



**City of Parkersburg
Development Department
2023 Annual Report**

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Dear Residents and Stakeholders,

As we reflect on the accomplishments of the past year, I am filled with gratitude and pride in the progress we've achieved together in the City of Parkersburg. Our Planning & Development Department has navigated challenges and embraced opportunities, shaping a landscape of growth and revitalization throughout our community.



I extend my appreciation to the dedicated professionals in our department whose commitment and foresight have been the driving force behind our successes. Your passion for enhancing our city's vibrancy has been instrumental in implementing initiatives that positively impact the lives of our residents.

I want to express my gratitude to Mayor Joyce for his support and vision for a better Parkersburg. His leadership has been instrumental in steering us towards creating safer neighborhoods, sound infrastructure, and a prosperous city.

In 2023 our commitment to enhance our physical spaces was a top priority. The transformative investments in large-scale infrastructure projects like the Parkersburg Ohio River Trail, Market Street Sidewalk Enhancements, Bennett-Stump Baseball Field, and the Southwood Park Swimming Pool exemplify our continued commitment to enhancing the quality of life for our residents.

These initiatives represent the collective efforts of a city that values our area's natural beauty and recreational amenities.

Looking ahead to 2024, I am filled with excitement about the opportunities that await us. As we continue to communicate, coordinate, and collaborate, I am confident that 2024 will be another exceptional year for Parkersburg. Together, we will build upon the foundation we've laid and create an even more vibrant, sustainable, and prosperous city for generations to come.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ryan Barber". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Ryan Barber
Development Director

Development Department Year in Review

Community Development



Over 200 Schools 2 Pools passes provided to income eligible households
Over 240 smoke detectors installed by the Fire Department through the *Sound the Alarm* program
Debut of the redesigned City of Parkersburg website and PKB Connect mobile app

Housing Programs



Over \$190,700 was distributed to first-time home-buyers in Wood County through the *Down Payment Assistance Program*
\$143,270 was awarded through the *Minor Home Repair Program* for the renovation of 13 homes throughout the City of Parkersburg
Two Habitat for Humanity homes were completed in 2023 with \$172,000 contributed by the City of Parkersburg

Capital Infrastructure



Completed redevelopment of Southwood Park Swimming Pool with funding assistance from the City of Parkersburg and the National Parks Service's Land and Water Conservation Grant
Completed renovations of Bennett Stump Field at City Park
Opened the 2.6 mile extension of the Parkersburg Ohio River Trail extending north from Point Park

Community Development

Market Street Streetscape

The final phase of the Market Street Streetscape Enhancement project was completed in 2023 and extends from 11th Street to 13th Street. The enhancement project replaced existing sidewalks, shortened street-crossing distances, and installed sidewalk “bump-outs” to reduce traffic speed. These “bump-outs” also act as bioswales, increasing stormwater control and reducing the urban heat island effect with native grasses and trees.

Community Oriented Policing and Engagement

The engagement program is designed to build a relationship between residents and the City of Parkersburg Police Department through meetings with local schools and community groups. It is also responsible for the Department’s Bike Patrol as well as the updated design to the City’s D.A.R.E. car.

Sound the Alarm

Throughout 2023, the city’s Fire Department installed 241 smoke detectors at no cost to the homeowners. This program is designed to increase fire safety within income eligible homes and is made possible by Community Development Block Grant funding.

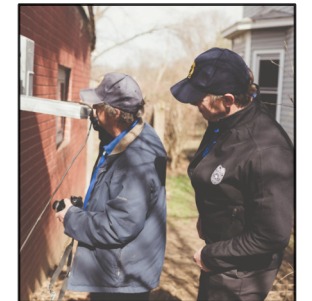
Sound the Alarm



Community Oriented Policing and Engagement



CODE Enforcement Program



CODE Enforcement Program

The CODE Enforcement Program uses Community Development Block Grant funding for code inspections of dangerous properties. Code Enforcement officers work to identify and record problems with dilapidated structures, notifying the property owners of any violations.

Schools 2 Pools

Schools 2 Pools offers pool passes to local students in income-qualified households. During 2023, a total of 216 passes were distributed. These passes may be used at both City Park and Southwood Park pools.

Downtown Façade Rehabilitation Program

The façade program encourages the restoration of commercial buildings within the Downtown Business District. The city provides financing for half the cost of exterior and structural repairs, with a maximum loan amount of \$20,000. The loan will be forgiven if the building remains under the same ownership and the unit is maintained for five years following renovation. During 2023, one Downtown business received \$20,000 for rehabilitation through the program, with a total project cost of \$68,560.

Housing Programs

Habitat for Humanity



Down Payment Assistance Program



Down Payment Assistance Program

Through this program, the city provides a \$15,000 loan to help with the down payment and closing costs of a first-time home purchase for qualified applicants. The funding is written off after the buyer has lived in the house for a minimum of five years. The Down Payment Assistance Program is provided by the Wood County HOME Consortium and administered by the City of Parkersburg.

In 2023, a total of \$190,788.23 was distributed to thirteen first time home buyers in Wood County. The value of the thirteen homes assisted through the program in 2023 totals approximately \$1,332,700.

Tenant Based Rental Assistance

The city has partnered with Children's Home Society and Community Resources to provide rent reimbursement to residents in need of shelter. This program is funded through the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development's HOME Investment Partnership Program. Throughout 2023, the program helped 21 households, with 13 households graduating into self-sufficient renting environments.

Minor Home Repair

This program provides a grant of up to \$15,000 for home repairs and includes a final inspection of the work by the City of Parkersburg Code Division. Qualifications for this program are based on an applicant's household income. In 2022 the income threshold was raised from 60% to 80%, making the program accessible to a wider number of residents. Throughout 2023 a total of \$143,270 was awarded for the completed repair of 13 homes.

Emergency Home Repair

The Emergency Home Repair program offers a grant of up to \$6,000 for emergency repairs that eliminate health and safety hazards. Qualifications for the grant are based on an applicant's household income, with the income threshold having been increased from 60% to 80% during 2022. In 2023, there were six projects that qualified as emergency home repairs with a total funding amount of \$24,927.

Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation Program

Qualified homeowners within Wood County can apply for a 0% interest loan of up to \$25,000 for home repairs through this program. This funding is made possible through the Wood County HOME Consortium and administered by the City of Parkersburg Development Department. One Owner-Occupied project began in 2023 totaling \$11,938 in rehabilitation funding.

Habitat for Humanity

The Development Department partnered with Habitat for Humanity to fund the construction of two homes for eligible homeowners. The city contributed a total of \$172,000 towards housing developments on City View Drive and Lincoln Drive. This funding allocation was made possible through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's HOME Investment Partnership Program.

Minor Home Repair: Before (left) & After (right)



Capital Infrastructure

Southwood Park Swimming Pool

The redevelopment of the Southwood Park Swimming Pool was completed in 2023. This project was funded in part by a \$668,117 award from the National Park Service's Land and Water Conservation Fund. Additional funding was provided through \$3,784,227 of American Rescue Plan Act appropriations and \$791,117 of General Fund financing.

This project replaced equipment, including filters, pumps, and pipes, while also redesigning the swimming pool to increase accessibility and recreation opportunities. The redesigned Southwood Park pool includes a zero-depth entry, water features, lap lanes, and a water slide. The pool deck and shade features have also been replaced. Because of these renovations, the approximate annual maintenance costs for the pool have decreased from \$15,000 to \$9,000. The city is looking forward to opening the Southwood Park Swimming Pool in the summer of 2024.



Bennett Stump Field

The City of Parkersburg Engineering Division completed its renovation of Bennett Stump Field at City Park in 2023. These improvements included:

- 32,000 square feet of synthetic turf
- New lighting
- 14 foot wide warning track
- 1,700 feet of black vinyl-coated chain link fencing
- 30 ft. tall back stop
- 30 ft. tall outfield netting
- Two new dugouts
- Two new ticket booths



Capital Infrastructure

Parkersburg Ohio River Trail

In the fall of 2023, the City of Parkersburg completed work on the 2.6-mile extension of the Parkersburg Ohio River Trail. Extending north from Point Park, the trail is built between the Ohio River and the Floodwall/Levee.

The completion of the trail, a \$1.5 million project, is due to the work of multiple City Departments over the years, as well as funding provided by the State of West Virginia Department of Transportation's Division of Highways. Following completion of the trail, the City of Parkersburg Engineering Division worked to remove brush and debris from the riverbank to ensure a safe and scenic experience for residents and visitors.



Parkersburg Ohio River Trail

Bennett Stump Field Renovation

Southwood Park Swimming Pool Redevelopment

Community Outreach & Engagement

Website Redesign

The city debuted a redesigned website in the summer of 2023. The new site, www.parkersburgwv.gov, increases the user experience through online applications and easy-to-navigate menu options. From the website, visitors can quickly learn what day their trash and recycling pickup is, who to call with building code questions, and how to obtain a business license. Likewise, requests for bids and proposals issued by the city are also available.

PKB Connect

In 2023 the city introduced PKB Connect, a digital reporting system giving residents the ability to submit service requests directly to the city. These submissions are automatically routed to the city department or division best suited to address their concerns. PKB Connect is currently available in both the Apple App Store and the Google Play Store.

Big Truck Day

During the summer of 2023, the Development Department partnered with the Public Works Department, Fire Department, Police Department, and local construction firms to host a Big Truck Day for area youth.

Members of the Public Works team taught kids how their trucks and construction equipment worked, giving demonstrations of the unique features of each vehicle in the city's fleet.



Big Truck Day 2023



Community Building Presentation & Public Meeting



Photo: Parkersburg News & Sentinel

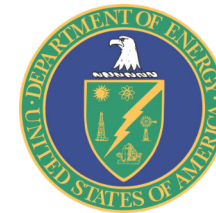
Public Information Services

The city's Development Department established the role of the Public Information Officer in 2023. This position has increased the city's digital communications through both social media and the city's official website. The Officer is also responsible for maintaining consistency in the city's branding, ensuring that community members can easily identify official City of Parkersburg messaging. Throughout the past year, the city has reached over 284,600 users, created 146 social media posts, recorded over 26,000 visits to the city's new website, and created a LinkedIn account to increase communication and visibility of the city's job postings.

Public Meetings – Community Building

In the Spring of 2023, the city and Pickering Associates hosted a public meeting to share the city's goals for a new community building. During this meeting, participants had the opportunity to talk directly with representatives from both Pickering Associates and the city, sharing their comments and concerns about where the building would be located, how large it would be, and what types of activities it would provide. The city adopted many changes stemming from this meeting, including a revision of the appearance of the building, and minimizing the building's footprint.

Grant Opportunities



WV Department of Transportation – Transportation Alternatives Grant Program

The city applied for \$860,000 from the WV Department of Transportation for the construction of Phase I of the Saint Mary’s/Dudley Avenue sidewalk enhancement project, extending along St. Mary’s from 15th to 19th Streets. The Development Department also applied for \$100,000 to plan and engineer Phase II of the project that would extend the sidewalk enhancements from 19th to 23rd Streets. The city anticipates award announcements will be made in 2024.

Federal Rail Administration – Railroad Crossing Elimination Program - \$120,000

The Parkersburg Utility Board and the city were awarded \$120,000 from the Federal Rail Administration’s Railroad Crossing Elimination Program. This grant will fund a planning and cost analysis study examining the railroad crossing at Keever and 19th Streets. A relocation of this crossing would improve accessibility to the Utility Board’s facilities and increase safety levels for pedestrians, the railroad, and Utility Board employees.

WV Department of Arts, Culture, and History – Fairs and Festivals - \$2,970

The city was awarded over \$2,000 from the West Virginia Department of Arts, Culture, and History to assist Downtown PKB in promoting the Taste of Parkersburg. This event features over 40 food and beverage vendors, bringing over 3,000 people to the Downtown Business District.

The Development Department has also been active in advocating for Fairs & Festivals funding for other local organizations. Working alongside Wood County’s State Senators and Delegates, the Department has advocated that additional Fairs & Festivals allocations be directed towards the Harvest Moon Festival, held at City Park, and the Mansion by Candlelight event that is hosted on Blennerhassett Island. Events like these provide unique experiences for both residents and tourists, increasing local business and building community pride.

U.S. Department of Energy – Energy Efficiency & Conservation Block Grant - \$76,150

The city obtained over \$76,000 from the U.S. Department of Energy to replace the lighting at the City Park tennis courts and the Southwood Park pond sidewalk with new LED fixtures.

National Endowment for the Arts – Floodwall Mural Initiative - \$25,000

The city was awarded \$25,000 from the National Endowment for the Arts for Phase III of the Floodwall Mural project. This phase will paint the floodwall with the lyrics and notes of the 1971 hit “Take Me Home, Country Roads”, originally written by Bill Danoff, Taffy Nivert, and John Denver. Phase II of the Floodwall Mural project was completed in 2023 and mirrors Parkersburg’s Sixth Street train trestles. The initial phase of the mural project was completed in the summer of 2021, displaying West Virginia’s Appalachian mountains and valleys.

Floodwall Mural Phase I



Grant Opportunities



WV Department of Environmental Protection – Litter Control - \$5,000

The city was awarded \$5,000 from the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection to provide overtime pay for Parkersburg Police Department officers while they supervised litter pickup activities in partnership with the Wood County Day Report Center. Between July 2022 and June 2023, the Police Department and Day Report crews collected 21,880 pounds of litter, along with 27 tires.

WV Department of Environmental Protection – Recycling Assistance Grant

The city's Recycling Center received a \$140,000 allocation from the Recycling Assistance Grant Program for 2023. Throughout the year this funding was utilized in four ways:

A flatbed truck to transport sorted recycling to purchasers

Baling wire, used to organize bales of recycled paper, cardboard, and plastic bottles

Educational flyers detailing what can and cannot be recycled at the Recycling Center

Maintenance to the Recycling Center's conveyor system that was originally installed in 2004

These funding opportunities allow the city's Recycling Center to continue to provide recycling services to residents of Parkersburg as well as the surrounding communities.

Recycling Center Employees Prepare Cardboard and Paper for Baling



Bales of Recycled Plastics

Real Estate Assisted Demolition

Background

The Real Estate Assisted Demolition Program provided a forgivable loan to help property owners with eliminating blighted structures. The City of Parkersburg completed twenty-three demolitions through the program in 2023.

Program Quick Facts

Property owners who qualified for the program maintained title to the property.

A deferred and forgivable lien was placed on the property for the cost of demolition.

The lien will be forgiven after two years if the property has not been sold or transferred and remains free of code violations.

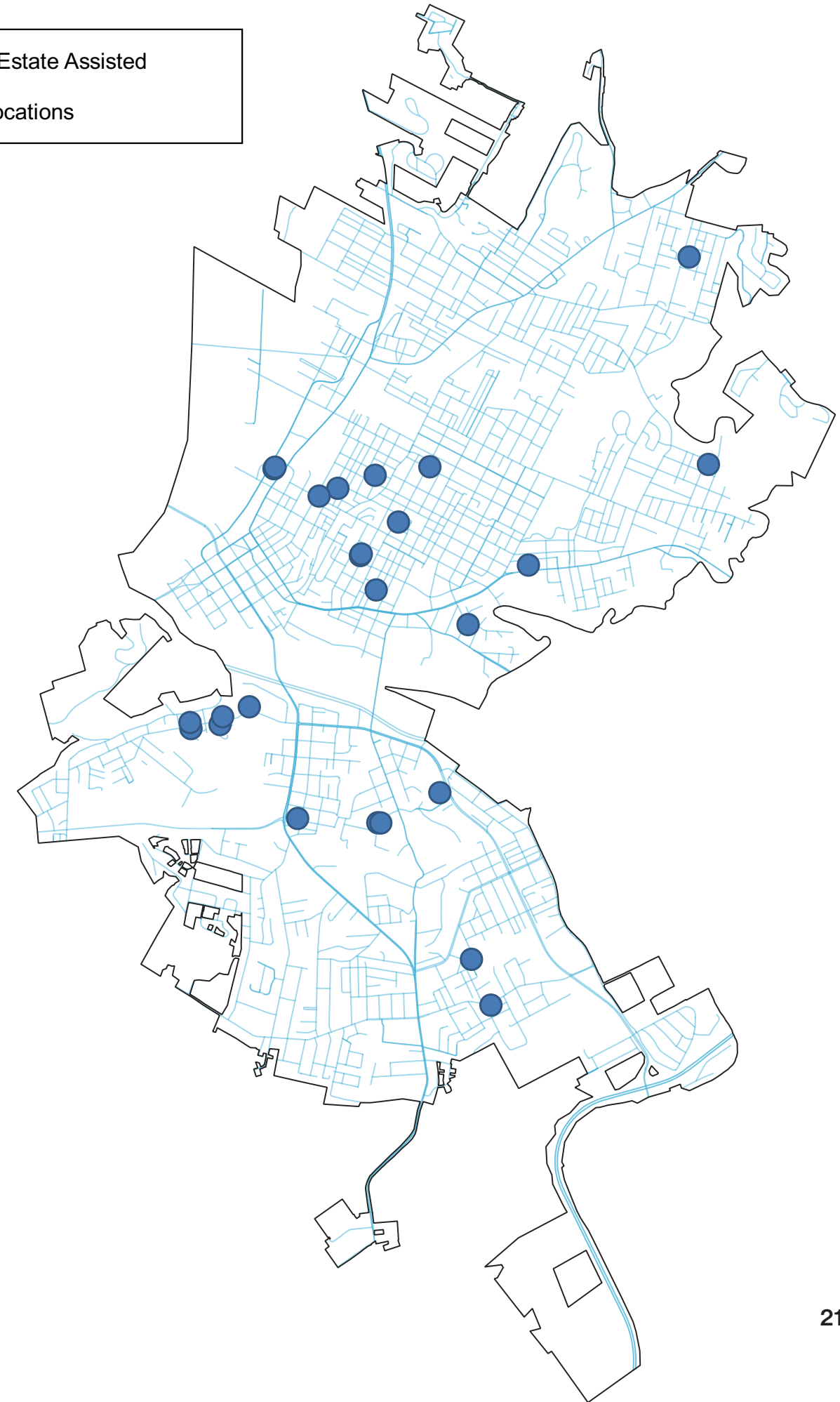
If redevelopment occurs on the property and a Certificate of Occupancy is issued, the property owner may request an early release of this lien.

The program was available for both residential and commercial buildings.

Demand for demolition assistance was high throughout 2023; the Development Department received over 40 applications for the program.

This opportunity was accelerated through a \$650,000 funding allocation from the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection's Reclamation of Abandoned and Dilapidated Properties program. Although Parkersburg did not receive funding from the State of West Virginia for 2024, the Development Department will continue to work with the Mayor's Office and City Council to determine how the Real Estate Assisted Demolition Program can continue moving forward.

2023 Real Estate Assisted Demolition Property Locations



Tree Commission

Background

The Tree Commission provides the Mayor, the Public Works Department, and City Council with guidance regarding the maintenance and growth of the city's tree canopy.

The Commission is responsible for new plantings as well as identifying trees that need maintenance or removal. It also provides a Memorial Tree Program, allowing community members the opportunity to purchase a tree that will be planted in a public park with a memorial plaque.

Tree City USA - 25 Years

In 2023, the City of Parkersburg celebrated its 25th year as a nationally recognized Tree City USA community. The Tree City USA program, sponsored by the Arbor Day Foundation, rewards cities for maintaining and investing in a healthy urban tree canopy.

City Park Tree Management & Planting Plan

The Commission partnered with the West Virginia Division of Forestry and Davey Resource Group to complete a comprehensive Management & Planting Plan for City Park during 2023. This plan serves as a guide to the city and the Commission as it works to care for the existing trees within the park while continuing to expand the park's tree canopy through new plantings.

Public Meetings – City Park Tree Management and Planting Plan

Throughout the summer of 2023, the city's Tree Commission hosted public meetings at both Emerson and Southside public libraries to share the findings of the recently completed Management and Planting Plan for City Park. These meetings provided the public an opportunity to talk with the Tree Commissioners about the details of the plan and how the Commission will work to meet the goals for maintaining a healthy tree canopy at City Park.

Arbor Day 2023

In the spring of 2023, the Commission partnered with local elementary schools and Parkersburg South High School to celebrate Arbor Day by promoting urban tree education.

4th Grade Foresters: The 4th Grade Foresters program gave individually wrapped tree seedlings to each participating 4th grade class, allowing students the opportunity to plant their own tree. In 2023, the Tree Commission handed out over 350 seedlings and looks forward to continuing this program in 2024.

Parkersburg South High School & Wood County Technical Center: In celebration of Arbor Day, the Commission partnered with The Ohio State University Extension office in Washington County to provide an educational planting seminar to students at Parkersburg South High School and the Wood County Technical Center. This event was held on April 25th, coinciding with the city's official recognition of Arbor Day for 2023. During the event, students planted nine trees with guidance from Commission members and The Ohio State University Extension office.

4th Grade Foresters



Building Enforcement Agency

Background

The Building Enforcement Agency has the authority to require the repair, alteration, improvement, or the demolition of any building found unfit for human habitation. The Agency inspects buildings that are vacant, dilapidated, and pose a risk to the surrounding neighborhood.

During monthly meetings, property owners discuss their outstanding code violations with the Agency, and work together to find a solution.

These solutions include property renovation, demolition, voluntary forfeiture of the property to the city, or recommendation that the City of Parkersburg Urban Renewal Authority acquire the property via eminent domain to remediate the blight. In 2023, the Real Estate Assisted Demolition program provided another possible solution for property owners whose structures were brought before the Building Enforcement Agency.

2023

The Agency reviewed 73 blighted structures throughout 2023, with 49 properties constituting new business. Throughout the year, 24 properties were removed from the Building Enforcement Agency agenda following successful renovations. A total of 42 properties were demolished following Agency review. Demolition of dilapidated buildings was accomplished through either the Real Estate Assisted Demolition program, or the traditional demolition/lien process. Finally, the Agency moved six properties to the Urban Renewal Authority for further review.

Before Building Enforcement Agency Review



After Successful Renovation and Removal from the Building Enforcement Agency Agenda



Urban Renewal Authority

Background

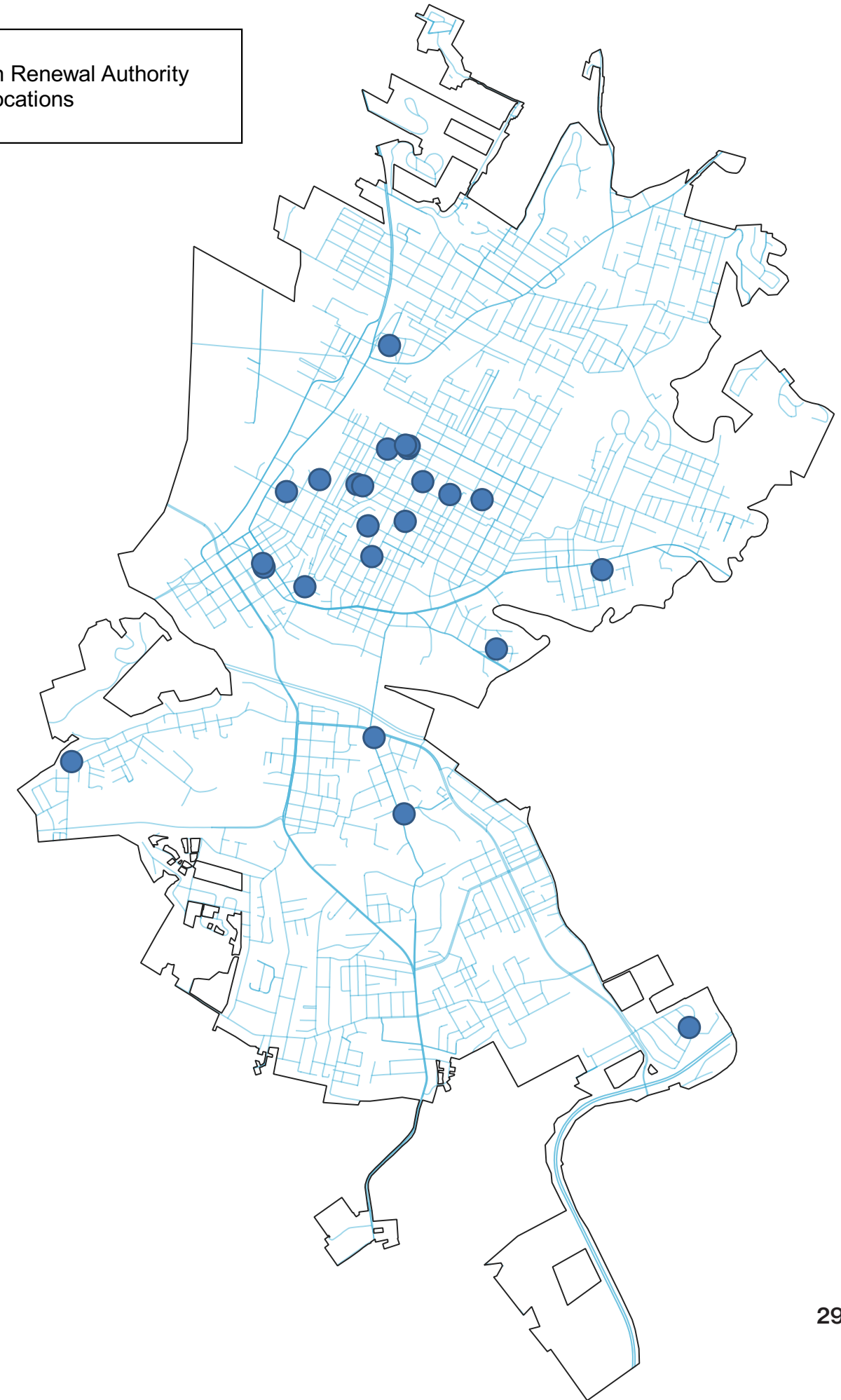
The Authority acquires neglected properties that are a source of blight to the surrounding area. After acquisition, the Authority works to encourage redevelopment through removing the blight and promoting infill development. Past projects include the revitalization of the Central Business District and the recently opened Parkersburg Ohio River Trail.

Meetings of the Authority are held as business dictates, following the meeting of City Council. These meetings are open to the public, giving the community the opportunity to directly address the Authority and share their feelings regarding vacant and dilapidated properties within the city.

2023

The Authority reviewed 30 blighted buildings throughout the past year, authorizing the acquisition of over 10 properties. Additionally, the Authority resolved to acquire two properties via eminent domain due to the hazards the buildings posed to public safety. Finally, four properties were sold to private developers by the Authority throughout the year, allowing for reinvestment through infill development throughout the City of Parkersburg.

2023 Urban Renewal Authority Property Locations



1954 7th Street Before (Left) & After (Right) Urban Renewal Acquisition and Demolition



Looking Ahead



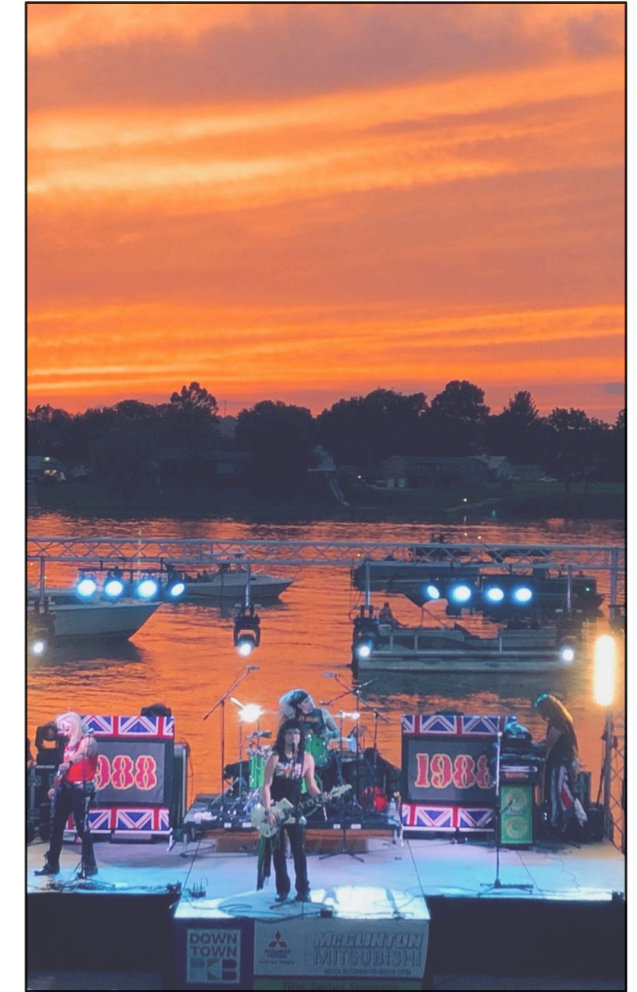
The Development Department's housing programs and grant initiatives will continue to provide assistance to residents and support redevelopment opportunities throughout the city in 2024. Development Department staff look forward to continuing their partnership with local boards and organizations; working together to address the issues that face the Mid-Ohio Valley.

Finally, the department will continue to work towards the goals of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan, including the St. Mary's/Dudley Avenue sidewalk project, amendments and revisions to the city's Planning and Zoning Code, and reviewing future growth through annexation. The 2030 Plan serves as a tool to remind the city of what it has accomplished as well as what lays ahead.

City of Parkersburg Development Department



- Ryan Barber - Development Director
- Lisa Cullum - Financial Compliance Officer
- Tammy Bunner - Administrative Assistant
- Jake Frady - Development Projects Coordinator
- Connor LaVelle - City Planner





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