



**BOROUGH OF  
WESLEYVILLE**

# State of the Borough

**August 2024 – Manager Jacobs**

A 21<sup>st</sup> century perspective for a 20<sup>th</sup>  
century community

# Outline

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**BOROUGH OF  
WESLEYVILLE**

- Who am I?
- Who we are as a Borough?
- What are we up to?
- What we ought to be thinking about
- What we ought to be doing
- Moral of our Story
- Brief Q&A session



# Who Am I?

# Who Am I?

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**BOROUGH OF  
WESLEYVILLE**

- Born and raised in the Mt. Washington neighborhood of Pittsburgh.
- Came to Erie for school at Penn State Behrend, earned;
  - Bachelor's of Business Economics,
  - Bachelor's of International Business, and
  - Masters of Project Management.
- Borough resident for a handful of years, love it!
- Honored to serve as the Borough Manager
  - Proud to have made it through my first year, as of August 1st, 2024.



# Who are We as a Borough?



# Who Are We?

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**BOROUGH OF  
WESLEYVILLE**

- Borough established in 1912
- Population of about 3,300
- Largely developed in the early 1900s
  - We built communities differently in the early 1900s.
  - We built communities better in the early 1900s.





# Who Are We?

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**BOROUGH OF  
WESLEYVILLE**

- Tightknit
  - Connected by a network of sidewalks
  - Front porches
- Traditional Main Street business district
  - On U.S. Route 20





# Who Are We?

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**BOROUGH OF  
WESLEYVILLE**

- Total of 0.53 sq miles (339.2 acres)
  - 1 (one) mile north-to-south
  - ½ (half) a mile east-to-west
- Grid network
  - More resilient, multimodal, and efficient
- Quite dense
  - 6,080/people sq. mile
  - Comfortable overall





# Who Are We?

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**BOROUGH OF  
WESLEYVILLE**

- As a Borough, we are the lowest form of government.
  - Small fish in a big pond.
  - Closest and most responsive form of government to the people.
- We are not alone. One of 956 Boroughs across the Commonwealth







# What are We up to?



# What are We up to?

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**BOROUGH OF  
WESLEYVILLE**

## Police Department

- K9 Unit – Funded through donations
- Hired a new officer in January.
- Sergeant position
- Received state grant of \$96,000 which covered the purchase of 2 police cruisers and computer equipment
  - Shoutout to Rep. Merski



Image provided courtesy of EriePics by Michael Nesgoda



# What are We up to?

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**BOROUGH OF  
WESLEYVILLE**

## Wesleyville Volunteer Fire Department

Greatly appreciative of over 100 years of service

Progress is being made;

- Influx of new members this year
- Onboarding new members and training,
- To improve collaboration and coordination between the WFD and Borough. Joint committee being established.



Image provided courtesy of EriePics by Michael Nesgoda



# What are We up to?

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**BOROUGH OF  
WESLEYVILLE**

## **Public Works Department**

Lots of maintenance to do to improve our Borough and they are chipping away at it.

This year we have made substantial investments in the department. Providing them with the proper tools to get the job done.

- Bucket truck
- Tractor
- Small tools and equipment





# What are We up to?

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**BOROUGH OF  
WESLEYVILLE**

## Parks and Recreation

### Hinkler Park

- Bathroom in by the end of the year
- Parking lot added
- Grant to improve accessibility

### Memorial Park

- Adding cameras to the park
- Parking lot to be added in coming years

### Morrison Park

- Tore out old, grant submitted for new.





# What are We up to?

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**BOROUGH OF  
WESLEYVILLE**

## **Transportation Office**

**Reconstruction** – 2 blocks of Center St. - ~\$300,000

- Shoutout to County Exec Davis for contributing \$250,000 of GAP Funds

**Resurfacing** – Eastern Ave, Willow Ave, Gray Ave, and Idlewood Drive – 0.65 miles - \$209,954

**Preservation** – 1.05 miles - \$45,205

**ADA Improvements** – 18 ramps total - \$49,500

**Hinkler Park Parking Lot** - \$11,734

Over \$616,000 invested in our transportation infrastructure





# What are We up to?

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**BOROUGH OF  
WESLEYVILLE**

## Worth Noting

Transportation infrastructure is a challenge for everyone.

2 PennDOT approved firms in this region capable of working on public roads.

One of them is headquartered right here in the Borough,  
McCormick Construction.

Contractors come from all around the region to the asphalt plant off of Pearl Ave.





# What are We up to?

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**BOROUGH OF  
WESLEYVILLE**

## Property Office

- Borough Hall improvements
  - Shoutout Rep. Merski
- Borough Kitchen (to be completed by end of year)
  - Shoutout Rep. Merski
- Borough Roof
  - Shoutout Rep. Merski
- Merski Office



# What are We up to?

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**BOROUGH OF  
WESLEYVILLE**

## Community Communications

- Wesleyville.gov - the Borough's most valuable digital asset
- SavvyCitizen – a notification system with 1,300 people signed up that is NOT algorithm driven.

# Get Wesleyville:



- Alerts
- News
- Events



Sign up for free at:  
**SavvyCitizenApp.com**

Available on the  
App Store

GET IT ON  
Google Play



# What are We up to?

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**BOROUGH OF  
WESLEYVILLE**

## Community Engagement

- 2023 Fall Open House
- 2024 Wesleyville Community Day at Memorial Park
- 2024 National Night Out

Reactivated the Planning Commission

Assembled the History Team





# **What We Ought to be Thinking About**



# **Ought to be Thinking About**

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- **Our Competitive Advantages**

# Competitive Advantage

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- Absolute advantage vs Competitive Advantage
- Absolute advantage refers to the greater capacity of an organization in resources and production.
  - Think more...
- Competitive advantage refers to the unique attributes or strategies that enable an organization to perform better or achieve superior results compared to others in a particular area.



# Competitive Advantage

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- South Korea is a great example of the value of leaning into competitive advantages
- On paper:
  - Has 37,500 sq mi, 109th in the world
  - Ranked 160th in percentage arable land
  - Very low natural resources, no significant oil reserves.



Picture from Wikipedia



# Competitive Advantage

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**BOROUGH OF  
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- Despite their apparent shortcomings
  - Incredibly fast economic growth, export powerhouse, tech leader (worldwide brands like Samsung and LG), modern infrastructure
  - Overall, 4th largest economy in Asian and 14th largest in the World.

"Unique attributes or strategies that enable an organization to perform better or achieve superior results"



Picture from Wikipedia

# Competitive Advantage

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**BOROUGH OF  
WESLEYVILLE**

## **Borough Competitive Advantages**

- Robust Sidewalk Network
- Traditional Main Street Business District
- Our Borough Hall
- Our Borough Parks



# Competitive Advantage

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**BOROUGH OF  
WESLEYVILLE**

## **Robust sidewalk network**

- May be crumbling and cracked in some areas.
- Needs ADA improvements throughout the Borough, progress is being made.

Allow;

- Residents to walk their dogs.
- Residents to safely jog around the community
- Kids to walk to a friend's house
- Safely ride their bikes.

# Competitive Advantage

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**BOROUGH OF  
WESLEYVILLE**

## **Traditional Main Street Business District**

Might not be the biggest, might not be in the best shape.

However,

- We have a traditional style main street business district, on a bustling corridor.
- It has a long and proud history of business
- People can actually walk, bike, or take the bus to our business district.



# Competitive Advantage

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**BOROUGH OF  
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## Controversial business types

- What does it signal when a business district is capable of hosting these types of businesses?
- When aspiring business operators were seeking a suitable location.... in the Wesleyville Corridor, they found;
  - small commercial spaces that were affordable,
  - with low barriers to entry,
  - that are highly adaptable,
  - and easily accessible to the public.

# Competitive Advantage

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**BOROUGH OF  
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## Borough Hall

Built in 1954, desperately in need of improvement.

Building serves as our;

- Council chambers,
- Police Department,
- Fire Department,
- Public Works Garage,
- Borough Office,
- Community Social Hall.





# **Competitive Advantage**

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**BOROUGH OF  
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**Our Borough Hall is,**

- Directly on Buffalo Road,
- Prominently located in the Borough Square,
- With multiple bus routes coming right by our front door,
- And with walking access available in every direction.

Any investment we make goes a long way.

What is the point of having a big new municipal building if residents can't easily get there.

# Competitive Advantage

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**BOROUGH OF  
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## Borough Parks

Have come a long way in the last decade.

We have more work to do to get them  
where we want them.

Greater return on investment

What does it matter?

In Wesleyville, kids CAN safely walk or  
bike to our parks independently.





# Competitive Advantage

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- So, we as a community must face the fact that we will never be the largest, have the most people, be the richest, etc.
  - Somewhere else will always have an absolute advantage over us.
- That's okay, because we can lean into our competitive advantages and make the best of what we've got.
- We have a choice;
  - Follow South Korea's path and flourish or give up and stagnate

# **Ought to be Thinking About**

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**BOROUGH OF  
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- **Competitive Advantages**
- **Value Per Acre**



# Value Per Acre

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**BOROUGH OF  
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- We only have 339.2 acres.
- We must make the most productive use of our land area that we possibly can.





# Value Per Acre

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- For Farmers, productive use of land is the basis of their business
- Everything they think is in terms of acreage;
  - Cost of seed/acre
  - Cost of fertilizer/acre
  - Yield/acre





# Value Per Acre

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In the municipal context, we calculate value per acre like this.

Take the total taxable value of the parcel, divide it by the size of the parcel in acres.

Ex. Total taxable value - \$89,000

Parcel size – 0.1 acres

Value per acre - \$890,000



# **Ought to be Thinking About**

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**BOROUGH OF  
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- **Competitive Advantages**
- **Value Per Acre**
- **Most Valuable Properties**



# Most Valuable Properties

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**BOROUGH OF  
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## Our MOST Valuable Residential Property

House on Skellie Ave east of Station Rd

2 Bed, 1 Bath – 888 sq ft.

Built 1930

Total Taxable Value – \$59,240

Parcel Size – 0.0386 acres

Value Per Acre - \$1,534,715





# Most Valuable Properties

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**BOROUGH OF  
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## Our MOST Valuable Commercial Property

Yurkovic Plumbing – 2828 Buffalo Rd

Total Taxable Value – \$110,500

Parcel Size – 0.0898 acres

Value Per Acre - \$1,230,512

Built - 1920





# Most Valuable Properties

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**BOROUGH OF  
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Terry Etzel's – 2914 Buffalo Rd

Total Taxable Value – \$160,200

Parcel Size – 0.1616 acres

Value Per Acre - \$991,336

The original structure built in 1928,  
add-ons in 1983.





# Most Valuable Properties

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**BOROUGH OF  
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JDL Computers – 3010 Buffalo Road

Total Taxable Value – \$46,800

Parcel Size – 0.0661 acres

Value Per Acre - \$708,018

Built - 1928





# Most Valuable Properties

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- For comparisons sake;

Dollar Tree – 3604 Buffalo Rd

- Total Taxable Value – \$698,100
- Parcel Size – 1.2670 acres
- Value Per Acre - \$550,986
- Built 1997

Country Fair – 2013 Eastern Ave

- Taxable Value – \$437,700
- Parcel Size – 0.8473 acres
- Value Per Acre - \$516,582
- Built 1999

# Most Valuable Properties



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To summarize:

Property Name	Acreage	Value	Percentage
Skellie House	0.0386	\$ 1,534,715	297%
Yurkovic	0.0898	\$ 1,230,512	238%
Etzel's	0.1616	\$ 991,336	192%
JDL Computers	0.0661	\$ 708,018	137%
Dollar Tree	1.267	\$ 550,986	107%
Country Fair	0.8473	\$ 516,582	100%

Let's put a pin in this for a moment.



# **Ought to be Thinking About**

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**BOROUGH OF  
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- **Competitive Advantages**
- **Value Per Acre**
- **Most Valuable Properties**
- **Density is our Superpower**

# Density is our Superpower

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- 6,080 per sq. mile, considered urban.
- For the municipality, easier to provide public services
  - Roadway maintenance/parcel
  - Police service/parcel
- For residents, the community is more tightknit and functional.



Traditional style of community development that has worked for thousands of years.



# **Ought to be Thinking About**

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**BOROUGH OF  
WESLEYVILLE**

- **Competitive Advantages**
- **Value Per Acre**
- **Most Valuable Properties**
- **Density is our Superpower**
- **Pension Plans**

# Pension Plans

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- Two Pension Plans - Employee and Uniform Pensions
- Just completed the 5-year audit up through end of 2023.
- Both plans are healthy being classified as "overfunded".
- Significant promises we have made, we will follow through on those promises.
- Ripple effect from time. Any marginal improvement we make will translate much bigger impacts later.





# What We Ought to be Doing

# **What We Ought to be Doing**

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**BOROUGH OF  
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- **Take a Different Perspective on Our Zoning.**



# Different Zoning Perspective

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**BOROUGH OF  
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**Revisit Our Valuable  
Properties**

Skellie House - 1930

Yurkovic - 1920

Etzel's – 1928 (Add-ons  
1983)

JDL Computers - 1928





# Different Zoning Perspective

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Reasons they are illegal;

- Front, side, and rear setbacks
- Maximum Lot Usage Percentages
  - R-3 district – Least restrictive residential – 45% allowed
  - B-1 District – 60% allowed
    - Yurkovic uses virtually 100% of their parcel,
    - It is NO coincidence that they are our most valuable parcel.
- Buildings that touch.
- Mixed Use developments



# Different Zoning Perspective

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**BOROUGH OF  
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**Is there a safety reason?**

- Modern day;
  - Meticulous construction codes,
  - Advanced materials,
  - and Improved understanding.



# Different Zoning Perspective



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WESLEYVILLE**



**I am 100%  
confident that we  
can safely build  
these structures  
again**



# Different Zoning Perspective

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We can build wealth in the 21st century in much the same way that we did in the beginning of the 20th century.

- Our very own laws have been the largest inhibitors of our development.
  - We shot ourselves in the foot and we wonder why our development has been stunted.



# Different Zoning Perspective



**BOROUGH OF  
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This development style is  
not against the character  
of the neighborhood.  
IT IS the character of the  
neighborhood.

**Take a different  
perspective on our zoning,  
we can't afford not to.**



## Side Note - ADUs

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**BOROUGH OF  
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Must allow Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

- Accessory structure: A structure that is separate from the primary structure on a parcel.  
Generally, a garage or a shed.
- Dwelling Unit: A housing unit.

So, an ADU is an accessory structure that could be lived in.

Might be a new label, not a new concept. We intuitively understand the concept.

In-law suites, backyard cottages, etc.

In fact,

# Side Note - ADUs

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## Prime Example of an ADU

- Skellie House  
888 sq ft., 2 Bed, 1 Bath, built in 1930
- Originally an accessory structure that was a part of the larger parcel that now sits to its west.



So, our most valuable residential structure is an ADU... it is NO coincidence.

- An ADU makes productive use of a space that would otherwise remain an undeveloped sideyard or backyard.



# Side Note - ADUs

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ADUs are a win, win, win, win....

A **property owner** is seeking to make an investment in their property that would;

- Increase their property value,
- Provide a revenue source.

A **renter** benefits from additional housing stock in the Borough. And, smaller, affordable housing units that otherwise might not be available.

Local **business owners** benefits from additional residents and potential patrons.

# Side Note - ADUs

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**BOROUGH OF  
WESLEYVILLE**

ADUs are a win, win, win, win....

The **Borough** benefits from;

- Increased property tax base,
- Additional residents paying income tax.
- And increased Real Estate Transfer Tax from the increased market value of the property.
- A business district with greater activity.



# **What We Ought to be Doing**

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- **Take a Different Perspective on Our Zoning.**
- **Incentivize Development Borough-Wide**

# Incentivize Development

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**The Borough's incentive structure is BROKEN**

Good property owner;

- maintains property in good condition
- invests in improving their property further.  
(Adding a shed, a new garage, etc.)

We slap them in the face with a higher tax bill.





# Incentivize Development

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**BOROUGH OF  
WESLEYVILLE**

- Property owner of a vacant lot
  - Doing nothing with it.
  - Coasting paying very little taxes.
  - No incentive to do anything, might sit for decades and decades.
- Municipal perspective – we don't save money on services for an empty lot.
  - Still maintain the road in front by resurfacing, plowing and salting.
  - Police still patrol, maybe even more so.
  - Sewer line still needs to be cleaned and functional.

We compensate by raising taxes even higher, disproportionately affecting good owners.

NOT FAIR to the good property owners that take care of their properties and invest in them.

# Incentivize Development

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**BOROUGH OF  
WESLEYVILLE**

- Possible options
  - Split Rate Taxation – Land Value & Building Value
    - Taxing land at a higher rate than the buildings to encourage development and discourage vacant unproductive land.
  - LERTA – Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance
    - Tax breaks for a period of time to encourage reinvestment.
- No silver bullet solution here.
  - Must take a series of steps to get back on track.



# Incentivize Development

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- It is unlikely that a large corporate developer will come to our rescue.
- Most of the development that could take place in the Borough is infill development
  - Meaning development that fills in the gaps that we have in our community.
- Large developers aren't geared for this, and they don't see an adequate profit margin to justify the hassle.

# Incentivize Development

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**BOROUGH OF  
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- The infill development that we need will be driven by small, local, community-oriented developers.
  - Some of which maybe have never built anything before.
- Anything we can do to simplify the process and help them will go a long way.
  - It is likely the difference between a structure being built or not.

**Local developers are the ones that will come to our rescue.**

**We MUST incentivize development; we can't afford not to.**



# **What We Ought to be Doing**

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**BOROUGH OF  
WESLEYVILLE**

- **Take a Different Perspective on Our Zoning.**
- **Incentivize Development Borough-Wide**
- **Encourage Development of the North Street Lot into More Productive Use**

# Make the North St Lot Productive

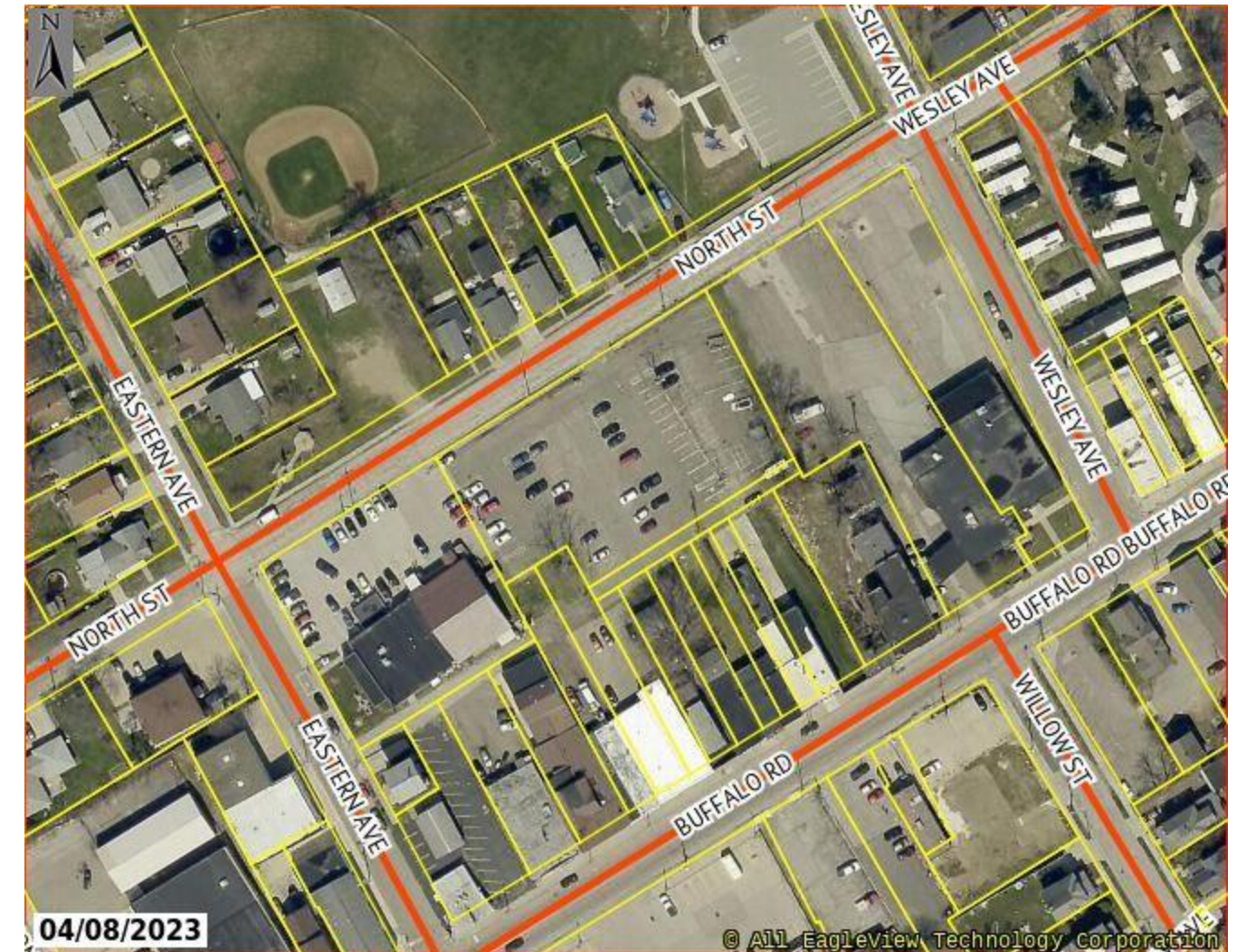
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**BOROUGH OF  
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## Encourage Development of the North Street Lot

- Our largest, most conveniently located buildable parcel;
  - Largest downtown block,
  - Prime transit access,
  - Next to a very active American Legion,
  - Across from our largest park, and
  - Around the corner from our Main Street Business District.





# Make the North St Lot Productive

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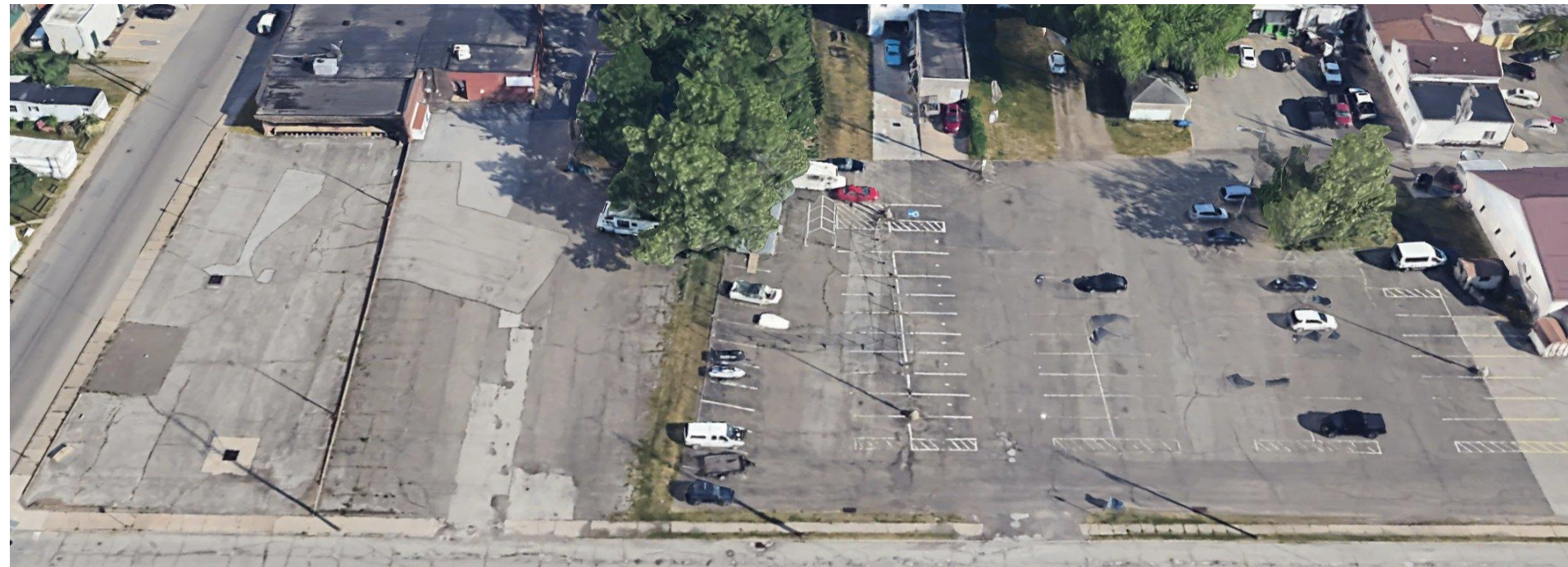


**BOROUGH OF  
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**Currently a municipal-owned parking lot.**

Can NEVER justify putting money into the lot when we have streets that look the way they do.

This parcel, as ugly and dilapidated as it currently is, if it remains a parking lot, it is as good as it will ever be again.





# Make the North St Lot Productive

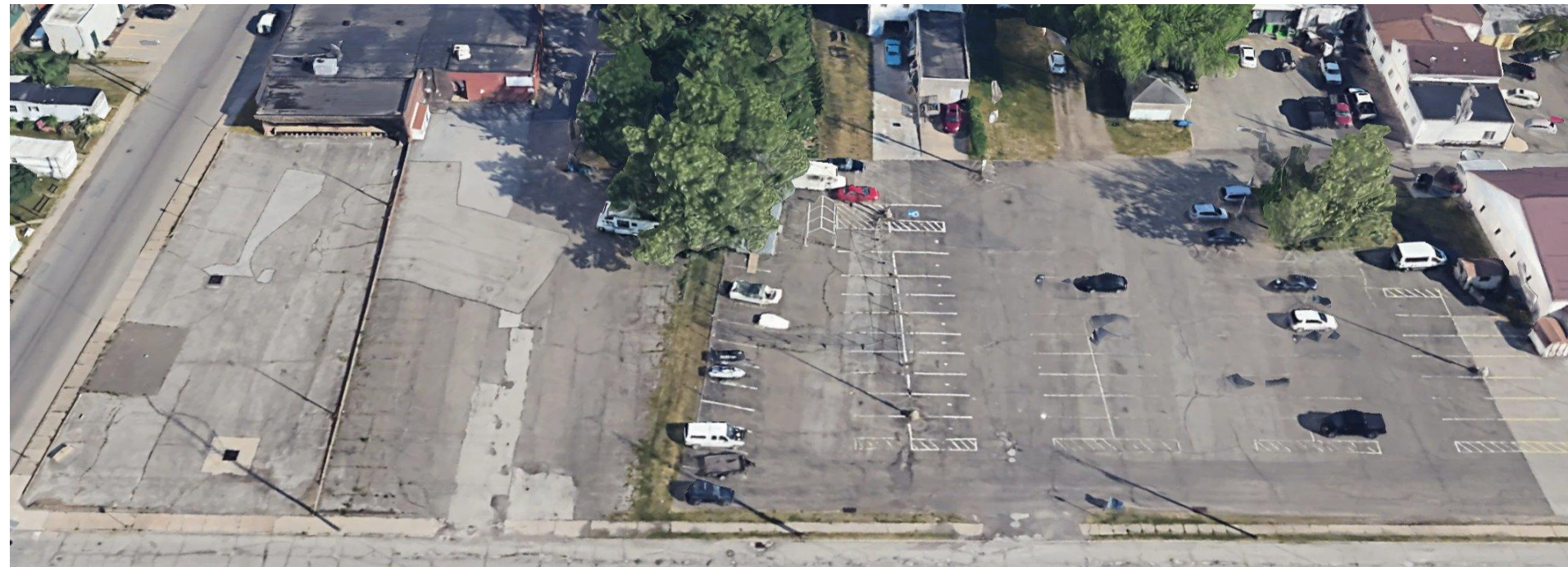
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## What if...

- This parcel is 0.845 acres.
- Let's assume a value per acre similar to the Yurkovic building, \$1,230,512.
- At a minimum, this property could be valued at \$1,039,782. AT A MINIMUM
- In reality, this property is 9.4 times the size.





# Make the North St Lot Productive

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**BOROUGH OF  
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**What if...**

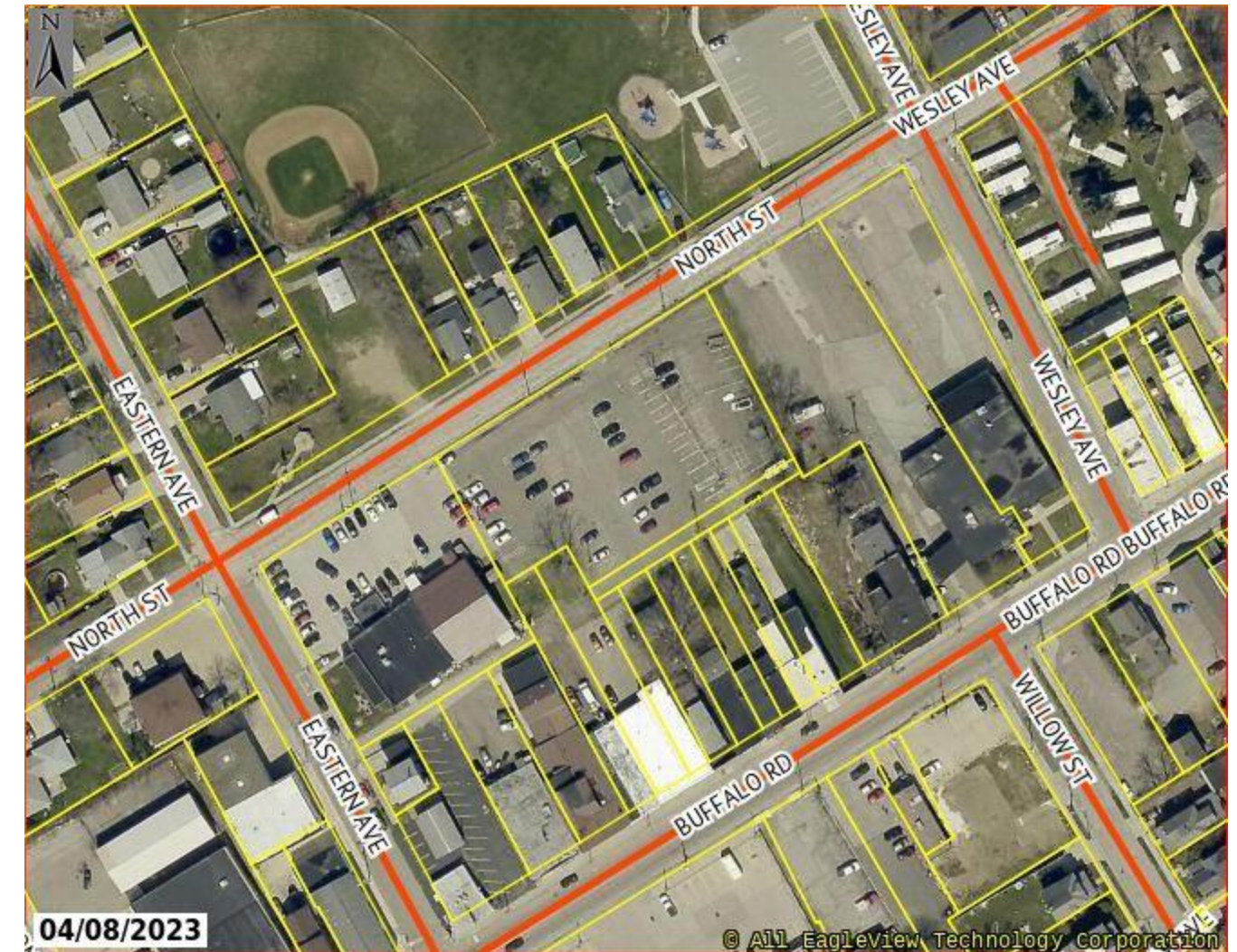
With an assumed value of \$1,039,782

At our current tax rate, this could bring in \$13,487

**ANNUALLY.**

Then, add;

- Additional resident income tax,
- Additional residential rental permit fees,
- And nonquantifiable benefits, business district activity.



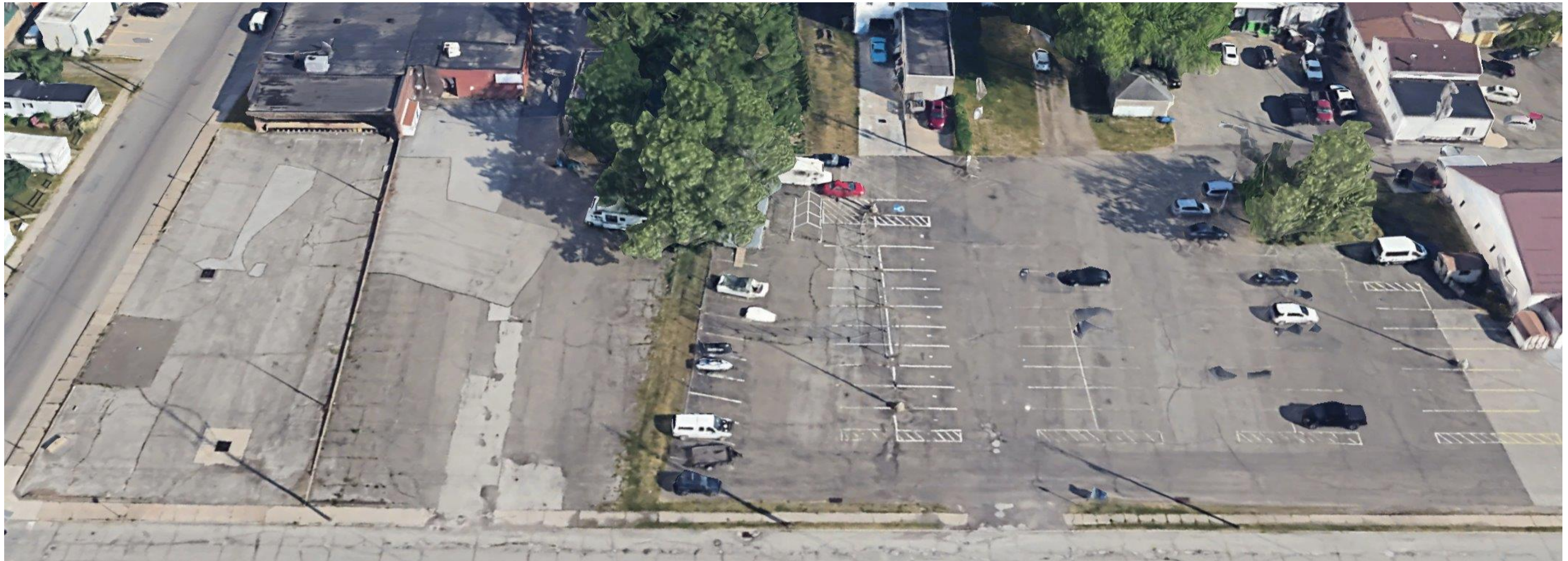


# **Make the North St Lot Productive**

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**We MUST make the North St Lot productive; WE CAN'T AFFORD NOT TO.**



# **What We Ought to be Doing**

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- **Take a Different Perspective on Our Zoning.**
- **Incentivize Development Borough-Wide**
- **Encourage Development of the North Street Lot into More Productive Use**
- **Forge Deeper Partnerships**

# Forge Deeper Partnerships

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We must recognize that we don't have competitive advantages with everything and therefore, we must seek collaboration.

- Multi-municipal Collaborations – shared services
  - Harborcreek – Vehicle Fuel
  - City of Erie – Sewer Camera Agreement
  - City of Erie - Municipal Garage
- Our most similar and logical collaborator is our neighbor Lawrence Park.
- Regional entities like the Erie Area Council of Government and the Erie County Association of Boroughs.
- Forge deep partnerships, we can't afford not to.



# **What We Ought to be Doing**

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**BOROUGH OF  
WESLEYVILLE**

- **Take a Different Perspective on Our Zoning.**
- **Incentivize Development Borough-Wide**
- **Encourage Development of the North Street Lot into More Productive Use**
- **Forge Deeper Partnerships**
- **Protect our Pedestrians**

# Protect Our Pedestrians

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**BOROUGH OF  
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## Protect our Pedestrians

- When people visit our business district it's important that their journey to the front door of the business is safe, comfortable, and efficient.
- All car rides start and end as a pedestrian.
- People will only decide to get out of their car in our business district if they feel that they are meant to.
- Otherwise, if pedestrians are an afterthought, they will keep on driving right by.

**We must protect our pedestrians; we can't afford not to.**



# **What We Ought to be Doing**

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**BOROUGH OF  
WESLEYVILLE**

- **Take a Different Perspective on Our Zoning.**
- **Incentivize Development Borough-Wide**
- **Encourage Development of the North Street Lot into More Productive Use**
- **Forge Deeper Partnerships**
- **Protect our Pedestrians**
- **Seek out Quick & Cheap Wins**

# Seek Out Quick & Cheap Wins

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We must take unconventional approaches.

- Community Garden
- McClelland Park

Must seek out quick and cheap wins.  
Literally cannot afford anything else.



Image provided courtesy of EriePics by Michael Nesgoda



# **What We Ought to be Doing**

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**BOROUGH OF  
WESLEYVILLE**

- **Take a Different Perspective on Our Zoning.**
- **Incentivize Development Borough-Wide**
- **Encourage Development of the North Street Lot into More Productive Use**
- **Forge Deeper Partnerships**
- **Protect our Pedestrians**
- **Seek out Quick & Cheap Wins**
- **Activate the Community**

# Activate the Community

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**BOROUGH OF  
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- Improvement in our Borough has only ever been community-driven. The community must be engaged to be effective.
- Everyone has a responsibility to contribute to our collective future





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# Moral of Our Story

# Moral of Our Story

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**BOROUGH OF  
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- We have experienced decline in the last so many decades. We must adopt a new approach
- We have great bones, all the right ingredients. A great starting point. We aren't in as bad of a position as we may feel
- We have significant competitive advantages, and our best move is to lean into them
- We have the power to embrace change.
- We have the keys to the Borough right here in this room.
- We have the power to unlock our fullest potential.





**BOROUGH OF  
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# Thank You

I hope this presentation was insightful and you walk away from this room with a fresh perspective on our Borough.

# Brief Q&A

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- Ask away...

