

# Historically HIP Charles Town 2040 Comprehensive Plan

## Executive Summary

*February 2018*



# INTRODUCTION

*Historically HIP Charles Town 2040* is the City of Charles Town's new Comprehensive Plan developed under the authority of the West Virginia Code (§8A-3). The plan serves as the City's official policy guide for short- (0-4 years), mid- (5-10 years), and long-term (11-20 years) decision making pertaining to future land use, growth and development, and resource preservation within the City's existing political jurisdiction and its Urban Growth Boundary (UGB).

At the foundation of the Comprehensive Plan, Charles Town promotes a strategic Downtown First focus for all areas of economic and community development over the next 25-year horizon, recognizing the historical importance of the Downtown district. The Plan identifies opportunities to leverage Charles Town's historical urban fabric to improve livability and economic competitiveness for the City and UGB.



Photo courtesy of Michael Baker International

## About the Comprehensive Plan Process and Final Document

The creation of the Comprehensive Plan was directed by the City's Department of Community Development under the leadership of the City's Planner. To support the year-long planning effort, Charles Town also organized a Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) to guide the planning process and to provide local input during plan development. This committee met 7 times over a 12-month period, and was instrumental in identifying core issues affecting the Charles Town community. In addition, the CAC, in partnership with the City and consultant team, organized and facilitated several opportunities for community involvement to obtain public input and validation on the Comprehensive Plan.

The Comprehensive Plan features seven chapters that comprise the primary plan elements. These chapters are organized by topical focus area and outline Charles Town's 2040 goals and objectives for each.

In summary, these chapters include:

- Downtown Charles Town
- Growth and Land Use
- Vibrancy, Sustainability, and Livability
- Mobility, Accessibility, and Connectivity
- Image and Identity
- Quality Public Services
- Environmental Stewardship

*A comprehensive plan is "...a plan for physical development, including land use, adopted by a governing body, setting forth guidelines, goals, and objectives for all activities that affect growth and development in the governing body's jurisdiction."*

**West Virginia Code, §8A-3**



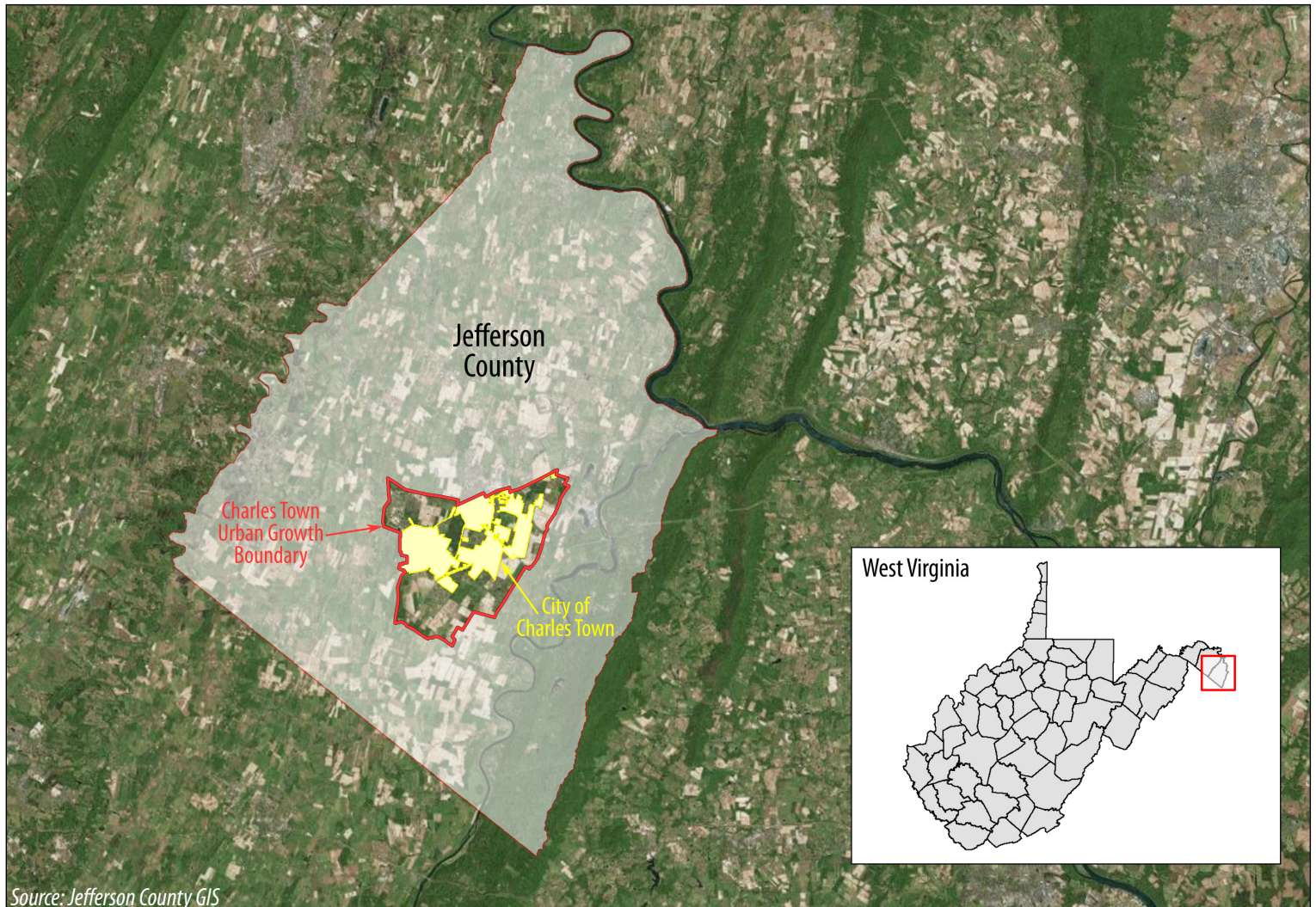
Photo courtesy of Michael Baker International



# COMMUNITY PROFILE

The City of Charles Town is home to approximately 5,723 residents and boasts a rich history with prominent historical sites and cultural assets. The City is located in Jefferson County, part of the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia, and is in close proximity to the Baltimore and Washington, DC metropolitan areas. With a cost of living about 30% lower than similar metropolitan areas, Charles Town is an attractive home for residents commuting to northern Virginia and Maryland for work. A summary of key demographic and socioeconomic trends is presented below.

## Population 2015



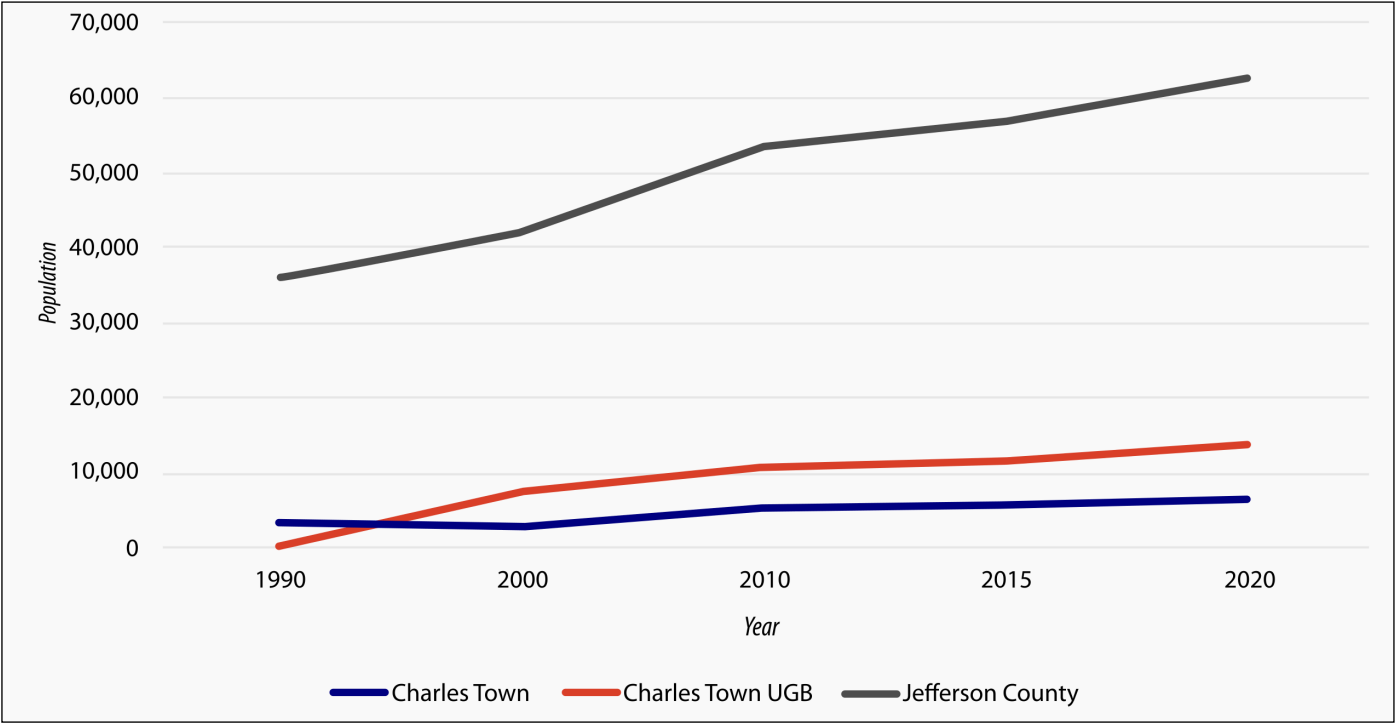
	City of Charles Town		UGB		Jefferson County	
	2015	2020	2015	2020	2015	2020
Population:	5,723	6,512	11,584	13,633	56,914	62,674
Total Households:	2,186	2,459	4,455	5,237	21,278	23,520
Median Age:	40.4	40.2	39.6	39.6	39.9	40.4
Median Household Income:	\$55,130	\$61,774	\$62,543	\$70,931	\$63,928	\$71,580
Percent Owner-Occupied Housing:	52.0%	51.7%	61.7%	60.9%	67.0%	64.9%

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

# Community Profile

## Population Growth

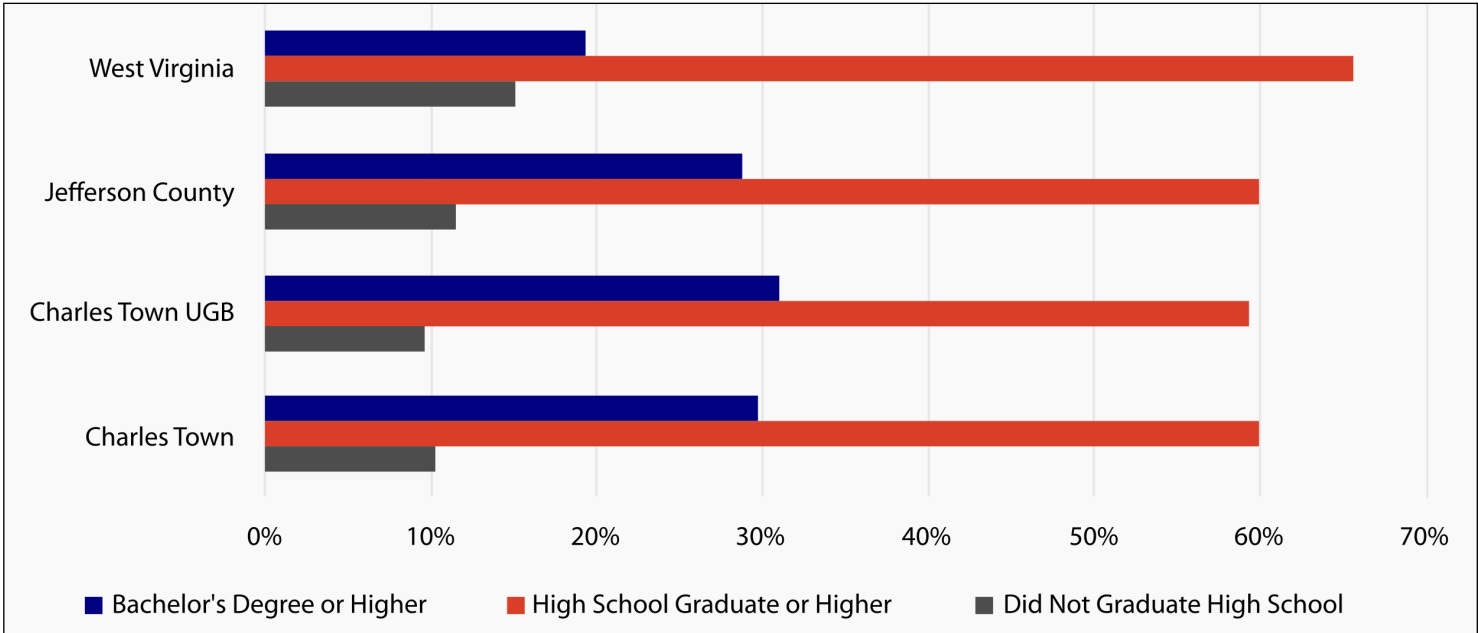
The City of Charles Town is projected to experience an 8.8% increase in population between 2015 and 2020, while the UGB is projected to increase by 8.6%. Population growth rates in the City and the UGB exceed growth rates in both Jefferson County and the state. Based on statewide projections, Jefferson County is projected to increase by approximately 36% between 2015 and 2020. West Virginia at a statewide level is projected to increase by 5% during the same time period, demonstrating that projected growth in the state is concentrated in the Baltimore and Washington, DC metropolitan areas.



Source: ESRI Business Analyst

## Educational Attainment

Compared to other communities in West Virginia, Charles Town and its surrounding region is well educated. In 2016, nearly 30% of residents age 25 and older had a bachelor's degree or higher, which is 10% higher than the statewide average. Higher education is demonstrated to provide economic benefits in terms of annual earnings. Residents with high educational attainment typically have increased disposable income and, particularly for Millennials, may desire high quality housing and amenities in the Downtown.



Source: ESRI Business Analyst



## Housing

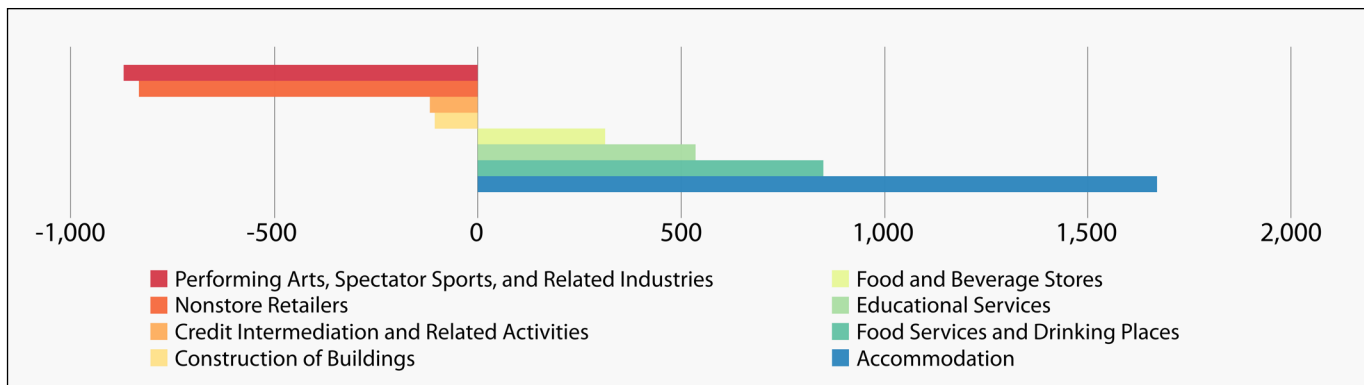
Median home values for Charles Town properties are significantly higher than the state average (\$266,353 in 2015, compared to \$123,440 for West Virginia). By comparison, Jefferson County's median home value was \$294,770 in 2015, demonstrating that Charles Town housing stock is more affordable than the County average. In 2015, the U.S. Census Bureau estimates that 10.2% of housing units in the City limits are vacant, compared to 7.5% in the UGB. While consistent with County trends (9.1% vacancy in Jefferson County in 2015), vacant housing units represent an opportunity for redevelopment to improve existing housing stock, particularly in the Downtown.

	City of Charles Town		UGB	
	2015	2020	2015	2020
Owner-Occupied Housing Units	52.0%	51.7%	61.7%	60.9%
Renter-Occupied Housing Units	37.9%	35.5%	30.8%	28.7%
Vacant Housing Units	10.2%	12.8%	7.5%	10.4%
Total Housing Units	2,433	2,820	4,817	5,848

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

## Employment

According to the 2014 *Charles Town Economic Development Strategic Plan*, the Charles Town zip code is projected to add nearly 1,500 new jobs in the ten-year period between 2013 and 2023. Currently, the accommodation and food services industries (e.g., hospitality) are the leading sectors for the City, accounting for 24% of its available employment. Employment by industry data is available at the county level. In total, Jefferson County gained 1,479 new jobs between 2000 and 2015. The chart below depicts the greatest job gains and losses in Jefferson County from that same time period.



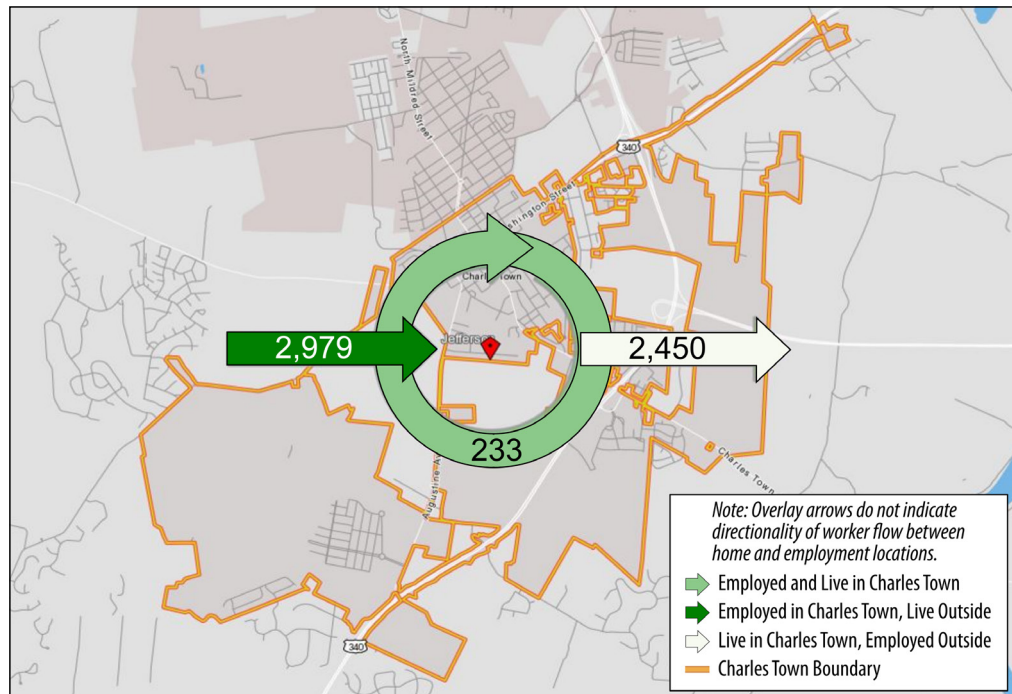
Source: US Census Bureau



## Community Profile

### Commuting Patterns

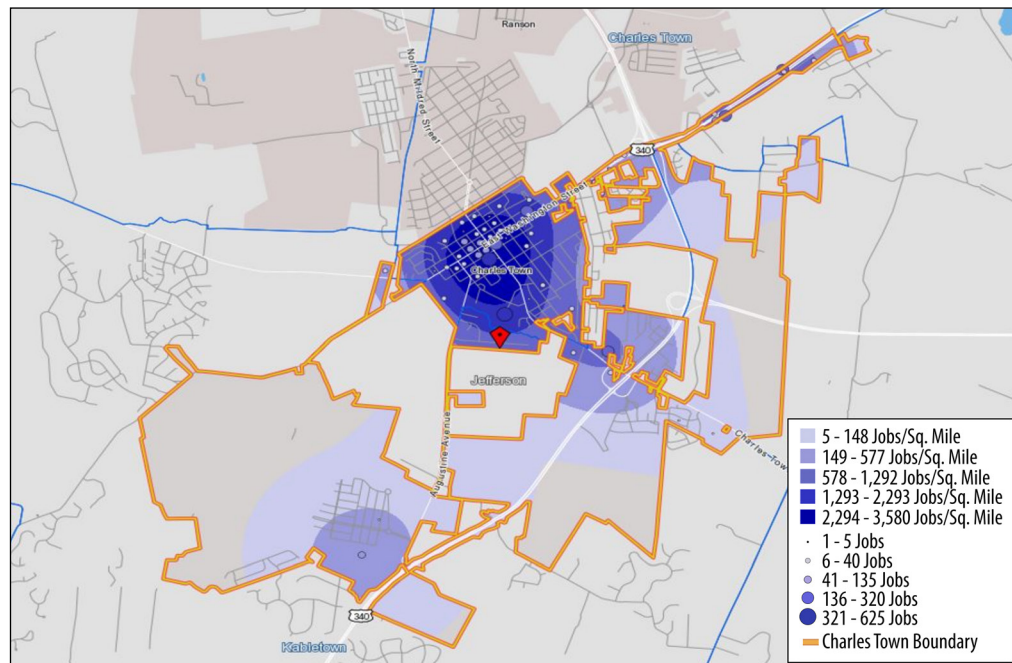
Based on 2014 data, the City of Charles Town has approximately 3,212 primary jobs located within the City. Of these jobs, 233 workers are both employed and live in the City; 2,979 workers are employed in the City but live outside; and 2,450 live in the City but work outside of the City. The data shows that Charles Town is neither a net importer nor exporter of workers. Rather, the inflow and outflow of workers is relatively neutral, and 7% of the workforce in the City is comprised of City residents.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau LEHD On-the-Map

### Employment Clusters

Shown below, employment is densely concentrated in Charles Town's Downtown district. The City's largest employment nodes are situated either along or just off of East Washington Street in the Downtown area.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau LEHD On-the-Map



# PLANNING FRAMEWORK

## ***5 Keys for an Implementable Comprehensive Plan***

1. Focus the plan on relevant, real community issues
2. Organize the plan the way local officials and citizens think
3. Devise practical and workable recommendations
4. Recruit partners and create capacity to implement the plan
5. Get local ownership of the plan and commitment to implement it

*Source: 2016 Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, "Creating an Implementable Plan: Principles and Keys"*



## ***Charles Town's Vision Statement for 2040***

*The City of Charles Town is a community that offers an exceptional quality of life for all residents by:*

- *Promoting access to jobs and livelihoods;*
- *Providing well-planned, safe and secure neighborhoods;*
- *Delivering quality public services;*
- *Preserving and promoting its unique history and cultural heritage for residents and visitors alike to enjoy; and*
- *Stimulating a business-friendly culture that embraces innovation and encourages entrepreneurship, business development and growth.*

## ***Key Themes and Goals***

*Seven key themes were brought forth as critically important to achieving Charles Town's Vision for 2040 and they serve as the Plan's overall goals:*

- |  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| • <i>Downtown Charles Town</i>                     | • <i>Image and Identity</i>        |
| • <i>Growth and Land Use</i>                       | • <i>Quality Public Services</i>   |
| • <i>Vibrancy, Sustainability, and Livability</i>  | • <i>Environmental Stewardship</i> |
| • <i>Mobility, Accessibility, and Connectivity</i> |                                    |

*These themes highlight and reinforce the major concerns the plan seeks to address and the issues raised by the public. An overview of each theme, its goal statements, and objectives are expressed in the following pages.*





# DOWNTOWN CHARLES TOWN

## **Goal Statement:**

Downtown Charles Town will be the center of the Jefferson County region and will serve as the center for community and economic development. The Downtown will be a strong center for business, and serve as a regional destination for arts, culture, entertainment, and learning.



A healthy, vibrant, and growing Downtown Charles Town is essential to the City's overall sustainability, quality of life, and future economic competitiveness. Throughout the Comprehensive Plan, Charles Town recognizes the Downtown as its urban core. Its connectivity and accessibility to and within the Downtown from all parts of the City's existing and future land use is imperative to sustaining and growing the City's economic competitiveness in the West Virginia Eastern Panhandle region. The Downtown symbolizes the City's image and identity and upholding and strengthening these elements can only be achieved through effective urban design approach that is, in part, accomplished through the City's historic preservation and building and property code enforcement policies.

To support the goal statement and address key challenges and opportunities discussed throughout the chapter, the Comprehensive Plan outlines the following objectives:

- *Increase economic vitality through Downtown and neighborhood revitalization.*
- *Help new and existing Downtown businesses be successful through increased visitation and technical assistance.*
- *Provide attractive storefronts occupied with a variety of appealing retail and service businesses.*
- *Create and maintain a clean, well-lighted, and inviting appearance day and night throughout the Downtown.*
- *Preserve and protect the Downtown's architecture that offers a quality experience in history and culture.*
- *Develop and create Downtown events and activities that will attract and benefit the community.*
- *Promote adaptive reuse of and investment into Downtown properties that strengthens the mix of uses within multistory structures.*





# GROWTH & LAND USE

## **Goal Statement:**

The City of Charles Town will strategically plan for and promote sustainable and well-designed growth and development throughout its Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) while maintaining a vibrant, walkable, and mixed-use Downtown that serves as the City's image center and core of civic life.



*Photo courtesy of Michael Baker International*

Growth and land use are often the primary components of a comprehensive plan because they establish the general physical characteristics of a community. The land use plan is a policy statement that decision makers must rely on to guide future actions. It provides the necessary foundation upon which all other elements are based. Included in the land use plan is a future land use map and related policies and strategies for guiding growth and development patterns through 2040. The previous Charles Town Comprehensive Plan was completed in 2006, during the economic peak of the early 2000s. The policies included in the document anticipated significant and continued growth. Furthermore, while the 2006 Plan was amended in 2009 to reflect the adoption of the UGB, no future land use map was developed for the unincorporated area (land that is governed by the jurisdiction of the County). Now, ten years later, the *Historically HIP Charles Town 2040 Comprehensive Plan* reflects a more stable growth reality and the defined UGB boundary to which the City can grow.

The chapter outlines a detailed overview of Charles Town's historical growth from the Civil War Era through the 2010 Census and 2015 demographic estimates. The Plan also provides an overview of existing land use and zoning regulations and ordinances in the City and outlines more recent planning documents that guide land use in the City.

At the core of the chapter, the Comprehensive Plan outlines a new approach to land use using a new urban design framework based on a SmartCode zoning policy and Smart Growth Principles. While conventional zoning focuses on use, which leads to separate building developments for residential, industrial, retail, commercial and office uses, and ultimately urban sprawl, SmartCode is a new, form-based approach to land development that emphasizes walkability and complete neighborhoods. SmartCode zoning categories are based on whether an area's character is urban or rural, or somewhere in between. In accordance, land use patterns are based on the proper location of development along the "rural-to-urban transect".

Based on SmartCode and Smart Growth Principles, the chapter presents the City's new Future Land Use Plan, which provides a framework to define the City's future growth and development patterns, types, and intensities. Charles Town's Future Land Use (FLU) Plan is composed of two Future Land Use Maps depicting 10-year and 25-year growth scenarios within the UGB.

To support the goal statement and address key challenges and opportunities discussed throughout the chapter, the Comprehensive Plan outlines the following objectives:

- *Establish land use and development regulations and supporting policies that uphold and achieve the future land use vision of the Comprehensive Plan.*
- *Balance development between new growth on the edges of the City and reinvestment in the City's Old Town.*
- *Promote adaptive reuse of and investment in Downtown properties that strengthens the mixed use concept within multistory properties.*
- *Utilize the City's annexation policy to provide areas for future growth, preserve critical green space, and expand the City's tax base.*





# VIBRANCY, SUSTAINABILITY, & LIVABILITY

## Goal Statement:

The City of Charles Town will be a community where all of its residents can enjoy great streets and complete neighborhoods; where walking, bicycling, and public transit are the preferred choices for most trips; where public spaces are beautiful, well-designed, and well-maintained; where local businesses are supported by the community and, in turn, encourage local economic development; and where housing is more plentiful and more affordable.



Photo courtesy of Michael Baker International

Charles Town is well positioned to grow as a regional destination for heritage tourism as well as a preferred community for a wide range of households and families. As a cornerstone for enhancing Charles Town's vibrancy, sustainability, and livability, the Comprehensive Plan recognizes the importance of creating a vibrant Downtown and increasing the livability of the City based on a number of factors. In addition, the Plan outlines steps to enhance financial sustainability by diversifying the local economy and capitalizing on opportunities to enhance regional attractions, locally-owned businesses, entertainment venues, and festivals and events.

To support the goal statement and address key challenges and opportunities discussed throughout the chapter, the Comprehensive Plan outlines the following objectives:

- *Utilize the City's limited resources in efficient and innovative ways, and foster revitalization.*
- *Increase the City's economic vitality and sustainability by supporting Downtown revitalization initiatives.*
- *Implement a City Housing and Redevelopment program to proactively and effectively address the City's blighted and abandoned properties.*
- *Collaborate with Charles Town Now to develop a vibrant, walkable, mixed-use Downtown.*
- *Preserve, promote, and market the City's Heritage Tourism assets including its emerging C\*Town Arts and Culture District.*



Photo courtesy of Michael Baker International





# MOBILITY, ACCESSIBILITY, & CONNECTIVITY

## Goal Statement:

The City of Charles Town will be a highly accessible community for all citizens by providing efficient multimodal (pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and vehicular) connections with Downtown Charles Town, and between and among its residential neighborhoods and local and regional commercial centers.



Photo courtesy of Michael Baker International

Efficient and reliable movement within a city is vital to its growth and success. Accessible transportation—affordable, safe, and extensive circulation between activity centers—supports a mobile workforce, regional tourism, local business, and overall community health. A well-developed network of multimodal transportation options benefits citizens of all ages, abilities, and incomes by removing barriers to jobs, accessing important goods and services, and engaging in community activities. For Charles Town, increasing mobility, accessibility, and connectivity around the Downtown area, residential areas, and nearby commercial centers will make the City a better place to live, work, and play.

This Comprehensive Plan chapter is built upon two key studies – A *2016 Walkability and Connectivity Study* and a *2014 Transportation Study* – to evaluate the street and sidewalk networks in the City and to outline opportunities to enhance mobility, accessibility, and connectivity. The Downtown First focus is discussed at length and a series of future transportation connections were identified for three main purposes:

- Connect existing or new suburban developments to Downtown Charles Town;
- Fill in existing gaps in the grid network; and
- Establish primary streets for new grid networks in undeveloped areas.

Other topics in the chapter include future bicycle and pedestrian connections, wayfinding, complete streets, regional bus service, and passenger rail.

To support the goal statement and address key challenges and opportunities discussed throughout the chapter, the Comprehensive Plan outlines the following objectives:

- *Provide convenient and affordable access to goods, services, jobs, and recreation for all residents and visitors.*
- *Create well-connected, safe, and efficient pedestrian and bicycle networks.*
- *Strengthen the walkability of Downtown Charles Town through improved pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and reduced volumes of through truck traffic.*
- *Implement complete streets design in all existing and new street and road design.*
- *Continue to create a Citywide network of greenways, open spaces, and green infrastructure.*
- *Continue to support and increase City residents' access to public transportation services.*



# IMAGE & IDENTITY

## **Goal Statement:**

The City of Charles Town will protect, enhance, and reinforce its historic, small town character and “sense of place” through high quality urban design and development standards that protect existing assets and investments, and create great new places by building vibrant, enduring neighborhoods where all people want to live, work, and play.



*Photo courtesy of Michael Baker International*

Charles Town is a community rich with history that was founded by President George Washington’s brother Charles Washington in 1786 and chartered by the Virginia Assembly in 1787. With a population just above 5,000, the City today is a quintessential rural American town nestled within the lush and rural Shenandoah Valley of West Virginia. Although the City has grown considerably since its founding, the urban fabric has been preserved in the Downtown and its surrounding traditional residential neighborhoods remain a testament to Charles Washington’s vision. However, like many rural American towns and cities, Charles Town’s more recent suburban growth and development patterns have begun to erode the image of the community.

The Comprehensive Plan emphasizes that Charles Town’s small-town image, identity, and sense of place is critically important to its sustainability, livability, and vibrancy. Accordingly, the Plan outlines several strategic planning initiatives that can reinforce the importance of Charles Town’s historic Downtown and reenergize a Downtown Focus that will promote growth while embracing the historically rich residential neighborhoods that will be beneficial to the entire community. The plan focuses on land development design standards, a façade improvement program, beautification and gateway enhancement, and community character and design.

To support the goal statement and address key challenges and opportunities discussed throughout the chapter, the Comprehensive Plan outlines the following objectives:

- *Improve the quality of new development and ensure it is compatible with existing neighborhoods.*
- *Protect and enhance the visual qualities of Charles Town’s streetscapes and public spaces.*
- *Support the preservation of historic buildings throughout the City and its UGB.*
- *Improve the appearance of existing commercial facilities to revitalize existing businesses and stimulate the development of new business.*



*Photo courtesy of Michael Baker International*





# QUALITY PUBLIC SERVICES

## Goal Statement:

The City of Charles Town will ensure the provision of quality and affordable public services to meet the health, safety, and welfare needs of its residents and visitors.



Photo courtesy of Michael Baker International

Quality public services are the foundation of strong growing cities. Clean and economical drinking water and efficient wastewater treatment are central to a city's ability to provide for its residents. Likewise, responsive law enforcement agencies, emergency medical services, and fire departments are critical to the safety and wellbeing of residents while high quality schools, libraries, and recreational opportunities are just as critical to support community's school-age children and families.

The City of Charles Town recognizes the importance of not just maintaining, but improving and upgrading its public services to exceed the needs of residents. Accordingly, the Comprehensive Plan identifies strategies to support the City's Fire, EMS, Police, Water, and Wastewater services and implement technology upgrades for a range of City departments. In addition, the Comprehensive Plan discusses recreation (public parks) and the Jefferson County School system.

To support the goal statement and address key challenges and opportunities discussed throughout the chapter, the Comprehensive Plan outlines the following objectives:

- *Ensure the delivery of quality, adequate, and affordable public water and sewer services.*
- *Continue to provide a high quality and well-trained police force to meet the City's law enforcement and protection needs.*
- *Support the City's volunteer fire and emergency medical service (EMS) providers.*
- *Promote the sustainability of the Charles Town Library to ensure its continued provision of quality museum and library services.*
- *Continue to provide diverse recreational programs and opportunities, quality facilities, and open natural spaces.*
- *Continue to support the provision and delivery of quality public education services and increase access to vocational educational opportunities.*



Photo courtesy of Michael Baker International





# ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

## **Goal Statement:**

Charles Town will promote the conservation of the City's natural environment while supporting sustainable economic growth, development, and redevelopment.



*Photo courtesy of Michael Baker International*

Charles Town acts as the confluence of multiple natural environments. The area around the City encompasses the headwaters of several perennial streams, such as Cattail Run, Evitts Run, and Bullskin Run. These small bodies of water flow west-to-east and discharge into the Shenandoah River, a major tributary of the Potomac River. Furthermore, the City limits encompass urban, suburban, and rural neighborhoods. This diverse setting leaves the City with a lofty responsibility to be a good steward of both its natural environment and its residents.

In the context of environmental stewardship, the Comprehensive Plan discusses the City's greenprint, brownfields redevelopment projects, green infrastructure, and water quality protection initiatives. In addition, the Environmental Stewardship chapter also outlines strategies to protect and preserve Charles Town's rural identity and natural resources, outlining considerations for farmland protection and natural resources to ensure soil, land, water, wilderness, and air are protected for future generations.

To support the goal statement and address key challenges and opportunities discussed throughout the chapter, the Comprehensive Plan outlines the following objectives:

- *Assist Jefferson County with achieving targeted reductions in sediments and nutrients to achieve the West Virginia's Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load attainment goals.*
- *Continue to implement the City of Charles Town's joint brownfield reclamation and redevelopment efforts with the City of Ranson.*
- *Protect the supply and quality of groundwater and surface water.*
- *Maximize the preservation of permanent natural areas within new developments.*
- *Preserve the City's agricultural lands in coordination with the future land use map and objectives.*
- *Continue to create a Citywide network of greenways, open spaces, and green infrastructure.*



*Photo courtesy of Michael Baker International*



# IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

To support the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan Goal Statements, an Implementation Strategy features a list of next steps for each of the 35 objectives that were identified under the eight theme areas. These strategies outline a tactical approach for advancing Charles Town’s 2040 vision by specifying tangible action steps that can be taken to ensure progress and implementation over the next 20 years. In addition to implementation strategies, this chapter also identified key partners that the City may collaborate with to support implementation. Partners include local, county, and state entities, as well as qualified consultants offer expertise in specific areas of need.

A targeted timeframe for the completion of each implementation strategy is also outlined in this chapter. The timeframes include short-term (0-4 years), mid-term (5-10 years), long-term (11-20 years), and ongoing, and prioritize the implementation items that can be advanced in the near-term. Finally, the Implementation Strategy identifies funding resource opportunities for each strategy, identifying City, county, state, and other resources that may be available to off-set implementation costs.

The Implementation Strategy will be a living tool that the City can use, refine, and update through implementation.

## Example Implementation Strategy Matrix

Section 4 – Growth and Land Use					
<b>Goal Statement:</b> The City of Charles Town will strategically plan for and promote sustainable and well-designed growth and development throughout its Urban Growth Boundary while maintaining a vibrant, walkable and mixed-use Downtown that serves as the City’s image center and core of civic life.					
Objectives	Implementation Strategy(ies)	Lead Entity	Partner(s)	Timeframe	Funding Resource Opportunities
4.1 – Establish land use and development regulations and supporting policies that uphold and achieve the Future Land Use Plan.	4.1.1 – Utilize the SmartCode to create a form-based overlay zoning district to ensure the Future Land Use Plan and the concepts of the Urban to Rural Transect and New Community Types envisioned therein are achieved.	• City of Charles Town	• Qualified Technical Consultant	Short-term (0 - 4 years)	• City Annual Operating Budget
	4.1.2 – Continuously examine and where appropriate implement Best Management Practices for land use planning concepts.	• City of Charles Town	N/A	Ongoing	• City Annual Operating Budget
	4.1.3 – Implement agricultural value added categories in a new agricultural zoning district as envisioned in the Future Land Use Plan (10-year).	• City of Charles Town	N/A	Short-term (0 - 4 years)	• City Annual Operating Budget
	4.1.4 – Examine and implement zoning districts that achieve the desired goals of the Future Land Use map.	• City of Charles Town	N/A	Short-term (0 - 4 years)	• City Annual Operating Budget
4.2 – Balance development between new growth on the edges of the City and reinvestment in the City’s Old Town.	4.2.1 – Place a priority on promoting and incentivizing new development investments in the Old Charles Town and Gateway Community Types where urban infrastructure exists to readily support revitalization and infill development.	• City of Charles Town	N/A	Ongoing	• Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

## Conclusion

Historically HIP Charles Town 2040 provides the City of Charles Town with a clear vision and roadmap for its near- and long-term success as a livable community whose center of activity is its Downtown. The Downtown First focus will ensure the urban core of Charles Town is connected to well-planned, walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods and is supported by quality public services and thriving centers of commerce that provide sustaining employment and a solid tax base for the City’s financial well-being. Charles Town is a community of lasting value worthy of preservation and continued investment.



Photo courtesy of Michael Baker International





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