



City of Lewisburg

Comprehensive Plan

Update

Final Draft Plan: September 2015

Chapter 7: Land Use

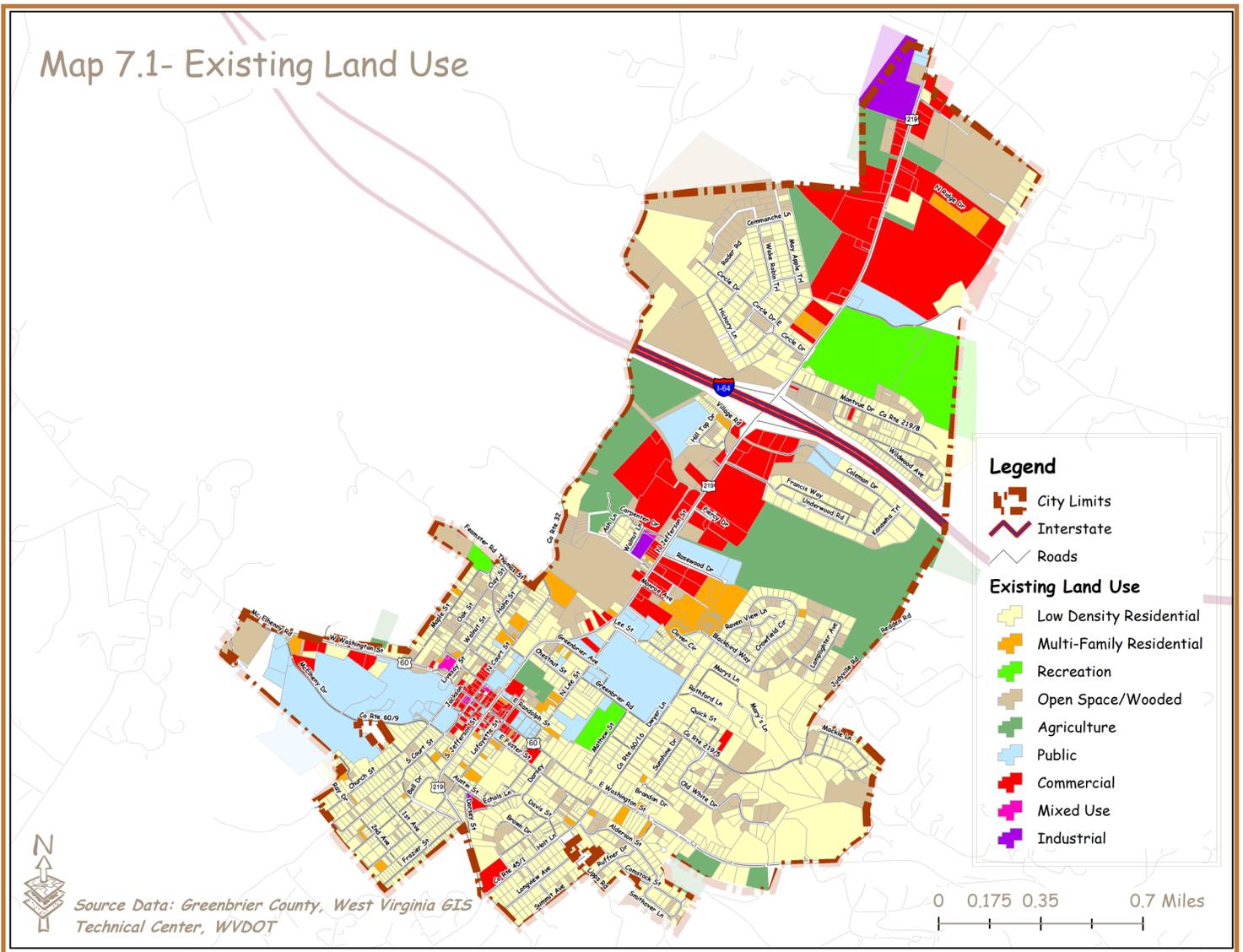


City of Lewisburg Comprehensive Plan

Land Use

Existing Land Use

The City of Lewisburg is comprised of a variety of land uses as illustrated on **Map 7.1: Existing Land Use**. Residential uses can be found surrounding the downtown business district, as well as in new housing developments off of U.S. Route 219. Large scale commercial uses, such as retail stores, can be found off of US 219. The downtown business district is comprised of smaller scale commercial uses, such as boutique shops and restaurants. Lewisburg is the County seat, therefore there are also many public uses in the downtown, such as schools, library, Court House and County Office Buildings. There is only a small percentage of industrial development within city limits and it is located off of U.S. Route 219. Lewisburg is mostly built-out but there is some land that is classified as open space/wooded and agriculture, which is scattered throughout the municipality.

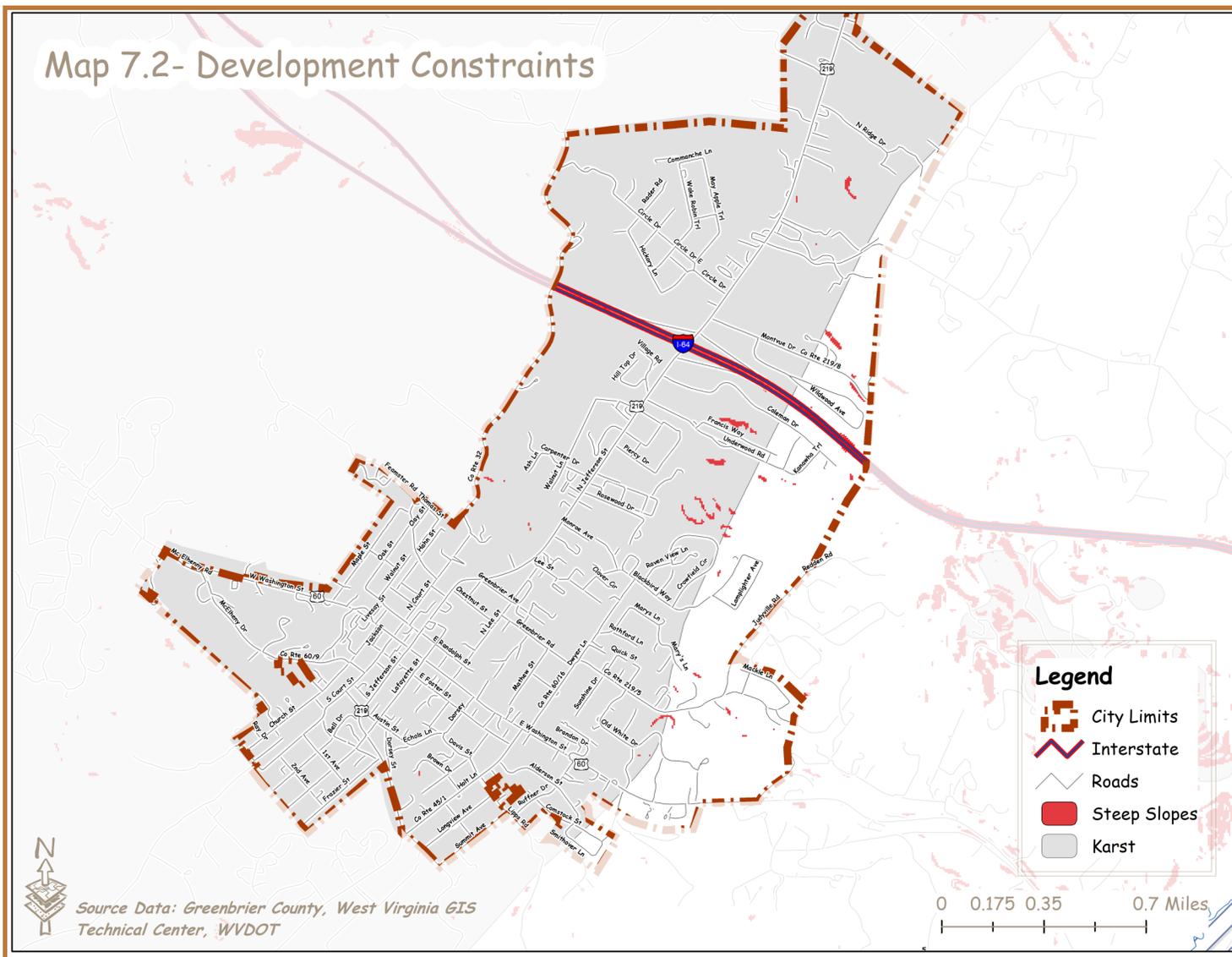




Chapter 7: Land Use

Development Constraints

The City of Lewisburg has very little development constraints as displayed on [Map 7.2: Development Constraints](#). There are no areas of the city that are within the floodplain. Steep slopes are only located in small areas of the city. A concern of the city for any type of development is the karst topography. Karst topography is where the terrain consists of limestone that has dissolved over the years, which then leads to sinkholes, fissures, and depressions. This type of terrain is well-known for underground caves and streams. Karst topography can lead to several issues that affect local governments; mainly increased chance of groundwater contamination, foundation engineering issues, and subsidence.





City of Lewisburg Comprehensive Plan

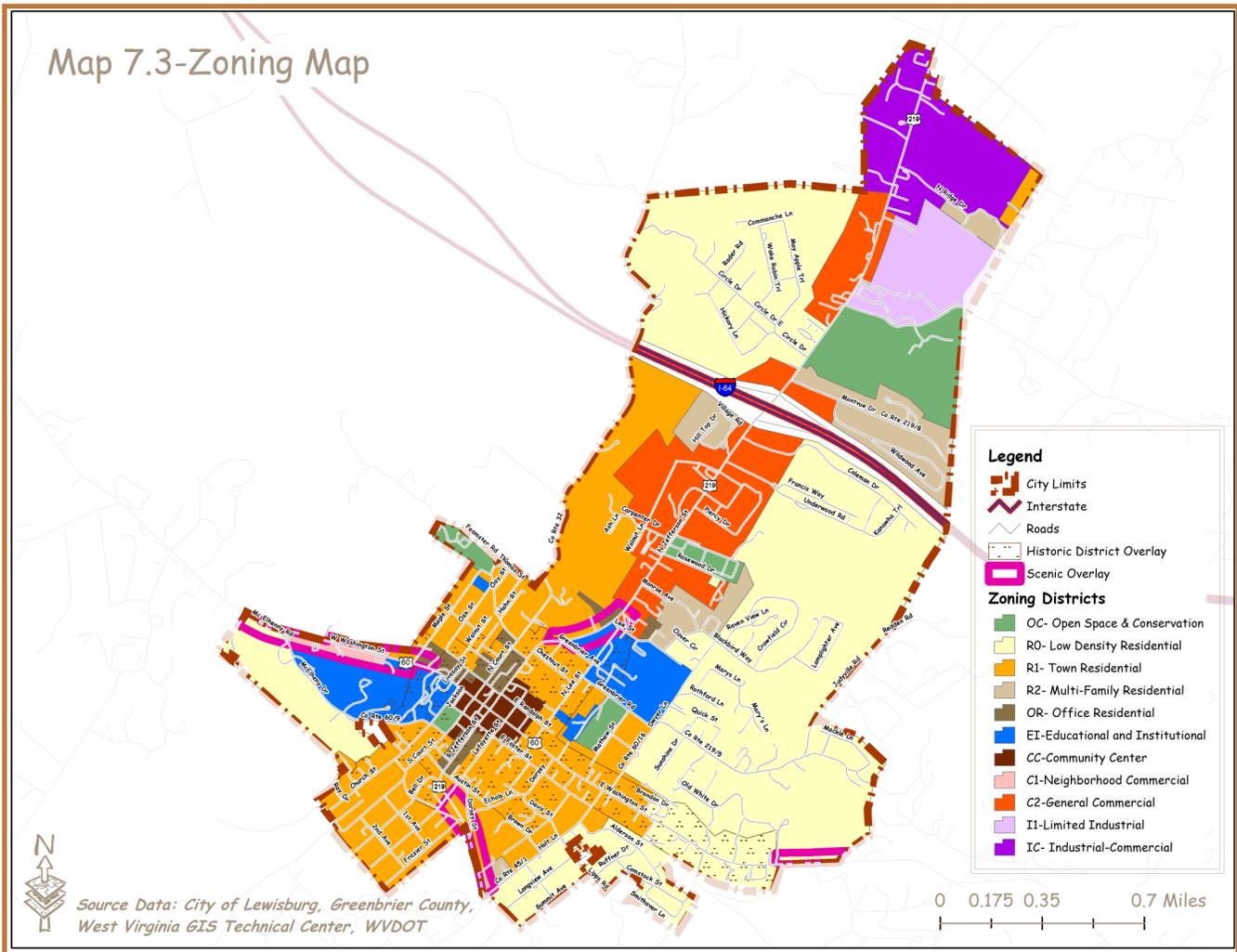
Land Use Regulations

Zoning

The City of Lewisburg enacted zoning regulations in 1994. The ordinance establishes a total of 12 districts, shown on [Map 7.3– Zoning Map](#):

- Open Space and Conservation (O-C)
- Rural Residential (R-R)
- Low Density Residential (R-0)
- Town Residential (R-1)
- Multi-Family (R-2)
- Office Residential (O-R)
- Educational and Institutional (E-I)
- Community Center (C-C)
- Neighborhood Commercial (C-1)
- General Commercial (C-2)
- Limited Industrial (I-1)
- Industrial Commercial (I-C)

The ordinance also includes 3 overlay districts; Historic District, Scenic Overlay, and Planned Development. The ordinance includes regulations regarding parking and loading, signs, and screening and landscaping.





Chapter 7: Land Use

SALDO

In 1994 the City of Lewisburg enacted Subdivision and Land Development regulations in order to plan for the orderly, efficient and economic development of the municipality. The ordinance includes regulations regarding design principles, easements,

and design standards for sidewalks, streets, public areas and open space. The ordinance also includes requirements for improvements (streets, sewers, water mains, fire hydrants, storm sewers, sidewalks, and permanent markers). Parks and recreational areas are also required for all residential subdivisions.

The SALDO requires 0.0025 acres of recreational areas per person expected to reside within a housing subdivision. Small residential subdivisions are exempt from this provision of this ordinance.

Building Code

The city has adopted several building codes to regulate building construction and for protection of the public from disaster due to fire, structural collapse and general deterioration. Building codes include:

- 2012 Energy Conservation Code
- 2012 International Property Maintenance Code
- 2012 International Residential Code for One and Two Family Dwellings
- 2011 National Electrical Code
- 2012 International Fuel Gas Code
- 2012 International Mechanical Code
- 2012 International Plumbing Code

Floodplain Ordinance

Even though Lewisburg is not located within a floodplain, the city has enacted a floodplain ordinance. The ordinance was enacted so that the city can participate in the FEMA program and Lewisburg residents can receive flood insurance. The ordinance requires that all development, substantial improvement, or relocation of any building or construction receive a permit for construction within the floodplain.

Vacant Structure Ordinance

In 2012 Lewisburg enacted a Vacant Structure Code. The code requires owners of vacant buildings to register their buildings and pay a fee.

- No fee for properties that are vacant for less than 1 year
- \$200 for properties that are vacant for at least 1 year but less than 2 years
- \$400 for properties that are vacant for at least 2 years but less than 3 years
- \$600 for properties that are vacant for at least 3 years but less than 4 years
- \$800 for properties that are vacant for at least 4 years but less than 5 years
- \$1,600 for properties that are vacant for at least 5 years, plus an additional \$300 for year in excess of 5 years



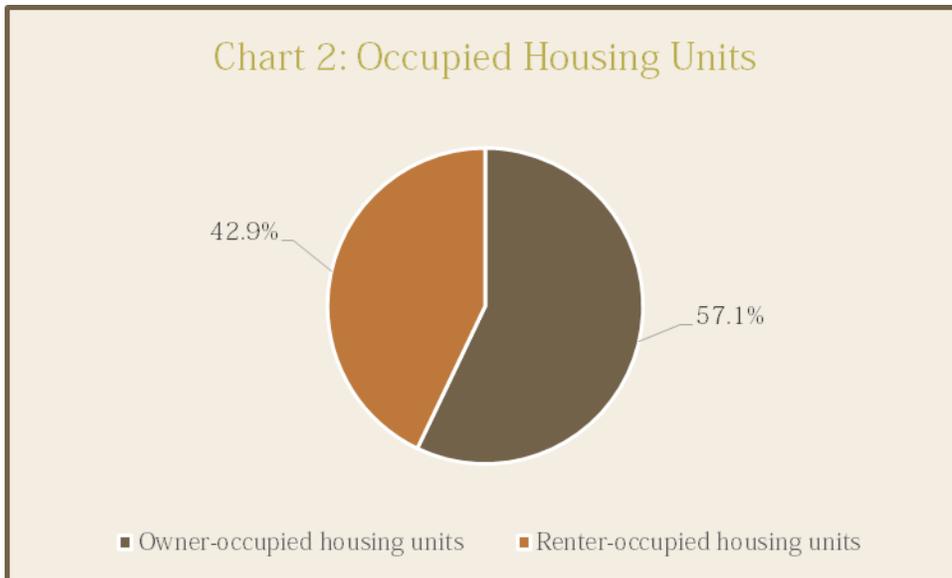
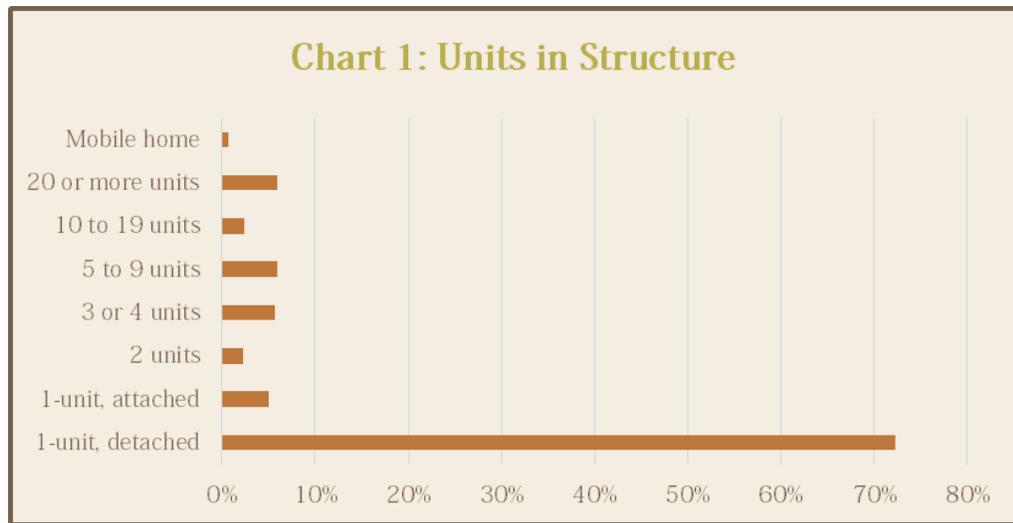
City of Lewisburg Comprehensive Plan

Housing Characteristics

Demographics

Over 70 percent of homes in Lewisburg are single-family homes, as illustrated on *Chart 1: Units in Structure*. Of the total housing units in the city, approximately 90 percent are occupied and 10 percent are classified as vacant. This is a very low vacancy rate, especially compared to Greenbrier County's vacancy rate of approximately 18 percent.

Of the occupied housing units in Lewisburg, approximately 57 percent are owner-occupied units and 43 percent are renter-occupied units as shown on *Chart 2: Occupied Housing Units*. This information reveals that a good portion of the population of Lewisburg rent homes and do not own them. The percentage of renter-occupied housing units exceeds the percentage in Greenbrier County (27 percent).



The Census breaks down the vacancies into different classifications. Of the 10 percent of homes in Lewisburg that are considered vacant, the majority are rentals (3.3%). Many factors contribute to vacant rental properties. Too many rental units may exist, the cost of rentals may be too high, or the rentals available may be in poor condition. The second highest level of vacancies are classified as “for seasonal, recreational, and occasional use” and

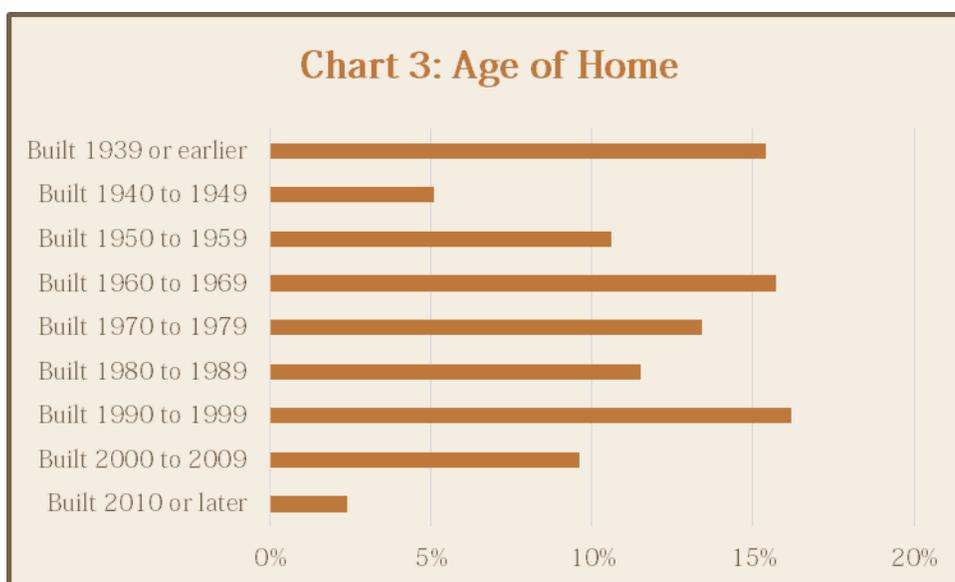
“all other vacants.” As Lewisburg is very close to a variety of historical, cultural, and recreational attractions, it makes sense that some people have bought second-homes in the city. The “all other vacants” classification means that units are held vacant for personal reasons. Reasons include :



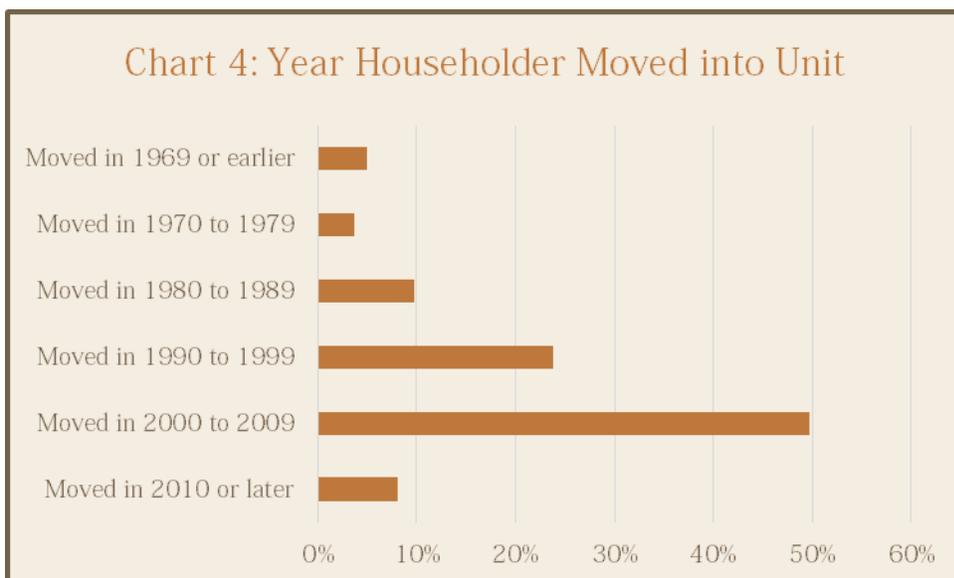
Chapter 7: Land Use

- No one lives in the unit and the owner is making repairs
- Owner does not want to rent or sell
- Owner is using the home as storage

Chart 3: Age of Home displays the year that homes were built in Lewisburg. The age of homes in the city is a mix, with the sixteen percent (16%) built between 1990 to 1999. Many homes were also built between 1960 to 1969 (15.7%) and earlier than 1939 (15.4%). Many communities throughout West Virginia have older housing which can lead to maintenance issues. However, Lewisburg is fortunate that both old and newer homes are available.



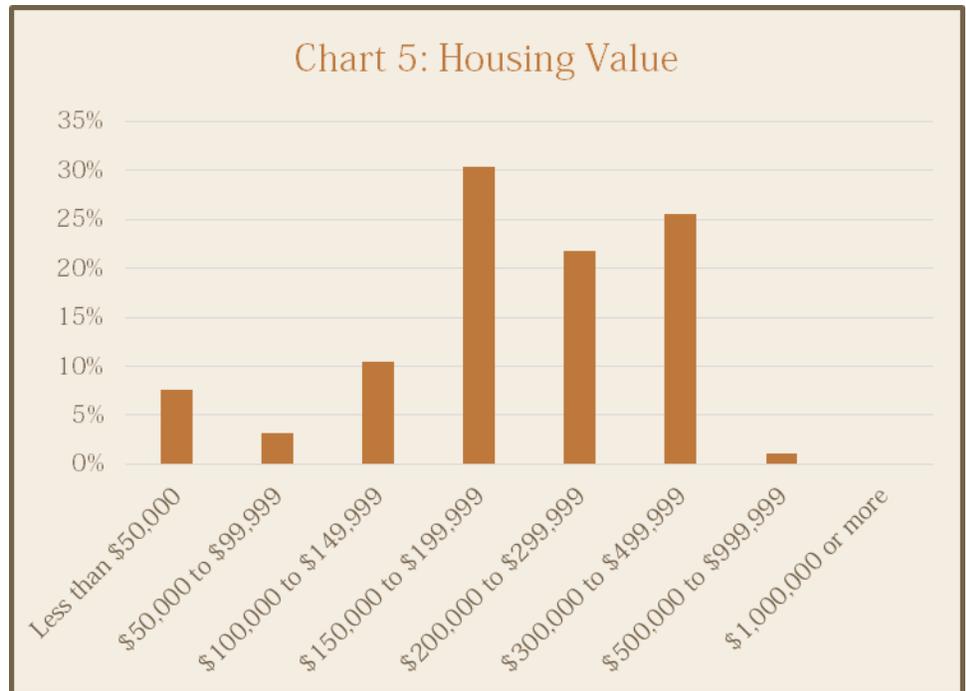
Almost 50 percent of residents in Lewisburg have moved into their homes between 2000 to 2009. Approximately 24 percent moved to Lewisburg between 1990 and 1999 as shown on *Chart 4: Year Householder Moved Into Unit*. This data illustrates that Lewisburg is considered a desirable place to live, with many people choosing to make their home within the city. This data aligns with the population data that was detailed in [Chapter 4: Economic Development](#), in that the city has been experiencing an increase in population over the past several years.





City of Lewisburg Comprehensive Plan

Housing value was examined to better determine the condition of the housing market in Lewisburg as shown on *Chart 5: Housing Value*. The median housing value in Lewisburg is \$197,100. This value is significantly higher than the median value in Greenbrier County of \$99,200. The higher value of homes in Lewisburg could potentially be contributed to the new housing built over the past ten years, as well as the historical nature of the community. Lewisburg takes pride in the older, historical homes in the community, which could lead to higher home values.



Historical Resources

Lewisburg is known throughout West Virginia for its historical character. Many significant events in the Civil War happened in Lewisburg and surrounding areas. The city was established in 1782 and named after surveyor Andrew Lewis who established a camp near the Lewis Spring.

The City of Lewisburg is home to three designated historic districts:

- Lewisburg Historic District- includes areas along US 60 and US 219
- Maple Street Historic District-includes properties along 107-121 Maple Street in the area known as “Gospel Hill”
- South Church Street Historic District- includes three residential homes along South Church Street



Historical resources listed on the National Register in Lewisburg include:

- North House Museum
- Old Stone Presbyterian Church
- Confederate Cemetery
- Lewis Spring

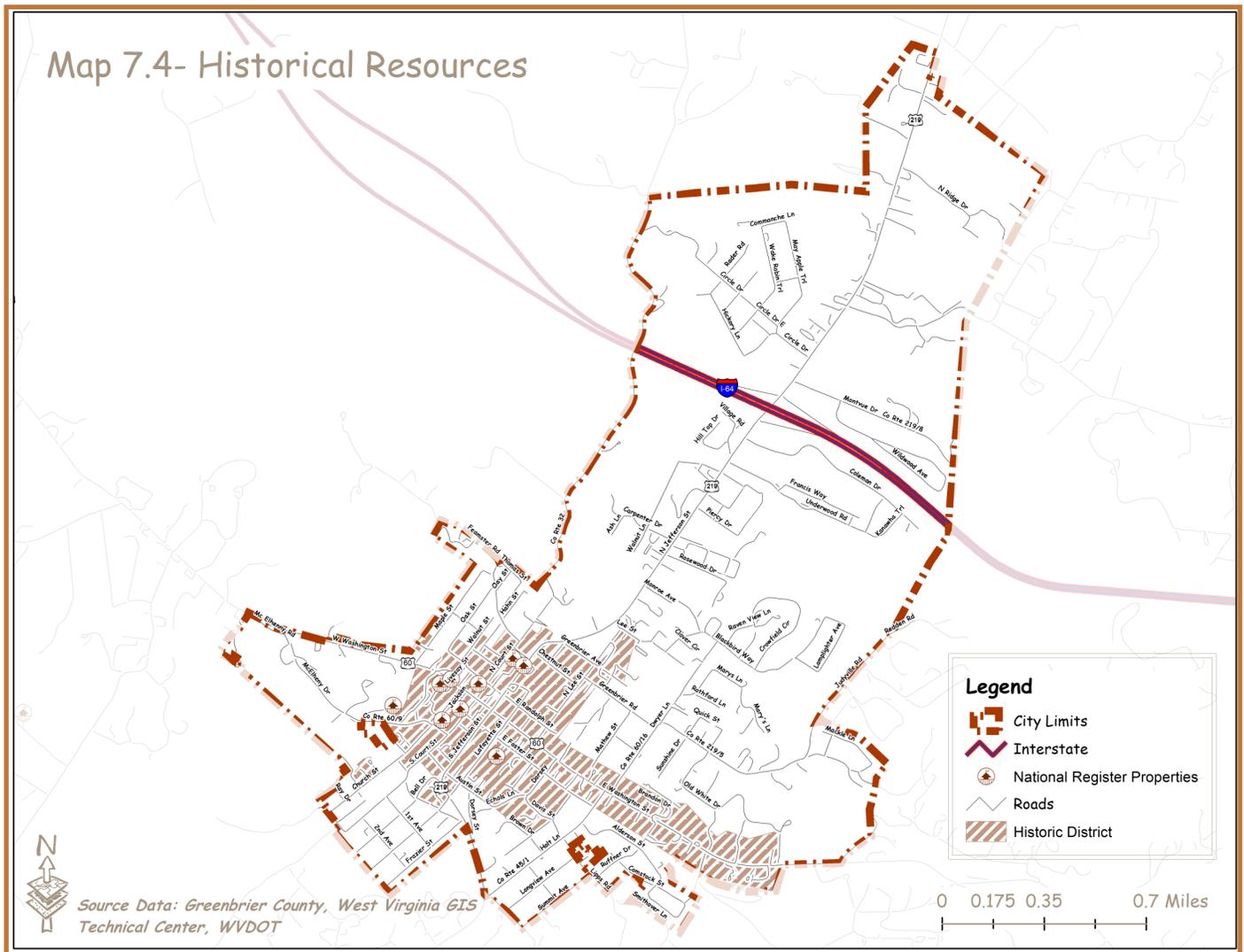


Chapter 7: Land Use

- Greenbrier County Courthouse
- Mt. Tabor Baptist Church
- Governor Samuel Price House
- Supreme Court Library Building (Greenbrier County Library)
- John Wesley Methodist Church
- James Withrow House



In 2005 the Lewisburg Historic Landmarks Commission adopted guidelines for changes to landmarks and all buildings in designated historic districts. The goal of the guidelines is to help property owners determine how buildings and properties can be maintained and preserved in a historical manner. A Certificate of Appropriateness is required for any changes to a structure that will affect the exterior of the building in the historical districts. All business signs in the historical district require a sign permit with review by the Historic Landmarks Commission. Historical resources are shown on [Map 7.4: Historical Resources](#).





City of Lewisburg Comprehensive Plan

Needs Assessment

During the planning process numerous land use issues were repeatedly mentioned. Issues identified include lack of residences in the downtown, lack of senior housing, lack of affordable housing and the conversion of single-family homes into multi-family homes. There are also concerns with the current zoning ordinance as it has not been updated in several years.

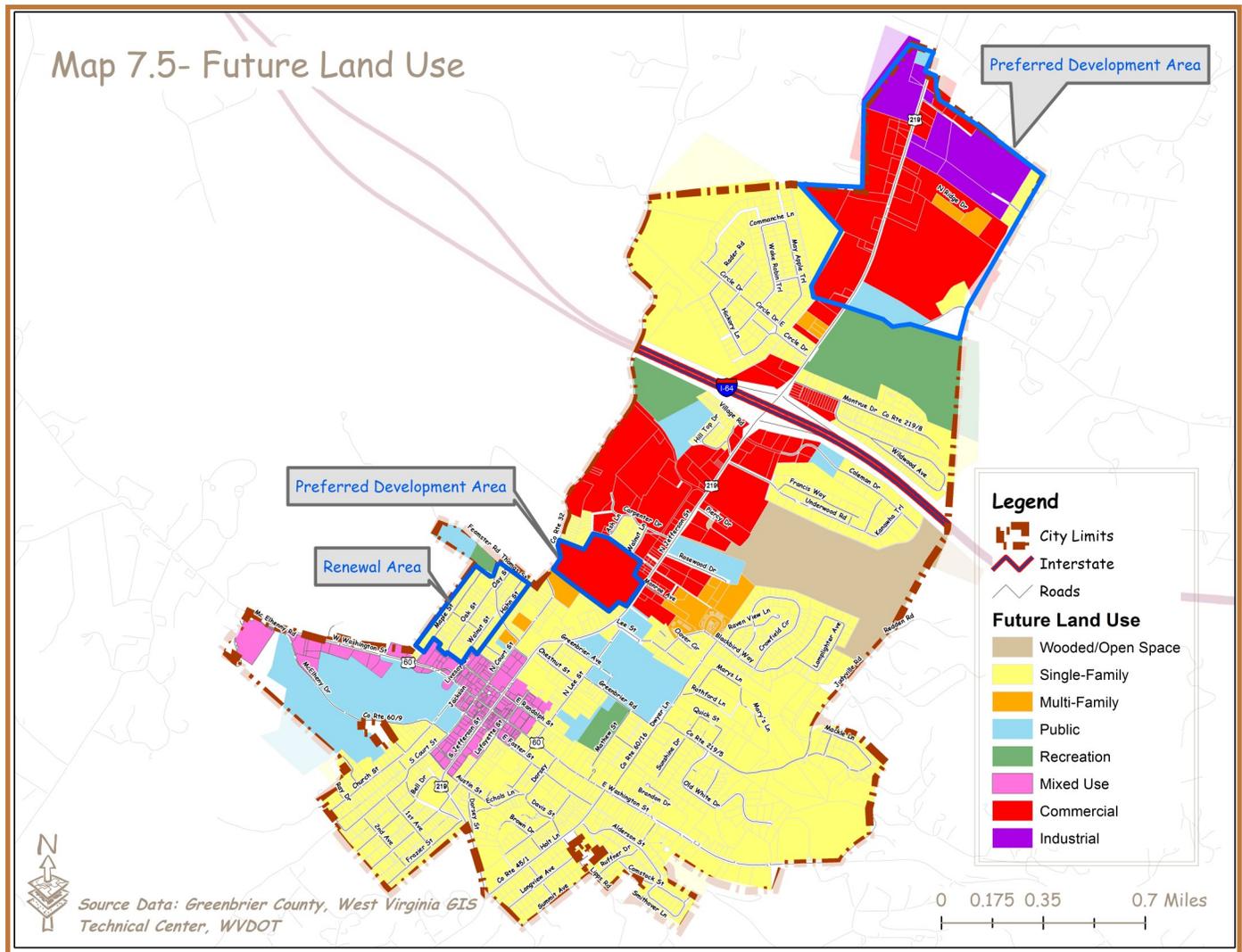
Land Use

Development Areas

The West Virginia Code Chapter 8A requires that a comprehensive plan designate preferred development areas and renewal and/or redevelopment areas. Areas are shown on [Map 7.5: Future Land Use](#).

Preferred development areas. -- Consistent with the land use component, identify areas where incentives may be used to encourage development, infill development or redevelopment in order to promote well designed and coordinated communities and prevent sprawl.

Renewal and/or redevelopment. -- Consistent with the land use component, identify slums and other blighted areas and set goals, plans and programs for the elimination of such slums and blighted areas and for community renewal, revitalization and/or redevelopment.





Chapter 7: Land Use

Land Use Regulations

The city's zoning ordinance has not been updated in several years. One of the main issues with the ordinance is the organization of the document. Parts of the ordinance should be consolidated to provide clarity to the reader. The table of permissible uses should also be revised in order to improve readability. The zoning ordinance includes 12 zoning districts, which is too many districts for a small city the size of Lewisburg. The following should be considered when the city is revising the current ordinance and map:

- Revision of the definitions in the ordinance
- Consider consolidation of the residential districts. There are minimal differences between two of the low density residential districts
- Inclusion of flexible regulations that allow for affordable housing and housing for persons with disabilities
- Every district must be shown on the zoning map, currently the Rural Residential District is not listed on the map
- Consider one industrial district that allows for light and heavy commercial uses
- Consider consolidation of the commercial districts. One district should be included for the downtown area to accommodate a variety of commercial activities within the downtown business district. The other should include large scale commercial uses, like those on US Route 219
- Re-examine the office residential district as it only includes a small area of the city. This district could potentially be combined with the downtown business district
- Specific regulations regarding the overlay districts should be included in the zoning ordinance
- Revisions to the administration chapter of the ordinance so that it is consistent with the West Virginia Code, Chapter 8A

Abandoned and Dilapidated Buildings

The city recently identified a total of 22 abandoned and dilapidated buildings within municipal limits. The buildings are mostly residential and are scattered throughout the municipality. The city is now in the process of implementing the vacant structure ordinance.

Housing

The median home value in Lewisburg is almost \$200,000, which is almost double the County value. A local real estate agent confirmed that the average selling price of homes in Lewisburg is \$202,552. The higher home value most likely makes it difficult for some people wishing to purchase a home in the city, especially younger adults just starting their careers and senior citizens on a fixed income. Coupled with the lack of multi-family housing that would appeal to these two age groups, it could be said that there is a lack of affordable housing in the community.

The demand for additional multi-family units in the city has lead to many residents to convert their single-family



City of Lewisburg Comprehensive Plan

home into multi-family units. This is a public safety concern as many of the rentals are undocumented and could pose problems for fire and police when responding to calls. The conversion of single-family homes to multi-family homes can also cause problems, as multi-family units could possibly attract more people and traffic and ultimately change the appearance of traditional neighborhoods.

During the planning process the need for multi-family housing, specifically for seniors, was repeatedly mentioned as a major issue. The Shepard's Center of Greenbrier Valley's main priority is to have a retirement community established in Lewisburg with three stages of housing; independent, assisted living, and nursing. As discussed in [Chapter 4: Economic Development](#) the city's population continues to age and therefore a retirement community may be a good fit for the city, especially as there are no other retirement facilities in the region. Lewisburg is an attractive place for those wishing to retire as it has many amenities and several healthcare facilities are within city limits or nearby.

Many would also like to see additional housing in the downtown area, specifically above existing business. An obstacle to housing above businesses is that converting second stories is usually a very costly undertaking. There are no opportunities for conversion of old business into housing as Lewisburg does not have any large industrial or commercial buildings that would be appropriate.

According to a local realtor there is a growing demand for single-family homes in Lewisburg. An issue is that there is a low inventory of available homes and very little new construction. This is a concern as the population of Lewisburg continues to increase, the city could potentially add 470 people in the next 20 years. This increase would generate the need for approximately 234 new housing units for the growing population.

Historical Resources

The Greenbrier Historical Society would like to see the General Lewis Park and Springhouse be preserved and used as a gathering place in the future. The historic African-American cemetery on Church Street should also be preserved and marketed as a tourist destination.

Annexation

The City of Lewisburg has very little developable land left within its municipal boundaries. For continued economic growth, annexation should be considered. Many businesses and people would like to re-locate to Lewisburg and enjoy all the municipal services and amenities that the city offers. Priority annexation areas are shown on [Map 7.6: Potential Annexation Areas](#). Public water is available in the proposed annexation areas, with limited public sewer handled by Public Service District #1. The lack of public sewage would have to be considered in any future development plans.

Chapter 7: Land Use





City of Lewisburg Comprehensive Plan

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:

Promote land uses that preserve the historic character of Lewisburg while allowing for new development

Action Step 1: Revise the current zoning ordinance to ensure the ordinance is consistent with the comprehensive plan

The zoning ordinance has not been updated for several years and is in need of a comprehensive overhaul. The entire organization of the ordinance should be revised to make the document more user-friendly. Out-dated definitions should be replaced. Consolidation of districts should also be considered. [Map 7.5: Future Land Use](#) should be used as a basis for any zoning map updates. The future land use map delineates several future land uses. There are no rural lands identified as much of Lewisburg is developed and will continue to grow.

Action Step 2: Consider annexation of surrounding lands to increase the tax base and provide continued economic growth

Currently the City of Lewisburg is mostly built-out with no room for new development. There is a need for additional residential development, as well as commercial development. By expanding the municipal boundaries, the city can increase its tax base, which in turn will help provide continued high quality services to residents.

The city should also annex “doughnut holes”. These are areas that are completely surrounded by the City of Lewisburg but are not within city limits. This creates many issues with community services, such as police and fire protection and public works.

Areas that the city would like to consider in the future for annexation are shown on [Map 7.6: Potential Annexation Areas](#).



Chapter 7: Land Use

Objective 2:

Promote policies that explore the possibility of new housing options and ensure existing housing is well maintained

Action Step 1: Enact a rental registration ordinance

Enacting a rental registration ordinance will help first responders in many ways. Many single-family homes are being converted into multi-family units. This is a public safety concern as police and fire departments are unaware of how many units and people could potentially be in a building when they are responding to a call. The ordinance will also require inspections to ensure that rental units are meeting all building code requirements.

Action Step 2: Encourage the development of residences on the upper stories in the downtown business district

Renovating the upper stories of downtown businesses can be a costly undertaking, especially as the renovations need to comply with current building codes. The city should work with property owners and developers to find solutions to code issues. The city should also work with owners and developers to acquire funding to help with renovation costs.

Action Step 3: Work with the Shepherd's Center of Greenbrier Valley to investigate the feasibility of retirement community facilities in Lewisburg

The City of Lewisburg and the Shepherd's Center should reach out to retirement communities in other municipalities to determine how they can market the city for such a facility. The city should investigate the feasibility of incentive zoning to encourage developers to build retirement housing within city limits. Incentive zoning encourages a specific type of a development in a community by providing incentives to developers. Incentives can include density bonuses, flexible development standards, parking reductions, and permitting priority.

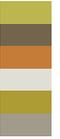
Case Study

Middlesex County, Virginia includes provisions in the zoning ordinance for incentive zoning. Property owners and/or developers can receive a density bonus if they dedicate open space as part of a development, retirement housing, and central sewer and water.



City of Lewisburg Comprehensive Plan

Goal: Preserve and promote the historical, cultural, and educational assets of Lewisburg



Objective 1:

Work with community groups, businesses, and other government entities to encourage preservation and promotion of Lewisburg

Action Step 1: Continue historic preservation efforts in downtown Lewisburg

There is a general consensus that the General Lewis Park and Springhouse is currently underutilized. The city, Greenbrier Historical Society, and County Commission should work together to advertise the history of the site, as well as promote the site as a community gathering place.

The African-American cemetery on Church Street should also be better maintained and marketed to tourists.

Action Step 2: Form a Town and Gown Committee with the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine and the New River Community and Technical College

The presence of two higher educational facilities in Lewisburg is a tremendous economic asset to the municipality. A town and gown committee would serve as a forum for Lewisburg and the two educational facilities to discuss issues that pertain to both entities. Issues that could be discussed include community relations, economic activities, volunteer programs, and academic outreach.