

# DRAFT

## Corporation of Shepherdstown 2025 Comprehensive Plan

### Public Review and Input

**Public Hearing: 6:00 p.m., March 13, 2025, War Memorial Building, Shepherdstown**

**Public Comments: Please provide comments and suggestions by March 13, 2025. Methods for submitting comments:**

- 1) Email: [comments@shepherdstown.gov](mailto:comments@shepherdstown.gov)
- 2) Hand Delivery: Shepherdstown Town Hall, Planning Commission, 104 North King St., Shepherdstown, WV 25443
- 3) Mail: Corporation of Shepherdstown, Planning Commission, P.O. Box 248, Shepherdstown, WV 25443
- 4) Submit comments at the Public Hearing on March 13, 2025

## **Acknowledgements**

The Town of Shepherdstown is grateful to have had a wide-ranging team assist in the development of this 2025 Comprehensive Plan. It has taken a truly united and community-based effort to bring this document to life.

We thank the residents of Shepherdstown, including the greater Shepherdstown community, and each of the entities and individuals below for offering their perspective, time, and commitment to ensuring Shepherdstown has a clear path forward for the decade ahead.

### **Shepherdstown Planning Commission (Appointed Members)**

Ebonee Helmick, Madge Morningstar, Roger Munro, Rebecca Parmesano (Staff: Andy Beall)

### **Citizen Review Committee**

Phil Baker-Shenk, Marty Amerikaner, Michael Athey, Nancy Craun, Heidi Hanrahan, Bill Howard, Jim King, Jonathan Moss, Karene Motivans, Leah Rampy, Lois Turco, Greg Welter

### **Additional Support**

The Thrasher Group, Inc.

The Eastern Panhandle Regional Planning and Development Council (Region 9)

Professor Jesse Richardson, West Virginia University School of Law, Land Use and Sustainable Development Law Clinic

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	5
Vision for Shepherdstown.....	6
Vision Statement.....	6
Goals.....	6
Plan Implementation .....	6
Community Overview .....	8
Availability and Affordability of Housing in Shepherdstown .....	8
Shepherdstown Land Profile .....	9
Land Use Zoning within Shepherdstown .....	10
Table 1 – Land Use Zoning within Shepherdstown .....	11
Shepherdstown Growth Management Boundary Area .....	13
Major Developments Since Adoption of the Shepherdstown 2014 Comprehensive Plan.....	15
Process for Developing the 2025 Plan .....	18
GOAL 1 – Promote Economic Prosperity & Cultural Vibrancy (EC) .....	19
Goal 1 Implementation Strategies.....	19
Subcategory 1A: Enhance Marketing Efforts to Attract Residents and Tourists and Support Local Businesses .....	19
Subcategory 1B: Provide Direct Support to New and Existing Businesses in Shepherdstown ..	20
Subcategory 1C: Enact Town Policies in Support of Downtown Businesses .....	20
Subcategory 1D: Support Development of Affordable Housing in Town.....	21
GOAL 2 – Preserve, Protect, Restore, and Complement Historic Attributes (H) .....	22
Goal 2 Implementation Strategies.....	22
Subcategory 2A: Sponsor and Promote Programs to Assist Property Owners in Preserving Shepherdstown’s Historic Properties.....	22
Subcategory 2B: Educate Residents and Property Owners about Historic Preservation.....	22
Subcategory 2C: Enact New Town Policies to Better Protect Shepherdstown’s Historic Properties .....	23

GOAL 3 – Conserve Natural Resources and Preserve Green Spaces while Supporting Growth and Development in the Greater Shepherdstown Area (LU).....	24
Goal 3 Implementation Strategies.....	24
Subcategory 3A: Proactively Advocate for Appropriate Development in Areas Surrounding Shepherdstown.....	24
Subcategory 3B: Use Annexation to Expand Shepherdstown’s Boundaries .....	26
Subcategory 3C: Enact Shepherdstown Ordinances in Anticipation of Annexations by Shepherdstown.....	26
Subcategory 3D: Improve Shepherdstown’s Existing Zoning and Land Use Ordinances.....	27
GOAL 4 – Administer a Range of High Quality and Affordable Services for Residents, Businesses, and Visitors (PS).....	28
Subcategory 4A: Public Safety Services .....	28
Subcategory 4B: Capital Budgeting .....	29
Subcategory 4C: Provision of Services .....	29
Subcategory 4D: Water and Wastewater Services .....	29
Subcategory 4E: Parks and Recreation Services .....	30
Subcategory 4F: Transportation Services .....	31
Subcategory 4G: Establish New Sustainable Services.....	31
Appendix A -- State Requirements for Local Comprehensive Plans.....	32

## **Introduction**

Founded in 1762, Shepherdstown is celebrated as a warm and welcoming small town. Nestled along the Potomac River in Jefferson County, West Virginia, the town is surrounded by breathtaking natural beauty, scenic rural vistas, parks, and outdoor recreation opportunities. Shepherdstown offers a charming mix of locally owned shops, unique boutiques, music and visual arts, and a variety of restaurants, making it a popular destination for residents and visitors alike. The town is the home of Shepherd University and has a strong interest in education and current events. With its deep historical roots, the town played a significant role in American history, particularly during the American Revolution and the Civil War eras. Its proximity to Washington, D.C. -- just an hour's drive away -- gives residents the perfect balance of small-town life and easy access to the nation's capital. Shepherdstown is forward-thinking, embracing responsible growth and new opportunities while preserving its unique character.

This 2025 Comprehensive Plan ("Plan" or "2025 Plan") serves as a roadmap for the Town, providing a clear direction for the town's future and a reasonable number of goals and actionable strategies for achieving those goals. The Plan is particularly important in balancing Shepherdstown's desire to preserve its historical character and cultural vibrancy with opportunities for thoughtful development. Based on resident and community input and guided by state requirements, the Plan serves as a blueprint for shaping the town's future while honoring its unique identity.

## **Vision for Shepherdstown**

The 2025 Plan is centered on a core vision statement that articulates what the town is now and what it strives to achieve between now and 2035. The vision statement was developed by the Planning Commission with input provided by residents of the greater Shepherdstown area.

### **Vision Statement**

Shepherdstown will be the cultural hub of the WV Eastern Panhandle while continuing to cherish our historic treasures, natural beauty, and small-town riverside charm.

### **Goals**

The following goals form the framework for achieving the Town's vision over the coming decade.

1. Promote Shepherdstown's economic prosperity and cultural vibrancy. (EC)
2. Preserve, protect, restore, and complement Shepherdstown's historic attributes. (H)
3. Conserve natural resources and preserve green spaces using orderly and cohesive planning and zoning while supporting growth and development in the greater Shepherdstown area. (LU)
4. Administer a range of high quality and affordable services for residents, businesses, and visitors. (PS)

Specific implementation strategies envisioned for each goal are listed and described below.

### **Plan Implementation**

Successfully implementing this Plan will require dedicated action and oversight by the Town governing body, that is, the Mayor and Town Council. As such, the Mayor and Town Council will be responsible for ensuring that the 2025 Plan's vision statement, goals, and implementation strategies are pursued diligently, with ongoing evaluation and adjustments over the coming decade to meet the Town's evolving needs and priorities.

The Mayor and Town Council will integrate the Plan's vision, goals and implementation strategies into the town's Annual Operating and Capital Improvement budgets.

In addition, the Mayor and Town Council will produce semi-annual reports that will keep residents informed of the decisions made and actions taken to implement the 2025 Plan. Town leadership will also convene public meetings to highlight key learnings and results and obtain resident input on any new strategies and funding allocations related to the Plan's goals.

DRAFT

## **Community Overview**

The Town of Shepherdstown had an estimated population of approximately 1,539 residents in 2024, which is unchanged from the population reported in the 2020 census.

The ethnicity of residents is estimated to be approximately 73% White, 25% Black, and 2% Hispanic and Other. More than 65% of the population are within the age category 18-24 years (which reflects the impact of Shepherd University students on the town's demographics). About 5% of residents are under 18, and about 20% are between 25-64. Notably, the cohort of Shepherdstown residents ages 65+ is estimated to have increased by nearly 5 percentage points between 2015 and 2023. That cohort comprises about 12% of the town's total population.

With an estimated median age of only 22.3 years, Shepherdstown is among the State of West Virginia's "youngest" towns. The median age data point is rooted in the reality that a sizable portion of Town residents are students attending Shepherd University; other college towns in the State, such as Morgantown, also have low median ages. The young median age of the Town residents is also notable considering the fact that the median age is much lower than that of Jefferson County residents (a median of 41.7 years) and of the State of West Virginia overall (a median of 42.9 years).

The average household income is estimated to be \$92,571 and the town's poverty rate is estimated at slightly less than 7%. The income of the residents of the dormitories is not included.

The town includes an estimated 349 households, with an average of 2 residents per household. Approximately 60% of residents own their homes and 40% rent their residences.

While the town population has remained steady, Jefferson County, which surrounds Shepherdstown, experienced significant population growth in recent years. The County's population grew from approximately 53,000 in 2010 to approximately 60,000 in 2024.

### **Availability and Affordability of Housing in Shepherdstown**

The Town contains approximately 450 - 500 housing units including single family homes, rowhouses, duplexes, and apartments and dormitories within multi-unit buildings. The number of in-town units has decreased in the past three to five years, while the overall cost of in-town housing has increased significantly.

It is estimated that the number of all types of in-town housing units declined from 2015 to 2023. Over that period, the portion of housing units that were stand-alone single-family or townhomes/row houses increased by 20 percentage points (from 52.7 percent to 72 .9 percent of all units). Conversely, the portion of apartments decreased by 18 percentage points (from 44.2 percent of all units in 2015 to only 26 percent in 2023).



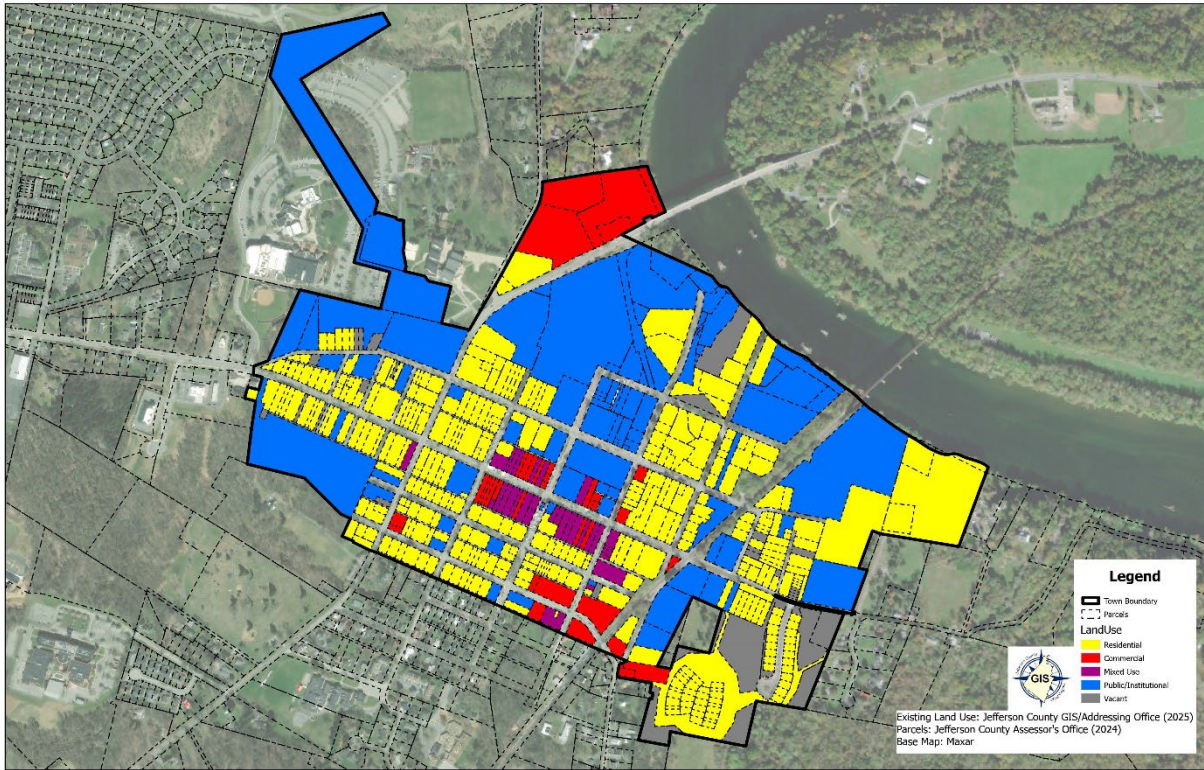
The cost of housing in Shepherdstown has increased for owners and renters alike over the past years. The availability of affordable housing is limited. It is estimated that the median in-town home sales price increased a full 47% between 2015 and 2023 – the average sale price was \$323,300 in 2015 and \$474,500 in 2023. Similarly, the gross cost of in-town rental units increased by 35% from 2015 when the median rental cost was \$854 per month to 2023 when the median rental cost was \$1,152. It is notable that while housing prices in Shepherdstown remain high relative to nearby areas, they are reasonable when compared to other towns in the region including those in Virginia and nearby Maryland.

### **Shepherdstown Land Profile**

The Town of Shepherdstown is about 230 acres (0.4 square miles).

The uses of parcels located within Shepherdstown have been unchanged from 2014 to 2025, except for land that was annexed over that time.

- Residential parcels are mostly single-family units, with a few multi-family developments. These parcels include about 36% (79 acres) of land within the Town boundaries. The average size of single-family housing lots is 0.23 acres. The residential lots are found throughout Town but are primarily clustered within walking distance to German Street.
- Land used for public and institutional purposes makes up about 39% (90 acres) of all real estate in the town. This category is located throughout the town with much of it in the middle area.
- Land used for mixed commercial / residential purposes comprises about 3% (5 acres) of land within town, with many of these parcels located in the downtown area.
- Land that is used for purely commercial purposes comprises 9% (19 acres) of all parcels within the town boundaries. These parcels are in the south-central section of town near the railroad lines and in the north central area on North Duke Street adjacent to Shepherd University.
- Vacant land accounts for about 10% (22.2 acres) of parcels within the town.



**Figure 1: This map shows Shepherdstown's current land use.**

Source: <https://www.shepherdstown.gov/media/Comp%20Plan%20Files/ShepherdstownLandUseMap2025.pdf>

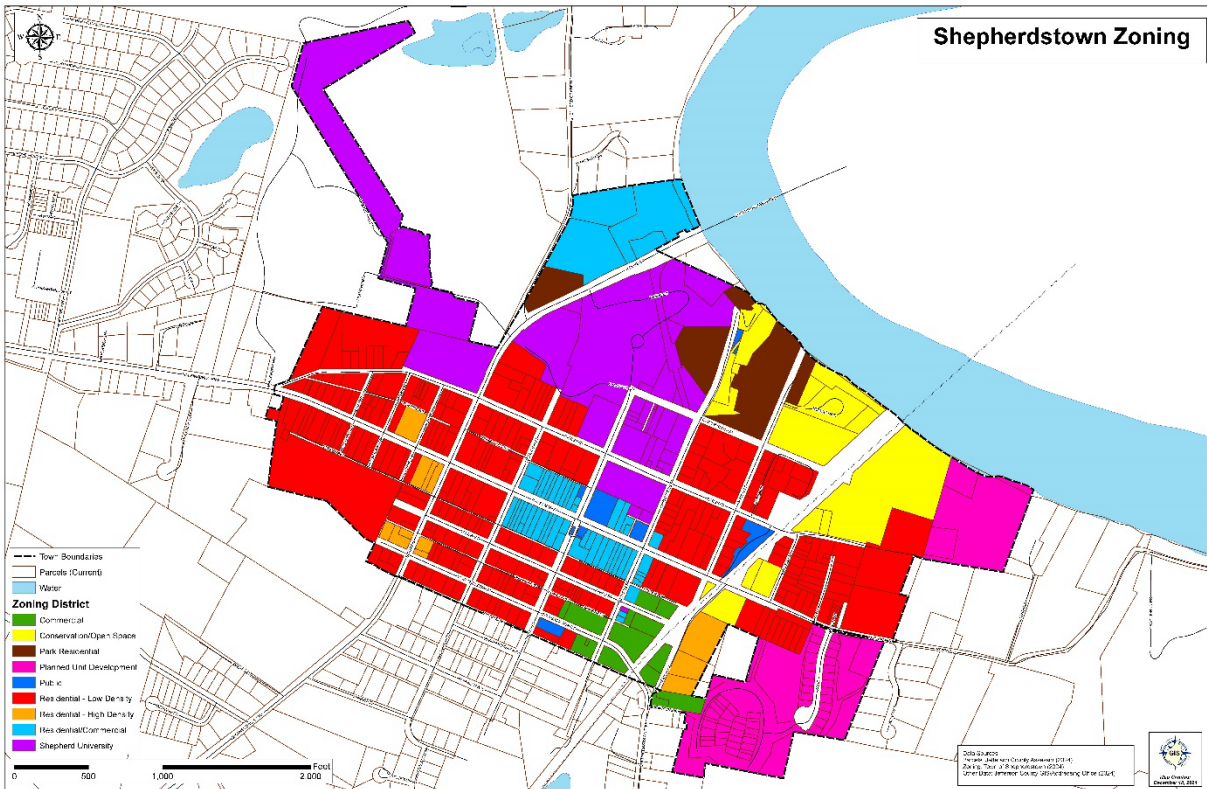
### **Land Use Zoning within Shepherdstown**

Shepherdstown's zoning categories have also remained unchanged over the past decade, except for the addition of the Planned Unit Development zoning category which was first established in 2007. Shepherd Village and Sage Place were the first two neighborhoods developed under the PUD beginning in 2016. See the Town's seven zoning categories listed in Table 1 and on the map below.

Notably, much of the property in Town, including the publicly owned parcels such as Shepherd University campus, is exempt from Town zoning.

**Table 1 – Land Use Zoning within Shepherdstown**

Land Use Zoning Category	Description	Acres	Percent of Total Land in Shepherdstown
R-1: Low Density Residential District	This zoning is primarily meant for single family residential neighborhoods.	98.2	44%
R-2: Medium Density Residential District	This zoning provides “an attractive, pleasant living environment at a sufficient density to maintain a high standard of physical maintenance and the optimum utilization of land appropriate for residential use.”	5.2	2%
R-3: Residential Commercial District	This category encompasses the central business uses that are core to Shepherdstown. It complements and is meant to preserve the historic setting of the town.	7.1	3%
C: Commercial District	This category provides a heavy commercial center for the town. Stores and facilities are grouped, and attention is given to pedestrian and vehicular circulation and includes off-street parking and loading.	14.2	6%
P-R: Park-Residential District	This category includes single family dwellings on large lots. It is also used to provide a transition to the Conservation Open Space District.	12.1	5%
COS: Conservation Open Space District	This category is for permanent open space, to preserve natural beauty, protect natural resources, prevent erosion, and safeguard the health of the population by limiting development on slopes, flood plains, and other areas.	20.7	9%
PUD: Planned Unit Development	This is a category in which developers are given greater flexibility to meet overall design, density, and land use goals, including environmental sustainability goals, without following more conventional zoning requirements.	27.3	9%
PUB: Public	This is town-owned property.	2.4	1%
SUB: Shepherd University	This is property owned by Shepherd University	44.2	20%

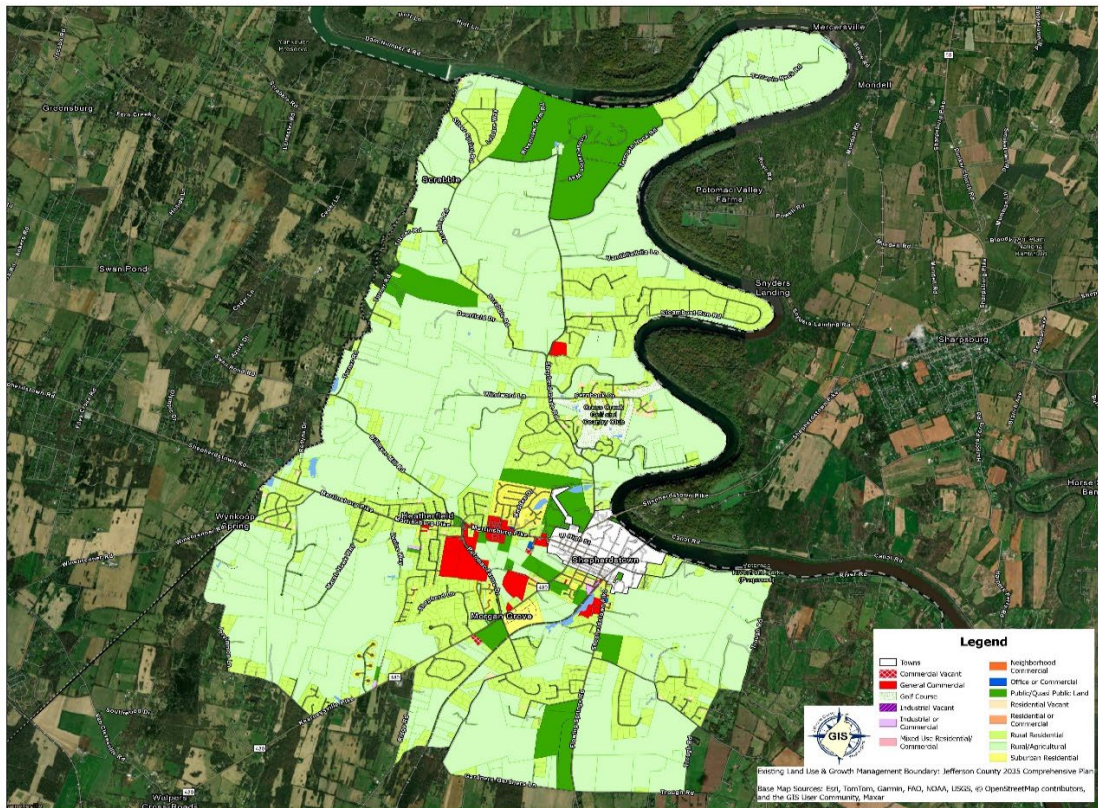


**Figure 2:** This map shows Shepherdstown's current zoning.

Source: [https://www.shepherdstown.gov/media/Comp%20Plan%20Files/2024\\_Zoning%20Map.pdf](https://www.shepherdstown.gov/media/Comp%20Plan%20Files/2024_Zoning%20Map.pdf)

### Shepherdstown Growth Management Boundary Area

The Shepherdstown “Growth Management Boundary” (GMB) refers to a planning designation applicable to 11,524 acres of mostly rural land that surrounds the Town. The Town requested that the land be designated under the authority of Chapter 8, Article 6, Section 4a of West Virginia State Code, and the Jefferson County Commission officially approved the GMB designation in April 2014.



**Figure 3: This map depicts the geographic extent of Shepherdstown’s adopted Growth Management Boundary that was agreed to and approved by Jefferson County in April 2014.**

Source: [https://www.shepherdstown.gov/media/Comp%20Plan%20Files/Shepherdstown%20ELU%20Draft%2017x22%20\(002\).pdf](https://www.shepherdstown.gov/media/Comp%20Plan%20Files/Shepherdstown%20ELU%20Draft%2017x22%20(002).pdf)

The Town cited three goals for creating the GMB:

- 1) To provide a manageable area for the future growth of the Town within the framework of existing infrastructure necessary for the transition from rural to urban land use.

- 2) To preserve and maintain agricultural and forested areas of importance for Town planning and development; and
- 3) To facilitate County objectives for coordination with Town planning.

Furthermore, as stated by the Town’s application for the GMB designation, “The Corporation of Shepherdstown needs to create a GMB to manage urbanization in a fashion complementary to the character of the town.... This GMB will establish an area of balance between growth and development and the need to preserve open space and critical environmental and natural resources.”

Now, in 2025, the Town of Shepherdstown continues to aspire to use applicable planning and land management tools and strategies to ensure that the future development within the GMB area will balance the need for economic growth with the preservation of the area’s beautiful rural landscapes, pristine streams and wetlands, and magnificent natural features. Development within the GMB should also be in keeping with the Town’s historic character and intrinsic charm.

Importantly, West Virginia State Code at Chapter 8, Article 6, Section 4a also established new, streamlined, annexation procedures applicable only to municipalities such as Shepherdstown that have designated boundary areas.

Since the designation of the Shepherdstown GMB area, Jefferson County has approved development within the GMB area including housing and commercial developments along gateway corridors immediately outside town and along Highway 45, Highway 480, and Highway 230, without meaningful input from Shepherdstown.

## Major Developments Since Adoption of the Shepherdstown 2014 Comprehensive Plan

Several notable development-related changes have occurred in the greater Shepherdstown area since the adoption of the Shepherdstown 2014 Comprehensive Plan.

### 2016

- The Maddex Farm residential development, located outside of town but adjacent to the western town boundary, was expanded.

### 2018

- The Shepherd Village subdivision was developed. This development is the town's first "Planned Unit Development." Shepherd Village is a 55+<sup>1</sup> co-housing development comprising 30 duplex and triplex units located on the eastern edge of the town.
- The Town annexed the following three properties:
  - Shepherd University property comprises a resident student dormitory (one parcel containing 2.21 acres).
  - The Bavarian Inn Resort property on the west end of town overlooking the Potomac River (three parcels containing 9.98 acres).
  - The "Kalathas" property, undeveloped property on the east edge of town overlooking the Potomac River (three contiguous and adjacent parcels totaling 8.3 acres).

### 2019

- The Sage Place Commons subdivision was developed. This is a 55+ community comprising 20 housing units within 10 duplex buildings located adjacent to the Shepherd Village subdivision on the eastern edge of the town.
- The Town received donated land to expand the "Princess Street Boat Launch" Riverfront Park.

### 2020

- The COVID-19 pandemic began and had a significant negative impact on the quality of life of residents and on the local economy for more than 3 years.

---

<sup>1</sup> Under the Fair Housing Act, at least 80% of the units in a 55+ development must house a least one resident who is 55 years of age or older.

- The town received \$250,000 in Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security Act program to cover COVID-19 related expenses including personal protective equipment, cleaning supplies, and employee overtime due to the pandemic.
- The town received \$800,000 under the American Rescue Plan Act. The Town chose to use the full amount received to make extensive upgrades to the town's water and wastewater plants which serve greater Shepherdstown.
- Shepherdstown Shares was established by residents of Greater Shepherdstown to assist residents and business establishments during the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### 2021

- The Bavarian Inn Resort expanded its core restaurant to include the new Bavarian Brothers Brew Pub.
- Two hotels, the Quality Inn and the Clarion Hotel, are closed. These establishments were immediately outside of Town.
- Several new commercial developments were constructed immediately outside of Town. The developments are located along Highway 45 (Martinsburg Pike) gateway connector. They include the WVU Medicine East Medical Center, two major gas stations with convenience stores, and other commercial establishments.

#### 2022

- The Shepherdstown Public Library closed its downtown location in the historic Shepherdstown Market House and relocated to a new facility outside of Town.

#### 2023

- The Jefferson County School Board announced plans to build a new elementary approximately 2 miles outside of Shepherdstown but within the GMB. The elementary school is scheduled to open in fall 2025.
- The historic Shepherdstown Opera House, located in downtown Shepherdstown, was restored, and reopened as a performing arts and entertainment venue.
- The historic Christ Reformed United Church disbanded and was closed. The church donated the historic church building and other property located on East German Street to the Contemporary American Theater Festival (CATF). The festival organization plans to convert the buildings into space for administrative offices and a performance venue.
- Shepherdstown was bequeathed about 4 acres near the intersection of Mill Street and Highway 230 to be converted into a town park. The property was donated by the Estate of Jay Hurley.



- The Town Run Watershed group was established, and Shepherdstown was designated as a “Bee City” by Bee City USA.

#### 2024

- Shepherdstown expanded its water service provision to the Mecklenburg Heights neighborhood in the GMB. It also made improvements to services, including fire hydrant services, to homes on North Mill Street within town with funding from a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers grant.
- The Town worked with the State to develop a sidewalk project along Highway 480 outside of town. The sidewalk will connect the Shepherdstown Middle School property with Morgan Grove Park. The Town received a Congressionally Directed Spending grant which it transferred to the State Department of Transportation for the project. The State plans to start construction of the sidewalk in mid-2025.
- The Town awarded up to \$6,000 for Shepherd University Professor Sonya Evanisko to direct students in creating a significant public mural on the Alma Bea Restaurant building at the Washington Street entrance to Town.
- The Town completed its \$250,000 renovation of its historic Market House. It awarded a 10-year lease (requiring payment of \$1 per year in rent) to the Jefferson County Convention and Visitors Bureau which has agreed to house a visitor center with space for community events in downtown Shepherdstown.

## **Process for Developing the 2025 Plan**

The Shepherdstown Planning Commission, along with dozens of leaders and Shepherdstown residents as well as residents of the greater Shepherdstown area, developed this 2025 Comprehensive Plan over a 20-month period from mid-2023 through early 2025.

The Planning Commission has made a concerted effort to ensure that the 2025 plan is clear and will serve as a helpful guide for community planning and decision making. This document presents a renewed Vision Statement and articulates overarching goals that, together, provide a helpful framework and context for the Plan's strategies and the direction for the town's future.

The 2025 Plan intentionally builds upon many components of the 2014 Comprehensive Plan. This Plan highlights and puts renewed emphasis on many strategies originally presented in the 2014 plan. It also includes many strategies to address an array of important current issues facing the town and that align with the 2025 Plan Vision and Goals.

A significant component of the town's approach for developing this 2025 Plan involved reviewing and identifying 2014 plan strategies that remain relevant considering the town's current needs and vision for the future. Much of the review was managed by the "Comprehensive Plan Review Steering Committee" (CRC) which was appointed by the former Town Council in 2023. The CRC later implemented a thorough 16-month review involving over 1,100 person hours. It scrutinized each of the 2014 Plan's elements to parse those that remained relevant in 2025, to identify relative priorities going forward, and to rework any 2014 strategies that needed updating. Throughout this process, the CRC interviewed dozens of Town leaders, residents, and subject matter experts, and reviewed public records to develop a holistic understanding of the situation with each strategy.

Starting in July 2024, the Planning Commission managed its independent review of the 2014 plan strategies, including a review of CRC notes and recommendations, to identify areas of the 2014 plan that remained relevant and should be considered among the highest priorities in the 2025 plan.

The Planning Commission hosted a public input session at the War Memorial Building in Fall 2024 to gather input from residents on their ideas, opinions, and priorities for the Town's future. More than 75 people attended. The session featured the launch of an on-line resident survey which remained open to the public over a one-week period and resulted in upwards of 375 responses. Finally, the Planning Commission also crafted an overarching Vision Statement for the 2025 Comprehensive Plan and four key underlying goals that together will serve as a framework for town residents and leaders in implementing the plan in the coming years. The Planning Commission used results of the public input session and the survey when crafting the vision and goals and in validating the prioritization of elements to be presented in the 2025 plan.

## 2025 Comprehensive Plan Goals and Implementation Strategies

The following pages provide more information on each of the four goals and associated strategies.

### GOAL 1 – Promote Economic Prosperity & Cultural Vibrancy (EC)

In recent years, the Town economy has been driven primarily by tourism, education, and outdoor recreation. Importantly, the Town recognizes the value of arts and cultural resources and understands the relationship of a sustainable and successful arts and cultural atmosphere to the overall quality of life and vibrancy those resources bring to the community from an economic and social perspective.

#### Goal 1 Implementation Strategies

##### **Subcategory 1A: Enhance Marketing Efforts to Attract Residents and Tourists and Support Local Businesses**

**EC1: Market Shepherdstown as a Destination and Highlight its Local Businesses** – Increase collaborations among the Town government, local businesses, and civic groups to market Shepherdstown and its unique offerings. Sponsor artistic, cultural, and live music events to attract shoppers and visitors. Engage with the Jefferson County Convention & Visitor’s Bureau, area festival and event sponsors, and other stakeholders to amplify these efforts.

**EC2: Highlight Shepherdstown as a Tourist and Outdoor Recreation Destination** - Develop a tourist marketing plan for the town with input from all sectors of the Shepherdstown community that examines existing tourism related sites, historic resources, outdoor recreation activities, and businesses in the area, with accompanying recommendations and materials for a marketing and promotions package for Shepherdstown.

**EC3: Coordinate Promotion of the C&O Canal Towpath Trail** - Continue to work with the National Park Service and the Canal Towns Partnership to promote Shepherdstown to hikers and bicyclists traveling on the C&O Canal Towpath trail.

**EC4: Increase the Town Social Media Presence** - Develop and implement a robust social media presence to increase Shepherdstown's visibility and engagement, including such social media platforms as Facebook and Instagram.

## **Subcategory 1B: Provide Direct Support to New and Existing Businesses in Shepherdstown**

**EC5: Institute Mentoring and Entrepreneurship Programming for Local Businesses** - Develop business mentoring and entrepreneurship programming to assist local businesses and encourage local entrepreneurs to start-up new businesses in town. Encourage local businesses to host Shepherd University students as interns with the potential for future full-time employment.

**EC6: Develop and Implement a Long-Term Action Plan to Expand and Promote Shepherdstown's Arts and Culture** - Develop a multi-year action plan to assist with the development, promotion, and expansion of artistic and cultural businesses and events in Shepherdstown.

## **Subcategory 1C: Enact Town Policies in Support of Downtown Businesses**

**EC7: Expand Parking Capacity** - Assess options to expand the availability of parking downtown including such strategies as converting existing vacant lots into parking areas, using pocket-parking, developing a multi-level parking structure, and using angled parking.

**EC8: Develop a Town-wide Comprehensive Parking Strategy** - Work with local businesses and organizations to develop a comprehensive parking strategy that includes such features as online mapping and directions for parking, a parking pass program for visitors, potential visitor-friendly policies for parking enforcement, and appropriate signage that identifies destinations and parking areas in Town.

**EC9: Strengthen Partnerships between the Town and Shepherd University** - Create greater constructive collaboration between the Town and Shepherd University, particularly with the goal of strengthening and growing the creative arts community in Shepherdstown.

**EC10: Study Availability of Local Lodging** - Analyze the availability of lodging, including short-term / vacation rentals, in the greater Shepherdstown area to identify gaps in the availability of rooms at the relevant market price points and amenity levels to accommodate the needs of a wide range of tourists.

**EC11: Promote the Use of Financial Incentives for the Use or Redevelopment of Vacant and Underutilized Commercial Structures** - Use such strategies as rent subsidies, federal tax credits, and other means to encourage the use of existing vacant or underutilized commercial structures for new or expanding businesses.

## **Subcategory 1D: Support Development of Affordable Housing in Town**

**EC12: Incentivize Affordable Housing Development** - Explore strategies that include revising the Town's zoning ordinances to enable density bonuses for housing developments in town and in the GMB that set aside a minimum threshold of dwelling units to be made available at price points that are affordable for working families and the creative community.

**EC13: Take Action to Allow Accessory Housing, Including Accessory Dwelling Lots** - Authorize property owners to develop accessory housing units, including Accessory Dwelling Units, on lots in residential areas in town to increase affordable housing and diversify housing options. Update Town zoning ordinances to establish clear standards for size, design, and placement while preserving neighborhood character. Streamline permitting and authorize financial and other types of incentives to encourage the development of accessory dwelling units. Permitting accessory dwellings in established single family residential neighborhoods can provide a wide range of benefits to the community.

**EC14: Repurpose under used sites, such as vacant buildings or lots, for affordable housing to maximize land use and revitalize neglected areas** - Update the town's zoning ordinances and streamline town development permitting to enable and encourage adaptive reuse projects. Partner with developers and nonprofits to convert underused and vacant buildings and lots into mixed-use or residential uses including affordable housing units. Leverage existing infrastructure to reduce costs and enhance community connectivity.

## **GOAL 2 – Preserve, Protect, Restore, and Complement Historic Attributes (H)**

As West Virginia’s oldest town, the preservation of the Town’s historic architectural resources and landmarks has been one of the town’s most important goals for many years. Nearly the entire town and some nearby areas are designated as a local historic district and listed as a National Register Historic District. The community has worked to preserve the Town’s architectural heritage by renovating and adaptively reusing many historical structures. As the Town looks to the future, historic preservation remains a key element of the quality of life that the residents of Shepherdstown hold in high regard.

### **Goal 2 Implementation Strategies**

#### **Subcategory 2A: Sponsor and Promote Programs to Assist Property Owners in Preserving Shepherdstown’s Historic Properties**

**H1: Support Historic Preservation** - Consider providing financing, such as a revolving loan fund or other mechanism, to assist residents in preserving and restoring historic properties, including commercial structures, located in the Shepherdstown Historic District, or named in the National Register of Historic Places. Also promote the use of federal and state tax credits for restoring these structures.

**H2: Encourage the Reuse of Underutilized Historic Properties** – Explore opportunities for assisting owners of underutilized historic properties located in town and in the greater Shepherdstown area to transform these properties into economic opportunities, thoughtfully incorporating themes of culture, nature, or history where appropriate.

**H3: Use Illustrated Architectural and Site Development Standards** in Shepherdstown - Develop and adopt illustrated architectural and site development standards that are consistent with the Town’s vision for the aesthetic and physical characteristics of new development.

#### **Subcategory 2B: Educate Residents and Property Owners about Historic Preservation**

**H4: Produce Educational Materials, Resources, and Workshops on Historic Preservation** - Develop a comprehensive public outreach program, materials, and resources for owners of historic properties to explain the design guidelines, development review process, and maintenance techniques, holding workshops to provide this information on a regular and targeted basis.

**Subcategory 2C: Enact New Town Policies to Better Protect Shepherdstown’s Historic Properties**

**H5: Implement Capital Improvement Planning and a Project Review Policy** - Adopt a policy that requires the Town to assess the impact of its construction projects and capital investments on historic properties.

**H6: Demolition by Neglect Ordinance** – Adopt a “demolition by neglect” ordinance to apply to contributing structures in the historic district to prevent property owners from allowing contributing structures to fall into disrepair. The ordinance should require the Town to monitor historic buildings in the historic district to take note of structure issues and material deterioration and inform the property owners of any issues.

DRAFT

### **GOAL 3 – Conserve Natural Resources and Preserve Green Spaces while Supporting Growth and Development in the Greater Shepherdstown Area (LU)**

Shepherdstown government must be well equipped to guide and manage development in Town and in the GMB area in a manner that is compatible with Shepherdstown’s unique character, respects the environment, and builds upon the Town’s identity. The community recognizes and accepts that growth and change will continue to occur. The community has expressed a desire for development in Town and the GMB area to occur in a manner that respects the history, identity, and soul of Shepherdstown.

The significant natural and environmental resources in the GMB that comprises the greater Shepherdstown area are closely guarded by the community. Town residents embrace environmental assets for their intrinsic values, the contributions they make to residents’ quality of life, and for their ability to draw visitors to enjoy the region’s natural beauty. The community understands that the forests, farm fields, waterways, and the flora and fauna all around the Town are irreplaceable, must be protected, and conserved.

Shepherdstown should pursue annexation of land within the GMB area, and other strategies, as appropriate, to ensure a balanced approach to development that honors the preservation of open space and natural resources. Shepherdstown should protect the rural character of the town and surrounding areas, including the gateway transportation corridors leading into Town. Annexation can provide significant opportunities for the Town to shape the pathways into Town, maintain appropriate uses of nearby parcels, and increase Town revenue if judiciously pursued.

#### **Goal 3 Implementation Strategies**

##### **Subcategory 3A: Proactively Advocate for Appropriate Development in Areas Surrounding Shepherdstown**

**LU1: Support Greenway Corridors on Roads leading to Town** - Develop a greenway corridor plan in coordination with Jefferson County. Use the Town ordinances to require the dedication of designated greenway corridors in conjunction with new development, and act to secure easements or donations of land for the preservation of greenway corridors.

**LU2: Promote the Use of Conservation Subdivision Design Techniques** - Encourage the use of techniques typically used in conservation subdivisions (also known as cluster developments) which minimize individual lot size and protect open space in new residential developments.



**LU3: Prohibit Mass Grading and Clear-Cutting** - Prohibit mass grading and clear cutting in areas within residential developments. Encourage Jefferson County to adopt policies to regulate these activities as well.

**LU4: Oppose Environmentally Damaging Industrial Development** - Oppose the construction or development of any heavy industrial or intense resource extraction ventures in the area. Ensure that the Town's land use ordinances prohibit uses which negatively impact environmental resources.

**LU5: Preserve Oversized Stream and Wetland Buffers** - Implement buffer regulations along perennial streams and around wetland features to minimize the impact of development on these natural features. Establish incentives to preserve wetlands.

**LU6: Strengthen and Improve West Virginia Annexation Laws** – Advocate to strengthen and modernize State annexation laws in favor of sound and rational municipal growth strategies.

**LU7: Enact Zoning that Aligns with Shepherdstown Growth Plans throughout the GMB** - For all parcels within the GMB, work with Jefferson County to enact future land use and zoning designations that align with the Town's growth plans.

**LU8: Create a Land Conservation Plan** - Work with the Land Trust for the Eastern Panhandle, the Conservation Fund, and the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board to develop and implement a local land resources conservation plan that identifies priority areas and parcels located outside of Shepherdstown for permanent protection, with a focus on working farms and forests, land with prime agricultural soils, and undeveloped properties in important watershed areas.

**LU9: Preserve Historically Significant Landscapes** - Work with stakeholders to develop and support a plan to preserve parcels outside of Town where the Battle of Shepherdstown occurred as permanently protected park land.

**LU10: Preserve Farmland** - Encourage and work with local agricultural producers to donate farmland conservation easements on their working farms with the goal of guaranteeing continued use of the farms for this vital purpose.

**LU11: Protect Landscapes Along the Potomac River** - Work with Jefferson County, Washington County, Maryland, and local conservation organizations to protect the scenic beauty and environmental quality of the lands along the Potomac River through the acquisition of scenic easements and conservation easements on lands that, if developed, could significantly alter the landscape of the river through the area.

**LU12: Protect Scenic Byways** - Work with West Virginia Department of Transportation, Hagerstown/Eastern Panhandle Metropolitan Planning Organization, and Jefferson County to establish and protect Scenic Byways along major roads in rural areas leading to town.

### **Subcategory 3B: Use Annexation to Expand Shepherdstown's Boundaries**

**LU13: Strategic Annexation Plan** – Create a Shepherdstown strategic annexation plan that identifies developed commercial and residential areas that are adjacent or near the town limits that may benefit from annexation into Shepherdstown. The plan should include analyses of the costs and benefits of annexation for each identified area, timelines for the initiation of the annexation process for each area, the most appropriate annexation method for each area, and plans for the provision of municipal services to newly annexed areas, including methods of financing such services. Following the adoption of the plan, the Town should immediately begin implementing the plan and revise as necessary to reflect changing circumstances over the life of the plan.

**LU14: Update Town Annexation Policies** - Review the Town Annexation Policy to ensure that it provides maximum flexibility in the town's review and decision-making concerning proposed annexation of GMB parcels.

### **Subcategory 3C: Enact Shepherdstown Ordinances in Anticipation of Annexations by Shepherdstown**

**LU15: Establish Conservation Subdivision Regulations** - Amend the Town's development ordinance to require the use of "conservation subdivisions" (also known as cluster developments with significant amounts of open space) in the rural fringe of the community to promote the preservation of working farms, forests, and other significant natural resources, while fostering development that is integrated with the context of the landscape in which it is situated.

**LU16: Revise Development Ordinances to Accommodate New Growth** – Review the Town's ordinances to ensure they will be sufficient to address growth in the area outside of the town's traditional core area.

**LU17: Encourage Traditional Development Patterns** – Require that new residential subdivisions located near the town's core area are platted with a physical layout that is consistent with the Town's neighborhood patterns, including street layouts and widths, lot configurations, and other similar characteristics.

**LU18: Identify Growth and Annexation Impacts on Public Services** - Evaluate proposed annexations and proposals for residential and commercial developments to ensure that the level of services provided to current town residents will not be negatively impacted by the development or annexation. Where negative impacts are identified, require mitigation, or create service expansion plans and identify funding to maintain current service levels.

### **Subcategory 3D: Improve Shepherdstown's Existing Zoning and Land Use Ordinances**

**LU19: Require an Environmental Review as part of the Town's Review of Proposed Developments** - Require property developers to submit an existing conditions survey as part of their development proposals to identify critical natural features. Work with developers to protect these critical areas.

**LU20: Evaluate Building Code Regulations** – Assess the potential for adoption the West Virginia State Building Code (or other building codes) and, if needed, partner with Jefferson County to provide administration and enforcement of a building code to ensure that construction complies with appropriate life, safety, and energy efficiency standards.

**LU21: Assess Review Processes for New Development** - Examine Town policies and procedures for its review of proposed developments to ensure that no unnecessary obstacles are present that may discourage investment in the community and to ensure an adequate level of technical review and public input. Examples of this type of policy to be reviewed include submittal and review schedules; development review and permitting fees; the level of detail required for preliminary or conceptual development plans; and the number of hearings required for development approval and the types of approvals that may be granted administratively.

**LU22: Expand the Town's Adequate Public Facilities Ordinances** - Amend the Town's Adequate Public Facilities ordinance to require the Town to consider the future availability of fundamental public services (such as fire and police service, sanitation, street maintenance and parks), in its review of development proposals, to ensure that adequate services will be available and affordable for future residents.

**LU23: Implement the Tree Canopy Plan in Town** - Implement the recommendations of the Jefferson County Urban Tree Canopy Plan in town and in the GMB.

## **GOAL 4 – Administer a Range of High Quality and Affordable Services for Residents, Businesses, and Visitors (PS)**

Shepherdstown residents enjoy many Town services that contribute to the quality of life and improve the overall livability of the community. To maintain trust in local government and ensure Shepherdstown remains an appealing place to live, visit, and conduct business, it is essential that the Town government provide efficient and effective services that align with community needs and expectations.

The parks and outdoor recreation resources found in Town and throughout the greater Shepherdstown area have a significant role in enhancing the quality of life for residents and for visitors who come to take advantage of the abundant opportunities that exist in the area. The variety of local parks and recreation resources is extensive given the community's size. The community should continue to leverage these assets to maintain and expand the parks and recreational activities available to residents and visitors.

Shepherdstown residents would like to maintain the features of the Town transportation network that give the community its unique character and create new transportation options that give residents true choice for moving about town, whether on foot, by bicycle, or by car. Residents envision that Shepherdstown will continue to be a highly walkable and accessible town. Many of the Town's aspirations for transportation put significant focus on ensuring that pedestrians and bicyclists can move easily in and around town and where automobiles are only one of several forms of transportation that need to be accommodated.

Moving forward, the town should take an integrated approach to evaluating its actions, whether in terms of development activity occurring in Town or how it provides services, to ensure it is on the path of sustainability and protecting the environment.

### **Goal 4 Implementation Strategies**

#### **Subcategory 4A: Public Safety Services**

**PS1: Establish Annual Fire Department Funding** - Shepherdstown should commit to providing annual financial contributions to the Shepherdstown Volunteer Fire Department for the provision of fire and EMS services to guarantee the long-term sustainability of the department, promote economic development, ensure public safety, and allow the department to develop long range plans for equipping, maintaining, and staffing fire protection and EMS services.

**PS2: Include the Fire Department in the Town's Development Review Process** - Include the Shepherdstown Volunteer Fire Department in Town development reviews to ensure that necessary considerations for the provision of fire protection are incorporated into development plans.

#### **Subcategory 4B: Capital Budgeting**

**PS3: Use Capital Budgeting for Town Facilities Management and Equipment Replacement Planning** – The Town should develop and use capital budgeting techniques. This approach will include implementing a plan to manage Town-owned property that addresses the long-term capital maintenance needs for town buildings and funds the improvements and maintenance activities in accordance with the plan. Also develop and implement a capital equipment replacement plan to ensure that equipment is replaced in keeping with equipment lifecycle guidelines and local needs.

#### **Subcategory 4C: Provision of Services**

**PS4: Partner with West Virginia and Jefferson County to Expand Access to Public Services**  
The Town should partner with the State of West Virginia and Jefferson County to expand the availability of county services, including county offices, in the local area. Making services available locally would be helpful for residents.

#### **Subcategory 4D: Water and Wastewater Services**

**PS5: Use Capital Improvement Planning for the Shepherdstown Water and Wastewater Services** - Develop and implement long-range capital improvement plans to guide strategic investments in the maintenance and growth of the public water supply and wastewater collection and treatment systems.

**PS6: Develop and regularly update the Shepherdstown Water and Wastewater Service Area Plans** – Regularly update the Town water and wastewater system plan that defines existing service areas and establishes future service areas in town and in the GMB area.

**PS7: Enhance Public Information and Outreach about the Town Water and Wastewater Services** – The Town should provide Shepherdstown Water and Wastewater Service customers with regularly scheduled and timely updates on the status of improvements to the water and wastewater systems, including promoting the environmental benefits of the town's wastewater treatment plant and the quality of the town's municipal water system.

#### **Subcategory 4E: Parks and Recreation Services**

**PS8: Develop a Parks and Recreation Master Plan** - Develop and implement a Town parks and recreation master plan to identify and address community needs for park facilities and recreational programs.

**PS9: Expand Access to Recreational Opportunities on Shepherd University Campus** - Explore opportunities to partner with Shepherd University to allow residents of Shepherdstown to access on-campus recreational facilities and programs.

**PS10: Build Connections Between Shepherdstown Parks on the River** – Provide direct pedestrian connections between Riverfront Park and the James Rumsey Monument.

**PS11: Establish Morgan’s Grove as a Public Park** – Consider working with the Jefferson County Parks and Recreation Commission, the Shepherdstown Community Club, and other local sports and community groups to permanently establish Morgan’s Grove as a public park.

**PS12: Develop Neighborhood Parks** - Work with Jefferson County and other stakeholders to identify and acquire strategically located properties in the greater Shepherdstown area for the development of parks and recreational amenities for active and passive recreation so that such facilities are located within 1/8 to 1/4 mile of each home in the greater Shepherdstown area.

**PS13: Improve Princess Street River Access.** - Develop and implement a plan to make better use of the Town Riverfront Park including the Potomac River access on Princess Street. The plan should address accessibility upgrades and dedicated funding for maintenance and upkeep.

**PS14: Refurbish and Use the Tobacco Warehouse Building** - Renovate and use the Tobacco Warehouse building for a needed resource such as a community-oriented paddle sports facility or other community needs.

**PS15: Support the Development of a Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan** - Work with the West Virginia Department of Transportation, appropriate agencies in the State of Maryland, regional planning entities, and local governments in the region to develop a regional bicycle and pedestrian plan.

**PS16: Establish and Improve Bicycle and Pedestrian Routes Between Parks and Neighborhoods** - Develop and implement a plan to connect all Shepherdstown area parks (in town and in surrounding areas) so that they are within convenient walking and bicycling distances from neighborhoods. Develop a signage system to identify the locations of parks and walking and biking routes to access them.

**PS17: Establish and Improve Bicycle and Pedestrian Routes from Shepherdstown and Area Parks, Schools, and Shopping** - Collaborate with West Virginia Department of Transportation

and Jefferson County to improve bicycle and pedestrian connections between the core areas of town, parks, schools, medical facilities, and shopping areas outside of town.

#### **Subcategory 4F: Transportation Services**

**PS18: Improve Pedestrian Safety in Town** - Identify opportunities to improve pedestrian safety in Town by using such methods as pedestrian warning signage and high visibility pedestrian crosswalks (i.e., pedestrian safety regarding sidewalks, crosswalks, alleys, traffic signage and so forth)

**PS19: Analyze Options for Rerouting of Highway Traffic Away from Shepherdstown's Core Area - Consider options for rerouting heavy truck traffic from Shepherdstown's historic core area to reduce congestion and improve safety.**

**PS20: Expand the Availability of Transportation Including Direct Public Transit Connections to the MARC Train** - Explore opportunities to expand the availability of public transportation to serve the greater Shepherdstown area.

**PS21: Expand Bus Routes** - Work with Eastern Panhandle Transit Authority or other transportation providers to establish direct bus connections between Shepherdstown and the Duffields MARC Train station.

#### **Subcategory 4G: Establish New Sustainable Services**

**PS22: Establish a Program for Harvesting Rainwater for Irrigation** - Develop and promote a rainwater harvesting program for residential and commercial properties.

**PS23: Generate Renewable Energy on Town Property** - Prepare a feasibility analysis for the installation of renewable energy collection facilities on town-owned property.

**PS24: Create Electric Vehicle Infrastructure** - Explore opportunities to install electric vehicle charging stations adjacent to public on-street parking spaces or in town owned parking lots. Encourage private property owners to do the same.

**PS25: Divert Food Waste from Landfills** – Collect food waste from both residential and commercial sources for composting so that the waste is diverted from the general solid waste stream.

## Appendix A -- State Requirements for Local Comprehensive Plans

Shepherdstown and other local governments across the State are required to develop new Comprehensive Plans (or update existing plans) every 10 years. State law requires comprehensive plans to address several mandatory components. The table below lists the 13 mandatory and 4 optional components and indicates the specific Shepherdstown 2025 Plan goal(s) where each is addressed.

Mandatory Components	Goal 1 – Promote Shepherdstown’s Economic Prosperity and Cultural Vibrancy	Goal 2 – Preserve Protect Restore and Complement Shepherdstown’s Historic Attributes	Goal 3 – Conserve Natural Resources and Preserve Green Spaces while Supporting Growth and Development in the Greater Shepherdstown Area	Goal 4 – Administer a range of High Quality and Affordable Services for Residents, Businesses, and Visitors
Land Use			X	
Housing	X			
Transportation				X
Infrastructure	X	X	X	X
Public Services				x
Rural		x	X	X
Recreation	X			
Economic Development	X	X	X	
Community Design	X	X	X	
Preferred Development Areas			X	
Renewal and/or Redevelopment	X	X	X	
Financing	X		X	X
Historic Preservation		X		
Optional Components				
History		X		
Environmental	X		X	X
Tourism	X	X	X	
Safety				X