



City of Bluefield, West Virginia

Strategic Plan
April 23, 2002



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*Vision without action is just a dream;
Action without vision is a waste of time;
But if we put action with vision, we can change the world.*
- Unknown

Without a doubt, effective change requires vision and action. As we seek to change our small part of the world, vision and action must prevail as hallmarks of the City of Bluefield, West Virginia. This strategic plan outlines a visionary course of action that will lead to better living within Bluefield as well as surrounding communities in southern West Virginia and southwestern Virginia. The strategic plan is future-oriented. Therefore, it requires forward thinking to move beyond current conditions by capitalizing on our strengths and minimizing weaknesses.

The strategic plan results from a comprehensive organizational process of adaptation through assessment, decision-making, and evaluation. This strategic plan is organized in four sections, the first of which focuses on Current Conditions in terms of Bluefield's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to success. The next section describes the vision and mission for Moving Towards a More Prosperous Future. The plan continues with actions for Accomplishing the Mission and ends with remarks about the overall plan in the Conclusion.

Current Conditions

Where are we now? To answer this question, consider the City of Bluefield in terms of its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the future success of the City. Close examination reveals that Bluefield has numerous strengths such as those in the following list.

- The people of Bluefield are the City's greatest asset. As a workforce, people here demonstrate ethics, reliability, and availability.
- The location situates Bluefield as a hub from the north, east, south, and west. The City is near an interstate highway and is in close proximity to southeast major markets.
- Bluefield has a low cost of living rate.
- Educational facilities in Bluefield strengthen local communities. The area offers colleges as well as new elementary, primary, middle and high schools.
- Bluefield is a safe environment with a relatively low crime rate- (away from terrorism)
- The climate is ideal. In fact, the local climate has been referred to as the "best weather/climate in the east."
- Bluefield has good health care facilities.
- Recreational opportunities are available.
- The infrastructure is satisfactory (i.e., good water, sewer, electric).
- Many vacant buildings are available for new businesses as well as for the expansion of existing businesses.

While the City has strengths beyond those listed here, Bluefield also has several weaknesses or limitations to overcome. Among the weaknesses are factors such as those contained in the following list.

- High State Workers' Compensation Rates and Corporate Tax Base

- Bluefield lacks a tax base.
- Bluefield does not have the attention of the State legislature. In southern West Virginia, leadership is stronger in other areas, resulting in Bluefield's political isolation.
- The cost of doing business in State of West Virginia is prohibitive (i.e., Worker's Compensation, Business & Occupation).
- Bluefield is not ready for business development in terms of zoning, annexation, and downtown revitalization.
- The declining population cannot support business growth.
- Bluefield lacks the ability to retain our young people.
- The City of Bluefield is limited by the lack of educational attainment among citizens.
- The general condition of Downtown Bluefield is decaying.
- Bluefield has no developed industrial sites.
- The workforce is not adequately prepared for high-technology jobs.

Looking beyond the strengths and weaknesses within the City of Bluefield, there are several opportunities that should be maximized to ensure future vitality. For example, the City could potentially benefit from:

- Further growth of Bluefield State College;
- Annexation of John Nash Property into the City;
- Regionalism and improved cooperation among neighboring cities and towns;
- Attracting new businesses by targeting industries that Bluefield can accommodate;
- Promoting the area via the Internet, traditional media, and word-of-mouth through citizens;
- Achieving industrial development in Asphalt Industry Site;

- Initiating a “face lift” to the area to make it more conducive to establishing unique functions such as the Retirement Community concept, Centers of Excellence for Hospitals, and Assisted Living Facilities;
- Acquiring new grants; and
- Improving the airport.

In contrast to these promising opportunities, some factors might impede future growth and development within the City of Bluefield. Factors could potentially hinder progress are threats to success. Threats might be more accurately described as concerns. As we explored current conditions in Bluefield, we identified threats or concerns such as:

- Worker’s compensation, taxes, and malpractice insurance;
- The nature of doing business in West Virginia and the lack of political clout;
- Failure to have King Coal Highway completed;
- The continued loss of business to Bluefield, Virginia;
- Inadequately State funding for our colleges (Bluefield State College and Concord College);
- The lack of tort reform;
- Failure to obtain advanced medical facilities;
- The lack of experienced grant writers and lack of regional approach;
- Economic development in Summersville, Beckley and Lewisburg;
- The block and loss of services due to declining tax and population bases; and
- The perception that the City is not business friendly to new businesses.

Moving Towards a More Prosperous Future

Clearly, Bluefield has a unique set of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges. With careful and consistent planning, we can suppress our problems by capitalizing

on our strengths and opportunities. To initiate a plan, we must specify what we want to accomplish. In other words, where do we want to go? And what do we want to achieve? In response to these questions, we crafted a vision statement and a mission statement.

The Vision

*Bluefield, West Virginia shall be the crossroads to
opportunity for mountains of successful living.*

This vision statement suggests that all citizens of Bluefield will have opportunities to achieve success from multiple directions. The vision is intent on making a better life for the people of Bluefield. The vision is also driven by the desire to increase awareness and involvement among citizens and thereby enhance the potential for each individual's success. From the vision statement, one should infer that citizens will have opportunities in terms of retirement, education, healthcare, recreation, and employment.

The vision statement emanates from several concepts. First, the City of Bluefield will foster growth and development of our community using principles of the highest quality and maintaining an appearance conducive to continued success. Second, the City of Bluefield is committed to growth, quality of living, future development of business and technology. Third, the City of Bluefield is committed to providing an environment that will allow its citizens to live and grow safely as well as prosperously both now and in the future. Fourth, the City of Bluefield shall be the headquarters for community development that offers quality civic services. Fifth, the City of Bluefield, WV will offer quality civic services in a wholesome environment that reflects the historical values of community, businesses, and its diverse population. Sixth, the City of Bluefield will be a growing community of persons that provides social, cultural and economic opportunities in a safe environment in responds to contemporary needs.

The Mission

*Our mission is to enhance the quality of life through
efficient management of resources and by providing necessary services
to the citizens of Bluefield, West Virginia.*

With this mission statement, the City of Bluefield endeavors to create and foster a community-involved climate that builds on our historical traditions. Fulfillment of this mission will result in a clean and safe city. The mission will also lead to an environment that is business and user friendly. Additionally, the mission demonstrates our commitment to efficient City government that manages its resources correctly and provides vital services to all citizens. To achieve this mission, we will unite with local, state, and national government representatives and we will forge strong networks with leaders in surrounding communities. The mission statement further indicates that we will proactively strive to enhance the economic development of our region. In view of this mission, we value efficiency, effectiveness, fairness, promptness, integrity, empathy, equality, responsiveness, honesty, and citizen input for multiple perspectives.

The mission statement has several characteristics worth mentioning. For example, the mission statement is clear and concise. Also, the forward-thinking mission statement is a guide to action. Also note that it clearly defines the population that we serve. It is expressed in broad, non-quantifiable terms. The mission reflects a broad consensus and sentiments that citizens across the city have expressed. We believe that the statement provides inspiration and that it should be easily understood.

In summary, the mission statement reflects our reason for being. The City of Bluefield exists for the sole purpose of serving the people who reside here. Our task is to improve the quality of life in Bluefield.

Accomplishing the Mission

Goals

Goals are broad statements that describe the way in which we intend to accomplish our mission. Goals are results-oriented statements of purpose. For the City of Bluefield, we have identified five goals. The following goals indicate the broad categories of needs that we intend to address as we seek to accomplish our mission.

1. Enhance the image of the City.
2. Increase Bluefield's viability as a successful business community.
3. Increase citizen involvement.
4. Improve the efficiency of City government and leadership.
5. Improve services.

Objectives

Objectives are action-oriented and measurable. Objectives define what we need to do in order to accomplish our mission and goals. We have identified several objectives for each of our stated goals. The objectives represent actions that will transform the vision from a dream to our reality.

GOAL 1: Enhance the image of the City.

OBJECTIVE 1. We will enlist our employees and the citizens to make this city more attractive to not only our residents but tourists and potential business owners as well. By July 1, 2002, we will conduct 3 brainstorming sessions with City employees to identify innovative ways to create a positive image for the City.

OBJECTIVE 2. By July 1, 2002, we will implement a citywide clean-up campaign. The clean-up campaign will involve the removal of 10 junk cars to generate revenue through scrap car sales. We will increase the removal or repair of dilapidated houses; therefore, we will remove 10 houses and repair or renovate 10 homes by April 15, 2003. The clean-up campaign will include the demolition of 5 condemned properties by April 15, 2003. We will remove Matz Hotel by April 15, 2003. By cleaning the City, we will be better positioned to enjoy the beauty of our surroundings.

OBJECTIVE 3. By July 1, 2002, we will implement a beautification program that encourages citizens to take responsibility for the appearance of our city. We will design a logo and slogan for the beautification project by June 1, 2002. The beautification program will involve a plan for the maintenance of all City flowerbeds. To improve the overall appearance of our community, we will devise a system for rewarding property owners for maintaining beautiful yards, sidewalks, and parking lots (e.g., a City award for the "Best Flower Garden"). We will beautify four (4) entrances to the City. We will also improve landscapes along roadways into and through the city. We will develop impressive landscaping at each cloverleaf at all new and existing interstate exchanges to identify the area as Bluefield, West Virginia.

OBJECTIVE 4. By October 1, 2002, we will develop through the Holiday of Lights Commission the following:

- a. A comprehensive master plan;

- b. An advertising scheme to have an article appear in one major publication such as Southern Living;
- c. A plan for donation methods at entrance to insure that all times are covered to receive cash contributions through volunteers or donation boxes; and
- d. A plan and budget for additional light structures for 2002.

OBJECTIVE 5. We will develop key relationships with decision-makers in State government. We will actively participate in State policy making discussion and decision making in State Legislature.

OBJECTIVE 6. We will network with neighboring cities.

OBJECTIVE 7. We will work towards a regional concept with adjacent counties (i.e., McDowell, Wyoming, and Tazewell) to attract a large industry.

GOAL 2: Increase Bluefield's viability as a successful business community.

OBJECTIVE 1. By October 1, 2002, we will develop a city marketing campaign to promote Bluefield locally, regionally, and nationally. This objective will also require completing a walking tour brochure.

OBJECTIVE 2. We will develop up-to-date technological infrastructure to attract technology-based interests (i.e., fiberoptics, network, wireless communications, etc.).

OBJECTIVE 3. We will create opportunities for economic growth and development. We will catalog building sites. We will identify and catalog available business sites. We will identify city owned property suitable for development.

- OBJECTIVE 4. We will attract two new restaurants to the community. We will add an industrial site with shell buildings in the corporate limits. We will facilitate the construction of a new nursing home inside the city limits. We will actively pursue small businesses and manufacturing facilities suitable to our area and market.
- OBJECTIVE 5. We will retain established businesses. We will become proactive in dealing with our businesses.
- OBJECTIVE 6. We will provide an environment for continued economic growth, which will enable the city to provide additional services to the citizens.
- OBJECTIVE 7. We will continue to use the resources and assets we have, such as BSC, Concord, Bluefield College, and the significance of this being the birthplace of John Nash. We will improve economic development opportunities for the City of Bluefield through the economic development commission;
- OBJECTIVE 8. We will assist Bluefield State College in construction of new student housing.
- OBJECTIVE 9. **???We will support Bluefield Regional Hospital's heart program application.????**
- OBJECTIVE 10. We will develop those parts of the City, which can sustain economic development, in particular John Nash Boulevard, Bluefield Avenue, and other areas along Route 460. We will make the development of John Nash a priority, whether it is annexed or not, in order to bring considerable revenue and jobs to this area. Also, we will make a museum in honor of John Nash (i.e., save his birth home from demolition).

OBJECTIVE 11. We will continue our tourism efforts and retirement community efforts in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce.

OBJECTIVE 12. We will annex additional property on Cumberland Road.

GOAL 3: Increase citizen involvement.

OBJECTIVE 1. We will motivate citizens to be a part of the plan and promote Bluefield to ensure buy-in.

OBJECTIVE 2. We will empower each citizen to take an active role in the City of Bluefield.

OBJECTIVE 3. We will create a positive attitude in city.

OBJECTIVE 4. We will strengthen the neighborhood association by increased training of leadership and identification of city wide projects such as clean-up or beautification;

OBJECTIVE 5. We will communicate the status of the city with citizens on a regular basis.

OBJECTIVE 6. We will be responsive to citizen concerns.

OBJECTIVE 7. For the citizens of Bluefield, we will develop a quarterly community activities report.

OBJECTIVE 8. By June 1, 2002, we will assign someone to keep our website current including agendas for meetings and a section for comments or suggestions from citizens.

OBJECTIVE 9. We will increase life opportunities for our youth and young adults.

GOAL 4: Improve the efficiency of City government and leadership.

OBJECTIVE 1. We will maintain accountability and fiscal responsibility.

OBJECTIVE 2. By July 1, 2002, we will fill the Information Services position to improve flow of computer-based information.

- OBJECTIVE 3. We will understand and use the GIS system beginning immediately.
- OBJECTIVE 4. We will finalize the financial policy and procedure manual by July 1, 2002.
- OBJECTIVE 5. We will review and/or create a personnel policy and procedure manual by October 1, 2002.
- OBJECTIVE 6. We will identify a replacement schedule for major equipment.
- OBJECTIVE 7. By October 1, 2002, we will develop a master plan for the parks and recreation department.
- OBJECTIVE 8. By October 1, 2002, we will develop a project timetable for Streetscape and keep it on schedule.
- OBJECTIVE 9. We will identify paving needs in city on a priority basis and begin projects by July 1, 2002.
- OBJECTIVE 10. We will develop an understanding of sales tax structure and business and occupation.
- OBJECTIVE 11. By December 31, 2002, we will develop goals and plans for all commissions in addition to defining the roles and functions of commissioners.
- OBJECTIVE 12. The Mayor will prepare and deliver a State of the City address by July 1, 2002.
- OBJECTIVE 13. Through grantsmanship, we will enhance the fiscal stability of City Government. We will identify grant sources and improve grant writing ability of city administration.
- OBJECTIVE 14. We will balance the budget and communicate it to all stakeholders.

Goal 5: Improve services.

- OBJECTIVE 1. By October 1, 2002, develop a long-term plan for deliver of necessary services.
- OBJECTIVE 2. We will create a benchmarking and best practices program for City services by October 1, 2002.
- OBJECTIVE 3. We will respond to immediate needs and issues that may seem insignificant.
- OBJECTIVE 4. Beginning immediately, we will become proactive in serving the needs of the citizens.
- OBJECTIVE 5. We will enhance the revenue flow to provide necessary services.
- OBJECTIVE 6. We will encourage teamwork and brainstorming among our City workers and department heads.
- OBJECTIVE 7. We will provide a safe environment by ensuring a strong Police Force and an effective Fire Department.
- OBJECTIVE 8. We will improve the efficiency of services delivered (service delivery) in terms of Safety (Police and Fire Departments); Public Works; Sanitary Board; Parks and Recreation; Code enforcement; Engineering, Planning and Zoning; Public Transportation; and Finance.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, history reveals Bluefield as a place of prosperity. In the past, Bluefield served as the entry point to the wealth of the coalfields of West Virginia. In fact, Bluefield has been viewed as the economic the center or hub of southern West Virginia. As we look towards the future, it is possible to achieve and perhaps excel that level of prosperity again within the City of Bluefield.

Restoring economic vitality and stability requires persistent planning and action. We have developed a cohesive and concise strategic plan for the City of Bluefield, West Virginia. This strategic plan is designed to improve the quality of life in Bluefield, West Virginia and the surrounding area. While the strategies outlined here are realistic and achievable, the strategies are also proactive and collaborative. This strategic plan is a call to action geared towards protecting and nurturing the good aspects of the city. We hope that the strategic plan will inspire people to unite and work together for the common good of citizens in our town.

