Community Profile
Huntington in Bloom Committee
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Municipal Information
Population: 49,253
City Website: www.cityofhuntington.com
City Contact Name: Tom Bell, Economic Development Director
AIB Committee Chair Contact: Tom Bell/Lisa Riley
Town Area in Square Miles: 15.9
Acres of Active Recreation: 150
Acres of Passive Recreation: 1,250
Volunteer Coordinator: Not available yet

Overview

Huntington is both a vibrant, energetic city and a place where heritage comes alive. Sitting on the mighty Ohio River at the point where West Virginia, Ohio and Kentucky meet, Huntington has been nicknamed the “Jewel City.” In its early days the city was a thriving port with steam river boats churning by daily. The captains gave nicknames to the cities they passed for navigational purposes and they dubbed Huntington the “Jewel City.” Steam boats shipped lumber and coal to fuel the growth of the railroad extension to the west. This growth was made possible by the city’s namesake and founder, Collis P. Huntington, an infamous railroad magnate.

Our picturesque city is a year-round destination for beautiful scenery. In the Spring, enjoy the abundance of colorful, blooming dogwood trees that are trademarks of the residential areas. By mid-summer, the nationally renowned Rose Garden of Ritter Park is in full bloom and ready for weddings.
and garden parties. Winter in Huntington provides a near mystical feel as the river rages past the hibernating hills. Fall foliage presents a gorgeous hillside of orange and yellow trees and a brisk mountain air that inspires the senses.

The downtown area is once again a draw for shopping and entertainment, including a modern town square. The streets are alive with people walking from venue to venue or taking advantage of the newly created bike path. Year-round, a variety of festivals and special events draw crowds to Pullman Square, Big Sandy Arena and the historic Keith-Albee Theater.

Huntington is also home to Marshall University, which contributes to the heart and soul of the community. On November 14, 1970, a chartered jet transporting 75 Marshall University football players, coaches, staff, and supporters crashed just short of the Tri-State Airport as they neared home. Everyone on board was killed.

A movie titled We Are Marshall, starring Matthew McConaughey and Matthew Fox, was released nationally in 2006. It depicts the aftermath of the aviation disaster for the families and university.

This disaster united the community in a deep and lasting way, forcing our citizens to re-build and basically start over. At the time, the university was one of the main focuses in the town. Losing the football team, coaches, popular news staff, prominent local families and key business people touched the community at its core and drew everyone together so they could work at rebuilding their lives and their city.

That determination still threads its way through the fabric of Huntington and is part of the fuel that powers this project. One reason we are so excited about participating in America In Bloom is because it is a way for us to expand on the amazing things that have already been done in so many of our neighborhoods. From Garden Clubs working on neighborhood projects to children planting community gardens – we already have a great head start. America In Bloom allows us to only get better as we continue to progress, and unite in our Growing Pride!
Floral Displays
Huntington has long been a city of beautiful yards and public areas. However, seven years ago several events occurred which would lead to a heightened interest in floral displays. A couple, Robin and Gene Howell, took an interest in the appearance of Harris River Front Park and City Hall. They provided their own sweat and money to make both areas a showplace. They provided annual and perennial flowers and maintained them throughout the season. Along the way, they also beautified a war memorial in the front of the downtown post office. As a final gesture they established an endowment to pay for flowers to be purchased in future years at these locations. Unfortunately health issues prevent them from actively doing the work to maintain these areas.

During this timeframe, Cathy Burns, Executive Director of the Huntington/Ironton Empowerment Zone, purchased 50 hanging baskets to place in the downtown area. She provided funding for the purchase of flowers and the maintenance of the hanging baskets the first year. After that first year, a change occurred in the administration at city hall and the new mayor brought Tom Bell on board as his Economic Development Director. Cathy Burns approached Mr. Bell about taking over the task of maintaining the hanging baskets due to funding shortfalls.

Mr. Bell was able to secure a truck and the necessary equipment to do the watering. He was able to secure a donation from the Jr. League Garden Club to purchase flowers and through the use of volunteers was able to plant the hanging baskets. The Jr. League Garden Club and the Cabell County Master Gardeners provided the volunteer effort to plant the hanging baskets. Because there was no remaining money, Mr. Bell and his wife watered the baskets each day at 4:30am from May 15th to Oct. 15th that second year.

A number of events have occurred since those beginnings and Huntington is now up to 150 hanging baskets as well as 60 large pots which are placed strategically on street corners and elsewhere. Most of these pots came through a partnership with the Pullman Square Shopping Complex. Also, by partnering with Bob’s Market and Greenhouse, we are able to have our hanging baskets pre-planted and delivered after the last frost is expected. City crews hang the baskets for us. We also purchase the needed flowers to plant our large pots and ground areas in our municipal parking lots. Volunteers assist us in these plantings. The watering task is now performed by clients of the Coalition for the Homeless through a partnership with Huntington in Bloom, the city and the Municipal Parking Authority. This provides their clients with training and skill development opportunities.
The theme for this year’s beautification efforts is red, white and blue. The hanging baskets will have the “Flag Mix” of Petunias. The large pots will have a general layout of a Red Grass (chiller), Evolvulus (filler) and Confetti mix (spiller), Calibrachoa, Verbena and petunia. We will use red, white and blue verbena for other areas. The ground areas in the public parking lots will have Vinca Titan red and white and Victoria Salvia for the blue. We will allow some of our volunteers to create “wow” pots of flowers they select on their own.

The municipal areas being planted include Marshall University, the public parks, City Hall, the County Courthouse, and the Civic Center as well as the municipal parking lots, the streetscapes and the street corners. We have plans to encourage local businesses to clean up and plant their respective property. We will have recognition for those businesses which do an outstanding job. The residential areas will also be included in our suggested planting theme and we will also recognize and reward outstanding achievement.

Lisa McComas, Master Gardener, member and former president of the Huntington Council of Garden Clubs and Donna Rumbaugh, owner of Perennial Favorites Nursery, have chosen the flowers and designed the layouts for the large pots and various areas which will be planted in and around the city. They have enlisted the aid of the garden clubs and master gardeners to oversee volunteers and to assist in the planting efforts. Specific garden clubs will be responsible for pruning, weeding and maintaining specific assigned areas.

**Landscaped Areas**

Huntington has a number of lovely, well maintained, landscaped areas allowing residents the opportunity to stroll along the majestic Ohio River, meander through a classically-styled rose garden, and enjoy the time in nature.

The community’s park system features a dozen beautiful public spaces. Located downtown, the **David Harris Riverfront Park** stretches along the Ohio River. It provides a tranquil setting, allowing guests an opportunity to stroll a tree-lined path, play in an outdoor playground, and enjoy a lunchtime picnic. The Park also features an amphitheater overlooking the Ohio River. The amphitheater hosts the Huntington Symphony Orchestra’s Summer POPS series, as well as other performances. An interactive [walking trail](#) with eight permanent markers designed by famed artists Chuck
Ripper was dedicated in 2010. Each marker contains between 8 and 15 Ripper renditions of creatures living along the Ohio River. The park also serves the boating community with a boat ramp, marina, and restaurant.

Recognized by the American Planning Association as one of Americas 10 Great Public Spaces for 2012, **Ritter Park** is the gemstone of the city’s park system. A walking path, children’s playground and exercise stations dot the 75-acre linear park. It is under the master plan of the Greater Huntington Parks & Recreation District. The GHPRD owns and/or operates park areas, a maintenance center, Heritage Station, 4 cemeteries and some undeveloped holdings. There is an outdoor amphitheater in the interior heart of Ritter Park and is active throughout the summer with musical and theatrical productions. The Rose Garden is located on the west side of the central part of Ritter Park. Since 1934, it has been West Virginia's nationally recognized municipal rose garden containing 1,000 plants and noted for its All-American Rose Selections. It is an accredited test garden and a favorite spot for weddings and receptions.

**Marshall University** is an integral part of our community. It is one of the region’s largest employers, an engine behind Huntington’s cultural vibrancy, and a geo-spatial centerpiece that connects many of Huntington’s neighborhoods. A largely self-contained campus, Marshall University occupies most of the area: 16th Street to 22nd Street and 2nd Avenue to 6th Avenue. The landscaping features majestic old trees, winding walking paths, a bronze memorial water fountain commemorating the victims of the 1970 plane crash, a sculpture of the University’s namesake, Chief Justice John Marshall, brick signage, and floral plantings.

Recognizing the opportunity for parking lots and garages to be aesthetically pleasing as well as function, the Huntington Municipal Parking Board has adopted the city’s beautification mission and provided upgraded signage and landscaped entrance areas with shrubs and plantings. The Fourth Avenue Parking Lot, for example, provides bricked pedestrian entrances, plantings, and is incorporated into the Old Main Corridor Project to offer shade for parked cars and tree canopy for pedestrians.
A number of private businesses also provide vital outdoor spaces for the area’s residents.

The **Heritage Farm and Museum** offers guests an opportunity to step into history with a recreated Appalachian village. The setting is stunning. The Farm's shops and cabins, all original Appalachian buildings painstakingly disassembled, moved, and rebuilt here, are nestled into two valleys and surrounded by lush green hills. The Farm features four museums, a blacksmith shop, country store, saw mill, church, schoolhouse, three country homes and two log cabins, butterfly garden, petting zoo, pioneer cabin, and miles of winding mountain trails. A quiet break anytime, Heritage Farm becomes a center of activity once every month during the Way Back Weekend, when guests can see demonstrations from artisans, including blacksmiths, glass blowers, jewelers and more.

The cornerstone of Huntington’s revitalized downtown; **Pullman Square** is a vibrant lifestyle center featuring upscale retail shops, entertainment, and restaurants. The shopping center was designed to fully integrate into the City’s historic architecture and create the feel that it had been here forever. Pullman Square features a prominent central park space that harkens back to a classic town square. It features a classic three-tier fountain and bordered by shrubs and walkways. An open stage on the south side of the property serves as a gathering spot, home to a weekly farmers market, and venue for free concerts.

**Residential**

The majority of Huntington’s residential areas were designed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries using a grid pattern with streets running north and south, and avenues running east and west. The city’s neighborhoods feature sidewalks, a smorgasbord of architectural styles including, Four Squares, Victorians, Greek and Gothic Revivals, and American, French, and Spanish Colonials. Neighborhood Associations provide residents an opportunity to meet and work on common projects. Many of the associations also feature beautification projects such as “Yard of the Month” competitions, neighborhood clean-ups, painting street markers, etc. Unlike other cities, Huntington has few modern, planned neighborhoods. An exception is The Woodlands, a private senior housing complex. Located on a hillside overlooking Huntington, The Woodlands features a lovely pond and walking paths.

**Community**
Volunteerism abounds in Huntington, with groups such as HARC (Huntington Area Revitalization Coalition), Create Huntington, and Huntington Community Gardens. There are several Garden Clubs within the city area, as well as a Master Gardener group. HARC has been responsible for the perennial plantings at the David Harris Riverfront Park the Big Sandy Superstore Arena, and elsewhere. The Community Gardens project of Huntington is a collection of volunteers and organizations working together to transform vacant lots into community gardens and green spaces all over the City.

An example of the “can-do” spirit of Huntington’s volunteers, Miller School Park is the newest addition for community involvement. It is the site of the former Miller Elementary School. After the school building was demolished, the six parcel lot was turned over to the Greater Huntington Parks and Recreation District. A group of volunteers spear-headed a project to develop a neighborhood park. Miller School Park will provide open green space for play and a mini-park with brick memorial path, benches and mixture of dogwood and hardwood trees.

**Urban Forestry**

There is general agreement among Huntington’s residents that beautiful tree lined streets and avenues are one of the city’s best features. The city’s urban forest includes a variety of hardwoods including oaks, maples, sycamores, evergreens and many flowering trees. Our urban forest enhances neighborhoods and retail areas throughout the city. Maintenance of the city’s forest is governed by various city ordinances which protect trees and provide specifics for tree plantings, trimming, maintenance and removal of trees and shrubs on city property and city rights of way.

Decades ago the city created the Urban Forestry Advisory Committee (UFAC) to plan for and oversee tree projects and to advise city workers regarding tree maintenance and removal. Huntington’s UFAC is comprised of seven members who are appointed for three year terms. The city’s mayor makes two appointments. The president of Marshall, the local university, appoints one member. Two members are appointed by City Council, the WV Extension agent for Cabell County is a member and one member must be from the Council of Garden Clubs. The UFAC works closely with the city’s Public Works Department and the West Virginia Department of Forestry to plan training workshops on how to properly maintain and plant trees. Last June the chairperson of the UFAC coordinated a workshop conducted by the WV Department of Forestry for city employees on how to remove dead wood from mature trees and how to conduct a hazard tree assessment for trees on the city’s rights of way.
Huntington has earned the Tree City USA designation 12 times including each of the past two years. We recently learned that the city is slated to receive the designation again this year. These designations are the result of dedication by many in the City, including municipal departments, private businesses, neighborhood associations, and individuals. The following are a few examples of these powerful partnerships.

The city is currently working to begin succession plantings of hardwood trees through a “Demonstration City Grant”, which is a public / private partnership. The plantings will occur in both the Westmoreland and Highlawn neighborhoods in Huntington. A private citizen matched the Demonstration Grant funds to purchase 30 trees for the initial succession plantings. The city has also worked cooperatively with the UFAC and private citizens to provide equipment, manpower and other in-kind donations to assist with tree planting projects on Eighth Street, Thirteenth Avenue, Huntington Avenue, Twelfth Avenue, Ninth Avenue and First Street. These projects have allowed over two hundred trees to be planted in these locations during the last three years.

The city, private citizens, the UFAC, the Greater Huntington Parks and Recreation District and the South Side Neighborhood Association are currently working together to create a park on the site of a former elementary school in the city’s South Side neighborhood. The city’s urban forest will soon grow by 20 dogwood trees, six sheltering maples and oaks and a row of Leland Cypress. These trees will be planted at Miller School Park. The dogwoods and hardwoods will serve as a memorial to the children and adults killed last December in New Town Connecticut at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

Members of the Urban Forestry Advisory Committee work cooperatively with the city’s public works department to review and inspect trees on a regular basis. When citizens make a request to remove a tree from a city right of way, the request is forwarded to the committee, the tree is inspected and a recommendation is made by UFAC concerning the request. If necessary, the chairperson confers with members of public works and specialists with the WV Dept. of Forestry or the WV Extension Agent for Cabell County to make a decision about the viability of the tree.

The city’s tree inventory is constantly being updated as hazard trees are removed and new trees are planted. The UFAC works cooperatively with Dr. Anita Walz and her students to map trees in certain areas of the city. Dr. Walz is an environmental specialist and professor at Marshall University. UFAC is also working to obtain grant money which can be used to help cover the cost of a comprehensive tree survey.

Eight years ago the UFAC worked with the city’s mayor and The Foundation for the Tri State Community to establish a short term fund and an endowment for the purpose of handling money for projects from which the city’s urban forest would benefit. The foundation supports
and strengthens non-profit organizations such as UFAC by providing grants and technical assistance which help to improve the lives of citizens. The Foundation is an independent, non-profit, tax exempt, philanthropic corporation, solicits and then manages donations for the city’s tree planting projects. The Foundation awarded a grant to UFAC for a pilot project which enabled UFAC to purchase and then install Terrewalks, a tree-friendly, water permeable sidewalk material made from recycled plastic. The Terrewalks project was the first project in which this material was used in the state of West Virginia.

In addition to these projects, many others in the community are actively engaged in supporting Huntington’s urban forest:

- The Greater Huntington Parks and Recreation District and several of the cemeteries have memorial tree planting programs
- Davey Tree, a private company, assists with assessing the well-being of certain trees on the city’s rights of way from time to time
- Each year the city holds an Arbor Day event which allows school children and others to celebrate our town’s beautiful urban forest
- In 2012, volunteers planted 50 trees around the YMCA and on the islands leading to Ritter Park

UFAC works diligently to preserve and protect heritage trees located on city property within the city’s boundaries. We will continue to work with local wholesale nurseries and private citizens to replenish our urban forest on an ongoing basis through succession tree plantings. The city council is finalizing the adoption of the WV Department of Forestry guide for tree selection and tree planting in urban settings. This guide provides a comprehensive list of large, medium and small trees suitable for urban planting spaces based on the size of the planting space and proximity to wires.

**Environmental Efforts**

An improved environment is the result of millions of individual decisions, ranging from the choice a person makes to recycle a plastic bottle rather than throwing it on the street to corporations choosing to incorporate environmentally sensitive practices into their regular operations. Recognizing this, and, frankly, the limited awareness of sustainable practices in Appalachia, the Huntington area’s environmental efforts are multi-faceted, focusing initially on recycling and education, and building towards more aggressive and comprehensive efforts.

**Recycling**

In the last year the Cabell County Solid Waste Authority has established four drop off recycling centers in the city for recycling of paper, #2 plastics, and cardboard. Recently, in cooperation with the hauler and a local manufacturer, the Solid Waste Authority has added glass to the materials accepted.
The program has been wildly popular. Prior to this, the area offered virtually no recycling, forcing some dedicated recyclers to drive 10 miles or more to visit recycling stations in Ohio. In the first year Huntington’s recycling program, 600 tons of material was sent to the recycling facility. There, an impressive 95% of the material was recycled.

The program is funded through grants from the Cabell County Commission and the City of Huntington. Collections sites are located on public property and in private, commercial spaces, such as supermarket parking lots. Local media, including WSAZ TV and the Herald-Dispatch daily newspaper have been very supportive in promoting and supporting local recycling.

In addition to the Authority’s recycling efforts, Goodwill Industries provides a convenient way for residents and businesses to recycle cardboard. Goodwill also works with the Cabell and Wayne County Boards of Education to offer paper recycling for area schools.

E-Recycling
Beyond traditional recycling, the Solid Waste Authority holds e-recycling events throughout the year. Two events were held in the last year, with a third event scheduled for May 2013. To date 43 tons of computer and electronic material have been collected and disposed of it through a certified partner. Goodwill Industries also provides residents with a convenient site for the daily disposal of old computers, components, printers, and scanners through the Dell Reconnect program.

Public Education
In 2012, the Solid Waste Authority was awarded a grant to partner with Marshall University in the development of a curriculum to help promote sustainability awareness in the community. The multi-phase project will include:

- Researching the legal requirements for recycling
- Documenting all current public and private efforts
- Determining the feasibility of curbside recycling
- Developing a media campaign to promote recycling and sustainable practices and measuring the success of the campaign
- Planning public education events

Additionally, the Sustainability Department at Marshall University hosts a regular seminar series that provides information various sustainability practices to the business community and is serving as a nexus for people interested in promoting sustainable practices. The Solid Waste Authority has provided
financial assistance to local groups involved in community clean-ups as well as scholarships for students to environmental conferences. Finally, in an age of fiscal austerity, the civic-minded Herald-Dispatch, the area’s daily newspaper has assigned a reporter to an environmental beat so that they may focus on sustainability issues.

**Sustainable Practices on Campus**

The [Sustainability Department](#) at Marshall University is involved with many activities on campus and in the community, including an on-campus recycling program, deploying OASIS bottle water stations, working with the procurement and facilities departments to use “green” cleaning products, instituting a building energy management program, holding internal committee meeting to explore green initiatives, creating a bike loan program, promoting recycling at football game tailgates, holding a public sustainability lecture series and other public events, and pursuing several sustainability grants.

Across the City, there are a number of other initiatives, all advancing the goal of supporting an environmentally aware and sensitive lifestyle.

**The Wild Ramp**

The Huntington community recognizes that we must develop a local food system if we are going to become the environmentally conscious community we desire. [The Wild Ramp](#) is a major part of the initiative. Launched last year, the Wild Ramp is a local-source food market where residents can purchase locally grown or produced vegetables, meats, dairy, eggs, and dry goods. Everything sold at The Wild Ramp was produced within 250 miles of Huntington, most within 50 miles. In its first seven months, The Wild Ramp (which keeps only 10% of the purchase price of goods) returned over $100,000 to local food producers. In a year, this effort has spawned a 30 Mile Meal project, the development of a farmer cooperative, the creation of a wholesale distribution system, a micro-brewery co-op, and assisted in the development of high tunnel greenhouses and other systems to assist local farmers.

**Paul Ambrose Trail for Health**

Currently under construction, the Paul Ambrose Trail for Health (PATH) will provide 50 miles of walking, hiking, and cycling paths connecting all of Huntington’s parks and neighborhoods.

**Municipal Ordinances**

The City of Huntington recently passed an ordinance that prohibits the outside storage of building materials, upholstered furniture,
mattresses, and other items not designed for outdoor use. A free pick-up is being provided to allow residents an opportunity to comply prior to the ordinance taking effect.

**Volunteer Efforts**
An informal group called “Litter Gitters”, has distributed over 4000 litter sticks to individuals who agree to remover litter from their blocks on a regular basis. Volunteers created “Critical Mass” to promote casual cycling and to educate drivers of the presence of cyclists and “Kidical Mass” to encourage parents to cycle with their children. Many of the City’s residential **neighborhood organizations** hold annual or bi-annual neighborhood clean-up days. Every year in April the community participates in a variety of clean-up programs, including the **Ohio River Sweep** where, last year, volunteers collected 700 pounds of material from Huntington-area river banks.

**Business**
The sustainable initiatives at local businesses are numerous. **McDonald’s** restaurant installed an electric car power station at a local franchise, the first Level Two Electric Car Charging Station at a McDonald’s facility. **Rubberlite Corporation** utilized advanced storm water mitigation practices when they recently expanded their manufacturing facility. **Steel of West Virginia**, a large manufacturer of steel products, uses a large amount of recycled material in its production. **State Electric Company** and the **Huntington Area Development Council** recently improved their manufacturing facilities by taking advantage of an AEP program that offers rebates for upgrading to more efficient HVAC and area lighting. The **TTA**, a local transit authority has begun to add alternatively fueled vehicles to its fleet. A **local little league** took a brownfield location that was seriously contaminated and worked out a mitigation plan with the previous owner that allowed the company to remediate the site inexpensively. The site was then developed into playing fields.

**Historic Preservation and Community Development**
Huntington has a long, rich history with tales of bank robberies by the Jesse James Gang, slaves escaping to freedom on the Underground Railroad, Civil War battles, riverboats, railroad barons, and a tragic plane crash. We celebrate our history, the good and the bad, realizing that understanding who our ancestors provides a strong foundation for us to reach our fullest potential. Described in this section are some of the treasured, historic sites and remembrances in Huntington.

**Heritage Farm**
The core mission at Heritage Farm is to educate current generations about the ingenuity and creativity of or forbearers so that we may understand and realize our true potential. Set in a quiet hillside valley just on the edge of the City, Heritage Farm is home to a recreated Appalachian
village, experiential heritage museums, miles of walking trails, a petting zoo, and more. Throughout the spring, summer, and fall, more than 200 volunteers arrive at Heritage Farm from as far away as western Kentucky, Pennsylvania and North Carolina to bring the Village to life. Lectures are given in the school, music streams from the church and the hills echo with the sound of the saw mill’s vintage tractor letting off steam. The blacksmith shop is fired up and everywhere people demonstrate arts and crafts integral to Appalachian heritage such as basket weaving, coopering, rope making and weaving. Many volunteers dress in period costumes ranging from trappers to Civil War soldiers to little girls in braids and bonnets.

**Heritage Station**

Huntington’s historic Heritage Station is home to the City’s original train station and railroad warehouses. It is also home to the original Huntington National Bank, once robbed by the James Gang. It was here goods from the east were off-loaded from rail cars onto riverboats for the trip to the frontier. It was also here that famed blues artist, Diamond Teeth Mary, boarded a train in search of fame and fortune.

Today, Heritage Station (now known as The Shops at Heritage Station) is a vibrant cultural and retail center, featuring local boutiques, galleries, and restaurants, live concerts, and outdoor movies. And in recognition of Diamond Teeth Mary, it is also home to the annual Diamond Teeth Mary Blues Festival.

**Marshall University Memorial Fountain and Memorial**

On November 14th, 1970, a chartered Southern Airways jet carrying 75 Marshall University football players, coaches, and civic leaders crashed into a hillside in Wayne County, West Virginia. The events of that day, and the many dark days that followed, are seared in the minds of residents. Two memorials were raised to commemorate the lives of those lost and to help a grieving community find its way to a brighter future. Both are treasured landmarks in Huntington. The Memorial Fountain sits just behind the
Memorial Student Center on Marshall’s main campus. Its water is turned off during a remembrance every November 14th and turned on every spring. Sitting atop a hill at Huntington’s Spring Hill Cemetery lies a memorial and gravesite containing the remains of victims who could not be identified.

In addition to these historic sites, there are a number of festivals to celebrate the region’s history and culture, including:

- Guyandotte Civil War Days, where hundreds of re-enactors portray the Union and Confederate forces involved in the November 1861 Battle of Guyandotte.
- Spring Festival Day at Heritage Farm and Museum where guests can experience life as it was in an Appalachian pioneer community and learn about the major inventions and transportation revolution that changed America.
- Juneteenth Festival, held in celebration of freedom from slavery for African-Americans.
- Old Central City Days, where guests can browse flea markets and specialty shops, and enjoy live entertainment and historic tours.
- Hosted by Marshall University’s Department of Music, the Tri-State Marching Band Festival has been called the largest band festival of its kind in this part of the country.
- Hosted by Marshall University’s Department of Music, the summer Jazz Festival is about students, teachers, and professionals working and playing music together.
- Lovers of all types of food, residents come out all summer and fall for the array of food-related festivals, including ChiliFest, the WV Hot Dog Festival, and the Greek Festival.

Preserving Our Architectural Heritage

As with many small cities, Huntington saw in the 70's and 80's a disintegration of the central business district. However, within 25 years, the city has through historic preservation seen a revitalization of the traditional downtown. Through the Main Street Program during the 1990's several private property owners spearheaded the revitalization of the central business district. Huntington boasts of the most historic tax credit projects within the state of West Virginia. Entire blocks have been carefully restored back to their original facades. These private property owners spearheaded the redevelopment of what was Urban Renewals last eyesore within the city limits. Through dedication, they formulated the game plan to successfully redevelop the “superblock” into what is now a lifestyle center giving life to the existing downtown. What makes this development so creative is that it is sympathetic to the architectural style of the
existing downtown buildings. This is a private-public partnership between the city and private ownership has provided the spring board for the redevelopment of the centerpiece of 3rd avenue into the expansion of the art department of Marshall University.

Through time Huntington has had many groups providing support to the preservation of our historic architectural stock. The Junior League of Huntington was one of the first groups to provide significant strides in saving historic structures. They documented extensively the commercial and residential structures of Huntington, establishing the first listings on the National register. The KYOWVA Genealogical and Historical Society was founded in 1978. This society is dedicated to the preservation of the genealogy and history of Cabell County, West Virginia and the surrounding area they serve. Main Street established the downtown historic district. Several residential neighborhoods have established historic districts to preserve the architectural integrity of their distinct areas.

On January 1, 2013 a new mayor, Stephen T. Williams, was sworn into office. Mayor Williams has made the beautification of Huntington one of his priorities. Aggressive enforcement of building codes, the passage of a new ordinance requiring that home and business owners maintain their properties and the formation of a graffiti task force are just a few examples of Mayor Williams’ belief that an attractive, well-maintained city is important for growth. And more recently, Huntington hosted a meeting of the West Virginia State Preservation Office on March 26, 2013 in City Council Chambers. The purpose of the meeting was to receive comments regarding the current historic preservation comprehensive plan and ideas for the direction of historic preservation efforts in the state from 2014 to 2019.

Resource availability for preservation and restoration
The state of West Virginia provides both commercial and residential owners tax credit to be used in conjunction with Federal Historic Tax credits. Huntington Main Street provided assistance with this program and in addition provided a loan pool through the local banking community to assist in these projects. After Main Street, the city of Huntington with surrounding communities, established the empowerment zone, which provided both technical and financial tools to redevelop commercial properties. This program retired, but not without providing its remaining funding to support the expansion of Marshall University’s efforts in redeveloping the art department. Today as always the State of West Virginia’s division of Culture and History proves to be the strong source of providing expertise and funding options for preservation.

Overall Impression
Huntington, West Virginia is a beautiful and historic city located in the Appalachian mountains at the confluence of the Guyandotte and Ohio Rivers. The first permanent settlement, Holderby’s Landing, was founded in 1775 in what was then the Colony of Virginia. The modern City of Huntington was incorporated by Collis P. Huntington and Delos W. Emmons as the western terminus of the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad at the Ohio River.
The city is the proud home of Marshall University, as well as the Huntington Museum of Art, the Huntington District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Collis P. Huntington Historical Society and Railroad Museum, Camden Park; one of the oldest amusement parks in the world, and the largest inland seaport in the United States.

Huntington’s “boom” period occurred from the founding in 1871 until the Great Flood of 1937 which claimed 5 lives, caused millions of dollars in damage, left tens of thousands homeless, and led to the creation of Huntington’s floodwalls in 1938. World War II brought another economic boom, but that was short-lived and ended along with the war in the 1940s. Huntington’s population began to drop after 1950 due to urban sprawl and the decline the steel and manufacturing industries. However, Huntington has seen a major revival since the opening of the Pullman Square Town Center in 2004, the filming of the Warner Bros. motion picture “We Are Marshall” in 2006, and the filming of ABC’s Food Revolution in 2010. As of the most recent census in 2010, the city population is on the rise for the first time in 6 decades. The largest employers are Marshall University, the Cabell-Huntington Hospital, St. Mary’s Medical Center, Amazon, and DirecTV.

The modern Huntington metro area spans 7 counties across 3 states and is the largest in the state of West Virginia with a population of more than 360,000. Many buildings downtown have been restored, or are in the process of being restored, so a visitor’s first impression is often of the well preserved gothic and Art Deco architecture. Great care is being taken to make sure that new construction like the Pullman Square Town Center fits in seamlessly alongside neighboring buildings that are sometimes more than 100 years old.

Shortly after Pullman Square was constructed, the city began work on upgrading the street scape on Fourth Avenue and Ninth Street. Ninth Street was formerly known as the Ninth Street Plaza and was closed to vehicle traffic for years. Anchored by Pullman Square on the north end, the old plaza was removed in 2006 and Ninth Street has once again begun attracting new businesses: Paula Vega’s Cupcakes, Sprint Wireless, Pub & Oven Pizza, Simply Whisk, Huntington Ink Tattoos, and Lamb’s Gate Market.
2013 will see continued work on the section of Fourth Avenue that connects Downtown to Marshall University, known as the “Old Main Corridor.” The corridor is being upgraded with new lighting, artistic and pedestrian-friendly design concepts, and bicycle lanes.

Locals have begun referring recent years as a “Huntington Renaissance,” an accurate statement considering the dramatic improvements in quality of life and economic opportunity: new restaurants, galleries and music venues have opened; new businesses are opening all over the city, and many historic buildings are being restored.

A building block for the next phase in the City’s renaissance is the new Visual Arts Center. Marshall University recently purchased the old Anderson-Newcomb/Stone & Thomas Building, which was built in 1902, and is converting that historic structure into a state-of-the-art visual arts center that will serve as home to the University’s art and design programs. The intent is to raise the college’s presence as an innovative institution, give the visual art program more space to expand, and afford students more opportunities to become engaged in community initiatives and improve the quality of life for everyone in the city.

Arguably, the most famous attraction in Huntington is the Keith Albee Performing Arts Center. Originally built in 1928 as the Keith-Albee Theater, and under the supervision of vaudeville tycoons B. F. Keith and Edward Albee as part of their Keith-Albee vaudeville circuit, the Keith-Albee was the second-largest theater in the United State at that time—behind the Roxy in New York City. The theater was designed by Thomas W. Lamb who designed approximately 153 theaters around the world. Unfortunately, only forty-three of these grand theaters are still open, and seventy-one have been demolished. Thankfully, “the Keith” has been undergoing a full restoration since 2009.

**Municipal Efforts**

For the last 3 years, the City of Huntington has invested considerable time and financial resources into the Old Main Corridor Project listed in the introduction. The City also unveiled a comprehensive cleanup
campaign in 2013 that includes a ban on all furniture from being stored outside—except that which is designed specifically for exterior use, and a crackdown on code enforcement beginning this summer.

At the behest of the Mayor, a citywide cleanup effort will give residents and business owners approximately 12 weeks to spruce up their properties before the city starts enforcing numerous ordinances that prohibit tall weeds and grass, litter and household items that belong indoors but are being stored on porches or in front yards. The looming zero-tolerance policy is part of Mayor Steve Williams' multi-pronged approach to improving the quality of life in the city through code enforcement. The city also will hire additional code enforcement officers, reinstate the Fire Department's Fire Prevention Bureau and seek the ability to issue on-the-spot citations from the West Virginia State Legislature. The City of Huntington also hired a graffiti abatement specialist in January of 2013 to work with the City on designing and implementing a new Graffiti Abatement System to make sure all new graffiti is removed from the city within 24 hours.

**Business Efforts**
The Pullman Square Town Center provided a much needed spark to Downtown Huntington, which has seen an explosion of new development since the Square opened in 2006. Unlike Downtown development of the past, we are not tearing down our historic buildings, but rather finding new ways to keep them in use.

The redevelopment of our historic **Shops at Heritage Station** is one of our crowning achievements of 2012. The redevelopment has required a concerted effort between local entrepreneurs, concerned citizens, the Cabell-Huntington Convention & Visitor’s Bureau, and the Cabell County Parks & Recreation Division. The **Shops at Heritage Station** is located in the old Baltimore & Ohio Railroad’s Huntington Depot which was originally constructed in 1887. The complex includes an original steam engine with a “pullman” train car, and a building that used to house one of Huntington’s first banks--which was once robbed by the James Gang. Heritage Station was turned into a shopping center called “Heritage Village” during the Urban Renewal in the 1970s. For decades, the beautiful station sat hidden and virtually unused just two blocks from the city center, until Create Huntington got involved in 2006. Happily, today Heritage Station is a busy artisan retail complex, full of locally-owned shops, and home to regular public events like the Diamond Teeth Mary Blues Festival.

**Residential**
As with Downtown business, there has been an explosion of interest in Downtown residency, with several historically commercial buildings being renovated to accommodate residential units on the upper floors.
The Frederick Building was built in 1906 as a luxury hotel, but no longer operates as a hotel, and is being remodeled into luxury apartments with offices throughout. The lobby has been restored and is open to the public; it is a favorite spot for local photographers and host of Create Huntington’s weekly “Chat ‘N Chews”.

On the same block as the Frederick Building is the West Virginia Building, which is the tallest building on the Downtown skyline and was built in 1924. After almost a century as a commercial building, it is currently being renovated into an upscale residential high-rise.

Community Involvement
Huntington is home to a grass roots community development organization, Create Huntington. Create Huntington empowers citizens to create the Huntington they love to live in by: creating forums for discussing ideas and connecting people, such as the weekly Thursday evening “Chat ’n Chew” meetings, the Facebook group, and the website; Facilitating local projects through Matching Grants and Scholarships to better help manifest ideas into actions; and empowering community leaders to grow their projects through educational workshops.

According to Create Huntington member Jessica Pressman: "It is what people might not know about Create Huntington -- that we are focused on positivity and bringing people together to create opportunities to help people make a difference, It's just a bunch of regular people. The people here aren't specifically trained to work in public policy, but it's people who want their community to be better and have found a passion for a way to do it. We want people to see us here and know that anyone can make a difference in their own community."

Some positive projects that have been impacted by Create Huntington are: an “Adopt Your Block” Litter Getter program, CAFE Huntington, a monthly “Cash Mob” of a local business, the Diamond Teeth Mary Blues Festival, local art gallery “Gallery 842,” a Graffiti Abatement Initiative, the revitalization of Heritage Station, the Huntington Community Gardens, the Huntington Petsafe Dog Park, the new bike lanes on Fourth Avenue, the Paul Ambrose Trail for Health, and several farm startups, recycling projects, and neighborhood associations.
In 2011 the community came together as never before, with hundreds of volunteers activating thousands of citizens across the region and country to win PetSafe’s first nationwide “Bark for Your Park” contest. Huntington logged more than 87,000 votes and was awarded the grand prize of $100,000 to build a new dog park Ritter Park. Phase I of Huntington’s Dog Park was completed and opened to the public in June of 2012. Construction of Phase II of the park began in December of 2012.

**Best Idea**
The Huntington area has wrestled with health problems for several years, problems that were made famous in 2010 by the television show *Jamie Oliver’s Food Revolution* on ABC. Before and since, concerned Huntingtonians have been working to improve the health and quality of life in the city of Huntington. These efforts have led to the “Best Idea” of 2012/2013.

Huntington’s best idea for 2012/2013 is a project of the Wild Ramp Market called the “30 Mile Meal” Project (30MM) which is a "hyper-local" food initiative that focuses on increasing direct marketing between farmers/producers and food businesses within 30 miles of Downtown Huntington. The desire for fresh local food has become very important as many of us realize that most of the produce we are offered in our supermarkets is neither fresh nor local. We have been eating green (unripe) or spoiled produce for so long in our community that many people have never experienced what fresh, ripe vegetables and fruit taste like!

Here in the Huntington area we are fortunate to have many small farms nearby that grow vegetables and fruit, and produce poultry, eggs, beef, pork, lamb, and so much more. The mission of the 30MM-Huntington is to develop a vibrant and thriving local foods economy by promoting (both regionally and nationally) and growing local food related businesses; as well as make Huntington a regional dining and local food destination. 30MM-Huntington is a community based initiative focusing on promotion of local foods and their producers, processors, wholesalers, buyers, and consumers.
Conclusion
Huntington is a city of remarkable resilience. Our community has survived a flood that washed away our homes and businesses, a plane crash that stole our hearts, a decades-long economic downturn that left residents without hope. Our City has been labeled the least healthy city in the country. And yet, with every blow we have risen. After the flood, we rebuilt our City to be a Jewell on the Ohio. After the plane crash, we rebuilt our football program to become national champions. A post-industrial city, we are now building a thriving 21st Century economy. Today we are facing our challenges head-on and creatively. We are taking ownership in our City and we welcome America in Bloom to the town we call home.