MEMORANDUM

TO: Shanna Murphy, Community Development Planner, Cambria County Planning Commission (CCPC)

FROM: Eden Zenisek, SGC Project & Practice Lead

CC: Jeff Raykes, Stuart Group Consulting (SGC) Managing Principal, Mark Lazzari, CCPC.

DATE: December 11, 2025

SUBJECT: West Hills Region Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee Meeting #2 Summary

A *hybrid* meeting of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee was held at the Brownstown Borough Building on November 20, 2025 from 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM. Please see below for a meeting summary.

The following items related to the steering committee meeting are included here as exhibits:
- Meeting Summary (Exhibit 1)
- Meeting Attendance (Exhibit 2)
- Presentation (Exhibit 3)
- Meeting Photos (Exhibit 4)
- Dot exercise (Exhibit 5)

Please share with the Steering Committee. If you have any questions on these documents or the project in general, please feel free to contact me at eden@stuartgroup.org.

Exhibit 1

West Hills Region Comprehensive Plan Update
Steering Committee Meeting #2
5pm, Thursday, November 20, 2025
Hybrid Meeting
- In-person location: Brownstown Borough Building (350 Habicht St., Johnstown, PA 15906)
- Virtual Participation Link: meet.google.com/nio-gynv-njb

Meeting Objectives & Agenda:

1. Welcome
2. Orientation
3. Organize & Excite Phase Updates
   a. The team reviewed the project's phased approach (Organize, Excite, Listen & Analyze, Build, and Launch) and highlighted that the project is currently in the **Listen & Analyze** phase. Branding materials, digital tools, and the project website have been developed to support ongoing communication and visibility.
   b. The organizational structure was reviewed: local municipalities, planning commissions, county staff, the consultant team, and the Steering Committee each play a defined role in the plan's development and implementation.
4. Project Goal Prioritization
   a. Six overarching project goals were presented:
      i. Strengthen Collaboration and Shared Capacity
      ii. Build a Unified yet Inclusive Community Identity
      iii. Develop and Communicate a Shared Vision for the Future
      iv. Encourage Openness to Change and New Ideas
      v. Create Lasting Capacity for Implementation
      vi. Pursue Broadly Supported, High-Impact Improvements
5. Engagement Updates
   a. Completed engagement:
      i. Field tour (September 2025)- A region-wide tour of 16 key sites brought the Steering Committee, project staff, and consultants together to directly observe conditions across the West Hills communities, deepening shared understanding of opportunities and challenges.

      ii. Municipal presentations (October 2025, on-going) - Presentations to each municipal governing body formally initiated local partnership-building and set expectations for the planning process. Presentations held at UYT, Southmont and Brownstown.

      iii. School presentations (October 2025) - A session with Westmont Hilltop High School students generated meaningful input from younger residents about local needs and aspirations.

      iv. Community meeting (October 2025) - More than 80 residents participated in interactive exercises including visioning boards, PET (Preserve, Enhance, Transform) mapping, and a Big Idea Wall to help identify values, concerns, and hopes for the area.

      v. Business & Organizational Engagement - Meeting with the Lyter Side Business Association revealed priorities related to commercial vitality, revitalization, and Main Street improvements.

   b. Future engagement:

      i. Focus Groups across multiple sectors (government, business, education, public services, housing, infrastructure, environmental organizations).

      ii. A Region-Wide Survey to broaden resident participation and capture statistically meaningful feedback.

   c. Emerging themes:

      i. Strong desire to protect natural assets and neighborhood character.

      ii. Concerns about blight, aging housing, and struggling commercial areas.

      iii. High priority on infrastructure improvements—sidewalks, stormwater, trails, and roadway safety.

      iv. Need for stronger economic development, more retail options, and reinvestment in Westwood Plaza.

      v. Broad support for shared services and regional collaboration.

      vi. Emphasis on retaining and attracting young residents through modern housing, amenities, workforce opportunities, and cultural vibrancy.

      vii. A shared aspiration to position the region as a destination community and attractive home for remote workers.

6. Community Profile Presentation

   a. Presented by Seth Koons of Michael Baker International (MBI)

b. Data shows that housing stock across most communities is older and vacancy rates are low — Westmont Borough at just 2%, compared to 15% in Upper Yoder. Median home values remain generally affordable (Westmont is the highest at $165,000). They are not rising as quickly as elsewhere in the state, which could help attract new residents.

c. SGC noted that aging housing stock includes desirable historic homes, but outdated zoning (e.g. Westmont's restriction preventing a duplex from being reconverted from a single-family home) limits investment and the creation of multifamily housing that younger residents want. Participants agreed the region lacks nightlife and amenities, pushing younger people toward places like Richland. SGC also noted that local school districts are struggling with declining enrollment, though the University of Pittsburgh Johnstown continues to add skilled graduates to the local workforce.

7. Open Discussion

8. Adjournment

    a. Community Profile Presentation: Wednesday, January 8, 2026 @ 6PM, virtual

        i. **Video call link: https://meet.google.com/zij-dhin-xot**

        ii. **Join by phone: (US) +1 405-267-1913 PIN: 412 387 809#**

    b. Next SC meeting: April 2026 date and location TBD

Exhibit 2

Meeting Attendance

West Hills Comprehensive Plan
Steering Committee Sign-In Sheet

Last Name	First Name	Contact (email or phone)	Organization	July 10, 2025 KO Meeting	November 20, 2025 SC #2		
Mitchell	Thomas		Westmont Hilltop School District	☐	☐	☐	☐
Schock	Kevin		West Hills Regional Fire Department	☐	☐	☐	☐
Newman	William		West Hills Regional Police Department	☐	☑	☐	☐
Reitz	Tim	online	Upper Yoder Fire Department	☐	☐	☐	☐
Blake	John		Upper Yoder Police Department	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hunt	Scott	Present but not signed in	Cambria County Commissioners	☐	☐	☐	☐
Zankyssen	Christopher		Hiram G. Andrews Center	☐	☐	☐	☐
Johnson	Dirk		West Hills Recreation Commission	☐	☐	☐	☐
	Daniel		The Lyter Side Business Association	☐	☐	☐	☐
Johanson	Ole		University of Pittsburgh, Johnstown	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lazzari	Lauren		Resident, West Hills CDMP, PTO, United Way, Early Childhood Systems	☐	☐	☐	☐
Stein	Anne		PennDot District 9	☐	☐	☐	☐
Roman	Dave		West Hills Community Church, Westmont Hilltop Basketball program	☐	☐	☐	☐
Bennett	Jessica		Brownstown Improvement Group	☐	☑	☐	☐
Stephens	Misty		Resident, Westmont Elementary School	☐	☑	☐	☐
Bradley	Amy		Cambria Regional Chamber	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cramer	Jeffrey		JARI	☐	☐	☐	☐
McMillen	Jasmine		Center for Population Health	☐	☐	☐	☐
Johnson	Bob		CamTran	☐	☐	☐	☐

Last Name	First Name	Signature	Organization				
Bagar	Lisa		Visit Johnstown	☐	☐	☐	☐
Solomon	Janie	*(signature)*	Westmont Hilltop School District	☐	☐	☐	☐
Aurandt	Jennifer		Rotary Club of Johnstown	☐	☐	☐	☐
Baer	Lindsey	on-line	PA DCNR	☐	☐	☐	☐
Samec	Molly	*(signature)*	PA DCNR	☐	☐	☐	☐
Burkert	Richard	*(signature)*	Southmont Borough Council	☐	☐	☐	☐
Grandinetti	Al	✓ Present but not signed in	Lower Yoder Township Supervisor	☐	☐	☐	☐
Konvicka	Sue		Lower Yoder Township Supervisor	☐	☐	☐	☐
McCall	Mary	*(signature)*	Westmont Borough Council	☐	☑	☐	☐
Porath	Bryan	*(signature)*	Brownstown Borough Council	☐	☐	☐	☐
Murphy	Shanna	Present but not signed in	Cambria County PC	☐	☐	☐	☐
Varner	Robert (Bob)	*(signature)*	LYT Resident, Zoning Board	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sydney	Stirbey	Sydney Stirbey		☐	☐	☐	☐
SHANNON	BRUCE	*(signature)*	BROWNSTOWN COUNCIL	☐	☐	☐	☐
EUGENE	KUPCHELLA		SOUTHMONT COUNCIL	☐	☐	☐	☐
Molli	Lazzari	Molli Sori	Student at Westmont	☐	☐	☐	☐
Leah	Spangler	✓	Westmont	☐	☐	☐	☐

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Exhibit 3

Growing Together:
West Hills Region Comprehensive Plan

Steering Committee Meeting #2
November 20, 2025

Welcome
[thank you for serving your communities as part of this group]

Mark Lazzari, AICP
Executive Director

Shanna Murphy Sosko, AICP
Community Development Planner

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0 Orientation

Objectives & Agenda
[what is happening in this meeting]

See **Meeting Agenda** HANDOUT

Welcome & Orientation	01
Organize & Excite Updates	02
Project Goal Prioritization	03
Engagement Updates	04
Community Profile Presentation	05
Open Discussion	06
Adjournment	07

Announcements
[housekeeping and ground rules]

- Bathrooms / Food / Phones
- Listen First
- Make your point in 30 sec.
- Big Idea Board

Introductions
[getting to know each other]

What do you think more people should know about West Hills Region?

Project Approach
[phases of project]

0 organize
We begin by building the foundation for collaboration: identifying key stakeholders, forming the Steering Committee, defining the planning geography, and designing a public engagement strategy that reflects the tone and needs of the region.

1 excite
We build early momentum by establishing a compelling brand identity for the plan and launching digital and physical outreach. This includes activating online tools, distributing communication toolkits, and raising public awareness with media outreach and creative touch-points.

2 listen
This is the heart of our work. We create opportunities for residents to shape the future of their communities through pop-up events, workshops, stakeholder interviews, and focus groups. We collect stories, aspirations, and feedback that inform the plan's

3 build
Using input from the community, we develop targeted action strategies and catalytic projects to address the region's most pressing needs. Our team will work closely with the Cambria County Planning Commission, municipal officials, and residents to ensure that strategies are both visionary and achievable.

4 launch
The final phase is about bringing the plan to life. We present the draft through public events and refined outreach, gathering feedback that informs the final document. We deliver both a polished plan and the momentum needed to start

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Project Timeline
[when things happen]

WE ARE HERE

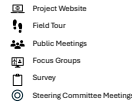| Task/Phase	ORGANIZE			LISTEN & ANALYZE								BUILD				LAUNCH	
	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Task 1: Project Management																		
Task 2: Steering Committee Meetings	◎			◎				◎							◎			
Task 3: Community Engagement		🖥	🚩	👥	🖼	📄												
Task 4: Analysis of Existing Conditions																		
Task 5: Public Presentation											👥							
Task 6: Plan Development																		
Task 7: Adoption and Launch Process	EXCITE																	

🖥 Project Website
🚩 Field Tour
👥 Public Meetings
🖼 Focus Groups
📄 Survey
◎ Steering Committee Meetings

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02 Organize & Excite Updates

Organizational Structure
[roles & responsibilities]

West Hills Residents / Public

Local Elected Bodies — All 5 elected bodies will be responsible for **overseeing, adopting, and implementing** the finished Plan.

Local Planning Commissions — All 5 Planning Commissions will asked to **review and recommend adoption.**

Project Steering Committee — A group of key stakeholders tasked with **guiding the development** of the long-range plan, building consensus, advising the consultant and planning staff, and participating in an estimated 4–8 meetings and public-engagement activities over the 18-month planning process.

County Planning Commission — Provides **technical planning assistance** and holding it all together!

Project Team — Representatives from each municipality, County planning staff and consultant team tasked with **managing the project.**

Consultant Team — Consultant Team is responsible for **building the Plan and guiding the planning process.**

Project Branding
[The creation of an identity for the project that helps raise awareness]

Comprehensive Plan Logo:
West Hills Growing Together COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

General Use Logo:
West Hills Growing Together

Fonts:
Las Americas
Lato Bold

Colors:

Foundational elements developed in Kick-Off Meeting in July 2025

Designs were distributed to SC for **feedback** and revisions were made

Final design was agreed upon in first week in October

Project Website
[online engagement]

https://cambriaplanning.org/westhills/about-the-plan/

West Hills Growing Together

News Releases
[raising awareness]]

West Hills
Growing Together

03
Project Goal Prioritization

Project Goals
[What we hope to achieve as part of the Growing Together project]

Brainstorming activity focused on hopes for the project was held during Kick-Off Meeting

More than **16 ideas** collected from attendees

Ideas were analyzed for themes, **6 key goals** were developed by Consultant Team

West Hills
Growing Together

Project Goals *cont.*
[What we hope to achieve as part of the Growing Together project]

See **Project Goals** HANDOUT

Strengthen Collaboration and Shared Capacity
The community includes numerous organizations, municipalities, and stakeholder groups working toward similar objectives. We believe that stronger collaboration—through coordinated efforts, shared services, and combined resources—will amplify impact while reducing duplication. By "enmeshing" ideas and working across boundaries, the community can achieve outcomes that no single entity could accomplish alone.

Build a Unified yet Inclusive Community Identity
Residents and leaders value the unique identities of neighborhoods, institutions, and individuals, yet recognize the importance of a cohesive community identity. Our goal is to cultivate a shared sense of place that celebrates individuality while promoting civic pride, especially among younger generations. This identity should honor local nostalgia while embracing a forward-looking spirit that resonates across the entire community.

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Project Goals *cont.*
[What we hope to achieve as part of the Growing Together project]

See **Project Goals** HANDOUT

Develop and Communicate a Shared Vision for the Future
A successful planning initiative requires a clear, inclusive vision that reflects the hopes of all community members. Our goal is to engage residents in shaping that shared vision and to improve regional communication about planning strategies, decisions, and outcomes. Transparent, consistent communication will ensure that everyone understands the direction of the community and how their voices contribute to shaping it.

Encourage Openness to Change and New Ideas
The community acknowledges the need to adapt as economic, social, and demographic conditions evolve. Our goal is to foster a culture that embraces change, supports innovation, and encourages new approaches while respecting the shared history of the Region. By remaining flexible and open-minded, the community can position itself for long-term resilience and opportunity.

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Project Goals *cont.*
[What we hope to achieve as part of the Growing Together project]

See **Project Goals** HANDOUT

Create Lasting Capacity for Implementation
Sustaining momentum is essential to the success of this planning initiative. Our goal is to develop strategies that support both the ongoing implementation of the project and the long-term resilience of the community. This includes responsible resource management, innovative service delivery models, and planning frameworks that withstand changing conditions.

Pursue Broadly Supported, High-Impact Improvements
Building trust and demonstrating progress require focusing on projects with clear community benefit. Our goal is to identify and advance initiatives that are broadly supported, uncontroversial, and capable of delivering visible, positive results. These early successes will help strengthen public confidence in the planning process and completed plan.

West Hills
Growing Together

Project Goals *cont.*
[What we hope to achieve as part of the Growing Together project]
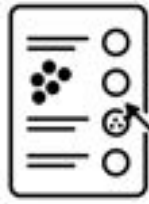
What Project Goals do you think are most important?

Dot Voting Exercise
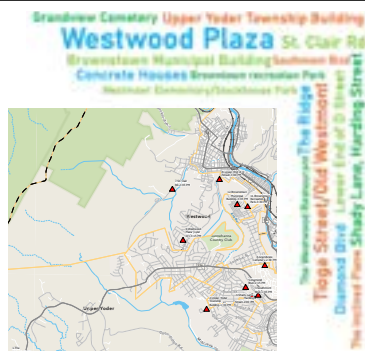- review the list of Project Goals
- 5 dots

West Hills Growing Together

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04 Engagement Updates

Field Tour
[engaging people]

1pm - 6pm,
Monday, Sept 22

16 Sites

Steering Committee, Project Team, Consultant Team

West Hills Growing Together

Field Tour *cont.*
[engaging people]

West Hills Growing Together

Field Tour *cont.*
[engaging people]

West Hills Growing Together
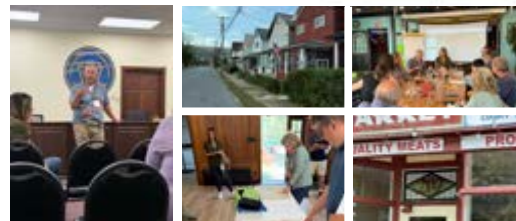
Municipal Presentations
[building lasting partnerships]

- Personally introduce and invite partnership and participation
- County Planning Staff, SGC
  - Upper Yoder Township *(October 16, 2025)*
  - Southmont Borough *(October 20, 2025)*
  - Brownstown Borough *(November 12, 2025)*
  - Lower Yoder Township
  - Westmont Borough

West Hills Growing Together

School Presentations
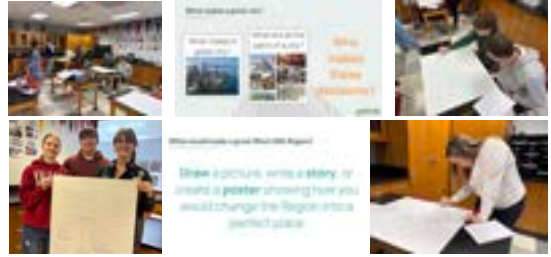
October 22, 2025
Westmont Hilltop Junior/Senior High School
20 - 30 9th Graders
Mr. Logan Seybold
Public Service, World History, and Government Classes

West Hills

School Presentations *cont.*

West Hills

Community Meeting #1

5-7pm, Wednesday, October 22, 2025
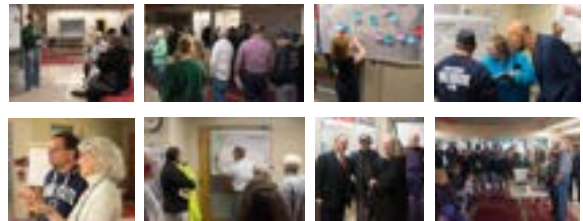Westmont Hilltop Elementary School
80 people, 50/30
Activities:
1. Voices of the West Hills: Identifying Strengths, Challenges, and a Shared Vision Boards
2. Preserve, Enhance, and Transform (P.E.T.) Exercise
3. The Big Idea Wall

West Hills

Community Meeting #1 *cont.*

West Hills

Community Meeting #1 *cont.*

West Hills

Community-Based Organizations

- Lyter Side Business Association
- 12noon, Wednesday, November 12, 2025
- 30+ attendees
- Plaza, Main Street Ideas

West Hills

Community-Based Organizations *cont.*

- Lyter Side Business Association
- 12noon, Wednesday, November 12, 2025
- 30+ attendees
- Plaza, Main Street Ideas

West Hills

16 Emerging Themes

The community wants to protect **Stackhouse Park, street trees, natural beauty, and rural character**.

Residents consistently value **outdoor recreation, wildlife, and a strong neighborhood feel**.

People are worried about **blighted properties, junk-filled yards, aging homes, and problem areas like Westwood Plaza**.

There is interest in revitalization tools such as a **land-bank** and **redevelopment** of older properties.

West Hills

Emerging Themes *cont.*

High priority is placed on fixing sidewalks, improving street safety, adding bike lanes, enhancing trails, managing stormwater, and maintaining roads.

Residents want easier, safer connections between neighborhoods, parks, schools, and shopping areas.

There is widespread concern about empty storefronts, unstable businesses, limited retail options, and slow economic growth.

The community wants a more business-friendly environment, more small businesses, and major improvements at Westwood Plaza.

West Hills

Emerging Themes *cont.*

Repeated calls for consolidation of services: police, fire, EMS, DPW, and administrative functions.

Aspirations for quality schools, safe/clean neighborhoods, more recreation opportunities, and family-sustaining jobs.

Emphasis on attracting and retaining young residents through new development, workforce opportunities, and a stronger local economy.
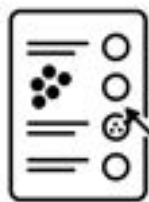
The long-term vision includes becoming a destination community, a hub for remote workers, and a place with vibrant activities.

West Hills

Emerging Themes *cont.*

What emerging themes do you think are most important?

Dot Voting Exercise
- **review the list of Project Goals**
- **5 dots**

West Hills

Future Engagement

Focus Groups

- November/December
- Stakeholder List
- Grouped by Categories
- 60 Minute, Informal Format
- What is working, What is not
- Themes & Ideas
- More the Merrier
- **We need your help!**

West Hills *Growing Together*

Focus Groups *cont.*

[future engagement]

West Hills *Growing Together*

Region-Wide Survey

[future engagement]

- November/December
- 10-15 minutes
- Online format / Survey Monkey
- Will share link to DRAFT Survey via email
- **Response target?**
- Connecting with people

West Hills *Growing Together*

BREAK: Dot Voting

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05 Community Profile Presentation

13

06 Open Discussion

Next Meeting
5pm, Thursday, April 16, 2026

Exhibit 4

Meeting Photos

Please view photos from the November 20, 2025 steering committee meeting here:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1pLoG8IExyD_-Ro_HEJNXDtq9Wuu3cCEQ?usp=drive_link

Exhibit 5

Dot exercise survey

*This exercise was completed in person at the steering committee meeting on November 20, 2025. Please complete the survey linked here if **you did NOT attend the meeting.** We would love to include your responses as part of our data collection!*

Survey link: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RYD8ZPW