

Chapter 1 – The Role and Purpose of Planning

The West Virginia Code, Chapter 8A states “the general purpose of the comprehensive plan is to guide a governing body to accomplish a coordinated and compatible development of land and improvements within its territorial jurisdiction, in accordance with present and future needs and resources.” The statute goes on to further identify ten purposes of the comprehensive plan:

1. Set the goals and objectives for land development, uses and suitability for a governing body, so a governing body can make an informed decision.
2. Ensure that the elements in the comprehensive plan are consistent.
3. Coordinate all governing bodies, units of government and other planning commissions to ensure that all comprehensive plans and future development are compatible.
4. Create conditions favorable to health, safety, mobility, transportation, prosperity, civic activities, recreational, educational, cultural opportunities and historic resources.
5. Reduce the wastes of physical, financial, natural or human resources which result from haphazard development, congestion, and scattering of population.
6. Reduce the destruction or demolition of historic sites and other resources by reusing land and buildings and revitalizing areas.
7. Promote a sense of community, character and identity.
8. Promote the efficient utilization of natural resources, rural land and scenic areas.
9. Focus development in existing developed areas and fill in vacant or underused land near existing developed areas to create well designed and coordinated communities.
10. Promote cost-effective development of community facilities and services.

The Comprehensive Plan evaluates the current status of the county and projects future growth trends. Based on these trends, the county proposes the best possible land use and implementation tools to accommodate the expected growth, while protecting the area’s resources. In order to develop a true picture of the county, the statute requires, at a minimum, that the Plan shall meet the following objectives:

1. Statement of Goals and Objectives
2. Timeline
3. Action Plan
4. Recommended Financial Program
5. Statement of Recommendations
6. Program to Encourage
7. Maps, Plats, Charts and/or Descriptive Material

The statute also requires, at a minimum, that the Plan shall have the following components:

8. Land Use
9. Housing
10. Transportation
11. Infrastructure
12. Public Services
13. Rural
14. Recreation
15. Economic Development
16. Community Design

17. Preferred Development Areas
18. Renewal and/or Redevelopment
19. Financing
20. Historic Preservation

In addition to the required components, the statute encourages optional components to be addressed including: history, environmental, tourism, conservation, safety, and natural resources use. All of these will be playing a more important role in the County's overall development in the coming years.

What This Plan Does

- Focuses on current trends and issues within Berkeley County and address them with appropriate solutions.
- Provides the best possible projection on future conditions based on the current patterns and identify strategies to help create a more desirable and sustainable future.
- Directs future change through a vision of community potential.
- Establishes the framework for consistency between future land use policies and land use regulatory measures.
- Assists county officials in their decision making process.

Relationship Between The Comprehensive Plan and Other Plans for Berkeley County

The Berkeley County Comprehensive Plan is a broad policy document that provides guidance for future decision making. The plan shows a relationship with other plans that have been developed in the community. These plans go into more depth regarding specific topics.

The following is a partial list of the specific plans that were referenced during the development of the Comprehensive Plan:

- Source Water Assessment and Protection Plan (SWAP)
- Comprehensive Educational Facilities Plan
- Hagerstown-Eastern Panhandle Metropolitan Planning Organization (HEPMPO) Long Range Transportation Plan Update "Direction 2040" (2014)
- Public Service Water District Water Facility Plan Update (2008)
- Berkeley County Commercial Solid Waste Facility Siting Plan (2011)
- Berkeley County Fire Services Board—Five Year Strategic Plan (2011)
- Region 9 Planning & Development Council Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan for Berkeley and Morgan Counties (Released 2012)
- Stormwater MS4 Permit Program Financing Feasibility Study (2015)

Recommended Review Process

The Berkeley County Comprehensive Plan will only be useful if it is regularly used and updated. Therefore, it is recommended that the Planning Commission perform the following actions and forward their findings to the County Council and the Council entertain possible amendments to the Plan or the appropriate regulations:

- Every three years evaluate to Comprehensive Plan, and if necessary, make modifications to ensure it provides adequate guidance regarding the future growth in the county.
- Identify potential new strategies and funding opportunities to achieve stated goals.

- Prepare a written summary of the evaluation process. This report should also include a record of major activities undertaken since the last review, as well as a list of the activities scheduled for action in the upcoming years.
- This is also an ideal opportunity to identify any new issues or concerns that may have an impact on the county.

Regulatory Review

The Berkeley County Comprehensive Plan is a guide to preparing for the future. The review process as stated above is important and necessary to preserve the relevance of the plan. Along with the review of the Plan, the regulations addressing items in the plan such as subdivision requirements, storm water management and other components need to be reviewed frequently. These ordinances provide the ability to implement and monitor the recommendations of the plan.

A result of the 2006 Comprehensive Plan was the preparation of a good land use element and plan for the future. However, the adoption of zoning regulations was to play a major role in the implementation of the land use element and plan. When the zoning concept was defeated by the voters of the county, the major tool for directing growth to certain areas was lost. Frequent evaluation of the goals and policies is necessary to ensure the future land use needs of the county are being met.