

# Public talks small-area plan

## Street repair among topics of discussion

BY JIM BISSETT  
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If you want to reimagine a neighborhood, you might want to take care of the collapsed street first.

That was the observation delivered by Morgantown landlord

James Giuliani on Thursday night, before the start of a community forum that addressed future development along North Willey and Snyder streets, plus Richwood Avenue.

Which also means the side streets and neighborhoods that spin off those arteries, including Forest Avenue, where Giuliani owns several rental properties.

As in, the aforementioned collapsed Forest Avenue, which is "beyond paving," the landlord said.

Over the years, Giuliani said he's rehabbed the street by open-

ing his properties up to once-homeless people and making other improvements.

"People didn't want to go down there before because of the needles," he said.

For urban planning purposes, Forest Avenue and its environs are designated as "Area No. 2," by the city, which is looking at rezoning and other reconfigurations as part of updates to its Comprehensive Plan.

Morgantown designated around 16 areas, all compact, mixed-used neighborhoods that run from Woodburn to Greenmont to Don Knotts Boulevard.

Chet Parsons, a senior planner with AECOM, the Wharf District company tapped by the city to conduct the studies, ran the meeting.

Thursday's was the first gathering for the study in the designated area, he said. Two other sessions will be scheduled in the future.

This one was a brain storming, "What do you think?" kind of session, he told the audience of about 30 who came to the forum at Spruce Street United Methodist Church.

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"It could be anything you want, or anything you don't want," Parsons said.

During forums last year, he said, Darst Street residents said they liked their neighborhood just as is, so that sentiment is now on record with the city when it comes time for upgrades in

that area.

Residents on Thursday night suggested a parking garage and full-service grocery store on Richwood Avenue.

One woman suggested sidewalk and crosswalk improvements along Willey Street.

Giuliani, before the start of the forum, suggested an upgrade of the universal-university mindset, as far

as the city is concerned.

WVU enrollment, he said, is in a slight decline.

If that's a forerunner of things to come, he said, those student dollars won't be as much a sure thing for a place that calls itself, "the University City."

"West Virginia University is not the economic engine it was," he said.