

City of Elkins

2018-2023 Strategic Plan

September 2018



2018 Strategic Plan

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Our Vision for Elkins in 2023

Elkins is a dynamic and growing community of 10,500 people, serving as a regional hub to 50,000 people for industry, health care and education, as well as a tourism hub to the mid-Atlantic. We are the gateway to vast outdoor recreation that includes, the Monongahela National Forest, WV State Parks, wilderness areas, ski resorts, hiking and biking trails, river access, scenic train excursions and much more. The community's economic base has continued to diversify and strengthen, showing growth in existing and new manufacturing, high-tech and service businesses. In the past five years the per capita income of Elkins' residents has increased, as well as the population of people under the age of 40.

Elkins boasts a bustling and beautiful downtown, with plenty of affordable and mixed housing options; new restaurants and shops opening with frequency; and abundant pedestrian and bike mobility routes. Elkins has recently been named the most livable community in West Virginia, and the 4th Best Small Town in the United States. Our "Unexpectedly Cool" city has achieved its enviable rankings by being at the forefront of change; charting its own path; being authentic; and relentlessly focusing on attracting young people and young families.

Elkins is renowned for its support of skilled trades and craft workers. This has become a competitive advantage for the city. Many skilled plumbers, electricians, high-tech workers, professionals, and crafts people, as well as artists and tradespeople call Elkins home, and live and work side by side in the downtown. Existing artisan retail spaces and festivals along with a new outdoor amphitheater and live performance theater have provided venues for both tourists and locals alike to enjoy.

Thanks in large measure to the West Virginia Roads to Prosperity Bond Issue of 2017, construction of Corridor H has advanced much more quickly than expected. Elkins has succeeded in capturing a huge number of motorists traveling on Corridor H as a result of an effective signage and wayfinding program and has been

able to impress them by creating an avenue through the City that emphasizes its beauty and opportunity. The city's arts, culture, and history venues, as well as parks, trails, restaurants, bars and hotels are flourishing as a result of the influx of tourists and the growing residential population.

Elkins is widely recognized as a leader in high quality, innovative health care, constantly evolving and creating new partnerships to serve the needs of the community and the region. A nearby, long-term treatment facility, made possible by state and federal funding, is directed at confronting addiction, and helps to support the goals of the City in creating successful pathways to link recovering addicts with jobs and to contribute to the growth and success of the community. These efforts, and those of our dedicated police and fire departments, have earned Elkins the reputation as a safe community, as well as a clean and livable community.

Elkins' reputation for new, efficient and affordable infrastructure, along with proactive planning, is a draw for new businesses coming into the area, and serves as a platform for the success of existing and expanding businesses. Elkins is the first town in West Virginia to have successfully upgraded its water, sewer and fiber-optic infrastructure. Recent investments and improvements to the Phil Gainer Community Center, City Hall and the Sanitation Department will serve residents and the community well for years to come. Our focus on river-front clean-up and redevelopment is the talk of the region, particularly the centrally located boutique hotel providing one of the most unique experiences in the State.

Elkins and Randolph County continue to explore opportunities for cooperation including metro government and internal organizational changes, in order to provide financial savings and effective services across the area. The city has studied and collaborated with other communities around the State and region in recent years, learning from their successes and failures, borrowing and implementing best practices, and all for the purpose of putting itself on the path that has made it the most livable and most admired community in West Virginia.

Strategic Focus Area #1

Redevelopment and beautification of downtown Elkins

A vibrant downtown Elkins is central to the success of the strategic plan. This includes the development of affordable housing; new signage; the attraction of new shops, restaurants and businesses; addressing public safety issues; acquisition of “doughnut hole” properties; enhanced recreational programming and opportunities; and much more. The committees and individuals noted below will oversee the execution of these elements of the Strategic Plan.

A. Enhanced public safety, neighborhood engagement

Responsible individual/committee: **Public Safety Committee**

Milestones and deadlines:

- Neighborhood Watch by Ward – Oct. 2018
- Advertisement of the PD tip email – immediate
- Investigate other tip reporting mechanisms – Jan. 2019
- Reinstate Foot & Bike patrols – Nov 2018
- Council meetings held in each ward – Jan 2019
- COE “learn about government” workshops – Jun. 2019
- Create a fund for demolition of condemned structures – FY20
- Adequate police department staffing – Mar. 2020

B. Public landscaping and Education

Responsible individual/committee: **Municipal Properties Committee; Elkins Tree Board & Elkins Parks and Recreation Commission**

Milestones and deadlines:

- Amend and improve the Tree Board Ordinance – Sep. 2019
- Develop and implement education program for the public on new ordinance and property owner responsibilities – Winter 2019
- Investigate opportunities to improve and/or expand greenspace – Fall 2019
- Hire or put on permanent contract a city arborist – Aug. 2020

C. Beautification

Responsible individual/committee: **Municipal Properties Committee & Elkins Main Street**

Milestones and deadlines:

- Hanging basket expansion – May 2019
- Engage Arts Community in developing, advocating for and implementing City-wide projects - ongoing
- Adoption of new zoning ordinance – Winter 2018/2019
- Create a matching grant fund – FY20
- Implementation of Main Street Streetscape Plan – Oct. 2020

D. Vehicle & Pedestrian access

Responsible individual/committee: **Municipal Properties Committee & Operations Department**

Milestones and deadlines:

- New parking test block – Nov. 2018
- Install new crosswalks – Nov. 2018
- Investigate improvements to access between D&E campus and downtown – Apr. 2019
- Add more bike racks to the downtown – Aug. 2019
- Improve parking & pedestrian safety in Tablet Square – Oct. 2019
- Implementation of new parking City-wide – Oct. 2020
- Install wayfinding & welcome signs – Oct. 2021
- Improvement of City Hall parking lot – Oct. 2021
- Cooperating to expand access to the Allegheny Highlands Trail, Stuart Park and Fox Forest – Sep. 2022
- Connecting our City Parks with walking & biking paths – Jul. 2023

E. Tygart Hotel restoration

Responsible individual/committee: **Municipal Properties**

- Work in cooperation with Woodlands Development Group in identifying parking options – Dec. 2018
- Consider a TIF or CED for the purpose of financing improvements related to the project – Jun. 2019
- Cooperate with river and riverfront restoration and improvement projects – Jun. 2020
- Improve parking and wayfinding surrounding project location – Oct. 2020

Strategic Focus Area #2

Execution of the Master Facilities Plan for Elkins

Elkins completed a major upgrade to its water system in 2017. Additional capital and infrastructure development in Elkins are necessary; will attract business and development; and will position the city for growth and success in realizing its vision. The Municipal Properties Committee is responsible for overseeing the various projects and initiatives set forth below.

A. Facility renovations and improvements to the Phil Gainer Community Center

Responsible individual/committee: **Municipal Properties, Finance and Revenue Committees, Elkins Building Commission and EPRC**

Milestones and deadlines:

- Designate funding for current projects – Jan. 2019
- Bid current projects – Feb. 2019
- Project completion – Jul. 2019
- Coordinate with center manager a plan to increase opportunities for use and revenue generation – Spring 2019
- Prioritize projects - annually

B. Facility renovations and improvements to City Hall

Responsible individual/committee: **Municipal Properties and Finance Committees; and Operations Department**

Milestones and deadlines:

- Designate funding for current projects – Jul. 2018
- Bid current projects – Oct. 2018

- Complete current projects – Mar. 2019
- Create a plan for efficient and maximum use of space – May 2019
- Develop a plan for ADA compliance – May. 2019
- City Hall parking lot planning – Jan. 2020
- City Hall parking lot completion – Oct. 2021
- Prioritize projects - annually

C. Kump House and Darden House

Responsible individual/committee: **Municipal Properties, Finance and Revenue Committees; Operations Department; Kump House Board; and Historic Landmarks Commission**

Milestones and deadlines:

- Identify increased use and revenue opportunities – Feb. 2019
- Annual review of Memorandum of Understanding or Lease
- Annual needs assessments

D. Operations Facilities and Equipment

Responsible individual/committee: **Municipal Properties and Finance Committees, and Operations Department**

Milestones and deadlines:

- Engage architectural services for sanitation garage project – Oct. 2018
- Bid sanitation garage project – Dec. 2018

- Complete sanitation garage project – Nov. 2019
- Equipment management plan – Aug. 2019
- Complete vehicle management plan – Jul. 2023
- Annual needs assessments and prioritization of identified projects

E. Geographic Information System (GIS) Capability

Responsible individual/committee: **Municipal Properties and Finance Committees; Operations and Clerk**

Milestones and deadlines:

- Identify areas where GIS technologies are currently utilized and where additional tools could be helpful – Sep. 2019
- Identify needs to implement new GIS tools (staff, training, hardware, software) – Nov. 2019
- Identify funding for GIS needs – Jan. 2020

Strategic Focus Area #3

Improved communications

Perhaps the most significant opportunity for Elkins identified by participants in the February 2018 strategic planning retreat was improved communications, both internal and external. A new Communications Committee will be formed to oversee execution of the many elements of this focus area. Among the tasks to be executed are inventorying assets and recent accomplishments; showcasing individuals and programs; engagement of the community in the many accomplishments and opportunities of Elkins; and development of a more robust marketing and PR campaign for Elkins and the surrounding region.

A. Development of a communications plan

Responsible individual/committee: **Communications Committee**

Milestones and deadlines:

- Creation of a Communications Committee – Sep. 2018
- Increase employee and departmental content in the City newsletter – Oct. 2018
- Draft an Emergency Communications Plan – Dec. 2018
- Citizen academies about city government and operations– Jun. 2019
- Frequent, scheduled press releases and/or short presentations at council with employees involved - ongoing
- Engage a writer to fine tune various ideas and strategies in coordination with administrative officers – Dec. 2019
- Create a public newsletter – Jul. 2019

B. City promotions

Responsible individual/committee: **Communications Committee, Mayor, City Clerk & CVB's**

- Use community branding to create a promotable sense of self for the entire City – Jan. 2019
- Use events to increase local government visibility – Jun. 2019
- Develop a plan to draw Corridor H travelers into Elkins – Jun. 2020
- Designate City funds for direct marketing – FY20
- Create and staff (or contract) a Public Relations position responsible for all the City's media – Jul. 2021

Strategic Focus Area #4

Review and enhancement of governance and process protocols

City Council will use the Strategic Plan as a roadmap for its work. The work of all committees and of City Council itself will be guided by the Strategic Plan. Elements of the plan will be discussed at each City Council meeting. The possibility of designating or hiring a City Administrator will be pursued as an early priority. Other governance and process improvements in the regular functioning of City Council will be reviewed and implemented as appropriate. The Rules and Ordinances Committee is responsible for oversight and execution of this portion of the Strategic Plan.

A. Adoption of recurring agenda items

Responsible individual/committee: **Council and Mayor**

Milestones and deadlines:

- Review of Strategic Plan at Council meetings – ~~quarterly~~ bi-annually
- Board and Commission presentations to Council – twice monthly
- Citizen recognition – monthly
- Employee recognition – monthly

B. City Manager

Responsible individual/committee: **Personnel and R&O Committees**

Milestones and deadlines:

- Determine feasibility of creating the city manager position – Jun. 2019

- Determine feasibility of reducing council seats – Jun. 2019
- Solicit public input for conversion to City Manager form of government – Sept. 2019
- Study the city manager style of government – Dec. 2019
- Investigate City Charter revisions in relation to potential change in form of government – Mar. 2020

C. Departmental policies

Responsible individual/committee: **R&O Committee and Administrative Officers**

Milestones and deadlines:

- Review of current Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's) in each department – June 2019
- Development of amended or new SOP's in each department – Dec. 2019
- Implementation and training on SOP's in each department – Apr. 2020

D. Training

Responsible individual/committee: **Personnel Committee & Mayor**

Milestones and deadlines:

- Council retreats (training, planning) – annual
- New council orientation – May following an election
- Employee and Officials training schedule – Mar. 2019

E. Examine City Charter

Responsible individual/committee: **R&O Committee**

Milestones and deadlines:

- Review charter and recommend changes to enhance delivery of city services - Mar. 2020

F. City Code review

Responsible individual/committee: **R&O Committee**

Milestones and deadlines:

- Review and enhancement of policies directly related to governance – quarterly
- Review and improve government delivery of services - continually
- Review of Home Rule authorities and ordinances – Oct. 2018
- Codification – Dec. 2019

G. Review organizational structure

Responsible individual/committee: **Personnel Committee and Administrative Officers**

Milestones and deadlines:

- Identify ways to enhance job ownership and employee recognition – Sept. 2018 and ongoing
- Review position workloads and organizational fit in each department – Jun. 2019

- Investigate need for changes in position workloads, elimination of positions or creation of new positions – Jun. 2019

H. Increase public engagement

Responsible individual/committee: **Communications Committee, Clerk & Mayor**

Milestones and deadlines:

- Assure accessibility of council members – ongoing
- Request weekly meeting bulletins be printed in the newspaper – Nov. 2018
- Move council meetings around town/wards – Jan. 2019
- Investigate new sound system and seating for council chambers – Jul. 2019
- Create informational packets for new residents – Oct. 2021
- Signage or kiosk outside City Hall for better public notification – Jun. 2019
- Convene with other community bodies, such as the County Commission, the Board of Education, the Office of Emergency Management, Davis & Elkins College, etc.) for information sharing - ongoing

Strategic Focus Area #5

Exploration of city expansion and opportunities

Elkins is constrained by boundary limitations, both internal and external to the city limits. Certain run-down properties inside the city limits impede the realization of the Strategic Plan for Elkins. Properties outside the city limits offer the potential for economic growth and expansion. Opportunities to address both issues will be explored and pursued as part of the Strategic Plan. The Municipal Properties Committee will have responsibility for oversight and execution of this portion of the Strategic Plan.

A. Development and execution of an Action Plan for “doughnut hole” properties

Responsible individual/committee: **Revenue/Annexation Committee**

Milestones and deadlines:

- Draft a list of “reasons why” – Aug. 2018
- Develop a plan to approach property owners for voluntary annexation– Oct. 2018
- Develop a follow-up plan for properties unwilling to voluntarily annex – Nov. 2018

B. Development and execution of an Action Plan for city limits expansion opportunities

Responsible individual/committee: **Revenue/Annexation Committee**

Milestones and deadlines:

- Draft a list of “reasons why” – Aug. 2018
- Identify target areas, type of property and population – Oct. 2018

- Gauge public interest in annexation through public forums –?
- Request letters of support – ?
- Develop a plan to approach property owners for voluntary annexation – Sep. 2018
- Develop a follow-up plan for properties unwilling to voluntarily annex – Sep. 2018
- Use increased revenues to improve/increase City services to support annexation – Jun. 2019

C. Identify and promote economic needs

Responsible individual/committee: **Revenue/Annexation/R&O Committee**

Milestones and deadlines:

- Work with the Randolph County Development Authority (RCDA) and Elkins Main Street (EMS) to identify and promote available sites – Jun. 2019
- Work with RCDA, EMS, Elkins-Randolph Chamber of Commerce, and residents to identify service/business gaps – Jul. 2019
- Promote economic growth and diversification of the local economy through technology & sustainability opportunities using regulatory tools and economic incentives – Jul. 2019
- Partner with RCDA and other agencies to promote and facilitate broadband growth opportunities – Jun. 2019
- Establish roundtable discussions with workers, skilled tradesmen and employees to identify gaps

D. Identify and promote other community needs

Responsible individual/committee: **Mayor, Council and Community Organizations**

Milestones and deadlines:

- Work with local organizations to increase outdoor recreation tourism – Aug. 2019
- Investigate how to recruit and retain professionals – Dec. 2019
- Investigate how to recruit and retain residents under the age of forty – Dec. 2019
- Cooperate with County government and local organizations to increase and diversify housing options – Feb. 2020