

# STEPUP CREATE HUNTINGTON

## IMPACT STUDY AND STRATEGIC PLANNING PROJECT

### At-A Glance Summary | July, 2017 - June, 2022

Create Huntington promotes citizen engagement and positive change for the City of Huntington. We continue to engage residents and support innovative projects to improve our city. The Create Huntington Board of Connectors are excited about future possibilities and we believe our community-driven strategic plan for the organization will achieve many additional positive results in the community over the next five years.

Create Huntington recently completed an impact study and planning project informed by a community survey of 579 community residents, discussions with 28 key stakeholders, a community engagement event (Create VEGington #VegBAM) – the first veggie/vegan festival in the city with over 500 participants, *StreetSpeaks* interviews conducted at community events with 377 community members, and individual interviews with 29 community leaders. Much progress has been made over the past eight years and Huntington residents have much to celebrate.

Create Huntington has been particularly effective in mobilizing community members to get involved in making their city better. Innovative and creative ideas have been generated through “Chat N Chew” sessions and the mini-grants program has invested \$22,500 in 54 community projects that promote entrepreneurship, recreation, the arts, and community events and celebrations. Huntington residents express a growing positive attitude about their community and the collective image of the city has improved dramatically.

There is, however, still work to do. Substance abuse issues and a lack of good jobs continue to be key concerns on the minds of city residents. By continuing to work with city government, Marshall University and other community institutions, Create Huntington is committed to involving all city residents in the continuing search for solutions through engagement strategies that build social and cultural capital, and invest in good ideas that make our city a premier place to live, work, and play.

**Create Huntington Mission** - To empower citizens through connections so that Huntington is appealing in its environment, successful in growing its economy, and sustainable for the future.

**Create Huntington Vision** - Huntington is a place where citizens actively identify needs and readily search for solutions to make the city a better place to live, work, and play.

**Create Huntington Core Values** - Create Huntington is focused on civic improvement through citizen lead projects and support. We do this by connecting like-minded people and encouraging creative solutions to the issues around us.

- We believe the citizens of Huntington are the best power for bringing about positive change in our community.
- We work to actively engage our citizens in order to create a strong local economy and to be a better place to live.
- We value innovation, creativity, and diversity in our community and wish to see these characteristics woven into the fabric of our city.
- We wish to see Huntington grow as a regional destination and, through the efforts of our citizens, be the premier place to live, work, and play in both the Tri-State and West Virginia.



“Create Huntington is an advocate for success – a promoter of innovation. The mantra in the town is: Make no Little Plans. Create Huntington is the embodiment of that. Talking about Create Huntington lifts my spirit.”

- Steve Williams, Mayor of Huntington

“Create Huntington gives people a platform to offer new ideas. It has given people a voice and conduit to propose solutions.”

- Interviewee

“Overall impressions across all the *StreetSpeaks* survey locations was that Create Huntington is a needed organization and should focus more on its promotion and brand awareness.”

- *StreetSpeaks* Surveyors

“Double down on community engagement, get more community involvement, partner with neighborhood associations.”

- Community Survey Respondent

In order to build on the progress of the past eight years, Create Huntington has developed goals and strategies to move our community forward over the next five years as we StepUp to make Huntington even better an even better place to live, work, and play. The following is as sample of Create Huntington goals and strategies. To see all of the strategies in the plan, see the full report and plan document.

## I. Programs, Services, and Facilities

### Short Term Strategies – Year 1

- Restructure and continue Chat & Chew sessions to increase attendance, community engagement, and accessibility.
- Expand and showcase the Mini-grant Program through earned media, testimonials, and developing a process and materials to promote and market accomplishments.

### Longer Term Strategies– Years 2 through 5

- Sponsor citizen-led “pop-up” tactical urbanism events to continue to inspire change and social capacity.
- Explore developing and hosting adaptive leadership training opportunities for the community.

## II. Marketing, Branding, Relationships, and Communications

### Short Term Strategies- Year 1

- Develop and implement a new website to ensure it is more functional and includes online payment and email features.
- Host an Annual Summit to showcase progress and outline future directions.

### Longer Term Strategies – Years 2 through 5

- Schedule presentations at neighborhood associations and other community meetings.
- Develop a new brochure and awareness materials, including placement of the logo on public structures.

## III. Human Resources and Culture

### Short Term Strategies- Year 1

- Develop stronger strategic partnerships with local businesses, the faith community, and non-profit organizations.
- Schedule regular liaison update meetings with the City of Huntington and Marshall University.

### Longer Term Strategies – Years 2 through 5

- Develop a structure (Create Huntington Network) consisting of “doer’s” and helpers to expand the organizations’ volunteer and leadership base.
- Explore hiring contractual staff to provide ongoing staff support to grow and sustain the organization.

## IV. Governance, Leadership, Financial, and Legal

### Short Term Strategies- Year 1

Update the organizational bylaws to align with the strategic plan.

- Explore professional development opportunities for the board of connectors.
- Diversify the Board of Connectors to include student representation from Marshall University and representation from local business leaders and the various neighborhoods throughout the city.

### Longer Term Strategies – Years 2 through 5

- Continue bi-annual signature fundraising events (Create Lovington and Create VEGington.)
- Develop meaningful indicators of citizen engagement and social capital (a scorecard) for use by the Board of Connectors in measuring progress.

“We need to encourage even more conversation and find new ways to engage people. We need to communicate what we do, and work with the City to share goals and strategies.”

- Tim Bailey, President,  
Create Huntington Board of Connectors



Over **\$22,500** has been invested in **54 community projects** supported through Create Huntington’s mini-grants program.