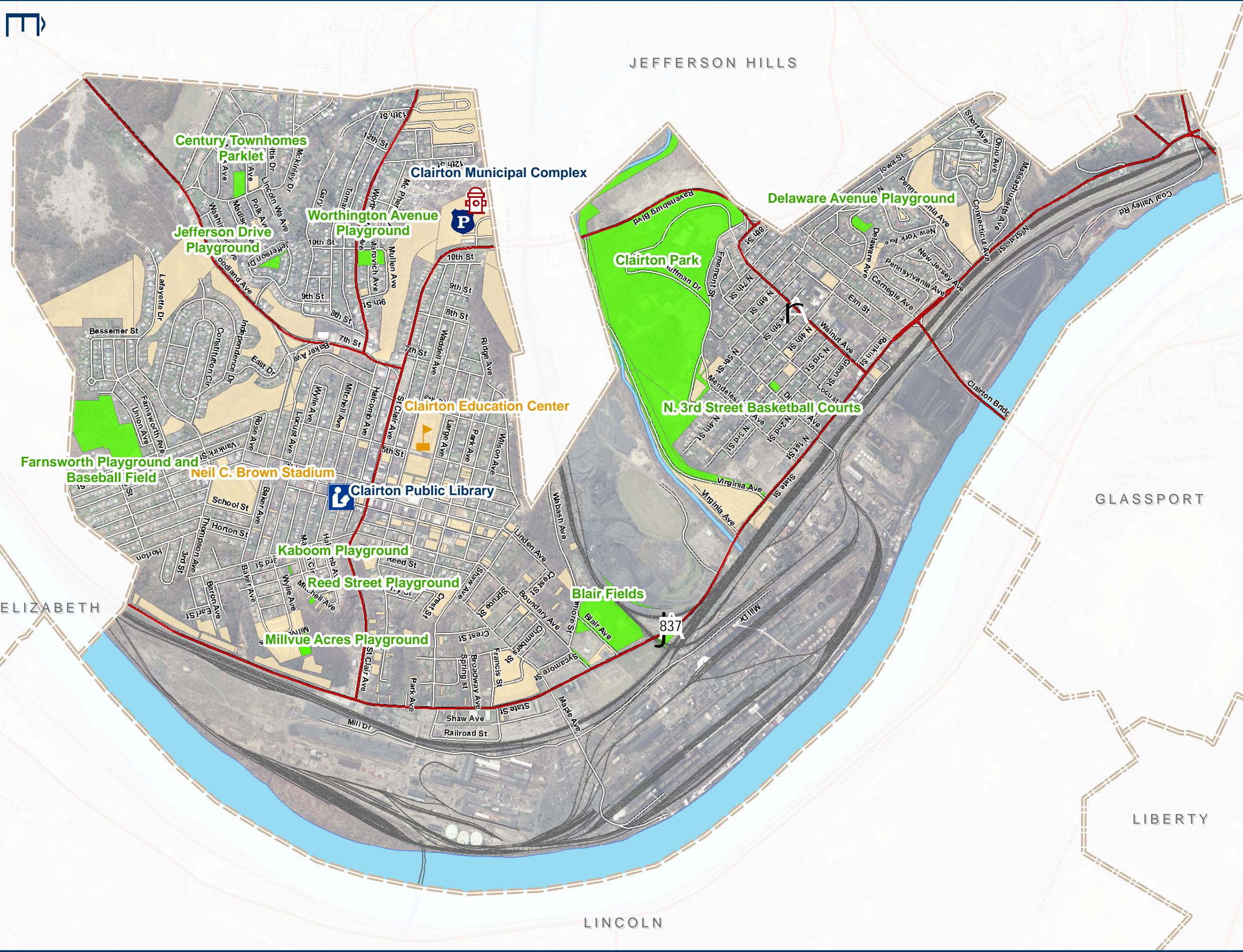


Adopted March 8, 2011  
Source: Data used is courtesy of Allegheny County and PASDA.









# City of Clairton Comprehensive Plan

- Legend**
- Municipal Boundary
  - Water Body
  - State Road
  - Local Road
  - Railroad
  - Public
  - Public Recreation
  - Fire Station
  - Police Station
  - Public School
  - Library



Adopted March 8, 2011

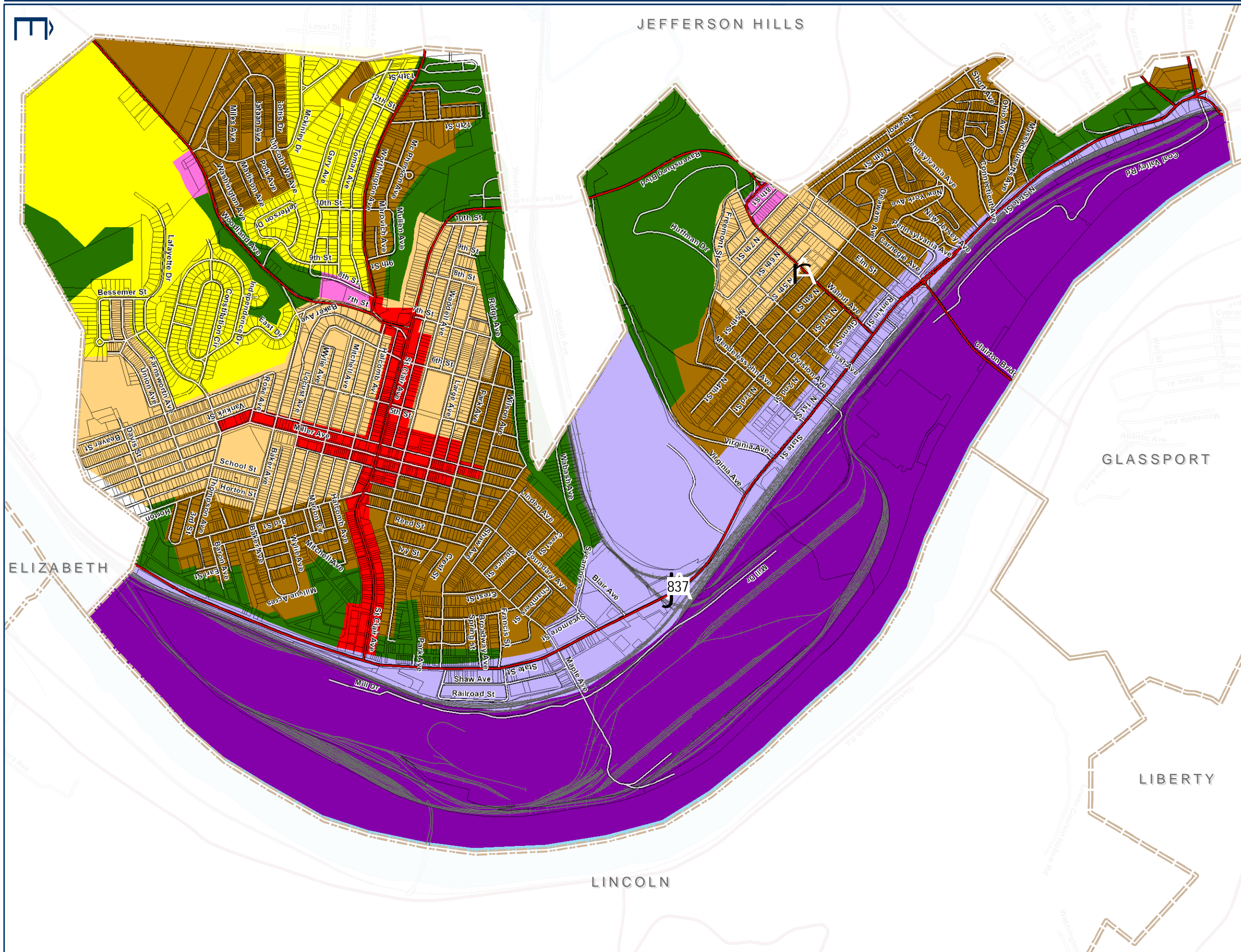
Source: Data used is courtesy of Allegheny County and PASDA.











## City of Clairton Comprehensive Plan

### Legend

- Municipal Boundary
- Water Body
- State Road
- Local Road
- Railroad
- Parcels

### Clairton Zoning Districts

- R-1 (Residential)
- R-2 (Residential)
- R-3 (Residential)
- B-1 (Central Business)
- B-2 (Neighborhood Shopping)
- I-1 (Light Industry)
- I-2 (Heavy Industry)
- S-2 (Conservation)

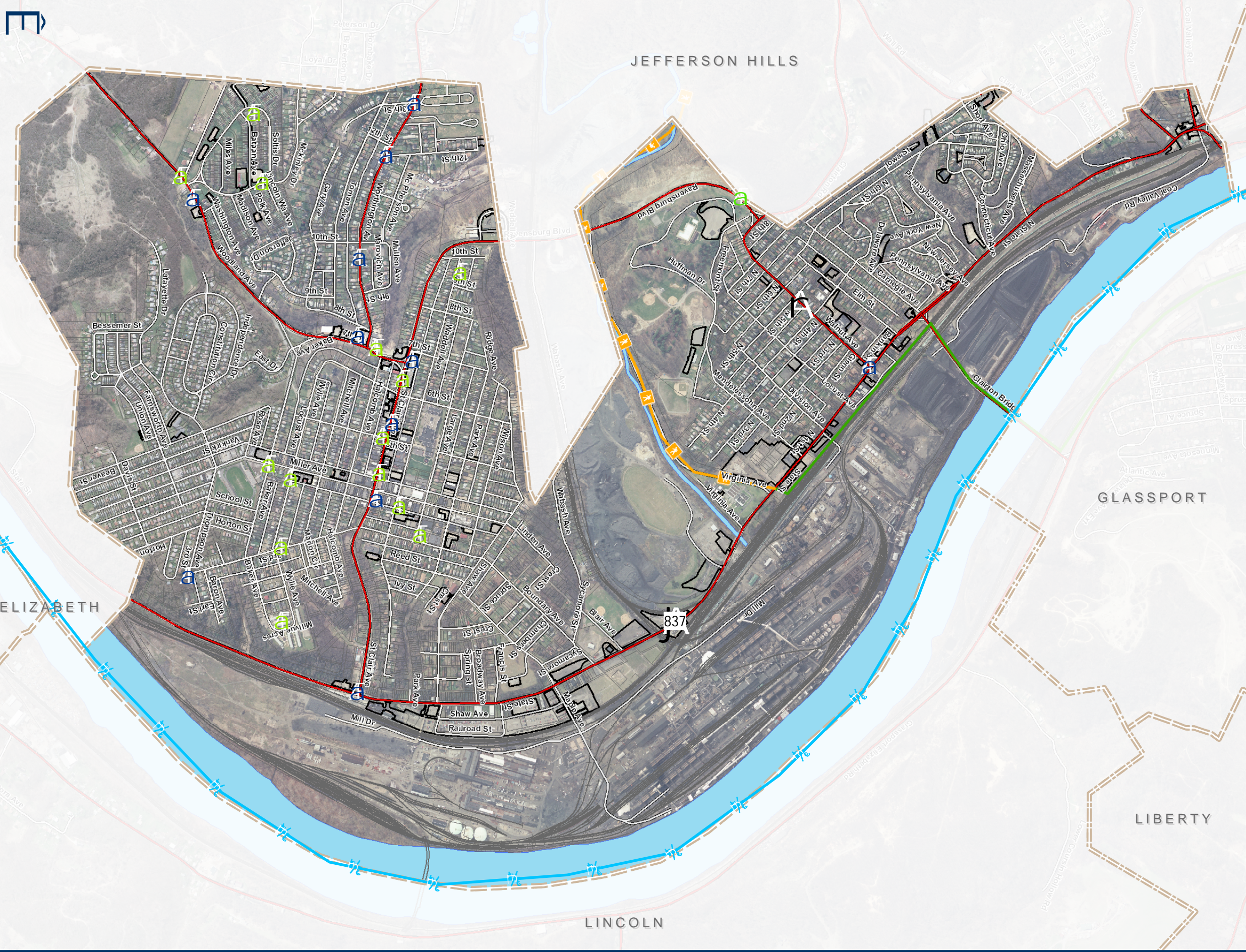


Adopted March 8, 2011

Source: Data used is courtesy of  
Allegheny County and PASDA.







# City of Clairton Comprehensive Plan

## Legend

- Municipal Boundary
- Water Body
- Parcel
- State Road
- Local Road
- Railroad
- Montour Trail
- Steel Valley Trail
- Monongahela Water Trail
- Parking Lot
- WorkLink Bus Stop
- Port Authority Bus Stop



Adopted March 8, 2011

Source: Data used is courtesy of Allegheny County and PASDA.







Evaluating the needs of the City is an imperative step in the process of developing recommendations for its future. Using input gathered from the public involvement process, in tandem with the Community Overview assembled, a vision for the future of the City of Clairton was developed. Community Development Objectives – that is, statements that broaden and support this vision – were used as a means to evaluate the City's current strengths and assets as well as areas that could use improvement. The result is a complete documentation of the City's priority issues framed in the context of its future goals. This chapter includes:

### ➤ PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

- Steering Committee
- City- School Partnership Group
- Website/Blog
- Focus Groups
- Surveys
- Stakeholder Interviews
- Youth Involvement
- Public Meetings

### ➤ NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- Vision Statement
- Community Development Objectives



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## PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

A sound comprehensive plan is not created in a vacuum. The creation of a community-driven plan, one that will serve as a unified voice requires the participation and support of community stakeholders throughout the planning process. Creating a plan reflective of the City of Clairton – its people and its character – requires an open and ongoing public dialogue. To achieve this, a number of organizations and residents were utilized to develop an accurate community snapshot, identify the key issues and concerns, and assist in the development of the goals and priorities. It is through the collaborative work of the various organizations and individuals involved to ensure that the plan is a reflection of the community as a whole.

*Destiny is not a matter of chance; but a matter of choice. It is not a thing to be waited for, it is a thing to be achieved.*

*- William Jennings Bryan*

Public engagement within the planning process presents an opportunity to develop a vision for the future of Clairton. More importantly, it also presents a chance to bring together the active but often uninvolved constituency of residents, business owners, investors, and visitors who enjoy and identify with the culture and social life of the City. Bringing these groups together gives them the chance to think about the effects of change and how best to integrate old with new. The plan itself is a tool that recognizes the value of development and the importance of community priorities and preferences. Once clearly established, these priorities will steer the area's commercial corridors and residential neighborhoods down a path that is in the best interest of the City and its diverse stakeholder groups.

## STEERING COMMITTEE

The Steering Committee was an extension of the Planning Team, which comprised Mackin and GSP Consulting, and provided critical input and information throughout the planning process. Meetings were held with the committee bi-monthly for a total of 8 meetings.

The Committee was comprised of 18 active members, who included representatives from the different neighborhoods in Clairton, churches, local businesses, City staff, and the Planning Commission.



### CITY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP GROUP

The City-School Partnership Group, comprised of school board members and city officials, was a valuable asset to the planning process. Meetings were held with the Partnership Group at key points throughout the planning process. The purpose of the City School Partnership Group was to provide project guidance and ensure ongoing awareness and commitment to the Comprehensive Plan and recommendations.

### WEBSITE/BLOG

A blog was created for the Steering Committee so they could communicate throughout the planning process. The blog is a type of website that allows members to comment on items related to the comprehensive plan. Meeting announcements, reminders, handouts, and materials were posted on the blog for review and comment.



### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOCUS GROUP

A business forum was hosted by GSP and Mackin in cooperation with the Clairton Chamber of Commerce. The goal of the forum was to identify main issues and concerns, as well as current and future needs of local businesses. A summary of the forum can be found in the Appendix 2.

### SURVEYS

As part of the public involvement efforts, two distinctive surveys were designed to gather information on local issues, concerns, and future priorities.

A general survey was prepared that asked respondents what the priority issues are within the comprehensive plan elements (Community Services / Facilities, Parks and Recreation, Transportation, Natural and Historical Resources, Residential Development, and Economic Development). The survey was distributed throughout the City by the Steering Committee at churches, community events, and neighborhoods. A total of 132 surveys were returned.

The second survey developed was targeted to the business community. The survey was designed to identify the nature of operations and how their current and future needs are impacted by Clairton's regional location. Questions related to items such as workforce availability, transportation access, business climate, and education and training.

The results from both surveys were tabulated and are woven throughout this chapter.

## STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Various stakeholder interviews were completed to gather information from people in the community who have expertise in specific plan elements. The Steering Committee was instrumental in identifying key stakeholders such as; Montour Trail, Clairton Police Department, Clairton Volunteer Fire Department, Clairton Public Works, Clairton Zoning and Code Enforcement, Clairton Library, Clairton School District, Clairton Municipal Authority, Steel Valley Council of Governments (COG), Clairton Chamber of Commerce, PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) and City of Clairton Redevelopment Authority.

## YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

A youth focus group was held in May of 2010 at the Clairton High School. It consisted of 12 students in civics course; the participants were a mix of sophomores, juniors, and seniors. The students participated in a visioning session where they identified their likes and dislikes, and identified important issues regarding the main areas of focus for the Comprehensive Plan. This included discussion of business districts and commercial opportunities, residential choices, transportation, parks, and social and cultural life. At the conclusion of the session, the students were given a quick in-class assignment, which was to write a “postcard from the future.” The activity instructed the students to pretend they were writing to a friend who had not visited Clairton in ten years and had to describe to them what it looked like. The students were to use their imagination and describe the things they hope



*Source: Mackin Photo, 2010*

to see, (i.e., their “ideal” Clairton), using some of the priorities and issues detailed from the earlier visioning exercise. The overwhelming concerns identified by the students included a lack of clubs and organizations, a lack of places to go in the commercial areas, a lack of accessible parks and recreation spaces (including indoor recreation) – as well as concerns regarding public transit, vacant structures, and public perceptions of the City by those in the region. Their postcards can be found in Appendix 3.

### PUBLIC MEETINGS

Two public meetings were held to help increase the public's understanding of land use planning, enhance awareness of issues facing the community, and identify problem solving opportunities. A summary of both public meetings can be found in Appendix 1.

#### PUBLIC MEETING #1: MARCH 15, 2010

The first public meeting was held to introduce the project to public, with approximately 116 people signing in. The meeting consisted of a presentation and visioning exercise. The results of the visioning exercise identified strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats within the City of Clairton. An exit survey was also distributed to all meeting attendees of which 66 people returned, a response rate of 57 percent.



*Source: Mackin Photo, 2010*

#### PUBLIC MEETING #2: NOVEMBER 15, 2010

The final public meeting was held to present recommendations to the public, with approximately 85 people signing in. The meeting consisted of a presentation of the draft recommendations with a question and answer session held at the end. An exit survey was also distributed to all meeting attendees of which 19 were returned, a response rate of 22 percent.

## ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

This comprehensive plan provides a long-term vision for the future, which will serve as a roadmap for community revitalization. In **Chapter 1: Community Overview**, the current state of affairs of the City were documented and analyzed in order to understand why certain concerns and priorities of residents exist. The next step in the planning process was the Issue Identification, which focused on the concerns and priorities shared by residents, business owners, community groups, institutions, and local municipal leaders.

The vision and issue identification that follow lay the groundwork for lasting community and economic development within the City of Clairton. With the continued involvement and interest of the community, Clairton will be poised to build upon its strong roots and guide change and realize a better future.

## VISION STATEMENT

The primary goal of a vision statement is to provide a focus for the future of Clairton and is the answer to the question: What do residents want to see in the community five, ten and 20 years from now? It is also a result of the public involvement process, during which elected officials and residents had a chance to discuss and identify the most important features they would like to see nurtured and developed in their community.

*"The City of Clairton will build upon its sense of community and strive to offer a high quality of life for its residents, business owners and visitors by providing efficient public services, quality education, safe and attractive business districts, housing options, abundance of open space and recreational opportunities and an efficient multi-modal transportation system."*

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

Generally, the purpose of Community Development Objectives is to provide a basis for Comprehensive Plan goals and recommendations. Specifically, the Community Development Objectives are reflective of Article III, Section 301 (1) of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC). “A statement of objectives of the municipality concerning its future development, including, but not limited to, the location, character and timing of future development objectives...”

<i>COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES</i>	
<i>#1</i>	Revitalize the multiple business districts to help grow and stabilize the local tax base to become a self sufficient community.
<i>#2</i>	Build upon municipal services and partnerships to enhance efficiencies and productivity.
<i>#3</i>	Promote sound land use planning through the protection of open space and the enhancement of natural and cultural assets.
<i>#4</i>	Provide additional social and recreational opportunities for residents of all ages through partnerships with other organizations and communities.
<i>#5</i>	Provide a diverse mix of safe housing options that will appeal to young professionals, families, and older residents.
<i>#6</i>	Ensure that all municipal ordinances are consistent and compatible with the desired future growth and development patterns.
<i>#7</i>	Improve mobility to, from, and within the City of Clairton by enhancing major transportation routes, public transportation options and pedestrian circulation and connections.

### ASSETS, OPPORTUNITIES, AND CHALLENGES: WHAT THEY ARE

Once the Vision Statement and Community Development Objective were completed, assets, opportunities, and challenges for each Community Development Objective were identified based on public input.

- Assets are strengths of the City and could be used as a foundation for future successes.
- Opportunities could potentially be assets if improvements were made.
- Challenges are obstacles that could possibly hinder the achievement of the objective and need to be overcome or addressed in order to achieve lasting success.

Throughout this section, the reader will notice certain words and phrases are in **bold**. This is to demonstrate their significance to the reader. Bold words and phrases can be assets, opportunities, or challenges, or some combination of all three. It is the hope that by calling them out in bold lettering that their interconnectivity and importance within the context of the plan is realized.



*Source: Mackin Photo, 2010*

**OBJECTIVE #1:** Revitalize the multiple business districts to help grow and stabilize the local tax base to become a self sufficient community.

<b>Assets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Longtime business owners</li> <li>• U.S. Steel's Mon Valley Works</li> <li>• Walkable neighborhoods</li> <li>• Friendly atmosphere and close-knit fabric</li> <li>• Low tax rate on property</li> <li>• Access to public transit</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demand for local services and retail, specifically a grocery store</li> <li>• Redevelop vacant structures in the Main, Blair, and Wilson business districts</li> <li>• Need to support efforts of struggling small business-owners</li> <li>• Act 47 presents an opportunity to completely reenergize the City's organizational structure and finances</li> </ul>
<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vacant and deteriorated properties require significant rehabilitation</li> <li>• Outside perception of the City of Clairton</li> <li>• Vandalism and crime</li> <li>• Need for greater organization among businesses</li> <li>• Need to condemn and demolish deteriorated and / or unsafe structures</li> <li>• Business privilege tax and tax forgiveness</li> <li>• Act 47 status presents a fiscal challenge</li> <li>• Isolation of business districts as major roadways do not go through all of the different districts</li> <li>• Reduced funding for many incentive programs such as Main Streets</li> </ul>

Clairton is a traditional smaller city with multiple commercial business districts that serve the existing neighborhoods. The development of Clairton is mainly associated with heavy industry. Unlike many other communities in the Mon Valley, Clairton has retained its steel mill, though it no longer plays the significant role that it once held. Although Clairton has suffered population decline and economic loss, it retains the important fabric of a close-knit community with a number of family-owned businesses still in existence.



Source: Mackin Photo, 2010



Residents and stakeholders have indicated that there is a distinct **need for local business services and retail** in the community. Although Clairton's business districts are not the busy hub they once were, there is still a good business environment in the City. There is a great opportunity for development as businesses that would not necessarily rely on the existing City population but would draw upon the larger region can find Clairton attractive due to its location and access within the Mon Valley. In addition, there is a great opportunity to develop restaurants and other attractions that can **capitalize upon the pass-through traffic** generated by the Waterfront, Kennywood, and Sandcastle. Clairton also has a brownfield that can be used for redevelopment.

Focus groups have also suggested that several existing companies have expressed interest in expanding but there are no ready to build sites to accommodate them. If the City can prepare the sites, it can easily attract **new investment**.

Aesthetics is currently inhibiting revitalization of the business districts. Revitalization of the multiple business districts was the highest ranked objective by attendees at the first public meeting. There are a large number of partially to completely **vacant structures** scattered throughout the City; many concentrated in the business districts. These structures negatively impact adjacent stores and the overall character of the districts as shopping destinations. Coupled with the vacant storefronts are often vacant upper floors that used to provide housing for storeowners or additional space for professional or medical offices. With vacancies above, local



*Source: Mackin Photo, 2010*

stores rely on foot traffic and outside visitors to purchase goods and services. From this standpoint, a combination of new housing as well as an increase in activity related to drawing in more outside visitors will help reinforce and strengthen the local market for commercial and retail space by creating a more **active, lively, and engaged sense of street life**.

In addition to vacant commercial structures, there is also a scattered pattern of smaller **vacant lots** that are lowering property values and affecting the stability of the property tax base, some of which are highly visible to thru-traffic, particularly along SR 837. The lots are uncared for, magnets for illegal dumping, and negatively affect the look and feel of the City. A combination of **infill** and **community greening efforts** (such as community gardens or "pocket" parks / playgrounds) can help alleviate this issue.

Building conditions vary significantly throughout the community. Much of the City's building stock is in fair condition; however, it is suspected that many of these buildings are in worse condition inside than out. Many stakeholders have raised the issue of building condition

particularly as it relates to **conflicts between the tenants and absentee landlords**. These issues are even more pronounced with the number of **distressed and deteriorated properties**. This can act as a significant barrier to change. It only takes one property to create a nuisance for neighbors and reduce property values for homeowners. **Delinquent taxes** are a significant contributor to this issue, and must be dealt with effectively in order for the community to move forward. In many instances, there is interest in purchasing vacant properties or properties that have owners who have long since lost interest in the property, but it is difficult for many of these interested buyers to obtain the funds necessary to pay back all of the taxes owed. Alleviating this issue would address much of the apprehension toward buying and renovating existing structures / lots.

Many of the issues mentioned above were validated in the business forum held on January 12, 2010 and in a survey of local businesses. While business owners are generally satisfied with services in Clairton, cutting taxes and improving safety are the top priorities, followed by efforts to restore vacant land and generally beautify the community which in part reflects the strong linkages between the issues of safety, vacant land and aesthetics. These issues are also closely related to the general decline in population and the socio-economic changes described in **Chapter 1: Community Overview**. Survey respondents were also in nearly unanimous agreement that there are insufficient resources invested in the revitalization of Clairton.

It is important to note that this Plan recognizes the limits of the City's manpower and finances and the need to achieve sustainable results. When the Commonwealth declared Clairton a Distressed Community under Act 47, it forced the City to take several measures to put itself back on track financially. The Act 47 plan is currently being updated and is anticipated to be completed in 2011. The plan will review recommendations relative to management and financial policies, service levels and staffing, collective bargaining/cost containment provisions, labor relations, financial projects, and community and economic development. The Act 47 plan will take into account recommendations made within this Comprehensive Plan and how recommendations can be implemented in terms of budgeting and prioritization.

**OBJECTIVE #2:** Build upon municipal services and partnerships to enhance efficiencies and productivity.

<p><b>Assets</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellent municipal services, including public works and maintenance, VFD and EMS, and police</li> <li>• Active civic organizations such as the Unity Group, the Clairton Community PartnerSHIP, and Steel Valley Trail</li> <li>• Local events such as the 5K race, Community Day, festivals, etc.</li> <li>• City and School District both dedicated to improving the community</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for increased communication and partnership between groups</li> <li>• Need to market the City better</li> <li>• Need for expanded programming such as more school and scholarship programs, drug rehabilitation programs, and job training and assistance programs</li> <li>• Need to address public safety and expand block watch programs</li> </ul>
<p><b>Challenges</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overcome poor perception of the City</li> <li>• Continue ongoing cooperation and maintain momentum of civic activism beyond the planning process</li> <li>• Funding for expanded programming</li> <li>• Funding to keep the Clairton VFD a self-sustaining organization</li> <li>• Addressing fiscal issues which prevent departments and services from receiving adequate funding and staff</li> </ul>

The City provides a variety of excellent services for its residents, including public works activities, police service, assisting the Volunteer Fire Department (VFD), and providing support to the Library. Residents enjoy the many activities provided by these organizations, as well as those provided by the Chamber of Commerce. Local events such as the Community Day, the 5K race, book clubs and educational outreach programs at the Library, and fundraising events at the VFD all contribute to a great quality of life in the City. However, there are some areas that need to be improved upon. The City must continue to **support these organizations** and **encourage their growth and expansion**. The Library needs improved space for storage and activities and, as is the case with many other

local libraries, needs a **consistent funding stream** in order to stay active in the community.

The VFD has also expressed concern about continued funding and support from the City – it is vital that they continue to pursue **grants and funding for improved equipment and training**. A major issue for the VFD is the large number of vacant structures. They are fire hazards but the cost of demolition is extremely high so the focus has been mainly on trying to demolish the most dangerous structures (particularly commercial). Thus far, the VFD plans to demolish 10 units this year (2010) and 15 already for next year (2011); unfortunately, it is “backlogged” and the VFD is struggling to keep up with diminishing manpower and fiscal resources. A similar but related issue for the VFD is the high percentage of the population that is elderly, on public assistance, or otherwise non-working. The ambulance and associated medical costs of these individuals are often not covered because they do not have health insurance, Medicare, or Medicaid. Not only does this impact the VFD, but is also indicates a great need for medical services within the community, such as walk-in clinics for the disadvantaged.

The public works department also faces serious constraints. The department is struggling to keep up as there is a lack of staff; originally the department had a staff of 10 but this has since been reduced to eight, with the work load continually increasing. In addition, public works staff often ends up picking up after residents and business owners who have allowed their properties to fall into dangerous disrepair. The department also needs more equipment; including trucks and lawn equipment.

Community members have identified a great need to tie together some of the loose threads of the good work already occurring in Clairton. The City and School District are working hard to improve, but it seems that often their efforts are at cross-purposes due to a **lack of effective communication**. This lack of communication exists not only between the two groups but also between the groups and the public at large. In general, there has not been enough positive publicity and information regarding the many steps taken to improve Clairton and propel it into the future.

The community is fortunate to have several dedicated non-profit organizations such as the **Unity Group**, the **Clairton Community PartnerSHIP** (State Health Improvement Plan), and **Steel Valley Trail** organization that are also seeking to promote revitalization; however, these efforts could be enhanced if there were more cohesive and broad-based partnerships between groups and between the City and School District. Making all of these connections should be a priority for the City. Establishing a more cohesive set of relationships will motivate residents to take more pride in their community and foster a greater sense of civic awareness. It will also enable the various parties involved to expand

their efforts and offer a greater array of much-needed programs, such as more **school and scholarship programs, drug rehabilitation, and job training and assistance.**

Partnerships should also be utilized to address the issue of public safety and crime by working with individuals, small block watch or neighborhood groups, and the police. A large number of people have indicated that one of the top issues in Clairton is **public safety**. Even when the statistics indicate that crime is on par, or in some cases less, than the rates in other neighboring communities, a persistent perception of the City as unsafe remains. Many residents would like to see more **foot patrols, security cameras**, and greater community policing efforts, such as **neighborhood block watches** to reduce petty crime and illicit activity like theft, drug crime, loitering, and vandalism. Though every neighborhood is plagued by small amounts of drug crime, the areas of concern for the Police Department include the business districts, particularly St. Clair Avenue and Wilson. The residential areas immediately adjacent (within one or two blocks) are also affected. Police are concentrating their efforts on reducing drug and gun crime, but programs related to improve the relationship between police and the community such as a **citizens' police academy** would do much to alleviate some of the pressure on the police staff, which often has a high turnover rate.

A related, and perhaps more important issue, is that of **overall perception**. The City currently suffers from a **poor reputation** within the region due to years of bad press coverage and sensationalized statistics.

**OBJECTIVE #3:** Promote sound land use planning through the protection of open space and the enhancement of natural and cultural assets.

<b>Assets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wooded slopes and undeveloped lots provide residents with open space</li> <li>• Many historic structures</li> <li>• Significant role as part of the region's industrial legacy</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community "greening" efforts such as community gardens or tree-planting</li> <li>• Effectively publicize City Cleanup Day to increase participation and awareness</li> <li>• Improve "gateway areas" to City</li> <li>• Provide incentives through land use codes and other ordinances to save and rehabilitate most important landmark structures</li> <li>• Use land use codes and ordinances to protect sensitive environmental areas such as steep slopes and floodplains</li> </ul>
<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dumping and littering throughout the City</li> <li>• Long-term management of vacant lots</li> <li>• Air pollution concerns and perception</li> <li>• Many congregations lack numbers / funding to maintain cemeteries or the churches are vacant / unused</li> </ul>

Clairton's natural setting on rolling hills in the bend of the Monongahela River affords beautiful views of the surrounding valley and make for a pleasing natural environment. Because of the City's naturally hilly topography, there is a great deal of undeveloped land and wooded steep slopes that make the community feel green. However, it is vital that the City make a concerted effort to protect this precious resource. Updates to **land use codes** can help the City in maintaining **sensitive lands** that are not otherwise suited for development such as steep slopes and floodplains.



*Source: Mackin Photo, 2009*

Many community members have also expressed a wish to see more **sustainable land use practices** throughout the City, including protecting water resources such as Peters Creek and encouraging more **"greening" of streets and neighborhoods**, i.e. increased landscaping.



Residents have also expressed a wish to see a **community garden program**, **community clean-up days**, or **tree-planting program** in the City. Currently, many of the City's churches are working to provide neighborhood gardens through the ongoing efforts of their congregations; First AME, Mt. Olive, and St. Clare of Assisi have all started implementing "unity gardens." The religious community is hoping to use these gardens not only as a means of providing a more aesthetically pleasing environment but also as educational tools for the youth of the City. Expanding these programs to encompass the greater population in general would be positive. Even more importantly, engaging in a community garden program could serve to **enhance gateways to the City**, a key concern for many stakeholders and residents. SR 837 is the major entrance to the community and many feel that it needs to present a much more pleasing face in order to welcome people to Clairton.

Finding opportunities to beautify the City through community groups can also assist the municipality with addressing the high cost of maintaining vacant and underutilized lots. Currently, the public works department spends a great deal of time and resources on cutting the grass, weeding, and addressing littering, and dumping problems. Transforming these spaces into community gardens or other types of green space might help alleviate that burden. The long-term future of these properties is an important consideration. Either City or the Redevelopment Authority needs to force the issue and take ownership of some of these parcels in order to make them productive.

There is also a consistent environmental concern in the community regarding **air quality**. It is important that the City and its residents continue to work positively with US Steel in order to find ways to reduce particulate matter and improve the health and well-being of residents. It is also equally vital that the City and US Steel keep open lines of communication so that residents are aware of continuing efforts to improve air quality and the environment so that a negative perception does not continue.



Source: Mackin Photo, 2010

Clairton is rich in architectural heritage, with a wide diversity of building types and styles that provide a significant visual and cultural context. Clairton's story is an important one to tell as it reflects the history of the region. Residents are eager to preserve the City's cultural legacy and have expressed a desire to see the City maximize its natural and historic features. Historic preservation efforts should concentrate on **saving landmark structures and places** such as the Peters Creek cemetery along SR 837. The community should also encourage **reinvestment in historic buildings**; special attention should be paid to historic commercial structures that serve as anchors in commercial districts, such as the Wilson Civic Center.



**OBJECTIVE #4:** Provide additional social and recreational opportunities for residents of all ages through partnerships with other organizations and communities.

<b>Assets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well-maintained and extensive Clairton Park</li> <li>• Swimming pool</li> <li>• Neighborhood playgrounds</li> <li>• Montour Trail and Steel Valley Heritage Trail</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect the Montour Trail and the park</li> <li>• Need for updated equipment at all parks and playgrounds</li> <li>• Partner with school to provide additional recreational programming, including youth and senior programs</li> <li>• Utilize recreation intern to save resources</li> <li>• Partnerships with adjacent municipalities</li> <li>• Potential locations for new recreation</li> </ul>
<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Swimming pool is in need of improvements</li> <li>• No active Recreation Board or Recreation Director</li> <li>• Vandalism at parks throughout the City</li> <li>• Additional park acreage needed for Clairton Park to make it a true regional park</li> <li>• Continued maintenance of all parks</li> <li>• Lack of knowledge of residents on recreational programs offered</li> <li>• School District not always able to provide time, facilities, or resources for “open recreation”</li> </ul>



Source: Mackin Photo, 2009

Clairton is fortunate to have a nicely maintained city park that is quite substantial for a community of its size. The park has many facilities that draw a large number of residents as well as regional visitors, including the swimming pool. Because of its popularity, residents have expressed a wish to see the pool updated and possibly even expanded. Specifically, there is a need for better lighting around the **swimming pool** and some minor cosmetic repairs to both the liner and the pool deck.

The remainder of the park serves a variety of both active and passive recreational purposes. The park is truly an asset for the city, but some of the pavilions could use minor updating and cleaning, and **Memorial Hill** is in poor condition. This part of the park is overgrown and has numerous unused and vacated structures that the

City should either renovate and re-purpose or demolish. Vandalism and crime play a significant role in the decline of many of the City's recreation spaces, but particularly at Memorial Hill, and the City needs to undertake concerted efforts – including enforcing the park curfew - to ensure the **safety and security** of all portions of the park, including passive areas.

Because the park is so large and has some room to expand, diversifying its profile would be a great way to address the recreational needs of all ages and types of residents. While the pool and ball fields certainly appeal to families, younger and older residents could gain more benefit from the park if walking or jogging **trails**, a roller or ice-skating **rink**, an **off-leash dog area** or **park**, or perhaps even a fishing pond were offered. These amenities would provide a **greater array of opportunities** for these community members.



*Source: Mackin Photo, 2009*

There also should be a **stronger connection** between the **Montour Trail** and the park. Currently there is a path between the trail and the park but maintenance is an issue. Illegal all-terrain vehicle (ATV) use is a problem in this area also. In addition, there is no signage to alert trail users of the proximity of the park. Providing a stronger connection – including signage, lighting, and / or a designated bike pathway or bike lane – would draw additional users to the park and expose an even wider array of visitors to one of Clairton's chief assets.

Many of Clairton's neighborhoods feature small **playgrounds** that offer additional recreational space. These playgrounds are in various states, with some featuring recently updated equipment in excellent condition while others have outdated equipment or lack certain features, such as bathrooms, signage and lighting. There is also a need for small passive parks throughout the business districts that would include small pedestrian plazas or benches to enhance the look and feel of the commercial corridors and provide a space for more interaction among community members.

**Youth and senior citizen programming** are also very much in need. While the City has a wonderful park and many sports activities such as baseball and swimming, there is simultaneously a lack of awareness of the availability of programming. Many people are not aware of the City's recreation programs at all. There is also a distinct need for space for "open" recreational activities, both indoor and outdoor. Offering a **broad array of recreational programming** and cultural activities (such as plays, movies "in the park," or similar events) can go a long way in keeping kids off the streets and acting as a tool for early intervention. These types of events can also broadly appeal to an older audience as well who may not be active enough to utilize other types of recreation. Moreover, quality services from after-school programs, day care, and job training and placement are needed in the community,

as are evening General Educational Development (GED), English as a Second Language (ESL), and computer classes for adults.

Perhaps the most important need in terms of recreation is that of **greater coordination and organization**. As the above paragraphs illustrate, while Clairton is lucky to have such a wonderful park and its many other valuable green spaces, there is a distinct lack of a coordinated effort among City departments and civic groups to manage these facilities adequately.

**OBJECTIVE #5:** Provide a diverse mix of safe housing options that will appeal to young professionals, families, and older residents.

<b>Assets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordable housing stock in good condition</li> <li>• Many different types of homes and neighborhoods</li> <li>• Historic homes in Wilson</li> <li>• Victorians on the Hill</li> <li>• Townhomes and duplexes</li> <li>• Newer subdivisions with detached homes</li> <li>• Quiet neighborhoods</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide more new single-family detached residences</li> <li>• Provide more diverse housing options to address needs of elderly / retirees</li> <li>• Provide more flexible land use codes and standards to allow for creative types of infill development in residential areas</li> <li>• Encourage sustainable, traditional residential patterns of development</li> </ul>
<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depressed housing values</li> <li>• Vacant structures and lots create a feeling of disinvestment and “blight”</li> <li>• Address property maintenance and code enforcement issues</li> </ul>



Source: Mackin Photo, 2009

Clairton is fortunate to have a very affordable housing stock which makes it an attractive community to members of the workforce who may otherwise not be able to afford home ownership. However, this can also be negative, as well, since property values tend to be much lower than in the rest of the region and hence negatively affect owner equity. It also makes the community a draw for those on fixed incomes. It is important to keep in mind that the affordability of housing affects more than very low-, low- and moderate-income households. Many of these households include valuable members of the workforce. Maintenance costs are a significant barrier for elderly homeowners and potential owners who often find themselves on fixed incomes.

Much of Clairton's character is defined by the many varied housing options in and around the City. Clairton's appeal to older and younger residents alike will necessitate a diversity of housing types within neighborhoods and communities. This diversity should be encouraged to meet the needs of all its citizens.

As mentioned previously, **code enforcement** is a major issue. One of the difficulties involving code enforcement in the City is the number of rental properties and the overall lack of code enforcement.

**OBJECTIVE #6:** Ensure that all municipal ordinances are consistent and compatible with the desired future growth and development patterns.

<b>Assets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currently has Zoning in place</li> <li>• Currently has a Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO)</li> <li>• Zoning Ordinance contains provisions for Planned Residential Districts (PRD's)</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update Zoning to accurately reflect desired future growth and development patterns</li> <li>• Adequately address sensitive environmental areas through steep slope and floodplain protections</li> <li>• Streamline and / or modify zoning districts such as Residential-1 (R-1), Residential – 2 (R-2), and Residential -3 (R-3) that may overlap</li> <li>• Reconsider the commercial districts –Central Business (B-1) and Neighborhood Shoppings (B-2) and their purposes</li> <li>• Add landscaping requirements</li> <li>• Add performance standards</li> </ul>
<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No special exceptions in current Ordinance</li> <li>• Many different neighborhoods makes it difficult to develop a cohesive set of residential districts – there is no “one size fits all” solution</li> </ul>

One of the best tools for helping a community achieve its vision is through municipal land use codes and ordinances. Local governments can ensure that land use ordinances not only **permit but also encourage the types of development** that the community wants to see as part of its vision, which is probably one of the most important steps of implementation. Outdated ordinances can **slow down the development process** (by requiring the developer or landowner to go through extra steps to obtain a Conditional Use permit, or extra meetings of the Planning Commission to determine if waivers of the Subdivision and Land Development requirements are appropriate) and can discourage development altogether in some instances. Overall, Clairton's Zoning Ordinance needs a closer examination to determine if it truly will accomplish the vision of the Comprehensive Plan.

First, the S-2 District is called the conservation district, but it encompasses many disparate areas such as Shaw Avenue hill, Blair Heights, Payne Avenue, Valley Inn area, and Desiderio Boulevard. Granted, many of these areas are steeply sloped but perhaps that illustrates one of the major weaknesses of the Ordinance, the **lack of environmental standards**.

In general, the districts need to be more **cohesive** – right now, they seem very scattered and piecemeal. When zoning a community, it is important to consider not only the current neighborhood patterns, but also (and perhaps more importantly) the **desired future patterns for development**. For example, there seems to be only one area of R-1 but R-2 and R-3 are mainly occurring in many small separate pieces. Moreover, R-2 and R-3 are virtually identical from a regulatory standpoint (i.e., same yard and setback requirements) with the only major difference being that townhouses are permitted “by right” in the R-3 district and are permitted by conditional use only in the R-2 district. While they do an adequate job of addressing the community’s current situation, it would be an excellent idea to re-visit the language and look for possible areas where the City could **streamline or modify zoning districts** to reflect the City’s future vision.

The minimum lot size requirement in B-2 (Neighborhood Shopping) is 15,000 square feet; compared to the minimum lot size requirement in the B-1 district, which is 5,000 square feet. If the B-2 is meant to encompass “neighborhood commercial,” i.e., retail meant to serve a smaller, more localized population on a neighborhood rather than city-wide or regional scale, then it does not make sense to have such a large lot requirement. Such a lot requirement only seems to be encouraging **breaking up the neighborhood fabric** with large auto-oriented uses, or large commercial uses that are sprawling, one-story, and feature expansive parking lots. At a neighborhood scale, it would make more sense to seek to **minimize the impacts of commercial development** by having smaller lot sizes and requiring developers to **build “up”** rather than **“out.”**

The current Ordinance features no **landscaping requirements**, which is a significant area to address, particularly in an urban context that exists in Clairton. As mentioned before, many residents and stakeholders have expressed a wish to see a “greener” Clairton, and without proper landscape requirements this is difficult to achieve. In addition, the regulations regarding **home-based businesses** (which here are called vocational occupations), **signage, off-street parking**, and as mentioned previously, **environmental standards** are outdated and in need of significant improvements.

The Ordinance does not provide for special exceptions (besides those who wish to project into a required yard), so all uses that are not permitted “by right,” are conditional uses, which means they go before City Council. This can be an **unnecessary burden on Council**. The Zoning Hearing Board, unlike Council, is a quasi-judicial body with special authority to look at zoning issues from an objective standpoint. This specialization is important because many zoning issues are multi-faceted and cannot easily be decided quickly, which Council may be pressured to do since they are dealing with so many other concerns. In addition, many of the conditional use parameters are **too broad and vague** to be of much use, and could be easily interpreted a number of ways; phrases and considerations such as “proper separation shall be provided”



and “adequately provide for traffic” are hard to measure **quantitatively**. Lastly, the Zoning Ordinance contains **performance standards**, but they only apply to conditional uses not all uses.

**OBJECTIVE #7:** Improve mobility to, from, and within the City of Clairton by enhancing major transportation routes, public transportation options and pedestrian circulation and connections.

<p><b>Assets</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally walkable business districts and neighborhoods</li> <li>• Montour Trail and Steel Valley Heritage Trail</li> <li>• Good public transit access</li> <li>• Access to major roadways such as State Route 51 and the Mon Fayette Expressway</li> <li>• Rail and River transportation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address lack of connection between sidewalk networks</li> <li>• Provide bike lanes and signage, specifically along SR 837 as part of the Steel Valley Heritage Trail</li> <li>• Improve crosswalks for pedestrians</li> <li>• Improve safety at intersections</li> <li>• Provide bike racks at the Clairton Education Center and throughout the City</li> </ul>
<p><b>Challenges</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of pedestrian amenities in Main Business District</li> <li>• Some sidewalks in poor condition</li> <li>• No school buses or crossing guards</li> <li>• Speeding on major roadways</li> <li>• Funding for improved road maintenance</li> <li>• Public transit cuts</li> <li>• No river access</li> </ul>



Source: Flickr.com, 2010

Throughout the planning process, residents have stated that the accessibility of the City is an asset. With access to State Route 51 and the Mon Fayette Expressway, the City is close to Pittsburgh, as well as other major destinations. The City also has the major roadways of State Route 837 and State Route 885 within its boundaries. The City is well served with public transit, with the Port Authority of Allegheny County offering many routes, as well as Work Link, a free service for riders in the Mon Valley Region. The railroad and the Monongahela River also provide alternative means of transportation and have served U.S. Steel for many years. However, because the railroad and U.S. Steel are located along Clairton's river corridor, access to the river for residents of Clairton is difficult.



Source: Mackin, 2010

The City is generally walkable in nature. However, the pedestrian experience can at times be chaotic and sometimes dangerous. The landscape and topography of the City can often make walking from one neighborhood to another difficult, and many of the sidewalks are in **poor condition** or **lack connections** to other sidewalk networks (i.e., sidewalks that “lead to nowhere”). In addition, not all intersections have **adequate crosswalks**; in some cases, a crosswalk is lacking altogether, while in others the striping and lines are faded.

Those traveling by bicycle **lack infrastructure** within the City. While the Montour Trail serves as a multi-use path that draws many trail users into the City, the Steel Valley Heritage Trail, which shares the right-of-way with SR 837, is dangerous for cyclists due to a lack of adequate space, signage, and concerns about speeding. In the future, the Steel Valley Heritage Trail will serve as the connection between the Montour Trail and the Great Allegheny Passage. Therefore, the City of Clairton has the potential for increased visitors and businesses. In order to take advantage of that potential, safety issues regarding the separation of trail traffic and vehicular traffic need to be addressed.



Source: Mackin, 2010



Source: Mackin, 2010

Further undermining the bicycle experience in the City is the **lack of bike lanes**. Children may wish to bike to school but find it unsafe to do so. There are no bike racks at the Clairton Education Center or anywhere else in the City.

The current road network in Clairton is satisfactory; however there are a few key problem areas. Several intersections need improvements, from minor changes of **improved signage and pavement markings**, to **major changes of re-designing** the intersection.

**Speeding and maintenance** are also primary public concerns. While speeding is more of a police enforcement issue, the width of roadways in Clairton can also factor into prevailing speeds. Therefore, certain roads, in particular State Route 837, should be considered for narrowing. As for maintenance issues, the distressed status of the City plays a key role in budgeting monies for improvements of local roadways.



Recommendations were developed for each of the Community Development Objectives so that the City of Clairton and its partners have a clear path for success. The recommendations listed in this Chapter are key to effectively implementing the Comprehensive Plan and achieving the overall vision for Clairton.

This Action Plan includes recommendations for the following Community Development Objectives:

### ➤ RECOMMENDATIONS

- Objective 1: Revitalize the multiple business districts to help grow and stabilize the local tax base to become a self sufficient community.
- Objective 2: Build upon municipal services and partnerships to enhance efficiencies and productivity.
- Objective 3: Promote sound land use planning through the protection of open space and the enhancement of natural and cultural assets.
- Objective 4: Provide additional social and recreational opportunities for residents of all ages through partnership with other organizations and communities.
- Objective 5: Provide a diverse mix of safe housing options that will appeal to young professionals, families, and older residents.
- Objective 6: Ensure that all municipal ordinances are consistent and compatible with the desired future growth and development patterns.
- Objective 7: Improve mobility to, from, and within the City of Clairton by enhancing major transportation routes, public transportation options and pedestrian circulation and connections.

### ➤ IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX





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## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are the key to successfully implementing the Comprehensive Plan for the City of Clairton. In order for the vision of Clairton to be realized the plan needs to be embraced by City officials, citizens, business / community leaders, and others. In order to accomplish this, the planning process included a significant amount of public participation.

In this Chapter specific recommendations for each Community Development Objective are listed that reflect the needs and desires of the community. Recommendations are also shown on **Map 4.1: Implementation**. An **Implementation Matrix**, located at the end of this Chapter, has also been prepared for the City of Clairton to guide in implementation of recommendations. The matrix is a prioritized list of all the recommendations with the responsible party (the organization to lead the implementation), potential partners (can assist with funding, technical assistance or volunteer hours) and funding sources that should be utilized to achieve the ultimate vision of the City. The matrix also lists probable costs as the City will have to carefully undertake projects due to their current financial status. Projects are categorized as high, medium, or low. High priority projects are those that are to be implemented within the next 1-3 years, as funding permits. Medium priority items are to be implemented within 4-7 years, while low-priority items are to be considered for implementation within 8-10 years. The projects were prioritized based on input by the Steering Committee and the City-School Partnership.



"The best way to predict the future is to invent it."

- Immanuel Kant

*"The City of Clairton will build upon its sense of community and strive to offer a high quality of life for its residents, business owners and visitors by providing efficient public services, quality education, safe and attractive business districts, housing options, abundance of open space and recreational opportunities and an efficient multi-modal transportation system."*

*--City of Clairton Vision Statement*

*2010 - 2020*

**OBJECTIVE I:** Revitalize the multiple business districts to help grow and stabilize the local tax base to become a self sufficient community.

### Issue #1: Capacity

*The City Manager and Finance Director position has been combined which limits the time that can be devoted purely to economic development. This constraint on the City Manager's time is not likely to go away and the City cannot afford additional staff.*



**Action Step 1.** Establish a clear “point person” for Economic Development who can act as a technical advisor.

It is important that a point person is in charge of leading the redevelopment process of the priority projects. In the past this task has been shared by the City Manager and the Clairton Redevelopment Authority. However, a new City Manager has been hired and therefore it would best serve the City if the Manager was in charge of economic development.

One of the more common complaints from businesses considering expanding, relocating or starting-up is the lack of clarity regarding what resources are available to help. Providing the most efficient and responsive service delivery possible is essential to ensure the community benefits from the maximum amount of new investment. This is especially true in smaller municipalities where regulatory processes, policies, financial incentives, and resources may vary widely. The processes for economic development should be clearly identified and mapped on the City website.

The development of a reference guide on how to open a small business, such as the City of Santa Clarita’s (California) guide that was recognized by the International Economic Development Council in 2009, is a useful communication tool. The City should consider developing a similar guide that would highlight targeted investment zones and ready-to-go sites or buildings. The guide should be placed in all city offices, posted on the City website, and distributed to real estate agencies, the

Chamber of Commerce, as well as regional economic development agencies. For more information on Santa Clairta's guide, visit: <http://thinksantaclarita.com/Index.aspx?page=60>

## Issue #2: Programs & Funding

*Public input results have revealed that business owners all agree that there are insufficient resources invested in the revitalization of Clairton.*



*Action Step 1: Earmark collected funds from the Business Privilege Tax specifically for community development objectives.*

There is a lot of sentiment for cutting taxes in general and the Business Privilege Tax specifically. The business privilege tax takes in about \$100,000 per year, which is not an insurmountable revenue gap except that Clairton already spends more than it takes in. Some businesses are currently exempt if their principal place of business is outside of Clairton, which creates tax-equity issues between locally based firms and firms which are headquartered elsewhere. At this time phasing out the tax or cutting the tax without any revenue offset will degrade services and make it harder to continue redevelopment.

However, proceeds from the Business Privilege tax should be dedicated to community development within the three (3) priority areas discussed on page 4-5. The tax should be dedicated to the highest priority area first. As progress is made within that area then the tax can eventually be utilized within the other areas.

The City has spent approximately \$88,000 on community development, so this would represent a small gain and it would at least create a mechanism whereby the business taxes would be used to fuel future growth that should benefit the businesses paying the tax. The City could phase in a revenue cap whereby 5% of the Business Privilege revenue is returned to the general fund until a minimum of 75% of the Business Privilege Tax revenue is spent on community development.

The City should also discuss options to amending the Business Privilege Tax ordinance with the Act 47 Coordinator as there are many issues that business owners within the City have with the tax.

***Action Step 2: Partner with the Redevelopment Authority and use incentives to encourage re-use of structures.***

As noted in the previous Chapter, there is a distinct need to address vacant commercial storefronts and a simultaneous need for retail services in the City. In particular, there is need for a grocery or similar food service chain to serve the basic needs of residents. As such, the City must seek to establish public-private partnerships and work with private developers who may be interested in providing such an outlet. In addition, the City needs to make development within its limits more attractive by cleaning up vacant properties into key shovel-ready sites.

Unfortunately, due to poor public perception, tax issues, and the high cost of building rehabilitation, new business development has been slow. The City and partner economic development agencies should take a proactive approach in recruiting businesses by using incentives to draw in “seed” retail opportunities that can act as a catalyst for further development. In particular, the Clairton Chamber of Commerce can act as an incubator for small businesses. Technical assistance and funding should also be sought from the local Pennsylvania Small Business Development Center (SBDC) located at the University of Pittsburgh. Possible options for incentivizing business development include the following:

- ***Business Building Re-use Program-*** A Business Building Re-use program could help encourage the re-use of vacant or underutilized business buildings. For example, if market studies indicate that a vacant or underutilized commercial structure is no longer viable as a retail facility; such a program could provide up to 25% of the financing necessary to convert the property into another viable business use. If funding for such a program simply is not feasible, the City should investigate additional incentives to make rehabilitation and adaptive reuse more financially attractive. Incentives could include excise tax exemptions, temporary property tax abatement, reduced parking requirements, access to low-interest revolving loans, or expanded sign and façade grant programs. A good example of a comprehensive strategy that encourages re-use of older commercial and industrial buildings is Prince George’s County, Maryland. More information is available at: <http://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/Government/AgencyIndex/Redevelopment/cblf.asp>.
- ***Rent Subsidy Program*** - The City in partnership with local economic development agencies could provide a 12-month rent subsidy of up to \$2.00 per square foot to businesses filling vacant space in the central business district. Typically, the assistance should not exceed \$3,000 for 12 months or \$250 per month. Payments are made on a monthly reimbursement basis; tenant is required to submit documentation (cancelled check or receipt from the landlord). This could help small, local businesses that are new cut some of the



initial costs of start-up and ensure that businesses are retained for longer periods of time and see greater success.

- ***Essential Goods and Services Grant*** - This grant would provide a capital grant in the form of a forgivable loan to businesses that will either (a) provide essential goods or services determined to be lacking in the downtown or (b) create a significant draw of customers to the downtown area. Businesses are eligible to receive 20% of the total capital cost required to establish the business. The typical maximum grant amount would be \$5,000. Assistance would be in the form of a loan that is forgiven after two years of operation in the established location.

### Issue #3: Prioritize Business Districts for Revitalization

*The City does not have the manpower or the funds to begin to tackle all the priority areas at the same time.*



Based upon the overall condition of each business district, combined with public input received through the planning process, the three business districts within the City of Clairton have been prioritized in order of importance, to allow the City to address revitalization efforts one at a time. The fourth business district, Worthington Avenue, was not prioritized due to the fact that does not require the level of redevelopment the other three need.

1. Blair Business District, including the Hercules site
2. Central Business District of St. Clair and Miller Avenues
3. Wilson Business District

Once positive change occurs within the Blair Business District and major projects are completed, then the City could move onto revitalization of the Central Business District, and then finally the Wilson Business District. However, if opportunities arise in the various business districts then the City should still take advantage of them, regardless of the prioritized list.

***Priority #1: Blair Business District (including the Hercules site)***

It is the goal of the City to redevelop this District in a manner that capitalizes on the traffic along SR 837. Today, the few structures remaining are vacant and in very poor condition. The vision for the District is new, medium-size to larger-scale commercial and industrial services that can create a local employment hub for the City. The Hercules Site is an 11.7 acre area with potential for industrial development.

***Action Step 1. Demolish buildings***

As the Blair Business District is small in nature and comprises a cluster of vacant and depilated structures, priority for any future demolition of buildings should be given to this area first. The Clairton Redevelopment Authority has the power to condemn properties in designated blighted areas under eminent domain, to clear the land and resell it to private interests for redevelopment. The redevelopment proposal as well as the sale of each parcel must be approved by the Clairton City Council.

***Action Step 2. Clean up sites with environmental issues***

The Hercules Site is one known area that has environmental issues that will have to be addressed. This site has not yet achieved Act 2 clearance through the PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), which sets the environmental cleanup standards for industrial sites. An initial assessment of the property identified a range of contaminants affecting the soil and groundwater which will have to be mediated before it can be redeveloped, including:

- Petroleum products
- Asbestos
- Lead
- PAHS
- PCBS

- VOCS
- Other Metals, Contaminants and Controlled Substances

Due to the fact that the clean up of this site is likely going to be very costly, one option could include a bio-remediation program similar to what was done at the Almono site in Pittsburgh's Hazelwood neighborhood. GTECH Strategies through a partnership with Carnegie Mellon University's Field Robotics Center, Bidwell Training Center, and RIDC piloted its Bioenergy Garden reclamation model on the Almono site growing switchgrass, sunflowers, and over 500 hybrid poplars to demonstrate the applicability of GTECH's model to large-scale former industrial sites. Since 2007, GTECH Bioenergy Garden has provided a low cost way to de-commission portions of the 178 acre Almono site of asbestos, petroleum, PCB, and other environmental hazards. While the Almono site is much larger than Hercules, it is similar in that the site is on river front property adjacent to an existing community.

While the bio-remediation proceeds, the site can continue to be marketed through Allegheny County, the Pittsburgh Regional Alliance, the Governor's Action Team, as well as the local Redevelopment Authorities and the Enterprise Zone. The goal is to pursue a low cost clean up strategy with a marketing approach that does not burden local resources. If and when a viable development opportunity surfaces or conditions improve, then an expedited clean up and redevelopment strategy can begin, but until that time, any investment will become locked up in a development cycle that can last for decades.

### *Action Step 3. Market the Blair Business District to potential developers*

Clairton is within the Enterprise Zone Program, which addresses the deteriorated, distressed, and blighted industrial and manufacturing areas. The purpose of the program is to improve the standard of living by revitalizing these areas, attracting new businesses to the area, and creating job opportunities. Benefits include:

- Priority consideration for Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) grants and loans
- Eligibility to apply for low-interest grants-to-loans for firms up to \$350,000 per project up to seven years
- Lowest statewide prevailing interest rates on DCED business development loan programs
- Eligibility to apply for 20 percent Neighborhood Assistance Program tax credits against most state businesses taxes for the value of improvements made to business properties located within an Enterprise Zone for two years after the zone exits the program
- Designation of Enterprise Zone firms as Socially and Economically Restricted Businesses to confer advantage in bidding on state government contracts for five years after the zone exits the program
- Availability of assistance for clean-up of contaminated sites under Act II
- Priority consideration for any resource administered by state government that would assist in leveraging imminent business investment and job creation in an Enterprise Zone

As this is an important program to help Clairton revitalize the Blair Business District, The City of Clairton, Redevelopment Authority of the City of Duquesne (who manages the Enterprise Zone for the City), and the Clairton Redevelopment Authority need to market these benefits to potential developers.

***Priority #2: Central Business District***

It is the goal of the City to revitalize this District in a manner that addresses the vacant properties, dilapidated buildings, and aesthetics concerns. The vision for the District is a vibrant Central Business District that offers services and shopping opportunities to visitors and residents.



***Action Step 1: Undertake a vacant property survey using ArcGIS software and prioritize hazardous structures for demolition.***

Every parcel in the Central Business District (CBD) should be surveyed and all vacant or abandoned properties documented and cataloged, including a rating of the present condition of any structures on the site using a scale of A to F or something similar. The results from the survey can be used to create a vacant property database. The completion of the survey will paint an accurate picture of the true extent of the vacancy problem within the CBD. The survey should also note ownership, code violations, suspected criminal activity, and tax status.

The City should use the Comprehensive Plan's priority objectives as part of considering what weight to give different factors. If a property is ranked high for demolition, the type of demolition should be noted, i.e. clearing for new infill, clearing for green space, partial demolition, etc. If a property is determined not to be high priority for demolition, it should be noted in the database whether it is best suited for tax compromise, sheriff's sale, or transfer to adjacent property owners.



The Steel Valley COG can work with the City to assist them with utilizing GIS software, as they have an ever-increasing database of GIS files. The City should also contact the Local Government Academy regarding their intern program to save staff time in compiling the survey (see Wilkinsburg Case Study on page 19 below).

*Action Step 2: Establish a vacant land reuse program.*

After documenting vacant properties the next step will be to turn these properties into community assets. There are a number of different steps and ideas that can be used in returning vacant lots to a productive use.

- *Explore the potential of developing community gardens.*

Most urban areas in America do not meet local or state requirements for open space and parks per capita, particularly minority communities that have fewer resources to obtain and retain open space. Community gardens are an inexpensive way for cities to mitigate this disparity and recapture unused land for the purpose of beautification. A neglected vacant lot can be transformed into a garden where people of all ages can grow food and strengthen community ties.



Source: Homewood Community Garden, 2010

In Clairton, the religious community has already begun to undertake this effort, and several churches have started “Unity Gardens.” It is recommended that this effort be continued and expanded. Clairton should utilize the Allegheny Grows Program to provide community gardens throughout the City. Allegheny Grows is a county initiative that will provide start-up materials, technical and educational assistance to promote urban farming and community gardening. To be eligible for Allegheny Grows, Clairton will have to demonstrate a significant interest in urban farming, provide letters of interest from partners, and have a leader willing to spearhead the project. The proposed site of the garden must have access to direct sunlight, available water source, and nearly flat slope. Applications are made available in January of each year ([www.county.allegheny.pa.us](http://www.county.allegheny.pa.us)).



- Provide places for citizens to come together.* Local funds should be matched with county and state funds to stabilize and where possible re-use vacant land by creating pocket parks in the cleared lots. This should be a priority in the Central Business District as there is currently a need by residents, specifically the youth, for a place to hang out. The pocket parks may consist of raised platforms to make them level with sidewalks and can include tables, seating, planters, art installations and bicycle parking. Pocket parks can be sponsored by neighborhood businesses and corporate donations so they will cost the city nothing but maintenance from the Department of Public Works. These costs are not trivial but the money can be spent on maintaining these parks, or it will be spent fighting fires in vacant buildings, police calls to abandoned lots, and further erosion of the tax base. Clairton is currently spending less than \$100,000 on community development. At least \$50,000 per year, for the next five years should be targeted to vacant property clean-up and blight remediation in and around the central business district. Allegheny County also has funds that could be combined with local funding for a targeted redevelopment approach. DCED invested a total of only \$250,000 in Clairton in 2008 and only \$120,000 in 2009 for all projects and while DCED funding is constrained, the current level of funding combined with City funds and County funds are enough to generate progress. Additional partners such as GTECH Strategies, a local nonprofit that rehabilitates Brownfield sites and trains people for green jobs, can also defray the cost of converting vacant land into parks and gardens (<http://www.gtechstrategies.org/>).



*Denton Pocket Park  
(Source: City of Harrisonburg, 2010)*

One way to accomplish this action step is to empower community residents and other stakeholders to turn vacant land or property into community assets. The City would solicit ideas from residents, stakeholders, or community organizations for land reuse and then select a small number to fund and incubate as “pilot” projects. The projects selected should be those that provide economic or health benefits, inspire community pride, and promote stewardship. **Figure 4.1: Pocket Park Artistic Rendering** at the end of this chapter illustrates what a pocket park could look like on a vacant lot along St. Clair Avenue in Clairton.



*Vacant lot along St. Clair Avenue  
(Mackin Photo, 2010)*

***Action Step 3: Encourage side lot sales and offer a mechanism for community members to buy vacant, publicly owned lots.***

The following steps are ways that the City can effectively manage the sale of vacant and publicly owned lots:

- ***Create a mechanism within City Government to advertise properties for sale*** - Clairton should advertise a list of homes and vacant lots for sale on the City website. The City of Pittsburgh's Department of Finance, Real Estate Division has a similar program and should be explored for applicability in Clairton. Please see: [http://www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us/finance/html/properties\\_for\\_sale.html](http://www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us/finance/html/properties_for_sale.html)
- ***Streamline the permitting process for side lot sales, community gardens, or green spaces*** - The obstacle of permitting has come up numerous times with community members as a major road block with regard to utilizing vacant properties in a productive manner. Inconsistent permitting, lengthy timeframes, and unclear processes can all act as hindrances to encouraging more positive uses of vacant properties. As such, the City should develop a shortened, streamlined process specifically for those individuals or groups interested in buying a vacant property in order to use it as an additional lot, a community garden, or open space. The City of Pittsburgh's Sideyard Sale Program allows property owners to buy a vacant lot that borders their property. Applicants or groups must meet certain requirements to be eligible; the prospective buyer must own the property that directly borders the lot, all taxes and utilities must be current, liability insurance must be proven, the lot must be publically owned and deemed unsuitable for erecting a freestanding building, and zoning and other codes must be complied. More information on the program can be found online at the City of Pittsburgh's website, located at: [http://www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us/finance/assets/sideyard\\_sale\\_program.pdf](http://www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us/finance/assets/sideyard_sale_program.pdf) and also the Wilkinsburg Case Study on page 4-19.
- ***Participate in Allegheny County's Vacant Property Program*** – The City of Clairton, in lieu of operating its own vacant property recovery program, can participate in the program and designate the County Committee as its vacant property review committee. Once the City is included within the County program, individuals and community groups can apply to purchase vacant properties that have been tax-delinquent for at least three years. The applicant must purchase the property for its appraised value and be responsible for closing costs. A good-faith deposit will be required, which will be refunded upon the successful completion of the reuse plan. Applicants must provide a reuse plan for the property, such as conversion to a side yard, community garden, urban farm, recreational space, or a small park. The program is a cooperative effort. Legal services, appraisal of properties, and title searches are all at no cost. The County Department of Court Records will also waive its filing fees.

*Action Step 4: Initiate a comprehensive vegetation program.*

Tree-lined streets, planter boxes, and street lights with hanging baskets not only make communities look great but provide benefits such as cleaning the air, providing shade to cool buildings and paved areas, and increasing property values.

Installing planter boxes and hanging baskets on street lights is a simple approach to beautifying the Central Business District. The initial cost could be small as donations from local landscaping companies could be solicited. The City should work with local churches and other community organizations who would be interested in assisting with implementation. Ultimately a comprehensive vegetation program, which includes not only trees but plants, should be included as part of the downtown revitalization strategy discussed on page 4-15.



*Hanging baskets on Street Lighting*  
(Source: [www.sxc.hu/](http://www.sxc.hu/))

In terms of tree-lined streets, TreeVitalize is a public-private partnership created to help restore tree cover, educate citizens about the importance of planting trees, and build capacity among local governments to understand, protect and restore their urban trees. Launched in 2004 in southeastern Pennsylvania, TreeVitalize has already achieved its goal of planting 20,000 trees in that five-county region. In spring 2008, TreeVitalize expanded to the Pittsburgh region. In southwestern Pennsylvania, TreeVitalize is co-sponsored by the Allegheny County Parks Department, the City of Pittsburgh, Friends of the Pittsburgh Urban Forest, and the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy.

*Action Step 5: Introduce murals at highly visible locations.*

Many communities experiencing chronic vacancy problems have sought to address it through creative murals painted on the sides of buildings that face vacant or “blighted” lots. Mural projects often include stabilization of abandoned lots and revitalization of open spaces. Community partners can include “block captains” in neighborhood watch programs, the school district, economic development agencies, churches, and City departments such as the Public Works. When coordinated with other strategies for community development, mural projects can leverage grassroots social capital to build positive momentum. They can create a more positive public perception of a community or neighborhood and can make residents feel a stronger sense of civic pride. In many communities, mural programs can incorporate at-risk youths or act as restorative justice for youth and adult offenders to help break the cycles of crime and violence in neighborhoods.

The Clairton School District should be involved in these projects as there are many talented youth attending Clairton's schools that could help create murals. A mural program could be sponsored by the City-School Partnership Group, and would include students submitting applications to the Group for consideration.

Professional artists or art educators can serve as teachers and mentors, provide a positive environment, as well as oversee the students. The Partnership Group should also make an effort to include members of the community along every step of the mural process, from selecting a theme to collaborating on a design, to creating the mural and celebrating its completion. This can help ensure that the murals become a living part of the community long after the project is finished. A request form should be created so that neighborhood residents can request certain themes or historic figures for a mural. Throughout the process, attention should be paid to meeting community goals, public accessibility, visibility, and potential for impact in the community.



*Example of a mural  
(Source: Google, 2010)*

Some of the necessary components of a mural arts program should include:

- An organization, group, or City department (or combination of these) willing to spearhead the effort
- A database of all vacant buildings, blank walls, or other appropriate spaces, noting owner interest and willingness to participate
- A call for submissions (targeting youth in particular) each year, specifying the theme and location of the mural, with the Partnership Group and / or implementing entity publically presenting the top (3) options and community members voicing their feedback at a public meeting
- An artist or art educator / teacher to help guide the youth and provide supervision
- An effort to explore the possibility of partnering with the Sprout Fund (see Case Study on page 4-19 below)

#### ***Action Step 6: Establish a downtown revitalization program.***

The City of Clairton needs to undertake a downtown revitalization program within the Central Business District (St. Clair and Miller Avenues) to help stimulate private investment and generate revitalization by focusing on visible improvements. A downtown revitalization program provides an incentive for local business or property owners to improve their street facades and signage, and contributes to the attractiveness of the core commercial district as a whole. The program within the City of Clairton should begin as a phased approach. Initial improvements can be small and not costly, such as fresh coats of paint, new signs, and awning canopies.

The revitalization should be lead by a non-profit organization that involved various stakeholders and experts throughout the City of Clairton. Funding for the program can come in several different ways:

- Allegheny Together Program- this program is administered by Allegheny County and provides downtown-based communities with a host of services aimed towards revitalization of business districts over a three year period. The program offers consulting services to business owners who then can apply for matching grants for work such as upgrading facades. For a downtown to be considered it has to include at least 50 contiguous, street-level storefronts; have more than 75 percent of its commercial buildings be at least 50 years old and be pedestrian friendly.
- Main Street Program- St. Clair Avenue and Miller Avenue should be established as a Main Street program by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED). Currently, DCED's Main Street program is not designating any new Main Street programs (for 2009-2010), but if the program is re-funded, the City should submit an application to be considered a candidate. The Pennsylvania Downtown Center works in conjunction with DCED to offer planning and technical assistance for Main Street communities. More information on the program itself can be found online by searching for the Main Street Program at [www.newpa.com](http://www.newpa.com).
- The development of a revolving loan fund program. In the event that the Main Street Program is not refunded in the future or the City wishes to proceed sooner, another option is for Clairton to develop and offer a revolving loan fund to be used specifically for façade improvements. A good example of such a program is in the Village of Downers Grove, Illinois. More information on their program can be found online at [http://www.downers.us/public/docs/board\\_commission/architectural\\_design\\_review/Facade\\_Grant\\_Application.pdf](http://www.downers.us/public/docs/board_commission/architectural_design_review/Facade_Grant_Application.pdf)

*Figure 4.2: Streetscape Enhancements Artistic Rendering* has been provided at the end of this chapter to illustrate how a downtown revitalization effort could improve the Central Business District.



**Priority #3: Wilson Business District**

The overall goal for the Wilson Business District is to maintain its health and vitality by retaining existing businesses, beautifying the corridor, and capitalizing on the proximity of the Steel Valley Trail. The Wilson Business District has fared far better than the other districts in terms of vacancies; many businesses serve the surrounding region. This district also features the Wilson Civic Center.

***Action Step 1: Market the Wilson Business District.***

As one of the main goals for the Wilson Business District is to retain the current businesses that do exist, the City of Clairton should market the business district actively. One way to get more people to shop, dine, or do businesses in Wilson is to have a “Wilson Day.” This day could serve as a mini-community day where business owners set up tables outside or have street sales, with entertainment, music, and free food. Other options include staying open late one night or having a special Trick or Treat night just for the Wilson businesses. The ultimate goal is to get more people down to Wilson to see how nice the businesses are.

The City also needs to capitalize on the Steel Valley Trail, as it travels through Wilson. Cyclists desire services such as restaurants, bike shops, grocery stores, etc. Bicycle trails represent an important economic development opportunity, as they bring in many diverse groups of people. In particular, the Steel Valley Trail is one of the largest trail networks in the region, spanning both Allegheny and Washington Counties, and yields an opportunity to bring significant dollars into the community through support services.

The Trail Town Program administered through the Progress Fund could be a great resource for the City of Clairton on how they can make Clairton a Trail Town, specifically the Wilson Business District.

*Action Step 2: Begin beautification efforts.*

The Wilson Business District is in need of some “sprucing” up. There are current business owners that have already made an attempt to upgrade their storefronts. The effort does not have to be as intense as recommended for the Central Business District but should include some of the main elements. The following beautification strategies are recommended:

- Planter boxes
- Street lights with hanging baskets and banners
- Store-front clean-up
- Banners with “Wilson Neighborhood”

For more in-depth detail on beautification actions steps, please refer to the information earlier in the chapter regarding steps that are recommended for the Central Business District.

*Action Step 3: Address the parking situation.*

Currently, parking is allowed on State Route 837 through the Wilson Business District. As there is considerable truck traffic on SR 837, those that park along the roadway are now parking their vehicles on the sidewalk to avoid conflicts with trucks and even cars. The conflict is even further exacerbated by the presence of the Steel Valley Trail, which is a share the road trail from the trailhead on SR 837 to the Clairton Bridge.



*Example of light banners  
(Source: Mackin, 2010)*

The City has the following options:

- Do not allow on-street parking along SR 837 to minimize traffic conflicts between pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles. Municipal parking lots could be constructed in vacant lots to provide safe parking options for residents.
- Re-locate the Steel Valley Trail behind the existing businesses, along the railroad. However, this option could pose problems as there may be right-of-way issues, property acquisition, and grade difference between the proposed trail and the Clairton-Glassport Bridge. This will also negatively affect the economic development potential from the trail as cyclists will not be traveling through the front of the Wilson Business District.

## Case Studies

### *Using the Local Government Academy - Wilkinsburg Borough, Allegheny County.*

*Wilkinsburg has undertaken a number of proactive and innovative approaches to handling their vacant property issue. Due to their budgetary constraints, the Borough has utilized community volunteers to complete surveys of properties, and established a summer internship program through the Local Government Academy. The LGA intern compiled a vacant property database, developed criteria for determining the future of these properties. The intern also worked with Nine Mile Run to conduct a vacant properties pilot project in Wards I and III of the Borough that focused on cleaning the lots, providing landscaping improvements, and constructing fences. For more information, please refer to: <http://wilkinsburgpa.gov/pdf/Making%20Wilkinsburg%20Sustainable.pdf#>.*

### *Tax Abatement Program - Wilkinsburg Borough, Allegheny County.*

*The Borough has been working with the Wilkinsburg School District and Allegheny County through a joint tax committee to create an ordinance that contains a willing seller program. This program makes it easier to acquire tax-delinquent and abandoned buildings for renovation, without having to pay more than their current value in delinquent taxes. It also contains a 10-year graduated tax abatement on commercial properties, and a residential tax abatement on new construction and rehabilitations. An interesting outgrowth of this effort is the Wilkinsburg Weed and Seed-funded "Houses in Waiting" program, which recruits community members to paint plywood window covers for vacant houses that will transform blocks not yet revitalized into an "outdoor gallery." A common theme is chosen and both youth and adult groups are encouraged to take part. More information is available at: [http://www.wilkinsburgpa.gov/projects/Housing\\_Initiatives.aspx](http://www.wilkinsburgpa.gov/projects/Housing_Initiatives.aspx).*

### *Public Art Program - Sprout Fund, Pittsburgh.*

*Since 2003, Sprout Public Art has collaborated with communities and artists to develop 51 enduring works of public art that enhance the urban landscape and consider the people of the community, their history, and their hopes for the future. The program encourages dialogue on public art between the community and the artist, contributes to community and neighborhood development and raises awareness about the important role that local artists can have in shaping communities. More information can be found at [www.sproutfund.org](http://www.sproutfund.org)*

## OBJECTIVE 2: Build upon municipal services and partnerships to enhance efficiencies and productivity.

### Issue #1: Communication

*There is a perceived lack of communication between City officials, community groups, and residents. In addition, there has not been enough positive publicity of the efforts by the City, community groups, and residents to the public at large.*



**Action Step 1:** *Keep the City website (<http://cityofclairton.com/>) updated and make it more user-friendly by creating “pages.”*

While the City of Clairton does maintain a website with useful contact information for the City’s offices and departments as well as links to related sites such as the Fire Department and School District, there are several ways that the site could be improved to make it more user-friendly by creating “pages” such as:

- A “community development” page, which should include at a minimum:
  - Comprehensive Plan
  - Zoning Ordinance
  - Subdivision Regulations
  - Uniform Construction Code information
  - Other municipal ordinances and regulations
- An “ongoing projects/improvements” page that includes information on and the status of any City Public Works projects or Park or other recreation projects
- A “businesses in Clairton” page, which could include the following:
  - Local business list/map
  - Links to websites
- Real estate listings (commercial/industrial property for sale or lease)



- Parcels available for development/redevelopment
- Public transit information or links to public transit information, including methods for obtaining information or participating in Work Link
- A community calendar, which should include the following
  - Upcoming projects/events
  - City meetings
  - School Board meetings
  - Local community service events and opportunities for volunteers

*Action Step 2: Publicize the City's website.*

In order for the website to be effective, it needs to be heavily publicized. Therefore, it is recommended that the City include the website address on all City-related correspondence, pamphlets, mailings, etc. Anything that goes out with the City's name on it should include the website address.

*Action Step 3: Consider utilizing social networking sites to get the word out about activities and events within Clairton.*

Social networking websites (Facebook, My Space, and Twitter) are very popular, especially with the youth. The City should consider creating a profile on Facebook to keep residents as well as former residents updated. Information to be included on the Facebook site could include upcoming programs and events, city services, meeting schedules and minutes, photos of events, etc. City council should assign the task of updating the site to a specific staff person so that it is continually updated.

*Action Item 4: Embark upon a sustained media campaign to counteract the City's negative public image in the region.*

The City needs to make a concerted effort to counteract its negative public image in the media, particularly at the regional level. E-mail blasts on region-wide nonprofit and community group list serves, the promotion of local events through metropolitan newspapers such as the Post Gazette and Tribune Review, as well as the continued promotion and advertising of positive local events should be emphasized.



## Issue #2: Partnerships and Efficiency

*The City is currently facing difficult budget constraints and should continue participating in partnerships in order to cut down costs and increase efficiency.*



***Action Step 1: Continue fostering the ongoing partnership activities between the City and the Volunteer Fire Department (VFD) and Emergency Medical Services (EMS).***

The City already has a well-established positive relationship with the Volunteer Fire Department (which includes Emergency Medical Services), and this should be continued. Efforts at streamlining costs, providing superior service to community members, and continuing training and education should all be joint focuses of the City and the VFD.

***Action Step 2: Continue the City's participation in the Steel Valley Council of Governments (COG).***

The City currently takes advantage of its membership in the COG and regularly participates in COG activities and programs. This participation should be continued in the future and be expanded as the COG seeks new ways to help its participant communities cooperate together efficiently and progressively (including the use of the COG's GIS system discussed on page 4-9 above).

***Action Step 3: Increase the City of Clairton's energy efficiency in order to cut down on costs.***

Develop an official energy conservation plan for the City's facilities and departments, including:

- Replace all incandescent bulbs with energy efficient bulbs
- Utilize electronic thermostats (some can even compute and track energy savings)
- Implement a comprehensive green purchasing policy (should include all environmental aspects of products and services and be incorporated into all contracts and bid specifications)
- When possible, purchase locally to reduce transportation and energy costs

- Implement a “green cleaning” policy that uses natural or organic products as well as microfiber cloths (which enhance the performance of cleaning products)
- Implement Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) or Energy Star green building requirements for new construction or renovations
- Install permeable paving where feasible to reduce stormwater runoff
- Consider purchasing alternative fuel vehicles as City vehicles are replaced
- Maintain City grounds, parks and open space without the use of pesticides
- Remove, replace or seal all playground equipment that is constructed from treated wood
- Purchase energy-efficient, non-polluting landscaping equipment or require the use of such equipment by contractors
- Use no- or low-VOC paints, stains, finishes and adhesives
- Provide recycling bins at all City-owned buildings and at all parks
- Install cost efficient and energy saving street lighting in the Central Business District to increase safety

### Issue #3: Public Safety

*One of the top issues identified by the public is the need to address public safety and vandalism issues. Residents would like to see more patrolling, security cameras, and community policing efforts.*



***Action Step 1: Encourage the establishment of a citizens’ police academy in tandem with neighborhood block watch programs.***

Many communities have begun offering a “community police academy” program in order to assist neighborhood block watch programs in proactively addressing crime issues. Typically, such a program would be eight to ten weeks in length, and would be designed to educate the public in typical day-to-day operations of the Police Department, while also giving the Department a chance to obtain valuable feedback from the community. It is highly recommended that Clairton consider such a program, as it would offer an excellent opportunity to increase understanding between the Police Department and the community members of through education and interaction. With

increased understanding, Clairton residents and police can work together and achieve realistic solutions to community problems relating to crime, fear of crime, and neighborhood decay.

It is also recommended that the City strengthen and expand its Block Watch programs. Block Watch is a national program that is based on the principle that neighbors working together are the first and best line of defense against crime. A Block Watch is a relatively simple program to organize, as it really just extends the idea of “eyes on the street” and formalizes it into a more systematic program. Instead of informality, a block map with neighbors’ names and telephone numbers that can be used in case of an emergency is provided. The City has some Block Watch neighborhoods but some of these are inactive or lost momentum. Re-activating these groups can assist in improving the security of at-risk neighborhoods.

A successful example of a hybrid program that combines both Block Watch neighborhoods with community police academy training can be found in Seattle. More information is available at: <http://www.seattle.gov/police/programs/policeacademy/default.htm>  
<http://www.seattle.gov/police/programs/blockwatch/default.htm>.

*Action Step 2: Purchase a Community Oriented Policing trailer that can be moved to various locations within the City.*

Having a mobile public safety office located within various areas of the City on a revolving basis will increase the visibility of the officers, and help to reduce loitering and more serious crimes. With resources allocated to specific areas, Clairton can stabilize these areas without having to dedicate vehicle patrols and service calls.

*Action Step 3: Establish a Police Citizens Advisory Board*

The ultimate goal of a Police Citizens Advisory Board would be to improve communication and cooperation between the Police Department and residents of Clairton. The board is one way the City can promote transparency of the Police Department’s everyday functions.

The board would act as a liaison between the community and police department by promoting community awareness and understanding of police programs and services. The board would also provide an avenue for citizens to identify programs and/or issues from the community to the police department and from the police department to the citizens.

*Action Step 4: Establish a Juvenile Delinquency Board*

A Juvenile Delinquency Board could be established to discuss various juvenile crimes that are prevalent in Clairton and recommend ways to decrease the crimes. The board could be made up of City council members, representatives from the Clairton School District, county juvenile probation representatives, civic leaders and law enforcement officials. Meetings should be held every two to three months.

### Issue #4: City/School Partnership

*One of the goals of the Comprehensive Plan is to ensure that the momentum behind the partnership between the City and the School District continues beyond the planning process.*



#### *Action Item 1: Continue to hold bi monthly City-School Partnership meetings.*

It is strongly recommended that the City-School Partnership group continue to meet even after the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan. The focus should not just be planning but should also be expanded to encompass any other pertinent issues that affect the education and the community at large. Opportunities for partnership should be explored continually. The Local Government Academy should be invited to a future City-School Partnership meeting to discuss their municipal programs, one of which focuses on partnering and resolving conflicts that may arise when the two intergovernmental groups are working together. The Steering Committee that was formed for the Comprehensive Plan should also continue to meet to discuss implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. Council should open up membership of the Steering Committee to include other groups and residents that are currently not represented on the committee.

#### *Action Step 2: Provide regular updates regarding city news to the School District for publication in their newsletter.*

In an effort to keep lines of communication open between the city, the public and the School District, it is recommended that the City provide short articles to the School District to print in their quarterly newsletters. The articles could contain information on upcoming city events, services offered by the city, etc. Due to the cost of producing the newsletter, the School District should investigate the possibility of providing it electronically as well as posting it on the School District's website.

*Action Item 3: Establish new (non-traditional) education programs and facilities targeted to serve a diverse population and to develop specialized workforce skills.*

The City and School District should collaborate with the active community groups in Clairton to pursue funding for educational opportunities geared toward residents of all ages. Together, a broad group of community leaders can develop a plan for expanding educational opportunities and implementing comprehensive workforce training and education for citizens. Options to consider include strengthening and promoting vocational education programs, establishing more broad-based preschool and daycare programs, reading programs, technology in the school including video conferencing and smart classrooms, considering the incorporation of a learning center for adult literacy education into a possible new community or recreation center, and establishing broad summer children's enrichment programs.



**OBJECTIVE3:** Promote sound land use planning through the protection of open space and the enhancement of natural and cultural assets.

### Issue #1: Community Pride

*A cleaner, greener public realm and a more positive public image should be established within the City of Clairton as currently there is littering and dumping occurring.*



**Action Step 1:** Promote recycling and the reduction of waste by providing more trash cans and recycling bins in parks and public places.

The City should lead the way in promoting recycling and responsible waste management practices. It needs to set a positive example by providing for an extensive and attractive network of trash cans and recycling bins. Trash cans are particularly needed in local business districts; currently, there are very few trash cans and those that do exist are unattractive or in poor condition. More attractive trash cans placed at strategic intervals can help encourage and remind residents to use them. Recycling containers should also be placed in easy-to-spot, centralized locations, including at all parks, playgrounds, and City-owned facilities. The City should also work with the Steel Valley Trail group to provide trash cans and recycling containers along the trail.

The City should also work with local groups and organizations, including the School District and the Unity Group to take a proactive approach in promoting individual recycling. This can be accomplished through marketing materials – information on



*Example of trash cans in poor condition  
(Mackin Photo, 2010)*

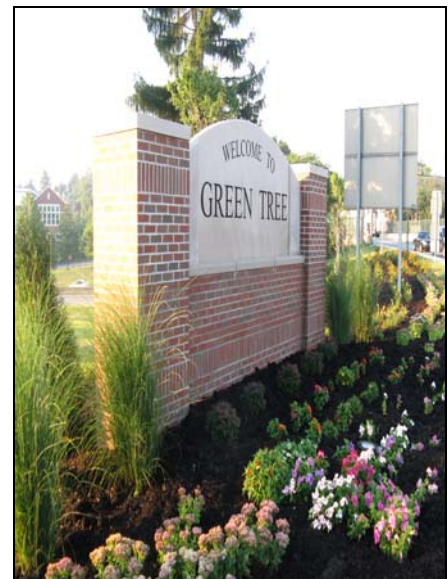
the City's website; recycling "reminders" on any correspondence or newsletters sent out by the City; or flyers / posters around the municipal offices, post office, or Library, or other prominent locations. It can also be encouraged through outreach and education. The City can partner with the School District to produce brochures or pamphlets that emphasize the benefits of recycling and waste composting. Concerted efforts on education should also focus on educating school-aged children about the benefits of keeping their communities "clean and green."

*Action Step 2.: Institute semi-annual Community Clean-Up Days and "Hard-to-Recycle" events.*

The City should organize semi-annual "clean-up" days, whereby Clairton solicits and organizes volunteers to clean key sites and streets in the City that have issues with litter, graffiti, or illegal dumping. This can be done in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce, and can be an excellent avenue for connecting different groups and organizations. All ages are welcome and it presents a good opportunity to instill community pride, particularly in school-aged children. Following a clean-up day, the City could sponsor a social event, such as a picnic in the Park, to reward the volunteers for their hard work. In addition to "clean-up" days, the City should also sponsor "Hard-to-Recycle" events, whereby residents can drop off items such as appliances such as refrigerators (Freon must be removed), batteries, compact fluorescent tubes/bulbs, computers and electronics, tires, etc. This would alleviate the proliferation of illegal dumping on vacant lots throughout the community.

*Action Step 3: Create welcoming and attractive landscaped gardens at the main public realm entrances to the City.*

Gateways are architectural and physical elements that are designed to create a sense of place and a perception of arrival and should be distinctive and creative. These elements could take the form of a simple stone structure or could be designed to be more artistic and reflect the community's image and history. Gateway designs typically compliment a community's physical features and building materials and can include signage as well as landscaping, lighting, and other creative elements. Clairton should establish such areas at all major "entrances" to the community, with possible locations along SR 837 both at the bridge and near St. Clair Avenue, and SR 885 at the top of the hill.



*Example of a gateway  
(Source: Mackin Photo, 2010)*

**Issue #2: Air Quality**

*There is an environmental concern due to air quality issues in the City of Clairton.*



***Action Step 1: Continue to communicate with U.S. Steel regarding their air quality program.***

As part of the ongoing meetings of the City-School partnership group, as well as the communications (newsletter, website, etc.) of the group, U.S. Steel representatives should be involved by providing timely updates regarding efforts at improving the natural environment of the City, including air pollution. New equipment or techniques should be outlined in these updates so that community members are aware of U.S. Steel's efforts in the region. A U.S. Steel representative should also be invited to speak several times a year at the meetings as a way to keep community members engaged and informed.



### Issue #3: Historical Resources

*There is a need to enhance and promote Clairton's rich and engaging history as currently there are no programs to do so now.*



#### *Action Step 1: Educate the public about Clairton's "story."*

Currently there is a lack of adequate signage in the City; therefore it is strongly recommended that the City use signage to market hidden assets and local destinations. Creative and visually appealing wayfinding signage, as well as informational signage (posted on street corners, building facades, etc. detailing interesting points about Clairton's history or directing the way to assets such as the Park and pool) can alert visitors and residents of the many assets the City has to offer.

#### *Action Step 2: Better publicize the existence of Peters Creek cemetery by developing an educational brochure and installing more visible signage, particularly along the trail systems.*

Consider installing historical markers along the Montour Trail directing users to the Peters Creek cemetery. Partnerships between the School District and the cemetery owners should be explored for the creation of an educational brochure that could be distributed at the cemetery.

**OBJECTIVE 4:** Provide additional social and recreational opportunities for residents of all ages through partnerships with other organizations and communities.

### Issue #1: Recreation Management

*There is a lack of staff dedicated to recreation planning.*



#### *Action Step 1: Re-activate the Recreation Board*

In order to provide an instructive and proactive means of addressing the City's recreation, it is recommended that the City reactivate the Recreation Board. The Board could be composed of community volunteers and stakeholders who are invested in seeing the recreational amenities in the City improved. Not only will a Recreation Board assist the City in accurately preparing a plan for continued maintenance and improvements to the community's green space infrastructure, but it could also act as an important communications tool for keeping a positive and transparent relationship between the City and the community at large.

#### *Action Step 2: Utilize a student as a recreation intern to assist with recreation and park management.*

In addition to re-activating the Recreation Board, it is recommended that the City utilize a student who is interested in parks and recreation management to assist with programming needs in order to conserve finances. Many local colleges and universities are eager to partner with municipalities who could use extra help. The City should coordinate with local educational institutions to advertise the availability of such a position. The Local Government Academy is also a source of local interns.



## Issue #2: Improve Recreation Facilities and Programs Offered

*There is a need to enhance and improve Clairton's recreational resources as there are maintenance issues within City parks and no recreational programming.*



***Action Step 1: Explore the possibility of utilizing the municipal building as an indoor recreation and community center.***

In discussions with City officials, it was mentioned that there is space within the current municipal building to potentially include recreation or community space for residents. The current offices of the municipal building would have to be combined into one wing, which would then open up space for these other activities.

The municipal building could be open for the youth once a week for recreational activities with adult supervision. Indoor games, such as pool, ping pong, board games, etc. could be easy to implement activities.

***Action Step 2: Complete a master plan for the Clairton Park.***

As there are many issues at Clairton Park it makes the most sense to complete a master plan to address concerns and issues. A Master Site Plan is a comprehensive site planning tool used to guide short and long-term development on a given piece of property based on specific goals and objectives. The Master Site Plan is designed to meet the public's goals and objectives identified through meetings, stakeholder interviews, public meetings and public survey. This process helps identify current needs, public support and plans for future growth. When Master Site Plans are created they provide the municipalities with a thorough site planning tool to guide future development. The Master Site Plans propose improvements that enhance existing facilities where applicable and define the optimal use for the property, protect sensitive environmental features and meet the current and future recreational needs of the community.

The following are the high priority concerns within Clairton Park:

- *Continue to maintain and improve the Clairton pool by making investments in updates when necessary* - Because the swimming pool is one of the major draws for the Park, both within the City and in the region at large, it is vitally important that Clairton continue to keep up with the maintenance of the pool facility and make improvements as necessary. Both adult residents and youth have identified the pool as a major resource for the City and a primary summer activity for many families. As such, it is important that even in times of economic duress, the City set aside appropriate funding for upkeep with the pool so that it can continue to remain open to the public.
- *Expand offerings by adding new features when possible, such as an off-leash dog area or park* - Many residents enjoy walking their pets in the Park, particularly in the summer weather, and an off-leash dog area could be a great attraction. Off-leash dog areas are also relatively inexpensive to construct, requiring only some fencing, signage, and perhaps a small walking path. The re-activated Recreation Board mentioned in **Action Item A** above, should also consider the long-term addition of other amenities, such as a roller rink, which would provide a great play space for all ages and even act as host for sports such as deck hockey.
- *Create a trail network throughout the park* - Many residents have stated that they would like an exercise trail created in Clairton Park, as well as a connection from the park to the Montour Trail. Currently there is a connection, but it is not maintained.

Other issues that should be addressed in any master site plan are as follows:

- Plan for maintenance of Memorial Hill
- Installation of lighting around the swimming pool
- Remodeling the locker rooms
- Replacement of the roof on Pavilion #3
- Replacement of the roof on lodge addition
- Exploring the possibility of acquiring additional land to add onto the park

*Action Step 3: Improve play spaces for youth of all ages through targeted playground improvements.*

Clairton is home to various neighborhood playgrounds that provide a much needed place to recreate, but many have various issues that need to be addressed. The following parks were identified as needing improvements:

**Blair Fields**

- Install lighting
- Provide bathrooms

**Delaware Avenue Playground**

- Repaint lines on Basketball court
- Replace benches
- Replace teeter-tot
- Provide signage
- Replace picnic table



*Delaware Avenue Playground  
(Source: Mackin, 2010)*

**Farnsworth Playground and Baseball Field**

- Provide signage to park
- Install garbage can
- Better connection needed between playground and baseball field
- Provide benches and picnic tables

**Reed Street Playground**

- Provide regular maintenance to the playground
- Replace broken benches
- Replace swing-set
- Re-paint lines on basketball court

**N. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street Basketball Courts**

- Provide regular maintenance to the playground
- Provide signage



*Farnsworth Playground and  
Baseball Field  
(Source: Mackin, 2010)*

*Action Step 4: Investigate opportunities for family-friendly programs*

Many residents have stated that they would like to see the City offer more recreational programs and activities. Specific programs and activities of interest include:

- Co-ed programs (girls softball, tennis, volleyball)
- Plays
- Movies in the park

It has been discussed that the City has tried to hold different types of recreational programs in the past, but they have been poorly attended. This is probably not due to lack of interest but because many residents were not aware about programs being offered. The City should advertise all programs and activities on their website, as well as including opportunities within a newsletter. The City-School Partnership Group should be utilized to involve the School District with publication of events and also for potential partnering in funding of the programs. Providing recreation programs and facilities is an expensive venture, one that will be hard for the City to handle on its own at this time. By partnering together, the City and School District can combine resources to save time and money.

**OBJECTIVE5:** Provide a diverse mix of safe housing options that will appeal to young professionals, families, and older residents.

### Issue #1: Property Maintenance

*There is an abundance of vacant structures and lots that need to be addressed as they create property maintenance and code enforcement issues.*



#### *Action Step 1: Adopt a “blight ordinance.”*

A blight ordinance generally provides that no “owner of real property shall ....cause or allow any blighted premises to be created, nor shall any owner allow the continued existence of blighted premises (<http://cama.ctbar.org/BlightOrdinancesAndPropertyMaintenance.pdf>). Generally, a blight ordinance will refer to “one or more of the following conditions” and proceed to list things such as:

- Missing or boarded windows or doors
- Collapsing or missing walls
- Exterior walls, which contain holes, breaks, loose, or rotting materials or which are not properly surface coated to prevent deterioration
- Foundation walls that contain open cracks and breaks
- Chimneys that are in a state of disrepair
- Vermin infestation

Most ordinances have a blighted properties list, and typically, the City Code Enforcement Officer will make a “recommendation” regarding the property. The list should be updated annually as properties are added or removed based on their condition.



***Action Step 2: Strictly enforce the property maintenance code.***

While the International Property Maintenance Code has not been adopted by the International Code Council (ICC), it is recommended that the City of Clairton update and amend its property maintenance code to reflect best practices put forth by the ICC. A copy of the most recent International Property Maintenance Code is available online through the International Code Council at [www.iccsafe.org](http://www.iccsafe.org). Enforcement is also a particular concern. Without proper enforcement, no code will provide much benefit.

**Issue #2: Housing Choices**

*There is a demand for more single-family homes as well as the need for a mix of housing.*

***Action Step 1: Mix market-rate development with affordable housing to build a mixed-income community.***

Residents and stakeholders have both expressed a wish to see a more diverse mix of housing in Clairton. To make a strong community, it has to be marketable to people who have choices about where to live. A key emphasis of planning is not only creating attractive housing that works for families but also acting as a catalyst for changes in education, for stimulating economic activity, and for other services that attract market-rate buyers and that support lower-income residents so they can thrive in a mixed-income community. As such, any program undertaken by the City, County, or other redevelopment agency, should place emphasis on mixing affordable units with market-rate units. Moreover, the styles of housing should also be more diverse – many residents have expressed a wish to see less dense development. The focus should be on developing detached single-family homes on larger lots, possibly by combining smaller vacant lots, to create a medium-density, mixed-income neighborhood.

Both the City and the Redevelopment Authority should be proactive in Clairton's residential revival. The community needs to take a block-by-block approach to infill development. The City's housing stock should be inventoried and categorized according to need or "at-risk" status, and those blocks

which have significant issues should be the first focus for redevelopment purposes. It is recommended that the City and Redevelopment Authority work together to maintain a digital database that is continually updated as infill projects occur.

As most of the vacancy is in the neighborhoods around the Central Business District, this should be a priority for new development, specifically in the Blair and Southside neighborhoods.

**OBJECTIVE6:** Ensure that all municipal ordinances are consistent and compatible with the desired future growth and development patterns.

### Issue #1: Outdated Codes and Ordinances

*The municipal ordinances will need to be revised to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and implement the overall Vision.*

*Currently there are no special exceptions in zoning ordinance, lack of cohesive structure to zoning districts, no landscaping or signage requirements.*



#### *Action Step 1: Update the Zoning Ordinance to address current weaknesses.*

As a basis for updating the City of Clairton Zoning Ordinance, a future land use plan was developed. **Map 4.1: Future Land Use Plan** provides City officials with a map of key investment and opportunity areas.

It is recommended that Clairton undertake a comprehensive zoning update that is consistent with the future land use plan. The current ordinance was reviewed and the following recommendations are offered for consideration:

**(1) Community Development Objectives.** Perhaps one of the most important sections of any land use ordinance is the Community Development Objectives. These objectives set the stage for the regulations that follow and provide the reasoning behind why the municipality is choosing to regulate land use. In many instances, when an ordinance is challenged legally, the courts will turn to the Community Development Objectives to see if the regulations under consideration achieve (or strive to achieve) any of the Objectives. If they do not, the court may nullify the challenged regulation. Thus, it is important that the City regularly examine the Community Development Objectives to ensure they still match the community's overall goals and vision for future growth and development (or re-development).

**(2) Definitions.** The definitions section is a very important part of a Zoning Ordinance, and one that is almost constantly changing, as new terms and uses are brought into existence nearly every day. Land use patterns are ever evolving. For instance, what community in the 1970's could have predicted that in the 1990's, "telecommunications towers" for cellular phones would become such a hot button issue? Currently, "sustainable" and "energy efficient" terms and uses are the newest issue, such as wind turbines, solar panels, and so forth. Natural gas drilling has also become an important subject to address with the recent Marcellus shale boom. Other examples of terms that are missing from Clairton's current Ordinance include terms that address and define assisted living facilities, retirement communities, drive-thrus, etc.

More importantly, since the last significant update to Clairton's Ordinance was 14 years ago, there have been several changes to the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) regarding certain terms and definitions, such as "home-based business," "billboards," signage terms, and so forth.

It is important to keep in mind that the City needs to include even the simplest terms in order to keep the document both user-friendly and legally sound. If a term is not defined in the Ordinance, it is much easier for a property owner to challenge the Ordinance and win that challenge, particularly if they can make an argument that a "similar" use is permitted – and if there are too many vague and undefined terms, this is a much easier argument to make.

**(3) District Regulations.** In general, the districts need to be more cohesive – right now, they seem very scattered and piecemeal. When zoning a community, it is important to consider not only the current neighborhood patterns, but also (and perhaps more importantly) the desired future patterns for development. Specifically, the following should be addressed and are illustrated on Map 4.1: Future Land Use Plan:

- **The "R" Districts.** Currently the R-2 and R-3 districts are not consistent in geographic distribution, often one block of a street is one designation while another block of the same street is a different designation, with little evidence to illustrate why. Moreover, the two districts are very similar both in permitted uses and in dimensional standards. In order to eliminate confusion and streamline the code enforcement process, it is recommended that the R-2 and R-3 districts be combined into one multi-family residential district. Therefore, only two residential districts will remain and they can then be designated more cohesively across neighborhoods (i.e., on a broader area-wide or neighborhood basis rather than block by block).
- **The "B" Districts.** Currently there are two business districts, B-1 Central Business District and B-2 Neighborhood Shopping. There are no issues with the B-1 district, however the B-2 district is not a cohesive geographic district and could be considered spot zoning. Also, the dimensional requirements and uses permitted allow for "strip commercial" that is more automobile-

oriented in nature. Therefore, it is recommended that this district boundaries be revised to include Worthington Avenue and SR 885 through the Wilson neighborhood. Types of permitted uses should include local retail (basic goods and services) approximately under 5,000 square feet, professional offices, home businesses, etc. Major retail stores or commercial establishments that require significant amounts of parking (such as taverns or restaurants) should not be permitted. It is also recommended that a "General Commercial" district be designated to allow for larger scale commercial development along Woodland Avenue.

- *The "I" Districts.* It is recommended that the area currently zoned I-2 (Heavy Industrial) stay the same as most of its US Steel property. However, the I-1 (Light Industrial) designation is no longer applicable along SR 837 as this area should be geared for not only light industry but office and commercial as well. This area should be rezoned to a Mixed Use Corridor, which will ultimately help in revitalizing the Blair and Wilson businesses districts by allowing more uses.
- *The S-2 District.* It is recommended that the City institute specific steep slope requirements that address all steeply sloped areas and eliminate the S-2 District. Also, the City should consider the guidelines for the Allegheny County Greenways Network when updating the current zoning ordinance.

***(4) Conditional Uses and Special Exceptions.*** Zoning Ordinances usually designate uses with a higher impact as Special Exceptions (must go before the Zoning Hearing Board) or Conditional Uses (must go before the governing body). There are currently no special exceptions in the Zoning Ordinance. While it is certainly acceptable to have larger, higher impact uses go straight to Council, some "lesser" uses may be more appropriate as special exceptions. Hence, it is recommended that Clairton re-examine its list of conditional uses and consider transferring the authority for approving some of these uses to the Zoning Hearing Board. Some possible examples of uses that could be special exceptions: group homes, daycare centers, schools or churches in a single-family residential area, recreation facilities in a residential area, light industrial activities in a commercial area, etc. Some uses that should remain a conditional use include landfills, heavy manufacturing, and adult uses.

In conjunction with designating some of these uses special exceptions rather than conditional uses, the City should develop specific parameters that are less vague than current supplemental regulations. Broad phrases such as "proper separation shall be provided" and "adequately provide for traffic" are hard to measure quantitatively and should be avoided. Instead, specific standards such as: "Must provide a screen 5 feet in height made of evergreens," or "Impervious surfaces may account for no greater than 45% of the lot," and so on are much clearer to applicants and eliminate any unnecessary confusion about the City's intentions.



It is important to note that when crafting guidelines for housing that the Federal Fair Housing Act and Fair Housing Act Amendments should be considered. The Federal Fair Housing Act protects citizens against housing discrimination. The Fair Housing Act Amendments establishes an enforcement procedure, penalties for those that violate the Act, and expands coverage to disabled people and families with children.

- (5) Fees.* Many stakeholders and residents feel that the fee schedule is currently too stringent, particularly since many residents are lower income. Since it is on par with neighboring communities, it is recommended that the City retain its current fee schedule and continue to periodically assess the fees, adjusting as necessary. However, the City may want to consider instituting an incentive program that waives fees for those wishing to redevelop a blighted property or for residents in low-income brackets who wish to make improvements to their property.

*Action Step 2: Adopt an Adaptive Reuse Ordinance, incorporating it into the updated zoning and subdivision / land development regulations.*

It is recommended that in order to spur the rehabilitation and creative reuse of vacant buildings in the City's commercial core, that the City incorporate an adaptive reuse ordinance into its zoning regulations. An adaptive reuse ordinance would permit existing commercial and light industrial buildings to be converted to residential or a combination of residential/live-work/office/retail. The ordinance would encourage preserving the existing built structures by relaxing certain common standards such as building coverage, density, or parking, and by providing a by-right process for permitting these types of buildings rather than requiring special exceptions or variances. An adaptive reuse ordinance can also provide for an expedited approval process, exempting historic structures from some of the stricter standards that would apply to new construction. Possible considerations for incentives include:

- (1) Density.* There should be no limit on the number of apartments, condos, live/work spaces or hotel rooms permitted if the project complies with the standards and definition for "historic structure" (which would be spelled out in the ordinance) and is considered "adaptive reuse" (as specified in the ordinance).
- (2) Exceptions.* When an existing building is converted to an adaptive reuse project, nonconforming floor area, setbacks and height are "grandfathered in" which means a special exception or variance would not be necessary.
- (3) Loading Space.* Not required.
- (4) Parking.* No new parking spaces are required. However, existing parking spaces must be maintained, but may be used for any on-site or off-site use.

A great example of a successful adaptive reuse ordinance is in Los Angeles. More information can be found at <http://www.scaq.ca.gov/Housing/pdfs/summit/housing/Adaptive-Reuse-Book-LA.pdf>.

*Action Step 3: Update the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.*

In addition to Zoning Ordinance updates, it is also recommended that the City of Clairton update the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO) in order to implement the Vision set forth by this Plan. The existing SALDO was reviewed and the following updates are recommended:

- (1) Procedural Requirements.* Consideration should be given to requiring a pre-application consultation with the City Engineer and/or Planning Commission prior to submitting the preliminary application.
- (2) Design Standards.* If the City is interested in incorporating new zoning principles into their Zoning Ordinance such as overlays, TND, or similar techniques, it will be necessary to make similar changes to the Design Standards of the SALDO in order for the two codes to remain congruent.
- (3) Landscaping.* A recommended planting list should be included that identifies suitable native plants for specific types of landscaping requirements.
- (4) Sidewalks.* Sidewalks should be required in all new developments and sidewalk requirements should be updated to address American with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements, etc.
- (5) Stormwater.* The design standards should be updated to include Best Management Practices (BMP) in relation to stormwater management and drainage and erosion control.
- (6) Sustainability.* The City should incorporate Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design – Neighborhood Development (LEED-ND) requirements.

**OBJECTIVE7:** Improve mobility to, from, and within the City of Clairton by enhancing major transportation routes, public transportation options and pedestrian circulation and connections.

### Issue #1: Vehicular Access and Safety

*There are several intersections that pose access and safety issues within the City of Clairton.*



#### *Action Step 1: Address intersection concerns at Carnegie Street, State Street (SR 837) and the Glassport Clairton Bridge*

Broken tether wires for traffic signal installation at Carnegie Street, State Street (SR 837), and the Glassport Clairton Bridge should be repaired. Checking clearance times (yellow and all red) to mitigate crashes is also recommended at this intersection.

#### *Action Step 2: Reconfigure the intersection of New England Road, Coal Valley Road, SR 837, and the C & C Marine Maintenance Driveway.*

The traffic signal should be redesigned with overhead traffic signal heads and signing, including pedestrian amenities. Additionally, access should be limited by constructing curbs and strategic curb cuts for the Shell Service Station, Valley Hotel, and gravel driveway across the street from the Shell Service Station.

Short-term solutions that could improve the current conditions include installing a second traffic signal head for the C&C Marine Maintenance Driveway approach, installing LED lenses in all signal heads, and prohibiting parking in front of the route marker and speed limit signs along the right side of New England Road southbound, or relocating those signs.

***Action Step 3: Address issues occurring at the intersection of Maple Avenue and Shaw Avenue.***

A stop sign should be installed on Maple Avenue at Shaw Avenue as well as on Shaw Avenue at Reed Street. Temporary stop ahead signs and stop bars may also be useful in alerting the public to the new traffic patterns.

***Action Step 4: Address speeding concerns on SR 837.***

The following are recommendations to prevent motorists from speeding along SR 837:

- Travel lane widths along SR 837 should be reduced to 10' or 11'. Currently, there are sections of SR 837 where the lane widths are 15' to 18'. Lane widths can be reduced by installing edge lines, bike lanes, or by increasing the number of lanes from two to three by installing a center turning lane or left turn lanes. As SR 837 is a state route, PennDOT would need to be involved in the changes to SR 837.
- Increase police enforcement, especially between St. Clair Avenue and Maple Avenue.
- Install center-line rumble strips along the center-line of SR 837, especially in the far south and far north where the lanes are narrower.

**Issue #2: Pedestrian Access and Safety**

*There is a lack of pedestrian amenities in the Central Business District, especially for school students.*

*There are also concerns with the sidewalk network in certain parts of the City.*

*Lastly, there is a lack of bike lanes and bicycle connectivity from the Montour Trailhead to the Clairton-Glassport bridge.*

***Action Step 1: Improve pedestrian access to and from the Clairton Education Center.***

The following improvements are needed to improve the safety of local students walking to and from the Clairton Education Center:

- Repair sidewalks and provide ADA compliant ramps with detectable warning surfaces at all intersections within the grid system whose corners are the following intersections:

- 6<sup>th</sup> Street/Large Avenue
- Miller Avenue/Large Avenue
- 6<sup>th</sup> Street/St. Clair Avenue
- Miller Avenue/St. Clair Avenue
- Develop a partnership between the City/School District to fund crossing guards at the intersections of St. Clair Avenue with 6<sup>th</sup> Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Street, and Miller Avenue.
- Improve the signalized intersection of St. Clair Avenue and Miller Avenue by providing countdown pedestrian signal heads for all crossings.
- Improve signalized intersection of St. Clair Avenue and 5<sup>th</sup> Street by providing pedestrian push buttons and countdown pedestrian signal heads for all crossings.
- Consider installing thermoplastic zebra-stripe crosswalk pavement markings at the intersections of Waddell Avenue with 6<sup>th</sup> Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Street, and Miller Avenue. Thermoplastic lasts five times longer than regular paint. In addition to the pavement markings, install additional pedestrian and school signing at these three intersections.

***Action Step 2: Complete sidewalks in the area along Desiderio Boulevard near Baker Avenue.***

A pavement marking crossing should be provided on Baker Avenue at the end of the existing sidewalk across Baker Avenue towards the memorial. The sidewalk should also be extended along the southern side of Baker Avenue to Desiderio Boulevard. In addition, a marked crossing should be provided on Desiderio Boulevard at the existing stop sign at Baker Avenue.

The existing sidewalk along western side of Desiderio Boulevard north to Worthington Avenue should be extended and ADA compliant ramps installed as necessary.

***Action Step 3: Address pedestrian and bicycling conflicts along SR 837 from the Montour Trail, along the Steel Valley Trail to Glassport.***

The following recommendations are needed to improve access and safety of the trail network within the City of Clairton:

- Advertise the trail head for the Montour Trail and Steel Valley Trail more clearly. A large gateway sign stating that this is the start of the Montour Trail could be installed on the right side of the parking lot entrance facing SR 837. Additionally, the wayfinding signs for the trailhead should be bigger, with larger text, following PennDOT signing standards.



*Small signs advertising the Montour Trail (Source: Mackin Photo, 2010)*



- Pedestrians and bicyclists who continue on from the Montour Trail to the Steel Valley Trail must cross SR 837, yet there is no marked crossing. A thermoplastic pavement marking zebra-striped crosswalk and pedestrian signs in both directions would draw attention to the crossing.
- Along the Steel Valley Trail, 'Share the Road' signs should be installed in each direction along SR 837, and another in each direction on the Glassport Clairton Bridge.
- Consider the possibility of bike lanes along SR 837 as it is wide enough. Two 5' bike lanes with 2' buffers in between would fit along SR 837 between the Montour Trail and the Glassport Clairton Bridge. As on-street parking is permitted along SR 837 (specifically the Wilson area), the Steel Valley Trail could operate as a shared use trail, using the arrow pavement marking shown on Figure 4.1.

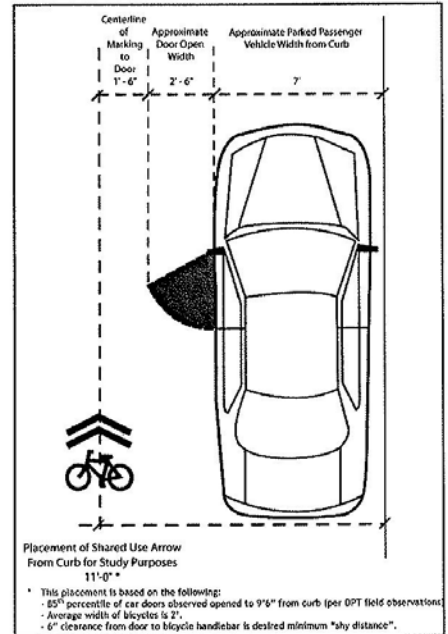


Figure 4.1: Arrow pavement markings diagram

### Issue #3: Operations and Maintenance

*The lack of newer technology for traffic control and needed maintenance on City roads were identified as issues.*



#### Action Step 1: Retrofit LED lenses into all of Clairton's traffic signals.

LED lenses are more efficient than incandescent signals because of the following:

- Provide for greater longevity; they can last up to ten (10) years, compared to two (2) years for conventional signals;
- Provide greater visibility;
- Use 80-90% less energy;

- Reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions;
- Rarely fail, thus reducing the risk of accidents; and
- Have lower maintenance costs because they need to be replaced less frequently.

There are several programs and funding options to consider for conversion of traffic signal incandescent lights to LEDs. These can be found on the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission's (SPC) website: [http://www.spcregion.org/trans\\_ops\\_traff\\_mun.shtml#rsep](http://www.spcregion.org/trans_ops_traff_mun.shtml#rsep).

*Action Step 2: Close portions of Boundary Avenue.*

It is recommended to close Boundary Avenue between Sycamore Street and Chambers Street. This section of Boundary Avenue should not be left in the condition it is today. To prevent motorists from using the closed road, curbing or some other obstruction should be constructed and a large arrow warning sign should be installed on both ends of the closed road. Permanent barricades could also be installed. In addition, the section of Boundary Avenue from the end of the concrete section north to Chambers Street should be repaved.

*Action Step 3: Address Worthington Avenue maintenance concerns.*

The entire length of Worthington Avenue should be paved and a double yellow center line and white edge lines installed. Faded signs should be replaced with new signing. A traffic study should be conducted at the intersection to determine if a traffic signal is warranted or not. If not, the signal should be removed. If it is warranted, the intersection should be redesigned to provide better safety for motorists, and to meet current design standards.

Issue	Recommendation	Priority	Reference page #	Responsible Party	Potential Partners	Estimated Costs	Funding Sources
Objective 1: Revitalize the multiple business districts and encourage them to work together to provide safe and convenient shopping choices for residents and visitors.							
Capacity	Establish a clear "point person" for Economic Development who can act as a technical advisor.	High	4-4	City of Clairton	Clairton Redevelopment Authority	Staff time; Brochure cost- \$1,000	DCED-Enterprise Zone funding
Programs and Funding	Earmark collected funds from the Business Privilege Tax specifically for community development activities.	High	4-5	City of Clairton	DCED	\$75,000-\$100,00 a year	DCED-LUPTAP (Land Use Planning and Technical Assistance Program), LGA
	Partner with the Redevelopment Authority and use incentives to encourage re-use of structures.	High	4-6	City of Clairton	Clairton Redevelopment Authority, Clairton Chamber of Commerce	Staff time	Pennsylvania Small Business Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh
Prioritize Business Districts for Revitalization	Blair Business District						
	Demolish Buildings.	High	4-8	Clairton Redevelopment Authority	City of Clairton	Dependent on Market Rate	CDBG
	Clean up the site.	High	4-8	City of Clairton, Clairton Redevelopment Authority	Property Owner and Potential Developer, West to West Coalition	Dependent on type of development & extent of contamination	GTECH Strategies, ACED, Enterprise Zone
	Market the Blair Business District to potential developers.	High	4-9	City of Clairton, Clairton Redevelopment Authority	Redevelopment Authority of the City of Duquesne; Governor's Action Team, RIDC, Pittsburgh Regional Alliance, West to West Coalition	Staff time	DCED-Enterprise Zone funding
	Central Business District						
	Undertake a vacant property survey using ArcGIS software and prioritize hazardous structures for demolition.	Medium	4-10	City of Clairton	Steel Valley COG, LGA	No cost if LGA intern and COG utilized	LGA
	Establish a vacant land reuse program that includes community gardens and pocket parks.	Medium	4-11	City of Clairton	Unity Group, Clairton School District	Community garden- \$500-\$5,000 Pocket park- \$3,000-\$15,000 (dependent on size)	ACED-Allegheny Grows Program, HUD- Neighborhood Stabilization Program
	Encourage side lot sales and offer a mechanism for community members to buy vacant, publicly owned lots.	Medium	4-13	City of Clairton	ACED	Staff time	ACED Vacant Property Program
	Initiate a comprehensive vegetation program.	Medium	4-14	City of Clairton	Unity Group, Clairton School District, National Tree Trust, the Arbor Day Foundation, Friends of the Urban Forest	Planter boxes- \$1,500-\$2,000 with soil and planters; Hanging baskets; \$15-\$30 per basket	Local businesses, TreeVitalize

\*ACED- Allegheny Co. Economic Development, DCED-Dept. of Community Economic Development, DCNR- Dept. of Conservation Natural Resources, DEP- Dept. of Environmental Protection, HUD- Dept. of Housing Urban Development, LGA-Local Government Academy



Issue	Recommendation	Priority	Reference page #	Responsible Party	Potential Partners	Estimated Costs	Funding Sources
Prioritize Business Districts for Revitalization	Central Business District						
	Introduce murals at highly visible locations.	Medium	4-14	City-School Partnership Group	Clairton Chamber of Commerce, Clairton Redevelopment Authority	Dependent on size of mural and artist	Sprout Fund, PA Council of the Arts- Local Government
	Establish a downtown revitalization program.	Medium	4-15	City of Clairton	ACED, Clairton Chamber of Commerce	Painting of buildings- \$3,000-\$10,000 (dependent on size); Awnings- \$5,000 and up	DCED-Main Street Program, ACED-Allegheny Together Program
	Wilson Business District						
	Market the Wilson Business District.	Low	4-17	City of Clairton, Recreation Board	Montour Trail Alliance, Friends of the Riverfront, Pittsburgh Regional Alliance	Staff time	Trail Town Program (Progress Fund)
	Begin beautification efforts.	Low	4-18	City of Clairton	Local business owners	Street lights- \$6,000; Planter boxes- \$1,500-\$2,000 with soil and planters; Hanging baskets \$15-\$30 per basket; Banners- \$300 each	Local business owners; donations
	Address the parking situation.	Low	4-18	City of Clairton	Clairton Redevelopment Authority	\$150/square yard for paved parking lot	
Objective 2: Build upon municipal services and partnerships to enhance efficiencies and productivity.							
Communication	Keep the City website updated and make it more user-friendly by creating "pages."	High	4-20	City of Clairton	Clairton School District, Steel Center VoTech	Staff time	SPC Municipal Technical Assistance - Website Development Assistance
	Publicize the City's website.	High	4-21	City of Clairton		Staff time	
	Consider utilizing social networking sites to get the word out about activities and events within Clairton.	High	4-21	City of Clairton	City-School Partnership Group, Steel Center VoTech	Staff time	

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Issue	Recommendation	Priority	Reference page #	Responsible Party	Potential Partners	Estimated Costs	Funding Sources
Objective 2: Build upon municipal services and partnerships to enhance efficiencies and productivity.							
Partnerships and Efficiency	Embark upon a sustained media campaign to counteract the City's negative public image in the region.	High	4-21	City of Clairton	Pittsburgh Post Gazette & Tribune Review	Staff time	
	Continue fostering the ongoing partnership activities between the City, VFD, and EMS.	High	4-22	City of Clairton	Clairton VFD	Staff time	
	Continue the City's participation in the Steel Valley Council of Governments (COG).	High	4-22	City of Clairton	Steel Valley COG	Staff time	
	Increase the City of Clairton's energy efficiency in order to cut down on costs.	High	4-22	City of Clairton		Cost dependent on scope of project	Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program
Public Safety	Encourage the establishment of a citizens' police academy in tandem with neighborhood block watch programs.	High	4-23	City of Clairton	Clairton Police Department in tandem with local schools and colleges	\$500	Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency / Pennsylvania Weed and Seed
	Purchase a Community Orientated Policing trailer than can be moved to various locations within the City.	High	4-24	City of Clairton	Clairton Police Department	\$65,000	
	Establish a Police Citizens Advisory Board.	Medium	4-24	City of Clairton	Clairton Police Department	Staff time	
	Establish a Juvenile Delinquency Board.	Medium	4-24	City of Clairton	Clairton Police Department	Staff time	
City School Partnership	Continue to hold bi-monthly City-School Partnership meetings.	High	4-25	City of Clairton, Clairton School District		No cost	
	Provide regular updates regarding city news to the School District for publication in their newsletter.	High	4-25	City of Clairton	Clairton School District, Unity Group	One issue costs \$3,000-\$4,000; City would have to pay a portion to include news	
	Establish new education programs and facilities targeted to serve a diverse population and to develop specialized workforce skills.	Medium	4-26	City of Clairton, Clairton School District, Steel Center	Unity Group	Dependent on program and facility	Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC)

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Issue	Recommendation	Priority	Reference page #	Responsible Party	Potential Partners	Estimated Costs	Funding Sources
Objective 3: Promote sound land use planning through the protection of open space and the enhancement of natural and cultural assets.							
Community Pride	Promote recycling and the reduction of waste by providing more trash cans and recycling bins in parks and public places.	High	4-27	City of Clairton		\$800-\$1200 for a 33 gallon steel trash can	DEP-Community Cleanup Program
	Institute semi-annual Community Clean-Up Days and "Hard-to-Recycle" events.	High	4-28	City of Clairton	Clairton Chamber of Commerce, Unity Group, PA Cleanways, Pittsburgh Cares	The approximate removal of trash is between \$800-\$1000 per ton, volunteer time required to organize/coordinate clean-ups	DEP-Community Cleanup Program
	Create welcoming and attractive landscaped gardens at the main public realm entrances to the City.	High	4-28	City of Clairton	Clairton Community Groups	\$10,000 for sign, flowers, and installation	WPC
Air Quality	Continue to communicate with U.S. Steel regarding their air quality program.	High	4-29	City-School Partnership Group	U.S. Steel, Clean Water Action Group, Allegheny County Health Department	Staff time	
Historic Resources	Educate the public about Clairton's "story."	Medium	4-30	City of Clairton	Mifflin Township Historical Society, Clairton Chamber of Commerce	\$1,250 for each sign	Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area
	Better publicize the existence of Peters Creek cemetery by developing an educational brochure and installing more visible signage, particularly along the trail systems.	Medium	4-30	City-School Partnership Group	Montour Trail Alliance, Cemetery owners, Mifflin Township Historical Society, Clairton Library, West Jefferson Historical Society	\$2,500 for each sign	Montour Trail Alliance

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Issue	Recommendation	Priority	Reference page #	Responsible Party	Potential Partners	Estimated Costs	Funding Sources
Objective 4: Provide additional social and recreational opportunities for residents of all ages through partnerships with other organizations and communities.							
Recreation Management	Re-activate the Recreation Board.	High	4-31	City of Clairton	City-School Partnership Group	No cost	PRPS RecTAP Program
	Utilize a student as a recreation intern to assist with recreation and park management.	High	4-31	City of Clairton	California University of Pittsburgh, Penn State Greater Allegheny, Community College of Allegheny County	No cost	LGA
Improve Recreation Facilities and Programs Offered	Explore the possibility of utilizing the municipal building as an indoor recreation and community center.	Medium	4-32	City of Clairton	Clairton School District	Staff cost (costs if building upgrades are needed)	DCNR-C2P2, DCED-LMRDP
	Complete a master plan for the Clairton Park.	High	432	City of Clairton	Recreation Board	\$7,000	DCNR-C2P2
	Improve play spaces for youth of all ages through targeted playground improvements.	High	4-34	City of Clairton	Recreation Board	Dependent on scope/size of project	DCNR-C2P2, NFL Youth Football Fund, NFL Community Football Fields Program
	Investigate opportunities for family-friendly programs.	High	4-35	Partnership Group	Recreation Board, Clairton Public Library	Staff time; 10 percent local cash match	DCNR-Peer to Peer Technical Assistance
Objective 5: Provide a diverse mix of safe housing options that will appeal to young professionals, families, and older residents.							
Property Maintenance	Adopt a "blight ordinance".	High	4-36	City of Clairton		\$15,000-\$20,000	
	Strictly enforce the property maintenance code.	High	4-37	City of Clairton		Staff time	
Housing Choices	Mix market-rate development with affordable housing to build a mixed-income community.	Medium	4-37	City of Clairton	Clairton Redevelopment Authority	Dependent on project	ACED
Objective 6: Ensure that all municipal ordinances are consistent and compatible with the desired future growth and development patterns.							
Outdated Codes and Ordinances	Update the Zoning Ordinance to address current weaknesses.	High	4-39	City of Clairton		\$20,000-\$30,000	DCED-LUPTAP
	Adopt a Adaptive Reuse Ordinance.	Medium	4-42	City of Clairton		\$10,000-\$15,000	DCED-LUPTAP
	Update the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.	Medium	4-43	City of Clairton		\$20,000-\$30,000	DCED-LUPTAP

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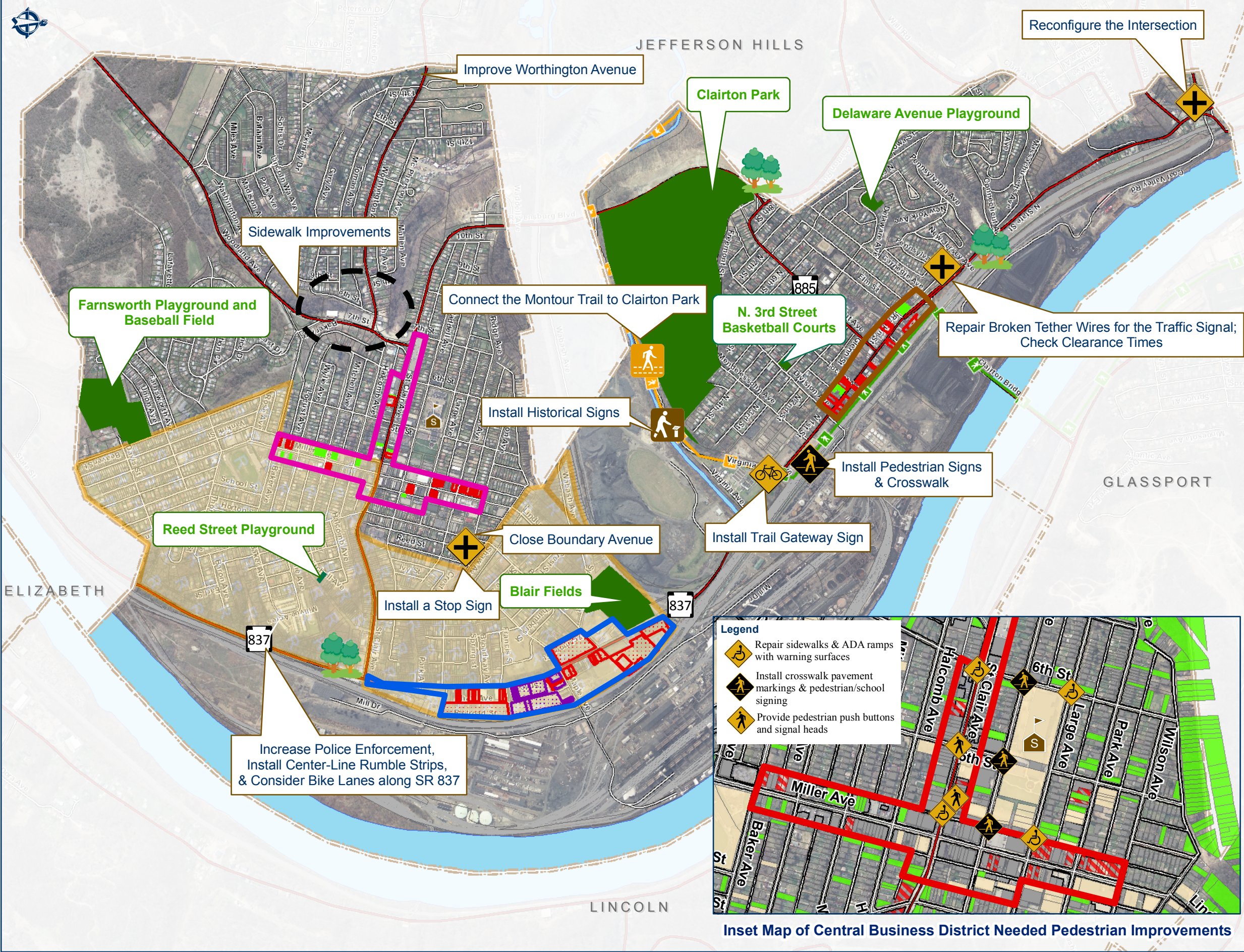


Issue	Recommendation	Priority	Reference page #	Responsible Party	Potential Partners	Estimated Costs	Funding Sources
Objective 7: Improve mobility to, from, and within the City of Clairton by enhancing major transportation routes, public transportation options and pedestrian circulation and connections.							
Vehicular Access and Safety	Address intersection concerns at Carnegie Street, State Street (SR 837), and the Glassport Clairton Bridge.	High	4-44	City of Clairton	PennDOT	\$250	PennDOT
	Reconfigure the intersection of New England Road, Coal Valley Road, SR 837, and the C & C Marine Maintenance Driveway.	Medium	4-44	City of Clairton	PennDOT	\$160,000	PennDOT
	Address issues occurring at the intersection of Maple Avenue and Shaw Avenue.	Low	4-45	City of Clairton		\$175 per stop sign	
	Address speeding concerns on SR 837.	Medium	4-45	City of Clairton	Clairton Police Department	Police time for enforcement; Bike lane-\$5,000	PennDOT
Pedestrian Access and Safety	Improve pedestrian access to and from the Clairton Education Center.	High	4-45	City-School Partnership Group		\$4,000 for ADA ramp with warning surfaces; \$80 a square yard for sidewalk removal and installation; \$5,400 for pedestrian signal heads for St. Clair/Miller; \$6,050 for pedestrian push buttons and countdown pedestrian sign heads at St. Clair/5th; \$1,200 for zebra-strip crosswalk at one intersection; \$2,100 for pedestrian and school signage at one intersection	PennDOT, Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC)
	Complete sidewalks in the area along Desiderio Boulevard near Baker Avenue.	High	4-46	City of Clairton		\$80 a square yard sidewalk installation	
	Address pedestrian and bicycling conflicts along SR 837 from the Montour Trail, along the Steel Valley Trail to Glassport.	High	4-46	City of Clairton	Montour Trail Alliance	Two wayfinding signs-\$720; Share the Road signs- \$175 each; Gateway sign-\$10,000; Bike lane-\$5,000	PennDOT, SPC
Operations and Maintenance	Retrofit LED lenses into all of Clairton's traffic signals.	High	4-47	City of Clairton		\$750 per traffic signal	SPC Regional Traffic Signal Program
	Close portions of Boundary Avenue.	High	4-48	City of Clairton		Public works time to install barricades	
	Address Worthington Avenue maintenance concerns.	High	4-48	City of Clairton	Allegheny County	\$20 a square yard for mill and resurface	

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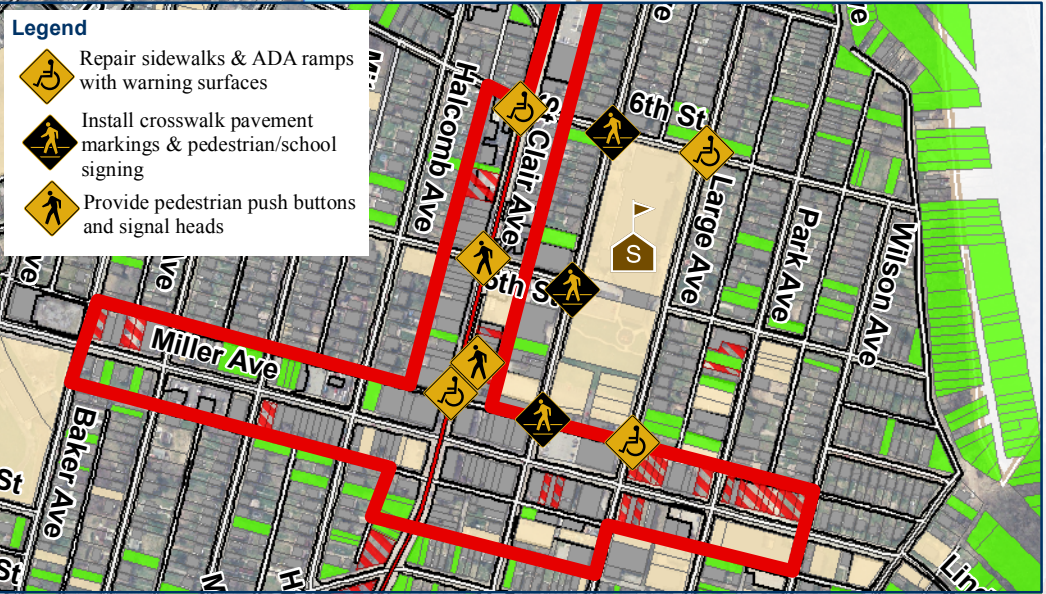


## City of Clairton Comprehensive Plan

### Legend

- Municipal Boundary
- Water Body
- State Road
- Local Road
- Railroad
- Public School
- Parcel
- Montour Trail
- Steel Valley Trail
- Park Improvements Needed
- Business District Revitalization**
  - 1st Priority-Blair
  - 2nd Priority-Central
  - 3rd Priority-Wilson
- Vacant Lot Opportunities**
  - Vacant Commercial
  - Vacant Industrial
  - Vacant Land
- Housing Revitalization**
  - Blair and Southside Neighborhoods
  - Potential Gateway Location

- ### Legend
- Repair sidewalks & ADA ramps with warning surfaces
  - Install crosswalk pavement markings & pedestrian/school signing
  - Provide pedestrian push buttons and signal heads



Inset Map of Central Business District Needed Pedestrian Improvements

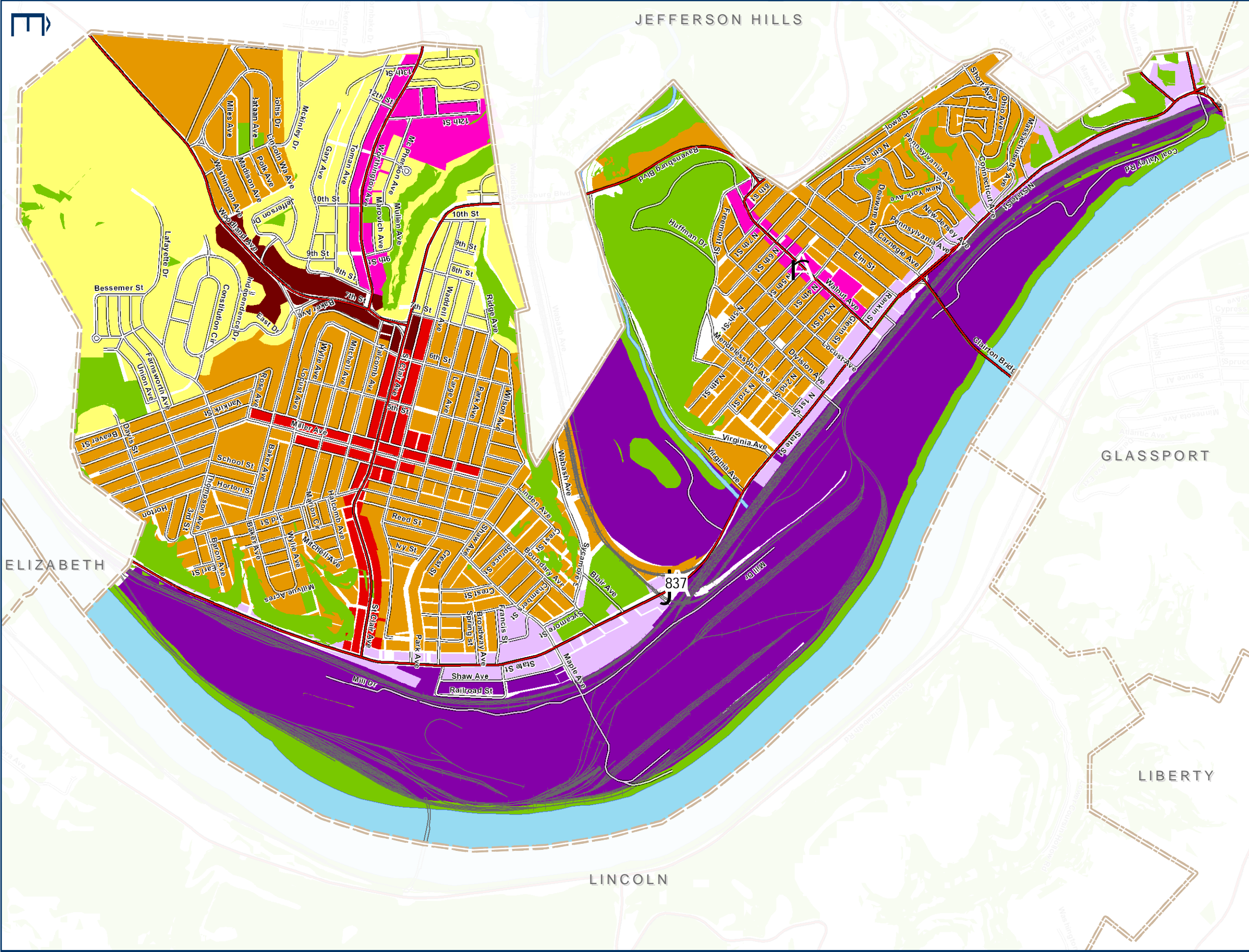


Adopted March 8, 2011

Source: Data used is courtesy of Allegheny County and PASDA.







# City of Clairton Comprehensive Plan

## Legend

- Municipal Boundary
- State Road
- Local Road
- Railroad
- Water Body
- Allegheny County Greenways
- Future Land Use**
  - Single Family Residential
  - Medium Density Residential
  - Neighborhood Commercial
  - Central Business District
  - General Commercial
  - Mixed Use Corridor
  - Heavy Industrial



Adopted March 8, 2011  
Source: Data used is courtesy of Allegheny County and PASDA.







City of Clairton  
Comprehensive Plan



POCKET PARK EXISTING CONDITIONS



*Adopted March 8, 2011*









City of Clairton  
Comprehensive Plan



STREETSCAPE ENHANCEMENTS  
EXISTING CONDITIONS



*Adopted March 8, 2011*



# APPENDICES



## PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARIES





# FIRST PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARY: MARCH 15, 2010

## EXIT SURVEY RESULTS

116 people attended the public meeting held on March 15, 2010 and 66 people returned a survey (57% of attendees).

### **Attendees were asked to note how they learned of the meeting**

- 28 heard about it other ways (church, library)
- 23 heard about it from a friend
- 12 saw a Flyer / Poster
- 10 read about it in a newspaper
- 2 saw a Yard Sign

### **Attendees were asked if they live and/or work in Clairton**

- 56 live in Clairton
- 14 work in Clairton
- 1 lived in Finleyville and 1 in West Mifflin

### **Attendees were asked what the primary reason was for attending the meeting**

Most respondents stated that they wanted to have input into the future of Clairton and learn about the comprehensive plan and how they can improve the city.

### **Attendees were asked how useful the meeting was**

- 44 thought it was useful
- 1 thought it was not useful

### **Attendees were asked if they understand what a comprehensive is and why it is beneficial to Clairton**

- 56 Yes
- 2 No

### **Attendees were asked to rank the following objectives in order of highest priority (the lowest number is the highest priority)**

**2.28** Revitalize the multiple business districts

**2.88** Improve public perception

**3.17** Continue to build upon partnerships with existing community organizations and the school district

**3.50** Provide additional recreational opportunities

**4.01** Provide a mix of housing options

**4.40** Improve mobility (vehicular and pedestrian)

### **Attendees were asked if there were any major objectives missing from the previous question**

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| ○ Build partnerships with county, state, federal government, and foundations | ○ Air quality            |
| ○ Public Safety  | ○ Beautification         |
| ○ Provide more housing   | ○ Public transit         |
| ○ School district problems   | ○ Need for grocery store |
|  | ○ Code enforcement       |

## FIRST PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARY: MARCH 15, 2010

### Attendees were asked what the three (3) things you like best about living/working in Clairton

- Most attendees feel that the small town atmosphere, neighbors, family, churches and friendliness of the town are the best reasons to live/work in Clairton.
- Other reasons include:
  - People are working together to improve the city (to make it what it once was)
  - Affordable -low taxes
  - Easily accessible to Pittsburgh, shopping, and other destinations in the Pittsburgh region
  - Good pedestrian network
  - Nice park (Clairton park)
  - Less traffic than other municipalities
  - Great view of the Mon River Valley
  - Stadium / Football games
  - Housing
  - Mayor
  - Quietness

### Attendees were asked what the three (3) things they would like to change

- The number one issue for most attendees is public safety - most Attendees believe that more police are needed as well as a better response time to effectively fight the crime in the city.
- Other main issues that attendees would like to change include:
  - School district - merge with another district or increase the performance level and safety of school students
  - Business district - lack of businesses (demand for a grocery store) and appearance of vacant buildings
  - Lack of recreation (specifically for youth and seniors)
  - Perception of Clairton
  - The high rate of vacant homes, lots, and businesses - vacant homes need to be demolished and vacant lots used as co-op gardens or open space
  - Efficiency of the government - eliminate back room meetings, more involvement from mayor and council members, more partnerships, and reduce zoning issues
  - Transportation - speeding vehicles, maintenance of roads, and public transportation
  - Natural resources - should be better protected, including improving the air quality, cleaning up litter, and beautifying the appearance of the entire city
  - Racial problems
  - Community involvement
  - Housing
  - Grants for new businesses
  - Property values
  - Fix the pool
  - Reduce poverty
  - Enforce curfew

### Attendees were asked if there were additional issues they would like to see addressed in the Clairton Comprehensive Plan

- Business revitalization
- Community Gardens
- Racism/diversity
- Maintenance of roads
- Cleaning up the City
- Air Quality
- Recreation center with indoor swimming pool
- Improved communication between city and residents
- Development of closed schools in Clairton
- Better leadership

# FIRST PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARY: MARCH 15, 2010

- Improvement of school, specifically educational clubs
- Merging of school
- City and school leadership
- Property maintenance
- Involvement of citizens in government
- Positive media attention
- Policeman who live the city and know it
- Playground for St. Clare, Waddell
- Need for people to pay their taxes
- Jobs
- Funding opportunities
- Input between businesses and citizens
- Bowling lanes
- Do things soon, move to slow

## VISIONING EXERCISE

A visioning exercise was conducted with the public that attended the meeting to determine issues in the following categories; mobility, vacant and underutilized properties, business districts, recreation and parks, and public perception. The meeting attendees were broken out into three groups; the results from the exercise are summarized below.

### MOBILITY

#### PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

- Fear of public transit cuts
- Lack of adequate transportation (specifically for the elderly to attend events)
- Port Authority service should be improved
- Educate residents about the Work Link Transportation program (lack of awareness)
- Increase public transit
  - Need more access to City of Pittsburgh and Century III Mall area
  - More stops needed on 837, Maple, and Shaw Avenues
  - Wilson needs better access

#### SAFETY

- No supervision / crossing guards for schoolchildren – concerns for their safety walking to school
  - Crossing guards needed at St. Clair and the post office
  - Lack of safety enforcement- children walking and biking in streets
- Stop sign at St. Clair
- Speeding on East Dr
- Traffic light not working- East Drive / Woodland
- Curbs need to be painted at the bottom of East Drive
- Running stop signs
- Lack of handicapped accessible transportation
- No marked crosswalk at bus stops and First Ward State St / Elm St

#### INTERSECTION CONCERNS

- St Clair and 8<sup>th</sup>
- 6<sup>th</sup> and Halcomb
- 3<sup>rd</sup> and Wiley
- Lines need repainted at Worthington and Woodland

#### MAINTENANCE

- Poor surface from 12<sup>th</sup> Street to Gary Hill
- Line and curb painting needed
- Wall falling down at Rainbow and Division
- Sidewalk on State and Division
- Marking and visibility of street signs
- Sidewalk on St Clair from State St
- Sidewalks near school need to be cleaned / repaired

# FIRST PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARY: MARCH 15, 2010

## MISCELLANEOUS

- No way to school for children in the Terrace and Wilson neighborhoods
- Problems getting around within the city – from neighborhood to neighborhood
- Illegally parked cars
- Baker Ave
- Light too long at Golden Gate
- DG/ Terrace not able to walk in
- St. Clair and 5<sup>th</sup> curb parking a problem
- Trucks on State Street – Jake brakes
- Better communication for providing access
- Transportation “within” City
- 6<sup>th</sup> Street First Ward – two blocks are one way
- School buses for children

## VACANT AND UNDERUTILIZED PROPERTIES

### RESIDENTIAL

- Great need for single family homes- spaced apart not high density
- Need for assisted living / elderly housing
- Need for more infill residential homes – fill in the gaps on the streets
- Grocery store needed anywhere (possibly Miller Ave 500 block)
- Blair Heights (area wide) – new housing opportunities
- New housing (owners not renters)

### COMMERCIAL

- Businesses should be cleaned up
- 837 (State St) – houses may not be a good idea – change to commercial / industrial

## MISCELLANEOUS

- Vandalism and health issues – animals, rats, etc. pose a threat
- Demolition would make way for new development
- Problem requiring back taxes – prevents redevelopment
- Need to turn over buildings to those who will re-use them
- Use greenery, small parks, and community gardens to fill in gaps
- Code enforcement is a problem
- Dumping and littering (Park Avenue)
- St. Clare of Assisi School has possibilities
- I.D. vacant properties for sale (vacant property program)
- State St. across from Blue Mt.. Hercules
- 5<sup>th</sup> and Wylie (property available) zoning problem
- 400 block demolition (Park Ave and Waddell)
- Issue with home rule charter
- Property maintenance
- Program that will allow people to purchase vacant properties – less red tape – on tax rolls
- Adjacent property owners – first option on vacant properties
- Reduce taxes- make it more affordable
- Lincoln Way (Willow) – future plans- one-way street
- City response
- Boundary St – Miller – need to be cleaned up



# FIRST PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARY: MARCH 15, 2010

## BUSINESS DISTRICTS

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Grocery store is badly needed
- Small “mom and pop” stores
- Movie theater
- Blair Heights
- Keenan Field area
- St. Clare school could be a great site- has a lot of potential
- Develop any of these sites into services- medical offices, social services, etc.

### SAFETY

- Reduce vandalism and drug traffic
- Keep businesses safe – cameras
- Remove illegal activity

### APPEARANCE

- Clean up the main business district
- Graffiti and litter is a problem (clean up using community service)
- Promote clean day and ongoing program
- Utilize Main Street program
- Remove signs
- Utilize a Façade program
- Improve visual aesthetic
- Remove boarded-up buildings
- Buildings on SR 837 should be demolished
- Revitalize historic buildings

### MISCELLANEOUS

- Small businesses need help – incentives, grant money and support from City, state, etc.
  - Tax breaks
- City, School District, and County should work together to forgive back taxes to encourage new businesses
- Blair is turning industrial and that is an issue
- Remove back taxes- allow purchases, specifically downtown

## RECREATION AND PARKS

### PLAYGROUNDS

- Update existing playgrounds in ALL neighborhoods, not just certain ones
- Playgrounds need updated on 3<sup>rd</sup> St
- Blair – park needs to be more “park friendly” (improvements – clean-up)
- Vandals destroy playgrounds for young kids

### PROGRAMS

- Offer more cultural programs in parks- plays, movies in the park, other activities
- More community events
- Co-ed programs
- Utilize school for programs
- Scholarships for programs
- Partner with County for programs – may be too small for county parks
- Recreation for seniors

# FIRST PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARY: MARCH 15, 2010

## RECREATIONAL NEEDS

- Boys and Girls' Club type center
- Fishing pond/ skating rink
- Develop community gardens
- Peters Creek-stock it for fishing
- Recreation Director is needed – should re-activate Recreation Board
- Recreation center for all ages
- Hockey rink (ice) (roller)
- Gardens on empty lots
- Sitting parks in downtown area
- Sports complex – Blair Heights
- All sports – fields / indoor
- Expand the Clairton pool
- Lighted access between Clairton Park and Montour Trail
- Possible recreation center – St. Clare school
- Old Clairton bowling lanes

## MAINTENANCE

- Fix swimming pool
- Memorial Hill needs cleaned and updated
- Pavilions and swimming pool need to be repaired
- Better maintenance of the parks and field

## MISCELLANEOUS

- Protection from vandalism- more supervision and vigilance
- Cemetery on SR 837 needs to be cleaned and taken care of
- Open school to recreation events
- Open track at stadium
- ATV's – riding areas
- Go green – more trees and greening of parks and open space

## **PUBLIC PERCEPTION**

- Motivate residents to take pride
  - Lead by Example
- Continue and expand positive press coverage
- Pride in homeownership
- Reduce loitering in business districts
- Increase awareness of affordable housing
- Increase government role in helping City
- Public education needs to be addressed
- Code enforcement needs to be stricter
- Neighborhood accountability
  - Crime Watch
- 837 and 885 should be gateways – clean up
- Cameras throughout town
- Police patrols on weekends – late in the evening
- More school programs
- Drug rehab programs
- Job assistance / job fairs
- Need more grants / missing out on some grants (i.e. stepping out program)
- USS / doesn't hire enough locally
- Promote community activities
- Newsletter needed / awareness / activities
- Sewage plant needs to hire local as well
- Taxes are an issue
- Update website
- Absentee landlords don't care about the community
- Too much litter/ homeowners should step it up
- Better communication about city affairs / big sign
- Promote the community's strengths – business, parks, people
- Leaders that care
- Improve perception of school district – internal problem first – fix them
- Air quality- sewage plant and mill – clean up city and people will come
- Sundays are bad for air pollution
- Dead Man's curve area
- Littering is a big issue

## FIRST PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARY: MARCH 15, 2010

- Keep young people in area
- Summer jobs- to help pick up trash, cut trees
- People will take pride in community
- Senior high school students – community service
- Media needs to accent the positive – appoint a point person from the community

### OTHER

- Increase jobs
- Air pollution
- Home rule charter should be changed
- Make Council accountable for their actions
- Consolidate schools
- Unity Day- more participation is needed – how do we do it?
- How can the community retain police officers?
- Relationship between community and police - need more community policing
- More job opportunities – city residents and youth

## EXIT SURVEY RESULTS

85 people attended the public meeting on November 15, 2010 and 19 people returned a survey (22% of attendees).

Attendees were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the recommendations heard during the presentation for each Community Development Objective. They were also asked to provide any additional comments they may have.

### **Objective 1: Revitalize the multiple business districts**

- Blair heights neighborhood needs the most attention, SR 837 should showcase what Clairton has to offer
- Worthington should be the first priority as there is Dollar Store and one success will quickly bring another; should start with cheapest and easiest to revitalize
- Need money making businesses on SR 837 in Wilson- grocery store, Walmart- to get people from other towns that pass through and will feel safer to stop
- Blair should not be a priority for businesses as it is next to the mill and not enticing for those to stop
- No need to revitalize as small businesses are being replaced by big box stores
- Funding is needed
- Business owners don't want to run a business with drug activities outside their business
- Need for a grocery store in one of the business districts
- Do not need murals in the City; speaks to a depressed community
- Need a plan to bring more businesses into the City
- SR 837 should be the focus of redevelopment
- Provide tax incentives and zoning updates to get businesses to come to Clairton
- Wilson should be a higher priority
- Clear vacant lots and market sites
- Demolish vacant and dangerous buildings
- Clean up litter

### **Objective 2: Build upon municipal services and partnerships**

- Develop better police patrols-response time is too long
- Need safe transport to school from Wilson and other areas within the City
- Residents need to support the police, fire, and ambulance services
- Need regular speakers on the street to encourage less crime and a clean City
- Facebook is a huge social network and would get the word out about what is going on in the City and would help reach more citizens
- City should collect their own taxes and those that are delinquent
- City and School Partnership is a must
- The municipal building should be used as a community center
- School needs improved; the future of the sustainability of the school is an issue
- Need better snow removal
- More clean up days
- Recreation is needed for youth / adults / seniors
- City should use a compost to save money

# FINAL PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARY- NOVEMBER 15, 2010

## **Objective 3: Promote sound land use planning**

- Air quality is poor, needs improved
- Pocket parks may lead to loitering
- City boards need to be reactivated
- More street lighting
- Need a street sweeper as there is a lot of trash
- There is little effort to preservation and improvement of green spaces
- No attention is given to development of community gardens

## **Objective 4: Provide additional social and recreational opportunities**

- Using the municipal building for recreational use is worth a try
- Kids are not interested in recreation; more interested in electronic devices
- There is enough recreation now that children do not take advantage of
- Use the St. Clair school building
- Keep the pool running
- Update and repair the parks
- Love to see a community center to get our kids off the street
- Need more recreational programs (football, baseball, basketball)
- Need to use stadium for other programs
- Need more recreation because children are going to the streets due to nothing to do

## **Objective 5: Provide a diverse mix of housing**

- Need grant money from both state and county
- No more Section 8
- Establish a board to oversee safe housing
- Need an older gated community
- Medium range family homes

## **Objective 6: Ensure that all municipal ordinances are consistent and compatible with the Comprehensive Plan**

- Update and restructure the old ordinances
- Municipal ordinances need to be enforced
- Need a dog leash and muzzle law
- Property ordinance where citizens are required to keep their property in good condition

## **Objective 7: Improve mobility to, from, and within the City of Clairton**

- Need the bus back in Clairton
- Improved public transportation
- Partner with the State and County



## QUESTION AND ANSWER

A question and answer session was conducted with the public that attended the meeting. The session is summarized below.

- ? **How do you attract new businesses to the business districts where buildings have been demolished?**
- Cleaning up the district is the first step, and can often be done at low cost (painting, awnings, planter boxes, etc.)
  - The plan is long-term and may not solve all the City's issues at once. It is important to take small steps toward improving the Business Districts to make them more attractive for new investment.
  - Demolishing unsafe buildings will also help to improve business districts. If a new structure is not built on the property, then it has the potential to be used for a community garden or pocket park.
- ? **Is there County/Federal/State money available to improve facades?**
- Allegheny County has a program entitled Allegheny Together that assists business district revitalization in the County by helping them direct public investment and encourage private investment. The PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) also offers a Main Street Program that has grants available to enhance business districts with improvements to businesses and the streetscape.
- ? **Do the city council and mayor support the Comprehensive Plan?**
- The City Council, including the mayor was involved the Comprehensive Planning process from the very beginning. The City-School Partnership Group, made up of Council members, the mayor, and School Board members, met six times throughout the planning process to review draft documents and provide input.
  - The mayor spoke briefly regarding his support of the plan.
- ? **Is there any way to find out about grants and grant deadlines?**
- There is a list of grants for each project within the Comprehensive Plan.
- ? **Does the City know why they have been denied in the past for grant monies?**
- During the planning process it was asked why the City was denied, however no clear answer was ever given. Now that a plan will be in place though, hopefully the City will be more competitive for grants.
  - The City should follow up with grant agencies when they are denied to find out how they can make their applications stronger in the future.
- ? **Is Clairton going to be combined with another school district?**
- Typically a Comprehensive Plan does not look at the merging of two school districts. The plan looks at educational facilities in terms of the number of students and projected number of students in order to create a future land use plan. The merging issue is something that would occur at the state level.
- ? **What is the cost of recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan?**
- The costs vary greatly for the recommendations in the plan. Some recommendations do not cost anything but staff or volunteer time. Other recommendations could potentially cost a

## FINAL PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARY- NOVEMBER 15, 2010

significant amount of money, such as transportation projects. The plan will have a list of projects with a potential cost of each project associated with it.

? **Where does the revenue come from if the community does not receive grants?**

- If the community does not receive grants then it would be up to the City to budget for projects in their General Fund. City residents could also form a Civic Club, which could create fundraisers (car shows, cookbooks, etc) to help pay for low cost projects.

? **How can the Comprehensive Plan help residents help themselves?**

- Residents should encourage City officials to implement the recommendations from the Comprehensive Plan to increase the quality of life for all visitors and residents.

? **Are there tax incentives and/or tax forgiveness programs for vacant homes?**

- Currently there are no tax incentives for vacant homes. The City and School District are working on tax forgiveness programs.
- One meeting attendee noted that there is a state bill whereby a property owner who improves their property is given tax forgiveness when property is reassessed.

? **What can you do about a façade program if businesses don't want to cooperate?**

- If a business is in compliance with all codes and ordinances the City can not force them to improve their property.

? **Why do you want to close Boundary Avenue?**

- Portions of Boundary Avenue are in very bad condition and are treacherous to drive on.
- A portion of Boundary Avenue was repaved and another portion is on the list to get repaved in the future.



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOCUS GROUP MEETING SUMMARY

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As a whole, the group noted that while many small business people who live and work in Clairton were present and have been consistently represented in this process to day, the School District and the larger businesses, namely USS, are not present

### Assets

- The people of Clairton are engaged in the planning process and committed to improving our conditions.
- It is easy to access Clairton from all sides – highway access to Clairton is good, but need to be improved once you are in the town.
- We have many properties that are available for tax sale, and could represent redevelopment opportunities.
- We work well with the local media, but need to do more to get our positives out by leveraging the regional media.
- Our parks and green space infrastructure is a major asset.
- A growing special events calendar such as Unity Day, and sporting events such as baseball and this year a running road race will take place – we need to build on those activities and promote them.
- Relatively safe community, although most outsiders don't think so.

### Challenges

- Business districts are disconnected – not a lot of pass through traffic – need to drive to each of the separate business districts – 1) 837, 2) Hilltop, 3) Miller Ave., 4) Worthington Ave.
- Many abandon buildings and few financial resources to help with that problem
- Clairton has joined neighboring municipalities to create incentive areas such as an Enterprise Zone, but has not benefited from it – while the other municipalities have.
- Hazardous sites need to be remediated such as the 11 acre Hercules site
- Bank financing is difficult for potential clients if the sites do not have a clean environmental clearance.
- Poverty levels are high
- Road conditions overall are poor
- Outside perception of Clairton is a big drawback – very negative – most associate Clairton with crime – This should be our number one priority. Events that bring people here such as the 5k can change that.
- Business privilege tax pushed by the school district is unfair and places a burden on businesses here that makes us less competitive – that needs to be reduced or repealed.

### Opportunities

- Businesses that do not rely on the existing population, but rather serve a larger region can find Clairton attractive.
- Restaurants that can serve pass-through traffic for Kennywood and SandCastle
- Storage units could be part of a strategy for making use of brownfields until they can be fully developed.
- Several existing companies have expressed interest in expanding or attracting suppliers but there is no ready to build sites to accommodate, if we can prepare the sites, I think we can attract new investment.
- That fact that our community is much safer than most would realize, is an opportunity for us to communicate and capitalize on.



## YOUTH FOCUS GROUP MEETING SUMMARY

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## 1. Introductions

Christy Burnside DeMuth, Senior Planner with Mackin Engineering opened the Youth Focus Group just after 1:00 PM. She introduced herself and thanked the students for participating in the Youth Focus Group Meeting. Christy explained that Mackin was holding the focus group meeting to gather input from the students for use in the City of Clairton Comprehensive Plan. She further discussed that a Comprehensive Plan looks at many different functional elements of a community including land use, economics, infrastructure (such as streets and utilities), parks and recreation, and housing and determines the needs for each element. Ultimately, the Plan will be a roadmap for the City to use for the next ten years and will address priority issues. Christy explained that the City held a public meeting on March 15, 2010, and that there was a great turnout. However, the Steering Committee and elected officials were eager to hear what the younger generation of Clairton had to say. Amanda Miller, Planner from Mackin Engineering was also in attendance and led the group in several visioning activities.

## 2. Activity One: What do you like / dislike about living in Clairton?

Amanda led the students through a quick brainstorming session and asked them to list their likes and dislikes about Clairton.

### Likes

- Small town atmosphere
- You know everyone

### Dislikes

- Lack of activities / things to do / places to go

## 3. Activity Two: What do you see as the “needs” in Clairton?

Amanda led the students through an exercise designed to help identify important issues regarding some of the main areas of focus for the Comprehensive Plan. The following topics were discussed and identified as needs:

### Appearance and identity

- City needs to stop separating Wilson from the rest of Clairton – they are all the same and should be unified in identity
- City in general suffers from a bad perception, especially to outsiders – however, the students feel that Clairton is a safe place
- Lack of activities / things to do / places to go

### Vacant buildings / lots

- Need to tear down decrepit buildings and redevelop vacant lots
- St. Clair Avenue across from the Post Office is particularly bad – many vacant buildings in the main business district



# YOUTH FOCUS GROUP MEETING SUMMARY- MAY 13, 2010

## Business districts

- Lack of businesses / no place to go
- Need a movie theater, skate park, roller or ice rink, bowling
- Shopping or services (such as hair salon)
- Grocery store (Wal-mart)
- The Dollar General is nice / Rite Aid can be expensive
- Since there is nowhere to go, often end up just hanging out in street or on corners and the police end up following them (to keep them out of trouble) – often makes them feel harassed

## Housing

- Housing / taxes are affordable, which is good for many people
- Need better / more housing, especially for big families – need more options

## Trails / sidewalks / bike routes / public transit

- It is easy to walk around the City – You can walk mostly everywhere
- Public transit is too expensive
- Many bus lines and routes have been cut
- Timing can be an issue / can be a long walk to stops
- No one rides bikes or uses the bike trail

## Safety

- Police are from out of town – don't know the kids
- Police response can be slow
- Graffiti is not really a problem

## Community center / space / recreation programs

- Nowhere for kids to go to just hang out – many things close early / have inconvenient hours
- Library closed after school / doesn't offer enough to do
- Need more recreation activities for girls – there is a City softball league for girls but not an official school team
- Would like to see girls' volleyball and tennis offered
- Need to develop sports programs for girls in elementary school
- Need more girl activities – activities and sports currently are more geared to boys
- Pool hall or recreation center would be nice
- Need more jobs for teens in the summer

## Parks

- Park is nice but is a far walk – the bridge is inconvenient
- Swimming at the pool in the park is really the only thing to do – but it can be expensive for some families
- The pool needs to be repaired
- Kids like to fish in Peters Creek
- Need more open space and parks in town – closer to where everyone lives / hangs out

# YOUTH FOCUS GROUP MEETING SUMMARY- MAY 13, 2010

- Water / air quality issues

## Civic group activities / involvement

- Would like to see more community service opportunities offered
- Need more clubs and activities at the high school – no drama, debate team, theater – would love to participate in those
- No music programs / music programs geared toward younger kids

## Top 3 Priority Issues

- 1. More activities in the school and community**
- 2. Address vacant buildings and lots**
- 3. Attract more businesses**

## 4. Activity Three: Write a “postcard from the future.”

Amanda and Christy concluded the session by giving the students a quick in-class assignment, which was to write a “postcard from the future.” The activity instructed the students to pretend they were writing to a friend who had not visited Clairton in ten years and had to describe to them what it looked like. The students were to use their imagination and describe the things they hope to see, i.e., their “ideal” Clairton, using some of the priorities and issues detailed from Activity #2. The postcards will be scanned and included in the Plan; however a summary has been provided below:

- The future Clairton will have amenities such as diverse stores and shops, a fruit market, and / or grocery store
- Young people are able to get business loans easily and open up creative stores and galleries
- The police force has more local representation
- There a lot more activities, especially for teens – skating rink, a place to hang out on Friday and Saturday nights, a swim team, clubs at school, and so forth
- Amenities and activities are not too far away so residents no longer have to worry about taking public transit, finding rides, or traveling far to get to where they need to be
- The buildings and streets have been refurbished and transformed due to active citizens and a community service program for students
- The park and pool have been improved and expanded

## 5. Adjournment

Christy and Amanda ended the session by taking a photograph of the class with their postcards and collecting their e-mail addresses so they may be notified of future meetings. The session adjourned at 2:30 PM.



# POSTCARD FROM THE FUTURE



IMAGINE THAT IT IS 10 YEARS IN THE FUTURE AND YOU ARE WRITING TO A FRIEND OR RELATIVE WHO DOESN'T LIVE IN CLAIRTON. YOU ARE DESCRIBING WHAT CLAIRTON LOOKS LIKE AND EXPLAINING ALL THE THINGS THERE ARE TO SEE AND DO.

Dear Susie

You just have to come home for our class reunion. Clairton has changed so much since 2010. Remember when there were more vacant building than there was business and opportunity. Our young people really made their voices heard back then. Besides the Post office and the Bank, we have another Fruit Stand, Hotel Dress Shop and Habdashary. "C.I." even opened a Meat Market. Remember the challenges he faced because he wasn't old enough for a business loan. He is now bringing changes to Clairton.

We even have enough people from the community on the police force. The school district had a make over. They are offering more languages besides Spanish. The swimming pool was repaired and the kids all know how to swim.



# POSTCARD FROM THE FUTURE



IMAGINE THAT IT IS 10 YEARS IN THE FUTURE AND YOU ARE WRITING TO A FRIEND OR RELATIVE WHO DOESN'T LIVE IN CLAIRTON. YOU ARE DESCRIBING WHAT CLAIRTON LOOKS LIKE AND EXPLAINING ALL THE THINGS THERE ARE TO SEE AND DO.

Dear Rajee,

I'm writing to you to tell you how amazing Clairton is now. We have great businesses and we have money now. We can go wherever we want and do get in trouble or bothered. We have fast food, malls, shopping stores, beautiful buildings and homes. We don't have to go long distances to get what we need. It's beautiful and you should visit hanging. :)



# POSTCARD FROM THE FUTURE



*IMAGINE THAT IT IS 10 YEARS IN THE FUTURE AND YOU ARE WRITING TO A FRIEND OR RELATIVE WHO DOESN'T LIVE IN CLAIRTON. YOU ARE DESCRIBING WHAT CLAIRTON LOOKS LIKE AND EXPLAINING ALL THE THINGS THERE ARE TO SEE AND DO.*

Dear friend,

It's been 10 years since you've been in Clairton and things have changed. There is a lot more activities, they have a movie theater, a little shopping center with a clothing store. They also have a club that's open to people 15 to 21 every Friday & Saturday night. We have an ice skating rink too. The school looks a lot better, they've opened the pool with a swim team, also a volleyball team and more clubs. You need to come back & visit!

# POSTCARD FROM THE FUTURE



IMAGINE THAT IT IS 10 YEARS IN THE FUTURE AND YOU ARE WRITING TO A FRIEND OR RELATIVE WHO DOESN'T LIVE IN CLAIRTON. YOU ARE DESCRIBING WHAT CLAIRTON LOOKS LIKE AND EXPLAINING ALL THE THINGS THERE ARE TO SEE AND DO.

In 2020 Clairton is a <sup>better</sup> ~~good~~ town <sup>than 10 years ago</sup>. The school is nice with a lot of fun ~~programs~~ programs that everyone like to do. Outside of school it is fun to, There is a big community center where everyone goes. We now have a shopping center to go food shopping. There is nothing to far away so people don't have to ~~go~~ get rides anywhere far. Clairton is a better place to be now than ten years ago.



# POSTCARD FROM THE FUTURE



*IMAGINE THAT IT IS 10 YEARS IN THE FUTURE AND YOU ARE WRITING TO A FRIEND OR RELATIVE WHO DOESN'T LIVE IN CLAIRTON. YOU ARE DESCRIBING WHAT CLAIRTON LOOKS LIKE AND EXPLAINING ALL THE THINGS THERE ARE TO SEE AND DO.*

*Clairton is now a beautiful city with much more things to do. There is now a movie theatre and also a grocery store. All the kids have new playgrounds and new baseball courts to play at. Everything is so much better now.*

# POSTCARD FROM THE FUTURE



IMAGINE THAT IT IS 10 YEARS IN THE FUTURE AND YOU ARE WRITING TO A FRIEND OR RELATIVE WHO DOESN'T LIVE IN CLAIRTON. YOU ARE DESCRIBING WHAT CLAIRTON LOOKS LIKE AND EXPLAINING ALL THE THINGS THERE ARE TO SEE AND DO.

Dear, James <sup>it's</sup> It's 2020 and Clairton looks so much different than it did ten years ago. There is a theater where all the vacant buildings use to be across from the post office. There is a McDonalds and store. People do not have to leave Clairton to go get every drug necessities. The houses and buildings are in nice shape. There are more activities. There's a softball team for the girls. The team is associated with the school instead of the city. The girls are able to get scholarships. There are more instructors for the children, to help prepare them for sports. There is a volleyball team and a tennis team. There are buildings with activities for the children to do. The Clairton Pool has a good business. They charge people and affordable price, along with a family pass plan. There are jobs available at the new businesses for the citizens. There's a study hall in the school and the pool is being used again. Clairton has transformed completely. You should come see the town's transformation.



# POSTCARD FROM THE FUTURE



IMAGINE THAT IT IS 10 YEARS IN THE FUTURE AND YOU ARE WRITING TO A FRIEND OR RELATIVE WHO DOESN'T LIVE IN CLAIRTON. YOU ARE DESCRIBING WHAT CLAIRTON LOOKS LIKE AND EXPLAINING ALL THE THINGS THERE ARE TO SEE AND DO.

Dear friend,

I want to tell you that Clairton is doing great. We have a lot of new businesses and the kids love it. There are ~~so~~ so many things for them to do. They have a lot of school activities. Their curfew is 12 or 12:30, and they get to go to the ~~movies~~ movies more often. We have a Walmart and even our swimming pool is cheaper. Now the police are being less controlling and are helping more and more. So this is what I wanted to tell you about Clairton.



# POSTCARD FROM THE FUTURE



*IMAGINE THAT IT IS 10 YEARS IN THE FUTURE AND YOU ARE WRITING TO A FRIEND OR RELATIVE WHO DOESN'T LIVE IN CLAIRTON. YOU ARE DESCRIBING WHAT CLAIRTON LOOKS LIKE AND EXPLAINING ALL THE THINGS THERE ARE TO SEE AND DO.*

Dear Me, There is so much for me to do. On Friday I can go to a variety of places. Such things as the Movie theatre, bowling Alley, skating Rink, and more. I can go shopping on the weekends to the various clothing stores and candy shops. We have the best Wal-Mart in town. I love to go walk down the street and see the different stores and places to go. The cops have it pretty easy because we have lots to do so were out of their hairs.

# POSTCARD FROM THE FUTURE



*IMAGINE THAT IT IS 10 YEARS IN THE FUTURE AND YOU ARE WRITING TO A FRIEND OR RELATIVE WHO DOESN'T LIVE IN CLAIRTON. YOU ARE DESCRIBING WHAT CLAIRTON LOOKS LIKE AND EXPLAINING ALL THE THINGS THERE ARE TO SEE AND DO.*

Hey Megan,

It was nice to finally visit. I enjoyed being home so much has changed. There is so much more activities from when we were younger. The streets are cleaner, there are less vacant areas and the school even opened the pool back up. I enjoyed the swim meet there was no use of wasting all of that space. Anyway I was surprised to see a movie theater and bowling alley. That movie was great I'm gonna have to buy the movie. Even the people are different. Clairton is just how it was when we were kids but better. I would love to visit again soon. It was great to see you and the little princess.



# POSTCARD FROM THE FUTURE



*IMAGINE THAT IT IS 10 YEARS IN THE FUTURE AND YOU ARE WRITING TO A FRIEND OR RELATIVE WHO DOESN'T LIVE IN CLAIRTON. YOU ARE DESCRIBING WHAT CLAIRTON LOOKS LIKE AND EXPLAINING ALL THE THINGS THERE ARE TO SEE AND DO.*

It's 2020, and things have progressed we have  
cleaner creek, underground rock fort, and  
more activities for the kids. Instead of  
doing negative things, we have more positives

# POSTCARD FROM THE FUTURE



*IMAGINE THAT IT IS 10 YEARS IN THE FUTURE AND YOU ARE WRITING TO A FRIEND OR RELATIVE WHO DOESN'T LIVE IN CLAIRTON. YOU ARE DESCRIBING WHAT CLAIRTON LOOKS LIKE AND EXPLAINING ALL THE THINGS THERE ARE TO SEE AND DO.*

*Dear Friend,*

*Clairton has changed so much in the past few years. We have so many new businesses, things to do, people to see ect. They have expanded Clairton alot more in size. They have build more places for kids to go now instead of having the kids be clustered into 1 community center. They also have formed a community service program so the community is alot cleaner and in order now. I decided I would stay in Clairton now since they improved the city in so many ways.*



# POSTCARD FROM THE FUTURE



IMAGINE THAT IT IS 10 YEARS IN THE FUTURE AND YOU ARE WRITING TO A FRIEND OR RELATIVE WHO DOESN'T LIVE IN CLAIRTON. YOU ARE DESCRIBING WHAT CLAIRTON LOOKS LIKE AND EXPLAINING ALL THE THINGS THERE ARE TO SEE AND DO.

CLAIRTON IN ~~2025~~ 2035

What do I want Clairton to be like in 10 years from now. I want us to have what we don't have, and more. Like we'll have a mall with a lot of the stores we want, and need. We'll have better housing, and stores. I want Clairton to be like a real city, and have a lot of things that other cities have. By the time 10 years come I'm going to be a parent, and I know the other parents would want their kids able to be able to do things in the community that they want to do.



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