

Chapter 4 – Values, Visions and Goals

Values, Visions and Goals Summary

Residents of Berkeley County have chosen to live here for a variety of reasons, including community character, the natural environment, and family ties. This section of the comprehensive plan examines the opportunities in Berkeley County and the visions for the future that will make it an even better place to live, work and play.

Public Involvement Process

This document is an update to the 2006 Berkeley County Comprehensive Plan and much of the same information was used in formulating the Action Plans contained in this document.

The Comprehensive Plan Update development has utilized several public involvement techniques to determine what the residents of Berkeley County see as the current issues and what they would like to see in the future. Residents were provided several opportunities to answer questions and to establish what is valued in the communities, as well as what the vision of the future should be. The results of this process are the foundation for the plans and implementation strategies found in the following chapters.

Public involvement has been multi-faceted so that the planning process would allow as many people as possible to participate in the planning effort. The following reviews the various levels of participation that have led to the development of the values, visions and goals for the update to the Berkeley County Comprehensive Plan.

Public Meetings

The comprehensive plan update was listed as an agenda item for every Planning Commission meeting beginning in May of 2015 and continued through to the completion and the adoption of the plan. Schedule for these public meetings and public hearings were posted on the comprehensive plan webpage.

Webpage

In order to facilitate sharing the plan with the community at large, a project webpage was developed: www.berkeleywv.org/ComprehensivePlan. In addition to providing information about public meetings, sections of the plan were made available as they were completed. The link to the online community survey was provided and basic background information about the plan, including an electronic copy of the 2006 Berkeley County Comprehensive Plan Update.



Values & Visions

Public Outreach – The Community Survey Summary

From July 2015 through October 2015, an online community survey was made available to the members of the Berkeley County community to validate current issues and concerns in Berkeley County. The survey was advertised in a variety of locations including The Martinsburg Journal, The Herald Mail, Planning Commission meetings, County Council meetings, Planning Commission office reception area, business cards, and email distributions to agencies throughout the community. A few agencies also distributed information regarding the survey through their own email blasts and group distributions.

A total of 375 on-line surveys were completed. The multiple choice survey results were compiled and compared to the survey results of the 2006 Comprehensive Plan. The survey comments were compiled by question and grouped according to similarities. The following provides a general summary of the results of the survey. Detailed survey results can be found in the Appendices.

Multiple Choice

In summary, the multiple choice survey yielded the following results:

- Most residents, nearly 87%, agree to some extent that the quality of life in the county is very good. This is up from 67% in the 2006 plan. However, the percentage of respondents that strongly agreed remains the same at less than 6%.
- More than 71% of respondents agreed to some extent that the location of new development, affordable housing, a lack of employment opportunities, protection of water resources, traffic congestion, the pace of new development and the cleanliness of the county were major issues. Cleanliness of the county and traffic congestion rank as the top two issues. Pace of new development has moved from being one of the top two major issues to being one of the bottom two concerns.
- With regard to the types of housing that should be encouraged in Berkeley County, single family detached homes and retirement villages/assisted living facilities remain ranked as the top two and received strong support with over 85% and nearly 92% respectively. Mobile homes and Conversion of single-family homes to apartments received little support from respondents with less than 22% of respondents encouraging this type of housing.
- More than half of respondents agreed to some extent that availability of community services and utilities in the county are adequate with the exception of Street and Road Maintenance and Internet Access with 46% and 47% of respondents feeling these services were adequate.
- Each of the identified transportation related projects received very strong support, with between 76 and 80% of respondents agreeing that the county should pursue them. Priorities continue to be to “reduce congestion in and around Martinsburg, Hedgesville, Inwood and Tabler Station” and “Provide transportation related services to elderly and the handicapped.”
- Citizens do not appear to be satisfied with County Government, particularly with regard to “planning regulations” (43%) and “keeping citizens informed on available assistance programs” (39%). In regards to “cooperation with other governments in the county and the state” the percentage of respondents unsure about this question remains at 35%.
- More than half of respondents agreed to some extent that the county needs a variety of recreational facilities, with the exception of football fields which fell from 58% to 40%. “Places to walk and hike” and “Bike trails and paths” remain the strongest supported recreational facilities/programs at 87% and 86%.
- There is also agreement on the need for additional community and cultural activities in the county, with the exception of “parades” which only received support from 34% of the

respondents. “Protected greenways along streams and scenic roads” continues to receive the strongest support at 88% of respondents indicating the county needs more of them.

Written Responses

The written answers to the survey questions provided the following insight:

Survey Comment 33: “Other Transportation Services That Should Be Pursued By County Officials”: The majority of responses to this question emphasized the need for improvements to Route 9 from I-81 to Berkeley Springs (25.7% of written responses) and the need for additional taxi and bus services throughout the county (23.0% of written responses). Requested improvements on Route 9 included widening the road to 4 lanes, traffic calming, and traffic enforcement to improve the overall safety of the road and reduce traffic congestion. Increased private taxi services in the area was strongly recommended along with requests for additional bus services for individuals who need off hour transportation to work at 24/7 facilities, medical care, or after school activities. Improved train and MARC access was requested in 14.9% of the written responses, including additional parking, overnight security and at least one weekend run in the morning and evening for families that would like to visit Washington DC. Another 14.9% of written responses suggested more bike and pedestrian paths including a system of paths that connected to each other throughout the county. The remaining written requests emphasized the need to reduce traffic congestion from Winchester Avenue (Route 11) to I-81; making all roads school bus accessible; improving I-81 to reduce congestion and increase safety; and providing apps for portable devices to inform residents of traffic issues.

Survey Comment 42: “I Am Very Satisfied With County Government In Regard To”: In response to this comment 63% of the written comments indicated dissatisfied with county government. The 37% of written comments, indicating that they were satisfied with county government, shared their appreciation for the use of existing vacant properties to house government services and the future rehabilitation center; holding departments within the county government accountable; helpfulness of county employees; the recycling program; pursuing new business growth and attracting better and healthier fast food options; improving the parks; and the use of cable and the county website. Many of the written comments, that specified a reason for dissatisfaction, mentioned concerns regarding zoning or lack of zoning; and decisions being made without or regardless of public input. (Zoning was presented to the public and was defeated in a general election in the 1980s and again in 2010).

Survey Comment 54 “Berkeley County Needs More”: In response to Comment 54, 21.4% of written comments indicated the need for an indoor pool in Berkeley County. The second highest percentage, 14.3% of written comments expressed a need for more bicycle trails and hiking paths along roads and in natural areas such as Sleepy Creek. Another 10.7% emphasized the need for more greenspace, nature preserves and habitat corridors, with shade trees, with an additional 5.4% recommending locations that allow for individual fitness opportunities. Infrastructure concerns were also mentioned 10.7% of the written comments to this question.

Survey Comment 61 “Berkeley County Needs More Community and Cultural Activities”: There was a strong interest in more dancing opportunities, music opportunities, and art festivals, with 15.2% of written comments specifying interest in a variety of these activities. Other interests included recommendations for better communication and advertising of events, improvements to downtown Martinsburg, and activities for elder citizens. Nature preserves, trees, and bicycle trails were also mentioned.

The most important issue to the citizens of Berkeley County remains the ability to maintain the quality of life in the face of the continued development of the County. The initial period after the adoption of the 2006 Comprehensive Plan can be characterized as a period of very rapid growth. This period of rapid growth brought Berkeley County to the forefront in the state as well as the nation. However, the “Building Bubble” burst in 2008. Development became almost non-existent and has only started to come back in recent years. It has not yet reached the levels seen prior to 2008. Berkeley County’s rapid growth has an impact on every aspect of community life. The unprecedented growth has been further complicated by the potential environmental impacts and in particular the waters of the Chesapeake Bay. While the county has taken a number of steps to maintain the water quality within the county, additional steps will need to be undertaken by both citizens and all governmental units and agencies operating within the County. Federal Regulations addressing water quality in the Chesapeake Bay watershed require continued attention and effort in order to meet these regulations. The challenge continues to be finding the balance between individual property rights and the overall needs of the Berkeley County community.

GOALS THROUGH ACTION PLANS

This chapter outlined a preferred vision for Berkeley County’s future. The following chapters outline the action plans that correspond to the preferred vision.

Action Plans answer the question “*How can we change what we do today in order to become the community we want to be tomorrow?*” They recommend policies for decision making and they recommend tasks for initiating change in the community. It is important to recognize that the action plans reflect a partnership of public and private entities working together to improve the quality of life in Berkeley County. Contributions of time, talent and financial resources will be needed to make this plan a reality.

The Action Plans are organized as follows:

- The Growth Management Plan (Land Use)
- The Natural Resources Plan
- The Housing Plan
- The Transportation Plan
- The Infrastructure Plan
- The Community Services and Facilities Plan
- The Education Plan
- The Parks, Recreation and Culture Plan
- The Economic Development Plan