

## **CHAPTER 10 – PREFERRED DEVELOPMENT AREAS**

### **Introduction**

There are several areas where development is preferred due in large part to the existence of available public infrastructure features to serve additional growth. These preferred development areas, especially for commercial development, include incorporated towns, existing rural villages and newer subdivisions that increasingly serve as self-contained communities.

Promoting growth within these preferred development areas must first take into account the ability of the Comprehensive Plan to outline how much additional growth each area may receive based on the adequacy of services to support it. Unlike those areas defined in Chapters 6 and 7 of this plan, this chapter serves to identify areas in which growth may be promoted through the provision of services to areas attractive to redevelopment, and, most importantly, preserving those areas of significant cultural heritage and recreational value needing protection.

If managed properly, growth will have positive benefits for current and future residents. This will require coordination with transportation improvements and the provision of public utilities, as well as with sensitivity for the county's natural resources.

### **Incorporated Towns**

The most obvious location for future growth is in and around existing municipalities. This is due in large part to the availability of existing public services and infrastructure. They are also the primary locations for employment opportunities, social organizations and other public amenities. There are two incorporated towns within Morgan County that should be promoted as preferred areas for future development, both residential and commercial, to occur.

#### **Town of Bath**

The Town of Bath encompasses approximately 384 acres and is surrounded by the greater urban area commonly referred to as Berkeley Springs. This larger area of primarily developed land stretches north and south along US Rt. 522 and east and west along WV Rt. 9. It is located primarily within the Bath district of the Central Valley Region and includes nearly 5% of the total county population. The two most significant features that define the reason for the existence of the population center are the warm mineral springs in Berkeley Springs State Park and the Morgan County Courthouse. The preferred development areas within this greater Berkeley Springs should focus on those areas where municipal water and county sewer have already been developed. These areas include south through the US 522 corridor a few miles and along Fairview Drive.

#### **Town of Paw Paw**

The town of Paw Paw, located at the southwest tip of Morgan County along WV 9, encompasses approximately 320 acres and a population of more than 500, with several small businesses and other employment industries. Paw Paw developed because of its location on the C&O Canal just across the Potomac River and later the B&O Railroad. The lack of “urban development” around the incorporated municipality contributes to its isolation. With both municipal water and sewer, plus a designated industrial park, Paw Paw and its immediate surroundings should be a priority area for both residential and commercial development.

**Table 10-1 Municipal Annexations**

Property	Town	Location	Acres	Year
Tritapoe	Bath	Martinsburg Road	0.98	1997
Omps	Bath	Cornelius Avenue	29.241	2000
Gyerik	Bath	Whisner Avenue	0.25	2000
Goller	Bath	Cornelius Avenue	0.2118	2000
Board of Ed	Bath	N. Berkeley School	2.75	2000
Seely	Bath	US522	0.9	2000
Rt. 9 West Greenway	Paw Paw	West side WV9	3.81	2002
Cemetery	Bath	S. Washington St.	6.0~	2008
Train Depot lot & p/o Williams	Bath	Williams St.	2.4~	2013

Source: Morgan County Government

As reflected in the housing and population information, located in Chapter 2, as well as in Table 10-1 above, neither Bath nor Paw Paw has experienced significant increases within the boundaries of the municipalities during the past decade in either land being added to their incorporated limits or population increases due to new growth or redevelopment efforts. As reflected in Chapter 2, population for both towns has continued to decrease since 1980 and there are no current plans for additional major subdivision activity in either corporate limits. However, as both towns provide the necessary public services to promote growth, development will continue to occur in close proximity to these urban centers. Targeted redevelopment in Bath has great potential for making the area thrive as outlined in Chapter 11.

### **Other Communities**

Although there are only two incorporated municipalities in Morgan County, there are numerous other small communities which have been in the past or currently are defined by some centrally located area. These areas typically evolve from the location of some group of services, which in turn creates some concentration of residents who develop additional types of public services over time and thus become somewhat self-supporting communities.

This evolution, as is the case for many small communities in Morgan County, appears to locate around transportation networks such as the Potomac River or the railroad system. However, over

time, these networks have been replaced by other types of transportation such as highways-- particularly US 522 and WV 9. With the exception of those absorbed into greater Berkeley Springs, population and commercial enterprises have failed to expand significantly in any of these historic communities. In virtually all cases even if residential population increases, commercial and governmental activity have disappeared or experienced substantial decline.

Recently, some of these areas have been supported and changed by the demand from outside interests to purchase and utilize the residences within these older areas for vacation and recreational purposes. This has been especially prevalent in those areas located closest to the county's many natural and scenic waterways and mountains. Even more recent is the increasing interest of larger development plans that are proposed for the more rural undeveloped areas, especially the southern valley area of the Central Valley region. However, both of these examples are areas of concern as the county must account for the ability to provide necessary public services where such services may not have been planned to be extended.

### Unincorporated Towns

Great Cacapon is the largest unincorporated community in Morgan County which includes a surrounding population of more than 1,300 residents. Great Cacapon takes its name from the Cacapon River which empties into the Potomac River to the town's east. It was originally known as Cacapon Depot on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad mainline when a post office was established there in 1848. In 1876, its name was changed to Great Cacapon to differentiate it from Little Cacapon which was also on the B & O mainline. It lies four miles down Cacapon Mountain from the Panorama Overlook along WV9, west of Berkeley Springs. It is also a short distance from the Town of Bath and the surrounding Berkeley Springs area, providing convenient access to public services and other daily needs. Great Cacapon has managed to retain several public features including a post office and fire company. Its elementary school closed. There is also a commercial operation in a local deli. A public sewer system was established in 1999.

Unger is an unincorporated community in southern Morgan County distinguished amongst other communities in Morgan County for retaining an operating post office since one was established here in 1853. From 1857 to 1935, it was known as Unger's Store until its name was shortened to Unger. Although the Post Office recently closed and the store decreased its hours and products, the community established in this area thrives with the potential for new neighboring developments. It is located at the crossroads of Winchester Grade Road (CR 13) and Unger's Store Road (CR 11). As new development proposals continue to occur in this area, there will be increasing need for the county to anticipate the provision of services to the entire South Morgan County community. Greenwood School's closing in 2016 shifts public-use facilities to the South Morgan Fire Company and the Morgan County Observatory.

Largent is a unique community located along the Cacapon River and WV 9 with population increases on weekends and during summer months due to the hundreds of cabins and camps located in the hills around the river. There is currently a general store and a proposal to build an

emergency services structure that may provide some basis for the establishment of a functioning community.

### **Commercial Areas**

The area with the greatest potential for new commercial, industrial and population growth is the north end of the county especially around the U.S. Silica site and the unincorporated area of Burnt Factory. U.S. Silica is a leading producer of high-quality ground and unground silica sand, kaolin clay and aplite. At the Berkeley Springs site, these materials are mostly extracted from Warm Springs Ridge directly across US 522 from the processing facility in Burnt Factory.

The north end is the richest in infrastructure, which would appeal to potential commercial and industrial development. It is only a couple miles from I-70 and I-68 as well as offering fiber networks developed by Maryland in that corridor. The airport, now in private hands, is located in this area. There is potential access to the Potomac River as a water source, especially industrial, and this is the area targeted by the natural gas pipeline. Plans for a connector road from the Silica site on US 522 to War Memorial Hospital just a few miles away on Fairview Drive and the existence of the Senior Life Services building, make this area prime for new community development.

Ridge is located along Valley Road at its intersection with Fish Hatchery Road (CR 38/10) near the Frederick County, Virginia line. Sleepy Creek cuts through the area and Unger lies to its east. It was originally known as Birch Grove, then as Timber Ridge, and then finally as Ridge. Its post office was in operation from 1860 to 1953. Ridge is the home to the Ridge State Fish Hatchery which breeds West Virginia trout used to stock local lakes, such as nearby Sleepy Creek Lake. The 522 Business Park is less than a mile north. Although not immediately adjacent to the former Unger community, any development in this area would serve to anchor the growing South Morgan community.

Other areas with potential for development of 21<sup>st</sup> century communities include the area on US 522 encompassing Cacapon State Park and the subdivisions of Cacapon South and East. Although there is some public resistance to increased commercial development in this area as demonstrated by opposition to proposed construction of a Dollar General, it seems inevitable that community growth will continue. There is already the beginnings of public sewer treatment in the Cacapon South subdivision and several springs in the area have the potential to serve as a secondary water source.

For more than 30 years, Coolfont was a growing community along Cold Run Valley Rd. that was part of Coolfont Resort. The residential area, Coolfont Mountainside, developed self-contained community water and sewer systems. When the resort property (but not the Mountainside) was sold to Carl M. Freeman Company in 2006, an intensive planning effort was undertaken to develop an expanded resort, additional residential and supporting retail activity. When a convergence of forces caused the collapse of that plan, the area lay fallow except for the Mountainside which experienced limited growth. The continued existence of community water and sewer systems in the former resort area as well as the population of the Coolfont Mountainside make this a preferred area for future development.

The far eastern segment of the county is anchored by the Pleasant View Elementary School and the Pleasant View Community Center. There is also commercial activity along WV 9 and population growth that promises to be dramatic as pressure rises from adjacent Berkeley County and its anticipated explosive growth from new industrial activity. The increased commercial growth in Berkeley County's Hedgesville – shopping center, banks, Department of Motor Vehicles – are all closer to the Pleasant View area of Morgan County than to Berkeley Springs. This indicates that the growth in Morgan County may be primarily residential.

## **Goals and Objectives**

### **Goals**

Although market demand is the primary factor influencing development, it is important for government to guide growth in a way that makes the most efficient use of public services and infrastructure. Goals that strive to balance planning efforts and development pressures include:

- Supporting the direction of development toward appropriate locations and where there are existing available resources and public services;
- Fostering development initiatives that reduce the need to extend these public services in inefficient ways when such extensions are required;
- Encouraging creation of neighborhood centers in densely populated areas;
- Encouraging the location of community activities (e.g. parks and recreation facilities) where proper access and services are located;
- Prioritizing road construction and expansion to be most cost effective and located in areas identified as preferred for development; and
- Establishing a countywide concerted effort to locate secondary water sources needed for commercial and industrial development.

### **Objectives**

Progress toward achievement of these goals may be accomplished by the following objectives:

- Supporting efficient community designs that minimize infrastructure costs;
- Encouraging the creation and use of incentives and disincentives to direct development to locations where public services are already available or may be readily provided;
- Promoting development such that growth and access to public services will be concurrent; and
- Encouraging opportunities for compatible mixed-use development.