

# SECTION ONE INTRODUCTION





## OVERVIEW

Shepherdstown's Comprehensive Plan is a written expression of the community's vision and goals for the future, serving as a dynamic guide for decision making by the Corporation's elected officials and staff. This update to the 2001 Comprehensive Plan is the result of a twelve month process that began in August 2013. As with the 2001 plan, this plan update has established a framework for achieving immediate, mid-range and long-term strategies that will ensure implementation of the plan. Shepherdstown is committed to a long-range planning process adopting its first comprehensive plan in 1978.

## THE SETTING

A town steeped in over 250 years of history, Shepherdstown, the oldest town in the state of West Virginia, is located in the lower Shenandoah Valley and Eastern Panhandle along the storied banks of the Potomac River. The town contains many Federal-style structures from the late 18th century period and is well-known for its vibrant downtown that is established along German Street (Shepherdstown's "Main Street"). Contributing to the success of Shepherdstown are the many restored historic homes surrounding German Street and the vital influence of Shepherd University, which has direct frontage onto the center of German Street. Shepherdstown is connected to the region by West Virginia highway routes 45, 230 and 480, the PanTran (Eastern Panhandle Transit Authority) and by the MARC train (Maryland Rail Commuter train), which provides connection to the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area. Over its recent history, the town has been a popular regional tourism destination for its arts and cultural offerings.





## Demographic Profile

### Population

The official population count in Shepherdstown has experienced both growth and decline over the last five decades. From a population of 1,328 in 1960, the town reached population of 1,791 residents in 1980 – an increase of nearly 35% since 1960. From that 1980 peak, the town’s official population count declined dramatically, losing 28% of its population between 1980 and 1990 (a loss of 504 residents) and then experiencing another decline of 7% between 1990 and 2000, which left the town with an official population of only 1,202 residents – a decrease of 85 residents from the 1990 population. By 2010, however, the official population had increased to 2,152 residents, which was 79% higher than the 2000 population. The resurgence in the town’s population between 2000 and 2010 was due to the annexation of the residence halls on the western part of the university campus, as there was little organic growth in the town’s off-campus residential population during this period. Of note, both the 2000 and 2010 population counts were revised upward by the Census Bureau due to inaccurate assignments of Shepherd University on-campus residence halls outside of the corporate limits in the initial counts.

Census Year	Population	Change
1960	1,328	
1970	1,688	27%
1980	1,791	6%
1990	1,287	-28%
2000	1,202	-7%
2010	2,152	79%

Table 1 - Shepherdstown Population 1960-2010

Jurisdiction	Population Density
Shepherdstown	5,673
Shepherdstown (off-campus)	2,983
Growth Management Boundary	234
Ranson	549
Charles Town	901

Table 2 - Population Density Per Square Mile

Census Year	Shepherdstown		Growth Management Boundary		Jefferson County	
	Population	Change	Population	Change	Population	Change
1990	1,287	-28%	4,642		35,925	
2000	1,202	-7%	5,185	12%	42,190	17%
2010	2,152	79%	6,625	28%	53,498	27%

Table 3 - Comparison of Population Growth Rates



Given the small physical size of the town, and the lack of available land within the corporate limits for new development, the growth of the town's population will be dependent in greatest part on annexation and the growth or decline of the on-campus population of Shepherd University. Therefore, accurate estimates of future population change are very difficult to predict since such changes will depend on factors that are not easily modeled.

#### **POPULATION QUICK FACTS:**

- The population of the area within the town's Growth Management Boundary increased by over 42% between 1990 and 2010.
- The population of Jefferson County grew by nearly 50% between 1990 and 2010.
- Nearly 1/3 of the population within the Growth Management Boundary resides within the corporate limits of Shepherdstown.
- Approximately 12.5% of the population of Jefferson County lives within the Shepherdstown Growth Management Boundary.
- Only slightly more than 3% of the population of Jefferson County resides within the corporate limits of Shepherdstown.
- The population density within the corporate limits of Shepherdstown is nearly 25 times higher than the population density found outside of town within the Growth Management Boundary.
- The population density in Shepherdstown is 10.5 times higher than the population density in Ranson and over 6 times higher than the population density in Charles town.

#### ***Households and Families***

In 2010, the population of Shepherdstown included 1,038 residents who were not part of a household, but rather live in what the Census terms "group quarters". These residents comprised almost 50% of the population of the town, and represent the portion of the student body of Shepherd University that resides on the campus. The increase of over 600 on-campus residents that were gained through annexation also represented a significant shift in the share of the on-campus student population as a share of the town's overall population, which was only around 33% of the total population of the town in 2000.

The average size of households in Shepherdstown is significantly lower than the average household size found in the larger Growth Management Boundary and in Jefferson County as a whole. This has remained true since 1990, when the average household size in



Shepherdstown was only 2.14 residents per household. Shepherdstown, the Growth Management Boundary and Jefferson County, all experienced similar declines in the average size of households between 1990 and 2000 and similar increases between 2000 and 2010. This followed national trends tied to economic prosperity in the late 1990s, which led to the formation of a large number of new households, while the 2007-2008 recessionary cycle caused the opposite effect, leading to the consolidation of households. The smaller size of the average household in Shepherdstown is significantly influenced by the presence of the University, whose students that live off campus have a greater tendency to live in single member households than the population as a whole. This is reflected in the fact that approximately 33% of the total number of households in Shepherdstown includes only one resident.

The average size of family households (a household containing two or more related individuals) in Shepherdstown was 2.79 people. While lower than the average family size found in the large Growth Management Boundary and Jefferson County as a whole, this figure represents an interesting divergence in the overall trend in family size that was observed. The average size of family households found in each of the three geographies that are discussed declined between 1990 and 2000 and increased between 2000 and 2010. The average family size in

Jurisdiction	1990	2000	2010
<b>Shepherdstown</b>	2.14	1.96	2.15
<b>Growth Management Boundary</b>	2.55	2.37	2.40
<b>Jefferson County</b>	2.68	2.54	2.61

Table 4 - Comparison of Average Household Size

Jurisdiction	1990	2000	2010
<b>Shepherdstown</b>	2.74	2.72	2.79
<b>Growth Management Boundary</b>	3.06	2.86	2.89
<b>Jefferson County</b>	3.13	2.99	3.07

Table 5 - Comparison of Average Family Size

Shepherdstown experienced a smaller decrease than the other two and the average size was actually larger in 2010 than it was in 1990. The opposite was true for the Growth Management Boundary and Jefferson County, neither of which recovered to the average size seen in 1990.



## Age Distribution

Note: Due to the inaccuracy of the original 2000 Census count, which enumerated age statistics for the undercounted population, that data point is not included in the following discussion.

With a median age of 21.9 years, the distribution of the age of residents within the corporate limits of Shepherdstown is heavily influenced by the on-campus population of Shepherd University. This is in comparison to a median age of 34.8 years for residents within the Growth Management Boundary and 35.9 years for residents of Jefferson County as a whole. The share of the town's population between the ages of 15 and 24 is approximately 57%, while the share of residents in this age range within the Growth Management Boundary is approximately 28% and around 13.5% in Jefferson County as a whole. The outsized share

Residents over the age of 65 make up 7.6% of the town's population. This is significantly lower than the share of the over 65 population in the Growth Management Boundary, where 14% of the residents are over the age of 65. This is slightly higher than the share of the population over 65 years of age found in Jefferson County as a whole, which has approximately 12% of its population in this age group.

Jurisdiction	Median Age
Shepherdstown	21.9
Growth Management Boundary	34.8
Jefferson County	35.9

Table 6 - Comparison of Age Distribution

Age Group	Shepherdstown	Growth Management Boundary	Jefferson County
Under 15	6.6%	13.3%	19.9%
15 - 24	56.7%	27.7%	13.6%
24-64	29.1%	45.0%	54.8%
Over 64	7.6%	14.0%	11.7%

Table 7 - Age Group Comparison



Residents in the youngest age group (under 15 years of age) make up only 6.6% of the town's population, while residents in this age group comprise over 13% of the population in the Growth Management Boundary and nearly 20% of the population of the county as a whole. The "workforce" age population, between 25 and 64 years of age, makes up only 29% of the town's population, while 45% of the residents of the Growth Management Boundary and 55% of the residents of the county as a whole are in this age group.

### **AGE DISTRIBUTION QUICK FACTS:**

- As a share of the total population, residents in the youngest age group (under 15 years of age) declined by nearly 37% between 1990 and 2010.
- As a share of the total population, residents in the oldest age group (over 65 years of age) declined by approximately 25% between 1990 and 2010.
- The share of the Town's population in the 15-24 year age group increased by over 16% between 1990 and 2010.
- The share of the Town's population in the "workforce" age group (25-64 years of age) decreased by 5% between 1990 and 2010.



## Legal basis for the comprehensive plan

The West Virginia Code, Chapter 8A, Land Use Planning, authorizes the preparation of comprehensive plans and further establishes the vital role that comprehensive plans play in ensuring a sustainable future for communities across the state. This plan follows those principles as stated in West Virginia Code §8A-3-1. Purpose and Goals of a comprehensive plan. (d) The purpose of a comprehensive plan is to:

- Set goals and objectives for land development, uses and suitability for a governing body, so a governing body can make an informed decision;
- Ensure that the elements in the comprehensive plan are consistent;
- Coordinate all governing bodies, units of government and other planning commissions to ensure that all comprehensive plans and future development are compatible;
- Create conditions favorable to health, safety, mobility, transportation, prosperity, civic activities, recreational, educational, cultural opportunities and historic resources;
- Reduce the wastes of physical, financial, natural or human resources which result from haphazard development, congestion or scattering of population;
- Reduce the destruction or demolition of historic sites and other resources by reusing land and buildings and revitalizing areas;
- Promote a sense of community, character and identity;
- Promote the efficient utilization of natural resources, rural land, agricultural land and scenic areas;
- Focus development in existing developed areas and fill in vacant or underused land near existing developed areas to create well designed and coordinated communities; Promote cost-effective development of community facilities and services.

### Shepherdstown Comprehensive Plan History

1978	First Comprehensive Plan Adopted
1997	Visioning Workshops - Vision 20/20
2001	Comprehensive Plan Update
2014	Comprehensive Plan Update



## Quality of Life

Shepherdstown has a distinctive sense of place that is founded upon its historic architecture, picturesque natural landscape, tourism based economy and small town appeal, which have helped nurture a remarkable quality of life for residents and unforgettable experiences for visitors. These foundational features have worked together to ensure the Town's long-term sustainability, economic prosperity and future achievements. Each of the elements that contribute to the Town's desirable quality of life is important to preserve as the community plans for the future.





## Vision for the Future

Building on these foundational components of Shepherdstown's quality of life, Shepherdstown has a recognized shared vision for the future as one in which the community:

- Embraces its small town character;
- Strives to preserve and protect its historic legacy, both architectural and cultural;
- Welcomes growth that reinforces the historic character of the town;
- Provides a range of housing options that fulfills the needs of its residents;
- Supports a thriving downtown business district that serves the needs of residents;
- Enjoys the presence of a wide range of cultural events and activities;
- Promotes the preservation of critical natural resources;
- Maintains a transportation network that is safe and accessible to all residents;
- Warmly invites visitors to enjoy the historic, cultural and natural resources of the community;
- Provides high quality public services to residents and businesses;
- Works in cooperation with its neighbors and partners in the region to achieve common goals;
- Promotes the long-term of sustainability of the town's high quality of life;
- Encourages land use patterns that promote a healthy and active living environment;
- Embraces renewable energy initiatives that reduce residents' dependence on non-sustainable energy sources; and
- Supports locally based business and locally grown food initiatives.

## Plan Development Process

Shepherdstown appointed a Comprehensive Plan Committee to oversee the Comprehensive Plan update. The Town issued a national request for proposals and selected a comprehensive planning consultant to assist the Comprehensive Plan Committee with the preparation of the updated Plan. The committee began work on the plan in August 2013 by formalizing the process and schedule for the plan update.

The general process included:

- Comprehensive Plan Committee Meetings
- Stakeholder Meetings / Interviews
- Public Survey
- Public Meetings
- Plan Drafting
- Plan Adoption

The plan update steps are listed in Figure 1.4: Major Steps in the Process. The descriptions of the public meetings and workshops are described below with the detailed results listed in the appendix.





Comprehensive Plan Update Process	Date
2013 Milestones	
Comprehensive Plan Committee Meeting	August 21
Stakeholder / Focus Group Meetings	September 24 - 25
Comprehensive Plan Committee Meeting	September 25
Comprehensive Plan Committee Meeting	October 24
Public Input Survey	November 6 – December 2
Public Input Meeting	November 21
Comprehensive Plan Committee Meeting	December 18
2014 Milestones	
Comprehensive Plan Committee Meeting	February 26
Comprehensive Plan Committee Meeting	March 27
Public Meeting to review Draft (TBD)	May 1
Comprehensive Plan Committee Meeting	July 2
Planning Commission Public Hearing	TBD
Town Council Presentation and Consideration of Adoption	TBD



## September 24 - 25 Stakeholder/Focus Group Meetings

Over a two day period in September, the consulting team met with over fifty people to discuss the opportunities and challenges in Shepherdstown to provide a foundation of information to inform the plan and the organization of the public input meetings. During meetings held at Town Hall, the consulting team met with those individuals in small focus groups, representing local business, development, real estate, education, arts and culture, historic preservation, public safety, public library, town staff and officials, hospitality, technology, tourism and others. The team also held meetings with County planners to discuss how the Shepherdstown Comprehensive Plan update fit within the broader process and framework of Jefferson County's Comprehensive Plan update.

## November 21 Public Input Meeting

The first public meeting was held on November 21 at the Community Club in the War Memorial Building. Meeting announcements were distributed throughout town and placed in all of the Shepherdstown mail boxes. Approximately 70 persons attended the public meeting that was held from 6:30pm to 9:00pm. At the meeting residents learned about the comprehensive plan process and in small groups, responded to questions and future scenarios regarding five major topic areas. At the end of the meeting, each small group presented the top three to five ideas generated during their discussions.



### Public Meeting Topic Areas

- Land Use, Development & Community Character
- Transportation, Infrastructure & Public Services
- Economic Development & Tourism
- Environmental and Natural Resources and Conservation
- Recreation, Cultural and Historic Resources

## *Committee Review of the Draft Plan*

During the months of February and March, the Comprehensive Plan Committee met to review and guide the development of a draft plan for public review. Once the public input draft was prepared, a meeting was held on May 1 for the public to provide comments for the preparation of the final update to the comprehensive plan.

## *May 1 Public Review Meeting*

At the public input meeting on May 1, residents reviewed the draft plan presented by the consulting team. After the presentation, meeting participants provided feedback and direction for how the Comprehensive Plan Committee should move forward with developing the final draft. The consulting team answered questions along with committee members at stations around the room where art boards were on display with illustrations, maps and information from the draft plan.

## *Plan Adoption*

The consulting team collected additional feedback from the Comprehensive Plan Committee and prepared the final draft of the plan. The Comprehensive Plan Committee provided final direction and endorsed the final draft, sending it forward to be considered by the Planning Commission at a public hearing.





The Planning Commission held a public hearing on (TBD) to review the plan and made a formal recommendation to the Town Council. After receiving the Planning Commission’s recommendation, the Planning Commission presented the plan to the Town Council. After the Planning Commission’s presentation, the Town Council scheduled and held a public hearing on (TBD) and adopted the plan as recommended by the Planning Commission.

### *Plan Overview and Organization*

The Comprehensive Plan is organized into 12 main sections:

#### **SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION**

This section of the plan contains the overview and basic information concerning why and how the plan was developed.

#### **SECTIONS 2-11: COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ELEMENTS**

Sections 2 - 11 discuss the key elements of the Comprehensive Plan. Each element includes a brief overview followed by recommended goals and strategies to guide future decision-making and actions in furtherance of the plan.

#### **SECTION 12: IMPLEMENTATION**

Section 12 sets forth a framework for implementing the plan. An implementation matrix highlights the priorities and the responsible parties needed to implement each goal and strategy identified for each Comprehensive Plan element.

### **APPENDICES**

The appendices includes a detailed summary of the public input survey and public input meeting held during the beginning of the planning process. The results of the survey and public meeting contributed significantly to the overall goals and strategies that are included in this document.

#### **Comprehensive Plan Elements**

Land Use and Community Character

Housing

Economic Development and Tourism

Transportation

Public Services and Infrastructure

Parks and Recreation

Natural and Environmental Resources

Historic Preservation

Cultural Resources

Intergovernmental Coordination