



City of Lewisburg

Comprehensive Plan

Update



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Final Draft: September 2015

Chapter 4: Economic Development

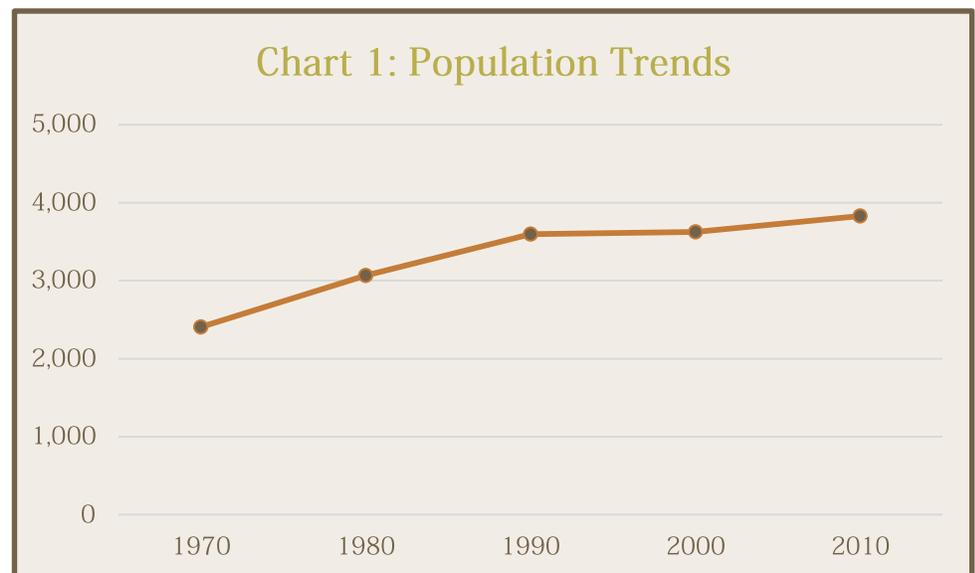


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Demographics

Population Characteristics

The City of Lewisburg has consistently gained population since 1970. Over the past 40 years, the population has increased by more than 1,400 people. Lewisburg's increase in population is not consistent with Greenbrier County and West Virginia. Greenbrier County has gained almost 900 new residents in the last ten years. However, since 1940, population has fluctuated up and down dramatically. The County still does not have as many residents as it did in 1940.



The West Virginia Code, Chapter 8A, requires that population projections be included in comprehensive plans. However, population projections are difficult to estimate as models do not take into account economic circumstances. West Virginia does not complete projections for municipalities, which further complicates the issue. The 2004 Comprehensive Plan used Greenbrier County population projections from the West Virginia Regional Research Institute. The projections predict a low level of population growth from 2000-2025 with an average growth rate of 0.52% per year. The gains in population will most likely be in the over 65 age cohort. There are no projections for Lewisburg. Past population numbers illustrate the following population growth rates for Lewisburg over the past 40 years:

- 1970-1980– 21.5% gain in population
- 1980-1990– 14.8% gain in population
- 1990-2000– 15.4% gain in population
- 2000-2010– 5.7% gain in population

Total population gain from 1970 to 2010– 37%
Average population gain per year– 0.92%

While population growth has slowed down the past ten years, Lewisburg continues to attract residents. Therefore, taking into account the County projections and Lewisburg's average population gain per year, Lewisburg will most

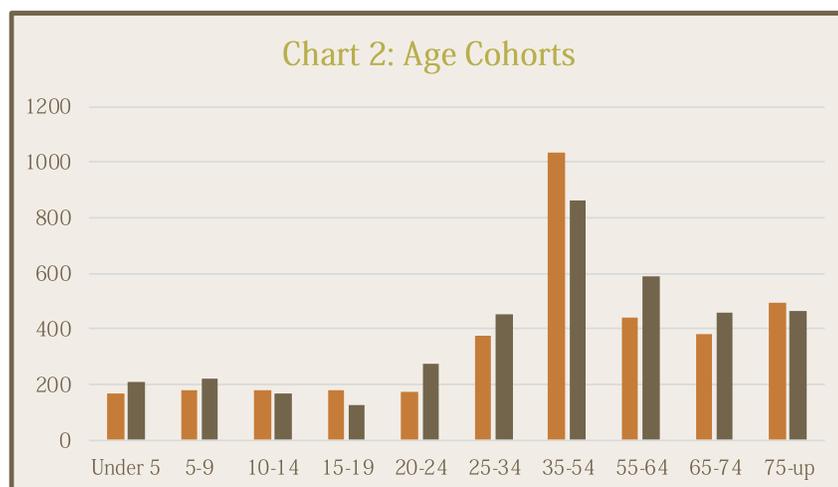


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likely continue to experience growth. By 2030, the population of Lewisburg could be approximately 4,300 people.

As mentioned earlier, the population of the County continues to age. Therefore, it is important to take into consideration the age cohorts in Lewisburg in order to determine how the town should prepare for the future. Different age groups require different types of government and community services. For instance, a community with a large number of younger children should be prepared to provide recreational services and programs, as well as educational facilities. A community with a substantial amount of older people should be prepared to offer different housing options, as well as public transportation and medical facilities. The median age of Lewisburg is 46.1 years, which is slightly higher than the County median age of 46 years. The majority of Lewisburg residents fall into the childrearing age group.

Comparisons from 2000 to 2010 Census data were also examined to determine what age groups the city is gaining or losing. Between 2000 to 2010, the city gained residents in the younger age cohorts (under the age of 9). The city also gained residents in the 20-24 and 25-34 age range which is a good indicator that younger people are choosing to make Lewisburg their home. The increase in residents in the childbearing age cohort could explain the increase in the amount of younger children (under the age of 9) in Lewisburg. Future school enrollments, recreation needs, and housing availability are all issues the city should be prepared to deal with if the preschool and primary school population of the city continues to increase.



The city has lost residents in the childrearing age group, which could potentially be a concern. The population loss though could be contributed to the fact that the city gained population in the pre-retirement age group, which could mean that residents are simply growing older. As the population of the city ages,

Age Cohorts	
Preschool - Under the age of 5	Childbearing - 25-34 age group
Primary school - 5-9 age group	Childrearing - 35-54 age group
Middle school - 10-14 age group	Pre-retirement- 55-64 age group
High school - 15-19 age group	Younger retired - 65-74 age group
Post Secondary - 20-24 age group	Older retired - 75-age group



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the city will have to prepared to provide a range of housing options, public transportation, and healthcare facilities.

Economic Characteristics

Unemployment rates are important to review as they are an indicator of economic growth in a region. According to the 2008-2012 American Community Survey, the unemployment rate in Lewisburg at the time was 5.4 percent. The rate is significantly lower than Greenbrier County (8%). The lower unemployment rate in the city could be contributed to the fact that many of the top employers in the County are located within city limits.

Top Employers in Greenbrier County

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Greenbrier Hotel Corporation | 6. Greenbrier Minerals, LLC |
| 2. Greenbrier County Board of Education | 7. West Virginia Department of Highways |
| 3. Greenbrier Valley Medical Center | 8. The Kroger Company |
| 4. West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine | 9. Seneca Health Services, Inc. |
| 5. Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. | 10. ABB, Inc. |

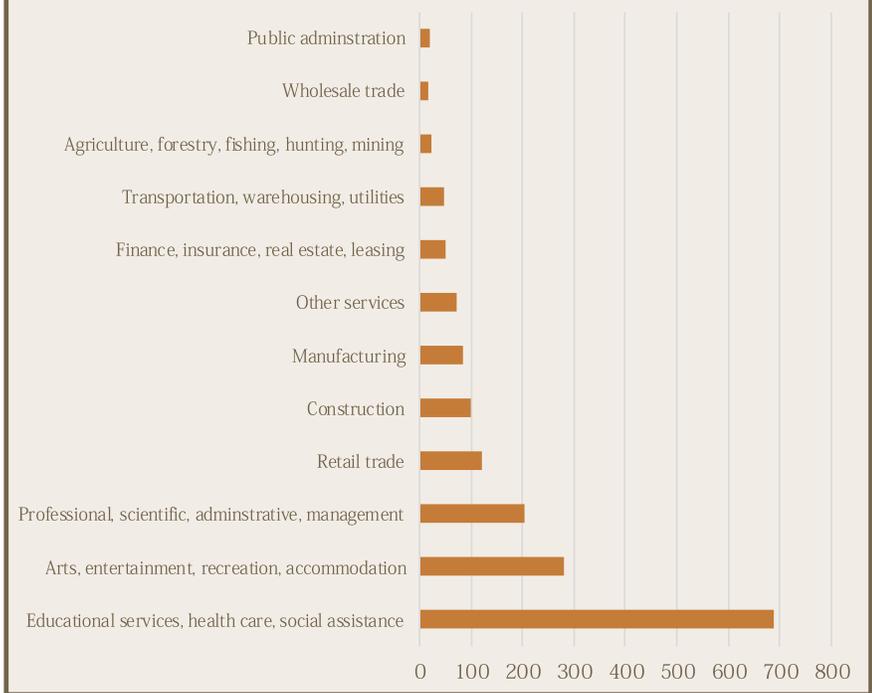
Source: Workforce West Virginia, March 2014

The mean travel time to work for residents in Lewisburg is approximately 17.9 minutes. The mean travel time indicates that many residents are either working within the city limits or not far away from the city.

Most residents work in the educational services, health care, and social assistance industry. The second highest industry in Lewisburg is arts, entertainment, recreation, and accommodation as displayed on *Chart 3: Employment by Industry*.

The median household income in Lewisburg according to the 2008-2012 American Community Survey was \$41,991. This is higher than the household income of \$36,539 in Greenbrier County. The higher median income could be attributed to the types of jobs that

Chart 3: Employment by Industry





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residents have in the city. Education and healthcare jobs tend to pay higher wages than those in retail and construction.

Table 1: Income illustrates the different types of income that residents receive. Over 71 percent of residents receive earnings from employers, which is slightly higher than the county and state. Many residents rely on social security and retirement income. This reliance will most likely increase as residents begin to age. The amount of public assistance that is disbursed is comparable to the county and the state. However, almost a quarter of the population relies on food stamps and SNAP benefits, which is a concern as it is higher than the county and state.

Table 1: Income			
	<i>Lewisburg</i>	<i>Greenbrier County</i>	<i>West Virginia</i>
Earnings	71.5%	66.4%	69.0%
Social Security	34.9%	42.3%	37.9%
Retirement Income	24.5%	24.3%	23.8%
Supplemental Security Income	5.0%	7.4%	7.1%
Cash Public Assistance Income	1.8%	1.6%	2.3%
Food Stamps/SNAP benefits	21.3%	15.8%	14.6%

Economic Development Organizations

Greenbrier Valley Economic Development Corporation

The Greenbrier Valley Economic Development Council (GVEDC) assists businesses in Greenbrier, Monroe, and Pocahontas County with financing, technical assistance, site selection and workforce development. The GVEDC is involved in three initiatives: food, wood products, and local technology. The Greenbrier Valley Local Foods Initiative works with local farmers, restaurants, schools, markets, and consumers to increase the availability of fresh, local foods. The initiative hosts workshops, provides educational programs for students, helps expand markets, and develops community gardens.



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Greenbrier County Convention and Visitors Bureau

Tourism plays a huge role in the local economy in Lewisburg and the surrounding area. The Greenbrier County Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) aims to promote Greenbrier County and its municipalities as a premier tourism destination. The CVB markets the county through ad placement, website, visitors guide and also manages the visitors center. The CVB is funded by fifty percent of the bed tax collections from Greenbrier County and the municipalities of Lewisburg, White Sulphur Springs, Rainelle, Ronceverte, and Alderson. The CVB sponsors a mini-grant program that awards approximately \$30,000 a year in marketing dollars to organizations for tourism marketing.

Tax Structure

The city has a municipal service fee which is used to help fund the fire, police, street maintenance, street improvements, park maintenance and improvements and other municipal services. The city recently enacted a fire service fee for structures located outside of municipal boundaries but still in the response area for the fire department.

The City of Lewisburg has a municipal business and occupation (B&O) tax in place. Selling of tangible property, contracting, and providing a public service or utility are taxed as part of the businesses and occupation tax ordinance.

Municipal Service fee rates

Residential- \$72 a year, billed monthly

Commercial, industrial, and governmental rate- \$0.09 per square foot of floor space

- *Selling tangible property- 0.60% of gross income of business that exceeds \$15,000,000. Selling at wholesale is 0% of the gross income.*
- *Contracting- \$2.00 per \$100 of the gross income derived from contracts*
- *Public service or utility- Street and electric railways (1%), water companies, except income received by municipality-owned plants (4%), electric light and power companies (4%) on sales and demand charges, except as to income received by municipal owned plants producing or purchasing or distributing electricity; natural gas companies (3%), toll bridge companies (3%), and all other public service or utility business (2%).*



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Needs Assessment

The location of Lewisburg has helped the city thrive throughout the years. The city sits at the crossroads of two busy state routes and is the county seat of Greenbrier County. The city is also in close proximity to several tourist attractions, which boosts the local economy. Public water and sewage is available in most of the city, which has helped attract new development. The police department provides 24 hour coverage,

which keeps crime low in the city. The fire department, which consists of paid and volunteer fireman, provide fire suppression, high angle rescue, water rescue, hazardous material decontamination and response assistance for traumatic emergency medical services. The presence of these public safety services help attract new business and residents into the city. The close proximity to several medical and educational facilities, such as the Greenbrier Medical Center, New River Community and Technical College and the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine provides job opportunities to area residents.

Assets

- County seat
- Tourism
- Geographic location
- Interstate access
- Educated workforce
- Higher education opportunities

Challenges

- Job opportunities
- Lack of high speed internet
- Developable land
- Economic diversification
- Inability to retain youth

While Lewisburg's economy is fairing better than many other small West Virginia communities, the city still has some issues and concerns pertaining to continued economic development. The public survey revealed that residents feel that there are a lack of job opportunities within the city. Other economic concerns include lack of economic diversification, lack of high speed internet, and no available land for growth.

<i>Public Survey Results: Rate your level of satisfaction:</i>				
	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Job Opportunities	0.74%	18.38%	50%	30.88%

Many of the top employers in Greenbrier County are located in Lewisburg. Most of the jobs in Lewisburg are centered around the healthcare, educational, and retail sectors. There are very few opportunities for those looking for jobs in manufacturing, information technology, or engineering. The lack of diversification in the economy could be one of the main reasons that youth are leaving the city to find employment opportunities elsewhere. Mid-size manufacturing and tech industries are the types of industry/business that are desired in Lewisburg. There is also a need for small business development to build upon the existing culture, outdoor recreation, arts, and local food movement in Lewisburg.



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The city would like to diversify its economy, however there are two large obstacles to continued economic growth. The city lacks high speed internet, which is a major obstacle to not only residents but potential business owners. The city has applied for grants to extend fiber optic but has not been successful in receiving grant money to date. Another challenge is the lack of available land or buildings that would be suited for a larger business or industry. In order to grow, the city will have to consider annexation as most land within city limits is currently developed. There are some possibilities for additional growth, however there is no organization that is marketing all that Lewisburg has to offer, as well as the real estate that is available. There is a definite need for a marketing and/or economic development organization to help with promotion of Lewisburg.

Action Plan

Goal: Promote balanced development, economic growth and appropriate housing choices that complement the existing city character and adequately reflect the needs of the changing population

Objective 1:

Investigate additional methods to market the City to retain existing residents and businesses and attract new development

Action Step 1: Consider designating an economic development point person to help with marketing and economic development opportunities

The city currently has no specific person in charge of economic development. The downtown business district relies on the non-profit merchants group to help with marketing and planning events downtown. This is a very time consuming and costly undertaking for local businesses involved in the group. The Greenbrier CVB does market Lewisburg, however they also market other communities throughout the Greenbrier Valley. It would only make sense for the city to designate a specific person, whether it be a current staff person, or hire a part time specialist to work on marketing and economic development. This individual could help existing businesses with any expansion efforts and new businesses with possible locations for development. The individual could also lead marketing efforts and planning and coordinating events.

Action Step 2: Annex designated areas to allow for new development

Lewisburg's location is one of its assets as it is located along a major interstate and very close to a nationally renowned resort. These assets make it a prime location for businesses looking to expand or re-locate. Lewisburg currently has



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very little land left for development, therefore priority areas have been identified for annexation on *Map 7.6: Potential Annexation Areas*.

Action Step 3: Improve the infrastructure to entice new business and industry

Increased broadband access is needed to further economic development efforts within city limits. Residents and business owners have access to the internet, however it is too slow for business and industry needs. City residents and business owners also lack competitive choices for internet, as there is only one provider that serves the area. The city should work with Region IV Planning and Development Council to secure funding for increased broadband access.