

CHAPTER 11 – RENEWAL AND REDEVELOPMENT

Introduction

Considering that nearly 14% of the total housing stock within Morgan County was constructed prior to 1939, it is a fair assessment that a certain percentage of this aging stock is in need of some revitalization strategy. Further, given the historic character and changing employment opportunities within the County, it is also fair to assume that there are a number of underutilized commercial properties and significant cultural sites that would benefit from redevelopment and preservation programs. In order to develop appropriate programs, policies, and incentives to assist in the redevelopment of these sites and structures, it is important to outline what structures are included throughout the County that may qualify for redevelopment.

Preservation of Town Centers

The term “town centers” used broadly here should apply to many of the areas as outlined in Chapter 10 that provide various places within the County with a sense of community. These include not only the two incorporated municipalities, but also the unincorporated communities and rural villages that bring neighborhoods together around centrally located services within a loosely defined central core.

In defining these areas, communities can better proceed with the preservation and improvement of their existing neighborhoods. While property maintenance may be the responsibility of each individual property owner, some properties for a variety of reasons deteriorate and detract from the neighborhood community. These blighted properties may discourage investment in the neighborhood, thus creating blighted areas.

Berkeley Springs

Berkeley Springs being the larger urban area surrounding the Town of Bath serves as the County seat for Morgan County and includes the largest concentration of public activity in a defined area. This includes a large percentage of the County’s population, much of its historic resources, many of its governmental functions, and a healthy mixture of residential and commercial properties. As the largest defined town center within Morgan County, having both major State routes that cross the County pass through its main streets, many planning tools for redevelopment may be used to focus on this area and duplicated for use in other town centers.

Two other town centers where revitalization and redevelopment strategies should be focused, utilizing tools developed to address efforts in Berkeley Springs, including the Town of Paw Paw and the large unincorporated community of Great Cacapon. As these town centers share similar needs for redevelopment and include many of the same social and physical attributes as Berkeley Springs, efforts for revitalization of these three major areas may be interchangeable for their respective properties.

Revitalization of Individual Properties

In addition to the generally outlined town centers, there are also a number of significant individual properties within these areas and elsewhere throughout the County that have been identified for redevelopment or revitalization. These properties include residential, commercial and recreational structures and sites that may provide some immediate and long-term public good such as architectural or historic preservation or opportunities for increased employment.

Residential

To facilitate the revitalization and redevelopment efforts of residential properties throughout Morgan County, an inventory to assess the available housing stock that exists within this category should be conducted. As outlined in Chapter 2, this inventory includes various housing types most of which are classified as vacant. However, in review of this information it is important to understand that some structures listed as vacant may be recently built homes or rental properties simply available for occupancy. There are also structures currently in partial or full occupancy, which are in need of significant revitalization efforts. Further, there are a smaller number of properties which are either neglected or abandoned that may require additional regulatory involvement.

Commercial Property

Much like the residential structure analysis, there is also a number of commercial sites and structures that would benefit from the creation, implementation, and promotion of redevelopment initiatives. Unlike residential properties, which are promoted through revitalization programs, commercial properties are often classified as vacant or underutilized and are more often affected by the larger regional economic climate and interests of consumer demand.

As outlined in Chapter 8 of this Plan, existing vacant and underutilized commercial properties are a major priority of the County Economic Development Authority. This is due in part to the fact that many of the vacant structures are located within urban areas where services are more readily available and opportunities for employment would be placed closer to existing population. The Authority also gives priority to vacant tracts in existing industrial and business park settings, thus promoting areas for compatible use, and in underutilized buildings in urban settings that “fill out” the central business districts of towns and rural communities.

Cultural Sites

In addition to the need to promote the revitalization efforts of residential and commercial structures typically located within the more urban areas of Morgan County, it is especially important for a County that includes tourism and recreation as an integral part of its economic base to develop an approach to ensure the viability of historically significant sites and structures located throughout the County. This includes both private and publicly owned properties that are often best supported through grassroots efforts that recognize the long term benefit and value each places for the identity and heritage of each community.

Table 11-1 Inventory of Property for Redevelopment

<u>Property</u>	<u>District</u>	<u>Description</u>
Residential		
Berkeley Springs	Bath	urban redevelopment area
Paw Paw	Cacapon	urban redevelopment area
Commercial		
Morgan County Landfill	Cacapon	undeveloped county owned property
Coolfont Resort	Cacapon	underutilized private recreational area
Lippert Components	Rock Gap	vacant business industrial building
Cultural		
Ice House	Bath	underutilized community resource structure

Tools for Redevelopment and Revitalization

Tools for redevelopment and revitalization for the purposes of attracting appropriate investment should be implemented through the collective efforts of the various local governments. These tools may be applied through broad programs to address long-range improvements to a town center or other defined area, or may be focused on the efforts of individual projects of either public or private investment to revitalize a single property.

- Redevelopment Planning and Implementation Programs- establish planning and implementation programs that focus on redevelopment and improvement. Merchants groups, property owners and local government would work together to plan and implement redevelopment programs such as street and pedestrian improvements, streetscape improvements, façade treatments, and similar improvements meant to create a theme and provide visual improvement to the neighborhood.
- Linking mobility and access with development patterns and design- provide for movement of goods and services, while at the same time providing convenient access to the downtown areas. Access management tools should be used to provide coordinated access, along with protected crosswalk areas and traffic calming principles. Also, provide for adequate parking.
- Promote pedestrian access- make the area safe for pedestrians by providing well marked crosswalk areas and improving sidewalk systems. Institute good streetscapes that beautify and also provide well-marked pedestrian ways that link to parking areas. Use traffic calming principles to slow down vehicular traffic in areas where they are in contact with pedestrians.
- Infill with new buildings that are sensitive to their surroundings- provide design guidelines for new buildings that will enhance community themes. Also, provide

guidance for these areas to manage the visual impacts new structures may have on older neighboring structures.

- Promote mixed use development to create livelier communities- encourage the mixed uses and traditional neighborhood design principles to guide redevelopment near older neighboring urban areas. While these centers need function as business and cultural centers, they should also provide opportunities for inclusive residential and commercial needs.
- Brownfield/land recycling- establish a core group of planning and land use techniques that facilitate recycling and redevelopment of former commercial and industrial sites. These sites should be identified, inventoried and prioritized with the top sites selected for more detailed planning analysis to successfully partner in redevelopment efforts.
- Reinvestment- direct public and private investment of funds and resources into neighborhoods to spark revitalization.
- Tax Increment Financing (TIF)- utilize tax increment financing to stimulate the reuse of vacant and underutilized buildings.
- State and Federal programs- leverage appropriate state and federal funding sources related to community economic development to stimulate revitalization efforts.

Goals and Objectives

Goals

The appeal of a community is strongly influenced by the ‘look’ of its neighborhoods. As communities age, this ‘look’ can change dramatically if buildings are allowed to deteriorate. The result can be a downward spiral reflecting the declining spirit of a once vibrant community. The way to avoid this is to promote conditions that foster the preservation and improvement of existing neighborhoods. Goals toward this end include:

- Encouraging owners to maintain their properties;
- Supporting the removal of unsafe or dilapidated structures; and
- Encouraging active use of and development in older structures and neighborhoods.

Objectives

These objectives will further the aforementioned goals:

- Supporting the development of incentives to motivate owners to keep up their properties;
- Considering the development of regulations providing for the removal of deteriorated and unsafe structures;
- Promoting programs to upgrade substandard housing;

- Fostering movement of residents and businesses to urban centers, particularly those in decline;
- Promoting ways to reuse vacant and underutilized industrial parks;
- Motivating and supporting efforts to clean up illegal dump sites; and
- Providing guidance for redeveloping and revitalizing 'brownfield' areas as a means of preserving 'greenfield' areas.