

## **CHAPTER 8 – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

### **Introduction**

Economic development efforts in Morgan County are an ongoing process of adapting to the changes experienced by the community through demographic growth and employment locally as well as to economic conditions on the regional, state and national levels. The role of public policy in the economic development arena is to build capacities that are beyond the ability of the market to provide and that enable economic agents, individuals, firms or communities to realize their potential.

In an effort to promote and maintain a stable and growing economy, the planning process must be flexible enough to allow for various types of enterprises and employment opportunity, but also be cognizant of the placement of these uses where infrastructure requirements are sustainable and are in compatible areas that compliment neighboring citizens and businesses.

There are several types of individual commercial and industrial economic development entities in Morgan County. There are also several locations within the county that have been developed and are promoted as business or industrial parks to provide needed infrastructure and generate a concentration of employment opportunity. However, it appears that the largest economic development impacts that exist within the county currently come from the solid growth in several existing manufacturing operations and perceptible increases in tourism revenue and activities.

Growth of the economy over the next decade requires infrastructure development especially in the area of technology, and targeting of new areas for development based on the availability of resources, primarily water.

The most significant impact on employment and new industry locating in the county is expected to come from the remarkable growth in jobs in neighboring Berkeley County arising from the recent location of several major employers there. This development provides opportunities for Morgan County to be a lower-cost location for peripheral industries. The availability of well-paying jobs nearby is both a benefit and potential problem as it may threaten the stable employment pool for industries in Morgan County. Solid economic development requires attention to both attracting new businesses and working to sustain and grow existing ones.

### **Assets and Liabilities**

Successful economic development efforts require a clear and accurate understanding of both the assets that lead to enterprises locating here and liabilities that make that unlikely. Some of these same characteristics also impact existing businesses.

Location in West Virginia's Eastern Panhandle is the county's primary asset. Every corner of the county is within 30 miles of a nexus of Interstates including I-81, I-70 and I-68. The northern end of the county has the most opportune location just six miles from I-70 and I-68.

There is an active CSX rail line along the Potomac River in the north end of the county although there are no facilities for stopping. Rail service is available through the intermodal Inland Port at Winchester, VA and piggyback services are available in Cumberland, MD. The closest commuter rail is located in Cumberland, MD and Martinsburg, WV (both are 45 minutes away west and east, respectively).

Site availability is good in Morgan County with low-cost lots in both business parks as well as lower land and rental costs in private hands. The county's renovation of the Pines Opportunity Center offers the potential for business/office/educational enterprises. Development of the Morgan Arts Council's Ice House also could provide space for in-town office/arts related enterprises.

Available and affordable infrastructure for various industries is crucial. A proposed natural gas pipeline that would be accessible to the northern end of the county could be developed within the next couple of years. Natural gas is a highly desirable infrastructure asset. Broadband and reliable cell service are essential through as much of the county as possible with a commitment to upgrade electronic services. High-demand electric power is currently available only in certain locations which do not include the 522 Business Park.

Water and sewer are traditional infrastructure requirements. Both business parks have available water and sewer; the park in Paw Paw uses town systems. During the final years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were successful efforts to extend water and sewer south on US 522 several miles from town. Any major industrial growth outside the established business parks would require development of new water sources besides the warm springs in town. Sources may include additional springs, deep wells or the Potomac River. Preservation of the warm springs water both for residential and commercial uses such as bottling and spas is necessary.

The Eastern Economic District, made up of the eight eastern most counties in West Virginia, which include Morgan County, continues to fare better than other parts of the state in such categories as wages and benefits, income earnings and labor management relationships. Unlike other areas of the state, it has not experienced the dominant influence of the unionized coal industry. It continues to produce a labor pool of high productivity, good mechanical skill and work discipline and low absenteeism and turnover rates.

Access to the major transportation network continues to be improved as it relates to freight transportation and access to metropolitan government employers. Housing costs remain relatively low with a healthy percentage of vacant land and structures for new residents and businesses.

Infrastructure has been improved recently and growth is projected because of these improvements.

The improvements to the Warm Springs Public Service District sewer facility help the community meet the Chesapeake Bay pollution mandates required by federal law. The Bath Water Department continues to work on Phase II of the water line replacement project which is alleviating massive underground water loss from corroding older lines. The new water tank

project and the Storm Water Management project in the Rt. 522 Business Park are alleviating financial burdens from potential businesses while increasing the square footage allowable. Increasing efficiency and decreasing pollution assist greatly in enticing new businesses.

Telecommunications have experienced a surge including a new cell tower in Paw Paw providing wide coverage for residents and improved emergency services communication.

A new emergency radio system provides the first Statewide Interoperability Network for Morgan County allowing all emergency service personnel to communicate throughout the county with no “dead zones” as well as to communicate with State Emergency Services.

**Labor Force Characteristics**

Availability of skilled labor and its relative cost are among the top characteristics considered when industry and businesses look to select an area in which to locate. Morgan County’s small population requires augmentation by nearby areas within a 50-mile range to provide the scale of workforce required to attract many industries.

**Migration**

Between 1980 and 2010 the population increased from 10,687 to 17,541 growing by nearly 40% but has held steady in recent years. During that same time, the number of persons eligible to enter the work force (16 years of age and older) increased from 8,005 to 14,309, or a 78% increase. In 2014, the percent of persons 16 and older in the labor force was 53.9% or 7,712. The unemployment rate in March 2016 was 5.3% with slightly less than 400 persons unemployed. This indicates to potential employers a tight labor market. With the future growth of jobs in Berkeley County, the Morgan County labor market can be expected to grow even tighter.

In further review of the changes in employment demographics, the number of females in the labor force increased from 38% in 1980 to 47.5% in 2014. This is slightly lower than the state average of 49.4% but the same as the national average of 47%.

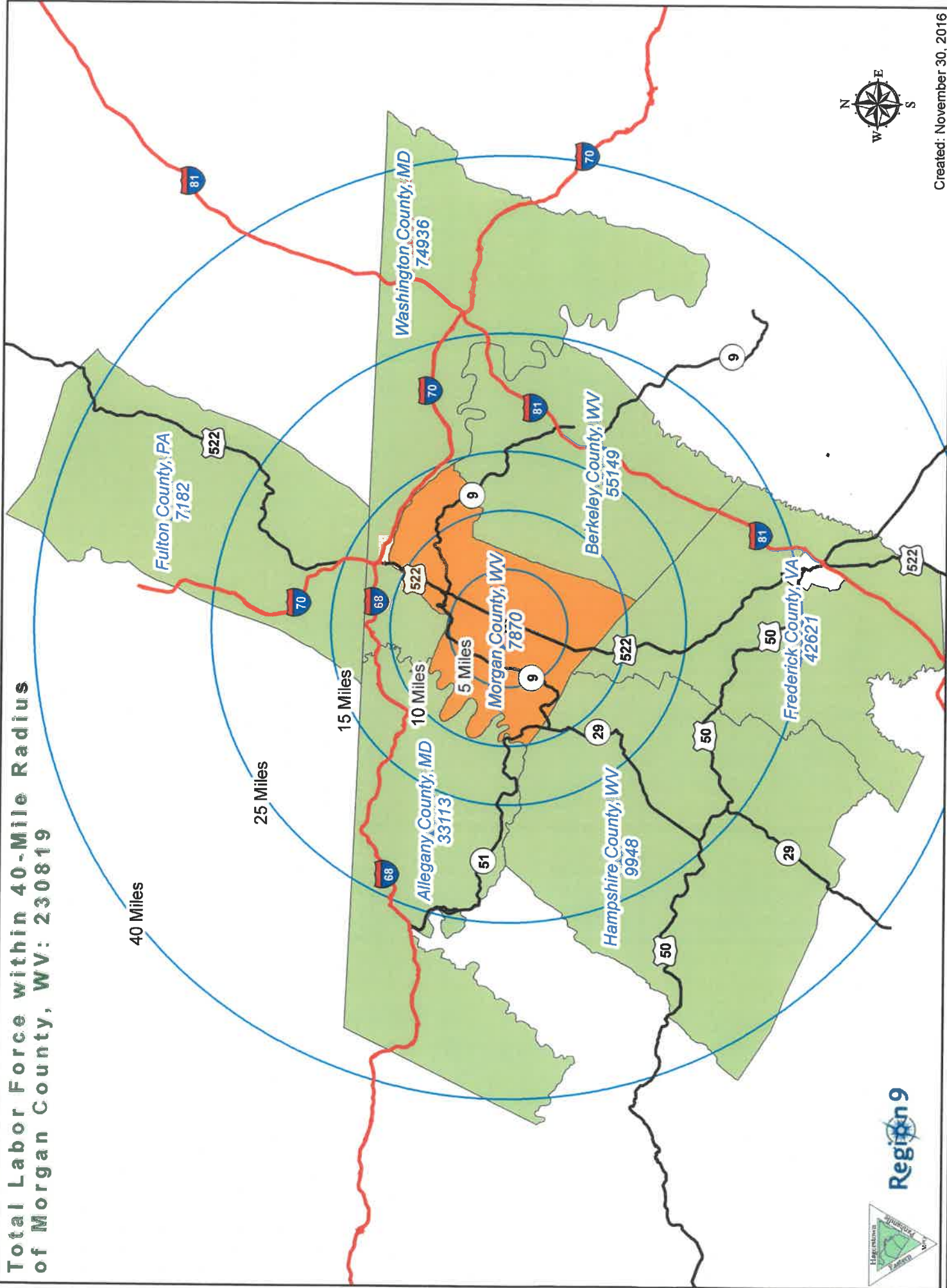
**Table 8-1 Labor Force Characteristics**

Statistic	1980	1990	2000	3/2016
Persons over 16	8,005	9,652	11,962	14,309
Labor Force	4,587	5,605	6,953	7,350
Employed	4,231	5,269	6,659	6,960
Unemployed	193	356	336	390
Not in Labor Force	2,914	3,418	4,047	6,959

Source: US Census Reports & Workforce WV

# Labor Force of Morgan County, WV and Surrounding Counties

Total Labor Force within 40-Mile Radius of Morgan County, WV: 230819



Although there is anecdotal evidence that a significant portion of the workforce living in Morgan County commutes to jobs outside of the county, there is no hard data indicating the number of out-of-county commuters or the areas to which they commute. An average commute time of 30 minutes is possible without leaving the county. Significant population centers in two adjacent states and an adjacent WV county make out-of-county commutes logical. The future development in Berkeley County for construction and industrial jobs will increase the number of commuters.

While commuting is made easier over time, there will be a limit to both the amount of new residents the county may adequately provide services for, as well as a finite capacity for the number of people willing to commute to work elsewhere. For these and many other reasons it is important that the county grow, sustain and diversify its basic economic development industries.

### Educational and Skill Levels

Those over 25 who are high school graduates or higher were 82.1% of the county's population in 2014, just slightly lower than the percentage for all West Virginia. Those over 25 with a bachelor's degree or higher were 16.5%, again slightly lower than the state average. Currently, nearly 95% of secondary students graduate and 68% of local high school graduates continue on to higher education.

Easily accessible higher education and vocational training are essential for having a prepared workforce. Recently, Blue Ridge Community and Technical College (BRCTC) opened a Morgan County Campus at the Pines Opportunity Center (the old War Memorial Hospital site). Blue Ridge is currently offering adult education, WorkForce and college general studies courses. Morgan County High School seniors are being offered free general studies courses beginning fall 2015. Continued effort is needed to assure expansion of training made available at both BRCTC in Morgan County and transportation to the Berkeley County Campus. Both health-related and hospitality industry training and education fit into long-term development goals and should be supported.

Other education and training institutions are available nearby including Shepherd University, Hagerstown Community College, Shenandoah University and James Rumsey Vocational Center. Preliminary outreach efforts have been made to Potomac State College for sustainable agriculture programs. In addition, support for enhancing the quality of secondary education in Morgan County is crucial for any workforce development. A solid high school education is often all that is needed for enterprises that conduct their own technical training of employees.

### Employment Trends

While the number of employed persons nearly doubled from 1980 to 2016, employment trends within specific sectors of the economy showed little change since 2009. The most significant changes came from an increase in health and education and a decrease in governmental employment.

**Table 8-2 Industry of Employed Persons**

<u>Industry</u>	2009	2014
Agriculture		184
Mining		114
Construction	80	87
Manufacturing	190	180
Transportation, Warehouse, and Utilities	460	436
Wholesale Trade	20	29
Retail Trade	390	372
Financial activities	130	106
Professional and Management Services	90	111
Educational, Health	380	555
Hospitality	370	331
Other Services	260	77
Public Administration (gov't)	1030	756

Source: Workforce WV- County Profile

### **Employment Earnings**

The economic success and viability of the county employment capacity depends not only on the creation of jobs, but also the increase in terms of total earnings. Given the apparent increase in costs associated with housing and services, it is important for the county to sustain economic opportunities for employment in all sectors that will provide earnings sufficient for the local population to live in the county in which they work. As reflected in Chapter 2 of the Comprehensive Plan, per capita and household income have increased over time, climbing above the state average with 12% and 9%, respectively. Due to the county's location in close proximity to employment markets of four other states, higher levels of income in those areas can increase pressure on county employers to provide comparable wages or lose their employees.

Income characteristics are economic indicators, which are most useful when compared to characteristics of like areas. As defined in the 1985 Comprehensive Plan, Morgan County, which is situated within the Cumberland Valley/Shenandoah Valley quad-state region, may be compared to the other 11 counties in this region with respect to median household income, per capita income, percent of the population below poverty level and other statistical economic demographic measurements.

Morgan County ranks third among the five West Virginia counties and eleventh overall for median household income with only Mineral County, WV ranking lower. It also ranks third and seventh in per capita income. At the same time it ranks third and fourth respectively for percent of persons with income below the poverty level. All are significant positive changes over its rankings in 1980. However, as its per capita income has climbed over the average during the past two decades, making it one of the fastest growing counties within the region for individual

income earnings, the county remains somewhat behind in comparison to the region for median household income. Perhaps the most significant change and success of the county income characteristics has been the ability for Morgan County to go from the second highest poverty level in the region, in 1980, to the fourth lowest in 2014.

Although trailing substantially behind the other two counties in the Eastern Panhandle, Morgan County made modest gains in per capita income between 1980 and 2014, increasing from 73% of the US average to 78% in 2014. One factor not displayed as part of the Table 8-3 is the county's regional ranking in terms of total income comprised of transfer income such as welfare and social security payments.

**Table 8-3 Regional Income Characteristics**

State County	Med. Household Income		Per Capita Income		% Below Poverty	
	1980	2014	1980	2014	1980	2014
<b>West Virginia</b>						
Berkeley County	15,390	55,100	6,376	26,516	13.9	13.2
Hampshire County	11,926	26,828	5,125	17,652	16.9	21.2
Jefferson County	15,803	66,205	6,139	29,861	13.4	10.2
Mineral County	14,662	30,713	5,697	19,055	13.3	16.1
<b>Morgan County</b>	<b>13,632</b>	<b>37,406</b>	<b>6,242</b>	<b>22,770</b>	<b>16.7</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Virginia</b>						
Clarke County	16,649	75,508	7,473	38,590	9.8	8.2
Frederick County	17,110	68,719	6,503	30,764	9.8	7.7
<b>Maryland</b>						
Allegany County	13,885	39,794	6,049	21,653	12.2	18.5
Washington County	16,623	56,477	6,765	27,173	10.8	13.8
<b>Pennsylvania</b>						
Bedford County	13,167	44,692	5,403	23,075	14.7	13.6
Franklin County	16,911	53,394	6,675	25,540	7.4	11.9
Fulton County	13,573	48,452	5,402	23,192	14.4	13.3

Source: US Census Reports

Although the local economy is growing and population is increasing, Morgan County residents continue to spend much of their income outside of the county. This includes residents in the northern part of the county traveling to larger retail centers for food stuffs, essential and secondary needs and durable and non-durable goods in Washington County, MD and Berkeley County, WV. It also includes the growing southern central valley region residents continuing to shop for such goods and services in Winchester, VA. Further, due to geographic proximity of the Paw Paw/Cacapon area, most residents in this western part of the county shop and seek employment in Frederick County, VA and Allegheny County, MD.

## Major Employers

Export industries, or “basic industries”, are an important component to an area’s economy. Basic industries are considered to drive the area’s economy because the goods and services are sold elsewhere, thus bringing “new” revenue into the area. This revenue then supports the non-basic or service-oriented industries in the local economy. There is a hierarchy within basic industries with those that use local resources as their raw material as the most desirable since they are not expending money purchasing raw materials from outside the county. One excellent example of such an industry is the water bottling plant which bottles Berkeley Springs water for distribution throughout the region and even produces some of its own containers.

As noted above, basic industry businesses, which make up 20% of county jobs, are of great importance to the long-term sustainability of the area’s economy, driving the local economy with goods and services being sold elsewhere, thus causing dollars to flow back into the local area through consumer exchange in non-basic purchases. As a general rule, it is estimated that a healthy ratio exists when there are two to three jobs created in non-basic services for every one job in basic industries.

Basic industries in Morgan County include mining, lodging, agriculture, fabrication and manufacturing. Since 1980, both basic and non-basic industries, as they relate to major employers, have changed as indicated on the following comparative table.

**Table 8-4 Major Employers 1984 and 2015**

<u>Rank</u>	<u>1984</u>	<u># of employees F/P</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u># of employees F/P</u>
1	Pennsylvania Glass Sand	290	MC Board of Education	400
2	MC Board of Education	250	Valley Health	168
3	Coolfont Recreation	105/40	Berkeley Springs Center	150
4	Vanguard Products	120	Caperton Furniture (Seely’s)	103
5	Valley View Nurse Home	102	Morgan County Commission	88
6	Morgan County Hospital	75/21	Senior Life Services	77
7	Consolidated Orchards	60/50	U.S. Silica (PGS)	72
8	Cacapon State Park	60/20	Food Lion	68
9	Country Inn & Spa	59/9	CNB Bank	68
10	Seely’s Pine Furniture	62		
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,183/140</b>		<b>1,101</b>

Source: Morgan County Government

The above table would indicate that over time, while general government employment has grown to include additional jobs, especially in the public education and health fields, overall major employment entities, especially in the manufacturing, mining and service industry sectors, have continued to decline losing approximately 300 jobs among the top 10 employers mostly from the closing of key businesses. Given that the smaller non-basic employment sectors, is an integral part of the success of the local economic employment industry as a whole, it is important to



explore further the make-up of those employment opportunities not included in the top ten listed in Table 8-6 as those industries combined produce a significant amount of the labor force.

### **Specific Economic Sectors**

#### **Real estate, Construction and Retail**

Non-basic or commercial development includes those general types of retail and service trades that tend to reflect the growing or declining pace of residential growth.

Real estate trends indicate the market is rebounding after a prolonged decline in home sales and values. Short sales and foreclosures are no longer prevalent, housing prices have begun to increase and banks are providing mortgages more readily. The second/retirement home market which began developing in the 1980's has returned to Morgan County after several years of decline. Washington, D.C., Baltimore and Pittsburgh provide an abundance of potential clients for the second home market.

Construction has also slowly increased after a near crash in 2008. New home building permits are being issued more frequently as are home improvement permits. Construction companies which had suffered from a major decline in revenue have begun hiring again. Many contractors are again hiring subcontractors for the first time in nearly a decade.

The Proctor & Gamble facility expects to hire approximately 1,000 construction workers during the initial phase of work in Berkeley County and it is anticipated that Morgan County residents and businesses can benefit from this activity.

All this activity suggests that the near stagnant population numbers after more than two decades of rapid growth are on the increase. This bodes well for the general commercial types of development, especially retail, that are dependent on population. Recent additions of another Dollar General store and a Tractor Supply store are positive indicators of returning economic health.

Thanks to the success and expansion of Mountain View Solar, alternative energy has the potential to be a major business activity. Retaining this enterprise and assisting it to grow requires state and national solar energy tax credits. In addition, encouraging Blue Ridge Community Technical College to provide the needed alternative energy training programs and certifications would further encourage growth.

#### **Tourism and Arts**

Morgan County, as outlined in Chapters 2 and 7, is unique from its surrounding neighbors, with nearly 15% of its housing units designated as recreational homes, and a larger per capita share of tourism-related activity. The economic benefits of these elements have grown over time as reflected by the increase in employment opportunities, which include the addition of at least one major employer, the Country Inn, to the list above. The fact that the tourism industry continued

to have measureable growth with both the closing of Coolfont Resort and the general economic decline after 2008 is a tribute to its underlying health. The imposition of hotel/motel tax gives an accurate basis for projecting the overall value of the industry as well as provides resources for both essential marketing efforts and support of tourism-related attractions. Efforts must continue to protect the natural assets that underlie the tourism industry. Continued promotion of the county as a destination for tourists and new tourism-related employers is essential to nurture the potential for small business growth within the community.

Although tourism is not traditionally listed as a “basic industry”, it does share the crucial characteristic of bringing “new” revenue into the county. In addition, tourism provides significant opportunities for locally-owned enterprises, a hallmark of the industry in the county.

The nationally recognized arts community in Morgan County both provides an important attraction for the tourism industry as well as being a stand-alone economic sector. Berkeley Springs continues to be listed among the most vibrant and successful arts communities in the country and a premier arts destination. Scores of artists working professionally in various media have made their home in Morgan County and contribute to the local economy. Centerpoint of this activity is the Ice House art and community center owned by the nearly 40-year-old Morgan Arts Council. Over more than a decade, more than \$1 million has been spent on renovating the facility which now provides galleries, classrooms and performance space. The recently established Digital Media Center houses freelance production work and offers technical training. It is engaged in a pilot project with Comcast to operate a website – BerkeleySpringsCommunityMatter -- that aims to provide an alternative to cable television studios in rural areas.

### Local Specialty Agriculture

The growing trend in local food promises to continue development in Morgan County. The county is especially well positioned for robust growth in specialty agriculture with easy access to metropolitan retail markets, several local restaurants featuring local foods, a thriving Farmers Market and two major growers plus numerous smaller ones. There is a Farm Directory and an active coalition of agriculture related groups including an Economic Development Authority task force. As mentioned above, preliminary outreach efforts have been made to Potomac State College for sustainable agriculture programs.

Mock’s Greenhouses is one of West Virginia’s largest hydroponic vegetable producers and recently undertook a major expansion project. Glascock’s has also added indoor growing as well as maintaining major production in traditional crops.

Like tourism, specialty agriculture qualifies as a “basic industry” in that it has the crucial characteristic of bringing “new” revenue into the county. And significantly, the success of the agriculture sector does not rely on outflows of revenue for raw materials or products to sell.

### Education

Serving as both a major employer and a crucial attraction for locating businesses, education in Morgan County is currently in a challenged position. Public education suffered a major financial

crisis during 2014 when an excess school levy, which provides additional funds for programming, salaries and building maintenance, was initially defeated by county voters then was ultimately successful but at a much reduced amount. At the same time, state funding was reduced due to declining enrollment. While public school officials remain positive and work diligently to find alternative funding opportunities, the result of decreased funding has been a closed school and the loss of many experienced teachers. A successful and thriving public education system is essential for successful business recruitment.

Higher education has seen some improvement but much more is needed if Morgan County is to be economically competitive. Blue Ridge Community and Technical College now has a Morgan County campus located in the Pines Opportunity Center. Efforts are on-going to expand and enhance programming there especially in employment training sectors. The current dire financial situation at the state level does not look encouraging for increased funding of Blue Ridge or other community colleges. Adult education, workforce training and general education credits are among the variety of programs offered.

#### Manufacturing:

Manufacturing continues to show evidence of growth within the region. Proctor & Gamble locating their new manufacturing facility in neighboring Berkeley County will bring a multitude of opportunities for Morgan County.

Ancillary businesses are one area of focus. The P&G facility will have specific needs for services and Morgan County is poised to benefit from those needs. Secondary supply businesses are also an area of focus. Morgan County provides a lower cost of living, more affordable business park lots and lower housing prices than any area within 30 miles of the P&G site.

Continued support of current businesses is always a priority. Gat Creek, a niche manufacturer of fine quality furniture, has expanded within the last three years to international exporting. The second largest homeopathic manufacturer in the U.S. is located in the 522 Business Park and continues to grow their operation. Wholesale, retail and online diversity has proven a successful business model. This business recently modernized its technology and expanded its product line.

#### Health and Senior Services:

The health and senior services sector offers an impressive opportunity for expansion. Berkeley Springs has a long tradition of healing related to the warm mineral springs and this can be developed through a variety of treatments both traditional and non-traditional. Several full-service spas offer massage, acupuncture and other therapies. Rankin Fitness Center offers physical therapy, massage and weight training as well as classes in yoga, tai chi, judo and kempo. Traditional medical services are available from many board-certified physicians countywide.

Valley Health Systems opened a new critical-access hospital on an 80-acre medical campus in May 2012. The \$30+ million investment is located on Fairview Drive in Berkeley Springs. There is potential for ancillary services plus training programs at the hospital.

The Morgan County Senior Life Services Center expanded to a new location in 2013 close by the hospital. The new facility is larger and presents many opportunities for growth in programming and services. The site is now located outside of the town limits but transportation services continue to be provided and growth is forecasted.

Both these facilities are located such that they would benefit from a connector road between Rte. 522 North and Fairview Drive. Not only would the hospital and senior center benefit from improved access, but the road would support economic development in the northern portion of Morgan County. Many medical services, businesses, senior health services and a senior living facility are viewed as potential development opportunities associated with the location as well as more traditional retail and consumer enterprises.

The Berkeley Springs Center, Nursing and Rehabilitation is the third-largest employer in the county and expansion is possible, especially considering the county's extensive aging population -- more than 22% of residents are 65 years old or older.

### Industrial Sites

Of the nine industrial sites identified in the 1985 Morgan County Comprehensive Plan, few exist in the Economic Development Authority (EDA) index today. Factors facilitating this change in direction include: previous sites identified being too small or incompatible with surrounding uses, environmental regulations that have changed over time limiting the intensity of uses, and outside funding promoting the development of alternative locations.

One of the most prevalent factors in the change in the index from 1985 is community outlook on defining what an industrial site should be. This is highly evident in both citizen feedback during public review of the Plan update as well as the identifier used by the EDA office in promoting the current list of sites on the Index. As citizens appear to be pressing large industrial and manufacturing employers to become both more environmentally aware and aesthetically appealing, the EDA promotes areas identified in Table 8-5 as Business Parks. These identified business parks offer more natural surroundings, well landscaped entrance and parking areas, and more environmentally friendly and community compatible practices.

**Table 8-5 Industrial Business Park Site Index**

Site	District	Total Acres	Acres Available
Robert C Byrd	Cacapon	30	17
522 Business Park	Timber Ridge	102	41.9
Shirley Farms West Site	Bath	43.7	43.7
Vanguard Building	Rock Gap	10	10
Pines Opportunity Center	Bath	7	7
<b>Total Acres</b>		<b>192.7</b>	<b>119.6</b>

Source: Morgan County Government

The Robert C. Byrd Industrial Park is located along WV Rt. 9 on the southeastern side of Paw Paw. It consists of 30 total acres divided into 8 lots with 6 lots on 17 acres remaining to be developed. Benefits to this site include the extension of available municipal water and sewer service from the Town of Paw Paw.

The 522 Business Park is located along US Rt. 522 in the Timber Ridge District, which is in the Central Valley Planning Region. It is a large Business Park consisting of 102 acres, with 70 acres available for development on 9 of the 12 total lots. However, given its close proximity to surrounding rural land and natural waterways, not all land within this park is suitable for heavy use. It is served by private on-site water and sewer systems. A recent project replaced an aging underground water tank. The larger, above ground, gravity-fed tank significantly improves marketability of the business park by providing fire suppression service to sprinkler systems required by the State Fire Marshall for larger tenants.

A Storm Water Management Project is also underway at the 522 Business Park.

Recently, Shentel® installed fiber optic lines leading up the Rte. 522 corridor into the town of Berkeley Springs and ending at the Pines Opportunity Center. The installation of these lines in the 522 Business Park makes possible the location of a potential Data Center there.

The Shirley Farms West site is located along US Rt. 522 in the Bath District, and includes 40 acres of undeveloped property being marketed for industrial business park use. It is served by a private well and septic systems and does not currently have internal access roads.

By far the largest single industrial site in Morgan County is corporately owned. US Silica, which has changed names and ownership over its decades of existence, provides the most potential for continued and future major employment opportunity. Of the 2,786 acres owned by this single entity, only a small percentage is utilized for its major mining operations of Oriskany sand. However, as this natural mineral resource is depleted, it is expected that the company may only have approximately 20 years of productive mining remaining, although current plans are to continue using the site for processing of sand mined in nearby Maryland. Given the location and importance of this industry within Morgan County, future use of this property must be taken into account in order to ensure that whatever reuse may evolve from this transition it is complimentary to the surrounding community and the goals of the Comprehensive Plan.

### Economic Organizations

The Morgan County Economic Development Authority monitors the economic climate of the county. It uses the information to identify barriers and promote positive economic growth through both marketing and policy perspectives. Positive factors include proximity to the metropolitan areas, relatively low real estate taxes and rent, low crime rate, available workforce and available structures for new industries. Some barriers that exist include the State Business and Occupation tax on gross income, lack of large, accessible parcels of land served by public

water, sewer and roads, limited broadband service throughout the county and lack of state programs offering tax package incentives.

The EDA is primarily responsible for promoting job development of major employers seeking to locate in the industrial business parks listed in Table 8-7. Job creation and retention through specific efforts in business finance, marketing, neighborhood development, workforce development, small business development, business retention and expansion, technology transfer and real estate development are also activities of the EDA.

The Authority's strategy in attracting new industry involves a system of priorities in marketing to potential employers. First priority is given to county-owned and developed industrial and business parks and structures. These industrial business parks as identified in Table 8-7 have been developed to group major employers in similar areas, which allows for sharing of necessary service and infrastructure costs, assurance of compatibility of uses and larger eligible employment base. Having several business park settings also allows the county to meet its goal of diversifying employment opportunity by offering locations for several smaller employers rather than few large ones, thus protecting the county from the impacts of major layoffs. Second priority is vacant and available buildings in the Berkeley Springs area. These locations are close to existing services, population, businesses and infrastructure. Next priority is given to privately-owned identified sites outside of the urban area, most of which are located along US Rt. 522 that have some level of water and sewer services.

The Morgan County Economic Development Authority outlines several strategies in accomplishing sustainable economic growth, including:

- Provide support in accessing funds for community development projects that serve to develop infrastructure and attract business, commercial and technology industries;
- Encourage, recognize and assist the growth of the existing business base;
- Successfully attract new employment opportunities to Morgan County;
- Support the efforts to promote tourism throughout the county;
- Partner with regional organizations in planning economic development activities;
- Provide support to private enterprise in placement of business tenants in sites and buildings and maintain an inventory of available locations;
- Maintain the position of the county's economic development organization; and
- Expand educational and workforce opportunities for citizens and employees living and working in Morgan County.

In addition to the above strategies of the EDA to build the employment base within the county, the Authority has also outlined priorities on a regional level, including:

- Developing strong alliances with counties of the Eastern Panhandle to promote causes that need a regional perspective and effort to achieve;
- Providing attention to the needs of existing businesses within the county through various entrepreneurial assistance initiatives;

- Using limited county marketing resources in an efficient manner to attract new businesses to the area that provide quality pay and sustainable job growth;
- Maintaining a comprehensive list of properties available for business development and evaluating the need for additional land as properties are developed; and
- Working to become one of the premier economic development organizations in the state and region while developing a reputation as a community that supports business and industry growth.

The Morgan County Chamber of Commerce, located on Fairfax Street in Berkeley Springs was established in 1952. However, it was not until 1978 that the Chamber became fully active with a full-time staff person and dedicated office space. Since that time, membership in this nonprofit entity has grown to 190 businesses, with services dedicated to a wide array of projects and informational tools that include an information-rich website with membership and civic organization directory, mapping and relocation information and many other community efforts such as new teacher mentoring and volunteer recognition. The Chamber co-operates with Travel Berkeley Springs in promoting tourism especially through its production of the annual Apple Butter Festival, the county's largest event.

Travel Berkeley Springs (TBS) is the convention and visitors bureau for the county, sharing an office with the Chamber of Commerce, and having nearly 100 industry members. By law, it receives half of all hotel/motel tax revenues collected by the town and the county. Promotion of the area as a destination is TBS's prime mission with goals and strategies centered around two distinct objectives: protecting the historic character and cultural attractions of Berkeley Springs and preserving the scenic wilderness throughout the county.

## **Goals and Objectives**

### **Goals**

The vitality of Morgan County is directly related to the health of its business and industry. The commercial sector provides jobs, as well as goods and services, to local residents. The following economic development goals support business and contribute to the well being of the county as a whole:

- Using incentives to locate businesses in appropriate areas with adequate access, including on unimproved land suitable for a range of compatible uses, as infill in existing commercial zones and in vacant commercial properties and industrial sites suitable for redevelopment;
- Mapping and promoting infrastructure improvements in transportation, public services, communications and utilities to attract and retain businesses with an intensive focus on technology including broadband and reliable wireless service;
- Facilitating construction of a connector road from US522 to Fairview Dr. and opening new areas for commercial development;
- Encouraging a strong and diverse local economy that motivates residents to spend more of their disposable income at businesses in the county;

- Working to attract a variety of new businesses—basic and non-basic—to meet the county’s growing needs, and draw in out-of-county dollars;
- Focusing on locating and developing secondary water sources in addition to the warm springs; and
- Encouraging protection of the viability of tourism assets and developing new public resources.

### Objectives

These goals may be met by accomplishing the following objectives:

- Maintaining an updated list of sites that could be developed by major employers and promoting incentives for locating on those sites;
- Encouraging programs for redevelopment and revitalization of underutilized vacant commercial properties and industrial sites;
- Encouraging incentive programs and tax credits with the state to retain and attract target employers and large and small businesses;
- Working to enhance the resources of the Morgan County Economic Development Authority and similar groups;
- Coordinating efforts between local government, business associations and private property owners seeking small business endeavors;
- Encouraging the development of plans that address such issues as marketing, research, financing and location to assist in business start up and retention efforts;
- Promoting secondary and higher education and training opportunities to meet skill requirements and technology needs of existing and potential businesses;
- Supporting efforts to identify economic growth opportunities for retention and expansion of existing employers;
- Enhancing opportunities to establish cultural and recreational tourism-related businesses including developing the North Berkeley Rail Trail;
- Promoting businesses focused on ‘green’ industry;
- Encouraging creation of an eco-industrial park;
- Promoting the health and wellness industry, the hospital and senior services including targeting development of a senior living facility; and
- Working with the farming community to encourage and support the role of agriculture and agribusiness industries in Morgan County.