

7. Community Facilities and Services

The quality of a community’s public facilities and services such as parks, schools and utilities are key to defining a place’s quality of life. Having high quality facilities and services is also important to serve existing residents and attract businesses and diversify the economy. The fiscal strain exposed by the recession of 2008 and continuing slow recovery has placed a new emphasis for municipalities to think creatively about the ways in which these services are funded. This chapter addresses services such as parks and recreation, safety, utilities, and other services provided directly by the city of Morgantown, from regional entities or through strategic partnerships.

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West Virginia Code Compliance

This chapter addresses the following topics required for a Comprehensive Plan in Chapter 8A of the West Virginia Code:

- Infrastructure
- Public Services
- Recreation

A. Goal

Highly desirable and competitive community facilities and services that promote the health and wellbeing of all of Morgantown’s residents.

B. Key Findings

This section summarizes key points raised during the public meetings and found from the technical analysis conducted for Crossroads. The objectives and strategies outlined later in the chapter are shaped by these ideas.

Public Input

The following themes highlight the most commonly expressed ideas from small group discussions and surveys conducted during the public meetings.

Expanding park space and recreational facilities. Citizens explained that there is not enough park space in the city and the amenities at those parks could be improved. Some neighborhoods have very limited access to parks. The rail trail is a major asset and connecting neighborhoods to it should be a priority. The city also lacks a major indoor recreation center that is available to the public. The university has a lot of open space and

recreational facilities but they are either not open to the community or require access/use fees for non-WVU affiliated residents that are high (i.e., \$40 for a family of four per occasion to use WVU's Student Rec Center).

There is a lack of family-friendly programs and amenities. There is widespread desire for community recreation centers and programs for children and teens.

Existing Conditions and Trends

The following themes were distilled from the technical analysis of the existing conditions and trends and represent the most important points.

A strong school system is one of Morgantown's assets. The Monongalia County Board of Education offers one of the best public school systems in the United States. In the year 2000, it was rated among the best 100 school systems in the country and among the top ten of West Virginia Districts (Offspring and Expansion Management magazines). In 2012, two of the County's three high schools ranked among the top five high schools in the state (US News). By state law, schools are county-wide independent districts and are not subject to municipal regulations. Each county school district is required to produce a Comprehensive Educational Facilities Plan every ten years to obtain funds from the state to build new facilities and maintain existing ones. The substantial growth experienced in the Morgantown area and the lack of land use plans and regulations to manage that growth at the county level has affected the ability of the Monongalia County Schools to do long-term planning. The condition places Monongalia County Schools in a reactive rather than proactive situation. School facilities are used extensively by the community.

Water and sewer utility service maintained by the Morgantown Utility Board. MUB is the primary provider of water, sanitary sewer, and stormwater services throughout the Morgantown urbanized area and to portions of rural Monongalia County. They were established in 1987 by the City of Morgantown. City Council appoints board members and sets rates, but MUB's day-to-day operations are independent from the City. The Utility Board aims to provide a high quality of service and infrastructure investments at competitive costs to customers. MUB offers the lowest water and sewer service rates in the state of West Virginia to both residential and commercial customers.

MUB water system currently processes 14 million gallons per day and

distributes to almost 24,000 customers. Their primary sources of water are the Monongahela River, which provides 90 percent of the water they intake, and the Cobun Creek Reservoir, which provides the remaining 10 percent. MUB operates two sewer systems, the primary Morgantown system and a separate system serving the Cheat Lake area.

Extension of sewer and water service impacts regional growth patterns.

Extension of utility service, particularly sewer service, is an important tool that communities use to manage growth. In many cities, utility service areas are designated where future water and sewer service will be provided. In these cities, utilities are typically not extended beyond the designated service area thereby controlling where urban growth will take place in the future. Also, extension of utility service to a property is part of an annexation agreement that brings the property into the municipality. MUB's policy (as mandated by the West Virginia Public Service Commission) is to extend of service anywhere a customer is willing to pay for that extension within 20 miles of the city's boundary. Extension of service is not dependent on annexation into Morgantown. MUB determines the cost which a property owner or developer must pay and directly oversees construction of the infrastructure.

MUB serves as the city's stormwater management utility. In 2001, the West Virginia Legislature authorized municipalities to regulate stormwater, in part to comply with the Federal Clean Water Act and to improve water quality in urban watersheds. In 2003 MUB became the state's first stormwater utility. All properties in the Morgantown watershed are required by law to participate in the stormwater utility, regardless of whether the property is within or outside the City limits. As with other utility services, fees are based on the amount of service provided. Stormwater fees are based on the amount of water that runs off of a property and into the watershed. Single-family residential properties must pay a flat monthly fee of \$5.30, while other properties are assessed based on the actual square footage of impervious surfaces on the property. Rates are set by Morgantown City Council. The fees pay for capital improvement programming to improve and expand drainage systems in the urban watershed, construction site runoff control, and post-construction stormwater runoff management from new developments located in the watershed.

Mon River Trails Conservancy manages the Rail-Trail system. The Mon River Trails Conservancy is a not-for-profit volunteer organization founded in 1991 to acquire, develop and manage the Caperton and Decker's Creek Rail-Trail system. Although, the City's BOPARC assists with maintenance and security for those portions of the rail-trail within the City, the rail-trail system is not overseen by a public agency.

City contracts solid waste and recycling collection. The City of Morgantown contracts with Allied Waste for curbside trash and recycling collection. The City began implementing a new service for single-stream curb-side recycling at the end of 2012.

Full-time Fire Department. Morgantown has the only full-time fire department in the county. It employs 47 fire fighters, with a minimum of 10 on duty at any given time. In addition to fire fighting, the department provides medical first responder, disaster response, rescue, and fire safety public education and inspection services. Stations and equipment are generally replaced as their life expectancy is approached. The North Side Fire Station was relocated to a new LEED Certified facility in 2008.

Expanding parks and recreation facilities for Morgantown's residents. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) sets a "target of excellence" of between 6.25 to 10.5 acres of park land per 1,000 persons in urban areas. The 2002 BOPARC Master Plan reported Morgantown's distribution of parks as 10 acres per 1,000 people. With the acquisition of the 71-acre Dorsey's Knob site and its recreational redevelopment and factoring in the current population growth, Morgantown now has approximately 11.4 acres per 1,000 people. By the 2008 Master Plan Update, Morgantown made improvements to many of its parks with additions like picnic tables and a one-acre dog park along the Deckers Creek Trail. The City took ownership of the Metropolitan Theatre in 2004, which originally opened in 1924 and after renovation seats 933 people. BOPARC also took ownership of the Wharf District Marina and Boathouse Restaurant in 2007.

C. Objectives and Strategies

Outlined below are seven objectives and 28 strategies to support the community facilities and services element. The objectives indicate a specific policy direction, while the strategies are detailed actions necessary to initiate or complete an objective such as a program, policy or a project.

Objective 1. Maintain high quality utility services to meet the growing needs of the community.

- CF 1.1 Evaluate sanitary sewer, water service, and storm sewer capacity to determine if existing infrastructure is adequate to support increased development densities where recommended by the Comprehensive Plan.
- CF 1.2 Evaluate water and sewer fees to ensure that such fees remain competitive with neighboring jurisdictions while supporting the cost of water and sewer infrastructure improvements.
- CF 1.3 Evaluate stormwater fees to ensure that such fees remain competitive with neighboring jurisdictions while supporting the cost of stormwater management infrastructure.

Objective 2. Maintain and expand the parks and recreational facilities and programming.

- CF 2.1 Implement and update the BOPARC Master Plan.
- CF 2.2 Evaluate how well the city's parks and recreational facilities serve the needs of citizens, looking specifically at the quality of each park or facility and their accessibility to surrounding neighborhoods.
- CF 2.3 Explore the feasibility of developing a community recreational center that offers facilities and programming like fitness rooms; gymnasiums; swimming pools; sauna, whirlpool, steam rooms; tennis courts, racquetball/handball courts; weight training room; banquet/meeting rooms and kitchen; craft rooms; preschool/child care rooms; computer labs; teen center/game room; etc.
- CF 2.4 Explore joint recreational programming with other community entities including West Virginia University and Monongalia County Schools.



COMMUNITY PRIORITY

- CF 2.5 Study alternatives for funding parks and recreational facilities and programming that includes, among others, cost-benefit analysis of existing programming, user-fee schedules, program and rental pricing, enterprise funds, revenue generating facilities, fund raising, sponsorships, public-private partnerships, financing capital projects, multi-jurisdictional consolidation of public recreation management, etc.

Objective 3. Support quality educational programs and facilities.

- CF 3.1 Hold annual meetings between the City, Monongalia County Schools and West Virginia University to create new educational opportunities for students and the general community.
- CF 3.2 Assist Monongalia County Schools with identifying appropriate sites for new schools that serve Morgantown's neighborhoods.
- CF 3.3 Encourage Monongalia County Schools to continue to make their facilities available for use by the community outside of school hours for appropriate purposes, while not interfering with the school's mission and success of delivering of quality learning programs.
- CF 3.4 Lobby Monongalia County Schools to seek adaptive reuses for vacated buildings and properties through public-private partnerships.

Objective 4. Broaden efforts to reduce homelessness.

- CF 4.1 Formally adopt the Community-Wide Plan To Reduce Homelessness prepared by the Morgantown/Monongalia Task Force On Homelessness.
- CF 4.2 Facilitate the creation of a Central Organization to Coordinate Community-Wide Action to Reduce Homelessness.

Objective 5. Provide appropriate social services and facilities to meet the changing needs of the community in concert with the City's Five-Year Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plans, and Annual Performance Reports.

- CF 5.1 Create an initiative or partnership to coordinate social services, policies, programs, and projects related to affordable housing, access to transportation, medical and mental care, literacy, job and life skills training, affordable childcare and after-school programming, and other needs.
- CF 5.2 Conduct an annual social services roundtable where the city meets with local social service providers to identify community needs and develop strategies to address those needs.
- CF 5.3 Identify programs to assist special needs populations, particularly individuals and families suffering from substance abuse or severe and persistent mental illness, experiencing homelessness or are at-risk of becoming homeless, while removing barriers to independent living and promoting self-sufficiency.
- CF 5.4 Conduct a campaign to raise awareness of social services.
- CF 5.5 Develop a program, in partnership with public transit providers, to increase access to and utilization of public transportation by low-income individuals and families and employees working shift-related schedules.
- CF 5.6 Prioritize in the City's Capital Improvement Plan the removal of barriers at all public facilities, including parks and recreation sites, that limits access and utilization by persons with physical, sight, and/or hearing impairments.

Objective 6. Continue to improve city services and community engagement.

- CF 6.1 Evaluate solid waste collection services, schedules, and pricing to identify potential improvements or new services.
- CF 6.2 Provide quarterly hazardous waste collection events. (Electronics, tires, appliances, hazardous liquids)
- CF 6.3 Develop a regional strategy for sharing and/or consolidating safety services.
- CF 6.4 Expand community policing activities for residents.

CF 6.5 Establish a community ambassador program.

Objective 7. Encourage healthy lifestyles.

CF 7.1 Form a Safe Routes to School committee with Monongalia County Schools and the MMMPO to obtain funding and assistance in encouraging students to walk or bike on safe and accessible routes to school.

CF 7.2 Designate a city-wide “Car-free” day where citizens are encouraged to walk, bike or use transit to get to their place of business.

CF 7.3 Create a Healthy Morgantown Initiative where the city partners with local institutions to promote awareness of healthy lifestyles and existing health services, develop wellness initiatives, and pursue grant funding.