



A Catalyst for  
**GROWTH  
& PROGRESS**

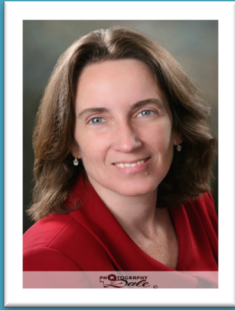
# Greater Hagerstown Committee

## ANNUAL REPORT

### FY 2018-219

5 Public Square, Suite 601 Hagerstown, MD 21740  
(301) 733-8811 [www.greaterhagerstown.org](http://www.greaterhagerstown.org)





## Message from The Outgoing Chair

During the past year, we continued to develop in line with the four pillars of our strategic plan, taking actions to increase workforce development, vitality in city centers, community infrastructure, and community collaborations. While increasing community education attainment levels remains a priority, our Vision Committee spent significant time identifying other goals that will further the development of our strategic areas.

OnTrack hired its first executive director and we have continued to lend our support in many ways. We have seen tremendous community collaborations amongst OnTrack's active partners – from joint grant applications to programmatic partnerships, the community is coming together to make a difference for our kids and our future.

While we are disappointed that more progress has not yet been made with respect to I-81 improvements, we continue to lobby the State for support on this important project. The public statement issued by our membership applied much needed pressure, spurring action and increasing public support for the proposed infrastructure improvements.

In addition to our focus on improvements to downtown Hagerstown, we have engaged with other municipalities and their downtown revitalization efforts. We are tremendously excited for the anticipated changes to the Williamsport area as a result of the C&O Canal National Park headquarters relocation. Though Hagerstown is the county seat, it's important to remember that the health of Washington County is dependent on each of the vibrant municipalities in our area.

As we entered our fourth decade, we shifted our views on public awareness of our group and its mission. As we saw with the public statement on I-81, the diversity of our membership and our collective community involvement lends credibility to our voice and our mission. For far too long, too many community decisions have been unduly influenced by the input of a vocal minority. To effectuate positive changes in our community, there will be moments when we will need to vocalize our views on certain issues.

It's been a pleasure serving you as we continue to strive to make the Greater Hagerstown region a better place to live and work.

Jeanne F. Singer  
GHC Chair 2017-2019





## Message from The Incoming Chair

Welcome! The Greater Hagerstown Committee (GHC) was established in 1987 to assist in making the greater Hagerstown area a vital and progressive region. GHC is solely funded by member dues which enables us to have a strong collective voice in our community allowing GHC the ability to be unbiased and nonpartisan. Our members are senior level executives who volunteer their time, talent, and resources, without thought of personal gain. We are proud of our role as leaders in this community for over thirty years and will endeavor to serve the community for generations to come.

Much of our work is done through our “Forums” where members focus on targeted projects or initiatives that are essential in advancing our community. They include:

**Vision:** It is always important to be mindful of new opportunities that arise and think creatively about ways to improve our community. We have a dedicated Vision Forum that continually asks, “What do we want to look like in 10 years?”, and then develops strategies to get us there.

**Education:** In order for our community to thrive in tomorrow’s high-tech economy, our workforce must double its current educational attainment levels. This forum is made up of key leaders at our education institutions including: WCPS, USMH, HCC, Purdue Global, PIA, trade organizations, and our Public Library. This collaborative team works on innovative projects that have led to programs such as OnTrack, FAFSA Frenzy, and various scholarship programs to help increase the educational attainment and career training levels of our community.

**Transportation:** This forum recommends and supports transportation improvements in our region. In the past, members have supported enhancements at our airport, the ongoing project of widening I-81, improvements to I-70 and Eastern Boulevard, and the extension of Halfway Blvd, Crayton Blvd, Yale Drive, and Professional Blvd.

**Downtown Enhancement:** This forum acts as a catalyst on projects that revitalize our urban centers such as the Urban Improvement Project (UIP), a Multi-purpose Stadium, USMH, new parking decks, the Barbara Ingram School for the Arts, and C&O Canal improvements in Williamsport. We will continue to work closely with the County, City, and our small towns to support other economic development projects and revitalization initiatives to help our municipalities realize their potential.

**Tourism Assets:** Washington County is known for its rich historic and cultural resources, the many state and national parks, sporting venues, hiking and biking trails, agribusiness, and lavish arts and entertainment infrastructure, Forum members are working to connect and enhance our many tourism assets to improve our tourism economy and the quality of life for our residents.

**Innovative Gateways:** This forum recognizes the value of entrepreneurs in a local economy. Members are working to assess and improve our entrepreneurial ecosystem to better cultivate these corporate pioneers and help them successfully grow their ideas to thriving businesses.

Since its inception, GHC has served as a community's catalyst recruiting the people, gathering the information, identifying the resources, and crafting the conversation necessary to advance initiatives that make our region a better place to live, work and play. We hope you will view our website to learn more about our past and current projects, and our strategic plan for the future.

Dr. Mitesh Kothari  
Chair 2019-2021

# Our Purpose



**GHC Mission:** *Identify community needs and apply the time and talents of each member to be a catalyst for consensus and progress*

The Greater Hagerstown Committee (GHC), a 501c(3) corporate body, was established in 1987 to bring stakeholders and community leaders together to discuss broad issues of importance in the region. While much of GHC's focus has centered in Washington County, MD, our region extends along the I-81 corridor. Since its inception, GHC has served as a community catalyst recruiting the people, gathering the information, identifying the resources, and crafting the conversation necessary to advance initiatives that make our region a better place to live, work, and play.

The Committee strives to cooperate with and assist governmental bodies and community organizations to achieve existing goals and objectives or to identify new ones. In addition, it provides a vehicle for its members and invited stakeholders to take a broad view of our region, become educated on regionally significant issues, and craft visions for improving the quality of life in our community.

The Committee does not exist to undertake any particular project and does not seek recognition for its work. Instead, it serves as a catalyst to identify and support community partners and public entities as they undertake these projects.

GHC's success is derived from its members, the community forums they create, and the networks they have established to discuss, debate, and ultimately impact vital issues. Individually and together, GHC members are active in our community, stay abreast of current affairs, and understand the paths of influence necessary for change. This allows GHC to intervene at a strategic point and leverage the strengths of its members to affect, motivate, and influence positive change for our region.



1<sup>st</sup> Annual 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Career Exploration Day, June 2018



Elected Officials Reception  
November 2018



Community Coalition's Day in  
Annapolis, January 2019



GHC Regular Monthly Meeting: March  
2019 Vision Forum Presentations

# Our History



On January 27, 1987 a group of concerned citizens assembled to discuss the creation of an organization whose purpose would be to improve and enhance the quality of life in the Washington County Tri-State area. As a result of this initial Steering Group effort, the Washington County Area Progress Council was established. Their initial efforts included a summary of the region's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

On May 1, 1987, the name of the organization was changed to The Greater Hagerstown Committee, Inc., a 501c(3) non-profit organization. Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws were reviewed and approved and Merle Elliot was selected as the organization's first Chairman. At the next regular meeting, eight standing subcommittees were appointed to monitor issues involving government, economies, education, health, human services, recreation, culture, transportation, urban renewal, and historic preservation.

On July 1, 1988, The Greater Hagerstown Committee acquired office space at 5 Public Square, Hagerstown Maryland where they reside today. Over the course of 31 years, The Greater Hagerstown Committee has had four executive directors and averages about 60 active members and over 20 ex-officio and retired members. The organization continues to attract business and professional leaders devoted to giving back to their community and finding ways to enhance the quality of life for all citizens of the region



## Past Board Chairs

**Merle Elliott 1987-1989**

**Dick Phoebus 1989-1991**

**Bill Reuter 1991-1993**

**John Waltersdorf 1993-1995**

**Wayne Alter 1995-1997**

**Robert Cirincione 1997-1999**

**Jim Latimer 1999-2001**

**Mike Callas 2001-2003**

**Bill Barton 2003-2005**

**Tom Newcomer 2005-2007**

**Jim Pierne 2007-2009**

**John League 2009-2011**

**John Schnebly 2011-2013**

**Dr. Gaye McGovern 2013-2015**

**Chris Motz 2015-2017**

**Jeanne F. Singer 2017-2019**

## **Former Executive Directors**

**Philip Moery 1988-1989**

**Herbert Meininger 1989-1998**

**Art Callaham 1998-2010**



# GHC Leadership Team FY 2019-2020

## Executive Committee FY 2019-2020

**Mitesh Kothari, Chair**

Comprehensive Women's Care

**Terry King, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chair**

Leadership Development Resources

**B.J. Goetz, 2nd Vice Chair**

Middletown Valley Bank

**Bill Fritts, Treasurer**

Smith Elliott Kearns & Company

**Andy Bruns, Secretary**

Herald-Mail Media

**Jeanne F. Singer, Immediate Past Chair**

Law Offices of Jeanne F. Singer, P.A.

**Basheer Azizi\*, Member at Large**

OpSmart, Inc.

**Richie Holzapfel, Member at Large**

Holzapfel Investments

**Kent Reynolds, Member at Large**

Keller Stonebraker Insurance

**Julie Rohm\*\*, Member at Large**

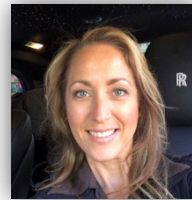
Preit Valley Mall

\*Also serves as Chair of V2.1 Innovative Gateways Success Team

\*\*Also serves as Chair of the V2.1 Tourism Assets Success Team and UIP2 Taskforce



**James F. Kercheval**  
Executive Director



**Dawn Hoover-Miller**  
Executive Assistant

### Staff



Pre-Legislative Delegation  
Luncheon, December 2018



New Educators Reception  
August 2018



GHC Regular Monthly Meeting  
May 2018

**Full Active Members:**

1. **Azizi, Basheer\*** 🔥 – OpSmart
2. **Barr, Jonny** – Ellsworth Electric
3. **Baykan, Mary** – Wash. Co. Free Library
4. **Baylor, Michael** – Ameriserv Financial
5. **Bloesel, Dieter** – Schmankerl Stube
6. **Bowen, Blackie** – Ewing Oil Co., Inc.
7. **Bowen, Scott** 🔥 – MSB Architects
8. **Bowen, Taylor** – Berkshire Hathaway Bowen Realty
9. **Bowman, Don** – Bowman Group LLP
10. **Brezler, Ronnie** – United Bank
11. **Bruns, Andy\*** – Herald-Mail Media
12. **Burke, Mary Anne** – WC Arts Council, Inc.
13. **Daughtridge, Rich** – High Rock
14. **Davis, Taylor** – Morgan-Keller Construction
15. **Day, Michael** – Law Offices Michael Day & Assoc.
16. **Divelbiss, Jason** – JD Law Co., Inc.
17. **Feight, Brent** – Bushey Feight Morin Architects, Inc.
18. **Fiery, Doug** – Douglas A. Fiery Funeral Home
19. **Fisher II, R.L.** – First United Bank & Trust
20. **Fitzgerald, Mike** – Gideon Properties, LLC
21. **Fitzsimmons, Brendan** – RBC Wealth Management
22. **Fritts II, Bill\*** – Smith Elliott Kearns & Company
23. **Fulton, Brad\*** 🔥 – AC&T Co., Inc.
24. **Giustini, Lou** – The Columbia Bank
  - Matt Hess (Delegate)
25. **Glessner, Neal** – Glessner Technologies
26. **Goetz, BJ\*** – Middletown Valley Bank
27. **Grach, Patrick** – Lifehouse Church
28. **Harrell, Mark** - CNB Bank
  - John Menard (Delegate)
29. **Harshman, Rick** - CBIZ Retirement Plan Services
30. **Hayes, Gary** – Spherion Staffing
31. **Hayes, Suzanne** – Merrill Lynch
32. **Hetzer, William** ❖ – C. William Hetzer, Inc.
33. **Hill, Sr., Nicholas V** 🔥 – Callas Contractors, Inc.
34. **Holzappel, Richie\*** – Holzappel Investments
35. **Howell, Aaron** – Bank of Charles Town
36. **Hull, Jeff** – BJ's Custom Creations
37. **Jenny, Pierre** – Volvo
38. **Johnston, Michael** – M.S. Johnston Company
39. **King, Terry\*** – Leadership Development Resources
40. **Kothari, Mitesh\*** ❖ – Capital Women's Care
41. **Latimer, John** 🔥 – Keller Stonebraker Insurance.
42. **Lough, Ed** – Northwestern Mutual
43. **Lynch, Brian** – Antietam Broadband
44. **McGovern, Gaye** – Gaye McGovern Insurance Agency, Inc.
45. **Motz, Christopher** – Purdue Global University
46. **Nerenhausen, Frank** – JLG Industries, Inc.
  - Emma McTague (Delegate)

47. **Newby, John** – John G. Newby, M.D., P.C.
48. **Plummer, Morgan** – HNNDP, Inc.
49. **Rappaport, Jason** – Innovative Inc.
50. **Reynolds, Kent\*** – Keller Stonebraker Insurance
51. **Rohm, Julie\*** 🔥 – Preit Valley Mall
52. **Rushing, Lynn** – Brook Lane Health Services
53. **Scott, Randy** – Chick-Fil-A
54. **Sears, Jim** – Potomac Edison
55. **Shuster, Dave** – Horizon Goodwill Inc.
56. **Simonsen, Carolyn** – Meritus Medical Center
57. **Singer, Jeanne\*** – Law Offices of Jeanne Singer, P.A.
58. **Smith, Chris** – Battle Creek Land Co. LLC
59. **Snook, Greg** - CHIEF
60. **Spedden, Dan** – Visit Hagerstown
61. **Spicher, Curt** – Spicher's Appliances
62. **Toothman, Jeffrey** – Toothman Orthodontics
63. **Weiss, Michael** 🔥 – Weiss Bros.
64. **Whiteside, Brittany** – Patriot Federal Credit Union
65. **Williams, Noel** – Williams Solution Group

**Retired Members:**

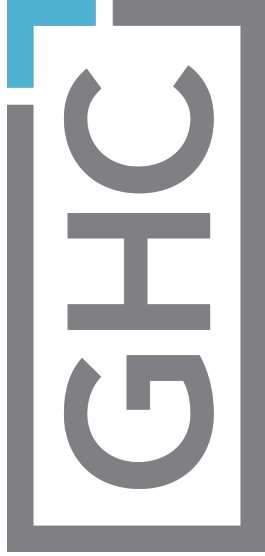
1. **Alter, Wayne**
2. **Barton, William**
3. **Brake, Harold**
4. **Cirincione, Robert**
5. **Fulton, Adna**
6. **Martin, Al**
7. **Perini, Kathleen** ❖
8. **Perini Peter**
9. **Pierne, Jim**
10. **Rhoads, Ross**
11. **Schnebly, John**
12. **Wright, Gary**
13. **Young, William P., Jr** ❖

**Ex-Officio Members:**

1. **Frey, Paul** – WC Chamber of Commerce
2. **Halsey, Mark** - USMH
3. **Klauber, Jim** – Hagerstown Community College
4. **Mercurio, Linda** – OnTrack Washington County
5. **Michael, Boyd** - WCPS
6. **Nicewarner, Scott** – City of Hagerstown
7. **Sargent, Tara** – Leadership Washington Co.
8. **Slocum, Rob** – Washington Co. Gov't

**Honorary Members:**

1. **Callaham, Art** – Retired Executive Director of GHC
2. **Elliott, Merle** ❖ – Smith Elliott & Kearns
3. **Noia, Al** – Allegany Energy
4. **Reuter, William** ❖ – Susquehanna Bancshares Inc



A Catalyst for  
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The Greater Hagerstown Committee, Inc.  
**2019-2021 Strategic Plan**

**Mission:** To identify community needs and engage the resources of each member to be a catalyst for consensus and progress.

**Vision:** We will be a strong, growing prosperous region

**Values:** Collaborative, Informed, Trusted, Nonpartisan, and Visionary

**External Goals**

**Workforce Readiness  
Educational Achievement**

- Break down barriers to post-secondary education and career training
- Aid in growth of relevant post-secondary educational programs and career training programs
- Promote community's need to improve educational attainment and career training levels to fill jobs of tomorrow

**Vitality In  
City Centers**

- Encourage collaborations of organizations impacting revitalization efforts
- Support or create initiatives that diversify housing stock, expand homeownership, and attract corporate investment
- Support efforts to bring jobs and corporate offices into city and town centers
- Support efforts to enhance safety in city and town centers
- Attract a large anchor catalyst project to downtown

**Community  
Infrastructure**

- Recommend and support transportation improvements in the region
- Support expansion of the educational footprint in the community
- Support, connect, and grow tourism infrastructure (Historic, Cultural/Arts, Agricultural, Eco, and Sports Tourism)
- Support and grow arts & entertainment infrastructure
- Enhance our Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

**Catalytic  
Collaborations**

- Support economic development efforts in our county and municipalities, and region
- Reinforce the value of diversity in our community
- Support initiatives improving health of community
- Support efforts to expand tourism in the region





Date, Time, Location	Committee & Chair	Mission
2 <sup>nd</sup> Friday monthly 7:30 am GHC Office	<b>GHC Executive Committee*</b> Dr. Mitesh Kothari	Review operations and policies of our organization and provide direction to, and oversight of, the Executive Director.
1 <sup>st</sup> Monday monthly As Needed 7:30 am GHC Office	<b>Public Engagement Committee</b>	Assess the level of public engagement desired by GHC members and develop materials and outreach tools accordingly.
2 <sup>nd</sup> Thursday monthly 7:30 am GHC Office	<b>Education Forum</b> Nick Hill	Implement specific courses of action designed to have a positive impact on employment and education in the Greater Hagerstown area. Serve as an official point of contact for local public schools, private schools, higher education centers, and workforce training organizations to collaborate on improving our education system and workforce development in Washington County.
3 <sup>rd</sup> Monday monthly As Needed 7:30 am GHC Office	<b>Transportation Forum</b> Brad Fulton	Assess current transportation plans prepared by the County, City, and State for the region, and offer feedback and support, as appropriate, to ensure growth considerations, traffic congestion, parking, environmental concerns, economic development, and funding needs are addressed. Monitor and provide input on the long-range transportation plans of the region (Ground, Air, Transit, and Rail).
Quarterly on the 3 <sup>rd</sup> Wednesday Mar, June, Sept & October 8:00 am GHC Office	<b>Vision 2.1 Forum</b> Scott Bowen	Function as the Committee’s “Think Tank” charged with the task of formulating a long-range vision of the region. Cultivate opportunities for projects, initiatives, collaborations, and/or specialized task forces needed to help our community achieve its vision and goals for the region.
3 <sup>rd</sup> Tuesday monthly 8:00 am Keller Stonebraker Ins	<b>Vision 2.1 Downtown Enhancement Success Team</b> John Latimer	Will focus on the last 4 bullet points on “Enhance Downtown” section of the Vision Plan: increase home ownership and market rates of properties around the city center; create a strategic plan for low income housing outside the city center; define, create or attract an industry, product or service hub; identify catalytic projects to drive investment opportunities including the feasibility and need for a community development authority
3 <sup>rd</sup> Wednesday monthly 8:00 am GHC Office	<b>Vision 2.1 Tourism Asset Success Team</b> Julie Rohm	Will focus on how to identify, diversify, expand, and connect tourism assets in the county – including Eco-, Agri-, Cultural, and Sports tourism.
3 <sup>rd</sup> Thursday monthly 8:00 am GHC Office	<b>Vision 2.1 Innovative Gateways Success Team</b> Basheer Azizi	Will focus on how to recruit a remote workforce, cultivate local innovative companies, and research and define an entrepreneurial ecosystem within our community.
Meets As Needed GHC Office	<b>Membership Committee</b> Michael Weiss	Search out and contact new prospects to become members of GHC. Review and develop policies, programs and events to grow membership, as well as support retention and engagement of existing members.

## GHC Education Forum



**MISSION:** Implement specific courses of action designed to have a positive impact on employment and education in the Greater Hagerstown area. Serve as an official point of contact for the Washington County Public Schools (WCPS), private elementary and secondary schools in the county, Hagerstown Community College (HCC), Purdue Global University, the University System of Maryland at Hagerstown (USMH), Washington County Free Library (WCFL), trade organizations, and others comprising the educational system in Washington County. Investigate educational issues and solutions and mobilize a Task Force when appropriate.

**STATUS:** New leadership and enhanced collaboration marked the 2018-19 year for the Education Forum as members met monthly to discuss local education and workforce development issues. Two long-time positions on the forum experienced leadership changes - HCC hired Dr. Jim Klauber as their new President, and Stacey Crawford took over as Executive Director of The Community Foundation of Washington County (CFWC). Forum members welcomed both to the table and assisted in their acclimation to the local educational community. The forum also recognized Dr. Altieri (HCC) and Brad Sell (CFWC) for their many years of leadership and service to our community and wish them well in their retirement.

Each month, members highlighted their successes and challenges, and discussed paths for more collaboration. HCC and Purdue University Global worked together to create new articulation agreements in Cyber Security that includes reduced student tuition rates for transfer students to get their bachelor's degree. HCC also started an apprenticeship program in the trades in conjunction with ABC (Associated Builders and Contractors) and opened a new Energy and Trades Training Center in April. WCPS and HCC worked on enhancing their ESSENCE Program and Middle College Program as both continue to grow. Low income students can now get an AA degree through the Middle College Program while in high school for about \$800 (vs \$10,000 if after High School). Other high school students can get an AA degree for about \$7,000.

Dr. Klauber also led a community effort to become the first "Work Ready" county in Maryland with the implementation of the WorkKeys Program. Work Keys is a program offered by ACT that measures a person's skills in applied math, graphic literacy, and their ability to understand written information in the workplace. Those passing a WorkKeys assessment can receive a "National Career Ready Certificate" (NCRC) - a career credential recognized by employers nationwide. GHC and other forum members used their networks to solicit support for this program. Two training sessions were held in early 2019 that drew attendance from HCC, WCPS, WCFL, Chamber, GHC, state officials and multiple businesses. HCC worked with our State Delegation and the Community Coalition to get \$200k in the Governor's capital budget to assist with implementation of this program and reduce the cost for employers wishing to use WorkKeys in their hiring practices.

WCPS's new BISFA Expansion broke ground in 2018 making room for expanded services at our downtown school for the arts as well as the relocation of programs in computer game development/animations and digital communications. The expansion also freed up space for new programs in cloud computing and artificial intelligence at Tech High to start in 2020. WCPS also remodeled the Innovation Center at Tech High creating updated engineering space, 3D printing, robotics, hydraulics, and more. Our students are one of just two schools in the nation that this have type of space and an opportunity to learn about these growing industries. GHC also assisted with the planning and coordination of the first annual 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Career Exploration Day event held at HCC at which approximately 1,300 WCPS students were able to see presentations and learn about educational requirements, benefits, and salary by over 60 presenters in over 35 different fields of vocation.

## GHC Education Forum (continued)

WCPS also worked with area businesses to expand their Youth Apprenticeship Program with the support of the MD Dept of Labor, Licensing, and Regulations (DLLR). Our county was the top performing county in this state pilot program which will now be available statewide. WCPS and the Washington Co. Community Foundation worked together to update the WashingtonCountyScholarships.org site and improve collaboration on financial aid with school counselors. Financial aid continues to be a challenging space to navigate for students and their families and both entities are working together to connect them to local, state and national scholarships.

USMH completed plans for their Hospitality Management program opening Fall of 2019 and raised nearly \$2M for scholarships, renovations, and equipment for their Physician's Assistant (PA) program starting in May 2019 in their new Health Science building on Walnut Street. USMH, Meritus Health, and Frostburg University collaborated on bringing the PA program to Hagerstown that will have 25 students to start, with another 25 students expected in each cohort, in the coming years to tackle the shortage of PA's in our state. A new student housing project on Antietam Street is also under construction to provide space for these students thanks to grants from the City to help with renovation costs.

Our community saw strong improvement in several areas over the past year. WCPS expanded their public full-day Pre-K from 250 students (in 2017) to 925 students giving our County the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest number of full-day pre-K students in the state. One full day pre-K program is now offered at every elementary school. Combined with other literacy initiatives by WCPS and its partners, our Kindergarten Readiness scores are improving as we jumped from 37% to 43%. WCPS expects to see the investments in public pre-K carry forward for these students in subsequent years. In addition to kindergarten readiness, FAFSA completion rates for the county improved as well as improvements in math and English proficiency scores.

Members also noted several areas that still remain a challenge. The demand for more mental health services within WCPS, HCC, and other entities working with children continues to rise, putting a strain on school counselors and financial resources. The library hired a full-time social worker this year and WCPS hired a mental health coordinator to assist with this issue. In addition, members discussed the need to work together to encourage increased local funding for education at all levels. Washington County continues to be deemed a "low effort county" in regard to its local funding of K-12 education over maintenance of effort (about ½% per year over last 8 years – ranked 20 out of 24 in the state). In addition, as HCC adds more expensive technical courses to meet the workforce demands of a high-tech economy, the cost per student continues to rise faster than current local funding levels. Failing to adequately fund education and career training initiatives will put our community's workforce at a competitive disadvantage and limit their ability to find jobs with living wages.

Other challenges discussed by the group included struggles in filling the growing number of jobs in the trades, (particularly those requiring security clearances), the national teacher shortage and its effect locally, and the need to continue to break down financial and cultural barriers to post-secondary education.

After 9 years of service as Chair or Co-chair, Dr. Mitesh Kothari will be transitioning off as leader of the Education Forum as he takes on the role of Chair for GHC. Nick Hill, President of Callas Contractors will be assuming this role. We thank Dr. Kothari for his energetic leadership since 2010 and his commitment to advancing educational opportunities in our community. During his tenure, and with the support of former Co-chair Jeanne Singer, multiple initiatives were developed including FAFSA Frenzy, community Promise Programs, WashingtonCountyScholarships.org, and OnTrack.





“There is no power  
for **change** greater  
than a community  
**discovering** what it  
cares about.”

Margaret J. Wheatley

# OnTrack Washington County



**MISSION:** Align public, private, and non-profit resources and opportunities from cradle to career, empowering individuals to maximize their potential through educational and vocational endeavors.

**VISION:** Every person in Washington County is prepared to thrive in a 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce, producing self-reliant and engaged individuals who strengthen our local economy and community.

**STATUS:** A major highpoint for the Education Forum and GHC was the transition of OnTrack to an independent staffed entity in the summer of 2018 as OnTrack hired their own full-time Executive Director (Linda Mercurio). The OnTrack initiative started within the Education Forum as a means to elevate the conversation in the community around our educational attainment levels and workforce development needs. OnTrack aligns public, private, and non-profit resources from cradle to career, empowering individuals to maximize their potential through educational and vocational endeavors. For the first three years, GHC provided in-kind staff support to manage the organization until it could afford to hire its own staff.

Thanks to the funding support of multiple GHC members and the community, OnTrack secured full funding for year one and partial funding for years two and three. We want to thank Antietam Broadband (\$150k over 3 years), AT&T (\$50k+ over three years), United Way of Washington County (\$50k+ over 3 years), The Fletcher Foundation (\$30k), The Pauline Anderson Foundation (\$5k), Hagerstown Rotary, and multiple companies and private donors who supported the effort along the way. We are also thankful to the Chamber who serves as the host agency for OnTrack and provides office space and support. The support of the business community will be critical in the future as we prepare our workforce for the jobs of tomorrow.



Under the new Executive Director, OnTrack continues to grow. The organization filed for its own non-profit status this fall which it hopes to secure in 2019. OnTrack has also increased its Active Partners to 40, escalated community outreach through social media, print, and PSA's, increased engagement of its partners, and will be delivering its 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Report on College and Career Readiness in May. More importantly, the community is seeing improvement in multiple college and career readiness benchmarks thanks to the dedication, collaboration, and hard work of the Active Partners in the coalition. We are excited about OnTrack's future and its ability to identify the educational and career challenges facing our county, foster collaboration and strategic action to solve these challenges, and inspire an educational movement in our community. GHC will continue to be a supportive partner as the organization transitions to an independent non-profit and develops a sustainable funding plan. We believe the OnTrack initiative will be looked back on as one of GHC's finest achievements.



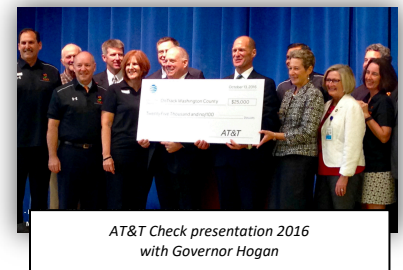
Antietam Broadband Check Presentation 2018



United Way Check Presentation 2018



Fletcher Foundation Check presentation 2017



AT&T Check presentation 2016 with Governor Hogan



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## GHC Transportation Forum



I-81  
4/16/19

**MISSION:** To assess current transportation plans prepared by the County, City, and State as it pertains to the local area and recommend changes, as appropriate, to address growth considerations, and the needs of a long-range ground, air, and rail transportation plan. The Forum will: 1) Review current planning, 2) Consider traffic congestion, 3) Encourage adequate, safe, attractive parking, 4) Identify failure points, 5) Assess environmental concerns, 6) Assess transportation needs for economic development and, 7) Research funding options.

**STATUS:** The GHC Transportation Forum met as needed this past year to assess, comment on, and advocate for transportation improvements with local, state, and federal officials.

The widening of I-81 once again remained the biggest transportation issue for our community and was listed as the top transportation priority for the County and City of Hagerstown. Phase 1 of the widening project (WV line to Williamsport) continues on schedule and should be completed in 2020. The engineering and design of Phase 2 (Williamsport to Halfway Blvd) is underway thanks to \$5M in state funding that was promised shortly after GHC submitted a public statement to the Governor in 2017 about the need to fund the completion of I-81. However, funding for construction of Phase 2 has not been identified. GHC assisted with the State and County's application of two federal grants this past year asking for about half of the funding for this project. For both the "BUILD" grant and "INFRA" grant applications, GHC submitted letters of support and used its network to obtain additional letters from multiple stakeholders in the region who are impacted by I-81. This included entities in WV and Pennsylvania. The County was notified in December that their BUILD Grant application was unsuccessful. However, the next round of INFRA grant applications were to come out in early 2019. GHC worked closely with County and State officials to submit a similar application in February of 2019. This application is believed to be more competitive thanks to a \$1M commitment of county funds for the project as well as \$1.35M of private funds for an added portion of the project that included the extension of Halfway Blvd. Awards for this grant are expected by the Fall of 2019. The community has advocated for this project for over 20 years now. GHC will continue to press the State and Federal officials to finally fund a project that is long overdue and has had multiple conversations about this with every possible stakeholder.

GHC also continued its efforts to support improvements to the I-70/MD 65 interchange; the extension of Professional Blvd, Crayton Blvd, Col Henry Douglas Drive, and Halfway Blvd; and improvements to Eastern Blvd. In addition, GHC worked with the City, County, CVB, and the Community Coalition to convince the state to install new tourism signage earlier than originally planned. While funding for these projects remains a challenge, the State was able to increase the amount of Highway User Revenue returned to local government this year. We are hopeful this new funding will allow more projects in the coming year to move forward.

Garrison Plessinger became our new airport manager at HGR following the retirement of long-time Airport Director Phil Ridenour. GHC welcomed Garrison to the group and continued their support of a variety of airport projects this past year including the renewal of the federal essential air service subsidy and an exemption of state sales tax for aircraft parts. The airport continues to be a major contributor to our local economy. This year Allegiant Air increased their flights to Sanford/Orlando and Tampa/St. Petersburg Florida and will add new flights to Myrtle Beach, SC beginning this summer. The County also hopes to upgrade HGR's terminal by 2020.

# GHC Vision 2.1 Forum



**MISSION:** Identify what Washington County should look like in 10 years and create key objectives, goals, and strategies for GHC to achieve that vision.

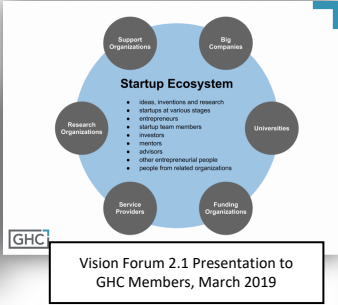
**STATUS:** The Vision 2.1 Forum began its second year with Rich Daughtridge as Chair. At the end of last year, the committee finalized three key objectives for the group to pursue. They include:

- Enhance downtown
- Expand, diversify, and connect tourism assets, and
- Develop a gateway for innovation

It is important to note that the group did not omit “education and workforce development” which impacts every aspect of our vision and is the foundation on which we must craft our work. As the OnTrack coalition is already the lead entity setting the goals and strategies associated with education and workforce development, members will allow OnTrack to take the lead in this area, support its work, and integrate their goals accordingly.

A separate task force or “success team” was created for each key objective and each team developed its own set of strategies around that objective. The success teams met monthly and the full Vision Forum came together on a quarterly basis for an update on their progress. The group then collaborated on a presentation to GHC’s membership at the March 2019 monthly meeting highlighting their work over the past year.

Rich Daughtridge will be stepping down as chair of the Vision Forum after two years of service. Scott Bowen will be assuming the role as chair beginning in September. Two success team chairs will return to continue their work (John Latimer, Keller Stonebraker Insurance - Downtown Enhancement and Basheer Azizi, OpSmart, Inc. - Innovative Gateways). Julie Rohm, PREIT/Valley Mall will be taking over the Tourism Asset team. We thank Rich for his creative leadership and direction over the last two years as we developed a vision and action plan for our community.

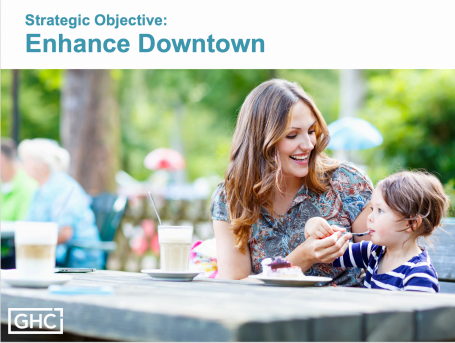


Vision Forum 2.1 Presentation to GHC Members, March 2019



V2.1 IGST Meeting at GHC Office (Basheer Azizi & Paul Frey)

# Vision 2.1 Downtown Enhancements Success Team



**STRATEGIES:**

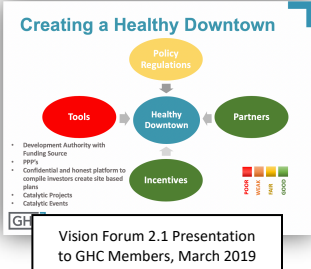
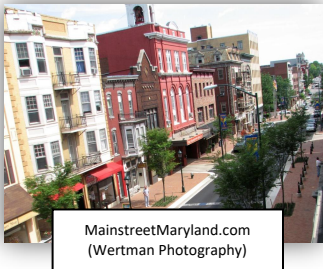
- a) Create a public perception of downtown to be one which is safe and clean
- b) Increase home ownership and high-rent occupancy within the four-block area from the square
- c) Offer a strategic plan to move low income housing outside of the city center with easy access to amenities.
- d) Define, create, and attract an industry, product, or service hub
- e) Identify catalytic projects to drive investment opportunities

**STATUS:** John Latimer, chaired this subcommittee of the Vision 2.1 Forum. Members began the year doing a SWOT analysis on downtown Hagerstown, taking into consideration perception and reality. They also reviewed various research on the components to create a healthy downtown and identified our City’s strengths and weaknesses. Members used this information to develop the five strategies to revitalize our City’s core.

Over the course of several months, members focused on two areas: 1) How to address zombie properties that serve as blight in City neighborhoods, and 2) How to create a Downtown Development Authority (DDA) that could positively impact all five of the strategies identified. (Both could be interconnected)

Each year multiple properties in the City go up for tax sale. Some are chronic repeaters and have incurred tax debt and nuisance penalties that exceed the property’s value and the ability to attract bidders who will positively reuse the property. The group incorporated input from City staff, the County Treasurer, and CHIEF and reviewed several options to address this issue. CHIEF proposed putting up seed money (\$200k) to start a program. They would need the City and County to abate any past taxes and penalties as well as pursue state grant money to assist with demolition, renovation, and repurposing the property. Another entity would also need to be identified to manage this process along the way. City staff presented a successful Dorchester County Program that had the same purpose. In March, the Dorchester model was presented to the Council and was approved to move forward with 1-2 zombie properties per year. This eliminated the need to further pursue this issue. However, GHC will support this new program as it moves forward.

When reviewing the components of a healthy downtown, one tool stood out as missing from Hagerstown’s toolbox – a downtown development authority. Having this structure would allow us to move quickly and strategically to purchase property and make investments in our core. CHIEF has successfully served in this role in the past and may play a role in the future, but currently is focused on developing Mt. Aetna Farms. Members believe that having a well-funded development authority is the key to diversifying housing stock, addressing blight, supporting catalytic projects that drive investment, and attracting businesses to the core. More study is needed on this issue and this will be the focus of the coming year.





# Vision 2.1 Tourism Assets Success Team



**STRATEGIES:**

- a) Research and define current assets
- b) Decrease hurdles and increase incentives to tourism
- c) Establish coop marketing and advertising
- d) Ensure alignment with current educational initiatives

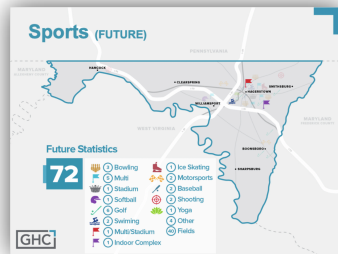
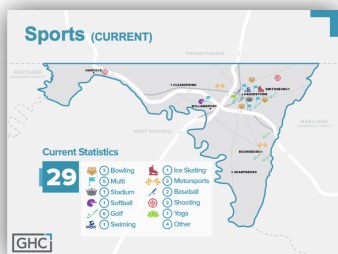
**STATUS:** Rich Daughtridge, also chaired this subcommittee of the Vision 2.1 Forum. For the first several months the committee focused on researching and defining current tourism assets in our community.

Tourism was broken down into five categories: Agritourism, Eco-tourism, Historic, Cultural & Arts, and Sports Tourism. Various community leaders such as Dan Spedden (President of our CVB) and Leslie Hart (County’s Business Development Specialist for Agriculture) were invited to participate in the discussion. Members researched and listed all of our “Current Assets” in place under each category, identified any “Pending Assets” that were in progress or had the commitment and/or funding to be created, and brainstormed “Expansion Assets” or a wish list of projects members would like to see occur.

A master spreadsheet was created of all of the tourism assets by the five categories and their current status. This listing also added several sub-categories such as: event venues, dining, lodging, retail, and support services, and included the asset’s website, address, and phone number.

Members discussed some of the hurdles that are preventing more tourism assets from being used or created, as well as the incentives that are in place to support them. Dan Spedden noted that they will be doing a study to gauge the amount of Air B&B rentals in our county over the summer. He also updated the group on the latest efforts to build a new Stadium and Event Center for the Hagerstown Suns and various success stories of other new ballparks built over the last few years. Leslie Hart enlightened the group on the challenges of sustaining a farming business, including permits and zoning for new projects, and the lack of succession plans for many farm families should they lose the patriarch or matriarch of the farming family.

Next steps for the success team will be to utilize the asset inventory to develop strategies that help grow, sustain and develop items on the list. Maps were put together to show the location of our tourism assets today and what’s possible 10 years from now.





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## Vision 2.1 Innovative Gateways Success Team



### STRATEGIES:

- a) Research and define an entrepreneurial ecosystem
- b) Cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset and innovation
- c) Support local innovative companies
- d) Recruit a remote workforce

**STATUS:** Basheer Azizi, chaired this subcommittee of the Vision 2.1 Forum. Basheer, President of OpSmart, Inc., is a living example of a successful entrepreneur who came out of the Montgomery County system and later moved to Washington County.

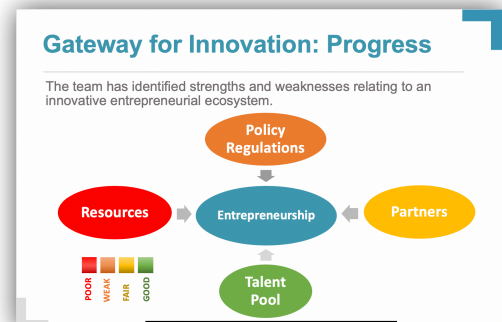
The success team included representatives from the County, City, Chamber, WCPS (Tech High), and HCC’s Technical Innovation Center (TIC). Their goal is to develop the vision and strategies to become an entrepreneurial gateway and identify an existing or new group to champion the effort. They also discussed metrics that could be used to measure their success such as growth in MD tax ID numbers existing in our county, local bank funding to new businesses, etc.

Members began the year researching and defining what a successful entrepreneurial ecosystem looks like. They reviewed various websites and resource pages for entrepreneurs from other communities and organizations (i.e. Asheville, NC; Frederick, MD; TEDCO, MD Dept of Commerce, etc.). There are many existing resources for entrepreneurs to access, however it can be challenging for a person new to business to navigate.

Members then moved on to assessing our own entrepreneurial ecosystem and the resources, partners, organizations, and infrastructure available to assist local start-ups. They utilized a “startup ecosystem canvas” worksheet illustrating the various stages of entrepreneurialism from “Idea” to “Launch” to “Growth and Sustainability” and entered the local assets available during each stage of the process. Several of these stages had minimal to no coordinated support, and it was clear that more work is needed to build a network of inspiration and assistance for entrepreneurs.

The largest gap in our ecosystem is the lack of a central entity to coordinate and market the many local organizations and resources available to entrepreneurs and to foster more collaboration among the stakeholders. The “Washington County Entrepreneurial Council” was started a couple years ago by HCC, County, City, Chamber, and several other organizations to tackle some of this. It developed a website ([www.ECwashco.com](http://www.ECwashco.com)) and hosted several events. However, it was an all-volunteer effort and the initiative stagnated due to lack of funding and dedicated staff to support it. HCC’s TIC also does some of this work. The team is looking at both entities as they determine the best way to tackle this issue. Over the next year, the group will finalize their vision and strategies for a strong, local entrepreneurial ecosystem and identify entity best to lead it.

The success team also discussed the need for an “Entrepreneurial Boot Camp” which would be a multi-week course offered at HCC to guide students and adults through the entrepreneurial process. A scaled down week-long course to inspire younger students may also be beneficial. Plans are being made to bring WCPS, HCC, and the business community together to discuss this idea.



Vision Forum 2.1 Presentation to GHC Members, March 2019

# GHC Public Engagement Committee



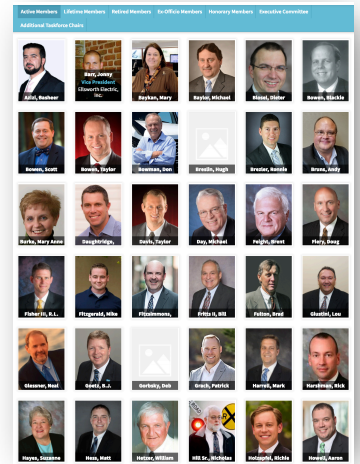
**MISSION:** To assess the level of public engagement desired by GHC members and develop materials and outreach tools accordingly.

**STATUS:** The public engagement committee entered the year with limited items on their agenda based on support for our current level of engagement at our Annual meeting and the work that had been done since 2016.


However, the GHC website was built on an older software platform, did not function well on mobile devices, and was in need of major revisions. The Committee's main goal for the year was to update the website to be more modern looking, user friendly, mobile friendly, and contain a section where staff could post news about current events and community projects.

Several meetings were held to discuss possible vendors, review the old site, and make recommendations for a new one. GHC member Basheer Azizi graciously donated his company's services (OpSmart, Inc.) to design a new website for our organization. Staff and the PEC committee worked with the designer over the course of several months and a new site was up and running by the start of 2019. The new site is clean, easy to use, and all of the pages are open to the public. Staff will be adding news posts throughout the year, including summaries of GHC monthly meetings. Other publications or presentations will also be available to download from the site. We encourage our members to visit the site regularly and promote the site as a resource of information for people with questions about GHC or those interested in joining.

The transition over the last two years to be more outwardly engaged in the public has gone well. There are no plans for the Public Engagement Committee to meet in the coming year unless a new project or initiative arises.



### GHC News



**March 2019 GHC Regular Monthly Meeting : Vision Forum Presentation - 10 Year Vision for our Community**

[Read full article](#)



**March 2019: USMH Launches Hospitality and Tourism Management Bachelors Program**

[Read full article](#)

### GHC Publications

March 2019 GHC Regular Monthly Meeting : Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Canvas Worksheet for the Vision Forum Presentation

This is the Powerpoint presentation shared with our members at the March 2019 monthly meeting, as presented by the GHC Vision Forum.

[Download File](#)

March 2019 GHC Regular Monthly Meeting : Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Canvas Worksheet for the Vision Forum Presentation

Document created by GHC V2.1 Innovative Gateways Success Team categorizing strengths and weakness of our community's entrepreneurial support system.

[Download File](#)

February 2019 Washington County Emergency Services presentation by Director David Hays

This is the Powerpoint presentation shared with our members at the February 2019 monthly meeting by David Hays.

[Download File](#)

GHC Strategic Plan 2018-2020

GHC Strategic Plan 2018-2020

[Download File](#)

GHC Public Statement 1-81 : July 2016

GHC Public Statement regarding needed improvements to I-81 as printed in the Herald-Mail on July 23, 2016

[Download File](#)

OnTrack Annual Report 2017-18

[Download File](#)

# FY 2018-19 Staff Work Related To GHC's Strategic Plan

## Workforce Readiness Educational Achievement

- OnTrack became an independent entity in 2018 with a full-time Executive Director. OnTrack continues to grow and develop and foster collaboration on multiple events and projects to support college and career readiness. GHC staff assisted with raising funds, the hiring of the director, and the transition. Staff remains on their executive board and continues to be a resource for the new director. Full funding for one full year plus funding for half of year 2 and year 3 is secured, but a long-term funding plan is still needed
- Participated in a state-initiated kindergarten readiness symposium
- Had several discussions with Mayor of Hancock on Promise Scholarship program for Hancock High School graduates
- Supported USMH and their expansion of new programs in hospitality, healthcare, and STEM as well as new facility expansion
- Brought in Dan Gincel, TEDCO V.P, and Executive Director of MD Stem Cell Research Fund, to speak to community on the growing Bio-Tech industry
- Worked with Chamber to get businesses at various OnTrack and WCPS events including the inaugural 7<sup>th</sup> grade Career Exploration Day
- Attended training, and gathered corporate and community support for the WorkKeys program
- Provided support letters for various educational grant applications in the community
- Hosted our annual New Educator's Reception
- Attended quarterly meetings of the USMH Advisory Bd as well as several other events with UMD Chancellor Caret and the board of regents to discuss USMH and ways for higher education to better support workforce development
- Interviewed for several articles on education and workforce development for newspaper, local magazines, and regional radio (Chambersburg)



## Catalytic Collaborations

- Assisted the Community Coalition on another successful year. Our reception had record numbers and was well received by state officials
- Attended multiple meetings with MEDA, local stakeholders, and local elected officials in the creation of a new Economic Development Coalition to replace old EDC
- Met with several new business and helped them get acclimated to the community and find community resources
- Met with several new community leaders to introduce them to GHC and offer our support (HCC President, New Directors in County Gov't, Interim Hospital CEO, New Director of Horizon Goodwill, etc.)
- Assisted in facilitating regular Quad State luncheons with regional economic development officials in PA, WV, and VA to improve collaboration in attracting jobs to our region along the I-81 corridor
- Represented GHC at multiple ribbon cuttings, board meetings, forums, and City events
- Continued service on state research advisory team for MD "ALICE" program by United Way and gave input on 2018 update to this report
- Met with various candidates for local and federal offices to build new relationships and educate them on the great things happening in our community, as well as our challenges, and priority projects
- Attended several Leadership Maryland events to build relationship with leaders in the State
- Presenter at Leadership Washington County's opening retreat for Class of 2020, participated in their Economic Development Day and attended their annual community forum
- Attended the summer MACo conference and met with state officials to discuss community issues and projects
- Several meetings with police chief, city officials and other stakeholders to discuss homelessness issues and parking rate concerns



# FY 2018-19 Staff Work Related To GHC's Strategic Plan

## Community Infrastructure

- I-81 – Phase 1 is progressing on time and on budget. Worked with county and state officials to apply for two federal grants (BUILD and INFRA) for Phase 2. Used network to acquire letters of support from local and regional businesses and organizations
- Continued working state contacts on need to fund the I-81 project as well as assistance with the I-70/MD 65 interchange
- Assisted county staff in support of extension of Professional Blvd and bridge over Antietam.
- Continued support of Williamsport in their efforts to fund C&O Canal Improvements and trail improvements
- Continue to monitor any developments concerning the Hagerstown Suns and a new stadium and provide assistance where appropriate
- Met with consultants studying the feasibility of a new sports and events center and indoor turf facility in the City
- Met with state officials and local contacts to discuss funding options and the need for a downtown development authority
- Regularly monitor activities at airport to assist when needed. Met with new Airport Director and offered GHC's support. Obtained letters of support for renewal of the federal essential air service subsidy and waiver



## Vitality In City Centers

- Continue to support the County's Urban Improvement Project benefiting the MD Theatre, BISFA, USMH, and downtown
- Supported Williamsport's efforts to build office space for the National Park Service in their downtown and construct a new C&O Canal visitors center
- Continued our involvement in supporting Wind Down events, Augustoberfest, and the replacement for Bluesfest in Hagerstown
- Participated in several forums related to downtown revitalization
- Met with various parties interested in investing in downtown, Mt. Aetna Farms, and/or Ft. Ritchie and connected them to appropriate stakeholders
- Continued relationship with consultants overseeing Cascade Town Centre project at Ft. Ritchie and offered GHC's support when needed
- Supported Hagerstown's Mainstreet Program
- Supported CVB-led efforts to attract prospective ownership teams interested in purchasing the Hagerstown Suns and building a new multi-use stadium
- Hosted several small forums to discuss regulatory issues and concerns with the permit and inspection process in the City and relayed information to City staff and elected officials
- Met with leaders of a new downtown recovery center to discuss concerns of community
- Participated in a "Revitalize Hagerstown" Panel hosted by GenNext
- Met with Baltimore Development Corporation on downtown revitalization



# GHC's Selected Past Partnerships Over The Last 31 Years

## EDUCATION

- Spearheaded the development of OnTrack Washington County, a local cradle-to-career network of support, empowering individuals to maximize their potential to secure a rewarding career. [www.OnTrackWC.org](http://www.OnTrackWC.org)
- Supported and aided in a successful effort to gain \$11.5 Million dollars in State capital funding for our Regional Library expansion.
- Helped research financing options and secure funding for the Barbara Ingram School for the Arts in downtown Hagerstown.
- Helped secure funding for University Plaza, the “open space” project as an adjunct to the new University System of MD - Hagerstown Facility
- Created an annual Report Card assessing College and Career Readiness in our county

## FOREIGN TRADE ZONE

- Catalyzed the process leading to the establishment of a General Purpose Foreign Trade Zone established in Washington County.

## GOVERNMENT

- Helped establish a community lobbying coalition.
- Participated in a community-wide task force that recommended that a Charter Home Rule referendum be placed before the voters during the 2008 Primary Election.
- Held past forums for education, transportation, and community issues with state and local elected officials

## HEALTHCARE

- Supported community initiatives to reduce high teen pregnancy rates in our community including support for the creation of the Washington County Teen Pregnancy Prevention Coalition.
- Established a substance abuse task force that hosted 2 seminars for regional CEO's to encourage employee substance abuse testing.

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

- Helped community leaders develop and establish a new leadership development program for the community currently known as Leadership Washington County: [www.leadershipwashingtoncounty.org](http://www.leadershipwashingtoncounty.org)

## PARKING DOWNTOWN

- Supported the efforts of the City of Hagerstown and Washington County to finish a surface parking lot in downtown Hagerstown.
- Supported the efforts of the City of Hagerstown in enhancing Renaissance Way (formerly Cramer's Alley) to make access to the Arts & Entertainment parking deck easily accessible.

## TRANSPORTATION

- Supported long term efforts to widen I-81 including organizing a quad state task force (1999), securing Federal funding for a 1.6 million-dollar study (2005), state funding for Phase 1 widening of I-81 (2014), and application for multiple Federal grants for Phase 2 funding (2016-2019).
- Supported efforts to build an Airport Runway Extension at Hagerstown-Washington County Regional Airport to be a catalyst for economic development in the region and improve safety for those using the airport.

## URBAN DEVELOPMENT

- Helped the City of Hagerstown establish its first Community Development Corporation to catalyze market rate housing development in the urban core.
- Assisted Williamsport in acquiring state and federal funding for improvements to the C&O Canal (over \$11M) and a site for a new visitor's center, and office space for National Park Service employees



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*GHC Monthly Meetings*



*New Educator Reception*



*Day in Annapolis*



*Holiday Party*



*Elected Officials Reception*





## The Greater Hagerstown Committee, Inc.

5 Public Square, Suite 601

Hagerstown, MD 21740

301 733-8811 (Office)

[www.greaterhagerstown.org](http://www.greaterhagerstown.org)