

CHAPTER 1 - LAND USE

Introduction

In order to determine how the County should grow and most benefit its citizens, it is important to first evaluate what factors have driven County growth to its current status. The Land Use Plan may then utilize these factors, including balancing the protection of natural and cultural resources with the extension of necessary public services to develop the most appropriate growth policies.

Although the County planning process does not currently provide for established zoning districts, mapping of existing land uses provides an outline of the natural progression of growth that has occurred. From these defined growth areas the Plan should provide direction on how best to manage and direct future growth patterns that will affect existing land use. This direction will then aid in the promotion of the designation of projected growth areas to serve an increasing population and economy, as well as define limitations that may affect the pace at which future growth occurs.

Existing Land Use

Residential land use comprises approximately 10,914 acres of the total area within Morgan County, with just over 6,500 acres estimated as developed. This is a significant increase from less than 4,700 acres in 1980. However, average lot size for this same period decreased from roughly one-acre per home in 1980 to just over 0.75 acres in 2000. This land use designation is made up primarily of three types of residential development. These areas include urban growth served by public water and sewer, newer suburban subdivisions, and the less defined rural pockets of residential dwellings. These types overlap other developed land use designations such as municipal as well as undeveloped land use designations such as woodlands and agricultural.

Commercial land use comprises 1,212 acres of the total area within the County, for those areas specifically outside of the incorporated towns and excluding industrial business parks. This is a new category from the 1985 Comprehensive Plan, and although it currently represents a small percent of the total County acreage is projected to increase throughout the County with the proliferation of new, larger residential development in areas where growth pressures did not previously exist. This land use designation is made up primarily of retail and service businesses that are located in and around residential development. Development of property for commercial use is also affected by the location of necessary public services as well as the adequacy of public infrastructure such as roads, water, and sewer.

Industrial land use comprises 3,014 acres of the total area within the County, most of which is owned by the US Silica Company. This area includes property that is part of undeveloped industrial property holdings, currently utilized for light and heavy industrial and manufacturing industries and underutilized developed land which may no longer serve its original purpose or be in full operation. Most of the land reflected in the 1985 Plan included more than 7,000 acres of

undeveloped property holdings under two companies, while the remainder was spread among nine smaller sites around the Berkeley Springs and Paw Paw areas. However, since that time the major landholders either sold off or changed their prospective use of the properties while most of the smaller sites have been developed or abandoned for industrial use and replaced with more appropriate locations. In order to designate and promote appropriate future industrial and manufacturing uses for these properties, it is important to understand the change in industries that provide the largest employment base for the local County workforce.

Agricultural land use comprises nearly 23,000 acres of the total area within the County. This is a decrease from more than 26,000 in 1980, and represents approximately 16% of the total County land area. Although the number of farms within the County has increased from 143 to 178, the average acreage per farm has decreased from 182 to 129 during this period. Further, the overall acreage being actively farmed has decreased from more than 13,000 acres in 1980 to less than 10,000 acres in 2005, with the remaining property primarily wooded.

Recreational land use comprises 11,562 acres of the total area within the County. The primary difference, or loss of recreational land over the 1985 Plan analysis is removing the 1,800 acre Coolfont Resort area that is privately owned, and therefore not available to be classified as public recreational area. Also, not included in this acreage is land designated as educational. However, it is reflected in Chapter 7 as part of the overall open space used by the public. Recreational land referred to in this chapter is owned and maintained primarily by the various governing entities for both active and passive use.

Educational land use, which totals 150 acres of the County land, comprises a small percentage of the total area within the County. This is primarily due to both a small and widely spread population that has not experienced a level of growth requiring construction of significant additional educational facilities and their accompanying school athletic field needs. However, given recent growth trends, including pace and location of new development, coupled with the fact that many existing schools are located on property with limited room for expansion and provision of adequate field space, it will be important for the school system to use the projections within the Comprehensive Plan to prepare to address future school needs. This is evident in the fact that over the last decade several older schools on smaller properties have been replaced by newer schools on larger campus settings, two of which make up two-thirds of the total acreage.

Municipal land use comprises 704 acres of the total land within the County. This land exists within the two incorporated towns including nearly 400 acres in the Town of Bath and the remainder in the Town of Paw Paw. The increase in acreage from 1980 to 2005 is due to differences in classification, whereas the 1985 Plan classified some areas in the County as “urban built-up area”, and the classification for this Plan refers to specifically those areas within the municipal limits. In reality there have been less than 50 acres of land annexed during that period. Due to the varying mixture of uses, and the continual evolution of these primarily built-up areas, it is difficult to classify any large single area within either Town under one particular land use designation. Therefore it is understood for purposes of this chapter that areas within each town contribute in some part to all of the land uses listed.

Public land use is defined in this chapter as land other than schools and parks owned by government for the provision of public utilities and services such as water and sewer, police, fire, libraries, and transportation. These uses comprise a small amount of the overall County acreage and are included in various designations as outlined in this chapter. More important, as reflected in Chapters 3, 4 and 5 of this Plan, is the current location of these services as it relates to their need and ability to physically expand in order to adequately address future growth.

Woodlands comprise 117,000 acres of the total area within the County. This land use makes up a large part of the County, covering vast areas across many types of land uses including more than 11,000 acres in recreational, 12,000 in agricultural and some smaller amounts in other classifications. The net acreage thus represents roughly 80% of the total County land area. This acreage has remained relatively constant over time due in large part to some areas previously in active agricultural production giving way to passive woodland, while in other areas previously wooded, new development has occurred. Although it is estimated that clear cutting for development accounts for only 130 acres of the total 1,130 acres cleared per year, consideration of preservation of these natural areas may be required in future planning process.

Historic and conservation land uses act more as an overlay of those areas previously outlined. The historic areas may include both natural and built features within the County that should be identified to protect their individual importance to the character of the community in which they are located. Conservation areas include both public and private properties. These areas may be protected through more stringent regulations that preserve the environmental integrity and sensitive elements that extensive growth would impair.

In addition to the various land use categories is the acreage for roads and water. Water coverage makes up less than 1% of the County's total landmass, which equates to just over 1,000 acres. This has remained relatively constant over time as development and environmental changes have not had significant effects on changing the County's waterways.

As residential development has nearly doubled since the 1985 Plan, local road systems have been added to serve new homes and accompanying commercial centers. Added to the nearly 400 lane miles of roads maintained by the West Virginia Department of Transportation, highway and road systems are estimated to cover approximately 3,000 acres of the total County land area.

Based on US Census data the total County land mass consists of 229.67 square miles. Converted to acres, the total County land mass is 146,988.8 acres. Subtracting out the total estimated acreage covered by water and roads, the total net land use acreage is approximately 142,970 acres.

In developing Table 1-1, all acreage for those types of land uses clearly documented were established first. From this calculation acreage for those land uses not documented, specifically residential and commercial, were estimated from the remainder.

Based on review of the 2006 County tax year statistics it was estimated that 10% of the remaining acreage could be classified as commercial and 90% residential with 80% and 61% developed respectively. Several notable changes from the 1985 Plan include:

- Reduction in total estimated County acreage from 149,277 to 146,989
- Increase in total residential acreage from more than doubling of housing stock
- Accounting for undeveloped acreage in the residential planning pipeline
- Reduction in total industrial acreage due to changes in designation of land holdings
- Reduction in recreational land due to removal of large private recreational property
- Increase in municipal acreage from 1985 which listed an “urban” acreage of 416

Table 1-1 Land Use (acres)

<u>Land use</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1980 Net</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2000 Net</u>	<u>Change in Acreage</u>
Residential	4,864	4,864	10,914	6,658	6,050
Commercial	N/A	N/A	1,212	971	N/A
Industrial	8,162	511	3,014	678	-5,148
Agricultural	26,068	13,635	22,953	9,475	-3,115
Woodlands	121,650	129,301	117,000	123,834	-4,650
Recreational	13,315	500	11,562	500	-1,753
Educational	50	50	150	150	100
Municipal	416	416	704	704	288
Total		149,277		142,970	

Source: Morgan County Government, USDA Census of Agriculture

Land Use Zoning Regulations

Under West Virginia State Code, Article 8A-7-1 provides counties the ability to enact zoning ordinances. Based on this provision, there have been considerations in the past of enactment, the most recent of which included the development of a tentative report and explanatory map which outlined comprehensive zoning ordinances and land use designations. This report was considered for adoption by the County in 1994 and ultimately turned down. The State Code specifically outlines the process by which a County must proceed with enactment including:

- Determining the area in which the ordinance will apply
- Consideration of the contents of the ordinance and its application
- Certification of zoning district boundaries and maps
- Completing a study and providing a report of existing and proposed land uses
- Providing public review and input through hearings prior to enactment

Although the land use map in this chapter does not serve as part of any process to establish zoning, it does provide the basic outline of many of the existing land use categories that could be used in development of zoning designations. This map merely provides all property within the County with a land use designation that reflects the current or proposed use of that property in

relation to the larger whole of the surrounding area. Therefore in certain instances it may not reflect the use of each property specifically, but rather should be used as a guide for uses in general within the defined area.

Although the County has not chosen to enact zoning through its process of consideration, the Town of Paw Paw does have zoning ordinances which apply to those area located within the corporate limits of the Town, and to all properties that would be annexed.

Population Trends

For purposes of development analysis and growth projections, this chapter is divided into 3 planning areas made up of 6 districts. These areas include: the small northeastern tip of the County known as the Sleepy Creek region, the Central Valley region, made up of four districts that encompass the largest and most heavily populated area, and the southwestern mountain area known as the Cacapon region, which includes the Town of Paw Paw as well as a large amount of publicly owned lands. These planning regions are further referenced throughout the Comprehensive Plan.

Morgan County is the western most of three counties that make up the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia. These counties, unlike much of the rest of the State have experienced significant increases in growth over the past 50 years, due in large part to the automobile-driven development pressures from the growing metropolitan areas of Baltimore and Washington to the east. It has also experienced recent pressures from the spreading Winchester area in Virginia, to the south.

Historic growth shows that the County experienced a 25% increase in residential growth between 1970 and 1980. Prior to this time growth was either negligible or in some areas declining. This increase in growth, however, did not result in a significant increase in population since the average household size continued to decline from 3.1 persons per household in 1970 to 2.8 in 1980. Further, an increasing percentage of this residential growth was due to new construction of scattered minor rural subdivisions and single lot recreational homes. By 1980 the decrease in average household size and increase in rural lot development produced roughly an average population of 46 persons in 16 households per square mile.

Between 1980 and 1990 the growth trend slightly declined, producing roughly 57 additional households or 143 persons each year as compared with nearly 74 new households and 215 persons per year in the previous decade. This decline included as well further decline in household size to just over 2.5 persons on average. Growth patterns during this period were focused on new development being located in the Sleepy Creek and upper Central Valley regions.

In spite of the further decline of household size to 2.43 persons per household, the growth trend of the previous decade nearly doubled between 1990 and 2000, adding more than 117 new households and 280 persons per year, which accounted for an increase in population from just over 12,000 in 1990 to nearly 15,000 in 2000. One important trend bolstering new households

during this period, which is further outlined in the Population and Housing Chapter, is the reduction of vacant rental units from nearly 13% to 7.6% in this period. As a result of the significant increase in growth from 1980 to 2000 the average population and households increased to roughly 65 persons in 27 households per square mile, which accounted for nearly a 71% population and 60% housing increase over the 1980 figure.

Table 1-2 Population Trends

Trend	1960-1970	1970-1980	1980-1990	1990-2000
Household Size	3.1	2.8	2.5	2.43
Units per Year	7	74	57	117
Annual Population Increase	20	215	143	280
Housing per Square Mile	14	20	23	30
Persons per Square Mile	37	46	52	65

Source: US Census Reports

The most significant increase in growth has occurred over the past 5 year period between 2001 and 2005. In 2002 Morgan County experienced its first year of issuing more than 100 permits for new homes. In 2005 this number approached 300. It appears from submission of major residential subdivision development plans and continued increases in the annual number of minor exemption approvals, that permit activity will not decrease significantly in the near future.

At the current pace it is projected that the 2010 population could reach 20,318 under the medium growth scenario, which would mean an increase of more than 1,110 new housing units equating in an average yearly population increase of 566. While still remaining quite rural in its overall appearance, this growth will result in increased population and housing densities, especially in the more densely developed urban areas within the County.

Table 1-3 Historic Population

Location	1970	1980	1990	2000	2005
Sleepy Creek	640	967	N/A	N/A	N/A
Central Valley	6,063	7,673	N/A	N/A	N/A
Cacapon	1,844	2,071	N/A	N/A	N/A
Town of Bath	944	789	735	663	764
Town of Paw Paw	706	644	538	524	N/A
Morgan County	8,547	10,771	12,128	14,943	17,232

Source: Morgan County Comprehensive Plan 1985, US Census Reports

Building Intensity

From the growth trends described above, the County has experienced three distinct types of residential development. These include lots with well and septic, private community systems for water and sewer, and public-utility-driven growth. Each type of development has a different impact on the ability to adequately provide various public services, which must be taken into account in providing direction for future growth. This is important in development of a land use map because the provision of water and sewer services in particular plays a large role in determining the density and pace at which development may occur.

From existing activity it is estimated that there is a total of 1,117 lots currently in the development pipeline for major subdivisions. In order to be included in this pipeline, it means that the proposed development has a reasonable probability of fruition in the Plan period due to the fact that plans have been granted some stage of review.

Major Subdivision Activity

As outlined in Table 1-4, there are several changes taking place in the development pipeline, which must be considered to understand better how increased pressures may affect growth. In using the sketch plan to final plat as a timeline, one noticeable trend is the increase in total number of lots being submitted for development approval as part of a single subdivision. These larger developments also include an increased average density per acre, which means that under State regulations many of these larger, denser developments must be supported by a public or community water and/or sewer system. It should also be noted that many of the smaller developments that have reached final plat approval, and therefore presumably older in the pipeline, have been submitted in sections, which typically denotes that the development is part of a larger whole being constructed by a smaller developer over a longer period of time.

Table 1-4 Major Subdivision Activity

<u>Subdivision</u>	<u>Approval</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Avg. Lot Size</u>	<u>Year Start</u>
Various Plans	Sketch Plan	Central Valley	894	411	.46 acre	N/A
Huntington Farms	Preliminary	Timber Ridge	56	90	1.6 acres	2006
Parkside Section II	Preliminary	Rock Gap	11	28	2.5 acres	2006
Pious Spr. Sect. I&II	Preliminary	Allen	9	23	2.6 acres	2006
Point View Estates	Preliminary	Rock Gap	15	24	1.6 acres	2006
Cacapon S. Sect. V	Final Plat	Timber Ridge	31	50	1.6 acres	2006
Fairview Oaks Sect. I	Final Plat	Bath	15	22	1.5 acres	2006
Horseshoe Run	Final Plat	Allen	43	125	2.9 acres	2005
Orleans Overlook	Final Plat	Cacapon	5	15	3 acres	2005
Parkside Section I	Final Plat	Rock Gap	14	16	1.1 acres	2005
Pious Spring Sect. I	Final Plat	Allen	5	17	3.4 acres	2004
Silo Acres	Final Plat	Allen	12	26	2.2 acres	2004
Stonewood	Final Plat	Allen	7	18	2.6 acres	2004
Totals			1,117	865	0.77 acres	

Source: Morgan County Government

Minor Subdivision Activity

Although major subdivision activity is increasing, it appears that much of the current and past development continues to occur on individual building lots within subdivisions of less than five total lots, which are commonly referred to as exemptions that often include several lots and a remainder. In order to better understand trends as it relates to this type of growth and the effect it will have on future development patterns in the County, it is important to utilize recent data due to the fact that unlike large subdivisions which may be affected by government policy, environmental constraints, or significant changes in land value, minor lot exemptions are not typically limited by such constraints, but collectively impact services, infrastructure, and available resources in a similar manner.

Table 1-5 Minor Lot Exemptions (Individual buildings lots of less than five total lots)

District	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Total	Annual Average
Sleepy Creek	1	0	16	5	0	18	40	7
Allen	24	18	10	33	6	41	132	22
Bath	5	2	12	13	16	13	61	10
Rock Gap	16	20	23	33	21	32	145	24
Timber Ridge	34	45	15	16	34	13	157	26
Central Valley Total	79	85	60	95	77	99	495	82
Cacapon	10	13	5	16	34	29	107	18
Total	90	98	81	116	111	146	642	107

Source: Morgan County Government

Development Activity

It is apparent from the tables above that the concentration of newly approved growth is and will continue to occur in the southern area of the Central Valley Planning Region, especially in the Timber Ridge and Rock Gap districts. This region includes 1,112 of the total proposed 1,117 major subdivision lots, and has experienced an average of 82 minor lot exemptions per year since 2000. This region also includes an estimated 1,750 undeveloped residential parcels which may yield a significant amount of additional future growth. This does not include the nearly 200 farms, most of which are located in the south central area of this region and can be expected over time to continue to experience both marginal and major development patterns. For this reason it may be important for the County to identify these areas and establish programs to maintain the agricultural character of important areas within this part of the Central Valley region.

The second most impacted region for immediate future growth is in the Cacapon Planning Region. Located west of Timber Ridge. There is only one listed major subdivision containing 5 lots in the development pipeline, and approximately 18 minor lots per year on average over the past 6 years. However, the number of minor lot exemptions approved has continued to grow

from 10 in 2000 to 29 in 2005. Further, this region includes many of the necessary resources that may adequately absorb future growth, with an estimated 1,615 undeveloped residential parcels. Given this amount of vacant available acreage, this region could also experience significant additional residential dwellings. However, unlike the Central Valley Planning Region, this area has a much smaller number of parcels classified as farms and due to its more rural character limited community and public water and sewer systems may expect to see a greater number of minor lot exemptions on larger lots over a longer period of time.

Although it appears that the much smaller Sleepy Creek Planning Region is least impacted at this time with no major subdivision proposals in the development pipeline and a sporadic annual average of 7 minor lot exemptions, pressures from the spreading growth in Berkeley and Jefferson counties immediately to the east, and the lack of adequate infrastructure and resources elsewhere in the County may change this direction at any point. However, this region being much more limited in physical size has less than 600 undeveloped residential parcels remaining for additional growth. Under optimistic standards this may yield a limited amount of additional growth. Further, it has less than 20 farms, and appears from recent permit activity to be building out at a faster pace than the Cacapon Planning Region, which would determine that both land and resources may be “used up” sooner than either of the two larger planning regions to the west.

Population Projections

Population projections for the County are developed in order to ensure that public utilities and services are adequate to provide for the natural increase in development. Projections are affected by such factors as the economy, household size, public policy, and adequacy of services. They are developed based on historic growth trends, current development activity, and land available for future development. However, given the method in which each factor may be affected, it is important to develop at least three growth scenarios for the County to consider when planning for the financing and provision of services.

Low Growth Scenario

The low growth scenario takes into account the pace at which development has occurred over the past 20 years. Although much of this chapter has focused on presentation of information in census periods, the impact of growth since the 2000 census period has increased significantly, and must be accounted for. Therefore, for purposes of this scenario the historical growth period will be measured from 1985 to 2005. During the past 20 year period as outlined, the average annual increase was 306 persons or 120 additional units with an average household size of 2.55 persons per household. Using these historical figures to project growth for the next 20 years, this static scenario would result in a projected population of 23,352 in a total of 9,487 dwellings for the year 2025. This assumes there will be similar periodic constraints on new development that have occurred in the past, and a significant decline in recent growth trends.

Medium Growth Scenario

The medium growth scenario analyzes all land currently available for development and the projected ability for existing public services to adequately provide for that growth. It is much more difficult to project than the low and high scenarios, as it must take into account potential changes in infrastructure, economy, services, and especially the regulatory process. This scenario recognizes that the current development pipeline will exceed the low growth scenario, while at the same time acknowledges services and resources may need to be expanded or improved in a more timely manner in order to sustain the pace estimated under the high growth scenario.

Taking into account that although a significant amount of development has been placed in the development pipeline, the actual build out of such development between 2000 and 2005 has averaged approximately 222 new homes being constructed and occupied per year. In comparing this data with the estimated availability of services from other chapters, it is evident that the pace of both current and projected growth will be affected by improvements to these necessary services being an integral part of the overall development process and the finite capacity of natural resources. This includes such examples as:

Public Service Needs

- Schools- the overall school system having less than 600 available seats will need to be evaluated for efficient student distribution and timing of expansion to handle increased growth
- Roads- upgrades will be required to address major issues such as capacity limitations on US Rt. 522 and alignment deficiencies on WV Rt. 9 as well as minor local road needs
- Public Safety- entities experiencing increased call load on primarily volunteer services will need additional funding for personnel and capital equipment outlay

Environmental and Natural Resource Limitations

- Water- development will be affected by future regulatory measures, the cost of extension of service, and the accuracy at which quantity may be accounted for and distributed
- Sewer- development will be affected by additional regulatory restrictions, the cost of extension of service, and the term of existing consent orders placed on various systems
- Sensitive Areas- consideration of development in areas where there are sensitive soils, steep slopes, waterways, floodplains and other significant features

Other Factors Affecting Development

- Market- market demand for housing has experienced a significant jump in housing prices, while there has been a noticeable decrease in average number of new units available
- Government Regulation- potential creation of comprehensive local zoning ordinances and expanded State and Federal environmental regulations

It is assumed that in order to maintain the recent pace of growth, such necessary services and regulations would be addressed as part of the development process. In addressing these current and projected limitations, it is also assumed that the 2005 peak of more than 300 permits will steadily decline and eventually level out as public will place increased pressure on the regulatory process to require growth and services be consistent in their collective approach.

Given this experience as reflected in the growth process of more developed counties to the east, it is a fair estimate to conclude that Morgan County may expect to experience a more balanced pace of an additional 566 people in 222 units per year through 2025. However, although Table 1-6 may reflect these increases in 5-year periods, it should be understood that the ebb and flow of such increases may depend largely on the ability for services and resources to adequately provide for the additional growth as well as market and regulatory effects. If this pace is achieved during the Plan period and average household size climbs slightly up to 2.55 from its current 2.4, it would result in a 2025 population of 29,577 in a total 11,599 dwelling units.

High Growth Scenario

Like the low growth scenario, the high growth scenario will also utilize an average household size of 2.55 persons per household, but will continue the recent escalation in development activity rather than an average of the previous 20 years. The high growth scenario takes into account all land currently available for development, as well as optimal conditions that reflect continued growth pressures that have been experienced in the past several years. Therefore, for purposes of this scenario it is assumed that growth will continue to build out without limitations to infrastructure, services, economy, or changes in the regulatory process. Under this scenario the County would continue to approve 223 new residential units per year for major subdivisions, and that the number of approved exemptions will continue to increase by 4 additional permits per year. This would result in a projected population of 37,890 in a total of 14,859 dwellings for the year 2025. This assumes that there will be a steady housing vacancy rate, an additional 3,140 minor lot exemptions and 4,460 major subdivision units, adding approximately 380 units per year and more than doubling the population and housing within the County.

Table 1-6 Population Growth Scenarios

Scenario	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
Low Growth	17,232	18,762	20,292	21,822	23,352
Medium Growth	17,232	20,318	23,404	26,490	29,577
High Growth	17,232	22,397	27,562	32,727	37,890

Factors Affecting Growth

Public Services include all necessary and desirable services provided by the government that allow for a community to function appropriately. These services range from necessary services such as public safety to desirable amenities such as public libraries. It is important to link the goals of the public services section of this Plan with the potential changes in land use and ultimately the direction of growth in order to ensure that services are timely, adequate, development funded, and above all financially efficient to maintain.

Infrastructure includes both public and privately developed services that are necessary in order for development to occur. These services primarily include roads, water, and sewer. It is important to understand how the extension of infrastructure, or lack thereof, over time has

allowed for growth to occur. This will allow for the public to make the most appropriate decision on whether growth will be better served by well and septic, private systems or public water and sewer, and determine how to best manage the design and maintenance of road systems to ensure efficient transportation networks and traffic flow.

Because environmental regulations are driven by ever changing State and Federal policy, this constraint is often the most overlooked and unpredictable factor affecting growth. In order to sustain some consistent direction for the County as it relates to growth and development, it is important for the County to develop policies that place it at the forefront of environmental policy rather than at the mercy of development that may leave behind costly measures for the County to later correct. This includes such efforts as assessment of the existing water table, watershed capacity and other information involving the establishment and extension of water and sewerage resources.

Possibly the most important factor affecting land use and growth is the socio-economic make up of the County. This can be observed at every point across the County from substandard housing to large vacation homes as well as declining industry and the rise of small seasonal retail tourism. In order to direct such change in a comprehensive manner, it is important to develop a plan for the most beneficial use of finite public resources. To accomplish this effort, the County must develop and lead this direction through the necessary implementation of all available planning tools that serve to guide all growth in an appropriate and timely manner.

Land Use Planning Tools

Although there are currently no zoning regulations governing land use within Morgan County, there are numerous available planning tools that should be considered by the County during the plan period to guide future land use. Given the sensitive issues surrounding what land use policies can and cannot control, it is important that the public is invited to participate in this decision making process. The following land use tools may be important to consider in the effective growth management of the Comprehensive Plan.

- Countywide Zoning Ordinance as provided by State Code and based on the strategies outlined in the Comprehensive Plan, most notably the ability for resources to support various types of growth in designated areas.
- Subdivision and Land Development Regulations recently updated by Morgan County to ensure that techniques used for development of land will be consistent with measures to benefit the entire County
- Traditional Neighborhood Design development with concepts that recreate and promote the continuation of small town character in design elements of new subdivisions and redevelopment proposals.

- Planned Residential Development permits innovative, well planned development that creates open space, blends housing types, and includes a mixture of uses that promotes neighborhood activity.
- Overlay Districts may be considered as part of the development of a comprehensive zoning ordinance to allow for increased flexibility within classifications while preserving the underlying controls that ensure neighboring uses are compatible.
- Agricultural Land Preservation includes methods to establish permanent easements that protect prime agricultural land from development, while providing financial value to the farmer to continuing viable operations.
- Transfer of Development Rights preserves land for agricultural and other sensitive areas directing growth to preferred development areas where services and resources are available.
- Neighborhood Revitalization incentives work to identify blight areas and properties that detract from the overall health of a community so that targeted strategies can be established to address each area's need.

Goals & Objectives

Goals

The goal of land use planning in Morgan County is to provide a reasonable, flexible guide for an orderly and economically sound pattern of development consistent with the goals in this Comprehensive Plan, which include:

- Preserving the rural nature of the county while providing for compatible residential, commercial and industrial development;
- Protecting, encouraging and maintaining viable agricultural land use;
- Preserving the views, water resources, and other natural features that define the county; and
- Protecting and enhancing the cultural, historic and aesthetic aspects of life in Morgan County.

Objectives

These goals may be achieved by implementing objectives such as the following:

Procedural Objectives:

- Establish some measure of countywide comprehensive land use controls;
- As one aspect of establishing land use controls, evaluate the need for zoning regulations and associated enforcement mechanisms;

- Determine the issues and how the process for obtaining Planning Commission review and approval for development plans might be streamlined;
- Promote coordination of the work of government entities to identify and designate areas where public services, infrastructure expansion, and public utilities will be needed in the future; and
- Create clear, consistent definitions for land use designations and development standards.

Land Use Design:

- Consider incorporating into development regulations elements that would protect view sheds and other natural features;
- Expand programs that protect the viability of active agricultural land uses;
- Ensure that adjoining areas are compatible when mapping transitions from urban to rural areas; and
- Create policies that provide adequate buffers between conflicting land uses, and limit incompatible land uses around farmland, historic sites, and industrial extraction areas.