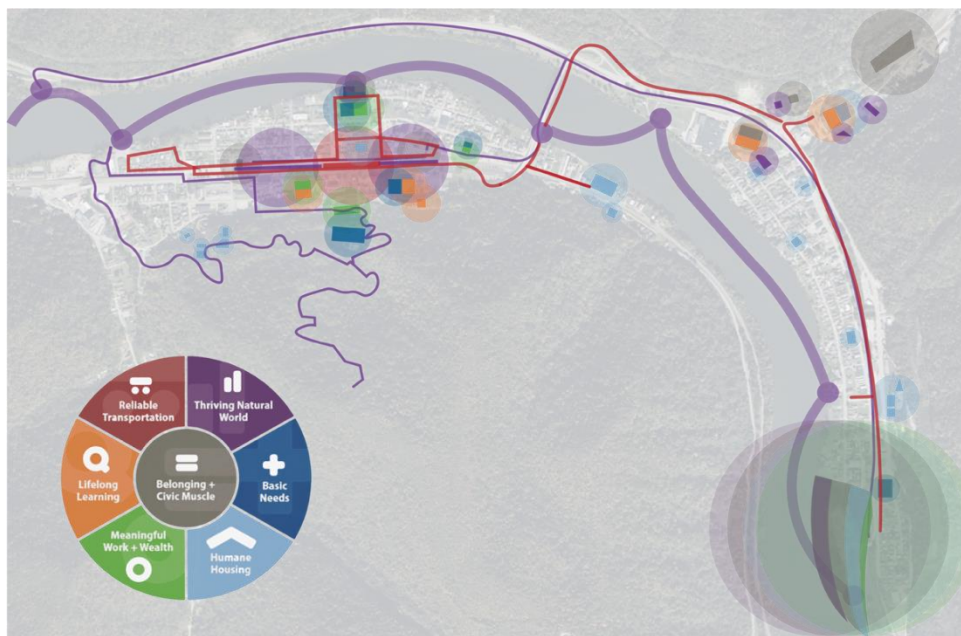


# DESTINATION HOPE:

## THE SMITHERS-MONTGOMERY INTERGENERATIONAL GATEWAY COMMUNITY

*Integrating Town Planning and Community Health to Address the Seven Vital Conditions for Community Health and Well-Being*



*“Start by doing what is necessary, then what is possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible.”*

*- St. Francis of Assisi*

July 2024

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In July of 2023, Dynamis Advisors Inc. (Dynamis) began a collaborative venture with the Center for Rural Health Development (the Center) to strategize on repurposing the recently shuttered WVU Institute for Technology campus in Montgomery, as well as properties located in Smithers, for the enhancement of both towns' economic development. Funding for this work was made possible through the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation and The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation. A driving force of this initiative is the fusion of neighborhood planning with community health objectives— a hallmark of Dynamis' Healthy Village® planning approach and a focal interest of the Center.

During this initiative, the collaboration between the Center for Rural Health Development and Dynamis Advisors Inc. was characterized by a strong partnership, leveraging each other's strengths as necessary. Frequent communication was a hallmark of this relationship, with daily interactions and weekly meetings ensuring alignment and progress. The Center's reputation as a trusted entity in West Virginia significantly bolstered our efforts, providing us with a valuable advantage.

## **VISION STATEMENT AND KEY OBSERVATION**

Smithers and Montgomery serve as quintessential examples of Appalachian communities adversely affected by the downturn in coal mining, manufacturing, and other sectors, compounded by the emergence of retail malls, big-box stores, and a lack of investment in education and infrastructure. The closing of WVU Tech further magnified these challenges, underscoring the urgency for inventive solutions. The Smithers and Montgomery Intergenerational Gateway Community (SMIGC) emerges as a strategic component of the Center's Wild, Wonderful & Healthy West Virginia initiative, aimed at creating a culture of health in communities throughout West Virginia conducive to both health and economic development. Specifically, the SMIGC is designed to attract and retain senior residents, embodying, as Sharon Lansdale, the President/CEO Emeritus of the Center, aptly notes, the flatwater counterpart to the state's whitewater rafting allure.

*The SMIGC highlights inspired, collaborative municipal leadership within an academic backdrop supported by multiple universities and emphasizes sectoral integration across the [Seven Vital Conditions for Health and Well-Being](#).*

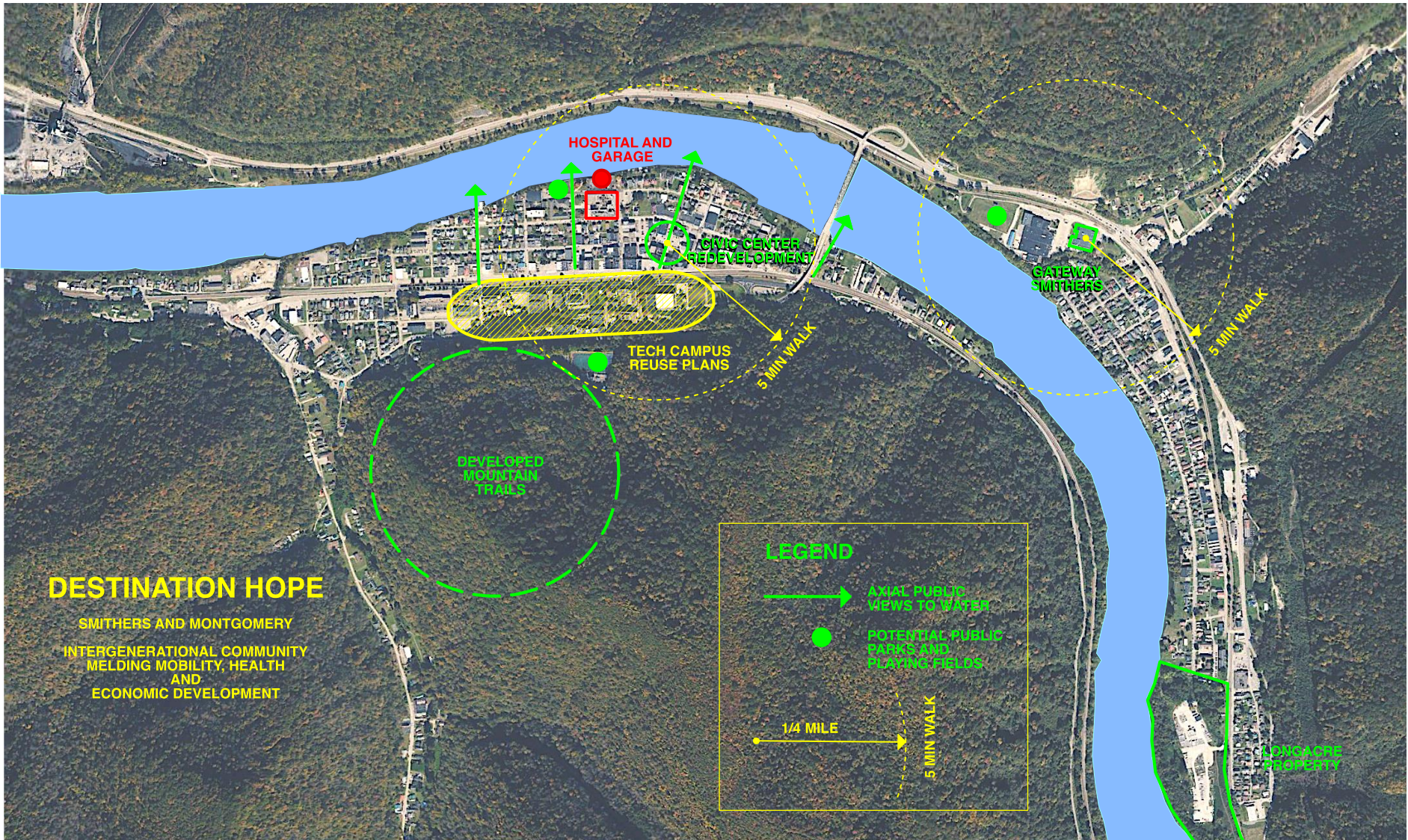


Figure 1. Overall Plan – Randall Imai, Architect

## **OVERALL PLAN**

The Smithers-Montgomery Intergenerational Gateway Community (SMIGC) has been crafted to nurture a community that is both inclusive and sustainable, with a deep integration of health and wellness into its core framework. The Community's vision is to attract and retain a vibrant mix of residents, creating an environment that not only supports living but also thriving across all age groups, and aims to cultivate spaces that encourage communal engagement, particularly fostering interactions that bridge generations, enriching the experience of life for every resident.

A cornerstone of the plan is the emphasis on education and workforce development. The Community is committed to equipping our community members with the necessary skills to navigate and excel in a rapidly changing job landscape. Additionally, The Community recognizes the fundamental need for affordable, comfortable, and safe housing that meets the diverse needs of their population, from young families to older adults.

To complement these efforts, we focused on enhancing mobility within the community. By improving and expanding infrastructure for walking, biking, and public transit, we aim to make the towns more accessible and reduce the environmental footprint. This initiative is about more than just facilitating movement; it's about connecting people to each other and to the services and spaces that make the communities thrive.

The proximity of a new National Park offers an unparalleled opportunity to boost tourism and recreational activities, turning the community into a destination that celebrates the great outdoors and invites visitors to explore all they have to offer. The plan extends to health initiatives encompassing the full spectrum of care—from preventive measures and wellness to recovery and Aging-in-Place—ensuring that Smithers and Montgomery is not only a place to live but a place where life, in its fullest sense, is supported and cherished.

The overall plan for the SMIGC is a comprehensive blueprint for a future where everyday aspects of community life are imbued with health, education, and a deep sense of belonging. It's about creating a place where every resident can find their purpose, contribute to a collective vision, and share in the benefits of a life well-lived.

## THE HEALTHY VILLAGE® PLANNING PROCESS

How was the SMIGC plan developed, and what insights can be gained for communities with similar challenges? Many issues plague these communities, notably a stark lack of resources. Communities with limited resources face significant obstacles in implementing effective solutions and often hesitate to propose novel ideas. However, strong, committed leadership can overcome these barriers. In Smithers and Montgomery, the excellent collaboration between the two mayors, backed by the Center, the local hospital, and other key partners, kick-started the process with a thorough assessment of physical, economic, and leadership assets through structured, virtual interviews and in-person meetings.

Building trust—a process that cannot be achieved with minimal effort—was a key initial focus. Stakeholder interviews and meetings unearthed valuable, often overlooked community assets and began the important task of trust-building. Stakeholders demonstrated a genuine commitment to enhancing the well-being of their communities. This asset mapping led to the initial formation of ideas to tackle the identified issues and opportunities. The planning process included the following steps:

- *Stakeholder Interviews:* 23 stakeholder interviews were conducted between August and October 2023 to forge a strategic plan for Smithers-Montgomery, focusing on revitalizing the community through the lens of the Seven Vital Conditions for Community Health and Well-Being. These discussions, involving leaders from public health, education, and local governance, emphasized a resilient community facing economic and social challenges, notably the aftermath of WVU Tech's relocation. A unified vision emerged to leverage the region's natural beauty, aiming at tourism and outdoor recreation as key economic drivers. The engagement uncovered initiatives to enhance transportation, develop affordable housing, create employment opportunities, improve healthcare access, expand educational offerings, and boost civic participation.
- *First Planning Meeting:* Held on November 6 and 7, 2023, this session aimed to bolster trust, foster team spirit, and gather feedback on the initial planning and ideas. Efforts were made to include all relevant stakeholders, with the Center ensuring the logistics were well managed. The two-day meeting was ideal, allowing Dynamis planners to refine ideas after the first day for presentation on the second day.

- *Feedback and Integration:* After the meeting, further feedback was sought from participants. Given the hospital's significance to the towns' futures, it was also determined that incorporating the emerging strategic plan of Montgomery General Hospital (MGH) into the overall strategy was essential. The Center provided an additional grant for MGH to work with Dynamis, extending the initial engagement period to facilitate this planning. Both projects were approached to create a comprehensive plan that integrates urban planning and community health at its core.
- *Second Planning Meeting:* On March 19, 2024, a subsequent meeting was held to share Dynamis' final recommendations, focusing on the next steps for implementation and the critical role of leadership. A specific recommendation was made to include the responsibility to lead this effort in the *job description of the new local extension officer through West Virginia State University*.

This methodical approach highlights the transformative potential of collaborative leadership and strategic planning in addressing the challenges faced by communities with limited resources.

## **DEVELOPING THE PLAN**

Dynamis' Healthy Village Design Principles are rooted in expanding community definition to encompass holistic care alongside career education and training and intergenerational supportive housing. This approach allows residents not just to live but to grow and evolve within their environment. The communities of Smithers and Montgomery demonstrated enthusiasm for integrating housing solutions that cater to a diverse demographic, encompassing multiple generations and income levels, and are complemented by support services. These are all designed to be user-friendly, promoting walkability and connectivity to foster a cohesive community fabric.

The design principles extend to imbuing neighborhoods with strategies aimed at ensuring economic stability and laying a foundation for a prosperous community life. Health and safety are paramount, as is the encouragement of new inquiries and solutions that enhance the collective sense of belonging. Central to the Healthy Village® vision are the spaces where community gathers—both the informal common areas and the formal meeting spaces. These are recognized as trusted places where meaningful interactions and solutions emerge.

At the core of the Healthy Village Design is the creation of a community where each citizen feels a deep sense of ownership, purpose, and social connectivity. The design principles aim to cultivate an environment where individuals are not merely residents but active participants in a shared, vibrant, and sustainable community life.

Central to this endeavor is fostering a culture of innovation and inclusivity, where every project and policy is crafted with the well-being and empowerment of the residents in mind. By prioritizing the integration of green spaces, sustainable practices, and cutting-edge technology, we aim to not only meet the immediate needs of the communities that we work for but also to anticipate and shape their future direction.

Engagement and partnership stand as pillars of our approach, encouraging active participation from all sectors of the community—businesses, educational institutions, healthcare providers, and residents—to co-create solutions that resonate with and benefit everyone. This collaborative spirit, coupled with a steadfast commitment to inclusivity and sustainability, will ensure that the community not only thrives in the present but also possesses the resilience and adaptability to face the challenges and opportunities of the future. Success is realized when the community uses the Healthy Village® plan as a launching block to embark on the journey to transform into a beacon of health, education, and connectivity, where every individual can find their place, purpose, and path to personal growth.



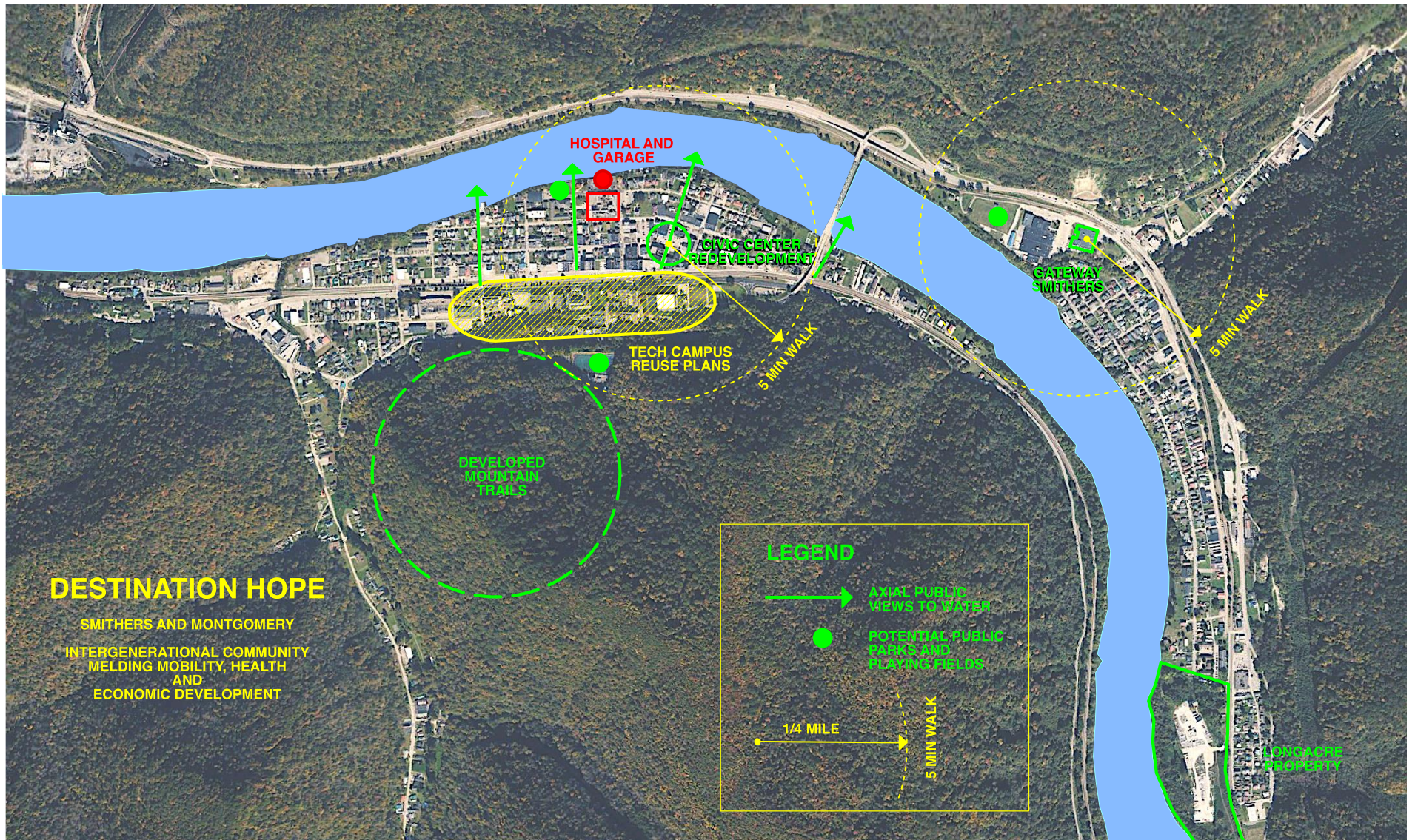


Figure 1. Overall Plan – Randall Imai, Architect

## KEY CONCLUSIONS

1. *Asset Identification:* A key result of the first planning session was the map Dynamis' town planner produced (Figure 1 on previous page), which showed the towns and various component developments completed, underway, and planned. Starting with the overall picture before diving into individual components defines the platform and develops an understanding of how each individual investment can help others. The platform also involves identifying human assets – those committed to the towns and their futures. Too often in the US, we concentrate on individual investments in the Seven Vital Conditions for Health and Well-Being without understanding the whole picture. This individual focus has led to less-than-optimal results and competing interests over perceived finite resources when interests should be collaborative. When looked at as a whole, these two elements, physical and human, define the communities – in other words, the future of Smithers and Montgomery. The plan will allow each individual component to develop and thrive.
2. *Community-driven:* Critical to the process was that it has been community-driven. We did not overlay a prescribed plan; rather we allowed representatives of the community put forward their ideas. We helped weave the initiatives into an integrated town plan.



Figure 2. The Dynamis Planning Process

3. *Existing efforts:* We were pleasantly surprised to observe the progress the communities have made on finding uses for most of the former WVU Tech buildings and other initiatives as described in the Smithers-Montgomery Healthy Village® Master Plan presentation and support document.

4. *Clear, defined boundaries:* The towns are densely populated in an isolated area due to topography. This allows for efficient planning, measurable outcomes, and, more importantly, a shared sense of responsibility and community (see map on next page).
5. *Existing and near- and long-term Initiatives:* Building on existing initiatives ongoing in the communities, near- and long-term possible initiatives were identified and built into the overall plan. Near-term initiatives were selected in part due to the relative ease of implementation, allowing for confidence to build for more challenging components.
6. *Blueprint for other Appalachian towns:* While no two towns are the same, we think the integration of town planning and community health can help other towns chart their future. In this regard, it is the process that is the key, not the result.
7. *Funding Opportunities:* Utilizing geospatial mapping, particularly with databases like [\*Justice 40\*](#) (see Attachments), will be vital for designing interventions and assessing outcomes. Future investment decisions by government, payers and grant-making entities will heavily rely on measurable data. We recommend identifying the key measurable criteria for the overall SMIGC and those for the existing and near- and long-term components and regularly reporting on the impact based on these measurable criteria. We recommend that each funding request, large and small, contain a consistent description of the overall SMIGC plan and the criteria it will impact. Developing the marketing materials for this purpose should be an early task of new leadership.
8. *Key Elements:* In many of our Healthy Village transformations, we often identify specific elements that, if developed, can unlock the full potential of the project. In this case, we believe there are two critical elements: 1) the establishment of the *Machine Robotics Imaging Systems and Research (MRISAR)* Museum of Science, Art, and Robotics and 2) the integration of Montgomery General Hospital's (MGH) strategic plan. Progressing with the MRISAR initiative will significantly boost the community's confidence and secure another committed partner. Conversely, should MRISAR fail to materialize, its absence could have a detrimental impact.

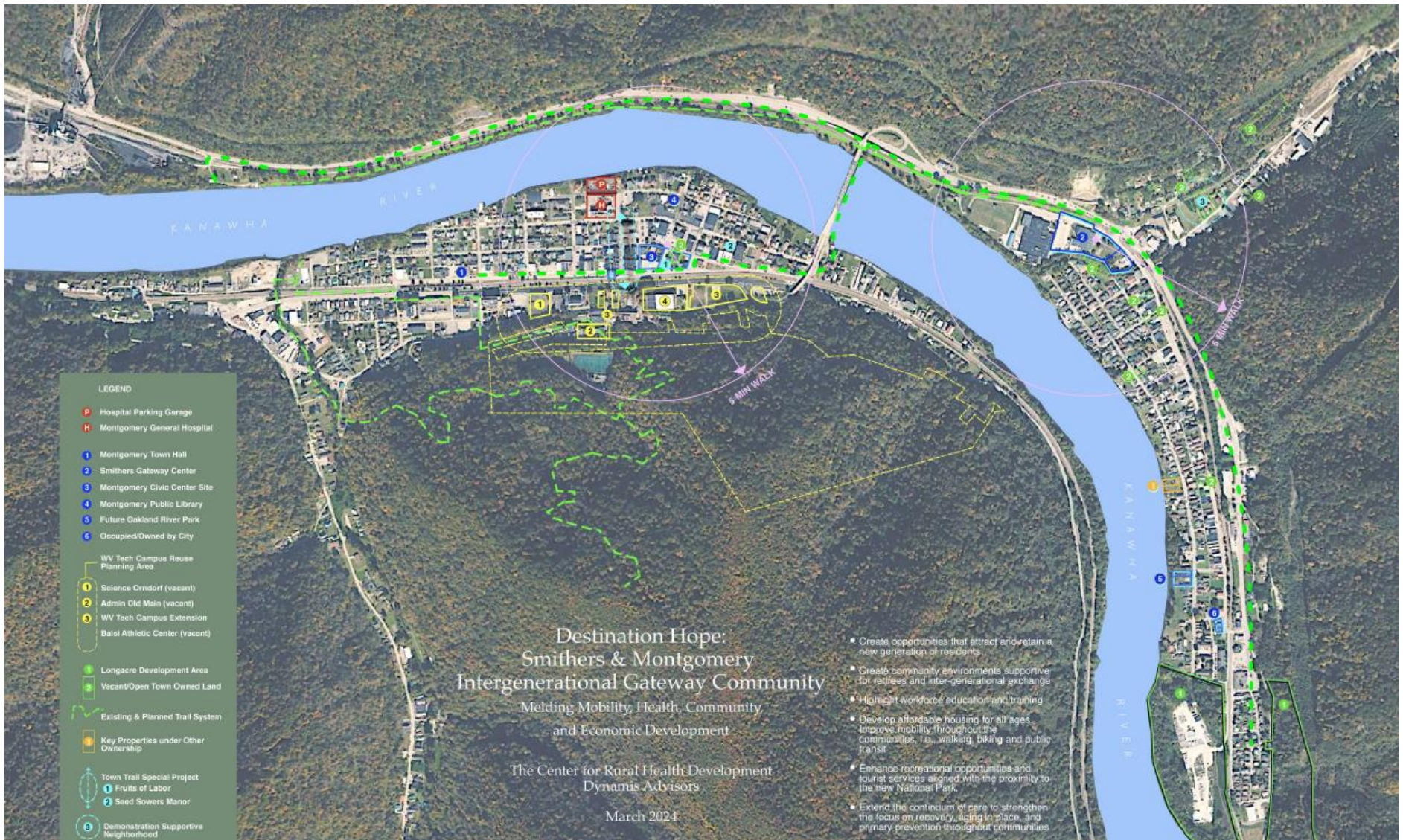


Figure 3. Overall SMIGC Plan, Revised – Randall Imai, Architect

9. Envisioning a prosperous future for Smithers and Montgomery is challenging without a dynamic MGH, which serves as a major employer and the cornerstone of healthcare, anchoring the community health aspect of integrating community health and town planning. Fortunately, MGH's leadership is robust and supportive of the SMIGC. We eagerly anticipate the unveiling of MGH's strategic plan in the months ahead, expecting it to play a pivotal role in the SMIGC Master Plan.

## BUILDING ON EXISTING EFFORTS



Figure 4. Existing Efforts

In the Smithers-Montgomery region, a range of initiatives is driving progress toward a more vibrant and healthy community. The establishment of walking trails, educational programs, healthcare enhancements, and community centers is fostering inclusivity and connectivity. Efforts to provide specialized housing for vulnerable groups and improve access to nutritious food tackle immediate needs while laying the foundation for long-term well-being. Additionally, recreational developments encourage active lifestyles, linking residents with their environment. Together, these initiatives form a comprehensive approach to community development, blending education, healthcare, nutrition, and recreation to pave the way for a sustainable future in the Smithers-Montgomery area. Finding and establishing linkages between the impressive existing efforts already in play is essential so that they may grow together toward a healthier, integrated future that best serves the residents.

#### *Existing and Planned Trails*

On July 2, 2021, Smithers introduced the River Cities Urban Walking Trail, marking a significant step in linking the community with the broader network of trails in the region. Starting at the Smithers Gateway Center/City Hall, this two-mile urban trail is part of a larger vision to seamlessly integrate Smithers and Montgomery into the burgeoning outdoor recreation economy. This initiative aligns with attractions like the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve and the Hatfield-McCoy Trails. The trail's design, funded by Healthy Places for Healthy People and further supported by a mini-grant from Cultivate WV, promises to connect the existing trail system near the former WVU Tech campus with new trails through Montgomery, creating a comprehensive network that enhances both towns' accessibility and appeal to residents and visitors alike.

#### *Former WVU Tech Campus Use*

##### *The Mountaineer Challenge Academy*

The Mountaineer Challenge Academy utilizes buildings on the former WVU Tech Campus to run its program for at-risk 16- to 18-year-olds who have dropped out or are at risk of dropping out of high school. Operated by the National Guard, it aims to transform participants' lives through discipline, education, and leadership development over a five-and-a-half-month residential stay. The curriculum focuses on improving academic skills, achieving high school diplomas or GEDs, and instilling values like respect and teamwork through military-style training and community

service. Participants also develop personal plans for their future education, careers, or military service. The Academy can potentially serve a key role as an educating entity in the overall master plan and has played an active role in this Healthy Village Planning Process, showing its interest in the health of the communities' future.

### *Bridge Valley Community College*

Bridge Valley Community College, with a campus located on the former WVU Tech Campus in Montgomery, is an institution that offers a wide range of academic programs, vocational training, and continuing education courses designed to meet the evolving needs of its community and the workforce. The college emphasizes a supportive learning environment, with a focus on student success through small class sizes, personalized instruction, and career services. Bridge Valley Community College is committed to fostering community engagement, economic development, and lifelong learning opportunities, making it a pivotal resource for personal and professional growth in the region. Its proximity and eagerness to be an active member in the health of the community proves it to be an important educational entity in this Healthy Villages® master plan.

### *Cavalier Heights*

The Tech Campus College of Business and Economics building has been converted into senior housing to address the need for age-appropriate living spaces. This transformation involved renovating the existing structure to create accessible, comfortable housing units tailored for seniors.

### *Montgomery General Hospital Improvements*

Montgomery General Hospital (MGH) has undergone several improvements and is gearing up to undergo more changes so that it may continue to be a beacon of hope and health for its community. The hospital houses a wide array of services that support a successful nursing home. With a clear understanding that healthcare is continuously evolving, this institution is committed to leveraging the latest advances in medicine and technology. This commitment ensures that the local community gains access to quality healthcare services. The mission of Montgomery General Hospital is to deliver the highest quality of care and to contribute to the overall health improvement of the community it serves. Recognizing that the MGH garage is



underutilized due to damages; thoughtful renovation and repurposing of this space as part of MGH's current strategic planning could contribute greatly to town pride and a sense of belonging as it is right on the water and next to the hospital.

### *Gateway Center*

Home to the office of Mayor Cavalier, the Gateway Center in Smithers, WV, is a vibrant community hub created from the repurposed Valley Elementary School. Officially opened in February 2020, this comprehensive facility includes the police department, city hall, municipal court, and various community and health services like Starting Points Daycare and Resource Center, a New River Health clinic and pharmacy, Fayette Senior Center's nutrition and activities program, West Virginia University's extension office, the Midland Trail Association, and an insurance company.

The Gateway Center stands as a testament to the resilience and community spirit of the people from the historic coal town, who have steadfastly navigated through challenges beyond their control. This center exemplifies the community's commitment to health and engagement, showcasing their enduring strength and unity. It stands as proof that Smithers-Montgomery is poised to pave the way for other communities facing similar struggles.

### *Amtrak Station*

The renovated Amtrak station in Montgomery enhances accessibility and connectivity to the nation for the area. With improvements, including an ADA-compliant platform and better lighting, the station ensures safer and more convenient travel for all passengers, including those with disabilities. A goal of the community expressed during the Healthy Village planning was to entice passengers to disembark from the train and visit the attractions in Smithers and Montgomery.

### *Seed Sower Manor*

Seed Sower Manor, newly inaugurated in Montgomery is a pioneering residential recovery home designed for pregnant women and mothers with small children undergoing substance abuse recovery. Operated by Seed Sower, Inc., the facility offers a 12-bed space supported by a comprehensive care program including access to counselors, medical care, legal services, and workforce training through partnerships with local organizations. Funded partly by the West Virginia Housing

Development Fund, Seed Sower Manor is a testament to the community's commitment to fostering recovery and providing a supportive environment for women and their children during the rehabilitation process. This initiative reflects Montgomery's growing support for innovative solutions to address substance abuse and support family unity in recovery. Seed Sower also provides local transportation for clients through a group of vans and local drivers, providing access to essential services for the community daily.

The Healthy Village® plan envisions an integral role for Seed Sower in the development of the SMIGC, serving as a vital connector between recovery, education, and career development, as graduates of this program could re-enter the community as caregivers for seniors or those suffering from substance abuse disorders or fill other needed jobs in the community.

#### *Longacre Property*

The recent purchase of the Longacre property by Smithers poses an extremely valuable and potent opportunity for the Smithers-Montgomery community. The 25-acre former coal camp property adjacent to the Kanawha River is currently undeveloped. A master plan for the property has been created by Uday Datta, MLA, PhD student of Peter Butler, the Director of Design and Community Development and Professor of Landscape Architecture at WVU. Key aspects of the master plan include a variety of recreational green spaces, direct access to the river, boat launching, a hotel for adventure tourism visitors, and new housing.

#### *Grants Supermarket*

Grant's Supermarket, a regional grocery store chain based in Bluefield, expanded its presence by opening a new location in Smithers, WV, in the former Kroger building. This move by Grant's, as stated by owner Ron Martin, aims to swiftly serve the Smithers community, filling the void left by Kroger as the town's sole grocery store.

#### *Oakland River Park*

The former site of a demolished school now holds the promise of becoming the vibrant Oakland River Park, a cornerstone in the revitalization of civic pride and community spirit. Envisioned as an essential part of the Smithers-Montgomery area's

commitment to nurturing a thriving natural world, the park is poised to become a beloved community hub and a key node in the proposed new Town Trail system, van route, and Water Trail proposed by the Healthy Village® plan.

This new park is designed not only to enhance the area's natural beauty but also to provide a space for residents to gather, play, and relax, fostering a strong sense of belonging and community cohesion. As a critical stop along the proposed Town Trail and Water Trail, Oakland River Park will offer easy access to recreational opportunities, encouraging healthy, active lifestyles among community members of all ages. Including this park in the proposed van route further ensures that it is accessible to everyone, promoting inclusivity and engagement across the community.

#### *Rivermont Presbyterian Homes*

Sponsored by National Church Residencies, Rivermont Presbyterian Homes in Montgomery plays a crucial role in providing affordable housing for the elderly. This income-based community offers one-bedroom apartments designed to meet the needs of seniors ages 62 and older, ensuring they have access to comfortable living spaces and essential amenities. Along with housing, Rivermont offers services such as a medical clinic and a service coordinator to help residents connect with community resources, thereby addressing both the housing and health needs of its elderly population.

#### *Mammoth Preserve*

The Mammoth Preserve, a sprawling 5,000-acre site in eastern Kanawha County, West Virginia, stands as a beacon of environmental restoration and community revitalization. Once a mountaintop removal site, the area is being transformed through the efforts of Appalachian Headwaters and the West Virginia Land Trust. Approximately 2,500 acres of the Preserve is undergoing intensive restoration to revive the native hardwood forest and stream ecosystems that were once prevalent. This includes the planting of nearly one million trees and the rehabilitation of the stream channels. In addition to its ecological restoration, the Mammoth Preserve is set to become a recreational hub, offering hiking and mountain biking trails that promise to boost local tourism and provide much-needed recreational opportunities for the community. The Preserve is a vital part of the Upper Kanawha Valley Master Recreation Plan, which seeks to create a recreational corridor along the Kanawha River, connecting Charleston to the New River Gorge National Park and revitalizing nearby communities.

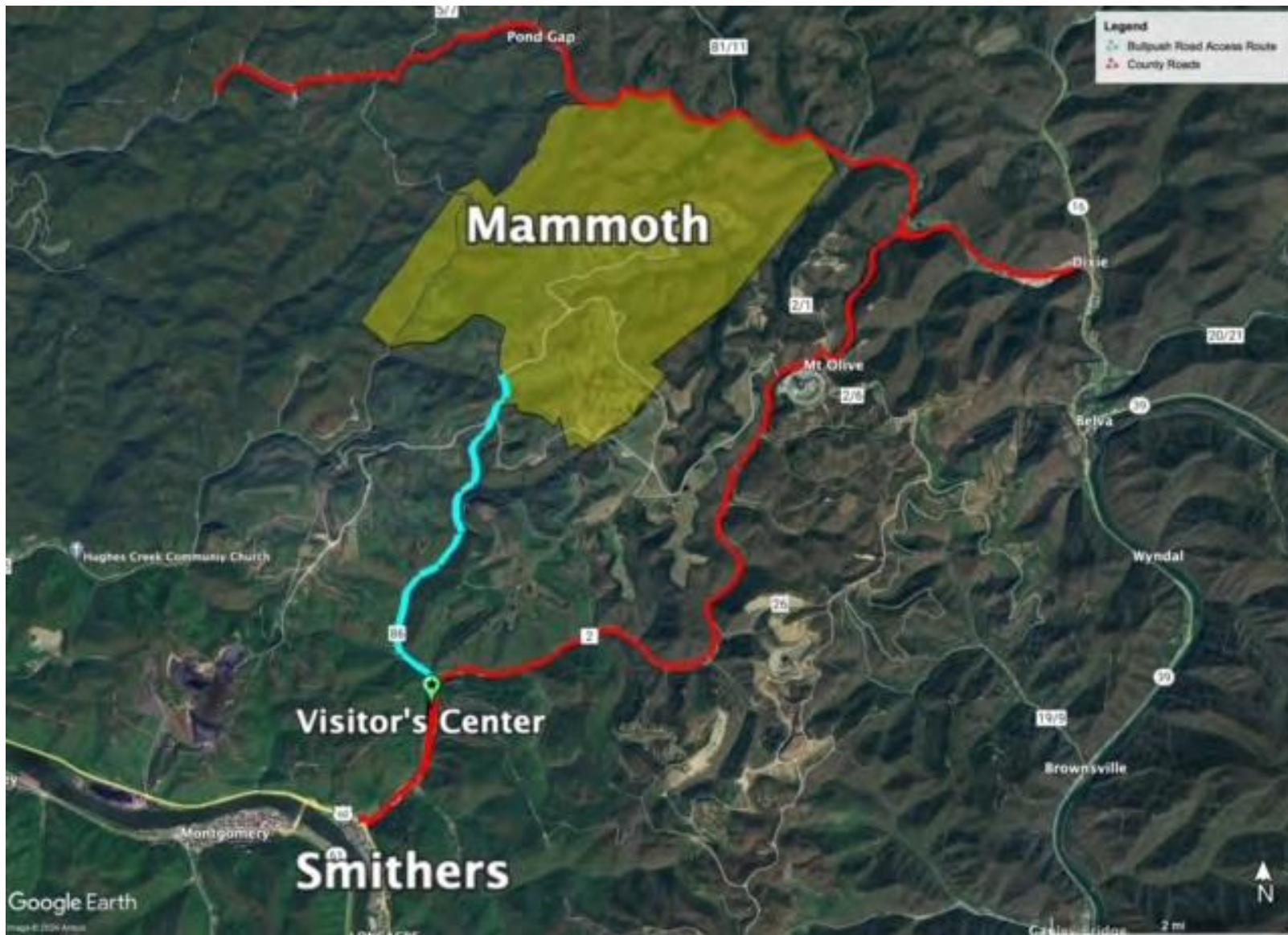


Figure 6. Mammoth Preserve

## NEAR TERM INITIATIVES

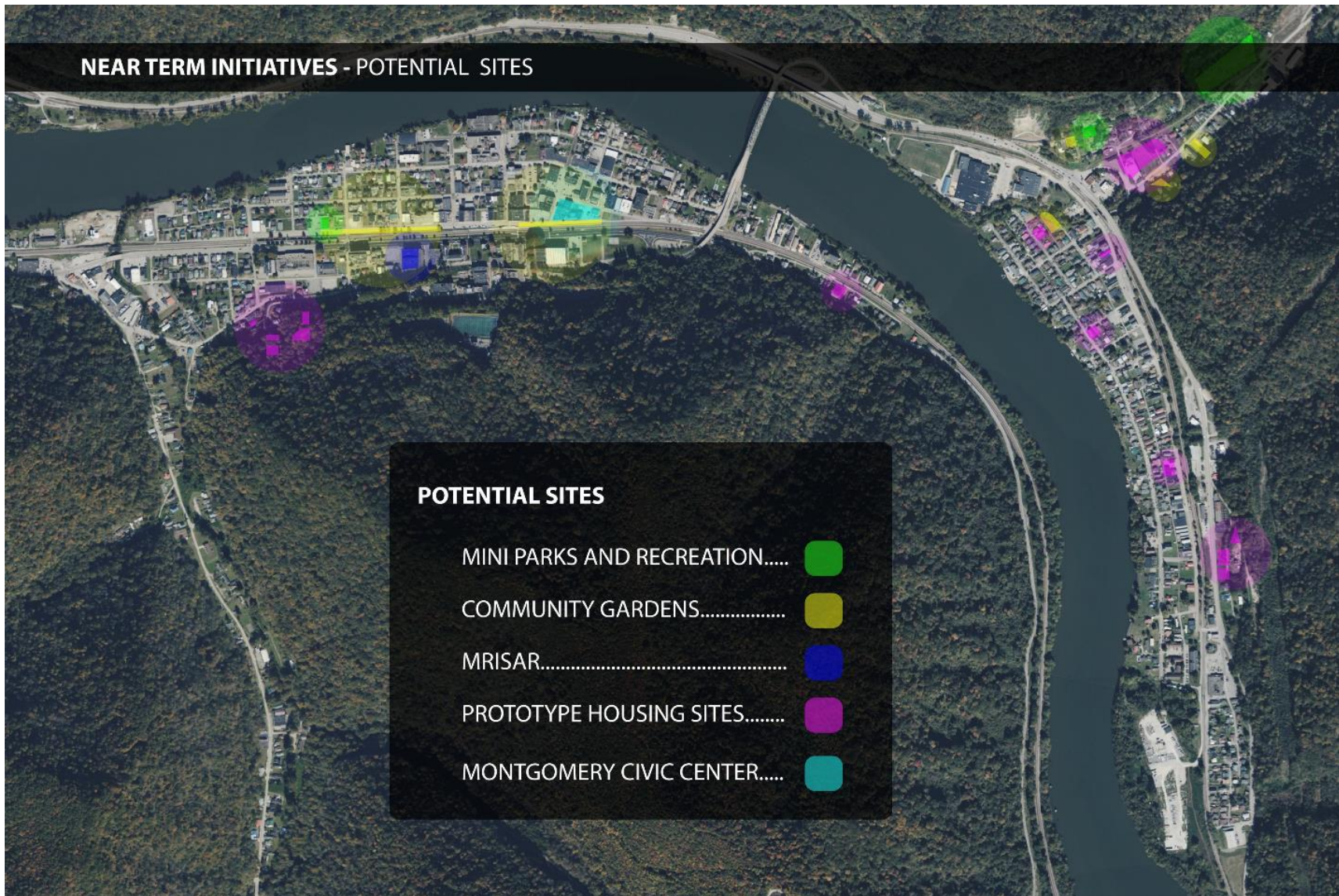


Figure 7. Near Term Initiatives

### *Town Trails*

The following initiatives are the opportunities that are most immediately actionable to begin advancing the plan for the SMIGC.

Developing a town trail system in Smithers-Montgomery represents a pivotal element in the broader vision of creating the SMIGC. This interconnected network of trails is designed to link the Seven Vital Conditions for Health and Well-Being physically and symbolically. By connecting these elements to the existing and planned River Cities Urban Walking Trail, the trail system will not only enhance the accessibility of local resources but also will encourage physical activity among residents, a key factor in promoting overall health.

The trail system can also serve as a vital conduit for social interaction and community engagement, creating spaces where residents can meet, interact, and build stronger community ties. It can serve a backbone for sustainable transportation within the area, offering a green alternative that reduces reliance on vehicles, thus contributing to environmental health and reducing carbon footprints.

Integrating the town trail system with the River Cities Urban Walking Trail has great potential to magnify the community's appeal to residents and visitors, showcasing the area's commitment to health, sustainability, and quality of life. This interconnectedness not only bolsters local pride but also positions Smithers-Montgomery as a model for other communities striving towards a healthier future.

### *The MRISAR Institute of Science, Art, and Robotics*

The MRISAR Institute of Science, Art, and Robotics, known for its innovative blend of technology and art through interactive exhibits, presents a unique opportunity for the Smithers-Montgomery region with the proposal to open a museum and school in Orndorff Hall. This initiative could catalyze innovation and investment, attracting attention not only for its cutting-edge exhibits on robotics, science, and art but also for its educational outreach and philanthropic endeavors. Integrating this museum with other SMIGC initiatives could significantly enhance community engagement, promoting a culture of learning, creativity, and technological advancement (especially in senior care and chronic care management).

The presence of MRISAR's museum would not only enrich the educational landscape by offering classes for pre-college students, but also stimulate economic growth by drawing visitors, researchers, and professionals to the area. A synergistic effect could be created by pairing the museum's focus on robotics and interactive science with local health, educational, and recreational projects, fostering a community that values innovation and well-being. This integration promises to transform Smithers-Montgomery into a hub of progress and health, leveraging MRISAR's global recognition in robotics and interactive exhibits to inspire future generations and drive sustainable community development.

### *Montgomery Civic Center*

Having received a Congressionally Directed Appropriation for development, a new Civic Center area has been planned in Montgomery near the former WVU Tech Campus. Caitlyn Lewis and Kaira Niedoba, students of Professor Peter Butler of WVU Extension, developed plans for this area; design elements include a railroad themed stage, pavilion, parking, fire pit, seating, and more.

The Civic Center area is envisioned as more than just a physical space; it symbolizes Montgomery's commitment to fostering a strong, united community where everyone feels valued and connected. Through this development, the city of Montgomery will set an example of how neighborhood planning and community-focused initiatives can significantly contribute to the social fabric of a city, instilling pride and a sense of belonging among its residents.

### *Growing-in-Place Housing Model*

The SMIGC Growing-in-Place Housing Model represents a holistic approach to urban development, aiming to rejuvenate existing neighborhoods by weaving together a tapestry of education, healthcare, and housing options enriched with the vitality of economic development and efficient transportation. This model emphasizes harmonizing the neighborhood's inherent strengths with the dynamism of redevelopment visions, ensuring residents have comprehensive access to healthcare and other needed services, career education, workforce development, and skills training. It advocates for diverse educational programs, support from healthcare and social service agencies, and an array of housing options, fostering a vibrant community ecosystem. Central to this model is integrating an efficient job placement program, designed to retain talented individuals within the community by providing pathways to employment close to home. By treating education and

healthcare as the bedrock for neighborhood improvement and by enhancing connectivity through efficient public transportation, the Growing-in-Place Housing Model aspires to cultivate a sense of belonging and mutual care among residents, thereby creating a sustainable environment that supports the well-being and economic prosperity of its community.

### *Growing-in-Place and Aging-in-Place Housing Communities*

The SMIGC Master Plan outlines potential sites where Growing-in-Place and Aging-in-Place housing could be developed. Growing-in-Place and Aging-in-Place housing sites are designed to be integrated via a van route, walking trails, and river trails to provide access to other parts of the community.

The fusion of Growing-in-Place and Aging-in-Place housing models cultivates a sustainable, inclusive community ecosystem, where the growth and education focus enriches senior living options. This synergy enhances the community's resilience by developing career paths in senior care, directly supported by the Growing-in-Place model's emphasis on education and workforce development. This educational investment creates a pipeline of skilled caregivers and healthcare professionals, ensuring that the Aging-in-Place model is bolstered by a steady stream of qualified individuals dedicated to supporting seniors within their community.

By integrating these models, the community not only addresses the immediate needs of its aging population through accessible and comfortable living conditions but also anticipates future demands by nurturing a workforce proficient in senior care. This approach not only provides meaningful employment opportunities for residents but also ensures high-quality, culturally competent care for seniors, allowing them to age gracefully in their homes and communities.

### *Prototypical Aging-in-Place Home*

Based on our initial property analysis and property information that the mayors provided, we have suggested sites for the development of a prototype Aging-in-Place home, which will be open for public viewing to demonstrate the future of senior living in rural communities. This model home will highlight how thoughtful design and advanced technology can support seniors' independence and comfort. It will feature smart home systems for easy control of the environment, voice-activated



devices, and emergency alerts. Designed for accessibility, it will have wide doorways, single-floor layouts, and safe bathrooms with walk-in showers. The home will also be situated near essential services and public transport, underscoring the role of a supportive community in Aging-in-Place. The Master Plan aims to set a new standard for rural senior living, emphasizing safety, convenience, and community connectivity.

In addition to showcasing the future of senior living, the prototype Aging-in-Place home has the potential to become a tourist attraction and a catalyst for further Aging-in-Place initiatives. Inviting visitors to explore the innovative features and technologies of the home can raise awareness and interest in aging-friendly designs, serving as an educational resource for architects, developers, and the general public. This exposure could ignite a broader conversation about the importance of Aging-in-Place, attracting investment and interest in developing similar projects elsewhere. As a beacon of innovation, the prototype home will inspire communities throughout Appalachia to embrace and invest in designs that support aging in place, leading to a widespread transformation in how we approach senior living.

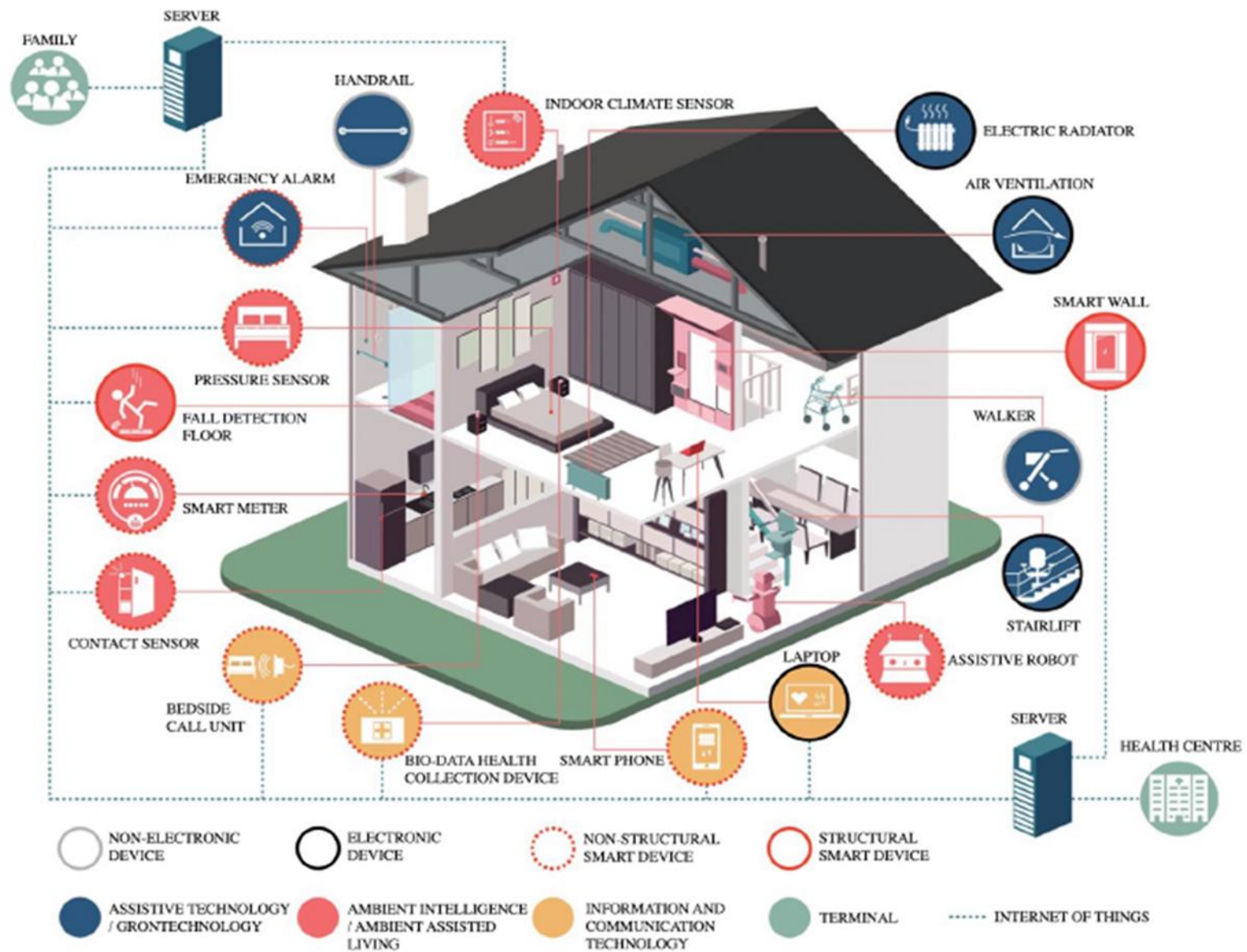


Figure 8. The classification of smart technologies used in the home environment

### *Smart Home Design*

Research on Aging-in-Place through smart home renovations highlights a strategic approach focused on enhancing the safety, comfort, and independence of older adults by integrating innovative technologies into their living environments. Key elements include:

1. **Assessment:** Evaluating the home to identify modifications needed to support independent living, using tools like virtual reality for precise planning.
2. **Technology Selection:** Choosing smart technologies based on ease of use, cost-effectiveness, and the specific needs and preferences of the older occupant, aimed at improving safety, health monitoring, and social connections.
3. **Design Strategy:** Applying universal design principles and participatory methods to ensure modifications are accessible, functional, and aesthetically pleasing, with a focus on seamless integration of technology.
4. **Evaluation:** Assessing the impact of renovations on the occupants' quality of life and making adjustments based on their feedback to ensure the modifications meet their needs.
5. **Adaptability:** Emphasizing flexible and extensible modifications to accommodate the evolving needs of aging individuals, ensuring the home environment remains supportive over time.

This research underscores the importance of a user-centered, adaptable approach in Aging-in-Place initiatives, aiming to create living spaces that are safe, comfortable, and capable of evolving with the occupants' needs.

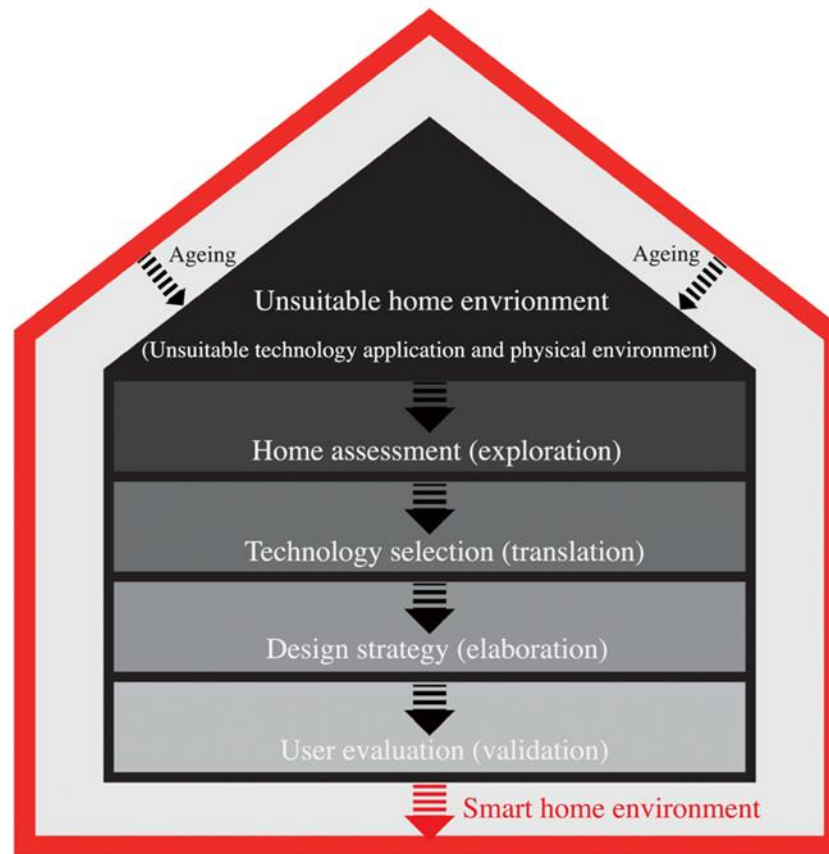


Figure 9. Smart home modification process

*Dr. Y.V. Ramana Reddy*

Dr. Y. V. Ramana Reddy is a distinguished Professor of Computer Science and Director of the Smart Living Space Lab (SLS Lab) at West Virginia University. His research focuses on enabling technologies to improve collaboration among widely distributed teams, with interests spanning Artificial Intelligence, Knowledge-Based Simulation, Concurrent Engineering, Medical Informatics, Telemedicine, Distance Learning, and Smart Living Spaces for individuals of all

abilities. Dr. Reddy has secured over \$50 million in funding from prestigious sources including DARPA, NIH, and various industry leaders. He is credited with pioneering concepts such as Knowledge-Based Simulation and the use of web browsers for distributed multimedia patient records. His work has led to over 60 publications and he has been a keynote speaker at numerous international conferences. Dr. Reddy also played a key role in founding technology-driven start-ups like Bell Atlantic Knowledge Systems and CareFlow Net, serving as Chief Scientist. Currently, he also directs the Capstone Program in his department at WVU.

At the final Healthy Village planning session on March 19, 2024, Dr. Ramana Reddy shared insights from his pioneering work, emphasizing the integration of advanced technologies to enhance the lives of aging populations. His initiatives, notably Project RANIA and the innovative concept of "Village in a City," illustrate a forward-thinking approach to gerontechnology, smart homes, and smart cities, all aimed at promoting healthy longevity for older adults.

Project RANIA stands as a testament to Dr. Reddy's vision, incorporating an array of technologies — from sensors and the Internet of Things (IoT) to robotics and artificial intelligence (AI) — into a model home designed to support the diverse needs of its residents. This initiative strives to create an ambient intelligence that proactively caters to aspects such as social connectivity, health monitoring, and physical mobility, employing everything from robotics that navigate around obstacles to cloud-based systems for unobtrusive care and timely interventions.

## Healthy Longevity - Connected Smart Village

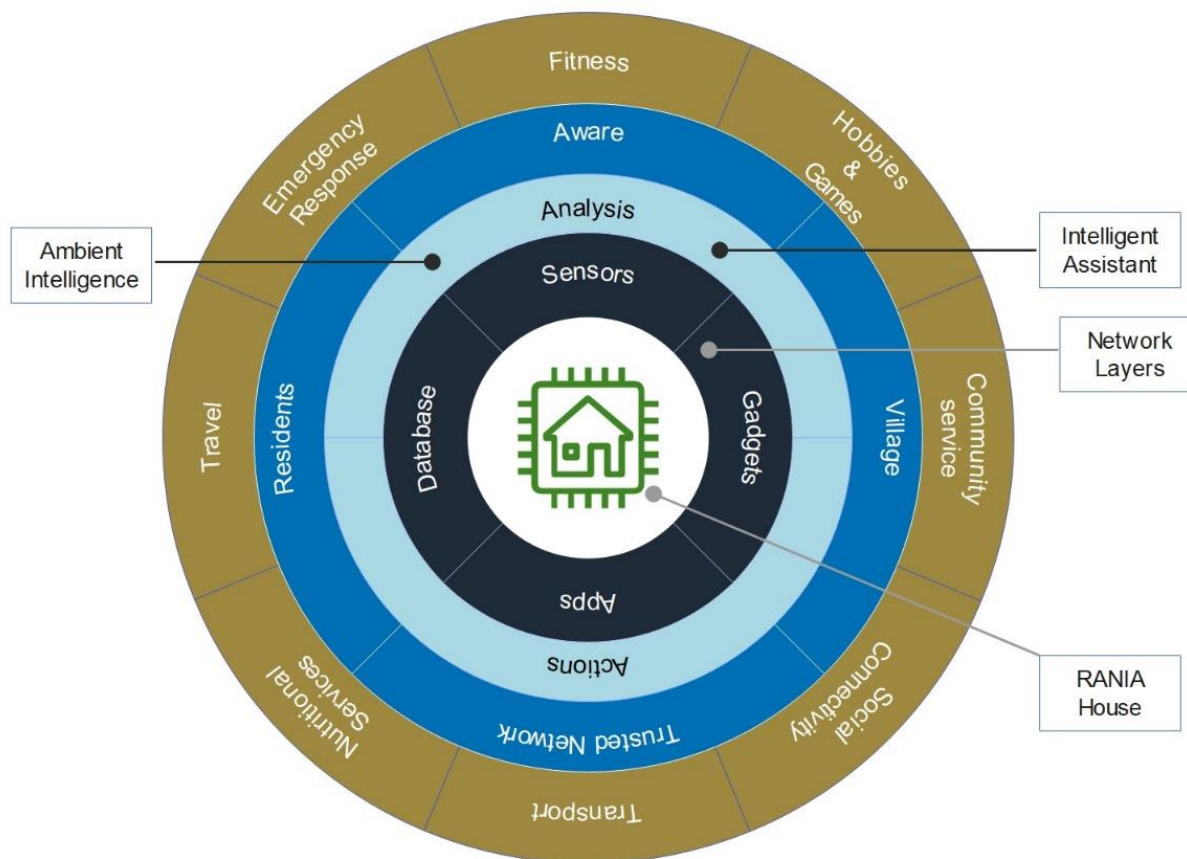


Figure 10. Healthy Longevity – Connected Smart Village

Expanding beyond the confines of individual smart homes, Dr. Reddy's "Village in a City" concept envisions retirement living within supportive, interconnected communities. Inspired by the ethos of community-based support networks, this innovative model fosters social engagement and collective caregiving, advocating for a systemic transformation to prioritize the well-being and societal contribution of older adults.

Dr. Reddy's work underscores the need for global collaboration in the realm of gerontechnology. He champions the development of resident-aware environments that do more than just monitor health; they also combat social isolation and encourage ongoing, meaningful activity. Through comprehensive smart living solutions, Dr. Reddy aims to markedly improve the quality of life for older adults, seamlessly integrating technology into their daily environments.

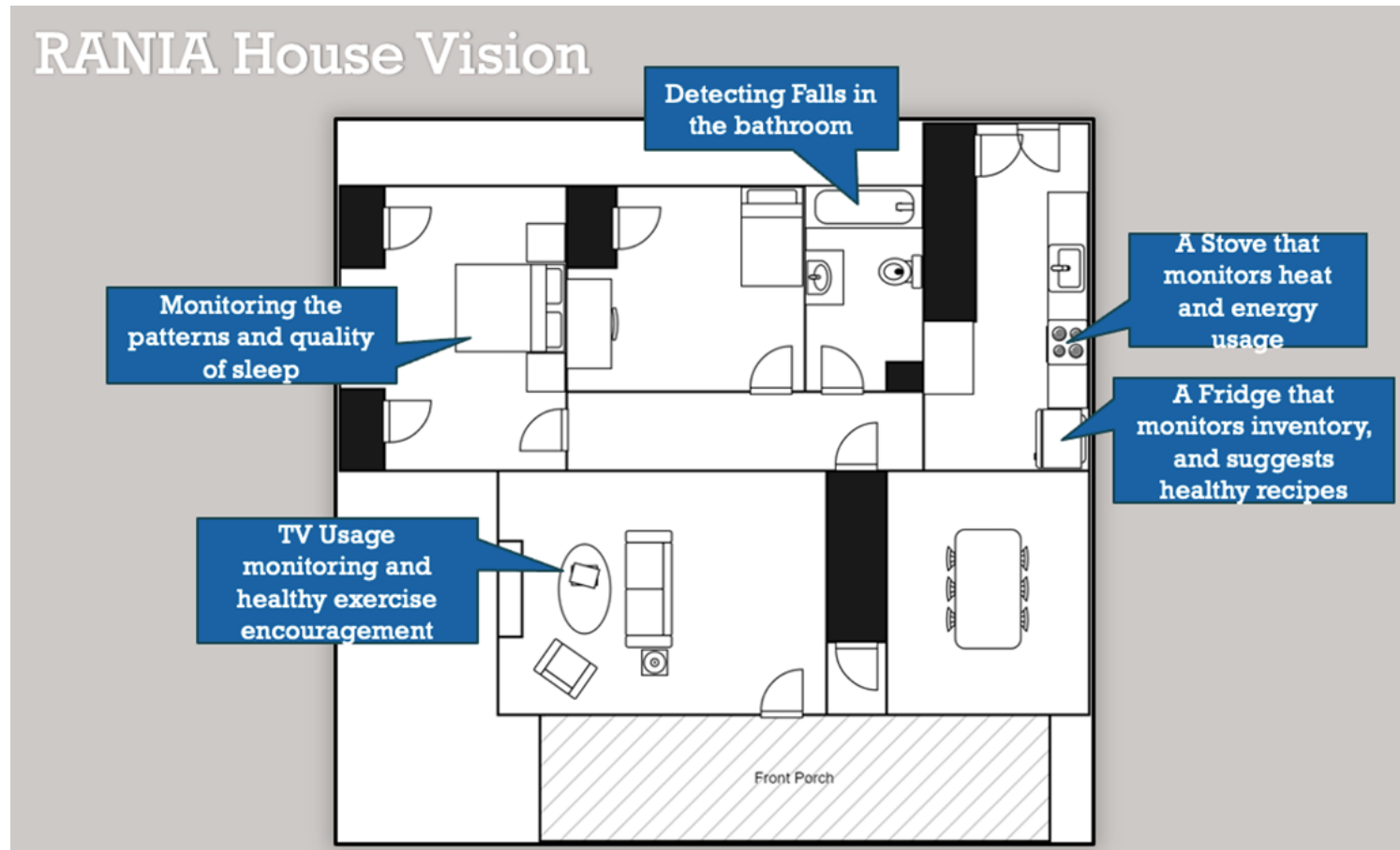


Figure 11. RANIA House Vision

Collaborating with Dr. Reddy to develop a prototypical smart home in Smithers and Montgomery can serve as a catalyst for future investment in this critical field, highlighting the potential of technology-enhanced living spaces to redefine Aging-in-Place. His contributions offer a blueprint for a future where older adults can thrive in their own homes, supported by an ecosystem of intelligent technologies and community networks.

### *Intergenerational Supportive Neighborhood*

The Dynamis Team has pinpointed the Cannelton Road Church and adjacent homes as the potential locations for developing a supportive neighborhood. This initiative, envisioned as an Intergenerational Supportive Neighborhood, is designed to foster both Growing-in-Place and Aging-in-Place living environments, thus accommodating a wide spectrum of residents' needs. The existing homes within this site are planned to undergo significant renovations to meet the modern specifications required for Aging-in-Place residences, ensuring that older adults can live comfortably and safely in their own homes with access to necessary support services. Simultaneously, the construction of new dwellings will cater to Growing-in-Place housing, designed to support families and individuals at various stages of life.



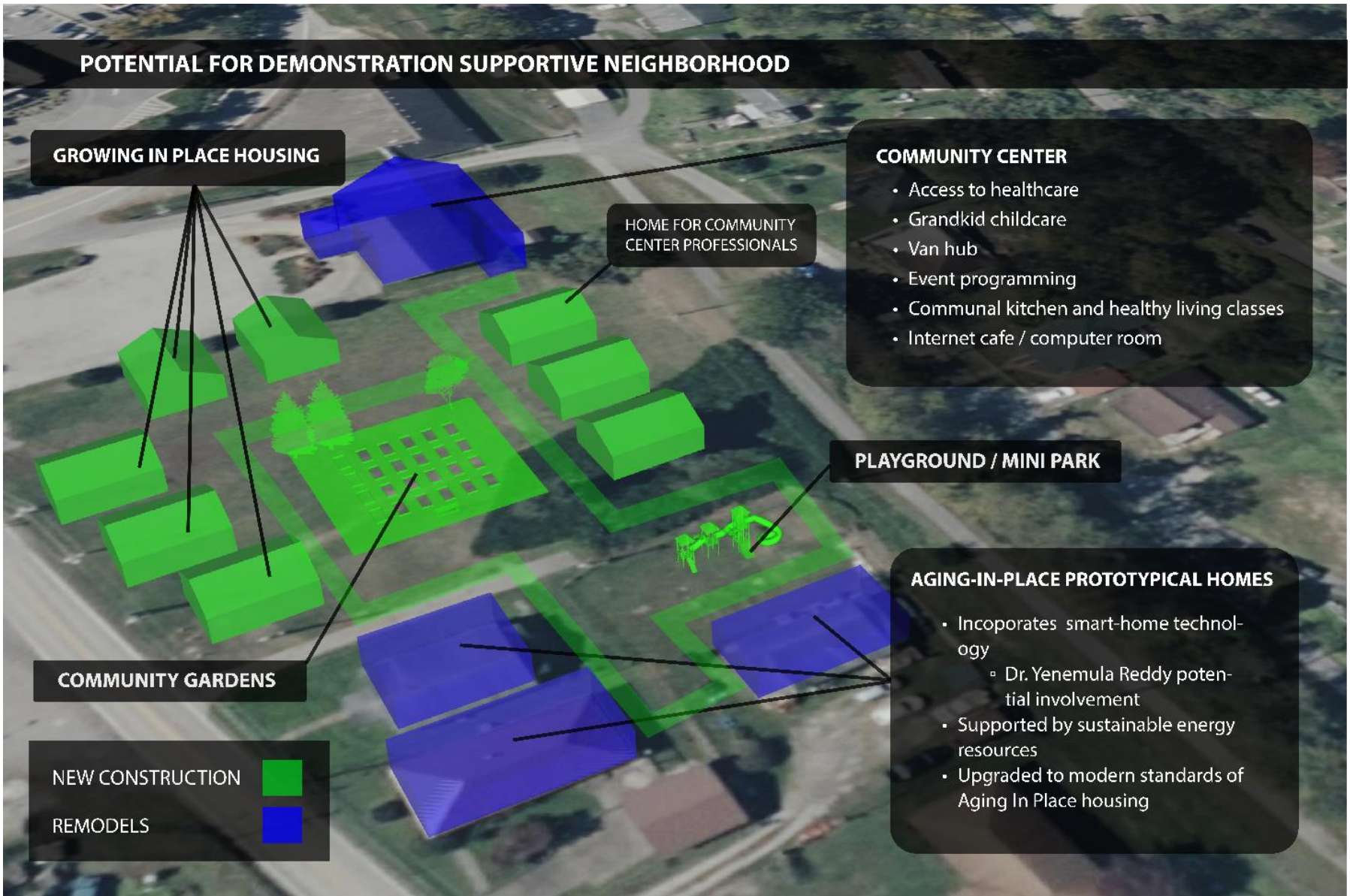


Figure 12. Demonstration Supportive Neighborhood

A pivotal feature of this development is transforming the old Cannelton Road Church into a vibrant community center. This center is ideal to become a hub of activity and support, offering a range of services, including healthcare by onsite professionals, childcare tailored for grand-families, and a suite of programs aimed at enhancing community well-being. Facilities will include a local transportation van hub to improve mobility, event programming to foster social connections, a communal kitchen for healthy living classes, and an internet café / computer room to ensure digital inclusivity.

One of the newly developed Growing-in-Place homes will be designated for the professionals working within the community center, creating a seamless integration of service provision within the neighborhood. The addition of a playground/mini park and community gardens will further enrich the communal living experience, providing spaces for recreation, relaxation, and community farming.

By adopting this holistic approach, Smithers-Montgomery stands to gain significantly from the establishment of this supportive neighborhood. Not only will it enhance the quality of life for current and future residents by promoting health, well-being, and intergenerational bonding, but it will also serve as a pioneering model for future neighborhoods across Appalachia. This initiative embodies a progressive vision for community living, where support systems and shared spaces unite residents of all ages, creating a cohesive and resilient community fabric.

## LONG TERM INITIATIVES

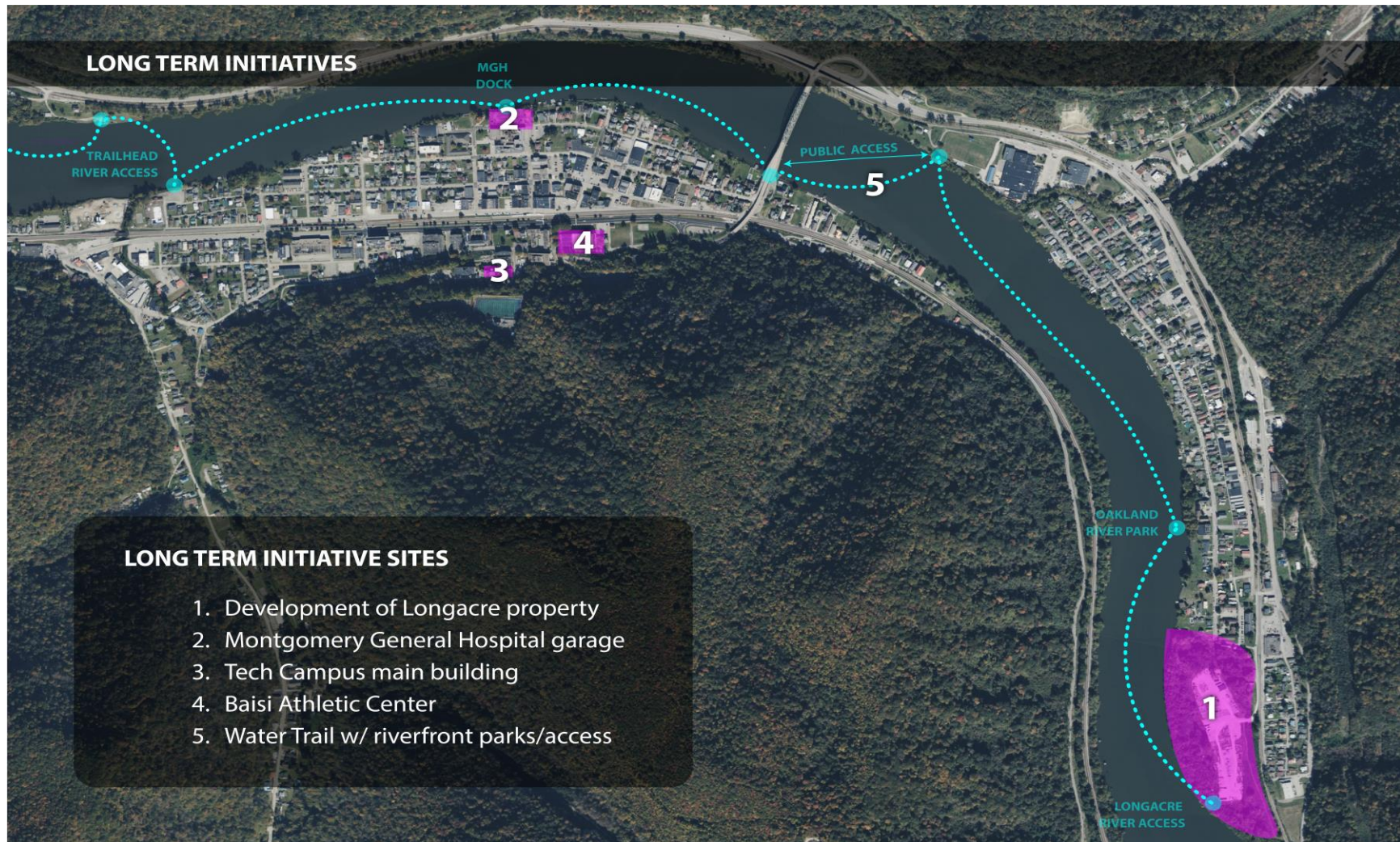


Figure 13. Long Term Initiatives

### *Development of Longacre*

Situated on the southern edge of Smithers, the 25-acre expanse known as Longacre, formerly a coal camp by the Kanawha River, is a prime development asset with immense potential. This site has received a Congressionally Designated Appropriation for its development. The Longacre Masterplan, spearheaded by doctoral student Udday Datta, proposes a transformative vision for this site. The plan outlines creating a dynamic, mixed-use district poised to become a gateway to the adjacent national park, leveraging its riverside location.

Envisioned as a pedestrian-friendly enclave, the proposed development blends recreational green spaces, residential quarters, lodging options, and direct river access to encourage flat-water activities such as paddle-boarding and fishing. To promote tourism, the development plan also envisions the creation of a hotel and RV park targeted toward seniors. This ambitious project seeks to boost Smithers & Montgomery's allure by promoting tourism, outdoor recreation, and environmental stewardship, meticulously addressing the need for trail connectivity and strategic marketing.

A critical element of the plan's success is seamlessly weaving Longacre into the broader SMIGC initiative. It underscores the importance of strategic transportation networks that link Longacre with pivotal elements like the Intergenerational Supportive Neighborhood, the Town Trail, and the Water Trail. This integrated approach not only ensures ease of access but also fosters a community ethos rooted in intergenerational interaction and a commitment to healthy living.

### *Montgomery General Hospital Garage*

The Montgomery General Hospital (MGH) garage, currently underutilized due to disrepair, holds significant potential to become a cornerstone for fostering energy resilience and enhancing community life in Smithers-Montgomery. Transforming this space into a multifunctional center and community space could greatly enrich the community's connection to the Kanawha River, offering many recreational and communal opportunities. Envisioned features include a community dock with riverside seating, a boat launch, a Water Trail stop, and a venue for adventure tourism events. This new dock would seamlessly integrate with the existing community dock, creating a cohesive waterfront experience. Additionally, envisioned is the transformation of the adjacent green space into a mini park complete with dog-friendly amenities, promoting outdoor activities and social gatherings among residents.

The redevelopment of the MGH garage into such a vibrant community hub would catalyze fostering a deeper sense of belonging, pride, and engagement within the Smithers-Montgomery community. By offering a space for communal dining supported by the MGH cafeteria and hosting various community events, this project would not only enhance the physical landscape but also strengthen the social fabric of the town.

Accessibility and connectivity are key; ensuring these new additions are easily accessible and well-integrated with the broader SMIGC concept is paramount. This integration would promote a holistic, healthy living environment, encouraging residents to engage more with their community and natural surroundings. Through these thoughtful developments, the MGH garage can transform from a neglected space into a beacon of community unity, engagement, and pride, further enriching the lives of all who call Smithers and Montgomery home.

### *Old Main Building*

The redevelopment of the Old Main administrative building into an intergenerational supportive apartment community in Smithers-Montgomery exemplifies a pioneering approach to inclusive living. This project, envisioned to blend seamlessly with the broader SMIGC Master Plan, aims to transform the building into a vibrant hub where residents of all ages can live, learn, and thrive together. By incorporating Dr. Reddy's aging in place and virtual village technology, the development will offer smart living environments that support independent living for older adults. This includes features like automated medication reminders, emergency alerts, and virtual check-ins, enhancing safety and facilitating intergenerational interactions through digital platforms for social activities and mutual aid. In addition to the use of technology, it is envisioned that the individual apartments would be furnished with space-saving furniture and appliances that promote physical safety in small spaces.

The mixed residential setup will cater to various life stages, ensuring accessible apartments for Aging-In-Place alongside units for younger individuals and families. This design fosters daily interactions across generations, encouraging mutual support and collaboration. Shared amenities like communal gardens and flexible activity spaces will promote community engagement and belonging.

Integrating the Old Main with the SMIGC Master Plan's health, wellness, and transportation infrastructure ensures that this intergenerational community not only enhances residents' lives but also contributes to the town's social fabric. This forward-

thinking redevelopment project champions diversity, inclusion, and technological integration, setting a new standard for community-focused living environments that prioritize the well-being and engagement of all residents, further enhancing Smithers-Montgomery's reputation as a model for innovative living solutions.

### *Baisi Athletic Center*

Dynamis' flagship project, the Samaritan Center on Detroit's east side, transformed an inner-city hospital into a Healthy Village with more than 70 tenants, including a new multi-tenant building on campus featuring a gymnasium, dental center, educational classrooms, and offices for non-profits. This innovative development secured substantial philanthropic funding, blending healthcare, education, job training, and social services into a unified community-support model. In a similar vein, the Baisi Athletic Center has the potential to be redeveloped into a multi-tenant hub, embodying the Samaritan Center's holistic approach to community support by offering a mix of healthcare, education, and fitness services

The Baisi Athletic Center stands as a landmark facility on the former WVU Tech campus, embodying both historical significance and architectural grandeur. Given its iconic status and substantial capacity, it presents a unique challenge in terms of utilization and operational sustainability. The prospect of relying on a single tenant to generate sufficient traffic and revenue to support the building's extensive operational demands appears impractical. Therefore, a strategic shift towards a multi-tenant model is recommended to maximize the center's potential and ensure its financial viability.

Envisioning the Baisi Athletic Center as a vibrant, multi-functional hub, we propose diversifying its use by introducing a variety of tenants that cater to a wide range of community and student needs. Including PACE adult care services would address the essential care requirements of the elderly, providing a supportive and engaging environment for our aging population outside of the MGH nursing homes. Similarly, integrating childcare services within the center would offer intergenerational value to local workers and residents, ensuring a safe and nurturing space for their children.

Expanding on the existing dive training program for first responders, we can further solidify the center's role as a critical training facility, supporting the preparation and readiness for emergency services personnel. This could include advanced simulation environments and training modules for a broader spectrum of emergency scenarios.

Additionally, introducing a physical therapy clinic would not only serve the rehabilitation needs of athletes and the general public but also create learning and internship opportunities for students pursuing health and wellness disciplines and provide access to fitness equipment for residents. Moreover, offering fitness programs specifically designed for Bridge Valley students and Mountaineer Challenge Academy participants could significantly enhance their overall educational experience, promoting health and wellness as integral components of their development.

By adopting this multi-tenant approach, the Baisi Athletic Center can transform into a dynamic community asset, fostering synergies among various user groups and creating a sustainable revenue model. This strategy not only preserves the legacy of the building but also enriches the campus and local community with essential services and opportunities for engagement, collaboration, and growth.

The Baisi Athletic Center embodies great potential for transformation into a multi-tenant community hub. However, its large size and historical significance present substantial challenges in energy resiliency and sustainability. The building requires significant modifications to enhance its heating, cooling, and overall energy systems to meet modern standards and ensure operational efficiency. Given the diverse usage envisioned—including a gymnasium, dental center, educational facilities, and spaces for healthcare and social services—the center will need a robust, adaptable energy infrastructure. To address this, energy efficiency improvements and the implementation of sustainable energy sources should be a priority. This will not only reduce operational costs but also contribute to the broader goals of environmental stewardship and community well-being. By making these upgrades, the Baisi Athletic Center can serve as a model of energy resiliency, complementing its role as a vibrant, multi-functional community asset.

#### *Water Trail with Riverfront Access Mini-Parks*

The SMIGC Master Plan envisions the creation of a comprehensive Water Trail, designed to seamlessly connect river access points across the two towns, enhancing the recreational and transportation infrastructure of the region. This trail will begin at the marina west of Montgomery and feature a series of riverfront mini-parks at strategic access points. These locations include the eastern Town Trail access points on both sides of the river, the MGH dock, public access points near the bridge,

the Oakland River Park at the former Oakland school site, and culminating at Longacre. Each point along the water trail will be equipped with essential amenities such as ramps and docking facilities, ensuring ease of access for all.

The introduction of the Water Trail is a strategic extension of the SMIGC, aimed at augmenting access and transportation options for the community. By integrating these river access points with the broader network of trails and parks, we are not just enhancing mobility but also spotlighting the river's thriving natural beauty. This initiative is about more than connectivity; it's about rekindling the community's relationship with the river, highlighting its role as a central, vibrant feature of the landscape that has nourished life and culture in the area for generations.

The Water Trail can be pivotal in fostering a sense of belonging and interconnectedness among residents. As individuals and families engage with the trail, whether for leisure, exercise, or simple contemplation of nature, they will experience a deeper connection to the river and, by extension, to each other. This project aims to restore the river's identity as the heart of the community, transforming it into a bustling artery that not only supports biodiversity and ecological health but also becomes a symbol of the community's resilience, unity, and commitment to sustainable living.

## **MOBILITY**

The SMIGC Master Plan envisions an extensive network of trails weaving through Smithers and Montgomery, designed to unify all components of this vibrant community. Originating from the existing pathways adjacent to the former WVU Tech campus and incorporating the River Cities Walking Trail that links Smithers and Montgomery, this comprehensive walking trail is set to serve as the backbone of community connectivity. It aims to bridge the hospital and its enhanced community dock space with pivotal locations within the SMIGC framework, such as Seed Sower Manor, Rivermont Presbyterian Homes, the designated Montgomery Civic Center, Cavalier Heights, and the historical buildings of the old Tech Campus.

Spanning the bridge across the river into Smithers, the trail will extend through the proposed supportive neighborhood site, encircling the Gateway Center, and seamlessly joining the River Cities trails leading down to Longacre. Complementing this pedestrian pathway, a van route will mirror the trail's trajectory, offering crucial support to residents facing ambulatory challenges or simply requiring transportation assistance.





Figure 14. Mobility

A cornerstone of the Healthy Village concept is the principle of mobility, which transcends mere transportation to encompass access and interconnectedness. This mobility is about empowering residents with the freedom to navigate through the various facets of the Healthy Village effortlessly and without hesitation. It cultivates a profound sense of community, belonging, and ownership among the townsfolk, rekindling town pride and reinforcing the communal bond. The intentional design and strategic placement of trails and transportation options are more than just infrastructural developments; they are the lifelines that enhance the quality of life, fostering an environment where every individual feels valued, connected, and engaged.

By facilitating easy movement between the entities that make up the SMIGC, from healthcare facilities and educational institutions to recreational areas and residential neighborhoods, the community will build a framework for a more cohesive, inclusive, and dynamic community. This mobility not only supports physical health through increased opportunities for walking and biking but also enhances mental well-being by promoting social interactions and a sense of belonging. Ultimately, developing these trails and transportation networks embodies the commitment to creating the SMIGC, where mobility catalyzes community revitalization, social cohesion, and a renewed sense of collective pride in Smithers and Montgomery.

## **ENERGY RESILIENCY**

Energy resiliency forms a cornerstone of the SMIGC Master Plan, recognizing it as crucial not only for the sustainability and well-being of the community but also as a strategic avenue to attract significant federal funding. The Master Plan has identified various potential sites for energy resiliency projects, including the football field for solar installations, Montgomery streets for geothermal energy harnessing, the MGH parking deck for solar canopies, and the sites designated for Aging-in-Place and Growing-in-Place housing, as well as the Longacre property, which could serve multifunctional energy purposes.

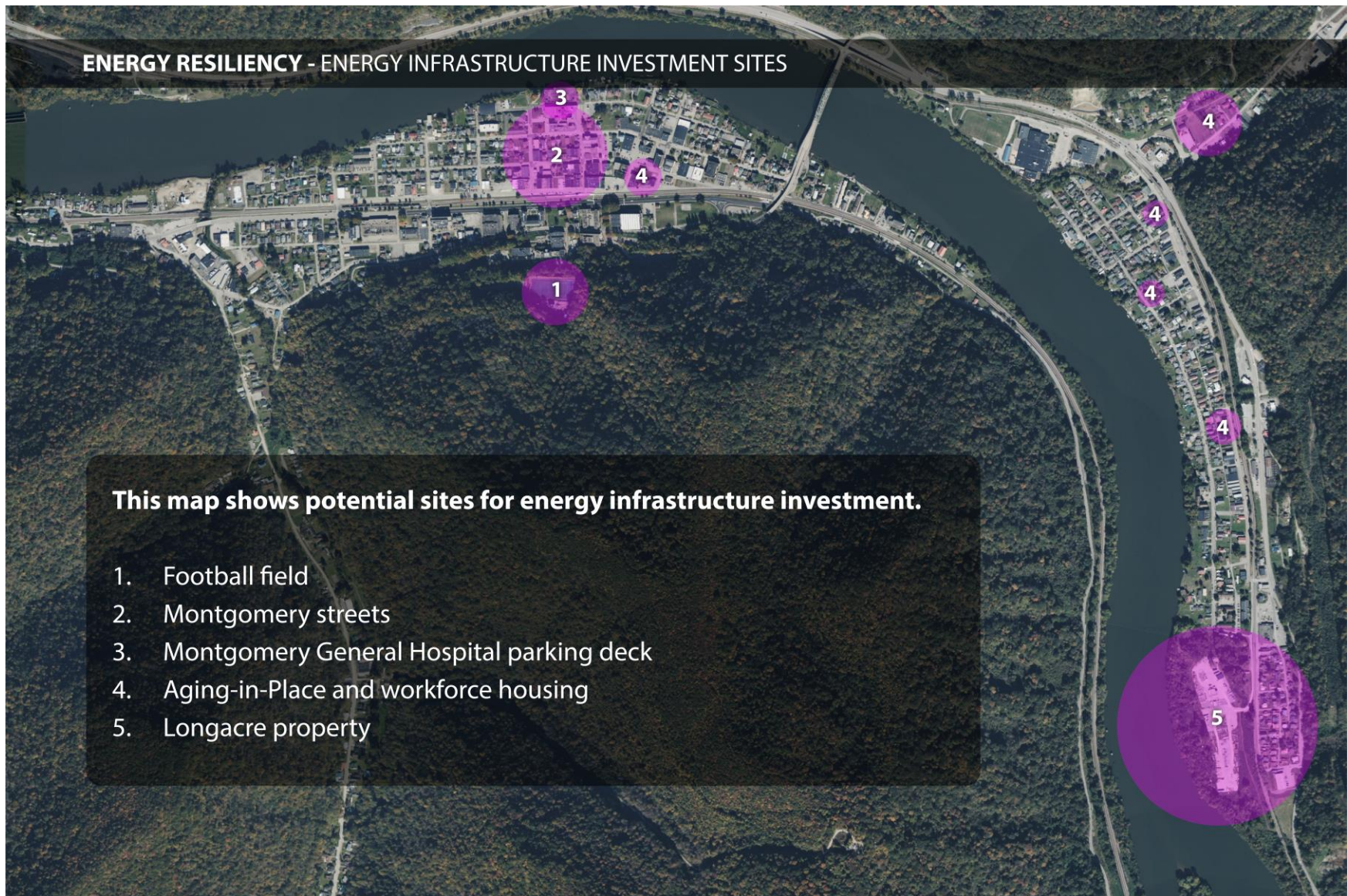


Figure 15. Energy Resiliency

The opportunity to secure federal and state funding for energy resiliency is immensely promising, particularly through initiatives like Justice40 and other federal programs aimed at supporting sustainable development and climate resilience. These initiatives offer a path to not only bolster our community's infrastructure against the impacts of climate change but also to foster economic growth and job creation in sustainable industries.

To fully capitalize on these opportunities, further investment and collaboration with energy professionals are imperative. Consulting with experts in sustainable energy, environmental planning, and federal funding mechanisms will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the specific projects that could be implemented within the community. This professional guidance is essential for developing detailed proposals that align with the criteria of federal initiatives, ensuring that the applications for funding are both compelling and competitive.

Engaging in this deeper exploration of energy resiliency projects not only positions Smithers-Montgomery to enhance the community's sustainability and self-reliance but also opens avenues for substantial financial support from federal and state sources. This strategic approach underscores the commitment to creating the SMIGC, that is not just vibrant and inclusive but also forward-thinking in its sustainability and resilience strategies.

## SEVEN VITAL CONDITIONS FOR HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

The SMIGC Master Plan is an innovative initiative to foster a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable community. Central to its strategy is the foundation provided through the Seven Vital Conditions for Health and Well-Being framework: Reliable Transportation, a Thriving Natural World, Basic Needs, Humane Housing, Meaningful Work and Wealth, Lifelong Learning, and, at its heart, Belonging & Civic Muscle. The SMIGC Master Plan was strategically developed not only to address these vital conditions but also to create a network of interconnectivity and enhanced mobility among them, ensuring that residents have the freedom to engage with and benefit from all aspects of the SMIGC without barriers.

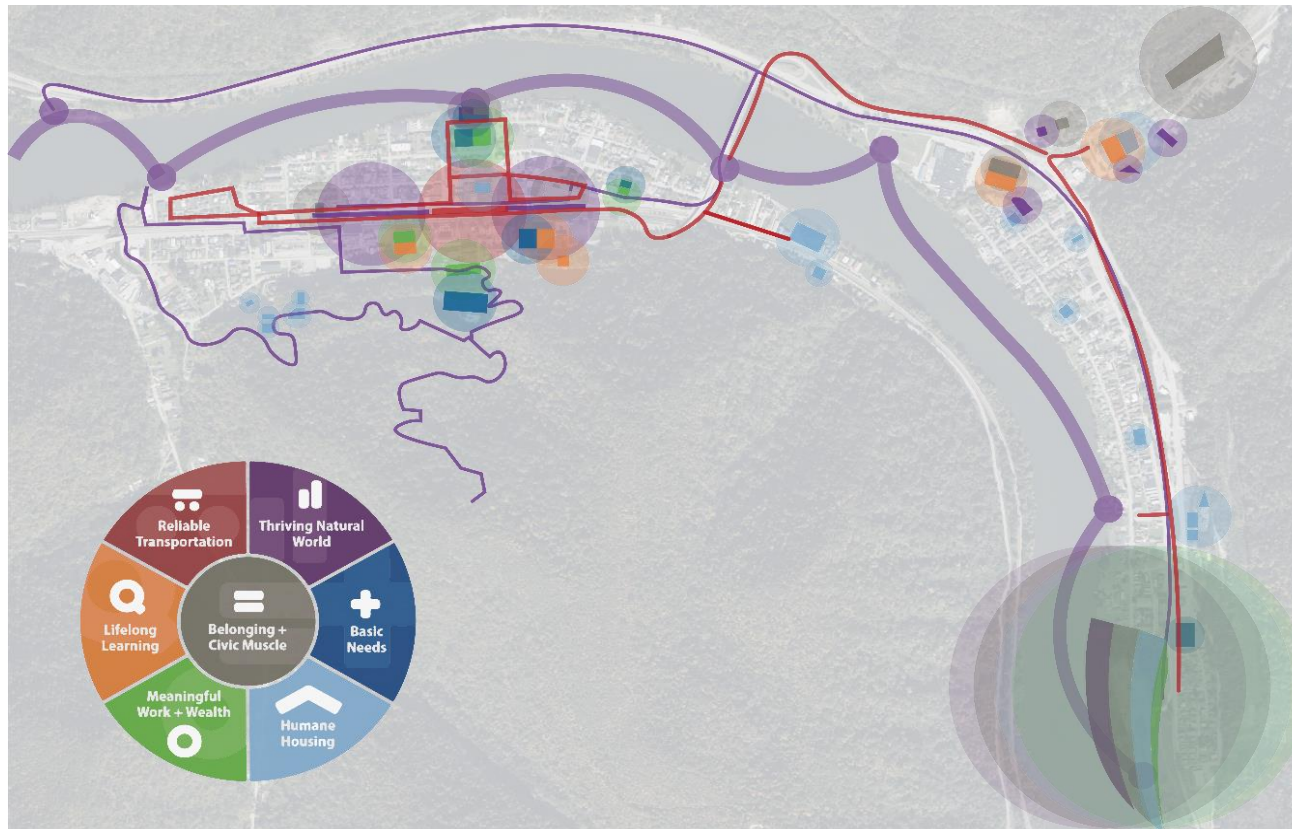


Figure 16. Seven Vital Conditions Map

*Reliable Transportation* is envisioned as the backbone of the SMIGC ensuring all residents have access to services, amenities, and each other. This includes the development of walking trails, a van route for those with mobility issues, and enhancements to public transportation, creating a web of accessibility that binds the community together.

*The Thriving Natural World* condition is advanced through the incorporation of green spaces, parks, and recreational areas like the proposed Water Trail and riverfront parks. These initiatives not only promote a connection with nature but also support environmental stewardship and outdoor recreation.

*Addressing Basic Needs* involves improving access to nutritious food, healthcare, and other essential services. This is achieved through strategic initiatives like the expansion of Grant's Supermarket, use of Community Health Workers to increase healthcare services, enhancements to Montgomery General Hospital, and the establishment of Seed Sower Manor, providing comprehensive support for residents' health and well-being.

*Humane Housing* is targeted through developments like the Aging-in-Place and Growing-in-Place housing projects, which aim to provide accessible and comfortable living conditions for all community members, from the elderly to young families.

The condition of *Meaningful Work and Wealth* is fostered through educational and workforce training programs offered by institutions like Bridge Valley Community College and the Mountaineer Challenge Academy, the secondary school systems, and MRISAR, creating pathways to employment and economic stability within the community. It is also anticipated that by creating the Water Trail and capitalizing on the close proximity to the New River Gorge National Park, opportunities for meaningful work in tourism and supporting industries will develop.

*Lifelong Learning* is encouraged through the integration of educational programs, the development of community centers like the Gateway Center, and initiatives such as the MRISAR Institute proposal, which together cultivate a culture of continuous growth and curiosity.

At the core of the SMIGC, *Belonging & Civic Muscle* is nurtured by creating spaces and programs that promote community engagement, civic participation, and a strong sense of community identity and pride. This includes the development of communal spaces for interaction and the encouragement of community-led initiatives and partnerships.

The SMIGC Master Plan is designed to create a seamless flow between these vital conditions, enhancing the overall quality of life for residents. By prioritizing mobility and interconnectedness, the plan ensures that each element of the SMIGC is accessible to all, fostering a deep sense of community, belonging, and shared responsibility. This holistic approach not only addresses the immediate needs of the community but also lays the groundwork for a future where Smithers and Montgomery is recognized as a beacon of health, education, and well-being.

### **RECOMMENDED STEPS MOVING FORWARD**

The SMIGC Master Plan has the potential to serve as a blueprint for other Appalachian towns. While each town has its unique challenges, the integration of town planning with community health improvement can offer a model for future development. It's important to note that the process is key, rather than the specific outcomes. To ensure the SMIGC Master Plan remains a valuable tool for guiding community development, the Dynamis Team suggests the following next steps:

*Funding Opportunities:* Utilizing geospatial mapping, particularly with resources like the Justice40 database (referenced in Attachments), is critical for designing effective interventions and evaluating outcomes. Future funding decisions by government agencies, payers, and grant-making entities will increasingly depend on quantifiable data. We recommend that funding applications, both large and small, consistently describe the impact criteria of the overall SMIGC Master Plan. Developing these marketing materials should be an early priority for new leadership.

*Access to Funding:* As community leaders advance various elements of the SMIGC Master Plan, identifying diverse funding sources becomes essential. Rural communities often lack the resources to access necessary capital. There are regional organizations addressing this capital need, but Smithers and Montgomery also require the skills and resources to craft competitive funding proposals. These proposals should be capable of integrating multiple funding sources to fully support both major and minor projects. We advise that the Center for Rural Health Development, along with its partners, establish a support structure to assist West Virginia's communities in developing strong funding proposals and aggregating different types of financial support, particularly for those with a robust community development plan.

*Local Leadership:* A crucial strategy discussed in the planning meetings is to begin recruiting a leader for the Upper Kanawha Valley Strategic Investment Council (UKVSIC), with financial backing from the West Virginia State University's Extension Office. This leader will be responsible for spearheading the development of the SMIGC Master Plan components as detailed in this report and subsequent updates. Key responsibilities will include leading the task forces outlined in The Healthy Villages Task Force Workplan (referenced in Attachments) and coordinating regular stakeholder meetings. Securing funding for this pivotal position is a primary initial step. The role should support the efforts of the UKVSIC and local mayors while promoting the innovative, collaborative decision-making that has characterized progress to date.

*Task Forces:* We recommend establishing task forces to oversee the implementation of the SMIGC Master Plan components. Initial task forces might focus on Transportation, Workforce Development, Housing, Baisi Center Development, Energy Resiliency, and Tourism. Each task force should report to the UKVSIC to ensure unified action.

*WVU Law Clinic Engagement:* As discussed at the March Planning Meeting, it is advisable for the communities to engage the WVU Law School's Law Clinic. This partnership will help review local laws and ordinances and develop a comprehensive set of policies to support the SMIGC's development.

*Stakeholder Engagement:* Continuing and expanding stakeholder and resident involvement is vital, as demonstrated by the Healthy Villages planning process that led to the SMIGC Master Plan. Additional stakeholders who could provide valuable guidance and support include Brandon Dennison from Marshall University, Ron Martin, owner of Grant's Supermarket, Adventures on the Gorge, National Church Registries, Craig Poole, owner of DoubleTree Hotel in Reading, PA, WV Tech alumni, WVU leadership, and other significant figures both within and outside the Communities.

*Site Visits:* To broaden their perspective on possible implementations for the SMIGC, community leaders and stakeholders should consider site visits to locations such as the DoubleTree Hotel in Reading, PA, to explore models for integrating persons in recovery into the workforce, and to [Singapore's Silver City initiative](#) to learn about senior living solutions that incorporate technology to alleviate loneliness and encourage active lifestyles.



## CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

For accelerated progress in the SMIGC initiative, we identify the following *critical success* factors:

1. WVU support for both the overarching strategy and the specific plan for repurposing the former WV Tech campus in Montgomery, including the transfer of ownership of the science building to MRISAR.
2. Integration of Montgomery General Hospital's strategic plan as it relates to the use of the current parking garage as a critical component of the SMIGC Master Plan.
3. Funding for the WVSU SM extension officer position and finalize the job description.
4. Technical assistance from the Center for Rural Health Development and other entities to implement tasks and support the role of the Upper Kanawha Valley Strategic Initiatives Council.
5. Communicating the enthusiasm of current stakeholders to key individuals, including leadership at the universities, state and federal officials, and various government program agencies.
6. Developing practical and sustainable leadership and collaborative business plans for each project component. Implementation of the SMIGC Master Plan will require similar dedication and expertise across all its components.

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*This initiative is a model of what can be achieved through collective vision and collaboration in community health and neighborhood planning. We also thank the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation and The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation for their support. Looking forward, we are eager to see the positive changes in Smithers and Montgomery and hope this project inspires similar efforts elsewhere.*

*This report was prepared by William (Gus) Keller, Community Health Design Specialist, Dynamis Advisors. Contributing to this report were Scott Keller, CEO, Dynamis and the Dynamis team members: Randall Imai, (Town Planner); Emil Slavik, AIA (Architect); Kevin Barnett, DrPH, MPH, MCP (Public Health) and Paul Hughes-Cromwick, MA CBE (Healthcare Economist), with support provided by the Center for Rural Health and Development, Inc.*

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